WRITING A FUTURE STATE: SPATIAL IMAGINARIES OF GERMAN JEWISH LITERATURE, 1885–1932

Joshua D. Shelly

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies.

Chapel Hill
2023

Approved by:
Kata Gellen
Ruth von Bernuth
Priscilla Layne
Adi Nester
Shai Ginsburg
ABSTRACT

Joshua D. Shelly: Writing a Future State: Spatial Imaginaries of German Jewish Literature, 1885–1932
(Under the direction of Kata Gellen)

This dissertation provides a literary history of German Zionist literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Throughout, the analyses attend to the German Jewish context and literary specificity of each text. In so doing, they reflect on the manner in which each text constructs space and place as a means to reflect on what it means to be Jewish in the modern world. The first chapter discusses Edmund Menachem Eisler’s Ein Zukunftsbild (1885) and situates it in its German Jewish emancipatory context with special attention to its relationship to the tradition of German Jewish middlebrow literature. The second chapter reads Theodor Herzl’s Das neue Ghetto (1897) and Altneuland (1902) as reflecting the lessons and problems of the German Jewish emancipatory project, something made legible in the spatial imagination and organization at the heart of both works. The dissertation then continues with a discussion of Der Verschollene (1927), reading Kafka’s first novel as a meditation on the desirability and pitfalls of literary utopias made real. It concludes with a reading of Arnold Zweig’s De Vriendt kehrt heim (1932), understanding the work as an expression of the author’s disenchantment with the violent nationalism he then saw as emerging in the Yishuv. It understands Zweig’s novel as an attempt to recuperate an alternative nationalism informed by an ethical Jewish tradition. In total, these readings reconstruct a literary genealogy of German Jewish texts that functioned as an important location for dreaming about, questioning, and critiquing the modern Zionist movement in the years before 1932.
To the memory of

Donald Lee Caruso (1940–2018)

Shirley Dawn Caruso (1935–2023) and


I am living. I remember you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a strange, wonderous journey for a gay, once evangelical boy from the suburbs of Detroit. Surely the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. From Michigan to the Research Triangle by way of Illinois, then from Berlin to Jerusalem and back, I have incurred many debts. It is a privilege to provide but a token of my deep gratitude by means of acknowledgement of some of those people and institutions who have provided support and accompanied me along my journey in these years.

My project was supported with fellowships from the Leo Baeck Fellowship Programme under the auspices of the Studientstiftung des deutschen Volkes; the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies at the Free University of Berlin; the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and the Royster Society of Fellows at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Summer research fellowships and the Julian Price Graduate Fellowship from the Duke Graduate School provided additional support at key junctures in this project. The Duke Center for Jewish Studies supported my Hebrew-language study and provided generous top-up funding in the form of the Nathan J. Perilman Fellowship in Jewish Studies. The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provided funding for research travel to the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem as well as Hebrew-language study. To donors who made these fellowships possible and the selection committees who saw promise in me and my project: thank you.

Thanks also goes to the many people behind the scenes who have performed countless administrative tasks at the various institutions and fellowship programs listed above. These include
Peter Antes, Serena Bazemore, Valerie Bernhardt, Karen Gajewski, Karin Goihl, Julie Montaigne, Laura Pratt, Na’ama Seri-Levy, Margy Swanson, Pam Tharp, and Dorothy Thorpe-Turner.

To my committee members Ruth von Bernuth, Priscilla Layne, Adi Nester and Shai Ginsburg: thank you for your feedback, support and productive pushback. Thanks also goes to Jonathan Skolnik, who participated as a committee member at an earlier stage in this project: your skepticism and reading suggestions led to a stronger final product. Although not a committee member, a special thanks goes to Benjamin Pollock for pushing me to think more about what literature can do, as well as his gift of encouragement. To my advisor Kata Gellen, who read everything I sent, however verbose, expressed enthusiasm for my project from the very beginning, and gave me the freedom to spend four years away from North Carolina: I am so grateful to have had you guide me along this journey. Thank you!

Various colleagues have been boon companions throughout these years. JJ Aupiais: our many walks and wide-ranging conversations were always enjoyable, thought-provoking and a welcome respite from the never-ending lockdowns in covid-era Berlin. Jan Kühne, your sly humor and intellectual generosity made me feel welcome during a difficult year in Jerusalem. Thank you!

The Carolina-Duke German Studies program has also been a wellspring of excellent colleagues. Lukas Hoffman: your good humor and general optimism has been an encouragement, especially in the final stages of this project. Helen Saenz: thank you for the great conversations and modelling a life that exemplifies care for others with refreshing common sense. Lea Greenberg: for baking me rugalach and kvetching about the questions that only a German Jewish specialist would care to ask, thank you. Jeff Hertel: your cynicism, sarcastic wit and evident joy at ridiculous nineteenth-century German theatre have been a gift. Nathan Drapela: thank you for your careful eye when reading, rigorous pushback when I have been less then careful intellectually, and for being a good conversational partner about any number of topics. And Ian McLean: you have been an
excellent drinking partner (of Diet Coke, of course). I am grateful for your caustic wit, impatience with absurdity and injustice, and constantly overflowing passion.

Throughout these years, I have found a spiritual home, first at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, and then in the Berliner Mennonitengemeinde; I am indebted to both communities. In Jerusalem, Sarah Heiman, Crystal and Dave Forward, Craig Fox, and Father John Paul were unsurpassable neighbors who soon became fast friends. Together, we laughed at the absurdity of the city we were experiencing; all five were marvelous company as I, like Arnold Zweig, mourned my disappointment at seeing a “utopian” project actualized as far different than I had imagined. To Tin Wegel and Sara Budarz in Berlin, thank you for the meals, walks, talks and warnings against questionable home design decisions. Gay yay! Courtney Gilman has been the closest of friends since we met in Bonn years ago – truly boo, regardless of what the phone company thinks, two hours will never be enough for a phone conversation.

My parents, Ralph and Renee, brother, Nathan, and niece Saniia have been there all along the journey to ask about the latest progress on the “paper”. Thank you for your love and support. Dad, you were right: “inch by inch, it’s a cinch.” I was grateful for the many emails from my Grandma Cathy, who always asked about the latest progress and assured me that my grandfather was proud of me. Thank you. To my grandma, Helen Shelly Klassen, who left Vancouver and her family, self-funded her further schooling at a time when the question of a girl pursuing higher education was met with incredulity, and as an adult audited so many classes that Bluffton College awarded her an honorary degree: you are a model of the dogged pursuit of knowledge. To the man I met in August 2019 who has never stopped asking questions and inclining his head with genuine interest to hear what I would say, thank you for everything. Anselm Holthaus, I love you more than words can tell. H.G. Wells was right: bicycle tracks abound in utopia.
This work is dedicated to three individuals whose deaths marked the beginning and ending of my dissertation journey. In 2018, within days of each other, and shortly after I had begun preparing for my exams, my grandfather Donald Lee Caruso received news of an incurable cancer diagnosis and my intended advisor Jonathan Hess passed away suddenly. Less than a week before my dissertation defense, my grandmother Shirley Dawn Caruso passed away. All three have left a legacy that continues to shape my life. My grandma is with me every time I slice potatoes and set them in salt water in preparation for dinner at ten in the morning. Upon preparing to move into our new apartment in Berlin, I (and my husband!) discovered that my grandfather’s insistence on the attending to each and every detail involved in preparing a perfect home had been passed on to me. And although he no longer occupies his office in Dey Hall, Jonathan’s writings continued to teach me as I wrestled through the challenges of my dissertation; his mark is especially evident on the first chapter of this work. I can only hope it would make him proud. To all three: thank you. I am living. I remember you.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


INTRODUCTION: MEETING A UNICORN IN A FAIRYTALE FOREST

On October 19, 1898, the founder of the modern Zionist movement Theodor Herzl wrote in his diary about his recent meeting with the German Kaiser Wilhelm II in Istanbul. The Kaiser had just embarked on a trip through the orient, during which he would meet Herzl not only in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, but later in Palestine.¹

The Kaiser was hardly the first political leader in the German Reich with whom Herzl attempted to make contact. Early on, he wrote to then-retired Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, exclaiming in his diary, “Der ist gross genug, mich zu verstehen, oder zu heilen.” (TB1 142) Though Bismarck ignored these letters, Herzl found support in another figure: the Grand Duke of Baden and uncle of the then Kaiser of the German Reich, Friedrich I. The Duke, a man Herzl would later refer to as “der gute alte König aus dem Märchen,” knew something about the founding of countries. (TB1 416) Thirty years earlier, he had been an active participant in the political movement to unify Germany. Indeed, Friedrich I drew on the memories of the difficulties entailed in those efforts when he encouraged Herzl that despite the considerable challenges facing Zionism, the creation of a state was, indeed, possible.²


² Herzl evidently took these words to heart recalled them to his advocate during a later meeting. See TB1 722.
Greater than the support lent by the Grand Duke of Baden, however, Herzl’s meeting with the German Kaiser in Istanbul – and later, Jerusalem – proved a high point of his early diplomatic efforts aimed at securing external support for the Zionist project. Given Germany’s active role in Ottoman politics at the time, Herzl proposed to the Kaiser that he support the creation of a German protectorate in Palestine under which a Jewish settlement might begin to take shape. Recalling the visit soon afterwards, Herzl committed these words to his diary:


Despite Herzl’s hopes and the apparently fantastical meeting with Kaiser-unicorn hybrid, communication with the German delegation slowed to a trickle following this encounter, and subsequent events would reveal Herzl’s confidence that this meeting might produce a positive outcome to be a chimera. The Zionist delegation would soon leave Palestine, and Herzl would never again return during his lifetime.

Zionist Politics as German Literature

Though bizarre at first glance, I argue that this diary entry captures in miniature several key elements that frequently recur throughout Herzl’s work. The image of a later meeting that does exist depicts the Kaiser atop a horse, wearing a Pickelhaube and inclining toward Herzl. This figure, wearing a helmet topped with a spike might indeed be said to resemble the equine-like, single-horned creature Herzl holds in his mind’s eye. Yet the fantastical (fabelhaft) creature does not

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3 An image of the meeting can be found in Amos Elon, Herzl (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 368–9.
surprise Herzl. As he writes, he had already conceived of it. What astonishes him instead is the breath its lungs, “das es lebte”; a product of fantastical imagination has ridden into human history.

The theme of the fantastical made real was no rare one in Herzl’s writings. One need only consider the epigram prominently displayed on the title page of his novel *Altneuland* – “Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen”. The phrase would soon become a watchword, especially in its Hebrew translation, for early Zionists. The novel’s epilogue elaborates: “…Wenn Ihr aber nicht wollt, so ist es und bleibt es ein Märchen, was ich Euch erzählt habe.” It continues: “das Träumen sei immerhin auch eine Ausfüllung der Zeit, die wir auf der Erde verbringen. Traum ist von Tat nicht so verschieden wie mancher glaubt. Alles tun der Menschen war vorher Traum und wird später zum Traume” (ANL 343). For Herzl, then, the *Märchen* – or dream – of a Jewish society in Palestine need not stay sandwiched between the boards of a book; readers need only believe, and it will become reality. Just like the Kaiser as unicorn, the idea is not the challenge, its actualization is.

What much of the talk of Herzl and his use of the phrase *Märchen* threatens to efface is the German specificity of the images and background he employs: a specificity on full display in his entry about his meeting with the Kaiser. Indeed, for German readers, the word *Märchen* necessarily evoked – and still evokes – thoughts of the Brothers Grimm and their famed *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* collection. This work, published in the wake of Prussia’s defeat at the hands of Napoleon’s armies, was of no mere passing significance for German national longings. As Jakob Norberg recounts, the Grimm’s collection was of particular nationalist potency: although not overtly political, these tales allowed German readers to “understand themselves as the collective inheritors of an old folk culture,” thereby “contrib[ing] to the plausibility of a unified collective German subject, a national
community with a shared tradition”. In collecting these works, the Grimms made the very character of Germanness “legible” and granted it historical depth.

More than half a century later, however, Herzl did not write about a fantastical Märchenfigur he had read about in one of the tales collected by the Grimms. The true Märchen was the fact that this people’s essence, evidenced by the stories in the collection, had now found political expression in a German state whose chief representative was Kaiser Wilhelm II. In other words, the idea of a unified Germany was not to be taken for granted. For Herzl and his interlocutors, unification was a recent political event that had occurred within the human memory of many; in the recent past, it might have easily been dismissed as a mere fairy tale. To be clear, then, Germany provided a model for these early Zionists. For if the fantastical unicorn of German nationhood could be made real, Herzl’s writing implies that Jewish nationhood, too, might be actualized in the soil of Palestine.

This German specificity, however, is yet one star in a more complex constellation. For a second aspect of this entry warrants our appreciation: the literary character of the Märchen. Given the many renderings of Zionist history full of accounts of diplomatic negotiations, congressional reports and later, violent skirmishes, it can easily escape our attention that Herzl conceives of his meeting

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5 Ibid., 74.

6 As I discuss later, with German, I in no way mean only the German Reich; I consider German to mean a broader, transnational cultural context shaped by figures in Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Central Europe more broadly.
with the Kaiser in literary terms. Nor was this the only time he spoke of the Zionist project as such. Already at the outset of his Zionist diaries, he suggests committing his ideas to the page, that they might serve “die Literatur...Wird aus dem Roman keine That, so kann doch aus der That ein Roman werden. Titel: das gelobte Land” (TB1 43). Herzl also wrote of the movement in theatrical terms. As a playwright, several of whose light comedies were part of the repatory of Vienna’s Burgtheater, he elsewhere wrote, “eigentlich bin ich...noch immer der Dramatiker. Ich nehme arme, verlumpte Leute von der Strasse, stecke sie in herrliche Gewänder und lasse sie vor der Welt ein wunderbares von mir ersonnenes Schauspiel aufführen.” (TB1 99)8 Collectively, these passages provide evidence of a man who understood Zionism in fundamentally literary terms.

*   *   *

In the pages that follow, this dissertation, Writing a Future State: Spatial Imaginaries of German Jewish Literature, 1885–1932 undertakes an analysis of four German-language novels written between the 1880s and 1932: Edmund Eisler’s Ein Zukunftsbild (1885), Theodor Herzl’s Altneuland (1902), Franz Kafka’s Der Verschollene (1927), and Arnold Zweig’s De Vriendt kehrt heim (1932). All four works witness German-speaking Jews using literature to dream about, discuss, or else critique the movement to establish a Jewish State in the period before the Second World War. Beginning with the earliest of these works, a little-known utopian text that predates the very term “Zionism” by some years, and reaching to the final one, published as National Socialists came to power in

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8 For the observation that some of Herzl’s plays were part of the repertory of Vienna’s Burgtheater, see Jacques Kornberg, Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 153. For a broader discussion of the literary nature of Herzl’s project with an emphasis on its theatricality, see Clemens Peck, Im Labor der Utopie. Theodor Herzl und das ‘Altneuland’-Projekt (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 2012), especially 27–61.
Germany, my analyses continuously return to the two concepts I draw out in my preceding discussion of Herzl's diary entry about his meeting with the German Kaiser. Equally important is a third concept, to which I will return shortly – that of the spatial. In sum, these analyses elucidate how the works under consideration intersect at the point of German context, literary specificity, and spatial imagination. This triad, I contend, helps us understand and reconstruct an important and heretofore underexamined aspect of Zionist discourse during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In undertaking these analyses, I do not propose to provide an all-encompassing account of the Zionist movement broadly, nor of all Zionist literary strivings specifically. Even from its earliest expressions, decades before a group of delegates gathered in Basel in 1897, Zionism and the movements historians read as its precursors – most prominently, Hovevi Zion – encompassed a wide range of often contradictory ideas, strivings, and programs. Jews from a variety of linguistic, social, and historical backgrounds contributed to a lively debate about what a future Jewish State ought to look like. Indeed, before and during the same period my dissertation examines, writers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, wrote works in English, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish, all of which might be understood as “Zionist” in one way or another.9 Under the label of Zionist utopias alone, scholars have already performed the work of collecting a series of texts, often including works that span many of these languages and analyzing them as belonging to a single tradition.10

9 Examples include Ze’ev Jabotinsky’s Samson the Nazirite (1926–7) originally written in Russian; Haim Nahman Bialik’s poetry, written in both Yiddish and Hebrew; and S. Y. Agnon’s novels, including The Bridal Canopy (1931), in Hebrew. English-language works such as George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda (1876) and Benjamin Disraeli’s The Wonderous Tale of Alroy (1833) and Tancred, or the New Crusade (1847) are frequently cited as proto-Zionist texts.

Scholarly endeavors that undertake to tell the story of Zionism by means of all-encompassing narratives or else literary histories that collect works written in multiple languages perform important work. At their best, they acknowledge Zionism’s transnational nature and attempt to reconstruct a discourse that was never only conducted in one language or limited by national or cultural boundaries. Simultaneously, however, some of these works can, by their very nature, prove problematic.\textsuperscript{11} In the first instance, this scholarship, especially as found in some of the aforementioned literary collections, brings together texts and retroactively reads them as part of a single tradition that has as its teleological endpoint the foundation of a Jewish State. Often, they not only take for granted that such a state will later be founded, but suggest, if only implicitly, that these works find their fulfillment in the State of Israel specifically. This reading can often efface the indeterminacy present at the times when these works were composed.

Secondly the writers of these histories – literary and otherwise – sometimes run the danger of missing the specific national, literary and cultural contexts out of which Zionism came into being. Thus, in telling a transnational, translinguistic history of Zionism or Zionist literature, scholars run the risk of losing sight of the national, cultural and linguistic specificity in which historical actors and writers found themselves. They instead implicitly frame these individuals as belonging to a category, the “Zionist”, which is often rendered equivalent with “(proto-)Israeli”. These works and their creators are thus contextualized as part of a state in waiting, a state whose very reality and form is

\textsuperscript{11} For a similar critique, see Michael Stanisklawski, \textit{Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), xviii–xxi.
presupposed from the outset at the expense of understanding of the actual contexts in which these works were actually created.

German

If I do not propose to take these paths, the journey I instead undertake is, as already announced, focused on a subset of Zionist literature consisting of works initially composed in the German language. To be clear, this limitation is linguistic and sometimes cultural, but by no means national. Indeed, at the time these authors wrote, German was an official language of both the German Reich and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as an important language of science and scholarship, and of special importance to the Jewish community specifically. This transnationality is clearly evinced by the biographies of the writers whose works I explore. As the story I trace in the following chapters demonstrates, German literature during this period was read, consumed, and produced in important metropoles like Vienna and Berlin, as well as less obvious locales such as Budapest, Prague, and Glogau, in what today is Poland.

But the readership of German Jewish literature at the dawn of the Zionist movement extended beyond the borders of Central Europe, something I explore in depth in my first chapter. It reached to places like Cincinnati, Ohio and Moscow, Russia. As these locations suggest, the linguistically-demarcated literary tradition of German-language Jewish novels was of significance to more than just German-speaking Jews. Instead, as recent scholarship has discussed, these works reached a wider readership, one Marc Volovici labels “German-reading Jews”. In other words, these works proved not only significant to native speakers or those who spoke German fluently as a non-native language; there existed yet another group, those who had enough knowledge to gain linguistic
access to German texts, actively sought them out, and constituted an important part of the readership of these works.\textsuperscript{12}

Importantly, German was no accidental medium for the transmission of a literature depicting and advancing the idea of a Jewish State. For, as the aforementioned Marc Volovici thoroughly details in his work \textit{German as a Jewish Problem}, German language and thought provided many Jewish writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with an important set of terms and conceptual vocabulary to theorize and think about nationalism broadly and Jewish nationalism specifically. Indeed, for a not insignificant number of early Zionists – including, but not limited to Herzl – figures from Herder to Bismarck played a key role in how they thought about what it meant to be a nation and how Jews might go about creating one.

There is more to the German-specificity of these texts, however, than the influence of contemporary German discourse around what made a nation, or even the particular resonance of the recent memory of the founding of a unified German State under the Prussian monarchy and rule of Bismarck.\textsuperscript{13} From its very beginnings, as the first chapter clearly details, German Zionist literature also exhibited clear resonances with the themes and tropes present in the German Jewish middlebrow literature that preceded it. Indeed, despite their overt rejection by major swaths of German Jewish communities at the time, as well as their political commitments, these writers and their works continued to evince significant continuities with German Jewish life and thought.


\textsuperscript{13} In addition to the influence of the German Reich, scholars have also read figures like Herzl in his Austro-Hungarian context. For a classic treatment of Herzl in this light, see Carl Schorske, \textit{Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture} (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 116–80. A more recent treatment can be found in Kornberg, \textit{Herzl}, especially 89–111.
Rather than a “radical rupture,” the Zionism of figures like Herzl, as I show, is best understood as the product of German Jewish communities and their years-long fight for social and political emancipation. Thus, even as the early Zionists I discuss in my first two chapters considered the emancipation of European Jewry an abject failure, they never fully broke with many key assumptions and commitments of the emancipatory discourse which they inherited. In other words, like scholars such as Steven Beller, Daniel Boyarin, and Jacques Kornberg before me, I read Zionism less as a rejection of the emancipatory project and instead as an attempt to achieve it by other means.  

In this, I argue, these works reveal themselves to be particular products of a German Jewish milieu and thereby reflect assumptions reaching back to ideas expressed in Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden (1781) and Moses Mendelssohn’s Jerusalem oder über die religiöse Macht und Judenthum (1783).

One of the key legacies of the (incomplete) emancipatory project these writers inherited from German Jews was the firm belief in the importance of separating religion from the public sphere. Thus, as these writers pursued the thought of creating a Jewish State, the beliefs first articulated in works such as Moses Mendelssohn’s Jerusalem found uptake, this time in the literary visions for a Jewish State discussed in the first two chapters of this dissertation. This movement to segregate the religious from the political and thereby create room for a non-religiously specific “citizen” was by no means a phenomenon isolated to German Jewry. Indeed, it was the Russian Maskil and Hebrew poet Yehudah Leib Gordon who summarized this secularizing tendency most pithily with the phrase: “Be a man in the streets and a Jew at home.”

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Nonetheless, this model of a state whose citizens might relegate their religious commitments to the private sphere left its special mark on German Jews and German Jewish discourse. This model, as I argue in my second chapter, finds special expression in Herzl’s *Altneuland*, a work I analyze as marked by attempts to divide public and private spheres. Indeed, it was this aspiration, I argue, that gave Zionists like Herzl hope that a Jewish State might be capacious enough to provide a home for non-Jewish citizens. That this secularizing hope eventually disappointed finds expression in the work I discuss in my final chapter on Arnold Zweig’s *De Vriendt kehrt heim*.

**The Literary**

The second part of the conceptual triad framing this dissertation is my insistence that we take seriously the fact that each and every one of the works discussed found expression *as literature*. Indeed, as my introductory discussion of the depiction of the German Kaiser as *märchenhaft* foregrounds, far from unique to the individual aspirations of Jews to create their own state, Zionists such as Herzl were quite familiar with national movements that used literary forms to advance their project by creating a national subject with historical depth. In highlighting this theme, I am indebted to the work of Benedict Anderson and his argument that the nation state is reliant on the creation of “imagined communities” propagated by means of print capitalism. As Anderson shows, nineteenth century national movements strategically deployed text-based media such as newspapers and novels that spurred readers on to imagine themselves as part of a national community.

Anderson’s insights allow us to appreciate how Herzl’s role at one of the most important newspapers of central Europe at the time, the *Neue Freie Presse*, gave him a front row seat to the power of newspapers to support nations and their governments. This, I would argue, in no small

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part accounts for his early, dogged insistence that the Zionist movement required a newspaper of its own. Yet of more interest for this present project is the power of novels, including Herzl’s own, in helping Jewish readers throughout Europe and beyond to imagine themselves as part of a single, national community in a transformed Palestine – and this as a direct repudiation of a century of Jewish claims that they were not in fact a state within a state.

Important for Benedict Anderson’s analysis of the creation of these imagined communities is the presence of a common language in which these texts find their expression. Without a doubt, European (and North American) Jews at the turn of the last century did not share any single language. Yet as discussed above and explored in more depth in my first chapter, given the transnational importance of German for Jewish readers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, combined with the already-extant network of German book distribution for those readers, it was specifically German literature (and newspapers) that were able to play an especially important role in creating just such an imagined community in print. Once again, this is not to dismiss the value of other linguistic contexts or print cultures for early Zionism. It is, however, a justification of why German Jewish print culture and its products warrant special attention if we are to understand the creation of a national, “imagined community” for European Jews at the turn of the last century.

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16 In his work, Kornberg mentions Herzl’s paper, Neue Freie Presse, together with the Neues Wiener Tagblatt, as having “attained substantial readerships” and functioning as “influential opinion moulders” at the turn of the century. Their reputation, “not entirely undeserved,” according to Kornberg, was “for serving the government”. See Herzl, 62. For more background on Herzl and the press, see Mordechai Friedman, Theodor Herzl’s Zionist Journey – Exodus and Return, translated by Gila Brand (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 69–104.

Any use of Anderson’s theory must acknowledge critiques his work has come under. Postcolonial approaches, such as the one advanced by Partha Chatterjee, consider the theory to be Eurocentric and unable to account for the wide variety of expressions of nationalism across space and time.\(^\text{18}\) Regardless of the larger purchase her critiques might find, modern Zionism in the years this dissertation explores was largely a European Jewish phenomenon, and its participants were well acquainted with and influenced by other European nationalist movements.\(^\text{19}\)

Anthony D. Smith’s critique, grounded in his own alternative theory of ethnosymbolism, also warrants consideration. In his work, Smith argues that the theories of his modernist opponents miss how much “‘tradition’, customs, religion, and ethnicity are interwoven with ‘modernity’, secularism, reason, and bureaucracy” and how these “serv[e] modern interests as much as those of earlier ages.”\(^\text{20}\) He further argues that scholars like Anderson fail to recognize how “religious traditions, and especially beliefs about the sacred, underpin and suffuse to a greater or lesser degree the national identities of the populations of the constituent states”.\(^\text{21}\)

Briefly, Smith’s main objections might be summed up as follows: first, a complaint about the failure of modernist theoreticians of nationalism – of which Anderson is a prominent representative – to consider nationalisms’ reliance on previous traditions; and second, their naive acceptance of a putatively “secular” nationalism that is, at its roots, structurally religious. Yet as Alexander Maxwell


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 795.
thoroughly documents, Benedict Anderson’s work dedicates considerable thought to nineteenth-century nationalists’ frequent use and repurposing of “the large cultural systems that preceded” them. Indeed, in using Anderson’s concept of an “imagined community”, I am not arguing that nineteenth and twentieth century Zionism created a state “ex nihilo,” – a move Smith rightly reads critically. Instead, like Anderson, I seek to point to the creative work that Zionists undertook to repurpose and transform preexisting cultural material to create the idea of a Jewish nation. Indeed, Zionism and other secular Jewish traditions did draw on traditional religious narratives and history to support Jewish national longings. But even as it drew on these narratives and historical events, Anderson helps us appreciate how Herzl and other (secular) Zionists used this material to “imagine” a nation of Jews in a way that fundamentally altered traditional cultural and religious symbols, giving them new meanings and new forms, all the while using the tools of print capitalism – such as Die Welt and Altneuland – to invite readers to join this imagined community.

Within this context, Smith’s second claim, what he describes as the fundamentally “sacred dimension” of the nation, also bears brief consideration. Importantly, in describing the “sacred”, Smith deploys Emile Durkheim’s definition of religion, one that emphasizes “rites and ceremonies” as a means to propagate identity. Deemphasized in this sociological definition, however, is the idea of an almighty or super-natural force as a structuring principle fundamental to the warp and woof of religious life: ideas that religious Jews in the time period under consideration would have considered


vital aspects of their tradition and not a few viewed as under attack by secular Zionists. In sum, though nationalism might indeed contain structures that could be read as sacred, this can in no way blind us to the insight Anderson and other modernist scholars of nationalism provide us.

Specifically, in regards to Jewish nationalism at the dawn of the twentieth century, Zionism represented a break with Jewish religious tradition. It asked Jews to reimagine what their “Jewishness” meant: no longer a primarily religious identity, or part of a familial inheritance, Zionists instead advanced the idea that “Jewish” was a political identity, an identity that justified the (re)creation of a nation state in Palestine. Put another way: as the careful scholarship of those such as David Biale has convincingly demonstrated, secular Jews and the movements they birthed often drew on Jewish tradition. But to prove that Zionism shared continuities with earlier forms of (religious) Judaism is not equivalent to proving that Herzl and other Zionists represented no change or did not imagine new ways of being Jewish in an alternative communal formation called a nation. Indeed, this was precisely what they did: theirs was a bold act of imagination that found purchase from those who first encountered their ideas while reading their tracts, newspapers, and, significantly, novels.

To fully grasp the significance of Zionist literature during the years this work examines also requires an appreciation of how it was an expression and outgrowth of a positive explosion of utopian literature in the nineteenth century. At the time of Altneuland’s publication, works such as Edward Bellamy’s 1888 American bestseller, Looking Backward 2000–1887 and Theodor Hertzka’s 1890 work, Freiland: ein soziales Zukunftsbild had found large reading audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. These works did more than just fuel book sales, however; they led to the creation of movements that advocated for concrete political change based on the ideas that first found
expression in the pages of novels. In other words, during the era in which they lived, these early Zionists were witness to the power of utopian literature to not only support, but actually lead to and spur on political action. Indeed, it is no accident that authors such as Bellamy and Hertzka garnered direct mention in Herzl’s writings. But even beyond works that are clearly utopian, if only in a literary form, my third and fourth chapters on Franz Kafka and Arnold Zweig, respectively, demonstrate how this literature and related forms made their presence felt, even when novels – and travelogues – were not immediately recognizable as belonging to the utopian genre.

Importantly, in analyzing the creations of these four authors and insisting that they be read as literature, I do more than emphasize them merely as tools of political action. Indeed, I suggest, their literary form is more than incidental; they are not, I argue, to be understood as propaganda of minimal literary value. I instead argue that to fully appreciate the work these novels perform, they need to be understood in literary terms. In other words, the conviction underlying this dissertation is that only with the tools of literary analysis – close readings, the examination of intertexts and attention to generic conventions – can we begin to fully appreciate the imaginative work at the heart of these texts.

Key to granting these texts their full due as literature is the analytical move to read German Zionist literature as a literary history. This method allows us to appreciate how these texts – from Kafka’s celebrated Der Verschollene to the more dismissed Altneuland – together constitute a

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26 Herzl mentions Hertzka in his introduction to Der Judenstaat, Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage (Leipzig: M. Breitenstein’s Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1896), 4. For Bellamy, see ANL 165.
conversation that can best be understood when taken as a whole. Doing this has several advantages. Among others, it allows us to see how literary tropes in one text are taken up and transformed in another work. Thus, for instance, Arnold Zweig’s depiction of the Dead Sea discussed in the fourth chapter is made more legible when considered in conversation with Herzl's very different portrayal of the Dead Sea in Altneuland. In short, by reconstructing this literary history of works that span genres, were composed by authors of differing ideological commitments, and understood today as being of varying literary value, this dissertation demonstrates how literature and the tools of literary analysis are vital to uncovering this one corner of Zionist discourse during the final decades of the nineteenth and early ones of the twentieth centuries.

**Space**

Of special importance in reading these texts as literature is the final part of the conceptual triad that rests at the heart of each of these analyses: an exploration of the spatial imaginaries that occupy places of prominence in the German Zionist literature I explore. In each analysis I explore the importance of spatial thinking to the depictions of Palestine in each text; more importantly still, I detect in the works a continuous consideration of the influence on Jews of the spaces they traverse and places they inhabit. In other words, I argue that these texts do something far more dynamic than depicting valueless spatial backdrops against which human agents – specifically Jews – conduct their affairs and build a state. Instead, the authors of the works under consideration each used the power of prose to think critically about and ultimately, (re)create in readers’ minds, places in Europe, Palestine, and even America.

In attending to these concerns, I am indebted to the spatial turn in the humanities. In the field of Jewish Studies specifically, two groundbreaking monographs warrant mention: in *Prague Territories*, Scott Spector queries the categories of the center and the periphery within Cultural Zionism in Prague during Kafka’s lifetime. In *A Rich Brew*, Shachar Pinsker draws on Edward Soja’s
third space theory to think about the influence of cafés and café culture on the creation of modern Jewish life. Both works demonstrate how spatial categories can be productively deployed to open up new readings of Jewish texts to help us gain new appreciation for key aspects of Jewish history and literature.²⁷

A third work, Na’ama Rokem’s *Prosaic Conditions*, is of special relevance to this project. In her monograph, Rokem uses spatial categories and the question of genre to provide insightful readings of classics of Zionist literature. Her analysis of Herzl’s work specifically demonstrates how the Zionist leader’s turn to prose can best be understood as deploying a “tool of technological imagination and more specifically as a kind of literary corollary to the world-making and technological transformation of space in which Herzl sees the great success of future Zionism.”²⁸ This, in turn, connects to a larger claim of Rokem’s work, namely how Zionists deployed prose specifically because its “proper use” was, and is, “to construct spaces”.²⁹

At the heart of Rokem’s discussion is the vital recognition that “Zionism is a constellation of grand spatial ambitions, aiming to relocate masses of Jews to Palestine and fundamentally transform its topography.”³⁰ Encapsulated in this statement are two key points of departure for my own work: a recognition of both (1) the spatial concerns at the heart of Zionism and (2) the considerable efforts

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²⁹ Ibid., 93.

³⁰ Ibid., xviii.
individual Zionists undertook to “transform” Palestine spatially through the medium of literature. Yet if my work shares this conviction with Rokem’s scholarship, it directs our attention to questions other than those of prose and poetry and their respective suitability for communicating and creating spatial imaginaries. Instead, my analysis seeks to interrogate another set of questions. In particular: how can we read spatial construction and spatial depiction in individual novels, especially with an appreciation for how authors consider the influence of spatial surroundings on their Jewish inhabitants? How do spatial representations in literature change over time? And how can we begin to appreciate how literary spatial representations of Palestine interact with each other? In sum, the questions animating the present work are less those about medium and genre and more about how spatial imaginaries in early German Zionist literature communicated about the potentialities of Palestine as a real, spatial entity to transform Jews.

Beyond the field of Jewish Studies, Phillip E. Wegner’s *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, The Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* also performs important work of immediate relevance to this study, especially in light of the fact that the first two chapters of this dissertation focus on utopian texts. In his monograph, Wegner directly rebuts the tempting conclusion that the very name utopian (literally: *no* space) means that texts belonging to the genre ipso facto resist spatial analysis.  

He instead shows how “the narrative utopia plays a crucial role in the construction of the nation-state as an original spatial, social, and cultural form”.

By way of analyses of texts reaching from Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) to classic utopian works of the twentieth century, Wegner provides a

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31 Of course, even Thomas More played with the word, suggesting it also be read *eutopia*, or “happy place”. See the introduction in Thomas More, *Utopia*, 3rd ed., edited by George M. Logan and translated by Robert M. Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xi.

helpful paradigm for thinking about how works belonging to the genre have functioned historically. Three of his insights bear brief mention.

First, Wegner maintains that the narrative utopia be understood as a romance, where space and place, rather than character, play the key roles. For him, these works provide the first locations where the “imagined community” and the places it inhabits can be created. Put succinctly, “description itself serves as what in other contexts we think of as action or plot” and the romance gives readers an “experience” of “settings, worlds or spaces”.33 In this, Wegner provides a productive model for thinking about Zionist literature: in brief, inasmuch as these texts are long on (spatial) description and short on character development, we need not understand these features as faults; they instead point to how these works are operating in an alternative literary mode.

A second and related point is Wegner’s observation that more than just romances, narrative utopias “make particular demands on their later readers”: they perform the “pedagogical operation” of “teaching [their] audiences to think of the spaces they already inhabit in a new critical fashion”.34 Of course, Zionist literature did educate its readers to rethink the places they already inhabited, but of equal – if not more – urgency for European Zionists was a reconsideration of Palestine, a place many had never inhabited or even visited. Yet, here, too, Wegner’s argument is not without relevance. For German Jews of the early nineteenth century, Palestine – especially Jerusalem – had long occupied a place of privilege and a locus of religious longing, best exemplified in the Passover

33 Ibid., xviii, 12.

34 Ibid., 3, 17.
liturgy where participants intoned “next year in Jerusalem”. German Zionist literature, I maintain, conducted its own “pedagogical operation,” helping its readers to reconceptualize Palestine not (only) as a place of religious significance, but more importantly as one of national and political import. In this, the literature partook in a larger change then taking place identified by historical geographer Yehoshua Ben-Arieh as a move from understanding Palestine as “Eretz Hakodesh” (the Holy Land) to “Eretz Israel”. 

In participating in this larger, epochal change, German Zionist literature played a role in envisioning a new form of Jewish identity. As Wegener notes, utopias not only critically re-envision the meaning of places; they also represent a “critical assault on already existing practices and spaces”. Wegner show how only following a “deterritorialization” of old spatial modes of thinking is the utopia able to undertake a “homogenization of space” and create a place to house a nation state demarcated by clear borders. “The creation of this new kind of spatiality,” he argues, “entails the production of a new form of cultural identity” based in the place of the nation. These identities, notably, involve a “crucial decentering of religion” all in the process of helping readers become “modern subject[s]”.

35 Of course, with religious reform, even this seemingly immutable phrase was up for revision, as exemplified in the Offenbach Haggadah, which read “next years in Worms on the Rhine, our home”.


37 Wegner’s own analysis follows from his reading of More’s Utopia as, among other things, a response to the processes of enclosure and dissolution of feudal estates. Here Wegner, Imaginary Communities, xxi, 25, 48–50.

38 Wegner makes the point that this not need imply a “full blown secularism.” Nonetheless, as he reads Utopia, “Religious practice on the island does not possess the same unifying force that it had previously in historical Europe precisely because it has given way to a new form of communal identity, one defined first and foremost by spatiality, or the shared sense that one inhabited a single, extended, and bounded place. It is
Wegner’s analysis not only proves generally convincing, but provides, I contend, a paradigm with significant explanatory power for phenomena that the German Zionist literature discussed in this dissertation partakes in. Even as authors such as Eisler and Herzl, discussed in the first two chapters, draw extensively on Jewish tradition, they repurpose the materials they deploy, proposing a form of “Jewishness,” not predicated on religious practice as much as on the place one occupies. The “state,” as a territorially defined entity, becomes a precondition for envisioning a new way of being Jewish, while orthodoxy and orthopraxy as criteria for belonging are marginalized. It must be noted, however, that when it comes to literature that reflects on actual Jewish experience in Palestine, as discussed in my final chapter, the desirability of this new form of Jewish identity is questioned.

These spatial considerations then, constitute an important third and final frame for the analyses that follow. Here, one final terminological clarification warrants mention. Throughout, I draw on Yi-Fu Tuan’s terminological delineation between space and place. According to Tuan, space refers to the locations one moves through, “more abstract” and “undifferentiated” areas which humans traverse on the way to place.\(^{39}\) Place, by contrast, is endowed with value; it is “an object” where one pauses and rests. Tuan argues: “space can be variously experienced as the relative location of objects or places, as the distances and expanses that separate or link places, and – more abstractly – as the area defined by a network of places.”\(^ {40}\) Here, importantly, Tuan’s definition of “experience” through the common habitation of the island territory and not by their religious allegiances that even Utopians who had never met one another could ‘imagine’ they were one people.” Ibid., 50–1.


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 12.
includes the conceptual models that individuals bring to specific places. Thus, it is no misnomer to speak of German Jewish readers’ “experience” of Palestine, even if they never left Europe and crossed the Mediterranean. Through the medium of literature, religious and secular, Jews nonetheless experienced settings, worlds, and spaces geographically removed from the chairs where they sat, silently turning the pages of the books they held. In adhering to this distinction, I aim to terminologically foreground the way in which the different authors discussed here were always at the work of using, disputing, or else creating spatial concepts and frames that informed (readerly) experiences of the place of a future Jewish nation. Space may be valueless, but the writers I discuss were part of the effort to by turns reencode the meaning of certain places, and by turn create brand new places out of spaces. These places were laden with value: value that the works I discuss took an active part in constructing.41

Chapter Outline

The dissertation that follows takes the form of four chapters, arranged chronologically by time of composition of the works considered in each. At the center of every chapter is a discussion of the aforementioned literary works. The first chapter begins with a discussion of German Jewish life in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It includes a comparative analysis of Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden (1781) and Leon Pinsker’s Autoemäzipation (1882) as well as Theodor Herzl’s Tagebücher. Though separated by over a century, my analysis highlights the these works’ kinship and thereby the kinship shared between the emancipatory strivings of German Jews and Zionists like Pinsker and Herzl. This kinship, my argument highlights, is legible not only in the similarities between both projects, but also in specific continuities that I

41 In using the word “constructing,” I do not in any way mean unreal or inefficacious. Constructing here simply acknowledges human agency in creating the meaning and value applied to a place.
uncover between German Jewish middlebrow literature and early German (proto-)Zionist literature. Exemplary of these continuities, I argue, is Edmund Eisler’s 1885 novella, *Ein Zukunftsbild.* In my close reading of the text, I show how Eisler’s work evinces a debt to German Jewish middlebrow texts as revealed in its use of romantic tropes. Yet I also argue that even as it evinces a debt to the middlebrow tradition, *Ein Zukunftsbild* moves beyond it and begins to make productive use of spatial tropes. I conclude by troubling the “proto-Zionist” label earlier scholars have given the text, and thereby show Eisler not only as valuable when understood as a precursor to Herzl, but also as an ambivalent bridge between earlier German Jewish literary expressions and an emerging German Jewish Zionist literary tradition.

The second chapter examines Theodor Herzl and his two major literary works. I begin with a discussion of Jewish emancipation understood as a spatial phenomenon, which I then use to analyze Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto.* In particular, my reading shows how Herzl understood the *Judenfrage* in fundamentally spatial terms. In *Altneuland,* I go on to argue, Herzl provides a *spatial solution* to the problem he poses in *Das neue Ghetto.* Throughout, I draw attention to the manner in which Herzl’s spatial solution seeks to relegate the religious into a private, domestic sphere, modeled on the domestication of religion that German Jews understood as a prerequisite for their attaining of citizenship in European countries. Equally important, he also attempts to create a second, secular political sphere wherein a multiethnic state might be erected, so that not only Jews, but Christians and Muslims, too, might find a home there. I conclude with an analysis of *Altneuland’s* depiction of a reconstructed temple and Herzl’s silent erasure of the Al-Aqsa mosque. Drawing on this passage, I suggest that Herzl’s novelistic secularizing of Palestine as place was never complete, even within the pages of *Altneuland,* given the novel’s implicit privileging of Jewish over Muslim religious places. This, I argue, indexes a contradiction at the heart of the Zionist enterprise, even in its most secular form.
In the third chapter, I turn to Franz Kafka’s Der Verschollene. In my analysis of Kafka’s first (incomplete) novel about the adventures of Karl Roßmann in America, I render the influence of Zionist literature on broader German Jewish literature in the years following Herzl legible. Using Kafka’s drafts of a literary review of Max Brod’s Die Judinnen as evidence, I suggest that the Prague Jewish writer conceived of Zionism as a literary problem. I follow with a close reading of the novel as an extended meditation on the problematics of what I call the “spatial relocation narrative”: a narrative where migration is viewed as the solution to social, cultural, and political problems. I conclude by resituating Der Verschollene in its literary context, suggesting that we understand Kafka’s text as a celebration of the ability for the literary to achieve a utopian dream that will necessarily be denied to anyone seeking to actualize it in real life. In this, I argue, we see Kafka’s implicit repudiation of the famed epigraph to Herzl’s Altneuland: “Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen!”

