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OF MICE AND MENSA: ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE JEWISH GENIUS

By Jay Geller

SOME YEARS BACK *Saturday Night Live* produced a game-show parody called “Jew/Not a Jew.” As a picture of Penny Marshall flashed across the screen, the contestants muttered: “Must be Jewish: look at that nose; what about that accent?” “Jew” they shout. The host built up their hopes—“she was married to Rob Reiner”—then squashed them: “But no—Not a Jew.”

I remember playing that game as a child while watching television with my aunt. Whenever anyone with a Jewish connection crossed the screen she would proudly point him or her out. My attention shifted from Tony Curtis’s matinee looks to Bernie Schwartz’s Brooklyn accent, from Kirk Douglas’s great dimpled chin to Issur Daniilovich’s nose. As I was growing up it seemed as if everyone smart or glamorous—all the scientists and half of Hollywood—was Jewish or had been Jewish or had a Jewish parent or spouse or lover. Not only Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein, Arthur Miller and Jonas Salk, but even Sammy Davis, Jr. and Liz Taylor were *Yidden*. And today as I look over the recent literature on some of our current cultural heroes like Freud or Derrida or Benjamin I sometimes feel as if I’ve walked onto the set of that *Saturday Night Live* parody or back into my aunt’s 1950s living room, because here too a question is frequently raised about their genius: does it have something to do with their purported Jewishness?¹

Standard accounts of modern Jewish history discuss extensively the contributions of Freud, Einstein, and others to Euroamerican culture. The influence of Jews, such surveys suggest, far exceeds the community’s percentage of the general population.² These lists not only generate a swell of pride for Jews themselves, they also produce a host of expectations, assumptions, and stereotypes among both Jews and gentiles: for example, all “New York intellectuals” are popularly assumed to be “Jewish”;³ conversely, all Jews are supposed to be smart. These opinions have recently combined in Seattle, where “Being Jewish is a sign of East Coast coolness, so some Seattleites claim to be Jews for the image boost”; they call it “Jewish credibility.”⁴

But beyond such misconceptions other problems arise with surveys of Jewish genius. By failing to adopt clearcut criteria for inclusion, most accounts of Jewish contributions to modern culture serve little more than apologetic purposes. Religious, genealogical, and self determinations tend

to be bundled together in order to make a nose count of any and all “Jewish” achievements. Yet since no single conventional criterion is sufficient for determining an individual’s Jewishness, attempts to be more selective lead either to outrageous exclusions or to troubling recollections. Those ardent Zionists like Herzl and Einstein who eschewed Jewish ritual and belief—let alone the untold numbers of assimilated figures whose only Jewish leanings take place at the seder table—would probably be excluded from any definition of Jewishness based on observance of *Halakhah* (Jewish law). Whether one follows the Orthodox or the Reform on the genealogical transmission of Jewishness,⁵ there is a taint of racialism attached to such determinations. The aura of offense is heightened by the memory of Nazi practice: in the Third Reich a single Jewish grandparent marked an individual as a Jew. Further, for every public affirmation of a certain “je ne sais quoi” Jewishness by a Sigmund Freud,⁶ there is a repudiation of any form of Jewishness by converts like Karl Marx and Otto Weininger. Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” continues to legitimate communist and socialist antisemitism, and Weininger’s best-selling, turn-of-the-century philosophic treatise, *Sex and Character*, was a cesspool into which all of the antisemitic as well as misogynistic effluvia of his time was deposited. Yet Marx and Weininger as well as such less derisive converts as Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Heinrich Heine appear along side other more manifestly “Jewish” geniuses such as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Nelly Sachs. There is clearly nothing approaching a consensus on the topic of Jewish identity.⁷

The relationship between this ill-defined Jewishness and creative production is no less problematic. This question is often at the crux of discussions about the Jewish—baptized or not—artists and writers of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.⁸ Did Jewish cultural values and/or the detours necessitated by social obstacles to Jewish advancement generate the invention of these “geniuses”?⁹ Or, were the opportunities middle-class life provided, such as access to higher education and the value the liberal bourgeoisie placed upon achievement (the so-called “protestant ethic”), sufficient explanations for the accomplishments of the tiny Jewish minority?¹⁰

The Other Tradition

While the answers to these questions remain contested, the disputants generally agree about the creative intelligence of these cultural greats. Indeed the prominence of so many Jews among Nobel Prize winners has led

one leading psychoanalyst to conclude that the Jews typify the creative individual.¹¹ But there is another tradition that places attention on what is now taken for granted: a tradition, now largely dormant, that believes it knows what a Jew is, that denies that Jews have ever had the capacity for creative, culture-enhancing work and that ascribes that lack to innate flaws in Jewish character. The Jews, its adherents argue, are by definition without genius; they can only imitate or destroy.

This other tradition flourished as Jews were granted emancipation in western and central Europe. Where baptism had been, in Heine's words, "the ticket of admission to European culture," now Jews sought entry through acculturation or achievement. By these strategies for social acceptance they attempted to negotiate their way in a post-Enlightenment Europe which celebrated originality: the creative was associated with the god-like, with authorship, with autonomy, with the true. Genius and geniuses were the objects of personality cults—especially those Aryan geniuses like Nietzsche and, according to a number of racist ideologues, that native of the non-Semitic hills of Galilee, Jesus.¹² The denial of Jewish genius endeavored to counter Jewish acculturation and accomplishment as well as to perpetuate anti-Jewish stereotypes. The claim that Jews by nature are incapable of genius permeates most of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature we call antisemitic, and it infected as well the writings and self-identities of contemporary Jews: not just obviously self-hating Jews like Otto Weininger but also Theodor Herzl and Sigmund Freud. This notion can be traced from Wagner's rantings in *Judaism in Music*¹³ to Kafka's ambivalent allegories, "A Report to an Academy" and "Josephine the Singer or the Mouse Folk."¹⁴

While standard histories of modern Jewry regale the reader with the fruits of Jewish accomplishment, they have often already spat out the pits: in post-Emancipation Europe, the scientific and artistic work of Jews left many non-Jewish contemporaries with a bad taste in their mouths.¹⁵ Thus, rather than a science with universal applicability, Freud feared with good reason that psychoanalysis would be branded a "Jewish national affair" and dismissed as a mere manifestation of certain Jewish proclivities.¹⁶ His diagnosis of the sexual origin of neurosis, some held, was provoked by the typical obsession of the lewd, egoistic, and materialist Jews: Jews focus on the gutter and the bedroom rather than the true universals of soul, spirit, and transcendence. Ironically, Carl Jung, whom Freud had recruited in part to shield psychoanalysis from such accusations, would some years after his break with Freud make similar charges. Jung denounced psychoanalysis as a

“Jewish” or “Semitic psychology” incapable of recognizing the Germanic peoples’ “creative and intuitive depth of soul.”¹⁷

