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The Problem of Pleasure: Disciplining the German Jewish Reading Revolution, 1770-1870

By

Amos Bitzan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor John Efron, Chair

Professor Martin Jay

Professor Ronald Hendel

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Abstract

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Focusing on learned men and women from traditional Jewish societies in Germany, between 1770 and 1870, my dissertation examines the emergence of an intellectual practice critical to the process of becoming modern: reading for pleasure. Unlike the written word that is its stimulus and object, the experience of reading in general is thought to be transitory and accessible only to individuals. But for Jewish intellectuals who were becoming modern by elaborating new selves outside the confines of traditional culture, pleasure reading, like writing, played a central role in their formations as modern individuals. Pleasure reading and the habit of sharing impressions of that reading in written correspondences, diaries, and memoirs, which were then re-read with equal pleasure, amounted to a revolution of traditional Jewish culture. In their discoveries of pleasure reading, Jewish men and women followed their feelings and imagination inside new interior spaces of individuality carved out by themselves. My dissertation traces this process by pursuing the discoveries of pleasure reading by three connected figures: the *salonnière* Henriette Herz (1764-1847), the founder of the critical study of Judaic literature Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), and the great historian of the Jews Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891).

לאבא ולאמא

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Preface

In a central passage of his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, the great medieval philosopher Maimonides (Rambam, 1135-1204) distinguished between two kinds of pleasure, affirming a dichotomy familiar to students of Western philosophy:

And now I will begin to speak about what I had intended. Know that just as a blind man cannot perceive the colors, a deaf man cannot hear sounds, a eunuch cannot desire sexual intercourse, so bodies cannot attain spiritual pleasures. And just as the fish do not know the element of fire because they live in its opposite, so are the pleasures of the spiritual world unknown to this world of the flesh. For we have no pleasures at all but the pleasures of the body and those achieved by our senses by eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. We consider any pleasures outside of these to be non-existent. We do not recognize it nor do we grasp it at first thought, but only after great investigation. And this is fitting, because we live in the corporeal world and can, therefore, attain only its inferior, halting pleasures. Spiritual pleasures, though, are constant, everlasting, and unceasing. There is no relationship or proximity of any sort between these two types of pleasure.¹

Commenting on a famous part of the Mishnah, the tenth chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin, known as “Perek Helek,” Maimonides laid out one of the defining positions of Jewish intellectual history. Its influence, even if occasionally interrupted, was felt deep into modernity. Against carnal pleasure (*ta’anug gufani*), the Rambam privileged a “spiritual pleasure” (*ta’anug nafshi*), to be achieved only after profound contemplation using one’s mind (*hakirah gedolah*).² As a life’s aim, this project inspired a whole generation of Jewish “enlighteners” or *maskilim*, in the German lands, Italy, Poland, and Russia, almost all of whom began their journeys with readings of the Rambam, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

But there exists in the annals of humanity a kind of pleasure that is neither entirely “physical” nor wholly “spiritual.” It is that sensation experienced by a reader whose imagination and emotions are aroused when she reads a poem or a story with the sole aim of

¹ Maimonides, *Commentary on Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10, Perek Helek. My translation is a modified version of Moses Maimonides, *Maimonides' Commentary on the Mishnah: Tractate Sanhedrin*, trans. Fred Rosner (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981), 143.

ועתה אחל לדבר במה שכוונתי לו הוי יודע כי כמו שלא ישיב הסומא עין הצבעים ואין החרש משיג שמע הקולות ולא הסריס תאות המשגל כן לא ישיגו הגופות התענוגים שנפשיות וכמו שהדגיש אינם יודעים יסוד האש לפי שהיותם מיסוד המים שהם הפכי כן אינו נודע בזה העולם הגופני תענוג העולם הרוחני אבל אין אצלנו בשום פנים תענוג זולתי תענוג הגוף בלבד והשגת החושים מין המאכל והמשגל וכל מה שזולתו אלה הוא אצלנו בלי מצוי ואין אנו מכירין אותו ולא נשיג אותו בתחילת המחשבה אלא אחר חקירה גדולה. וראוי להיות כן לפי שאנחנו בעולם הגופני ולפיכך אין אנו משיגין אלא תענוגיו הגרועים הנפסקים אבל התענוגים הנפשיים הם תמידים עומדים לעד אינם נפסקים ואין ביניהם ובין אלו התענוגים יחס ולא קורבה בשום פנים.

Maimonides’s commentary was originally composed in Arabic but was translated into Hebrew and known only in this language in the late medieval and early modern Ashkenazi world. The Hebrew above is from the Hebrew *Commentary* of Maimonides found in most editions of the Mishnah and Talmud, such as Maimonides, “Perush ha-mishnah le-ha-Rambam (Warsaw, 1879 edition),” in *Mishnayot Yakbin u-Vo’az ‘im Perush ha-Mishnah le-ha-Rambam*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem, 1960), 22. The *Commentary*’s different parts were translated into Hebrew by a number of medieval translators. Maimonides, *Maimonides' Commentary on the Mishnah*, xii.

² Here, I have provided the Hebrew terms that most of the work’s Ashkenazi readers would have known.

delighting in its words and their effects on the self. To be sure, such a way of reading has never been and will never be universal. It may sometimes simply vanish from the records of human culture, subject to a multitude of constraining and enabling effects that influence all other practices of daily life.

In the history of the Jews, reading for pleasure was a marginal and marginalized activity until the eighteenth century. The practice faced a number of structural and ideological obstacles common and peculiar to many of the cultures of the Jews. Ironically, these obstacles often derived from the relatively high literacy rates prevailing among the People of the Book in its dispersion. In the heterogeneous but nevertheless connected pockets of Ashkenazi Jewish culture scattered across the map of Central and Eastern Europe, reading for pleasure had to supplant a powerful constellation of intellectual practices: *Talmud Torah*, in Hebrew, or *ler(e)nen* in Yiddish. The study of Torah in all its variegated manifestations had the weight of tradition and society behind it. Backed by elites who saw its ways of interacting with a specific (though constantly expanding) canon of texts as central to the existence of Jews in community, the world, and the cosmos, Torah study was the most privileged practice of pre-modern Jewish life. In the well-known words of rabbinic Judaism's central collection of texts, the Babylonian Talmud, "*Talmud Torah* outweighs all [other obligations]." ³ It was, however, a practice reserved almost entirely for males. The pursuit of Torah study according to the ideals enshrined by generations of intellectuals required significant investments of scarce resources. In reality, it was always the practice of a limited elite – though one which was not oblivious to masculine meritocracy. It is perhaps all the more remarkable that among all intellectual practices of Jewish societies, *Talmud Torah* remained supreme for most of the pre-modern period.

One of the central stories of Jewish modernization was the revolutionary rise of pleasure reading among Ashkenazi Jews, against modes of textual study and social organization fundamentally opposed to it. The emergence of reading for this-worldly pleasure from its marginal position disrupted the cohesive forces that had previously bound Jewish societies along gendered axes. Privileging the secular desires of the individual, the modern revolution in reading practices legitimized access to intellectual pursuits for women and men "unlearned" in Torah study. It liberalized Jewish culture, by equalizing opportunities for and asserting the needs of the individual reader against those of the elite or the collective.

But the pleasure reading revolution was always contested in Jewish society. Modern Jews were (and are) heirs of both the rise of pleasure reading as well as the powerful reactions to it in the nineteenth century. Thus, one of the other central stories of Jewish modernization, as it transpired in the German cultural sphere of Ashkenaz, was the effort by a new, bourgeois masculine intellectual elite to discipline pleasure reading by subsuming it under "greater" social, religious, or cultural aims. The primary agents of this reading "counter-revolution" were the nineteenth-century German Jewish historians and scholars who articulated the practices and ideas of a new "*Wissenschaft des Judentums*" or program of academic Judaic studies and of a modern historiography devoted to the history of the Jews.

The research for this dissertation actually began as a project about the origins of Jewish historical scholarship. While reading the diaries of one of the outstanding representatives of

³ Talmud Bavli Shabbat 127a.

nineteenth-century Jewish historical writing, Heinrich Graetz, I was struck by the importance he attached to reading, in his own life and in history. I was also impressed by the many ways in which literature figured into Graetz's experience and his autobiographical narratives. It occurred to me that the turn to historiography by Graetz was preceded by a more significant turn in Jewish culture: the discovery of a new mode of reading books.

The drive to create a *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and to produce a scholarly history of the Jews, one of the most ambitious secular cultural projects of nineteenth-century German Jewish culture, was the principal and defining expression of the tendency against the revolutionary discovery of savoring texts and affect solely for one's private delight. Though a dynamic and fragmented process, the scholarly treatment (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) of Jewish texts and memory, which produced infinite new literatures and remembrances of things past, was an effort by the new readers of German Jewish society to exorcise the demon of their pleasure. *Wissenschaft* endowed the pleasures of reading with a noble mission: the edification of the soul, the discovery of knowledge, the redemption of German Jewry. Partly limiting the reading material and partly insisting on the toil of writer and reader, the first generation of Jewish *Wissenschaftler* tried to solve the problem of pleasure by circumcising their hearts. A subsequent, more enterprising generation, mobilized the new modes of reading and feeling to promote the cohesion of the Jews as a religious or cultural whole. Culminating in grand narrative history, the efforts of its principal characters aimed to compel Jewish readers to sacrifice the joys of losing themselves in fictions for the higher purpose of integrating them under the new *nomos* of the nation.

In the famous epilogue of his classic work on Jewish history and collective memory, *Zakhor* (1982), Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi argued that literature and ideology have been far more important in determining the modern Jewish understanding of the past than Jewish historical writing.⁴ I largely agree with this assessment but would suggest that nineteenth-century Jewish historiography was a kind of literature born in the same reading revolution that transformed the People of the Book from "learners" of Torah into pleasure readers. This modern-day collective conversion was the basis for the flowering of narrative historiography and critical scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany.

For male German Jewish intellectuals who came of age at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the modern solution to the novel problem of pleasure lay in what might be called the "productivization" of reading. This entailed assigning some productive purpose other than pleasure to the new intellectual practice. Simultaneously with its robust growth, many of the erstwhile discoverers of pleasure reading elaborated programs for the sentimental education of modern Jews such as themselves. Converging and diverging with developments in European and German intellectual culture, and framed by the rise of the modern state, nationalism, citizenship, and the bourgeoisie, these programs competed to discipline the Jew as reader and the reader as Jew. Harnessing the ideals of *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft*, they made the formation of the German Jewish subject contingent on socializing the solipsistic pleasure of the pleasure reading self.

⁴ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 98. For a critique of the particular passage in which Yerushalmi makes this point see Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "Fiction and Memory: Zakhor Revisited," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97, no. 4 (2007): 521-529.

Though sensitive to important discontinuities, this dissertation argues for a model of continuity rather than rupture to explain the turn to history in nineteenth-century Jewish culture. It suggests an alternative to Yerushalmi's view of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as representing a dramatic break in the history of the Jews and with Jewish collective memory.⁵ It reconstructs a cultural context much broader and ultimately of more significance to the genesis of modern Jewish historical writing than developments such as the rise of historicism or the influence of university training on modernizing intellectuals. Jewish historical scholarship and historiography emerged out of and as responses to a *longue durée* Jewish reading revolution that began in the early modern period among women rather than elite male intellectuals. In the nineteenth century, the ideals of *Wissenschaft* and the German academy proved crucial in mediating the efforts by male intellectuals to discipline Jewish pleasure reading in the modern period. The real story of Jewish cultural and intellectual modernization, however, should not be sought in "historicism" or "historical consciousness" – phenomena dear to the hearts of historians – but in the larger transformation of Jewish reading practices, in which literature, including histories of the Jews, played such an important part.

⁵ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 81.

Introduction

Modernity, in the words of Carla Hesse, “is the consciousness of oneself as self-creating.” The modern fashioning of individual subjectivity, she argues, depended on specific intellectual practices and on a sophisticated communications infrastructure that overcame some of the limitations of the spoken word. The spread of writing and the rise of commercial print culture, according to Hesse, were fundamental to realizing “the cultural ideal of the modern self.” The former allowed increasing numbers of individuals to separate their selves from their words, a precondition for exchanging ideas with spatially and temporally distant others. In turn, the emergence of modern literary markets in late-eighteenth-century Europe, abetted by the expansion of literacy and advances in printing, enabled the transformation of private into public selves. As writers, individuals could increasingly circumvent the censorship and surveillance of traditional societies. They could convey their ideas to a public of strangers.⁶

Focusing on learned men and women from traditional Jewish societies in Germany, between 1770 and 1870, my dissertation examines the emergence of another intellectual practice critical to the process of becoming modern: reading for pleasure. Unlike the written word that is its stimulus and object, the experience of reading in general is thought to be transitory and accessible only to individuals. But for Jewish intellectuals who were becoming modern by elaborating new selves outside the confines of traditional culture, pleasure reading, like writing, played a central role in their formations as modern individuals. Pleasure reading and the habit of sharing impressions of that reading in written correspondences, diaries, and memoirs, which were then re-read with equal pleasure, amounted to a revolution of traditional Jewish culture.⁷ In their discoveries of pleasure reading, Jewish men and women followed their feelings and imagination inside new interior spaces of individuality carved out by themselves. My dissertation traces this process by pursuing the discoveries of pleasure reading by three connected figures: the *salonnière* Henriette Herz (1764-1847), the founder of the critical study of Judaic literature Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), and the great historian of the Jews Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891).⁸

⁶ Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), xii.

⁷ In the history of the West, the second half of the eighteenth century is generally regarded as the “second ‘revolution in reading’ of the early modern age,” distinguished, technologically, by the industrialization of printing. It has often been seen as the transition point from “intensive” reading of a small, sealed canon of books, which were reread, committed to memory, and recited, to “extensive” reading of a large number of books, many of an allegedly “ephemeral” nature. Such reading, in Germany, was pathologized by critics as “*Lesewut*” (reading frenzy) in the age of Goethe and *Sturm und Drang*. However, historians of reading have recently disputed the easy chronological juxtaposition of intensive and extensive reading. Most importantly, for our purposes, they have pointed to the beginnings of a “most ‘intensive’ sort of reading at the very moment of the [second] ‘revolution in reading,’ thanks to authors such as Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Goethe and Richardson.” Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 24-25. Nevertheless, a second reading revolution did take place in England, Germany, in France, when one considers the enormous growth of book production in the eighteenth century. Reinhard Wittmann, “Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 284-312.

⁸ Because of limitations of time and space I was unable to incorporate my research about the first German Jewish nineteenth-century historian of the Jews Isaac Jost (1793-1860) and of the brilliant philologist and

By “reading for pleasure,” I mean the practice of reading for the purpose of providing immediate delight to the self through the experience of reading. “Pleasure,” is a kind of stimulation of the senses or the mind that the historical actors who experience or critique it imagine as desired and positive but ritually, economically, and intellectually “unproductive.”⁹ Though pleasure reading may in reality provide an education in morals, conduct, or any number of other areas, both its detractors and practitioners may still see it as “mere” entertainment. Defined negatively, pleasure reading is an interaction with texts that provides little or no “useful” information to the reader. Nor is its direct aim to fulfill positive religious commandments or the function of prayer.

Of course, people have often derived pleasure from reading texts that make claims to informing the reader or to some other kind of “productive” result. Modern print media and their consumption represent reading matter and reading practices which claim to apprise readers of important developments, knowledge of which has a clear utility. At the same time, newspaper-reading has, arguably from its beginnings, provided men and women with pleasure. Likewise, many readers have delighted in reading various works of scholarship, which again impart putatively useful knowledge about the world to them. The study of intricate legal discussions or the recitation of elaborate ethical homilies may also delight their readers. On the other hand, works of fiction may be written solely to amuse the reader or author – often in complicated ways – and yet fail entirely to achieve the effect. For my purposes, pleasure reading consists of all instances of reading that take place under the sign of pleasure, in a given historical context. I am therefore interested in all texts and reading experiences which inspire their readers to report pleasure in the act of reading itself. I also include all reading that critics condemn as having private pleasure as its primary aim.¹⁰

As the work of historians and literary scholars associated with the New Historicism has shown us, representations of pleasure reading in the eighteenth century lay at the intersection of discourses about sexuality and economics with a new print culture, in particular that of

Reform theologian Abraham Geiger (1810-1874). Jost’s childhood and adolescence in Wolfenbüttel overlapped with Zunz’s and their experiences with pleasure reading reveal many similarities. Nevertheless, Jost’s formation is of sufficient interest to be included in a future version of this work. Geiger’s life and oeuvre has been masterfully reconstructed in Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁹ For an analysis of the late-eighteenth-century critique of fiction as “the prototype of an antiproduktive literature” see the classic study by Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 276.

¹⁰ Our ability to make sense of the phenomenon of pleasure reading is further complicated by the fact that at its zenith in the nineteenth century few authors or readers were content to describe their books “merely” as sources of pleasure. Indeed, for most of the nineteenth century, the explosive growth of books that seemed to offer mostly pleasure was accompanied by ingenious claims about their other, more productive ends. Many books from the genre of *Trivalliteratur*, which, needless to say was not a classification accepted by their authors, promised to better the reader morally or even spiritually. Such claims and the corollary critiques of pleasure for its own sake are therefore as relevant to this dissertation as the texts they purported to denounce. The very possibility of pleasure, not to mention the chance of accessing it through reading, is a phenomenon bound by history and by one’s hermeneutic horizon. A work of liturgical poetry with a primary function of petitioning God in one context may become a source of pleasure by a reader from a different time or place. On the other hand, an imaginative epic that entertained its readers in the sixteenth century, may fail to elicit any pleasure at all from a twenty-first century reader, struggling with its allusions or bored by its familiar plot.

the novel.¹¹ My dissertation is an attempt to begin a similar line of inquiry about the modernization of European Jewry, with some consideration of the particularities that made this process distinct from the related developments in other cultural contexts.

In general, historians of the Jews have been more concerned with the act of writing than the practice of reading, unless they are using “reading” as a synonym for a coherent conception or interpretation of a text. Those studies of Jewish modernization that do pay attention to changes in reading books or, more commonly, texts, have focused more on *what* Jews have read rather than on the practice of reading. My dissertation argues that in the story of Jewish modernization, changes in how and to what ends men and women read books were as important as the contents of their reading matter.¹²

Starting among literate women, from the margins of Jewish intellectual culture, pleasure reading gradually encroached upon the idealized practices of learned men’s textual study or Talmud Torah. Devoted to a sanctified canon of legal, exegetical, mystical, and liturgical writings in Hebrew and Aramaic, traditional Jewish study was classically conducted out loud in group settings supervised by communal and spiritual authorities and had been a pillar of Ashkenazi social organization since the early Middle Ages. Private pleasure reading in Jewish culture first became a significant factor with the expansion of vernacular print culture in the sixteenth century. Pioneered by women, who were excluded from the obligation and privileges of Torah study, it gradually weakened the constraining bonds of the rabbinic house of study and of accepted canons of interpretation. In private, readers could imagine radically new ideas, often quite alien from the intentions of their books’ authors.¹³ More important than the substance of these interpretations or the reading matter was the act of such emancipated reading itself. Pleasure reading modeled an intellectual practice whose

¹¹ See Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 303. Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, xiv.

¹² A typical example is Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 37. My approach, on the other hand, has been strongly influenced by the works of scholars at the intersection of literature and history, most notably Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, trans. Saadya Sternberg (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2004). I have been equally inspired by historians of early modern Europe who have made some of the most significant contributions to our knowledge of reading and writing practices before 1700. Outstanding in this respect is the work Anthony Grafton. For a description of his goals see Anthony Grafton, *Bring out Your Dead: The Past as Revelation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 14. An excellent provisional study of reading practices among medieval and early modern Jews is Robert Bonfil, “Reading the Jewish Communities of Western Europe and the Middle Ages,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 149-178. In the academic year 2009-2010, the Center for Jewish History in New York convened a “Working Group on the History of the Book.” Several junior and senior scholars presented talks on their periods of specialization at the Center in October 2009, which were subsequently published in the *AJS Review*. See Adam Shear, “Introduction to AJS Review Symposium: The Jewish Books: Views and Questions,” *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 353-357; Lawrence Schiffman, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of the Jewish Book,” *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 359-365; Jeffrey Shandler, “The Jewish Book and Beyond in Modern Times,” *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 377-384; Yaacob Dweck, “What is a Jewish Book?,” *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 367-375. A symposium on “The Jewish Book: Past, Present, and Future” was held on April 3, 2011. Most of the talks of the initial Working Group and the Symposium, however, have focused more on the supply side (publishing and writing) than on readers and the practice of reading.

¹³ It is sufficient to recall the astounding cosmogony that Menocchio “derived” from his reading, to illustrate this point. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xxii, 6.

aims, at least in medieval Jewish terms, were purely “profane” or secular, as such reading did not fulfill any known religious obligations.

Extending at first only to Old Yiddish literature, women’s pleasure reading in the early modern period made possible the rise of reading in another vernacular language, German. The transition from the Hebrew alphabet (or, rather, alphabets) in which Yiddish books were written and published to reading Roman or German (i.e., *Fraktur*) letters could not have been easy. In Yiddish, these alphabets and writing in them were called “*galkhes*,” derived from the Yiddish word for “monk” or “priest” (Hebrew root, *galah*: shaven, referring to the tonsure).¹⁴ Acquiring facility in this alphabet meant crossing a significant religious and cultural divide

Women were the vanguard of German-language pleasure reading in Jewish society at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ They were followed by increasing numbers of German Jewish men, not only in the large cities but also in smaller towns. Often learning from and emulating female relatives, young male Jewish intellectuals in the early nineteenth century were as enchanted by pleasure reading as Jewish women had long been. Given the sacral as well as sociological importance of textual study by men in Jewish culture, the infiltration of this radically new reading practice into the ranks of learned Jewish males constituted a veritable reading revolution.

In addition to outright opposition by many traditionalists, this Jewish reading revolution faced the profound ambivalence of self-conscious Jewish modernizers in the nineteenth century. In the late eighteenth century, absolutist rulers by law and German Jewish modernizers by example and exhortation had encouraged Jews to become more proficient in the letters and language of the land. Male Jewish intellectuals promoted reading German among Jewish men with the aim of furthering the economic and social “regeneration” of Jewish society and with the hope that the Christian states in Germany would lift anti-Jewish restrictions. But proficiency in the German language and a better acquaintance with the norms of educated Christians could sometimes lead Jews, as individuals, away from Judaism and its traditional institutions. Thus, nineteenth-century Jewish intellectuals who wanted to create a modern Jewish culture and society, rather than to modernize individual Jews, grew uneasy about the unplanned consequences of modernization, especially as they pertained to German Jewish women.¹⁶

¹⁴ For more about the Hebrew and Latin alphabets in relation to Yiddish see Neil G. Jacobs, *Yiddish: A Linguistic Introduction* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48–49.

¹⁵ The association of women with the intense, emotionally involved modes of reading that arose in the late eighteenth century simultaneously with the novel can be observed in many European contexts. Cavallo and Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West*, 25. Catherine Gallagher has suggested that the term “novel,” in the English context may have been “designed to demarcate a class of books [prose fiction] suitable for” new readers, especially women. Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, 220–221.

¹⁶ A similar evolution in attitudes toward pleasure reading can be observed in nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish culture. Parush argues that the major (male) advocates of Jewish modernization in the nineteenth century constructed their later reading autobiographies (in memoirs) in such a way as to exclude the possibility of poetry and prose fiction having had any effect in shaping their worldviews. Among Eastern European *maskilim*, novels gave rise to the “*romanen* debate” in the 1850s and 1860s. They were seen as causing moral degeneracy. Despite acknowledging their emotional reactions to certain novels, figures such as Abraham Mapu (1808–1867) and later Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910) and Asher Ginsberg (Ahad ha-am, 1856–1927) never saw pleasure reading as an experience valuable for its own sake. Rather, they viewed it as useful in

Just as traditional societies perceived the individualistic practices of pleasure reading as threats to their survival, those interested in creating modern collective identities and harmonizing social divisions regarded reading for pleasure with anxiety. Nineteenth-century European projects of nationalizing the masses and strengthening state institutions relied on reading subjects. But the intended goal of such reading, in the minds of nationalist ideologists, was not for individuals to please themselves. Rather, reading was to induce individuals to imagine themselves as part of larger communities or nations.¹⁷ In an age of economic modernization, pleasure reading also stood out as economically unproductive. Solitary female readers appeared as especially disruptive, posing threats to harmonious bourgeois social organization with their fantasies and sentiments stimulated by potentially deleterious novels.¹⁸ Although they did not frame their view of reading in nationalist terms, mid- and late-eighteenth-century English critics of the novel assailed “the very ease with which readers identified with fictional characters.” Female sentimental readers were scandalous because they became “emotional addict[s], craving fictional identification and powerless to disengage from it.”¹⁹

Within this larger context of anxieties about pleasure reading, Jewish society manifested some particular concerns. The relatively high literacy rates of Jewish women compared to those prevailing among Christian women doubtlessly intensified and accelerated the dispersion of pleasure reading through their ranks. It was also a necessary precondition for the fact that so many Jewish women became prominent readers and associates of German Christian writers at the end of the eighteenth century (and in some cases, writers and translators in their own right). In a number of high-profile cases, these women, read themselves out of Jewish society and converted to Protestantism. In the nineteenth century, several prominent Jews who were among the first generation of Jewish poets, playwrights, and novelists writing in German also converted to Christianity. Moreover, the success of German-language acquisition and the pleasure reading revolution seemed to shatter the dreams of Jewish intellectuals who wanted to create a specifically Jewish modern culture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jewish modernizers who wanted to renew Jewish life and preserve a separate (but integrated) collective culture rather than dissolve all traces of Jewish particularity were in a bind. They opposed both a return to traditional society as well as the individualistic consequences of pleasure reading by women and men. Having been part of the first generation of German Jewish boys to discover pleasure reading, they knew and feared its seductions. As young intellectuals, several men from this generation set out to

acquiring certain linguistic skills and broadening one’s familiarity with non-Jewish culture. Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 121-123. On the *romanen* debate see Dan Miron, *Ben ha-zon le-emet: nitsane ha-roman ha-ivri veba-yidi ba-me’ah ba-tesha’esreh* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1979), 231-239. For the English case, see Michael Galchinsky, *The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson’s classic argument of course was that certain features of print-capitalism made national consciousness possible and allowed it to emerge. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 36, 44. By referring to nationalist ideologists, I am not attempting to make an argument for “top-down” nationalization. I am merely pointing to the former’s intentions and desires for literature.

¹⁸ These anxieties are brilliantly analyzed by Laqueur, who argues for the “deep and extensive” connections between literary practices (especially fiction) and masturbation. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 306. For different, gender- and sexuality-related anxieties in the Eastern European Jewish context see Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 196.

¹⁹ Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, 279.

create new forms of writing and produce a novel type of reader through a “*Wissenschaft des Judentums*.”

Sometimes awkwardly rendered as “Science of Judaism” but better translated as “Jewish historical scholarship,” *Wissenschaft des Judentums* denotes the scholarly practices, institutions, and ideas, which proliferated among German Jews in the nineteenth century and formed the foundation for modern academic Jewish studies. In the words of a recent study, “it has long been recognized as one of the major spiritual and intellectual responses to the crisis of modernity.”²⁰ It is a phenomenon that has long occupied historians of nineteenth-century German Jewish intellectual culture.²¹ The drive to *Wissenschaft* by young German Jewish intellectuals has often been explained with recourse to large-scale “shifts in consciousness,” that involved the penetration of historicist modes of thought into German Jewish culture.²² When we look more closely at the early biographies of some of the individuals involved, however, these abstractions lose their explanatory force. This dissertation links the rise of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to the discovery of reading for pleasure that took place across Jewish society. Born of the reading revolution and at the same time presenting a reaction to it, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was inconceivable without the large-scale transformation of Jewish reading practices which modernized Ashkenazi culture and society..

While the first part of this dissertation focuses on the pleasure reading revolution proper, the second part argues that the turn of Jewish male intellectuals to history and scholarship in the nineteenth century was an attempt to discipline pleasure reading and to “sublimate” it to

²⁰ Nils H Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 3. A vast literature about *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which goes back to the writings of some of its founding figures about their colleagues and themselves, exists today. A founding essay in twentieth-century criticism of *Wissenschaft*, today usually cited merely as a foil, is Gershom Scholem, “Mi-tokh hirhurim al hokhmat yisrael,” in *Luah ha-Aretz* (Tel Aviv: Ha'aretz, 1944), 94-112. It still brims with remarkable and useful insights about Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger, and Heinrich Graetz. A classic work, which focuses on some of the key individuals of *Wissenschaft* and highlights their connections to various intra-Jewish religious polemics as well as to the struggle for emancipation is Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1994). The aforementioned work by Roemer is the best recent study of *Wissenschaft*. Roemer is the first to systematically investigate the reception of Jewish historical scholarship among German Jews in the nineteenth century and uses a sophisticated framework to argue for a reciprocity of influence between scholars and readers. Other excellent recent monographs are Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*; Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und Protestantische Theologie im Wilhelminischen Deutschland: Ein Schrei Ins Leere?* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999). Both of the former focus on the relationship of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to Protestant scholarship and to Christianity.

²¹ See for example Michael A Meyer, “Leopold Zunz and the Scientific Ideal,” in *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), 146; Ismar Schorsch, “The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 158-176; David N Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 28.

²² See Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 152. Schorsch’s account sometimes borders on the triumphalist in its celebration of *Wissenschaft*. The rise of Jewish historiography specifically has attracted countless commentators since the publication of the groundbreaking work by Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*. See also Michael A. Meyer, “The Emergence of Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs,” *History and Theory* 27, no. 4 (1988): 160-175. Yerushalmi insisted on modern Jewish historiography as a “decisive break with the past that it describes.” Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 81. But cf. the argument for an earlier origin to the historicist turn in Jewish thought by Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 16-17.

some putatively greater end than mere pleasure. Drawing on the ideals of *Wissenschaft* articulated in the new German universities, nineteenth-century writers attempted to steer male Jewish pleasure readers toward the Jewish past. In so doing, they created a new literature that claimed to provide a higher, collective good than solitary pleasure. The efforts of the scholars of this generation to discipline Jewish readers were mirrored by German Jewish middlebrow novelists as well as by the creators of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literatures in Eastern Europe.²³

In realizing their aims, the Jewish historians of the nineteenth century faced a major obstacle which highlights the differences of the role that historical scholarship played among German Protestants and Jews respectively. Unlike their Protestant counterparts, German Jewish scholars, systematically excluded from university employment and state backing, lacked the kind of security, authority, and legitimacy enjoyed by German academics. Jewish *Wissenschaftler* were crucially dependent on a reading public for their legitimacy and income. Ironically, this meant that they often had to compete on the literary marketplace for readers interested primarily in reading for the sake of pleasure. The other option available to them was to tie the modern rabbinate to academic Jewish studies. By setting up rabbinical seminaries that trained future rabbis in historical scholarship, all three of the new Jewish denominations that emerged in nineteenth-century Germany – Reform, Positive Historical (“Conservative”), and Orthodox Judaism – tried to discipline the Jewish reader through the congregational pulpit.

Building on recent works about the popularization of Jewish historical scholarship and the growth of middlebrow literature among German Jews in the nineteenth century, I foreground the practices of a burgeoning public of Jewish women and, later, men reading for pleasure.²⁴ My dissertation offers a reinterpretation of the phenomenon of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a solution to the “problem” that pleasure reading represented for the project of Jewish modernization. I argue that the modern intellectual elite responsible for the unprecedented explosion of Jewish historical writing in the nineteenth century was motivated by the aim of creating a literature that would discipline male pleasure readers intellectually, culturally, and religiously. Although they did not always make it explicit, the *Wissenschaftler* left the disciplining of female pleasure readers to avowedly Jewish middlebrow novelists and larger social changes promoting the feminization of Jewish religious practice.²⁵

²³ In a seminal article, Jonathan Skolnik points to Berthold Auerbach’s historical novel *Spinoza* as a “novel about the limits of communal acceptance in an incompletely secularized society [that] itself participates in the creation of a secular Jewish culture. Jonathan Skolnik, “Writing Jewish History between Gutzkow and Goethe: Auerbach’s *Spinoza* and the Birth of Modern Jewish Historical Fiction,” *Prooftexts* 19, no. 2 (1999): 108. The figures I discuss in the second part of my dissertation shared Auerbach’s ambivalence about modernization but turned to historiography rather than the historical novel as part of their reaction against fiction-reading. In the English context, some late-eighteenth-century novelists also tried to make fiction “productive” by teaching readers to control their identification with imagined characters. See Gallagher on Maria Edgeworth’s *Letters for Literary Ladies* in *Nobody’s Story*, 282.

²⁴ See Jonathan M Hess, *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010).

²⁵ On these processes of “feminization” see Benjamin Maria Baader, *Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). For the way in which they played themselves out post-1870, in the period of the German Empire, see the pioneering study of Jewish women’s history by Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*

The rise of pleasure reading in Jewish society was revolutionary because it democratized access to intellectual pursuits and enabled individuals, especially women, to fashion modern selves, often against the spirit of religious law and traditional norms. The reaction against pleasure reading, on the other hand, attempted to reassert a privileged masculine reading sphere. In their turn to history in the nineteenth century, male Jewish intellectuals practiced a form of scholarly reading different from both supposedly “feminine” pleasure reading practices as well as from traditional Torah study. Their embrace of scholarship obviously limited the involvement of women and men who lacked a modern German education. How successful they were in achieving these aims is another question. As the history of reading shows, readers have often taken books in directions at odds with the larger cultural agendas of their authors.

In order to illustrate the cultural shift exemplified by the reading revolution in Jewish culture, I begin with a chapter about discussions of pleasure reading in Jewish law (Hebrew, *halakhab*). The goal of the chapter is to illustrate the sources of the resistance to pleasure reading in traditional Jewish society. Its sources range from the writings of rabbinic scholars in late antiquity to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reformulations of *halakhab* on reading. The authors of these texts all belonged to a male scholarly elite that considered itself the backbone of Jewish society. While their discussions and legal opinions did not necessarily determine the behavior of their contemporaries, they do allow us to reconstruct the dominant ideological positions *vis-à-vis* pleasure reading of the Jewish intellectual elite in pre-modern societies.

A second chapter outlines the emergence of a vernacular Jewish reading sphere in Ashkenaz beginning in the sixteenth century. It shows how reading of imaginative literature, at first in Yiddish, became an intellectual practice associated with women. Moving the narrative to the late eighteenth century, this chapter describes the transition from Old Yiddish literature to pleasure reading in German, French, and English by Jewish women.

My third chapter examines the reading practices of the famous Berlin *salonnière* Henriette Herz.²⁶ Herz and her circle of friends, which included such luminaries as Rahel Levin (1771-1833) and the later doyen of German scholarship Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), elaborated the kind of reading that so provoked the anxiety of nineteenth-century male Jewish intellectuals. Reconstructing her formation as a reader, I show the importance of pleasure reading to her project of becoming modern.²⁷ In reading for pleasure, Herz and her peers emancipated themselves from Jewish society. Her example therefore terrified Jewish modernizers in the nineteenth century, two of whom are the subjects of the second half of my dissertation.

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). The classic study is Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

²⁶ For the social and economic contexts of the salons, see Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). For an important critique of Hertz, see Barbara Hahn, “The Myth of the Salon,” in *The Jewess Pallas Athena: this too a theory of modernity*, trans. James McFarland (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 42-55.

²⁷ My use of “reading formations” follows Parush’s use of “reading biography” – an analysis of the works read by an individual and the contexts, purposes, and effects of that reading. Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 98.

In chapters four and five, I move to the provinces of Germany, to trace the confrontation of the first *Wissenschaft* generation with the new reading practices and its subsequent turn to historical scholarship. Beginning with the childhood discovery of pleasure reading by Leopold Zunz in Wolfenbüttel, I follow his embrace of the ideal of *Wissenschaft* and his efforts to discipline pleasure reading by founding a *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Zunz's approach to the problem of pleasure in the early period of his scholarly activity, I argue, ultimately failed to achieve the readership required from the change he sought. However, it provided a negative model for a younger generation of scholars and modernizers, exemplified by the greatest nineteenth-century historian of the Jews, Heinrich Graetz.

Graetz's discovery of pleasure reading and his reaction against its alleged excesses are the subject of my sixth and seventh chapters. Returning to the late-eighteenth-century reading revolution of the *salonnières*, I analyze Graetz's emotional critique of Herz and her Christian and Jewish peers in his historical writing. I conclude by showing that Graetz, who saw the German Jewish writer Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) as a model writer of history, crafted historiography as literature in order to direct Jewish pleasure readers to subordinate their individual desires to the need for collective cohesion. Although Graetz's career and his legacy did not end in 1870, I conclude my narrative at this point because the founding of the German Empire in 1871 marks the beginning of a new period with distinct features. The last three decades of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of mass politics and the emergence of modern political movements among Eastern and Central European Jews. They gave rise to a fundamentally different set of institutions, practices, and ideologies than those of the worlds in which Herz, Zunz, and Graetz had come of age.

My study engages several concerns in the history of Jewish modernization in particular and European modernity more generally. It illuminates the great ambivalence toward modernity even by some of the self-conscious modernists and ideologists of emancipation among nineteenth-century German Jewish intellectuals.²⁸ In the modernization of Jewish culture and society, my dissertation highlights the role of both the practices of Jewish women and their representation by men. With regard to modernity more broadly conceived, my dissertation analyzes a specific instance of changes in reading practices, gender formations, and emotional experience converging to challenge a traditional society and culture as well as its modernizers. It provides a case study of the tensions among religion, intellectual practices, and the possibilities of pleasure in the history of modern Europe. Finally, this dissertation examines the history of what some might call the secularization of books and reading and others would refer to as a change in religious encounters with texts in the modern period.

²⁸ Much of my thinking about the ambivalence of Jewish modernizers toward modernity is inspired by the teaching and scholarship of Olga Litvak. Her work, like my own, "embrace[s] the imbrication of literature and history." For her study of the "exhilaration and mounting sense of anxiety" among late-nineteenth-century Russian Jewish *maskilim* (enlighteners) about Russian Jews' "emancipation from the jurisdiction of the community," see Olga Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 7.

Chapter 1: The Problem of Reading for Pleasure in Jewish Legal Thought, 220-1863

The critique of pleasure reading in Jewish intellectual culture dates at least to Maimonides. The Rambam's position was based on his attachment to both philosophy and Torah study as the sole paths toward truth. While his own project of reconciling these two modes of intellectual inquiry were not always appreciated by his contemporaries and by later Jewish thinkers differently invested from him in Torah study, *halakhah*, and Kabbalah, Maimonides' distaste for pleasure reading dominated the canonical Jewish legal literature of the late medieval and early modern periods.

The Rambam developed his position from a new interpretation of the following passage in the Mishnah, the collection of Jewish legal thought redacted ca. 220 CE:

All of Israel has a share in the world to come, as it is said "All your people also shall be righteous, forever they shall inherit the land" (Isaiah 60:21). And these do not have a share in the world to come: one who says there is no resurrection of the dead, one who says the Torah is not from heaven, and an *apikoros*. Rabbi Akiva says: also one who reads the external books [...]."²⁹

Basing himself on the Gemara (discussion of the Mishnah) in Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b, Maimonides, in line with other medieval commentators, glossed Rabbi Akiva's term "external books" as "the books of heretics" (*minim* or *tsdukim*).³⁰ In the Talmudic passage that discussed this Mishnah, Rav Yosef adds that "to read the Book of Ben Sira is also forbidden."³¹ Like Rav Yosef, Maimonides invoked Ben Sira's work, which he compared to these "external books." In his commentary on the Talmud, the medieval rabbinic scholar Shlomo Yitzhaki (Rashi, 1040-1105) glossed "Ben Sira" as a work "containing nonsense," which "leads to the nullification of the Torah."³² He thereby emphasized the heretical tendencies of this kind of "nonsense." What distinguished the commentary on the Mishnah from both the Gemara and other medieval commentators such as Rashi was his expansive illustration of bad authors, books and modes of reading. In the Rambam's words, Ben Sira was

a man who wrote books of foolishness[...] that have no reason and are useless; they waste one's time with vain matters, like the books that one finds among the Arabs, such as books of history, legends of kings, genealogies of

²⁹ Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1

כל ישראל, יש להם חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר "ועמך כולם צדיקים, לעולם יירשו ארץ" (ישעיהו ס, כא). ואלו שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא האומר אין תחיית המתים, ואין תורה מן השמים, ואפיקורוס. רבי עקיבה אומר, אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים [...].

³⁰ Because of the complicated history of the word "*minim*" (heretic sectarians) in the history of Hebrew books and Christian censorship (as well as Jewish self-censorship), many manuscripts and printed editions of the Talmud read "*tsdukim*" (Sadducees). The term "*minim*" was often flagged as a derogatory appellation for Christians. However, for all the commentators involved, both "*minim*" and "*tsdukim*" would have signified "heretics" against rabbinic Judaism.

³¹ Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b.

³² Rashi to "רב יוסף אמר אף בספר בן סירה," Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b.

"שיש בו דברי הבאי ובא עליהם לידי ביטול תורה"

the Arabs, and books of music and the like which contain no wisdom and substantive usefulness but are merely a waste of time.³³

With his line of associations, Maimonides connected Ben Sira's work not only to heresy but also to some of the books published in the vernacular language of his day, Arabic. These works, about history, legends, genealogy and music, were books which, in the Rambam's view, were primarily intended to provide pleasure to their readers. For Maimonides, this meant that these books had no purpose and offered no access to truth or wisdom. His critique of pleasure reading as a "mere" waste of time restricted worthy intellectual activity to the study of Torah and philosophy. In other words, there was no way in which reading for pleasure could be intellectually, morally, spiritually or otherwise productive.

The Rambam's interpretations of Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 survived in modified form in the work of the Italian Jewish commentator Ovadiah ben Avraham of Bertinoro (d. ca. 1500). The latter's commentary on the Mishnah was included in almost all editions of the work after first being published in Venice in 1549. Like Maimonides, Bertinoro glossed "external books" as the "books of heretics," using the word "*minim*." Unlike the Rambam, however, Bertinoro chose "the works of Aristotle the Greek and his peers" as examples of "books of heretics." He expanded this category even further. The injunction against reading external books, according to Bertinoro, also applied to "chronicles about the kings of non-Jews, poems of flirtation, and *writings of desire* which have no wisdom and no value other than wasting time."³⁴ The term "writings of desire" (*divrei besbek*) may have originally been a translation of vernacular terms for romances and early novels, such as the Italian "*romanzo*." As Bertinoro also mentioned "poems of flirtation" (*shirim shel agavim*), which referred to shorter erotic poems or perhaps ballads, "writings of desire" probably indicated longer poetic or prose novels. In Bertinoro, unlike in Maimonides, we thus see an explicit association of pleasure reading with erotic writing. Unlike the Rambam, who listed works of history in his critique, Bertinoro's gloss focused more on genres of writing that we would clearly recognize as imaginative literature intended to be read solely for pleasure.

In expanding Rabbi Akiva's original statement, the commentaries of Maimonides and Bertinoro on the Mishnah both ignored a dissenting voice found in the Talmud. Whereas the Gemara in the Babylonian Talmud, mentioned previously, extended the injunction against "external books" to Ben Sira, the Palestinian Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) actually limited its scope:

Rabbi Akiva says "Even one who reads in external books." For example, the books of Ben Sira and the books of Ben La'anah. But books by Homer and all the books written later, one who reads them is like one who reads a letter. What's the reason? "Furthermore, my son, be warned, [of making many books there is no end, and much study is exertion of the body]" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). They were given for recitation not for tiring study.³⁵

³³ Commentary on Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1. Translation based on Maimonides, *Maimonides' Commentary on the Mishnah*, 150.

³⁴ R. Ovadiah me-Bartenura on "be-sfarim ha-hitsonim" in Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1.

³⁵ Talmud Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 10:1 (50a).

In its elucidation of the Mishnah, the Yerushalmi also at first referred to Ben Sira and even mentioned another author called “Ben La’anah.” But then, the Yerushalmi allowed the reading of “Homer.” Whether or not the authors of this sentence in the Yerushalmi knew *The Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, “Homer” signified some form of epic poetry to them. Furthermore, all “later” books – perhaps books recognized as being of a later date than the Prophets or the Writings, were allowed – at least for a certain kind of reading. The argument advanced in the Yerushalmi was that such books are read like correspondence. Here, the Yerushalmi actually defined two different kinds of reading, drawing on a passage in Ecclesiastes. On one hand, there was intense “study” of Torah with the purpose of defining the Law. But when people read Homer, they did not study his works in this manner but recited them as they would when reading correspondence. The word that the Yerushalmi used here for describing this practice was “*bigayon*,” which it contrasted with “*yegi’ab*” (exertion). Although, the term “*bigayon*” in medieval Hebrew literature and modern works could mean “logic” or “reason,” in this context it referred to a kind of “declamation,” though not necessarily a formal one. Contemporary Western readers would not automatically associate the act of reading letters of correspondence with reciting them, but in antiquity, in the Near East and in Greece and Rome, reading silently was uncommon. Jewish culture preserved the ancient practice of reading out loud well into the modern period.³⁶ The distinction made in the Yerushalmi is between a rigorous, probably communal study of texts, which stopped to explain words and sentences, and a more leisurely, semi-private reading of letters and imaginative literature to oneself.

The interpretation of Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 in the Palestinian Talmud, which suggested a more tolerant attitude toward pleasure reading, did not find an echo in the writings of medieval and early modern Jewish legal scholars and exegetes. The birth of Hebrew publishing, which eventually enabled the rise of print imaginative literature among Jews (in Hebrew and vernacular languages), also coincided with the emergence of new codes and ways of disseminating halakhic rulings. At least initially, the latter led to an intensification of the opposition to pleasure reading, which is apparent in the *Shulhan Arukh* (“Set Table”), a synoptic codification of legal rulings completed in the Ottoman Palestinian city of Safed in 1563 by the Sephardic scholar and mystic Yosef Karo (1488-1575).³⁷

Drawing on the codes of Yitzhak Alfasi (Rif, 1013-1103), Maimonides, and Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh, 1250/59-1327), Karo’s work presented a distilled and authoritative *halakhab*. In cases where there was disagreement among the positions of these three great codifiers of the past, Karo chose the majority opinion. The consequent privileging of the opinions of the Rif and Rambam, a North African and an Iberian respectively, over those of the Rosh, born in

"אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים. כגון ספרי בן סירא וסיפרי בן לענה אבל סיפרי המירם וכל ספרים שנכתבו מיכן והילך הקורא בהן כקורא באיגרת. מאי טעמא? ויותר מהמה בני היוהר וגו'. להגיון ניתנו ליגיעה לא ניתנו"

³⁶ A decisive break with past reading practices occurred in the Latin West during the Early Middle Ages among Christians. Reading was increasingly confined to the closed spaces of churches, monks’ cells, and cloisters, and silent or murmured reading replaced reading out loud. Jews retained earlier reading practices well into the modern period. In fact, reading out loud is still preferred in many circles. Cavallo and Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West*, 16-17.

³⁷ On Karo see the classic study by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). For some suggestive ideas about the “book history” of the *Shulhan Arukh* see Dweck, “What is a Jewish Book?,” 368-371.

Germany, provoked some opposition among Ashkenazi authorities in sixteenth-century Poland. In particular, Ashkenazi legal scholars saw the new code as a threat to local custom (*minhag*). That threat as well as the Ashkenazi opposition to the *Shulhan Arukh* were effectively neutralized with the publication of a gloss to Karo's work by the Polish scholar Moshe Isserles (Rema, ca. 1520-1572), which he called the *Mapah* ("The Table Cloth"). Often modifying the conclusions of Karo, Rema's *Mapah* added a Polish voice to the code. Included in all printed editions of the *Shulhan Arukh* published after 1578, the Rema's glosses follow Karo's rulings in the body of the text, though they are usually printed in the letters used for commentaries (called "Rashi script"). The combination of Karo's and Isserles's texts together came to constitute the *Shulhan Arukh* thereafter. Printed with a growing body of super-commentaries, almost all of them by Ashkenazi scholars, the *Shulhan Arukh* became the authoritative code of Jewish law in the early modern period. Though its *halakhah* was never completely unassailable, the *Shulhan Arukh*'s decisions remained dominant in the following centuries.

Karo's opinion in the *Shulhan Arukh* presented a maximalist halakhic position against pleasure reading. First, such reading would almost always be limited in some way by the general obligation of Torah study incumbent upon all Jewish males. Failing to set aside times for the study of Torah was in itself a transgression. Devoting leisure time and intellectual energy to other kinds of reading went against the ideals of almost all medieval and early modern Jewish intellectual elites and societies. The expression of this fundamental pillar of Jewish belief in the *Shulhan Arukh* was hardly unique. In Karo's opinion,

One who is able to occupy himself with Torah and does not do so, or who read, learned, and explained without concentration, or neglected his study, he falls under the rule "for he scorned the word of the Lord [and broke His commandment: that soul will surely be cut off, its sin is within it (Numbers 15:31)]."³⁸

Karo's statement also emphasized the manner in which study had to be pursued. It involved a process of reading, repetition and memorization, and then explanation or analysis. Ideally, this study had to take place in a public institution, in the company of other learners, and preferably the "reading" would be out loud. As Karo exhorted the Jewish man:

Everyone who studies in the house of assembly (synagogue) does not soon forget. And everyone who exerts himself in his study with modesty gains knowledge, as it is said "but with the humble is wisdom" [Prov. 11:2]. And everyone who speaks out loud when he is studying, it stays with him. But one who reads quietly, he soon forgets.³⁹

³⁸ Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah Hilkhoh Talmud Torah 69:25.

כל שאפשר לו לעסוק בתורה ואינו עוסק או שקרא ושנה ופירש להבלי העולם והניח תלמודו וזנחו הרי זה בכלל כי דבר ה' בזה. I have followed the Eliyahu ben Shlomo (Gra, 1720-1797) in translating "ופירש להבלי העולם" (lit., "and interpreted for the vanities of the world") as "שאינו משגיח על המשנה" ("one who doesn't take care in his learning"). Bi'ur ha-Gra 74 (עד) to Yoreh De'ah 69:25. *Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah*, vol. 3 (Vilna: Romm Brothers, 1880), 137.

³⁹ Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah Hilkhoh Talmud Torah 69:22.

שכל הלומד בבית הכנסת לא במהרה הוא משכח וכל היגע בתלמודו בצנועה מחכים שנה ואת נועים חכמה וכל המשמיע קולו בשעת תלמודו מתקיים בידו אבל הקורא בלחש במהרה הוא שוכח.

Karo's commentators of course took the essence of these statements for granted. Both Shabtai ben Meir ha-Kohen (Shakh, 1621-1662) and David ha-Levi Segal (Taz, c. 1586-1667), the major super-commentators of this section of the *Shulhan Arukh* were most concerned about Karo's reference to the "synagogue" (*beit knesset*) as the setting for Torah study. They were puzzled that Karo did not mention the *beit midrash*, the communal house of study, instead. In his commentary *Turei Zahav* ("Columns of Gold"), the Taz explained that Karo was talking about a situation where no *beit midrash* existed in a community. In such a case, it was preferable for every man to study in the synagogue rather than each one learning by himself in his home.⁴⁰

These formulations of a general, positive obligation to engage in Torah study only indirectly discouraged pleasure reading. But Karo and his commentators as well as later, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century halakhists devoted a considerable amount of writing specifically to the practices of reading for pleasure. In a passage on the laws governing Sabbath observance, Karo began by prohibiting such reading on the Sabbath⁴¹ and immediately expanded that prohibition to the days of the week:

Poetry and fables about profane matters and writings of desire like *Sefer Imanuel* as well as books of wars, it is forbidden to read them on the Sabbath. Even during the week, they are prohibited because [of the injunction against sitting in] "the seat of scoffers" (Psalms 1:1). And he [who reads these] transgresses "do not turn to idols [or make molten gods for yourselves]" (Lev. 19:4), do not remove God from your thoughts. And with regard to writings of desire, it is [the transgression of] arousing the evil inclination. And those who write, copy, and, needless to say, print these [works] cause the multitudes to sin.⁴²

We can see in Karo's opinion some specific connections to Maimonides's opinion – in the opposition to the historical chronicles ("books of wars"), though in this case, the immediate context is reading on the Sabbath. The other examples of genres adduced by Karo introduced new terms into the critique of pleasure reading – poetry (*melitsab*) and fables (*mashalim*), specifically about profane matters or conversation, "*sibat bulin*." In the Hebrew Bible, these words occur together in two passages, which have been translated in a number of different ways. A *mashal* is typically a proverb or a parable but can also signify a mocking or satirical aphorism. *Melitsab* occurs twice in the Hebrew Bible and seems to refer to an epigram or riddle, sometimes likewise with the intent to mock. In rabbinic literature, all of these meanings were preserved to some extent. *Mashal* most often refers to an allegory or parable but also to fables – i.e., somewhat longer stories with some didactic and allegorical

⁴⁰ Turei Zahav to Yoreh De'ah 69:22. *Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah*, 3:137.

שכל הלומד בבית הכנסת. נראה שזה אמר בשעה שאין בית המדרש קבוע בעיר ובני העיר לומדים כל אחד בביתו על כן טוב שילך לבית הכנסת ללמוד [...].

⁴¹ The question of what one can read specifically on the Sabbath arises from a concern with preserving the holiness of the day, which is contrasted with the "profane" remainder of the week.

⁴² *Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim*, Hilkhot Shabbat 407:16.

מליצות ומשלים של שיחת חולין דברי חשק כגון ספר עמנואל וכן ספרי מלחמות אסור לקרות בהם בשבת ואף בחול אסור משום מושב ליצנים ועובר משום אל תפנו אל האילים לא תפנו את מדעתכם ובדברי חשק איכה תו משום מגרר יצר הרע ומי שחיברן ומי שהעתיקן וא"צ לומר המדפיסן מחטיאים את הרבים.

content. *Melitsab* evolved to mean poetics, metaphorical writing, and rhetoric more generally. Depending on the context, it could have the connotation of “scorning” or “sneering” oratory, presented in writing or speech.⁴³ For the author of the *Shulhan Arukh*, *melitsab* and *mashalim*, belonged to a larger category of imaginative writing. Lacking any obvious liturgical function, halakhic or exegetical content, they were texts that were read or listened to for pleasure.

Another sub-category that Karo included in this prohibition were the “writings of desire” (*divrei besbek*) already listed by Bertinoro. Again, the reference by the earlier writer, Bertinoro, in his commentary on the Mishnah, was unrelated to laws about Sabbath observance. Karo began by introducing them in this context but intended the prohibition to cover reading during the week as well. In the *Shulhan Arukh*, he specifically cited the work of the Italian Hebrew poet Imanuel ben Shlomo ha-Romi (Immanuel of Rome, 1261-1328), whose *Mahberot* Karo mistakenly called *Sefer Immanuel*. This book, a brilliant collection of sonnets, rhymed prose narratives, and persuasive letters was first published in Brescia in 1492. Karo may have seen or heard about the second edition, published in Constantinople in 1535. Imanuel’s writing combined merciless satire with descriptions of its protagonist’s highly amusing literary, commercial, and romantic exploits.⁴⁴

⁴³ Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2005), 790. In the Bible, מליצה (*melitsab*) occurs in Proverbs 1:6 (להבין משל, ומליצה); and in Habakkuk 2:6 (דברי חכמים, והידתם), both times with the word “*mashal*.” The precise meaning is unclear, as the translation history suggests (see below).

