Exclusion and renewal: identity and Jewishness in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and David Vogel's Married Life

Valk, F.C.

Exclusion and Renewal explores logics of identity and meaning in the works of two Jewish writers of fin-de-siècle and interbellum Europe, through the lens of Julia Kristeva's notions of abjection and meaning.

The work of Julia Kristeva offers a space for enunciating an alternative register of identity and meaning, eluding the power of dominant and oppressive discourse on identity.

Exclusion and Renewal investigates the works of Franz Kafka's novella "The Metamorphosis" (1912) and David Vogel's novel *Married Life* (1929). Read through the lens of the Kristeva's work, these texts testify to a productive ambivalence in their dramatizations of identity and meaning. They simultaneously produce the social exclusion of Jews in the dominant anti-Semitic discourses and an artistic renewal of identity in terms of a Jewishness not already fixed in those dominant discourses.

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In poetical discourse, the communication of the existential possibilities of one's state of mind can become an aim in itself, and this amounts to a disclosing of existence.
(Heidegger, *Being and Time*)

CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

Every scholarly or scientific preoccupation with research has a strictly personal component which, along with intellectual curiosity and talent, inspires the researcher to explore precisely a specific research field to the exclusion of possible other ones. It is that personal drive which helps the scholar through the emotions of production. In my case it was recognising a particular type of inner condition communicated by David Vogel's *Married Life* that set the ball of my research rolling. I call it an inner condition of exile, which I had seen as a very young child in my Jewish father without realising what it was at the time. This condition is a state of consciousness, an awareness of displacement and of the radical instability of existence that goes with migration. Migration is a Jewish experience inspired in biblical times by God's command and in medieval and modern times by anti-Jewishness, which is of all ages: it caused Maimonides in the twelfth century to migrate from the south of Spain to the north of Africa in much the same way as it caused Vogel's wanderings through Europe between 1912 and 1944 and his eventual death in Auschwitz.[1]

The inner condition I try to describe is that of marginality, of being on the border of things: a sediment of an endlessly repeated experience indelibly imprinted on the brain (or on the soul?) of Jews by generations of persecution and migration since biblical times, through the Middle Ages until today. It pervades the subject matter of *Married Life*, but even more so in that indefinable aspect of literature which is style, and which David Vogel himself refers to as the "colour of the writer's soul". It is that quality of *Married Life* that eluded all critical comments on his novel, and propelled me back to my childhood, to the beginnings of the Second World War, waking up from dormancy the memory of that same - never verbally articulated - inner condition of exile in my Jewish father, despite the fact that he and his Jewish forebears had lived peacefully in the Netherlands for generations. It was that inner condition that I sensed before the fact that my

[1] Maimonides, Moses. 1135-1204. Rabbinic authority, codifier, philosopher and royal physician. The most illustrious figure in the post-Talmudic era, and one of the greatest of all times. As a result of the fall of Cordoba in May or June 1148, just after his thirteenth birthday, and of the ensuing religious persecution, Maimonides was forced to leave Cordoba with his family. Any trace of them in the following eight or nine years has been lost, whilst they wandered through Spain and the Provence until arriving in Africa. Maimonides himself described those years as a period that had laid, "while my mind was troubled. and amid divinely ordained exiles, on journeys by land and tossed on the tempests of seas", the strong foundations of his vast and varied learning and the beginnings of his literary work. From: Encyclopedia Judaica. Eds. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder. Vol. 11. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1994. 16 vols. 754-81.

father was Jewish, which had been hidden from me for safety reasons. Yet, it was transmitted to me without words.

Only much later did I realise that it was this same inner condition of exile that had shaped the freedom of Jewish scientists and scholars to tread new ground and to defy, as Freud put it, "the prejudices which restricted others in the use of their intellect: as a Jew I was prepared to go into the opposition and to renounce agreement with the compact majority".[2] It was that freedom that I sensed in Vogel's idiosyncratic constructions of consciousness and masochism, and the same freedom which Hebrew scholars have found in his equally idiosyncratic use of the Hebrew language. Critics have viewed *Married Life* as a modernist novel for many valid literary reasons; to me, as a Jewish daughter, not as a scholar, what associates *Married Life* with the fleeting cultural sensibility of modernity is its communication of that continuing inner Jewish sense of displacement that defies definition, even the definitions of marginality. It is the artistic freedom facilitated by this sensibility which - as a scholar - I have tried to trace back in the beyond of language whose curious eloquence I remembered from my youth, and which Julia Kristeva's work has academically made accessible to me through her notions of the symbolic and the semiotic as categories of identity and meaning. This inspired me to explore in this study the writings of Vogel and Kafka as writings on the border between the speakable and the unspeakable, as formulated by Julia Kristeva; a dynamics I remembered from my father's (spoken) discourses as I have noted before. The unspeakable, albeit not producing meaning itself, seems to add to and even alter the meanings in the speakable, which opened up a layer of meanings as unexpected as they were revealing to me.

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[2] Sigmund Freud. "Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith" (1926). Psychological Writings and Letters. Ed. Sander L. Gilman. New York: Continuum, 1995.
Sigmund Freud writes about marginality and the readiness to open up to perspectives challenging the prevailing discourses: "Because I was a Jew I felt free of many prejudices which restricted others in the use of their intellect: as a Jew I was prepared to go into the opposition and to renounce agreement with the 'compact majority'". ("Weil ich Jude war fand ich mich frei von vielen Vorurteilen die andere in Gebrauch ihres Intellektes beschränkten, als Jude war ich dafür vorbereitet, in die Opposition zu gehen und auf das Einvernehmen mit der 'kompakten Majorität' zu verzichten").

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Aim of this Study

In this study I explore literary structures of identity-formation in the works of assimilated/acculturated Jewish writers: Kafka's novella "The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung", 1912) and David Vogel's Hebrew novel *Married Life (חיי נישואים, 1929)*.[3]

These authors wrote their works when the failure of Jewish assimilation began to dawn on assimilated/acculturated European Jewry, and an upsurge of hatred of Jews made it, as someone put it: "as impossible *to be*, as *not* to *be* a Jew (by assimilation/acculturation)".

What I aim to show is that during that deadlock of Jewish identity, new structures of identity began to emerge in the literary works of Jews. Works demonstrating the power not to represent the world of located subjects but to imagine, create and vary affects, that were not already given: not already tied down to communication and signification in the social order. That is what Deleuze and Guattari call minor literature, namely literature that does not add a work to the great tradition but disrupts and dislocates that tradition. Minor literature represents nothing but the power to be different. All great literature, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is minor in this sense: it is the vehicle for the creation rather than the expression of identity.[4]

1.2 Research Perspective and Methodology

This relation between identity and affect (instinct/drive) in literature guided me to the theoretical work of Julia Kristeva. Her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) theorizes precisely that association from a psychoanalytical

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[3] See the introductions to chapters 4 and 6 for bibliographical information on Kafka and Vogel.

[4] This paragraph is based on:
- Ronald Bogue. *Deleuze and Guattari*. London: Routledge, 1989. 102-23.
- Claire Colebrook. *Gilles Deleuze*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005. 102-22.
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. 3-27.
For the idea of Kafka and other German Jewish writers as writers of minor literature in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari, see also Vivian Liska, *When Kafka Says We: Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. 1-11).

perspective.[5] *Abjection* in the title of Kristeva's work has nothing to do with its everyday meanings such as the state or condition of being cast down, brought low, humiliation, degradation, dispiritedness or despondency. Rather it is a complex, drive-oriented and thus ambivalent psycho-dynamics of identity-formation offering possibilities for identity/ subjectivity not yet tied down to communication and signification in the social order. In chapter 2 I shall go into the notion of abjection in more detail.

In this study I investigate through the lens of Kristeva's notion of abjection how the works of the Jewish writers under consideration in this study can be viewed as vehicles for the creation, rather than the expression or representation of a Jewish identity.

Associating affect with identity-formation was not new in psychoanalysis. In 1912, Freud wrote an anthropological study, *Totem and Taboo,* in which he points to invisible, drive-oriented psychological forces operative in the formation of identities in primitive tribes.[6] He postulates in *Totem and Taboo* that the social exclusion of others not only binds the identity of a clan, but is also the source of highly ambivalent, drive-oriented emotions which are equally the source of the pleasure of identification (this is what we are) and of barbaric persecution (this is what we are *not*), and must therefore be hunted down, massacred. What he describes is a perception of a self-other group's identification process that was, much later, extended to the individual.

1.3 Identity: Historical Perspectives from Group to Individual, and from Essence to Language

In the second half of the twentieth-century, two tendencies in postmodern philosophies expanded on the perception of identity and its relation to the instinctual. First, the modernist prominence on subjectivity extended the Freudian group's conceptualisation of that relation to the sphere of individual identity-processing, manifest in the claim that any self – a group's as well as an individual's – needs

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[5] Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. Quotations in English and references to page numbers refer to this edition as *Powers of Horror.*

[6] Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. 1912. Trans. James Strachey. London: Routledge Classics, 2001. *Totem and Taboo* consists of four essays originally published in the periodical *Imago* (Vienna): the first and second essay in Vol. 1 (1912), and the third and fourth in Vol. 2 (1913). A Hebrew translation from 1939 contains a most interesting foreword by Freud in which he confirms his identity as a Jew by elucidating his allegiance to the Jewish people despite the fact that he was not religious and did not know Hebrew (the language in which his work was then being published).

an internal/external other (alter) to define itself. The prominence in that so-called alterity philosophy was on the socio-cultural rather than the psychological interpretation of alterity. Today, as Silke Horstkotte and Esther Peeren formulated it in *The Shock of the Other* (2007), alterity, or the relation between the self and its other, has become a cliché. However:

> what has remained elusive is a situated, specific account of their intersection, the precise politics that arise at the points where the self's desire for unity and self-sameness is crossed by its inevitable, multiple and various encounters with otherness. These encounters take place internally – within the self – as well as externally, and may involve either concrete other subjects, or more general [ideological] principles of otherness, configured in terms of class, gender, sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, and so on.[7]

A merit of Julia Kristeva's work on abjection is that it theorises precisely what according to Horstkotte and Peeren "has remained elusive … the precise politics that arise at the points where the self's desire for unity and self-sameness is crossed by its inevitable, multiple and various encounters with otherness". I will examine Kristeva's theoretical implications of these precise politics when dealing with her work in chapter 2, while applying her notion of abjection to my reading of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" in chapter 4, and to my reading of Vogel's novel *Married Life* in chapter 6.

1.4 Literature Creating Identity: The Case of Jakob Wassermann

The instinctual group psychodynamics that Freud describes in *Totem and Taboo* has been hinted at as operative in the relation Nazi-Jew. Cynics have observed that there would not even have been a Europe without the exclusion and murder of the Jews. But what has hardly been explored psychologically is how acculturated modern Jewish artists/writers have experienced abjection when exposed to the Jew-hater and turned that experience into art, thus creating a new artistic Jewish identity "by the word", to use Vogel's phrase, and outside the grip of anti-Semitism and Nazism. Let me illustrate this with an example. In an episode from the diary (1921) of the German/Jewish writer Jakob Wassermann (1873-1934), he recounts his first direct confrontation with anti-Semitism as the social exclusion of Jews, when he enlisted in the German army. As soon as his fellow would-be soldiers noticed that he was a Jew they gave him just *a gaze*, but one of sheer hatred and resentment, setting him apart and excluding him as the other, the unwanted Jew. Wassermann writes:

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[7] Silke Horstkotte and Esther Peeren, eds., *The Shock of the Other: Situating Alterities*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 9.

> For the first time I encountered that dull, rigid, almost inarticulate hatred that has permeated our national organism. The word anti-Semitism does not suffice to describe it, for the term reveals neither the nature, nor the source, neither the depth, not the aim, of that hatred. It contains elements of superstition and voluntary delusion, of fanatical terror, of priestly callousness, of the rancour of the wronged and betrayed, of ignorance, of falsehood, of lack of conscience, of justifiable self-defence, and of religious bigotry. Greed and curiosity play their part here, bloodlust, and the fear of being lured and being seduced, the love of mystery and deficient self-esteem. In its constituents and background, it is a peculiarly German phenomenon. It is a German hatred.[8]

Initially I read the preceding episode almost automatically as yet another account of anti-Semitism. Now, from the perspective of the exclusion/renewal machinery of abjection, a quite different meaning presented itself. Exposed to the destructive gaze of the other (the Jew-Hater), excluding the Jew Wassermann from the social order (in this case the army), Wassermann the artist instinctively excludes the gaze (not me) by turning it into literature and, by that very act of exclusion, creates himself artistically, a Jewish self outside the gaze.

1.5 Abjection: A Psychodynamics of Exclusion and Renewal

Obviously, reading abjection in Jewish writers' texts creates new meanings. How that works literary-technically, and how it affects meaning formation in the text are the questions that inform my attempts to make abjection visible in chapters 4 to 6 on the texts of my choice. Within the context of this introduction, it suffices to say that in the works of Jews living in the anti-Semitic context of Central Europe, when read through the lens of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, the drive-ambivalence of abjection manifests itself in a most idiosyncratic way. It appears as a universal psychodynamics of exclusion and renewal in the sense that it excludes hatred of Jews (not me) by turning it into art and, through that very act of exclusion, renews Jewishness (this is what I am) in ways not already fixed in the contemporary cultural discourses on Jews excluding Jews. Kristeva generalises this productive ambivalence to a universal principle of all identity-formation (both for the individual and for the group) that appears whenever the borders of identity are uncertain.

The uniqueness of the Jewish writers under investigation in this study is that – in the Jewish deadlock of identity through the failure of assimilation – they fell back on the ancient Jewish tradition of creating identity through the word (as Vogel puts it in his diary), that is, through their literature.

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[8] Jakob Wassermann. *My Life as German and Jew*. London, G. Allen & Unwin ltd. Tr. S.N.Brainin, 1934, 53.

1.6 The Organisation of this Study

Keeping in mind Kristeva's dictum that the visibility of abjection takes different forms in different cultures and for different peoples, I will explore the historical moment of the cultures and peoples in Central and Eastern Europe in which the Jewish writers' texts under investigation came into being. A word of caution is called for regarding my use of cultural history in this study. Kristeva's dictum about the visibility of abjection implies a specific view of history, namely in relation to the experience of abjection. That is, Kristeva views abjection as a universal psychodynamics of identity-formation, and cultural/history only the specific ambiance in which abjection appears.

That "only" does by no means belittle the role of cultural history in her research. There is however no causal relation between abjection and the historical context in which it appears. On the contrary, abjection, as a universal phenomenon, appears in any context in which the subject feels the borders of the self threatened.

Yet, precisely because of this universality it becomes the more pressing to investigate abjection alongside the specific historical particularity in which it emerges. This is why I have devoted a relatively long chapter to the historical specificity for Jews (chapter 3) in fin-de-siècle and interbellum Central Europe, in which abjection appears in the works of the Jewish authors of my choice. The more so as that ambiance, especially that of Vogel's Eastern Europe and Russia, is not in the forefront of the European mind.

In accordance with Kristeva's dictum (chapter 2), I will look into the cultural-historical specificity in which abjection appears in the work of Kafka as an East-Central European German-Jewish writer, and in the work of Vogel as a Russian-Jewish exiled writer in Europe. It does hardly need explaining that my historical overview cannot be but incomplete, as the subject matter is complex, but it serves as a framework for the cultural/historical contexts in which abjection plays a role in the works of the writers under investigation in this study.

Chapter 2 is a theoretical exploration into the complexity of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, intended as an introduction to my actual analysis of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Vogel's *Married Life,* through the lens of that concept. Chapters 4 to 6 included contain the actual analyses of the preceding works, and in the final chapter 7, I formulate, by way of conclusion, what the methodology that I have outlined here has yielded in terms of new understandings of my chosen texts. To conclude, I focus in this study on abjection as a psychodynamics of identity-formation in Jewish literature and from the perspective of Jews. What I aim to show is what eludes historical discourses modelled on the victim/perpetrator axis: how Jewish writers – such as Wassermann – tried to create, in and through their art, identities as Jews outside the anti-Semitic craze of the day.

From the preceding it follows that psychoanalytical, rather than philological, interests have in the first instance informed my choice of Kafka and Vogel. Vogel's writing in Hebrew is itself an act of identification marking him a European, Hebrew modernist, as I will show in chapter 6. By now it may be clear that I am interested in the logics of abjection that I read in the works of my chosen writers, as I did in my example from Wassermann's diary. I am particularly interested in the ways in which those logics create unexpected meanings of identity in their works. In chapter 7, Concluding Observations, I evaluate this methodology.

Finally, my research has confronted me with the ambivalence of the drive as both a destructive and a creative force. The former is manifest in the persecution of the Jews, the latter in the Jews' incredible artistic power to draw out from their art the identities that were denied them in social reality, only different ones. The ambivalence of the drive, however, is not only the subject matter of my research but also a continuing intellectual dilemma.

2 ABJECTION AND MEANING IN THE WORK OF JULIA KRISTEVA

2.1 A Brief Sketch of Julia Kristeva's Life and Work

Julia Kristeva is the recipient of eight honorary doctorates, and the winner of the prestigious Norwegian Holberg Prize 2004 for her innovative work at the intersection between linguistics, culture and literature. In addition to academic work, Kristeva wrote fiction because, as she said in an interview, fiction is a space where the imaginary (the semiotic: that which eludes everyday rational discourse, yet affects meaning) can still find an outlet in a globalised and therefore standardised world. Furthermore, a re-formulation of psychic diversity might be possible through the novel, but only if it is understood as a novel of the subject, and thus of the unconscious, and not only of the ego. The subject is the actual process of language of meaning of the instantiation of identities, which are continually surpassed.

A predominant feature in Kristeva's work is her concern to bring the unanalysable, i.e. the semiotic, into the experience of language. I will go into her notion of the semiotic more extensively later in this chapter. This is Kristeva's own brief formulation of the semiotic in relation to the symbolic, as expressed during an interview:

> ....to be schematic, I would say that for me signification is a process that I call signifiance. To recognize the dynamics of this process, I distinguish between two registers (of meaning): the registers of the symbolic and the semiotic. By symbolic I mean the tributary signification of language, all the effects of meaning that appear from the moment linguistic signs are articulated into grammar, not only chronologically, but logically as well. In other words, the symbolic is both diachronic and synchronic; it concerns both the acquisition of language and the present syntactic structure. By semiotic, on the other hand, I mean the effects of meaning that are not reducible to language or that can operate outside language, even if language is necessary as an immediate context, or as a final referent. By semiotic, I mean, for example the child's echolalia before the appearance of language, but also the play of colors in an abstract painting or a piece of music that lacks signification but has meaning.[9]

The distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic marks Kristeva's farewell to structuralism and a hello to post-structuralism:

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[9] Ina Lipkowitz and Andrea Loselle. "A Conversation with Julia Kristeva". *Julia Kristeva, Interviews*. By Ross Mitchell Guberman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. 22.

> I have realized that it was not necessary to apply mechanically models to the literary text, but that it was necessary to consider the literary text as another language, another type of discourse. From this theoretical conception of the literary text as another type of discourse, I had to change the models of my approach, and eventually make use of linguistic models. But after modifying them, I had to take into account that the text is not the language of ordinary communication. I was very much influenced at the time by the works of Bakhtin, who, with respect to the formulation of the Russian Formalist critics, also tried to seize upon something specific in the literary text that did not necessarily appear on the level of language, even if it involved deep laws of communication that could also be attributed to this same level of language.[10]

In the late 1960s, when Freud and Lacan were not yet part of her universe, Kristeva introduced the work of the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin to a European audience, particularly his notions of the dialogical novel and of carnival. Kristeva's interest in analysing the heterogeneous nature of poetic language distinguished her from other semioticians, who were exclusively interested in the symbolic, that is, in formalising the conventional workings of language.[11] Kristeva grasped language as a dynamic, transgressive process rather than a static instrument as the analyses of linguists implied. The static view is tied to the notion that language is reducible to those dimensions (such as logical propositions) that can be apprehended by consciousness, to the exclusion of the material, heterogeneous and unconscious.

After 1979, Kristeva's work focuses on the formation of identity and the roles that abjection and the other play in this process. Her writings of the 1980s include transcripts from her practice as an analyst, such as *Tales of Love* (1983) and *Black Sun* (1987).

In her 1980 publication, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, Kristeva differs from Freud and Lacan by situating the process of individuation before the child's entrance into language (Freud) and before the mirror stage (Lacan). In that pre-language stage, according to Kristeva, maternal regulation (breastfeeding, etc.) operates as a law, foreshadowing and providing the grounds of paternal law as the entry of the child into language and society.

Kristeva's writings maintain the logic of an oscillation between symbolic identity and semiotic rejection: the child's earliest experiences of difference from the

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[10] Lipkowitz and Loselle. Ibid. 19.

[11] In Bakhtin's view, an expression in a living context of exchange – termed a "word" or "utterance" – is the main unit of meaning (not abstract sentences out of context), and is formed through the speaker's relation to otherness (other people, others' words and expressions, and his cultural world in time and place). A "word" is therefore always already embedded in a history of expressions by others in a chain of ongoing cultural and political moments.

mother. *Revolution in Poetic Language* and *Powers of Horror* focus on maternal rejection, which prefigures signification and sets up the logic of rejection.

Tales of Love and *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholy* focus on primary narcissism, which prefigures all subsequent identity and sets up the logic of repetition. *Strangers to Ourselves* (1989) and *Lettre ouverte à Harlem Désir* (1990) concentrate on rejection or difference within identity.[12]

2.2 Some Key Concepts in Kristeva's Work

Freud first investigated the ambivalent, drive-oriented dynamics within the context of his anthropologically oriented research on group's identity-formation in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Almost seventy years later, Julia Kristeva extended Freud's research on the ambivalence of group's identity-processing in *Totem and Taboo* to a universal principle of all identity-processing including that of individuals, which she called abjection (1980), a notion that I will discuss in some detail in this chapter. Kristeva's theorisation of abjection, and the wider philosophical context of identity and meaning in which abjection appears in her work, are the subject matter of this chapter and the focus of research in my analysis of the literary texts in this study.

2.3 Abjection Within the Wider Context of Kristeva's Philosophy of Nihilism

Kristeva's interest in abjection as a narcissistic structure of identity-formation is part of the wider context of her philosophical interest in the problem of nihilism in modernity in the aftermath of secularisation. Nihilism in Kristeva's work is structurally different from the philosophical idea of the loss of transcendence, which, "for one, is predominantly metaphysical (like the death of God in Nietzsche's work), and for the other predominantly political and cultural (like the loss of great political narratives, for instance, Marxism)". [13]

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[12] Sources for this introductory section are: *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. Also *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Post-Humanism*. Ed. John Lechte. New York: Routledge, 2008; Sarah Beardsworth's eminent study of Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity*. New York: State University Press of New York, 2004. And, last but not least, Marc de Kesel's introduction to Julia Kristeva's work in the series *Lectures and Debates for Deepening Knowledge. 2010. Modern Thinkers: Introduction to the Ideas of Contemporary Intellectuals*. Soeterbeeck Programme: Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

[13] Beardsworth. Ibid. 1-22.

2.4 The Semiotic and Symbolic Registers of Identity and Meaning

Kristeva's view of nihilism is a psychoanalytic approach rooted in her notions of the symbolic and the semiotic as two opposing, yet inter-dependent cultural registers of meaning and identity: the semiotic as tied to the world of instincts/drives and the symbolic to the social world of authority, values, traditions and signification. She sees the problem of nihilistic modernity in the drifting apart of the semiotic and the symbolic: the two registers that albeit separate need to be connected, if self-relations and relations with others are to be possible at all, a need, she claims, that modern institutions and discourses have failed to meet.

Kristeva's psychoanalytic work on abjection aims to mediate that nihilistic gap by giving symbolic form to what is culturally neglected: the instinctive, drive-oriented onset to narcissism which she calls abjection and which she sees as a universal, instinctive (and thus ambivalent) psycho-dynamics of exclusion and renewal, susceptible to ideologies:

> ... all identity, including cultural identity, is processed on the basis of exclusion, an instinctive, drive-oriented process often tapped, rationalized, and made operative by ideologies, for instance, Nazism and Fascism.[14]

Kristeva repeatedly shows her indebtedness to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, to begin with in her thesis *Revolution in Poetic Language (1974):*

> ...We will make constant use of notions and concepts borrowed from Freudian psychoanalytic theory and its various recent developments in order to give the advances of dialectical logic a materialist foundation - a theory of signification based on the subject, his formation, and his corporeal, linguistic, and social dialectic.[15]

She reconnects the social (the symbolic) and the affective/instinctual (the semiotic) by presenting a theory of identity-formation (abjection) that – as I will presently show – does justice to both aspects and thus prevents one from dominating over the other. From that perspective Kristeva's theory of abjection is actually an attempt at restoring the balance between the instinctive and the social aspects of identity-formation, for what happens when the instinctual seeps into and dominates the social we will see in the next chapter on anti-Semitism.

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[14] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror.* 155. All references refer to this edition as *Powers of Horror.*

[15] See Kristeva's thesis for the French Doctorat d'État in 1974: "Prolegomenon". *Revolution in Poetic Language* (*La Révolution du langage poétique*). Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. 14-5.

2.5 Abjection

Abjection – a key concept in my analysis of Kafka and Vogel's work – is theorised in Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* as an ambivalent, narcissistic psychodynamics of exclusion and renewal, an overcoming through suffering, set in motion by the pre-Oedipal child's instinctive attempts at individuation (primary narcissism).[16] Kristeva's interest in abjection as a pre-Oedipal and pre-language stage of individuation was fuelled by clinical research on that subject by the Austrian-born British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960), as set out in *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932). Klein wrote in 1932 in the introduction to the first edition of this work:

> The beginnings of child analysis go back more than two decades, to the time when Freud himself carried out his analysis of 'Little Hans' ("Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy" 1909, Standard Edition of Freud's Works ,Volume 10, p. 3 ff). The great theoretical significance of this first analysis of a child lay in two directions. lts success in the case of a child of under five showed that psycho-analytic methods could be applied to small children; and, perhaps more important still, the analysis could establish, beyond doubt, the existence of the hitherto much-questioned infantile instinctual trends in the child himself which Freud had discovered in the adult. In addition, the results obtained from it held out the hope that further analyses of small children would give us a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the working of their minds than analysis of adults had done, and would thus be able to make important and fundamental.[17]

At some point, the child, sojourning in a blissful, subliminal unity with the mother (referred to by Kristeva as the *chora*), before it has any notion of itself as a separate body, instinctually (we are in the world of affects here) begins attempts at individuation by making space in the *chora* for an individuality of its own.[18] To

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[16] Kristeva wrote a biography of Melanie Klein: *Melanie Klein*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

[17] Melanie Klein. *The Psychoanalysis of Children*. Trans. Alix Strachey. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1986. xv.

[18] The *chora*: the term is from a chapter in Kristeva's thesis for the French Doctorate d'État, 1974: *Revolution in Poetic language*. See *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Chapter 5: "Revolution in Poetic Language". 90-136.
Here Kristeva expounds some key-notions from her psycho-linguistic theory, one of which is the semiotic *chora* ordering the drives. She also adopts the term semiotic from the Greek, where it has a variety of connotations of which distinctiveness is the one that "allows us to connect it to a precise modality in the signifying process". This modality of the semiotic facilitates and structures the disposition of drives, and also the primary processes which displace and condense both energies and their inscription. In this way the drives, which are energy, charge ... articulate, what we call a *chora:* a non-expressive totality formed by the

that end the child begins to exclude (abject) parts of the *chora* (instinctive mother-child unity). Once excluded, those parts form an outside to the subject-to-be's inside, or to put it differently: the excluded parts, now-turned–into-an-other, or abject, confront the child with an inside/outside border where before it drifted in the centre of an instinctual, borderless mother/child sameness (the *chora*).

The not-yet (because pre-Oedipal) subject – trying to negotiate the anxieties and suffering that go with separation and the frightening, very first looming of a border – frantically starts setting and re-setting that border by excluding all that is experienced as not me. That border, presented to the fledgling subject by its separation from the *chora*, now forms the fragile limit of the fledgling subject's budding self. Behind that border, however, the abject (the discarded part of the *chora*) threatens the fragile border of the pre-Oedipal subject's self. Anxious to return to the *chora,* the pre-Oedipal subject-to-be struggles to tighten its fragile border by frantically excluding everything felt as "not me". Paradoxically, that very struggle in what Kristeva refers to as a space of anxiety turns the child into a (pre-Oedipal) subject. It is this space of anxiety that Louis-Ferdinand Céline intuitively hints at when he writes:

> You know, in the Scriptures it says: "In the beginning there was the word". No! In the beginning, there was emotion. The Word came later, like the trot replaced gallop while the natural law of the horse is gallop, it is forced to break into trot. Man was removed from emotional poetry and pushed into dialectics, in other words splattering, is not that so?[19]

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drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. Kristeva reads in this rhythmic space, which has no thesis and no position, the process by which signifiance, the psychosomatic origin of meaning, is constituted. "Plato himself leads us to such a process when he calls this receptacle, or *chora*: nourishing and maternal." (Moi. 94). Kristeva points out that the *chora* has a maternal connotation in many religious ceremonies: Roman, Byzantine, Chinese. She borrows the term from Plato's *Timaeus*. 52-53. (See *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. 1179.) Kristeva writes "If our [her] use of the term *chora* refers to Plato, who in this instance seems to follow the pre-Socratics, the notion that we will attempt to formulate concerns the organisation of a process, while being that of the subject, moves through the unitary cut-off [Freudian], or separation between [conscious/unconscious] which installs it and introduces into its topos the struggle of drives which makes it move [subject–in-process] and puts it into danger [subject-on-trial]". My additions between brackets.

[19] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 188. No reference to Céline's work is given by Kristeva but, along with the other quotes from Céline's work on the same page (188), it refers to *Romans II*. Paris: Gallimard, 1974. 933-34.

2.6 The Abject: Kristeva's Abject and Heidegger's Nothing

As noted before, paradoxically the pre-Oedipal child's suffering in *Angst* after separation from the instinctive unity with the mother (*chora*) simultaneously presents the frightful subject-to-be with its first border and its first confrontation with an other, or abject. The separation is final: it makes a return to the *chora*, the realm of drives where language does not exist, impossible, except in psychosis. The subject-to-be's first confrontation with the border is "on the edge of non-existence and hallucination where the borders of one's very own self are simultaneously threatened and drawn".[20] From that perspective the threat of the abject, or non-differentiated other (is it me, or is it other?) literally scares the subject into being: a paradox reminiscent of the ambivalent psychodynamics of Freud's *Eros/Thanatos* principle.[21]

McAfee suggests that Kristeva's psychoanalytical notion of the abject, though different, functions similarly to Heidegger's philosophical notion of the Nothing. McAfee writes that the state of mind of one experiencing abjection has its parallel in Heidegger's description of the state of encountering the Nothing.[22] Both the Nothing and the abject present an abyss where one is, Kristeva writes, on the edge of non-existence and hallucination.

Heidegger extensively explores the nature and depths of anxiety (*Angst*) that go along with a confrontation with the Nothing or what Kristeva would refer to as a confrontation with the abject presenting the borders of the I beyond which the collapse of meaning and language threatens.[23]

The Nothing, according to Heidegger, like the abject in Kristeva's work, can only be faced in anxiety (*Angst*). To explain the nature of anxiety (without which the reader's emotional grasp of the Nothing is actually impossible), Heidegger

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[20] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 2.

[21] S. Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 18. London: Hogarth Press, 1922. Freud introduced the concept of death instinct (Thanatos) to explain the existence of certain phenomena in psychoanalytic treatment: aggressive impulses towards the self and others which were incompatible with his theory of sexuality (Eros) as the root of instinctual life. The Eros/Thanatos principle is in keeping with Freud's tendency to seek for dualistic explanations of psychic phenomena. Melanie Klein (see note 6) has developed and augmented the concept postulating that there is strong clinical evidence in the analyses of small children for the existence of a death-instinct. Melanie Klein. *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, 1986.

[22] Noëlle McAfee. "Abject Strangers: Towards an Ethics of Respect". *Ethics, Politics and Difference in Julia Kristeva's Writing*. Ed. Kelly Oliver. New York: Routledge, 1993. 119.

[23] Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Capital letters originate from the translation out of the German language. References to *Being and Time* refer to this edition.

begins with an exposition on the difference between fear and anxiety, comparing the former to the object-related fear of something: for instance, the dark, insects, spiders, crowds, open spaces, difference, etc. Anxiety, however, is not, according to Heidegger, a mere psychological (or even pathological) symptom but a basic and fundamental experience of *Dasein* (Being-in-the-world) in the face of Nothing, an experience of bottomless existential fear, that simply *is*: it has no object, yet it is experienced as real and immensely threatening, which is why it is warded off by projection on persons, situations, images, which, rationally speaking, are not threatening in themselves, but are experienced as such, as they somehow evoke that uncertain borderland between Being and Nothing that Heidegger associates with authentic Being. Heidegger's anxiety, however, differs from fear in another way, one which seems somehow akin to Kristeva's notion of the abject: its structural ambivalence as a simultaneously threatening and shaping force.

> In anxiety one feels "uncanny" [*unheimlich*]. Here the peculiar indefiniteness [Nothing] alongside of that which Dasein (Being in the World) finds itself in anxiety, comes proximally to expression: the "Nothing and nowhere". But here "uncanniness" also means not-being-at-home [*Das Nicht zuhause sein*] ... On the other hand as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the "world". Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized as being-in-the-world.[24]

Dwelling on the difference between fear and anxiety, Martin Heidegger distinguishes in *Being and Time* two modes of Being-in-the-world: authentic Being, and inauthentic Being, the latter referring to a mode of Being in which one simply does the things one has to do: living life as it comes to you. Authentic being, however, is living life with a strong awareness of its finality, and consequently a deep concern for the meaning of existence whose reverse side is a deep anxiety (*Angst*) for the loss of either, for loss of meaning signifies Nothing-ness, indeterminateness, loss of self, loss of language/meaning, psychosis/death. Authentic being is thus inherently ambivalent, it hovers over the borderland of Being and Not Being (Nothing) and this border position paradoxically shocks into and threatens Being.

Kristeva, following Lacan, seems to transfer Heidegger's ambivalent borderland between Being and Nothing to the inner, drive-oriented world of the speaking subject: the Lacanian subject constructed in and by language and meaning.[25]

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[24] Heidegger. *Being and Time*. 233.

[25] The term "speaking subject" is used by Kristeva to elucidate the difference between her semiology and semiotics (Saussure, Peirce, the Prague school and Structuralism). The latter presupposed a Cartesian (authoritative) subject and language as an act of that subject. Freud

She appears to translate the ambivalence of Heidegger's Nothing into an equally ambivalent psychoanalytic principle: the abject as ambivalent as the Nothing, in that it inspires deep anxieties as well as the possibilities and need for subjectivity and being.

My above discourse struggles to give expression to the ambivalence of instinctive processes that elude description, such as the one that Kristeva calls abjection, or primary repression. This means that notions like mother, child, border, other, should be taken as attempts to name the unnameable/instinctive. The real (flesh and blood), pre-Oedipal-child gives expression to the following, anxiety-ridden passage from sameness to separateness by symbolic acts of rejection/exclusion, for instance by vomiting the mother's milk:

> Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want nothing of that element, sign of their desire; I do not want to listen, "I" do not want to assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an 'other' to 'me', who am only in their desire, *I expel myself, spit myself out, I abject myself in the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself.*[26]

2.7 Psychodynamics of Subjectivity

Kristeva views this pre-Oedipal, ambivalent psychodynamics of exclusion (rejection) and renewal (through overcoming) which abjection *is*, as setting the pattern for post-Oedipal subjectivity-in-process, "the latter, ... functioning by way of the reiteration of the [initial] break, or separation, as a multiplicity of expulsions ensuring [the subject's] infinite renewal".[27]

Thus, she considers subjectivity/identity in terms of a repetitive process of exclusion and renewal, a being as becoming, where the I continually re-positions itself vis-à-vis an inassimilable, internal or external other (abject) who is, paradoxically and simultaneously, a threat to, and a condition for subjectivity to arise

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displaced the Cartesian subject by splitting it into a conscious and an unconscious, but Lacan went further by postulating a subject created in language and the ever shifting production of meaning. Kristeva expands on the work of both Freud and Lacan and advocates the notion of *the speaking subject* as a divided subject (conscious/unconscious) and specifies the operations on two sides of the split as both imperative for the process of signification: on the one hand the bio-physiological processes (the drives) and on the other hand the social constraints (family structures, etc.). For an extensive explanation see Julia Kristeva. "The System and the Speaking Subject". *The Kristeva Reader,* 1986. 24-33.

[26] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror.* 3.

[27] Julia Kristeva. "The Subject in Process". Paper given at the 1972 conference Artaud/Bataille: "Towards a Cultural Revolution". Trans. Patrick Ffrench. *The Tel Quel Reader.* Eds. Patrick Ffrench and Roland-François Lack. London: Routledge, 1998. 134.

at all*:* without abjection no subjectivity, writes Kristeva. She relates how her borderline patients with abjection gone wrong discourses again and again testify to their sojourn in that space of anxiety (the *chora*) where meaning collapses: patients

> ….with no longing but to last, against all odds and for nothing; on a page where I plotted out the convolutions of those who, in transference, presented me with the gift of their void – I have spelled out abjection.[28]

Kristeva's notion of abjection as an iterative psychodynamics of identity-formation not only differs from Freud and Lacan's perceptions of identity/subjectivity as only coming into being after the child's entrance into language, but also from their postulation that pre-Oedipal, unconscious content, because it is repressed after the Oedipal phase, has no direct access to the conscious mind: only indirectly, in dreams, or as parapraxis. Instead, Kristeva postulates that it may be true that

> ...the 'unconscious' contents remain here excluded, *but in strange fashion*: not radically enough for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive position to be established ... one that implies a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration.

In other words: Kristeva argues that repression is never absolute, and that it is at the borderline of the conscious me, and that the not-me – the other, or the abject – keeps threatening the (post-Oedipal) subject, which is excluded from consciousness, but not quite:

> ... a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which nevertheless does not let itself be seduced.[29]

Thus, paradoxically, the other, or abject, presents the subject with a border where the fragile, indeterminate boundaries of the self (is he me, or is he an other?) are simultaneously threatened and drawn. This uncertainty or indeterminateness is why the abject inspires anxiety/horror. This is, writes Kelly Oliver, the psychoanalytic explanation of the social fear of the other, or stranger, whose face bears the sign of a transgressed border, which immediately affects us as horror or fascination; but regardless of which, the other is a foreigner: not me/us. The appearance of the other/foreigner gives us an uncanny feeling – of a burning experience gone through, but not remembered. The boundaries between imagination

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[28] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 7.

[29] Kristeva. Ibid. 1.

and reality are erased. The foreigner is not just someone else, different, he is the abject threatening to transgress the borders of our selves.

2.8 Motivations for Choosing Kristeva's Work for Exploring Literature Written by Jews

Kristeva's work not only makes the drive-oriented sources of exclusion/renewal thinkable, but she also shows the universality of that psychodynamics by tracing it back to an archaic, instinctive struggle that lies at the heart of any form of identity-formation. Yet, abjection can only be inferred in the therapeutic relation, and dramatized in literature and art no matter from what specific historical period, culture, national or ethnic origin. Abjection, in itself a universal psychodynamics, only appears in the specificity of a certain literary or cultural/historical context. My work is concerned with how abjection, as a universal psychodynamics of identity-formation, appears in the works of assimilated/acculturated European Jewish writers like Kafka and Vogel, at a time when Jewish identity was at a deadlock, when, as I noted in the first chapter, it was as impossible to *be* as *not to be* a Jew.

It was Anne Fuchs' *A Space of Anxiety* (1999) that set me on the trail of exploring abjection in the work of Kafka.[30] Fuchs argues that the works of the German Jewish writers she investigated (including Kafka) shatter the fixity of modernity's definite borderlines between self/other, subject/object, Jew/Aryan, together with the assumption of a unitary self vital to it.[31] Instead, according to Fuchs, they dramatize those borderlines as highly uncertain, and identity as holding a simultaneity of conflicting strivings turning it into a space of anxiety, a phrase borrowed from Julia Kristeva who conceptualises that space (which I have referred to as the *chora* earlier) as the epitome of uncertainty and anxiety about the borders between self and other, where

> ... identities (subject/object) do not exist, or only barely so – double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject.[32]

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[30] Anne Fuchs. A *Space of Anxiety: Dislocation and Abjection in Modern German-Jewish Literature*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999. Fuchs' study explores Franz Kafka's *Der Verschollene*, 1912 (English title: *America*) and works by Sigmund Freud, Joseph Roth, Albert Drach and Edgar Hilsenrath.

[31] Unlike modernism, which can be defined as an intellectual and aesthetic practice, Modernity is a political, legislative, administrative and discursive practice whose overriding aim is the production of a rationally designed order. Based on Zygmunt Bauman. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. 3.

[32] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 7.

Having explored abjection in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis", written at a time when assimilated German-oriented Jewry had discovered the failure of Jewish assimilation, in terms of national identity, had become an empty notion, it seemed to me that – since identity was in a different way as controversial for Vogel as a Russian-Jewish exile (an *Ostjude*) in Vienna – it was plausible to try and read the logics of abjection in Vogel's novel *Married Life* as well. The question arose whether this methodology would open up dimensions/meanings in those works as yet unexplored in the Jewish and general reception of either.

My research, however, takes the preceding methodology one step further: it shows, or at least aims to show, that the works of acculturated (that is, aiming to live as Germans and as Jews) Jewish writers reveal, alongside the exclusion aspect of abjection, a drive-oriented power for renewal or, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, those works testify to a "power not to represent the world of located subjects but to imagine, create and vary affects, that are not already given: not already tied down to communication and signification in the social order". This is what Deleuze and Guattari call avant-garde writing: writing which does not add another work to the great tradition (naturalised ways of dramatizing Jewish identity), but disrupts and dislocates that tradition. This is what happens in what Deleuze and Guattari call minor literature. Minor literature represents nothing but the power to be different. All great literature, according to them, is minor in this sense, as it is the vehicle for the creation of identity rather than the expression of identity.[33] Kristeva's notion of abjection makes the ways that process works psychoanalytically accessible, and how its logics of exclusion and renewal can be read in the text. In contrast to Deleuze and Guattari she calls texts functioning as vehicles for the creation of identity avant-garde literature. I will come back to this term when analysing my texts in chapters 4 to 6.

In summary, I aim to show in this study on Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and David Vogel's *Married Life* that both works, albeit in a different way, qualify as avant-garde literature in the sense of Kristeva: they are literature of the (archaic) Border enabling its contemporary, Jewish audiences to experience abjection and, in doing so, to find possibilities for new Jewish identity-formations not already tied down in the symbolic order. I have given an example of the dynamics of avant-garde literature in that specific sense in the Wasserman example in chapter 1 of this study. Rather than delving into the different theoretical ways in which

[33] This paragraph is based on: Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*. London: Routledge, 1989. Chapter 5. 102-23; Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005. Chapter 6. 102-22; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Chapter One: "Content and Expression". 3-8. Chapter Two: "An Exaggerated Oedipus". 9-15. Chapter Three: "What is Minor Literature?". 16-27.

Kristeva, and Deleuze and Guattari arrive at that curious phenomenon which Kristeva calls abjection, and Deleuze and Guattari de-territorialisation, suffice to say that I was fascinated by the idea that *both* have in common - each from their own theory/research-field - that they register, a domain of affects not already given in the symbolic order. Reading those affects through the lens of Kristeva's notion of abjection in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and David Vogel's *Married Life* is the object of my research in this study.

In the next chapter, I will explore the cultural-historical ambiance in which abjection emerged as a universal phenomenon in the specificity of the lives and times of Kafka and Vogel.

3 ANTI-SEMITISM IN CULTURAL SPACES OF FRANZ KAFKA AND DAVID VOGEL

3.1 Introduction

The object of this study is, as shown by the Wassermann quote in the first chapter, to read the ambivalent logics of identity formation through the lens of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection in the works of the Jewish writers under consideration in this study: Kafka's novella "The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung", 1912), and David Vogel's Hebrew novel *Married Life (חיי נישואים, 1929)*.

Keeping in mind Julia Kristeva's dictum that "the visibility of abjection (as a universal psychodynamics of identity-formation) takes different forms, in different cultures, and for different peoples", in this chapter I will draw a historical sketch of the specific anti-Semitic historical climate where the universal psychodynamics of abjection assumed artistic visibility in the works of Kafka and Vogel as writers and as Jews.

Of course, the modest scope of this single chapter only allows a restricted and thus incomplete view of what was in reality a complex social context producing ambivalent manifestations of hostility to Jews, sometimes disguised as love. Yet, being familiar with that specific historical climate helps to make Kafka's and Vogel's artistic dramatizations of abjection as a universal psychodynamics visible in their texts.