Einstein’s theory of relativity provided another occasion for an attempted discrediting of a Jew’s scientific accomplishment. It was repudiated as the product of Jewish physics, not scientific principles, by the Nobel Prize winner Johannes Stark and the Third Reich academic Wilhelm Mueller. Rather than pursuing the truth, writes Mueller in his *Jewry and Science*, Einstein sought in typical Jewish fashion to transform the “living . . . into spectral abstraction in which all individual differences . . . are lost in unreality, and in which only an unsubstantial diversity of geometric dimensions survives which produces all events out of the compulsion of its godless subjection to laws.”¹⁸ The contributors to a so-called Jewish bacteriology—researchers like Albert Neisser, who discovered the gonococcus bacterium; August Wasserman, who devised the test for syphilis; and Paul Ehrlich, who developed salvarsan, the first successful treatment for syphilis—were accused of infecting rather than treating their patients with venereal and other diseases.¹⁹

Weininger, too, would be attacked during the Third Reich—not for his antisemitism, of course, but for his characterology of woman. He describes woman in terms of sexuality and lack: lack of an innate moral sense, lack of the ability to think conceptually, lack of honesty, lack of individuality, etc. His attempts philosophically to ground such a characterization exemplified, in the words of a Nazi critic, his “typically Jewish” misogyny.²⁰ It was a part of the antisemitic catechism that Jewish men hated and mistreated women. Such attacks on the scientific and philosophic accomplishment of Jews had an underlying assumption: Jews lacked any culture-producing capacity. They were neither original nor creative. Jewish genius was by definition an oxymoron.

A People without Genius

The founder of semitic philology, Ernest Renan, instituted the absence of creativity as a key component of the Jews’ mental physiognomy. He begins his general history of comparative semitic languages by asserting that Semitic peoples “completely lack a creative imagination.”²¹ This characterization directly contrasts with the other great (linguistic) race, the culture-producing Indo-Europeans. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, author of the influential antisemitic compendium *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, also emphasized this purported lack: “In comparison with Rome

and still more so with Hellas [the Jews'] intellectual horizon appears so narrow, their mental capacities so limited, that we seem to have before us an entirely new type of being." He remarks upon the inherent absence of Jewish genius, their "narrowness and want of originality. . . . [T]he influence of the Jews—for good and for evil—lies in their character, not in their intellectual achievements."²² Eugen Dühring graphically depicts that narrowness and lack of genius in his vitriolic antisemitic opus, *The Jewish Question as a Racial, Ethical, and Cultural Question*: "The Jewish skull is no thinker's skull—all the time the Lord God and business affairs have claimed all the space in it."²³

Those achievements the Jews—and later historians—would claim are mocked. Heinrich von Treitschke, in "A Word about Our Jewry," reduces the value of their creations to the product of publicists. The appearance of this anti-Jewish essay by a highly respected Prussian academic and Reichstag deputy and in a prestigious journal (the *Preußische Jahrbuch*) rendered antisemitic utterances respectable among the cultured bourgeoisie.²⁴ In his incendiary article, Treitschke facetiously offers this example of Jewish arrogance and genius: "[In Graetz's *History of the Jews*] it is proved with continuous satirical invective that the nation of Kant was really educated to humanity by the Jews only, [and] that the language of Lessing and Goethe became sensitive to beauty, spirit, and wit only through [the Jewish-born writers] Boerne and Heine." Treitschke continues: "Among the leading names of art and science there are not many Jews. The greater is the number of Semitic hustlers among the third rank talents. And how firmly this bunch of literateurs hangs together! How safely this insurance company for immortality works, based on the tested principle of mutuality, so that every Jewish poetaster receives his one-day fame, dealt out by the newspapers immediately and in cash, without delayed interest."²⁵ For Treitschke, the one invention of the Jews is their own good press.

The most influential statement on Jewish genius—or its absence—was Richard Wagner's infamous tract, *Judaism in Music*. According to Wagner: "The Jews have brought forth no true poet. . . . At the time when Goethe and Schiller sang among us, we certainly knew nothing of a poetic Jew" (W99). And what applies to poetry applies to music: "[D]own to the epochs of Mozart and Beethoven, there was nowhere to be found a Jewish composer" (W99). Only when German poetry and music began to ebb, did so-called poets and composers of Jewish descent like Heine, Meyerbeer, and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy emerge—and their work only mockingly

pointed out the German dearth. For Wagner this lack is not a historical anomaly; it is Jewish nature. He bluntly asserts that the Jew “is innately incapable of presenting himself to us artistically through either his outward appearance or his speech, and least of all through his singing. . .” (W87). The only site of Jewish music is in the synagogue, but like Judaism itself, Jewish liturgical music has been fixed in form and substance for millennia; hence it is lifeless, without feeling, senseless, distorted. Wagner writes: “Who has not been seized with a feeling of the greatest revulsion, of horror mingled with the absurd, at hearing that sense-and-sound-confounding gurgle, yodel, and cackle, which no intentional caricature can make more repugnant. . . ?” (W91).

Wagner’s rhetoric—his attack on Jewish singing and alleged musical genius—would eventually find its way, albeit in a new key, to Kafka. Kafka may well have become familiar with Wagner’s denial of Jewish genius courtesy of the now-familiar storehouse of antisemitic notions: Otto Weininger.²⁶ Weininger repeats Treitschke’s assertion that Jewish creative achievements are more products of their press than their presence: “The extraordinary fashion in which Spinoza [‘the greatest Jew of the last nine hundred years’] has been over-estimated is less due to his intrinsic merit than to the fortuitous circumstance that he was the only thinker to whom Goethe gave his attention.”²⁷ But Weininger places his own spin on Jewish lack: it illustrates their intrinsic feminization. “[L]ike women, [Jews] are without any trace of genius.”²⁸ “To produce music requires a great deal more imagination than the malest woman [or Jew] possesses.”²⁹ Weininger also holds that music in particular exemplifies why Jews can never manifest genius. Sounding a somewhat different chord than his predecessor Wagner, he writes that Jews “seldom sing . . . because [they] do not believe in [their] own singing.”³⁰ This proves to Weininger that they lack the simplicity characteristic of music and of genius. For the Jew Weininger, who viewed himself as a genius, “Jewishness” is more an intrinsic character flaw than a racial essence. Even “Wagner . . . cannot be held free from an accretion of Jewishness. . . . [H]is music . . . cannot be declared free from obtrusiveness, loudness, and lack of distinction.”³¹ Everyone has some of the Jew which needs to be extirpated; but those of Jewish descent have a whole lot more.

A Talent for Imitation

The denial of Jewish genius had an added facet: paired with the Jews’ alleged absence of creativity was their no-less alleged mimetic or imitative capacity. Imitation was viewed as an essential part of Jewish nature.