Proverbs 1:6

For understanding proverb (*mashal*) and epigram (*melitsab*), the words of the wise and their riddles (1985 JPS).

To understand a proverb, and a figure; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings (1917 JPS).

To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings (KJV).

Habakkuk 2:6

Surely all these shall pronounce a satire against him, a pointed epigram concerning him (1985 JPS).

Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting riddle against him (1917 JPS).

Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him (KJV).

In rabbinic literature, *melitsab* as “metaphor” occurs in Shir ha-shirim Rabbah to Song of Songs 1:1 (מליצה מנין?), and in Midrash Mishlei to Proverbs 1.6, where it is associated with scoffing:

To understand *mashal* – those are *mashalim* of Torah, and *melitsab* – this is the Torah itself, which is called there *melitsab* because it rescues [pun on *metsil*, “rescue”] those who study it from the judgment of Gehenna in the days to come. Another interpretation: one who scoffs [*mitlotsets*, pun on “scoffer, fool”] about words of Torah, more scoffing is given to him, as you say “with regard to scoffers, He scoffs at them” (Proverbs 3:34).

להבין משל - אלו משלים של תורה, ומליצה - זו התורה עצמה, שנקראת שמה מליצה, שהיא מצלת עוסקיה מדינה של גיהנם לעתיד לבוא. ד"א למה נקראת שמה מליצה - שכל מי שמתלווץ בדברי תורה, מוסיפין לו ליצנות, כמה דאת אמר "אם ללצים הוא יליץ."

⁴⁴ For a recent study detailing one of these exploits, see Ann Brener, “Stealing Wisdom: A Story of Books (and Book-Thieves) from Immanuel of Rome's Mahbarot,” *Prooftexts* 28 (2008): 1-27. A critical edition of the work was published by *Mahberot 'Imanu'el ha-Romi*, ed. Dov Jarden (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1957).

Karo objected to poems, fables, and writings of desire (i.e., prose and poetic romances or novels) on three grounds. One, he equated them with a lack of piety, describing them as turning the reader away from the sacred. Closely linked to this, he saw these books as writing which “scoffed” at sacred ideas and authorities. They were frivolous, befitting of “fools” or *letsim*. Third, Karo saw the sexually suggestive work of Imanuel in particular as exciting the imagination – in his rabbinic vocabulary, the “evil inclination.” In this context, he specifically alluded to the new market for printed books, decrying all those engaged in the work of publishing such books as Imanuel’s as exerting a pernicious influence on the masses. Karo’s position thus reaffirmed the opinions of Bertinoro and applied them to specific instances of literature, such as the work of Imanuel. The Ashkenazi commentators, however, did not accept Karo’s opinion as it was.

In his gloss, Moshe Isserles significantly modified Karo’s maximalist position on pleasure reading. For the Rema, the language of the texts in question determined whether one could read them, a matter that Karo did not consider:

It is necessary to be more precise about what it is forbidden to read from profane matters. With regard to the histories of wars, it is specifically [prohibited to read them] if they are written in the vernacular [La’az], but if they are written in the Holy Tongue, it is allowed [...] (Rema Orah Hayim, Hilkhhot Shabbat 407:16).

Isserles thus removed Hebrew-language histories and chronicles from the list of prohibited Sabbath reading material, thereby also permitting them for reading during the week. As long as these works were written in Hebrew rather than in Yiddish or other vernacular languages, they were permitted. Isserles did not cite specific reasons for this permission. We can only speculate about the causes of the divergent attitudes among the Sephardic and Ashkenazi legal scholars. As we will see in the following chapter, the Rema, in his day, could have observed an incipient Yiddish imaginative literature for pleasure readers. He may also have been more concerned about the level of expertise in Hebrew by Jews in Central and Eastern Europe than Karo was. It is well-known that Jewish scholars in the Middle East, especially the Sephardi expellees in the Ottoman empire, were generally more proficient in Hebrew grammar than Ashkenazim in the sixteenth century. Showing forbearance for profane literature in Hebrew could have been a pedagogical measure.

The Rema’s gloss left some potential ambiguity about the other kinds of reading prohibited by Karo. Karo’s first statement seemed to suggest that study of Torah was the only permissible kind of learning and reading on the Sabbath and festivals: “It is forbidden to learn anything but words of Torah on the Sabbath and festivals. And even books of wisdom [*sifrei hokhmot*, i.e. philosophy and sciences] are prohibited” (Orah Hayim 407:17). However, Karo also acknowledged another authority, “someone,” who permitted reading works of philosophy and science on the Sabbath and festivals. The super-commentator Moshe ben Naftali Hirsch Rivkes (1591-1671/2) attributed this alternative opinion to the Spanish scholar Shlomo ben Aderet (Rashba, 1235-1310).⁴⁵ Whatever the identity of the more permissive authority, according to Karo, this scholar “allowed looking through an astrolabe,”

⁴⁵ Be’er ha-golah 1 on Orah Hayim 307:17.

using the same reasoning by which he arrived at the opinion that one could study books of science or philosophy on the Sabbath and on festivals.⁴⁶

The permission of some form of study and reading other than Torah, provided by this opinion, combined with the Rema's tolerance for certain Hebrew-language texts, provided further openings for the later Ashkenazi super-commentators. Although they continued to prohibit the most hedonistic kind of reading, these commentators, like Isserles, showed an appreciation for works of history. They endowed the latter with a special function, which they apparently could not attribute to the imaginative literature against which Karo had inveighed.

Thus, the commentary *Be'er Heitev* ("Clarify Thoroughly") of Yehudah ben Shimon Ashkenazi Tiktin (1730-1770), a Polish scholar, glossed Karo's prohibition on reading "stories about profane matters" on the Sabbath with the qualification that "this rule does not apply to *Sefer Yosipon* and *Sefer Yubasin* and the chronicles of R. Y. Kohen."⁴⁷ The former was a medieval Hebrew history, loosely based on some parts of Josephus's histories and often attributed to him. It was compiled some time in the tenth century and printed as early as 1476 in Mantua. The first Yiddish translation was published in 1546, and the book continued to be very popular in Hebrew and Yiddish, in the eighteenth century. *Sefer Yubasin* ("Book of Genealogy") was a later work by the Iberian Jewish scholar Abraham Zacuto (1452-ca. 1515), which told the history of the Jews from Genesis to the beginning of the sixteenth century. . Yosef ha-Kohen (1496-1577) was a Sephardic Jew whose parents emigrated to Avignon and then Genoa in the wake of the Spanish expulsion. A physician and prolific writer, he published the *Chronicles of the Kings of France and the House of Othman the Turk* (*Divrei ha-yamim le-malkhei Tsarfat u-vet Otoman ha-Tuger*) in 1544 (at Sabionetta), among other works.⁴⁸ Ashkenazi seemed to endorse the ban on reading the vernacular versions of these works, at least on the Sabbath, but he went against Karo and in support of Rema, to affirm halakhically the reading of Jewish history. Indeed, in the case of the *Chronicles* of Yosef ha-Kohen, Ashkenazi even allowed the reading of a work concerned as much with the history of non-Jewish rulers as with the Jews in their countries. Here was a significant reversal of Maimonides's disdain for precisely those kinds of works – "the books of legends of kings by the Arabs."

The *Be'er Heitev* also introduced into the halakhic literature a new justification for reading these works of history. The Rema's gloss, which had accorded a special status to historical works written in the Holy Tongue, did not explicitly reveal the reasoning behind his opinion. But Ashkenazi argued for permitting the reading of historical works with the claim that the reader would "learn from them ethics [*musar*] and piety [*yir'ah*]." He then added another book to the list, *Shevet Yehuda* ("The Scepter of Judah") by the early sixteenth-century writer Sephardic exile Solomon ibn Verga. The *Shevet Yehuda*, like all of the other books (other than *Yosipon*) mentioned by Ashkenazi, was part of the "unparalleled resurgence in Jewish historical writing" in the sixteenth century. Like many of the works written in the wake of

⁴⁶ Orah Hayim 307:17.

⁴⁷ *Be'er Heitev* 18 (π) on Orah Hayim 307:16, "hulin."

⁴⁸ A new edition was published by an equally prolific Anglo-Galician writer in the nineteenth century. Yosef ha-Kohen, *Divrei ha-yamim le-malkhei Tsarfat u-vet Otoman ha-Tuger*, ed. Joseph Kohen Tsedek (Lemberg: S. Bak & A.J. Menkes, 1859).

the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, it focused especially on the history of Jewish suffering.⁴⁹ Ashkenazi's commentary of the *Shulhan Arukh* provided an eighteenth-century rabbinic theory of reading the lachrymose history of the Jews for the purpose of moral fortification. These justifications for reading history were already contained in many of the introductions written by the authors of such works. But by the eighteenth century they had also entered the halakhic sphere.

In his commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayim, Mor u-ketsi'ab* ("Myrrh and Cassia"), the great eighteenth-century German Jewish rabbi, Ya'akov ben Tsvi Ashkenazi Emden (Yabets, 1698-1776) defined in more detail what kinds of histories were permitted for reading on the Sabbath. He also provided additional justification for reading such works during the week. Emden spoke highly of the first part of *Tsemah David* (1592) by the Jewish astronomer and historian David Gans (1541-1613) and the *Sefer Yubasin*. Both of them, he wrote, "are considered sacred writings, because they only deal with the sages of Israel and Talmudic matters." Emden also mentioned the *Sefer Yosipon* – he emphasized that he was referring to the Hebrew one. Emden approved of most of the first part of the work, which "concerned Jewish matters and the miracles performed for the Jews." But he strongly discouraged reading

the stories of nonsense [lit., "vanity"] about Nektanibor (Nectanebo) which continues from Alexander of Macedonia because the whole story is not from *Yosipon* itself but rather an addition that its copyists added [...] and they filled it with nonsense of the magicians of Egypt. This is certainly also prohibited to read on a regular basis during the week.⁵⁰

These stories with their mysterious attribution to the "magicians of Egypt," found in Book II, Chapter 13 of *Sefer Yosipon*, described the life of Alexander, ending with his alleged poisoning and burial in the city of Alexandria in Egypt.⁵¹ In this particular case, Emden described these as vanity or "nonsense" not only because they dealt with the history of Alexander (rather than with the history of the Jews) but also because they were obviously fantastic (even more so than other parts of the book). Emden recognized that this part of the *Yosipon* diverged too much from the rest of the book – or perhaps even from Josephus's original work. Because they contained nothing "holy" – that is no discussion of the history of the Jewish people as sacred history – Emden did not allow reading of these passages on the Sabbath and discouraged reading them during the week.

Emden prohibited certain parts of various other Hebrew-language histories that dealt primarily with the non-Jewish rulers, for Sabbath reading. He specifically cited Yosef ha-Kohen's aforementioned *Chronicles of the Kings of France and the House of Othman the Turk*:

⁴⁹ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 57. See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 46 (1979): 607-638; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1976).

⁵⁰ Jacob Emden, *Mor u-ketsi'ab*, vol. 2 (Altona, 1768), Siman 307, 18.

חוץ מספורי הבלים שנקבעו בתוכו, כמעשה נקתניבור והנמשך מאלכסנדרוס מוקדון, כי זה הספור כולו אינו מדברי יוסיפון עצמו אלא תוספת שהכניסו בו מעתיקיו, ליפותו בשו"א, ומלאוהו מהבלי חרטומי מצרים זה ודאי אסור גם בחול בקבע.

⁵¹ See for example the following editions: *Sefer Yosipon* (Venice, 1544), ca. 56. *Sefer Yosipon* (Warsaw: Munk, 1889), 46.

Because its main subject matter was “the history of the nations [of the world], which there is no need to know, it [was] forbidden to read on the Sabbath.” The same applied to the second parts of *Tsemah David* and *Sefer Yubasin*. Unlike, the “bad” parts of *Yosipon*, however, Emden allowed reading the latter during the days of the week, but “only in times of leisure, when the teachers are tired from study, and on vacation days.” Emden permitted such reading by adding objectives higher than pleasure. First, readers could acquire “pure and clean language” from the *Chronicles*. Second, knowing the history of the (non-Jewish) world ensured that a scholar would not appear an ignoramus among Christians.⁵²

Like Ashkenazi, Emden also encouraged the reading of this “lachrymose” Hebrew-language history during the week.⁵³ In particular, he praised ibn Verga’s *Shevet Yehuda*. But unlike Ashkenazi, Emden prohibited reading this work on the Sabbath. The reason for this prohibition, however, was different from others discussed so far. Emden wrote that because of the sorrow that such works produced among their Jewish readers – he added the part of the *Yosipon* that described the destruction of the Temple to the list – they were not suitable for the most joyous day of the week, on which fasting and mourning were forbidden. Rather, he encouraged Jews to read both the sixth part of *Yosipon*, which he called the “choice flour,” as well as *Shevet Yehuda* during the three weeks of ritual mourning that precede the Ninth of Av (the fast day commemorating the Temple’s destruction).

Emden added to the justifications for reading *Shevet Yehuda* and “lachrymose” Jewish histories already articulated by Ashkenazi. According to Emden, books like *Shevet Yehuda*, combined the narration of Jewish suffering with the commemoration of the Jews’ miraculous redemption by God. Even though reading these works did not count as Torah study, all Jewish males were obligated in reading them during the week:

It is proper for every Jewish man to peruse this book and to know its content. And he will earn from it a few matters of wisdom and from everything he will gain through the history of the miracles of God [that He performed] for our holy nation, which has been persecuted from the day it came into existence. The eyes of God are upon us and will not abandon us to be destroyed. And he steadied our feet on a rock against all those rising against us. This is why I say it is an obligation incumbent upon every man in Israel to be an expert about this beautiful book, to remember the benevolence of God for us in all the generations. Because the many persecutions have not ended yet [...].⁵⁴

⁵² Emden, *Mor u-ketsi’ab*, 2:Siman 307, 18.

⁵³ Salo W. Baron (1895-1989) first used the expression “lachrymose theory” to describe the modern Jewish philosophy of history that saw the pre-Emancipation era as a succession of trials for the Jewish people. Salo W. Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” in *The Menorah Treasury*, ed. Leo W. Schwarz, English (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 63. Baron’s essay originally appeared as Salo W. Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” *Menorah* XIV, no. 6 (June 1928): 515-528. I am using the term “lachrymose” here to describe any conception of the history of the Jews as the drama of Jewish continuity in the face of relentless violence and persecution. See also the glosses of Yerushalmi and Baron in Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry*, 6, 210 fn. 12.

⁵⁴ Emden, *Mor u-ketsi’ab*, 2:Siman 307, 18.

וראוי לכל איש יהודי לעיין בו ולידע עניניו. וירויח ממנו כמה דברי חכמה ועל כולם יזכה על ידו בסיפור נפלאות ה' לאומתנו הקדושה, אשר נרדפה מעת היותה, עיני ה' עלינו שלא עזבנו לכלותינו, והקים על סלע רגלינו נגד הקמים עלינו, לכן אני אומר

Emden and Ashkenazi thus devised new justifications for reading certain kinds of history, even though these did not qualify as Torah study. Emden did not mention imaginative literature in his work, though his critique of the fantastical parts of *Yosipon* suggests that he was not positively predisposed toward it. Despite his defense of a type of reading that deviated from Torah study, Ashkenazi too was unable and unwilling to fit works such as the aforementioned *Mahberot* of Imanuel into his schema: “and writings of desire and Imanuel are forbidden even in the Holy Tongue.” Ashkenazi did not comment explicitly on the question of reading such works during the week. It is indicative of the persistent critique of imaginative literature specifically that Ashkenazi allowed the reading of a different kind of non-Torah writing *on the Sabbath*. Though he did so with rhetorical resignation, Ashkenazi accepted the widespread reading of newspapers (perhaps containing financial tables bearing news of importance to merchants). He followed his endorsement of the prohibition on pleasure reading of imaginative literature with the observation that “because of our many transgressions, even the pious read the *kurent* on the Sabbath and no one takes it to heart [Isaiah 57:1]. And carrying it is permitted.”⁵⁵

By “*kurent*” (related to French, *courant*, “current”), Ashkenazi meant a news or commercial bulletin, almost certainly printed in Yiddish or another vernacular language. It is possible that his reference was specifically to the second Jewish newspaper in the history of the Jewish press, the Yiddish Amsterdam-based *Kurant*, published on a semi-weekly basis between August 1686 and December 1687.⁵⁶ Referring to lived reality rather than the ideal world of *halakbah*, Ashkenazi used a standard formulation about the current generation’s “many transgressions” essentially to accept a practice contrary to the law of the *Shulhan Arukh*. Since the larger framework of his discussion were the laws of the Sabbath, he also addressed the matter of “carrying” (objects outside of the house – forbidden in Jewish law without the provision of a special boundary marker called an *eruv*). He had earlier ruled about Imanuel and the fables that “one may not carry them [outside of the home],”⁵⁷ since they were not permitted reading for the Sabbath. The *Courant*, on the other hand, could be carried on the Sabbath, having become permitted for reading despite the fact that it dealt with profane

מצווה היא על כל אדם מישראל, להיות בקי בספר נחמד הלז, לזכור חסדי ה' עלינו בכל הדורות, כי לא תמנו בכל השמדות המשוממים הרעיונים.

The meaning of Emden’s last two words (not included in the translation but see above for the Hebrew text) is unclear. In a later responsum by the nineteenth-century Galician scholar Zvi Hirsch Chajes (Maharats Hayes, 1805-1885), which quotes Emden’s work, the last sentence was “emended” to read *כי לא תמנו בכל בהשמדות המשומ' את הרעיונות*. There are several other differences between Chajes’s quotation of Emden, as it appeared in print, and the 1768 edition of Emden’s *Mor u-ketsi'ah*. For example, the work by Chajes adds to the justification for reading the history of non-Jews, “lest they say this is a people composed only of fools, bereft of intellect,” “ולא יאמרו רק עם סכל ועניי הדעת העם הזה.” Zvi Hirsch Chajes, *Sefer She'elot u-Tshuvot Moreinu-ha-Rav Tsvi Hayut* (Zhovka/Zólkiew: Kirshboym, 1849), Siman 12, 648.

⁵⁵ Be'er Heitev 19 (יט) to Orah Hayim 307:16. See also the opinion of Emden, which likewise permits the reading of “*petakei kurentin*.” Emden, *Mor u-ketsi'ah*, 2:Siman 307, 18.

⁵⁶ The first Jewish newspaper was the Judeo-Spanish *Gazeta de Amsterdam*, published in 1678 for less than a year. Both the *Gazeta* and the *Kurant* were business newspapers. A Yiddish weekly called the *Dybernfurter Privilegirte Tsaytung* containing political and financial news was published between 1771 and 1772 in Germany. Another politically-focused weekly called *Tsaytung* was published between 1789 and 1790 in the Alsatian city of Metz. See the still-valuable article by Richard Gottheil and William Popper, “Periodicals,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9 (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1905), 602.

⁵⁷ Be'er Heitev 19 (יט) to Orah Hayim 307:16, “ha-kodesh.”

matters and was written in the vernacular. Moreover, there was no problem reading it during the week.

On the other hand, despite the significant easing of Karo's original formulations, by Isserles and then by subsequent commentators, the kind of reading that Imanuel's works signified – reading to which no higher purpose than pleasure could be assigned – remained prohibited on the Sabbath and discouraged for the days of the week. This prohibition can be found even in the nineteenth-century super-commentary on the Mishnah of a relatively liberal rabbinic scholar such as Israel Lipschütz (Tiferet Yisrael, 1782-1860). Lipschütz, rabbi in Dessau and Danzig, interpreted the injunction against the “external books” as applying to regular reading of “Homer, the religious scriptures of idolaters, and other books of *apikorsim*.” But it was acceptable for scholars to read such books “incidentally.” More specifically, Lipschütz explained,

the believer should not fear reading them on occasion in order to know how to answer heretics; and especially in the bathroom it is proper for a Torah scholar to browse in them.⁵⁸

Lipschütz wondered how the commentators had even arrived at the idea that one who read Ben Sira would not have a share in the world to come: “it is only forbidden; we didn't hear any place in the Talmud [where it is stated that one who reads Ben Sira has no share in the world to come].” He also dismissed Bertinoro's opposition to reading the histories of non-Jews and “*tsaytung*” (Yid., newspaper), though Bertinoro actually had not mentioned the latter. According to Lipschütz, both could be read in the bathroom. However, “writings of desire” were forbidden there too.

Among male rabbinic scholars the reading of imaginative literature for pleasure found few supporters even in the nineteenth century. A breakthrough of sorts can be found in the posthumously published masterpiece, *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zman* (“Guide for the Perplexed of our Time,” 1851) of the Galician Jewish philosopher Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840). Returning to Rabbi Akiva's statement in the Mishnah that those who read “external books” do not have a share in the world to come, Krochmal historicized the second-century rabbinic text and foregrounded its more lenient interpretation in the Talmud Yerushalmi (see above). Krochmal argued that the “external books” mentioned in the Mishnah were really those books not included in the canonization of the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible. They were those books that Christians called “apocrypha.” According to Krochmal, the point of the Mishnah was merely to restrict the public study and teaching of these non-canonical books. However, Krochmal argued, there was no prohibition on reading non-Torah literature privately. If one engaged in “*higayon*” – private recitation to oneself – there was no halakhic problem with reading even Ben Sira. Without invoking Bertinoro's name,

⁵⁸ Tiferet Yisrael 8 (ת) to Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1. *Mishnayot Seder Neẓikin*, vol. 4 (Warsaw: Jawitz, 1863), 120.

כספרי (האמעער), וספר דתות של ע"ז, וספרי שאר אפיקורסים וכולן דוקא בקורא בהן קבע, אבל בדרך עראי, המאמין לא יחוש מלקרות בהן; ובפרט בב'הכס ראוי לת"ח לעיין בהם (לחם משנה); אמנם דברי חשק (שזכר הר"ב) גם שם אסור (ומה שכתב עוד הר"ב בקריאת דברי הימים של עכ"ו וצייטונג נמי בכלל זה; תמוה מאד, דהא מנ"ל? ואינו רק בכלל שיחת חולין ודברי בטלי שעובר בעשה, (כיומא ד"ט ב'); וגם הא נ"ל דבאקראי שרי דאל"כ מה שבח שבחו לריב"ז (סוכה דכ"ח א') שלא שח שיחת חולין מעולם? והרי אפי' בשבת רק להרבות בשיחות חולין אסור (כא"ח ש"ז ס"ב)? וכ"ב אדברי בן סירא אמר' בש"ס דרך אסור לקרות בו (ופשוט דזה נמי דוקא בקבע אסור; אבל שלא יהי' להקורא בו חלע"הב לא שמענו בשום דוכתא. מיהו בב"הכס פשוט דהכל שרי, ורק דברי חשק אסור שם).

Krochmal dismissed those who interpreted “external books” to mean “Aristotle.” Rather, as the Talmud Yerushalmi had shown, one could read Greek literature, such as Homer’s works – if one read them privately – i.e., for one’s own pleasure. As long as one did not treat these as books of Torah from which proofs and theological principles were derived in public study, there was no problem with reading “profane matters.”⁵⁹

The following chapter will show that Krochmal was merely legitimizing, albeit tentatively, the reading revolution that had begun transforming Jewish society from the margins, beginning in the sixteenth century.

⁵⁹ Nachman Krochmal, *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zman*, ed. Leopold Zunz (Lemberg: Michael Wolff, 1863), 87.

Chapter 2: Reading Jewish Women and the Pleasures of the Vernacular, 1500-1770

Pleasure reading as a social phenomenon of scale in the history of the Jews in Ashkenaz began in the sixteenth century and owed its rise to female readers of early modern Yiddish books.⁶⁰ Because of the gendered division of textual study and reading that prevailed in Jewish society in this period, new kinds of texts and modes of reading specifically devoted to pleasure emerged first among women. Without a female readership – a social group that comprised potentially half the population (we count not only women who could read but also those who were read to) – there would have been no market for a vernacular imaginative literature whose aim was primarily to delight readers and listeners. The association of women with imaginative literature in the vernacular, as opposed to the Hebrew and Aramaic texts read by elite males, consigned pleasure reading and fictional texts in general to a position of low prestige in Jewish society, at least until the nineteenth century.

Because Old Yiddish imaginative literature consisted largely of (extremely creative and sometimes highly original) adaptations of texts originally written by Christians, fictional forms of writing were also regarded as morally suspect in Jewish society. This association intensified in the late eighteenth century, when some of the young women from the German Jewish elite in Berlin who had publicly embraced European novels, drama, and poetry, later converted to Protestantism. In the early nineteenth century, the increasing prestige accorded to those with German cultural capital (speech, writing, educational outlook, and mannerisms) in Jewish societies in Prussia and the German lands forced a revaluation of such reading by male Jewish intellectuals. German Jewish embourgeoisement seemed to require the “feminization” of the reading practices of Jewish men. That is to say, men, too, had to turn toward vernacular reading – not in Yiddish but in German or other European languages – and away from the kind of textual study that had been their mainstay in the past.

The specters of femininity and pleasure, however, still haunted the reading of vernacular imaginative literature in nineteenth-century Jewish society. Memories linking conversions to Christianity with female readers, pleasure reading, and forms of literature which aroused the sentiments and imagination hovered above the efforts of nineteenth-century Jewish intellectuals to define a new, masculine and Jewish mode of reading. At the antipode to feminine pleasure reading loomed the texts and modes of study privileged in traditional Jewish society. *Wissenschaft* – historiography and scholarship – for German Jewish intellectuals became the mediating idea for the formation of a new kind of practice and subjectivity. Central to this novel formation was the disciplining of texts and the male intellectual into a new kind of Jewish literature and reader. Ultimately, this process involved the sublimation, that is the moderation and “elevation,” of the reading practices pioneered by Jewish women. The new intellectual elite that emerged in the early nineteenth century

⁶⁰ Any search for the origin of pleasure reading in the history of the Jews is complicated by myriad factors. The heterogeneity of this phenomenon, the variegated meanings assigned to pleasure, and the important differences among Jewish societies in Europe and elsewhere, make it difficult to fix a single point as a beginning. This dissertation therefore traces the genealogy of the “problem of pleasure” specifically in the Ashkenazi world, recognizing that this was not an isolated realm.

sought to discipline the Jewish reading revolution of the early modern period by assigning to it ends allegedly higher than mere pleasure.

Before dealing with the process by which an incipient German Jewish intellectual elite tried to supplant its rabbinic predecessors and to discipline a reading revolution initiated by women, we must look more closely at the transformation of Jewish reading practices from the early modern period until the 1770s. That story begins with the development of Yiddish literature in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, in which reading women played a significant role.

The beginnings of Central and Eastern European Jewish vernacular writing date at least to the High Middle Ages. The oldest known Yiddish text is a rhymed blessing in the *Worms Mahzor*, a two-volume illuminated manuscript prayer book for festivals from 1272.⁶¹ The earliest known compilation of Yiddish texts is known as the Cambridge Codex, which scholars date to 1382. The manuscript contains a number of Yiddish epics. Some, like *Dukus Horant*, were adaptations of medieval European epics – in this case, parts of the Germanic Hildebrand cycle. Another early popular tale of knights, friendship, and heroic conquests was *Ditrikh of Bern*. Many of these texts were Yiddish versions of various European epics, often altered to render the characters and their environments Jewish or to remove Christian allusions and plot-lines. Sometimes the latter was accomplished by subverting references to Christianity using puns and other devices. Other works were based on classical Jewish sources, retelling biblical stories such as the Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22).

Although Yiddish literature preceded the printing press and the Renaissance by several centuries, the print publications of the 1500s represented a dramatic improvement in quality and quantity. The sixteenth century saw the unprecedented rise of a printed vernacular literature written by and for Jews. In addition to a change in the number of books available to readers, vernacular Jewish literature expanded in form and substance. The new vernacular literature included works of imaginative prose and poetry, biblical concordances, and popular religious guides written in what scholars today call “Old Yiddish.” Other than chronologically delimiting the literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries from modern, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Yiddish texts, the term “Old Yiddish” describes the written vernacular of Ashkenazi Jews across the continent. This language often amounted to an orthography, diction, and syntax which represented a compromise among a diversity of local written and spoken Yiddish dialects. In an effort to ensure intelligibility and comfort across regional divisions, book publishers standardized the vernacular used in print and thereby bound a diverse group of readers into a pan-Ashkenazi book market.

The foundations of Old Yiddish literature were the translations of the Hebrew Bible into the vernacular, to which many other works continued to be linked intertextually. The earliest known printed Yiddish book was a biblical concordance, *Mirkeves ha-mishne* (Kraków, 1534). Concordances and Hebrew-Yiddish glossaries made possible larger translations from and adaptations of Hebrew texts, such as the famous *Tsene-rene* (Hanau, 1622), an imaginative

⁶¹ Facsimiles of the two surviving volumes, which are from different manuscript copies, can be viewed at “Mahzor Worms,” *Jewish National and University Library, David and Fela Shapell Family Digitization Project*, 2011, http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/worms/a_eng.html.

commentary on the Bible. *Tsene-rene* was a growing and changing work of Yiddish narrative and commentary based on the Bible. It included elaborate adaptations of classic commentaries and homiletic exegetical works, turned into engaging narrative. The oldest surviving edition of *Tsene-rene* referred to three earlier editions. Written by Jacob ben Isaac Ashkenazi of Janów, the *Tsene-rene* became the “women’s Bible,” read by women on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.

Ultimately, the concordances also allowed for full translations of the Hebrew Bible such as the ones published in Amsterdam by Blitz (1676-9) and Witzzenhausen (1679) respectively. Although it is difficult to trace direct lines of influence, the translation of the sacred scriptures into the Jewish vernacular in this period can be likened to the translations of the Bible by Protestants in the German lands during the Reformation. While the ultimate effects of these translations among in the Ashkenazi world were far less schismatic than in Christian Europe, some of the problems and arguments advanced by those for and against the vernacular were similar.⁶²

The same period also saw the beginning of instances of vernacular prayers appearing in print. Although Hebrew maintained its absolute supremacy as the liturgical language everywhere in the Jewish world, a new genre of Yiddish prayers appeared at the end of the sixteenth century. *Tkhhines* or “supplications,” were personal prayers often written specifically for women in the vernacular. Individual compilations were published as early as 1590 in Prague, with countless editions following in subsequent centuries.⁶³

From the sixteenth century, one can also observe a new genre of vernacular guidebooks for moral counsel (*musor sforim*) and proper conduct (*minhogim sforim*).⁶⁴ According to the claims of their authors and publishers, they were intended to provide access to legal and spiritual knowledge to Jewish readers who lacked sufficient literacy in Hebrew and Aramaic. Among these kinds of books were compendia, such as *Sefer Brantshpigl* (“The Burning Mirror Book”). The oldest surviving edition of this book dates to 1602, when it was published in Basel. In a section entitled “Why This Book is Written in Yiddish” (ch.3), the author, Moshe ben Hanokh Altschul of Prague, explained that

this book is written in Yiddish for women and for men who are like women and cannot study much. The Sabbath and the holy days come, and they can read [this book] and understand what they read. For our holy books are written in Hebrew; sometimes they include *pilpul* [complicated arguments] from the *Gemara* [Talmud], which many people cannot understand.⁶⁵

The burgeoning of Yiddish print literature depended on the major advances in European book printing generally and Hebrew print in particular, since Yiddish was printed using the same typesets as those used for Hebrew books. But what factors account for the tremendous new output of works in the vernacular that began in the sixteenth century? The foremost

⁶² Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, trans. Jerold C. Frakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 82-83.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 207ff.

⁶⁵ Cited in *Ibid.*, 36.

scholar of Old Yiddish literature, Jean Baumgarten, interprets the rise of Old Yiddish literature as part of a “strategy” of Jewish society during a period of crisis and great uncertainty. He argues that the print vernacular literature that emerged in the sixteenth century reflected Jewish society’s (i.e., the religious elite’s) determination to maintain its religious and cultural identity, to combat ignorance of law among Jews, and to convey the essential aspects of Jewish tradition to the “common people.” In other words, Old Yiddish literature was a sort of popular culture engineered primarily from above in order to perform particular social functions. Those functions included moral instruction, religious education, and the circulation (via translation) of Judaism’s sacred texts. According to Baumgarten, this program of Jewish society coincided with novel forms of religiosity by precisely those groups who had long perceived themselves to be on the margins of Jewish religious life – women and unlearned men.⁶⁶

But “crises” are a dime a dozen in the history of the Jews and not all new developments are necessarily functional responses to social turmoil. Another explanation might be to see the printing press and the elaboration of sale and distribution mechanisms as having created new opportunities on both the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, various kinds of writers could now reach previously untapped audiences at greatly reduced cost. The publishers of vernacular literature advanced a number of arguments against potential opposition to Yiddish books. If possible, they appealed to the aim of furthering piety and religious knowledge among those who would buy these books. But they were also savvy entrepreneurs who recognized a new commodity and customer base. On the demand side, Yiddish vernacular literature gave women and those men who were excluded from the privileged intellectual sphere of advanced Torah study, which required a sophisticated knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, a way to acquire knowledge and demonstrate piety. The new literature also provided these readers with ways to indulge in reading for pleasure.

In the words of Baumgarten, the Yiddish epics published in the sixteenth century, “mark the actual moment of birth [...] of a vernacular Jewish literature that had attained the level of other medieval European literatures.”⁶⁷ This rich literature included works such as the *Shmuel-bukh* and the *Melokhim-bukh*, loosely based on the biblical books of Samuel and Kings respectively. In addition to the *Shmuel-* and *Melokhim-bikher*, the sixteenth century saw the publication in 1541 of *Bovo d’Antona* or the *Bovo-bukh*, written at the beginning of the century, by the brilliant Hebrew philologist and epic poet, Elye Levita Bokher (1469-1549) truly an exceptional figure among the writers of Yiddish books. Based on an Italian work whose *Urtext* was an Anglo-Norman epic, the *Bovo-bukh* was flush with court intrigues, comic but violent battles, and a few highly suggestive, amorous scenes. Another chivalric romance called *Pariz un Viene*, of unknown authorship, was published in 1594.⁶⁸ Such works made possible a new kind of reading culture, in which certain segments of society read Yiddish literature for pleasure.

Unlike Elye Bokher, many of the authors of Yiddish books in the early modern period, came from the lower intelligentsia rather than the scholarly elite. In the sixteenth century, they pioneered a completely new practice for Jewish society – to rewrite classic texts in Yiddish.

⁶⁶ Ibid., vi.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁸ Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basic Books, 2007), 83-84.

Authors identified themselves as *shrayber*. This term often referred to copyists who transcribed a text or to those who translated works in Hebrew and non-Jewish languages, often with some revisions. The average writer of Old Yiddish works was likely to be a school teacher, cantor, synagogue beadle, scribe (of scrolls and ritual texts), or preacher.⁶⁹ Some of these authors wrote and arranged the ethical guidebooks as a new kind of “self-improvement” literature in Old Yiddish.

The attitudes of the scholarly elite toward such works in the early modern period were ambivalent. Most rabbinic authorities were adamantly opposed to the imaginative literature described previously. In justifying their own vernacular works, Yiddish authors of religious compendia turned specifically against the epics. In the preface to his Yiddish translation of the Pentateuch, published in Constance in 1544, a writer sharply attacked the reading of epic romances, railing against the improper use of leisure time and denying any value to fictional texts. The translator promoted his own work as

good for married women and unmarried girls who all know well how to read Yiddish but pass their time by reading worthless books such as *Ditraykh fun Bern* and others like them, which are nothing but lies and invented things. These married women and unmarried girls could use their free time to read this *Khumesb* [Pentateuch], which is nothing but pure truth.⁷⁰

By default, vernacular literature in Jewish society was designated for “marginal” groups – i.e., women, children, and those men who lacked the requisite learning to be a part of the intellectual elite. Although the reality was often different, in theory every adult man in Ashkenazi societies in the medieval and early modern periods was supposed to belong to the class of scholars. The differentiation between the Hebrew and Aramaic books of scholars was almost always reflected in the size and typography of the book. Old Yiddish books were printed in small octavo format, rather than quarto or folio size of Talmud tractates or commentaries. They were also printed in a special typeface called *mash(k)it* (etymology uncertain), *vaybertaytsch* (“women’s Yiddish”), *tkhino-ksav* (“script used for *tkhines*, women’s supplications”), or *Tsene-rene ksav* (“script used for the *Tsene-rene*”).⁷¹

In the bifurcated reading culture of Jewish society, it was acceptable only for women to read these Yiddish-language publications, clearly marked as “other,” even from afar. Although many of the authors of Old Yiddish “women’s books,” were men, Jewish society tried to restrict the reading of these texts to female readers, through the force of social stigmatization. Unlike the epic romances, the Bible translations, legal compendia, homiletic and moral works at least had a chance of being endorsed by rabbinic scholars for female readers, precisely because such reading could boast a greater aim than the pursuit of pleasure alone.

Was the growth of the new legal and homiletic vernacular literature the result of a concerted attempt by rabbinic authorities to reassert their control over Jewish society? Or was it driven by market forces from the demand side – i.e., pious female and unlearned male readers who craved more than “mere” pleasure reading? Whatever the case, over the *longue durée*, this new

⁶⁹ Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, 58-59.

⁷⁰ Cited in *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

vernacular literature revealed itself to be a rampant growth, which often escaped the putative intentions of its pious readers or the rabbinic elite. As Baumgarten has pointed out, Yiddish books written for “simple (male) Jews” and women led to the “emancipation of knowledge” from the control of the rabbinic elite, which had long preserved a virtual monopoly on the creation, interpretation, and reading of texts.⁷² One of the unintended consequences of the novel production in Yiddish, was the rise of imaginative literature. The Yiddish books that began circulating in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe in the sixteenth century provide us with evidence of both pleasure reading and its critique in Ashkenazi Jewish culture.

The gendered division of reading matter and reading practices in Jewish society continued to shape Ashkenazi intellectual cultures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As we have seen, pleasure reading among Jewish women in the early modern period met with opposition from a rabbinic establishment that was ambivalent about vernacular literature in general. Such reading for men was doubly stigmatized. Men who read epic romances first of all faced the stigma of engaging in “feminine” reading of Yiddish rather than Hebrew or Aramaic texts. In addition to this, they also had to go against the opposition of the rabbinic intellectual elite to reading “made-up stories.” The latter not only presented a threat of distraction from the privileged sphere of Torah study but were inherently suspect (see Chapter 1).

This evaluation of Yiddish imaginative literature by Jewish intellectuals did not change in the eighteenth century. Although he was far from a typical figure, the views about vernacular imaginative literature of someone like the Lithuanian scholar Menashe of Ilya (1767-1831), a follower of the Vilna Gaon who had *Haskalah* inclinations, are instructive. In the second part of a work called *Alfei Menashe* (“The Thousands of [the Israelite tribe of] Manasseh”), published in 1822, Menashe referred to the *Bovo-bukh* as part of a diatribe against shallow ways of praying, studying Torah, and reading. In an involved example, he referred to a writer who compiled a list of

all the books and pamphlets [...] and wrote in his preface that he put it together based on what he heard from gossiping women [lit. “women who spin by the light of the moon, see Mishnah Sotah 6:1], that one who cannot study [Torah] should repeat the names of the books in the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, Mishnah, and all the other books, and he divided [the list] according to the days of the week so that [the readers] can finish the book week by week and count this as Torah study. And among the books, for example, is the book *Bovo-bukh*, which is a tale of history with Dalmatians⁷³ and the like. And it will count for him as if he learned them. Is there an end to [nonsensical] things like this? [Part II, Ch. 35].⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid., 36-37.

⁷³ Menashe refers to a “*flek hund*” (spotted dog). According to Dov-Ber Kerler, this may have been a corruption of the name Pelukan, a half-dog, half-man character in the original *Bovo d’Antona*. Dov-Ber Kerler, “Flek Hund and Bovo-Bukh,” *Jewish Studies on Facebook Group*, March 28, 2011.

⁷⁴ Menashe ben Yosef of Ilya, *Alfei Menashe*, vol. 2 (Vilna: Sh. P. Garber, 1904), 50.

כמו שחיבר א' רשימה מכל הספרים והמחברים [...] וכתב בהקדמתו שחיבר את זאת עפ"י מה ששמע וקבל מנשים המזרות בלבנה שמי שלא יוכל ללמוד אזי יחזור שמות הספרים תורה נ"כ משניות וכל הספרים וחלקה לימי השבוע שיגמרו את ספרו בכל שבוע ושבוע ויחשב זה ללימוד ובתוכם יש למשל ספר בבא בוך שהוא סיפור היסטאריע עם פלעק הונד. וכיוצא בזה ויהי נחשב לו כאלו למד אותם היש קץ לדברים כאלו.

Menashe was most bothered by the strange manner of studying by reciting the titles of books. But the inclusion of the *Bovo-bukh* – probably one of the abridged versions that circulated in Eastern Europe at this time – along with the Pentateuch appeared ludicrous to him because of the book’s frivolous nature, in his view. The fantastical “*flek hund*” (“Dalmatian”) – perhaps a corruption of the half-canine character Pelukan in the book – embodied the topsy-turvy world of fiction. The classification of the work, in part, as “history,” here did it no credit in this respect. To top it all off, Menashe linked the world of falsehood and a bad kind of reading practiced by unlearned people to the sphere of ignorant women.

Just as the rise of print provided opportunities for cultural and economic entrepreneurs to create Jewish vernacular texts, modernity gave rise to new adaptations and subversions of traditional Jewish society’s literary regime. The journey to an expansion of pleasure reading was anything but straightforward though. Among eighteenth-century German Jewish intellectuals, most notably Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and those associated with the Berlin *Haskalah*, Yiddish literature and pleasure reading suffered from their general association of Yiddish speech (“jargon”) with ignorance and backwardness. However, unlike the traditional, rabbinic intellectual elite, Mendelssohn was open to imaginative literature (poetry, drama, and narrative prose) in other vernacular languages – specifically French and German.

It is well-known that Mendelssohn and those *maskilim* who followed him arrived in the world of European letters through philosophy. For Mendelssohn, metaphysics, in particular, constituted his “first and true love.”⁷⁵ However, Mendelssohn also devoted a considerable part of his intellectual career to *belles lettres*. In addition to publishing several philosophical works, Mendelssohn was active as a literary critic between 1757 and 1768, publishing many reviews in the various journals edited by his friend Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811). Mendelssohn’s close friendship with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) resulted in years of discussion of literature and philosophy. Despite his public criticism of Yiddish, Mendelssohn pursued a substantial correspondence in Yiddish with his fiancée and, later, wife, Fromet Guggenheim (1737-1812), whom he married in 1762. In this correspondence, he also tried to direct Fromet’s reading, encouraging her to read Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Heloise* (in a 1761 German translation). Although Mendelssohn later wrote a critical review of the book, Fromet thought highly of it. She also read a German translation of *Lettres de Mylady Catesby* by the French sentimental novelist Marie Jeanne Riccoboni (1714-1792) in the same year.⁷⁶

There were limits, however, to Mendelssohn’s tolerance of imaginative literature. On the whole, Mendelssohn believed in that literature which, in his view, promoted the values of the *Aufklärung* as he and his friend Lessing conceived them. Both Mendelssohn and Lessing rejected the new currents of German *belles lettres* that rose to the surface in the 1770s. The two condemned *Sturm und Drang* as a movement, and like many writers (with Enlightenment commitments) of the time, expressed outrage about *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Die Leiden

⁷⁵ Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London and Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), 66.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 96.

des jungen Werther), published in 1776.⁷⁷ Goethe's epistolary novel described the romantic obsession of its protagonist Werther with Lotte, a woman engaged to another man. The work, which ended with Werther's suicide, caused a sensation in Germany. It was based in part on the letters of Karl Jerusalem (1747-1772), in which Jerusalem described his own unrequited love for the wife of a colleague. The suicide of Jerusalem, whom Lessing had mentored, shocked the older writer. Lessing rejected not only Goethe's representation of Jerusalem as driven entirely by passion, he also objected to the book's failure to criticize the choices of its protagonist.⁷⁸ Goethe's *Werther* rather presented the emotional whirlwinds of its hero as a source of pleasure to its readers. Immersing themselves in the work, readers of Goethe's book felt Werther's love and pain as their own or likened their real-life experiences and feelings to those of the fictional character. This was indeed a kind of reading that seemed to have no aim but the reader's pleasure in experiencing romantic euphoria and despair.

We know of at least one episode in which Mendelssohn specifically encountered a young Jewish woman reading *Werther*, some time in 1776. According to Sara Meyer, she had been involved in a "Roman" with a Christian with whom she exchanged letters. The relationship developed such that Meyer's lover sent her

the solace of frustrated lovers, the divine *Werther*; having devoured it, [she] returned it with a thousand passages marked, together with a glowing note. The missive was intercepted by [her] dear father; [she] was punished by confinement to [her] room, and Mendelssohn, [her] mentor, appeared: he bitterly reproached [Sara]. Could I have forgotten God and religion, he asked, and amid foolish reproofs of this sort he took the dear *Werther*, the innocent corpus delicti, and threw it out the window.⁷⁹

Meyer's pleasure reading embodied the chaos that *Werther* could introduce into traditional Jewish society. By celebrating the pursuit of any path toward which one's feelings led, she had transgressed against the patriarchal order of Berlin's Jewish community. Later in her life, after an unhappy marriage with a Jewish businessman, Lipmann Wulff, Meyer married an aristocratic Prussian officer and acquired the name "von Grotthus." The connection which her narrative established between conversion to Christianity and Jewish women reading *Sturm und Drang* or other imaginative literature for pleasure, plagued a whole generation of men and women beginning in the 1770s.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 331.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 297.

⁷⁹ Cited in Ibid., 298.

Chapter 3: The Berlin *Salonnières* and the Feminization of German Jewish Reading, 1770-1800

The life of Sara von Grotthus (*née* Meyer), the passionate *Werther* reader described in the previous chapter, was emblematic of a generation of Berlin Jewish women known to many historians as the “salon Jewesses.” These women, who included figures such as Dorothea Schlegel (formerly, Veit, *née* Mendelssohn, 1764-1839), Rahel Varnhagen (*née* Levin, 1771-1833), and Henriette Herz (*née* de Lemos, 1764-1847) came from the elite of Berlin Jewish society.⁸⁰ They began reading European languages from an early age, often receiving little or no Hebrew instruction. Because of their lack of familiarity with the Hebrew alphabet and, more importantly, because of the low esteem in which they and their surroundings held Yiddish, Old Yiddish women’s literature played almost no part in the lives of these women. Instead, they embraced the vernacular languages and literatures of elite Christian society – the novels of the eighteenth century, in particular English and French sentimental fiction and the works of the German *Sturm und Drang* writers. In so doing, they defined themselves via their reading against the Jewish men associated with the *Aufklärung* and Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) from an earlier generation. Embedding their reading and writing in the world of *Empfindsamkeit* or sentimentality, these women turned against a *maskilic* (adj., of the Jewish Enlightenment) program of disciplining Jewish readers and Jewish society at large. The incipient ideology of Jewish emancipation and regeneration sought to push Jews toward familial stability and bourgeois productivity, all framed by a modernized German Judaism, which confined women to the domestic context.⁸¹ The salon women instead aspired toward an aristocracy of the heart. They gave their aspirations concrete form in their

⁸⁰ The classic study of the salons, invaluable for understanding the larger social and economic context in which they lived and died lists a total of twenty Berlin Jewish women, born between 1763 and 1787, as having attended salons. Of these, nine were actually *salonnières* who ran salons by themselves or with their husband. The *salonnières* were Rahel Levin, Henriette de Lemos, Sarah Itzig, Marianne Meyer (b. 1763), Sara Meyer, Dorothea Mendelssohn, Amalie Lipmann (b. 1772), Philippine Zülz (b. 1776), and Rebecca Solomon (b. 1763). Eighteen of them eventually converted to Christianity. The total Jewish population of Berlin hovered around 3,500 or under two percent of its total population, in the last three decades of the eighteenth century. Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*, 192-193. On Rahel Levin Varnhagen specifically begin with the English translation of the classic work by Hannah Arendt, which includes full notes. Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, 1st ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). See also the important studies written and edited by Barbara Hahn and her colleagues: Barbara Hahn, “1833: Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s three-volume collection of letters to her friends is published shortly after her death,” in *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David E Wellbery (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 551-555; Barbara Hahn, “Antworten Sie Mir”: *Rahel Levin Varnhagens Briefwechsel* (Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990); Hahn, “The Myth of the Salon”; Ursula Isselstein, *Studien zu Rahel Levin Varnhagen: der Text aus meinem beleidigten Herzen* (Turin: Tirrenia Stampatori, 1993). Editions of her correspondence are Caroline von Humboldt, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, and Albert Leitzmann, *Briefwechsel zwischen Karoline von Humboldt, Rahel und Varnhagen* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1896); Rahel Levin Varnhagen, *Rahel: Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde*, ed. Karl August Varnhagen, 3 vols. (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1834); Rahel Levin Varnhagen, *Rahel: Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde*, ed. Barbara Hahn, First publication of reconstructed final. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011); Rahel Varnhagen and David Veit, *Aus dem Nachlass Varnhagen’s von Ense: Briefwechsel zwischen Rahel und David Veit* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1861).

⁸¹ This ideology is masterfully described in David J. Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3-40.

relationships with Christian men, often from the real nobility and sometimes from the literary “aristocracy” of poets.⁸²

The bridge across the confessional divide was the world of sentimentality elaborated in the literature they read and the letters they wrote. Not coincidentally, the novels dear to them often featured characters from different ranks of life united by deep friendship, who lay their souls bare before each other. They inspired similar confessions of feeling through correspondence. Letter-writing, which could not help echoing the emotional epistolary novels of the period, such as Goethe’s *Werther*, provided a vehicle for the circulation of these revelations of feeling, including between young Jewish women and Christian men. They augmented the pleasures of reading novels by rendering their own feelings to each other in correspondence.⁸³

In effect, the Jewish *salonnières* solidified the association of women with pleasure reading and of affect in late-eighteenth-century in German Jewish intellectual culture. That is to say, they linked reading in the European vernacular languages (specifically, in German, French, and English, but not Yiddish) to femininity in the minds of their Jewish contemporaries. In the same manner, they lay claim to special capacities for feeling on behalf of elite Jewish women from their generation. Ultimately, many of them found Judaism an inadequate religious framework and German Jewish society a constraining cultural realm for their attempts to reconcile life and literature. Almost all of the salon women converted to Christianity. Theirs was a veritable reading revolution against the legacy of Mendelssohn and the *maskilim* (Jewish Enlighteners), who wanted to maintain a Hebrew republic of letters and preserve access to a German-language public sphere, in which Jewish male intellectuals could participate as Jews. Already well-known to their Jewish and Christian contemporaries in Berlin, the experiences, reading practices, and beliefs of the salon Jewesses became widespread public knowledge when their memoirs and correspondences were published in the nineteenth century. For male German Jewish intellectuals coming of age then, these women served as an important foil in the formation of their own subjectivities as readers and their attempts to transform Jewish collective experience through new modes of reading.

In this chapter, I present the reading formation of Henriette Herz, perhaps the most famous Jewish *salonnière* after Rahel Levin, as a symptomatic case of this history.⁸⁴ Herz became a semi-celebrity among German Jews and Christians through her salons and her associations with Wilhelm von Humboldt and Friedrich Schleiermacher, two of Prussia’s most important intellectuals of their generation. Of interest in light of the subsequent chapter on German Jewish intellectuals’ turn to *Wissenschaft* is that both of these figures were crucial in the

⁸² Hertz argues that the Berlin salons as institutions and the success of elite Jewish women in “salon performances” was central in determining the high rate of conversions and marriages with Christians among them. Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*, 191.

⁸³ Hertz refers to the marriages of several Jewish salon women as the “penultimate stage in the intricate, laborious process of using literature to move up the social ladder.” Ibid., 186. There is certainly some truth to this observation, but on the whole, reading of the sort that the salon women were doing in this period cannot be subsumed entirely under the instrumental aim of social climbing.

⁸⁴ Although symptomatic of a particular cultural moment, the experiences of the *salonnières* were highly unrepresentative of German Jewish or German Christian society conceived as wholes. Most of them belonged to a subsection of the wealthiest parts of the Berlin Jewish elite. Likewise, the Christian men who married them were economic and/or intellectual elites who boldly defied contemporary norms. Hertz also calls the salons “geographically and chronologically unique.” Ibid., 22.

founding of the University of Berlin and the new German scholarship at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ Her memoirs, which she began writing in the 1820s, were published in 1850, three years after her death. Herz's life and memoirs became an important (negative) source for Heinrich Graetz in the formulation of his own views of reading and German Jewish identity.⁸⁶

In a landmark article about "Intermarriage in the Berlin Salons," Deborah Hertz concluded that the salons and the conversions of Jewish women such as Henriette Herz and Dorothea Veit (later Schlegel) might be viewed as the "achievements" of a difficult struggle for "personal freedom."⁸⁷ In so doing, the historian rejected earlier views of these women as having "opportunistically betray[ed]" Judaism and the Jewish people. Rather, she wrote, these women strove for "integration into dominant upper-class culture and society" just as their male counterparts had done. The explanation that she ultimately advanced for the number of conversions to Christianity and marriages to Christians among Jewish women in Berlin hinged on an economic factor. Hertz interpreted the phenomenon as an exchange of wealth (supplied by Jewish women) for status (supplied by male Christian aristocrats). Hertz was suspicious of using memoirs and other autobiographical testimonies about feelings by her subjects, because, she argued, "Statements made about emotions even by the actors themselves in memoirs and letters require delicate interpretation, insofar as such statements may have reflected contemporary expectations and ideals rather than individual lived reality."⁸⁸

In dismissing such sources, Hertz ignored the possibility of reading not only the substantive content of writing about emotion but also the very forms of the letters themselves and the practice of reading them for pleasure. The fact that their letters and memoirs so often transposed the conventions of sentimental literature onto life testifies to the importance that pleasure reading had acquired for these women. Likewise, the condemnations of the reading practices of the famous Jewish *salonnières* of Berlin by male Jewish writers in the nineteenth century should be interpreted with an eye on the importance attached to reading. This viewpoint reveals the centrality of the search for proper reading practices in the efforts of nineteenth-century writers to define a modern, masculine subjectivity for Jewish males. The history of Jewish women's vernacular reading – and particularly the practice of reading for pleasure – in the minds of these intellectuals endured as a challenge to the survival of modern Jewish collective identity.

What nineteenth-century male Jewish intellectuals made of the salon Jewesses will be the subject of subsequent chapters. The remainder of this chapter unravels the discovery of reading for pleasure by one German Jewish woman at the end of the eighteenth century. Her experiences and her own interpretations of them represent the full-scale, modern transformation of Jewish reading. They also reinforced the gendered division of reading in Jewish society. Distinguishing her mode of reading as feminine (and Jewish) and having an

⁸⁵ On Schleiermacher's role in particular see Thomas A Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 133.

⁸⁶ Biographies of Herz that can still be profitably consulted are Hans Landsberg, *Henriette Herz: Ihr Leben und ihre Zeit* (Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1913); Meyer Kayserling, "Henriette Herz," in *Die jüdischen Frauen in der Geschichte, Literatur und Kunst* (F. A. Brockhaus, 1879), 198-208.

