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I, Wesley T Jackson Jr., hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Germanic Languages & Literature.

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Where Do We Go from Here? : Tortured Expressions of Solidarity in the German Jewish Travelogues of the Weimar Republic

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Abstract

This dissertation examines three travelogues written by German Jewish intellectuals during the Weimar period of Germany, just after World War I.


Each of these travel writers addressed the issue of how German Jews were to navigate national and cultural identities in an environment of political, economic, and social instability after World War I. In response to mass migrations of impoverished, Eastern European Jews and exclusivist, anti-Semitic definitions of national identity, these travel writers articulated an inclusive, porous vision of European Jewish identity that was rooted in the Judeo-Christian ethic to “love thy neighbor.” Each author proposed a different mechanism to bring about such a sense of spiritual renewal and of neighborly hospitality—particularly toward the Eastern European Jews. Arnold Zweig relied on the inspirational power of art and poetry; Alfred Döblin as a psychiatrist pointed to a complicated process of individuation and sublimating one’s ethnic or national identity to the greater good of a common state; and Sammy Gronemann advocated a return to religious Orthodox ritual. While the formation of more “porous” and inclusive German Jewish identities were innovative for the cultural debates of the 1920s, each of the proposed versions of solidarity or national identity presented in the travelogues contains contradictory mechanisms for relieving Western, German Jews of the obligation to actively identify with the Eastern Jewish community.
These contradictory elements reveal the psychological, social, and political difficulties for the assimilated, German Jewish community in confronting their dominant, anti-Semitic culture. The contradictions also demonstrate the challenges they faced in actively identifying with Jews from different national, cultural, and religious backgrounds. All three travel writers ultimately hoped to recover the spirit of the old, pre-war monarchies that granted them the space and the freedom to assimilate and inhabit multiple identities. In a post-war Europe when so many of the new nation states sought to express their nationalism through exclusive, racial methods, Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann articulated an innovative ideal for a national identity the foundational characteristic of which was the transcendent ethical principle to “love thy neighbor.” Their difficulty in implementing their renewed identities revealed both the fragility of their ideals but also the fragility of a post-war German identity that was so insecure and paranoid it sought to define itself through exclusivist prejudice and purges. As it was, the protective ghosts of the old empires were no match for the very physical incarnations of the anti-Semitic Blut und Boden ideology that already permeated German society and tragically cut short the development of a more hospitable vision of humanity before such a vision could outgrow the weakness of its own infancy.
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“The world needs to grow up into mature human beings.”
—Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen*

“It is also true of Zionism, that the Zionists talk about a lot of things, but do very little. Zionism has proclaimed a program, but most people are content with the proclamation and do not remember that they are called themselves (and no one else) to change. Everything stays in generalities. The word ‘someone’ undermines any sense of obligation. ‘Someone’ has to go to Palestine, ‘someone’ must rebuild the country, ‘someone’ must spend money, ‘someone’ has to learn Hebrew, ‘someone’ must bring up the children in a Jewish way. Everything is for ‘someone’ – for anyone but ‘oneself.’”

—Chiam Nachman Bialik, “Bialiks Rede in Berlin”
Introduction: Hospitality and Porous Identities

Alternative Ideals towards Nation Building

The time in Germany between the two world wars continues to illicit intrigue and questions from scholars and artists, not least of all because the Weimar Republic era was one of such transition, experimentation and possibilities. This period was also marked by a great deal of confusion and a sense of loss for the world of empires and monarchs that had passed away with the end of the First World War. In addition, with barely time to grieve the loss of the old world or to establish the foundations of a new Europe, the inhabitants of the Weimar period had their liminal window of “self-determined” democracy and independence cut short by the sudden rise of the Nazi power. The political and artistic experimentations, growing in the ideological soil of new visions of nationalism throughout Europe, were brought to a halt with the outbreak of the new war. The 1920s remains a period of possibilities and perpetual might-have-been historical scenarios.

One of the potential might-have-been scenarios of the Weimar period was a full blossoming of the Jewish cultural renaissance that occurred during this time, in part because of the massive immigration of millions of Eastern European Jews, the Ostjuden passing through Western Europe to escape Russian pogroms (Aschheim, Brothers 37)\(^1\). The presence of the Ostjuden refugees captured the imagination of German and Austrian Jews with an exotic foreignness of their own distant cultural and religious roots, and the Ostjuden simultaneously disturbed them. This wave of, what was perceived to be, impoverished, dirty and “immoral” immigrants forced Western assimilated Jews to negotiate and clarify their own cultural and

\(^1\) Michael Brenner’s work *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (1996) has been critical to this dissertation study for its historical contextualization of the Jewish innovators in their quest of a new community and the formation of new identities during the 1920s in Germany.
political allegiances with a renewed sense of urgency in response to the anti-Semitic moods of a post-war Europe. That sense of urgency fueled a creative burst of new Jewish poetry, philosophy, theater, literature and art. Many assimilated Jews felt a desire to explore a Jewish cultural identity over and against a German cultural and national identity. The rise of Hitler and the Nazi party ensured that the potential of the Jewish renaissance was not allowed to spread, and thus the Weimar era remains a fascinating time-capsule of cultural dreams and ambitions, not least of all for the German and Austrian Jewish communities.

The travelogues of the Weimar era are fascinating to examine as metaphors for many of the social and cultural changes happening in Germany during the 1920s. The end of World War I set the stage for new questions for both European and German culture. In a time when all of Europe seemed to be asking the question, “Where do we go from here?” it is incredibly enlightening to pay attention to the writers and thinkers who actually went somewhere looking for answers. In a time when Europe was experiencing something like a political and social “blank canvass” for identity formation, German travel writers went abroad in search for inspiration and models of what a self-determining nation might look like. The Jews, too, entered the Weimar period eager to know how to respond to the new era. Their questions surrounding national identity were especially poignant since they were uncertain as to the political status of their own Jewish “nationality” and culture within the reconstituted German state.

This dissertation examines the travelogues of three German Jewish authors: Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann. Each of these men were unique in their backgrounds and literary contributions, but they shared the commonality of being born to Jewish families in the Eastern provinces of the German Empire, of having successfully assimilated their lives (to different degrees) into secular, Western European society as intellectuals and artists, yet
possessing the same desire to rediscover their lost cultural and religious roots by going back to the East to visit the Ostjuden. The travelogues are interesting for several reasons—not the least of which is that these texts reflect German Jews negotiating an uncertain social and political existence in Germany after World War I.

Arnold Zweig published Das ostjüdische Antlitz in 1920, and Sammy Gronemann wrote Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich in 1924. Both books draw on the experiences of the authors during their time in Lithuania, serving in the German army during World War I (Brenner 143). In 1924 Döblin took up the offer from the Vossische[r] Zeitung and the S. Fischer Verlag to visit Poland and write about his experience of the Eastern Jewish communities. Julian Preece writes in an article on the travelogue that “Reise in Polen was the first Polish travelogue to be published in German since the 1840s and warrants critical attention for that reason alone” (172). Each of the authors wrote with a different set of concerns in mind for the way that they portrayed the Eastern European Jews. In many ways, Döblin and Gronemann represent opposite ends of the German Jewish spectrum in terms of how Eastern Jews in Germany were viewed and treated. Gronemann was a Zionist who passionately believed in the necessity of cultural and political separation for Germans and Jews, advocating for a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Döblin preferred an assimilationist approach: The Jews needed to adopt German cultural norms and work to support the greater good of the common state, albeit a more tolerant and compassionate German state. Zweig falls in the middle of these two perspectives. He both advocated for the necessity of a Palestinian home for the Jews per the Zionist political platform, yet he also passionately held to his (assimilated) German cultural heritage, and it is evident that he personally had little intention of abandoning Germany despite the rise in anti-Semitism through the 1920s.
Joseph Roth, though not treated extensively in this dissertation, was aware of these other German authors and even wrote a travelogue about Eastern Jews in response to Döblin. Roth was a Viennese Jew who had grown up in East-Galicia—now part of the Ukraine—and produced his *Juden auf Wanderschaft* in 1927 as a correction to Döblin’s “arrogant” Western portrayal of the Ostjuden (Brenner 143). Though not a German, Roth provides unique perspective and insightful critiques of the ideologies reflected in the German Jewish travelogues, and thus throughout this study I have incorporated various quotations as helpful, historical interpretive tools when examining the three other texts.

All of these authors exhibit that fundamental characteristic of European Modernity of mourning the loss of some Golden Age or the loss of connection with a previous generation that somehow took with them the secrets of life, culture, civilization, and community. Arnold Zweig, Sammy Gronemann, Joseph Roth, and Alfred Döblin sought to use the genre of travel narratives to come to terms with the lost world of the past and simultaneously greet the new era with creative, if also cautious, optimism.

Although travel writing was a popular literary genre during the 1920s, the reasons for these men to undertake writing projects about the culture and living conditions of the Eastern European Jews had far more to do with the felt necessity to negotiate and defend the legitimacy of their own existence and also the existence of the large numbers of Eastern European Jewish refugees immigrating to or passing through the German-speaking countries at that time. The loss of World War I combined with these waves of poor, refugee Eastern European Jews spilling into the fragile Weimar Republic provided an excuse to unleash new mutations of anti-Semitism. The travelogues were attempts by these Jewish intellectuals to assess the situation and to respond. Each of the authors wrote from a different perspective as to how to negotiate Jewish identity
during a transitional time, but they all respond to these events out of a common constellation of concerns and influences.

One of the major themes that emerged for all of these writers was a new definition of what it meant to be human. According to Döblin’s travelogue, the question of being human was of foremost importance. He writes at the end of his travelogue, *Reise in Polen*, “Die Welt muß aufgemenscht werden” (331). It is as if in the midst of his visit to post-war Poland, Döblin was crying out for some kind of universal humanity, for a new “centering” force to quell the chaos of the competing racial, political, religious, and cultural identities of these peoples. All three of these men agreed that if European countries could not answer the question of what it meant to be human, the questions of what it meant to be German or Jewish or French or Polish were inconsequential.

Another common theme for these travel writers was what it meant to belong to a national community. For the German Jews, like Döblin, Zweig, and Gronemann, and for Austrian Jews, like Joseph Roth, the question of nationality was unique. In many ways, each of these writers continued to insist on their German or Austrian nationality throughout their lives, even when they were rejected by their own nation states. The travelogues represent a wrestling of what it meant for these men to be German and what it meant for them to be Jewish in a time when there was increasing pressure to choose between one identity or the other, and to defend oneself against the surrounding anti-Semitism and discrimination.

Each travelogue is an assessment of the wholly other culture that belonged to the Eastern European Jews in comparison to materialistic, “corrupt” Western culture. As David Brenner notes, the debate around Eastern and Western societies and the comparisons of *Zivilisation* and
Kultur were common themes for Germans, and the Jewish communities likewise integrated the binary model as a way of interpreting their own identities:

Like Meinecke’s dichotomy of Staatsnation/Kulturnation, the associations evoked by the dichotomy Zivilisation / Kultur were an accepted part of intellectual discourse in the Kaiserreich. […] For [Thomas] Mann, Germany embodied Kultur and was therefore superior to French and British Zivilisation in the West and Russian barbarism in the East.

Such an idea of culture centered on an inward feeling and preferred mysticism to rationalism and science […] Whereas Kultur put the accent on romanticism and the authentic self, Zivilisation was enlightened and industrialized. Whereas a monarchy might be the ideal polity under Kultur, Zivilisation favored secularism and mass participation in the political process. Kultur was usually linked to the “soul of the people” (Volksseele) and was epitomized in the rural peasantry. Zivilisation, in contrast, was identified with the superficiality and relativism of the city. (D. Brenner 70)

The travel writers looked to the life of the Ostjuden as a way of recovering a sense of spiritual or moral values for the European community. But the texts also reflect the patronizing perspective of the “host” countries toward their refugee immigrants. For Zweig and Gronemann who served on the Eastern front during World War I, theirs is a perspective consistent with that of military, colonial values. For all three authors, they fall victim to the tendency both to romanticize the Ostjuden in their foreign context of Poland or Lithuania, and also to express great ambivalence as to what to do with the Eastern Jews once they entered Germany. The travel writers’ assessments of their own national identity and of the identity of Ostjuden thus comes through the lens of hospitality—a question of what to do with the guests, the foreigners as they passed through or came to dwell in the West. In many ways, the texts of Zweig, Döblin, and
Gronemann express both a kind of infatuation with the Eastern Jews and also a way to relate to the Ostjuden once the conditions for infatuation (distance, traditional political borders and boundaries) were gone.

The value of hospitality, Gastfreundlichkeit, and solidarity with the poor and the outcast, particularly with the Ostjuden, is a common characteristic that these travel writers look for when assessing new definitions of humanity and new definitions of nationalities. Sammy Gronemann writes in his travelogue about how the Jews of Eastern Europe had not forgotten how to be kind to the stranger and showed this as an exemplary quality for Western Jews: “Hier im Osten ließ man sich durch vorübergehende Ereignisse nicht in seiner Menschlichkeit und in seinem Geiste beirren. Und die Gastfreundschaft galt nicht etwa nur den Juden, sondern jeder, der nur sich abweisend zeigte, mußte sie empfinden” (Hawdoloh 206). Döblin also wrestled with the question of how he, as an assimilated German Jew could better advocate for the rights of this persecuted minority and insisted on a certain solidarity with the Ostjuden: “[…] ich müßte, ja ich müßte durchaus sagen und aussprechen, daß ich diese Ostjuden als meine Leute empfinde und daß ich eine Solidarität anerkenne” (Schriften zu Leben und Werk 65). This theme of identifying with the oppressed recurs throughout Döblin’s travelogue. Zweig, too, appeals to the innate sense of ethical obligation among Western Jews to help their suffering brothers and sisters. Zweig writes: “Natur sei ihrer Idee nach wider-gerecht? Um so heftiger hat, als Ausgleich, Menschheit ihre Idee der Gerechtigkeit durchzusetzen! Art des Menschen sei, daß der Starke den Schwachen knechte? Um so tiefer die Pflicht des Menschen, dem Schwachen beizuspringen!” (Antlitz131).

It is through those lenses of expressed solidarity and hospitality—how these authors envisioned its practice—that I will assess the three travelogues. I have employed a new-historicist approach to each of the texts, seeking to situate the travelogues in light of the
biographies of the authors and in light of the circumstances surrounding the wake of World War I. The theoretical work of Leo Spitzer (*Lives in Between*, 1989) has also been helpful in directing my study. Spitzer’s book is a remarkable, cross-cultural work that draws upon the experience of individuals from the late eighteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century who responded and reacted to the demands and betrayals of assimilation-ideology in British colonial West Africa, in imperial Brazil, and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire of the Habsburgs. He captures both the subjective, psychological realities of marginalized families seeking to acquire the traits, habits, education, social status and sensibilities of their surrounding, dominant cultures while also acknowledging the objective, historical circumstances that persisted and functioned to ensure a marginalized status for these individuals.

In comparing the experience of three diverse families over a century and a half, and particularly in the comparison of André Rebouças, Cornelius May, and Stefan Zweig in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Spitzer identifies a series of attitudes and characteristics in these people that are remarkably similar to those exhibited by Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann in relation to their struggle with the dominant, German Weimar culture. What Spitzer articulates is the profound sense of disillusionment and psychological fracturing endured by Rebouças, May, and Zweig as later-generation members of a marginalized class who had pursued sophisticated paths of assimilation into the dominant cultural structures, only to find themselves rejected, discriminated against, and doubly reminded of their social status as step-children. Spitzer’s examination of the individual responses to the failure of assimilation provides a helpful, “normalizing” series of comparisons when examining the attitudes expressed by the travel writers: The disappointments of highly assimilated German Jewish intellectuals during the
Weimar period were unique, but Spitzer highlights how those experiences are not without comparative or parallel examples in other colonial histories.

In this dissertation I have also chosen to draw from the work of psychologist and cultural philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, particularly for the purpose of raising questions around the Judeo-Christian ethical concern of how to treat or relate to the “Neighbor.” Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann all reference the issue in different ways of how to be a “Neighbor” to the “Other”—and in their circumstances, the foreign Ostjuden was the most immediate example of the “Neighbor”. Žižek frequently addresses the topic of the “Neighbor” in his works and reminds his readers that the Judeo-Christian idea of the “Neighbor” is someone who is potentially toxic to a given community or to a person’s way of life (Violence 59). The “Neighbor” in the Judeo-Christian sense was not intended, according to Žižek, to be primarily an acquaintance or colleague but specifically a person who is fundamentally different, who is irritating, disturbing, or uncomfortable for someone else to tolerate. The “Neighbor” is someone in whom it is difficult to be infatuated. The Ostjuden occupied this unwanted status for many Germans and for many German Jews during the Weimar period. The question for the three travel writers was how to demonstrate a form of solidarity and hospitality to these individuals who were different, potentially offensive, and even politically dangerous to their own assimilated German Jewish communities.

Borrowing from Žižek’s observations regarding normalized cultural violence in contemporary European societies, I implement his questions as a way of reading the travel texts “against the grain” of their respective, proposed purposes. I argue that Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann all wrote with the intention of advocating or supporting a more inclusive Jewish and European communal identity in a post World-War I society, and they did so
based on transcendent, ethical and religious ideals. For various reasons, each of the authors struggled to implement or integrate their ideals into a practical, experiential form and settled, instead, for an expression of solidarity in the travelogues that re-inscribed a separation or a distance between the dominant German culture and the marginalized culture of the Eastern Jews. Each of the three travel writers ultimately attempted to situate themselves on one side or the other of the cultural divide and advocate for an identity that was more tolerant, more flexible, and more porous.

After a devastating war, the travel writers asserted new visions of humanity and reassessed the value and place of national loyalties within a new European political landscape. Their articulations of a renewed, “hospitable” humanity were written against the backdrop of difficult historical circumstances: the overthrow of traditional European imperial political structures; the massive immigration of Eastern European Jewish refugees into Western Europe; the radical adoption of nationalistic and völkisch identities; the resurgence of anti-Semitism and the renewed importance of Zionism. Each of the three writers formulated a response to these circumstances that sought to restore a view of universal human dignity and to negotiate the place of national and cultural loyalties that was open and generous toward the poor and the foreigner. In considering the historical circumstances of these men, their unique contribution to Germany’s cultural debates becomes apparent.

In many ways an examination of the travelogues merely provides an overview of attitudes, convictions and political strategies regarding German Jewish identity during the 1920s that can be readily found through study of other publications, journals, as well as literary and artistic productions from the period. Steven E. Aschheim’s seminal work, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* is
Aschheim’s work presents a picture of cultural movements having to do with the founding of political and community organizations in Germany and Austria to defend Jewish rights and preserve its identity. His perspective on these developments operates (understandably) primarily from a place of crisis. His is a kind of history of failed attempts of Jews to turn the tide of anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria. One of Aschheim’s closing paragraphs summarizes this perspective and his prioritized interest in the various Zionist movements throughout Germany and Austria:

Only the Zionists were equipped with an ideological and explanatory framework that took seriously the radical nature of anti-Semitism. (This does not mean, of course, that they were able to foresee the unthinkable mass horrors of the Holocaust. They were, however, exceedingly alert to the novelty and seriousness of German anti-Semitism. The German Zionist tragedy consisted not in faulty analyses of the situation but in the failure to act upon their convictions and to leave while they still could). […] Those who still believed that the Enlightenment ideal of the German people would solve the problem were deceiving themselves. Anti-Semitism was propelled by an inner dynamic that would never be satiated and would not stop with the “foreign” Jews. In the wake of the Berlin riots, the Zionists dramatically announced that the achievements of Jewish emancipation in Germany had been shattered and that the hour of fate for German Jewry had arrived. (244-245)

Aschheim’s study looks at Jewish identity from a perspective of fear and imminent threat—again, from a perspective similar to the Zionist movement of the early twentieth century. His is a
perspective that emphasizes the negative motivation of identity formation: an identity formed on the basis of a common enemy or threat rather than on any positive trait or character expressed by a group of people.

My interest for this dissertation was to examine the contributions of the travel writers that resisted an identity (Jewish or otherwise) rooted in exclusion of other peoples or cultures and instead promoted an intentionally porous cultural identity. Whereas Aschheim and Brenner have produced studies interested in describing a distinctive Jewish identity during the Weimar period, my dissertation acknowledges the cultural and social pressures at work on Jewish communities to define themselves in terms of ethnic or cultural exclusivism but highlights three travel writers who resisted the limiting categories of the national-cultural-ethnic debate. While each of the three texts incorporates and celebrates cultural loyalties to different degrees in their works, all of them appeal to a higher standard or a deeper human, pan-Jewish, pan-European identity that makes room for other peoples and other cultures.

Aschheim’s assessment of German Jewish identity developments takes non-Zionist-specific movements and cultural identities into account, but these non-Zionist groups—such as the Rechtsstelle organization developed in Saxony to handle ostjüdischen concerns and legal problems from within the local Jewish community—are exceptions (227). The legal and economic support that the German Jews provided for the Eastern refugees created their own dangers. The Vereinigung jüdischer Organizationen Deutschlands zur Wahrung der Rechte der Juden des Ostens and the Arbeiterfürsorgeamt represented concentrated efforts on behalf of German Jewry to ensure legal status and economic means for the Eastern immigrants (218-219). According to Aschheim, such groups only fueled the impression among Germans that the Jews facilitated resources to undeserving refugees when postwar German citizens were also desperate
for work and housing opportunities. It seemed unfair to give away already-sparse resources to foreigners. Aschheim’s history favors the Zionist movement for preserving the cult of the Ostjuden and for developing a political program to preserve Jewish culture and ethnicity in the face of an antagonistic German culture. Rarely does Aschheim report efforts of a non-Zionist-specific organization without assuring his readers that it was problematic, that it was not lasting in its effect.

Aschheim’s history of the relationship between Eastern and Western Jews is incredibly valuable, and yet he continues to participate in a legacy of nationalism (Jewish or otherwise) that historically describes itself as a reaction to oppressive European powers: Aschheim favors the Zionist approach to Jewish identity as a politically responsible preserver of Jewish culture. My argument is that what the travel writers describe is the need for a positive response—for Jewish identity that was self aware and proactive without being dependent upon European anti-Semitism. The travel writers articulated the necessity for developing “porous” or “permeable” identities as opposed to those identities based primarily on exclusion for the purpose of maintaining ethnic, cultural or political purity.

As Aschheim found, it is difficult to include such porous identities in a history about the formation of a particular kind of people or culture and yet, counter-intuitively, porous identities are perhaps the very things that need to be encouraged if we are concerned about the health and preservation of any culture and any nation. The assertion of “porous” identities that are open and capable of housing multiple ethnicities may not make for the most convenient historical or political categories and yet such notions of hospitality and “neighborliness” were innovative, positive contributions to the debates surrounding national identity in the post World War I context.
The “porous” identities proposed by the travel writers were reactionary to some degree, but each of the authors sought to assert the value of “neighborliness” from a positive, authoritative Jewish identity: They appealed to a transcendent Jewish or universal human ethic. What each of the texts attempted to counteract was the nationalist ideology of post-war Europeans (and particularly Germans) to define their identities in terms of animosity against their political enemies. Peter Pulzer notes that after the Napoleonic wars and certainly after national unification Germany continued to exhibit cultural and political insecurity about its identity as a state: “There had been a tendency ever since the first modern ‘national experience,’ the war against Napoleon, to define what is German in restrictive and exclusive terms, by stressing the criteria of what was not German as well as what was German” (Meyer 3: 264).

While the German Jewish travelogues also exhibit exclusivist attitudes, their collective contribution to the theme of “neighborliness” and hospitality as a common characteristic for a renewed vision of humanity is positive, voluntaristic, and innovative, if also idealistic, striking against the grain of nationalist identities defined in negative terms.

As admirable as the German Jewish travel writers’ idealistic contributions about hospitality and “neighborliness” are, each text reveals a strong ambivalent element. This ambiguity or inconsistency in the texts comes across, at times, as an unconscious hypocrisy that appears in the ways in which Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann express their desire to stand in solidarity with the Eastern Jews. On the one hand, each of the authors recognizes a high ethical obligation to the help the Ostjuden, and certainly in the cases of Zweig and Gronemann, their texts contain concrete, practical examples of what this solidarity was to look like. On the other hand, each of the authors introduces mechanisms to help the Ostjuden that seem to contradict or undermine their high ethical ideals, and that contradiction is often tangled, in the travelogues,
with the inability or the unwillingness to confront or address assumptions about their German identities.

Steven Aschheim’s comment cannot be ignored that those Jewish intellectuals who continued to cling to the Enlightenment principles of Bildung as a cultural bastion of support and protection against the forces of Nazi anti-Semitism were fooling themselves. What is remarkable about the texts of Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann is that while each text testifies to the ability of the author to embrace the possibility of their Jewish identity being porous and open, they are all remarkably silent about the possibilities of their German identities becoming more porous or more flexible. The texts are contradictory, ambivalent examples of the authors’ awareness that a total renewal of European society was needed, but this awareness was coupled with a silent hope that such a need for renewal would not require direct confrontation of German cultural and political mores.

This dissertation has just as much to do with analyzing the various forms of solidarity and neighborly hospitality proposed in each of the texts as it has to do with the difficulties and self deception of the travel writers to implement their theories. One of the main difficulties that subtly colors the backdrop of each travelogue is the issue of German national loyalty and patriotism and the great attachment that each of these writers had to German culture. In light of anti-Semitic attacks, the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (CV), the largest organized representation of German Jewry during the Weimar period, was known for asserting Jewish loyalty to the German nation, even through the early 1930s (Meyer 3:285). The CV declared that the Jews were “Germans of the Jewish faith” similar to a Protestant or Catholic religious identity. “Jewishness,” they insisted, did not pose a threat or a competing loyalty to “Germanness.” What the travelogues represent, then, is a similar desire of the writers to remain
German or to assure their readers that they have not compromised their national German identity, while simultaneously advocating the necessity for revolutionary change within European concepts of nationalism. Extreme patriotism, the travel writers argued, led to unneighborly, inhospitable brutality, but surely, they seemed to say, there was a way for Europeans and Jews of diverse cultural backgrounds to be more hospitable without fundamentally compromising their national loyalties.

Leo Spitzer identifies a similar ideal of a “porous” identity in the writings of André Rebouças (Brazil), Cornelius May (West Africa), and Stefan Zweig (Austria) during the early twentieth century. Spitzer notes that all three men in their very different national and cultural contexts, had successfully traveled the road of assimilation and had largely adopted the identity of middle class (if not upper class), European intellectuals. They were comfortable affirming the social norms of their surrounding dominant, colonial cultures and believed in

[...] a harmonious and reasonable world in which neither language, race, religion, nor politics would limit individual freedom—a world, in other words, ideally suited for cultural and racial “hybrids” such as the two exemplified [May and Rebouças]. But its appeal was also particularly great for urbane Jews like Stefan Zweig, who desired to move far beyond the confines of religious traditionalism and the segregated corporate communalism associated with the pre-emancipation ghettos and schtetlekh of Europe, and who wished to be accepted as full citizens of the societies in which they lived.

(Spitzer 161-162)

What such an “assimilated” worldview meant for Zweig and Döblin was that the “porous” Jewish identity they described was ultimately more pliable to German expectations
than the reverse: They advocated assimilationist models of “inner” transformation and described vague, universal goals of social justice and compassion to be realized in Palestine, the new Zion or, for Döblin, perhaps in Eastern Europe. They tried to show the great similarity between the values of German Christian and Socialist ideals and the ethical ideals of traditional Jews. In light of the similarities, Zweig and Döblin subtly argued, could not the Eastern Jews seek to adapt themselves to a more German cultural framework without losing anything of their “spiritual” substance?

Gronemann provided counter-arguments to the assimilationist approach that was more externally focused in his demands for German and Jewish cultural and political separation. Whereas Zweig and Döblin were more interested in philosophical or aesthetic notions of personal renewal, Gronemann pointed to the importance of religious ritual within the Orthodox Jewish tradition in the quest for spiritual renewal, and he united that religious identity to his political, Zionist cause. While Gronemann was very clear concerning the need for Jewish separation away from Gentile Europe, he too was a man of his times whose political imagination was influenced by European notions of national identity and national categories: It was difficult for Gronemann to conceive of a pan-Jewish identity that did not correspond to a country or a state of its own.

It is helpful to note that Spitzer’s description of the reasonable, cosmopolitan world that May, Rebouças, and (Stefan) Zweig believed in and the unique social positions they occupied were intricately tied to the imperial political and social structures under which these men grew up and flourished. As long as those dominant powers remained unthreatened (in reality or in their perception), the assimilated intellectuals continued to entertain the optimistic hope of such porous national identities. Once these political empires were overthrown or, according to
Cornelius May’s interpretation, when the British felt threatened by independent notions among the West African colonies, the porous, cosmopolitan ideal was thrown into jeopardy (Spitzer 160). In the case of André Rebouças, the Brazilian empire of Dom Pedro II was eventually overthrown by a republican political conspiracy, removing whatever political and cultural protection he had earned as an assimilated, African Brazilian (149). Stefan Zweig likewise enjoyed his hybrid status until the Nazi powers stamped out whatever was left of the old pluralistic cultural ideals of the Habsburg Empire (166-67).

For the Jewish Weimar travel writers, part of their difficulty in articulating and implementing a politically active, porous Jewish identity was due to their previous reliance on the imperial, colonial powers. The fact that the Weimar Republic was a new political arrangement away from a Kaiser-centered, Prussian military structure meant that Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann were attempting to describe and promote a porous national identity, the ideal for which relied on an old, now-vanished political structure. After World War I, these authors were left to articulate that ideal in the midst of new political realities and with new political and cultural ideas. One of the main new concepts of the post-war period was that of “national self-determinism.”

Great Britain, France, the Russian Bolsheviks, and finally the United States all promoted the idea of “self-determining” nationalism, initially as a war strategy, as a way to destabilize the Habsburg and the Russian Imperial forces. If the old ethnic rivalries within these empires could be stirred up, there was a chance that these imperial powers would crumble. After assuming control of Moscow, Lenin launched a propaganda campaign across Europe for the rights of self-determining peoples to assert their independence by creating a revolution in their own countries. He did this in part to give a “democratic” legitimacy to his new Socialist government in Russia.
Lenin also did this knowing that encouraging nationalist revolutions throughout Europe would portray any of America’s imperial allies in a bad light: They were oppressors, not guarantors of democratic freedom (Johnson, *Modern Times* 23). The propaganda worked and Woodrow Wilson created his Fourteen Points, advocating “self-determining” nations for Europe. That the promotion of the vague idea of “self-determination” was used as a destabilizing war strategy is instructive, because it worked quite effectively and it continued to work as a destabilizing political mantra well after the war.

Germany, and much of the rest of central and Eastern Europe, attempted to define themselves as “self-determining” nations but without much direction or leadership as to how this was to occur. Germany cobbled together a National Assembly in charge of drawing up a new “democratic” constitution—it “was, on paper, the most liberal and democratic document of it’s kind the twentieth century had seen, mechanically well-nigh perfect, full of ingenious and admirable devices which seemed to guarantee the working of an almost flawless democracy”—but without the broad support of institutional, aristocratic, and military powers (Shirer 56). The constitution for the new Weimar Republic was written for a nation that was not ready to function as a democracy. Germany was still tied to its old monarchial and military power-structures and hierarchies. It is true that, after the war, many returning soldiers were bitter against the “old government” and were ready for a change. It may not be fair to say that, at its heart, Germany did not want a democracy. It might be more accurate to say, at its heart, Germany did not know how to be Germany without a monarch.

Even if the Weimar constitution guaranteed unprecedented freedoms and civic liberties for German Jews this did not mean that German Jews had a long legacy of “self-determined” political activism. Just the opposite was true. German Jews had responded to the late-nineteenth
century Emancipation policies with assurances of their loyalty to the Prussian monarch. With the outbreak of World War I, many patriotic Jews joined the war effort in hopes that their service would result in full acceptance into German society. To their shock, discriminating German war policies only confirmed their status as disenfranchised stepchildren (Meyer 3: 372). Peter Pulzer notes that liberal Jewish leaders were conflicted in their responses the anti-Semitic census during the war:

They were one and all indignant, but divided on how to express their indignation. On the one hand, they were put under pressure to defend Jewish honor, especially by serving soldiers and their families. They had also to fear increasingly militant defense rhetoric from Zionists. On the other hand, they saw the government of Bethmann Hollweg, for all its weaknesses and defects, as a barrier against völkisch and militarist forces and felt compelled not to embarrass him. (Meyer 3:373)

In many ways, the development of a more self-aware Jewish culture during the Weimar period was the extension of the German Jewish political response to such confusing, anti-Semitic treatment during the war. The primary difference was that, after the war, the stabilizing authority structure of Wilhelm II’s Kaiserreich was gone. During the Weimar years, the Jews felt the need to be a “self-determining” nation like other European states established by the Versailles Treaty, but like many of those new states and like Germany itself, the Jews were uncertain as to how to organize political representation along democratic lines. After a long heritage of having their political identity framed in terms of a central authority, the Jews, along with the new post-war nations, still sought for a higher power to show them what they should be as a national community.
World War I and the End of Empire

The three travelogues’ treatment of the themes of a renewed humanity and the anxieties surrounding political and cultural membership to a certain state or people group, while not new to the German Jewish community, became important to these travel writers largely due to the historical developments during World War I and in its aftermath. Without appreciating the collapse of the major European imperial, monarchical political systems after World War I, it would be easy to read each of the travelogues as a spiritual memoir or as passing polemic for Jewish belief and practice. The texts deal with moral, spiritual and religious questions and, particularly for Döblin and Gronemann, a genuine sense of religious belief gives power and conviction to their observations, but their spiritual musings are not casual, esoteric interests. The character of each of the travelogues must be weighed against the surrounding political pressures and radical cultural changes taking place in Germany and Austria in light of World War I.

Each of the travel writers experienced and witnessed a kind of identity crisis that prompted them to go and explore Eastern Europe—most notably, Poland and Lithuania—and while this identity crisis certainly related to their Jewishness, or a sense of needing to recover their Jewish heritage, the identity crisis was not only felt by European Jews. It was a pan-European crisis that was uniquely highlighted in the struggle of many Jews during the 1920s. Everyone was seeking to define themselves as groups, as nations, as races, as economic classes, and as newly realized historical entities. Many people groups after the war found themselves with new, often arbitrarily assigned political identities, along with the general admonition to be “self-determining” nation states (Johnson, *Modern* 20-21).

The historical reality was that most of the new nation states spawned by Versailles had little to no precedent for being a self-determined political entity. Most of the “nationalities” were
used to being governed by an emperor or a monarchy. Paul Johnson’s seminal work on the twentieth century, *Modern Times*, provides a helpful perspective to the kind of environment Döblin, Arnold Zweig, Sammy Gronemann and Joseph Roth encountered in their travels to visit to Poland and Lithuania during the war and in the mid 1920s. The first World War was not only a catastrophe in terms of the sheer loss of life, the virtual wiping out of an entire generation of young men across Europe, but it accomplished the collapse of the three major hegemonic political powers in Europe, by which nearly all of the Central and Eastern European people groups had heretofore defined themselves: the Prussian empire disappeared with Kaiser Wilhelm II in November, 1918; the last Hapsburg Emperor, Karl I, surrendered his crown shortly thereafter; the Romanovs of Russia, too, had been executed earlier in July of that year (19). The downfall of these three political powers represented, certainly in the case of the Hapsburgs and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the near-overnight transition from a thousand-year monarchy to a more democratic political system. Johnson writes:

At a stroke, the dissolution of these dynastic and proprietary [sic] empires opened up packages of heterogeneous peoples which had been lovingly assembled and carefully tied together over centuries. The last imperial census of the Habsburg empire showed that it consisted of a dozen nations: 12 million Germans, 10 million Magyars, 8.5 million Czechs, 1.3 million Slovaks, 5 million Poles, 4 million Ruthenians, 3.3 million Romanians, 5.7 million Serbs and Croats, and 800,000 Ladines and Italians. According to the 1897 Russian imperial census, the Great Russians formed only 43 per cent of the total population; the remaining 57 per cent were subject peoples, ranging from Swedish and German Lutherans through Orthodox Latvians, White Russians and Ukrainians, Catholic Poles, Ukrainian Uniates, Shia, Sunni and Kurdish Muslims of a dozen nationalities, and
innumerable varieties of Buddhists, Taoists and animists. Apart from the British Empire, no other imperial conglomerate had so many distinct races (20).

Though Johnson does not mention it in his list of collapsing empires, the Ottoman Empire likewise came to an end, which resulted ultimately in the creation of the modern, Turkish state (Sharp 268). The result of the dissolution of the great powers was that all of these different peoples struggled to find a new, central source for their identity. For many of these emerging nations, they sought to bind themselves together on the basis of ethnicity, language and culture.

After World War I, the framers of the Versailles Treaty set out to establish political boundaries in Europe that would somehow accommodate the rights of these “self-determining” peoples. The intentions of the framers were good. These men operated on the belief “that it was the desire and the destiny of ‘nations’ to be free, and that peace and progress could only be achieved when these nations were governed by representative, constitutional regimes” (Martel xxvii). The assumption was that once the “nationals” were granted a space of their own to be “self-determined” peace would be restored. Aggression in Europe would cease.

What happened in reality was that the Versailles Treaty “actually created more, not fewer, minorities, and much angrier ones (many were German or Hungarian), armed with far more genuine grievances” (Johnson, *Modern Times* 38). The result was that peoples, who had never operated in such distinct, nationalist terms, were given a kind of fresh political legitimacy. In many ways, the new national groups simply were not used to such autonomy. As with the Jews, several of these culturally national entities had few historical models of their cultural traditions translating into successful political structures. On the whole, the smaller nationalities of Central and Eastern Europe had become accustomed to letting their political identity and security be determined by Russian Tsarist Rule, Hapsburg rule, or by Prussian militarism. The
new, post-war political autonomy was an almost entirely new experience for many of these
groups, and a quite violent one.

Poland was a particularly symbolic country that reflected the potential hopes and dangers
of what the new, self-determining nation states could be. Poland was a new hodge-podge
political entity, cobbled together by the Allied Powers after World War I. It was the result of a
political experiment, and the nation was racked with questions of identity. In many ways it was
the perfect breeding ground for the same sorts of questions that the travel writers asked when it
came to history, democracy and to questions of place and identity, and the goal of forging
humanizing communities.

Far from being a contented political entity after the war, Poland used its new-found
autonomy to launch a series of territorial attacks against its neighbors: Poland invaded and took
Eastern Galicia from the Ukrainians, tried (without success) to force Teschen (Cieszyn) from the
Czechs, occupied Lithuania, and made an aggressive assault against Russia, claiming new
territory. The result was that by 1921, Poland was double the size that the Versailles Treaty
framers initially anticipated. In order to maintain control of the conglomerate of minorities that it
absorbed, Poland operated with massive police forces, careless of the promises made to ensure
human rights to its political aliens (Modern Times, 39). Rather than bringing stability, the newly-
formed political identities created unrest and uncertainty for minority groups, the Jews not least
of all. The result was an increase in the flood of migration from Poland and other Eastern
European countries into Germany and Western Europe.

Mass Migration

The new nationalist European order of the post-war period fostered a recognition among
the new states that their Jewish populations did not fit in, did not belong to these new self-
determined, culturally-defined historical entities, and thus the Versailles Treaty served as a trigger for more intense persecution and discrimination against local Jewish populations in the Central and Eastern European states and sent a flood of Jewish immigrants to the West:

By the 1920s [...] The Versailles Treaty itself gave the [anti-Semitism] controversy new life by driving into Germany a great wave of frightened Jews from Russia, Poland and ‘Germany’s surrendered territories. Thus it became an urgent ‘problem’, demanding ‘solutions’. They were not wanting either. There were proposals for double-taxation for Jews; isolation or apartheid; a return to the ghetto system; special laws, with hanging for Jews who broke them; an absolute prohibition of inter-marriage between Aryan Germans and Jews. (Johnson, Modern Times 120)

The “problem” of Jewish immigration into Germany was not new. During the war the Germans had already been concerned about what to do with the Ostuden in the occupied Eastern-front territories. One of the main reasons for Döblin’s, Zweig’s, and Gronemann’s interest in Poland was that, for many Germans, the associations with Ostjuden was that of the poor ghetto Jews in Poland and Lithuania during the war.

Since the 1880s, Eastern European Jews had been fleeing persecution from Russian and Central European territories into Western Europe. The question of poor, immigrant Ostjuden was not new to Germans, but with the war came a new political twist: the efforts of Zionist activists to persuade German leaders that the Polish Jews were part of a key political strategy to further the German imperial cause. Max Bodenheimer established the Deutsches Komitee zur Befreiung der russischen Juden—only a short time later to be re-named the Komittee für den Osten—in 1914. His group was one of several activist attempts to marry German imperial expansion with the protection and support of Eastern Jewry (Aschheim 157).
Liberal and conservative publications from the war years frequently framed the question of the Eastern Jews in terms of a “Polish Jewish” question—particularly because of the German-occupied territory. The issue was what the German liberators were to do with the Jewish inhabitants in the Polish cities. Were the Jews to be treated as a separate nation? Could they be converted into being good German citizens? What language should they speak? Yiddish? Hebrew? Polish? (158-159, 169) All of these questions were hotly debated among Jewish activists during the war, and the anxiety of Jewish identity in general only increased during the 1920s. Again, Aschheim points out that the fear of many Germans was that the steady flow of Eastern Jews from war-occupied territories would only increase the number of Westernized Jews in Germany. The fears of what that might mean differed. Some were concerned that the Jews would never actually outgrow the “ghetto,” with all of its hygienic and moral barbarism. Others feared an increase in Jewish capitalists who would take over the country (79).

In many ways, the “problems” created as a result of Jewish immigration stemmed back to Tsarist anti-Semitic laws and violent persecution of the Jews from the nineteenth century. Ostensibly aimed at the goal of creating religious conformity, Tsarist policy had been officially anti-Semitic at least since the 1790s, beginning with Russian acquisition of the current Polish territories of Central Europe (Johnson, History of the Jews 358).

Paul Johnson remarks that the Russians were the first to pioneer modern expressions of social control on a large scale—policies that would later be adopted by the Nazis: “What the Russians did was to engage in the first modern exercise in social engineering, treating human beings (in this case the Jews) as earth or concrete, to be shoveled around” (358). They did this first by creating large settlements or territories to which the Jews were confined, but these settlements were to later expand into violent, oppressive tax and police laws that sanctioned
discrimination in business, in the universities, and ensured regular acts of physical abuse and plundering by local officials. The May Laws throughout the 1880s perpetuated a thirty-year period of persistent legal discrimination and murderous violence against the Jews, beginning one of the largest expulsions of the Jewish population in modern history:

Hence from 1881, this vicious, mounting and cumulatively overwhelming pressure on Russian Jewry produced the inevitable consequence—a panic flight of Jews from Russia westwards. Thus 1881 was the most important year in Jewish history since 1648, indeed since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Its consequences were so wide, and fundamental, that it must be judged a key year in world history too. The first big rush to get out came in 1881-2. Thereafter Jews left at an average of 50,000-60,000 a year. With the Moscow expulsions, 110,000 Russian Jews left in 1891 and 137,000 in 1892. In the pogrom year 1905-6, over 200,000 Jews left. The exodus was by no means confined to Russia. Between 1881 and 1914 more than 350,000 Jews left Austrian Galicia. More Jews emigrated from Rumania, where they were also under pressure. (History of the Jews, 365)

Naturally not all of these Jews fled into Germany, but many of them did. Between 1916 and 1920 alone, seventy thousand Jews emigrated into Germany to find work in factories or as various tradesmen (Brenner 32-33). Steven Aschheim remarks that between 1905 and 1914 “700,000 East European Jews passed through Germany to embark at Hamburg or Bremen or other West European ports bound for the United States. Although these statistics are not complete, we know that a large proportion of the total 2,750,000 Eastern Jewish immigrants who left Europe for overseas lands between 1880 and 1914 passed through Germany” (37).
The difficulty of the mass migration into Germany was that the Eastern Jews came from gross states of impoverishment. German soldiers in Poland and Lithuania sent home letters and reports of the greedy, “Shylock” Jewish merchants, of rampant prostitution among Jewish women, and of a pervasive “criminality” in the ghettos (Aschheim 145-147). The Polish, Lithuanian, and Galician ghettos suffered even more during World War I, and while the German army helped to bring medical and hygienic improvements to those areas, the reputation and image of Ostjuden as basically sick, dirty, sexually promiscuous deviants also gained fresh evidence and support:

They [German soldiers] very often did find unsanitary conditions, a situation that the German occupation did excellent work in improving. Stringent medical and sanitary regulations were promulgated, houses were sprayed to prevent epidemics, streets were cleaned of years of ingrained dirt, and schoolchildren were disinfected. All this was no doubt both necessary and beneficial, but still, its symbolic significance should not be overlooked. Many Germans regarded the cleansing as an explicit act of political hygiene, an effort at massive cultural purification. [...] Well after the war, the image of the Ostjude as unclean and carrier of infectious sexual disease was perpetuated. (Aschheim 148)

These circumstances did not necessarily improve once the Eastern Jews arrived in Germany. Actual class and socio-economic differences were enough to make the Ostjuden painfully different from both German Jews and non-Jews. Jakob Wassermann in 1921 published, Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude, and gave voice the very real differences that existed between himself as a Western Jew and the Ostjuden with whom he attempted to interact. He acknowledged that whether right or wrong, he felt an unbridgeable divide:
Sah ich einen polnischen oder galizischen Juden, sprach ich mit ihm, bemühte ich mich, in sein Inneres zu dringen, seine Art zu denken und zu leben zu ergründen, so konnte er mich wohl rühren oder verwundern oder zum Mitleid, zur Trauer stimmen, aber eine Regung von Brüderlichkeit, ja nur von Verwandtschaft verspürte ich durchaus nicht. Er war mir vollkommen fremd, in den Äußerungen, in jedem Hauch fremd, und wenn sich keine menschlich-individuelle Sympathie ergab, sogar abstoßend. Viele Juden, die sich Juden fühlen, verhehlen sich dies; einem Pflichtbegriff oder Parteidiktat zuliebe oder um feindlichen Angriffen keinen Zielpunkt zu geben, üben sie Zwang auf sich aus. Das hat in meinem Fall keinen Zweck mehr. Ich rufe auch nicht zur Nachahmung auf und sage nicht, daß es gut war, was ich tat, und wie ich mich verhielt; ich schildere einfach mein Erlebnis und meinen Kampf. (Wassermann 115)

In light of the extreme cultural and economic differences that existed between the East and West, between Western Jews and their Eastern relatives, it is little wonder that Germans—and German Jews especially—sought to differentiate themselves from this new foreign population. The Eastern element made its presence known in Germany and in Austria, and in the post-war context, Eastern and Western nationalities were all already operating on the assumptions of non-imperial, non-monarchical, self-determining, nationalistic philosophies for establishing their new political orders.

The pressure for national self-definition in the absence of a central political power only exacerbated the need for historical distinctions among Germans and Jews. With no Kaiser or Emperor or Tsar to denote the political status of his people, the Germans were not sure how to categorize themselves or their Eastern European cousins in the Weimar period. The result was a
variety of experimental, national cultural identities that incorporated the *Ostjuden* as both model and foil.

**Emancipation and the Persistence of Old Divisions**

Prior to World War I, Germans and Westernized Jews alike viewed Russia and Eastern Europe as barbaric territories. The government was despotic; its people were “uncivilized.” The Eastern lands were backward, primitive, violent –simply un-Enlightened “Asian” and “Oriental” countries (Johnson, *Modern* 136). After World War I, these negative stereotypes persisted for the new, immigrant Eastern Jews and many Germans, including assimilated Jews, continued to associate the *Ostjuden* with the older cultural associations of the “barbaric” Eastern European states (Aschheim 122).

The stereotypes of the poor, wandering, beggar Jews had been present in the minds of the German Jewish community through the nineteenth century, and even before then. The old feudal order and class system still shaped the perception of the Jews as a separate, protected, impoverished group of people within Germany:

> Jews [of the Holy Roman Empire] had no freedom of movement, nor were they entitled to practice a trade freely. By law, they were restricted to commercial occupations, and they could neither become guild craftsmen nor acquire land. The ruler even limited the number of Jewish children who were permitted to settle in his state to one or, upon sufficient payment, at most two per family. (Richarz 2)

This kind of discrimination against the Jews lasted through the end of the eighteenth century. Even into the nineteenth century, German and Austrian Jewish emancipation came about in fits and starts. In 1848, most German states granted Jews full legal emancipation, but it was not until the 1860s that the Jews were free of their housing and living restrictions (Johnson, *Jews* 313).
As the nineteenth century progressed, the more educated classes began to accept the
notion that educated Jews were capable of being counted as human. While social conventions
still limited the civil, medical and educational positions the Jews could attain, the number of
university-educated Jews increased dramatically from the 1850s and into the twentieth century.
The result was that many of the Jewish young men, if they could not be hired in a government
position, at the universities or at any of the state medical institutions, opened their own
businesses or practices, and those Jews who came from merchant-class families continued to
prosper with the industrialization of the German economy. Retail stores, clothing dealers and
metal suppliers, cattle and grain business all saw sizable minorities (if not majorities) of Jewish
entrepreneurs in those markets (Richarz 14). In Prussia alone during the 1880s, over 40 percent
of the banks were controlled by Jewish businessmen (13). With the beginning of the twentieth
century a large minority Jewish population in Germany had achieved middle class, bourgeoisie
status.

Education and career diversification had granted many of the Jews a respectable position
in the eyes of their German neighbors. The Enlightenment mood of tolerance and education gave
them a chance to prove their worth. It was education, acculturation, and social usefulness—all of
the associations bound up in the concept of Bildung—that mattered more than religious
affiliation. Even Christian baptism—normally the quickest form of escape from discrimination
and persecution—was losing its significance for both Jews and Germans in terms of a dramatic
or explicit religious identity: It was simply a rite of passage to being German (Johnson, Jews
312).

Economic opportunity, combined with the Enlightened, Humanistic attitude among the
rest of Europe’s upper classes, provided a kind of answer to the question of “how, in common
humanity, to rescue this pathetic people from their ignorance and darkness” (299). The influence of the Enlightenment, particularly in Germany, offered an increasing amount of tolerance towards the Jews. The values of secular Humanism likewise corresponded to many of the virtues of the Jewish religion, and it seemed foolish to many Western Jews to deny this unique opportunity by refusing to assimilate.

This unique social standing achieved through Emancipation resulted in a change of self perception by many German Jews. Those who had assimilated came to see themselves more as “civilized” Germans than Jews, and this became even clearer in light of the mass immigration of “barbaric” Ostjuden coming to Germany in the early twentieth century. All of the old stereotypes relating to “Oriental” peoples were still present in the minds of Germans as well as in the memories of Westernized, German Jews. The assimilated Jews felt a tie to their immigrant Eastern brothers and sisters, but there was a decreasing appreciation in the Jewish community for how to incorporate these poor, wandering Jews, the Betteljuden, the immigrant beggars, into their midst.

Prior to the social and cultural revolution of the nineteenth-century application of Enlightenment values, a clear distinction existed between the culture of the disenfranchised, ghetto Jews and secular German culture and politics. The Jews operated in their various respective European countries as disenfranchised citizens in regard to the secular society surrounding them, but self-organized and self-disciplining within their own communities, united by their religion and their authority structures (Johnson, Jews 295). With religion and faith practices as the defining element of their identity, the Jews habitually took on the responsibility to “take care of their own”—including new immigrants. It was not until the nineteenth century that there was a question regarding Jewish communal identity. The Jews had always “taken care
of their own.” With the advent of legal and social Emancipation, the question arose as to whether or not the Jews belonged more to a more middle-class, German community, or to the traditional Jewish community. In the case of assimilated, bourgeois German Jews, they were faced with a new question as to what it meant to “take care of their own”: Were they and the poor, traditional, religious Ostjuden really of the same community?

The problem was a political one. Many of the nineteenth-century, assimilated Jews interpreted the old injunction to “take care of their own” from the perspective that they now considered themselves as primarily members of the German state: They handed over the “problem” of immigrating Jews to the state and to the police (Aschheim 21). Steven Aschheim comments on the attitude of many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German Jews towards the immigrating masses from Eastern Europe:

The German Jewish response to the problem of Eastern Jewish persecution and mass migration was, then, grounded in an old ambivalence. German Jews approached the problem on the basis of categories inherited from their nineteenth-century experience. […] German Jews undertook massive charitable work on behalf of the persecuted East European Jews at the same time that they sought the most efficacious means to prevent their mass settlement in Germany. (Aschheim 33)

Rather than a desire to incorporate the immigrants or to identify with them, German Jews looked ever more to distance themselves from their Eastern brothers. If Western Jews wished to continue to preserve remnants of their religious heritage, then they wished this to be as a “‘clean,’ rational religion, free of mysticism and superstition,” which was the exact opposite of what their Eastern relatives brought with them (Brenner 29). Instead of the immigration issues
being treated as a local community issue, it increasingly turned into a “welfare” problem for the secular German state to handle.

**Nationalisms and Völkisch Identities**

Without the strong central power of a Tsar, a Kaiser, or an emperor to impose political definition on the post-war peoples of Europe, Germany, Austria and the Central and Eastern European countries began working through the process of appealing to new forms of authority for legitimacy—the appeal to the “people.” They appealed to the ideology of “self-determining” nationalism. The violent eruptions that occurred in the name of national independence and the assertion of new political identities was shocking enough for the Western framers of the post-war peace, but it could hardly be surprising to those more acquainted with the ethnic ties that nationalism had for so many of the Eastern European peoples.

The problem of nationalism and the definition of a civic state was a misunderstood and unappreciated concept by the framers of the Versailles Treaty. Woodrow Wilson’s idealism for a new Europe was rooted in the Anglo-American belief in civic states based on the rule of law and had nothing to do with ethnicity. Wilson did not realize that, for the Eastern Europeans, ethnicity was the crux of their definition of nationhood (Sharp 268). These conflicts around identity and ethnicity immediately following the war stemmed from definite European historical and philosophical roots.

Erika Harris, in her survey of several case studies of modern nationalism, traces the ideology back to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (22). She also finds it unique that the excuse for Rousseau’s specific articulation of modern nationalism came through his own assessment of the Polish state in his, *The Government of Poland* published in 1772 (23). She
clarifies that Rousseau’s political ideology invested more importance in the culture of a people for his nationalistic political systems to work than in the adoption of a particular governmental structure: “If state building is a complementary project which aims at unifying a political community behind the loyalty to the state, its institution and its interests […] Rousseau, when faced with a political conflict, put more faith into culture than into citizenship” (23). Common ethnic characteristics carried more weight or authority for claiming a people’s loyalty than did the rule of law.

To many historians, the incarnation of ethnic qualities intrinsically tied to a political identity was quite revolutionary and unquestionably modern. Prior to the French Revolution and certainly prior to the Napoleonic Wars, Central and Eastern European peoples—specifically the Polish—did not think of their political identity as being rooted primarily in their cultural or linguistic heritage (Davies 9). Their political identity rested on a far more feudal concept of the kingdom or dukedom to which they belonged. During the nineteenth century, this began to change as more Central Europeans adopted French, Italian, and German ideas about “historical peoples” and the Romantic notions of a Volk (21).

Norman Davies in his study of the history of Poland, God’s Playground, points out that the ideology of nationalism is a belief about the identity of one’s group that is not necessarily based in fact but a kind of circular reasoning designed to justify the exclusivity of a particular group of people:

For Nationality is essentially a belief—a deep sense of convictions concerning one’s personal identity. It is not inherent in human kind, and in European life is hard to discover at any period prior to the French Revolution. […] As Ernest Renan once remarked, ‘a nation is a community united by common error with regard to its origins,
and by common aversion with regard to its neighbors.’ At all events, the modern Nation can only be effectively defined as a social group whose individual members, being convinced rightly or wrongly of their common descent and destiny, share that common sense of identity. (Davies 8)

He goes on to identify four categories around which the Polish sought to define their own sense of nation: Church, Language, History, and Race (14).

Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) had already laid the German and Austrian philosophical foundation for understanding their united identity around common historical and linguistic traits. Herder, specifically, emphasized the importance of a common language as being an indicator for a national people. “Herder’s emphasis on language was meant to underline the human capacity for culture because, following his thoughts, humans are who they are because they were brought up within a particular culture, with a people (Volk). It then follows that each community has its own language which expresses a community’s unique values and ideas” (Harris 25).

In the late 1760s, Herder published a collection of Fragmenten—a series of meditations on the character of German literature and on the nature and power of language. The reception of Herder’s philosophy has been diverse through German history, and contemporary scholars such as Jürgen Trabant, take pains to emphasize that “An analogous prejudice [similar to the critical reception of Du Bellay’s defense of the French language and French literature] misrepresents Herder’s political and historical convictions: Herder was not a herald of (German) nationalism” (Trabant 122). Herder may not have personally welcomed the developments of the German nation in its nineteenth-century incarnations, but it is easy to see how his writings were interpreted by German Romantic philosophers and nationalists as a justification for their ideas
about an innate German *Volk* whose language acted as a preserver, a monument, and a temple of the peculiar characteristics of the people. Herder wrote:

> Eine Sprache […] die wie ein alter Tempel erscheint, von der Nation, nach dem Urbilde ihres Geistes, aus Materialien ihrer eigenen Stein-und Tongruben errichtet, geräumig genug, die Nation zu fassen und dauerhaft genug, um ihr ewiges Denkmal zu sein, eine Sprache, die dies ist, wäre die nicht noch nach allen Revolutionen, eine *ursprüngliche, eigentümliche* Nationalsprache? Is sie es nicht, so kann es sicherlich keine von allen jetzt lebenden gelehrten Sprachen heißen. Ist sie es, so ist es unsere deutsche. (Herder 106)

Herder goes on to link language to the history of the German people—to the blood of their forefathers—and also compares the “rootedness” of the language to a fixed land and country. Unlike other people groups (later readers would easily picture the landless, nationless, wandering Jews in this category), the German language contained something permanent and lasting—like the land. The German language was not “rootless” or “floating” in an ocean of cultures and languages, tossed about with every social change. No, the German language contained something eternal:

> Man betrachte ihr körperliches Gebäude von der Mechanik einzelner Glieder bis zur Bauart und Gestalt des Ganzen; man lerne in den Geist sehen, der sie gestaltet hat, der sie belebt und bewegt; so erblickt man ein Geschöpf eigener Art, das Ähnlichkeiten mit andern, aber das Urbild in sich selbst hat. Man gehe soweit man kann auf die Würde ihrer Ahnen zurück; ungeachtet aller Völkerwanderungen und mancherlei Schicksale der Familien, wird man in ihr das echte Geblüt der Väter finden. Mit ihren Nachbarinnen verglichen, erscheint sie wie ein festes Land, das mit Meeren und schwimmenden Inseln umgeben, auf seiner Wurzel sicher ruht. Mit der Natur ihrer Eigentümer verglichen, ist
This important philosophical background sheds light on the struggles exhibited by the travel writers and the Weimar Jews who desired to prove their Germanness by their use and familiarity with German language and literature. They hoped that use of the German language and literature would allow them to partake in the “permanence” that the German language bequeathed to its people. Sammy Gronemann, wanting to elicit sympathy from his German readers towards the Ostjuden youth in Lithuania describes an example where a school girl corrects him regarding a reference to Lessing—showing that she was at least as familiar with German cultural and aesthetic debates, if not more so, than he was (Gronemann 177). Gronemann remarked:

Man kann sich kaum vorstellen, mit welchem Eifer dort die gute Literatur des Westens verschlungen wird. Ich möchte behaupten, daß selbst unsere humanistisch gebildeten jungen Leute im Westen im Durchschnitt längst nicht so beschlagen in der deutschen Literatur und zumal in den Klassikern sind wie die meisten ihrer Altersgenossen dort im Osten, die doch größtenteils wenigstens nach dieser Richtung hin Autodidakten sind.

Unsereins kam dort oft in Verlegenheit. (175)

The display of an educated mind and a love for the classics were the signs of civilized life. These children were not barbarians, as Gronemann shows. They were even more sophisticated than German children when it came to literary studies.

Gronemann’s example functions both as an appeal to German linguistic and literary culture but also to the Enlightenment principle of Bildung, self-improvement through education so important to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German Enlightenment thought. He touches
on a common theme for the German Jews of the 1920s—the various attempts to prove their legitimacy through earned, educational means and through their demonstration of absorbing and incarnating German cultural and linguistic characteristics. The historical background for Gronemann’s assumptions are unique; his argument is based on the developments within German Jewish Emancipation. Gronemann could appeal to a German national heritage based on language and thus agree with Herder’s postulations about the roots of nationhood, but the appeal to the use of language and the absorption of a nation’s cultural heritage through education was increasingly less significant to radical, ethnic forms of nationalism that arose after World War I.

Peter Pulzer points out that the outcome of World War I only fueled the flames of anti-Semitism that existed in Germany. Had Germany won the war, the “spirit of 1914,” in which Jews were invited as equals to fight for their Fatherland, might have prevailed and Germany could have continued along the lines of a “civic truce” among the diverse political parties and interests:

If the emperor and the chancellor really meant what they said […] The civic truce meant conciliation toward the “internationalist” (and therefore unpatriotic) Social Democrats, toward the “ultramontane” (and therefore unpatriotic) Center Party, and toward the “cosmopolitan” (and therefore unpatriotic) Jews. It implied cautious steps toward the greater powers for the Reichstag and a reform of the plutocratic electoral system in Prussia […] If the war had gone according to the government’s plans, the radical right would have stayed on the fringes of politics. (Meyer 3:370-371)

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2 See Marion A. Kaplan’s *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class* (1991) for a more thorough discussion of the methods of education, particularly related to the role of women, in Jewish middle class families in imperial Germany.
Of course, what actually happened was that as the war progressed and continued to take its toll of life, material goods, and finances in Germany, the right-wing political forces began looking for reasons to blame the Jewish presence for their difficulties.

Many German Jews had hoped that World War I would close the social gap between Germans and Jews in fighting for a common Kaiser: The war was to be the culminating climax of a successful trajectory of Jewish Emancipation. Even Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen wrote excitedly of the German Jewish task to spread German influence to other Jews in across Europe (Brenner 31). The sad reality was that the war only deepened the rift between German Jews and their countrymen, and the loss of the war further turned them into scapegoats:

Instead of resulting in the social acceptance of the Jews, the war led to their brutal disillusionment. Many had lasting memories of the antisemitism in the trenches. For some, this experience led directly to Zionism. Those who were already Zionists and had initially welcomed the war, such as writer Arnold Zweig, expressed increasing doubts about the commitment to a German state that had made its Jewish soldiers subject to a specific census, the so-called Jew count, in 1916. (Brenner, Renaissance 32)

After the war, the public narrative around Germany’s defeat turned into one of self-castigation and shaming. Dedicated as many Germans were to Prussian military ideals, the blame for the war shifted to “civilian defeatism and cowardice” (Johnson, Modern 108). This “patriotic lie” was perpetuated by the military leaders who survived the war, despite complete lack of plausibility of any kind of myth about the German forces “being stabbed in the back.”