Literature for Kafka, I argue, provides the utopian moment that real life can never offer.

I conclude with a final chapter on Arnold Zweig and two of his works: Das neue Kanaan (1925) and De Vriendt kehrt heim. I read the first text, Zweig’s imaginary travelogue through Palestine, written at the high point of his Zionist convictions, as evidence of the author’s indebtedness to Zionist utopian literature. In the chapter’s main analysis, I discuss Zweig’s “Palestine novel,” written after his first journey to the Middle East and on the eve of his emigration from Germany. Altneuland, I argue, constitutes an important intertext for De Vriendt. Yet rather than celebrating Herzl’s literary vision actualized in Palestine’s landscape, I suggest that Zweig uses Herzl’s novel as an intertext for the purpose of critique, in particular his goal of problematizing the consequences or even possibility of achieving spatial separation between the religious and the political in Palestine. Throughout my concern is less with Zweig’s status as either Zionist or anti-Zionist, and more with the very manner in which Zweig’s text works as an example of how German literature, even as late as the 1930s, functioned as an important site for grappling with questions of Zionism.
Taken as a whole, I consider these works to constitute a crucial site of discourse about the Zionist project and the question of turning the literary (the Märchen) into reality in the half century before the rise of National Socialism in Germany. In reconstructing this site, my scholarship illustrates how a subset of German literary texts functioned as more just an exercise in propaganda or “advertisement” for the Zionist project. Instead, during these years, literature functioned as a realm for not only imagining the place of a future nation but also arguing about what was imagined. In interacting with the political, these texts did not sacrifice their literary qualities; instead, they did something unique for their writers and their readers. In each of these analyses, I seek to reconstruct a part of this journey and in so doing, provide us all with a sense of the possibilities of literature. These readings thereby help us to think critically about how the early work of Zionism did not just take place in Kibbutzim and settlements, but also at writing desks, and indeed, in the reading chairs of Jews as they turned the pages of novels in their houses and apartments in Berlin and Prague.
CHAPTER 1: EIN ZUKUNFTSBILD: EDMUND EISLER'S LONGING FOR EUROPE IN PALESTINE

On December 15th, 1898, following his trip to Palestine where he met with the German Kaiser, Theodor Herzl continued his correspondence with one his supporters, the Grand Duke, Friedrich I of Baden. He wrote:


The letter continues, emphasizing Herzl’s continued desire to bring Jews to Palestine as part of a German protectorate, something the Zionist movement was then pursing. Indeed when meeting the Kaiser, Herzl had suggested that this arrangement would prove fruitful, as “[d]ie überwiegende Mehrheit der Juden gehört der deutschen Cultur an.” The Kaiser, had also considered an arrangement promising, as “die Juden würden auf die Colonisierung Palästinas eintreten, wenn sie wüssten, dass er [der Kaiser; JDS] sie unter seinem Schutz behalte, dass sie also Deutschland nicht verlassen.” (TB1 666)

As mentioned in the introduction, Herzl’s efforts to build the foundations for an eventual Jewish State under the auspices of the German Reich ultimately failed, and the Zionist movement would soon thereafter pivot to England to gain European support for a foothold in the region. Despite the ultimate failure of the venture, however, I argue that Herzl’s letter, together with the Kaiser’s own observation about Jewish attachment to Germany, are more than empty words. They
instead index an important rhetoric underlying a significant part of the Zionist movement borne of a much older project to achieve Jewish civic betterment, also known as emancipation.\footnote{Although I will not thematize it further, Jacob Katz notes that using the term “emancipation” to describe Dohm’s project is “clearly a case of linguistic anachronism, for though it occasionally pops up in deliberations on the Jewish issue of that time, it was only from 1828 onward that the term became the magic formula for Jewish aspirations.” See Jacob Katz, Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870 (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), here 191. David Sorkin also provides a classical treatment of the topic with a German focus in The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For a recent, more chronologically and geographically comprehensive treatment, see his Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).}

My contention that Zionist rhetoric bears more than a passing resemblance to the emancipatory pamphlets and enlightenment rhetoric of a bygone century may at first appear counterintuitive. To this day, Zionist self-understanding emphasizes its profound break with earlier Jewish efforts to live in, adapt to, acculturate, and perhaps even assimilate to non-Jewish places and societies. It views itself, in other words, as a rejection of specific Jewish pasts it understands as “diasporic”. Yet Zionism’s insistence on the radical rupture it represented and continues to represent obscures how much significant streams within it originated in the movement for Jewish emancipation – which is to say, the project of pursuing political equality by remaking Jews into a new type of human being fit to become citizens of modern European states. Indeed, as I show, even as it advocated for a physical movement away from the continent, Zionist concerns were often paradoxically driven by the long-held Jewish desire to finally join the European community of nations.

In what follows, I develop this argument by providing a close reading of the Zionist movement not purely as rupture, but as partial continuity: specifically, I show how significant elements of Zionism ought best be understood as continuations of the then century-long strivings for German (and more broadly, European) Jewish emancipation. I do this by bringing Herzl’s own
writings, as well as Leon Pinsker’s earlier tract *Autoemanzipation*, into conversation with the text largely responsible for inaugurating the debate about Jewish “civic betterment” in the late eighteenth-century German-speaking world: Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s 1781 treatise, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*. In making this argument, I situate myself in a line of scholarship represented by Steven Beller, Daniel Boyarin, and Jacques Kornberg. As Boyarin puts it, “Herzlian Zionism [was]...a civilizing mission, first and foremost directed by Jews at other Jews and then at whatever natives happened to be [in Palestine], if indeed, these natives [were] noticed at all.”43 This comparative approach, then, allows us to appreciate the depiction of Zionists as unambivalent colonizers and Palestine’s Arab inhabitants as the “colonized” as not a complete picture, eschewing as it does the internal Jewish dynamics at work in Zionism that were, in turn, informed by emancipatory debates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Yet in directing our attention at these continuities, I seek to do more than simply better explain Zionism’s political goals. Important to this current project is how this insight helps us recognize (proto-)Zionist German literature as not only indebted to utopian literature – as discussed in my introduction – but also to another literary phenomenon of the time, namely German Jewish middlebrow literature. While middlebrow and Zionist literatures can in no way be collapsed onto each other, I argue that they share a kinship; and recognizing this allows us to better approach and interpret early literary texts often read as “Zionist”. As a demonstration of this, I pivot in the second half of my chapter to show how a connection of these two literary traditions allows us to open up a

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43 The quote here is Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 303. See also his description of Herzl’s Zionism as “the logical extension of the liberal Dohm’s solution to the Jewish problem,” here 295. See also Beller, *Herzl*, who refers to Herzl’s stance as “super-emancipation” and Kornberg, *Herzl*, especially 16–27 and 161. All three discussions focus on Herzl; my inclusion of Pinsker is an argument that this approach extended beyond Herzl.
productive literary reading of a mostly forgotten utopian text that anticipated Altneuland by more than a decade: Edmund Eisl er’s Ein Zukunfts bild (1885).

In sum, by reading German Jewish emancipatory discourse and the Zionist movement’s concerns as interconnected, and in so doing connecting the German Jewish middlebrow literary tradition to German Zionist literature, I illustrate how modern Zionism and its literary expressions were, at their foundations, much more complex than pure rupture. Instead, leading Zionists such as Herzl were situated in a particularly German Jewish milieu, and believed, as their non-Zionist counterparts, in the need for Jewish “betterment”. For despite the chilly reception it received from many German Jews at the time and its legitimate claims to representing something new, Zionism was always also never too far from that which it rejected.\(^4\)

Christian Wilhelm Dohm and the Zionist Afterlife of Emancipation Discourse

In 1781, Christian Wilhelm Dohm, a pastor’s son and then minor official in the Prussian bureaucracy released his treatise Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden, quickly garnering multiple reviews and awakening heated public debate about a small group he dubbed “asiatische Flüchtlinge”: the Jewish community.\(^4\) Though the treatise began with the premise that Jews were “morally, politically, and even physically ‘degenerate’” – a common enough belief of the time – Dohm advances in the pages of his work a controversial thesis. For, he writes, if the Jew


“Abneigung und Haß gegen den Christen [sich] fühlt, wenn er sich durch die Gesetze der Redlichkeit gegen ihn nicht so gebunden glaubt; so ist dieß Alles unser Werk.” But if Christians might be blamed for Jewish degeneration, he argues, they might also be the source, through his program for civic betterment, of Jewish transformation into “nützlichere Glieder der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft”.

In support of his argument, Dohm’s treatise includes a detailed analysis of the degeneration of Jews from the time of the Roman Empire until the contemporary moment; in spite of this, he also argues forcefully for the seemingly limitless possibilities for Jews to (once again) become good citizens, leading them to inhabit the “noch unbebaute Stücke Landes und Wohnunge,” and thus simultaneously providing the Prussian state with “vermehrte Bevölkerung, Industrie, und Consumption”. Emancipation, in sum, will allow Jews to improve their “Zustand” and in so doing, productively contribute to the welfare of the Prussian state.

Included in Dohm’s analysis is his related argument that Jewish degeneration is a product of the limited professional opportunities afforded Jews by the state. If Jews appear to have a penchant for haggling and deception, he writes, it is only because of their unnatural concentration in commerce, brought about by the external constraints placed on them by the law. If the state will but open up the trades and farming to them, Dohm counters, Jews will over generations become model citizens, and soon enough eagerly joining the ranks of those defending their state on the battlefield.


48 Ibid., 63, 71.

49 Ibid., 71.
Dohm’s treatise may appear to be concerned with an insignificant issue pertaining to a minor community inside Prussian borders at the time. Yet as Jonathan Hess argues about Dohm and the larger rhetoric around Jewish civic betterment, this discourse was about more than just Jews. Instead, in the discussions about remaking Jews as proper citizens, a “distinctly modern and secular ideal of citizenship…was at stake,” and even more a “larger, European vision of political modernization.” Central to this vision was a secularizing move, one where the state took central stage and religion’s influence stopped at the church – and, indeed, synagogue – door. The government, Dohm argues, ought to pursue the goal such that “der Edelmann, der Bauer, der Gelehrte, der Handwerker, der Christ, und der Jude noch mehr als alle dieses, Bürger ist.” For Dohm, then, citizenship is the fundamental, operative category for the modern state: a citizenship that supersedes and rises above questions of nobility, occupation or confession.

Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden inaugurated a lengthy, more than century-long discourse that spanned the European continent. In German-language letters alone, this discourse became especially rich, shaped in no small part by Jews themselves. It also marked the beginning of the genealogy of the idea wherein Jews’ “rehabilitation as citizens” became inextricably connected to

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51 Dohm, *Verbesserung*, 20 (emphasis in the original). Importantly, Dohm allows that religion has a role to play, partially as a matter among private citizens, and partially as an institution that serves the state. Synagogues, he suggests, might help Jews properly understand “das Verhältniß aller Bürger gegen den Staat und die Würde der Pflichten gegen denselben,” here 66. Per Dohm, this, indeed, was the original purpose of Jewish law, given that Moses “wollte einen dauernden, blühenden Staat stiften, und sein Gesetz enthält nichts, was diesem Zweck widerspräche,” here 77.

their “‘moral’ improvement, their regeneration as men,” two phenomena that David Sorkin notes were, in many respects, the “same thing”.53

By beginning with an analysis of Dohm’s treatise, I seek to show a line of continuity that runs from the late eighteenth century through to the concerns of the modern Zionist movement. For if modern Zionism in many ways represented what I have earlier termed a rupture with the concerns of German-speaking Jewry, it also saw itself as the continuation and indeed, apotheosis of some of those same concerns, something a careful reading of two early, foundational Zionist texts illustrates.

It is, indeed, no accident that when Leon Pinsker released a pamphlet advocating for the foundation of a Jewish state in 1882, he entitled it Autoemanzipation, thus explicitly linking his idea of a Jewish state to the discourse discussed above. For while the “auto” implies a different approach, at its heart, emancipation remains the pamphlet’s stated desire: encapsulating a simultaneous continuity and rupture in the project to found a Jewish state. As Pinsker notes: “Die grossen Ideen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts sind auch an unserem Volke nicht spurlos vorübergegangen. Wir fühlen uns nicht allein als Juden; wir fühlen uns als Menschen. Als Menschen wollen wir auch leben und eine Nation sein wie die anderen.”54 For Pinsker, there is no contradiction between the marriage of the universal, enlightenment and emancipatory ideal of humanity and the specificity of the romantic nationalist dream. Indeed, only by gaining a homeland intended for a specific nation will Jews be able to truly emancipate themselves and become, paradoxically, full Menschen. Pinsker considers this is no idle

53 Sorkin, Transformation, 25. Elsewhere, Sorkin characterizes it as a conception of “emancipation as a quid pro quo in which Jews were to be regenerated in exchange for rights.” See 20.

need; this is a radical necessity in light of longstanding Jewish illness (*Seichtum*) that must be grasped by the root and radically healed.\(^{55}\) In other words, Pinsker shares with Dohm both an explicit belief in Jewish degeneration and the conviction that an emancipatory program might repair this. Once again, vital to repair is the state: the difference is only *which* state might bring about this change. The rupture is not in the foundational assumptions, then, but in a part of Pinsker’s proposed solution.

A brief look inside of Theodor Herzl’s diaries, written less than two decades after *Autoemanzipation* is further proof of the continuity of these assumptions. To be clear: the *Zionistische Tagebücher* are a record of someone who sees the emancipatory project as a failure and testify to a belief that “der Antisemitismus die Folge der Judenemancipation [ist]” (TB1 48). Thus, even as Herzl attributes goodwill to the European states who “den guten Willen [hatten] uns zu emancipiren. Es ging nicht mehr, an den alten Wohnorten.” (TB1 133).

For all this belief in the failure of the emancipatory project, however, the Zionism on display in Herzl’s diaries remains reliant on the assumptions that undergird that earlier project. Just as Dohm, Herzl continuously writes about Jewish faults, encompassed in what he terms a “Ghettonatur.”\(^{56}\) The cause of these faults remains the same, too, for Jews are but the “Opfer früherer grausamer und noch beschränkter Zeiten.” True, he admits, Jews “kleben am Geld,” but only “weil man uns aufs Geld geworfen hat. Zudem mussten wir immer bereit sein, zu fliehen oder unseren Besitz vor Plünderungen zu verbergen. So ist unser Verhältnis zum Geld entstanden.” (TB1 49) From the outset then, the very problem that Herzl diagnoses and upon which he builds his Zionism is largely a reiteration of the very faults Dohm and early emancipators diagnosed and

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55 Ibid.

56 I address the spatial aspect of this in my analysis of Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto* in the second chapter.
sought to repair. He even shares with them a belief about the causes of these faults: namely, the lengthy history of Jewish mistreatment by Christians.

Like Pinsker, Herzl’s Zionism shares more with emancipatory discourse than a common point of departure and diagnosis of fault: he also sees the state as the source of the solution. For like Dohm, Herzl repeatedly expresses a belief in a form of Erziehungs politik: a political program of education undertaken by the state that would recreate the individual Jewish human being and therewith an entire people. As he puts it near the end of his planned address to the Rothschilds: Zionism will make “neue Menschen,” for “wir [werden] durch unseren Staat unser Volk erziehen können” (TB1 177, 200). In his pursuit of the education of the Jewish people (Volk) through the state, Herzl also reveals where his indebtedness to emancipatory rhetoric ends. For just like Leon Pinsker argues in his pamphlet, so too does Herzl believe that only in the process of pursuing a fatherland specific to them will Jews be able to join the universal human community. Note, however, what this will finally enable: Jewish entrance into European society with the respectability and status promised them by the original emancipatory project. As Herzl recalls to the Viennese Chief Rabbi, Moritz Güdemann: “Wollten wir in unseren jetzigen Zuständen den Universalgedanken der grenzenlosen Menschheit verwirklichen, so müssten wir mit der Vaterlands idee kämpfen.” (TB1 242)

To put an even finer point on it, then: more than becoming human, the Zionist project as Herzl conceives of it allows Jews to finally become European. In a meeting with the Prussian foreign minister Bülow, Herzl makes this point spatially. Bülow remarks that the Zionist movement will lead Jews to, for the first time in history, travel east, rather than westward. Herzl, however, contradicts

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57 As Jacques Kornberg puts it, “When he became a Zionist, Herzl had only to push Dohm’s argument one step further. The cure for Jewish decay was a full citizenship in the state, but in a state of their own.” See Herzl, 18.
him, stating, as he recalls in his diary: “Doch nicht! Es geht auch diesmal nach Westen. Die Juden sind eben schon um den Erdball herum. Osten ist wieder Westen.” (TB1 645). Lest we misunderstand the intent of this spatial disagreement, consider how Herzl elsewhere writes that Zionism will finally allow Jews “dieses Deutschland zu lieben.” (TB1 278, 636) In other words, only in founding a Jewish state will Jews be able to truly become European, and more specifically, German: the very thing Herzl sees the earlier version of the emancipatory project as promising, but ultimately unable to fulfill.

In reading Pinsker and Herzl as sharing foundational similarities with Dohm, who here functions as a stand-in for a larger emancipatory discourse, I in no way suggest that Zionism did not mean something new or mark a watershed in the history of European, or specifically German, Jewry. Neither Pinsker nor Herzl believed that emancipation would work “an den alten Wohnorten” anymore; a Jewish state was needed, and in this, they advocated for an innovative idea. Nonetheless, much more than rupture, Zionism represented a specific continuation, perhaps best understood as an outgrowth, of an emancipatory discourse that flourished, especially among German-speaking Jews, between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. For even as it proposed a radical new solution, it retained many of the same assumptions and even more importantly, the goals of emancipation. Only by beginning with this theoretical continuity undergirding the Zionist project, I argue, are we able to truly appreciate the specificity of German Zionist literature as a phenomenon. For as I show below, this literary tradition also shared specific continuities with a literary genre that flourished among German Jewry and supported the emancipatory project: German Jewish middlebrow literature.

58 Similarly, Yigal Schwartz notes that when Löwenberg and Kingscourt enter Jerusalem from the east during their return visit to the city in Alteumland. See Yigal Schwartz, The Zionist Paradox: Hebrew Literature and Israeli Identity, translated by Michal Sapir (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 61. See also ANL 281.
In his classic treatment of the topic, David Sorkin carefully reconstructs the history of German Jews and how, in their pursuit of emancipation and universal values, they paradoxically developed a subculture. As Sorkin notes, this was largely the product of “incomplete emancipation,” which is to say, the inability for Jews in all German-speaking principalities and duchies to simultaneously achieve civic emancipation until quite late, with the advent of German unification. This, together with “partial integration comprised the conditions for the ideology [of emancipation] becoming the basis of a new kind of identity.”

Thus even as emancipation encouraged German Jews to strive for traits supposedly characteristic of a “universal humanity,” their inability to achieve an equal legal status brought about the creation of a subculture that set German Jews apart.

Building on Sorkin’s thesis, as well as scholarly work on French and English Jewish literature, Jonathan Hess explores one expression of this subculture: German Jewish middlebrow literature in the nineteenth century. More than just reading it as a compensatory phenomenon – literary subculture as ersetzung for emancipation – Hess forcefully argues for a deeper understanding of this literature as a “complex cultural phenomenon”. Works belonging to this genre, he shows, “actively and explicitly encouraged Jews to fashion new identities for themselves that would reconcile commitments to German and European bourgeois culture with Jewish tradition”. In addition, these works played a pivotal role in “promoting a [reading] community of Jews and other Germans”.

More than just a means by which to reconcile two competing identities, however, Hess

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shows how this literature helped sustain a new form of Jewish identity: one that was simultaneously German and Jewish, the latter of which “could become a function of reading secular literature.”

Lest we imagine that this literature was a phenomenon that only concerned Jews in certain parts of German-speaking central and western Europe, Hess makes clear that the print networks responsible for producing these middlebrow works reached far beyond the borders of any future German Empire to many other places in Europe and North America where German functioned as an important lingua franca for Jewry. Nils Roemer provides a specific example in his discussion of Ludwig Philipppson’s *Institut zur Förderung der israelischen Literatur*, a key agent for the production, translation, and distribution of important middlebrow German Jewish titles during the middle part of the nineteenth century. The Institute’s membership, Roemer notes, “entailed a substantial number of international readers,” and in 1865, 533 out of 3000 subscribers came from “Russia, England, America, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Belgium, and Italy combined.” These numbers alone, however, underestimate the reach of the Institute’s publications outside of German-speaking lands, given that works “of the Institute were [also] published in American Jewish newspapers and in separate editions.” This reading community, again, can best be captured in the term discussed in the introduction to this work, “German-reading Jews”: “a geographically broader

61 Ibid., 14, 103.

62 Ibid., 15.


64 Ibid., 74.
group…[that] include[s] individuals who acquired German at some stage of their lives without it necessarily being central to their self-understanding.”

To be explicit about the relevance of this reading community to the present discussion: at the point of the emergence of Zionism in the late-nineteenth century, German language literature, especially as provided by the print networks that produced middlebrow German Jewish texts, had a “transnational quality” that reached far more than just German Jews. And just as Zionism evinces key continuities with the emancipatory discourse that flourished among German Jewish communities, German Zionist texts were also able to address an extant German-reading, Jewish public that was already in the habit of consuming literature as a means to actively think about and reimagine what it meant to be Jewish – often in a secular sense – in the modern world. This then, I argue, must necessarily inform our reading of German Zionist literature as way more than just incidentally written in German.

In connecting middlebrow literature consumed by German-reading Jews of the nineteenth century with German Zionist literature, I once again do not seek to dismiss Zionism’s originality. Indeed, in setting the boundaries of his own examination of German Jewish middlebrow literature, Hess explicitly excludes works such as Herzl’s Altneuland, noting: “In German-Jewish literature…the decades straddling 1900 witnessed the publication of any number of major novels that departed decisively from the celebration of German-Jewish bourgeois values [propagated]…in nineteenth-century middlebrow fiction.” But while acknowledging this important juncture and the points of

65 Volovici, *German as a Jewish Problem*, 7.

66 Ibid.

67 Hess, *Middlebrow Literature*, 22. Other works Hess mentions in this context are Ludwig Jacobowski’s *Werber der Jude* (1892), Jakob Wassermann’s *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (1897), Karl Emil Franzos’s *Der Pojaż* (1905), Georg
rupture the texts I explore represent, I also propose that it is productive to understand works historically read as “proto-Zionist”, specifically the one I explore in this chapter, as having specific continuities with, and even more importantly, an indebtedness to, German Jewish middlebrow literature.

An English Inheritance: Benjamin Disraeli in German Translation

To gain an appreciation of these continuities and debts, as well as the ultimate gap between German Jewish middlebrow literature and later German Zionist literature, I begin with the dedication in the novel of concern in this chapter: Edmund Eisler’s Ein Zukunftsbild. It reads: “Den Manen eines Grossen, der die seltene Eigenschaft in sich vereinte, gross als Staatsmann wie als Mensch gewesen zu sein, BENJAMIN d’ ISRAELI, EARL OF BEACONSFIELD in tiefster Verehrung gewidmet.” At first blush, mention of the English novelist and United Kingdom’s first – and until now only – Prime Minister of Jewish extraction might seem far afield from the concerns of German Jewish middlebrow literature. Yet, as I will show shortly, it is precisely this dedication to Disraeli that provides us with a key to understanding the complicated relationship between German Jewish middlebrow and Zionist literatures. To do this, we must undertake a brief examination of German editions and reviews of Disraeli’s fiction as found in the German Jewish Zionist press, as well as the foundation upon which they built: namely, the earlier reception, translation and publication of Disraeli’s texts by key actors in German Jewish middlebrow literature.

Benjamin Disraeli’s works have long been read in a “proto-Zionist” light, with “Zionist publicists and historians” from “from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century” numbering among Disraeli’s greatest boosters; in him they see and saw a Jew who “embraced his origins with

Hermann’s Jetten Gebert (1906), Auguste Hauschner’s Die Familie Lowositz (1908), and Arthur Schnitzler’s Der Weg ins Freie (1908).
gusto,” a precursor who could and can continue to be made part of a usable (pre)history for the movement and later, the Jewish State. Indeed, in addition to his active participation in the shaping of British policy and expansion in the Near East, Disraeli has proven especially valuable to the movement as a model of a man who understood the value of land in Palestine and saw his wielding of political power as not as contrary to his Jewishness, but as a logical extension of it.

Nor was Disraeli’s fiction merely ancillary to his understanding of Jewishness. Fiction was, indeed, central to his re-envisioning – and racialization – of his Jewish identity. Especially through his figure Sidonia, who appears in multiple novels and figures as a “fantasy of power,” Disraeli tells a tale – one that would later be taken up in antisemitic discourse – of a different type of Jew who controlled and manipulated the levers of power behind the scenes. Despite the dark afterlife of this image, at the time, Disraeli’s project recast his own identity as an object of pride rather than of shame. As Adam Kirsch notes, through fiction, “Disraeli reclaimed the imaginative freedom to define Jewishness, and himself as a Jew, on his own terms. In this sense, it was necessary for Disraeli to be a novelist before he could be a statesman, and his career as a statesman was a continuation of the work of self-invention that he began as a novelist.” In his deployment of fiction to perform this imaginative labor of recasting the Jew as a figure who might feel comfortable with, and competently yield the levers of power, Disraeli could convincingly be read as engaging in a project whose aims

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68 Whether or not Disraeli truly was a proto-Zionist does not concern me here. I am instead interested in understanding how Disraeli was understood by early Zionists and those who belonged to its precursor movements. Todd M. Endelman and Tony Kushner, “Introduction” in Disraeli’s Jewishness, ed. Todd M. Endelman and Tony Kushner (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), 4. For a nuanced look at the high point Jewish understandings of Disraeli as a proto-Zionist, as well as his “gradual disappearance from Israeli culture,” see Eitan Bar Yosef, “Benjamin Disraeli’s Afterlives in Israeli Culture” Journal of Jewish Identities 15, no. 2 (July 2022): 201–222, here 210.

resemble those of German Jewish middlebrow literature, as well as anticipating much of what Zionism, including its literature, sought to achieve in its early years.

Disraeli’s fiction appeared in German Zionist publications at an early date. From 1890 to 1891, *Selbst-Emancipation*, the periodical founded by Nathan Birnbaum and dedicated to the ideals propagated in Leon Pinsker’s aforementioned pamphlet, serialized part of one of Disraeli’s novels, *Alroy*. The work is loosely based on a real-life twelfth-century Jew, David Alroy, a so-called “Prince of Captivity”. In the tale, Alroy assembles and leads a military force to conquer Baghdad and begins establishing his own empire, but ultimately loses it to the hands of the Persians, who behead him.

Early editions of Theodor Herzl’s Zionist newspaper *Die Welt*, in turn, made explicit the reasons for Zionist fascination with Disraeli’s take on Alroy. In a two-part article in the periodical’s inaugural and second issues, literary historian and later Herzl biographer Leon Kellner provides an overview of Disraeli, who he reads as “der erste Jude im Sinne des neuen Geschlechts”. In a not uncritical look over six pages and two issues, Kellner reads Disraeli through three of his novels: *Alroy*, *Coningsby*, and *Tancred*. He argues with a teleological bent that while the first of these is “sehr arm an zionistischen Gedanken,” by the final, *Tancred*, Disraeli propagates a political idea that anticipates the modern Zionist movement.

Like many other Jews celebrating Disraeli, Kellner mourns his baptism: something undertaken at the hands of the latter’s father when the younger Disraeli was only twelve. If Disraeli had truly been British, Kellner contends, he might have become the English Bismarck; and had he not been baptized, “so hätte die Welt das, was die Phantasie Disraelis’ als Dichtung auf’s Papier

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71 Kellner incorrectly states Disraeli was baptized at age thirteen.
warf, als Ereigniß mit eigenen Augen gesehen.” Of the man who had gained both Egypt and Cyprus for Britain, Kellner continues: “dieser Mann hätte auch seinem Volke eine neue unbestrittene Heimat zu geben vermocht.” Kellner further deems Disraeli’s pronouncements “die Weissagung eines Propheten” and closes by arguing that the Zionist idea will soon blossom, as “[a]uch [Disraelis] Prophezeihung, daß die Juden ihre Weinberge wiedergewinnen werde, geht ihrer Erfüllung entgegen.”

In a move that allows him to simultaneously celebrate Disraeli’s political success – especially in the Near East – yet also mourn his baptism, Kellner reads Disraeli for the Zionist movement as both model and warning. While Disraeli’s attachment to Britain means that he fails to actualize Jewish national aspirations, his words and literary works provide a useful source that Zionist rhetoric could deploy to maintain that the movement had historical depth, as well as inevitability on its side. In this vein, Kellner reads the titular character of Alroy, who in Disraeli’s novel “settles” for conquering Baghdad, yet stops short of retaking Jerusalem, as symbolic of Disraeli himself. Drawing from words in the novel that a priest directs at Alroy, Kellner argues: “Du kannst König von Bagdad sein, aber Du kannst nicht gleichzeitig der König der Juden sein.” The reader is left to conclude that Disraeli, in a position similar to Alroy, could either have led the United Kingdom or the Jews, but not both. Kellner adds: “Ein jüdischer Staat hat seine Berechtigung ausschließlich auf dem jüdischen Boden.” Disraeli’s ultimate failure, readers are left to conclude, was his failure to embrace Jewish “Boden,” and by extension, a Jewish state.

To truly appreciate Kellner’s reading, however, we must return to our discussion of German Jewish middlebrow literature: for multiple clues suggest that Disraeli’s novel came into German Jewish consciousness, including into the consciousness of German-speaking and reading Zionists,
by way of the very publishing networks discussed above.\textsuperscript{72} Indeed, Disraeli’s \textit{Alroy} was released in a “freie[r] Übersetzung” by the aforementioned \textit{Institut zur Förderung der israelischen Literatur} in 1862.\textsuperscript{73} The translation proved long-lasting: not only did the \textit{Jüdische Universal-Bibliothek} rerelease it in 1912; it was also the version used by the editors of the Zionist \textit{Selbst-Emancipation} when they serialized the novel in the early 1890s.\textsuperscript{74}

Nearly three decades before Ludwig Philipsson’s \textit{Institut} sent their own translation to subscribers, the \textit{Israelitisches Predigt- und Schul-Magazin}, also under Philipsson’s editorship, released a review of \textit{Alroy} by Gustav Lahn.\textsuperscript{75} As Lahn saw it, Disraeli’s novel and others like it were models for literature that could successfully advance the emancipatory project: “Romane liegen auf den Tischen von Herren und Damen aller Confessionen und aller Stände. Es ist gewiß, daß der gewonnenes Spiel hat, welcher in Herzen der Menschen emancipiert wird, weit mehr als wenn er im Verstande emancipiert wird, denn jenes wirkt unmittelbar.” Lahn thus reads \textit{Alroy} as supporting the larger project undertaken by middlebrow German Jewish literature: a literature that will advance the emancipatory project by reimagining and showing what it means to be Jewish in the modern world.

\textsuperscript{72} For the analysis that shows how another English novel in German translation had significance for German Jewish Middlebrow literature, see Hess’s analysis of Grace Aguilar’s \textit{Vale of Cedars} in \textit{Middlebrow Literature}, 42–54.

\textsuperscript{73} Benjamin D’Israeli, \textit{David Alroy. Frei nach dem Englischen}. (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1862).

\textsuperscript{74} Benajmin D’Israeli, \textit{David Alroy. Frei nach dem Englischen}. (Prague: Druck und Verlag von Richard Brandeis, [1912]). For the serialization, see \textit{Selbst-Emancipation!}: \textit{Zeitschrift für die nationalen, socialen und politischen Interessen des jüdischen Stammes}, from III. Jahrgang, Nrs. 10–17 (15 August–1 Dezember 1890). The serialization ended prematurely and without comment with the seventh installment.

\textsuperscript{75} Gustav Lahn, “Literature. e) Ueber die neueren jüdischen Romane.” \textit{Israelisches Predigt- und Schul-Magazin} 2, Heft 3 (March 1835). The continuation can be found under the same title in the same periodical, Band 2, Heft 5 (May 1835).
Like Kellner decades later, Lahn sees in Disraeli’s *Alroy* an exemplary Jewish past that provides a productive image of what a Jewish future ought to be. The novel and its titular character, he argues, proves “für die Geschichte Israels von höchster Wichtigkeit, weil es uns ein Gemälde von dem, trotz Allem, hohen Standpunkte der orientalischen Juden unter den Mohamedanern, zu der selben Zeit, wo wir die höchste Demüthigung und tiefste Knechtschaft der abendländischen Juden mit tiefem Schmerze erblicken.”76 In short, David Alroy provides a model of a proudly Jewish figure who thrives in a non-Jewish milieu: an exemplary mold for the newly emancipated Jewish readers of Lahn’s review. Thus, Lahn, like Kellner, understands Alroy as a proof of the historical depth underlying a contemporary political project. Yet while sharing a structural similarity, Lahn’s and Kellner’s understandings of the novel also differ at key junctures reflecting their variant political aims.

These differing readings are clearest in the respective reviewers’ explanations of Alroy’s ultimate downfall. Importantly, both agree that Alroy fails due to his insufficient loyalty to Judaism. But the shape of this disloyalty differs. For if Kellner the Zionist views Alroy’s failure as a result of his lack of dedication to “jüdische[m] Boden”, Lahn the emancipationist locates the failure in Alroy’s marriage to the Muslim – that is, non-Jewish – Princess Schirin. This reading, to be clear, was part of a larger trope familiar to readers and writers in the German Jewish middlebrow tradition. For, as Jonathan Hess has shown, the genre evinced consistent anxiety about the *continuity* of Jewish life in the face of emancipation by thematizing the danger of romantic relationships between Jews and Christians. Lahn’s reading and its focus on the marriage between the Jew Alroy and the Muslim Schirin nicely fits into this theme. In highlighting the dangers of non-endogamous romance which he reads the novel as warning against, Lahn makes *Alroy* intelligible to German Jewish middlebrow

76 Kellner, “Lord Beaconsfield”
readers. Thus, for him, Alroy offers both proof of concept for the idea of Jewish success in a non-Jewish milieu, even as it also informs readers that failure awaits those who go too far and fall into the arms of a non-Jewish amour.

Of course, these differing readings are eminently explicable when considering the political programs of their respective proponents. For Lahn, who identifies literature as useful for its capacity to support the emancipatory project, living in Baghdad – and by extension, Berlin – cannot be read as a sign of Jewish disloyalty; the concern instead is how to ensure Jewish continuity in the face of life in a non-Jewish place. For the Zionist Kellner, by contrast, Alroy’s disinterest in establishing Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem is precisely where his story deviates from the Zionist program; thus this must be read as the source of his downfall.

Underlying these divergent readings, however, are a series of continuities of which we cannot lose sight. First, both reviews provide evidence of a reading community committed to the practice of reading fiction as a means to think critically about, and advance political programs interested in, finding new (yet somehow historically grounded) ways of being Jewish in the world. Secondly, and equally significant, in sharing a text and, at times, a translation, German Zionist literature shows itself to be, at least in part, growing out of the print networks and community first constructed by German Jewish middlebrow writers, translators, and readers.

Here we see a specific example of how just as Zionism sought similar goals as the emancipatory program of Jews and other Germans from the century preceding it, so too did German Zionist literature grow in no small part out of the print networks and reading communities created by German Jewish middlebrow literature, a tradition that was in no small part an expression of that same emancipatory project. Once again, even in recognizing these continuities, we must also allow that German Zionist literature represented innovation and a different political program: it was not wholly the same as that which preceded it. To fully appreciate this tension between continuity
and change, I propose we now turn the text dedicated to Disraeli: Ein Zukunftsbild. For more than a full-blown Zionist tome, I suggest instead we see in this short novel something more ambivalent, a point of transition. This transition, I argue, is no more apparent than in the text’s simultaneous interest in questions of romance, a key trope in middlebrow fiction, and place, a trope, I argue, that will come to characterize much of German Zionist literature.

**Edmund Eisler’s Zukunftsbild: Interreligious Romance & Questions of Jewish Continuity**

In 1885, a Viennese publishing house released a short, anonymous literary utopia entitled Ein Zukunftsbild. The work begins the morning after a violent pogrom in an unspecified eastern European setting and follows the path of a young Jew, Abner, as he recognizes the failures of the emancipatory project and leads a movement to found a Jewish state called “Judea”.77 By story’s end, Abner is king of this new state, has successfully led his kingdom in a defensive war against its enemies, and established peace. He passes away, leaving the rule of the kingdom to his son.

In many ways, the work – a text scholars now attribute to the Slovakian Jewish merchant Edmund Eisler – has been lost to time.78 In one sense, it can be read as but one more in a long list of social utopias of the period, sharing a name, for instance, with the subtitle of the much better-known work by the writer Theodor Hertzka, published five years later, Freiland: Ein Zukunftsbild. Today, when the text does gain notice, it is usually included in a footnote about the work that would follow it: Theodor Herzl’s Altneuland. In one of the few analyses that does exist of Eisler’s text, Shlomo Avineri concludes as follows: “In a literary sense, Ein Zukunftsbild is, like most utopias,

77 For a discussion of the role of the actual historical pogroms in the creation of “Lover of Zion” societies in eastern Europe and other “proto-Zionist” movements, see Vital, The Origins of Zionism, 49–62.

unexceptional: it is a program, crudely presented in novelistic form. But like all utopian writing, it can be used as a measure by which to judge existing reality.”

Avineri’s conclusion is a tempting one. Eisler’s text, though only a scant ninety-five pages, reads in parts as a tiring melodrama interrupted by fourteen pages listing a selection of the new Judean kingdom’s various laws; and yet while Eisler’s utopia may appear “unexceptional” in a literary sense, to frame it as only a “program, crudely presented in novelistic form” is to miss how the work functions as a literary text. For, as I show below, it is precisely in attending to Ein Zukunftsbild’s use of literary tropes that we are we able to understand how the work functions, and moreover, how it represents important connective tissue between German Jewish middlebrow, and an emerging Zionist, literature, as well as between the larger German Jewish emancipatory project and the nascent Zionist movement. Yet more important, as my concluding reading shows, examining the text’s relationship to utopian literature allows us to escape a necessarily teleological reading of the text as categorically, unambivalently “Zionist”. To be clear, this approach remains agnostic about the literary merit of the work as such and more concerned with how literary analysis can help us, as scholars, open up the text and thereby reconstruct the genesis of Zionist literature.

Ein Zukunftsbild, as mentioned above, begins in the aftermath of a pogrom: a jarring event that leads the work’s protagonist, the orphan Abner, to break away from the religious commitments of the grandfather who has raised him on the one hand, as well as his beloved European “fatherland,” and the concomitant enlightenment dream to achieve belonging there, on the other. This first rejection is evidenced in an early conversation between Abner and his grandfather. The latter models traditional Jewish piety and patient suffering built on a belief in ultimate, messianic

redemption and the futility of Jewish action to counter antisemitic attacks. To this, the grandson responds: “Ihr Alten möget Engel an Geduld und Sanftmut sein, ich will euere Tugend nicht schmaelern; aber wir Jungen sind Menschen. Und wenn man uns wehe that, bäumt sich jede Fiber in uns und wir möchten uns rächen. Seid Engel, aber uns lasset Menschen sein!” (ZB 11, emphasis added)

Abner’s description of Jews as either “Engel” or “Menschen” provides an important index of the changes the Zionist movement portended, as well as its reliance on emancipatory categories. By invoking but dismissing old, religious Jews as “angels”, Eisler’s protagonist represents a rejection of traditional, pious endurance amidst anti-Jewish, and later, antisemitic, outbursts of hatred and violence. Equally significant, however, is the protagonist’s justification: it is his status as a Menschen that renders him unable to bear the injustice and violence. In identifying himself as a Mensch, Abner places himself in the Enlightenment and emancipatory tradition of Jews who understand themselves first and foremost as human beings, equal to their non-Jewish counterparts in every way. Indeed, it is this newly won status that leaves Abner unable to tolerate violent antisemitism. By contrast, the grandfather can only repeat “du [Abner] bist Jude,” and more importantly still, “Jude bleibst du ihnen [i.e. Antisemiten, JDS] immer” (ZB 11, 12). The juxtaposition is clear: the non-emancipated Jew endures persecution and waits for religious redemption. Abner, the emancipated Jew, whose first and foremost identity is as a Mensch, an equal to his persecutors, can bear no such burden. In identifying himself as a Mensch who is treated as anything but, Abner depicts the conflict at the heart

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80 I have been unable to locate a print copy of Eisler’s Zukunftsbild. For the paginated, typewritten manuscript I use, see Nathan M. Gelber Private Collection, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, P83-I-154.

81 Hadomi thematizes this as part of the three dualities – “Nationalität/Universalität; Religion/Staat; Innerlichkeit/Aktivität” – present in Zionist utopias. See her “Jüdische Identität,” 42.
of early Zionism: both the product of an enlightenment and emancipatory context and the victim of the failure of Jewish emancipation to deliver on its promises.

This thread continues during a conversation between Abner and his non-Jewish lover, Agnes. During it, he accuses her, as a representative of their shared fatherland: “Sie haben uns die Vergangenheit gestohlen und die hehren Gestalten unserer Vorfahren uns geraubt. Sie rauben uns die Gegenwart, aber die Zukunft wollen wir nicht so ohne Kampf preis geben. Die Zukunft sei unser!” (ZB 25). Without dismissing his noble (hehre) predecessors, Abner places them and their religious Judaism in the past; they cannot be retrieved. The non-Jews of the fatherland have robbed modern-day Jews of their religious ancestors. Here, of course, the meaning is ambiguous. First, this is a robbing of life in the very literal sense of the murders resulting from the pogroms. But second, and no less significant, the enlightenment reforms and emancipation have robbed Jews of this old way of being Jewish. Yet even while doing this, non-Jews will not allow their Jewish compatriots to fully belong to the fatherland in the present (Gegenwart), meaning that something beyond this past and present must exist: a future in a Jewish state.

Before considering this future state, the role of romantic love, as displayed in the relationship between Abner and the Christian Agnes, warrants closer examination.82 As already discussed in relation to Lahn’s reading of Disraeli’s Alroy, the trope of fictional interreligious romantic relations was by no means a new one in Eisler’s time, and the depiction of this young hero’s romantic entanglement with a non-Jewish woman can readily be understood as part of the storytelling vocabulary often deployed in the German Jewish middlebrow canon. Naturally, these tropes also operated in a larger, non-specifically Jewish context. As Jonathan Hess notes of non-specifically

82 Hadomi briefly mentions the role of romantic love in the Zionist utopias she evaluates in her article, including Ein Zukunftsbild, see her “Jüdische Identität,” 52–4.
Jewish romance literature, “dark handsome strangers, exotic figures from unknown places, [and] erotic fantasies about foreigners” often played a key role in novels of the time. In German Jewish takes on the genre, however, these figures were largely absent. Instead, as Hess shows, Jewish writers used fantasies of romance to encourage endogamy, where “self-fulfilment through fantasies of romantic love” came to be complimented with “fantasies of being part of a larger Jewish community.”

