

University of Nevada, Reno

**German-Jewish Relations in the Works and Lives of German-Speaking Laureates of the
Nobel Prize in Literature**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and the Honors Program

by

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December, 2016

**UNIVERSITY
OF NEVADA
RENO**

THE HONORS PROGRAM

We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by

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entitled

**German-Jewish Relations in the Works and Lives of German-Speaking Nobel Literature
Laureates**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS

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December, 2016

Abstract

German-Jewish relations has been a widely studied field, often with the intent of understanding or explaining exactly why and how a modern state could have developed a system of mass genocide. While scholars tend to view the *Judenfrage*—a socially and politically charged debate about the place of Jews in European, especially German society—as an issue pertaining only to the years of National Socialism (1933-1945) and most common amongst less educated classes in Germany, in reality the “Jewish Question” spans centuries and pervaded even the upper-educated spheres of German-speaking societies. This thesis explores the development of German-Jewish relations in such academic societies from about 1880 to the present by examining the social, political, and personal influences of the “Jewish Question” in the lives and works of thirteen German-speaking laureates for the Nobel Prize in Literature. These laureates and their year of award include: Theodor Mommsen (1902), Rudolph Eucken (1908), Paul Heyse (1910), Gerhart Hauptmann (1912), Carl Spitteler (1919), Thomas Mann (1929), Hermann Hesse (1946), Nelly Sachs (1966), Heinrich Böll (1972), Elias Canetti (1981), Günter Grass (1999), Elfriede Jelinek (2004), Herta Müller (2009).

Acknowledgments

It is only fitting to write these acknowledgements on Thanksgiving weekend, because every time I see my family I realize again how much I have to be thankful for. Heidi, as my roommate you've had to hear about this thesis non-stop for the past year; thanks for putting up with me and keeping me sane. Grandma Rita, you were always so excited for me as I learned German and half the German books I have now are because of you. I'm so glad you can be here for my oral defense. Josh and Amanda, you guys keep my "inner nerd" in check most of the time, and I don't know what I'd do without you. And lastly, Mom and Dad, thank you for reading *Little House* and *Harry Potter* with me every night before bed. You set me on the path of reading and learning and then stepped back to let me find my own way.

Of course, this undertaking would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Pettey, who has been part of my education from my first day at the university to my last. You taught me a new language (which I am, of course, always still learning), and then introduced me to some of the greats of that language by sharing your crazy interest in Nobel laureates with me. I may be an English major, but looking back it is clear that German has left an indelible mark on my undergraduate career, and for that Dr. Pettey, I can only say *danke*.

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At a Glance: the German-Speaking Nobel Laureates in Literature

- 1902** **Theodor Mommsen (Germany)** **1817-1903**
the greatest living master of the art of historical writing, with special reference to his monumental work, A history of Rome
 Major Works:
- *Römische Geschichte* [A History of Rome] (1854-56): a three-volume survey of the history of the Roman Republic, still read and cited by historians today.
 - *Auch Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* (1881): An essay published in response to a polemic against Jews published by Mommsen's colleague, Heinrich von Treitschke.
- 1908** **Rudolf Eucken (Germany)** **1846-1926**
in recognition of his earnest search for truth, his penetrating power of thought, his wide range of vision, and the warmth and strength in presentation with which in his numerous works he has vindicated and developed an idealistic philosophy of life
 Major Works:
- Eucken was a neoidealist philosopher. Two of his major works are *Die Lebensanschauungen der großen Denker* [The Problem of Life as Viewed by Great Thinkers] (1896) and *Der Sinn und Wert Des Lebens* [The Meaning and Value of Life] (1908).
- 1910** **Paul Heyse (Germany)** **1830-1914**
as a tribute to the consummate artistry, permeated with idealism, which he has demonstrated during his long productive career as a lyric poet, dramatist, novelist and writer of world-renowned short stories
 Major Works:
- *Jugenderinnerungen und Bekenntnisse* [Memories of my Youth and Confessions] (1900): Heyse's autobiography about his childhood and family history.
 - *Dramatische Dichtungen* [Dramatic Works] (1864-1905); *Gesammelte Werke* [Collected Works] (1871-1910): Heyse was a prolific poetry and prose writer.
- 1912** **Gerhart Hauptmann (Germany)** **1862-1946**
primarily in recognition of his fruitful, varied and outstanding production in the realm of dramatic art
- *Vor Sonnenaufgang* [Before Sunrise] (1889): Hauptmann's first drama created a scandal for its blunt realism, but ultimately ushered in a golden age of German naturalistic drama.
 - *Die Weber* [The Weavers] (1892): Hauptmann's most famous drama depicts the harsh life and ultimate uprising of textile workers in Silesia in the 1840s.
- 1919** **Carl Spitteler (Switzerland)** **1845-1924**
in special appreciation of his epic, Olympian Spring
 Major Works:
- *Prometheus and Epimetheus* (1881), Spitteler's first published work, was an allegorical prose-poem contrasting the values of its titular mythological beings.
 - *Olympischer Frühling* [Olympic Spring] (1900-1905): composed in iambic hexameter, this epic poem mixes mythological, religious, and naturalistic themes with a raw human concern toward the universe.
- 1929** **Thomas Mann (Germany)** **1875-1955**
principally for his great novel, Buddenbrooks, which has won steadily increased recognition as one of the classic works of contemporary literature

Major Works:

- *Buddenbrooks: Verfall einer Familie* [*Buddenbrooks*] (1901): Mann's first novel depicts the affairs of a Hanseatic bourgeoisie family from 1835 to 1877. Drawing inspiration from his own family's history, Mann portrays the conflict between business and artistic spheres.
- "Wälsungenblut" ["The Blood of the Walsungs"] (1921): this short story based on Richard Wagner's opera *Die Walküre* (1870) was controversial in its portrayal of incest, and somewhat for its blatant use of negative Jewish stereotypes.
- *Der Zauberberg* [*The Magic Mountain*] (1924): This novel follows the development of Hans Castorp, a young engineer from Hamburg, who travels to a sanatorium in Davos, in the Swiss Alps where he stays seven years due to failing health. There he meets various characters who represent a microcosm of pre-war Europe.

1946 Hermann Hesse (Switzerland, formerly Germany) 1877-1962
for his inspired writings which, while growing in boldness and penetration, exemplify the classical humanitarian ideals and high qualities of style

Major Works:

- *Peter Camenzind* (1904): The first novel for which Hesse had any significant commercial success.
- *Glasperlenspiel* [*Magister Ludi*] (1943): a two-volume novel written over eleven years, of this work Hesse says "I survived the years of the Hitler regime and the Second World War" (Frenz).
- *Siddhartha* (1922): Hesse's 9th novel depicts the spiritual self-discovery of Siddhartha, a young man living in the time of Gautama Buddha. Siddhartha is one of Hesse's most widely read novels.

1966 Nelly Sachs (Sweden, formerly Germany) 1891-1970
for her outstanding lyrical and dramatic writing, which interprets Israel's destiny with touching strength

Major Works:

- *In den Wohnungen des Todes* [*In the Apartments of Death*] (1947): Sachs wrote many poems based on the terrible suffering and destruction of the Holocaust. Some of her best known works in this collection include "O die Schornsteine" ["O the Chimneys"], "Wenn ich nur wüste" ["If I only knew"], and "Chor der Waisen" ["Chorus of the Orphans"].
- *Eli: Ein Mysterienspiel vom Leiden Israels* [*Eli: A Mystery Play on the Suffering of Israel*] (1951): written from her sanctuary in Sweden, *Eli* is a series of small scenes set "after martyrdom" in the rubble of a ghetto. The drama draws on Jewish mysticism as it portrays the process of renewal and follows the journey of Michael, a shoemaker and "man of God," who seeks the murderer of Eli, an eight-year-old boy.

1972 Heinrich Böll (Germany) 1917-1985
for his writing which through its combination of a broad perspective on his time and a sensitive skill in characterization has contributed to a renewal of German literature

Major Works:

- *Der Zug war pünktlich* [*The Train was on Time*] (1949): Böll's first novel follows Andreas, a German soldier on a train from Paris to Poland, and explores the experience of German soldiers during WWII.
- *Wo warst du, Adam?* [*And Where Were You, Adam?*] (1951): in the subgenre *Trümmerliteratur* [literature of the rubble], this novel traces the collapse of the German army through the perspective of various individuals.

- 1981** **Elias Canetti (United Kingdom, also Bulgaria, Austria, Switzerland)** **1905-1994**
for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power
 Major Works:
- *Die Provinz des Menschen [The Human Province]* (1942): Canetti's book of aphorism, in which he remarks upon the destruction of World War II and guilt of Adolf Hitler (amongst other themes).
 - *Masse und Macht [Crowds and Power]* (1960): Canetti's best known work is a philosophical analysis of mass psychology.
 - *Die Fackel im Ohr: Lebensgeschichte 1921-1931 [The Torch in the Ear: Life History 1921-1931]* (1980): Canetti's three-part autobiography was heavily influenced by Karl Kraus, editor of the periodical *Die Fackel [The Torch]*.
- 1999** **Günter Grass (Germany)** **1927-2015**
whose frolicsome black fables portray the forgotten face of history
 Major Works:
- *Die Blechtrommel [The Tin Drum]* (1959): part of the *Danziger Trilogie [Danzig Trilogiy]* this novel, which used magical realism, was initially controversial for its portrayal of post-war Europe, but was later accepted by the public.
 - *Ein weites Feld [Too Far Afield]* (1995): This novel was also deeply controversial for its somewhat sympathetic depiction of the relationship between perpetrators of totalitarianisms and their victims.
 - *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel [Peeling the Onion]* (2006): Grass's autobiography, in which he revealed that in his youth he had been part of the Nazi Waffen-SS.
 - *Was gesagt werden muss [What Must be Said]* (2012): This prose-poem was published in response to Germany sending U-boats to aid the state of Israel, and it was deeply divisive about issues of modern German-Jewish relations.
- 2004** **Elfriede Jelinek (Austria)** **1946-**
for her musical flow of voices and counter-voices in novels and plays that with extraordinary linguistic zeal reveal the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power
 Major Works:
- *Die Klavierspielerin [The Piano Teacher]* (1983): made into an acclaimed film in 2001 by Michael Haneke, depicts the relationship between a sexually repressed piano player and her young student, dealing with themes of repression and control.
 - *Der Kinder der Toten [The Children of the Dead]* (1995): a postmodern horror novel, Jelinek's magnum opus follows various "undead characters," including victims of the Holocaust seeking a new life.
 - *Rechnitz* (2008): this drama depicts the vicious massacre of 180 Jews by various socialites (and Nazi officials) at a party in Burgenland, Austria in 1945.
- 2009** **Herta Müller (Germany, formerly Romania)** **1953-**
who, with the concentration of poetry and the frankness of prose, depicts the landscape of the dispossessed
 Major Works:
- *Niederungen* (1982): this short-story collection, censored when first published in Romania, depicts the corruption and repression characteristic of life in Müller's childhood home.
 - *Drückender Tango [Oppressive Tango]* (1984): this novel also explores the corruption and intolerance Müller experience in Romania.

Introduction

From 1933 to 1945 nearly six million Jews were murdered in a systematic and hateful attempt by the Nazis of Germany's Third Reich to answer the "Jewish Question"—the debate surrounding the assimilation and marginalization of Jews in Germany—with a "Final Solution" (Remak 30). For the Nazis, this "Final Solution" meant rounding up Jews and other social minorities, forcing them into ghettos or concentration camps, and murdering them in extermination camps with poisonous gas chambers, firing squads, backbreaking labor, and starvation (Fischer 11; Remak 31). Because of this catastrophic event, the Holocaust stands at the forefront of modern memory when it comes to the perception of German-Jewish relations. In *The "Jewish Question" in German Literature: 1749-1939*, Ritchie Robertson acknowledges that German-Jewish relations have become a copiously researched topic; nevertheless, he rightly points out that we still have much to learn about its influence on both German and Jewish literature and authors:

My aim in this book is to render the "Jewish Question" more intelligible by looking at its literary expressions. There is now a large body of first-rate historical work on German-Jewish relations, and research is still proliferating, but studies of German-Jewish literary history are less numerous. (2)

My own research will contribute to such studies by analyzing thirteen German-speaking authors to understand how German-Jewish relations and the "Jewish Question" influenced their lives and works. This study will use the Holocaust as the *terminus ad quem* and *terminus ad quo* to trace the development of these relations as they pertain to the field of German literature.

The Nobel Prize for Literature

Since it is not feasible to study centuries of German-Jewish relations in just two semesters, this thesis focus is narrowed to a study of only recipients of the Nobel Prize for literature who wrote the main body of their works in German. Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite, founded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1901. Almost every year since his death (excluding some years during World War I and World War II), the Swedish Academy in Stockholm has met to decide which writer should be granted the award, which includes great notoriety, literary recognition, and a large monetary prize (Jewell 97). Nobel had some stipulations regarding his prize. First, it should be awarded to someone who, “in the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind.” Second, that the prize be awarded to “the person who [in the previous year] shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work of an ideal tendency” (98). In actuality, the prize has more often been awarded for a writer’s literary production as a whole, though at times a single significant work has been acknowledged.

Before using the Nobel Prize for Literature as a framework for my research, I noted that the award is not infallible or perfect, and its selections have been controversial. Since the founding of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1901, one-hundred and thirteen authors have been recognized for the award¹; however, many other authors have been overlooked and some of the writers who won the prize are no longer widely read (“All Nobel Prizes in Literature”). In his essay “The Literary Politics of the Nobel Prize,” author Jeffrey Meyers claims that of the 103 winners selected by 2007, only about 17 of them “are now recognized as great authors” (215). He goes on to note some of the controversial politics of the award, such as its selection process, which requires a nomination by another noted author and is based on “subjective and often biased judgments” by members of the Swedish Academy (217). Meyers traces an extra-literary trend in the selection process, claiming that, in many cases, award is based more on political and personal

¹ As of December 10, 2016

biases than literary merit. For example, the conservative-minded Academy of the early 20th century selected “establishment figures” such as Theodor Mommsen, while the growth of liberal politics in more recent decades influenced the non-choices Milan Kundera and Salman Rushdie, neither of whom has ever won (222).

Despite the biases and controversies associated with the Nobel Prize for Literature, using this award is still a viable framework for several reasons. First of all, this paper is not interested in judging the literary merit of the 13 German-speaking laureates; instead, it will examine their works, their politics, and their lives to study the relationship between Germans and Jews in the 20th and 21st centuries. Some of the authors, such as Paul Heyse and Rudolf Eucken, may not be well-read or considered great writers today, but are important because they were considered popular in their time and represent personal perspectives in history of German-Jewish relations. Heyse’s prolific output created works widely read both in Germany and abroad, and, according to Dr. Sture Packalén, Eucken’s idealistic philosophy was a balm for the “educated German middle class” as the society dealt with the turmoil after the First World War (Packalén).

The Nobel Prize for Literature will not provide a scale to measure which German-speaking laureates were the “greatest,” rather, using the prize as a framework to determine which authors to study reveals an interesting window into the past. An examination of either the works or life of each laureate will reveal how German-Jewish relations stood at the time of each award and were developing over the century. Not every author had strong ties to this topic, but most laureates do have personal, literary, or professional ties to Jews or Judaism. The Nobel Prize for Literature serves a functional purpose as it enables a survey of German-Jewish relations throughout the century by using laureates as touch points; this system works well because the first German writer to win was Theodor Mommsen in 1902, and the most recent was Herta Müller in 2009.

Finally, using the Nobel Prize for Literature as a prism provides a wide spectrum of literary styles and diverse genres to examine the history of Germany-Jewish relations and the authors' effect on the literature and literary figures of the period. This spectrum includes literary genres ranging from history, philosophy, poetry, and prose fiction, as well as writers from five different countries, and different lifestyles, ages, religions (including three Jews), and genders (including three women). Although my research will not be exhaustive, it will illuminate some clear trends and biases amongst each of these authors as they pertain to German-Jewish political and social relations in the past two centuries (especially since 1880) ("All Nobel Prizes in Literature").

A Brief History of Antisemitism

Before studying how each author was personally or politically influenced by German-Jewish relations, it is necessary to have a foundational understanding of the development of Judeophobia and Allo-Semitism. Judeophobia, the prejudice against, hatred of, and marginalization of Jews and Jewish culture, has a history over 2000 years old, and has been studied widely by historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and scholars (Fischer 24). Allo-Semitism, a term proposed by Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, uses the Greek root for other, *allos*, to refer to the "practice of setting the Jews apart as people radically different from all others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them and special treatment in all or most social intercourse" (143). In the aftermath of the Holocaust, this phenomenon of setting Jews up as an "other" has been of great interest in the context of German-Jewish relations for trying to understand how a modernized state could have sanctioned the systematic murder of six million Jews in concentration camps. Scholars have traced the history of German-Jewish relations in politics, society, and literature to analyze how anti-Jewish prejudices developed in Germany. In *The History of an Obsession*, Klaus Fischer identifies distinct stages in the development of Judeophobia:

(1) a relatively mild hatred of Jews in ancient times; (2) a gathering momentum with the coming and expansion of Christianity. [...] (3) a short ebb during the Wars of Religion (1540-1648) and the ensuing age of toleration and enlightenment (1650-1815); (4) a new rising tide of Judeophobia in a potentially destructive form under the impact of nationalism and racism in the nineteenth century; (5) a final tidal wave, set in motion by World War I and the Nazi movement, culminating in the Holocaust. (26)

Although this thesis will focus primarily on Fisher's fourth and fifth points, it is necessary to review some of the early roots and later developments of Judeophobia in Europe and Germany as they pertain to German-Jewish relations in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In *The Nazi Holocaust Part 2: The Origins of the Holocaust*, Shumael Ettinger traces the development of anti-Jewish prejudices. Beginning with the disputes between Christian and Jewish beliefs in the medieval period, Ettinger notes that "in the Middle Ages, when the Christian Church held sway, it was a fundamental doctrine to hate Jews and a sacred duty to oppress them" (3). Anti-Jewish prejudices, when first conceived, were largely tied to religious prejudices and frustrations so that "to hate Jewry, that 'seed of Satan' was the sign of a good Christian" and "to Medieval Christians, Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ, was *the Jew* incarnate" (9). Negative stereotypes likening Jews to pigs and Satan were common, and social and political laws barring Jews from many careers and economic need compelling them to the practice (and occasional abuse) of usury further alienated the population and creating the reputation of the "avaricious" Jew (9). Prejudice developed around these stereotypes, leading to the implementation of further social, political, and cultural barriers that marginalized Jewish populations.

