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IRVINE

"A scarecrow to the nations:" Engulfment and Historicity in Jewish Writing

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Comparative Literature

by

Daniel Carnie

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Rei Terada, Chair

Professor Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan

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2020

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DEDICATED

To

Chae, Mom, Dad, David, and Bean

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely grateful for the support, encouragement and inspiration of my advisor, Rei Terada. In addition to the generosity of thought and frank advice that Rei brought to our conversations about this project, her scholarship and seminars shifted my thinking so fundamentally that it's impossible to overstate how transformative her mentorship has been. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan also played a huge part in the development of this project. I honestly can't thank him enough for all of what I've learned in the course of our conversations. In seminar as much as in directed readings, Radha introduced a level of collaboration and sheer creativity that I didn't think was possible in academia, and I couldn't be more grateful. Without Liron Mor, moreover, who had such incisive advice at all stages of this project, there is simply no way it would have come to fruition. Liron supported my scholarship but also pushed me to refine and sharpen my ideas, like no one else. She is a remarkable teacher and mentor, and I'm extremely lucky to have had her guidance at UCI. Additionally, from the department of Comparative Literature, Eyal Amiran was incredibly helpful. Eyal's teaching, scholarship and guidance had a huge impact on me, and many of the questions he introduced in our conversations continue to structure my thinking. My eternal respect goes to these geniuses.

My dear friends and fellow graduate students at UCI also made this project possible, in addition to keeping me afloat through it. My conversations with Kevork Murad, Morgan Slade, Parisa Vaziri, Nima Yolmo, Michael Berlin, Williston Chase, Amanda Mixon, Ana Baginski, Chris Malcolm, Mell Rivera, Yassaman Rahimi, and Anandi Rao were absolutely transformative. These interlocutors shook the foundations of my thinking. I would be remiss not to acknowledge Kevork's insights in particular, without which this project would not have gotten off the ground. Outside of the Department of Comparative Literature, I have had the privilege to know and learn from the amazing Erica Cheung, Jessica Pruett and Elaine Kathryn Andres. And without Bindya Baliga, lastly, there is no way I would have made it through graduate school. Bindya is a remarkable administrator, and an incredibly caring person besides. These acknowledgements can't approximate the powerful impact all of these people have had on my life, but suffice it to say that I am blessed to have known every one of them.

A huge shout-out is also owed to my family and friends outside of academia who provided such helpful feedback over the years to the ideas that ended up here. Kirk, Marion, Mitchell, Kevin, Josie, Vicco, Chae, David, Richard, Jesse, Phil and Estee all made huge contributions to this project – even while they may not realize it.

In addition to the intellectual and personal assistance acknowledged above, the completion of this dissertation was aided by two grants from the UCI Center for Jewish Studies, a grant from the School of Humanities to study Arabic, a Dean's fellowship, a Dissertation-Year fellowship, and (lastly) the Murray Krieger Fellowship from UCI's School of Humanities. I would also like to thank the Center for Jewish History in New York City, for their help finding materials.

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"The Literary Imagination in Israel-Palestine: Orientalism, Poetry, and Biopolitics, by Hella Bloom Cohen." *Middle Eastern Literatures* Vol. 21 No. 2-3 (2018).

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"A scarecrow to the nations:" Engulfment and Historicity in Jewish Writing

By

Daniel Carnie

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Irvine, 2020

Professor Rei Terada, Chair

"A scarecrow to the nations:" Engulfment and Historicity in Jewish Writing takes up Jewish writing in the United States and Israel-Palestine from the perspective of how it understands temporality and history. Drawing on examples from American sociology and poetry, as well as historiographies of Zionism and the academic field of Jewish Studies, I trace a discourse in which historical thinking is imbricated in Euro-American hegemony, thus inspiring a certain level of ambivalence. At the same time, this dissertation also attends to moments of anti-historical thought in Jewish writing. In the second half of the dissertation, I address the context of Israel-Palestine. This move provides a compelling point of comparison to the American case, as Zionism was/is often thought of as the only genuine version of Jewish politics in the modern era. Zionism thus presents other unique discursive intersections of historicity and power.

INTRODUCTION

I. ENGULFMENT AND HISTORICITY

While this dissertation largely concerns itself with Jewish writing from the United States and Israel-Palestine, it is also more generally (and in the humblest terms possible) a critique of the place of "history" in Western discourse. I would, therefore, like to begin with a theoretical overview of some of the major concepts that I use in my analysis to tackle the problem of history.

In many ways, I'm starting from the idea of "engulfment," which I draw from Denise Ferreira Da Silva's *Toward a Global Idea of Race.* By engulfment, Silva means Europe's need to eclipse what it considers external to it. This need is connected to Europe's concept of "the human" as well as the "secular" concept of historical time (a la Hegel especially), and is rooted in legacies of conquest:

> engulfment, introduces a fundamental but sublatable and reducible difference when it circumscribes the place of the realization of spirit. For it writes post-Enlightenment European social configurations as the only ones in which it has completed its trajectory in its recognition of universality and self-determination[1]

Silva elaborates further:

> In transcendental poesis, the merging of universal reason's regulative and productive powers writes the scene of engulfment, where exteriority is not only rendered onto-epistemologically irrelevant but, because already a moment of a transcendental productive force, it also becomes product and effect, the stuff without which "Spirit" cannot fulfill its essentiality, that is, to come into existence[2]

"Transcendental poesis" refers here to Hegel's understanding of time as the medium through which Europe would realize its mission or spirit. Thus, engulfment describes a process of

[1] Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 85.
[2] Silva 98-99.

enfolding others into the movement of this history, viewed from the perspective of European supremacy. It is precisely this kind of enfolding – by which Jewishness (for example) becomes both "product and effect" of Europe, "the stuff without which 'Spirit' cannot fulfill its essentiality" – that becomes the fuel of history.

Among the examples Silva brings in to show the role of engulfment in political thought, she cites what she calls "racial democracy" (and what Gilberto Freyre called "miscegenation democracy") in the context of Brazil, and "the logic of obliteration" in American sociology. Both of these strategies fold a representation of the other / the exterior into their projects of historical self-determination. One of the crucial aspects of both strategies of engulfment is that they transmute questions of race and racial power into questions of "culture." In my discussion below, I take up how the discourse of "culture" has occluded projects of emancipation for not only Jews but also other ethnics shoved under the banner of American multiculturalism. I will be talking about each of the "strategies" of engulfment at length below. Suffice it to say for now that "engulfment" (in general) describes a process whereby time (or "historicity") becomes a way for the Euro-American "Subject" to secure their positional superiority over populations that are considered antithetical to Europe, by manipulating the terms on which self-determination is understood.

One aspect of "engulfment" that Silva could have explored more in *Toward a Global Idea of Race* but that is crucially relevant here, is its Christian underpinning. Pairing Silva with the work of Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin and Kathleen Biddick helps to clarify that Hegelian "engulfment" wouldn't have been possible without Christianity's supersessionary temporality. Although Hegel's work is not always interpreted as Christian per se, *Phenomenology of Mind*

has been widely read as a thinly-veiled version of Christian temporality. Per Raz-Krakotzkin's analysis:

> Only a Christian like Augustine, who was concerned with the fateful relationship between the Christians and Jews, between the Old and New Testament, was able to conceive this idea, which later developed into Hegel's *Aufhebung*, a concept which all of us—Jews, Christians, Hegelians and non-Hegelians—share. This was the idea that the past must be understood both on its own terms and as a link in a chain leading to ourselves[3]

Kathleen Biddick supplements this further to argue that the very distinction between past and present, which currently organizes our idea of historicity, is founded on an attempt by Christian thought to manage its own anxiety about circumcision (which is to say that, it is constantly rearticulating and "encrypting" the (bad) "Jewish" form of circumcision in order to reinforce its own (good) form of circumcision, qua "circumcision of the heart"). What Kathleen Biddick refers to, in this regard, as "the typological imaginary" or "supersessionary time," is also what I refer to in this dissertation sometimes as "Pauline historicity." Taking after Biddick herself as well as Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, I trace this version of historical thinking to Paul, since it is in the writings of Paul that the supersessionary appropriation of Jewish circumcision to the baptismal "circumcision of the heart" is articulated.

By negating genealogy and carnality in Gallatians ("things of the body are less important than things of the spirit"), Paul triumphs over the Jew's supposed particularism, and arrogates to himself (and to Christ) the truth of universal human equality. He then turns around, in supersessionist fashion, and makes this universalism the fulfilment of Judaism as well: "True Jewishness lay, according to Paul, precisely in renunciation of difference and entry into the one body of Christ. Anyone at all can be Jewish, and those who 'call themselves Jews' are not

[3] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return." *Journal of Levantine Studies* vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 2013), 43-44

necessarily Jewish at all."[4] In this movement, the Jew becomes a metaphor for difference *and* universality, in such a way as to "depriv[e] those who have historically grounded identities in those material signifiers of the power to speak for themselves and remain different."[5] In other words, while the Jew becomes a symbol of universality, they are simultaneously deprived of a role in enacting that very idea. On Biddick's account, it is precisely this disempowerment and denigration of the flesh that fuels thought about temporality in the West (in addition to typological thinking about the Old Testament, and a whole lot of other things).

II. THE DECOLONIZATION OF JEWISHNESS

> We love the Jews, but not so much, and, above all, if they keep the place we have assigned them
> - *HOURIA BOUTELDJA*

As many scholars in "the secularism debates" (Talal Asad, Gil Anidjar, and others) have argued, what we call secular (often, in contrast to "religious extremism") is itself a cypher for Christian imperialism and domination. In this dissertation, it is *only* to the extent that "Jewishness" as an "secular" identity category has been influenced by such Christian domination that I take it up. I want to clarify this right off the bat, so as to avoid any potential misunderstanding. I am not discussing world Jewry, nor Judaism as a religious practice, but rather the "place assigned" to Jews in Western discourse – especially when this place is understood as secular and "cultural." It must be kept in mind that this category often has nothing

[4] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin. "Diaspora: Generation and Ground of Jewish Identity." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Summer, 1993), 697.
[5] "Diaspora" 697.

to do with the lives of people who actually identify with Judasim. My focus is much more on what Jewishness *means* for Western discourse.

After having synthesized the insights of a few key scholars -- principally Gil Anidjar on race and religion, Denise Da Silva on historicity, Kathleen Biddick on the typological imaginary, Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin on Christian Hebraism, Houria Bouteldja on philo-semitism, and Joyce Dalsheim on what she calls "self-elimination" -- I argue that this idea of "cultural" Jewishness cannot be properly separated from the power of Christian thought in the discourse of "the West." I approach this identity category as one that, under Euro-American hegemony, has been understood as (1) upholding the historical mission of the "secular" (i.e. Christian) West against the dogmatic and despotic East, (2) as primarily guided by a non-orthodox Ashkenazi leadership, and (3) as a "culture" rather than (strictly speaking) a race, ethnicity or religion.

III. CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1, I explore a period to which many historians and sociologists trace Jewish ascension into American whiteness (as a sociological fact). It seems to me that this idea, of the early 20th century Jewish ascension into whiteness, is a lynchpin in attempts to "decolonize" Jewishness; there being a broad consensus that, before the period between 1882 and World War II, American Jews were *not* properly "white," but then became white. Tracing Zionism and "race" in early 20th century Jewish social science, I attempt to show that Jewish American whiteness was not merely the product of a material context in which Jews became middle class, but rather, the result of a discursive constellation that Denise Da Silva calls "the logic of obliteration." The logic of obliteration "engulfed" Jews into, rather than simply making them into

a part of, whiteness. Using Denise Da Silva's concept of "engulfment" to trace the West's production of its own history of modernity *through* deracinated others, I argue that the concept of "Jewish marginalization" functioned in the United States to make Jewish writers unwitting junior partners of the West. In Chapter 1, I focus especially on the writings of early 20th century Jewish social scientists like Horace Kallen and Louis Wirth, framing their attempts to rewrite Jewishness (as culture) in the context of larger trends in German-Jewish historicism. I close the chapter with an example of how I see this same dynamic manifesting today in the works of "culturally" Jewish celebrities like Ezra Koenig.

In Chapter 2, I attend to how the field of "Jewish Studies" defines Jewishness. Working through a number of texts by Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, I argue that their ideas uncritically perpetuate the engulfment of Jewishness. Chapter 2 is thus a further exploration of the ideas I lay out in the previous chapter. However, I tend to lean more heavily on the problem of historicism here, arguing that by imagining it possible to think *historically* without thinking through the lens of typology/supersession, the Boyarins reinscribe a Christian subject position at the heart of Jewish Studies. Especially where they deal with Zionism in their work, I see something of a pitfall.

Chapter 3 is a jump back in time, to the late 19th century, where Emma Lazarus -- as a Sephardi Jew -- stood at the cross-roads of American "Jewishness," between the racial and the cultural. I offer this as an example of what it looks like for a Jewish author to grapple with their own engulfment into "Jewishness." Drawing on the work of J Kameron Carter, I elaborate on how Lazarus glimpsed the extent to which her own Jewish self-identification was appropriated from her and exploited by the Christian West through the concept of a renewed, "Protestant" Jewish culture. This chapter, again, builds on the previous -- by drawing out Lazarus' struggle to

escape the engulfment of Jewishness, and to escape/destroy history. Prominent in the texts that I analyze in this chapter are Emma Lazarus' Zionist essay *Epistle to the Hebrews* and her play "Dance of Death." As a point of comparison, I also use the work of Reform German-American rabbi Gustav Gotthiel.

I hope for these first three chapters to demonstrate a common theme. For Emma Lazarus and Horace Kallen, who thought they could revive Judaism through the lens of American Hebraism (chapter 1); as much as for the Boyarins, who attempt to rework the Pauline enlightenment from a Jewish diasporic perspective (chapter 2); and for Gustav Gottheil, who tried through his interfaith activism to claim for Reform Judaism the basis of American republicanism (chapter 3), reclaiming "Jewishness" in each case turned out to be a failed enterprise that ended up retrenching the Christian West's typological narrative of its own progress through engulfment.

Chapter 4 takes us to the British Mandate regime in Palestine, where I again focus on the problem of historical time (but taking a slightly different tack). Here, reading Settler Colonial Studies (Patrick Wolfe, especially) against the grain of Palestinian historians and journalists, I take issue with the deployment of history to explain Zionist settler colonialism. I want to broaden the picture of Zionist settler colonialism to encompass the long duree of Christitan incursion into the Middle East, and to highlight how, in the purgatorial gap of historical "self-determination," Jewish and Arab writers questioned/question the very idea of progress. Amongst the texts that I analyze here are Najib Nassar's journalism, Judah Magnes' journals and Haim Bialik's essays. I intend for these reflections to contribute to the larger arc of my critique of Pauline historicity (and how it continues to impact scholarly fields like Settler Colonial Studies).

Chapter 5 deals with Palestine again, but in the second half of the 20th century and early years of the 21st. Broadening the scope of my deployment of Silva's concept of engulfment, I attempt to describe a form of engulfment that Israel's "principle of separation" often occludes. In a context where multiple strategies of engulfment co-exist, I explore one of the subtler, less obvious ones: "miscegenation democracy." Taking up Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* and Sayed Kashua's *Second Person Singular,* I explore the engulfment of Arab characters into the life narratives of Zionist characters via this strategy. Although Kanafani and Kashua's works were written in completely different periods and for different audiences, I intend, with these readings, to put a finer point on certain parts of Western imperial "history" that seem to be shockingly enduring – so enduring, in fact, that they might call into question the notion of time marching from past to future, in empty, homogenous units.

CHAPTER ONE
Engulfment Beyond the Melting Pot:
Jewish Multiculturalism in the Early-20th Century United States

Whiteness! Whiteness!
White peaks
and swimming white clouds.
Peaks and clouds mixed.
Whiteness! Whiteness!
Somewhere a palace . . .
white walls,
And gleaming white columns.
There sits a young sultan
wrapped up in white cloths
and around him
women's bodies
twisting, stretching,
Whiteness! Whiteness!
Someone white
has spread out over us
and we are hovering in a world
of white

- *ZISHE VAYNPER*[6]

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I read early 20th century Jewish American writing, exemplified especially by American sociologists like Horace Kallen, not simply for moves to assimilate into or disaffiliate from a hegemonic American political mainstream. Rather, I use it as a jumping off point for an analysis of how American multiculturalism harmonized (and continues to harmonize) with various ethnic and cultural nationalisms in its vision of an American "international nation." I try to demonstrate moreover the special role that this discourse gives to Zionism -- namely, of destabilizing the concept of racial solidarity altogether and thereby burying any recognition of the racial order *built into* American politics.

[6] Zishe, Vaynper. "Whiteness [1921]," in *Proletpen*, ed. Glaser and Weintraub (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 165.

Throughout this chapter, I use Denise Da Silva's concept of "engulfment," and more specifically what she calls "the logic of obliteration," to trace the destabilization of racial discourse in American Zionist writing and social science. My goal is thus to nuance perspectives that consider discourse about Jewish particularity simply a hindrance or catalyst of Jewish assimilation. At least in the United States, Jewish writing (about Jewish marginalization, the "Jewish ghetto," Zionism, etc.) was part of a discourse that shifted the terms of difference from race to "culture," thereby sublimating and abjecting forms of contestation to Euro-American power based on racial solidarity.

Under a symptomatic reading, the poem (above) by Jewish-American émigré writer Zishe Vaynper, "Whiteness," brings together the central themes that guide this chapter. Being himself a member of the Zionist *Poale Zion,* Vaynper's deployment of the "sultan" here most likely has something to do with Palestine, which had fallen from the Ottoman empire into the hands of the British Mandate government. Unsurprisingly, Vaynper parrots the well-worn orientalist trope of pathological hypersexuality in his depiction of the sultan and his courtesans. What's more interesting is that this sultan seems to give his power over to the speaker through a series of erotic transpositions: from the despotic sultan, to "someone white" who "spreads" (as if he now were a courtesan too) over the speaker, finally to "a world/ of white" in which the speaker is helplessly suspended, leaving the sultan nowhere to be found. Surrounded in white, it is now the speaker who seemingly wears the white cloths. Drowning in his oversized outfit, Vaynper's speaker depicts some recognition of a new kind of "white" authority.

Vaynper himself was a soldier for the British empire in Palestine during WWI. This poem, written after the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised the Zionists a "national home" in Palestine, conveys some of the newfound authority (what the League of Nations would

call "national self-determination") conferred upon Jewish writers by Europe. It is this kind of "whiteness" that I think the sultan represents, indirectly.[7]

The somewhat panicked way in which the speaker addresses this may have something to do with the fact, long held by American historians, that Jewish-Americans were slowly "becoming white" during the period.[8] By all accounts this becoming-white was *not* a result of Zionism. In fact, Zionism was considered a hindrance to the assimilation of Jewish people into American whiteness,[9] which is why it was decisively rejected in the 1880s, and up until the 1930s, couldn't even begin to enter mainstream American discourse. The notion that Zionism was a hindrance in this sense also explains why Jewish-American writers often embraced it as a form of *anti*-assimilationism, and as a critique of American society.[10] And yet, as I hope to demonstrate, the dichotomy was false. Both (at this early moment) as a form of anti-assimilationism and (later) as a form of assimilation into the American mainstream, Zionist discourse was of a piece with the production of American multiculturalism.

In the midst of the above poem, where a profusion of present-continuous verbs and gerunds ("swimming," "gleaming," "twisting," "stretching") confuse temporality, the speaker's after-the-fact suggestion that "someone white/ *has* spread out over us" makes the action uncannily retrospective. The erratically repeated "Whiteness! Whiteness!" seems as if it were emerging from a different, more present time than that of the narration. Vaynper's speaker is thus likely looking *back* at things like the *white* clouds, *white* columns, etc. as warning signs that

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[7] And this would make a certain kind of sense in a context where the very idea of power is orientalized. See Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans. Heron (Verso: 1998).

[8] e.g. Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton University Press, 2008); Jennifer Glaser, *Borrowed Voices: Writing and Racial Ventriloquism in the Jewish American Imagination* (Rutgers University Press, 2016); Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[9] See Goldstein.

[10] See, e.g., Ludwig Lewissohn, *The Answer. The Jew and the World: Past, Present and Future* (Liveright, 1939).

he unfortunately disregarded. Whiteness is what the speaker in the poem above was trying to escape as he ventured up the mountain to meet this sultan, and likely also, what Vaynper sought through his Zionist activism. The surprising circumstance in which he finds himself, however, conveys what Denise Ferreira da Silva calls "engulfment." Engulfed as he is by the Christian West, the speaker indirectly grasps that their anti-assimilation is itself coopted.

By engulfment, Silva means Europe's need to eclipse what it considers external to it. This need is connected to Europe's concept of "the human" as well as the "secular" concept of historical time (a la Hegel especially),[11] and is rooted in legacies of conquest:

> engulfment, introduces a fundamental but sublatable and reducible difference when it circumscribes the place of the realization of spirit. For it writes post-Enlightenment European social configurations as the only ones in which it has completed its trajectory in its recognition of universality and self-determination[12]

Silva elaborates further:

> In transcendental poesis, the merging of universal reason's regulative and productive powers writes the scene of engulfment, where exteriority is not only rendered onto-epistemologically irrelevant but, because already a moment of a transcendental productive force, it also becomes product and effect, the stuff without which "Spirit" cannot fulfill its essentiality, that is, to come into existence[13]

"Transcendental poesis" refers here to Hegel's understanding of time as the medium through which Europe would realize its mission or spirit. Thus, engulfment describes a process of enfolding others into the movement of this history, viewed from the perspective of European

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[11] Although Hegel's work is not always interpreted as Christian, *Phenomenology of Mind* has been widely read as a thinly-veiled version of Christian temporality. See, for instance, Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return." *Journal of Levantine Studies* vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 2013), 43-44: "Only a Christian like Augustine, who was concerned with the fateful relationship between the Christians and Jews, between the Old and New Testament, was able to conceive this idea, which later developed into Hegel's *Aufhebung*, a concept which all of us—Jews, Christians, Hegelians and non-Hegelians—share. This was the idea that the past must be understood both on its own terms and as a link in a chain leading to ourselves."

[12] Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 85.

[13] Silva 98-99.

supremacy. It is precisely this kind of enfolding -- by which Jewishness (in this case) becomes both "product and effect" of Europe, "the stuff without which 'Spirit' cannot fulfill its essentiality" -- that Vaynper's poem demonstrates.

Among the examples Silva brings in to show the role of engulfment in political thought, she cites what she calls "racial democracy" (and what Gilberto Freyre called "miscegenation democracy") in the context of Brazil, and "the logic of obliteration" in American sociology. Both of these strategies fold a representation of the other / the exterior into their projects of self-determination. While both logics are operative to varying degrees in all situations of conquest, I argue below that the "logic of obliteration" helps us to think more deeply about what "Jewishness" meant for Vaynper and other Jewish writers in the American context during the early 20th century.

Between dual fears of conversion and persecution, the debate about Jewish assimilation masked an underlying anxiety about a certain inescapable transformation in Jewish identity. Jewishness was coming to be seen less as a "race" (i.e. no longer considered to be outside of the "progress" of historical time) than as "a culture," a nation, etc. These new designations couched Jewishness *within* white civilization, by making it a crucial piece in the emerging discourse of multiculturalism.[14] Impacting this was the fact that Jews were also in the process of losing their place in the political and symbolic order of Europe. Beyond (or alongside) being orientalized, Jews had been important to Europe as a tool for envisioning internationalism.[15] Since they were

[14] On the question of how multiculturalism is a settler-colonial ideology that upholds white supremacy, see Hilton Obenzinger, "Naturalizing Cultural Pluralism, Americanizing Zionism: The Settler Colonial Basis to Early-Twentieth Century Progressive Thought." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107:4 (Fall 2008).

[15] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt: 1976), 21: "the elimination of Jews from the international scene had a more general and deeper significance than antisemitism. Just because the Jews had been used as a non-national element, they could be of value in war and peace only as long as during the war everybody tried consciously to keep the possibilities of peace intact, only as long as everybody's aim was a peace of compromise and the re-establishment of a *modus vivendi*. As soon as 'victory or death' became a determining policy, and war actually aimed at the complete annihilation of the enemy, the Jews could no longer be of any use"

spread diasporically throughout the countries of Europe and in many cases sustained major national economies, "Jewishness" became the means of imagining and establishing a European "peace among the nations." Arendt's argument is that when this peace was eroded by imperialism and fascism, "Jewishness" became extraneous to the logic of Europe.

While I agree with this framing, my conclusion is slightly different. Jews were never consummately "extraneous" to the logic of Europe. Although they were racialized in particular ways in different contexts, they were never abjected in the same way that people of African descent were, for example. I thus partially disagree with the literature that posits Jewish ascension into whiteness as an American invention of the 20th century. Perhaps at the time that whiteness was "invented," Jews were thought to become part of it, but they did not enter from an position completely outside of it.[16]

In any case, the whiteness with which Jews were identified came at a cost. Silva argues that engulfment in general prevents projects of racial emancipation[17] -- meaning here that "Jewishness" would not serve as a rallying-cry around which to take aim at, and resist, white power. Some of the most prominent commentaries on Jewish identity during this period fail to capture this aspect of engulfment. And yet it crucially explains the emergence of Jewish sociology and of what Jennifer Glaser has called Jewish "racial ventriloquism" – both of which I

[16] Never were Jews fully equated with African peoples, or subjected to social death in the same way that black Africans were (via the Atlantic slave trade) in the United States. Never did Euro-American thought completely remove the idea of Jewishness from its own orbit. The fact that Jews were identified with whiteness during this period, itself, shouldn't distract us from the larger context in which Jews have always been circumscribed within the orbit of the European West. Engaging in an admittedly paranoid perspective, would it be too much to suggest that the Christian West's persecution of Jews and its philo-semitic recuperation of them are both equally a part of the same mechanism that upholds antiblacknesss? Although it would require an entire dissertation on its own, I think it would be worthwhile to explore if (as I suspect) Jewish racialization is always laced with antiblackness, regardless of whether it degrades or upholds. And if so, how would scholars of Jewish identity revise their interpretation of racialization (namely, as a historical phenomenon, contingent upon the national and economic realities of any given context) to account for that consistency? How would we talk about "racialized" Jewish degradation as, even in its worst iterations, within the orbit of Europe and within the orbit of (white, "transparent") civil society?

[17] Silva 162.

take up in detail below. In the background of these trends was the antecedent development of secular historicism. Jewish-American writers largely inherited this discourse from German-Jewish scholarship (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) and from Reform Judaism (which by most accounts was a mostly assimilatory, Christian-like version of Jewish ritual practice).[18]

II. (WAITING FOR) THE RETURN TO HISTORY

Inspired by the *Haskalah* (itself tied up with assimilation), German-Jewish and Russian-Jewish scholars of the nineteenth-century ushered in a new era of secular thought about Jewish history (a kind of thought that I think it is fair to call "historicist").[19] Framing Jewish history as one of a nation amongst nations marching through empty, homogenous time, this new discourse put a finer point on questions of assimilation: does Jewish history prove that the Jewish nation is like or distinct from the other nations of Europe?[20] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin has convincingly argued that the "secularism" of this historical paradigm was problematic for the reason that it

[18] I elaborate much more fully on *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and American Reform Judaism in my chapter on Emma Lazarus.

[19] David N. Myers describes this shift extensively in *Resisting History*. In *Reinventing the Jewish Past,* Myers tackles the influence of this secularized Jewish thought on the study of history at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the first major Zionist university in Palestine.

[20] In the United States at least – even while we find a little bit of both – there was a clear shift toward the former. In contrast to the European truism that "The jewish race is one of the primary races of mankind that has retained its integrity, in spite of the continual change of its climatic environment, and . . . conserved its purity through the centuries (Hess 59), we find as early as 1882 the insistence by Jewish-American writers that they formed "a race . . . whose physical constitution has adapted itself to the vicissitudes of every climate (Lazarus 35). Just a few years later, in the "Pittsburgh Platform of 1885," Reform Jewish leaders decisively rejected the nationalistic interpretation of Jewish identity, writing that "Jewish" designated nothing more than a confessional community. By the turn of the century, Maurice Fishberg was on his way to proving that the racial "Semitic type" didn't exist (Goldstein 111-112). Louis Wirth builds on this in *The Ghetto,* insisting that "the race" is merely a product of the ghetto and that it will/should vanish (60-62, 130).

Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem* (Bloch Publishing Company, 1918); Emma Lazarus, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York : Jewish Historical Society of New York, 1987 [1882]); Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (University of Chicago Press, 1988); Goldstein, *The Price*; Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1928).

implicitly promoted a Protestant view of history in which Jews were outside of time and waiting to be integrated back into the "Age of Grace."

> The dialectic of assimilation postulated an acceptance of Christianity's ambivalent attitude toward Judaism and reformulated it . . . In the Christian view the Jews were witnesses to the truth of the Gospel as successors to the Jews of Christ's period, on the one hand, and were a people who rejected the Gospel (and thus persisted in their stubbornness and blindness), on the other. In the modern Jewish context, and particularly in Zionism, this ambivalent relationship was replaced by an attitude toward the Jewish exilic past. On the one hand, the present was conceived as the realization of aspirations that had existed throughout Jewish history that could not be realized in the conditions of exile. On the other hand, the past was conceived as a partial reality upon whose negation the present was founded . . . theological discourse was partly replaced by and in fact re-articulated with the notion of history as referring to *the West and as opposed to what was then considered to be outside history* . . . The analysis of modern Jewish discourse demonstrates the inherent Orientalism associated with secularization. Secularization involved an obvious identification with the West and a distinction from the East[21]

The crucial distinction here between Western "progress" and the (non-)history of Jews in exile (*galut*) informed much of secular Jewish thought (and secular thought about Jews) in Europe and the US even where it did not address "history" per se. To take a particularly important example, we find a rejection of the diaspora in the ambiguously racial discourse of "Hebraism," which gained wider circulation in the late-nineteenth century amongst Jewish-Americans.

Hebraism associated diasporic Jewishness with bodily infirmity. Because life in the diasporic ghetto was thought to be a-historical and stagnant, the Jewish body within its walls was conceived as sick and hysterical. Hebraism rejected this "bodily infirmity" and vaunted militaristic images from the bible of pre-diasporic Jewish life in Zion. While racially alienated from this ancient "Jewish type," many writers nonetheless built a connection to it through concepts of culture and "national spirit." Emma Lazarus, for example, drawing on the work of

[21] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return." *Journal of Levantine Studies* vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 2013), 43-44, emphasis mine.

German historicist Heinrich Graetz, celebrated the glorious “Judean” type exemplified in the Bar Kochba revolt.[22] She concomitantly deplored the physical state into which the diaspora had put Jewish communities, and advocated vociferously for technical training in New York (The Hebrew Technical Institute) and manual labor in Palestine (Society for the Colonization and Improvement of East European Jews). This refashioning of Jewish identity via Hebraism, even while it incorporated ideas from race science, worked itself out on the plane of the "cultural." It signified a kind of cultural heritage that was lost on modern-day Jews -- but crucially, one that could be regained.

Even where the ghetto and its denigrated Jewish type were not in view, however, the diaspora was thought to rob Jews of history through assimilation, by treating

> each as a 'natural man,' the equal of all other 'natural men,' without heredity, history, language, culture, or social memory, a mere 'now' in the temporal extent of the generations. The stripping of his selfhood which this requires from any man was of course an impossible price to pay for enfranchisement. It was suicide[23]

By denigrating Jewish diasporic experience as "a mere 'now,'" writers Lazarus and Kallen circumspectly contributed to the modern iteration of the political theology of the West, in which assimilation did not solve the problem of Jewish ahistoricality. Regardless of whether they were ghettoized or assimilated, Jews were thought to be outside of the march of history. Raz-Krakotzkin's gloss suggests that, by casting the Jews as indolently waiting to return to history, this version of secular Jewish thought paved the way for a reclamation of Jewish history and "culture."

It was in the context of this tension that what Caleb Maskell calls the “social-scientific turn in Jewish self-narration,” a crucial piece in Jewish engulfment, emerged and came to

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[22] See *Epistle.*

[23] Horace Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics: A Study in History and Social Psychology* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921), 35.

fruition in the United States.[24] With Horace Kallen's landmark 1915 essay "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot" came a wave of sociological writing about minority experience, and Jewish-American experience in particular. Jewish *immigrant* communities in the US (as opposed to the established Sephardi Jewish community, tracing back to the colonial period) were often poor and sequestered in "ghettos." To the Jewish-American public, they represented precisely the kind of 'backwards' a-historicality against which *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had defined its project. Much as the idea of the Jewish nation did in Germany, so too did it mobilize different writers differently in America. The work of not only Horace Kallen, but Randolphe Bourne and Louis Wirth as well, all functioned to address a tension between assimilation and multicultural difference. Writers like these were crucial in spearheading an explicitly Jewish discourse of "culture" and multiculturalism.

III. THE "SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC TURN IN JEWISH SELF-NARRATION"

In Kallen's depiction of a multicultural America in "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," he argues against total assimilation, defending immigrant communities through the argument that diversity makes America more "international." His characterization is more complicated than that however:

> As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization, with this difference: a musical symphony is written before it is played; in the symphony of civilization the playing is the writing, so that there is nothing so fixed and inevitable about its progressions as in music[25]

[24] Caleb Maskell, "'Modern Christianity Is Ancient Judaism': Rabbi Gustav Gottheil and the Jewish-American Religious Future, 1873–1903," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* vol. 23, no. 2 (2013), 175.

[25] Horace Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot." *The Nation* 100 (February 25, 1915), 220.

Although the boundaries of identities may shift, Kallen is clear that each ethnic group / cultural group / "[national] spirit" has a distinct function. Part of what makes the shifting of these boundaries so important for Kallen is that, according to his schema, racialized others are required to assimilate into American culture *before* they express their difference in the "symphony of civilization." In this sense, Kallen argues that Americanization "liberates" difference. On the other hand, his insistence that the "playing is the writing" partly represses this precursive "liberation" of difference.

Kallen's own life story includes precisely this kind of partially occluded "liberation" of difference. Having abandoned Jewish practice completely to then rediscover it through the lens of Barrett Wendell's Protestant fascination with "Hebrews," Kallen refashioned his own stance. In the words of Hilton Obenzinger, he "fashioned himself to be an American by way of being a Jew and a Zionist by way of being an American"[26]

> Wendell "re-Judaized" Kallen by bringing him into the orbit of Christian settler colonial culture based on a covenantal, nationalist narrative that was deeply philo-Semitic in relation to the ancient Hebrews (although he reviled most Eastern European Jews in the flesh). Kallen [in turn] "re-Judaized" Judaism by *redefining its core as cultural rather than religious,* calling it Hebraism, revising the Hellenism/Hebraism dyad from Matthew Arnold to his own purposes. Because he saw the Old Testament as the foundation for American ideals of democracy and equality, he identified Hebraism as "the catalyst that encouraged the formation of a free society with notions of equal liberty to all individuals and to all groups no matter how different, i.e., a pluralistic society."[27]

Kallen's version of Jewishness thus participated in the discourse of a liberated cultural difference, i.e. "Hebraism." Like his American Protestant teachers, he came to think of Judaism as the ethical or cultural core of the American Federalist ideal, and re-appraised

[26] Hilton Obenzinger. "Naturalizing Cultural Pluralism, Americanizing Zionism: The Settler Colonial Basis to Early-Twentieth Century Progressive Thought." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107:4 (Fall 2008), 655.

[27] Obenzinger 655-656, emphasis mine.

it on this basis. Without interrogating the typological *Christian* basis of this philo-semitic "Hebraism," Kallen's writing ends up reinscribing whiteness. As many critics have acknowledged, the multicultural orchestra Kallen imagines totally buries the question of non-white (especially, African American) identification, as it is exclusively composed of white *ethnics*.

Kallen's article confuses race with nation and culture. While for some readers his attachment to the idea of distinct, unassimilated cultures *masks* a racial way of thinking about groups in terms of "primitive" and inherent differences, others read his failure to explicitly talk about the color line as a major oversight.[28] Ultimately, I would suggest, it is rather the ambivalence whereby race becomes nation, and whereby race becomes culture, that is Kallen's biggest contribution to Jewish engulfment. The two-step process Kallen outlines in which difference is subtly metamorphosed into another, "liberated" kind of difference conforms to the imperative of engulfment. Jewishness was changing from a racial into a cultural category, and thereby absorbed into a version of federal democracy that fundamentally excludes certain unnamed others.

We can see these effects from how they shaped the debate around Zionism. Unlike in the nineteenth century, Zionism was beginning to enter the American mainstream in the early 20th century. Once the discourse of cultural pluralism was in place, sociologists like Kallen found it easy to blend ideas of federalism with the Zionist settler-colonial ideal.

Inspired by "Democracy versus the Melting Pot," Randolphe Bourne argued in 1916 that American Zionism was key to American multicultural "internationalism" precisely because

[28] Noam Pianko, "The True Liberalism of Zionism: Horace Kallen, Jewish Nationalism, and the Limits of American Pluralism," *American Jewish History* 94:4 (December 2008), 299-300.

Zionism is *transnational.*[29] The distinction Bourne draws between Jewish transnationalism and American internationalism here is telling in that, even while it brings the two together, it shifts the terms with which (as Arendt argues) Europe had previously envisioned Jewish identity. Bourne acknowledges as much when he writes that "if the Jews have been the first international race, I look to America to be the first international nation."[30] We can see here some recognition that the discursive mantle of internationalism has been passed down. When the Jews were international, they were a "race," but when America became international in the multicultural sense, internationalism itself lost its racial coordinates (in the figure of "the Jew") and became "national." Thus the idea of the Jewish "race" itself is here submerged in the multicultural iteration of "internationalism."[31] This internationalism would *de facto* be, like Kallen's cultural pluralism, antiblack, as it tends to privilege the conceptual demands of "ethnicity" and "culture" over those of race. The natal alienation of slavery, barring any possibility of black heritage on history's discursive terms, make blackness fundamentally ill-fit to occupy this "orchestral" depiction of America's multicultural space.[32]

Kallen's writing about Zionism proceeds along a similar track. In *Zionism and World Politics* (1921), he, like Bourne, grounds his argument for internationalism on Jewish experience. But rather than finding internationalism in the diaspora, Kallen argues that it comes out of the Jewish inhabitation of Palestine.

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[29] "Dual loyalty," in other words, was something materially good for the American republic.