The movement of western- and central-European Jews to assimilation seemed preeminently to confirm to the European bourgeoisie a strong relationship between Jews and mimicry. With the advent of Emancipation, Jewish life undertook a variety of adaptations toward and adoptions of the dominant bourgeois national cultures: caftans were traded in for cravats; Talmuds for Tolstoy; fringes for fringe benefits. Even a polemical opponent of antisemitism like the French historian Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu noted: “[T]here is in every Jew a secret power of metamorphosis which has often amazed me. . . . He has the remarkable faculty of taking on a new skin, without at bottom ceasing to be a Jew. There is something Protean in him.”³²

Lending additional credence to the Jews’ mimetic predisposition was their increasing presence in theater, on the concert stage, and in journalism. The Jews were adopting European customs and entering these professions not, so anti-Jewish writers said, because of a desire to be accepted, to improve their lifestyles, or because there were openings or opportunities in this or that field. Rather, the Jews were simply demonstrating the latest manifestation of their chameleonlike nature. For example, in his antisemitic tractate *Jewry in the Present and Future* the philosophic successor of Artur Schopenhauer, Edouard Hartmann, characterized the Jews as experts in disguise and the reproductive arts such as “acting” (*Mimik*, literally mime) and musical virtuosity, i.e., those in which “nothing more than reproduction is demanded.”³³ The performing arts and the press were called “reproductive arts” since they reproduced the creative work of others. The Jews also continued both in the European cultural imagination as well as in actuality to be associated with that most monstrous reproduction of all: capital, making money from money, getting something from nothing.³⁴

Because all forms of mimicry and reproduction were devalued and ascribed a variety of socially undesirable traits, the notion of the Jew as natural mimic reinforced a number of derogatory stereotypes about Jewish character. The popular opinion about the reproductive arts and artists negatively contrasted their mimicry with authentic, virile originality. These arts were tied to the feminine in general, and to prostitution in particular.³⁵ Moreover, acting, musical virtuosity, and journalism were not known in the nineteenth century for the realism of their re-creations. Rather these occupations performed or exaggerated that which others produced; they aped the real and the true. They also often deceitfully claimed for themselves the value or significance that properly belonged to the original. Jewish presence in these professions appeared to confirm yet again the Jews’

innate duplicity: mimicry was just like those other stereotypical Jewish character flaws—lying, deception, trickery, rationalization, self-delusion, etc. Mimicry and the imitation-disposed Jews were hence viewed as both feminized and immoral.³⁶

These deceitful mimes posed a threat. Jews made knockoffs—and not only of designer clothes. They also copied the people wearing those clothes. This alleged Jewish ability to imitate was particularly frightening to German nationalists endeavoring to shape some form of pure folk identity. If the Jews living in German-speaking lands looked and sounded and acted like their gentile neighbors, then who were the real Germans? Thanks to their mimetic talent the Jews' victory over Germandom appeared inevitable. This pessimism is evident in the title of the first major broadside in the development of German political antisemitism: Wilhelm Marr's 1879 *The Victory of Judaism*.

Yet this apparent inevitability was countered by the implicit contradiction between the antisemites' construct of the Jewish chameleon and their presupposition of the visibly indelible moral and physical Jewish physiognomy. These Jewish attempts to ape European culture—their mimicry of language, dress, manners—would always eventually fail; the true Jewish nature would necessarily break through the mask, disrupt the illusion, and produce a hybrid monster.³⁷ Anti-Jewish writers viewed assimilating Jews as living caricatures who intentionally make a mockery of authentic Germanness. Jewish nationalists too viewed their confrères as making no less a mockery of authentic Jewishness. Both agreed: bad Jews made bad Germans.³⁸

Ironically, the Jews' attempts to enter European modernity reinforced another component of the antisemitic stereotype: mimesis was a sign of primitiveness. During his 1832 encounter with the natives of Tierra del Fuego Darwin noted that in contrast to Europeans, "All savages appear to possess, to an uncommon degree, this power of mimicry."³⁹ The "savage" Fuegians had responded to the Europeans with faultless mimetic gestures because, it was assumed, they possessed a language without meaningful sounds or, at least, they lacked an adequate language. The Jewish imitation of European manners was similarly perceived as a mediation made necessary by primitive linguistic skills. The Jews' language, that hopelessly inadequate hybrid of German and Hebrew, Yiddish, required supplementation with hand and body movements. Assimilation was then but an extension of this penchant for mimetic gesturing.

Darwin's later observations about nonhuman albeit natural mimesis had a more direct effect upon the connection between Jews and mimicry. The discoverer of evolution wrote of the use of mimicry in nature: "Insects often resemble for the sake of protection various objects, such as green or decayed leaves, dead twigs, [etc.]. . . . The resemblance is often wonderously close, and is not confined to colour, but extends to form, and even to the manner in which the insects hold themselves."⁴⁰ Darwin described how adapting to one's surroundings—masking one's true identity—often ensured evolutionary survival. A number of writers concluded from this discussion of mimicry in nature that the Jews' ability to imitate was an animalistic talent evolutionarily hewn for their survival; Jews employed their innate gift for mimicry in order to live in a hostile world. Or, Jews sought to secrete their presence in it. On the one hand, when analogies were drawn between the adaptation of animals to their environment (as described by Darwin) and Jewish assimilation into European society, natural, value-free, animal behavior was equated with typical Jewish deceit.⁴¹ On the other hand, Darwin's work was a primary source for analogies between the Jews and those tiny animals that camouflage or otherwise hide themselves among us—insects, vermin, rodents. Such likenesses were drawn by writers as diverse as the apostle of the aryan Jesus Paul de Lagarde and the epitome of Jewish authorship, Franz Kafka.

Complementing the assumptions of the Jews' mimetic talents and innate predisposition for the so-called reproductive arts was the claim that they were constitutionally incapable of engaging in such productive arts and crafts as literature, musical composition, and farming. Germans produce culture; Jews can only reproduce it. When accomplishment seemed to belie this apothegm, when a Heine or a Mendelssohn would produce verse or violin concerti, then such work was denigrated as clever or derivative or technical. So, for example, Wagner argued throughout *Judaism in Music*. The Jewish-identifying philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, having internalized this argument, came to similar conclusions: "[E]ven the greatest of Jewish thinkers is no more than talented. (Myself, for instance.) I think there is some truth to my idea that I really only think reproductively. . . . Can one take the case of Freud and Breuer as an example of Jewish reproductiveness?"⁴² Historical explanations for Jewish job preference too were inverted: legal limitations on Jewish access to the land were held to be an effect instead of a cause of the alleged Jewish aversion to labor "by the sweat of their noses."⁴³

In addition to denying Jewish creativity Wagner also asserted in his denunciation of Jewish music their innate mimetic talent. While no one may want to imitate the Jews (cf. W91), the Jews want to imitate everyone else. “In this Speech, this Art, the Jew can only [imitate; *nachsprechen*, *nachkünsteln*]—not truly make a poem of his words, an artwork of his doings” (W85). He attacked Jewish musical virtuosi: they perform “with quite distressing accuracy and deceptive likeness, just as parrots reel off human words and phrases. . . . Only in the case of our Jewish music-makers this mimicked speech presents one marked peculiarity—that of the Jewish style of talk in general” (W89). For Wagner, Jewish singing cannot be separated from *Mauscheln*. This derogatory term refers both to the “Jewish Jargon” (W92), Yiddish, and to the singsong way Jews reputedly speak that language, indeed, to the way they speak any language.⁴⁴

The image of the Jew as a natural mimic engaged in the other reproductive arts of theater and journalism became a leitmotif of late nineteenth-century polemical discussions. In part because the Jewish actress Sarah Bernhardt was virtually synonymous with the dramatic, if not the melodramatic, and was viewed as an exemplar of the Jewish personality,⁴⁵ the Jews became identified as predisposed toward acting. Nietzsche in his *Gay Science* described them as “the people who possess the art of adaptability par excellence, . . . a world-historical arrangement for the production of actors, a veritable breeding ground for actors.”⁴⁶