In his own study of the origins of Judeophobia, Fischer identifies a “logic of delusion” as a source for understanding radical Judeophobia. This “logic of delusion” holds true both in the Middle Ages, when Christian Crusaders, “gripped by a special kind of Jew hatred” massacred thousands of innocent Jews in Northern France, and in Nazi Germany, where the fanatic hatred of Hitler and his followers brought about the systematic murder of the Shoah (13). Fischer compares these phenomena to the witch burnings of the Middle Ages to show how a prejudiced “belief created its own reality in the form of entirely innocent people, who were identified, tortured, and killed” (14). Fischer then shows that “Nazi belief about Jews represented a twentieth century reversion to witchcraft” and claims that “the ‘witchified’ Jew became the centerpiece of Nazi diabolism” (14).

It is important to understand these early cases of Judeophobia and then not only trace the origins of anti-Jewish prejudices, but show that as these prejudices developed in different regions, centuries, cultures, and mindsets, Judeophobia took on a variety of characteristics. During the Reformation and religious upheaval at the end of the Middle Ages, the diminished influence of the Catholic Church and the growing availability of a vernacular Bible meant that “a different picture of the Jews arose” in Protestant Europe. However, because of deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes, this image was “not enough to eradicate the accepted image of the Jew or even to change it fundamentally” (Ettinger 10). Both the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Romanticism added their own ingredient to the recipe of Judeophobia. The Age of Enlightenment—with its emphasis on personal liberty, equality, and secularity—at first led to great success for the Jews of Europe, who left their ghettos and made great economic and literary achievements. Romanticism, especially in Germany, caused a surge in national sentiment and nostalgia, and its emphasis on “national folklore” led to the “resurrection of old negative

stereotypes of the Jew, as it had crystalized in folklore” (14). However, Ettinger notes that because of “developing historicism”—a product of “enlightened Romanticism”—even the educated were able to find “fresh justification for denying the value of Judaism and hating the Jews: one could rely on modern philosophical thought and ‘objective’ scientific research” (17). Fischer, too, shows that instead of fading away as anti-Jewish prejudice lost its religiously-based foundation, modern anti-Semitism became “grafted onto secular causes” in the 19th century, especially issues of nationalism, the nation-state, and a “biological-racism” based on pseudoscientific interpretations of Charles Darwin’s research on evolution (47).

Foundations of the Modern “Jewish Question”

Discussions pertaining to this branch of Judeophobia manifested themselves in the form of the neutrally couched “Jewish Question.” The “Jewish Question” was a debate that arose in the middle and late nineteenth century surrounding questions of Jewish assimilation or exclusion from society that shaped the development of Judeophobia in Germany (Fischer 46). Until the 1870s, this debate had been “conducted within a traditional Christian and cultural framework,” but as the debate entered intellectual and political spheres of society, its “framework was radically altered by the biological and racial views of the late nineteenth century” (46). Once Judeophobia shifted to a “modern-register,” anti-Semites were able to “indulge in a ‘medieval’ hatred of the Jews that an ‘enlightened’ modern period proscribed” (Bein 230). In this context, the word anti-Semitism was coined by Wilhelm Marr, a “pamphleteer” and “founder of the League for Anti-Semites,” who used the word as a political slogan to unite Germans behind a “non-partisan movement to fight the detrimental influence allegedly exerted on German society by organized Jewry” (Fischer 23; Bein 230). In spite of the word’s linguistic ambiguity,² anti-

² Semite refers not only to Jews, but also people who are Arabic, Aramaic, Babylonian, Assyria, and Ethiopian (Bein 231)

Semitism and its veneer of scientific terminology gained influence as a social and political movement in late-nineteenth-century German-speaking Europe. The debate on the “Jewish Question” in Germany and Austria not only focused on issues of religious and social assimilation, but also shaped the debate in the context of race (Bein 231).

Thesis Organization

This thesis explores the evolution of the “Jewish Question” in the educated spheres of German-speaking societies by studying the issue in the lives or works of the thirteen German-speaking Nobel laureates in literature. The first chapter explores the early politicization of the *Judenfrage*, which was carried into academic society by Heinrich von Treitschke, a professor of history at the University of Berlin. The bulk of this chapter deals with the ensuing *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, a debate between Treitschke and his colleague Theodor Mommsen, the first German and second person ever to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1902. The chapter then explores how the philosopher Rudolf Eucken (1908) and Swiss author Carl Spitteler (1919) confronted the unjust politicization of the *Judenfrage* in their own lives, and how Paul Heyse (1910) often distanced himself from his partial Jewish ancestry. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of Thomas Mann’s (1929) controversial short story *Wälsungenblut* (1905) and a consideration of the author’s own stance on anti-Semitism.

The second chapter delves into the psyche of Gerhart Hauptmann (1912) to understand whether the aging author’s decision to remain in Hitler’s Germany is evidence enough of antisemitism. Hauptmann’s character is contrasted against that of Hermann Hesse (1946) and Elias Canetti (1981), two authors forced into exile by National Socialism, and Heinrich Böll (1972), an author of *Trümmerliteratur* [literature of the rubble] who portrayed the aftermath of post-war Germany for a new generation.

The penultimate chapter explores the life and work of the laureate perhaps most affected by the horrors of the Holocaust: Nelly Sachs (1966). Although Sachs escaped to Sweden in 1940, her dramas—of which *Eli: Ein Mysterienspiel vom Leiden des Israels* (1943) will be analyzed—and her poems deal intimately with the suffering of the Jewish people. This chapter explores the role of memory and suffering post-Holocaust, not only in Sachs’s drama but also in the writings of Austrian laureate Elfriede Jelinek (2004) and Romanian-born Herta Müller (2009), who experienced prejudice as part of the German-speaking minority in her native country. These female laureates testify against the ever-expanding boundaries of prejudice and hatred, as they memorialize and mourn the victims of such forces.

Finally, the last chapter examines the role of the “Jewish Question” in modern Germany, where Nobel laureate Günter Grass (1999) sought to separate social criticism of Israel from accusations of antisemitism in his prose-poem *Was gesagt werden muss* (2012). Grass exemplifies the frustration felt by many younger Germans generations after the Holocaust, yet his own involvement in the Waffen-SS blurs distinctions between past and future, guilt and debt.

Chapter I: Personal and Academic Politics of the *Judenfrage*

Theodor Mommsen, a well-respected German historian and professor of history at the University of Berlin, won the second ever Nobel Prize for Literature in 1902; the Swedish Academy called him “the greatest living master of the art of historical writing” and gave special recognition to his “monumental work” *Römische Geschichte* (1854-56) (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1902”). While Mommsen’s *A History of Rome*, and particularly his “celebration of Julius Caesar” greatly influenced the nationalist pride of the German middle-class in the 1860s, of greater interest is how Mommsen himself was influenced by the cultural and national politics of the newly formed German Reich³ (Stoetzler 2). With the unification of Germany under Otto von Bismarck in 1871, German state-identity as a newly founded empire took on a vehemently nationalist character so that even those considered Liberal Nationalists, such as Mommsen, began to limit their definition of “liberal” in favor of a more homogenized nation-state. This trend had potentially dangerous consequences for the Jews of Germany—a people who, in spite of centuries of persecution and external pressures, refused to sacrifice their culture, religion, and history for full assimilation into the German state.

Theodor Mommsen:

The Treitschke-Mommsen Debate

As discussed in the introduction, the *Judenfrage* was not a new concept in Germany; however, in 1879, the “Jewish Question” took on a new dimension when it was reintroduced by Heinrich von Treitschke in an essay published in the Berlin-based journal, *Die Preußische Jahrbücher*. Treitschke, also a professor of history at the University of Berlin, published two articles expressing his scathing opinion of the German Jewry and demanding that Jews convert to

³ Mommsen published over 900 works in his lifetime and his foundational studies of Roman history carved a path for future systematic studies of Roman government, economics, and finance. His incomplete *Römische Geschichte* helped shape Mommsen’s personal understanding of the modern nation-state, thus influencing his stance on the *Judenfrage* and assimilation in late 19th-century Germany.

Christianity, integrate with German society, and become “fully German”. In *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* he wrote:

Was wir von unseren israelitischen Mitbürgern zu fordern haben, ist einfach: sie sollen Deutsche werden, sich schlicht und recht als Deutsche fühlen—unbeschadet ihres Glaubens und ihrer alten heiligen Erinnerungen, die uns Allen ehrwürdig sind; denn wir wollen nicht, daß auf die Jahrtausende germanischer Gesittung ein Zeitalter deutsch-jüdischer Mischcultur folge. (2)

[What we require of our fellow Israelite citizens is simple: they should become German, should feel themselves simply and rightfully as German—regardless of their beliefs and their old holy memories, which are venerable to us all; because we do not want thousands of years of German civilization to be followed by an age of German-Jewish mixed culture.—my translation⁴]

Treitschke’s demands in this essay were not new or unheard of in Germany, where antisemitism had deep roots tracing back to the Middle Ages. However, both *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* and his earlier essay, *Unsere Aussichten*, are significant in the history of German-Jewish relations using a “formal, moderate tone,” Treitschke created a facade of respectability for the *Judenfrage* by removing the “radical sting” of antisemitism (Bein 251):

Überblickt man alle diese Verhältnisse—und wie Vieles ließe sich noch sagen!—so erscheint die laute Agitation des Augenblicks doch nur als eine brutale und gehässige, aber natürliche Reaction des germanischen Volksgefühls gegen ein fremdes Element, das in unserem Leben einen allzu breiten Raum eingenommen hat. Sie hat zum Mindesten das unfreiwillige Verdienst, den Bann einer stillen Unwahrheit von uns genommen zu

⁴ Wherever the rhetorical flourishes on intertextual references blocks the comprehension of the reader, a looser, but more apt, translation will be used.

haben; es ist schon ein Gewinn, daß ein Uebel, das Jeder fühlte und Niemand berühren wollte, jetzt offen besprochen wird. Täuschen wir uns nicht: die Bewegung ist sehr tief und stark; einige Scherze über die Weisheitsprüche christlich-socialer Stumpf-Redner genügen nicht sie zu bezwingen. *Bis in die Kreise der höchsten Bildung hinauf, unter Männern, die jeden Gedanken kirchlicher Unduldsamkeit oder nationalen Hochmuths mit Abscheu von sich weisen würden, ertönt es heute wie aus einem Munde: „die Juden sind unser Unglück!“* (4).

[If one surveys all of these relations—and how much there is still to say!—such that it seems thus the loud agitation of the moment is but a brutal and ugly, yet natural reaction of the German national-feeling against a foreign element, which has taken all too wide a space in our lives. It has, at the least, the involuntary merit, of having taken the ban of a silent untruth from us; it is already advantageous that an evil that everyone felt and no one wanted to touch will now be openly discussed. Let us not deceive ourselves: the movement is very deep and strong; some jokes about the wise words of Christian stump-speakers are not enough to defeat it. *Even up in the circle of the highest education, amongst men who would reject any thought of religious intolerance or national arrogance with disgust, is it entoned as out of one mouth: “The Jews are our misfortune!”*—emphasis mine, translation mine.]

If one of the most respected professors at the University of Berlin published such an overtly antisemitic call for Jewish assimilation, then who dared refute him? Treitschke's moderate tone lent a disguise of rationality to the antisemitism movement, making the prejudice “fit for public society by removing its radical sting” (Bein 251).

Nevertheless, Treitschke's polemic met with some dissent from the educated sphere of German society. Social scientist (and Jewish-German) Moritz Lazarus, philosopher Hermann Cohen, and politician Ludwig Bamberger all published responses opposing Treitschke's rhetoric (Stoetzler 2); however, the most significant response came from Treitschke's colleague at the University of Berlin, Theodor Mommsen. In 1880, not long after *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* was published, Mommsen released his response, directly referencing Treitschke's article in the title of his own essay: *Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum* [Also a word about our Jews]. The argument between Mommsen and Treitschke is a part of a greater dispute that unfolded around Treitschke's article and became known as the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*. The dispute has been widely studied by scholars, especially since the Holocaust, and is considered a significant moment in the development of *die Judenfrage* in the German Reich⁵ (Stoetzler 2). While many scholars have studied Treitschke's *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* alongside the development of nationalism, antisemitism, and the nation-state of Germany, fewer have taken the time to analyze his opponent's stance on the *Judenfrage* in the newly-formed German Reich. Mommsen's stance on the *Judenfrage* is ambivalent, yet his words and behavior show his strong aversion to antisemitism. The following pages will analyze Mommsen's argument in *Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum* to understand his position on German-Jewish relations in the Second Empire, questioning why he felt the need to respond to Treitschke's remarks, the extent that his own nationalism influenced his opinion about Jewish assimilation, and the significance he placed (or did not place) on culture and religion in the German nation-state.

⁵ For a more background and a comprehensive analysis of the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* see Stoetzler in works cited.

Why did Mommsen, who was not a Jew himself, feel the need to oppose publicly Heinrich von Treitschke in the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*? Perhaps, in his role as a foremost professor at the University of Berlin, Mommsen spoke in defense of his Jewish colleagues. The introduction of *Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum* suggests another motive though, revealing that for Mommsen, the issue of *die Judenfrage* and the “Agitation” stirred up by Treitschke’s pamphlet were not only dangerous for the German Jewry, but also threatened to destabilize the unity within the German Reich.

Both Theodor Mommsen and Heinrich von Treitschke were members of the Liberal Nationalist party, but when Treitschke published *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* in 1879, he sacrificed the party’s unity by broaching a divisive topic in the Liberal Nationalist platform—that of Jewish assimilation (or rather non-assimilation) into the German state. Under the Prussian-led unification of Germany nearly a decade earlier, many of the regional German peoples—the Schleswig-Holsteiner, the Pommern, the Sachsen—had to relinquish some of their local customs and autonomy for the sake of national unity (Fischer). Ten years after the establishment of the Reich, many Germans still felt that the Jews of Germany had not sacrificed enough to be considered “fully” German. While some Jews did assimilate and even converted to Christianity, a larger number of them kept to their religious and cultural customs, and this reality, when coupled with restrictive German legislation, increased the separation between German-Jewish and German-Christian cultures. The division was blatant enough that the issue of the *Judenfrage* reemerged, especially as the schism between Jewish and German cultures was again considered a danger to the unity of the nation-state.

The *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* was at its core, not so much an issue of antisemitism as a moment in time when that newly formed empire was seeking to define itself through a national,

homogenized—and increasingly Christian—culture; however, the dispute also stood as an important moment in the development of German-Jewish relations. Both Mommsen and Treitschke were concerned foremost with the issue of national unity, and their crucial differences stemmed from the way each man believed that potential reality should be attained. Treitschke callously, or at least unthinkingly, used antisemitism as a tool to try to strengthen this unity by forcing an accelerated assimilation of German Jews. His language was harsh and bitter, “Die Juden sind unser Unglück” [the Jews are our misfortune] and his demand that “sie [the Jews] sollen Deutsche werden” [they should become German] implied that he considered the Jews to be separate from the German people (Treitschke 2). In fact, he even called the frustration of the German people against the Jews “ein natürliche Reaction des germanischen Volksgefühls gegen ein fremdes Element” [a natural reaction of German national-feeling against a foreign element] (4).

Many years after the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, Mommsen wrote in a letter that he considered Treitschke the “Vater des modernen Antisemitismus”⁶ [father of modern antisemitism]. While Treitschke was neither the first nor most important German to express this prejudice, his rhetoric in *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum* led to a significant development in the nature of antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Up to that point in the 19th century, antisemitism had been a hatred expressed mainly amongst the uneducated, superstitious, and overly religious lower classes. However, in both *Unsere Aussichten* and *Ein Wort über unser Judenthum*, Treitschke’s moderate tone and elevated language masked some of the stigma associated with antisemitism, making it more palatable, and even perhaps respectable, for the educated elite of Germany to feel.