[30] Randolph Bourne, "Zionism and Transnationalism [1916]." in *Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History,* ed. Michaels (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 291.

[31] Although it would take an entire chapter on its own, it would be worth exploring how the multicultural idea, in this way, destabilizes the radical projects of "proletarian internationalism" and "third world internalism" from their very inception.

[32] For more complete discussions of antiblackness and natal alienation, see Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Carribean Journal of Criticism* 12:2 (2008); and Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Duke University Press, 2010).

> The ideal of international peace under a general law for all nations is the outcome of the bitter political experience of a small state situated at the junction point between the competing military imperialisms of Asia and Africa. The Prophets were nothing if not *realpolitiker* with a passion for the preservation of Israel for Zion and of Zion for Israel, and they grew to realize that the only device by which this could be secured was an international order and a single law[33]

Here we find a thinly-veiled reflection of the relations between Zionism and British imperial *realpolitik* in the Levant. Kallen's acknowledgment that the Jewish experience necessary for "international peace" is that of occupying a small state between "competing military imperialisms" registers not just the power of international law to bring global peace, but also the extreme vulnerability of Jewish life to colonial machinations. In the context of what Zionism looked like in 1921, this is clearly a comment on the British Mandate, which both connected Zionism to currents in international peace efforts after WWI (via The League of Nations) and at the same time made Zionism beholden to the British Mandate Regime.

Kallen's use of a biblical story about Jewish "nationalism" is a strategic, Hebraist move to occlude the role of white imperialism in shaping Jewish "history." British imperialism notably does not appear amongst the entities (imperialisms "of Asia and Africa") against which his Zionism and Jewish "peace" has to struggle in this narrative. Kallen here uses historicism to configure a Jewish nation whose international perspective always functions in concert with, but *never as a result of*, white imperialism. It is a disavowal. Even as a form of anti-assimilationism and as an inspiration to American multiculturalism, Kallen's idea of Zionism is simply another veiled recognition that the "Jewish" role in world politics has become the stuff of white imperialism.

In another version of the social-scientific turn in Jewish self-narration, Louis Wirth rehearsed a negative attitude toward diasporic Jewish communities in his precise and elaborate

[33] *Zionism* 11.

description of the Jewish urban ghetto. I argue that Wirth's writing acutely draws out the moment of Jewish engulfment by using racializing terms that Christian historicism had up until this point sustained to describe Jewish identity while also deterritorializing those very terms. In a development seemingly opposed to Kallen and Bourne's cultural pluralist politics, which shifted Jewish race into the terrain of "culture," Wirth and the Chicago School of sociology directly address "Jewish" "race."

Wirth more openly considered Jewish difference in racial terms, and more openly analogized it to blackness. Whereas Kallen would dodge the color line entirely, Wirth faced it head on. Wirth's account of race, however, deals heavily in what Jennifer Glaser calls "racial ventriloquism" -- a process of deterritorializing racial signifiers in such a way as "to speak to anxieties about the waning of Jewish difference."[34] To the extent that this is the case, Wirth's work is very much a reaction or complement to Kallen and Bourne's work on *cultural* pluralism, as it mediates the ambiguous conceptual space between race and its vanishing.

IV. "RACIAL VENTRILOQUISM," AND THE "LOGIC OF OBLITERATION"

Wirth re-wrote racial identity as a choice that had to be repeatedly performed or disavowed, rather than as a form of domination; and he generalized this model to all forms of social marginalization.[35] As this logic configured populations that could not escape their racial subjection as pathologically undemocratic, Wirth's work did even more to bury mechanisms of racial subjection in the American body politic than did Kallen's.

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[34] Glaser 4.

[35] Configuring race as a kind of difference that could "vanish with the ghetto," and thus one that epitomized the effects of social marginalization on potentially any community. In the words of one writer, Jews became a "parable" for social marginalization. Jewish sociologists were able to "use" what they learned about the Jewish experience in America to talk about – or rather talk *for* – other groups "ventriloquistically."

Louis Wirth's 1928 book *The Ghetto* is another landmark text in the social-scientific turn. Written less than twenty years after Wirth's own arrival in the United States, Wirth's study of the immigrant slums of Chicago is an attempt to think about the "Jewish [racial] type" while also thinking outside of it.

> To the modern psychologist mind is not so much the cause as it is the result of activity. If we would know the mentality of a people, we must get acquainted with their activities and experiences. Isolation has exercised the most significant influence upon the Jew as a physical and social type[36]

Wirth begins his explication of the Jewish ghetto by talking about how it makes Jewish "mind" more abstract, replacing the immediacy of "primary contacts" with "secondary contacts" based purely on law and commerce. He argues, however, that "primary contacts" persist in the warmth of the closely knit "Jewish family" – a crucial part of Wirth's "cultural" depiction of Jewish identity. Ghetto isolation seems to *primarily* affect contacts between Jew and Gentile rather than intra-Jewish contacts, and yet Wirth writes about an intra-Jewish alienation as well.

Cataloging a variety of roles, types and functions in the ghetto,[37] and describing beautifully the warmth and immediacy of family ties,[38] Wirth nevertheless focalizes a Jewish type of ghetto psychology that is fundamentally ill-fit to occupy any of them. Because the child of the ghetto finds themselves between worlds – ghetto and city, private and public – they can't settle into either. Contrary to Joseph Jacobs' suggestion that living such a "duplex" life makes for a "richer and more iridescent" personality, Wirth argues that the Jew of the ghetto "is seldom himself."[39] At times this alienation filters so deeply into Wirth's descriptions of ghetto

[36] *Ghetto* 75.
[37] *Ghetto* 77-78.
[38] *Ghetto* 26.
[39] *Ghetto* 73, 126.

psychology that it destabilizes Jewish tradition itself, suggesting that Jewishness can no longer name anything but social isolation.

> His life was full and real only where the *values* to which he was accustomed were dominant. The Jew is not merely a product of his past social life, but his character is constantly being re-created along the old pattern because his past experience has so indelibly impressed upon him the value of this heritage that he inevitably sets to work to shape his environment to conform to his accustomed pattern[40]

The Mobius-like contortions through which Wirth's description goes here to describe the relationship between Jewish "values" / "heritage" and their performative reinscription is telling. For it to exist, isolation must be continually (self-)imposed. There is no rest for the weary in the production of "cultural" Jewishness. The description of Jewish culture at this point becomes an opportunity for a total semiotic evacuation of the idea of Jewish "race."

Judging by what he says about his larger project in *The Ghetto,* Wirth's elaborate portrayal of this alienation is an attempt to translate his own Jewishness into an academic discourse about culture. Wirth writes of his findings in *The Ghetto* that what he discovered about Jews through his research applies to human nature writ large.[41] In so doing, he brings to bear one of the critical aspects of the "social-scientific turn in Jewish self-narration:" Jewishness becomes a metaphor for the American minority experience in general.[42]

Jennifer Glaser has written astutely about how, with the wider circulation of the idea of Jewish suffering, Jewish-American writers increasingly felt they had license to speak for other minorities. Such a characterization surely fits Wirth's writing. I would argue that Wirth's construction here of the Jewish Ghetto, as not simply analogous to other minority ghettos but as a *paradigmatic* metaphor for the experience of social marginalization, plays a crucial role in the

[40] *Ghetto* 74, emphasis mine.
[41] *Ghetto* 36-37.
[42] *Ghetto* 282-287.

transition from talking about Jewishness as a race to talking about Jewish culture, and the emergence of a symbolic privilege Glaser calls "Jewish racial ventriloquism."

We can track how this practice of racial ventriloquism emerges from Wirth's abstraction and analogization of the Jewish ghetto experience, at the point that he engages the haptic and sensual dimensions of the ghetto. In a section titled "Ghetto Atmosphere," Wirth writes

> Several families often lived in a single building, and the location of the quarter was usually in the least desirable region of the city. One writer speaks of the ghetto of his native town as an "outcast quarter, which stretches along the unhealthy morasses of the river of our town. *Pestilential vapors poison the atmosphere*, which remains gloomy in spite of the clearest sunshine." *The protests which emanated* from the Jews with the establishment of the compulsory ghetto were numerous but unavailing . . . And yet, in spite of all the misery and oppression, the life in the ghetto had a sunny side. It is necessary to view a typical ghetto *concretely* to appreciate the fact that when active persecution ceased for the time being, the life within the ghetto walls was as rich and as human as in the world outside[43]

The parallelism Wirth draws here between the "pestilential vapors" and the protests that "emanated from the Jews" puts on display a curious logic of race in which the racial subaltern's desire for emancipation is itself racialized.[44] Jewish diasporic culture is no longer simply a product of ghetto isolation. While Wirth insists that "the Jewish racial type disappears with the disappearance of the ghetto," his characterization of Jewish difference here – and especially of Jewish emancipatory struggle – as an odor, as an "emanation," implies a racial difference of the Jewish body that emanates foreignness. Describing the work of the Chicago School of sociology, in which Wirth's work figured centrally, Denise da Silva writes that it fundamentally imagines

> an incessant wave of affectable "strangers" [racial others] coming from every corner of the globe to muddle an otherwise transparent social configuration . . . For the racial became an element of the U.S. social configuration only with the arrival of strangers whose bodily configuration . . . whose racial difference prevents them from "assimilation" into, or "amalgamation" with, the racial group who had created a "modern civilization" in the United States . . . the racial

[43] *Ghetto* 35, emphasis mine
[44] Silva 162.

> subaltern consciousness actualizes its position in a given social configuration, but because it results from race prejudice and other exterior determinants, when the racial subaltern subject emerges as a self-consciousness . . . it cannot but desire self-destruction[45]

Rather than simply a result of ghettoization and exclusion from white Christian America, the infirm Jewish body is necessarily, in *The Ghetto*, a cause of its own subjection. This logic is what Silva calls "the logic of obliteration." The Jewish body is not excluded merely due to some decision on the part of American society, but because of its own physical and moral self-isolating difference.

Wirth's argument that Jews embrace race consciousness only as a natural reaction to being a "stranger" in American civil society, and moreover, that this ends when their isolation ends (e.g. via the tearing down of the ghetto walls) is a ruse. On a deeper level, this argument presupposes that American society is always already *more* modern than its strangers, and that subalternity is the stranger's proper location (at least for the racialized stranger who cannot step out of the ghetto walls).[46]

According to this logic, the process of inclusion, allegedly inevitable and yet always conspicuously incomplete, tautologically "proves" that the failure of the racial other to become modern is not the result of white society, but of the racial other themselves. In *The Ghetto*, Wirth mobilizes this logic to shift the boundaries of Jewish identity. As Kallen suggests in *his* work, Jewish racial difference must be "liberated" and transformed into a new form of difference. Wirth plays with racial boundaries -- shifting, throughout his discussion of the ghetto, from a Jewish to a Black to a White perspective and back again. Partially an abstraction that makes Jewishness available as a signifier of "culture" in Kallen's discourse of post-racial

[45] Silva 154, 160, 165.
[46] Silva 162.

multiculturalism, Wirth's "ventriloquism" also significantly retains the affective, sensate language of race. I would thus suggest that, like the literature Jennifer Glaser discusses in her book, this makes "racial ventriloquism" both a symptom and a reaction to Jewish engulfment into post-racial Christian, multicultural whiteness.[47]

Wirth constructs Jewish "race" as thin and on the verge of vanishing, while at the same time, something that Jews must voluntarily forfeit. (Racial) Jewishness fundamentally can't lead to modern projects of emancipation, since its zero degree is a self-reinforcing abstention from (European, white) modernity. Twenty years after the publication *The Ghetto,* Wirth wrote another article that deploys the trope of racial "odor" again but in a different way:

> Just as we ascribe identical physical traits to them, so we are inclined to ascribe identical mental, social, and moral traits to people whom we know only by their racial labels. Thus, for instance, we attribute a racial odor to the Negroes because we have met one or a few individuals *whose smell offended us.* We forget that perhaps white individuals working in the same occupations or living under comparable conditions might have an equally offensive odor. We meet a member of another racial or ethnic group who cheats us in a business transaction and we immediately ascribe his dishonesty in business to his race, forgetting that if someone of our own group cheated us, we would blame only the individual and have no thought of the race[48]

The parallelism between this quote and the previous from *The Ghetto* is striking. Through the repeated trope of a racialized body odor, Wirth ventriloquistically broadens the scope of his initial description of Jewish otherness to cross over into a black positionality. It is the (potentially self-imposed) occupations and living conditions that explain the odor, and thus the racialized

[47] I am using these terms together to suggest (as this chapter up to this point has been arguing) that multiculturalism and its suppression of race discourse is part of a Christian history that operates from a European positionality and "engulfs" others external to it, as it secures its "transparent" onto-political existence.

[48] Louis Wirth, "Race and Public Policy." *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 58, no. 4 (1944), 303, emphasis mine.

affect, in much the same way that the ghetto walls explained Jewish psychology and bodily infirmity.[49]

But the parallel construction of these two ideas masks a dissymmetry. Wirth's suggestion "[not] forget that perhaps white individuals . . . might have an equally offensive odor" under similar conditions erases the line between Jew and white. Wirth uses the phrase "forget" here to tie the "we" back to the Jewish reader (it is "we" Jews who "forget," but shouldn't forget, our own (former) smell), but points ironically toward "white individuals" who would also presumptively smell if they had jobs that make people smell. Thus, Wirth embeds his own position (ambiguously) within whiteness, while boiling down racial marginalization to class. Both forgetting and refusing to forget what "we've" gone through, Wirth ventriloquistically uses the abject trope of racial odor to drift among multiple racial locations, and circumspectly to lead us to the abject corporeality of a white body, allowing him to make a jab, from the perspective of the white/black color line, *about* whiteness – but without ever addressing Jewishness (racially).

The second moment in this quote, i.e. where "[w]e meet a member of another racial or ethnic group who cheats us in a business transaction and we immediately ascribe his dishonesty in business to his race," ambiguously reinscribes Wirth's own Jewish positionality. Although he speaks in general terms, by refusing to include any of the racial descriptors he just used in the example previous, and by focalizing commerce (with which Jews remain associated), Wirth is

[49] In light of the problem Glaser detects with regards to speaking for others, and also taking into account Hartman's critique of the "analogy," we have to confront the question of whether there is or is not any way for one "minority" to relate to another (speaking, here, of the American context) without reinscribing antiblackness. Is any invocation of others' suffering/inequality necessarily a ventriloquism? While Glaser would likely say *yes*, she would also read that ventriloquism (reparatively) as an opening for solidarity. I, on the other hand, would argue (in a more pessimistic vein) that this space of comparison is inextricable from the antiblack unconscious of white civil society. That's not to say that possibilities for affiliation don't exist, but rather that affiliation on a conscious level will always have to reckon with its unconscious antiblack coordinates. Although it does not always tackle the unconscious directly, I personally regard Tiffany Lethabo King's careful treatment of solidarity in *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2019) as an inspiring piece to think with.

again making his Jewishness *conspicuously* absent -- even, perhaps, allegorizing the contemporary convergence of Jewish and black communities in the Chicago neighborhoods on which *The Ghetto* was based.[50]

Yet this frank discussion of racial/racist feeling jars with his account of the Jewish-black harmony brought by business in *The Ghetto*: "As one clothing merchant on Maxwell Street put it, 'A dollar is just as good whether a white hand or a black hand hands it over. Anyway, their hands are white on the inside.'"[51] Again we are brought to an ambiguous intersection of the Jewish and the white position. Whereas earlier, commerce typified precisely the alienating, "secondary" kinds of contact that, Wirth insists, Jews need abandon (i.e. that the alienation of commerce is part of what ghettoizes Jewish consciousness, a form of contact that undermines the possibility of assimilation and thus reinforces a Jewish racial identity), here Wirth implicitly lauds the honest business transaction as the pinnacle of Jewish-Black relations.

Moreover, the x-ray vision that the Maxwell Street merchant performs on the hands of his customer here should give us pause, as it takes Wirth's materialist framing of "race" to its furthest extreme. "'A dollar is just as good whether a white hand or a black hand hands it over. Anyway, their hands are white on the inside.'" This is a moment of what we could call color-blindness, but colorblindness of a kind that abjectly reinscribes racial blackness -- the Maxwell Street merchant absents the customer's racialized skin in a way that makes it all the more abjectly present. Why, otherwise, would he say they are *white* on the *inside*?

Wirth's comment that "many of the immigrants in the ghetto have as yet not heard of the color line" is clearly misleading,[52] but to take it to this extreme -- to basically re-vision blackness

[50] Goldstein 68. Goldstein discusses the influx of African-Americans into the South Side of Chicago, and the somewhat negative response to it on behalf of the South Side Jewish community.

[51] *Ghetto* 230.

[52] *Ghetto* 230.

as black*face* -- is to enforce the "logic of obliteration" to the point of its zero degree. The hyper-corporeality of blackness remains, haunting and emanating para-visually from the scene, but is completely divested of its ontological weight. Wirth reverses the direction of his racial ventriloquism, and thereby asserts not only his difference from racial blackness, but his distance (as an engulfed Jew) from racial difference itself and his privileged claim to an abject poetics of racialization.

Thus in his rejection of racialism and paean to integration, Wirth actually finds many opportunities to play ventriloquistically with the color line. His deployment of Jewishness as an index and metaphor for social marginalization *tout court* in *The Ghetto* and "Race and Public Policy" is a pretext for absenting the role of racial domination in his politics. According to Glaser's description of racial ventriloquism, this is a mode of "self-fashioning." Racial ventriloquism (almost) draws Jewishness outside the orbit of whiteness even at the moment when it is being most fully engulfed, but only to more fully secure that engulfment.

VI. CONCLUSION

This history of Jewish racial engulfment and ventriloquism in the United States during the early 20th century can potentially explain any number of things about the discourse of the Jewish-American left, including the overweening solidarity it performs towards racialized others. To the extent that racial ventriloquism affords a chance for Jewish-Americans to explore their own fears and anxieties about engulfment into American whiteness, perhaps it can be regarded as a way of attempting to build the foundation for an attack on Euro-American Christian whiteness. Artists as different as Mike Gold and Muriel Rukeyser, for example, both used the figure of the black body to critique white supremacy. And yet, somewhat persuaded (by work like Saidiya

Hartman's) to recognize in white solidarity the pleasures of "analogy," I wonder if the Jewish-American left sometimes overestimates its own power to stand outside of white Christian supremacy, and if instead of creating bonds of solidarity it sometimes reduces praxis to the Maxwell Street merchant's x-ray vision: "'Anyway, their hands are white on the inside.'"

One can begin to assess the ventriloquism (if it is there) of today's Jewish-American left also by looking at Jewish pro-Palestinian solidarity. In Vampire Weekend's 2019 album *Father of the Bride,* for example, noted Jewish-American songwriter Ezra Koenig makes a scathing critique of the Zionist project from its inception, writing that "this prophecy of ours/ has come back dressed to kill."

> A hundred years or more,
> It feels like such a dream,
> An endless conversation
> Since 1917

Notwithstanding Koenig's unthinking use of the term "conversation" to describe Zionism's deeply asymmetrical disruption of Palestinian and Mizrahi life, the reference here to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 is a clear signal to listeners that what Koenig finds to be problematic about Zionism can't simply be chalked up to Israel's recent history. Zionism was problematic as far back as (at least) 1917. Not coincidentally, Koenig also takes up the shifting dynamics of the West's political theology when he sings on the track "Sympathy:"

> Judeo-Christianity,
> I'd never heard the words,
> Enemies for centuries,
> Until there was a third

Koenig's anti-Zionist critique is timely not only because it coincides with a trend amongst American Jews to question Israeli policy (often via groups like IfNotNow and and Jewish Voice for Peace). This helpful linkage of Christian political theology to the Zionist project, while a

powerful investigation into the underpinnings of Jewish-American identity, also provides us with a way out of talking about the engulfment of Jewishness into whiteness.

Given the ventriloquistic relationship writers (like Wirth, for example) had to America's other others and to Jewish identity itself, I would argue that we can read Koenig's Anti-Zionism – and the "mature" reckoning with Jewish identity for which *Father of the Bride* is coming to be known – as another form of "liberated" Jewish difference, and a disavowal of engulfment.[53]

[53] The music of Vampire Weekend, it should be noted, has been criticized repeatedly as a display of white privilege. The layers upon layers of cultural appropriation in their musical style have put many listeners on the defensive. Oftentimes defenders of the band cite Koenig's Jewishness in order to argue that whatever privilege the band displays can't properly be called "white" because he is marginalized. In light of the preceding discussion however, we should probably treat this claim very carefully. The differing uses to which the concept of Jewish marginalization is put in the West, as we've seen in this chapter, provides essential context for this claim.

CHAPTER TWO
The Christian Unconscious of Jewish Studies

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the shift in Jewish Studies toward an engagement with (or appropriation of) post-colonial studies, Black Studies and indigenous studies,[54] with an eye to how this turn upholds rather than contests white Christian supremacy. This chapter is also motivated by scholarship in the field of Black Studies that tries to link antiblackness to antisemitism.[55] At the crux of this intersection between Jewish and Black thought, the problem of seriously contending with how thoroughly imbricated what we call "Jewish identity" *is* in the anti-black and anti-indigenous worldview of Christianity often goes uninterrogated. What I'm trying to address here is not dissimilar from what Gil Anidjar calls Freud's "Christian unconscious."[56] Zionism, as an orientalist Christian millennial desire that (far) exceeds the temporal limits of what we might call a history of the settler state of Israel,[57] serves to name the Christian unconscious of "Jewishness." A close look at how Jewish Studies functions, reveals the "Jewish identity" it produces to be little (or nothing) more than a thinly-veiled Zionism, a barely concealed imperative to colonize Palestine, to colonize Islam,[58] to make settler colonialism a

[54] Jennifer Glaser, "Race, Ethnicity, Postcoloniality, and the New Jewish (Trans)cultural Studies." *Literature Compass* 10/3 (2013).

[55] J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[56] Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

[57] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return." *Journal of Levantine Studies* vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 2013).

[58] Gil Anidjar and Nermeen Shaikh, "The Jew, The Arab: An Interview with Gil Anidjar" *Asia Society* (undated), https://asiasociety.org/jew-arab-interview-gil-anidjar/. "There is no moment when Europe is not concerned, occupied, at war, propagandizing, writing, thinking, worrying, admiring, loving, hating the Arab, the Muslim, the Turk, the Saracen, the Agarene, the Moor. There is no single moment in history since the 7th century when someone can tell me that in Western Europe there is not a concern which is, in one way or another, determining of Western culture, music, art, politics, religion, everything. Would someone want to tell me that it is just a Jewish matter that is being exported to the Middle East? Absolutely not. Why, then, specifically, to Palestine? Why did the Western powers want and agree with the destruction of Palestine for the benefit of Israel? Why to the 'Holy Land'?"

"Jewish" specialty – and thereby keeping it alive.[59] The Boyarins' discourse of "diasporic" Jewishness is not separate from Zionism. It positions "Jewishness" between a certain group of settlers and their own radical implication in white settler Christendom. I will go on to suggest that the *historical* framework the Boyarins adopt in their promotion of Jewish diaspora and circumcision (as a crucial piece within that Jewish diasporic identity) makes their rearticulation and encryption[60] of a white Christian subjectivity all but inevitable.

II. JEWISH STUDIES, "POLITICS OF THE VICARIOUS"

Jewish Studies can be traced back to nineteenth-century Germany in a form known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, conceived as an extension of Jewish political enfranchisement and the *haskalah* ("Jewish Enlightenment").[61] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin highlights the roles of Orientalism and Christian Hebraism in the formation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums,*[62] begging the question of whose gaze this "Jewish science" served and continued to serve today qua "Jewish Studies." In many ways, throughout modern history, it was the Christian interest *in Jews* that constituted the meaning of Jewishness in Western discourse, rather than the activity of Jews themselves.

[59] Gil Anidjar, "Mal du Sionisme: Zionist Fever" in *Living Together: Jacques Derrida's Communities of Violence and Peace,* ed. Weber (Fordham University Press, 2012). In this essay, Anidjar intimates such changes to the meaning of Jewishness occasioned by Zionism.

[60] I'm taking this term from Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

[61] The Haskalah (Hebrew: השכלה; literally, "wisdom", "erudition") was an intellectual movement among the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe that arose in conjunction with the European Enlightenment. Major players in the early history of the Haskalah include Moses Mendelssohn and David Friedländer.

[62] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Orientalism, Jewish Studies and Israeli Society: A Few Comments." *Philological Encounters* Vol. 2 (2017), 242.

On the other hand, for scholars Susannah Heschel and David Myers, *Wissenschaft* was also the site of a "counter-historical" struggle against Christian thought.[63] This struggle with Western Christendom has only become more explicit through the work of other contemporary figures in Jewish Studies, who have tried to strategically reappropriate Jewishness to a position critical of the Chrisian West.

In a broader sense, this tension between hegemony and counter-hegemony in Jewish Studies resonates with the contradictions of America's model minority discourse insofar as it applies itself to Jewish-Americans. On the one hand, Jewish-Americans recognize their inclusion in America's power structure, but at the same time they seek to strategically mobilize a memory of exclusion / marginality in order to enact bonds of solidarity with the US's other others. "Having finally reaped the fruits of the promise of the Enlightenment, American Jews sometimes ask why liberalism can't do for other marginalized American groups what it has done for them."[64] Keith Feldman explains this dynamic with more nuance, attending to the ways the model minority narrative actually upholds structures of exclusion:

> Jewish assimilability in the United States indexed an exceptionalist narrative of liberal pluralism, an idea whose origins trace at least to the 1910s. Jews becoming 'white' ethnics involved grafting Jewishness onto the secular Protestant ethos framing the notion of national "Judeo-Christian" values. Yet, Michael Rogin shows, as early as the 1920s, the vigorous enactment of Jewish non-Blackness via mainstream cultural performance -- the embrace of blackface, the Jewish rearticulation of minstrelsy, and so forth -- framed Jewish assimilability as predicated on a foundational white supremacist substructure. By the 1950s and early 1960s, Jews participated in civil rights desegregation and voting rights struggles to demonstrate liberal inclusion as an American civic promise, performing pluralist commitments by fighting Jim Crow. At the same time, often inadvertently, Jewish integration fused conceptions of Jewishness and political

[63] David Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2003); Susannah Heschel, "Revolt of the Colonized: Abraham Geiger's *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a Challenge to Christian Hegemony in the Academy." *New German Critique* No. 77, Special Issue on German-Jewish Religious Thought (Spring - Summer, 1999), pp. 61-85.

[64] David Biale, Micahel Galchinsky and Susannah Heschel, "Introduction: The Dialectic of Jewish Enlightenment" in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. Biale, Galchinsky and Heschel (University of California Press, 1998), 6.

> Zionism, and sedimented into the dominant racial order the exclusion and devaluation of Palestinians and Arabs as proper political subjects. It obscured liberalism's enduring historical investment in racial exclusion and recoded settler colonial violence in West Asia as Jewish national liberation[65]

Feldman's argument thus puts a finer point on how the very definition of "Jewishness" (certainly in the US) was wrapped up with a dominant model minority narrative that also *upheld Zionism*, and moreover put the onus on racialized minorities for their own exclusion. Regarding the latter point, Feldman goes into greater detail when he takes up the work of Patrick Moynihan and Nathan Glazer:

> Moynihan's ground-clearing 1963 work of comparative urban sociology, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, centered a nation-of-immigrants paradigm of whiteness. It reproduced a bootstraps narrative of pluralist success and tidily pathologized Blackness for lacking culture. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer (the book's primary author and architect) theorized race to function conceptually like ethnicity, replacing the history of structural inequality from racial slavery and Jim Crow with a narrative of immigrant inclusion in American national life. African Americans were conceived as the "latest" in the wave of immigrants to the urban north. This "immigrant analogy," as the legal scholar Ian Haney-López argues, "erased the enormous differences in historical experience between white immigrants and racial minorities, and gave new legitimacy to the belief that not structural disadvantage but inability, now cultural rather than innate, explained the social and material marginalization of racial minorities in the United States." The book privileged a normatively white national subject even as it functioned to authorize the subsequent consolidation of a color-blind ideology that bracketed the historical institutionalization of racial hierarchy generally and anti-Black racism specifically.[66]

Jewishness was a crucial piece of what Feldman here refers to as the "nation-of-immigrants paradigm of whiteness" that used the idea of culture to pathologize groups whose enduring suffering under structural racism differentiated them from white ethnics. A la Denise Ferreira Da Silva's analysis of "the logic of obliteration" -- in which the subject of "Reason" sees racial Others as the cause the Others' exclusion from the sphere of self-determination and a damper on the Subject (of Reason)'s access to universality, precisely because the Others fail to "give up"

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[65] Keith Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 28.

[66] Feldman 44-45.

their racial identification[67] -- this "racial liberalism," as a new Jewish common sense, promoted an antiblack and anti-indigenous worldview at the same time that it became the basis of progressive thought about race in the US.

Feldman's analysis of racial liberalism, however, butts up against his own historical method. The way he credits the fusing of Jewishness and political Zionism to the "incidental" needs of US empire, is (arguably) limiting, as it subscribes de facto to an (empty, homogenous) historicist model of time.[68] Feldman writes of Jewish assimilation as a reaction to third-worldist, pro-Palestinian black radicals in the US: "this suturing of political Zionism and American Jewishness was contingently fashioned, often reactively, in the crucible of late-1960s and early-1970s racial justice struggles."[69]

We can take his point in a broader sense however, and try to think about how racial liberalism – as a cornerstone of the West and a re-iteration of Christian "universality" – has found a home in and reshaped the discourse of "Jewishness." Feldman's analysis clarifies that the enfolding of racial liberalism *into* Jewishness "obscured" the fundamental link between liberalism and racial order. Let's take a closer look at how this process functions at the level of the discipline of Jewish Studies.

David Biale, Naomi Seidman and others have taken note of how model minority liberalism deeply impacts Jewish Studies as a field, which rose to prominence (in the US) at a unique intersection of Jewish assimilation and the emergence of black radical / identity politics:

> Jewish studies in America developed precisely at the moment when Jews felt themselves fully integrated and the field became a vehicle for establishing their right to be considered

[67] Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Silva's critique of the Chicago School of Sociology's discourse of "race relations" in the chapter called "The Sociologic of Racial Subjection" explains "the logic of obliteration."

[68] There is a similar problem with the work of Hilton Obenzinger. For a more capacious perspective, see Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile."

[69] Feldman 104.

> part of the Western canon. Ethnic studies often took the opposite tack, criticizing the Western canon for its exclusionary practices and promoting ethnic and racial particularism. Jewish studies typically subscribed to an Enlightenment vision of the university while ethnic studies often challenged this vision[70]

The flip-side of this commitment to racial liberalism was, of course, a subterranean recognition of Jewish complicity in the promotion of this antiblack and anti-indigenous white Protestant world. The epistemological privilege Arendt accorded to the Jewish "pariah" seemed to have lost its social coordinates in a context where Jewish ascension into Protestant Americanism was not only a stark economic fact, but also clearly linked to a cultural performance of anti-blackness, and alignment with the settler colonial state of Israel.

Where was the Jewish proletarian – as marginalized, revolutionary type? "The spread of this Jewish self-definition . . . has roughly coincided with its obsolescence."[71] The idea of Jewish marginality became more and more important for the field even while, or because of, its irrelevance in light of the sociological fact of assimilation. According to Naomi Seidman, American Jewish intellectuals

> retain[ed] in some form the legacy of Jewish marginality while seeking its "truer" expression in particularist, non-Jewish models. The price has been, for some, the awkwardness of championing particularisms while avoiding one's own, or, alternatively, to feel one's self-identification as a Jew as somehow in bad faith. . . . what prevented the widespread Jewish adoption of Jewish ethnic particularism was, in a way, Jewishness itself, in the form of the tradition of universalism that came closest to articulating modern Jewish hopes and pride[72]

Seidman's reliance on the explanation that the "universalism that came closest to articulating modern Jewish hopes and pride" prevents Jews from embracing their own (now groundless) ethnic particularism commits a two-fold fallacy by (a) naturalizing a commitment to "progressive" universality as if it came from within the epistemological privilege of a "Jewish

[70] Biale, Galchinsky and Heschel, "Introduction" 6.
[71] Seidman.
[72] Seidman 259-262.

experience" of marginalization, and (b) implying that this universality was ever separate from colonial racism. Moreover, Seidman occludes those groups whose "truer" marginalization Jewish Studies uses, with her suggestion (at the start of the quote) that what was awkward about "Jewish marginalization" was the understanding, amongst Jews, that it didn't have anything to do with them.

Seidman thus highlights an important tension within Jewish Studies. Why is Jewish marginality "no longer" available? Is it the sociological fact of assimilation? Or is it "Jewishness itself, in the form of the tradition of universalism," erasing its own difference? What is the relationship between the Jewish marginality that no longer exists, the "truer" forms of marginality that Jewish Studies uses in order to re-imagine that Jewish marginality *still* exists and, the "tradition of universalism" that seemingly gets Jewish Studies out of the bind between these two.[73] It is in the space of this bind and its resolution that Seidman locates the Jewish "politics of the vicarious." This "politics" is a general critique of identitarian logics, demarcating the moment where Jewish politics (or Jewish Studies) supersedes its attachment to the once-"truer expressions" of marginality that allowed it to imagine Jewish marginality in absentia. It demarcates the moment where black radicalism, for example, becomes an object for a deconstructive critique from the Jewish position: "If the parenthetical Jew [is motivated by] an impulse to vacate what would necessarily be a conservative politics of self-interest, the radical movements they join are not so radical that they can embrace this move."[74] Seidman uses the

[73] Jennifer Glaser offers another account, using *Zelig* (1983): Woody Allen in blackface, Woody Allen in brownface, Woody Allen in *jewface* – "a triple threat to the KKK." Woody Allen is a void filled with images of identity, none of which (not even the Jewish) stick. Woody Allen reveals Jewishness to be an abstraction even to himself, but on the other hand, as the "triple threat," he stands in for "post-ethnic" multiculturalism, acknowledging a struggle *in common,* between multiple categories of identity, against Christian whiteness. Jennifer Glaser, *Borrowed Voices: Writing and Racial Ventriloquism in the Jewish American Imagination* (Rutgers University Press, 2016).

[74] Seidman 265.

term “parenthetical Jew” to descrive a situation in which Jews can no longer identify with their history of marginality but look to others with which to be in solidarity. “The politics of the vicarious” is thus defined by a movement from its own “conservative politics” that would only consider Jewish suffering, to a moment of solidarity with other others, and then finally to a critique of those other groups as they too firmly to their “conservative” identarianism.

While Seidman ultimately reads the “politics of the vicarious” reparatively, I would argue that it (again) reinstates what Silva would call the West’s “logic of obliteration." This recursive movement from a “self-interested” position, through a “vicarious” identification with blackness, back to the seat of Reason tends to externalize and put the onus of racial subjection onto the Others (in this case, the black radicals) themselves. Seidman overlooks how such Jewish post-identitarianism comes, in this way, to reaffirm the antiblack and anti-indigenous undercurrent of the Jewish model minority narrative.[75] Seidman’s model of Jewish Studies as a recursive movement *through and beyond* identity politics models a kind of supersessionary fantasy whose bases lie in Paul’s rejection of the flesh for the spirit (circumcision of the heart > circumcision of the flesh). I want to suggest that this issue prevails, beyond Seidman’s work, across the field of Jewish Studies, and in particular in the work of Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin.

I interpret the writing of Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin as an attempt to short circuit the “politics of the vicarious,” and to re-appropriate liberalism for a “grounded” Jewish position. In what follows, I elaborate on how their attempt at a strategically essentialist “Jewishness” effectively reinstates the subjectivity at the heart of racial liberalism by misrecognizing the social

[75] This makes Feldman’s uninterrogated adoption (from the Boyarins) of a model of Jewishness as radical universalism/racial “responsibility” all the more disappointing. “The narrative of Jews becoming American ethnics was, at least in one sense, a story of American secularism’s triumphant exceptionalism, a model for the model minority. At the same time, the irreducibility of Jewish particularity meant that national incorporability was always partial and incomplete. Jewish difference expressed through a genealogy of diasporic thought and practice, for instance, exceeded the incorporative capacities of a secularizing U.S. national imaginary” (105).

death of the slave as a form of civil exclusion. Even as they try (as we will see) to limit their Western universalism, they reinforce it by building an anti-black theory of solidarity into their analysis.

III. THE BOYARINS: DIASPORISM AND CIRCUMCISION

> What we wish to struggle for, theoretically, is a notion of identity in which there are only slaves and no masters, that is, an alternative to the model of self-determination, which is, after all, itself a Western, imperialist imposition on the rest of the world. We propose Diaspora as a theoretical and historical model to replace national self-determination
>
> *-DANIEL AND JONATHAN BOYARIN* [76]

> We suggest that an Israel that reimports diasporic consciousness – a consciousness of a Jewish collective as one sharing space with others, devoid of exclusivist and dominating power – is the only Israel that could answer Paul's, Lyotard's, and Nancy's call for a species-wide care without eradicating cultural difference. Reversing A. B. Yehoshua's famous pronouncement that only in a condition of political hegemony is moral responsibility mobilized, we would argue that the only moral path would be the renunciation of Jewish hegemony qua Jewish hegemony. This would involve first of all complete separation of religion from state, but even more than that the revocation of the Law of Return and such cultural, discursive practices that code the state as a Jewish state and not a multinational and multicultural one.
>
> *-DANIEL AND JONATHAN BOYARIN* [77]

Recognizing the embattled relationship of Jewish Studies to its own inherited Christian gaze, the Boyarins take up the question in "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity" of if Jews can resist their own abstraction by Christian thought and Western philosophy. They start with the suggestion that Christian thought fundamentally needs the figure

[76] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin. "Diaspora: Generation and Ground of Jewish Identity." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Summer, 1993), 711.

[77] "Diaspora" 713-714.

of "the Jew" in order to articulate the transcendence of the soul.[78] By negating genealogy and carnality in Gallatians ("things of the body are less important than things of the spirit"), Paul triumphs over the Jew's supposed particularism, and arrogates to himself (and to Christ) the truth of universal human equality. He then turns around, in supersessionist fashion, and makes this universalism the fulfilment of Judaism as well: "True Jewishness lay, according to Paul, precisely in renunciation of difference and entry into the one body of Christ. Anyone at all can be Jewish, and those who 'call themselves Jews' are not necessarily Jewish at all."[79] In this movement, the Jew becomes a metaphor for difference *and* universality, in such a way as to "depriv[e] those who have historically grounded identities in those material signifiers of the power to speak for themselves and remain different."[80] In other words, while the Jew becomes a symbol of universality, they are simultaneously deprived of a role in enacting that very idea.