3.2 Perspectives of Anti-Semitism in Kafka's and Vogel's Cultures

As early as 1896, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the father of Zionism, referred to the complexity of the concept of anti-Semitism:

> I believe that I understand antisemitism, which is in reality a highly complex movement. I consider it from a Jewish standpoint, yet without fear or hatred. I believe that I can see what elements are in it, of vulgar sport, of common trade, of jealousy, of inherited prejudice, of religious intolerance, and of legitimate self-defense.[34]

David Berger (1986), ninety years after Herzl, formulates it as follows:

> We shall never fully understand antisemitism as it is: deep-rooted, complex, endlessly persistent, constantly changing yet remaining the same, it is a

[34] Theodor Herzl. "A Solution of the Jewish Question" (1896). *The Jewish Chronicle* 17 January 1896. *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. Eds. Paul Mendes Flohr and Yehuda Reinharz. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 534.

> phenomenon that stands at the intersection of history, sociology, economics, political science, religion, and psychology.[35]

It is the very complexity of the concept of anti-Semitism that has informed a continuing stream of interpretations, each focusing on yet another of its many aspects: Walter H. Sokel (1987), for instance, proposes the term ontological anti-Semitism by which he means hostility towards Jews that concentrates on their being, rather than on their religious or economic practices or any single particular attribute. Ontological anti-Semitism does not offer conversion (to Christianity) to save the Jew since it presupposes that he is unable to change his nature. Where Christian hatred was directed against the Jewish religion, ontological anti-Semitism is directed against Jewish attempts at emancipation from Judaism.[36]

Sander Gilman offers a shocking example of ontological anti-Semitism in his The Jew's Body (1991). Gilman's example is an 1893 short story named The Operated Jew: a fantasy of re-building into healthy sameness a supposedly unhealthy, because Jewish, body and its speech production, written by the German physician Oskar Panizza (1853-1921).[37] The text deals with the reconstruction of

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[35] David Berger, ed. *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1986. 2.

[36] Walter H. Sokel. "Dualistic Thinking and the Rise of Ontological Antisemitism in Nineteenth Century Germany: From Schiller's Franz Moor to Wilhelm Raabe's Moses Freudenstein". *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*. Eds. Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz. New York: New York University Press, 1991. 154-72.

[37] Oskar Panizza. *Der operierte Jud*. (The Operated Jew). Munich: Georg Müller Verlag, 1923. In his foreword to the 2007 e-book edition of the story, Peter M. Sporer writes: "Man ist heute zurecht, insbesondere im deutschsprachigen Raum, sensibler für Antisemitismus – nach Hitler und sechs Millionen brutal und kaltblütig ermordeten Juden. In dieser Erzählung – eine Art Pygmalion-Geschichte – kann man ein antisemitisches Machwerk sehen; doch muss man gleichzeitig bedenken, dass zu der Zeit, in der Panizza die Geschichte schrieb, fanatischer Judenhass in intellektuellen Kreisen, zu denen Panizza zählte, verpönt war, Fragen zur biologischen und rassischen Abkunft der Menschheit dort aber gleichzeitig heftig diskutiert wurden. Ähnliche Karikaturen finden sich auch im Simplicissimus. Ob man nun deshalb sagen kann, dass Panizza Antisemit war oder es als Grosteske aufzufassen ist, überlasse ich den Leser. Ich neige eindeutig zur Groteske, was vielleicht auch daran liegen mag, dass meine Wiege nicht in Deutschland stand und ich die Erzählung vielleicht unbefangener lesen kann, oder weil ich Panizza als Autor allgemein schätze, sei es hier in diesem Stück oder beispielsweise auch im *Das Liebeskonzil* bei der bewusst übersteigerten Kritik am Katholizismus, der Dreieinigkeit und Jungfrau Maria."
(Today one is rightfully more sensitive, particularly in the German-language space, to anti-Semitism – after Hitler and six million Jews murderd brutally and in cold blood. It is posible to see this narrative – a kind of Pygmalion story – as anti-Semitic; yet, one should also consider at the same time that, at the time when Panizza wrote the story, fanatic Jew-hatred was taboo in the intellectual circles he addressed. However, at the same time questions about the biological and racial origines of mankind were objects of heated discussions.

Itzig Feitel Stern, a Jew, into an Aryan. The story, according to Gilman, begins with a detailed description of Stern's physiognomy:

> … his Jewish antelope's eye, his nose, his eyebrows, his fleshy and overtly creased lips, his violent fatty tongue, his bowlegs, his curly, thick black locks of hair.[38]

But, according to Gilman quoting Panizza, it is not just his body which marks Stern as a Jew:

> He mee-owed, rattled, bleated, and also likes to produce sneezing sounds… His language, whether it is French or High German, is 'warped' by his Palatine Yiddish.[39]

The physical part of the operation is successful: even Stern's Palatine Yiddish is retrained into a pure High German.[40] However, it appears that Stern's Jewish soul, together with his circumcision ("the outward sign of the immutability of the Jew within"), has unfortunately escaped Panizza's medical zeal. In the end, all the changes brought about by Stern's operation turn out to have been useless. So the story powerfully celebrates/or satirizes (critics are not sure which is which) the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jew as the inassimilable other, a stereotype effectively reinforced by the fact that even medical science was unable to blot out Stern's Jewishness in spite of the good Aryan doctor's scientific dedication and skills.

Any attempt to formulate a definition of anti-Semitism stumbles on the complexity of the concept and depends on the aspects of anti-Semitism one focuses on, on the historical period or cultural/geographical context and on the chosen line of argumentation. In post-Holocaust historiograp hy the victim/perpetrator axis has understandably been, and still is, a prominent discourse axis. In the same

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Similar caricatures occur in *Simplissimus*. I leave it to the reader's discretion of the reader whether, on that ground, one could call Panizza an anti-Semite, or the story should be seen as a specimen of the grotesque. I myself definitely tend to the grotesque, which may be due to the fact that my cradle was not in Germany, which is perhaps the reason why I can read the story with a more open mind, or because I appreciate Panizza as an author anyway, whether in this piece or , for instance, also in *Das Liebeskonzil* with its consciously overdone criticism of Catholicism, the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Mary.) My translation. — *Nigiyaw* e-Books 2007 (ebooks@ngiyaw-ebooks.com).

[38] Sander Gilman. *The Jew's Body*. London: Routledge, 1991. 203.

[39] Ibid. 64 and 68.

[40] Palatine refers to phonetics here, in the sense of relating to the palate. Hence, palatine sounds are sounds that are produced with the help of the palate, as opposed to guttural and labial sounds.

line of thought Moshe Zimmermann writes in his 1986 biography of Wilhelm Marr (the father of modern anti-Semitism) how curious it is that, although the post-Shoah stream of publications on anti-Semitism seems to have been endless – some even speak of a post-Holocaust industry – the role of anti-Semitism in the motivations of the perpetrators still needs further exploration.[41]

> Historians, psychologists, and publicists have invested a great deal of effort in the study and evaluation of the phenomenon of antisemitism, without paying much attention to the anti-Semites. … And so it happened that the personality of Wilhelm Marr, the man who called himself "the patriarch of Anti-Semitism" was never given any biographical coverage.[42]

In 1997-98, a group of American Jewish scholars from different disciplines, referring to themselves as The New Jewish Cultural Critics, expressed the wish to enter the growing field of postmodern and post-colonial cultural studies, as they felt that research and critique of Jewish culture had much to offer to the cultural studies community, especially on the issues of diaspora, exile and the cultural construction of racial categories (and thus anti-Semitism).

Inspired by the work on racism, ideology and difference in post-colonial discourse theory, they realised that they could no longer study anti-Semitic cultural constructions of Jewish difference in isolation, and produced a number of publications advocating this insight in *Modernity, Culture and The Jew* (1998)[43] and *Jews and Other Differences* (1997) where they proposed:

> ... to move toward the recognition of Jewish culture as part of the world of differences to be valued and enhanced by research in the university, *together with the differences of other groups hanging onto cultural resources similarly at risk of being consumed by a liberal universalist* ethos.[44]

Inspired by post-colonial theorists and literary critics (e.g. Homi K. Bhabha), The New Jewish Cultural Critics began to restore Jewishness to texts where it had previously been ignored by "politically correct" mainstream literary critique. The

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[41] Moshe Zimmermann. *Wilhelm Marr. The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

[42] From: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003. CD-ROM. Lemma: Streicher, Julius.

[43] Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, eds. *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. With an introductory essay by Homi Bhabha, "Joking Aside: The Idea of a Self-Critical Community". xv-xx. (The self-critical Witz is a common element of Jews and Parsis (Bhabha is a Parsi) and Bhabha associates it with Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque.)

[44] Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, eds. *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. xi. My emphasis.

latter critically investigated anti-Semitic stereotyping Jews as "a strategy of European culture's dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness".[45]

3.3 Zygmunt Bauman: Back to History

Zygmunt Bauman is both sympathetic to and critical of the work of the New Jewish Cultural Critics and challenges their view of the Jew as part of a more generalised, a-historical category of difference. He believes Jews to be sui generis, or unlike others because of their historical relation to Christendom. Bauman also criticises the perpetrator/victim line of discourse, which essentializes Jews as eternal and thus timeless victims. This takes the history of anti-Semitism out of the social/political and historical conditions that gave rise to it in the first place.

Instead, Bauman aims to historicise anti-Semitism: not by exploring it against the background of the European history of modernity as is the case in mainstream historiography, but by analysing it as an integral aspect of the close interaction between Jewish and European history as separate but interdependent histories.

In his article "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern" (1998), Zygmunt Bauman proposes a new term for Anti-Semitism: *allosemitism*. He finds the

> area delineated and separated by the notion of antisemitism the cutting criterion being hostility to the Jews too narrow to account fully for the phenomenon he intends to grasp; it leaves aside quite a few socio-psychological realities without which the understanding of antisemitism must remain inconclusive, if not faulty.

Instead, Bauman proposes the term *allosemitism,* borrowed from the Polish Jewish literary historian Arthur Sandauer who uses the Greek word for other, *allos*, when referring to the practice of representing the Jew as a radically different other. Bauman writes:

> Allosemitism refers to the practice of setting Jews apart as people radically different from all the others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them and special treatment in all or most social intercourse since the concepts and treatments usually deployed when facing or dealing with other people or peoples simply would not do.

"Allosemitism", writes Bauman, "… is, perhaps, already in place before anti, or philo-semitism are conceivable, itself not unambiguously determining either

[45] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2003. 66.

hatred or love, but containing the seeds of both, and whichever of the two appears is intense and extreme".[46]

This view makes *allosemitism* a radically ambivalent attitude. There is a sort of resonance between the intellectual and emotional ambivalence of *allosemitism* and the endemic ambivalence of the other: "the stranger, and consequently the Jew, as a most radical embodiment of the latter". (143-44). Bauman's *allosemitism* draws on the Jewish philosopher Levinas' philosophical perception of "radical otherness" by which Levinas does not mean the cultural other, but any other experienced as not me .

Contrary to the postmodernist idea of the other as socially constructed, Bauman conceptualises the other as precisely what eludes social construction. Like Levinas' other, it is structurally ambivalent on account of what does not appear. It is similar to Kristeva's abject (as I will show in the next chapter), not a category but disrupts Being and Presence. It eludes construction and raises ambivalence, the emotional stance from which, according to Bauman, Western Christian culture has traditionally responded to Jews. Bauman's following anecdote illustrates *allosemitism* as ambivalence (mirrored in Friedrich Rühs' ambivalent response to the Jew), this time appearing in its love (philosemitism) aspect:

> In 1816, when all over western Europe the visible and invisible walls of Jewish ghettos were crumbling and Jews were shaving beards and hiring gentile tailors, Friedrich Rühs noted that whatever they do, the Jews possess their own, inimitable *Volkseigentümlichkeit* of such kind that 'they should be proud of their distinctions, and even wear a special ribbon to distinguish themselves – as a sign of honor'.[47]

Was, asks Bauman, Friedrich Rühs a Jew hater or a Jew lover? Was his admiration of Jewish distinction genuine, or just a clever mask? Whichever was the case, continues Bauman, Rühs obviously could not bear the thought of Jews melting inconspicuously into the crowd, as they were about to do in those early years of emancipation so that the Jew-hater and the Jew lover alike could not tell

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[46] Zygmunt Bauman. "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern". *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*. Eds. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 143-56; on "the Jew" as the radically different other, see page 19, note 15, Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus. "Introduction: Some Methodological Anxieties". *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*. 1-20; Arthur Sandauer. *Collected Works*, vol. 3. Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985. 449-52. For a popular restatement of this argument see Alain Finkielkraut. *The Imaginary Jew*. Trans. David Suchoff, Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1994. 164.

[47] Zygmunt Bauman in *The Imaginary Jew,* page 155, note 2. Quoted after Michael A. Mayer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979. 80-1.

them anymore from the next person.[48] Anti-Semitism, according to Bauman, does not spring from *heterophobia* (as in the philosophies of difference), the resentment of the different, but from *proteophobia* (a term which, again, seems a sociological equivalent of Kristeva's perception of the abject), namely that which "disturbs identity, system, order, what does not respect borders, positions, and rules". For Bauman, *proteophobia* is the apprehension and vexation of something or someone that does not fit the structure of the orderly world and does not fall easily into any of the established categories. It therefore sends out contradictory signals regarding the proper conduct and as a result blurs the borderlines that ought to be kept watertight, and undermines the reassuringly monotonous, repetitive and predictable nature of the life-world.

Thus, writes Bauman, the cultural fantasy of the Jew shows the limits of ordering intentions or hopes (the law of the father) and reveals the feebleness of ordering efforts: the unfitting becomes a fissure in the world order through which the ultimately invincible chaos (the collapse of meaning) becomes, reluctantly and depressingly, visible. In short, from this perspective the Jew becomes a signifier of ambivalence, or even ambivalence incarnate and, as such, comes to mean the impossibility of order.

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[48] Differences between Jewish and Western Enlightenment. Bauman refers here to the Jewish emancipation, or *Haskalah* (Hebrew term for the Enlightenment movement and ideology which began within Jewish society in the 1770s). An adherent of Haskalah became known as a *maskil* (pl. *maskilim*). The movement continued to be influential and spread, with fluctuations, until the early 1880s. Haskalah had its roots in the general Enlightenment movement in Europe of the 18th century but the specific conditions and problems of Jewish society in the period, and hence the objectives to which Haskalah aspired in particular, all largely differed from those of the general Enlightenment movement. Haskalah continued along new and more radical lines the old contention upheld by the Maimonidean party in the Maimonidean Controversy that secular studies should be recognized as a legitimate part of the curriculum in the education of a Jew. For Jewish society in Central Europe, and even more so in Eastern Europe, this demand conflicted with the deeply ingrained ideal of Torah study that left no place for other subjects. As in medieval times, secular studies were also rejected as tending to alienate youth from the observance of the precepts and even from loyalty to Judaism. The Haskalah movement contributed toward assimilation in language, dress, and manners by condemning Jewish feelings of alienation in the *galut* (diaspora, homelessness, exiled state) and fostering loyalty toward the modern centralized state. It regarded this assimilation as a precondition to and integral element in emancipation, which Haskalah upheld as an objective. The *maskilim* also advocated the productivization of Jewish occupation through entering crafts and agriculture. The emphasis placed on these common objectives naturally varied within Jewish society in different countries and with changing conditions. Greater emphasis was placed on assimilation and it became more widespread in Western and Central Europe than in Eastern Europe.
Based on an article by Yehuda Slutsky in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Israel: Keter Publishing House, 1997. CD-ROM. Version 1.0.

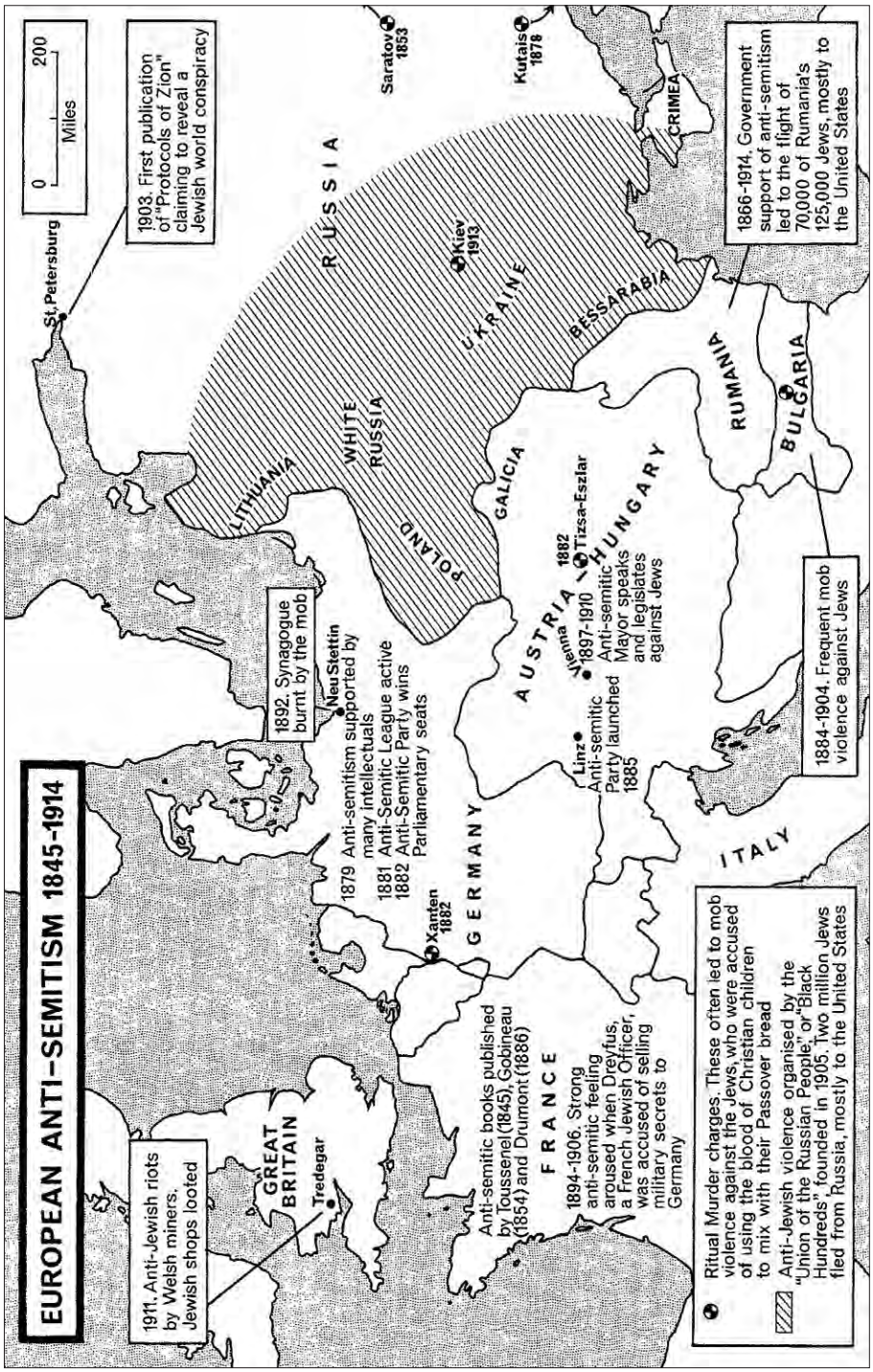
Apart from historicising anti-Semitism as a means to fight anti-Semitic essentializing Jewry, Bauman applies a multidisciplinary methodology, distinct from mainstream historiography, which involves sociology (his own discipline), history and Jewish philosophy: Emanuel Levinas' notion of the other as the one radically different from me.

3.4 Anti-Semitism in the Cultures of Kafka and Vogel

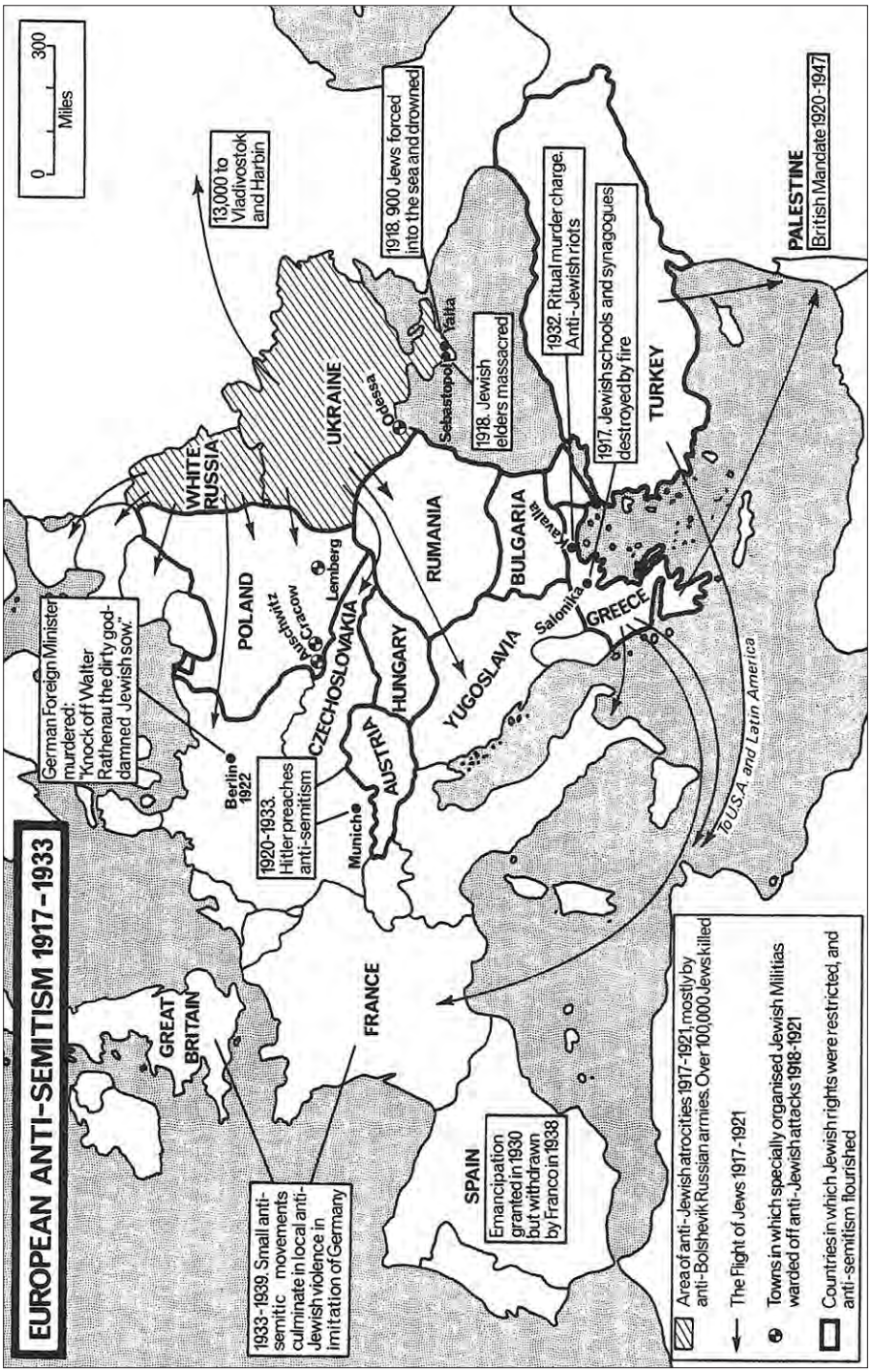
Broadly viewed two cultures are involved. On the one hand, there is the culture of 1912 fin-de-siècle Prague in which Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" was written and which at the time was part of Franz Joseph's already decaying Austro-Hungarian Empire, which ultimately disintegrated into different nation states after the First World War, with the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye of 10 September 1919. (See maps *European Anti-Semitism 1845-1914* and *European Anti-Semitism 1917-1933).* As an artist and an intellectual Kafka identified with the Central European, German-oriented culture and language of the German Jewish minority in Prague in whose schools he had been educated.

On the other hand there is David Vogel, the Russian-Jewish exile who arrived that same year (1912) in Vienna, to stay there until 1925. He thus witnessed the convoluted transition of Franz Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Empire into separate nation states. Vogel came from the Jewish Pale of Settlement, a vast Jewish reservation within the Russian Empire founded by the Russian Tsars in 1835 and stretching from Western Ukraine to the German border until 1917, the year of the second Russian revolution. (See map: The Jewish Pale of Settlement in Russia, 1835-1917.) [49]

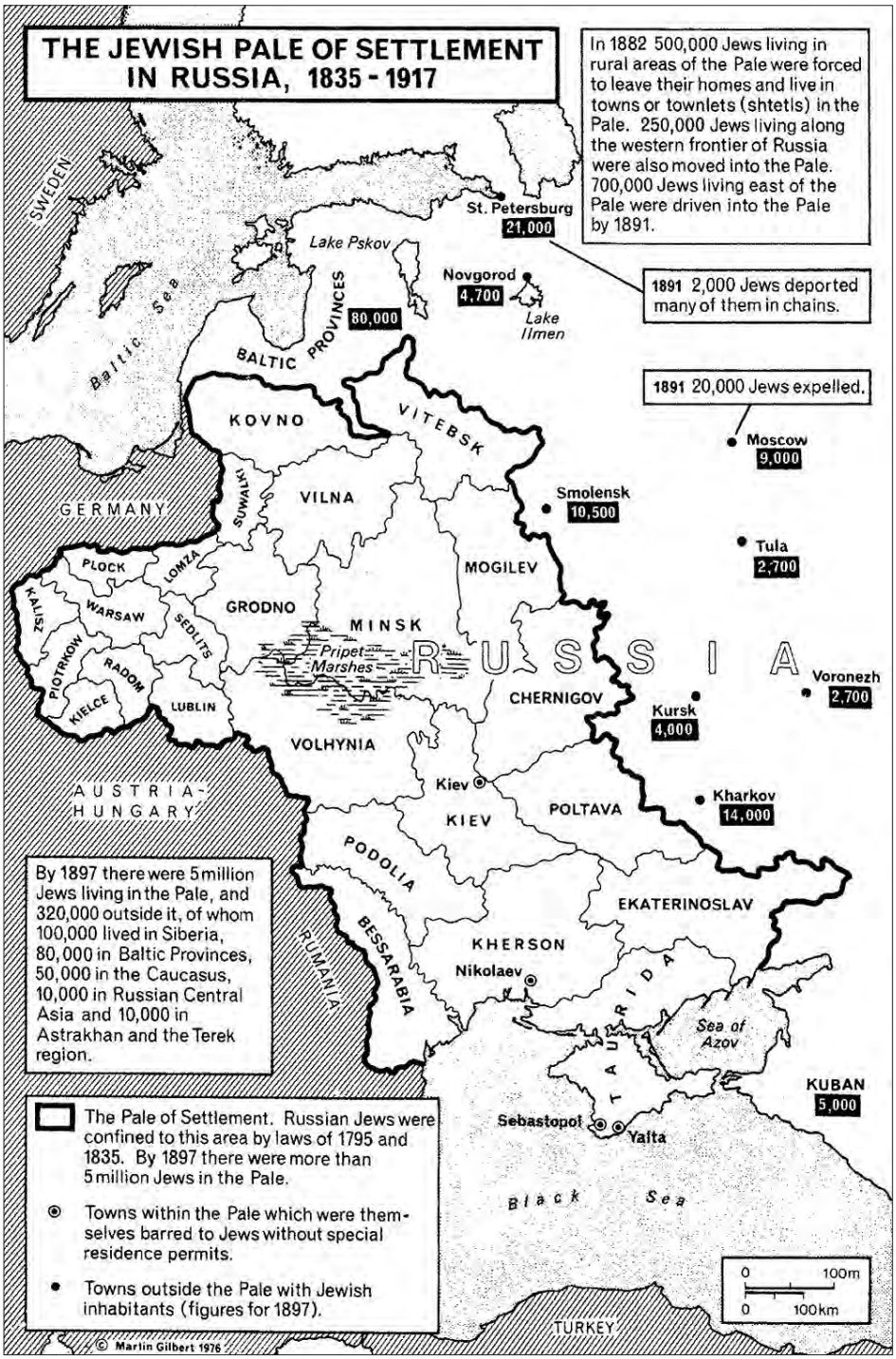
[49] Martin Gilbert. *The Jews of Russia: Their History in Maps and Photographs*. Published privately by Martin Gilbert in Oxford, 1976. Dedicated to the memory of the Jewish historian Simon Dubnow, born in Msitslavl, Russia, 1860, murdered by the Nazis in Riga in 1941.



Martin Gilbert. *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*. 8th ed. London: Routledge, 2010. 44.



Martin Gilbert. *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*. 8th ed. London: Routledge, 2010. 210.



Martin Gilbert. *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*. 8th ed. London: Routledge, 2010. 64.

My research in this chapter involves anti-Semitism in Germany, Austria and the Jewish Pale of Settlement, which included Russian-occupied Poland. Vogel was born and bred in the Pale until the age of twenty-one (1912) when he fled to Franz Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Empire (Vienna) to escape the twenty-five years of conscription into the Russian army that the Russians had stipulated for Jews.

However, historicising anti-Semitism and hatred of Jews in the German/Austrian as well as the Russian contexts seems a task as vast as it is inevitable, as the hatred of Jews was the powerful other which allowed both authors to create their art and their dramatizations of abjection as a psychodynamics of identity-formation in that art.

Jews had been living in Prague from the twelfth century onward and formed, as in the whole of Eastern and Western Europe, a pariah group, excluded from civil rights, civil service, marriage, and from freely choosing a profession or trade. Although at the end of the nineteenth century the situation seemed somewhat improved, the threat for Jews had not lessened. Two main historical tendencies, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Czech nationalism, constituted powerful influences on the Jewish population of Bohemia. On the one hand the Jews had greatly contributed to the economic growth of Bohemia, but on the other hand their newly acquired social position and wealth invoked fierce hatred of Jews amongst the Czech population and in the German elite within it, who refused to see Jews as their equals. No wonder, that – in that Jewish quandary – Zionism started to grow and flourish in Bohemia.

Kafka's friend Gustav Janouch recounts how, after the creation of the first Czech republic (after 1918), he intended to visit a clandestine Zionist meeting:

> In a large corner house on the Bergstein I was looking for the meeting-room of the *Jewish Working Men's Association*: *The Poale Zion*. When I spoke to a group of people in the dark courtyard, instead of information I received several blows in the face, so that I took flight. The caretaker, whom I fetched, of course found no one left in the courtyard. In a bad temper he inquired: "What do you want from these Jews? After all you are not a Jew". I shook my head. "No, I am not a Jew".
>
> "There you are" said the guardian of the law triumphantly. "What do you have to do with that rabble? Thank your stars that you only had a couple of punches on the nose, and go back home. Decent people don't mix with Jews."[50]

[50] *Poale Zion* (workers of Zion) was the name of the *Jewish Workers Party* within the Zionist Movement. It originated in Poland and Russia as an attempted synthesis of Zionism with social democracy. Gustav Janouch. *Conversations with Kafka*. Trans. Goronwy Rees. New York: New Directions Books, 1971. 108, note 52, 209.

A most incisive example of Kafka's experience of the fierce anti-Semitism in the Prague of his days is recorded in one of his letters to his friend, the Czech Milena Jesenská. The 1920 letter most poignantly reflects the scope and depth of the Jewish experience in Prague, and of the deep sense of insecurity it involved for Jews. The letter to Milena is an answer to a previous letter of hers in which she asks Kafka if he is Jewish (*Jste žid?*), and in which she subsequently expresses her astonishment at the typically Jewish anxiety (German: *Angst*). Note the ambivalence of Kafka's reply: he first blames her for generalising, and then justifies Jewish anxiety by pointing out the precarious, insecure position of all Jews:

> You may reproach the Jews for their specific anxiety, although such a general reproach shows more theoretical than practical knowledge of human nature: more theoretical because first of all the reproach does not fit your husband [Milena is not Jewish, but her husband is] at all according to your former descriptions, nor, secondly, in my experience, does it fit most Jews, and thirdly it fits only isolated ones [acculturated: Jews, but not practising Jews], but these most poignantly, for instance myself. The insecure position of Jews, insecure within themselves, insecure among people, would make it above all comprehensible that they consider themselves to be allowed to own only what they hold in their hands, or between their teeth, that furthermore only palpable possessions give them the rights to live, and that they will never again acquire what they once have lost, but which instead, calmly swims away from them forever.[51]

In his biography of Kafka Ernst Pawel vividly pictures the Jews' experience of their position by the end of the First World War:

> Caught between the lines, trapped in the shrinking no-man's land between crusading armies headed for the showdown but both equally committed to their Jew-baiting extremism, Bohemia's Jews found themselves in a unique quandary that was to shape the attitude of Kafka and his generation in fatally decisive ways. It spared them some of the illusions to which other Western Jews, notably in Germany and Austria proper, had avidly surrendered [the illusion of a German-Jewish symbiosis]. In Prague, unlike in Vienna, baptism was rare; Jews remained Jews, even if their Judaism amounted to little more than showing up four times a year at the synagogue to demonstrate their loyalty – to God on the three High Holidays, and to the house of Habsburg on the Emperor's birthday.[52]

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[51] Willy Haas, ed. *Franz Kafka: Letters to Milena*. Trans. Tania and James Stern. London: Secker & Warburg, 1953. 49-52; Jürgen Born and Michael Müller, eds. *Franz Kafka: Briefe an Milena*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 1980. 24-7.

[52] Ernst Pavel. *The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984. 31.

3.5 The German Cultural Context: Jewish Emancipation and Assimilation as Sources of Hatred of Jews

Jews had found hospitality in Germany from the Middle Ages onwards, but had always been viewed and treated as foreigners and, until the eighteenth century, kept themselves closely to themselves, living in ghettos.[53] They were subjected to additional taxes, barred from craft guilds and most professions, and they were only physically safe when carrying expensive letters of protection. Until the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, they lived in almost complete, self-imposed, ghetto isolation, advocated by the rabbis who were intent on protecting the group identity. Between 1500 and 1800 court Jews constituted a Jewish elite; they were wealthy Jews who managed to maintain economic relations with the German princes who depended on them for their money to wage war and keep expensive households, while in exchange the court Jews managed to procure a relative safety for themselves and the poorer Jews in the ghettos. However, the influence and wealth of the court Jews provoked resentment among the German population. The court Jews often formed the ghettos' only link with the outside world and it was through their contact with the outside world that the Enlightenment ideals eventually got access to the German ghettos.

Once the Jews, inspired by the general cultural Enlightenment, started their own Jewish Enlightenment or *Haskalah*, they began to leave the ghettos. However, the thought of Jews melting inconspicuously into the crowd caused great fear and suspicion within and outside German society. German fear of the Jewish

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[53] *Ghetto*: urban section serving as compulsory (or voluntary) residential quarter for Jews. Generally surrounded by a wall shutting it off from the rest of the city, except for one or more gates, the ghetto remained bolted at night. The origin of this term has been the subject of much speculation. It was probably first used to describe a quarter of Venice situated near a foundry (*getto*, or *ghetto*) and which in 1516 was enclosed by walls and gates and declared to be the only part of the city to be open to Jewish settlement. Subsequently the term was extended to all Jewish quarters of the same type. Other theories are that the word derives from the Hebrew *get* indicating divorce or separation; from the Greek geitwn (neighbor); from the German *geheckter (Ort)*, or fenced place; or from the Italian *borghetto* (a small section of the town). All can be excluded, except for *get* which was sometimes used in Rome to mean a separate section of the city. In any case the institution antedates the word, which is commonly used in several ways. It has come to indicate not only the legally established, coercive *ghetto*, but also the voluntary gathering of Jews in a secluded quarter, a process known in the *Diaspora* time before compulsion was exercised. By analogy the word is currently used to describe similar homogeneous quarters of non-Jewish groups, such as immigrant quarters, Black quarters in American cities, native quarters in South African cities, etc. In Muslim countries the Jewish quarter in its beginnings never had the character of a ghetto. It was always built on a voluntary basis, and it remained so in later times in the vast Ottoman Empire. From an article by Jozeph Michman (Melkman), in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Israel: Keter Publishing House, 1997. CD-ROM. Version 1.0.1997. Lemma: History.

Enlightenment was at least one of the catalysts of what Zygmunt Bauman, the sociologist, refers to as the ordering frenzy (involving the exclusion of Jews) that marked later German nationalism. Jewish Emancipation began in Holland (Spinoza) and Italy in the seventeenth century, but gained momentum in Germany in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Mainz 1798; Frankfurt 1811; Brunswick 1834; Prussia 1850; Baden 1862; Saxony 1868), and peaked in the second half of the nineteenth century when the Jews were granted civil rights throughout Germany (1871).

Besides, as early as the eighteenth century, opportunities had arisen in Germany for Jews to enter trade, and the development of capitalism gradually broadened the economic base of many professions: Jews integrated trade, banking, industry and various other professions and urban occupations. By the end of the nineteenth century the old time court Jews had become industrialists, bankers and important businessmen. A new social stratification emerged, based on new classes and professions. These processes also took place in other countries and were at the root of Jewish Emancipation culture.

These developments inspired considerable envy, resentment and fear of Jews in Europe. This in turn gave rise to the wildest fantasies about Jewish wealth and power, such as, for instance, the powerful fable of a Jewish plan for world domination – the Protocols of Zion, published by a Russian newspaper in 1903, which spread to all European capitals during the first half of the twentieth century. Even a quality newspaper like *The Times* (London) did not escape its spell when it wrote in 1920:

> Have we been struggling these tragic years [of the First World War] to blow up and extirpate the secret organisation of German world domination only to find beneath it another, more dangerous, because more secret? Have we, by straining every fibre of our national body, escaped a *Pax Germanica*, only to fall into a *Pax Judaica?*

Writing about the so-called "complete Jewish domination" of Viennese economic and cultural life in the nineteenth century fin-de-siècle, Peter Pulzer (1988) points out this applied to

> ... only 10 to 15 per cent of the Austrian Jews and that the remainder of 90 to 85 per cent 'led an indescribably miserable existence in Galicia and Bukovina', and that it is estimated that toward the end of the century some 5000 to 6000 died of starvation annually. And, as the number of Galician Jews increased in Vienna, the Jewish haute bourgeoisie became less and less representative of Viennese Jewry as a whole, while the peddler, the old-clothes

> dealer and the *Lumpen Proletarier,* scraping an irregular existence on the periphery of the economic system, became typical.[54]

The fact that envy and fear of Jewish success could even lead to murder was exemplified by the life and death of Walter Rathenau, the son of a prominent Jewish business family, himself a leading industrialist during the German Empire. Rathenau's 1922 murder was inspired by the hatred and anti-Semitic fantasies evoked by the fear of Jewish emancipation and assimilation. Rathenau was German Foreign Minister and a fervent advocate of Jewish assimilation; he argued that Jews should oppose both Zionism and Socialism, and integrate into German society. He believed, like many Jews with him, that assimilation would solve anti-Semitism. The German radical right fiercely hated Rathenau and caricatured him as the prototype of the Jewish capitalist.

Albert S. Lindemann (1997) writes that during the First World War, when Rathenau held a senior post in the Raw Materials Department of the German War Ministry, he favoured a disproportionate number (10 percent of all industrialists, while only 1 percent of the population was Jewish) of Jewish industrialists many of whom had made extraordinary war profits.[55] Nobody seemed to notice that 90 percent of the war profits went to non-Jewish German firms. Rathenau's favouritism of Jews was grist to the mill of right wing anti-Semites and made him many enemies. In spite of his extended service to his country and being one of the founders of the German Democratic Party, which was committed to maintaining a democratic, republican form of government, two right wing army officers assassinated Rathenau on 24 June 1922. Whilst driving one morning from his house to the Wilhelmstraße, as he used to every day, he was overtaken by another car with three armed young men. They simultaneously shot at the minister with revolvers and then quickly drove off. A memorial stone in the Königsallee in Berlin-Grünewald commemorates the murder.

The term anti-Semitism was coined in Germany in 1879, in the pamphlet *The Victory of Judaism over Germandom* (*Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum*) by the German agitator Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904), a middlebrow journalist who formed the first Anti-Semitic League.[56] The term anti-

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[54] Peter Pulzer. *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, 13-4. The Lumpenproletariat consisted mainly of poor Eastern European Jews living under the direst of circumstances in Leopoldstadt, the Jewish quarter of Vienna.

[55] Albert S. Lindemann. *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 403-4.

[56] Wilhelm Marr. *Der Sieg des Judenthums ueber das Germanenthum vom nicht con-fessionellen Standpunkt ausbetrachtet*. Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 1879. Other historians give 1873 as the year of publication.

Semitism referred to the contemporary anti-Jewish campaigns in Europe. The term is actually a misnomer: Semite covers all Semites, including Arabs. Léon Poliakov, in the conclusion to Volume III of his *History of Antisemitism,* distinguishes between anti-Jewish, which is hostility to a belief, and anti-Semitic, which is hostile to a hypothetical Jewish essence, although the two terms often lead to confusion.

Marr's coining of the term signalled a landmark in the history of anti-Semitism in Europe: a shift from religious prejudice to a scientifically justified (by pseudo-scientific racial theories), politically organised and society-sanctioned racism that would culminate eventually into Nazism.[57] Marr's pamphlet did not so much offer novel ideas about Judaism as it voiced prevailing racist ideas at the right time. In other words: the public consciousness seemed ripe for Marr's perception of Jews. Marr claimed that

> when Jews were legitimately disliked, it was not because of groundless or metaphysical fantasies, but because of quite palpable Jewish traits, among them their abhorrence for real work and their proclivity to exploit the labour of others. These traits were in turn related to Jewish contempt for non-Jews and feelings of superiority towards them.

Marr's pamphlet, first denounced as mere demagogy, soon earned him the respect of intellectuals like Heinrich von Treitschke and Adolf Stoecker.[58] The latter, minister and chaplain to the court of the Kaiser (Emperor Franz Joseph) and founder of the Christian Social Workers Party, proclaimed Jews as out of control and therefore not fitting in a liberal environment. In addition, according to Stoecker, Jews were recklessly destructive in their mockery of German Christians. Marr's predilection for the term Semite, which he used to refer to Jews as a race,

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[57] Léon Poliakov. *The History of Anti-Semitism. From Voltaire to Wagner.* 1968. Trans. Miriam Kochan. Vol. 3. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 458-60.

[58] Adolf Stoecker. *The History of Anti-Semitism. Suicidal Europe, 1870-1933.* By Léon Poliakov. 1977. Trans. George Klin. Vol. 4. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 19. Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-96) was a widely respected historian and political writer whose advocacy of (Prussian) power politics was influential at home and contributed to distrust of Germany abroad. From 1871 to 1884 he was a member of the Reichstag, first as a National Liberal and then as a moderate conservative, but as a public figure he was handicapped by almost total deafness. Treitschke was a proponent of authoritarian power politics and a vociferous herald of the unity of Germany through Prussian might. Treitschke believed that the state should be the centre of the lives of its citizens and that it should be headed by authoritarian rulers without the check of a parliament. He held that Germany was the true heir of the Holy Roman Empire; thus he pressed for its rise to the status of a great imperialist power. He disparaged Western European liberalism and took an equally sceptical view of democracy in North America. From: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2003. Lemma: Support of Fascism: Heinrich von Treitschke.

must be viewed within the context of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific interest in biological and linguistic differences between the various peoples in the world. Ultimately, this interest led to a view of humankind in terms of a hierarchy of races and languages. Soon the idea of the Aryan race (and its languages) as superior (to the Semitic races for instance) by virtue of physical, cultural and mental characteristics, took hold.[59] Initially this preoccupation with races, also referred to as racialism as opposed to racism, was a purely academic matter and thus had nothing to do with racism or politics. In France, for instance, Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816-82), a well-kown French aristocrat, diplomat and novelist, had developed a theory of the Aryan master race in *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races(Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines,* 1853-55), in which he claimed that the foundation of empires created racial mixture which led to the degeneration of races. He called this process Semiticisation, because of his belief that Semitic peoples were a product of a Middle Eastern mixture of otherwise distinct black, white and yellow races. Gobineau was not an anti-Semite, but his theories, like those of other racialists such as Julius Langbehn (1851-1907) and Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), were put to use by Nazi ideologists, for instance by Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946).[60] Ethnologists then realised that the only relation between the peoples in the Bible book *Genesis* designated as Semites was a geographical one. Subsequently phrenologists defined the term "Semite" in terms of certain measurements of the skull of the Jews, and Arabs having dolichocephalic skulls: curly

[59] The discovery of the Indo-European language group not only enabled science to track the historical relations between many European and Asian languages. It was also once and for all the end of the idea that Hebrew was the original language of all human beings and also of the idea that all human beings are descendants of (one) Adam. As a result the western scholars searched for their own illustrious forefathers in Central Asia, Persia and India following the traces of Indian and Iranian traditions. Indo-European research started as early as in the first decades of the 19th century, and Max Müller and other Indo-Europeanists happened to use the word "Aryan" to describe the old Indo-Europeans. As a matter of cause, these early Aryans had to be members of the superior white race if they were to represent the ancestors of the modern Europeans. S. Scholz. "The Myth of the Aryan Tribe". *Das Ariosophieprojekt. N.p.* 1994. Trans. B. Kühne (2003). Web. 6 December 2014.