⁸⁷ Deborah Hertz, "Intermarriage in the Berlin Salons," *Central European History* 16, no. 4 (December 1983): 344.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 320.

affinity with young, male, Christian and preferably aristocratic reading, she juxtaposed it with the reading of older Jewish men of the *Haskalah* generation.

For Henriette Herz (1764-1847), *née* de Lemos, the discovery of imaginative, sentimental literature in her childhood coincided with the discovery of a higher kind of feeling. In her memoirs, written in the 1820s and first published in 1850, Herz described a “hazy, yearning feeling” which often came over her as a child and led her “to look into the moon and cry, without knowing why.”⁸⁹ She attributed the source of these “moods” (*Stimmungen*) in part to her reading sentimental novels.⁹⁰ Describing her childhood, Herz reported that she “acquired a taste for reading, perhaps too early for [her] own good.” She noted that she had stopped “engaging in child’s play” at a very young age.⁹¹

From the context of the passage, it appears that she first began reading for pleasure at the age of ten.⁹² In contrast, she remembered that her father would often “read in holy books.” Herz’s reading matter as a young girl consisted of “bad novels and comedies,” which she ingested together with “stupid and foul stuff” that she heard from the servants and tenants of the household.⁹³ It may have included Yiddish stories of ghosts and demons, circulated in writing and orally. A bit later, she began reading sentimental novels – she specifically referred to *Siegwart* and described a fascination for “abductions and incredible things,” which she imagined might also happen to her. She characterized this novel-reading as “frenzied” and impassioned. Herz read with such abandon that her mother scolded her for neglecting household chores. As a result, Herz’s mother sent her to a “sewing school,” reducing the time she had for reading during the week but increasing the number of books she consumed on Saturday and Sunday. On those days, she recalled reading “with such alacrity and steadfastness, that I read through several parts of a novel on one day and constantly ran to the lending library close to our house to pick up other books.”⁹⁴

Siegwart: Tale from a Monastery, first published in 1776, was one of the most popular sentimental German novels of the late eighteenth century. Its author, Johann Martin Miller (1722-1774) was an admirer of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803) and one of the members of the Göttinger Hainbund (the Göttingen Copse Association), a literary society founded by several writers later identified with the *Sturm und Drang*. The sprawling novel, encompassing three volumes or more than seven-hundred pages, appeared two years after Goethe’s *Werther* and, while of inferior literary quality than the latter, claimed the affective engagement of an entire generation, including Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805). Miller’s *Siegwart*

⁸⁹ “ein trübes, sehnsüchtiges Gefühl, dann saß ich wohl ... und guckte in den Mond und weinte, ohne zu wissen warum.” Henriette de Lemos Herz, *Henriette Herz in Erinnerungen Briefen und Zeugnissen*, ed. Rainer Schmitz (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1984), 19.

⁹⁰ “Das Leben des Siegwarts und mehr dergleichen sentimentalen Romane mögen wohl das Ihre zu dieser Stimmung beigetragen haben ...” Ibid., 19-20.

⁹¹ “Ich hörte sehr früh auf zu spielen, und früher vielleicht, als es gut für mich war, fand ich Geschmack am Lesen.” Ibid., 18.

⁹² The reference to this age appears shortly after the cited passage. Ibid., 19.

⁹³ “hörte dort dummes Wut, dergleichen Bücher zu lesen, daß ich gar nicht arbeitete [...] sah meine

⁹⁴ “auch hatte ich eine solche Wut, dergleichen Bücher zu lesen, daß ich gar nicht arbeitete [...] sah meine Mutter sich genötigt, mich in die Nähsschule zu schicken; ich konnte nun an Wochentagen wenig lesen, tat es aber am Sonnabend und Sonntage desto mehr, und zwar mit einer solchen Schnelligkeit und Anhaltsamkeit, daß ich an einem Tage mehrere Teile eines Romans durchlas und immer nach der Leihbibliothek lief, die nicht weit von unserm Hause war, um mir andere Bücher zu holen.” Ibid., 20.

follows the journey of its sentimental protagonist Xavier Siegwart, the youngest son of a Swabian provincial official, from innocent bliss to grief. The character and his beloved suffer from their fatal love for each other, as their plans to marry are thwarted by the interested machinations of outsiders. Parallel to the hero's life of suffering, his best friend, Kronhelm, finds love and happiness after marrying Siegwart's sister, Therese. The subtitle of the novel, "a monastery tale," alludes to the fates of Siegwart and Mariane, both of whom end their lives in the cloister. Mariane is sent to a convent against her will by her father; Siegwart enters a monastery after he is deceived into thinking Mariane dead.

Herz's reference to *Siegwart* in her memoir was brief; she alluded in shorthand to moonlit nights, a link that would have transported many readers of her generation to their own sentimental experiences of *Siegwart*. The moon figures prominently in many of the novel's romantic scenes, such as this one, where Kronhelm and Therese declare their love for each other:

Therese cried and [Kronhelm] did too. They sat down on a bench by the meadow. The moon shone in their faces. They exchanged long looks, averted their eyes, and then smiled at each other half-mournfully. Then they looked up at the moon, regarded every little cloud, every bright star. "From now on, I will always think of you when I see the moon," Kronhelm said. – It is so sad, that we must take leave from one another, when we have only now really become acquainted! But we will see each other again. Here, Therese looked at him sadly. A tear, illuminated by the moonlight, rolled over her pale-red cheek.⁹⁵

Tears appear on nearly every page of the novel, as Siegwart and the other virtuous protagonists are almost always crying. The novel narrates their lives as a succession of moving moments which rouse them to tears. Unlike in Goethe's *Werther*, which tends to allow us to infer its protagonist's emotional state from his letters, the omniscient narrator in *Siegwart* informs us explicitly in every sentence what Xavier and others are feeling. A passage that describes Siegwart's reaction to seeing Mariane, his beloved, dancing with another man illustrates this particular characteristic of the narrator:

When the student with whom [Mariane] was dancing kissed her hand at the end of the minuet, it was as if a dagger had pierced [Siegwart's] heart. He became fire-red and, quickly thereafter, sad; for he had a great, perhaps even an excessive predisposition to jealousy. The friendly glance with which she thanked the student aroused a thousand sentiments in [Siegwart].⁹⁶

Siegwart's narrator also has a marked didactic tendency, commenting on the sentimental flaws of its protagonists. The novel frequently inserts gentle criticism of Xavier's and others' emotional excesses, as the narrator perceives them. Though inconsistent with the form of

⁹⁵ Johann Martin Miller, *Siegwart: eine Klostergeschichte*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Henne, 1844), 246.

⁹⁶ "Als der Student, mit dem sie tanzte, ihr beim Schluß der Menuet die Hand küßte, da fuhr ihm's wie ein Dolch durchs Herz. Er ward feuerroth, und gleich darauf traurig; denn er hatte viel, fast zu viel Anlage zur Eifersucht. Der freundliche Blick mit dem sie dem Studenten dankte, machte tausend Empfindungen in ihm rege." Johann Martin Miller, *Siegwart: eine Klostergeschichte*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Henne, 1844), 61.

the novel, which aims to produce intense (excessive?) emotional absorption in its readers, these critiques of feeling highlight some of the anxieties of the age of *Empfindsamkeit* about the need to guide the affect of young men and women. Over the course of the novel, the narrator observes growth in the sentimental faculties of Siegwart and others. Together, the protagonist and his friend Kronhelm, cultivate their capacity for feeling, usually under the tutelage of their friend and teacher, the monk Philip. He teaches them to refine their hearts through the study of literature and nature.

As a young boy, Siegwart discovers the power of feeling within him spontaneously, in nature. A special drive inside his heart, we learn at the beginning of the novel, compels him to leave the company of his playmates in order to gather flowers and to observe his pastoral surroundings. He is able to appreciate its aesthetic and affective beauty. Following the bee as it pollinates flowers and listening to every bird in the countryside, he lies down at a spring rolling down a hill and perceives an “unusual yearning, a never-experienced wistfulness in his soul.”⁹⁷ This longing and nostalgic sadness, marked also by visits to his mother’s grave, endow him with unusual sympathy for others. Moved by the pure beauty of his surroundings that day, he returns home in a kind of sentimental rapture. With “his eyes glistening,” he affectionately “presses the hand of every peasant boy he encounters” on the way, sharing a part of his supper with each one.⁹⁸

Herz, a city child born and raised in Berlin, saw her response to sentimental situations and texts as rooted in her unique sensibility. She remembered it as having derived from some faculty inside herself, though it was further augmented by the books she was consuming and the solitary manner in which she immersed herself in them. Reading works such as *Siegwart* was a private activity for Herz, quite unlike the public reading of plays for which she was (willingly) enlisted every week by her parents. Whereas Herz read dramas out loud to a domestic audience, she consumed novels in an interior space occupied by “[her]self alone.”⁹⁹ Apart from the familial context, in which she read to her father and mother on Friday nights, Herz maintained a more personal emotional sphere, in which novels “always moved [her] to bitter tears.”¹⁰⁰ These tears, Herz suggested, would have failed to inspire understanding from her surroundings, and accordingly produced shame in her.¹⁰¹

The same was not true for the “ghost stories,” which Herz heard and read with abandon as a child, and which she did not see contradicted by her domestic environment. The “gruesome” or “eerie” stories, she claimed, were “confirmed to [her] in the nursery.”¹⁰² In the space of the *Kinderstube*, which was a relatively new phenomenon at the end of the eighteenth century when wealthy urban families first began designating rooms specifically for play by children, Herz encountered her parents, domestic servants, and playmates. These

⁹⁷ “ein ungewohntes Sehnen und eine nie empfundene Wehmut in der Seele.” Miller, *Siegwart*, 1:16.

⁹⁸ “mit glänzendem Auge ging er weg, drückte jedem Bauernjungen, der ihm begegnete, die Hand stärker, und gab ihm von seinem Abendbrod.” Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Am Freitagabend las ich meinen Eltern vor; mein Vater hörte am liebsten Schauspiele; diese las ich auch gerne laut, Romane lieber für mich allein.” Herz, *Henriette Herz*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ “sie rührten mich immer zu bittern Tränen.” Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “ich schämte mich zu weinen.” Ibid.

¹⁰² “Das Schauerliche war besonders von großer Wirkung auf mich, und alles, was ich von Gespenstergeschichten las, ward mir in der Kinderstube bestätigt.” Ibid.

interactions may have strengthened her susceptibility to feeling the uncanny, because the members of the household were equally fascinated by stories of specters and superstitions.

In her memory of this period, Herz separated the domestic sphere of ghost stories and Sabbath Eves spent reading dramas to her parents from a more elevated, solitary realm of pleasure reading. She represented her sentimental responses as originating from without the milieu into which she had been born, instead emanating inside herself. “The sentimental,” she claimed, “came entirely from me, for no one whom I saw stimulated it in any way.”¹⁰³ Sentimental novel reading, which included staring wistfully at the night sky, provided an escape from the less edifying surroundings of her childhood – surroundings that Herz, without overt malice, marked as patriarchal and Jewish.¹⁰⁴ The characters of sentimental novels such as *Siegwart* also struggled against environments at odds with their refined feeling. In Miller’s work, Siegwart’s friend Kronhelm has to contend with his *Junker* father, who derides reading as weak and offends his son with uncouth behavior. Siegwart’s Mariane, meanwhile, struggles against the restrictions of her authoritarian father and a weak, older brother manipulated by his wife. For these characters, sentimentality in life and on the pages of books, provides a way out. With her reading practice, Herz likewise opened up a path to emancipating herself from perceived constraints.

Herz recalled German Jewish women being more successful in the pursuit of reading themselves to freedom than men. While *maskilim* such as David Friedländer, Salomon Maimon, and Lazarus Bendavid had become knowledgeable students of philosophy – in Maimon’s case, brilliant ones – Jewish women, Herz claimed, faced fewer obstacles in their endeavors to acquire “German cultivation and civilization” (*Bildung und Gesittung*) than the average Jewish man. If they came from wealthy families, women had more leisure time to pursue independent studies and they concentrated on a different realm of knowledge than men, who tended to focus on philosophy. But Jewish women also chose different means of forming their characters – means, in which they found it easier to excel than their male counterparts.

Encouraged by Mendelssohn’s exhortations and example, Herz related, Jewish women threw themselves into what she referred to as “schöne Literatur” or *belles lettres*.¹⁰⁵ In the period that Herz was describing here, the 1770s, some writers still used this term, which literally means “beautiful literature,” to refer to the entire range of “*belles lettres*.” That category could include essays and criticism as well as imaginative prose and poetry. However, beginning in the 1760s, and certainly by the 1820s when Herz began composing her reminiscences, “schöne Literatur” had narrowed in meaning to refer to dramas, novels, and poetry – in short what we would call imaginative literature or fiction.¹⁰⁶ In her memoir, Herz detailed that Jewish

¹⁰³ “Das Sentimentale aber kam wohl ganz aus mir allein, denn niemand, den ich sah, erregte es auf irgendeine Weise.” Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Herz linked the “patriarchally structured family” with its Jewishness *en passant* Ibid., 61-62.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁶ Rainer Rosenberg, “Eine verworrene Geschichte: Vorüberlegungen zu einer Biographie des Literaturbegriffs,” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 20, no. 77 (1990): 43. Rosenberg attributes the shift in meaning to the growing influence of the French *encyclopédistes*, English sentimental literature, and, most importantly, the theorizing of Herder and some *Sturm und Drang* writers, who separated imaginative writing from humanistic studies and rhetoric by linking “Poesie” and “Dichtkunst” (lyrical poetry and fictional prose) to traditions of “Volks poesie” (folk- or popular creativity) rather than the classics. Of these potential influences,

women of her generation began with “dramatic literature” and then went on to familiarize themselves with the entire corpus of German “beautiful literature.”¹⁰⁷ From this passage, in which Herz added that this literature reached its “flowering” (*Blütezeit*) precisely as Jewish women were turning to it, we can infer that she indeed meant the dramas, novels (epistolary and otherwise) and lyrical poetry produced by German writers of the *Sturm und Drang*, classical period, and the Romantic movement. The “masterpieces” (*Meisterwerke*) of German literature, Herz wrote “formed [into masterpieces] with us” (“Dre Meisterwerke wurden mit uns”). She thus inscribed Jewish women and their involvement as readers and (usually) private critics into the origins of one of the greatest movements in German literary history, while implicating these works of art in her own emancipation from the traditional order into which she had been born.

There was little that Herz found appealing about the Judaism of her childhood, at least as she remembered it in her memoirs. She criticized, in particular, the religious instruction that she and others in her milieu received in their youth. Children, especially girls, Herz lamented, were not educated in the “fundamental principles of religion.” Parents merely enjoined their children to practice the “forms” of their beliefs, rather than knowing faith itself, she argued. In these recollections, Herz was repeating a common critique of Judaism of her day according to which the Jewish religion was too focused on external practices and rituals rather than internal beliefs. That critique suggested that Judaism consisted of positive laws rather than edifying moral truths or vital spirit. Like many Protestant and some Jewish critics, she ascribed these “countless customs” to the “Rabbanites.”¹⁰⁸ By implication, she saw her Jewish education as having provided her only with the mere superficialities of religion. She also claimed, somewhat sweepingly, that Jewish children “today,” that is in the early nineteenth century when she was writing her memoir, were often instructed “in no faith.” Thus, she complained, they do not experience religious “devotion” and “are unable to pray to God when their heart is burdened or they are frightened by unending anguish.” As for herself, Herz remarked that she had been fortunate to experience “the beautiful light of faith within [her]” later in life.¹⁰⁹ For Herz, that emotional connection seems to have come exclusively through Christianity, as we see no references in her writing to Judaism fulfilling her religiously. Like so many of her contemporaries, she saw Christianity as the religion of

the connection to the *Encyclopédie* seems questionable, since its most prolific contributor used the term “littérature” in the broader, humanist sense of “belles lettres” from the early eighteenth century, which included rhetoric and even the natural sciences. For a statistical analysis confirming this point see Russell Horton et al., “Mining Eighteenth-Century Ontologies: Machine Learning and Knowledge Classification in the *Encyclopédie*,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 21–24. However, note also the authors’ conclusion, in which they write that the term’s broad, universal meaning did not survive the nineteenth century. *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁷ “Aber man war bald nicht bei der dramatischen Literatur stehengeblieben. Man suchte sich mit der deutschen schönen Literatur in ihrem ganzen Umfange bekannt zu machen.” Herz, *Henriette Herz*, 62.

¹⁰⁸ “Das Kind, besonders aber die Mädchen, wurden gar nicht eigentlich im *Glauben* ihrer Eltern unterrichtet, wurden aber angehalten, die *Formen* desselben zu beobachten, d.h., sie mußten alle die unzähligen Gebräuche beobachten, welche er oder vielmehr die Rabbinen vorschrieben.” *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ “keine Andacht erfüllt ihr Gemüt, und sie können nicht beten zu Gott, wenn ihr Herz gedrückt ist und geängstigt von unendlicher Qual. ... Glücklicher der, dem später im Leben wenigstens noch das schöne Licht des Glaubens im Innern aufgeht, und er nicht stribt, ohne von jenem erhebenden, beglückenden Gefühl der Andacht durchdrungen gewesen zu sein. – Gottes Gnade sei es Dank, daß auch mir dieses Glück ward.” *Ibid.*, 11–12.

feeling. Her father lived strictly according to the precepts of Judaism, she wrote, “but he had the mildness and love of Christianity in his heart.”¹¹⁰

In a similar vein, Herz recalled with some pride that her father, who was of Iberian ancestry, did not speak with the “Jewish jargon and tone” common among German and Eastern European Jews. His language, she recalled, was “pure.” She shared this prejudice with most of the German Jewish *maskilim*, who saw the Jewish “jargon,” i.e., Yiddish, as “corrupt” and “corrupting” of morals and character. Herz associated her father’s “pure” speech with his “gentle, and most lovely expression” as well as his “most beautiful foot and hand” and “noble bearing.”¹¹¹ In contrast to the portrait she painted of her mother, Herz represented her father as noble in appearance, speech, and, most importantly, feeling.

Despite her lack of interest in Judaism, Herz credited Berlin’s Jewish middle class with creating a sphere where Prussian and foreign aristocrats came together for intellectual conversation. Her own home became a space where distinctions of rank faded and where members of the Christian elite (in particular young men) socialized with the acculturated Jewish elite of Berlin, especially its young women. Jewish circles, she argued, provided the most stimulating intellectual and social environment of the day. Furthermore, unlike social affairs in aristocratic homes, parties in the houses of Berlin Jews, Herz recalled, did not require “cold and stiff formalities” and thereby significantly eased interactions.¹¹²

Alongside what became the classics of German literature, Herz testified, she and her cohort of young Jewish women also read French works and English novels. In her old age, Herz still savored the memory of this reading even as she mildly satirized her novelistic infatuations:

[...] knowledge of the English language [...] also provided access to many novels from this time, which offered sweet fare to the romantic enthusiasm of youthful girls’ hearts. And I must confess, we all had some desire to become heroines of novels. There was not one of us who did not gush over some hero or heroine from the novels of this time, and above everyone in this matter was Dorothee, Mendelssohn’s ingenious daughter who was blessed with a fiery imagination.¹¹³

Dorothea (Brendel) Mendelssohn (1764-1839), lauded for her “Einbildungskraft” (literally “imaginative power”) in this nostalgic passage from Herz’s memoir, took the idea of emancipating oneself (from Judaism and patriarchy – or at least the Jewish variant of the latter) through literature much farther than her friend. After fifteen years of marriage to the

¹¹⁰ “Mein Vater lebte streng im Gesetz seines Glaubens, hatte aber die Milde und Liebe des Christentums im Herzen [...]” Ibid., 14.

¹¹¹ “ein sanfter, höchst lieblicher Ausdruck [...] den schönsten Fuß und Hand, edle Haltung [...] seine Sprache war rein, wie denn die portugiesischen Israeliten überhaupt den jüdischen Jargon und Ton nicht haben.” Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 67-68.

¹¹³ “[...] Kenntnis der englischen Sprache [...] eröffnete zugleich den Zugang zu manchen Romanen der Zeit, welche der Liebeschwärmerei der jugendlichen Mädchenherzen süße Kost boten. Und daß ich es gestehe, wir hatten alle selbst einige Lust, Romanheldinnen zu werden. Keine von uns, die nicht damals für irgendeinen Helden oder eine Heldin aus den Romanen der Zeit schwärmte, und obenan stand darin die geistreiche, mit feuriger Einbildungskraft begabte Tochter Mendelssohns, Dorothee.” Ibid., 63.

Jewish banker Veit, to whom she had been betrothed in 1783, she left her husband for the writer Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), at the age of 35 in 1799. But for Herz, too, the turn to feeling and imaginative literature was not merely a brief chapter of adolescence. In fact, it reached new heights during her twenties, in the late 1780s, when she maintained an intensely sentimental correspondence with Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), three years her younger. That correspondence shared with an association of other letter-writers (the *Tugendbund*, described below) from which it originally developed, reflected the emergence of an affective private space, in which both Jews and Christians pledged to lay bare their feelings to each other. The letter-writing of Herz and Humboldt was preceded by changes in her reading practices. As a result of her involvement in a reading society, Herz's sentimental reading found a presence in a fellowship with other feeling readers.

After her marriage to Marcus Herz, Henriette entered a new stage in her development as a reader. She remembered that her "inclination toward reading grew" and that she was now in a position to "satisfy it undisturbed."¹¹⁴ Under Marcus's guidance, she recalled, she read Leonhard Euler's *Letters to a German Princess*, sometime around her sixteenth birthday. Translated into the German from French, the book was a popular exposition of contemporary physics. This was obviously quite a different kind of reading matter than the sentimental novels with which she had begun her reading. Marcus's interest in the physical sciences, for which he was well-known in Berlin, had influenced this particular book selection. But Herz and her female Jewish contemporaries in Berlin were at this time throwing themselves into the new imaginative literature of German writers, which "had been "entirely unknown to them until then."¹¹⁵

In the same period of her late adolescence, at the beginning of the 1780s, Henriette not only acquired new reading matter but also new modes of reading. As a child, Henriette had read dramatic literature to her parents. But to her fiancé and then husband, Henriette's manner of reading out loud proved deficient. Shortly after their engagement, Marcus asked his bride whether she could read to him. When Henriette responded in the affirmative and began reading a passage from an unnamed book, Marcus promptly interrupted her. "That is what I call reading from the sheet!" The German expression he used, *ablesen*, as Henriette herself noted, connoted a mechanical action. Marcus wanted Henriette to read with feeling to an audience. This is what he considered "*lesen*."¹¹⁶ The text could be a scientific or scholarly essay, a poem by Goethe, a play, or a novel. In her memoirs, Herz described the formation of reading groups, or, more precisely, reading "societies" (*Lesegesellschaften*) which began to emerge at this time in her milieu. She claimed that the earliest such association that she could recall, was the *Lesegesellschaft* that met weekly at the home of her friend Dorothea Veit. In addition to Henriette and Marcus, such figures of Berlin Jewish society as Moritz, David Friedländer, Dorothea's sister, and Moses Mendelssohn himself participated. A few years later, in 1785, a larger *Lesegesellschaft* formed, which included a broader spectrum of Berlin's Christian and Jewish intellectual notables, including Engel, Ramler, Moritz, Teller, Zöllner, Dohm, Klein, Marcus Herz, as well as their wives and the young Humboldt brothers,

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹¹⁵ "Die Frauen wendeten sich [...] mit dem Feuer, mit welchem lebhaft Naturen ihnen bis dahin gänzlich Unbekanntes erfassen, der schönen Literatur zu." Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁶ "Aber nach den ersten Zeilen schon sagte er [...]: 'Das nenne ich: ablesen.'" Ibid., 47.

Wilhelm and Alexander.¹¹⁷ They read scholarship, criticism, and imaginative literature. The “Wednesday Society,” founded in the 1790s, maintained this range of reading material, including “Schönwissenschaftliches” as well as “Dramatisches,” texts from the “beautiful sciences” as well as dramatic works. Because these societies involved reading out loud, their members privileged the practice of reading with emotional engagement. Failing to do so in a pleasing manner met with disapproval.¹¹⁸ When reading plays, Herz wrote, she and others strove to present them with an understanding of the characters and their relation to the work as a whole.¹¹⁹

Herz identified two objectives for the reading societies: *Bildung* and the pursuit of the beautiful. People in those times, she wrote, strove “to cultivate themselves.”¹²⁰ This demand was met by a ready supply of autodidact teachers as well as scholars who presented to mixed audiences of experts and laymen, male and female, in order to “take pleasure from works of *belles lettres*” by reading them to each other. The process of “forming oneself” and the setting of the reading society both involved the shared experience of feeling. In the semi-public spaces of these societies and their corresponding existence in the private sphere of letter writing, Herz was able to participate in the circulation of sentiment, across social and religious divisions.

Herz prized sentiment in others, perhaps more than any other quality. In her description of the writer Leopold Friedrich Günther von Goeckingk, whom she met in person as a young woman, she emphasized above all the “depth and gentleness of the sentiments” in his “Songs of Two Lovers.” The writer’s *Epistles* received praise from her for the “refinement of the observations, which competed with feeling and grace.” In real life as well as on the page, he “enchanted” Herz.¹²¹ In a portrait of her friend Rahel Levin, Herz likewise highlighted the former’s “feeling heart.” Rahel’s “goodness of the heart,” her “intense empathy for relatives and friends” became all the more developed as she “penetrated more deeply into the history of the heart.”¹²² Part of being a feeling person, for Herz, was the pursuit of beauty. She praised the young Humboldt brothers for their “interest in everything beautiful,” noting facetiously that this interest also extended to the female beauties in their company in Berlin.¹²³

Our record of the Herz-Humboldt correspondence is one-sided; we have only Humboldt’s letters to Herz, not her responses. But through Humboldt’s epistles to Herz, which refer many times to letters she had written to him and others, we come to know Herz and her friends as thirsty readers of passionate prose. Our record of Humboldt’s letters to Herz, which begins in 1786, reveal a sentimentality linked closely to the writing and reading of

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁸ See for example Herz’s ironic swipe at a certain Stern. Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁹ “mit möglichstem Verständnis des betreffenden Charakters und seines Verhältnisses zum Ganzen des Werkes [...]” Ibid., 52.

¹²⁰ “sprach man unbefangen und rückhaltlos aus, man habe das Bestreben, sich zu bilden.” Ibid., 46-47.

¹²¹ “Die gewandte Form und die Tiefe und Zartheit der Empfindungen in seinen ‘Liedern zweier Liebenden’ [...] ‘Episteln,’ in welchen Feinheit der Beobachtung mit Gefühl und Anmut wetteifern, mich geradezu entzückt.” Ibid., 44-45.

¹²² “[...] durch ein fühlendes Herz hervorragend [...] Herzensgüte [...] von der regsten Teilnahme für die Ihrigen und für ihre Freunde, [...] um so wohlthuender und wirksamer, als Rahel tief in die Geschichte der Herzen eindrang.” Ibid., 42.

¹²³ “ihrem Interesse für alles Schöne [...] wohl auch einiges für die Schönen unserer Gesellschaft.” Ibid., 49.

feelings, yearned for, remembered, and tasted. In a letter from that year, written Sunday morning in Berlin, Humboldt recalled with “deep delight” an encounter with Herz and exulted in his memory of the meeting as it was aroused by a note she had sent him. Reading Herz’s letter inspired a new wave of feeling in Humboldt with each rereading:

What did I feel during the perusal of your letter. Oh, how often did I read and re-read it! It aroused in me a feeling of joy and pain so mixed that I cannot describe it to you.¹²⁴

The “perusal” Humboldt meant here was not a cursory but a thorough “reading through” the letter. Herz’s description of her situation and the feelings it aroused in her were a kind of sentimental novel for Humboldt. He read with the aim of experiencing emotions as he sympathized with Herz’s position. As he narrated his own sympathetic predicament, Humboldt paradoxically insisted upon its resistance to being rendered into speech or writing. Unconsciously echoing a convention found in the literature of sentiment, Humboldt represented his affect as exhausting the power of discourse.

In addressing Herz in this letter, Humboldt still used the formal “Sie” and its possessive forms. When she received Humboldt’s epistle, Herz had been married for seven years, having been betrothed in 1779 at the age of fifteen to her husband, Marcus. The seniority that she enjoyed over Humboldt, the bachelor, amounted to a much greater advantage in life experience than the mere three years between them might suggest – a point Herz was not too shy to emphasize in her memoirs.¹²⁵ And nevertheless, in the context of a community of sentiment, Humboldt and Herz’s correspondence began at a high level of intimacy, based on the discursive circulation of feeling. Together with a small group of sons and daughters of the Prussian elite, Herz and several other Jewish women in Berlin had formed what they called a *Tugendbund* or “league of virtue,” whose primary activity seemed to consist in the “exchange of thoughts and sentiments” through letter-writing.¹²⁶ Traversing differences of corporate status, culture, and religious upbringing, the correspondents of this covenant claimed a common space in the shared confession of feeling.

For the members of the *Tugendbund*, feelings were sources of judgment. The initiates attributed their convictions to personal *Empfindungen*.¹²⁷ No wonder then that they took a strong interest in their sentimental formation. Later in life, Herz described the association into which she and a select group of acquaintances had entered as having had the goal of “mutual moral and spiritual development as well as the practice of works of love.”¹²⁸ The kind of improvement for which they strove was a matter of the heart. Among the members of the *Tugendbund*, excellence of “Geist” and “Herz,” of the mental and emotional faculties was prized above all – they were the qualities that Herz ascribed to her circle.¹²⁹ The

¹²⁴ “Was habe ich bei der Durchlesung Ihres Briefes empfunden. O wie oft habe ich ihn gelesen und wiedergelesen! Er erregte ein so gemischtes Gefühl von Freude und Schmerz in mir, daß ich es Ihnen nicht beschreiben kann.” Ibid., 207.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 82.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁷ Note for example Humboldt’s use of the expression “meiner Empfindung nach.” Ibid., 207.

¹²⁸ “Der Zweck dieses Bundes [...] war gegenseitige sittliche und geistige Heranbildung sowie Übung werktätiger Liebe.” Ibid., 82.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

emphasis tended to lie on the second of these. In his correspondence with Herz, Humboldt traced the arc of his own development from an adolescent dominated by intellect into a young man discovering true feeling: love, tenderness, and an elevated sadness.

Looking back at this *Bildung* in 1786, Humboldt recalled having acquired a taste for “Literatur und Wissenschaften” as a twelve-year-old. In Humboldt’s usage, these terms clearly connoted *belles lettres*, as he attributed the inspiration for his newfound interest to his reading of ancient history and described himself as sitting diligently with his books.¹³⁰ This was, in other words, a mode of reading quite different from Herz’s absorption in *Siegwart* or her readings of dramatic literature to the family. For Humboldt, the next transformation in his character did not occur as a result of reading but in the sphere of social life, which he marked as qualitatively different from the studies he had pursued until then: at the age of eighteen, he fell in love for the first time. In Humboldt’s account, this incident turned him into someone who had once lacked all feeling and had “left his heart entirely unoccupied,” into a *Schwärmer*, an emotional enthusiast.¹³¹ Humboldt regarded this change in wholly positive terms.

As a further stage in his sentimental development, Humboldt pointed to a subsequent romantic entanglement, which followed closely on the heels of the first one. This time, he fell in love with a young woman who, he claimed, lacked any kind of feeling. A creature of social grace and etiquette alone, according to Humboldt, she managed to enchant and involve him in the life of social coquetry. His rescue from this life came only at the hands of Herz, through whom he transcended the social world of calculating courtliness. Looking back, he constructed this way of life as the opposite of his new feeling one. Whereas in his first love he had fooled himself with “feigned sentimentality,” the new girl was capable of “neither true nor false *Empfindsamkeit*.”¹³² But with Herz, Humboldt insinuated, he had entered into a relation of true feeling.

From Humboldt’s letter, we can infer that Herz had confided in the young man about some dissatisfaction with her marital and familial life. He expressed his sympathy for her lack of contentment. Humboldt lamented that Herz had to experience “frustration and sorrow precisely as a result of those whom you love most and who, in turn, also love you.”¹³³ At the same, he rejoiced at the intimacy between them that her confession had produced. Humboldt could feel “deep pity” about her fate, and simultaneously experience “sincere joy” that Herz had included him in her suffering.¹³⁴

Humboldt’s letters filled an absence of sentimental engagement that Herz perceived in her surroundings. In her memoirs, Herz presented her husband in loving terms but with clear convictions about his emotional deficiencies. He was ignorant of the kind of romantic entanglement that she and her male and female friends shared. As Herz put it, “A love like the one in my heart was unknown to my husband.”¹³⁵ This had been true from the beginning

¹³⁰ Ibid., 208.

¹³¹ “wenn ich mein Herz ganz unbeschäftigt gelassen hatte, so wurde ich nun in der Tat schwärmerisch.” Ibid.

¹³² “verstellte Empfindsamkeit”; “fern von aller wahren und falschen Empfindsamkeit.” Ibid., 209.

¹³³ “daß Sie [...] so oft Verdruß und Kummer erfahren müssen, und gerade von denen erfahren müssen, die Sie am meisten lieben, und von denen auch Sie wiedergeliebt sind.” Ibid., 207.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Eine Liebe wie in meinem Herzen kannte mein Mann nicht.” Ibid., 121.

of their relationship. Herz remembered that as a young bride of fifteen, she had loved her husband with an enthusiastic love inspired by the many novels she had read: “when I grew passionate – I danced around him and embraced him around the neck.” Narrating with more jest than bitterness, Herz added that her husband would laugh at and “enjoin me to reason.”¹³⁶ But elsewhere in her memoirs, she explained with more seriousness that Marcus Herz had spent his late youth “only in scholarly intercourse,” so that “his mind was educated without his character being formed.”¹³⁷ In other words, Marcus suffered from an imbalance between his intellectual and affective *Bildung*.¹³⁸ If an undated letter by Marcus to Henriette, in which he instructs her on preparations for a small dinner party, is any indication, the correspondence between husband and wife was much less sentimentally involved than the epistles exchanged by the *Tugendbund*.¹³⁹ Herz constructed her husband as the opposite of the man of feeling – a gifted brain without refined emotional sensibilities. For a sentimental soul such as herself, Marcus Herz’s alleged inability to relate to feeling (in life and in literature) inevitably presented problems.

Henriette Herz chose the couple’s conflicting attitudes toward the literature of the late eighteenth century as markers of the differences between them. The publication of Goethe’s *Götz* and *Werther*, she recounted, were turning points in the history of German imaginative literature. Herz contrasted herself, “a young woman gifted with a lively imagination,” with her husband, who “even with respect to imaginative literature [schöne Literatur] rejected everything not written with Lessing’s clarity and transparency.”¹⁴⁰ The Herzs’ opposed valuations of the German romantics caused Henriette the greatest “aesthetic sorrows.”¹⁴¹ She saw the poet Novalis as the summit of the movement and lamented that Marcus only leafed through the writer’s work to mock it as false and incomprehensible. Her husband, Henriette suggested, lacked the imaginative and emotional faculty required for this reading: “mere scientism has no organ for mysticism.”¹⁴² Herz did not explicitly mark the way in which her husband read imaginative literature as “Jewish.” Indeed, she associated him with Lessing. However, Herz distinguished her husband’s view of Lessing’s writing from the latter’s own self-evaluation. Henriette implied that her husband mistakenly saw Lessing as a “great poet” rather than as “the greatest critic of the Germans.” That claim, Henriette argued, contradicted Lessing’s own appreciation of his oeuvre. Marcus Herz and his circle of friends (she mentions David Friedländer), who were mostly male German Jewish Enlightenment figures, failed to grasp the new imaginative literature, in which feeling played the central role. In Henriette Herz’s account, only Jewish women in close correspondence with Christian friends were capable of connecting to and understanding this literature and its new reading practices.

¹³⁶ “Ich war glücklich, liebte mit der fünfzehnjährigen Liebe einen dreißigjährigen Mann, ich hatte viele Romane gelesen und sie in mich aufgenommen. Herz lachte mich aus, wenn ich schwärmte – tanzte ich um ihn her, hing ich mich an seinen Hals, wies er mich zur Vernunft.” Ibid., 27.

¹³⁷ “so ward sein Geist gebildet, ohne daß es sein Charakter ward.” Ibid., 24.

¹³⁸ Some eighteenth-century Jewish intellectuals proudly admitted their deficiencies in sensibility. In his autobiography, Salomon Maimon (1753-1800) ironically described the failure of his sentimental education, which is revealed in an encounter with a female Jewish reader of French novels. Maimon laughs at her attempts to elicit a novel-like reaction in him. Salomon Maimon, *Geschichte des eigenen Lebens (1754-1800)* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 171-172.

¹³⁹ Herz, *Henriette Herz*, 252.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁴¹ “ästhetische Leiden.” Ibid., 29.

¹⁴² “Für die Mystik hat freilich die bloße Wissenschaftlichkeit kein Organ.” Ibid.

The correspondence between Herz and Humboldt was occupied almost entirely with the feelings of the letter-writers. Humboldt's epistles both excited the affective imagination of his reader and kindled the affective reveries of the writer. On the leaves of his letters, Humboldt appears like a Wertherian hero, riding in bucolic valleys and concerned solely with the elaboration of his feelings. In one letter from 1786, Humboldt described to Herz a horse-ride that ended in a "small, fetching birch valley, out of the way, on the foot of a relatively tall mountain." There, Humboldt continued, he had "inscribed [her] name in a quite beautiful birch." The carved letters spelling out "Henriette" on the tree and the solitude that this place provided, Humboldt explained, were the reasons for his frequent visits to the valley. His horse, he claimed, had already memorized the way to Henriette's tree. "Does this not sound romantic?" Humboldt asked rhetorically. With this term he was not referring to the Romantic movement – a phenomenon of a later period – but to the resemblance of the natural scene and his own sensibility for it to a *Roman* or novel. Humboldt answered his question with an ironic affirmative, "surely, yes" and then concluded with the exclamation "but let it." The birch valley, for Humboldt, was the source of his "sweetest hours" and his "purest sentiments."¹⁴³ The pursuit and shared experience of these feelings, his *reinsten Empfindungen*, were for Humboldt the aim of reading and writing with Herz.

Humboldt's emphasis on the "purity" of his and Henriette Herz's feelings betrayed the moral suspicion that surrounded the close relationships that developed in their circle of fine-feeling correspondents. Similar suspicions adhered to Herz's later relationship with the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. Herz insisted that the only feelings between them were those of "deepest friendship."¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Herz and Schleiermacher, explicitly addressed the nature of their relationship in their correspondence. Although Schleiermacher spoke of his "dependence" on Herz and described himself as extending his "roots and leaves toward love" as he awaited her letters, the two friends insisted that their ties were platonic. Herz treasured Schleiermacher's "deep sentiment" and the emotional rather than physical intimacy between the two.¹⁴⁵

Two decades later in her life, in the year 1803, the young Ludwig Börne fell in love with Herz and began writing to her passionately. The epistolary affair was entirely one-sided. It differed considerably from the exchanges of feeling in which Herz had participated in the 1780s. Börne had been living in her house, where his father had put the young man in her charge. Börne's pursuit perturbed Herz. She first explained Börne's actions as a "novel-like enthusiastic fit," but then characterized them as driven by a "mad passion."¹⁴⁶ Börne lacked the restraint of her own generation and exhibited raw emotion rather than cultivated sentiment.

¹⁴³ "Klingt das nicht romantisch? Freilich wohl. Aber mag es immer. Ich danke doch einmal diesem kleinen Tale die süßesten Stunden dieses Sommers, meine reinsten Empfindungen [...]" Ibid., 211.

¹⁴⁴ "So haben wir uns denn öfter darüber ausgesprochen, daß wir kein anderes Gefühl für einander hätten und haben könnten als Freundschaft, wenngleich die innigste [...]" Ibid., 92.

¹⁴⁵ "tiefe Empfindung" Ibid., 90.

¹⁴⁶ "Ich muß gestehen, daß ich bis dahin sein Benehmen einer romanhaften Grille zugeschrieben hatte, aber nachdem ich diese Papiere gelesen hatte, mußte ich von dieser Ansicht zurückkommen. Es sprach eine Leidenschaft aus ihnen, die mir allerdings als eine wahnsinnige erscheinen mußte." Ibid., 105.

The charge of excessive fantasy also figured into Herz's critique of Catholicism. After her conversion to Protestantism in 1817, Herz spent two years in Rome, often in the company of German artists. Unlike some of these artists and several German Romantics, Herz did not subsequently convert to Catholicism. However, she noted that the German artists she encountered in Rome found "Catholic worship undeniably more appealing to their artistic sense and fantasy than the Protestant one."¹⁴⁷ The heightened imaginative powers of the same artists, she noted critically, heightened the force of their emotions, including unfounded fear.¹⁴⁸ Her association of Catholicism with an unrestrained imagination leading to mystical excess and its relatives, hypochondria and other phobias, can be found already in *Siegwart*, in which Catholic churches and cloisters feed the protagonist's distorted fantasy in a period of melancholia.¹⁴⁹

Alongside these reservations about the imagination, we also find in Herz's memoirs a critique of "false" sentiment and feeling, usually denoted using the German term "Sentimentalität" and its variants rather than "Empfindsamkeit." Paraphrasing the critical opinion that Berlin theatergoers had of a particular actress, for example, she recalled that the latter had been accused of "a false, boring sentimentality, which had become an indelible mannerism in her."¹⁵⁰ More directly, she derided the writer Lafontaine as "soft" and "sentimental," preferring the infamous theologian Karl Friedrich Bahrdt – known for his rough polemics – as a conversation partner when she met the two.¹⁵¹ While critical of affected feeling, however, Herz maintained the possibility of true sentimentality beyond reproach.

In her recollections, recorded in an era that Herz perceived as more conservative in its social norms, she defended the exchange of intimate feelings of the *Tugendbund* from the aspersions of nineteenth-century critics. First, she argued for the "cleansing principle" of "sensuality" in her time.¹⁵² Then, with surprising candor, Herz took on the charge that she and others in her milieu, who celebrated feeling, had compromised the "sanctity of marriage." In her defense of the idea of "elective affinities," (Goethe's "Wahlverwandschaften" expounded in his third novel by the same name, published in 1809) where kindred souls had a right and duty to find each other – if necessary outside the confines of marriage – Herz inverted the moral language of her imagined critics. She denied that the *Tugendbund* had violated the sanctity of marriage. Rather, Herz argued, she and her contemporaries had defined marriage differently from their nineteenth-century successors. For the former, marriage had to be truly fulfilling for both partners. An "inner band" of "spirit and character satisfying to both" had to tie the two parts together. If such mutual harmony did not exist, Herz wrote, she and her peers regarded the relationship as a "concubinage" that itself "profaned the sanctity of

¹⁴⁷ "unleugbar mußte der katholische Kultus für den Kunstsinn wie für die Phantasie dieser jungen Männer ansprechender sein als der protestantische." Ibid., 133.

¹⁴⁸ "die Lebhaftigkeit der Phantasie der Dichter, geeignet, alle Gefühle in ihnen zu steigern, auch das der Furcht [...]" Ibid., 135.

¹⁴⁹ Johann Martin Miller, *Siegwart: eine Klostergeschichte*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Henne, 1844), 126.

¹⁵⁰ "einer falshen langweiligen Sentimentalität [...] die bei ihr zur unaustilgbaren Manier geworden sei." Herz, *Henriette Herz*, 126.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁵² "Die Sinnlichkeit war [...] mit einer Art reinigenden Prinizips gemischt [...]" Ibid., 198.

marriage.”¹⁵³ In effect, Herz reversed the charge: marriage which had not resulted from “elective affinities” was immoral, while relations grounded in the experience and elaboration of shared feelings were “pure” and “holy.” For Herz, marriages which left one spouse or both partners emotionally incomplete and which the couple endured to keep up appearances of propriety amounted to “falsehood.” She defended the search for a “connection of the heart” outside of marriages that were “empty, joyless, often painful, and wholly unsatisfying to the longing of a soul in need of love.” For Herz, the pursuit of such a connection was preferable to the “damaging” effects of a marriage without a relation of feeling.¹⁵⁴

Writing nearly half a century after this correspondence, Herz described the last decades of the eighteenth century as an era in which letter-writers from the educated world devoted many pages to reflecting on their thoughts and feelings. This particular “disposition,” she argued, which derived from a “truly humanist ethos” – i.e., a commitment to understanding the mind and heart of the human being – lay behind the creation and “electric” effect of Goethe’s *Werther*.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, when we read Humboldt’s letters to Herz, sent in 1786, a year before Goethe’s epistolary novel first appeared, we can imagine Herz reading them not unlike contemporaries read *Werther*’s. In his letters, Humboldt, like Goethe’s protagonist, is constantly longing to see his beloved, calling the hours of her absence from his life “sorrowful.” He complains about his need to speak to her “freely from the heart.”¹⁵⁶ Herz had her own Wertherian moments, which she described much later in her memoirs. They included an English would-be lover kneeling before her and begging for a kiss.¹⁵⁷

In defining the goals of the *Tugendbund* retrospectively in her memoirs, Herz included in its mission carrying out acts of love that would have some lasting effect on the world (i.e., be “werkfähig”).¹⁵⁸ Herz herself did indeed engage in at least one such work of charity. She adopted a girl, the “daughter of Jewish beggars,” whom she had “found” in a hostel (called the “Landwehr”) outside the confines of Berlin. Those who ended up there were usually indigent Jews from other states with no residence rights. By adopting the girl, Herz had hoped to “educate her to virtue, though for the serving ranks.” As she admitted with some bitterness, her education project or “Erziehung” came to naught: it produced an “Erztaugenichts,” an “arch-good-for-nothing.” Herz complained about the “grief” that the girl caused her, and concluded the story with the sarcastic observation that “the apprentice to virtue died in the end as a maid on the childbed of the Charité.”¹⁵⁹ In other words, the girl had conceived out of wedlock and succumbed to complications from childbirth in a hospital

¹⁵³ “eines beiden Teilen wahrhaft förderlichen Ehebundes. [...] Als ein solcher wurde nur derjenige erkannt, in welchem Geist und Gemüt des Ehepaars völlige oder doch beiden Teilen genügende Befriedigung fand, mit der Lösung des innern Bandes aber wurde das eheliche Verhältnis als die Heiligkeit der Ehe profanierend, ja als zu einem Konkubinat herabgesunken erachtet.” Ibid., 199.

¹⁵⁴ “[...] nicht selten nach einem langen, leeren, freudenlosen, oft peinvollen, die Sehnsucht eines liebebedürftigen Gemüts gänzlich unbefriedigt lassenden ehelichen Bunde, schon während der Dauer desselben eine anderweite Herzensverbindung eingegangen worden war. Aber mag es dafür heute nicht um soviel mehr die Ehegatten innerlich gänzlich unbefriedigt lassende, ja ihnen verderbliche [...] vor der Welt mit der Unwahrheit, welche diese oft Anstand nennt, ertragene Ehen geben?” Ibid., 200.

¹⁵⁵ “Ohne diese [...] aus einer echt humanen Gesinnung hervorgegangene, geistige Disposition, hätte der „Werther“ einerseits nie entstehn, andererseits nie so elektrisch wirken können, wie er getan.” Ibid., 202.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 210.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 82.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 84.

for the poor. For Herz, this was indeed an ignoble, unvirtuous end, completely at odds with the refinement of feeling that the *Tugendbund* saw as its chief aim and activity. It was a reminder of a world that does not appear very frequently on the pages of her memoirs and correspondence.

When Humboldt reflected on virtuous deeds in a 1787 letter to Herz, he appeared most interested in the pleasant effects that thinking about them had on the benefactors who carried them out. Referring to the efforts of Herz on behalf of a little girl – presumably the same child that she mentioned in her memoirs – Humboldt lauded his friend’s consequent (but momentary) contentment with her life. “You are happy because of your consciousness of noble actions,” Humboldt wrote to Herz, “because of the feeling of deep goodness of the heart.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, the elevated feeling aroused by reflection on one’s own virtuous deeds (or those of others) was as important as the work itself. This kind of feeling constituted one of the prime “pleasures of the heart,” and, according to Humboldt, made up the “only, truly joyous and blissful” delights one could experience.¹⁶¹

The pleasure that Humboldt and Herz derived from contemplating acts of sympathy and kindness became a prime target for the critics of sentimental pleasure reading in their time and in the nineteenth century. In the final volume of his *History of the Jews*, devoted to the modern period, published nearly a hundred years later in 1870, Graetz attacked the sentimentality of Herz and her contemporaries as self-indulgent and degenerate. But as we will see later, Graetz had his own sentimental phase. It took several decades for pleasure reading to reach the small towns of Posen, where Graetz grew up. Nevertheless, his discovery of feeling in the 1830s, which transpired in quite different surroundings from Herz’s, included many similar experiences as those which shaped the Berlin *salonnière*. Before turning to Graetz, however, the next two chapters examine a member of the first generation of male German Jewish intellectuals who grew up in the wake of the reading revolution of the salon Jewesses. For Leopold Zunz, who was raised in a tradition-oriented, small-town German Jewish milieu, the encounter with “feminine” pleasure reading provided one gateway out of the “medieval” Jewish education system. Unlike the *salonnières*, however, Zunz stayed within the confines of Jewish institutions in his youth, embracing the discipline provided by *Haskalah* pedagogy, at least temporarily. A second revolt against the latter led Zunz to search for an intellectual identity that he saw as more suited to his age. Reconstructing Zunz’s reading formation, I argue that his turn to historical scholarship and lifetime project of a *Wissenschaft des Judentums* can be understood as an effort to assert a new masculine and Jewish reading subjectivity against the disciplinary project of the remnants of the *Haskalah*. With his historical scholarship, Zunz himself tried to discipline German Jewish reading. Zunz’s embrace of *Wissenschaft* was a reaction against German Jewish readers’ turn away from Hebrew sources and the ascendance of (German) vernacular pleasure reading among them.

¹⁶⁰ “Sie sind glücklich, Henriette, durch das Bewußtsein edler Taten, durch das Gefühl innerer Herzensgüte.” Ibid., 219.

¹⁶¹ “die Vergnügungen des Herzens sind die einzigen, recht beglückenden, recht beseligenden.” Ibid. Humboldt’s distinction among different kinds of feeling here is reminiscent of the classification of feeling made only a few years later by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790.

Chapter 4: The Young Provincial Reader and the Revolt against Enlightenment Pedagogy, 1800-1815

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the modes of reading practiced by the daughters of Berlin's Jewish elite reached Jewish boys and adolescents in the German provinces. Here, however, pleasure reading was still encumbered by the educational policy of traditional Jewish society, which mandated the supervised instruction of unmarried males in the classical canon of sources and method of relating to them. Any deviation from this educational path was likely to require or result in some new formation of the individual as a reader or intellectual, more broadly. Given the gendered divisions that defined pre-modern Jewish reading, that new formation had in some way to resolve inevitable questions about the "femininity" or "masculinity" of reading for pleasure. This chapter follows the development of the young Leopold Zunz as a reader and writer, by reconstructing what Iris Parush has referred to as a "reading biography" in her study of discoveries of reading by Eastern European Jewish men and women in the nineteenth century.¹⁶²

Zunz's reading biography reveals the role of vernacular pleasure reading in the process of modernization; his reading amounted to a revolt against the traditional Jewish educational system in the provinces. When the Talmud Torah school of Zunz's early childhood was superseded by the Enlightenment pedagogy of the Free School, Zunz found a new source of authority in the disciplinary project of his maskilic teachers. But the continued attractions of new modes of reading as well as the small delights of modern, early-nineteenth-century life, proved compelling enough for Zunz to stage another small revolt, this time against the remnants of the German Jewish *Haskalah*. The ideal of neo-humanist study for its own sake proved more enticing and offered a more attractive discipline to Zunz. It was from Zunz's turn to *Wissenschaft*, described in the next chapter, that a modern masculine intellectual model emerged, which had the aim of creating a new Jewish reader.

The early period of Zunz's life, to which this account assigns primacy, has been somewhat neglected by Zunz's biographers.¹⁶³ Zunz was born on August 10, 1794 in Detmold, the

¹⁶² Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 98.

¹⁶³ Zunz's first biographer concentrated on what he called the "most important period" of the scholar's life, between 1818 and 1839. Siegmund Maybaum, *Aus dem Leben von Leopold Zunz*, 12. Bericht über die Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin (Berlin: Rosenthal, 1894), 2. Luitpold Wallach's monograph about Zunz dealt primarily with the ideas in his mature writings and hardly mentioned aspects related to his development as a human being. Luitpold Wallach, *Liberty and Letters: the Thoughts of Leopold Zunz* (London: Published for the Leo Baeck Institute by the East and West Library, 1959). Ismar Schorsch's excellent comparative essay briefly mentions the childhood experiences of Jost and Zunz in Wolfenbüttel, juxtaposing them, in one paragraph, with the privileged youth and career of Leopold von Ranke. Ismar Schorsch, "From Wolfenbüttel to Wissenschaft: The Divergent Paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz," in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 233-234. The body of the essay, however deals with their respective scholarly careers long after they had left the Samson Free School in Wolfenbüttel for Göttingen (Jost) and Berlin (Zunz). A future version of the present dissertation will include a more rigorous comparison of the reading biography of a major German scholarly figure such as Ranke with the formation of German Jewish *Wissenschaftler*. For Ranke's autobiographical writings see Leopold von Ranke, *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte von Leopold von Ranke*, ed. Alfred Wilhelm Dove, vol. 53, 54 vols., 3rd ed., *Leopold von Ranke's Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875). Previous comparisons, usually of Graetz and Ranke, have focused rather narrowly on their ideas of history. See for

capital of the small Westphalian Principality (*Fürstentum*) of Lippe, in northwestern Germany. This was a town of roughly 2,000 people, home to a small Jewish community. Jews had first settled in Detmold during the seventeenth century. The economic pillars of the Jewish community then were the factors and bankers of the princely court of Lippe, who included Isaak Heine (also known as Itzig Bückeburg, 1654-1734), an ancestor of Heinrich Heine. Zunz himself was not directly connected to this economic elite but rather to the lower ranks of the small class of scholars and religious functionaries who served the community.

His parents, Emanuel Menachem Mendel (1759/1761-1802) and Hendel *née* Behrens (1773-1809), originally named their son Yomtov Lipman (also, Jomtov Lippmann), the name by which many friends and relatives knew Zunz for most of his life.¹⁶⁴ Zunz adopted the German first name “Leopold”, only in his early twenties, using it in lieu of his original given name, in his German-language writings.¹⁶⁵ His most famous namesake in the history of the Jews, whose works were doubtlessly familiar to Mendel Zunz, was the Bavarian-born Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller (1578-1654). Author of the *Tosafot Yom-tov*, he served as chief rabbi of Prague and Kraków.¹⁶⁶ The choice of this name may have signaled his parents’ intellectual aspirations for their son. Whatever the provenance of Zunz’s given names the fact that these were distinctly Jewish testifies to his parents’ immersion in an Ashkenazi culture where tendencies toward acculturation had not yet made strong inroads.