⁶ This statement, pointed out by Schwartz’s in , is from a letter by Mommsen dated 7 May 1895, cited in Lothar Wickert, *Theodor Mommsen: Eine Biographie*, IV, Frankfurt a. M. 1980, pp. 239, n. 14

Mommsen recognized the dangers of this development and so chose to speak against it, though he was not certain his voice would be heard over the mob:

In dem Chavivari, welches jetzt zum Befremden der übrigen gebildeten Welt in Deutschland über die Judenfrage sich erhoben hat und zu dessen Misslängen der Pöbel auf beiden Seiten nach Vermögen besteuert, wird es kaum möglich sein, daß eine einzelne Stimme sich Gehör verschafft; die Aussicht das Unwesen auch nur zu mindern erscheint selbst dann gering, wenn man es über sich gewinnt zu glauben, dass die Agitation nicht zugleich eine Machination ist (1).

[In all of the nonsense over the discussion of the Jewish question, which has now been raised to the consternation of the educated world in Germany and added to the unsuccess of mobs on both sides according to its ability, it will hardly be possible to hear a single voice; the view of this mitigating mischief also only seems itself small, if one convinces himself to believe that the agitation is not at the same time a machination. —my translation].

Mommsen called the radical antisemitism of by Treitschke's pamphlet a "selbstmörderlichen Treiben des Nationengefühle" [suicidal movement of national-feeling.—my translation] (4). He especially castigated Treitschke for his thoughtlessness in reigniting antisemitism in Germany:

Darin vor allem liegt das arge Unrecht und der unermeßliche Schaden, den Herr von Treitschke. mit seinen Judenartikeln angerichtet hat. Jene Worte von den hosenverkaufenden Jünglingen und den Männern aus den Kreisen der höchsten Bildung, aus deren Munde der Ruf ertönt „Die Juden sind unser Unglück.“ (11)

[Within all of this lies the awful wrong and immeasurable damage, which Herr von Treitschke has wreaked with his Jewish articles. Every word from the pant-selling youths

and the men from the highest circles of education, from whose mouths the call chimes out “the Jews are our misfortune”. —my translation].

Mommsen went on to point out something significant about Treitschke’s intentions that is often overlooked by both the masses and by scholars: “—ja es ist eingetroffen, was Herr von Treitschke voraussah, daß diese ‘versöhnenden Worte’ mißverstanden worden sind“ [yes it has arrived, what Herr von Treitschke predicted, that these “conciliatory words” would be misunderstood] (11). This admission shows that Mommsen recognized that at least part of Treitschke’s intention was to increase unity through Jewish assimilation, not to drive a deeper wedge between the German-Jews and the rest of Germany. However, the antisemitic phrases and overtones of Treitschke’s polemic exacerbated the problems between Germans and German-Jews by feeding a radical and divisive ideology.

As he tried to repair the damage that Treitschke’s articles inflicted upon German national unity, Mommsen blamed his opponent in sarcastic tones:

Das sprach Herr von Treitschke aus, der Mann, dem unter allen ihren Schriftstellern die deutsche Nation in ihren letzten großen Krisen den meisten Dank schuldet, dessen Feder eines der besten Schwerter war und ist in dem gewendeten, aber nicht beendeten Kampfe gegen den alten Erbfeind der Nation, den Particularismus. (11)

[Thus spoke Herr von Treitschke, the man from whom, amongst all of its other writers, the German nation owes most thanks in its latest major crises, whose pen was one of the best swords and remains so in the struggle, the ground of which has been broken but which has not been concluded, against the old arch-enemy of the nation, that of sectionalism.—my translation]

Mommsen noted that the Jewish stereotype had always been strong, but he argued that the perception of their difference had, to this point, been tempered by the obligation of equal rights and the duty the German people felt toward their state. Antisemitism, far from unifying Germans and German-Jews by pressuring assimilation (as Treitschke had intended), was detrimental to national unity. Furthermore, Mommsen argued that antisemitism would do nothing to improve German-Jewish relations and only increased tensions:

Die schlechten Juden bleiben, was sie waren; die guten wenden von den Christen sich ab, und von den Christen selbst stürzt der Pöbel aller Klassen sich begierig auf das wehrlose Wild und die Besseren selber sind zum Theil im Innern unsicher und schwankend. (12).

[The bad Jews remain as they were; the good turn away from the Christians, and from the Christians themselves pounces the mob of all classes eagerly on the defenseless prey and the better selves are in part on the inside more uncertain and shaky.-my translation.]

Finally, he argued that if the Jews and friends of Jews wished to live in harmony, why should the anti-Semite object? For Mommsen, the best lesson of Treitschke's article was that "[d]ie Petition kommt zur rechten Zeit. Sie öffnet jedem die Augen, wie weit wir schon sind, und wohin wir kommen müssen und kommen werden, wenn diese Fluth weiter braust" [the petition comes at the right time. It opens every eye to how far we have already come, and how far we still must come and will come, if this flood roars further. -my translation] (14)

The formation of the Second German Empire in 1871, nearly a decade before the dispute, lays an important foundation for the reasons behind both Treitschke's and Mommsen's articles. As mentioned above, when Germany became a unified nation, many of its regional peoples—*Stämme* ["tribes" in the sense of *Tacitus*]—relinquished ties to their local cultures in order to fit into the greater state. One conflict between Treitschke and Mommsen arose from their

disagreement about whether the Jews fell into the category of a *Stämme*, and whether the German Jewry had given up enough of their cultural distinctions to meld with the German national culture and “spirit.” For Treitschke, the Jews remained a separate, foreign group within Germany and antisemitism was a “natürliche Reaction des germanischen Volksgefühls” [a natural reaction of the German people] (4). Treitschke exaggerated the perception of Jews as a racially separated people whom he could never consider fully German, though some had resided in Germany for centuries.

In contrast, Mommsen viewed the German Jewry as merely another regional people in Germany: “in wie fern stehen nun die deutschen Juden anders innerhalb unseres Volkes als die Sachsen oder die Pommern?” [how far are the German Jews now any different from our own people as the Saxons or the Pommeranians? –my translation] (5) By Mommsen’s definition, the Jews belonged to Germany, and so even the racial implications of antisemitism were obsolete. He argued that if the descendants of a French colony settled years ago in Berlin were considered both historically and practically as German citizens, the why should the Jews who have been there just as long in reality, even longer be considered anything else?⁷

Mommsen’s Stance on Assimilation

Mommsen’s understanding of the German Jewry had important implications for his expectations of their assimilation, because although he scorned the antisemitic undertones of Treitschke’s demand that Jews should “become German,” Mommsen did not completely disagree with Treitschke’s statement (2). He wrote that the Jews must sacrifice some of their culture—just as the various German *Stämme* did—to be a part of the greater German nation which “ruht, darüber sind wir wohl alle einig, auf dem Zusammenhalten und in gewissen Sinn

⁷ “Historisch wie praktisch hat eben überall nur der Lebende Recht, so wenig, wie die Nachkommen der französischen Colonie in Berlin in Deutschland geborene Franzosen sind, so wenig sind ihre jüdischen Mitbürger etwas anderes als Deutsche” (5).

dem Verschmelzen der verschiedenen deutschen Stämme” [rest on one thing we all agree, on the holding-together and melding of the different German *Stämme*. –my translation] (4)

In some ways, Mommsen’s “liberalism” was restricted by his commitment to the German Reich, because while he argued against antisemitism and in favor of the social and political inclusion of Jews, he still made this inclusion conditional to a great sacrifice by the Jewish people. Mommsen either did not understand or did not care about the sacrifice he demanded—that the German Jews relinquish their religion, a cornerstone of their cultural identity, for the price of inclusion in the German state. This demand echoed Treitschke’s own call for assimilation.⁸ Christianity held a significant place in each man’s argument, as evidenced in *Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum*, where Mommsen wrote:

Die Schuld davon liegt allerdings zum Theil bei den Juden. Was das Wort „Christenheit“ einstmals bedeutete, bedeutet es heute nicht mehr voll; aber es ist immer noch das einzige Wort, welches den Character der heutigen internationalen Civilisation zusammenfaßt und in dem Millionen und Millionen sich empfinden als Zusammenstehende auf dem völkerreichen Erdball. (15)

[The guilt, however, lies in part with the Jews. What the word “Christianity” once meant, today it does not mean as fully; but it is still the only word which summarizes the character of today’s international civilization, and in which millions and millions feel they are held standing together on the people-rich planet. –my translation]

In spite of Mommsen’s opposition to Treitschke’s vitriolic article, to an extent each man believed that to be Jewish and to be German were mutually exclusive identities; the *extent* of

⁸ The significance of Christianity in the German spirit was further explored in “German Spirit and Holy Ghost—Treitschke’s Call for Conversion of German Jewry: The Debate Revisited” (2010) by George Kohler.

each man's belief in this impossibility is where they differ. Though Treitschke demands a Christian conversion to be considered fully German, Mommsen acknowledges Judaism as a divisive factor in the German nation-state, but he does not demand conversion, only secular assimilation. Because of this difference, Mommsen perceived the divisive nature of Treitschke's call for conversion as dangerous to national unity.

Undertones of the Berliner Antisemitismusstreit

While many scholars have focused on religious, antisemitic, and nationalist influences in the Berlin Antisemitism Dispute, in his essay "From Feuding Medievalists to the Berlin Antisemitism Dispute of 1879-1881," Daniel Schwartz analyzes the debate between Treitschke and Mommsen in the context of other academic disputes of the 1860s and 1870s. His analysis suggests that the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*—rather than merely a dispute over the "Jewish Question" in Germany—may instead have been colored by the personal and professional relationships of Treitschke, Mommsen, and other scholars of the period.

Schwartz's study of the dispute in the context of the academic relationships of the 1860s and 1870s reveals another important instance of Mommsen's supporting a Jew—his colleague and friend, Professor Phillip Jaffé. Though his name is largely forgotten today, in his time Jaffé was a well-known editor of Latin texts and the first Jewish professor to receive an appointment in Prussia. In Schwartz's own analysis of how the academic climate of the 1860s affected the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* of 1879, he cites Jaffé's antagonistic relationship with German scholar Georg Heinrich Pertz, who headed the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Although Mommsen eventually would take over editorship of that collection, the dispute between Jaffé and Pertz began some time earlier when Pertz overlooked Jaffé (and other noted scholars) and chose his son as his successor to the *MGH*. Their relations worsened dramatically when Pertz sabotaged Jaffé's chance for an appointment in the archives in Florence. Jaffé was nearly without

work, when his former teacher, Leopold von Ranke, and Theodor Mommsen stepped in to offer him an adjunct professorship at the University of Berlin. Mommsen's patronage extended further, and he helped Jaffé find a publisher for his work and supported his friend until Jaffé's suicide in 1870 (Schwartz 248).

While it may be tempting in the context of this thesis to argue that Mommsen's patronage stemmed from his respect and support of German-Jews, it is more accurate to account for other possible reasons for his support of Jaffé. These reasons include Mommsen's own disdain for Georg Pertz and his respect for the "kindred" work that he and Jaffé shared. The letters between the two men, as well as Mommsen's "warm and touching words" in an article memorializing Jaffé, show the relationship of the two men to be based on mutual respect and friendship, not merely political or professional positioning (Schwartz 253). Nevertheless, Mommsen's friendship with Jaffé may have influenced his role in the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, since his role as Jaffé's "defender" mirrored the stance he took against Treitschke's polemic a decade later.⁹

Personal Stances on the *Judenfrage*

Rudolf Eucken

Although Mommsen's defense of German-Jews in *Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum* expresses a tacit ambivalence regarding the cultural sacrifices the German Jewry would have to make for full German assimilation, his defense of and friendships with various German Jews¹⁰ showed his staunch opposition to the antisemitic movement. Just as Mommsen supported Philip Jaffé, Rudolf Eucken—the second German to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1908—

⁹ A more detailed analysis of the dispute between Georg Pertz and Phillip Jaffé, as well as other information about the academic disputes that may have later influence the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* can be found in Daniel Schwartz's "From Feuding Medievalists to the Berlin Antisemitism Dispute of 1879-1881."

¹⁰ Schwartz notes that Mommsen was friends with several well-known Jews, including the philologist Jacob Bernays, politician Ludwig Bamberger, and brothers Salomon and Théodor Reinach (255).

supported his Jewish students in both their academic work and their careers. As an *ordentlicher Professor* of philosophy at Jena, Eucken led a movement of other neoidealists (*Programm neoidealistischer Universalintegration*) that included many Jewish philosophers and scholars in addition to those of Catholic and Protestant background (Dathe 288; “Philosophie in Jena”). The most notable example of these *Anhänger* [supporters] was the Jewish scholar Max Scheler, for whose dissertation Eucken had served as advisor. Scheler started as a *Privatdozent* [lecturer] in philosophy at Jena because of Eucken’s influence, but his later work as a professor in Munich would move away from his starting point in Eucken’s popular idealism to phenomenology (“Rudolf Eucken-Nobel Lecture”; “Philosophie in Jena”). Eucken helped another of his former students, the Jewish philosopher Julius Goldstein, by supporting Goldstein when an antisemitic dispute erupted over his professorial appointment at the University of Darmstadt. The two men remained close friends, evidenced by the nineteen letters written by Goldstein from 1906 to 1926 which are still housed at the Eucken estate. Goldstein’s 1929 obituary in *Der Isrealist* also notes Eucken’s efforts on behalf of Goldstein at the University of Darmstadt (“Professor Julius Goldstein”).

In his study of “Der Nachlaß Rudolf Euckens. Eine Bestandsübersicht.” the German scholar Uwe Dathe notes that Goldstein, as well as two rabbis, several Protestant pastors, publicists, and scholars were included by Eucken on a list of those he considered his *Gesinnungsgenossen* [like-minded companions] (Dathe 288). In addition to those who directly corresponded with Eucken, Dathe considers Eucken’s connection to other authors by noting those who personally dedicated copies of their books to Eucken; among the fifty-five names Dathe mentions, six of these dedicators were Jewish, while two were noted anti-Semites (289). The combination of these groups shows the struggle Eucken perceived between forces of

“idealism” and “naturalism” overshadowed most concerns he may have had for political and religious differences (“Rudolf Eucken – Nobel Lecture”; Dathe 288).

The relationship between Rudolf Eucken and Henri Bergson—a fellow philosopher, the 1927 Nobel Laureate from France,¹¹ and a Jew—is emblematic of the complex tensions and ambiguous conflict surrounding issues of nationalism, assimilation, and the “Jewish Question” in early 20th-century Europe. Eucken and Bergson were both proponents of the “idealist” philosophy, and because of their similar work, they shared a supportive relationship prior to World War I. As a guest at the University of Jena, Bergson gave lectures and met with faculty, notably Eucken, at the *Philosophisches Fakultät* (“Philosophie in Jena”). Their close early relationship is demonstrated in the forward of Eucken’s major work *Der Sinn und Wert des Lebens*, in which Bergson praised Eucken respectfully. In the outbreak and aftermath of World War I, the relationship between the two men soured, overshadowed by intense feelings of nationalism (“Rudolf Eucken-Nobel Lecture”). In spite of the outcome of their relationship, it must be noted that Eucken’s dislike of Henri Bergson had no bearing on the Frenchman’s Jewish heritage, but rather on his French chauvinism.

Carl Spitteler

Like Eucken and Mommsen, 1919 Nobel laureate Carl Spitteler from Switzerland bore no form of prejudice against Jews in academia or as writers (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1919”). Specifically, because of Spitteler’s positive intervention (*Fürsprache*), Jonas Fränkel, a Swiss Jew, was appointed to the position of *außerordentlicher Professor ad personam* [untenured professor] in 1921 at the University of Bern in Switzerland (Feilchenfeldt 148). His efforts on behalf of Fränkel—like those of Eucken for his former students in philosophy—

¹¹ Bergson won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927 “in recognition of his rich and vitalizing ideas and the brilliant skill with which they have been presented” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1927”).

indicate his political and social liberalism with regard to the so-called *Judenfrage*. In contrast to the Jews of Germany, who in the 1880s still had restricted civil rights, the Jews of Switzerland were granted equal citizenship and the right to travel by 1876. The *Judenfrage*, though probably an issue in the appointment of Jonas Fränkel, was of far less immediate concern in Switzerland. There the percentage of Jews in the years 1871-1933 was extremely low—that is, much smaller in sheer numbers and percentage than in Germany, where the population of Jews at the time of Hitler's appointment in 1933 was circa 0.7 percent (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Hein).

Paul Heyse

Unlike the four aforementioned Nobel laureates, Paul Heyse, the third German to win Nobel Prize in 1910, seemed to avoid the political tension of the *Judenfrage* both in his works—largely well-crafted novellas set in non-political backdrops—and in life as part of the artistic circle surrounding Maximilian II, the King of Bavaria (Beebee; “The Nobel Prize in Literature 1910”). Heyse was prolific, a fact which the Swedish academy emphasized when they awarded him the prize "as a tribute to the consummate artistry, permeated with idealism, which he has demonstrated during his long productive career as a lyric poet, dramatist, novelist and writer of world-renowned short stories" ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 1910"). However, in his dramas, novels, short stories, and poems, Heyse seems to shy away from dealing with the *Judenfrage*, and only his autobiography *Jugenderinnungen und Bekenntnisse* (1900), provided an interesting perspective on German-Jewish relations. Heyse's ability to brush aside the implications of the *Judenfrage* in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Germany is especially interesting when one considers that, from his mother's family, he was essentially half-Jewish. Despite this heritage, Heyse was not raised learning about Jewish culture and religion; however, Heyse did speak briefly about his Jewish heritage in his autobiography.