That being said, the Boyarins don't reject Paul wholesale. They also embrace his "progressivism," writing that without Paul racial slavery wouldn't have been eliminated.[81] What they can't abide is the fact that this ideology gained territorial power, and arrogated to itself the right to impose "sameness" on Others. What they envision instead is a world in which the ideals of Paul can exist without necessitating a figure of the (Jewish) other to represent discord and disorder. Slavery and colonial domination are not, for them, the constitutive stuff of Enlightenment, but an incidental flaw in "those most truly progressive discourses of Europe"[82] that followed from Paul (and that could have led to their vision of a multicultural polis). These

[78] Not unlike J Kameron Carter does in *Race.*
[79] "Diaspora" 697.
[80] "Diaspora" 697.
[81] "Diaspora" 696, footnote 8.
[82] "Diaspora" 708.

claims bespeak an incredible oversight, and in some ways the root of the problems I explore below.

The Boyarins do acknowledge and bemoan how *long* it took for the Pauline West to conclude slavery. But they forgive it -- writing that if "the very discourse of 'the Rights of Man' provides form for a particularly French racism, this does not mean that the world would be better off not having had those principles articulated."[83] Although, rhetorically, they avoid trumpeting Paul by limiting themselves to the claim that the world would not *necessarily* have been any better *without* his universalism, the Boyarins nevertheless put a certain stamp of approval on his vision of the future, thus displaying a conception of historical time in which Pauline universalism (if it does not cause progress) at least does not *prevent* progressive inclusion of Others. It is for this reason that they do not see the gaps and obstacles to inclusion (e.g. slavery) as an antagonistic structuring condition of the world we live in.

Although (as we will see) the Boyarins argue that the enfleshed, circumcised Jew (rather than the Christian "true Jew") could destabilize the entire power structure of Christendom if they could only take the reins of "Jewishness" as an idea, their vision of what would follow this destabilization ultimately lines up with Paul's "progressivism" (and thus fits in easily with America's model minority narrative), and moreover a "politics of the vicarious."

In order to guard against this possibility, however, and as a way of "grounding" their progressivism in Jewish difference, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin assert that "the Jew" can resist their own discursive abstraction by Christian white hegemony by vaunting the diaspora. Taking their examples from rabbinic Judaism and from modern-day Antizionist Orthodox sects like Neteuri Karta, the Boyarins try to construct an image of Jewish identity fundamentally opposed

[83] "Diaspora" 696, footnote 8.

to Zionism. Although diasporism[84] is fundamentally based, in their conception, on a rejection of Zionism, I will go on to suggest that it rather provides channels through which the Boyarins retrench Zionism.

In a footnote attached to the first epigraph above, the Boyarins question whether their own concept of diaspora reinscribes Pauline allegorical Jewishness (qua supersession of the flesh):

> To the extent that this diasporic existence is an actual historical entity, we ourselves are not prey to the charge of "allegorizing" the Jew. It may be fairly suggested, however, that the model is so idealized as to be in itself an allegory[85]

Precisely here, the Boyarins re-open the problem of Christian abstraction. Believing that their diasporism is rooted in rabbinic Jewish tradition, following W.D. Davies' assertion that "under the main rabbinic tradition Judaism condemned itself to powerlessness . . . and therefore had its own brand of [longitudinal] power,"[86] they also question their own idealization of it. What the stakes of this idealization might be is a question they feel the phrase "actual historical" allows them to leave glaringly unanswered.

Related to this, then, is the problem of "history" itself. Kathleen Biddick critiques postcolonial writing that lays claim to "history," in which a that-was-then-this-is-now model of Time works to "institutionalize modernity as supersession,"[87] and thereby to reinstate what she calls the (Christian) "typological imaginary." Denise Ferreira Da Silva, too, has written about how historical time reinstates the European "moral" subject at the heart of the Enlightenment,

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[84] See *Powers of Diaspora,* where Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin use this term to describe a politics of diaspora.

[85] "Diaspora" 711, footnote 32.

[86] "Diaspora" 722. This, in radical opposition to the central argument of David Biale in *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken, 1986).

[87] Biddick 93.

and in so doing consolidates a *racial* concept of the world. Writing of Hegel's "transcendental poesis" that what it

> promises but cannot deliver . . . is the establishing of the limits of temporality, the assurance that, though as a thing of unbounded *time,* the transparent 'I' exists solely within the spatial-temporal limits of post-Enlightenment Europe[88]

Hegel's historical time is a "sequestering of space in the unfolding of Time" that ultimately divides Europe from its Others, and as an "undelivered promise," requires the constant reinstatement of a spatio-temporal imaginary in which the World becomes the white Subject's domain.[89] Silva thus issues a call to destroy historical time, as the name for the Hegelian desire of the subject of modernity, delimited to Europe -- without which "the object, the other, and the commodity dissolve."[90]

While the Boyarins go on to suggest that their "historical" model differs fundamentally from Zionism and the European self, their lingering investment in history and the self-determined progressive Subject in fact reinstates Zionism, as I elaborate below.[91] Their ultimate move in "Diaspora" -- the request that Israel "reimpor[t] diasporic consciousness" and renounce "Jewish hegemony qua Jewish hegemony"[92] -- thus does make a certain kind of sense. They fall prey to a recapitulation of Zionist ideology because, after Paul, Jewishness (even on their diasporic model) can only be "historically" articulated as a worldview that aligns with the imperial designs of the West. In order to preserve some idea of historicity without falling prey to grand narratives and origin stories, they end up drawing on circumcision as a "culturally"

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[88] *Towards a Global Ideal of Race* 98.

[89] Denise Ferreira Da Silva, "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Towards the End of the World." *The Black Scholar* 44:2 (2014), 90.

[90] "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics," 90.

[91] When I say that their work reinstates Zionism, what I mean to say is not only that they retain an attachment to the settler-colonial state associated with that movement, but also that the Christian impetus behind it.

[92] "Diaspora" 713.

embedded practice of genealogy and try to use circumcision performatively as a deconstruction of the differences on which Europe defines itself. But within this "historical" performativity -- moored in the past but open to the future, entrenched within the self/group but open to others -- the self-determined Subject of Europe preserves itself.

This is why, ultimately, their reconstructed Jewishness does not directly confront Israel. The "diasporic" identity they construct, via circumcision, in opposition to Europe, is itself a Pauline allegory. Why include in their program a "complete separation of religion from state" and a "revocation of the Law of Return and such cultural, discursive practices that code the state as a Jewish state and not a multinational and multicultural one?"[93] Taking up how it is "code[d]" rather than the state itself, and thereby leaving-be one of Christian power's fundamental modes of propagating itself,[94] the Boyarins unfortunately invite back into their argument a kind of self-determined, white, *Christian* settler consciousness.[95] What good would it do to move that inside of Israel? Who's to say it is not already there?[96] The Boyarins seem to be suggesting that Israel is in some real sense a "Jewish" state, despite their earlier and repeated acknowledgement that it is an imposition of Christian domination via the West's concept of national self-determination.[97]

The Boyarins do try to be cautious, avoiding "essentialism" and its grand narratives of capital-H History. Theirs is not a project of historical "recovery" per se. Writing in "Self-

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[93] "Diaspora" 713-714.

[94] See Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab* (Stanford University Press, 2003); Gil Anidjar, *Blood*; Gil Anidjar "Secularism." *Critical Inquiry* 33:1 (August 2006). My critique here is especially indebted to "Secularism." One way of putting my spin on that argument is by saying that "Judaism" in the political theology of the West *is,* perhaps because of Israel, "secularism" -- which is to say that "Judaism" (after Zionism -- or, perhaps, ever since Paul) *is* Christian domination.

[95] Or perhaps a "Christian unconscious," a la Anidjar's critique of Freud in *Blood*.

[96] See Joyce Dalsheim, "Ant/agonizing Settlers in the Colonial Present of Israel-Palestine" (2005). *Social Analysis*, Vol 49, Issue 2 (Summer 2005), pp. 122-143, regarding how Israel is spearheading a redefinition of Zionism that includes an anti-occupation wing .

[97] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct* (University of California Press, 1997), 294. "Herzlian Zionism is the ultimate project for an honorable conversion of the Jews to Christianity, understood as it always was for Herzl as not a religion, but a *Kultur* itself, as civilization."

Exposure as Theory" that their work side-steps "an older functionalist rhetoric" that simply focalizes the techniques of "culture" and tradition in maintaining "external boundaries and internal continuity,"[98] they clearly articulate Jewish difference as precarious and unstable. The work Jonathan Boyarin in particular is trying to do in "Jewish ethnography" acknowledges a certain kind of loss -- "a model for a kind of Jewish ethnography that would not only be the ethnography of Jews."[99] An ethnography that has to *forget* Jewish history *in order to* remember it,[100] Jonathan Boyarin's approach is clearly a "strategic" essentialism, operating at the site of a wound.

On the other hand, this conception of Jewishness stands absolutely apart from "cultural relativism." There is something – again, on an "actual historical" level – about Jewish difference that lies irrevocably on the margins of Europe for the Boyarins:

> Rather than dismissing the marks of ethnic difference in favor of a model of voluntaristic pluralism and an open marketplace of self-invention, it is worthwhile focusing at least briefly on Jewish circumcision as a 'tribal rite' . . . persisting within the heart of the enlightened, civilized world. Greater attention to specific Jewish practices and the response to them . . . may also suggest surprising links between the exclusion of Jews and other forms of exclusion[101]

Their guiding thesis here is that the "incorporation, both literal and figurative, of Jewishness as an aspect of the self implies an experience of time that is panchronic and empathetically expanded," marking "rich contrasts to the rhetoric of the [European] self-made man."[102] This Christian and European "self-made man" against which they pose Jewish difference is eminently *un*-historical: he "starts from a zero point" and "he owes nothing to anyone;" he "has no

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[98] Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, "Self-Exposure as Theory: The Double-Mark of the Male Jew," in *Thinking in Jewish,* author Jonathan Boyarin (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 37.

[99] Jonathan Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise* (University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 74.

[100] *Storm* 4.

[101] "Self-Exposure" 39-40.

[102] "Self-Exposure" 39.

prehistory."[103] The Jew, on the other hand is "panchronic and empathetically expanded," since their identity is "given" to them by the people who circumcise them. Jewish males do not choose to be circumcised, and so are connected (without their willing it) to previous, and future, generations.

Circumcision thus plays a crucial role in the Boyarins' schema, since it gives them a "grounded" way of talking about Jewishness (historically without History). Thus, avoiding the language of essence and authenticity, they still have something to set them apart from total "cultural relativism." It would thus seem that what they are doing departs from "the politics of the vicarious."

> Perhaps an appropriate departure is the word 'natives,' which we used in our first sentence. It could be objected that we are cloaking ourselves in the rhetoric of authentic knowledge of a bounded and *sui generis* culture. The term bears the traces of the imperial, territorializing context in which it became part of anthropology. Its history is that of the effort to create a unique mapping of human groups onto the globe, to separate and order them and keep them in their places. What would it mean to imply, as we do here, either that some of us are indeed natives (and some are not), or that one can choose consciously to be a native? In this case the answer has to do with a more specific return to the connections with birth *implied by nativity. We understand ourselves as more profoundly born to, native to, an anamnestic generational tradition than to any national state or territory. The mark on our bodies, it seems to us, works harder than our birth certificates* [104]

Avoiding nationalism and "territory" – the ordering of nations along a singular timeline of progress and decline – the Boyarins imagine they've escaped what Silva would call the "sequestering of space in the unfolding of Time" that divides Europe from its Others, while still preserving a concept of their unique cultural difference. Nativity, they tell us, is the answer: the physical, the corporeal, the bodily, the particular: circumcision. Through circumcision they grasp the particular without abstraction, embracing and radicalizing the Pauline abjection of Jewish

[103] "Self-Exposure" 38.
[104] "Self-Exposure" 35, emphasis mine.

circumcised flesh. But the Boyarins momentarily forget that Paul's abstraction didn't only separate Christians from Jews. It also separated the concept of "Jewishness" itself *from* the circumcised flesh, and so resorting to "Jewishness" may be a fundamentally compromised strategy of resistance to Christian designs. Again, they are working from *within* an allegory.

The very linkage of Jewishness to circumcision, even as it radicalizes and performatively destabilizes the distinction between Jew and Christian, bespeaks the inescapability of Paul's perspective.[105] Kathleen Biddick also addresses this in *The Typological Imaginary*, where she explores the recursivity of Paul's "circumcision of the heart." Christian supersessionism is constantly rearticulating and "encrypting" the (bad) "Jewish" form of circumcision in order to reinforce its own (good) form of circumcision. This is precisely why the Boyarins themselves worry that the concept of diaspora they develop could also be a Christian abstraction/Pauline allegory, and it is moreover why their "actual historical" framework is so flawed. Biddick locates this recursivity at the heart of the notion of European historical time. In this light, the Boyarins' attempt to escape the imperial version of European time by resorting to circumcision runs a high risk of reinforcing that very European vision, by re-abstracting and re-encrypting "Jewishness" under Paul's gaze. Much like J Kameron Carter, who proposes[106] that recognizing the basis of state racism in the Christian rejection of the Jewish flesh does something to undermine state

[105] One might argue, here, that these reflections apply only to "true Jews" (i.e. Christians), and not to Jews as such. Along the same lines, one could say that circumcision, as a practice, preceded Pauline discourse in actual fact, and thus need not be allegorized in such a way. Moreover, one could also say (in reference to the discussion below about diaspora) that there were versions of diasporism that preceded Zionism. I would respond by saying that the historical perspective that is necessitated by these observations re-opens the problem of historicity by introducing the that-was-then-this-is-now perspective Biddick links to Christian supersessionary anxieties. Although it may not seem that introducing chronological "facts" such as these fully reinstates a Hegelian teleological temporality, it at least allows for periodization along the vectors of progress and thus (at least potentially) reinstates the problem of supersessionary time. I admit that this perspective makes projects of historical recovery seem inherently problematic, and precludes engagement with other "traditions" and lifeworlds that lie outside of Europe, but I feel wary of resorting to historical recovery nonetheless. This is why, in my dissertation as a whole, I explicitly limit my observations to Europe and to Western discourse; and moreover, why I still make an attempt to avoid the idea of recovery, even while historical thinking is to some extent impossible to avoid.

[106] *Race* 70-73. See the next chapter on Emma Lazarus for a fuller discussion of Carter's work.

racism, the Boyarins here believe they can escape the abstraction built into the Christian discourse surrounding "Jewishness" simply by pointing it out. I suspect however that it is not so easy to escape the effects of Western discourse, if only for the reason that the Boyarin's choose to deploy their argument in these terms (-- not for and within a religious lifeworld).[107]

In "Diaspora," in order to describe the importance of circumcision to Jewish identity, the Boyarins use the analogy of a house slave who, despite being radically alienated from their ancestors, still has access to African "culture."[108] This moment in their analysis is crucial as it reveals the reproduction of racial subjection at the heart of their idea of Jewish identity. It also importantly foreshadows the epigraph for this section, where the Boyarins advocate their "alternative model" of self-determination: "only slaves and no masters." As it turns out, the figure of the slave is crucial to their "diasporic model," while blackness (curiously) falls out of it.

"Their bodies were marked as being different from the other people doing 'white' things." In the Boyarins' account which draws on Walter Benn Michaels, the house slaves are said to experience assimilation into whiteness as "a dissonance or gap between one's practices and affects. Partly assimilated, partly repressed, early childhood acculturation reasserts itself as a sense of dissonance, or guilt, as well."[109] Thus, when house slaves meet other slaves outside the house, a bonding based on this common experience ensues that results in a (partial) recovery of their "culture."[110] Without explaining at length how this common suffering results in "culture" for the house slave, the Boyarins go on to argue that Jews are similarly alienated from their

[107] Clearly, their work is ensconced within the fields of cultural studies, post-colonial theory, continental philosophy and anthropology. Nateuri Karta and the other religious traditions they reference (at least in the work that I review here) are an afterthought. The thrust of their argument conforms to the demands of a "secular" discourse.

[108] "Diaspora" 703.

[109] "Diaspora" 703-704.

[110] "Diaspora" 704.

heritage due to assimilation, and for them the answer is circumcision. The practice of circumcision "compels" Jews to re-member their genealogy: "The insistence on the value of bodily connection and embodied practice that is emblematic of Judaism since Paul thus has significant critical power vis-a-vis the isolating and disembodying direction of Western idealist philosophies."[111] To the extent that circumcision distinguished Jews from their Christian neighbors in the diaspora, it constitutes a source of Jewish "culture" in common.

The Boyarins make a point of saying that any (male) person, regardless of race or creed, can take on this mark of circumcision and compel themselves to re-member their Jewish "ground."[112] Although it is not always freely chosen, it has a performative quality and as such, this bodily practice evades the Pauline distinction between flesh and soul. It both is, and is not, a clear sign of genealogical/carnal difference, since anyone can do it.

This analogy between the circumcised Jewish male and the house slave raises some red flags, principal among them the untrammeled access the Boyarins imagine that the house slave has to African "culture." This conflation of genealogy and utter subjection occludes the process whereby social death and natal alienation *constitute* the slave as such.[113] Natal alienation describes the process whereby whole populations of slaves are divested of their kinship structures. Despite the continuity of social death and alienation across black experience that

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[111] "Diaspora" 705-706.

[112] "Diaspora" 705: "Male Jewish circumcision provides a particularly sharp disruption of Michaels's statement that no 'mark of identity . . . transcends one's actual practices and experiences,' for it certainly can be a mark that transcends one's actual practices and (at least remembered) experiences, yet it is a mark that can reassert itself, and often enough does, as a demand (almost a compulsion) to reconnect, relearn, reabsorb, and reinvent the doing of Jewish things. Indeed, one could understand circumcision precisely as the cultural construction of a genealogical differentiation, as a diacritic that symbolizes the biological status of Jewishness -- not in the sense of a biological difference between Jews and others but in the sense of the biological connection that filiation provides. Further evidence that this connection has nothing to do with racism per se is the fact that one not Jewish can indeed adopt Jewish identity by taking on Jewish practices and through symbolic rebirth (and for men, physical marking) as a member of the Jewish People."

[113] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 1982).

clearly eliminates the possibility of genealogy,[114] the Boyarins analogize circumcision to (the fiction of) a bodily difference that filiates generations genealogically.

The Boyarins turn rejection into "culture" for the house slave (and implicitly for the Jew), without questioning, like Hortense Spillers does, the idea that blackness is a "mark" analogous to other marks of difference -- which is to say, without asking if there should be another category to describe this space before a "body," i.e. a "zero degree of social conceptualization" *before* the human, that coincides with the phenomenon of the transatlantic slave trade?[115] The Boyarins implicity take "humanity" to be the foundation underlying all differences. And yet, they already glimpse some kind of gap – writing recuperatively of circumcision as not only denigration but also "traditionally" a source of Jewish pride, a tool of diasporic survival. It would be hard to think of blackness similarly as a tool through which any kind of "tradition" can survive -- and yet this thought seems not to occur in their analysis, as they move on from the figure of the slave entirely.

Thus it is unsurprising when, in *Unheroic Conduct*, Daniel Boyarin misreads Spillers as a deconstructive humanist, failing to see that the West *produces* its very idea of "the human" through enslavement. He understands Spillers' claim that "there is no such thing as a black woman" to buttress his argument that race is a "mapping [of difference] onto more or less arbitrary physical differences, such as . . . skin color."[116] The version of intersectionality, or "race/gender system," that Daniel Boyarin glosses here clearly assumes some common basis on which race is mapped that is not already saturated with gratuitous, antiblack violence. More

[114] Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Carribean Journal of Criticism* 12:2 (2008), pp. 1-14.

[115] Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* Vol. 17, No. 2, Culture and Countermemory: The "American" Connection (Summer, 1987), pp. 64-81.

[116] *Unheroic Conduct* 193.

fundamentally, it also assumes a delimited *space* on which the difference of blackness could be mapped, as if blackness did not constitute space itself – a problem which I elaborate below.

The central question here should be why the Boyarins ground the concept of genealogy-through-circumcision upon an analogy with a group whose experience of social death challenges the very idea of genealogy. By suggesting that such groups can have "culture," can be "human," can turn their denigration on its head, the Boyarins submerge the deeper conceptual cut of antiblackness in a level playing-field of multicultural difference. It is for this reason that the Boyarins can figure Jewish difference as not only containing or opening onto (some) other differences but as the key to all others. It is for this reason, in other words, that they can conceive of Jewish marginalization / *the destabilization thereof* as a vantage from which to evaluate and critique the politics of any other marginalized group.

"Jewishness" in this sense, "travel[ing] along a marginal trajectory providing a connecting thread among an ever-widening field of articulated differences" [117] is the key to the end of identity politics. This is the movement of obliteration that coincides with Jewish "model minority discourse" and Seidman's "politics of the vicarious" all over again. In short, it *is* Paul ultimately.

Post-identitarian Jewish difference then becomes a way to insinuate the idea from within other identity categories that they are not what they think they are. As Paul said of the Jews, *they who say they are true Jews are not; it is Christians who are the true Jews.* By processing its notion of universality through the "Jewish" position, Christian universality gets to conceal itself while gaining wider access to a field of identity categories with which it can feign parity.

[117] "Self-Exposure" 37.

We can see again in *Storm from Paradise* that this framework requires the Boyarins to give special attention to blackness, where Jonathan Boyarin compares Jewish thought to double consciousness:

> Estrangement from the self, or at any rate a double consciousness, is constitutive of Jewishness not because we persist only through being repeatedly rejected by others but because there was a time before the Jew was a Jew. Abraham becomes the first Jew when he leaves his father's ways and his father's house to follow an invisible God. Coming to be Jewish is coming to be Other. What is relevant here regarding the possibility of a distinctively Jewish ethnography is that Judaism contains the Other in its own genealogy[118]

For a simple feeling of common suffering amongst slaves or amongst Jews to evolve into "culture," Jonathan Boyarin argues, it has to include the Other. It cannot simply remain a fact of subjection. It has to be something other than itself. It has to deconstruct itself. The Pauline resonance of this move should be obvious by now. But can one say of the black position that there "was a time before the [black] was a [black]?" This seems to presume a project of recovery that (again, if we think with Hartman) seems deeply questionable. The allusion to double consciousness here seems to exclude the black position more than it includes it -- or in more precise terms, it seems to bury the black position *within* its logic, since, as in "Diaspora," the Boyarins never explicitly elaborate how the transformation of black subjection into genealogy and culture would happen.

We can see the same sort of Pauline post-identarian appropriation of blackness, if more subtly, in Daniel Boyarin's essay on Fanon and Freud, "What Does a Jew Want?" Here, again, he starts out with an equation between circumcision and blackness. Both blackness and Jewish circumcision figure as differences constituted by, *but not only by,* persistence-through-rejection.

> The situation of both Jew and Negro is misrecognized as feminine. This mechanism entails a form of intrapsychic splitting, in which the colonized establishes a partial identification with the colonizer. The colonized begins to see

[118] *Storm* 66.

> himself from the eyes of the oppressor and tries to reject what he considers contemptible by projecting all of this onto the white man's other Others: the Jew onto the black, the black onto the Jew, and both onto women and homosexuals[119]

Daniel Boyarin's reading of Freud's antiblackness and Fanon's antisemitism as analogous, traumatic repetitions of their feminization by Christian whiteness drives ultimately toward the point that both Jew and black are constituted by misrecognition.[120] Like Jonathan Boyarin in the quote above, Daniel Boyarin tries to show that these differences include each other; that coming to be _____ is "coming to be Other." "Freud and Fanon have privileged access to the same knowledge."[121] To be circumcised or to be black is deterritorializing. Unlike Jonathan Boyarin however, Daniel Boyarin makes the provision *not* to "idealize this knowledge . . . of lack."[122] As the quote above highlights, racialized marginalization and its attendant psychological misrecognition often simply result in a repetition compulsion of toxic symptoms. It appears that Daniel Boyarin seems more cautious and skeptical than Jonathan Boyarin about the analogy he is drawing, and yet he refuses to proceed to the consequences.

Why do the Boyarins perpetually appropriate concepts from black thought -- social death, double consciousness, etc. -- and use them as a basis for comparison between Black and Jewish experience? In "an ever-widening field of articulated differences," why is Jewish Studies magnetized to the figure of "the slave?" Why must it believe that the slave can have its genealogy?

The moment where Jonathan Boyarin writes that Jewish persistence is not constituted by rejection alone, that Jewish life is not founded on death, marks where his analysis clearly

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[119] Daniel Boyarin, "What Does a Jew Want?; or the Political Meaning of the Phallus," in *The Psychoanalysis of Race,* ed. Lane (Columbia University Press, 1998), 226-227.

[120] "What Does a Jew Want" 212.

[121] "What Does a Jew Want" 217.

[122] "What Does a Jew Want" 212.

diverges from Black living-death (whose persistence in the West *is, indeed,* inseparable from gratuitous violence, social death and suffering).[123] And yet Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin both *need* to recuperate this figure of radical disempowerment in order to shore up their idea of an articulated field of differences, spreading horizontally and progressively forward in Hegelian time.

In order to show that all differences can be articulated, the Boyarins enter into a series of substitutions that noticeably does not include the slave. Interestingly, it is at *this* point in "Diaspora" -- i.e. at the point where they begin to actually travel the "ever-widening field of articulated differences" -- that the figure of blackness drops out of their essay entirely, and the Boyarins take up the indigenous. "It is thus not quite as obvious . . . that a New York Jew cannot become a Mashpee Indian . . . Certainly a Mashpee Indian can become a Jew."[124] Before analyzing the problematic logic of this statement, I want to ask what special relevance the Mashpee Indian holds for the Boyarins' argument in "Diaspora" that the slave does not -- and vice versa. The Boyarins never go to the length of claiming that the New York Jew can become a house slave, but why? I will offer a symptomatic reading. The slave's fungibility enables the Boyarins' concept of comparison, serving as a point of transit across which groups of "humans," i.e. cultures, can be compared and combined (into the multicultural space that can exist in Israel).

The idea that the house slave is themselves a "human" occludes how their ante-human fungibility provides the lynchpin for comparison. Comparison is a spatial metaphor, and so requires the production of space – which in turn requires the fungibility of the slave. In the words of Tiffany Lethabo King,

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[123] Frank B. Wilderson III. *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Duke University Press, 2010).

[124] "Diaspora" 705.

> Blackness is the raw dimensionality (symbol, matter, kinetic energy) used to make space. . . While they are used for the production of human geographies of possession, inhabitance, and self-actualization, Black bodies do not exist as human cartographers, inhabitants, or stewards of space and property in eighteenth-century mappings of empire and within human geography writ large. Black bodies are, in fact, the spatial coordinates that the human can manipulate and inhabit . . . Black bodies mark the outsides of humanness[125]

Fungibility opens up what Denise Da Silva calls "the horizon of death" -- "the haunting spatiality . . . at the core of modern thought"[126] -- a gulf that Europe projects outside itself in order to found its separation from "the Others of Europe."

> the distance creating a vacuum within the Same, it is the hiatus that disperses and regroups it at the two ends of itself. It is this profound spatiality that makes it possible for modern thought still to conceive of time — to know it as succession, to promise it to itself as fulfillment, origin, and return[127]

Projecting this "distance" to the margins, Europe finds itself entitled to the position of the desiring, interior, historical Subject (aka the "human"). As fungibility, black bodies are the ultimate destination and ground of the horizon of death, the marker of spatial expansion and contraction. They cannot occupy space, because they are it.

The Boyarins bring in the "haunting spatiality" of the slave to divide Europe from itself, to divide the interior subject of history from itself, but in order to retain the concept of separation,[128] they still rely on the fungibility of blackness. Black bodies serve as a figure both for the loss and recuperation of "culture." The house slave can lose their Africanness in one sense (assimilation), while retaining it in another (mark of blackness) simultaneously. Without ever doing anything themselves, the slave is the material upon which the idea of genealogy

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[125] Tiffany Lethabo King. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2019).

[126] *Toward* 25.

[127] *Toward* 279 fn 6.

[128] Denise Da Silva, "Difference without Separability," catalogue of the 32a São Paulo Art Biennial, "Incerteza viva" [Living Uncertainty], https://issuu.com/amilcarpacker/docs/denise_ferreira_da_silva

plays. Is genealogy an imposition of the white gaze in this case, or does it provide the slave with the power to repel the white gaze? Somehow this does not seem to matter. They leave alone the question of whether the slave is a "person" who can "have" culture to begin with. Can "culture" be something a black body "has," with which to rebel against/stand on the other side of/oppose Europe?[129]

As the "raw dimensionality" of space itself, and thus that which makes comparison and analogy possible, blackness would not ever find itself on equal footing, in parity, with the (European) "human." Its mutability is that with which the "human" measures its distance from, or dangerous proximity to, Others (including, e.g., natives). This is why, unsurprisingly, the slave body *remains* a kind of unbridgeable gap, haunting the text. Less the subject of a direct comparison than an index of antagonism, the comparison of the mark of circumcision to blackness conceals an antagonism that Jonathan Boyarin doesn't touch and that Daniel Boyarin barely intimates.

Whereas genealogy for the house slave is based on a kind of ontological incapacity, the native's access to genealogy is coded positively as an onto-epistemic capacity. Unlike the African slave, natives and Jews can re-appropriate their difference for deconstructive purposes. The Boyarins repeatedly insist that circumcision, while associated with castration by White Christendom, represents wholeness in the Jewish tradition. Although it opens onto the Other, it also offers a plenitude of identity. In *Storm from Paradise,* where Jonathan Boyarin writes comparatively of Jewish and Native American "Othering," both of which are founded upon "the incorporation of the Other as both mythic ancestor and allegory of degradation,"[130] he similarly

[129] Edward Said has analogous, if not equivalent, suspicions about the idea of "culture" -- namely, that it is implicated in purposes of state control. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage: 1979), 325.

[130] *Storm* 30.

writes of how natives can reappropriate their superseded identity as a tool of resistance to the West.

Let us return to the original statement: “It is thus not quite as obvious . . . that a New York Jew cannot become a Mashpee Indian . . . Certainly a Mashpee Indian can become a Jew."[131] The implicit reversal here whereby the Boyarins suggest that the New York Jew *can* become a Mashpee Indian not only commits an obvious logical fallacy (just because it goes one way doesn’t mean it can go the other),[132] but also begs the question of why this reversibility is attributed to the native and not the black position.

Per King’s analysis, the native is an “anapace” -- or, in other words, “a space that needs to be kept at bay until it is conquered.” The native can be moved around from place to place, freely trafficked between inside and outside without radically disturbing the dimension of space itself. In fact, the traffic between back and forth may be necessary, as it marks the time of conquest: it is, after all, only "*until it is conquered*” that that native is "kept at bay." When the native appears on the inside *as such*, the conqueror knows their work to be (nearly) done. Because they represent “barriers to the creation of space,” natives serve as walls to be felled.

Taking into account this distinction between fungiblity and anaspace, the difference between how blackness and indigeneity function in the Boyarins' argument begins to make sense. The Mashpee Indian is an exemplary figure *to implicate* in comparison, moving across the “horizon of death,” once they have been conquered, as they are afforded a measure of performativity. They can exist within Europe (without being *of it*) once they have been sufficiently conquered (defining themselves as a conquered and dispersed nation). That Jonathan

[131] "Diaspora" 705.

[132] Which also begs the questions of how far outside of the body/soul dialectic the practice of circumcision takes someone if you can’t quite undo it.

Boyarin is acutely aware of the fact that he "benefit[s] from a prior obliteration of the Native American Other"[133] clues us into the fact that he no longer sees the native as an anaspatial threat. Their performative agency is actually a foreclosure, or vanishing point, of political resistance.

> Under some circumstances, where the dilemmas of the dominant, collectively imagined self do not call forth genocidal responses, this interaction offers the minority group a space to survive through the symbolic and material goods it provides [134]

This falsity that the dominant self ever refrains from calling forth genocidal responses indexes the fantasy of the settler that King identifies: that there will come/has come a time where the native "is conquered." I would suggest that, again, this has to do with Boyarins' concept of their project as "historicizing and political."[135] This historical framework *requires* the notion that there exist "some circumstances, where the dilemmas of the dominant, collectively imagined self do not call forth genocidal responses," because to think otherwise -- i.e. to think about settlerism as "structure, not an event" -- would bar them from managing the anaspace of nativeness.[136] Armed with this idea of the reprieve, however, they can implicate the native, unlike the black, in the reversible space of comparison and analogy with the Jew.

Hence, again, the issue Jewish Studies faces of how to articulate a vanishing Jewish difference: Can Jews take on a "mark" to distinguish themselves from the Christian West, and if so, is this mark analogous to the mark of blackness? The irreversibility of the mark of circumcision gives an air of facticity (a la Fanon's "fact of blackness") to circumcised male Jewishness. It, of course, does consign the Jewish male body to one side of the body/soul

[133] *Storm* 22.
[134] *Storm* 21.
[135] *Storm* 22.
[136] See C. Heike Schotten's gloss on how nativeness deforms time in political theory from Hobbes forward in C. Heike Schotten, *Queer Terror: Life, Death and Desire in the Settler Colony* (Columbia University Press, 2018).

distinction, and *indeed,* there is a connection worth exploring between antisemitism and anti-blackness qua ungendered flesh,[137] but in the Boyarins' symbolic analysis of Jewish male feminization they totally bypass the flesh. The insistence on the performativity of circumcision that keeps cropping up – i.e. the insistence that "the convert becomes the ideal type of the Jew" – implies a kind of reversibility between the Christian and the Jewish body, from which the house slave is fundamentally barred. The Boyarins construct circumcision as a difference that one can "have" and use to dismantle the master's house, if only partially. In this, they fail to appreciate the racial capitalism and racial thinking at the root of modernity out of which racist, sexist, nationalist discursive formations of the Subject emerge – including their own Diasporic, "Jewish" one.

Although the Mashpee native proves a more fitting model for the Boyarins' "politics of the vicarious" than the slave, their model ultimately falls apart in moments when native and black academics speak back to the "imperializing" tendencies built into their praxis of diaspora.

IV. DIASPORISM IS ZIONISM

"Only slaves and no masters." What does it mean to disavow power to this extreme, to identify with the slave, and yet – by claiming genealogy and a good version of history – to so fully avert the irreconcilability of black social death? It is for the reason that the Boyarins so fully disavow their whiteness, conflating their alternative politics of "self-determination" with slavery, that they reinstate the white Desiring subject at the heart of historical time.

[137] Kathleen Biddick and J Kameron Carter have both persuasively argued that the typological thinking at the root of all Historical thought is based on a denigration of the "Jewish" flesh. The negation of this flesh by which the Christian West constitutes itself in historical time, which is to say *as* supersession after supersession (that was then, this is now), is also the flesh of the slave. This does not mean that the Jew is oppressed in the same way as the slave, but it does mean that any move to think about anti-Jewish or anti-Black oppression in historical terms reinstates the problem. By centering the male body over and against degendered flesh, the Boyarins are reinstituting a kind of supersessionary historical thinking. See Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary*, and Carter, *Race.*

This white settler consciousness rears its head in a number of moments where a defense of Jewish diasporism subtly morphs into an attack on anti-Zionism. In a footnote from "Diaspora," the Boyarins narrate a conflict between themselves and a native academic who issues a critique of diaspora, which actually turns out to be a critique of settler colonialism. I quote at length:

> It is profoundly disturbing to hear Jewish attachment to the land decried as regressive in the same discursive situations in which the attachment of native Americans or Australians to their particular rocks, trees, and deserts is celebrated as an organic connection to the Earth that "we" have lost. [Continued in the footnote:] An aboriginal Australian recently began her lecture at a conference with greetings from her people to the indigenous people of the United States, of whom there were two representatives in the audience and whom she addressed by name. Much of her lecture consisted of a critique of the rootlessness of Europeans. Daniel Boyarin had a sense of being trapped in a double bind, for if the Jews are the indigenous people of the Land of Israel, as Zionism claims, then the Palestinians are indigenous nowhere, but if the Palestinians are the indigenous people of Palestine, then Jews are indigenous nowhere. He had painfully renounced the possibility of realizing his very strong feeling of connection to the Land (*this connection having been co-opted by the state*) in favor of what he and Jonathan Boyarin take to be the only possible end to violence and movement toward justice. Are we now to be condemned as people who have lost their roots?[138]

It is curious that Daniel Boyarin conceives this native critique of Jewish rootlessness as the opposite of his (former) Zionism, when the opposite could equally have meant acknowledging a connection of European Jews to *Europe.*[139] By eclipsing this native academic's critique of Europeanness, the Boyarins derail her critique. Although it looks like they are defending diasporic Jewish rootlessness, I want to focus on how this ironically becomes an opportunity for Daniel Boyarin to express a nostalgia for Zionism. The moment where they acknowledge the "co-option" of Daniel Boyarin's attachment to the land of Israel is crucial, since it implies falsely

[138] "Diaspora" 714-715.

[139] Although Europe has persistently defined itself against Jewishness, and I do not mean to erase that by any means, I am trying in this chapter to think about how, as an enemy that was considered internal to Europe, in what ways specifically Jews were thought to be "inside" nonetheless.

that something *before* the co-option is possible, and that something about his former Zionism is "his."

How does this nostalgia for Zionism erupt from his defense of Jewish rootlessness? The fact that it is an indigenous academic against whom the Boyarins feel the need to defend this traditional "connection to the Land" in this moment unconsciously says something about the (Zionist) stakes of this connection to the land. It would seem that the connection is, in fact, inextricably settler-colonial; and the co-option complete. What if there is not (and not even "history" will make it possible to say there ever was) a connection to the Land that was not part of a settler-colonial state project. In a moment such as this, the Boyarins' betray their faltering attempt to conceal the Zionism built into their model of diasporic Jewishness.