The wanderings of Zunz’s peripatetic namesake, Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller, from Bavaria to Bohemia to Ukraine and finally Poland exemplified the interconnected Ashkenazi world of the seventeenth century. In the age of Zunz’s parents, learned Jews from eastern Ashkenaz were once again migrating westward, accepting posts in Talmudic academies and lower schools throughout the old Holy Roman Empire, including the renowned yeshivas of Prague and Frankfurt.¹⁶⁷ Growing up at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Zunz encountered some of these “Polish” or Eastern European scholars in his early schooling. Given the preeminence of Ashkenazi rabbinic scholars who had studied east of the Elbe river, Zunz

example, Salo W. Baron, “Graetzens Geschichtsschreibung,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 62 (1918): 5-15; Myers, *Resisting History*, 20.

¹⁶⁴ Nahum Glatzer records Menahem (Mendel) Zunz’s years as 1759-1802. According to him, Mendel died “at the age of forty-three, when Leopold was a child of eight.” Nahum N. Glatzer, “Introduction,” in *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz: An Account in Letters, 1815-1885* (London: Leo Baeck Institute, 1958), x-xi. The contributor to the Jewish Encyclopedia gives the dates of Zunz’s father “Mendl Emanuel” as 1761 to July 3, 1802. Markus Brann refers to an approximate date: “c. 1764 blühte Immanuel Menachem b. R. Jehuda Loeb, der Vater des Dr. L. Zunz.” Marcus Brann, “Dr. Leopold Zunz und seine Frankfurter Ahnen,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 38, no. 11 (1894): 498.

¹⁶⁵ Nahum N. Glatzer, “Introduction,” in *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz: An Account in Letters, 1815-1885* (London: Leo Baeck Institute, 1958), 357 n. 1. According to Glatzer, Zunz chose this name at the urging of J.H. Samson after he began teaching in Wolfenbüttel. From a letter by S.M. Ehrenberg, written in August 1815, when Zunz was twenty-one years old, it appears that Zunz had only recently adopted the German name, as his teacher specifically points out the name change: “Nun noch etwas über den Namen Leopold. Es ist mir unausstehlich, wenn Juden ihre Vornahmen deshalb ändern, um alle äußere Spuren ihres Ursprungs zu verwischen.” Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz: An Account in Letters, 1815-1885* (London: Leo Baeck Institute, 1958), 2.

¹⁶⁶ On Yom-Tov Lippmann Heller see Joseph Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005).

¹⁶⁷ On the German yeshivas in this time period see Mordechai Breuer, “Intellectual and Religious Life,” in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Tradition and Enlightenment (1600-1780)*, ed. Michael A. Meyer and Michael Brenner, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 209-215.

would have faced significant obstacles as a German Jew, if he had wanted to make a name for himself in the world of traditional Jewish learning. In any case, later in his youth, as an intellectual of a self-consciously modern mold, the alternative figure of the traditional rabbinic scholar loomed in his memory largely as a negative intellectual role model.¹⁶⁸

The economic circumstances into which Zunz entered the world were hardly auspicious. The family's difficult circumstances may be surmised from the early deaths of his parents and the fact that Zunz was the only one of their children who survived into adulthood, his twin-sister and other siblings having died as infants.¹⁶⁹ If we can assign Zunz's family to a class, it is that of the materially-impooverished religious intellectuals who served traditional Jewish society and depended on the wealth of a few community patrons. Zunz's father and his paternal forebears came from Frankfurt. His genealogy can be traced to the sixteenth century and Zunz's ancestors had once belonged to the prosperous rabbinic ranks of the community of that city. From Frankfurt, Zunz's father moved north and married into one of the Jewish families of the small towns in Westphalia. As a whole, the Jews of the principalities and imperial cities of the region, roughly coterminous with the Lower Rhenish-Westphalian Imperial Circle, comprised less than one percent of the population at the time.¹⁷⁰

While Zunz's father had left the great city of Frankfurt for smaller Detmold in the 1790s, the most significant demographic development in the history of German Jewry during the nineteenth century was the move of rural and small-town Jews into larger cities such as Hamburg and Berlin.¹⁷¹ Zunz's own family moved to Hamburg a year after his birth, in 1795.¹⁷² Although Zunz did not remain in the northern port city, he was to repeat the move from the German provinces to the big city in his own adult life, spending most of it in Prussian Berlin, with a short stint in Habsburg Prague. The trajectory of Zunz and Adelheid from small towns in Westphalia and Lower Saxony to Berlin traced a cultural journey from the schools and domestic settings of traditional German Jewish communities to the bustling intellectual life of the big city.

We know little about how Mendel and Hendel supported the family. Zunz's mother was the daughter of Dov Ber, a functionary in the Jewish community in Detmold.¹⁷³ One biographer described Mendel as a Talmudic pupil, who earned pittance as a tutor in Hebrew and Talmud and then managed a small grocery store.¹⁷⁴ In Zunz's memory, his father survived as

¹⁶⁸ Though Zunz became a close epistolary friend of the Galician scholar Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840).

¹⁶⁹ Emil G. Hirsch, "Zunz, Leopold," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1906), 699-700.

¹⁷⁰ Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, "Population Shifts and Occupational Structure," in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Emancipation and Acculturation (1780-1871)*, ed. Michael A. Meyer and Michael Brenner, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 52.

¹⁷¹ A significant exception to this pattern were the Jews of the southern German states (e.g. Württemberg), who continued to live largely in small towns into the second half of the nineteenth century. *Ibid.*, 56-57.

¹⁷² Marcus Brann, "Stammtafel," *MGWJ* 38, no. 11 (1894): 480. David Kaufmann, "Die Familie Zunz," *MGWJ* 38, no. 11 (1894): 484.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* Kaufmann described Dov Ber as a "Gemeindebeamte" (communal official) and "Hilfsvorbeter" (assistant cantor). The dates for Zunz's mother, Hendel Behrens, are from Hirsch, "Zunz, Leopold," 700.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 699.

a “very learned man” who provided him with his early education in Hebrew grammar, Rashi’s commentary to the Pentateuch, and the Mishnah.¹⁷⁵

Measured by his birth and the income of his parents, Zunz lived on the margins of the German Jewish economic elite of his day. Indeed, when he became an orphan as a child, he was left with next to no means of support and had to rely on benefactors and philanthropic institutions for his subsistence and education. Unlike the *salonnières*, he spent most of his childhood and youth in a provincial town in a small German principality rather than in one of the more cosmopolitan cities of Europe. He therefore lacked the connections of wealth and pedigree that linked the well-to-do German Jewish elite in the early nineteenth century. Also unlike many members of the economic elite, Zunz’s first language was Yiddish and he acquired Hebrew literacy before learning German letters. His family was far from acculturated and still immersed in the traditional Jewish life of the eighteenth century. However, Zunz was not well-situated in the religious aristocracy of his day either. His father did not occupy a post as a communal rabbi or even an appointment as an honored scholar.

Those circumstances at least partially account for the fact that he did not develop allegiances to the traditional rabbinic elite of his day or to the German Jewish aristocracy. Unlike the sons of parents who owned successful businesses, Zunz could not count on acquiring a trade under their wings or those of a relative. Nor could he look forward to inheriting capital. Zunz’s own rise therefore depended largely on his ability to distinguish himself intellectually. Because of his own interests as well as the dominance of the Eastern European Talmudic academies, any intellectual achievements had to be in a field outside of the purview of the traditional Jewish scholarly elite, if they were to satisfy greater ambitions. Perhaps because he lacked the economic support system that would have tied him more closely to traditional society, he was able to pursue the ideal of learning for learning’s sake at a German *Gymnasium* and university, finding in *Wissenschaft* an outlet for his intellectual drive. Marginality thus gave him a certain degree of freedom in his vocational pursuits.

While his own father was still alive and until the appearance of Ehrenberg, Zunz was immersed in the traditional educational system of Ashkenazi Jews. Our goal here is to reconstruct Zunz’s early education in more detail. More specifically, we want to know what kinds of ways of interacting with texts Zunz encountered as a young boy. The earliest memory that Zunz recounted in his partially-published memoir, *Das Buch Zunz*, dated to some time after his fifth birthday when he learned to sing a famous Sabbath-day *zemer* (hymn sung at a festive meal) by heart.¹⁷⁶ “Freedom, He will Proclaim” – “*Dror yikra*” or “*Draur jikro*,” as Zunz transcribed the Western Ashkenazi pronunciation that he had heard – is a beautiful poem written by the famed Hebrew grammarian and commentator Dunash ben Labrat (920-990). Composed of allusions to biblical verses, it uses clever adaptations of classical Hebrew literature to Arabic meter in order to convey a messianic theme. It was a fitting text to grapple with for a boy who early on took an interest in the Hebrew language. The way in which Zunz approached “*Dror yikra*” was of course typical of a traditional mode of Jewish learning. The five-year-old Zunz learned by singing or reciting the poem until he

¹⁷⁵ Kaufmann, “Die Familie Zunz,” 484.

¹⁷⁶ Leopold Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz: Künftigen ehrlichen Leuten gewidmet*, ed. Fritz Bamberger (Salman Schocken and Soncino Gesellschaft, 1931), 12.

had memorized it. At the same age, Zunz recalled, he also “began the [study of] the Talmud.”

Learning with various instructors, Zunz received an intensive introduction to rabbinic study in his early childhood years. His first teacher was a “barber named Löwe,” who taught both boys and girls in a *keheyder*. Then, Zunz switched to the “school” of the family’s neighbor Moses, where he stayed for nearly two years. Later, he studied with a Rabbi Pelta for eighteen months, and with Joseph Tiktin.¹⁷⁷ With Tiktin, Zunz recounted, he “learned Tractate Kiddushin.” In-between Moses and Pelta, Zunz noted laconically, “a *Polak* instructed me in Talmud for one week.” Given that all his other terms of instruction lasted for several months, we might assume that things did not work out with the anonymous “*Polak*.” There were occasionally complaints in this time period by German Jewish children who could not understand the Polish Yiddish dialect of their teachers, one that was so very different from German Yiddish. By the 1830s, “Polish Talmudism” and supposedly Polish methods of instruction had become notorious among German Jewish intellectuals. Another encounter with “the writing instructor Wolf from Poland” who also taught Zunz Talmud, lasted a short time as well. The latter instructor, Zunz added in his memoir, later converted to Christianity and became a bookseller in Hamburg.¹⁷⁸

Studying Talmud in these settings was a communal experience in which students and teachers read passages out loud, explained, and translated. All interactions with books and texts – mostly the large folios of Talmud tractates with the commentaries printed on the sides – were supervised and occurred in public. A path to a different kind of interaction with texts opened for Zunz in the summer of 1802, after the death of his father on July 3 in Hamburg.

The loss of his father temporarily brought a new pedagogical influence into Zunz’s life. Unlike all the teachers Zunz had studied with so far, the one who introduced him to a new way of reading was a young woman – his aunt Hannchen, who was eighteen years old. In addition to teaching him arithmetic, Zunz recalled, she taught him the basics of reading and writing German. Like their Eastern European counterparts, young German Jewish women were more likely to acquire literacy in the vernacular language of the land than men in a society still structured by the traditional educational regime.¹⁷⁹

Zunz could not have learned how to read German from any of his male Jewish teachers. His teenage aunt was the mediator of new linguistic skills and ultimately new ways of reading and writing texts. As Parush has shown for the Eastern European context, young women like Hannchen, whose Jewish education in traditional Ashkenazi society was a low priority, were relatively unsupervised in their intellectual pursuits. They therefore enjoyed a “benefit of marginality,” which gave them an edge in gaining literacy skills in German superior to those of their brothers and nephews.¹⁸⁰ Although traditional forms of study had long provided boys and young men with prestige in Jewish society, the solitary reading practices

¹⁷⁷ Perhaps a member of the famous Silesian rabbinic family whose sons became embroiled in disputes with Abraham Geiger around the Breslau rabbinate beginning in the 1830s.

¹⁷⁸ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ For the Eastern European case see Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 172-206.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, xiii, 59.

increasingly cultivated by Jewish women were in effect more congruent with the type of reading done in the schools, universities, and homes of the Christian German educated elite or *Bildungsbürgertum*.

As we will see, Zunz continued his German-language education at a later point, in a more supervised setting than the playful lessons with Hannchen. But his initial exposure to German reading and writing over the course of a summer was through the informal instruction of this young female relative. This was an environment more nurturing and less restricted than any of his other childhood and adolescent educational experiences. It provided a glimpse of the experience of reading for pleasure. Unlike in the traditional classrooms in which he had studied and was to continue learning, reading German with Hannchen did not present the threat of corporal punishment; Zunz described his harrowing encounters with the latter in reminiscences of his later traditional schooling in Wolfenbüttel. He was to have few other opportunities for this kind of reading.

Even though Zunz's mother survived her husband and continued living in Hamburg until her death in 1809, she entrusted Zunz to her brother, Salomon Berends (d. 1846) who brought the boy to Wolfenbüttel. The journey took four days and included a five-hour walk from Braunschweig to Wolfenbüttel, where Zunz arrived on June 5, 1803, not quite nine years old.¹⁸¹ In Wolfenbüttel, Zunz initially remained immersed in a traditional Jewish *milieu*, but one which first provided him with opportunities to venture into novel intellectual realms. In this phase of Zunz's life we also see his first acts of self-conscious intellectual activity and rebellion against his surroundings.

The move to Lower Saxon Wolfenbüttel brought Zunz back to an environment similar to the small-town Westphalian German Jewish surroundings in which he was born. Then located in the Principality of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, the town became part of the newly-constituted *Herzogtum* Braunschweig or Duchy of Brunswick in 1814, as a result of the Congress of Vienna. As a child and adolescent in Wolfenbüttel, Zunz witnessed first-hand the modernization of traditional, *ancien régime* Jewish institutions as well as the German polity in which he grew up. Closely linked to that process and most significant to our story was Zunz's ongoing encounter with new modes of learning, writing, and reading in Wolfenbüttel, in the period between 1803 and 1815. In the young Zunz's biography, we can discern this transition, which became crucial to the new intellectual identity he acquired for himself post-1815 in Berlin and elsewhere.

In addition to closing some doors, marginality also opened others for Zunz. As a child without means, Zunz was able to study for free at the Wolfenbüttel Bethhamidrasch, the small school that had been established by Philipp Samson (d. 1804) in 1786.¹⁸² Samson, whose brother Herz had also founded a similar school in Brunswick using a bequest from their father, may have been inspired by the new maskilic Jewish schools that had been established in Berlin (1778) and Prague (1782). But as its name indicated, when Zunz first

¹⁸¹ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 12-13.

¹⁸² Lesser Knoller, "Wolfenbüttel," in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York and London: Funk and Wagnall, 1905), 550. Zunz recorded the year of Philipp Samson's death in an 1843 essay that was later published by Ludwig Geiger. See Leopold Zunz, "Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel," ed. Ludwig Geiger, *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* (1937): 135.

arrived at the school it operated in a manner much closer to a traditional German Jewish *beis midrash* (*bet midrash*) than the revolutionary, reformist school envisioned by the Berlin *maskilim* Isaak Itzig and David Friedländer. “Bet midrash” literally means “house of study” and was the designation for a traditional Jewish educational institution for youth and adult education. Most of this education centered around traditional Talmud study and many of Zunz’s teachers at the beginning were Polish rabbinic scholars. Nevertheless, the Samson Bethhamidrasch did offer several hours of separate instruction to teach the boys how to write and read in German. Zunz also remembered that the teacher who gave the lesson devoted to instruction in the Pentateuch, which took place only once a week on Friday mornings, used Mendelssohn’s translation of the Torah.¹⁸³ Thus, even in its earlier phase, the school Zunz entered in Wolfenbüttel prepared him for new kinds of encounters with books.

However, between 1803 and the end of 1806, Zunz received a largely traditional education – he later described it as “medieval” – in content and form.¹⁸⁴ For the first year, he lived together with several other students, in a room adjoining the school. In the winter, all the students, the teacher Rabbi Kalman (d. 1804) and the latter’s wife (the *rebbetzin*), shared one room, where they slept, learned, and ate, because they could not heat the rest of the building. After Kalman’s death, Zunz and his peers came under the apparently tyrannical supervision of a certain Rabbi Beer, in a different building, this time on the historic Zimmerhof street of Wolfenbüttel.¹⁸⁵ In Zunz’s recollections, this period constituted the dark ages of his childhood, not only intellectually but also physically and emotionally.

Zunz’s depiction of the Samson School resembled the critiques of the *kehayder* and Jewish traditional schools in Eastern Europe by *maskilim* there. In addition to the unhygienic conditions and the bitter cold in the winter, Zunz alluded to hazing by older students and remembered traumatic scenes of corporal punishment. He related two miraculous instances in which “Providence” spared him from being beaten with a rod by his teacher. In one such episode, which Zunz related with some amusement, the teacher missed the ten-year-old Zunz and hit a lamp instead; “its oil poured over the tractate Gittin.”¹⁸⁶ A different teacher, Rabbi Michel, apparently enjoyed watching military recruits being beaten outside more than he liked to teach his students.¹⁸⁷

The material provisions of the students were minimal. Zunz recalled having no possessions other than a few garments, a duffel bag, and a chart for counting the *omer*.¹⁸⁸ The food was barely adequate. “Highlights” were parsnips (*Pastinaken*), served every first night of Passover, and chopped liver (*Lungenmuß*), served on Purim. The weekly *kugel* on Saturdays, Zunz still remembered somewhat bitterly, “was so often burnt that [he] threw it out.” Besides the many religious obligations of the Jewish calendar incumbent upon all Jews, Zunz and his peers, had special tasks as pall-bearers and assistant *matzo*-bakers. Even as nine-year-olds, they had to wake up for *selichot* (penitential liturgical poems recited in the days leading up to

¹⁸³ Ibid., 131-132.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 134-136.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 133.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 135.

¹⁸⁸ “Counting the *omer*” (*sefirat ha-omer*) is the practice of ritually enumerating each of the forty-nine days between the second day of Passover and the day before the festival of Shavuot. Charts for *omer*-counting list the formula recited for each day.

the High Holy Days) at four in the morning, earlier on the eve of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. After two years in Wolfenbüttel, having celebrated his eleventh birthday, Zunz had “literally no pants and not a single whole sock.”¹⁸⁹

What especially bothered Zunz in retrospect was the chaos of the institution and the lack of guidance for the students. The Samson School, as Zunz encountered it between 1803 and 1806, “lacked any kind of school regulations, records, or pedagogy.” If they were not in class, the students were enlisted for household chores and left to their own wild games the rest of the time.¹⁹⁰ The general disorder could turn Rabelaisian. On the eve of the festival of Sukkot, the clamoring of local (Christian) “riff-raff” (*Pöbel*) to see the *sukkah* escalated into such a brouhaha that the teacher, Rabbi Kalman, ran to the town’s police director. His “agitation and sprinting [to the police]” caused complications of a pre-existing condition – the teacher’s hernia; he died only a few days later.¹⁹¹

The “medieval” character of the school for Zunz was further reinforced by the absence of any interaction with Christians in the lives of the students. Zunz recalled that he knew only two non-Jews at the time. One, was “a woman who combed [his] hair” and the other was a teacher who instructed the boys in writing and reading German as well as in arithmetic, four to five hours every week – continuing the studies that Zunz had started with his aunt Hannchen a year earlier.

The German teacher, who was the only man who “sat with a bare head in the classroom” of the Samson School was Gottlieb Bertrand (1775-1813), a prolific writer of low-brow novels and plays.¹⁹² Bertrand’s works included a variety of romances, mysteries, gothic tales, adventure stories, and narratives about robbers, knights, exotic peoples, and places. They could often be found in lending libraries. Some representative titles from his oeuvre are: *Amina the beautiful Circassian* (1803), *Sigismund and Sophronie: Cruelty due to Superstition* (1815), and *Pugachev, the monstrous rebel, represented romantically* (1807). A reviewer in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (Halle), as one might imagine, judged the latter work, which was an attempt at historical fiction, an utter failure, complaining that the personality of the Cossack Pugachev truly did not lend itself to that of a protagonist in a novel. The critic also railed against the “many contradictions and inaccuracies” in the book.¹⁹³ Reviewed in the magazine’s “Schöne Künste” (*belles lettres*) section, Bertrand’s *Pugachev* was a specimen of the kind of popular fiction that captured a wide lowbrow and middlebrow readership in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and aroused the ire of the critics.

¹⁸⁹ Zunz, “Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel,” 133-135.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 132.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 134.

¹⁹² Ibid., 133. On Bertrand see the excellent German Wikipedia article “Gottlieb Bertrand,” in *Wikipedia (Deutsch)*, 2011, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottlieb_Bertrand. *Amina die schöne Zirkassierinn* (Leipzig: Rein, 1803); *Sigismund und Sophronie, oder Grausamkeit aus Aberglauben. Ein Schauspiel in drei Aufzügen.*, 1815; *Pugatschew, der furchtbare Rebell* (Wolfenbüttel: Albrecht, 1807). Bertrand’s plays and novels were translated into Danish and Swedish. His works in those languages and in German went through multiple editions. Both Zunz and Ludwig Geiger mistakenly refer to 1811 as the year of Bertrand’s death.

¹⁹³ “Review: Pugateschew der furchtbare Rebell,” *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 4, no. 69 (June 1811): 550.

From one of Bertrand's utterances in the classroom, which survived in Zunz's memory, we can infer that the teacher did not take an excessive interest in his students. Zunz, who distinguished himself with his arithmetic skills at a young age, remembered that in reply to his question, "what is Algebra?" Bertrand responded, "something which you will never understand."¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that with a writer like Bertrand giving him German lessons, between 1804 and 1805, Zunz never read any of his novels.

In his memoir, Zunz claimed that he read his first German book in 1805, at the age of eleven. The title of the first German book that Zunz read in its entirety was *Philadelphias Kunststücke* (The Feats of Philadelphia).¹⁹⁵ Jacob Meyer Philadelphia (1720-1795?) was an American-born German Jewish "scientist," mystic, conman (or professional hyperbolist), and magician.¹⁹⁶ His last name was a later addition, in honor of his place of birth. Philadelphia's "feats" consisted of physics demonstrations and sleight-of-hand. He and others published a number of books about the magic tricks he had performed. Many of these titles bore references to "leisure" and "amusement."¹⁹⁷ Reading about the legerdemain of this Jewish magician whose spectacles excited courts and public audiences in the eighteenth century must have been a welcome escape for Zunz. It also trained him again in a different kind of reading practice than the Talmudic studies in the classroom.

Reflecting on his time there, Zunz observed with some consternation that during his first years at the Samson School no one organized any kind of reading for the students: "Leisure reading and that kind of thing did not exist."¹⁹⁸ Solitary reading for pleasure, in short, may still have been foreign to the rabbis who taught him. We know that Zunz did not own any books in his first years at the school. But a year later, in 1806, at the age of twelve, after Bertrand had stopped teaching at the school, Zunz read *A Thousand and One Nights* in Yiddish. He referred to the book as "the Arabian fairy tales in the Judeo-German edition."¹⁹⁹ Clearly, Zunz had found his way to leisure reading. Perhaps he had already received a head start in the Bertrand years.

Collections of stories like *Toyznt un eyn nekht* (A Thousand and One Nights) were among the earliest narrative compilations adapted to and then published in Old Yiddish across the Ashkenazi world.²⁰⁰ One such edition, bearing the title, *Arabische Ertzelung*, was published in Frankfurt Oder in 1794 but there were many others before and after it.²⁰¹ Nineteenth-century Eastern European Yiddish writers such as Shomer (Nokhem Meyer Shaykevitch, 1849–1905), known and later criticized for his popular novels, remembered finding the book on their mothers' bookshelves and reading it as young boys. In his memoirs, Shomer recalled that he had to do this leisure reading in secret, so as not to anger his mother and tutor for

¹⁹⁴ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 14.

¹⁹⁵ Zunz, "Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel," 138.

¹⁹⁶ See Ludwig Geiger, "Jacob Philadelphia and Frederick the Great," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 16 (1907): 85-94; Julius Sachse, "Jacob Philadelphia, Mystic and Physicist," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 16 (1907): 73-84.

¹⁹⁷ For example, Jacob Philadelphia, *Des berühmten Amerikaners Jacob Philadelphia sämtliche approbierte Kunststücke, zum Vergnügen und Zeitvertreib gewidmet*, 3rd ed. (Gera: Rothen, 1783).

¹⁹⁸ "Lektüre und dergleichen gab es nicht." Zunz, "Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel," 133.

¹⁹⁹ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 14.

²⁰⁰ Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, 297.

²⁰¹ *Arabische Ertzelung: Toyznt un eyn nekht* (Frankfurt Oder: Itsik, 1794).

reading a womanly story book.²⁰² We do not know if Zunz perceived a similar stigma in his time and how he obtained his reading matter

Technically, as Zunz acknowledged in a different autobiographical account, he had read one other work before the magic book by Philadelphia – Johann Hemeling’s classic “Small Arithmetic Handbook,” a basic primer in arithmetic and practical commerce-related calculations, which dated to the seventeenth century.²⁰³ Between 1805 and 1807, Zunz remembered later, he wrote down all the solutions to the exercises in the book.²⁰⁴ Although much of the first part of the book contains the simplest fundamentals of arithmetic – from counting to addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and manipulating fractions – this was still quite an achievement for an eleven-year-old boy working on his own. For Zunz, these seemed to have been exercises in mathematical learning for its own sake. In defiance of his teacher Bertrand’s prophecy, Zunz went on to study algebra from a different book by Hemeling in the next year (1806).²⁰⁵

In addition to his first encounters with pleasure reading and mathematical problem-solving, Zunz explored one other intellectual practice that might have gone against the grain of his early education. In the same period in which he began studying algebra, at the age of twelve, Zunz also started keeping a Hebrew diary in verse.²⁰⁶ In so doing, the precocious Zunz may have adopted the posture of a *maskil* – a follower of the Jewish Enlightenment.²⁰⁷ *Maskilim* in Central and later Eastern Europe deliberately turned to the study of Hebrew and grammar in opposition to what they perceived as the misplaced emphasis on Talmudic study in Jewish culture. The traditional Jewish education system did not invest time in the study of the Hebrew language for the purpose of aesthetic creation. Acquiring a knowledge of Hebrew grammar and vocabulary rich enough to compose rhyming journal entries would have required independent study on Zunz’s part. The main source for such study would have been the Bible, especially the Prophets and Writings, as well as the medieval homiletic poetry (*piyutim*). Given that study of the Bible revolved mostly around the weekly Torah portion and took up only a few hours each Friday morning at the Samson School, Zunz must have derived the craft from his own reading, perhaps together with his colleague, Jost.

Zunz’s diary marked the beginning of his formation as a modern writer. It was fundamentally concerned with his own subjectivity. Writing down personal reflections also involved Zunz in the performance of an interior self. As a practice that his teachers would not have seen as valuable, it had a transgressive quality. More explicitly transgressive was a Hebrew satirical tract that Zunz penned in the summer of the same year, in which he lampooned the older students and his teachers.²⁰⁸ Both acts of writing depended on the sophisticated use of Hebrew and Aramaic applied to new forms and designed mainly to elicit

²⁰² Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 140.

²⁰³ The “little” and “big” Hemeling books went through countless editions. One edition from the nineteenth century includes math problems such as “Richardus, a *burgher*, has a wall built [...]” or “Elias the Jew buys 225 cubits of golden lace in Hamburg [...]” Johann Hemeling, *Kleines Rechenbuch* (E. A. Telgener, 1817), 93.

²⁰⁴ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 14.

²⁰⁵ Zunz, “Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel,” 136.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ For *maskilic* accounts of traditional society’s opposition to the study of Hebrew, see Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 25-26.

²⁰⁸ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 14.

the pleasure or at least amusement of his audience and himself. Despite its critical content, Zunz's satirical tract may have been more familiar to his students and teachers than the diary. The satire was more obviously public than the latter and it treated a subject matter familiar to everyone who read it. Sharp criticism by rabbinic scholars of one another were not unprecedented and such demonstrations of intellectual acumen and literary prowess had some legitimacy. Most importantly, writing a satire of this sort was also an unequivocally masculine intellectual performance in the traditional Jewish culture of rabbinic learning. The journal may have been more ambiguous in this respect. It is telling that in an act of self-censorship Zunz destroyed his own diary whereas the satirical tract was burned by the offended teachers.²⁰⁹

Despite these acts of overt suppression and physical punishment practiced by his teachers, Zunz, looking back at his early Wolfenbüttel education (1803-1806), perceived a lack of discipline in it. Intellectually, morally, in their physical condition, and in their outward appearance, the students were "left to their own devices."²¹⁰ Zunz singled out the lack of systematic and thorough supervision as the most harmful aspect of the experience. He complained that "there were no school bylaws, no records, and effectively no pedagogy."²¹¹

Things changed dramatically with the appointment of the thirty-four-year-old, former Bethhamidrasch student Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg (1773-1853) as *Inspektor* (director) of a revamped Samson School. The people behind this change were the wealthy court factor Israel Jacobsohn and a Samson scion, Isaak Herz Samson. The new era was heralded as a reorganization of the free school "according to principles more suitable for our times."²¹² The school was rededicated in a ceremony attended by Jacobsohn and Ehrenberg. Following the enlightened model of the school Jacobsohn had earlier founded in Seesen, Ehrenberg formally introduced several laws to the students according to which the Samson School would now operate.²¹³ Ehrenberg gave the institution a decidedly more *maskilic* twist with some moderate reformist tendencies. In addition to greatly expanding the systematic study of secular subjects, Ehrenberg brought to Wolfenbüttel a modern, pedagogical disciplinary regime.

The defining characteristic of the Ehrenberg era as Zunz remembered it was the new paternal discipline. Eschewing corporal punishment, Ehrenberg instead focused on providing a firm structure for his charges. The reformers of Jewish education blamed the "savage" conditions of Jewish education in small communities such as Wolfenbüttel on the lack of attention on the part of teachers who consisted mostly of "vagabond types, whose knowledge no one evaluates."²¹⁴ Ehrenberg directed the reading and writing of his charges toward particular subjects. After being allowed to "run wild," during their free time, the

²⁰⁹ Isaak Markus Jost, "Vor einem halben Jahrhundert: Skizzen aus meiner frühesten Jugend," in *Sippurim: Eine Sammlung jüdischer Volkssagen, Erzählungen, Mythen, Chroniken, Denkwürdigkeiten*, ed. Wolf Pascheles, vol. 3 (Prague: Heinrich Hunger, 1854), 150.

²¹⁰ "in unseren Spielen und Raufereien waren wir uns selber überlassen." Zunz, "Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel," 132.

²¹¹ "in unseren Spielen und Raufereien waren wir uns selber überlassen." Ibid.

²¹² "Pädagogische Notizen," *Sulamith*, 1806, 491.

²¹³ David Fränkel, "Nachrichten von den jüdischen Schulen in Wolfenbüttel, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin und Dessau," *Sulamith*, 1807, 50.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

students of the school were now subject to a new rule. For the first time, Zunz began reading consistently and under the instruction of a mentor, who selected books especially for him.

Zunz's reading matter under Ehrenberg's guidance consisted mainly of a canon of Enlightenment pedagogical works. It included the world histories of Gabriel Gottfried Bredow (1773-1814) and Karl Friedrich Becker (1777-1806), which retold the events of ancient history or great works of antiquity, such as the *Odyssey*, to young readers in an engaging style. Bredow and Becker were beloved pedagogical writers, whose histories were intended not only to inform their young readers but also to form them morally and sentimentally. They contained constant exhortations, explicit and implicit, to virtue.²¹⁵ Frequently reissued and reworked, they enjoyed tremendous popularity. At some point in his youth, nearly every German Jewish scholar of the nineteenth century came into contact with these kinds of pedagogical histories. For some, they continued to be important models in their own historiographical production. These histories were aimed especially at boys, presenting the manly heroes of antiquity as exemplars of virtue and moderation and praising chaste, loyal women such as Penelope.²¹⁶ Though written as engaging narratives, often featuring as a frame an adult story-teller speaking in dialogue to children, these books claimed to educate their young readers by amusing them.

The Jewish reformers behind the reorganization of the Samson School recommended books of history primarily for the moral education of children. In addition to works of world history by Becker and Bredow, they also pointed to one Jewish work, *Toledot Yisrael* (History of Israel, 1796), by the Bohemian *maskil* Peter Peretz Beer (1758-1838). Beer's histories retold the narrative parts of the Bible, beginning with the creation of the world. They were printed in many editions, usually with square, vocalized Hebrew text in the top half of the page and a Yiddish translation, printed in the special *mashket* or *vaybertaytsch* letters used in old Yiddish literature.²¹⁷ Beer's books were seen as especially suitable for Jewish children in the less enlightened small towns, which required the paternal attention of their "brethren in the large cities."²¹⁸

Two similar bodies of work that Zunz read were the pedagogical works of the Enlightenment writers Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746-1818) and Christian Felix Weiße (1726-1804).²¹⁹ Campe will be discussed in more detail in chapter six. Weiße's *Kinderfreund* ("Child's Friend") was a weekly periodical of serial narratives, which could be read in large volumes containing all the issues of a given year. Like the histories of Bredow and Becker, it too was written in an engaging style, often featuring conversations among children and a respected parental figure who guided them Socratically to morality and virtue. The latter, for Weiße, consisted of enlightened Christianity, tolerance, and love of humanity. Jews featured prominently in these stories, often as victims of prejudice. Weiße's stories captivated readers

²¹⁵ For typical examples see Karl Friedrich Becker, *Die Weltgeschichte, für die Jugend*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (Vienna: Franz Haasische Buchhandlung, 1813), 33.

²¹⁶ Karl Friedrich Becker, *Erzählungen aus der alten Welt für die Jugend*, vol. 1, New ed. (Halle and Berlin: Buchhandlungen des Halleschen Waisenhauses, 1815), 9.

²¹⁷ See for example Peter Peretz Beer, *Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 3, 4th ed. (Vienna: Anton Edlen von Schmid, 1833).

²¹⁸ Fränkel, "Nachrichten von den jüdischen Schulen in Wolfenbüttel, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin und Dessau," 46.

²¹⁹ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 15.

and the audiences of children inside the text, leading to high points of moral drama and Jewish and Christian characters in tears about their virtuous deeds.²²⁰ Zunz remembered reading twelve volumes of the *Kinderfreund* at least three times, between 1807 and 1808, his early teenage years.²²¹ Such obsessive re-reading was quite typical in this period among adolescent readers of these books. It testifies to the immense pleasure that the narratives gave readers such as Zunz, all in the guise of educating and disciplining them.

Ehrenberg's program of study made extensive use of grammar and translation exercises. Students would translate the Bible from Hebrew into German and German works into Hebrew, at the same time practicing their penmanship.²²² Zunz reported that between his fourteenth and eighteenth birthdays (1809 to 1812), he translated the history of the Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, and various essays on aesthetics and natural history under Ehrenberg's direction.²²³ Other components of the curriculum included French, geography, and religion. In the same period, starting in 1808, Zunz also wrote his first longer essays in German, "Aufsätze," as exercises for Ehrenberg. These were Zunz's first steps toward scholarly writing. He also began studying Latin, first by himself, and later by attending regular lessons with a tutor.²²⁴

The wealthy benefactors and the ideologically-motivated teachers behind the creation of new Jewish schools and the reform of existing ones aimed to raise boys from poor families to the *Bürgerstand*.²²⁵ The new order in Wolfenbüttel over which Ehrenberg presided gave an important place to the sentimental formation of the school's students in the achievement of this goal. Upon taking over the direction of the school, Ehrenberg addressed the pupils and intoned a prayer on their behalf. The prayer, composed in a *maskilic* Hebrew style, asked for God's help in moderating the force of passion in making decisions:

Save us, our Father, so that we shall walk all the days of our lives according to the counsel of your good spirit which you gave us, and let every tendency of our heart worship you. And if our inclination [*yetzer*] should inflame us to act against your pure will, leading our heart to error, help us speedily to return to you full-heartedly. And let not our bodily substance override the purity of our spirit. – And you, God full of compassion! Forgive our transgressions and the wavering of our hearts, when our inclination tilts from right to wrong.²²⁶

²²⁰ A representative story features the rescue of a drowning Jew by a Christian peasant. Upon waking up, the Jew realizes that his bag of jewels and gold has gone missing. He suspects the peasant, who is in fact innocent. Upon the Jew's departure, the peasant finds the bag and guards it for two years, despite being in danger of losing his property to his creditors after running into financial trouble. The Jew returns and the full story is revealed; the two embrace in tears. Christian Felix Weisse, *Der Kinderfreund: Ein Wochenblatt*, vol. 13 (Hanau: Kämpfe, 1779), 36.

²²¹ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 15.

²²² Fränkel, "Nachrichten von den jüdischen Schulen in Wolfenbüttel, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin und Dessau," 52.

²²³ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 16.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

²²⁵ Fränkel, "Nachrichten von den jüdischen Schulen in Wolfenbüttel, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin und Dessau," 50.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

In his prayer, Ehrenberg used the Hebrew word “*yetzer*,” which in rabbinic literature usually refers to the “evil inclination” and counteracts the “good inclination” (*yetzer ha-ra* and *yetzer ha-tov*). In the German translation that he provided, Ehrenberg translated this line somewhat differently: “And if the heavy chains of sensuality [Sinnlichkeit] drag us down to earth, so that our beguiled heart acts contrary to your wise counsel, then lead us back to you.” Instead of “will,” Ehrenberg translated “counsel” or “advice.” “*Yetzer*” received a gloss in the vocabulary of the late eighteenth century as “sensuality,” “carnality,” or “passion.”²²⁷ Despite some interesting differences between the Hebrew and German versions of the prayer, both variants focused on the importance of disciplining the emotions in order to follow God’s will (or counsel, as the German version had it) and make ethical decisions.

Moderating one’s feelings and desires required an education, which consisted of more than simply “learning,” Ehrenberg argued in a speech delivered after the prayer. Referring to Proverbs 22:6, “Instruct a boy in the way he should go,” he pointed out that the text used the imperative “*hanokh*” (instruct) rather than “*lamed*” (learn or teach). Clarifying the verse further, Ehrenberg explained the former as “initiating, leading, mentoring, or educating.”²²⁸ Unlike the traditional Jewish education system, the Samson School in the Ehrenberg-era aspired to form its students into modern subjects. This required more than the mere acquisition of knowledge; as Ehrenberg detailed in his speech, it entailed the constant discipline of one’s feelings. Only in this way could one become

a productive human being and a useful citizen to the state. But to accomplish this, one has to begin early to accustom oneself to organization, diligence, moderation of one’s desires and passion, and to punctilious obedience toward one’s parents and teachers and indeed all superiors.²²⁹

The educational relationship that Ehrenberg envisioned was that of a father disciplining his sons. In his speech to Zunz and his peers, Ehrenberg exhorted them to think of their teachers as their fathers. As we will see, the orphaned Zunz constructed Ehrenberg as a greater-than-life father who had come to deliver him to freedom.

Ehrenberg’s changes at the school coincided with the world historical events of the summer of 1807, which brought French occupation forces to Wolfenbüttel and saw the incorporation of the Principality of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel into the Kingdom of Westphalia under the rule of Jérôme Bonaparte, Napoléon’s younger brother. Although the

הושיענו אבינו, למען נלך כל ימינו אחר עצת רוחך הטוב שנתת בנו, ויהי כל מגמת לבנו לעבוד אותך. ואם יסיתנו יצרנו, לעשות נגד רצונך הטהור, בשגגת לבנו, עזרנו מהר לשוב אליך בלבב שלם, ולא יגבר חומר גוינתנו על טוהר רוחנו. – ואתה אל מלא רחמים! לחטאינו סלח, ומחל לרפיון לבנו, אם בין היושר והעול היצר יטה.

²²⁷ “Hilf, o Vater! Das wir stets folgen dem Rathe dieses bessern Geistes; das wir immer streben dir treu zu dienen. Und ziehet der Sinnlichkeit schwere Fessel uns zur Erde nieder, daß unser bethörtes Herz wider deinem weisen Rath handelt, so führe uns zu dir zurück, und lass die irdische Hülle nicht besiegen den reinen himmlischen Geist. – Vergieb Allgütiger unser Vergehen, und verzeih den Unbestand, das schwache Wanken zwischen Recht und Schuld.” Ibid., 54.

²²⁸ Ibid., 55.

²²⁹ ““jeder von Euch nimmt sichs fest vor, einst ein brauchbarer Mensch, und dem Staate ein nützlicher Bürger zu werden. Um aber dieses werden zu können, muß man früh anfangen, sich an Ordnung, Fleiß, Mäßigung seiner Begierden und Leidenschaften, und an pünktlichen Gehorsam gegen seine Eltern und Lehrer und überhaupt seine Vorgesetzten zu gewöhnen.” Ibid., 58-59.

emancipation of the Jews was reversed in late 1813, following the French defeat at Leipzig, Zunz described the interim period as a “redemption” from “helotry.”²³⁰ For Zunz, these figured as the most transformative years of his life. Guided by Ehrenberg, he received an education that allowed him to transition to a German Gymnasium – a move made easier by the political changes of the Napoleonic era. For Zunz, the Ehrenberg years represented light after the “dark ages” of his initial years at the Samson School. Ehrenberg took on the shape of Zunz’s own “redeemer” who liberated him from backwardness. Just as Napoleon had emancipated the Jews of Wolfenbüttel, Zunz imagined, Ehrenberg had freed the young boy from the oppressive rule of the traditional Jewish education system. In his recollections of this revolution, Zunz collapsed his personal emancipation and the civic emancipation of German Jews under French occupation:

I will never forget the day when it was proclaimed [...] that the old Bear’s rule would end. On Tuesday (March 31, 1807), the Herr Inspektor (Ehrenberg) arrived [...] We literally moved from a medieval age into a new era on one day, simultaneously with the exit from Jewish helotry into civic freedom.²³¹

Jewish “helotry” or “slavery” here signified both the status of the Jews in the German states before the Napoleonic emancipation (in the Kingdom of Westphalia) as well as the conditions under which boys like Zunz were ruled by the oppressive agents of traditional Jewish society. The “Bear’s rule” he referred to was the tyranny of Rabbi Beer under which Zunz and his peers had recently fallen. Written during the Vormärz in 1843, when most of the Napoleonic emancipatory measures were no longer in place, Zunz’s account still preserved the excitement and the hopes associated with the prospects of this dual emancipation, from and of the Jews.

When Zunz reflected on the new era that began for him with Ehrenberg’s appearance, he remembered all the things he had missed in his years at Wolfenbüttel until the reforms:

parents, love, instruction, pedagogical means. Only in arithmetic and Hebrew grammar was I more advanced than everyone else; I had begun the [study of the] latter already with my late father as a child. But from the world and what it is made of, of all the academic subjects that thirteen-year-old boys today complete in the third and fourth grades already, of people and life in society, I knew nothing.²³²

²³⁰ Zunz, “Mein erster Unterricht in Wolfenbüttel,” 136-137.

²³¹ “Den Tag vergesse ich nicht, wo es hieß [...] die alte Bären-Herrschaft geht zu Ende. Am Dienstage [March 31, 1807] kam der Herr Inspektor [...]. Wir sind buchstäblich aus einer mittelalterlichen Zeit in eine neue an einem Tage übergegangen, zugleich mit dem Heraustreten aus der jüdischen Helotie in bürgerliche Freiheit.” Ibid.

²³² “Man denke sich lebhaft, was ich alles bis dahin entbehrt hatte: Eltern, Liebe, Unterweisung, Bildungsmittel. Nur im Rechnen und in hebräischer Grammatik war ich weiter als alle; letztere hatte ich schon als Kind bei meinem seligen Vater begonnen. Aber von der Welt und was sie füllt, von all den Lehrfächern, die heutige Knaben im 13. Jahre schon in drei bis vier Klassen durchgemacht haben, von Menschen und gesellschaftlichem Leben wußte ich nichts.” Ibid., 137.

The kind of knowledge that Zunz singled out as having been missing from his education testifies to his rejection of traditional Jewish education not only as backward but also as closed and divorced from life. The study in which he had been engaged as a young boy had given him access only to the universe of Talmudic textuality and with a few hints of the world from haphazard German reading. What he longed for and found in Ehrenberg was the guiding hand of a father and instructor – a pedagogue – who would liberate him from darkness. Indeed, Ehrenberg represented himself as a father to the young Jewish men who had become orphans with the decline of the traditional Jewish community. For Zunz, Ehrenberg’s paternal vocation temporarily filled a vacuum of authority that had not yet been adequately replaced by the modernization of the state and Jewish society. So Ehrenberg appeared in Zunz’s recollections as a heroic rescuer figure who could lead him into the world.

The Samson School as restructured by Jacobsohn, Herz, and Ehrenberg was one of several similar German Jewish educational institutions that had been founded in the past two decades. In Berlin (1778), Prague (1782), Breslau (1791), Dessau (1799), Seesen (1801), and Frankfurt (1804), Jewish enlighteners had previously set up similar schools. These institutions were united by the goal of Jewish “regeneration,” which aimed to turn Jewish boys, especially from poorer families, into productive citizens and which sought to use religious instruction specifically to instill “moral character” in students. As David Sorkin has highlighted, even though the pedagogues behind the various Jewish Free Schools accepted some of the principles of neo-humanism which dominated the German *Gymnasien* at this time, the Jewish institutions were closer to *Real-Schulen* in practice. On the secular side, they tended to focus on instruction in German, French, English and mathematics, in order to prepare their students for careers in commerce. The *Gymnasien* on the other hand abjured practically-oriented, vocational training and focused on the aesthetic formation (*Bildung*) of their students through the study of classical civilization.²³³

Zunz, however, made the jump to a proper, humanist German Gymnasium only two years later. In April 1809, he entered the Prima (highest form) of the Wolfenbüttel Gymnasium. The first Jew ever to attend the school, he graduated in October 1811.²³⁴ The studies at the Gymnasium were Zunz’s introduction to German *Wissenschaft* as a set of practices and ideas.²³⁵ While Ehrenberg’s lessons had focused primarily on giving his students their first systematic education in secular subjects with practical applications, the Gymnasium introduced him to yet another way of reading texts and giving meaning to them. In the Gymnasium, careful, structured study of grammar served as the basis for students’ readings and translations from the Greek and Latin canons. The theoretical aim of this study was the formation of character or human personality, rather than training for a vocation. It served as the basis for further, more advanced humanist study at the universities.

By all measures, Zunz blossomed in this new environment. He excelled in his studies and immersed himself in lengthier German writing, composing poems and drafting an epistolary

²³³ Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*, 126-128. Simone Lässig, *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum: kulturelles Kapital und sozialer Aufstieg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 115-116.

²³⁴ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 16-17.

²³⁵ On the “ascendancy of *Wissenschaft*” in Germany in precisely this period see Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*, 134-142.

travel narrative. At the same time, he began teaching younger students at the Samson School, thereby earning his tuition and expenses. Most importantly, in light of his future development, he took some tentative steps toward applying the methods of the Gymnasium and its ethos to the parallel universe of Jewish texts.

Until then, Zunz had only known the Talmud and later legal writings primarily through the traditional study of these texts in the pre-Ehrenberg days of the Bethhamidrash. Ehrenberg had somewhat changed the classroom atmosphere and the pedagogical mechanics for Talmud and Mishnah study, but he had introduced no fundamentally different approach. In line with the maskilic ideology of the new Jewish schools, the study of the Bible was oriented primarily around instruction in morality and religion. This proper religious instruction, in turn, was to serve the object of educating the sentiments of young Jewish men, which the educational reformers believed had been neglected in the traditional schools.²³⁶

After a year and a half at the Gymnasium, Zunz had his first glimpse of the kind of humanist study of Judaic texts practiced by Renaissance and Reformation scholars. In the summer of 1811, he began making excerpts from the four-volume *Bibliotheca Hebraea* (1715-1733) by the Christian Hebraist Johann Christoph Wolf (1683-1739).²³⁷ Wolf's work was a sprawling bibliography of Jewish literature based on the massive "Oppenheimer Collection," the library of the Bohemian rabbi David Oppenheim (1664-1736), which contained 7,000 printed volumes and 1,000 manuscripts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish.²³⁸ Using the Latin he had acquired in his schooling, Zunz was able to read and take notes from Wolf's detailed descriptions of Hebrew works ranging from the Bible to medieval grammars. It may well have been the first time that Zunz perceived the vastness of the Jewish corpus. Certainly, Wolf's bibliography presented the Bible, Talmud, and myriad rabbinic writings in a novel manner for Zunz. The Christian Hebraist's researches resembled his education at the Gymnasium much more than his schooling at the Samson School. But many of the texts that Wolf summarized, quoted from, and analyzed were intimately familiar to Zunz from his early childhood. Here, the Bible, Talmud, and other works were translated and arranged in a format that made them appear similar to the classical texts he had studied in the Gymnasium.

The example of Wolf also modeled a new kind of intellectual vocation for Zunz that differed from the aims of the Samson School. The curriculum of the Jewish free school sought to give its students the skills necessary to make a living – either by entering an occupation open to Jews (such as commerce – but only in its respectable guises) or becoming teachers and community functionaries. By subsuming the study of Talmud and Bible under the religious and moral education of the students, it rejected the notion of Torah study for its own sake. The Samson School, in other words, did not aim to produce traditional Jewish scholars. It also did not seek to prepare its students for a lifetime of humanist scholarship of the kind practiced by professors at the new German universities. Having long repudiated the model of the "Polish" rabbinic scholar, Zunz now saw a Christian version of scholarship for its own sake, which did not carry the stigma of the traditional Jewish pursuit of learning. To

²³⁶ Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*, 127.

²³⁷ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 16.

²³⁸ C. Duschinsky, "Rabbi David Oppenheim. Glimpses of His Life and Activity, Derived from His Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 20, no. 3, New Series (January 1, 1930): 217.

pursue this vision, however, would require Zunz to break free of Ehrenberg and the Wolfenbüttel order.

Zunz's study of Wolf's work did not immediately inspire in Zunz a desire to pursue scholarship at a German university. Financially and emotionally, this still seemed hard to imagine. Zunz remained under the paternal care of Ehrenberg, continuing to teach at the Samson School. The event that proved as important to Zunz's future development as his study of the *Bibliotheca Hebraea* was his discovery of an entirely different institution and canon of texts, as well as a continuation of reading practices from his childhood.

In January 1812, when he was seventeen years old, Zunz began borrowing German books from a lending library. Lending libraries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were the main purveyors of novels, plays, and other pleasure reading matter in Germany. In addition to circulating a growing body of fiction at low cost to readers, they could function as sites of sociability bringing together different members of society. Lending libraries blossomed in the period after 1815. But they had begun to take off in the late eighteenth century, as a result of the increasing democratization of reading.²³⁹ The mode of reading that such institutions fostered and the kind of interactions to which they could give rise provided an alternative to the supervised interactions with texts at the Samson School and the Gymnasium.

The particular lending library that Zunz visited was founded by Heinrich Georg Albrecht in 1788, formerly an apprentice at Wolfenbüttel's first lending library, which had gone out of business.²⁴⁰ In Zunz's day, it was managed by Madame Albrecht, the founder's wife. This non-Jewish woman, who seems to have been a free spirit in the town, for a short period of time was his conversation partner. Zunz remembered that her "liberal remarks [freisinnige Äußerungen] did not remain without influence on [him]."²⁴¹ The lending library was Zunz's first exposure to newer German writers. He specifically remembered *Hesperus* (1795) by Jean Paul Richter (1763-1825) as having made a "tremendous impression" upon him. *Hesperus* features a love story and a number of sentimental scenes but contains an equal number of "interruptions" by its whimsical narrator.²⁴² Whether Zunz was more drawn to the former, the latter, or equally attracted by both is hard to say. Either way, he was certainly a prime candidate for the "reading addiction" (*Lesesucht*) so feared by the princely court of Wolfenbüttel that it denied a request to open an additional lending library in the town in 1823.²⁴³ As we have seen, Zunz could read obsessively and since, as he complained, he had never received a formal introduction to German literature, he might not have approached his reading matter with discerning prejudices. Ehrenberg did not approve of either Zunz's lending library reading or his interactions with Madame Albrecht.

²³⁹ Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek: Geschichte einer literarischen Institution (1756-1914)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1990), 6.

²⁴⁰ Michael Grabicki, *Wolfenbütteler Leihbibliotheken im 19. Jahrhundert* (Herzberg: T. Bautz, 1987), 22.

²⁴¹ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 17.

²⁴² For a typical example see the description of the gently weeping protagonist, Viktor, which is followed by humorous treatment of a different character's untimely death. Jean Paul, *Hesperus, oder 45 Hundspostage*, *Ausgewählte Werke* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1865), 63-65.

²⁴³ Grabicki, *Wolfenbütteler Leihbibliotheken*, 23.

Zunz's visits at the Albrecht Leihbibliothek seem to have made him eager to see the world beyond Wolfenbüttel. They accelerated his embrace of modern secular culture and led Zunz to stray from the enlightened but nevertheless religiously conservative norms of the extended Ehrenberg household to which he belonged. At the age of eighteen, in December 1812, Zunz attended his first musical concert. He heard the news of Napoleon's armies arriving in Moscow. In 1813, he contemplated matriculating at the university for the first time, buying a lottery ticket in the hopes of using the windfall to pay for his studies. In the wake of his conversations with the liberal Madame Albrecht, Zunz also began to have more contact with women. He was hired to instruct the teenage daughters of a local notable L.G. Samson on religion. In 1814, he reported actively socializing, for the first time, with "people outside the house" and "seeking acquaintances." On September 3, 1815, he again tried his luck at games of chance, playing dice for the first time at the town's "Freischießen" – an annual fair that revolved around a marksmen's competition. Nine days later, Zunz noted in his autobiography, "I began to shave my beard."²⁴⁴ Zunz's rebellion against Wolfenbüttel and the rule of Ehrenberg had seriously escalated. He was to depart for Berlin a few weeks later.

In his correspondence with Zunz's classmate, Jost, Ehrenberg observed Zunz's transformation with paternal concern. He complained in a letter from August 31, 1815, that Zunz had shown a lack of gratitude to the Ehrenberg family and that he had turned arrogant over the past year. Ehrenberg also alluded obliquely to Zunz's socializing with women, which he interpreted as a moral decline:

One more thing – but this might be a character flaw – the *old Adam* often wakes up with him and then a rebellion arises in his lower house to which the ministry of reason often succumbs – as a *bokher* told his *rov* who reproached him for being too friendly with the opposite sex: with a p[ig]... you can't speak *ta'am ve-svoreh* [sense].²⁴⁵

Since completing his education at the Gymnasium, Zunz had begun to chafe at the maskilic disciplinary regime that reigned in Wolfenbüttel. Despite Zunz's many achievements, Ehrenberg now saw Zunz as lacking in self-control – in his social and intellectual activities. Old impressions of Zunz as impetuous, unruly, short-tempered, and hot-blooded resurfaced, reviving character assessments from Zunz's days as a student in the pre-Ehrenberg days.²⁴⁶ Ehrenberg expressed doubts about whether Zunz's sentimental education had been sufficient.

In a subsequent letter, Ehrenberg wrote Jost that his suspicions had been confirmed. Members of the household had "interrupted Zunz several times in all-too-intimate conversations with one of [Ehrenberg's] maids." Zunz, Ehrenberg warned Jost, was "now of

²⁴⁴ Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 17-19.