The story that the German imperial forces had somehow been betrayed by their own people was absurd. The military was strong, and German civilians were so supportive of Prussian ideals precisely because of the strength of the armed forces. The reverse psychology and denial
enacted in the wake of the loss of the war was horrible, and the guilt-avoiding and simultaneous self-condemning sense of failure among the Germans mutated the East-West conflict into convenient and odd forms of Jewish scapegoating. Again, relying on Eastern-traditionalist ideals of German cultural homogeneity, and Western-minded stereotypes of Versailles-Treaty-signing, materialistic capitalists and Jewish financiers, the Weimar Republic itself, in all of its democratic chaos, was popularly assumed to be a *Judenrepublik* (116). Rather than being able to enjoy a German identity based on the principles of *Bildung* and Emancipation, the Jews found themselves in an uncertain and hostile environment in the post war years where the political authority of the *Kaiser* was absent from nationalist debates and an increasing appeal to ethnic and *völkisch* identities defined the conversation.

**Towards a Jewish *Volk* Identity**

The loss of the war and the capsizing of Jewish expectations concerning their social and cultural Emancipation did not mean that that German Jews were unaware of the *völkisch* trends in national identity before the war. On the contrary, just as the German romantic philosophies spawned by Herder and Fichte led to the popular acceptance in Germany and in Central and Eastern Europe that culturally, linguistically connected people should become united into one political state, so Jewish intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began promoting the idea that the Jews were also a culturally, linguistically defined *Volk*.

This paradigm of nationalism, relying more on cultural tradition than on civic structures, became an active point of political contention among the Germans, but the Jews were also impacted by it. Within the German-speaking countries, this tension was referred to it as the conflict between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, between East and West. The concept of *Kultur* was bound up with associations of old (hierarchical, feudal) traditions. *Zivilisation* was associated
with Western democracy, Socialism and French and Anglo-American culture. Sammy Gronemann mentions this cultural conflict explicitly as a topic of enthusiastic discussion among his group of intellectual friends on Germany’s Eastern Front in during World War I in his *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich. Erinnerungen an die ostjüdische Etappe, 1916 – 1918*:

> Jeder gab seine Beobachtungen, die er an Ort und Stelle gemacht hatte, zum besten und wir debattierten über das merkwürdige Schauspiel, das wir dort in Litauen beobachteten. – Krieg im Krieg! –nämlich den Krieg zwischen Zivilisation und Kultur—zwischen der Zivilisation des Westens, wie sie im Gefolge des siegreichen deutschen Heeres einmarchierte, und der Kultur des Ostens, wie sie von den Völkern dort, den Litauen, Weißrussen, später Weißruthenen genannt, den Letten, den Polen und vor allen Dingen den Juden vertreten wurde. (49)

In this text, Gronemann contrasts the “civilized” life of Germany with the “culture” of the *Ostjuden*, but the dichotomy existed within the German nation itself. Whereas in the pre-war environment the principles of *Zivilisation* had allowed Jews to successfully emancipate themselves by adopting aspects of the Enlightenment-inspired German culture, what mattered more after the war was demonstration of one’s traditional, “authentic” ethnic heritage and culture as a national signifier (Johnson, *Modern* 111).

This philosophical and political framework for national identity created a tension between two poles that German Jews attempt to bridge throughout the 1920s. Drawing on the success of German Jewish intellectuals and economic giants of the previous century and a half, many Jews hoped to continue in the path of *Bildung* and Enlightenment assimilation practices. Others, simultaneously inspired and frightened of the implications of the presence of the *Ostjuden*, sought to create a new political existence through cultural solidarity with the Eastern
European Jews under the tenets of Zionism and thus to distinguish themselves from assimilated German Jews.

The combination in Weimar Germany of nationalist ideologies with a large presence of socio-economically impoverished foreigners created a hostile environment politically and socially. Because of the large immigration numbers of Eastern Jews coming into Germany and because of the influence of Nationalistic, Romantic ideology, Jewish intellectuals such as Martin Buber sought a way to create or rediscover a Jewish *Kultur* of their own.

As mentioned above, for many secular Germans and German Jews in the late nineteenth century, the impression of the Eastern Jews never ceased to be that of unrefined, dirty beggars (Aschheim 52). Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and other intellectuals such as Nathan Birnbaum and Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, had their work cut out for them as they attempted to mitigate the negative stereotypes of the Eastern Jews with a more palatable image of the Hasidic (Eastern) Jewish culture, suited for a Western audience.

Martin Buber, along with Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann, all participated in the larger literary and aesthetic dialog regarding the portrayal of the exotic, foreign Other. They were not the only German intellectuals to produce works that described the peoples of far-away lands in glowing, attractive terms. Wolfgang Reif cites a number of German travel writers at the turn of the twentieth century who popularized the *Naturvölkern* from India or China or Japan as ideals against which to critique or assess the values of western, European, industrial societies. Waldemar Bonsels’ 1916 travelogue *Indienfahrt* described a people who possessed a “purer” relationship to the natural world:

> Es ist der Erlebnis einer Natur, die in ihrer Unmittelbarkeit und ihrer zeugenden und zerstördenden Kraft, in den „Elementen“ des Meeres und der Sonne, in der Flora und
Fauna des Dschungels, in Seuchen und Katastrophen, im Geist Indiens, seiner Religionen und Sitten und schließlich in der Sinnlichkeit und Leidenschaftlichkeit seiner Menschen erfahren wird. (Reif 444)

Reif goes on to describe Bonsels’ advocacy of a pantheistic religious experience that blends youthful passions with strains of Hinduism, Goethean philosophy, and Christianity. Reif concludes, “Hier trifft Bonsels genau die pseudoreligiöse Gestimmtheit der Jahrhundertwende: Ein vitalistischer Lebens-und Jugendkult erhält mit mystizistischen und okkultistischen Beigaben im „Monismus“ die Weihen einer modernen dieseszeitigen Religion“ (445). Such themes resurface again and again for Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann in their treatments of the Ostjuden as the travel writers attempted to understand the Eastern Jews in terms of a Naturvolk.

Buber understood these contemporary literary trends and the conflicting and contrasting loyalties at work within the German Jewish community, and he sought to build a bridge between the traditionalism of the Eastern Jews and the modern mentality of liberal, assimilated Western Jews, and he did so by working with and promoting the Romanticized picture of the “Asian” Jew. Buber did this in at least two different ways. The first was to advocate a new kind of secular spiritualism that drew upon Hasidic mysticism. A second way that Buber promoted the image of the “Asian” Jew was to emphasize the issue of race—to acknowledge that, regardless of cultural background, Jews were uniquely tied together by blood.

As for the spiritual aspects of the new Judaism, the younger, Weimar generation experienced a longing for greater “spiritual” meaning. It was not only a question of national and political identity. Franz Kafka, Gershom Scholem, Alfred Döblin, Joseph Roth, and Arnold Zweig all felt a sense of a lost past—that somehow their parents had neglected to pass on the fundamentals of authentic Judaism, of a faith, a religion, a culture, a way of life, or that this
traditional way of life had been compromised by Modernism, by a post-war European, secular culture (Brenner 2-3). The interest in the East came out of a desire to believe that Eastern Judaism could bridge the gap between Western, assimilated Jews and an authentic, historical identity.

One of the foundations for this “spiritual” renewal or the renewed interest in Eastern Jewish life was the Haskalah movement of the eighteenth-century in Germany. Though German Romantics of the twentieth century would react against the “rational” principles of the Enlightenment, the pioneers of the “cult of the Ostjuden” (such as Buber) benefitted from the scholarly legacy of the Enlightenment’s Jewish incarnation. Though intellectuals such as Moses Mendelssohn and Leopold Zunz advocated for a rational, secular approach to Jewish studies during the nineteenth century in Germany, “its creative center shifted to Eastern Europe. It was there, a century after the pioneering work of the Me’assefim, that Eliezer Ben-Yehuda resuscitated Hebrew as a spoken language and such writers as Peretz Smolenskin and Ahad Ha’am launched the most significant modern journals of Hebrew literature” (Brenner Renaissance 197). The work of the Maskilim (secular Jewish scholars) in Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century prepared the way for Hebrew language and literature studies in the early twentieth century. The work of the enlightened, Eastern European Maskilim provided Germany with an influx of educated Russian Jewish Hebraists, fleeing persecution in the early twentieth century, who would go on to ensure that Berlin would become, according to poet Chaim Nachman Bialik, the center for Hebrew culture (Brenner 198).

While benefitting from the Enlightenment legacy, Buber’s approach to Eastern Hasidic spirituality incorporated a much more Romantic influence, and it would prove to be foundational for the Weimar generation of artists and intellectuals. Scholem admitted that it was Buber’s
reinterpretation of Hasidism that shaped the conceptual framework of Eastern Jewish spirituality for most Western Jews (Aschheim 122-23) One of Buber’s main contributions to the understanding of the Eastern Jew and of Hasidism were his creative retellings of Hasidic legends about the Wunderrabbi who traveled through Eastern Europe, performing miracles in the Jewish ghettos and sharing their wisdom with the common people. These were stories that created an image about the culture and life of the Eastern Jews without making any theological or liturgical claims. The stories combined something of a Nietzschean, existential Lebensphilosophie with the neoromantic Erlebnismystik that flourished during the Weimar period. Thus, Buber’s works and his particular vision of Hasidism became accessible to a wide audience and to readers of very different ideological camps. One did not have to be religious to appreciate Buber’s stories, and many were not. Both Rainer Maria Rilke and Hugo von Hofmannsthal were attracted by the aesthetic and poetic possibilities of Buber’s stories. Like the poet Else Lasker-Schüler, they were drawn by the cultural and artistic themes of old, strange myths and not the religious or political implications (Aschheim 130-31).

Part of the difficulty with Buber’s vision of Hasidism is that it was not very historical. The wide appeal of Buber’s message lay precisely in that his message focused on the spiritual and mystical aspects of Hasidism without emphasizing any programmatic or theological content. Gershom Scholem and Buber differed significantly on these aspects of what Hasidism was supposed to be: Scholem’s interests were both religious and historical; Buber’s interest was far more aesthetic, Humanistic, and philosophical (Aschheim 127). The frustration that many of Buber’s admirers eventually experienced was that, while Buber’s spiritual feelings were attractive, they were so generic that they disregarded the importance of historical Judaism altogether. Some critics thought Buber had presented an overly “Christianized” version of
Hasidism that emphasized universal love at the expense of Jewish tradition and religious law; still others thought that Buber’s ignorance of life-as-it-actually-was in the Polish ghettos generated a fictional spirituality that might as well have taken place in India (Aschheim 133-34).

What Buber’s critics, perhaps, did not appreciate enough, was that Buber acknowledged a break with the past; he could not go back. He could not pretend that he was not Western, that he was as much, if not more, a Viennese intellectual, as he was a Jew (124). Arnold Zweig, Sammy Gronemann, and Alfred Döblin made similar conclusions on their visits to the Jewish communities of the East: They could not go back, even if they wanted to. Whatever form of community Western Jews would create, many of these intellectuals recognized that it would have to be something new, a true re-discovering of the Jewish tradition.

Even if intellectuals like Gerschom Scholem became disenchanted with Buber’s Hasidism, Franz Rosenzweig was able to appreciate Buber’s works as a first step for Western Jews in rediscovering what it meant to be Jewish. Rosenzweig, both a friend and co-worker of Buber’s, was another intellectual proponent for the re-emerging interest in Judaism during the Weimar era, though from a more scholarly, religious, and devotional perspective. Not only did Rosenzweig and Buber produce a new German translation of the Bible, but Rosenzweig established the Frankfurt Free Jewish Lehrhaus in 1920 as an institution created for the spreading of Jewish ideas and for the creation of genuine Jewish community (Brenner 70, 76). As opposed to the more scholarly and scientific pursuits, typical of the nineteenth-century, Enlightenment-inspired model of Rabbinical Judaism, Rosenzweig and Buber emphasized the more mystical strains of the religious experience. Rosenzweig promoted the idea of divine revelation as a personal encounter with God and creation (42-43). Buber, while lecturing at the Lehrhaus during
1922, began formulating the thoughts that would culminate in a series of lecture, and later in his seminal work, *Ich und Du* (Friedman, *Life and Work: the Early Years* 295).

Though different in their approaches, both men sought to promote an integrated and interpersonal religious experience through dialog and informal interaction within a community. As much as Rosenzweig and Buber wanted to inform a new generation of German Jews about what their cultural, historical, and religious heritage was, they were also intent on building relationships and authentic community. As Rosenzweig wrote: “Books are not now the prime need of the day. But what we need more than ever, or at least as much as ever, are human beings—Jewish human beings” (Rosenzweig, *Jewish Learning* 68).

It was the recognition of the need for a new vision of humanity, particularly in light of World War I, that Jewish intellectuals like Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann began traveling East and why Zweig and Gronemann decided to record their war memoirs. They wanted a new model, not just for Judaism, but a model that contrasted with the fragmentation of Modernity: “The occidentals [Western Jews], for their part, had to recognize that preoccupation with science had led to an overinstrumentalized world. Ostjuden still carried with them vital values of noninstrumentality and soul” (Aschheim 203).

Both Rosenzweig’s *Lehrhaus* and Siegfried Lehmann’s *Volksheim* were loosely constructed educational institutions that sought to bridge the gap between the Western Jewish experience and more traditional Judaism and Eastern practices. They were volunteer-oriented centers that attempted to provide some sort of programmatic integration of the “new spiritualism” that Buber advocated. The centers combined religious fervor with scholarly research, in order to address the realities of the new immigrants passing through or settling in Germany.
Lehmann was a medical student in Berlin who was powerfully influenced by Martin Buber’s popular notions of the “authentic” Hasidic culture. He established the Volksheim in the Scheunenviertel, the home of many poor Eastern European Jewish immigrants and refugees. Lehmann’s idea was to use the Volksheim as a communal welfare system in which assimilated, German Jewish youth could teach the Ostjuden vocational skills while simultaneously learning from the Hasidic Jews what it meant to possess an “authentic” Jewish spirituality (Meyer 4:17-18).

If the Lehrhaus and the Volksheim somehow implied that the principles of authentic Judaism could be relearned, Buber’s concurrent admission that authentic Judaism was something “in the blood” reminded both Jews and non-Jews that the Jewish Volk probably needed to relocate. Buber’s intention in referencing a Gemeinschaft des Blutes was intended to be a unifying, metaphorical concept addressing the problem of the Western and Eastern Jews. Buber wanted to stress their underlying commonality. He did not intend to fuel the fire of anti-Semitism, and yet racist critics of Buber took these expressions and used them as justification for their own hatred and prejudice (Aschheim 103-4).

Rosenzweig adopted the language of a “blood community” as well, attributing Jewish cultural traits to a genetic disposition (106). For Rosenzweig, the internal “something” that made Jews distinctive was one of the principles around which he tried to reconstruct an authentically Jewish history. He needed a people of blood, a race that he could trace, for this project. Buber tried to explain his choice of terminology as symbolic and by emphasizing the importance of human will, also. The “blood community” was only as valid as a willful commitment to the values and culture of the Jewish Volk. Buber linked the blood and the will to the cause of
Zionism: an autonomous political state where the Jews could live as a self-determined people, politically, religiously, and culturally (Aschheim 107).

Buber’s neo-romantic spirituality and his promotion of the idea of a blood community paralleled larger movements both within Germany and throughout Europe. Buber echoed the sentiments that pulsed through European culture, especially after the war, of the need to recover a sense of the past, a mysterious golden age that was more human than the new mechanical age in which they lived, but also a sense that the deeper spiritual meaning could be achieved by realigning oneself with one’s people, with one’s linguistic, cultural, and blood brethren. These tenets of community formation were the very stuff of twentieth-century, self-determined nationalism. In general, these concerns of re-discovering an authentic community or group to which one belonged, were not unique to Judaism, though the Jewish communities within Germany and the rest of Europe offered unique expressions of how they were integrating the principles of mystical spirituality, historical identity, and political activism.

**Zionism and Politicized Anti-Semitism**

For matters of the “Jewish Question” in the interwar period, it is helpful to recognize that it was not only the Jews who were “questionable” as a people or a *Volk*. It was also the Poles who found difficulty asserting their own sense of national, group identity (Davies 11). This was also the case with the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. The scapegoating that took place in Germany concerning the Jews was unique in the German context: the Germans wanted someone to blame, but as to why the Germans felt that they could point to an entire people requires a bit more explanation. The recognition of the power of nationalism, of the pressure for people groups to define themselves in terms of a landed, culturally and linguistically unified political
organizations, helps to explain why the Jews were all the more a natural target for already anti-Semitic communities.

Again, Paul Johnson argues that though Germany had a long history of anti-Semitism, the Weimar Republic’s brand of racial discrimination was relatively new. It was not Germany but Russia and France that were far more known for either pogroms or intellectual propaganda against the Jews (Modern 117). What made the breeding ground for German anti-Semitism particularly fertile were the ideas of nationalism and Volk culture of the late nineteenth century:

Indeed it was from the Volk movement that Marx took his concept of ‘alienation’ in industrial capitalism. A Volk had a soul, which was derived from its natural habitat. As the historical novelist Otto Gemlin put it, in an article in Die Tat, organ of the Volk-romantic movement, ‘For each people and each race, the countryside becomes its own peculiar landscape’. If the landscape was destroyed, or the Volk divorced from it, the soul dies. The Jews were not a Volk because they had lost their soul: they lacked ‘rootedness.’ (Johnson, Modern 118)

The concerns of the Jewish travel writers with anti-Semitism relate back to these topics of rootedness and Volk culture in their travelogues. Arnold Zweig and Sammy Gronemann passionately hoped that the Jews could, through the Zionist movement, manufacture or recover their own sense of a romantic Volk identity. The “Jewish Question” was not only a question of being compatible with German society, and it was not just a question of anti-Semitic tendencies within certain Western European countries. The anti-Semitic debates during the interwar period was part of a larger concern of whether or not people groups of all kinds could successfully combine themselves into self-determining, “historical,” linguistically and culturally homogeneous groups that were politically viable.
The Eastern Jews immigrating in from Russia or other Central European provinces had not been accustomed to a ruling political power that supported Enlightenment-inspired assimilation ideals. For Eastern Jews, their relationship to political authorities was at best neutral and at worst quite hostile (Aschheim 20). In light of that lack of affinity for any European secular authority among Eastern Jews, and in light of the comfort of so many Jews in the West felt regarding Enlightenment assimilation practices, Theodor Herzl’s Zionism primarily appealed to Eastern Jews who were eager to create a völkisch nation of their own:

Unlike the sophisticated, middle-class Jews of the West, the eastern Jews could not toy with alternatives, and see themselves as Russians, or even as Poles. They knew they were Jews and nothing but Jews—their Russian masters never let them forget it—and what Herzl now seemed to be offering was their only chance of becoming a real citizen anywhere. (Johnson, Jews 399)

Again, as with so many of the new, self-determined, culturally defined nationalities after World War I, the Jews experienced the difficulty of translating cultural affinities and commonalities into political practice. While the Eastern Jews, who were eager to see the Zionist movement succeed as a nationalistic völkisch movement, the Western German Jews were still trying to prove their loyalty to their Fatherland of Germany (Aschheim 56).

The growing number of Jewish immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made them increasing unwelcome in Germany and in France. The question by Theodor Herzl and the Zionist movement leaders was why the Jews could not unify themselves and create their own unique place and nationality like everyone else. Many Jews began to expect of themselves that they should demonstrate a self-determining group identity based on common linguistic, religious, and cultural signifiers.
Theodor Herzl recognized the vice-grip difficulty of Jewish nationalism and determined to do something about it. As a response to the Jewish question and, more specifically, to Jewish persecution in Eastern Europe as well as to the developments of the Dreyfus affair in France, Herzl pioneered a new political vision for the creation of a Jewish state, and effectively began the modern Zionist movement in 1897 at the First Zionist Congress in Basel (Brenner 22, 23). In many ways, Herzl’s political response to questions of Jewish identity was motivated out of fear: If the Jews could not be protected from persecution while living in various European countries, then they needed to create their own political state (23).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Herzl was able to rally a great deal of sympathy from European political leaders, anxious to dispose of Jews in their respective countries. He met with various ministers in Turkey, Germany, Russia, Austria, and England in order to reach a solution. Wenzel von Plehve, the Russian Interior Minister expressed great eagerness to be rid of the Jews within the Russian provinces—not the intelligent ones, he assured Herzl, but they were certainly ready to place in Herzl’s hands those who possessed little intellectual or material capital (Johnson, History of the Jews 400). Wilhelm II likewise expressed an eagerness to see the Jews depart. The Kaiser even presented Herzl’s cause before the Turkish sultan. In the end, the Turkish leaders could not accept the idea of the Jews being granted a political home. Wilhelm’s priorities lay in cultivating an alliance with the Turks and thus did not renew efforts with Herzl (400).

In England, Herzl was far more successful. He was able to enlist the support of Colonial Secretary Chamberlain, as well as future Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Together they espoused the idea of Uganda as a proper place for a Jewish state (401). By this point Herzl had heard continued reports of Russian brutality against the Jews, and he still operated out of the fear and concern that he had experienced in France regarding the hostility against Captain Alfred
Dreyfus. Herzl was ready to accept almost any political arrangement that granted the Jews a separate space of refuge and a secure political identity. The Seventh Zionist Congress of 1905 did not feel either the urgency or the optimism towards Uganda that Herzl did, and they rejected the proposal. It was to be Palestine and Palestine alone, according to the Zionists, that would be sufficient for the Jewish state.

The reasons for the Zionist Congress’ decision are instructive, and these reasons relate back to the difficulty of European Jews defining themselves in nationalistic, völkisch terms. German Jews already saw themselves as firmly rooted in the middle class. They had assimilated. They were at home in Germany and they had no wish to re-settle. The very idea of conceding that a resettlement was somehow reasonable or necessary would have undermined everything that they had earned and achieved within German emancipation and within the Enlightenment value system (Johnson, *History of the Jews* 398). The Enlightenment, Emancipation model had worked for them and these Western Jews could not understand why it would not work for Eastern Jews pouring into the West (Aschheim 21). There was no need to think about looking for a new, Jewish state.

In contrast to the more liberal German Jews, a portion of German Orthodox Jews opposed to using modern European methods to bring about the will of God. As Joseph Roth describes the Orthodox Jew from the East:

Judentum aufrichten will, das keines mehr wäre, weil es nicht den Messias erwartet hat und nicht Gottes Sinnesänderung, die ja bestimmt kommen wird. (Wanderschaft 842-843)

Roth’s portrayal was not representative of all Orthodox Jews in Germany. Certainly after World War I, the Zionists were able to find common ground in meeting the needs of the Eastern Jews in Germany, and thus attracted many of those more religiously-minded Jews into their ranks (Meyer 4: 93, 100). But there was still a select minority of German Orthodox Jews who vehemently opposed political Zionism, and it is likely that it was Orthodox leaders such as Isaac Breuer that Roth had in mind (Meyer 3:120-21).

Zionist or not, the religious convictions of many of the Eastern European Jews created a unique dilemma for the more liberal Western Jews who, after a generation or two of living in Germany, had largely ceased to consider the explicitly religious elements of Judaism to be part of their identity. If a German Jew was not especially religious, what did this mean? What did it mean when well-intentioned Western Jews desired to help their persecuted Eastern European cousins by working for a political route of escape and of immigration, only to be rejected because of certain theological associations surrounding Palestine and the coming of God’s Messiah? These are the religious and cultural questions that the German Jewish travel writers engaged.

**Whither the Travel Writers?**

For each of the travelogues that will be examined in this dissertation, it is important to recognize that each author was aware of these conflicts of national identity and racial or religious identity. It is also important to recognize that each author was writing to present an alternative model to the chaos of a post-war Europe. Dissatisfied with the state of Western Europe, the
authors cast their gaze to the East in hopes of discovering a new way of life, a way to reconcile the political and cultural tensions that they felt themselves.

It was not only Jewish intellectuals who traveled or wrote best-selling travelogues after the Great War. There were other German writers who traveled to the United States or to other parts of Western Europe seeking alternative models for the society of the future. Many of the non-Jewish travelogues were preoccupied with the same questions surrounding the East-West debate. As a nation, Weimar Germany was asking “Where do we go from here?” and various German intellectuals—not just Jewish—went looking for places that would provide models by which to assess the new political and cultural changes during the Weimar period. This same tendency appears again and again by multiple writers to either look to the West for cultural and political models of salvation and stable communities, or towards the East.

Several popular travelogues of the Weimar Republic focused either on studies of the United States or visits to Moscow. Not unlike the German Jewish travel writers, the authors of the best-seller travelogues were mostly from Berlin; most of them had a fascination with the big city, the developing modern metropolis (Gleber 463). Travelogues such as those written by Alfred Kerr, Yankee-Land (1925), Egon Erwin Kisch, Paradies Amerika (1930), Heinrich Hauser, Feldwege nach Chicago (1931), or Ernst Toller’s Amerikanische Reisebilder (1930) feature both a fascination with the cities of the United States—the city as pure spectacle—combined with a strong distrust or overt criticism of the corrupt American justice system or the horrific social effects of a capitalistic economy (Gleber 468-69).

Authors like Kisch applied a very journalistic approach to their visits, citing statistics and providing descriptions of harsh social realities, such as Chicago’s meat-packing industry and Henry Ford’s automobile assembly line in Detroit. Kisch juxtaposes these emerging business
practices with the presence of capital punishment and the electric chair in the United States, implying that even the justice system was not free of the brutal efficiency of American capitalism.

In a somewhat different manner, Heinrich Hauser took more of an approach of a simple tourist, yet understood many of the same contradictions inherent in the United States. The American city, particularly New York, impressed Hauser as a post-apocalyptic, *unmenschlich* landscape. It horrified him; and yet he was delighted at the technological and scientific advances that the Americans were able to apply in business and in their factories (Gleber 470-71).

Most of the travelogues regarding the United States described the country as a something of a technological monstrosity that was losing its humanity. The natural contrasting city for these American, capitalistic extremes was, of course, Moscow, recently liberated by the Socialist revolution. Compared to the slave-like working conditions of the Chicago meat houses, the leftist, Weimar travel writers described the workers living in Moscow as leading a kind of utopian existence (472-73). Alfons Goldschmidt described Moscow as successfully avoiding the technological defects of modernity, such as that found in the United States, embracing instead a new, egalitarian, social humanity (477).

The glowing reports of Moscow are problematic, especially with what we now know of the beginning of Lenin’s reign of tyranny. It was not only Germans who thought of Lenin’s Moscow as a “city of the future.” American journalist Lincoln Steffens visited Moscow in 1919 and, returning, told one of President Wilson’s economic advisors, Bernard Baruch, that Lenin’s version of socialism was a success (Johnson 88). It is difficult to say what Steffens would have seen that would have convinced him of any kind economic prosperity or viability, since Lenin’s new policies were rapidly bringing Russian industry to a halt and driving peasants out of the
cities and back to their rural farms (88). Walter Benjamin interpreted the near “ghost town” of Moscow that Steffens witnessed as a labyrinthine tapestry of new “public spaces” of offices, clubs, and cafes, and street cars that were interwoven into traditional Russian village scenes (Gleber 478-79).

The layouts of the urban landscapes and the use of space was a legitimate concern for the Weimar travel writers. Walter Benjamin also published travelogues regarding Marseilles (1928) and Naples (1924). Both he and Siegfried Kracauer compared and contrasted these more “open” cities, with their street markets and village-like simplicity with the overly-controlling, overly-planned designs of the big metropolis. Kracauer even thought such urban layouts of the southern European cities reflected more of a resonance with the “natural” landscape (481).

This is the pattern of these Weimar travelogues: providing Modern Germany with models of an idyllic, medieval, long-lost past, or a warning about what might happen to Germany if it fully embraced the spirit of capitalism, like the United States had done. In any case, there seemed to have been a general consensus among the Weimar travel writers that some sort of political and / or cultural salvation lay in the East. It was not just the Jews but most of the newly formed European states after World War I who, convinced of the inherent viability of the principle of self-determination, confusedly looked about and asked: “Where do we go from here?” In light of that question, it is helpful to examine those writers who, for many similar personal reasons, actually went different places to answer that question.

I have limited the scope of this dissertation to the three travelogues by Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann in order to focus on the unique questions of national and communal identity for the German Jews during the Weimar period. Though Joseph Roth contributed a similar travelogue examining the characteristics of Eastern Jewish communities,
Roth belongs to the larger Austrian Jewish context. I have included quotes and observations from Roth throughout the dissertation since he was in dialog with the other German Jewish travel writers and his insights are helpful in interpreting the other three texts, but the additional historical and cultural nuances of the Habsburg Empire that must be included when providing an in-depth treatment of Roth and his works simply falls beyond the limits of the specifically German, Weimar Jewish experience. The integration of a more thorough chapter on Joseph Roth’s 1927 Juden auf Wanderschaft belongs to the purview of a future incarnation of this study.

Other examples of German Jewish travelogues, such as Walter Benjamin’s Moscow journal or Herbert Eulenberg’s Skizzen aus Litauen, Weissrussland und Kurland, might have been included for their perspectives on Eastern European cultures, but Benjamin’s diary was not primarily concerned with the life of the Eastern Jewish communities, and Eulenberg’s, though treating the Ostjuden, was written as a war propaganda piece in 1916. As such, Skizzen aus Litauen cannot be treated as a contribution to Weimar political and cultural debates.

The existing scholarship recognizes the travelogues of Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann to be three of the main contributions within this literary genre to the creation and description of the Eastern European Jew during the Weimar years. These three authors chose to see the “backwardness” of the Ostjude as an exotic ideal, a preservation of the old traditions and identities to which the Jews in the West desired to re-connect, and yet sustained comparative treatment of the three travelogues together is scarce (Brenner 142-143). Karol Sauerland has written an article that provides a general overview and description of the three German Jewish travelogues, including also Roth’s Juden auf Wanderschaft and Eulenberg’s Skizzen aus Litauen. The article, “Begegnungen mit dem Ostjudentum als einem vom Glauben erfüllten Volk” (2005) is helpful as a summary of the works, but largely focuses on simply listing how each author
uniquely describes the Eastern Jew. Eva Raffel’s comparative study, *Vertraute Fremde* (2002) is a detailed analysis of Eastern Judaism in the works of Arnold Zweig and Joseph but no sustained discussion of Döblin’s and Gronemann’s texts comes into her study. Hanni Mittelmann’s biography of Sammy Gronemann (2004) likewise mentions the travelogues of the other authors, but only as a superficial comparison to Gronemann’s contribution.

Steven Aschheim’s assessment of Döblin’s travelogue, too, is instructive in terms of the perspective with which scholars have approached the travelogues—primarily as contributions to the image of the *Ostjude*:

Döblin’s enthusiasm for the Ostjuden, however, was by and large not annexed to an institutional framework but was basically an ingredient in his personal and intellectual evolution. Even there it was diluted by his later conversion to Catholicism, a religious orientation which began on that same trip to Poland, where Jesus stood as the symbol of universal compassion. We need, therefore, to return to that point where the cult [of the Ostjuden] was most obvious and organized, the Zionist camp. (206)

The aim of this study is to contribute to the existing scholarship by building on the research regarding the various portrayals of the Eastern European Jews and focusing on the mechanisms that Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann proposed as instruments to creating a sense of solidarity with the *Ostjuden*. Complementing what Michael Brenner terms the *invention* of the authentic Eastern Jewish stereotype during the Weimar period, my study draws attention to how the travel writers made use of this *invented* stereotype in their respective works in order to promote a more inclusive communal identity (Brenner 129). I argue that they all constructed different scenarios and narratives about the Eastern European Jews as a means to the end of cultivating a new vision of humanity and of common human values rooted in a greater sense of solidarity with those who
were fell outside the national, economic, and social boundaries of assimilated, middle-class Germans and German Jews.

The travel writers’ vision of solidarity was a unique contribution to the debate regarding nationalism and national identities in the post-war era. At a time when so many different cultural and political parties sought to define their collective identities negatively, in terms of who they were not or in terms of who their enemies were, Zweig and Gronemann particularly proposed more inclusive and pan-Jewish ideas of communal and national identities, in the sense that they sought “to unite Jews of all nations, sects, and political ideologies” (D. Brenner 40). Döblin remained more universal in his scope, advocating for a pan-European identity that required the sublimation of local cultural, ethnic, or religious loyalties to the greater good of a common political community, rooted in socialist values. They each defined this inclusiveness and flexibility differently. Their travel narratives were explorations in answering the question of how flexible their own Jewish identities could be—politically, culturally, and religiously—often written with the hope that a more flexible Jewish identity might appease the dominant anti-Semitic expectations of German culture. The self-deceptive or ambivalent techniques they employed to superficially overcome or ignore or look past the difficulties posed by the cultural prejudices in Germany sheds greater light on the confined social and political circumstances of the Weimar era and should not function as a way to diminish the ideals of more hospitable, pan-Jewish or pan-European identities that Zweig, Döblin and Gronemann tried to imagine. The travelogues illustrate the innovative attempts of German Jewish intellectuals to contribute an alternative view of national identity formation within a hostile, exclusive cultural environment. In a time when anti-Semitic propaganda and nationalistic theories demanded that political identities be fixed to a permanent place or to a static ethnicity, the following chapters reveal the
possibilities of ethical and religious ideals that frame the conversation of nationalism and communal belonging in terms of travelers—in terms of those who believed in an identity that transcended the categories of *Blut* and *Boden*. 
Chapter I

Arnold Zweig: Das ostjüdische Antlitz

A Note on the Strangeness of the Text

Noah Isenberg produced an English translation of Arnold Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz in 2004. Isenberg wrote, “Translating Zweig’s text has not been a straightforward task. It has entailed difficult decisions and many hurdles. Part of what accounts for this is that Zweig’s manuscript is, on many counts, a very strange piece of writing. The tone is strange; strange, too, is the structure” (Isenberg xxvi). Isenberg’s comment provides a proper introduction to a fascinating work – one that saw three different incarnations over the course of the 1920s. Arnold Zweig’s “strange” text was the result of an incredibly idealistic individual attempting to assert his dual, German Jewish identity within the chaotic, and increasingly anti-Semitic, post-war Germany. He and his collaborator, the artist Hermann Struck, tried to present Jewishness – and specifically the poor, immigrant Eastern European Jews – in a way that was acceptable to assimilated, middle-class German Jews and even in a way that was artistically and intellectually significant for the time. The result of Zweig’s efforts was a book that received popular and critical attention throughout the 1920s in each of its three incarnations, but which ultimately reflected the ambiguous and ambivalent attitude of many assimilated German-Jews, including Zweig, who desired to express solidarity with their persecuted, discriminated Eastern cousins yet without sacrificing their middle-class, German identity.

Zweig chose to write about his subject in the format of a popular, illustrated coffee-table travel book. His goal was to provide descriptions and pictures of what an authentic, spiritually informed Jewish community looked like. Zweig specifically intended his words for Westernized,
German Jews whom, he believed, had lost the secret of their völkisch authenticity. To that end he portrayed the Eastern Jews as a key component to aid the Western Jews in the recovery of their true identity.

_Das ostjüdische Antlitz_ provides a curious example among the travel writers examined in this dissertation of the ways Western Jews attempted to articulate and navigate the expression of solidarity and “neighborliness” with their distant Eastern European relatives. As with Döblin, Gronemann and Joseph Roth, Zweig gave voice to that ambiguous but prevalent sense of obligation that many Western Jews felt toward the Ostjuden. An invisible bond associated the two groups, with neither knowing exactly how they were supposed to interact and relate. Zweig’s _Das ostjüdische Antlitz_ is a strange text partly because it serves as a remarkable conflation and embodiment of those ambivalent attitudes in Germany toward the Eastern Jews during the 1920s.

While critics have rightly censured Zweig for his highly romanticized notions about the Eastern European Jews and his ambiguous and “poetic” vision for a Zionist future, the odd or curious tone and content of _Das ostjüdische Antlitz_ is a result of the contradictory and ambivalent elements within the text. On the one hand, as Isenberg notes, Zweig’s text represents a snapshot of a transitional time within German Jewish culture:

At its core, this juncture signaled a radical turn among otherwise acculturated, bourgeois, German-speaking Jews toward their far more spiritually savvy, traditional-minded counterparts in Eastern Europe. Taking their cue from utopian Zionism and other paths of nationalism, these Western and Middle European Jews, who had up until then invested the bulk of their energy in integration and in the main tenets of modernity, suddenly sought to readjust to the ways of an ostensibly more authentic mode of Jewish existence.
found in the countless shtetls and small cities of Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and other parts east of Berlin, Prague, and Vienna. (x-xi)

What potentially comes across as “strange” to a twenty-first century reader is the combination of the seemingly blind, manic enthusiasm in Zweig’s descriptions of the Eastern Jews with what we know historically about his determination to portray the Ostjuden in a utopian light. In May of 1918, Zweig wrote Buber about his specific plans to produce the travelogue with Hermann Struck:


In other words, Zweig’s enthusiasm was part of a premeditated plan to portray the Eastern Jews in idealistic terms. In fact, we know from his other letters that Zweig was disappointed at times with the character and culture of the Eastern Jews, and he later expressed a hesitant reservation about the degree to which he really belonged with them as a people (Sternburg, Um Deutschland 114). Though these reservations are not expressed directly in the Das ostjüdische Antlitz, one cannot help but see Zweig’s ambiguous or non-committal words of support for the Eastern Jews in the travelogue as evidence of his own doubts and conflicted identity with the Ostjuden.
The main contradictory element of *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* is the exaggerated sense of admiration that Zweig expresses for the *Ostjuden* combined with a proposed Zionist solution for the “Jewish question” that did not appear to require immediate action on the part of Western, German Jews. Zweig’s recommendations for relating to the Eastern European Jews can perhaps best be described as a general Jewish “cultural” or “spiritual” transformation growing out of a youthful folk movement, preferably in, though not limited to, Palestine.

Critics such as David A. Brenner and Steven Aschheim assess the fault in Zweig’s work as one of naiveté, of a sense of overidentification with the Eastern European Jews that lacked critical distance. Zweig belonged to the Weimar cult of the Eastern Jew, celebrating Martin Buber’s romantic, literary re-imaginings of their wise and exotic “Asian” relatives in Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine. For David Brenner, the devotion of Zweig and others to the Eastern Jewish ideal was simply uninformed, unhistorical, and despised by contemporary Eastern European Jewish intellectuals who knew the depths of poverty, lack of education, and disease that existed in the Polish ghettos. They knew better than to glorify those Hasidic Jewish communities as somehow morally purer or spiritually enviable to a Western audience (D. Brenner 162-163). Zweig needed, according to these critics, a healthy dose of reality to make his expressions of solidarity more authentic and viable and less of an infatuation.

What makes Zweig’s text different from Döblin’s travelogue or Gronemann’s or even Roth’s is that the other three acknowledge a critical distance, a sense of separation, and a willingness to examine the Eastern Jews in the context of their poverty and their cultural traditions. Döblin, Gronemann, and Roth all participated in the idealization of the Eastern Jew, but they balanced their praise with clear acknowledgements of the difference between them as German Jews and the communities of the Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian Jews they
encountered. Some of the post World War I German Jewish critics reacted to Zweig’s travelogue with suspicion precisely because of his lack of critical distance. Paul Zucker’s review of *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* from 1923 in *Der Jude* noted that “[…] gerade die Tatsache, daß hier [im Text] Urinstinkte getroffen werden, daß man zu jeder einzelnen Zeile, zu jedem einzelnen Bild, zu jedem Urteil immer wieder „Ja“ sagen will, gerade das macht das Ganze so tief verdächtig” (Zucker 465). What makes Zweig’s text fascinating and provocative is not that he portrayed the Eastern Jews with romanticizing and patronizing language but that he did so without critical distance and without realizing the ways in which his expressed support of the Eastern Jews was actually a subtle form of discrimination.

In this chapter, I explore Zweig’s text in terms of the contradiction between Zweig’s own standard of what solidarity with the Eastern Jews should look like and the ways in which he, in the text, sought to justify the evasion of such responsibility to actively help the Eastern Jews. Part of the reason that Zweig’s travelogue was so popular was that his own conflicted attitudes regarding solidarity with the Eastern European Jews were so representative of middle-class German Jewish culture of the time. Despite Zucker’s criticism, something about Zweig’s travelogue made sense to the larger German Jewish readership of the Weimar period. The book struck an emotional chord.

Rather than viewing Zweig’s internal inconsistency and ambivalence as reason to dismiss the text as merely sentimental propaganda, the travelogue—contradictions and all—provides a unique insight to the political imagination and assumptions of the Weimar Jews. In many ways the inconsistencies in the travelogue were typical of Weimar Jewish intellectuals: They attempted to marry a set of social norms, assumptions, and expectations regarding German Jewish identity that had been formerly guaranteed or protected by a liberal constitutional
monarchy, and which social norms intellectuals like Zweig were now attempting to describe and cultivate in the post World War I society using the new *völkisch* language of “national self-determinism” and democracy, but without the supportive framework of a Kaiser or an emperor. This does not mean that Zweig was necessarily pining for a new Kaiser or emperor (like Joseph Roth was) to provide support and direction for the formation of a new Jewish identity. What the new democratic Weimar period meant was that Zweig and many German Jewish intellectuals were uncertain as to the form and shape of a collective (political) Jewish identity within Germany and they were also uncertain of who would lead the new Jewish community.

Zweig’s combination of social expectations associated with an old political order and the new cultural, *völkisch* language associated with new political realities resulted in what might seem like unconscious, hypocritical discrimination against the Eastern Jews. In other words, what is clear from the travelogue is that Zweig was well intentioned—he wanted to help the Eastern Jews who had immigrated to Germany. What is also clear is that he wanted to help them in a way that would not compromise his German identity and his middle class social position, hence his attitude of contradiction, ambivalence, or lack of commitment in supporting the Eastern Jews.

Steven Aschheim notes that “However one regarded the Ostjude [during and after WWI], all agreed that he was the embodiment of archetypal Jewish characteristics, the living link in an uninterrupted historical chain of tradition. In this sense, the glorification of the Eastern Jew was always a potential, if slight, element in Western Jewish self-understanding, the positive side of a built-in ambivalence” (Brothers 185). In this chapter, I provide a close-reading of the travelogue within its historical context in order to examine they ways in which Zweig’s expressions of compassion and admiration for the Eastern European Jews functioned both as subtle, likely
unconscious, methods of distancing himself from the Ostjuden and also as a way of convincing himself (and other German Jews) of genuinely standing in solidarity with the Eastern Jews and with a historical Jewish identity as such.

David A. Brenner argues in his *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* that many Western Jews accepted and applauded a public proclamation of solidarity with the Eastern Jews (168). Arnold Zweig’s own personal example, and the popularity of his travelogue, reveals another side to Brenner’s observation: The public solidarity that many Western German Jews were ready to proclaim can be attributed just as much to a polite, subtle dismissal of the Eastern European immigrants as it can be attributed to a desire to collaborate towards a common cultural identity. Both in his personal life and his travelogue, Zweig revealed a greater loyalty to, and prioritization of, his German cultural identity, than he did to any kind of Jewish heritage. He was willing to express public solidarity with Eastern European Jews only to the degree that he was not required to sacrifice his Deutschtum. My contention with Brenner is not that Western Jews failed to express solidarity with their Eastern relatives. My argument is that a great many German Jews really did feel and express solidarity with the Ostjuden, but they were not used to implementing solidarity or thinking about solidarity in democratic terms or in völkisch terms.

German Jews were used to thinking about it in terms of their existence within a constitutional monarchy that sought to encourage Jewish acculturation. Thus, given the new political circumstances of the democratic Weimar period, the (outdated) German Jewish expressions of solidarity often ended up functioning as unconscious, well-intentioned, subtle form of dismissal against the Eastern Jews. The unwillingness of Zweig, and so many other assimilated German Jews, to radically re-examine their own German identity transformed an
expressed desire (as found in Zweig’s *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*) to materially support and communally relate to the *Ostjuden* into a self-deceiving solidarity that undermined the obligation to any such concrete expression of neighborly love.

Throughout the chapter, I employ several of Slavoj Žižek’s observations regarding normalized cultural violence in contemporary Western society (*Violence* 2008) as a comparative and provocative tool for exploring the ethical implications of Zweig’s text. While Zweig was unquestionably a man of his time, attempting to reconcile old ideals with new political realities, his travelogue also reveals both a recognition of a deep ethical obligation toward the Eastern Jews and a simultaneous disavowal of that obligation. What I will demonstrate in this chapter and in the proceeding chapters on Döblin and Gronemann is that each of the authors exhibits some degree of unwillingness to know or to critically examine their own German identities, but Zweig is the most glaring example of such “fetishist disavowal”: He did not want to believe that his German identity was a hindrance to his ethical obligation to stand in active solidarity with the Eastern Jews.

In this chapter, I will examine Zweig’s vision of solidarity and neighborliness toward the immigrant Eastern Jews, and then address the four main contradictions within the particular tenets of his mission. I will address how each form of expressing support with the Eastern European Jews in the text actually functions to undermine genuine solidarity with the *Ostjuden* by simultaneously relieving readers of their obligation or responsibility to intervene on behalf of the Eastern European Jews.

The four aspects of contradiction within Zweig’s travelogue that I will examine are: (1) the spiritual and aesthetic premise of his argument, (2) the appeal for solidarity with the *Ostjuden*
based upon positive and negative Jewish stereotypes, (3) the fabrication of a sense of solidarity based on a common history of anti-Semitic persecution, and (4) the promise of a Palestinian (non-German) home, primarily initiated by the German Jewish youth movements. These four elements are not unique to Zweig. All four characteristics appear in different guises in the other German Jewish travelogues and in other Jewish publications of the time. Zweig simply reproduced those contradictory elements in a way that demanded greater attention. He protests too much. He leaves much unsaid in his romanticized portrayal of the Eastern European Jew, and what he does not say creates a literary void, a kind of photo-negative outline of a much more insidious problem from which the compassionate image of the Eastern Jew distracts: the post-war identity crisis of an anti-Semitic Germany.

**Summary of Das ostjüdische Antlitz**

Arnold Zweig’s text was published three different times throughout the 1920s in book form, and Martin Buber published an excerpt of the text in 1919 in his journal, *Der Jude*. The first edition appeared in 1920, published by the Berlin Welt-Verlag featuring fifty illustrations by Hermann Struck. The next publication was in 1922. This version contained minor changes to Zweig’s wording and a re-ordering of Struck’s drawings with Zweig’s text (Raffel 42-43). The final edition appeared in 1929 under the title *Herkunft und Zukunft. Zwei Essays zum Schicksal eines Volkes*, in which it was combined with the essay, *Das neue Kanaan* (Raffel 44).

Karol Sauerland writes that “*Das ostjüdische Antlitz bildete die erste größere monographische Darstellung des Ostjudentums*” (“Begegnungen mit dem Ostjudentum” 179). Furthermore, the last version did not include Herman Struck’s illustrations – though it was dedicated to him – but instead featured sketches by noted artists Max Liebermann, Marc Chagall,
Joseph Budko, Lionel Reisz, and A. Kosloff, another sign of the text’s cultural and artistic significance. Both Alfred Döblin and Sammy Gronemann specifically praised Zweig’s text as a valuable and beautiful book for the time (Isenberg, Preface xxiv; Gronemann 160). *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* did not invent a new genre—as scholars have noted, commenting on the similar coffee-table books that Struck contributed to both before and after his work with Zweig—but Zweig’s text signaled a change in the genre, and served as an influence, inspiration, and a point of contention in the subsequent works of the other German Jewish travelers of the period (Raffel 49).

*Das ostjüdische Antlitz* contains five chapters of essays structured around the images of the old, wise Jewish sage and the young, socialist revolutionary Zionist. The text begins with Zweig’s discussion of the virtues of the old sage in the Eastern Jewish culture. The wise man preserves the traditions and the identity of the faithful Jew:

> Ist dies der Jude des Ostens? Ist er ein Greis, der aus aller Gegenwart schon fast und sicher aus aller Zukunft herausgeschnitten, ein Leben lebt, das im Gepreßten und Engsten bedingt ist, und das zerstiebt, wenn der Druck wegfällt, der es in eine Form zwang? Wir wissen, daß unsere Vorväter die Genossen der Männer waren, die wir heute in den Städten Litauens, Polens und Galiziens finden; nein, daß diese in den Hügellanden Frankens und den deutschen Ebenen lebten wie wir. (13)

He goes on to describe the daily routine of the old, wise man: a pious, faithful individual, generous, visiting the sick, giving out of his meager resources to those who have even less, readily comforting those who mourn while helping them bury their dead, and providing dowries for the poor brides of their families and communities (14).
Hermann Struck’s drawings of Eastern Jewish men reflect a gentle, kindly appearance. The drawing below complements Zweig’s description: The face is “treuherzig und verträumt und von einer Reinheit, die sich nur erkauft mit Verzicht auf die breiten Tätigkeiten und das Glück der breiten Tätigkeit” (14-15)

The face of these old Eastern Jewish men represent, for Zweig, a life of simplicity full of the responsibilities of raising children, providing a meager income through establishing a small business, through regular devout prayer and religious study. Complementing a further drawing by Struck, Zweig writes that the face contains the joy of duty and responsibility.
“Die klaren stillen Augen und der Mund, der seine große Güte verschämt und weich hinter dem Barte birgt, sagen aus, daß hier noch die Ursprünglichkeit und Helligkeit aller Verpflichtung wacht” (16-17). The Eastern Jewish elders are wise, kind, and hardworking, and their discipline and dedication to their work and their families makes their labors seem effortless, according to Zweig. Their work is not drudgery. The Eastern Jews still take pride in their callings.

The Eastern Jewish women also take pride in their work centered around the family and raising their children. Zweig’s romanticized patriarchal (sexist) vision of the Eastern Jews places the woman primarily in the domestic sphere, and Struck’s images reflect this as well, as the below image shows (110).
Zweig praises the examples of the Polish and Lithuanian Jewish mothers, and of the young girls who aspire to be mothers – illustrated by Struck’s image of the young Jewish girl, holding her doll. Zweig attributes the virtue of the Jewish culture to the naïve innocence of the Eastern Jewish woman. He says that the ability of Jewish girls to endure their lives of being married off, without their own individual love and passion to have led to the marriage, and to have their youth stolen away by the quick succession of children is the long-suffering virtue that has preserved the Jewish people:

According to Zweig in this passage, only the domestic image of a mother holding her child rivals the image of the kind and wise sage to represent the spirit of the Eastern Jews. Zweig pictures her as similar to the biblical figure of Leah, the wife of Jacob and the mother of the sons who would establish the different tribes of ancient Israel.

The modern, Western Jew, in contrast, has forgotten this identity – this generous, communal way of being. Similar to the völkisch, racial arguments about the more “authentic” and “natural” Kulturjuden of the East versus the superficial, assimilated Jews of the West popularized by the likes of Buber and Landauer, Zweig claimed that “we” in the West may have cultivated much learning and cosmopolitan variety in our societies, but he is concerned that Western Jews have forgotten the roots of their identity and heritage (Aschheim, *Brothers* 101-102). Zweig writes:


In light of the materialistic distractions of Western society, Zweig calls for a new kind of Jew—the youthful, Jewish revolutionary. The youthful Jew is inspired by the traditions of the old, wise sages and fueled with a spiritual vision for a new, socialist community in the New Canaan, in Palestine.
The new Jewish youth value the traditions of the old men and women whom Zweig celebrates in the beginning of the text, but Zweig says that the youthful, socialist Jews are not bound by those traditions. They must create a new, fresh vision of the Jewish community for themselves, and it is the youthful Knabe who is the symbol of the new movement:

In Gesichtern dieser Kinder steht die Antwort auf jene Frage, die unter allen Worten mitgegangen ist bis an diesen Ausgang: ist das Volk der Juden ein Greis? Und ein harter oder weiser Greis sein Sinnbild? Nein und nein! [...] Ein Kind ist dein Sinnbild, ein Knabe mit weich gebildeter Nase, mit einem lieben Munde und großen schuldlosen Augen. (172)

Zweig’s description is paired with another of Struck’s drawings—that of a young boy with a cap (173).

Zweig names the biblical figures of Isaac, Joseph, Benjamin, David who killed the giant Goliath—these young boys are the images, the models for the Jewish people—not old men. The
old men and women represent the preservation of a rich spiritual tradition, but Zweig insists that the “spirit of community” must not be contained by the models and traditions of the older generations. Zweig writes that the new Jewish youth must discover and imagine God for themselves in a new way. Their elders provide boundaries in which this creative, “new imagining” of God is to occur, but Zweig remains vague and ambivalent as to what the new form of youthful Judaism would look like:


(127)

Expressing an open-ended interpretation of Judaism and the Jewish spirit similar to that of Martin Buber, Zweig’s faith in the future of Judaism relied on creative inspiration and not primarily in fixed practices or traditions. The traditions served as general guidelines and boundaries for inspired creativity and spirituality.

Gershom Scholem criticized Martin Buber severely for this kind of historical inaccuracy in such a mystical, open-ended approach to Jewish Hasidism, but both Zweig and Döblin echoed this faith in a mystical creativity of the human spirit (Scholem, *Messianic Idea* 245-246). The expectation of the sudden “appearing“ of a Messianic age, the flash of inspiration that revealed and created the future, was common among Weimar Jewish intellectuals. Even Scholem himself, as dedicated as he was to a strict, historical understanding of the Jewish texts, was attracted to
radical conceptions of discarding the past traditions and allowing for the inspired moment of the Messianic spirit to break into history (Aschheim, “German Jews Beyond Bildung” 132-134).

Zweig’s text reveals that he, too, was interested in the possibility of unlocking such an a-historical flash of spiritual insight, and he thought that the passion of idealistic youth was the most fertile ground for the flourishing of such a mystical spirituality. His goal was to channel the youthful energies of rebellion into the Zionist movement—and he points to the young, Jewish girls, just as much as the boys, as the carriers of the revolutionary spirit (121, 123). Again, Zweig is ambiguous as to what the Zionist youths should do or who they should become. What is important is that the Jewish youths are inspired to create a new Antlitz (face, countenance, appearance) for their Volk. He writes that for the Jews to join in the socialist movements of Germany or Russia contributes directly to the loss of their own unique Jewish identity (121). The solution therefore was to immigrate to the new Zion, in Palestine, where they could freely practice as Jews all of the anti-capitalistic, anti-materialistic virtue inherent to Jewish youth. Once the Zionist youth were all gathered in Palestine, the “flash” of spiritual revelation would come. They must take all of those virtues and exercise them in a new community in Palestine, although he does not say how or when this is supposed to happen:

Es gibt Gebote, die man nur in Erez Israel erfüllen kann—also werden sie nach Palästina gehen. Es ist ein Gebot, zu heiraten und Kinder zu haben: sie werden es tun. Sie werden in der Lehre forschen, Tag und Nacht. Und sie werden all die „Laster“ und irdischen Triebe und die wahren Feinde des Menschen: Ehrgeiz, Hochmut, Härte, Geldgier, Lüge und Heuchelei—diese werden sie ausrotten: aber nicht mit dem Wort bei andern, sondern zuerst bei sich selbst, unermüdlich, ohne jede Verzärtelung. (138)
The book serves as a free-association meditation on the virtues of an idealized, preserved Judaism of the past and the potential of a new generation of youthful Zionists and spiritual innovators to create a better community for the future. The text is an assessment of how the Ostjuden have avoided the practices of materialistic capitalism and how their example can serve to inspire a new incarnation of the Jewish Volk. Though highly poetic and ambivalent in his articulation of this future Jewish Volk, Zweig’s role was to call the Jewish youth to the task of reclaiming their identity, and to do that by remembering and honoring the “elder” culture from whence they came—that of the Ostjuden.

Each of the travel writers, if they testified to anything, expressed great uncertainty as to the shape of the post-war German community and European, transnational stability. With Zweig, his hope was simply to inspire his readers’ imaginations with his poetry, rather than to provide a concrete plan of action. His words were meant to stir up the latent, spiritual life still flowing in their blood, to use the power of his words and his art as a kind of prophetic call for the new “Children of Israel” to abandon the slavery of the capitalistic, “Egyptian” West and to seek the “Promised Land” in Palestine: “Denn nicht das Blut ist der allmächtige Spender und Binder solcher Gemeinsamkeit, sondern der Geist, der sich vom Blute tragen läßt, aber auch das Blut überwindet” (33).

In drawing upon an idealized portrayal of the Eastern European Jews as inspiration for constructing a new, common Jewish culture and community in Zionist Palestine, Zweig’s travelogue functioned as an intuitive attempt to create a unique vision of solidarity with the Eastern European Jews in the midst of an anti-Semitic, post-war Germany. Zweig’s vision was insightful regarding its sensitivities to Western Jewish tastes and concerns, but that sensitivity reveals, at best, a conflicted solidarity with the Ostjuden. My contention, following Žižek’s
argumentation of linguistic and cultural violence, is that Zweig’s glowing praise of the *Ostjuden* and his alarms regarding their plight ultimately functioned, for himself and many other Western Jews, as a socially-acceptable form of protest that served far more to confirm the assimilated, bourgeois German Jewish ideology of the time and to preserve the social and cultural norms as they were, than it did to bring Western Jews into real solidarity with the Eastern Jews or to advocate for radical social change.

**The New Ideal: Solidarity, Hospitality, Neighborliness**

In *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, Zweig writes for the need of “renewal” among the Jewish people. Döblin and Gronemann similarly in their travelogues write about the need for transformation, for people to “grow up” in order to transcend or overcome intercultural and ethnic conflicts. After World War I, all three of the German Jewish travel writers examined in this dissertation (and even the Austrian, Joseph Roth) advocated for a new vision of humanity in Europe and among the Jewish people. For Zweig and for Döblin particularly the passion for a renewed humanity was rooted in the larger trends of Jewish thought promoted by philosophers such as Gershom Scholem, Franz Roszenzweig, Gustav Landauer, and Ernst Bloch during the post-war, Weimar era. Anson Rabinbach writes that the several Jewish intellectuals of the “1914 generation” “[...] emphasized a certain kind of intellectuality as politics, a spiritual radicalism that aimed at nothing less than ‘total transformation’ of the individual and society, sometimes coupled with activism, sometimes wholly without any concrete political touchstone” (30). This proposal of a radical transformation of society and of the individual is one of the clear themes of Zweig’s text.
Zweig writes in the last chapter of the book: “Erneuerung: das ist die Scheidung zwischen uns und den anderen. Denn dem bürgerlichen Zionisten bleibt diese Erneuerung eine körperliche, möglicherweise eine nationale Angelegenheit; uns ist sie eine Angelegenheit des Menschen im tiefsten Ganzen und Wesen – eine religiöse” (157). For Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann, the “renewal” of the human being—or, for Gronemann, of the Jew—took on a common characteristic in all three travel texts. Despite whatever different religious practices or political actions that the individual authors recommended to their readers, each of them agreed that such spiritual renewal was to be characterized by solidarity and compassion for the poor, specifically, but not limited to, the immigrant Eastern European Jews. As I will show, Zweig describes solidarity with the Eastern Jews in terms of material and financial support and communal interdependence.

Throughout Das ostjüdische Antlitz Zweig repeatedly describes the virtues of solidarity with and compassion for the poor Ostjuden as those that mark the “true Jew” or the “pure socialist.” He, Döblin, and Gronemann draw from the Judeo-Christian injunction and from different socialist ideals to “love thy neighbor.” Zweig especially makes regular biblical references throughout the travelogue, and he intentionally positions his own text to function like the words of an Old Testament prophet, to remind Western Jews to return to faithful practice of the Jewish “law and the prophets”: “Und dem thoratreuen Juden kann sie mit Notwendigkeit nur ein Wegweiser ‘zurück zur Thora’ sein, zum ganzen Gesetz, zum Leben wie es war – und die Besten von ihnen sehen es groß und rein an und leben es mit herrlichen Heroismus schon heute […]” (157).

Earlier in the text he is more explicit in terms of what he expects of the new, Jewish youth:

This passage is both a strong reference to the biblical texts as a model or inspiration for the new, ethical model to “help people.” Earlier in the travelogue Zweig writes that this practice of mutual responsibility and mutual help for others is not limited to ethnic communities. The German Christian who is generous, who is willing to help others in need is more a Jew than an assimilated, but unkind, ethnic Jew (33).

The aspect of generosity toward the poor is a common theme that appears in Zweig’s travelogue, as in Döblin’s and Gronemann’s, and practicing generosity to the poor further embodies what Zweig means with his injunction to “help people.” He writes:

Der Arme, dessen von Leid und Geist gegliederte Hand die Almosenbüchse umspannt und schüchtern hinhält, indeß sein gramvolles und vertrauendes Auge den Geber prüft und den Herzensgehalt der Gabe empfindet, er ist der sichtbarste Ausdruck dieser Art von Gemeinschaft. Die Freiwilligkeit der Leistung, sie, die im Grunde jede Art von gemeinschaftlicher Leistung erst ermöglicht, sittlich macht, wertvoll macht; die
The kind of mutual interdependence and communal responsibility that Zweig mentions here with the image of *der Arme* holding the alms container, begging for money, is one that Gronemann likewise employs to illustrate how the virtues of generosity and the sharing of one’s wealth are more integrated in the behavior and practice of Eastern Jewish communities than they are in Germany.

Gronemann writes that because alms-giving is a serious religious duty among the Eastern Jews in Poland and Lithuania, the poor *Bettler* capitalize on the guilt of the rich to the degree that, theoretically, a unionized strike among the *Schnorrer* was actually quite possible (Gronemann 56). Rather than a critique against crafty Jewish beggars, Gronemann writes about the unionized strike of the beggars to show how seriously that Eastern Jews understood their religious obligation to be generous: If the beggars refused to visit a certain area, the more wealthy members of the community would have fewer options for demonstrating their religious good works in the form of almsgiving, and this potential for having the beggars leave actually caused anxiety for the spiritually sensitive *Ostjuden*.

Later in Zweig’s travelogue he again introduces the expression of communal solidarity and interdependent, mutual responsibility with the economic injunction that material goods should be shared equally: “Wer bin ich, daß ich mehr besitzen sollte als du? Teilen wir; mehr als man bedarf, braucht keiner, und wie reich ist diese Erde bei gerechter Teilung, wie wenig
braucht der Mensch, um froh zu leben!” (131). How little, he asks rhetorically, does one need in order to live happily? Compassion for the poor, selflessness, and fulfillment of the biblical “law and prophets,” Zweig strongly implies, is best expressed through material generosity.