In turn, the alleged omnipresence of the Jews in the press was a dominant theme of the Berlin political antisemitic movement from its inception in 1879. That year, the Kaiser’s court preacher, Adolf Stoecker, declaimed to his Christian Social Worker’s party faithful: “Even if we presume for once that this lofty mission [of bringing salvation to the world] really is Israel’s permanent task, who then are those thinkers and poets, who, inspired by the divine spirit, preach, praise and honor the living God? Perhaps the editors of the *Tageblatt*? Or the scholars of the *Kladderradatsch*?” Many of the journalists on these liberal papers were of Jewish descent, if not openly Jewish. Stoecker goes on to accuse the Jews of using the power of “their” press “to bring misfortune to the nation. . . .”⁴⁷ Stoecker’s diatribe had been anticipated months earlier by Heinrich von Treitschke’s “A Word about Our Jewry.” In that notorious essay, Treitschke wrote that “The greatest danger [to God and nation] . . . is the unjust influence of the Jews in the press. . . . [Jews were] the first to introduce into our journalism the peculiar shameless way of talking about the fatherland [in an] off-hand [manner] and without

any reverence, like an outsider, as if mockery of Germany did not cut deeply into the heart of every German individual. . . .”⁴⁸

Antisemitic polemicists were not the only ones to make connections between mimicry and Jewish desires for assimilation; so did a number of Jewish writers also appropriate the discourse of mimicry to discuss assimilation. Herzl was typical. He had offered a number of answers to the Jewish Question before he arrived at Zionism: in addition to mass conversion, he also proposed a Darwinian mimicry. Herzl suggested that the provocation of antisemitism would lead Jews to imitate European culture through radical assimilation: “[Antisemitism] represents the education of a group [i.e., the Jews] by the masses and will perhaps lead to its being absorbed. Education is accomplished only through hard knocks. Darwinian mimicry will set in. The Jews will adapt themselves.”⁴⁹

And Herzl was not alone. In a widely quoted 1898 essay, “Hear O Israel”—cited perhaps more among antisemites than among Jews—the Jewish writer, industrialist, and eventual Weimar foreign minister Walter Rathenau offered as his solution to the Jewish Question:⁵⁰

the conscious self-education and adaptation of the Jews to the expectations of the Gentiles. Adaptation not as “mimicry” in the Darwinian sense—namely the art of certain insects to take on the coloration of their environment—but a shedding of tribal attributes which . . . are known to be odious to our countrymen, and a replacement of these attributes by more appropriate ones. If such a metamorphosis also brought about an improvement in the balance of our moral values, this would be all for the better. The final result of the process would not be Germans by imitation, but Jews of German character and education.

In the end molting did not do Rathenau any more good than mimicry; he was assassinated by antisemitic German ultranationalists in 1922.

Herzl, at least, soon dropped this idea. Max Nordau, one of the leading cultural critics of his day and the first major Jewish figure to support Herzl’s Zionist idea, then denounced those who assumed mimesis would provide at least a personal solution to the Jewish question. In his plenary address to the First Zionist Congress (1897) Nordau decried those assimilating Jews who strive for a total “mimicry” of the goyim: “On the inside, they become deformed; on the outside, they become a sham and thereby always laughable and . . . repulsive.”⁵¹ But despite the Zionist critique, such mimetic practice remained a prominent strategy of European Jews. The Jewish writer Theodor Lessing, in his 1930 analysis of “Jewish self-hatred,” described with telling irony how mimicry is one of the self-hating Jew’s foremost modes of both self-defense and self-denial.⁵²

Now the great transformation succeeds, all mimicry succeeds. You become “one of the others” and look marvelously genuine. Perhaps a little too German in order to be completely German. Perhaps a little too Russian to be completely Russian. And precisely because Christianity is a little new to you, you tend to overemphasize it a bit. But still: Now you are protected.

Weininger took a different slant on Jewish mimicry. He insinuated imitation into his virtual equation of Jewish and feminine character traits. He wrote that “[t]he congruity between Jews and women further reveals itself in the extreme adaptability of the Jews, in their great talent for journalism . . . their lack of deep-rooted and original ideas, in fact the mode in which, like women because they are nothing in themselves, they can become everything.” He continues: the Jew “adapts himself to every circumstance and every race, becoming, like the parasite, a new creature in every different host. . . .”⁵³

By the 1920s mimicry became the hallmark of the Jewish menace to German identity. In *Secessio Judaica*, Hans Blüher, one of the foremost thinkers of the German youth movement, essentialized and demonized Jewish acculturation and assimilation. He considered the Jews’ drive to imitate their hosts to be their foremost fault and greatest threat: “The Jews are the only people which practices mimicry. Mimicry of blood, of name, of form. . . . Jewish mimicry is anchored in the destiny of the race, that is, in the idea Jew.”⁵⁴ Blüher argued that the only way to overcome this dangerous mimesis would be for the Jews to leave not only Germany but Europe as well. This book so outraged Kafka that he was unable to compose either himself or a review; he solicited his friends to publish critiques and combat this latest attempt to legitimate antisemitism.⁵⁵

Aping Apes

Five years earlier Kafka had already addressed the self-delusions of those Jews who pursued acculturation. But for Kafka, unlike Blüher, those mimicry-mad Jews do not threaten. Rather, they are themselves the threatened. In 1917 Kafka published in Martin Buber’s journal, *Der Jude*, his story about Jewish assimilation, “A Report to an Academy.” The report is presented by Red Peter, who is an ape or *Affe*. Red Peter recounts his life from his capture on the Gold Coast through his acquisition of language to his pursuit of a career on the variety stage. The centerpoint of the report is an account of his caged existence on board ship and his realization that his only escape is in imitating his captors. And this he was well suited to do:

just as in English “to ape” means to imitate or mimic, so in German a similar verb occurs: *nachäffen* (literally: to ape after).

Red Peter represents the Jew as European manqué. With the choice of an ape as the protagonist of his parable, Kafka draws upon a well-established tradition. Since the eighteenth century Jews had been caricatured as orangutans and other apes.⁵⁶ Contemporary antisemitic writers like the German psychologist and philosopher Ludwig Klages described the Jewish people as the *Affentum der Kultur*, the apes of culture.⁵⁷ These animalistic associations received support from a standard trope of antisemitic rhetoric: the Jews were a rung below on the evolutionary ladder; they were almost-but-not-quite human. Theodor Frisch, a leading antisemitic publicist and the publisher of the oft-reissued *Handbook of the Jewish Question* (originally, *The Antisemitic Catechism*), claimed that God created the Jew as a buffer between humanity and the apes.⁵⁸ And the assertion of racial theorists like Chamberlain that the Jewish race had an “admixture of negro blood”⁵⁹ conferred upon the Jews the variety of African stereotypes including evolutionary underdevelopment and simian similarities.

Kafka provides numerous other indicators of Red Peter’s Jewish identity besides his apeness. Red Peter makes giving up “being stubborn” (R168)—a stereotypical Jewish trait—his supreme commandment. He fights constantly against his “ape-nature” (R170); thus, like many assimilated Jews, he repudiates his origins even as he recounts them. Also like them, Red Peter repudiates his community; he is making it on his own. This star of the variety stage is no longer some incontinent, flea-ridden animal who thereby embodies the oppressors’ image of the filthy, smelly (East European) Jew; instead, he is the performing ape who captures the oppressors’ image of the self-deluded, assimilating (Western) Jew.