[60] Julius Langbehn (1851-1907). Professor and Rembrandt scholar; wrote a popular racist attack on modern art and art museums. Langbehn studied art history and anthropology at the university of Kiel before obtaining his doctorate from the university of Munich. Among art historians who adopted Nietzschean values of art, perhaps the worst was Langbehn. Poorly educated and highly opinionated, Langbehn anonymously published a book in 1890 attacking modern art on racial grounds, a book which took the German art history world by storm. *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator), deplored the state of contemporary art production, suggesting that, Rembrandt, an example of the southern German "race" was part of a pure *Volk* least defiled by racial intermixing. https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/langbehnj.htm

and abundant hair, slightly wavy or straight strong beard, predominantly black, prominent straight or aquiline nose and an oval face.[61]

Back to Germany in the interbellum. What did Germany look like when David Vogel visited Berlin in the 1930s and when Kafka lived there for a while in the twenties with Dora Diamant? After the First World War Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and the German Empire founded by Bismarck ended. Germany turned into the Weimar Republic with democratic ideals: power to the people, a parliament (*Reichstag*), political representation for minorities and a president elected by the people. However, Germany was deeply humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles terms stipulating that it alone was forced to accept responsibility for causing the war and that it had to pay substantial war reparations for all the damage done. It also had to cede land to France and Poland. The German army was limited to 100,000 men and was barred from having submarines or military aircraft.

Moreover, the country was in great political and social turmoil as a result of the war: conflicts between right-wing nationalists, socialists and communists, hunger, unemployment, etc. Adolph Hitler, who joined the Workers' Party, cleverly manipulated the desire of many Germans to get rid of the shackles of the Versailles Treaty. After a number of setbacks, Adolf Hitler rose to leadership through his emotional and (pathologically) manipulative speeches and shrewd political machinations. He advocated nationalism, militarism, a commitment to the *Volk* (people) and a racially pure Germany, that is, a Germany free from Jews. Hitler condemned the Jews, cleverly exploiting and politicising the anti-Semitic feelings prevailing in Europe. He changed the name of the party into the National Socialist German Workers' Party, for short the Nazi Party (or NSDAP). By the end of 1920, the Nazi Party had about 3,000 members, and a year later Hitler became its official leader. In 1923 his attempt to seize power in Munich, which failed miserably, came to be known as the Beer Hall Putsch. Together with other Nazi Party members, he was charged with high treason and imprisoned. However, using the courtroom for propaganda purposes, he succeeded in winning over the sympathy of the conservative judges, and was sentenced to five years and released after one year. It was during that year that he wrote *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle,* 1925) in which he expounded his ideas about German Nationalism, anti-Bolshevism and the Jews. *Mein Kampf* became the ideological foundation for the Nazi Party's racist beliefs and practices. After his release from prison, Hitler resurrected the Nazi Party and awaited the political opportunity to seize power while the con-

[61] Dolichocephalic means long-headed: applied to skulls of which the breadth is less than four-fifths (or, according to Broca, three-fourths) of the length; also (less commonly) to human populations having such skulls; as opposed to brachycephalic or short-headed: skulls whose breadth is at least four fifths of the length. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. CD-ROM. Version 3.0.

servative Von Hindenburg was president. Hitler's Nazi Party initially failed to be successful in the cities and in the Reichstag elections of 1928. However, after shifting its programme to pleading for the expropriation of Jewish agricultural property and by condemning the large Jewish department stores, the Party became popular, mainly among the lower middle classes. By 1929 the Party had 108,000 members, a paramilitary unit (the SA) and, within the latter, an elite group, the SS, under Heinrich Himmler. By the late twenties, the Nazi Party set up further auxiliary groups. The Hitler Youth, the Student League and the Pupils' League were all open to young Germans. The National Socialist Women's League allowed women to get involved. Different professional groups, such as teachers, lawyers and doctors had their own auxiliary units.

The Weimar Republic collapsed after the American Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed. The Crash had a devastating impact on the American economy and by extension on the Weimar Republic, which had been financed with American capital. Companies throughout Germany, especially in the industrial Ruhr area, went bankrupt and workers were laid off by the thousands. Unemployment affected nearly every German family. Fathers could no longer provide for their families, which lacked money for the most basic items: food, heating, a home, clothes, etc. As the Weimar regime offered no solutions for this terrible situation, it is hardly surprising that they turned to the more extreme political parties in Germany: the Nazi Party and the Communist Party. In the 1930 Reichstag elections the Nazis gained 143 seats, a vast improvement on their previous result. In the July 1932 Reichstag elections, the Nazis obtained 230 seats, making them the largest party in the Reichstag. In 1933 Hitler became Chancellor. At that time there were 550,000 Jews in Germany: less than one percent of the German population.

After the Holocaust it was hard to understand the love of generations of Jews for a German culture that had so easily slipped into Nazism. Perhaps that love was rooted in the memory of the golden age of German Jewry, from 1850 to 1871, when German Jews were widely tolerated; even before the German Emancipation Law of 1861 removed all limitations on Jews, they had taken full advantage of newly found acceptance and opportunities to forge ahead. The Jewish community, writes Macmaster:

> ... with its highly literate culture achieved a remarkable degree of upward social mobility through educational achievement and entry into the professions particularly medicine, law, journalism, and finance. The dynamic rise of Jews led to an 'overrepresentation' in many sectors where they constituted a percentage that was much higher than their presence in the overall population. However, the industrial revolution, which - unlike France and Britain - affected Germany and Austria much later, affected those countries by an almost

> unprecedented advance of new technologies backed by capitalist finance. The anti-Semitic political parties that began to appear from 1879 onwards were able to recruit among urban groups that were in crisis as a result of the stock market crash of 1873 and the following economic depression which lasted until 1896. Typical victims of change were the small shopkeepers of Berlin and Vienna who blamed their problems on Jewish owned department stores and retailers …who could not compete with large-scale, industrial enterprise.[62]

This may be true, but it does not explain why these people blamed the Jews instead of class relations for their misfortunes. In any event, subsequently the relations between Germans and Jews were thoroughly damaged, no matter how the Jews tried to restore them. Ritchie Robertson writes how Gershom Scholem, the German/Jewish historian of Jewish mysticism, thundered in 1964: "The Jews attempted a dialogue with the Germans, starting from all possible points of view and situations, demandingly, imploringly, and entreatingly, servile and defiant, with a dignity employing all manner of tones and a godforsaken lack of dignity".[63] This behaviour was informed by a long-standing Jewish love of German culture that had characterised the attitude of assimilated German/Jewish bourgeoisie long before the industrial revolution as can be seen in Hannah Arendt's *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (2000).[64] Rahel Varnhagen, born Levin (1771-1833), adopted the values of the Enlightenment, presided over a salon of intellectuals and poets including Heinrich Heine, and was married to a gentile German aristocrat. Her deepest wish, to become truly German, was shattered by the rise of Prussian anti-Semitism. She died in 1833, feeling bitterly betrayed.

Martin Buber, before leaving Germany in 1939, testified to his love of German culture when he wrote: "The symbiosis of German and Jewish character (German *Wesen*), as I experienced it in the four decades I spent in Germany, was the first and only one since the Spanish Middle Ages, to have received the highest confirmation that history can confer: conformation by fruitfulness." [65] However, to Scholem the Zionist, who left Germany for Palestine in 1923, Jewish attachment to Germany seemed a huge and fatal mistake. How terribly, terribly right he was!

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[62] Neil MacMaster. *Racism in Europe: 1870-2000*. Palgrave: New York, 2001. 98-9.

[63] Ritchie Robertson. *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939*: Emancipation and its Discontents. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 2-3.

[64] Hannah Arendt. *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*. Ed. Liliane Weissberg. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

[65] Robertson. Ibid., 3, note 5: "Das Ende der Deutsch-Jűdische Symbiose". *Jüdische Weltrundschau* (10 Mar. 1939), repr. in Buber: *Der Jude und sein Judentum*. Cologne: Joseph Melzer, 1963. 645.

Back to Bauman. Bauman views the perception of the Jew as a signifier of ambivalence instilled into the believer by medieval Christianity and as subsequently assimilated into the Western cultural consciousness, to be given new life, by being politically utilised, during the ordering frenzy of modernity. Bauman's sociological model of ambivalence fuses sociology with (undefined, but obviously Freudian) psychology. His perception of ambivalence (love/hate) in the eye of the believer could be seen as a sociological perspective of what Julia Kristeva had formulated earlier as a universal psychodynamics of identity-processing in *Powers of Horror.*

3.6 Hatred of Jews in Vogel's Culture of Origin: The Jewish Pale of Settlement

The Central European ordering frenzy Bauman refers to as typical of modernity appeared as a rather different ordering principle in tsarist Russia, which included the once independent kingdom of Poland since the Polish partitions in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.[66] The Western ideals of the Enlightenment and the subsequent rise of modernity did not penetrate in tsarist Russia, and the Tsars' (Emperors) policy was one of divide and rule (by oppression) with regard to the many different ethnic groups and peoples living in the Russian Empire. Religious animosity against Jews, however, was not limited to Western and Central Europe.

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[66] After the first partition of Poland in 1772, when masses of Jews living within the former country came under Russian rule, it was decided (1791) to allow the presence of the Jews not only in their former regions of residence, but also in the new areas which had been annexed from Turkey on the Black Sea shore, which the Russian government sought to colonise rapidly. On the other hand, Jewish merchants were barred from trading in the provinces of inner Russia. These decrees were intended to serve the national and economic interests of the state by preventing competition between Jewish and Russian merchants and encouraging settlement in the desolate steppes of southern Russia, which eventually became the provinces of Kherson, Dnepropetrovsk (Yekaterinoslav) and Taurida (Crimea). The Russian government also aimed to reduce in this way the excess of Jews in the branches of commerce and inn-keeping within the territory annexed from Poland. In 1794 the earlier decree was ratified and applied to the regions which had been annexed with the second partition of Poland (1793), to the provinces of Minsk, Volhynia, and Podolia as well as to the region to the east of the River Dnieper (the provinces of Chernigov and Poltava). With the third partition of Poland (1795), the law was also applied to the provinces of Vilna and Grodno. In 1799 Courland was added to the Pale of Settlement. In the "Jewish Statute" promulgated in 1804, the province of Astrakhan and the whole of the northern Caucasus were added to the regions open to Jews. In 1812, upon its annexation, Bessarabia was also included. The Kingdom of Poland was incorporated into Russia in 1815, which comprised ten provinces that later became known as the Vistula region but was not officially included within the Pale of Settlement, and until 1868 the transit of Jews through this area to the Lithuanian and Ukrainian provinces was prohibited by law. In practice, however, the provinces of the Vistula Region were generally included within the Pale of Settlement.

In the Russian Empire, the presence of Jews had not been tolerated since the fifteenth century. Russian Orthodox Christianity considered Jews as enemies of Christ and believed that their ultimate aim was to convert Christians to Judaism. The Tsars, as Protectors of the Faith, frequently refused permission to Jewish merchants even to enter Russia. As a result, the large numbers of Polish and Lithuanian Jews incorporated into Russia after its expansion to the west in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century constituted an enormous problem. Jews were not a Slavic people, and thus did not fit in with the Pan Slavic conceptualisation of the Russian Empire to form a single Slavic people embracing all nationalities with one language and one religion. Besides, there were resentments about the emerging economic role of the Jews in in Russian villages where they constituted a threat to the virtually unlimited power of the nobility who owned both the villages and the inhabitants (the serfs). The only solution to these problems was state-enforced assimilation and the confinement of Jews to one district: the Pale of Settlement. This meant mass deportations of Jews (on foot, and sometimes shackled) from all parts of the vast Russian Empire to the Pale of Settlement from 1835 until 1917 (with the second Russian Revolution) when the Jews were finally granted equal rights in Russia.

Martin Gilbert. *The Jews of Russia: their History in Maps and Photographs*. Imprint unknown. 1976. 23.

Why devote a relatively long section to Poland? Kafka had no associations with Poland at all during his life, which ended in 1924. However, during the Second World War, his favourite sister Ottla was deported by the Nazis to the Łódź ghetto where his other two sisters, Ellie and Valli, perished. On 7 October 1943, Ottla accompanied a group of children as a voluntary assistant to Auschwitz. She was murdered there shortly after.

Poland was the country where Vogel stayed for a while in the interim period between his flight from Podolia (in the Pale), Russia, to escape conscription in the Russian Army, and his settling in Vienna. In his diary (see Chapter 5) he extensively describes his stay there among the orthodox Polish Jews. He also travelled to Warsaw after a short stay in Tel Aviv (Palestine) in 1929-30, to lecture on modern Hebrew literature. Poland was thus the place of Vogel's entrance into Eastern Central Europe (Vienna), as well as that of his exit in Auschwitz, where he was murdered together with millions of other Jews in one of the five camps set up by the Nazis with the exclusive purpose to kill Jews (the others were: Maidanek, Belzec, Chelmo, Sobibor and Treblinka).[67]

Compared to the relation between Jews and any other European peoples, the relation between Poles and Jews is most difficult to grasp on account of the contradictory picture one gets when one tries to gather information about the experience of Jews in Poland. On the one hand, there is the long history of Jewish settlement in Poland from the tenth century onwards, when Jews from Germany and Bohemia, the Byzantine Empire and Eastern Romania, invited by the Polish Kings, settled in Poland. At the time, it was a kingdom with a population consisting only of two classes: nobles and utterly poor and uneducated serfs, with the Jews forming a middle class. It is obvious that the Jews, with their diasporic tradition of surviving in the most difficult situations, their (religious) literacy and their long trading history of trading, were no partners for the Polish population who lived for the greater part in medieval conditions in isolated rural communities. The Jews, according to the historian Léon Poliakov, soon assumed the chief role in all activities relating to the circulation of merchandise and money. Poliakov insists that initially the Jews lived in excellent harmony with the Christians and that it was only much later, when the power of the kings waned and the Church became increasingly powerful, that the Christians started preaching hostility

[67] Serge Klarsfeld. *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France 1942-44: Documentation of the Deportation of the Victims of the Final Solution in France*. New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983. There is an entry on David Vogel, on p. 525. It reads: "Convoy 69, February 10, 1944, Vogel, David, born 1891 Satanoff. When convoy 69 arrived at Auschwitz 110 men out of 812 were selected for work and received numbers 174904-175013. The rest was gassed upon arrival. Twenty of the men selected for work survived the camp. As Vogel suffered from tuberculosis and ill health it is highly likely that he was not selected for work."

against Jews and that hatred and resentment against them began to spread. Yet, one wonders about Poliakov's excellent harmony for, if Jews inspired hostile feelings, it would particularly have been the case in the closed communities of the Catholic Polish peasants. If anywhere the role as a signifier of ambivalence fell to the Jews, it must have been in that closed, feudal society of the poor, uneducated Polish peasant where anything strange, the not us, must have caused apprehension, vexation and fear. The Jews were the outsiders, others, blurring the us borderlines that ought to be kept watertight, while simultaneously undermining the reassuringly monotonous, repetitive and predictable nature of the feudal world. The Church may have canalised and manipulated those apprehensions, but it was not the architect: it preyed on resentments already there.

The relative wealth and literacy of the strangers in comparison to the general utter poverty and illiteracy of the Polish peasants must have caused resentment too, the more so as in the early settlement times in Poland Jews lived from moneylending, leasing property and trade. But Jews also ran taverns, and worked for tradesmen and merchants. They also gradually came to act as stewards for the Polish nobility (as the court Jews had done in the courts of the German princes) and had to collect the peasants' dues to their lords and masters. Furthermore memories, particularly of bad relational situations, have a long life in closed, primitive rural communities where they were bound to be transmitted from one generation to the next. The longevity of those resentments is therefore hardly surprising. From a psychological point of view, this is understandable but, from a post-Holocaust position of the historiography of anti-Semitism, it is extremely difficult to accept.

At the end of the First World War (1917), Poland finally became an independent Republic and faced the difficult task of having to integrate the three regions into a single country and nation. Poland had gained its independence on the condition (stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles) that it should give all its minorities equal rights. The Poles had to give in, but bitterly resented having been coerced into accepting the Treaty by the Allies and the Jews, who had sent their leaders to the Paris Peace Conference to plead their case. At that time, Poland then consisted of two-thirds Poles and one third minorities: Jews, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Lithuanians. Whereas the Belorussians, Lithuanians, and to some extent also the Germans, lived in clearly defined areas, the Jews were scattered all over the country. Three factors determined the Polish struggle with the Jewish problem: (1) The size of the Jewish population (three million: 10 percent of the whole population and up to 30 percent of the urban population). (2) The key role of the Jews in the Polish economy: Jews accounted for an average of 52.7 percent of all those engaged in commerce with trade being the livelihood of 36.6 percent of the Jewish

population.[68] (3) Their administrative elusiveness as a group because of their dispersion among the Polish population.

As the leadership of the new Polish Republic was in the hands of an intelligentsia rooted in the old Polish nobility, and with a weak middle class, the Jews initially had an opportunity to engage in commerce and to penetrate into the free professions: medicine, journalism and publishing, while accounting for 10 percent of the country's schoolteachers and outside the state-school system even for 43.3 percent. Jews were however excluded from bureaucracy as the new state insisted on keeping its Polish national character.

From 1920 to mid-1923 the country seemed to recover economically from the damage of the war, but entered a period of financial crisis until the *coup d'état* by Marshall Pilsudski in 1926. Pilsudski set up a dictatorial regime that was meant to establish peace and order in the country. During Pilsudski's tenure Polish nationalism grew stronger, a tendency that reinforced itself after his death in 1935. Meanwhile Poland had been deeply affected by the economic depression that prevailed in Europe. The economic and political tensions found expression in overt anti-Semitism, which meant that the Jews suffered doubly: from the economic situation itself and from the way it worked as an incentive for a now openly expressed anti-Semitism. In addition, between the 1920s and 1930s, Nazi anti-Semitism had gradually started blowing over to Poland, especially when Hitler began to manifest himself politically in Germany. There were anti-Semitic riots, destruction of Jewish property and individuals of the German *Kristallnacht* type.

Ezra Mendelsohn's (1994) paraphrasing a section from Polin's *Pinkas Hakehilot* (1980), writes on the small Polish town of Drohobycz:

> Antisemitic outbursts of varying proportions were the lot of the Jews of Drohobycz during the years 1918-39. At the end of the nineteen twenties Ukrainians attacked Jews, especially in the market. In 1930 the Endeks [right wing party] circulated antisemitic pamphlets. In 1936 several Jews were wounded by Ukrainian attacks. In the same year seven Jewish homes were attacked. In 1938 the Endeks broke the windows in the synagogue… The Polish authorities did nothing to calm things down.[69]

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[68] Leny Yahl. *The Hol ocaust: The Fate of European Jewry.* Trans. Ina Friedman and Haya Galai. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 187.

[69] Antony Polonsky, Ezra Mendelsohn and Jerzy Tomaszewski, eds. *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry: Jews in Independent Poland, 1918-1939.* Vol. 8. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994. 8.

At a meeting of the *Sejm* (the Polish Parliament) deputy Mincberg read into the record a passage from the Łódź newspaper *Republika* that had appeared on 10 October (1936):

> Blood has been spilled and will continue to be spilled in the future. Much blood will be spilled for this is the only plank over which this debate on justice can be conducted. …Today there is no way to confront the Jew, who wishes to take over Poland, other than to strike him with sword or bullet. These are correct and useful arguments. There can be no verbal arguments or attempts to persuade; we are at war, and we must wage a war that is continuous and all-encompassing. He who seeks to dissuade us from this war is a traitor.[70]

Already before Hitler's rise to power, the Polish government had considered purging the economy from Jews. Jews were excluded from welfare allowances distributed to which unemployed Polish workers were entitled. Jewish access to the free professions was restricted, and in 1938 they were no longer allowed in the legal profession. Gradually the Jewish population sank into destitution and poverty, suffering also from an intensifying anti-Semitism that found expression in all layers of Polish society. No wonder that Zionism began to increasingly appeal to Jews as the situation became unbearable and there seemed to be no other way out. In his book Melzer provides a detailed survey of a stream of anti-Semitic incidents, supported by factual evidence of the sort I have noted before.

Jan T. Cross writes that during the German occupation some segments of the Polish population supported, took part in or even instigated anti-Jewish actions by the Germans.[71] Deep-seated religious hate of Jews played a role and led to incidental pogroms in Poland, which was a divided, predominantly Roman Catholic country. Only when Poland became an independent country again in 1917 as stipulated by the Versailles Treaty, Polish political nationalism/anti-Semitism began to play a more prominent role (especially after Marshall Pilsudski's death in the thirties) and the us/them distinction applied to the Jews, which had always been there, intensified and changed into the ideological type of anti-Semitism that spread from Germany from the 1920s onwards.

In summary, on the one hand the situation of the Jews in Poland between the wars might be viewed as a grim foreboding of the tragedy of Polish Jewry in the Second World War. Yet, on the other hand, it saw a period of tremendous internal

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[70] Emanuel Melzer. *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935-39*. Trans. Ronit Librozen. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997. 63.

[71] A devastatingly sad example is, for instance, the brutal murder of 1,600 Jewish men, women and children by their Polish neighbours in the Polish town Jedwabne in 1941. See Jan T. Cross. *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001.

developments among the Jewish population: during the 1920s and 1930s, the Jewish political movements that I have discussed earlier flourished as they never had before. Zionism and Jewish socialism turned almost overnight into mass movements capable of undermining the control of Jewish orthodoxy, which had organised itself into the powerful traditionalist orthodox party *Agudat Yisrael*.

The Jewries of Poland, Bessarabia, Bukovina and Lithuania went through a period of politicisation and nationalisation not unlike the various nation-states in Central and Western Europe. Thus, the external situation of Eastern European Jews became increasingly similar to that of non-Jews. But, as in Central Europe, the process of acculturation did not improve the social relation between Jews and non-Jews. The accusation that anti-Semitism was a result of the cultural separateness of Eastern European Jewry proved untrue.

The post-Holocaust historiography on Eastern European anti-Semitism in interbellum Poland for instance is relatively young; most works I have consulted are from the last two decades of the twentieth century and have been written as part of Jewish history in Poland, seldom by non-Jewish authors, mostly by Israeli, Polish-born, or one generation removed Polish-born authors. The first work I have consulted is *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry: Jews in Independent Poland 1918-1939*.[72] The authors question if objectivity is possible in those works, on two grounds that can be traced back to conflicts between Orthodox and Secular Zionist Jewry in interbellum Poland about how to deal with the difficult situation of the Jews there. In a nutshell, Ezra Mendelsohn (clearly representing the orthodox view) expresses reservations (expressed in a chapter entitled "Jewish Historiography on Polish Jewry in the Interwar Period" (3-13)) about what he sees as the official or Establishment Jewish attitude towards that period in Poland. Although leaving the historical quality of those works intact Mendelsohn thinks that: a) their representation of the pre-interwar period is biased by a romantic and at times heroic view of the *shtetl* period of Jewish history in Poland, b) they think too much in terms of national categories and do not compare the suffering of Jews with the suffering of Polish peasants and other minorities, c) they are biased by Leftish moral indignation, and d) they do not devote enough time on the analysis of twentieth-century Polish politics and Polish social thought.

I will not go further into this problem as it falls outside the scope of this study. However, it is certainly relevant as it not only represents the differences between orthodox and Zionist perceptions of the relations between Poles and Jews, but also a much wider controversy as evidenced by the ongoing contradictory views on that subject matter. If you talk to Polish-born immigrants in the west today about the Polish-Jewish relations in the interbellum, passions will flare up, ranging from

[72] *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* (1994).

deep indignation about the mere assumption of Polish anti-Semitism, to sad assent illustrated by stories about anti-Semitic discrimination and insult.

3.7 The West's Puzzling Lack of Interest in the History of the Jews in Eastern Europe and Russia

A relatively large portion of this chapter is devoted to Vogel's cultural background because, unlike the history of the Jews in Central and Western Europe, the history of the Jews of Russia and Poland/Galicia (where Vogel stayed on his way from Satanów to Vienna) has certainly not been of paramount interest to the average Western audience of *Married Life*. I even wonder if, except for the Israeli Russian refugees and their offspring, that history is the self-evident intellectual property of today's average Hebrew reader in Israel.

There are at least two obvious reasons for the West's lack of knowledge or interest in the history of the Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe: (1) The Holocaust: the vanishing of a whole culture with the murder by the Nazis of 4,565,000 Eastern European (Polish) and Russian Jews out of a total of 5,950,000. (2) Non-Jewish pre-Holocaust Western historiography has barely shown any interest in the history of the Jews of Poland and Russia, or for that matter in their trials and tribulations, or the flourishing Jewish literary, cultural, political, educational, journalistic, religious, and spiritual activity.

This lack of interest is curious to say the least, considering that during the decades before and after Vogel's birth (1891), the cities of Vienna, Paris, Berlin and New York were inundated with thousands of Eastern European and Russian Jewish refugees.

Public communication during the First World War (1914-18) was a case in point: public attention was focused on the Western Front and nobody wrote about the Eastern Front where, sanctioned by the Tsar, Russian troops marching to the west ransacked the Jewish Pale of Settlement on their own Russian territory as well as the Jewish regions of Southern and Eastern Poland. Glenda Abramson (2008) writes about this strange incongruity in communication:

> We are fully aware of the crimes committed against the Jews in the Second World War, but while the persecution of the Jews in the Great War has not been ignored, it is surprising that it has not received more extensive attention. When the war broke out Jewish settlements along the Eastern front [the Jewish Pale of Settlement] were immediately targeted, particularly by the Russian army - with the eager help of the Russian Poles – seemed intent on annihilating the Jews and every vestige of their culture.[73]

[73] Glenda Abramson. *Hebrew Writing in the First World War*. London: Valentine Mitchell, 2008. xiv.

To Russian eyes the Jews were responsible for all the ills of the war. This belief was at the root of the tsarist army's campaign of brutalisation of the Jews, including expulsion and massacres: almost 600,000 Jews were expelled from their homes and almost 250,000 Jewish civilians were slaughtered. Russian soldiers desecrated cemeteries, burned synagogues and Jewish *shtetls*, demolished Jewish businesses, banned Hebrew and Yiddish printing and destroyed books. Backed by local Poles, the Russians convinced themselves that every Jew was a spy and that Jewish homes harboured great wealth and treasure. Wherever the Russian army was located, the local population would violently turn against the Jews, who became scapegoats for German achievements. Russian soldiers were told that, had it not been for the *Yids* (traitors), the Prussian army would have been routed altogether. The fact that a quarter of a million Jews were serving in the Russian army did not help to combat these beliefs.[74]

However, the West's lack of interest in Eastern European and Russian Jewry was not limited to the First World War. Jan Karski, secret courier between the Polish resistance and the Polish government in exile in London during the Second World War, writes in his devastatingly factual, historical account of that period (which reads like a film), *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World* (1945), how he informed the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the American President Roosevelt in 1942 and 1943 about what happened in the Warsaw ghetto and in the concentration camps, and how they both listened politely but sceptically, and did nothing at all. Eden, who did not allow Karski to meet Churchill and Roosevelt, spoke the unthinkable words: "Tell the Poles that we shall win the War".[75]

3.8 The Historical Sources for This Chapter

In view of the relative general lack of historical interest in Eastern European and Russian Jewry, I gleaned my sources for that research area from works of Jewish historiographers. Simon M. Dubnow's integral *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland* (1918), written whilst Vogel was in Vienna, has lost nothing of its stylistic directness and keeps the reader enthralled, in spite of (or perhaps because of) its emotional presentation of historical facts.[76] Dubnow (1860-1941), a Russian Jew,

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[74] Abramson. Ibid. xiv.

[75] Jan Karski. *Story of a Secret State. My Report to the World.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1945.

[76] Simon M. Dubnow. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*. Trans. Israel Friedlander. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1918. For a current, integral history see: Antony Polonsky. *The Jews in Poland and Russia*. Vol. 2. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012. For Vogel studies especially: Polonsky. Ibid. Vol. 2. This volume

born like Vogel in the Jewish Pale of Settlement and a contemporary of Vogel (though a generation older), shared the latter's fate, albeit differently. Whereas Vogel was secretly and namelessly killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, there were some witnesses to the crime committed against Simon Dubnow by a Nazi collaborator, obviously aware of the lack of interest in the fate of the Russian Jews. Dubnow, a Jewish historian until his last breath, insisted that his fellow Jewish prisoners record the atrocities committed against the Jews of Russia. Koppel Pinson, another historian, writes about this event in the section "Simon Dubnow" in *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism:*

> In August 1933, when Hitler came to power, Dubnow moved from Berlin to Riga, Latvia. There he wrote his autobiographical *Book of my Life*. When the Russians came into Latvia, Dubnow was afraid that they would not spare him because of his well-known anti-Bolshevist record. But to his surprise they did not molest him. Perhaps it was because they did not remain long enough. In any case, when the Nazis entered Riga the fate of all the Jews there was sealed. We have several versions by refugees from Riga about Dubnow's last days. They vary in details. But the main course of events was apparently along the following lines. When the Nazis entered Riga they evicted Dubnow from his home and seized his entire library. They summoned him for questioning at Gestapo headquarters and then placed him in a home for the aged. After a short period of ghetto organization the Nazis liquidated the ghetto at the end of October 1941 and a month later they carried out their first "action" against the Riga Jews. Dubnow was seriously ill, but friends managed to conceal him for a while. On the night of December 7-8 the Nazis carried out their second "action." All the old and sick as well as the women in advanced pregnancy were herded together in buses. Dubnow was also taken outside to be squeezed into one of these over-loaded buses. He was in high fever at the time and was hardly able to move his feeble legs. A Latvian militiaman then advanced and fired a bullet in Dubnow's back and the sainted martyr fell dead on the spot. The next day several friends buried him in the old cemetery in the Riga ghetto. A story went round that the last words that Dubnow muttered as he was being led out to the bus were: "Brothers, Jews, don't forget! Recount what you hear and see! Brothers make a record of it all!" His sense of history and the spirit of *Nahpesa v'nahkora* did not forsake him even to his bitter end.[77]

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considers the deterioration of the situation of the Jews in the period from 1881 to 1914 and the Jewish politics that led to the development of new movements: Zionism, socialism, autonomism, the emergence of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature, Jewish urbanisation and the rise of Jewish mass culture. Galicia, Prussian Poland, the Kingdom of Poland and the tsarist empire are all dealt with individually, as are the main towns.

[77] Simon Dubnow. *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*. Ed. Koppel Pinson. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958. 39. The expression

Except for Polonsky, post-World War Two historiographers of Russian Jewry have restricted themselves to selected historical periods. An example is Salo W. Baron, in his informative study on *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (1964), written almost half a century after Dubnow's integral study of Russian Jewry, and leaning on it. Baron's work has been crucial to this study as it expands on the history of Jews under the two Tsars that ruled during Vogel's life in the Russian Pale of Settlement (1891-1912) before he fled to the West: Tsar Alexander III and Tsar Nicholas II. Baron writes that, alongside the Tsars, the Russian Christian Orthodox Church exercised considerable spiritual and political power. It worked as a government agency and was used by the Tsars to various degrees as a tool during their imperial campaigns of russification and persecution of the Jews.[78] One of the reasons why Vogel's Russian Jewish background is particularly crucial to my analysis of his novel *Married life* (chapter 6) is that it helped me as a modern Western reader to avoid looking at Vogel's novel from a self-same, restricted Western perspective. Marcel Proust describes this expressively in his *Remembrance of Things Past* (1923):

> … if we visited Mars or Venus keeping the same senses, they would clothe in the same aspect as the things of the earth everything that we should be capable of seeing. The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit if … if we visited Mars or Venus keeping the same senses they would clothe in the same aspects as the things of the earth everything that we should be capable of seeing. The only true voyage of discovery the only fountain of eternal youth would he not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is.[79]

3.9 Conclusion

A substantial part of this chapter has been devoted to Eastern European history for reasons I have expounded before. Compared to the sea of historical infor-

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Nahpesa v'nahkora comes from Lamentations 3:40: "Let us sift through and investigate our ways".

78 Tsar Alexander III (ruled 1881-1894), believed that all cultures and nationalities within the empire should become *Great Russians*. This was referred to as *russification*, which implied that all the ethnic groups that were concerned about their culture at the expense of Russia's as a whole had to become loyal to Russia and the Tsar, rather than to their ethnic leaders. For instance, they had to be Russians first, instead of a Kazak, or Cossack, or a Jew for that matter.

79 Marcel Proust. *Remembrance of Things Past. The Captive*. Part Two. Trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff. New York: Chatto and Windus, 1941.

mation we have about Western and Central Europe (Kafka's cultural historical context), relatively little is known about the Eastern European cultural context in which David Vogel lived, travelled and studied before he came to Vienna, and in which he died. Chapter 5 will examine anti-Jewishness in Vogel's native country Russia, as an introduction to my analysis of his novel *Married Life* in chapter 6. If we want to make what Proust calls a "true voyage of discovery", we have to look at Vogel's work "with other eyes", to behold the "hundred universes" that I have sensed in every sentence of *Married Life*, but that I have missed in the reception of his novel.


FRANZ KAFKA
DIE VERWANDLUNG
DER JÜNGSTE TAG * 22/23
KURT WOLFF VERLAG · LEIPZIG
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4 CAPTURING ABJECTION IN FRANZ KAFKA'S "THE METAMORPHOSIS"

> …modern German-Jewish literature questions and undermines all notions of stability and identity. It is not so much identity but abjection, ambivalence and difference that characterize modern German-Jewish literature.[80]

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I read textual productions of identity and meaning in Kafka's novella "The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung", 1912) through the lens of Julia Kristeva's notions of abjection and the two registers of identity and meaning, the symbolic and the semiotic, which I discussed in chapter 2.[81]

Kafka's "The Metamorphosis", the famous story about a man turning into a giant insect, is perhaps the most enigmatic and challenging work of Kafka's oeuvre, on account of its extraordinary simultaneous realism and fantasy. It centres on the German Samsa family whose only son, Gregor, a hard-working, dutiful young salesman, turns overnight into an enormous horrific insect. The family,

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[80] Fuchs. *A Space of Anxiety*. 3. Fuchs' study explores Jewish experiences of identity and difference in the works of modern German Jewish writers before and after the Holocaust. Explored are Franz Kafka: *Der Verschollene*, 1912 (trans. America), Sigmund Freud, Joseph Roth, Albert Drach and Edgar Hilsenrath.

[81] The German text "Die Verwandlung" (1912) was first published in 1915 in *Die weissen Blätter*, a literary journal edited by the Alsatian novelist René Schickele, and subsequently published in book form in 1916 by Kurt Wolff Verlag, Leipzig. Kafka probably knew the concept of "metamorphosis" as a literary theme from two sources: from his training in the Classics at the German gymnasium *(*Staatsgymnasium mit Deutscher Unterrrichtssprache*)* (1893-1901), and the German University in Prague (Deutsche Universität Prag), but also from his keen interest in Jewish mysticism, in particular in the work of the Jewish mystic rabbi Nachman of Bratislava, in the years preceding "The Metamorphosis". For possible Jewish mysticism influences referring to the concept of metamorphosis into animals, plants and stones, see Gershon G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken, 1961. 281 ff.
Quotations in English and references to page numbers refer to the edition of "The Metamormhosis". Trans. and ed. Stanley Corngold. New York: Norton, 1996. From now referred to as "The Metamorphosis".
References to the German text in this chapter originate in the German critical edition in two volumes (*Textband* and *Apparatband*): *Franz Kafka: Drucke zu Lebzeiten. Kritische Ausgabe*. Wolf Kittler, Hans-Gerd Koch and Gerhard Neumann, eds. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1996.
The *Apparatband* also contains the history of the composition and publication of "The Metamorphosis", 177-91. From now referred to as DzL Textband.

with whom Gregor lives and works hard to provide for financially, is deeply disturbed by Gregor's metamorphosis. Unable to deal with their son/brother's insect difference, they increasingly see Gregor as a threat and start excluding him from their midst. At first they isolate him by locking him in his room but eventually the very relatives he used to financially provide for kill him at the hand of the father who finishes his insect/son off by throwing a rotten apple at him. After protracted suffering, Gregor the insect dies and is disposed of by the cleaning lady, along with other unwanted rubbish the family has no longer use for.

At the end of the narrative, with Gregor the Bug safely out of the way, the Samsas' fate seems to take a turn for the best. The parents, on a family outing with their daughter Grethe, Gregor's favourite sister (and co-plotter in his murder), fantasise with great satisfaction on Grethe's potential (as a future wife/mother) to safeguard the renewal and continuation of the Samsa family identity.

4.2 Methodology

Most critics who tried their hand at interpreting Kafka's enigmatic text saw it as representing actual socio-historical structures outside the text (as I will show later). That is not, however, the focus of my attention in this study. Taking a critical position on the border between the symbolic and the semiotic, I will try in this chapter to make the invisible logics of abjection in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" visible, and to investigate how such a reading affects the meaning and function of the text.

My focus on abjection as a universal, instinctive logic of all identity-formation does not imply disregarding the specificity of the text. On the contrary: Kristeva writes that the visibility of abjection in a text takes different forms, in different cultures, for different peoples. This inspired me to explore the universal: the text's production of abjection, alongside with the specific, namely its rootedness in the contemporary body of literature written by Jews, and in the contemporary Jewish discourse on the failure of assimilation.

Thus, I consider the text's specificity together with its universality: its dramatizing the logics of abjection as an ambivalent psychodynamics of exclusion (of an other) and renewal (in order to be a self). It is that life-giving ambivalence of abjection which is most difficult to grasp. Indeed, asks Kristeva, how can we grasp that impossible co-existence of positive and negative from our position in the symbolic order that is grounded in their separation? We can only look for analogies in literature, art, psychoanalysis and religion (and possibly Quantum physics?), and that will be my approach in this chapter. This brings me to a final remark about methodology: my analysis of texts in this study differs from classical Freudian text interpretation in that it does not interpret neurotic afflictions of the

writer into the text. On the contrary, I am not interested in pathology but in the universally human. That is perhaps the greatest shock that the study of abjection and "The Metamorphosis" present to us.

4.3 On the Specificity of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis"

Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" teems with inter-texts from the Jewish/Yiddish narrative tradition. The notion of metamorphosis itself, for instance, was a well-known motif in Hebrew/Yiddish literature, though Kafka was also familiar with Ovid's metamorphosis stories which he had read whilst at the German school.[82]

In addition, Berman (1995) and Mitosek (2004) consider Kafka's deployment of a family setting as a matrix for some of the primary psychic conflicts as a tradition in Polish/Yiddish literature.[83] Kafka may have become familiar with this tradition through his keen interest in the Polish/Yiddish theatre which would perform in corners of Prague cafés frequented by Kafka and his friend Max Brod, in the years before and during his writing "The Metamorphosis". As to the family setting, Freud's deployment of the Oedipal family triangle as a matrix for his work might, or perhaps must be, viewed within that same Jewish tradition. Deleuze and Guattari overlooked this issue in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983).[84] Obviously, their political preoccupations narrowed their view of Freud's Oedipal triangle to a product of a patriarchal, capitalist way of thinking. The "family romance as a setting", writes Berman, "enabled its (Jewish) audience to locate themselves in the world, *to achieve identities*".[85] That is, curiously enough, precisely what Kafka's text offers

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[82] Sarah Loeb. *Franz Kafka: A Question of Jewish Identity: Two Perspectives*. Boston: University Press of America, 2001. 53.

[83] Marshall Berman. "A Little Child Shall Lead Them: The Jewish Family Romance." *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*. Eds. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995. 253-75.
See for the issue of the "family romance" in Polish literature, that inspired Polish-Yiddish writers: Zofia Mitosek. "The Polish Tradition of the Family Novel". *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Eds. Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004. 506 ff.

[84] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. In Anti-Oedipus Deleuze and Guattari challenge "old" (Freudian) psychoanalysis – specifically the Oedipus complex which they deem a product of a patriarchal, capitalist way of thinking – and which they oppose on every account, shifting their attention to the pre-Oedipus phase of psychic development: the pre-Oedipal world of the schizophrenic (they name their project schizo-analysis), as they "...seek to discover the 'deterritorialized' flows of desire, the flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and neurotized territorialities, the desiring-machines that escape such codes as lines of escape leading elsewhere". (xvii).

[85] Berman. Ibid. 254. My emphasis.

its readership, when read through the lens of Kristeva's notion of abjection: functioning as a technology of subjectivity for its Jewish audience, as I will show in the Jewish historical context.

Kafka's choice of an animal as the protagonist is reminiscent of Yiddish literature and drama, where the animal fable was part of the great tradition of social satire in which animal figures represented the sufferings of the Jewish people, as can be seen in the work of Eastern European Yiddish writers like Mendele, Peretz and Sholem Aleichem.[86] To the Western reader, unfamiliar with both this Yiddish tradition and the sufferings that accompanied the failure of Jewish assimilation and acculturation in the west, it is difficult to grasp the contemporary thrust of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" when read as a social satire, or even to recognise the object of his satire.[87] To appreciate satire one must know what is being satirized. Kafka's satirical bend, writes Ritchie Robertson in his invaluable *Kafka, Judaism, Politics and Literature* (1985), was only picked up by his contemporary (Jewish) audience.[88] William C. Rubinstein suggests in this respect that Rotpeter (the name of the ape in Kafka's *Report to an Academy*) represents an assimilated Jew who learns to drink Schnapps (Jews did not touch alcohol, except for the Sabbath wine), thus symbolising Holy Communion and hence his conversion to Christianity.[89] Robertson refers to Evelyn Torton Beck's use of Rubinstein's interpretation in her book *Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre*, in which she argues that the Ape was modelled on the figure of Berele, a converted Jew figuring in one of the Yiddish plays Kafka saw in the Café Savoy in Prague.[90] Although Robertson disagrees with this interpretation he does agree with its general gest: the ape's representation of the converted Jew. Robertson writes about the ape's subsequent career:

> Although his [the ape's] efforts to imitate a human being have gained him admission to human society, he has not been accepted as a human being but

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[86] Mendele Mocher Sforim (Mendele the Bookseller): pen name of Shalom Jacob Abramowitsch (1835-1917), Yiddish and Hebrew author; Isaac Leib Peretz (1852-1915), Yiddish and Hebrew poet and author; Sholem Aleichem, pen name of Sholem Rabinowitz 1859–1916, Yiddish author, born in Russia. Sholem Aleichem is one of the great Yiddish writers, best known for his humorous tales of life among the poverty ridden and oppressed Russian Jews of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His works include five novels, many plays and some 300 short stories.

[87] Acculturation: acceptance of a common culture by a social group that remains distinct.

[88] Ritchie Robertson. *Kafka, Judaism, Politics and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. 164-70.

[89] William C. Rubinstein. "A Report to an Academy". *Franz Kafka Today*. Eds. Flores and Homer D. Swander. California: Gordan Press, 1977. 55-60.

[90] Evelyn Torton Beck. *Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre: Its Impact on his Work*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971.