Communal support and responsibility that has at its ethical base “alle Worte des Gesetzes und die Reden der Propheten und Jeschua wörtlich gemeint, in diesem Leben und auf dieser Erde” is the divine, super-natural miracle of the Jews. He writes earlier in the text that it is Christians who think that God’s work and God’s help refers to an unexplained miracle. The Jew, in contrast, knows that God’s help and God’s work is the assistance that the Jewish community gives to each other:

„Gott wird helfen“, sagt der Jude getrost dort, wo der Sohn westlicher Völker verzweifelt seine Vereinzelung erfährt oder titanisch gegen das Schicksal angeht, und das heißt nicht—wie dem gläubigen Christen—„es wird ein Wunder geschehen“, sondern „Juden werden helfen“, „Brüder werden helfen“. Und die notwendige Ergänzung zu diesem Satze ist jener andere, ebensooft gehörte: „Denn wir sind doch Juden...“ (33)

Fulfilling the Old Testament law and the biblical injunction of the prophets to “help people” and “help each other” finds practical expression in voluntary alms-giving and material generosity – the sharing of possessions – but Zweig argues further that the best way to “help people” is to take this ethical disposition of generosity and the “loving of the neighbor” and implement those attitudes and practices in a united, Jewish community. Zweig demands that, if the Jews wanted to help other people in the world, they needed first to start within their own cultural and communal ties: “wir Menschen alle sind weniger wert als Blumen oder Korn” if the Jews cannot practice the biblical law of helping other people among themselves (168).
Zweig’s vision of Jewish solidarity and altruism is one of communal support and interdependence, expressed in material and financial generosity toward those less fortunate than oneself. Scholars have criticized Zweig’s work as “idealistic” and guilty of “romanticizing” the Eastern European Jew as a “repository of values that a brutalized Europe seemed to have irretrievably lost” after the war (Aschheim, *Brothers* 202). Zweig’s portrayal of the Eastern Jews is certainly idealized and, as I will argue, Zweig was aware of this strategy: He did not naively portray the Eastern Jews as a historical phenomenon. His intention was to describe their moral potential. Even if he described the Eastern Jews as already having attained that moral ideal, the standards of the ideal are concrete enough to be understood and to practice – even in Western Europe.

What is puzzling and strange is that Zweig’s vision of Jewish altruism and solidarity is combined throughout the text with caveats that complicate the biblical directives and the socialist injunction to “love thy neighbor” – particularly the Jewish neighbor. The caveats or exceptions to his solidarity are found in Zweig’s spiritual and aesthetic “conditions” for neighborly and “brotherly” behavior; in Zweig’s fostering of a Jewish community based around positive and negative stereotypes; in his commitment to Palestine as the ultimate destination and home of the Jews; and in his belief that it was the responsibility of the Zionist youth movement to be the implementers of social and communal change.

**The Spiritual and Aesthetic Premise of Zweig’s Vision**

Both the popularity of *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* and the controversial critical reception it received testified to the distinctive aesthetic quality of the work. Reviewers of the travelogue reacted against the overly sentimental, idyllic and idealistic portrayals of the Eastern European
Jews in Zweig’s “spiritual” descriptions of this “ancient people” and in Hermann Struck’s “timeless” and “placeless” portraits of the eternal Ostjuden (Raffel 45-46). Zweig assures his readers that the book was not intended as historical or factual report: The book was intended as a work of art, as a unique aesthetic experience (Aschheim, Brothers 199). He acknowledges in the preface to the first edition of the travelogue that the descriptions in the text are inherently subjective: His portrayals represent the Ostjuden from the perspective of “jemand, der sie zu sehen versuchte” (7). Isenberg translates this as “somebody who has attempted to observe them” (xxxi).

The “attempt” to see the Eastern Jews was based on Zweig’s personal experience and observations, since he connects this desire to “see” the Eastern Jews with his experience of the Lithuanian Jews during the World War I: “In den Tagen, da der Plan zu ihm entstand, vor einem Jahre und in einer litauisch-jüdischen Stadt, durfte man vieles über das Schicksal dieser unserer Brüder erwarten, und nicht Leichtes” (7). Zweig was stationed, along with Hermann Struck and Sammy Gronemann, in the German-occupied territories of Poland and Lithuania at the end of World War I and had ample time to observe the Hasidic communities in their all of their historical authenticity. He wrote in the travelogue:

Und wenn irgendwo, so soll hier gesagt werden, daß sich dieses Buch nicht auf Literatur stützt und nicht auf Berichte, sondern nur auf das Gegenwärtige des Lebens und der sehenden Geistesgabe; daß es so richtig oder falsch ist wie der Aspekt selbst, den das Leben einem Besucher darreicht. Daher seine Lücken, daher seine Übertreibungen; es ist ein Zeugnis. (104)
The book is supposed to be a Zeugnis – a witness or a testimony. Part of what needs to be appreciated in any critical examination of the text is that, from the outset, Zweig wanted to produce a work that capitalized on the power of the subjective experience. Unlike Döblin or Gronemann whose travelogues were qualified with skeptical remarks and stylistic strategies that demanded an almost scientific view of the concrete situations in Poland and Lithuania, Zweig writes about the Eastern Jews as one who understood their motives and intentions. He provides an imagined internal assessment of the Eastern Jews. The travelogue is a work of imagination and poetry. The purpose of the book was to create an aesthetic experience, not provide a historical record.

The distinctive aesthetic purpose of the work becomes clearer as readers trace the patterns of the strong biblical imagery that Zweig incorporates throughout the text. Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz draws on the biblical narratives of the Old Testament, and he styles himself as a kind of Old Testament prophet, borrowing examples and language from the story of the Exodus of the Children of Israel out of Egypt to frame his message. Operating within that religious framework, Zweig produced a poetic call for the Jews to leave the land of slavery—slavery to capitalistic, materialistic Western “pharaohs”—and to immigrate to a socialist Holy Land in Palestine, portrayed as an ideal land of “milk and honey,” where the scattered Jews of the Diaspora could regain their true identity.

Influenced by Martin Buber’s “cultural Zionism”, as well as Gustav Landauer’s “spiritual socialism,” Zweig painted a picture of the ideal Promised Land in Palestine for the modern Israelis. Just as Moses had promised the ancient Israelites their own land of Zion, so Zweig preached a message of the Jews regaining their own land –though he was careful not to imply that he was the new Moses to lead the Jews to Palestine. Zweig’s Zionist image of the future was
of a united Jewish people pursuing their historic, Volk identity as Jews, gradually relocating to inhabit the new Zion in modern Palestine.

Zweig incorporates several examples of the Old Testament Exodus story within the travelogue as he weaves his own prophetic vision of Zionist liberation to complement those older narratives. He writes that the Jewish youth is most himself when he is a socialist. The ideal Israelite community of the Old Testament, Zweig implies, was supposed to be something like a socialist community, and the history of the Israelites is one in which the people are perpetually tempted to follow after Ichlust and Machtlust. Like the Old Testament Israelites, Zweig argues, assimilated Western Jews are also tempted by selfishness, ambition, and power, but these characteristics ultimately enslave them. Rather than remaining true to their inner, socialist identity, Western Jews are led astray to serve their capitalistic, pharaoh masters. The Jew, more than any other, Zweig claims, knows what it is to fall away from a committed, socialist way of living. Just like in the Old Testament, the Jewish people still need prophetic voices to remind them of their identity and to bring them back to the “sheepfold” from their wandering:

Nur ein Jude kann die Weite des Abfalls ermessen, den der kapitalistische Mensch getan hat. Ein Volk, geboren im Proletariat des pharaonischen Absolutismus und gepreßt, bis ihm Gerechtigkeit zum innersten Kern wurde; herausgeführt durch den Geist eines Gesetzgebers, in den Gott selbst die Urworte der Menschlichkeit hämmert und auf Jahrtausende beherrscht von seiner Urgestalt; ausgebreitet im schönen und zugesprochenen Lande nach gerechter Ordnung und, aus dem menschlich eingeborenen Abfall zu Ichsucht und Machtlust, immer wieder zurechtgejagt von den Propheten, Gottes herrlichen Schäferhunden […] (135)
Zweig hints at the Exodus narrative of the Old Testament, associating the Jews in Western Europe with the “Proletariat des pharaonischen Absolutismus.” His mention of the prophets as God’s shepherds sent to bring the people back to the spiritual way of life is curious and implies that Zweig’s travelogue is to function with a similar kind of prophetic message.

Zweig references the Exodus narrative at the beginning of his text as well. He says that Jews are to remember the deeds of Poland like the deeds of Amalek. In the book of Exodus, the narrative describes the Children of Israel escaping from Egypt and the Amalekites engaging them in battle. The Children of Israel are ultimately successful and the chapter concludes:


Zweig uses the metaphor of Amalek for the people of Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. These host nations made war against the Jews, the modern “Children of Israel”. Similar to the pharaohs of Egypt, the Amalekites oppressed the Jewish people.

In the preface to the first edition of the travelogue, Zweig draws attention to the plight of the Eastern European Jews, suffering from persecution and post-war pogroms. He explains that the treatment of the Jews at the hands of the Poles was even worse than that at the hands of the Germans during the war:
Was aber gekommen ist: die Herrschaft des Raubs, der Peitschen und Kolben, der
Hinrichtungen und Morde, der spurlose Verschwundenen und in Zuchthäusern
Verkommenden—die Herrschaft der Polen ahnten wir nicht. […]

Möge Israel der Taten Polens gedenken als den Taten des Amalek, dem heute noch nicht
vergeben ist seit dreitausend Jahren, wie es nach unzähligem Mord und Unheil von
Seuche, Krieg und Hunger den Mord des Völkerhasses, den feigen Mord des
Bewaffneten am Wehrlosen, über unsere Brüder brachte. […] (7,9).

In the preface to the second edition, Zweig includes Hungary and the Ukraine among the
“Amalekite” nations that are hostile to the Jews (11). Zweig implies that Western Jews, like the
Jews of the Exodus, may have forgotten that they have any other destiny than that of a slave to
the modern “pharaohs” of capitalism. Like the Amalekites, Zweig argues, European host
countries such as Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania and even Germany have made war against
God’s chosen people (38). Zweig borrows the language of the Exodus and styles himself as an
Old Testament prophet, coming to bring a divine revelation of liberation to the European Jews
against their capitalist masters.

Zweig’s reference of Old Testament narratives about the Israelites battling their enemies
raises questions for readers: Does Zweig mean that contemporary, persecuted Jews are to
likewise “take up their swords” against enemy nations? Is Zweig advocating the use of violence?
A reprise of the Spartacus revolt of 1918? Does he mean that contemporary Jews should seek to
distinguish themselves from the culture of their oppressors by confronting those nations
somehow? Instead of answering those questions directly, Zweig goes on to write about the
creative drive of the Jewish identity and to point out that the Jews are not primarily defined by
their antagonists but rather by a transcendent goal to follow a God who reveals himself in new ways. The priority of the Jewish people is thus not retaliation—though according to Zweig, the true “Israel” must never forget the abuse done to them—but cultural and religious innovation. This innovation is to be sought by remaining true to their spiritual identity:

Der Geist der Gemeinschaft, um den wir ringen, daß er uns erfülle, muß sich frei aus unserem Leben die Formen seiner Erfüllung selbst schaffen: die Namen Gottes müssen sich uns aufs neue offenbaren. Denn heute ist er wieder: der unbekannte Gott. „Ich werde sein, der ich sein werde”. Mögen wir erkoren sein, Diener dieses Ewigwerdenden zu heißen in den Völkern.” (157-158)

In this quote, Zweig recalls the story of Moses witnessing the burning bush and hearing the divine message to go and deliver the Children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. Yaweh tells Moses his name: I AM, THAT I AM; “Ich werde dasein, als der ich dasein werde” (Buber, Buch Namen 15)

Zweig pairs the Exodus narrative and the passages describing Moses prophetic message with his own idealistic images of the Ostjuden and the Zionist youth in order to make the point: Just as God describes himself to Moses as a being who is perpetually “becoming” and who promises his people new beginnings in a new land, so too the Jewish people, according to Zweig should be characterized by new beginnings, by creative growth and development. Zweig’s romanticized vision of an authentic Jewish community was to be the prophetic call to a new culture, a new way of life – “[...] in ein Land, gut und weit, in ein Land, Milch und Honig träufend”—an expression intended to evoke potential and possibility rather than factual reality (Buber Buch Namen 14). Zweig wanted his Jewish readers to “be who they will be” rather than
be primarily shaped by their oppressors. The Israelites of the Old Testament eventually arrived in the land of Canaan, but not until after forty years of wilderness wandering. Even once they arrived in Canaan, they still had to fight for the land. The “milk and honey” imagery reinforces the idea of potential and possibilities, but it does not exclude suffering or great difficulties along the way. This is what Zweig wanted to capitalize upon as well. He wanted to give Westernized, German-Jews a new vision of promise and potential for their own culture and way of life.

Just as the Old Testament Jews heard and responded to Moses’s message, so Zweig crafted his text to be a message which he likewise hoped would inspire personal transformation and action in his Jewish audience. Zweig, along with Döblin (and Gronemann to a more limited degree) advocated for social ideals which politics and economic regulations were powerless to bring about. Certainly after the loss of World War I and the experience of the Judenzählung, Zweig was further discouraged by the revolutionary violence of the Spartakus revolt (Sternburg 124-125). Zweig wrote an article in Martin Buber’s journal, Der Jude, in June of 1921 responding both to the violence of the Spartakus revolution and to the general spirit of atheism and materialism that, he claimed, corrupted the current government systems. Zweig specifically targeted the Marxist belief that social reform and renewal would come about through the changing of political and economic laws:

Der atheistische und materialistische Sozialismus marxistischer Prägung [...] ist heute eine Kirche und Konfession wie jede andere auf der Erde. Er leugnet die geistige Freiheit und göttliche Durchseeltheit des Menschen in wissenschaftlichem Determinismus, bekennt sich zum Dogma zwangsläufiger Entwicklung der gesellschaftlichen Zustände aus materialistischen, politisch-wirtschaftlichen Gesetzen, strebt die Beseitigung von Klassen und Klassenherrschaft und die Überwindung nationaler Grenzungen durch die
What was needed, Zweig protested, was the education and development of people’s souls first rather than a violent overhaul of their political circumstances: “[…] das Ziel ist Wiedergeburt, Erneuerung” (148). Zweig’s art was part of his tool set for resisting the over-politicization of Europe and the over-emphasis on economic matters and for redirecting his audience to their spiritual need.

Döblin and Gronemann reflect a similar conviction: They sought alternative means for bringing about social and political change. From a place of disillusionment with current political processes, all three authors sought to wield what artistic, psychological, or religious tools they possessed to educate their readers and inspire them toward personal and spiritual transformation. As I will discuss further in the next two chapters, Döblin discouraged direct political activism and pursued psychological and artistic methods for bringing about enlightenment in his readers. Gronemann, even though a passionate Zionist and political activist, emphasized that what was needed was a renewal of the Jewish person, the ability to distinguish what was good and evil. He ends his travelogue with the expressed desire that the Jews would (once again) come to know how “zu unterscheiden zwischen Heiligem und Unheiligem / zwischen Licht und Finternis” (227). Gronemann wanted the Jews to know their identity and to practice an integrity that transcended the changing tides of political parties and cultural movements. Rather than directing his readers to overt political action, Gronemann reminded his audience of the importance of religious ritual in shaping their identity.
Zweig understood his art as having “spiritual” and transformative influence. In his travelogue, Zweig suggests that his book had the power to inspire Jewish youth to become a renewed, revitalized community. He celebrates the young Jewish revolutionary scholar as the hope of the future, and it is through reading poetic literature that the youth will be ignited with passion to create a new world. Zweig provides two examples of what he hopes will be the effect of his own work. The first is of the literary influence that the text will have on his youthful readers:

So soll es werden! rufen sie [die Jugend] sich zu; das Leben auf der Erde soll werden wie es in Büchern steht, frei, bunt, windbewegt, aufregend—und doch soll es uns nicht aus der Judenheit herausführen! Zu welchem Ende sind meine Sprache, meine Ideale, meine Mittel, Gang, Haltung, Aussehen und Geist anders als die von Litauern, Polen oder Deutschen? Verwandt aber eigenartig? Ich will nicht werden wie sie—sondern ebenso viel wie sie, ja, mehr als sie alle, den ohne den Geist meiner Urväter wären sie alle nicht geworden, was sie sind; ich aber, ich bin ohne den ihrer Urväter noch, was ich bin! Und will ich, so lerne ich den ihren noch dazu, ohne aufzugeben, was ich bin! Denn ich bin zu viel mehr verpflichtet als sie—solche Ahnen und eine so entstellte Gegenwart verpflichten mich, viel zu wollen! (154)

While Zweig writes about the intellectual disposition of the Jewish youth in general and though Zweig writes about the Bücher containing the free and energetic, life-filled visions, he clearly means this description to apply to his own text, because he asks immediately after he portrays this youthful excitement of discovering an ideal and wishing to implement it: “Zu welchem Ende sind meine Sprache, meine Ideale, meine Mittel, Gang, Haltung, Aussehen und Geist […]?” The Jewish youth may be inspired by other secular socialist ideals in other books, but Zweig wants to
show the purpose behind his own text: to inspire the best socialist ideals in Jewish youth, “und doch soll es uns nicht aus der Judenheit herausführen!”

He argues that the Jewish people have a capacity for socialist values, such as justice, which is capable of drawing from other ideals and yet remains distinctive and qualitatively better. Zweig asserts in several places that the most natural expression of the Jewish ethical spirit is in Socialism:

Und all die andern bejahenden Kräfte in guter Jugend: sie alle münden für den Juden, der sie auf besondere Art, auf jüdische Art erlebt, im Sozialismus. Da ist der Trieb zu Kameradschaft, zu Nächstenhilfe, er, von Juden geübt seit sie auf Erden wandern, er, ohne den die Juden längst nicht mehr da wären, findet sein nahes Ziel am Mitkämpfer, sein fernstes und Beschwingendes in der entrechteten Schar der Menschen. Da ist der Kampftrieb der Jugend; er, von den Juden in Geist umgesetzt, wird gegen das größte Ungeheuer, den autokratischen Kapitalismus gerichtet, einen Gegner, den es lohnt zu bekämpfen [...]. (133)

Zweig imagines that modern socialist values are the reincarnation of the ancient Volksleben of the Jewish people, and his ideal of socialism comes from Gustav Landauer’s spiritual interpretation of the Marxist social revolution:

Von einem jüdischen Sozialismus an, der reiner Marxismus ist und gleichsam als seine Agitationsprovinz die jüdisch sprechenden Menschen betrachtet, bis zu einem reinen Sozialismus, der der Prägung des erschütternd starken Menschen und gemordeten Führers Gustav Landauer ganz nahe kam—in kleinen Siedlungen, ohne Staat, aus gemeinschaftlichem, antipolitischem Geiste heraus, unter Gemeinbesitz an Grund und
Boden und den entscheidenden Produktionsmitteln den sozialistischen Geist zu leben, im jüdischen Lande, dem Lande unserer Arbeit und Erfüllung—hat er mehrere Grade immer reinerer Inkarnierung gefunden. (156)

It is to this non-political, non-capitalistic, communal lifestyle in Palestine that Zweig hopes to inspire his youthful readers. The Jewish people have a great capacity for justice and for socialist values: it is in their blood, Zweig argues. They only need to have that spirit awakened in them. “Muß so nicht die Grundstimmung einer Jugend sein, die, […] das jüdische Ideal gerechten Lebens im Blute, zugleich den trotzigen und in sich gründenden Willen zeigt, ihr Wesen rein zu erhalten, das heißt: sozialistische Lehren auf jüdisch darzuleben?” (154,156). From that awakened calling, from that realization of their old, true, and authentic identity, “die Jungen mußten den Schritt tun, der sie über die mechanisch konzipiert sozialistische Idee zur organisch konzipierten brachte: der Sozialismus, getragen in das jüdische Volksleben […]” (156). Zweig did not wish to replicate the past – his images cannot be seen an ideal that he expected the Zionist youth to mirror. The images were to inspire, to reflect the depths of Jewish potential, and to trigger that inner socialistic drive in modern Jewish youth so as to recapitulate, reincarnate the Jewish values in a new, fresh way.

Struck’s visual images were to serve a similar purpose, as well. In a second example of Zweig’s aesthetic strategy for social and personal influences, he writes that when young Jewish women look at the faces of the female socialist students from Russia, their hearts will be inspired to also live as dedicated socialists:

Und wenn ein Mädchen mit stillem und reinem Gesicht, mit hochgebauter Stirn und breiter Schläfe, mit verschwiegenem Munde und geradem Nacken all die Bilder der
sozialistischen Studentinnen sah, die stillen und reinen Gesichter, hochgebauten Stirnen
und verschwiegenen Münder—sollte in ihrem Herzen dann nicht der Entschluß
entbrennen: so zu leben, gelobe auch ich—das zu sein, vermag ich auch? Beispiele
werden die Nachfolge der Jugend wecken wo immer Jugend reinen unbedingten Willens
ist [...]“. (131)

Zweig makes the point that these female students, reflected in Struck’s portraits, are not violent
revolutionaries (128, 132).

These students are among “die Revolutionäre des langen Kampfes um die Menschenrechte und
das Menschen würdige Leben auf der Erde, die ihren Kampf in Rußland fochten” (130-131).
Struck’s images of “normal” Jewish women throughout this chapter clearly serve a similar
purpose: to inspire Jewish youth to live by the same humanitarian, socialist values as the Russian
youth. “Jugend, gute Jugend muß verehren oder sie kann nicht sein; und Welch ein Glück, wenn
es in der Zeit Männer und Frauen gibt, deren leuchtende Tapferkeit, deren Hingabe und
Opfermut, deren Hilfsbereitschaft und echte Kameradschaft ein Vorbild, Antrieb, Ziel ist, das zu
erreichen lockt!”(130). If the Jewish youth in Germany could not go abroad to Poland or Russia
to observe the authentic socialist students or the dedicated Hasidic Jews, Zweig would describe those examples to his readers; Struck would portray their faces. From such a perspective, it is clear how Zweig understood the power of art and of portraiture: If the youth could see the ideal, they would be inspired to become the reality. If they could hear the prophetic message and imagine the “land flowing with milk and honey,” then they would go and find that land.

But it was precisely the spiritual and aesthetic element that created the difficult and contradictory nature of Zweig’s “prophetic” vision of Jewish readers becoming a community characterized by such a strong ethical system. Zweig argues for the transformative power of art, traditional folk music, and Jewish ritual to inspire a sense of community devotion and even to inspire action—immigration back to Palestine—but Zweig’s own strategy of aesthetic inspiration never appears capable of taking his readers beyond an ephemeral feeling. In fact, as I will argue, Zweig’s method of advocating solidarity with the Eastern Jews contained a contradictory, self-defeating mechanism that was destined to sabotage his own professed goals of community building.

Zweig describes the spiritual and aesthetic value of the Chasan, the cantor of the Jewish synagogues, and how he blends the beauty of music with the power of spiritual transformation. “Er erbaut die Gemeinde, und sie vergöttert seine Stimme, sein Können und seine Melodien. Damit ist er das lebende Symbol der Zeit. Zwitterlich zwischen ästhetischer und religiöser Wirkung, strahlend, volkstümlich, naiv, eitel, nicht ganz ohne Gewinnfreude [...]” (150). He goes on to describe that, just as the cantor inspires the Jewish community, so the traditional celebration of Sabbath and the singing of the folks songs brings about a revolutionary, socialist community, a great sense of triumphant belonging to the Jewish people:

Just as literature affects Jewish youth and makes them long to implement the literary ideal into the world, so folk songs inspire the people to escape their own individualistic self-involvement and enable them to become lost in the larger community: “entgeht ihr eurer persönlichen Ichverhaftung und taucht zurück ins Sein des Volkes.” To reference back to the question of how the Jewish community is to come together and practice the ethical command of “helping people” first among themselves, and then later to those outside of the Jewish community: Zweig understands these aesthetic experiences of song, of literature, and of visual art as a crucial
element in Jewish spiritual preparation and personal transformation. Sammy Gronemann would also portray the transformative power of ritual in a similar fashion in his travelogue, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich* just a few years later.

Zweig’s attempt to spiritually renew his Jewish readers through aesthetic experiences reveals his indebtedness to the philosophies of Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer. Martin Buber combined an aesthetic interpretation of the Eastern European Jewish history and tradition with appeals for personal and spiritual “inner renewal” – and with no definite commitment to immigrate to Palestine or to return to traditional Orthodoxy: “[Martin Buber] war beeinflusst von seinen Studien des Chassidismus, zu der Ansicht gelangt, dass im modernen Juden vor allem das verkümmerte religiöse Gefühl wiedererweckt werden müsse. Er hatte dabei nicht die Ausübung der jüdischen Religion gemäß der Halacha im Sinn, sondern die Neubelebung der emotionalen Quellen jüdischer Religiosität“ (Mittelmann 50). Zweig reflected the prioritization of religious feeling in his own work, but Gustav Landauer’s radical insistence on the gradual re-occupation of Palestine complimented Zweig’s aesthetic and spiritual program and gave the vision at least one concrete, social and quasi-political position: Jews should move back to Palestine “in kleinen Siedelungen, ohne Staat, aus gemeinschaftlichem, antipolitischem Geiste heraus, unter Gemeinbesitz an Grund und Boden und den entscheidenden Produktionsmitteln den sozialistischen Geist zu leben, im jüdischen Lande, dem Lande unserer Arbeit und Erfüllung[...].” (156)

Martin Buber’s presentation of Hasidic literature and culture of the Eastern European Jews opened Zweig’s eyes to the truth of such potential in the Eastern Jews. In a letter to Buber, dated December 16, 1912 Zweig expressed his thankfulness for Buber’s insight—acknowledging that Buber’s works allowed him to sincerely re-engage the Jewish question:

(Buber, *Briefwechsel Band I* 321-322)

The effect of Buber’s works—most notably, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (1906), *Die Legende des Baal-Schem* (1908) and *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (1911)—triggered a new passion for “cultural Zionism” – an ambiguous term that represented Buber’s interpretation of Hasidism and which encouraged Zweig to participate in Jewish culture without stipulations for direct Zionist political involvement (Hans-Harald Müller “Zum Problem” 158). Buber’s vision of Hasidism affirmed Zweig’s preference for the aesthetic and cultural sphere of life and even invested that sphere with a new spiritual meaning – aesthetic experience as the key to personal, religious transformation.

Before the war, Zweig wrote Buber of his intention to follow the Austrian philosopher’s example by writing a similar description of the Ostjuden, specifically for the purpose of providing a contrast with the compromised, bourgeois culture of the assimilated Western Jews. Whatever Zweig’s expectations of the Ostjuden were, his actual experience of those communities while he was stationed in the Ober-Ost disappointed his ideals – or the experiences at least confirmed that the Eastern Jews were not in a position to organize themselves in any politically meaningful fashion. He wrote Buber from his station in the Ober-Ost in November of
1918, expressing his great discouragement not only with the Eastern Jews, but with Germany and the War in general. Zweig had reason to be frustrated with the political shortcomings of the Eastern communities, but his letter also reveals Zweig’s own non-political nature:

Zweig’s frustration with the political abilities of the Eastern Jews is curious. He clearly believed in the potential for the Eastern Jews to form themselves into some sort of a political entity with representation to distinguish themselves against the Polish authorities, but the *Ostjuden* had no background for political engagement – those rights had been denied them for centuries in their ghettos. At the same time, it is difficult to see how Zweig himself differed from the Eastern Jews in terms of his own political response to the national and international conflicts of his day. In his letter to Buber, he complains that the Eastern Jews’ most significant “political” initiative is that of founding a newspaper. Yet this was precisely the kind of “political” activity that Zweig
practiced when he came back from the war: publishing books and writing for newspapers, criticizing the *Spartakusbund* and the failed November Revolution of 1918 (Sternburg 123-24). Similarly, while he spoke out on political topics, Zweig largely discouraged political engagement within the existing political system of post-war Germany and offered, instead, his spiritual and aesthetic solutions as forms of social engagement.

Zweig’s aesthetic and spiritual approach to the importance of political life, or the kind of political life he thought German Jews should cultivate, is not only explained by Buber’s influence, and in terms of his own personality, but also by the influence of the political philosophy of Gustav Landauer—a socialist and “spiritual anarchist.” Zweig’s early, post-war newspaper articles criticized the Marxist and materialistic assumptions of the German November revolutionaries from a Landauer-like perspective. Zweig claimed that the German revolutionaries focused too much on political and economic issues and not enough on the “spiritual preparation” of individuals for the new life as a socialist or as a Zionist (Bernhard, Müller “Das Gewissen” 33-34).

Zweig discovered Landauer’s writings around the same time as the uproar created by the *Judenzählung* in 1916, and it was Landauer’s notions of spiritualized socialism that influenced Zweig’s Zionist understanding during the Weimar period. Zweig was able to pair his enthusiasm for Buber’s cultural Zionism with Landauer’s quasi-political language. Landauer’s book *Die Revolution* was particularly influential in Zweig’s thinking—convincing him of an anarchistic, spiritual form of agrarian socialist democracy within Palestine (Sternburg 101). During the Weimar era, Zweig’s pre-war nationalist, German ideals and expectations transformed, thanks to Landauer, into a vision for a pacifist, democratic Jewish community within a bi-national, Arab-
Jewish state, but again, Zweig avoided any specific articulation of administrative details (Grab 77).

Because Zweig’s text emphasizes the spiritual, inner renewal – and even inner renewal as a prerequisite for immigration to Palestine – *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* is ambivalent at best in terms of how seriously Zweig’s readers needed to consider relocation to Palestine. What becomes clear, and as I will explain below, is that Zweig believed it was too late for him and for his generation to immigrate to Palestine. The Zionist youth and, presumably, the unassimilated Eastern Jews should seek a new home in Palestine. Confusingly, if Zweig’s vision of a renewed Jewish community was of Jews who fulfilled the Old Testament law and the biblical injunction of the prophets to “help people” through voluntary alms-giving and material generosity – the sharing of possessions – and to practice this “brotherly aid” first and foremost in a united, Jewish community, and if that sense of solidarity and unity can be fostered through shared aesthetic experiences such as folks songs and inspirational literature, what is the urgency for a Palestinian migration?

One could easily refer to the pogroms and intense anti-Semitic persecution occurring in Eastern Europe as a reason for the Jews to escape to Palestine, and yet Zweig implies that the continued practice and performance of Jewish folk songs and the participation in a Jewish *Volk* culture not only leads to the spiritual and communal transformation of the Jewish *Volk* but to the socialist transformation of Europe as well: “in diesen Liedern standet ihr da, jüdisches Volk. Ihr hattet die Rettung. Ihr wart jung, euer Glauben reichte nicht allein an die erneuende Zukunft des Volkes in dem alten Lande, --dorthin auch der westliche gereicht hatte—sondern an die erneuende Revolutionszukunft Europas, an den Sozialismus auf der Erde” (152). Does Zweig’s text imply that the Jews have reason to continue to remain in Europe, since their influence is,
seemingly, beneficial to secular host countries? Given Zweig’s personal choices throughout his life, one can easily make a case that such statements reflect Zweig’s (sub)conscious desire to remain in Europe rather than relocate to Palestine.

Drawing on Buber’s example of spiritual and inner renewal, Zweig pairs his moral injunctions with the insistence that the form of a renewed Judaism needs to be new and, like God himself, eternally in the process of becoming: “die Namen Gottes müssen sich uns aufs neue offenbaren. Denn heute ist er wieder: der unbekannte Gott. ‘Ich werde sein, der ich sein werde’. Mögen wir erkoren sein, Diener dieses Ewigwerdenden zu heißen in den Völkern” (157-158). Zweig’s commitment to a spiritual and aesthetic path of transformation proves to be a double-edged sword that advocates for practical, material generosity and solidarity to other Jews in need, and he even passionately advocates for the value of shared cultural traditions and rituals, and yet his ethical injunctions are dependent – even contingent – on the aesthetic experience of renewal and religious feeling and a highly subjective process of individual interpretation.

The contradictory element here is the emphasized importance on communal life with the simultaneous insistence on individualistic, personal transformation. As I will point out in the next chapter, Alfred Döblin faced a similar difficulty: He could articulate the need for personal education, development, and subjective individuation and transformation, but he had difficulty demonstrating how such a path of individualistic spiritual development could lead to a renewed communal life. The danger with Zweig’s spiritual and aesthetic inspiration for a Jewish community is that it was so easy for Zweig to feel aesthetically and spiritually connected to a larger Jewish community, to feel in solidarity with the Eastern Jews, and yet to continue to interpret his Jewish identity in such distinctly individualistic, German terms. In other words, it is difficult to see how Zweig’s aesthetic inspiration or his emotional connection to the Eastern
Jewish communities led him to actively identify with them, work with them, and help them improve their social, material, and political conditions.

It would be helpful to borrow a couple of examples from Zweig’s life to demonstrate the inconsistency or the difference between Zweig’s cultivation of an aesthetic sense of cultural identity with the Eastern Jews and his lack of practical or communal integration with the Eastern Jews. In August of 1914 Zweig wrote a letter to Helene Weyl that revealed some of his thoughts regarding how he was interpreting his own Jewish identity at the beginning of the war:

So hat mich die im tiefsten verbindende Kraft der Kulturgemeinschaft, die mir früher nicht so gegeben war, geradezu überfallen. Ich weiss ganz genau—und Sie wissen, dass das zu meinem Glücke gehört--; ich nehme meinen leidenschaftlichen Anteil an unseres Deutschlands Geschick als Jude, auf meine mir eingeborene jüdische Art mache ich die deutsche Sache zu meiner Sache; ich höre nicht auf, Jude zu sein, sondern ich bin es immer mehr, je wilder ich mich freue, je tiefer ich empfinde, je heftiger ich nach Aktivität dränge. (Zweig, Weyl 78)

One wonders exactly what Zweig means in this passage when he asserts that he possesses some innate Jewish way of making the German causes and concerns his own. Based on the trajectory of his life throughout the rest of the Weimar period, one can only deduce that what Zweig meant by his Jewish identity was incredibly subjective, for, despite what he acknowledges in his travelogue regarding “Jewish” culture, it is difficult to see that he ever sought to apply or adopt any of those cultural practices for himself or his family: “Jüdisch ist Sabbath, jüdisch sind Feiertage und Speisen; Sprache, Bücher, Ahnen; Vorzugsgesetze, nach denen gewertet und
Instinkte, nach denen bejaht und verneint wird; jüdisch sind Witze und Gesten, Sprachfehler und Körperformen, individuelle Gebrechen und moralische Vorurteile [...]” (Zweig 125).

In his personal life Zweig, Wilhelm von Sternburg notes that Zweig’s integration of Jewish religious practices was sporadic at best: “Jüdische Orthodoxie oder die Religion überhaupt spielte bei der Erziehung der Kinder keine Rolle. Geistige Freiheit herrschte im Hause Zweig, zumindest solange die Grenzen des väterlichen Denkens nicht überschritten wurden” (Um Deutschland 130). The difference in Zweig’s personal life and the ideals that he described indicate that, for Zweig, an aesthetic or an emotional connection to the Eastern Jews was more important for him than was the practical, communal identification with the Ostjuden. The cultivation of aesthetic and emotional sensibilities did not, in and of itself, undermine the need to stand in solidarity with the Eastern European Jews, but, as I will demonstrate, for many German Jews, cultivating a positive emotional disposition toward the Eastern Jews was enough. In fact, I will argue that Zweig’s sentimental portrayals of the Ostjuden functioned as a kind of emotional substitute for Westernized, German Jews, for their active, communal support of the Eastern Jews.

Zweig acknowledged that the path to creating a united Jewish community would be difficult: “Der Weg der Hilfe aber ist: daß wir zunächst zu uns selber kommen und mit zusammengebissenen Zähnen nur an uns selber, am eigenen Volksleibe, das Leben neu gestalten” (168) – and yet his acknowledgment of the frustrations that might come in to practicing solidarity with poorer, Eastern Jews through material generosity and care for the poor was subjected to the larger principle the “Ewigwerdenden” nature of the Jewish people and their practice, and to “die unbedingte Abwesenheit jedes sozialen Zwanges; die Verantwortlichkeit des Menschen für den Menschen, die jedem Anspruch an ihn eine von beiden empfundene
Legitimität gibt; die Verbundenheit im Rhythmus des Daseins, im Anschauen der Welt, in der Rangordnung der Werte [...]” (31).

Zweig’s spiritual and aesthetic premise for a pan-Jewish solidarity contains, at its core, the simultaneous justification for continued disunity and non-solidarity among the Jews. Because the subjective aesthetic experience was primary to Zweig’s vision of Jewish renewal, his message inherently perpetuates a delay or a postponement of concrete action, even if concrete action, both material and economic, is implied and enjoined. Worse, because the subjective aesthetic, religious experience was primary in Zweig’s vision of renewal, his message guaranteed that readers could believe themselves to be in solidarity with their poor Eastern cousins based on their own personal religious or “spiritual” feeling. Traditional interpretations of the Old Testament ethical law could always be trumped with the demand for a “new,” subjective, individualistic, interpretation, and it is this conflicted philosophical base that is the primary reason for the self-deceptive solidarity / non-solidarity expressed in Das ostjüdische Antlitz.

A Community Rooted in Stereotypes: Universal Virtues and the Vices of Particularism

One of the criticisms Zweig and Struck received regarding their travelogue is that their romanticized portrayals of the Eastern Jews were inaccurate, but what needs to be understood is that Zweig was not interested in providing a historically accurate account of the Eastern Jews. It is evident both from passages in Das ostjüdische Antlitz and from letters he wrote to Martin Buber that Zweig’s interest was clearly in portraying the inner potential of the Eastern Jews to be a “nation” rather than any kind of historical reality. A few examples of Zweig’s idealized portrayals of the Eastern European Jews are worth citing. In the beginning chapter, Zweig
portrays the wise old man as a symbol and signifier of the rich cultural tradition within the Eastern Hasidic communities. He describes them as fundamentally “unchanged”—carrying on living traditions for decades if not centuries: “Und dies Volkstum, starr erhalten, in Sprache Tracht, Sitten und Geistigkeit dem fünfzehnten, dem vierzehnten Jahrhundert, nur oberflächlich verändert, entnommen, scheint selber unveränderlich und zählebig zu sein wie ein von Krankheit nicht bedrohter Greis” (21). The unbroken tradition is preserved by the wise sage, who is still energetic, who is still full of health. These wise men are generous, kind, spiritual and very devout, dedicated to their families (14). Zweig writes that the generation previous used to see more of such old, wise sages, but the Western Jew has traded the tradition and the company of the Hasidic elders for the temporary pleasures of materialist pursuits. The modern, Western Jew has forgotten this identity – this generous, wise, communal way of being embodied by the Greis. Zweig says that “we” in the West may have cultivated much learning and much cosmopolitan variety in our societies, but he is concerned that Western Jews have forgotten the roots of their identity and heritage.

Zweig complements the wise and generous image of the Eastern Jewish sage with that of the faithful, long-suffering Jewish mother. Just as Zweig and Struck picture the men as scholars upholding the traditional, patriarchal system through pious study of their Torah scrolls, they portray the mother, holding her child, demonstrating her devotion to the home and the family. Zweig compares these mothers to the Old Testament figure of Leah, wife of Jacob, and mother to many of the sons who became the patriarchal heads of the various tribes of ancient Israel. Zweig thus pictures the Eastern Jewish mothers cheerfully embracing the sacred role of child-bearing since among their children are the sons of Israel’s future. The women are dedicated to the family and the home, at great cost to themselves, and in this role, they are to be admired.
While the overly domestic image of the Eastern Jewish woman will offend contemporary readers for its overbearing patriarchal and sexist implications, Eva Raffel points out that Zweig’s intention was to defend Jewish girls against the common reputation as prostitutes (78). Both Zweig and Gronemann sought to shift the emphasis of this negative, but popular, stereotype. If the young, Hasidic women fell into prostitution, it was because of the horrific war conditions, and because of the immorality of the German soldiers, and not because of anything inherent in the character of Eastern Jewish women (79-80). Their true character, Zweig argued, was that of long-suffering, caring mothers.

What is important to recognize in these descriptions, and what contemporary critics of Zweig recognized, is the idealization at work. It is not just Zweig’s overly positive or naïve understanding of the harsh realities of the Ostjuden that critics have found puzzling. Whereas Zweig portrayed the Ostjuden as a link to the ancient past, this image did not correspond to the historic reality of those Jewish communities of Poland and Lithuania at the time of the war as Zweig would have witnessed. Both the cities of Wilna and Kowno (Zweig was stationed for part of his time in Kowno) were already known as acculturated, “enlightened” Jewish cities during the early part of the twentieth century and certainly during the German occupation. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Wilna especially had developed a reputation as “one of the most important centers of the Haskalah movement in Eastern Europe” (Zalkin). Even some of the models of Ostjudentum whom Zweig and Struck selected as ideal examples to highlight in the book were themselves leaders of change, progress and Enlightenment: “Selbst der erste Gewährsmann Zweigs für sein idealtypisches Bild vom Ostjuden, Mendele Mocher Sforim alias Schalom Jakob Abramowitsch, war ein Aufklärer, der nicht abließ von der Forderung nach Bildung und der Kritik an der traditionellen Ordnung jüdischen Lebens” (Raffel 60).
What is more, because Zweig was stationed on the Eastern German front during the war and had experienced the culture of the Eastern European Jews in Wilna and Kowno, he knew he was disregarding historical conditions in his portrayal of the Eastern European Jews. Because of this, Zweig’s text cannot be seen as merely a naive romanticizing of the subject matter. His purpose was far more intentional—namely to perpetuate an image and reputation of the Eastern Jew as artistically and culturally significant for a German audience. Again, Zweig was concerned with portraying the “truth” of the Eastern Jews’ potential as a united, national Volk, not the historical realities.

Zweig’s portrayals were “historically inaccurate” but he was participating in a larger tradition among Western Jewish literature and propaganda. Steven Aschheim notes that the Weimar travel writers were essentially basing their observations of the Eastern Jews on Heinrich Heine’s 1822 assessments of the outwardly unsophisticated, but inwardly spiritual, wise and pure Eastern Jew—the image that became the basis for the German revival of interest in Eastern Jewish culture nearly 100 years later. Heine’s characterization, and the message preached by the leaders of the Ostjuden cult in the early twentieth century (Buber, Zweig, Struck, Scholem, Kafka) regarding the positive image of the Eastern Jew, was rooted in a negative critique of the assimilated Western Jew: “The Ostjude was a foil for the presentation of the Western Jew as shallow, imitative, and assimilating. Beginning with Heine, the East-West evaluation was almost always derived from predominately antibourgeois sentiments” (Brothers 187).

This attempt to capture the truth of the potential of the Eastern European Jews was not unique to Zweig. David A. Brenner’s book, Marketing Identities, examines the stereotyping strategies used to promote a pan-Jewish identity in Germany in the publication Ost und West, a German Jewish journal that existed from 1901 to 1923, remarkable for its exploration and
popularization of Eastern European Jewish culture well before Buber’s reinvention of the Ostjuden for the Weimar era (D. Brenner 47-48). In the book, Brenner writes how the journal’s editors, Leo Winz, Binjamin Segel, Theodor Zlocisti, and Arno Nadel, carefully crafted stereotypes of the Eastern European Jew that were palatable to Western, German Jews and which were based less on the reality or the particular characteristics of the Eastern Jews and more in terms of their potential. Brenner argues that this unique stereotyping served to bridge the divide between the Eastern and Western Jews, providing a common cultural reference, which could help build coalitions between opposing Jewish factions and their notions of Jewish culture. Ost und West thus merged the universal with the particularistic and espoused an Eastern Jewish nationalism that was compatible with Western liberal humanism. The realization of the journal’s ideas in Weimar Jewish politics shows that a qualified form of Jewish separatism was acceptable to German Jews, if not to Germans in general. (168)

Brenner’s argument is that these carefully crafted stereotypes formed the basis of a publicly expressed, Western Jewish solidarity with their Eastern cousins. Whether or not Western Jews felt a personal need to invite the Eastern Jews more into their private spheres, Brenner writes, is difficult to know. What is evident is this public demonstration of support.

Brenner quotes from the January, 1901 edition of Ost und West, stating the intention of the publication:

So wollen wir auch jüdisches Leben preisen, nicht wie es heute ist, sondern wie es sein soll und schon zu werden beginnt. Wir verstehen darunter ein selbstbewusstes, innerlich gefestigtes und geheiligtes, treues und fruchtbares jüdisches Leben, das auf dem Boden eines schönen Menschentums und einer stillen Arbeit für allgemeinen Kulturfortschritt
die gute Eigenart unserer Rasse entfaltet. Ein solches Leben kann aber erst dann voll aufblühen, wenn die tiefe Entfremdung, die innerhalb des Judentums zwischen den einzelnen Gruppen und Schichten eingetreten ist, überwunden wird, und einer einheitlichen Gemeinschaft die Wege gebahnt werden. („Ost und West” 1-2).

This sounds quite similar to Zweig’s early book proposal to Martin Buber, demonstrating that for Zweig and others, the purpose of their publications was not to produce a historical record or journalistic reportage. Theirs was a propagandistic message aimed at bridging gaps of misunderstanding and cultural division among Western and Eastern Jews.

As was noted above, Buber also participated in this “translating” of the Eastern Jew for the benefit of Western audiences. His neo-romantic Hasidism bore almost no connection to the historical reality. Yet as much as Gershom Scholem criticized Buber for his historical dishonesty, other serious Jewish scholars, such as Franz Rosenzweig, believed that Buber’s work was at least a good place for most Western Jews to begin engagement with their Jewish heritage, ethnicity, and faith (Aschheim, Brothers 135). Zweig was unquestionably a romantic and an idealist, but censure of the travelogue because of its lack of historical accuracy must be balanced with the perspective that Zweig was not alone in portraying a positive, subjective view of the Eastern Jews that was rooted much more in German Jewish expectations, critiques, and hopes than in factual reporting.

One of the points that David A. Brenner maintains regarding the publication of Ost und West is that the journal’s readership responded better to negative stereotypes and behaviors that both Eastern and Western Jews agreed should be avoided than the readership responded to positive formulations of what “true” or authentic Judaism was. In other words, potential Eastern
and Western Jewish subscribers to the journal had set ideas on what a Jew was not, though they had difficulty determining a universally agreed-upon description of who Jews were or should be. Brenner argues that it was the common “enemy” of the negative Jewish stereotype that gave Eastern and Western Jews a sense of shared solidarity – at least in terms of a public proclamation in the form of a news journal. Both Western and Eastern Jews seemed to be insistent in condemning various forms of stereotypical Jewish greed and materialism. Thus the editors of Ost und West carefully balanced regular condemnation of these stereotypical public vices in their publication with images of the “good” Eastern Jew or the “good” Western Jew (D. Brenner 75).

The primary negative stereotype critiqued by the Ost und West journal was that of the eager Jewish parvenu, the social climber, the Jew who had perhaps come from a poor, undistinguished background and who ungracefully flaunted whatever social and financial success he managed to attain (D. Brenner 78). Zweig uses a similar strategy, concentrating on negative, “capitalistic” stereotypes of Western Jews which need to be avoided. He reminds the Jewish youth that their goal is to avoid such capitalist pursuits and selfish pride: “Euer Ziel ist: Aufrichtung eines gerechten Lebens. Euer Feind ist der Dämon des Geldes, der Eigensicht, des Handels und der Zeit. Eure Gefahr, und eine, die euch sehr deutlich umlockt und, viel heftiger als uns selbst je, umwirbt: ist Stolz auf euch selbst. [...]”(168).

On the whole, Zweig’s portrayals of the Eastern Jew do not focus on such negative stereotypes. As noted by Eva Raffel earlier, Zweig, Struck, and Gronemann specifically aimed at countering the negative, anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany with a positive message – one that redeemed or at least explained the common images of Eastern Jewish girls as overly promiscuous and immoral, for example. The corruption of the German military and the horrors of war were what poisoned the reputation of the Ostjuden rather than anything inherent in the
character of Jewish women. What Zweig capitalizes upon instead is the negative aspect of Jewish persecution and anti-Semitism in order to create a shared sense of solidarity.

As discussed earlier, Zweig opens the travelogue with a warning about the pogroms in Poland and the Ukraine. He compares these Eastern European host countries to the ancient, pagan enemies of the Jews: the Amalekites. While perhaps less dramatic, he compares the capitalistic systems of Western Europe to the slavery of the Egyptians, but early in the text he also includes Germans into the accusation of being like the Amalekites: “[…] und er, Kajin-Amalek, einst Römer und Deutscher, nun Rumäne, Ungar, Ukrainer und Pole, wird das Blut des Juden vergießen und darin seine Niederlage finden, seine Schande, seinen endlichen Tod” (38-40). Throughout the text he recalls the sacrifice and martyrdoms of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Gustav Landauer who were all willing to speak out, willing to be killed for their beliefs. (171). Zweig likewise charges the youth to have the same kind of readiness to give their lives for their convictions: “Wenn er dann aber sich entscheidet und sagt: die Zeit schreit nach mir, daß ich hier und an diesem Orte meine Tat tue, — so möge er hingehen, ein Opfer mehr” (169). Zweig conflates Jewish persecution in Eastern Europe at the hands of “godless pagans” with the political Jewish martyrs in Germany in order to create an identity between the two. Zweig’s pairing of the political murders in Germany provides a sense of balance: The Jews in the West had also suffered. The pan-European solidarity among Jews thus stems from a common enemy in the non-Jew, even among Germans.

Zweig’s positive descriptions of the Ostjuden, as well as his strategic emphasis on a common enemy for the Jews is powerful and did create, if the book’s popularity and artistic significance is considered, a reliable metric, what David Brenner considers a public expression of pan-Jewish solidarity. If nothing else, the book allowed Western Jews to express solidarity
with the kind of Eastern Jew portrayed in the text. Zweig also allowed Western Jews to believe that, in light of the murders of Jewish political revolutionaries, the Western Jews shared in the collective identity as persecuted victims and martyrs.

At least two problematic elements complicate the affirmation of the positive stereotypes and the shared, collective identity as a persecuted group. The first contradictory aspect is that a universally appealing image distracted and even denied the potentially offensive particularity of the Eastern Jewish immigrants in Western societies. The second contradictory aspect is that creating solidarity out of a common enemy worked to reinforce or affirm the identity of Western Jews with the positive, universal ideal: The Western Jew, just as much as the Eastern Jew, can claim the shared experience of persecution and discrimination and can therefore simultaneously participate in the positive stereotype. Western or Eastern Jews are both identified with the positive, and persecuted, ideal.

The most obvious difficulty with expressing solidarity with the positive, universal ideal of the Eastern Jew – or the Jew who represented the full potential of a spiritual, ethically distinctive people – is not that this Jew did not exist. Even if Zweig intentionally portrayed an ideal and not a factual, historical reality, Döblin and Gronemann did attempt to capture their experiences in a more journalistic fashion. Döblin especially was under no obligation to praise the Eastern Jews, and, in fact, made his critique and distaste of many elements of the Hasidic communities quite clear. In spite of his lack of a personal connection with the Eastern Jews, Döblin admired the wisdom of the Hasidic Rebbes for their ability to navigate the tension between modern science and the religious teachings and for their compassion on the poor (Reise 92, 330). Gronemann likewise emphasized the great kindness and hospitality of the Eastern Jews (Gronemann 205-206). A virtuous reality existed in the Eastern Hasidic communities to support
Zweig’s ideal. The problem with Zweig’s positive stereotypes was that he sought to overlook the particularism that others would have found offensive and that anti-Semitic propaganda capitalized upon. As Paul Zucker noted, it was precisely because any reader could look at each page of Zweig’s and Struck’s beautiful book with admiration that the publication was suspicious (Zucker 465). As David Brenner notes, it was not only Zucker who felt this way: “The Polish contributors to [the journal] Ost und West knew better than to accept any glowing accounts of life in Germany’s Eastern neighbor” (163).

The universal appeal of Zweig’s Eastern Jews minimized and nearly eclipsed the particular character of the people with whom he wished to express solidarity. One could almost conclude that, if the Eastern Jews really were as Zweig portrayed them, there would have been no need to express an active solidarity for them, because they would have been universally accepted. But the Eastern Jews were in great need of public solidarity from Western Jews precisely because of their particular circumstances. David Brenner points out that, ironically, as the image of the Ostjuden became more popular in Germany, the conditions of poverty, ignorance, superstitious practices, and the lack of cultural sophistication only increased in Poland and in the other Jewish communities of Eastern Europe (163).

What Zweig did not emphasize – though he acknowledged this principle in the text – was the difficult reality of the Judeo-Christian injunction: To “love thy neighbor” meant to love those different from, and even offensive to, oneself. As quoted earlier, Zweig acknowledged: “Der Weg der Hilfe aber ist: daß wir zunächst zu uns selber kommen und mit zusammengebissenen Zähnen nur an uns selber, am eigenen Volksleibe, das Leben neu gestalten” (168). The image of “gritting one’s teeth” in order to get along with the others in the group is certainly indicative of the putting aside of one’s personal preferences for the greater good of the common cause and
culture. In another place, Zweig recognizes the common fear of the Western Jew associating with the Eastern Jew: “[... ] der einfache Ostjude ist nicht ‘fein’. Man denke! Er redet sehr laut, kennt keine Distanz und Zurückhaltung, er schmatzt und schlürft bei Tische, er steckt das Messer in den Mund... Der Westjude fällt in Ohnmacht vor Scham, denn der Nichtjude könnte ihn mit jenem verwechseln oder identifizieren!” (83). Zweig goes on to say that these perceptions are terribly narrow. One must look deeper to see the true character of the Eastern Jew – and yet he acknowledges that the Western Jew would have to overcome the superficial lack of “refinement” and culture in the Eastern cousins. Zweig wanted to help Western Jews see the Eastern immigrants “as they really were” – their inner value.

The Antlitz that Zweig presented was meant to assure Western audiences that the Ostjuden were “just like” Western Jews underneath their lack of refinement. Both groups, Zweig argues, held to the same universal ethical values and both groups belonged to the same persecuted ethnic minority. In brief places throughout the text, Zweig demonstrates that he was aware of the problematic differences between the two cultural groups of Jews, but he overshaows the acknowledgement of those differences with an overwhelming optimism that the next generation of Zionist youth will be able to overcome the cultural divide to create a new, united Jewish community. In other words, Zweig wanted to make the ethical injunction to “love thy neighbor” as appealing as possible to Western Jews: He tried to portray the Eastern Jews as people with whom they could relate, and as a result, he re-imagined the Eastern Jew in a German image.

In contrast to Zweig’s portrayal of the Eastern Jewish “Neighbor” as someone who was very similar to German Jews, Slavoj Žižek makes the observation that the Judeo-Christian “Neighbor” whom the ethical injunction enjoins individuals to love is rarely easy to understand.
or relate to. In fact, Žižek insists that the concept of the “Neighbor” does not refer to the fellow man, but rather to someone who is irritating and potentially toxic to oneself. Žižek writes:

Since a Neighbor is, as Freud suspected long ago, primarily a thing, a traumatic intruder, someone whose different way of life (or rather, way of *jouissance* materialized in its social practices and rituals) disturbs us, throws the balance of our way of life off the rails, when it comes too close, this can also give rise to an aggressive reaction aimed at getting rid of this disturbing intruder. (*Violence* 59)

Žižek’s comments on the Neighbor need to be qualified with his larger argument in his work, *Violence*. Žižek’s solution to the “toxicity” of the Neighbor, the Other, the unwanted guest is to find ways of politely avoiding one another. He goes on to say that sense of modern alienation in European societies can actually be a good thing:

One of the things alienation means is that distance is woven into the very social texture of everyday life. Even if I live side by side with others, in my normal state I ignore them. I am allowed not to get too close to others. I move in a social space where I interact with others obeying certain external “mechanical” rules, without sharing their inner world. Perhaps the lesson to be learned is that sometimes a dose of alienation is indispensable for peaceful coexistence. (59)

Žižek is less concerned about actively building communal relationships than he is concerned with the reduction of ethnic, religious, and cultural conflict. Žižek is not writing about creatively forming human culture but rather ensuring that people do not disturb one another, and the way he envisions this is the imposition of “external ‘mechanical’ rules,” which begins to sound rather
inhumane, dictatorial, and totalitarian. In other words, his purpose is different than Zweig’s who was trying to cultivate a new kind of voluntaristic Jewish community.

The reason Žižek’s perspective is helpful is that although Zweig recognized the “toxic” element of the Neighbor, he failed to elaborate on the implications of this principle within a community. Zweig’s intention was inspire more genuine, human community life, but his method was ultimately oddly similar to the kind of “distancing” and “alienation” that Žižek describes. For Zweig’s travelogue, the reader does not come away aware of the concrete hurdles that he or she must now work to overcome in order to forge a new community with the Eastern Jews. What Zweig proposes instead is an idealized, inoffensive, acceptable image of the Eastern Jew and then goes on to advocate for certain “external ‘mechanical’ rules” to keep them in a lower socio-economic, political position. In other words, Zweig’s treatment of the Eastern Jews resembles what Žižek describes as a “reasonable anti-Semitism”: an indirect way of ensuring that the potentially disturbing elements of the Neighbor will not be too disruptive to the dominant culture.

In a very odd passage at the end of the second chapter, Zweig writes how the Western Jew needs to look past the lack of refinement of the Ostjuden in order to overcome his fear of being identified with his uncultured cousins. Zweig then proceeds to briefly sketch what the Eastern Jews are “really” like: They are hard working factory laborers. They are oppressed and earn barely enough money to afford their bread. This is the cause of their lack of sophistication and culture (83). All of their extra energy is poured into fulfilling strict ethical demands. Their expression of greater artistic or cultural potential is cut off because of their poverty:

Alle schaffenden Kräfte dieses Volkes vermögen nur nach innen zu schlagen, ins Ethische abzuströmen; die Erdfreude, das liebe Leben, von der göttlichen Freiheit
verschönt und Menschenwürde schon außen in Gehaben und erfreulicher Breite des Daseins zur Schau bringend, bleibt abgeschnürt durch Mangel an Nahrung und Mangel, vor allem, an Raum. Und dabei müssen wir, vom unbarmherzigen Auge des Volkswollenden geleitet, diese Grausamkeit noch segnen; denn wenn dem Ostjuden plötzlich jede Hemmung von außen genommen wäre, wenn ihm der Raum beliebigen Landes in der ganzen Breite des östlichen und westlichen Kontinents offen stünde: so groß ist der Überdruck des Elends, der Not und der drängenden, Lebenwollenden Kräfte, daß nichts dafür bürgt, es werde der Ostjude nicht explosiv ausgesät werden, wie der Samen einer platzenden Frucht, und die letzte geschlossene Volkheit der Juden zu Individuen ausgebreitet werden. Der Haß der Völker ist eine Form politischer, bewahrennder Vorsehung... (85).

What is very strange about this passage is that Zweig appears to support these conditions of poverty, the social and economic limitations of the Eastern Jew: “Und dabei müssen wir, vom unbarmherzigen Auge des Volkswollenden geleitet, diese Grausamkeit noch segnen [...]” The reason that these impoverished conditions can be tolerated or even encouraged is that if the Eastern Jews had all obstacles removed, it is possible that they would begin to overpopulate their host countries. They would spread their seed like a fruit that has fallen on the ground and burst open. Another danger in the Eastern Jews multiplying is that they would be no numerous, the sense of a contained community would be lost.

The impoverished conditions, the misery and the spatial limitations come about as a result of what the host countries impose on the Eastern Jews. The last sentence of this paragraph is cryptic: “Der Haß der Völker ist eine Form politischer, bewahrennder Vorsehung...” What does Zweig mean? Does he mean that because anti-Semitic host countries have made conditions
difficult for the Jews, this is all the more reason why their pent up creative energy will burst forth, ultimately placing the Jews in a position where they will be the majority of the country’s inhabitants? Does he mean that the anti-Semitic discrimination works to seal the fate of the host country? This interpretation is possible given the earlier quote, referencing the biblical history between Israel and Amalek: “[…] und er, Kajin-Amalek, einst Römer und Deutscher, nun Rumäne, Ungar, Ukrainer und Pole, wird das Blut des Juden vergießen und darin seine Niederlage finden, seine Schande, seinen endlichen Tod” (38-40). Zweig believes that discrimination toward the Jews by non-Jews will result in some kind of curse for the host country.

Zweig proposes a veiled threat that host countries need to be kind to the Eastern Jews, but he also says that the impoverished condition of the Jews must be looked on favorably: Zweig did not, apparently, want the Jews to multiply to the degree that they would overpopulate Europe because he wanted the Jews to continue to identify with their self-contained communities. Their völkisch distinctiveness would be lost if all obstacles were removed for their social and economic freedom. In a strange way, Zweig wanted the image of the Eastern Jew to remain that of a poor, persecuted minority.

Zweig’s desire to retain the impoverished aspects of the good, poor, persecuted Eastern Jew is odd, but it makes sense in light of the larger goal that Zweig had for the travelogue: to combat the anti-Semitic propaganda and stereotypes in Germany. He wanted to make the Eastern Jews appear as inoffensive and as virtuous as possible but without advocating too strongly for their rights and acceptance into German society, less they create too much of a disturbance.
Žižek argues, as a modern parallel to Zweig’s example, that contemporary European host countries, in order to address the problem of the (immigrant) Neighbor, incorporate various forms of “reasonable anti-Semitism.” What this means is that “tolerance” is defined as accepting those immigrants who fit certain expectations within the host country so as not to fundamentally alter the social norms. As long as the immigrants play their acceptable part – as long as they live the idealized image that that host country expects of them – there is no reason for conflict. Žižek writes:

The formula of ‘reasonable anti-semitism’ was best formulated in 1938 by Robert Brasillach, who saw himself as a ‘moderate’ anti-semite:

We grant ourselves permission to applaud Charlie Chaplin, a half Jew, at the movies; to admire Proust, a half Jew; to applaud Yehudi Menuhin, a Jew; and the voice of Hitler is carried over radio waves named after the Jew Hertz … We don’t want to kill anyone, we don’t want to organise any pogroms. But we also think that the best way to hinder the always unpredictable actions of instinctual anti-semitism is to organise a reasonable anti-semitism. (“Berlusconi in Tehran”).

Again, in this passage Žižek describes “reasonable anti-Semitism” as a hypocritical method that modern European countries have adopted for reducing ethnic and cultural conflict, but the method has clear parallels to Zweig’s passage where he acknowledges that it is probably best for the Ostjuden and their host countries if they are not allowed too much freedom. This does not mean that Zweig did not advocate for better conditions for the immigrant Jews (and certainly for better conditions when immigrating to Palestine), and he provided the vague threat that it is in the host country’s best interest to be kind to Jews – but not so kind as to fundamentally disrupt the social order. What Zweig reflects is a type of “reasonable anti-Semitism” that would have
been acceptable for Western Jews, seeking desperately to blend in with the majority, German culture.