In his account of Red Peter’s capture and naming, Kafka also offers an allusion to Genesis 32, the account of the noted mimic Jacob’s fight with an angel at the Jabbok and his consequent reception of a new name, Israel. When he was taken, Red Peter received two injuries. A wound in his cheek leaves him with a red scar and the sobriquet Red. This name resonates with references to the Jacob story: Jacob spent the night at the Jabbok just prior to the feared reunion with his brutish brother Esau, who was also known as Edom or “Red” (Gen. 25:30). The name in rabbinic literature comes to signify the Roman (gentile/Christian) empire; the ethnic context of the ape’s naming is reinforced by the other half of his eponym, Peter, the name given to the Jew Simon after he acknowledged Jesus’s divinity. Further Jacob had

tricked his brother out of his birthright first by selling him the red pottage (in Hebrew, “the red red stuff”) and then, through an act of mimesis, by deceiving his blind father into bestowing on him the paternal blessing: Jacob, following his mother’s advice, donned animal skins in order to smell and feel like his hairy twin. Second, Red Peter receives a wound below his hip which leaves him, like Jacob, with a limp. That second wound also left him with a scar, which he likes to exhibit by pulling down his pants. In this ironical allegory Red Peter, after his struggle with the seemingly omnipotent European goyim, believes he is *no longer* a child of Israel. Yet, in a doubly ironical move, the character is no longer *any nationality but Jewish*. The wounds and limp suggest castration and therefore recall the feminized, impotent status of the Jew in European society. Finally, in pulling down his pants to show his scar, Red Peter acts the lewd Jew showing the scar of his Jewishness: his circumcision.

By making Red Peter an ape Kafka signals that perhaps the most significant trait of Jewish life in Europe is imitation.⁶⁰ Beneath the mask of the report is an indictment of a dominant culture which both requires and denies Red Peter’s—and the Jews’—move toward gentile humanity. Red Peter concludes that the only “way out” (R173) of the cage of Jewishness is to imitate his tormentors: “it was only the mass weight of my observations [of them] that impelled me in the right direction. It was so easy to imitate these people” (R176). “Desperate to emulate” (R177) them, he begins to adopt their vices, such as spitting: first to entertain them—they cannot beat him when they are convulsed in laughter—and second to prove that he is one of them. He undergoes a rote catechism in humanity by way of repeated mock drinking from a bottle of spirits. This practice culminates in a communionlike scene with his first swallow and first human word (“Hallo!”); here Red Peter even apes a conversion (R178).

Kafka’s protagonist realizes when he lands in Hamburg that to imitate the worst in his gentile, bourgeois captors is insufficient: that path leads only to the zoo, in other words, to a new cage. Rather, he opts for the only way out: *Mimik*, the variety stage and attaining the “cultural level of an average European” (R179). The story itself—a report delivered to a scientific academy—is the ultimate mimetic act: although he is the object of the report, Red Peter is also its subject. He is reading in the guise of a race scientist. And his is quite a performance, for in the story of his development, he portrays those models of gentile human behavior whom he calls his “mentors” and “teachers”(R168, 179) as the bestial tormentors they were.

As the story ends, by constantly performing—by aping the “civilized”—Red Peter is able to survive. He is able to inhabit a properly bourgeois household, albeit with his keeper residing in an anteroom. Red Peter may have begun his report with the claim that “it is now nearly five years since I was an ape” (R168), but in the end he remains to the implied scientific audience of the academy a talking ape, a European-aping Jew—and to the reader, as well as to Kafka, a self-deluded one at that.

Mauscheling Mice

The claim that imitation was intrinsic to Jewish nature and the well-known invective against Jewish genius, in particular Jewish musical genius, converge upon Kafka’s last story, “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk.” In what his mouse narrator describes as “a small episode in the eternal history of our people” (J328), Kafka chronicles the rise and fall of the singer Josephine. Throughout this account of a musical virtuoso, the narrator emphasizes that the Mouse Folk “are quite unmusical,” that they “are not in general a music-loving race,” and that Josephine is the “sole exception” (J305; cf. J306, 318). Yet even as he credits her with a certain genius, he retracts it. For the narrator as it was for Wagner, Weininger, and the genius cult of the time, genius consists in what “we have never heard before and which we are not even capable of hearing.” But the narrator concedes “that Josephine’s singing, as singing, is nothing out of the ordinary. . . . So is it singing at all? Is it not just a piping? And piping is something we all know about, it is the real artistic accomplishment of our people, or rather no mere accomplishment but a characteristic [i.e., nonartistic] expression of our life. We all pipe. . .” (J306). Josephine’s virtuosity is thus more exemplary than exceptional: “[H]ere is someone making a ceremonial performance out of doing the usual thing. . .” (J307). She is the reproductive artist par excellence: as a singer, she practices a reproductive art; as a piper, she reproduces the ordinary sounds of her people; as an exemplar, she re-presents all of the ascribed negative qualities of that people—including their feminization.

It is generally assumed that the model for the mouse-folk is “of course the Jew[s].”⁶¹ In the wake of *Maus*, Art Spiegelman’s moving memoir of his parents’ experience of the Sho’ah, such a conclusion appears to modern readers as self-evident. The association of Jews and mice does in fact long precede both Spiegelman and Kafka. Kafka’s mice are like many of the furtive, fertile, and cowardly creatures that menace the imagination of anti-Jewish writers. For example, some dozen years before the writing

of “Josephine” the historical economist Werner Sombart characterized the Jews by a term rooted in mice and their storied behavior. Amid the controversy surrounding his massive indictment of Jewish character and participation in the development of capitalism, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (1911), and his even more controversial discursus on the *Zukunft der Juden* (1912) Sombart asserted that Jewish assimilation would destroy the character of western peoples because the Jews were “*Duckmäuser*,” sneaks and cowards.⁶² Thirty years earlier in *Golden Rats and Red Mice*, Wilhelm Marr, the man popularly credited for coining the term “antisemitism,” taunts the presumed Jewish capitalists as golden rats and the members of the allegedly Jewish social democratic movement as red mice.⁶³ But the association of Jews and mice actually dates to medieval church inscriptions. Upon a wall of the Freising cathedral one can read: “As surely as the mouse never eats the cat so surely can the Jew never a true Christian become.”⁶⁴

In addition to the choice of mice to represent Josephine’s people, Kafka offers numerous allusions to Jewish diasporic existence. For example, the mouse narrator laments that “the areas on which, for economic reasons, we have to live in dispersion are too wide, our enemies too numerous, the dangers lying everywhere in wait for us too incalculable” (J317). A number of characteristics shared by the mouse folk are also familiar stereotypes from anti-Jewish discourse. The narrator remarks that “we hold to be our greatest distinction a certain practical cunning. . . . [O]urs are a people who love slyness beyond everything” (J305, 312). He also notes the “fertility of [his] race” (J317), which both plays on gentile society’s demographic fears and reinforces the connection of Jews with the reproductive.