Indeed, even as a large swath of general nineteenth century romance fiction depicted romance “as a threat to Jewish continuity,” German Jewish writers of the era did something different. They “productively [drew] on these models of love and romance, transforming them so that novelistic love would go hand in hand with love for a rejuvenated Jewish tradition.” In other words, here, romantic liaisons often took on an extra significance: more than fantasies of the individual reader, romance became a means to work out what it meant to ensure Jewish continuity in a different form in the emancipatory moment.

Given this context, readers could be reasonably expected to bring these tropes and their deployment – both in non-Jewish as well as in German Jewish middlebrow fiction – to Ein Zukunftsbild. On the one hand, Agnes could be viewed as a threat to Jewish continuity. Abner almost appears to welcome this in his impassioned conversation with her: “In Ruhe und Frieden waeren wir vielleicht in einen Saeckulum oder in einem geringeren Zeitraume ineinander verschmolzen. Liebe vermag vieles” (ZB 24). Here, Abner embraces the mysterious outsider and lover as the agent of the fatherland who might dissolve Jewish continuity, or else weave it into a great whole (verschmolzen). This dissolution, however, is to remain in the subjunctive. As Abner accuses Agnes early on, her

83 Hess, Middlebrow Literature, 156.

84 Hess, Middlebrow Literature, 120, 124.
own uncle is a purveyor of antisemitic myths and violence, and a union with any such family is an impossibility.

Thus, Abner and Agnes’s love for each other and the futurity it represents (including children) is more than an interpersonal choice. Abner’s desire to join in union with Agnes also represents his love for his European fatherland, such that when he cries out, “Du warst meine erste Liebe, in meinem Herzen wird keine zweite mehr Wurzel fassen können,” he speaks not only of Agnes as an individual, but also the political community she represents. Yet the lover waiting in the wings, competing with Agnes, is not another woman, but a community: “Der Ueberrest von Liebe gehört meinen Glaubensgenossen.” (ZB 25). In refusing to join with Agnes in marital bliss, Abner chooses instead his “Glaubensgenossen”. For middlebrow German Jewish readers, the story arc is a familiar one: a threat in the guise of romantic love, defused in the name of Jewish continuity.

Consider, however, Abner’s reasoning for clinging to his coreligionists. Though he would welcome union with Agnes and the fatherland she represents, the antisemitic violence he and his fellow Jews face leaves him no choice. “Jetzt mich losreissen von meinen Glaubensgenossen; jetzt sie schnöde verlassen um mich mit fremder Flagge zu schützen, das waere elende Feigheit. Ich thue das nicht, weil ich mich selber achte; ich thue es nicht, weil du edles Mädchen mich verachten müsstest.” (ZB 24). In language that anticipates Herzl’s own obsession with masculinity by more than a decade, Abner views his dedication to his people as an index of his manhood in both senses.85 Not only as a human (Mensch), but even more so as a man (Mann) who desires to enter his relationship with Agnes on those terms, Abner is required by the dictates of masculinity to cling to, indeed, lead,

his people and lead them in their creation of a new state. Here, Abner flips the watchword of Enlightenment Jewry: not only in the streets, but at home, too, he strives to achieve manhood. Similarly, his Jewishness, now as a national identity, becomes that which he dons as he marches through the streets.

In this justification we thus witness a striking discontinuity with German Jewish middlebrow literature and its redeployment of romantic tropes as a means to symbolize the hope of Jewish continuity in fiction. Here, Abner's is not an inherent commitment to this continuity, nor an intrinsic, deeply held belief that some form of reimagined Judaism has a role to play in modernity. Instead, because of the antisemitic attacks on his community, he is forced to choose the Jewish people and so maintain his emancipated status, lest he be considered a coward (Feig) and thus, unmanly.

This break from German Jewish middlebrow romantic tropes extends beyond Abner's reasoning for Jewish continuity, however. More significant still is the way the novel frames Abner's romantic alternative. Rather than running into the arms of a Jewish woman and founding a Jewish family, thereby adhering to an ideal of a domestic Judaism for the modern world, Abner opts for something else: a Jewish state; and more than falling in love with an abstract state itself, Abner becomes infatuated with a land. Indeed, at the end of his meeting with Agnes, he looks out through window shards, broken by the recent pogrom, and sees in his mind's eye a different place: “Es schwebt ein Bild vor meinen Blicken ein neues, noch ungekanntes Land…Weisser Sand von keiner Umgebung begrenzt bedeckt den Boden, heisse sengende Luft umweht den Atem und macht das

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86 The novel makes the rejection of the bourgeois, domestic dream of Jewish continuity even clearer when Abner gains one of his first adherents for his movement: a man who loses his Jewish fiancée at the hands of antisemitic violence. This new follower declares his buried wife “war meine erste, einzige Liebe…darum Jüngling klammere ich mich an deine Idee,” 31. In this move, the story seems to foreclose the possibility that endogamy and domestic Judaism, so prominently advocated in German Jewish middlebrow literature, might ensure Jewish continuity.
Auge fieberhaft erglänzen, es ist die Wüste! Die Wüste meines künftigen Vaterlandes. Nacktes Land wie lieb’ ich dich!” (ZB 26). In Eisler, then, there is not just a different reason to ensure Jewish continuity, there is also a different locus of one’s love that ensures that continuity. The locus is the land itself: the tabula rasa that is the desert upon which Abner seeks to erect this new kingdom.

Here, the reader encounters a new object of affection: not the feminine aspect found in a young woman, but land itself, also encoded as female, waiting to be written on.87 This is the alternative love story that Eisler proposes for his hero: enchantment with land itself. Abner, who can see the land before him in his mind’s eye, can only exclaim, “Hier bin ich kein gejagtes Wild mehr, ich trage den Kopf hoch in dem Nacken, o Jubel, hier bin ich Mensch!” (ZB 26). The words, echoing those found in Goethe’s Faust – “Hier bin ich Mensch, hier darf ichs sein!” – capture something at the base of Abner’s striving. For him, the land that provides the foundation of the future Jewish state which he will pursue is the prerequisite for ultimately achieving the emancipatory dream of fully being a Mensch. For as we will soon see, Abner’s decision to leave his European fatherland is less an abandonment of the goal of emancipation than the pursuit of this goal by other means.

A Jewish State Birthed from a Non-Jewish Woman

In support of his fledgling movement to found a Jewish state, Abner speaks before the parliament of his fatherland with the hope of securing political support for his national idea. Within the narration, parliamentary procedure itself has become its own theatrical production. Though audiences are no longer drawn to dramas and comedies within the “Raeume der Kunst,” the narrative instead notes the public has instead found an ersatz in “d[em] Haus der

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87 For a longer meditation on the myth of Palestine as empty land, see my reading of Arnold Zweig’s Das neue Kanaan in the fourth chapter.
Volksrepraesentanten” (ZB 34). Using language evoking the features of theatrical space –
“Eintrittskarten,” “Vorhang,” and “Zwischenakte” (ZB 36) – the novel depicts art itself as most
manifest in political action. Though not directly referring to prose utopian works such as Eisler’s
own, the text deconstructs the barrier between a place constructed in the playwright’s imagination –
and, more broadly, author’s – and the place where concrete political action is planned. But more
immediately that anticipating the importance theater and other literary forms would play for Zionists
like Herzl, Eisler here provides his readers a means of thinking about the role of literary art,
including the novel they hold in their hands, in political movements.

In this context, Agnes again appears and plays a pivotal role in Abner’s quest to gain
parliamentary support for his political project. As the narrative makes clear, in his pursuit of a Jewish
state, “Aus dem Jüngling [Abner]…war mit der Zeit ein Mann geworden” (ZB 36). Juxtaposed
against this masculine figure, another sits in the balcony, the “Gestalt eines Weibes”, Agnes (ZB 36).
In counterposing the two figures, the reader witnesses the conundrum of the European (male) Jew:
only through exercising political action is he able to truly claim his masculinity, a masculinity that
might prove worthy of non-Jewish, feminine ardor. Yet given the realities of antisemitic prejudice,
Jewish political action is only possible in choosing to depart from the European fatherland while
nonetheless drawing on the support of the non-Jewish feminine aspect, here embodied in the figure
of Agnes.

Indeed, in the speech that follows, Abner repeatedly positions himself and his fellow
coreligionists not as Jews, but as a Menschen whose honor has been impugned (“unsere Ehre [wurde]
angetastet,” ZB 37) in the face of antisemitic violence. Repeating the theme present in his earlier
exchange with his grandfather, Abner invokes the Jews’ “2000-jaehriges Martyrium” – a martyrdom
that must end, since “wir Jungen sind von anderem Stoffe als unsere Alten…Sie duldeten in ihrem
Glauben. Der unsere ist vom philosophischen Geiste eines 18. Jahrhundertes durch tränt; wir sind
weniger gläubig als wir menschlich empfinden.” (ZB 38) With this juxtaposition – an echo of that of the angel-human counterpart from an earlier chapter – Abner again explicitly places himself in the tradition of the Enlightenment and the movement for Jewish emancipation.

Following his speech in which he requests governmental support for a Jewish exodus to Palestine, Abner waits for members of the parliament to cast a vote on whether or not they will support the plan. Before the vote, Agnes’s antisemitic uncle appears and speaks against the idea. Yet he and his faction lose the day when Agnes, seated in the balcony, throws a rose at the feet of the first member of parliament who bravely steps forward to cast his vote in favor of Abner’s plan. Suddenly, “[e]in wahrer Blumenregen umschwirrte das Haupt des Ministers,” encouraging “yea” votes from further members of the parliament. The chapter ends with an ode to femininity: “Im Busen des Weibes wohnt das Gefühl der Anerkennung für jede edle Regung….Heil dem Volke wo die Mehrheit des Frauengeschlechtes von diesem heiligen Feuer beseelt ist, denn nur edle Frauen können dem Vaterlande wackere Bürger geben…Der Sieg war den Händen des Antisemitismus entrungen worden und ein weibliches Wesen hatte darüber entschieden” (ZB 41–2).

For all its conservative overtones and romanticization of the feminine, Eisler’s text contains within it a radical contradiction. Even as Abner rejects Agnes, the non-Jewish woman, as his lover, she is the feminine agent who, in unity with Abner, gives birth to a Jewish nation. As will become clear in the final portion of my close reading, this is an ambivalence that continuously confronts Ein Zukunftsbild’s reader. For even as the text appears to advance a belief in the necessity of Jewish separation from Europe, it necessarily relies on a non-Jewish European agent to actualize a Jewish state. In so doing, the text subtly appears to suggest the reliance on European (political) ideas, which, only when wed with the Jewish people, can actualize a Jewish state.
A Wasted Europe, a Barren Woman

Abner eventually leads a group of Jews to Palestine where he is chosen as king by his people. In a literary move that appears to evoke the Pentateuch, this modern-day, secular exodus culminates with a selected list of the laws in this new, Judean kingdom. As much as the list mimics a structure of religious law, it is clearly also reliant on utopian texts, which, as I detail below, have a long tradition of imagining new, ideal political forms and legal codes that might act as a panacea for those ills plaguing the home of the writer.

Lest one think that Eisler’s blueprint imagines a fully separate Jewish people, however, these selected laws make clear that this kingdom is no theocratic political body meant to create a division between Jew and non-Jew. As one law makes clear: “Religion gehört in den Tempel und in das Haus.” The law that follows on its heels allows: “Nur einmal im Jahre ist deren öffentliches Gepränge stattet. Am Tage der Neuerrichtung des Reiches, weil es Volks- und kein Religionsfest dann ist.” (ZB 56). In a move that corresponds with Herzl’s own vision for a Jewish state, religion does not disappear; it is spatially limited to houses of worship and the domestic sphere, only allowed to enter the public sphere when in service of the state. The state itself reigns supreme; all else is laid at its feet.

In line with this, and in continuation of the romantic theme that weaves through the narrative, another law allows, “Es ist jeden gestattet sich das Weib aus welcher Religionsgenossenschaft immer zu wahlen und hat der Staat die Pflicht diese Ehe anzuerkennen.” (ZB 57). Thus, Eisler’s imagined kingdom allows for the dream deferred in Abner’s European fatherland to finally be realized – in theory, at least. For if legal codes create an opening, the narrative soon thereafter forecloses this possibility for its protagonist.

Before this, however, Ein Zukunftsbild makes a narrative move unique among the texts we will explore: it addresses Europe directly. In a chapter ironically entitled “Das Befreite Europa” and
subtitled “Hosannah!”, the reader learns that in spite of the promises propagated by an antisemitic, “haessliches Maerchen” that Jews were a scourge on European society, the exodus led by Abner has left Europe sick (ZB 66). Indeed, the “Volk” that “fühlte sich benachtheilt” and “hatte grosse Berge von dem Wegzuge der Juden getraeumt” is now left “disappointed” (ZB 67). In fact, in allowing Jews to leave, Europe has, per the narrative, committed “Selbstmord” (ZB 68): though it had hoped to be cured in the absence of Jews, it is now left “altersschwach” and covered with “ekle Geschwüre” upon its “kranken Leib” (ZB 72). Indeed the first of these “Beule” and the harbinger of things to come was “die stinkende Jauche des Antisemitismus” (ZB 72).

We will return to this section; yet before this, and of no small relevance, it bears notice how Abner and Agnes encounter each other one final time before Ein Zukunftsbild concludes. In the chapter that follows, Abner, now an established king over a peaceful kingdom, is approached by his people, who request of their king, “in der Blüthe seiner Jahre,” that he might marry and produce an heir (ZB 74). Following the request of his people, Abner allows that there is one he has chosen, but she is in a faraway land and not Jewish. Granted the permission of his people to seek her hand, Abner writes Agnes with a request to marry her.

Yet Agnes declines Abner’s proposal. In a letter, addressed to “den Herrscher Judas!” she declares that she must forgo this marriage (entsagen), for her “Blütheszeit” has passed, and she would be unable to fulfil her one duty: to produce an heir who might ascend to the throne (ZB 76–7). She has, moreover, chosen the cloistered life, become a nun, and “die Maueren eines Klosters umschliessen” her “für immer” (ZB 77). Thus, for a second time, the reader is denied a consummated romantic relationship between Agnes and Abner. In swift succession following the receipt of Agnes’s letter, Abner declares to his people that he will choose “die Hand einer Jungfrau aus dessen Mitte.” Yet no woman is mentioned; readers only learn that Abner’s people respond with “unendliche[m] Jubel” upon learning that “Abner hatte einen Sohn bekommen. Juda war ein Prinz
geboren worden.” (ZB 77). Here, the text evinces a clear disinterest in the particular Jewish female figure Abner chooses. Instead, the Volk as an entity, out from whom Abner’s wife has been chosen, proves to be the alternative entity with whom Abner mates and which produces the future of the kingly line. Thus, in no small part, Eisler’s narrative once again proposes its own alternative romantic constellation to ensure a distinctly Jewish future.

Though Ein Zukunftsbild does not end here, in this moment, the book appears to declare one final end to interreligious romantic entanglement. In becoming a nun, Christianity, the very force blamed for Europe’s antisemitism has become the ultimate source of Agnes’s – and Europe’s – barrenness. Indeed, the narrative flips and no longer appears concerned with Jewish continuity, but with a distinct form of European illness and extinction. This seems, in other words, to be the swan song of Christian-Jewish coexistence, and while Judea ensures flourishing Jewish continuity, Europe appears inclined toward its end.

Of Utopian Literature and its Uses: A Small Clump of Earth

By the time Abner produces an heir, romantic love seems to have been finally, successfully sublimated in Abner’s attachment to his Volk. Threat to Jewish continuity defused, Ein Zukunftsbild appears to produce an alternative solution to the problem that so occupied German Jewish middlebrow literature before it. Yet to conclude thusly, I argue, would be to misunderstand a deep ambivalence that sits at the heart of Edmund Eisler’s novel. To fully grasp this, we must briefly consider how utopian literature traditionally works.

In an analysis of the text that gave the genre its name, J.C. Davis argues that Thomas More’s Utopia demonstrates how “we need fiction to see reality afresh: in particular, we need to see utopian
fiction and the costs of putting it right.” This, in turn, dovetails with Kenneth M. Roemer’s definition of literary utopia as “a fairly detailed narrative description of an imaginary culture – a fiction that invites readers to experience vicariously an alternative reality that critiques theirs by opening intellectual and emotional spaces that encourage readers to perceive the realities and potentialities of their cultures in new ways.” Here, both Davis and Roemer argue for an understanding of utopia that deploys the imaginative to allow readers to see how they can improve their present cultures and realities. In other words, despite the action at the heart of many literary utopias, the genre is traditionally understood as less interested in encouraging readers to set sail for far shores to erect new societies and more in helping them imagine how to improve the societies where they find themselves.

For the critic of Zionist utopias, of course, this approach requires modification. The assumption at the heart of this school of critique is that these particular literary utopias are interested in convincing their readers to leave their present societies for a far-off place. Indeed, any scholar of Herzl, for instance, must be left with no doubt that this is Altneuland’s program. Yet in the attempt to construct a literary genealogy with Herzl at its heart, I argue, we run the risk of missing the fundamental ambivalence that grounds texts like Ein Zukunftsbild. Instead, I contend that an appreciation for the role the literary utopian tradition in which Eisler’s novel finds itself opens up an alternative reading. For I propose we reconsider the work less as a portent of things to come – the Zionist movement and the eventual creation of a Jewish state – and more as a critique of European society for European ears. In this light, the novel’s chapter discussed above, where the narrator


89 Roemer, “Paradise Transformed”, 79.
explicitly addresses Europe, calling it out and laying bare the lie of antisemitism, becomes explicable. Here, *Ein Zukunftsbild* is manifest as an imaginary literary experiment meant to depict the negative results of Jewish separation from Europe that works as a sort of literary warning.

This alternative reading becomes all the more credible when one considers that the novel first places the call for Jewish embrace of “their” land in the mouths of antisemites who, during the pogrom at the work’s beginning, exclaim that the Jew “soll…in sein gelobtes Land ziehen und ein eigenes Reich sich schaffen” (ZB 8).\(^9\) Notably, when Abner first chooses to pursue a Jewish State, he responds, “Was eurem Munde als bitterer, verächtlicher Spott entströmt…das soll ein Wort der Wahrheit, ein Wort der beseligendsten Hoffnung werden. Nach Palaestina!” (ZB 19). Framed this way, Abner’s journey proves to be as much about imagining the true, undesirable consequences of Jewish exodus from Europe – something antisemitic rhetoric advocates – as about propagating a new national movement.

Indeed, the final chapter of *Ein Zukunftsbild* provides further evidence of Abner’s continued romance with Europe. This time, however, Agnes no longer appears, and dust itself remains. Nearing his death, Abner observes his kingdom: “Wo ehemals wüstes Gestein gewesen, dorthin hatte die fleissige Hand des Landmannes den fruchtbaren Humus der Ebene unter unsaeglichen Mühen hinaufgeschafft” (ZB 86). Jewish labor has produced fruitful land. Yet at novel’s end, Abner directs his attention to a different place – the one laid waste by Jewish exodus – Europe. Preparing for a handover of power, the king sends his son to Europe, that he might “dort die Gebraeuche und Gesetze durch eigene Anschauung kennen lerne, um mit dem Blicke der Erfahrung sein eigenes Staatswesen zu erfassen” (ZB 89). In writing of Abner’s son’s “return” to Europe, rather than to Palestine, the narrative makes clear the debt this imagined Judea owes to European political forms.

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\(^9\) This reflected real-life antisemitic cries. See Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 298–9.
More than a similar comment on political forms, however, Abner makes one final expression of his enduring affection for his fatherland. He sends his son with a “prächtiges Kaestchen” (ZB 89) to the ruler of his original, European home. The box contains a letter in which Abner writes, “ich [habe] nun das Höchste erreicht was ein Mensch erlangen kann.” Nearing death, he glimpses “die leangst verlassene, vergessen gedachte Heimat”. Though his life “gehört meinem Volke”, he makes one final request: that a bit of the dust (Staub[?]) of his European fatherland be brought back in the box, allowing that in death, his “müdes Haupt auf der Scholle der Heimat ruhe[n kann]” (ZB 93).

In depicting Abner’s final request, Eisler flips the Jewish practice of burying those in diaspora with earth taken from the land of Palestine.91 Abner’s expressed desire instead suggests that Europe itself is the place of beginnings, the place of unrequited love, and unsatisfied longing. In this light, the framing of the work as the literary child borne out of an incipient movement proves questionable. Instead, we encounter a novel in between: one that remains incredibly reliant on literary forms that preceded it, including middlebrow German Jewish literature, evinces a deep attachment to the emancipatory dream of becoming a Mensch, and depicts the success of a Jewish state as, at best, an ambivalent victory. Ein Zukunftsbild thus read becomes a love-letter to Europe, a text seeking to reveal by means of utopian imaginings the way to a better European reality in the late nineteenth century.

A Zionist Coda: Edmund Eisler writes Theodor Herzl

On October 11, 1903, Edmund Eisler wrote Theodor Herzl with a request. He wished to dedicate his “Geisteswerk” to him. The work – it was presumably Ein Zukunftsbild he included with the letter – resembled Herzl’s “Zukunftsstaat.” In his letter, Eisler ponders whether “man ein Werk

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91 See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 363:1.
einer Person widmen kann, die davon keine Ahnung hat?”. He concludes positively and offers to dedicate the work to Herzl as a fitting tribute “einem Manne, den ich verehre”. Whether two men had any further correspondence remains unknown, no other letters between the two exist today.

In shifting his dedications, Eisler fittingly captures the two competing impulses at the heart of his text. In its earliest incarnation, *Ein Zukunftsbild* begins with a dedication to Disraeli, a man who embodied the emancipatory dream by leading the United Kingdom and thereby demonstrated the ability for a Jew to become a full citizen in a non-Jewish state in Europe. Though the work itself may have depicted the foundation of a Jewish state, its intention was less clear, and the ambivalence of its protagonist’s actions suggest Eisler’s lingering hope that Disraeli’s trajectory might be possible for other Jews. Less than twenty years later, in rededicating his text to Herzl, Eisler displays a less ambiguous belief and seems to imply that emancipation must, indeed, be pursued by different means – through the form of a Jewish state. No longer might the utopian to be considered a literary tool to speak to non-Jewish Europeans; it is now a vision of something that Herzl, the dedicatee, views himself as creating.

Eisler’s second dedication has no doubt influenced *Ein Zukunftsbild*’s few readers ever since. Yet in writing Herzl and placing his work in conversation with the political movement of the Zionist leader, Eisler effaced an alternative interpretation of the text, something my reading has sought to excavate. To be clear, in making this argument, my point is not that Eisler’s early text does not

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92 Edmund Eisler to Theodor Herzl, 11 October 1903, Theodor Herzl Papers, H1\1184-2, Central Zionist Archives.

93 Leah Hadomi maintains that the two had further correspondence, but the correspondence she refers to is actually the editor of the periodical *Lustige Blätter*, Otto Eysler, and not the author of *Ein Zukunftsbild*. See her “Altneuland – ein utopischer Roman” in *Juden in der deutschen Literatur: Ein deutsch-israelisches Symposium*, edited by Stéphane Moses and Albrecht Schöne (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 224–5n20.
contain within it the seeds of the national political movement that would later gain the name Zionism. What I have instead sought to show is how this text functions as a site of ambivalence and indeterminacy. On the one hand, the work uses a fictional narrative to imagine what a future, utopian Jewish state might look like, and in so doing, can legitimately be read as an important part of Zionism’s early history. On the other, however, the text, like Abner himself, cannot be completely divorced from a previous era; and it continues to hold open the ever so slight possibility of imagining a better Jewish existence in Europe.

In beginning our story with Edmund Eisler, we thus witness a vital part of the prehistory of German Zionist literature: how works beginning with and following Ein Zukunftsbild were not simply a new start following a deep cut with German Jewish civilization. Instead, despite the innovations this literature represented, it remained a product of its time and a place, in significant ways, dependent not only on the print networks created and nurtured by those who shaped the tradition of German Jewish middlebrow literature, but also an inheritor of a specific literary vocabulary. Of course, in a shift from focus on the romantic to the spatial, Eisler also heralds a change in focus – a change we see continued in perhaps the most well-known exemplar of German Zionist literature: Theodor Herzl’s Altneuland.
CHAPTER 2: DAS NEUE GHETTO & ALTNEULAND: THEODOR HERZL'S DIVIDED SPATIAL IMAGINARY

On August 18, 1900, the general interest, non-Jewish illustrated periodical The Sphere published a one-page article on the Zionist movement. A prominent photo of a noble Theodor Herzl sits at the article’s center, and smaller images of the movement’s other significant figures are placed at the page’s footer. The contribution, entitled “Back to Jerusalem – The Vision of the Modern Hebrew” introduces readers to the Zionist movement, whose fourth congress had just concluded in London.94 Today, a scholar in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem will not find a copy of the original article among Herzl’s papers, but instead the next leaf from the magazine headlined “Back to Jerusalem – The Dream of the Zionists” [FIGURE 1]. At the header of this page is a list of all the Jewish communities in Europe and the world, divided by country or region with population statistics for each. In the middle of this top part sits a small world map to scale, superimposed with arrows originating in the locations of the respective Jewish communities in diaspora. All these arrows point directly to Palestine. A larger map is below, but it is not to scale. It instead depicts a topographical “Holy Land” with an oversized image of the Old City of Jerusalem dominating its center. The reader of the periodical – presumably Herzl himself – has underlined various words and fragments on the page, notably select parts from the following sentence: “The

Palestine to which the Zionists may return is not the Holy Land of ancient days. Four lines of railways pierce the country, and the quiet valleys echo the hooting of the locomotive whistle.995

*The Sphere’s* depiction proves to be a study in tensions. On the one hand, it emphasizes statistics and provides a modern world map that suggests the movements of large groups of people. Here, Zionism can be understood as technocratic challenge of moving Jews from one place to another. The larger map, however, together with the use of “Jerusalem” as a synecdoche for all of the “Holy Land” indexes an older, religiously inflected reading of Palestine as place. Indeed, prominently displayed at the center of the Old City is the religious site the Dome of the Rock, mislabeled as the “Mosque of Omar”. The partially underlined sentence emphasizes this tension: this is a movement between the “Holy Land of ancient days” and a different, modern place traversed by locomotives and open to large-scale migration.

In the pages that follow, I read two of Theodor Herzl’s key literary works – his play *Das neue Ghetto* and novel *Altneuland* – to explore some of these tensions. These analyses continue a story already begun in the previous chapter: for my argument is that in reimagining Palestine as a place fit for a state, Herzl not only seeks to create Menschen out of Jews who need reforming; he also draws on another commitment of German Jewry borne of the emancipatory project. For, beginning at least as far back as Moses Mendelssohn, German Jews understood their entrance into non-Jewish society as not only dependent on their “reformation”; they also believed it contingent on a division between their private, religious lives on the one hand, and their public and universal faces on the other: a division to be enacted in space. This movement, to be clear, led to a reconceptualization of

995 Ibid., 191. Herzl’s version can be found in the Central Zionist Archives in the Theodor Herzl Papers, H1\460-12. A digitized version can be found at http://www.zionistarchives.org.il/en/Pages/ArchiveItem.aspx?oi=09001e1580febee8&ot=cz_archived_document.
Jewishness as the most ideal of religions, a domestic phenomenon par excellence that, at least
according to the proponents of this idea, best understood how to withdraw from the public sphere
and thereby create space for the secular state.\textsuperscript{96} That this ideal was predicated on the never fully
actualized Christian commitment to also withdrawal their religious particularity from the public
sphere is captured in Jacob Katz's concept of a “semineutral society”\textsuperscript{97}. Regardless of its success,
however, German Jews remained largely committed to this project of spatial separation – a
secularizing impulse – throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, and equally significant, this
change led to new Jewish ways of relating to the diaspora and the “Holy Land”. My argument thus
begins by examining how German Jews at the point of the emergence of Zionism were heirs to a
century-long tradition of relegating the private and religious to its own sphere and the creation of a
separate sphere for the public and political. It is to this story that I dedicate the first part of my
chapter.

In the second part I pivot to trace Herzl's own depiction of the crisis facing Jews in spatial
terms in his literary works. In particular, I argue that in his deployment of the ghetto as metaphor,
Herzl sees a spatial configuration that both causes and indexes Jews’ pre-emancipatory state, thus
indicating the failure of the European emancipatory project to improve Jews. In depicting what I
term a “spatial crisis,” I argue Herzl shows that part of the Jewish need for betterment is rooted in
Jewish adaptation to a faulty place. I then show how Herzl proposes a spatial solution to this crisis in

\textsuperscript{96} Two volumes that address the nexus of domestication, feminization, and the embourgeoisement of Jews
and Judaism are Benjamin Marie Baader, Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870
(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006) and Marion A. Kaplan, The Making of the Jewish Middle Class.
Women, Family, and Identity, in Imperial Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Baader sums the
transformation up as follows: “When ‘in the streets’ German Jewish men came ‘to be men’ rather than Jews,
as Judah Leib Gordon had phrased it, the cultural transmission of Judaism and Jewishness increasingly took
place at home and lay in the hands of women,” here 216.

\textsuperscript{97} See Katz, Out of the Ghetto, 42–56.
the form of Palestine, a solution that leads to the creation of a new Jew. This transformation, significantly, is informed by the spatial lessons detailed above that learned by Jews in their pursuit of emancipation. Supporting this argument that Zionism is largely informed by the German Jewish emancipatory inheritance is the fact that the novel ends with the Prussian aristocrat Kingscourt’s embrace of the product of the “New Society,” Fritz. This, Herzl shows, is proof positive that Zionism can achieve what thus far has eluded Jews: true emancipation.

Despite this seemingly successful ending, however, Herzl’s novel also includes a problematic tension, also enacted spatially. On the one hand, Herzl seeks to impose the same division of religious and political spheres on Altneuland’s only named Arab Muslim character, Reschid Bey, understanding this separation to be the prerequisite for a multi-confessional society. Yet, as I conclude, in spite of his attempt to achieve spatial separation – a secularizing impulse, as it were – the final part of Altneuland proves more ambivalent. For in the process of heralding a rebuilt temple, whose unspoken location is where the Dome of the Rock is, Herzl proves incapable of fully separating the private and religious from the public and political. This, in turn, augurs the creation of another “semi-neutral society”, this time in Palestine – namely, one that fails to recognize how it privileges certain religious elements despite its aspiration to neutrality.

The Spatial Story of the German Jewish Pursuit of Emancipation

If the previous chapter read Zionism as the partial continuation of the emancipatory project’s pursuit of the recreation of the Jewish individual as a Menisch, a category deeply intertwined with the creation of the Jew (and non-Jew) as citizen, here I propose to tell a related, largely overlapping story, this time in a spatial key. For as I show, Jewish emancipation also proved spatially consequential in ways that influenced Zionism generally, and Theodor Herzl, specifically.

In 1783, Moses Mendelssohn, considered by some to be the “first modern German Jew”, published his only major work concerning Judaism in the German language: Jerusalem oder über die
religiöse Macht und Judenthum. In it, he contributes to a larger debate then underway in German letters about Jews and their role in German society, a debate Christian Wilhelm Dohm had prominently contributed to at Mendelssohn’s behest two years earlier. Yet unlike Dohm, who sought to rehabilitate Jews using the guiding hand of the modern European state, Mendelssohn took a different tact: one that scholars such as Jonathan Hess read as a polemic against some of assumptions implicit in Dohm’s plea for Jewish civic betterment. In Jerusalem, Mendelssohn “forcefully argues for freedom of conscience and separation of church and state, articulating a normative concept of religion as incompatible with any form of temporal power.” Like Dohm, Mendelssohn makes his argument by way of a reading of ancient Jewish history. Yet unlike his non-Jewish interlocutor, Mendelssohn discovers therein a different image: a historical Judaism founded on just such a separation of the religious from the political that enables the creation of a model (modern) state. Indeed, it is from the Jewish model, as Mendelssohn sees it, that Jews and Christians can learn to create the ideal state. To be clear, Mendelssohn’s project did not harken back to an old, idealized form of Judaism as much as it heralded a new, enlightenment model that “depoliticized”


99 See Mendelssohn, Jerusalem, IX–X.

100 Hess, Claims of Modernity, 97.

101 Ibid., 95.
and “denationalized” Judaism, making it into a “confession”.\textsuperscript{102} Regardless of the historical veracity of his reading, however, Mendelssohn’s \textit{Jerusalem} provided German Jews with a way to read their own history that simultaneously provided a model for them to remain Jewish while entering a larger, non-Jewish political community – be it Prussian, French, or later, German.

Mendelssohn’s argument achieved this by challenging a major spatial principal structuring Jewish life at that time, one captured in the Passover \textit{Hagaddah}’s phrase, “Next year in Jerusalem.” For even while reaffirming the place of Jerusalem in Jewish life, Mendelssohn created a way for readers to understand their home in \textit{Galut} (exile) positively. As Arnold Eisen points out, here Mendelssohn “effectively located the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ awaited by the rabbis in an \textit{earthly} exile where Jews would enjoy full civic and religious liberty and fully participate in the surrounding culture.”\textsuperscript{103} In the process, “Jerusalem, in the Land of Israel, loses its reality as a place in which, and for which, Jews might actually live. The center of Jewish concern, religious as well as political, the locus of Jewish aspirations, shifts to exile.”\textsuperscript{104} Nowhere did this reorientation become more legible than in the change undertaken more than half a century later by the new Reform movement. The rabbis leading the reform, notably, renamed their synagogues “temples,” thus symbolically asserting that Jews did not seek a return to Palestine and no longer longed for the Temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt; they were already at home in Europe. An expression of this spatial reorientation is found in

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{102} Ibid., 96.
\bibitem{103} Arnold M. Eisen, \textit{Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 63, \textit{emphasis in original}.
\bibitem{104} Ibid., 64.
\end{thebibliography}
the records of the 1845 Reform Rabbinical Conference in Frankfurt. During discussion, one speaker claimed,

The decline of Israel’s political independence was at one time deplored, but in reality it was not a misfortune, but a mark of progress; not a degradation, but an elevation of our religion…I vote the renunciation of all petitions for the restoration of the sacrifices [in the Temple in Jerusalem] and our political independence.105

Another speaker responds,

The wish to return to Palestine in order to create there a political empire for those who are still oppressed because of their religion is superfluous. The wish should rather be for a termination of oppression, which would improve their lot as it has improved ours…messianic hope, truly understood, is religious.106

To be sure, the Reform Movement represented an extreme reorientation. This removal of ritual prayers expressing a hope for a return to Palestine was in its time – and is still today – rejected by more conservative and orthodox Jewish communities. In tracing the extremities of the social currents of the time, however, we can see how the general reorientation, enacted in spatial terms, was informed by a desire to separate the religious from the political. For inasmuch as the Reform movement circumscribed and clearly delineated what was and was not religion, it sought to further a fundamentally spatial division of life into different realms and enable Jewish participation in a secular public sphere. Indeed, the reformers understood the removal of a few, seemingly insignificant liturgical prayers to be urgent, precisely because in reconfiguring their relations to the place of Palestine, they saw themselves as gaining entry into European political communities and achieving Jewish belonging in their respective fatherlands.107


106 Ibid.

107 As Deborah Hertz highlights in her book, the beginning of the eighteenth century witnessed a rise in the number of wealthy and influential Jews who converted to Christianity as a form of ersatz emancipation. The
Like the larger discourse about civic betterment discussed in the first chapter, so too were Mendelssohn’s writings and the actions of reform rabbis in Frankfurt part of a larger change that impacted more than just Jews. This project, Charles Taylor shows, was tied to the emergence of the nation state. As society sought to empty public spaces of “God, or of any reference to ultimate reality,” the ostensibly non-religious public spaces that resulted created room for a populace with fundamental, often religious disagreements to nonetheless operate as a cohesive whole. This project was a fundamental change from the previous state of affairs, where “religion was ‘everywhere’, interwoven with everything else, and in no sense constituted a separate ‘sphere’ of its own.” Now the political sought to create its own, ostensibly secular political realm, allowing fractious religious, especially inter-Christian, differences to be banished from public discourse.

reform movement came out of these same circles and responded to many of these same pressures in their efforts to make Judaism more compatible with national belonging. See How Jews became Germans: the History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

108 Notably, the word secularization originally referred to the process of state expropriation of church property, thus illustrating how from its beginnings, the relationship to place(s) heralded and indexed broader societal changes. See “Säkularisation, Säkularisierung” in Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland, edited by Otto Bruner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 5:789–807, here 801–802.


110 This is made in connection to Charles Taylor’s definition of secularism 1 in A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), here 2. Shmuel Feiner excavates the roots of Jewish secularization in the century preceding Mendelssohn. In this context, he cites Yosef Kaplan’s analysis of the “weakened hold of tradition in various spheres” of the life of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, as exemplified in the “relegation of religion to the confines of the synagogue, and to the distinctions drawn between the spheres of the ‘sacred’ (synagogue) and the ‘profane’ (commerce) in life”. Feiner’s analysis directs the readers’ attention to the importance of specific places (coffeehouses, clubs, taverns, brothels) in the emergence of an alternative, secular Jewish life. See The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe, translated by Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 13, 17.
In Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this form of societal secularization remained, at some level, an ideal, never fully actualized, a point I will return to in the conclusion of this chapter. Yet even while acknowledging how much these attempts at secularization may have remained incomplete, what remains undeniable is the impact of these efforts on German Judaism – and Judaism more broadly – and that these changes influenced how Jews understood their world spatially. 111 This reorientation, again, entailed two interrelated phenomena. First, within Europe, especially in German-speaking realms, Jews began to reconceive of their Judaism as a confession and in so doing, sought to create a separate religious sphere from that of the political. Secondly, to achieve this, attachment to Palestine was marginalized, even jettisoned by those in the Reform movement, and replaced with attachment to the “fatherland,” once derogatorily understood as the diaspora.112

Similar to Zionism’s ambivalent relationship to the German Jewish project of civic betterment, one detects in its relationship to space and place both continuities and discontinuities with this German Jewish spatial inheritance. On the one hand, Zionism proved invariably connected to the place of Palestine in a way that ran counter to the rejection of that same place by the rabbinical reformers. Even here, however, it must be allowed that Herzl’s early thoughts that a Jewish state could be constructed in Argentina, as well as his later efforts to erect a (possibly temporary) Jewish home in Uganda indicated a stance that was, in some form, a product of this


112 If this “reorientation” represented something new, it nonetheless drew inspiration from Sephardic Jewry. As David Biale notes, “The creators of Jewish secularism were primarily Ashkenazi (i.e., northern and eastern European Jews). Theirs was a revolt of sons against traditionalist fathers. But the tradition in which they found inspiration was often that of the Sephardic (Spanish) Jews, especially the philosophical tradition mediated through Islam.” See his Not in the Heavens, 9.
earlier rabbinical repudiation. But what interests me here, however, is a separate indebtedness: namely, the manner in which political Zionism, especially as advanced by Herzl, remained indebted to a political model predicated on the separation of religious and political spheres. In this, I argue, we see Herzl as an heir to German Jewry: revealing an inheritance, as we will see, that is part and parcel of his attempt to achieve emancipation by different means, but is anything but unproblematic.

**Das neue Ghetto and a Spatial Crisis**

In 1897, Theodor Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto* premiered on stage in Vienna. Widely acknowledged as his first and only theatrical work to explicitly deal with Jewish themes, Herzl had drafted the play and first attempted to have it anonymously staged in the early 1890s. Initially unsuccessful, the play was only staged – and under Herzl’s name – following his publication of *Der Judenstaat* in 1895. Given the date of its authorship, the work serves as a document of Herzl’s early attempts to deal with the *Judenfrage* (Jewish question) of the time and marks his first steps toward founding the modern Zionist movement. Although widely mentioned in Herzlian and Zionist scholarship, relatively few literary analyses of *Das neue Ghetto* have appeared. Of the ones that exist, Daniel Boyarin’s *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997), provides perhaps the definitive treatment of the work. In it, Boyarin uses a post-colonial approach to read the play as an engagement with the question of Jewish masculine honor in fin-de-siècle

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113 Related to this, Arnold Eisen, writing about Spinoza and Mendelsohn’s “transformation of the conception of *galut*,” argues: “Without that transformation, modern Jewish nationalism could not have arisen, and would certainly not have taken the paradoxical form of Zionism: a largely secular movement of return to a Land rendered sacred by Jewish faith, resulting in a secular Jewish state which the tradition could neither have sanctioned nor conceived.” See his *Galut*, 61.

114 For context and a reading of *Das neue Ghetto*, see Kornberg, *Herzl*, 130–158.
Vienna. More recently, Na’ama Rokem has read the work together with Kafka’s as addressing the question of Jewish legal representation in broader European society.

What these valuable treatments leave unaddressed, however, is the question of spatiality in Herzl’s play, a theme already evident in its title. In short, the play depicts bourgeois, Jewish Viennese society as a new instantiation of the Jewish ghetto. Historically, a ghetto refers to a walled-off location in urban centers in Europe where Jews were once forced to live and locked into at night. Yet Herzl appears to have a less historically bounded understanding of “ghetto,” almost certainly influenced by the German tradition of Ghettoesichten, taking it to mean any living configuration where Jews are segregated from larger society. Importantly, at the time of the play’s staging, Herzl’s contemporaries considered the ghetto to have been consigned to historic Jewish experience – or else Eastern Europe. His use of the word was a deliberately provocative gesture indicating his belief that Jewish emancipation had failed. Part and parcel of this spatial failure was Herzl’s belief that Jews had not escaped the negative effects of physical separation on their character. Equally importantly, I argue, it is precisely in depicting the Judenfrage as a fundamentally spatial problem that Herzl implicitly bolstered the validity of his spatial solution: the mass exodus of Jews from Europe to Palestine.

Here, it bears emphasis that while I often read place as a literary tool employed in Das neue Ghetto – and later, Altneuland – to think critically about the Judenfrage and solutions to it, Herzl and his

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115 Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct, 285–95.


117 For a look at the historical meaning of ghetto, see Daniel B. Schwartz, Ghetto: the History of a Word (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019). The scholarship on Ghettoesichtatur is voluminous. For two treatments, see Ernst, Schtetl, Stadt, 79–189 and Hess, Middlebrow Literature, 72–110.
contemporaries understood it as much more than that. Jewish life in Vienna was spatially
circumscribed and limited by many of the same factors as those discussed and faced by the play’s
characters.\textsuperscript{118} Who felt welcome in a prominent temple for occasions such as weddings and funerals
was a real-life concern: it was a reality that either aided or inhibited communal belonging. In these
cases, metaphor does not begin to describe the role of place for Jews at the turn of the last century;
spatial dynamics both reflected and shaped reality itself. Similarly, as we will see when we turn to
\textit{Altneuland}, relocation to Palestine was never just a metaphor, but a reality that Herzl hoped his
literary work – as well as his more overt political activity – would bring about.