Zweig’s strategy of a subtle, “reasonable anti-Semitism” makes sense in terms of the larger concerns of Western Jews in Germany: They wanted to blend in. The Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (CV) was the largest organizational representation of German Jewry during the Weimar period and promoted, above all, loyalty to a German identity among German Jews (Borut 95). Avraham Barkai notes that the priority of the CV was to encourage a deutsche Gesinnung. Although the importance of the deutsche Gesinnung and the exact definition was debated among its members, this did not stop the CV from successfully advocating that the voting rights of the Ostjuden be restricted (Barkai 83). The CV wanted to be known as loyal German patriots, and their loyalty expressed itself, at times, in initiatives of “moderate anti-Semitism” in order to limit the outbursts of the more dangerous, non-Jewish anti-Semites.

From its beginning in the early 1890s, the “CV’s program was derived from the notion of the ‘emancipation contract.’ Prejudice, discrimination, and hostile propaganda were to be fought ruthlessly, but on the basis of total loyalty to the German Empire and nation” (Meyer 3:257). The difficulty with this stance is that it was a perspective inspired by the likes of more liberal minded intellectual Jews, such as Raphael Loewenfeld, who professed only minimal connection to the religious aspect of Judaism. As such, the philosophical foundations of the CV’s anti-Semitic defense campaigns were at odds with the Jewish identities of the Orthodox and the Zionists (Meyer 3:258). The result was that, especially after the 1918 revolutions in Germany, the CV tried to distance itself from the Eastern Jewish political leaders of the revolts, claiming that the radicals had nothing to do with the good German Jewish nationalists. Other CV dignitaries
lashed out against the Zionists for perpetuating the negative stereotypes of Jewish nationalists who made for unstable, unreliable German citizens (Meyer 4:105). Zionism was not German enough for the CV and even endangered the image of the loyal German Jew, and thus, it was the responsibility of the CV to fight against the Zionists (along with their Eastern Jewish adherents) as a way to fight anti-Semitism (Barkai 82-83).

While Zweig was a committed cultural Zionist, his own position expressed in the travelogue reveals the level of conflict and ambivalence that many German Jews felt about the limits of their respective identities. David A. Brenner writes that it is incredibly difficult to determine what qualified as true self-hatred among German Jews and what was simply the recognition among many Jews that anti-Semitism was, in some form, to be expected as a part of the Jewish European experience (164-65). Despite the anti-Semitism that Zweig experienced throughout his life, he remained a proud bearer and supporter of German culture, and the depth of that primary identity revealed itself in such odd passages where he advocated that “[…] dabei müssen wir, vom unbarmherzigen Auge des Volkwollenden geleitet, diese Grausamkeit noch segnen […]” Zweig attempted to both advocate for the Eastern Jews and yet in a way that appealed primarily to a Western audience and in a way that re-inscribed his own commitment to German values.

What this means is that Zweig’s positive stereotypes, his romanticized descriptions of the Eastern Jews actually functioned to perpetuate a socially acceptable image of the Eastern Jew as poor, persecuted, and socially and politically limited. Once the Eastern Jew escaped those limitations, the image became less acceptable and more uncertain as a basis for public solidarity. Zweig’s travelogue shows an affirmation of the Eastern Jews that would have been acceptable to German Jews: They were the embodiment of traditional Jewish ethics and values, supposedly
lost by Western Judaism, and simultaneously relegated to a socially, economically, and politically limited sphere. In other words, Zweig’s and Struck’s images and descriptions of the Eastern Jews did not represent a people group that threatened to dislodge a loyal German reputation that so many Western Jews had worked to create. The Eastern Jews, in Zweig’s depictions, could be seen as a cultural or historical oddity, but surely not as a growing, competing, political minority. This is precisely why the Zionists, as Avraham Barkai argues, represented a threat to the Centralverein: The Zionists questioned the place and primacy of Jewish identity as Germans and thereby threatened the Jewish reputation as politically loyal subjects and German nationalists (78-79).

While such an attitude of loyalty and cultural affinity among the Weimar Jews was complicated, I believe that Zweig’s travelogue provides insight into the deeper reasons as to why he portrayed the Eastern Jews as he did and why Western Jews would have continued to find such a portrayal so attractive: Zweig’s positive descriptions of the virtuous Eastern Jews, when combined with his examples of persecution and martyrdom among Eastern and Western Jews, functioned to create an identity between the East and the West whereby Western Jews could continue to believe that they were part of a virtuous, historically rooted Volk as long as they could still see, and express solidarity for, examples of the “true” Jews.

The Solidarity of a Persecuted Minority

David A. Brenner argues that the reason why the publication of Ost und West was so successful is that it played on the fears of middle-class and intellectual Western Jews, that they would somehow lose their Jewishness, that they would become too assimilated (D. Brenner 75). Brenner chronicles that, of all the various ways that Western Jewish men and women sought to retain their sense of Jewishness, one of the main ways was the cultivation of disgust and
disapproval towards the social unrefined, Jewish parvenu. Zweig employs a similar strategy, drawing upon a negative emotion of disgust and anger, but his target is the non-Jewish oppressor and persecutor. For Zweig, the strategy he employed to assure his readers that they were still Jewish was to create a common identity between the virtuous Eastern Jews and the less virtuous Western Jews by showing that both groups were persecuted and that their collective community was one of innocent martyrs.

Brenner points out that German Jewish women feared losing their Jewish roots and yet, of all the social ranks in Wilhelminian Germany, they were less likely to be in danger of full assimilation: Many still saw themselves as the defenders of the Jewish heritage within the home. In addition, they were the bearers of the legacy of Rahel Varnhagen, Henriette Herz, and Dorothea Schlegel—eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century examples of social elites, known for nurturing and disseminating German culture from within a domestic setting. Such a positive influence was easily paired with middle-class expectations and bourgeois, enlightened values that the woman’s priority was to be her home and family (100).

Brenner points out that it was not as easy for Jewish men within early twentieth-century Germany to proudly own up to their ethnicity as it was for women. Germany fostered a greater sense of social pressure for German Jewish men to assimilate or convert than in other Western European countries (85). Yet identifying with Eastern Jewish ethnicity became a unique cultural response, and form of survival, in light of the social and economic and discrimination starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The great desire among Jewish men to identify with the Eastern Jews and to reject the Western, assimilated identity was largely a privilege of the upper-middle class. Brenner argues that the economic difficulties in Germany after 1873 created an environment of heated competition and discrimination in the job market, particularly
in the university setting. The result was an entire generation of well-educated Jewish men and women who were openly discriminated against and denied the possibility of academic or legal careers. Popular recourses for their skill sets were within journalism and other cultural and artistic outlets (80). Brenner writes: “These young German Jews, whose chances to succeed as Bildungsbürger were waning, reacted to the threat of becoming déclassé by portraying their fathers (and the rest of the German Jewish propertied bourgeoisie) as assimilationist” (81). These young men (and some women) chose a unique strategy of a cultural defense and a new back-to-the-roots identity over and against the parental generation that they believed had betrayed them.

In addition to the economic shake-up for many Jewish intellectuals, it took the shock of the Judenzählung and the experience of German discrimination during World War I to cause German Jewish men to reexamine their German identity and fierce German patriotism (140). Zweig was himself an example of a passionate German patriot who was nevertheless proudly Jewish. In a letter to Helene Weyl, dated August of 1914, he wrote “[...] ich nehme meinen leidenschaftlichen Anteil an unseres Deutschlands Geschick als Jude, auf meine mir eingeborene jüdische Art mache ich die deutsche Sache zu meiner Sache; ich höre nicht auf, Jude zu sein, sondern ich bin es immer mehr [...]” (Zweig, Weyl, Komm her, wir lieben dich 78). His hopes to live out that dual identity in the service of the Kaiser were shattered by the end of the war. The Zählung confirmed for Zweig that the anti-Semitism of Germany had not been assuaged by the war, and it marked a turning point for Zweig in becoming an active pacifist and a more deeply committed Zionist. After the Judenzählung, Zweig and the rest of the German Jewish community understood that a clear demarcation had been drawn: Peter Pulzer notes: “Whatever the true motivation [of the Judenzählung], the effect on the Jewish population was disastrous. No single
wartime act of the [German] regime did more to alienate them or remind them of their status as stepchildren” (Meyer 3: 372).

World War I, combined with a disgruntled generation of well-educated, middle-class Jews, created an environment in Germany in which “[y]oung German Jewish intellectuals were thus unwilling to abandon the upper-middle-class status they had inherited. And they were the only ones likely to have the leisure (or the finances) to support Jewish nationalism” (D. Brenner 83). Zweig’s generation enjoyed the middle-class, educational, and economic status of their German heritage, but that same nation had proven capable at least twice of betraying their interests. The result was a renewed cultural loyalty and affinity for “true” Jewish folk culture combined with a simultaneous desire to preserve their socio-economic stability.

This historical perspective helps explain Zweig’s seemingly contradictory position of over-identifying with the Eastern Jews in certain sections of his travelogue and then sanctioning economic and social Hemmungen in other sections. His corresponding strategies of creating a balance between Eastern and Western Jews, or forging an associative pan-Jewish identity through the common denominators of anti-Semitic persecution and aggression, and through highlighting Eastern and Western Jewish martyrs further reinforced an image of the Eastern Jew as primarily serving to reassure the Western Jews of their own Jewishness—that they had not completely assimilated.

Early in the travelogue, Zweig graphically depicts the brutality of anti-Semitism in Poland and the Ukraine and he refers to these slain individuals as “our martyrs”: “Wir ahnen alle, erschüttert vor der Reinheit solchen Todes, die Geste, mit der unsere Märtyrer sich in den weißen streifigen Gebetmantel hüllen und sich erschlagen lassen, weil sie diesem Volke angehören, das
ausgewählt und niedergeworfen in einem ist“ (38). The deaths of these Eastern Jews do not signal the end of the Jewish people, he says. The Jews people will eventually overcome and outlive their oppressors: “Es [das Volk] wird nicht untergehen. Es wird die junge und bestialische Nation überdauern, wie es andere überdauert hat. Und wir werden nichts vergessen; das Volk wird nichts vergessen. Juda ist ewig, und Amalek, der die Schwachen, die sich nicht wehrten, niedermachte, ist nur langlebig” (38). Zweig claims these Eastern martyrs as “ours” and then finally emphasizes the commitment that “we” will never forget. He then goes on to identify the non-Jewish host countries with Amalek, the pagan enemy of ancient Israel (38).

Zweig claims an identity with the Eastern Jews in this early passage but then balances those examples of Eastern Jewish martyrdom by ending his travelogue with the examples of Western Jewish political martyrs:


The purpose of listing the martyrs, according to Zweig, is to show the younger generation that these men and women died in order to bring new life to the Jewish community that will
ultimately overcome and outlive their violent, Gentile host nations. The promise that the old Eastern Jew was sacrificed only to give rise to a new Jewish people might just as well be applied to Liebknecht, Luxemburg, and Landauer: “Greis, von den Sternen her strömt Sicherheit in dich; Greis im Tallith, dein Blut, vergossen für uns alle und für die Wehrlosigkeit des Menschen, wird verklärt auferstehen und das Morgenrot der Zeiten je und je färben, wird wie ein unverlöschliches Gestirn, die Morgenröte, das Ende der Dämmerung einleiten und bekräftigen” (40).

Again, by constructing a public form of solidarity based on a common history of persecution and a common, non-Jewish enemy, Zweig creates an associative identity between the Western and Eastern Jews: The two groups belong together. Eastern Jews have suffered; Western Jews have suffered. Both represent a victimized, persecuted minority. This associative identity between Eastern and Western Jews worked to strengthen the Western Jews’ sense that they still belonged to this historical Volk, thus preserving the use of the Eastern Jew’s image as “always a potential, if slight, element in Western Jewish self-understanding, the positive side of a built-in ambivalence.” (Aschheim, Brothers 185).

Slavoj Žižek provides a further layer of analysis for this associative phenomenon between dual identities that helps further interpret the overly romanticized images and descriptions of the Eastern European Jews. He argues that ideology and belief often functions such that an individual can rely on someone or something else (real or imagined) which serves as a stand-in for individual identity, personal belief, and commitment. Following Robert Pfaller’s philosophy (Illusionen der Anderen), Žižek argues that, more than ever, postmodern culture consists of rituals and traditions that individuals profess not to really believe in, but nonetheless practice:
What is a cultural lifestyle, if not the fact that, although we don’t believe in Santa Claus, there is a Christmas tree in every house, and even in public places, every December? Perhaps, then, the “nonfundamentalist” notion of “culture” as distinguished from “real” religion, art, and so on, is in its very core the name for the field of disowned/impersonal beliefs—“culture” is the name for all those things we practice without really believing in them, without “taking them seriously.” (Žižek, *Puppet 7*)

The similarity between this postmodern attitude and Zweig’s approach to the Eastern Jews is remarkable. One might even hear Zweig protesting that he did not “really” believe in the Eastern Jews he described. How could critics accuse him of falsely portraying the “real” Eastern Jews? They were an ideal, an image of inspiration and potential! And yet it was precisely that distance, that idealized, overly-romanticized caricature of the Eastern Jew that allowed Zweig and many other Germans to deny an association with the real Eastern Jews which would have been too close for their own German identities to bear. They did not “really” believe in these romanticized visions of the Eastern Jews, but they were nevertheless very popular among German Jews as the topics of coffee table books adorning German Jewish homes.

What Zweig’s overly idealized Eastern Jews also meant was, as long as the caricature and example of the Eastern Jew was present for them to deny or for them to express public solidarity with, that image prevented them from having to fully bear the responsibility of living up to the ideal of whatever a full Jewish identity might look like. As long as the image (real or imagined) of the Eastern Jew existed, Western Jews could trust that their own identity, their own *völkisch* identity in the Jewish people, was secure. Žižek expresses this phenomenon in another way by retelling an anecdote about the physicist Niels Bohr. Supposedly, a guest came to visit the renowned scientist and noticed that a horseshoe was hung over the door of Bohr’s home. The
guest teased Bohr for being superstitious, accusing the physicist of hanging the horseshoe on the house in order to keep evil spirits away:

Surprised at seeing a horseshoe above the door of Bohr’s country house, a visiting scientist said he didn’t believe that horseshoes kept evil spirits out of the house, to which Bohr answered: ‘Neither do I; I have it there because I was told that it works just as well if one doesn’t believe in it!’ This is how ideology functions today: nobody takes democracy or justice seriously, we are all aware that they are corrupt, but we practise them anyway because we assume they work even if we don’t believe in them.

(“Berlusconi in Tehran”)

Zweig’s portrayals of the Eastern Jews functioned like Niels Bohr’s horseshoe. Western Jews did not need to believe in a religion any longer, but they needed someone else who did, or they needed a tangible stand-in to be the guarantor of their own religious / non-religious identity.

Again, as Avraham Barkai notes, one of the remarkable sociological features of German Jewry during the 1920s was that it increasingly consisted of non-religious Jews, many of whom identified as atheists (Barkai 77-78). Zweig himself belonged to this category, cultivating little to no religious practice or tradition whatsoever in his home (Sternburg 130). The Eastern Jewish image functioned as a stand-in, as a guarantor that “believed for” the Western Jews who still wanted to identify with the Ostjuden as a Volk.

Žižek provides a final illustration of this tendency to project belief onto another party or to incorporate the belief of another for one’s own personal benefit or identity. Golda Meir, former Prime Minister of Israel, seems to have exhibited this trait—she did not claim personal belief in God, but rather situated her identity as one who advocated for the rights of others who did believe in God:
when Golda Meir was asked whether she believed in God, she said: “I believe in the Jewish people, and the Jewish people believe in God.” One should be very precise in interpreting this statement: it does not imply that the majority of the Jews believe in God (as a matter of fact, the State of Israel is arguably the most atheistic country in the world, the only one in which a clear majority of its citizens do not believe in God). What it implies is a certain fetishization of the “people”: even if—to go to the extreme—no individual Jewish citizen of Israel believes, each of them presupposes that the “people” believes, and this presupposition is enough to make her act as if she believes…” (In Defense of Lost Causes 227).

My argument is that Zweig displays the same tendency as Golda Meier: Even though he personally may not be devout or even desire to be more religious, traditional, or Orthodox, his travelogue functions as a tool for cherishing, praising, and admiring “the people” who do believe in God. His positive, romanticized descriptions of the Eastern Jews, combined with the associative solidarity based on anti-Semitic persecution functioned powerfully as an ideological tool to affirm an identity between Western and Eastern Jews without actually challenging German Jews to reexamine their unique social, economic, and cultural position as assimilated. Zweig’s essentialized portrayal of the Eastern Jews undermined their image as a neighbors (unwanted guests) who needed material and financial aid and communal support and turned them into an object primarily used for reassuring German Jews of their continued connection to a “deeper” Jewish identity. The images allowed German Jewish readers a kind of luxury of believing themselves to continue to be Jewish in their own way, just as Zweig sought to be Jewish on his own individualistic, subjective way: He would continue to be German but “auf meine mir eingeborene jüdische Art” (Zweig, Weyl 78).
Zweig’s positive descriptions were the embodiment of universal values that the German Jew could feel safe in affirming without raising any question as to his or her national loyalties, and yet those same positive descriptions entailed the image of the Eastern Jew as socially, politically, and economically limited, indicating that solidarity with the Eastern Jew was contingent on his occupying a place of near non-influence—certainly as not possessing any political influence that might disrupt the Western Jewish position and status within Germany.

The positive images and romantic descriptions are brilliantly paired with Zweig’s pronouncement of Eastern and Western Jewish solidarity by virtue of their common enemies, and yet this associative, shared identity as a persecuted people, while certainly true (though in different degrees), functioned in a largely self-affirming way for the Western Jews that essentially robbed them of any sense of urgency to take any direction action on behalf of the Eastern Jews—unless it meant for them to affirm that the Eastern Jews should immigrate to Palestine. As I will continue to argue, Zweig’s strategy was well intentioned but ultimately self-serving in that his expression of public solidarity allowed for public approval of the Eastern Jews while containing caveats that excused direct activism on behalf of the Eastern Jews in Germany.

In the next section, I will argue that Zweig continued with the strategy of using a “distant other” to serve as a stand-in for Zionist beliefs and convictions: advocating the move to Palestine continued to keep the Eastern Jew or the renewed Jewish youth at a distance. Zweig’s insistence that Jewish renewal occurs only through the young likewise projects the responsibility of living out a “renewed” Jewish identity onto another generation, while continuing to affirm Zionist principles in theory.
A Palestinian Home for Zionist Youth

Zweig’s hopes for a Palestinian home for the Jews were rooted in the philosophy of Gustav Landauer, and he included that vision at the end of *Das ostjüdishe Antlitz*:

Von einem jüdischen Sozialismus an, der reiner Marxismus ist und gleichsam als seine Agitationsprovinz die jüdisch sprechenden Menschen betrachtet, bis zu einem reinen Sozialismus, der der Prägung des erschütternd starken Menschen und gemordeten Führers Gustav Landauer ganz nahe kam – in kleinen Siedelungen, ohne Staat, aus gemeinschaftlichem, antipolitischem Geiste heraus, unter Gemeinbesitz an Grund und Boden und den entscheidenden Produktionsmitteln den sozialistischen Geist zu leben, im jüdischen Lande, dem Lande unserer Arbeit und Erfüllung – hat er mehrere Grade immer reinerer Inkarnierung gefunden. (156)

Despite the criticism of historical inaccuracy against Zweig’s romantic portrayal of the Eastern European Jews, his hopes for a Jewish home within the Palestinian state were not utopian. Even if he ultimately believed that Palestine would be inherited by a future Jewish generation, Zweig’s optimism was rooted in political realities. In opposition to a dedicated, party-line version of Zionism, Zweig wrote as early 1925 that a Jewish Palestinian home would only be accomplished by receiving permission from the Palestinian Arabs (Grab 77-78). Zweig did not entertain naïve Zionist fantasies of a full-fledged Jewish state. He knew the reality would be one of intercultural and international negotiation. Given the developments immediately following World War I with the British Balfour Declaration and the Allied intervention in Poland to guarantee the constitutional rights of the large Jewish minority, Zweig had good reason to think his bi-national Zionist expectations had legitimate international political support.
The Balfour Declaration of late 1917 expressed that (in what was increasingly revealed to be remarkably careful, non-committal language) the British government sought to encourage the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine but in such a way as not to disturb the existing conditions of the inhabitants in Palestine (Sachar 359). Howard M. Sachar argues that the motivation behind Lloyd George’s government to craft the Balfour declaration had to do both with the religious sentiments of the British government at the time (the desire to preserve Palestine for its Jewish and Christian historical value), but also in order to win international Jewish favor in the midst of the war. The effect of the Balfour Declaration was a surge of enthusiasm among British Zionists and American Jews, but Sachar writes that the overall effect among the Jewish communities of other nationalities was minimal (361). Still, the Declaration represented a promising future for the Zionists.

With the end of World War I, the League of Nations used the Balfour Declaration to support Great Britain’s control of Palestine, as a military government. Lloyd George appointed Sir Herbert Samuel to be Jerusalem’s new High Commissioner. Samuel was Jewish and, as Michael Brenner notes, “[t]he fact that the mandate provided for the recognition of a Jewish Agency as a public corporate body to cooperate with the administration on economic, political, and other matters was also regarded as a promising new beginning” (Brenner, *Zionism* 140). As the 1920s progressed, the lack of commitment to a Jewish home on behalf of the British became more clear, but so did the ambivalence and uncertainty of world Jewry, since far fewer Eastern Europeans migrated to Palestine than were expected, giving rise to serious doubts as to the popular legitimacy of the Zionist movement. While acknowledging the decrease in enthusiasm among Western countries in later years after the war, it is important for contemporary readers of
Zweig to understand that 1917 through 1920 were years of optimism for the Zionists who thought they could rely on international support for political intervention.

Another factor that Zweig would have been aware of was the intervention by the League of Nations in Poland to secure constitutional rights for the Jews after the war. What interested Zweig was the dire condition of the Jewish community in the new, self-determined nation states in post-war Eastern Europe, and he noted in the beginning of his travelogue: “die Herrschaft der Polen ahnten wir nicht” (7). Lenni Brenner reports that the Polish national government at the end of World War I was cobbled together from the leftist, proletariat party of Józef Pilsudski—himself something of champion of the Jewish cause, desiring that Jewish soldiers serve under him and viewing anti-Semitism as a characteristic of Russian barbarism—and the traditional, right-wing tsarist capitalists. Pilsudski continued in a leadership capacity in the newly formed Polish nation:

[…] however, he had no control over those generals who came into the army via the Endeks’ tsarist military […] Murder and persecution of Jews reached such proportions that the Allies had to intervene and impose a minority-rights clause into the Polish constitution as a condition of recognition. Only when the Endeks realized the Jewish pressure could affect Warsaw’s credit with foreign bankers did the pogroms tail off. But the end of the pogroms only meant that anti-Semitism was changing its form. The regime determined to ‘Polonise’ the economy, and thousands of Jews lost their jobs as the government took over the railways, cigarette and match factories and the distilleries. (Brenner, Zionism in the Age of the Dictators 187).
The international intervention may have effected minimal changes, as Zweig bitterly observed in the preface to the second edition of *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, but the standard for these improvements was the contrasting barbaric persecution of the Jews in Hungary and the Ukraine:

“Und nun noch ein Wort zur Vorrede: Polen hat sich längst als ein Kulturland herausgestellt; seitdem nämlich Ungarn und Ukraine in grauenhaften Pogromen den Bodensatz militaristischer Niedertracht ans Tageslicht gekehrt haben” (11).

Zweig’s advocacy for immigration to Palestine was all within reason for the immediate post-war European political climate, perhaps especially for a defeated Germany. Zweig certainly could not have counted on the new Weimar government to radically intervene on behalf of the Eastern Jews at the international level, but the League of Nations – and most notably Great Britain – was interested in rallying international support. In many ways, Zweig’s text can be seen as an extension of that international enthusiasm, as even the production of the travelogue can be seen as Zweig’s attempt to fan the flame of world Jewish sympathies on international political stage: “Glauben Sie nur ja, lieber Struck, der Zeitpunkt für unser Buch ist und bleibt günstig. Dafür werden die verfluchten Polen sorgen. Und wenn der Verlag Intelligenz hätte, ließ er überhaupt 2 000 Exemplare mit englischem Text erscheinen” (Sternburg 122).

What is odd in light of Zweig’s advocacy for a Palestinian home is that neither he nor a great many other Western Jews (nor Eastern European Jews) appear to have made plans to immigrate to Palestine themselves. Walter Grab writes that despite Zweig’s Zionist affinity he came to Palestine as something of a last resort. Once the Nazis came to power, he immigrated to Palestine, but it is doubtful that this was ever his ultimate goal. Walter Grab writes regarding Zweig’s exile:

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Zweig kam nicht als Einwanderer nach Palästina, der eingesehen hatte, daß der Versuch der Juden, sich in die deutsche Gesellschaft als gleichberechtigte Staatsbürger einzugliedern, endgültig gescheitert war. Im Gegensatz zu den meisten andern deutschen Juden, die Palästina Zuflucht suchten, hatte er kein schlechtes Gewissen, daß er nicht schon vor der Machtübernahme der Nazis eingewandert war. Er wollte und konnte auf seine Verbundenheit mit der deutschen Kultur nicht verzichten, denn das hätte seinen geistigen Tod bedeutet. (Grab 80)

The discrepancy between Zweig’s advocacy for the Palestinian national home as the ideal and his own reluctance to leave Germany was not unique. As Michael Brenner notes, the fact that so few European Jews immigrated voluntarily to Palestine in the early 1920s was cause for concern among the Zionist community (Zionism 142).

One possible clarification for Zweig’s position was that he intended his Landauer-inspired vision of Jewish socialism primarily as a Zionist youth movement initiative. In a self-deprecating passage at the end of Das ostjüdische Antlitz, Zweig appeals to the younger generation to take up the cause of anti-capitalistic justice since it is, apparently, too late for Zweig’s generation to fully bear that responsibility:

Wer sind wir denn, heute und hier! Mit Schaudern müssen wir den Kindern sagen: werdet nicht wie wir! sondern mehr, sondern viel mehr! Sehet unsere Gebundenheit an und unsere Lähmung—nicht um über uns zu richten, sondern um es besser zu machen. Denn es genügt nicht, besten Willens zu sein und seine Nächsten zu lieben—all das haben wir versucht und davor warnen wir euch—wenn man sich zugleich wohlfühlen konnte in einer Zeit, deren grauenhafte Spannung zwischen geistiger Kultur und grenzenloser Not
In passages such as these one sees further acknowledgement of Zweig’s realization of what “love of the neighbor” entails: There is something more than just the love of the fellow man and having good intentions, and yet he portrays his generation as gebunden and gelähmt: somehow bound and paralyzed to effect any real social change. He continues to recount his regrets and his appeal to the youth is to fight for change, to resist evil and to help the older generation to work for good: “Widerstrebt dem Übel, Kinder, ja widerstrebt und helft uns, das Gute zu tun und das Frevelhafte einzudämmen. Denn wenn auch ihr eines Tages dasäbet wie wir, zerrieben, geschwächt, ungeeint und in allem Guten verzögert: wieder wäre die Hilfe an der Welt verschoben!” (166). Once again, Zweig’s approach to generating some form of public solidarity for a pan-Jewish renewal is to embed passionate pleas for social change with a caveat as to why he and his generation are unable to take direct action.

Similar to his Palestinian hopes, Zweig’s optimism regarding the Zionist youth movement was not unfounded. In the travelogue he writes that: “Die Jugend muß Gott dienen, indem sie sich einen neuen Gott gebiert, der wahr ist; sie muß mit Gott, um Gott ringen. Bei dem ‘Gott der Väter’ sich zu beruhigen—furchtbare, tragische Verirrung, Jugend dazu anhalten! Denn der Got der Jugend hat ein verhülltes Antlitz, und wenn sie gelernt hat, sich dies Antlitz vorzustellen—ist die Jugend dahin” (127). Zweig envisions a creative, youthful renewal of the Jewish people that will be defined by a perpetual search for how to conceptualize God. This youthful energy would not allow itself to be fundamentally limited by tradition.
In the last chapter of the travelogue, Zweig describes the character of the new Zionist youth as a contrast to the description of the Greis in the first chapter. In light of the materialistic distractions of Western society, Zweig calls for a new kind of Jew—the youthful, Jewish revolutionary, inspired by the traditions of the old, wise sages and fueled with a spiritual vision for a new, socialist community in the New Canaan. Zweig describes the youthful revolutionary in romanticized language as a timeless, non-particular youth. This Knabe becomes Zweig’s new symbol for the renewed Jewish community, just as the Greis was the symbol for the old, traditional forms of Judaism (172) The young boys are the images, the models for the Jewish people, and their spiritual heirs and successors Zweig saw in the Zionist youth movements in Germany.

Similar to the German youth groups, the Jewish youth societies were motivated by values regarding importance of nature, romanticism, poetry and philosophy, and folk culture. These German Jewish youth groups often took on a kind of “Boy Scouts” identity that frequently integrated hiking and camping trips and a celebration of masculine ideals (Brenner, “Turning Inward” 62). Michael Brenner notes that these youth groups were prevalent among Zionist and non-Zionist Jews: “Altogether, more than thirty thousand young German Jews joined the various Jewish youth movements during the Weimar years. Thus, by 1933 at least every third young Jew in Weimar Germany had at some point been a member in a Jewish youth organization” (59).

What is curious about the youth that Zweig envisioned leading the way to a new “national home” in Palestine is that most of them, even the Zionists, took their “renewed” spiritual influences from their youth movements and reinvested those energies on behalf of the Jewish communities in Germany. Again, Brenner notes that Zionists, almost from the movement’s inception, were conflicted over their relationship to the situation in the Diaspora:
“Should Zionists become active in the Gegenwartsarbeit (present-day work) and thus help to strengthen the Zionist camp in the Diaspora, or should they reject any attempt to create a comfortable positive basis for Jewish life in the Diaspora? In Weimar Germany, most young Zionists chose the first option […]” (“Turning Inward” 65).

The decision of the German Jewish youth to invest in the Jewish schools and larger Jewish social organizations in Germany may seem to fall short of Zweig’s vision for a renewed Jewish future in Palestine, and yet their decision was remarkably consistent with what Zweig valued about German youth movements and German culture in general:

Eine Jugendbewegung nach Weise der deutschen gibt es im Osten bei den Juden nicht. Die deutsche muß man rufen und fördern, ihre edlen Ziele sind ohne Gefahr, sie öffnet Quellen des deutschen Menschen, erneut den Geist und mündet mit Selbstverständlichkeit im Deutschtum. Die beste deutsche Jugend will aus der bürgerlichen Verbannung den deutschen Menschen erlösen, sie führt ins edelste Volkstum hinauf. [...] An der westlichen Assimilation verarmt der jüdische Geist weniger; an der östlichen verarmt das Judentum. (115-117)

Zweig believed that a German model for youth movements would prove more fruitful than an Eastern model. The good German youth could see the path to a “noble Volk identity,” and the Western youth movement (“assimilationist”) model did not weaken the Jewish spirit as much or subject to it to the impoverishment that an Eastern socialism or revolutionary youth movement would, which attempted to erase any distinctive Jewish characteristics. The German youth model acted as a good, nurturing sphere for the Jewish spirit. If that was the case, one might begin to question the value of immigrating to Palestine in the first place.
Even Zweig, once he arrived in Palestine and actively worked for a peaceful solution between Arabs and Jews, insisted on maintaining a German sphere of culture. It was almost as if he were determined to bring a part of Germany to Palestine with him. Zweig supported and wrote for the *Orient* journal during his Palestinian exile. The publication was established in 1942 by Wolfgang Yourgrau, from Berlin. Yourgrau tried to articulate a social-democratic vision of the Jewish community in Palestine that actively encouraged partnership with the Arabs (Grab 78-79). Zweig voiced his support for such collaboration and expressed strong critique of the Jewish nationalists, accusing them of nurturing their own form of fascism and being admirers of Hitler and Mussolini (Grab 79). To add insult to injury, Zweig failed to learn either Yiddish or Hebrew (Alt “Zu Arnold Zweigs” 180). Walter Grab points out that Zweig’s refusal to learn Hebrew and his choice to limit himself to German-speaking social circles was a direct critique against the Zionists. The Jewish nationalists in Palestine did not take Zweig’s critiques well. In fact, Zweig’s loyalty to German culture and his work with Wolfgang Yourgrau in the *Orient* resulted in their being accused as anti-Semites (Grab 80, 82).

The situation for the exiled German Jews in Palestine was complex, and it was clear to Zweig that he was not prepared to handle the new (physical, geographic, socio-economic) environment, nor was he prepared to deal with the radical nature of Zionist nationalism (Grab 81). That being said, for the purpose of *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, if Zweig did not envision himself ultimately immigrating to Palestine, nor seriously learning Hebrew or Yiddish, and if he advocated that the Jewish youth movements should have a fundamental German character to them, and that (if Zweig’s own example is any indication of his hopes for a future Jewish existence in Palestine) once they arrived in Palestine, the youth would maintain a German way of
life, the obvious question becomes why Zweig passionately advocated for Palestinian immigration.

Of course there are the historical and ideological reasons of the Zionist movement to immigrate to Palestine. Zweig writes, “Es gibt Gebote, die man nur in Erez Israel erfüllen kann—also werden sie nach Palästina gehen,” and that might have been true (138). But it was also equally true that the German Jewish youth movements, among others, were active in trying to fulfill those commands that supposedly could only be fulfilled in Palestine, and Zweig’s vague platitudes of postponing the realization of a full Jewish identity in Germany had more to do with the fears of Western Jews than any theological reality.

The German Jewish youth groups worked to create institutional examples for supporting an educated, thriving Jewish life in Germany. The Berlin, Cologne, and Frankfurt am Main Schulen der jüdischen Jugend drew upon a wide base of different Jewish youth groups and reflected a similar character as Franz Rosenzweig’s Lehrhaus. The goal of the Schulen was to provide a new Jewish community experience for exchanging ideas, learning about Jewish history, literature, philosophy, folk culture and religious ritual. The schools also provided Hebrew language classes (Brenner “Turning Inward” 65). What is interesting is that the Zionists began to feel like these schools might become too successful: The late Weimar Jewish youth movements were fostering the development of a new, distinctively Jewish community, and Zionists feared that such communities would prove so satisfying, no one would want to leave for Palestine.

As mentioned earlier, whether Jews inhabited satisfying, comfortable communities or not did not seem to matter: Jews worldwide during the 1920s did not immigrate to Palestine en
masse, no matter where they were from – but many Eastern Jews had immigrated to Germany. This is my point: The excuse that “some commands can only be fulfilled in Erez Israel” might have been true, but this expression of delaying intervention on behalf of the Eastern Jews, at least for Zweig, more represents the fears of German Jews that they were betraying their German national loyalties, than a mystical, theological reality. The schools developed by the Jewish youth movements were proof that bridges between the Ostjuden and the German Jews could be built. Zweig’s insistence for a Palestinian immigration is tied to the tenets of Zionism and to Jewish religion and history (Palestine as the Promised Land), but the plea for Palestine also represents another form of ideological distancing – another example of Niels Bohr’s horseshoe: It was important for Western German Jews to believe in Palestine as an ultimate Jewish home, and as long as Palestine existed as a possible option for immigration, and as long as other Jews moved there, that was good enough. It was important to have the option of Palestine available – but this did not mean that Western Jews “really” believed in the necessity of immigrating there. As long as Eastern Jews could immigrate there and German Jews could advocate for the resettlement of Eastern Jews in Palestine, the sense of Jewish identity was affirmed for German Jews.

Zweig’s Self-Deceptive Solidarity

In 1932 the Eastern Jewish poet Chaim Nachman Bialik gave a speech in Berlin in which he critiqued the contradictory, hypocritical attitudes of Western, German Jews regarding their commitment to the Hebrew language and the larger Jewish community. What was strange, Bialik noted, was that Western Jews were eager to support the Hebrew language and a renewal of Jewish life – but these sentiments never seemed to apply directly to themselves. The renewal of
Jewish life was for “someone else,” and he attributed this failure of action and implementation to the lack of spoken Hebrew:

Denn die hebräische Sprache ist das geistige Lebenselement des Judentums. Alles, was wir an geistigem Erbe besitzen, ist im hebräischen Schriftum niedergelegt. [...] Die folgende Epoche ist dadurch charakterisiert, daß nicht die unmittelbare schöpferische Arbeit im Mittelpunkt steht, sondern die Erforschung der Gegenstände, die bis dahin von Juden geschaffen worden sind. Man produzierte Abhandlungen über Sachen, aber nicht Sachen selbst. Auf diese Weise ist das jüdische Volk ohne die Segnung des Heiligen Geistes geblieben. [...] sie haben auch Geschichte geschrieben, aber nicht Geschichte gemacht.


Bialik’s assessment of Western Jewish attitudes articulates the expressions of solidarity with the Eastern Jews that Zweig captures in his travelogue: Zweig’s words embody sympathy toward an idealized minority group, but the sympathy expressed contains inherent caveats that defer the
immediacy for direct action or radical cultural or social change on behalf of the speaker. The realization (or “renewal”) of change for the Jewish community is, as Bialik states, for “someone else.”

Noah Isenberg’s observation that Arnold Zweig had produced a strange text with his travelogue is accurate, and yet what is most strange is that Zweig and Struck’s travelogue, despite being criticized as too idealistic, was both popular and artistically significant and influential throughout the 1920s. Zweig’s contradictory text was idealistic and full of ambiguity, and yet the text was popular precisely because so many Western Jews could relate to the kind of sincere, yet rather self-serving, solidarity the book expressed toward the Ostjuden. The travelogue raised awareness of Eastern Jewish persecution, as well as their financial and educational needs, but the book did so in a way that continued to affirm the assimilated social norms of many German Jews and assured them that radical departure from the German bourgeois was not immediately necessary.

Zweig painted a vision of spiritual and social renewal, drawing on dramatic Old Testament, prophetic imagery and exciting themes within popular Jewish youth movements. The result was a vision of a Jewish community that seemed destined to be perpetually deferred elsewhere and led by someone else. Zweig and many other German Jews allowed themselves, unconsciously and however well-intentioned, the luxury of continuing to believe that they were in solidarity with the Eastern European Jews without learning Hebrew or Yiddish, without making firm plans to immigrate to Palestine, without actively incorporating any form of Jewish ritual or practice into their personal life, and without consistent association with non-German Jewish communities. Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz enabled German Jews to continue telling
their own “inner story” that they were in solidarity with the Eastern European Jews, relieving
them of the burden and responsibility to radically intervene.

The historical context, particularly after 1933, was complicated and politically volatile,
and German Jewish attitudes toward the immigrant Eastern Jews have to be assessed with those
political, social, and economic pressures in mind. There may have been justifiable reasons that so
many German Jews kept their distance from their Eastern cousins. The critique that Zweig’s text
expressed a hypocritical kind of public solidarity is not based on the fact that these reasons did
not exist. Indeed, Alfred Döblin provides an excellent example of a Jewish intellectual who
desired to stand in solidarity with the Eastern Jews and yet still firmly insisted that he did not
organically, naturally fit in the Eastern Jewish community or way of life – and he did not intend
to. Döblin was proud of his Western, German heritage and he did not try to over-identify with
the Eastern Jews. Döblin openly maintained a distance from the Ostjuden and sought other social
and philosophical reasons for solidarity with them but maintained a strong ambivalence about
what shape those solutions should take. The critique regarding Zweig’s ambivalent expression of
public solidarity is based on the on the ethical ideals and standards that he demands within the
text itself. Not only did Zweig insist on the implementation of a socialist community that
integrated a biblical ethical system, he specifically acknowledged the importance of Jews
overcoming their differences in order to work together for mutual (material, financial) assistance.

What Zweig created in his travelogue was an embodiment of beautiful social and ethical
ideals, and he intended for his art to inspire the realization (Verwirklichung) of a new Jewish
identity and community among his readers, but the result was that the beautiful image functioned
as an ideological stand-in for German Jewish belief and active solidarity with the Eastern Jews.
In many ways, what the popularity of Zweig’s travelogue revealed was not so much that German
Jews were concerned about the plight of the Eastern Jews as they were about re-assuring themselves that they, the Westerners, were still Jewish. As long as German Jews could still see and read about examples of the suffering, virtuous Eastern Jew, they had an image, a proxy representative whom they could openly affirm and express solidarity with, which worked to affirm their own Jewish connection. Like Niels Bohr and his horseshoe and Golda Meir and her imagined, theistic Israeli people, Arnold Zweig’s Ostjuden gave Western Jews a significant cultural artifact with which they could express solidarity yet which also allowed them to deny the necessity of acting on that solidarity or fully bearing the responsibility to realize a renewed Jewish community that welcomed the Ostjuden as neighbors and equals.
Chapter II

Alfred Döblin: Reise in Polen

Introduction: Reise in Polen as an “Important Work” for the Jewish Community

In a 1926 review of Alfred Döblin’s Reise in Polen, Zionist Hans Bloch wrote:
Es ist sehr wichtig für uns, daß Döblin zu den Juden gefahren ist. Denn wir haben ein großes Interesse daran, daß dies Volk entdeckt wird—nach Chinesen, Mexikanern, Eskimos und anderen Exoten auch dies Volk. [...] Wir sind Parteileute, wir sind verdächtig. Aber: Döblin hat Geltung, er sieht und weiß zu sagen, was er sieht, er ist mutig und reinen Herzens. (Bloch 163-164)

Hans Bloch’s review of Döblin’s travelogue is an appropriate beginning to the discussion of Döblin’s expression of solidarity with the Eastern European Jews, because it demonstrates the significance of someone like Döblin, a highly assimilated Western Jew, deciding to investigate Eastern Jewish concerns. The fact that Döblin, the famous Weimar novelist and public intellectual, had taken an interest in the Ostjuden was a good sign of popular influence and public relations to the German Zionists. Döblin brought credibility to the Zionist cause—precisely because he was not a Zionist (not Parteileute), and yet he still recognized that something needed to be done to address the anti-Semitic pogroms and the concerns of the Eastern immigrant Jews in Germany.

Alfred Döblin’s engagement with the Jewish question during the Weimar period was first and foremost as an elite, public intellectual and successful German novelist and only secondarily as a Jew. Unlike Zweig who sought to over identify with the Eastern European Jews, Döblin was skeptical and conflicted throughout his entire life as to how he should identify with the Jewish
community. Döblin’s travelogue reveals his personal ambivalence about his own Jewish heritage, and that ambivalence shaped the kind of individualistic, non-partisan solidarity that he expressed for the Eastern European Jews.

Döblin was born in Stettin (contemporary Szczecin) on the German / Polish border, in 1878 and lived there for the first ten years of his life. He grew up as an ethnic Jew who had every wish to assimilate into German secular culture as quickly and seamlessly as possible. Thanks to his literary talent, Döblin was able to do exactly that, certainly by the time World War I was coming to an end (Schoeller 160-161). He managed to establish himself as a cultural critic and journalist, as a medical doctor, and as an important avant-garde novelist.

In many ways, Döblin’s path of assimilation was similar to that of Stefan Zweig, and even Arnold Zweig. All three men assumed that they were accepted by the larger German culture due their literary accomplishments. Leo Spitzer notes that:

[Stefan Zweig] was enveloped at this time by what Hannah Arendt has described as “the radiant power of fame”—by a success that must have indicated to him that he was accepted and his background irrelevant. Indeed, for Zweig, the 1920s seemed to recreate turn-of-the-century optimism; despite the ominous undercurrents, he believed that it was a time when “one might even dream again and hope for a united Europe.” (Spitzer 165)

Spitzer’s description is helpful for it provides insight to the attitudes and responses of Döblin and Zweig toward the changing cultural and political environment. As explored in the previous chapter, Arnold Zweig found it difficult to completely separate himself from his German identity, and the popularity of his literary works only confirmed that he did not need to abandon his position as a leading German cultural voice. The same was true for Alfred Döblin.
Döblin’s early writings show that he expected nothing less than that other Jewish immigrants find a way to assimilate and to become integrated German citizens, just as he had done. The Jews living in Western countries, he argued, needed to give up their resentment and prejudice against their secular neighbors in whose nations they lived:

Die jüdische Furcht vor dem Antisemitismus ist noch ein Rest, ein Ghettorückstand von dem Haß auf die Wirtsvölker. Den Entschluß und die Fähigkeit, die Wirtsvölker nicht zu hassen, sondern sich mit ihnen eins zu fühlen—wenn auch nicht mit ihren Lastern—, wird die Furcht vor dem Antisemitismus verschwinden lassen, den Juden freier und selbständiger machen und ihn veranlassen, statt rückwärts vorwärts zu sehen. (Kleine Schriften I 317).

Assimilation had worked for him and he did not see why assimilation could not work for the thousands of other immigrants that poured into Western Europe.

Döblin’s perspective of the Eastern Jewish question when he traveled to Poland was thus that of an assimilated, German intellectual both attempting to understand the culture of the Eastern European Jews and to advocate for greater intercultural understanding among the peoples of Europe. His study of Poland was unquestionably aimed at helping post World War I Europeans feel a sense of unity with each other in their newly created nations (“sich mit ihnen eins zu fühlen”), and, like Zweig, Döblin thought that the key to a cross-cultural European solidarity was personal and spiritual transformation.

In several different essays during the Weimar period, Döblin wrote about the importance of cultivating the spiritual and intellectual (geistlich) shape of the German nation. The new post-war Weimar Republic would not be maintained, he argued, through political, technological, or economic means but rather through the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual efforts of the people
(particularly the writers) to develop a sense of duty, responsibility, discernment, and justice for their new nation: “Ich wiederhole: die Leidenschaft des Schriftstellers steht im Dienst und unter der Aufsicht der Erkenntnis. Im Geist aber liegen beschlossen die großen Möglichkeiten des Überblickens, des Vergleichens, des Abwägens, der Gerechtigkeit, und diese Möglichkeiten enthalten Verpflichtungen, die Verpflichtung zum Abwägen, Vergleichen, zur Gerechtigkeit” (Döblin, *Aufsätze zur Literatur* 54, 56). Döblin’s *Reise in Polen* text can be seen as a fulfillment of his own demand on Weimar writers: to discern, to understand, to weigh the options and compare the different communities and their circumstances in Poland for the purpose of making just and right (“gerecht”) decisions in a new Germany and a new Europe.

Döblin’s vision of solidarity with the Eastern European Jews is subsumed under his larger concern for what he calls *Aufmenschung* – the “growing up” or maturing of humanity. In this process of *Aufmenschung*, Döblin desired individuals to go through the spiritual and intellectual (*geistlich*) process of learning to internalize and maintain their own unique cultural identity without recourse to violent political exclusivism against others and at the same time to cultivate a sense of universal compassion for everyone. He argues for a socialist view of human equality, regardless of ethnic heritage or nationality. In Poland he focuses primarily on the importance of standing in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, including the Eastern Jews.

The examples that Döblin uses to illustrate this kind of pan-European and pan-ethnic vision of solidarity are the Hasidic teachers, the Zadiks, and the figure of Jesus Christ. Döblin portrays both the Zadik and Jesus as spiritual leaders who lived and worked among the poor and the socially oppressed. They represented, for Döblin, the embodiment of universal compassion and the ability to implement spiritual truth in a social and cultural setting.
Whereas Zweig and Gronemann possessed hopes for a renewed Jewish community in Palestine, Döblin’s text reveals his hope for a renewed, aufgemenschte Europe where individuals would learn to become relational, pan-European “bridges” to community groups different from themselves, allowing for intercultural groups within each country to work together and flourish as new nations. One of Döblin’s inspirations for a culturally diverse, yet hospitable nation, was the United States. While he did not explicitly promote the idea that Poland become part of a “United States of Europe,” Döblin suggests this kind of pan-European solution in the travelogue as a model for the post-war European countries.

*Reise in Polen* differs from Zweig’s *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* in that Döblin’s text is not as lavish of an artistic production – certainly not in terms of the visual formatting. Whereas Zweig wrote with a clear aesthetic program to inspire his readers by drawing on prophetic traditions from the Old Testament and sentimental images of committed Jewish youth to lead the renewed Zionist movement, Döblin’s text is both more journalistic in style than *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* and it is also more personalized. Döblin features far more of his own subjective thought process than Zweig does. Zweig’s text reads much like a sermon and a hymn on the virtuous qualities of the Eastern European Jews. Döblin’s text reads like a series of news stories, reportage observations of an impoverished, war-torn country, combined with his own personal doubts, fears, hopes, as well as cultural, political and religious reflections. I argue that whereas Zweig wrote with a highly aesthetic program in mind, Döblin’s strategy for communicating his solidarity with the Eastern Jews took on a strong psychoanalytical form.

If Zweig hoped that his readers would experience a personal transformation and deepen their sense of empathy with the *Ostjuden* by seeing Hermann Struck’s illustrations and reading Zweig’s poetic descriptions, Döblin’s text functions like a psychological guide for the reader to
engage in the process of “[der] Verpflichtung zum Abwägen, Vergleichen, zur Gerechtigkeit.”

Drawing on the patterns of personal and psychological transformation portrayed by the protagonists in several of Döblin’s novels, Döblin presents his own subjective mental and emotional processes in *Reise in Polen* as a model for his readers to emulate.

The psychological pattern that Döblin describes in the travelogue is a dialectical series of considerations: The cultural and political situation in Poland consisted of either / or decisions relating to political affiliation, national and ethnic identities, and religious creeds. Throughout the book, Döblin compares and contrasts these different social solutions and group loyalties in an attempt to assess what components made for a healthy national identity. His considerations create tension and uncertainty for Döblin and the reader. Which choice is better? To assimilate as Jews, or to remain culturally distinctive within the new Polish nation? Is Hebrew or Yiddish or Polish the better language to represent the Jewish “nationality” in Poland? Is technology and industrialization better for a country, or are the traditional means of production and work a better way to guard against economic exploitation and to preserve the spirit of a culture? Is religion or science the better guide for a community and for their children?

With all of these considerations, Döblin noticed that violent party lines could be drawn, with ethnic, religious, and political advocates demanding exclusive loyalty to their political or social agendas. Döblin portrays the considerations between the different identities as conflicting, Hegelian theses, which he desperately wanted to see reconciled in a transcendent *Aufhebung* identity of empathy and compassion: a European identity that preserved the particular characteristics of an individual ethnic or religious culture, but in a way that did not exclude or oppress people in other communities. This more universal, pan-European identity was Döblin’s concept of the *Aufmenschung*: He advocated for a new, educated, enlightened class of
individuals who could successfully reach out to the poor and the oppressed and stand in solidarity with them without compromising their own unique identities, similar to the examples of Jesus Christ and the Hasidic Zadik teachers.

Like Zweig, Döblin saw the importance of his work in terms of a spiritual and intellectual preparation for his readers and not as a political manifesto or an implementation plan for the new Weimar Republic, and much less for a new, post-war Europe. The implications of Döblin’s proposed process for spiritual transformation remained ambivalent; he left the final decisions up to the reader as to what actions to take and as to how best engage communities of the poor and the socially oppressed.

_Reise in Polen_ includes both the open-ended injunction for the reader to be responsible for seeking out concrete answers to social and political relationships and other passages that imply Döblin was not overly optimistic about the ability of such enlightened individuals to form a larger community. He knew that participation within a larger community was necessary for the Aufmenschung to be socially relevant. Yet, in his novels, Döblin’s portrayal of individuals who confront and overcome their own self-deceptive illusions discover that the revelation of universal human compassion is achieved at a significant cost to themselves. Döblin consistently portrays these individuals as isolated, unstable, vulnerable, naïve and possibly as incapable of re-entering the competitive and political world around them.

Döblin’s commitment to a non-ethnic, non-nationalist, transcendent identity left him with few options for institutional or organizational support, and thus he exemplified, in many ways, this principle of a spiritually or intellectually aware, but lonely, individual that he addresses so often in his novels. One of Döblin’s chief insights throughout his literary career was that isolation or ostracization is the consequence of receiving the vision of universal human
compassion. Those who are “blessed” to see the underlying spiritual interconnectedness of the natural world are also those who society may consider mentally imbalanced—as a psychiatrist, Döblin was fascinated by the imagined realities of the mentally ill and he problematized the “truth” of such subjective experiences in contrast to the worldview of stark, non-spiritual materialists (Fuechtner 114). Döblin also recognized that such aufgemenscht individuals may not only fall into the category of those whom society considers mentally ill but that such individuals may eventually be considered as a threat. For some of those individuals, martyrdom is their fate—as Döblin’s portrayal of Rosa Luxemburg in his November 1918 and as his meditation on the crucified Jesus in Reise in Polen indicate.

Döblin promoted a dialectical pattern of psycho-spiritual development and self-understanding in his travelogue. Similar to Arnold Zweig’s travelogue, the value of Döblin’s insights appear to have distracted him as he sought to work out an active form of solidarity with the Eastern European Jews. Reise in Polen provides a sophisticated articulation of the dualistic conflict between group loyalties and identities and personal autonomy and individuation. In contrast to Zweig’s book, discussed in the previous chapter, which emphasized the importance of belonging to the larger, Jewish community, Döblin advocated a path of personal, individual education and transformation as the best way to cultivate an authentic sense of solidarity with others who are ethnically, politically, and religiously different. The ambivalent or contradictory element within Döblin’s expression of solidarity with the Eastern Jews was that he so prioritized the internal, subjective experience of individuation, that he overlooked the equally important necessity of investing in and committing to other people as a participant in a larger community.
Summary and Critical Reception of *Reise in Polen*

In 1924 Döblin took up the offer from the Vossische[n] Zeitung and the S. Fischer Verlag to visit Poland and write about his journey. He was there for roughly two months: from the end of September through November (Sauerland, “Verhältnis” 29). The book is divided into several chapters, most of which are titled with the names of the Polish cities Döblin visited. He provides a first-person account of the people he meets, records many conversations with politicians, religious leaders, farmers and factory workers. As much as he can, he tries to live among the people to observe and experience life in Poland, acknowledging that his inability to understand the different languages is a barrier to him: “Wie gerne würde ich mehr Polnisches, mehr Litauisches, mehr Russisches sehen. Aber die Sprache behindert mich. Und man führt mich wenig. Außerhalb Warschaus werde ich so schlecht behütet” (*Reise* 127).

One of the chief characteristics of the book is Döblin’s fascination with the various cultural, linguistic, ethnic religious and national tensions within Poland. The travelogue examines the differences between Eastern and Western culture, between Polish national claims and those of the minorities living within the new, post-Versailles-Treaty state borders. Döblin is also interested in the different factions among the Jewish community—the disagreements around Zionist policies, Orthodox convictions, and Kabbalah numerology. As an extension of the Western and Eastern cultural divisions, Döblin was interested in the kind of schools established in the different cities and what kind of education was required of the Jewish and non-Jewish children. This leads him to question what should constitute a proper education. He notices the extreme divide between the rich and the poor and tries to assess not only the class conflict but the presence of industrialization and the radical, modern challenge new business enterprise presents to a more traditional, agrarian Polish lifestyle.
Consistent with Döblin’s intellectual development up until his trip to Poland, his assessment of the cultural, political, religious and ethnic divisions comes with a mystical solution. The journey to Poland is, for Döblin, a spiritual pilgrimage. His encounter of Polish cities and his observations of the conflicts within the new state was a process of trying to personally understand and transcend the nationalistic and cultural differences in order to access a sense of universal human community, identity, purpose and direction. He wanted to recover a sense of a united humanity that recognized differences, but without oppression—and possibly without borders (at least not political borders). I argue that Döblin’s travelogue functions as an aesthetic and educational tool to bring about the kind of transcendent, reconciling spiritual identity—the Aufmenschung—that Döblin believed he had experienced himself and thus desired on behalf of a divided, post-war Europe. He presented his own subjective mental and spiritual process as a model for others to learn from.

The conflict surrounding national identity and human identity came in the wake of World War I. Döblin was asking the question: Where do we go from here? What was a post-war Europe supposed to look like? His fear was that radical nationalist ideology eclipsed a more inclusive, humanitarian vision for different groups of people. Somehow, nationalism had already worked to twist the affection for family, friends and one’s country, turning those affections into a weapon that brought harm to their neighbors:

Das zarte Gefühl zur Heimat, die Anhänglichkeit an die Familie, die Liebe zu Freunden, Liebe zum Stamm; wie hat dies alles der Staat verschlungen, und was macht dieses Unwesen daraus. [...] Nur wenige Völker haben im Krieg für ihre Freiheit gekämpft. Die meisten sind in den Krieg gezogen, ohne zu wissen, warum, und nicht einmal die Führer haben gewußt, warum. (Reise 313)
Döblin’s solution to the loss of identity is a deeper, mystical connection with what he called the *Ich* of the world, a transcendent, unifying spiritual- and life-force.

This *Ich* is exemplified and represented by a community of enlightened individuals: “Die wahrhaftigen Gruppen unter den Menschen, die wirklichen vernünftigen Kreise des Ich, des Einzelmenschen müssen gegen dies Gebilde [des Staates] angerufen werden. Seine Nützlichkeit ist unbestritten, aber das lebende Ich, die vernünftigen Gruppen und Bindungen des Menschen sind es allein, die dieser Nützlichkeit ihren Rang geben” (*Reise* 312). He goes on to write that “the state” has become a kind of bureaucratic monster that suppresses the role of the individual and leads its people into destruction. He argues that most people who served during World War I did not even know what they were fighting for—and the heads of state themselves did not know. The *Ich*—the unifying spiritual and natural principle of the world—is what allows people to see a purpose and an order to historical events: “Man muß das Ich anhalten, zu wissen, was es ist. Es muß belanglos machen, was belanglos ist.” (*Reise* 313)

Just before his trip to Poland, Döblin had finished his science-fiction novel, *Berge, Meere und Giganten* in which he laid out his natural-spiritual mysticism and philosophy. He had worked on this fantastic, futuristic epic since 1921. He finished the manuscript by 1923 and had it published by the Fischer Verlag in 1924 (Dollinger, 93, 95). Given the writing and publication dates, the novel makes for a fascinating precursor to Döblin’s trip to Poland. What is interesting is that he articulates his vision of a harmonious interaction between the one and the many, between an individual and an unspecified Other in a unique way in the *Zueignung*. The “dedication” of the book provides an insightful philosophical context for Döblin during this period, similar to his later reflections of a Naturphilosophie expressed in his *Das Ich über der Natur* (1927).
Döblin portrayed a mystical relationship to the universe that was somehow personal—or it was a mysticism that he wanted to be more personal—with a spirit or force that permeated history, life, and the universe:


Rolland Dollinger writes that Döblin’s purpose in writing the science-fiction novel was to illustrate two competing forces in the world: a “male” technological drive to dominate the natural, maternal, organic “female” force in the world. Döblin had intended to write a novel about mankind’s control of and dominance over nature. In the process of writing the book, Döblin experienced something of a conversion: Döblin came to believe that mankind was ultimately powerless and insignificant against the fluctuations of nature (Dollinger 98). Dollinger writes that Döblin concluded: “The attempt to dominate nature is transformed into a humble relationship with what he [Döblin] perceives as uncontrollable female forces” (99). This is the mystical humility before the Ich that he expresses in the Zueignung, and it is this sense of humility that he took with him on his journey as he examined the formations of the various communities in Poland.
Scholars of Döblin’s works have largely interpreted *Reise in Polen* as a book about Döblin’s experience of the Jewish community in Poland and about his own spiritual development. Steven E. Aschheim summarizes Döblin’s experience as “by and large not annexed to an institutional framework but was basically an ingredient in his personal and intellectual evolution” (*Brothers* 206). He goes on to talk about Döblin’s later conversion to Catholicism as “diluting” the Jewish elements of the travelogue—a conversion that scholars such as Friedrich Emde have capitalized upon, portraying *Reise in Polen* as a stepping-stone to Döblin’s later Catholic identity and minimizing the significance of Döblin’s Jewish background and influences.

In a recent biography, Wilfried F. Schoeller provides a summary of Döblin’s conclusion of his journey into Poland:

> Er hat die Schwierigkeit, in die Welt seiner Vorfahren einzudringen, schon in die Szenerie seiner Reise eingefügt: als auffällige komische Anekdote, die eine *keynote* ist.

> Er erzählt auf vier Seiten eine komische Geschichte: Für das Hotel in Lubin hat er zwei Schlüssel zur Verfügung. Beide passen ins Schloss, lassen sich drehen, aber nur einer schließt auf, allerdings auch nur gelegentlich. Und dann gibt es auch noch Schwierigkeiten mit der maroden Türklinke. Ein Blick aufs Ganze wird in dieser Anekdote angeboten: Der Zugang zum Ostjudentum ist für ihn unplanbar und keineswegs verlässlich. (283)

Despite Döblin’s interest in the Eastern Jews, he did not feel that he had reliable access to that community, emphasizing instead the need for a transcendent human identity that recognizes the differences of others and that also recognizes the limitations of an individual’s ability to fully participate and understand that other culture or community. Döblin did not assume, like Zweig, that he could imagine the “inner story” of the Eastern Jews. Given the significant attention
Döblin places on the churches he visited and the person of Jesus Christ in his text, Döblin showed a clear preference for a universal, “catholic” interpretation of “solidarity” with the Eastern Jews in contrast to further exploration of his own particular, Jewish roots and his underlying commonality with the Ostjuden.

Perhaps because of Döblin’s conflicting interest in both the particularities of the Eastern Jews and his simultaneous insistence on a more universal, non-partisan European identity in the travelogue, scholars have found his text on Poland unfocused and difficult to categorize. Julian Preece writes about the critical reception of *Reise in Polen*: “Döblin’s 1925 travel essay is, perhaps like many of his other works, too eclectic, apparently too disorganized a text to have acquired the classic status it deserves for its originality—even uniqueness—and the quality of much of the literary writing contained in it” (Preece, “The ‘Grateful’ Traveller”161). Because the book is so unique, scholars have often interpreted the work itself, like Döblin’s encounter with Eastern Judaism, an unreliable key in opening the doors of interpretation for the Döblin oeuvre.