In *Powers of Diaspora*, the Boyarins bolster the concept of diaspora in a similar way: by attacking what appear to be attacks on Jewish diasporic existence, but are actually critiques of the connection between diaspora and Zionism/Europe. They begin with Stuart Hall's gloss on the Jewish diaspora in relation to Zionism:

> diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of 'ethnicity.' We have seen the fate of the people of Palestine at the hands of this backward-looking conception of diaspora[140]

The Boyarins respond in the following way:

> Hall identifies Zionism -- the attempt to negate Jewish diasporic existence -- with Jewish diasporism; when Jewishness is reduced to a caricatured Zionism in this fashion, it is indeed the case that anti-Zionism is anti-Judaism[141]

[140] quoted in Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 13.

[141] *Powers* 13.

Again, if diaspora is itself another allegory of the Christian West, there's no reason to think it is incompatible with Zionism. In fact, Zionism and Jewish diaspora probably *should* be thought of as two facets of the same political theology.[142] Joyce Dalsheim has argued, in the context of Israel, that debates over settler-colonial violence have not broken apart but reconstituted, and even strengthened, Israeli settler society:

> the emerging appearance of discontinuity is itself hegemonic, exerting power in numerous ways. It is powerful in defining the problem as the split among the people. It is powerful in instilling fear of impending doom, civil war, or destruction as the people are torn apart. Finally, it is powerful in suggesting solutions that involve peacemaking among settlers[143]

Why couldn't this insight also apply to Jewish communities globally (certainly those in the Christian West)? Zionism has, even according to the Boyarins, arrogated to itself the power to define Judaism as "a European, Western cultural-political formation."[144] Why couldn't Zionism -- like the Christian "typological imaginary" – also define Jewish diasporic consciousness as a first step toward its own consummate 'ingathering?'[145]

Note, moreover, Jonathan Boyarin's anxiety in the quote below about the inextricability of Zionism and his Jewish self-definition:

> The Holocaust and the establishment of Israel have been described as "The Jewish return to history" (Fackenheim 1978). This is only true within a Hegelian conception of history as the history of states. If instead we view states as products of history, rather than the vehicle of history, it is altogether easy to see that Jews have been inextricably part of European and Mediterranean history for millennia, and that they would not have survived otherwise. Nevertheless, if any event is epoch-making, then genocide and statehood are epochal events. In this sense I would rather claim that *Israel does not objectively inaugurate, but rather existentially demands, a new era in Jewish history* – inasmuch as history is not an

[142] After all, it is only after being dispersed and gathered back into Zion that Judgement Day can befall the earth in Christian eschatology.

[143] Dalsheim 126.

[144] "Diaspora" 712.

[145] I want to clarify here that I am resisting an impulse to step into the realm of history and to locate versions of Jewish diaspora/diasporism outside of this discursive articulation of it we see in the work of the Boyarins, because my argument here only concerns itself with the discourse we call Jewish Studies.

> external framework within which human lives are played out, but the human way of surviving (or bringing destruction) by telling stories about ourselves. *Jews are now faced with the task of fundamentally refashioning our history – rearticulating our relation to both our ancestors and to our contemporaries who call themselves Jews* [146]

"Our contemporaries who call themselves Jews:" is this not Paul again – the Christian unconscious of Jewish Studies – slipping out, questioning whether those who are circumcised in the flesh rather than in their hearts are the real Jews? Furthermore: rather than evading Hegel, Jonathan Boyarin clearly reinstates the historical Hegelianism of the desiring Subject when he lays claim to a "history [that is] not an external framework . . . but the human way of surviving (or bringing destruction) by telling stories about ourselves." At the same time, it is important to note that Jonathan Boyarin's concept of a renewed Jewish historicity is figured as *derivative of* the "epochal event" of Zionism. How far, this passage subliminally asks, can this new diasporic Jewishness stray from Zionism, its catalyst?

Similarly, see Daniel Boyarin's gloss on the inextricability of Zionism to his project in *Unheroic Conduct*:

> [Like Herzl] I am also in search of a Jewish political subject who will find a place in modernity. As a Jew, like other people who do not unproblematically "belong" in the Metropolis, I find modernity a dilemma. *We are always in a "derivative discourse."* The very struggle against colonialism, homophobia, and sexism that my project is born of is structurally identical with Herzl's struggle for 'manliness' and its signifiers – colonialism, homophobia, and sexism – in the sense that it is also informed by the values and ideals of the larger culture within which I find myself living as a Jew. *I could not disavow Zionism as a Jewish practice without involving myself in an invidious and artificial essentialism cum triumphalism. Zionism is, it must be conceded, as 'authentic' a practice of being Jewish as any other, and it is, moreover what most -- not all -- Jews who identify strongly as Jews are doing now* . . . Zionism cannot be undone and history cannot be changed, but the future may be, and a first step, in my view, would be an attempt to recover and revalue the conditions and historical resources of a Jewish culture within which masculinity was Edelkayt[147]

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[146] *Storm* 125, emphasis mine.
[147] *Unheroic* 310-311, emphasis mine.

In this quote, Daniel Boyarin is much more forthright in his declaration that his historical project of recovery is a "derivative" product of Zionism. Although the historicism of his project is clearly rooted in the desire for a kind of anti-Zionist Jewish essence, he clearly can't dissociate that historicism and that de-essentializing from Zionism. The Boyarins need history, in other words, because otherwise how would they find an alternative to Zionism? My question is: what if history itself reinstates the problem? The true alternative, it would seem, might have to be anti-historical.

In other words, it may be too late. Was there ever "time" to change this? "Zionism cannot be undone and history cannot be changed." It is *this* echo of an anti-historical pessimism that I would suggest we hear out – this skepticism about what projects that aim to *historically* recuperate Jewishness from Zionism can do.

V. CONCLUSION

I would be remiss not to mention Daniel Boyarin's attempt to deal with some of these issues in his most recent work. Discourse that makes Judaism out to be "a religion" reinstates Christian power, as his new book *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* shows. Although I have problems with Daniel and Jonathan Boyarins' "diasporist" project as a whole, I believe that this idea from Daniel's new book is worth sitting with.

Simultaneously, I am skeptical about the strategically essentialist move that Daniel tries to pull even in this recent work, at the end, where he insists "on the ways that Judaism is not now, and never was, a religion – for Jews," and further on, where he writes that

> letting the others, even our own ancestors, be as truly themselves as we can allow them, as complexly different from us as we can imagine them, expands our sense of the myriad forms of life that humans have produced and has the potential to

> render the imagined potentialities of our own collective human lives immeasurably richer as well.[148]

It is not as clear to me, as it is to Daniel Boyarin, that "Judaism" can be strategically reappropriated from its engulfment into Christian (and especially white Christian) discourse. Although Daniel Boyarin's approach as a whole forbids essentialism, he fails to see how profound the effects of Christianity's definition of Jewish essence are, and how fully it has eclipsed any individual Jew's grasp on "their own" identity. Even the minimal performative capacity to say that Judaism is not a religion, and thus to "render the imagined potentialities of our own collective human lives immeasurably richer," is barred under the Christian definition of Jewishness. There is, in other words, no "Jewish" position from which to critique Christianity that is not already within it and co-opted by it. The discourse of "Jewishness" has become, or always was, irrevocably historical, which is to say "Judeo-Christian," which is to say Christian. It is this impossibility that I attempt to explore further in the next chapter.

[148] Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (Rutgers University Press, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE
The Biopolitics of Jewish Protestantism:
Emma Lazarus's Lachrymose Poetics

> "P.S. Did you really say as you were reported in yesterday's Times that 'the Christian Church in America is a noble and vital institution'? I hope not!''
> – *Emma Lazarus to Gustav Gottheil* [149]

I. INTRODUCTION

As many critics have pointed out, Emma Lazarus' take on Jewish identity, especially in her writing from the late 1870s to early 1880s, is strikingly ambivalent. On the one hand, she expresses pride in her history and debates antisemitism in the press vociferously, while on the other, she's clearly dissatisfied by those parts of Jewish practice she sees as "backward." She petitions on behalf of the Eastern European immigrants coming into the US in the 1880s, but also refers to them as "refuse" (in a poem famously devoted to them, no less).[150] At stake in this tension between proud advocacy and internalized antisemitism is the question of Jewish politics. Can a Jew, as such, even *be* political? Lazarus clearly subscribes to a widespread view of Jews as outside of historical time and politics, secluded in ghettos and isolated from modernity.[151] And yet, even while she rejects the idea that Jewish immigrants "could adapt themselves upon touching American soil to the exigencies of 'the most progressive country in the world,'"[152] and whereas a number of her "post-Jewish" contemporaries emphatically deny the possibility of a Jewish politics,[153] Lazarus distinctly affirms the possibility of Jewish self-determination.[154]

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[149] Letter dated Oct. 3, 1882. Quoted in Esther Schor, *Emma Lazarus* (Random House, 2017).

[150] See Max Cavitch, "Emma Lazarus and the Golem of Liberty," *American Literary History* 18:1 (2006).

[151] See Anidjar's chapter on Franz Rosenzweig in *The Jew, The Arab* (Stanford University Press, 2003).

[152] Emma Lazarus, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York : Jewish Historical Society of New York, 1987 [1882]), 44.

[153] To the extent that Felix Adler and Emma's own sister, Josephine Lazarus, promoted the idea of abandoning Judaism as such, see Shaul Magid, *American Post-Judaism* (Indiana University Press, 2013), 42.

[154] Her Zionism, as well as her promotion of Jewish labor in the Wild West, attest to her position on Jewish self-determination.

In this chapter, my first goal is to show that this affirmation does in fact play into the hands of Christian hegemony. The epigraph above is an indication of Lazarus' long-standing critique of institutional Christianity in the United States, but by reading Lazarus' work alongside that of her contemporary and friend, Reform Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, I aim to demonstrate how their versions of a Jewish "return to history" rehearse (rather than negate) Christian supersessionary time. Like Salo Baron and his predecessors in the field of the secular study of Jewish history, Lazarus and Gottheil repress the "lachrymose" conception of Jewish time (*Jammergeschitchte*)[155] – a sustained note of lamentation, defeat, despair – in order to grasp a secular (Hebraist) historical Jewishness that fits into the history of the West. According to Kathleen Bididick, Salo Baron

> traced *Jammergeschitchte* to a medieval Ashkenazi tradition, which, he claimed, emplotted Jewish history since the fall of the temple as a lamentable vale of tears. Baron further argued that some Jewish historians of the nineteenth century remobilized the tradition to aid civil assimilation. Baron intended that his oeuvre, a legacy of social and economic studies of European Jews, should mute such lachrymosity once and for all[156]

Similarly, David Biale suggests that "The Jewish tradition" itself "is strangely unhistorical:

> the traditional Jew sees his history through the lens of memory, for which all events are cyclical recurrences of ancient archetypes. The exile from Spain conjures up the memory of the exile from Judea; the pogroms of the Crusades are repetitions of the slaughter of the martyrs by Antiochus Epiphanes. One might say that this very notion of a recurring Jewish destiny remained deeply rooted even in Ben Gurion, the most secular of Zionists: in attempting to revolt against this destiny, Ben Gurion accepted the traditional view of recurrent cycles. The

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[155] See Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Per Biddick, *Jammergeschitchte,* lachrymose lamentation, is a part of the Ashkenazi German tradition of Jewish practice that the Haskalic and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* thinkers fundamentally discounted in their version of an enlightened Jewishness. Over the course of this chapter, I use *Jammergeschitchte* as a lens through which to look at the work of Emma Lazarus. Although she was of Sephardic heritage and thus not filiatively linked to this tradition, I am trying to demonstrate how alienated (if I can use that word) from any version of Jewish tradition -- including "her own" Sephardic one -- Lazarus was. I wish to offer lachrymose lamentation as a remainder of the antihistorical that echoes through Lazarus' work as she translates Heine, as she translates medieval Jewish poets from German translations, etc.

[156] Biddick 77.

> historian, on the other hand, does not see the past as recurring but rather as made up of unique events, each to be understood in its own context[157]

Whereas Baron sees lachrymosity as a tool of assimilation and Biale suggests that Ben Gurion's Zionist "return to history" is structured by the cyclicality of the "traditional" view of Jewish history,[158] I want to put pressure on these interpretations that fold lachrymosity into the secular West. Following Biddick's own lead, the secularization problem may not be with the recurrence model, but rather with the attempt to escape it through the production of a Jewish historical subject. Biddick reads the repression of lachrymosity rather than lachrymosity itself as a reinstatement of "secular" historicism – which is to say a Christian typological imaginary that abjects Jewish flesh, circumcision, etc.

I will suggest that not only do Gottheil and Lazarus affirm Christian hegemony through this secularist view of Jewish history that rejects *Jammergeschitchte*, but that they do so in a way that some scholars of the Jewish question argue isn't possible before the Holocaust. Lazarus' secular "return to history" is predicated on a detheologizing racialization of Jews, which as Gil Anidjar suggests, extirpated them from the category of "Semites," and from the question of

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[157] David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken, 1986), 8.

[158] Per Biale, it was precisely Ben Gurion's attempt to bring together the cyclicality of lachrymose time and secular historicism that bound him to Zionist ideology. Although I agree that bringing together Jewish cyclicality and "history" is problematic, my critique tends to go after the problems with secular historicism more than it deals with any problem cyclicality might conceivably have. I am much less sanguine than Biale is about the discipline of history and its attempts to demystify material reality than he. On this score, I draw from Benjamin's critique of historicism in "Theses on the Philosophy of History" of course, but also from Silva, Biddick, Carter, Anidjar and other contemporary critics of history as a concept (Fasolt, Davis, etc.). Denise Da Silva's critique of Marxian historical materialism is especially apposite here, as it acknowledges the pros, but also the near-inevitable cons of thinking historically. According to Silva, Marx took the idea of history in a scientific enough direction to nearly dislodge Europe's "Transparent I," but failed when, with the idea of recognition (whereby the proletariat would see their conditions and desire to appropriate the products of their labor), he reinstated transparency. See Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 188-192.

I'm not sure if history can mean anything aside from the version of historical time we've inherited through the Enlightenment from Christianity, but I am intentionally limiting my purview in this chapter (and in the dissertation as a whole) to the epistemological orbit of Christian Europe and the United States (including their settler colonies). Euro-centrism is a charge I am willing to accept, if it illuminates something about the role of Jewishness in Western imperial thought.

political theology (which then gets shifted solely onto the Muslim). Whereas Anidjar asserts that this happened during the Holocaust and in the formation of the state of Israel, my analysis of Lazarus and Gottheil reveals that this development has a longer trajectory. I do this not to assert a more accurate timeline, but rather to destabilize the structure of periodization altogether, since it is, in fact, periodization that seems to be the problem with Lazarus and Gottheil's work.[159] Following Kathleen Biddick, J. Kameron Carter and Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin's writing about the Christian supersessionary underpinnings of historical thought, my analysis shows that periodization, used in order to articulate a historically ascendant secular Jewishness, leads Lazarus and Gottheil into the predicament of having to negate "flesh" of some kind or another. I adopt the term "biopolitics" from Foucault and J. Kameron Carter to describe the anti-Jewish impulse that is built into modern racism. I mean to show that this negation becomes a form of self-elimination[160] for Jewish writers like Gottheil, and even more so for doubly-racialized Sephardic Jews like Lazarus.[161] Lazarus and Gottheil put on display a moment where "Jews" are detheologized and inscribed into racial discourse (both in contrast to white Europeans, but also intra-communally), as a kind of stepping-stone towards engulfment via "cultural Jewishness."

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[159] Although it would be impossible to write this chapter without taking history into account at all, I try to destabilize the linear, historicist narratives surrounding Lazarus and American Jewry during the period in question, so as to open larger questions about the problems with periodization.

[160] See Joyce Dalsheim, *Israel has a Jewish Problem: Self-Determination as Self-Elimination* (Oxford University Press, 2019). I use "self-elimination" as a direct reference to Joyce Dalsheim's concept of self-elimination therein, while trying to broaden the scope of her argument beyond the contingencies of Zionist history. Convinced by the shape of Dalsheim's argument, I understand the concept of self-determination at an individual and collective scale as equally wrapped up in the Christian "secularity" of nationalism, and thus a capitulation to the Christian West. I also use the term "self-elimination" as an oblique reference to Denise Da Silva's concept of the "logic of obliteration" (elaborated in Chapter 1).

[161] I say this with Patrick Wolfe's argument regarding Israel's relation to non-Ashkenazi Jewish identities in mind. See *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (Verso, 2016), 265:

> As in Brazil — another White-minority context — race is conspicuous by its absence from this situation, an absence that is central to social control. In aligning Mizrahim to fellow-Jews rather than the fellow-Arabs, race operates in negation (or, perhaps, under erasure). Mizrahi de-racination is a work of race

In this chapter, I go on to suggest that the majority-Sephardi Jewish population of the United States was similarly racialized by way of "de-racination" in the eyes of an ascendant Ashkenazi leadership.

At the same time, I would be remiss not to touch on how Lazarus's writing, more than Gottheil's, *resists* these contortions of Jewish identity and undoes the concept of Jewish self-determination, by subtly embracing the anti-historical lachrymosity of Jewish time. Contrary to some of her biographers, I don't see Lazarus as a secular, political writer, but rather as a sentimental, religious one. Like Heine, Lazarus understands that she is barred from the figure of Jewish self-determination that Jewish historicists (like Gottheil) paint for themselves via secularization (i.e. the racial detheologization of Judaism). Jewish self-determination is, for her, self-obliterating: a Jewish life that is historical and political is cursed: "since Christ/ Cursed him to live till doomsday, still to be/ A scarecrow to the nations" (*Songs of a Semite* 21). It is, thus, in the realm of theological Judaism -- and more particularly, in its lachrymose concept of Jewish time – that she finds refuge.

In this sense, Lazarus is torturously invested in grasping Judaism religiously. Even as she finds it difficult to articulate Judaism in a way that doesn't feed Christianity's definition of religion (i.e. a vision of religious toleration under the purview of the larger structure of the Christian West)[162] and that doesn't separate Jews from Muslims, Lazarus engages Jewish theological lachrymosity as a trace of resistance to the secular/Christian concept of historical time. It is, in this way especially, that I depart from mainstream analyses of Lazarus as a "cultural Jew" (Schor 79).

Via an analysis of Lazarus' portraits of suicidality and despair in the play *the Dance of Death* and in her series of poems "A Translation of Heine and Two Imitations" (1882), I explore

[162] See Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (Rutgers University Press, 2018), which conveys (to some extent) how there is no "Jewish" position from which to critique Christianity that is not already within it and co-opted by it. Judaism has become, or always was, irrevocably Judeo-Christian – and no version of "history" will allow us to say otherwise. It is, I believe, this *impossibility* that Lazarus' poetics of *Jammergeschitchte* evokes.

lachrymosity as the repressed underside of Jewish historicism's vision of self-determination. I offer this as a case study in what it looks like for Jewish writers to struggle with their own engulfment into white Christendom's imperatives.

II. 'POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS OF A SENTIMENTAL GIRL'

When she's not interpreted solely through the triumphal American exceptionalism of "The New Colossus," Lazarus is thought of as a pathologically melancholic or "sentimental" writer. All the more so is she seen this way because of her Jewishness. Bette Roth Young attributes this idea to an essay by her sister Josephine, which depicts Emma Lazarus "as a one-dimensional, tragic Jewish priestess, whose 'somber streak' was rooted in her membership in a 'race born to suffer.'"[163] In the shadow of Josephine's essay, biographers continued to portray Emma Lazarus's life as uneventful, even stagnant – featuring "no dramatic episode or climax." The major exception to this sentimentality, according to Lazarus' contemporaries and critics, was her vociferous advocacy on behalf of Jewish immigrants. Lazarus' Jewish advocacy, these biographers sometimes speculated, might have been a defense mechanism that she used to disavow her perverse libidinal attachments.[164] As diametrically opposed as these two interpretations of her Jewish identification are, the two grow out of each other: Emma Lazarus was Jewish and morose, except when she was an advocate; her advocacy on behalf of Jews was itself not itself "Jewish," but a screen for her perversion. The logic that ties these ideas together is that Jews and politics do not mesh. Similarly, where Bette Roth Young argues (to the contrary

[163] Bette Roth Young, *Emma Lazarus in Her World: Life and Letters* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 13.
[164] Young 18.

of Josephine's essay) that Lazarus was very active, assertive and confident, she reproduces the same problem by attributing her Jewishness to "merely a phase."[165]

Young's critique not only reproduces the tension between self-determination and heteronomy (or reason vs. affect) that plagues the concept of Jewish history under the West's political theology,[166] but it also obscures how much Lazarus' writing *insists* on its own somberness. I will argue that this lachrymosity in Lazarus' writing is an index of how she, in fact, resists what Kathleen Biddick has referred to as "the typological imaginary," i.e. the antisemitic, Christian supersessionist basis of historical time. Whereas Gottheil tries to use this supersessionary historiographic imagination against itself, by positioning Jewishness as the more ethical, more fundamental religion of the Judeo-Christian pair, Lazarus – partly because of how she is a positioned as a Sephardic Jew over against an ascendant Ashkenazi whiteness – sees that strategy as a ruse. Not only does it reinstitute Christian supremacy, it also precludes her semitic identification. I will briefly provide a theoretical architecture for understanding the secularization/racialization of Judaism using the work of Gil Anidjar.

Orientalist thinkers like Renan clearly deepened, rather than helped to resolve, Europe's "Jewish Question," by secularizing it and making it a question of race rather than religion. As Anidjar clarifies, this moment was one where religion was both supposed to disappear, and also one where it reappeared (as separate from politics and modernity) in the Arab-Jewish figure of "the Semites." The Semites, at once religious and racial – the race who *invented* religion – were thought to confound the modern separation of church and state by their very existence, thus allowing Europe to displace the question of political theology. The fact that they couldn't be

[165] Young 14.

[166] This tension, explored at length in David Biale's *Power and Powerlessness*, describes the vacillation in Western discourse regarding Jews, between absolute powerlessness and absolute control.

modern according to this secular separation of church and state proved that the rest of Europe could be, and was, historically ascendant (i.e. modern). The West regarded Jews and Arabs, interchangeably, as figures through which the separation (and collapse) of religion and politics could be repeatedly worked out. At some point, though, the figure of the Semites bifurcated. Per Anidjar:

> the Jew "bifurcated," the way in which the animus was transferred from the Jew and the Arab to the Arab alone. Thus the Jews stopped being Semites . . . whereas the last Semites and the only Semites become the Arabs. So *they are a race, and the Jews are a religion. Or if you want, even vice versa. Better yet, the Arabs have become the race that is still attached to its religion, whereas the Jews have in fact become Western Christians, and therefore are no longer marked, neither by race nor by religion*[167]

Playing across the Jew-Arab divide, the question of race confounded the "semitic" status of the Jew. Anidjar uses the Holocaust to plot this movement. In the Holocaust, the Jews were racialized and at the same time de-theologized. Jews came to signify an absence of theology: the death of God. In the Nazi racialization of Jews, race supplanted religion in the collapse of two moments –

> The first is the recognition by the persecuted [Jewish] addressees that there is no escape from that sentence, that having been targeted (identified) leaves them with no options (modern racism is often recognized by its targeting of an inescapable given). The second moment, that that to which one is reduced at that moment is *what one is*[168]

Writers such as Arendt thus accepted the terrain on which Jews were persecuted: Jews were persecuted *as* Jews, racially rather than religiously, and so that is what they became. This moment of (mis)recognition between persecutor and victim from within the structure of modern racism is what, for Anidjar, finalizes the detheologization of the Jew and thereby the

[167] Gil Anidjar and Nermeen Shaikh,"The Jew, The Arab: An Interview with Gil Anidjar" *Asia Society* (undated), https://asiasociety.org/jew-arab-interview-gil-anidjar/. Emphasis mine.

[168] Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford University Press, 2007), 24.

"bifurcation" he talks about in the quote above. After the Holocaust, Jewishness simply didn't signify in the same way for the Christian West, i.e. as a religious obstinacy. Hereafter, the Jew signifies an absence of theology – and the *Muselmanner,* "a theological absence."

This unstable difference is crucial to understanding how the Muslim came to supplant the Jew and the broader Semitic category as Europe's primary enemy. Because of the traumatic violence of the Nazi camp, Jewish racialization could not be spoken as such, and so antisemitism remained ambiguously associated with religious persecution. In the abject figure of the *Muselmanner*, the Auschwitz Jew no longer appears racialized – no longer appears even as Jewish, but as Muslim. 'The Jews knew that they would not die at Auschwitz as Jews.'[169] Instead of contradicting Arendt's point that the Jew is defined by their detheologizing racial persecution, this re-theologizing double-vision of the Jew as *Muselmanner* rather confirms it. Speaking of the Jews of the camp (called *Muselmanner*) who were so violently subjected as to live at the boundary of life and death, and building on Levi and Agamben, Anidjar writes:

> As figures of "faithful resignations," the Muslims thus appear as quasi-theological figures. . . What is missing from [Agamben's] otherwise compelling account is therefore precisely a theological threshold. The Muslims testify to the theological in that they are lacking in divinity, in that they mark the death of a divine (non)humanity . . . Over against the Jews, whose racialization was always a detheologization, Muslims (or Arabs) would thus testify to a theological absence rather than to the absence of theology . . . But the paradoxical threshold also inscribes itself onto political meaning[170]

The questions that had previously haunted the figure of the Semite generally – theology vs. politics, race vs. religion – are now distributed across the Jew/Arab or Jew/Muslim binary. In these binaries, Jews are always at the ambivalent threshold of becoming Muselmanner or Western Christians. As such, they are uniquely positioned to stand between the West and its

[169] Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 142.
[170] *The Jew, The Arab* 144-145.

Eastern double, between secularism and political theology, between war and holy war. "The Muslim, The Arab" are the only names by which this antagonism can become visible. Even while the Jew emerges as a kind of foil to the Arab in new configurations of race and religion, Jews are – because of their absolute subjection and detheologization in the camp – "no longer marked" as such. As Anidjar says, "the Jews have in fact become Western Christians" (unless, that is, they are *Muselmanner*).

Standing in between these two poles, Jews assist in constituting what Anidjar calls elsewhere the warring temporality of Christian time. The Jew and the Arab become "temporally distinct and distant,"[171] which is to say that the distinction between them becomes a site for the articulation of historical time and historical movement. This

> more pointedly reinscribes . . . the European wedge that, now called "secularization," would turn away from religion, distance itself from the only invention of its Semitic, monotheistic, and desertic origins . . . and separate race from religion, and religion from (modern) politics, separate, finally, the Jew from the Arab[172]

Jews thus become the vanguard of secularization and the premier enemy of Islam. The figure of the *Muselmanner* sediments the incommensurability of Jew and Arab (by introjecting it). And, through these developments, the Christian West gets another chance to stand back and appear as a disinterested mediator. All these together give to the idea of Jew vs. Arab a sense of historical movement and historical production. In the difference between a now ascendant Jewish whiteness and the Muslim flesh it has to negate, emerges a slightly different iteration of the typological imaginary. It is, then, the Muslim rather than the Jewish flesh whose supersession fuels historical time. Through Lazarus and her fellow Jewish public intellectual Gustav Gottheil, we can see a moment before the Holocaust where this very dynamic is at work. Lazarus, in

[171] *Semites* 25.
[172] *Semites* 33.

particular, as a Sephardi Jew – whose identity is therefore defined in part by a proximity to Islam (via Andalusian Spain) – struggles against the detheologizing secularization of her identity by Ashkenazi figures like Gottheil.

III. GOTTHEIL'S REVERSE-SUPERSESSIONARY HISTORICISM

Regarded "even by those who disagreed with him as the best-known rabbi in America,"[173] Gustav Gottheil largely reproduced a view of Jewish history originally propounded by the secular historians of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school. Largely in line with the intellectual Jewish Enlightenment (*haskalah*) and the movement to reform Jewith liturgy, Gottheil's writings as much as the work of *Wissenschaft* scholars, are wrapped up in a discourse of Jewish assimilation that goes back to debates in early nineteenth century Germany, nicely summed up by David N. Myers:

> the 1840s witnessed an intensification of denominational debate within German Jewry, as liberal, "positive-historical," and Orthodox camps battled for the soul of the community. Historical methods were employed in this battle, and became an important marker of denominational affiliation: the more radically one applied them, the more committed one was to the reform of Judaism; conversely, the more guarded one was in using these methods, the closer one was to the traditional, or Orthodox, position[174]

As a reformer, Gottheil reproduced the methods of secular historicism that were being integrated into the study of Jewish history by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school, and in so doing, made American Judaism more palatable to his white Protestant audience. His writings focus Jewish theology on the Tanakh, and especially on the Prophets, in a way that spoke to his Protestant contemporaries, and emptied Jewish practice of all that they found distasteful. His writings vaunt

[173] Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Wayne State University Press, 1995), 51.

[174] David N. Myers. *Resisting History: Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 26.

the glorious pre-diasporic political history of the Hebrew nation over and against diasporic history and rabbinical Judaism. In the 1870s, Gottheil was criticized for incorporating elements of other religions into his hymnals and sermons; "emptying out," as Caleb Maskell has said, Jewish tradition for the sake of appeasing Christians. Maskell elaborates that Gottheil was frequently accused of "abandoning Jewish distinctiveness" because of "his perceived openness to the ideals, institutions, and elites of American liberal Christianity."[175]

Lazarus could also be rightly critiqued along the same lines. Referring to an account of the Bar Kochba revolt by Heinrich Graetz (a pre-eminent *Wissenschaft* scholar), Lazarus like Gottheil promotes a kind of theological minimalism:

> Strip it of every outward ceremony and adornment, every external mark that distinguishes it from other races and creeds, but as long as the three basic principles of Monotheism, purity of morals and brotherly love are retained, the unity and integrity of Judaism remain inviolable . . . Not the teaching of the *Thora* [sic], not the inculcation of the Talmud, not the preservation of the Hebrew tongue, not the maintenance of Synagogue worship, not even the circumcision of the flesh, in times of difficulty and danger, such as our own days are, should be our primary consideration . . . we should adapt ourselves to the practical requirements of the hour, and make our race the fittest to survive, a paragon to all the nations of the earth[176]

From this quote, it is clear to what extreme Lazarus envisions boiling down Jewish doctrine. She sees the strength of Judaism not in theology, but in racial concept of survival. Curiously, it is to Christians that she credits this insight:

> the contemporary student of Jewish life and character derives chiefly from Christian sources a faith in the regenerating powers of Judaism. The Jews themselves, especially those of America, seem rarely imbued with that vivid sense of the possibilities and responsibilities of their race . . . it is necessary to be born

[175] Caleb Maskell, "'Modern Christianity Is Ancient Judaism': Rabbi Gustav Gottheil and the Jewish-American Religious Future, 1873–1903," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* vol. 23, no. 2 (2013), 141.

[176] Emma Lazarus, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Jewish Historical Society of New York, 1987 [1882]), 25-26.

> outside of Judaism in order to appreciate the full beauty and grandeur of her past, the glory and infinite expansiveness of her future[177]

Indeed, more than Gottheil, Lazarus obliquely acknowledges the Christian sources for her concept of Jewish history.

While Gottheil's Reform program and Lazarus' account are both premised on Jewish-Christian reciprocity, they are also extremely sensitive to the trend of Christian supersessionary thinking in the writing of their contemporaries, and they struggle against it at every turn.[178] Gottheil very explicitly, in fact, *inverts* Christian supersessionary time in order to give a concept of self-determination "back" to Jews. As Maskell elucidates so well, Gottheil's vision of a great Jewish comeback is rooted in a theory of universal history, wherein Judaism – as the simplest and most ethical religion – would *supersede* Christianity and all other religious thought in the United States. In Gottheil's own words: "The drift of Christian thought has carried Jewish thought into the foreground."[179]

Lazarus chimes in with a similar view, historicizing Judaism as not only the root of Christianity writ large, but as the special impetus behind the Protestant Reformation[180] and the Scientific Revolution.[181] In fact, for Lazarus, the whole of historic development in the West can be attributed to "Judaic principles." Whereas Christianity set "back the hands of the great world-clock three thousand years,"[182] and Islam in set it back another 700,[183] Lazarus asserts that the

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[177] *Epistle* 7.

[178] Much like Hermann Cohen who, "While deeply conversant with Protestant scholarship [on the Prophets] . . . could not accept the claim that the prophets had passed on the mantle of Israel's spiritual leadership to Christianity. Rather, he insisted on the ongoing relevance, and *even ethical superiority*, of a Judaism rooted in the prophetic tradition" (Myers 59, emphasis mine).

[179] quoted in Maskell, 157.

[180] Emma asserts that it was when the Jews were kicked out of Spain and entered the Lower Countries of Europe, that they inspired the Protestant Reformation.

[181] *Epistle* 52-55.

[182] *Epistle* 54.

[183] *Epistle* 52.

"Mosaic Code . . . has served as the advance-guard of political and religious freedom and of ethical philosophy."[184] Triangulating Christianity, Islam and Judaism, she writes:

> The intellectual superiority of [the] Mussulman conception over that of Christianity is conspicuous at a glance; the only objection to be urged against it is that it contains the seed of fatalism, and precludes the idea of human activity or growth. Between the two extremes of the Christian and the Mahometan conceptions stands the Jewish theory of Law. This, while embracing all the wisdom of the Mussulman, and proclaiming the inevitable sequence and correlation of facts, yet avoids the fatalistic negation by acknowledging the reign of Law, and admitting therewith the possibility for human energy and human reason to discover the special laws that govern our world, and by implicit obedience to them to establish harmony between man and Nature[185]

Whereas it would seem that Lazarus construes Judaism as a unifier of the other two religions -- i.e. the perfect balance between Islamic fate and Christian event, and concomitantly between science and faith -- her gesture of unification does more to strengthen these very differences than to dissolve them. By calling the Jews an "advance-guard of political and religious freedom," Lazarus implicitly credits Jews with the *separation* of politics/science from religion, and through this, the emergence of a secular modernity. The Judaism to which she ascribes this "political and religious freedom" is, thus, actually a stand-in for the transition into modernity. It has no theological component, but is rather defined by the very supersession of science over theology. Like Gottheil, Lazarus thus reverses the script of Christian supersessionism in a way that empties out Jewish theology.

What is different about her prediction of the ascendance of a secularized Jewish essence is that Islam stands more prominently in the background. While it may appear to her as too fatalistic, Lazarus conceives of Islamic theology as superior to the Christian theology of "disconnected impulses . . . sudden surprises,"[186] since Islam like Judaism embraces "Law."

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[184] *Epistle* 54.
[185] *Epistle* 54.
[186] *Epistle* 54.

Lazarus doesn't do much to distinguish the Jewish from the Islamic conception of law, other than to say that the Jewish is superior. Thus, the possibility that Islam could be an equally good candidate for Lazarus' reverse-supersessionism over Christianity haunts the scene. This ambivalence is especially present where Lazarus uses the example of Andalusian Spain (in which histories of Jewish and Islamic thought are obviously intertwined) to epitomize the contributions of *Jewish* (but curiously not Islamic) thought to medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc.[187] Lazarus' represses this ambivalence and this indiscernability by doubling down on her orientalist depiction of Islam.

In the same chapter of *Epistle to the Hebrews*, commenting on Ahmed Arabi's Egyptian nationalist uprising of 1882, Lazarus reflects on its "anachronistic" blend of different historical elements: "the curious blending of Oriental habits of thought and expression with the names of Occidental persons, customs and inventions."[188] In order to convey how Islam set the clock of historical time back 700 years, she frames despotism in Arabi's Egypt through the lens of medieval Europe (1299 in the Muslim Calendar = 1299 in the Christian calendar).

> Let us transport ourselves in imagination to the year 1299 of the Christian era in Europe . . . The capture of Acre had just put an end to the wars of the Crusades and to Latin rule in Syria, leaving the principal countries of Europe in an extremely debased moral and material condition. . . . *The institution of chivalry was at its height,* and according to Hallam, was "the best school of moral discipline which the Middle Ages afforded . . . This solitary and independent spirit of chivalry, dwelling, as it were, upon a rock and disdaining injustice or falsehood from the consciousness of natural dignity without any calculation of the consequences, *is not unlike what we sometimes read of Arabian chiefs"* . . . This hasty glance at the Europe of 1299 gives us a curious insight into the condition of the Ottoman Empire of 1299 (1882), or rather into what that condition would be if it had not profited in certain ways by the industrial, scientific and political progress of Christendom. The railroads, canal and telegraphic communications, not to speak of the parliamentary and constitutional modes of government whereof Arabi the Egyptian writes so familiarly, strike us as so many anachronisms, and bear no inherent relationship to the civilization which he

[187] *Epistle* 55-56.
[188] *Epistle* 52.

> represents. Despotism, dissension, corruption and assisination among the rulers, extortion, misery and slavish toil crushing out the life-blood of the masses, household-comfort in its infancy, printing, steam-navigation and telegraphy unimagined, and the isolated spirit of *chivalry dwelling in men like Arabi himself* -- such is the general aspect of the Mussulman empire to-day[189]

By placing one (Islamic) timeline in the Orient and another (Christian) timeline in Europe, Lazarus is able to fully separate Islam from her own Judeo-Christian lifeworld. There is contamination however, where Lazarus acknowledges that the Ottoman empire today is *not,* in fact, quite like the Europe of 1299 (since it "profited by the . . progress of Christendom"). Moreover, the fact that Lazarus cannot map the Jewish timeline onto either the Orient or the Occident betrays her anxiety about the very idea of Jewish historicity. She goes on to remark that while the Jewish people's calendar year is 5643, they are absolutely *not* up to historical speed. "Looking at the Ghettos of Europe, or the newly-enriched materialists among our American co-religionists," Lazarus is sorely disappointed by how stuck in the past they are.[190] It is at this point that she asserts the "Mosaic code" as that impulse which has driven scientific progress, Protestant reform, the scientific revolution and ultimately secularism -- without ever speaking *in the name of Judaism as such*. But it seems that there might be another protagonist in this story, another origin for Christian civilization: "chivalry." Where does this spirit of chivalry (in the quote above) come from?