> rather as an alien with extraordinary imitative skill. The greater his fame, the further he is from real membership of humanity. This expresses Kafka's view about the situation of the assimilated Jew. The Jew can enter Western society only by adapting himself to its customs. If he can act his part skilfully enough, he will be allowed to mix with gentiles, and he may imagine that his mimicry is completely successful. But, to the non-Jews around him it remains obvious that he is an actor, and they appreciate the act without being taken in by it.[91]

The story of the ape sums up Jewish assimilation in Prague and modern Central Europe as a two-faced phenomenon: on the one hand there are stories of economical, scientific and artistic success; on the other hand this success was by no means a guarantee of social acceptance. Seen in this light, Kafka's story of the giant bug Gregor in "The Metamorphosis" is even more pessimistic than that of the Ape: where the latter enjoys at least some worldly success, Gregor the bug is doomed to failure and death from the very beginning of the narrative. Evelyn Torton Beck (1971) writes that the fascination of "The Metamorphosis" is "the most widely known and one of the most disturbing of Kafka's works, lies chiefly in the horror of its central metaphor – a man awakens one morning to find that he has become a giant bug."[92]

Torton Beck writes in her intriguing book on the influence of the Yiddish theatre on Kafka's work:

> Although Kafka frequented both German and Czech theatre with some regularity - references to such visits are shattered throughout the diaries - but at no other time in his life was he so deeply involved in a single repertoire, in so concentrated a period, as with the Polish-Yiddish theatre troupe in 1911/12. Had the involvement been less intense, had it not been followed by his sudden literary breakthrough in 1912 (which came only after years of artistic failure) one would place less emphasis on the encounter with the Yiddish theatre. But given the sequence of events, one might well conjecture that the Yiddish plays represented an important factor in Kafka's literary development and merit close attention by the Kafka scholar.[93]

She also draws parallels in imagery, structure, technical devices, setting and themes between Kafka's mode of dramatization in "The Metamorphosis" and that of the Yiddish playwright Gordin in his play *The Savage One* (Der wilde Mensch). Kafka writes in detail about this play in his diaries (1910-23) and outlines the plot in some detail.[94] Like Lemekh, the protagonist of *The Savage One*, writes Torton

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[91] Robertson. Ibid. 167.

[92] Torton Beck. Ibid. 135.

[93] Torton Beck. Ibid. Preface. x.

[94] Max Brod, ed. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-23*. Trans. Joseph Kresh. New York:

Beck, Gregor Samsa, is barely tolerated at home, and looked upon with disgust (particularly by the father) as an outcast whose very existence shames his family. Albeit in different ways, Gregor and Lemekh combine the same qualities of "thing" (the abject) and "person". Both are depicted as essentially simple, meek and self-effacing persons who become animal-like creatures because of a drastic transformation, which culminates in Gregor's murder and Lemekh murdering Zelde. Although Gregor's physical transformation is already complete when "The Metamorphosis" opens, and the change in Lemekh occurs more gradually, the process of progressive decay continues throughout both works.

Torton Beck also points to another parallel between the restricted space of Gregor's room where most of the action takes place, and the narrow stage of the Yiddish theatre performances adapted to the very limited space where the performances took place, such as, for instance, the café corner in the Savoy Café in Prague, where Kafka watched the plays. Kafka deeply admired the authenticity of Eastern European Jewry (in contrast to the assimilated Central European Jews' efforts to free themselves from their bonds to Judaism), as is shown by the fact that he devotes the best part of two years' diary entries (1911-1912) to Eastern European Jewry, their lives, their spiritual leaders (e.g. Rabbi Nachman of Bratislava whose teachings and person are discussed in Kafka's diaries), their literature and their drama. Also testifying to this admiration is his interest in Yiddish and his deep concern about bourgeois assimilated Jews' disdain/fear of Eastern European Jewry and the Yiddish language. Franz Kafka's "discovery" of Eastern European Jews, according to Aschheim, was a classic illustration of the major impulses behind the movement of young Jewish intellectuals seeking a post-liberal Jewish commitment.[95]

Evidence of Kafka's intuitive recognition of what Kristeva calls abjection as a universal affect can be seen in his introductory speech on the Yiddish language delivered to an assimilated Jewish audience about to watch a performance of a travelling Eastern European Yiddish theatre group.[96] Yiddish was despised in the anti-Semitic non-Jewish world as "Jew-talk" and therefore feared and avoided,

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Schocken Books, 1976. Section 1910-13, 88-91.

[95] Steven E. Aschheim. *Brothers and Strangers: The East-European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1982. 204.

[96] Max Brod. ed. *Dearest Father: Stories and Other Writings*. By Franz Kafka. Trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins. New York: Schocken Books, 1954. 381-83. Brod adds the following note (52, p. 408) to the text: "The speech which Kafka delivered at the beginning of an evening's recitations by the Eastern European Jewish actor Isak Löwy in the main hall of the Jewish Town Hall in Prague on February 18, 1912. The original manuscript has been lost; what is left is a careful and complete copy made by Frau Elsa Brod."

abjected by assimilated acculturated Jews for fear it should draw them back to the very Jewish roots they had had to forgo in order to belong: to be accepted as Germans or Czechs. Remarkable in this reading is Kafka's intuitive recognition and understanding of that unspeakable fear, and his intuitive, didactic strategy to acknowledge it first and then to explain the strangeness of Yiddish by giving an enumeration of its qualities as a language of Jewish exile, a language of a nation without a territory:

> Before we come to the first poems by our Eastern Jewish poets, I should like, ladies and gentlemen, just to say something about how much more Yiddish you understand than you think. I am not really worried about the impact this evening holds in store for each of you, but I should like it to be universally comprehensible if it merits it. Yet this cannot happen as long as many of you are so frightened of Yiddish that one can almost see it in your faces. Of those who take an arrogant attitude to Yiddish I do not even speak. But dread of Yiddish (*Angst vor dem Jargon*), dread (horror), mingled with a certain fundamental distaste, is ultimately understandable if one wishes to understand it.
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> Our Western European conditions, if we glance at them only in a deliberate superficial way, appear so well ordered; everything takes its quiet course. We live in positively cheerful concord, understanding each other whenever necessary, getting along without each other whenever it suits us, and understanding each other even then. From within such an order of things, who could possibly understand the tangle of Yiddish – indeed, who would even care to do so? Yiddish is the youngest European language, only four hundred years old and actually a good deal younger even than that. It has not yet developed any linguistic forms of a lucidity such as we need. Its idiom is brief and rapid. No grammars of the language exist. Devotees of the language try to write grammars, but Yiddish remains a spoken language that is in continuous flux. The people will not leave it to the grammarians. It consists solely of foreign words, but these words are not firmly rooted in it, they retain the speed and liveliness with which they were adopted. Great migrations move through Yiddish from one end to the other. All this German, Hebrew, French, English Slavonic, Dutch, Rumanian, and even Latin is seized with curiosity and frivolity once it is contained within Yiddish, and it takes a good deal of strength to hold all these languages together in this state. And this too is why no sensible person thinks of making Yiddish into an international language, obvious though the idea might seem. It is only thieves' cant that is in the habit of borrowing from it, because it needs linguistic complexes less than single words, and then too, because Yiddish was, for long times a despised language. In this whirl of language there are, however, certain fragments of recognized linguistic laws which dominate it.[97]

[97] Brod, ed. *Dearest Father*. 381-83.

I intend to read "The Metamorphosis" as a Jewish writer's text and as a text responding to the semiotic (abjection) and the symbolic: the cultural/historical frame of reference of the restricted circle of Jewish intellectuals that constituted the majority of Kafka's friends in Prague. He would read passages of "The Metamorphosis" to them between 1912, the year of its creation, and 1915, when it was finally published. Within that context I refer to Kristeva's observation in an interview given to Margaret Waller (1985), where she refers to Ferdinand Céline's work as giving maximum visibility to abjection, although, so she adds, "of course, this visibility takes different forms in different centuries, for different people".[98]

This inspired me to explore the visibility of abjection in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" as a 1912 Jewish writer's dramatization of what eluded contemporary symbolic discourse: the invisible instinctive forces behind the social exclusion of Jews that Kafka and his contemporaries faced. I refer specifically to the circle of acculturated Jewish intellectuals who were his friends and his audience in the very early years of his career as a writer.

The social abjection of Jews confronted Kafka through two socio-political phenomena, both characterised by a tantalising ambivalence: the Western and Central European Jewish attitude to the Eastern European Jews (who fled the pogroms in their homelands of the Russian/Polish border to Vienna and Prague), which was one of great help and support, combined with a tendency to keep aloof for fear of being identified with the – to Western eyes – culturally backward and poverty-stricken situation of the *Ostjude*.

Brothers and strangers were those Eastern Jews as Steven E. Aschheim writes in his book with the same title, which sums up the ambivalence.[99] Besides, there was the double-bind situation of assimilated/acculturated Jewry: the impossibility (anti-Semitism) of being a Jew (which originally led to assimilation) and of *not* being a Jew, which was clear in the assimilation failure facing the assimilated/acculturated Jewry.[100] The deep cultural ambivalence with respect to Jewish assimilation in the German cultural context expressed itself on the one hand, through strong cultural pressure on Jews to transform their supposed radical otherness by assimilation while, on the other hand, cultural discourses pronounced

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[98] Guberman. "Intertextuality and Literary Interpretation". *Julia Kristeva, Interviews*. 1996. 188-203.

[99] Aschheim. Ibid.

[100] Assimilation was, in Kafka's days, by no means unambiguous: it signified a variety of different positions ranging from the extremes of conversion to another religion (usually Roman Catholicism) to being an "acculturated" Jew, that is interested in Jewish culture but refraining from any involvement with the Jewish religion, to the point of altogether ignoring/forgetting that one was a Jew.

such transformation as absolutely impossible on the grounds that one could switch from one religion to another, but not from one race to another.

Kafka's acute awareness of this double-bind position seems almost unavoidable, in light of the 1910 turning point in assimilated/acculturated German/Jewish attitudes to this situation.[101] Before 1910 liberal Judaism (which most assimilated/acculturated Jews identified with) covered assimilation failure of assimilation with the mantle of discretion "no Jew, not even militant German Zionists (ideologically predisposed to uncover that subject matter) had openly pronounced it …". But in 1912, when Kafka wrote "The Metamorphosis", Moritz Goldstein published an article entitled "The German Jewish Parnassus", in which he argued that "We Jews are administering the spiritual property of a nation which denies our right and our ability to do so".[102] Goldstein's article, by challenging the tacit liberal Jewish agreement to gloss over such sensitive matters, sparked an open debate about the duplicities of assimilation and proposed the creation of a separate Jewish culture.

The timing of Kafka's vision of abjection or the invisible/ unspeakable, to which he hints, appearing in his art is not accidental: it is synchronous with the assimilated German Jewry realising its double-bind situation due to the assimilation failure which I mentioned earlier. Not assimilation in the economic sense (for *pecunia non olet*), but in the social, affective sense: a Jewish crisis of identity in addition to the general cultural identity crisis that was commonplace in Kafka's days.[103] Assimilation/acculturation had proved to be no "cure" against the socio-political exclusion of Jews despite the significant artistic/economical Jewish contribution to German (and European) culture and economy.[104] When the Jews

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[101] This turning point was linked to political developments: German Liberalism in Prague, to which most assimilated/acculturated Jews subscribed, was changing. In March 1910 the liberal party transformed itself into the *Judenrein* (cleansed of Jews) German National Union. The Jewish paper *Selbstwehr* responded as follows*:* "Naturally not the German-liberal Jews, but – pardon the expression – the Jewish Jews, are overjoyed with the death of an unwholesome unjust, unsalvageable, system that can finally be discarded. No one weeps a tear over the passing of this German liberalism except for the German liberal Jews, whose hope to be accepted as real Germans has been robbed forever."

[102] Moritz Goldstein's "The German Jewish Parnassus" (1912) sparked a debate about assimilation, German culture and the "Jewish spirit". Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes, eds. *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 419.

[103] See also Liska. Ibid., Introduction. 1-11.

[104] Conceptually, *assimilation* encompasses – and is often confused and conflated with –four analytically distinct changes in Jewish behaviour and status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: acculturation (the acquisition of the cultural and social habits of the dominant non-Jewish group), integration (the entry of Jews into non-Jewish social circles and spheres of activity), emancipation (the acquisition of rights and privileges enjoyed by non-Jewish

became aware of this quandary, it became a strong impulse behind the wish for a Jewish national identity, a place to belong (Palestine), as belonging had proved highly problematic, if not impossible, in Europe (as it seems now in Israel).[105] At first Kafka was critical of Zionism (as was the orthodox Jewry), but in 1913 he attended the eleventh Zionist Congress in Vienna. Within this context, and because it gives an incisive image of how the Jews' realisation of their assimilation failure had a destructive impact on their sense of identity, I refer to part of the correspondence between Kafka and his old school friend Hugo Bergman (1883-1975), published by Scott Spector in *Prague Territories* (2000).

In 1902 Bergman replies to a letter from Kafka questioning Bergman's Zionism. Below are the fragments from Bergman's answer, as published by Spector, as they show the Jewish identity crisis that went hand in hand with the double-bind situation of assimilated/acculturated Jews:

> Why have I become a Zionist? ... Don't think that it was sympathy that made me a Zionist. My Zion is a good piece of selfishness. I sense that I would like to fly, I would like to create, and cannot; I no longer have the strength. And yet, I think that I might have the strength under other circumstances, that the innate ability does not abandon me at all. I only lack the strength. ... Perhaps we will in fact overcome this weakness once more, and stand sturdily once more on our own ground instead of waving... like a reed; perhaps, perhaps I will even find strength again... Sometimes I feel that I might be able to fly but then my strength is broken and my wings are lame. I would like to stand for once on our own ground and not be rootless. Maybe then my strength will return to me too.[106]

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citizens/subjects of similar socio-economic rank), and secularisation (the rejection of religious beliefs and the obligations and practices that flow from these beliefs). In Eastern Europe, as in Western Europe, these processes, while obviously influencing each other, operated in the end independently of each other. Thus, in most Eastern European states, Jewish acculturation and secularisation were well in advance of legal emancipation and social integration. Todd M. Endelman. *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Ed. Gershon David Hundert. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 81-7. The problem was that neither acculturation, emancipation, integration, nor secularisation guaranteed social acceptance.

[105] In 1913, two years before "The Metamorphosis" was published, Kafka attended the 11th Zionist Congress in Vienna, together with many Jews who had come to realise that the rising tide of anti-Semitism required political action, and that, by analogy to the foundation of the new European national states, the foundation of a Jewish State was the only option for Jews to be safe from the century-long persecution and harassment they had had to deal with in Europe. For cultural Zionism, see Scott Spector, *Prague Territories : National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin-de-Siècle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 135-37. Bergman's was a now extinct, cultural Zionism: a renewed interest in both Palestine as the possible new homeland and in Jewish culture, language and literature.

[106] Quoted by Spector from: *Hugo Bergman to Franz Kafka*, 1902. Reprinted in part in

The fragility/uncertainty of the assimilated Jew's identity was of course not restricted to Prague, but its threat was more acute there on account of the hostility between the various ethnic groups beginning to strive for nationality and hegemony (Germans, Czechs) whilst Franz Joseph's empire was slowly falling apart into nation states. This turned the political situation for Jews in Prague into something entirely different from, for instance, the sophisticated (*salonfähig*) face of the anti-Semitism of Proust's Parisian circles, where the Jew was secretly hated and considered "an eccentricity", an "Orientalism", an "aesthetic interest" or a source of "local colour".[107] Or, for that matter, a focus of a public and/or intellectual debate on a political case célèbre, like the Dreyfus case. The Paris situation cannot be compared with Kafka's situation in 1912 Prague, a world of fierce, anti-Jewish Czech nationalism.

The German Jewish community of Prague, with which Kafka and most Jewish intellectuals identified, was shocked by a nasty, political anti-Semitic discourse intruding from the German-speaking cultures they loved. In that discourse Jews were seen as radically different others, definitely not us. Jews were abject, inassimilable strangers whose exclusion seemed conditional for the formation of a truly nationalist German/Czech identity.

A shattering example of the Jewish anxieties inspired by anti-Semitism in 1912, when Kafka wrote "The Metamorphosis", comes from Vienna where the influence of the anti-Semitic mayor Karl Lueger (who died in 1910) had intensified the tensions between Jews and the rest of the population. In an article by Egon Schwarz (1997) about the Viennese writer Arthur Schnitzler's play *Reigen* (1903), Schwarz writes how Schnitzler

> ... though every inch the acculturated Viennese citizen, outwardly indistinguishable from the Austrian upper bourgeoisie, was increasingly treated as the Other, the outsider, often as a repulsive intruder, despite his undeniable achievements.[108]

The racist, cultural othering of assimilated/acculturated Jews was culturally deeply ingrained and phobia-informed, and threatening for Jews, as shown by H. Sayer's article in *German Life and Letters* (2007) about the reception of Arthur

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Tagebücher und Briefe von Samuel Hugo Bergman. Ed. Miriam Sambursky. Königstein im Taunus: Jüdischer Verlag, Athenäum, 1985. 1-9.

[107] Julia Kristeva. *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*. Trans. Ross Guberman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

[108] Egon Schwarz. "The staging of Arthur Schnitzler's play *Reigen* in Vienna creates a public uproar that draws involvement by the press, the police, the Viennese city administration, and the Austrian Parliament." *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996*. 419.

Schnitzler's novel "Der Weg ins Freie" ("The Road into the Open", 1908), written four years before Kafka's "The Metamorphosis". Sayer writes how in a recently discovered diary fragment Schnitzler complains about the atmosphere of insincerity, maliciousness and falsehood that had marked the reception of "Der Weg ins Freie" in the liberal press.[109] This press, although dominated by acculturated Jews, both as owners and critics, had publicly distanced itself from Schnitzler's novel for fear of being accused of "siding with the Jews", according to Sayer.

In "The Metamorphosis", however, Kafka the artist and the Jew is not interested in the socially speakable, such as the discussion about the double-bind position discussed earlier. What he dramatizes in "The Metamorphosis" is that which is not speakable: the instinctive dynamics of exclusion and renewal informing the cultural exclusion of the Jews, assimilated or not. Beardsworth comments:

> Abjection is *not* a category, political, or otherwise, if categories articulate what fundamentally structures a society. Rather, abjection is a term that captures the *inarticulate*, *at the limits of society*. Abjection belongs to subjectivity because it is a journey into what is *not* organized - or regulated - by society ... abjection *shows up as* abjection - after tragedy, defilement, abomination, and sin - precisely because modern secular discourses neglect "messy stuff": what is loose and baggy with respect to the ties which relate the individual to society.[110]

In Kristeva's terminology, writers like Kafka, who connect the reader with the speakable (the symbolic) and the unspeakable (the semiotic), are avant-garde writers, writers of abjection, like Céline, Baudelaire, Lautréaumont, Georges Bataille and Sartre. Their texts connect the reader to what is neglected in the symbolic order: the instinctive aspects of identity-formation, borderline situations between the I and its inassimilable Other, borderlines as much from the point of view of literary form as from that of their dramatization of identity/ subjectivity.[111]

The borderline, or the limit in Kristeva's thought, is created in and by language itself: it is the limit between what is socially speakable and not-speakable. Avant-garde literature – in her work – is literature created "at the limit" while reorganising what is within the limits, from the perspective of the exploration of what is beyond. For Kristeva the beyond (semiotic) of language is not transcendent, as in surrealism, but within language itself. There is no space beyond the limit that writing cannot reach, that language cannot speak. It is a question of extending language to the limit, and of opening up this space within language. All avant-

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[109] Holly Sayer. "Arthur Schnitzler's Critical Reception in Vienna: The Liberal Press and the Question of Jewish Identity". *German Life and Letters*. 60.4 (2007): 186-87. My translation.

[110] Beardsworth. Ibid. 243.

[111] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 297.

garde art, such as surrealism, with which Kafka's work is often identified, is art at the limit, but Kristeva's notion distinguishes itself from surrealism in that the latter conceives the limit's "beyond" in terms of an essence residing in a separate "space", while Kristeva views it as a property of language.[112]

4.4 "The Metamorphosis" and Literary Criticism – Two Examples: Eric Santner and Theodor Adorno

In view of the preceding, the difference between Kristeva's perception of abjection and the entirely different meaning Eric Santner gives it in his 1997 article "Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and the Writing of Abjection" is particularly interesting. Santner views Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" as a representation of disturbances in the social order outside the text. Santner's article, which incidentally lacks any reference to Julia Kristeva's different theory of abjection, uses the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of abjection: as a condition, or state of being cast down; abasement, humiliation, degradation, rejection; that which is cast off or away; refuse, scum, dregs. He views

> ... Gregor's fall into abjection ... as a symptom, whose fascinating presence serves as a displaced condensation of larger and more diffuse disturbances within the social field [the crisis of the patriarchal family: the son's revolt to the father] marked out by the text.[113]

My reading of abjection as conceptualised by Kristeva is structurally different from Santner's. His abjection relates (in terms of a displaced condensation) to the symbolic order, as I have noted before. He refers, for instance, to the crisis of the patriarchal family; the son's revolt against the father, whereas my use of the term eludes expression in the symbolic order as it falls within that other register of identity and meaning that Kristeva refers to as the semiotic. The latter can only be expressed in literature and art, as I intend to show in this chapter on Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" as well as in chapters 5 and 6 on David Vogel's *Married Life*.

I see Theodor Adorno's (1903-1969) extraordinary perceptive critique of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" in his 1953 essay "Notes on Kafka" as foreshadowing Kristeva's perception of Kafka as an avant-garde writer (one who connects the reader to the semiotic and the symbolic).[114] Unlike the vast majority of critics

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[112] For a more extensive discussion of the differences between "Surrealism" and "Avant-garde" see my source for this paragraph: Patrick Ffrench, "'Tel Quel' and Surrealism: A Re-evaluation. Has the Avant-Garde Become a Theory?". *The Romanic Review* 88.1 (1997).

[113] Eric Santner. "Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and the Writing of Abjection". *The Norton Critical Edition of The Metamorphosis*. New York: Norton, 1996. 195-210.

[114] Theodor W. Adorno. "Notes on Kafka". *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical*

reading Kafka's text as "representing" situations or persons in the social context outside the text, Adorno's is unique in that he refuses to do so and, instead, concentrates on the novella's power to evoke fascination (one of the symptoms of abjection, as we saw earlier). For Adorno the most striking feature of "The Metamorphosis" is perhaps the abyss between text and meaning which unsettles the reader, and for that reason arouses fascination.

Adorno ascribes this fascination to Kafka's clever, artistic manipulation of the relation between text and meaning, which are not fused, as one would expect from a parable. "Kafka", writes Adorno, "does not express himself by expressing himself, but by his refusal to do so". Kafka himself – as Adorno reminds us – forcefully protested against Martin Buber's qualification of his work as "parable art". If, according to Adorno, Kafka's novella is parable art, it is parable art whose key has been stolen. Each sentence cries out: "Explain me", but not a single sentence allows interpretation. Yet, seeking "the key" outside the relation text/reader destroys, in Adorno's view, the essence of Kafka's work: the fascination it elicits in the reader. Fascination, according to Kristeva, is beside horror a symptom of abjection.

Adorno explains the effects of Kafka's technique of separating text and meaning in "The Metamorphosis" as follows: the fierce insistence with which the text demands (on account of the precision of its language) the reader's explanation reduces the esthetical distance between text and reader to nil. This is why what is narrated confronts the reader with the force of a locomotive in full steam. The violence of that collision crushes the reader's process of identification with the literary figures in the text and confronts him/her directly with his/her self. Or, to put it differently: Kafka, according to Adorno, turns the text into a technology of subjectivity. I will come back to Kristeva's perception of that term later.

Adorno continues his intriguing theory about the role of fascination in Kafka's art by claiming that the most striking feature of "The Metamorphosis" is perhaps the abyss between text and meaning which unsettles the reader and for that reason arouses fascination. Kafka himself seems to have artistically intuited that unsettling effect as the very purpose of literature, judging from what he wrote in a letter to his friend Oskar Pollak in 1904, eight years before he wrote "The Metamorphosis":

> I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. If the book that we read does not wake us up with a blow on the head, what are we reading it for? So that it will make us happy, as you write? Good Lord, we would have been equally happy if we had had no books. And the kind of books that make us happy we could, if necessary, write ourselves. We need, however,

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Reader. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. 211-39.

> books that affect us like a mishap that wounds us deeply, like the death of one we love more than ourselves, or like we were outcasts in the woods away from humanity, or, like a suicide: a book must be the axe to the frozen sea within us. That is what I believe.[115]

Adorno claims that the functioning of Kafka's text is completely lost to literary critique which tends to "assimilate Kafka's texts into its established, cultural trend of thought" as, for instance, existentialism in Adorno's days and which, in his view, pays little attention to those aspects of his work that resist such assimilation, and precisely for this reason, require interpretation.

Adorno explicitly warns not to reduce the meaning of "The Metamorphosis" to its representation of something outside the relation text-reader, which "would destroy the essence of Kafka's work", but to focus instead on those aspects of the text resisting socio-cultural interpretation. It is this very resistance, according to Adorno, that unsettles the reader and arouses his/her fascination.

What Adorno and Kristeva have in common is the idea that there are meanings in a text that refuse to show themselves directly to the reader, and that these hidden meanings affect the reader's sense of self. Adorno, however, owes this textual refusal (in "The Metamorphosis") to a creative ploy by the writer (Kafka), while Kristeva views it as an intrinsic quality of the text, related to its position in the two registers of meaning and identity: the symbolic (visible) and the semiotic (invisible/drive-oriented). By artistically dramatizing the invisible semiotic aspects of identity the text forces the reader into a violent confrontation with the instinctive aspects of his/her own self, which prompts a sensation of fascination and horror: the symptoms of abjection as expounded in Kristeva's *Powers of Horror.*

Kafka's originality – from my Kristeva-informed perspective of the novella – lies in the fact that "The Metamorphosis" positions its Jewish audience on the border between the semiotic and the symbolic, from where it can view the logics of abjection. There, the Jewish audience half-recognises in horror and fascination, something familiar that shocks, but cannot be named. Yet, naming it is, paradoxically, the object of the text as well as of this study on the text, as I have noted in my introduction to this chapter.

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[115] Letter to Oskar Pollak. 27 January 1904. *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*. By Franz Kafka. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Schocken Books, 1977. 15-16. "Ich glaube, man sollte überhaupt nur solche Bücher lesen, die einen beißen und stechen. Wenn das Buch, das wir lesen, uns nicht mit einem Faustschlag auf den Schädel weckt, wozu lesen wir dann das Buch? Damit es uns glücklich macht, wie Du schreibst? Mein Gott, glücklich wären wir eben auch, wenn wir keine Bücher hätten, und solche Bücher, die uns glücklich machen, könnten wir zur Not selber schreiben. Wir brauchen aber die Bücher, die auf uns wirken wie ein Unglück, das uns sehr schmerzt, wie der Tod eines, den wir lieber hatten als uns, wie wenn wir in Wälder verstoßen würden, von allen Menschen weg, wie ein Selbstmord, ein Buch muß die Axt sein für das gefrorene Meer in uns. Das glaube ich."

Interesting is that Kafka, Kristeva and Adorno endow the un-interpretable (or, in Kristeva's terminology, the semiotic) with the power of catching the reader unaware, addressing him/her alongside the precision of language, arousing the paradoxical emotions of horror and fascination that Kristeva associates with abjection. All three of them view the text as putting the reader literally beside him/her self, on the border, or limit, although using different perceptions of border and self: Kafka a purely intuitive artistic one (1912), Adorno a perceptive, critical one (1953), and Kristeva a post-Freudian and even a post-Lacanian inspired, philosophical one. She writes:

> Even before being *like* [seeing a likeness in the Lacanian mirror] "I" am not, but do *separate, reject, ab-ject*. … Abjection, with a meaning broadened to take in subjective diachrony, is *a precondition of narcissism*. It is coexistent with it and causes it to be permanently brittle. The more or less beautiful image in which I behold, or recognize myself rests upon an abjection that sunders it as soon as repression, the constant watchman, is relaxed.[116]

4.5 Capturing the Psychodynamics of Abjection in "The Metamorphosis": Reading Kafka's Text as a Parable of Abjection

Kafka's artistic genius in "The Metamorphosis" resides in the fact that the text – as I have noted before – can be read and will be so in this chapter as artistically capturing abjection as the archaic condition that Kristeva calls primary repression (see Kristeva's developmental account of abjection in chapter 2): "a condition of the subject that is sent to its boundaries where there is, as such, neither subject nor object, only the abject: non-differentiated otherness".[117]

From that perspective, the self (the Samsa family) appears in relation to its other (Gregor Samsa) who as the son is actually the discarded, abjected part of the same, namely the Samsa family self.

This ruthless (because drive-oriented) artistic self-other dynamics, set within the context of a respectable German family's struggle for identity, artistically foreshadows what appears in alterity philosophy only half a century later: the idea that there is no self without its alter, or other. Literature, as the German critic Karl Kraus put it, is always centuries ahead of science (or, in this case philosophy).[118]

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[116] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror.* 13.

[117] Beardsworth. *Julia Kristeva*. 83.

[118] Thomas Szasz. *Karl Kraus and the Soul Doctors: A Pioneer Critic and His Criticism of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976. 107-8. The Viennese Jewish publicist, essayist and cynic Karl Kraus, owner of a celebrated journal named *Die Fackel,* cynically comments on the power of Freud's cultural impact in Vienna. He writes in the 7-11-1912 issue: "I am often told that much of what I have discov-

The self within the context of "The Metamorphosis" is the Samsa family, and its other is Gregor, the giant bug whose messy animal/otherness blurs (threatens) the family's system of identity, clarity and order. By being exposed to Gregor, the Samsas struggle for identity. This struggle opens new possibilities for renewing the family identity in the figure of Grethe, Gregor's favourite sister who, paradoxically, eventually organises his murder (see my analysis of the plot).

In this perspective, I see "The Metamorphosis" as a parable of abjection whose key has not – as Adorno put it – been "thrown away" but is vested in the semiotic, waiting to be found by the critic on the border between the symbolic and the semiotic, which is my critical position: one that offers access to both registers of identity and meaning. There, on the border, I try to capture the drama of abjection, as a condition of the subject (the Samsa family) that is sent to its boundaries where there is, as such, neither subject nor object, only the abject: Gregor as non-differentiated (man or beast?) otherness.

In this light, I read the Gregor and the Samsa personages as symptoms of abjection engaged in the oscillation between symbolic identity and semiotic rejection that Kristeva describes in her developmental account of the constitution of the subject when exposed to (m)otherness, as we recall from the previous chapter. At this utmost sensitive, archaic in-between moment, after the fledgling (pre-Oedipal) subject's separation from the *chora*, but before entering into language/signification, the abject entices the not-yet-I into a defensive gesture (abjection/exclusion) through which it simultaneously creates itself as an I. In other words, I read "The Metamorphosis" as an artistic vision of that archaic, subjective self-other diachrony engaged in a dynamics in which the abject (other: Gregor) presents to the subject-to-be (the Samsa family) a limit or border, where the Samsa family's identity is both threatened and drawn.

If, in contrast to my argumentation, we should envisage a social elaboration of abjection at all, the artistic form it assumes in "The Metamorphosis" is the Samsas' (subject) creating a threatening other (Gregor as the abject), as a defence against social (family) collapse. By rejecting Gregor as different, or (animal) other, the Samsas re-create them-selves in the same movement as self-same*:* a family. Conceiving of the text as dramatizing an instinctual (semiotic) reality at work in identification seems to do justice to Gregor's outcry when he becomes aware of his insect appearance: "What has happened to me? It was no dream!" Indeed it was not: every single change in the process of Gregor's metamorphosis from man

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ered without researching must be true because Freud researched these things and came to the same conclusions. This would be a depressing and wretched criterion for ascertaining the truth. To be sure, the goal or result is important for the seeker. But for the finder the path or way to it is what matters. The twain shall never meet. He who finds travels so much faster than he who searches."

to beast dramatizes the subject-to-be's repetitive (because instinctive) succession of exclusions ("not *me*") that mark the Samsa family's unaware process of abjection/struggle for identity. Unaware to (the Samsa family) self, for they are in a nasty shock about Gregor's metamorphosis, and unaware to Gregor too, as he has no idea what is happening, as is clear from his outcry: "What happened to me?" And his diagnosis: "It was no dream!" It certainly was no dream: it was abjection. I will turn to Kafka's presentation of that process as ambivalent, as both destructive and creative, both horrific and funny, later in this chapter.

"The Metamorphosis" artistically anchors the abject within a monstrous, giant, animal body (Gregor) that nevertheless retains a certain (Samsa) familiarity and therefore blurs the border between man and animal. As a literary giant insect/monster, Gregor the bug, who fills a human bed to the edges, assumes cultural dimensions as well: the literary monster, writes Cohen (1996), is born at a metaphorical crossroads: as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment of a time, a feeling and a place:

> The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary) giving it life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture: a construct and a projection: the monster exists, only to be read (monstrum is etymologically "that which reveals", "that which warns," a glyph that seeks a hierophant). Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again. These epistemological spaces between the monster's bones are Derrida's familiar chasm of différence: a genetic uncertainty-principle, the essence of the monster's vitality.[119]

Returning to the cultural context in which Gregor appears as an animal/monster, Reiner Stach argues that Kafka had probably been familiar from early childhood with the image of a person degraded into an animal. His father called their clumsy cook a beast, the consumptive shop-boy a sick dog, and Kafka's Eastern European Jewish friend Löwy of the Yiddish theatre group a dog ridden with fleas: "If you go to bed with dogs, you wake up with fleas", he warned his son Franz.[120]

Kafka's culture, according to Stach, likened animal imagery to the idea of horrendous (giant) degradation. Insects (like Gregor) fared the worst. Calling people vermin was a serious insult; treating someone like a bug was to deny his human-

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[119] Jeffrey J. Cohen, ed. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 4.

[120] Reiner Stach. *Kafka: The Decisive Years*. Trans. Shelley Frisch. Orlando: Harcourt, 2005. 192-3.

ity. Killing an insect or even an entire species of insect was of no consequence. As a keenly observant child, Kafka, according to Stach, must have concluded that it was a curse to be an animal.

In the 1890s overworked horses were a regular part of the metropolitan street scene. No adult gave a second thought to the creature living in captivity in the zoo and the circus, or to the inferno of the slaughterhouses. Animals suffer, but their suffering is not entered into the moral accounting of human history. They are mute*;* their forms of expression are not considered *language*. Above all they have no concept of shame: they present their bodies in a way that constantly and painfully reminds people of their own animal nature, evoking disgust, repulsion, and cruelty.[121]

The preceding defines Gregor as a highly ambivalent, borderline creature. On the one hand he is as far removed from the humanity of the Samsa family as possible, on the other hand he is part of it, being the Samsa son and heir. Where does that giant bug Gregor come from? It is the Samsa family's phobic fantasy about a threat to the limits of their fragile, social and subjective identity, their *Angst* for his otherness that blows Gregor up into a giant monster.

The text goes to extremes to point to Gregor's monstrosity, otherness and inassimilable difference, firstly by dramatizing him as an insect and secondly by blowing that insect up into enormous proportions, which turns him into an object of horror and laughter.

Here the text connects the reader to the archaic giant monsters of past and present that have haunted the artistic, literary and cinematic literary imagination until the present day (think of the "monster" film industry). Kafka's dramatization of Gregor as a threatening inhuman (because animal) monster is masterly suggested by the rhythmic repetition of the German prefix *un* (*un-geheures, un-geziefer*). Seen in this light "The Metamorphosis" might be viewed as heralding the modern body of literature and film that dramatizes giant-monsters functioning as technologies of subjectivity, othering/machines, and providing the reader with, in Cohen's (1999) words:

> ... a little piece of 'the real' [Kristeva's semiotic] that symbolization exudes [sweats out]: it is everything suppressed in order for 'culture' (or the subject) to come into being.[122]

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[121] Ibid. 193.

[122] Cohen. *Monster Theory*. 94.

Characteristic, apart from its monstrosity, is the monster's ambivalence: a symptom of the abject, as we know. The monster is not only disruptive, writes Cohen, it is also necessary*:* the head of the giant, with his obscenely gaping maw, traps the gaze by exciting the audience's body to perverse enjoyment.[123]

Whilst the monster traps the gaze and fascinates, it also inspires horror and laughter (symptoms of abjection). On the level of the narrative the fact that Gregor provokes laughter is closely connected with the contrast between his horror-inspiring giant-size versus his inability to perform even the most simple of human actions, such as getting out of bed, as his stiff insect-shield deprives him from the plasticity to bend and get up. Driven to despair by this inability he finally decides to wiggle from one side of his shield to the other until he topples over and drops on the ground. However, "No matter how hard he threw himself onto his right side, he always rocked onto his back again."[124]

Even funnier is the huge bug's attempt to get used to his fragile, little insect legs that strangely contrast with the enormous size of his body:

> He was lying on his back as hard as armor plate, and when he lifted his head a little he saw his vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs, to whose dome the cover, about to slide off completely, could barely cling. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, were waving helplessly before his eyes.[125]

So are his efforts to get in control of that overpowering multitude of legs:

> He would have needed hands to lift himself up, but instead of that he had only his numerous little legs, which were in every different kind of perpetual motion and which, besides, he could not control. If he wanted to bend one, the first thing that happened was that it stretched itself out; and if he finally succeeded in getting this leg to do what he wanted, all the others in the meantime, as if set free, began to work in the most intensely painful agitation.[126]

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[123] Ibid.

[124] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 4. "Mit welcher Kraft er sich auch auf die rechte seite warf, immer wieder schaukelte er in die Rückenlage zurück." (DzL Textband. 116)

[125] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 1. "Er lag auf seinem panzerartig harten Rücken und sah, wenn er den Kopf ein wenig hob, seinen gewölbten, braunen, von bogenförmigen Versteifungen geteilten Bauchauf dessen höhe sich die Bettdecke, zum glänzlichen niedergleiten bereit, kaum nog erhalten konnte. Seine vielen, im Vergleich zu seinem sonstigen Umfang kläglich dünnen Beine flimmerten ihm hilflos vor den Augen." (DzL Textband. 115)

[126] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 6. "Er hätte Arme und Hände gebraucht, um sich auf zu richten; statt dessen aber hatte er nur die vielen Beinchen, die ununterbrochen in der verschiedensten Bewegung waren und die er überdies nicht beherrschen konnte.Wollte er eines einmal einknikken, so war es das erste, dasz es sich streckte; und gelang es ihm endlich, mit diesem Bein das auszuführen, was er wollte, so arbeiteten inzwischen alle anderen, wie freigelassen, in höchster schmerzlicher Aufregung." (DzL Textband. 121)

In addition to its psychological significance, Gregor the giant monster had a cultural significance to Kafka's contemporary audience of German-Jewish friends to whom he read portions of "The Metamorphosis" before it was published. Gregor's gradual exclusion and his turning into an animal- elicited in Kafka's audience an intuition of the invisible: the increasingly affective and social exclusion that they subjectively experienced as Jews. This brings me to the relation between abjection and laughter, for the obvious question is: what was so funny about a family excluding and killing their son?

Fun, as triggered in Kafka's contemporary Jewish audience by his reading "The Metamorphosis" aloud, generates the joy of identification (ha, ha, ha: that monster is *us, Jews*), but also the need for rejection ("ha ha ha: *monster! not* us"), which implies us as different *(no monster at all!*). The fun of the text lies in its evocation of, and putting the reader/audience on, the border, in its poking fun with the unspeakable or, in Freud's terminology, with a *taboo* or, according to Beardsworth, with the inarticulate at the limits of society, namely with that which is not organised or regulated by society. The fun of "The Metamorphosis" relies on its literary (safe) evoking of crossing borders and the fear and thrill of doing so, in other words its artistic evoking of the subjective experience of abjection.

Abjection, as pointed out before, captures a condition of the subject (the Samsa family) that is sent to its boundaries where there is neither subject nor object as such, only the abject: Gregor, non-differentiated otherness (is he a human, or a beast?). From this point of view the key of Kafka's parable is not lost, as Adorno expressed it, but mislaid, in the sphere of the register of identity and meaning that Kristeva calls the semiotic. The semiotic, however, has a great many appearances, some of which I will now identify in Kafka's text. I will then explore how, as manifestations of the semiotic, or instinctive, although not producing meaning themselves, they transform meaning in the text's symbolic discourse.

The threat of losing access to language/meaning – which afflicts the pre-Oedipal subject after separation from the *chora*, when the fragile border of its budding self is threatened to be transgressed by the abject – induces a constant fear of relapsing back into that drive-governed space of anxiety (the *chora*) where language/meaning do not exist and the drive reigns, as in psychosis. This archaic fear appears in the text's many recordings of failing and losing language and meaning, as shown in the interaction between Gregor and the Samsa family.

Gregor literarily embodies this threat to the Samsas: during his process of transformation, he slowly looses the ability to speak (language and signification) as well as the ability to hear/understand it. When Gregor's mother (still unaware of his metamorphosis because he has locked himself in his room and refuses to open the door) calls him in the morning (through the closed door of his room) and tells him to get up for work, Gregor thinks: "What a soft voice!" But then:

> Gregor was shocked to hear his own voice answering, unmistakably his own voice, true, but in which, as if from below, an insisting distressed chirping intruded, which left the clarity of his words intact only for a moment really, before so badly garbling them as they carried, that no one could be sure if he had heard right.[127]

Later, when Gregor's employer (who has arrived at the Samsas' to inquire after the reason for Gregor's being late for the morning train, and thus for his work) tries in vain to persuade Gregor to open the door of his room (locked doors are representations of the limit, or border), both his employer and the Samsas are unable to understand Gregor's attempts at explaining the situation; for, rather than words, he produces peeping animal sounds which reach them through the closed door of his room. What Gregor hears on the other side however (bearing in mind that the narrative is still focalised on Gregor) is:

> 'Did you understand a word?' the manager was asking his parents. 'He isn't trying to make fools of us, is he?' 'My god', cried his mother, already in tears, 'maybe he is seriously ill, and here we are, torturing him.' 'Grethe! Grethe!' she then cried.
> 'That was the voice of an animal', said the manager, in a tone conspicuously soft compared with the mother's yelling.[128]

Evelyn Torton Beck (1971) writes about fascination and horror that

> … the fascination of *The Metamorphosis,* the most widely known and one of the most disturbing of Kafka's works, lies chiefly in the horror of its central metaphor – a man awakens one morning to find that he has become a giant bug – a situation which is presented with a matter-of-factness that is difficult to accept or comprehend.[129]

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[127] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "chirp" as follows: "The short sharp shrill sound made by some small birds and certain insects; a sound made with the lips resembling this; a chirrup".
Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 5. "Gregor erschrak, als er seine antwortende Stimme hörte, die wohl unverkennbar seine frühere war, in die sich aber, wie von unten her, ein nicht zu unterdrückendes, schmerzliches Piepsen mischte das die Worte, firmlich nur in ersten Augenblick, in ihrer Deutlichkeit beliesz, um sie im Nachklang derart zu zerstören, dasz man nicht wuszte, ob man recht gehört hatte." (DzL Textband. 119)

[128] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 10. "Haben Sie auch nur ein Wort verstanden?" fragte der Prokurist die Eltern, "er macht doch wohl nicht einen Narren aus uns? "Um Gottes willen", rief die Mutter schon unter Weinen, "er ist vielleicht schwer krank, und wir quälen ihn Grete! Grete!" schrie sie dann....."Das war ein Tierstimme" sagte der Prokurist, auffallend leise gegenüber dem schreien der Mutter. (DzL Textband. 131)

[129] Torton Beck. *Kafka and the Yiddish Theater.* 135.

From the preceding sections of this chapter it may have become clear that I take "fascination" and "horror", the "giant monster"/bug Gregor himself, but not in the least the laughter elicited by its pointless efforts to act/speak like a human, as symptoms of abjection, one of which ("a language that gives up") I have already touched upon. The other, "a non-assimilable alien, a monster" inspiring horror and laughter.[130] I will examine now, beginning with the monster.

Kafka's creation of Gregor as an animal – animals being associated with sex and murder in Kafka's culture, with insects, as Stach argues, faring the worst – radically sets him apart as the *S*amsa family's Other. The association with murder is obvious: Gregor is murdered by the Samsas, a murder plotted by his (favourite) sister. The text's association of Gregor with sex is less obvious but all the same present in two allusions: the first as early as the first page of the text takes the form of the picture of a pretty "lady done up in a fur hat and a fur boa" hanging above the table on the wall of his room. In Kafka's time, this was the standard image of the *femme fatale* materialised in "The Metamorphosis" by Gregor's most beloved sister Grethe, who is also plots his murder. Cultural models for this ambivalent character are the attractive, demonic, violent and dangerous females in Sacher-Masoch's *Wanda* and Wedekind's *Lulu*, while the other is the sickly, sexually undeveloped woman, for example Hauptmann's Hannele or Gabriele Kloterjahn in Thomas Mann's *Tristan*.[131] The second allusion to sex is when mother and sister are clearing out his room and Gregor, in a pointless effort to salvage the picture of the pretty lady, "hurriedly crawled up to it and pressed himself against the glass, which gave a good surface to stick to and soothed his hot belly".

The reader's sense of horror is repeatedly kindled through the text's association of Gregor with something sickening or, in German, *zum kotsen*. This is not unlike what Kristeva describes as the reaction to viewing a corpse: unclean, dirty animal; dung (dung beetle, as the maid calls him). Gregor emits bodily fluids and eats revolting, rotten food:

> …old, half-rotten vegetables; bones left over from the evening meal, caked with congealed white sauce; some raisins and almonds; a piece of cheese, which, two days before Gregor had declared inedible…[132]

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[130] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 11.