Herzl’s play occurs exclusively in the homes of Vienna’s upper-crust, assimilated Jewish
bourgeois classes. Despite the more-or-less static physical backdrop, the characters throughout make
reference to numerous places outside these drawing rooms and home offices. The play begins with
the celebration of the wedding of Hermine and Jacob Samuel at the home of the bride’s parents. In
the course of the play, Hermine’s brother, Herr von Rheinberg, attempts to engage his new brother-in-law, Jacob, a lawyer, for legal help in his purchase a Dubrovnik coal mine located in the eastern
part of the Habsburg Empire. In short, Rheinberg hopes by means of stock market speculation to
quickly turn a major profit on the mine. Jacob is skeptical and is soon thereafter visited by one of
the workers from the very same mine his brother-in-law hopes to acquire. The worker complains
about poor conditions in the mine under the current owner, a calvary captain named Schramm, and
successfully engages Jacob’s services to improve the miners’ working conditions. Unfortunately,
Jacob signs on too late and soon afterward, numerous workers die in the collapse of a mine shaft.
This leads to a drop in the mine’s market value and bankrupts both Jacob’s brother-in-law and

\textsuperscript{118} One of those Viennese Jews was Sigmund Freud, who subsequently had a dream that has since become a
major source of scholarly debate. For one discussion of the dream and its meaning, see Todd Presner, \textit{Mobile
Schramm, from whom he intended to acquire the mine. Schramm, perceiving his honor and fortune to be damaged by Jacob’s alliance with his mine’s workers, challenges Jacob to a duel. Years earlier, Jacob had been challenged to a duel by the same man and backed out, something he regrets and views as having compromised his honor. This time, he goes through with the duel and is fatally shot by Schramm. In the final scene, Jacob is carried onto stage, having reclaimed his honor at the cost of a mortal wound. As he dies, he cries out that he only wishes to break out of the ghetto.

The Temple: Stock Market as Religion

*Das neue Ghetto* opens with a discussion of two guests – Dr. Bichler and Emanuel Wasserstein – in the parental home of the newlywed bride, as servants scurry about, preparing for the return of the rest of the wedding party from the local temple. Wasserstein reveals he had originally longed to marry the bride, but due to his failure to make a fortune through the stock market, he could not successfully seek her hand. His heart broken, he leaves the wedding mid-ceremony and despairingly crosses a bridge. As Wasserstein recounts the story, Bichler cries out aghast, fearing his conversation partner had planned to commit suicide, only to discover that he was instead headed “[z]ur Börse…Starke Hausse in Türkenlosen.” (NG 9)

If Wasserstein leaves the temple before the wedding’s end, Bichler reveals he has not attended the wedding, arriving instead at the house early for the festivities following the ceremony. As a baptized Jew, he explains, “[d]er Rabbiner zürnt mir…Er hat auch Recht, von seinem Standpunkte.” When Wasserstein asks why Bichler chose baptism, the latter responds that it was a failed “Versuch der Lösung” to the question (NG 11).

With the temple as spatial context, this and subsequent discussions reveal a place that is simultaneously the product of the emancipatory project – it is notably not a synagogue – and a testimony to that same project’s failure. For Wasserstein, the place and events therein represent the denial of his social and romantic dreams, leading to his explicit movement out of the temple and
toward the stock markets. In so doing, he crosses a bridge whose image evokes in Bichler the specter of suicide, foreshadowing the deadly nature of Jewish stock market speculation. For Bichler, the temple proves a place no longer open to all Jews. Baptized, but still considered a Jew by larger society, Bichler has not been granted entrance into the putatively secular public sphere, but is now worse off, having also now moved to the margins of an already marginalized group, and finds himself socially constrained from entering Jewish places. Here and throughout the play, place acts as a cipher for larger issues of social exclusion and belonging.

A further illustration of the contradictions of the temple as place occur when Franz, the non-Jewish best friend of the groom Jacob, arrives and reveals, to Bichler’s surprise, that he too, was in the temple for the wedding. In response to Bichler’s questioning, Franz responds,


Explained from the perspective of an outsider, Franz’s recollection furthers the depiction of temple as a contradictory place. In addition to the fact that characters identify it as a temple, the mention of an organ clearly classifies this as a Reform Jewish congregation. Yet contrary to the conscious attempts of the Reform Jewish movement to change its services to better fit European (Christian) norms, Franz can only declare that the place proclaims his Jewish friend Jacob’s otherness. Thus, despite reform attempts to jettison Jewish peculiarity, the temple retains a specter of difference. Even in the presence of an organ and, one can safely assume, “modernized” liturgy, Franz primarily sees foreign customs.

An encounter between sisters during the same party foregrounds yet another problematic aspect of the place: the lack of piety, something Franz has already sensed – “es kommt mir nicht recht fromm vor”. In a conversation between the bride, Hermine, and her sister, Charlotte, the latter
asks if the former noticed “die Schlesinger” and her Parisian dress at the ceremony. Hermine responds, “Im Tempel sollte ich darauf achten?” earning her sister’s scoffing rejoinder, “O weh, du bist sentimental!” (NG 18). If the temple remains a place of piety for Hermine, for Charlotte, this is a place to see and be seen: it is where bourgeois society showcases the newest fashion and other products of its wealth.

Both Franz’s comments and the conversation between Hermine and her sister suggest that the temple no longer exists chiefly in relation to a transcendent referent. A final aspect, the intrusion of the markets into the sacred, is brought home in a conversation with the temple’s rabbi, who, to the astonishment of Franz and Jacob, expresses keen interest in the market’s movement. He explains: “Nicht meinetwegen…sondern wegen unserer Armen…Ja, wenn es der Börse gut geht, so habe ich auch Geld für meine Armen. Die Börse gibt” (NG 28). This final statement is especially telling, as it alludes to a statement by the biblical character Job: “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away”. Yet the Rabbi’s modification of the first part of the phrase indicates the community’s elevation of markets to nearly divine status.

With such pronouncements coming from the mouth of the spiritual head of the Jewish community, coupled with the previous depictions of the temple in the conversations recounted above, the audience witnesses traditional Jewish religious life completely disrupted by the dynamics of emancipation. Jews have entered public life, play a prominent role in the stock markets, and enjoy, at least in part, lavish wealth. Yet simultaneously, their specifically “Jewish” characteristics remain. This is explicitly noted by Franz, who declares the temple as a site of alterity.

119 Job 1:21

120 Interestingly enough, the rabbi returns in the final scene to mourn Jacob’s death, whereupon he quotes the full verse, “Der Herr hat’s gegeben, der Herr hat’s genommen. Gelobt sei der Name des Herrn,” NG 100.
not so subtly suggested by the apparent Jewish obsession with the stock market. Indeed, one need only think of Herzl’s pronouncement that Jews “kleben am Geld” to see how Das neue Ghetto’s first act portrays a group of Jews who retain many of the negative characteristics that emancipation – and concomitant spatial reforms embodied in the place of the temple – were meant to reform.

*Ghetto*-living and the Dubnitzer Mine

While the temple provides the major spatial context in Das neue Ghetto’s first act, the second and third acts revolve around another location: that of a coal mine from which Jacob’s brother-in-law, Herr von Rheinberg, seeks to make a fortune. Rheinberg, the audience learns, has recently bought shares in a mine and seeks Jacob’s legal representation. The mine was initially wholly owned by a certain aristocrat, Schramm, who inherited it from his father. The son, having robbed the mine of financial resources to feed his gambling habits has left behind “ein vernachlässigtes Bauwerk” that nonetheless “trägt doch viel” (NG 50). Rheinberg hopes to purchase the mine, form a corporation, and split ownership three ways – between himself, Schramm and his employee, Wasserstein. This group can then improve the market’s belief in the mine’s financial viability and sell their shares at a profit.

The Dubnitzer mine that emerges as the source of the play’s conflict has a backstory that provides insight into the change in societal structures taking place in continental Europe at the turn of the century. Schramm, a von, clearly comes from a long aristocratic line, whose relationship to place is familial: land is translated from father to son over generations and inherited. However, this form of land ownership has proven precarious, leading to the land’s partial sale to a stock company, run by Herr von Rheinberg: a Jew whose name (“von”), the audience can safely assume, is a pretense belatedly acquired by newly-gained wealth rather than inherited from aristocratic lineage. With this partial transfer, land is revalued: it is no longer part of a family estate, but rather the product of speculation whose value is determined by what market forces deem to be its potential for
coal, and consequently, wealth, extraction. Although not immediately related to the questions of church (or temple) and state, this shift in land ownership is part of those same changes we might properly call “secularization.” The notion that the ownership of land is not determined by belonging to a stable aristocratic social structure – a structure whose sanction is directly from the divine – but is instead something that can be traded and speculated upon, is a key change that emerges in the modern era.

Despite Rheinberg’s enthusiasm for the project and attempt to recruit his brother-in-law, Jacob continues to express concerns about this venture, not least because of his backstory with Schramm, who once challenged him to a duel, from which Jacob retreated, compromising his honor. Jacob, who Wasserstein, Rheinberg’s employee, suggests is “auf der Börs’ nicht zuhaus” declares himself against “solche Geschäfte” (NG 52, 54). His argues such speculation damages Jews, whose constant movements of money for the purposes of business “richten sich Menschen zugrunde” (NG 54).

Throughout the exchange between Jacob, his brother-in-law, and Wasserstein, the three make constant puns on coal, mining, and the possibility these stocks have for producing wealth. Speaking of Schramm, Rheinberg notes that he “[hat] immer nur Geld aus dem Bergwerk herausgenommen,” to which Jacob suggests that Rheinberg wishes, “die Verhältnisse wieder ins Geleise bringen,” making an allusion to coal cars running on tracks in and out of the mine (NG 50). Jacob, for his part, suggests that he has no desire to hide his views “hinterm Berge” (NG 54). Before departing for the markets at the end of the scene, Wasserstein then concludes, “Die Börstenstund’!...ich steh’ auf glühende Kohlen – was ich gekauft hab’…” (NG 56). There is a double meaning at the heart of this pronouncement. First, the image of standing on burning coals in anticipation of, but also fear about, the outcome of the stock market speculation. The frequent use of coal imagery also expresses his hope that these stocks will produce money – “glühende Kohlen”.

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The frequent punning does not simply exist in the exchange between this trio, however, but goes deeper, when one considers the characters’ names. Both Rheinberg (the Rhine mountain) and Wasserstein (water stone) have names indicating an identity tied to rocks and mountains, where coal, a mineral, or stone-like substance, is extracted from the earth, containing the potential to both provide energy to industrial production and fill the pockets of investors with a different mineral: gold. Meanwhile, Jacob, who shares his name with the forefather of the Jewish people, Israel, and whose family name – Samuel – is explicitly Jewish, is given the choice to cast his lot with these stock speculators and turn the very earth into a source of profit.

Despite the variety of elliptical references in names and punning on the relationship between identity, money, and coal, one pun remains unspoken in this exchange. Perhaps absent from the mind of the audience, this idiom, “Kohlen haben” refers not to great profit, but instead to having no money, being bankrupt. Indeed, with the play’s denouement in mind, this unspoken reference to bankruptcy provides perhaps a much more fitting idiom for describing the relationship of these figures to coal.

This darker side of coal for these characters, as well as this coal mine in particular, becomes apparent in the following scene as Rheinberg and Wasserstein exit and a poor coal mining worker from Slovenia named Vednik enters, requesting Jacob’s representation and advocacy to improve working conditions in the mine where he works. By happenstance, this coal mine is the very one where Rheinberg and Wasserstein are investing millions. In halting German, Vednik depicts the scene for Jacob, claiming the pace with which they mine means that “dann wird nit gut verzimmert,

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121 This idiom was attested to in the German-speaking world well before the time Herzl wrote Das neue Ghetto. See Friedrich Christian Benedict Avé-Tallemant, Das Deutsche Gauenthum in seiner social-politischen, literarischen, und linguistischen Ausbildung zu seinem heutigen Bestande (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1862), 561. Notably, this is an ethnographic work on Gaunersprache, a classification often used in older German to refer to Yiddish (and not simply the language of thieves).
weil wir uns eilen – und dann kann uns alles am Schädel fallen” (NG 59). Continuing on, he speaks of one shaft named Rosamunde. Describing the conditions, he explains,

Unser letztes Unglück war auch in der Rosamunde. Da hab’n’s bissel repariert…Nit viel. Und hab’n’s nit mehr getraut, in der Rosamunde zu sprengen…(Leiser, düster;) Dort darf man nur mit Hacken arbeiten – sonst!…Und jetzt lässt Verwalter wieder sprengen…Da können wir einmal alle drinbleiben. (NG 59)

This depiction of a shaft in the ground, whose very walls are not sturdy, suggests that Rheinberg’s earlier description of the mine as neglected (“ein vernachlässigtes Bergwerk”) is an understatement. The money (and coal), which Schramm has continually raided from the mine has led to precarious, dangerous conditions, which threaten to collapse on the miners who recognize the danger that the whole mine, and this particular shaft, pose to them. The cause of this return to dynamiting, Vednik explains, is the recent sale of the mine, which the mine manager explains is being undertaken in order to prove the mine’s financial viability to investors. Jacob, moved by the worker’s appeal for help, agrees to represent the workers, who have chosen Vednik as spokesman, and calls his wife, Hermine, to inform her that he is leaving immediately to visit the mine.

Jacob’s advocacy quickly proves useless, as the audience learns in the next act, when Bichler reports that a mine shaft has collapsed. Reading aloud from Vednik’s words as recorded in a newspaper, the audience learns:


Vednik’s description of the collapsing mine shaft provides the audience with an alternative, vicarious experience of the coal mine as place. Unlike Rheinberg and Wasserstein, who understand the mine as a distant piece of land, valuable as a product of speculation, Vednik’s descriptions give an insight into the mine’s inner workings. In a passage that brings the audience into the mine’s inner spatial
dimensions, Vednik evokes a sense of claustrophobia, depicting workers running from all sides and water threatening to overwhelm them. The beams and other forms of structural support collapse in the face of the natural elements unleashed by the dynamite. In revolt against the destabilizing forces of the men at work extracting coal from the mine, water and earth collapse on some miners, as others barely escape with their lives. The actions undertaken in the financial markets in Vienna resound in Rosamunde, killing miners. In turn, the “glühende Kohlen” Wasserstein celebrates in the second act are transformed and at least two investors in the mine – Rheinberg and Schramm – are left with “Kohlen,” bankrupt.

The Dubnitzer Mine and Ghetto Walls

The consideration of the Dubnitzer mine above carries meaning beyond questions of changing economic systems and the transfer of land rights from old aristocrats to modern speculators. For Herzl’s audience, the mine evokes the metaphorical place named in the play’s title and the first act during a conversation between the wedding guests: the ghetto. In a conversation between Jacob and the temple’s rabbi, Friedheimer, the audience hears the latter extol the virtues of the old life in the ghetto. While the rabbi acknowledges the fall of the walls (“die Mauern sind doch gefallen”), he also recognizes the cost these falling walls have exacted. He observes, “Das Ghetto war dumpf und unreinlich, aber es blühten darin die Tugenden der Familie. Der Vater war ein Patriarch. Die Mutter…lebte nur für ihre Kinder…Schelten Sie mir die Judengasse nicht…Es ist unsere arme Heimat” (NG 29-30). For the rabbi, the place of the ghetto functioned as an incubator of pious, religious Judaism. Unlike the worldly thoughts the various guests are able to have in the temple with their attention to wealth and status, the ghetto, despite its drawbacks, provided a place where religious (and curiously bourgeois!) values flourished.

If the physical walls of the ghetto have fallen, Friedheimer is not unaware of emerging antisemitism which he views as divine punishment for the heretical actions of those Jews taking
advantage of their new freedom. Indeed, he subtly indicates that the baptized Jew, Bichler, is one of those guilty of heresy in light of his newly found freedom. As a hedge, Friedheimer advocates erecting new, invisible “Mauren und Schranken,” a “moralische[s] Ghetto” that functions as “unser vorgeschriebener Aufenthaltsort,” concluding with the warning: “Wehe dem, der hinaus will!” before exiting the stage. Friedheimer’s voice functions as a nostalgic recollection of spatial configurations before emancipation: the force that disrupted the semi-autonomous Jewish community and thereby transformed both the religious and political life of Jews.

The nostalgia for these old spatial norms and their accompanying values, however, is countered by Jacob, who reads the physical walls of the old ghetto and the invisible ones of the new one in particularly sinister light. He instead advocates for breaking down these walls, declaring, “Die äussern Schranken mussten von aussen hinweggeräumt werden – die inneren müssen wir abtragen! Wir selbst! Aus uns heraus!” (NG 30). These latter limits, as Jacob sees them, are not outwardly imposed, but rather internalized patterns of behavior that must be thrown off through a conscious program of self-improvement. Rather than waxing nostalgic for old Jewish places, Jacob proposes to complete the destruction of these places and thereby achieve true emancipation.

As the play continues, however, Jacob confronts the reality that the walls of the ghetto still exercise their power on Jewish life from without. He is not able to deconstruct them by reformation of the self. Upon losing his best friend, the non-Jew Franz, because Jacob has become “too Jewish,” Jacob laments that the ghetto is an “Absonderung, die ich nicht will, die mich kränkt und die ich ertragen soll” (NG 44). As this last quote indicates and the play’s final scene illustrates: the walls of the ghetto, the “new ghetto” of only ostensibly emancipated Jewish life in Vienna, are still a reality. These ever-present walls are already apparent in the first act, when Jacob encounters

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122 As Jacob says to his parents, “Wir haben ja doch immer was vom Ghetto in uns,” NG 41.
the original owner of the Dubnitzer mine, Schramm, at his wedding reception. Having to explain his previous association with Schramm, Jacob recalls once being pushed by his mother to leave the house. He narrates,


This figure, who we discover is calvary captain Schramm, then challenges Jacob to a duel to defend his lost honor, to which Jacob agrees, before later backing out and thus sacrificing his own honor. The economy of honor depicted in this scene, as I have already discussed, has been convincingly analyzed by Daniel Boyarin.123

Yet what I would draw our attention to is the spatial backdrop against which Jacob’s humiliation takes place. As Todd Endelmann has argued, the city functioned as the place of emancipation, where modern Jewish life, under the influence of secularizing forces, played itself out.124 Moreover, as both Jürgen Habermas has demonstrated and Sachar Pinsker has convincingly expanded upon in the Jewish context, cafés within cities became the places where modern life and the public sphere, in particular a form of secular Jewish life, flourished and blossomed.125 Thus, Jacob’s humiliation does not just play out within an economy of honor and shame, but also in a particular spatial configuration that reflect the changes wrought by Jewish emancipation. Leaving his mother and her house, representing in turn Jewish values and a locus of traditional religious Judaism, Jacob enters the places first of the city, and then of the coffeehouse. Therein he spatially situates

123 For a discussion of another scene where Schramm and Jacob meet, see Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct, 290.


125 For more, including a conversation of Habermas, see Pinsker, A Rich Brew, 1–16
himself as an individual in the public sphere where confession is no longer an obstacle to participation. Moreover, thinking together with Benedict Anderson, in picking up the newspaper, Jacob indicates an intention to participate in an emerging imagined political community. Yet in calling into question the legitimacy of Jacob’s access to both newspaper and the shared space of the café, Schramm’s actions also reflect the reality that Jewish belonging under the star of secularization is contested (including in spatial terms). Thus, to bring the metaphor of the ghetto to bear on the Viennese situation, as the play’s characters consciously do, the walls of the ghetto may be invisible, but their reality remains.

In the fourth and final act, the collapsing coal mine in Dubrovnik comes to represent the ultimate fate of Jacob, who faces another collapse: the collapse of the ghetto’s walls onto him. Schramm, now bankrupt, again challenges Jacob to a duel, because, as he sees it, Jacob has led to the mine’s collapse in value by representing its workers. Jacob, intent on gaining honor to enable his participation in broader society, agrees to the duel and is killed in the action. His dying words declare his desire: “Ich will – hinaus!…Hinaus – aus – dem – Ghetto!” (NG 100). What these words, together with his death, indicate, is the spatial impossibility confronting Viennese Jews at the turn of the century: a physical departure from the ghetto into the city, but concurrent emergence of a new ghetto, and denial of access to the place of the public sphere, as played out in Jacob’s earlier altercation in the coffeehouse. In his attempt to resolve this impossibility, the walls of the ghetto metaphorically fall in on Jacob, mirroring the deadly collapse of the walls of the mine’s shaft.

If we take seriously that the collapsed coal mine somehow acts as a metaphor for the metaphorical ghetto invoked throughout Herzl’s play, what does this metaphor reveal to us? In the play, the actual walls of the coal mine collapse, as the dynamite meant to increase coal production and produce the image of wealth creation for a stock market leads to structural instability. Thus, a combination of longtime neglect by the aristocratic Schramm (a representative of an old order) and
speculation by the two Jewish parvenus Rheinberg and Wasserstein (the new order) are brought together to hasten the mine’s collapse and Schramm and Rheinberg’s consequent bankruptcy. From this perspective, one might argue that the play leads its audience to the point of recognizing the moral bankruptcy behind emancipation (a new order). Yet the play does not actually appear to long for the pre-emancipatory state, perhaps best advocated by the rabbi when he waxes nostalgic for the ghetto. Indeed, it functions as an attack against the old spatial (and social) order ruled by Schramm and those like him. Indeed, Schramm’s initial neglect of the mine created the preconditions which lead to its collapse.

Instead, the play suggests that incomplete emancipation is what ails these characters. Understood in terms of the ghetto, the societal changes that resulted in Jewish attempts to leave the traditional ghetto and join the public sphere have only resulted in a return to a metaphorical ghetto inhabited by Vienna’s Jews. These walls are not only supported from without by those like Schramm who refuse to grant Jewish entry into society; they are also maintained by Jews from within, who continue to exhibit the negative traits, such as an unhealthy relationship to money, something their exit from the ghetto was supposed to reform. Understood to be occupying a place akin to a mine, this latter ghetto is only an unstable spatial construct that continues to threaten its inhabitants with collapse and even death.

In Das neue Ghetto, these destabilized walls lead to Jacob’s death in the play’s emotional denouement. The audience feels sympathy with Jacob’s desire to escape the ghetto and sorrow at his inability to achieve his goal. Yet where does it leave its audience? Perhaps most accurate is that Herzl’s play is the diagnosis of a spatial crisis, or perhaps more accurately, a larger crisis embodied in a spatial idiom. It poses a problem while providing no answer. To access the answer, in turn, one must turn to the solution, once again spatial, that Herzl provides readers in only novel.
Alneuland

In 1902, toward the end of his life, Herzl released another literary work: the novel *Alneuland*. Despite its late publication date, Herzl’s diaries reveal that he had long considered his Zionist political dream to have novelistic qualities, something I thematize in this dissertation’s introduction. Herzl began writing the *Alneuland* manuscript itself in 1899, several years after publication of *Der Judenstaat*, and completed it in April 1902. Upon publication, the novel found wide readership, and controversy, with translations and reviews in various languages, including Hebrew and Yiddish. In what follows, I read *Alneuland* as a continuation and extension of the spatial themes first addressed in Herzl’s play.

*Alneuland*, like *Das neue Ghetto*, begins in contemporary Vienna with the protagonist Friedrich Löwenberg, a despondent Viennese Jew whose career prospects are limited by structural and social antisemitism. Early in the novel, Löwenberg learns his romantic interest, Ernestine Löffler, is engaged to a wealthy Jew from Brünn. Despairing, he responds to a newspaper ad from a non-Jewish, Prussian aristocrat, Kingscourt, who has spent the past years in America, amassing a fortune. The misanthrope Kingscourt, disappointed by the failure of his marriage in America, plans to escape the civilized world and settle on an island in the South Pacific. He nonetheless seeks a companion to accompany him so that he does not forget human speech. Löwenberg agrees, and the two set sail. Before departing, Löwenberg leaves his remaining wealth to a poor, desperate Eastern European Jewish family – the Littwaks – whom he encounters while patronizing his regular café. Kingscourt and Löwenberg then leave Europe, but on their way to the Pacific, stop in Palestine. Their brief visit

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leaves them convinced that the land is a broken-down wasteland, and they continue their journey to Kingscourt’s island.

The novel resumes twenty years later. Kingscourt and Löwenberg embark upon a return voyage to Europe. On the way, they hear rumors of a new, thriving society in once-backwards Palestine. They divert their ship to visit, and upon landing in Haifa, encounter David Littwak, the son of the family to whom Löwenberg left his money in Vienna twenty years earlier. The entire Littwak family has resettled in Palestine and become important figures in “The New Society” there (“Die neue Gesellschaft”). They have long assumed Löwenberg dead, mourned their benefactor, and named their new palatial home in Haifa for him.

The Littwak family takes Löwenberg and Kingscourt on a tour through Palestine to see the new, prosperous Jewish society to which they belong. Along the way, they pick up guests, including the Arab Muslim Reschid Bey. The remainder of the novel is resplendent with extensive, detailed descriptions of the landscape and the conditions which allow for the emergence of this new Jewish home. Another plot runs concurrently throughout: a larger political battle between David Littwak and another figure, Rabbi Geyer. Littwak argues that the society must continue to be open to all, Jew and non-Jew alike, while Geyer wishes to make the society exclusively Jewish and closed to outsiders. The novel ends with Littwak and his vision for the society triumphant when voters elect him their new leader. This political triumph is amplified by both Löwenberg and Kingscourt’s decision to voluntarily become members of the society.

Like Das neue Ghetto before it, read Altneuland as a work deeply concerned with spatial questions and demonstrative of the principal that Jewishness manifests itself in relationship to the places Jewish individuals inhabit. Indeed, there exists significant scholarship on the spatial dynamics
of Herzl’s novel.\textsuperscript{127} In his book \textit{Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains}, Todd Presner brings Herzl into conversation with the German railway pioneer, Friedrich List, and his use of railway maps as “programs for unity and depictions of the already unified body politic.”\textsuperscript{128} Presner draws a direct line of influence between the project of German national unification and Herzl’s political project. Just as “[r]ailway transportation…create[d] and defend[ed] national space” in Germany, Presner argues, Herzl too “conceive[d] of Zionism as a politics of transportation,” something that allowed “Jews, like Germans…[to] cultivate the land and the people, in turn improving them both,” thereby enabling Jews to become, in Hegel’s terminology, a “world historical people”.\textsuperscript{129} In her work, Na’ama Rokem directs special attention to the depiction of the Dead Sea Canal – among other locations in the text – to advance an argument that Herzl’s work speaks to the power of prose to mediate place to readers do not share a single location.\textsuperscript{130} Yigal Schwartz, in turn, reads Herzl’s depiction of Palestine as one that draws on “‘classical’ models of Eretz Israel” while simultaneously “reforming” the place, such that at its end, it resembles an “industrial, liberal European state”.\textsuperscript{131} Schwartz, importantly, lends significant attention to Herzl’s “‘erasure from the map’ policy” of “‘old’ forms of settlement” – under which he understands both older Jewish, but more significantly, Arab

\textsuperscript{127} For another spatial reading of Altneuland analyzing Herzl’s Palestine as heterotopic space, see Ernst, \textit{Shtetl}, 309–50. Ernst situates her reading within a larger argument about three major locations in turn-of-the-century Jewish literature: the shtetl, city, and state.

\textsuperscript{128} Presner, \textit{Mobile Modernity}, 169.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 181, 185, 197.

\textsuperscript{130} Rokem, \textit{Prosaic Conditions}, 73–94.

\textsuperscript{131} Schwartz, \textit{Zionist Paradox}, 61.
ones. This erasure, he argues, is built on a “hierarchical, modern attitude with a patronizing colonial touch.” Similar to this reading, Ulrich Bach situates Herzl’s work in the context of colonial concerns of the Austro-Hungarian empire and reads Herzl’s utopia as producing “a space in which [Herzl’s] European experiences and Oriental imaginations collapse into each other”. Here, Herzl’s colonial gaze turns Palestine “upside down” in the quest to resolve “the social and xenophobic problems of contemporary Vienna” while simultaneously “clear[ing] and clean[ing] the colonial space of its historicity,” something most notably on display in the novel’s dearth of Arab protagonists.

Woven throughout these readings are an interrelated groups of observations and concerns. First, we see how the question of place relates to the creation of a nation. This leads some scholars to grapple with the tension between older religious spatial models and newer, European models based on the modern, liberal nation state. Related to this, at least one of these readings grapples with the question of the literary in creating the nation as place in the face Jewish spatial dispersion. In addition, interwoven in multiple analyses is the recognition of the impact of place on the recreation of the Jew. Finally, scholars have confronted the colonial and oriental patterns legible in Herzl’s fiction and spatial conceptions.

In my reading, I seek to address many of these same concerns through a focus on the novel’s reliance on the German Jewish legacy of emancipation, especially as reflected in its spatial reconfiguration of Palestine. As I have already begun to argue in the first chapter, Herzl’s beliefs

132 Ibid., 69–70.

133 Bach, Tropics of Vienna, 85.

134 Ibid., 99.
significantly resembled those of his non-Zionist predecessors: namely, that the modern (European) state ought to function as an agent to reform the Jew. In so doing, this reform would achieve Jewish integration into the European social and political order. Indeed, it is no accident that Kingscourt, a Prussian aristocrat, lends his final seal of approval by joining the New Society at Altneuland’s conclusion. I read this as Herzl’s indication of the success of his alternative emancipatory undertaking.

This vision of the state, importantly, also relies on a specifically spatial model discussed above, which forms an addition part of the German Jewish emancipatory inheritance. In my reading of the novel, I understand Reschid Bey, the novel’s only named Arab Muslim character, to spatially enact the separation of religious and public spheres when he leaves his wife – the embodiment of religion confined to the private, domestic sphere – and departs with the Littwak party on a tour of the New Society. In this model, all individuals, including Jews, must check their religious commitments at the household door as a prerequisite for creating a neutral public sphere. Thus, though Herzl undoubtedly relies on colonial and oriental tropes and ideas, we can also recognize here a reliance on a model German Jews understood as the best way to tackle difference in society. Despite Altneuland’s attempts to enact this separation, however, it ultimately proves unable to fully deliver on a secular public sphere, as exemplified by the silent misplacement of the Dome of the Rock in the book’s final part and the erection of a Jewish temple in its place. In so doing, Altneuland implicitly becomes a site of an alternative “semi-neutral” society, something I will unpack at the conclusion of this chapter.

My approach to Altneuland finally seeks to address the question of reading in the novel, an aspect largely left untouched in current scholarship on the work. As I argue, embedded in Herzl’s story is an attention to the relationship between literary dreams and reality – and these, in turn, are connected to the spatial concerns to which my readings draw our attention. As already discussed in
the introduction to my dissertation, the famous epigraph from the novel’s title page – “Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen” – is one place where Herzl actively reflects on the relationship between the political and the literary. But this is by no means the only place in the work where this is touched upon. Indeed, throughout the text, Altneuland provides a model and conscious reflection on the tight relationship between artistic and literary products and their role in the political. These meta-commentaries embedded within the text provide Altneuland’s readers with an implicit model for the way literature can become the first instantiation of a national community that will go on to become reality.

**Vienna’s Tight Spaces**

Like *Das neue Ghetto* before it, *Altneuland* begins with a social problem depicted in explicitly spatial terms. Friedrich Löwenberg sits in the café he regularly patronizes, considering the many doors closed to him as a Jew. Like Jacob Samuel, Löwenberg comes from an upwardly mobile family who seeks to advance over generations by education – both characters are trained lawyers, like Herzl – and a movement into the public sphere as reflected in the place of the café, something clearly connected to newspaper readership.

Death and despondency also permeate both stories. Löwenberg and his fellow (Jewish) café patrons are despondent because their social and economic advancement has stalled. Indeed two of Löwenberg’s close friends are victims, like Jacob Samuel, of the *Judenfrage*. One, Heinrich, has committed suicide. The other, Oswald, joined Jewish workers to found a settlement in Brazil, but has, by the book’s beginning, succumbed to yellow fever while in that settlement. Therewith these first few pages suggest, but also quickly foreclose, the possibility of a spatial escape to South America as a solution to the challenges facing Jews in Europe.

In addition to the café, whose valences I discussed in my analysis of *Das neue Ghetto*, the first chapters of *Altneuland* play out in two main locations: the home of Löwenberg’s love interest,
Ernestine Lößler, and the home of the Littwaks, an Eastern European Jewish family living in poverty. The Lößlers, a wealthy Jewish merchant family, live in the second floor of a Zinshaus. The ground floor of the same building houses the family’s rag company and main source of wealth. The Lößlers’ living arrangement indicates a life focused on the accumulation of capital. Their proximity to their business indicates that life and the pursuit of profit are not separable, but necessary components of a complete household. The Zins – this might be translated as “revenue house,” but Zins also means interest – at it is termed, is further dedicated to profit, given the fact that other parts of the home have been subdivided into multiple apartments for the purpose of letting and thus producing more income. The Lößler family’s life clearly revolves around the amassing of wealth.

Moreover, the suppositions one can draw from this spatial configuration are supported when readers – and Friedrich – learn in the second chapter that the family has chosen to marry Ernestine off to a wealthy merchant from Brünn: a decision clearly undertaken because of the current wealth and future earning potential of the groom-to-be. In short, the spatial surroundings of the Lößler family represent a Jewish archetype who may have escaped the physical ghetto, but whose character has not been adequately reformed in the process.

Despite the Lößlers’ wealth, Friedrich describes the house as cramped. He experiences the salon as “überfüllt” and the dining room during the meal he spends with the family as “noch zu klein für die heutige Gesellschaft” with people sitting “dicht gedrängt” (ANL 11, 13). Friedrich himself, after learning that he no longer has any hope of winning Ernestine’s hand, “kommt] sich überflüssig vor in diesem Zimmer [dem Spiesesaal], in dieser Stadt, in der Welt überhaupt” (ANL 19). The tightly-packed room and Friedrich’s subjective experience of his place in it acts as a spatial index of the social challenges facing wealthy and bourgeois Jews in Vienna at the turn of the century. In a world where only select few Jewish families can obtain success, others are left to crowd in,
seeking benefits by their proximity to the wealthy, or else experiencing the feeling of being squeezed out and unwelcome.

Friedrich’s experience of the cramped quarters among the wealthy Viennese continues into the next chapter. He leaves the dinner, dispirited because of Ernestine’s engagement and chooses to return to his regular café, asking, “Was sollte er auch jetzt schon zu Hause in seinem Engen Stübchen anfangen? Es war zehn Uhr. Schlafen gehen? Ja, wenn es kein Erwachen mehr gäbe…” (ANL 20). Friedrich’s small, narrow room thus recalls a coffin: this description, coupled with the previous mention of his two close friends whose deaths were either directly or indirectly caused by despair at the Jewish situation in Vienna, leads readers to see European Jewish life at a dead end.

The cramped spatial circumstances of the wealthy Löfflers and middle-class Friedrich are shared with the home of the Littwaks: a poor, Eastern European Jewish family Friedrich encounters in the café. These spatial challenges relate to the Littwak father’s reliance on “handeln,” a stereotypical occupation that Jewish emancipation sought to root out: “Ueberall werfen sie mich heraus, wenn ich handeln will. Wenn man ein Jud is, soll man lieber gleich in die Donau gehen” (ANL 23). The evocation of the Donau is yet another spatial image of death: drowning in the river that flows through the city.

The father describes his attempt to improve his life circumstances by moving through space: “Wir sind von Galizien hergekommen. In Krakau hab’ ich gewohnt in ein’ Zimmer mit noch drei Familien. Wir haben gelebt von der Luft. Hab’ ich mir gedacht, schlechter kann es nit mehr werden, und bin mit mei’ Weib und meine Kinder hergekommen. Hier is es nit schlechter, aber auch nit besser” (ANL 23). The movement through space from Galicia to Krakow and then to Vienna is undertaken in the belief that this will lead to upward advancement. Yet the family’s life remains less than ideal, something mirrored in the cramped quarters the father describes in the one-room home.
in Krakow. The promises never come to fruition, and the Littwak patriarch can only say that nowhere are things better or worse.

The man’s concerns are further demonstrated when Friedrich accompanies him and his son, David Littwak, to the “hohen, neugebauten Hause an der Lände” where they live. When the father rings the bell upon arriving, the door remains closed (ANL 25). He explains, “Der Hausmeister weiß schon, wer da is. Da laß er sich Zeit. Oft steh’ ich da a Stund! Er ist ein grober Mensch.” (ANL 25) On the days when he does not return home having earned enough to pay rent, the father, we learn, does not even attempt to ring; he instead goes “herum bis in der Früh, bis das Haustor offen ist” (ANL 25). Like the society which blocks him from entry into their public places like coffeehouses where he can peddle his goods, the man is prevented even from entering his home, left to wander about, evoking in his individual life the stereotypical myth of the wandering Jew.

Once inside, Friedrich climbs to the fifth floor to see the Littwak’s living conditions in an “eifenstrigen Stübchen” where at first, no light burns. They then sit in the “Halbdunkel” illuminated by a borrowed candle stump. The “schmale[r] Raum” contains no furniture, and Friedrich concludes from the spatial clues and demeanor of the family that this is “ein Anblick des tiefsten Elends.” (ANL 26)

In sum, while reflective of different social classes, the Littwak family’s single room, the wealthy Löfler’s Zinshaus and Freidrich’s “enge Stübchen” are all cramped, unwelcoming places.

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135 As Petra Ernst points out, at this time the high room was an indicator of a low station, see her Schtetl, 329n143.

136 “Elend” is described later in the novel as the best word to describe the diasporic condition: “Und das Judentum kam bei alledem immer tiefer herab. Es wurde das ‘Elend,’ ganz im Sinne des alten deutschen Wortes: nämlich das Aus-land, das fremde Land, der Aufenthaltsort von Verbannten. Wer im ‘Elend’ war, der war ein Unglücklicher...So kamen die Juden aus eigener wie aus fremder schuld immer tiefer hinein. Elend, Golus, Ghetto! Worte in allen Sprachen für dasselbe Ding. Verachtet werden, und sich schließlich selbst verachten!” ANL 289.
Their apparent differences belie their commonality, a spatial similarity which indexes the social challenges facing Jews throughout Europe, and the interrelated concern of the continuous negative impact of separation on Jewish character, thus leading to the aborted attempt to reform the Jew. Indeed, as Yigal Schwartz states by means of a similar line of argumentation, “Vienna…is thus portrayed as a place where the Jews have no chances of survival.”

Importantly, this experience of spatial deficiency and human degeneracy later recurs in the “alte Land[] der Juden,” or Palestine, where Friedrich and his traveling companion Kingscourt briefly visit at the end of the first part of the novel (ANL 45). There, they encounter “fast nur Sand und Sumpf,” a place full of “entwaldeten Berge[n] von Judäa.” (ANL 46) Reading people and place together, Friedrich muses, “Wenn das unser Land ist…so ist es ebenso heruntergekommen wie unser Volk.” (ANL 46) In images informed by the oriental and colonial imagination, the “[a]rme[n] Türken, schmutzige[n] Araber, [und] scheue[n] Juden” loafing about become part of the landscape (ANL 46). Rather than active agents who shape their surroundings, these inhabitants fail to make the land productive; in the interaction between the two, readers see how landscape and human character reflect on and shape each other.

Thus, more than simply an index of social misery, one discovers in all these spatial images a tightly intertwined experience of social marginalization and its impact on the manifestation of Jewishness. Indeed, much like the emancipatory rhetoric which I argue Zionists like Herzl remain indebted to, these descriptions provide a picture of Jews in need of some sort of improvement, something that can only be actualized by spatial reform. The novel depicts the Littwaks, for example, as living from air – *Luftmenschen* – thereby harkening to a stock antisemitically-tinged trope

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137 Schwartz, *Zionist Paradox*, 57.
of poor, Eastern European Jews.\textsuperscript{138} The depiction of the wealthy Löffler family, as manifest in their spatial circumstance, alludes to another antisemitic stereotype of Jews as obsessed with the accumulation of wealth and status at any cost. Palestine, in turn, provides a summary image of Jews who remain timid and lesser, something reflected in the desolate landscape against which they live their lives. Clearly, we cannot dismiss how these representations are deeply informed by Herzl’s internalized antisemitism.\textsuperscript{139} But neither can this recognition allow us to ignore the mechanism by which it is articulated and it informs the Zionist project: within Herzl’s novel, the places Jews occupy are the causes of, as well as the means to reflect upon, European Jewish challenges in the contemporary moment. They shape individuals, and in so doing, are more than just simple metaphors: they are realities that index and influence the expression of Jewish character.

Finding Future in a Hopeless Place

Intruding into these varied yet similar places of suffering, several characters in \textit{Altneuland}’s first chapters bring two other places into the conversation: Palestine and a remote island in the Pacific. Palestine is first mentioned during dinner conversation at the Löffler house, as guests celebrate Ernestine’s engagement. A visiting Rabbi speaks about antisemitism confronting Jews in the smaller cities in Moravia. Arguing that most Jews “wissen nicht, wohin sie sollen,” the rabbi mentions “eine Bewegung, man nennt sie die zionistische” that proposes to solve the \textit{Judenfrage} through “eine großartige Kolonisation…in unsere[r] alte[n] Heimat” in Palestine (ANL 15). The


\textsuperscript{139} Kornberg captures Herzl’s general antisemitism by quoting Arthur Schnitzler’s remark in \textit{Der Weg ins Freie}, “I myself have only succeeded up to the present in making the acquaintance of one genuine antisemite. I’m afraid I’m bound to admit…that it was a well-known Zionist leader”. He also quotes a review of the play itself, that it “seemed to antisemitic for a Jewish play and too Jewish for an antisemitic play”. See Kornberg, \textit{Herzl}, 154, 156.
discussion of Palestine as the home of a large-scale settlement quickly becomes the object of considerable scorn by the Löffler’s other guests, who mock the suggestion of creating a “neue[s] Reich” in Palestine (ANL 16). But the wealthy Löffler guests are not the only ones to be aware of this place. In a later section, the Littwak son, David, details his dreams of the place with passion, rather than scorn, and tells Friedrich of his longing to go “mit meine [sic] Eltern und Mirjam nach Erez Israel”. He adds, “Das is unser Land. Dort können wir glücklich werden!” (ANL 28).

Friedrich’s surprise decision taken in response to Ernestine Löffler’s engagement introduces the second place of longing found in Altneuland’s first chapters: the Pacific Island where he eventually retreats with Kingscourt, who places an ad in a newspaper signed “N.O. Body”. This negation of the individual – nobody – is related to a spatial negation – no-place – that the island represents. For Kingscourt, the island is “[d]ie volle wahre Rückkehr zur Natur! Diese Einsamkeit ist das Paradies, das die Menschen durch ihre Schuld verloren haben.” (ANL 33) Indeed Einsamkeit is what Kingscourt seems to long for: encountering humans, he declares, is “schmutzig” (ANL 33). He prefers a no-place on an island “in der Südsee, wo man ganz allein ist…Es ist ein kleines Felsennestchen im Cooks-Archipel.” (ANL 33) He buys the spot and builds a comfortable home there. The home, he explains, “liegt so versteckt hinter den Felsen, daß man es von keiner Seite bemerkt”; he continues, “Meine Insel sieht nach wie vor unbewohnt aus” (ANL 33–4). Kingscourt’s description of both the island and his longing to “return to nature” explicitly calls forth an image of “paradise,” a place tightly intertwined with, if not wholly identical to, the Garden of Eden, a place lost, of course, because of guilt (“durch ihre Schuld verloren haben”).