What Lazarus is repeatedly grasping as she touches on the concept of "chivalry" is the ambivalence of the West's political theology, wherein concepts of history and political war are predicated on the Christian-Muslim antagonism of the Crusades. Deeply connected with the history of the Crusades, chivalry -- as a religious code *and* a code of war -- operates at the fragile boundary between theology and politics. It thus intimates the collapse of the two, and

[189] *Epistle* 53, emphasis mine.
[190] *Epistle* 53-54.

moreover, the collapse of Christian and Muslim. For Lazarus seems unable to decide whether chivalry is a Christian or Muslim invention.[191] The circular way she historicizes it, as both a product of Islam (something amongst the Europeans that came from "Arabian chiefs") and yet something that doesn't completely fit in Arabi's Egypt ("the *isolated* spirit . . . dwelling in men like Arabi"), mirrors the circularity whereby Islam is both intellectually superior to Christianity but also productive of an Ottoman civilization far behind Christian civilization. The historical instability of this concept is glaring. These moments of chronological derangement suggest that the Christian-Muslim antagonism built into the concept of chivalry (de)structures historical time altogether. Although she only glimpses it, this moment intimates a more fundamental basis for supersessionary time than the Jewish-Christian binary. In chivalry lies the more radical, more immanent threat to Christian supersessionary time that is Islam. It is by this threat that the Jewish triumphalism we find in Lazarus and Gottheil comes to grips with the fragility of its own Christian historicism.

As a starting point for a critique of Christian historical thinking, Biddick suggests that we take a critical look at the "Christian reduction of temporality into a binary of past and present."[192] If the binary is the problem, then a simple reversal won't cut it. This is not to deny the fact that attempts to reverse supersessionary time are, to some extent, a form of resistance. Indeed, Biddick herself writes about how supersessionary thinking tries to suppress the "shattering threat of typological reversibility."[193] Moreover, Susannah Heschel offers the work of Abraham Geiger

[191] Bette Roth Young notes how, in Emma's letters, she traces her concept of heroism to the Koran (29)

[192] Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 2.

[193] Biddick 6.

as another example of how the reverse-supersessionary tack can work.[194] But Biddick's analysis suggests that this "shattering threat" of reversal often fails to dislodge the typological imaginary, since it preserves periodization. Later in *The Typological Imaginary*, Biddick goes on to explore circumstances in which reversal actually forecloses and "encrypts" Jews into the space of an ontological absence.[195] I would suggest that this is precisely what happens in Lazarus' reflection on Islam and Christianity, between which, at some point, Judaism seems to vanish. Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin's work on the process whereby Christian Hebraism and then Zionism fold Jewish self-determination into a millennial teleology provides us with another example of how supersessionary reversals can encrypt Jewishness *within* Christian supremacy.[196] This should provide some context for the way in which Lazarus' detheologizing racialization of Jewishness seems to pit her against Islam (even as she recognizes its intellectual superiority to Christianity). Lazarus' reverse-supersessionism actually reproduces a Christian supersession of Muslim flesh.

Supplementing these critiques with the work of J. Kameron Carter sheds light on how this Christian-vs.-Muslim supersessionism, rather than absenting the Jewish position altogether, transforms Jewish identity from within to fit a Christian mold. Carter not only links historical periodization to the anti-Jewish grammar of supersessionism, but goes to the length of demonstrating that racism is a transformation and concealment of this anti-Jewish supersessionism. Racism, Carter suggests, traces back to "the process by which Christ was abstracted from Jesus, and thus from his Jewish body, thereby severing Christianity from its

[194] Susannah Heschel, "Revolt of the Colonized: Abraham Geiger's *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a Challenge to Christian Hegemony in the Academy." *New German Critique* No. 77, Special Issue on German-Jewish Religious Thought (Spring - Summer, 1999).

[195] Biddick 72-75.

[196] Ammon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return." *Journal of Levantine Studies* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter 2013), 42.

Jewish roots."[197] In his examination of Foucault, Carter writes about how this disavowal of Jewish "covenantal flesh" informs the formation of biopolitics.[198] Between the poles of History and "counter-history," between the Sovereign and the host of "subjugated knowledges" that lurk within it, modernity flashes back and forth perpetually.[199] Carter puts a finer point than Foucault himself does on the fact that the Ancient Hebrews are the ur-figure for the kind of counter-historical move he counterposes to the History of the Sovereign, suggesting that Jews are the anti-Sovereign "people," par excellence. For Carter, this is precisely because they constitute themselves as a "convenental" people, without the need of a Sovereign, and as such, disrupt the possibility of the absolutist (Christian) state.[200] But this anti-Sovereign war is absorbed into the state and transformed into the biopolitical grammar of racism.[201] Carter takes Foucault to task for not recognizing that this move required not just the racialization but the de-theologization of the Jewish people, the denial of their covenantal flesh (to use Carter's terms), i.e. for failing to recognize that "the question of race [arises] inside the question of the theopolitical meaning of Jewish existence."[202] This theopolitical meaning of Jewish existence – what Carter calls the covenental flesh" – is precisely that which Anidjar claims the Holocaust took from Jews, and in our case, it is precisely what Gottheil and Lazarus' reverse-supersessionary historicization suppresses, leading to a detheologizing misrecognition of Jewishness as a race amongst races.

Taking into account the bifurcation of "the Semites" that we glimpsed in *Epistle to the Hebrews*, however, we can see that this detheologizing racialization of the Jews is connected to

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[197] J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 6-7.

[198] Carter 70.

[199] Carter 70-71

[200] Although I'm not sure how fine a point Carter points on this, you could look at *Leviathan*

[201] At this point in the analysis, Carter follows Foucault's analysis from *Society Must Be Defended* pretty closely, arguing that biopolitical state racism only developed after the anti-Sovereign "race war" between inside and outside was incorporated *into* the body politics (as a war waged against internal enemies).

[202] Carter 73.

the re-theologization of Islam – a re-positioning of racial Jewishness over Islam in a way that re-grounds the march of historical time for the Christian West. As such, it not only denigrates ritual, orthodox versions of Jewish practice, for the sake of vaunting a secular, racial peoplehood, but also produces a biopolitical re-ordering of Jewishness such that Jewish communities marked by their proximity to Islam are abjected: Sephardi, Mizrahi, etc. Because the most prominent, most vocal communities of Jews in the United States (up until 1882, when waves of Ashkenazi immigrants came to redefine American Jewishness) were proudly Sephardi, this biopolitical reorganization came to bear on them directly – Lazarus herself included.

IV. EMPTY JUDAISM, ASHKENAZI 'PROGRESS'

Caleb Maskell's work on the sheer *paucity* of theological content in Gottheil's Reform Program brings this problem of racialization to bear in a conspicuous way. A Jew need not identify as such, or engage in any sort of Jewish practice, in order to be one. For Gotthiel, this drift into an (only) racial Jewishness

> was part of a world-historical process, a religious transition in which the fundamental primacy of Jewish particularity, albeit in its modernized Reform mode, was taking its place as ''the only possible religion of the future.'' *He did not elaborate on the concrete form that this Judaism would take—perhaps he did not feel sure, given his conviction that this transition was, at base, evolutionary*[203]

We can see that the counter-historical, reverse-supersessionary mission of Jewish Reform seems to have little to do with the practices and activities of Jewish people. Rather, because Gottheil sees what he's doing as part of a Hegelian "drift," he doesn't expect there to be much of a theological component. It seems that he wants, rather, to subtract as much Jewish practice as he can from Jewish identity.

[203] Maskell 157, emphasis mine.

> Judaism is not a church in the Christian acceptation of that term. It is not a spiritual community founded upon a technical creed and armed with powers not to be found elsewhere. It does not claim to be the appointed guardian of 'the means of grace,' on the correct and faithful dispensation of which depends the salvation of the human soul[204]

In a clear reverse-supersessionary move, Gottheil re-approriates a classic anti-Jewish critique in order to charge *the Christian Church* with blind legalistic formalism. At the same time, like Lazarus, Gottheil seems to be divesting Jewish practice of all forms of ritual content.

> Reform is not to sink to a mere badge marking off one body of religious people from another, but otherwise meaningless to its bearers . . . for the orthodox Jew also the old isolation is passed. He cannot longer be, nor does he desire to be, exactly what his forefathers were. In that sense all Jews living within the influence of modern civilization are reformed Jews, no matter how strictly they may adhere to the old ceremonialism[205]

This insistence that, regardless of whether they know it or not, all Jews are reformed speaks (again) to the Anidjarian moment of racializing, de-theological recognition. The implicit suggestion in this quote seems to be that the conflict between Judaism and Christianity has been shifted to intra-Jewish sectarian debates, where the Reform movement supersedes orthodoxy. Curiously, the specter of circumcision (a "badge" marking a "body") still haunts this figure of orthodoxy. The subtle phrasing Gottheil uses here, that Reform will not be a "badge marking off *one body of religious people from another,"* splits (right when it is ironically supposed to connect)[206] Jews into two religious "people[s]:" a vanguard of Jews refusing to "sink" to a level where they participate in differentiating themselves (i.e. the level of circumcision), and those who are already sunk. Just as Paul triumphs over the particularism of the Jewish circumcised flesh, and arrogates to Christ the truth of universal human equality, only to turn around in

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[204] Gustav Gottheil, "The Jewish Reformation," *The American Journal of Theology* vol. 6, no. 2 (April 1902), 269.

[205] "The Jewish Reformation" 268-269.

[206] Similarly: "among the best of all the reforms that have been achieved is the mutual forbearance which the orthodox and the progressive sides of Judaism show to one another" (273).

supersessionist fashion and make Christian universalism the fulfilment of Judaism as well, so too does Gottheil triumph over this "badge marking off one body of [Jewish] people from another" in order precisely *to* mark off the spirit of the Reform movement from the letter of orthodoxy.

Gottheil's rejection of sectarianism thus reinstates a Christian supersessionism *within Judaism*, and in fact articulates the biopolitical move of moving "race war" *into* the body politic. The upshot is that, because of the historical "drift" mentioned earlier, this introjected antagonism – a race war relocated inside of Judaism – Gottheil believes will inevitably lead to the incorporation of all Jews, including the Orthodox, into a new biopolitical unity. As Gottheil says, "all Jews living within the influence of modern civilization are reformed Jews," and "the old Orthodox Jew . . . can no longer be." But by ambiguously defining orthodoxy as both impossible and *unwanted*, in the conjunction "the old Orthodox Jew . . . can no longer be, *nor does he desire to* be, exactly what his forefathers were," Gottheil indicates the anxiety that continues to haunt this biopolitical Jewishness, and against which Reform regulates itself as a kind of racial purity. Still lurking in his formulation is the trace of what "the old . . . Jew" does not desire; we could call this un-desire a trace of the theological at the heart of this self-determined, self-regulating biopolitical Jewishness.

Lazarus is stuck, even more deeply than Gottheil, in this bind of theology and race. She subscribes to a similar anti-orthodox line, but seems dissatisfied with Gottheil's alternative of a quasi-Pauline supersessionary Reform. Lazarus' ambivalence about this process is captured most fully in her view of Sephardi history, which Jewish historicists (the *Wissenschaft* writers, as much as Gottheil,) glorified. Reading these historians, Lazarus became motivated to connect with her heritage and to translate the great poets of Andalusian Spain including Gabirol, Yehuda Ha-Levi, Ibn Ezra, etc, but she did not know Hebrew. When in the late 1870s, Gottheil solicited

translations of these poets into English for his edited hymnal *Hymns and Anthems Adapted for Jewish Worship,* Lazarus – enthralled with the idea of learning the original Hebrew – requested instruction from him personally. Gottheil rebuked her, insisting that she could work instead from existent German translations, and that she could get private instruction in Hebrew on her own.[207] I view Gottheil's refusal to give Lazarus the means of establishing a connection to her Sephardi heritage via Hebrew, as a moment where the biopolitical regulation of Jewishness – *as* whitened, *as* European, *as* Judeo-Christian (i.e. as no longer Semitic) – becomes visible, since one of the effects of this racialization of Jewishness is the sidelining of Sephardi peoples (if not their "history"). Gottheil's refusal to instruct Lazarus in Hebrew reinforces orientalism as a system of power-knowledge, by giving (again) to Europeans the power to speak on behalf of people of Eastern descent. Gottheil frees up the history of Sephardic Jewry to appropriate for his own white, Ashkenormative supersessionist narrative of Jewish ascendance. For Gotthiel, it seems that Sephardi history (glorious though it is) was meant to remain in the past, and it was the secular-Ashkenazi American future that mattered.[208] It is in the shadow of precisely this epistemological violence that Lazarus went on to express her ambivalence about contributing to Gottheil's anthology, writing, "I should be most happy to serve you in your difficult and patriotic undertaking, but the more I see of these religious poems, the more I feel that the fervor and enthusiasm requisite to their production are altogether lacking in me."[209] Lazarus, who

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[207] Richard Gottheil, *The Life of Gustav Gottheil*; *Memoir of a Priest in Israel* (Bayard Press, 1936), 61-63.

[208] Emma is thus forced, at least for a time, to translate her Sephardic History through German translations of the originals.

[209] quoted in Richard Gottheil, 62. Thus, I thoroughly reject Esther Schor's interpretation that Emma Lazarus' hesitation was simply the result of her secularism in Esther Schor, *Emma Lazarus* (Random House, 2017). Writes Schor,

> her "religious convictions" were unamenable to any existing form of American Jewish worship — traditional or Reform. This became the beat of her strange, syncopated dance with Gottheil . . . she danced to her own drummer . . . In her own way, to be out of step with the religious life of Jews (including Reform Jews) doomed her to a paradoxical sense of her Jewish identity: as she explained to Gottheil, she was both one of the Jewish "race" and "somewhat apart from it." To us,

eventually *did* translate the great Sephardic poets from the German per Gottheil's suggestion, for his hymnal, was torturously aware of the transformation of Jewish identity whereby she could not grasp the "enthusiasm and fervor" of Sephardic history for herself.

In an essay called "The Jewish Problem," Lazarus reproduces this process by which Gotthiel's new supersessionary, de-theologized Jewishness subverts her access to not only Sephardic history but Jewishness in general, by quoting an anonymous "young Russian Jew:"

> The mission of the Jews throughout history has been to protest against corruption and despotism in religion and morals. *The religious mission of the Jew belongs to the past.* But the moral mission remains unchanged . . . The racial tie binds Jews together even though they discard all religion. What they need is to be once more consolidated as a nation. They are essentially an original people, borrowing neither thoughts, emotions, nor manners of the nations around them. *(From this statement I exclude American Jews, who have lost color and individuality, and are neither Jew nor Gentile)*[210]

Echoing Gottheil in the first half of this quote, the young Russian Jew seems to think of the new waves of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants arriving on the shores of America as Protestants *within* Judaism. They offer something new to the largely Sephardi American Jewishness that had characterized American Jewry since colonial times. Like a Protestant, the new Jew defines their mission as that to "protest against corruption and despotism in religion and morals." It must be emphasized again however, that Lazarus does not imagine this narrative as conforming to a Protestant mold, but rather suggests that the idea of Protestantism itself traces back to this Jewish narrative.

> more than a century later, Emma Lazarus' Jewish identity in the late 1870s is not such a riddle; she was a secular Jew, a cultural Jew, an emerging Jewish writer (79)

It was not, however, her secularity that held her back. Schor's suggestion that Lazarus' paradoxical Jewishness was not a result of a structuring epistemological condition but rather of her maverick secularism disturbingly disavows the point she herself makes, just previous to this, that Lazarus recognizes herself in the figure of Heine's self-hating conversion (74-75). Lazarus sees herself in Heine, because like him, she is dedicated to a Judaism that is no longer (or never was) possible for her, a Sephardic history to which she has no access.

[210] Emma Lazarus, "The Jewish Problem," in *Selected Poems and Other Writings*, ed. Eiselein (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002), 280, emphasis mine.

Like Gottheil, furthermore, the Russian Jew in Lazarus' account ascribes this development within Jewishness to a kind of evolutionary history (the religious has passed, the racial is ascendant). The young Russian puts on display how Reform supersessionism maps onto American history in the second half of this quote, where he explicitly excludes American Jews – and thus Lazarus, herself – from this historical development. Gottheil and this young Russian immigrant together seem to be thinking of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century as *the site* at which this particular supersession, by racial Jewishness over religious "Judaism" *and* by the Ashkenazic over the Sephardic, is historically fated to take place.

We thus also have to attend to the fact that Sephardi Jews like Lazarus, who comprised the majority of Jews in the United States prior to the influx of Eastern European immigration in 1882, are being construed as "neither Jew nor Gentile," and, as such, restricted from the biopolitical-redefined position of the new Jew that the Reform movement (or, American Judaism more generally) is helping to bring into being. In order to understand how Gottheil biopolitically excludes and supersedes Lazarus' Sephardicness, we need to further consider how Gottheil mobilizes race in the context of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery. Gottheil uses the "despotism" of the slave system to stigmatize the Sephardic Jew slave-holder, and implicitly to exculpate Asheknazim from their complicity in the biopolitical administration of whiteness. This anxious denial of Sephardic American Jewishness and its intersection with the American slave system is part of what allowed/allows respectability politics and model minority discourse to have such a hold on the philosemitic imagination of Jewish-American identity today.[211] How it bears on this argument more specifically though, is that it demonstrates the Christian whiteness

[211] See Houria Bouteldja's critique of philosemitism in Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love,* trans. Valinsky, *Semiotext(e)* Intervention Series 22 (2017). Although she does not discuss slavery in particular, her understanding of especially Ashkenazi-philosemitism is unparalleled.

of Gottheil's Reform program. Like white humanists routinely do, Gottheil projects the ills of slavery and imperialism onto a specific "tanned" group of people and excises himself (along with the Christian West) from the process. By figuring slave-holding as itself a form of mental slavery, Gottheil casts American Sephardim via the logic of obliteration, i.e. as a group fundamentally constituted by their refusal to be modern.[212]

Gottheil's Reform Judaism is, crucially, a "social gospel." Because his imagined "drift" coincides with the American Civil War, Gottheil often articulates Jewish supersessionism from within an abolitionist framing. Written before he moved to the US, Gotthiel's sermons collected in *Moses versus Slavery* embed this "drift" in the moral journey of the United States to abolish slavery. As Gottheil extols the moral mission of the Jews, he theatrically pictures himself looking across the Atlantic toward "that great Republic:"

> in the face of boundless contempt, contumely and maltreatment, the Jew never for a moment lost heart or hope. He believed in the progress of the human race, as what must come to pass . . . Looking through the Roll of the Law as through a telescope he beheld afar off the moral and political redemption of the world[213]

Projecting Jewishness back in time, as a moral underpinning of the pilgrim voyage to Plymouth rock, Gottheil figures Americanism as fundamentally Jewish.[214] He goes on to read this Jewish American spirit in the contemporary impulse to abolish slavery in the US, and to sustain the integrity of the Union despite civil war – this being "momentous, not only in relation to

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[212] As we will see, the antiblackness of using slavery, and especially self-enslavement, as a conceptual resource for thinking about racialized biopolitical subjection is on full display in Gottheil's account. See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997), for a critique of how slavery functions as a conceptual, affective and legal resource for white humanism.

[213] Gustav Gottheil, *Moses versus slavery: being two discourses on the slave question* (Manchester: John Heywood; London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1861), 6.

[214] This is the flipside of the Protestant discourse of the New World as "our American Zion." See Hilton Obenzinger, "Naturalizing Cultural Pluralism, Americanizing Zionism: The Settler Colonial Basis to Early-Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107:4, Fall 2008.

American slavery, but to the estimation in which we Jews are to be held by the nations of freemen over all the face of the earth."[215]

Gottheil asserts that the question of how Judaism regards the abolition of slavery in the United States is *not* "a matter on which there is, as on so many other questions, room for difference," but a moment in which the ethical mission of the Jewish people is fated to become more visible.[216] Even as he rails against literalism in biblical hermeneutics,[217] he considers the anti-slavery interpretation of Jewish law to be so obvious and incontrovertible as to spontaneously ring in one's ear. To ignore this message is thus to close oneself off from the plenitude of God's presence in this acoustical dimension, and thus to ask for one's own enslavement.

> "Why is it," asks an old Hebrew expounder of the law, "that of all the parts of the human body, the ear was the member which had to bear the slave-mark?" And his answer is: The ear that heard the word of God proclaiming . . . "The children of Israel are *my* servants, my servants are they," "and which, having heard, did not hinder a man selling himself to a master, must suffer the punishment by bearing for ever the degrading mark of servitude[218]

Thus, to practice slavery is to become a slave. When one misinterprets Jewish law and fails to see the moral mission of the aboition of slavery in the US *as* the only possible path for Jewish thought, what one calls for is one's own enslavement. This moment in which Gottheil collapses the belief in slavery's rightness by Jewish tradition with mental enslavement is telling, for it symptomatically reveals that the historical Ashkenazi Jewish subject he is building relies on an image of total Sephardic subjection, i.e. "flesh." Many of the families who defined Sephardic

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[215] *Moses* 9.

[216] *Moses* 9-11. Jewish law protects the runaway slave; Jewish law does not allow slavery without the certainty of eventual freedom; "The latest Jewish expositors of the Hebrew Scriptures [affirm] that the laws of Moses have for their main purpose the extinction of slavery."

[217] *Moses* 26. "What was the Torah (the Law) intended to be to us? . . . Is it to be interpreted by slavish adherence to the letter, and applied paragraph by paragraph to cases as they arise?"

[218] *Moses* 17-18.

American Judaism in the United States (including Lazarus') were slave-owning families, and thus were, according to this logic, calling for their own enslavement. In this move, Gottheil is preparing for the biopolitical subsumption of the American slave-owning Sephardim in an Ashkenazi-exceptionalist, supersessionary narrative of Jewish Americanism.

The significance of the acoustical dimension in this account – i.e. that when one asks for one's own slavery in this way, they are asking for *their ear* to be pierced – becomes clearer if we take into account Kathleen Biddick's attempt to uncrypt an "unhistorical history of acoustics in the Christian typological imaginary."[219] Following suit, I regard this equation of the mark of slavery and a self-imposed closure of the "ear that heard" as a substitute for and disavowal of circumsion – which is not to say a disavowal of *castration* or of the shame of Jewish bodily difference,[220] but a disavowal of that which uncannily undoes historical time. Those slave-owning Jews whose closure of the "ear that heard" *enslaves them* are circumcising themselves, and via this marking, making themselves into the flesh the Ashkenazim must supersede to realize an ethical (Jewish) American future.

Gotthiel's ambivalent commitment to the unassailability of the abolitionist interpretation of the bible and, simultaneously, to the idea that the bible should never be interpreted literally – that it does not have a literal, unassailable interpretation – conveys an anxiety analogous to the Christian anxiety over the legibility of baptism, qua circumcision of the heart (over and against corporeal circumcision). As an "acoustical record of the prophet's mouth," circumcision is the hauntological double of Paul's "circumcision of the heart," a remainder that persists despite the historical time predicated on the supersession of Jewish (in this case, Sephardic) flesh. Biddick positions the repression of acoustics against a backdrop in which Haskalic German-Jewish

[219] Biddick 77.
[220] like Boyarin in *Unheroic Conduct*

thought repeatedly represses acoustics,[221] but perhaps fails to see how the orientalization and supersession of acoustics can racialize Sephardim.

At the same time, the parallelism Gottheil draws, between the Ashkenazi moral mission and the post Civil-War future of the United States, falters at a point:

> When America saves her Constitution, sheds the blood, both of her faithful and of her faithless children, she is honored for her heroism; and well she should be to the end of days! But when the Jews defend their constitution, divinely given, as all Christendom believes, they are only blind zealots led by blinder zealots[222]

This concept of wartime heroism that Gottheil here compares to, or reads into, Jewish ethics but which the US seems to be incapable of seeing in actual Jews, not only (again) racializes the concept of Jewishness but intimates the failure of Gottheil's secular/racial Jewishness to provide even Ashkenazi Jews with full entry into Christian American whiteness. Even as historicism – in its reverse-supersessionary, counter-historical guise – functions to constitute the West *as* the Judeo-Christian West, it may be the case nevertheless that not even white, European Jews have a way of participating in it. Regardless of how much they approach Christian whiteness, Jewish identity will always be constituted by its own internalized antisemitism. Like the Sephardic slave-holding Jews of America's past that Gottheil's abolitionist and the "young Russian Jew" supersede, perhaps all Jews will have to reckon with how they enslave themselves in their articulation of a Jewish historical subject: blind led by the blinder, servant of servants.

This failure to live out Jewish self-determination is much more immediate to Lazarus. Lazarus' take on the concept of heroism, which traces it (as we've already seen) to the fragile border between chivalric crusader and Muslim martyr, envisions heroism as a kind of Semitic self-obliteration – a teetering point on the verge of the Christian-Muslim antagonism and on the

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[221] Biddick 76-81.

[222] Gustav Gottheil, *The great refusal; being an open letter to Rev. S.R. Calthrop, on his article entitled: "Israel's last word* (New York: W.R. Jenkins, 1887), 8-9.

verge of the theologo-political. More simply put, when this element gets reproduced in Lazarus' writing it tends to mediate the impossibility of Jewish politics. In the conjunction of two of Lazarus' works, we can clearly see how this self-obliterating concept of chivalric heroism plays out.

V. CURSED TO LIVE

Lazarus opens her 1882 collection of poems *Songs of a Semite,* with a play (meant, not to be acted, but to be verbally recited) called "The Dance of Death." The play centers on a medieval Christian Prince, William, who falls in love with a woman named Liebhaid. Once the prince's father discovers the interfaith romance, he imprisons William in the hopes of changing his mind. The rest of the play is a race-against-time scenario, in which the town's antisemitic mayor Henry Schnetzen spreads a libel to incite a massacre against the town's Jews, while William tries to convince his captors that his love is legitimate so that he can go save Liebhaid. Ironically, the massacre is fated to happen from the very first scene, in which the aging Rabbi Cresselin arrives in town, having travelled from afar, to deliver one last message before he collapses and dies: "God's angel visited my sleep and spake./ 'thy Jewish kin in the Thuringian town/ of Nordhausen, shall be swept off from earth,/ Their elders and their babes -- consumed by fire."[223] The conjunction of this fated time with the narrative time under which William labors to save Liebhaid frames *The Dance of Death* as a question about the value of time and historical self-determination.

As the antisemitic Schnetzen says at one point, "The Jew survives/ Sword, plague, fire, cataclysm -- and must, since *Christ/ Cursed him to live till doomsday*, still to be/ A scarecrow to

[223] Emma Lazarus, "The Dance to Death," in *Songs of a semite : the dance to death and other poems*, author Lazarus (New York: "The American Hebrew" Publishing Company, 1882), 8-9.

the nations."[224] Not only does this quote point to the anxiety that lurks within the crusader's mission -- i.e. that their task is interminable --, but it also puts into sharper relief an unmoving (Jewish) temporality in which even life itself is a curse. On this unmoving temporality Lazarus puts an explicit Jewish stamp. Susskind von Orb's speech in the face of impending death at the end, which draws directly on titular theme, captures this well:

> Susskind: Brethren, My cup is full!
> Oh let us die as warriors of the Lord.
> The Lord is great in Zion. Let our death
> Bring no reproach to Jacob, no rebuke
> To Israel. Hark ye! let us crave one boon
> At our assassins' hands; beseech them build
> Within God's acre where our fathers sleep,
> A dancing-floor to hide the fagots stacked.
> Then let the minstrels strike the harp and lute,
> And we will dance and sing above the pile,
> Fearless of death, until the flames engulf[225]

Susskind's portrait of the dance in heaven brings us back to the acoustical dimension that Jewish historicism perpetually represses, the lachrymose lamentation that the New Jew always has to supersede in order to articulate their self-determined historicity, the "ear that hears" that Gottheil imagines closing itself in the figure of the slave-owning/self-enslaving Sephardi Jew. This acoustical dimension clearly threatens to unravel a concept of historical time by making life and death reversible. But what sutures life to death here, more specifically, is a kind of self-sacrificial heroism: "let us die as warriors of the Lord." This ironic heroism in death perfectly foils Gottheil's chivalric ideal. Within the play, moreover, it performativity subverts the concept of chivalric, heroic love under the sign of which William *pathetically* strives to save Liebaid: "True, I love/ Liebhaid von Orb, but 'tis the honest passion/ Wherewith a knight leads home his equal

[224] "Dance" 21, emphasis mine.
[225] "Dance" 44.

wife."[226] The fact that William fails to save Liebhaid, and that this failure distinguishes his from her concept of chivalry, points to the ambiguous identification of Liebhaid with a Muslim.

Where Schnetzen early in the play compares William to "Count Gleichen, doubly wived, who pined in Egypt,/ There wed the Pasha's daughter Malachsala,/ Nor blushed to bring his heathen paramour/ Home to his noble wife Angelica,/ Countess of Orlamund. Yea, and the Pope/ Sanctioned the filthy sin,"[227] he is -- in fact -- comparing Liebhaid to a Muslim. Crucially, by making the Count "doubly wived," the Muslim in this side-story contaminates not only the Count himself and the Christian wife Angelica, but the very institution of Christian marriage and the preservation of Christian/white futurity it entails. In this intimation, again, of a Christian-Muslim antagonism, Lazarus locates the question of historical time in an anti-Muslim political theology, even as she primarily addresses the Jewishness of Liebhaid. What's ironic, however, is that Liebhaid is not, in fact, a threat to William's white Christian future. She has Christian blood.

Liebhaid – the blonde-haired, blue-eyed daughter of a Jewish moneylender named Susskind von Orb – does not know that she is, ironically, a gentile. Not only that, but her real father is the man plotting to foment an anti-Jewish massacre in town, Henry Schnetzen. Although it is not until the third act that a disgraced crusader-turned-monk named Nordmann reveals the fact of Liebhaid's parentage, her racial whiteness is obvious from her very first physical description.[228] Nordmann's mission to reveal this to Schnetzen himself, and to Liebhaid, comprises another thread in the race against time and against the fatal, lachrymose conception of time the Jewish massacre represents. When Liebhaid is told about her racialized Christian roots, she decides (Antigone-like) to die with her family instead becoming a Christian and saving

[226] "Dance" 17. And Schnetzen: "He woos the Jewish damsel as a knight" (16).
[227] "Dance" 16-17.
[228] "Dance" 15.

herself. “Never! If I be the offspring of that kite,/ I here deny my race, forsake my father . . . Thy God is mine,/ Thy people are my people."[229] Ironically, it is she who is *electively Jewish* who turns out most powerfully to represent this unheroic heroism. By her act of suicidal heroism and submission to the will of God, Liebhaid troubles the discourse of race. She becomes a Semite, qua chivalric Muslim martyr.

The fact that Liebhaid *chooses* the cut of lachrymose time, that performatively deracializes Jewishness and re-theologizes Judaism, is crucial. Lodged within the innermost recesses of lachrymose antihistory, Liebhaid’s choice shows a Christian sort of historical self-determination that is unavailable to Jews like Susskind, who are racially born as such (and thus born *into* raciality). This difference is captured in a dialogue between themselves and Claire (Rabbi Cresselin’s daughter) towards the end of the play:

> Susskind . . . Our general doom,
> Liebhaid, is not for thee. Thou art no Jewess.
> Thy father is the man who wills our death;
> Lord Henry Schnetzen.
> Liebhaid. . . . My love is firm as thine, and dies with thee.
> Claire. Oh, Liebhaid, live. Hast thou forgot the Prince?
> Think of the happy summer blooms for thee
> When we are in our graves.
> Liebhaid. And I shall smile,
> Live and rejoice in love, when ye are dead?
> Susskind. My child, my child! . . .
> Go kneel to [Schnetzen] -- for if he sees thy face,
> Or hear they voice, he shall not doubt, but save[230]

Despite Susskind’s lachrymose, anti-historical belief that it is God’s will if he is fated to die, Susskind still encourages Liebhaid to live. He fully expects her, because of her gentile blood, to leave Jewishness behind. Were she to do so, hers would not be life “doomed to live till

[229] "Dance" 42.
[230] "Dance" 41-42.

doomsday." Susskind can't shake the racial concept, since he can see that Liebhaid expresses her Jewish-turned-Muslim chivalry *historically*, which is to say as a Christian – i.e. as a choice.

Lazarus makes this point about the impossibility of Jewish self-determination even more poignantly in her series of poems "A Translation of Heine and Two Imitations." Again, images of courtly love, chivalry and the Crusades circulate.[231] The series takes its point of departure from Heine's poem about a courtship between a Spanish noblewoman and a rabbi's son, "Donna Clara," whose ironic appeal derives from how the noblewoman assumes her lover's Christianness in her overtures to him, lacing them with antisemitic asides. Taking Heine's lead, Lazarus builds a longer narrative in which a child, "Don Pedro," results from this failed romance. Never knowing of his true parentage and believing his father to have been a loyal Christian knight, Don Pedro grows up to be a Dominican abbot in the Inquisition. "'Tis from [my father] my zeal deriveth."[232] At the same time, Don Pedro's racial Jewishness shows when his zeal reaches self-obliterating heights. So much does he insist on biopolitically purging the Jewish blood from Spain, that he suicidally maps this process onto his own body: "In my veins' pure current/ Were a single drop found Jewish,/ I would shrink not from outpouring/ All my life blood, but to purge it."[233] Don Pedro seems, despite his upbringing, to be trapped in a circular, despairing, lachrymose temporality. As desperate and unchosen, his suicidal lachrymosity does not read in the same way as Liebhaid's Christianized heroic self-sacrifice. Even while his upbringing gives Don Pedro a Christian-adjacent subjectivity, his biopolitical attempt to cleanse Spain of its "circumcised intruders," both Jewish and Muslim, betrays his racialized "intensive"

[231] As chivalry figures prominently in the origin stories of European nations, Lazarus' connection between chivalry and self-determination may also be understood as related to the discourse of European nationalism.

[232] Emma Lazarus, "A Translation of Heine and Two Imitations" in *Songs of a semite : the dance to death and other poems*, author Lazarus (New York: "The American Hebrew" Publishing Company, 1882), 62.

[233] "Translation" 65.

Jewishness. In *Epistle to the Hebrews*, Lazarus raises the issue of the "intensive form." Aligning language with race according to the philological dictates of orientalism, she posits the unique Jewish capacity to "reflect the general color of the people who surround us, and usually succeed in giving it a shade deeper dye" in much the same way that "the *Intensive* (Piel) Voice . . . intensifies the meaning of the primitive root."[234] For Lazarus, this intensive racial characteristic of the Jew, which enables their survival in a variety of nations, also opens upon the possibility that assimilation can turn into self-obliteration.

If the nations of Europe and America are founded on a secular ideal that is actually Christian and antisemitic; if *historical time itself* is based on the supersession of the Jewish (and Muslim) flesh; if the biopolitical constitution of the modern nation-state is racially founded on the detheologization of the Jews, then clearly, it could be the case that Jews end up obliterating themselves as they "intensively" adapt to such contexts. What Lazarus puts on display in "A Translation of Heine and Two Imitations" is precisely this – the point at which a vision of racial self-determination can fold Jewish lachrymosity into its own project of eliminating and superseding Jewish (and Muslim) flesh.

VI. HEINE'S SUSTENTION

This trace of the lachrymose "intensive" form of Jewishness that Lazarus is trying to excavate, despite its co-option and weaponization by the Christian West, she conceives of as theological. Her devotion to Heine's melancholic Judaism springs from the same pursuit. Writing in her introduction to her translations of Heine, Lazarus writes:

> During the period of his earnest labors for Judaism, he had buried himself with fervid zeal in the lore of his race, and had conceived the idea of a prose-legend, *the Rabbi of Bacharach,* illustrating the persecutions of his people during the

[234] *Epistle* 21.

> middle ages. Accounts vary as to the fate of this work; some affirm that the manuscript was destroyed in a fire at Hamburg, and others that the three chapters which the world possesses are all that were ever completed. Heine, one of the most subjective of poets, treats this theme in a purely objective manner. He does not allow himself a word of comment, much less of condemnation concerning the outrages he depicts. He paints the scene . . . not as the passionate fellow-sufferer and avenger that he is. But what subtle eloquence lurks in that restrained cry of horror and indignation which never breaks forth, and yet which we feel through every line, gathering itself up like thunder on the horizon for a terrific outbreak at the end! What that we could hear the explosion burst at last! We long for it throughout as the climax and the necessary result of the lowering electric influences of the story, and we lay aside the never-to-be-completed fragment with the oppression of a nightmare. But a note of such tremendous power as Heine had struck in this romance, required for its prolonged sustention [sic] a singleness of purpose and an exaltation of belief in its efficacy and truth, which he no longer possessed after his renunciation of Judaism[235]

This constancy of purpose and refusal of eruption, which to Lazarus is both a massive *Jewish* accomplishment and also (as unfinished) a nightmare, captures what Heine's self-hate means for her. In the novel's incompleteness, the cry of horror and the silence that covers it over become indistinguishable. The "sustention" is thus not lachrymosity or its absence, but both; it is the indistinguishability of the two in Jewish writing. In an essay on Heine published two years later, Lazarus quotes Heine's ironically very sentimental preface to the novel:

> Break out into loud lamentations, thou glowing martyr-song, that I have so long cherished in the flaming silence of my soul.
> It pierces all ears, and through the ears it pierces into the heart. I have powerfully invoked the thousand-year-old agony.
> Great and small are weeping, even the haughty nobles; the women and the flowers are weeping, the stars are weeping in heaven.
> And all the tears flow silently commingled toward the south, they all flow onward and empty themselves in the Jordan[236]

Lachrymose lamentation may be absent from the body of Heine's unfinished novel but it was always there para-textually, haunting the edges; and for it, Lazarus confers on Heine "a high

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[235] Emma Lazarus, "Heinrich Heine: Biographical Sketch" in *Poems and Ballads of Heinrich Heine*, ed. Lazarus (New York: R Worthington, 1881), xv-xvi.

[236] Emma Lazarus, "The Poet Heine." *The Century* (1884), 216. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015005250132&view=1up&seq=226

place in that splendid galaxy which includes not only Halevi and Gabirol, but David, Isaiah, and the author of Job." Even while she, in the same breath, takes him to task for his "lachrymose sentimentality,"[237] Lazarus is clearly drawn to his lament as an index of her own profoundly vexed engagement with Jewish secularization.

VI. TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES

Aside from "The New Colossus," Lazarus' most well-known poem is "In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport" (1871), written as a response to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport" (1854). Lazarus' poem is often interpreted as an example of Jewish power and self-determination. I argue, on the contrary, that it is an embrace of Jewish lachrymosity and non-self-determination. Lazarus appropriates Longfellow's antisemitic concept of Jewish people as an unhistorical people, rooted in the past, to produce a melancholic and haunting Jewish lament that unravels historical time.