[131] Ritchie Robertson. *Kafka: Judaism, Politics and Literature*, 72, note 73, and Nike Wagner. *Geist und Geschlecht: Karl Kraus und die Erotik der Wiener Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982). 138.

[132] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 18. "Da war altes halbverfaultes Gemüse; Knochen vom Nachtmal her, die von festgewordener weiszer Sauce umgeben waren; ein paar Rosinen und Mandeln; ein Käse, den Gregor vor zwei Tagen für ungenieszbar erklärt hatte." (DzL Textband. 147)

In psychoanalytical terms, the text's explicit dramatization of Gregor's huge animal body oozing disgusting fluids explodes the fantasy of the clean and proper body (which has nothing to do with hygiene but with abjection: borders that give up) by dramatizing the leaking borders. Eventually Gregor the bug gets out of his human bed and, with great difficulty, tries to open the door of his room:

> Gregor slowly lugged himself toward the door, pushing the chair in front of him, then let go of it, threw himself against the door, held himself upright against it – the pads on the bottom of his legs exuded a little sticky substance – and for the moment rested there in exertion.[133]

Also, the metamorphosed Gregor struggles at length to open the door of his room, behind which the Samsa family and his employer impatiently wait for him to appear. As mentioned before, the door symbolises the border between self and other). His animality appears to frustrate even the most simple human action of opening a door. Deprived of human hands and teeth he turns the key with his (insect) mouth, causing his giant mouth to ooze disgusting liquid, emphasising the fact that he is literally out of place in the orderly, human (Samsa) world:

> Unfortunately it seemed that he had no teeth – what was he supposed to grip the key with? – but in compensation his jaws, of course, were very strong; with their help he actually got the key moving and paid no attention to the fact that he was undoubtedly hurting himself in some way, for a brown liquid came out of his mouth, flowed over the key, and dripped onto the floor.[134]

The text's recurring associations of the metamorphosed Gregor with filth and impurity - right from the beginning of the narrative we read about "itching little white patches" on his shield - deserve a little more attention.

"Abjection", warns Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*, "is not about dirt, it is about the subject's [the Samsa-family's] horror/fascination experienced by the fantasy of the abject transgressing the uncertain borders of an 'I' that need constant re-settling in the face of that threat."

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[133] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 11. "Gregor schob sich langsam mit dem Sessel zur Tür hin, liesz ihn dort los, warf sich gegn die Tür, hielt sich an ihr aufrecht- die Ballen seiner Beinchen hatten ein wenig Klebstoff – und und ruhte sich dort einen Augenblick lang von der Anstrengung aus." (Dzl Textband. 132)

[134] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 11. "Es schien leider, dasz er keine eigentlichen Zähne hatte - womit sollte er gleich den Schlüssel fassen? – aber dafür waren die Kiefer freilich sehr stark; mit ihrer Hilfe brachte er auch wirklich den Schlüssel in Bewegung und achtete nicht darauf, dasz er sich zweifellos irgendeinen Schaden zufügte,denn eine braune Flüssigkeit kam ihm aus den Mund, flosz über den Schlüssel und tropfte auf den Boden." (Dzl Textband. 132)

The defence against this threat is evident in, for instance, the fantasy of (in French) *le corps propre*, meaning clean: the Dutch word *proper*: clean/ hygienic and, in English and French, *proper/propre* in the sense of something *bordering* on something else, for example property. Thus, *le corps propre* can be translated as the fantasy of the *clean* and proper body that one *owns,* or *is*. Dirt, from that perspective, especially dirt secreted by the orifices of the body (like Gregor the insect's body) constitutes a threat to those imaginary borders. The abject (like Gregor) is disgusting, it makes you want to vomit; it is what does not respect borders (Gregor the insect transgresses the borders of the Samsa family's human self). It is neither one (human) nor the other (animal), it is ambivalence incarnate. The abject (Gregor) is not a "quality in itself". Rather it is the Samsa family's relationship to its inside/outside boundary, and represents what has been jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, the instinctive, the semiotic: the abject, that is, Gregor, the beast.

Interesting, within this context, is the cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas' view of dirt in *Purity and Danger* (2002).[135] On the issue of dirt, or impurity versus purity, Douglas enjoins the reader to suspend the Western association of the notions of purity and dirt with hygiene/health for a while.[136] She invites the reader to enter into the world of primitive communities where purity and dirt are not thought of in those terms. Douglas views the notions of purity and impurity as functioning in those communities, not in terms of hygiene, but in terms of setting parameters for conceptual ordering: putting the chaos of experience in place, within conceptual borders. "Dirt", in this outlook, is "matter out of place".[137] Things are not considered dirty in and of themselves, but because of where they stand in a cultural system of categories, which can include people as well as non-human classes of animate or inanimate objects. From that perspective, Gregor's camping in and oozing dirt signals that he is "out of place" in the human Samsa family.

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[135] Mary Douglas. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge, 2002. Douglas does away with the notions of purity and impurity in terms of hygiene. She explains that the notions pure/impure have no fixed, or essential meaning: what is pure in one society is considered impure in another and vice versa. The notions pure and impure function as parameters for a conceptual ordening of the place of things, of society as a whole. They shape that perspective and come to mean what is "in" or "out of place". Something is "pure" according to that society's perception of the order of things, and something impure does not fit in with that perception and is therefore "out of place".

[136] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, hygiene is "that department of knowledge or practice which relates to the maintenance of health; a system of principles or rules for preserving or promoting health; sanitary science".

[137] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 50.

The abject (Gregor) appears when the pre-language subject-to-be (the Samsas) feels that its fragile border is threatened. The fragility of the border, or the law acting as a boundary, is masterly shown in the text through the Samsa family's three boarders (dressed as lawyers) who seem to dramatize that fragility by finding fault with a number of transgressions of the law (or transgressions of the border between the Samsa family self and its animal other, Gregor). Their outward appearance matches their function: their long beards and clothes suggest the authority of the law (the culturally fixed border between human and animal, self and other), which they symbolise in terms of Mary Douglas' law of purity and cleanliness when it comes to animals, especially vermin like Gregor:

> These serious gentlemen - all three had long beards, as Gregor was able to register through a crack in the door - were obsessed with *neatness*, not only in their room, but since they had, after all, moved in here, throughout the entire household, and especially in the kitchen. They could not stand uselessness, let alone dirty junk.[138]

Significantly, it is the boarders' presence in the Samsa household that prompts the Samsa family to exclude anything that might "hurt" the boarders' pathological sense of purity into one little room, including Gregor. One evening they spot Gregor the bug, who had escaped imprisonment for a while to attend a violin recital given by his beloved sister Grethe in the drawing room. In a corner of the room the three gentlemen (invited by Gregor's father) find Gregor the bug listening in, thus transgressing the archaic memory of the fixed border between man and animal. That is too much for the three. In a display of the rigidity of the (purity) law transgressed by Gregor, they follow mock legal proceedings by formally holding Gregor's father responsible for the bug's presence in the first place:

> "Mr. Samsa", the middle roomer called to Gregor's father, and without wasting another word pointed his index finger at Gregor, who was slowly moving forward. The violin stopped, the middle roomer smiled first at his friends shaking his head, and then looked at Gregor again.[139]

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[138] My emphasis**.** Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 33. "Diese ernsten Herren – alle drei hatten Vollbärte, wie Gregor einmal durch eine Türspalte feststellte – waren peinlich auf Ordnung, nicht nur im ihren Zimmer, sondern, da sie sich nur einmal hier eingemietet hatten, in der ganzen Wirtschaft, also insbesondere in der Küche, bedacht.Unnützen oder gar schmutzigen Kram ertrugen sie nicht." (DzL Textband. 180-81)

[139] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 36. '"Herr Samsa", rief der mittlere Herr dem Vater zu, und zeigte, ohne ein weiteres Wort zu verlieren, mit dem Zeigefinger auf den sich langsam sich vorwarts bewegenden Gregor. Die Violine verstummte, der mittlere Zimmerherr lächelte erst einmal kopfschüttelnd seinen Freunden zu und sah dann wieder auf Gregor hin.' (DzL Textband. 186)

Subsequently the boarders, revolted by Gregor's presence in the house, give notice to Gregor's father in style, with a speech strongly suggesting court proceedings, and delivered by the angry, middle one of the three boarders:

> "I herewith declare", he said, raising his hand [as if in a court of justice] and casting his eyes around for Gregor's mother and sister too, "that in view of the disgusting conditions prevailing in this apartment and family" - here he spat curtly and decisively on the floor, "I give notice as of now. Of course I won't pay a cent for the days I have been living here, either; on the contrary: I shall consider taking some sort of action against you with claims that – believe me – will be easy to substantiate." He stopped and looked straight in front of him, as if he were expecting something. And in fact his two friends at once chimed in with the words, "We too give notice as of now". Thereupon he grabbed the doorknob and slammed the door with a bang.[140]

This "bang" symptomizes the law capitulating and marks a reversal in the Samsa family's attitude to Gregor: exposed to the threat of the abject's (Gregor's) transgressing the borders (of the family self), the Samsas are confronted with the impossible in their midst; they fall into expulsory rhythms of abjection (like the pre-Oedipal child facing the abject-ed mother). That fall culminates in their conviction that Gregor will have to disappear to purify the family body, to secure its borders and allow it to return it to its clean and proper state or, in Kristeva's words, "to exclude what is felt as disturbing identity, system, order": the abject.[141]

> "My dear Parents", said his sister, and by way of an introduction, pounded her hand on the table, "things can't go on like this. Maybe you don't realize it, but I do. I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster, and so, all I say is: we have to try to get rid of it. We've done everything humanly possible to take care of it and to put up with it; I don't think anyone can blame us in the least." "She is absolutely right," said his father to himself. His mother, who still could not catch her breath, began to cough dully behind her hand, a wild look in her eyes.[142]

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[140] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 37. "'Ich erkläre hiermit", sagte er, hob die hand und suchte mit den Blicken auch die Mutter und die Schwester, "dasz ich mit Rücksicht auf die in dieser Wohnung und Familie herrschenden wiederliche Verhältnisse" - hierbei hierbei spie er kurz entschlossen auf den Boden- "mein Zimmer augenblicklich kündige. Ich werde natürlich auch für die Tage, die ich hier gewohnt habe, nicht das Geringste bezahlen, dagegen werde ich es mir noch überlegen, ob ich nicht mit irgendwelchen -glauben sie mir – sehr leicht zu begründenden Forderungen gegen Sie auftreten werde." Er schwieg und sah gerade vor sich hin, als erwarte er etwas. Tatsächlich fielen sofort seine zwei Freunden mit den Worten ein: "Auch wir kündigen augenblicklich." Darauf faszte er die Türklinke und schlosz mit einem Krach die Tür.' (Dzl Textband. 188)

[141] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror.* 4.

[142] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 37. "'Liebe Eltern", sagte die Schwester und schlug zur Einleitung mit der Hand auf den Tisch, "so geht: es nicht weiter. Wenn ihr das vielleicht

After trying to look as well as they could after Gregor, their metamorphosed brother and son, the Samsas move into a psychodynamics of abjection and start turning their abject (son/brother) into an object of hatred. Gregor becomes a despised other, who has to disappear.

Here, "The Metamorphosis" merges two archaic fantasies/memories of the border: a) the social one, that prevented primitive human society from surrendering its human identity by mixing with animals; b) the psychological one (Kristeva), that prevents the fledgling-subject to revert after separation to the instinctive unity with the mother (the *chora*) which means - as we recall from the previous chapter - loss of meaning, or psychosis. Reading the text as rooted in these two fantasies puts the reader on the border between the symbolic and the semiotic, connecting him/her to both. This turns "The Metamorphosis" into an avant-garde text, a technology of abjection, in Kristeva's sense: a text offering the reader the possibility of sublimation.

Antonin Artaud views the avant-garde writer as taking on the artistic "duty of safeguarding", of providing:

> ... a tissue for the anxieties of its time. The artist who has not sheltered in the depths of his heart the heart of his time, the artist who does not know himself to be a scape-goat, who does not know that his duty is to magnetize, to attract, and to bring down on his shoulders the errant furies of his time so as to discharge it of its psychological sickness, he is not an artist. Now, all the artists are not capable of arriving at this kind of magical identification of their own feelings with the collective furies of men. And the times are not all capable of appreciating the importance of the artists and the job of safeguarding that they undertake to the profit of the social good.[143]

Horror and fascination in "The Metamorphosis" are manifest in the subject's (the Samsa family) response to the metamorphosed Gregor, now their other, or abject. Both ambivalent emotions are of the order of reactions at "seeing a corpse, which confronts one with something encroaching on borders between life and

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nicht einsehet, ich sehe es ein. Ich will vor diesem Untier nicht den Namen meines Bruders aussprechen, und sage daher blosz: wir müssen versuchen es los zu werden.Wir haben das Menschenmögliche versucht, es zu pflegen und zu dulden, ich glaube, es kann uns niemand den geringsten Vorwurf machen." "Sie hat tausendmal Recht", sagte der Vater für sich. Die Mutter, die noch immer nicht genug Atem finden konnte, fing in die vorgehaltene Hand mit einem irrsinnigen Ausdruck der Augen dumpf zu husten an.' (Dzl Textband. 189)

143 Julia Kristeva. "Towards a Cultural Revolution" (1972), a paper delivered by Kristeva at the 1972 Artaud/Bataille conference and published in *Tel Quel* 52-53 (1973). My Artaud quotation is from the English translation of that paper in Julia Kristeva. "The Subject in Process". *The Tel Quel Reader.* Eds. Patrick Ffrench and Roland-François Lack. Trans. Patrick Ffrench. London: Routledge, 1998. 173.

death".[144]. In other words, as dramatized in "The Metamorphosis", reactions to seeing a human turned into a giant insect encroaching on the borders of the Samsa family self, confronting them with what they permanently thrust aside in order to live: the fragility of the borders between humanity and that which denies humanity. This is literarily represented by an insect, the lowest of animals, which is now here, threatening the fragile Samsa family border. From Kristeva's perspective of identity-formation such transgressions signal the abject, that which does not respect borders (does not keep its proper domain), positions and/or rules: the classification, or ordering of things in the dominant cultural discourse. Gregor's appearance and death (through murder), from this perspective, may be interpreted as dramatizing the abject as well as its purification by his sacrificial death. This ambivalent double-role evokes associations with Kristeva's analysis of king Oedipus at Colonus in *Powers of Horror* where she interprets the abject as the defilement (repressed family relationship) of the family by king Oedipus, and that defiled king as simultaneously representing the source of the abject and its purification by his assuming the role of the scapegoat, as Gregor does in "The Metamorphosis". Horror and fascination mix almost seamlessly in the family's and the manager's responses to the metamorphosed (abject) Gregor. Confronted with their son-turned-into-a-monster the parents subside into a metamorphosis of their own, with the mother loosing her bourgeois decorum:

> His mother - in spite of the manager's presence she stood with her hair still un-braided from the night, sticking out in all directions - first looked at his father with her hands clasped, then took two steps towards Gregor, and sank down in the midst of her skirts spreading out around her, her face completely hidden on her breast.[145]

The father abandons any trace of his patriarchal authority:

> With a hostile expression his father clenched his fist, as if to drive Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly around the living room, shielded his eyes with his hands, and sobbed with heaves of his powerful chest.[146]

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[144] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 1-3.

[145] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 37. "Die Mutter – sie stand hier trotz den Anwesendheit des Prokuristen mit von der Nacht her noch aufgelösten, hoch sich sträubenden Haaren – sah zuerst mit gefaltenden Handen den Vater an, ging dann zwei Schritte zum Gregor hin, und fiel inmitten ihrer rings um sie herum ausbreitenden Röcke nieder, das Gesicht ganz unauffindbar zu ihrer Brust gesänkt." (DzL Textband. 134)

[146] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 12. "Der Vater ballte mit feindseligem Ausdruck die Faust, als wollte er Gregor in sein Zimmer zurückstoszen, sah sich dann unsicher im Wohnzimmer um, beschattete dann mit den Händen die Augen und weinte, dasz sich seine mächtige Brust schüttelte." (DzL Textband. 134)

So does the manager: at the sight of his employee-turned-into-a-giant-vermin he lets slip the cloak of authority that fits his position as Gregor's superior, and succumbs to horror and fascination:

> … the manager [on first seeing Gregor the bug], burst out with a loud "Oh" - it sounded like a rush of wind - and now he [Gregor focalising the action] could see him [the manager] standing closest to the door, his hand pressed over his open mouth, slowly backing away from, as if repulsed by, an invisible, unrelenting force [the abject].[147]

Subsequently, the manager relapses into a bout of animality (curling his lips like an aggressive dog), transgressing himself the archaic border between human and animal. Snarling aggressively like an animal (curled lips), panics and takes flight in horror, no matter how Gregor beseeches him to stay and listen to his arguments against sacking him on account of failing his duties (being late for work):

> But at Gregor's first words the manager had already turned away and with curled lips [animality] looked back at Gregor only over his twitching shoulder [fear]. And during Gregor's speech he did not stand still for a minute but, without letting Gregor out of his sight [fascination], backed toward the door [panic], yet very gradually, as if there were some secret prohibition against leaving the room. He was already in the foyer, and from the sudden movement one might have thought he had just burned the sole of his foot. In the foyer, however, he stretched his right hand far out toward the staircase, as if nothing less than an unearthly deliverance were awaiting him there [taking flight in panic].[148]

Obviously a fear of insects alone cannot explain the phobic intensity and violence of the family's and the manager's reactions to the metamorphosed Gregor. Phobias, as Kristeva explains in the episode about (Freud's) *Little Hans*[149], are

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147 Ibidem. ' ... da hörte er schon den Prokuristen ein lautes "Oh" ausstoszen – es klang, wie wenn der Wind saust – und nun sah er ihn auch, wie er der der Nächste an der Türe war, die Hand gegen den offenen Mund drückte und langzam zurückwieg als vertreibte ihn eine unsichtbare, gleichmäszig fortwirkende Kraft...' (DzL Textband. 134)

148 Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 13. "Aber der Prokurist hatte sich schonbei den ersten Worten Gregors abgewendet, und nur über die zuckenden Schulter hinweg sah er mit aufgeworfenen Lippen nach Gregor zurück. Und während Gregors Rede stand er einen Augenblick still, sondern verzog sich, ohne Gregor aus den Augen zu lassen, gegen die Tür, aber ganz allmählich, als bestehe einen geheimes Verbot das Zimmer zu verlassen. Schon war er im Vorzimmer, und nach der plötzlichen Bewegung, mit der er zum letztenmal der Fusz aus dem Wohnzimmer zog, hätte man glauben können, er habe sich soeben die Sohle verbrannt." (DzL Textband. 137) My explanations in square brackets.

149 Kristeva. *Powers of Horror.* 34-5.

hieroglyphs condensing all fears, from nameable to unnameable. The latter is reminiscent of the suffering of unacknowledged subjectivity: that conglomeration of fear, deprivation and nameless frustration that marks the "in-between" child, between separation from the instinctive unity with the mother and signification, and its entrance in the symbolic order, its ability to enter into subject/object relations without which there is no meaning, like in psychosis, a situation Kristeva refers to as horror.

Of particular interest are Kafka's notes on "The Metamorphosis" in his diary entry of January 1914, two years after he wrote the text and one year before it was published:

> Anxiety alternating with self-assurance at the office. Otherwise more confident. Great antipathy to 'Metamorphosis'. Unreadable ending. Imperfect almost to its very marrow. It would have turned out much better if I had not been interrupted at the time by the business trip.[150]

Kafka the artist has clearly no inkling of the imperfection that he has turned into literature: an imperfection "almost to its very marrow". Marrow signals the invisible other side, the semiotic, that turns Gregor into that "little piece of the real", as Žižek formulates it. The whole narrative appears as a vision of the real, or the semiotic in Kristeva's terms, a vision of the border. The unreadability of the ending through the lens of abjection marks the rebirth of the Samsa family, made visible by the narrative's double, ambivalent life-in-death movement that I have discussed before. With Gregor out of the way, the Samsa parents (now on a family outing with Grethe, Gregor's favourite sister and plotter of his murder):

> Growing quieter and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, thought that it would soon be time too, to find her a good husband. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions when, at the end of the ride their daughter got up first and stretched her young body.[151]

Here "The Metamorphosis" uses artistic dramatization by placing the reader on the limit between the symbolic and the semiotic, Heidegger's ambivalent machinery of *Dasein*. This productive ambivalence of Being as subject is abjection in Kristeva's reference framework.

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[150] Max Brod, ed.. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka: 1910-23*. Trans. Joseph Kresh. New York: Schocken Books, 1976. 253.

[151] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 42. "Stiller werdend und fast unbewuszt durch Blicke sich verständigend, dachten sie daran, dasz es nun Zeit sein werde, auch einen braven Mann für sie zu suchen. Und es war ihnen wie eine Bestätigung ihrer neuen Träume und guten Absichten, als am Ziele ihrer Fahrt die Tochter als erste sich erhob und ihren jungen Körper dehnte." (Dzl Textband. 200)

4.6 Conclusion

The critic is greatly tempted to explain the text's dramatization of abjection in causal relation with the social sphere in which it came into being. Eric Santner's essay "Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and the Writing of Abjection", for instance, views Gregor's fall into abjection "as a symptom whose fascinating presence serves as a displaced condensation of larger and more diffuse disturbances within the social field marked out by the text" but also "a change in the nature of patriarchal power and authority that infects its stability, dependability and consistency with radical uncertainty".[152]

My reading of "The Metamorphosis", through the lens of Kristeva's entirely different notion of abjection, does not focus on societal/cultural structures but rather on what resists interpretation in the symbolic order as it "resides beneath religion, morality and politics as systems of representation: the unbearable fragility of identity - inexpressible in terms of the symbolic order, but nevertheless (experientially) real".[153] Gregor seems to hint at this reality of the impossible when he wonders at the very beginning of the narrative: "What's happened to me? … It was no dream."[154]

This does not mean however that one can discard the symbolic when writing about the semiotic, only that one cannot be explained as causally related to the other. Kafka's genius lies in my view in his artistic/ intuitive vision of what eluded expression in the contemporary symbolic order but which he sensed in all dynamics of exclusion, whether within or outside his Jewish cultural context. What he saw, without realising what it was yet expressing it in his art, was what Kristeva conceptualised as abjection, which appears whenever the law is weak. This weakness of the law is dramatized by Gregor the insect transgressing it by mingling with the humans attending his sister's violin-recital. As soon as the three boarders have restored the law by confronting the Samsa family with its transgression, the abjection/expulsion of Gregor, after his isolation in a rubbish room, sets in. Isolation of the other always precedes expulsion in any sense and context.

I believe that my above analysis of the text shows that "The Metamorphosis" can be read as an avant-garde text in Kristeva's sense: written at the border between the Samsa family's self and Gregor as other, or abject. Read in this light, the narrative action can be viewed as a vision of abjection as well as a technology

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[152] Eric Santner. "Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and the Writing of Abjection". *The Norton Critical Edition of the Metamorphosis*. New York: Norton, 1996. 195-96.

[153] Beardsworth. *Julia Kristeva*. 117-8.

[154] Kafka. "The Metamorphosis". 3. "'Was ist mit mir geschehen?" dachte er. Es war kein Traum.' (Dzl Textband. 115)

of subjectivity since this vision enables the reader/writer to re-constitute his/her self. Or a vision, in Slavoj Žižek's terms as noted before, that temporarily intermits the agency of the symbolic (signification) to which the reader is exposed, while offering him/her artistically the agency of the real (Kristeva's semiotic).[155] Kristeva refers to the aforementioned textual technology in terms of the text offering the reader the possibility of sublimation, as I have pointed out earlier.

My view is that Kafka, both as a Jew and an artist, intuited the invisible drive behind his culture's socio-political exclusion of Jews, despite their artistic/intellectual/economical contribution to German culture. Other German/Jewish writers shared this insight but it was Kafka's artistic genius to sense the ambivalent machinery of the drive, which excludes and creates in one sweep, but also to artistically associate that machinery with the process of identity-formation, which Kristeva calls abjection. A process that he literally dramatizes in "The Metamorphosis" through the German Samsa family's move from exclusion (of the other: Gregor) to renewal of the Samsa family self. This is also the machinery that the reader half recognises in horror and fascination: something familiar, a burning sensation that cannot be remembered. For how can we grasp the impossible co-existence of positive and negative from our position in the symbolic order that is grounded in their separation? We can only look for analogies in literature, art, psychoanalysis and religion.

[155] Based on Slavoj Žižek. *The Fragile Absolute, or Why the Christian Legacy Is Worth Fighting For*. New York: Verso, 2000. 74-5.

DAVID VOGEL

[עָרֵי נְעוּרַי] [MY CHILDHOOD CITIES]

עָרֵי נְעוּרַי,
עַתָּה אֶת כֻּלָּן כְּבָר שָׁכָחְתִּי
וְאוֹתָךְ בְּאַחַת מֵהֶנָּה.

My childhood cities, by now I've forgotten them all, and you in one of them.

תּוֹךְ שְׁלוּלִית מֵי־גֶשֶׁם
יְחֻפָּה בִּשְׁבִילִי עוֹד תִּרְקְדִי –
וְהֶנָּה וַדַּאי כְּבָר מֵתִּ.

You still dance on for me in a puddle of rainwater – but surely you're already dead.

מִתּוֹךְ יַלְדוּתִי הָרְחוֹקָה
לִדְהֹר אֵיךְ נָחַפַּזְתִּי,
עַד בּוֹא אֶל הֵיכַל הַזִּקְנָה הַלָּבָן –
וְהוּא רָחָב וָרִיק.

How quickly I galloped out of my distant childhood, until I reached the white palace of old age, and found it wide and empty.

רֵאשִׁית דַּרְכִּי
שׁוּב לֹא אֶרְא,
וְאוֹתָךְ לֹא אֶרְא,
וְלֹא אוֹתִי מֵאָז.

I can no longer see my road's beginning; I cannot see you or the self that I was.

אֹרַח הַיָּמִים,
מֵרָחוֹק,
לָנוּעַ תּוֹסִיף הָלְאָה,
מֵאַיִן אֶל אַיִן,
בִּלְעָדַי.

The caravan of days, from afar, will move on its way, from nothingness to nothingness, without me.

The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse. Ed. T. Carmi. New York: Penguin, 2006. 527

5 DAVID VOGEL (1891-1944) BIOGRAPHICAL AND LITERARY-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 of this study are dedicated to the Russian-Jewish- Hebrew writer David Vogel (born in Satanów, Podolia, in 1891 and died in 1944 in Auschwitz), and his Hebrew novel *Married Life (Hayei Nisu'im, חיי נישואים, 1929-30)*.[156] Chapters 5 and 6 are complementary in the sense that chapter 5 focuses on the cultural historical Jewish context in which Vogel wrote and lived before his exile; in chapter 6 I have tried to make the logics of abjection visible in Vogel's text, *Married Life*, particularly in its focus on the protagonist's subjective experience of Vienna as a Russian Jewish exile.

The preceding methodology aims to do justice to Vogel's stubborn and courageous efforts to forge – as he writes in his diary – an identity from the (Hebrew) word, as a writer and a Russian Jewish exile.. Thus, like most Eastern European and Russian Jews in Central and Western Europe, Vogel rejects assimilation into a nasty, anti-Semitic European culture, although he admires that culture's philosophy, literature and art. I will show in the next chapter that this ambivalence this is at the same time Vogel's and other Eastern European and Russian Jewish exiles' dilemma and an underlying literary theme. Vogel also rejected Zionism as the only political possibility for a Jewish identity in an anti-Semitic world, although he sympathised with the movement. Critics who blamed him for being anti-Zionist are wrong: Vogel went to Tel Aviv (Palestine) in 1929 in an attempt to get *Married Life* published as he could not find a Jewish publisher in Europe. Once in Tel Aviv, his novel was published and he was offered a teaching job, which he refused. The reason for that was in all likelihood not political but simply physical: both Vogel and his wife suffered from tuberculosis and could not stand the exacting heat of

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[156] *Married Life (חיי נישואים)* 1929-30. Tel Aviv: Mitzpeh, 1929. Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuchad/Siman Kriah/Keter, 1986, 2000. Trans. Dalya Bilu. British edition: London: Peter Halban, 1988. Quotations in English and page numbers refer to this edition as *Married Life*.
Bilu's translation is based on the 1986 Hebrew edition by Menakhem Perry. In 2010, Lilach Netanel, a young scholar from Bar-Ilan University, discovered in Genazim ,the archive of the Hebrew Writers' Association in Tel Aviv, a sheaf of papers covered with Vogel's dense, cramped handwriting, which appeared to be the manuscript of an as yet unknown, and now recently published, Viennese Hebrew novel by Vogel, *Viennese Romance*. Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2012. Translations in English and Dutch, the latter by Kees Meiling, Amsterdam: Atheneum, 2014.

the Palestinian climate. That is why Vogel, back in Europe, eventually chose the healthy mountain climate of Hauteville (France) to live in and cure his illness.

When Vogel wrote *Married Life* in Paris (1929-30), and even long before that, it was more than obvious that full assimilation was no longer an option for Jews in Europe: assimilated or not, converted to Roman Catholicism or not, a Jew remained a Jew in the eyes of his non-Jewish Others. Besides, Eastern European and Russian Jews, coming from orthodox environments, seldom chose full assimilation, let alone conversion to Catholicism, which was not uncommon in Vienna. It is telling, in this connection, and satirical, that in *Married Life* Thea, the Catholic Austrian wife, converts to Judaism before her marriage to the Galician Jewish Gurdweill, instead of him converting to her religion, Roman Catholicism.

Chapter 5 does not introduce new historical facts. Rather it brings together dispersed, historical and literary historical facts, in an attempt to reconstruct Vogel's position as a Jewish exile on the geographical-cultural border of two cultures: his orthodox, Yiddish-Russian culture of origin, and its Western other, the Central and Western European, German-oriented culture that is the literary *mise en scène* in which abjection becomes visible. Drawing a sketch of that *mise en scène* as the décor of the protagonist's struggle for identity is the object of this chapter.

5.2 Vogel's Cultural Historical Contexts: Russia and Vienna

I have already given a very broad overview of Vogel's Russian Jewish historical and geographical background, the Russian Pale of Settlement, in chapter 3 of this study. This fifth chapter, however, has been tailored to the historical and literary historical specifics relating to David Vogel's identity as a Russian Jew and a modern Hebrew writer in Vienna. *Not* the elitist Vienna of assimilated Jewry, its music, art, architecture and literature, as evoked in Schorske's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* and Stefan Zweig's Austrian memoir *The World of Yesterday,* with their evocation of a bygone world of security.[157] Rather, I will try to conjure Vogel's view of Vienna as the view of an outsider, a Russian-Jewish refugee faced with a Jewish intellectual community torn between orthodoxy, Zionism and the impossibility of social assimilation on account of an inextricable, political anti-Semitism. To try and capture that outsider's view I will first explore aspects of Vogel's experience as a Jew in Russia.

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[157] Stefan Zweig. *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers (1944*). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1992; Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1980.

David Vogel was born in 1891, in Satanów (also spelled Satanoff) in the province of Podolia in Russia, then under the regime of Tsar Alexander Romanov III, Tsar of Russia, King of Poland and Grand Prince of Finland from 1881-1894. Podolia was situated in the Jewish Pale of Settlement, the area - as I have pointed out in chapter 3 - to which Jewish life was restricted under the Tsars, and which covered White Russia north of the river Neman, Western Ukraine: the district between the rivers Dnieper and Dniester and part of Moldavia. The history of the Jews under the Christian Tsars was marked by cruelty and arbitrariness: pogroms, deportations, forced emigration, etc. The differences and analogies with the history of the Jews in Central and Western Europe invite further investigation.

Actually, the history of the Jews in Russia should be studied together with that of the Slavic peoples, who lived in poverty, illiteracy and serfdom under the rule of the Tsars and the Russian Orthodox Church, unimaginable in the eyes of a Westerner. Yet, a comparative study of Russian and Russian-Jewish history would transgress the boundaries of my research field in this study. For my purposes, suffice it to say that Russia, in Vogel's days, was a powerful, unintelligibly vast and, for the Tsar as a ruler, unwieldy Empire, larger than the whole of Europe. It was inhabited by many different ethnic peoples, ruled by one, absolute ruler and had seen no cultural movements comparable with the Western Enlightenment. Revolutionary movements in Russia came much later than in Europe, where the French Revolution took place in 1789. The Russian revolutions took place in 1905 (Vogel was fourteen) and 1917 (Vogel was twenty-six and lived in Vienna). In Russia, before the 1917 revolution, the Christian Orthodox Church was a spiritually and politically powerful institution that hated Jews, not because they were Jews, but because they were others: not Christians and Slavs, and thus different, "not us".

Historically speaking, the term anti-Semitism to qualify Russian hatred of Jews is out of context and incorrect. As the German-Jewish writer Jakob Wasserman observed in his diary (see chapter 1), anti-Semitism as political hatred of the Jews was something typically German. The term anti-Semitism was coined by the German political agitator Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904), founder of the first Anti-Semitic League.[158] Simon Dubnow, the Jewish historian from Belarus (see chapter 3), calls fear of the Jews *Judeophobia*. The social effects of *Judeophobia* for Jews in Russia were similar to those anywhere else in Europe: pogroms (violent mass attacks), murder and violence. Pogroms, in some Russian districts and towns more frequent than in others, were continuously experienced by Russian Jews, in particular in the Pale of Settlement, but also - as far as there were any Jews outside

[158] Wilhelm Marr. *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt ausbetrachtet*. Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 1879.

the Pale - in the closed, agrarian communities of Russia as well as in the big cities. Jews, who had no territory of their own, except the one they had been deported to, *The Pale*, and did not belong to the Christian Slavic peoples, were viewed as aliens, and triggered in the Russian mind the fear of difference, of the Other, manifest in Russian parlance in the distinction between our own (*svoi*) and aliens (*chuzie*).

To the Christian Russian Tsars, the otherness of Jews presented a political problem. They were concerned by the possible threat posed by Jews to Tsarist absolute power. Through their religious studies, Jews were literate, at least compared to the vast majority of their Russian neighbours, and therefore potential rebels. Moreover, Jewish autonomy was felt to be a threat to the feudal state on account of the Jews' commercial entrepreneurship, and their traditional autonomy through a vast network of communal institutions of their own, which provided not only for their religious needs but also took care of such semi-secular requirements as education, the judiciary and social welfare.[159]

Tsarist policy regarding the Jews was marked from the eighteenth century onwards by (1) attempts to extinguish the Jews' otherness through (compulsive) conversion to Christianity, (2) restrictions to the Jews' socio-economical influence by excluding them from an array of professions and occupations, and (3) geographical isolation by empaling Jews, which started under the reign of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great (1729-96, reigned 1762-96), to the Pale of Settlement in order to be able to better keep them under tsarist control. What had provoked the empress Catharina's sweeping removal of the Jews to the Pale was Russia's annexation of the Eastern provinces of Poland and Lithuania. At a loss what to do about the vast numbers of Jews in those provinces, Catherine came back on her earlier promise to give the Jews in those countries the same rights as the original population. She decided that it was wiser to let the Jews of the newly acquired provinces spread out into the Empire's interior provinces, which marked the beginnings of the transportations to the Jewish Pale of Settlement (from 1792 onward) whose borders the Jews were not allowed to cross. Jews were also deported to the Pale from other regions of Russia and Eastern Europe and were subsequently forbidden to live or travel outside the Pale - and even in some towns within the Pale, for which they needed a special permit.

The deportation of Jews to the Pale remained a recurring feature of Tsarist politics up to Vogel's birth in 1891 and after. In 1891, under Tsar Alexander III (1881-94), 20,000 Jews were expelled from Moscow and deported to the Pale, many of them in chains. The census of 1897, under Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918),

[159] Salo W. Baron. *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets (1964)*. Rev. ed. New York: Schocken Books, 1987. 17.

when Vogel was six years old, indicated that most of the Jews had remained confined to the Pale: almost 5,000,000 Jews lived in the Pale, and only 200,000 lived elsewhere in Western Russia. Jews had access to only a restricted number of professions and occupations and were not allowed to work in public or governmental service.

In addition to the harsh rules imposed on the Jews by Tsar Alexander III, writes Baron, the Industrial Revolution blown over from the West caused a dramatic change in Russia for the whole population, including the Jews. The rapid urban and industrial growth and the rise of a Jewish/non-Jewish workers' proletariat as a result of industrialisation began to change the feudal face of Russia. The professional lives of Jews who used to work as artisans (shoemakers, tailors, tinkers, saddlers, bakers, carpenters, etc.) were disrupted by rapid urbanisation and industrial mass production, which forced them to look at the new mills for employment. Here they also faced what had *not* changed: discrimination from Christian employers and workers alike. Many employers considered Jews ill-suited for the work and many Christian workers were simply unwilling to accept them as co-workers. Collisions inevitably took place between the workers of the two communities, although not on a large scale. However, industrialisation also opened up possibilities for Jewish emancipation; Jews joined upcoming Russian socialist movements and also created one of their own, in 1897 (Vogel was six). It was named the *Yiddish Bund* (*Yiddischer Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln, un Rusland*) or in English: *The General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland and Russia,* which was founded by a number of socialist Jews led by Alexander Kremer (1865-1935) in Vilnius, thirteen years before Vogel visited that city to study there at the *yeshiva,* or Jewish college.

This brings me to another very important aspect of the universe of Vogel's mind: Jewish education as it functioned in Polish Galicia (where Gurdweill, the protagonist of *Married Life,* came from) and in Russia until the years before the First World War when Vogel fled to Vienna (1912). Education, for those Jews, had quite different connotations than in the West: it was concerned with religion/emotion/identity, personal and religious, a way of life rather than a section of it, in short, the German word *Bildung* seems more suitable. I will try to give an impression of Jewish education in Russia and Poland.

Elementary Education*: The Heder*

The *heder* (Hebrew *heder*; Yiddish *kheyder*; English: room) was the widely accepted elementary educational framework among Eastern European Jewry since the Middle Ages. Study in the *heder* was restricted to religious subjects and considered an integral part in the process of raising and socializing a Jewish child, including the inculcation of Jewish religious and cultural values through imparting basic knowledge of the canonical sources Torah, Mishnah, Talmud- and of the liturgy.[160]

Alter Kacyzne. *Poyln, Jewish Life in the Old Country.*
Ed. Marek Web. New York: Henry Holt, 1999.

Education for Jews in Russia and Poland was a purely private matter: the responsibility of the parents - that is, until the age of thirteen. Then, after their Bar Mitzvah and thus reaching religious adulthood, boys were responsible for their own education. The Jewish community saw to it that no male Jewish child between the ages of four and thirteen should be deprived from at least a good elementary Jewish education at the *heder.* The result, writes Baron, was a sharp contrast between the Jews and their Christian-Russian neighbours who were often illiterate.[161] The *heder* curriculum consisted exclusively of Jewish subjects and the mas-

[160] Mordechai Zalkin. *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 2008*. Trans. Barry Walfish. Ed. Gershon David Hundert. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. Volume I. 708-10. Lemma: Heder.

[161] Baron. *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*. 116-17.

tering of the Hebrew *Aleph-Beth*. The teachers, or *melameds* – apart from gifted ones who gave their pupils excellent instruction – were often either untrained for their jobs, or had taken on their profession only because they had failed in other jobs. The school system was subject to fierce criticism, both from enlightened Jews as from outsiders, yet, writes Baron, in general it gave good elementary training in Jewish subjects preparing boys under the age of thirteen for advanced religious education. Girls did not have to study, but most of them were taught how to recite prayers and read Yiddish translations of the Bible.[162]

Yekhiel Shtern's article "A Kheyder in Tyszowce (Yiddish: Tishevits)", a reminiscence of his own *heder* in Poland, gives a lively picture of that school type, what it looked like, inside and out, and its teaching methods:

> The inside [of the *heder*] consisted of a large square room divided in two by a screen. Behind the screen was the teacher's bedroom and kitchen. We used to call it 'the teacher's alcove'. Over the opening of the alcove hung a red sheet covered with countless white dots. We would wrap ourselves in that sheet and play hide-and-seek. During the winter, at twilight, when the teacher and his helpers were in the synagogue, and the schoolboys who studied at night were alone, this sheet was converted into a tales (praying shawl), and 'would-be' magicians wrapped themselves around in it and imitated the cantor in the synagogue.[163]

In the following section Shtern recounts how a Jewish boy's life became bound up with the *heder* and its *melamed* from the day:

> The Shir hamaalot amulets which were pasted up in the room of a mother in child-birth, were purchased from the teacher of the kheyder. On the seventh day after birth the [teacher's] helper would bring the school-children, after class to the home of the new-born and there read the Shema with them.[164] For the ritual of circumcision, a special kind of honey-cake, called reshete, was prepared. This reshete was brought to the teacher before baking and the teacher would mark out on the dough the form of a little fish and the words Mazl tov. He also would make a lot of little holes over the whole cake. That is why it was called reshete, which means a sort of iron sieve. The little fish was supposed to indicate that Jews were to multiply like fish.
>
> When a boy became three years old, his parents would wrap him in a tales (prayer shawl) and bring him to the kheyder. The children in the kheyder

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[162] For instance, the *Tsene-rene,* composed by Yankev ben Yitskhok Ashkenazi of Janów, which took its name from *tse'enah u-re'enah benot Tsiyon* ("Go forth and look, daughters of Zion"), a phrase from verse 3:11 of the Song of Songs.

[163] Yekhiel Shtern. "A Kheyder in Tyszowice (Yiddish: *Tishevits*)". *East European Jews in two Worlds. Studies from the YIVO Annual*. Ed. Deborah Dashe Moore. Evanstone: North Western University Press and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1989. 53.

[164] "I lift my eyes to the mountains - from where my help will come." Psalm 121:1.

> would stand around, look at him and wait for candy and cookies that the parents would distribute. The teacher's wife would come in and wished the parent of the child "that he should be eager to learn".
>
> The teacher would then take the child to the table and show him the alphabet printed in large letters on the first page of the prayer book. He would point out the letters tet, mem, alef, jod, dalet, shin, and then combine them into the Hebrew for "the Lord is Truth" and the child would repeat it after the teacher. After class the teacher would let a coin drop on the table from on high. The sound of the coin on the table would startle the new pupil and the teacher would say: "An angel threw this down for you so that you should be eager to learn."[165]

Another less romantic *kheyder* image in the following correspondence from Vitebsk (1894) is recounted in Baron's *The Russian Jews under the Tsars and Soviets*:

> Our Talmud Torahs are filthy rooms crowded from nine in the morning until nine in the evening, with pale, starved children. These remain in this contaminated atmosphere for twelve hours at a time and see only their bent, exhausted teachers. … Most of them are clad in rags; some of them are almost naked….Their faces are pale and sickly, and their bodies are evidently not strong. In parties of twenty or thirty, and at times more, they all repeat some lesson aloud after their instructor. He who has not listened to the almost absurd commentaries of the ignorant melamed (teacher) cannot even imagine how little the children gain from such instruction.[166]

Institutions for advanced Jewish education, *yeshivas*, dedicated to Talmud studies, were far and between compared to *heders*. From the age of thirteen when, religiously speaking, Jewish boys reach adulthood after their Bar Mitzvah, many left home and travelled around in search of a *yeshiva* that would accept them as a student. *Yeshivas* were run by distinguished rabbis and owed their prestige to the number of students that attended their schools, ranging from adolescent boys to married young men. The subject of study at the *yeshiva* was exclusively the Babylonian Talmud, a vast corpus of texts written in a mix of Hebrew and its cognate language, Aramaic. The language spoken in the *yeshivas* was Yiddish.

Small *yeshivas* were financed locally, and students were assigned to Jewish families for their daily meals. Larger, national *yeshivas* sent messengers out to collect donations from Jewish communities all over the Pale. This money provided the students with a small stipend. They were also assigned to Jewish families for meals but only on Sabbaths and holidays. Those financing methods, however,

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[165] Shtern. "A Kheyder in Tyszowice". 55.