Despite the difficulty of categorizing the travelogue, it is a key text for understanding Döblin as a writer and as a thinker. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer has written about *Reise in Polen* as just such a Schlüsselwerk, both tracing of Döblin’s development as an epic novelist and examining his philosophical framework:

Die ‘experimentelle Spaltung’ zwischen einem journalistischen und einem epischen Autor-Ich wird rückgängig gemacht. Nicht, daß fingiert wird, was aus Polen zu berichten wäre; aber Döblins episches Prinzip, das im Schichten und Verzahnen von Materialien seinen Angelpunkt hat, wird mit dem journalistischen der engagierten und kritischen Beobachtung verbunden. In diesem Sinne wird der Reisebericht zu einem Schlüsselwerk in der Entwicklung der Döblinschen Schreibweise. (“Ghettokunst” 164-65)
Bayerdörfer goes on to describe how it is not just Döblin’s literary style that contains these Spaltungen but that Döblin’s philosophical framework is one of polarity—similar to the polarity expressed between the technological, “male” forces of humanity and the “female,” organic and nurturing forces in the world that he portrayed in his science-fiction novel. Döblin constantly compared and contrasted different political, cultural, and philosophical / religious positions and always ended up “zwischen allen Stühlen” – between the (ideological) chairs (172).

It is precisely this framework of contrasted polarities that defines much of Döblin’s literary output and much of the content of Reise in Polen. Throughout the book, Döblin highlights both physical and metaphysical divides. He is interested in geographical divisions, cultural divides between East and West, conflicts between the Volk and the larger state or nation, and even in conflicts between men and women. For Döblin, people and ideas tend to be assessed in terms of polarized categories.

In Reise in Polen, Döblin’s polarized peoples and ideologies beg for resolution. Though the different nations are separate and culturally distinct, Döblin argues that the European countries should not let these differences keep them separated. They should all work together collaboratively and attempt to overcome their cultural differences. He recalls the words of Italian statesman Giuseppe Garibaldi and his plea to the peoples of Europe to send aid to Poland: “Verläßt Polen nicht! Alle Völker haben die Pflicht, dieser unglücklichen Nation zu helfen, welche der Welt beweist, was die Verzweiflung vermag. Obgleich entwaffnet, ihrer besten Jünglinge beraubt, die bereits proskribiert oder eingekerkert sind, von einer großen Armee niedergehalten, erhebt sie sich wie ein Riese” (19). The travelogue details many of the social divisions, the class divisions, the great divide between the affluent European Poles and the extreme poverty of others, not least of all the Ostjuden. All of these polarized social, political,
and religious extremes beg for someone to do something to help—to provide a relational, economic, political “bridge” between these groups. Döblin even borrows Leon Trotsky’s comparison of Poland as a bridge from Russia to the rest of Europe: “‘Polen ist unsere Brücke nach Europa’” (53).

Given the presence of these Spaltungen and Döblin’s incorporated imagery of bridges, the travelogue is not so much about Döblin’s experience of the Eastern European Jewish community as such—although much of Döblin’s experience there has to do with discovering this unique community for “the first time” (he thinks)—but rather it is about Döblin’s search for a bridge between (or an Aufhebung of) the social, religious, political and class divides in Europe. Further, Doblin considered the very process of occupying in-between identity spaces – that is, oscillating between various social, religious, and political extremes – as the creation of a bridge between social classes, cultural groups, Easter and Western identities, and historical breaks, along with the dialog and debate that came with such “traveling” between ideas.

Like the good Hegelian that he was, Döblin reinforced the notion that development, and human evolution happen not in a particular place, or even with a particular people, but rather historical Aufhebung and cultural Aufmenschung occur through continual dialectic oscillation between theses, experiences, actions and reactions that results in transcendent syntheses of ideas and identities (Midgley 13-14). Döblin’s definition of “solidarity” with the Eastern Jews was the willingness of individuals to go through the process of sublimating their particular national or ethnic identities to a higher, transcendent identity of universal human compassion, which would allow those individuals to work with culturally or ethnically or economically different individuals and groups from themselves. The primary examples of such transcendent identities Döblin found in the religious Hasidic leaders (the Zadiks) and in the figure of Jesus Christ.
Döblin’s Portrayal of Solidarity with the Eastern European Jews

Döblin developed his nuanced concept of Eastern Jewish solidarity and a transcendent identity defined by empathy and universal compassion in part as an immediate response to the anti-Semitic pogroms occurring in Germany during the early 1920s. While the turmoil and conflict around German Jewish identity and the presence of the Ostjuden was already very evident to many of Germany’s Jewish intellectuals such as Sammy Gronemann and Arnold Zweig, it was not until late 1923 that Döblin began to take seriously the issue of the Eastern Jews and the level of anti-Semitism in Germany. Whereas Zweig and Gronemann had been to the Eastern Front during the war and had already experienced the disillusionment of a German Jewish reconciliation as a result of the humiliating Judenzählung, Alfred Döblin remained unconcerned with the issues of the Ostjuden and of his own Jewish identity within the post-war context. The Berlin, Scheunenviertel pogroms between November 5 and November 8 in 1923 changed Döblin’s perspective and roused him to active inquiry on behalf of the Ostjuden.

These Scheunenviertel pogroms were a riot of destruction and plunder for businesses and homes of the neighborhood. While the reasons for the pogrom were supposedly the increase in bread prices, the mob was unquestionably anti-Semitic. The violence was aimed at the Jews, particularly the Ostjuden, and the police did nothing to interfere (Schoeller 273). Karol Sauerland adds: “Gerüchte, die Juden würden Nutznieder der Währungsreform sein, sollen der Anlaß dafür gewesen sein” (Sauerland, “Einführung” 10). The reports were of “over ten thousand people roaming the streets of the Scheunenviertel […] Although the event was also a hunger riot, there was no doubt that it was a pogrom. Anyone who was Jewish or looked it was
robbed and beaten. Not until late on November 7, after massive police reinforcements had arrived, was some order restored” (Aschheim, *Brothers* 243).

After the pogrom, Ernst Heilmann, an old school friend of Döblin’s and an SPD politician, organized a community discussion about the riots and invited Döblin to attend. This community meeting was an extension of Heilmann’s discussion group for socialists that he regularly hosted in his home (Schoeller 274). Though we do not know all of the details of the meeting, Schoeller argues that presumably the group talked about the effects of the pogrom. Döblin complained later that the participants in the forum assumed a separation between German culture and the westernized Jewish-Germans. He was upset because the forum appeared to have been called in order to find out what “the Jews” wanted to do about the situation, as if assimilated German Jews could somehow be lumped into the same category as the Ostjuden:

“Man stellte uns die Vorgänge dar und fragte, was wir, Juden wie die Betroffenen, machen wollten. […] zuerst protestierte ich dagegen, daß man uns für quasi reinjüdische Existenz eine jüdische außerdeutsche Heimat und Gemeinschaft andichten wolle […]” (*Schriften zu Leben und Werk* 65). Döblin stated that those Jewish intellectuals who were gathered at the discussion group were most comfortable in the culture of “Goethe, Kant, Nietzsche, Heine, Beethoven: dies, allein dies sind unsere Stiefväter. Was die Herren hier eigentlich vorhaben, gehe auf eine unerträgliche Erschütterung unseres Bodens aus” (*Schriften zu Leben und Werk* 65).

In many ways, Döblin experienced a subtler kind of discrimination in this social gathering to the German military experience of Zweig and Gronemann in 1916—the census of the Jewish soldiers (Brenner, *Renaissance* 32). Whatever rhetoric the German government had propagated in the past about bridging the divide between Germans and Jews, the response of
German intellectuals to the pogroms revealed that many still made the association that westernized, assimilated Jews and the Ostjuden were of the same cultural group.

While Döblin resisted this “arbitrary” association and sought to distance himself from the Ostjuden, he also desired to advocate for the rights of this persecuted minority and insisted on a certain solidarity with the Ostjuden: “[...] ich müßte, ja ich müßte durchaus sagen und aussprechen, daß ich diese Ostjuden als meine Leute empfinde und daß ich eine Solidarität anerkenne” (Schriften zu Leben und Werk 65). In spite of his desire to speak out on behalf of the Ostjuden, he also recognized that “meine Berliner Juden keine Juden, sondern irgendein verwischter bürgerlicher Mischmasch waren” (65).

Döblin admitted that he had not articulated his position very well and many of the other intellectuals gathered at the community meeting told him as much—they were confused by what he meant (Schriften zu Leben und Werk 65). It was this internal, personal confusion about his identity that motivated him, after promptings from some of his Zionist associates, to go to Poland and investigate the Ostjuden. He did not yet feel comfortable speaking on behalf of the Ostjuden. He needed more information and did not consider his own Jewish upbringing in any way a qualification for him to represent this persecuted minority.

Part of what needs to be understood when considering Döblin’s view of Judaism and his conviction to express public solidarity with the Ostjuden is the polarized nature of his own experience of Jewish life and culture. He clearly felt something similar to what Jakob Wassermann articulated relating to the Ostjuden: “Viele Juden, die sich Juden fühlen, verhehlen sich dies; einem Pflichtbegriff oder Parteidiktat zuliebe oder um feindlichen Angriffen keinen Zielpunkt zu geben, üben sie Zwang auf sich aus” (Wassermann 115). In addition, Döblin grew up receiving conflicted messages from his parents and his extended family about the nature of
what it meant to be Jewish. Döblin’s mother was devout and hard-working with little to no appreciation of art and culture, while his father was a secular, free-spirited wanderer and womanizer who eventually abandoned his wife and children. The conflicting example of Döblin’s parents was coupled with the disparaging attitudes of at least one of his uncles (likely Rudolf Freudenheim) towards Judaism (Schoeller 35-36, 45). What seemed to irritate Döblin as a child was the self-satisfied, middle class attitudes of his wealthy uncles in Berlin who participated superficially in Jewish traditions:


He goes on to describe, in the same passage, how he and his uncle were invited over to a friend’s home after the synagogue service. Döblin was put off by the attitudes of these men: “[…] und ruhig, sich etwas selbst ironisierend, aßen die Herren dicke Schickenbrote und tranken Rotwein. Ja, sie machten selbst Witze darüber. Aber mich brachten solche Dinge nie zum Lachen, diesen Humor verstand ich nicht und habe ihn auch später in den jüdischen Cabaretts mit Ingrimm abgelehnt und ihn gehaßt” (Schriften zu Leben und Werk 62-63). Döblin rejected this self-aware community of ironic ritual observance combined with “Lauheit, Bequemlichkeit und bürgerlichen Muff.” This was not the Judaism of the poor, Ostjuden in Poland, but it was the Judaism that Döblin knew; it was what he grew up with, and he wanted nothing to do with it.
Part of Döblin’s frustrations with his uncles was undoubtedly that within his own family he felt a sense of class distinctions and discrimination. His uncles were wealthy businessmen, whereas his mother was poor, had several children, and was forced to rely on her brothers’ charity. Wilfried Schoeller surmises that Döblin’s childhood was likely one in which his mother and his siblings were never allowed to forget their status as that of dependents: “Der Gegensatz zwischen den reichen Onkeln und der bettelarmen Sippschaft war gewiss nur schwer zu überbrücken. Die Vorbehalte gegenüber der Schwester mit ihrem reichlichen Kindersegen, aber ohne Mann, werden öfter laut geworden sein” (45). In Döblin’s family, the picture of Judaism not only presented a polarized view of a secular, irresponsible father and devout mother, but also polarizing examples of wealth and poverty. It should not be surprising that the kind of spirituality that Döblin began articulating by the time he visited Poland contained a disposition toward the needs of the poor and the outcast. The Judaism that he wanted to leave behind was that of his uncles.

The conflict that Döblin felt, in light of his upbringing, around the topic of the Ostjuden and his obligation to the Jewish community would never fully be resolved. He did not wish to perpetuate the kind of middle-class condescension and sacrilege of his uncles towards poor, devout Jews, and thus he advocated for the rights of the Ostjuden and felt a need to continually affirm his solidarity with the Jews as a Volk, but at the same time, Döblin never put primary importance on his own Jewish identity (Briefe I 258-59). He was an assimilated Jew, but a German first, and he held tenaciously to all that such a status represented. Wilfred Schoeller writes that Döblin’s uncertainty around his Jewish identity is characteristic for the author throughout his entire life—especially when later, for the sake of solidarity with the Ostjuden, he tried to deny the fact that he had fully assimilated (Schoeller 474, 476-77),

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What was confusing and infuriating for Döblin was that even sympathetic, socialist groups like Heilmann’s did not recognize him as a full German who happened also to be Jewish. At the same time, he did not want his German identity to exclude his sympathy and solidarity for the Jews, and he did not want his Jewish identity to exclude him from middle-class German society. He did not understand why he was still branded as Other, even though he had nothing to do with the religious aspects of Judaism (he officially left the faith in 1912, though did not seriously pursue a Catholic identity until after World War II) and wanted nothing to do with its cultural aspects (Müller-Salget 234). As will be touched on later in the chapter, Döblin was not alone in his conflicted sense of Jewish identity. Leo Spitzer demonstrates rather convincingly that his experience could be typical of well-educated, second-generation, assimilated immigrants within dominant “colonial” cultures—and not just in Europe.

Klaus Müller-Salget observes that Döblin’s answer to the tension between his German and Jewish identities was to try to transcend the dichotomous or exclusive categories through an intellectual and spiritual transformation: “But one must recognize that he was above all concerned with a change in consciousness, a renewal of the Jewish religion through the reaffirmation of the original strong belief in God (without the hope for the Messiah that he saw as paralyzing), and a recognition of the obligation to a full, active existence” (Müller-Salget 236). When Döblin confronted the question of Jewish identity or the European response to the Ostjuden or to Zionism, he often reiterated the need for education. He advocated abstract values of mutual solidarity, the right of universal human freedom from tyranny as part of the Aufmenschung process as he does in Reise in Polen.

Unlike Zweig, as seen in the previous chapter, Döblin’s expression of solidarity with the Polish Jews grew from his conviction for universal human freedom and not primarily from a
commitment to the Jewish community or the Jewish nation. While Döblin focused much of the travelogue on the culture of the Eastern Jews, his primary concern was with Poland as a nation that consisted of several large minorities – one of which was the Jewish population. As in Germany, so in Poland: Döblin advocated for the support of a German or Polish identity that should be enlightened and tolerant enough to actively accommodate the particular cultural identities of the Eastern Jews. This active accommodation was Döblin’s understanding of a European solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

**The State of Poland**

Poland was still a recovering nation in 1924 and Döblin frequently noted the damaged buildings in his travels to the different cities, several of which were cathedrals: “Der Bau hieß Alexander-Newsky-Kathedrale. Achtzehn Jahre hat man ihn aufgerichtet. Soll fünf vergoldete Kuppeln gehabt haben; ein hoher Glockenturm stand frei daneben” (16). This gorgeous building had been destroyed—the windows were boarded up, a fence had been set up around the entire building and movie theater advertisements decorated the fence. Döblin says that he experienced the feeling of loss in seeing that a building that was once holy to God was now repurposed and had been desecrated.

On second thought, he realizes, this church was another memorial to Paskewitsch Eriwanskij—a symbol of Russian power: “Das hier, dieses Bauwerk, was nicht als Kirche gedacht, gewollt. Das sollte eine Faust sein, eine ganz und gar eiserne, die auf den besten Platz der Stadt niederfiel und deren Klarren man immer hören sollte” (16-17). Döblin mourns the loss of such a beautiful, holy building and yet he says, “[…] ich kann der Lösung nicht widersprechen” (17). Consistent with Döblin’s desire for freedom of the people, he opposes any symbol of tyranny or oppression.
Döblin is reminded of Giuseppe Garibaldi and his plea to the peoples of Europe to not forget Poland—a nation that the Russians had oppressed for so long: “Verlaßt Polen nicht” (19). Döblin then contrasts Garibaldi’s plea with words that Döblin hopes echoes the sentiment of the Polish people, a promise to forgive the Russians for their cruelty and the simultaneous desire to see true repentance and an effort to repay what they had taken from Poland: “Die Polen selbst: Und nun sprechen wir auch zu dir, du Moskowitische Nation. Unser uns überliefertes Lösungswort ist Freiheit und Brüderlichkeit der Völker; deshalb verzeihen wir dir auch sogar den Mord unseres Vaterlandes, sogar das Blut von Praga und Oszmiana, die Gewalttaten auf den Straßen von Warschau, die Folterei in den Löchern der Zitadelle [...]” (20). This forgiveness from the Polish people comes with a condition and a threat: that their oppressors join them in the fight against tyranny.

„[...] Wenn du aber in dieser entscheidenden Stunde nicht Reue für die Vergangenheit und ein heiligeres Sehnen für die Zukunft in deiner Brust fühlst, wenn du in unserem Kampfe den Tyrannen, welcher uns mordet und dich zertritt, unterstützen wirst, dann wehe! Wehe dir! Denn angesichts Gottes und der ganzen Welt werden wir dich zu der Schande ewiger Untertänigkeit und zu den Foltern ewiger Knechtschaft verfluchen und dich zum schrecklichen Kampfe der Ausrottung herausfordern, zum letzten Kampfe der europäischen Zivilisation mit dem wilden asiatischen Barbarentum.“ (20)

Döblin’s imagined curses and promises of forgiveness for Russia stand as a vague and general warning against anyone who would try to oppress the Poles or limit their freedom.

He writes later that his primary interest is in the freedom of the people and he wants to know what the actual political situation is: “Ich will wissen, was in dem Land jetzt vorgeht, welche Kräfte, Gewalten den Staat organisieren, welche Kräfte offiziell und welche inoffiziell
regieren. Wer hat die Macht und wer den Mund? Ich verzage rasch, weil ich die Sprache, nein, die Sprachen des Landes nicht kann [...] Ich frage: Wer hungert im Lande, und wer ist satt? Was sind hier politische Verbrechen?” (47). This is similar to Döblin’s earlier injunction to German writers: Döblin was fulfilling his responsibility to observe, consider, and to weigh the circumstances in order to discern whether or not the society was just and good. He wants to know who has the power, and who is left to hunger and starve. He soon finds out that the Jews in Poland have been stripped of much of their political influence, despite changes to the Polish constitution.

Döblin encounters a “young Jewish politician” who tells him that the Jews are protected by Polish law, but the reality is that much of the conditions for the Jews have remained the same as when Russia controlled the territory: “Wer sich jüdischer Nationalität bezeichnet, kann in polnischen Heer nicht avancieren. In Versailler Vertrag spricht der Artikel 10 von jüdischen Gemeinden und 11 von Juden; sie sollen die Rechte der Minoritäten in Sprache und Religion genießen. Das ist, man muß es zugeben, keine juristische glatte Anerkennung der jüdischen Nationalität” (81). Döblin goes on to describe the taxes and economic burdens that are placed on the Jews in Poland—which force the Jew then to seek work outside of Poland, to immigrate to the United States or to Palestine (82).

Döblin’s response to the economic discrimination and the inter-ethnic oppression that exists in the individual cities is a vague call for freedom for all: “Freiheit ist der allernötigste ‘Alltag’! Freiheit ist keine politische Phrase, sondern real und notwendig wie die Luft, unter der man zu leben hat, wichtiger als Landstraßen und ausgetrocknete Sümpfe” (194). This ideal of freedom consists for Döblin in the reform of the new state of Poland. The freedom should be found in the “growing up” and working together of the different people groups – not in an escape
to Palestine or to the United States. Döblin advocated for a different solution than his Zionist acquaintances and friends. Despite the difficulties of rebuilding the country, Döblin is convinced of the worth of the work—to make Poland one people: “Ich überschaue ein ungeheures organisatorisches Werk von maßloser Schwierigkeit. Es muß schon ein ganzes Volk sein, das dahinsteht. Eine stolze Freude, das Werk zu bewältigen. Eine Freude, die ich heftig mitfühle” (58).

The Zadik and Jesus Christ: Döblin’s Vision of a Spiritual (“geistliche”) Transformation

Döblin’s frustration with Poland and its oppression of the Jewish community was primarily directed against the insistence on nationalistic or ethnic exclusivism that prevented the conglomerated culture groups in the new state from working together. In the city of Lemberg, Döblin observed the ethnic and cultural tensions between the Poles, the Germans, and the Ukrainians. The city of Lemberg (contemporary Lviv, Ukraine) was an example of the abuse of the Poland’s new “self-determining” status received after the Versailles agreement. The nation had used its new-found autonomy to launch a series of territorial attacks against its neighbors. Poland invaded and taken Eastern Galicia (including Lemberg) from the Ukrainians after the war (Johnson Modern Times, 39). The result of Polish occupation in Lemberg was an unhappy mixture of minorities. Döblin observes three main cultural-ethnic groups in competition with each other:

So leben drei Völker in Lemberg zusammen, nebeneinander: Polen, die Stadt beherrschend, aufmerksam, lebendig, die Besitzer, --Juden, vielspältig, versunken und abweisend, oder mißtrauisch, sich wehrend, rege, zum Leben erwacht, --Ukrainer,
unsichtbar, lautlos hier und dort, zurückhaltend, jähzornig, gefährlich, trauernd, die Spannung von Verschwörern und Aufrührern um sich. (205)

One of the most prominent places where he notices the lack of national unity is within the schools. Döblin writes how he visited different schools and observed how the Ukrainians taught their children to be Ukrainian, how the Polish taught their children to be Polish, how the Germans taught their children to be German. What he noticed is that each cultural nationality frequently defined itself in terms of historical victimhood and with hatred against their other European neighbors. The result for Döblin:


Nationalism or patriotism that attempted to teach or inspire hatred of one’s neighbors is what Döblin despised. He wanted to see Poland become a restored nation, but that restoration and that new sense of nationality was not to be built at the expense of hospitality and solidarity with Poland’s neighbors and with its own larger minorities within its borders. Döblin’s vision of
nationality within the post-war Europe was that of a hybrid nation based upon concepts of universal human dignity and law rather than upon notions of ethnic nationality.

Just as Zweig relied on ideals and stereotypes of wise old men and sages among the Ostjuden as well as youthful images of inspired Zionists immigrating to Palestine, Döblin also drew upon two main images or figures to represent his vision of a transcendent, universally compassionate human identity: the Hasidic Jewish Rebbe – a Zadik – and the figure of the crucified Jesus Christ as Döblin saw him portrayed in the Catholic churches he visited in Poland, particularly in the city of Kraków. Both of these religious leaders were capable of connecting the common people with what Döblin believed was the greater spiritual power in the world – the Ich, the life-force – a connection that was necessary to cultivate empathy for others outside of one’s ethnic or national or religious identity.

In Warsaw, Döblin observed the honor and the importance that the Hasidic Ostjuden gave to their leaders: the Rebbes and the Zadiks. The Hasidim traced their spiritual roots back to their eighteenth-century founder, Israel ben Eliezer, also called the Ba’al Shem Tov. Eliezer promoted a “spirituality of the people” that did not depend on great amounts of learning but on practices of mystical meditation and prayer as ways to access the divine spirit. Eliezer’s teaching was very popular in Poland and Lithuania, partly because of its great appeal to the common people. He also revived the concept and the role of the Zadik (or zaddik) who “was not a messiah, but not quite an ordinary human being either—somewhere between the two. Moreover, since the zaddik did not claim a messianic role, there could be many of them. Thus, a new kind of religious personality arose, to perpetuate and spread the movement.” (Johnson, Jews 296).
Döblin describes how, in a restaurant, he witnessed the disciples of a local, holy Rebbe—a Zadik—crowd around to hear his teaching and to take, if they could, crumbs of food that might fall from his table as he eats (107). One of Döblin’s guides explained the relationship that many of the Ostjuden, the Hasidim, have to the Zadik. He is a holy man and the holy man makes other things holy. What matters is not material things themselves, but whether or not those things have been touched and blessed by the Zadik. The guide explains:


The Zadik acts as a bridge from this world to the spiritual world. He allows his disciples to realize that this world is connected to the next world, the heavenly world. The material things of this world, according to the Rebbes, are also intimately connected to life with God (111). This connection to the divine is what interested Döblin: How could individuals learn to see the underlying, spiritual connection of everything? The Zadiks were the teachers that helped people see these truths.

The Ostjuden, Döblin thought, still maintained, through their Zadiks and through their rituals, a natural connection to the Ich—the “life force.” It was that characteristic that Döblin wanted to explore. When writing about the Laubhüttenfest of the Jews, he associates this holy
day with a celebration of nature. He says that the Jews are a people more connected to nature and
to the World Spirit of the Ich than some of them want to admit. The Jews are not just a cultural
community, but a people intimately tied to the Spirit of the World:

Sie gehen jetzt ein Naturfest feiern auf den finsteren Hinterhöfen der Großstadt, neben
Mülleimern, auf den dachhohen Balkons. Das sieht wie eine Geste der unverwüstlichen
Masse aus: trotz alledem.

Ich kann mir nicht helfen: wie ich durch die Hausflure gehe und Hütte nach Hütte besehe,
schafft in der Natur. (98).

He writes that the Ostjuden were unlike other Völker, which often become pessimistic with their
metaphysical versions of God and spirituality. These kinds of religions and philosophies, Döblin
says, do not embrace life but are preoccupied with a distant God and with ascetic practices. In
contrast, the Ostjuden “sind kräftig, irdisch geblieben, haben sogar, sehe ich, den Optimismus
der strebenden Menschen. Ihre Metaphysik ist die nach innen geschlagene aktiver Menschen,
denen die Aktivität genommen ist. Es sind—Araber” (98). In this passage, Döblin participates in
the stereotyping or the essentializing of the Eastern Jews as an “exotic” “Asian” or “Oriental”
people—in this case, conflating Eastern European Jews with Arabs. His descriptions are similar
to those used by Buber, Zweig, and even German authors such as Waldemar Bonsels writing
about the exotic Indian peoples (Reif 444-45).

Döblin’s description is a highly romanticized portrayal of the Ostjuden and is remarkably
similar to passages from Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz. Zweig compares the Eastern Jews to
Muslims because of the similarity of their worship rituals and expressions of prayer:
Ja, das Gebet ist noch laut im Osten, zu jeder Stunde des Betens entzündet sich allgemach
die Glut des Ansturms auf die Höhe des Herrn, und für oberflächliche und westliche
Ohren und Augen ist das ein peinlicher und geschmackloser Eindruck [...]. Wer aber je in
einer Moschee der Islam-länder geduldet wurde während des Gebetes, der erkennt im
Juden den Orientalen. Der Rhythmus, der dort die Körper bewegt, ist entgeisteter,
weniger persönlich, geregelter durch die Vorschrift, ist in den objektiven Teil des
Gebetes eingegangen; beim Juden blieb er subjektiv, mehr vom Antrieb geformt und aus
der einzelnen Seele des Beters nach der Gewalt der Stunde brechend. *(Das ostjüdische
Antlitz 46-47)*

Zweig’s portrayal of the Eastern Jews complements Döblin’s picture of the *Ostjuden* as a unified
people group, even as an *Urvolk* – a description far more reminiscent of the nationalistic
mythologies promoted for many of the new Eastern European political entities during the 1920s
than of anything factual Döblin would have observed (Brenner *Renaissance* 135). The way
Döblin writes about the Jews reveals an apparent naiveté that might seem strange to
contemporary readers. Did he really hope to encounter a “race” of people that contained an
unbroken magical bond with the past and with nature, a people that was self-determining and
harmoniously unified?

Karol Sauerland thinks it possible that Martin Buber had a direct influence on Döblin’s
perception of the Jews, particularly regarding their Oriental portrayal and their status as an
*Urvolk*. Döblin does seem to adopt Buber’s broad definition of the Jews as being an “Asian”
people. Commenting on Döblin’s comparison of Jews and Arabs in the travelogue, Sauerland
writes, “Sollte Döblin meinen, die Juden, zumindest die Ostjuden hätten sich seit den
alttestamentarischen Zeiten nicht verändert? Oder schrieb er dies unter dem Eindruck der
Lektüre der Schriften Bubers, insbesondere des Essays Der Geist des Orients und das Judentum, in dem die Juden zu den Orientalen gerechnet warden?” (Sauerland “Döblins Begegnung” 37).

Given the historical context of the Weimar period and the preoccupation with the völkisch “Oriental” traditions of the immigrating Eastern Jews, and given the interest of intellectuals like Buber, it is hardly surprising that Döblin would have seen the Eastern Polish Jews as a kind of organic, natural Volk—certainly in contrast to the “artificial” forms of national, political organization.

Zweig’s travelogue also helps to illuminate what Döblin means by saying that the Eastern Jewish “Metaphysik ist die nach innen geschlagene aktiver Menschen” (Reise 98) In Das ostjüdische Antlitz, Zweig describes the Eastern Jews as a people who do not take out their sense of shame, hurt, anger and revenge on others. Rather, they redirect their grief inward:

Die Trauer und die Verzweiflung sind an die Stelle der Freude und Ernstlust getreten; hier lebt der Jude so heftig im Wirklichen des Untergangs, wie kein Westvolk das vermag. Das Gefühl nationalen Bedrohtseins, welches den Besiegten und Gelähmten des Weltkrieges so schwach pulst, daß von wahrer Volkstrauer überhaupt keine Spur im Öffentlichen zu merken war, dieses Gefühl flutet im Juden echter als Fremden vorstellbar. Denn die Trauer des Juden, unvergänglich über Jahntausende und mit der furchtbaren Gegenwart ganz eins, wird ihm zugleich fruchtbar: sie wendet sich gegen sein eigenes Sein und Wesen; und wenn er auch aufschreit um Erlösung und im Hasse gegen den Schänder und Mörder: zuvörderst schlägt er doch an seine eigene Brust; er hat sein Ziel und seinen Weg verleugnet, hat gegen den Geist gesündigt, er ist der Urquell selbst des Leidens und der Schmach, nicht die Anderen, die Fremden, die Feinde! (65)
Zweig’s portrayal of a people that bears their frustrations with other nationalities and that is able to redirect those emotions into productive creativity and culture building is the same Volk quality that Döblin espouses. Zweig expounds further as to what kind of culture creation such an “inner spiritual activity” produces. He writes that the Eastern Jews are economically oppressed and must work difficult jobs and long hours just to survive. This is why, he says, they are not terribly sophisticated in their cultural expressions. Their poverty forces them to pour all of their extra energy into fulfilling strict ethical demands instead:

Alle schaffenden Kräfte dieses Volkes vermögen nur nach innen zu schlagen, ins Ethische abzuströmen; die Erdfreude, das liebe Leben, von der göttlichen Freiheit verschönt und Menschenwürde schon außen in Gehaben und erfreulicher Breite des Daseins zur Schau bringend, bleibt abgeschnürt durch Mangel an Nahrung und Mangel, vor allem, an Raum. (85)

Zweig’s passage illuminates Döblin’s portrayal of the life-affirming optimism in the Ostjuden who “selbst blieben jüdisches Volk und ihre Religion ihre Religion. Sie blieben es, wenn sie auch zuletzt ganz ins Geistige verjagt wurden und scheinbar nur eine Kulturgemeinde waren” (Reise 98). While Döblin did not necessarily endorse the concept of “race” or blood identities as Buber did (even though Buber’s own intention of racial categorization is nuanced), Döblin did hold to the ambiguous idea of “naturally determined” people groups, or Völker and this is what he wanted the new post-war European nations to cultivate: cultural nationalities that were able to work with each other, in the case of Poland, in support of a shared political state. His idea of a Kulturgemeinde was of an ethically conscious, cultural Volk. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer writes:
Auf der Grundlage einer anarchistisch[en] getönten Staatsutopie erwartet Döblin, daß jedes historische Volk irgendwann die ihm zustehende Staatliche Form finden und nach einer Phase der Durchsetzung den Herrschaftscharakter des Staates überwinden wird—so auch die Juden […]. Jüdische Eigenständigkeit und Selbstbewußtsein hat Döblin in überwältigender Weise erfahren, aber deren Zukunft liegt für ihn nicht mehr in einer nationalstaatlichen Formation, sondern in einer menschheitlichen Utopie, welche die Nationen auslöscht, um die Völker zu bewahren. (Bayerdörfer 166-167)

Like Buber, and many of Buber’s followers, Döblin hoped that an encounter with the Hasidic communities would also be an encounter with preservers of authentic (“natural”), Jewish spirituality, tradition, and history.

Near the end of his journey, in the city of Lodz, Döblin has a chance to speak with a Rebbe, one of the Hasidic teachers. Döblin wants to know how Judaism is able to contain the great diversity of its adherents. He confesses that he came to Poland expecting a united, single people in the Jews: “Es gibt, habe ich im Westen gehört, doch nur ein Judentum, einen Glauben. Sie lächeln freundlich am Tisch; einer nickt bekräftigend: ,Eine gute Frage’” (328). The Rebbe answers him:

„Alle habe dasselbe Ziel, das zu Gott führt. Es gibt ein großes Land. Ein König herrscht über das Land. Der König kann aber das Land nicht allein regieren; er braucht Soldaten und Generale. Das sind die Rebbes. Die Rebbes, worin unterscheiden sie sich. Sie halten sich alle an ein und dasselbe. Ein Rebbe kann die Thora verstehen hart oder weich. Man kann die Thora verstehen so und so. Es gibt eine Thora von ,Middas haddim‘: ich befehle, bis zu einer Thora: ,Middas horachim‘: ich habe Mitleid. Das ist die Interpretation. Und wer die Thora hart versteht, hat seine Anhänger; und wer sie weich
versteht, hat seine Anhänger. Und das macht die Zahl der Anhänger. Die Rebbes sind
Fromme und Söhne von Frommen. Jeder wählt sich den Rebbe, zu dem er Sympathie
hat.“ (328)

This passage is part of a larger conversation, and Döblin takes great comfort from the wisdom of
this religious leader and the openness that this Rebbe encourages regarding the spiritual path.
Döblin discovers that there is no *Urvolk*—certainly not in an ethnic sense, not in the sense that
implied a monolithic Judaism —to provide an example to the rest of the world. The wisdom
Döblin receives is that access to the underlying life-force of the world is something that can be
learned through many different kinds of Rebbes and teachers.

Just as Döblin hears from the Rebbe that everyone must find a spiritual teacher or guide
that is suitable, he discovers an inner spiritual need that stirs him when considering the figure of
Jesus Christ. Throughout his Polish journey, Döblin often stopped in various Catholic churches
to observe the people and the rituals practiced there, just as he observed those within the Jewish
communities. Particularly in a Kraków cathedral Döblin describes himself as strangely moved by
the statue of Jesus, *der Hingerichtete*, hanging in the church above the worshippers, surrounded
by beautiful, liturgical colors, stained-glass windows, and decorations:

> Und am Eingang zum Altar, über dem Eingang, ein Christus am Kreuz, ungeheuer. Unter
der Decke hängt er, von der Decke hängt er herab, die Arme ausgebreitet; das Kreuz
steigert seinen Leib, Längs und Querlinie des toten Körpers. Ein toter Mann, ein
Hingerichteter über den Betenden, Lebenden, vor den bunten tiefen Farben der Fenster.

Dem Menschen, dem toten Mann, Christus, bin ich schon in den anderen Städten
begegnet. Vor den Marien übersah ich ihn. Es überstürzt mich etwas, wie ich ihn hier
This scene is important for Döblin because it combines the religious figure of Jesus – the suffering martyr – with the “Frauen mit Marktkörben” whom he observed earlier in the text: the “common people” of Poland.

As Döblin continues in his meditations on the person of Christ, he also articulates what sort of spiritual direction or enlightenment he seeks: “Intensiv lehne ich ab und weise von mir Klassizität, Hellenismus und Humanismus” (248). Döblin goes on to write that he is not seeking a new philosophy or new aesthetic theory. He is not captured merely by the beauty of the buildings or the churches. The kind of spiritual truth he wants is empathy with those who suffer. This is what the example of Jesus represented for him:

Döblin recognizes that this spiritual truth is a difficult one: The true nature of the world is one of suffering, pain, and death and even the Catholic worshippers cannot bear to face this truth without the additional colors, the church decorations and the beauty of the stained glass windows. Döblin interprets the person of Christ as one who identifies with the pain and suffering of the poor and pairs the example of Jesus with that of a Zadik—Jesus is a teacher or an example with whom Döblin personally identifies, as one who knows the divine will but is not divorced from the turmoil of the common people.

While learning about various Kabbala traditions, Döblin discovers that the Zadiks can themselves be common people and artisan workers, but their quiet piety and selfless service to their people is what keeps the world running in an orderly fashion. They are, in fact, divine messengers: “Man weiß von sechsunddreißig Zadiks. Das sine keine Rebbes, sondern anonyme Gerechte im Volk. Sie dürfen sich nicht offenbaren, und niemand errät sie; sie können Schuster und Schneider sein. Auf diesen stillen verborgenen sechsunddreißig Gerechten ruht die Welt. Wären sie nicht da, ginge sie unter. Wenn einer von ihnen stirbt, wird ein anderer geboren.”

(252)

Döblin goes on to conflate the image of the crucified Jesus with the image of the Jewish Zadik: Both of these spiritual, religious figures identify with the causes of the poor. Döblin writes: “Von dem Gehenkten kann ich nicht lassen. Es zieht mich zu ihm. Der Gerechte, der Zadik, die Säule, auf der die Welt ruht: das ist ja der Gehenkte, der Hingerichtete. [...] Wie ein Mensch, der ruhig steht und geht, und einer, den man ins Wasser wirft und der am Ertrinken ist: so der Gerechte und der Hingerichtete.” (261)
Döblin does not stop at conflating the religious figures of the crucified Christ with the Zadik. He proceeds to draw a connection between Christ and the Zadik and a Socialist workers memorial parade that he witnesses. The procession is to memorialize a workers’ strike that the Polish military violently stopped one year before. He says that there were sixty men who stood trial as instigators of the strike. They were acquitted, but enough people were killed in the riot that ten thousand people attended the funeral of the workers (272). Döblin observes this parade of red flags and observes that in the Marienkirche, where he meditated on the significance of the 

Hingerichtete, “Ich sah an dem Tag in der Marienkirche einen Sarkophag am Hochaltar, mit Blumen bedeck, umgeben von einem sehr hohen Ziergestell, das gelbe breite Bänder trug” (272). He then writes that the procession is marching toward the cemetery. The group of people that march to the cemetery are memorializing those who were killed in the workers’ strike, and a coffin has been placed in the church, also in remembrance.

The centerpiece in the church is now not the crucified Christ but, at least symbolically, a murdered, proletariat worker. The coffin replaces or is conflated with the image of Christ as the Hingerichtete and the Gerechte. Döblin goes on to write that the red Socialist flag that symbolizes the cause of the poor and the oppressed, Christ and the Zadik, has captured his heart:

Döblin portrays Jesus as a martyr for the cause of the working poor and as a model whose
d example brings about the already earlier quoted spiritual renewal: “Empfinden sie es wie ich.
Steinerne Herzen aus der Brust genommen, fleischerne eingesetzt, und nun können sie sehen”
(239). This kind of spiritual awakening, the biblical metaphor of exchanging hard “hearts of
stone” that ignore the suffering of others, for “fleshly hearts” of empathy is part of the
Aufmenschung that Döblin wants to see in the divided communities of Poland, and throughout
Europe.

Döblin writes of these spiritual experiences as both something personal and subjective
within himself, but also as a process of identity creation that the Jewish people exemplified.
What attracted him to the Ostjuden is that they had become a Volk capable of preserving the
divine temple in themselves. Döblin was impressed with the Hasidic movement within Judaism,
and he valued its emphasis on inner spirituality. He saw the Hasidim as the culmination of a long
history of suffering in which the Jews were forced to realize and practice a faith that was without
nation and without a fixed place of worship:

In diesem Religiös-Geistigen ist das Volk [die Ostjuden] so zentriert wie kaum ein
anderes in seinem. […] Sie brauchten den Staat nur für den Tempel. Nur auf Zion steht
der richtige Tempel. Unter dieser Idee, als der Staat nicht kam, ist langsam die
Verwandlung des ganzen Volkes eingetreten. Lautlos hat der Verzicht auf Land und
Staatlichkeit das Volk durchdrungen. Und sie haben sich selbst zum Tempelvolk
so künstlichen, langwirkenden Bedingungen war es möglich. (138)
It is this same kind of pattern that Döblin wishes that radical nationalists would experience: He wanted the various *Völker* of Europe to know and internalize their cultural nationality—to carry the temples of their identity in themselves—without insisting on a physical state or political identity to the exclusion and harm of their neighbors. The Jews, and the Hasidic Jews especially, through their suffering and state-lessness, had discovered a spiritual identity that transcended time and nationalities.

The pattern of experiencing loss, of having a political state and national status taken away—an experience that Döblin believed the Jews to have gone through historically as a people in their Babylonian captivity and the occupation of Palestine by the Romans and in the centuries-long desire to return to a political state—could be used productively for the creation of one’s own internal identity. Poland had experienced a similar history of national oppression. It remained to be seen whether the different culture groups and nationalities within Poland would learn to express their own nationalities and spiritual truths in empathetic ways, or whether they would continue to define themselves through political and territorial conflicts.

Throughout the travelogue, Döblin’s portrayals of nationalistic violence remind the peoples of Europe of the urgency to embrace empathetic identities. Political alternatives for solving the ethnic and cultural differences had failed time and again. What the nations of Europe needed was a guide, a Zadik, to a new identity that transcended their own preoccupations with ethnic, cultural and territorial rights.

**The Importance of the Individual Aufmenschung**

Similar to Arnold Zweig’s travelogue, Döblin’s plea in *Reise in Polen* for cultural and communal renewal contained a spiritual and mystical element. Döblin allowed that there were
many different ways to accessing spiritual enlightenment and Aufmenschung—individuals had to decide which method worked best for them. As Döblin heard from the “Rebb Sadie, ein Enkel des großen Gichliners,” fulfilling the Torah meant having empathy or compassion for others: “Ich habe Mitleid,” but different teachers understood this teaching differently. It was the responsibility of everyone to choose the guide who made the most sense to themselves: “Jeder wählt sich den Rebbe, zu dem er Sympathie hat” (327-28).

Döblin ends the travelogue with a meditation on the tension he feels between his own individuality and the sense of connectedness in nature. He articulates tension between belonging to a larger entity (community, nationality, natural process) and maintaining a strong sense of individuality throughout the text. At the end of the book, he presents the tension to the reader with the observation that everyone will need to “use their head” and work out how to express their empathetic and compassionate independence and autonomy for themselves:


The head—the intellect, the geistliche element—lies in a tension between the divide of the shoulders. In contrast to Zweig’s aesthetic program of inspiration and spiritual transformation (looking at Hermann Struck’s sympathetic portrayal of the Eastern Jews, or reading Zweig’s empathetic portrayals of their virtues), Döblin points to the process of considering and
contrasting political, national and cultural identities as a means of Aufmenschung – growth and enlightenment and personal transformation. In weighing the claims and holding the identities in tension with one another, siding neither with one or the other but examining both from a middle position, one learns, according to Döblin, to empathize with those identities and yet come to a new, synthesized geistliche identity (which is aufgehoben). Similar to the transcendent identity of the Hasidic Jews, Döblin advocates for an identity that does not depend on a political state but relies on spiritual and intellectual enlightenment for preservation. The Hasidim “warten schon lange nicht mehr auf den ‚Staat‘. Man kann sich nur im Geistigen erhalten, darum muß man im Geistigen bleiben. Das Politische kann nicht das Himmlische erfüllen, Politik schafft nur Politik” (138).

Like Zweig, Döblin consistently calls for his own version of geistliche Erneuerung throughout his life. His position takes many forms and different mutations, but his vision remains that of an international community that is able to appreciate its own national boundaries while respecting the rights and territories of others. His beliefs are spiritual, though by no means religious or strictly theological. In his 1924 essay, “Der Geist des naturalistischen Zeitalters,” Döblin writes:

Und dieser Periode, die keinen jenseitigen regierenden Gott kennt, wird sehen, daß das Wesen, das diese Welt ist und sich in ihr äußert, in viel stärkerem Maße, als man früher glaubte, als man noch humanistisch war, grandiose gesellschaftlich und freundschaftlich ist. Diese Periode wird wohl beachten, was bis jetzt noch selten gesehen wird, das Faktum: die Welt baut ein Gesellschaftswesen. Man verstehe, man fühle, was das heißt.  
(Aufsätze zur Literatur 83)
Though Döblin provided later nuances to this ideal of an international, spiritual community, his vague description that it was ultimately something people could intuit, feel and understand did not change. Zionism was too limited for such a broad vision of an international, enlightened, humanistic community. He would later adjust his views and become more sympathetic to the Zionist cause, but his primary concern never wavered from that of a universal, spiritual enlightenment that transcended national, ethnic, political, economic and social boundaries.

Interestingly enough, Döblin makes a casual note in the travelogue, while critiquing the examples of Austrian and Polish political order, that he thinks the United States has managed to assimilate or integrate its diverse populations successfully. Out of all of the German Jewish travel writers, Döblin is the only one who actually seems to give America a positive evaluation regarding its ability to provide a workable solution for cultural and national conflicts: “Amerika gelingt es, es ist ein offenes Becken. Die Massen strömen leicht ein, die vorhandene Zivilisation ist groß und begehrenswert” (198). The American quality of openness and tolerance for other people groups and cultures within a single nation or state interested Döblin and is what made it begehrenswert – desirable. While Döblin does not specify that the United States represented an ideal for him, one cannot help but draw the connection that Döblin had hopes that a community of enlightened, aufgemenscht individuals would produce a similar working solution for Poland (and Europe) that reflected the openness and tolerance toward diverse (immigrant) cultures.

While Döblin leaves his travelogue open-ended, with no specific recommendations for either Germany or Poland outside of this vague injunction for individual spiritual renewal, Döblin describes his own subjective mental process throughout the travelogue and provides a psychological pattern for personal transformation that he also displays in the protagonists of his novels: It is a dialectical pattern of weighing competing ideas (theses) or identities, which theses
are eventually reconciled or resolved in a higher, transcendent, empathetic identity or spiritual revelation.

Continuing with Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer’s observation, quoted earlier, that Döblin’s philosophical framework is one of polarity and that Döblin constantly compared and contrasted different political, cultural, and philosophical / religious positions and always ended up “zwischen allen Stühlen,” it will be helpful to provide examples of where and how this polarity of thought and literary structure is used in *Reise in Polen* (‘‘Ghettokunst’. Meinetwegen” 172). Döblin’s comparisons of binary, ideological poles builds on the larger cultural debate in Germany at the time—whether or not Germany was more associated with an Eastern European culture or a Western European culture. The Eastern culture was associated with tradition and with history: It was older than the newer, more scientific, Western culture. Döblin thus compares older ways of life with newer technologies and industries. The Jewish culture in Poland reflects these contrasts as well; the Zionists desire a newer, more secular, political community and the Orthodox Jews cling stubbornly to their tradition and rituals. While he was in Poland, Döblin felt himself an uncertain traveler, caught in the tension between these competing ideologies, seeking for a way to resolve the differences or bridge the divide between these community identities.

June Hwang has remarked on the point that, from the beginning of the travelogue, Döblin addresses himself to his readers as someone who exists in something of a transient state of being—an in-between state (268). The narrator of the travelogue writes as one who is both present in his location, and also not present. He begins the book by telling readers:


From the beginning of the travelogue, we read of Döblin being in between Germany and Poland. He is traveling over bridges, a structure representative of an in-between space. Döblin also tells us that he is somehow “not there.” This begs the question of “where” we are supposed to understand him to be. As a traveler, he is constantly in between destination points.

Similarly, Poland was caught between the points of Eastern and Western Europe. According to Döblin, Poland was very much like a bridge between East and West, North and South. Poland was “nicht frei wie Russland, nicht weit wie Russland, sondern geklemmt zwischen Osten und Westen, zwischen Süden und Norden. Das gibt überhaupt nicht einfache Menschen. Eine Brücke: ist das Land oder Wasser?” (122). In a post-war Europe, the question of how to bring the different nationalities together in a new way—to bridge the troubled waters of national conflict—was at the forefront of everyone’s mind.

As mentioned in the historical overview, Germany’s national identity waivered between the two poles of Kultur and Zivilisation, between East and West. The concept of Kultur was bound up with associations of old (hierarchical, feudal) traditions. Zivilisation was associated with Western democracy, Socialism and French and Anglo-American culture. (Johnson, Modern Times 109-111). Poland also engaged in these tensions of Eastern traditionalism and Western, democratic and scientific culture. Döblin continually compares the two ways of life throughout the text.
Strangely, one of the ways Döblin portrays the differences of Eastern and Western culture within Poland is by comparing the women he observes in the different cities. In Lemberg, he criticizes the superficial, westernized culture among the women in the cafés—they are beautiful, fashionable women, but they are not aware, Döblin says, of God’s presence in their lives:


In contrast, Döblin has a high opinion the poor Hasidic women and the rural farming women he meets. In Zakopane, Döblin experiences the snow-covered picture of local hospitality. Despite the poor conditions, he finds two women who are willing to let him stay with them: Njuscha, who is something like a concierge for the area, and her aunt. Döblin describes her:


Döblin reports that he feels a greater affinity to these simple, unrefined women who nevertheless express great warmth and hospitality:
Etwas von mir ruht noch im Gefühl des Hauses, der Einwohner, in ihrem Zusammenleben, ihrer Armut. Da sind sie beide [Njuscha and her Tante], die mit den zerrissenen Handschuhen, die mich vom Bahnhof holt, die andere, die ihre Kinder zu Verwandten weggegeben hat und mir den Kaffee brachte. Eine freundschaftliche, nach allen Seiten nickende Stimmung geht mit mir. (291-292)

Döblin returns to the portrayal of the simple, poor people of Poland throughout the text, and most notably he describes the poor men and women, and the beggars, who come to the Catholic church to worship (41).

Julian Preece writes that Döblin was interested in drawing out a sexual component in the midst of the political tensions in an attempt to make the debates around Polish nationality more humanized (Preece 175, 177). Part of the purpose of Döblin’s comparisons was to use the image of these different women as a metaphor for Poland itself as a woman who was torn between an Eastern way of life and a Western way of life. Though he makes the comparison indirectly, Döblin provides the image of Poland as a woman who has to choose between Eastern and Western lovers: Russia and Western Europe. He pairs and contrasts conversations with two different men as he is visiting Lemberg / Lwow. In the first conversation, a man tells Döblin that Poland is really more democratic than Germany, but because of a poor economy and the lack of organization, Poland is an anxious nation and looks back to Russia for possible help and support (212-213). Döblin goes on to record another conversation with another man. He says that this very fat man “spricht gern von Politik, noch lieber aber von einem anderen Ding” (213) The rest of the conversation is this man’s reflections about the sexual relationships between men and women. The man goes on to describe how peculiar the sexual act is with every woman—each woman is different and responds differently to a man’s touch, and yet the connection is real.
between them. Just because one way of relating to a woman is not effective, the man says, this does not mean that it will not be effective with another woman.

The pairing of these conversations—the one relating to Poland’s relationship to Russia—and the other conversation over the conflicts and tensions between men and women—shows that Döblin understood that Völker were bound together in different ways—not unlike the pairings of men and women. In the case of Poland, most of her political, imperial “lovers” had abused their relationship with her, but it was still Poland’s responsibility to determine what “her” future relationships with the rest of Europe would be.

The male-female dualism also draws upon Döblin’s distinctions between the “male” technological and controlling tendencies in humankind in contrast to the more organic, nurturing, “female” instincts in humankind and in the natural world that he portrayed in his Berge Meere und Giganten. The choice was also whether Poland’s political and cultural future would be determined by the more violent and controlling characteristics of the ethnic nationalists or if it would be determined by a more humble, empathetic, nurturing and “natural” attitude.

Poland’s tensions between an Eastern and Western identity extended into the Jewish communities as well, where those tensions emerged in conflicts between the more Western, secular Zionists and the deeply traditional Orthodox Jews. The danger of Zionism, Döblin fears, is that it was a movement that attempted to create national unity and solidarity based on its own kind of Tyrannenmacht—just like of Austria, Russia, Germany with militaristic nationalism. He describes a conversation between a Zionist and a Galician Rebbe, that latter of whom points out a flaw of Zionism—that Zionism establishes its own form of dictatorship:

Der Galizianer gerät ins Gespräch mit einem Zionisten: der Fehler der Zionisten ist, daß sie glauben, überall die Diktatur zu errichten. In Palästina geht es schon fast
The Rebbe from Galicia points out how the Orthodox keep the laws of God, sustaining Palestine by the virtue of pious, traditional believers. The Zionist whispers to Döblin that the requirements of the Jewish law will be lifted in the time of the Messiah—but he does not dare say this aloud to the Orthodox Rebbe (102).

The conflict between the Zionist and the Orthodox Rebbe has much to do with the definition or interpretation of the Messiah or the Messianic Age for the Jews. According to the Orthodox Rebbe, attempting to establish a Jewish state as an end to itself is misguided. God will bring about the Messianic Age as long as His people are faithful. For the Zionist, the Messianic Age will only come once a Jewish state is first established.

The Zionists are politically practical—less religious. They think that the Orthodox traditions are an atavistic force keeping the Jewish people from embracing their political identity as a modern, secular state:

im Schwinden. Es ist ein Zeichen des Rückgangs des Klerikalismus, daß die Orthodoxie sich zu einer Partei hat zusammenschließen müssen.‘ (83-84)

This kind of political involvement—the need to join a political party—is a signal to Döblin that something is wrong with the ideology of his conversation partners. Throughout the travelogue, almost always whenever Döblin witnesses party-politics, he offers a warning of some kind. He seeks a transcendent, non-partisan community, and, as he goes on to observe, the political actions of the Orthodox Jew and the Zionist do not seem to be helping either cause. He later discovers the frustration of the Polish authorities who do not want to subsidize the Jewish schools because the Jews cannot agree on which language their children should be taught in: Yiddish or Hebrew (83).

Döblin’s response to the conflict over whether or not Yiddish or Hebrew should be the preferred instructional language is to reflect on the example of a modern Jewish school that he discovers where Yiddish, Polish and Hebrew are studied and socialist and Enlightenment values are embraced: “Das ist also eine selbständige Emanzipation der Arbeitermassen des Judenvolkes. Sie sind nicht zionistisch, lehnen den Klerus ab, verwerfen aber auch als Sozialisten die gesamte schlechte Gesellschaftsordnung von heute. Hier also Kampf nach zwei Seiten: um politische und wirtschaftliche Befreiung” (84).

The school provides Döblin with a vision of two great publishing houses that could come from such educational experiments—one publishing in Hebrew, the other in Yiddish: “Vorzügliche Lehrbücher erscheinen doppelt, doppelsprachig, hebräisch die einen, jiddisch die andern. Hebräisch treiben vorwärts die bürgerlichen, bloß nationalen Zionisten; Jiddisch, die wirkliche Volkssprache, wird gepflegt von den Arbeiterfreunden, den Sozialisten, Weltlichen”
(84). Such hopes for a Jewish future that could include both the modern Zionist and the more Orthodox (Yiddish) cultural contributions is the kind of solution that Döblin seeks throughout his journey: a way to reconcile conflicting ideologies and identities.

A further conflict for the Jewish communities that Döblin experiences is the tension between the superstitious beliefs (especially regarding Kabbala) maintained by the Hasidic Jewish community and the advances of modern science. While he enjoys the curiosities of Kabbala practices, he recognizes it is bound up with superstition and he rejects this kind of mysticism. He describes an experience regarding childbirth within the Jewish community in Kraków. Döblin observes a slip of paper, on which is written a magical phrase of protection. He learns that when a certain woman was giving birth, her neighbors pasted such pieces of paper all over her room. The phrases are for keeping the evil spirit of Lilith away from the newborn baby, who, according to the apocryphal Book of Raziel, desires to take the lives of newborns. Döblin dismisses such practices:

The modern world, Döblin says, has learned to control the world of nature using external, scientific methods. We no longer need to “control” events using “internal” mystical wishes and kabbalistic spells.

Even though Döblin describes the superstitious practices of the Hasidic Jews as the vestiges of a Totenkult, he also has doubts about the advances of science and modern intellectual thought:

Das heimtückische unsichere Geschmeiß der Intellektuellen, das ich hasse. Die Prostituierten des Geistes.

Die Elektrische, weiß ich, ist nicht realer, als was ich fühle. Was kommt sie auf gegen die mächtige Realität des Gerechten, des Hingerichteten. Gegen die nicht zu törende Furchtbarkeit der Seele. (262)

In this passage, Döblin confesses that he objects to certain kinds of intellectual thought—the kind that would emphasize the material world, the technical, electrified, industrial world as more real than the moral convictions that he feels. He reflects again on the person of Christ as the Hingerichtete: the righteous martyr. Döblin rejects the kind of intellectual materialism that would dismiss Christ’s example of empathetic solidarity with the poor and the outcasts, but he also admits that he continues to be fascinated by the advances of industry and technology.

While visiting the city of Lodz, Döblin writes about the thriving cotton and fabric industry (324-325). He is excited to see the factories and the machines, and yet he worries about industrial, factory life—whether or not it really has made the living conditions better. He says that many people in the West see only the destruction of the old ways of life:

Döblin acknowledges that with rapid industrial development, there dramatic changes in the way people live, but industry creates work for the masses. He goes on to say that the dramatic changes will not last—there is no point in longing for an older, better time. The materialistic, industrial advancements and changes will not last, but they will prepare the way for a better future:


Döblin realizes that his position of praising the industrial age, while simultaneously rejecting an immoral, non-spiritual materialism often connected with technological progress, might be a
contradiction, but embracing the tension between the two convictions is exactly what Döblin wanted to present. He wanted to believe that modern scientific and industrial advancements would ultimately help usher in a new age of spiritual and intellectual awareness rather than hinder such human growth and development. Roland Dollinger writers, “Döblin argues that technology and spirit should not be seen as irreconcilable forces. On the contrary, he expects that a new spirituality of the scientific-technological age will gradually evolve” (Dollinger 103). For Döblin, it was important to hold the tension between the two poles rather than to simply choose a side.

Near the end of the book, Döblin includes a discussion he has with one of the Hasidic Rebbe’s about the potential conflict between science and religion. The Rebbe is able to help Döblin find a synthesizing, unifying concept for his sense of polarized conflict. Döblin is intrigued by the idea that through the study of the Torah one can come to terms with the world, or more specifically, the Torah helps one, understand how the material and the spiritual elements of the world flow into one another so that the two spheres are not in conflict. Döblin wondered whether the Rebbes felt their religion was threatened by scientific ideas, especially since so many Western Jews had forgotten the importance of the Jewish religious texts and preferred modern, secular education:

Immer kehren in seinen Sätzen wieder die Worte Talmud und Thora. Wie ich von den Westjuden spreche, weist er auf Polen: viele Westjuden haben sich von Talmud und Thora getrennt, ihre Kinder haben darum keine jüdische Erziehung. Erst muß ein Kind Talmud und Thora lernen, dann die weltliche Bildung. Bei einem guten Gehirn lernt man die weltliche Bildung schon so. Und wie stehen die alten heiligen Schriften zur modernen Wissenschaft; kann man überhaupt beide vereinen. (329)
He does not know if the two worlds, the two value systems, can be reconciled—if science and spirituality can be reconciled. The Rebbe answers by saying, “Die Thora ist die Quelle, die alles befruchtet. Die Wissenschaft is nur ein einzelnes Wasser daraus. Sie ist nicht zu halten ohne die Quelle, sie vertrocknet ohne sie. Es kommen Naturerscheinungen vor, die über die höchste Macht, die feinste Berechnung sind. Es ist eine göttliche Aufsicht da, die alles zuschanden machen kann.” (329-330).

Döblin’s response to the words of the Rebbe: “Wundervolles Gespräch, vollkommenes L absal” (330). The Rebbe reconciles the tension between science and religion by saying, in effect, that natural catastrophes are divinely orchestrated to bring the greatest human (political) powers to account, to a reckoning. Science and the study of nature allows people to observe these natural phenomena and, presumably, cultivates humility in people. Science is not opposed to religion, but religion (or the divine scripture) helps give meaning to scientific observation—the study of the natural world. Döblin thus sees a point of reconciliation between science and technology and religion and spirituality—the reconciliation is rooted in the realization of mortality and the transience of the material world.

Döblin had explored this topic in both his fictional works (Wallenstein) and his non-fictional works (Das Ich über der Natur) prior to writing Reise in Polen—the theme of the divine, destroying (or judging, assessing, reckoning, humbling) power in nature that was capable of bringing human aspirations and plans to ruin. Döblin was strongly attracted to the idea that human beings were not ultimately in control of nature. On the contrary, the powers of nature consumed and re-assimilated human life and human plans and legacies. In a time when Poland (and Europe) was consumed with ideological conflicts over political, cultural, linguistic, and
religious identities, Döblin argued that people should overcome their limited views of themselves by remembering their own mortality and insignificance before the larger processes of nature.

Earlier in the travelogue, Döblin had gone to a museum where he saw a number of different stuffed and mounted animals. He reflects on the larger evolutionary processes at work: Nature destroys and kills, but it does so in order to re-create. Smaller, simpler organisms die in order to give life to more complex organisms—like human beings. Döblin describes a snake skeleton on display, as well as a rhinoceros and the skeleton of an elephant. These bones have been taken out of the earth, he says, just like the Egyptian kings were taken from their royal tombs. He looks back on these animal skeletons as a hall of fame of his natural family—all of the animals have lived and come together to give evolutionary rise to the human. This whole evolutionary process that unites the creatures of nature Döblin calls the Ich:

The *Ich* is Döblin’s mystical concept that brings a spiritual and natural connectedness to everything. All of the natural world is interdependent and shares a “familial” relationship. Nature might kill and destroy, but it does so to perpetuate the process of evolution. Döblin feels grateful to be the inheritor of the long line of development and thus says to the foxes and the rats that he aims “not to be unworthy” of their existence and sacrifice in order produce him and his life.


Döblin is willing to embrace a more mystical approach to the world because the world is too big, too mysterious. The sciences could not access or explain everything about the world, least of all could the sciences explain the pain and suffering in the world: “Leid ist in der Welt, Schmerz, menschlich-tierisch ringendes Gefühl ist in der Welt” (239). Religious mysticism, on the other hand, provided some explanation. Thus, Döblin writes: “Der mächtigen Realität habe ich mein Herz zugewandt, dem toten Mann, dem Hingerichteten am Holz über den Betenden. –Die Elektrische ist nicht realer, als was ich fühle” (237). The powerful and terrible reality was the divine, destructive force that human power and science could not control. Again, as mentioned earlier, it is helpful to note that Döblin associates this particular scene of observing the crucifix with “Frauen mit Marktkörben” in the church. The image of a suffering, crucified Jesus affirmed
this truth of human limitation and weakness before the larger natural “female” forces in the universe—something that Döblin felt existentially.