The historical object of both poems is the same – what was called, after its cantor and director, "The Touro Synagogue." From 1677-1763, the site functioned only as a Jewish cemetery, but eventually, the Jews of Newport erected a temple nearby and formed a congregation. During the American revolutionary war, Touro Synagogue had to be abandoned. Most of its valuables were transferred to Temple Shearith Israel in New York for safe-keeping. Throughout most of the 19th century, The Touro Synagogue was closed. Rather than trying to revive the history of the Synagogue, which, for most of its history up to this point, had been available only for weddings and burials, Lazarus embraces its haunting a-temporality -- essentially following Longfellow's lead by weaving biblical imagery throughout and

[237] "Poet" 216.

pronouncing the Jews a biblical race rooted in the past. Neither is willing to narrate a history of (Jewish-American) assimilation. Rather it is Judaism as absent, encrypted, enclosed[238] that Lazarus and Longfellow hatch into their architectural poetics of the temple.

Four stanzas into "In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport," the poem erupts into a circular temporality. The present "vanishes," and suddenly we see scenes from the Torah flash before our eyes: "The slaves of Egypt;" "Dark fleeing hosts by flaming angels led;" "In the rich court of Solomon;" "the exiles by streams of Babylon."[239] These scenes proceed in the straightforward narrative order of the Bible, but when in the final stanza we read Lazarus' imperative "Take off your shoes as by the burning bush," we're suddenly transported back to where the flash-back began. The circularity of this move is coded as a kind of anti-historical assertion; a lachrymose attack on historical time.

After remarking on "the weary ones, the sad, the suffering" who "found their comfort in the holy place" Lazarus again indexes Jewish anti-historical time in the penultimate stanza, through reversals of death and marriage, childhood and age:

> The funeral and the marriage, now, alas!
> We know not which is sadder to recall;
> For youth and happiness have followed age,
> And green grass lieth gently over all.[240]

Funerals and marriages: these were the only rituals for which The Touro Synagogue was able to open its doors at the time, and even so, they must be "recalled." Like the stages of life, these rituals aren't embedded *in life*, but atomized and thrown into disarray. Thus it is not really either the marriage or the funeral that's sad, but the recalling which is so depressingly hard. And that

[238] Biddick 72.

[239] "In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport," in *Selected Poems and Other Writings*, ed. Eiselein (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002), 50.

[240] "In the Jewish Synagogue" 51.

would be "sad" enough, but Lazarus takes it a step further: everyone is dead. The congregation, both young and old, lies beneath the green grass. As Wolosky points out, this confluence becomes explicit when Lazarus repurposes the same image for a macabre promise in "The New Ezekiel" (1883): "I ope your graves, my people, saith the Lord,/ And I shall place you living in your land." Again, as for the Jews cursed by Christ to "live till doomsday" in *The Dance to Death,* here too life and death are (anti-historically) rendered indistinct.[241]

For Lazarus's injunction at the end of "In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport" to come after all this – "Take off your shoes as by the burning bush,/ Before the mystery of death and God"[242] – means that the trace of resistance here isn't only political or social in nature. Cavitch calls it "existential," but we might also call it religious. Lazarus is expressing a deep frustration with the epistemological violence to which Jews have been submitted. If the entire framework of historical thinking is rigged by Christian historiography, then mythic images like this in the final stanza function as a different kind of response. Lazarus mobilizes an image of religious difference -- confronting not only Longfellow, but Gottheil too, with its hauntological Judaic acoustics. It certainly wouldn't fit Gottheil's version of polite, reformed Judaism, wherein

> The absence of a priestly order saved the reform movement from the opposition which imperiled authority and class interest naturally show toward innovations. The rabbi is not a member of an organized class, and his ordination carries with it no special and formal consecration […] *The small modicum of authority that the rabbinical law accords to him he can increase only by the weight of his personality and by the confidence that he can instil [sic] into the hearts of his people*.[243]

Rather differently here in "In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport," Lazarus speaks with utter disregard for the listener's opinion. She speaks against the secularizing force of Jewish Reform.

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[241] Shira Wolosky. "An American-Jewish Typology: Emma Lazarus and the Figure of Christ." *Prooftexts*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (May 1996).

[242] "In the Jewish Synagogue" 51.

[243] "Jewish Reformation" 270, emphasis mine.

The suddenness with which this religious authority intrudes after the line about people lying under the "green grass" (a reminder of the setting of Longfellow's poem) suggests a "return of the repressed," arguably even a return *to the living* (by an ancient Rabbi buried in the graveyard). The joke here seems to be that Touro synagogue, which was officially in operation for less than twenty years (at the time of Lazarus' writing), is a haunted house to which these Jewish ghosts seek to return in vain. Indeed, these were similar to the terms in which Longfellow painted his poem's images: the doors emphatically shut, the eerily silent surroundings. The ghostly figure of the Jew Lazarus depicts is, like Anidjar's *Muselmann,* a trace of theology, "a theological absence rather than [an] the absence of theology" – and a conservative one at that; this figure performs a sort of Jewishness that is committed to the rules of the synagogue, even when the synagogue doesn't properly exist or is defunct, in order to preserve an already-warped memory against epistemological obstacles like Longfellow's poem.

In another of Lazarus' poems, "Arabesques," we find another, more oblique re-appropriation of Longfellow's antisemitism. In this poem, Lazarus produces an account of Muslim history, again as a history of dead letters: stuck in the past, irretrievably and hauntingly lost. In it, the Moorish ruler Boabdil sighs disconsolately as he is forced to leave the Alhambra of 1492 upon Catholic takeover. Lazarus applies a unique prosodic structure to her composition: trochaic tetrameter, varied with dimeter (rhyming: *abbccbdda*). This structure is almost identical to Longfellow's prosody in his account of indigenous absence, "the Song of Hiawatha," but with an interruption.

> Through these halls that people stepped
> Who through darling centuries
> Held the keys
> Of all wisdom, truth, and art,
> In a paradise apart,
> Lapped in ease,

Sagely pondering deathless themes,
While, befooled with monkish dreams,
Europe slept.

Where shall they be found to-day?
Yonder hill that frets the sky
"The Last Sight
Of the Moor" is naméd still.
There the ill-starred Boabdil
Bade good-by
To Grenada and to Spain,
Where the Crescent ne'er again
Holdeth sway.

Vanished like the wind that blows,
Whither shall we seek their trace
On earth's face?
The gigantic wheel of fate,
Crushing all things soon or late,
Now a race,
Now a single life o'erruns,
Now a universe of suns,
Now a rose.[244]

In this poem, Lazarus is playing not only on Longfellow's lapsarian account of Jewish absence, but also, prosodically, on Longfellow's Hiawatha. As such, even as the poem bemoans the impossibility of recovering Boabdil's history after "The gigantic wheel of fate . . . crush[es] [his] race," it aligns the Muslim and the indigenous Native American. In a move contrary to her approach in *Epistle to the Hebrews*, here Lazarus surprisingly positions the Christian and the Muslim along the same timeline -- "Sagely pondering deathless themes,/ While, befooled with monkish dreams,/ Europe slept" -- in order to draw out a trace of anti-Christianity from a Muslim positionality.

What is perhaps most profound about "Arabesques" is how it captures Lazarus' ambivalence about the historicist project engaged in by Gottheil. Even when she's writing about

[244] "Arabesques," in *Selected Poems and Other Writings*, ed. Eiselein (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002), 64-65.

the Andalusian Spain that is supposed to be her unique Jewish cultural patrimony, she cannot picture it through the lens of self-determination, nor can she even picture it through the lens of a Jew. In order to fully take up the problem of supersessionary historical time, Lazarus needs to engage the West's political theology from the other side, i.e. from the side of the Muslim, the indigene who disorders the settler temporality of the Catholic order that comes to replace them. In full view of the Anti-Muslim political theology in which she is emplotted by Jewish historicism, Lazarus resorts to the Muslim position.

VII. CONCLUSION

This is merely a case study. There are countless resonances throughout American Jewish writing of all periods. One could take Ludwig Lewissohn's work, for example, and find very similar struggles with the concept of historical time. I believe this struggle of Lazarus' resonates, moreover, with the early 20th century "social scientific turn in Jewish self-narration," via figures like Kallen and Wirth (Chapter 1). Although Lazarus is trying, in the ways I've identified, to retheologize Jewishness *specifically against racialization*, she is also effectively working against the "cultural" turn of Jewish social science, as the latter also takes after the discursive secularization of "Jewishness."

In this chapter, I've tried to cover Emma Lazarus' attempt and failure to achieve Jewish self-determination by the means of modern historicism. Encountering not only the embedded anti-Jewishness of supersessionary time, but the Ashkenormative biopolitical rearrangement of Jewishness by figures like Gottheil, Lazarus experienced the question of Jewish self-determination as a question about the value of time. She sought in her lachrymose, sentimental portraits to convey something of the spiritual homelessness of Jews in the midst of a

detheologizing racialization that ultimately could only end in one thing: a white-adjacent Protestant Jewishness. Seeking refuge ultimately in the indigene, the Muslim, was her only way out.

CHAPTER FOUR
"Incitement to Inaction:"
Settler Colonial Studies and the Historiography of the British Mandate Regime

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the central claims of this chapter is that what one could call "cultural appropriation" is essential to understanding the history of Zionism. More specifically, what Patrick Wolfe calls "the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim" – a piece of indigenous culture appropriated from the indigenous and grafted onto settler society – is important for understanding the pre-1948 period in Palestinian history. According to Wolfe's definition, the refractory imprint provides a way for settler society to simultaneously erase native presence and to distinguish itself from "the motherland." In this case, the refractory imprint functions not only to accelerate Palestinian elimination but also to engulf Zionist Jews into the imperatives of European Christian whiteness, precisely by making Zionism appear *distinct* from Europe.

Wolfe argues that the incorporation of Mizrahi Jews (Arab Jews)[245] into Israel contributed significantly to Zionism's refractory imprint, and thus engulfed all of settler society into a racial way of thinking.[246] By downplaying the Arabness of its Mizrahi constituents, by abstracting that Arab identity from Arab life and racializing it, not only did the refractory imprint further alienate *Palestinian* Arabs from their ancestral ties to the land but it also prevented Mizrahi-Palestinian solidarity. As I will discuss more below, we can see this process clearly at work in the discourse of "Jews in the form of Arabs" that welded Arab Jews to Ashkenazi

[245] I use this term anachronistically, as the identity category of "Mizrahi" was not used to refer to Jews from Arabic-speaking countries (e.g. Egypt, Iraq) until later. At the time, a more accurate term would likely have been Sephardi or (in cases where one refers specifically to Jews from Palestine) Palestinian.

[246] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (Verso, 2016), 265.

Zionists via an ideal of religious unity, while abstracting and racializing the concept of "Arab culture."

What Wolfe doesn't stress enough about the refractory imprint is that this racial thinking wasn't simply a racialism of Jews v. Arabs. Rather it was tethered to the whiteness of Europe – to the proto-settler British regime, to the League of Nations and to the Orientalist worldview they jointly espoused. It had a significant impact on the settlers themselves, engulfing them and preventing them from resisting the imperatives of Europe.

In the writings of the "cultural Zionists" (Ahad Ha'am and his followers), for example, we find a shadow of this process. The cultural Zionists don't explicitly articulate a desire for native elimination; as binationalist thinkers, they put the ideal of *peace* first. This peace, of course, becomes a venue for orientalist abstraction, for the incorporation of native qualities into the Zionist psyche – which is to say that it becomes a venue for the production of a refractory imprint of the natives. At the same time however, the very idea of peace also becomes a refractory imprint of Jewishness. As Shai Ginsburg observes, the Palestine that cultural Zionists imagined was one empty not only of Arabs but of the Jewish masses as well.[247] Multicultural peace in Palestine was conceived as a model for international peace. It didn't only absent the natives; it also abstracted the settlers themselves. Thus the cultural Zionists participated in Jewish engulfment, much as Horace Kallen did in *Zionism and World Politics*. Through a discourse of "Jewish pacifism," their writings both cement and occlude the role of the international lawmaking bodies, i.e. the League of Nations and the British Mandate, in *directing them* to establish a settler regime in the Middle East.

[247] Shai Ginsburg, *Rhetoric and Nation: The Formation of Hebrew National Culture, 1880-1990* (Syracuse University Press, 2014), 56.

For this reason, cultural Zionists experienced their attachment to the Zionist project in Palestine, qua project of "peace," as something fundamentally out of their hands – something that evacuated the idea of Jewishness itself. Native writers could also see that "cultural Zionism" was ensconced in a larger project of maintaining white power under erasure. While some expressed sympathy with the cultural Zionists and "the Hebrew revival," they also acknowledged its colonial underpinnings in various indirect ways. In fact, many Palestinian writers refused to consider the Jewish presence as anything but a third party in their conflict with European empire. As late as 1939, Ameen Rihani argued that Jewish nationalism was a fiction.

The Zionist discourse of nationalism was a conundrum vis-à-vis Jewish identity. On the one hand it was imagined as a way for Jews to return to History, to grasp it by the reigns. On the other hand, the production of the refractory imprint made Zionism a source of profound alienation. Being subjected to the amorphous currents of European imperialism felt like the *galut* (exile) all over again. Returning to History became a way of losing it all the more. Zionism could not achieve discursive stability.

But this observation complicates the history of Palestinian nationalism as well, inasmuch as it is impacted by Zionism. If Palestinian nationalism was a reaction to something, it wasn't simply "Jewish" Zionism. It was fundamentally, and for a longer time than Zionism existed, a response to Europe. Thus Rashid Khalidi is much closer to the truth when he says that,

> the assertion that Palestinian nationalism developed in response to the challenge of Zionism embodies a kernel of a much older truth; this modern nationalism was rooted in long-standing attitudes of concern for the city of Jerusalem and for Palestine as a sacred entity which were a response to perceived external threats. The incursions of the European powers and the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century were only the most recent examples of this threat[248]

[248] Rashid Khalidi. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 30.

The long duree of European settler-colonialism is thus at stake. An event-centric historiography of Israel-Palestine that imagines the two as two halves of one coordinated event – one monolithic Zionism creating another monolithic Palestine – miss the fact that both were embroiled in a conflict with Europe over a longer period of time. That Zionist and Palestinian history are couched in a larger story of Christian imperialism is clear. Thus the people who were trying to deal with Zionism, from the vantage-point of Palestine during the period I read here, experience it as something bigger than a series of colonial encroachments. Even when these writers take on Zionism directly, blow-for-blow, they unconsciously acknowledge this large context.

Although Patrick Wolfe's writing about Palestine only concerns itself with the narrow historical range in which Israel has existed as a state, the way that he describes the temporality of settler colonialism – as a "structure not an event" – applies very well to Palestine in the pre-1948 period. Ashkenazi, non-Ashkenazi Jewish and Palestinian writers found it difficult to distinguish settler-colonial events from a larger, slower structure of Christian European settler-colonialism.

II. HISTORIOGRAPHY

In *Men of Capital,* Sherene Seikaly's project is to undermine a certain historiographical approach that she attributes to Zachary Lockman, which can be boiled down to "the Jews of the Yishuv act and the Palestinians react."[249] Essentially, this is the view that Palestinian nationalism wouldn't exist without the Zionist movement. She also says that a similar line of thought exists in the well-known essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," wherein Edward Said uses the idea of a "discipline of detail" to paint a monolithic, overpowering picture of Zionism. In this version of pre-1948 Palestinian history, other nationalisms that came before Palestinian

[249] Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 9.

nationalism seem to give it its meaning and purpose. In support of such a position we might look into the writings of Najib Nassar, whose 1911 essay about Zionism certainly bears out such an idea. Nassar gives up hope that the Ottomans will protect him from the Zionists, and urges his fellow Palestinians to resist what he considers a highly complex, very powerful Zionist movement.

This approach to Israeli-Palestinian history transcends figures like Said and Lockman however to play a part in Zionist arguments that understand Palestinian nationalism as a "derivative," 20th century fabrication. With these previous formulations in the background and the awareness that they can be morphed into a Zionist perspective, Seikaly's *Men of Capital* attempts to re-write pre-Nakba Palestinian history as a dynamic between Palestinians and the British colonial apparatus. Seikaly's approach in this regard has a precedent in Palestinian writing from the period. In *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (1937) for example, Matiel Mogannam writes that "The Arabs think, and rightly so, that the dispute, if it can be so called, is directly between themselves and Great Britain and they refuse to consider the Jews except as a distant third party to the issue."[250] In *The Fate of Palestine*, Ameen Rihani[251] also focalizes the role of the British. Even Najib Nassar, writing before the British Mandate, sidelines Zionism occasionally to critique "the inaction of the Christian states" for producing his helplessness in the face of Zionism.[252]

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[250] Matiel Mogannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (Hyperion Press, 1976 [1937]), 310-311.

[251] Ameen Rihani, *The Fate of Palestine: A Series of Lectures, Articles, and Documents about the Palestinian Problem and Zionism* (Beirut: Rihani, 1967). Although Ameen Rihani was not himself born in Palestine, he trafficked between Palestine, the United States, and other locations in the Middle East to promote the Antizionist cause. He also explicitly positions his writing in a dialogue with Palestinian writers and Zionists.

[252] Najib Nassar, *Al-Sihyuniyya: Tarikhuha, gharaduha, ahamiyyatuh* (Hindawi, 2014 [1911]), 48-50.

Mogannam, Rihani and Seikaly all share a peculiar way of describing the British Mandate regime. They don't paint a political scene where Zionism is, alone, moving all-powerfully to usurp Palestinian land. There is, in their descriptions, rather much less going on. Focusing as they do on the British, they characterize living under the Mandate regime as a state of directionless and confused immobility. Perhaps this feeling ensued from the fact that the population was, in fact, restricted from knowing much about the Mandate Regime. Many of the laws to which the Palestinians were held accountable under the Mandate were never published in Palestine's vernacular newspaper, *The Official Gazette*. "The Mandate itself was not published in the *Official Gazette* of Palestine until January 16th, 1926, and then only to form part of the Convention between the British Government and the United States of America."[253] Whatever the reason, the proto-settler style of government to which the Palestinians were subjected was experienced as amorphous.

That's not to say that these writers don't acknowledge when the Zionists made a major incursion into Palestinian territory, or when they won over the British authorities on a particular matter. What's curious is that these incidents don't disturb an overall structure in which the British, who hold all the political cards, seem to be doing *nothing*. According to one portrait, the Mandate was "experimental in character, though arbitrary in spirit."[254] In Rihani's words, "the British have failed to try and tried to fail"[255] – their policy was nothing but "a policy of delay."[256] Seikaly writes that the British mandate was "an incitement to inaction."[257] All of these impressions reflect a situation of historical non-movement.

[253] Mogannam 273.
[254] Mogannam 267.
[255] Rihani 108.
[256] Rihani 160-161.
[257] Seikaly 96.

But what does this image of suspension under the British Mandate *do* historiographically? Aside from depriving Zionism of its sometimes role as author of Palestinian history, this approach also pre-emptively decenters the Nakba. In this version of the story, there is no teleological pull *toward* the Nakba.[258] The Nakba does not organize the rest of Palestinian history around itself. It is rather a policy of inaction that structures their reality. The space of waiting I'm pointing to here serves to complicate Palestinian historiography inasmuch as we don't have the two distinct "overlapping senses of identity." This is a picture in which Zionist and Palestinian nationalisms are struggling to distinguish themselves, and to get off the ground amidst political stagnation. In other words, it is not simply that one reacts against the other or vice versa, but that they are intimately linked in one opaque experience of historical non-movement.

This move by Seikaly also complicates the picture of Israel-Palestine we find in Patrick Wolfe's work, where 1948 functions as the center of gravity in Palestinian and Zionist histories. Wolfe constructs a continuity between the subtler forms of native elimination in law and culture (reservations, blood quanta, assimilation) on the one hand, and the more violent facts of expulsion/murder "at the frontier" on the other hand, but does so in such a way that the more violent event of 1948 predominates as more *real*.

While as a rule (Wolfe's rule), settler-colonialism starts with frontier violence and then moves into cultural elimination, Zionism presents something of a limit-case. Wolfe writes that, before 1948, the Zionists were

> different from an ordinary settler colony in that they had to proceed through legal channels. This they did, until they reached the point where they were strong enough to throw out both the colonial authorities, in this case the British mandate

[258] I make this argument in response to critics who do organize their concept of Palestinian history, even if inadvertently, around the Nakba. Seikaly argues that Edward Said himself falls prey to this framing in "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims."

> authorities, and complete the job of driving Palestinians off their land [in the 1948 Nakba][259]

In the case of Zionism then, the openly violent "frontier" phase of Native elimination was *preceded* by what he elsewhere calls "genteel elimination." While he goes on to suggest that the Zionists "complete[d] the job" in 1948, he also claims that the frontier era never ended.[260] Moreover, as we'll see below he dates a number of subtler, "genteel" modes of elimination *to the post-1948 period*. As this convoluted summary makes plain, the standard timeline of settler-colonialism doesn't make sense in the case of Zionism. Wolfe's suggestion that the Nakba completed something does more to confuse than clarify. Let us look more closely at Wolfe's standard picture of the settler-colonial story:

> Europeans usually win in that violent confrontation. Let's call that the frontier, though the frontier is a very misleading term because it suggests a nice clear black-and-white line with Natives on one side, Europeans on the other. It doesn't work that way. The frontier, it seemed to me the more I thought about it, isn't just a line in space, albeit a misleading line in space – there are sorts of transitions going on backward and forward across it so it's not a hard and fast line – but it's also a line in time. What happens once the Natives have been violently suppressed . . . there are still some left around . . . the way in which remaining Natives are eliminated shifts. It becomes more *legal and more genteel*. It looks better. It is necessary for settlers to continue eliminating Natives for all sorts of reasons, but one is a very political one. If you're a settler, theoretically at least, you've come with a social contrast, you've done all those Europeans things involving subjecting yourself to the rule of the sovereign and you've consented, the whole deal. Natives never did that; their rule of law was prior to colonial rule[261]

On the one hand, we have Wolfe's assertion of a uni-directional course for settler-colonialism to take from brute force to "genteel" elimination, but on the other hand we can see a slippage. If the temporal frontier is anything like the spatial frontier, then it too doesn't "work that way" – i.e.

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[259] Patrick Wolfe, "On Settler Colonialism" in *Speaking of indigenous politics: conversations with activists, scholars, and tribal leaders*, ed. Kauanui and Warrior (University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 357.

[260] "On Settler Colonialism," 358.

[261] "On Settler Colonialism" 347.

the idea of a historical transition-point is as misleading as a spatial transition. After all, settler colonialism *is* a "structure not an event."[262]

Standing outside of the Nakba is a larger, more opaque historical process of settler-colonialism that Wolfe doesn't do enough to theorize. The temporal "frontier" is a disintegrating line, the distinction between brutal dispossession and cultural forms of elimination blurred. Zionists didn't "complete the job" in 1948, nor did they start it in 1948. Focalizing the Nakba inevitably overshadows the genteel modes of settler thought that characterized Zionist society early on/continuously.

It thus overshadows how settler-colonialism generally is more of a structure than an event. We can, in fact, see the coeval existence of multiple modes of elimination even before 1948 in the work of writers from this period. By removing Zionism (and/or the Nakba) from its role as the hidden author of Palestinian history, Seikaly's book thus serves to open up new questions about how settler-colonialism was experienced. What Wolfe calls "the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim" – i.e. a remainder of indigenous "culture" around which settlers consolidate their identity – serves as both a very early example of genteel elimination and a symptom of the Jewish engulfment into European Christian whiteness.

III. REFRACTORY IMPRINTS

"Settler society," Wolfe writes, seeks "to recuperate indigeneity in order to express its difference – and, accordingly, its independence – from the mother country."[263] Indeed in the case of Zionism, the refractory imprint allowed the settlers to distinguish themselves from not only

[262] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006).

[263] "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" 389.

diasporic Jewishness but from Europe as well, and thus it provided the groundwork for their engulfment into the imperatives of white empire.

In line with his usual thinking about the place of "genteel" elimination in the settler-colonial timeline, Wolfe traces the refractory imprint to developments in the history of Zionism post-1948 – something that happens only after the natives have left in droves, a return of the repressed.[264] In the case of Zionism, the relation between the Jewish settlers and the Palestinian Arab natives became racialized through the production of a refractory imprint. In this case, it wasn't simply a cultural remainder left for the settlers to appropriate, but a whole population of people – Mizrahi Jews[265] –, that served the purpose of a refractory imprint. Wolfe writes of Israel in 1967 that it pitted Palestinian Arabs against Arab Jews, engulfing Arab-Jews into a "religious" Jewish identity in order to racialize the Palestinian natives:

> religion was central to Israel's absorption of the Mizrahim. If the possibility of a pan-Arabism capable of uniting Palestinians and Mizrahim is indeed doomed, one is still left with the question of how this came to pass. After all, on the face of it, one group of Arabs who were being oppressed by Europeans might well have found common cause with another group of Arabs who were being even more oppressed by the same Europeans, especially when both groups were well acquainted with the historical ideal of European domination. […] Under these circumstances, the ideological requirement to fend off the open possibility of Mizrahi-Palestinian solidarities was intense. In the event, the requisite intensity was furnished by traditional modes of Mizrahi religiosity […] As in Brazil — another White-minority context — race is conspicuous by its absence from this situation, an absence that is central to social control. *In aligning Mizrahim to fellow-Jews rather than the fellow-Arabs, race operates in negation (or, perhaps, under erasure). Mizrahi de-racination is a work of race*[266]

Thus race functioned precisely by concealing its own work. Denise Da Silva would call this moment one in which Arab-Jews were engulfed. In much the same way that the idea of "culture"

[264] "On Settler Colonialism" 390.

[265] Although I focus on Mizrahim here, the refractory imprint of nativeness in the Zionist case does not solely impact the experiences of Mizrahim.

[266] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (Verso, 2016), 265, emphasis mine.

masks the ongoing work of Euro-American racial oppression in the United States, so too did the idea of religious affiliation *mask* an expanding regime of racial violence/dispossession that targeted indigenous Arabs. However (again), I think Wolfe's timeline doesn't quite fit. This project would have made more sense in the context of the 1950s when Israel incorporated its Mizrahi majority citizenry. The Yemenite Children Affair, for instance, in which Mizrahi babies were stolen and incorporated into Ashkenazi Jewish life through secret adoptions clearly fits into the model of "genteel" assimilation Wolfe outlines.

But this ideological apparatus for sustaining Arab racialization "under erasure" was already at play during the British Mandate period. Ella Shohat writes of how during the 1910s and 20s, the Ashkenazi leadership of the Zionist movement needed to incorporate Yemeni Jews into their labor ranks.

> Often deluding Sephardim about realities in the "land of milk and honey," Zionist emissaries engineered the immigration of over 10,000 Sephardim (largely Yemenites) before World War I. They were put to work mainly as agricultural day-laborers in extremely harsh conditions . . . the Founding Fathers presented Sephardim as passive vessels to be shaped by the revivifying spirit of Promethean Zionism . . . the actual realization of the Zionist project in Palestine, with its concomitant aggressive attitude toward all the local peoples, brought with it the possibility of the exploitation of Sephardi Jews as part of an economic and political base . . . This skewed version of *Avoda Ivrit* generated a long-term structural competition between Arab workers and the majoritarian group of Jewish (Sephardi) workers, now reduced to the status of a subproletariat[267]

Here Shohat tackles the political motives for incorporating the Mizrahi/Sephardi Jews. Exactly as in Wolfe's description, the advantage of creating such structural competition was not only that it allowed for an exclusively Jewish labor reserve, but that it short-circuited any possible solidarity between the Palestinian natives and the Mizrahim. Where Shohat writes of the Zionist conception of the Mizrahim as "Passive vessels to be shaped by the revivifying spirit of

[267] Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims." *Social Text* 19/20 (Autumn 1988), 15-16.

Promethean Zionism" moreover, she goes beyond describing the *realpolitik* to intimate a psychological need met by the refractory incorporation of Arab Jews. In Arthur Ruppin's speech "The Picture in 1907," we find a parallel logic:

> It is an exceedingly motley mixture of Jews from all the countries under the sun which makes up the Jewish population of Jerusalem . . . The East-European Jew builds himself a small, wretched dwelling. Even more primitive is the mode of life of the Yemenite Jew, who is happy to have any sort of home. Nevertheless these immigrants from Yemen are a valuable element for Palestine, for they are able, by virtue of the fewness of their needs, to compete successfully with the cheap labor of the Arabs. Apart from this, they are so accustomed to heavy physical labor that they can easily be transformed into agricultural workers, and from all appearances they will play a considerable role in this field[268]

In this quote, we can see again that the Zionist effort necessitated a group of "vessel[s]" not only because of what they could provide economically/politically, but because of what they could do psychologically. Ruppin's extremely brief description of how his Eastern-European comrades lived compared to that of how the Yemenite Jews lived suggests an implicit comparison. By distancing himself from the "more wretched" dwellings of the Mizrahim, Ruppin disavows those echoes of the shtetl that haunt and threaten to re-racialize the Ashkenazi settlers. But simultaneously, by including the Mizrahim in his "motley mixture from all countries under the sun," he makes a place for the Mizrahim in the collective Zionist psyche, thus laying the groundwork for engulfment.

Shohat goes on to describe a larger project that she calls, after Ruppin, the need for "Jews in the form of Arabs."[269] Again, this issue is as much driven by psychology as it is by the pragmatics of settler colonialism. We can see this clearly from how this discourse overlaps with the discourse of Palestinian natives. There was, after all, the concurrent idea that Palestinians

[268] Arthur Ruppin, "The Picture in 1907" (Speech delivered Feb 27, 1908) https://zionism-israel.com/Arthur_Ruppin_1907.htm

[269] Shohat 14.

were also Jews:

> [I]deas that the Arabs of Palestine are the descendants of the ancient Jewish population which never went into exile but was forced to convert to Islam and that they had preserved archaic customs from times of the First and Second Temples were . . . accepted amongst Zionist intellectuals who . . . claimed that the Arabs of Palestine had no authentic national character of their own and would therefore assimilate into the higher culture of their Jewish neighbors . . . Even Ahad Ha'Am who warned against disregarding Arab national feeling and its link to the land, wrote in one instance that the Moslems are the ancient residents of the land, that they are *am ha-aretz* (the simple folk) who became Christians on the rise of Christianity and become Moslems on the arrival of Islam[270]

It should be clear at this point that the refractory imprint did not correspond simply to a pragmatic need to preclude Mizrahi-Palestinian solidarity. At this moment, when there were still many native Arabs and Arab-Jews in Palestine, the refractory imprint did more *to blur* than to reinforce the line between Jews and Arabs. It did, however, make Arabness an abstract "form" to be appropriated through discourse – a mobile identity. Even bi-nationalists like Ha-am were gripped by this idea.

Ashkenazi-Zionist fascination with the life of "Jews in the form of Arabs" was of course incorporated into Zionist identity itself;[271] one of the most well-known symptoms of this being the Semitic "sabra figure," a literary welding of orientalist and Aryan tropes onto Jewish bodies. Understanding this as the work of race, we must see the refractory imprint in the larger context in which it also created a wedge between Zionism and European whiteness. British colonial and more broadly Euro-American imperial interests created an imperative for Zionism to accelerate Jewish engulfment.

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[270] Ya'acov Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 123.

[271] Ehud Ben-Ezer, "Introduction." *The Arab in Hebrew Fiction* edited by Ben-Ezer (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers), 4; Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 95-97.

The Jewish transition from a racial to a cultural identity, made possible by the refractory imprint of "ancient Semites" – i.e. Jews in the form of Arabs; native Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews – allowed them of course to propel their settler project forward by denigrating natives, but it also allowed Europe to appear detached from the process. Because this refractory imprint gave Ashkenazis the license to claim "independence – from the mother country" in their Zionist return to History, it simultaneously barred them from seeing how they operated in the service of white empire. It is for this reason that the Zionists also experienced the settler-colonial project as a "structure."

IV. CULTURAL ZIONISM

Having initially to do with the natives, the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim in this case should be seen as a solution to the following problem, articulated in a letter from Arthur Ruppin to Hans Kohn:

> In the foundations of Brith Shalom one of the determining factors was that the Zionist aim has no equal example in history. The aim is to bring the Jews as second nation into a country which already is settled as a nation - and fulfill this through peaceful means. History has seen such penetration by one nation into a strange land only by conquest, but it has never occurred that a nation will freely agree that another nation should come and demand full equality of rights and national autonomy at its side. The uniqueness of this case prevents its being, in my opinion, dealt with in conventional political-legal terms. It requires special contemplation and study. Brith Shalom should be the forum in which the problem is discussed and investigated[272]

Brith Shalom was a home for some of the more peaceful, "cultural Zionists" – many of whom were involved in the founding of Hebrew University. Among the members and affiliates of Brith Shalom were Judah Magnes, Hans Kohn and Arthur Ruppin. They were largely inspired by the ideas of Ahad Ha'am, who envisioned Zionism as follows:

[272] Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Croom Helm, 1979), 168-169.

> [Ha'am] sets apart the question concerning the Jews from the question concerning Judaism. The solution to the former, he argues, lies in immigration to the United States, where the pressing economic needs of the Jewish masses could be addressed. The solution to the second, on the other hand, lies in turning Palestine into a national spiritual-cultural center, maintained by a small number of carefully selected Jewish colonizers, spiritually and physically committed to the creation of a new national culture[273]

In their effort to create this new national center, which at the same time did not contain the Jewish "masses," Ha'am and his followers used the refractory imprint of the native counterclaim. Ha'am's move to divide "the question concerning Jews from the question concerning Judaism" and thus to "imagine [Palestine] empty: not of Arabs, but of the Jewish masses," was, according to Shai Ginsburg, a move motivated by the need to "figure" a discourse of Jewish nationalism. Ha'am considered the diasporic Jewish masses to be non-figurative,[274] and not very good material upon which to build a national discourse – because of their place as middlemen, moneylenders, etc. in Europe. Therefore, he envisioned Palestine as less of an economic than as a "spiritual center." What Ginsburg overlooks is that Ha'am and his followers didn't simply imagine Palestine as "empty: not of Arabs, but of the Jewish masses" – but as full of Jews *in the form of* Arabs. This is how they conceived of the Mizrahim. Their attachment to the idea of "spirituality," and significantly (as we will see with Magnes) "peace," was a kind of compensatory gesture to balance their irreconcilable attachments to settler society and to a "native" culture.

Someone like Judah Magnes, the founding president of Hebrew University, saw his spiritual approach to his own settler-colonialism as part of a larger movement toward "peace" amongst Jewish communities internationally. In this sense, his thinking aligns with Horace Kallen's in *Zionism and World Politics,* where Kallen argues that Zionism promotes

[273] Ginsburg 55-56.
[274] Ginsburg 53.

international peace:

> The ideal of international peace under a general law for all nations is the outcome of the bitter political experience of a small state situated at the junction point between the competing military imperialisms of Asia and Africa. The Prophets were nothing if not *realpolitiker* with a passion for the preservation of Israel for Zion and of Zion for Israel, and they grew to realize that the only device by which this could be secured was an international order and a single law[275]

Almost as if the idea for the League of Nations wouldn't have been possible without Zionism, Kallen rewrites the role of Jew as broker of international peace into this specific territorial acquisition. My first chapter discussed how Kallen here also *conceals* the role of the British and, in a larger sense, the Euro-American League of Nations in Zionism and this version of "peace," by only talking about "the competing military imperialisms of Asia and Africa." Magnes likewise writes about Zionism as a movement that promotes international peace in the sense that "Striking [a] national root can produce the freedom to look beyond nationalism."[276] He moreover conceals the Euro-American whiteness of such a project by making the role of the League of Nations appear derivative. He writes that

> living at peace with the Arabs here has to be the outcome, not only of the practical considerations which are apparent to everyone, but also of *the basic theory of a Jewish pacifism*, that has applicability not only here, but throughout the world, and that is valid not only for Jews and Arabs, but for human relationships generally[277]

If "human relationships generally" isn't a clear enough reference to international politics, Magnes draws a more explicit connection:

> the "internationalism of Palestine." The League of Nations is therefore the proper form of final sovereignty and control. The interest of the League in Palestine must be increased. The Mandatory must be brought to feel more and more his international position as trustee for an international land. The land should serve as little as possible the political or economic imperialism of the Mandatory power.

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[275] Horace Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics: A Study in History and Social Psychology* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921), 11.

[276] Judah Magnes, *Dissenter in Zion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 263.

[277] Magnes 273, emphasis mine.

> No favored nation, no tariff preferences . . . with harbor open to all comers, with governor of another nationality – perhaps governors of various nationalities over given periods[278]

Magnes' insistence that the interest of the League of Nations in Palestine must "be increased" signals (1) a kind of directionlessness that Magnes perceived in life under the British Mandate, even from the perspective of the settler, (2) that he thinks the League isn't already in control, and (3) that he imagines Palestine as a haven of internationalism.

I described in the first chapter how the conferral of an essentialized Jewish pacifism onto the international politics of the League of Nations that cropped up in pro-Zionist arguments is a manifestation of Jewish engulfment into whiteness during this period. For Magnes, this was absolutely the case. The cultural version of Jewishness that Magnes sketches here, in talking about the "basic theory of Jewish pacifism," does little more than to reproduce Jewish identity as a vessel for the Euro-American dominated League. To the extent that "cultural Zionism" crafted this deracinated cultural image of Jewish pacifism that appealed to the authority of the League, it too functioned as a kind of refractory imprint: whites in the form of Jews. Jewishness itself became a thin veil for the League's project of asserting Euro-American whiteness.