[166] Baron. *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*. 118.

were highly inadequate and entailed great hardship for teachers and students. Yet the majority of both accepted these difficulties without demurring. They were proud of their academies' intellectual achievements whilst considering their own work as the fulfilment of Judaism's supreme commandment. Some *yeshivas* in Vogel's days also taught secular subjects. It was the *yeshivas*' outstanding achievement to inspire their students with an often lifelong dedication to self-study. This may baffle the twenty-first century reader living in a market culture tuned to instant gratification. Robert Alter writes:

> The yeshiva population was the intellectual elite of Central and Eastern European pre-modern Jewry. The Hebrew writers produced by the yeshivas were elite within elite. In part, I mean simply that they were the equivalent of the A+ students in the system, and certainly the evidence many of them offer of retentive memory and (to a lesser degree) of dialectic subtlety, of beqi'ut and harifut, is formidable. But I am also referring to a rather special mental aptitude which was not necessarily given special value within the system but which would have abundant uses outside the system, something that the Germans call 'Sprachgefühl', an innate sense, like perfect pitch in music, for how language should properly sound, joined with a relish for the sonorities and the semantic colorations of Hebrew words in their classical idiomatic combinations.[167]

Baron gives a telling example of that dedication, quoted from the Pauline Wengeroff's *Memoirs*, reminiscing how her father, a busy and wealthy (building) contractor, used to get up at four o'clock every morning so that he could devote several hours to Talmudic studies before attending synagogue services, and then going about his business.[168]

During the three years preceding his flight to Vienna in 1912, Vogel had travelled to and lived in Odessa, Lvov and Vilnius, all well-known Eastern European-Russian centres of Jewish learning and culture whose traditions of Jewish orthodoxy/assimilation, Zionism, Socialism (the *Bund*) and other forms of Jewish emancipation shaped his mind whilst studying there.[169] Vogel often lovingly

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[167] Robert Alter. *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988. 8.

[168] Baron. *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*. 119, note 372; Pauline Wengeroff. *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert*. 2nd ed. Vol. I. Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1913-1919. 5, 9, 143 ff.

[169] Vilnius: a town in Lithuania. Referred to as Vilna (Russian), Wilno (Polish) and Vilne (Yiddish). Vogel, a Russian Jew, uses the Russian name Vilna in his diary. From the 15th century onwards the city became a centre of rabbinical study, called the "Lithuanian Jerusalem" and "The citadel of Culture". Its best-known scholar was Eliyah ben Solomon Zalman, universally known as the Vilna Gaon. Vilna was one of the three major cities of Jewish education, the others were:

remembers Vilnius in his diary, yet there are no particulars as to the curricula he took part in, except that they appeared to have instilled in him a deep love of, and dedication to the study of Hebrew (he speaks of "my Hebrew" in his diary), his constant preoccupation.

5.3 Vogel's Personal Hebrew Diary

Vogel's diary *The End of the Days (Ketsot Hayamim),* written in Vienna between 20 September 1912 and 2 August1922*,* is one the few sources from which to draw biographical information about Vogel, not only about his arrival in Vienna but also about his experiences in his home country, the Jewish Pale of Settlement.

Ketsot Hayamim was written in Hebrew and published together with the originally Yiddish *Kulam Yatseu La'krav*[170] (*They All Went Into Battle,* 1941-42) in one single Hebrew volume *Tachanot Kavot* (*Extinguished Stations,* 1990).[171] In this chapter I use the only German translation of *Tachanot Kavot,* which is confusingly named after one of the diaries in which it appears.[172]

Das Ende der Tage (The End of the Days), which covers pages 23-113 of the German translation, gives the impression that Vogel is talking to himself. If ever meant for publication, which seems doubtful, it would have reached a very limited Jewish audience because of its very Hebrew language. Such audience would have to be able to read Hebrew and be familiar with Vogel's historical contexts, its references to historical facts being both scant and often no more than allusions assuming that the reader shares the author's cultural-religious frame of reference.

- Lvov (Polish: Lwów, German and Yiddish: Lemberg), capital of Galicia, was a cultural and political focus of Galician Jewry between 1880 and the First World War and a centre of the Zionist movement from 1880 until 1939.
- Odessa, in the Ukraine, was a centre of Russian Jewish assimilation and at the same time a focus of Jewish literary and nationalist life. The first secular school for Russian Jews (1824), the first Russian Jewish newspaper Rasviet (1860) and the pioneer Hebrew newspaper in Russia HaMelitz were founded in Odessa. Many of the great figures of modern Hebrew literature, such as Mendele Mocher Seforim, Bialik, Klausner (historian and professor of Hebrew literature), Ahad Ha'am (advocate of cultural Zionism) and Asher Ginsberg (a leading Eastern European Jewish essayist), were active in Odessa.

170 The originally Yiddish *Kulam Yatseu La'krav* was translated into Hebrew by Menakhem Perry, who in an editorial note, expressed doubt as to whether it was a diary or a novel.

171 *Tachanot Kavot*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad/Siman Kriach, 1990.

172 David Vogel. *Das Ende der Tage: Tagebücher und autobiographische Aufzeichnungen 1912-22 und 1941/42*. Trans. Ruth Achlama. Munich: Paul List Verlag, 1995. 23-113. The translation was carried out under the auspices of *The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature*. Foreword by Amir Eschel. German translation of David Vogel. *Tachanot Kavot*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad/Siman Kriach, 1990. In this study I focus on Vogel's diary in the German edition of the same name as the translation: David Vogel. *Das Ende der Tage: Tagebücher und autobiographische Aufzeichnungen 1912-22 und 1941/42*.

Allusions, as far as Vogel's diary is concerned, are the only clues in *Ketsot Hayamim* to his historical background. The diary, however, has been invaluable in my attempt to place Vogel's life and work into some historical frame of reference, even if the historical facts are often only hinted at or mentioned in passing. As I have noted before, unlike Kafka's life, which has been the subject of several excellent biographies, in Vogel's case the Western reader has not much to go on. For instance, his flight to the west to evade the Russian conscription of young Jews (the *rekruchina*) and the significance of his stay in Vilnius whose praises he sings repeatedly in the diary, have not been documented.[173] First, however, I will discuss the reason for Vogel's flight to Vienna and explore Jewish life in Vienna at the time he arrived there in 1912.

Married Life would perhaps never have been written and Vogel would probably have remained in his beloved Vilnius, had he not been forced, like all young Russian Jews in his days, to cross the Austrian-Russian border to evade the twenty-five years' conscription of Jews into the Russian army: the *rekruchina*. The first diary entry recounts Vogel's return to Satanów, his native town in Podolia (Russia) in the Jewish Pale of Settlement on Friday 20 September 1912.[174] In this entry (Vogel is twenty-one then) he writes that he is not yet certain as to what to do: join the Russian army, or escape that ordeal by crossing the Russian-Austrian border. He obviously chose the latter, since he had returned to his birthplace Satanów, very close to the Russian-Austrian border.

Most young Russian Jews who crossed the border went to Galicia, then Austrian, which had a large Orthodox Jewish community, or elsewhere in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose emperor Franz Joseph was widely known among the Eastern European Jewry for his (relative) tolerance towards the Jewish people.[175] The Russian secret police were watching the border to prevent Jewish boys from shirking the *rekruchina* and arrested him. He was jailed and subsequently returned to Satanów, where he started a new diary as the previous one had been stolen. The entry touches on a powerful historical issue affecting the lives of young Jews living in the Pale of Settlement. Jewish men, aged eighteen onwards, were obliged by law to serve twenty-five years in the Russian army, as decreed by Tsar Nicholas

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[173] The young Vogel spent some time in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, which was nicknamed "The Jerusalem of the North", on account of being an important centre of Jewish learning. The city was renowned for its *yeshivas*, or higher Talmud schools, which Vogel clearly visited whilst in Vilnius, in the years before he fled to Vienna.

[174] David Vogel. *Das Ende der Tage: Tagebücher und autobiographische Aufzeichnungen 1912-22 und 1941/42*. 23.

[175] Galicia, the cradle of Orthodox Jewry, was a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire under Franz Joseph I between 1848 and 1918. It bordered on north-west Poland and Western Ukraine.

I in 1827. Until then, Jews had fulfilled their military duty by paying a special tax. In 1827 Tsar Nicholas I abolished this option, stating in a special memorandum that "the chief benefit to be derived from the drafting of Jews is the certainty that it will move them most effectively to change their religion".

This meant that young Jews not only had to serve in the Russian army for twenty-five years but also that they were constantly pressurised to convert to (Russian Orthodox) Christianity. "Get yourselves baptised, scoundrels, or else I will flog you to death", one commander roared. Soon the age of eighteen was no longer a hard and fast limit and much younger Jewish boys were rounded up and made to join the army. Estranged from their communities, living as outcasts among hostile comrades, removed at a tender age (sometimes as young as eight if there were not enough Jews for the army) from their families and friends, a great many *cantonists,* as they were called, sooner or later submitted to baptism. A few resisted and survived all tribulations. Others preferred suicide to conversion. "Since most Jewish families knew what to expect, including forced baptism, many youngsters of draft-age fled to forests, mutilated their bodies so as to become ineligible for service, and resorted to all sorts of subterfuges to evade the draft." Salo Baron, quoting from Dubnow, recounts how Alexander Herzen witnessed what he called "one of the most awful sights I have ever seen" in a small village of the province of Vyatka:

> Pale, worn out, with frightened faces, they stood in thick, clumsy soldiers' overcoats, with stand up collars, fixing helpless, pitiful eyes on the garrison soldiers, who were roughly getting them into ranks. The white lips, the blue rings under the eyes, looked like fever, or chill. And these sick children, without care or kindness, exposed to the icy wind that blows straight from the Arctic Ocean, were going to their graves…. Boys of twelve or thirteen might somehow have survived, but little fellows of eight or ten … No painting could reproduce the horror of that scene.[176]

5.4 Vienna at the Time of Vogel's Arrival: the Political Situation for Jews and the Jewish Identity Crisis

What was Vienna like between 1912 and 1925, when Vogel lived there? Bruce Pauley (1987) gives a succinct and factual account of the post-First World War situation after the disintegration of Franz Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Empire.

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[176] Baron. *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*. 29-31. The quote is from Alexander Ivanovitch Herzen's (1812–1870) autobiography *Byloye I dumy* (Reminiscenses and Meditations) in Constance Garnett's English translation entitled *Alexander Herzen. My Past and Thoughts*. 6 vols. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1924-26, I. 270 ff. Herzen, himself not Jewish, was a Russian dissident thinker/writer, and founder of Russian populism.

> [A]ntisemitism was probably more intense in Austria than anywhere else in western or central Europe including Pre-Nazi Germany, though it was in all likelihood less extreme than in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, or Lithuania. Both Austrian antisemitism and Jewish migration into Vienna drastically increased as a result of the Great War of 1914-18. Now, for the first time in the modern era, antisemitism became far more *salonfähig* and no longer the monopoly of a lunatic fringe.[177]

Habsburg Austria had the largest Jewish community on the European continent outside tsarist Russia where Vogel had lived until 1912. The Western, Austrian half of Franz Joseph's monarchy, counted almost 1.3 million Jews, who were never officially recognised as constituting a nationality, although they represented 4.7 percent of the population, more than the Slovenes, Serbs, Croats or Italians. In Austria, Jews mainly identified with the ten million Germans to whom they owed their emancipation and who, with the Hungarians, were the two dominant nationalities in the Habsburg Empire.[178] In the early decades of the twentieth century, writes Wistrich, *Deutschtum* (Germanness) appeared in a new guise: not as a liberating banner of enlightened reason and Jewish emancipation, but as its very antithesis, *Volksdeutschtum* (the people's Germanness), which demanded the exclusion of Jews from German student fraternities, literary clubs and societies, school associations and all forms of political activities.[179] What it felt for *Ostjuden* like Vogel to live in the political climate of interbellum Vienna was concisely formulated by the Jewish writer Joseph Roth in *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927), published two years before Vogel's *Married Life:*

> The [Great] war caused a lot of Jewish refugees to come to Vienna. For, as long as their homelands were occupied, they were entitled to "support". Not that money was sent to them where they were. They had to stand in line for it on the coldest winter days, and into the night. All of them: old people, invalids, women and children... When the war was over, they were repatriated, sometimes forcibly. A Social Democratic Provincial Governor had them thrown out. To Christian Socialists they are Jews. To German Nationalists, they are Semitic. To Social Democrats they are unproductive elements.[180]

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[177] Bruce F. Pauley. "Political Antisemitism in Interwar Vienna". *Jews, Antisemitism and Culture in Vienna*, Eds. Ivar Oxaal, Michael Pollak and Gerhard Botz. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987. 152-53.

[178] Robert S Wistrich. *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*. New York, Schocken Books, 1994. 31-3.

[179] Wistrich. Ibid., 34-5. *Volksdeutschtum*, with its ideals of body culture and physical health, emerged in Austria in the 1880s, and was the popular counterpart of the Deutschtum of the German and German-Jewish elite whose ideals were *Bildung*, art and culture.

[180] Joseph Roth. *The Wandering Jews*. Trans. Michael Hofmann. New York: Norton, 2001. 67.

This is the only reference I found to the way the *Ostjuden* regarded the West. With what frame of mind did they look at the West, particularly at their fellow Jews? What exactly did they expect to find in the West? This is relevant in view of Vogel's satiric tone in *Married Life*. Again, this has best been expressed, not by a historian but by Joseph Roth, an *Ostjude* from Russia and refugee in Germany (at some time living in Berlin), a writer and travelling journalist. In *Juden auf Wanderschaft,* Joseph Roth says:

> The Eastern Jew in his homeland knows nothing of the social injustice of the west; nothing of the habitual bias that governs the actions, decisions, and opinions of the average Western European; nothing of the narrowness of the Western perspective, jagged with factory smokestacks and framed by power plants; nothing of the sheer hatred, that, like a life–prolonging (though lethal) drug, is so powerful that it is tended like some Eternal Flame, at which these selfish peoples and nations warm themselves. The Eastern Jews looks to the west with a longing that it does not merit. To the Eastern Jew, the west signifies freedom, justice, civilisation, and the possibility to work and develop his talents. … To the Eastern Jew, Germany, for example, remains the land of Goethe and Schiller, of the German poets, with whom every keen Jewish youth is far more conversant than our own swastika'd secondary school pupils… the Eastern Jew sees none of the advantages of his homeland. He sees nothing of the boundless horizon, nothing of the quality of the people, in whom simplicity can produce holy men and murderers, melodies of melancholy, grandeur and obsessive passion. He fails to see the goodness of the Slav people whose coarseness remains more decent than the house-trained animality of the Western European, his secretive perversions, his cringing before the Law, with his well-bred hat in his apprehensive hand…[181]

5.5 Vogel's Disillusionment with Vienna as an Ostjude

Vogel's exile period in Vienna was representative of the lives of exiles from the east for a number of reasons. From his homeland status of yeshiva student in Russia, belonging to the intellectual Jewish "elite of the elite" (as Robert Alter formulated it), he turned into an intellectual outcast in the eyes of assimilated Western Jews, as he had neither a gymnasium nor an academic education. This was probably one of the reasons why, once in Vienna, Vogel aspired to a classical (gymnasium) education, as he wrote in his diary. Why he had not done so in Russia becomes clear from Dubnow's work: back in Russia Jewish boys, even from well-to-do-families, were hardly allowed to the Russian state gymnasia following the imperial resolution of 1887 (four years before Vogel was born) which limited admission of Jewish boys to Russian state universities and secondary schools. The

[181] Roth. Ibid. 5-6.

number of Jews admitted to the state gymnasia in the Russian Pale of Settlement amounted to ten percent of the Christian school population. Outside the Pale the norm was five percent and in St Petersburg and Moscow three percent. Thus the majority of young Jewish men barred from the Russian gymnasia and colleges were compelled to leave home in search of higher secular education and, as they were generally without means, they suffered untold hardships.[182]

In Vienna, the gymnasium was not only the gateway to university but also the breeding ground for a German-Jewish elite. As a poverty-stricken *Ostjude* (who reminded that elite of the very reason for their assimilation) with a restricted, because religious, education Vogel did not stand the most remote chance to be admitted.[183] This leads to the bitter conclusion that for Vogel, as a Jew, a gymnasium education in Russia was impossible because of tsarist restrictions, while in Vienna it was thwarted by class distinctions among Jews. Vogel, like other gifted young Russian Jewish exiles, had to resort to a variety of odd jobs, for instance teaching beginner level Hebrew to the children of rich Western Jewish families in order to keep alive.

In view of Vogel's love of and intense dedication to Hebrew (he speaks about "my Hebrew" in his diary), it was very painful that academically educated fellow modernist Hebrew writers in Vienna, and later in Berlin, criticised him for his lean (primitive) Hebrew. The critic Glenda Abramson, in an attempt to make this harsh judgment more understandable in the light of Vogel's inapproachability as a person whilst not condoning it, writes about this matter in her most enlightening essay "Two Telushim of Vienna: Gershon Shofman and David Vogel" (2008):

> Vogel appears to have been a constant thorn in the flesh of the early guardians of the developing [Hebrew] literature. In fairness to them, however, this may partly have been due to his personality, by all accounts a very difficult one. Vogel made few friends and not only his behaviour but also his circumstances tended to estrange him from his contemporaries. In the café in which they met the Hebrew writers would engage in conversation and debate, while Vogel remained silent. In a photograph of 1923, a group of people which include Bialik, are rendered in strong, clear, black and white. Vogel stands to

[182] Simon M. Dubnow. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: From the Earliest Times until the Present Day*. Trans. Israel Friedlander. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1918. Vol. 2. 350-51.

[183] For an extensive overview of the German Gymnasium as the stronghold of classical education in Vienna see Steven Beller. *Vienna and the Jews: 1867-1938: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 49-70. Beller relates that Sigmund Freud, Arthur Schnitzler, Stephan Zweig, Karl Kraus and many other German Jewish intellectuals attended the Gymnasium.

> one side, and, through an accident of lighting, his figure is faded, almost ghostlike, and pale-grey.[184]

Yeshurun Kesset, who took pity on Vogel at the time, describes an encounter with him in interbellum Paris in 1926.[185]

> The evening I met David Vogel I found him sitting in the company of Schneour, Sholem Asch, Moshe Nadir, and others. He and his (second) wife sat there somewhat on the outside and took almost no part in the conversation. They both looked weak and tired and seemingly bewildered. Sholem Asch surely had never met Vogel, and had no idea of the identity of the small, pale man sitting hunched over into himself. … I … moved my chair to where Vogel and his wife were sitting and I began a conversation with them. I did this deliberately: I simply could not bear the sense of isolation and sadness that enveloped them like a kind of fine mist, like a sort of transparent vague imprint.[186]

Keshet goes on to say, somewhat impatiently, that Vogel seemed not to want to help himself. "His useless stubbornness could not hide the negative and sad softness of soul, a lack of spine."[187] Abramson adds: "The truth of this notwithstanding, their neglect of Vogel, a man who was clearly unable to fend for himself, is shameful".[188]

Steven Beller (1989) writes about the failure of Jewish assimilation in Vienna and recounts how even the most renowned assimilated Jews in Vienna were constantly kept on the threshold of Austrian culture, despite being major contributors to that culture. Arthur Schnitzler complained that, in spite of his position as a successful novelist and playwright in Vienna, he felt excluded as a Jew from "Austria as Vaterland". Gustav Mahler, notwithstanding his prestigious post as *Hofoperndirektor* in Vienna and being married to the very Austrian Alma Maria Schindler, and even having converted to Roman Catholicism, felt:

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184 Glenda Abramson. " Two Telushim of Vienna: Gershon Shofman and David Vogel". *Hebrew Writing in the First World War*. London: Valentine Mitchell, 2008. 251-52 and 213-58.

185 Yeshurun Keshet (Jacob Koplewitz, 1893–1977): Hebrew poet, literary critic and translator. Born in Minsk Mazowiecki, near Warsaw, he first went to Palestine in 1911. He left in 1920 to study in Europe, and also taught in Marijampole, Lithuania. In 1926 he returned to Palestine and, after a short period of teaching, devoted himself to writing and translation work. His first poems were published in *Ha-Ahdut* and *Revivim* (1913), after which he contributed poetry, essays and literary criticism to most Hebrew newspapers and periodicals.

186 Yehurun Keshet. "Bizekhori et David Vogel" *Moznayim* (July 1972), 165. See also "Rishmei masa be-eropa" *Hadoar* (13 October 1967), 739. Abramson. "Two Telushim of Vienna". Note 63, 258.

187 Abramson. Ibid., Note 64, 258; Keshet. Ibid. 165-6.

188 Abramson. Ibid. 252.

> ... dreifach heimatlos: als Böhme unter den Österreichern, als Österreicher unter den Deutschen, und als Jude in der ganzen Welt. Überall bin ich Eindringling, nirgends erwünscht.[189]

Steven Beller writes:

> Socially, the situation of acculturated/assimilated Jewry in Vienna and elsewhere in German culture (where identity was *national* identity and determined one's identity as 'being and belonging') was an anomalous one: they had left their identity as Jews to develop an elaborate structure of *Bildung* to what they saw as the society and culture of a new, just, and free world, and had then been rejected precisely by what they had taken to be that society. In that situation the world of Viennese culture, art, literature, was the one thing that could still give them any sense of identity. This was why Jews dominated Viennese high culture: the coffee houses where they met became a 'surrogate totality' to replace a social world which they did not have.[190]

Although the Viennese coffeehouse was not an exclusively Jewish institution, being a Jewish *Kaffeehaus literat* was a common Jewish occurrence when Vogel arrived in Vienna: to be a non-Jewish *Kaffeehaus literat* had become increasingly uncommon. Gurdweill, the protagonist in David Vogel's *Married Life*, when not roaming the city, practically lives in the coffee houses that appear under their historical names in the novel: Griensteidl, Herrenhof and Central.[191]

Norman Tarnor, in his account of the Russian-Jewish refugee writer Gershon Shofman's (1989) arrival from Lemberg (Galicia) in Vienna in 1913, a year after Vogel, provides an appealing picture of the Viennese café as Shofman found it at his arrival in Vienna, as a home for Russian-Jewish writers like Shofman and Vogel.

> One of the Viennese institutions which eased the [Shofman's] adjustment [to Viennese cosmopolitan experience] was the ubiquitous *Kafé,* or *Kaffeehaus*. Other countries had their pubs, or clubs, or bars, or "joints". Vienna had the *Kaffeehaus*. You sat at one of the many small tables, drank your coffee, read newspapers. In the wintertime you looked out on the frozen street through the window. In the summer, you sat at your table on the white, shaded sidewalk, and wrote letters, or stared absent-mindedly at the passing parade. Everything is transient, but the coffee cup persists. After all the strolling about in the gardens, streets and boulevards, the fruitless quests, the big and little disap-

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189 Beller. *Vienna and the Jews*. 207 ff. "… three times homeless: like Böhme amongst Austrians, like an Austrian amongst Germans and as a Jew in the whole world. I am an intruder everywhere, welcome nowhere." My translation.

190 Beller. Ibid. 214-15.

191 The café *Griensteidl* was demolished in 1897 and its clientele moved to the nearby café *Central*.

> pointments, what endures is that little cup of liquid, "black gold" which stimulates and calms at one and the same time in some coffee house corner. Old age may devastate, but one thing it cannot deprive us of is that leisurely, warm cup of fragrant coffee, spreading through the body, warming, comforting, reassuring…..They are pathetic as they bunch together in their favourite *Kaffeehaus,* like chickens huddling on a perch with rain beating down on the roof above. Actors, artists, sculptors, poets, they joke with one another, good-naturedly, but the tension within is great. They laugh outwards, but weep inside.[192]

In the Café *Arcade* in Vienna, which Vogel frequented in the 1920s, when he had already achieved a name as a lyric poet, he became part of the circle of contemporary Jewish writers who debated on subjects such as the situation of contemporary literature in Hebrew, Art, and Zionism.[193]

During those intellectual debates, Vogel must have been confronted with what he had already recognised with the perceptive gaze of the (Russian) refugee-outsider during his wanderings through Vienna: that Jewish social (not economic) assimilation had failed and that the so-called German-Jewish cultural symbiosis, in which the German-Jewish intelligentsia believed, was a myth revealed as such by the Viennese reality. This realisation, which Vogel shared with many other outsiders and a few insiders (as noted earlier in the chapter about Kafka), was one of the reasons for Jews to join national or cultural Zionism or socialism (although not in Vogel's case). Zionism, as one tends to forget nowadays, was born in Europe.

5.6 The Jewish Identity Crisis: Two Manifestations in the Works of German and Eastern German Jewish Writers

In 1914, at the start of World War I, Vogel was arrested by the Austrians as a Russian enemy-alien and spent time in internment camps. In 1925 Vogel left Vienna where he had conceived the idea for *Married Life*. Later, whilst in Paris (1925-1929) and looking back on the situation of Eastern European and Russian Jewry in Vienna with the advantage of retrospect, he artistically-satirically dramatized his experience of that city in his novel *Married Life,* which also dramatizes his love for the city as well as his conviction that, for him as an Eastern European Jew, a symbiosis with anti-Semitic Austro-German culture was impossible.

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[192] Norman Tarnor. *The Many Worlds of Gershon Shofman*. New Jersey: Behrman House, 1989. 45-6.

[193] Amir Eschel. Foreword. *Das Ende der Tage: Tagebücher und autobiographische Aufzeichnungen 1912-22 und 1941/42*. By David Vogel. Trans. Ruth Achlama. Munich: Paul List Verlag, 1993. 9. For an overview of Vogel's poetry see the Vogel bibliography.

Vogel lived in Paris for about three years, devoting part of his time to writing Hebrew prose fiction, including the beginning of *Chai Nissuim* which was finished and subsequently published in Tel Aviv (Palestine) in 1930, during his one-year stay there. During Vogel's sojourn in Paris in 1925, the Russian Jewish writer Joseph Roth (1894-1939) also lived in Paris but there are no records that they ever met. In 1929 Vogel left Paris for Tel Aviv, but returned a year later to Europe. After travelling to Warsaw, Vienna and Berlin he returned to his beloved Paris in 1932. There he published his novellas "Beveit Ha-Marpeh" ("In the Sanatorium", 1927) and "Nochach Ha-Yam" ("Facing the Sea", 1934), and prepared a second volume of poems which he did not live to publish. After the outbreak of World War II, the French imprisoned him as an Austrian enemy of the French nation. His experiences in this period are fictionalised in *Tachanot Kavot* (*Extinguished Stations,* 1990). The manuscript of *Tachanot Kavot* partly contains Vogel's diary which, according to Robert Alter, conveys a feeling of the "fashioning of a living language, a language that, though not the writer's actual vernacular, is able to trace the twisting contours of his inner life, to body forth a thoroughly modern and European sense of self and other, motive and identity".[194] In 1941, after the capitulation of France, Vogel was released and settled in Hauteville (near Lyon) where the Nazis arrested him in 1944 for being a Jew. In Serge Klarsfeld's *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France*, there is an entry about David Vogel which records his transport from the transit camp Drancy (France) to Auschwitz in February 1944 where he was probably killed on 10 March 1944.[195] Before his arrest he had buried his writings in a wooden box in his landlady's garden at Hauteville. Vogel's friend, the painter Awraham Goldberg, dug up the box after the war and sent it to Simon Halkin in the United States. The latter took Vogel's literary heritage to Asher Barash in Tel Aviv in 1949. The manuscripts were sent first to the United States, and afterwards to Israel (Tel Aviv) where they still are. David Vogel's name has been recorded on a monument commemorating Hauteville residents killed during the Second World War.

5.7 Vogel's Preoccupation with Literary Modernism and Identity Crisis

In the chapter about Kafka I pointed out how, on the eve of the First World War, when Kafka wrote "The Metamorphosis" and Vogel set foot on Austrian soil,

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[194] Robert Alter. "Fogel and the Forging of a Hebrew Self". *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*. 13.1 (1993): 3.

[195] Serge Klarsfeld. *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942-44: Documentation of the Deportation of Victims of the Final Solution in France*. New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983. Entry about David Vogel: "Convoy 69, March, 1944, Vogel, David, born 15-5-1891, Satanow". 525.

the notion of the I or self as unitary had made place for a sense of displacement and alienation of the self, which found expression in literary modernism. Vogel, however, also faced a Jewish identity crisis in his host land Austria where Jews, whether assimilated or not, wrestled with the rise of a vicious political anti-Semitism.

The works of a number of assimilated German Jewish writers clearly shows an identity crisis. Having abandoned the Jewish religion of their parents and grandparents, they dwelled in the no man's land between identities: no longer observant Jews, yet not German by a long shot, even though they contributed profusely to German art, trade and culture in many ways. Their non-choices for social acceptance were reducing Jewish identity to zero by complete assimilation, which was impossible on account of the political turn of common (non-political) anti-Semitism into a nasty political anti-Semitism; returning to Jewish orthodoxy, which would still mean being subjected to anti-Semitism; or a political way out, namely Zionism and, later, Socialism/Marxism.

Arthur Schnitzler, a Viennese by birth (1862-1931) and a successful novelist and playwright, is a tragic example. Egon Schwartz (1997) writes:

> Schnitzler was a thoroughly assimilated citizen, outwardly indistinguishable from the Austrian upper bourgeoisie. As a result of the re-kindled anti-semitism, however, he was treated more and more as an outsider, often a disgusting intruder, despite the undeniable successes he also had. As a scientifically trained Liberal, he was a rationalist, an individualist, and an agnostic. Zionism he regarded as one of the eccentricities into which the Jews were pushed, and he believed sycophancy [servile flattery] and baptism to be indignities. This did not leave much leeway. His great contribution was that he observed *The Jewish Question* in all its intricacy with the diagnostic skills of the trained physician that he was and the psychological acumen that became his trademark as a writer... As a human being with a poetic nature he suffered from the *malheur d'être juif* (the misfortune of being Jewish), not only outwardly because of the incessant vilifications, and the obstacles that were piled in the path of his artistic progress, but also because of the inner damage that was inflicted on his most intimate, creative impulses. But he was spared the worst. He died in time. Only a few years later he would have been driven into exile or into the gas chambers by those he had seen through, regardless of his age or his deep-rootedness in the culture of his native city (Vienna).[196]

[196] Egon Schwartz. "The Staging of Arthur Schnitzler's Play *Reigen* in Vienna Creates a Public Uproar That Draws Involvement by the Press, the Police, the Viennese City Administration, and the Austrian Parliament." *The Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996*. Eds. Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1997. 412-19. Another play by Schnitzler that caused great tumult was *Professor Bernhardi* (1912) in which, as in the novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road to the Open,* 1908),

Vogel belonged to a group of Russian Eastern European Jewish exiled writers referred to by Pinsker (2011) as the European Hebrew modernists:

> A loosely linked group of Hebrew writers like Shofman, Brenner, Gnessin and Fogel [who] belonged to a loosely linked group of Hebrew writers who had no state, or territory to call home, and no clear national affiliation in the modern, western sense of the word... These men and women were linked, however, by their restlessness, and by what we will come to see as their literary passports: de facto certifications of affiliation in a community of Hebrew writers that enabled them to travel through multiple geographical spaces as "resident aliens," and to participate in multiple cultural contexts, while maintaining a sense of belonging to something approximating a coherent group.[197]

As Jewish exiles in an anti-Semitic world, these writers aimed to forge a Jewish literary identity from the Hebrew language in which they wrote: from "the word", as Vogel wrote in his diary. They refused to assimilate into European culture and its fashions whilst also being attracted to those fashions. In their European exile these writers literally wrung a Jewish identity out of their Hebrew or Yiddish language and texts, as a result of exposure to, in Dubnow's terminology, a Judeophobia-infected European culture as other. I will return more extensively to these European Hebrew modernists in the next chapter. At the heart of the matter lies the authenticity of their struggle for a Jewish self in and through their Hebrew and Yiddish literary art rather than assimilation into the cultures of their exile, which they admired. That much is apparent in Vogel's *Married Life*. This authenticity, which is not lost in translation, attracted me to Vogel's novel and challenged me to analyse his artistic dramatization of the struggle for identity through the lens of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection as a universal psychodynamics of identity formation. Vogel's interest in Western culture turned him into an acculturated Jew, that is to say, one interested in Western culture but without being prepared, unlike assimilated German Jewish writers, to give up his Russian-Jewish soul or *Bildung* for a culture that hated Jews.

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he analyses the position of the Jews in Austria. The play, along with Schnitzler's other works, was banned in Central Europe and subsequently copies of the play were burned by the Nazis.

[197] Shachar M. Pinsker. *The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

David Vogel. Vienna, 2 April 1914

The Dark Gate: Selected Poems of David Vogel. Trans. A.C. Jacobs. The Menard Press: London, 1976.

6 ABJECTION AND EXILE: THE TROPE OF THE BORDER IN DAVID VOGEL'S *MARRIED LIFE (חיי נישואים)*

6.1 Introduction

My research on David Vogel's Hebrew novel *Married Life (Hayei Nisu'im, חיי נישואים, 1929-30)* in this chapter must be viewed within the wider context of a fairly recent, renewed literary-critical interest in Jewish exile and its implications for the formation of identities.[198] The work of young critics such as, for instance, Shachar Pinsker (2011) and Allison Schachter (2012) has reinstalled Jewish exile as a literary critical category. Reinstalled, since the previously dominant Zionist-oriented Jewish literary critique had shifted its attention away from dramatizations of Jewish exile and its suffering wandering Jews to focus instead on literature about the militant "New Jew" in Palestine/Israel.[199]

Schachter and Pinsker's return to Jewish exile and its implications for the formation of identities has restored to the critical limelight the lives and work of a group of Eastern European and Russian Jewish exiles (including Vogel), who wrote both in Hebrew and Yiddish in the modernist metropoles of interbellum Europe and published their work between 1914 and the late 1920s.

Pinsker views the identities of these exiled writers as "shaped by the highly charged encounter of traditionally educated (Galician and Russian) Jews with modernist European literature and culture".[200] Schachter explores how these writers negotiated their "disjointed and diasporic attachments to the traditional world of the shtetl and to the modernist world of metropolis".[201]

The question their critical work raises – and which inspired my research on Vogel's Hebrew novel *Married Life* in this chapter – is whether the logics of abjection can be read in the text's artistic evocation of that experience. And, if so, how does such a reading affect the meaning of the text's artistic production of exile and identity? These are the questions that I will explore in this chapter through the lens of Julia Kristeva's work on identity and meaning.

In my project as in the text itself, the trope of the border plays a powerful role. Firstly, it marks my psychoanalytical critical position: on the border between self and the social, the research field of psychoanalysis. Secondly, it appears as

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198 For bibliographic information of editions used in this chapter, see paragraph 5.1.

199 Schachar M. Pinsker. *The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. Allison Shachter. *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish literature in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

200 Pinsker. *The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*. 8-17.

201 Shachter. *Diasporic Modernisms*. 87.

Kristeva's imaginary border between the text's semiotic and symbolic registers of identity and meaning.[202] Thirdly, it can be seen in Vogel's text as an utterly ambivalent trope returning to the points of the protagonist's life where (archaic, inside/outside) boundaries arise and threaten to break down, and where the abject (the semiotic: what is excluded from the text's symbolic discourse) is named and retched over in fascination and horror.[203]

The discerning quality of Kristeva's thinking for my project is that it lifts my discourse on *Married Life* out of the ideological either/or (Jewish or not Jewish) epistemology that has long dominated Jewish literary critique – as I will show later on in the Reception section in this chapter. Her epistemological effort to think in and-and categories (we recall her distinction between semiotic and symbolic as separate, but interdependent registers of identity and meaning) enables me to read in Vogel's text the universal (the logics of abjection as a psychodynamics of identity formation), while allowing room for the particularity of Eastern European Jewish exile in interbellum Vienna.

The question that structures my research is how the artistic production of identity and subjectivity in *Married Life* (which dramatizes a Galician-Jewish exile's subjective experience of Vienna) co-produces the logics of abjection. And since abjection, as we recall from chapter 2, belongs to the world of the semiotic or drives, how can drive produce meaning in a text or, more specifically, in Vogel's *Married Life*?

To answer the last question we can turn to the plastic arts. An intriguing example is the oeuvre of another Russian Jewish exile, a painter who, like Vogel, had fled Russia to avoid conscription into the Russian army: Mark Rothko (Marcus Yakovlevich Rothkowitz, 1903-1970). Unlike Vogel, Rothko emigrated to the United States, along with thousands of other Eastern European Jews fleeing the pogroms, the devastation of war and persecution in their homelands.[204]

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[202] We recall that in Kristeva's work the process that structures meaning (significance) in a text is linguistic, but not exclusively: signification also goes back to an affective process that precedes signification, which Kristeva calls the semiotic, or abjection.

[203] The horror and fascination responses must be viewed in the light of Kristeva's (and Freud's) perspective of man as ultimately driven by lust (the lust principle) as a self-destructive drive, namely the urge to surrender to total libidinal pleasure uninhibited by desire and delivered from self. In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva delineates how this possibility fills one simultaneously with fascination and horror. Horror, in this specific sense, simultaneously focuses on, whilst at the same time keeping us at a safe distance from, self-annihilation.

[204] James E.B. Breslin. *Mark Rothko: A Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. 18. Marc Rothko (Marcus Rothkowitz, 1903-1970) was Russian Jewish painter from the city of Dvinsk, in the province of Vitebsk (at the time in the Russian Empire, now Daugavpils, Latvia), in the Pale of Settlement. He emigrated from Russia to the United States, following the path of many other Jews who left Daugavpils in the wake of Cossack purges, with his mother and elder sister Sonia. They joined Jacob and the elder brothers who had already

As in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" (chapter 4) in which abjection appears in repetitive visions of the archaic border, Rothko's work in all its rich variety can be viewed as one, collective manifestation of the archaic border, appearing in endless variations of form and colour in his whole oeuvre, which, canvas after canvas, repeats dramatizations of simple, coloured fields.

However, watching those fields weirdly shocks the innocent viewer without him or her having a clue about what is happening. Shifting his or her gaze from Rothko's coloured fields to the in-betweens – the partitions, or borders between them, and back – something curious happens that can best be described as a sensation of a dynamics coming to pass between colour-field and border. Through the lens of Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and the symbolic, these partitions, or borders, suggest a beyond (the semiotic) which seems to reorganise the foreground colours (the symbolic) from the perspective of that beyond.

left and arrived at Ellis Island in the winter of 1913. They emigrated with his family to America, because Marcs' father, Jacob Rothkowitz, feared that his sons were about to be drafted into the tsarist army. Despite Jacob Rothkowitz's modest income, the family was highly educated, and spoke Russian and Yiddish, and his son Marc also read Hebrew. Jacob Rothkowitz returned to orthodox Judaism at Marc's birth..As a result, he sent Marc, his youngest son, to the *cheider* to study Talmud, whilst his elder brothers were educated in the state school system.

No 12, "Mark Rothko/1951".

Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas: Catalogue Raisonné.
By Mark Rothko and David Anfam. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 347.

Likewise in literature, the semiotic appearing in visions of the archaic border can acquire meaning indirectly: by reorganising meaning-formations on identity and subjectivity in the symbolic discourse of the text, from the perspective of what is beyond.

I will proceed with sections about the plot, the narrative space, the manuscript and the audience Vogel had in mind. I will then analyse the reception of *Married Life,* which has been defined for a long time by a Zionist negation of exile and the suffering Jew, an ideological perspective now problematized in the work of young

UNTITLED, "Mark Rothko/1960".

Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas: Catalogue Raisonné.
By Mark Rothko and David Anfam. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 532.

Jewish critics, as noted before. In the next two sections I will explore the beginnings of European Hebrew modernism to which the text belongs, and read the logics of abjection in the text's dramatization of the protagonist's subjective experience of Vienna as a Galician (Eastern European) exile and Jew. I will conclude with a summary of my findings and an interpretation of their implications for my understanding of the meaning of the text.

6.2 *Introducing* Married Life

The idea for David Vogel's Hebrew novel *Married Life* (חיי נישואים) was conceptualised during the writer's stay as an Eastern European Jewish exiled writer in Vienna (1912-25) where he found refuge from Russian conscription (see chapter 5). Vogel subsequently turned it into a Hebrew novel in Paris (1929), finished and first published in Tel Aviv (1929-30) during Vogel's stay there. From that perspective it seems plausible to see the novel as an artistic, 1929 impressionist retrospective of Vogel's subjective experience of Vienna (1912-25) as a Russian Jewish exile (derogatorily called *Ostjude*) in that culture.[205] The protagonist is Gurdweill, Vogel's literary other or alter ego, who explicitly identifies himself as an Eastern European Jew from Galicia, "and of no mean origin either".[206] Gurdweill descends from "an ancient Jewish family. He could trace his descent to a great and famous rabbi from Prague!" [207]

The Plot: A Marriage Not Intended to Bear Fruit

The protagonist of *Married Life* is Rudolph Gurdweill who, as we have seen, identifies himself as an Eastern European Jewish exile from Galicia. The text's double identification (writer and protagonist) with Eastern European Jewry in exile is of paramount importance for understanding both its dramatization of identity and its meaning as a text, a connection which, as I will show in the section about reception, has not been on the horizon of critics and Western audiences for a long time. Gurdweill becomes inordinately fond of an Austrian baroness, Thea von Takow, a member of the disintegrating Roman Catholic Austrian nobility, a *Brünhilde*-like woman with whom he plunges into a sadomasochistic marriage-relationship in which he assumes the victim-role. The text is divided into five sections, each dramatizing an episode of the marriage relation: "The Meeting", "The Beginning", "Inside and Out", "The Baby" and "The End". Although Thea belittles and deceives Gurdweill, he believes in her and in the marriage, against all odds and with an unintelligible tenacity that sometimes tries the patience of his

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[205] For the status of the *Ostjuden* in the Austro-German cultural context, see also chapter 4 on Kafka's "The Metamorphosis".

[206] Galicia is a region bordering on south-east Poland and Western Ukraine. From 1848 until 1918 it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire under Franz Joseph I. Galicia had been a relatively tolerant country for the Jews since the "Judenordnung" of 1789. Despite increasing institutional tolerance, the hatred of Jews, pogroms and hostilities between Jews and Christians were widespread.

[207] David Vogel. *Married Life*. London, Peter Halban, 1988. 50.
The rabbi referred to is probably Yehudah Leib ben Betsal'eln (d. 1609), rabbi and scholar, known as the Maharal of Prague. From the online version of *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Lemma: Yehudah Leib ben Betsal'eln.

Jewish friends (as well as the reader's and critic's). In his friends' eyes, and specifically in those of a Jewish girl, Lotte Bondheim, who secretly loves Gurdweill, it is an impossible marriage.

A son, Martin, is born to the Gurdweills. His care is left entirely to Rudolph, as Thea is not interested in the baby. Despite Rudolph's dedicated care for the child (he is not even certain it is his), little Martin becomes ill and dies, to his father's immense distress. It is clear that the impossible union is not supposed to bear fruit. The relation between Rudolph and Thea becomes increasingly troubled and eventually unbearable. Gurdweill is thrown out of the house and starts roaming the streets of Vienna. He practically lives in the city's coffeehouses, does odd jobs to keep body and soul together, while begging his luckier friends for small amounts of money for cigarettes and coffee. In the end, the truth about his marriage and his licentious wife slowly begins to dawn on him and, unable to bear that burden, he kills Thea.

The Narrative Space

The narrative space in *Married Life* is interbellum Vienna, a city struggling with economic crisis, unemployment and moral disintegration in the wake of the First World War (1914-18), the disastrous Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and the rise of an increasingly political anti-Semitism.[208] The protagonist Rudolph Gurdweill, a Galician Jewish exile, lives in Leopoldstadt, at the time Vienna's Jewish quarter around the North Station (Nordbahnhof). *Married Life's* intended Eastern European Yiddish audience must have immediately recognised both the station and the neighbourhood, as most of them had arrived there from the east. Different reasons had prompted them to leave their countries: to escape dire poverty, pogroms, Russian conscription for Jews, and/or the devastations of war and revolution. The Jewish quarter's ironical nickname was *Die Mazzesinsel* (Matzos Island), as most Jews arriving at the Nordbahnhof from the east stayed to live in that neighbourhood.[209]

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[208] After the Great War (1914-18), Austria was reduced from twenty-eight and a half million inhabitants, as the Austrian half of the Austrian-Hungarian double monarchy, to six and a half million as *Deutschösterreich* by the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (6 September 1919). The treaty laid the foundations for interbellum economic depression, high unemployment,and civil unrest, with rival militias on the left and the right, eventually culminating into a civil war in 1934.

[209] For a splendid photo-graphic record of Leopoldstadt as Vienna's Jewish quarter, with prose contributions from Joseph Roth, Elias Canetti, Bruno Frei and many others, see *Die Mazzesinsel: Juden in der Wiener Leopoldstadt (1918-1938).*

The Manuscript

The manuscript of *Married Life* is perhaps the most travelled one imaginable and probably the only one that rose from its grave to travel the world. Written in Paris, brought along by Vogel on his trip to Tel Aviv in 1929 (when and where it was finished and first published), it accompanied Vogel on his way back to Europe in 1930, after which it remained in the writer's possession until 1944. Vogel, who lived in Hauteville, near Lyon, at the time, probably suspected that, as a Jew, the chances he would survive the war were minimal and buried the manuscript of *Married Life* (together with other literary manuscripts) in the garden of his French landlady. After the war it was dug up and travelled, accompanied by various people, to the United States where Vogel's daughter lived. From there it travelled back to Tel Aviv, to be published for the second time by Menakhem Perry in 1986.[210] *Tahanot Kavot* (*Extinguished Stations*, Novellas and Diaries, see chapter 5) contains a two-page draft for a novel with characters similar to Gurdweill and Thea, the protagonists in *Chayei Nisu'im*. Only in the draft they are not married but landlady and tenant. The draft is named *The Tenant*.