David Midgley writes that Döblin was a philosopher who sought a comprehensive, unifying theory to explain his experiences, and Döblin’s religious passages in *Reise in Polen* bear out this fact. He was an author desperately trying to reconcile a modern scientific worldview with a more traditional, ethical and spiritual worldview. Midgley writes:

> When the evidence from Döblin’s critique of Nietzsche is placed alongside his later recollections of his early philosophical interests, then, the picture emerges of a young man anxious to retain the unifying power of metaphysical thought in compensation for the disintegrative effects of empirical inquiry that he perceives in the contemporary development of science and looking to major representatives of speculative philosophy for persuasive integrative ideas, even if it is not clear how these ideas might be reconciled with each other: the oneness of substance and the need for a dialectical understanding of the relationship between unity and diversity, which he would have found in Spinoza, the workings of the spirit as expounded by Hegel, and the notion of the will as ultimate reality in Schopenhauer. (13-14)

Midgley mentions Döblin’s persistent reputation of being “an uncompromising Hegelian” and that Döblin was increasingly fascinated by the relationship of the one and the many: the forces of human individual against the will of the group, as well as the relationship between the conscious individual soul and the unconscious, natural forces (10-11). Döblin’s mystical view of Christ and the Zadik was that these religious teachers understood the dualistic principle at work in the world
and had been able to submit their own identities into a larger, transcendent, empathetic worldview of humility before the natural, destructive and creative order.

**The Cost of Aufmenschung: The Suffering of Döblin’s Fictional Protagonists**

While Döblin’s sense of *Mitleid* (empathy) and universal compassion is rooted in this mystical respect for the destructive and creative processes of the natural world, he does not appear to have been content with his own philosophy, because he continued experimenting with the same pattern of dialectical decision-making and personal transformation in his novels, with little difference in the final outcome and conclusion of such a process: Döblin’s protagonists who go through a such dialectical processes of personal enlightenment and *Aufmenschung* may gain a greater sense of empathy and compassion for other people, but the protagonists consistently experience this revelation only to die shortly thereafter in the story, or the revelation leads to an ambivalent, isolated existence for the character. The reader is unsure what to make of the protagonist’s new form of “social responsibility” or “empathetic social engagement.” One is ultimately left asking the question as to the social value—the solidarity value—of such an *Aufmenschung* process.

Throughout the travelogue, Döblin advocates a rather vague notion that peoples (*Völker*) should be self-determined. Yet he did not have a clear idea as to how this would be accomplished:


He goes on to write about the power of a collective of *Einzelmenschen*, and it is difficult to determine exactly what he means – perhaps that enlightened, educated individuals will naturally form a harmonious, collective or community, which will invent or discover its own organic set of boundaries and governing laws, as opposed to the harsh, artificial imposed laws of the state. As has been mentioned in his earlier quoted essay, Döblin wrote about this new emerging community: “die Welt baut ein Gesellschaftswesen. Man verstehe, man fühle, was das heißt” (*Aufsätze* 83).

In Döblin’s novels, he continued trying to understand and to work out what this principle might look like in society. His fiction served as literary experiments portraying *aufgemenscht* individuals seeking to find an organic, meaningful community or seeking to integrate themselves into their existing communities in meaningful ways. A brief examination of Döblin’s novels and the trajectory of the protagonists leads to the conclusion that his fictional characters model a similar dialectical transformation process to the one he advocates in *Reise in Polen*. Their narrative patterns provide a way to assess Döblin’s own thoughts of individual and community renewal.

Throughout his life, Döblin consistently portrays his transformed, fictional characters as isolated individuals, mentally unstable, or ambivalent in their ability and desire to reintegrate into society or a new community. Döblin’s portrayals of the Chinese revolutionary leader, Wang-
Döblin’s literary output prior to his trip to Poland. In these two novels, his protagonists experience spiritual enlightenment and a new, profound sense of empathy for nature and humanity but who are murdered or die soon afterwards. Berlin Alexanderplatz likewise provides an example of Döblin’s fiction after his trip to Poland where the protagonist goes through a meaningful “conversion” experience or processes of spiritual enlightenment. Yet despite these experiences, each of the characters in these novels appear little better informed about how to engage their communities than they were prior to their moments of Aufmenschung. The one major consistency in the characters is that they change from active, self-seeking individuals to men with passive and more compassionate dispositions.

Following the argument that Döblin believed that personal transformation or Aufmenschung occurs through a dialectic process of alternations or oscillations between contradictory identities and principles, it is helpful to examine the protagonist Wang-lun in Döblin’s 1915 Chinese novel, Die Drei Sprünge des Wang-lun. The novel is an extravagant portrayal of the growth and development of Wang-lun as a religious and revolutionary leader in eighteenth-century China, during the time of the Manchu Dynasty. The story chronicles Wang-lun’s experience of trying to find a new community which can passively resist conformity to the political demands of the Manchu emperor, but the novel also describes the internal conflicts of the emperor who does not know the balance of maintaining peace and order within the empire without using excessive political force and persecution. The character of Wang-lun-experiments with different practices trying to discover a non-violent form of communal independence. These attempts are not without consequences. At several points, Wang-lun’s well-intentioned efforts
cause death and destruction: murder, the mass poisoning of a city, and a final, catastrophic defeat and surrender of Wang-lun’s rebel followers at the hands of the imperial forces.

David Dollenmayer comments on the characteristic of “alteration” that provides the main structure for Döblin’s Chinese novel:

Its most basic structural principle is alteration, of which the three leaps of the title are emblematic. When they actually occur late in the fourth book, those leaps are not forward, but from side to side. Wang jumps back and forth across a stream to demonstrate to a trusted lieutenant the course of his life. His first leap was into the doctrine of non-resistance. [...] The second leap is his return to anonymity as a married cormorant fisherman. [...] He presents the third leap as having been inspired by his encounter with the robber. (“The Advent of Döblinism” 62)

Dollenmayer does not believe that these alterations serve the development of Wang-lun’s spiritual trajectory as a disciple of wu-wei and non-violence; rather, the alterations of his identity provoke non-linear “spiritual ruptures” (62).

The Chinese novel provides, if nothing else, Döblin’s exploration of a pacifist worldview in a society dominated by pressures of political control and military force. The novel ends in apocalyptic destruction as Wang-lun’s revolutionaries are killed off by imperial forces, since Wang-lun decides that it is better to die, and to allow his followers to die, than to actively pursue violence (“Advent of Döblinism” 64). Even if Dollenmayer finds the ending of Wang-lun problematic, he does not fully appreciate the emphasis that Döblin places on the oscillations and alterations of Wang-lun to bring him to the place where he receives a sudden enlightenment that gives him empathy for a robber he is supposed to execute: “So alt wie dieser war Wang auch;
dieses Schicksal also hätte er gefunden ohne den und jenen Zwischenfall, ohne Su-koh in Tsinan, ohne das Elend auf Nan-ku und anderes. [...] Ein verhungerter Bursche mit Klauen und Armen wie ein Affe, zahnloses Maul, dürre Waden; er konnte klettern, wie er lügen konnte. Sein Bruder, sein Bruder! Wie gelogen, so wahr geredet [...]” (Wang-lun 458). The alteration and oscillation may not provide an attractive political plan for Wang-lun, or for pacifists in general, but Döblin continues to place value in the process of this spiritual and geistlich oscillation and alternation to bring about empathy.

A similar example can be found in Döblin’s 1920 historical novel, Wallenstein. The emperor Ferdinand II likewise alternates between the political pressures of his court advisors and the violent, capitalistic measures of the military commander Albrecht von Wallenstein to wage war against the Protestant states of Europe during the Thirty Years War. Like Wang-lun, Ferdinand II flees the court and its political pressures in order to go live in anonymity in the forest. Having suffered a mental collapse, he joins up with robbers and with an animalistic, goblin-like creature, the latter of who eventually kills Ferdinand.

Earlier in the novel, Ferdinand begins to sense the absurdity of the war, even the ridiculous nature of attempting to assert or maintain his claim to authority. In fact, he begins to feel that the more he tries to impose his will upon the circumstances of the war or rally for support, the more it works to his own detriment: “Ich hab’ ja nichts zu schenken, Eleonore. Ich besitze selbst nichts. Je mehr ich Kaiser wurde, um so mehr wurde von mir genommen, liegt nun da” (360). This realization of his own powerlessness gradually leads to his abandonment of the empire. He escapes to the forest and joins company with a band of thieves. His mental instability has reached a point where, as Döblin describes him, he appears to have become a complete fool:

Ferdinand aber schien, seit er die Quälereien von der Fechterbande erfahren hatte, ein
vollkommener Narr geworden zu sein. Er war von einer flutenden, stoßweise ihn
durchrollenden Erregung heimgesucht. Wie ihn die Räuber auf die Straße warfen und er
gefangengenommen wurde, war er, als wäre er alle Sorgen losgeworden. Er hatte schon
die Wallonen im Wald nicht, wie die Buben erzählten, aufgefordert, ihn zu befreien,
sondern nur von sich erzählt. Er sei in einem hohen Amt gewesen, hätte es aufgegeben.
Denn das Regieren hätte wenig Zweck. Es läuft alles von selbst. Es ist auch alles gut,
hätte er erkannt; man müsse nur wissen wie. Man könne mit ihm tun, was man wolle,
man täte ihm nicht weh. (727)

Ferdinand’s associations with the robbers in the forest and with the goblin is not unlike the
identification that Wang-lun feels for the robber he is supposed to execute. Both Ferdinand and
Wang-lun experience revelations of empathy with lower classes, and, for Ferdinand, with the
natural world. Even as Ferdinand’s mind decays, he is able to experience a mystical connection
with the world that “Es läuft alles von selbst. Es ist auch alles gut, hätte er erkannt; man müsse
nur wissen wie. Man könne mit ihm tun, was man wolle, man täte ihm nicht weh. (727).

Eventually Ferdinand’s openness and empathy for all of nature leads him to try and befriend a
Kobold, a forest goblin. The Kobold stabs Ferdinand to death with a knife and, as if to supremely
symbolize Ferdinand’s sense of identity with all of nature, the Kobold leaves Ferdinand’s body
to decay, hanging from a tree—serving as an ironic or perverse kind of crucifix (732-733).

The examples of Wang-lun and Ferdinand II present a pattern in Döblin’s works for his
vision of geistliche development through an oscillation between political control of situations
and other people and a passive surrender of power. This back-and-forth process of uncertainty
leads eventually to a changed perspective, a moment of revelation where the protagonists feel a
greater sense of empathy with the world.
Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer articulates Döblins use of contradictions and intellectual Spaltungen as a dialectical path to enlightenment and connects this technique with the tradition of the Hasidic koans in Döblin’s Reise in Polen and in Berlin Alexanderplatz (“Ghettokunst” 167). He argues that Döblin’s observations of the conflicts of national and cultural identity in Reise in Polen are addressed again as themes in Berlin Alexanderplatz: “Was sich in dem Polen-Buch als ungelöster Widerspruch zwischen dem naturhaftkollektiven Lebens- und Überlebensbedürfnis der Gruppen und Nationen und dem letztlich vom Individuum ausgehen Anspruch des Geistes darstellt, wird zum Problem und epischen Gestaltungsprinzip des neuen Romans [Berlin Alexanderplatz]” (168).

In Döblin’s 1929 novel, Berlin Alexanderplatz, the protagonist, Franz Biberkopf, is anxious to become a respectable citizen after being released from prison on a charge of manslaughter. Biberkopf’s naiveté and impulsiveness ultimately lead him to associate with criminals and to become an alcoholic. He wants to be self-sufficient, but he is confused by the big city of Berlin. His criminal friends betray him and kill Bieberkopf’s new girlfriend, Mieze. Bieberkopf experiences a mental and emotional collapse after this and is taken to a psychiatric ward where he confronts his own mortality and the foolishness of his own self-reliance. During his stay in the Berlin-Buch psychiatric hospital, Bieberkopf metaphorically dies and is reborn, a new man:

Hier ist zu beschreiben, was der Schmerz mit Franz Biberkopf tut. Franz hält nicht stand, er gibt sich hin, er wirft sich zum Opfer hin an den Schmerz. In die brennende Flamme legt er sich hinein, damit er getötet, vernichtet und eingeäschert wird. Es ist zu feiern, was der Schmerz mit Franz Biberkopf tut. Hier ist zu sprechen von der Vernichtung, die der Schmerz vollbringt. Abbrechen, niederkappen, niederwerfen. Auflösen, das tut er.
When Biberkopf finally comes to terms with pain and with his own death and mortality, he is able to “wake up” and embrace the world with humility and the realization that he needs other people: “Viel Unglück kommt davon, wenn man allein geht. Wenn mehrere sind, ist schon anders. Man muß sich gewöhnen, auf andere zu hören, denn was andere sagen, geht mich auch an. [...] Ein Schiff liegt nicht fest ohne großen Anker, und ein Mensch kann nicht sein ohne viele andere Menschen. Was wahr und falsch ist, werd ich jetzt besser wissen”(453).

Listening to other people is precisely what Biberkopf had not done once he was released from prison. Early in the novel, two Hasidic Jews, Nachum and Eliser, try to advise Biberkopf by telling the parable of Stefan Zannowich. According to Nachum, an Eastern European Jew named Zannowich traveled to Italy many years ago and made a living through cleverness and trickery. He was a swindler who was eventually discovered by the Venetian authorities. He was beaten and punished and forced to leave Italy—but because of his cleverness, he nonetheless was able to return to his home in Albania with enough money to send his sons to Italy for a good education. The youngest son, Stefan, used his education to become friends of wealthy nobles throughout Europe and thus became fabulously wealthy himself. Eliser, corrects Nachum and insists that this is not how the story ended. In reality, he argues, Stefan tried to steal money from various European governments by pretending to be an Albanian prince, collecting funds for a war. Stefan’s schemes were discovered and he was thrown in prison where he later committed suicide.
Each of the two Jewish men has a different interpretation and ending of the story. For Nachum, the moral of the parable is to have courage and go out into the world; the more one knows the ways of the world, the less there is to fear of the world: “Aber die Hauptsache am Menschen sind seine Augen und seine Füße. Man muß die Welt sehen können und zu ihr hingehn‘” (Berlin Alexanderplatz 25). For Eliser, the story is a cautionary tale: One should not be too proud and too confident in his own ideas and schemes.

The two interpretations leave Biberkopf confused about how to live and conduct himself in the world. Bayerdörfer sees the presence of this parable as an illustration of Döblin’s didactic strategy for the larger novel: Just as Biberkopf is confronted with a parable that contains an open-ended, binary interpretation, the appropriateness and the application of which Biberkopf must discern for himself, so Döblin’s novel functions as a similar kind of parable for the reader:

In der Tat verweisen die Erzählungen auf das ironisch-didaktische Erzählkonzept des Romans. Wie Biberkopf, so wird auch der Leser nicht mit einem einfachen ‘fabula docet’ entlassen. Die eigentliche Beziehung der Geschichte auf die eigene Situation muß er selbst herstellen. Diese ‘offene Didaktik’, die ein Moment der Sebstrelativierung seitens der Erzählfigur einschließt, nimmt spezielle jüdische Traditionen der Unterweisung auf. Sie ist Döblins Antwort auf die Forderung einer parteipolitisch gebundenen Agitations- und Anweisungsliteratur, wie sie im zweiten Jahrhundert der Weimarer Republik von vielen Seiten erhoben worden ist. (170-71)

Bayerdörfer draws out an educational formula for Biberkopf, who mirrors and interprets the “Zannovich” parable in his own life. At the end of the novel, Biberkopf is forced to reflect on his own actions, his own attempts at financial success and creating a good reputation—anständig zu
sein—for himself, his assumptions about his identity and his role in society, which leads to a psychological crisis and a breakthrough. Bayerdörfer makes the connection that Döblin’s *Binnenerzählung* are similar to that of Kafka’s parable, “Vor dem Gesetz” in *Der Prozeß*, in that the story serves to provide many meanings for the protagonist, and engages him to reflect and to use the story to create meaning of his situation (169-170).

The result of Döblin’s dialectic, psychological pattern of self-awareness for Biberkopf is that he re-emerges from his self analysis and becomes a responsible gatekeeper (*Hilfsportier*) at a factory:

Biberkopf tut seine Arbeit als Hilfsportier, nimmt die Nummern ab, kontrolliert Wagen, sieht, wer rein-und rauskommt.

Wach sein, wach sein, es geht was vor in der Welt. [...] Da werde ich nicht mehr schrein wie früher: das Schicksal, das Schicksal. Das muß man nicht als Schicksal verehren, man muß es ansehen, anfassen und zerstören. (454)

Biberkopf now feels more compassionate or sympathetic towards others—he recognizes the need for community. He also recognizes the need to be responsible and to be careful who he lets in the factory and to be watchful of who comes out.

The social and interpersonal awareness for all of these protagonists is heightened as a result of their spiritual experiences, but, the reader might ask, has this *Aufmenschung* experience better prepared Biberkopf to guard against being deceived again, just as he was before by his criminal friends? Was Wang-lun better for his spiritual enlightenment experience if it led him to surrender his own rebel army to slaughter at the hands of the imperial forces? Did not Ferdinand
II’s revelation of the interconnectedness of the world only deceive him into trusting a forest goblin, who kills him in a fit of non-rational, animalistic violence?

David Dollenmayer notes of the conclusion of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* that Biberkopf, in his new job as a gatekeeper: “He watches warily as unidentified groups march past ‘with flags and music and singing.’ Are they Nazis? Communists? Socialists? Whom will Biberkopf join? Döblin leaves these questions maddeningly open” (“Narration and the City” 769). The same questions are left “maddeningly open” for the conclusion of *Reise in Polen* as well.

If Döblin’s other writings and his life are any indication as to how to interpret the openness, one plausible explanation is the rather ominous implication in Döblin’s works that the solution to the issues confronting Poland, Germany, and Europe was that the price of an aufgemenscht community was a paradoxical acceptance of loneliness, isolation, and various forms of martyrdom. The figure of the crucified Jesus in *Reise in Polen* serves, in light of the character and trajectory of Döblin’s protagonists mentioned above, not only as an admirable example or teacher who appeals to Döblin personally, but as an archetype for all universally compassionate, aufgemenscht individuals.

**Döblin’s Paradoxical Path to Community**

Döblin’s complicated form of support for Jewish cultural identity and spirituality in *Reise in Polen* were qualified by his simultaneous resistance to a nationalist, political Jewish identity. In the travelogue, Döblin argued that, in the midst of competing, warring parties in the newly established states of post-war Europe, what was needed was an Aufmenschung, a maturing of the nations for a universal valuing of human life rather than the tyranny of a nationalistic state—which could also appear in a Zionist form:

Passages such as this illustrate Döblin’s frustration with political developments in Europe and his own aversion to political or economic solutions to social conflict. No sooner would a social revolutionary bring freedom to an oppressed people but, once the revolutionary leader gained power, he, too, would become a tyrant. The post-war, self-determining nations had created their own form of internal slavery, Döblin argued. Rather than become free peoples who sought justice, the governments instead demanded absolute, exclusive loyalty from their subjects. Döblin does not see this as freedom but a perverse, beastly barbarism.

In Döblin’s cautionary support of a political state—one based on universal principles of justice and equality rather than ethnic or political loyalties—he advocated the path of
assimilation and Westernization for German Jews while simultaneously recognizing that something needed to be done for the Ostjuden. As early as 1921 Döblin recommended that, instead of a Palestinian home, a separate state be created for the Ostjuden. He wrote in the Neuer Merkur journal:


Karol Sauerland makes the observation, “Döblin stellt sich nicht die Frage, wie so etwas möglich wäre. Sollte er an Umsiedlungen gedacht haben? Oder ging es ihm nur um die Ablehnung der Errichtung eines jüdischen Staates in Palästina?” (“Einführung” 9). The naiveté that Döblin expresses for the Ostjuden or his assumptions about the nature of the Eastern-European Jewish conflict may justify his later claims that he simply did not know the Ostjuden, and thus he needed to go to Poland and produce a research document (travelogue) of his observations (Schoeller 274).

One almost wonders how serious Döblin was when he made the assertion that Poland should simply be a commonwealth for both landless Poles and Jews. “Natur, Landschaft, Klasse nivellieren,” according to Döblin and he writes something similar in his Polish travelogue: “Bündnisse sind gut, Geographie ist besser. Rußland ist Nachbar. Eine natürliche Symbiose der Völker hier muß sich anbahnen, in besseren loser Formen als heute” (Reise 201). Döblin
consistently returns to the argument of geography and economic issues as the more important, more practical issues when confronting ethnic and racial animosity. It for this reason that he never fully embraces the convictions of the Zionists: “Palästina ist für sie [Ostjuden] eine falsche, nämlich idealistische Formel. […] Palästina ist nicht vom lieben Gott für die Juden bestimmt” (Kleine Schriften I 318). He further objected to Zionism because of its intrinsic nationalistic and racist implications (“Der Geist des naturalistischen Zeitalters” 81).

Döblin believed it was more important that the Jews, wherever they were, invest in the land and culture they already knew—which was not Palestine for most of the Eastern European Jews. He advocated for national autonomy for the Eastern European Jews in their respective countries, but that they should have patience with the process.

In March of 1924 Döblin made notes for a speech in which he cited the urgency to support the Jewish nation in light of the anti-Semitism in Germany (Sauerland 10). What Döblin meant by such support of the Jewish nation was that immigrant Jews, wherever they were, had a cultural task to join together in solidarity. The Western Jews, for their part, should then give their full support to the creation of an Ostrepublik (10-11). Döblin believed that Palestine was simply too small of a geographical space to house all of the Jews living in the Diaspora (Schoeller 275). He also distrusted the explicitly religious associations with Palestine: “Er suchte nach einer Religiosität außerhalb der Synagoge. […] Er sah es keineswegs aus dem Ghetto herauswachsen. Sein Messianismus war ein rationale, auf zu bildenden Grundlagen des Judentums gerichtet, keinem kulturellen oder religiösen Residuum vertrauend” (Schoeller 275).

While Döblin clearly hoped for a renewed and restored Europe, his question in the middle of the travelogue, “Und was ist die Heimat der wirklichen Christen?” has a rather
ominous, rhetorical tone, similar to Joseph Roth’s observation in his *Vorede* to the 1937 edition of his *Juden auf Wanderschaft*:


If Döblin’s paradigm of universal compassion contains an internal contradiction or paradox, it is that his simultaneous plea for a community of enlightened, *aufgemenscht* individuals is accompanied by a strongly inferred acknowledgement that the price of realizing such universal compassion, if the examples of Jesus, Wang-lun, Ferdinand II, and Franz Biberkopf are to be followed, is isolation, loneliness, being outcast from society, and risking the possible loss of mental and emotional sanity.

Drawing from Döblin’s later writings, Wolfgang Düsing argues that Döblin never overcame or resolved the dualistic, binary struggle that he perceived in the world, even after he converted to Catholicism. Identification with a larger community always threatened the autonomy of the individual, and he always saw selfish individualism as a danger to a person’s humanity. Indeed, Döblin declared after he finished *Berlin Alexanderplatz* that he did not think that an ultimate *Aufhebung* of life’s dualism was possible (Düsing 284). Düsing writes:

> Thus the search for identity, not possession of it, becomes the prime mover in human existence, an oscillating back and forth between two extremes, between a total
“communion” in which the self threatens to dissolve into the whole and be lost in anonymity, and a radical “individuation,” which trades off loss of the world for retreat into a fortress of self-awareness, where the isolated self also runs the risk of obliteration. Thus the self is essentially characterized by its “incompleteness.” (273)

If Arnold Zweig suffered from a contradictory sense of solidarity with the Eastern Jews because of over-identification, Döblin’s solidarity revealed itself in an inverse sense of independence and autonomy: Döblin, despite his work with various Jewish organizations, seeking alternative “colonies” for the displaced Jews throughout the world, could never commit to any one group or movement. He remained suspicious of becoming attached to a larger group almost as much as Zweig desperately longed to be defined by a larger, group identity:

Er [Döblin] blieb der spöttische, bitter scharf kommentierende Zaungast der Ideologien. […] Er blieb der unabhängige Geist, der auf dem Gegenspiel von praktischer Tätigkeit und utopischen Impulsen, spiritueller Inbrust und rationalistischer Zweckbestimmung bestand und der seinen selbstgewählten Auftrag wieder zurückwies, wenn ihn die Wiederholung (auch seiner Widersprüche) langweilte. (Schoeller 420-422).

Part of Döblin’s conflicted identity and solidarity with the Eastern European Jews was that, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, he saw himself primarily as an intellectual outsider, arguing between polar extremes. The self-selected position of a socially responsible intellectual with no political party ties is important to keep in mind when reading Reise in Polen. The job of the intellectual, presumably, was to educate people. Commenting on Döblin’s 1931 text, Wissen und Verändern!, Wilfred Schoeller observes:

Den Platz der Intellektuellen sah Döblin nicht im Proletariat, sondern daneben. Der sich theoretisch gebende Dezisionismus marxistischer Intellektueller führe zur Versimpelung
Döblin’s hope of conscious communal engagement was an ideal, but it was ambivalent in a different way than Zweig’s ideal. Whereas Zweig was consistently frustrated with Jewish nationalist efforts because he insisted on upholding his German cultural identity, Döblin’s intellectual determination not to invest in any one organization or movement was rooted in a determination not to over-identify with any one group of people. His fear of the political, ethnic, and religious abuses of group identities led him to advocate for a renewed community for other
people, while he granted himself the exceptional status of the intellectual who functioned best as a detached critic of various ideological communities and groups.

Döblin’s “distant” support of the marginalized Eastern European Jews bears strong similarity to Stefan Zweig’s reaction to the needs of Jewish refugees in the 1930s. As discussed in the introduction chapter, Leo Spitzer’s study of assimilated, second-generation immigrants in twentieth-century Austria, Brazil, and British West Africa reveals a set of attitudes and responses that these men exhibited to the act of discrimination and marginalization. Not only Stefan Zweig, but André Rebouças, and Cornelius May—all well-educated, middle-class or upper-class individuals who had adopted a European bourgeoisie self-image as their primary identity—experienced great difficulty in actively taking part in the causes of their “persecuted brethren.” Spitzer writes:

Although Zweig felt some affection for the Austrian-Jewish bourgeoisie, he did not feel strong ties to any other community within Judaism. For many of the same reasons that André Rebouças had been unable to identify meaningfully merely on the basis of racial affinity with Afro-Brazilians and Africans, or Cornelius May with the “less enlightened” African masses in Sierra Leone, Zweig could not maintain a sense of identity with those fellow émigré Jews with whom [he] had little in common except an externally defined Judaism and a sense of the experience of persecution. (Spitzer 169)

The danger with Döblin’s form of solidarity through the individualistic process of self-individuation and the distancing from any community commitment was that it was easily cloaked in the legitimate recognition of a deeper truth: The path of universal compassion and empathy with the socially oppressed is inherently a path of rejection, isolation and suffering. The kinds of community that Döblin’s aufgemenscht examples inspire or create (such a Jesus, the Zadik,
Wang-lun, Ferdinand II, and Franz Biberkopf, or even Edward Allison, protagonist of *Hamlet,* Döblin’s post-conversion novel) require great sacrifice. Döblin’s works illuminate the theme that martyrdom and ostracization characterizes the lives of such aufgemenscht individuals. What was potentially self-deceptive (in the sense that he had convinced himself being in active solidarity with the Eastern Jews) for Döblin was the belief that, because he described such individuals and the importance of this Aufmenschung process, he too shared in their isolated state of truthful, just (gerecht) singularity—that he, too, belonged to the “wirklichen Christen,” doomed to wander, without a home.

What is even more curious was Döblin’s shared hope with Zweig that, in light of anti-Semitic persecution, solidarity with the Jews meant creating a community “somewhere else”—as both Döblin and Zweig worked to support new Jewish communities in Palestine or, in Döblin’s case, in Canada, Peru, or in Angola in Southern Africa (Schoeller 419). In an oddly ominous gesture, both Döblin and Zweig recognized that they could hope for a renewed community in Palestine (Zweig) or in South America, Southern Africa, or in Poland (Döblin), but both men remained silent regarding the possibilities of a renewed, aufgemenscht community in post-war Germany. This silence indicates an attitude typical of the Western, Weimar Jews towards their Eastern European relatives—it was either the desperate hope that, if the Ostjuden remained in Germany that they would assimilate as soon as possible, or that they would leave. The burden was largely on them, the Ostjuden. As Steven Aschheim observed:

The German Jewish response to the problem of Eastern Jewish persecution and mass migration was, then, grounded in an old ambivalence. German Jews approached the problem on the basis of categories inherited from their nineteenth-century experience. […] German Jews undertook massive charitable work on behalf of the persecuted East
European Jews at the same time that they sought the most efficacious means to prevent their mass settlement in Germany. (Aschheim 33)

Döblin’s silence as to the possibility of welcoming Eastern Jews into Germany (and his earlier claimed ignorance about whether or not “real” Jews lived in Germany) is likely rooted in this German Jewish cultural ambivalence as articulated by Aschheim, but the silence also grew out of Döblin’s deeper recognition of the true cost of active solidarity with the Ostjuden as social outcasts.

Döblin knew, or suspected, that active identification with the Ostjuden as meine Juden would involve suffering through a similar kind of ostracization (Schriften zu Leben und Werk 65). Wilfried Schoeller writes that Döblin’s failure to find connection with the larger Jewish community lay in the inner conflict that he would have to betray or undermine or deny his own successful career as an assimilated Jew and a successful German intellectual in order to show solidarity with the Zionists and with the Ostjuden:

Döblins Verhängnis aber bestand wohl vorwiegend darin, dass er als deutscher, gar als “preußischer” Jude die Grundtatsache, ein Assimilierter zu sein, und das in seiner äußersten Steigerungsform, als grandiose deutscher Schriftsteller, tilgen wollte, um seine Solidarität zu erweisen. Ein unlösbaren Konflikt, den er nur mit Verbalradikalismus, einmal in die eine, einmal in die andere Richtung, überdecken konnte. Auch die Schmähung der jüdische Assimilation ist ein polemisches Ostinato gegen seine eigene Existenzform und kulturelle Aura, die er damit nicht löschen konnte. (476-477)

Döblin’s travelogue provides, among other things, a fascinating contrast to Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz. Reise in Polen was in many ways, an inversion of Zweig’s profession of solidarity with the Eastern Jews. Whereas Zweig’s travelogue focused on bringing to light an
imagined “inner story” of the Ostjuden in an attempt to make them more appealing to a Western audience—as if the relational and social problems between Eastern and Western Jews was that Western Jews did not really understand the Ostjuden—Döblin located the problem in the need for empathetic identities. Whereas Zweig portrayed the Eastern Jews as similar to the Germans (“they are really more like us than we think”), Döblin acknowledged the cultural and historical differences, but he sought an identity that was enlightened enough to recognize a mutual interdependence between different communities. Both men acknowledged the importance of community involvement, of active solidarity with the Eastern Jews, and both of them recognized, in different ways, the sacrifice that was required in order to achieve solidarity.

If Zweig’s fault and source of self-deception lay in the postponement of his communal engagement with the Eastern Jews because he was focused on describing a renewed vision of Jewish community for the younger generation of Zionists (the practice of Jewish culture and Jewish ethics was ultimately for someone else), Döblin’s fault lay in the opposite extreme: in an endless maze of self analysis and identity construction to the exclusion of communal investment and commitment.

Joseph Roth, reviewing Reise in Polen in 1926, criticized Döblin for the highly subjective and westernized, condescending view of the Ostjuden he put forward in the travelogue:

Ich weiß wohl, worauf es hier ankommt: Döblin, ein ganz moderner Autor, geht souverän mit seinem Stoff um, in diesem Fall also mit einem Land. Alles, was er von sich selbst mitteilt, ist viel interessanter, als was ein gleichgültiger schreibender Wanderer „objektiv“ über ein Land berichten würde. Wenn Döblin einen erschütternden Kampf mit einer Tür ausführt, so ist es wichtiger, als wenn ein anderer die Geschichte der Konfessionen des Landes schreibt[…]

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Roth was dissatisfied with Döblin’s portrayal of the Ostjuden, accusing him of the same arrogance and stylistic tendencies with which Tacitus described the “barbarian” Germans when Rome began conquering portions of Gaul. Roth admitted that Döblin at least “saw” the Eastern Jews in Poland better than most Western Europeans or Zionists who, as members of wealthy nations, wanted to come and “improve” the Eastern Jews by forcing them to conform to Western standards of culture and education (170). What was odd or unfortunate, in Roth’s estimation, was that Döblin ultimately thought more of his own intellectual processes and internal debates than he did of his subject matter.

Similar to Zweig’s travelogue, Döblin’s artistic and analytic brilliance was also a source of intellectual or spiritual blindness—he allowed his articulation of geistliche Aufmenschung to distract him from the application and practice of active solidarity. While he acknowledged the need for active community engagement, Döblin did not fully appreciate that the resolution of his dualistic conflict between a larger, group identity and individuated, personal autonomy might be found in active solidarity with the socially oppressed through commitment and investment in their larger community, embracing the loss and the sacrifice that such a move would entail. He preferred to remain an observer, a perpetual traveler on the ideological “sidelines,” and for a time, as the Hans Bloch review demonstrated, Döblin’s lack of party loyalty earned him a degree of “objective” credibility. What became frustrating is that his “objectivity” never resulted in concrete commitment to a particular community or group—Zionist or non-Zionist. As argued
above, Döblin was aware of the cost of such active solidarity; the implications provided him a
source of torment and unease throughout the Weimar period, and yet the price of such active
solidarity was ultimately too high for him to pay.
Chapter III

Sammy Gronemann: *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich: Erinnerungen an die ostjüdische Etappe 1916-1918.*

Introduction: the Necessity for Jewish Ritual and Separation

In his *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, Arnold Zweig wrote that it was ritual and cultural habits that defined what it meant to be Jewish: “Jüdisch ist Sabbath, jüdisch sind Feiertage und Speisen; Sprache, Bücher, Ahnen; Vorzugs gesetze, nach denen gewertet und Instinkte, nach denen bejaht und verneint wird; jüdisch sind Witze und Gesten, Sprachfehler und Körperformen, individuelle Gebrechen und moralische Vorurteile: […]” (Zweig 125). Though such paragraphs never described the Jewish identities of either Arnold Zweig or Alfred Döblin, Sammy Gronemann embraced the rich traditions of Jewish Orthodoxy, and his respect for the ritual heritage of the Jews is apparent in his travelogue, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich: Erinnerungen an die ostjüdische Etappe 1916-1918.*

Like Zweig and Döblin, Gronemann’s family came from the Eastern territories of Prussia, which today are included within the boundaries of Poland. He was born 1875 in Strasburg, Westpreußen (modern day Brodnica in Poland). His father, Selig Gronemann, was an Orthodox rabbi who in 1883, was appointed as the Landesrabbiner of Hannover where Gronemann and his younger sister, Elfriede, spent their formative Gymnasium years. Selig Gronemann felt a strong conviction to preserve both the Orthodox tradition and cultivate an openness to secular education and intellectual curiosity in the members of his congregation. Gronemann’s father was highly influenced by the Neo-Orthodox movement that attempted to reconcile religious and spiritual teaching with Jewish engagement in the secular world, and thus
he ensured that his children received the best education of the Western tradition and of Jewish instruction (Mittelmann 14). To a great degree, Gronemann’s identity never departed from the tradition-rich trappings and religious devotion of his family.

Unlike Zweig and Döblin, Gronemann’s approach to the question of Eastern Jewish solidarity was an especially religious question—not only a cultural, political, or psychological question. Gronemann was a devout Jew in ways that Döblin and Zweig never were. Because of that, Gronemann’s travelogue about the Eastern European Jews focused on the importance of religious observance and religious ritual. Even if Western Jews were not religious or were not believers in God, Gronemann argued, they could still participate in the power of the religious ritual. In the Eastern territories during the war, Gronemann observed Jews who were atheists, who still held adamantly to the importance of rabbinical authority (71). In addressing various forms of Jewish radicalism, Gronemann was surprised to find the persistence of religious ritual, even among these groups of people (213-14). What was significant to Gronemann was less what Jews “believed” and more what they practiced. Their actions defined them as a distinctive people.

Fittingly, Gronemann’s travelogue, while it is a collection of humorous anecdotes about his wartime experience living in Lithuania and Poland among the Eastern Jews, is primarily a meditation on how Germans and Jews define or re-affirm their respective cultural and moral identities through the practice of various rituals. Gronemann’s vignettes serve as a subtle contrast and comparison between the two cultural groups (Germans and the Eastern Jews). He portrays both the Germans and the Ostjuden as often misunderstanding each other due to cross-cultural confusion created by their respective rituals. Gronemann’s conclusions from his juxtapositions of the different cultural rituals ultimately make for an unambiguous argument that supports the
humanity and the dignity of the—superficially—“backward” practices and traditions of the Eastern Jews and simultaneously critiques the dehumanizing sense of “orderliness” that the Germans brought with them. The question for Gronemann was not whether one people group was “civilized” and the other “uncivilized” but rather, he focused on the underlying values that each group attempted to preserve. While Gronemann allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about the experiences he records, he describes several examples supporting the idea that the Jews have a separate, distinct identity with a different value system, and that Jewish ritual fosters the cultivation of that separate identity.

The title of Gronemann’s book, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich: Erinnerungen an die ostjüdische Etappe 1916-1918*, hints at this notion of cultural separation. The *Hawdoloh* (Havdalah) is the ceremony performed at the end of the Jewish Sabbath. The ritual is used to demarcate and establish a boundary around a sacred time. The word *Hawdoloh* means differentiation or distinction in Hebrew, and Gronemann employs this concept of separateness in his travelogue to point out the benefits of Jewish difference and uniqueness in comparison to the Germans and their culture. Hanni Mittelmann writes in her biography of Gronemann:


(Mittelmann 68).
Just as the Sabbath was set aside as a distinctive day of the week in the Jewish calendar, Gronemann believed that Jewish people were distinctive from the other people groups of the world. The comparison is not superlative in Gronemann’s text. The Jews are not necessarily “better” than the Germans (Gronemann includes examples of morally good Germans), but he writes that the Jews function best as a people when they are true to themselves and to their own community first and foremost.

Gronemann elaborates that the Zapfenstreich, the military bugle taps played to signal the end of the day, was used to signal the German curfew during their occupation of the Eastern territories World War I: “In Bialystok herrschte Ordnung und Elend. […] Die Polizeistunde gab es ja überall im besetzten Gebiet; nach dem Zapfenstreich um 10 Uhr bis früh am 6 Uhr durfte sich kein Zivilist auf der Straße sehen” (135). The Zapfenstreich is highly symbolic for the German cultural characteristics of order and efficiency and a highly regulated way of life.

Both ritual ceremonies of the Hawdoloh and the Zapfenstreich serve to mark distinctions of time, and both ceremonial rituals reveal unique aspects of their respective cultures. Like Döblin, Gronemann recognized that ritual serves to befestigen—to anchor individuals and families in their identity. Döblin noted in his travelogue the connection between the reverent gesture of Catholic genuflection in the Polish churches and the affirmation, or the reinscription, of the believers’ identities. Gronemann uses his text to elaborate on a similar observation: Rituals serve as a powerful way of affirming and even recovering one’s (Jewish) identity.

As explored in the chapters on Zweig and Döblin, this dissertation addresses the recognition in each of the travelogues for a “renewed human” or the “renewed Jewish community” and that the desired outcome of such renewal was a greater solidarity or unity with
the Eastern European Jews. Gronemann’s “renewed Jewish community” and “renewed Jewish individual” contained at least two significant elements in his travelogue. First, the renewed Jew—just like the Eastern Jew, Gronemann claims—was certain of his identity. In a transitory, post-war world of change, the Eastern Jew knew who he was and Gronemann’s hope was that the Western Jew would learn to have this same sense of certainty as well. Second, renewed Jewish individuals and the renewed Jewish community were hospitable and generous, even to strangers, just as the Ostjuden had demonstrated to the German soldiers during the war.

Gronemann’s means for bringing about this renewal was rooted in a return to traditional Jewish religious ritual practices—particularly the practice of Sabbath keeping. He compares Sabbath keeping for the Jews to what touching the ground was to Antaeus, the magical Greek giant who, according to legend, remained undefeated in battle as long as he was touching the earth (86). Throughout the travelogue, he notes the powerful effect of participation in Hasidic worship ceremonies and other traditional Jewish folk rituals on the perception and attitudes of skeptical Western Jews (195-196). For Gronemann, returning to traditional Jewish religious rituals and cultural practices was a way for assimilated, Western Jews to return to the roots of their true Volk identity. In an effort to provide a compromising perspective that would satisfy both the political Zionists and the Orthodox Jews, and in an effort to address the prevailing Blut und Boden nationalist ideology, Gronemann subtly argues that practice of the religious ritual is more important as a spiritual Boden to complement Jewish Blut than the possession of the physical, Palestinian territory (Mittelmann 34). Religious practice, for Gronemann, could not be separated from political efforts to establish a Jewish state and a Jewish, national identity.

Gronemann’s devout commitment to religious and cultural distinctiveness and “separatism” was fueled not only by theological beliefs, but also by Zionist ideology and fears.
Any thorough discussion of Gronemann’s travelogue needs to incorporate his Zionist convictions. Unlike Zweig, Döblin, and Roth, Gronemann was not aloof or distant in his political affiliations. From the time Gronemann was coming to the end of his legal studies in 1901, he was actively engaged in promoting political Zionism, even serving as a traveling apologist throughout Germany to debate Reformed Jewish Rabbis and scholars who sought to justify the presence of Jewish populations in their host countries (Mittelmann 33, 38). Whereas Zweig and Döblin addressed the question of the Eastern European Jews with universal socialist values, psychological theories, and romanticized Oriental notions of the Hasidim, Gronemann’s literary work (as a whole) contains a political and a religious injunction that is absent is Zweig’s and Döblin’s writings. In their travelogues, Zweig and Döblin certainly used political and religious language, but, as I have argued, their conclusions regarding the Eastern European Jews and how to express solidarity with them remained ambivalent and highly subjective.

Gronemann’s *Hawlodoh und Zapfenstreich*, in contrast, contains the subtle but unmistakable argument for the Jews to separate themselves from German culture, to stop pretending that they are Western Germans. The Jews in the West, according to Gronemann, need to return to their corporate identity as a united, distinctively Jewish people. Gronemann urges Western Jews to incorporate much of the communal life of their Eastern cousins, along with the traditional Jewish religious rituals. As a Zionist apologist, Gronemann argued throughout his adult life that the Jewish people needed to realize a renewed corporate, national identity through immigration back to Palestine in accordance with the Zionist political tenets. His travelogue, however, is less specific in presenting a political call to action, and *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich* places far more importance on the significance of cultural and religious ritual as the key to the renewal and the affirmation of one’s identity.
The premise of Zionism was, from its inception, a deep uncertainty that Western Europe would ever accept the Jews as a seamless part of the dominant culture, and that uncertainty is evident in Gronemann’s travelogue (Brenner, Zionism 35). In the book, he admits that his experience and observations of the interactions between the Germans and the Polish and Lithuanian Jews during World War I taught him one thing: the near impossibility for Western Europeans to break out of their perspectives and ways of seeing the world. He writes: “Mehr und mehr sah ich ein, daß wir aus Westeuropa Kommenden uns gar nicht aus unseren Gedankenkreisen losmachen können, daß wir, mit unseren Maßstäben messend und mit unseren Mitteln arbeitend, selbst beim besten Willen Verwirrung und Unheil gar zu leicht anrichten können” (132). He says that he does not want to deny the help that many Western Jewish organizations were trying to provide the Eastern Jews, but he had to acknowledge that the Judaism of the West was not an authentic Judaism—that it was an Ersatzjudentum—and that in most cases, Western visitors were not prepared to adjust their expectations of the Eastern Jewish communities during World War I.

Most middle class German Jews simply could not see beyond the very real material poverty and hygienic concerns of the Hasidim (exacerbated by the wartime conditions) to appreciate the richness of their communal life (154). Steven Aschheim notes that the clash in the relationships between the Eastern and Western Jews was brought about by the very real lack of sanitation and material destitution in the East but also by the very “clean” and refined sensibilities of the Western visitors (Brothers 148-49). Such perceptions of uncleanness and ignorance meant, to most Western Jewish visitors, that the Eastern Jews were uncivilized and that these people needed to be rescued and brought up to Western standards of living.
The solution to what Gronemann considered a “façade” of authentic Judaism in Western Europe was not, like Döblin, to provide a pattern for assimilation or for achieving a psychological, Hegelian Aufhebung as a result of weighing the virtues and vices of the two different people groups. Nor was Gronemann’s solution a version of Martin Buber’s inner, “cultural” Zionism, which he regarded as inauthentic. Gronemann argued for a similar “inner” and “spiritual” renewal as Buber and Zweig, but for Gronemann this “inner” renewal was to come through a rather dramatic cultural, “outward” distinction of how the Jews lived their lives. More than Zweig and Döblin, Gronemann emphasized not only the “inner” solidarity of understanding the Eastern Jews, but also of the active identification with the Eastern Jews in the political mission of securing a cultural identity and a national homeland.

Like Zweig and Döblin, Gronemann’s insights regarding solidarity with the Eastern Jews and the construction of a new Jewish identity contained their own set of limitations. Similar to Zweig, Gronemann’s praise and recommendation of the Eastern European Jews contained a perverse core of racism that accepted an assumed need for separation and for segregation of Jews and Germans. Gronemann focused on the renewal of Jewish culture (and ultimately on the necessity of relocating to Palestine) rather than confronting German anti-Semitic trends and culturally accepted attitudes. His ritual-cultural solution for Jewish, national separatism is also ultimately highly religious. Even though he argues for the “non-religious” cultural importance of Jewish ritual, Gronemann’s vision of solidarity is exclusive, and his travelogue is not optimistic about including secularized, assimilated, Western Jews into the larger vision of a united, Jewish Volk. His assessment of Westernized Jews was that they had lost their true identities, that they were deeply conflicted in terms of cultural loyalties—an assessment that was not necessarily true.
Despite Gronemann’s ideological limitations, his travelogue complements Zweig’s and Döblin’s contributions as it addresses the question of the relationship to the Eastern Jews during the Weimar period in that Gronemann’s work is remarkably concrete in its analysis of the Eastern Jewish question. Zweig and Döblin both located the issue in terms of how the Western Jew was supposed to understand the Eastern Jews or feel more empathetic towards them—but neither offered tangible examples of what this understanding and solidarity was to look like. Gronemann participates in positive stereotyping of the Ostjuden as well as a way of advocating for a more positive understanding of the Ostjuden in Germany, but his primary focus was to identify the concrete actions to express solidarity with the Eastern Jews and to foster a common Jewish culture. His solution (in the travelogue) was to point back to the religious rituals as the common source of Jewish Volk identity. Gronemann’s commitment to Zionism was not the result of naïve political loyalties or the purely reactionary fears of growing German anti-Semitism. Gronemann’s plea for separatism was the conclusion of a highly pragmatic and devout individual, seeking institutional and communal support to accomplish the goal of mutual aid for the persecuted Eastern Jews and the spiritual and historical renewal of the assimilated, Western Jews.

Like the travelogues of Döblin and Zweig, Gronemann’s work functions both to reveal the racist and cultural tensions at work in Germany during the Weimar period and the sophisticated attempts among the German Jewish community to diplomatically and respectfully resolve those tensions. In Gronemann’s case, he was an intellectual who not only wrote and spoke about what a renewed Jewish cultural life might look like, he was intensely involved as an activist, organizing relief efforts for immigrant Eastern Jews within Germany, as well as a successful immigrant to Palestine who continued to thrive there even after World War II had
ended. In sharp contrast to Zweig, Döblin, and even Roth, all of whom never felt comfortable fully embracing a distinct Jewish identity that suppressed their German or Austrian identities, Gronemann made a conscious choice to define himself first and foremost as a Zionist and a Jew, and he advocated the implementation of that renewed Jewish identity for other Western Jews primarily through the practice of traditional Jewish rituals.

**Summary of Travelogue and Publication Background**

The structure of Gronemann’s text is straightforward—a series of chronological anecdotes and vignettes about his experience on the Eastern front during World War I, working for the *Presseabteilung*—the German military news and propaganda office. He describes his work translating books into languages he did not know, censoring harmless Jewish religious texts, watching the daily squabbles between the order-obsessed Germans and the religiously devout, ceremonially-vehement *Ostjuden*. He describes the poverty and destitution of the Polish and Lithuanian villages and the strategies of the common people to survive.

In this occupied territory of the Eastern front, the *Ostjuden* are poor but creative and clever. They are virtuous and hard-working. Most importantly, they know who they are. At the end of the book, Gronemann says that the *Ostjuden* may not know a lot of things, but they know what is important—their identity is unshakeable:

Wissende sind sie! Sie wissen vielleicht nicht, welchen Weg sie gehen und zu welchem Ziele—aber sie wissen, daß sie auf dem Wege sind und in sicherer Führung wandern.

Und was rechts und links vom Wege geschieht, kümmert sie nicht, kaum, daß sie einen Blick hinwerfen—kaum, daß sie ausweichen, wenn ein grober Flegel, der den Weg nicht kennt, querfeldein stolpernd sie bedrängt. –Sie gehen geruhig ihren Weg. (225-226)

Similar to Döblin, Zweig, and Roth, Gronemann was concerned about the identity of the Western Jews and he sought to portray how the Ostjuden preserved and maintained their unique sense of self and of their culture, as an example to Western Jews. Gronemann suggests that the Ostjuden preserved their identity through the keeping of their various rituals—the Havdalah being one. As Gronemann writes in his Erinnerungen, the traditions may seem foolish, but they function like a wine flask to contain the “wine” of a culture, a method to cultivate and preserve Jewish virtue and a distinctive way of life:

Gerade durch die Form wird die Tradition aufrecht erhalten, mehr sogar als durch den Inhalt. Eine leere Flasche kann immer noch mit Wein gefüllt werden, aber Wein ohne Gefäß läßt sich nicht aufbewahren. Nur das Festhalten der alten, oft scheinbar sinnlosen Formen hat das Judentum erhalten und es auch über leere Zeiten und Generationen hinweggebracht, bis dann neuer Wein in die alten Schlächle gefüllt werden konnte.

(Erinnerungen 112)

The rituals functioned as a process by which a community learns to know and discern its collective identity. According to Gronemann, the rituals themselves act as better preservers of authentic Jewish culture than the recovery or the revision of any of the culture’s content.

Gronemann writes at the beginning of the travelogue that his friends demanded that he write a follow-up volume to his novel, Tohuwabohu—it was a such a promising beginning to his
creative career, and he had aggravated so many of their friends that they hoped for a sequel. Gronemann goes on to say that it is better for him to help people in their legal concerns as an attorney than it is to stir up public opinion (8). However, he writes that he has managed to dictate memories of his experience on the Eastern front during the war and although he promises the book “würde ein hübsch confuse Zeug werden,” he feels that he has at least warned the reader and that he has complied with the demands of his friends (9).

_Tohuwabohu_ was a literary success, though he was confused by the reception of the novel. He admitted that readers continued to express their appreciation for the humorous narrative he had written, whereas he understood the novel to be a tragic tale: “Wieso dieses letzten genannte Buch vielfach als ein humoristisches Werk angesehen wird, ist mir schierhaft—mir schien es beim Schreiben und erscheint es heute noch eher eine tragische Geschichte […]” (112). A number of other reviews of the book complained of the heavy-handedness of Gronemann’s Zionism and his critique against assimilated German Jewry. Still others understood the subtlety of Gronemann’s style and recognized that whatever humorous irony the story presented, he captured the grief caused through underlying dilemmas and dangers of a Jewish identity (Mittelmann 86-87).

Whether critics understood the novel as tragic or comic, the book was noted for its deft portrayal of the variety of identity conflicts among Western Jews. The novel is, in part, about the journey of self-discovery by Jossel Schlenker and his wife, Chane Weinstein. Jossel and Chane move to Berlin from Russia—themselves _Ostjuden_—after being inspired to learn more about German culture through a lecture on Goethe’s _Faust_. When they arrive, they meet the Lehnsen family, who are Christianized Jews. Jossel and his wife are a curiosity to the assimilated Lehnsens. The son, Heinz Lehnsen, determines to investigate his own Jewish roots, by taking a
trip into the Russian Jewish villages, similar to Gronemann’s own trip in 1905. Heinz is welcomed by the local communities and treated as a special guest, as the Eastern Jews are equally fascinated by the arrival the Westerner, just as he was intrigued by the Eastern Jossel and Chane. While continuing his visit, Heinz is caught up in a pogrom, but avoids persecution because of his Christian baptism. The novel’s narrative runs back and forth between the experience of Heinz, a Western Jew in the East, and the Eastern European Schlenkers in Berlin, capturing the nuances of cultural misunderstandings and local political schemes unique to each context.

The final chapter features Heinz Lehnsen and the Schlenkers on a train to Switzerland. Many of the Jewish passengers are on their way to a Zionist Congress. Heinz is conflicted as to whether or not he wants to join the Zionist movement and decides to get off the train. The novel ends on a note of uncertainty as to whether he will go back to Germany and fully assimilate in order to be promoted in a career within the court system or whether he will embrace his Jewish identity and eventually join the Zionist movement, as the Schlenkers seem to have done.

In his novel, Gronemann captured something of the conflicted identity crises that many German Jews experienced, as well as provided insight as to what some of the Eastern Jews wanted in coming to Berlin. Gronemann employs a similar strategy in his *Hawlodos und Zapfenstreich* memoir. The book is a collection of largely humorous anecdotes and vignettes that describe the interactions of German soldiers and the *Ostjuden* during the war-time occupation of Poland and Lithuania. Gronemann highlights the cultural conflicts between the two peoples, clearly writing to show the peculiarities of Eastern Jewry’s attitudes and traditions and the differences with German Jewish attitudes and assumptions.
Gronemann begins the book by talking about how he had been in the trenches—on the Eastern German front—“wo ich im Schützengraben in der Gegend von Smorgon mir allerhand unangenehme Dinge zugezogen hatte [...]” (11). Gronemann was wounded during his service and taken back to Strasburg, Westpreußen to be hospitalized (Mittelmann 65). After going through the hospital system, he applied again to serve in the military. Even if he was not capable of serving on the front lines, he was still “dienstfähig” (11). He met the artist Hermann Struck in Berlin while he was recovering from his injuries, and Struck arranged for Gronemann to work as a Yiddish translator and censor of the German Presseabteilung for the benefit of the Jewish populations in the Polish territories.

Working for the Presseabteilung, Gronemann had the opportunity to meet members of the local Jewish communities, and he also had the fortune of working with a number of prominent writers and artists—among them, Hermann Struck, Herbert Eulenburg, Arnold Zweig, and Richard Dehmel. Gronemann records a number of different adventures and experiences between the Western German Jews and the Eastern Jewish communities, the effect of which is not unlike the back-and-forth of his Tohuwabohu novel. His is a subtle contrast and comparison of the two cultures, with the aim of showing the Ostjuden in a positive light, and even to argue that, despite their peculiarities, the Ostjuden have found the secret to preserving their identity and a hospitable, educated, humane way of life.

Gronemann was just as concerned as Döblin, Zweig, and Roth with a humane renewal, a spiritual revival for the Jewish people, but whereas Döblin and Roth were more universal and international in their scope, Gronemann targeted his message specifically toward the Western Jews. Gronemann did not write to raise awareness among non-Jewish politicians, nor did he appeal to Christian readers. He did not seek to reform Europe or German society. His goal was to
offer a tool that provided subtle comparisons between the two cultures that Jews could participate in, and to argue for a greater level of pride and involvement in the Jews creating their own distinctive culture.

The difference in Gronemann’s travelogue from the other German Jewish travel writers is that Gronemann is removed from the decision. He presents his anecdotes as humorous, witty arguments for a question that he has already settled for himself, and the difference in tone and style is apparent. Even though Gronemann writes a first-person narrative, his prose does not contain the emotionally-charged, manic-depressive language of Zweig, advocating both for a Zionist homeland and international intervention against the Jewish pogroms in Eastern Europe; nor does it contain the mystical longing and aesthetic and philosophical complexity of Döblin, nor does it contain the deft, compact sketches and subtleties of the tragic Eastern Jewish experiences throughout Western Europe and the United States, as Roth provides. Gronemann’s descriptions are charming, but not dramatic. The events he includes in the text are rather common, even mundane. They are perfect for capturing the day-to-day realities of two different people groups in wartime—the occupiers and the occupied.

Gronemann writes that he helped to establish the group der Klub ehemaliger Intellektueller—a meeting every Monday evening of the German Jewish officers who enjoyed talking about philosophical, artistic and cultural matters (Gronemann 44-45). In many ways, the travelogue invites the reader into a similar kind of debate and discussion as der Klub entertained. The group debated what was meant by a “cultural” identity, or how one could define the value of “culture”.
Throughout the book, Gronemann examines this question of “culture” by comparing different aspects of German military life and Jewish communal life. He writes about the different forms of entertainment among the officers. He assisted with the organizing of regular theater productions for the soldiers, and he also explored local Jewish shops and tea rooms. He includes several observations about the sexual tensions and relationships between Jewish girls and German soldiers. Above all, Gronemann shows the reader the experience of Eastern Jewish worship and their celebration of various rituals. The Jews have their own culture—defined by their religion, and yet Gronemann records a number of examples where he shows the Eastern Jews remarkably open to Western literature and influences. The Germans, in contrast, also maintained a culture—one preoccupied with rules of social hierarchy, cleanliness and order, and observed with as much “religious” zeal as the Eastern Jews observed their Sabbath laws, but with less openness to Hasidic Jewish cultural practices.

The vignette structure of the travelogue is likely rooted in Gronemann’s attempt to replicate a Talmudic teaching principle of explanation passages of holy scripture through the telling of further stories and examples—a technique with which Gronemann was highly familiar, since he spent a year after his Gymnasium graduation deepening his knowledge of Jewish Orthodoxy and Talmudic studies under the tutelage of Rabbi Josef Nobel (Mittelmann 22). Gronemann describes Rabbi Nobel as “nicht nur ein großer Talmudgelehrter war, sondern von echter Lebensphilosophie erfüllt, geistig und sittlich auf gewaltiger Höhe stand. […] Wenn er am Sabbatnachmittag seine Vorträge hielt, glaubte man einen der alten Propheten vor sich zu sehen” (Erinnerungen I 86). Nobel also had a flair for the dramatic. Proud of his Jewish heritage, Nobel advocated dueling as one of the best ways to combat anti-Semitism: “Er […] behauptete, daß der Antisemitismus am besten mit der Pistole in der Hand bekämpft werden könne” (87).
Gronemman admits that this kind of defense of Jewish honor was unique and rare among Orthodox Rabbis, but the memory of this teacher captures the enthusiasm and the pride in Jewish identity and tradition in which Gronemann was trained. It was Nobel’s teaching methods that Gronemann wanted to incorporate into his own writing.

Gronemann specifically employed the literary strategy of anecdotes and vignettes in his 1927 book, *Schalet. Beiträge zu Philosophie des „Wenn schon”* (Mittelmann 92). Hanni Mittelmann writes of Gronemann’s style in *Schalet*:

Wie beim Talmudstudium zur Erhellung einer bestimmten Schwierigkeit Zitate aus der Bibel oder aus der Mischna angeführt werden und durch Rede und Gegenrede das Problem immer plastischer wird, so tritt durch die Vielzahl von Anekdoten und Geschichten, die „den Stimmungsparadoxen und anderen Kuriositäten jüdischen Lebens heutiger Zeit gewidmet“ sind, auch hier das Paradox der jüdischen Situation in Deutschland immer deutlicher hervor. [...] Mit seiner Methode des mäandernden Geschichtenerzählens versetzt Gronemann seinen Leser geschickt in die Rolle des Talmudstudenten, der oft schon zufrieden ist, wenn er den roten Faden des Problemkreises im Auge behalten kann und die mit scharfer Logik geführten Debatten zu verfolgen imstande ist. (98)

Mittelmann concludes that Gronemann possessed a didactic intention and purpose in his writing, but he had no desire to be overly dogmatic—he wanted his readers to discover the truth for themselves (99).

In the beginning of his memoir, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich: Erinnerungen an die ostjüdische Etappe 1916-1918*, Gronemann says that he fears writing his book because he does
not profess to hold any authority on the subject of Jews and that he has no desire to teach anyone anything. He says that what he does have are memories—and it is these confused memories, these “unordered”, “unstructured” experiences that his friends demand that he write down, dictating them “täglich eine Stunde meiner blonden Sekretärin” (9).

Warnung! In diesen Blättern wird viel von Juden und jüdischen Dingen die Rede sein. Ich mache aber ausdrücklich darauf aufmerksam, daß niemand irgend etwas daraus lernen oder etwas Neues erfahren wird, und wüßte er von Juden und Judentum so wenig, wie ein australisches Kaninchen oder ein Ordinarius für Völkerkunde oder ein Synagogenvorsteher des Westens. Ich habe keinerlei Neigung, jemanden zu belehren und verspüre kein pädagogisches Talent in mir. Wenn jemand also doch etwas lernen sollte, so tut er’s auf seine eigene Gefahr und Verantwortung! (7)

Gronemann’s literary works frequently included elements of satire and irony, and it is no accident that, out of the German travel writers who were most educated in the ways of Judaism and even familiar with the Ostjuden—only maybe with the exception of Joseph Roth—Gronemann was the most qualified and yet, at least here, he explicitly professes to have no desire to teach others about this experience. He wants the reader to glean the truths about Jewish identity and purpose from stories and anecdotes themselves, and thus, similar to the purpose and setting of the Klub der ehemaliger Intellektuelle or to the setting of a Talmudic exegesis of biblical passages, Gronemann invites the reader to join a group discussion and listen to various cultural experiences about Jewish and German life in order to compare notes and stories.

As scattered and as prosaic as some of Gronemann’s examples are, the purpose of his remembrances is made clear near the end of the book as Gronemann reflects on the abusive and
belittling treatment by many of the Germans towards the Ostjuden in contrast with the great hospitality and kindness that the Ostjuden often show the Germans. His purpose is to demonstrate that, first, the Jewish people are a distinct and separate people, and their very separateness has served to create a culture that is hospitable, attractive and even desirable by many Germans. The second purpose which Gronemann’s memories serve is to demonstrate to the reader that, as concerned as the Germans are with rules—with proper greetings and recognition of social and military rank, with categorization and curfew—the Germans lose the secret to wisdom and discernment as to what is important. In all of their rules and with all of their science, the Western Germans do not know how to preserve an identity characterized by hospitality and generosity. The Ostjuden, despite their poverty and destitution, have at least maintained a human reputation or Antlitz, a humane spirit through their tradition and their rituals, and it is through those rituals that Western Jews can also recover a sense of their true identity.

**Gronemann’s Definition of Solidarity with the Eastern European Jews: the Jewish Nation**

Similar to Arnold Zweig’s travelogue, Gronemann’s text focuses on the cultural and spiritual renewal of the Jews as a united Volk, but whereas Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz includes an international, socialist, spiritual renewal, Gronemann limits his (Zionist) concern to the Jews, that they would embrace their identity as a united, Jewish nation (Hawdoloh 108). Like Zweig, Gronemann holds up the Eastern Jews as a model to emulate: the Ostjuden know who they are; their identity is certain, unshakeable, but unlike Zweig, Gronemann did not want that identity to be merely “cultural” or an inner, personal, individualized identity. Gronemann wanted that Jewish identity to express itself in a distinct, collective fashion: the political rebuilding of Jewish life in Palestine (108). Solidarity for the Eastern Jews was expressed, for Gronemann, in
the desire to join with the Ostjuden in their religious devotion and practices in order to work for a united, Jewish Volk existence.