Early in the discussion of his mother's family in *Jugenderinnerungen und Bekenntnisse*, Heyse wrote "So bin ich also nur von den Mutter Seite ein richtiges Berliner Kind" [so I am only from my mother's side a true Berlin child. –my translation.] (2). While this statement may seem innocuous, it immediately dismissed one of the major implications of the *Judenfrage*—the idea that German-Jews are not true Germans. Indeed, Heyse placed far more emphasis on the impressive education of his mother and her siblings than their Jewish heritage. His mother's family—the Saalings (a Christianized version of Salomon)—were wealthy jewelers well known in the educated Jewish salons of Berlin. This atmosphere created a cultural richness in both Heyse and his mother's early lives; Heyse postulated with fascination about his mother's education growing up:

Ich zweifle aber, dass sie je eine Schule besucht und auch nur im Hause einen regelmäßigen Unterricht genossen haben. In Französisch, Tanzen, Singen, feinen Handarbeiten hat man sie wohl ziemlich zwanglos unterrichtet und es ihnen selbst überlassen, sich nach Belieben weiterzubilden (3)

[But I doubt that she ever attended a school and also had enjoyed a regular education only at home. In French, dance, singing, fine handwork had been taught them informally, and they were left on their own to improve themselves further.-my translation]

In an anecdote about a smallpox epidemic [*Blatternepidemie*] that left his mother blind, Heyse noted that while many other Jewish families were vaccinated, his mother was not because of her grandmother's distrust of the medicine. Instead of scorning the superstition that led to this impairment, Heyse emphasized his mother's spirit, liveliness, and strength in the face of trial (3).

The Saaling family was an example of those Germany Jews who successfully assimilated into Germany society by abandoning their religious and cultural heritage. And much like

Mommsen, who thought this sacrifice important to true assimilation but believed discussion of conversion belonged in the *Kämmerlein* and not to “öffentliche Discussion” [public discussion], Heyse did not seem to take much interest in the political or personal reasons behind his maternal family’s assimilation (Mommsen 15). Of their conversion to Christianity, he stated only:

Wann und unter welchen Umständen die sechs Geschwister zum Christentum übertraten und ihren jüdischen Namen Salomon gegen den nicht allzu christlichen Saaling vertauschten, wüsste ich nicht zuzugeben, so wenig wie, wer die Paten waren, die meiner Mutter zu ihrem Rufnamen Julie die übrigen Namen gaben (4).

[When and under what circumstances the six siblings converted to Christianity and gave up their Jewish name Salomon in favor of the not too Christian Saaling, I do not claim to know, as little as I know who the godparents were who gave my mother her nickname Julie and the other names. –my translation].

Heyse did not spend many lines discussing his family’s conversion, and he referenced some stereotypical Jewish features several times. However, far from caricaturizing these features, Heyse mentioned them straightforwardly:

Fünf Geschwister, zwei Brüder und drei Schwestern, gingen ihr voran, sämtlich von der Natur glücklich ausgestattet mit lebhaftem Geist und einem schönen Äußeren, wie man es in gewissen aristokratischen jüdischen Familien findet. Nur die Züge des ältesten Bruders, Simon, und einer der Töchter, Klara, erinnerten an den bekannten semitischen Typus. Den anderen war ihre Abstammung nicht an den feinen geraden Nasen zu lesen, so wenig wie an den großen blauen Augen unter breitgeschwungenen Lidern (1).

[Five siblings, two brothers and three sisters, came before her altogether happy in their nature and with lively spirits and a beautiful exterior, such as one finds in certain

aristocratic Jewish families. Only the features of oldest brother, Simon, and one of the daughters, Klara, were reminiscent of the known Semitic type. The ancestry of the others could not be read in their fine straight noses, as little as in the big blue eyes wide with curved lids. –my translation.]

Though he mentioned a *bekanntem semitischen Typus* [known Semitic type], Heyse distinguished his mother and some of her siblings from this stereotype, calling their appearance that of an *aristokratischen jüdischen Familien* [aristocratic Jewish family] (1). This difference reveals a preference for Germanic features, such as blue eyes and straight noses; however, it did not necessarily betray any negativity towards the so-called Jewish stereotype on Heyse's part.

Thomas Mann

While Paul Heyse skirted stereotypes in his discussion of the Jewish features of his mother's family, Thomas Mann unrestrainedly drew on these stereotypes in his novella "Wälsungenblut" (1905) to caricature the Aarenholds, a German-Jewish family. The novella, which was based in part on and parodied Richard Wagner's opera *Die Walküre* (1870), portrays the characters of its protagonist-family with many negative Jewish stereotypes such as "drooping nose, intense black eyes, full lips and heavy beard" (Mann 290; Elsage 90). Frau Aarenhold in particular is negatively portrayed as "unmöglich" and "klein, hässlich, früh gealtert und wie unter einer fremden, heißen Sonne verdorrt" [small, ugly, prematurely aged and as if desiccated under a foreign, hot sun. –my translation] (187). Because of these caricatures, when "Wälsungenblut" was published in 1905 it created a scandal surrounding Mann. Mann had married into a bourgeoisie Jewish family, and the characterization in his short story were offensive to Mann's father-in-law, who demanded the text be taken out of print (Levesque 9).

The negative Jewish stereotypes Mann used in "Wälsungenblut" are problematic when considering Mann's own stance on the *Judenfrage*; however, many scholars agree, with ample

evidence,¹² that Mann himself was not an anti-Semite. Not only did he marry into a German-Jewish family, he also openly opposed the Nazi regime by fleeing Germany and spoke out against Hitler during World War II in a series of well-publicized broadcasts on the BBC (Marquardt 672). Why, then, did Mann choose to utilize, perhaps callously, the negative Jewish stereotype in his depiction of the Aarenholds? Upon closer inspection of these depictions, one can see that Mann was interacting with the same debate about assimilation as Treitschke and Mommsen during the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*.

The names of the characters themselves may provide insight into the way Mann interpreted the *Judenfrage*. The Aarenholds name alludes to Aaron, the elder brother of the biblical figure Moses, and this allusion emphasizes their Jewishness as much as their physical descriptions tie Frau and Herr Aarenhold to the Semitic stereotype. However, unlike their surname, the Aarenhold children all have very Germanic names: Kunz, Märit, Siegmund, and Sieglinde. These names are the first hint of assimilation, and the elder siblings Kunz and Märit embody two different paths of this assimilation. Kunz, who is a soldier in the *Husarenregiment*, represents assimilation through the military, while Märit, who studies the law and has stereotypical traits such as a “Hackennase” [hooknose] and “Raubvogelaugen” [raptor eyes], represents assimilation through emancipation and not through marriage (Mann 124).

In contrast to their older siblings, the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde exhibit arrogance about their social position which is not linked to their Jewish ancestry, but actually an internalized belief in their own importance that mirrors the growing belief in German exceptionalism at the start of the 20th century. Both Siegmund and Sieglinde are lazy, entitled,

¹² Among this evidence is Mann’s own marriage into a German-Jewish family, his staunch opposition to the Nazi regime expressed in his anti-Nazi radio speeches for the BBC broadcast “Deutsche Hörer!” When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Mann, vacationing in Switzerland with his wife, elected not to return to Germany. He was officially exiled in 1936, when the Nazi government revoked his German citizenship (Levesque, Klugkist, Marquardt).

and egotistical; for instance, Siegmund's ablutions are described in great detail to showcase his narcissism:

Siegmund machte Toilette für die Oper, und zwar seit einer Stunde. Ein außerordentliches und fortwährendes Bedürfnis nach Reinigung war ihm eigen, dergestalt, daß er einen beträchtlichen Teil des Tages vorm Lavoir verbrachte. Er stand jetzt vor seinem großen, weißgerahmten Empire-Spiegel, tauchte den Puderquast in die getriebene Büchse und puderte sich Kinn und Wangen, die frisch rasiert waren; denn sein Bartwuchs war so stark, daß er, wenn er abends ausging, genötigt war, sich ein zweitesmal davon zu säubern (133).

[Siegmund made ablution for the opera, and indeed it lasted an hour. An extraordinary and constant need for cleaning was peculiar to him, to such a degree that he spent a considerable part of the day in front of the basin. He stood before his big white-rimmed Empire mirror, dipped the powder brush into the tin and powdered his chin and cheeks, which were freshly shaved; for his beard was so thick that when he went out evenings, he needed to shave himself a second time. –my translation].

While Mann was clearly emphasizing Siegmund's vanity in this scene, he also underscored the man's idleness, which contrasts with the busy, productive lives of his siblings and the apparent diligence of his father, who has worked hard to maintain his wealthy lifestyle. Through this contrast, Mann may have been promoting a productive, assimilated lifestyle over one of laziness and arrogance, rather than merely mocking a Semitic stereotype. Nevertheless, Mann's use of stereotypical Semitic traits, such as the Märk's "Hackennase" and Siegmund's heavy beard creates a tension in this reading of "Wälsungenblut".

We have yet to answer an important question: why did Mann portray the Aarenholds with antisemitic stereotypes? In addition to engaging with the assimilation debate surrounding German Jews, characterizing the Aarenholds, in particular the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde, enabled Mann to mock the twins' vanity by mirroring Wagner's opera *Die Walküre*, while also using the opera in his novella to create an acute irony about the twins' self-perception, and their ultimately incestuous relationship. In Act 1 of *Die Walküre*, the hero Siegmund, who is fleeing from his enemies, finds shelter with the lovely maiden Sieglinde, who is actually married to the warrior Hunding. Although they do not realize it, Siegmund and Sieglinde are twins, the children of Wotan (Odin), who were separated at birth. As they fall in love with one another, a jealous Hunding challenges Siegmund to a duel; but in the night Sieglinde drugs her husband and tells her lover-twin about a weapon he can successfully use for the duel. At the end of the act, the two realize that they are twins and passionately embrace as both siblings and lovers.

In "Wälsungenblut", Mann intentionally mirrored the first act of *Die Walküre*. Though the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde know of their familial relations, Mann's descriptions of their characters—"ähnlich," "feucht," always "Hand und Hand" [similar, moist, hand in hand], and seemingly able to understand each other with a single glance—develops an inexorable attraction between the twins. Their intense connection leaves no room for Herr Beckerath, Sieglinde's Gentile betrothed, thus casting him in the role of Hunding. By making the Aarenhold twins love Wagner's opera, which they want to attend together, *without* Beckerath, Thomas Mann intentionally developed an irony regarding the Jewish twins and their love for an opera by Wagner, who was a vehement anti-Semite.¹³ Through this irony, Mann poked fun both at the

¹³ In September 1850, Richard Wagner pseudonymously published an article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in Leipzig, entitled "Das Judenthum in der Musik" [*Judaism in Music*]. Today considered one of the founding documents of modern antisemitism, the essay attacked Jews, Judaism, and in particular the composers (and Wagner's rivals) Felix Mendelssohn and Giacomo Meyerbeer (Weiner). The animosity Wagner felt towards

arrogance of his Jewish characters and at Wagner himself, by showing that they are united by this opera.

Scholars have disagreed about how to interpret Mann's decision to use anti-Semitic stereotypes to portray the incestuous twins Sigmund and Sieglinde and the Aarenhold family in "Wälsungenblut." But in dealing with Thomas Mann, one cannot omit the function of irony in his works. Specifically, for "Wälsungenblut", irony comes to the fore in a number of ways: Jews as ardent fans of the rabid anti-Semite Richard Wagner, their incestuous relations paralleling that of the Germanic heroes Wagner immortalized musically in the *Ring*-cycle, and their own contemptuous and dismissive opinions about Sieglinde's ineffectual, socially awkward bridegroom, a "goi" (Levesque 15; Whiton 40).

While the role of incest in Wagner's opera is distanced by its mythic proportions, the incest in Mann's "Wälsungenblut" is immediate, domestic, and therefore more shocking and incomprehensible. When considering how the Jewish-characterization factors into this shocking incest, Alan Levenson argues that Mann's intention was to comment on the "debate over intermarriage and its relationship to the 'Jewish Question' which argued that Jews' refusal to intermarry posed the greatest threat to German-Jewish amity because it signaled a refusal of Jews to embrace their *Deutschthum*" (136). Levenson argues that by making the Aarenholds, and most important Siegmund and Sieglinde, Jewish, Mann was engaging in the same debate about Jewish assimilation as Mommsen, Eucken, Heyse, and Spitteler did before him, albeit with various levels of commitment: the debate surrounding the *Judenfrage* in early 20th-century Germany and its attendant social, cultural, and political ramifications.

Meyerbeer, whose music was more popular in Paris at the time, may have been a catalyst for this polemic. Wagner's antisemitism is explored in detail in Joan Thomas's "Giacomo Meyerbeer: The Jew and His Relationship to Richard Wagner," Paul Lawrence Rose's *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner.*, and Marc Weiner's *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination.* See works cited.

Chapter II: Conscious Opportunism and Conscientious Objection

Gerhart Hauptmann

The Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature to Gerhart Hauptmann "primarily in recognition of his fruitful, varied and outstanding production in the realm of dramatic art" ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 1912"). Though he was awarded the prize in 1912, Gerhart Hauptmann had been nominated several times before and thrice by his Jewish contemporaries, the professors Max von Waldberg and Frederick Pollock in 1902, and Richard Meyer and Erich Schmidt in 1912. Hauptmann himself also nominated a Jewish author, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, for the award in 1919 ("Nomination Database"). These instances are both a tribute to the playwright's impressive reputation in early 20th century Germany and his amiable relationship to Jews in Germany prior to National Socialism.

Aged fifty at the time of his award, Hauptmann became one of the most celebrated literary figures of the Weimar Republic. The dramatist Klaus Mann called him the "Hindenburg der deutschen Literatur" [Hindenburg of German literature], and many linked his name to Goethe, the most celebrated German writer¹⁴ (Grenville 1; Scheller 61). His birthday a decade later was cause for national celebration, and his dramas were read and performed widely during his life (Grenville 1). Hauptmann's early and continued successes suggested that history would be kind to the dramatist, but though his works are still regarded by some as fine examples of Naturalism, Hauptman is no longer widely read outside of schools and the academy. Much of this phenomenon directly rests upon Gerhart Hauptman's reputation, which has been decidedly—and I propose rightfully so—blackened by his decision to remain in Germany under the Third Reich.

¹⁴ For a detailed account of Gerhart Hauptmann's public behavior and reputation during the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist regime, see Guthke, Karl S. "Der 'König der Weimarer Republik': Gerhart Hauptmanns Rolle in der Öffentlichkeit zwischen Kaiserreich und Nazi-Regime" in works cited.

When Adolf Hitler gained power in 1933, many notable figures of German literature fled the country in either self-imposed or forced exile. Among those who fled were the dramatist Bertholt Brecht and Thomas Mann, whose complicated position in the study of German-Jewish relations has been analyzed in the previous chapter. Unlike his contemporaries, Gerhart Hauptmann, then aged seventy, elected to remain in his homeland, which was now fully under the control of National Socialism. His decision to remain in Germany and, at least outwardly, accept the rule and ideology of the Nazi regime, leaves a black mark on Hauptmann's reputation that is difficult to reconcile with the numerous accounts of his friendships with various German Jews. Contemporaries, friends, and scholars of Hauptmann have sought and continue to seek explanations for this contradiction by trying to understand Hauptmann's actions and intentions both before and during the reign of National Socialism (Grenville 1, "Gerhart Hauptmann—Facts").

Perhaps the most forgiving of Hauptmann's critics is the scholar Walter Reichart, who argues that the playwright's works "loom large" in German and European literature and "should not be obscured by any present day pettifogging" (125). Much of Reichart's ardent defense rests upon his own respect for Hauptmann's literary works, of which Reichart claims that "despite the war, despite the Nazi regime" they will "continue to command the attention of scholars as well as the rank and file of German readers" (125). Seeking to reconcile Hauptmann's impressive literary achievements with his controversial relationship to National Socialism, Reichart is quick to dismiss the possibility that Hauptmann was a willing participant in the Third Reich, claiming that "he [Hauptmann] never troubled himself about politics and has remained naïve in political matters [so he was] frequently claimed as an adherent by various parties and groups" (127).

Attesting to Hauptmann's decision to remain in Germany after 1933, Reichart argues that the playwright's choices masked a form of passive rebellion, akin to "inner emigration"¹⁵ (127).

However, many of Hauptmann's actions under the Third Reich were not as passive as Reichart implies and lean more towards sycophancy. Nevertheless, Reichart elects to portray Hauptmann as a victim of history and circumstance, writing that:

Much that Hauptmann wrote during these difficult years [1933-44] reflects his feeling of loneliness, helplessness, and despair in a hostile world. Hauptmann was isolated, cut off from the rest of the world, a stranger and suspect among his own people, uncertain even that he would live to see the end of this nightmare. (128)

Reichart's emphasis of Hauptmann's distress after 1933 is darkly ironic, when compared to the plight of Jews in Germany at that time, and his analysis of the authors behavior is discounted by later evidence.

An apologetic, yet more even-handed analysis of Hauptmann's behavior is offered in the essay "Gerhart Hauptman unter der Herrschaft des Nazismus" by Felix Voigt. Voigt was director of a state gymnasium in upper Silesia and a popular figure in the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* [German Democratic Party]. He was forced to resign both positions after Hitler became Chancellor in 1933 and instated the *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums* [Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service]. Voigt moved to Neustadt in southern Silesia, where he met and befriended Gerhart Hauptmann; in 1937 the two even spent time together in Rapallo, Italy, a favorite vacation spot for the dramatist (Voigt 298). This friendship may have influenced Voigt's forgiving depiction of Hauptmann in his essay. Somewhat of an

¹⁵ For an analysis of the debate surrounding "inner emigration" in 20th century Germany, see Kleineberger H.R. "The 'Innere Emigration': A Disputed Issue in 20th Century German Literature in works cited.

