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## Between *Self* and *Other*

### Representations of Mixed Relationships in Contemporary German Film and Television

It is not just the influx of Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union since the early 1990s that has shaped the Jewish way of life in contemporary Germany, but also the fact that approximately half of all Jews have a non-Jewish partner. This illustrates two things: firstly, that mixed partnerships are a central component of contemporary German-Jewish reality; and secondly, that the separation between Jews and Gentiles is a construction that was quite possibly always nonfunctional and remains so since in this construction children from these ‘mixed relationships’ or ‘mixed families’ are disregarded. Whereas the former aspect is a frequent topos in filmic presentations, the latter is rarely represented in German film and television, and thus remains essentially invisible.

In talking about sexual relationships between Jews and Gentiles in this essay, we are not speaking primarily of social realities<sup>1</sup> but rather of cultural constructions (or sexual stereotypes) and their filmic representations. However, it is important to realize that these constructions are not without repercussions, as David Biale emphasizes: “When certain images are eroticized and others are deeroticized in literature, movies, or even theological writing, romantic expectations are unconsciously channelled: discourse creates desire.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, these filmic presentations influence social reality and the circulating images of Jews, as well as images of relationships between Jews and Gentiles. The presentation of mixed relationships is, however, not a phenomenon tied specifically to contemporary German film, which means that this topos appears both in contemporary and historical literary works, just as there are also older filmic presentations that are significant. For example, Paul Wegener’s silent film *Der Golem oder wie er in die Welt kam* (engl. *The Golem: How He Came into the World*; 1920), with its portrayal of desire between Jews and Gentiles and the depiction of an

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1 In this respect, the reference above should be enough to show that mixed relationships are a decisive part of the social reality of the Jewish way of life in Germany, independent of whether or not it is negotiated publicly/ openly. The statistics also look similar in the U.S. context, that is, approximately half of U.S. Jews live with non-Jewish partners; however, the social implications and identity consequences are more visible than in Germany due to the founding of such groups as [Interfaith.Family.com](http://Interfaith.Family.com) and [Half-jewish.org](http://Half-jewish.org).

2 Biale, David, *Eros and the Jews*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1997, 205.

erotic Jewish-Christian relationship, can be seen as iconic, one that has certainly shaped later portrayals.<sup>3</sup> In the contemporary U.S. film and television landscape, portrayals of mixed relationships are so numerous that only a few exemplars from the realm of television series can be mentioned here, for example *Sex and the City* (2000–2008), in which Charlotte, a WASP, converts to Judaism for her Jewish husband Harry Goldenblatt; or *The Nanny* (1993–1999), which revolves around the Jewish nanny Fran Fine, who is in love with her non-Jewish boss Maxwell Sheffield. These examples are significant, inasmuch as the effect of intertextual references between filmic and televisual texts (that is, audiovisual but also literary texts) cannot be underestimated.<sup>4</sup>

It becomes apparent in German examples, which will be examined in detail later,<sup>5</sup> that the filmically represented constellation is usually that of a Jewish man and a non-Jewish woman. In contrast, relationships between Jewish women and non-Jewish men occur far less often as the object of filmic presentations. In those few cases in which this configuration is dealt with, it is treated as a ‘forbidden love’ that has to be covered up or kept secret from the respective families – especially from the woman’s Jewish family. Jewish men seem to enjoy far more free-

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3 Omer Bartov describes Wegener’s Golem adaption as the “earliest and most influential extant cinematic depiction of European images of Jews.” He stresses that this early film seizes upon existing concepts or notions of Jews, makes them accessible to a wider audience, and in doing so popularizes them. The film provides images and models that generations of filmmakers, whose goals and intentions covered a wide spectrum, have either used or tried to avoid. At the same time, the obsession with sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews is one of the principal motifs of the film. Bartov, Omer, *The Jew in Cinema*, Bloomington: Indiana 2005, 3.

4 “[...] a process whereby certain cinematic types and images are constantly informed by each other, creating a kind of treasure house or arsenal of representations that can be drawn upon irrespective of the ideological or artistic predilections of the filmmaker and the social, political, or cultural context in which the film is made.” Bartov, Omer, *The Jew in Cinema*, x.