Gershon Shaked quotes Dan Pagis on Ben Menachem's opinion that Jews in Germany postponed the German translation of *Chayei Nisu'im* because they feared trouble when publishing a story of the sexually pathological relationship of a Jew with a Christian baroness.[211]

The Audience Vogel Had in Mind When Conceptualising Married Life

It is highly likely that Vogel wrote *Married Life* in Paris with an audience of Eastern European and Russian Jewish intellectual writers in mind he had socialized with in the Viennese coffee-houses, and who were, contrary to assimilated the German Jewish Jewry, able to read (and write) Hebrew. That group, writes Pinsker (2011), consisted in the years around the First World War and in the interbellum of an extraordinary collection of writers, mostly Eastern European and Russian exiles from various places in Eastern Europe, Galicia, Poland, Ukraine and other regions of the Russian Pale of Settlement. Among them were Gershon Shofman, Avraham ben-Yitzchak (nicknamed Dr Sonne), Zwi Diesendruck and Ya'akov Horowitz, who were active mainly in Hebrew. Melech Ravitch, Melech

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[210] For an account of the travels of the text after it had been dug up from the garden of Vogel's landlady after World War Two, see Niels Bokhove's article "Sterven wil ik niet, leven kan ik niet" (I don't want to die, but I cannot live). *Parelduiker* 5 (2003): 2-17. Bokhove was first struck, as I was, by the beauty of Vogel's novel when he read the impressive Dutch translation from Hebrew by Kees Meiling. David Vogel. *Huwelijksleven*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1992.

[211] Gershon Shaked . "A Viennese Author Who Wrote in Hebrew: David Vogel as Novelist". *Modern Hebrew Literature* 12 (1986): 20.

Chmelnitzki, Meir Henish, Meir Wiener, Mosche Ungerfeld, Mosche Zilborg and Mordechai Gottfried wrote mainly in Yiddish.[212]

Many of them were multilingual and wrote in two or three languages: Hebrew, Yiddish and German. The diaries and memoirs of this period reveal a close and fertile collaboration between the Hebrew and the Yiddish writers, creating a wide-ranging cross-pollination between the two literatures.[213]

Although some of them had studied at Western universities, they came from an Eastern European Yiddish culture alien to the type of German Jewish assimilation that confronted them in the West: Jews giving up their Jewishness in exchange for the German national identity of a Christian host-country that despised them in spite of assimilation. In Galicia, Gurdweill's country of origin, the protagonist's Jewish assimilation as it happened in Germany and other Western countries was as unthinkable, as in Vogel's own country of origin, Russia. Jews could only get the Russian nationality by converting to Christianity which, among the religious *cheider* and *yeshiva* Jews Vogel originated from, was considered a fate worse than death. More realistic options for social emancipation for Jews in Russia were (at least in the first quarter of the twentieth century) joining Socialism, Marxism, *The Bund* or Zionism.[214] Martin Gilbert (1976) writes: "Few Jewish attempts at assimilation [in Russia] were successful: government, aristocracy, peasantry and intellectuals, all prevented any relaxation of barriers, or diminution of hostilities."[215]

During the Soviet Union period Jews assimilated on a vast scale. At least that was the consensus among historians until recently. Elisa Bemporad's latest study *Becoming Soviet Jews* (2013), about Jewish life in the city of Minsk (in the former Pale of Settlement), qualifies that consensus by showing that many Jews acculturated to Soviet society in the 1920s and 1930s while remaining committed to older

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[212] For the development of Yiddish literature alongside Hebrew literature in the west see Mikhail Krutikov. *From Kabbalah to Class Struggle: Expressionism, Marxism, and Yiddish Literature in the Life and Work of Meir Wiener*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

[213] Pinsker. *The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*. 88-9.

[214] The *Bund*, short for the *Algemeyner Yiddisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poylin und Rusland*.

[215] Martin Gilbert. *The Jews of Russia*: *Their History in Maps and Photographs,* first published privately and separately in Oxford 1976. 27. This last edition is in remembrance to Simon M. Dubnow (1860-1941), the Jewish historian born in the Pale and murdered by the Nazis. In 2010 Gilbert's *The Jews of Russia* was included in the eighth edition of *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*. This edition includes all Gilbert's writings and maps on Jews all over the world, including that of the Russian Pale of Settlement. More recent research exploring the period of the great changes brought about by the Soviet regime, and focusing on the city of Minsk, capital of Belarus, shows that, despite the violent changes brought about by that regime, many Jews succeeded in acculturating to Soviet society while simultaneously remaining committed to Yiddish culture, education, the Jewish workers Bund and other forms of Jewishness.

patterns of Jewish identity such as Yiddish culture and education, attachment to the traditions of *The Bund*, circumcision and kosher slaughter.[216]

6.3 The Reception of Married Life

Following translation into seven Western languages in the 1980s, Western Jewish and non-Jewish audiences read *Married Life* as a Viennese urban novel, while ignoring the exile status of the writer, his work and his intended audience.[217] Also the fact that the novel's original language was Hebrew and that both writer and protagonist were Eastern European Jewish exiles, or *Ostjuden* as they were derogatorily called in German cultures, was hardly relevant to the general appreciation of the novel in the West. The publication of Vogel's translated novel coincided with a hype of public interest in fin-de-siècle Vienna as a cultural, intellectual and artistic centre of European (German) modernism explored in various studies of which Carl Schorske's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (1980) is still the standard study.[218] Vogel's novel captured that city so meticulously, albeit a few decades earlier, that some Western readers used the novel as a glorified travel guide for Vienna: following the protagonist Gurdweill's wanderings through Vienna, novel in hand. The "western audience", wrote the late Israeli critic Gershon Shaked (1929-2006), "derived its pleasure reading *Married Life*, from its beautiful impressionist renderings of Vienna as well as its evocations of the inner stirrings of Gurdweill's mind whose impact lies in their complexity".[219]

Jewish (Western and Israeli) critiques of Vogel's *Married Life* have been structured around three complex issues: (1) the question of literary identity: "Is *Married Life* a Jewish novel?" which begs the question "What does Jewish mean when one speaks of modern Jewish literature?" (2) the question of ideology (Zionism) as a factor affecting the reception of *Married Life*, and (3) the critical equation of European Hebrew literary modernism (covering the period between approximately 1918 and the end of the 1920s-1930s) with German Jewish modernism which appeared much earlier (1890-1910) and consisted of the *Young Vienna* group of writers such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Peter Altenberg, Jakob Wassermann, Franz Werfel, Stefan Zweig and

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[216] Elisa Bemporad. *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

[217] For *Married Life* translations, see the Vogel bibliography.

[218] Schorske. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*.

[219] Gershon Shaked. *Modern Hebrew Fiction*. Trans. Yael Lotan. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, 128. *Modern Hebrew Fiction* is a compilation of Shaked's major achievement: the analytic description of Hebrew narrative fiction (1880-1980) in five volumes, published between 1977 and 1998.

Elias Canetti, whose works challenged the Victorian morality of nineteenth-century literature by practising sexual, social and psychological openness in their works. I will now briefly examine these three issues.

The Question of Literary Identity

Hebrew and Yiddish fiction had always been conceptualised within realistic (or positivist) literary conventions since the middle of the nineteenth century when in Russia the first extended novels were written by Jews. Although the realistic tradition was far from homogeneous, the authors as well as the literary critics viewed the novel's literary world from a positivist perspective: as mimetically representing the Jewish socio-cultural reality or individuals in that reality, outside the text.

The historical roots of positivism, in Jewish discourse, lie in the nineteenth-century *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment). Jewish *Haskalah* representatives (*maskilim)* in the west advocated a commitment to reason rather than to religious revelation as the source of all truth. They went as far as to claim that religious (specifically Hassidic) practices, mores and beliefs were not truly Jewish, as they were not in consonance with reason. Their worldview not only covered the realms of science and philosophy but also social behaviour and aesthetics and, consequently, the belles lettres and literary criticism. The positivist literary and critical stance entailed a methodology with objective criteria. In American universities in the 1960s, for instance, literature was considered Jewish only if it met three objective criteria: Jewish language (Hebrew, Yiddish), religion and nationality. The idea of qualifying literature in non-Jewish languages as Jewish was considered outlandish. [220]

However, after the foundation of the state of Israel, Hebrew as a national language was no longer spoken and written exclusively by Jews.[221]

Moreover, as a result of assimilation and immigration, Jews wrote modern fiction in the vernacular of their host countries rather than in Hebrew or Yiddish. The old underpinnings of positivism and its unitary Cartesian subject (associated with fixed national, cultural and ethnic identities) were also questioned in a Western Jewish debate trying to establish new criteria for a canon of modern Jewish literature in any vernacular (alongside the classical Hebrew canon). The question was how to define modern Hebrew and vernacular literature? This unavoidably evoked the old problem (and the object of many Jewish jokes) of

[220] Ruth R. Wisse. *The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey Through Language and Culture*. New York: The Free Press, 2000.

[221] For instance, Anton Shammas, an Arab writer, poet and translator, born in Israel in 1950 and now living in Quebec, Canada, wrote his novel *Arabesques* (1986) in Hebrew.

Jewish identity. What struck me in the debate was the wide variety of criteria suggested for defining literature as Jewish.

My aim is to set out my own Kristeva-oriented viewpoint of identity and subjectivity in literature against the canon-oriented, and more recent, ideological debates. I will therefore give here a brief overview of those debates, for comparison with my own perspective, starting with the debate of the 1980s and 1990s, which tried to establish criteria for a canon of modern Jewish literature.

The Debate about the Meaning of "Jewish" in Relation to Modern Fiction

An outstanding feature of this debate is its wide scope of differing views as to what constitutes Jewish literature, underpinned by an equally multifarious body of implicit assumptions about Jewish identity. Works by writers who in essence had not been associated with Jewish literature before, such as Kafka and Proust, became objects of lively discussions. Some of the contributors to the debate formulated intimately personal and dazzlingly un-traditional approaches to the question of Jewish identity, whilst others kept to more traditional criteria. Ruth Wisse and Gershon Shaked, for instance, dismissed Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu (Remembrance of Things Past)* (1913-22) from the canon of modern Jewish fiction.[222] Alain Finkielkraut, referring to himself in *The Imaginary Jew* (1994) as "a Jew without God, but a Jew before all else", wondered whether after the Shoa Jewish identity in life and letters had not become "an empty category, because necessarily defined by absence"?[223] The French Jewish writer Henry Raczymov (1994) asked if perhaps one should refrain from concentrating on traditional views of nationality and identity and look for entirely different dimensions of Jewishness. As a writer he believed for many years that he had nothing to say as a Jew, but eventually

> ... came to understand that I did not have nothing to say. Rather I had to say nothing, which is not the same thing. As the years went by, as I wrote more, I discovered that the 'nothing' I had to say, to write, to explore – the nothing I turned into sentences, narratives, books – the nothing I could not escape saying as a positive nothing, was my Jewish identity. My Jewish identity was not nothing. It was nothingness: a kind of entity in itself with its own weight, value, stylistic possibilities, contours, colours, moorings.[224]

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[222] Marcel Proust. *Remembrance of Things Past*. Trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff. New York: Chatto and Windus, 1941. The novel is contemporary with Vogel's stay in Vienna; it was first published in Paris 1913 but its publication was only completed after Proust's death in 1922.

[223] Alain Finkielkraut. *The Imaginary Jew*. Trans. Kevin O'Neill and David Suchoff. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. 35.

[224] Henri Raczymov. Tales of Exile and Forgetfulness. *Discourses of Jewish Identity in*

Or maybe, wondered Michiel Kramer (2001), shouldn't one simply restrict the label Jewish (with respect to modern belles lettres) to the criterion of race, the writer being born a Jew?[225] "Or", as Anne Golomb Hoffman (2001) suggested in her response to Kramer's article, "should we, perhaps, refrain from dichotomous thinking at all" and "work … towards a dialogical understanding of Jewish literature, one that supports both inquiry into and reflection on the formulations of identity to which we are inevitably drawn?"[226]

Dan Miron's Response to the Preceding Debate

More recently, the Israeli literary critic Dan Miron (2010) postulated that discourses such as the preceding presuppose something that is not there. They assume continuity, the belief that all Jewish literature, whether written in Hebrew, Yiddish or another language, forms a continuum which, according to Miron, is now dead. Instead he advocates a view of Jewish literature in terms of time and space, for instance: Biblical verse, or the medieval poetry of Judah ha-Levi, or Chaim Nachman Bialik's poems, or the connectedness of Hebrew and Yiddish letters in the early twentieth century. Miron further postulates that languages such as Hebrew and Yiddish can no longer claim a monopoly to literary Jewishness. Resisting attempts at clearly outlined definitions of the term Jewish in relation to literature, he proposes that any text that evinces an interest in, or is in whatever way and to whatever extent conditioned by a sense of Judesein (Jewishness), is Jewish literature.

Instead of continuity, Miron proposes the term contiguity (proximity), and shows how it can operate as a critical paradigm in his reading of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Dairyman* as contiguous to Kafka's stories, in the sense that, while Sholem Aleichem and Kafka wrote within radically different linguistic and literary settings, both writers "embraced passivity, weakness, wordiness, inertia and minority". Contiguity, Miron argues, is any relation between texts that is more ambivalent, or stranger, less concrete or predictable, than what we refer to as influence.[227]

Twentieth-Century France. Ed. Alan Astro. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. 91-98.

[225] Michael P. Kramer. "Race, Literary History, and the 'Jewish' Question". *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 21.3 (2001): 287-332. Race is used as a general term here, that is, without the fascist connotations of superior and inferior races.

[226] Anne Golomb Hofmann. "A Response To: Race, Literary History, and the 'Jewish' Question from Kramer". *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 21.3 (2001): 329.

[227] Dan Miron. *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010. See Chapter 1*: "The Prologue",* and Chapter 2*: "The 'old' Jewish literary discourse"* and also chapters 10 and 11 on the contiguity between the works of Kafka (10) and Sholem Aleichem (11). On canon formation, see p. 377 ff. where Miron refers to the postmodern debate problematising canon-formation and exploring, as

In fact, Miron's book ratifies today's status quo at American universities, where Jewish studies programmes have for some time typically increased their reach by including in their list of affiliated faculties professors in German, Russian or Portuguese literature who teach Heinrich Heine, or Isaac Babel or Moacyr Scliar.[228]

The Issue of Ideology

Gershon Shaked saw Vogel's *Married Life*

> … outside the contours of the modern Hebrew literary canon: … a Viennese novel that happened to be written in Hebrew, but was beyond the scope of specifically Jewish experience as it addressed neither the Jewish situation, nor reflected social processes [Zionism] experienced by Jews as Jews and by Israelis as Israelis.[229]

Shaked, as he takes the Zionist stance, excludes exile as a factor in Vogel's literary dramatization of subjectivity. He criticises Vogel for his "detachment from local issues and national [Zionist] culture".[230] Dan Miron's sense of *Judesein* obviously does not exclude ideology either. Although *Married Life,* according to Miron's criterion, may be regarded as Jewish literature, his devastating comment about Vogel's novel is ideologically motivated. Miron accuses Vogel of political inconsistency, with reference to Zionism. On the one hand, according to a somewhat sarcastic Miron, Vogel "never allows the Jewish collective themes (politics, Zionism) to obfuscate his universalistic vision", while on the other he gives in his novel *Married Life* "the most ferocious anatomy of the failure of the assimilated Jewish intellectual". Miron also takes the view that

> … Fogel justified his "lean" Hebrew and the poetics based on a minimalist approach to the linguistic medium, as commensurate with Hebrew having become the spoken language of the new Jewish contingent in Palestine.[231]

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he formulates it: "the complex issue of the aesthetic dynamics and politics of canonization and canonicity; an issue that has attracted scores of scholars critics and literary theorists engaged in the postmodernist dialogue in general, and in minority discourse theory in particular".

228 Moacyr Scliar (1937-2011). Brazilian Jewish novelist and short-story writer, who wrote existential allegories in which he explored the complexities of Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

229 Shaked. "A Viennese Author Who Wrote in Hebrew: David Vogel as Novelist". 20.

230 Shaked. *Modern Hebrew Fiction*. 204.

231 Miron. *From Continuity to Contiguity*. Note 30, 501. See David Fogel, "Lashon vesignon besifrutenu hatse'ira" *Siman Keri'a* 3-4 (1974): 388-91. The article appeared in translation as: David Fogel. "Language and Style in Our Young Literature (1931)". *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*. 1.20 (1993).

In Miron's eyes, therefore, Vogel only feigns indifference to politics, for in fact *Married Life is* politics: a biting, political critique of the assimilated German Jewry's masochist patience with German anti-Semitism, the political solution of which (Zionism), however, Vogel ignores. Besides, Miron qualifies Vogel's Hebrew as minimal and he rejects Vogel's defence, namely that it resembles the Hebrew that just started to be spoken in Palestine, as a feeble excuse.

Miron defends this ideological stance by stating that

> in the last decades of the previous century the scholarly studies on and the critical evaluation of the Jewish literatures formed an integral part of the revolutionary (Zionist) projects that informed and shaped the literatures themselves … That implied a task no lighter than the replacing of the traditional cultural ethos (created and promulgated by the rabbinical Halachic leadership, or by the Chassidic establishment), with a new [Zionist] humanist ethos; thus, literary critics and scholars were self-evidently expected to do their share.[232]

I assume that Vogel's literary creation of Gurdweill, just as the wandering, suffering, exiled Jew, did not tally with the Zionist image of the new Jew in the national home of Palestine.[233] I will come to that later.

Robert Alter (1988), on the other hand, uninhibited by ideology, carefully probes the uniqueness of Vogel's Hebrew style and language as qualities in their own right while carefully exploring thematic analogies as well as differences from German Jewish modernism:

> What concerns us centrally is the degree to which Fogel succeeds in realizing these themes … in a language that, unlike Mann's German, Lawrence's English, and Nabokov's Russian, was not a spoken language. By 1932 Hebrew had, in fact, become a spoken language in Palestine, but as far as Fogel was

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[232] Miron. *From Continuity to Contiguity*. 32-3.

[233] Gurdweill's reference to himself as "The wandering Jew" (*Married Life*, 401) in turn refers to the Christian legend about a Jew who rebuked Christ as he was carrying the cross to Calvary and who told Christ to go faster; the Jew was condemned to wander the earth until Christ's second coming. The story is of an early date, one version going back as far as the thirteenth-century English chronicler Matthew Paris. However, its popularity dates from 1602, when a pamphlet was published containing the story of a bishop of Schleswig who had met a certain Ahasuerus, who claimed to be the Wandering Jew. The legend was revived in a German pamphlet in 1602, „Kurze Beschreibung und Erzählung von einem Juden mit namen Ahasverus" („A Brief Description and Narration Regarding a Jew Named Ahasuerus", 1856). The popularity of the pamphlet may have been due to the anti-Jewish feeling aroused by the belief that the Antichrist would appear in 1600 and be aided by the Jews. The pamphlet was soon translated into other languages of Christian Europe. Appearances of the wandering Jew were frequently reported in various European cities. As late as 1868 he was reputedly seen in Salt Lake City, Utah.

> concerned, it was not a vernacular. He was no doubt in touch, through reading with new coinages and other kinds of innovation of the revived Hebrew of the land of Israel, and even his brief stay there, he would certainly have been capable of sustaining a conversation in Hebrew. Nevertheless, his Hebrew came to him through literary sources and has the earmarks of a literary language without a vernacular base. This characteristic is transparently evident in his stilted, artificial dialogue, which is compounded of phrases from classical texts and bears little relation to Hebrew as it was spoken even in 1932.
>
> Given the inadverted quaintness of the language of the dialogues, the great surprise about the prose of Fogel's narrator is that it is so un-archaic, so supple and precise. Here and there, to be sure, there are certain odd terms for particular garments or objects that have not become part of modern Hebrew usage: it's a bit like reading a contemporary story by E.M. Forster, or Katherine Mansfield and occasionally running into a Middle English word for robe, or slip, or balcony. But these are no more than minor moments of strangeness in a mimetic prose that is more fluent, even more beautifully natural than anything that would be produced in the next generation – the first native one – of Hebrew fiction in Israel after 1948. The potential for artistic maturity in the European tradition of Hebrew writing may be suggested by the fact that Fogel's stylistic achievement would be matched, or surpassed, only in the second and third generations of native Israeli fiction, in the works of writers like Amalia Kahana Carmon, the later A.B. Yehoshua, Yaakov Shabtai, Yitzhak Ben-Ner, and, most recently, David Grossman. [234]

My Critical Position in this Chapter

In my exploration of *Married Life* in this chapter, I am not concerned with ideology, or with criteria for canon formation as in the discourse on modernist fiction as Jewish/non-Jewish that I have discussed earlier.

Instead, I place Vogel's novel in the literary tradition of European Hebrew modernism that interrupted the hegemony of the positivist (realist) tradition of *Haskalah* fiction through its predilection for the artistic expression of interiority and subjectivity, and as such an area of research for exploring abjection as defined by Kristeva. In the next part of my chapter I will first uncover the historical roots of European Hebrew modernism in Central Europe. Its emphasis on interiority makes *Married Life* a perfect research object for the logics of abjection.

6.4 The Beginnings of European Hebrew Modernism

European Hebrew modernism was probably born with the work of the Russian Jewish journalist and novelist Micha Josef Berdyczewski (1865, Ukraine - 1921, Germany), whose pen name was Micha Yoseph Bin-Gorion. Berdyczewski was

[234] Alter. *The Invention of Hebrew Prose*. 78-88.

an extraordinary colourful figure who came from a generation of Hassidic rabbis and whose popularity as a modern Hebrew novelist among contemporary young Russian Jewish Hebrew exiles such as Vogel has been attributed to his success in addressing the ambivalence involved in exile, particularly Eastern European, Russian Jewish exile in Europe. On the one hand, there was the connectedness to the traditional *cheider* and *yeshiva* world that had shaped them intellectually and affectively, and which they had left but which refused to go away in their exile, like the abjected mother in Kristeva's theory. On the other hand, as intellectuals, they felt the strong pull of secular Central and Western European culture, literature and philosophy in their new host countries.

Uri Nissan Gnessin (1879, Russia - 1913, Poland), one of those exiles, and his friend Yosef Haim Brenner (1881, Ukraine - 1921, Israel), were among the pioneers of European Hebrew prose modernism. They spearheaded a difficult reorientation of Hebrew literature, moving it away from its matrix in the positivist (realist) literature of the *Haskalah*.[235] Included in their effort was their wrestling with Hebrew as a medium for modernist literature. In the first place, Hebrew was a language without a vernacular and therefore, unlike assimilated French and German Jewish writers, the European Hebrew modernists could not resort to a tradition of spoken and internal dialogue but had to turn to European literature for examples instead.

There was also the matter of epistemology, as they broke with the Hebrew positivist tradition of literature as representation of the social reality and/or persons in that reality outside the text. Gnessin and Brenner were among the first pioneers of European Hebrew modernism. They were immigrants from Russia who adopted writing interiority, not in interior monologue but in, what the Germans call, *erlebte rede*, the French *le style indirect libre*, and for which Dorrit Cohn has more recently suggested the term narrated monologue:

> … the report, summary, description of the movements of thought and feeling in the language of the narrator instead of their immediate rendering in the unspoken inner speech of the character.[236]

Traditional, positivist-oriented Jewish literary critique initially failed to understand their attention to interiority. It saw Brenner's protagonists as negative types and as miserable adolescents and loafers (like Vogel's Gurdweill) unable to deal with reality. Brenner's response to the negative critique was that it had not been

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[235] Deborah Steinhardt. "Figures of Thought: Psycho-Narration in the Fiction of Berdichewsky, Bershadsky and Feierberg". *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 8.2 (1988).

[236] Dorrit Cohn. *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. Chapters 1 and 3.

his intention to show "how things appear to an objective, clearheaded observer, but rather to evoke an atmosphere of the mind".[237]

Berdyczewski – Brenner's senior contemporary author, friend and critic, writes Fleck – was the first to perceive that the "true object of representation in Brenner's work was not the mimetic representation of social reality, or persons in that reality, but the act of perception itself, and the ways in which it was problematized by the processes of the mind." From that perspective, Berdyczewski calls Brenner's negative types (such as Vogel's Gurdweill) "not imitations, but sources of an internal reality, or truth that cannot be grasped directly".[238] Vogel's affiliation with the work of Berdyczewski, Brenner and Gnessin is apparent from a lecture he gave about these writers Warsaw in 1931.[239]

To these Russian Jewish writers who, like Vogel, had spun off from the traditional Eastern European Jewish milieu and tried to forge a new Hebrew fiction in European exile, their Hebrew writing was in a sense, according to Robert Alter, a calling card that gave them entry to the great polyglot salons of European culture, as if to say: "We belong here as equals, and we are proud to display our original address."[240]

Together with influences of Western modernist writers, these Jewish Russian exile-writers' gift for creating psychic interiority had probably also been influenced by Russian writers such as F.M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881) whose work, as Freud wrote to Stefan Zweig, "cannot be understood without psychoanalysis – i.e. he isn't in need of it because he illustrates it himself in every sentence".[241] The Dostoevskyan creation of "uprooted experience" recurs in Vogel's *Married Life* as in Haim Brenner's *Breakdown and Bereavement*.[242] Brenner actually translated Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and was deeply impressed by the Russian master. Brenner is particularly interesting as a possible influence on Vogel as the latter was familiar with Dostoevsky and Brenner's work.

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[237] Yosef H. Brenner. "The Land of Israel, Genre and its Trappings". *Character and Context: Studies in the Fiction of Abramovitsh, Brenner and Agnon*. By Jeffrey Fleck. Chico: Scholars Press, 1984. 269-70.

[238] Fleck. *Character and Context*. 63-4.

[239] Vogel expressed his affiliation with these writers and their artistic aims in a lecture given in 1931 in Poland. Fogel. "Language and Style in Our Young Literature (1931)": 15.

[240] Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose*. 71-2.

[241] Ernst and Lucie Freud, eds. *Letters of Sigmund Freud*. New York: Basic Books, 1960. 331-33.

[242] Yosef Haim Brenner. *Breakdown and Bereavement*. Trans. Hillel Halkin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971. Trans. of *Shchol Ve-Kishalon*. New York: Stybel, 1920. The setting is Palestine in the years before World War I, when the tragic pattern of Arab-Jewish relations was taking shape. The hero, Hefetz, is a wanderer in search of a spiritual homeland.

Gershon Shaked writes that it is possibly through the Brennerian tradition that "Russian influence, particularly that of Dostoevsky seeped into Hebrew literature".[243] Nabakov writes that "Dostoevsky, because he [could] spin a yarn with such suspense, such innuendoes, ... used to be eagerly read by schoolboys and schoolgirls in Russia, together with Fennimore Cooper, Victor Hugo, Dickens, and Turgenev"[244] Vogel, at any rate, seemed to know Dostoevsky's work well enough while working on *Married Life,* for he writes in 1931:

> They say that the style of Dostoevsky is not beautiful, that it isn't polished enough, and it isn't brilliant. This fact, in and of itself, is of no consequence. What is of consequence is that this style served as a complete and exhaustive expression of his great and deep world; that is the essence of his exalted genius.[245]

But the matter of "influence" was complex as we can see from Menachem Gnessin's autobiography. Menachem, who was Uri Nissan Gnessin's brother, was an actor. In his autobiography he wrote that

> Pochep's [the Gnessins' home town] young Jews used to follow [alongside their classical Hebrew education] contemporary Russian literature with great interest: they read the works of Tolstoy, Gorki, Chekhov and Turgenev, and compared them to contemporary Scandinavian literature, to the plays of Ibsen and Strindberg, and to the prose work of Knut Hamsun.[246]

Rachel Albeck-Gidron writes that, according to Menachem's memoir, these young Jewish writers took patriotic pride in the superiority of Russian literature, no less than the pride they felt when reading the Hebrew writers of their generation, or contemporary Yiddish literature, such as that of the Yiddish writer Y.L. Peretz, which, at that time, was being translated into Hebrew. They were part of a new generation of Russian Jewish modernists. They led a modern nationalistic life and identified with the artistic works of the Russian host culture. They were also just beginning to address the question of their identity and their future as a Jewish ethnic minority, whilst repressing and acknowledging by turns the fact that they were literally persecuted to death by the very culture they adored.[247]

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[243] Shaked. "A Viennese Author Who Wrote in Hebrew": 21.

[244] Vladimir Nabokov. *Lectures on Russian Literature*. Ed. Fredson Bowers. Harcourt Brace Yovanovich: New York, 1981. 109-10.

[245] Fogel. "Language and Style in our Young Literature (1931)": 15.

[246] Menachem Gnessin. *My Way with the Hebrew Theatre, 1905-1926*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1946.

[247] Rachel Albeck-Gidron. Introduction. *Beside & Other Stories*. By Uri Nissan Gnessin. Toby Press: London, 2005. xi.

Vogel's *Married Life* reads as a novel of Viennese exile and testifies to the ambivalence of those young writers' sense of identity I have underlined before. On the one hand they felt the strong pull of Western culture with its modernist philosophy, art and especially literature whose influence in *Married Life* can be discerned in the text's prominence on interiority, and in its rather superficial flirtation with names of Western philosophers (Nietzsche), literature (*Madame Bovary*), art (Rembrandt) and even Freud's talking cure.[248] On the other hand there was the inescapable pull of the old, Orthodox Jewish *cheider* and *yeshiva* past from which they had parted, but which refused to disappear in their exile, like the abject (m) other in Kristeva's theory, like something you want to get rid of but which refuses to disappear.

Ambivalence also returns in the form and style of Vogel's *Married Life*. The mimetic descriptions of Vienna, its people, streets, cafés, squares and bridges, the noise of its traffic, all tend to make the reader forget that he or she is dealing, not with the city of Vienna, but with the exiled protagonist's subjective experience of Vienna. The reader's forgetfulness is possibly also the reason why, after the novel's translations into Western languages, the general public enjoyed *Married Life* specifically for its colourful and realistic picture of the city. Focusing on the mimetic aspect of the text *Married Life* can be read as an urban (Viennese) novel, a genre very popular in contemporary European modernist literature (such as, for instance, Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf (1929)* written in German, in the same year as *Married Life)*.[249] Western audiences have taken that track and understood the meaning of the text accordingly, as I have noted in the context of the reception of *Married Life*. In Kristeva's terms, this means that the focus lies on the text's symbolic discourse, ignoring what eludes that discourse yet resounds in the text's meaning production: the semiotic (instinctive) register of identity and meaning that does not produce meaning itself but seems to suggest a beyond (the semiotic) which reorganises the visible meanings (the symbolic) from its perspective.

This ambivalence in the text's meaning formation raises the powerful trope of the archaic border that occurs in Kristeva's work in her perception of meaning (significance) as a linguistic process, but not exclusively so: signification also goes back to an affective and instinctive process that precedes signification, which is

[248] For instance, in a discussion about the possibility of appreciating art on an empty stomach, Gurdweill's acquaintance Perczik calls art absolutely superfluous, and wonders what good art would do to a man who has not eaten for two days. "Will you give him *Madame Bovary* to read? Or show him pictures by Rembrandt?" Vogel. *Married Life*. 23.

[249] Alfred Döblin (1878-1957) was a modernist German Jewish writer and psychiatrist. His novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) was burned during the Nazi book-burnings in 1933, the year Hitler rose to power.

conveyed in the meaning formations of the text, as I have shown when discussing Rothko earlier in this chapter. Kristeva, as we recall from chapter 2, calls that process the semiotic. The border in this specific sense positions the two signifying processes as separate (bordered), yet interdependent registers of meaning in the text. In the following sections I will discuss the border trope in relation to the symbolic (exile) and the semiotic registers of meaning and identity with an emphasis on the semiotic. This psychoanalytical research position marks the difference between my work and that of Pinsker and Schachter, who accentuate the socio-cultural perspective of Eastern European Jewish modernist writing and thus, in Kristeva's terminology, the symbolic discourse of the texts. I critically position myself at the border between the socio-cultural and the self, which is the research field of psychoanalysis. From that position I will analyse views of the archaic border within the symbolic productions of identity and meaning in Vogel's *Married Life*.

6.5 Visions of the Border in Married Life

Kristeva's approach of the fledgling (pre-Oedipal) subject's archaic struggle to be a self in exposure to the abject resurfaces in *Married Life* in the structures of the text's artistic evocation of Gurdweill's subjective experience of interbellum Vienna, as an exile and a Jew from Eastern Europe.

Both struggles, however different, share what Kristeva views as fragile defences against non-differentiation. In the case of the fledgling subject this defence refers to the stage when, just after separation from the *chora*, the pre-Oedipal child faces for the first time the fearful appearance of otherness (the abject) where there was initially one-ness (the *chora*), and feverishly excludes what is other to strengthen the fragile border that protects him from the threat of collapsing into the abject (loss of meaning, psychosis for the instinctive has no meaning). This is why Kristeva calls this stage border subjectivity, which means that the fledgling subject's very struggle to fortify the fragile border of his budding self against the threat of collapsing into the abject, must be viewed as a fragile defence against non-differentiation, and thus a beginning of identification before his entering into language (Lacan's law of the father).

Back to Gurdweill. His struggle for identity as an exile and a Jew, which is a struggle for identity in terms of belonging (as opposed to abjection which is identity as being), takes place on the border between the old *cheider* and *yeshiva* culture he has left but which refuses to disappear (like the abjected mother), and the new host culture that he aspires to be part of. This is why the trope of the border keeps appearing as a curious symbolic-semiotic double in the text's struc-

tures of meaning and identity as I will show when analysing episodes from *Married Life*.

This leads me to the two significant women in Gurdweill's life who, in my line of thought, function as two different aspects of the abject. But first I should point out again that the notion of the abject in Kristeva's theory has nothing to do with its household meaning as defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary*: as a condition, or estate, of one cast down; abasement, humiliation, degradation, rejection; that which is cast off or away; refuse, scum, dregs. In Kristeva's work the feminine-motherly is associated with that other logic (the semiotic), which challenges symbolic representation, and which she refers to as the semiotic.

The two women in Gurdweill's life can be viewed as two aspects of the abject: Lotte, the Jewish girl who really loves Gurdweill but whose nurturing love he rejects, appears as Kristeva's abjected mother of the *chora,* or the Yiddish mother culture that he has left, something rejected from which one does not part. Thea, the Viennese Austrian Christian baroness appears as another aspect of the abject: the fledgling subject's, and the Jewish exile Gurdweill's, first fascinating and horrific confrontation with Christian otherness, beckoning him to transgress the border as a subject and a Jew, which would destroy him as either. In essence, the two women together artistically dramatize aspects of the abject. When exposed to these, Gurdweill struggles against indifferentiation both as a subject and as a Galician Jewish exile and writer.

Married Life from this perspective is about abjection, which Kristeva refers to as border subjectivity, which is why the border is a recurring trope in Vogel's text. In the following sections I will discuss appearances of the border trope in Vogel's text, which dramatize points of the protagonist's life where archaic boundaries rise up and/or threaten to break down, and where the abject (the semiotic, namely what is excluded from the text's symbolic discourse) is artistically named.

The Border as an Inside/Outside Experience

The first appearance (naming) of the archaic border as an inside/outside experience in *Married Life* occurs at the very beginning of the text where we see Gurdweill, the newly arrived Jewish exile, waking up on his first morning, or at least one of the first mornings, after his arrival in Vienna from Galicia. The scene shows Gurdweill, slowly and half unwillingly waking up to his new status. The city literally dawns on his still half-aware consciousness:

> In the passage the tap woke up with a roar. In an instant the noise filled all the space around, penetrating the rooms, which were still steeped in the half-light of dawn, and invading the sleeping body of Rudolf Gurdweill. Perhaps the noise of the tap triggered of an unpleasant dream in Gurdweill a moment before waking, for the first feeling struggling inside him as his senses cleared

> was one of reluctance: probably the result of the dream, which remained there inside him, on the other side of consciousness. For a moment Gurdweill lay listening with his eyes closed. But in the meantime the silence had returned and he heard only the click of a door closing in the corridor, picking it up belatedly – in the abstract, as it were – after the sound itself had already faded and died. Then he turned to the windows and opened his eyes. He saw that the windows were already quite pale with the light of the approaching morning, which immediately increased his desire to go back to sleep. And as if he were fleeing from some danger, he quickly turned on to his right side and pulled the quilt over his head. Down below, in Kleine Stadtgutgasse, a heavy wagon trundled past slowly, creaking mercilessly and shaking the windowpanes like an earthquake. "A coal-wagon from Nordbahnhof", concluded Gurdweill. Now he would never be able to go back to sleep. The creaking narrowed down to two or three maddeningly monotonous sounds, which went on repeating themselves with an idiotic obstinacy in his drowsy mind, although the wagon was quite far away by now, *until it seemed to him that they were coming not from outside but from some corner of his own soul*. In a sudden panic he jumped up and sat on the bed.[250]

Through the lens of Kristeva's theory of abjection the text's poetic evocation of the rhythm of Gurdweill's unstable, advancing and receding sleep-wake border of consciousness, seems to trigger a deeper, equally unstable, archaic inside/outside border: the one confronting the pre-Oedipal fledgling-subject after separation (from the unity with the archaic mother) and before it enters into language. This is the logic of abjection which, in Beardsworth's words, "belongs to and is barely distinguishable from that unstable border".[251]

Thus viewed, Gurdweill's lingering on the border between inside and outside (of consciousness), or of sleeping and waking, doubly dramatizes a position of uncertainty (where am I?), that of the fledgling subject and of the fledgling exile whose new other. The Western Christian host culture makes itself audible before making itself audible by the sound of its heavy traffic.

The Border as a Trope of Ambivalence

The trope of the border is highly ambivalent throughout *Married Life*. On the one hand it figures powerfully as a definite, historical and religious border between Jews and Christians, for instance as recounted by Gurdweill when telling his Christian Austrian wife after marriage about the Galician Jewish village he came from:

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[250] Vogel. *Married Life*. 7-8.

[251] Beardsworth. *Julia Kristeva*. 82.

> People seemed to be divided in two separate species utterly different from each other, as different as cats and dogs. In a little village, unlike a city, religion still plays an important role in life. The boundaries are well defined: Jews are Jews and Christians are Christians. You cannot possibly confuse the two, especially in the little settlements of Galicia and Poland. My parents were not orthodox, but nevertheless they had nothing to do with Christians.[252]

On the other hand, in that same memory, the image of the border between Jews and Christians, dramatized as immovable and forbidding, begins to move like the reflection of a tree in the water after a stone has touched the surface. The borderlines that only a moment before seemed inexorably closed and definite now suddenly appear to be permeable, uncertain and threatening, which arouses both fascination and horror in young Gurdweill, as we recall from chapter 2, the paraphernalia of abjection. Gurdweill continues:

> In short, the Christians fascinated me in their strangeness. When I grew a little older I would hang around the Church on their holy days, moved and excited, waiting for something. The singing of the choir, threatening and obscure, would come pouring out into the fresh summer air like a slow stream of thick, black tar. By then I already knew about the Inquisition, the Crusades, the persecution of the Jews, and I was constantly afraid that they would suddenly seize me and drag me inside and force me to do something terrible. And yet I kept on hanging around outside the Church. You might say that in the depths of my soul I was even eager for the thing to happen. If they abducted me, I thought, and forced me to do something (I didn't know exactly what) it wouldn't help them. I would suffer all the tortures of hell and I wouldn't do their bidding. Once I dared to approach the door and look inside. I saw nothing but dense darkness dotted with weak candle flames. From that day on, whenever I thought about Christians, I would see something dark with flickering candles...[253]

The preceding section artistically evokes a very young Gurdweill's phobic image of Christians as Jew persecutors in the narrative past, framed, as it were, within an analogous Thea-Gurdweill marriage situation (the analogy escaping Gurdweill's conscious mind) in the narrative present of his Jewish Christian marriage. What is the analogy?

Both the past and the present vividly evoke the border situation between Jew and Christian as forbidding, inexorably fixed, yet permeable yet transgressable (as illustrated by the Gurdweill-Thea marriage situation). The effect of this construction to the targeted Yiddish audience is that the impossibility of a relation between Jews and Christians, as dramatized in Gurdweill's recounted past, works as a kind

[252] Vogel. *Married Life*. 211.

[253] Ibid. 210-11.

of artistic double of, and a comment on, the marriage situation (between Gurdweill the Jew and Thea the Christian) in the narrative present: as a transgression of the border described in Gurdweill's memory of Galicia as "Jews are Jews and Christians are Christians". A transgression on both sides, as subjectively experienced by the Jewish Gurdweill in horror and fascination: "I was constantly afraid that they would suddenly seize me and drag me inside and force me to do something terrible" he remembers, and "the Christians fascinated me in their strangeness".[254]

This episode dramatically suggests a deeper permeable border between the archaic past, before the child enters into language and before its first efforts to create space for separateness confronts it with the uncertain border (of a budding I), and the fearsome appearance of otherness, where first there was only oneness (in the *chora*). Here, and in other sections of the text, psychoanalysis meets what Beardsworth formulates as:

> narcissism converting its walls into a permeable inside/outside limit, bringing out the archaic arrangement that Kristeva calls abjection. That permeable limit – the abject – paradigmatically the ab-jected mother [the psychic equivalent of Gurdweill's Yiddish roots] appears as: something rejected from which one does not part.[255]

Back to the Viennese narrative present of the text, to the intimacy of the (in the eyes of Vogel's intended Yiddish exile audience) impossible marriage. The text shows Gurdweill, the Eastern European Jew from Galicia (the cradle of Eastern European ultra-Orthodox Hassidic Jewry), offering to read the New Testament to his Christian wife Thea, just to please her:

> If you like, said Gurdweill suddenly, I'll read to you from the New Testament... He read for half an hour, while his wife sat opposite him, her head resting on her hands, smoking without a pause.[256]

But, while reading, a strange thing happened: something intangible seemed to suddenly blow up the idyllic peacefulness generated by the reading:

> … A strange, eerie silence descended. The upper half of the room was shrouded in semi-darkness as before. A feeling, something like shame, welled up in Gurdweill, and he couldn't understand what it meant.[257]

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[254] Ibid. 211.

[255] Beardsworth. *Julia Kristeva*. 88-9.

[256] Vogel. *Married Life*. 210.

[257] Ibid. 210.

Terms such as strange, shrouded (reminiscent of death), semi-darkness and shame seem to appear suddenly from an elsewhere or in-between, eerie (fear-inspiring, gloomy, strange: the semiotic), threatening the atmosphere of serenity, peace and quiet created earlier. Like the abject threatening the uncertain border of the pre-Oedipal child's budding self after its separation from the mother, forcing it into a defensive gesture of abjection and exclusion:

> Suddenly what he had read seemed utterly naive to him, insipid. and lacking in any poetic spirit. All that was left was the unpleasant aftertaste of over-masticated chewing gum...[258]

What the text shows compares to my findings following my discussion of Rothko's work. The text's (symbolic) discourse, dramatizing Gurdweill's pleasant experience of the intimacy of the reading moment of the New Testament, is unexpectedly spoiled from the limit or border of the text's symbolic discourse: transformed, as it were, by something beyond (the semiotic). Although not producing meaning itself, this seems to reorganise the visible (symbolic) meaning of the text (a Jew reading the New Testament) from the perspective of that beyond: the abjected *cheider* and *yeshiva* past (the archaic mother) turning (in the subjective experience of the Galician Jewish exile Gurdweill) the Christian New Testament into a watered-down version ("naive, lacking any poetic spirit", "over-masticated chewing gum"), of the beloved, internalised Jewish Scriptures from his homeland Galicia.

Jewish Satire and Laughter in Married Life

An audience cannot identify satire unless it knows what is satirized. This is why Western audiences, seldom mention the literary origins of the satire in Vogel's text, let alone its psychological function: laughter, according to Kristeva[259], can be a way to place or displace abjection as she shows time and again in her analysis of Céline's work. In the following historical sections I will attempt to capture the Jewish understanding of satire, which shows most remarkable analogies with Kristeva's psychoanalytical view of laughter displacing abjection.

Jewish Satire: Historical Roots

Whilst Western satire began with the Roman poets Horatio (65-8 BC) and Juvenal (ca. 60-130 AD), the Hebrew tradition of satire is as old as the Bible, as Joseph Chotzner (1911) shows in his inimitable book *Hebrew Satire*.[260] Thomas

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[258] Ibid. 211.