“apologist” of Hauptmann’s choices post-1933, Voigt cites the dramatist’s deep connection to his home and his old age:

Ich gehe nicht ins Ausland, da ich ein alter Mann bin und, an meine Heimat gebunden, nur hier schaffen kann. Ich möchte nur noch die paar Sachen, die ich im Kopfe habe, zu Ende schreiben. Freilich—sobald man auch nur eins meiner Werke verböte oder mich nicht das schreiben ließe, was ich schreiben muß, dann allerdings müßte ich die Heimat verlassen. (298)

[I do not go abroad because I am an old man and bound to my home, can only create here. I would like only to finish the few things in my head that I have left to write. Of course—as soon as one of my works were to be forbidden or if I were not allowed to write that which I must write, then I would have to leave home. —my translation]

These words, spoken to Voigt by Gerhart Hauptmann in 1937 seem to suggest that the aging writer and beloved national figure was a sort of passive victim to National Socialism; however, later evidence regarding Hauptmann’s relationship to Nazism will prove that implication false.

For now, we return to Voigt’s essay to answer the same question asked about Thomas Mann in the previous chapter: Do any of the author’s works promote antisemitic or Nazi ideology? Voigt replies in the negative and goes on to deal with several of Hauptmann’s dramas, arguing that “Denn ein Tendenzdichter im eigentlichen Sinne ist Hauptmann nie gewesen.”¹⁶ [Hauptmann has never been a tendentious-writer in the actual sense—my translation] (298). In his avoidance of overt political themes, Hauptmann can be compared to Paul Heyse; however, the style and content of Hauptmann’s dramas do clash with his apparent political apathy. For instance, one of Hauptmann’s most well know plays, *Die Weber* (published 1892), is a Naturalist

¹⁶ For an analysis of these dramas, including *Iphigenie in Aulis*, *Das Meerwunder*, and *Die Finsternisse*, see Voigt’s essay “Gerhart Hauptmann unter der Herrschaft des Nazismus” (288-89).

drama depicting the 1844 uprising of textile weavers in Silesia against their harsh working conditions. In addition to setting the play in his home-state, Hauptmann had an even more personal connection to the uprising through his friendship with Max Pinkus, who was Jewish and who ran a textile factory in Neustadt. Nevertheless, when establishment powers in 1890 became angered by the play's overt political message, Hauptmann gave way to their demands, softened his stance and stated that the play was meant only to "arouse sympathy for its characters" (Grenville 1).

This anecdote severely undercuts Voigt's concluding argument excusing Hauptmann's choices under the Third Reich:

Die Frage, ob Gerhart Hauptmann richtig oder falsch gehandelt habe, ist in dieser Form gänzlich unzutreffend. Er hat als Gerhart Hauptmann gehandelt und blieb er selbst. Die geistigen Kämpfe, die er mit den Dämonen seines Inneren ausficht, sind tiefer und ewiger als der Streit um eine vergängliche Staatsform. Und gegen die Untaten des Nazismus ist sein ganzes Werk ein einziger Protest, gesprochen freilich nicht nur zu den kurzlebigen Menschen seiner Zeit, sondern zu der Menschheit. (302)

[The question of whether Gerhart Hauptmann behaved rightly or wrongly is, in this form, entirely inaccurate. He behaved as Gerhart Hauptmann and remained himself. The spiritual battles he fought with the demons of his inner being are deeper and more eternal than the dispute over a transitory form of government. And against the misdeeds of Nazism, his whole work is a single protest, not only to the ephemeral men of his time, but to mankind. —my translation]

First of all, by arguing earlier in his essay that Hauptmann was not a "Tendenzdichter," Voigt himself admitted that Hauptmann did not tend to promote political ideals in his works. Second,

Hauptmann's own actions during the conflict about staging *Die Weber* in 1890 show that, in his life and actions, the playwright's sense of self-preservation often contradicted the lofty convictions of his artistic works.

Other scholars, even some of Hauptmann's contemporaries, recognized this character weakness. Anthony Grenville calls him an author who even before 1933 "ceased to present more than the outward façade of a great man of letters" (1). In his best-known novel *Der Zauberberg* [*The Magic Mountain*] (1924), Thomas Mann caricatured Hauptmann as Mynheer Peeperkorn,¹⁷ a Polonius-like character whose impressive reputation masks a banal, pompous, and hypocritical personality (2). Although Mann brazenly drew inspiration from his relationship to his wife's Jewish family when writing *Wälsungenblut*, Mann seemed to feel sincere guilt over the caricature of Hauptmann, writing to his friend that:

I have sinned against you. I was in need, was led into temptation, and yielded to it. [...] I did so blinded by the passionate conviction, foreknowledge, certainty, that in my transmutation (for, of course it was not a question of a portrait, but of a transmutation and stylization into a totally foreign element, in which even the externals were barely akin to reality) I should be able to create the most remarkable character of a book which, I no longer doubt, is itself remarkable. (Winston 128)

Though Mann spoke out against National Socialism in scathing essays and on his anti-Nazi radio broadcast "Deutsche Hörer!," the sense of guilt surrounding this caricature may have blunted some of his own criticism of Hauptmann (Marquardt 673). In a letter to the German scholar Harry Slochowver (9 January 1943), Thomas Mann suggests that Hauptmann should be treated with more humanely than the regime he supported has treated its victims:

¹⁷ For more on the connection between Mann's character, Mynheer Peeperkorn, and Gerhart Hauptmann, see Heilbut, Anthony. *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature* (414) in works cited.

Mit Hauptmann gehen Sie milde um. Und man soll es auch, trotz der persönlichen Bessessen, der er sich reichlich hat zuschulden kommen lassen. Die Unangepaßtheiten in dem Teil seines Werkes, den er innerhalb der Reichs-Kulturkammer getan, sind immerhin bemerkenswert. (II: 289)

[Treat Hauptmann mildly. And one should do so, in spite of the personal possessions that allowed himself to be at fault. The inconsistencies in the part of his work which he has done within the *Reichs-Kulturkammer* are nevertheless noteworthy. —my translation]

One can imagine the discomfort Mann, an outspoken opponent of National Socialism, must have felt writing these words. That discomfort compounded after the war, when Hauptmann's widow requested Mann give a speech at a 1952 festival honoring the dramatist in Frankfurt. Though he gave a complementary (at least superficially) speech at the event, Mann expressed his frustrations in a letter to his friend Hans Reisiger a month earlier, calling his situation "beschwerlich und störend" [burdensome and disruptive] (III: 267-68). For the experienced writer composing the speech was hardly troublesome; rather, the idea of presenting a complimentary speech about Hauptmann, a man whose decisions for the past decade he abhorred, was onerous and morally taxing, and that despite their former closeness.

Up to this point, we have focused mainly on the reactions and attitudes of those who knew Hauptmann; now we turn to the deeds and decisions of the man himself.¹⁸ Not only did Hauptmann choose to remain in Germany after 1933, many of his choices can be easily traced to opportunistic motives. He expressed public approval for National Socialism and became an official member of the NSDAP in 1933, just as Hitler was beginning to close the party to new membership (Mann 294; Grenville 1). Thereafter, Hauptmann joined the *Reichstheaterkammer*, a

¹⁸ For a detailed account of Hauptmann's life under and connection to the National Socialist regime, see Sprengel, Peter. *Der Dichter stand auf hoher Küste. Gerhart Hauptmann im Dritten Reich*. Berlin: Propyläen, 2009. Print.

bureau organized by Reichsminister Joseph Goebbels that permitted artists in Nazi Germany to work in the theater (1). One could argue that submitting to Nazi policy was necessary for survival in the Third Reich¹⁹; however, Gerhart Hauptmann was engaged beyond the point of passive participation. Speaking about his first meeting with Hitler at the opening of the Reichskulturkammer, Hauptmann stated that “my meeting with Hitler was the climax and reward of my life” (Grenville 1; Scheller 62). He publicly supported Nazi policies, and even went so far to claim that “Hitler is the greatest German since Luther”²⁰ (Grenville 1).

To counter, or at least temper, these incriminating remarks, some scholars reference Hauptmann’s friendships with Jews, both before and under the Third Reich. In 1922, Hauptmann defended Walter Rathenau, a German-Jewish statesman and foreign minister [Außenminister] who was assassinated by right-wing extremists—bitterly angered by the draconian measures of the Treaty of Versailles (1919)—for his work removing trade barriers with Russia. Hauptmann’s voice was instrumental in crafting the public image of Rathenau as a martyr for Germany:

Walter Rathenau, ein Deutscher, während des Krieges und nach dem Kriege von heißer Vaterlandsliebe bewegt, hat seine geniale Kraft für sein Wohl und seinen Aufstieg eingesetzt und ist für sein Vaterland den Tod eines Helden gestorben. (Sprengel 99)

[Walter Rathenau, a German, who during the war and after the war {WWI} was moved by passion for his fatherland, has put his brilliant power into the prosperity and rise and has died a hero’s death for his fatherland.—my translation]

²⁰ Comparing Adolf Hitler, the demagogue of National Socialism, to Martin Luther, the seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, is apt because both men were vehement anti-semites. For more information on Luther’s antisemitic tendencies and the connection between his early prejudice and the racism of Nazi Germany, see: Mark Edwards’ “Martin Luther and the Jews: Is there a Holocaust Connection?”; Heinz Kremer’s *Die Juden und Martin Luther—Martin Luther und die Juden: Geschichte, Weilangsgedichte, Herausforderung*; Christopher Probst’s *Damning the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* in works cited.

The Nazi party forbade all mention of Rathenau when they came to power in 1933, but Hauptmann's compliance was, at best, partial. When his Jewish friend, the textile factory owner Max Pinkus, died in 1934, the town of Neustadt forbade its citizens from attending the funeral. In a rare act of defiance, Hauptmann's personal conviction overcame his sense of self-preservation, and he not only attended the ceremony, but delivered an elegy for his friend (Grenville 1). Felix Voigt attests to another instance of Hauptmann defending his Jewish friends. At a dinner gathering in 1944, one of the guests, a "früherer völkischer Anwalt und verbohrter Nationalsozialist" [early *völkisch* lawyer and stubborn National Socialist] began a vitriolic speech against Judaism. The guest soon felt the fury of Hauptmann's sharp tongue, and despite the presence of the Oberbürgermeister and other Nazi officials, the playwright began to speak of German-Jews such as Otto Brahm, Max Reinhardt, and Gustav Mahler, praising the "menschlichen Eigenschaften und unauslöschbaren kulturellen Leistungen der Juden" [Human characteristics and inextinguishable cultural achievements of the Jews] (Voigt 300). Despite Hauptmann's outburst, the Nazi officials treated the elderly playwright with indifference, sending an almost laughably forgiving letter to his wife that said, "man muss ihn also wohl auf seiner 'Insel der seligen' weiterleben lassen." [So one must leave him to continue to live on the Isle of Elysium.—my translation] (300).

Hauptmann's support of Jews under the Third Reich did not extend beyond those who were his close friends, and his public statements in favor of National Socialism even enraged some of these former friends. In late 1933, Hauptmann penned an article for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, expressing his approval of Nazi-Germany's decision to withdraw from the League of Nations (Scheller 62). More than any other of Hauptmann's public statements, the foreboding article—entitled "Ich Sage Ja!" [I Say Yes!]¹—was the final straw for theater critic Alfred Kerr,

an assimilated Jew who vehemently opposed the Nazi regime. In an article for the socialist journal *Deutsche Freiheit*, Kerr delivered a blistering denunciation of his former friend:

Since yesterday there is nothing in common between him [Hauptmann] and me, neither in life nor in death. I do not know this coward. [...] Not only has he found no word of condemnation for these most barbarous of barbarians. He does not wish to risk his economic status. So he has not simply ducked: he fawns. [...] With the respect he universally enjoys he could have dealt a blow to the reputations of these murderers, slaves, hangmen, liars, violators of every law, who hunt down before his eyes his own weaver folk [referring Hauptmann's historical drama *Die Weber* (1893)] and men whose sold crime is their birth. [...] Out of fright, out of desire for gain, out of sordid weakness, he used his last ounce of strength to hoist the Hackenkreuz [swastika] rag on his dwelling. [...] Hauptmann has deserted to the enemy. (Solow 64)

As a Jew in Germany of the 1930s, Kerr faced the immediate dangers of the National Socialist regime, so his condemnation of Hauptmann's acquiescence was far more personal and biting than that of Thomas Mann or of other scholars concerning Hauptmann's creative work and public life.

“So he has not simply ducked: he fawns”—with these words Alfred Kerr aptly locates the most incriminating behavior of Gerhart Hauptmann under the Nazi regime. Hauptmann's stance on political and personal matters was always ambivalent and highly subject to outside pressures; nevertheless, under Hitler's Third Reich, he exhibited a “bewußten Opportunismus” [conscious opportunism] (“Ich fühle das Ereignis” 127). Hauptmann did not always fawn over National Socialism; in 1932, he wrote that “Der NS ist eine große Kinderei” [National Socialism is a great whimsy. —my translation] (“Ich fühle das Ereignis” 131). However, after hearing Hitler's

Reichstag speech in May 1933, Hauptmann succumbed to the nationalist fervor. After listening to Hitler call Jews “Weltbrandstifter” [world arsonists] and label Winston Churchill²¹ a “wahnsinniger Säufer” [insane drunkard], Hauptmann wrote of the experience in his diary, calling his Führer a “Platonist, also Ideenmensch, eigentlich human, national und europäisch universell” [Platonist, that is, ideas man, truly human, universally national and European—my translation] (131).

Hauptmann’s evident approval of Nazi fascism undercuts arguments that he practiced only ‘inner emigration’ or passive cooperation under the Third Reich. In addition to his personal infatuation with Adolf Hitler, Hauptmann had already met Benito Mussolini in 1929 and expressed his admiration for the order of Italy’s fascist government.²² Concerning the *Anschluss* [annexation] of Austria in 1938, he stated “Ich fühle das Ereignis im Blut” [I feel the event in my blood] (“Ich fühle das Ereignis 131). After Hitler’s Blitzkrieg victories, Hauptmann even stated that “Deutschland steht vor der Weltherrschaft...Dazu bedurfte die Geschichte Adolph Hittlers (sic) Weltgenie” [German stand before world domination...thereto history is in need of Adolf Hitler’s world genius] (131).

Was Gerhart Hauptmann himself an anti-Semite? In spite of his personal friendship and admiration with Jews such as Walter Rathenau and Max Pinkus, he was not immune to expressing antisemitic sentiments. Responding to the bitter denunciation by his former friend Alfred Kerr, Hauptmann wrote a bitter entry in his journal, calling his former friend a “Geldseele” [money soul] and “sittlich abstoßend... nur ein Ghettojude” [morally repulsive...only a Ghetto Jew] (“Ich fühle das Ereignis” 131). While this entry expresses an

²¹ Churchill would be awarded the Noble Prize for literature in 1953 “for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1953”).

²²Of this meeting Hauptmann wrote, “Mussolini hat Ordnung geschafft...ich würde seine Methode modifiziert auf Deutschland anwenden“ [Mussolini created order...I would apply his modified method to Germany.—my translation] (“Ich fühle das Ereignis” 129)

instance of intense emotional distress, the charged antisemitism behind his insults certainly suggest antisemitic prejudice, which was undoubtedly enflamed by the fanatical hatred of National Socialism. Yet even this case pales in comparison with one final anecdote, discovered by Hans Brecius²³ when he was going through Hauptmann's *Nachlaß* [unpublished material found after his death]: in 1942, Hauptmann received an anonymous document describing the scope and details of the "Final Solution"—the Nazi party's plan to exterminate all Jews in Europe. Did the once-socialist playwright, a friend to several Jews, use his influence and popularity to publicly reveal this atrocity and decry its perpetrators? No; instead, the document was filed in Hauptmann's *Nachlaß* under the rubric "Kuriositäten, Psychopathen" [Curiosities, Psychopaths] ("Ich fühle das Ereignis" 131).

Gerhart Hauptmann as viewed by Hesse, Böll, Canetti

Hermann Hesse

Gerhart Hauptmann's ambivalence to politics did little, if anything, to counter his predisposition toward nationalist sentiments. Hermann Hesse, the Nobel laureate for literature in 1946, recognized this nationalistic tendency in Hauptmann (as well as the German nation) as early as World War I. Hesse's third marriage to Ninon (née Ausländer), who was of German descent and his own pacifistic tendencies caused the author to clash often with the more nationalistic elements of the German literary community ("Hermann Hesse—Biographical"). He cautioned intellectuals and artists from engaging in (or protesting) the wars, and encouraged his fellow artists to remain neutral for the sake of reuniting Europe after the war.²⁴ In a letter to his friend Samuel Fischer (1919), an established Hungarian-Jewish publisher in Berlin who had also

²³ The details of this discovery are noted in the *Der Spiegel* article "Ich fühle das Ereignis."