And again by emphasizing the mouse-folk’s “lack of musical gifts,” Kafka specifically recalls the diatribes of Wagner and Weininger. With his choice of an ungenial and untalented performing virtuoso to exemplify the community, Kafka seems to confirm the assumption that Jews both lack musical genius and can engage only in reproduction. The very notion of a mouse singer evokes Wagner’s picture of Jewish singing as a “creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle . . . [completely lacking in] purely-human expression” (W85).

The connection between Josephine and the Jews is reinforced by the orthographic similarity of *M-a-u-s* and *M-a-u-s-chel*. Particularly in the context of a story which focuses upon the way a people speak and sing, the German *Maus* resonates with allusions to the language of the Jews,

Mauscheldeutsch. In 1921 Kafka had written to his friend Max Brod that “in this German-Jewish world hardly anyone can do anything else [but] *mauscheln*—taken in a wider sense.” This wider sense extends past Yiddish to incorporate the figure of the Jewish intellectual and the so-called Jewish gift for mimicry. As he continues, *mauscheln* “is an organic compound of bookish German and pantomime.”⁶⁵ In this letter *mauscheln* comes to incorporate all of the ambiguities, ambivalences, and irreconcilable dilemmas of being a German-Jewish writer. For Kafka who spent many years including his last immersed in Zionist circles, his German *Maus* could not but recall Herzl’s picture of *Mauschel*, the “spineless, repressed and shabby” anti-Zionist Jew who embodies all the worst of anti-Jewish stereotypes.⁶⁶

Kafka’s depiction of a particular mouse, Josephine, also reproduces many of the behaviors of Herzl’s *Mauschel* as well as of the often-Jewish virtuoso: what she lacks in talent she makes up in attitude. Josephine puts on a great show of being offended at the effrontery of others to notice her inadequacies. Her excessive demands, efforts to shirk manual labor, and egoistic belief that her rights were so self-evident that it did not matter how she secured them, are all typical of both the virtuoso and the *Mauscheljude*, the Jew who *mauschels*.

**“Thus, as Kafka puts it, there is an
infinite amount of hope, but not for us”⁶⁷**

Because Kafka’s animals embody many of the characteristics ascribed to the Jews, they elicit perhaps the most troubling aspect of representations of Jewish genius. Do Kafka’s Kafkaesque stories undercut the denials of Jewish genius and the accusation of a Jewish mimetic nature? Or, do they insidiously confirm them by literalizing the animalistic slurs against the Jews? By unleashing this menagerie of cognates, this aping ape and *mauscheling* mice, has Kafka the Jew mimetically represented his fellow Jews according to the image of the dominant, oppressive culture? Has he thereby denied his people—and himself—any self-determined identity? Kafka’s narrative ploys engage in a dangerous business: they are vulnerable both to legitimating the views of the oppressors and to yielding to self-hatred.⁶⁸

The risk of accepting the identity ascribed by the oppressor and, consequently, of hating oneself and one’s people is especially acute when one’s own Jewishness lacks positive content. Kafka often perceived in

himself such a lack. In his “Letter to his Father” (one of the most famous unsent letters), Kafka complained that while his father always told him to be Jewish, the Jewishness that he saw practiced was apparently empty of meaning: “It was indeed, so far as I could see, a mere nothing, a joke—not even a joke. Four days a year you went to the synagogue, where you were, to say the least, closer to the indifferent than to those who took it seriously. . . . This was the religious material that you handed on to me. . . .”⁶⁹

So what was left for Kafka the son? He had lamented a year earlier: “I have vigorously absorbed the negative element of the age in which I live.”⁷⁰ Lacking a positive model of Judaism in his father, Kafka drew upon the derogatory figurations of the Jew that circulated in Prague, specifically, and in German (and Zionist) culture, more generally. In his letters and other writings, Kafka the insurance official favorably contrasted the productive labor of artisans and farmers with the sham and unproductiveness of typically Jewish professions like the one he himself pursued. Indeed, Kafka thought of himself as the living embodiment of the stereotype; even his anorexic, asthmatic body and those famous ears reproduced the stereotype of Jewish physiognomy. Kafka described himself as “the crooked [*krumme*] West European Jew.”⁷¹ His word choice is significant; *krumm* is perhaps the buzzword of anti-Jewish representation.⁷² Is Jewish self-hatred then the ultimate confirmation of the assumptions about the uncreative, imitative Jew?

Kafka’s texts can generate an alternative reading consonant with his own prescription for a literature that helps an ethnic minority like the Jews forge a national identity and a communal memory and that supports such a group “in the face of a hostile surrounding world.” One trait of this “minor[ity] literature” is “the presentation of national faults in a manner that is very painful, to be sure, but also liberating and deserving of forgiveness.”⁷³ Therefore, Kafka’s animals can be viewed both as an attempt to historicize those images—these characters are written in ink not in the genes—and as an attempt to reappropriate the cudgels that have been used against him and his fellow Jews. Kafka has not merely taken the reigning stereotypes of Jewish character and reproduced them *tout court*. He insinuates a tragic dimension to his figures. They are either sympathetic or they are offered a moment’s respite and a hope however deferred for redemption: there is at least hope for, as Red Peter puts it, “a way out” of the worst situations.

More significant for the problem of Jewish identity in post-Emancipation Europe, Kafka's stories are not simply *about* an ape or a mouse; they are told *by* an ape and a mouse. By allowing them to speak and to recount their histories, Kafka has created characters who in part make themselves in their storytelling. Red Peter the talking ape may be self-deluded, but perhaps because of this self-delusion, he appears all the more human. And the mouse narrator doesn't squeak, but instead offers a voice of quiet self-recognition and resolve. Kafka's creations do not present the Jews as the dominant antisemitic society's "other," the monstrous animal-object constructed by gentile, bourgeois fears and hatreds. Rather, he presents individuals and groups whose identities are shaped by exile within such a society.

The problems of Jewish identity in post-Emancipation Europe could not be overcome by either acculturation or achievement. Each individual Jewish strategy was met in the dominant culture by a counter interpretation. Acculturating Jews were informed: Jews cannot become Europeans, they can only imitate them. And the accomplished Jews were told: Jews cannot create; they can only either re-create or corrupt. Kafka had his own retort: for all of the community's faults his individual creations—Red Peter and Josephine—appear to represent, they manifest these flaws when they set themselves apart from that community. At the latter story's end, the narrator remarks that "soon [Josephine] will rise to the heights of redemption and be forgotten like all her brothers" (J328). Josephine will find redemption when she will have become absorbed into the collective memory of the mouse-folk; this "will have become"—the future anteriority of the community's memory—signifies the possibility of its redemption as well. Memory signifies that the community has a future; memory anticipates the future moment when the past will be brought forth.

Ultimately for Kafka it is not so much Josephine as it is the community itself, the Jewish people, who rises. It rises above any particular ascribed trait or individual accomplishment, and where Josephine disappears it endures. In the hostile environment of post-Emancipation Europe, the Jews may not be completely self-determining, but neither are they totally at the mercy of their enemy's power to define and represent. And it is the genius of Kafka's creations that grants insight into the complex forms of identity and identity making of his time.⁷⁴

NOTES

¹On Freud, see, *inter alia*, the work of Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987); Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993); and Yosef Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991). On the "Jewishness" of modern theoreticians see, e.g., Susan Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* (Albany: SUNY P, 1982); and, *idem*, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem, and Levinas* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991).