[259] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 8.

[260] Joseph Chotzner. *Hebrew Satire*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1911.

Yemielity (1992) even traces back the origins of the genre to the Jewish prophets who used satire to answer attacks on their credibility.[261] Friedlander (2008) writes:

> Jewish satire reflects 200 years of "culture wars" within the Jewish people; it dates back to the late eighteenth century, was composed in Hebrew or Yiddish, and became one of the most significant genres, if not the most significant one, in Jewish literature, and specifically in Yiddish literature. … Jewish satire evolved in a hostile environment, and has been involved in a never-ending confrontation between the world of traditional beliefs and views on the one hand and the dynamic milieu of European humanism, with all its trends and periods, on the other hand. … The contents of satirical works display a great deal of self-hatred and self-accusation, but through a moral platform, this hatred is shaped and presented in a pleasant and aesthetic form. One of the foundations of satirical creation is the convention of finding pleasantness in the horror of the ugly and repulsive. [262]

For his satire in *Married Life,* Vogel resorted to the Yiddish and Hebrew traditions of satire in Eastern Europe and Russia, where he had been born and bred, and whose literary sources he had studied during his stays in Vilnius and Lvov before leaving for Vienna. The culture war reflected in that Jewish tradition was waged between Jewish orthodoxy (Hasidism) and the *Maskilim*, adherents of the Jewish enlightenment, or *Haskalah*.

Modern Jewish satire dates back to the late eighteenth century. It was composed in Hebrew or Yiddish and became one of the most significant literary genres, if not the most significant one, in the Yiddish and Hebrew literary traditions of Eastern Europe and Russia. A later telling example, of course, is the work of the great Yiddish satirist Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh (1835-1917), also known as Mendele Moykher Sforim. Mendele the bookseller still lived in Odessa when Vogel lived there in the three years before he arrived in Vienna in 1912. Mendelian traditions of Hebrew satire and parody written in the form of short stories always had didactic aims: they were intended to enlighten, warn off or elevate the Eastern European and Russian Jewish masses. In the above quote Friedlander effectively describes its ambivalent symptoms as those of abjection, without using the concept: "One of the foundations of satirical creation is the convention of finding pleasantness in the horror of the ugly and repulsive".

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[261] Thomas Jemielity. *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

[262] Yehuda Friedlander. *The YIVO Encyclopaedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Lemma: Satire. Trans. Rami Hann. Ed. David Hundert. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 1664.

Satire in Married Life*: Laughter Displacing Abjection*

In the very first pages of *Married Life*, the text itself announces its satiric bent when one of the characters, the Jewish Lotte Bondheim, who secretly loves Gurdweill but cannot compete with Thea, responds to the idea of a marriage between Gurdweill, the *Ostjude,* and Thea, a member of the notoriously anti-Semitic Roman Catholic Austrian nobility, with the laughter and horror epitomising abjection:

> Oh no, she cried, it's too ridiculous for words. I've never heard anything so grotesque in my life! Little Gurdweill is going to marry a baroness! A big blond baroness! Ha, ha, ha! A little baron! One day he'll start a pogrom against us! [263]

The text satirically presents the cultural-religious conflict between Jews and Christians in terms of an unequal match: the incompatibility of the partners, Jew and Christian, provokes laughter in its intended Jewish audience who know better: "Ha, ha, ha!"

The reception of *Married Life,* as we have seen, shows that the satiric element of Vogel's text was lost to Western audiences who did not realise that the novel was written by an Eastern European Jewish exile addressing an Eastern European Yiddish audience for whom, in their homelands, the impossibility of any union (marriage) between them and Christians had been one of the unforbidding realities of Jewish life. The reality they now faced as exiles, namely the possibility of crossing the border by acculturation and assimilation, filled them with both horror and fascination (the paraphernalia of abjection) and to displace abjection there was satire. A telling example in *Married Life* is the poking fun at the horror of the intensifying Western political anti-Semitism in Vienna. One day, whilst wandering through interbellum Vienna, the protagonist Gurdweill, the Jewish exile from Galicia, stumbles accidentally upon a meeting of the fascist Society of Aryan Nature Lovers held in a third-rate Viennese café.[264] There he happens to overhear a speech delivered by one of the Aryan members of the Society, Herr Eigermeier:

> The great and particular importance, Gentlemen, which cannot be sufficiently emphasized, of the establishment of special branches of our society for the organization and education of Aryan youth to the love of nature and fresh air and a proud, natural, healthy life, in the spirit of the teachings of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and their preservation from the undesirable foreign elements which – hmm – which have penetrated into our midst from the east,

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[263] Vogel. *Married Life*. 54-55.

[264] Aryan: term used before and during the Nazi regime (1933–45) to refer to inhabitants of Germany and Austria of non-Jewish descent.

> and which are taking over everything – I must stress, gentlemen, everything, all the economical and intellectual professions, and, in the end, even the last precious possession remaining to us: the glorious nature of our beloved country... My heart bleeds, my friends... And when he came home Herr Eigermeier would wake his wife and tell her in a casual, nonchalant tone that he had made a speech lasting half an hour at the meeting tonight. He wasn't one to blow his own trumpet, as she very well knew, but all the members of the society had praised the clarity of his ideas and the precise, economical way in which he had expressed them.... His wife would yawn lengthily, listen inattentively, and fall asleep again while he took off his clothes and got into bed with a feeling of profound self-satisfaction.[265]

Obviously the text deploys here, in Friedlander's words, "one of the foundations of satirical creation: the convention of finding pleasantness in the combination of horror of the ugly and repulsive" (Eigermeier's fascist hatred of Jews), the pleasure derived from Frau Eigermeier's devastating response to her husband's account of his successful Aryan eloquence ("His wife would yawn lengthily, listen inattentively, and fall asleep again.") The latter sentence also shockingly exposes Frau Eigermeier as both an instrument of satire and a satirical portrait of the silent German and Austrian majority who witnessed the outbursts of Fascism but who did not pay attention and fell asleep.

Eigermeier's speech sets out the ideological pre-Nazi discourse (as Christian and nature-loving) on Jews that excluded Jews, but first and foremost it demonstrates the unspeakable in the symbolic order: abjection as an instinctive, drive-oriented process of identity formation, "tapped, rationalized, and made operative by ideologies", in this case Nazism and Fascism, and obviously giving the Aryan Herr Eigermeier "a feeling of profound self-satisfaction".[266]

Vogel's *Married Life* is possibly satirising here (and elsewhere) the "Myth of a German-Jewish symbiosis" circulating among the German-speaking Jewry.[267] The incredible historical longevity of that (German) Jewish fantasy arose from a 1998 interview with Yehuda Bauer, then director of Yad Vashem:

> People talk today about a Jewish-German cultural symbiosis that existed before Hitler. There was a love affair between Jews and Germans, but it was one-sided: Jews loved Germany and Germans; Germans didn't love Jews, even if they didn't hate them. One-sided love affairs usually don't work very well. In this case, the so-called symbiosis between Jews and Germans is a

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[265] Vogel. *Married Life*. 178.

[266] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 155.

[267] For an authoritative anthology of German/Jewish writing unmasking that fantasy as a myth, see Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes, eds. *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

> post-factum invention. It never existed. Jews participated in German life, in German cultural life, but to say that they were accepted, even if the product they produced was accepted… They were not accepted, even if they converted.[268]

This view is not just a contrivance on my side: all the historical material about Russian and Eastern European Jewry that I have seen takes this gap between Jew and Christian as self-evident, as a truth that needs no further explanation. Nor does Vogel's *Married Life* in any way generalise: what strikes the reader is that the symbolic text at least makes no difference between the Jewish and Christian individuals the protagonist meets on his wanderings through the city and some of whom he befriends. Despite a couple of razor-sharp portraits of Austrians utterly humiliating Gurdweill the *Ostjude*, there are also non-Jews who behave as real friends to him. However, in Central and Western Europe, as in Gurdweill's Galicia and Vogel's Russia, the whole culture seemed to be imbued with suppressed or openly hatred to Jews. The history of the Tsars of Russia and the Jews (see chapter 5) testifies to that fact. So did the great Eastern European Jewish novelists before and during Vogel's life. And last but certainly not least, there is the historian Dubnow, one of the few historians explicitly focusing on Eastern European Jewry about whom I wrote in the previous chapter. Vogel's *Married Life* is no exception. Indeed, I postulate that one cannot grasp the drift of the text if one is not aware of Jewishness as affectively (before physically) excluded from Christian humanist European culture. "The love of Jews is even more suspect", as Zygmunt Bauman the sociologist put it. His sociological guess, which seems curiously close to Kristeva's ambivalent notion of abjection, is, as I indicated in chapter 2, that modernity's cultural ambivalence to the Jew has been informed by something

> … perhaps, already in place before anti- or philo- sentiments are conceivable, itself not unambiguously determining either hatred or love, but containing the seeds of both, and whichever of the two appears is intense and extreme…[269]

And ambivalence is in the eye of the beholder:

> … ambivalence is ambivalence mostly because the subject experiencing it is unable to contemplate a certain object without ambivalent feelings. It [the object] is simultaneously attractive and repelling, it reminds one of what one would like to be, but is afraid of being, it dangles before the eyes what one

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[268] The multimedia CD *Eclipse of Humanity* Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 2000. Professor Yehuda Bauer, then Director of the International Center for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem, in an interview given to Amos Goldberg, on 6 January 1998 at Yad Vashem.

[269] Bauman. "Allosemitism". 146.

> would rather not see: that the settled accounts are still open and the lost possibilities are still alive.[270]

Bauman views the European perception of the Jew as a signifier of ambivalence, instilled into the believer by medieval Christianity and subsequently assimilated into the Western cultural consciousness, flaring up during the ordering frenzy of modernity (modernity's either/or epistemology). Bauman's sociological model of ambivalence fuses sociology with undefined, but obviously Freud-oriented, psychology. His perception of ambivalence (love/hate) in the eye of the believer could be seen as, again, an un-theorized sociological variant of what Julia Kristeva formulated psychoanalytically a decade earlier in *Powers of Horror* in relation to her notions of abjection, the symbolic and the semiotic.

As to *Married Life,* Western literary critique, as we have seen when discussing its reception, has been blind to what I see as the text's major theme: its dramatizations of the gap between Jew and Christian, in east and west. This gap is depicted as unbridgeable in *Married Life*. The western reception of the novel, as a charming literary evocation of interbellum Vienna, is a glaring denial of that gap.[271]

Grasping the bite and fun of Jewish satire, or even recognising it as such, presupposes that the reader shares, or is at least familiar with the writer's cultural and historical frame of reference: consensually held tacit assumptions, background, etc. In order to grasp Vogel's targets of satire the reader must be aware of the Jewish roots of satire which I have examined earlier. Gurdweill the Jew, painfully remembering the many faces of hatred of Jews from his home country, finds to his horror and fascination that, alongside its much-lauded modernist culture, hatred of Jews is as much alive in the West as it was in his home country, only differently. In that light Vogel's *Married Life* could be viewed as an artistic act of abjection, tragically misunderstood by Western audiences as the text's production of masochism. Reading the text as a Russian Jewish artist's disbelief at and satiric exposure of the naive belief in the possibility of a symbiosis between anti-Semitic German and Jewish culture, it seems hardly surprising that Vogel reverts to the traditional Russian Jewish vehicle for social criticism: Yiddish satire. Satire in that case was both a self-critical tool and a source of laughter (displacing abjection of self), indispensable for survival in a hostile environment that offered nothing to identify with. Vogel's artistic dramatization of this experience is more powerful than any theory, such as the threat of psychic collapse or, in Kristeva's terms, abjection of self. Gurdweill, the exile and Jew facing Western culture as alien, experience this in the streets of Vienna:

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[270] Ibid.

[271] For the relation between Jews and Christians in Eastern Europe and Russia, chapter 5.

> In the narrow, shady Tiefer Graben, a quiet street in the heart of the city, full of leather warehouses and textile wholesalers, workers in their shirtsleeves were loading huge crates on to wide, flat wagons. While this was going on, the heavy cart-horses with tufts of hair above their hooves munched steadily and gloomily from the feed bags tied around their heads. A cleaner in wooden clogs with a long pipe dangling from his mouth sprayed the pavement with a rusty hose. In one of the doorways a maid in a white apron stood calling over and over again in a long-drawnout voice: "Flo-ckie come he-eere!" But the little brown dog with his long back and short crooked legs was busy chasing a cigarette butt blown by the wind and showed no inclination to go home. A sturdy labourer called teasingly to the maid from the opposite pavement: "Why don't you come and sleep with me tonight, pussycat?" Then a heavy truck came roaring down the road and swept Flockie aside.
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> A pleasant, pungent smell of cured hides and freshly dyed cloth wafted out of the open warehouse doors. All around there was a sense of people busy at work, of quiet, strenuous effort, and Gurdweill felt an urge to go up to the labourers and help them load the crates, to lend a hand and shoulder and overcome the resistance of the heavy load. At that moment he saw himself as an outcast, excluded from the masses of humanity helping to keep the world going. Like all those unfit for crude physical labour, he imagined that it was the only way to achieve perfect fulfilment. Gurdweill stood at a distance and watched the workers enviously. No, of course he could not compete with men like these! He glanced contemptuously at his thin, short body, which seemed to him to be made of nerves and brains alone, and moved away.[272]

This long excerpt is a pertinent illustration of Kristeva's difficult concept of abjection of self as a defence against social and symbolic collapse and throws an entirely different psychoanalytical light on Gurdweill as a masochist, which I will look into now.[273]

Misunderstanding in Western Critiques of Masochism in Married Life

Western and Israeli critics of *Married Life* have interpreted the text's dramatization of the protagonist's masochist passivity in clinging to a wife that deceives him, to the influence of the German neo-romantic novel.[274] Also, Jewish critics

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[272] Vogel. *Married Life*. 17-8.

[273] For the notion of abjection of self, see Beardsworth. *Julia Kristeva*. 226 onward.

[274] Neo-romanticism, as a cultural and literary tendency, was a reaction to positivism and naturalism in fin-de-siècle Central and Western Europe. The three tendencies existed side by side until the early twentieth century. Ellenberger points out that neo-romanticism was "a distorted imitation, almost a caricature of Romanticism....Whereas Romanticism had viewed everything in the process of growth and evolution, Neo-Romanticism was inclined to view it in decay... Where Romanticism had had the peculiar ability or sympathy with almost all periods of history, Neo-Romanticism showed a predilection for the periods of decadence... Decadence, decay and degeneration under all imaginable forms and disguises

have uneasily tiptoed around the issue of masochism by referring to the text as, for instance, a "fascinating novel of psychological aberration."[275] Or they expressed their respectful astonishment at the novel's construction of "sado-masochism, not as extraordinary, but rather as a universal law".[276]

However, in my view *Married Life* artistically dramatizes what those eminent Western critics have overlooked: the fact that, especially for *Ostjuden* such as Gurdweill, masochism had, beside sexual implications, strong existential and survival implications beyond the ken of a Western reading public. That is partly because, until now Western culture has been blatantly unaware of or not interested in the historical conditions the Eastern European Russian Jewry had to live in until, and even after, a relatively small group found refuge in socialism (Bundism) and later Marxism, to be eventually destroyed in the Holocaust. From that perspective, the Jewish historian Dubnow's study *The History of the Jews in Russia and Poland (1916*) should be compulsory reading for all students of history, in particular the Holocaust.[277]

Daniel Boyarin (1998) aptly illustrates the fact that even the acculturated children of Eastern European Jewish exiles in Vienna, such as young Freud, had no conception of the impact of hatred of Jews and its role in their Eastern European fathers' (masochist) passivity in the face of that hatred. The passage to which Boyarin refers is from Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*Die Traumdeutung*, 1900) in which the writer remembers how, as a young Jewish boy born and bred in Western culture, he responded to a story told to him by his pious Eastern European orthodox father Jacob Freud. Sigmund Freud recalls:

> I may have been ten or twelve years old, when my father began to take me with him on his walks and reveal to me in his talk his views upon things in the world we live in. Thus it was, on one such occasion, that he told me a story to show, how much better things were now, than they had been in his days. 'When I was a young man', he said. 'I went for a walk one Saturday in the streets of your birthplace; I was well-dressed and had a new fur cap on my head. A non-Jew came up to me, knocked my new fur cap from my head and shouted: 'Jew, get off the pavement!'. 'And what did you do?' I asked. 'I went into the roadway and picked up my cap,' was his quiet reply. This struck me as un-heroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man who was holding the

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pervaded the thinking of the time. Neo-Romantics, however, were no less concerned than their predecessors with the irrational, the occult, and the exploration of the hidden depths of the human mind". Henry Ellenberger. *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books, 1970. 278-82.

275 Alter. *The Invention of Hebrew Prose*. 76.

276 Shaked. "A Viennese Author Who Wrote in Hebrew: David Vogel as Novelist". 20.

277 Dubnow. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day.*

> little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted with my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my fantasies.[278]

Young Freud's inability to grasp his father's masochist passivity is characteristic of the West's inability to grasp the passivity of the Eastern, and sometimes also of Western Jews, instead of instantly striking back in the face of attacks, as Israel does now. This inability is also exemplified by Hannah Arendt's (safely in America from 1938 onward) blaming the Jewish leaders in occupied Europe, at the beginning of the Second World War when the deportations began, for not having more actively resisted and sometimes even co-operated with German measures to exclude Jews. When, as a young girl witnessing both the deportations and that so-called leaderly inactivity and passivity, I asked my Jewish father about it, he unwittingly summed up Freud's father's attitude by answering that "the reeds that bow to the ground are more likely to weather the heavy storms".

I certainly do not mean to generalise: I refer to previous chapters in which I described various forms of Jewish political resistance (Bundism, Socialism, Marxism, Zionism) among Russian and Eastern European Jews. But all these movements were a political overcoming of that passivity, inconceivable to the West, which I have tried to sketch before as a way of emotionally and socially dealing with an endemic Eastern and Western European hatred of Jews, against which Eastern European Jewish exiles, blinded by their deep admiration for modernist Western culture, were unprotected and which contained the seeds of Zionism.

Vogel however a-political, tried as an artist to speak and write revolt through literature in the vein of Jewish satire, the bite and fun of which, even less its psychological function of abjection, was beyond the ken of the general Western audiences who read and commented on *Married Life* after its re-publication and translations in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Vogel's *Married Life* dramatizes the association of Jews with masochism. Vogel dares to portray, as Kristeva writes about Proust, "albeit in an ambiguous and fiercely ironic way, the sadomasochistic dynamic of belonging".[279] But unlike Proust, Vogel does so by means of his metaphor of a marriage between a Christian and a Jew, the former playing the sadist dominatrix and the latter, Gurdweill, the

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[278] Daniel Boyarin. "Goyim Naches, or, Modernity and the Manliness of the Mentsch". *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, eds. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 63-90.

[279] Julia Kristeva. "Marcel Proust". *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*. Eds. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995. 140-41.

Galician Jewish exile, playing the passive role. This (impossible) relation between Christian and Jew is in my view the dominant theme in the text. As early as Gurdweill's first meeting with Thea, vague associations about the Jew-Christian relation as structured by sadomasochistic machinery emerge in the text. For instance in the episode of Gurdweill's first meeting with the baroness when he feels that there is something familiar about her:

> 'You know Fräulein', he said, looking directly into her face, 'it sometimes happens that you meet someone and you immediately feel that there is already a definite, permanent relationship, between you, good and bad, but the kind of relationship only created by years of living together. In these cases the first part [of the relation] is already over, has already taken place in secret. Have you ever had that kind of experience? Meeting someone for instance, and knowing right away that you have to avenge yourself on him for something, or the opposite feeling that you owe a debt of gratitude to some stranger you have just met for the first time in your life? Strange, isn't it?'[280]

Although the reader is initially inclined to understand this feeling of Gurdweill's as a lovers' experience of kindred souls, it soon appears that something quite the opposite sounds through, corrupting, as it were, that first impression:

> Gurdweill, who was short and thin, walked beside the woman who was a head taller than he was. From time to time as they walked down Währingerstrasse, he glanced to his companion and thought to himself: A tall, handsome woman, but obviously hard. She will probably give a lot of pain to anyone close to her. Gurdweill felt a wonderfully pleasant sensation together with a terrifying uneasiness. The girl gave off a vague but definite sense of menace. It was a strange new mood for Gurdweill, but at the same time it was clear to him that he had experienced it before, perhaps in his infancy. Certain events too, connected with this mood trembled at the threshold of his memory. Gurdweill almost touched them, but then they sank back into the depths of his mind, like a fish leaping out of the water and disappearing into it again before you could do more than glimpse it.[281]

What happened in Gurdweill's infancy and what he is unable to remember, as we can read elsewhere in the text, is that when he was very young he was continually raped and sexually dominated by his parents' much older, experienced Christian Polish maidservant.[282] Gurdweill's half-aware association not only links the two incidents but also constitutes two examples amongst many in the novel of the cultural-religious border between Jews and Christians, corrupted by hatred of

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[280] Vogel. *Married Life*. *28*.

[281] Ibid. 30.

[282] Ibid. 213-17.

Jews. For, already at their first meeting, Thea, the baroness, makes no bones about the kind of kindredness that binds her and Gurdweill when, without a hint of shame, she sums up her noble family antecedents: a combination of dignity, tradition and hatred of Jews. Recounting her father's, the baron, caring concern for her welfare she tells Gurdweill, the Galician Jew, with clearly sadistic overtones:

> 'Dorothea' – he always calls me 'Dorothea', because it sounds more dignified and traditional, 'Dorothea', he says, ridiculous and pompous as an old man, 'you are the scion of an ancient race. Your ancestors were Crusaders, don't forget!' You must be on your guard against the Jews. The city of Vienna has been Judaized from one end to the other. Blood does not matter anymore. They are poisoning the air. But for them, we would never have lost the War'. And all the time [adds Thea] he is running himself after a little Jewess who has turned his head completely.[283]

Much later in the text, the reader discovers what happened in Gurdweill's youth and what he cannot remember at his first meeting with the baroness. The memory crops up when Gurdweill recounts an episode from his Galician past to her after the marriage:

> 'I was fifteen at the time', said Gurdweill quietly, 'but everyone thought I was twelve, because I was so small and thin. I was very naïve too, which also makes you look younger. I had no friends, either in school, or out of it. The boys did not like me, or at any rate, that's how it seemed to me, and since I was shy by nature, and at the same time proud, I made no effort to make friends with them. I took no part in their games and pranks I kept apart, as though I was in an invisible cage. During breaks I would sometimes see them whispering to each other with strange expressions on their faces, as if they were conspiring to commit some terrible crime. Sometimes I would accidentally overhear some enigmatic phrase, which, I sensed, contained a secret that somehow, although I did not understand it, affected me too. I would rack my brains for hours over such phrases, turning them over and over until I was exhausted. Needless to say, it never occurred to me to ask one of them what it meant. I felt obscurely that I would make a fool of myself by questioning them.
>
> ... At that time I was once attacked by a gang of Christian boys. I fought desperately, as if I was fighting for my life. But I was alone, and I was defeated. When I came home battered and beaten, I felt a curious satisfaction, a kind of content and peace of mind. Once I was hit by a stone – here you see?' – Gurdweill pointed to his left temple next to the ear – 'There still is a little scar. You can feel it with your fingers. In the course of time, when they saw that I wasn't afraid of them and knew how to use my fists, they left me alone. And I remember too, that I once took a thick darning needle I found at home,

[283] Ibid. 48.

> and rolled up my sleeve, and stuck it into the flesh above my wrist, slowly, half a centimetre deep, in two, or three places, and as I did so I felt a strange pleasure and a kind of revenge. Then I washed away the blood and stuck some of my father's cigarette papers on the wounds. I only did this three times, by the way. The sight of the blood made me nauseous, I felt giddy and faint, and I stopped. I threw the needle away and adopted a new, bloodless means of torture. I would light a match and burn the tip of my little finger. I don't know why precisely that one, burnt it till I couldn't stand the pain. Then I would dip my charred finger in ink: a popular remedy for burns.'[284]

The text's dramatization of the relation between Jews and Christians as impossible, for which *Married Life* is an extended modernist metaphor, is a unique aspect of Vogel's novel. This brings me to the place of Vogel's *Married Life* in European Hebrew modernist literature, as part of that movement and as individual work of art.

6.6 Conclusion

How is it, that Western critique has missed the preceding and many other references to the relation between Gurdweill's masochism and hatred of Jews? I will refrain from further analysing the Western audiences – Jewish and non-Jewish – within that context and conclude this chapter by summing up the uniqueness of *Married Life* as an individual work and as part of European Hebrew modernism.

As I have indicated before, *Married Life* is part of European Hebrew modernism on account of, for instance, its use of the Hebrew language for modernist literature instead of German. The use of Hebrew, apart from providing these modernist writers with a linguistic identity, also entailed practical difficulties: there was no tradition, for example, of interiority in Hebrew literature. Also, as Hebrew was not yet a spoken language, the creation of modern dialogue offered problems, which is why they often resorted to Russian models.[285] For Vogel there was an additional, more prosaic reason to write in Hebrew: his command of the German language was insufficient for writing in it.

Robert Alter poignantly formulated the uniqueness of Vogel's work and its relation to the work of the European Hebrew modernists:

> They were among the first to introduce psychologically-oriented prose dispensing with a narrator, into Hebrew literature, which Brenner referred to as 'creating an atmosphere of the mind'.[286] … … what is truly compelling

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[284] Ibid. 212-13. Gurdweill attending a Christian school as a Galician Jew is historically correct.

[285] Itamar Even-Zohar. "Gnessin's Dialogue and its Russian Models". *Poetics Today*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990. 131-53.

[286] David Vogel lectured on Brenner's and other contemporary Hebrew writers' style, during

> about Fogel's diary is the palpable feeling it conveys of fashioning a living language, a language that, though not the writer's actual vernacular, is able to trace the twisting contours of his inner life, to body forth a thoroughly modern and European sense of self and other, motive and identity.[287]

My psychoanalytical reading of Vogel's text through the lens of Kristeva's work has enabled me to explore the (Bakhtinian) polyphony of the text in terms of Kristeva's philosophical notions of the symbolic and the semiotic and their implications for the text's structures of identity and meaning. What I found – and have tried to show in my discourse on *Married Life* in this chapter – is Vogel's horror and fascination as a Russian Jew and intellectual at Western Christian culture (embodied by Thea) and its relation to Jews (dramatized by Gurdweill). Obviously he deemed that relation impossible and the marriage between Gurdweill and Thea became a metaphor for this.

My use of the notions of horror and fascination already points to my view of Vogel's writing the novel as an artistic act of exclusion simultaneously creating possibility for new identities: by the Hebrew word, as he writes in his diaries. Gurdweill appears in this context as Vogel's literary alter ego. Not (quoting Berdyczewski on Brenner's negative types) as one of those loafers who cannot deal with reality, "but sources of an internal reality, or truth that cannot be grasped directly".[288] I have read this internal reality through the lens of Kristeva's ultimately ambivalent notion of abjection. From that perspective the text shows itself as Vogel's artistic defence against indifferentiation, as a subject, an exile and a Jew.

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a trip in Poland in 1931. David Fogel. "Language and Style in Our Young Literature (1931)". *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*. 13.1 (1993). For an extensive overview of the rise of the Hebrew novel in tsarist Russia see David Patterson. *The Hebrew Novel in Czarist Russia: A Portrait of Jewish Life in the Nineteenth Century*. Lanham: Rowland and Littlefield, 1964. See also the Introduction by Alan Mintz to: Alan Mintz, ed., *Reading Hebrew Literature: Critical Discussions of Six Modern Texts*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2003. 1-20.

287 Alter. "Fogel and the Forging of a Hebrew Self": 2-5.

288 Fleck. *Character and Context*. 63-4.

7 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Anne Fuchs' work *A Space of Anxiety: Dislocation and Abjection in Modern German-Jewish Literature* (1999) first triggered my interest in Julia Kristeva's work, on account of its insight that identity in modern German Jewish literature emerges from an ambivalent space of enunciation, the semiotic, challenging contemporary notions of identity as defined by nation states, which excluded Jews. Using Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection as a literary tool, Fuchs explores in *A Space of Anxiety* her German Jewish writers' quest to redefine their sense of identity in that ambivalent space.

Fuchs' work sparked my interest in Kristeva's work, specifically her work on identity formation and her creation of that new space of enunciation in her theory of the semiotic. I have explored her view of that space in chapter 2 in terms of two different but interdependent registers of identity and meaning.

While studying Kristeva, I wondered how a reading of David Vogel's Hebrew *Married Life* through the lens of her notion of abjection would affect my understanding of the text, and of its dramatization of the Eastern European Jewish protagonist's subjective experience of Vienna as an *Ostjude*. Giving artistic voice to an *Ostjude's* discourse on his experience of Vienna, in a culture that despised *Ostjuden* was incidentally in itself a daring enterprise of Vogel as a writer. The more so as he wanted to translate the novel into German, and since he did not master the German language well enough, he asked a Jewish publisher during one of his trips to Berlin (at the time when Hitler rose to power) to translate *Married Life* and to subsequently publish it. Vogel's efforts failed, however. Perhaps because at the time he was unknown as a prose writer, or perhaps because Jewish publishers were afraid to publish a German novel about a Jew and an Austrian baroness in a sadomasochist relationship when Nazi sympathy was high in Berlin.

It then occurred to me that it would be interesting to do a reading of Vogel's dramatizations of identity through the lens of Kristeva's notion of abjection alongside the work of a Central European Jewish writer such as Kafka, whose novella "The Metamorphosis" I selected, as I found most interpretations of that enigmatic text unsatisfactory in the sense that they lacked a sensitivity to the unspeakable in that text. Theodor Adorno's comment on "The Metamorphosis" was an exception. His perceptive discourse on the unspeakable in "The Metamorphosis" seemed to me to anticipate Kristeva's notion of the semiotic as an invisible register of meaning, and of the text as a machinery of subjectivity by offering the reader the possibility of sublimation. This double function turned "The Metamorphosis" into an avant-garde text in the specific meaning given to that term by Kristeva.

What did my reading of the texts in this way produce in the field of identity and meaning? In the first place, both Kafka's and Vogel's texts were written at a time when there was a German Jewish identity crisis in Europe. German Jews became finally aware that assimilation had failed, and that "to be a Jew" was as impossible as "not to be a Jew". That deadlock, however, was also true for Eastern European exiled Jews such as Vogel, but in a different way, as I have shown in chapter 6. Vogel, like most Eastern European Jewish intellectuals and writers coming from orthodox backgrounds, was highly ambivalent with respect to assimilation. On the one hand, he was attracted to European high culture, art, literature and philosophy, while on the other he felt a deep loyalty to his orthodox backgrounds. Perhaps that is why in *Married Life,* Austrian Thea becomes Jewish in order to marry Gurdweill in a Jewish ceremony, and not the other way round, namely Gurdweill becoming Christian. *Married Life*, as I see it, is a sophisticated, artistic dramatization of the impossibility of assimilation, which was not uncommon among German Jewry.

That, however, is not a new approach to the novel. New is my reading of both Kafka's and Vogel's texts as connecting their Jewish audiences to what had been neglected in the symbolic order. I refer to the drive aspects of identity formation: borderline situations as in abjection between the I and its inassimilable other, as much from the point of view of literary form as from their dramatization of identity and subjectivity.

Looking back on my investigation of abjection in both texts I have focused on two issues: the universal (abjection as a psychodynamics of identity formation) and the specific (the cultural-historical) situation in which abjection appears. I have paid ample attention to the latter in chapters 3 and 5, and to the theoretical implications of abjection as a psychodynamics of identity formation in chapter 2.

Finally, I have shown that art dramatizing abjection, which Kristeva calls avant-garde art (see chapter 4), inspires the reader's experience of self. By dramatizing abjection the text enables the reader to keep it under control through sublimation, in the sense of the ancient Greeks who viewed art as catharsis, or purification.[289] "Sublimation", writes Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*,

> … is nothing else than the possibility of naming the prenominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal. In the symptom (a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster....), the abject permeates me, I become abject. Through sublimation I keep it under control.[290]

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[289] Julia Kristeva, in an interview conducted by Nina Zivancevic, in Paris, March-April 2001. *16 Beaver*. Web. 2 March 2003.

[290] Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 11.

"Naming the pronominal" is a perfect definition of what I see as the dynamics in both Kafka's and Vogel's texts, as well as in Rothko's paintings. In doing so avant-garde art (in the sense of Kristeva) enables the reader/viewer to re-constitute his or her self, or, as Slavoj Žižek formulated it in a different context, those texts "temporarily intermit the agency of the symbolic signification to which the reader is exposed, while offering him/her artistically the agency of the maternal, or semiotic."[291] This view transforms Kafka and Vogel's texts, as well as Rothko's art, into technologies of subjectivity for reader/viewer and writer/artist.

At last, a few words about the social relevance of the work of Kristeva. She certainly did not aim to turn her insights about abjection into a political programme or system. And indeed, as Beardsworth rightly observed, abjection has nothing to do with politics, and is far from a recipe for political action. "Yet", writes Kristeva, "these unconscious determinations remain a constituent part, an essential one, of social and therefore national dynamics" and

> Indeed, I am convinced that, in the long run, only a thorough investigation of our remarkable relationship with both the *other*, and *strangeness within ourselves*, can lead people to give up hunting for the scapegoat outside their group, a search that allows them to withdraw in their own "sanctum": thus purified: Is not the worship of one's "very own" of which the national is the collective configuration, the *common denominator* that we imagine we have as "our own," precisely, along with other "own and proper" people like us? [292]

Whether or not we agree with Kristeva, the fact is that in the past and present we have seen that social and legal measures against political othering, though necessary and useful, are not sufficient. My hope focuses, like Kristeva's, on education on the instinctive aspects of othering as an integral part of all identity-formation, in addition to legal measures. In this context, education should perhaps focus on students realising that social and individual othering is difficult to deal with, as it is an integral and universal aspect of identity formation charged with deep affects. Kafka, as an artist and a Jew, realised this, as appears from his address to the German Jewish audience of the Yiddish theatre (chapter 4). He did not address the social but the affective aspects of the German Jewish audience's fear of Yiddish: the language which they – as assimilated Jews – had been forced to see as other (not us) but which was actually part of their selves: their Jewishness.

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[291] Based on Slavoj Žižek. *The Fragile Absolute, Or Why The Christian Legacy Is Worth Fighting For*. New York: Verso, 2000. 74-5.

[292] Julia Kristeva. *Nations without Nationalism*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. 50 -1.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

In dit proefschrift onderzoek ik literaire verbeeldingen van identiteitsvorming door de lens van Julia Kristeva's begrip abjectie. Mijn onderzoek richt zich op werken van twee Joodse schrijvers, zo verschillend als Franz Kafka's (1883-1924) novelle "De Gedaanteverwisseling" ("Die Verwandlung", 1912) en David Vogel's (1891-1944) Hebreeuwse roman *Huwelijksleven (Hayei Nisu'im, חיי נישואים, 1929-30)*. Deze en andere Joodse schrijvers van het fin-de-siècle en interbellum in Europa leefden en werkten in een identiteitsvacuüm waarin de aanzwellende Jodenhaat het – zoals iemand het treffend uitdrukte – net zo onmogelijk maakte om wel, als niet Joods te zijn (bijvoorbeeld door assimilatie).

In dit identiteitsvacuüm verschijnt er artistieke en wetenschappelijke literatuur van Joden, waarin de verbeelding van identiteit zich onttrekt aan de eigentijdse gelijkstelling ervan met nationaliteit. Men was óf Duitser, Oostenrijker, Czech, óf Jood, en daarmee was de kous af. Dit onttrekken aan de gelijkstelling van identiteit met nationaliteit wordt duidelijk wanneer we identiteitsvorming in de teksten van deze schrijvers door de lens van Julia Kristeva's begrip abjectie lezen. Dit begrip heeft in haar psychoanalytisch en filosofisch georiënteerde werk een zeer specifieke betekenis. Abjectie is een proces van identiteitsvorming*:* een onbewuste machinerie van zijn in relatie tot een ander. Aldus begrepen is identiteit een per definitie onzeker proces waarbij de grens tussen zelf en ander voortdurend opnieuw gezocht moet worden. Diezelfde onzekerheid schept echter ook mogelijkheden tot invullingen van identiteit (als Jood) die nog niet in het eigentijdse, antisemitische discours vastlagen. Dat laatste laat ik in dit proefschrift zien aan de hand van het werk van bovengenoemde Joodse schrijvers.

Kristeva's begrip abjectie heeft dus niets te maken met het Nederlandse abject in de zin van verachtelijk. Integendeel: het verwijst naar een productieve, existentiële onzekerheid over identiteit die scherp contrasteert met de zekerheid van het enkelvoudige Cartesiaanse zelf dat aan ideologieën als die van Fascisme en Nazisme ten grondslag ligt. Kristeva's theorie van het abjecte past daarmee in het postmoderne denken, dat nu weer onderwerp van discussie is. Kristeva's visie op identiteit als proces levert, toegepast in een analyse van teksten van Vogel en Kafka, verrassende inzichten op over de betekening van identiteit als Joods in het werk van beiden.

Dat brengt mij op het tweede punt van haar theorie: over hoe betekenissen in literaire teksten tot stand komen. Kristeva deelt deze betekenisproduktie in twee categorieën in. De ene categorie is de gewone letterlijke betekenis zoals die gangbaar is in het dagelijks taalgebruik, en die zij – enigszins verwarrend – symbolisch noemt; de andere, indirecte betekenisproductie, die zij semiotisch noemt, komt uit

een onzichtbaar deel van de tekst dat aan het symbolische discours ervan ontsnapt, maar de tekst tóch mee betekent. Dit semiotische (driftmatige) aspect kan zelf geen betekenis produceren, maar verandert betekenissen in het symbolisch discours over identiteit, vanuit het perspectief van het driftmatige.

Al deze begrippen komen aan de orde in hoofdstuk 2, waarin ik de theorieën van Kristeva over identiteit en betekenis behandel. Waar het op neer komt is dat mijn gebruik ervan in mijn analyse van de werken van mijn schrijvers in dit proefschrift, literaire verbeeldingen van identiteitsvorming laat zien, die bij een louter symbolische (in de zin van Kristeva) analyse van de tekst verloren zouden gaan.

Waarom zou dat nadelig zijn? Omdat juist aandacht voor de semiotische aspecten van identificatie in de tekst, het autonome (Cartesiaanse) zelf dat aan Jodenhaat ten grondslag ligt, op allerlei verrassende wijzen ter discussie stelt. Of beter nog, het lezen van de logica van abjectie in de teksten van Kafka en Vogel laat twee zaken zien: a) Hun literaire uitsluiten van het antisemitische beeld van de Jood in eigentijdse, fascistische discoursen. b) Het in dezelfde beweging van het uitsluiten ruimte scheppen voor een artistieke verbeelding van een andere Joodse identiteit die aan dat ideologische discours ontsnapt: die van het Woord. Deze beweging van uitsluiting en vernieuwing is wat ik in dit proefschrift bedoel met de ambivalente logica van abjectie.

Kafka's "De Gedaanteverwisseling" laat deze dubbele beweging van abjectie zien in de vorm van een parabel van het onzichtbare (semiotische), waarmee hij de driften die schuilgingen achter de eigentijdse fascistische uitsluiting van Joden literair vormgeeft. Vogel's *Huwelijksleven* is in dit opzicht moderner, in de zin dat daar het proces van identificatie zich afspeelt in de hoofdpersoon's subjectieve ervaringsstroom van het leven in de steeds fascistischer wordende stad Wenen. Voor beide schrijvers geldt in mijn optiek dat, door deze anti-Joodse tendensen om te zetten in hun kunst, zij ze tegelijkertijd uitsluiten en daarmee ruimte scheppen voor Joodse identititeitsvormen die nog niet in het discours van de ander zijn vastgelegd.

Identiteitsvorming is dan zichtbaar in hun werk als de ambivalente psychodynamiek van uitsluiting en vernieuwing. Kristeva noemt dit abjectie. In mijn inleiding (hoofdstuk 1) geef ik daar een treffend voorbeeld van aan de hand van het dagboek van een heel andere Duits-Joodse schrijver uit die tijd: Jakob Wasserman (1873-1934). Zulke werken, geschreven met een eigentijds Joods publiek voor ogen, bieden dat lezerspubliek de gelegenheid zélf abjectie te beleven door het lezen ervan en zo door sublimatie deel te hebben aan een Joods zelf, dat ontsnapt aan een Joods zijn dat alreeds door de ander is bepaald. In die zin zijn de teksten die ik exploreer avant-garde teksten. Daarmee bedoelt Kristeva teksten die de lezer inspireren tot het beleven van abjectie en daardoor ruimte scheppen voor een besef van Joods zijn buiten dat antisemitische discours.

Dit proefschrift gaat uit van Kristeva's opvatting dat abjectie een universele psychodynamiek van uitsluiting en vernieuwing is die aan alle vormen van identificatie ten grondslag ligt. Daarom heb ik in hoofdstuk 2 (over Kristeva's theorieën) uitgebreid aandacht aan abjectie gegeven, maar daarnaast ook aan de manier waarop volgens Kristeva betekenis in teksten tot stand komt. Beiden spelen immers een rol in de vraag die aan dit proefschrift ten grondslag ligt: hoe verbeelden mijn geacculturee rde schrijvers identiteit als Joods in het identiteitsvacuüm van het mislukken van assimilatie? En de tweede daarmee verbonden vraag: als ik hun teksten lees door de lens van abjectie, wat zegt dat dan over de wijze waarop deze teksten identiteit als Joods betekenen?

Naast het universele van abjectie als psychodynamiek van identiteitsvorming, speelt het specifieke, de cultuur-historische context waarin het voorkomt, een even grote rol in het werk van Kristeva. Haar theorie laat zien dat abjectie als universeel drift-mechanisme onzichtbaar is en als zodanig autonoom: onafhankelijk van de cultuur waarin het speelt. Maar het kan zichtbaar worden gemaakt in kunst en literatuur. De laatsten zijn cultuur- en tijdgebonden en daarom besteed ik in hoofdstukken 3 en 5 even veel aandacht aan cultureel-historische achtergronden van mijn schrijvers als Joden, als in hoofdstukken 4 en 6 aan hun artistieke dramatisering van abjectie.

Kristeva's onderzoek naar de driftmatige aspecten van identiteitsvorming en haar nadruk op de universele naast de cultuur-historische kant daarvan, is actueler dan het op het eerste gezicht lijkt. Het betekent een verlaten van het uitsluitende óf-óf denken (je bent óf Jood óf Duitser), en het omhelzen van het én-én denken (je bent Jood én Duitser) waarbij de termen Jood en Duitser door elke huidige ideologische tegenstelling, bijvoorbeeld Moslim-Nederlander, vervangen kan worden. Maar Kristeva's werk heeft ook praktische implicaties. Haar inzichten kunnen belangrijke bijdrage leveren aan educatie in de psychologie van het uitsluitingsdenken; vooral haar psychoanalytisch inzicht dat dat denken ook één van de universele grondslagen van onze identiteitsvorming is. Daardoor is het een constante invloedrijke factor in onze relatie met de ander. Het is niet het wegwerken van verschillen tussen ons en de ander dat uitsluitingsdenken kan oplossen, zoals men in de vorige en voor-vorige eeuw dacht toen de Joden aangemoedigd werden hun baard af te scheren, hun kaftan uit te doen en zo te assimileren. Het is de diepgewortelde angst voor alles buiten de grenzen van het zelf die Kristeva situeert in de allereerste fasen van identiteitsvorming, nog vóór het kind intrede doet in de taal. Wat er gebeurt als gevaarlijke religieuze en/of politieke ideologieën deze instinctieve angsten gaan bezetten en exploiteren, hoeft nauwelijks betoog.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Francina Valk was born on 26 February 1932 in The Hague, The Netherlands. After high school she worked at the Human Resources department of *De Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij* in The Hague. In the 1970s she completed a seven-year advanced teacher training (MO-a and b) for high school education in English at *The Nutsseminarium* in Amsterdam. From 1974 to 1992 she worked as an English language and literature teacher in the top forms of the *Rijks Scholen Gemeenschap voor Havo and Atheneum* at Alkmaar. There she prepared pupils for their final exams in English language and literature.

After her retirement in 1999 Valk aspired to a more academic approach to the English language. She enrolled for a doctoral degree in English language and Literature at the University of Amsterdam. She completed her doctoral degree in two years, under supervision of Prof. Dr. Pamela Pattynama.

Valk's interest in her own Jewish descent and an inspiring series of lectures about Kafka at the VU in Amsterdam led her to investigate literary dramatisations of identity in the work of Jewish writers living and working in an increasingly anti-Semitic *fin-de-siècle* and interbellum Europe.