140 For a reading of “N.O. Body” as indicating Herzl’s belief that Jews had “defective bodies,” see Gluzman, “The Zionist Body,” 97.
Importantly, Kingscourt values the island because it is cut off, inaccessible, and hidden away; it allows him to largely escape humankind. Rather than a place tied to a social body, like the Jewish people and their relation to Palestine, this place is paradisiacal because social contact is ruptured. It is nearly complete alienation – and this is what makes it Edenic. Moreover, in traveling to this island, a no-place, Friedrich embraces the ability to become, like Kingscourt, a nobody. This is “ein Abschied vom Leben”: a decision to remove oneself from the social relations of life by a radical spatial act and thereby negate the self (ANL 35).

Discussion of Kingscourt’s island as utopian necessarily engages with the word’s multivalence. As Fátima Vieira notes, utopia alludes to both “imaginary paradisiacal places” as well as “a particular kind of narrative…utopian literature”. To fully appreciate Kingscourt’s island fantasy, then, I argue we must understand it as both a (non-)place, but as also directing our readerly attention to literary intertexts mentioned in the introduction such as Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* and Thedora Hertzka’s *Freiland*. In understanding this island as a gesture towards the utopian literary genre, we can appreciate how *Altneuland* here evinces a self-reflectiveness about its literary and generic status. Put more plainly: Kingscourt’s island allows *Altneuland* to take a stance on its relationship to utopias: both as (non-)places and literary works.

Scholars such as Leah Hadomi, Petra Ernst, and Clemens Peck have all weighed in on whether *Altneuland* technically qualifies as a utopian work – a debate that concerns me less than the

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novel’s obvious engagement with the form. Kingscourt’s island and further developments in Altneuland reveal Herzl’s understanding of the ideal relationship between the literary and spatial reality. In other words, as I understand it, Herzl seeks to show how unlike what he understands previous literary utopias to be doing, the vision depicted in Altneuland can be actualized in the real world.

Spatial Longing and the Act of Reading

The locations of spatial longing described above – Palestine and Kingscourt’s island – are more than simply described as possible destinations. They are also both connected to the act of reading. In making this connection, I argue, Herzl embeds an ideal model of reading into his novel’s own narrative: a model that flies in the face of what he perceives utopian literature to do.

The first character where we see the connection between spatial longing and reading is Friedrich. The book opens with him consuming newspapers at his table in his regular café. He consumes “Tages- und Wochenzeitungen, Witzblätter[] und Fachjournale[],” and then, afterwards, gives himself over to the “einsame[] Träume” that fill his head (ANL 1). Indeed, Friedrich first encounters Kingscourt’s advert within the pages of one of these papers (ANL 7).

Despite this furious reading, Friedrich’s habits change after learning about Ernestine’s engagement. He returns to the café, but once there, only acts “als ob er läse” (ANL 21). He then encounters Kingscourt’s ad again and responds to it. By the time he sets sail with Kingscourt, we learn that he no long reads. Although their yacht contains “eine gewählte kleine Bibliothek…zum Lesen kam man gar nicht, so abwechslungsreich vergingen die Meerstage” (ANL 42).

143 See here Ernst, Schtetl, Stadt, Staat, 311–16; Hadomi, “Altneuland – ein utopischer Roman,” especially 201–2; Peck, Labor der Utopie, esp. 212–38.
Later on in the novel, after Friedrich and Kingscourt return to Palestine after twenty years in the South Pacific, Friedrich expresses his commitment to the principle of non-reading explicitly. He tells Kingscourt, “Der beste Beweis, daß ich mir nichts mehr aus der bewohnten Welt mache, ist der, daß ich alle die Jahre hindurch keine Zeitung in die Hand genommen habe.” When Kingscourt retorts that no newspaper ever existed on the island to read, Friedrich counters that once, upon receiving a package on the island, the goods were wrapped in newspapers. He admits, “Einen Augenblick war ich in Versuchung, sie zu lesen…ich hatte seit fünfzehn Jahren nichts mehr von der Welt gehört. Aber ich raffte die Blätter alle zusammen und verbrannte sie ungelesen.” (ANL 60–1)

Here, Friedrich’s reading habits, or better stated, his conscious decision to cease reading, explicitly relates to the island as (no-)place. Fidelity to the place he inhabits – a place outside of time and divorced from a social or political body – demands he foregoes reading.

Another character, however, does read during the course of the first section of Altenland: the young David Littwak. When Friedrich visits the family a second time, he enters and notices that, Die Stube…sah bei Tage noch elender aus als bei Nacht. Und doch fand Friedrich Löwenberg diese armen Leute in beinahe rosiger Stimmung, als er bei ihnen hineintrat. David Littwak stand vor dem Fensterbrett, auf dem ein aufgeschlagenes Buch lag, und er las darin, während er an seinem mächtigen Butterbrot kaute. (ANL 37)

To Friedrich, the place the Littwak family inhabits continues to exhibit the miserable characteristics discussed above. Despite this, there is a rosy mood in the place. This seems, in part, to relate to the reading David Littwak, nourishing himself with bread as he consumes whatever exists in the pages of the book. The window in front of him, where he stands, suggests a look directed outward, toward the world outside the family’s cramped conditions. The juxtaposed “elende Stube” and reading David Littwak in “rosiger Stimmung” suggests that books create the conditions to ameliorate the spatial suffering of individuals.

After introducing this tableau, David recalls to Friedreich, “Ich hab’ einmal gelesen eine Geschichte von einem Manne, der einem kranken Löwen geholfen hat.” Friedrich immediately

David’s recollection of a story he once read, together with his impulse to map his reading onto the reality around him suggests a connection between that which already is and the fantastical found in books. The tale he references is recorded in Aesop and describes the story of a runaway slave, Androcles, who hides in a cave, where he finds a wounded lion with a thorn in its paw. He removes the thorn, earning the lion’s friendship. The lion thereafter brings food back to the cave, helping Androcles to live. The story ends years later when Androcles is captured, thrown into the Circus Maximus to be devoured by beasts, where he once again encounters the lion, who remembers him and saves his life.

Structurally speaking, Androcles mirrors Friedrich Löwenberg and David Littwak’s relationship, especially following Friedrich’s arrival in Palestine twenty years in the future. The metaphor is more complex, however: David and Friedrich immediately identify the lion in Androcles with the “Lion of Judah”: a symbol of Jewish national sovereignty. This is even more important considering David’s name: a name belonging to perhaps the greatest, perhaps mythical, king in Jewish history and a direct descendent of the line of Judah. Judah, in turn, is often symbolized by a lion. (Also suggestive, Friedrich’s last name, Löwenberg, connects him to the figure of a lion.)

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144 See here Schwartz, Zionist Paradox, 78, 93–4.

145 Judah is also the source of the term “Jewish”.
Given David’s later elected role as president of the Neue Gesellschaft at Altneuland’s conclusion, the connection is even more suggestive.

At this moment in Herzl’s novel, however, no new society exists in Palestine and the spatial crisis facing European Jewry is still acute. David’s assertion that Judah can once again have that which it once did – namely, a homeland – connects with his reading. Reading not only provides him with an opportunity to explain his current circumstances, but also to project forward the fulfillment of his spatial hopes.

Here we witness how the difference between Löwenberg’s and Littwak’s respective reading practices are not simply connected to whether the two read or not. For Löwenberg, reading provides a connection to the world as it currently is, or else an escape from the world. The newspaper reading concretely facilitates this spatial escape through his encounter with Kingscourt’s advertisement. Moreover, this spatial decision then leads to his decision to forego reading out of a conviction that he wishes to escape a depiction of the world as it is. By contrast, David’s reading fuels his dreams of a new reality in a new place. It becomes the avenue for him to suggest that Friedrich’s donation will allow him, a wounded lion, and, by extension, all of Jewry, to reclaim a place for themselves.

Naturally, the reading habits of Löwenberg and Littwak are not simply an internal observation about Altneuland. They also point to Altneuland’s meta-reflection about itself as a novel: “Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen!” David’s contention that Androcoles is no Märchen thus amplifies the novel’s message about itself and the Zionist dreams of a Jewish national homeland. It also illustrates how the Märchen becomes a part of the work of articulating a new dream, thus explaining the importance of Altneuland the novel to the Zionist movement.

The Märchen as Latter-Day Haggadah

The majority of Altneuland, unlike my analysis thus far, does not dwell on Vienna or the “backwards” Palestine of 1902. It instead plays out in a Palestine twenty years in the future, as seen
and experienced by Löwenberg and Kingscourt who visit the place during their return from a twenty-year stay on the Prussian aristocrat’s remote island. They land in Haifa, now a thriving, modern city filled with beautiful buildings and signs of progress all around them. There they encounter a grown David Littwak, now an influential leader in this “New Society” (Die neue Gesellschaft). The society has brought Palestine back to life during Löwenberg and Kingscourt’s disappearance.

In what follows, I provide a series of close readings to demonstrate the argument with which I began this chapter: namely, that Herzl exhibits here a reliance on spatial models and priors propagated as part of the efforts to achieve German Jewish emancipation. Perhaps no one better explicates the challenge Herzl sets for himself in reenvisioning Palestine than David Littwak. During a celebration of the Passover Seder in Tiberias, he announces to the guests at the table: “Wir sind die Nachfahren von Rabbi Elieser, Rabbi Jehoschua, Rabbi Eleasar dem Sohne Asarias, Rabbi Akiba und Rabbi Tarphon. Und dies ist unser Abend von Bene-Berak. Altes will in neues übergehen.” (ANL 215). Formulating the significance of the last twenty years in words that evoke the emancipatory project, he continues, “Wir mußten neue Menschen geworden und doch auch dem alten Stamme nicht untreu sein” (ANL 216, emphasis added). Here, to use the language Yigal Schwartz, Littwak sums up the tension between “classical models” and reformatory impulses at work in Herzl’s novel. Littwak’s pronouncement thus explains the importance of simultaneously mapping the Zionist enterprise onto the ancient Exodus narrative while also demonstrating the New Society’s reliance on new models of political organization – “Altes will in neues übergehen”. The ultimate goal, importantly, is the creation of new Menschen, something that must be reconciled with remaining
true to the “alten Stamme”. Here, the Zionist project announces itself as sitting uneasily between a dual commitment to universalism and particularity.

During the Seder, guests listen to a wax cylinder recording of Joseph Levy, who recounts his key role in organizing the movement of Jewish masses from Europe to Palestine. The society, David mentions, has had the recording duplicated and distributed to schools for the Passover celebration, implicitly situating it as a technological replacement for the Haggadah. Just like in the traditional Seder, this recording shares the story about the successful rebuilding of a Jewish political community meant to be told again and again. The schools, notably, act as an extension of the “New Society” and propagate this new, shared national myth. The wax cylinders provide their own Märchen – something, appropriately enough, early Zionists often translated as Agadah. Indeed, Kingscourt reaffirms this connection by referring to the entire Zionist plan as a “Märchen” and Levy as an “edler Märchenprinz” (ANL 222) In so doing, Altenland again models how its status as a text ought to relate to reality. It associates itself with the fairy tale that is no fairy tale: the text which takes the form of a Märchen but also negates anything unrealistic about it given its actualization in Palestine.

Importantly, the goal of this future Palestine, the transformation of the Jew into a Mensch, is connected to the revaluation of Palestine’s land. Joe Levy details the movement’s “privatrechtlichen Ankauf von Grund und Boden, für das Ansiedeln ganz mittelloser Menschen“ who then work for the “Urbarmachung, Bepflanzung, [und] Aufbesserung des Landes”. In engaging and improving the land, the Jewish workers who have forgotten the “ABC des Volkstums” rehabilitate themselves

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146 As Michael Gluzman aptly notes, “The entire land is presented as a site of national health, both mental and physical,” here in “The Zionist Body,” 103.

147 Relevant here is the Hebrew translation of Altenland’s famous epigraph: “הדגא וזניאוצרתםא” (Im tirzu, ayin zo agadah), where the Hebrew word used to translate Märchen is agadah.
When Kingscourt asks how Levy funded the acquisition of more land following his initial purchases, David Littwak explains, “Hauptsächlich durch die Wertsteigerung des Bodens” (131). In other words, the effort of Jewish settlers becomes the mechanism by which to endow the land with value and thus enrich the New Society. Part and parcel with this increase in value, vitally, is the recreation of the Jewish individual as a Mensch. In both the celebration of Jewish rehabilitation in this universal mode, but also the emphasis on the rediscovery of what means to be a Volk, the narrative again captures a tension at the heart of Herzl’s Zionism. On the one hand, the political body of the “New Society” becomes a latter-day, state-like actor responsible for Jewish Erziehung as a universal Mensch; on the other, this leads to the rediscovery of Jewish nationhood, a form of Jewish particularity.

In the process of recounting this alternative Seder, then, the narrative emphasizes the connection between place, Jewish rehabilitation and the proper engagement with the Märchen. In a scene which captures these dynamics in brief, readers learn that as Friedrich listens to the wax cylinder recording, he sits in a corner. He looks over the “Köpfe der Zuhörer hinweg zu den Fenstern hinaus ins Freie…bis nach den Bergen jenseits des Sees. Und zwischen ihm und dem Landschaftsbilde war der lichtumflossene Umriß Mirjams.” (143). Here, the landscape acts as an index of the reality of this Märchen Friedrich and the other guests listen to, just as David Littwak’s sister, Mirjam, illuminated by that same landscape, and representative of the rehabilitated Jewish Mensch, takes on a new aspect.148

Spatial Division in a New Jerusalem

Vital to appreciating the structure of the New Society is yet another aspect of spatial organization rendered legible in the depiction of Jerusalem at the end of the novel. In these passages,

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148 See here Schwartz’s remark, “The two catalyzers in Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg’s resurrection – the old-new woman (the helpless baby from Vienna turned into a lovely woman) and the old-new place – gradually merge in the novel.” Schwartz, Zionist Paradox, 83.
I maintain, one sees Herzl’s true reliance on the spatial organization that forms an important base for the German Jewish emancipatory model. When Friedrich and Kingscourt enter Jerusalem, they witness a city transformed. Before them in panorama lies the “heilige Landschaft der Menschheit” (ANL 281). Private homes no longer line the streets of the Old City, readers learn; instead, all buildings within the walls of this renovated place “dien[en] Zwecken der Wohlthätigkeit oder Andacht.” (ANL 283). Jerusalem’s Old City is now a location set apart. Its holiness has become universalized, belonging to all humanity (Menschheit), and is sealed hermetically within the ancient walls.

Outside the walls, Jerusalem’s residents have erected a new, lively city. Here the visitors glimpse “moderne Stadtteile…von elektrischen Bahnen durchzogen, breite, baumbesetzte Straßen, ein Häuserdickicht, nur von grünen Anlagen unterbrochen. Boulevards und Parks, Lehrinstitute, Kaufhallen, Prunkgebäude und Belustigungsorte” (ANL 282). Behind this organization is the separation of the religious and public spheres, enacted on a grand spatial scale. As the painter Isaak later shares with Friedrich, “Glaubensachen waren ein- für allemal von der öffentlichen Beeinflussung ausgeschaltet.” (ANL 297). One may devote oneself to temple, church, mosque, art museum or the philharmonic orchestra, he continues, “darum hatte sich die Gesellschaft nicht zu kümmer” (ANL 297).

The significance of this separation – one the novel is at pains to emphasize – makes Herzl’s indebtedness to the spatial model he inherited from German Jewry legible. First, and more generally, this is a demonstration of Herzl’s commitment to a liberal model of the state whereby politics and religion operate in separate spheres. Secondly, it is a deployment of the very spatial model that had

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149 See here Kornberg, Herzl, 14–6.
provided for German Jewish entrance into larger society and political life, however faulty that entrance had proven.

Yet more than a means to incorporate Jews into Christian society, Herzl seems to understand this as the correct means by which a society might accommodate all forms of religious difference. This is clearly seen in the behavior of *Altneuland*'s only named Arab Muslim character Reschid Bey. Notably, when Bey joins the group touring the “New Society,” he leaves his wife Fatama at home. As they pull up in their motor coach, readers learn that “[h]inter dem Holzgitter eines Fensters im ersten Stock erhob sich eine schöne, weiße Frauenhand und winkte mit dem Taschentuche.” One of women shouts, “Grüß dich Gott, Fatma! Wir werden dir deinen Mann unbeschädigt zurückbringen, sei ganz ruhig!” (ANL 131). When Friedrich expresses concern that this “arme Frau” must remain at home, David Littwak’s sister Miriam assures him that Fatama gladly remains within the walls of her abode.

Though a brief scene, its spatial dynamics are suggestive. Bey leaves his home to ride along the streets as a man, an equal to his fellow Jewish and Christian passengers. His wife, whose face is never glimpsed – suggesting perhaps a reticence to show her uncovered head – acts as a specter of Muslim particularity who is (happily) relegated to the private sphere. Fatama’s placement in the home nods to the female, domestic space which many German Jews viewed as the locus of religious practice, especially following emancipation. The greeting used to address Fatma accentuates her as a religiously-coded figure. It evokes “God” and is the only time where this greeting is used in the text. The assurances that Reschid will return home “unbeschädigt” seek to still any anxieties that Muslim particularity might be harmed in this division. Indeed, as a fluent German speaker who has

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150 For a larger discussion of the marginalization of women in the New Society and how it relates to the marginalization of Arabs, see Gluzman, “The Zionist Body,” 105–110.
spent time in Europe, the narrative suggests Reschid Bey is open to this division of the private and the political and recognizes its advantages.

In sum, for all that Herzl’s program can be read as a colonialist enterprise and Reschid Bey as a walking set of orientalist tropes, we cannot lose sight of the German Jewish inheritance at work in Herzl’s spatial politics. Understood from this perspective, the challenge of (religious) difference is lifted when individuals marginalize their (religious) particularity in the name of creating a “neutral” public sphere where all are welcome. Indeed, German Jews in the century leading up to the publication of *Altneuland* had undertaken just such a project in the name of joining their respective European fatherlands. Of course neither the instantiation of this model in Europe in the nineteenth century nor in the pages of *Altneuland* prove unproblematic, something to which I will return at the end of this chapter.

**An Emancipatory Ending**

Throughout my analysis of *Altneuland*, I have directed our attention to the text’s deployment of specific spatial categories, the role of the literary in the political, and the novel’s indebtedness to a German (Jewish) heritage. I have demonstrated how *Altneuland* proposes an explicitly spatial solution to a fundamentally spatial problem first depicted in Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto*. In unpacking the how the increase in the value of Palestine’s land indexes the reeducation and recreation of the Jew as *Mensch*, I have argued that *Altneuland* remains in large part dedicated to a project first begun with Jewish emancipation in the eighteenth-century German-speaking world. Similarly, in highlighting the novel’s division of private and public spheres, I have argued that the political model Herzl (at least partly) advances for Jerusalem is based on a separation understood by German Jews as the means to accommodate difference and particularity in a multicultural society. This, I note, is a lesson taken from their own experience of the emancipatory project in Europe. Yet in all this, I argue Herzl was in no way unknowingly and indiscriminately drawing on this German Jewish heritage. Instead, my
argument all along has been that Herzl’s Zionism has as its ultimate goal Jewish emancipation by other means.

A true demonstration of this is found in the novel’s denouement when the two outsiders to Palestine, Kingscourt and Friedrich, choose to remain and join the New Society. For the reader, Friedrich’s decision to join is clear cut: while an outsider to the society, his Jewish identity is more than enough justification to join this largely Jewish settlement.  

He acts as an emissary and representative for the Jewish reader: the figure who comes from contemporary Vienna and has, through his tour of the New Society, become convinced of Zionism’s viability. His choice provides the logical final signal to Jewish readers that they, too, can actualize the fairy tale they have just read and step into the pages of the novel. This, of course, relates to Herzl’s rejection of the utopian model and his advocacy for a different relationship between text and reality.  

Kingscourt’s entry into the New Society proves more significant. A truly liminal figure, the Prussian aristocrat – Schwartz reads him as Herzl’s “most highly regarded character” – is both European, German outsider and non-Jew. In many ways, Kingscourt provides the positive counterpart to Schramm in Das neue Ghetto. His decision to join the New Society signals an aristocratic, non-Jewish, German embrace of the Zionist project and reveals the apotheosis of Herzl’s Zionism. Importantly, Kingscourt’s attraction is to more than just a land or societal model; it is an

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151 For a discussion of the romantic context in which this occurs, see Schwartz, Zionist Paradox, 83–91.

152 As I already noted in the introduction, despite Herzl’s attempt to differentiate his book from those like Bellamy’s Looking Backward and Hertzka’s Freiland based on his clear belief that they were politically inefficient, both books spurred on real-life political movements. See footnote 25.

153 Schwartz, Zionist Paradox, 89
embrace of the first fruits of this New Society, the new Jew and Mensch, David Littwak’s son, Fritz.\(^\text{154}\) In other words, even in leaving Europe and setting sails for distant shores, Altneuland’s clear goal is, to quote Steven Beller “the attempt to fulfill the promise of Jewish emancipation, if not in Europe, then in a state of Jews on their own.”\(^\text{155}\) Here, Kingscourt’s entry into the society validates Zionism as the proper project to finally actualize the reconciliation of the European – here German – non-Jew with the recreated Jew as Mensch. In this New Society, Jews once and for all realize the dream begun during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment: emancipation.

Yet to herald Herzl’s ending as unambiguously successful is a premature step. As I have already noted, many scholarly readings of Altneuland critique Herzl’s willful credulousness about the attitudes of Palestine’s Arab inhabitants and the colonialist fantasy depicting them as welcoming Jewish “saviors” from the European continent with open arms.\(^\text{156}\) These readings often “lean forward,” to my mind, in that they are made to explain the problems Herzl’s approach – shared with many other early Zionists – would lead to in the Yishuv and later, State of Israel. Consonant with the approach I have sought to take in the previous pages, however, I would instead like to situate Altneuland’s problematic nature in the Jewish emancipatory frame.

In his classic treatment of Jewish emancipation, Jacob Katz points out that despite the enlightenment ideal to fully incorporate Jews into European society, this was often not fully actualized. The result was less “the inclusion of Jews in the society of non-Jews” and instead “a

\(^{154}\) Schwartz convincingly reads this as an alternative “love story”; Fritz(chen) replaces the elder Friedrich (for whom he is named) and thereby actualizes the story of Androcoles told in the novel’s first part. See Schwartz, Zionist Paradox, 89–94.

\(^{155}\) Steven Beller, Herzl, location 105.

\(^{156}\) In using the word Arab, I am using the term Herzl and his contemporaries used at their time.
particular Jewish variation of enlightened society that had some contact with their non-Jewish counterpart but, on the whole, remained socially aloof."\textsuperscript{157} Speaking of Jews’ interactions with non-Jews, he continues “[s]uch communion existed but it can scarcely be said to have achieved the abstract model of a neutral society conceived by the propounders of Enlightenment. At most it can be said to have achieved the status of a semineutral society.”\textsuperscript{158} As Katz clearly demonstrates, then, even at the enlightenment’s highpoint, a truly neutral society enabling Jewish integration remained, at best, an ideal unevenly actualized. To frame it differently, European, specifically German (or earlier, Prussian) society never fully succeeded in creating a neutral, public sphere free from Christian particularity that allowed full participation of Jews as Jews. Indeed it was precisely the frustrations of this semineutral society that informed the Zionist project and find expression in \textit{Das neue Ghetto}.

Yet importantly, a careful reading of \textit{Altneuland}’s spatial politics indexes that inasmuch as Herzl seeks to construct the New Society according to enlightenment principles, the society he depicts also seems destined to become semineutral. Yet here, the semineutrality does not exclude Jewish members, but instead Muslim ones. In other words, here figures like Reschid Bey, who Herzl assumes will separate their public and private, religious lives, appear doomed to live in a not fully secular public sphere. An indication of this semineutrality is pointed to in an early review of

\textsuperscript{157} See Katz, \textit{Out of the Ghetto}, 54. David Sorkin makes a similar point when he refers to “incomplete emancipation and partial integration” as having “together comprised the conditions for the ideology becoming the basis of a new kind of identity,” what he later refers to as German Jewish subculture. See Sorkin, \textit{Transformation}, 5. I prefer Katz’s term to “incomplete emancipation,” if only because it is clearer that society itself does not provide the necessary prerequisites for full emancipation.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. In what, to my mind, is a clear impact of the Shoah on historical practice, Katz’s original dissertation, composed in German and published in 1935, referred to “die neutralisierte Gesellschaftsform”. In a footnote in his published book, he simply writes: “Now it seems to me that semineutral is a more appropriate term.” See Katz, \textit{Out of the Ghetto}, 231n27.
Almenland by prominent cultural Zionist Ahad Ha’am (‘one of the people’ in Hebrew). The review, first published in Hebrew and later translated in German for publication in the periodical Ost und West, lambasts the New Society’s European character and clear erasure of Jewish distinctiveness.\footnote{159 For a discussion of Ahad Ha’am’s reaction to Almenland, see Eran Kaplan, “Herzl, Ahad Ha’am, and the Almenland Debate. Between Utopia and Radicalism,” in The Individual in History: Essays in Honor of Jehuda Reinharz, edited by ChaeRan Y. Freeze, Sylvia Fuks Fried, Eugene R. Sheppard (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015), 42–54.} This serves, importantly, as a natural extension of the cultural Zionist critique of the larger emancipatory project – the very project which I have just argued was Herzl’s own goal. Yet equally important, Ahad Ha’am also questions the plausibility of Arab buy-in to a Zionist project. In the process, he points out an interesting conundrum that Herzl’s otherwise carefully constructed book with its emphasis on plausibility glosses over. He writes:


This sarcastic questioning, which one might take as a simple swipe at a minor oversight, bears unpacking. Indeed an examination of the original Almenland manuscript supports this second look: Herzl himself first followed his description of the “Omar Mosque” (actually the Dome of the Rock or Qubbat aṣ-Ṣakhra) with a description of the temple, before crossing it out. He finally places the words “Das ist der Tempel!” at a later point in the manuscript (see ANL 281–2). This, interestingly enough, is precisely where Herzl indicates by way of a marginal note the place he ceased working on the manuscript due to writer’s block, only to return and finish it a year later. It is not conclusive, but
Herzl’s apparently deliberate decision to not place the discussion of the Temple in proximity to the discussion of the Temple Mount, together with his yearlong experience of writer’s block suggests a larger challenge. ¹⁶¹

To put it in plain terms: Herzl’s description of Jerusalem stages either a deception or impossibility. Either Herzl allows readers to assume that the third Temple has returned to the Temple Mount, even though it is actually located somewhere else in the Old City (deception) or else he is depicting the co-existence of both buildings in the same place (impossibility). This spatial relation is especially notable given the extreme emphasis the novel otherwise places on the plausibility of each and every development in Palestine in 1923.

This spatial impossibility indexes the larger, unacknowledged paradox at the foundation of Herzl’s project. On the one hand, *Altneuland* depicts a model, secular society open to adherents to all religious traditions. This, after all, is the promise of the spatial division advanced by the enlightenment: not that religion is erased, but that it is walled off to make room for other religions and civil society. Yet at the same time, the inability for two buildings to coexist on the same ground reveals that in order to fully actualize Herzl’s dreamed of Jewish settlement there will either be a disappointment of certain religious dreams – building the temple somewhere else – or displacement of Arab Muslim (religious) life – knocking down a sacred Muslim structure to make place for a (Viennese-styled) temple. This, in turn, leads us back to the challenge David Littwak articulates at the Seder table: both simultaneously to make *Menschen* out of Jews, while also remaining faithful to “dem alten Stamm.” Indeed, in fulfilling this second aspect of his charge, Herzl brings Jewish

¹⁶¹ See CZA\H1\451-2, page 325 (manuscript pages 26–7). Herzl first inserts his description of the temple right after describing the “Omar Moschee” (i.e. Dome of the Rock), but then crosses it out. He eventually places it on the next page. Right after the words “Das ist der Tempel,” Herzl draws a line and writes in the margin, “Ein volles Jahr Pause! Erst am 3 April 1902 hier wieder aufgenommen”. For the final product, see ANL 326.
(religious) particularity into the public sphere that negates an implicit promise to Reschid Bey that if he will only check his particularity at his house door, he will gain (full) entrance into the “New Society.” In other words, the novel replicates not only the virtues, but also the faults of the partially-implemented enlightenment model Jews were then experiencing in European society.

As I have already argued, the spatial configurations depicted in Herzl and the work of other authors were meant to be more than metaphors. The status of actual places was connected to the ideas depicted in the works of literature. Ahad Ha’am’s critique, partially articulated through the lens of his discussion of the placement of the temple shows how Herzl was not the only one to use a spatial idiom to talk about a contested Jewish future. Nor was this critique the final example of a place where Jews would wrestle with the shape of a future Jewish place in Palestine.162 Herzl’s “New Society”, envisioned in the pages of his novel, would soon attract more engagement than just critical book reviews. Indeed, two examples of this engagement and critique, I argue, can be found in the works of Franz Kafka and Arnold Zweig. In the final two chapters, I turn to these works to consider Altneuland’s afterlives in German Jewish literature.

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CHAPTER 3: *DER VERSCHOLLENEN: THE FAULTY PROMISE OF RELOCATION, OR LOCATING UTOPIA IN KAFKA'S AMERICAN STORY*

In 1911, Franz Kafka drafted a review of his friend Max Brod’s recently published *Die Jüdinnen* in his diaries. In the review – which he reworked twice – Kafka critiques the novel on perhaps surprising grounds: its problematic (non-)presentation of Zionism.\(^{163}\) He wrote:

> Wir sind jetzt fast gewöhnt, in westeuropäischen Erzählungen, sobald sie nur einige Gruppen von Juden umfassen wollen, unter oder über der Darstellung gleich auch die Lösung der Judenfrage zu suchen und zu finden. In den ‘Jüdinnen’ nun wird eine solche Lösung nicht gezeigt, ja nicht einmal vermutet…Kurz entschlossen erkennen wir darin einen Mangel der Erzählung und fühlen uns zu einer solchen Ausstellung umso mehr berechtigt, als heute seit dem Dasein des Zionismus die Lösungsmöglichkeiten so klar um das jüdische Problem herum angeordnet sind, daß der Schriftsteller schließlich nur einige Schritte hätte machen müssen, um die seiner Erzählung gemäße Lösungsmöglichkeit zu finden. (KT 159–60)\(^{164}\)

The review continues, specifying three main faults. Scholars analyzing this text often concentrate on interpreting Kafka’s tone in order to explicate his elusive stance vis-a-vis Zionism. Iris Bruce, for instance, reads them as parody and critique of contemporary Zionist discourse.\(^{165}\)

> Less remarked on, however, is Kafka’s approach in these passages to Zionism as a movement with not only sociopolitical, but also significant literary implications. Indeed, irrespective of their potential for understanding Kafka’s “true feelings” about Jewish nationalism, the reviews

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\(^{164}\) For the other two draft reviews, see KT 36, 162.

demonstrate an engagement with Zionist literature. Consider the novel’s faults the review quoted above goes on to enumerate: Brod’s work lacks an answer to the Jewish question; fails to provide an outside, non-Jew to observe the Jew who asserts himself as an individual and thereby dissolves the Jewish masses; and foregrounds a character who leads the Jews away, rather than toward, the center of Jewishness (KT 160). These faults, notably, perfectly parallel aspects found in the archetypal Zionist novel, Theodor Herzl’s *Altneuland*. His text “solves” the Jewish question by proposing a “Neue Gesellschaft” in Palestine; offers a non-Jewish observer in the character Adalbert Kingscourt; and discredits the character Löwenberg’s attempt to move toward the margins of Jewishness by setting sail for a “no-place,” proposing instead an alternative prominent youth, David Littwak, who heads a movement centered on Jewishness. Indeed, Hartmut Binder notes that in summer 1910, when Brod intensively read *Altneuland*, Kafka and he met daily and presumably discussed the work. Given the publication of *Die Jüdinnen* a year later, this bolsters a reading of the reviews in light of Herzl’s novel.  

If this analysis is accurate, however, how might it bear on interpretations of Kafka’s contemporaneous literary production, and might we read it as an engagement with the tradition of *literary* Zionism? In what follows, I propose to answer this question with a reading of Kafka’s first novel, *Der Verschollene*. I begin with a brief methodological review of approaches to reading Jewishness, and specifically Zionism, in Kafka. In light of this discussion, I provide a detailed close reading of the novel. This reading shows how *Der Verschollene* is intimately attuned to the dynamics of the immigrant experience and carefully depicts the frustration of the immigrant’s natural recourse to national, social, and familial constellations that are grounded in another place. The novel, I contend, flips the perspective of what I term the “spatial relocation narrative,” showing how

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166 Binder, Kafka-Handbuch. Band 1, 375.
immigration and attempted assimilation to a new place is not a tale of unmitigated gain, but mainly loss. Moreover, I show how Kafka depicts even attempted assimilation and the paradoxical goal to “achieve indigeneity” is always already destined to fail. Following this close reading, I move to situate Der Verschollene in light of Kafka’s passionate consumption of travel literature and depictions of far-off places, including Zionist representations of Palestine. This, I argue, helps us to appreciate the significance of Kafka’s consumption of Zionist literature while also demonstrating how that literature was itself reliant on a larger literary trope of its time. I conclude with the argument that in light of this literary-historical backdrop and its connection to the Kafka short story, Wunsch, Indianer zu werden, the final fragment of Kafka’s novel is best understood as a celebration of literary narratives that achieve that which political realities never can: a utopian moment suspended in air between a dream and its fulfillment.

A Methodological Problem: Reading Zionism in Kafka

In his work, Albert Memmi depicts a problem confronting the Kafka scholar. He writes:

“There is a paradox in Kafka. In the whole of the work published during his lifetime, Kafka never wrote the word ‘Jewish.’ However, his diary, published posthumously, reveals that he was literally haunted by his Jewishness; and that the whole of his work is an attempt to interpret, to put in order, to exercise his condition as a Jew.” 167 While one might argue that the line between Kafka’s diaries and his literary texts is more murky than Memmi suggests, 168 his point nonetheless indexes a challenge for Kafka scholarship. It is the methodological question of how (or if!) to account for


168 For example, Kafka’s diaries contain many literary drafts. Just a selection can be found in the following locations: KT 151–8, 168–91, 347–8, and 464–88. For a “story” in the diaries that blurs the line between fiction and autobiography, KT 382–293.
Kafka’s Jewish, often specifically Zionist, milieu and concerns in literary texts that often appear to have nothing to do with these topics.

In her work, Vivian Liska notes how scholars often approach this quandary with either an appeal to historical and biographical evidence or else allegorical, symbolic or parabolic readings. The former approach, exemplified by the excellent work of scholars like Scott Spector and Iris Bruce, emphasizes facts and contextualization. The latter relies on decoding the hidden Jewish and Zionist referents scholars claim underly Kafka’s texts. Liska argues these approaches frequently fall short, for “[i]n reading [Kafka’s] fiction, one has no verifiable way of identifying what the different groups and communities [therein]…might refer to, and any attempt to assign them specific correspondences in the real world reveals only the choices and concerns of the reader.” In addition to Liska’s observations, these interpretive decisions also fail to answer what is, to my mind, a central question: given his milieu, which was full of literature explicitly engaged with Jewish topics and characters, and given Kafka’s ability to clearly articulate the expectations of at least one section of the Jewish reading public – as evidenced in the aforementioned reviews – how are we to understand the absence of these features as anything but a deliberate choice to not engage with them, at least in the expected manner, in his own writing? Indeed, these questions are precisely what


171 Liska, *Kafka Says We*, 17.
open many scholars of a “Jewish” Kafka to the critique that they are imposing irrelevant historical details from without and thus violate the sanctity of his aesthetic works.

Liska’s work, by contrast, models an alternative approach with a “focus on the internal and external dynamics at work in Kafka’s communal configurations as such.” This is not a call for a simple divorcing of text from context, for it does not ignore Kafka’s milieu. Instead, this approach allows the scholar to first approach the text as a cohesive unit with an internal logic and thereafter attend to the text’s relationship to external realities. The text, then, is not read as really about something else, but instead as a cohesive unit with its own autonomous dynamics that nonetheless reflect specific social, political and historical concerns.

In what follows, I provide just such a reading of Kafka’s Der Verschollene, a work begun a year after he penned the aforementioned reviews. My reading neither suggests Kafka sought to emulate the expectations articulated in his reviews, nor interprets the novel’s main character, Karl Rossmann, and/or his milieu as Jewish. It nonetheless seeks to take Kafka’s Jewish, specifically Zionist influences, however subterranean, seriously by attending to the thematic resonances, generic similarities and striking parallels it shares with Zionist literature.

In reading Der Verschollene in a Zionist context, I am preceded by scholars Joseph Metz, Clemens Peck, and Philipp Theisohn. Metz reads the Cultural Zionist influence on Kafka’s novel through a careful decoding of the work’s symbolic use of “east” and “west” in reverse, arguing that

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172 Ibid.

by heading west to Oklahoma, Karl (ambivalently) chooses a more “primitive,” eastern European Jewish authenticity and rejects western Jewish assimilation represented by the “eastern” New York. We might gloss this as the “allegorical approach” Liska identifies.\(^{174}\) Peck, by contrast, reads the novel as the site of multiple Herzlian intertexts, a rejection of political Zionism and embrace of cultural Zionism, thereby modeling a more “historical/biographical” approach.\(^{175}\) Combining the two approaches, Theisohn reads *Der Verschollene’s* first part as an allegory of Jewish exile, with the final fragment as a reflection of Zionism as stagecraft, which he argues Kafka depicts as destined to always be theatrical.\(^{176}\) While all three of these readings have their virtues, I follow an alternate route: one that begins with a reading of the novel as an aesthetic work independent of any external Zionist referents. Only in the chapter’s final sections do I then attend to questions of Zionist influence in an attempt to marry together text and context.

**The Man Who Disappeared: The Problems of the “Solution” of Spatial Relocation**

Readings of *Der Verschollene*, a work sometimes glossed as a(n anti-)*Bildungsroman*, often focus on the main character Karl Rossmann’s downward trajectory throughout much of the novel.\(^{177}\) These readings ask who is to blame for Karl’s inability to “make it” upon his arrival in America.

174 Metz, “Zion in the West”


177 For scholarship on *Der Verschollene* as *Bildungsroman*, see Marion Sonnenfeld, “Die Fragmente ‘Amerika’ und ‘Der Prozeß’ als Bildungsromane,”* German Quarterly* 35 (1962): 34–46; Jürgen Pütz, *Kafka*’s Verschollener – ein *Bildungroman*? (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1983); and Greiner, “Im Umkreis von Ramses”. For a critique of this approach, see Robertson, *Kafka*, 66–7.
Ritchie Robertson, for example, interprets the work as an expression of the cruel realities of technology and its effects on modern, especially American, urban life.\textsuperscript{178} I instead argue that Karl’s failures in America are best explained by his reliance on old national, familial and social constellations that lead to his frequent missteps in a new place. These challenges, I contend, are evidenced by Karl’s frequent spatial disorientation on the American continent, a phenomenon that acts as a clear index of his difficulties navigating the place’s *Verhältnisse*, a word often translated as relations.\textsuperscript{179}

The connection between place and Karl’s own disappearing identity as once determined by these aforementioned constellations is encoded in Kafka’s intended title for the work itself: *Der Verschollene*.\textsuperscript{180} The title’s standard English translation, *The Man Who Disappeared*, effaces a key dynamic in the German. While linguistic scholars trace the etymology of the word *verschollen* to *verschallen* – meaning “ceasing to echo” – the word most immediately *appears* to contain the word *Scholle*, a clod of earth, which calls to mind the common phrase “heimatliche Scholle,” or native soil.\textsuperscript{181} The “ver-” prefix, in turn, negates. In other words, though the typical translation for

\textsuperscript{178} Robertson, *Kafka*, 38–86.

\textsuperscript{179} In reading Kafka’s work in connection to nation and place, I am most notably preceded by Deleuze and Guattari and their deterritorialization thesis. My argument is not an attempt to reterritorialize Kafka, but instead to show how *Der Verschollene* as a literary work depicts the inefficacy of appeals to national identity outside the nation. See Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: toward a minor literature*, translated by Dana B. Polan (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

\textsuperscript{180} Max Brod initially released the novel posthumously as *Amerika*. For sources documenting Kafka’s intended title, see Jost Schillemeit, “Entstehung” in *Der Verschollene. Apparatsband*. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1983), 87.

“verschollen” is to disappear, a folk etymology of the word could be read as indicating the lack of a place to stand. Indeed, though problematic from a historical linguistic perspective, I argue that Kafka’s novel and its focus on the loss of identity made visible through Karl’s spatial dislocation makes a strong argument for this alternate reading. To be clear, the disappearance of an old, “European” version of Karl in his quest to “achieve indigeneity” is connected to his quest for a new clod upon which he might perch. Yet this is no traditional immigrant tale: instead, the work subverts celebratory narratives of unambivalent gain by changing the perspective and reflecting on the true loss required when discarding diasporic baggage, even as it reveals the notion of “achieved indigeneity” to be a farce.\footnote{182 Of course, Kafka is not the only one to have problematized this narrative. For a longer discussion the trope of “a visit to America which begins with high hopes and ends in disillusion,” see Robertson, \textit{Kafka}, 63f.}

\textit{Der Verschollene’s} narrative premise was quite familiar to readers of the time: spatial displacement, especially to America, as a solution to problems at home.\footnote{183 See Robertson, \textit{Kafka}, 62f.} Karl’s parents ship him to America after he is seduced by a servant girl and fathers her child. In expelling Karl from home, they seek to avoid the scandal of an illegitimate grandchild and the monetary claims the child’s mother make. Karl, notably, is more acted \textit{upon} than an autonomous agent, sent to the “New” World in what might be read as an unjust punishment.

Yet if spatial dislocation to America is meant to solve a European problem, Karl’s aborted arrival casts doubt on the simplicity of this solution. As he disembarks from the ship in New York, Karl realizes he has forgotten his umbrella and returns aboard, hoping to recover it, only to

\textbf{182} Of course, Kafka is not the only one to have problematized this narrative. For a longer discussion the trope of “a visit to America which begins with high hopes and ends in disillusion,” see Robertson, \textit{Kafka}, 63f.

experience profound disorientation. He weaves through “eine Unzahl kleiner Räume, fortwährend abbiegende Korridore, kurze Treppen, die einander aber immer wieder folgten…bis er sich tatsächlich…ganz und gar verirrt hatte” (V 8). He finally arrives in a room where he encounters the ship’s stoker.

Karl’s physical disorientation upon reboarding the ship indexes a social one. Seeking to gain his bearings, he asks the stoker if he is German, having heard from passengers how the Irish “den Neuankömmlingen in Amerika drohen,”; he is (V 9). Comforted to find himself once again in a seemingly reliable national constellation, Karl is lured into a feeling of security and nearly forgets that “er auf dem unsicheren Boden eines Schiffes an der Küste eines unbekannten Erdteils war,” for “so heimisch war ihm hier…” (V 14). The stoker’s national identity thus awakens in Karl a temporary reorientation and feeling of homey-ness (*heimisch*).