Gronemann writes that he promised his readers would learn nothing about the Eastern Jews in his collection of memories, except perhaps one thing—that a peculiar characteristic lies in the Ostjuden:


He goes on to write that the Eastern Jews have managed to incarnate the eternal spirit that is expressed in the holy scriptures—the Torah. The Western Jew had lost the ability to maintain an eternal identity. Western Jews do not know, according to Gronemann, who they really are. Like Zweig’s comparison of the Greis of the Ostjuden and the knowledge-filled Western Jew, Gronemann writes that the current generation of Western Jews no longer knows how to distinguish between right and wrong. He says that their own set of moral values only apply to specific circumstances and is doomed to change with the tide of time and culture.

Gronemann longs for a certitude of identity for the Jews and for the other nations of the world: “[...] das jene besitzen, das wir vielleicht einmal besessen haben und dessen einst alle
Welt teilhaftig werden soll” (226). He ends the travelogue with the expressed desire that the Jews would (once again) come to know how “zu unterscheiden zwischen Heiligem und Unheiligem / zwischen Licht und Finternis” (227). The secret to learning this eternal truth lies with the Ostjuden. The solidarity Gronemann expresses with the Eastern Jews in his travelogue is, like Zweig, to praise them as spiritual examples from whom Western Jews can learn. Gronemann goes one step further than Zweig in his portrayal of Eastern Jews: Gronemann does not wait on a future, youthful generation to take up the cause of Jewish nationalism. Gronemann advocates for the active, immediate embracing of Jewish national Volk identity with the Eastern Jews.

While Zweig’s travelogue provides theoretical language for what an ideal Jewish community should look like, Gronemann portrays the ideal community through vignettes. He describes various scenes and topics where the Eastern Jews reveal their sense of unity and their sense of devotion to their faith and tradition, but the underlying theme of Gronemann’s travelogue is that the Ostjuden know who they are—that they are a nation and they belong together. The Western Jew with his divided political loyalties is the exception in the East, according to Gronemann:

Gronemann describes a version of national awareness and unity that is not threatened by internal differences—the Jews of the East do not imagine that they belong to any people group other than the Jewish people. They may disagree with one another, but they do not ultimately disagree about who they are as a people.

Gronemann’s portrayal may have provided an optimistic ideal or alternative for a “fragmented” Western Jewish culture, but the image of unified Eastern Jewish identity was not historically accurate. There were thousands of secular Jews who wanted to escape their identity and attempted to do so by joining the various expressions of the Socialist movement with its proletariat revolutions. Paul Johnson writes that the Socialist ideology both before and after the first World War contained the idea that joining the Socialist cause would eliminate the unwanted “Jewish” characteristics, which were merely products of a corrupt, capitalist system. Johnson writes:

It is hard now for us to get back inside the minds of highly intelligent, well-educated Jews who believed this theory. But many thousands of them did. They hated their Jewishness, and to fight for the revolution was the most morally acceptable means to escape from it. It gave to their revolutionary struggle a peculiar emotional vehemence, because they believed its success would involve a personal liberation from their Jewish burden, as well as a general liberation of humanity from autocracy. (Jews 450)

Gronemann had to ignore these groups of political revolutionaries (of which Leon Trotsky was one of the most prominent) in order to maintain the image of a unified Jewish identity in Eastern Europe. Similar to Arnold Zweig, Gronemann’s aim was to promote a specific communal ideal against which he could assess secular German culture.
The vignettes in *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich* illustrate the national cohesiveness of the Eastern Jews, and Gronemann compares that national identity with the example of the German military, which he portrays as a well-intentioned group but also as a people who lacks insight and discernment. Both the Eastern Jews and the German soldiers follow strict codes of conduct: the Jews follow their religious traditions and the Germans follow their military orders. Gronemann compares these two sets of culturally united people groups and their traditions and leaves it to the reader to decide which group is ultimately more humane in their actions.

Gronemann’s travelogue is not an explicit propaganda piece for a Zionist political agenda, and yet his descriptions of the Jews and the Germans make the argument clear to the reader: a choice must be made between the two groups. Gronemann’s book does not advocate vague assimilationist hopes, like Döblin’s travelogue. By the end of Gronemann’s text, the reader is left with the subtle warnings that the Jews were no longer welcome in Germany—that Jews remaining as participants within German culture would result in their moral and spiritual confusion, whereas joining in authentic, religious solidarity with the Eastern Jews would result in a spiritual, cultural, and moral renewal for the Jewish *Volk* in the West.

Hanni Mittelmann points out that though Gronemann was a dedicated Zionist functionary throughout his life, his ultimate concern was with Jewish spiritual renewal—and thus the political, nationalistic, and social questions were of secondary concern in his literary texts: 

Obwohl er sich sein Leben lang für die Ziele des politischen Zionismus eingesetzt hatte, so waren doch für ihn weder die Wiedererrichtung der Nation noch die Lösung der sozialen Frage, wie sie der Zionismus sozialistischer Ausprägung anvisierte, das eigentliche Ziel. Als religiösem Juden war ihm die nationale Wiedergeburt letztlich nur
The spiritual renewal that Gronemann pictured was for the Western Jews to become more like the virtuous Ostjuden whom he portrayed in his travelogue. In these portrayals, Gronemann participates in positive stereotyping, similar to that which Zweig employed in his travelogue. The images of the virtuous, chaste Eastern Jewish women and of the “scholarly” Hasidic men all serve to contradict the anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany. Gronemann, through his vignettes, establishes the picture of an ideal Eastern Jewish community. He then recommends the practice of the traditional, Orthodox Jewish rituals (particularly the Sabbath) as a way for Western Jews to participate with their Eastern cousins in a renewed Volk existence. He then contrasts the idealized image of the Eastern Jewish community with the less-than-ideal community and rituals practiced by the Germans. Gronemann’s descriptions of the German military solidarity is a gentle, but firm, critique of a moral and social incompetence fueled with the best of intentions.

**Eastern Jewish Ideals and Rituals**

At the Klub der ehemaliger Intellektuelle, Gronemann and his friends debated many issues, not the least of which was the division between Eastern and Western culture, and the definition of true Kultur:

Jeder gab seine Beobachtungen, die er an Ort und Stelle gemacht hatte, zum besten und wir debattierten über das merkwürdige Schauspiel, das wir dort in Litauen beobachteten.—Krieg im Krieg!—nämlich den Krieg zwischen der Zivilization des Westens, wie sie im Gefolge des siegreichen deutschen Heeres einmarschierte, und der Kultur des Ostens, wie sie von den Völkern dort, den Litauen, Weißrussen, später
Gronemann says that to better explain what this “culture war” was about, he would use an illustration from Richard Dehmel. At a party for Herman Struck, Richard Dehmel presented him with a poem on flowery stationary, drawn by one of the locals: “Auf der Rückseite aber stand jene Bemerkung Dehmels, um derentwillen ich diese Episode einflechte: ‘Die Randleiste hat ein litauischer Bauer gemalt, der weder lesen noch schreiben kann. Es ist anzunehmen, daß die deutsche Kultur dieser Barbarei bald ein End bereiten wird.’” (50) As discussed in the introduction, this passage represents Gronemann’s (and Richard Dehmel’s) sarcastic critique of the German belief that they were bringing Kultur to the “backward” and “barbaric” lands of the Russian East (D. Brenner 70). What Gronemann draws attention to is the very real and beautiful Kultur that the local people actually possessed, in contradiction to whatever German political propaganda might claim.

Gronemann draws attention to the conflict between the condescending German view that they had come to the East to reform the uncivilized Ostjuden, and the view of many Germans that the Ostjuden had created a self-sustained community that produced beautiful art, music and literature—though such beauty was often shrouded in poverty. Gronemann’s anecdotes and vignettes provide a constant contrast and comparison of two different cultures. Both of the people groups are good at keeping their own kind of order and fulfilling their own rules, and it is those rules that reinforce a certain view of humanity. Both cultures are justified in their own eyes in their practices, but Gronemann portrays the contrast between the two cultures to allow the reader to choose which group has the more humane set of boundaries and practices.
One of the purposes of Gronemann’s travelogue was to provide a defense against the anti-Semitic prejudices and stereotypes that were popular in Germany at the time, especially during and after World War I. Gronemann and Zweig particularly wished to correct the glaring image of Eastern Jewish women as sexually promiscuous. In addition to this widely-spread prejudice, Gronemann also wished to point out differences in the levels of education and the desire of Eastern Jewish children to learn from German literature. The Ostjuden were not lazy; they merely had different rhythms of life, and Gronemann took it upon himself to defend the Eastern Jews against anti-Semitic views.

Throughout the memoir, Gronemann provides aesthetic and romantic associations with the Jewish culture of the East, particularly boasting as to the attractiveness of the Jewish women. From the beginning of the text, Gronemann introduces the idea that the Eastern territories were filled with beautiful Jewish women. Hans Goslar, who initially familiarizes Gronemann with his duties within the Presseabteilung and with the local culture of the surrounding area, shares with Gronemann what he has learned so far. Goslar tells Gronemann about

[...] volkswirtschaftlichen und von sexualethischen. Er stellte sich, um den letzen Gesichtspunkten voranzustellen, heraus, daß er in sämtliche jüdische Mädchen Kownos verliebt war, aber noch nicht die persönliche Bekanntschaft einer einzigen gemacht hatte.

Er konnte aber nicht genug von ihren schönen Augen und ihrer Grazie und ihrem sittsamen, beschneidenen Wesen erzählen. (Hawdoloh 19)

Goslar appears to have been a perpetual romantic, telling Gronemann about all of the women with whom he has fallen in love, though without having made their acquaintance. Goslar’s behavior is comical and yet Gronemann continues to mention the beauty of the Eastern Jewish
women as a point of pride and he does so as a direct counter to the accusations of sexual promiscuity.

When describing the Sabbath rituals, Gronemann gives a long description of a favorite Sabbath activity—not only for the Jews, but for the German soldiers as well: the pleasant diversion of going to the park to observe all of the beautiful Jewish young women and to flirt with them:

Übrigens erstreckte sich die Sabbatruhe in gewisser Weise auch auf die militärischen Büros und die deutschen Okkupanten. [...] am Sabbatnachmittag ging es in den Verwaltungsbüros selbst sehr still zu, nicht nur in der Abteilung der jiddischen und hebräischen Übersetzer. Wer nur irgend konnte, nahm sich eine Mappe unter den Arm und machte einen Dienstweg. Nur höchst ungnern versäumte man etwa in Bialystok im Stadtpark den Sabbatnachmittagskorso, die die Woche über hinter dem Ladentisch gestanden oder bei der Mutter im Haushalt in stiller Verborgenheit gearbeitet hatten, in ihrem schönsten Staat zu zeigen. (88-89)

Gronemann describes these Saturday-afternoon park visits as an enjoyable activity that both German and Jewish soldiers participated in. They all wanted to go and flirt with the young Jewish women. As an additional badge of honor, the beauty of the Jewish women made the German women jealous:

Da war es dann ein vergnügliches Promenieren und Flirten, und die zahllosen deutschen Helferinnen, die sich doch nicht ohne weiteres den Rang ablaufen lassen wollten, strömten, wenn irgend es der Dienst erlaubte, auch zum Stadtpark und hatten sich der Konkurrenz wegen herausgeputzt. Sie schnitten übrigens am Sabbat gegenüber den
Gronemann lists further examples of the female Jewish beauty—specifically as an example of national pride and the unique separateness of Jewish culture. He writes that the Presseabteilung participated in several local festivals. One of the local festivals was the Blumentage—this was a Jewish festival, held in the Stadtpark in Bialystok. It was an opportunity for the Jewish young women to dress up and to receive flowers from admirers:

An solchen Tagen war die Straße von jüdischen jungen Mädchen besetzt, alle mit Schärpen versehen, die eine Aufschrift in hebräischen Lettern trugen. Die Mädchen gingen an ihnen unbekannte Militärpersonen nicht heran, um unangenehme Zwischenfälle zu vermeiden, aber die meisten Offiziere ergriffen selbst die Initiative und kauften sich die Sträußchen und die blauweißen Abzeichen mit dem Davidstern. Nachmittags dann im Park ging es hoch her, alles war in blauweiße Farben gekleidet, alle Besucher trugen die jüdischen Farben, und sehr wenige Offiziere bleiben da fern. Aller etwa vorhandene Antisemitismus zerrann vor dem Blick der jüdischen Schönen, und der Luftpostverkehr war gewaltig; jeder Besucher hatte eine Nummer als Adresse auf der Brust, und kleine Postillions d’amour trugen behend die mit Wohltätigkeitsstaxe beschwerten Kärtchen hin und her. (168)

In these examples, Gronemann stresses the moral consciousness of the Jewish young women.
Zweig, Gronemann and Döblin all felt obliged to address the question of Eastern Jewish women, because of the prevalence of prostitution in the Eastern Jewish community. Steven Aschheim writes that the problem of prostitution had to do with the poverty of the Eastern European ghettos, but there were other contributing factors as well:

Before 1880 it was not widespread, but with the onset of persecutions and a worsening of economic conditions it became more widespread. East European Jewish women (and girls) could be found in brothels throughout the world as well as in the white-slave trade, which was itself operated heavily by Jews. Prostitution was obviously related to the extreme poverty of the ghetto, but as the German Jewish feminist Bertha Pappenheim and her Frauenbund pointed out, it was also linked to Orthodox neglect of education for women in Eastern Europe. (Brothers 38)

Gronemann and Zweig attempted to combat this image of the Jewish Mädchen as a prostitute—Zweig did this by emphasizing the maternal qualities and the revolutionary enthusiasm of young Jewish women, and Gronemann tried to capitalize on the sexual appeal of the Jewish women while simultaneously emphasizing their moral character. Gronemann writes that he feels it his duty to fight against the accusations of immoral behavior among the Eastern Jews (170). The war, and not the inherent sinfulness of the Jewish women, causes such blights on the community:

Wahr ist, daß die furchtbare Not der Kriegszeit manche Frau und Mutter in den Sumpf getrieben hat, daß Mädchen, um sich und ihrer Familie Brot zu verschaffen, in Verzweiflung üble Wege einschlugen. Und selbstverständlich war Verführung und Lockung zu leichtem Lebensgenüß nirgends und nie so groß wie damals. (170)
Gronemann acknowledges that there were dance bars, pubs and brothels—just like in Berlin—but he swears that no Jewish girl is part of these immoral establishments (171). In contrast, the Jewish girls are often hostesses for “tea bars.” It is true, he writes, that beautiful Jewish women may stand at the door of the tea shop to invite the soldiers in, but the men are usually surprised, Gronemann says, to be served by a young man. There are no women in the tea room, except the young girl’s mother, an old hostess, and the girl, who resumes her position at the front door (171). Gronemann says that the Jewish girls, if nothing else, are thieves—they trick German soldiers into taking them on dates, buying food for them, and then the girls disappear (172).

If Gronemann portrayed the Eastern Jewish women as inherently virtuous, he also added that the men within the Hasidic community were patriarchal scholars, worthy of respect and reverence. Gronemann recounts an episode where he and his colleagues find a Jewish restaurant in Kowno that they like to visit. The restaurant is owned by an elderly Jewish couple—the Michelsohns. One might think that the description of this old, wise couple is taken from Zweig’s *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*. Like the men in Zweig’s text who must attend to their Sabbath learning, Gronemann includes a quick description of Herr Michelsohn who likewise possesses the beauty of ancient wisdom and tradition in his simple life as a restaurant owner and a devout student of the Torah and the Talmud:

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Dann aber trat, wie immer nach dem Sabbatmahl, unser Wirt, Herr Michelsohn, an unseren Tisch, um sich zu verabschieden, bevor er in seine Schule, wo er am Sabbatnachmittag „lernte“, ging. Er gehörte der Sekte der Chabad Chassidim an. An sich schon einer der schönsten Menschen, die ich je gesehen habe, wirkte er in dem langen, schwarzen, sauberen Rock überwältigend—eine hohe Patriarchengestalt, mit großem,
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weißem Barte, wundervollen dunklen Augen, dessen Gesicht von einem fast überirdischen Schein von Güte, Milde und Klugheit erstahlte. (58)

With this description, Gronemann not only re-casts the image of the Eastern Jew as a revered and wise patriarch, he also combats the stereotype of the Ostjuden as uneducated (Brenner, Marketing 163).

Gronemann acknowledged that, as a Zionist, he knew that what Palestine needed was pioneers, not more scholars, to re-build the state, but he writes that he has come to respect the value of the kind of study that the Eastern Jewish Batlonim have preserved:


Passages such as these are another example of the positive stereotyping that Gronemann employed to combat the negative propaganda used against the Eastern Jews. He took the image of a lazy Jewish beggar and recast the stereotype as that of the patriarch of a larger (Jewish) European intellectual legacy.
Not only the old men but the Eastern Jewish children, too, Gronemann observed, cultivated a hunger for learning that surpassed that of Western children. Regarding education standards, Gronemann reports a greater desire to learn among the Eastern Jewish youth than among German students. He provides a number of examples in which he witnessed Eastern Jewish school children creating exciting intellectual competitions and games where they test their knowledge of European literature. In one instance he recalls a student correcting him regarding a certain reference in German literature. The Eastern Jewish children desired to learn and to educate themselves (175). Gronemann writes that:

So ähnlich wie jetzt den Kindern im Lande Israel ging es damals den Zöglingen in einigen Warschauer Schulen, die den fremden Besuchern vorgeritten wurden. Nun unterscheiden sich aber die jüdischen Kinder des Ostens dadurch von allen mir bekannten schulbesuchenden Kindern sonst, daß sie den Unterricht nicht als eine höchst unerquickliche Einrichtung betrachten, die nach Möglichkeit sabotiert werden muß, sondern daß sie samt und sonders eigentlich mit ungeheurem Vergnügen und Eifer lernen (150).

Gronemann led a number of tourists from Germany through the Jewish schools in the occupied territories in order to demonstrate how well the Jewish children learned and reasoned, the ability of even nine- and ten-year-old children to argue from the Talmud complex questions of marriage and laws regarding birthrights in traditional Hasidic schools.

He writes that his tourists were generally quite impressed and ready to change their minds regarding assumptions about the lack of Jewish education. These positive impressions did not last long, Gronemann notes, since the credibility of the traditional Hasidic methods were
immediately dismissed upon the encounter with a filthy schoolhouse. He says that he led his tour group into an older, more traditional school—“ein richtiges Cheder, eine jüdische Volksschule alten Stils” (153). Nearly one hundred children, aged from six to fourteen, were pressed into a room. Gronemann describes them as barefoot and with torn clothing. The window was closed; the room had little to no airflow. It was a dusty, dirty environment and the lesson proceeded in a chaotic manner. Despite the dirt and grime, Gronemann points out that the children were surprisingly friendly, warm and asked several questions of the tourist guests. It was after this experience that Gronemann’s tourists changed their minds yet again:

Wir konnten es nicht lange in der Hölle aushalten, und als wir draußen in frischer Luft standen, began einer von den Herren mächtig zu schimpfen. Diese Kinder müssen gerettet werden, mit solchen Schulen müßte aufgeräumt werden; mit Licht und Luft, mit Hygiene und Seife müßte man da Ordnung schaffen. Ich konnte nicht einstimmen, wußte aber nicht, was ich zur Widerlegung sagen sollte. (154)

Gronemann criticizes his guests for not being able to look deeper. Despite the poverty and the lack of hygiene, the children themselves were kind and well-reasoned. The prejudice on the part of the German visitors was not a question of good education for the Jewish children, but of a certain appearance that the German tourists associated with “culture” and good, middle-class standing.

Gronemann concludes the chapter by saying that he has nothing against hygiene and cleanliness, but he doubts that the European belief in hygiene is able to bring about the goodness that Europeans think it will. He questions whether or not the cost of adopting such a mentality that prioritizes hygiene and cleanliness actually does more harm than good because of the
“dirt”—and the local traditions and culture—that such a European mentality tends to disregard along with the filth and poverty (154).

Gronemann’s recognized that it was difficult for Western Europeans to break out of their cultural perspectives that associated hygiene and certain forms of education and social order with civilized culture. He incorporated positive stereotypes in his text to help Western Jews see past the “uncivilized” exterior of the Ostjuden and to appreciate their authentic spirituality and their genuine sense of community and a shared culture. But more than inspirational stereotypes, Gronemann advocated a return to Orthodox religious ritual, particularly the shared celebration of the Sabbath, as an antidote to the Western European prejudices that might blind German Jews from fully appreciating their Eastern cousins.

Again, as mentioned above, Gronemann compared the Jewish celebration of the Sabbath as the source of renewal and strength for the Jewish identity. He notes that the Sabbath is when the Jews are most alive. The Sabbath gives them a new perspective for their lives during the week. Gronemann writes: “Im Westen hat man den Ruhetag, um sich an diesem Tage für die Arbeit zu stärken, für das Werk der Woche. Bei den Juden ist es anders. Man arbeitet die ganze Woche, um zu hoben auf Schabbes‘. Der Jude lebt in Wirklichkeit nur am Sabbat und nur für den Sabbat!”(85). He says that it is not just a religious disposition but the instinct of the people, the common sense of responsibility, the carrying on of a tradition and the desire to pass on this tradition to the next generation that keeps the practice of Sabbath observance going (88).

The effect of Sabbath celebration is like a magical spell that comes over the city, according to Gronemann. He writes that the Jews work throughout the week and become covered in the sin and grime of ordinary life “werden beschmutzt an Leib und Seele, brennen von den
Begierden und Gelüsten des Alltags und der Erde” (86). On the Sabbath, the Jews are transfigured:


This passage is powerful because, unlike Zweig and Döblin, Gronemann’s text describes the Sabbath ritual as the key to Jewish identity, to renewal. It is at this point, as mentioned above, that he compares the Jewish Sabbath celebration to Antaeus, the mythical Greek giant who drew his strength from contact with the earth (86). Especially within the Zionist context, which emphasized the importance of the Jewish re-possession of the physical land of Palestine, Gronemann’s argument that it is the practice of the Sabbath ritual which strengthens Jewish identity almost appears to be a contradiction to Zionist ideology. Both the popular assumptions with German Romantic Volk culture and the theological belief system of many Zionists emphasized that it was the particularity of the Palestinian land that was significant for the Jews as a people (Johnson Modern 118).
Gronemann infers in this passage that there are “other people” who benefit from the Sabbath celebration, even though they are not necessarily Jewish. The larger implication, of course, is that even the non-Jewish inhabitants of a city benefit when Jews observe ritual separation and when they do not confuse themselves by acting as if they were Werktagsmenschen just like their non-Jewish neighbors. To be fully human for the Jew, according to Gronemann, is to regularly celebrate the Sabbath by the cessation of work, the observance of a day of rest.

Along with the celebration of the day of rest, Gronemann described the peculiar effect that Eastern Jewish worship services had on him and other colleagues. Richard Dehmel, the poet, was so inspired by the religious milieu of the Ostjuden that he travelled to Wilna to witness the synagogue worship. Dehmel had an aesthetic, spiritual experience that might be likened to some of Arnold Zweig’s descriptions of community worship and celebration in Das ostjüdische Antlitz. Dehmel, Gronemann says, was intellectually committed to the idea of the Jews as a Volk and to the Zionist beliefs, but it was not until he visited the city of Wilna that he really understood what a non-Western Jewish service was like—it was as powerful and moving as being in Rome at Easter for a Roman Catholic:

Auf meinen Rat hin fuhr er kurz danach zu einem Feiertag nach Wilna, um sich dort das Treiben in der Judengasse anzusehen. Er wohnte dort auch in der alten Synagoge einem Gottesdienst mit dem prächtigen Kantor Herschmann bei, und als er zurückkam, erklärte er mir, Wilna hätte auf ihn einen größeren Eindruck gemacht als Rom;--der Gottesdienst hätte ihm mehr gegeben, also die Celebrierung der Ostermesse durch den Papst, und ihm war der Begriff der betenden Gemeinde erst jetzt klar geworden. (58)
The cultural, aesthetic and spiritual power that this liturgical worship ceremony had on Dehmel and Gronemann led them to question the Jewish experience in the West.


The experience of the Eastern European Jews, Gronemann says, is not like the synagogue experience in the West, where congregants rely on a priest to bring them the truth from Heaven. He says that it is far more a struggle and an eager fight of the entire communities to lay hold of the divine teaching:

Nicht der Priester, der Träger göttlicher Sendung, erscheint vor der Masse der Gläubigen [...] Es ist nicht so, daß die Gnade, die Liebe sich von oben auf die unwürdigen Menschen herabsenkt, daß ein Mittler vom Himmel herabsteigt, um die Sünder zu erlösen, sondern wie Moses den Berg Sinai erstieg, um die Lehre herabzuholen vom Himmel, so ringt der Jude, ringt und kämpft die Gemeinde um die Lehre, um den Segen—so kommt es in jüdischer Sage, in den vielen Erzählungen der Chassidem zum Ausdruck. Es ist ein ewigens Kämpfen, ein Stürmen zum Himmel, in wachsender Ekstase wird das Gebet emporgesandt, um die Wolken und das Himmelsgewölbe zu durchbrechen. (61-62)

Part of the difference in ritual that Gronemann describes in this passage has to do with liberal Jewish practices in Western Europe that emphasized a strict order of worship and liturgy and the Hasidic practice of seeking to “generate” spiritual inspiration or release through concentration and ecstatic prayer. Through concentration on the Torah, even on the very Hebraic letters themselves, a devout Jew could actively unlock or release the power of God into the world.
Rather than passively listening or reciting passages of holy scripture, the Hasidic ceremonies focus on actively working to achieve or “bring down” the power of God through their prayer.

Despite this poetic description of an Eastern Jewish synagogue, he continues on to describe in greater detail the chaotic experience of a typical religious service: Men and women are crowded around the podium, praying as the cantor takes his place. Children might be running around, with an older Jewish grandfather following them and boxing their ears so that they behave; the members chant and sing and pray along with the cantor in a warbling harmony where words and enunciation are blurred; others sit in a corner mumbling and murmuring over large books. Gronemann says that anyone used to German order and structure would walk in and perceive the entire commotion to be chaotic nonsense (Hawdoloh 62).

Gronemann points out that what this Eastern community possesses is an inner joy, despite the apparent lack of organization. He says that this kind of authenticity is almost completely lost in the West. As with the comparison of the education systems in the East, Gronemann finds that, in their worship, the Ostjuden have maintained an inner peace and joy and community intimacy, even if at the expense of external cleanliness and order. The practice of traditional ritual, according to Gronemann, led to an inner peace and joy in one’s Jewish identity.

Gronemann provides a further example of Josef Carlebach, the director of a Jewish Gymnasium in Kowno. According to Gronemann, Carlebach was a firmly convinced anti-Zionist who forbade his students to sing the Hatikwah at the school. However, Carlebach’s students eventually won him over through their insistence to sing the Zionist national anthem: “Carlebach hat mir oft gesagt, wieviel er in jener Zeit in Kowno gelernt und wie er sich davon überzeugt hat,
daß die nationale Begeisterung und der nationale Wille der jüdischen Jugend anzuerkennen sind und daß daran vorüberzugehen blöd und verbrecherisch sei” (196).

Richard Dehmel was another example of a Western Jew who gained greater appreciation of a more authentic vision of Jewish identity through witnessing Hasidic rituals and the inner joy that the Hassidim seemed to possess. Steven Aschheim points out that Gronemann attributed Richard Dehmel’s ability to appreciate the Eastern Jews to his intellectual and “poetic sensibilities” (Brothers 150). This is certainly true. Gronemann does attribute Dehmel’s appreciation of the Eastern Jewish prayer services to his instincts and intuitiveness, but Gronemann’s further descriptions of the effect of the Sabbath and of Eastern Jewish worship services on himself and the effect of the nationalistic fervor of the Kowno youth on Josef Carlebach show a mystical association that Gronemann held between Jewish celebratory ritual and personal Jewish transformation.

Gronemann admits that the Ostjuden insisted on many particular and strange rules for observing the Sabbath, as well as other Jewish traditional rituals, but the general effect of this devout behavior was a self-regulated, hospitable, and open community—the ritual and the religious structure served to replace political governance and thus political positions mattered less among the Jewish communities of the East than it did in Western countries.

In an early chapter, Gronemann recounts the story of the regulation of bread prices. The German military tried to regulate the prices across the territory, and yet the shop owners consistently charged more for the bread and flour. Strictest measures of punishments were used; yet shop owners continued to ignore the German authorities. But when a rabbi from Kowno proclaimed that the Jews should obey the price laws, miraculously everyone complied. This respect for internal, non-military authority is what Gronemann found so curious. The Jewish
sense of loyalty to its own community and the sense of greater submission to a rabbi’s command than to German military command was powerful—this was an identity that seemed unshakeable to Gronemann. He writes that even the atheists among the Ostjuden submit to the rabbi’s authority:

[…] auch Atheistien etwa, deren es im Osten genügend gibt, beugten sich absolut der rabinischen Autorität, und da liegt vielleicht das Seltsamste und Gewaltigste, was wir im Osten kennenlernten. Hier dokumentiert sich der ungeheuer entwickelte politische Instinkt der jüdischen Masse. Alle sind durchdrungen von dem Gefühl, daß ihre Existenz als Volksganzes davon abhängig ist, daß die moralische Autorität aufrechterhalten wird, die durch die Synagoge verkörpert wird. Andere Völker bedürfen staatlicher Machtmittel, bedürfen der Organe eines Staatswesens, der Gerichte, der Polizei, des Militärs—bei den Juden wird das alles ersetzt und übertroffen durch das nationale Verantwortungsgefühl, durch die moralische Selbstzucht. Jeder einzelne ist sich der Bedürfnisse des Ganzen bewußt und jeder einzelne ordnet sich unter Hintansetzung seiner persönlichen Interessen den Interessen des Ganzen unter. (71-72)

Gronemann chooses to attribute this submission to a common religious authority—as opposed to tsarist deprivation of political influence for the Jews—and cultural unity as the result of a spiritually rich existence. In the West, the Jews are used to locking God away in the synagogue, he writes, but in the East, the Jews live as if God was intimately part of every aspect of their work and their families: “Man hat versucht, den lieben Gott und das Judentum in die Synagoge zu sperren, und wacht sorglich darüber, daß beide die Schwelle nicht nach außen hin überschreiten. Mir ist das unerträglich, seit ich im Osten etwas gesehen –etwas ganz und gar anderes” (61).
In the East, Jewish spiritual existence translated into a life that whole-heartedly embraced religious disciplines and ceremony. Gronemann writes that the Westernized Jews no longer properly understand the concept of spiritual disciplines, if they are familiar with religious disciplines at all:

Fasten und Trauern an Bußtagen versteht man eben halb und halb auch im Westen, aber die richtige Freude, die Freude an der Lehre, am Gesetz, die kennt man nur dort [im Osten]. Ich sehe noch den kleinen Scherenschleifer von der Ecke der Lietzmannstraße in Kowno vor mir, wie er im Tempel herumlief, um immer wieder und wieder jede einzelne Gesetzesrolle zu küssen; ein unglaubliche Seligkeit war über sein lachendes, zahnloses Gesicht ausgegossen. Worüber freut sich der Mensch? Worüber jubeln alle diese Leute? Was ist schließlich diese Thora, deren Fest man so feiert? (64)

Fasting and special days of repentance and prayer were foreign to the Western Jewish individual, but the Torah and the study and the practice of the Old Testament commands serves as a source of great joy and vitality for the Ostjuden. He goes on to ask whether Germans were ever so enthusiastic about their own laws and legal policies as the Jews were about the Mosaic regulations (64). This kind of communal life that relishes tradition and ceremony is what Gronemann wanted to recover. In the Eastern Jews he perceived joy in their religious observances. The Jewish traditions were not a burden, as they were in the West.

Though he provides other observations about Jewish nationality and unity, the final chapters of the travelogue serve to anchor the value of these traditions and observances into a greater sense of hospitality that comes from this devout community: “Wie mir, ging es vielen anderen der jüdischen und nicht jüdischen Kameraden, die gleichzeitig oder durch mich Anschluß fanden. Ich kam in zionistische und assimilatorische, orthodoxe und neologe Häuser –
überall herrschte jene geistige Atmosphäre und jene ungezwungene herzliche Geselligkeit, wie man sie nur im Osten kennt” (123).

Gronemann writes that in the West, the German Jews cared far more about preserving their own national, German identity than they did about being hospitable to the Russian prisoners of war. Gronemann mentions that his father, Selig, was nearly alone in his desire to provide a space for the Russian, Jewish war prisoners to be housed in Hannover. His own congregation protested: God forbid that they give shelter to the enemy during the war—even though these enemies were their Eastern Jewish cousins (205). Gronemann wrote that this nationalistic attitude was not so prevalent in the East:

Hier im Osten ließ man sich durch vorübergehende Ereignisse nicht in seiner Menschlichkeit und in seinem Geiste beirren. Und die Gastfreundschaft galt nicht etwa nur den Juden, sondern jeder, der nur sich abweisend zeigte, mußte sie empfinden. Ich weiß, wie in Kowno einfache Leute, wenn sie zu Festtagen Kuchen backen, regelmäßig die Kinder mit gefüllten Körben in das nächste Soldatenquartier schickten, um den fremden Soldaten, die fern von der Heimat so einsam waren, eine Freude zu bereiten. (206)

In contrast to this sense of openness, hospitality and warmth, Gronemann closes his travelogue with worries about how the Germans have responded to the Eastern Jews immigrating to Germany. He writes that “von jener Ostjudenthetze und –verfolgung, mit der später diese Liebe vergolten werden sollte,” no one would have the slightest idea that the German troops left the Eastern territories at the end World War I with the promise never to forget the kindness that was shown them. In contrast to the hospitality-cultivating rituals of the Eastern Jews, Gronemann
pairs his observations of Eastern Jewish traditions with the strict order and military discipline that the Germans brought with them.

**German Ideals and Rituals**

While Gronemann’s book ends with this rather ominous reminder of the Jewish persecution and discrimination occurring within Germany, he suggests an explanation for the inhospitable attitudes of the Germans related to their own way of life and the rituals they practiced. Just as the emphasis on traditional Jewish Orthodox ritual gave fresh spiritual life to the Eastern Jews, Gronemann makes an unmistakable comparison to the German insistence on order and discipline. The result, he implies, is that German military organization could be quite inhospitable and unneighborly.

Gronemann writes that he served for a time as a guide and interpreter for German visitors as they travelled on “educational tours” through the Jewish parts of the cities on the Eastern front (128,130). Gronemann learns that it was important for new visitors to wear armbands with red crosses on them to designate their status as visitors: “[…] das Tragen dieser Binde war seit einem ärgerlichen Zwischenfall in Grodno allen fremden Reisenden zur Pflicht gemacht worden” (130). He tells the story that in Grodno the local German military commanded the local citizens to greet German officers with a salute whenever they saw them. As a result, when an officer noticed a man who did not salute him, the officer knocked the man’s hat off his head with a horsewhip. The German officer did not realize that the “citizen” was actually a prominent German businessman, touring the city, who was quite disturbed at this act of violence against his person. Despite profuse apologies by the officer, the local occupational authorities created a new rule that anyone visiting their cities needed to wear an identifying armband (131). Gronemann makes
clear that such rules were not the case everywhere, and these incidents regarding locally enforced salutes to the officers certainly did not originate with the central German authorities: “Die Einführung der Grußpflicht wie die Verhängung vieler anderer Maßnahmen hing eben ganz von dem Ermessen der Kriegsgewaltigen ab, und es wäre ein Unrecht, die Oberste Heeresleitung für alle die drakonischen Anordnungen untergeordneter Stellen verantwortlich zu machen” (131).

Gronemann mentions the issue of properly greeting German officers and the misunderstandings around compliance with this protocol a few times throughout the text, indicating that this particular ritual was a source of frustration for both the Germans and the local population. He recalls an incident where a man was arrested because he did not salute a German officer from the other side of the street. The man was released after a fourteen-day investigation that revealed the man was nearly blind. Quartermaster-General Erich Ludendorff called to speak with the Generalmajor who arrested the man and denounced him for his carelessness (131). Gronemann goes on to write very positively of Ludendorff, that he was very kind to the Ostjuden, but lamented that such high-positioned officials could not be everywhere on the Eastern front, and thus the local, lower-ranking German officials often caused confusion and pain through their own prejudice (131). He writes of Ludendorff:

Die kleinliche Schikanierung einzelner Personen lag wohl nicht im Sinne der Heeresleitung. Insbesondere hat der selige Ludendorff—bitte, das ist kein Druckfehler--, der selige, nicht der unselige; ich sprech von dem Ludendorff, wie er sich damals zeigte, als er in jeder Beziehung auf der Höhe war, sich durchaus nicht etwa als Judenfeind gezeigt. Er hat im Gegenteil oft bewiesen, daß er jüdische Hilfe und Mitarbeit zu schätzen wußte und sich häufig und gern jüdischer Hilfe bedient. Er hat jüdische Künstler herangezogen, sich mit ihnen studenlang angeregt unterhalten und sich von ihnen Werke
widmen lassen. Er ist auch gegen antisemitische Ausschreitungen mehr als einmal
eingeschritten, und er hatte damals volles Verständnis dafür, daß durch den Eindruck im
neutralen Auslande nicht nur, sondern auch von anderen Gesichtspunkten betrachtet, ein
antisemitisches Gebaren das deutsche Interesse auf das empfindlichste schädigen würde.

(132)

Gronemann goes on to record how Ludendorff allowed a food kitchen to be opened for the
Jewish poor in Kowno during the entire period of the occupation (132). This was high praise
indeed—Gronemann wanted to objectively give praise where it was due, but even Ludendorff’s
kind actions did not ultimately dissuade Gronemann from his suspicion that the Germans still
nurtured a deep sense of anti-Semitism. Ludendorff’s service in the East was exceptional in
terms of German displays of generosity toward the Jews.

Earlier in the travelogue, Gronemann describes another incident regarding the principle
of properly greeting German officers and the practical jokes that the lower-ranking officers
played upon the higher officials. This incident involved a “Leutnant St.” who, Gronemann says,
had a hobby of caring for two pet geese. Gronemann writes that his colleague Herr von Wilpert,
“und einige Herren,” led these two geese astray. While this was happening, one of the lower-
ranking officers from the Presseabteilung ran to tell Leutnant St. that his geese were gone.
Rather than responding to the emergency, Leutnant St. interrupted the officer before he could
find out what was going on, and used this opportunity to lecture his inferior on the rudeness of
barging in, breaking protocol, and overstepping rank. Gronemann writes that the Leutnant St.
was more casual in his methods of operation and had received a negative evaluation of his
performance from his superiors. Leutnant St. thought lecturing an inferior officer on proper
protocol for delivering messages might make him look better. The result was that, by the time he
had finished his lengthy lecture, “waren die Gänse weg—ein Opfer auf dem Altare militärischer Disziplin—die militärische Zucht hatte die Gänsezucht siegreich geschlagen!” (117-118).

Gronemann treats this theme again and again: the Germans were so insistent on some particular rule that they lost perspective as to what the rules were for. The example of the geese is comedic, but Gronemann gives another example that demonstrates the lack of discernment or lack of perspective when it came to regulating food and supply measures to the local Polish and Lithuanian communities.

In general, Gronemann thought that the Poles and the Lithuanians appreciated the Germans, and he compared the military occupation to that of a fairytale—the local people had great awe and respect for their ruling “fairytale princes” (138, 143). The tragedy was that the German occupation “princes” were often tied by bureaucracy that did not allow them to effect beneficial change, even if they wished they could do something. Gronemann tells of a time when a group of private German citizens suggested an innovative food and supply distribution method for the German troops and for the impoverished, starving population in the surrounding countryside. The proposed system involved local traders buying food from the inhabitants, paying for the food with Schnapps. The local traders would then sell the food back to the military so that the military could be fed. The traders would make a profit and more food could be distributed both among the troops and among the locals. Gronemann recognized this proposed plan as a brilliant solution both for the needs of the military but also for the local economy and for the inhabitants. The result of the recommendation was a moral outrage among the German military and political circles because of the use of alcohol to pay for the food from the local merchants and farmers. Thus no systematic plan for distribution was implemented (143).
Gronemann’s conclusion of this incident was: “So mußte die Deputation unverrichteter Dinge abziehen, und die Unerschütterlichkeit der Grundsätze unserer Verwaltungspraxis war wieder einmal glänzend dokumentiert. So bimmelte das Sterbeglöckchen weiter und so ließ das Gejammer der Klageweiber nicht nach” (143-144). The German military held to their high moral ground, which resulted only in the continued misery and starvation of the local inhabitants. Although Gronemann included humorous stories about the absurd obsessions Germans seemed to have for their military protocol, the absurdity could quickly become destructive as well. Whatever the value of German discipline and order, those values alone did not inspire discernment and the ability “zu unterscheiden zwischen Heiligem und Unheiligem / zwischen Licht und Finternis” (227).

Gronemann’s travelogue deftly compares and contrasts the differences between the German military traditions and rituals and the Eastern Jewish observance of traditional, religious rituals. The latter is a source of renewal for the Jew whereas German military order ultimately brought confusion, the misappropriation of resources, and a forgetfulness of Jewish hospitality. Similar to his story about the tourists who did not know how to value the enthusiasm of the Eastern Jewish children for learning because of the offensive hygienic differences, Gronemann portrays the German way of life as highly ordered and ritualized but in a way that was not life-giving—certainly not life-giving for the Jews. This was all the more reason that the Jews, according to Gronemann, needed to separate themselves, to become distinct from the German pattern of life and re-connect with their own history, their own cultural patterns of living.

Zionism

For the purpose of the travelogue, Gronemann is not overly explicit in his Zionist
injunctions. He freely admits that he is a Zionist and he writes about other Zionist groups and activities, but the book does not end with a call for Jews to become Zionist supporters. Like the form of Talmudic discussions and exegesis, Gronemann wants readers to weigh the examples and stories for themselves in order to make their own decisions about their identity—particularly in relation to their German and Jewish identities.

Even though Gronemann is not explicit in his argumentation, the positive examples he provides in the travelogue are Zionist in tone. His implications can often be quite strong: The Jews are a separate people and deserve their own recognition as a political state. Not only does Gronemann single out the distinctiveness of Yiddish as a Jewish language, he also draws attention to examples where Germans have appreciated Jews more when they act as a separate, independent people, rather than as an assimilated minority within the German population. Finally, Gronemann indirectly argues for space and land where the Jews can freely express themselves without fear of betraying some other national loyalty. In making these observations Gronemann drew on the contemporary, romantic notions of Zionist nationalism of the time. He was moderate in his argumentation and sought to find the common cultural and religious elements around which to unite the different international Jewish groups, and with which the Jews could gain a position of international respectability as a cohesive, political and cultural entity.

The importance of language as a signifier of national cohesion and autonomy was a powerful idea born out of the romantic, late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century philosophies of Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, Erika Harris points out that the distinctiveness of language was the primary justifying characteristic, in this philosophical context, of national culture (Harris 24). Michael
Brenner likewise emphasizes that part of the perceived “authenticity” of the Eastern European Jews among Western, German Jews came from the use of Hebrew and Yiddish (Renaissance 185). Drawing on the German youth movements of the late-nineteenth century, the Jewish youth groups in Germany of the early twentieth century began articulating a völkisch, peasant-inspired Jewish particularism, for which the Yiddish-speaking Eastern Jews were the stereotype (47).

From a Zionist perspective, concerns over language and racial differences was one of the conflicts that Theodor Herzl observed as a young journalist in France, witnessing the unfolding of the case regarding the (false) accusation against the French Jewish army Captain, Alfred Dreyfus as being a spy and a traitor to the Germans (Johnson Jews 384-85). The result of the furor over the trial was increased attention upon Jewish citizens as inhabitants among the French. They claimed that the Jews were usurping their linguistic and literary heritage: […] “why could not Jews write in another language—why did they have to write in French?” (390). Gronemann’s text participates in this concern over language by celebrating the use of Yiddish to represent Jewish separatism and authenticity.

Yiddish, according to Gronemann, was not a corrupt form of German, but was its own distinctive language—and one that Goethe even admired. He says that Goethe was interested in the language but never claimed to have mastered it, and despite the similarities, Gronemann maintains his claim that German and Yiddish are separate:

Ja, also Goethe kannte die Schwierigkeiten dieser Sprache und bildete sich trotz seiner ziemlich weit vorgeschrittenen Versuche—es existiert ja bekanntlich von ihm eine jiddische Predigt—nicht ein, sie zu beherrschen. Ihn interessierte aber vornehmlich die offensichtliche Verwandtschaft mit der deutschen Sprache. Jiddisch ein korrumpiertes Deutsch zu nennen, ist genau so unsinnig, wie wenn man Deutsch als ein korrumpiertes
This passage illustrates a theme that Gronemann develops throughout the book: He recognizes the similarities between German and Jewish (Yiddish) cultures, and he even welcomes the idea of partnering with Germans—specifically regarding their military goals during World War I—but this partnership does not mean that his primary identity, or that the Jewish identity, has been completely subsumed into a German identity. There should be no confusion—the Jews are not linguistically or historically a corrupted part of the German Volk and family. They are separate, just as the Yiddish language is separate.

Another way that Gronemann chose to emphasize the distinctiveness and separateness of Jewish culture was to describe certain contribution of Yiddish and Hebrew theater groups. Michael Brenner describes this enthusiasm for Yiddish and Hebrew theater as a phenomenon of the Weimar era and the cultural milieu that celebrated cultural “authenticity”:

When the two leading Yiddish theater troupes of Eastern Europe, the Vilna Troupe and the Moscow Jewish Academic State Theater, toured Germany during the Weimar years,
they enjoyed similar success [to the Habimah, Hebrew theater group]. Much of the praise from the German Jewish critics was certainly due to the companies’ incontestable artistic creativity and dramatic skills. But this does not explain the unusual enthusiasm of the German Jewish audience. […] Instead, the most noted German Jewish critics, playwrights, and stage directors emphasized their admiration for Yiddish culture, which like Hebrew, was perceived as an authentic expression of Jewish culture. In the plays of Habimah and the Vilna and Moscow Yiddish theaters, the “antiquated” and “debased” languages had become symbols of a renewal of Jewish authenticity that was no longer reduced to a mere nostalgic longing for the world of yesterday. (190)

Gronemann recounts his discovery of the Vilna Troupe in the travelogue and how he organized the way for them to begin touring in Western Europe (185-86). The effect of the performances on the German Jewish soldiers during the war is similar to that described by Brenner in the quote above. Gronemann writes that Hermann Struck would often say that he felt more of Jewish culture in the performances, songs and dances of this theater than in all of the sacred Jewish writings (184). The performances were so popular, Gronemann insists, that the actresses who played the main roles, were often in danger of being overwhelmed by male theater goers who had fallen in love with them (184). The Wilna Theater Troupe was a cultural success, even among non-Jewish Germans: “Der Erfolg blieb den Leuten treu—sogar die Herren vom deutschen Generalgouvernement führten ihre Ehrengäste aus Deutschland zu den Wilnaeren, und nach dem Kriege konnte ich der Truppe den Weg zum Westen bahnen. Sie hat sich inzwischen einen europäischen Namen erworben” (186).

The Yiddish theater troupe was another example of success for a cultural product that was distinctly Jewish. Gronemann’s mention of the attractiveness of Jewish actresses is another
of his observations that Jews are most admired when they are operating as a distinct, separate cultural entity. Throughout the travelogue memoir, Gronemann provides aesthetic and romantic associations with the Jewish culture of the East, particularly boasting as to the attractiveness of the Jewish women—and Gronemann notes this fact is a point of national, cultural pride. During the Flower Day celebrations, Gronemann writes that Western Jews gained additional appreciation for their own national identity beyond that of a simple religious, confessional identity:


The effect of these festivals (Gronemann also mentions a beauty contest) is that German Jewish soldiers witnessed a united, culturally respectable national demonstration of the Eastern Jews. Gronemann combines several different Zionist sentiments in this passage. His first claim is that, whether one supported the Jews or not, no one could deny their national character, that the Jews were a separate, distinct nation. Next, he acknowledges that the Jewish nation had been robbed of its statehood (des eigen Staatswesens beraubten Volksgemeinschaft), the implication being
that the Jews not only belonged to the category of Germans who happened to be of the Jewish confession (*Staatsbürgers jüdischen Glaubens*) but that they belonged to a political nation and state just as much as any other state. The final element that Gronemann includes is that, upon recognition of the inherent, cultural unity of the Jewish people, no one could or wanted to deny them the respect to be treated like any other nationality. Again, Gronemann is not dogmatic or aggressive in his insistence of Zionist ideology, rather his examples are enough to provide strong implications of Zionist convictions.

In many ways, however, Gronemann’s positive descriptions of Jewish cultural nationalism were simply an extension of the fundamentally negative assumptions of Zionist ideology. Gronemann portrayed the uniqueness of Jewish community and solidarity as evidence for a deeper, national identity that would only express its full potential when the Jews possessed a political country of their own (Mittelmann 35). Gronemann operated from a standpoint of national pride. The other side to this ideological assertion was that the Jewish people, as long as they lived in “host” countries, would never be a complete, fulfilled people. Theodor Herzl, from the beginning of the Zionist movement, operated from the certainty that it was the Jewish, exilic existence that was responsible for anti-Semitism. Herzl wrote in *Der Judenstaat*:

\[\text{The Jewish question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers. Where it does not exist, it is carried by Jews in the course of their migrations. We naturally move to those places where we are not persecuted, and there our presence produces persecution. This is the case in every country, and will remain so, even in those highly civilized—for instance France—till the Jewish questions finds a solution on a political basis. The unfortunate Jews are now carrying Anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America. (Herzl 19-20)}\]
Herzl expected that his proposition would be met with support from the wider European powers since, as Herzl assumed, they were anxious to be rid of their Jewish minorities. Gronemann’s travelogue expresses a similar view, indirectly, near the end of the book when he reflects on the post-war persecutions within Germany: The German soldiers forgot the hospitality of the Ostjuden. Jews were not wanted in Germany after the war; they were better off as Jews going elsewhere, leading a separate existence from Western Europe.

Gronemann’s positive examples of cultural separation can be combined with his brief mention regarding the Zionist cause to support his belief not merely in cultural and ritual practice as the source of renewal but also in the immigration back to Palestine: “In Palästina brauchen wir tüchtige Arbeiter—nicht Batlonim, sondern Chaluzim, Pioniere!—nur sie werden das Land aufbauen, nur auf ihnen ruht unsere Zukunft [...]” (108). While the practice of traditional Jewish ritual was a primary element in the recovery of an authentic, Jewish identity, Gronemann’s position on the need for a separate Jewish space and country was also unquestionable. Not only does he close the book with the example of his father attempting to provide aid and housing for the Russian Jewish prisoners of war in Hannover, to the shock and horror of his congregation, Gronemann also includes the cold, inhospitable example of the Belgian Jews towards the Germans after the war:

Von den belgischen Juden kann ich wenig berichten; sie hielten sich noch in größerem Maße vielleicht als die nicht-jüdischen Belgier von jeder näheren Beziehung mit den Deutschen fern, und ich schloß gerade aus ihrer prononciert kühlen und ablehnenden Haltung, daß sie sich ihrer Gleichberechtigung denn doch nicht so ganz sicher fühlten und in Betätigung ihres Patriotismus „mehr als ihre Pflicht“ zu tun für angezeigt hielten.
Die große Synagoge machte im Innern keinen sympathischeren Eindruck als von außen.
Innen war eigentlich auch alles „Fassade“. (211)

In this passage, Gronemann quotes from a directive of the *Zentralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* at the beginning of World War I. The call was for the German Jews to show their patriotism in the war by “doing more than their required duty” for the Fatherland (Mittelmann 63). Gronemann observes that, after the war, the same phenomenon was occurring among the Belgian Jews who, he supposed, desired to show their patriotism by not associating with the German Jews. This kind of nationalism, in which Jews emphasized their loyalty and identity within their host countries, over and against their Jewish identity—and thus against their sense of solidarity to their international Jewish relatives—is what Gronemann found so disturbing.

What makes Gronemann’s text a Zionist work is this three-point assertion that Jews are “naturally” and linguistically distinctive, that they are most attractive and most productive and creative when they operate as a separate group and within their own cultural heritage, and that living in Western countries, he claims, hinders Jews from the full expression of their national and creative potential. The national and cultural environment in the West created Jews who were fearful and uncertain of their identities and, out of this deep uncertainty, were forced to “lock God away in their Western synagogues,” making the religion inside the synagogues merely a façade. The result was that these Western Jews became inhospitable and cold to their Jewish relatives if they were not from the same country. Though Gronemann begins the travelogue writing that he does not wish to teach about anything Jewish, the conclusion that his readers must inevitably reach is that, whatever it means to be Jewish, they likely could not explore that cultural identity to its fullest in the West. They needed to go elsewhere.
An American Critique of Gronemann’s European Zionism

In contrast to Zweig, Döblin (and even Roth), Gronemann offers a subtle but direct argument for separation between German and Jewish identities. Steven Aschheim concludes in his seminal work, *Brothers and Strangers*, that the Zionists offered the most practical framework for understanding the relationship between Germans and Jews during the Weimar period:

Only the Zionists were equipped with an ideological and explanatory framework that took seriously the radical nature of anti-Semitism. (This does not mean, of course, that they were able to foresee the unthinkable mass horrors of the Holocaust. They were, however, exceedingly alert to the novelty and seriousness of German anti-Semitism. The German Zionist tragedy consisted not in faulty analyses of the situation but in the failure to act upon their convictions and to leave while they still could). (244)

Sammy Gronemann was a subtle and astute apologist for the Zionist cause. Whereas Zweig, Döblin and Roth each reveal a kind of tortured identity regarding their Jewishness, Gronemann seems to have felt little to no struggle as to cultural loyalty. The other authors oscillate in their travelogues between despair and a mystical hope that somehow the Jews and the other *Völker* of Europe could maintain a separate cultural identity with mutual respect towards other people groups, but without military enforcement of political boundaries. Gronemann ultimately advocates for a separation between the Jews and Germans, and he does so with a cultural pride that acknowledges the mutual aid and benefit that the Jews and Germans can provide each other, but ultimately a clean break was needed.

American journalist Lenni Brenner adds a questioning caveat to Aschheim’s conclusion that the Zionists offered the only ideological framework to respond to anti-Semitism. If the
Zionists offered the only comprehensive, ideological solution, the framework was fundamentally negative—the Zionists held on to the firm belief that fighting anti-Semitism in their host countries was useless (Brenner 15). Brenner does not contend that another political party had developed a comprehensive, ideological response to anti-Semitism within Germany, but he does question that such a despairing agreement with the anti-Semites proved to be the most comprehensive “ideological and explanatory framework that took seriously the radical nature of anti-Semitism.”

Brenner not only argues that anti-Semitism had been defeated in Russia, France, and the Ukraine, but also it could have been defeated in Weimar Germany. Hitler was not inevitable. The German Jews could have taken certain steps to defeat Hitler, but Brenner identifies primarily the prejudices of middle-class, capitalist nationalism that prevented such a united, Jewish front to fight Nazism. He notes that the Communist KPD and the Rote Front parties devolved during the 1920s into distrustful, sectarian groups. Neither party wanted to work with the SPD. Brenner’s further research showed that “In 1930 the two working-class parties combined outpolled Hitler 37.6 percent to 18.3 percent. He could have been stopped; it was their failure to unite on a militant programme of joint physical defense against the brownshirts and in defense against the government’s onslaught against the standard of living of the masses that let Hitler come to power” (28).

The German Jewish middle class did not wish to partner with the working-class, socialist Jews since that would have meant “expropriation of the Jewish middle class as capitalists. That was unacceptable to the local affiliates of the WZO, who were largely middle class in composition with virtually no working-class following” (13). Brenner thus locates the failure of a united Jewish response against anti-Semitism within German economic and class distinctions.
The Jews could have defeated anti-Semitism in Weimar Germany, but it would have meant forming a sense of community and solidarity that broke through class divisions. Nationalism was the luxury of the middle class, and Germans as well as Jews wanted to support the political (nationalist) structure that allowed them to keep their middle-class status. Zionism, then, in Brenner’s depiction, was primarily a movement of middle class European Jews who used the suffering of Eastern European Jews to provide the justification and excuse to lobby for their own national statehood among the world powers as an expression of first-world national pride. Such an assessment is difficult to refute when combined with Herzl’s own admission in his diary, even after he had begun writing his famous work, *Der Judenstaat*, that one of his greatest ambitions was to be a Prussian nobleman (Michael Brenner, *Zionism* 33).

Brenner’s assessment is stark and controversial. He is unapologetic about his Trotskyist politics and historical revisionist tendencies. His book *Zionism in the Age of Dictators* (1983) is helpful for its documentation of Zionist activities and their strategies to negotiate with the political tyrants of the twentieth century, but his conclusions that the Zionists “should have done more” or “should have strategized differently” are probably more easily articulated in hindsight than it was for German Jews of the time to generate the vital sense of class-crossing solidarity necessary to implement such political change in Weimar, Germany (Aronsfeld). Brenner’s (very American) perspective betrays a comfort with democratic processes and assumptions that shows him to be an heir of the post 1960s Civil Rights movement and of American democratic tradition. While the Weimar period attempted to operate within a democratic framework, the new democracy was highly experimental, and Lenni Brenner’s critique of the Zionist movement does not take the strong psychological motivations of German Jews during this transitional period into consideration.
When evaluating Gronemann’s travelogue, or the works of the other German Jewish travel writers, one must keep the social and political limitations of the Weimar Republic in mind to understand why these authors were not more comfortable with democratic political strategies to change the government. That being said, Brenner’s critique raises the question as to why German Jews did not seek out more democratic strategies to resist anti-Semitism. Why did Zionists conclude that national separatism was the only solution for achieving Jewish respect and equality in Europe?

Brenner’s frustration—and the frustration of some American Zionists—was that the World Zionist Organization leaders such as Chaim Weizmann were so focused on the creation of the Jewish state that they ceased to prioritize lobbying for Jewish rights in the Diaspora, not realizing that if the WZO did not also help promote the safety and well-being of Jews in their host countries, there would likely be little support from the other, imperial countries to help develop a separate Jewish state in the future (16). The Zionist fear that aiding the Jewish cause in host countries such as Germany would allow them to become too comfortable and not wish to immigrate to Palestine revealed Zionism’s own shortsightedness and its rootedness in anti-Semitic fears rather than in a positive Jewish identity (18).

If there is a critique against Gronemann’s vision of solidarity with the Eastern Jews, it must be associated with his convictions in Zionist separatism—that Gronemann, like many of the other Zionists, could not imagine other possibilities of fighting for Jewish equality within the principles of German democracy but instead accepted the accusation that the Jews were a “parasite” people, existing at the expense of their “host” countries and needed to go elsewhere. Gronemann, of course, never articulated his position in these terms. His view was far more that
the Jews were a historically determined people who had never given up the intention of someday, again, possessing their own state in Palestine:

Gronemann dagegen wies darauf hin, dass die in Jawne vermittelten Lehren der Mischna und des Talmuds im Grunde den Bestand des jüdischen Staates würden da bis heute in den Lehrhäusern weiter diskutiert. All dies deute darauf hin, dass der Jude des Exils nur äußerlich im Exil lebe, im Herzen aber lebe er in der Zeit der nationalen Selbstständigkeit. (Mittelmann 34).

Again, Brenner’s critique against this shortsighted Zionist ideology was that it did not have the vocabulary of affirming the autonomy, independence, and self-reliance of Jews regardless of the country in which they lived. Such an ideology ultimately led to the discouragement of actually helping Jews in their host countries—working for their democratic rights—since the ultimate goal was not to improve the situation in the host countries but to escape to Palestine.

Paradoxically, Gronemann’s version of Zionism seems to have had the exact opposite effect, as Brenner had feared, since, personally, Gronemann may have done the most (out of the German Jewish travel authors examined here) to physically assist the Eastern Jewish refugees as they made their way through Germany to their countries of destination. In his Erinnerungen, Gronemann writes of his time living in Hannover, working as an attorney, and his efforts to assist the Jews fleeing from the Ukraine to the United States and the deplorable conditions in which they were transported through Germany:

In der Ukraine hatte eine mächtige Auswandererbewegung nach Amerika eingesetzt. […] Die Durchreiseerlaubnis wurde nur unter der Bedingung gegeben, daß die Auswanderer in plombierten Wagons Deutschland passieren sollten, so daß sie tagelang nich aus den
Gronemann goes on to describe how he worked to create a relief system to bring food and refreshments to the Jews packed into the train cars when the trains stopped briefly in Hannover. He writes that interacting with the Jews and allowing them to even get out and walk around was a terrible infringement against the law, and yet the more they continued with their work, the more (financial) support they received from the surrounding community—both from Jewish and Christian organizations (296).

As Gronemann appealed to Jewish organizations for continued financial support, he encountered resistance from the *Hilfsverein Deutscher Juden* in Berlin. Their objection was: “[…] daß wir die heiligen Gebote des Ministeriums größlich verletzten” (296-97). This experience is similar to what Gronemann describes of the Germans in the travelogue—they were so concerned about law, order, and certain formulations of moral appearances that they were hindered in providing real, material assistance to those in need. As Gronemann points out, the Berlin Jews viewed Prussian law as holier than their own sacred, religious laws.

Gronemann’s solution to this initial rejection by the *Hilfsverein* was to appeal to the *Deutsche Konferenzgemeinschaft der Alliance Israelite* (the German office of the French, Jewish relief organization). The result: “Das war nun eine Gelegenheit für Herrn Klausner, die Großzügigkeit der Alliance zu beweisen, und er bot uns sofort Subventionen an” (297). Gronemann then went back to the *Hilfsverein*, telling them of the generosity of their French
competitors, to which they also responded with financial donations. He concludes by saying that, in this way, they were able to help ten thousand Ukrainian refugees.

These examples serve to illustrate Gronemann’s personal sense of activism, but they also demonstrate the frustrating attitudes and prejudices among German Jewry that he had to navigate: In general, German Jews were committed to proving their loyalty to German law and German cultural norms. One of the only ways to break them out of such blind national loyalty and fears was to present the Germans Jews with another nationalist threat or source of competition—that the French Jews might some prove to be more helpful to the refugees than the German Jewish organizations.