²⁴⁵ "Noch etwas – welches aber ein Naturfehler sein kann – der *alte Adam* erwacht sehr oft bei ihm, und, dann entsteht bei ihm eine Rebellion im Unterhause, bei welcher Sitzung das Ministerium der Vernunft oft unterliegt – wie schon einst ein *בזור* zu einem *רב*, der ihm Vorwürfe darüber machte, daß er das andere Geschlecht zu sehr in Affection nähme, sprach: mit einem Schw ... läßt sich kein *טעם וכברא* sprechen. [...] Wenn er nur in Deiner Nähe ist, so daß Du ihn immer beobachten kannst." Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 2.

²⁴⁶ Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 4; Zunz, *Das Buch Zunz*, 20.

the age in which the *yetzer ho-ra* [evil inclination] has a lot to say.” He also hinted at improprieties by Zunz which had left “their mark outside of the house.”²⁴⁷

Some of the tension between Ehrenberg and Zunz may have derived from the fact that Ehrenberg was not fully in favor of Zunz’s plans for studying at the university in Berlin. More specifically, Ehrenberg was skeptical about Zunz’s decision to pursue academic study in the arts or theology faculty. In exasperation, Ehrenburg wrote to Jost: “May [Zunz] become a theologian, philologist, or some other kind of ologist there; I hope – with all my heart – that he will at least turn into *something*.”²⁴⁸ Ehrenberg, who referred to Zunz only as “Lippmann,” also expressed resentment about his student’s recent adoption of a less Jewish-sounding first name:

Now something else about the name Leopold. I find it unbearable when Jews change their given names in order to erase all exterior traces of their origin. No amount of hiding can help the arch-Jew [Stockjude], and as for an intellectual [Gebildete], it is disgraceful for him to deny his origins.²⁴⁹

Whether Ehrenberg believed Zunz to fall into the former or latter category (or both) is unclear. The discovery of pleasure reading had led Zunz to put on increasingly free-spirited and modern airs. He arrived at the limits of Ehrenberg’s tolerance. In his struggle to free himself from the disciplinary regime of Wolfenbüttel and Ehrenberg, which had been shaped by the pedagogical vision of the late German Jewish *Haskalah*, Zunz turned to another kind of reading. He left the provinces for Berlin and *Wissenschaft*.

²⁴⁷ “Er ist mehrere Male in allzuvertrauten Gesprächen – mit einer meiner Mägde überfallen worden, und außer dem Hause habe ich auch Spuren. Er ist jetzt in dem Alter, in welcher der *יצר הרע* gewaltig mitspricht, also bedarf es hierin besonders Deiner Aufmerksamkeit.” Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 3.

²⁴⁸ “Mag nun dort ein Theologe oder Philologe oder sonst ein Loge, aus ihm werden; so wird er doch, - ich wünsche es wenigstens vom Herzen – *Etwas* aus ihm.” Ibid., 1.

²⁴⁹ “Nun noch etwas über den Namen Leopold. Es ist mir unausstehlich, wenn Juden ihre Vornamen deshalb ändern, um alle äußere Spuren ihres Ursprungs zu verwischen. Dem Stockjuden hilft all sein Verstecken nichts, und dem Gebildeten ist es eine Schande, wenn er seinen Ursprung verleugnen will.” Ibid., 2.

Chapter 5: The Turn to *Wissenschaft*, 1815-1830

In the face of the pressure from Ehrenberg to become an economically self-sufficient and productive member of society, Zunz asserted a different vocation. After moving to Berlin and matriculating at the university there, he embraced the ideals and practices of German scholarship, *Wissenschaft*, as his *raison d'être*.²⁵⁰ *Maskilim* like Ehrenberg had promoted the intellectual and sentimental disciplining of German Jews on utilitarian grounds. Their programs to reform German Jews aimed at economic and social “improvement” through acculturation. Zunz, however, seized on *Wissenschaft* as a higher kind of discipline that transcended personal economic considerations. He chose an intellectual asceticism that sacrificed material comforts for the prospects of neo-humanist edification. This elevation and ennoblement of character was to be achieved through rigorous philological scholarship, rather than reading imaginative literature or traditional Jewish textual study.²⁵¹

In Zunz’s formation, *Wissenschaft* represented an implicit reaction against all three of the ideologies that had shaped him. In choosing *Wissenschaft*, he rebelled against traditional Jewish society’s privileging of Talmudic study; rejected the late *Haskalah*’s aim of reforming poor Jewish boys into economically self-sufficient men through reading; and turned against “feminine” reading for the sake of pleasure. In the place of these ideologies, he defined a new approach to reading, aimed particularly at young Jewish men like himself.

When Zunz arrived in Berlin in the fall of 1815, he was twenty-one years old with no pedigree or prestigious connections in the large city. Zunz was to earn his living by tutoring the daughters of Madame Saisette Hertz, who was part of the Veitel Heine Ephraim family (and unrelated to the household of Henriette Herz). He stayed there until March 1818.²⁵² Berlin in 1815 was the most culturally and intellectually progressive capital within a reasonable traveling distance. It had been the setting for the most important developments in German Jewish culture in the eighteenth century. The recently-founded University of Berlin was a cutting-edge institution, attracting some of Germany’s greatest philosophers and philologists. Brilliant men with literary aspirations were flocking to the city.²⁵³

What were Zunz’s ambitions when he finally received the call to go to Berlin? Zunz, too, harbored hopes of literary fame. As we have seen, he tried his hands at humoristic and other kinds of *belles lettres* writing several times in his youth, first in Hebrew and then in German.

²⁵⁰ On *Wissenschaft* “in the German sense” (to quote one of its theoreticians, Friedrich Schleiermacher) see the outstanding study by Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*, 137.

²⁵¹ The observations in this chapter are based primarily on Zunz’s early scholarly writings, published as follows: Leopold Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur. Nebst Nachrichten über ein altes bis jetzt ungedrucktes hebräisches Werk* (Berlin: Maurer'sche Buchhandlung, 1818); “Salomon ben Isaac, genannt Raschi,” *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 1, no. 2 (1823): 277-384; *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt. Ein Beitrag zur Altertumskunde und biblischen Kritik, zur Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1832); *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin: Veit und Comp, 1845); *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1855). For an extensive bibliography of Zunz’s oeuvre, see Klaus-Gunther Wesseling, “Zunz, Leopold,” in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 14, 32 vols. (Traugott Bautz, 2008), 607-627, <http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/z/zunz.shtml>.

²⁵² Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 385 n.20, 359 n.9.

²⁵³ For a survey of Berlin’s intellectual culture in this period see Ronald Taylor, *Berlin and its Culture: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 115ff.

At the same time, he was clearly fascinated by the practice and ideal of *Wissenschaft*. On the other hand, law and medicine, not to mention a vocation in commerce (which would not have required a university education), did not interest him at all. It made sense that he would enroll in the faculty of philosophy at Berlin, where he could study with the great classical philologists of the day. But we should not ignore the literary hopes aroused in Zunz by his experiences of reading for pleasure at the lending library.

Zunz's aspiration was first of all to be read – to reach the other side of the relationship reader-book-author. The question of what kind of reading audience he imagined for himself may still have been up in the air when he first arrived in Berlin. The first known published text by Zunz was a lecture about “religiosity” that he delivered to acquaintances.²⁵⁴ As early as 1818, Zunz was writing for the maskilic periodical *Jedidja* (1817-1831, 8 volumes), edited by Jeremiah Heinemann (1778-1855). There, he published a Hebrew translation of the German poet Klopstock's “Sommernacht” in 1818, among other pieces. Zunz also published numerous essays, sketches, and aphorisms in a short-lived satirical publication called *Die Leuchte* (“The Lantern”), which he signed with the *nom de plume* “Mastix” (probably derived from Mastic or “Arabic gum”).²⁵⁵ But this kind of literary activity came to an end soon after. With his turn to scholarship, Zunz set out a different kind of program for himself as author and for an elite audience of readers.

In the summer of 1818, shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday, Zunz published a dense thirty-three-page tract entitled “Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur:” (“Something about Rabbinic Literature”). He was of course not the first German Jew to enter the European republic of letters. But this was perhaps the first time that an Ashkenazi Jewish intellectual explicitly and self-consciously identified his new reading and writing practices with a central pursuit of contemporary Christian intellectuals: *Wissenschaft*. One of his goals, ironically, was to reform the ways in which German Jewish intellectuals read. At the same time, Zunz also hoped to demonstrate the achievements of Jewish scholars in history, by translating their writings into a literature or collection of *Wissenschaften* that could be studied by contemporary *Wissenschaftler*.

Zunz's turn to Jewish *Wissenschaft* was in part prompted by his encounters with Jews who had become alienated from Judaism and Jewish learning, and who, like most Christian intellectuals, saw no value in the historical literary creations of Jewish writers. After his first month in Berlin, in November 1815, Zunz described the different kinds of Berlin Jews in a letter to Ehrenberg as consisting of

baptized and enlightened Jews, who reverently spent all of Yom Kippur in Jacobson's temple, baptized Jews who have become Jews again, converts who are worse Jew-haters than born Christians, people indifferent to both

²⁵⁴ Leopold Zunz, *Predigt über Religiosität, gehalten in dem Kreise einiger Freunde* (Berlin: W. Dieterici, 1817). I have relied on the bibliography in Chajim David Lippe, “Zunz, Leopold,” in *Bibliographisches Lexicon*, vol. 1 (Vienna: D. Löwy, 1881), 554-563. for the titles of these early writings by Zunz.

²⁵⁵ Perhaps an antiquarian allusion to Tosefta Shabbat 13:7: “[...] אין לועסין מוסתכין בשבת” (One does not chew mastic on Shabbat [...]).

religions, a young generation which does not know what it is, and less than a dozen truly enlightened Jews.²⁵⁶

One month earlier, Zunz had attended Yom Kippur services at Israel Jacobson's new synagogue in Seesen. There, he met Jews "who for twenty years had not had contact with Jews." The sermons and the edifying liturgy moved them to "outpourings of reverent tears." Zunz noted that "the majority of the young people fasted."²⁵⁷ That it should at all have been a surprise that Jews were fasting on the Day of Atonement indicates the extent of these young German Jews' estrangement from tradition. Like a number of other German Jewish intellectuals in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Zunz himself was greatly moved by the sentimental stirrings that the Yom Kippur service had aroused in the other worshippers.²⁵⁸ Given the nature of Zunz's writing style in "Etwas" and the erudite content of the essay with its monumental footnotes, it may seem strange to imagine it as a way to reach Jewish intellectuals who had grown "indifferent" or "cold" to Judaism. Zunz hoped to inspire their attachment through the noble dream of *Wissenschaft*, in a language familiar to university-educated young men.

That is not to say that Zunz himself did not continue to be challenged by doubts about his own attachment to Judaism, in this period, even after the publication of "Etwas." Zunz's friends, the jurist Eduard Gans (1797-1839) and the writer Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) were both to convert to Protestantism in 1825. Zunz's former friend, Isaak Jost, from whom Zunz had become increasingly distant, suspected that Zunz was seriously considering converting to Christianity in the spring of 1819: Jost poured out his resentment in an April 6, 1819 letter to Ehrenberg:

Zunz rarely visits me. Baptism is much on his mind, although he is struggling greatly with this idea and doesn't really want to go this way. He stands too high above his coreligionists to be appreciated or even fed by them.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ "Berliner Juden [...] getaufte und aufgeklärte, die den ganzen יום כפור in Jacobsons Tempel andächtig verbrachten, wieder Juden gewordene Getaufte, Proselyten, die ärgere רשעים als geborene Christen sind, Indifferente in beiden Religionen, ein junger Anwachs, der nicht weiss, was er ist, und wahrhaft aufgeklärte Juden, vielleicht eine halbe Mandel [old unit of measurement equivalent to fifteen]." Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 5-6.

²⁵⁷ "[...] Sonnabend [...] war ich in Jacobsons Synagoge. Menschen, die 20 Jahre keine Gemeinschaft mit Juden hatten, verbrachten dort den ganzen Tag: Männer, die über die religiöse Rührung schon erhaben zu sein glaubten, vergossen Tränen der Andacht; der grösste Teil der jungen Leute fastete. Aber wir besitzen hier auch drei Redner, die der grössten Gemeinde Ehre machen würden. Herr Auerbach trägt mit philosophischer Klarheit und innerer Gediegenheit vor, seine Stimme ist klingend, weich; sein Wesen ist Unschuld; selbst das Hebräische spricht er wunderschön aus, auch ist er ein guter Dichter in dieser Sprache. Kley ist lebendig und kühn; seine Bilder erregen die Fantasie; als er sagte: 'nun wollen wir uns erheben' war auch alles – wohlgemerkt abends 5 Uhr – wie durch einen Zauberschlag aufgesprungen. Uebrigens, es war der Gesang und die Musik gut, und Dr. Heinroth bringt uns jetzt die Seesensche Orgel her. Ibid., 4.

²⁵⁸ Perhaps the most famous Yom Kippur "conversion" story is that of the German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), who abandoned his plans to be baptized after attending Kol Nidrei services at a Berlin synagogue.

²⁵⁹ "Zunz besucht mich selten. Das Taufen liegt ihm sehr im Sinne, obgleich er mit dieser Idee kämpft, und nicht gern daran will. Er steht zu hoch über seinen Glaubensgenossen, um von ihnen geschätzt, noch ernährt zu werden." Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 13-14.

As it happens, Zunz never converted to Protestantism, despite the academic doors that it surely would have opened for him. Ehrenberg, alarmed by Jost's letter, sent off his own missive to Zunz. He again needled his former pupil about his career plans, faulting him for having rejected his options in the pedagogical field. He also alluded to the possibility of conversion, seeking affirmation that Zunz would not go that route:

You don't want to become a house tutor. And also certainly not a school teacher, I believe. To be a professor at a university – there the Jew-hatred [*rishes*, lit. "maliciousness, evil,"] is in the way. And the way through which you could arrive at this, if I am not mistaken about your way of thinking, you would surely find contemptible and revolting.²⁶⁰

Ehrenberg was indeed not mistaken, as Zunz's later writings bear out. There was in Zunz still too much of the small-town Jew, an outsider in both Christian society and among Berlin's wealthy, acculturated German Jewish elite, to feel at home with the idea of converting to Protestantism. His studies at the university, where he encountered outright antisemitism among individual professors as well as a general lack of interest in the history of Judaism, may even have given rise to a determination to prove the value of Jewish scholarship

As is well-known, Zunz studied with the famous classical philologists Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) and his student Philipp August Böckh (1785-1867) in Berlin. Both were primarily antiquarians interested in the work of cataloguing the literary artifacts of classical culture.²⁶¹ Their influence, when we look at Zunz's later scholarly oeuvre, is undeniable.²⁶² There was of course one important twist. Zunz applied their approaches to the literary heritage of the Jews, who, unlike the ancient Greeks and Romans, continued to exist as a civilization. From the beginning of his scholarly activity, Zunz aimed also to influence Jewish intellectual life in the present with his scholarship.

In pursuing Jewish scholarship, Zunz faced two significant personal obstacles. First, he had to overcome the polite disdain of his teacher Wolf for both the biblical (old Hebrew) canon and later Jewish texts. Wolf's skepticism, we must note, was not motivated by anti-Jewish

²⁶⁰ "Hauslehrer willst Du nicht sein. Schullehrer, wie ich glaube, gewiss auch nicht. Professor an einer Universität, da ist das רשעות im Wege. Und der Wege durch welchen [Du] dazu gelangen könntest wird Dir, wenn ich mich anders in Deiner Denkungsart nicht geirrt habe, gewiß verächtlich und zuwider sein." Ibid., 14.

²⁶¹ Giuseppe Veltri, "A Jewish Luther? The Academic Dreams of Leopold Zunz," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000): 343. On Wolf more generally see the excellent essays by Markner, Veltri, and Anthony Grafton in Reinhard Markner and Giuseppe Veltri, eds., *Friedrich August Wolf* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999).

²⁶² A cursory perusal of the "encyclopedias" of classical scholarship published by students of Wolf and Böckh based on these scholars' lectures in Berlin will suffice to see the influence. Friedrich August Wolf, *Darstellung der Altertumswissenschaft nach Begriff, Umfang, Zweck und Wert* (Weinheim: VCH, 1986); August Boeckh, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, ed. Ernst Bratuscheck (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1877). For further insights into Wolf's life and scholarship see Friedrich August Wolf, *Friedrich August Wolf: Ein Leben in Briefen*, ed. Siegfried Reiter, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1935). On Böckh see Maximilian Hoffmann, *August Böckh: Lebensbeschreibung und Auswahl aus seinem Wissenschaftlichen Briefwechsel* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1901); Bernd Schneider, ed., *August Boeckh: Altertumsforscher, Universitätslehrer und Wissenschaftsorganisator im Berlin des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1985). The importance of philologists and of Böckh specifically for German historiography is asserted in Christiane Hackel, *Die Bedeutung August Boeckhs für den Geschichtstheoretiker Johann Gustav Droysen: Die Enzyklopädie-Vorlesungen im Vergleich* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006).

feelings – from all the evidence we have, he never expressed any such animus toward his Jewish student. Rather, Wolf's feelings can be related to a larger German academic context which placed the intellectual productions of the Greeks above those of all other ancient cultures and indeed reserved a place for their achievements as “unique.” In Wolf's case, the sense of Greek superiority also stemmed at least partially from the small size of the old Hebrew corpus. As a teenager in Nordhausen, Wolf had taken an interest in the Hebrew Bible. To allow his son to pursue this interest, Wolf's father hired a tutor for him, who lived on in Wolf's correspondence as a “not wholly inept Jew” – a backhanded but sincere compliment. Wolf also recalled that he “learned the foundations of Hebrew with [the tutor] and went through most of the Pentateuch as well as several other parts of the O.T.” However, he found it “a bit of a joke to expect much from knowing a language in which there is hardly as much extant as half of Cicero's writings.” Thus, Wolf returned to the classical writers.²⁶³ This intellectual hurdle, however, may have been less difficult to overcome than the personal pressure he faced from his mentor in Wolfenbüttel and the larger structural factors that stood in the way of modern Jewish scholarship.

The goal of the *maskilim* who founded the German Jewish free schools in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had not been to produce a class of scholars. It was to enable Jews, especially from poorer, traditional families into productive citizens, to pursue occupations that would make them economically and spiritually independent from traditional Jewish society. The *maskilim* advocated an education that would give their students the knowledge and skills to interact with Christian bureaucrats, employers, and customers in a way that would be honorable to Jews as a whole. They did not envision the creation of an elite of German Jewish humanist academics. In 1815, some German Jews could look back at a brief experience of emancipation that promised to open up more occupational opportunities for Jews. This window of opportunity ended, however, with the reversion to the *status quo ante*. Post-1815, regular employment by the state and by German and Prussian universities was closed to Jews unless they converted to Protestant Christianity.

Because of these structural reasons and perhaps also for other internal considerations, the pedagogues who directed the free schools tried to steer their students to respectable professions (e.g., commerce and medicine) or to careers as rabbis, preachers, and pedagogues. In Zunz's case, his mentor Ehrenberg was determined to see his student choose what he called a “Brodwissenschaft” (lit., a “science” to earn one's bread) – a career that would assure him a stable income. Zunz's academic pursuits, for Ehrenberg, did not fit the bill. He therefore expressed numerous misgivings about Zunz's studies and intellectual activities in Berlin.

In December 1815, a few months after Zunz had begun his studies, Ehrenberg sent him a reminder of his views. Ehrenberg expressed a combination of grudging approval and even astonishment at the advanced course work of his *protégé* and the young man's interactions with leading German scholars, including the famous theologian Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780-1849). But Ehrenberg immediately undercut these positive notes with the stern admonition that there was no future for Jews in the humanities:

²⁶³ Wolf, *Friedrich August Wolf*, 2:339. Quoted in Anthony Grafton, “Juden und Griechen bei Friedrich August Wolf,” in *Friedrich August Wolf: Studien, Dokumente, Bibliographie*, ed. Reinhard Markner and Giuseppe Veltri (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), 23.

You do well to attend Prof. de Wette's lectures. As happy as I am that you have the opportunity to live for your favorite studies; I still regret deeply that it might come of little use to you to have spent your best years on them – given the atmosphere currently reigning between Jews and Christians. And I must confess to you that, for your own sake, I wish you would study a *Brodwissenschaft*.²⁶⁴

The only way to make a career devoted fully to scholarship possible for a Jew other than conversion was to find an independent source of income. Zunz and Ehrenberg both entertained hopes that Zunz would inherit money from a wealthy uncle in London.²⁶⁵ But the gift never materialized. Failing such support, Ehrenberg wanted Zunz to devote himself to building and expanding German Jewish schools like the one in Wolfenbüttel. Zunz's classmate from those days, Jost, shared Ehrenberg's assessment, although he himself had pursued university studies. As Ehrenberg noted approvingly, Jost had turned to teaching at a new reform-oriented school in Berlin to support himself.²⁶⁶ In a letter that Ehrenberg wrote to Zunz a year later, in December 1816, he described a vision of the future that he had had in a dream about his birthday:

More than two-hundred men, youth, and children had made their way to me [...] They were all my pupils; they all called me father; they all supported themselves with an honestly earned salary [*Brod*]. My Jost and Lippmann [i.e. Zunz] were also there. They had both excelled in the pedagogical profession.²⁶⁷

Still referring to Zunz by his Jewish given name, Lippmann, Ehrenberg reaffirmed his paternal authority over the young man who had left his house. The path that Ehrenberg laid out for Zunz was clear. He was to become a teacher like Jost and Ehrenberg, so that he could earn his "bread" and provide for a modest but stable family life.

Yet another year later, in the fall of 1817, Ehrenberg reiterated his demand that Zunz pursue a realistic career path. In a letter from September 4 of that year, he alluded to Zunz's grand

²⁶⁴ "Du hast sehr recht, den Prof. de Wette zu hören. So sehr ich mich freue, daß Du Gelegenheit hast Deinen Lieblingsstudien leben zu können; so bedauere ichs doch herzlich, daß es Dir – nach der Stimmung, die gegenwärtig zwischen Juden und Christen herrscht – vielleicht nur wenig nutzen würde, Deine besten Jahre damit verbracht zu haben. Und ich gestehe es Dir, ich wünschte um Deiner selbst willen, daß Du eine *Brodwissenschaft* studierstest." Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 6.

²⁶⁵ See Ehrenberg's letter from December 8, 1815, in which he asks Zunz about news from London. Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Jost began at a school founded by Moses Hirsch Bock (1781-1816) in Berlin. On Bock, see Jacob Jacobson, *Die Judenbürgerbücher der Stadt Berlin 1809-1851* (Walter de Gruyter, 1962), 123. For Bock's pedagogical views see Moses Hirsch Bock, "Israelitischer Kulturfreund, Vorrede (1811)," in "*Lerne Vernunft!*": jüdische Erziehungsprogramme zwischen Tradition und Modernisierung. *Quellentexte aus der Zeit der Haskala, 1760-1811*, ed. Ingrid Lohmann and Uta Lohmann, vol. 6, Jüdische Bildungsgeschichte in Deutschland (New York and Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2005), 518-524. In 1835, Jost moved to Frankfurt to teach at the Philanthropin School there. He continued his scholarly writing, which Zunz found many occasions to belittle in private correspondence, with Herculean determination.

²⁶⁷ "Aus allen Gegenden hatten sich über 200 Männer, Jünglinge und Kinder bei mir eingefunden [...] Alle waren sie meine Zöglinge; alle nannten sie mich Vater; alle lebten von einem sich selbst und ehrlich erworbenen Brodte. Mein Jost und mein Lippmann fehlten auch nicht. Sie hatten sich beide im pädagogischen Fache hervorgethan." Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 10.

ambitions, asking him to focus more on the present and less on the world to come. Instead of living for *Wissenschaft*, Ehrenberg wanted Zunz to pursue a profession. Anti-Jewish discrimination, Ehrenberg believed, would continue to block Zunz from obtaining a position at a German university:

You are studying your favorite *Wissenschaften* and are surely right in doing this: But are you not also thinking about your future? And you know now from experience that the Jew must acquire a *Brodwissenschaft*, since he cannot become a teacher at a university. I would sure like to hear something about your vocation in *this* life.²⁶⁸

Apparently, Ehrenberg's well-founded fears did not faze his pupil. In Berlin, Zunz developed in these years a belief in his own mission as someone who might redeem German Jewry from its unemancipated state.²⁶⁹ Within a year or two of his arrival, he had become convinced that *Wissenschaft*, specifically his own scholarship would be the catalyst for this redemption. Zunz believed fervently that his own creativity and scholarship would lift him out of his situation and simultaneously ameliorate the state of the German Jewish intellectual. In response to both his teachers at the university and his mentor in Wolfenbüttel, he created a new literature that embraced the anti-utilitarian ethos of *Wissenschaft* and also aimed at the (secular) redemption of German Jewry. With the sweat of his brow he hoped to form a new Jewish elite devoted to the academic study of Jewish texts, which would earn German Jews respect from the state and Christian society. Through the production and consumption of Jewish *Wissenschaft*, this elite, he imagined, would develop a closer connection to Judaism in the past and present.

To accomplish this transformative vision, Zunz proposed a project of disciplining Jewish texts and an elite group of Jewish readers. Although Jewish women, as we have seen, pioneered the new reading practices on which Zunz's vision depended, their exclusion from the university and from traditional Jewish textual study precluded them from participating in his program. Whether by accident or design, the kind of reader that Zunz's proposed new Jewish literature imagined was a young Jewish man. It required at the very least a modern university education or some knowledge of the mostly Hebrew and Aramaic texts that functioned as its sources.

Even though Zunz's essay also presented Jewish scholarship to Christian intellectuals, hoping to demonstrate the rigor of Jewish scholars, Zunz directed his words primarily at German Jews. He addressed them with a demanding program that conceived its approach to texts and experience as the culmination of all Jewish learning. In so doing, Zunz imagined his writing as representative of the day's most advanced scholarly practices (nineteenth-century philology and historical criticism) - perhaps even as the final destination of all scholarship. He believed that older ways of interacting with texts had now been surpassed.

²⁶⁸ "Du studirst Deine Lieblings-Wissenschaften, daran thust Du freilich recht: Aber denkst Du nicht auch an die Zukunft? Und Du weißt es doch nun aus Erfahrung, daß der Jude eine *Brodwissenschaft* erlernen muß, da er nicht Lehrer an einer Universität werden kann. Ich möchte also wohl etwas über Deine Bestimmung über *dieses* Leben erfahren." Ibid., 11.

²⁶⁹ Veltri, "A Jewish Luther? The Academic Dreams of Leopold Zunz," 343.

The task of *Wissenschaft* as he saw it was to recover the accomplishments of previous Jewish life and learning, so that Jews and Christians would appreciate them in the present.

In his essay, Zunz counted himself among a “battalion of deputies” who “go into battle” for *Wissenschaft*. It is unlikely that he received remuneration for his labor. In his most flattering self-representation at least, he did not even aspire to monetary rewards. Zunz claimed that the essay was to be a contribution to scholarship for the sake of scholarship alone, declaring in his preface that

As I am more attached to my tract than to *amour-propre*, and since I care more for *Wissenschaft* than either of those two, I ask the truly knowledgeable man to inform me in his review how my review – for that is how I see my present tract – has failed.²⁷⁰

It was the earnest, perhaps even desperate, cry of a young scholar appealing for recognition from the republic of letters. Zunz’s legitimation card was altruistic devotion to scholarship obtained not only by relinquishing interest in his personal intellectual creation but also by surrendering any care for the self. Upon entry, he asked to be recognized as a fellow scholar, requesting a reading by a peer with real expertise. Indeed, Zunz went further and sought from this hypothetical adept a response to his writing likewise to appear in print.

Zunz’s program differed from the *Wissenschaft* of his German Protestant professors and peers in the precise field of study and its ultimate aims. Zunz’s goal was to transform the heterogeneous multitude of Jewish texts into a coherent literature that would present a suitable object for scholarly research. In “Etwas” he turned both canonical Jewish legal works and a scattered array of other kinds of texts into “sources” for the study of a civilization using the tools of modern philological scholarship. More importantly, he attempted to enlist an incipient elite of German Jewish intellectuals in this pursuit. “Etwas” called on this group of young men to discipline their ways of reading texts. Instead of reading German literature or scholarship unconnected to Judaism, Zunz appealed to them to devote their intellectual labor to a new kind of Jewish scholarship. His appeal also included those who had come from more traditional educational and religious settings but were now turning toward academic scholarship.

Unlike the classical philologists with whom he had studied, Zunz argued that one could achieve *Bildung* through the study of “rabbinic” literature, rather than the great Greek and Roman authors of antiquity or the Bible. Also unlike his teachers, Zunz believed that German Jews were most suited to the tasks of scholarly inquiry of this material unencumbered by prejudice. For Zunz, the process of *Bildung* through *Wissenschaft* thus also had a particularistic, collective aim rather than a purely universal one. That is to say, it was aimed at Jewish men and Jewish texts.

²⁷⁰ “Da mir nun an meiner Schrift mehr als an meiner Eigenliebe, und an der Wissenschaft mehr als an beiden aufliegt; so bitte ich den ächten Kenner mir in seiner Recension zu sagen, was in der meinigen – denn dafür erkenne ich meine gegenwärtige Schrift – misslungen ist.” Leopold Zunz, “Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur (1818),” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Zunzstiftung, vol. 1 (Berlin: Louis Gerschel Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1875), 1.

By disciplining those Jewish texts into a “literature” deserving of scholarly study and turning Jewish intellectuals from learners or readers into *Wissenschaftler*, Zunz ultimately hoped for a two-fold improvement of German Jewish society. On one hand, he saw these transformations as prerequisite for the formation of a new elite with a commitment to preserving German Jews as a religious and cultural collective. On the other hand, Zunz believed that the achievements of Jewish scholarship would earn Judaism and Jews the respect of German Christian elites. This improved standing, he and others hoped, would lead to an amelioration in the legal and social status of German Jewry. But the moral and civic improvement of German Jews would come about only if they practiced *Wissenschaft* truly for its own sake, as Zunz believed he was doing.

Zunz’s first published scholarly essay marked the changes in his modes of reading since the Wolfenbüttel days. It also contained his reaction to the processes that he saw transforming the reading culture of German Jews in the early nineteenth century. In “Etwas,” Zunz not only responded to the changes in German Jewish reading practices in his time but also proposed a new way of reading Jewish texts that he hoped would guide Jews in the modern period.

Zunz explicitly referred to what I call the reading revolution – the transformation in German Jewish reading practices that he had experienced and witnessed. As a prime motivation for the program that he was proposing, Zunz identified the growing estrangement of German Jews from Jewish literature:

But precisely because we are seeing the Jews in our time – to stay only with the German ones – reaching with greater seriousness for the German language and for German education and thus – perhaps without intending to do so or suspecting it – carrying neo-Hebrew literature to its grave, scholarship steps up and demands an account from that literature which has been closed.²⁷¹

At the same time, Zunz also historicized and sharply criticized earlier, alternative Jewish modes of interacting with texts:

The study of Hebrew literature is something that the ordinary Talmud-torturers know nothing about. The cursed verbal jousting or the so-called *pilpul*²⁷² only dates to the sixteenth century and had many great opponents then (*Tsemah David* I. fol. 43, b). We heartily endorse dehabitation from such

²⁷¹ “Aber gerade weil wir zu unserer Zeit die Juden – um nur bei den deutschen stehen zu bleiben – mit grösserem Ernst zu der deutschen Sprache und der deutschen Bildung greifen und so – vielleicht oft ohne es zu wollen oder zu ahnen – die neuhebräische Literatur zu Grabe tragen sehen, tritt die Wissenschaft auf und verlangt Rechenschaft von der geschlossenen.” Ibid., 4. Leon Wieseltier translates “um nur bei den deutschen stehen zu bleiben” as “and we refer not only to the Jews of Germany.” Leon Wieseltier, “Etwas über die jüdische Historik: Leopold Zunz and the Inception of Modern Jewish Historiography,” *History and Theory* 20, no. 2 (May 1981): 148.

²⁷² A kind of study of the Talmud often derided as “casuistic” or “hairsplitting.” For a study of proponents and critics, see Dov Rappel, *Ha-viku'ah al-ha-pilpul* (Jerusalem: Devir, 1979).

Talmudism and vulgo-Rabbinism (see *Ergänzungsblätter to Jena'sche Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 1817, No. 88, 314).²⁷³

In Zunz's view, these traditional learners simply did not know how to read. Zunz argued that that university-educated readers like him had a way of reading Jewish texts that was more suited to understanding them. "Etwas" amounted to a proposal for a new mode of reading that would mediate Jewish texts from the past to an incipient German Jewish elite. It was part of the search for a proper relationship to texts that so occupied modernizing German Jewish intellectuals in the nineteenth century.

The kind of reading that Zunz advocated first of all required the disciplining of a vast, heterogeneous collection of texts into a body of "Jewish literature."

As praiseworthy and useful as all these efforts may be they will never satisfy the higher calling as discrete particulars if the laborer forgets the awesome porphyry formation in favor of a little stone that he has extracted from the mountain and polished for himself and then, with his task completed, rests complacently in order to crow about the beauty that nature has acquired by his hands.²⁷⁴

Once completed, the hard work of scholars to gather, evaluate and build on Jewish learning would reveal an inspiring vision of the whole.

Zunz tried to convey to his readers the edification they would experience one day if they followed him as a guide through all the Jewish contributions to scholarship. He exhorted them to imagine a view of the whole of Jewish scholarship, once the work to recover the parts had been done. Jewish literature, from antiquity to the present, in his vision appeared as an inspiring mount of treasure, which had to be conceived in its grandeur in order to be properly appreciated. Zunz promised readers of his essay who applied themselves diligently to the labors of *Wissenschaft* the delight of beholding a culture in all its vastness:

One who regards the literature [Litteratur] of a people as the entry way to a total knowledge of its progress as a civilization through all eras – how in every moment its essence was shaped by that which was present and that which came toward it, i.e., from inside and outside – how fate, climate, mores, religion, and coincidence come together in a friendly or hostile manner – and how finally the present stands there as the necessary result of all phenomena that have been: truly he enters this divine temple with awe and humbly allows

²⁷³ "Studium der hebräischen Litteratur ist etwas, von der die gemeinen Talmudquäler gar keinen Begriff haben. Die verwünschte Klopffechtereie oder der sogennante פלפול ist erst mit dem sechszehnten Jahrhundert entstanden, und fand damals viele und grosse Gegner (Zem. Dav. I. fol. 43, b). Die Entwöhnung von solchem Talmudismus und dem vulgo-Rabbinismus unterschreiben wir herzlich gern (s. Erg. Bl. zur Jen. allgemeinen Litt. Zeit., No. 88 p. 314 v. Jahre 1817)." Zunz, "Etwas," 29 fn. 1.

²⁷⁴ "So rühmlich und nutzbar indessen alle diese Bestrebungen auch immer sind; sie werden als Einzelheiten nimmer der höheren Forderung genügen, wenn der Arbeiter das ungeheure Porphyrgebirge über das Steinchen vergisst, dass er sich daraus zu poliren geholt, und nach gethaner Arbeit selbstzufrieden ausruht, um von der Verschönerung zu posaunen, die unter seinen Händen die Natur gewonnen." Ibid., 6.

himself to be led to the atrium, in order to savor the sublime view from the pediment as one who is worthy of it.²⁷⁵

The “sublime view from the pediment,” however, was only open to those who embarked on the arduous climb upward and acquired an accounting of all the parts. But those who invested the effort would see “our *Wissenschaft* transformed into a whole array of *Wissenschaften*.”²⁷⁶

The “temple” that Zunz asked his readers to imagine as he ordered “rabbinic” literature into fields and subfields was a vivid, three-dimensional representation of Jewish creativity from antiquity to the present. He wanted them to envision a total and three-dimensional reconstruction of Jewish civilization that would be built by the labors of university-educated German Jews fitting together pieces from their careful study of the sources. Zunz believed that beholding this structure could edify Jews as individuals and bring credit to them as a collective in German society.

What exactly were the texts to which Zunz hoped German Jewish intellectuals would devote themselves? Although Zunz referred to “rabbinische Litteratur” or “rabbinic literature” in the title and body of his essay, he rejected this nomenclature as an imprecise description of the authors and content of the texts he discussed. “Rabbi,” among the Jews, Zunz argued, was an honorific ascribed to nearly all Jewish writers, less meaningful than the title “doctor.”²⁷⁷ In a footnote, he proposed the term “new Hebrew” or “Jewish” literature instead. Perhaps Zunz wanted to avoid the derogatory connotations of the word “rabbinic” among Christian scholars. But the alternative descriptors that he suggested also expanded the category to encompass, at least in theory, a much larger range of writings than the term “rabbinic” implied.

Zunz was somewhat opaque in demarcating old from new Hebrew or Jewish literature. He began “Etwas” with the rather provocative declaration that “Discounting the interest accorded to age and content, the awe-demanding remnants from the Golden Age of the old Hebrews owe their great significance to chance.”²⁷⁸ Zunz seemed to be referring to the Hebrew Bible, without explicitly naming it – this then, was “old Hebrew literature.”

Whether to avoid using the term “Old Testament,” to skirt controversy, or, on the contrary, as part of an effort to historicize the Bible, Zunz spoke of “remnants” or “Überbleibsel,” a diminutive form that connotes fragmentary remains or even debris. It is therefore hard to ignore the note of skepticism, perhaps even sarcasm, in the characterization of these remains

²⁷⁵ “Wer die Litteratur einer Nation als den Eingang betrachtet zur Gesamtkennntniss ihres Culturganges durch alle Zeiten hindurch – wie in jedem Moment ihr Wesen aus dem Gegebenen und dem Hinzukommenden, d.i. aus dem Innern und dem Aeussern sich gestaltet, - wie Schicksal, Klima, Sitten, Religion und Zufall freundschaftlich oder feindlich in einander greifen, - und wie endlich die Gegenwart, als aller dagewesenen Erscheinungen nothwendiges Resultat dasteht: - wahrlich der tritt mit Ehrfurcht vor diesen Göttertempel, und lässt bescheiden sich in die Vorhalle einführen, die erhabene Aussicht vom Giebel herunter als ein Würdiger einst zu geniessen.” Ibid., 6-7.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁷⁸ “Die Ehrfurcht gebietenden Ueberbleibsel aus der Blüthenzeit der alten Hebräer haben, das Interesse, das Alter und Inhalt gewähren abgerechnet, ihre höhere Wichtigkeit dem Zufalle zu danken.” Ibid.

as “demanding awe.” The phrase “Ehrfurcht gebietend” in German is ambiguous and could convey the meaning “awesome” in its earnest sense or “imperiously commanding reverence” in a more critical variant. Because Zunz concluded his opening salvo with the claim that the importance with which those fragments had come to be regarded was a result of the contingencies of human history, rather than their inherent religious or literary value, the less pious reading seems compelling. With respect to old Hebrew literature, Zunz was most interested in the role it had subsequently played in Jewish and Christian civilization.

Although only the first paragraph of “Etwas” mentioned the ancient layer of Hebrew texts, Zunz’s treatment of old Hebrew literature is instructive for his approach to later Jewish texts. One of Zunz’s main concerns was to demonstrate that scholars should use post-biblical Jewish writings as sources in their research. He also wanted to make this case for ancient Hebrew texts. As a student of Wolf, who, as we have seen, regarded ancient Hebrew literature with some skepticism, Zunz may have internalized a sense of inadequacy about the small size of the ancient Hebrew corpus compared to the huge amount of extant material by Greek and Roman authors. Perhaps that is why he presented the Hebrew Bible as mere “remnants” of a larger body of works that had not survived. Zunz noted that the scholarly industry that “those few books” of the Hebrew Bible inspired was more impressive than the classical Greek legacy because the former “acquired its opulence from more meager materials” than the latter. Moreover, he argued, the “fragments” later assembled as the “Hebrew canon” became the foundation of the Christian state, as the revolutions that emerged from the midst of the Jewish people reshaped the entire world.²⁷⁹

Zunz, of course, was not concerned with these “old Hebrew fragments” but with the “later creations of the Hebrew nation,” which had never commanded the same appreciation as the former. But in describing these later texts, Zunz distinguished between one phase of writings concerned primarily with exegesis of the old works and a new literature, which was the subject of his essay. The latter emerged as “the shadows of barbarism receded from the darkened world.” New Hebrew or Jewish literature, Zunz added, was the product of a “new, alien formation that attached itself to the remnants of the old Hebrew one.”²⁸⁰

Maddeningly vague here and elsewhere, it is not clear which “dark ages” Zunz meant. The earliest texts that Zunz mentioned in “Etwas” were tractates from the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud; the large majority of works to which he referred were medieval and early modern. Although in theory the category “Jewish literature” could have encompassed all post-biblical writings by Jews, Zunz was particularly concerned with scholarly texts and works of erudition. In most of “Etwas,” the word “Litteratur” was a synonym for pre-modern Jewish “*Wissenschaft*.” When Zunz referred to the “literary creations of the Jewish

²⁷⁹ “Die Revolutionen, die aus der Mitte des jüdischen Volkes sich entwickelten, und auf dieses Volk selbst nicht minder ihren grossen Einfluss hatten, als auf die übrige Erde, stellten jene Trümmer unter dem Namen des hebräischen Kanons gleichsam als das Fundament der christlichen Staaten auf, und der immer fortschreitende Gang der Wissenschaften that dann das seinige, und erweiterte jene wenigen Bücher zu einem Umfange von geistiger Industrie, die mehr als die griechische bewundernswürdig ist, weil sie aus dürftigerem Stoffe ihren Reichthum sich zu schaffen gewusst.” Ibid.

²⁸⁰ “Als allmählig die Schatten der Barbarei von der verfinsterten Erde wichen, und das Licht die überall verbreiteten Juden auch überall treffen musste, knüpfte eine neue fremde Bildung sich an die Ueberbleibsel der alten hebräischen an, und Köpfe und Jahrhunderte verarbeiteten beide zu derjenigen Litteratur um, die wir die rabbinische nennen.” Ibid.

people,” he really meant the “*Wissenschaften*” or scholarly writings of Jews, from late antiquity to the early nineteenth century. Needless to say, this was a conception of “literature” that differed radically from understandings of the term as synonymous with or, at least, as including the overlapping categories fiction, imaginative literature, and *belles lettres*. However, conceiving of medieval Jewish philosophical treatises, legal texts, and erudite grammatical works as one “literature,” encouraged a novel kind of relation to such writing.

The kind of reading that Zunz modeled in “Etwas” was a contemplative admiration of the whole. He wanted his readers to conceive of the entire body of extant Jewish texts as comprising an aggregate of *Wissenschaften* that spanned all the areas of human scholarly inquiry. Instead of studying folios of Talmud tractates as Talmud Torah, Zunz imagined Jewish intellectuals directing their study of the whole range of Hebrew and Aramaic literature to specific areas of knowledge in order to learn not only how Jews had thought about them but also, in many cases, to understand something universal about these subjects themselves. Zunz outlined to his readers a plan for an enormous encyclopedia of sciences. In “Etwas,” he enumerated the fields included in this plan as theology, mythology, dogmatology, religion, synagogue liturgy; legislation and jurisprudence, state constitution; ethics; natural sciences, astronomy (but not astrology), geography, mathematics, chronology, topography; biology, physics, medicine (incl. psychology, anthropology, and physiology); technology, business, industry, trade, craftsmanship (*Kunst*), architecture, book printing, calligraphy, music, inventions; history and antiquities; language, poetry, rhetoric, grammar, lexicography, synonymy, diplomatics (i.e., paleography), manuscript history, typography; and bibliography.

Reading the first third of Zunz’s essay we are struck by the many promises of sights that may in the future be revealed to his readers. But in the body of the work, Zunz also conveyed a taste of what he had in mind. He offered the reader a survey of the “literary creations of the Jewish people,” which he had ordered into “a table of contents of *Wissenschaften*” though, he did not delve into great detail for each of these sections.²⁸¹ The purpose of the essay was to suggest ways of structuring future research. For example, in the small section on “theology,” Zunz merely observed that “the Jews never clearly constructed their system of theology in its entirety.” However, he noted that many “honorable fragments” do allow for a reconstruction of Jewish theology. Zunz then fended off past portrayals of Jewish theology by seventeenth-century Christian scholars. He charged the Cistercian Hebraist Guilo Bartolucci (1631-1687) with having concocted an “elenchus de Rabbīnorum blasphemīis” – a catalogue of the rabbis’ blasphemies – from “myths and fairy tales” in his *Bibliotheca Magna Rabbīnica* (1675-1693). Zunz complained that Bartolucci “was more than severe,” in his attitude toward Jewish literature. Citing the latter’s declarations about “irreligious Talmudic beliefs” and “godless and perverse rabbis,” and the difficulty of “find[ing] nobility in a slave-like and downtrodden people,” Zunz also bitterly noted the charges against Jewish piety by the Protestant Hebraist Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633-1705) in his *Tela Ignea Satanae* (“The Fiery Arrow of Satan,” 1681).²⁸²

²⁸¹ Ibid., 7.

²⁸² “Der Mann [Bartolucci] ist überhaupt mehr als streng.” Quotations from Bartolucci: “si nobilitas in servili et abjecto populo inesse posit,” (*Bibliotheca* Vol. 1, 710); “impia Talmudica Doctrina” (Vol. 3, 696); “impīi et perversi Rabbīni” (Vol. 3, 321). Zunz’s Wagenseil quotation is from *Tela*, 50. Ibid., 8 and 8 fn. 1.

In a section on ethics, Zunz argued that “it is time to compile the magnificent things written about [ethics] in the Talmud and by later sages in an objective manner; but also to elucidate everything that contradicts or seems to contradict this, if it derives from recognized authors.” Again, Zunz referred to the anti-Jewish writings of a seventeenth-century Christian author, Johann Andreas Eisenmenger (1654-1704). Alluding to Eisenmenger’s notorious antisemitic tract *Entdecktes Judenthum* (“Judaism Revealed”), Zunz remarked that such “discoveries [Entdeckungen]” in the field of Jewish ethics would have “obviated the need for Eisenmenger to publish his.” Among the sources for a study of ethics he counted the works of Maimonides, Nachmanides, Rabbeinu Tam, Albo, Mendelssohn, and even some passages in the allegedly “little-read book *Zohar*.”²⁸³

Surveying Jewish literature on the natural and physical sciences, Zunz highlighted the treatment of astronomy in Jewish literature. Zunz suggested an etymological investigation of the oldest terms used in Jewish writings about the subject and a compilation of all the passages about astronomical matters in roughly eighty different early works, among which he included fragments from the Targumim, Zohar, Halakhot Gedolot, and *Sefer ha-Bahir*. That compilation would be followed by a study of the “actual literature” about astronomy, which, according to Zunz, began in the twelfth century.²⁸⁴

In a section on law and jurisprudence, Zunz pointed to the “incisive” explorations torts or injuries (*culpa*) in the Talmud, specifically in the three *Bavot* – tractates Bava Kamma, Bava Metsi’a, and Bava Batra. He argued that Jewish law from late antiquity should be compared to other contemporaneous bodies of law, such as Roman law. Such comparisons would elucidate the nature of law in general as well as the understanding of Jewish and Roman law in particular.²⁸⁵

For each of these areas of human knowledge, Zunz tried to conjure for his readers a sense of the rich treatment accorded in Jewish literature to universal human questions. In some cases, Zunz saw Jewish literature as contributing to contemporary scholarly investigations of the field. In most, it was clear that showing the relation of ancient, medieval, and early modern Jewish scholarship to a world history of ideas was what mattered to Zunz. He wanted to demonstrate that Jewish literature could be used to recover how Jews in the past had conceived of their world and thereby argue for the inclusion of the Jews in histories of civilization. Zunz suggested that the Christian scholars whom he cited had failed to properly understand and represent these contributions because of the reigning prejudice against “rabbinic” literature and sometimes because of a lack of knowledge or insight.

Zunz bemoaned the “indifference” of many Christian academicians toward rabbinic literature. These scholars, he wrote, “are of the opinion that [rabbinic learning] is useless, that there is nothing sensible in it, that it ruins one’s taste, that one cannot go very far in it, and that it is godless [...]” Indeed, Zunz noted, similar charges such as these had even been made against Hebrew literature in general, not only the later, “rabbinic” parts of it. Christian

²⁸³ “es ist wohl Zeit das Herrliche, was im Talmud und späteren Weisen darüber geschrieben ist, sachlich aufzustellen; aber auch alles was diesem widerspricht oder widersprechen zu scheint, wenn es von anerkannten Schriftstellern herrührt, zu beleuchten: Entdeckungen, die dem Eisenmenger die seinigen herauszugeben, erspart haben würden.” Ibid., 10.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 9.

scholars' indifference for Jewish literature often tended toward outright partisanship against the subject and field. From there, Zunz lamented, it was often a small step to contempt for the creators of that literature. Worse, at least in Zunz's mind, was the partisan objective with which Christian scholars approached Jewish literature when they did not hold it in contempt; often they studied it "with hatred" rather than "out of love" for the material. The only concern of such scholars was to find evidence against the Jews and Judaism.²⁸⁶

But Zunz also trained his eye on the reasons for German Jews' neglect of the study of rabbinic literature. He acknowledged that many Jews of his day lacked sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language to pursue such scholarship. Zunz also cited the increased openness of "other kinds of sciences" as well as the "very praiseworthy picking up of the arts and trades, farming and military services" by Jews as reasons for Jews' lack of interest in studying rabbinic literature. Zunz's observations here were partly based on the wishful thinking of *maskilim*, who had long prodded Jews toward "productive" occupations such as the trades and agriculture; in his time, there were very few Jews who entered these parts of the economy. In any case, the greatest obstacle that Zunz saw in the way of German Jewish immersion in the study of rabbinic literature was "coldness toward religion in general and especially against the literature of [our] ancestors." According to Zunz, there were two different reasons for German Jews' antipathy toward Jewish scholarship. One, many of them were under "the delusion that occupying themselves [with Jewish literature] dishonored them." Two, some of them suffered from "an endearing, modern lack of thoroughness."²⁸⁷

Simply put, study of rabbinic literature no longer excited Jewish intellectuals. If they interacted with texts in any way, Zunz implied, they preferred other kinds of literature and modes of reading. Despite announcing that he would "have more to say" about German Jews' modern "haphazardness," Zunz did not specify exactly what he meant. He may have been objecting to intellectual dilettantism. Certainly, Zunz was concerned about "today's writing frenzy" or *Schreibewut* among some Jews, who wrote without having studied any subject thoroughly.²⁸⁸ He inveighed against the eagerness of Jewish dilettantes to pen "shallow" tracts and German Jews' general lack of interest in reading rabbinic literature. Both, according to Zunz, harmed the enterprise of scholarship. His critiques of German Jewish readers' superficiality and flighty auto-didacticism, betrayed his hopes of remaking the Jewish learner and the German Jewish reader in his own image – or in the image to which he aspired: that of the scholar committed entirely to the highest standards of *Wissenschaft*. Zunz's goal was to bring discipline to what he perceived as a mad universe of texts and a chaotic society of learners. New genres of semi-scholarly writings and *belles lettres*, which were gaining increasing traction among German Jews, did not figure into this program.

The absence of this kind of literature from Zunz's disciplinary program had its analogue in a significant lacuna in his survey of Jewish scholarship. Missing from "Etwas" was a treatment of Jewish exegetical works in general and the genre of *midrash* in particular. Zunz referred to *midrashim* twice in the essay. In one of those references, Zunz observed that Midrash Rabbah

²⁸⁶ "etwa aus der Meinung, dass sie nichts nütze, - das nichts Gescheutes [sic] darin wäre, - dass man sich den Geschmack damit verdürbe, - dass man es nicht weit darin bringen könne, - dass sie gottlos sei [...]" Ibid., 23-24.

²⁸⁷ "Kälte gegen Religion überhaupt und gegen der Vorfahren Litteratur insbesondere [sic], der Wahn sich mit der Beschäftigung derselben zu entbehren, und eine liebenswürdige moderne Ungründlichkeit [...]" Ibid., 25.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 26.

contained more Greek than the Babylonian Talmud.²⁸⁹ He evinced almost no interest in the stories of the Talmud and the Midrashim known as *hagadah*, which he apparently did not regard as works producing new knowledge. Indeed, there are more references in “Etwas” to mystical texts than to *hagadah* in Talmud or Midrash. For Zunz, “Litteratur” for the most part signified learned, scholarly texts rather than imaginative works. He did show slightly more interest in poetry and mentioned some early modern Jewish comedy, satire, and parody.²⁹⁰ However, Zunz focused primarily on questions of meter and language in his proposals about research in these areas. What accounted for this willful neglect of such an important area of Jewish literary creativity in Zunz’s encyclopedia? For one, unlike the early modern comedy, satire, and parody that Zunz described, the midrashic texts of late antiquity did not easily fit into genres used to classify imaginative literature. Despite his claims to universality, Zunz seems to have excluded texts that he deemed as lacking in value to the aims of *Wissenschaft*. Zunz also saw this literature’s fictionality as problematic. Its lack of faithfulness to historical reality and to the plain meaning of the text bothered him. Zunz also doubted the value of midrashic exegesis because he saw it as lacking in “originality.” At the beginning of “Etwas,” Zunz described the Hebrew nation as having “lost its reproductive power,” in the period after the destruction of the Second Temple. As a result, he wrote, the Jews remained content for several centuries with the “sometimes more, sometimes less successful exegesis of the few writings extant from better times.”²⁹¹

In his first major book, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* (“The Religious Sermons of the Jews”) published fourteen years later, in 1832, Zunz did study *midrash* and somewhat revised his assessment of this literature. He was still bothered by the problem of “originality” and “independence.” That is to say, the question of whether these writings could really be regarded as new creations that deserved to be studied as a separate literature.²⁹² The main argument of the book was to show the ancient roots of the religious sermon and its continuous development over time, contra those traditionalists of his day who regarded modern synagogue sermons as an alien innovation.²⁹³ Surveying a vast number of exegetical texts, including both “homiletic” (which are usually only loosely tied to biblical texts) and “aggadic” midrashim (which proceed verse-by-verse), Zunz viewed these texts primarily as means of ethical exhortation and edification, of which he approved.²⁹⁴ In a preface, Zunz presented the modern-day sermons delivered by German Jewish rabbis and preachers with reformist ambitions as grounded in the historical institution of the homiletic sermon. The latter, Zunz argued, was based mainly on the early *hagadah*. With groundbreaking critical scholarship, Zunz not only assembled and catalogued the entire midrashic universe but also attempted to date its various parts. However, Zunz was far less enamored by the blending of fact and fiction in the *midrashim*.²⁹⁵ Aside from distinguishing “historical” layers from

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 18 fn. 3; 20-21 fn. 4.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 17 fn. 2, fn. 3; 18, 18 fn. 1; 19 fn.1, fn. 2.

²⁹¹ “[Die hebräische Nation], von ihrer politischen Höhe wie von ihrer intellektuellen herabgesunken, schien die Reproduktionskraft auf lange Zeit verloren zu haben, sich begnügend mit der bald mehr bald weniger gelungenen Exegese der sparsamen Schriften aus der bessern Zeit.” Ibid., 3.

²⁹² Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt. Ein Beitrag zur Altertumskunde und biblischen Kritik, zur Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte*, 41, 84.

²⁹³ Ibid., XI.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 1.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 119.

“mythology” in these texts, he never turned to the study of *bagadah* as a kind of imaginative literature.