The resistance of Palestinian writers toward the League of Nations during this period is a very significant thing, speaking directly to the substance of Joseph Massad's recent writing about the League in "Against Self-Determination."[279] Mogannam displays remarkable cynicism toward the League of Nations and advocates direct action in her book *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (1937), much of which is a photographic record of protests and demonstrations she orchestrated with her interfaith (Christian-Muslim) society. Knowing her stance on the League, we can read her exclusion of Jews in this interfaith alliance less as

[278] Magnes 271.
[279] Joseph Massad, "Against Self-Determination," *Humanity* 9:2 (2018).

antisemitism than as an awareness that even the pro-Palestinian Jews around her were conscripted to this Euro-American project of the League through their ideal of Jewish pacifism – their "religious" cultural identity itself, already a part of the League's ploy. Mogannam writes, in her final chapter which is ironically titled "A Solution:"

> In the case of Palestine, the Mandate has imposed the Jewish National Home on the Arabs in direct contradiction to their wishes and interests. Events have shown that the League, far from helping to remove causes of war, was responsible for sowing the seeds of struggle in a country which of all countries should enjoy complete peace. The case of Ethiopia has proved beyond any doubt that the League could not prevent acts of unspeakable savagery and invasion, and Ethiopia has been sacrificed on the defiled altar of colonization . . . In light of such bitter experience the Arabs in Palestine do not look to the League for justice or support. *They have always considered the League as an international instrument used to serve the interests of its powerful members. This may appear a severe judgement, but it is a fact. The Arabs think, and rightly so, that the dispute, if it can be so called, is directly between themselves and Great Britain and they refuse to consider the Jews except as a distant third party to the issue*[280]

Mogannam's exclusion of the Jews from her understanding of Palestine's deadlock with Zionism runs deep. Like Seikaly, Mogannam sees a broader picture in which, behind the machinations of Zionism lie a regime of European hegemony. It is for this reason that I find histories of the period that put some of the onus of the Nakba on Palestinian natives for not maintaining the Jewish/Zionist distinction highly suspect, e.g.

> With the pressure of waves of Ashkenazi-Zionist immigration and the swelling power of its institutions, the Jewish/Zionist distinction was becoming more and more precarious, much to the advantage of European Zionism. Had the Arab nationalist movement maintained this distinction, as even the Zionist historian Yehoshua Porath has recognized, it would have had significant chances for enlisting Sephardi support in the anti-Zionist cause[281]

Even Shohat falls into this trap. The issue was not simply with Zionists, but with Europe. While it may be true that solidarity was possible, the process of Jewish engulfment itself, which

[280] Mogannam 310-311, emphasis mine.
[281] Shohat 11.

conscripted Jewishness to the imperatives of empire, was more to blame in making the Jewish/Zionist distinction untenable.

In Ameen Rihani's *The Fate of Palestine* (1939), we find a similar critique of the League. In this series of published lectures, as Rihani travelled back and forth between the Middle East and the US, he is speaking not only to Arab but to Jewish audiences as well. He is thus not as outright as Mogannam in insisting that the League is a tool for the Christian states, but he remains aware of how white Christian imperialism bears upon the situation: "If a Jewish state is established there, Christian Europe will ask the Jews to go to that State. Thus they will be driven out of Europe to an unwelcome and already crowded home in Palestine."[282] Rihani's sympathy with figures like Magnes, moreover, conveys a sense (similar to Mogannam's) of Jewish engulfment. Rihani cites Magnes in *The Fate of Palestine* and expresses sympathy with the "The Hebraic revival," but he simultaneously insists that "The Jews as a nation have ceased to exist two thousand years ago."[283] Moreover, he writes that "The revisionists are more honest than the Zionists, because they know what the Zionists want and are out to get it."[284] Thus, while Rihani is somewhat amenable to Magnes and to cultural Zionism, he distances it so thoroughly from Zionism as a whole – which he categorically says is *not* Jewish nationalism – that his commentary on Magnes reads as vaguely irrelevant:

> The Hebraic revival is a noble spiritual and cultural movement. It has the sympathy of all the civilized nations of the world, including the Arab nation. But a Hebraic revival harnessed to a political movement must inevitably fail, and its failure will be a great misfortune . . . Empires, such as the Jews now depend upon, are not eternal;[285] the Arab people, now struggling for union and solidarity are all agreed on their cardinal objectives . . . How can Zionism, in view of this state of

[282] Rihani 67.
[283] Rihani 64.
[284] Rihani 62.
[285] I can't not think of this later quotation from Taqfiq Zayyad: "*I take my time*, for it is the function of history to follow our dictates! We have prepared for the downfall of the giants of the earth. We will pay them back in kind; We will give them enough rope, not that they might live longer, but that they might have enough to hang themselves"

> things, long survive? I would save the purer aspects of Zionism, the spiritual and cultural aspects, from this most dangerous and most imperialistic experiment of the political Zionists[286]

In this passage (as in the rest of the book), the slippage between cultural and political Zionism is telling. Rihani's effort to distinguish the Hebraic revival from Zionism is coated in ambivalence and cynicism. "I would save the purer aspects of Zionism" conveys a wish Rihani imagines neither he nor Magnes can act on. He explicitly views Zionism in the context of its dependence upon Euro-American empire. When he talks about Magnes, the question is not whether Magnes will take hold of the movement, but if the Zionists will listen. And he knows they will not, since it is clear that they rejected Magnes long ago. Zionism is here cast as a kind monolith that waits for its own unravelling under the immobility of the Mandate. Rihani characterizes Zionists like Magnes as anything but in control.

Although Mogannam and Rihani are writing in the late 1930s, there is, as I said, a long track record of Anti-Zionist Palestinian writing from the pre-1948 period that has a similar logic. In the case of Najib Nassar,[287] like in the case of Rihani, the rejection of Zionism, which cuts across the "moral Zionism" of figures like Ahad Ha'am to the *realpolitik* of the Zionist Congresses, is premised on sympathy with Jewish peoples. Moreover, Nassar also sees the larger context (even in 1911, before the British Mandate began!) in which not only the Zionists, but the Christian states and Britain had a decisive role to play.

Nassar's essay about Zionism is an abridged translation of Richard Gottheil's entry on Zionism in the *Jewish Encyclopedia.* Periodically, Nassar will insert his commentary on the original content of this article. At one point, where Gottheil's article covers the cultural Zionism

[286] Rihani 67-68.

[287] Nassar was connected to Mogannam through his wife Sadhij Nassar, who was also active in the world of interfaith Palestinian feminist, anticolonial activism. The two of them appear in pictures together.

of Ahad Ha'am, Nassar inserts the following line, saying of Ha'am's followers, that "they respect the thought of Ahad Ha-am, leader of this party . . . but in practice they support Zionism."[288] Nassar's skepticism toward this more "moral" version of Zionism is of a piece with his awareness that behind the Zionist movement as a whole lies an imperial machine. He writes that "If the British take pains for this organization, and are even dragged into negotiations over it with other countries, then it [Zionism] can't properly be called 'imaginary.'[289] He suggests also that the Christian *mahilat* [prefectures] will not withstand the "inaction of the Christian states."[290] Christian empire has done as much to create the helplessness of Palestinian natives in the face of Zionism as the Zionist movement itself. This is a crucial element, adding to the complexity of the picture Nassar paints of his situation in Palestine.

Nassar's insistence that Zionism is not an "imaginary" movement conveys an understandable sentiment in Ottoman Palestine of 1911, before the Balfour Declaration lent Zionism its more official standing. But it also conveys a crucial aspect of the proto-settler-colonial regime under which Palestinian natives were living. As "a structure not an event," it defied historiography. To wrest this structure from the amorphous time of imagination and to put it in tangible, historical form would be a challenge even to post-Balfour writers (both native and settler). It is for this reason that Nassar can't imagine his effort at clarification succeeds: "My own words make me tremble: illusion and imagination."[291] Nassar, in other words, glimpses the time of settler colonialism under Zionism as an anti-historical structure.

V. SETTLERS

[288] Nassar 48.
[289] Nassar 49.
[290] Nassar 48.
[291] Nassar 50.

In the writing of Zionist novelists and poets, there is a kind of parallelism. Although they don't explicitly address matters of international peace and the League directly, they do index the state of immobility and confusion precisely at the moment where they try to assert their authority as historical actors. In all of these writers, we see Jewish identity itself getting abstracted. Struggling like Magnes with the Jewish engulfment into Christian imperial whiteness via the Zionist project, Haim Nachman Bialik conveyed a sense of directionless confusion.

We find a moment of anxiety about Jewish engulfment into Christian whiteness, and the non-evental time of settler-colonialism in an essay called "Jewish Duality" (1922) by Hebrew poet Haim Nachman Bialik. Bialik writes of two dominant strands of Jewish heritage: that of the farmer and that of the shepherd. Much like Ruppin, Bialik can't produce an image of the farming type using modern Eastern European Jews as models, so he reverts to "savage man" and children.[292] Reading this, especially in light of Ruppin, we can imagine that he's unconsciously thinking either of the Mizrahim, or perhaps the Palestinian natives. In using this language to describe the farming tendency in Jewish life/history, Bialik is drawing on the refractory imprint of the native counterclaim. He waxes poetic about the Jewish farmer's "animistic" economy of value and property:

> when a man sees something and desires it in his heart, his desiring 'buys' it. The soul of the object cleaves to the purchaser; they make a covenant . . . This is the relationship of primitive man and of children to the object they love . . . it is also the attitude of the farmer to his soil, his sowed land, his plants – he is 'enslaved' to them all[293]

[292] Haim Nachman Bialik, *Revealment and Concealment: Five Essays* (Ibis Editions, 2000), 40.
[293] Bialik 40-41.

Contrast this with the economy of the shepherd, who Bialik identifies with the diasporic Jew. Bialik argues that the shepherd brought the use value of farm-life to higher and higher levels of abstraction until he invented exchange value.[294]

> This is how humanity has proceeded from the concrete to the abstract . . . Torn from the soil, we reduced all our wealth to religion, and then we further reduced this religious wealth to one book, the Bible . . . From this lofty abstraction we climbed to the highest of all – to one biblical verse, 'Hear, O Israel,' on whose final word we agreed to take on the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven . . . Even this abstraction, the highest, was expressed with the greatest economy, and after it there is nothing except the idea of the denial of idolatry ("He who denies Torah"). This negative form is the extreme condensation[295]

Bialik invests this figuration of the shepherd and his system of exchange value with a seemingly endless process of abstraction. As this process proceeds and gains higher "quality," the Jewish tradition is itself quantitatively vanishing. Much as in Brenner's *Breakdown and Bereavement* or Uri Nissan Gnessin's story "The Time Before," we get a vision of Jewishness in between multiple identities that yet never quite fits into any of them.

VI. CONCLUSION

This chapter is meant to question the framework in which settler-colonial theory operates. While Wolfe's suggestion that settler colonial history is a "structure not an event" explains much of what we see in the literature from Palestine in the pre-1948 period, I wonder if there are limitations to the idea that this structure emerges simply from the pragmatic demands of the settler project. Veracini writes that settler consciousness could have implications beyond the immediate context of settler society. Moreover, considering the scope of Christian imperialism

[294] Bialik 41.
[295] Bialik 42-43.

and its incursions into Palestine over hundreds of years, I wonder if settler colonialism could benefit from a broader inquiry into political theology.

What I hope to have elucidated in this chapter is a temporal "structure" under which both settlers and natives live – out of which, moreover, it is difficult for either to construct a historicist narrative. I thus agree with Ginsburg's argument about the inherent instability of nationalist discourse in the Zionist context. I would rather broaden it to encompass its effects on Palestinian writers as well.

CHAPTER FIVE
Refractory Engulfment:
Kanafani's Returning to Haifa *and Sayed Kashua's* Second Person Singular

I. INTRODUCTION

Although it is clear that the works of Ghassan Kanafani and Sayed Kashua were written in two very different contexts, for different rhetorical purposes, and with different audiences in mind, I will suggest in this chapter that they overlap in this significant respect: that they both address the Zionist fantasy of Arab incorporation.

Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* ([Arabic: *A'id ila hayfa*] 1969) and Sayed Kashua's *Second Person Singular* ([Hebrew: *Guf sheni yahid*] 2010) portray what one could call "assimilation" under Zionist settler colonialism. These stories focus on characters that are born Palestinian non-Jews, but whom are incited in various ways to mimic settler Jewishness past the point of no return. In Kanafani's story, an Arab boy (Khaldun) is confiscated by Zionists during the mass expulsion of the Palestinian residents of Haifa in 1948, and later gifted to a settler family, in which he is renamed ("Dov") and raised Jewish. Kashua, in another version of this narrative, tells the story of a young man named Amir who chooses to steal the identity of a paralyzed Israeli (Yonatan) with the consent of the paralyzed Israeli's mother. In both cases, these Palestinian characters are divorced from their Arab kin and brought into Israeli families in a way that fulfills a particular desire on the part of settler characters.

As both are about assimilation, these stories depict an extremely uncommon sociological phenomenon in Israel/Palestine, as Zionism today is clearly premised on what Neve Gordon calls the "separation principle."[296] Gordon gives this name to the ideological principle whereby

[296] Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (University of California Press, 2008), xix.

Palestinian identity is considered extraneous to the Zionist state. In his periodization, the "separation principle" follows on the heels of the "colonial principle" wherein Palestinians were considered (economically) integral to the Israeli state, as a source of super-exploitable labor. The "separation principle" names a relation to the inhabitants of historic Palestine that is -- I think it is fair to say -- necropolitical.[297]

What I'm trying to shed light on in this chapter, however, is a more mundane, unconscious operation of settler consciousness. While assimilation seems not to fit the sociological fact of Israel's setttler/native "separation," writing of the kind I examine in this chapter (Kashua's especially) serves to demonstrate the limited, but real, importance of assimilation to the Zionist project. Even under the auspices of a clear, hegemonic separation between Jew and Palestinian bodies, Israel yet produces a post-racial idea of multicultural harmony that folds the denigration of indigenity into itself -- as "love." This image of multicultural harmony is eroticized, corresponding to a particular settler desire that Denise Da Silva calls "racial democracy" and Gilberto Freyre called "miscegenation democracy" in the case of Brazilian settler colonialism.

From Israel's prohibition of interfaith marriage and apartheid legal system, it would seem that such a thing could never have any presence in Israeli or Palestinian discourse on a hegemonic scale. But it is precisely what isn't offered up for hegemonic negotiation that I'm trying to highlight. This is not a matter of politics but of the settler state's internal, *domestic* logic. It is on this deeper level that, I argue, ideas of assimilation *through "*miscegenation democracy" lurk in the Zionist project as unconscious impulse or desire.[298]

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[297] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Meintjes. *Public Culture*, Volume 15, Number 1 (Winter 2003), pp. 11-40.

[298] There is, in other words, something within Zionist consciousness ready to equate love and democracy with "miscegenation democracy."

This chapter is a response, in part, to Hella Bloom Cohen's work -- which shows that Jewish/Arab romance, biopolitically coded as interracial, haunts the Israeli literary text (and to some extent the Palestinian as well).[299] Even while her central argument that miscegenation democracy *would* (as it explicitly purports to do in Brazil) undo the violence of conquest is problematic, her examples from Israeli and Palestinian literature do at least index "miscegenation democracy" as an undercurrent in the settler-colony.

I read Kanafani and Kashua's narratives as descriptions of how the implication of Arab bodies into an undercurrent of Zionist miscegenation democracy satisfies settler fantasies of indigenous deracination and assent. What these stories, more than the everyday discourse of compulsory assimilation, put on display is the *psychological* importance of native assimilation for the settler's consciousness. To understand this dynamic and its importance to settler society, I draw (somewhat critically) on what Wolfe calls "the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim" -- i.e. the incorporation of some elements of native "culture" in order to distinguish settlers from their mother country. Wolfe writes:

> On the one hand, settler society required the practical elimination of the natives in order to establish itself on their territory. On the symbolic level, however, settler society subsequently sought to recuperate indigeneity in order to express its difference—and, accordingly, its independence— from the mother country[300]

While he argues that the Zionist project in some cases resists the impulse to recuperate indigeneity, he does not offer an argument for why. Again, Wolfe considers amalgamation and appropriation irrelevant to the Israeli case because of its unavailability in sociological and political discourse, but I would beg to differ. Settlerness can be, can even thrive on being,

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[299] Hella Bloom Cohen, *The Literary Imagination in Israel-Palestine Orientalism, Poetry, and Biopolitics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[300] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006), 389.

contradictory and flexible.[301] Although I think there is a logic to it, settlerness should not only be thought of simply as a conscious or pragmatic process. It proceeds contradictorily, like the unconscious. In this regard, I admittedly depart from the white Australian model of Settler Colonial Studies espoused by Wolfe (and the *Settler Colonial Studies* journal). I continue in this chapter to question some of the hard distinctions Wolfe's model makes between the genteel and violent phases of settler-colonial "history." Yet, I would suggest that this intersection between Wolfe's idea of the "refractory imprint" and what Denise da Silva has to say about settler-colonial "miscegenation democracy" is worth exploring further.

Drawing on Silva, I expand the limits of Wolfe's definition of the "refractory imprint" to encompass the settler's need to distinguish themselves from Europe, not simply from a given imperial sponsor (e.g. England in the case of Australia). But this isn't the only way Silva nuances Wolfe's theory -- attending, as she does, to how amalgamation doesn't eliminate but sustains and subsumes racialized distinctions into the idea of settler "culture." In other words, unlike in Wolfe's account of boarding schools and American/Australian amalgamation, "miscegenation democracy" (in practice or theory) is not meant to straightforwardly disappear the native position, but rather to engulf it in such a way as to sow discord/create contradictory ideas of nativeness *within* the native position. It "domesticates" the native in a heteropatriarchal domestic space that belongs to the settler. The very concept of the native is circumscribed by its role in the

[301] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage: 1979), 247, where Said suggests that "the number of attributes ascribed to [Arabs], by its crowded set of sheer appositions, cause 'the Arabs' to acquire a sort of existential weightlessness." Orientalists abjure consistency in their accounts of The Orient. By a textual (over)production of inconsistency, they find a way of emptying out the living content of the Orient, and asserting themselves as its authors. Differently put, they "flex" their "positional superiority" by putting themselves "in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient. . . without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (7). As Said's reference to Balfour suggests, this more dynamic engagement with nativeness -- in addition to the top-down/metropolitan production of static "visions" of Arab life -- would be essential specifically for the production of a settler identity in Palestine. The partial incorporation of this textualized, existentially weightless Arabness into settler identity was, and is, experienced by native writers as a form of psychic genocide, as Kanafani and Kashua (on my reading) elucidate in their accounts of Zionist empathy.

settler's narrative of self-actualization. This is the process that makes "The Arab," according to Edward Said, "existentially weightless" and fills Fanon's head with "a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" about his blackness.[302] Native "culture" then becomes an idea that works from within the native position against it. Drawing on Houria Bouteldja's work as well in this regard, I take these stories to demonstrate the "real effects" of appropriation. Through this appropriation, native culture finds value only in the ways it is mediated, evaluated and re-figured under the settler's gaze.

What *Returning to Haifa* and *Second Person Singular* bring into sharper relief is how this process works: it rips native bodies from their lifeworlds and remakes native "culture" as a fundamentally domesticated object *for them*. "Culture" folds nativeness within the settler's national narrative (or within the settler's psyche) as an "anaspace" of sensual, domestic affectability.[303]

Both *Returning to Haifa* and *Second Person Singular* focalize this point of violation, in the form specifically of the destruction of kinship ties, or what Samera Esmeir might call "the death of human relationships."[304] This process that tears the native from the fabric of their lifeworlds[305] and dislocates them from indigenous time[306] facilitates a specific *psychological*

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[302] Franz Fanon. *Black Skins White Masks* (trans. Philcox, 2008 [1952]), 91.

[303] I am taking the term "anaspace" from Tiffany Lethabo King. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2019). By this term, she means to describe the tension wherewith the Native is imagined as a space that simultaneously needs to be kept at bay, but only needs to be kept at bay "until it is conquered." In the space of this tension between holding at bay and its imagined endpoint is, I would argue, the gap between Neve Gordon's "separation principle" and the "colonization principle." I suggest that it is this gap between the two, rather than one principle or the other, that guides settler colonial practice in Palestine.

[304] Esmeir, Samera. "1948: Law, History, Memory." *Social Text* 75, Vol 21, No. 2 (Summer 2003), 44.

[305] I am using "lifeworlds" here as a kind of substitute for the terms we typically use in academia do describe groups of people, principally "culture." My use of the term is inspired partly, though, by Ariella Aisha Azoulay *Potential History*: *Unlearning Imperialism* (Verso, 2019); and Samera Esmeir, "1948." Much of this dissertation is about questioning the idea of "culture," which tends to feed state projects; and so I am grasping for different ways of talking about "historical" "groups."

[306] See Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Duke University Press, 2017).

process for settler society. In what seems like it might be (but is not) a contradiction, settlers grasp the vulnerability, disruption of kinship ties and temporal dislocation that their process of conquest produces in the native body *as an opportunity* to congratulate themselves for remedying it, and for re-evaluating "the Arab male." *Returning to Haifa* and *Second Person Singular both* put this moment on display, as an instance wherein the refractory imprint of the native-counter claim intersects with colonial seduction.

II. CULTURAL MISCEGENATION

Denise Da Silva's writing on the idea of racial inclusivity in Brazil is particularly apposite, as it shows that the discourse of democracy in settler colonies can work *through* sexualized and racial degradation.

> [N]ational narratives necessarily institute fundamentally modern subjects, for the historic and scientific assume that the realization of the transparent I necessitates the engulfing of the others of Europe, because it also presumes the 'other' ontological context, globality (spatiality-exteriority), that the analytics of raciality institutes[307]

Globality and race thinking serve both as a promise and threat to Europe's transcendental Subject ("transparent I"), and thus this Subject needs to discursively *include* (not exclude) those beings it has classified as "affectable" into the historical narratives of nationalism and democracy, in order to mitigate threats of contamination.

The Brazilian national subject mitigated/mitigates this threat of contamination through the ideology of "miscegenation democracy," i.e. the idea that amalgamation will lead (eschatologically) to the obliteration of African and native cultures, which is to say, "miscegenation supports the statement that the presence of affectable others of Europe is a threat to 'superior races and cultures.' but also that 'contact' with them will lead to their

[307] Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 240.

disappearance."[308] This narrative in which whiteness triumphs over the native and black *within* an amalgamated identity is necessary for Brazilian settler society to constitute itself as historical and "transparent:"

> What I gather in the articulation of the figure of the hybrid (*mestiço*) in the writings of the Brazilian subject is the delimitation of the dangerous place where European particularity was threatened by the proximity required by the dislocations that ensured the juridical and economic appropriations that guaranteed the successful trajectory of capitalism. In writings of the Brazilian subject, the refashioning of miscegenation as a historic signifier enabled the narrative of the temporal trajectory of a European subject 'adapted' to the conditions in the tropical global regions . . . Unlike the English colonizers, the Portuguese were able to take advantage of Indians' and Africans' familiarity with the tropical environment, even though they never really depended on them to build the Brazilian 'civilization'[309]

This "advantage" was conceived of as being taken sexually, through the violation of African and Indigenous women. Rather than dissolving the color line and incorporating elements of whites and non-whites equally into Brazilian politics, Silva elucidates how it actually retrenched whiteness by narrating blackness and nativeness as "affectability," i.e. "as consciousness that could not thrive in the transparent social configuration."[310] Rather than eliminating racial difference, it "displace[d] the social as the domain of operation of the racial,"[311] replaced the discourse about miscegenation in natural law with "cultural miscegenation,"[312] and marked the "cultures" of the Others of Europe as unhistorical/ bound to vanish. It was in this way specifically that Brazilian discourse divorced natives and slaves, as well as the national settler narrative of which they were a crucial part, from African and native lifeworlds.

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[308] Silva 229.
[309] Silva 232, 241.
[310] Silva 223.
[311] Silva 224.
[312] Silva 228.

It was only insofar as their bodies were domestically subjected to this masochistic role, as that which (through sexual submission) "tanned" the presumptively European subject that Africans and Indigenous peoples were considered relevant to the Brazilian national project. "With the same logic," says the premier theorist of "miscegenation democracy" Gilberto Freyre, "one could hold the domestic animals responsible."[313] Simply put, settlers imagine native and black "cultures" as fundamentally receptive. They fantasize about joining with the Others of Europe only to the extent that they can appropriate those elements of native or black culture that make them uniquely adaptive conquistadors, and then eclipse those "cultures" with their European essence -- which is said, by contrast, to be fundamentally active and historical. All of this is, of course, gendered.

The discourse of "cultural miscegenation" is constituted, importantly, *not* at the level of legal or economic discourse, but rather "resolved in the interiority" and in the patriarchal/domestic space signified by Brazilian "culture." In other words, black and native cultures were folded into a domestic narrative of the patriarchal Brazialian tradition that normalized the sexual violation of black and indigenous women, as an index of European vitality, virility, adaptability and power.[314] The idea of "culture" itself is thus, in this context, gendered in such a way as to take the native and black male out of the equation, and to make the gendered/racialized subaltern black/indigenous female body twice-affectable:

> Neither passion (which, though not determined by reason, instituted a subject as the affected person I determined by a given object), nor love (which also refers to a mode of affection, but one that does not depart from the boundaries of rational morality), nor consent (which is a privilege of the self-determined rational thing) could be deployed to capture the female racial subaltern. Her reasons and passions, the attributes of one who desires, of a subject, were written as irrelevant in the statement that compared her to a banana tree, *an object that should be engulfed, an exterior thing whose appropriation was necessary for the*

[313] Quoted in Silva 244.
[314] Silva 241-245.

> *actualization of the male's desire, that which the Portuguese needed to release the unrestrained lust that marked their particular productive power*[315]

While Brazil's "tanning" of the European subject through rape and conquest fulfills what Silva calls a "strategy of particularization,"[316] and so clearly validates the idea that settler society needs a "refractory imprint" of the native, it also highlights an aspect of the "refractory imprint" that Wolfe never adequately explores: the parasitical constitution of the settler's psyche on the basis of racial and gendered violation.[317] Moreover, Silva's account highlights how this process if facilitated by the idea of "culture,"[318] which allows Brazil's racially antagonistic fantasy of patriarchal sadism over black and indigenous female bodies to persist, even while it advances an image of *post-racial* multi-"cultural" harmony. Not all "cultures" are equal in this onto-epistemological context where some cultures seem *meant* to be violated and appropriated to the point that they vanish, while others are destined to triumph.

On the other hand, Brazil's framing of "miscegenation democracy" as its own, specific problem is worth questioning, since what makes Brazil an appropriate context for such a discourse is its positioning (like many other settler colonies) "on the outskirts" of capitalist and racial globality. In other words, most settler colonies positioned in precisely this way, i.e. as interfaces between Europe and the Others of Europe, where the threat of unruly desires must be managed and re-narrated to reinforce the civilizing mission of the West. It is for this reason that I find it apposite to apply Silva's analytic in the case of Palestine, where although miscegenation democracy hardly figures as an explicit ideology, it nonetheless undergirds the state's attempts to

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[315] Silva 245, emphasis mine.

[316] -- emphasizing, as it does, the settler nation's need to differentiate itself from the metropole and from Europe as a whole.

[317] Wolfe treats the land as central to the settler project, and racialization as epiphenomenal.

[318] Edward Said also articulates a wariness about the idea of culture at the end of *Orientalism,* writing "How does one represent other cultures? What is another culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture ... a useful one or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation ... or hostility and aggression" (325)?

control unruly desires between Europe and its others. These unruly desires flash across the boundary between the "tanned" subject of Europe's civilizing mission (the Ashkenazi "New Jew" who incorporates "sabra culture") and the Palestinian citizen/non-citizen from whom they appropriate it.

I argue that, even in settler societies where miscegenation democracy is not an explicit ideology, it still constitutes the search for the refractory imprint, and codes the interface between settler and native "culture" as a site for the libidinal availability of native bodies and celebration of European "productive nomos." The "cultural" separation of settler from native, even where it most insistently segregates, *requires* a sexual, racial and even religious fantasy of supersession through miscegenation in order to mitigate its own anxieties about contamination. Through my readings of *Returning to Haifa* and *Second Person Singular,* I hope to examine this libidinal economy more closely.

What these stories reveal first of all is that the object of racialized/libidinal domestication is not always the indigenous woman, but in this case targets the Arab man. As a "brutalized" projection of the West's patriarchy, these characters play out settler fantasies of being subordinated. In a confirmation of Shaden Tageldin's argument, here we find a settler fantasy in which settlers are dominated by natives, but in which that domination ironically favors the settler.[319] And much as in Brazil's miscegenation democracy, this gendered dynamic displaces

[319] Shaden Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (University of California Press, 2011), 10: "As Egyptian intellectuals came to see their colonizers and themselves as *translatable -- or exchangeable -- terms*, they could in turn "love" those colonizers enough to translate French and English idioms and ideas." Although Tageldin writes from the position of the colonized who is seduced by the colonizer into seeking their own (native) authority through the colonizer's sovereignty, here I place the emphasis on the colonizer who seeks their own authority (their differential sovereignty as a nation-state, separate from the mother country and from Europe) through the seduction of the colonized. It is at the point that the Arab characters in *Returning to Haifa* and *Second Person Singular* consider their "culture" and "humanity" exchangeable, that the wheels of this process have begun to spin for the colonizer. The moment where these terms are lifted into abstraction by "exchange," they are rendered to the colonizer, in Edwards Said's words, for "digestion." We could also liberally interpret this reformulation of culture and humanity as the stuff of "rights," in the sense Azoulay gives to "unworldly rights," i.e.

racial antagonism from the public sphere to an idyllic domestic space, wherein Arab masculinity can be reinvented in a way that proves the vitality of the Jewish settler.

III. *RETURNING TO HAIFA*

Ghassan Kanafani was a Palestinian writer and member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. His impact on Palestinian literature is hard to overstate. His novels and nonfiction works contributed significantly not only to the nationalist cause, but also to an analysis of Zionist ideology from the perspective of Palestinians. His novella *Returning to Haifa*[320] tells the story of a couple's return to the home they had fled in the Nakba, only to find that their infant son Khaldun (whom they had left behind) has been raised by a Jewish widow named Miriam, now calls himself "Dov," and is currently an officer in the Israeli army. *Returning* has been read as "an allegory about the fate of Israeli Arabs (the Palestinians of the inside) in relation to that of Palestinians who fled Palestine in 1948," and concomitantly, a precursor to other literary work (like Sayed Kashua's) that deals with how Palestinians figure internally to Zionism's body politic.[321]

Returning to Haifa was written in Arabic The relationship between Miriam and Khaldun/Dov is a case in point for understanding Zionism's incorporation of the "affectable" Arab body into its settler identity. The state premises their gift of a home in Haifa to Iphrat and Miriam on the condition that they take the Arab infant. "When the officials saw from [Iphrat's] papers that he didn't have any children, they offered him a house right in Haifa as a special

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"rights given as provisions." For this, see Azoulay.

[320] Ghassan Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa," trans. Riley in *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).

[321] Gil Hochberg, "To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab: Sayed Kashua and the Prospect of Minority Speech-Acts." *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Winter 2010), 72.

concession if he agreed to adopt the child."[322] In this way, the story depicts a conjunction of Miriam's post-Holocaust trauma and the state's prerogative to generate a refractory imprint of the native counter-claim through the libidinal reformulation of the Arab native.[323] It is through the reformulation of her psychic attachments, as well as Khaldun's, that Zionism produces settler society.

Miriam's attachment to Khaldun is deeply cathected, as it substitutes for the loss of her father, brother, husband and son. Shadowing this chain of associations is Miriam's (non)trauma of seeing a dead Arab child during the Zionist ethnic cleansing of 1948.[324] I call it (non)trauma, only because the lifeless Arab body functions in Miriam's story as a repetition of what *she* herself has lost and not as a loss in and of itself. I thus disagree with Ian Campbell's reading in which the trauma of losing her family in the Holocaust is simply equated with (as a repetition of) the trauma of seeing the dead Arab child.[325]

Directly after describing what she saw to her husband, Miriam flashes back to her father's death in Auschwitz, and to seeing the Germans kill her 10-year old brother. The scene thus divests the Arab of its own grievability. Kanafani highlights this ungrievability when Miriam says (to Iphrat) that this dead Arab body is being treated in a way that a Jewish body wouldn't be: "if it had been a Jewish child they never would have done that." The incommensurability in this analogy between the Arab (who reminds Miriam of the Jews whose loss she has not processed) and the Jewish child (whose body would never be treated like that)

[322] Kanafani 170.

[323] Thus, it also depicts how racial and libidinal dynamics precede the land in the formation of the settler, contrary to the central tenets of white Settler Colonial Studies. See Tiffany Lethabo King. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2019).

[324] Kanafani 169.

[325] Ian Campbell, "Blindness To Blindness: Trauma, Vision and Political Consciousness in Ghassân Kanafânî's Returning To Haifa," *The Journal of Arabic Literature* 32:1 (2001), 58-59.

speaks to an gap that's missing in Campbell's seamless analogization -- "just as Nazi soldiers could freely kill Jewish children, Israeli soldiers can evince a similar lack of acknowledgement of the humanity of Arab children."[326] My point is not that the parallelism doesn't exist, but rather that it is also irreconcilable for Miriam. Coded in brutality, the Arab body dies in a way that the Jewish settler believes Jews never would (again), thus marking a psychic limit on the basis of which Miriam dissociates from painful memories.

Whereas Campbell's reading is based on the traumatic delusions of Said and Saffiya, his analysis pays far too little attention to this one within Miriam's character. He is right to suggest that Said and Saffiya use their other child Khalid traumatically as a replacement for Khaldun, but remiss not to examine in what way particularly "Dov" serves as a replacement for Miriam. This other side of the coin is significantly different: unlike Said and Saffiya's repetition which, without the mediation of a third figure, replaces one child with another, Miriam's repetition must pass through this specific moment of seeing the Arab body in the death cart. Campbell spends his analysis arguing that Miriam's Holocaust trauma equates with the "real" of this dead Arab child, but what would it mean to reckon with the irreconcilability of Miriam's statement that the Arab child in the death cart is *not* a Jewish child? In what way might this alterity provide her with a certain kind of leverage in dealing with her trauma that Said and Saffiya do not have? Why do Said and Saffiya have to move on from Khaldun and "creat[e] a second delusional structure," whereas Miriam gets to keep her "Dov?"

When Khaldun enters her life, the dead child that Miriam could only derivatively grieve seems no longer to matter. Although Miriam is initially repulsed by her own implication in

[326] Campbell 60.

Zionist ethnic cleansing, Khaldun redeems the "dead Arab child thrown into the death cart like a lump of worthless wood" for her -- miraculously blurring the boundary between life and death:

> [Miriam's husband had] learned for certain that Miriam couldn't have children. The whole thing seemed to him to be a gift from God; he could hardly believe it had come about so suddenly, just like that. Without a doubt, a child would change Miriam completely and put a stop to the strange ideas that had been filling her mind continuously ever since she'd seen the dead Arab child thrown into the death cart like a lump of worthless wood[327]

Khaldun clearly replaces the dead Arab child, from whose murder Miriam still benefits in perpetuity. Despite her ambivalence, she chooses to stay in the settler colony *for the sake of* raising Khaldun. What she's required to do in order to stay, and what keeps her from leaving here, converge on the figure of the vulnerable Arab child, thereby burying Miriam's moment of (in)decision. It is in a similar way that Miriam buries her implication in Zionism again when it comes to deciding whether "Dov" should stay or return to his birth family -- by refusing to convince him either way:

> Listen, Mr. Said . . . I wanted you to wait for Dov -- or Khaldun, if you like -- so you could talk to each other and the matter could end as it naturally should end. Do you think this hasn't been as much of a problem for me as it's been for you? For the past twenty years I've been confused, but now the time has come for us to finish the matter. I know who his father is. And I also know that he is our son. But let's call on him to decide. Let's call on him to choose[328]

Khaldun is thus a transmutation of murder into innocence, an expiation in person that redeems Miriam from the sin of having murdered the Arab child. As Said and Safiyya tell Miriam,

> The child whose body, so you said, was the first thing that shocked you in this world that wipes out justice with baseness every day? Maybe that child was Khaldun! Maybe the small thing that died that wretched day was Khaldun. Yes, it was Khaldun. You lied to us. It was Khaldun. He died[329]

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[327] Kanafani 170.
[328] Kanafani 172.
[329] Kanafani 183.

Said and Safiyya can see that these two Arab bodies are psychically inseparable, both for Miriam and for themselves. They died the same death, they live the same life: they are living-dead. Kahldun and/as "Dov" confuses the boundary between life and death itself. Thus, *Returning to Haifa* depicts a process whereby Miriam is redeemed and psychically healed from her trauma, by means of the transmutation (from dead to alive) of Khaldun into a different kind of Arab man.

It should be clear then that Khaldun is *not* a replacement for Miriam's dead Jewish relatives in a simple way. He does not satisfy a repetition compulsion that replaces instead of grieves for Miriam. The very fact that "Dov" stands in for *so many* of Miriam's lost connections should itself signal something excessive and worth questioning about her "traumatic" replacement. Khaldun is father, son and husband to Miriam -- what does it mean? I suggest we read Khaldun, not simply as an excuse for Miriam not to deal with her Holocaust trauma, but rather, as a way out of the logic of life and death that would otherwise lead Miriam into endless repetitions. As a "miracle," Dov is a supersessionary fantasy based on the negation of the dead Arab child in the death cart, through which Miriam is given the chance to move on.

"Dov," as he is now called, is haunted by images of the passive Arab whom he replaces in the mind of Miriam. In the explosive monologue that leaves him "withdrawn in his chair, holding his head between his hands,"[330] Dov cries out:

> Twenty years have passed, sir! Twenty years! What did you do during that time to reclaim your son? . . . You're all weak! Weak! You're bound by heavy chains of backwardness and paralysis![331]

Libidinally engulfed as he is in the Zionist refractory imprint of Arabness, Dov is reduced to a body. He himself can sense that his body is indistinguishable from the Arab child thrown onto the death cart, "bound by . . . paralysis." He protests too much, attempting to extirpate those

[330] Kanafani 187.
[331] Kanafani 185.

elements of himself that read as "Arab" and thus lifeless. In order to escape the gnawing feeling, he resorts to militarism, saying "I'm in the Reserves now. I haven't been in direct combat yet so I can't describe my feelings . . . but perhaps in the future I'll be able to confirm [that] I belong here, and [Miriam] is my mother."[332] In this moment of uncertainty, Dov circumspectly admits that his own reinvention as an active, decisive Arab is predicated on a psychic negation of the dead boy in the cart, and thus can feel that he may never feel self-determined (which is why his militarism is deferred). The chains of "paralysis" that haunt Arab nationalism after '67 also haunt him.[333]

Yet *Returning to Haifa* also highlights the impossibility of self-determination in the case of Miriam and the entire settler colonial project she represents. As Da Silva argues with regard to the Brazilian project, although miscegenation promotes a settler positionality, it also "threatens the transparency of the being that modern philosophers write as essentially self-determined."[334] When Said says to Dov, "When are you going to stop considering that the weakness and the mistakes of others are endorsed over to the account of your own prerogatives?",[335] he alludes to Zionism's own "affectability," i.e. the extent to which it is contaminated by the Others of Europe even as it engulfs them into its national discourse.