²⁴ Although Hermann Hesse abhorred war and espoused peace, he also pushed for his fellow artists to remain neutral and cultivate ideals of humanity in their literary works. These somewhat contradictory sentiments are expressed in his 1914 essay, "O Freunde, nicht diese Töne" [O Friends, not these Tones], which alludes to the *chorale* movement Beethoven's 9th symphony.

published Hauptmann and Thomas Mann, Hesse discussed his displeasure and discomfort with the positions of German poet Richard Dehmel and Gerhart Hauptmann on World War I:

Mit Dehmel mögen Sie ganze recht haben, seine Ganzheit als Typ verehere und liebe auch ich. Ich empfand nur eben bei seinem Buch ganz plötzlich die Kluft, die ihn von der heutigen Jugend trennt. Es ist mit Hauptmann dieselbe Sache und mit der Stellung der deutschen Dichter zur Politik [...] (*Ausgewählte Briefe* 13)

[With Dehmel it is possible to be wholly right, I adore and also love his wholeness as a type. Only I even found in his book quite suddenly a gap, which separates him from today's youth. It is the same thing with Hauptmann and with the position of the German poets to the politics [...]—my translation]

During his youth, Hesse expressed interest in Hauptmann's naturalistic dramas. However, the passage of time and pressures of the early 20th century suppressed any respect he had for his fellow Nobel Laureate, culminating in Hesse's statement that "In meinem ganzen späteren Leben hat Hauptmann keine Rolle mehr gespielt" [Hauptmann played no role in the whole of my later life—my translation] (*Ausegewählte Briefe* 376).

Compelled by a somewhat-contradictory personal sense of duty to serve alongside his fellow artists, Hesse enlisted as a volunteer in the Imperial Army in 1914 but was found unfit to serve because of age and poor eyesight (Mileck 41). As nationalist tendencies ran hot in the years during and between the two World Wars, Hesse was largely immune to this ideological furor²⁵ (42). His unyielding stance against German nationalism drove a wedge between the writer and his native country, and Hesse eventually abandoned Germany and emigrated to Switzerland (41). In the biographical information on the Nobel Prize for Literature website, Hesse wrote of these events himself:

²⁵ For original source, see Hesse, Hermann "O Freunde nicht diese Töne" in works cited.

Soon after I settled in Switzerland in 1912, the First World War broke out, and each year brought me more and more into conflict with German nationalism; ever since my first shy protests against mass suggestion and violence I have been exposed to continuous attacks and floods of abusive letters from Germany. (“Hermann Hesse – Biographical”)

Although elements of nationalism existed in German society even in the late 1800s, the blatant antagonism and unrest of German society after World War I and the Treaty of Versailles are evident in Hesse’s description of his treatment (Mileck 42). Whether this social climate can help to account for Gerhart Hauptmann’s decision to stay in Germany remains uncertain; however, it is clear that when confronted with the pressures nationalism, antisemitism, and the censure of his fatherland, Hermann Hesse sustained his own personal conviction and rejected such nonsense.

Heinrich Böll

Heinrich Böll, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972, dealt with the aftermath of these events and the strong influences of his preceding laureates several decades after World War II and the Holocaust. Born in Cologne in 1917, Böll came of age under the shadow cast by the Third Reich, yet unlike Hauptmann, he rejected the National Socialist regime and refused to join the *Hitlerjugend*, a youth organization within the Nazi party (Kater 24). The Allied bombing of Cologne greatly impacted Böll and triggered the blunt style and pessimistic themes of his literary works, such as *Der Zug war pünktlich* [*The Train Was on Time*] (1949) and *Wo warst du, Adam?* [*Where Were You, Adam?*] (1951)—novels in the subgenre *Trümmerliteratur* [literally, rubble-literature] that deal with the poverty, destruction, guilt, pessimism, and post-traumatic stress in Germany after World War II. Nevertheless, even in Böll’s darker works, the Swedish Academy of 1972 identified a guiding light for the renewal of a “German Spirit.” At the award ceremony, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, Karl Ragnar Gierow, stated:

There is however another reality which Böll's writing continually requires: the background to his existence, the air his generation breathed, the heritage into which it came. [...] The renewal of German literature, to which Heinrich Böll's achievements witness... is a rebirth out of annihilation, a resurrection, a culture which, ravaged by icy nights and condemned to extinction, sends up new shoots, blossoms, and matures to the joy and benefit of us all. Such was the kind of work Alfred Nobel wished his Prize to reward. ("Award Ceremony Speech 1972")

Members of the Swedish Academy were not the first to recognize Böll's moralistic mission; noted philosopher, Theodor Adorno, and the Holocaust survivor Jean Améry—an Austrian Jew and partisan fighter who was captured and tortured by Nazis in World War II—both praised Heinrich Böll for his independence, integrity, and keen sense of right and wrong (Sackett 336).

In his Banquet Speech, Heinrich Böll discussed the work involved in this renewal effort and the difficulties faced by German recipients of the Nobel Prize attempting to understand and overcome the horrors of early twentieth-century Germany history. Referring to Thomas Mann (1929) and Herman Hesse (1949), two writers previously discussed, and Nelly Sachs (1966), who was forced to flee Germany because of her Jewish heritage, Böll stated:

Mit Bangen denke ich an meine deutschen Vorgänger hier, die innerhalb dieser verfluchten Dimension Eigentlichkeit keine Deutschen mehr sein sollten. Nelly Sachs, von Selma Lagerlöf gerettet, nur knapp dem Tod entronnen. Thomas Mann, vertrieben und ausgebürgert. Hermann Hesse, aus der Eigentlichkeit ausgewandert, schon lange kein deutscher Staatsbürger mehr, als er hier geehrt wurde. ("Heinrich Böll - Banquet Speech")

[With anxiety I think of my German predecessors here, who within these cursed dimensions should no more be authentically German. Nelly Sachs, rescued by Selma Lagerlöf, only narrowly escaped death. Thomas Mann, expatriated and exiled. Hermann Hesse, emigrated from the realm, already long no more a German citizen than when he was honored here {at these ceremonies}]

In his careful mention of Gerhart Hauptmann in the next lines of the speech, Heinrich Böll can be compared to Thomas Mann, who also was reticent to comment on the aged playwright's acceptance of National Socialism:

Fünf Jahre vor meiner Geburt, vor sechzig Jahren, stand hier der letzte deutsche Preisträger für Literatur, der in Deutschland starb, Gerhart Hauptmann. Er hatte seine letzten Lebensjahre in einer Version Deutschland verlebt, in die er wohl trotz einiger Mißverständlichkeiten nicht hineingehörte. (2)

[Five years before my birth, sixty years ago, here stood the last German Laureate for Literature who died in Germany, Gerhart Hauptmann. He had spent his last years of life in a version of Germany, to which, in spite of some misconceptions, he did not belong. —my translation]

Heinrich Böll's description of Hauptmann's acquiescence as a series of "Mißverständlichkeiten" [misconceptions] expressed some of Böll's disappointment, but ultimately glossed over the issue of Hauptmann's willing participation in National Socialist regime; however, Böll's leniency must be weighed against the, then, scant availability of details surrounding Hauptmann's behavior under the Third Reich.

In her book, *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust*, Ernestine Schlant argues that Böll's "acute moral conscience" conflicted with "unconscious [...]"

prejudices against Jews”; however, her argument is oversimplified and overly critical of the writer (36). Robert E. Sacket, another Böll scholar, offers a more nuanced discussion of this issue in his essay “Germans, Guilt, and the Second Threshold of Heinrich Böll: A Study of Three Non-Fictional Works.” Böll’s 1956 speech “Wo ist dein Bruder?” [Where is your Brother?], a conversation published in *Die Juden in Köln* [*The Jews in Cologne*] (1959), and an essay “Hierzuland” [“In This Country” or “Here at Home”] are best understood in Sacket’s excellent analysis; however, his conclusion is worth noting:

I find it an idle accusation to say that he was an anti-Semite in spite of himself, that his morality hid an aversion for Jews, although it cannot be said that his moral position is above review. [...] It was historically in Böll’s reach to reconsider whether Germans and non-Germans were equal in suffering, whether the young Jewish man from Lwów really should be remembered in the same breath as the young, misguided SS man of the same age. [...] In Böll, there is an authorial commitment to ‘experience,’ but, as he constructs it, it did not encompass genocide. [...] Victimization of ‘the other,’ not central to this experience, was not central to his work. The past for him was the war, his perspective a common soldier’s, his basic memory that of a struggle to survive. (352)

Sackett’s conclusion offers a blunt counterpoint to Schlant’s criticism of Böll and admonishes the reader not to oversimplify such a complex man. Böll’s character, Filskeit, the commandant of a concentration camp, is unflinchingly racist and works unceasingly for the extermination of Jews; however, writing this character does not make Böll inherently racist (*Wo Warst du, Adam?* 93). Although the forces of National Socialism irrevocably affected Böll and his fellow laureates, the Holocaust, and World War II, these authors and their writing remain relevant beyond these issues.

Elias Canetti

Born in 1905 to an old Sephardic Jewish family in Bulgaria²⁶, Elias Canetti and his family moved several times during his youth, and a polyglot of five languages,²⁷ ultimately chose to write his works in German. In a press release announcing that Canetti had won the Nobel Prize “for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power,” the Swedish Academy remarked upon his preferred literary tongue, “the exiled and cosmopolitan author, Canetti has one native land, and that is the German language” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1981”; “Nobel Prize in Literature 1981 - Press Release”). Though not a practicing Jew, Canetti was directly affected by National Socialist policies because of his heritage, yet he did escape the worst of these horrors. Eight months after the Nazi *Anschluss* [annexation] of Austria in 1938, Canetti and his wife Veza escaped Vienna and fled to London, where he continued to write his many works in German, such as his tri-part autobiography, collections of aphorisms, and his magnum opus, *Masse und Macht* [*Crowds and Power*] (1960), a philosophical analysis of mass psychology. While the Holocaust and World War II clearly influenced Canetti, he only obliquely refers to these events in his works. In his analysis of *Masse und Macht*, Canetti-scholar Michael Mack notes this tendency that “the word Holocaust or Shoah is conspicuous in Elias Canetti’s works by its absence” (289). Indeed, direct references to the Holocaust and World War II are rare in Canetti’s works, but not nonexistent. In his book of aphorisms, *Die Provinz des Menschen*²⁸ [*The Human Province*] (1942), he remarks upon the war: “Mit Schuld beginnt der Krieg. Mit Schuld hat er geendet. Sie ist nur zehntausendmal größer” [With guilt begins the war. With guilt has it ended. It {the guilt} is only ten-thousand-times greater] (82—from chapter “1946”). While

²⁶ For more on Canetti’s Jewish Heritage see Chandra, Prem Lata “Elias Canetti and the Enigma of Jewish Identity” and Asher, Gloria “Elias Canetti and his Sephardic Heritage” in works cited.

²⁷ His early languages were Ladino, Bulgarian, English, French, and German.

²⁸ On Adolf Hitler’s role in the Holocaust he wrote, “Hitler müßte jetzt als Jude weiterleben” [Hitler would now have to live as a Jew] (79—from the chapter “1945”).

this statement is certainly true, it does not approach the full scope of the Holocaust's destruction—a number of deaths in the millions rather than ten thousands.

Like many of the other Nobel Laureates discussed in this thesis, Canetti recognized the dangers posed by antisemitism and nationalism early and with growing concern. He held deep respect for the respected Austrian writer Karl Kraus, whose public readings he habitually attended while completing a chemistry degree at the University of Vienna. Kraus was the sole editor and writer of the periodical *Die Fackel* [*The Torch*], and his strong influence on Canetti is evident of the title of the second volume of Canetti's autobiography *Die Fackel im Ohr: Lebensgeschichte 1921-1931* [*The Torch in the Ear: Life History 1921-1931*] (1980). Through Kraus, Canetti offered an interpretation how another laureate, Gerhart Hauptmann, encouraged and succumbed to fanaticism on the advent of World War I:

Die meisten Intellektuellen halfen sich, indem sie im allgemeinen Strom mitschwammen und zur Anfachung der Kriegsmasse das Ihrige beitrugen. Selbst Dichter, denen seine Verehrung galt, wie Gerhart Hauptmann, verfielen widerstandlos der Hysterie des Krieges. ("Der neue Karl Kraus" 268)

[Most intellectuals helped themselves by swimming with the general stream of things and contributed their part to the inciting of the masses for the war. Even authors who earned his [Kraus's] respect—like Gerhart Hauptmann—fell without resistance into the war hysteria.—my translation].

This testimony, coupled with evidence from the statements of Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Böll, and countless scholars on Gerhart Hauptmann, paints an incriminating portrait of the playwright's character: susceptible to fanaticism, vulnerable to political and social pressures,

and accepting of a movement built on nationalism, antisemitism, and genocide. The ensuing chapters will further explore the devastation and fallout of this regime.

Chapter III: German-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust

Nelly Sachs

Flight and Rescue

Jews remaining in Germany after the outbreak of war against Poland in 1939 had personally felt the antisemitic vitriol of National Socialism in countless ways—their property destroyed or seized, their practices banned by law, their means of escape cut off by anti-immigration laws, and their very lives threatened by deportation to ghettos and concentrations camps.²⁹ Nelly Sachs—recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1966 “for her outstanding lyrical and dramatic writing, which interprets Israel's destiny with touching strength”—faced this dangerous reality (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1966”). However, thanks to a personal connection she had developed with Selma Lagerlöf, a venerated literary figure in Sweden and Nobel laureate in 1909,³⁰ Sachs was able to escape the fate of many other Jews by obtaining permission to enter Sweden and fleeing to that country in 1939. In her banquet speech, Sachs describes some of this remarkable tale:

In the summer of 1939, a German girl friend of mine went to Sweden to visit Selma Lagerlöf, to ask her to secure sanctuary for my mother and myself in that country. Since my youth I had been so fortunate as to exchange letters with Selma Lagerlöf; and it is out of her work that my love for her country grew. The painter prince Eugen [of Sweden] and the novelist helped to save me. (“Nelly Sachs – Banquet Speech”)

Her humble praise for this act of humanity from the, then aged and dying, Swedish writer inspired another previously mentioned laureate, Heinrich Böll, to remark upon Sachs’s rescue in his own banquet speech:

²⁹ Joachim Remak’s *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History* provides an excellent analysis of National Socialist Germany between 1933 and 1945. See works cited.

³⁰ Selma Lagerlöf received the Nobel Prize in Literature “in appreciation of the lofty idealism, vivid imagination and spiritual perception that characterize her writings” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1909”).

Mit Bangen denke ich an meine deutschen Vorgänger hier, die innerhalb dieser verfluchten Dimension Eigentlichkeit keine Deutschen mehr sein sollten. Nelly Sachs, von Selma Lagerlöf gerettet, nur knapp dem Tod entronnen. (“Nelly Sachs – Banquet Speech”)

[With anxiety I think of my German predecessors here, who within their cursed dimensions are said no more to be authentically German. Nelly Sachs, rescued by Selma Lagerlöf, only narrowly escaped death.—my translation]

Considering these authors’ statements alongside one another reveals how the account of Nelly Sachs’s rescue from Germany has in many ways passed into the realm of legend; however, it is worth considering the actual details of this story to understand the effect that distance and time have on rewriting unique details of history.

Nelly Sachs and her “savior” Selma Lagerlöf never actually met in person³¹ and their correspondence was far less regular than suggested in Sachs’s own account. In 1921, at the age of thirty, Sachs published her debut work to modest admiration. The publication, *Legenden und Erzählungen*, was a collection of three short stories and six legends, “which testify to her admiration of Selma Lagerlöf” (Fioretos 35). She sent a copy to Lagerlöf, who was already a world-renown Swedish author, and Lagerlöf wrote her reply on a postcard that Sachs treasured for the rest of her life: “Herzlichen Danke für das schöne Buch. [Ich] Hätte es selbst nicht besser tun können.” [Many thanks for the beautiful book. I could not have done it better myself—my translation] (36). This postcard was Sach’s first recognition by a colleague as an important literary figure and it “amounted to nothing less than a second baptism certificate”—showing that Lagerlöf’s influence on the laureate’s life extended beyond the “rescue” of that life (Fioretos 38).

³¹ Lagerlöf died exactly two months before the date of Sachs’s departure (Fioretos 110).

Just as the reality of Lagerlöf's and Sachs's relationship is more nuanced than is often implied, the actual details of Sach's rescue and flight from Nazi Germany are far more unique and no less remarkable than the legend. These details are recounted in part by Guy Stern and Gustav Mathieu in the introduction to *Ausgewählte Gedichte* (1963), a collection of select poems by Sachs, and deserve to be repeated nearly in their entirety:

The true story, however, is more prosaic and at the same time more miraculous than is generally reported. A Gentile friend,³² a dancer, fearing for Nelly Sachs, offered to travel to Sweden to appeal to Selma Lagerlöf. But upon her arrival in Sweden late in 1939, she was told that Miss Lagerlöf, then in her eighties, was desperately ill and that a visit would be a futile undertaking.

However, Miss Sachs' friend persisted and was finally permitted to see Selma Lagerlöf, who apparently did not grasp what the German girl was saying. As a late desperate measure the friend showed her a few of Nelly Sach's poems, fully convinced that this gesture, too, would prove unavailing. Selma Lagerlöf read them, asked for a pencil, and wrote below them: "ich hätte das auch nicht schöner sagen können." The young lady showed this autograph to the housekeeper with the despairing remark that she had failed in her mission. But the housekeeper corrected here. "Don't you know that Selma Lagerlöf is absolutely venerated in Sweden and that this remark will open every door?" (i)

Stern and Mathieu's account approaches the truth, but must still be amended slightly, as it was by the historian Aris Fioretos in *Nelly Sachs, Flight and Metamorphosis: An Illustrated Biography*.