Edification, in the view Zunz articulated at the beginning of his career, seemed to be attainable only through erudite, academic literature. Reading *Wissenschaft* was a contemplative activity in which the reader could delight in the vastness of a book’s erudition, its rational methodology, and its efforts to separate truth from fiction. But it was not supposed to sweep its readers along on flights of feeling and imagination. Although Zunz did not explicitly attack reading of imaginative literature as “feminine,” his turn toward *Wissenschaft* effectively excluded Jewish (and Christian) women.

When Zunz burst onto the scholarly scene in 1818, he still had hopes of one day obtaining an academic position in Prussia or one of the German states – whether by remaining Jewish or by converting to become a Protestant. But even when these hopes were dashed, Zunz made no concession to market forces or to popular taste. In Zunz’s inability to imagine a larger readership also lay the reasons for his failure to translate his redemptive vision into sustainable institutions. Stymied by the state and academy, Zunz depended on the fiscal support of Jewish communities and individuals. But the kind of reading that his new literature required could not compete with other literary forms.

Zunz sought to discipline both Jewish texts and Jewish readers with the force of systematic, scholarly methodology. Among those German Jews swept up in the modern reading revolution of the early nineteenth century, popular periodicals (whether specifically Jewish or not) and European *belles lettres* attracted far more interest than the dense, learned works of Zunz and his colleagues. Indeed, Zunz’s own colleague and friend, Heinrich Heine, described the academic German of Zunz’s publications (especially the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*) as “unpalatable.”²⁹⁶ Ultimately, Zunz’s writing failed to produce the kind of reading or recognition to which he had aspired – a failure that became apparent within several decades and was at least partially reflected in the new approaches taken by subsequent, younger scholars such as Heinrich Graetz. Graetz built on the *Wissenschaft* of Zunz, Jost, and scholars such as Abraham Geiger. But his grand *Geschichte der Juden*, encompassing eleven volumes, published over three decades beginning in 1853, introduced a sweeping perspective and a highly emotional prose style into Jewish historical scholarship. It went through countless editions and translations, becoming a major popular success. Graetz’s achievement was to combine richly footnoted, primary source-based approach with captivating narratives of the Jewish people’s tragic and heroic encounters with adversity.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Cited in Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 32. Roemer also expertly documents the failures of Zunz and Jost to attract sufficient numbers of subscribers or sell out even their miniscule print runs.

²⁹⁷ On the institutions that supported the formation of Graetz’s reading public see *Ibid.*, 71-74.

Chapter 6: The Sentimental Education of Heinrich Graetz, 1830-1838

The writer who succeeded in reconciling the demands of *Wissenschaft* with the German Jewish reading revolution was Heinrich Graetz. He rejected the scholarly approaches of Zunz and several other more established Jewish scholars, such as Jost and Geiger, which he saw as antiquarian, and turned deliberately to a more popular format. From the geographic and socioeconomic margins of German Jewry, Graetz conquered an unprecedented Jewish readership. With narrative history, Graetz sought to reverse the perceived “feminization” of pleasure reading and affect. Against the private, aristocratic reading modes and sensibilities associated with Henriette Herz, Dorothea Schlegel, and Rahel Varnhagen, he attempted to fashion a bourgeois, male public sphere of scholarship that nevertheless preserved some of the emotionally intensive reading practices of the age of *Empfindsamkeit*, assigning them a “higher” purpose than pleasure. With his narrative historiography, he tried to discipline German Jewish pleasure readers, whom he perceived as potentially solipsistic, into a modern, self-assertive Jewish collective.

In tandem with his effort to define a modern, masculine German Jewish subjectivity through affect-laden writing and reading, Graetz also attacked what he perceived as the “Christianization” of Judaism and German Jewry. He imagined Christianity as bound up with bad reading practices and tried to prove how Christian scholars and intellectuals had distorted the achievements of Jewish religious figures and intellectuals from the past and present.

The origins of Graetz’s historiographical project lay in his formation as a reader at the time of a wide-ranging transformation of reading in German Jewish culture. In the following chapter, I reconstruct Graetz’s discovery of a new mode of reading in its cultural context of the early-nineteenth-century German Jewish periphery. I follow his adolescent sentimental education in passionate and deeply involved pleasure reading. Graetz’s reading formation led him to attach particular significance to practices of reading. He maintained this interest in his mature work. Much of Graetz’s critique of Christianity and the salon Jewesses in his *History of the Jews* revolved around the allegedly harmful ways of reading they represented.

Like Zunz, Graetz came from the margins of both German and German Jewish society. He looked for a larger world in the pages of the books that he read thirstily as a young autodidact. His socioeconomic marginality in Jewish society meant that he lacked a defined vocational path or convenient entry into the declining traditional rabbinic elite. Partly because of these factors and partly as a result of his natural inclinations, Graetz carved an alternate path for himself out of his autodidactic study.

Graetz was born in 1817 in Xions (Polish, Książ Wielkopolski), a small town in the province of Posen (Poznań) on Prussia’s eastern frontier. Acquired by Prussia in 1793, as part of the Second Partition of Poland, Posen was Prussia’s most ethnically and religiously heterogeneous territory, home to Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, speakers of German, Polish, and Yiddish. Its Jewish population had historically identified with the collective

institutions of Polish Jewry. However, in the post-Partition era, and certainly after 1815, the Jews of Posen increasingly looked westward to German culture.²⁹⁸

Several years after Graetz was born, his parents, Jakob and Vogel, moved even farther east to Zerkow (Żerków), which, according to a mid-nineteenth century source, had 603 Polish residents and 111 Jews. Graetz's parents ran a small butcher shop.²⁹⁹ Some of their neighbors seem to have been notorious for their involvement in extensive smuggling operations across the border with the Russian empire. The advent of Prussian administration over the town brought a new state-run primary school, which first offered instruction in Polish and later in German, as well as a German library.³⁰⁰ It did not significantly affect Graetz's own childhood education. Like most Jewish boys of his generation in Posen, he attended a traditional *kehayder* during his childhood. While many of his male peers in the community entered vocational training when they turned thirteen, Graetz's parents recognized their son's gifts. They sent him to advanced studies in Talmud and the halakhic codes at a *yeshiva* (rabbinic academy). The provincial capital, Posen, was home to one of the distinguished yeshivas of Central Europe, the academy presided over by Akiva Eger (1761-1837). Graetz, however, attended a smaller institution in Wollstein (Wolsztyn).³⁰¹ There, Graetz was able to board with a relative. He began his studies at Wollstein in August 1831.

Wollstein, a town of 2,600 people (in 1837) was considerably west of Zerkow, only a few miles from the border with Brandenburg. Its population was dominated by German Protestants, with Jews representing the second largest group. The town had four bookbinders, all of them Jews, which suggests a relatively high level of literacy.³⁰² The *yeshiva*, while not as prestigious as the one in Posen, had a good reputation and the support of a relatively wealthy community. One of his teachers was Sanwil Meyer Munk (d. 1840), a student of Eger, who proved to be relatively tolerant of his students' extracurricular pursuits.³⁰³ It was in Wollstein that Graetz began keeping a journal in 1832.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ For a study of Prussian policy and the changing demographics of Posen, see the relevant chapters in William Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Still valuable is the work of Aaron Heppner and Isaak Herzberg, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Juden und der jüdischen Gemeinden in den Posener Landen* (Koschmin: Self-published, 1909). For the early modern history of Jewish life in the regional capital city of Poznań, see Adam Teller, *Hayim be-tsavta: ha-rova ha-yehudi shel Poznan ba-mahatsit ha-rishona shel ha-me'ab ha-sheva' esreh* (Jerusalem: Y.L. Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 2003).

²⁹⁹ For Graetz's biographical details I have relied on Philipp Bloch, "Heinrich Graetz: Ein Lebensbild," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 48, no. 1 (1904): 33-42, 87-97, 161-177, 224-241, 300-315, 346-360, 491-503; Marcus Brann, "Heinrich Graetz," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 61, no. 4 (1917): 321-355; Reuven Michael, *Hainrikh Grets: ha-historyon shel ha-am ha-yehudi* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2003). An excellent recent study of Graetz is the work of Marcus Pyka, *Jüdische Identität bei Heinrich Graetz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009). For a thorough study of the reception of Graetz's historiography in Germany, France, England, the United States, and Eastern Europe see Jeffrey Blutinger, "Writing for the Masses: Heinrich Graetz, the Popularization of Jewish History, and the Reception of National Judaism" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2003).

³⁰⁰ Heinrich Wuttke, *Städtebuch des Landes Posen* (Leipzig: Hermann Fries, 1864), 434.

³⁰¹ By the 1830s, Eger's yeshiva had become the most important center for Talmudic studies in Central Europe. Hundreds of students flocked to Posen to study at the institution. Mordechai Eliav, *Jüdische Erziehung in Deutschland im Zeitalter der Aufklärung und der Emanzipation*, trans. Maike Strobel, Based on revised Hebrew ed., *Jüdische Bildungsgeschichte in Deutschland 2* (New York: Waxmann Verlag, 2001), 193-194.

³⁰² Wuttke, *Städtebuch des Landes Posen*, 468.

³⁰³ Brann, "Heinrich Graetz," 324.

This journal, a truly remarkable source, reveals to us the full implications of the German Jewish reading revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the diary, Graetz self-consciously narrated his discovery of pleasure reading and his sentimental formation as a new kind of Jewish reader.

Journals often present themselves to us as records of an author's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Daily diaries promise us an especially raw, undigested compendium of the journalist's inner state, even or precisely when they slavishly preserve only the most quotidian details of the writer's waking hours. Furthermore, the journal's claim to providing unmediated access to its creator's heart and mind seems to increase with the contemporaneity of the text to its referent sensation or event. And yet, in many cases journal entries are structured like other narratives. When a writer composes a diary entry late at night, the *end* of the day is already known to him, so that the narration of sensations and experiences follows a plot with a beginning, climax and end. The diary entry arrives at a particular conclusion, even as it reports the numerous detours and tangents that lead to it.

Following the narrative arc of Graetz's journal, we see how Graetz not only recreated his experiences on the leaves of his notebooks but also tried to construct his life according to his reading of vernacular imaginative literature and scholarship. Modern modes of reading led Graetz and others of his milieu to novel intellectual practices and identities.

Although the diary was an ostensibly private archive, Graetz often imagined an audience of at least one other reader, even if that reader was the anthropomorphic journal itself.³⁰⁵ From the beginning of his diary-writing, Graetz inscribed his text in a larger republic of readers. He envisioned a readership that far transcended the provincials with whom he interacted on a daily basis. This imagined audience became a sounding board and source of legitimation for the new intellectual practices and subjectivity that Graetz developed in his notebook.

Although the initial four pages of Graetz's journal are unfortunately missing, the diary manuscript's first partial sentence entered the text in a universal fellowship of feeling readers. "As every human being has likely experienced," Graetz reflected, "a time of deprivation

³⁰⁴ Comprising six notebooks in total over a period of twenty-three years, Graetz's diary accompanied him from his mid-teenage years into his late thirties, from the *yeshiva* to the university. Found after his death in 1891, the diary survived its author with only a few gaps. Overall, 70 pages out of an original 850 are missing. Fifty-six of these pages are from the first notebook and fourteen from the second one. Presumably, Graetz himself excised the missing pages at some point before his death, as the journal was unknown even to his wife. Although, sadly, the first four pages of the journal are among those missing from the extant manuscript, the diary remains fundamental to reconstructing this part of his life. Starting with the earliest entries, it is cast in a bewildering variety of languages. Although most of the text was written in a German that matured with the author, it contains long passages in Hebrew, French and Latin, as well as shorter fragments in Greek, English and Italian. Throughout, it follows the Hebrew calendar for dating, beginning in 5593 (1832/33) and concluding in 5616 (1855/56). But very often, the names of weekdays are indicated in French and much later even in Greek. The journal's playful, hybrid form reflects its author's variegated social, intellectual, religious and political experiences. Graetz's diary is a remarkably rich biographical and historical source from the period. It is today housed at the National Library of Israel (MS. 263; 1,2) but was published in 1977 with notes and selections from Graetz's adult correspondence. I have relied on the excellent published edition Heinrich Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, ed. Reuven Michael (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977).

³⁰⁵ For a fascinating analysis of a 1768 "private journal" entry by the fifteen-year-old Frances Burney playfully addressed "To Nobody," see Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, 203.

[*Entbehrungszeit*] can cause great pain and even press tears out [of a person].”³⁰⁶ The appeal to a common experience of deprivation and yearning betrayed the “publicity” of the journal entry. Graetz universalized his particular experience of missing his father and mother. In this passage, he pointed to the palpable symptoms of feeling, *Schmerzen* and *Thränen*, pain and tears that his “*Entbehrungszeit*” had wrought. Although the term could mean a period of abstinence and withdrawal from pleasure, including through fasting, Graetz was referring to his distance from familiar surroundings – to homesickness. The sentiment of the suffering protagonist longing for his home, in Graetz’s text, had physical effects on the body, violently forcing him to tears, perhaps like a character in a novel.

The elements of artifice that went into the composition of Graetz’s journal complicate our use of it as a repository of biographical facts. Many of Graetz’s journal entries were written in the form of retrospectives, narrating the highlights of his being over long stretches of time. It makes more sense to read them as texts subjects to the constraints of form as well as substance, rather than fishing for isolated bits of information in them. Graetz’s diary too narrated a story whose outline was already known to Graetz when he commenced it. It would document his troughs and peaks as he grew into a *gebildet* (“formed”) human being – the *telos* of his life. But rather than only reflecting feelings and ideas, Graetz’s writing itself often “produced” them. Diary writing, which was closely bound up with his reading, opened Graetz to the joys and sorrows of aestheticized emotion. On the written page, Graetz often shaped his feelings and experiences according to the exigencies of literary sensibility, rather than a commitment to representing his life “as it really was.” The sensibility that he developed in his text in turn shaped his readings of other texts and of his life as it transpired. To understand Graetz’s sentimental education, we therefore need to pay attention to the literary models of his autobiographical writings. Those models came from a modern world that was still *terra incognita* to his parents and many of his teachers at the yeshiva.

Paying attention to those reading models in Graetz’s journal-writing from his teenage years in the 1830s allows us to understand better the implications of pleasure reading in the Jewish context. The first German books that Graetz read were adventure novels, borrowed from a local or itinerant lending library. Around 1800, in many parts of Germany, these were the types of books requested most often by library patrons.³⁰⁷ Graetz specifically mentioned “Hugo von Felseneck, the first knights’ novel [*Ritterroman*].” The book to which Graetz seems to have been referring was a historical novel called “Raspo von Felseneck, or Trial by Combat from the Eleventh Century,” first published at the end of the eighteenth century.³⁰⁸ The author of this and a number of similar titles also set in the Middle Ages was a history instructor in Bamberg, who made his living churning out such novels.³⁰⁹ “Raspo” belonged to a whole genre of novels featuring knights and bandits which earned tremendous profits

³⁰⁶ “[fragment begins *in medias res*] Entbehrungszeit Schmerzen verursachen und sogar Thränen auspressen, wird jeder Mensch wohl die Erfahrung gemacht haben.” Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 1.

³⁰⁷ Rolf Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser: Lesergeschichte in Deutschland, 1500-1800* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974), 235.

³⁰⁸ Johann Baptist Durach, *Raspo von Felseneck oder der Gottesgerichtskampf aus dem elften Jahrhunderte*, 1st ed. (Berlin: Im Verlage der Königlichen Preußischen Akademie Kunst- u. Buchhandlung, 1795).

³⁰⁹ Christian Friedrich Rassmann, *Pantheon deutscher jetzt lebender Dichter, und in die Belletristik eingreifender Schriftsteller* (Helmstedt: C.G. Fleckeisensche Buchhandlung, 1823), 65-66.

for low-brow writers.³¹⁰ They were the kinds of books, which, in the discourse of the time, sucked in their readers. In a stereotypical representation, Graetz described himself as having been “enraptured by every book,” before learning how to read and feel properly. Authors of knight and robber novels spoke of their audiences as “devouring rather than reading” their books.³¹¹ Nineteenth-century writers lambasted both this reading matter and the mode in which it was produced and consumed. Such books enchanted readers “like magic wands,” one mid-nineteenth-century writer complained in a work devoted to the genre.³¹² The type who fell victim to the spell of the low-brow novel was the “Romanneugierige[r],” in the untranslatable language of the same author.

Graetz too diagnosed himself as a “Neugieriger,” “a curious person,” as the much softer English phrasing would have it. Graetz’s usage and that of the Biedermeier moralizers who castigated the knight and robber novels, however, retained the literal meaning of the German compound word, “greed for that which is new.” When Graetz wrote that he had been like “any *Neugieriger*,” he meant that he had been greedily indiscriminate and omnivorous in his reading.

His self-analysis betrayed the anxieties of a young intellectual who had not yet found a way to define his activities. Reading for pleasure was not something that he imagined as an available practice. But Graetz’s diagnosis also imitated the language of the *Aufklärung* pedagogues who narrated some of the other books that he read later.

As a young reader and writer of German letters discovering himself as an intellectual, Graetz entered a world whose culture and sociability are today designated as “Biedermeier.” Falling mostly into the period between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, Biedermeier discursive and material expressions preached restraint from the emotional abandon and speculative ardor celebrated by the German romantics.³¹³ In many ways, Biedermeier writers continued a late-eighteenth-century critique of sentimentality and romanticism. Whether Graetz derived these lessons immediately from his *Spätaufklärung* reading matter, to which he came belatedly in the 1830s, or from a Biedermeier reception of these notions, is hard to resolve. Both the critics of sentimentality from the late Enlightenment as well as Biedermeier commentators privileged social and domestic harmony, castigating those “who are possessed by powerful desires and urges [*Begierden und Neigungen*], which they wish to gratify by any means.”³¹⁴ And yet, the antagonists of social harmony and inner calm, the violent fabrications of the heart and mind, continually beckoned to Graetz, as they did to many of his contemporaries. Every reading, every experience, and every diary inscription sounded a seductive call. If heeded, the critics of feeling (in the *Spätaufklärung* and in Graetz’s time) imagined, the implosive force of frenzied

³¹⁰ Carl Müller-Fraureuth, *Die Ritter- und Räuberromane: Ein Beitrag zur Bildungsgeschichte des deutschen Volkes* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1894), 86. The author bemoans the morality of *Raspo* and similar novels but also sees them as an integral part of German literary history.

³¹¹ The writer Carl Gottlob Cramer boasted that “Meine Romane werden [...] nicht gelesen, sondern verschlungen, nachgedruckt und noch viermal aufgelegt.” Cited in Johann Wilhelm Appell, *Die Ritter-, Räuber- und Schauerromantik: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Unterhaltungs-Literatur* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1859), 14.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ James Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 541.

³¹⁴ Adalbert Stifter, *Stifters Werke*, ed. I.E. Walter, vol. 2 (Salzburg: Verlag “Das Bergland Buch”, 1953), 905. Cited in Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 281.

imagination threatened to lead the undisciplined reader to dissolution. To avert this fate, they advocated disciplining the reader's imagination by channeling it toward a virtuous sentimentality.

These concerns about the disruptive potential of feeling coalesced with the ideas that Graetz imbibed about his own development. In the narrative elaboration of his *Bildung*, Graetz represented himself as a raw mind and heart in crisis and need of discipline. Graetz feared the fate of the intellectual dilettante who thought and felt too intensely, stimulated by any text or experience he fell into. His anxiety intersected with a larger concern in Biedermeier letters about intellectual and emotional excess imperiling social harmony and bourgeois domesticity. But Graetz's fears were also compounded by the novelty and uncertain status (in his mind) of the intellectual practices he had recently acquired. In the Jewish milieu of the eastern Prussian borderlands from which Graetz emerged, the pleasurable reading and writing that he discovered and which fulfilled him did not yet offer a clear path to a stable vocational or religious role in society. The insecurity of his position, which arose from a unique constellation of forces facing intellectually ambitious young Jewish men rising up from what they perceived as economic, religious, and cultural backwardness, led Graetz on a search for authoritative and legitimate knowledge in reading and feeling. His diary was more than a record of the heart in this quest.

Graetz's fragment cited earlier, in which he described his tears and pain, was part of a retrospective of his first year living away from home. His parents had sent him to Wollstein after Graetz had turned thirteen in 1830. But Graetz only composed the diary entry three years later, in 1833, at the age of sixteen, when he began keeping a journal. Through writing about the time that had passed since his departure from his parents' house, he ordered his experiences into a narrative of his sentimental and intellectual formation. In the meditation on his homesickness, Graetz transformed his grief and sense of loss about the separation from his family into a challenge that had helped the development of his sentimental and intellectual faculties: "And yet, this being apart, was the foundation for my future being," he theorized in the same entry from the year of 1833.³¹⁵

The "future being" which Graetz imagined himself to become in his diary entry was the persona of the refined pleasure reader. He distinguished this more developed self from the earlier, undisciplined and unfeeling kind of reader he had been. Graetz claimed that as a thirteen-year-old he had been fascinated by any book he saw, but now, as a more mature reader, he involved his feelings in his reading. As a result, he had learned how to savor books.³¹⁶ In other words, the appropriate education of one's *Gefühl* or sentimental faculty could allow one to derive pleasure or *Genuß* from reading. Reading in this manner, in turn, made one into a new person, Graetz believed. His "visible development into another human being" became intelligible to Graetz through the narrative of self-formation that he crafted in his diary.³¹⁷ Writing for the invisible audience of his journal, which he imagined as sharing a common discourse of feeling, Graetz crafted a new sentimental subjectivity for himself.

³¹⁵ "Und doch war dieses Getrenntseyn, die Basis meines künftigen Seyns." Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 1.

³¹⁶ "[...] denn mein Gefühl nahm noch keinen Antheil daran [...]. Nun fing ich an, dieses mehr zu genießen [...]." Ibid.

³¹⁷ "[...] bildeten mich sichtbarlich zu einem andern Menschen." Ibid.

When Graetz wrote that he had learned to derive pleasure (*Genuß*) from his *Lecturen*, he had a particular conception of reading in mind. Graetz's description of his development into a more emotionally involved reader, and thereby into a more sensitive person, echoed the claims made by authors of edifying children's literature from this period. Pedagogical writers such as Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746-1818), following in the footsteps of the *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), wanted to transform young reading addicts into thinking and feeling human beings. To achieve this transformation, they believed that they had to train their readers to read a certain way. As the cultural historian of early modern France Robert Darnton has argued, Rousseau "directed the reading of his readers. He showed them how to approach his books. He guided them into the texts, oriented them by his rhetoric, and made them play a certain role."³¹⁸ Rousseau wanted his readers to abandon themselves to their reading, to "digest" books so completely that they became part of life.³¹⁹ His conception of pleasure reading blurred the distinction between readers' feelings and those of characters in books. Readers of Rousseau's epistolary novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, published in 1757, responded enthusiastically. They "were swept off their feet. They wept, they suffocated, they raved, they looked deep into their lives and resolved to live better."³²⁰ Moreover, when Rousseau's readers wrote to the author, they often reflected on their changed reading patterns: "In describing the way they suspended their critical instinct, identified with the characters, and let waves of emotion wash over themselves, the readers paraphrased or quoted, consciously or not, the instructions that Rousseau had given them in the prefaces."³²¹ Like these eighteenth-century French men and women, Graetz played the type of reader envisioned by Campe and then reported in his journal on the transformation he had undergone.³²²

Graetz became a pleasure reader who spent his adolescence in passionate communion with books. But it was important for him to portray his reading as a sentimental education that was the fruit of intercourse with learned human mentors rather than texts alone. He mistrusted an imagined undisciplined autodidact in his past, whose wildly devouring appetite for written words he believed himself to have surpassed. In the narrative of his *Bildung*, written at the age of sixteen in the early 1830s, Graetz looked back on his prior existence as that of a "*Grillenfänger*," literally a cricket-catcher. This expression, largely forgotten today, was once a key term in German letters. In eighteenth-century usage, it referred to the aimless and futile chase after fantastic ideas ("*Grillen*," crickets) by intellectual enthusiasts as well as to the distorted emotional frenzies of melancholics.³²³ The melancholy and obsessive plunges

³¹⁸ Robert Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau: the Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 228.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid., 242.

³²¹ Ibid., 248.

³²² I was unable to incorporate the awe-inspiring scholarship of Marcus Moseley into this dissertation. Future versions of this chapter will carefully engage his standard work on Jewish autobiography in Eastern Europe, which deals at length with the importance of Rousseau to Eastern European Jewish writers of autobiographies. See Marcus Moseley, *Being for Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 5-16, 286-312, 333-376.

³²³ See for example Kant's reference to the *Grillenfänger* as part of a discussion of the melancholic, in his *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764): "Ist der Verstand noch schwächer, so geräth er auf Fratzen. Bedeutende Träume, Ahndungen und Wunderzeichen. Er ist in Gefahr, ein Phantast oder ein Grillenfänger zu werden." English: "If his understanding is weaker still, he [i.e., the melancholic] turns to grotesque antics. Ominous dreams, premonitions, miraculous signs. He is in danger of becoming a fantasizer or

into emotional abysses and speculative existential crises so characteristic of the stereotypical *Grillenfänger* would haunt Graetz's diary-writing in subsequent years. But writing in his diary in 1833, Graetz sought to exorcise the specter of capricious, indiscriminating emotion and intellectuality from his life. Proper guidance and reading matter had redeemed him from this dangerous existence, he believed. A man named Dov Baer Kronthal (1792-1833), the owner of a book store and lending library in Wollstein, set Graetz on the right path. According to the memoir of his daughter Doris (1820-1916), Kronthal mentored a number of young Jewish men from the town.³²⁴

Before his rescue by Kronthal from the existence of the cricket-catcher, Graetz recounted in his diary, that he had developed "an inclination to" what he called, in good German, "*Lecturen*."³²⁵ The term "*Lectüre*" for the act of reading had entered the German language from French in the early eighteenth century, and Graetz's usage though perhaps affected was not unusual in that sense.³²⁶ More interesting for our purposes is how Graetz distinguished the form of reading suggested by "*Lectüre*" from the intellectual activities that occupied him in his traditional Jewish schooling. There too, he "read" texts – exegetical, legal, homiletic, and ethical. But the term he used for his interaction with these was "learning" (*lernen*, in both Yiddish and German). The mode of reading that he practiced in the setting of the Jewish study house was so different from the new inclination which he had discovered, that it did not occur to Graetz to link the two. The *Lecturen* "enchanted" him, Graetz claimed.

Graetz's childhood enchantment by reading, however, figured as a state, which, like that of the cricket-catcher had to be overcome. Being bewitched by the wrong kinds of texts turned one into a mere *curiosus*. In his autobiographical writing, Graetz imagined himself as having been disciplined and saved by Kronthal, who recommended more edifying books to him. His rescue from the aimless, superficial reading style of the *curiosus* may have been a stereotyped self-representation based on eighteenth-century anxieties about young readers and the increasingly commercialized world of book production and consumption. In an autobiographical account, the writer Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858), who later married Rahel Levin, confessed to having been addicted to "stories of knights and ghosts, bandit novels, romances, and fabulous tales of all sorts" that he found at a nearby Hamburg lending library in his childhood. Varnhagen's father discovered and suppressed this "wüste Leserei" (errant reading), in order to protect the boy from lasting damage.³²⁷ But an alternative cure for "reading madness" was to teach children how to read with feeling. In eighteenth-century France, textbooks inspired by Rousseau framed reading as a "kind of spiritual exercise" that was not about learning literature but about training for real life, about being good.³²⁸ We do not know how Graetz's parents or teachers viewed their son's early reading. They probably did not know how to read or write German. However, Kronthal, by

a cricket-catcher." Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Karl Rosenkranz and Friedrich Wilhelm Schubert, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1838), 418. For a historical discussion of the term's journey from fifteenth-century Italy to the German *Aufklärung*, see Horst Bredekamp, "Grillenfänge von Michelangelo bis Goethe," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 22 (1989): 172-173.

³²⁴ Doris Zadek, "Tagebuch," Microfilmed typed manuscript (Berlin, 1906), 3, LBI New York.

³²⁵ "hatte ich eine Neigung zu Lecturen." Ibid., 1.

³²⁶ Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, "Lectüre," in *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 12 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854), 489.

³²⁷ "Ritter- und Geistergeschichten, Räuberromane, Liebesabenteuer, Robinsone und Wundermärchen aller Art." Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser*, 236-237.

³²⁸ Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau," 226.

giving Graetz other kinds of books, endeavored to instruct the boy how to read with intense emotional participation in order to build his character.

The more appropriate reading matter suggested by Kronthal allegedly reformed Graetz's uncontrollable reading frenzy. Specifically, Kronthal recommended a book called "Unusual Events in Universal World History" by Gabriel Gottfried Bredow (1773-1814) and a series of travel narratives and edifying moral guidebooks by Campe, including one popular title called "Theophron, or The Experienced Advisor for Inexperienced Youth."³²⁹

Both of these authors were favorites among German Jews in the early nineteenth century.³³⁰ A hagiographic sketch of Bredow published shortly after his death, celebrates its subject's edifying "sermons" delivered to the house staff: "he edified them with festive speeches ... one of which made such an impression that the listeners dissolved in tears."³³¹ Bredow was a minor classical philologist who had studied with Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824), one of the most important classicists in the German university system of his day. Though little known for his scholarly contributions, Bredow made his mark in publishing popular, pedagogical histories of antiquity and contemporary history, with a German nationalist, anti-French bent.³³² Graetz, like many of his contemporaries, was drawn to the "lively presentation," which allegedly "captivated" Bredow's reading and listening audiences.³³³ His trajectory from edifying sentimentality to *Wissenschaft* and popular history, as described by his early nineteenth-century contemporaries, superficially resembles the path that Graetz would take decades later.

Campe was a well-known late-Enlightenment pedagogue, who published hundreds of titles for young readers, with very large print-runs and profits.³³⁴ A Protestant theologian who identified strongly with German Pietism, he formulated a reformist education program based on the writings of Rousseau, John Amos Comenius, and John Locke that eschewed physical punishment and hierarchies – a model that he tried to implement at the *Philantropinum* elementary school in Dessau and his own experimental school in Hamburg.³³⁵ The writings of Campe and other philanthropists or "benefactors of humanity" – *Menschenfreunde* – as they called themselves, struck a chord with Jewish *maskilim* ("enlighteners") from the eighteenth century to the time of Graetz's youth. Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784-1855), the Italian Jewish scholar from the Habsburg town of Göriz (Gorizia), for example, praised the translation of Campe's writings into Hebrew. In an 1832 letter to a fellow enlightener, Ignaz Blumenfeld (1812-1890) from Brody, in Habsburg Galicia, Reggio not only wrote about the

³²⁹ Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 1. Gabriel Gottfried Bredow, *Merkwürdige Begebenheiten aus der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte: für den ersten Unterricht in der Geschichte, besonders für Bürger- und Landschulen*, 19th ed. (Altona: Hammerich, 1832). Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Theophron, oder der erfahrene Rathgeber für die unerfahrene Jugend*, 10th ed. (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1832).

³³⁰ Marcus Brann, "Aus H. Graetz's Lehr- und Wanderjahren," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 62, no. 3 (1918): 242 fn. 2.

³³¹ J.G. Kunisch, "Gabriel Gottfried Bredow: Eine biographische Skizze," in *Schriften von G.G. Bredow: Ein Nachlaß* (Breslau: Josef Max, 1823), viii.

³³² Bredow agitated against French rule in Westphalia, during the Napoleonic period. Ibid., xii-xiii.

³³³ "sein Talent für lebendige Darstellung und rednerischen Vortrag [...] der [...] die gesammelte akademische Jugend so mächtig [...] fesselte." Ibid., xi.

³³⁴ Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Briefe von und an Joachim Heinrich Campe: Briefe von 1766-1788*, ed. Hanno Schmitt (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 26.

³³⁵ Ibid., 33.

“pleasure” that Campe’s work about the discovery of America had given him but also attached special importance to its translation into Hebrew: “It is very fitting to copy these kinds stories into the Holy Tongue, so that young men of our people see that we have not been deprived of anything and that our humble and terse language is capable of providing sufficient explanation for every thought, like any other tongue.”³³⁶ A Hebrew translation of Campe’s travel writings appeared as early as 1807.³³⁷ Graetz’s favorite, *Theophron*, was translated into Hebrew several times, including in 1831, shortly before he read it. It appeared under various, somewhat severe-sounding titles, such as “Moral Admonitions” (*Tokhabot Musar*),³³⁸ “Rebuke of the Wise” (*Mokhiah Hakham*),³³⁹ and “Moral Education” (*Musar Heskel*).³⁴⁰

Graetz read the German original rather than a Hebrew translation. But the early Hebrew translations had been the work of German Jewish writers from the milieu to which Kronthal and Graetz belonged. These members of an incipient *intelligentsia* were free-floating intellectuals such as David Samoszcz (1789-1864). Born in nearby Kempen, in the province of Posen, Samoszcz grew up to become a private tutor and writer in Breslau, and translated *Theophron* in 1819.³⁴¹ Still lacking a remunerative outlet for their talents and ambitions, writers such as Samoszcz occupied a precarious position in German Jewish society for most of their lives, hovering on the brink of poverty. They never escaped their marginality. However, Samoszcz and others made Campe and the ideas of the late *Aufklärung* familiar to *petit bourgeois* Prussian Jews with high intellectual hopes. By the 1830s, the children of the generation of Samoszcz and Kronthal – a generation born just before Prussia had annexed the province of Posen – could read the recently canonized pedagogical texts in German. Graetz and his peers encountered these books through the tutelage of Jewish enlighteners. Campe’s and Bredow’s young adult literature, having previously been selected and translated, was transmitted to Graetz together with a set of suggestions (if not expectations) about how it was to be read. Campe’s books, in particular, were supposed to reform the minds, souls, and even bodies of the youth reading them.

Graetz’s reading material, in the 1830s, included some of the same books that the twelve- to fourteen-year old boys of the North German bourgeoisie had read in the 1790s: Campe’s

³³⁶ Samuel Isaac Reggio, “Letter to Ignaz Blumenfeld from Samuel Isaac Reggio (YaShaR), 10 Sivan 5592 [8 June 1832],” in *Otsar Nehmad*, ed. Ignaz Blumenfeld, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1856), 9.

קראתי ס' מסעות הים והנאני ולפי קוצר דעתי טוב מאד להעתיק סיפורים כאלה לל"הק למען יראו בחורי עמנו כי לא חסרנו דבר וכי יש לאל יד לשוננו העניה והקצרה למצוא די באר כל העשתונות כמו בשאר הלשונות ...

³³⁷ Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Metsi'at ha-arets be-badashah: kolel kol ha-gevurot veba-ma'asim asher ne'asu le-'et metso ha-arets ba-zot. Ne'esaf ve-ne'etak ve-nikhlal mi-sifrei ha-amim le-lashon ivri*, trans. Moses Mendelssohn (Altona, 1807). The translation is attributed to Moses ben Mendel (Moses Mendelssohn) but the extant edition was published many years after his death. More than twenty other works by Campe appeared under various names in Hebrew over the course of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century, several Hebrew editions were published in Germany, but the large number were printed in Warsaw, Lemberg, Vilna, and Odessa. By the 1830s, most German Jews would have found it easier to read these books in German than in Hebrew. This was obviously not true for reading publics in East Central and Eastern Europe. For Campe and Eastern European Jewish readers see Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 22.

³³⁸ Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Tokhebot Musar: Mishle Kampe*, trans. David Samoszcz (Breslau, 1819).

³³⁹ Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Avi'ezer, o Mokhiah hakham*, trans. Tsevi Anapolski (Odessa: A. Tsederboim, 1863).

³⁴⁰ Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Musar haskel: ve-hu sefer ha-midot le-lamed la-no'ar hovotav*, trans. Baruch Schoenfeld (Prague, 1831).

³⁴¹ Gotthard Deutsch, “Samoszcz, David,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York and London: Funk and Wagnall, 1905), 684.

editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, his collections of travel narratives and edifying handbooks.³⁴² Campe's *Theophron* took the form of a series of long lessons imparted by the father Theophron to his adolescent son Kleon.³⁴³ Over more than three-hundred pages, Theophron sought to instruct his son in the proper manner of pursuing one's occupation and of interacting with other human beings. Throughout his teachings, Theophron was especially concerned with the appropriate regulation of sentiment. Even a young man with a "heart filled with the purest feeling"³⁴⁴ needed the guidance of his elders. Only *Erfahrung*, experience, could moderate the potentially explosive tendencies of the sentimental and speculative imagination, which were the target of *Theophron*. One's affect and reason had to be contained by developing a "love for everything true and good and morally beautiful."³⁴⁵ Everywhere a young man went, Campe's paternal narrator warned his son, he might encounter the "oh so tempting larvae" of evil and dishonor.³⁴⁶ The image of the developing insect, the pernicious cricket *in potentia*, loomed as a threat to the delicate balancing of one's moral, sentimental, and intellectual constitution. Only a "well-formed mind, free of immoderate inclinations and passions" could avoid the dysphoric state that Campe imagined "dissolute souls" entered.³⁴⁷ Those who had let themselves become unmoored by their imagination were like "the torpid waters of a foul swamp, which while phlegmatic and rotting inside, is rocked by mutually opposed winds and a violent, oscillating vacillation."³⁴⁸

Suspicion of fantasy pervaded Campe's writings. The narrative devices of his children's literature, Richard Apgar has argued, sought to "prevent the child from becoming lost in the adventure and flights of imagination."³⁴⁹ Campe especially mistrusted what one might call the "affective imagination." He saw the surrender of the individual to the whirlwind of emotions as a pernicious and constant threat to morality. Campe's scathing account, in *Theophron*, of the *Sturm und Drang* in German letters exemplifies these views. Without naming particular individuals, he spoke of the "sudden appearance of a few young men with glowing imaginative faculties and lively and intense poetic feeling." This was not an endorsement of their capacities. Campe noted acerbically that "they found our language too narrow for their omnipotent sensations, our rules of art too restricted for their poetic potential, and even the world itself too small for the velocity of their minds, which tolerated no limitation." With their imaginative and affective power they then "broke [...] every dam, every linguistic usage, rule, and harmony, pitting them against their violent sensations." In creating a new language, these writers had "substituted their feelings for rules and conjured a world without order,

³⁴² Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser*, 135.

³⁴³ This unusual name, a combination of the prefixes "theo-" (God) and "phron(t)-" (thought, care), was also used by Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) in "God: A Few Conversations." In the book, Theophron defends Spinoza in a dialogue with Philolaus. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Gott: Einige Gespräche* (Gotha: K. W. Ettinger, 1787).

³⁴⁴ "[...] Herz voll der reinsten Empfindungen [...]" Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Theophron, oder der erfahrene Rathgeber für die unerfahrene Jugend*, 6th ed. (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1806), 3-4.

³⁴⁵ "[...] die Liebe zu allem, was wahr und gut und sittlich schön ist [...]" Ibid., 9.

³⁴⁶ "[...] das Böse und Schändliche unter jeder, ach noch so reizenden Larve [...]" Ibid.

³⁴⁷ "von keinen unregelmäßigen Neigungen und Leidenschaften beunruhigtes Gemüth [...]" Lasterhafte Seelen [...]" Ibid., 14.

³⁴⁸ "[...] gleichen einem, auf unreinem Moorgrunde stehenden Gewässer, welches in sich selbst träge und faulend, von mehren einander entgegenblasenden Winden durchwühlt, und in heftiges Hin- und Herschwanken gesetzt wird." Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Richard Apgar, "Taming Travel and Disciplining Reason: Enlightenment and Pedagogy in the Work of Joachim Heinrich Campe" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008), 218.

laws, or limits.”³⁵⁰ The effects of this wantonness, according to Campe, were felt not by the writers themselves but by their readers. The storming mania of the *Sturm und Drang* drove their undisciplined readers to run away with their moods, feelings, and speculative fits. Campe claimed that “the unusual fire of those minds [of the writers described] burnt out the brains of many people, so that they ended up in a sort of frenzy, in which, like madmen, they declared themselves above other mortals, and spoke of nothing but lofty feelings, force, genius, and inner drive [*Drive*].”³⁵¹

Theophron’s condemnation of “lofty feelings” might give one the impression that Campe mistrusted feeling in general. Apgar believes that Campe’s writings were “anti-sentimental” and that they “squelch[ed] the emotional.”³⁵² But Campe’s *Theophron* is filled with literary sentimentality. At the beginning of the book, Campe described an embrace between father and son, which took place upon the realization of both that the Kleon would soon depart from home to make his way in the world. Campe had Kleon “flying fervently into the arms of his father” and described the two “holding themselves locked together in wistful, silent sympathy.”³⁵³ This is a kind of sentimentality with which Campe was entirely comfortable.³⁵⁴ In fact, for Campe, developing proper kinds of feeling (*Gefühl*) was the basis of a virtuous life. In *Theophron*, Campe attached more importance to “sittliches Gefühl,” (moral feeling) than to reason. When Theophron asks Kleon to examine his own character and morality, he tells him to “put [his] hand on [his] heart” and probe there.³⁵⁵ In his preface from 1790, Campe explained that he derived all the lessons and experiences in the book “from [his] heart, i.e., from [his] own circle of sensation and perception.”³⁵⁶ Disciplined sentimentality did not bother Campe as much as the unbridled motion of the mind. More specifically, Campe warned against what he called the “harmful writing-plague” (*schädliche Schreibeseuche*) and its intimate ally “reading frenzy” (*Lesewut*).³⁵⁷ These two intertwined phenomena, which caused a “frightening inflation of books,” led to the “further distraction of the soul, which has already been distracted from any useful activity.”³⁵⁸ Campe took literally the German word for

³⁵⁰ “Es traten nämlich plötzlich einige junge Männer von glühender Einbildungskraft, von lebhaften und starken Dichtergefühlen auf, welche unsere bisherige Sprache für ihre allgewaltigen Empfindungen, unsere bisherigen Regeln der Kunst für ihr Dichtervermögen, die Welt selbst für die Schnelkraft ihres, keine Einschränkung duldenden Geistes, zu enge fanden. Sie brachen ... durch jeden Damm, den Sprachgebrauch, Regel und Uebereinkunft dem Drange ihrer allgewaltigen Empfindungen entgegenstellten; schufen sich eine neue Sprache, setzten ihre Gefühle an die Stelle der Regeln, zauberten sich eine Welt ohne Ordnung, ohne Gesetze und Einschränkungen [...]” Campe, *Theophron*, 361.

³⁵¹ “[...] das ungewöhnliche Feuer jener Geister verbrannte vielen Leuten das Gehirn, daß sie in eine Art von Wuth geriethen, in welcher sie sich, wie Verrückte zu thun pflegen, über alle andere Sterbliche weit hinwegsetzten von nichts als hohen Gefühlen, Kraft, Genie und innerem Drange redeten [...]” Ibid., 362-363.

³⁵² Apgar, “Taming Travel and Disciplining Reason,” 178 and 178 fn. 43.

³⁵³ “Kleon flog mit Inbrunst in seine Arme, und lange hielten sie sich in wehmütiger, sprachloser Rührung umschlungen.” Campe, *Theophron*, 6.

³⁵⁴ In his cultural history of masturbation, Laqueur goes so far as to suggest that “Campe probably did more than any other eighteenth-century literary figure to fire the fantasy of the young and thus to create the sort of solitary reader who, lost in fictions, stood in mortal danger of self-abuse.” Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 269.

³⁵⁵ Campe, *Theophron*, 9.

³⁵⁶ “[...] daß ich alles, was es enthielt, ohne Ausnahme, aus meinem Herzen, d.i. aus meinem eigenen Empfindungs- und Wahrnehmungskreife genommen [...]” Ibid., vii.

³⁵⁷ For a now classic, New Historicist interpretation of the fears of literary “overproduction” in terms of “authorial debt” and credit, particularly with relation to female authors, see Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, 261.

³⁵⁸ “[...] die zerstreute, von aller nützlichen Thätigkeit abgewandte Seele noch mehr zu zerstreuen [...]” Campe, *Theophron*, 159.

distraction, *Zerstreuung*, describing it as a dispersion of the spirit (the verb *zerstreuen* means to scatter or dissipate). According to Theophron, excessive intellectual activity amounted to a disease, that led to the degeneration of morals in society, because pathological reading and writing made the afflicted forget their domestic and civic duties.³⁵⁹

Ironically, Campe's young readers devoured his works obsessively, reading them again and again. Karl Friedrich von Klöden (1786-1855), an autodidact who rose from humble circumstances to become a well-known Berlin pedagogue and cartographer, reported in his memoir (written in the early 1850s) that he read Campe's *Robinson Crusoe* eleven times, one after the other, shortly before his twelfth birthday.³⁶⁰ Klöden's spellbound re-readings of Campe seem, at first glance, to have defied the author's injunctions against *Lesenut*. However, the total immersion in reading "without skipping a single syllable" to the point of nearly learning the book's content by heart, which the mature Klöden described in his memoirs, actually resembled the ideal reading practice imagined by Campe and other pedagogical writers of the *Aufklärung*. Campe privileged steadfast devotion to a few texts; he railed against the diffusion of attention to any stimulus which might catch the mind. Whether as a young reader or only as a practiced reader later in his life, Klöden absorbed a similar view of how one ought to interact with books. He anticipated a potential objection from his own readers that the obsessive re-readings of *Robinson Crusoe* in his youth might have bored him - although he did not use the word boredom. Against this challenge, Klöden willingly conceded that "the excitement [*Reiz*] of the new may have been gone, but not my joy about everything beautiful and good."³⁶¹ He denigrated *Reiz*, which connoted stimulus, excitement, agitation, and thrill. Instead Klöden privileged the edifying but more laborious apperception of virtue, which was "worth more" to him "than the evanescent excitement of novelty."³⁶² Campe's book itself and his particular manner of reading it, literally "enlightened" Klöden. Reading *Robinson Crusoe*, Klöden exulted, was a "lightning bolt in a dark night, whose shine did not blind [him] but illuminated and continued to irradiate [his] entire life."³⁶³

The German historian Engelsing has previously described the formative role that many men ascribed to this childhood reading matter: Klöden wrote that "later, [he] believed that no book had a greater impact on [him] than the Bible and Robinson Crusoe."³⁶⁴ The childhood letters of Campe's *Philantropium* students indicate that these boys read *Theophron* in a similar manner. In a 1784 letter, Johann Nikolaus Böhl, the fourteen-year-old son of a merchant, thanked Campe for the benefit he had derived from his former teacher's book: "I have already read [Theophron] in its entirety several times and nevertheless continue to find new teachings in it, which I definitely need at this time."³⁶⁵ The tone in which Graetz concluded

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Karl Friedrich von Klöden and Max Jähns, *Jugenderinnerungen* (Leipzig: F. W. Grunow, 1874), 105.

³⁶¹ "[...] der Reiz des Neuen war zwar dahin, aber nicht die Freude an allem Schönen und Guten [...]." Ibid.

³⁶² "[...] und diese ist mehr werth, als der flüchtige Reiz der Neuheit [...]." Ibid.

³⁶³ "Es war ein Blitzstrahl, der in eine dunkle Nacht fiel, aber sein Schein blendete nicht, er erleuchtete und hat mein ganzes Leben durchleuchtet." Ibid.

³⁶⁴ "Ich glaubte später keinen Büchern mehr Wirkung und Förderung zu verdanken als der Bibel und Robinson Crusoe." Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser*, 136.

³⁶⁵ "Ich habe ihn [den Theophron] schon ein paar mahl ganz durchgelesen, und finde doch immer noch neue Lehren drin, die mir jezo vorzüglich nöthig sind." Hanno Schmitt, ed., *Briefe von und an Joachim Heinrich Campe*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 371.

a tally of his reading material – “and *finally* Theofron” – reveals a similar childhood attachment to this book.³⁶⁶

Graetz ascribed a similar kind of redemptive power to Campe’s *Theophron* as Klöden had to *Robinson Crusoe*. He, too, endowed the book with the ability to reform his reading practice and ultimately his life. In his diary, Graetz had diagnosed himself as a recovering obsessive, who darted after every book thrown in his direction. Unlike Klöden, however, Graetz could relate the etiology of his pre-reformed condition to the particular interaction of his autodidacticism and his education at the yeshiva. For Graetz, acquiring proper modes of reading and thereby receiving a sentimental education constituted his introduction to the mores of the society and culture outside his provincial, Jewish surroundings in Posen. From these early encounters with literary sentimentality, Graetz came to see reading practices as central to human life.³⁶⁷

In Graetz’s diary-writing, we see an effort to locate new sources of authority and legitimacy for how a young man ought to live his life. Fearful of the destructive tendencies of speculative reason and of the vagaries of free emotion, Graetz sought some novel way to discipline his heart and mind. The law as embodied by its traditional guarantors, the lay and religious leadership of the Jewish communities in Posen, where he grew up, no longer sufficed. As a power capable of curtailing the skeptical, hedonistic, or melancholy flights of fancy on which young Jewish men could now embark through reading, the old authority had lost much efficacy. Pleasure reading and Kronthal, the layman, whom Graetz called “a true *Menschenfreund*,” i.e., a *Philanthrop*, had supplanted the heads of the Talmudic academy and his community rabbi as a figure of authority in Graetz’s life. Craving guidance, Graetz had found it through the emotional attachment he formed with mentors, authors, and friends by reading. A new kind of literature and reading, capable of providing both emotional connection and authority, supplemented and in some cases replaced old customs, texts, and institutions. For Graetz, it offered authority and legitimacy to new Jewish identities, practices, and institutions. At the same time, Graetz sought some way to impose limits on autonomous reason, mood, and feeling.

Somehow, Graetz managed to do all this pleasure reading while also studying at the yeshiva. Usually such studies entailed at least one folio of Talmud with the corresponding commentaries each day, or, alternatively parts of one of the codes, such as the *Shulhan Arukh*. In addition to preparing for his yeshiva lessons, Graetz began studying Latin with a friend, learning the five declensions and some vocabulary over a stretch of two weeks. Later in the same year, in 1833, he began studying French, which he increasingly employed in his diary entries. When Kronthal died in April 1834, Graetz was allowed to move into his mentor’s flat and to continue reading in his mentor’s library. He stayed there for a month and indulged in long stretches of pleasure reading of novels as well as memoirs, such as the *Life of Napoleon*. In a linguistic potpourri that became typical for the young Graetz, he noted that “Using an incomplete dictionary, I read the Life and Deeds of Napoleon, which I did not

³⁶⁶ “und *endlich* Theofron” [emphasis added]. Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 1.

³⁶⁷ As for Rousseau, literature and life were almost always imbricated for Graetz. I have found Carol Blum’s study of Rousseau invaluable for my understanding of the former as well as my treatment of Graetz’s diary, life, and historiography in relation to each other. See for example her remarks in Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 16.

entirely understand ... I also read other French books that I found in the new library.” After his mentor’s death, he approached a former *Gymnasium* principal in Wollstein named Marquart who was known for his French speaking skills. Graetz approached the man with great trepidation but much persistence, eventually convincing Marquart to tutor him in French. They read Voltaire’s play *Mohammed or Fanaticism* (written 1736, first staged 1741) in French, and Goethe’s translation in German (written 1742).³⁶⁸ Through his friendship with Marquart, Graetz even became somewhat of a local celebrity in Wollstein, as the two were often seen speaking French in public.³⁶⁹

When Graetz came home for Rosh Hashanah 5595 at the beginning of October 1834, he flaunted the new learning he had acquired through his pleasure reading, demonstratively citing Molière at the dinner table. Upon his return to Wollstein, he immersed himself in more Voltaire, in Rousseau, the plays of Jean Racine (1639-1699), in French. In Latin, he read Cicero, Virgil, and the biographer Cornelius Nepos. Graetz’s Talmud studies suffered as a result, he reported: “the more I turned toward pleasant, classical forms of learning, the more I neglected the Talmud and the Hebrew Bible, partly because I had no time for it, and partly because the time allotted for this study went to waste on account of my Rabbi’s tastelessness.”³⁷⁰ However, Graetz turned to different kinds of Jewish books – the works of Maimonides, the poet Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141), and Mendelssohn – approaching them like the imaginative vernacular literature he was reading for pleasure.³⁷¹ Against the “tasteless” Judaism of his rabbi, Graetz championed a different kind of religiosity, influenced by his Rousseauistic vernacular and Hebrew reading.

Slowly, he grew weary of his existence as a rabbinic student. Refusing to “play the *bokher*,” i.e., to put on the sharp, scholarly performances of the yeshiva student in order to earn his meals in the Jewish community, he often found himself with nothing to eat on the Sabbath. Graetz escaped to a delirious mixture of philosophical and religious texts, to “different, mutually contradictory ideas – pagan, Jewish, Christian, Epicurean, kabbalistic, Maimonidean and Platonic, which made [his] head spin.”³⁷² He found a rescue line in the novel *The History of Agathon* (1773) by Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813). Its protagonist fascinated Graetz and he strongly identified with the young Athenian character of the title who, like Graetz, had recently fallen from grace.³⁷³ Graetz was astonished by the similarities between him and Agathon. He thought that Agathon, like him, distinguished religious feeling, virtue and morality from self-righteousness, false piety and exaggerated severity and asceticism. The latter was a sharp barb directed at his surroundings, heavily tinged with the young man’s sense of superiority and social unease. To top it all off, Graetz even found justification for

³⁶⁸ Jean Voltaire, *Mahomet*, trans. J.W. Goethe (Vienna: Bauer, 1816); Jean Voltaire, *Mahomet ou le fanatisme: une tragédie* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1825).

³⁶⁹ “ich las à l’aide d’un dictionnaire incomplet la vie et les actions de Napoleon, que je ne comprenais pas tout ... Auch andere französische Werke, dich sich in der neuen Bibliothek befanden, las ich.” Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 4.

³⁷⁰ “Aber je mehr ich mich auf das Erlernen angenehmer und alter Kenntnisse legte, desto mehr geriet der Talmud und überhaupt die hebräische Bibel bei mir in Verfall, theils weil ich keine Zeit dazu hatte, und theils weil die dazu bestimmte Zeit auch durch die Geschmacklosigkeit des Rabbiners vergeudet wurde.” Ibid., 6.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

³⁷² Ibid., 12.

³⁷³ Christoph Martin Wieland, *Agathon* (Leipzig: Weidmanns, Erben und Reich, 1773), 38.

his misanthropy in Agathon, who had “a strong antipathy for humanity, which was not the result of his benevolent and loving character but based on humanity’s depravity.”³⁷⁴

Around Passover of 5596, in the spring of 1836, Graetz’s misanthropy and outrage at perceived hypocrisy bubbled over into a radical critique of Talmud, Torah and religion in general. This crisis had its origin, according to Graetz, in his philosophical and historical studies. But it was rendered acute, he diagnosed, by his own lack of insight and the irreligious behavior that he claimed to have observed every day:

For a while already, since I had become acquainted with philosophy, history, different religions and their distances from the intentions of their founders, I was upset not only by the different passages in the Torah that, due to my lack of insight, I found contrary to reason, but also by the contradictory manner in which my coreligionists observed the Law.³⁷⁵

Here, early on in his life, Graetz formulated a critique that he would apply many years later to his study of Christianity. It was above all a sharp reaction against what he claimed were misreadings of sacred texts. In this crisis period, Judaism and, more directly, contemporary Jews bore the brunt of his critique.