²"In every country of the world during the past generation [i.e., during the first half of the twentieth century] Jews made contributions to the arts out of all proportion to their comparatively small numbers." Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews: From the Babylonian Exile to the Present* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1948) 757. Cf. Cecil Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People* (London: East and West Library, 1948); *idem*, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* (London: Macmillan, 1938); Dagobert D. Runes, ed., *The Hebrew Impact on Western Civilization* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951); M. Hirsch Goldberg, *The Jewish Connection* (New York: Stein and Day, 1976); Howard Sachar, *The Course of Modern Judaism*, new rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1990).

³Cf. Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986).

⁴"Buzzwords," *Newsweek* (5 April 1993) 6.

⁵Orthodox *Halakhah* accords Jewishness to the child of a Jewish mother, while the Reform movement accepts the child of a Jewish parent. This discrepancy over "who is a Jew" recently led in 1989 to a crisis in Israeli-diaspora relations when Orthodox parties in the Knesset sought to amend the Law of Return (granting every Jew the right to settle in Israel) to exclude Jews who traced their descent through the father.

⁶In his introduction to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo* (S.E. 13:xv), Freud described himself as one "completely estranged from the religion of his fathers . . . and who cannot . . . share in nationalist ideals, but who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter this nature. If the question were put to him: 'Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?' he would reply: 'A great deal, and probably its very essence.'" Such self-assertions go back at least to 1886, when, in a letter to his fiancée Martha Bernays, Freud reports that in a Parisian conversation with Gilles de la Tourette over the prospects of another Franco-German war he "promptly explained that I am a Jew"; *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst Freud, tr. Tania Stern and James Stern (New York: Basic Books, 1960) 203 (2 Feb. 1886). These and other such comments motivated Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of a Moralizer* (New York: Viking, 1959) 258-62, to describe Freud as the archetypal "psychological Jew" for whom Jewishness is a matter of character and ethnic pride, not of creed.

⁷Cf. David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz, eds., *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993).

⁸Cf. Ivar Oxaal, "The Jewish Origins of Psychoanalysis Reconsidered," in *Freud in Exile: Psychoanalysis and Its Vicissitudes*, ed. Edward Timms and Naomi Segal (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988).

⁹For example, barred from advancing in the Austrian civil service, the chief employer of the cultured bourgeoisie, Jews migrated to law and medicine.

¹⁰See Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (New York: Vintage, 1981).

¹¹Silvano Arieti, *Creativity: The Magic Synthesis* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

¹²Cf. Paul de Lagarde, *Deutsche Schriften* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1878) and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, tr. John Lees, 2 vols. (rpt.; New York: Howard Fertig, 1968; Eng. orig. 1910; Germ. orig. 1899).

¹³*Judaism in Music*, in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, ed. W. A. Ellis (London, 1897), hereafter, W followed by pagination. The German title is *Das Judentum in der Musik*; the English translation of *Judentum* as *Judaism* obscures the polyvalence of the German. *Judentum* refers to Jewishness (an ethnic or ontological category), to the Jewish people (a social or demographic category), and to Judaism (a religious category).

¹⁴"A Report to an Academy" (hereafter, R followed by pagination) and "Josephine the Singer or the Mouse Folk" (hereafter, J followed by pagination), in *Selected Short Stories of Kafka*, tr. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Random House, 1952).

¹⁵Sander Gilman, "The Jewish Genius: Freud and the Jewishness of the Creative," in *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), addresses this tradition that denied Jews the capacity for genius, but he emphasizes the history of medical discourse on the Jews rather than the context of the Jewish situation in post-Emancipation Europe.

¹⁶Freud employs the phrase "Jewish national affair" in a letter (3 May 1908) to his colleague Karl Abraham, Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, *A Psycho-Analytic Dialogue: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham (1907-26)*, ed. H. C. Abraham and E. L. Freud, tr. B. Marsh and H. C. Abraham (London: Hogarth P, 1965) 34. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, esp. 40-60, extensively discusses these accusations. Also cf. Geoffrey Cocks, *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich: The Göring Institute* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), on National Socialist persecution of the "Jewish science" of psychoanalysis.

¹⁷C. G. Jung, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious," in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. H. Read et al., tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1953) 149 n.8; "The State of Psychotherapy Today," in *Civilization in Transition*, vol. 10 of *Collected Works* (1964) 165, 166; cf. "A Rejoinder to Dr. Bally," in *Civilization in Transition*, vol. 10 of *Collected Works* (1964), 535-44. In the 3 May 1908 letter to Abraham Freud suggests that the adherence of Jung to the psychoanalytic movement shields it from the accusation of ethnic particularity, *Letters of Freud and Abraham* 34.

¹⁸Cit. Ronald W. Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times* (New York: Avon, 1971) 638.

¹⁹Cf. Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: UP, 1989), and Jay Geller, "Blood Sin: Syphilis and the Construction of Jewish Identity," *Faultline* 1 (1992): 21-48.

²⁰Alexander Centgraf, *Ein Jude treibt Philosophie* (Berlin: Verlag Paul Hochmuth, 1943) 6.

²¹Ernest Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*, 4th ed. (Paris: Michel Lévy, Frères, 1863) 11 .

²²Chamberlain, *Foundations*, 254.

²³E. C. Dühring, *Die Judenfrage als Rassen-, Sitten- und Kulturfrage. Mit einer weltgeschichtlichen Antwort*, 2d ed. (Karlsruhe/Leipzig, 1881) 61; cit. Peter P. G. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964) 53.

²⁴It also unleashed a *Historikerstreit*, a historians' debate, such as Germany would not see again for another hundred years. Coincidentally, just as a leading historian named Mommsen (Theodor) responded to Treitschke's assault on the Jews, so one-hundred years later (1986-87), when conservative academics like Andreas Hillgruber and especially Ernst Nolte sought to normalize the Nazi regime and gloss over the Holocaust, two other historians named Mommsen (Hans and Wolfgang) entered the fray.

²⁵Heinrich von Treitschke, "A Word about Our Jewry," in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World. A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) 281-82.

²⁶Also see "'Jewish' Music? Otto Weininger and 'Josephine the Singer,'" ch. 8 of Mark Anderson, *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg fin de siècle* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1992).

²⁷Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, tr. of 6th ed. (New York: Putnam's, 1906) 316.

²⁸Weininger, *Sex and Character* 316.

²⁹Weininger, *Sex and Character* 118-19.

³⁰Weininger, *Sex and Character* 324.

³¹Weininger, *Sex and Character* 305.

³²Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *Israel among the Nations: A Study of the Jews and Antisemitism*, tr. Frances Hellman (New York: Putnam's, 1895; orig. 1893) 178.

³³*Das Judentum in Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Leipzig/Berlin: Wilhelm Friedrich, 1885) 168.

³⁴Cf. Catherine Gallagher, "George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question," in *Sex, Politics, and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, ed. R. B. Yeazell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986).

³⁵Hartmann, in *Das Judentum in Gegenwart und Zukunft*, implicitly analogized the Jews who readily enter journalism to indecent actresses: since "Respectable individuals decide only with difficulty and reluctance to dedicate themselves totally to the service of the press, like respectable young women decide only with difficulty and reluctance to go on stage" (171). On writing for money as prostitution, see Gallagher, "George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*."