As Fioretos describes it, the process to rescue Sachs and her mother from Germany actually began in 1938; but after laying out emigration plans in Berlin, her heroic friend, Gudrun

³² Gudrun Dähnert, a German dancer, was Sachs's friend (Fioretos 109).

Dähnert, was struck by a bus, halting any progress toward escape and trapping Sachs and her mother within easy reach of the Gestapo (105). In this state of suspense, Sach's appealed movingly to her literary hero for the last time (January 26, 1939):

And if I may repeat my diffident supplication, which to you [Lagerlöf] may seem to be on bended knees: Would you, who have been a symbol of love and goodness all my life, would you help my mother and myself to open the gate to Sweden, a land for which we so fervently long, by allowing me to put your ever-valued name as a reference on the question form at the Swedish consulate here? This is our only hope of obtaining a residence permit in Sweden. (105)

Sachs never received a reply from Lagerlöf; however, once Dähnert was well enough, she travelled to Sweden to seek out the Swedish laureate. Though the accounts offered by Stern and Mathieu and by Fioretos agree upon how difficult it was for Dähnert to receive an audience with Lagerlöf, who was very old and quite ill, the stories diverge on one important point. Stern and Mathieu confuse the contents of Lagerlöf's postcard to Sachs from 1921 with the message she gave to Dähnert to achieve Sach's rescue. The real message Lagerlöf penned, which is recorded correctly in Fioretos account, was this: "It matters to me that Ms. Sachs is received in Sweden" (106). Without the determination of her friend and the intervention of Selma Lagerlöf, it is almost certain that Sachs would have fallen victim to the Nazi terror machine, becoming a phantom of the event she was most drawn to in her writing—the Holocaust.

The story of Sachs's rescue, both in its legendary and truthful versions, is relevant not only to a study of the writer's life, but also to a more complete understanding of how National Socialism reshaped the "Jewish Question" in Germany during the 1930s and early 1940s. As has been shown in this thesis, up to this point the *Judenfrage* had been largely a social issue,

addressed or avoided in academic debates, literary works, or the personal lives of each laureate. However, when the National Socialist Party came to power in 1933, the treatment of this social issue shifted drastically. The “Jewish Question” became highly politicized by the Nazi party, who demanded an answer to this question and found one in their “Final Solution”—the systematic mass murder of nearly six million Jews as well as other “undesirables” in *Vernichtungslager* [extermination camps] (Remak).

Eli: Ein Mysterienspiel vom Leiden Israels:

Written in 1943³³ as the horrifying details of the Nazi’s “Final Solution” began to seep into public consciousness, Sachs’ drama, *Eli: Ein Mysterienspiel vom Leiden Israels* [*Eli: A Mystery Play of the Suffering of Israael*] (1943)³⁴, is undoubtedly based on events of the Holocaust; however, there is no mention of Nazis, Germans, or even concentration camps in the play. Instead, at the heart of that drama is a consuming sense of *absence*, identified in Canetti’s works,³⁵ and pervasive in Sachs other dramas and poetry. Her drama, is both literally and figuratively centered around such absence—Eli is both the name of the drama and its protagonist, yet the titular character, an eight-year-old boy and a “God-child”³⁶ murdered before the action of the play, has no role. The issue of Eli’s absence is formulated in first scene of the play during a dialogue between a washwoman and a baker, Eli’s grandmother:

WÄSCHERIN:

Komm von der Bleiche, der Bleiche,
hab' Sterbewäsche gewaschen,

³³ In her afterword to *Eli*, Sachs touches upon this experience: “Dieses Mysterienspiel ist entstanden nach einem furchtbaren Erlebnis der Hitlerzeit rachend noch in Flamen, niedergeschrieben in einiger Nächten nac der Flucht in Schweden” (344).

³⁴ Hereafter referred to as *Eli*

³⁵ Canetti-scholar Michael Mack notes this tendency, “the word Holocaust or Shoah is conspicuous in Elias Canetti’s works by its absence” (289).

³⁶ Signified by his Hebrew name (Bahr, Ehrhard, found in Plunka page 102)

dem Eli das Hemd gewaschen,
 Blut herausgewaschen, Schweiß herausgewaschen
 Kinderschweiß--Tod herausgewaschen

[...]

Das Hemd von Dein Enkel will ich zu dir tragen,
 vom Eli das Hemd.

BÄCKERIN:

Wie kam es, Gittel, daß er stumm wurde? (7)

[WASHER WOMAN:

Come for the bleaching, the bleaching,

the laundry is washed,

Eli's shirt is washed,

Blood washed out, sweat washed out

Childs sweat - Death washed out

[...]

I will bear the shirt of your grandchild to you,

Eli's shirt—

BAKER WOMAN:

How was it, Gittel, that he became mute?—my translation]

In asking how Eli became mute, the Bäckerin formulates the central question of the play: who murdered Eli? Aris Fioretos eloquently summarizes the significance of this question:

The play is about a protagonist who is absent, hence its subject is less words than muteness. The text never portrays the murder of the shepherd boy Eli, however, but

instead centers on what is neither said nor may be forgotten. *In other words: the testimony is about the witness slain. At stake is the writing of history.* (176, my emphasis)

In spite of how unimaginable the Holocaust is both to its witnesses and to nonwitnesses, Holocaust survivors and authors of that literature persist in their attempts to describe this incomprehensible historical catastrophe. Fioretos' words hold true for both *Eli* and for other literature of the Holocaust, and as we read we must consider how historical reality and elements of the surreal blend to convey the ineffable, and to shape emptiness and sorrow into something meaningful.

The opening exchange between the Bäckerin and the Wäscherin describes the details of Eli's death. As Eli watched his parents dragged suddenly away to their deaths by an unnamed enemy, the eight-year-old raised his pipe to his lips in a plea to God, "Zum Himmel hat er die Pfeife gerichtet, / zu Gott hat er gepfiffen, der Eli" [To heaven he directed his pipe, / to God did Eli play] (Sachs 8). Though Eli's pipe represents the Jewish people's desperate call to God, his tormentor believes it is a threatening secret code³⁷ and kills Eli with a strike from his rifle butt.

Since Eli, muted by his death, cannot tell his own story, the action of the play shifts to Michael, a shoemaker, who takes up Eli's pipe and serves as God's representative as he searches for Eli's murderer amongst the rubble of a destroyed Polish ghetto. In seventeen somewhat isolated scenes, he meets various characters in the ghetto and its surrounding area (Plunka 98). Michael's quest is symbolic rather than plot-driven, and the characters he meets are representative of "types" instead of important as individuals. This is typical of expressionist plays:

³⁷ In her afterward Sachs refers to this as a "symbol des Unglaubens" [symbol of unbelievers] (344).

As in Expressionist drama, the majority of characters in *Eli* are identified generically: “a washer-woman,” “a woman,” “a man,” “A knife-sharpener,” “a deformed man,” “a blind girl,” “a beggar,” “a rabbi,” etc. Expressionism, like Nelly Sachs’ dramas, is not interested in individual psychology but in the fate of humanity, so that each character stands for all of its kind (Plunka 99).

Thus, during Michael’s wanderings, each character takes on a greater meaning. A “Maurer” [wall builder] rebuilds a house for the future, yet is still very conscious of his broken past:

Weine nicht, Joselle.

Bauen wir doch aufs Neue das alte Haus.

Hängen sich die Tränen ans Gestein,

hängen sich die Seufzer ans Gebälk,

können nicht schlafen die kleinen Kinder,

hat der Tod ein weiches Bett. (16)

[Do not cry, Joselle.

Let us build the old house anew.

If we hang the tears on the stones,

hang the sighs upon the beams,

then the small children could not sleep,

death has a soft bed.—my translation]

Other characters testify similarly, albeit indirectly, to the horrors of the Holocaust. The actions that tore Eli’s parents from their beds are reminiscent of ghetto deportations, and an old man recalls recent death and destruction, “Wo du stehst, rann Blut—” [where you stand, ran blood] (32). In *Eli*, Sachs even predicts the terrible extent of the “Final Solution” years before she could

have known the full truth; the character Dajan references a scene resembling a crematoria: “Ich sah ein Kind lächeln, bevor es in die Flammen geworfen wurde” [I saw a child smile, before he was thrown into the flames] (52).

By developing her secondary characters as “disembodied voices of the post-Holocaust era,” Sachs elevates Michael’s journey to a religious quest for meaning, so that the actions and characters become symbolic of a timeless pattern (Plunka 99, *Nelly Sachs zu Ehren*). The timelessness of the play is amplified by its setting, “Nach dem Martyrium” [after Martyrdom], which hints at the play’s religious undertones and the impossibility of a meaningful death after the Holocaust (Sachs 6). The role of the Jewish religion, specifically Jewish mysticism, cannot be understated in *Eli*. Though Sachs was safe in Sweden, the guilt and relief she felt about her escape renewed her interest in Judaism and through the guidance of a friend she turned to Hasidic tales, texts from the Kabbala, and Gershom Scholem’s *Jewish Mysticism* (1941) (Plunka 99, Bahr 480).³⁸

These texts greatly informed Sachs’s use of symbolism in *Eli*, especially her depiction of Michael and his quest. In her afterword, Sachs writes:

Dieses Mysterienspiel hat zur Hauptgestalt Michael, einen jungen Schumacher. Nach der chassidischen Mystik ist er einer der geheimen Gottesknechte, die, sechsunddreißig an der Zahl—und ihnen gänzlich unbewußt—, das unsichtbare Universum tragen. (344)

[This mystery play has as the main character Michael, a young shoemaker. According to Hassidic mysticism, he is one of the secret “Just Men”, who, thirty-six in number, and wholly unaware, carry the invisible universe. —my translation]

³⁸ For a deeper understanding of the influences of Hasidism and Jewish mysticism, see Plunka 99; Bahr 480.

According to Jewish Mysticism outlined by Scholem,³⁹ the “thirty-six Just Men” were the reason that God decided to save the world. Therefore, casting Michael as one of these “Just Men” makes his quest for Eli’s murder ultimately a quest for renewal, as he “takes his people’s grief into his own heart, so that they are relieved of the burden of their sorrow and thus are able to build the new town without grief” (Bahr 481). Just as Michael carries Eli’s pipe, he also bears the grief of those he meets along the way, so his fellow Jews can move on with rebirth and renewal.

The play reaches its climax in the final two scenes, when Michael finally meets Eli’s murderer. Sachs refers to the murderer only as “Der Mann,” an appropriate title when one considers how difficult it is to identify and humanize perpetrators of the Holocaust. As a shoemaker, Michael’s task throughout the play has been to mend the souls of his people. However, he is unable to mend the sole of the murderer’s shoe, which has been split in two: *Die Sohle ist nicht mehr zu flicken, / ein Riß geht in der Mitte*— [the sole is no longer to be patched / a tear goes in the middle] (81). A scene later Michael stands in his cobbler shop as the man and his son walk in. Seeing Eli’s pipe, the son begs to play the instrument, but though Michael is happy to allow it, the man/murderer does not permit it. Instead, he mocks his son for wanting to play the pipe, and promises his child another instrument, saying “*Wenn du sie hast, / so folgen dir alle Kinder*” [when you have it, all the children will follow you—my translation] (82). Ehrhard Bahr argues that by refusing to allow the boy to play Eli’s pipe, the “murderer prevents his child from establishing a relationship with God through an instrument giving voice to longing” and instead offers his son “worldly domination and demagogy,” which are characteristic of National Socialism (482). The son dies because his yearning for the pipe is denied, but though the murderer repents after his son’s death, he finds no redemption for his two-fold evils. Sachs writes the play’s moral in her afterword: “Das Kind Eli und das Kind des

³⁹ In Scholem, Gerschom. *Die 36 verborgenen Gerechten in der jüdischen Tradition*. See works cited.

Mörders, beide sterben, ein Opfer des Bösen” [The child Eli and the child of the murderer, both die, a victim of evil—my translation] (344). Set during the Jewish New Year, every character in the play can look to the future but three: the man, whose evil actions are past redemption, and Eli and the son, both forced away from God directly through the murderer’s actions.

Though written by Sachs in 1943, *Eli* was not performed publicly for nearly twenty years. Some of the reason for this can, of course, be attributed to the turmoil of the final war years. Nevertheless, when *Eli* was finally broadcast publicly as a radio adaptation in 1958⁴⁰, the play was met with censure by much of the public. In a letter to her friend Paul Celan, a Holocaust survivor and poet of Holocaust literature, Sachs again displays her impressive premonition: “That brave man [Alfred Andersch] has decided, despite my insistent warnings against provoking the resistance of listeners, to broadcast my ‘Eli’. I really do fear for him.” (Celan and Sachs 7). Despite initial censure, as time passed, the spirit of renewal central to *Eli* began to awaken in the German people as well. When the play was staged in Dortmund in 1961, it received high praise for its “spirits of conciliation” (Plunka 98). Like her character Michael, Sachs bears the weight of her people’s suffering in her literary works, so that they can be transformed and find renewal in the future.

Other Perceptions of the Holocaust

Elfriede Jelinek

While Nelly Sachs used words as a way to understand the devastation of the past and look, sometimes hopefully, to the future, Elfriede Jelinek, born in Mürzzuschlag, Austria, in 1946, was fortunate enough not to have lived during those horrors. She was nevertheless deeply

⁴⁰ By Alfred Andersch, on Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 21 May 1958.

influenced by the legacy of the Holocaust and its resulting cynicism, and her novels and dramas⁴¹ have a biting “linguistically sophisticated social criticism” that is sometimes compared with Elias Canetti (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2004 – Bio-bibliography”). Jelinek won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2004 “for her musical flow of voices and counter-voices in novels and plays that with extraordinary linguistic zeal reveal the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2004”). At the presentation speech, Professor Horace Engdahl of the Swedish Academy summarizes her works thus: “She mimics the prejudices we would never admit to, and captures, hidden behind common sense, a poisonous mumble of no origin or address: the voice of the masses” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2004 - Presentation Speech”). Through her writing, Jelinek pierces this “voice of the masses,” which was a driving force behind National Socialism that was carefully crafted by propaganda and intimidation.

The work of a social critic is seemingly endless. In 2009, the Technical University of Vienna awarded Walter Lüftl, an Austrian Civil Engineer, the “Goldene Ingenieurdiplom” [Golden Engineering Diploma] for his years of academic service. However, Lüftl was a Holocaust denier. In 1991, he published a “Gutachten” [expert opinion] in which he argued that it was mathematically impossible for the Nazis to have killed so many Jews in *Vernichtungslagern* because the crematoria would not have been large enough to house so many (Lüftl; Lasek 63). Lüftl’s conclusions bolstered a new wave of Holocaust deniers, and Jelinek worked vehemently to denounce him. In her essay, “Im Reich der Vergangenheit,” Jelinek’s tone is sarcastic and incredulous:

⁴¹ Some of Jelinek’s best known works are *Die Liebhaberinnen* (1975; *Women as Lovers*, 1994), *Die Ausgesperrten* (1980; *Wonderful, Wonderful Times*, 1990) and *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983; *The Piano Teacher*, 1988), made into an acclaimed film in 2001 by Michael Haneke (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2004 - Bio-bibliography”).

Dieses Lüftl-Gutachten wird noch oft zitiert werden. Erbringen Sie einmal einen Gegenbeweis! Es gab hunderttausende Gegenbeweise, aber wen kümmert das schon? Die Menschen werden enteignet, die Menschen werden ermordet, aber das kann nicht sein. Wer hat es gesehen, wer war dabei? Aus der Gaskammer ist keiner zurückgekommen, also keiner, der dabei war. Und so kann es nicht abgelaufen sein, meint Herr Lüftl, der jetzt geehrt worden ist. (2)

[This “expert opinion” by Lüftl will be often quoted. Provide for once the counterevidence! There were a hundred thousand counter-arguments, but who cares? People were dispossessed, people were murdered, but that cannot be. Who saw it, who was there? From the gas chamber no one has returned, therefore no one was there. And so it cannot have happened, says Mr. Lüftl, who has now been honored.]

Jelinek’s incredulity is magnified by her background. Her father was half-Jewish and—for that very reason—had to keep his head down under the Nazi regime and work twice as hard as anyone else to earn a chemistry degree from the Technical University of Vienna. That her father’s alma mater would honor a Holocaust denier was outrageous to Jelinek, and her scorn was well directed because in 2010 Lüftl’s award was retracted by the university (“Im Reich der Vergangenheit” 2).

In addition to that public outrage, Jelinek has dealt with the aftermath of National Socialism and the Holocaust in Austria in myriad ways. Like Nelly Sachs, Jelinek used drama to portray some of these events, but unlike Sachs’s *Eli*, Jelinek’s drama *Rechnitz* lacks a sense of renewal or hope. In a newspaper criticism after the play’s staging in Düsseldorf, one critic concluded “Elfriede Jelineks *Rechnitz* ist kein gefälliges Stück, sondern ein Ungetüm” [Elfriede Jelinek’s *Rechnitz* is not a pleasing piece, but rather a monster] (Bosetti 1). The darkness of the

play can, of course, be directly attributed to its historically based narrative; *Rechnitz* tells the story of the 1945 massacre of 180 Jews in a small village in Burgenland, an eastern region of Austria. Details surrounding this massacre have been forcefully concealed, but some details have come to light and are depicted in *Rechnitz*. On the night of March 24th a group of notables gathered at a party held by the Countess Margit von Batthyány-Thyssen. At some point in the evening, guns were handed out and the guests, some of whom were members of the Nazi party, were encouraged to hunt down and kill the Jewish laborers who worked the manor (Bosetti 2). After the party, the bodies were hidden and the massacre concealed through intimidation. Although *Rechnitz* is not a “pleasant play,”⁴² Jelinek uses her drama to hold those murderers accountable the memory of history.