The stoker, however, warns Karl of the unstable ground underneath them. Upon learning that Karl has left his suitcase with his *Landmann*, Franz Butterbaum, for safe keeping, he insists, “Auf dem Schiff wechseln mit den Hafenplätzen auch die Sitten, in Hamburg hätte Ihr Butterbaum den Koffer vielleicht bewacht, hier ist höchstwahrscheinlich schon von beiden keine Spur mehr” (V 10). The suitcase and its contents, including a passport and familial images, disappear repeatedly in the following chapters, and represent Karl’s ever attenuating connections to nation, family, and self. As the stoker explains it, the suitcase and all it represents is endangered precisely because of the new

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185 Traversing unnavigable places and is a frequent Kafka trope. Kata Gellen refers to this as “architectural narration,” noting how Kafka’s characters are rarely if ever “able to complete or comprehend an architectural construct.” See *Kafka and Noise: The Discovery of Cinematic Sound in Literary Modernism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 74.
ground on which Karl stands. Karl may feel at home, but the ship’s ground is an illusion. Karl’s father, who gifts his son the suitcase before his departure, also seems to anticipate this problem, asking his son, “Wie lange wirst du ihn haben?” thus revealing an anxiety about Karl’s diasporic condition (V 14).

The stoker, in contrast to Karl, clearly understands this unstable ground: having worked on the Hamburg America line, an ostensibly “German” ship, he complains of his non-German superior, Schubal, who “schindet uns Deutsche auf einem deutschen Schiff” and “bevozugt die Ausländer” (V 13, 25). After his dismissal, indeed, the stoker mourns that the captain will only hire “lauter Rumänen” and “es würde überall rumänisch gesprochen werden” (V 47). Thus, while nominally a German ship, the stoker’s frustration indexes his loss of national stature on the ship’s unstable, liminal ground. This dynamic explains Karl’s own struggles and frustrations in the first chapter and beyond: they are based on an inability to understand and adapt to reordered (national) relations. Yet as the stoker warns Karl: “das sind so die Verhältnisse, es entscheidet nicht immer, ob es einem gefällt oder nicht” (V 12).

Unlike Karl, Uncle Jakob, who subsequently discovers his nephew aboard the ship, provides a clear counterexample to this. His is an unambiguous embrace of reordered Verhältnisse built on American ground: instead of clinging to the old, he proudly claims to have discarded his familial name, fashioned a new identity, and even admits to knowing neither European law, nor the “sonstigen Verhältnisse der Eltern [von Karl]” (V 40, emphasis added). Uncle Jakob now dismisses any German claim on him, as represented by his disregard for the German stoker, and instead proudly proclaims himself an American “mit ganzer Seele” (V38). When Karl, by contrast, attempts to advocate for the stoker based on a now misplaced sense of German national loyalty, the captain reprimands him and exhorts him: “lerne Deine Stellung begreifen” (V 50).
This reordering of national relations and the resultant loss renders Karl’s “heftiges Weinen” at chapter’s end explicable. His mourning, brought on by the sense “als gebe es keinen Heizer mehr” (V 53), is caused by more than just the loss of an individual. It is a recognition – if only partial – of his severing from a national community whose legitimacy the story’s other characters no longer recognize.

*Der Verschollene’s* first chapter notably follows a series of generic expectations: the departure from the “Old Country,” followed by arrival and embrace by a rich uncle who gathers his kin to himself. These tropes awaken readerly expectations, promising that in spite of a wrenching from national, social, and familial contexts, a familial representative be at the end of the journey to provide continuity. Yet here, such expectations are disrupted: rather than celebrating his good fortune, as other characters tell him he ought to, Karl mourns. Indeed, he can only doubt if his uncle “ihm jemals den Heizer werde ersetzen können.” (V 53). This is but a foretaste of the wrenching Karl’s spatial dislocation portends. For even as *Der Verschollene* grants Karl the best welcome he might expect, the narrative challenges this perspective, foregrounding his great loss, rather than gain, upon arrival in New York.

In the subsequent chapter, however, Karl learns that even his “gain” of a rich relative rests on unstable ground. At his uncle’s, he “gewöhnte sich…an die neuen Verhältnisse.” (V 54) Most immediately, the sentence might be translate as Karl “adapted to the new conditions.” But *Verhältnisse*, as already mentioned, can also refer to relations, thus implying Karl’s successful adaption to new relational constellations. This ambiguity hints at an ironic reality: for Karl quickly demonstrates a failure to adapt to a new ordering of relations. Indeed, his second expulsion, this

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186 For a related discussion of this point, see Ritchie Robertson’s discussion of the “cultural myth” and “rags to riches” narrative novels in *Kafka*, 62–69.
time from Jakob’s household, is precisely due to his inability to recognize where he stands vis-a-vis his uncle, and family more generally, while on American ground.

Uncle Jakob’s insistence on reeducating Karl in these new American Verhältnisse is figured spatially near the beginning of the second chapter when he expresses displeasure at his nephew’s decision to stand all day, gawking from his balcony, lost in the tiny figures below. Mark M. Anderson observes that the balcony perspective, situated at the same height as the tallest building in Karl’s hometown might have provided him with “a panorama of a totality to be observed, studied, measured, [and] represented” back in Europe, but “here offers a fragmented image without relation to a surrounding whole.”187 Thus, Jakob’s attempt to move his nephew from the window is part and parcel of an attempt to dislodge his nephew from old vantage points and perspectives.

Karl, however, ultimately rejects this approach when he chooses to accompany his uncle’s friend, Herr Pollunder, for a trip to the latter’s country home. Notably, when they first meet, Pollunder asks Karl “vielerlei über seinen Namen [und] seine Herkunft” (V 69). Unlike Uncle Jakob, who expresses a disinterest in Karl’s European past, Pollunder validates it. Jakob is invested, ironically perhaps, in separating his nephew from familial ties in an attempt to make Karl an American success story.188 Yet in following Pollunder to his country house, Karl implicitly embraces a backwards-looking approach and echoes his return to the ship and European perspectives and social relations. Yet when Karl arrives at the country house, spatial disorientation returns, and while lost, he longs for the flashlight his uncle gifted him to provide lighting in the estate’s unlit corridors,

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187 Anderson, Kafka’s Clothes, 119.

188 Consider also Uncle Jakob’s displeasure when Karl plays old Soldatenlieder from home on the piano, in response to which he brings Karl sheet music of “amerikanischer Märsche” and the national anthem, here V 61.
thereby suggesting his uncle’s superior ability to equip Karl with the tools to navigate this new place (V 89).

Karl's expulsion from his uncle’s household, as he himself slowly realizes, is best explained as a consequence of his unwillingness to properly reorient himself and embrace a new understanding of the reliability of family. Illustrating this is Karl’s slow realization that “das Verhältnis zwischen meinem Onkel und mir” is not built on their kinship as blood relatives (Blutsverwandter). Instead, he slowly recognizes “daß ich es mir bei solchen Verhältnissen nicht erlauben darf auch nur das geringste gegen seinen [Jakobs] auch nur geahnten Willen tun.” (V 106–7) The letter Karl receives from his uncle casting him out of the household confirms this. “Von Deiner Familie, Karl, kommt nicht Gutes,” his uncle writes. “Sollte Herr Green vergessen, Dir Deinen Koffer…auszuhändigen, so erinnere ihn daran.” (V 123). In other words, familial ties are unreliable, even dangerous, on this new ground, and success, at least per his uncle, is precisely predicated on Karl's ability to separate himself from family. The reappearance of the suitcase, moreover – something that had disappeared while he lived with his uncle – suggests Karl faces two competing, mutually exclusive options: a new identity produced under the tutelage of his uncle and appropriate to his American circumstances, or else non-arrival and continuous journeying while clinging to diasporic identity.

Following this second expulsion, Karl picks up with two traveling companions, the Frenchman Delamarche and Irishman Robinson, in search of work. His decision notably ignores the advice mentioned earlier in the narrative to avoid Irish immigrants. While preparing to overnight across from the “Hotel Occidental” following a day’s march, Karl retrieves and gazes at a family photo from his suitcase that fails to include him in the frame (V 134). Longing to recreate an alternate image back in Europe that places him together with his parents in one physical place, he seeks “von verschieden Seiten den Blick des Vaters [im Foto] aufzufangen,” only to be disappointed that his father “wollte…nicht lebendiger werden” (V 135). By chapter’s end, the photo itself
disappears, for which Karl blames his French and Irish traveling companions, demonstrating again how spatial displacement and new social constellations threaten Karl’s ability to even pretend to share space with his closest relations.¹⁸⁹

That same night, Karl lands in the Hotel Occidental. His initial success, however, comes from his reliance on his old, German identity. Unable to navigate the “hiesigen Verhältnisse” at the hotel bar, a German head cook, who recognizes in Karl a fellow “Landsmann” (V 155, 172–3) offers him help and, later, lodging for the night. When Karl expresses concern for his luggage, she invites him to bring it in, stating “das ist kein Hindernis” (V 159). Unlike his non-German fellow travelers, who are meanwhile breaking the lock to Karl’s suitcase, stealing his photos, and scattering the remaining contents on the ground (cf. V161ff.), the head cook, a fellow German, appreciates and expresses a willingness to guard Karl’s diasporic identity as embodied in the suitcase.

In the Occidental, Karl identifies himself by name and nationality (V 171), implicitly recognizing the source of his access to the hotel. The head cook secures him a position as an elevator boy, thereby relegating the Italian Giacomo, whom she discovers asleep on the job, to a lower position. Giacomo is “deshalb verärgert, weil er den Liftdienst offender Karls halber verlassen mußte” (V 186).¹⁹⁰ Karl, the head cook, and her secretary, Therese, meanwhile spend time together discussing Europe (V 204). The head cook, however, must continually exclaim how Karl’s recollections reveal that many things “in verhältnismäßig kurzer Zeit von Grund aus geändert hatte” (V 204, emphasis added). In other words, even though Karl, from Prague; Therese, from Pomerania;

¹⁸⁹ For an alternate reading based on bourgeois familial power structures represented in the photograph, see Carolin Duttlinger, Kafka and Photography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 81–9.

¹⁹⁰ In response to this proposed placement, the Oberköchin notes: “es [ist] nicht besonders leicht…solche Stellen zu bekommen”. Karl immediately recognizes that given his limited educational background, “[e]s wäre ein großer Unsinn gewesen, gegen die Stelle eines Liftdiener…Bedenken zu haben.” See V 173.
and the head cook reconstruct a makeshift national community, it is a nation built on ever vanishing ground.

Indeed, though subtle, the same mechanism – German belonging – that allows Karl to quickly gain his position at the Hotel Occidental eventually leads to his undoing. The trouble begins soon after Karl hears from his fellow elevator boy, Renell, that the latter has met Karl’s previous traveling companion, Delmarche, to whom he says Karl has good prospects for a new position “infolge der Protektion der Oberköchin” (V 205). Karl’s reliance on German identity is apparently well known among his hotel colleagues. Soon thereafter, however, Karl is removed from his post after his other former traveling companion, Robinson, comes to the hotel, begs Karl for money, and progressively drinks himself into a stupor, thus causing Karl to leave his post temporarily. The head waiter, incensed at this “dereliction of duty,” charges Karl in a makeshift, farcical trial conducted with a series of elevator boys as makeshift witnesses who conveniently arrive to bolster the accusations against their colleague. Though Karl proves unwitting and dismisses them, Robinson’s words during a drunken outburst – “Ach ja…Renell ist mit Delmarche beisammen. Die beiden haben mich ja um Sie geschickt” – reveal the conspiracy behind the events (V 216). Here, the text subtly reveals the elevator boys’ plot to dispose of the head cook’s “Schützling” (V 238), just as Karl’s presence and German connections led to the removal of one of their own – Giacomo. (Giacomo, fittingly, delivers the final accusation that leads to Karl’s dismissal. [V 246–52]) Thus Karl’s situation proves unstable precisely because of his reliance on national identity while perched on unstable, American ground, where Irish, French and Italians are unwilling to honor the national constellation on which Karl is reliant.

If his stay with his uncle witnesses the final blow to reliable familial relations, and his experience in the Hotel Occidental provides a final disruption to former national relations, Karl’s subsequent stay at the singer Brunelda’s witnesses the dissolving of identity itself. Having escaped
the Occidental with Robinson, the pair arrives by taxi to Brunelda’s apartment. On the street outside, a police officer stops Karl and asks for his name and identification papers, which Karl cannot furnish, having left the hotel without documentation (V 276–7). The scene, appropriately furnished with luggage handlers standing around on break (V 279f.) to witness Karl’s humiliation, thus depicts Karl left without passport or suitcase, and thus severed from the last shreds of his identity. Indeed, though Delamarche and Robinson continue to refer to him as Rossmann, Brunelda confirms this loss by never using his name, calling him instead “der Kleine” (V 322, 327, 333, 357, 359, 370). When he meets the student on the balcony near chapter’s end, moreover, Karl provides no name, even though the former directly asks “Wer sind Sie denn?” and “Wie heißen Sie” (V 344). In short, arrival at Brunelda’s apartment corresponds with a blow to Karl’s very self: a dissolution of name and personal identifiers.

**Embarking for Oklahoma: Disappearing into Space**

Though Kafka never completed *Der Verschollene*, the novel traditionally ends with the fragment about Karl joining an Oklahoma [sic] theater troupe, written several years after the majority of the novel.¹⁹¹ Yet while previous chapters mark a downward trajectory, the final chapter strikes a hopeful, almost utopian tone.¹⁹² It appears to depict Karl’s overcoming of the challenges depicted in previous chapters and culminates in an ambivalent embrace of a new identity: Karl thus truly

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¹⁹¹ I maintain Kafka’s misspelling throughout my text as a recognition of this Oklahoma as part literary creation, not solely political reality. For an important argument on Brod’s use of the term *Naturtheater*, see Theisohn, “Natur und Theater”, especially 631–3.

“disappears” upon joining the Oklahoma theatre troupe.\(^{193}\) But while the promise of gaining belonging and achieving the paradoxical dream of performing indigeneity appear successful, the narrative hints that this “indigeneity” is actually an unsuccessful act and an unceremonious end awaits Karl in Oklahoma. In other words, as I argue, the chapter subtly deconstructs the promise of finding a new home and place to plant one’s feet.

At chapter’s beginning, Karl encounters the Oklahoma theatre troupe’s recruiting placard with its promise of a welcome for all. In this, he reads the promise that “[a]lles was er bisher getan hatte, war vergessen, niemand wollte ihm daraus einen Vorwurf machen.” (V388). These motivations and actions thus dovetail with the initial catalyst for the novel: like his parents who ship him off to avoid societal sanction and shame, Karl has now internalized a similar need – why remains unclear – and is thus drawn by the opportunity to relocate (V 388). Indeed, what follows – Karl’s departure for a far-off place, the angelic avatars, and the theater’s intake process – appear, respectively, to refer to the American dream, Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island. Yet in ending with another departure, Der Verschollene appears to adopt a circular narrative structure, implicitly suggesting that arrivals inevitably conclude with new departures: a wearying repetition, rather than utopian conclusion, to Karl’s journey.\(^{194}\)

At the recruiting station in Clayton, Karl finds a podium filled with hundreds of women dressed as angels with attached wings blowing golden trumpets. One of them, an “old friend”

\(^{193}\) For a similar reading, see Greiner, Im Umkreis von Ramses, 656.

\(^{194}\) Kafka’s comment in a November 11, 1912 letter to Felice Bauer that the story “ins Endlose angelegt ist” would seem to support this reading. This resembles Kafka’s Der Bau (1923), a tale that begins with the declaration that everything is complete. Thereafter, it becomes, per Kata Gellen, “a negative edifice, an intricate underground cavern that is deconstructed over the course of an unfinishable narrative.” See Kafka and Noise, 74.
readers encounter for the first time, Fanny, calls Karl by name (V 392–3). Once he joins her on stage, Fanny asserts that despite initial appearances – the crowd is quite small – this is “das größte Teater der Welt”. Though she has never been in Oklahoma, she assures him that her colleagues “sagen, es sei fast grenzenlos” (V 394). She then celebrates the possibility “daß wir wieder beisammen sein werden,” yet allows that depending on Karl’s placement, there is the possibility that they might not see each other again, a scenario that later proves the case (V 394).

Despite his initial connection with an old friend, the subsequent intake process demonstrates Karl’s willingness to discard his diasporic identity, albeit temporarily. Without Legitimationspapiere, he provides the clerk with the name “Negro,” his “Rufnamen aus seinen letzten Stellungen,” rationalizing that he must first fulfill “die kleinste Stelle…zur Zufriedenheit” before identifying himself by his real name (V 402). I will return to the choice of name momentarily, but for now, consider how the very use of an alternate name suggests Karl’s recognition that his previous reliance on old national and familial constellations have inhibited his advancement in America. Indeed, his categorization as the more general “European,” rather than “German”, “Mittelschüler” (V 402) further hints at an explicit decision to discard his national identity.

Karl nevertheless retains a modicum of ambivalence about his former identity. After the intake process, for instance, he enters a large, empty horse racetrack, where he discovers his Rufname emblazoned on the board. Readers learn, “Da alles hier seinen ordentlichen Gang nahm, hätte es Karl nicht mehr so sehr bedauert, wenn auf der Tafel sein wirklicher Name zu lesen gewesen wäre” (V 409). Despite these thoughts, however, readers might reasonably conclude that in successfully completing the “ordentlicher Gang” and “temporarily” setting aside diasporic labels, the old Karl has irrevocably “disappeared”. Bolstering this claim is Karl’s later observation, when boarding the train for Oklahoma, that no one, with the exception of a couple with a stroller, carries luggage, evocatively suggesting new beginnings that wipe out old, traditional baggage (V 416).
While “disappearing” and losing the old, however, Karl appears to have gained entrance into a new community. Before departing and after searching in vain for Fanny, he encounters Giacomo, the Italian elevator boy from the Hotel Occidental. Despite their shared contentious history, the two are now reconciled, and the text notes how both “natürlich immer zu einander halten [wollten]” (V 413). After sharing a meal with other new recruits, the fragment ends with the two seated snug next to each other on the train departing for Oklahoma, forming a new communal arrangement: a friendship no longer hindered by differing national identifiers, but forged on new, American ground.

One might thus conclude that despite losing his former identity, Karl has consolation, safely ensconced next to Giacomo, thereby evidencing a new belonging. Yet textual clues provide reason to suspect the neatness of this American “happy ending,” something Kafka himself suggests in a later diary entry, when he writes that Karl will be “strafweise umgebracht…mit leichterer Hand, mehr zur Seite geschoben als niedergeschlagen.” (KT 757) This possibility is perhaps most clearly foreshadowed in Karl’s choice of name: a moniker that reveals an incomprehension of the racial politics (or Verhältnisse) that undergird American society. Karl’s faulty “performance” of a new identity is thus laid bare – of course the clerk processing his application appears distinctly suspicious (V 402–3) – as Karl inadvertently allies himself with a group of people more marginalized than he.

Thus, though Karl grasps the need to discard old attachments, he demonstrates a misunderstanding of his new milieu. Indeed, as several scholars have pointed out: both the (misspelled) name of the theatre and Karl’s choice of name suggest a foreboding photo from Arthur Holitscher’s richly illustrated American travelogue, a volume Kafka read in serialized form.\(^{195}\) The photo is of a

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lynching and carries the ironic heading, “Idyll in Oklahoma [sic]”. [FIGURE 2] Given textual clues and this compelling intertext, readers can reasonably conclude that Karl’s ending in the American West may be the exact opposite of Der Verschollene’s “idyllic” final scene.\(^{196}\)

Bolstering this argument is how Kafka incorporates a further subtle citation of Holitcher’s volume in the novel’s final fragment. For when Karl and the other recruits feast before their departure for Oklahoma, the servers invite them to look at “Bilder von Ansichten des Theaters”. The activity suggests a behavior similar to that of readers like Kafka who consumed the Holitscher volume’s many photographic illustrations. In Kafka’s text however, Karl only glances at the first image of the gold presidential box (V 412f.), but despite his ardent desire to do so, is never passed the remaining images, one of which might be expected to depict the aforementioned “Idyll in Oklahoma”.\(^{197}\)

Karl’s hunger for depictions – be they visual or textual – of far-off places does not appear isolated to this passage; readers learn earlier, for instance, of his use of books about America before departing for New York (V 55, 133). Based on Karl’s poor preparation, however, as well as the reader’s foreboding that a violent ending may await him following his arrival in Oklahoma, it is important to identify a conclusion with which readers may leave: a recognition of the messy manner in which the promises of far-off, supposedly utopian locales, which are in turn bolstered by textual and visual mediation, can be selective, eliding the ugly realities beneath the surface of a promised paradise. To fully consider this possibility and bring it into conversation with the question of literary


\(^{197}\) See Duttlinger, Kafka and Photography, 93–9.
Zionism with which we began, let us turn to the presence and role of travel literature in Kafka’s first novel. This, I suggest, may help us to appreciate the full import of the underlying ambivalence of Der Verschollene’s (non)ending.

Traveling with Kafka & The Echoes of Palestine in Kafka’s America

In his work, John Zilcosky excavates the trope of travel in Kafka’s work, especially in light of the author’s love for “popular utopian colonial travel narratives” and similar texts, including the American travel narratives other scholars have widely recognized to have influenced Der Verschollene.198 Zilcosky notes how some of Kafka’s first literary attempts belonged to the travel genre and argues that Kafka’s “fantasies about travel were almost always benevolent, if not utopian”.199

Building on Zilcosky’s analysis, I would like to take special note of the slippage between travel, tourism, and migration, as well as between direct and mediated experience of far-off places found in Kafka’s writings: slippages all represented in Der Verschollene.200 As a departure point, however, let us consider the inaugural paragraph of Kafka’s correspondence with Felice Bauer, written shortly before he began drafting Der Verschollene. In it, Kafka recalls the pair’s first meeting: a shared experience examining photographs of Kafka and Brod’s Thaliareise. He concludes the


199 See Zilcosky, Kafka’s Travels, 1–18, here 1 and 3. For examples of Kafka’s travel writings, see KT 929–1064; Franz Kafka, Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente, Band I, edited by Malcolm Pasley (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1993), 182–6.

200 For Zilcosky’s reading of Der Verschollene based on Kafka’s reading of Goethe and Flaubert’s travel writings, see Kafka’s Travels, 40–70.
paragraph with a reminder of his promise that they undertake a Palästinareise together.\footnote{Franz Kafka, \textit{Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit}, edited by Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, with an introduction by Erich Heller (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1967), 43.} Consider the slippages that occur in this brief passage. The first is captured in the gesture of gazing at the photographs of the Thaliareise. While Kafka and Brod use the photos to relive previous travel, Felice vicariously lives out travel for the first time through the photographic medium. These gestures recall the new recruits’ experience of images of Oklahoma while in Clayton, as well as Karl’s attempt to resituate himself in family photographs earlier in the novel. In gazing at photographs, then, Karl – just like Kafka and Felice – can achieve one of two different purposes: either as a tool to reanimate or express longing for past lived experience, or else as a means to vicariously “experience” far-off places for the first time.\footnote{See Duttlinger, \textit{Kafka and Photography}, 62–66, especially 65.}

The destination for travel in this paragraph, however, is not only Thalia. Note Kafka’s mention of a planned trip to Palestine – a trip he calls off at the letter’s conclusion. Here, the text slips almost imperceptibly from Thalia to Palestine as the object of travel. In so doing, the places almost become equated, perhaps interchangeable.\footnote{Kafka’s interest in both the USA and Palestine is evidenced by his attendance at a talk by Davis Trietsch entitled “Palestine as Land of Colonization” and another by Czech political representative František Soukup about the latter’s trip to America within a month’s time in summer 1912 (KT 423–4).}

The final slippage has to do with Palestine itself. The letter, notably, identifies it as a destination for tourism, rather than a potential “homeland”. Significantly, the occasion for Kafka and Felice’s discussion of Palestine was a Zionist periodical Kafka carried with him at the time:
Palästina: Monatsschrift für die Erschließung Palästinas. Indeed, Kafka would recall in a later letter to Felice the great pleasure the periodical granted him. Paradoxically, however, Palästina was not chiefly meant to provide vicarious experience or spur on tourism, but instead sought to further “practical Zionism” and long-term Jewish settlement in the Middle East. To put a fine point on it, then, Kafka’s use of Palästina contradicted the periodical’s intended mission, thereby slipping from travel for the purposes of long-term settlement to tourism, or even vicarious tourism as mediated by text and image.

What we witness here and in other contemporaneous texts, including Der Verschollene, then, is Kafka’s pleasure derived from narratives about, and images of, far-off places, slipping not only between actual and vicarious experience, but also between different places and between long-term relocation and tourism. All these slippages, I argue, help make sense of Kafka’s avid engagement with the place Palestine in talks and periodicals at a time when most scholars argue he was not invested in the Zionist project: his was a pleasure derived from the possibilities travel posed broadly, rather than from Palestine specifically. Taken from the other direction, moreover, this observation

204 See Kafka, Briefe an Felice, 58; Palästina: Monatsschrift für die Erschließung Palästinas (Vienna) 9.7–8 (August 1, 1912)

205 Kafka, Briefe an Felice, 121–2.

206 See here Bruce, Kafka and Cultural Zionism, 68.

207 In his work, Scott Spector reads Kafka with Hugo Bergmann to argue that Prague Cultural Zionism of this era was “not ‘also’ spiritual, nor ‘primarily’ spiritual, but spiritual in its definition – defined as the movement established to struggle against matter, to expulse the concept of territory from its midst.” Spector does this as a helpful contextualization of Deleuze and Guattari’s deterritorialized reading of Kafka. Prague Territories, 157. I view my reading as providing somewhat of a corrective, emphasizing Kafka’s engagement with Palestine and other far-off places as physical realities, albeit mediated through text and image.
also allows us to appreciate how Der Verschollene engages with the possibilities of relocation writ large, more so than the specificity of relocation to America as such.

This argument returns us to our initial concern: Kafka and his relationship to Zionism as literature. Let us again return to Zionism’s best-known literary practitioner, Theodor Herzl. Like Kafka, Herzl wrote travel narratives early on, and his novel Altneuland famously blurs the lines between real and vicarious, fantastical travel. Indeed, both Der Verschollene and Altneuland are literary creations that enable readers to experience migration to far-off places in the novelistic form. From this shared foundation, however, the works critically diverge, and in comparing the two, we can truly appreciate a key aspect of Kafka’s first novel. For while Herzl’s famous dictum “Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen” encouraged readers to actualize the literary dream, Kafka’s novel defers the actualization of the wish. It instead ends with a (non)conclusion, leaving readers perched at the precipice of a dream’s actualization with a light foreboding of what awaits Karl in Oklahoma. Indeed, as I would argue, Kafka’s text reveals the true pleasure of utopian travel narratives to be found in the act of reading, and not in the act of actualizing them. To illustrate this point, I propose we take a brief detour through Kafka’s short text about an Indian on horseback.

Achieving Indigeneity: A Centaur Suspended in Air

In his masterful analysis, David Wellbery unpacks Kafka’s “Wunsch, Indianer zu werden”. The text expresses the wish to be an Indian on horseback, shooting through the air. Pointing to the text’s grammatical shift midstream from subjunctive mood to indicative imperfect, Wellbery reads the change as reflective of a shift from a wish state to a state of actualization with a culmination at sentence’s end of man and beast united together in the form of a centaur. The centaur, he notes,

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208 Peck, Labor der Utopie, 33.
functions both as a representation of the desire for “becoming other,” but also as a fulfillment of the desire to move beyond the duality of nature and self. The text, given its grammatical peculiarity, ends in a suspended state between wish and fulfillment.209

At the end of his analysis, Wellbery briefly suggests that the short text’s motif maps onto Der Verschollene and its main character, Karl Rossmann, whose last name literally translates as “Steed Man”. Indeed Der Verschollene repeatedly connects Karl with the image of horses, including his emergence onto the race track at Clayton with his chosen name emblazoned on the board meant to display the names of horses.210 Yet even more, just as Kafka’s short story expresses a desire to become indigenous (Indian), a being so connected to a land that the borders between man and nature disappear, Karl too appears in this moment to truly have “achieved” indigeneity and become other. This association is bolstered by Karl’s destination: Oklahoma, a state known for its large Native American population.211 In other words, the image of Karl as horse-man indexes a similar hope to the one found in Kafka’s short story. Both express a desire to belatedly achieve indigeneity – a state bestowed by birth – and thereby gain entrance to a group rooted in a specific place.

209 Wellbery further connects this to the subtext of sexual fantasy. A special thanks to the author for his generosity in sharing a transcript of his talk with me. David E. Wellbery, “Reading Literature: On a Sentence in Kafka.” Transcript of lecture delivered at the colloquium “What is a Reading” sponsored by the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, April 15, 2020. See also Spector, Prague Territories, 188.

210 Karl is repeatedly associated with and compared to horses in the novel. This includes his horse riding lessons (V 63–65) and comments made by Delmarche and Brunelda (V 285, 360, 363).

211 The notion of a European becoming Native American was captured in a story, then being covered in the newspapers wherein it was (erroneously) reported that the German Bohemian Herman Lehmann had ostensibly gained “official recognition in Oklahoma as the former adopted son of a famous Comanche chief and hence as a Native American Indian”. See Reiner Stach, Kafka: The Early Years, translated by Shelley Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 323 and 510n27. See also Helmut Heuer, Die Amerikavision bei William Blake und Franz Kafka (Munich: UNI-DRUCK, 1959), 199.
Yet this “happy ending” contains a wrinkle. As Wellbery points out, “Wunsch, Indianer zu werden,” is a grammatical contradiction, a centaur suspended midair between wish and actualization, leaving a successful synthesis in doubt. Moreover, when the horse shoots into the air, flying above the “zitternden Boden,” one “kaum das Land vor sich als glatt gemähte Heide sah”. The near actualization of the wish appears to require separation from the land, and in achieving indigeneity, the land quivers and nearly disappears. The dream of becoming an “Indian,” then, requires an illusion. In a text, this illusion can remain suspended, halted in time. But reality cannot sustain it.

Consider here the referee’s injunction to Karl on the racetrack before the latter’s final departure: of chief importance, he exhorts, is to find “überhaupt irgendwo dauernd festzuhalten” (V 408). And yet in a movement that recalls a centaur suspended midair, Karl’s journey ends en route, without his feet (or hooves) firmly perched on the ground. Thus, though seemingly having achieved his end, Karl remains in transit in the liminal space between wish and actualization, just as Kafka’s “Indian”.

Conclusion: Locating Utopian Joy in the Text

In his afterword written for the first edition of Kafka’s first novel, Max Brod recalls how Kafka “besonders liebte” the Oklahoma chapter, which “versöhnlich ausklingen sollte.” Brod continued, “[m]it rätselhaften Worten deutete Kafka lächelnd an, daß sein junger Held in diesem ‘fast grenzenlos’ Theater Beruf, Freiheit, Rückhalt, ja sogar die Heimat und die Eltern wie durch paradiesischen Zauber wiederfinden werde.”


213 Brod, afterword to Amerika, 389–390.
Given the ambivalences contained in *Der Verschollene’s* final pages and Kafka’s diary entry about Karl Rossmann’s final fate, we may be tempted to dismiss Brod’s statement as unreliable. Yet I would propose another route. For Karl Rossman’s final journey functions like a utopian travel narrative. It simultaneously provides the reader with the “certainty” of a conciliatory ending and subtle hints of the cruel realities of actual migration. In so doing, it allows the reader to experience the joy of utopian travel stories, even as the entire novel disrupts the hope that these narratives might successfully become reality. The joy is not in actualization, then, but in the articulation of the wish and the living out of that wish in the pages of a novel. Though careful readers may detect hints of foreboding, the process of telling these stories is itself the point. In other words, even while *Der Verschollene* warns readers of the reality of immigration to far-off climes and foregrounds the loss that accompanies spatial dislocation, it also ends with its own utopian story. In so doing, it recaptures the joy of relocation as a narrative trope mediated through fiction.

An illustration of this might best be encapsulated in Fanny’s words to Karl when the two meet in Clayton: “ich habe es allerdings selbst noch nicht gesehen, aber manche meiner Kolleginnen, die schon in Oklahoma waren, sagen, es sei fast grenzenlos” (V 394). Fanny’s joy does not come for Oklahoma itself; her pleasure derives from the reported speech of others (*es sei*), a narrative of sorts. Indeed, it is in this reported speech that the place becomes limitless (*grenzenlos*), akin to the effortless pose of Kafka’s rider on horseback: situated between subjunctive and indicative, between dream and actuality.

To be clear, this position, I would argue, was not limited to Kafka. This enjoyment of the dream and simultaneous deferral of its actualization was actually encoded in a central concept of the Western Zionism of Kafka’s time: *Gegenwartsarbeit*. Based on this concept, Western European Jews encouraged Ostjuden to immigrate, but carved out for themselves a role staying behind the diaspora, working toward secular redemption, without needing to travel to Palestine. In so doing, they too
could engage in the pleasure of a utopian story, even as they deferred the one action truly necessary to enact those dreams: spatial relocation.

Here then, I suggest, we find the genius of Kafka’s American novel. For in telling the story of Karl Rossmann, a young man who experiences the horrors of disappearing as a consequence of spatial relocation, and at story’s end sets off for Oklahoma, Kafka locates the true source of utopian pleasures. The source is not in New York or Palestine. It is, instead, in the promise of utopia back in Clayton, and, indeed, for the first readers turning the pages of Altneuland, situated comfortably back at home in Prague, without having to disappear at all.
CHAPTER 4: DE VRIENDT KEHRT HEIM: ARNOLD ZWEIG, VIOLENT NATIONALISM AND UTOPIA QUESTIONED

In May 1918, as the First World War raged across the European continent, the young author Arnold Zweig wrote the philosopher Martin Buber.\textsuperscript{214} Reflecting broader societal cynicism in the midst of a lengthy, protracted war, he confessed, “[Ich] mache…mir doch keinerlei Irrtümer über die Zähigkeit und Bösartigkeit der Verstrickung, in der wir Menschen befangen sind und trotz aller Arbeit, an uns immer wieder verfallen.”\textsuperscript{215} Of those who sought to construct an ideal “Menschengemeinschaft” he argued: “die gelebte Gemeinschaft von Menschen drängt zu Ausartung aller Werte.”\textsuperscript{216}

In spite of this negative anthropology, however, Zweig confessed an optimism and belief in a “jüdischen Glücksfall: den des neuen Anfangs.”\textsuperscript{217} This new, Jewish beginning, he argued, was not


\textsuperscript{216} Buber, \textit{Briefwechsel}, 1:533.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
unprecedented in history. Rather, he wrote, Jews had often experienced new beginnings, such as at the time of Moses, or during the highpoint of Jewish life in medieval Spain. These were periods of “Mangel” when “nichts Bestehendes brauchte zerstört zu werden; es fehlte, mit einem Worte, die Gewalt.”218

The specific new beginning in which Zweig was confident, and in which Buber was an important leader, was the Zionist movement. The Jewish “national,” as Zweig conceived of it, was organic and could not be “erzielt, errechnet oder erzwungen werden.”219 In a period where other nationalisms fought each other on the battlefield and resulted in mass death, Jewish nationalism – “[u]nser Nationalismus,” as Zweig refers to it – “gründet sich ja auf eine vorhandene wesentliche Besonderheit, er wird weder von einer Gewalt getragen, noch gar wird er propagiert.”220

Zweig’s letter is a study in ambivalence. On the one hand, it reflects a deep, general disenchantment with the ability for human beings to create ideal communities without perverting the deeply held values that may have once inspired those communities’ creation. Yet it also expresses an incredible confidence in a non-violent form of Zionism. This nationalism distinguishes itself, as Zweig sees it, because of a Jewish exceptionalism grounded in an obligation to the ethical. Violence, the very marker of other nationalisms that fueled the outburst of the First World War in which Zweig was even then participating, was not present. The Jewish utopian dream was possible.

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218 Ibid.

219 Ibid., 1:534.

220 Ibid.
Fourteen years later to the month in 1932, Zweig neared completion of a new novel, *De Vriendt kehrt heim*, wherein he portrayed a fictionalized version of the 1924 assassination of the Dutch Jew Jakob Israel de Haan. De Haan was a complicated figure: a religious Jew who immigrated to Palestine in 1919 as a zealous Zionist, he was soon disenchanted with the movement and quickly found his way to anti-Zionist Jewish orthodoxy and Agudat Israel, a group that opposed Zionist efforts to build a Jewish State on religious grounds. Despite his deeply held religious beliefs, however, de Haan remained unmarried, wrote openly about his homosexuality – at least in Dutch – and almost certainly carried on affairs with young teenage Arab boys before his death. When his erotic Dutch poetry was translated following his murder, many in the Yishuv posited that the shot killing him had been fired from the gun of an aggrieved family member of one of his young Arab lovers. Zweig had long been drawn to de Haan, something evidenced as early as 1925 in a fleeting reference to the latter’s death in Zweig’s essay *Das neue Kanaan*.221

In the midst of work on *De Vriendt*, Zweig wrote his frequent correspondent Sigmund Freud about the novel. He revealed that he had recently learned a “new fact”: that de Haan had actually been murdered by a Zionist, a member of the Haganah. A different form of fraternization – de Haan’s attempts at negations with Arab leaders as a representative of Agudat Israel that would subvert the Zionist program, and not a homosexual liaison with a young Arab boy – had led to de Haan’s untimely death. Writing Freud, Zweig admitted that the revelation had forced him “d[je]

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Dingen ohne projüdisches Vorurteil auf die Haut zu sehen, den politischen Mord des Juden am Juden genau so zu beleuchten, als wäre es ein politischer Mord in Deutschland, der Desillusion weiter zu gehen, so weit als nötig, als möglich.”

The bullet killing de Haan had come from a weapon wielded by a Jewish assassin, and the murder, as Zweig saw it, was just like any other political murder, one that might even happen in Germany.

The comparison to political murder in Germany was no idle comment: it called up the specter of more than a decade’s worth of violence in the Weimar Republic where important political figures – including many of Jewish background such as Walter Rathenau and Gustav Landauer – were gunned down by assassins not out of interpersonal animus, but because of these figures’ political views and activities. More recently, Hitler’s National Socialists had come to power and exercised their own forms of political violence. Indeed, shortly after writing Freud, Zweig and his family would flee Germany for Palestine. De Vriendt would be the final novel he published in Germany before the end of the Second World War.

Juxtaposed with his earlier letter to Buber, it is no wonder that Zweig writes of his novel as a process of “disillusionment.” In the temporal space between both letters, the notion of an ethical Jewish nationalism devoid of violence appeared to have collapsed for the Zweig. Zionism had not

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222 Sigmund Freud/Arnold Zweig Briefwechsel, edited by Ernst L. Freud (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1984), 53, emphasis added. For an argument that Zweig already knew de Haan had been assassinated by a Jew, see Plapp, Zionism and Revolution, 58–9.

223 Sigrid Thielking points out that a section of De Vriendt removed before publication explicitly connects the assassination to the right-wing murders of German Jews (Eisner, Landauer, Erzberger, Rathenau) in Weimar Germany. See Thielking, Auf dem Irwegen, 161. See also DV 245.

224 Zweig was a target of Nazi violence not only as a Jew, but also as the author of his novel about the First World War, Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grißcha (1927). For a sample of National Socialist reactions to Grißcha, see David R. Midgley, Arnold Zweig: Zu Werk und Wandlung 1927–1948 (Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1980), 59–60.
grown organically without resort to coercion. Instead, just like different nationalisms in Europe and the Americas, Jewish nationalism seemed to be building itself on a foundation of inter-Jewish violence, of which de Haan’s murder was only a portent. Utopia in Palestine was, it seemed, now in question.

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In the pages that follow, I reconstruct Arnold Zweig’s passage from the utopian ideals articulated in his early letter to Martin Buber to the process of disillusionment expressed in his 1932 letter to Sigmund Freud. I do so by exploring two of Zweig’s works in the context of the larger literary history I have sought to tell in the previous three chapters.

First and foremost, this chapter places Zweig’s work – specifically his 1925 essay Das neue Kanaan and 1932 novel De Vriendt kehrt heim – in the longer tradition of German Jewish writing about Palestine as place, foregrounding how Zweig, like authors before him, used writing to facilitate an engagement with Palestine for far-off readers. In particular, I argue that the second of these works, De Vriendt kehrt heim, can be productively read in intertextual conversation with Theodor Herzl’s Altneuland. In reading the two together, I argue that De Vriendt constructs a counter-spatial imaginary to Herzl’s and in so doing critiques the Herzlian Zionist project in spatial terms.

Throughout my analysis, I also pay attention to another theme developed in the previous chapters. If, as I argue, earlier works such as Herzl’s utopia propose a division between private, religious and public, political spheres in Palestine, Zweig’s depiction of Palestine as place grapples with the consequences of removing the religious and ethical from the political sphere in Palestine. For Zweig, this division is not something to be celebrated, but instead a harbinger of the loss of Jewish ethical values. In short, De Vriendt kehrt heim critiques how a political body in Palestine disconnected from religious Judaism’s ethical core facilitates the emergence of violent nationalism that changes what it means to be Jewish and results in political murder.
Das neue Kanaan and Zweig’s Spatial Imaginary

Before examining De Vriendt kehrt heim, however, I begin with Zweig’s 1925 collaboration with the Zionist artist Hermann Struck, Das neue Kanaan, written during what is rightly understood as the “Höhepunkt von Zweigs zionistischen Bekenntnissen”. In examining this work, I aim to develop a foundation for understanding the spatial imagination informing Zweig’s literary oeuvre. As in previous chapters, this analysis is part of my larger effort to show how Zionist spatial imaginaries were reflective of differing Zionist beliefs and reveal what different Jewish authors considered the true stakes of Jewish relocation to Palestine.

In what follows, I unpack Zweig’s spatial imaginary with special attention to four key elements on display in Das neue Kanaan: the importance of literature for imagining a future Jewish place in Palestine; an understanding of Palestine’s landscape as agent or Aktuerin; a reliance on the Herzlian juxtaposition of old and new; and an understanding of Palestine as largely empty. As I will point out, Zweig’s Zionism, even at its most ardent, could differ dramatically from that of figures such as Herzl. Yet even in the face of those differences, the two men shared certain convictions. In both cases, I argue that understanding Zweig’s construction of Palestine as a Zionist, utopian-like place in the pages of Das neue Kanaan is an important backdrop for seeking to understand the literary and political work of Zweig’s later novel, De Vriendt kehrt heim.

In his essay on Arnold Zweig’s relationship to Zionism, Hans-Harald Müller notes that Zweig “war ein Schriftsteller, für den Zionismus anfangs eng mit seiner literarischen Produktivität verbunden...war.” This assertion is supported in myriad ways, beginning with any cursory

225 Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 71.

examination of Zweig’s first published work from 1911, *Aufzeichnungen über eine Familie Klopfer* where the narrator, writing from a future Jewish settlement in Palestine, tells the story of his European Jewish family from his villa on the Sea of Galilee. Zweig’s decision to place the *Klopfer* narrative in a future Jewish State is, I would argue, proof that the author’s early literary efforts already evince an engagement with Herzl’s *Altneuland*. Of additional importance for this chapter, the novella’s narrator, Heinrich Klopfer, makes a further appearance in *De Vriendt kehrt heim*, which will be discussed later.

Zweig’s literary works, however, were more than simply the product of someone who used Zionism as a muse or mined his own relationship to the movement for literary inspiration. Literature, for Zweig, was simultaneously the record of an author whose encounter with Palestine, especially as place, was – until his first trip to the area in 1932 – mediated through, and projected by means of, texts and images. This dynamic is most apparent in *Das neue Kanaan*, a lengthy essay published in 1925 and tellingly subtitled, “Eine Untersuchung über Land und Geist”. The work, published seven years before *De Vriendt’s* release, pairs Zweig’s narrative with fifteen illustrations from his artistic collaborator, Hermann Struck. The two had previously collaborated on *Das

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228 The subtitle only appears on the title page in the original version: Arnold Zweig, *Das neue Kanaan* (Berlin: Horodisch & Marx, 1925). Since the original edition in unpaginated but is the only one with Struck’s images, I cite the images by number based on their order within the book.
ostjüdische Antlitz, a product of their encounter with Ostjuden during their time as German soldiers in the First World War.  