³⁶On the millenia-old moral critique of mimesis, also see Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session," in *Dissemination*, tr. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981).

³⁷Oskar Panizza's 1893 short story "The Operated Jew" (*Der operirte Jude*) graphically depicts the inevitable failure of Jewish mimicry; Jack Zipes's translation first appeared in *New German Critique* 21 (Fall 1980): 63-79.

³⁸Cf. Ritchie Robertson, *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1985).

³⁹Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle Round the World, Under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy, R. N.* (New York: D. Appleton, 1896) 206; cit. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 75.

⁴⁰Charles Darwin, *The Origin of the Species* (New York: New American Library, 1958) 205; cit. Margot Norris, "Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, and the Problem of Mimesis," *MLN* 95 (1980): 1232.

⁴¹Cf. Norris, "Darwin" 1233-34, who writes that for Nietzsche "certain organic processes (protective imitation, camouflage, adaptive behavior, morphological resemblance) and intellectual acts (deception, lying, trickery, rationalization, self-delusion) are treated as homologous and analogous."

⁴²Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) 18-19. Wittgenstein although born and raised a Catholic nevertheless perceived himself as a Jew because of his Jewish forebears.

⁴³*Nasenschweiß*. The official American edition of Luther's collected works translates the phrase as "sweat of their brow"; Martin Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies," in *The Christian in Society IV*, vol. 47 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Franklin Sherman (Philadelphia: Fortress P, 1971) 272. On the view that Jews are innately averse to agriculture, see Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism* 66-67.

⁴⁴Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986), extensively chronicles the negative views of Yiddish and of Jewish speech.

⁴⁵Characterized as a prostitute of problematic gender in Sarah's *Reisebriefe aus drei Welttheilen (Amerika, Europa u Sko-bolessa)* (Würzburg: L. Kressner, 188?), by the antisemitic Viennese satirist Kikeriki [Ottokar Franz (Ebers)berg], Sarah Bernhardt epitomizes the mimetic Jew. Cf. Sander L. Gilman, "Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the 'Modern Jewess,'" *The German Quarterly* 66 (1993): 195-211.

⁴⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974) 317 (§361).

⁴⁷Adolf Stoecker, "What We Demand of Modern Jewry," in Paul W. Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany* (New York: H. Fertig, 1967) 281, 287.

⁴⁸Treitschke, "A Word" 282.

⁴⁹Theodor Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, ed. Raphael Patai, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl P, 1961) 1:10. Although the entry is dated Whitsuntide, 1895, Herzl is recalling a conversation from the previous summer with Ludwig Spideel.

- ⁵⁰Walter Rathenau, "Hear, O Israel!" in Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 232.
- ⁵¹Max Nordau, "I. Kongressrede," in *Zionistische Schriften*, ed. Zionistischen Aktionskomitee (Köln/Leipzig: Jüdischer Verlag, 1909) 51.
- ⁵²Theodor Lessing, "Jewish Self-Hatred," in Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 238.
- ⁵³Weininger, *Sex and Character* 320.
- ⁵⁴Hans Blüher, *Secessio Judaica: Philosophische Grundlegung der historischen Situation des Judentums und der antisemitischen Bewegung* (Berlin: Der weisse Ritter Verlag, 1922) 19.
- ⁵⁵Letter to Robert Klopstock, 30 June 1922, in Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977) 330.
- ⁵⁶Rainer Erb and Werner Bergmann, *Die Nachtseite der Judenemanzipation: Der Widerstand gegen die Integration der Juden in Deutschland 1780-1860* (Berlin: Metropol, 1989) 208-10.
- ⁵⁷Ludwig Klages, "Typische Ausdrucksstörungen und das Wesen der Hysterie," *Graphologische Monatsheft* 7 (1904): 60.
- ⁵⁸According to George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964) 143, Frisch made this claim in his 1881 work *Leuchtkugeln* (Fireballs).
- ⁵⁹Chamberlain, *Foundations* 387. On the association of Jews and Africans, see Gilman, *The Jew's Body*.
- ⁶⁰Cf. Robertson, Kafka, 164-69, who also argues that the application of Darwinian "mimicry" to the discussion of Jewish assimilation relates to Kafka's story. In his discussion Robertson notes how earlier criticism by Walter Sokel (e.g., *Franz Kafka: Tragik und Ironie* [Munich, 1964]) and Margot Norris ("Darwin") had acknowledged the importance of imitation to the story but had failed to recognize the specifically Jewish provenance of Kafka's concern.
- ⁶¹Sachar, *Course* 484.
- ⁶²In Arthur Landsberger, ed., *Judentaufen* (München: Georg Müller, 1912) 16-17. During the controversy generated by Sombart's provocative work, Landsberger had collected from the leading Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals of the day, including Hermann Bahr, Heinrich Mann, Fritz Mauthner, Max Weber, and Sombart himself, their responses to a series of questions regarding the future disposition of the Jewish Question.
- ⁶³Wilhelm Marr, *Goldene Ratten und rothe Mäuse, Antisemitische Hefie* 2 (Chelmnitz: Schmeitzner, 1881).
- ⁶⁴Cit. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1943) 218.
- ⁶⁵Letter to Max Brod, June 1921, in Kafka, *Letters* 288.
- ⁶⁶Theodor Herzl, "Mauschel," in *Zionist Writings: Essays and Addresses. Volume One: January, 1896—June, 1898*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl P, 1973) 163.
- ⁶⁷Walter Benjamin, "Some Reflections on Kafka," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 144. Benjamin's source is Max Brod, "Der Dichter Franz Kafka," *Neue Rundschau* 11 (1921): 1213.
- ⁶⁸There is a not dissimilar risk in my exhibiting the connections among anti-Jewish

representations. By discussing such material—by reproducing the slurs of a Weininger or a Wagner—I navigate between the dual threat of the pornographic and the kitschy. I subject myself and my reader to the imagistic onslaught of verbal violence against the Jews. Yet I also risk trivializing those utterances and attitudes which would have such tragic consequences. But this material, even though it is obscene, is hardly trivial.

⁶⁹Franz Kafka, *Letter to His Father/Brief an den Vater*, tr. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, bilingual ed. (New York: Schocken, 1953) 177, 179.

⁷⁰Franz Kafka, *Dearest Father: Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Max Brod, tr. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, bilingual ed. (New York: Schocken, 1954) 99.

⁷¹Letter to Max Brod, mid-April 1921, in Kafka, *Letters 273*; translation altered.

⁷²Wilhelm Busch's 1871 *Die fromme Helene (Pious Helen)* popularized the image of "the Jew with crooked [*krummer*] heel, crooked [*krummer*] nose and crooked [*krummer*] legs/snakes his way to the stock market/profoundly corrupted and soulless" (Heidelberg: Fr. Bassermann, 1871) 2. Cf. George M. Kren, "The Jews: The Image as Reality," *The Journal of Psychohistory* 6 (1978): 285-99.

⁷³Franz Kafka, *Diaries 1910-13*, ed. Max Brod, tr. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1948) 191, 192 (25 Dec. 1911).

⁷⁴An earlier version of this article was delivered at Tulane University, 15 April 1993. I thank Valerie Greenberg of Tulane for conversations which contributed to its production.