The motif of the religions abandoning the intentions of their founders was hardly original – one could trace it through the Enlightenment to the Reformation. One form of this trope among both Jewish and Christian eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics of Judaism, was the view of the Talmud and contemporary Talmudic study as symbols of the Jews’ departure from the founding principles of their religion – i.e., the “Mosaic Law” as it appears in the Pentateuch.³⁷⁶ Among many Jewish reformers in Prussia and the German lands, as well as among Christian critics of Judaism, the Talmud schools of eastern Prussia represented the ultimate degeneracy and decline of Judaism.

Graetz was not immune to these arguments about Jewish spiritual degradation, intellectual stagnation and Talmudic scholasticism. He combined his severe observations of his contemporaries in Wollstein, whom he perceived as especially hypocritical, with the stereotypical attacks on Jewish learning that other critics had used before him: “The contradictory manner in which my coreligionists observed the Law ... made me ill-disposed toward the Talmud, which I sometimes saw as useless nitpicking and sophistry, other times as a [mere] tool for the sharpening of the mind.” Writing from the perspective of one who had atoned for his mistakes, he mentioned that his reading matter – “the writings of atheist authors” and contacts with certain “frivolous persons who embraced the superficial,” had led him to reject (temporarily) the divinity of the Torah.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 12.

³⁷⁵ “da empörten mich nicht allein verschiedene Stellen in der Tauroh, die bei Mangel an Einsicht ich für ungereimt und der Vernunft zuwider hielt, sondern verzüglich die entgegengesetzte Weise, wie meine Religionsgenossen die Gesetze und die ganze Tauroh halten.” Ibid., 15.

³⁷⁶ Although, this notion too, of course, had a long history, beginning at least with the Karaites, Jewish sectarians who rejected the Talmud in the eighth century.

³⁷⁷ “die entgegengesetzte Weise, wie meine Religionsgenossen die Gesetze und die ganze Tauroh halten ... machte mich dem Talmud, den ich bald für nicht nützende Spitzfindigkeiten, Sophistereien, bald für die Vernunft schärfende Mittel angesehen, abgeneigt.” Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 15.

An entry from Abraham Geiger's childhood diary provides an interesting parallel to Graetz's short-lived belief that Torah had been fabricated by humans. Geiger's "first doubts" about Judaism arose after a reading of Becker's *Handbuch der Weltgeschichte*. Although Geiger's parents forbade him from reading its chapter on Jewish history, the book's presentation of Greek and Roman mythology as political tools led him to reflect on the origins of biblical accounts. As an eleven-year old, Geiger wrote later, he barely averted a crisis of faith:

It is possible, I thought, that Moses might have ascribed his teachings to God, as Minos did to Jupiter, Lykurgus to Apollo and Numa Pompilius to Egeria? Pfui! what sins, called out a voice empowered by eleven years, such thoughts should come to the mind of the son of a rabbi, of a believing Jew?! Should doubts rise up against Moses's holiness and prophetic witnessing of the divine? The thought went away and I fell asleep.³⁷⁸

Like Geiger, Graetz was rescued from his skepticism – fittingly, by another book. Bearing the enigmatic title *Igrot Tsafun: Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum* ("Epistles of a Hidden One: Nineteen Letters about Judaism"), this book, determined the course of his life over the next four years, until 1840. For Graetz, it presented "an unheard of and unimagined conception of Judaism with convincing arguments that the latter was the best religion and required for the betterment of humanity."³⁷⁹ The imprint of the book's first edition, published in Altona in 1836 – the edition that Graetz likely had in front of him – listed the pseudonymous "Ben Usiel" as author or rather "publisher." Later, it became known that Ben Usiel was the pseudonym of the young Oldenburg rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), the founding figure of "modern orthodoxy" in Germany.

Hirsch exploited a familiar bibliographic device, presenting the book as the public release of a correspondence with an urgent message that had fatefully fallen into his hands. The preface began,

These letters came into my possession as part of the literary legacy of a dear friend. Much of their contents spoke to me; they seemed to tackle a number of highly important issues from a new perspective, so that, even if not everyone will agree with everything in them, I hope to earn my brothers' gratitude by passing them on.³⁸⁰

By presenting himself as a mere publisher of an exchange that had actually occurred, Ben Usiel patterned his book after Rousseau's epistolary novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. The *Igrot Tsafun* ostensibly compiled the unmediated and unedited correspondence of two real individuals whose thoughts were *incomplete sketches* rather than coherent philosophical systems. Furthermore Ben Usiel emphasized that he was releasing the letters "just as [he] had found them," and that he had refrained even from stylistic improvements, "in order to prevent

³⁷⁸ Abraham Geiger, *Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. Ludwig Geiger, vol. 5, Reprint. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1999), 7.

³⁷⁹ Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 15.

³⁸⁰ "Mehreres darin sprach mich so sehr an; sie schienen mir manchen hochwichtigen Gegenstand von so neuer Seite aufzufassen, daß ich mir, wenn man auch vielleicht nicht Allem darin beystimmen möchte, doch den Dank meiner Brüder zu erwerben hoffe, indem ich sie ihnen übergebe." Ben-Usiel, *Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum* (Altona: Hammerich, 1836), iii.

effacing [the letters'] particularities.” Rousseau invited his readers to throw themselves actively into his novel “with innocent eyes” – without sophisticated considerations and stylistic expectations. He wanted his readers to identify so strongly with the characters in the book that the text appeared “as truth itself.”³⁸¹ Ben Usiel offered his found correspondence to a reader quite similar to Rousseau’s ideal readers – one who could relate with “head and heart” to the book’s characters.³⁸²

Graetz would not have had to work very hard to identify with the book’s protagonist. The *Igrot Tsafun* begin with a letter that could have been written by Graetz himself at this time. A young fictive correspondent, Benjamin, writes to a childhood friend, Naphtali, who had recently visited and seen him much changed:

You found that my religious mindset and, even more, my religious life had changed so much that, despite your otherwise tolerant mode of thought, you could not suppress the questions “since when?” and “why?”³⁸³

Benjamin, like Graetz, had left home, begun reading and formulating his doubts about Judaism away from paternal authority: “In reply, I had a whole series of charges against Judaism, which had only come to my attention after I left my father’s house, through my reading and interactions here.”³⁸⁴ Benjamin’s critique of Judaism, like some of the earlier assessments we have seen, drew special attention to the inferiority of Jewish writings, contrasting them with classical literature, Shakespeare and German philosophy. He wondered how it was possible that someone like Naphtali, who, after all, knew how to appreciate “the Beauty of a Virgil, Tasso or Shakespeare,” and who could follow “the ingenious edifices of a Leibniz or Kant,” might find pleasure in the “the crude and tasteless writings of the Talmud.” These were questions that might have occurred to Graetz, who had recently immersed himself in classical and modern imaginative literature. Benjamin also repeated the common characterization of Jewish scholarship as sophistic and obscurantist, according to which rabbinic scholarship was a degenerate caricature of real scholarship: “And our own *Wissenschaft*? It contorts the mind, lures it into futile speculation and trifling inquisitions, so that it becomes incapable of looking at anything plainly.”³⁸⁵ Instead of helping Jews live better lives, it turned them into fearful ascetics who wasted away reading bad writing. It failed to inspire an emotional connection by the Jewish reader:

And what effect does [our learning] have on our spirits and lives? It compresses the spirit into timid scrupulousness about meaningless minutiae; it teaches us only to fear God ... so that the Jew, amidst fasting and praying, and reading of senseless writings, throws his life away.³⁸⁶

Naphtali, in his response, did not really argue with this depiction of Talmudic learning but blamed its degeneration on “Polish” influence. Benjamin’s accusation of scholasticism was correct, Naphtali agreed, but the *Wissenschaft* that Benjamin saw as Jewish was not

³⁸¹ Darnton, p. 230.

³⁸² Ben-Usiel, *Neunzehn Briefe*, iv-v.

³⁸³ Ibid., 1.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

authentically Jewish at all. It was, rather, “mindless and incomprehensible Bible and Talmud study under Polish direction,” a misinterpretation of Judaism’s sources. Naphtali told Benjamin that he was wrong to judge Judaism as a whole for its perverted parts. In effect, Naphtali argued that Benjamin did not really know Judaism at all. He had mistaken the real thing for the deformed Judaism that he has encountered in his life. Benjamin, Naphtali argued, owed his knowledge of Judaism to his upbringing and the Polish style of scholarship on the one hand, and the propaganda of Christian critics and Jewish reformers on the other.³⁸⁷ We can see how these kinds of arguments would have appealed to Graetz at this time. The *Igrot Tsafun* lay to rest his anxieties about the status of the Torah. Naphtali’s understanding of Torah precluded such criticism from the outset, where he told Benjamin that there was one way to read the Bible – as divine revelation:

Not for philological and antiquarian investigations ... not in expectation of otherworldly secrets, but as Jews shall we read her [the Torah], i.e., as a book that God gave us so that we might recognize ourselves in it and what we are to be and do in our lives on earth.³⁸⁸

Reading the *Nineteen Letters* inspired Graetz, offering him a way out of the skepticism and despair that, combined with his social awkwardness, had soured his life in Wollstein. Invigorated, he returned to studying Bible and Talmud independently, reading Genesis and the tractate Berakhot again “with great enjoyment and reflecting about everything, reading them not like artifacts from antiquity but as books that bring divine redemption to humanity.”³⁸⁹ His lofty mood was soon interrupted..

On the eve of the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, in the year 5597, corresponding to September 20, 1836, Graetz, then eighteen years old, rediscovered the brute, profoundly unrefined ugliness of his life. Uncertain about what the future had in store for him and bored with life at the home of his pious parents in a small, provincial town on the backward margins of Prussia, Graetz had been feeding his mind and heart with binges of autodidactic learning, edifying reading, and enthusiastically sentimental but insecure diary-writing. Just one week earlier, the two days of Rosh Hashanah, which marked the new year, had inspired him to fervent prayer for the unification of humanity in the world to come. The selflessness of his own petitions to God had so moved him that he attained “inner bliss” and was granted “a tranquil and peaceful heart.”³⁹⁰ But soon thereafter, the facts on the ground disturbed his lofty mood. Tragedy and farce mingled, as he found himself facing the premature end of his career as a fine-feeling and learned man of sentiment.

The trouble began over a chicken. As in years past, Graetz’s parents had purchased cocks and hens that day in order to perform an old custom. Those participating in the rite would lift the chicken above their heads and trace a circle with it, three times around themselves.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 1-2.

³⁸⁸ “Nicht für philologische und antiquarische Untersuchungen ... nicht in Erwartung aufgeschlossener, überirdischer Geheimnisse, - als Juden wollen wir sie lesen, d.h. als ein Buch, uns von Gott gereicht, daraus uns selber zu erkennen, was wir in unserem irdischen Hierseyn sind und sollen.”

Ibid., 7.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 16.

³⁹⁰ “Ich betete mit Inbrunst, dachte bei **ובכן תן פהדך** an die Allverbrüderung, und dieses ging mir so zu Herzen, daß es mir innere Seligkeit, Herzensruhe und Herzensfriede gewährte.” Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 20.

After reciting a formula, “this is my substitute, this is my exchange, this is my atonement offering, this chicken will go to its death and I will go in peace to a long and good life,” the chicken would be slaughtered and its meat donated to a poor person. This year, Graetz, apparently for the first time, refused to take part in the offering of *kaparot*, expiatory substitutes. We cannot know for certain what motivated Graetz’s refusal or, perhaps, simple reluctance to be involved. But in the diary entry Graetz composed a few days later, the episode of the atonement offering became an occasion for him to take a stand for the “true religiosity” that he had acquired in his readings against what he saw as a coarse custom contrary to both religious law and reason:

It is the custom among the Polish Jews to swing a rooster (for a man, a hen for a woman) as a sacrifice in a circle around a person’s head. But this ritual is expressly forbidden by S. Aderet (*Rashba*) and Nahmanides (*Ramban*). I repeated several times before the day of the ceremony (which takes place two days before *Yom Kippur*), that I would not take part in a ritual against sound reason, as well as the law;³⁹¹ but my parents took all this for mockery. To avoid a disagreement, I went off to Cohn’s that evening. My parents, upon seeing that I was not coming to do this with them, and after waiting a long time for me, looked everywhere, because it seemed to them a great sin not to carry out this ritual. Finally, my mother found me near some girls, which she made out to be a great sin for the holy days of the New Year just before *Yom Kippur*, and she grew even angrier. Having gone home, I listened to my mother and my sister despairing over me, that I was so degraded and an atheist, what they call *apikoros*,³⁹² and my brother told me that my father had threatened to burn all my books (what the Jews call everything not Hebrew, even if they are more religious than theirs [sic]), if I didn’t swing the rooster. It was so unpleasant to me to hear such words from my parents, who have a great effect on me. But I nevertheless appeared composed as before, which is the best way to be held in esteem by the vulgar, went off and walked around until just before eleven at night, when I finally returned without saying a word.³⁹³

³⁹¹ I.e., it is contrary to the Torah and violates Jewish law or *halakhab*.

³⁹² A rabbinic term of opprobrium for a heretic, probably originally derived from “Epicurus.” The Talmud invokes the category in Sanhedrin 90a (10:1, Mishnah).

³⁹³ The original passage, which follows in this note, appeared in Brann, “Aus H. Graetzens Lehr- und Wanderjahren,” 256. The translation into English is mine. In my translation, I have italicized words which, in Graetz’s diary, appear in Hebrew.

Il est de coutume parmi les Juifs polonais de tourner un coq (à un homme, et à une femme une poule) en sacrifice autour de la tête, Mais cette cérémonie est expressément défendu par S. Aderet (רשב"א) et Nachmanide (רמב"ן). Je répétais quelque fois avant le jour de cette cérémonie (c'est le veille avant le jour de יום כפור), que je ne ferai pas une cérémonie contraire à la saine raison, comme à la loi raisonnable; mais mes parents prenaient cela pour moquerie. Pour éviter une altercation, je m'en allai ce soir à Cohn. Mes parents en voyant, que je ne viens point faire çaci [sic] comme eux, et m'attendant longtemps, me cherchèrent par-tout [sic], parceque [sic] leur semblait un pêché à ne faire pas cette cérémonie. Enfin ma mère me trouva auprès des filles, qu'elle est prétendu pour un très grand pêché aux temps saints du nouvel an jusque יום כפור, et elle en fut d'autant plus irritée. Etant retourné à la maison, j'entendus, comment ma mère et ma soeur se plaignent de moi, que je sois si libertin, athée, ce qu'ils nomment אפיקורוס, et mon frère me raconta, que le père avait menacé, à brûler tous mes livres (ce que les juifs nomment tout ce que n'est pas hébreux quoiqu'ils soient plus religieux

Graetz's account was doubly alienated from his surroundings. It was written in a self-taught French, a language twice removed from the Yiddish that his parents spoke, since it employed a different alphabet and, unlike German (the language of most of Graetz's diary entries), was incomprehensible to them. Though never intended for publication, Graetz's narrative of the Yom Kippur's eve episode was inscribed with a paradoxically public seal of secrecy. Written in French to forestall the easy discovery of his thoughts by relatives, it simultaneously bore the features of an objective narrative whose readership could not be assumed to know the customs familiar to the author. Graetz's tale estranged the narrator even more from his family and people, by assuming the detachment of an alien ethnographer. He wrote of "the Polish Jews" as if they were an unknown species. In his composed prose, Graetz skewered both the custom of *kaparot* and his parents' reaction to their son's refusal to practice it. Graetz was probably the weaker party in the dispute, especially with his father's threat to offer the young man's library as a hecatomb and his mother's guilt-inducing cries of despair hovering above him. The inscription of the episode in his diary, however, allowed Graetz to represent his experience and himself as embedded in a larger cultural project of critiquing tradition based not only on reason but also a claim to "authentic" religiosity. Visibly influenced by his reading of French Enlightenment literature, Graetz invoked the custom's alleged irrationality. With the affected voice of a *philosophe*, he poked fun at this practice of the pious masses.

And yet, neither the preceding nor the following entries in Graetz's diary maintained this tone. Graetz remained ambivalent about engaging in open mockery of his parents, to whom he expressed a deep and warm attachment throughout the diary. He also relied on two classic rabbinic sources from the Middle Ages, Moshe ben Nahman (1194-1270) and that scholar's student, Shlomo ben Avraham Aderet (1235-1310), for support of his view that the custom was not a religious obligation and in fact went against the considered opinion of some authorities. In his text, Graetz added in parentheses the Hebrew acronyms by which these figures were known, as one might find them in a rabbinic work of exegesis or in a halakhic *responsum* (a ruling in response to a query about Jewish law). The two legal scholars, Rashba and Ramban, had ridiculed and prohibited the rite from which Graetz wanted to absent himself. But neither the medieval authorities nor reason itself were the decisive arbiters for the young Graetz. A year earlier, in the fall of 1835, shortly after the onset of the new year 5596, Graetz reported that he had been "reverent and religious, not out of fear of the *shofar* and Satan, but wholly out of pure love for God."³⁹⁴ He had contrasted the purity of his own piety with that of others. While they prayed for "worldly and temporal riches," he, who was penniless, appealed to God for the "extermination of shameful superstition and

que les leurs) si je ne tournerais pas le coq. Ce fut tant désagréable pour moi, que j'entendre telles expressions de mes parents, qui m'affectent incomparable. Mais je prétendis néanmoins l'autorité comme auparavant, qui est le moyen le plus sûr, d'être honoré du vulgaire, m'en alla, me promena seul jusque à onze heures du soir et retourna enfin sans dire mot et me coucha.

³⁹⁴ "Am Rausch haschonoh dieses Jahres war ich so andächtig und religiös, nicht wie immer aus Furcht vor dem Schaufor und Soton, sondern aus reiner Gottes-Liebe." Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 10-11. Graetz's spelling of "Rosh Hashanah," "shofar," and "Satan" reflects the classic Judeo-German pronunciation, which can also be seen in the contemporary writings of Samson Raphael Hirsch, among others. Thus, "Thauroh" rather than "Torah" or "Toyreh." Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Igrot Tsafun: Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum* (Altona: J. F. Hammerich, 1836), 7.

deceit, which, along with atheism, the greatest enemy, currently rules our people.”³⁹⁵ Graetz measured his religiosity not solely according to adherence to the Law but, perhaps more importantly, by the strength of the feelings it produced in him. Reflecting on his Rosh Hashanah liturgy, he remarked, “I cried so fervently over my prayers that I marveled at myself.”³⁹⁶

When Graetz’s father threatened to burn all of his son’s “profane” books, he was on to something. For books of the sort that he had accumulated in his room, most borrowed from a lending library or friends, had exerted a considerable influence on the course of his sentimental and intellectual formation, which in turn had rendered the custom of *kaparot* distasteful to him.

The reading practices of young Jewish women played a significant part in Graetz’s reading biography. While the disciplinary works of Campe and Bredow were typically intended for boys, Graetz also came into contact with decidedly “feminine” modes of pleasure reading – namely the reading of sentimental novels. His first adolescent romantic encounters in the 1830s reveal the penetration of this kind of reading into his life, on and off the page. Most of these short-lived intrigues were with the daughters of local bourgeois Jewish families who had employed Graetz as a tutor. For a student at an all-male Talmudic academy, interactions with these young women provided relatively rare opportunities for hetero-sociability; Graetz treasured these moments accordingly. The immense joy that Graetz derived from them owed much to the stimulation of his imagination by pleasure reading. The imbrication of life and literature is clear from the importance Graetz attached to the beautiful phrase in a diary entry chronicling one of these episodes:

More than any of this, an *expression* that she used set me into rapture [Entzückung], as we were sitting in the garden, [...] when I wanted to shake her a few plums, which she liked to eat, she said to me, “oh let it be, my dear!” I was unable to get enough of this *sentence*, and several weeks afterward I still recalled it with new delight each time. [emphasis added].³⁹⁷

Reading sentimentally, Graetz had learned to use his imagination to turn his surroundings into gardens of sweet but (in fact) chaste romance, which could serve as long-lasting sources of *Entzückung*. The pleasure that he derived from the sentimental organization of the world was doubled, when the world spoke back to him sentimentally. Thus, Graetz’s rendition of this scene revolved around the memory of an “Ausdruck,” an expression, that his love-interest had used. After the fact, its mere recitation charmed him anew with every iteration. In his inscription of the vignette, Graetz transformed the delectable fruit which he had hoped to lead to the young woman’s mouth into a sentence on his own lips. Graetz’s nearly

³⁹⁵ “Ich betete nicht wie andere um irdische, zeitige Güter, ob ich gleich Geldblos [sic] war, sondern um Ausrottung des schändlichen Aberglaubens und Betruges, die neben dem Atheismus, dem größten Feinde, die Herrschaft über unser Volk [sic].” Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 11.

³⁹⁶ “Ich weinte so inbrünstig über die Gebete, daß ich mich darüber wunderte.” Ibid.

³⁹⁷ “Noch mehr als dieses alles setzte mich ein Ausdruck von ihr in Entzückung, als wir im Garten, in Gesellschaft ihres Bruders, N. um diese Zeit zusammen waren, und sie zu mir, da ich ihr einige Pflaumen, welche sie gerne aß, schütteln wollte, sagte, ach lassen Sie es, Lieber! An diesem Satze konnte ich nicht gar nicht satt denken, und einige Wochen nachher erinnerte ich mich dessen immer mit neuem Entzücken.” Ibid., 7-8.

untranslatable original phrasing turned the words which she had uttered into delicacies that he savored. Graetz tasted her sentence again and again “without thinking [him]self to satiation of it,” as a more literal and less comprehensible translation of his German “konnte ich mich gar nicht satt denken” might have it. The whole aim of Graetz’s representation of the short utterance was to circulate in writing and consume in reading the sensation of virtuous emotion. Graetz’s Eve, at ease in an idyllic garden, had innocently declined his offering, and treated him with a polite but romantic phrase. Mitigating her formal “Sie” (formal “you”) by addressing him a second time as “dear,” the young woman spoke like Lotte to Werther. As the protagonist of Goethe’s epistolary novel had done, Graetz recalled the words for his own, seemingly limitless delight.

The textual models for this feat of the imagination were the sentimental novels that he devoured with abandon. In a typical reading, Graetz hung with pleasure on the particular expressions used by the characters in a text. Although the characters and the objects that they encountered elicited in him the outpouring of feeling that we associate with literary sentimentality, sentimental speech itself was the greatest source of pleasure for Graetz in his reading. While he projected this pleasure onto a female audience, it is clear from Graetz’s description that he enjoyed such speech more than anyone. In a passage from his diary, in which he described his ongoing attempt at courtship of the same plum-enamored young woman, Graetz exulted with sentimentality as he remembered not only the sympathy that a female character in a novel had extended to a flower but, more importantly, the sentimental terms in which she expressed it:

Nevertheless, I continued my visits, under all kinds of pretexts; I occasionally showed her much that was beautiful from literature, among other [books] Jany Gray [sic], a beautiful French novel by Durat, in which the virtuous but unhappy Jany pities a broken [zerknickt] flower, in the most august, sentimental [gefühlsvoll], and yearning expressions, which she [the love-interest], but even more so her mother, enjoyed [emphasis added].³⁹⁸

The subject of the novel, Lady Jane Grey (1536-1554), who was proclaimed Queen of England and Ireland after the death of King Edward VI only to be arrested by Mary Tudor a few days later, was the virtuous heroine of numerous plays and novels as well as several paintings. In 1833, the French painter Paul Delaroche (1797-1856) completed his “Supplice de Jeanne Grey,” an imaginative depiction of her execution.³⁹⁹ Two years later, in 1835, the year in which Graetz composed his diary entry, the American historical painter George Whiting Flagg (1816-1898) finished his “Lady Jane Grey Preparing for Execution.”⁴⁰⁰ Like the novel that Graetz read to the mother and daughter, these paintings depicted the purity, sacrifice and innocence of the eighteen-year-old would-be queen. In both the English and German contexts, Jane Grey had been claimed by Protestants as a martyr killed by the Catholic “Bloody Mary.” That martyrdom suited the type of the virtuous sufferer who aroused the sympathy of the sentimental reader.

³⁹⁸ “Nichts destoweniger setzte ich meine Besuche fort, unter irgend einem Vorwand; zeigte ihr zuweilen manches Schöne in der Literatur, unter anderm Jany Gray, einen schönen französischen Roman von Durat, in welchem die tugendhafte aber unglückliche Jany eine zerknickte Blume in den erhabendsten, gefühlvollsten und schmachtendsten *Ausdrücken* bedauert, welches ihr, noch mehr aber der Mutter gefiel.” Ibid., 7.

³⁹⁹ The painting can be seen in the National Gallery in London.

⁴⁰⁰ It is housed in the Henry Luce II Center for the Study of American Culture in New York.

Graetz may have been referring to a French selection of “Literary Fragments by Lady Jane Grey” that appeared in 1832, though it was not published by “Durat.”⁴⁰¹ A German novel about “Lady Johanne Gray, Die Unschuldige” (Lady Jane Grey, The Innocent) which its publisher described as “freely adapted from Walter Scott” – although Scott never wrote a novel about Grey – was published in 1833.⁴⁰² A review from the same year, which castigated previous attempts to render Jane Grey as a tragic heroine, illustrates the appeal she had for writers and readers as a protagonist of sentimental literature. In a barb at the eighteenth-century “tragedy of Jane Grey” by Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), first published in 1715, and its numerous copies and translations,⁴⁰³ a champion of the sentimental novel argued that

wholly immaculate and passion-free innocence cannot be a tragic heroine, [since] she would, like her heavenly charm, lose in pure virginity, as soon as the author would attempt to dress it up in words [...] now that that often-tried and always ill-advised attempt to render the guilt-free sufferer Johanne Gray for the stage, has apparently been abandoned, her story is being turned into novel form, which is indisputably more fitting.⁴⁰⁴

In this reviewer’s polemic on behalf of the sentimental novel we see many of the key terms of sentimentality: most notably innocence, suffering, and purity of body, soul, and heart.

Graetz’s sentimentality sought to incarnate feeling in text. In representing his affect, Graetz inundated the text with references to his body. Tears, palpitations, and physical pain in the heart and breast resurrected the corporeality of emotion on the written page. Sentimental readers often reported experiencing these symptoms in their own bodies, but ironically, they attributed the physical symptoms of affect to metaphysical abstractions, such as love, truth, sympathy, and beauty, and described its emotionality as “pure feeling.” This “purity” (*Reinheit*) referred both to the morality (i.e., “decency” or *Sittlichkeit*) and sincerity of the sentiments. Contemplation of the privileged abstractions and his capacity for experiencing them produced in Graetz the pleasure of sentimental reading. At the same time, his sentimentality also excluded certain emotions or moods from the realm of refined sensibility, which he and his reading matter represented as rooted in venality, unfettered speculation, and inauthenticity. While sensations such as lust, obsession, and melancholy gloominess appear in his sentimental reading, their physical symptoms are marked as distortions of the body and mind.

⁴⁰¹ Édouard Frère, *Fragmens littéraires de Lady Jeanne Grey, reine d'Angleterre* (Rouen: Édouard Frère, 1832). Graetz may have been referring to Claire de Duras (1777-1828), the author of several sentimental novels, including *Ourika* (1823). But Duras did not publish any novels based on Jane Grey’s life.

⁴⁰² Walter Scott and Heinrich Müller, *Lady Johanne Gray, die Unschuldige: historisches Gemälde* (Braunschweig: G.C.E. Meyer sen., 1833).

⁴⁰³ Nicholas Rowe, *The tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (London: Printed for Bernard Lintott, 1715).

⁴⁰⁴ “Nachdem die Tragöden endlich einsehen lernen, daß die ganz flecken- und leidenschaftslose Unschuld keine Tragödienheldin sein kann, daß sie gleich ihren himmlischen Reiz, reinste Jungfräulichkeit einbüßen würde, sobald der Dichter ihn in Worte kleiden wollte; nachdem also dem Anscheine nach der oft probierte, stets misrathene Versuch, die Person der schuldlosen Dulderin Johanne Gray bühnengerecht zu machen, aufgegeben ist, fängt man an, ihre Geschichte in Romanenform zu bearbeiten, was unstreitig weit passender ist.” *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* (F. A. Brockhaus, 1833), 848.

In his youth, sentimental novels satisfied his longing for intense emotional experiences. But simultaneously with his discovery of the exuberant sentimental mode of perception so apparent in the descriptions of his encounter with his female pupil, Graetz sought ways to restrain his feelings. The notion that his affect-laden reading had to be restrained came to Graetz through his reading of late-eighteenth-century pedagogical literature and from the larger cultural context of the 1830s, discussed above. It endured over the course of his career as a historian, shaping his attitudes toward reading as well as the emotions and the imagination that it could stimulate.

In addition to reading, the practice of regularly inscribing his thoughts and sentiments in a notebook was a continuous source of pleasure for the young Graetz. On the pages of his journal, Graetz elaborated a new kind of intellectuality and conjured a vision of himself as *homo scribens et sentiens*. The persona, which Graetz crafted and savored in the diary, was able to transcend the stereotypically obscure surroundings of a provincial man of letters, at least for brief, blissful moments between long trials of debilitating boredom.

Graetz craved a kind of reading experience that he imagined as pure, true, and exalted; as its other, he defined the type of learning associated with the “*bokher*,” the student of a yeshiva, or rabbinic academy. Eventually, Graetz found in historiography a set of scholarly and literary practices that, in his mind, superseded those of the yeshiva. But long before his discovery of *Wissenschaft*, Graetz developed a vision of himself as an intellectual with a different relation to life and texts than the one he associated with the traditional institutions of Jewish learning. Paradoxically, Graetz saw the latter as a distortion of true Judaism, while conceiving of the new learning and reading for which he yearned as essentially Jewish.

To some extent, as we will see, Graetz’s own model of historical writing was one which would give his readers the kinds of reading experiences that had been so important in his youth – reading with total emotional absorption. However, as a young man in his twenties, Graetz came to believe that undisciplined pleasure reading, especially as practiced by Jewish women, threatened the cohesion and continuity of German Judaism. In his personal life and in his work, Graetz linked reading Jewish women to Christianization. Christianity, in turn, for Graetz figured as a religion that had institutionalized bad “readings” or distortions of texts and history. Graetz also represented Christian theology as fostering excessive sentimentality.

Chapter 7: History as Literature – Disciplining the Jewish Pleasure Reader, 1856-1870

The eleventh and final volume of Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden*, which ranged from "the beginning of the Mendelssohnian period (1750) to most recent times (1848)" and was first published in 1870, began with two questions: "Can a people be born on a single day? Or can a people be born again?"¹ In his narrative, the ties binding this people together – its national ties – had begun to disintegrate recently and were, at the beginning of the modern period, threatening to unravel altogether, especially in Germany. Writing several decades into his career as a historian, Graetz had grown ambivalent about the German Jewish reading revolution. On one hand, Graetz believed that the *Haskalah* and Mendelssohn, in particular, had prevented the dissolution of the Jewish nation and brought about a miraculous resurrection. On the other hand, Graetz saw the pleasure reading of Jewish women as a threat to the project of modern Jewish collective identity, specifically attacking the *salonnières* described in the third chapter of this dissertation.

In describing the rebirth of the Jews as a nation, Graetz contrasted the phenomenon with the wonders of nature, which scientists can present in impressive and often startling demonstrations. Events such as the birth of a nation, though less dramatic in appearance, were no less incredible than certain natural phenomena revealed by chemists, physicists, and biologists, he wrote. Of particular interest to us is how Graetz classified the former type of occurrence: it belonged to the "world of morality, the sphere of history."² For Graetz, who had in his youth been reared on the combination of late-Enlightenment pedagogical literature and sentimental fiction described earlier, morality was always closely tied to feeling. The birth of a nation thus required an education of the sentiments. Individuals endowed with discrete passions and wills had to be joined into a national body politic.³ The "egoism, moodiness, obstinacy, and dogmatism" of solitary human beings had to be subordinated to a "collective purpose."⁴ This notion, that individual sentiments, desires, and fantasies had to be disciplined for the collective good, dominated Graetz's historical writing. In his history, he blamed the reading practices of Jewish women in particular for imperiling the continued existence of German Jewry.

¹ "Kann ein Volk in einem Tage geboren werden? Oder kann ein Volk wiedergeboren werden?" Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 11, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1870), 1, title page. While this chapter deals primarily with the eleventh volume of Graetz's magisterial history, my research is based on close readings of the entire work, originally published as follows: *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 4, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Berlin: Veit & Co., 1853); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 3, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig, 1855); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 5, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Magdeburg: Albert Falckenburg & Co., 1860); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 6, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Nies'sche Buchdruckerei (Carl B. Lorck), 1861); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 7, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1863); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 8, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Nies'sche Buchdruckerei (Carl B. Lorck), 1864); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 9, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1866); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 10, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1868); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 1, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1874); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 2, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1875); *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 2, 11 vols., 1st ed. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1876).

² "Solche staunenswerthe Wunder gehen auch in der sittlichen Welt, in der Geschichtssphäre vor." Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:1.

³ "Zusammenschließen von leidenschafts- und willensbegabten Einzelwesen zu einem Nationalkörper." Ibid., 11:2.

⁴ "die Selbstsucht, die Launenhaftigkeit, der Eigensinn und die Rechthaberei der Einzelnen ... zu einem Ganzen zu fügen ... einem gemeinsamen Ziele ... unterzuordnen." Ibid., 11:1.

The sentimental education of his youth had inculcated in Graetz a longing for the experience of pleasure reading as well as a sense that the emotional excesses to which such reading could give rise had to be restrained. Graetz interpreted and evaluated the history of the Jews – its heroes and villains – using criteria derived from literary sentimentality and from his subsequent critique of it. He assessed the sentimental character of the protagonists and antagonists in his narrative, differentiating positive and negative types of feeling. While Graetz castigated certain figures in the Jewish past (both Jews and non-Jews) for their emotional deficits or excesses, he praised others for their virtuous feeling and imagination.

Graetz's historiographical oeuvre, spanning several decades, might be read as an extended reaction against feeling and fantasy in life and scholarship – were it not for his continual efforts to distinguish good forms of sentiment and imagination from bad ones. The attempt to differentiate ethically acceptable types of emotion and fiction from morally deleterious kinds in fact began in Graetz's adolescence. But it acquired new dimensions as part of his struggle to define a new kind of reading and writing – of historical narrative and scholarship – against other forms of literature (venerable and novel) produced and consumed by European Jews. The current chapter delineates Graetz's arguments against sentiment and imagination, then defines those forms of feeling and fantasy which the historian continued to embrace as morally salutary, and finally unravels the entanglement of these antagonistic conceptions with the genre of historical writing as it emerged in nineteenth-century German Jewish society. What emerges is that Graetz, who had himself been swept up in the pleasure reading revolution, now wanted to subordinate the pursuit of pleasure to other, higher aims that he attached to reading. The aim of reading could not lie “merely” in bringing pleasure to the individual. It had to serve an allegedly higher purpose, such as uniting contemporary Jews around a common past.

We do not usually think of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a particularly emotional affair. But in the historiography of Heinrich Graetz feelings abound. In conjuring the history of the Jews for his readers, Graetz assigned primary importance to the sentimental worlds of individuals and societies. It is fair to say that the emotions and imaginations of Jewish history's cast of characters, institutions, and movements drove Graetz's narrative. The standard of measurement in Graetz's assessments of affect was ethical. Certain kinds of enthusiasm and passion, in thought and deed, Graetz believed, had dangerous consequences for individuals and communities. We see this most clearly in the eleventh and final volume of his history of the Jews, first published in 1870, which ranged from Mendelssohn's activities in the eighteenth century to the eve of the 1848 revolution. A gap of nearly forty years separates this work of scholarship from Graetz's early years. But many of the positions can be traced to his sentimental education in the 1830s.

In Graetz's view, undisciplined pleasure reading had compromised Jewish life from within and without. Especially in the modern period, his history suggested, certain kinds of unrestrained enthusiasm, sentimentality, and fantasy, some of which were caused by new reading practices, had led significant numbers of Jews to abandon Judaism or, alternatively, set them on a path of believing in a distorted form of the religion. The same sorts of unrestrained emotion and imagination, Graetz's writings suggested, had led to a deterioration in Jewish morality. They could also be linked to modern forms of political and religious tyranny. The corrosive tendencies that Graetz diagnosed in modern Jewish culture, as well as

in the enemies persecuting Jews and Judaism from outside, could all be traced to emotionality unbound. Speculative reason without restraints posed its own dangers to individuals, as we will see later. But fantasy and feeling freed of necessary constraints were the prime culprits in Graetz's historiography. At the same time, Graetz preserved the positive assessments of the emotional and imaginative faculties of his history's heroes. It remains for us to examine in greater detail what kinds of feeling and imagination Graetz evaluated as negative, which ones he classified as positive, and what all this meant for the beginnings of Jewish historical writing and for German Jewish culture in the nineteenth century.

In the final volume of his *Geschichte der Juden*, Graetz received an opportunity to tackle not only the most recent developments in the history of the Jews but also several movements and figures, which figured prominently in the cultural history of Germany. Graetz gave his acerbic critical impulse free reign. Although he was hardly the first critic of the *Sturm und Drang*, Graetz's attack on the literary movement in a German Jewish key was a novel permutation. Graetz embedded his critique of *Sturm und Drang* in a section devoted to Moses Mendelssohn, whom he held up, in juxtaposition, as a paragon of virtue. Contrasting the character and sentimental education that Mendelssohn acquired in his youth with what he saw as the prevailing attitudes in German life and letters during the 1760s, Graetz marked out a distinctly positive contribution of a Jew to German morals. In a passage about Mendelssohn's *Phädon* (1767), Graetz claimed that Mendelssohn's argument for the immortality of the soul, based on a revision of Plato's dialogue, was an attempt by the German Jewish philosopher to combat the

Jerusalem-Werther illness of talented youth in this time, who, without any purpose in their striving, excluded from politics and from uplifting activity for the common good, wallowing in wanton sentimentalism and self-created pain, lost themselves to the point of considering suicide and would have carried it out, had not their courage also been weakened by this illness"⁵

Graetz's withering critique of *Sturm und Drang* emotionality was anachronistic. It positioned Mendelssohn's *Aufklärung* work against the cult around Goethe's epistolary novel *Werther*, which was published seven years after *Phädon* (1767). Based partly on Goethe's own experiences as well as the real case of Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem, *Werther* belongs to a later period than Mendelssohn's tract. But Graetz's juxtaposition of the two works and the clashing sensibilities he assigned to them provides us with the clearest link between the historian's early autobiographical writings and his historiographic oeuvre. The reference to supposedly excessive and self-absorbed emotion reads very much like something from Campe's *Theophron*. The "wanton sentimentalism" or, in German, "grillenhafte Empfinderei" that Graetz condemned echoed the pedagogical literature which he absorbed in his youth. The reappearance of the "Grille" (cricket), meanwhile, takes us back to Graetz's adolescent *Bildungsroman*, in which Graetz had celebrated his graduation from the status of the "cricket-

⁵ "Bei der Beweisführung für die Unsterblichkeitslehre hatte Mendelssohn noch eine andere edle Absicht. Er gedachte damit der Krankheit begabter Jünglinge jener Zeit, der Jerusalem-Werther, entgegenzuwirken, die ohne Ziel für ihr Streben, von politischer und erhebend gemeinnütziger Thätigkeit ausgeschlossen, in grillenhafter Empfinderei und selbsterschaffendem Schmerze, sich bis zum Gedanken an Selbstmord verirrt und ihn auch ausführten, wenn der Muth nicht auch mit angegränkt war." Ibid., 11:19-20.

chaser” grasping after castles in the sky. With the word “Empfindelei,” a pejorative permutation of “empfinden,” Graetz denoted both the excessive and the affected tendency of the historical objects of derision. By using the derogatory variant of *Empfindung*, Graetz heaped scorn on those who lusted after pleasure with their reading, while abandoning any responsibilities to society.

At a different point in his life, of course, Graetz too had sought out the pleasures of reading, in a manner not dissimilar from that associated with the “Werther-Jerusalem illness.” In his early discoveries of himself as a man of sentiment and as an intellectual, Graetz had struggled with a feeling of serving no recognizable role in his immediate surroundings and in society at large. Although he claimed to have overcome the state of the intellectual and emotional *Grillenfünger* who chased after intense speculative and sentimental moments, Graetz often sank into moods that closely resembled those he castigated in his mature historical writing. Writing several decades later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Graetz rejected this state of being in the strongest terms, ascribing its origins to solipsistic indulgence in affect and idleness. This critique was not altogether different from the one he had imbibed in his reading of *Theophron*. In the *Spätaufklärung* pedagogical literature, certain kinds of affect and imagination were condemned in ethical terms for their alleged egoism. The charge against them was that they lacked a useful social function and abdicated concern for the collective.

In addition to being unethical, “Werther-Jerusalem” sentimentality, in Graetz’s account was a malaise that rendered the afflicted “weak” and “womanly.”⁶ Graetz marked the allegedly degenerate world of the young German *Sturm und Drang* writers and readers as feminine and contrasted it with the presumably “stronger” and more “masculine” writings of Mendelssohn, the Jewish philosopher. Feminine here was shorthand for self-indulgent and for the pursuit of individual pleasure at the expense of responsibilities to the collective – an association that Graetz had made earlier in his life and continued to draw in his historiography.

But neither Graetz nor his enlightened teachers rejected feelings *tout court* – as feminine, sick, or morally harmful. In his description of Mendelssohn’s *Phädon*, Graetz summarized the work as an effort to “arouse ‘the conviction of the heart and the warmth of feeling’ on behalf of the teaching of the immortality of the soul.”⁷ The importance he attributed to the heart and feeling is emblematic of sentimental convictions. Crucially, however, the emotion in question here had some social or religious function, which Graetz believed *Sturm und Drang* feeling and imagination lacked. Graetz perceived this deficit as a moral flaw. In his model, emotions and fantasies which threatened to become self-sufficient ends in themselves were proscribed as ethically compromised. Graetz construed such sentimentality as a kind of solipsism; suicide figured as the ultimate act of selfishness, not unlike incidents of Jews converting to Christianity or betraying the Jewish communities to which they belonged for private gains.

⁶ Ibid., 11:20.

⁷ “[...] ‘die Ueberzeugung des Herzens, die Wärme des Gefühles’ für die Unsterblichkeitslehre zu erregen [...]” Ibid.

In describing the fascination of Mendelssohn's contemporaries, including Herder, Goethe, and several statesmen) with *Phädon*, Graetz referred to their enthusiasm as "a *Schwärmerei* that would appear ridiculous today."⁸ The verb "schwärmen" and its variants, most notably the derogatory noun "Schwärmerei," were key terms in Graetz's history. Like all his language about feelings and the imagination they assumed both negative and positive connotations. "Schwärmerei," like "Empfindelei," obviously characterized a negative kind of enthusiasm. But the verb form itself as well as the noun "Schwärmer," which described a (male) person engaging in acts of "schwärmen," was *ipso facto* neutral, gaining its particular moral coloring only from the context. A typical example of Graetz's deployment of the term to connote a negative kind of emotion appeared in his description of Johann Kasper Lavater, "a Protestant priest from Zurich, one half *Schwärmer* and the other half hypocritical conspirator, who later entered into an alliance with the Jesuits."⁹ Lavater's mystical enthusiasm for the Christian faith, which he wanted Mendelssohn to embrace, earned him only derision from Graetz. It represented the worst kind of religious enthusiasm in the historian's eyes, even though Graetz did not oppose passion for religion. In addition to finding fault with Lavater's religious imagination, Graetz ridiculed the pastor's interest in physiognomy, which he called "a deceitful art."¹⁰ What about Lavater led Graetz to condemn his activities as negatively-marked *Schwärmerei*? Not all of Graetz's villains were *Schwärmer*. Some, on the contrary, were hyper-rationalists. But Graetz saw in Lavater and others like him enthusiasts who distorted the truth at the expense of Judaism. Mystics like Lavater denied the historical circumstances of Christianity's creation and its debts to Judaism. According to Graetz, they were complicit in the long record of Christian misinformation about Jews and their religion. For Graetz, *Schwärmerei* amounted to a corruption of historical and contemporary reality. In his view of history and historical scholarship, that kind of falsification was closely linked to injustices perpetrated against the Jewish people in the past and present. It became a serious ethical shortcoming.

Graetz's conception of *Schwärmerei* also had some kinship with that of *Aufklärung* writers like Lessing. In a discussion of the latter's *Nathan*, Graetz cited approvingly the play's description of a female Christian character, Daja, as "one of the enthusiasts, who are under the delusion that they know the only true path to God."¹¹ That same "delusion," characteristic of *Schwärmer*, made up one of Graetz's main charges against Lavater, who had thought it impossible for someone of Mendelssohn's spiritual and intellectual caliber not to profess faith in Christianity. It was also the cause of great harm in the world, according to Graetz, as it could quickly turn "despotic."

⁸ "mit einer Schwärmerei, die heutzutage lächerlich erscheinen würde." Ibid.

⁹ "[...] halb Schwärmer und halb scheinheiliger Ränkeschmied [...]" Ibid., 11:21. The German word for "conspirator," "Ränkeschmied," literally a "smith of intrigue," was one of Graetz's favorite epithets. Many of his great villains, especially Christian or (formerly Jewish) apostate persecutors of Jews received this appellation. For one of many examples, see Graetz's description of the Christian patriarch of Jerusalem in Lessing's play *Nathan*. In his summary of the play, Graetz juxtaposed the "representative of Christianity" with Nathan, representing the patriarch as an ungrateful conspirator, who betrays Sultan Saladin's tolerance with treasonous intrigues against the ruler and with a plan to burn Nathan at the stake. In this case, Christian disloyalty to the Muslim ruler goes hand in hand with anti-Jewish persecution. Ibid., 11:37.

¹⁰ "trägerische Kunst." Ibid., 11:21.

¹¹ "Sie ist eine von den Schwärmerinnen, die / den allgemeinen, einzig wahren Weg / nach Gott zu wissen wähnen." Ibid., 11:37-38.

Another form of fantasy that Graetz condemned in his history was the religious enthusiasm of the Hasidic movement, flourishing in his own time. He found its “prophetic reveries” and its miracle cures especially objectionable. Hasidism, for Graetz, consisted of “the grossest collection of delusional beliefs.”¹² An excess of imagination had convinced the religious movement’s followers to put their faith in falsehood and corruptions of Judaism. In his history of Hasidism’s eighteenth-century origins, Graetz highlighted Israel Ba’al Shem Tov’s “over-stimulation” or “Überreizung” of the soul and body.¹³ Graetz used the same terms to dismiss the writings of François-René Chateaubriand (1768-1848), “a romantic who erected new pillars made of cob webs for Christianity in France, where it lay in ruins and oblivion.” Chateaubriand’s fictions, which according to Graetz, defied historical evidence, had been caused by the “excessive agitation of [the writer’s] imagination” which had “caused a complete rift with reason.”¹⁴ In the case of the Ba’al Shem Tov (Besht), Graetz traced the cause of this agitation to the mystic’s propensity for “filling his brain with fantastic images,” which had made it impossible for him to distinguish imagined visions from “real, tangible entities.”¹⁵ Here, a surfeit of emotional and nervous stimulation went hand-in-hand with a hyper-active imagination. Together, Graetz suggested, they fostered religiously as well as physically debilitating acts of “self-deception.”¹⁶ The religious dangers consisted in the generation of what Graetz called blasphemous ideas, which corrupted the core of Judaism. As an example of such a perversion, as he construed it, Graetz referred to the Hasidic notion “that prayer is a type of marital relation (*zivug*) of man with the divine (*shkheina*), which therefore required arousal.”¹⁷ In Graetz’s view, the blasphemous combination of sexual and religious enthusiasm had been fomented by the hyper-active imagination of the Ba’al Shem Tov. It represented the dangers of fantasy and sentiment unbound. There was nothing edifying about the Besht’s “entranced” or “verzückt” moods. For Graetz, they were completely different from his own youthful “enchanted” (“entzückt”) states.

Überreizung or hyper-stimulation of the mind accounted, in Graetz’s history, not only for the ecstasies of the Ba’al Shem Tov but also for the rapid growth of Hasidism in Poland. According to Graetz, Polish Jews had over-filled and over-fed their “mental digestive tools” with textual study. Their minds had been over-stimulated to the point that they found “the tasteless more appealing than the tasteful.”¹⁸ Graetz’s account suggested a relation between reason, the faculty used in Talmudic study, and the imagination. An excess of Talmudic learning led to a surfeit of unchecked fantasy, resulting in wild outgrowths that distorted religious and social life.

¹² “prophetische Träumereien” and “krassesten Wahnglauben” Ibid., 11:102-103.

¹³ Ibid., 11:104.

¹⁴ “Zur selben Zeit hatte ein anderer Romantiker für das in Frankreich eingestürzte und fast vergessene Christenthum neue Stützen aus Spinnwebfäden aufgerichtet, Chateaubriand. ... seine überreizte Phantasie, welche sich mit der Vernunft völlig entzweit hatte” Ibid., 11:185.

¹⁵ “er füllte sein Gehirn so sehr mit Phantasiebildern, daß er sie von wirklichen, handgreiflichen Wesen nicht mehr unterscheiden konnte.” Ibid., 11:103.

¹⁶ Graetz cited the “Todesschwäche” (mortal weakness) that the Ba’al Shem Tov reported feeling after an ecstatic experience. Ibid., 11:104.

¹⁷ “In diesem Wahn verstieg er sich zu der lästerlichen Äußerung, das Gebet sei eine Art ehelicher Verbindung (Sivug) des Menschen mit der Gottheit (Schechina) und darum müsse es unter Erregung vor sich gehen.” Ibid., 11:105.

¹⁸ “gerade diese Ueberfüllung und, so zu sagen, Ueberfütterung der geistigen Verdauungswerkzeuge hat diese trübselige Erscheinung zu Wege gebracht. Das Organ des Geistes war unter den polnischen Juden so überreizt worden, daß ihnen das Geschmackloseste noch mehr zusagte, als das Geschmackvolle.” Ibid., 11:111.

Metaphors of health, disease, and digestion recurred in a passage where Graetz described German Jewry's mental life, in much more positive terms than those he used for Hasidism and Polish Jewry. Citing a letter by Schleiermacher, in which the theologian complained of the preponderance of Kant's philosophy among young Jewish men, Graetz remarked that "what was a reproach in Schleiermacher's mind accords honor to the Jews, who did not bother with his or with Fichte's fantastic musings [Phantastereien] but took Kant's healthy nutrition for the mind [Geistesnahrung]." ¹⁹ Kant's philosophy, for Graetz, thus represented a healthy balance of reason, emotion, and imagination. Its study fostered a salutary emotional, physical, and social life, in contrast with the writings of Fichte and Schleiermacher or the study of Kabbalah by the Hasidim.

From Graetz's adolescent autobiographical writings, we know that he attached special significance to romantic connections and savored the feelings that he associated with love and intimate, hetero-social friendship. Nevertheless, in his history he described Schleiermacher as desperately "pining for love" and being "weak like a woman, in a state of dreamy, sentimental bliss." ²⁰ Against Schleiermacher's sentimentality, Graetz positioned "Jewish sobriety," embodied in the writer Börne, who held out against "gushing Romanticism and the ruling sentimentality of pining young men and consumptive women." ²¹

Graetz also set up Schleiermacher as the principal voice of modern Christian theology and as the "main pillar" of the idea of the Christian state. In doing so, Graetz linked Schleiermacher's sentimentality and his imagination to what he saw as the despotism of the Prussian empire and of modern Protestantism. He referred to Schleiermacher's theology as "ropes to enchain the mind," which had been fashioned out of cob webs. ²² Graetz's representation of Schleiermacher as weak and effeminate was in line with many of his depictions of Christianity in the same gendered terms. Christian and "female" imagination and sentiment invariably led to tyranny in Graetz's history. This was true also for his depiction of Schleiermacher's contemporary and friend, Friedrich Schlegel, whose deeds and convictions Graetz assailed. His extra-marital relationship with Dorothea Mendelssohn, which Graetz ascribed to "Goethe's obscene doctrine of elective affinity" and the publication of Schlegel's "sordid and lewd novel *Lucinde*," for Graetz went hand-in-hand with "enthusiasm for monarchist despotism." ²³

For Graetz, reading *Sturm und Drang* literature, sexual immorality, unrestrained imagination, and Christianity were all linked. In his derisive treatments of Schlegel and Schleiermacher, Graetz presented their respective literary contributions, the former's novel *Lucinde* and the latter's *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* as connected by more than the friendship

¹⁹ "Was in Schleiermacher's Mund ein Tadel ist, gereicht den Juden zur Ehre, daß sie sich nicht mit seinen und Fichte's Phantastereien abgegeben, sondern zu Kant's gesunder Geistesnahrung gegriffen haben." Ibid., 11:152 fn. 1.

²⁰ "Schleiermacher [...] war in seiner Gefühlstraumseligkeit schwach wie ein Weib und schmachtete nach Liebe." Ibid., 11:177.

²¹ "Es war seine angeborene jüdische Nüchternheit, welche über diese überschwengliche Romantik siegte und sich über die herrschende Sentimentalität der verschmachtenden Jünglinge und schwindsüchtigen Mädchen lustig machte." Ibid., 11:372.

²² Ibid., 11:177.

²³ "Die unzüchtige Lehre von Göthe's Wahlverwandtschaft [...]." Ibid., 11:178.

between the authors. Both, he claimed, took as their starting points “an undefined, nebulous feeling.” The particular sentiment in question provoked Graetz’s ire: “man’s submission to the universal (*das Allgemeine*) and infinite, and the act of letting himself be aroused” for Schleiermacher constituted “religion” and for Schlegel “love.” Schleiermacher’s “new gospel,” contained “merry fantastic musings” while the novel of his “twin,” Schlegel, consisted of “lascivious, bawdy fantasies.”²⁴ Their belief in abandoning themselves to mystical fantasies was, for Graetz, integrally related to what he saw as sexual and religious corruption.

Graetz was convinced that Schleiermacher’s Christianity, which the historian saw as rooted in a bad kind of sentimentality, was fundamentally anti-Jewish. Despite the fact, which Graetz acknowledged, that Schleiermacher could hardly be called a traditional Jew-hater, Graetz nevertheless referred to the theologian as a “Protestant Chrysostom,” referring to the stridently anti-Jewish Church Father, John Chrysostom (c. 347-409 CE). Graetz saw Schleiermacher’s theology as an attempt to erase Christianity’s historical roots in Judaism. Citing Schleiermacher’s complaint that “in matters of religion, [he] hate[d] these kinds of historical relationships,” Graetz claimed that Schleiermacher had tried to break the last bonds linking Judaism and Christianity. Those ties, however fragile, had nevertheless been guaranteed by the grudging acceptance of the “wanton daughter” (i.e., Christianity) that it owed one of its two foundational texts, the Hebrew Bible, to the “enslaved mother” (Judaism).²⁵

Schleiermacher’s “romantic-pietist mystical exuberance,” Graetz believed, depended on a “falsification of history.”²⁶ He gleefully referred to D.F. Strauss’s critique of Schleiermacher’s incredulity about claims that “Jesus should only have been a Jewish rabbi.” Along with Strauss, Graetz derided Schleiermacher’s “romantic snobbery,” which could only imagine Jesus as an elevated, transcendent personality, as he is described in the Gospel of John, rather than the more down-to-earth personage depicted in the synoptic accounts.²⁷ Unlike Strauss, however, Graetz presented the entire thrust of Schleiermacher’s mystical, romantic, and sentimental writing as an attempt to distance Jesus from his historical, Jewish context, as part of an effort to slight the Judaism of the past and present.