Das neue Kanaan begins in Haifa, perched atop Mount Carmel, accompanied by an image of the bay – the same location where Löwenberg and Kingscourt arrive and meet David Littwak in Almenland.  

[FIGURE 3] Importantly, Zweig – the narrator – situates himself far away. He writes, “ich sehe sie in ihrer Weite, ihrer afrikanischen Farbenbräune und ihrer hemmungslos durchsichtigen Luft mit geschlossenen Augen, zurückgelehnt in einen Stuhl…in einer Stube nahe dem kieferumkränzten See der Mark Brandenburg” (HUZ 166). He continues, “[j]Ich schreibe ein Buch der Sehnsucht, des Verlangens und der inneren Gerichtetheit – kein Buch des Erfahrenhabens, gesättigten Wissens, und das nach dem Gelebthaben sich einstellte als Mitteilung aus der Fülle” (HUZ 166). From the onset, Zweig establishes his “non-experience” of Palestine, embracing his essay instead as the product of his imagination aided by the images of Struck – who was then living in the area. It is, as becomes clear, a utopian reflection written not long after marching as a solider throughout the “die großen Kaserne” known as Europe (HUZ 187). Over forty plus pages, Zweig describes the landscape with vivid rhetorical flourish, even as he readily admits that he sits near the

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230 After immigrating to Palestine in 1922, Hermann Struck settled on Mount Carmel. Zweig would later visit him there; when the whole family moved to Haifa, they settled nearby. See Freud/Zweig, 48 and Manuel Wiznitzer, Arnold Zweig: Das Leben eines deutsch-jüdischen Schriftstellers (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987), 44, 78, and 211n38. Arnold Zweig, Das neue Kanaan, image 1.
Schlachtensee outside Berlin, far off from this “neue Kanaan.” Zweig does not elide this distance; instead, he embraces it.

Several years later, in 1929, Zweig would rerelease the essay, collected together with Das ostjüdische Antlitz in a single volume entitled Herkunft und Zukunft: zwei Essays zum Schicksal eines Volkes. This time, however, Struck’s images were absent, possibly because Zweig wished to produce a volume with lower printing costs that would reach a larger audience. In the afterword he writes,

Zweig’s afterword thus encourages the reader to understand an encounter with both Ostjuden – the topic of the first book in the collected volume – and Palestine, the topic of the second, as an imaginative act, something taking place between the pages of a book, or even more in the imagination of the reader.

231 This point is further emphasized in the first printed version on the page before the main text where the Hebrew text from Psalm 92:12 is printed in Latin letters. At the bottom of the page is the following: “Schlachtensee, Sommer 1924 * (Juli–August).” (Schlachtensee is the lake in Berlin where Zweig wrote The New Canaan.) Both the citation from the Psalm and the reference to the Schlachtensee are absent from Herkunft und Zukunft.

232 For a different reading of the afterword, see Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 95.

233 For this theory, see Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 92. Given the new edition was partially dedicated to Struck, it seems highly unlikely the images were not included because of personal disagreements between the two. The new version contains some photographs and images, albeit far fewer, including some from famous Jewish artists such as Max Lieberman and Marc Chagall.
Yet the afterword makes clear that Zweig’s emphasis on prose and imaginative fantasy as the media of encounter have to do with more than simply the absence of Struck’s images. There is also an issue of chronology, something captured in the collection’s title, *Herkunft und Zukunft*. In his afterword, Zweig addresses the former, “Herkunft,” the Ostjuden in the first essay, sadly concluding, “Vielleicht waren wir, die Generation des Krieges, die letzten, die noch das alte ostjüdische Antlitz zu sehen bekamen” (HUZ 225). Shortly thereafter, he adds, “Das ostjüdische Antlitz beschreibt eine Welt, die versunken ist, auch von innen her” (HUZ 228). Here, Zweig informs his readers that his book is not one of many ways to encounter the Ostjude; it is now the only one. This old world, he declares, has passed away, except for readers of books like his.

If the *Ostjude* is inaccessible because his or her time has passed, however, “das neue Kanaan” is inaccessible by dint of its futurity. Zweig writes, “Und Palästina…auch seine Verwirklichung ist in den vier Jahren, die verstrichen sind, seit ich jene Niederschrift abschloß, uns nur wenig nähergekommen” (HUZ 228). He lists recent events inhibiting the actualization of this new society, including the attempts by “the Mohammedans” to prevent Jewish access to the Western Wall. Here, the afterword reinforces the “future” announced in the volume’s title, placing the Palestine of Zweig’s essay in a time beyond the present moment.234 This categorization, I would argue, makes clear the role Zweig envisions for his book-length essay: *Das neue Kanaan* is not only a record of his imaginative engagement with Palestine’s landscape because of a question of distance. Just like *Altneuland*, it is a book meant to allow readers to engage with a future Palestine, whose landscape has already been transformed in the literary realm and is, for the moment, *only* able to be experienced between the pages of a book.

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234 Interestingly enough, Sigrid Thielking repeatedly categorizes *Das neue Kanaan* as a type of “Palestinian Utopia,” though she does not explicitly situate the work in a longer genealogy of Zionist utopian texts. See *Auf dem Irrweg*, 58.
Also like Herzl’s novel, Zweig’s essay is full of landscape descriptions that beckon the reader to imagine this far-off place. Yet for Zweig, these landscapes are often situated within a spatial imaginary at variance with the father of modern Zionism. Whereas Herzl celebrates Jewish transformation as a result of the Jew who has become an agent who acts upon, directs, and channels the powerful, but ultimately passive forces embedded in the landscape, *Das neue Kanaan* depicts Palestine’s land as a mystical, potent agent. If *Altneuland* depicts Palestine’s landscape as but a passive index of Jewish transformation, Zweig’s landscapes are more autonomous and active, directly influencing the development of the Jewish individual.\(^{235}\)

In depicting Palestine’s landscape in this way, Zweig’s work evinces the influence of strains within Zionism represented by figures such as A.D. Gordon – whose ideas he most likely encountered through Martin Buber – and amount to what one might best call a “mythologization of Boden”.\(^{236}\) Gordon’s influence is evident throughout Zweig’s writings, garnering a direct mention in the *Kanaan* essay.\(^{237}\) Martin Buber, writing of Gordon in later years, would summarize the man’s understanding of Palestine’s land as follows: “the real wound in Gordon’s heart is caused by the Jews having fallen…from the cosmos…Man can participate in the Cosmos only when he does

\(^{235}\) See here Anne Maximiliane Jäger-Gogoll’s description of landscape as an “Aktuerin” in her analysis of Zweig’s *De Vriendt Goes Home* in “Reiseziel, Fluchttort, Zukunftsprojekt: Ansichten von Palästina bei Arnold Zweig und Arthur Koestler, 1926–1948,” in *Reisliteratur der Moderne und Postmoderne*, edited by Michaela Holdenried, Alexander Honold and Stefan Hermes (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2017), 422. Also relevant is Yigal Schwartz’s summary: “all the Eretz-Israeli landscape that Herzl chose to depict in *Altneuland* is settled, and every piece of land is cultivated, so much so that it seems that the book’s author had an anxiety about any piece of landscape not bearing the mark of a human hand” in *Zionist Paradox*, 64.

\(^{236}\) Thielking, *Auf dem Irrweg*, 238. For the original context in which Thielking uses this phrase and my critique of her reading, see my discussion of *De Vriendt’s* final scene.

\(^{237}\) HUZ 198; Here, Zweig erroneously writes Abraham D. Gordon, rather than Aaron. Gordon later appears as the old kibbutnik Nachman in *De Vriendt kehrt heim*, a scene I analyze in depth below.
something in the cosmic context, that is his particular sphere…To work on the land entrusted to his care is what befits man.”

Thus, for Gordon, as well as Buber and Zweig, Jewish labor on Palestine’s land was of more than simple political significance or the site of an emancipatory transformation as Herzl understood it: working the land enabled Jewish participation in a cosmic drama. Indeed, Zweig himself states a similar point when he announces: “Eines Tages wird man erkennen: Länder verändern Menschen” (HUZ 171). In line with this observation, Zweig’s essay continuously portrays the human as similar to a palm tree, nourished by the same grounds which cause vegetation to grow. The human, who works the land, simultaneously becomes a product of the land. Here, the text can be best understood as related to the citation of Psalm 92:12 that precedes the essay’s first page, which translates to “the righteous will flourish as a palm tree.”

In other words, rather than depicting Jews working the land, *Das neue Kanaan* depicts Jewish labor as the means by which the land (re)creates the human.

Despite this variance with Herzl, however, there remains between *Altneuland* and Zweig’s oeuvre a particular structural similarity that warrants notice. Zweig himself evinced an appreciation for the man and an awareness of his literary oeuvre in a 1927 review of Leon Kellner’s book *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre*. The review, entitled “Das frühe Herzl,” takes a notably literary tact when rehearsing different elements of the man’s biography, beginning with a dismissal of his early plays as the product of an “alltägliche[m] Sonnenkind” who had neither “seelische Struktur noch Sinn für

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239 See footnote 231.

wahre Kunst und Größe.” Yet Zweig’s review also detects a turn in Herzl's life, a transformation grounded in the latter's Zionist awakening. Here, he argues, “zeigt sich…der wirkliche Herzl an: ein Schriftsteller…der beste Typ des echten Journalisten, dessen großer Vater Voltaire ist.” The review allows that Herzl's later writing continues in this journalistic vein, and “damit außerhalb der Kunstsphäre rückt,” but it simultaneously reveals Zweig to be a reader and appreciator of Herzl, inclined to situate the man in his literary-philosophical, rather than purely political, milieu.

Yet more than simple familiarity, Zweig’s work also evinces a structural indebtedness to Herzl’s juxtaposition of old and new in Altneuland, something that finds a clear uptake in Zweig’s depiction of land and people in the essay. This juxtaposition is already evident in the title, which describes the land as new. The use of the word “Kanaan,” by contrast, encapsulates something old, but vital, a word that precedes the names “Israel” and “Judea” within the biblical narrative.

The image of old and new continues within the main body of the essay, which despite its title, also refers to the land as old, contending, “Kein Mensch kann heute mehr als ahnen, was das alte Land aus dem Juden wecken wird” (HUZ 186, emphasis added). The adjective “new,” by


242 Ibid., 703.


244 The uptake of the juxtaposition of old and new is not unique to Zweig. See, for instance, Felix Salten, Neue Menschen auf alter Erde: Eine Palästinafahrt (Berlin: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1925).


246 For a reading of this as a “re-mediterranization” of Jewry, see Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 69.
contrast, appears near the book’s conclusion, where Zweig expresses his hope for a “neuer Sozialismus in Palästina” or “ein neues Levantinertum,” which he considers possible because of the “neue Klima,” which will release new energies (HUZ 222). The celebration of the new continues shortly thereafter in the concluding section that simultaneously captures Zweig’s use of Herzlian vocabulary, yet also marks his reliance on an alternate spatial imaginary. He writes,

Die Schönheit des Landes, die Besucher und Neubewohner überfallt und langsam durchtränkt, ist der beste Verbündete, um in neue Formen, in das reinere Leben, in ein Heim hineinzuwachsen, das der Jude sich wahrlich verdient hat: Durch den Traum, in Jahrtausenden nicht vergessen, von seinem Zion, das unter dem Auge des Ewigen liegt. (HUZ 222–3)

In the original volume, this section is accompanied by a Struck image which Zweig’s prose describes.247 [FIGURE 4] Here, like Herzl, Zweig emphasizes Palestine as activating something new (“neue Formen”). His use of the word dream also resonates with Herzlian discourse, where the word, like Märchen, functions as a byword for the hope of a new Jewish State. Yet here, importantly, the individual does not shape the land; instead, the land is an agent that springs upon, even assaults (“überfallt”) and saturates (“durchtränkt”) the human being. The human, notably, who in Struck’s image stands dwarfed by the trees, no longer resembles the Herzlian human agent who acts upon landscape, powerful enough to control and shape it. Instead, he is an organic being, acted upon by the landscape, and growing as a product of it.

“Land Ohne Menschen” and the Arab Question

Thus far, I have sought to provide a detailed sense of Arnold Zweig’s spatial imagination before his 1932 trip to the Middle East and subsequent publication of De Vriendt kehrt heim. On the one hand, I have shown how Zweig’s understanding of Palestine as place was largely a literary invention, created in the pages of books, including those resulting from his own pen, and mediated

247 Arnold Zweig, Das neue Kanaan, image 15.
by images, such as those by Struck. In analyzing Zweig’s spatial descriptions, I have also highlighted his reading of landscape as an active agent, even while recognizing his reliance on the Herzlian juxtaposition of “old” and “new.”

Unaddressed until now, however, is a curious near-absence in the pages of Zweig’s essay: the native Arab population. Scholars Laurel Plapp and Robert Cohen have rightly emphasized how Zweig’s essay about Palestine includes, in all caps, the sentence, “DAS NATIONALE HEIM DER JUDEN WIRD NUR IN PALÄSTINA UND NUR UNTER DEM BEIFALL DER ARABER PALÄSTINAS” (HUZ 217). Zweig follows this pronouncement with a ready acknowledgement that although “[d]ie Juden bringen dem Lande Vorteile” – a very Herzlian contention – Arab inhabitants respond: “wir wollen sie nicht” (HUZ 217). Plapp and Cohen situate this section – found on the same page as a massive portrait of an unnamed Arab inhabitant – in light of Zweig’s sympathy with the Arab cause, reading it as a foreshadowing of themes he would latter develop in De Vriendt kehrt heim.

Without forgetting Zweig’s keen insight into the “Arab Question” here on display, however, I would nonetheless like to argue that the larger message of his essay, especially when juxtaposed with Das ostjüdische Antlitz, is more ambivalent, demonstrating another side of Zweig’s spatial imagination in the 1920s. For even while Zweig acknowledges Arab presence in Palestine, the larger project emphasizes Palestine as empty space and deemphasizes human presence in it. For instance, Struck’s images found in the first edition of the book are largely devoid of people. Instead, vast vistas yawn across the page. Only three of the fifteen images are of human faces: two Jewish

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249 Arnold Zweig, Das neue Kanaan, image 13.
portraits to the aforementioned Arab one. These faces include no landscapes and are conjured up out of context, free of background. In addition, two images, including the second one discussed above, contextualize humans in space, but the humans are singular, minuscule figures, alone in a landscape otherwise devoid of human presence. In other words, Struck’s images largely fail to integrate the human into the landscape, and when they do, it is a single individual with no recognizable facial features or any community around her. Curiously, the landscapes are not devoid of houses and other human structures. Yet these, too, seem people-less, more communicating a welcoming gesture to Jewish settlement rather than providing an index of already present human beings and communities. In other words, even while recognizing Arab presence explicitly, the book’s form and illustrations marginalize that presence.

This marginalization is all the starker when placed side by side with Das ostjüdische Antlitz, Zweig and Struck’s first collaboration. Reading the two essays together is a natural impulse given the similar format – Struck’s images interposed with Zweig’s essayistic prose –and their thematic resonances. Indeed, the final pages of the former volume already anticipate the Zionist hopes that would be taken up in the latter essay. The 1929 creation of a single edition for both works makes

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250 See Arnold Zweig, Das neue Kanaan, images 9, 12 and 13. These three images resemble the style of the portraits in Das ostjüdische Antlitz. The only other human figure in the images is found in the final image, discussed above, where a barely recognizable human is dwarfed by palm trees. For a summary of the contents of all the images and their relation to the text, see Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 63–4.

251 Herkunft und Zukunft is slightly different, as it only includes four photographs to illustrate The New Canaan. One is of Tel Aviv, the other three of Jews in various places in Palestine (Meron, a street in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter, and the Western Wall). The images include no recognizably Arab individuals.

252 See especially the final part of the first essay (HUZ 141–61). Thielking makes a similar observation in Auf dem Irrweg, 58.
this juxtaposition explicit. The new title – Herkunft and Zukunft – provides an implicit narrative structure – clearly Herzlian in its juxtaposition of old and new – in which to place the two works.

Instructively, the first collaboration about Ostjuden is devoid of landscapes. Of Struck’s fifty-two accompanying images in the volume, only two do not depict human faces. The method of portraiture, similar to that found in the three faces depicted in Das neue Kanaan, often extracts the Ostjuden from his or her spatial context. The two images that are not portraits depict traditional Jewish buildings: a synagogue and a Jewish home in the shtetl. But these images do not depict landscape, but rather buildings that overwhelm the frame, much in contrast to the buildings and human structures found in Kanaan essay. In short, Das ostjüdische Antlitz largely flips the proportion of images, and like the title announces, the visage of the Eastern European Jew takes center stage.

By reading original titles and illustrations together, a singular message emerges from the collection of these two Struck-Zweig collaborations. The message, it seems, echoes a phrase Zweig would later (erroneously) attribute to Herzl and lambast in De Vriendt kehrt heim. “a land without a people for a people without a land.” Put another way, Das ostjüdische Antlitz seems to pose a problem of a surplus of noble Ostjuden whose life in Eastern Europe is no longer tenable. They are a people without a land. As a solution, the nearly empty landscapes this new Canaan beckon.

253 For easy access, the images can be found in Noah Isenberg’s English translation, Arnold Zweig, Face of East European Jewry, 44, 88.

254 Diana Muir discusses this phrase’s own complicated history in her article “A Land without a People for a People without a Land,” Middle East Quarterly 15, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 55–62. Muir argues that it is not true “that early Zionists widely employed the phrase,” and also corrects Edward Said’s “erroneous attribution” of the phrase to Israel Zangwill, locating it instead in a variety of nineteenth century Christian sources long before Zangwill first used the phrase. In Zweig’s novel, de Vriendt attributes the quote to Herzl, and it is within this context that I wish to situate this quote. Importantly, Diana Muir cites Adam M. Garfinkle, who concludes, “the phrase ‘land without a people’ [n]ever appear[s] in Herzl’s books, letters, or diary.”
To be clear here, in making these observations, I in no way discount Zweig’s explicit acknowledgment of Palestine’s Arab population as found in *Das neue Kanaan* and his other writings. What I instead seek to demonstrate is that these essays contain a form of ambivalence that recognizes that Palestine is not empty of inhabitants, while simultaneously portraying it as wide open, sparsely populated, and open to Jewish settlement. To quote from a general observation made by Diana Muir that seems quite apt for Zweig: “it seems…likely that Jews were capable of knowing on one level that there were…Arabs in Palestine…while still referring to the land as empty.”

It is with this tension as backdrop that we now turn to Zweig’s 1932 novel, *De Vriendt kehrt heim.*

**Arnold Zweig in Palestine**

In February 1932, Arnold and his wife Beatrice Zweig traveled to the Middle East for the first time. The trip included stops in Beirut and Egypt, as well as Haifa, where the couple stayed with Hermann Struck at his home on Mount Carmel. Writing after a visit to Damascus, Zweig informed his American publisher Benjamin W. Huebsch, “Wir leben hier nicht in der Gegenwart – alles ist überwältigende Vergangenheit oder hoffnungsvolle Zukunft.” Zweig’s letter indicates that even as he encountered Palestine as physical reality, he continued to process his experience through the literary categories from in his earlier writings: past and future, old and new, *Herkunft* and *Kanaan*.

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255 Diana Muir, “A Land without People”

256 For more details about the writing of *De Vriendt*, see Julia Bernhard, “Entstehung und Wirkung,” in *De Vriendt kehrt heim* by Arnold Zweig (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1996), 277–95. For more about Zweig’s Zionist writings between *Das neue Kanaan* and *De Vriendt*, see Sigrid Thielking, *Auf dem Irrweg*, 88–106.

Despite this continuity in conceptual categories, however, *De Vriendt kehrt heim* – a book that began to truly take shape during the couple's travels and was completed by year's end after their return to Germany – also evinced a departure from Zweig’s earlier writings. No where is this more evident than in *De Vriendt*’s numerous landscape descriptions.

*De Vriendt kehrt heim* begins with Lolard B. Irmin – a non-Jewish British secret service agent who learns that the family of a prepubescent Arab boy, Saûd, who is secret lover to a Dutch Orthodox Jew, Jizchak Josef de Vriendt, is plotting to murder the man. Irmin, who knows de Vriendt, resolves to spirit him out of Jerusalem, where he lives, for a journey north, to the Galilee and thereby prevent the man’s murder and a subsequent inflaming of Arab-Jewish tensions. In these early pages, readers also learn that de Vriendt has a dark side: tortured by his attraction to young men, he views God as responsible for his sexual desires and writes heretical poetry cursing God, which he hides away in his desk. Even while harboring these heretical thoughts, de Vriendt is actively at work crafting a plan as a representative of Agudat Israel, wherein he proposes to cooperate with Arab officials in British Mandate Palestine as the representative Jewish body within no pretention to political power. The organization, per the plan, would provide a non-Zionist Jewish voice in the land, and unlike the Zionists, would only seek certain religious privileges, rather than the right to establish a state. Shortly thereafter, de Vriendt is gunned down in the street, assumed by

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258 Anne Maximilliane Jäger-Gogoll detects a resonance between this statement and Herzl’s *Altneuland*, although she argues that Europe is the old (Vergangenheit) and Palestine the new (Zukunft). Jäger-Gogoll, “Reiseziel, Fluchort, Zukunftprojekt,” 415.

259 For Zweig’s description of his writing process in near real time, see his correspondence with Freud in *Freud/Zweig*, 53 and 56.

260 In the first edition of *De Vriendt*, Irmin’s first name is Lolard Bartholomäus. When republished in East Germany, Zweig changed the name to Leonard Bruce. See Arnold Zweig, *De Vriendt kehrt heim* (Rudolstadt: Greifenverlag, 1956). The critical edition I cite is consistent with the original version.
many in the novel to be a victim of Arab nationalists offended by any attempt at Arab-Jewish negotiations. Yet readers know the actual murderer is the newly arrived Zionist *Chaluz* (pioneer) Mendel Glass, a nationalist zealot outraged by de Vriendt’s actions which threaten his deeply held dreams for a new Jewish State.

A subgroup of the Zionist executive, in an expression of solidarity with a fallen Jew who was nonetheless their political rival, march in de Vriendt’s funeral. This action, fueled by encouragement from certain Zionists who leak false information about Jewish intentions, inflames Arab-Jewish tensions and unleashes a literally imagined version of the 1929 Arab-Jewish violence in Palestine. The remainder of the book follows Irmin and multiple Jewish characters as they experience the riots. The British agent meanwhile hunts for de Vriendt’s murderer, discovers it is Glass and finally tracks him down to the Dead Sea, where the latter is working, hoping to personally expiate his guilt for the assassination by his hard labor in a potash factory. Irmin directly accuses Glass of de Vriendt’s murder and attempts to exact justice, but fails. The book ends on the Mount of Olives where de Vriendt is buried, as various individuals come to visit the grave one year after the man’s death.

Although the titular character J. J. de Vriendt stands at the book’s center – his death is at the novel’s midpoint –, the following action, which includes the agent Irmin’s search for the man’s killer, lends the book a feeling of genre, detective fiction. At the same time, the novel recreates a

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261 Alternatively known as the Arab Riots, Buraq Uprising, 1929 Massacres, or Meora’ot Tarpat (1929 Events) in Hebrew, these riots and demonstrations in the summer of 1929 were the culmination of long-running disagreements between Muslims and Jews over access to the Western Wall. By the end of the uprising, more than a hundred Jews and hundred Arabs, many of whom were unarmed, had died. For more about the events and the role they play in Zweig’s novel, see Thielking, *Auf dem Irrweg*, 131–4. As my argument makes clear, Zweig’s decision to pair his fictionalization of de Haan’s assassination from 1924 with these riots and demonstrations, is part of his larger message.

vivid world where main and minor characters alike confront brewing political conflicts in Palestine, with many functioning as representatives of various major competing Zionist (and non-Zionist) discourses of the day. These divergent, often conflicting, world views allow readers to immerse themselves in contemporary political debates that consumed Palestine and much of the Western world in the late 1920s. Zweig himself articulated this as a main goal of the novel: to bring together ten years of “palästinensischer Entwicklung…in der Absicht, späteren Lesern von den Problemen, Zerklüftungen und Aufschwüngen dieser Jahre ein Bild aufzubewahren.” As he understood it, this required a depiction of the “Kämpfen zwischen…Ideen, die von den Personen meines Buches getragen und verkörpert werden, und die die Ideen und Prinzipen unserer jüdischen zionistischen und sozialistischen Epoche sind.”

Citing these comments, Jonathan Skolnik interprets De Vriendt as an historical novel, arguing that it presents an alternative model to the prevalent German Jewish literary historical writing of the day. Its employment of “a continually shifting perspective,” as Skolnik terms it, “sets several conflicting historical visions against each other,” in turn relativizing all political positions and refusing to “absolutize” any single view of “Jewish history’s trajectory.” Skolnik thus rightly foregrounds the novel’s multi-vocality, a feature that has, at points, led scholars to produce quite variant readings of the novel.


264 Jonathan Skolnik, “‘Hier wuchsen die historischen Romane wild’: Arnold Zweig’s De Vriendt kehrt heim and the German-Jewish Historical Novel,” in Arnold Zweig: sein Werk im Kontext der deutschsprachigen, edited by Arthur Tilo Alt und Julia Bernhard (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 107, 108. On this, see also Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 156, 255 and 260.

265 Compare here Robert Tobin’s reading of the novel as championing a “quirky individualism” and David R. Midgley’s contention that, in contrast to Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa, “In Palästina sah sich Zweig mit einem Aufeinanderprallen der Völker und Kulturen konfrontiert, bei dem das Schicksal des einzelnen unter
Other scholars have read *De Vriendt* in light of Zweig’s dedication to Freudian psychoanalysis and socialist commitments. More recently, Laurel Plapp has situated de Vriendt’s homosexuality in the novel’s Zionist context. She argues that Saûd and de Vriendt’s relationship is an explicit rejection of the Zionist masculine ideal. Robert Tobin, also highlighting the de Vriendt-


267 For a reading by Robert Cohen that argues that Zweig’s novel differentiates between wealthy, land-owning Arabs (effendis) and landless peasants (fellahin), allowing the reader to sympathize with the latter while simultaneously recognizing the cynicism of the former (who sell plots of land to Zionists while simultaneously awakening antisemitic, nationalist sentiments in their poor, landless counterparts), see “Arnold Zweig und die Araberfrage: Über die Veränderung in seinem Denken durch die Arbeit am Roman *De Vriendt kehrt heim*,” in *Wider den Faschismus: Exilliteratur als Geschichte*, edited by Sigrid Bauschinger and Susan L. Cocalis (Tübingen: Francke, 1993), 123–45.


269 Plapp’s analysis touches on questions adjacent to my concerns of space and place. She argues, for instance, that the novel divides Zionists between two positions: “the Orthodox Jewish position…linked to the ‘ Orientals,’” (and also to the Ostjude) and the Western Zionists, who view the “‘ Orientals’” as “‘ threatening,” 70. For Plapp, the novel “clearly” identifies Zionist pioneers (Chaluzim) with Western, or political Zionism, see 76. Unfortunately, Plapp’s analysis ignores the fact that most Chaluzim were from Russia and Eastern Europe and that within the context of Zweig’s novel, are not to best understood as part of a Herzlian, or Western Zionism, but appear as adherents to either Jabotinsky’s Revisionist Zionism or A. D. Gordon’s Labor

Umständen nicht mehr jenes leidenschaftliche Engagement erforderte, das im besetzten Osteuropa als selbstverständlich erschien.” Here Arnold Zweig, 74, emphasis added.
Säüß sexual relation, reads the novel as situated between two competing models of same-sex relationality: a liberal version, where gayness is understood as a fixed identity, and a classical Greco-Roman one that “rejects identity as a structuring concept in its discussions of male sexual interest in other men.”

Tobin reads de Vriendt’s pederastic desires as a version of this second model, which he argues Zweig uses to critique Zionist “identity politics and group orientations.”

In the last two decades, scholars have also analyzed De Vriendt spatially. Stefanie Leuenberger focuses on Zweig’s depiction of Jerusalem throughout his oeuvre, arguing that in it, Jerusalem “erscheint…als Ursprung und Verschiebung: es wird zur Allegorie für die ‘Lage des Juden in der westlichen Welt’ im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert.” This Jerusalem “bedeutet keine reale Örtlichkeit mehr, sondern wird zum Schrift-Raum, in dem die Frage der ‘deutsch-jüdischen Identität’ erörtert und verkörpert wird.” Anne Maximilliane Jäger-Gogoll, in contrast to this reading, uses Zweig’s travel journal during his first trip to the Middle East to situate the novel’s descriptions of Zionism, categories that are conspicuously absent from her analysis. She also does not seem to appreciate how de Vriendt, whom she categorizes as an Ostjude, is Dutch.


271 Tobin thereby reads pederasty as a form of “quirky individualism” that proves inhospitable to the production of “a cohesive group identity comparable to that of Zionist Jews.” See Tobin, Peripheral Desires, 228–9; Stefanie Leuenberger’s analysis has certain resonances with Tobin, using Freud to argue that in his relationship with Saüß, de Vriendt attempts to shed his body and the Judaism of his fathers. She is not in agreement with Tobin, however, in that she insists that this is part of Zweig’s attempt to “inzensiere” a hybrid, Jewish-Christian and German Jewish identity. See Schrift-Raum Jerusalem: Identitätsdiskurse im Werk deutsch-jüdischer Autoren (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 179–223.


273 Ibid., 197, emphasis added.
Palestine in the context Zweig’s own recent experiences. She reads *De Vriendt* as a travelogue of sorts, “…welche[s] die Orte und Landschaften Palästinas…präsent mach[t] und im Spannungsfeld von Geschichte, Politik und Literatur neu verorten”.\(^{274}\) For her, Palestine’s landscape becomes a place where the author’s own confrontation with Zionism is reflected.\(^ {275}\) Moreover, she argues that by novel’s end, especially during the penultimate scene at the Dead Sea, landscape begins to function as more than a simple place of reflection, instead becoming an “unmittelbaren Akteurin des Geschehens”.\(^{276}\)

In the following pages, I also argue that the depictions of Palestine’s landscape are pivotal to understanding *De Vriendt*. As I show, these extensive descriptions are not incidental “color,” or, as Leuenberger argues, a solely textual “Schrift-Raum” somehow divorced from real, physical space. In this sense, I wholeheartedly agree with Jäger-Gogoll, who understands Zweig’s novel to be the result of his real-life travels that facilitate a readerly encounter with a very real, contemporary Palestine and Jerusalem. Moreover, in an extension of my argument developed above about *Das neue Kanaan*, I continue in the vein of Jäger-Gogoll, arguing that *De Vriendt* depicts Palestine’s landscape as an agent – *Akteurin*, to use her apt term – a being to which the narrative attributes volition.

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\(^{276}\) Jäger-Gogoll, “Reiseziel, Fluchort, Zukunftsprojekt”, 422. Although she does not further thematize it in her work, Ursula Schumacher also writes that, “Im Roman wird immer wieder die Landschaft Palästinas, die die lange Geschichte der Auseinandersetzung offenbart und vergegenwärtigt, zum Anlass religionsphilosophischer Diskurse, die die orthodoxe Argumentation auf die Probe stellen,” Schumacher, *Die Opferung Isaaks*, 169. For a spatial analysis conducted by Sigrid Thielking of one scene in *De Vriendt*, see my later discussion of Klopfer and Saamen’s conversation.
My argument, however, also goes beyond Jäger-Gogoll: first, in that it foregrounds how spatial images communicate Zweig’s deep-seated critique of political violence, which the novel depicts as a constitutive part of emerging Jewish (and Arab) nationalism. Indeed, Zweig made this point explicitly when he wrote that De Vriendt offers a “Kritik des modernen Nationalismus am jüdischen Nationalismus, Kritik der Nachkriegswelt an unserer jüdischen Nachkriegswelt”.277 Put succinctly, in my reading of De Vriendt, I argue that Zweig’s depicts landscapes that, once robbed of their ethical, religious referents, become co-actors in a violent nationalism. This, coupled with the illustration of de Vriendt’s – and by extension, de Haan’s – assassination, shows how political violence threatens to take root in the very physical foundation of a future Jewish State.

To truly demonstrate the power of De Vriendt’s critique of nationalism in spatial terms, I also continue my contextualization of Zweig’s work within a larger literary conversation. Indeed, just as I have argued that Das neue Kanaan drew on the Herzlian juxtaposition of old and new, I here argue that De Vriendt can be productively read in an intertextual conversation with Herzl’s work: sharing with it an appreciation for the interplay between the places Jews inhabit and the impact on their character. Nowhere is this clearer, I would argue, than the fact that the plot to assassinate de Vriendt takes place on Mount Carmel in Haifa, not only a place depicted in Das neue Kanaan, but also located in the very city where Herzl has his protagonists land during their visit to the “New Society.”278 To truly grasp the significance of Zweig’s descriptions, my argument draws special attention to Zweig’s depiction of Palestine’s landscapes as read next to similar scenes in Herzl’s Altneuland. In bringing


278 Sigrid Thielking connects the location in both Zweig works in Auf dem Irrweg, 176.
the two works into explicit dialogue with each other, I aim to help us appreciate the full meaning of landscape in Zweig’s novel and demonstrate how spatial depiction becomes a means for Zweig to communicate his fear that political violence threatens to foreclose the utopian possibilities of the Zionist project.

Palestine’s Competing Spatial Realms

Any spatial analysis of *De Vriendt* must necessarily begin with the eponymous character’s experience traveling through Jerusalem and Palestine. On the one hand, the Dutchman de Vriendt experiences Palestine as a traditional orthodox Jew who understands Jerusalem as a sacralized place, set apart for holy activity. On the other, even de Vriendt is confronted with a Palestine that is home to an emerging secular public sphere where religious categories are inoperative. The tension between these two spatial experiences illuminates for readers both de Vriendt’s inner personal conflict and the Zionist-Agudist conflict that leads to political violence.

The first of these spatial modalities, the secular public sphere, is captured as de Vriendt traverses the path from his home near the Old City to the Rashi School where Rabbi Zadok Seligmann, the Orthodox leader of the anti-Zionist Agudat Israel sits. Along the way, we learn that “[d]iese jüdischen Straßen des äußeren Jerusalem glichen modernen Vierteln Warschaus oder Berlins, zum mindesten, was die Tracht der Bewohner anging” (DV 52). The “outer” Jerusalem, as the narrative refers to it, might be compared with Jerusalem’s “New City” depicted in *Altneuland*’s final book. Beyond the gates of the Old City, de Vriendt appears to inhabit an at least partially secular society that Zionists seek to build. Here, much to the Dutchman’s dismay, Jews have brought profane Europe to the Holy Land.

By contrast, the second of these modalities, the sacred, is captured once de Vriendt arrives at the Rashi School and joins the students for prayer, turning southeast toward “das Heiligtum, die Westwand des Tempels,” voicing the words of the evening prayer, “wie es in den Synagogen der
gesetzestreuen Judenheit Europas üblich ist.” In prayerful contemplation, his closed eyes search, looking for the “Tempelplatz, nein, über ihm schwebend, in den Wolken, jenes himmlische Jerusalem, das eigentliche, das geistige, welches gemeint war, wenn die Propheten um die Stadt klagten und Trost ausgossen” (DV 54, emphasis added). Simultaneously, de Vriendt and the other men in the room take three steps backward, and then forward again, “um die Ausbreitung des Heiligen Raumes zu versinnbildlichen” (DV 54). Here, an alternative, religious Jewish community has brought another part of Europe to Palestine: they do not so much embrace their presence in a common physical location, as much as re-create an alternative version of that same location on a spiritual level, sharing that alternative space with religious Jews throughout the world.

In these few pages, de Vriendt’s experience captures for readers how the battle over his attempt to counter the Zionist project is both about a different perception of place, but also about the spatial consequences of different perceptions of Judaism. Indeed, de Vriendt’s assassination later on the novel might really be read as a battle between sacred and secular forces over who is to have control over Palestine as place: whether the Orthodox community will be allowed to negotiate with their Arab counterparts to protect their access to sacred sites, and thus retain their identity as a religious community, or whether the Zionists will be able to claim Palestine’s land to build a nation state to house a newly-conceived Jewish community expressed as a nation. As becomes clear, Zweig’s novel depicts the ultimate victory of this latter vision as not without consequences: it results in the rule of a violent nationalism that marginalizes the Jewish ethical religious tradition which served as the basis of the Zweig’s own earlier utopian vision of a non-violent Jewish nationalism.

Simultaneous with the battle of secular and religious spatial modes is a second dynamic on display throughout De Vriendt’s early pages: a reckoning with the divergence between the Zionist dream and the spatial reality on the ground in Palestine. We learn de Vriendt first came to the land as a zealous Zionist, but became disenchanted with the project and its “reality” in Palestine, and as a
result, became Orthodox and joined Agudat Israel. Nowhere is this disenchantment more evident than during Irmin and de Vriendt’s journey northward from Jerusalem to the Galilee.

During the men’s journey, the narrative dwells in the interstitial space between departure point and destination, carefully describing sights along the road and capturing the landscape for readers. This journey, much like that undertaken by Litwak, Löwenberg and Kingscourt on their way to Tiberias, provides an opportunity to examine the landscape of the northern part of the land Jews are settling. In Herzl’s telling, the landscape is full of blossoming flowers and trees. People are few, and buildings only exist as a testament to the emergence of a modern, technologically advanced society.

De Vriendt and Irmin, by contrast, witness something far different. Leaving Jerusalem, they travel through the districts of Judea. By the side of the road, an Arab peasant [Bauer] is already at work, but the reader learns that “zwischen Jerusalem und der Ebene Jesreel findet sich fast kein jüdisches Land” (DV 102). Along the way, the two witness a few places where the mandatory government has recently begun reforesting, protecting these areas from grazing goats with “Drahtzäune und Verbotstafeln” (DV 102). The journey northward through the desert, briefly punctuated by sad attempts at revitalization, contradict the palm-laden drawings of Das neue Kanaan and Herzl’s utopian dreamscape in Altneuland. Several years after Löwenberg and Kingscourt’s purported journey to visit the “New Society,” land in actual Palestine has still not been acquired; most is still not “Jewish”. The reforestation celebrated in Herzl’s novel is here limited, at best. Goats threaten even the few attempts that are made, and the image of “No Trespass” signs indicates that the goats’ owners – probably friend and kin of the Arab peasant – do not recognize the Zionist project’s or British Mandatory government’s legitimacy.

De Vriendt’s own words provide explicit commentary on these images. Despite the land’s failure to live up to Zionist dreams, he declares it “wunderbar” and “bezaubernd”. He praises this
De Vriendt’s understanding of the land once again contains an implicit critique of the Zionist dream to make Palestine a showplace for modern technology, conquered by human ingenuity and scientific know-how; he instead asserts the supremacy of a sacred approach to the place. When one considers the prominent role of scientists, engineers and doctors in Herzl’s novel, this counter-narrative can only be read as a rebuke. De Vriendt is not enchanted by dreams of a land that acts as a showplace for human power. Instead, his narrative of the land foregrounds the historical and religious meanings of the landscape that passes by as Irmin’s car speeds northward. The description – including the mention of the biblical kingdom “Assur-Babylon” – introduces the reader to a landscape completely different than Herzl’s, whose vision of the land appears, by contrast, to be the product of an amnesiac.

The subtext of this counter-narrative becomes text when de Vriendt mentions, “ein österreichischer Schriftsteller namens Herzl,” about whom he “spottet ein paar Sätze lang über seine romantische Erscheinung und sein schwaches Talent” (DV 103). This is only one of two mentions of Herzl’s name in Zweig’s novel, but de Vriendt’s gloss proves instructive. He does not emphasize Herzl as statesman or politician, instead deeming him a “Schriftsteller,” albeit one of weak talent whose work has failed to truly grapple with Palestine’s reality. Indeed, the scoffing invites the reader to compare de Vriendt’s perception of the land with the vision Herzl propounds and lays out in *Altneuland*.

De Vriendt takes special issue with Herzl’s proclamation, “Jetzt ist die Stunde, Israel! Volk ohne Land, erlöse das Land ohne Volk.” He then adds that at that time, “wohnten damals schon dreihunderttausend Araber darin, aber das wußte er glücklicherweise nicht” (DV 103). This pronouncement makes explicit what the landscape descriptions of the previous pages implicitly provide: a recognition of Arab inhabitants in Palestine and a conscious attempt to fight against their erasure. De Vriendt’s perspective – one that both foregrounds land and the traces of Arab dwelling within the land – acts as a counter-narrative to Zionist dreams and the imagined landscapes conceived by far-off European Jews in books and essays. It confronts the reader with a different landscape, a place where exclusive Jewish rights to dwell are challenged and histories Zionists wish to relegate to the past assert themselves.

Political Violence and the Founding of a State

As I have already acknowledged, citing Jonathan Skolnik, de Vriendt is a multi-perspectival work that avoids privileging any single character’s point of view. This multi-perspectivalism is nowhere more on display than when considering the various, often conflicting valences and meanings different characters derive from, and project onto, Palestine’s landscapes. Some of these perspectives come to the fore in a conversation between two minor characters following de Vriendt’s assassination: Heinrich Klopfer and Eli Saamen. Klopfer and Saamen, a German and Russian Jew, respectively, are characters who first appear in earlier Zweig works, and within the context of De Vriendt are members of the Zionist elite who have just left a meeting of the Zionist executive, where the decision has been made about whom to send to de Vriendt’s funeral.280

As the two stroll, lapsing happily into their “Muttersprache,” German, the narrative foregrounds the firmament, which has radically changed, with the constellations appearing “[s]chon recht anders als drüben in Europa” (DV 143).281 In conversation, Klopfer and Saamen debate the proper reaction to de Vriendt’s death. On one hand, the man was an outspoken opponent of the Zionist mission; yet he was also a Jew who has ostensibly been gunned down by an Arab man in cold blood. The image of stars and constellations askew suggests the cosmic reorientation that life in Palestine requires of these men who have not yet fully given up their diasporic European Jewish habits and speech. The North Star, a vital source to orient travelers, has changed positions, framing the dislocation the two men are experiencing. In other words, the starry heavens above reflect how the Zionist project requires Klopfer and Saamen to adjust their orientation – physically and morally – now that they live in a land where the cosmic order is not the one they knew in Europe.

The conversation quickly makes this explicit, as Saamen suggests to Klopfer that Arabs may not in fact be responsible for de Vriendt’s death, but instead Jews. Klopfer shrinks back at such a thought, thinking to himself, “Politischer Mord? in diesem Lande? von Juden an einem Juden?” Saamen continues, suggesting that there are different sorts of Jews now in Palestine:

Wir wissen ja doch, wie gründlich unsere Stammländer uns umprägten. Sie denken deutsch und an deutsche Juden. Ich denke russisch und an russische. Unsere jungen Kerle schlagen zu, wenn Mann ihnen jemanden als Verräter hinstellt. (DV 144, emphasis added)

Here Saamen does not speak of a linguistic difference – both speak German natively – but rather of a national orientation that re-casts, or literally re-coins (umprägten), the individual from the ground up (gründlich), pointing to the earth or land (Grund) itself as the origin and depth of the various imprints on Jews. The “um” prefix, however, also implies that these lands of origin (Stammländer) have taken an original Jewish cast and modified it somehow.