Brenner is right to point out the limitations of German Jewish Zionism, but Gronemann’s writings reveal, as well, the cultural difficulties within which he worked. Theodor Herzl faced the same problems: Seeking to build a sense of national solidarity with the majority of Eastern Jews required a commitment to the particularity of Palestine (Mittelmann 56-57). Gronemann was of a similar disposition to Herzl—that the location of the national state was less important than the cultural renewal and unity of the Jewish people, but this perspective revealed far more of a Western conception of national existence. Many of the Eastern Jews, similar to their non-Jewish counterparts, fought for a national existence that was intrinsically tied to a specific place. For the Eastern Jews, that place could be nowhere else than Palestine.

In addition, the argument that the Jews could have created a cross-class sense of solidarity to fight anti-Semitism during the Weimar period discounts the general importance that location and place played in the understanding of national identity anywhere in Europe during this time. It was precisely the legacy of a nineteenth-century ideology that insisted because the
Jews did not have a physical home of their own that they were not considered eligible to be a *Volk*:

In the nineteenth century, German hatred of the Jews acquired a *völkisch* basis. It started with the nationalist rising against Napoleon. [...] This ideology, which slowly become predominant in Germany and Austria during the nineteenth century, drew a crucial distinction between ‘culture’ (benign, organic, natural) and ‘civilization’ (corrupt, artificial, sterile). Every culture had a soul; and the soul was determined by the local landscape. German culture, then, was in perpetual enmity with civilization, which was cosmopolitan and alien. Who represented the civilization principle? Why, the one race which had no country, no landscape, no culture of their own: the Jews! (Johnson, *Jews* 392)

In many ways, Gronemann was simply operating with the ideological and cultural tools available to create a pan-Jewish sense of solidarity. Because the Eastern European Jews were so insistent in tying their identity to a particular place, Gronemann felt it was foolish to create a divide or a disagreement with them over the issue of the territory.

Gronemann’s travelogue provides a unique, hopeful vision of the Jews experiencing spiritual and cultural renewal through the unhindered practice of their ritual and the living out of their unique culture. He submits this proposal within a nationalist, *völkisch* framework. Like Zweig, he does not shy away from similar “magical” descriptions of the power of Jewish ritual and culture to transform the Jewish people into a better, more fulfilled, more complete *Volk*. In terms of Gronemann’s own biography, one could make the argument that his thorough education of Jewish history and tradition, and his continued participation within Orthodox ritual practices
fueled his own sense of an altruistic identity and of his own neighborliness, activism, and solidarity with the Eastern European Jews.

Part of the difficulty with Gronemann’s proposition is that even if he found a greater sense of identity and renewal within Orthodox ritual, many Jews did not define themselves in these religious or traditional terms. Gronemann’s travelogue thus presents a concrete, practical form expressing Jewish solidarity through the regular practice of Orthodox ritual. The difficulty with this strategy is that the connection is not entirely clear why, if the practice of the ritual leads to a deeper identity and cultural solidarity within the Jewish people, not to campaign for a greater Jewish education and devotion to traditional practices within Germany? Gronemann’s father was certainly an example of a devout, hospitable Jewish leader whose identity transcended the national boundaries within which he lived and worked.

If Gronemann saw the temptations of capitalism, nationalism, and affluence in the West as a constant enemy of religious and cultural Jewish identity (as Zweig did), he does not address how those temptations would be avoided if the Jews possessed their own nation state. Did he think that Jewish separatism would magically guard them against the dangers of affluence in a country defined more by religious law than German bureaucracy, as the Eastern European Jewish culture did? Did he think that Jewish separatism and nationalism (in Palestine) would not lead to the same kind of chauvinism and inhospitable exclusivism that the Germans exhibited, as it inevitably did, and as Zweig experienced?

In an early series of articles Gronemann emphasized his belief both that the Zionist state would consist of separate components—religious and political—but he also emphasized that these elements were bound together—the one led into the other:
Ich möchte behaupten, daß die jüdische Religion nur eine christliche Einrichtung ist, --
soll sagen, daß ohne das Vorbild der Kirche wir nicht zu einer Abstrahierung der
Religion gekommen wären […]. Das Judentum ist eine Einheit. Das Einheitsprinzip ist
das Wesen unserer Gemeinschaft und Kultur. Wer vom religiösen Judentum abgeht, wird
bald auch den nationalen Halt verlieren und umgekehrt. (Gronemann “Israelit,
Orthodoxie und Zionismus”)

Later in the same article, Gronemann protests that Judaism should not be merely limited to the
synagogue—a Jewish life should encompass all spheres of activity, including the political
sphere. Gronemann was aware of the dangers that political ambitions could present to the new
Zionist state without religious content and influence, and thus Gronemann always saw the two
characteristics of religious conviction and tradition and political activity as working together
(Mittelmann 127).

If Gronemann understood that political and national separatism did not alone guarantee
spiritual renewal for the Jews, one questions why this should have been such an important
priority in the first place. Was it too difficult for an Orthodox Jew such as Gronemann to imagine
taking an active part in German, Weimar politics for the sake of improving Jewish rights and
cultural freedoms in Germany? Was it too difficult to imagine mobilizing a Jewish political
campaign to ensure that Western and Eastern Jews could practice their religious rituals more
freely, without discrimination? Was it really easier to attempt the establishment of a separate
state than it was to imagine carving out political spaces for religious and cultural separation for
the Jews in Germany? Perhaps astonishingly, it was easier or more effective, in Gronemann’s
mind, to argue for a complete national break than it was to experiment further with the (new)
democratic opportunities the fragile Weimar Republic provided. Like Herzl, Gronemann had
concluded that attempts to improve the Jewish situation in Germany by being better Germans was a futile path to pursue.

Despite the critiques, the importance of Gronemann’s travelogue lies in what he contributed to the vision of Jewish solidarity in Weimar Germany: That rootedness and security in their own identity would lead to a greater sense of hospitality to others. Whereas Zweig located the source of a transnational solidarity with the Eastern Jews in artistic inspiration, and whereas Döblin prescribed a dialectic, psycho-spiritual process, Gronemann’s source of Jewish identity and cultural renewal was in the ritual of traditional religious Orthodoxy. The securing of a space, and statehood, served only to facilitate that larger ritual component. As long as the Jews attempted to assimilate in the West, they would be tempted and pressured to follow the “rituals” of their host countries, thus stifling the generous and hospitable nature of which they were capable.

In contrast to the visions of mutual aid and international bridges that Döblin, Zweig, and Roth tolerate or espouse, Gronemann argues that the best way for Germans and Jews to relate and respect one another was through separation. Gronemann did not demonize the Germans, nor did he deny that the Germans’ practice of ritual and traditions based in Western science, hygiene and Prussian order contained their own set of destructive consequences. He could acknowledge the benefit of German culture while also making a clear distinction as to spiritual and humanitarian values. Gronemann saw in the Eastern Jews individuals who possessed a whole identity, not just a partial, cultural identity.

Like the other travel writers, Gronemann desired to recover a new vision of humanity, and like Döblin and Zweig, Gronemann appealed to the Torah, the Jewish law, to frame the
definition of that new humanity. Each of the travel writers longed for a Jewish identity that was certain and unshakable. The Eastern Jews, so they thought, knew how to be uncompromising in their identity by making the values and commands of the Torah a priority. The question was how this wisdom of keeping the commands of the Torah and how to grow up to be aufgemenscht was to occur. For Gronemann, the process could only occur through separation, through the cultivation of ritual which allowed for Sabbath—the intentional recognition that the Jewish life did not only consist of biological heritage but also of distinctive, traditional, historical ritual. Only through the process of separation and by prioritizing their tradition could the Jews be, in Gronemann’s thinking, the generous and hospitable people to neighboring people groups that the post-war generation so desperately needed.
Conclusions: Where Do We Go from Here?

Visions of Hospitality and Solidarity as Political Identity

Scholars have already contributed a great deal of material regarding the German Jewish travel writers of the Weimar era and the “discovery” or the “invention” of the authentic Eastern European Jew. For this study, I have built upon the existing research in order to draw attention to the travel writers’ connection between a strong cultural identity and a community’s ability to reach out in solidarity to those outside the group. Scholars such as Eva Raffel, Michael Brenner, David Brenner, and Steven Aschheim provide seminal studies of the nature of the “invented” Jewish identity during the Weimar period and its relationship to the Eastern European Jews.

Much of the existing research has to do with the gap in understanding between who the Eastern European Jews “actually” were and what the Western German Jews wished they were. Scholars have focused on the frustrated attempts of the Western Jews to create a united pan-European Jewish identity and “nationality.” My research has focused on those questions of national identity and Jewish cultural characteristics (whether real or invented) as a means to an end. In other words, I have focused on the common thread of “hospitality” and active solidarity with the poor and the socially disadvantaged as the character quality of the “new European” person or the “new Jewish person” in the travelogues.

Each of the authors recognized the need for a new kind type of European or Jewish person after World War I. Europe had been through a crisis. The existing structure of society as they had known it was gone. The travel writers were asking the questions present in everyone’s minds: Who are we as a people, as a nation, as a community, as individuals? How does the individual relate to the whole? What is the nature of the new whole, if it is no longer part of a larger imperial identity? Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann proposed different answers or solutions.
Zweig and Döblin both supported versions of an “inner disposition” or sense of solidarity with the Eastern Jews or that involved a “revitalization” of Jewish culture that did not compromise their own German identities. Zweig advocated the idea of Western Jews building a more authentic or spiritual Jewish cultural identity with the Eastern Jews that supported a youthful form of socialist Zionism. Zweig wanted the “older” Jewish cultures of the East to serve as a foundation and as an inspiration for Western Jews who desired to return to their spiritual roots. He knew that it would take time for Eastern and Western Jews to understand each other and work together, and thus he advocated a solidarity energized by the common hopes (from both Eastern and Western Jews) of what the next generation would create in Palestine.

Döblin envisioned a more universal, European identity which was conducive to constitutional state and national loyalties, in which local cultural identities were preserved but not used as the basis for political discrimination. Whereas Döblin and Zweig formulated various suggestions for reconciliation and the creation of a new, unified culture between Germans and Jews, Gronemann was a separatist arguing that the best way for Germans (or Europeans) and Jews to relate to one another was to create noticeable forms of cultural and political separation.

Zweig and Döblin operated on the assumption that the German cultural identity was large enough, tolerant enough, and enlightened enough to house citizens or members who possessed other religious or cultural or ethnic identities. They saw no reason why a Jewish identity should conflict with an enlightened German cultural identity. Gronemann saw that loyalty to a German identity led to potential compromise with a dedicated Jewish identity, and thus what was needed to reinvigorate Western Jewish communities was not a more nuanced compromise between German and Jewish identities but a separation and a demonstrative recognition that Jews belonged first to their own Jewish communities and to a Jewish nation.
The three travel writers, Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, and Sammy Gronemann represented the conflicting variety of German Jewish identities that existed during the Weimar era, but all three writers agreed on the outcome of their various attempts at creating a renewed and revitalized Jewish identity: the emergence of a more hospitable, empathetic, generous community. This dissertation thus addresses the questions of national or communal identity less in terms of “Jewishness” and more in the light of what each author believed was the necessary catalyst in a communal identity to enable people to reach out beyond their own cultural boundaries to those who were poor and at a social disadvantage. Each author defined their “boundaries” in different ways. For Zweig, he sought to overcome the boundaries of prejudice against Eastern Jews in Europe, but with a primary focus on those Ostjuden in Germany. For Döblin, he sought to overcome the boundaries of ethnic prejudice and economic discrimination in Europe in general, and he included the Ostjuden among the marginalized members of Europe who needed compassion. Gronemann, with a slightly different aim, focused on overcoming the boundaries of national prejudice primarily among religious Jews.

Though a thorough study of his travelogue did not constitute part of the main body of this dissertation, Joseph Roth’s essay, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927) provides an additional, historical lens through which to read the final conclusions of this study. There are several reasons why I did not include Roth as a more integral part of this dissertation. One of the reasons was that Roth was Austrian, not German. Including a more thorough examination of Roth’s travelogue would require additional exploration of the unique complexities of the Austro-Hungarian, Jewish political and social identities that were very different from what the German Jewish travel writers knew. The Habsburg monarchy had allowed legitimate, plural identities to co-exist in a way that nationalist Germany or France did not. Prior to World War I, “Jews all
over Austria insisted that they were Austrian by political loyalty, German or Czech or Polish by cultural identity, and Jewish by ethnic attachment” (Rozenblit 136). Such a tri-partite identity was foreign to the German Jews, the majority of whom insisted that they were Germans of the Jewish religion.

Another reason not to examine Roth’s travelogue in direct comparison with the other travel books here was that Roth was himself a wanderer. Roth had grown up as a Galician Jew with a great love for the emperor Franz Joseph. He longed for a return to the plural identities that had been guaranteed under the Habsburg monarchy and was not at home in the post-war culture of ideological nationalism. Unlike Döblin, Zweig, and Gronemann, Roth never settled down for long and was constantly traveling throughout Europe as a journalist. Whatever their political uncertainties and ambivalences, Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann did not leave Germany (as a residence) until the rise of Hitler made it absolutely necessary. Roth did not possess even this kind of connection to a homeland. His entire life he longed for a return to the old Hapsburg Empire and preferred living in Paris. He was a cosmopolitan at heart and a political orphan. His Jewish identity was similarly conflicted. He was not a Zionist and often expressed a strong preference for Catholicism because of its close ties with the Habsburg monarchy and Austrian culture (Sternburg 22, 24).

Despite Roth’s differences with the three German Jewish travel writers, he was raised in Galicia and had an intimate knowledge of growing up in a poor, Eastern Jewish community such as Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann “discovered” and admired. Roth’s close proximity to the German Jewish problem both historically and spatially allowed him the benefit and the freedom of being able to critique the situation and the other writers (he was rather disparaging of Döblin’s analysis of Polish Jewish culture) as an outsider (non-German) while still being able to offer the
expertise of his experience as an assimilated Galician Jew. Besides Gronemann, Roth was the most familiar among these travel writers with the cultural peculiarities of Eastern Jewish life. The benefits of distance and that of being an outsider allowed Roth unique insights and advantages to critique the proposed solutions of Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann, but his vantage point did not also allow him the ability to imagine a better solution or a better way to express solidarity with the Eastern European Jews, and this inability is itself important when considering the imaginations of the German Jewish travel writers as a collective group: Their political imaginations were limited by their imperial past.

In his 1937 preface to *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, Roth provided a summary of the German Jewish conflict in terms of the insecurity surrounding both German and Jewish identity. Both groups, Roth argues, desperately sought to secure sense of their own communal or national identity and the inability to achieve that “inner freedom” was connected to the inhospitality towards poor immigrants (902). Roth writes as his conclusion to this later preface:

1. Der Zionismus ist nur eine Teillösung der Judenfrage.
2. Zu vollkommener Gleichberechtigung und jener Würde, die äußere Freiheit verleiht, können die Juden erst dann gelangen, wenn ihre „Wirtsvölker“ zu innerer Freiheit gelangt sind und zu jener Würde, die das Verständnis für das Leid gewährt.
3. Es ist—ohne ein Wunder Gottes—kaum anzunehmen, daß die „Wirtsvölker“ zu dieser Freiheit und dieser Würde heimfinden. (902)

Roth’s three points function as an appropriate summary of the aims and conclusions of the three travelogues examined in this dissertation. All of the writers recognized the need for a full transformation of Jewish and or German identity and all of these writers framed that transformation in spiritual or religious terms. Even for Gronemann, Zionism was a means to an
end of Jewish spiritual renewal: Political Zionism alone was only a “partial solution.” Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann hoped for a miracle and their travelogues were a means to promote faith in such a miracle. Each of them believed that the identities of the Jews and the Germans could be changed and could be brought to maturity, even if such change occurred with the next generation or through a psycho-spiritual form of analysis or through greater separation between people groups.

The travel writers offered different solutions for what would bring about that inner sense of freedom and a conscience of compassion toward the poor and the oppressed. In his conclusion to his preface, Roth writes about this “inner freedom” as applied to the “host countries”—to non-Jews. What was this “inner freedom”? Drawing from the texts of Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann, the search for “inner peace” represented a variety of attempts to achieve a sense of belonging to a politically legitimate cultural group. Arnold Zweig did not want to immigrate to Palestine. He wanted to remain German with all of the privileges that such an identity afforded him, but he also desired to belong to the cultural heritage of the Jews. Döblin advocated for a new kind of state in which cultural differences were respected but were also sublimated for the sake of a common good. Gronemann’s form of cultural belonging required political and geographical separation: The Jews needed their own nation state in order to feel secure, respected, and at peace with themselves and their European neighbors.

The three travel writers identified the great need of a new, secure communal or national identity in order that they could stand in solidarity with the poor and the outcast. The search for a new hospitable identity was a conundrum: How could the German Jews build a new communal identity that was strong enough to include members who were potentially toxic or disruptive to the new community—especially when most other European “nationalist”
communities defined themselves precisely through the exclusion of other “toxic” races or cultures? Each of the German Jewish travel writers, as well as Roth, agreed that a mere political, national or ethnic identity was not sufficient enough for such hospitality: A transcendent, spiritual or religious identity was necessary to produce the changed attitude towards immigrants and outsiders.

Roth’s final point in his conclusion that it was unlikely, apart from a divine miracle, that the “host nations” would experience such a transformation underscores not only the dire political conditions as he interpreted them in 1937, but his comment also sheds light on the difficulty of identity formation itself. If Roth thought that “inner freedom” and a sense of security in one’s national or cultural belonging was unlikely for non-Jews, Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann revealed how unlikely it was that the Jews themselves would come to an agreement on their own sense of cultural and national identity.

Part of the great frustration that the three travel writers felt with the Eastern Jews was that their presence called into question their identity as Western Germans who happened to be Jewish. The Eastern Jews forced the unwanted question of whether the German Jews were more German or more Jewish, something that most German Jews assumed they were beyond needing to address. Roth’s observations, along with the travelogues of the other three German Jewish writers, reveal that the concern with Jewish identity and the characteristics of “authentic” Judaism during the Weimar period was not solely a Jewish problem. The aggressive nationalism that Döblin discovered in Poland and that Zweig railed against in Hungary and the Ukraine and that Gronemann reacted to within the Zionist movement revealed the tendency of these groups to define themselves in negative terms: The emerging Eastern European nations defined themselves by who they were not. The Zionist movement defined itself in negative terms: the
unwanted Europeans. Roth even stated that the National Socialist movement relied on the existence of the Jews for its own self-perpetuation:

Nichts hätte dem nationalsozialistischen Regime so sehr geschadet als etwa die wohlorganisierte, prompte Auswanderung aller Juden und aller Judenstämmlinge aus Deutschland. Der Nationalsozialismus gibt sich selbst auf, sobald er irgendeinen Kompromiß mit Juden schließt. Er zielt ja weiter, in eine Richtung, die Juden gar nicht unmittelbar angeht. Er spricht von Jerusalem, und er meint: Juden und Rom. (900)

Roth’s comment that the Nazi party was both anti-Jewish and anti-Christian further implies that, even if the Nazis had managed to completely eradicate the Jews, the continued existence of the party would have depended on the hope of going on to eradicate the Christian church from Germany. The self-identity of the Nazis was primarily negative despite promoting a positive, Aryan identity.

The Nazi movement embodied the worst characteristics of a fanatical nationalism: That its identity was built at the expense of others, that it was an identity built on the “resentment at being patronized by the greater and the larger, or the fear of being overwhelmed by changes” (Harris 27). Solidarity for one group came through identifying scapegoats in another, neighboring group. The negative, anti-Jewish identity of the Nazis was representative of other nationalist trends throughout Europe. Whatever the ideals of the post-war framers of the Versailles Treaty, the new “self-determining” nations of Europe were scrambling desperately to find their own identities, and the result of the panicked necessity to defend their own legitimacy resulted in violent outbursts against their neighbors.
The “Jewish problem” addressed by Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann was thus less of a specifically Jewish issue and more a symptom of the larger European and German question of an uncertain, insecure national identity in the post-war context. The need to find a lost jüdisches Antlitz turned out to be so necessary and crucial primarily because Germany had lost its own Antlitz and identity after the war. The German national identity provided a fragile basis for hospitality toward and solidarity with immigrant Eastern Jews.

Tanja Nusser, in an article that examines a number of publications having to do with the Antlitz during the Weimar period, stresses that these books were attempts to recover a sense of German national identity after the war:

Die verschiedenen Texte binden die Beschäftigung mit dem Antlitz in der Weimarer Zeit an die zerstörten / verletzten Gesichter des Ersten Weltkrieges, an den verlorenen Krieg (Verlust des Gesichts im übertragenen Sinn), an die Rassenlehre und Phrenologie (Franz Josef Gall und Cesare Lombroso im Gefolge Lavaters) sowie frühe biometrische Erkenntnismethoden (Alphonse Bertillon), an die Suche nach einem Deutschland (in restaurativen, konservativen oder auch anti-modernen Sinn), an eine „Dissoziationserfahrung der Moderne“ insgesamt, aber auch an die Entwicklung der Fotographie und des Films. (326-327)

Nusser cites how it was not only Arnold Zweig who was involved in such projects, but that Alfred Döblin and Joseph Roth contributed to the discussion of the Antlitz of the times as well (330-31). These different writers and students of culture were all attempting to look deeper at their own society and trying understand the confusing period they were living in by examining the faces of different people, hoping that these images would confirm or reveal some sort of
authentic personhood or pre-modern, unified communal identity (330). Nusser explains that such Antlitz studies during the Weimar period were produced “[…] um das Bild eines typischen Deutschlands zu entwerfen, das—wie sich bei [August] Sander und [Erna] Lendvai-Dircksen zeigt—auf einer gegen Verstädterung und Industrialisierung gerichteten, auf ‘Schlichtheit‘ und Tradition basierenden Okonomie beruht” (346).

With this background in mind, the historical picture that emerges from the three travelogues and from Roth’s 1937 preface to his own travel essay was of Germans and German Jews frantically trying to shore up a sense of their own communal identity after a devastating war, and they tried to do this both by resorting to national, political extremism that created a sense of solidarity through prejudice and discrimination against others, and through protecting their own economic, material status. Roth summarizes this tendency of Germans to resort to national patriotism and the pursuit of their own economic success by writing that the Western Jew “war hochmütig geworden. Er hatt den Gott seiner Väter verloren und einen Götzen, den zivilisatorischen Patriotismus, gewonnen” (894). The cost of the idolatry of this national patriotism was “Das Wandern hat [der Jude] verlernt, das Leiden und das Beten. Er kann nur arbeiten—und gerade dieses erlaubt man ihm nicht” (894).

Roth’s pessimism and his moral indignation at the Jews for “betraying” their own tradition is harsh. His assessment in 1937 even borders on the extremism of Lenni Brenner’s condemnation of Zionism—the near accusation that the German Jews could have done more (and did not) to prevent the anti-Semitic catastrophe that occurred. Roth’s accusatory tone aside, his observations confirm what Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann wrestled with: the Jewish struggle to secure their identity through national German patriotism and through economic success. What the three German Jewish travelogues contended is that these ambitions and values were poor
foundations for a communal identity: Those Western values constrained the ability to be hospitable and generous toward immigrants and the poor. Roth concluded that “In dem Bestreben, jene Terrasse zu erreichen, auf der Adelige, [...] warf der deutsche Jude seinem Glaubensgenossen sehr schnell ein Almosen zu, um nur nicht am Aufstieg behindert zu werden. Almosen einem Fremden geben ist die schimpflichste Art der Gastfreundschaft; aber immerhin noch Gastfreundschaft” (893-894). As Nusser’s article points out, Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann reacted in similar ways as their conservative, German counterparts: They tried to find an identity that incorporated a pre-modern identity—or at least a future identity that somehow incorporated pre-modern values and transcended or escaped the difficulties and complications of a post-war, industrialized, democratic society. In the attempt to recover their own sense of lost communal identity, Germans and German Jews found it difficult to think of how to meet the needs of Eastern Jewish refugees much less incorporate those refugees into a new vision of the German state.

**Political and Social Limitations**

Roth’s accusation that the Jews betrayed their spiritual heritage and Lenni Brenner’s argument that the German Jews could have taken advantage of the democratic political conditions to defeat anti-Semitism reveals an uncomfortable question when examining the travelogues of the Weimar Jewish writers: If they were aware of the necessity to stand in solidarity with the Eastern European Jews and they promoted the virtue of hospitality and neighborly generosity to the immigrants, why was there a gap between the awareness of the needs and large-scale political or economic mobilization?
Part of the tragic historical picture that emerges from studying these texts is that none of the writers, not even Roth, suspected the horrors of the Holocaust. Roth’s assumption in 1937 was that “Es ist also menschlichem Ermessen nach wahrscheinlich, daß die Juden noch lange Parias unter den Deutschen bleiben werden” (901). The conditions in Germany for the Jews were likely going to get worse, but Roth did not anticipate the Holocaust. Neither did the other travel writers. Wilhelm von Sternburg, in his biography of Arnold Zweig, insists that not only Zweig but many other German intellectuals could not have anticipated the likes of the Nazi regime:


(167)

Wilfried Schoeller likewise emphasizes that Alfred Döblin simply did not see Hitler as a protracted threat: “Döblin wollte im Februar 1933 zunächst noch in Berlin bleiben. Er hielt die Veränderungen für Ereignisse von kurzer Dauer, eine Gefahr für sich und seine Familie für ausgeschlossen” (397). Similar to Sternburg, Schoeller goes on to list prominent intellectuals and authors “denen es an Einsicht fehlte, an politischer Wahrnehmungssicherheit oder an einer realistischen Einschätzung des Gegners“ who saw no reason to take radical political action nor reason to flee Germany (400).
It is easy to look back at the Weimar period and see, in hindsight, everything that Germans and Jews could have done to defeat the rise of such a horrific, anti-Semitic power. It is easy to see that they could have done more, and yet part of what must be considered when examining the literature from this period is that, given their assumptions of their own “civilized” country, both Germans and Jews did work to change social and political conditions. In many ways, certainly during the 1920s, it is easy to see that most Weimar citizens did not think it was necessary to do more. Truly radical change was not called for. Roth even acknowledged that as of 1927, when he published his *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, “the Jewish question” was not an emergency issue in Germany, but rather in Eastern Europe:

This passage is revealing both for Roth’s observation regarding the general optimism that existed during the Weimar period (“the superstitious belief in progress”) but also for his comment that Germany was seen, by many Jews, as a land of “boundless opportunity.”

Yes, everyone acknowledged the anti-Semitism existed in Germany, according to Roth, but it existed everywhere in Europe, and Germany was, at least before World War I, seen by Jews as exceptionally hospitable. The Marburg philosopher professor, Hermann Cohen argued that Germany’s reverence for ethical idealism and its respect for religion made it one of the most preferred nations in which the Jewish faith and values could flourish (Johnson, *Jews* 405). Paul Johnson claims that many intellectual German Jews and Jewish business entrepreneurs, prior to World War I “felt, in their hearts, that Germany was the ideal location for Jewish talents. Was not Germany now aspiring, and on solid grounds, for cultural world leadership? […] Was not this the true, modern and secular meaning of the ancient injunction to the Jews to be ‘a light to the gentiles’” (406-407). Jewish industrialists, like Walther Rathenau, believed that anti-Semitism would die out with the aristocracy, and this was all the more reason for Jews to participate in the industrialization and democratization of German society (407). What was so confusing, then, for many of the Jews was that they entered World War I with a sense of optimism that they could participate in a German future only to come out of the war with only the ghost of such a hope. The *Judenzählung* was devastating to men like Zweig. It was a betrayal; yet the belief that Jews could still be active, participating members of the new society continued to haunt them.

The postwar situation in Germany was unprecedented politically and economically, and to claim that the German Jews did not do enough for their Eastern Jewish relatives misses the point. Steven Aschheim writes that the presence of the persecuted Eastern immigrants in
Germany “could not have made itself felt at a worse time. […] Mass migration was impossible anywhere in the postwar world, and certainly Germany was in no position to absorb more workers. It was to be hoped that reconstitution would facilitate the return of most Ostjuden to Eastern Europe” (219). Germany was poor, Aschheim continues, and Eastern Jews were thought to be taking food and housing space from Germany’s own citizens (231). The perception, exploited in the right-wing propaganda, was that the nation did not have enough resources to recover from the war and take care of the influx of refugees.

Added to the economic difficulties of the time was the politically volatile state of postwar Europe. Aschheim writes that “After the success of the Russian Revolution, the German revolutions were viewed by millions as the ultimate threat to the traditional German way of life. Bolshevism, the alien import, became an immediate threat. The prominent role of Jews in the Russian Revolution and Bela Kun’s radical regime in Hungary made the equation of Judaism and Bolshevism seem credible” (Brothers 231-233). The Eastern Jews represented a potential economic threat; they were political “wildcards.” In the midst of politically unstable environment, it is no wonder that Döblin records the comment of a “frische[r] Mann von Palästina” who observes that the maturing of European countries must be a slow process: “‘Die Welt muß aufgemenscht werden. Es ist nicht nur bei den Juden schrecklich. Auch den Deutschen, Polen, Franzosen, Amerikanern, Engländern geht es schlecht. Was ist mir ihrer Kultur? Sie imponiert uns nicht. Wir haben im Krieg viel gesehen. Alles muß aufgemenscht werden. Langsam. So wird auch die jüdische große Schwierigkeit behoben werden. Ohne Zerstörung der Substanz.’” (Reise 331) Likewise, Sammy Gronemann, when confronted with the prejudices of Western Europeans and their insistence on certain kinds of “civilizing” education and hygiene for the Eastern Jewish children, writes that “Ich glaube, daß da nur eine langsame
Zweig was waiting for a cultural change with the next generation—a fresh start. All of the travel writers emphasized the need for gradual change. Germany had already experienced enough upheaval.

If Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann were sensitive to the need for gradual change, they also recognized that legitimate outlets for political involvement and the improvement of the Jewish condition in Germany already existed. Not only were Jewish organizations actively caring for the needs of the Eastern immigrants, but the German Social Democratic Party continued to advocate for the rights of German Jews throughout the Weimar Republic (Aschheim 238). In other words, in the midst of rising anti-Semitism, even German political life continued to offer the glimmer of hope that assimilated Jews could participate in the political sphere. There was good reason to think that if German Jews simply continued to invest in cautious ways, culturally and socially, the tide of anti-Semitism could be turned. To say that they should have known better is simply not a fair assessment of the situation.

Even though Zweig and Döblin were selective in how they advocated for Eastern European Jewish rights and welfare in Germany, they knew about the Jewish relief and defense organizations that existed. Aschheim acknowledges that “These [Eastern Jewish] refugees needed political protection and economic assistance desperately, and to a large degree the organized German Jewish community provided them” (Brothers 216). The Vereinigung jüdischer Organizationen Deutschlands and the Arbeiterfürsorgeamt were both representatives of a “concerted effort by representatives of the major institutions of the Jewish community […] to protect the rights of and provide employment and housing” to the Eastern Jews (218-219). Furthermore, Aschheim cites the example of a Jewish group in Saxony who, in 1917, reported to the Centralverein that they had established an internal form of self-policing to “keep the
Ostjuden in check and ensure that they conformed to German standards of morality” (227). The Jewish Saxon Rechtsstelle, as they called it, was reportedly successful in actually reducing the amount of anti-Semitic outbreaks and incidences in the area.

Lenni Brenner’s claims that the Jews could have organized better politically to defeat Hitler should not convey that German Jews were somehow without institutional resources. On the contrary, Jewish organizations were very active in defending Jewish civil rights through the Weimar period. The Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens was the largest organized representative of German Jewry during the Weimar era. Over 60,000 members belonged to the Centralverein (CV) in 1926, and the organization boasted that it spoke for more than 300,000 Jews in Germany (Meyer 4: 86). The CV insisted through the early 1930s and through Hitler’s rise to power that immigration was unnecessary, that German Jews could still work for change, at least socially and culturally (Mittelmann 111).

The Centralverein was but one of many post-unification and pre-war German Jewish organizations that grew to meet the needs of the Jewish communities, including poor immigrants. Steven M. Lowenstein remarks that “One estimate counts five thousand Jewish organizations devoted mainly to welfare (though also including educational and self-defense groups) in Germany in 1906” (Meyer 3: 133-34). He continues by noting that these organizations provided care facilities for the disabled, hospitals, orphanages, urban homes, and social work programs (132-134). Lowenstein admits that these attempts to meet the needs of the Ostjuden in Germany were not free from patronizing attitudes or a sense of burdensome obligation, but the fact was that in very difficult circumstances, the German Jews were able to organize and provide substantial resources to the refugee Ostjuden and many of them continued to believe that through such efforts stemming the tide of anti-Semitism was possible (133).
While many of these religious organizations (often run on the strength of volunteers) continued after the war and even into the 1930s, the political and economic shift after the war created a significant societal change. National shame at their defeat, the high inflation rates of the early 1920s, and the increased unemployment numbers exacerbated the existing tensions among Germans and Jews. Paul Mendes-Flohr emphasizes how the Jews took on a renewed status as the scapegoat population after the war, and the Jewish revolutionary activism in the figures of Rosa Luxemburg, Hugo Haase, Kurt Eisner and Gustav Landauer all contributed to the collective impression that Jews (particularly Eastern Jews) were volatile, dangerous, Bolshevik political threats (Meyer 3:46). Avraham Barkai demonstrates that the combination of the economic and political circumstances, combined with the massive influence of right-wing anti-Semitic groups overwhelmed the traditional Jewish defenses:

[The Jews] were not prepared for the scope and power of [anti-Semitic propaganda’s] political impact on the masses. Initially, both individual and collective responses were along familiar lines; the original watchword was forbearance: it was necessary to wait, as passively and inconspicuously as possible, until this storm too had spent itself and died down. [...] Communal leaders and rabbis called for restraint. On holidays and Jewish family festivals they cautioned reserve: avoiding ostentatious public display. Festive clothing, prayer books and religious objects carried visibly in hand could “make rishes” (i.e., provoke antisemitic sentiments). Women in particular were advised to show tactful modesty in clothing and jewelry. (Meyer 3: 104).

In light of the historical evidence, the strong thread in the travelogues of advocating a greater level of Western Jewish solidarity with the Eastern Jews or of criticizing the lack of Western Jewish hospitality toward their Eastern cousins takes on a new significance. The travel
writers’ call for greater solidarity or greater hospitality does not mean that hospitality among the
German Jewish community was necessarily lacking. In this dissertation, I have explored the
themes of Jewish and German identity as they related to the human quality of solidarity and
hospitality to the economically poor and socially outcast. I have also examined the presence of
the travel writers’ strong, self-deceptive rhetorical techniques or rationales within their
injunctions for greater levels of solidarity with the Ostjuden. What the study of the travelogues in
conjunction with the surrounding historical and cultural evidence points to is that the injunction
for greater levels of hospitality, while admirable and justifiable, contained a contradictory
element that functioned to deny the real need for radical political change, and revealed the depths
of the cultural influence that an assimilated German upbringing had on each of the authors. They
were not eager to question the fundamental assumptions of the German narrative regarding a
national identity—which included, for Gronemann, the German assumptions regarding Jewish
identity and the need for the Jews to leave Germany and find their own separate land.

The German Jewish travelogues capture a strange amalgamation of half recognized
threats combined with optimistic hopes of traditional emancipation cultural strategies. The
travelogues simultaneously advocate for a radical renewal of the German Jewish individual and
community while also insisting that Western Jews simply needed to be a little more hospitable to
the Eastern immigrants. In many ways, the pleas for greater levels of Jewish solidarity function
as a desperate hope that simply working harder with traditional hospitality strategies would be
enough to turn back the anti-Semitic tide, that a direct confrontation with German culture would
not be necessary or that a complete revaluation of their relationship to German society would not
be required. Gronemann was a remarkable exception among the travel writers in that he sought
to conceive of his identity primarily in Jewish terms rather than primarily in German terms. Even
with this acknowledgement, Gronemann’s Jewish, Zionist identity was one strongly influenced by nationalist, ideological principles that conceded the place of Germany as a space for the Germans and that the Jews needed to find their own territory as a more legitimate solution. Gronemann’s was an ideology that conformed to the pressures of German anti-Semitism rather than confronted it.

**Imaginative Limitations for *Kaisertreu* German Jews**

The travel writers’ proposed methods of artistic, mystical, psychological, and ritualistic techniques for building a renewed Jewish community which are a reflection of the authors’ wishes to avoid political and economic debates and entanglements, but their idealistic approaches also reveal the political limitations (and self limitations) of the Jewish community during the Weimar period. The travelogues of Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann demonstrate the boundaries of their political and social imaginations, and their works reveal a reactionary position: The German Jews remembered their heritage of being loyal to the *Kaiser* from before the war, and in the post-war setting they were unsure who or what represented the political constant. In addition, German Jews came out of the war with the stigma of the scapegoat: The anti-Semites blamed the Jews for the national tragedy (Meyer 3: 382-383). The rules of what it meant to be good subjects to the *Kaiser* had evaporated with the end of the war, and the democratic political structure of the Weimar Republic was increasingly tainted with extremist positions. The result was a general sense of passivity among German Jews, “adopting a policy of wait and see” (Meyer 4: 104).

Avraham Barkai points out that even though the Weimar constitution had eradicated all of the old laws that prevented Jews from engaging fully in German civic life, the post-war anti-
Semitic trends made it difficult for any of the political parties, even if they advocated for Jewish rights, to take strong public stances in favor of the Jews. Barkai writes:

Paradoxically, Jews under the Weimar constitution exercised less political influence than before, even though that constitution had formally swept aside the last barriers to their integration and also opened paths for them into the civil service. Beginning in the mid-1920s political battles were fought less often in the parliamentary bodies and more frequently out on the streets. [...] After the murder of Walther Rathenau Jewish politicians were unable to exert any significant influence on political events comparable to that of party leaders such as Eduard Lasker or Ludwig Bamberger in Imperial Germany. In the state governments and municipal administrations Jewish participation and influence declined even more. Only in the press and in political journalism was the Jewish presence still substantial. (Meyer 4: 109)

Rathenau was shot and killed in 1922 and with him the legacy torch of the Jewish entrepreneur as industrial and political leader was put out (Meyer 4:47). Not only were fewer Jewish politicians able to hold their offices in the various political parties during the 1920s, but even pro-Jewish parties such as the German Democratic Party (DDP) felt the need to compromise with anti-Semitic organizations such as the Young German Order just to be able to maintain its influence. Such a partnership naturally led to a significant loss in popular support among Jewish voters (Meyer 4:109).

The Social Democratic Party (SPD) was one of the last pro-Jewish political bastions to which German Jewish voters could turn, as noted earlier, but the language of class-struggle made it difficult for middle-class Jewish business owners and merchants to embrace the party’s cause.
Only after the electoral fortunes of the bourgeois parties plummeted—especially in the last elections of 1932—did more and more Jewish voters throw their support to the SPD. […] The traditional association of Jews with capitalism, stemming from the early period of the socialist movement, had still not been fully discarded. For their part, many Jews felt the shrill tone of class struggle adopted by Social Democratic propaganda was a personal attack on them, a rhetoric intensified under the influence of the dispute with the KPD [communist party]. (Meyer 4:107)

Jewish voters who would have traditionally rallied around political and business leaders such as Rathenau now, especially after 1932, felt themselves cornered with few options left to them.

The political realities explain why Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann tried to use their literary voices to sway the tide of political opinion through cultural influence. If fewer and fewer options existed to work for direct change in political circles, these intellectuals attempted to create change within educational and cultural spheres. Again, according to Zweig, social change would realistically occur with the next generation of youthful German Jewish activists. In many ways, it made more sense to try and influence young and impressionable minds rather than directly attack the anti-Semites who were now severely embittered because of the war.

A further component of political activism needs to be considered when examining the German Jewish travelogues. These texts represent both the struggle of German Jewish intellectuals to conceive of a generic, pro-Jewish, non-institutionalized political and cultural identity and the reality that their own cultural and political imaginations were dependent upon traditional imperial structures of their “host” countries. Each of the writers emphasized the importance of a renewed sense of solidarity with the Eastern European Jews, and throughout the
Weimar Republic even the pro-German Centralverein fought for a more conscious form of a specifically Jewish identity. Several of the leaders of the Centralverein argued that, with the rise of Zionism and the increased social acceptance of anti-Semitic attitudes, it was not enough for Jews to fight anti-Semitism but also to work for “a deeper level of Jewish self-awareness and knowledge along with the cultivation of German sentiments” (Meyer 4:87). For Zweig, Western culture, materialism and capitalism had corrupted the sensibilities of the Jew. The task for German Jews, according to Zweig, was thus to re-unite with their Eastern relatives and do the hard work of forging a new community of mutual, material aid and support. For Gronemann, he understood how the sense of German loyalty caused the assimilated Jews to be prejudiced toward “enemy” Russian Jews during and after World War I. Roth’s early quote that Western Jews were so focused on their own social and economic advancement that they only had time to toss their Eastern relatives a few alms further illustrates this concern. Döblin likewise advocated for a greater social awareness and concern with the working poor and the Eastern immigrant Jews. With the heightened sense of need for Jewish solidarity and an active defense for the Jewish identity, what prevented them from more aggressive or intentional community action?

What the travelogues reveal, and what the historical trajectory of Jewish political action within the Weimar Republic demonstrate, is that the attempt to forge a pan-Jewish identity was, similar to the other post-war national identities, reactionary and dependent upon an opposing political authority. After the 1932 elections, politically-aware German Jews realized that a new approach was in order and that Jewish participation in the continuing government led by Chancellor Franz von Papen was dependent on securing agreements with German nationalists. There were no Jewish political representatives left with the necessary weight to secure Jewish rights:
Toward the end of 1932, at their own initiative or that of their organizations, [Jewish leaders] held a number of personal discussions with prominent German nationalist[s] and other politicians and with other influential figures in the economy; these talks continued even after January 1933. Two generations after gaining full emancipation, German Jews found themselves hurled back into the position of a “protected Jewry” that sought to safeguard its existence by an appeal to state power. (Meyer 4:115)

This resort to seeking protection from the state was the result of desperate political circumstances, and yet the disposition to rely on a strong external political protector to bring about political and social change for the Jewish community is evident within the travelogues.

In many ways, the travelogues are the result of the Jewish cultural tensions of the Weimar era to be an autonomous, self-determining political entity within the German nation and the older, traditional disposition to defer to the Gentile, host state for protection. What Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann reveal is the incredible difficulty for the German Jewish population to imagine a new form of existence in which they continued to participate within the German political system and culture but as a mobilized (dissenting) minority positioned for widespread democratic, political agitation. As Gronemann and Zweig’s texts demonstrate, it was difficult for many German Jews to possess such a high level of conscious, self-determined Jewishness and not think that a separate nation state was required for their continued existence. Döblin’s vision of the fate of a highly individuated community is likewise ambivalent. If his surrounding literary oeuvre provides any additional interpretive context for his travelogue, it points to rather dark and unclear futures for such independent and self-aware individuals and communities, and he includes martyrdom as one their main characteristics.
It is worth noting that, in terms of radically individuated, community activism both Arnold Zweig and Martin Buber were aware of Mahatma Gandhi’s methods of non-violent civil disobedience. Zweig even understood the political work of Gustav Landauer, of Kurt Eisner and Theodor Lessing to be in the same tradition as that of Gandhi (Zweig, “Thanks” 327). Though more research is necessary to determine the degree to which Gandhi’s teachings influenced and penetrated Jewish thought during the Weimar era, both Zweig and Buber praised Gandhi for his innovative philosophy and practice of non-violent resistance, but both likewise insisted that the racial and anti-Semitic violence in Germany was very different than the kinds of social oppression Gandhi experienced in India (Schaeder 119). Zweig, writing from exile in Palestine, conceded:

To-day we would merely congratulate Gandhi upon the fact that he was born and lives in India, and has to deal with Englishmen and not with Central Europeans. For no respect for his humanity could be extorted from the animals who reign there to-day. We, however, gaze across at him with mournful and unenviable gratitude. Twenty years ago we took the halo that encircled him for the dawn of our new age. To-day we wonder whether it was not the dusk of that age which ended with the world war and which was followed by the wildest epoch of barbarism we could ever conceive. (Zweig, “Thanks” 328).

What is important to understand in studying the travel writers is that at the very least Arnold Zweig, if not Alfred Döblin and Sammy Gronemann, knew of Gandhi’s example of nonviolent civil disobedience, but Zweig’s understanding was that such a strategy for cultural and social change had already been tried in Germany and it failed with the assassinations of Gustav Landauer and Kurt Eisner. Whether Zweig’s comparison of Landauer’s and Eisner’s political
efforts with Gandhi’s is historically accurate is not important; it is enough to read that Zweig and Buber thought that Germany had made a sincere effort to try an alternative political strategy in the fight for Jewish rights and that their efforts had been overwhelmed.

This historical perspective helps explain why none of the German Jewish travel writers were eager to confront anti-Semitism on the grounds of German law and German ideals of equality: They were haunted by the suspicion that German nationalists were sinking beyond the point of reason and democratic, collaborative debate. The best that the German writers could hope for was an indirect influence on German readers by urging their fellow German Jews to “be more hospitable” and to stand in solidarity with their own people—because the German nationalists certainly were not going to do this—or to hope for the help of an external political power.

Lenni Brenner’s critique of Herzl’s Zionism includes at least a partial understanding of the cultural attitudes under which Herzl, and many other German Jewish intellectuals operated: They were monarchists at heart. Even if Zweig and Döblin used revolutionary or anarchical language to describe the necessary spiritual, political, and cultural developments they believed needed to take place within Europe, their travelogues all contain a certain hesitancy that betrays political assumptions and attitudes of an imperial past. Brenner writes: “In the severest sense, Herzl was a man of his time and class; a monarchist who believed the best ruler ‘un bon tyran’. His Jewish State baldly proclaimed: ‘Nor are the present-day nations really fit for democracy, and I believe they will become ever less fit for it [...]’” (Brenner 1). This is not to say that Zweig, Döblin, or Gronemann were strong monarchists or that they advocated, like Roth, for the return of the Hapsburg Empire, but their travelogues express the hope of a strong central power, such as the British Empire, to intervene on behalf of the Jews. The travel writers also reveal the
struggle to imagine a truly alternative political identity that was free from seeking the permission of an external authority to exercise or assert a strong Jewish identity.

Both Zweig and Gronemann looked to the international European and American powers for further assurances of a Palestinian home, and Zweig sought further intervention in Eastern Europe. Zweig and Gronemann did not directly address the German authorities who were in no position for international political intervention after the war. They desired the continued good will from other Western powers to help the Jews—particularly those in Eastern Europe. Joseph Roth, with nostalgia for the lost Austro-Hungarian Empire, likewise longed for a centering force to bring peace to the post war chaos, and he stood by the conviction that only a restored monarchy could usher in a restored Europe. In his 1929 novel, *Der stumme Prophet* Roth has one of the characters, Herr von Maerker describe the lost humanity of the old empire:

> „Und doch war zu meinen Zeiten, als noch der Mensch wichtiger war als seine Nationalität, die Möglichkeit vorhanden, aus der alten Monarchie eine Heimat aller zu machen. Sie hätte das kleinere Vorbild einer großen zukünftigen Welt sein können und zugleich die letzte Erinnerung an eine große Epoche Europas, in der Norden und Süden verbunden gewesen wären.‘ (Roth, *Der Stumme Prophet* 922)

According to Roth, it was the presence of a good and powerful monarch that allowed the citizens of Europe to value one another’s humanity over their political or ethnic nationality. Rather than multiple, politically divisive nationalities, under an emperor such as Franz Joseph, the only question that mattered was whether or not someone had sworn their loyalty to the monarch.
Of the travel writers, Döblin was the most suspicious of strong centralized political authorities. The quote from Friedrich Schiller at the beginning of Döblin’s *Reise in Polen* indicates a political disposition the very opposite of what Roth expressed: “‘Denn eine Grenze hat Tyrannenmacht.’ Allen Staaten gesagt / Und dem Staat überhaupt.” Döblin expresses a generic disdain for all oppressive “tyrannical” rule and the ruthless enforcing of political borders and yet this disdain was not accompanied by a clear idea of what a new democratic, European society would look like. At the end of his travelogue, Döblin expresses interest in the Hasidic model of religious leadership: Every spiritually-inclined Jew could choose a teacher “‘zu dem er Sympathie hat’” (328). Döblin quotes a Rebbe who compares the Jewish community to God’s kingdom: God is the king, but the king cannot rule the whole of his kingdom alone; he needs soldiers and military commanders as well, and this, the Rebbe explains to Döblin, is what the Jewish teachers are like. Though Döblin concedes the religious metaphor of God’s monarchy, he otherwise intentionally resists language that defers to a centralizing political power. He echoes Giuseppe Garibaldi’s plea to the peoples of Europe to intervene in the affairs of Poland, but based on the tone and the content of the rest of his travelogue, it is clear that Döblin envisioned a collaborative political model rather than a hierarchy (*Reise* 19). Even in his most direct acknowledgement of the need for religious or ethical teachers, Döblin prefers that the religious pupil is given a choice among the Rebbes.

Despite Döblin’s anti-authoritarian political tendencies, he was not free of a political imagination shaped by the imperial *Kaiserreich* in which he grew up. It is ironic that all three travelogues celebrated the cultural solidarity and apparent unity of the Eastern European Jewish communities with little awareness or consideration that the Jewish communities operated with such a strong sense of their own identity precisely because the Russian tsars had so thoroughly
removed them from the rest of Russian civic life. Döblin was the most vocal about the connection between a harsh, centralized government and the identity-creation of a persecuted minority, but even Döblin’s observations contain a strange ambivalence. Gronemann praised the Eastern Jews for their sense of national unity despite internal religious or cultural politics and yet he attributes the mutual solidarity to their common commitment to their religious traditions, not to the enforced living arrangements of the ghetto: “Kein Jude bildet sich etwa ein, daß er zu einer anderen Nation gehöre als zur jüdischen” (178). Similarly, Zweig attributed the characteristics of Jewishness to an intuitive, spiritual and ethnic quality.

Döblin’s analysis of the Jewish communal character likewise assumes an inherent, ethnic and intuitive quality, but he also attributes their collective identity to their suffering and statelessness throughout history. He writes that the Jewish people have been able to create such a strong cultural and spiritual identity in spite of, or even because of, their political disenfranchisement. He claims that the pursuit of a modern Jewish state will not bring about the spiritual renewal many Jews hope that it will, and he expresses a dichotomy between political activism and true spirituality (138-39). Again, Döblin voices opposition to tyranny and centralized political power, and yet he acknowledges that in the case of the Jews such abusive authoritarian structures have worked to further the cultural depth and identity of the Jewish people. Döblin clearly meant for these passages to be acknowledgements and praise of Jewish innovation and spiritual creativity despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and yet he does not address the apparent contradiction between the need for the peoples of Europe to be free of “tyrannical boundaries” and his own observation that, in the case of the Jews, such restrictive boundaries have benefitted them. Like so many of Döblin’s descriptions in his travelogue, his historical assessment of Jewish history rests on the presentation of two political extremes—
tyranny and spiritualized anarchy—with an implied demand that the reader find reconciliation “between the two ideological chairs.”

The truth was that the Eastern Jews were incredibly dependent on the imposed, imperial structures of their “host” countries, and Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann were reluctant to concede this fact. Each of the travel writers presented different ideas and strategies for accessing the imagined, “self-regulating” authentic Jewish character without having to resort to a traditional political explanation or without the creation of a new political strategy. They hoped that the Eastern Jews possessed a secret that would allow them to stand in solidarity with their Eastern relatives but without direct confrontation to the governing German authorities. Both Gronemann and Zweig desired a non-confrontational means of acknowledging the importance and position of the German people and therefore simply sought permission for the Jews to immigrate to a separate country. Döblin’s ambivalent, assimilationist approach advocates for the importance of individuation and the transcending of national and ethnic identities while also conceding that political oppression can be helpful for minorities in creating a stronger sense of their own cultural identity.

Both the Western Jews and the Eastern Jews lacked a strong political imagination for asserting their minority rights within the German political setting. As mentioned in the chapter on Zweig’s Das ostjüdische Antlitz, Zweig’s correspondence with Buber revealed that the Eastern Jews, during the war, could barely agree on any internal political action, and when they finally did the result was a small newsletter publication, not a political organization. The Eastern Jews did not have the tools to begin inscribing their own political future in the West.
Steven Aschheim writes that the interactions of the impoverished Eastern European Jews with the German military authorities during the war resulted in comical exchanges that only emphasized the level of their political disenfranchisement: “Perhaps even more incongruous was von Beseler’s meeting with the anti-Hasidic Rabbi Soleveitzschik. The General was told that this was the Jewish equivalent of a meeting with a cardinal. When the General respectfully asked if he could be of service, the Rabbi astounded him with his almost comically out-of-context reply: ‘Yes, I want a grocery store.’” (Brothers 153). The lack of political scruples and leadership continued into the Weimar era with most of the Eastern Jewish immigrants carrying a social stigma with few resources allowing them to grow beyond their alien status (248). Zweig later admitted that the political mood of the Weimar era was ultimately a denial of what it set out to be: a break with the Prussian imperial, militaristic tradition (Sternburg 169). Rather than exploring the full opportunities of new democracy, the Weimar Republic limped along, haunted by the ghosts of its imperial past.

Summary

The aim of this study has been to demonstrate that the Weimar German Jewish travelogues were attempts to imagine a new communal identity for Germans and Jews after World War I and the difficulty the writers encountered in trying to break away from imperial political norms and anti-Semitic social expectations. After the war, with no Kaiser or emperor or tsar to impose an identity on the German Jews, each of the travel books provided a unique strategy in helping readers imagine a renewed German Jewish community in a democratic setting. Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck chose a distinctively artistic method of communicating their message, hoping that if readers could “see” what a “good Jew” looked like through Struck’s etchings and Zweig’s descriptions of the Ostjuden, Western readers would be
inspired to change. Alfred Döblin provided a similar example with portrayals of Jesus Christ as a socialist martyr and with the Eastern Jewish teachers, the Zadiks, as ethical and religious examples of the new aufgemenschte European. He also provided a description of the psychological and mystical trajectory he thought was necessary for individuals to go through in order to become aufgemenschte, individuated, and mature, responsible citizens. Gronemann, too, provides anecdotes of the hospitable Eastern Jews and invited his Jewish readers to re-engage in the practice of religious rituals and disciplines as the method to recapturing a historic Jewish identity that was generous and discerning.

Each of the travelogues represents a proposed template or blueprint for becoming a “renewed” European Jew, but they are also indirect acknowledgements of the desire by many Weimar Jewish communities to have an external confirmation of their identity: They continued to need the permission or approval of a strong central authority to know who they were. In many ways the strong religious or spiritual appeals in the travelogues are representative of that desire. With no Kaiser present to tell them where their loyalties should lie, Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann called upon the larger religious traditions and Judeo-Christian imagery to provide an authoritarian reference point. For Döblin, this was the mystical Ich that pervaded human history and the natural world. Zweig wrote about the communal Jewish Geist and Gronemann wrote about the power of the God-given traditions to transform the Jewish community.

Strong, internally motivated political activism was an all-but-foreign concept for the travel writers. The German Zionist sense of responsibility for the Jews to “take care of their own” revealed that such autonomous thinking was almost inseparable from founding a new nation state. It was difficult for the writers to envision some sort of self-determined, responsible community that worked for social change for a minority group in direct challenge to the state
authorities. Zweig envisioned his ideal fulfilled by the Jewish youth. Gronemann’s community activism was rare and it involved a cutting of German national ties. Even if Döblin could imagine a community of self-aware, individuated persons, his own portrayal of such a community was that it was also isolated, lonely, probably subject to martyrdom. Certainly by the late 1920s, the travelogues were reflections of the larger German Jewish attitude to be well-behaved step-children within their own country in the hopes that a bon tyran would take notice (Aschheim 227).

Nevertheless, the travel writers were trying to sow seeds of faith for another way of thinking about the German world: a community that was defined by solidarity with the poor and hospitality towards the immigrant Eastern Jews. It was a conflicted, tortured vision of solidarity that recognized the need for radical social and political transformation and desperately hoped that such transformation would occur through the traditional means of “just a little more hospitality” within the German Jewish community. The travelogues represented the belief that if the Jews were able to exercise more control over their own Jewish sphere, the larger German condition would improve.

Aschheim argues that this view was largely self-deceptive: “All Jewish responses [to the Ostjuden and to anti-Semitism] had to come to grips with the assertion that the problem of the Eastern Jews was not a Jewish problem but was a German one and would have to be treated as such” (219). Germans may have used the Eastern Jews as an excuse for anti-Semitic political campaigns and social prejudices but the hatred expressed toward Westernized Jews was often just as real (224). Rather than fighting back with aggressive political campaigns, the response of the German Jews was similar to Zweig’s description of the tendency of the Jewish people to blame themselves first for tragedies that occur:
Denn die Trauer des Juden, unvergänglich über Jahrtausende und mit der furchtbaren Gegenwart ganz eins, wird ihm zugleich fruchtbar: sie wendet sich gegen sein eigenes Sein und Wesen; und wenn er auch aufschreit um Erlösung und im Hasse gegen den Schänder und Mörder: zuvörderst schlägt er doch an seine eigene Brust; er hat sein Ziel und seinen Weg verleugnet, hat gegen den Geist gesündigt, er ist der Urquell selbst des Leidens und der Schmach, nicht die Anderen, die Fremden, die Feinde! (65)

Zweig praises this characteristic as an example of Jewish humility, but the passage also confirms an underlying attitude within German Jewish culture of the Weimar period: that of dependent, “step-children” who were unsure of their power and influence within the larger society.

My hope for this dissertation is that it opens further research opportunities into the way that expressions of solidarity and hospitality were used and understood by German Jewish intellectuals as strategies for political leverage during the Weimar period and to invite comparative studies of other minority groups struggling for civil rights in their respective contexts. My contention is that, despite the self-deceptive aspects, the travel writers’ advocacy for greater hospitable action contained a powerful truth: Hospitality to the poor and the socially outcast, particularly among the Eastern European Jews, was a political statement that indirectly confronted German anti-Semitism and nationalist extremism. The three travel writers intuitively recognized this fact while also hoping that they would not have to bear the full implication that such a political stance would require. The self-deceptive element was not located in the practice of greater hospitality but in the belief that such hospitality would not require them to compromise a traditional, German identity.
In a post-war environment where the Weimar German identity was unclear and floundering, the German Jewish travel writers actually offered an innovative contribution for a new, national German identity—greater solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. Such proposed spontaneous solidarity with the Eastern immigrants was an example of a break from the Prussian, militaristic tradition. In a time when so many Germans were trying to recover their national identity through reactionary methods and by defining themselves negatively, in terms of who they were not, rather than in terms of who they were, the German Jewish travel writers proposed a positive, if also idealistic, description of a renewed Jewish identity based on more inclusive categories rather than exclusive categories: a renewed Jewish community defined in terms of the people to whom they helped and included rather than the people from whom they sought to distance themselves.

What was problematic with this assertion was that such “hospitality” did not occur naturally. The needs of the post-war period required a great deal of coordination between different organizations in a time when resources were scarce, as Sammy Gronemann discovered. What was needed was more than just a little additional spontaneous generosity on the part of Jewish individuals. What was needed were coordinated, organized efforts to meet the needs of immigrant Eastern Jews. Coordinated efforts to meet the needs of immigrants and the local working poor were problematic and divisive, posing a conflict to the traditional concept of German nationality and class loyalty. Such organized efforts required greater leadership and responsibility on a large scale and that kind of leadership would have attracted negative attention, as it did with the Zionists. Such leadership was the opposite of “Jewish restraint” and “suppressed Jewish ostentation” as was recommended by the Centralverein.
The difficulties that the German Jewish travel writers encountered were not unique to them. In the post-war environment, everyone needed a re-affirmed identity. Everyone was confused as to how to be part of a “self-determining” community. The German Jewish travel writers went abroad and confirmed the general mood of the post-war period: Everyone was looking for an example to follow. The travel writers wanted to know both what an authentic Jewish community looked like, and what a democratic Germany might look like.

These three writers possessed the insight for the foundations of an innovative, new German Jewish identity and yet they recognized their own limitations in implementing the strategy of hospitality as a radical political break from the pre-war Kaiserreich tradition. In other words, they could not imagine the potential for these values of solidarity and hospitality to become an integrated piece of the foundation for a new, democratic German identity as well. Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann described a crucial truth in their texts: that active solidarity with the poor and the socially oppressed through material, economic and political support is an effective form of political and social engagement and change. What they also recognized was that such solidarity would require a renewed and re-imagined German Jewish identity, and the task of engineering and exploring such a new identity seemed all but impossible.

Instead of the description of how to re-engineer the German Jewish identity, the three texts provide provocative and inspirational examples or ideals with the quasi-religious hope that individuals and communities would suddenly be spiritually enabled or inspired to be more generous and more hospitable toward the immigrant, Eastern Jews. Again, Joseph Roth echoes both this hope for “ein Wunder Gottes” but simultaneously expresses his pessimism that nothing could be done to “magically” halt the anti-Semites: “Man wird zur Einsicht kommen müssen, daß jenes banale Witzwort, auf die Juden geprägt, das da lautet: „Sie sind nicht zu dertaufen‘,
lediglich für das Dritte Reich auch gilt. Es ist 'nicht zu dertaufen'. Auch nicht durch Konkordate” (901). For Roth, not even the Catholic Church could baptize the anti-Semitism out of the Third Reich and the Nazis. Not only was the task of radically re-thinking the German Jewish identity daunting in terms of political, educational, cultural, and economic resources, but the travel writers simply did not have the time to continue exploring the further possibilities of a renewed German Jewish community before the Nazis came to power.

The travelogues represented a collective German Jewish cry into the void left by the imperial European powers of World War I. Like much of the rest of Germany after the war, they desperately desired for a leader or a teacher to tell them where they were supposed to go after the war or who they were supposed to be as Germans and as Jews. Their religious heritage provided them the inspiration and a kind of prophetic insight for an innovative new beginning: a strong sense of hospitality and generosity as a foundational component of their renewed communal identity. But this new insight, with its radical political implications, was often too blinding and painful, even for the travel writer “prophets” themselves. They shielded their awareness and their mind’s eye with self-deceptive narratives that a break with their German identity (including their assumed identities as “step-children”) was not necessary; that some other European or American political power might intervene on their behalf; or that immigration and escape to Palestine would allow them to avoid the direct confrontation of German anti-Semitism.

Whatever their limitations, the insights of Zweig, Döblin, and Gronemann were innovative, counter-intuitive contributions to the Weimar conversation regarding German Jewish identity that worked against the exclusive, negative ethnic and nationalist definitions of the period. The three texts represent individuals who attempted to define their own identities based on a transcendent ethic and ideal that was not bounded by political or economic association. The
difficulties surrounding the implementation of their high ideals are still relevant to the struggles of other minority groups today, and understanding the challenges and successes of implementing strategies of intentional solidarity with the politically and economically oppressed contributes to an ongoing legacy of the re-imagining of identities in a more just and democratic society.
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