In Graetz’s writing, the mystical, anti-historical work of Schleiermacher and, to a lesser extent, Schlegel’s set in motion a wave of both religious and political reaction. As it gained influence over the state, this “new Christianity” turned more and more hateful against the Jews. Ironically, according to Graetz, this phenomenon had been conceived in the “Jewish-Christian salons of Berlin.”²⁸

²⁴ “einen unzüchtigen Roman, voll von wollüstigen, unfläthigen Phantasien”; “ein neuchristliches Evangelium, voll von lustigen Phantastereien.” Ibid., 11:181.

²⁵ “Bis dahin hatte sich die gläubige Christenheit in einer gewissen Gemeinschaft mit dem Judenthum gefühlt, und das alte Testament, die Bibel, war der gemeinsame Boden, auf dem die übermüthige Tochter und die geknechtete Mutter einander begegneten und auf einen Augenblick ihren Haß vergaßen.” Ibid., 11:183-184.

²⁶ “romantisch-herrenhuterische mystische Ueberschwenglichkeit”; “Fälschung der Geschichte.” Ibid., 11:184-185.

²⁷ “Vergl. D. Strauß’s vortreffliche Bemerkung zu dieser romantischen Vornehmheit Schleiermacher’s.” Ibid., 11:184 fn. 1. The original passage can be found in David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1864), 92.

²⁸ Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:186.

In his ultimate assessment of Schleiermacher, Graetz reiterated the connection he saw between the former's theology and negative emotionality. Graetz referred to Schleiermacher as having invented his own form of Christianity, which provided his contemporaries with a new source of excitement (*Reiz*). Invoking the terminology of sensibility and sentimentality, Graetz also turned to the consumers of this new theology, which included Henriette Herz and many other Jewish women in Berlin. He claimed that they had followed Schleiermacher because of the "titillation" of "letting themselves be enchanted by the captivating preacher."²⁹ The pleasure of being seduced had tickled the fancy of the daughters of Israel and they had abandoned "the spring of fresh water for regalement from varnished wells."³⁰ Reading Schleiermacher's prose had caused Jewish women to jettison their Jewish faith and to start "christianizing" (*christeln*). Protestantism, for Graetz, consisted of superficial, inauthentic sentimentality – a charge he also applied to Reform Judaism. In chronicling the beginnings of the latter, Graetz, a life-long bitter enemy of the movement, depicted its adherents as engaging in affected religious sentimentality ("religiöse Empfindelei"). Graetz also mocked Reform claims to pursuing devotion and edification. Even though Graetz himself sought edification, he found the Reform movement's emphasis on these contrived and imitative of Christian worship. The Hamburg Reform Temple, he wrote, institutionalized "affected piety and churchliness."³¹

Graetz (falsely) construed Schleiermacher's theology as anti-historical, in the sense that it denied the importance of the past and prevented its accurate representation. Instead, Schleiermacher offered Jewish women "fantasy fare" in exchange for "spiritual manna."³² Schleiermacher's religion, according to Graetz, was product of the theologian's imagination, and yet Herz et al. were willing to trade their Judaism away for it. Implicitly, Graetz contrasted Judaism and its rich past, which he reconstructed in his own historiography, with Schleiermacher's fiction.

Fiction came under attack from Graetz also in a different sense. The historian criticized "novel-like love" based on "so-called elective affinities."³³ He made it clear that these were not the foundations of good Jewish marriages. In denial of his own novel-reading experiences and youthful search for love, Graetz seemed to maintain the moral superiority of a system in which "Jewish women were [...] seldom married for love." Jewish society's strict limitations on romantic and sexual encounters between unmarried men and women, he argued, had been the basis of a "joyous family life." "Serious Christians" had once held Jewish mores in high esteem, but the stable system restraining romance had become corrupted through the social intercourse of Jews with Christians from the "licentious upper

²⁹ "[Schleiermacher] hat mit seiner Sprachglätte Henriette Herz und viele jüdische Frauen und Mädchen Berlins nicht bloß in die Kirche, sondern zur Kirche gezogen, aus einem eigenen Kitzel, sich von dem hinreißenden Prediger bezaubern zu lassen." Ibid., 11:182-183.

³⁰ "Sie verließen, wie in der alten biblischen Zeit, die Quelle lebendigen Wassers, um sich Labung aus übertünchten Gruben zu holen." Ibid., 11:183.

³¹ "Andächtelei und Kirchlichkeit." Ibid., 11:414-415.

³² "Phantasiespeise für Geistesmanna." Ibid., 11:182.

³³ "[Henriette Herz] sah [...] bei ihren Eltern das Muster einer glücklichen Ehe, die nicht aus romanhafter Liebe und sogenannter Wahlverwandtschaft entstanden war." Ibid., 11:156.

classes.”³⁴ When it came to Jewish women, Graetz saw in novels and pleasure reading only dangers to Jewish collective existence and individual morality. He seemed to long for the time of the “Ghetto [in which] there was no room for flirtatious play.”³⁵ Drawing up a balance sheet for the increased immersion of German Jews in Christian society and literature at the end of the eighteenth century, Graetz counted the allegedly negative effects on Jewish women’s chastity for a loss which outweighed any gains. Graetz claimed that the “virtue of Jewish women and virgins,” which had been “an untouchable sanctum when they lived apart” from interactions with Christian men, had become “infected with moral sepsis.”³⁶ Graetz blamed the young “Christian libertines” who with “egoism, hedonism, licentiousness, and recklessness, set about seducing [Jewish] women” in the famous Berlin salons.³⁷ He identified these transgressors with German Romanticism. The latter, he remarked caustically, had just begun its efforts “to realize the lyrical feelings of poetry, to poetically distort life.”³⁸ Here, Graetz juxtaposed feeling and imagination with a moral order based on a realist, unpoetic understanding of life. He denounced the “league of virtue” (*Tugendbund*) in which Henriette Herz and several other young Jewish women joined with Wilhelm von Humboldt, Karl Laroche, and Meyering, as an effort to “indulge in pleasure, nourish sentimentality, and find infamous elective affinity marriages.”³⁹ By the twentieth century, blaming Jewish men for the decay of Christian morals, especially in the sexual sphere had become a well-established trope of antisemitic literature, also often drawing on the language of medical pathology.⁴⁰ Although Graetz’s judgments were of a very different nature from these – he did not see a conspiracy against Judaism in these social trends, nor did he blame Christianity (the *Tugendbund*, in his words, was actually a “refined, agreeable paganism”),⁴¹ his language betrayed fears about the disintegration of the collective through the subversion of communal discipline by romance and sentimentality. Without the restraint of Jewish collective norms, Graetz argued, morality and social interactions became distorted; individuals could no longer tell right from wrong, and licentiousness acquired the illusionary semblance of virtue.⁴²

The type of love deemed acceptable and indeed privileged in Graetz’s history was either homosocial or filial, in the widest sense of the word. Graetz treated with reverence the “love” between Lessing and Mendelssohn, whose growing friendship complemented the two men. He wrote of an instant elective affinity between the two – acceptable to him, unlike the more romantic and heterosexual version of elective affinities that Graetz identified with

³⁴ “Jüdische Frauen wurden [...] selten aus Liebe heimgeführt ... dieses Heiligthum, der Stolz Israels, das ernste Christen mit Bewunderung erfüllte [...] wurde durch Umgang mit Christen aus den verdorbenen höhern Ständen geschändet.” Ibid., 11:175.

³⁵ “für Liebeständelei war im Ghetto kein Spielraum” Ibid.

³⁶ “Die Keuschheit jüdischer Frauen und Jungfrauen war während ihrer Gesonderheit ein unantastbares Heiligthum gewesen.” “[...] die jüdischen Frauen mit der sittlichen Fäulnis anzustecken.” Ibid.

³⁷ “die christlichen Wüstlinge”; “Selbstsucht, Genußsucht, Lasterhaftigkeit und Gewissenlosigkeit ... auf Verführung der Weiber geradezu angelegt.” Ibid., 11:176.

³⁸ “Es war damals der Beginn der von Göthe’s Poesie ausgegangenen deutschen Romantik, welche dahin strebte, die lyrischen Gefühle der Dichtkunst zu verwirklichen, das Leben poetisch zu verklären.” Ibid.

³⁹ “dem Genuß zu fröhnen, Empfindsamkeit zu nähren und berüchtigte Wahlverwandschafts-Ehen zu suchen.” Ibid.

⁴⁰ These accusations dated to the eighteenth century. See John M Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-De-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 6-7. As Efron’s pioneering study demonstrated, Jewish race scholars vigorously combated these antisemitic representations and asserted new, science-backed theories about Jewish sexual hygiene. Ibid., 147.

⁴¹ Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:176.

⁴² “Urtheil über Recht und Unrecht gerieth in Verwirrung.” “Schein der Tugendhaftigkeit.” Ibid.

admirers of Goethe. In Graetz's narrative, Lessing and Mendelssohn, the two sages of the *Aufklärung*, connected instantly upon meeting, and "learned to adore and love each other."⁴³ A different kind of love that Graetz evaluated positively was the love of his history's protagonists for the Hebrew language, Judaism, and the Jewish people.⁴⁴ Although Graetz had reservations about Wessely, he praised the latter's "enthusiastic love" for Hebrew.⁴⁵ Heine's "return" to Judaism for Graetz meant that the writer was coming back to "the love of his youth," based on his preference for religious morality over beauty.⁴⁶

In the life of Rahel Levin, Graetz saw the ultimate confirmation of pleasure reading's power over sentiment and morality to negative effects. Graetz faulted Levin for her views of marriage, the "holiest institution, the strength of families and nations." According to Graetz, they resembled those of a "wine-intoxicated lecher."⁴⁷ She had, in other words, absconded from her responsibilities to the Jewish people – as a believer and as a biological procreator. Levin, Graetz wrote, was seduced by Goethe's "paganism." Her intelligence, or "cleverness" (*Klugheit*), as Graetz called it, and her "penetrating mind" failed to protect her from the "pollution of immorality emanating from the elite ranks of Christian society at the time."⁴⁸ Taking Goethe's writings as her "Bible," she "stirred up her blood." Levin's veneration of Goethe led her toward the agitation of her passion and to inner degeneration. In his history, Graetz enumerated the sexual indiscretions of her male and female friends. He also linked their emotional and moral abandon to political reaction. Graetz noted that the "abysmal rake Gentz," (1764-1832) whom Levin saw as "geistesverwandt" (spiritually related to her) despite his dissipated lifestyle, had assisted in the effort "to repress the freedoms of the people," presumably in his work for Metternich, widely seen as the betrayer of liberal hopes.⁴⁹

In Graetz's narrative of the rise of German nationalism, Romanticism, undisciplined fantasy and feeling, Schleiermacher's Christianity, and the distortion of the past combined to produce a new, virulent hatred of Jews. Graetz's term for German nationalist writing of the early nineteenth century was "Deutschthümelei," a pejorative, diminutive form of "Germanism," which can be roughly translated as "Germanomania." The latter was in fact the term used by the Jewish writer Saul Ascher (1767-1822) in his 1815 critique of extreme German nationalism.⁵⁰ Graetz inscribed anti-Jewish tendencies in the origins of anti-French German nationalism, pointing to the writings of a certain Friedrich Buchholz (1768-1843).⁵¹ Buchholz, to Graetz, falsified history to malign Jews and glorify the Germans of antiquity.⁵²

⁴³ "Sobald Lessing und Mendelssohn Bekanntschaft mit einander gemacht hatten, lernten sie einander verehren und lieben." Ibid., 11:10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11:171, 500.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11:92.

⁴⁶ "... Vorzug der auf Religiösität gebauten Sittlichkeit vor der Schönheit ... kehrte Heine zu seiner Jugendliebe ... zurück." Ibid., 11:401.

⁴⁷ "Ihre Grundsätze über die Ehe, dieses heiligste Institut, die Kraft der Familien und Völker, waren die eines weinberauschten Wüstlings." Ibid., 11:180.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11:179.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Saul Ascher, *Die Germanomanie: Skizze zu einem Zeitgemälde*, 1815.

⁵¹ For more on Buchholz, see Kurt Bahrs, "Friedrich Buchholz: ein preußischer Publizist" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Göttingen: Georg-Augusts-Universität, 1907).

⁵² Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:260.

Graetz blamed the anti-Jewish, German nationalist agitation on an excess of fantasy among its advocates. The adherents of “fanatical-Christian *Deutschthümelei*” created a “horrifying image of the Jews, in order to frighten themselves and others.”⁵³ Likewise, the Teutomanic dream consisted of “Phantasterei” and rested on the “proud delusion” that Christianity was the highest stage of civilization – beliefs which had been encouraged by the Romantics and their adoration of the Middle Ages.⁵⁴ As a result of these harmful fantasies, German nationalism was “narrow minded and misanthropic.”⁵⁵ In Graetz’s view, there was something particularly dangerous about “German reveries.”⁵⁶ The German nationalists who emerged from the wars against France maintained their xenophobia even after the defeat of Napoleon. They raved (*schwärmten*) for phantom ideals and presented their dreams as reality. Their idealism turned despotic and coercive, as they tried to force others to adopt their views of the nation and state.⁵⁷ Graetz referred to German nationalism as the “Christian-Germanic deception”; it was an infatuation which led its partisans to confuse right and injustice, truth and illusion.⁵⁸ It was thus no wonder, according to Graetz, that the state crackdown on nationalist agitation following the assassination of Kotzebue by the “high-strung, Christian-romantic Karl Sand” soon led to outbreaks against German Jews, who had been selected as scapegoats.⁵⁹

As much as Graetz despised certain types of mysticism and the kind of unrestrained emotion described above, he also saw a surfeit of reason as exerting a negative effect on Jewish intellectual life. Graetz objected to “excessive” speculative rumination, which he saw as a distortion of the mind and soul. Graetz’s description of Mendelssohn in his pre-enlightened state helps us unravel the historian’s views on this matter. The representation of Mendelssohn was explicitly allegorical, presenting his journey to enlightenment as mirroring that of the Jewish people in modern times:

And from whom did this elevation emanate? From a man who, in some sense, represented the image of this people, from Moses Mendelssohn, of crooked stature, awkward, dumb, dull, stuttering, ugly, and repulsive exterior. But in this deformed figure of a nation was a thinking spirit which pursued chimeras only because it was led astray ... As soon as this nation was shown truth in its splendor ... it soon abandoned its formations of delusion and turned toward the light, and its mind at once transfigured its body, to raise its

⁵³ “entwarfen ein grauererregendes Bild von [den Juden], um sich und Andern Furcht zu machen.” Ibid., 11:330.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11:329.

⁵⁵ “während die deutschthümelnde Phantasterei es engherzig und menschenfeindlich machte.” Ibid.

⁵⁶ “Dieser gefährliche Feind, der zunächst die Waffen gegen die Juden kehrte, war die deutsche Träumerei.” Ibid., 11:328.

⁵⁷ “Das Joch ... machte ihnen nicht die Franzosen, sondern alles Fremde, Alles, was nicht das Gepräge rein deutschen Wesens trug, verhaßt.” Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11:333.

⁵⁹ “Die Gemüther waren damals in Deutschland sehr erregt durch die Ermordung Kotzebue’s ... von der Hand des christlich-romantisch überspannten Studenten Karl Sand ... und durch die Gewaltmaßregelnd der Regierungen gegen demagogische Umtriebe und Deutschthümelei ... Die Deutschthümer lechzten nach einem Opfer ... und da sie den Staatslenkern ... nicht beikommen konnten, so wurden die hilflosen Juden dazu ausersehen.” Ibid., 11:356.

bowed figure, the ugly aspects disappeared and not much was required to see the insult “Jew” transformed into an honorific.⁶⁰

The key to the transformation of Mendelssohn and of the Jewish people in this passage lay in the discovery of truth. The resulting abandonment of the “formations of delusion” and of “chimeras” brought about rejuvenation. In English, the term “chimera” or “pipe dream” loses some of the connotations of the original German “Hirngespinnst,” literally a “little specter in the brain.” The reference to “brain” rather than to “mind” or “spirit” (Geist) is to a mechanical reasoning faculty, devoid of considerations of truth, beauty, ethics, or feeling. It was the reliance on this faculty alone, Graetz seemed to imply, which had physically distorted the Jews, rendering them “crooked.” However, the discovery of other kinds of knowledge and beauty remedied their situation, transforming the body through the mind.

The evidence that Graetz consistently cited for Jewish intellectual degeneration was the focus on what he termed “twisted, sophistic, and perverse” learning among European Jews. Specifically, Graetz attacked the Talmudic academies of his day and indeed from the fourteenth century on with “making the crooked straight and the straight crooked.”⁶¹ His critique was hardly unique but in line with attacks on rabbinic learning dating at least to the eighteenth century, by Jews and Christians. In his own condemnation of traditional practices of Jewish textual study, Graetz complained that they had “dulled a sense for the simple” and thus ruined their ability to perceive “the beautiful and true.”⁶² This abandonment of the *peshat*, the plain meaning of the text, was partly the result of an excess of speculative reason for its own sake. It led “good minds” to “wild thoughts” and from there to “debauched lives.”⁶³ In his description of Mendelssohn’s attitude toward philosophical speculation we see Graetz’s own preference for a rationality devoted to supporting religious and ethical life over one facing no such constraints. Ventriloquizing his views through Mendelssohn, Graetz expressed his own misgivings about “Vernünftlei” – “excessive reasoning.”⁶⁴ He also lauded the Vilna Gaon for encouraging his students and Lithuanian Jewry to “seek out the plain [meaning], and to stay away from the sophistry of Polish Talmud study.”⁶⁵

Graetz found an analogue to what he called “sophistry” in German philosophy. He referred to Fichte as having “philosophized into the air ... like most of the German metaphysicians” until being woken up by the French Revolution.⁶⁶ Graetz had similar scorn for Hegel, whom he derided as “the deep thinker and great sophist, the court and church philosopher” whose philosophy was “a labyrinth of formulas” which drove his students “half-confused and half-

⁶⁰ “Und von wem ging diese Erhebung aus? Von einem Manne, der gewissermaßen das Bild dieses Volksstammes dargestellt hat, von Moses Mendelssohn, mit verwachsener Gestalt, linkisch, blöde, stotternd, unschön und abstoßend in seiner Aeüßerlichkeit. Aber in dieser Volks-Mißgestalt webte ein denkender Geist, der nur, irre geleitet, Hirngespinnste verfolgte ... Sobald diesem Volksstamme die Wahrheit in ihrem Glanze gezeigt wurde ... so ließ er alsbald sein Wahngelbde fahren und wandte sich dem Lichte zu, und sein Geist begann alsbald seinen Leib zu verklären, seine gebeugte Gestalt zu heben, die häßlichen Züge verloren sich, und es fehlt nicht viel, um den Schimpfnamen “Jude” in einen Ehrentamen verwandelt zu sehen.” Ibid., 11:3.

⁶¹ “verschroben, klügelnd und verkehrt.” Ibid., 11:5, 13.

⁶² “Der verkehrte Studiengang der Juden seit dem vierzehnten Jahrhundert hatte auch ihren Sinn für das Einfache abgestumpft.” Ibid., 11:13.

⁶³ “mit guten Köpfen aber warren Gedanken ... führten ein wüstes Leben ...” Ibid., 11:30.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 11:85, 89.

⁶⁵ “das Einfache aufzusuchen und sich von der Klügelei fern zu halten.” Ibid., 11:120.

⁶⁶ “ins Blaue hinein philosophirt.” Ibid., 11:246.

mad.” He also charged Hegel with having “described the course of history with sophistry and arbitrariness.”⁶⁷ Hegel’s grand edifice, according to Graetz, amounted to “intellectual soap bubbles.”⁶⁸ The specific object of Graetz’s critique was what he perceived as speculative reason without a moral purpose. For this reason, he also condemned Salomon Maimon, who lapsed into an “addiction to skepticism” which resulted in “terrifying confusion.”⁶⁹ For Maimon, Graetz charged, life consisted only of “creating ideas, splitting, reconciling, and contradicting them” with the effect that even “morality had no validity in his eyes.”⁷⁰ Graetz explicitly linked this hyper-rationalism to a neglect of feeling. He grouped Maimon together with Jonathan Eibeschütz and Samuel Holdheim, all of whom he presented as having “subordinated the emotional side of the mind. Holdheim, who like Maimon, became a skeptic and according to Graetz turned away from Judaism and morality, “knew no enthusiasm” and was devoid of nostalgic yearnings or hopes.⁷¹ The final consequences of thinking without the constraints of sentiment were thus relativism, nihilism, and solipsism.

Graetz’s evaluation of a historical subject’s character tended to be the predominant factor in his assessment of that figure’s worth. Mendelssohn was a model in Graetz’s history of the Jews in many ways, but what earned Mendelssohn special admiration from Graetz was the German Jewish icon’s process of intellectual and emotional self-formation – an education that bore some resemblance to one which Graetz aspired to in his youth and thereafter. According to Graetz, Mendelssohn,

[f]or the most part ... was his own teacher and his own educator. He hardened himself into a steadfast character, tamed his passions, so that they willingly obeyed reason, and accustomed himself, even before he knew what wisdom was, to live unwaveringly according to its precepts. In this sense, too, Maimonides was his guide. For Mendelssohn was short-tempered and irascible by nature, but he learned to control himself so completely, that he was seen as a second Hillel because of his meek and gentle demeanor.⁷²

By using two different terms, “teacher” and “educator,” “Lehrer” and “Erzieher,” Graetz distinguished different kinds of formation. In Graetz’s subsequent description, Mendelssohn’s sentimental education, his *Erziehung*, appeared as important as his philosophical one. Graetz framed Mendelssohn’s *Bildung* in both Maimonidean and Enlightenment terms, assigning great importance to the role that *Vernunft*, Reason, assumed

⁶⁷ “Hegel, der tiefe Denker und große Sophist, der Hof- und Kirchen-Philosoph, hatte [sie] in das Labyrinth seines Formelwesens eingeführt und sie halb wirre und irre gemacht. ... Aber den Verlauf der Geschichte legte sich Hegel mit Klügelei und Willkür zurecht ...” Ibid., 11:439.

⁶⁸ “Gedankenseifenblasen.” Ibid., 11:441.

⁶⁹ “Zweifelsucht ... entsetzliche Verirrungen.” Ibid., 11:142.

⁷⁰ “Auch das Sittengesetz hatte keinen Gehalt in seinen Augen ... Ideen erzeugen, sie spalten, klären, widerlegen.” Ibid., 11:146.

⁷¹ “Gemüthsseite des Geistes ... sei untergeordnet.” “Er kannte keine Schwärmerei, weder für den Mondschein blasser Erinnerungen, noch für den Dämmerchein in Nebel gehüllter Zukunftsträume.” Ibid., 11:562, 563.

⁷² “Zumeist war er sein eigener Lehrer und auch sein eigener Erzieher. Er stahlte sich zu einem festen Charakter, zähmte seine Leidenschaften, daß sie willig der Vernunft gehorchten, und gewöhnte sich, ehe er noch wußte, was Weisheit ist, unverrückbar nach ihren Regeln zu leben. Auch nach dieser Seite hin war Maimuni sein Wegweiser. Mendelssohn war nämlich von Natur heftig und jähzornig; aber er lernte sich so vollständig beherrschen, daß er an Sanftmuth und Milde als ein zweiter Hillel angesehen wurde.” Ibid., 11:7.

in the young man's growth. But before Mendelssohn could accept reason as his guide, Graetz suggested, he had to discipline his affect. According to Graetz, the domestication of Mendelssohn's affect and the training of his sentiments preceded his ability willingly to obey reason. It also distinguished him from other Jewish figures of the same period who relied on rationality alone.

The critique of certain kinds of sentimentality, of "excessive" or "unrestrained" feeling and imagination in Graetz's writing also had as its corollary the privileging of other sorts of emotion and fantasy derived from new practice of reading for pleasure. In his history, Graetz often described the sentimental education of various figures and even societies. Virtuous modes of feeling and fantasy were sentimental aesthetic appreciation, love, moral sensibility, and sympathy.

The significance that Graetz assigned to Mendelssohn's aesthetic education revealed the ongoing importance of certain sentimental models to Graetz as a historian. Graetz pointed out that Mendelssohn had acquired an appreciation for *belles lettres* at an early stage in his exposure to secular learning.⁷³ Graetz took pains to emphasize the refined, sentimental appreciation of nature and humanity that Mendelssohn acquired. Graetz's description of Mendelssohn's abilities as a writer, to convey "not only faith in God and the nullity of evil, but also the rejuvenation of nature in her spring dress and the rapture in it of the pure human mind," suggests the importance he attached to moments of emotional elevation.⁷⁴ The references to purity and to the aesthetic appreciation not only of nature but of the mind which perceives belong to the sentimental register. In one of the rare instances in which the word "kabbalistic" did not carry a pejorative connotation in Graetz's writings, he admiringly referred to Mendelssohn's Hebrew style as reminiscent of the "kabbalistic-enthusiastic poet Moshe Hayim Luzzato." The historian here meant the liveliness, passion, and imaginative quality of Mendelssohn's writing. Invoking a pastoral scene, he described the style that Mendelssohn employed as "Hebrew effusions ... gushing out fresh and clear like a mountain spring."⁷⁵

At the same time, Graetz emphasized that unlike his early instructor, Aaron Salomo Gumpertz, Mendelssohn was not "so foolishly in love with beautiful literature that he turned himself into the personal attendant of the crusty [Johann Christoph] Gottsched," the eighteenth-century German author and theoretician of poetics.⁷⁶ Gumpertz, in Graetz's mind, had gone too far down the aesthetic and sentimental route, admiring beautiful literature for its own sake. Mendelssohn, on the other hand, saw beautiful literature as a means for the moral and aesthetic improvement, indeed, ennoblement, of the Jewish

⁷³ "schöne Literatur." Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Der Gedankengrund seiner Erstlinge war philosophisch-religiös nicht blos da, wo er das Gottvertrauen und die Nichtigkeit des Uebels veranschaulichen wollte, sondern auch da, wo er die Verjüngung der Natur in ihrem Frühlingskleide und das Entzücken des reinen Menschengemüthes bei dieser Wandelung schilderte." Ibid., 11:8.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ "in welche [Gumpertz] mit einem Anflug von Narrheit so verliebt war daß er sich zum Schleppenträger des zopfigen Gottsched gemacht hatte." Ibid., 11:7. As further evidence of Gottsched's "foolishness," Graetz points to his super-commentary, *Megaleh Sod*, on Ibn Ezra's biblical commentary and to his correspondence with Gottsched. Ibid., 11:7 fn. 1.

people.⁷⁷ Wessely, who was painted in mixed colors by Graetz, received approval from him for his early development of “a sense for beauty, and taste and feeling for pure language and forms as well as an antipathy toward the mixing of languages and jargon.”⁷⁸ The importance Graetz attached to aesthetic appreciation of this sort reveals the fundamentally new (in Jewish life), sentimental concerns that the historian marked out as desirable for Jewish men in modernity. Indeed, Graetz defined the essence of a “civilized people,” a *Culturvolk* [sic], as lying in “sense and taste for the beautiful.”⁷⁹

The connection between this kind of aesthetic appreciation and morality was a given for Graetz. Quoting Mendelssohn approvingly, he saw “sensibility [*Empfindung*] for the good and the beautiful” as linked and as fundamental to his Judaism.⁸⁰ Lessing, who was one of Graetz’s other favorite personalities, received the historian’s commendation for his “aesthetic-moral stature.” Graetz contrasted the latter with the “levity of the French jester,” by which he meant King Frederick II of Prussia. Graetz emphasized that Lessing, unlike Frederick II, used wit as a means with a definite end: ennoblement of the soul, whereas the Prussian king used it only for courtly amusement.⁸¹

In the complementary relationship between Lessing and Mendelssohn, Graetz saw the latter as bringing “elevation in thought, a drive for truth and a steadfastness of character that rested on strong moral foundations.”⁸² The Christian writer Lessing, on the other hand, supplied the aesthetic refinement, which served an important but ancillary role. Mendelssohn had what Graetz called a “delicate moral sense.”⁸³ “Delicate” (*zart*) here referred to Mendelssohn’s refined moral sensibility. The combination of delicacy, morality, and sense or feeling (*Gefühl*) came straight from the sentimental vocabulary that Graetz had developed in his early years.

Graetz’s heroes also asserted their morality on a different front. We know from Graetz’s treatment of Herz, Levin, and Schlegel that he saw their unrestrained feelings and imaginations as responsible for sexual profligacy. Against them, Graetz held up the “Sittlichkeit” (morality, decency) and “Keuschheit” (chastity) of his favorite protagonists. He identified this morality as essentially Jewish. In supporting this claim, Graetz could quote such writers as Dohm who spoke approvingly of the relative paucity of “transgressions resulting from a lack of chastity” among the Jews in the eighteenth century.⁸⁴ Graetz quoted Heine, who spoke of the “peculiar chastity” of the Jews to the same effect.⁸⁵ Against his

⁷⁷ “seine Stammesgenossen moralisch und ästhetisch zu läutern ... zur Veredlung der Juden unternommen ...” Ibid., 11:8.

⁷⁸ “Frühzeitig entwickelte sich auch in ihm der Schönheitssinn, Geschmack und Gefühl für reine Sprache und Formen und ein Widerwille gegen Sprachvermischung und Kauderwelsch, welche unter Juden deutscher Zunge heimisch waren.” Ibid., 11:92.

⁷⁹ “Worin besteht das Wesen eines Culturvolkes [sic]? Doch wohl, neben Gesittung, in Sinn und Geschmack für die schöne Form ...” Ibid., 11:139.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 11:86.

⁸¹ “ästhetisch-sittliche Größe ... Gegensatz zur Leichtfertigkeit des französischen Spottvogels.” Ibid., 11:9.

⁸² “Lessing bewunderte an Mendelssohn wieder die Gedankenhöhe, den Wahrheitsdrang und die auf sittlichem Grunde ruhende Charakterfestigkeit.” Ibid., 11:10.

⁸³ “sittliche[s] Zartgefühl.” Ibid., 11:13.

⁸⁴ “Der Ehestand ist bei ihnen unbefleckter und die Vergehungen der Unkeuschheit, besonders unnatürliche Laster sind bei ihnen weit seltener.” Ibid., 11:72.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 11:400.

moral foil, “elective affinities” and “novel-like love,” Graetz positioned the “patriarchal decency” of the Jewish home, which restrained affective and imaginative excesses, while preserving the purity of Jewish women, who remained “sensitive to Truth.”⁸⁶

By moral sensibility Graetz also meant an ability to be affected by truth, beauty, and tender feelings. He praised Heine as “sensitive” (*empfindlich*), pointing out that, unlike Börne, he harbored a “deep love for his mother inside his heart.”⁸⁷ For Graetz, again, the ability to feel in this manner, which he saw as moral sensibility, was a particularly Jewish quality. He contrasted it with the “emotion-free dullness” of Christian Germans.⁸⁸ The kind of enthusiasm that Graetz condemned in other contexts as *Schwärmerei* received his highest praise when its object was the history of the Jewish people or the Bible, as in the case of the mature Heine.⁸⁹ Enthusiasm for Judaism reflected refinement of feeling (“Feingefühl”) on Heine’s part. Being enchanted (“begeistert”) for the Jewish past, as Heine was, received only commendation from Graetz and indicated a developed but disciplined sentimental imagination, which subordinated itself to the collective. Indeed, Graetz faulted Wessely’s poetry for not stimulating the imagination and sentiments enough. More specifically, Graetz complained that Wessely’s “verses leave one cold” because they failed to “rouse the imagination to self-delusion or the spirit to reflection.”⁹⁰ The self-deception to which Graetz referred here, may not have been entirely negative in his mind. Graetz endorsed the notion that writing should inspire readers by stimulating their sentiments and fantasies.

On the other hand, a decline in morals and in sentimental refinement could also lead to the degeneration of aesthetic taste. Echoing Mendelssohn, Graetz believed that German and Polish Jews had lost the “sense for form, taste for artistic beauty and aesthetic sensibility,” as a result of their use of “jargon” (Yiddish), which had corrupted them.⁹¹ Mendelssohn was so exemplary because he had a “fine sense for the simple, beautiful, and true.”⁹² This aesthetic appreciation, which Mendelssohn conveyed to his Jewish readers, effected a remarkable change in German Jewry, according to Graetz. Often reading Mendelssohn’s works secretly, a generation of Talmud students acquired that which was “elementary and most sublime.”⁹³ This generation was responsible for the “rejuvenation” of the Jewish people, in Graetz’s narrative. The traditionalists, or as Graetz described them, those who adhered to the “stockalte” or “stockfromme” (obdurate, old; stubbornly pious) orientation, lacked this sensitivity for the beautiful, especially when they hailed from Poland.⁹⁴ When confronted

⁸⁶ “patriarchalische Sittsamkeit”; speaking about Henriette Herz in her youth: “für das Wahre empfängliche Seele.” Ibid., 11:156.

⁸⁷ “Empfindlich war er ... Heine hatte das vor Börne voraus, daß er in seinem Herzen eine tiefe Liebe zu seiner Mutter trug.” Ibid., 11:383.

⁸⁸ “in gefühlloser Stumpfheit.” Ibid., 11:268.

⁸⁹ “begeisterte Hymnen auf die jüdische Geschichte und den jüdischen Stamm, und man hört es ihnen an, daß sie ernst gemeint waren. Für die Bibel hat der feinfühligste Dichter, stets geschwärmt.” Ibid., 11:401.

⁹⁰ “Seine kunstgemeißelten Verse lassen kalt, regen weder die Phantasie zur Selbsttäuschung, noch den Geist zum Nachdenken an.” Ibid., 11:93.

⁹¹ “Es war nur eine andere Seite der Sprachverderbnis, daß die deutschen und polnischen Juden auf dem ganzen Erdrund den Formensinn, Geschmack an künstlerischer Schönheit und ästhetisches Gemeingefühl eingebüßt hatten.” Ibid., 11:13.

⁹² “das Einfache, das Schöne und Wahre.” Ibid.

⁹³ “das Elementare und das Erhabenste.” Ibid., 11:49.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 11:371, 489. For a typical usage of “stockfromm” see Ibid., 11:508.

with the “moral and tangible dirt” of Hasidism, however, the new generation, with its “inborn sensitivity to beauty,” felt “disgust.”⁹⁵

Although he never found room in his heart for Polish Jewry, the sentiment that appealed most consistently to Graetz was the sensation of sympathy for the suffering of Jews in the past and present. Dohm, one of Graetz’s Christian protagonists, was distinguished by his feelings of sympathy for “a people that has experienced so much suffering.”⁹⁶ Similar, Abbé Gregoire “cried over the misery of the Jews, narrated their blood-soaked history, that long pain- and tearful tragedy.”⁹⁷ Another Christian writer “made the Jews’ centuries-long historical tragedy come alive.”⁹⁸ On the Jewish side, Graetz praised Berr-Isaak Berr (1744-1828) for his speeches in France about the “thousand-year-long suffering” of his people.⁹⁹ The historian described how Berr’s audience was “stirred” by the “lachrymose fate of the unfortunate descendants of the most ancient people.”¹⁰⁰ Like Berr, Graetz saw the Jewish people as united by the experience of virtuous suffering at the hands of the nations over two millennia.¹⁰¹

The historical figure whose sympathy for Jewish suffering was most exemplary to Graetz was Heine. In highly sentimental prose, Graetz praised the “warm attachment” that Heine “nourished in his deepest breast for the Jewish history of suffering.”¹⁰² Graetz invoked the writer’s identification with “those martyrs, who gave the world one God and one morality and who fought and suffered on all the battlefields of thought.”¹⁰³ A poem that Heine wrote in 1824, in which he referred to the “thousand-year-old sorrow” of the Jews, and in which he described the tears of crying Jewish men, women, and children flowing into the Jordan for Graetz provided persuasive proof of Heine’s “heart-felt” sentiment. According to Graetz, the lachrymose poem may not have been Heine’s best work, but it captured his genuine feelings. That was of no small importance to Graetz. As we have seen, Graetz, while rejecting “undisciplined” sentimentality, praised other kinds of feeling, especially enthusiasm for Judaism and sympathy for the suffering of Jews over the course of their history. In fact, Graetz saw the historiographical project itself as deeply sentimental in this particular sense.

Graetz believed that his narrative of the past would have an effect on the sentiment and imagination of his readers, much as his own diary writing had affected him. The kind of history that Graetz wanted to write and believed should be written had to move its reader to sympathy with the narrative’s protagonists and to moral edification. In writing history, Graetz wanted to produce an emotional connection between his readers and the travails as

⁹⁵ On Isaak Erter (1792-1851): “das ihm angeborne Schönheitsgefühl empfand Ekel an dem Anblick des sittlichen und handgreiflichen Schmutzes dieser berauschten Himmelsstürmer.” Ibid., 11:489.

⁹⁶ “... Volksstamm, der so viel Leiden durchgemacht ...” Ibid., 11:67.

⁹⁷ “Er weinte über ihr Elend, zeigte ihre bluttriefende Geschichte, diese lange schmerz- und thränenreiche Tragödie.” Ibid., 11:197.

⁹⁸ “Er verlebendigte die Geschichtstragödie der Juden durch die langen Jahrhunderte.” Ibid., 11:257.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 11:207.

¹⁰⁰ “thränenreiche Geschick des ältesten Volkes ... Gerührt hörten die Deputirten ...” Ibid., 11:208.

¹⁰¹ “tausendfachen leiden, die sie von den Völkern erduldeten, nicht mit einem Hauche aus ihrem Gedächtnisse verlöschen.” Ibid., 11:248.

¹⁰² “Für das Judenthum oder für den jüdischen Stamm, die jüdische Leidensgeschichte und die heiligen Schriften hegte er in tiefster Brust eine warme Anhänglichkeit ...” Ibid., 11:385.

¹⁰³ “... daß ich ein Abkömmling jener Märtyrer bin, die der Welt einen Gott und eine Moral gegeben und auf allen Schlachtfeldern des Gedankens gekämpft und gelitten haben.” Ibid.

well as small victories of the Jewish people. He wanted to discipline the affect of his readers toward the end of identifying with the Jewish collective, without entirely suspending the emotional experience typical in pleasure reading.

And yet, Graetz also believed that an excess of imagination threatened the integrity of historical writing. Wessely, in Graetz's representation, could hardly be called sentimental or overly emotional. Graetz did, however, find fault with his imaginative faculties. On one hand, Graetz assessed Wessely's poetic talent as inferior and lacking in imagination. On the other hand, Graetz also described him as a "life-long dreamer." The precise formulation Graetz used was "Phantast." He accused Wessely of having perceived "the real world only through tinted glasses."¹⁰⁴ More precisely, Graetz was bothered by Wessely's alleged failure to properly grasp certain historical realities. In particular, Graetz singled out Wessely's belief that *Ecclesiasticus* was a work of King Solomon and an example of authentic, ancient Hebrew wisdom literature. For Graetz, the only way to explain this interpretation was Wessely's "fantastic quirk."¹⁰⁵ Condemnations of erroneous historical-critical judgments as "fantastic" appeared frequently in Graetz's work. While Graetz often argued for the importance of the imagination for historians and for readers of history, he labeled those historical accounts which he rejected as enthusiastic, fantastic, and ultimately willful distortions of reality.

In the case of Wessely, Graetz called his translation of and scholarship on *Ecclesiasticus* a form of "self-delusion" that had absorbed him.¹⁰⁶ Wessely's political judgment of contemporary matters earned the label "pedantism and dreamery" or "Pedanterei und Phantasterei" from Graetz, who faulted him for being unreasonably "enchanted" by the Habsburg emperor Joseph's Edict of Toleration.¹⁰⁷ The source of Graetz's agitation lay in Wessely's allegedly skewed view of the past and present. Wessely, according to Graetz, was a "Phantast" because he substituted his desires and eccentricities for a sober appraisal of the real world. For Graetz, failures to read history correctly often resulted in false sentimentality. A work by Joel Jakobovits called "Laments of a Jew," Graetz wrote contained "much that was untrue" as well as "fantastic sentimentalism, affected suffering, and ... Christianizing."¹⁰⁸ As usual, Graetz also detected traces of negative Christian influence in such emotionally and historically distorting works.

It was Heine – a non-historian – whom Graetz singled out for balancing the demands of the imagination and history, of pleasure and responsibility to the collective. In a passage about the writer's "Rabbi von Bacharach," an unfinished novel, Graetz remarked that Heine

[W]anted to present the glorious and the sad scenes from Jewish history as alive, in the manner that only he was capable of. For this purpose, he immersed himself even more in the annals of Jewish history, because he wanted to convey a historically faithful picture; his imagination was to

¹⁰⁴ "Wessely blieb sein Leben lang ein Phantast und erblickte die Vorgänge der wirklichen Welt nur durch gefärbte Gläser." Ibid., 11:93.

¹⁰⁵ "phantastische Schrulle" Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 11:94.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 11:95.

¹⁰⁸ "viel Unwahres, phantastische Empfinderei, einen erheuchelten Schmerz und viel Christelei ..." Ibid., 11:508.

illuminate the facts, not invent them, since there was enough substantive material available to him.¹⁰⁹

Graetz here described an ideal form of historical writing. Ironically, he presented a novel as a model for historiography. The affective imagination was crucial in his characterization – both suffering and edifying achievements were to be rendered so that they became alive in the reader's mind. But the means of achieving these aims were to consist in truth alone, or rather, in the facts. The imagination of the writer, i.e., the inspired but hard-working artist, only rendered these visible to the reader; it did not conjure them out of thin air.

Against this model historical writing, Graetz juxtaposed the work of two German Jewish scholars who had preceded him but were still his contemporaries as he was writing his history. Damning Zunz's work on Jewish liturgy with faint praise, Graetz described it as "the first dignified, dry and reference-filled work by a Jewish writer, of the sort that appeals to the German scholarly guild."¹¹⁰ Although Graetz did not deny that Zunz's work was an achievement, its lack of sentimental and imaginative engagement made it not only "dry" and essentially "German" (rather than Jewish) but also a failure as historical writing. The same held true, according to Graetz, for Jost's history of the Israelites. Graetz condemned Jost for "having given the undeniably heroic history of the Jews a dry, philistine quality and having dulled the luster that it had even in the eyes of impartial Christian observers."¹¹¹ The history of the Jews – the *res gestae* – Graetz believed was an affair of intense feeling, that could not help emotionally captivating even non-Jews, when the form of the historical narrative representing it – the *historia rerum gestarum* – was truthful.

Historiography's ultimate object for Graetz was to recover the past in its true, undistorted form, which required sentimental and imaginative engagement with a history full of beauty and suffering. Along the way, such a historiography could also correct the problems of the present, which included a lack of identification by German Jews with other Jews, in their times and in the past. With realist narrative, Graetz sought to inspire that identification in his readers. Although he was highly critical of certain forms of sentimentality, this basic aspect of the sentimental mode of perception that had played such an important role in his youth, became central to Graetz's life's work – the *History of the Jews*.

Graetz's account of the 1840 Damascus blood libel is the most representative example of realist narrative mixed with sentimental engagement in the historian's treatment of the modern period. In describing his treatment of this episode, we would be remiss to downplay the real horror of the ritual murder accusation against Damascene Jews and the ripples it sent throughout European and Middle Eastern Jewry. In Graetz's narrative, the Jews of Damascus accused of the ritual murder of a Capuchin priest and tortured in subsequent

¹⁰⁹ "Im 'Rabbi von Bacharach' wollte er die herrlichen und die traurigen Szenen der jüdischen Geschichte lebendig, wie nur er allein es vermochte, vorführen. Zu diesem Zwecke vertiefte er sich noch mehr in die Jahrbücher der jüdischen Geschichte, weil er ein geschichtlich treues Bild liefern wollte; seine Phantasie sollte die Thatsachen nur beleuchten, nicht erfinden, da ihm Stoff genug zu Gebote stand." Ibid., 11:393.

¹¹⁰ "Es war die erste gediegene, trockene und belegreiche Arbeit eines jüdischen Schriftstellers, wie sie der deutschen Gelehrtenzunft zusagt." Ibid., 11:497.

¹¹¹ "Er hat der unleugbar heldenhaften jüdischen Geschichte einen trockenen, philisterhaften Charakter gegeben und ihr den Schimmer geraubt, den sie selbst in den Augen unbefangener christlichen Beobachter hatte." Ibid., 11:456.

proceedings became historical “martyrs” in a “new bloody drama.”¹¹² This language of course does not impinge upon the authenticity of the events described. What concerns us here, is Graetz’s presentation of this “drama” complete with a public of “spectators” in the Jewish world on whom it had profound effects. For the suffering of the Jews of Damascus and of Rhodes, where Christians promulgated a similar blood libel shortly after the original accusation in the former city, in Graetz’s view, “aroused the self-esteem” of Jews in Europe and the Orient.¹¹³ The tortures endured by the accused Jews and the resulting ordeal suffered by the Jews in Damascus and elsewhere in his narrative were not in vain. According to Graetz, the pain and tears produced by the “bloody martyrdom” of the victims selected by the authorities had the effect of “trying and toughening the Jewish tribe.”¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, Graetz described the Damascus blood libel and the resulting suffering as having led to the “elevation” of the Jewish people.¹¹⁵ How did Graetz conceive of this “elevation”? In effect, the Damascus blood libel in Graetz’s history was as important as Mendelssohn to the “rejuvenation” of the Jewish people. The horrors of malicious distortion of the truth and the resulting anti-Jewish violence produced a scene of “innocence drenched in blood,” whose contemplation united Jews in the East and West.¹¹⁶ Watching this drama, Graetz suggested, only the cruel persecutors could remain “dry” and unmoved.¹¹⁷ The Jews, meanwhile, were united: “all of Israel was again one heart and one soul.”¹¹⁸ That, in a nutshell, was the sentimental education of the Jewish people. By writing about the suffering of the modern Jewish martyrs and the resulting sentimental mobilization on their behalf, Graetz hoped to rouse his own reading audience to similar acts of tribal sympathy as well as to a more reverential relation to God and to Judaism as a religion.

Graetz believed in writing what we might call a “wet” history of the Jews. Long before he had become a historian, in July 1844 when he was twenty-seven years old, Graetz sketched in his journal the defining national characteristics of various European peoples. The Jews, he wrote “are passionate about their lachrymose religious history.”¹¹⁹ In referring to the Jews’ passion or enthusiasm, Graetz used the German word “schwärmen.” This term, much like the word “*empfindsam*” acquired both negative and positive valences over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this entry from the mid-nineteenth century, Graetz used it approvingly, expressing a desirable tendency. Although, as we have seen, he would later use a derivative term, “Schwärmerei,” as a pejorative description of negatively-coded enthusiasm, often of a mystical sort, *schwärmen*, to be enthusiastic about one’s past, was a laudatory activity, as was the weeping that it might involve. Crying about the past revealed one’s passionate involvement in and attachment to the history of the Jewish people.

¹¹² “blutige[s] Drama . . . , worin den Juden wieder die Märtyrerrolle zugeteilt war.” Ibid., 11:510.

¹¹³ “Wo das Selbstgefühl schlummerte, wurde es wach gerufen.” Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “der jüdische Stamm sollte durch das blutige Märtyrertum erprobt und gestählt werden.” Ibid., 11:537.

¹¹⁵ “Erhöhung” Ibid., 11:510.

¹¹⁶ “bluttriefenden Unschuld.” Ibid., 11:533.

¹¹⁷ See Graetz’s description of Ratti Menton’s appeal for adherence to procedure rather than sentiment, and the negative reaction to it by the French consul’s peers. Ibid., 11:537-538.

¹¹⁸ “Ganz Israel war wieder ein Herz und eine Seele.” Ibid., 11:538.

¹¹⁹ Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, 133. “[...] die Juden [schwärmen] für ihre thränenreich Religionsgeschichte.”

Conclusion

Modernity in the history of the West can be characterized as the multiplication of opportunities for the individual's pursuit of pleasure and the proliferation of discourses at once legitimating and circumscribing it. The phenomenon of reading for pleasure was bound up with the rise of pleasure as a factor in many aspects of human life. This rise owed its possibility to the myriad processes responsible for the modern conceptions of society, economy, religion, family, and culture that we have inherited.

Starting in the late eighteenth century, the challenges of modernity to pre-modern orders of rank exerted continuous pressure on the power of traditional societies in Europe to limit the social identifications and aspirations of individuals. They set in motion a long-term tendency of opening educational and vocational paths to an ever-increasing number of people, irrespective of their birth. This liberalization – a combination of the needs of emerging states, the democratizing impetus for which the French Revolution became symbolic, and the upheavals engendered by economic changes – made it possible for expanding groups of individuals to make the pursuit of pleasure a larger consideration in their choice of occupation.

The transformations of agriculture, industry, and trade at the heart of European and global modernization were accompanied by the creation of numerous markets backed by regulatory frameworks of increasing geographic reach. Economies once struggled to ensure the food supply of populations and adequate materials and pay for the military defense of small polities. The modern revolutions first of farming and then in manufacturing made possible, by the nineteenth century, the production and circulation of commodities designed primarily to promise pleasure to an amorphous mass of individuals interpellated as consumers. At least since the eighteenth century, processes of modern state formation and the regulation of religious authority, from above and below, have also increased the abilities of individuals to determine their religious commitments and practices – initially according to the dictates of conscience but, later, according to the promise of pleasure. Beginning in the Enlightenment and in some cases earlier, conscious and unconscious modernizers inside religious communities and cultures have cast tradition as the guardian of laws and customs which limit pleasure. Most important for our narrative are the innumerable books created for and consumed by pleasure-seeking individuals as a result of the economic and political changes wrought by modernization.

Crucial to the growth of reading for pleasure was the inexorable democratization of the means of circulating these books to men and women from all parts of society, at ever diminishing costs. The basic technological and material obstacles to the rampant growth of pleasure-reading first became surmountable with the proliferation of the printing press. But it would take several more centuries for the cultural and political conditions to ripen such that they stimulated a reading revolution.

The growth of reading for pleasure depended on the formation of a new kind of reading public. Precisely because European Jews as the hyper-literate “People of the Book” had a robust and sanctified conception of how and why one interacted with texts – as well as established customs about who was qualified to do so (men) – the circulation of new reading

practices was bound to face resistance from Jewish elites. However, the multilingual character of Jewish society in the pre-modern period created an initially controlled space for such practices to emerge. The kinds of works read for pleasure were printed in the Jewish vernacular, ostensibly for female and some male readers who, to paraphrase a formulaic publisher's slogan from the time, "were like women" in that they lacked high-level literacy in the languages of learning, Hebrew and Aramaic. Only some of these books were works of imaginative literature; most were ethical tracts, liturgical aids, and practical compendia. But the growth of this sphere of books established a pattern whereby the reading of books in vernacular languages marked a fundamentally different kind of interaction with texts than that practiced by learned men engaged in the traditional study of Torah.

When combined with literacy in English, French, or German, female marginality in the privileged intellectual sphere of male learning turned Jewish women into a vanguard of pleasure readers among German Jews. Circumstances created precisely this reality for young women from the Jewish elite of Berlin in the last three decades of the eighteenth century – which also saw unprecedented literary productivity in German, in addition to the widespread availability of English and French sentimental novels. In the reading of these pioneers we see the beginnings of the German Jewish reading revolution. The term "revolution" is appropriate because the new reading practices, first confined to the margins, usurped traditional modes of communing with texts. Although the older practices have not remained static since and are far from disappearing today, the modern age saw the conversion of the vast majority of (male) Jews from "learners" of Torah (in the classical Jewish sense of the term) into readers.

Beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, the novel sphere of reading began to make inroads into the world of male textual study. Or, to view the matter from another perspective, a few learned Jewish men started to colonize outgrowths of the new reading sphere. Of course, male Jewish scholars had always been involved as producers of vernacular Jewish books, but rarely did they admit to being consumers of them. Unlike women, who were not expected to devote their intellectual leisure time to the study of Hebrew and Aramaic scholarly works, Jewish men had to (t)read carefully in their pursuit of pleasure. With respect to their own motivations and the personal psychological barriers that they had to surmount, however, Jewish men from the intellectual elite may have found it easier to justify reading books in a prestigious "foreign" language than reading Yiddish imaginative literature aimed at women. And still, they faced the nagging problem of assigning some purpose to their reading that could compete with the lofty aims ascribed to traditional Jewish intellectual activity. Looking over their own shoulders and those of Jewish women around them, they also had to differentiate their journeys into vernacular literature from the feminine pursuits of an earlier time. Above all, they – and especially the generation of men after them – struggled with the potentially disturbing implications of the pleasures of absorption in reading and in travels through new, emotional realms inside and novel social and cultural worlds outside themselves.

Unlike the many other pleasurable potentialities proffered by modernity, those promised and delivered by the new modes of reading, in addition to having no clear purpose besides the pleasure of the reader, seem virtually limitless. Especially in the manner in which late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century readers devoured books, racing through the same one many times consecutively, reading for pleasure opened up a world without scarcity,

where the laws of double-entry bookkeeping did not apply. As a far more solitary practice than the Jewish learning that transpired in the Talmudic schools and academies of the day, reading for pleasure carried the specter of an emotionally self-sufficient disengagement from the reader's physical surroundings, especially those under the surveillance of traditional Jewish society's institutions and norms. At the same time, acts of reading, could construct new communities of individuals, bound by the simultaneity of their reading. But for those German Jews already concerned with the decline of Jewish communal organizations and the alluring hints of freedom or fulfillment promised by a dissolution into a larger Christian or simply German collective, reading for pleasure appeared more deconstructive than integrative.

As a result of their unsettling implications, the pleasures of the new reading practices became a central problem for modernizing Jewish intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Seeking to discipline the German Jewish reading revolution that was transforming Jewish culture and society, some of the leading intellectuals of the period struggled to moderate, professionalize, and redirect the new ways of interacting with books produced in modernity. In their efforts, they enlisted and helped define the ideals of *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft* articulated by German writers and statesmen in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

The origins and development of Jewish historical scholarship in the German lands during the nineteenth century have been explained in a variety of ways. Scholars have long agreed on the centrality of the phenomenon in modern German Jewish culture. Many historians of German and, indeed, European Jewry, recognize *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as one of the great creative expressions in the modern history of the Jews. But no one has as of yet interpreted this phenomenon's origins as a reaction to the modern Jewish discovery of reading for pleasure.

My work traces the ways in which two key figures of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were shaped by and tried to contest the "problem" of pleasure reading. By connecting the emergence of new scholarly discourses among German Jews to a cultural transformation which revolutionized traditional Jewish society with the promises of reading for pleasure, my dissertation also makes an argument about the modern history of pleasure and its discontents. While modernity has expanded the range of pleasures imaginable to increasing numbers of people, the modern West and all areas touched by it have produced new discourses aimed at limiting pleasure – especially the kind of pleasure associated with the imagination. Following the roots of this critique of pleasure would take us into a past more distant than the times described here. But my hope is that an elucidation of one particular, historical formulation of the problem of pleasure – a formulation that emerged from the productive interplay of modern Jewish, Christian, European, and German cultures in transition – might contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole.

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