281 For a similar reading, see Thielking, Auf dem Irwweg, 157, 165–75.
Klopfer, shaken (erschrocken), admits to himself:

Was verstand er von den Grundkräften in den Seelen, derjenigen, die unter dem Druck des Zarentums…aufgewachsen waren? Den Unterschied zwischen deutschen, österreichischen, russischen, britischen Juden spürte man auch in Jerusalem und bis zum Grabe…Wären die Kinder nicht gewesen – die Zukunft hätte bedenklich ausgesehen. Sie aber wuchsen auf der Straße zu einer hebräisch redenden Horde zusammen – quer durch alle Schichten, Klassen, Herkünfte und Beschäftigungen; sie verwoben ein Netz von gleicher Gesinnung, gleichen Idealen, gleichem Trotz und gleicher Begabung durchs Land. (DV 144, emphasis added)

Klopfer’s thoughts suggest that relocation alone cannot actualize the Zionist dream. Jews from Germany, Austria, Russia, and elsewhere are like coins that have already been pressed (“Druck”) and molded by forces such as Russia’s tsardom. Yet in future generations, he allows, inter-Jewish difference can be erased by the powers of the land (“durchs Land”) to create new human beings. Thus, the founding generation remains fundamentally divided by the divergent “Grundkräften” of their various lands of origin, with unity only possible after their passing. Accustomed to different conditions, they must recalibrate their “Gewohnheiten” and adapt to what for them is unnatural.

It is important to recognize in the language of coining and imprinting an extended metaphor running throughout De Vriendt. Readers first meet the eponymous character examining Roman coins at his desk, collected by the fellahin as they plow following the rainy season, after which “spie der Boden sie förmlich aus” (DV 28). Later on, following de Vriendt’s death, in the course of the riots, his house will burn to the ground, and the coins themselves will become “einen flachen Klumpen Silber, ausgossen wie geschmolzenes Blei” (DV 168). The narrative explicitly equates this to the human, the memory of whom, following death, “verfällt” (DV 168). Thus Saamen and Klopfer’s conversation finds resonances in the book’s other portrayals of coins, formed and reformed at different times.

282 Tobin points out that the emperor depicted on the coins in this scene is Emperor Hadrian, who was known for his persecution of the Jews, as well as his own pederastic relationship with a young Antinous, who de Vriendt also mentions. See Tobin, Peripheral Desires, 219–20. For a similar argument, see Thielking, Auf dem Irrenweg, 194–5.
This process, as Saamen and Klopfer’s conversation makes clear, is affected by origin countries – places of the diaspora – which fundamentally wire difference into Palestine’s Jewish community and can only be fixed in a future generation imprinted by a new place – Palestine – with a unified image. Here, readers encounter a modified version of Zweig’s spatial imaginary as found in *Das neue Kanaan*. On the one hand, Klopfer and Saamen understand the mystical powers of land to act upon the human. Yet here, the landscape takes on a sinister patina, deviating from its positive valuation in Zweig’s earlier essay. It is, as the starry heavens above indicate, a disorienting place: possibly deadly and restructuring inter-Jews relations in such a way as to make Jewish political assassination possible.\(^{283}\) These new values appear to require violence and an eschewing of Jewish religious (and inherently to Zweig, ethical) tradition so valued in the diaspora. As Ursula Schumacher, reading this passage, pointedly puts it: “die Verwirklichung des jüdischen Nationalismus ist nur unter Verleugnung der ‘geistigen’ jüdischen Substanz als politische Realität denkbar, genauso wie die unbedingte Bewahrung dieser Geistigkeit in letzter Konsequenz die Existenz gefährdet”.\(^{284}\)

Reflecting this new violent Jew, Eli Saamen continues the conversation, reflecting on the Israelites’ time in Egypt. He imagines himself an engineer, as he is in the present moment, but during earlier times, directing construction of the pyramids and supporting Moses when he “den Ägypter totschlug”; he concludes: a “Politischer Mord am Anfang unserer Geschichte” (DV 146). In response, a horrified Klopfer considers that this to be akin to “Romulus und Remus…Kain und

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\(^{283}\) It is worth mentioning that de Vriendt’s assassin Mendel Glass is not born in the land, but is a newly-arrived *Chaluz* (pioneer) from Eastern Europe; yet the book makes clear his firm rejection of the old-world Jewish cast.

\(^{284}\) Schumacher, *Die Opferung Isaaks*, 179.
Abel. Am Anfang jeder Staatsgründung ein Brudermord” (DV 147). These examples, given in quick succession, provide a series of suggestive mythological frames for de Vriendt’s assassination.

The first draws on the biblical story of Moses’s murder of an Egyptian overseer in his aborted early attempt to liberate the Israelites from their bondage. It dovetails, in turn, with a poem (Vierzeiler) of de Vriendt’s cited earlier in the novel:

Weil Mosche einen Mann erschlug, der schlug 
Schlugst Du den Mosche: er betrat es nicht, 
Das Land, das Du versprochen ihm als Pflicht; 

This text, which might be understood as a complement to the Saamen and Klopfer conversation, depicts Moses as denied entrance into the Promised Land because of his murder – understood as a political assassination by Saamen and Klopfer – of an Egyptian.286 Taken together, conversation and poem suggest that political violence, the very thing which once prevented Moses’s entry into the Promised Land, might again foreclose contemporary Zionist attempts to actualize a utopian society in Palestine and thereby “enter” a latter-day Promised Land.

285 Tobin incorrectly writes that Zweig attributes the quatrains to de Haan. See Tobin, Peripheral Desires, 223 and 280n60. For the original citation, see Sigmund Freud/Arnold Zweig Briefwechsel, 59. In a later letter, Zweig mentions that he had encountered five of de Haan’s original quatrains earlier in a “journalistic prose translation” from the man’s final work, Kwatrijnen (1924). See Ibid., 61. The five quatrains Zweig mentions were probably those published in several Jewish periodicals around the time of de Haan’s death, including in Der Jude, which Martin Buber founded in 1928. Hugo Bergmann, “De Haan als Dichter,” Der Jude 8, Heft 10 (1924): 598–600. Other literal translations of the quatrains can be found in “De Haan,” Das jüdische Echo: bayerische Blätter für die jüdischen Angelegenheiten. Mitteilungen der Zionistischen Vereine Bayerns 11, Nr. 34 (August 22, 1924): 234. See also Thielking, Auf dem Irrweg, 125.

286 According to the biblical narrative, Moses is not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he disobey God while the Israelites are wandering in the desert (see Numbers 20:1–12 and Dueteronomy 32:51–2). The alternative interpretation given in the Vierzeiler can be found in Midrash Petirat Moshe (“Midrash of the Passing of Moses”). For a translation of the relevant passage into English, see Nehama Leibowitz, Studies in Shemot: the Book of Exodus, trans. and adapted Aryeh Newman (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976) 1:44–46. I am grateful to Professor Dov Weiss for his aid in locating this source.
Another story Saamen mentions, the account of the first fratricide in Genesis – Cain’s murder of Abel – is equally suggestive. In the biblical narrative, God confronts Cain with his brother’s murder, exclaiming, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground.” God continues: “Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a wanderer and a drifter on the earth.” Following this curse, Cain is “driven from the land,” leaves his home, and founds the first city. Here, the city can be read as a testament to his lack of rootedness, an image of his relentless wandering and alienation from the soil that many Jews, especially cultural Zionists, sought to escape in their creation of a Jewish state.

These two biblical stories, then, suggest how violent political acts foreclose the possibility of entering utopian space (Moses) and result in expulsion from home (Cain). They also portend the true cost of de Vriendt’s assassination: consequences that include the real-life 1929 Arab riots in Palestine, which lead to the deaths of over a hundred Jews and Arabs, each. In this frame, the Saamen-Klopfer allusion to these stories of violence not only becomes the explanation for the death of one Jew (de Vriendt) at the hand of his “brother” (Glass), but also for the murders of Arabs and Jews by one another, who as Semitic peoples kill each other might be understood as committing repeated acts of fratricide.

Within this context, it is worth reiterating that Zweig does more here than just situate de Vriendt’s assassination in a longer genealogy, suggesting that Zionism must give itself over to political violence as the price for admission into nationhood. More fundamentally, these images

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287 Genesis 4:9–11 (NASB), emphasis added.
suggest that political violence precludes utopian futures generally, and that in particular the Zionist project is necessarily compromised by its reliance on violence.288

The Passing of Labor Zionism and N.A. Nachman

In the part of De Vriendt that I have analyzed thus far, I have largely focused on the novel based on its own internal narrative. I have sought to draw out a series of thematic strains where the novel highlights the contradictions underlying Zionist dreams and the implication that the violence necessary to actualize these utopian dreams will simultaneously foreclose the possibility of their realization. In the following two sections, I draw our attention to two scenes where Zweig makes this point explicit by mirroring two critical scenes from Herzl's Altneuland. In each of these scene pairs – one at a Kibbutz/Tiberias, the other at the Dead Sea – I argue that De Vriendt critically rewriting Herzl's novel and in so doing, welcomes readers to compare its alternative, violent spatial reality with Altneuland's utopian landscapes.

The first of these two scenes, which takes place on a Kibbutz, shares important characteristics with the scene in Altneuland's final chapter where the Littwak matriarch passes. In Altneuland, the death of David Littwak’s mother accompanies Löwenberg and Kingscourt’s entrance into the “New Society.” Yet it is more than the death of an individual soul which Herzl depicts. During his eulogy for his mother, David makes the greater significance of her death explicit:

288 In making this argument, I am partially in agreement with George Salamon’s reading of the De Vriendt. He writes that Zweig “leads us to conclude that both [Jewish] intellectual achievement and predisposition to socialist utopianism are consequences of the inaccessibility to Jews of expression and activity in the spheres of power and politics…Palestine, to be sure, offered a large number of Jews the first opportunity in modern history to determine all aspects of their destiny. No longer were utopian dreams or mathematical abstractions required as substitutes for social roots or political and economic independence. But Zweig’s…fascination with de Haan/De Vriendt reflect[s] his doubts about the survival of these very same Jewish qualities.” Here, I would emphasize Salamon's word doubt, as opposed to certainty. In the final part of my analysis, I highlight that while Zweig does question the ability for utopianism and political power to coexist, he still holds out hope for the perseverance of an ethical Zionism. See George Salamon, Arnold Zweig (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 130–1.

As Littwak’s description makes clear, with its recalling of “Elend” and “Zeit der Leiden,” his mother functions as a diasporic figure. In line with the bourgeois domestication of religion in the nineteenth century, where religion exited the public sphere and became a private matter that took on an increasingly feminine aspect, the Littwak matriarch is read as the site of domestic piety. Yet even more, David not only associates her within the home as the site where bourgeois religion in an age of secularization is practiced; she represents the house itself and Judaism at once. With related spatial and religious images superimposed on her, David’s mother becomes the representative of diaspora Judaism: the home for the Jewish people when they had no other home. Thus, the coincidence of David’s election as leader of the New Society, which marks the ascension of the Jewish male to political power, and the death of his mother, is no accident. With complete Jewish access to political power, diasporic Judaism and its representative in the form of David’s mother can now be completely laid to rest.

In De Vriendt, I argue, Zweig provides a literary counterpart to this scene. During the Arab riots unleashed following de Vriendt’s assassination, three characters travel from Haifa to Tiberias to reach the bedside of another figure who also lays dying, though this time it is not from natural

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289 See footnote 136 above.

290 See footnote 96 above.
The three travelers – de Vriendt’s then unknown assassin, Mendel Glass, the British detective Irmin, and a medical doctor, Philipsthal – leave Haifa upon hearing of a wounded elderly kibbutznik in the Galilee who has been shot and requires immediate medical attention. In their own way, the group acts as a counterpart to Kingscourt and Löwenberg, who also rush to Tiberias to reach the deathbed of David Littwak’s mother.

On arrival at the Kibbutz, the old man who has been shot, N. A. Nachman, a giant whose name is “im Lande häufig” is near death (DV 190). Nachman is clearly modeled on the aforementioned Labor Zionist A. D. Gordon, a Russian Jew who immigrated to Palestine at forty-eight and spent the final decade of his life working in the Galilee, finally settling in the Kibbutz Degania Alef. Although a socialist, Gordon opposed the other Jewish parties with ties to international socialism, hoping to develop a uniquely Jewish form of socialism through labor on the land. Moreover, like we will see with Nachman, Gordon was adamant about the need for a peaceful Jewish-Arab coexistence, arguing, “their [i.e. Arab] hostility is all the more reason for our [i.e. Jewish] humanity.”

Once at Degania Alef, the travelers learn that as Nachman went out earlier the night before, a “verirrte Kugel eines von fernher gefeuerten Schusses mußte ihn gestreift haben” (DV 193). The old man, who has little hope for recovery, doses. Upon awakening, and at peace with his death, Nachman demands that he be buried “am Abhang oben, in den Steinen. Kein fruchtbares Stückchen

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291 On De Vriendt’s publication, the Jüdische Rundschau published this section of the novel as an excerpt in its pages. See Arnold Zweig, “Sterben eines alten Mannes,” Jüdische Rundschau 37, No. 92 (November 18, 1932): 447.

292 For two readings of Nachman as Gordon, including a connection to the quote, see Salamon, Arnold Zweig, 134 and Schumacher, Die Opferung Isaaks, 183. Thielking reads Nachman as an homage to either Gordon or Ahad Ha’am. See her Auf dem Irrweg, 115.
Erde vergeudet mit mir...Ich habe das Land geliebt,” (DV 195). He then recalls a “place in the scripture” he always liked, “die von den siebzig Jahren und der köstlichen Mühe und Arbeit [erzählt]” (DV 196). Nachman’s burial wishes, together with his evocation of Psalm 90, situate him as a latter-day Moses. Similar to Moses, Nachman wishes to be laid to rest in an overlook among stones, where he does not take up valuable land and one would assume looks out over the Kibbutz he worked to actualize. 293

Nachman also alludes to the only chapter attributed to Moses in the Psalmody, a work that speaks of the transience of life and humanity’s inevitable return to dust. The Psalm concludes with the line, as Nachman alludes to, “confirm for us the work of our hands.” 294 This final refrain and felt need to appeal to God to confirm or establish the effort of human labor captures a thematic thread of the Psalm: the precarity of human achievement. Unlike David Littwak’s mother, who passes, assured of the success of the “New Society,” now led by her own son, Nachman passes with a final word about the transience of life and implicitly, the precarity of the Zionist project.

These markers that invite Nachman’s comparison with Moses suggest that like when the Israelites entered into the Promised Land – in its own form a utopian place – contemporary Zionists are also losing an important leader from the founding generation. This death, moreover, is not a natural one: it is brought about by a stray bullet that whizzes across the kibbutz’s fields. Who exactly is responsible remains unclear: the immediate suspicion is that is comes from the neighboring Arabs, though others suggest that it might have come “von einem jüdischen Schomêr” (Hebrew: guard)

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293 For the biblical traditions about Moses’s burial place, see Deuteronomy 32:49–50 and 34:6.

294 Psalm 90:17b (NASB)

In a dynamic that echoes de Vriendt’s assassination, the fatal bullet that passes through Nachman may come from either a Jewish or Arab weapon. The ambiguity once again blurs the lines between Arab and Jew. It suggests that inter-Jewish and Jewish-Arab violence are two sides of the same coin: a reoccurrence of a fratricide found in both the aforementioned Cain and Abel and Romulus and Remus stories. And just as Moses, who murders a fellow Egyptian in an attempt to free the Israelites from captivity, and as a consequence is unable to enter into the Promised Land because of violence, Nachman’s death suggests a similar dynamic where violence forecloses utopian possibilities. The suggestion that the land itself has unleashed the bullet, a messenger of sorts, suggests that Palestine’s ground has internalized this cycle of violence, becoming its own actor that participates in and unleashes its own bloodshed. On his deathbed, Nachman seems to sense just such a dynamic, and begs his fellow kibbutzniks that they do not investigate further or take vengeance on the Arabs. Very clearly, the dying man seems to understand the threat that just such a cycle of violence poses to the Zionist project.

Nachman’s refusal to participate in the violence and entreaties that revenge not be sought is emphasized when he discovers that Mendel Glass is present to provide blood for a transfusion. Although unaware of de Vriendt’s death and his potential blood donor’s role in it, he refuses Mendel’s blood, saying, “Dein Blut will ich nicht, Junge…Es soll überhaupt keines weiter vergossen werden.” (DV 195). Shortly thereafter, reflecting on these events, the assassin considers “Es wäre besser gewesen, er hätte es angenommen, Blut für Blut, das bot einen Ausgleich.” (DV 197). Here, Mendel draws a direct line between his murder of a fellow Jew and the Arab-Jewish violence threatening to tear the land apart. His thoughts reveal a tendency to believe in the ability for violent retribution (“Blut für Blut”) as the means to achieve harmony (“Ausgleich”). Meanwhile Nachman, a
victim of the logic of violent retribution that has now infected the land, refuses participation in such a scheme. Yet importantly, the scene ends, not with Glass’s death, but with Nachman’s. As Ursula Schumacher argues, Nachman’s refusal of Glass’s blood and his death signal an end to “der durch Nachman lebendigen Utopie,” suggesting that Mendel Glass’s violent nationalism “läßt keinen Raum für die friedvolle Arbeitsphilosophie Nachmans.”

As I have already suggested, the thematic strains of Nachman’s death are exentuated when put in conversation with the death scene of the Littwak mother in Altneuland. In this instance, the mirroring takes on a critical aspect. Littwak passes peacefully surrounded by friends and family in a transformed Tiberias that has become a spa town for both members of the New Society and distant Europeans. Her death is preceded by the announcement of her son’s ascension to the highest political office in the land and suggests a natural passing of one era to another. Judaism is no longer required to house the Jewish people; instead, a new, secular political order has replaced and surpassed it and utopian dreams are accomplished without recourse to violence.

Nachman, too, passes, and in a kibbutz near to Tiberias. Yet he does not find himself in a majestic home in a city turned vacation spot. It is instead in a kibbutz – an attempt to erect a socialist utopian society where manual labor and connection to the land is believed to hold redemptive possibilities. Nachman, in turn, though not feminine or an explicitly religious figure, represents the death of an older, ethical Jewish tradition. His life is not ended naturally, nor does his passing simply mark the clear order of things. Instead, a bullet that kills him comes out of the very ground, heralding the danger posed to the Zionist utopian project. In other words, for Zweig, the passing away of older, forms of Judaism are not to be celebrated, but to be mourned as deep losses.

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295 Schumacher, Die Opferung Isaaks, 182.
Meeting at the Dead Sea

Shortly following Nachman’s death, the as-of-yet undiscovered assassin Mendel Glass senses the detective Irmin closing in on him and resolves to take a position at a potash (potassium carbonate) production facility at the Dead Sea, resolving to hide out there, away from the main centers of action in Palestine, evading – he hopes – Irmin’s notice. His encounter with the elderly kibbutznik has made him aware of the folly of his assassination of de Vriendt. He admits, “er ging ja jetzt freiwillig in Zwangsarbeit bei fünfzig Grad Celsius, und wenn er Glück hatte und dies ein halbes Jahr durchhielt, ohne verhaftet zu werden, konnte er annehmen, daß dieses Dummheit gesühnt war. Das Wort Sühne fiel zum erstmal in seine Gedanken” (DV 206). Glass’s hope for atonement suggests a secular frame with religious vocabulary where labor itself provides expiation for transgressions, a need that readers are led to believe comes about after his meeting with Nachman. The Dead Sea thus becomes the place at which Mendel Glass, and perhaps all of Palestine, seeks to have the violent forces unleashed by an assassin’s bullet absorbed and their effects muted.

Before providing a full reading of the Dead Sea in De Vriendt, however, let us again turn to Herzl’s depiction of this same location in Altneuland’s penultimate section. It is in recognizing the contrast of the depiction of this location that I propose we see the full import of Zweig’s intervention. In Altneuland, Herzl introduces the Dead Sea as a majestic location to his readers. To reach the place, Löwenberg, Kingscourt and their other companions effortlessly glide on an electric rail “in die bezaubernd junge Landschaft,” amazed as life flourishes all around them (ANL 271). The New Society, it is allowed, has not figured out how to change the forces of nature, but it has “die

296 See Rokem, Prosaic Conditions, 90–4, where Rokem compares the technology on display at the Dead Sea with Herzl’s use of the technology of prose. In Zionist Paradox, 63–4, Schwartz describes the power station at the canal as a “technological temple” where “the machine takes the place of God.”
Naturkräfte besser kennen und ausnutzen gelernt” (ANL 272). As David Littwak contends, “Die wahrer Gründer von Altneuland…waren die Wasserbautechniker” (ANL 272). The highlight of the entire project is the canalization of the Jordan and its connection to the Dead Sea. This leads to the aforementioned blossoming landscape full of flourishing crops; and as the narrative proudly announces, “Und so geschah es, daß wieder Milch und Honig in der alten neuen Heimat der Juden floß, und es war, was es gewesen: das Gelobte Land!” (ANL 277).

The tour ends at the site of the Dead Sea, where engineers have manipulated the body of water’s deep location to produce power. Kingscourt immediately responds, suggesting that in his day, Niagara Falls had produced forty-thousand horsepower to which David Littwak boasts that this operation produces half a million horsepower. The overwhelmed audience gazes out, surveying the body of water before them, “weit und blau…groß wie der Genfer See” (ANL 279). As they look, the narrative announces, “Der Kanal hatte das Tote Meer zum Leben erweckt.” (ANL 279)

It continues as Kingscourt examines “d[ie] eiserne Röhren, in denen das Kanalwasser auf die Turbinenräder schlug,” favorably reminding him of Niagara once again (ANL 279). The pipes appear as “phantastische Rauchfänge” and Löwenberg, overwhelmed by the roar of the waters and the imposing technical feats before him, revels in the “altneue Land” that is now traversed by these waters, which “machte es aufblühen, daß es ein Garten und Heimat wurde für Menschen, die ehemals arm, schwach, hoffnungslos, heimatlos gewesen [waren]” (ANL 280). The frequent garden imagery evokes the original paradise, the Garden of Eden. Löwenberg finally proclaims, “Ich fühle mich zermalmt von dieser Größe,” to which David Littwak replies, “Uns…hat die große Kraft keineswegs zermalmt – sie hat uns erhoben.” (ANL 280)

This final image evokes David Caspar Friedrich’s *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1818). In this instance, however, the human being is not overwhelmed by the sublime powers of unbridled nature; instead, powerful waters harnessed by human technology and innovation in service of a
utopian society provide the impetus for feelings of sublimity. Herzl depicts a Dead Sea canalized and in perfect homeostasis with the Jordan, with a constant balance of salt and freshwater. His narrative reveals in human ability to harness that which is by name dead, and reanimate it, just as it provides both water and electric power to enliven Palestine’s whole landscape. It is a celebration of human ingenuity and technology endowed with almost messianic powers to actualize the building of this new society.

It is with this as context that I propose we turn again to *De Vriendt*. Unlike Herzl, Zweig’s narrator seems less enchanted by human ingenuity, directing a more skeptical eye toward the ability for technological innovation to change the landscape. Within the narrative, Mendel Glass quickly secures a position at the potash factory. Irmin meanwhile becomes convinced of Glass’s guilt for de Vriendt’s murder and discovers his whereabouts. On the sabbath, when he is assured that Mendel will not be working, Irmin journeys out to the Dead Sea. Unlike the effortless move through space that Löwenberg and the others experience on the electric rail, Irmin’s “Wagen mit gedrosseltem Motor” traverses the landscape and the steep twelve hundred meter drop, “weinend, singend” (DV 224).

As he examines the view from his car, whose brakes threaten to fail, the reader learns that he “hat aus den Botanikern und den Geologen der Universität manches herausgeholt: knapp jenseits des Ölbergs verlässt man die Pflanzengrenze der Mittelmeerwelt und tritt in die Wüstenflora ein. In der Wüste gilt das Gesetz der Blutrache und der streng gemessenen Vergeltung” (DV 224). In contrast to Herzl’s images of overwhelming bounty and green luscious landscapes, *De Vriendt* narrates a desolate world where flourishing ceases and those few plants capable of surviving are governed by the curiously human “laws” of vendettas and vengeance. As Sigrid Thielking notes, “hier wird das Erlebnis der unheimlichen, seltsam anziehenden Landschaft stimulierend auf Irmins
Yet more than a simple relation, I would suggest that the landscape takes on an active role in the story. Moreover, Irmin’s experience also provides an inverse image of *Altneuland*’s mirage, as the landscape reflects Palestine’s human society and Irmin’s own intentions on his trip to meet Mendel Glass.

Approaching the Dead Sea, he examines it and its unparalleled power, “vierhundertmal Meter hochgetürmt, herniederschlagen und alles Lebendige zerschmettern und ersäufen müßte, ein millionenfacher Niagara” (DV 225). Unlike the powerful forces which raise the New Society up, allowing it to flourish, Irmin only observes a force that crushes and drowns all life that encounters it. This is no way the life-giving source of energy that powers the whole society in *Altneuland*.

The sea itself, “groß wie der Bodensee” – rather than Lake Geneva in *Altneuland* – is a single “giftige Lauge” (DV 225). Indeed, the water’s deadliness is something the narrative returns to repeatedly throughout the chapter. Even bathers must be careful, as underneath the sea’s “schimmernden Lieblichkeit lauert für Unvorsichtige der Tod, ein unangenehmer Tod,” as the sea, “duldet…kein Lebewesen; es ist wahrscheinlich die einzige Masse eines Elements auf Erden, in der sich kein Pflanzenkeim hält, keine Tierzelle, nichts!” (DV 226). In short, just as Herzl’s narrative revels in the life-giving powers of the canalized Jordan and Dead Sea, Zweig’s narrative constantly highlights the poisonous and life-threatening nature of the deep blue body of water at the edge of Palestine. Just as the landscape in *Altneuland* functions as a testament to human ingenuity and a celebration of the New Society’s achievement, accomplished by transformed, manly Jews, this landscape provides a reflection of Jews transformed by a sinister landscape full of death.

Irmin, once he arrives, encounters Mendel Glass and invites him out on a boat ride on the deadly sea. Once out in the middle of the waters, Mendel Glass provides an explanation of pipes...
sticking out from the water’s surface. Rather than “phantastische Rauchfänge” that seem to arise from the mists of roaring waters, he reports of “den Schwierigkeiten, die zu überwinden waren, ehe sich die langen Pumprohre in der richtigen Tiefe verankern ließen.” Even afterwards, readers learn, these pipes do not function and workers must “die ganze Sache von neuem anfangen, wie bei einem schwierigen Brückenbau” (DV 230). Zweig’s narrative thus denies the reader the easy enjoyment of a finished landscape found in Altneuland, choosing instead to foreground the hard, often pointless labor required to make the landscape yield to human manipulation, focusing the reader’s gaze on the labor necessary to actualize a finished product.


Unlike Irmin, who appeals to eternal principles of justice and accountability, Glass instead proposes that Palestine has now fully become like all the other lands on the planet, where might makes right and political murder is simply an undeniable reality that cannot be called into question by ethical principles. In contrast to the frequent pronouncements throughout the novel, where various characters express disbelief that a Jew might murder a fellow Jew, Mendel Glass argues that full Jewish political sovereignty carries with it a concomitant reality where power and violence are the tools of the trade. In other words, Glass himself celebrates the inauguration of a new order in Palestine, where holy space is no longer set apart for principles of peace and justice to always reign.

In contrast to Glass’s image of a political order built on violence, Irmin cites from the final, unsent letter de Vriendt wrote him, where the assassinated Jew articulates an image of his own
desires. In it, de Vriendt writes that he longs for, “die Wahrheit um ihrer selbst Willen, die Gerechtigkeit um des Menschen willen, Erbarmen um der Gemeinschaft willen und Liebe um Gottes willen. Der Mut, dem eigenen Volke zu trotzen und ihm zu sagen, was ihm fehlt und woran es leidet.” (DV 233). In these few sentences, Irmin evokes a image of the potential society that Glass seems to have foreclosed by assassinating de Vriendt. Here, de Vriendt is revealed as the true utopianist, whose dreams are trampled as Palestine fully joins the community of nations.

Irmin, nonetheless hoping to carry out justice, orders Glass out of the boat, condemning him to swim to shore, knowing that if Glass should make but one false move or swallow even a tiny portion of the water, he will die. He states, “Laß das Urteil Gott oder das Salzmeer [das Tote Meer] sprechen” (DV 234). Glass mocks Irmin’s attempts at justice, responding, “Sie schaffen die Gewalt mit Gewalt aus der Welt, Sir,” highlighting his perception of the futility of any attempt to make Palestine a place where a peaceful, utopian order might reign (DV 234).

Glass eventually jumps out of the boat and swims ashore without incident. As Irmin observes, “das Salzmeer kam ihm zu Hilfe, der Richter Jam hamelach [das Tote Meer] sprach ihn frei” (DV 235). Glass is “acquitted,” but instead of attributing the decision to God, as in his earlier statement, Irmin concludes, “der Geist der Zeit in ihm hatte ihn gerettet” (DV 235). Unable to bear what he perceives to be the injustice of Glass’s survival, the British detective can only attribute this outcome to the “spirit of the times.” The new god in Palestine is the landscape embodied in the sea itself, a specter of death, where might makes right and violence reigns.

Here again, the landscape itself becomes the representative for a different kind of place, where the religious and ethical sphere has been cordoned off. Yet unlike in Herzl, this is a secular landscape in the sense that divine justice is absent and utopian dreams are throttled in the process of full Jewish political emancipation. In providing this critical counter-vision of the Dead Sea scene in Almenland, Zweig thus presents a full bill with the cost of Jewish political sovereignty.
The Graveyard: An Alternative Community

Readers of *De Vriendt kehrt heim* may be tempted to view the book’s penultimate chapter at the Dead Sea as Zweig’s final expression of despair at the direction of the Zionist project. Mendel Glass’s questionable acquittal at the hands of an ambivalent, or even violent, vengeful place can easily appear to be an echo of an unambiguous belief in the irredeemable nature of a violent Zionism rooted in the very landscape. Yet Zweig’s novel does not end at the Dead Sea, but rather at a graveyard on the Mount of Olives, at the erection of de Vriendt’s gravestone, one year after his death.298

Consistent with the spatial imaginary on display throughout *De Vriendt*, the narrator begins the chapter with a consideration of Palestine’s landscape:


On the one hand, this narrative reflection on Jews’ relationship to the land marries religious approaches with a broader Zionist belief in the power for Jews to redeem both land and themselves by laboring on it. On the other, the description is remarkable, as it highlights a religious understanding of Palestine as place that seems to have been marginalized, and indeed, killed, with de Vriendt’s assassination. Yet in the final pages of the novel, Zweig’s narrator seems to return to this older vision of Jewish attachment to “the land” and paint an image that acts as a counter-narrative.

On the mount, a diverse community visits de Vriendt’s grave: religious Jews from Agudat Israel, to whom the deceased had once belonged; a slightly matured Sāūd, his young Arab lover; and

298 Thielking portrays the passage as only “eine schwache Hoffnung auf Verbesserung”. For her full reading see *Auf dem Irrweg*, 234–42, here 116 is quoted.
finally, the agent Irmin. Unlike the Zionists, who after the uprisings “nirgendwo nahmen sie ernstlichen Schaden,” readers learn that “[v]iele Freunde hat jener August von [dem Rabbiner der Agudisten] genommen” (DV 237–8). Despite, or perhaps because of, the loss of so many of the Rabbi’s friends, he now has found a new mission. He no longer opposes the new pioneers in the land, but instead encourages “[dass] in den Gemütern mancher junger Zionisten die Thora als Lebensform des jüdischen Menschen in diesem Lande keimt” (DV 238). In short, the rabbi now models an alternative Jewishness that neither neglects old tradition nor dismisses possible innovation, but brings the two together in a dynamic synthesis.

Creeping in, Saûd comes from the other side of the Mount of Olives, mounting the cemetery wall. He finds the grave of his friend, where he speaks a Muslim prayer. Saûd’s attachment to de Vriendt, even a year after his death, suggests an enduring link between Arab Muslim and Jew that cannot be so easily severed, even after the conflicts of the previous year.

The final visitor is Irmin, recently returned from London with a new wife. The British official plans to settle in Palestine with his new family, and addresses the deceased de Vriendt, reporting, “Im übrigen werden wir ein Kind kriegen, hier im Lande wird es geboren werden, und ich will hoffen, das ihm ein besseres Schicksal blüht als Ihnen…” (DV 240). In a stunning final similarity with Herzl’s own novel, De Vriendt thus concludes with the decision of a non-Jewish outsider, much like Kingscourt, who chooses to tie his fate to the land and join this new society.

The final party present in the graveyard is de Vriendt. Readers learn:

Der Mann de Vriendt aber unter seinem Hügel in der Erde: ihm geht es besser denn je. Er liegt gelöst da, im wahren Sinne des Wortes, aufgelöst in seine Bestandteile, und schickt seine Substanz, die Moleküle und Zellen, die ihn bauten, aufwärts, in die Wurzeln und Würzelchen der Pflanzen, die sich trotz allem und allem zu ihm heruntergerasten haben, und die nur auf den Grund von oben warten, um zu wachsen, zu blühen, Samen auszustreuen. Sein Gehirn ist nicht mehr in seinem Schädel, die Individualität, das einmalige Wesen, in das er so zwanghaft und sich selber fremd hineingewachsen, die Hemmungen, die ihn hielten, die Triebskräfte, die ihn bewogen – alles wird Fruchtbarkeit, es hilft das Land bauen, es will wieder unter den blauen Himmel und mit Anemonen um die Wette neue Tänze von Atomen wirbeln lassen, aufs Neue kreisen, sich verflechten, sich zerstreuen. (DV 240–1)
In reading this passage, Sigrid Thielking attends to Freudian drive theory and picks certain utopian elements out of the scene; yet she also dismisses what she terms Zweig’s “skurrilen Hang zur Mythisierung des Bodens,” arguing “[d]ie hier angetroffene Vorliebe Zweigs für palästinensische Bodenmythen…zeigt hier seltsame Blüten, die hart an Grenzen zum Kitsch rühren.299

Unlike Thielking, I consider the mythologization of soil to be more than a “bizarre tendency,” but rather a constitutive part of De Vriendt’s structure. Moreover, while I agree that the graveyard scene contains utopian elements, I suggest that they are more to be discovered in the community formed around the gravestone and the redirection of de Vriendt’s drives, rather than the simple dispersal of them. For collected around the gravestone are not the violent Zionists who gunned the man down. Instead we find here an instantiation of an alternative community, a varied group of those viewed as enemies of the Zionist project: traditional religious Jews, an Arab boy, and a member of the British mandatory power. Here, they stand together, asserting their presence in the land, regardless of violent attempts to excise them from the Zionist narrative. In this then, de Vriendt as an explicitly religious, ethical figure contributes to an alternative, utopian project in death. Rather than a vague dispersal of his drives, which in life were at war with each other, they become

The force which moves an alternative utopian vision forward; and this contribution is manifested precisely in the landscape which it further enlivens.

Thus, in a manner quite contrary to Herzl, Zweig uses the final De Vriendt scene to imagine an alternative way out of the violent nationalist quagmire in which Palestine finds itself. Rather than imaging that religious particularity must be cordoned off and accorded its own sphere in order to achieve a multicultural, society housed in a modern state, Zweig charts a different path. When the diasporically-encoded, religious Jew passes, and a new communal configuration gathers around the body at novel’s end, the figure is not read as representative of a closed, bygone era, as Herzl understands the Littwak matriarch. Instead, Zweig suggests that this figure, de Vriendt, and all he represents, – an older, ethically-grounded Judaism – is not to be buried without second thought. For Zweig, instead, de Vriendt continues to represent something necessary to the Zionist project. For only in building on figures like him and what he represents, might utopia in Palestine still be possible.
CONCLUSION

Today, a tourist to the Middle East can visit the Herzl Museum, dedicated to the founder of modern Zionism. The museum and its grounds are located on a mountain named for the man on the outskirts of Jerusalem, now the capital of the State of Israel, itself nearing its 75th anniversary. The permanent exhibit is housed in low-flung building at the base of the mountain, and a short walk away stand the graves of the man himself, as well as his family members and other prominent individuals in the Zionist elite. Visitors to the permanent exhibit experience a celebration of the man himself, as well as his novel Altneuland, which they are led to believe is all but actualized in the Israel of today.  

Last year, on the 120th anniversary of the publication of Altneuland, the museum displayed the original manuscript for the first time and hosted a temporary exhibit about the novel. Located in a room directly opposite the entrance to the main building, this told a similar story to the one in the permanent exhibit. Spread across the walls in massive Hebrew letters, organizers posted the transliterated title “Altneuland” (אַלטנֶוֶלֶנְד). Each letter was filled with a graphic illustration of some part of Israel and juxtaposed with quotes from the novel – first in Hebrew, then in English and

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301 For the viewpoint of the exhibit’s curator, who understands the novel to be “part prophecy,” see Michal Horovitz, “Handwritten manuscript of Herzl’s utopian ‘Altneuland’ on display for first time,” The Times of Israel, May 14, 2022, https://www.timesofisrael.com/handwritten-manuscript-of-herzls-utopian-altneuland-on-display-for-first-time/.  

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Arabic. The exhibit left the visitor to conclude, if only implicitly, that Herzl’s prose, perhaps first authored in Hebrew, had been made real in the Jewish State in which the museum is situated.

Apart from any elision of the distance between Herzl’s novel and the Israeli State however, the exhibit stood out for an absence: the German language. Indeed, though one placard allowed that the book was first “published in German”, no original German quotes were posted, and the only German word to be found throughout was the title.\textsuperscript{302} In Hebrew letters, however, the name of Herzl’s only novel ran from right to left, providing, in miniature, an illustration of the problem at the heart of many modern-day – often if not only Israeli – readings of Alteumland. For in adapting the title into Hebrew, the visitor was welcomed into a reading of Herzl’s work that approached the text \textit{backwards} from the form it originally took.\textsuperscript{303}

Mapped onto a chronological continuum, it provided an illustration of many of the “backwards” approaches to Alteumland that result when readers approach the text from the present moment and extract Herzl and his utopian dream from the contexts from which they sprang.

Indeed, it has been the contention of the analyses in this work that more than just Alteumland, all the texts here under examination ought to be understood as literary products concerned with spatial issues borne of a German Jewish context. In approaching them with this lens, readers gain a more complete understanding for the work each and every author performed when setting pen to paper. In other words, we must make an effort to understand these works as a product of specific

\textsuperscript{302} Notably, the exhibit organizers used the word “published” rather than “written”. This is also present in the Hebrew: “תינמרגב הנושארל וא האר דנליונטלא.”

\textsuperscript{303} The point here is not that one way of reading is \textit{ipso facto} normative, simply that this way of reading runs counter to the normative means for reading a German text.
conditions – ideological, but also linguistic and historical – rather than as a prophecy or prediction of what was to come.

In reclaiming Herzl as a German Jewish product, my readings have sought to remove him from his pedestal as “prophet” or “visionary of the state” (הנידמה הזוח), as the Israel of today would claim. This act of recovery has sought to show how Altneuland and, indeed, the entire Zionist enterprise, need be read as at least partially indebted to the German Jewish emancipatory project. It has sought to disrupt the “radical rupture” narrative so many Zionists have told – one that has been especially tightly held in the face of the horrors of the Shoah. Moreover, it has shown how German nationalism, so often understood as inimical to Zionist longings, itself formed an important context and, indeed, model, for early Zionism.

Of course Herzl is not the only German Jewish author whose presence – or, as well shall see, absence – in the Israeli society of today bears remark. In 2007, Max Brod’s secretary, Esther Hoffe, who then held a collection of original Kafka manuscripts given her by her former employer and likely lover, passed. Soon thereafter, the fate of Kafka’s papers quickly became embroiled in a legal case about whether the National Library in Israel or Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany had the proper legal claim to the documents.

Beyond questions of legality and ownership of physical manuscripts, however, the court case over Kafka’s papers also resurfaced debates about Kafka’s “true feelings” about the Zionist movement. On the one hand, scholars like Judith Butler advanced a reading of Kafka as rejector of

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304 See here the final chapter in Volovici, *German as a Jewish Problem*, 200–28.

305 For more context, see Benjamin Balint, *Kafka’s Last Trial: The Case of a Literary Legacy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018).
Zionism and implicitly, but more importantly, the actual and real Israeli State today. Following their victory in court, the National Library of Israel processed the collection. In a blog entry on the institution’s website, librarians “revealed” Kafka’s Hebrew writings, which they now held. They thereby, if only implicitly, claimed him as an honorary, national writer.

Despite their opposing stances, both sides of this debate became united in their deployment of the Prague writer in a proxy battle over contemporary politics. They again sought to read backwards into the historical record commitments all of which Kafka could, by virtue of chronology, not hold. In my reading of Kafka, I have instead sought to reconstruct a writer responding not to Netanyahu or Likud, but instead to Herzl, and issues contemporary to both men. This recovery, in turn, has yielded a Kafka who understood Zionism as a literary conundrum, an author less concerned with questions of left and right-wing, and more interested with the very possibility and desirability of actualizing literary utopia.

Unlike the other authors populating the pages of this dissertation, the final author discussed here, Arnold Zweig, actually moved to Palestine and lived to see the founding of a Jewish State. Yet in the same year as Ben Gurion signed the Israeli Declaration of Independence under the watchful eye of Herzl in portrait, Arnold Zweig returned to the European continent and became a citizen of East Germany. Zweig’s life in Palestine had been anything but easy. As he wrote Sigmund Freud over a decade earlier, the “hebräische[] Nationalismus” of the land’s inhabitants left him to lead a “übersetztes Dasein”. Yet his publication of De Vriendt, shortly before his move to Palestine, was read as a betrayal by many in the Yishuv. As he asked Freud in the same letter: “Aber gehöre ich als


Staatsbürger zu diesen, die mich hier seit dem de Vriendt ignorieren? Indeed, though Zweig may have led a translated existence, *De Vriendt* only arrived belatedly in Hebrew translation in 1991, more than two decades after Arnold Zweig’s death a continent away in East Berlin.

These then have largely been the fates of the authors analyzed here – prophet, coopted proxy in modern Israeli politics, untranslated author, or, as discussed in the first chapter, figure of a usable Zionist (pre-)history. Each has, in his own way, become the victim of a politics less concerned with reading literary works on their own terms and more interested in the usability, or lack thereof, of literature in political debates of modern import. In my work, by contrast, I have sought to write against this impulse and attempted to perform a work of recovery. In reconstructing contexts, engaging in close readings, and attending to the archival record where available, I have striven to provide the reader with an image, not of literature as prelude to the real, but as worthy of attention on its own terms. The result of this attention, I hope, is to have provided my readers with experience akin to the one Herzl once had when he encountered the German kaiser and felt as if he had stumbled across a unicorn in a fairy-tale forest.

\[308\] *Freud/Zweig*, 130–1.
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