The murdered Jews in *Rechnitz*, whose bodies were callously hidden by their murderers, are just a small sample of those victims of the Holocaust who lost everything from their homes, to their name, to their very lives. At a memorial site near Lake Constance, some of these names have been recovered and honored. Over eight-thousand names are inscribed on the monument’s tall glass panels, and about twenty meters away stands a plaque with Jelinek’s words:

Mit den Augen von Toten schauen

Eine Bestandsaufnahme des Erinnerns: Wie kann man Erinnertes fassen, an das man sich selbst gar nicht erinnern kann, weil man es nicht erlebt hat? Erlebt haben es andre, sehr viele, die meisten von ihnen sind tot. An ihren, der Toten ungesicherten Leitfäden müssen wir uns entlangtasten und aufpassen, daß sie uns nicht aus den Händen rutschen oder wie Spinnweben zerreißen. (“Mit den Augen der Toten Schauen” 1)

[Look with the eyes of the dead

⁴² To use Nobel laureate George Bernard Shaw’s term (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 1925”).

An inventory of memory: how to grasp what one is reminded of, on that which one cannot remember because he has not experienced it himself? Others have experienced it, very many, most of them are dead. Along the unsecured guidelines of those dead we must fumble and pay attention, so that they do not slip from our hands or rip to shreds like spider webs. —my translation]

Although she did not bear personal witness to the Holocaust, through her works, Jelinek testifies for those without a voice and, like Nelly Sachs, she bears the burden of the Holocaust in an uncertain future.

Herta Müller

The violence and oppression of the 20th century reached well beyond the borders of Germany and even Austria, and Herta Müller, born in 1953 in a small German-speaking village⁴³ in Romania, spent most of her life under the shadows of these forces. Though she had no Jewish heritage, as part of the German minority in Romania Müller faced discrimination all the same, and her family was torn apart first by National Socialism and later by the oppressive Communist government of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. Müller's father left to serve under the German Waffen SS during World War II, and, after the war in 1945, her mother, along with thousands of other German Romanians, was deported to the Soviet Union where she was forced to work in a labor camp for five years ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 2009 – Bio-bibliography"). Just as many Jews experienced in Germany even before World War II, Müller dealt with oppression and prejudice from her own country. In a summary of Müller's life for the Nobel Prize Foundation, Georgia Brown writes of the discrimination Müller faced under the Ceaușescu regime:

⁴³ Müller was born in Nitzkydorf in Banat, Romania ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 2009 – Bio-bibliography")

She found work as a translator of technical manuals in a tractor factory, but after she refused to collaborate with the secret police, the harassment started. She turned up for work one day to find herself barred from her office. So she worked on the stairs. Then the secret police started to spread rumours that she was a police informer. Ironically, because she had refused to become a spy, people now believed she was one. She was eventually dismissed and later her apartment was bugged, she could not find work, she was picked up, questioned and kicked around. (1)

In 1987, Müller was forced to flee Romania and settled in Germany, joining an illustrious line of exiled Nobel laureates, including Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Elias Canetti, and Nelly Sachs.

The oppression, discrimination, and violence of Müller's past are the very forces that drove her to write. The short story collection, *Niederungen* (1982) and the novel *Drückender Tango*, portray "corruption, intolerance, and repression" in a small German-speaking village in Romania, and other novels,⁴⁴ which were often censored in Romania, depict life under harsh, "stagnated" dictatorships ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 2009 – Bio-bibliography"). She also spoke and wrote often on the topic of exile. When she was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2009, it was as a writer "who, with the concentration of poetry and the frankness of prose, depicts the landscape of the dispossessed ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 2009").

In her speech for the "Hannelore-Greve-Literaturepreis," (2014) Müller speaks at length about the reality of exile. She begins with a discussion of the film *Casablanca* (1942), which alongside its love story, depicts the "Schwierigkeiten, die Tragödien, die Verzweiflung der Fluchtversuche aus dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland [the difficulties, the tragedy, the

⁴⁴ *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (1992), *Herztier* (1994; *The Land of Green Plums*, 1996) and *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* (1997); *The Appointment* (2001) ("The Nobel Prize in Literature 2009 – Bio-Bibliography").

despair of refugees fleeing National Socialist Germany. –my translation] (Müller 1). Behind this film, Müller argues, are the real stories of so many Jewish authors and artists dispossessed and destroyed by National Socialism. She honors the memories of these victims: journalist Stephan Großmann, who spoke out against Hitler and narrowly escaped to Vienna with his wife in 1933; Walter Benjamin, who after escaping with his manuscripts through the Pyrenees was not allowed to cross the Spanish border and so poisoned himself rather than return; Felix Nussbaum, a painter denounced by his neighbor and deported to Auschwitz; and Paul Celan, Holocaust poet and friend to Nelly Sachs, who survived the Holocaust by working nearly to death in a forced labor camp (3). It is important to honor these victims, because the experience of those in exile, Müller claims, have been diminished and belittled, so that “wer im Exil war, gilt in Deutschland bis heute nicht als Opfer” [those who were in exile, even in Germany today are still not regarded as victims] (Müller 4).

The implications of Müllers statement are far reaching, not only for traditional victims of the Holocaust, but for the authors considered by this thesis. Was Thomas Mann a victim of National Socialism? In many ways the answer is yes. He was forced to flee his home and almost certainly would have been arrested had he remained, yet he was not a Jew and did not suffer the fate of millions of other victims. Hermann Hesse emigrated to Switzerland because of the animosity he experienced in Germany. Should he be considered emigrant or exile? Elias Canetti left for London after the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938 and most of his literature works were written in exile from his adopted homeland. Finally, we turn to Nelly Sachs. As a Jew in living in Germany until 1940, Sachs was unquestionably a victim of National Socialism, and her flight to Sweden inarguably an exile from her native country. But is she considered a victim of the

Holocaust today? A quote from noted Holocaust scholars Lawrence Langer suggests one answer as to how she should be considered:

It should come as no surprise that the two words used most often in her [Sachs's] poems, according to the count of a diligent scholar, are "Tod" [death] and "Nacht" [night]. [...] Death and night are not merely metaphors for Nelly Sachs, they literally describe the reality of her experience, the history of her time—and ours. (317)

Though she escaped the direct threats of the Holocaust, Nelly Sachs is inarguably a victim of that catastrophe, and the terrible legacy of the Holocaust refuses to fade away. The horrors wrought in the early 20th-century persist in the works, lives, and concerns of 21st-century laureates, Elfriede Jelinek and Herta Müller, and these issues will remain relevant in the history of our time as well.

Chapter 4: The Modern “Jewish Question”

Günter Grass and the modern “Jewish Question”

As the extensive horrors of the Holocaust came to light in the aftermath of World War II, Europe faced unprecedented political upheaval. Allied forces split Germany into separate occupation zones, Eastern Germany quickly fell to darkness behind the Iron Curtain of the Soviet Union, and the remaining Jewish survivors—victims of a genocide killing over 6 million of their number—were now refugees in the very country that wronged them (Remak, Bein 410). In response to this refugee crisis, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on November 29, 1947, to establish a Jewish State in Eretz Israel, stating that, “this right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State” (Bein 411). The Jewish State was officially founded the next year, on May 4, 1948, and was an event “for which many generations of Jews had been waiting anxiously and hopefully for” (410). The concluding chapter to this thesis will consider some developments in German-Jewish relations after the state of Israel through the life and works of Günter Grass, recipient of the Nobel Prize in 1999.

Mission and Controversy

Grass received the Nobel Prize for Literature for his “frolicsome black fables [that] portray the forgotten face of history” (“The Noble Prize in Literature 1999”). Born in Danzig (now Gdansk), Poland in 1927, Grass bridges the period between World War II and the 20th-century in a way that recent laureates Elfriede Jelinek and Herta Müller, both born after the war, are unable to do. In the aftermath of World War II, Grass was sometimes considered a moral conscience for postwar Germany, but although this role might recall that of Heinrich Böll, the satire and wit of Grass’ novels more clearly resemble the style of Thomas Mann (Bawar 3; Engdahl). Grass’s early novel, *Die Blechtrommel* [*The Tin Drum*] (1959) is a “satirical panorama

of German reality during the first half of this century” and in the press release announcing he had won the Nobel Prize, the Nobel Prize Foundation describes *The Tin Drum* thus:

Here he comes to grips with the enormous task of reviewing contemporary history by recalling the disavowed and the forgotten: the victims, losers and lies that people wanted to forget because they had once believed in them (“Nobel Prize for Literature 1999 – Press Release.”)

Grass’s ability to deal pointedly with the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, a German composite word that describes the struggle to overcome the Nazi past, is complicated by his own rather controversial past. Five years after receiving this praise at his Noble Prize ceremony, Grass released his memoir *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* [*Peeling the Onion*] (2006), revealing he had been a member, even a volunteer, of the Nazi Waffen-SS. This revelation stunned the world, lending a dark irony to many of his works, for which, as one critic stated, he had made his name by “holding up to derision those who refused to take full ownership for Germany’s Nazi past” (Bawer 4).

The revelation that Grass had been complicit in some of the crimes of the Holocaust severely colored public perception of his literary works. In his novel *Ein weites Feld* [Too Far Afield] (1995), Grass attempted to depict an “undramatic view of the relationship between the henchmen of totalitarianism and its victims” after German reunification, but even before the revelation of Grass’s Nazi past, the novel was deeply contentious (“Nobel Prize for Literature 1999 – Bio-Bibliography”). Although the Swedish Academy noted that Grass was “bound to infuriate many readers of his country”, the Academy members were forgiving of Grass’s style, noting “something so hilariously insolent, independent and relativistic in Grass's rendering of life in Berlin around the Fall of the Wall” (Engdahl 2). Marcel Reich-Ranicki, a critic “widely

considered the ‘high priest’ of contemporary German literature” was far less forgiving in his review of *Ein weites Feld*. A Polish-born Jew and survivor of the Holocaust, Reich-Ranicki never published a favorable review of Grass’ works, yet his criticism of *Ein weites Feld* was particularly scathing. The conflict between the two men escalated in a series of heated and bitter letters that became highly publicized by the German media (Primor 101).

Now we return to the issue of German-Jewish relations to ask the central question: was Günter Grass antisemitic? While his dubious past connection to National Socialism and his feud with the Polish-Jewish critic Reich-Ranicki might suggest this answer would be yes, the issue remains ambiguous. For his own part, Reich-Ranicki did not think so. In a meeting with Avi Primor, the president of the Israel Council on Foreign Relations, in 1995, Reich Ranicki argued that “no one should consider Grass an antisemite” and stated:

You know that I have “killed” many books and many authors. Most of them vowed eternal hatred for me. With practically all of them I have had bitter exchanges. Many of them wrote emotional letters or even articles in the press in which some of them could not resist the urge to hint, in one way or another, about my origins. They were only veiled hints, but everyone could understand the code: Reich-Ranicki is a Jew—he is not an authentic German. Never, however, did I detect the slightest hint of any such language in Grass’ writings—neither in his letters to me nor in the articles he wrote against me.

(Primor 101)

Avi Primor is similarly forgiving. He claimed, “one cannot find even the slightest expression of antisemitism” in Grass’s literary works and even notes that many of Grass’s Jewish characters are his most sympathetic creations (102). Still, some critics remain fixated on Grass’ past service

in the Waffen-SS, claiming that since National Socialism became taboo, Grass had been suppressing his “authentic self” (102).

Was Gesagt Werden Muss

Arguments favoring Grass’s antisemitism were exacerbated in 2012, when he published *Was gesagt werden muss* [*What Must Be Said*], a prose-poem protesting the German government providing U-boats to Israel and critical of Israel’s preparation against Iran, which Grass perceived as an “Erstschlag” [first strike] position against Iran that threatened world stability and peace (Grass 1; Primor 101). In part because of the bitter history of the Jewish people and the “existential crisis” that the State of Israel still faces today, reactions to Grass’s poem were swift and hostile. Some critics argued that Grass’s understanding of the Israel-Iran relationship was ignorant and willfully blind to Israel’s plight, and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu argued, “It is Iran, not Israel, that is a threat to the peace and security of the world” (Herf 386; Bawer 6). Anshel Pfeffer, a writer for the Israeli Newspaper *Haaretz* castigated Grass thus:

[for his inability] to understand that his membership in an organization that planned and carried out the wholesale genocide of millions of Jews disqualified him from criticizing the descendants of those Jews for developing a weapon of last resort that is the insurmountable policy of someone finishing the job his organization began. (Bawer 6).

In his article “Günter Grass goes from Bad to Verse,” Bruce Bawer expresses instant agreement with Pfeffer’s analysis, summing it up with the tense statement “Nicely put” (6).

The sentiments expressed by both men are miscalculated, but justifiably so, since Israel, a state founded in part for the refugees and victims of the Holocaust, is understandably sensitive to German criticism. This issue, however, is at the core of Grass’s poem. Grass questions why he feels the need to be silent about his fears, which he hesitates to express because he knows that by

criticizing Israel as a German, especially with his former ties to Nazism, he will be branded an Anti-Semite. Of course, from Bawer and Pfeffer, as well as many Israeli officials, this scorn was the exact reaction he received. Nevertheless, Grass refused the path of silence:

Warum aber schwieg ich bislang?

Weil ich meinte, meine Herkunft,

die von nie zu tilgendem Makel behaftet ist,

verbiete, diese Tatsache als ausgesprochene Wahrheit

dem Land Israel, dem ich verbunden bin

und bleiben will, zuzumuten. (Grass)

[But why have I kept silent till now?

Because I thought my own origins,

tarnished by a stain that can never be removed,

meant I could not expect Israel, a land

to which I am, and always will be, attached,

to accept this open declaration of the truth.] (Grass, translated by Mitchell).

In *Was gesagt werden muss*, Günter Grass evinces a modern perspective on the Judenfrage in Germany: over half a century since the end of World War II and the Holocaust, Germans weary of being reprimanded for their nation's past are sick of being labeled antisemitic. Avi Primor notes that, "a great many Germans, particularly younger ones, demonstrate sympathy, not necessarily for the anti-Israel 'poem,' but for the plight of its author who has been taken to task for writing it" (104). Grass' concern lies at the heart of modern German-Jewish relations. The "Jewish Question" in Germany, once answered with religious prejudice, social ridicule, political

vitriol, and under National Socialism with systematic genocide, today is a question often met only with silence, guilt, or frustration.

The Future of the “Jewish Question” in Germany

So where do German-Jewish relations stand today? Although Germany has paid its reparations and is often seen as a “paragon of formalized historical reckoning,” author Yascha Mounk, of both German and Jewish descent, seeks an answer to this question as he explores his own identity in Stranger in My Own Country: A Jewish Family in Modern Germany (2015). Like Avi Primor, Mounk identifies a “resentment against the country’s [Germany’s] supposed obsession with the past—a resentment that is voiced especially by younger Germans” (McKeon 7). Though not the first Jew to feel alienated in post-war Germany, Mounk’s account eloquently expresses the “seesaw of anti-Semitism” and “philo-Semitism” sometimes encountered by Jews in Germany. After several accounts of various Germans realizing and reacting to his Jewishness, Mounk concludes “for me personally it wasn’t primarily violence or hatred that made me feel that I would never be a German. It was benevolence... the effect of their [his classmates’] pity and their virtue was to leave both of us with the sense that I couldn’t possibly have anything in common with them. [...] the simplest interaction between Jew and Gentile [could] degenerate into a politically correct comedy of errors” (McKeon 5).

Mounk’s account demonstrates, again, how the *Judenfrage* persists in Germany and adapts to new social and political situations, while this analysis of German-Jewish relations in the lives and works of the thirteen German-speaking Nobel laureates in literature shows how complex and changing the relationship has been over the past century. Each author has dealt with the “Jewish Question” in his or her own way, and each dealing with this issue reveals how the *Judenfrage* shifted from political tool to instrument of mass murder, to symbol of guilt. As

social and political prejudices increased in the decades before World War II, the Judenfrage was confronted by Theodore Mommsen, Rudolf Eucken, Carl Spitteler, and even Thomas Mann, but avoided by the laureate of partial Jewish heritage, Paul Heyse. Gerhart Hauptmann demonstrates how quickly weak character and opportunism could succumb to the passionate vitriol of National Socialism, while Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Böll, and Elias Canetti suggest that conscientious objection to such forces is always possible.

As a Jew fleeing the Holocaust, Nelly Sachs deals the most intimately with Jewish suffering in her poems and dramas, yet the other female laureates, Elfriede Jelinek and Herta Müller, born after World War II, carry on Sachs's work by honoring the memory of Holocaust victims and fighting minority oppression in their own lives. Finally, Günter Grass looks to the future of this issue in Germany, as Germans, especially younger generations, seek to overcome their dark past and face a more optimistic future.

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