IV. *SECOND PERSON SINGULAR*

Second Person Singular[336] tells another story of colonial mimicry, albeit one that, in contrast to *Returning to Haifa*, has been read as "post-revolutionary," and even as a betrayal of

[332] Kanafani 182.
[333] On the chains of paralysis, see Bashir Abu-Manneh, *The Palestinian Novel: From 1948 to the Present* (Cambridge Univeristy Press, 2016)
[334] Silva 224.
[335] Kanafani 185.
[336] Sayed Kahsua, *Second Person Singular,* trans. Ginsburg (Grove Press, 2012).

the Palestinian nationalist cause. As a former citizen of Israel, and someone whose writing tends to reflect the experiences of Arab citizens of Israel, Kashua's writing distinguishes itself to an extent from other Palestinian writing (from, for example, the West Bank). In fact, Kashua's work as a whole is often interpreted as catering to Israelis, partly for the reason that all of it is written in Hebrew.

On the other hand, some take Kashua's work to be "minor literature," i.e. a deconstruction from within the dominant discourse/language of its authority. Gil Hochberg's analysis of his work, for example, posits that

> through the impossibility of the Israeli Arab . . . we are invited to rethink our notions of (ethnic/national) identity and to envision new possibilities of being that are articulated beyond and across current (and prevailing) ethno-national political map[337]

In what follows, I will try to nuance this interpretation. Out of all of Kashua's work, *Second Person Singular* seems to do the most to question the limits of this deconstructive approach. By centering an Arab character whose passing into Ashkenazi Israeliness completes itself, without necessarily destabilizing Zionist nationalism, Kashua's explores the ways in which mimicry serves Israel's settler-colonial ideological apparatus.

Half of the novel is devoted to the story of Amir Lahab, who -- as the son of a collaborator and a mother that refused to marry her husband's brother after he died -- has led a life of shame in his village in the Triangle.[338] Upon graduating from college with a degree in social work, he begins to work at an outpatient clinic for drug addicts in East Jerusalem. Eventually he moves onto working full-time as a caretaker for a paralyzed Israeli by the name of Yonatan.

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[337] Hochberg 70.

[338] The Triangle (Hebrew: המשולש; Arabic: المثلث), formerly referred to as the Little Triangle, is a concentration of Israeli Arab towns and villages adjacent to the Green Line, located in the eastern Sharon plain among the Samarian foothills

Endlessly deferring his plans to go back to the Triangle, claim his inheritance and marry, Amir becomes increasingly engrossed in taking care of Yonatan. He reads Yonatan's books and listens to his music. Eventually he finds a camera, and begins to train himself to use it. On a whim, he submits some photographs as part of an application to Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. In the application, he uses Yonatan's name instead of his own. All the while, Yonatan's mother, Ruchaleh -- who lives in the same house -- is growing closer to Amir. When Amir gets into Bezalel (as Yonatan), Ruchaleh reveals that she is aware of Amir's impersonation of her son. And surprisingly, she encourages him to proceed. Eventually, an erotic (although not sexual) bond forms between the two. Amir serves as a substitute for Ruchaleh's absent husband/paralyzed son, and they become family. When the real Yonatan eventually dies, they stage it as if Amir had died. Again, in order for the Israeli mother to incorporate the Arab boy as her own, he has to be separated from his kin and killed (if only symbolically).

Ruchaleh's left-wing politics, alongside her paralyzed son, represent an extremity of Israeli liberal Zionist discourse. Much like Miriam who redeems herself from the apparent guilt of having benefited from the death of the Arab boy, here too, Ruchaleh redeems herself of a certain guilt. Overtly, her concern is to expiate herself of the guilt that attends Zionist settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing. She marches with the "Women in Black."[339] And yet, her "lefty" views are limited by a general critique of nationalism that tends to obscure the structural inequality of settler and native:

> She believed that the Arabs did a bad job of impersonating the Zionists, who did a bad job of impersonating the European nationalists of the early twentieth century.

[339] Women in Black [נשים בשחור] is a women's anti-war movement, started by Israeli women in Jerusalem in 1988, following the outbreak of the First Intifada. Responding to what they considered serious violations of human rights by Israeli soldiers in the Occupied Territories, the women held a vigil every Friday in central Jerusalem, wearing black clothing in mourning for all victims of the conflict. See "Women in Black" in *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*, ed. Cheris Kramarae and Dale Spender (Routledge, 2000), 1517.

> Nor did she believe in identity, certainly not the local nationalistic version of it. She said that man was only smart if he was able to shed his identity[340]

She is embittered and disillusioned by politics. Even when acknowledging her structural power over Amir, she partially denies it, imploring him not to "talk to [her] in that groveling slave-at-the-master's-house tone."[341] And when Amir asks her if she's helping him out because he's an Arab, she can't help but pejoratively and flirtatiously say "You know what . . . You Arabs really are idiots."[342] The more she teases him, the angrier he gets: "I sat before her, preparing to fling one of her books in her face. I'm not apologizing anymore. Let her call the police for all I care."[343] This game wherein her racialized denigration is coded erotically runs parallel to Amir's experience of the "left-wing circles" at Bezalel where token Arab male students are considered highly desirable to female Jewish students, who simultaneously sustain the discourse of Arab hypersexuality to justify Zionism.

> At Bezalel, I, a left-wing liberal like most of the students, learned that Arabs are horny, that they think with their dicks -- mostly about pussy and mostly about preserving the honor of their sisters' pussies. I learned that they can get angry fast and that there is no way to know what might set them off. They're unpredictable and can be aggressive. Honor is desperately important to them . . . Even the ones that seem the most enlightened are still, in some very basic ways, primitive . . . Arabs are more impulsive, more animalistic . . . It does not mean that we should be occupying them, that is not what it means, but it's such a shame that there's no one you can talk to. Such a shame that they don't change, that they can't really be trusted[344]

Amir here parrots a consensus in Israeli "left-wing liberal" circles regarding the impossibility of integrating Arabs, or rather the impossibility of incorporating Arabness (as a racialized set of characteristics and an identity category), into the Israeli body politic. The logic that Arabs will

[340] Kashua 290.
[341] Kashua 215.
[342] Kashua 289.
[343] Kashua 215.
[344] Kashua 284-285.

never get along with the Jews, that "the only thing they really understand is force," is of course present today,[345] aligning with what Neve Gordon calls the "separation principle," and also with what Silva calls "the logic of obliteration."[346] As Gil Hochberg observes, Kashua's work (as a whole) is "an explicitly critical commentary on [Arab] stereotypes" that targets "the underlying racism that characterizes the Israeli Jewish Zionist society, particularly in its secular, leftist, and liberal sectors, where racism is not recognized as such."[347] Even they, who claim to be against the occupation and who "love" Arabs, are clearly subject to an ethno-racial separation in their thinking.

In the relationship with Ruchaleh, however, the joke seems to be less on Ruchaleh's liberal racism than on Amir himself, who (at first) doesn't get her perspective -- thinking that she's after "some kind of sexual quid pro quo, sex in exchange for silence."[348] Ruchaleh's ironic take on "identity" seems to model precisely the deconstructive politics that Hochberg ascribes to Kashua himself. Morevoer, it seems to provide another of model of erotic kinship than that on offer at Bezalel (other than one based solely on fetishization and the desire "to get back at [students'] parents"[349]). Ruchaleh's affection for Amir is portrayed as transcending this degraded hypersexualization. Across the unbridgeable partition of Arab and Jewish identity politics flashes the (im)possibility of Arab-Jewish coexistence, qua "a forgotten memory of desire."[350] What if,

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[345] See, e.g., Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: A Short History of Humanitarian Violence* (Verso, 2011).

[346] This is the logic wherein the racial identity of the colonized is conceived of as coming from the outside, and ill-fit to occupy the "transparent" space of democracy. In the quote above, this is exemplified by the statement that "Even the ones that seem the most enlightened are still, in some very basic ways, primitive." This racial (or more often, now, "cultural") identification is coded by the settler colony as inherently contrary to the transparent space of modernity and democracy. See my first chapter for a fuller treatment of the "logic of obliteration," coming out of American social science in the early 20th century.

[347] Hochberg 86, 85.

[348] Kashua 289

[349] Kashua 287.

[350] Gil Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

however, the line between these two forms wasn't so hard and fast? Even at Bezalel, we find a trace of a more elevated erotic regard for the Arab other. “There’s no one you can talk to” is subliminally erotic. It is with the feeling of having partially incorporated “The Arab” as an absent conversant, the shadow of a former affair, that the liberal laments. And in the midst of Ruchaleh's affection for Amir, on the other hand, we can detect a certain fetishization.

It seems that her flirtation is orchestrated to unleash and transform Amir in a particular kind of way:

> I thought she might be after some kind of sexual quid pro quo, sex in exchange for silence. The poor weak Arab would fuck his way out of his situation and the forty-five-year-old woman would get to feel that she was setting him free while giving release to the passion that was burning inside him. A good deal for both parties involved (289)

In what way specifically is it a good deal for Ruchaleh? Although Amir at first imagines his own role in the scenario as vulgarized (“fuck his way out”), Ruchaleh’s desire functions as the desire to unburden *him* of his own repression: to “se[t] him free” -- almost as if it can only be indexed in this way, making use of and transmuting an Arab boy’s unfreedom into something else.

I want to suggest that her (“lefty”) power [351] to bring freedom to the Arab in this way parallels Silva’s description of miscegenation democracy, in which the Portuguese power of civilization expresses itself in the domestic space *through* the indigenous and black bodies it sexually subsumes. In this move, Ruchaleh re-invents what Arab “culture” means for Amir. She separates him from the pack (speaks to him in the second person *singular*), and allows him to live out his Arabness unburdened of what “traditional Arab culture” would typically dictate. She constructs Arab independence, Arab passion and Arab anger in such a way that only she can mediate it. Only she can make him mad, only she can unleash his passion, only she can

[351] By the term “power” here I do not mean to imply that Ruchaleh’s position is hegemonic, but that Amir’s transformation becomes an *expression* of her desire to transform him and herself.

interpellate him as such. And, throughout all of this, what she actually wants is completely opaque to Amir. In the mirror-play of colonial seduction,[352] Amir is put in such a position that his identity is produced and appropriated simultaneously by his settler benefactor.

Moreover, Ruchaleh actually *is*, like the girls at Bezalel, "getting back" at someone through her relationship to Amir. Repeatedly, the relationship is figured as a kind of taboo, either adulterous or incestuous. Ruchaleh's son, the real Yonatan, became paralyzed in a suicide attempt.[353] Much like Miriam who gets over the son she couldn't have and the death in her family by adopting Khaldun, Ruchaleh in *Second Person Singular* allows Amir to steal her son's identity as a way of replacing her dead son. As Ruchaeleh gets closer to Amir, Yonatan becomes more resistant – refuses to eat, stiffens up when they try to move him. Ruchaleh throws herself at Amir to get back at Yonatan, who transmutes into a kind of father-figure, silently judging Amir and Ruchaleh for their intimacy and the theft of his identity.[354] Ruchaleh replaces Yonatan with Amir however as a kind of excessive superegoic father, by giving him the "choice" of whether to let Yonatan live or not: "'I just can't go on.' She hugged me harder than usual and whispered in my ear, 'You are going to have to decide.'"[355] Again, as in *Returning to Haifa,* the settler's desire to reinvent the Arab allows them to project their own power and implication in life-and-death decisions.

When they pull the plug on Yonatan, it reads at Amir/Yonatan's decision rather than Ruchaleh's. Allowing Amir to kill and impersonate her son/father/lover (Yonatan) becomes a

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[352] Thinking with Tageldin again here.

[353] Having attempted suicide right after graduating high school, the novel seems to imply that Yonatan's suicide may have had to do with him joining the army. Although his mother marched with the "Women in Black" and she doesn't believe in nationalism, she could not protect her son from the obligation to join the Israeli Defense Forces. Because there is no other explanation offered in the novel for why Yonatan attempted suicide, I am venturing a reading in which it may have had to do with conscription, especially because it coincided with his graduation from high school.

[354] e.g. Kashua 111.

[355] Kashua 282-283.

way for Ruchaleh to displace Zionism's violence against him, and to make Amir's choice seem *like a choice* – which is to say, to obscure the way his hybrid impersonation engulfs him into a settler narrative.[356]

In contrast to Amir's absolute assimilation, the novel poses the story of another of Kashua's alter-ego's, "the lawyer," who *fails* to assimilate and ends up replaying the fantasy of the hyper-sexual "Arab male" that the Bezalel left-wingers fantasize about and tokenize. The lawyer's story is all about class mobility, and its limits. Originally, he thinks he can ascend out of Arabness and its denigration by the Israeli state through an economic will to power. A different model of assimilation than miscegenation democracy, contrary to the enfolding of the Arab into the domesticity of an Israeli domestic drama, seems possible:

> By now the lawyer understood that it had nothing do with the way a person looked, his accent or his mustache. It had taken him some time, but he had finally figured out that the border police, the security guards, and the police officers, all of whom generally hail from the lower socioeconomic classes of Israeli society, will never stop anyone dressed in clothes that seem more expensive than their own[357]

But his own mind is colonized. When the lawyer confronts what he perceives as evidence of his wife's infidelity, another dimension of his identity comes out. What Houria Bouteldja has called the "barbarisation" of the colonized is apposite here.

> The production of white innocence implies the production of barbarians. This naturalization of civilization and barbarism is, of course, a pure fantasy. But, supported by colonial power, this fantasy in turn produces *a performative effect with real consequences* on the social life, perception, and treatment of brown and Black men and women. It is what I call barbarisation, a phenomenon inseparable from the civilizing process imposed on postcolonial subjects during their integration into the white world . . . [T]he coloniality of power produces a performative effect and that the postcolonial subject has to contend constantly

[356] The fact that, even before Amir enters the mirror-play of colonial seduction with Ruchaleh, Osnat (Yonatan's other nurse) encourages him to wear Yonatan's clothes is telling. The encouragement that Amir step into Yonatan's shoes thus extends beyond the mother, and clearly has something to do with the desires of the settler society at large (Kashua 122).

[357] Kashua 21.

> with the barbarisation imposed by the production of white innocence. This dialectic transforms him. . . . [W]hen anger and humiliation perpetuate, when they do not find a political outlet, they turn into either resignation, self-destruction, or an explosive pressure cooker[358]

This is precisely the kind of psychic colonization to which the lawyer is subject, as he plays out the Zionist's fantasy of a honor-obsessed misogynistic and hyper-sexual man, only understanding the language of force – and inviting thereby the separation principle, and the logic of obliteration onto himself.

What the contrast between Amir and the lawyer allows us to see is how Zionism divides the very idea of Arabness into multiple images, redeemable and irredeemable. It is by mobilizing the inconsistency, by making the traffic of the concept of "Arabness" itself a concern of particular Arab men like the lawyer and Amir, that Zionism conceals its own structural work at managing the idea of "Arabness." There seems to be an alternative of assimilation or something else – but the line between them is uncertain and precarious

> the decision to found a mixed school, to send their children off to study with Jews, the lawyer thought, was not borne of shared ideals or a dedication to coexistence, as the brochures claimed and the philanthropists believed; the Arab parents simply wanted their children to soak up Western culture, for their children to learn from the Jews which they themselves could not provide. All of a sudden the lawyer started to feel that they were sending their children like spies into the heart of a foreign culture. *It will be interesting to see what types of insights they come back with, he thought, whether they return as double agents*[359]

The lawyer is unsure of what happens when Arab children "soak up Western culture" in this particular way. Either they come back with "insights," i.e. become sophisticates like the lawyer, or they come back as "double agents." But the sophisticates are barbarized. What if it were inevitable that they come back "double agents," in one form or another? It would seem that the

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[358] Houria Boutedlja, "White Innocence and the Barbarisation of the Racialised : letting the sleeping monster lie," *Parti des Indigenes de la Republique* (29 January 2020), http://indigenes-republique.fr/white-innocence-and-the-barbarisation-of-the-racialised-letting-the-sleeping-monster-lie/

[359] Kashua 39-40, emphasis mine.

lawyer himself operates as a kind of double-agent, confirming with his barbarized mentality what Zionism classically thinks of "The Arab," – troubling, as the novel repeatedly does, the line between collaborators and non-collaborators.[360]

As with "Dov," the idea of "Arabness" becomes radically alienating – precisely because it is so fully *imposed* and not part of an individual choice. Like Fanon who experiences blackness as "a thousand anecdotes," so too does the lawyer have trouble managing the multiple versions of Arabness that hover around himself. "The feeling passed with a dark thought, one that surfaced every now and again, that his life was a mirage, that all of it could suddenly melt away."[361] Similarly, Amir has trouble grasping his own identity. Even as he takes on Yonatan's identity, Amir harbors desires to leave his job and recover his family's inheritance.[362] Like "Dov," the future in which Amir/Yonatan is self-determined is endlessly deferred.

By contrasting Amir's narrative to the lawyer's barbarized failure to assimilate into Israeli society, the novel posits the Amir-Ruchaleh bond (qua "miscegenation democracy") as the only possible version of freedom available under Israeli settler-colonial discourse. I thus agree with Ebileeni's reading of *Second Person Singular* to the extent that Amir/Yonatan represents "inevitable changes taking place in Palestinian modes of identification as a result of the conflict with the Israelis," but take issue with his optimistic reading of these changes.[363] Characters like Amir must render themselves up to continual destruction of their kinship ties and separation from their past; they must mold themselves in such a way as to fulfill settler fantasies, replacing various familial figures and enfolding themselves into a domestic narrative of harmony; at the

[360] Kashua 99, 129.
[361] Kashua 24.
[362] Kashua 182-184.
[363] Maurice Ebileeni, "Literary Trespassing in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and Sayed Kashua's *Second Person Singular*," *Comparative Literature* (2017)

same time, they must take this harmony as an opportunity to triumph over and become something other than the "token" barbarized Arab that is supposed to exist *outside* such a domestic space. Only the Arab whose Arabness is self-consciously mediated through Israeli humanitarianism is figured as worth the effort at freedom. This enfolded idea of indigeneity importantly co-exists with the denigrated *public* figure of the barbarian: the violent, anachronistic and hyper-sexualized "Arab male." It is for the reason that both of these sides exist simultaneously that I question Neve Gordon's framing of a seamless transition from the "colonization principle" to the "separation principle," and mean to highlight the co-existence of multiple modes of Arab engulfment in Zionism.

In such a context, it is not at all clear that the promise of minor literature plays out and that this implicitly erotic "inva[sion] and subver[sion]" of language is not forced onto the minoritarian writer themselves as another mode of epistemological domination, which is to say another of the settler's tools of putting themselves "in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient. . . without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[364]

VI. CONCLUSION

This analysis of *Second Person Singular* and *Returning to Haifa* is meant to open a question about the settler positionality in which the force of History comes from the European from within a miscegenated (post)nationalism. Arrogating to themselves the right to mediate conflict, to frame and reframe Palestinian nationalism -- to kill and revamp "Arab culture" -- in various vicarious ways, characters like Miriam and Ruchaleh contribute to the (re)constitution of settler consciousness.

[364] Said 7.

EPILOGUE: *UNCUT GEMS*

I. LIMITATIONS

In these chapters, I've tried to borrow from a variety of academic contexts in order to demonstrate a common problem with historicity. For all of the authors I've discussed – even those who try to resist it –, engaging with historicity leads to the re-encryption of a Christian/European temporality. This temporality then requires the engulfment of others, who become the medium through which the "transparent" West realizes its vision of self-determination.

In certain chapters, I've tried to focalize an anti-historical impulse, but I have to admit that even my own project cannot escape history. Perhaps most obviously in my chapter on Emma Lazarus, chronology became inescapable. I ended up asserting a more accurate historical timeline for the intersection of Judaism and a secular discourse of racialization. I would hope that further work can clarify the limits of an anti-historical impulse, and provide direction for a fuller scholarly approach.

Another limitation of this study is that it could have explored the distinction between (and interweaving of) the discourses of "race" and "culture" as they pertain to Jewishness more. Although I assert unequivocally that the discourse of "culture" (i.e. the concept of "cultural Jewishness") preempts Jewish racial discourse and engulfs Jewish writers into the history of the Euro-American subject, I did not get to fully address how race also serves as a tool of engulfment. I hope it is clear that, when I speak of racialization/biopolitics and not antiblackness (for instance in the discussion of Emma Lazarus), I am thinking of the two as distinct. Racialization in such cases sustains a certain relationship to history and genealogy than is not

available to blackness (at least not in the same way). Although Lazarus' Andalusian heritage is barred from her and abstracted into a cultural realm to which Ashkenazim (like Gottheil) have unique hegemonic access, she is not natally alienated or (more generally) subject to social death. Although some of this may seem obvious, it is important to point out nonetheless.

I'd like to close the dissertation reflecting on a recent film, Josh and Benny Safdie's *Uncut Gems* (2019). In my estimation, this film tackles the underside of the model minority narrative that drives so much of Jewish "progressive" thought in the United States with a remarkable honesty. Ultimately, the film reflects a situation where Jewish solidarity with America's other others tends unconsciously to retrench an anti-black status quo. Thus, it makes something of a full circle *back* to the dilemma I discussed in Ch. 1, with regard to the racial ventriloquism of Jewish-American social science in the early 20th century.

II. UNPAYABLE DEBT

Howard Ratner, the film's protagonist, played by Adam Sandler, is an unabashedly "materialistic" man: a gambling-addicted "overcompensator," a fantasmatic Jewish pariah in the context of a revival of identity politics, a fantasy of the Jewish outsider who is constantly attempting to assimilate "by whatever means necessary." Howard's narrative centers on his purchase of a rare opal from Ethiopia -- absurdly -- through an internet connection to a "stranded tribe" of Ethiopian Jewish miners. Howard calculates that the stone will sell for 1 million dollars, even while he's purchased it for much less. After seeing the stone, one of his clientele -- NBA star Kevin Garnett -- becomes obsessed with the idea that it has the mystical power to improve his game, and so insists on borrowing it. Eventually Kevin purchases the stone from Howard and

goes on to win the NBA finals, while Howard is killed by a gangster loan-shark to whom he owes money.

Like Jonathan Boyarin, Howard ethnographically invents and carries around a scrap of the Jewish ghetto that no longer exists. To quote Josh Safdie:

> I think what you see in Howard is the long delineation of stereotypes that were forced onto us in the Middle Ages, when the church was created, when Jews were not counted toward population, and their only way in, their only way of accruing status as an individual, as a person who was considered a human being, was through material consumption. That was the only way in. *And I think what's happened over the years is it's kind of morphed and almost turned into Kabuki theater. Because as assimilation has accrued, the foundation, the DNA of the strive [sic] has become kind of cartoonized in a weird way. What you're seeing in the film is a parable*[365]

Howard in *Uncut Gems* is an internally deconstructed representation of Jewish structural oppression and "overcompensation," that meets a multicultural America *sans* Jewish difference with a fantasy of marginality. In between their occasional glosses on "authentic" Jewish experience, the Safdies are clear that Jewish religion "and cultures that are defined by religion -- in general are in decline,"[366] and that the Jewishness they are interested in is something new. What they are consciously doing with Jewish representation in *Uncut Gems* is drawing from what they refer to as its second, "cartoonized" life. This second life is decidedly "cultural" rather than religious. And yet at the same time, much like in the internal monologue of the Maxwell Street merchant from Wirth's *The Ghetto,* this cartoonized Jewishness needs the sensate language of race. It is a ventriloquistic representation. Howard needs a specific other in order to articulate his "cultural" version of corporeal difference: the slave.

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[365] Quoted in Heather Schwedel. "*Uncut Gems'* Directors on Making the Most Jewish Movie in Years." *Slate* (24 December 2019), emphasis.

[366] Quoted in Jordan Hoffman, "Gritty new Adam Sandler film 'Uncut Gems' is aggressive, and aggressively Jewish" (*The Times of Israel*, 23 December 2019)

To manufacture this cartoon of Jewish difference, the Safdies like the Boyarins draw not only on diasporic histories of Jewish struggle and resistance, but on the conceptual resource of corporeality and blackness. More specifically, they make the move to reverse-engineer from blackness what the film calls "Black Jew Power." This is also a mediation on comparative diasporas not unlike Jonathan Boyarin's reparté with Stuart Hall, and like the latter, it also subsumes blackness into its own diasporic vision.

Like Freud and Herzl,[367] the Safdies are clearly attempting to reinvent the Jewish man,[368] but their attempt comes at a time when Jewish phallic whiteness seems hardly to be in question. Thus the Safdies do not model Howard's masculinity, like Freud, on incorporated images of Aryan/white masculinity (since that would read tautologically), but rather on Howard's ability to "own" (or rather, to *over-do*) Jewish stereotypes of old.[369] In order for that to happen however, Howard needs a fungible resource.

At the same time that he's trying to assimilate, Howard is also, by the very fact of being "constantly on," creating his difference from the white ideal. Howard unabashedly exploits opportunities for profit; he doesn't hesitate to gamble away the money he should use to pay off the loan-sharks; he reaches for higher and higher echelons of financial promise to the point of putting his family in danger, a supreme optimist. It is *because* he is so insistently Jewish that his reckless financial speculation is, to quote a line from the film, "how [he] wins." This difference Howard puts between himself and his whiteness relies, however, on his always-already white

[367] See Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct* for their attempts to supersede the castration anxiety of Jewish circumcision by incorporating images of complete Aryan masculinity in psychoanalysis and Zionism.

[368] "So much of the representation of Jewish people in films are weak or nebbishy. [Howard] never backs down. Even when he's getting roughed-up the most, he'll still reach out and smack someone. This is a big, big deal for us" (quoted in Hoffman). Interestingly, this is not a true statement.

[369] "He owns it" (quoted in Hoffman). Also thinking about the debate regarding the film's antisemitism -- see the disagreement between Stephen Silver, "'*Uncut Gems'* uses age-old Jewish stereotypes nonstop. Why is there no backlash?" *The Times of Israel* (17 January 2020), and Andy Blumenthal, "'*Uncut Gems'* Cuts Deep." *The Times of Israel* (3 January 2020).

male body, in that he constantly *chooses* to mark himself as Jewish. In other words, his body *has to be* presumptively uncircumcised – i.e. white, "uncut" – in order for him to repeatedly circumcise himself, and for him to read as such (i.e. as Jewish). The assault on Howard's body that takes place over the course of the film – a result of the danger to which he constantly exposes himself, but which never brings him to his knees -- is a prolonged voluntary circumcision.[370] By going through the ups and downs of circumcision and uncircumsion, Howard displays the unique ability to make Paul's body-soul distinction totally reversible, to bring the performativity of Jewishness that Paul makes possible to perfection.

However, this reversibility fundamentally excludes blackness. Unlike the persistence-through-rejection model of bodily difference that Jonathan Boyarin uses to elaborate on Jewish "double consciousness," and unlike the blackness that fragments Fanon's psyche in *Black Skins, White Masks*,[371] Howard's Jewishness becomes available for him to "own" (to phallically "have") through this voluntary and constant circumcision/uncircumsion. Here the power of self-determination that characterizes post-Enlightenment white subjectivity rears its head. Although Howard confronts life like a battle to the death, what he ends up with is less a radical deterritorialization than a reterritorialization of his whiteness. Although he is arbitrarily executed by the Christian West, he dies happy because he won the largest bet of his life. He is powerful; he "has" it. Howard has a remarkable ability to bounce back from this assault, and in the end remains "uncut" even in death.

In order for this to work, Howard takes up a highly specific relation to the film's black characters: exploiting the Ethiopian miners and speculating on Kevin Garnett's sports acumen,

[370] For those who have seen the film: think of the scene where Howard emerges naked from the trunk of his car after being stripped and shoved into it by Arno, covering his penis abashedly,

[371] "My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me" (trans. Philcox, 96)

trading Demany's fake Rolex watches and pawning Garnett's championship ring to keep up his gambling streak. Howard's endless struggle to "win" is a matter not only of "mystical" financial speculation but of black exploitation – i.e. racial capitalism. Yet anti-blackness is a kind of submerged term in the discourse of the film. Even as Howard consciously exploits the unofficial labor of the Ethiopian miners, he imagines that very exploitation as an act of Jewish (and Jewish-Black) solidarity. Folded into the image of a diasporic Jewish bond, blackness is made to speak "Black Jew Power."[372] What oppresses the Ethiopian miners seems primarily to be antisemitism rather than racial capitalism,[373] and although Howard cheats them, this exploitation is a testament to the fact that Howard finds them (like the gem itself) "exotic and beautiful."[374] Hence a fantasy of consensual racial capitalism hinging on Jewish solidarity, an image of black-Jewish reciprocity that leans more heavily on the Jewish. From the Safdies:

> I think that the Jewish people, I think we have a general proclivity to step up against oppression because there was oppression in our own history. It still obviously exists, but there is a strange spiritual connection . . . there was a kinship, and it was almost like in a weird way, it was a celebration but also a trapping for both [Jews and Black Americans]. I think there's a long shared lineage *using materialism to transcend*, and that's pretty cool (quoted in Schwedel, emphasis)

Where Josh slides between past and present tense ("there *was oppression* in our history. *It still obviously exists"*), invoking again the question of whether Jewish difference exists, he leads us into a structural relation between Jewishness and Blackness that's more complex than a simple "ruse of analogy." The Safdies beg the question of becoming: Can the Jew become black? Is

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[372] The Safdies say that LaKeith Stanfield improvised this line. What I'm interrogating is not who came up with the line, but the pleasure the directors take in reproducing that idea, by (1) keeping it in and (2) repeatedly making it clear that it wasn't their idea.

[373] "The fact that they're both [Jews and Blacks] oppressed in that sense. The Ethiopian Jews were forced to convert" (quoted in Schwedel). It is not clear that the Safdies understand antisemitism and anti-blackness as connected. But even if they did, the exceptionalism that centers Jewish suffering and makes black flesh the negated material of Howard's mystical transcendence is there.

[374] "[T]o Howard's character, to see a faraway people who read the same text, who are following the same story that he was following, he felt a kinship. That was exotic and beautiful to him. He felt a connection to it" (quoted in Schwedel).

Jewishness *already part* of a (reconstructed) blackness? The Safdies' Jewishness still somehow needs this difference, some kind of "ground," on which to articulate its transcendence. As we will see, it is the fungibility of the slave as commodity from which the Safdies derive this ground. The Safdies suggest that Jewishness is already a part of reconstructed blackness, "the mother plant" of diasporic survival, while at the same time deriving their model for Howard's radical transcendence *from* the excesses of racial violence.

Howard's big-brother style of interaction[375] with Kevin Garnett is really about what he can get out of Kevin: a chance to raise the stakes, but he's also trying to teach him a lesson about diaspora. "Black Jewish power" is the film's name for *Jewish diaspora*. Even while it masquerades as the crux of Jewish-black reciprocity, this narrative constructs "black jewish power" around the image of a "stranded tribe" of Jews in Africa. The fact that they are black Africans *in Africa* doesn't in any way contradict the fact of their strandedness.

For this reason the Ethiopian Jews (and their opal, by association) are primarily an iteration of the Jewish diaspora, and are only secondarily African. To be clear, what I mean to suggest by highlighting the film's usage of the term "stranded" to describe the Ethiopian Jews is not that it configures Jewish diasporism as primary or superior to Black identity. Rather, what this is does is to show how Jewish diasporism feeds off of denigrated images of -- or images of the impossibility of -- black diasporic consciousness.[376]

In the sequence where Kevin looks into the opal, in between shots of the stone's inner plenum, flash a series of images -- the majority of which depict Kevin Garnett's upbringing and rise to fame. Interspersed between these images however are images of black workers in

[375] His attempts to coach him throughout the film bespeak a relation to power. On sibling rivalries, see Marriott, "Bonding over Phobia" in *The Psychoanalysis of Race,* ed. Lane (Columbia University Press, 1998)

[376] When Kevin Garnett's character asks Howard what he means by "stranded," Howard doesn't answer.

situations of extreme exploitation/slavery, and (near the end) a picture of an Ashkenazi rabbi instructing a young black boy in Hebrew. Despite Kevin's fame and fortune, his life (as it appears in the opal) is continuous with black exploitation around the world. Intruding upon and haunting the sequence's filmic flow, these photographs of black exploitation engage viewers in a different register: the extrasensory register "off the screen, off the map, off the charts, off the books" of the flesh.[377] This rabbi that instructs a young black child in Hebrew represents the paternalism of Howard's character who likewise saves Kevin by imparting to him "Jew Power."

Kevin can't do what Howard does. Whereas Kevin can only see his life as the flesh, Howard reportedly sees the whole universe. It is thus *Howard's* opal, Howard's mystical post-identitarian "black power," to which Kevin becomes beholden and for the sake of which he must consent to his own exploitation. This actually reifies roles for the master and the slave. Kevin has to do what Howard says in order to win. It is only by being folded into Howard's white/settler vision of Jewish "bonding" that Kevin's blackness can emerge from its own materiality into "Black Jew Power," and he can win the championship game.

While this is all happening, the film nevertheless explores the Howard-Kevin connection as if it were reciprocal. Howard and Kevin are risk-takers. They speak "mano a mano." In this construction of reciprocity, the Safdies crucially elide the difference between trading and *being* property. That the ongoingness of slavery and racial capitalism undergird the production of whiteness[378] (and Jewish whiteness) is a fact *Uncut Gems* indexes but disavows near the end of the film in a conversation regarding the price Howard paid for the opal.

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[377] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus* (Duke University Press, 2014), 111.

[378] See for reference the work of Saidiya Hartman on the "torturous constitution of agency" (*Scenes of Subjection* 7). See also Denise Ferreira Da Silva, Frank Wilderson, Fred Moten, David Marriott and Anthony Paul Farley, e.g. "black men must die so that the aggressive structure of white repression and sublimation of libidinal drives can remain in place" (Marriott "Bonding Over Phobia" 428); "There is no law before the slave bows down" (Farley "Perfecting Slavery" 228); "The slave is the commodity that thinks. It creates the basic element or foundation of legality, the notion of equality" (Farley "Law as Trauma and Repetition" 621)

Kevin: Real shit. What did you pay for this right here?
Howard: That's not a fair question, Kevin. We're talking months and months of -- fucking -- my time. I'm not gonna take the money back, when I did a deal now.
Kevin: Straight up, straight up, me and you, mano a mano. How much did you pay for this?
Howard: What did I pay? I paid… This is... I'm telling you, if I answer that question it's very misleading.
Kevin: Why?
Howard: I paid a hundred grand.
Kevin: So you doubled your money.
Howard: I'm the joker here, all right? I got fucked. A million dollars is what I was supposed to get. I get a -- fucking -- what? Made sixty-five G's?
Kevin: You gave some ****** from Ethiopia a hundred grand for something you thought was worth a million dollars? You don't see nothing wrong with that, Howard?
Howard: Ethiopian miners, you know what these fucking guys make? A hundred grand is fifty lifetimes for these fucking guys.
Kevin: A million dollars is more. That's my point, you understand?
Howard: You wanna win by 1 point, or fucking 30 points?

Whereas the European Jew and the slave each had a unique relation to capital over the course of Western modernity, those relations were obviously not the same. The slave relation was and is fundamental to the sphere of "contractual" capitalist relations globally.[379] The Ethiopian miners at the start of the film do, like the slave, have to render their flesh in order to extract the opal.[380] Their sale of the opal to Howard may look, to Howard, like a kind of deterritorializing "intimacy" between continents that reinvents Jewish difference as a Black-Jewish commonality, but this commonality is structured in racial dominance.

This is Kevin's point. Even while he presses Howard to accept the fantasy that a certain "correct" price could remedy this exploitation and thus could also remedy the global imbalance whereby African workers are systematically cheated, underdeveloped and doubly exploited by

[379] Commenting on how the raciality of Enlightenment ideas of universality, history, The Subject and The World occlude the fundamental role of the slave relation in global capitalism, Denise Ferreira Da Silva writes "[B]ecause racial knowledge transubstantiates (shifts them from the living to the formal register) what emerges in political relations into effects of efficient (scientific reason's) causality, *its critical tools fail to register how the total (past, present, and future) value expropriated is in the very structures (in blood and flesh) of global capital*." ("Toward a Black Feminist Poethics" 83-84, emphasis).

[380] In order to distract management at the quarry (so that they can steal some of the opal to sell to Howard), the Ethiopian miners stage an emergency in which one of their legs is intentionally broken.

racial capital, he does also point to the unpayable debt[381] that structures all capitalism (legal and illegal, systematic and disordered) by emphasizing the "more" over and above an economic calculus of equivalence. "A million dollars *is more.*"[382] It is precisely from this excessiveness that Howard derives his response -- "you wanna win by 1 point, or fucking 30 points?" -- and, by implication, the mysticism of his entire economic approach. The "mysticism of capitalism" for which Howard is a stand-in,[383] thus seems actually to be an inverted image of the incalculable violence of racial slavery and primitive accumulation.

Although "cartoonized" as Howard, the "Jewish" subject in *Uncut Gems* reveals his whiteness through his failure to acknowledge his own participation in racial capitalism, and negating blackness as a degraded form of Jewish diasporism. Even while, in the abovementioned opal sequence and in the dialogue between Kevin and Howard, the film goes to extreme lengths to depict black social death and the irreconcilability between it and Howard's experience of Jewish difference, it couches this irreconcilability in a vision of reciprocity and consensual exploitation – thereby reiterating a uniquely self-determined positionality.

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[381] Thank you to Rei for this insight regarding Rosa Luxemburg's thought on primitive accumulation.

[382] Silva "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics," 85: "By reconstruction, I should emphasize, I do not mean reparation or a restitution of monetary sum that corresponds to that which mercantile and industrial capital have acquired through colonial expropriation since the sixteenth century. Decolonization requires the setting up of juridico-economic architectures of redress through which global capital returns the total value it continues to derive from the expropriation of the total value yielded by productive capacity of the slave body and native lands. Before we can even conceive on how to design these architectures, we need another account of racial subjugation, for the one we have cannot comprehend a demand for decolonization, that is the unknowing and undoing of the World that reaches its core."

[383] "Nobody's beneath him . . . Nobody's above him. To him, everyone's at the same place, and he's able to inspire that kind of impossible thinking among other people. There's real mysticism in capitalism." (Josh Safdie quoted in Pride)

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