5 In its analysis, this essay concentrates on German feature films that were produced after 1990. Even more than documentary films, feature films tend to make cultural constructions visible and can therefore be considered particularly valuable sources of cultural stereotypes. A focus on the period prior to Germany’s reunification would certainly have been interesting in terms of taking both the ideological and societal differences between East and West Germany into account. However, concentrating on the time since the 1990s has the advantage that Jewish characters and topics have appeared much more often in popular culture since then and have thus attained much greater visibility in both cinema and television. This can be understood in terms of a global development: “In contrast to these earlier decades, this post-1990 cinematic shift was *global*.” (Abrams, Nathan, *The New Jew in Film. Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Cinema*, London 2012, 9.) So while German (television) films stand at the center of this analysis, American films and television series are also included for comparison. This allows both global relations and references of the filmic depictions and specific aspects and connotations of the German context to be taken into account.

doms and are less bound by the views or beliefs of their families. At the same time, they appear to exert a considerable power of attraction over non-Jewish women, which is why their relationships with these women are much more sexually denoted.

## Forbidden Love Across Boundaries

Both of the television programs that will be examined here deal exemplarily with the love between a Jewish woman and a non-Jewish man. In both cases, the relationship portrayed is marked as a romantic one that ends happily. However, before this happy ending takes place the characters experience conflict concerning if and how they should inform their respective families – particularly their Jewish families – of this *forbidden love*.

In one episode of the television crime series *Pfarrer Braun* (Pastor Braun; 2002 to present) entitled “Die Gärten des Rabbiners” (The Gardens of the Rabbi; 2008), the forbidden love between Alisha Grün and Gerd Kruschke leads to a kind of religious dispute. Although Pastor Braun and Rabbi Seelig agree that the young couple should be allowed to be together and also to marry for love,<sup>6</sup> a teasing sort of duel flares up around which of the two young lovers should be the one to convert to the religion of his or her partner. To this end, the men of God mutually instruct the lovers in the religion of the respective other. Catholicism and Judaism are contrasted with each other here, in a way similar to the U.S. romantic comedy *Keeping the Faith* (2000), in which two friends, a young rabbi and a priest, compete for the same (non-Jewish) woman. “Die Gärten des Rabbiners” does not even consider the option of a mixed marriage in which both parties maintain their own religious convictions. After a long period of time, during which Alisha and Gerd have kept their relationship secret from their families, the two men of God help them plan a talk with their families. At the end, Gerd and Alisha decide to defer their decision about conversion and in the meantime get married at the registrar’s office instead. This solution, portrayed as provisional, illustrates one of the consequences that a mixed marriage without conversion would entail and,

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6 As Pastor Braun says: “Eure Liebe ist ja nichts Verwerfliches, auch wenn Konventionen die Liebenden trennen. [...] Wenn wahre Liebe zum Problem wird, dann ist nicht die Liebe das Problem.” [“Your love is nothing reprehensible, even if convention is dividing the lovers. [...] If true love becomes a problem, it is not the love that is the problem.” L.W.] Rabbi Seelig agrees with this. However, neither of the two wants to lose a member of his congregation to conversion, which is why Braun tries to convince Alisha to become a Catholic and Seelig tries to convince Gerd to convert to Judaism.

especially in the setting of romantic love, can become perturbingly conspicuous: only a civil ceremony is possible.

However, in *So ein Schlamassel* (What a Mess; 2009) forbidden love is staged against a less religious background. Being Jewish offers a different kind of background here, which implicates other traditions and, above all, a different kind of family history (particularly in relation to National Socialism). Jil Grüngas and Marc Norderstedt do not conceal their relationship as Alisha and Gerd do in “Die Gärten des Rabbiners.” Instead, they pass Marc off to Jil’s Jewish family as the Jew Jonathon Rosenzweig. In this way, forbidden love becomes the background for, on the one hand, a comedy of mistaken identity and, on the other, a didactic piece about the Jewish traditions and customs that Marc has to study in order to carry off his masquerade. Pretending to be Jewish is a motif around which Dani Levy configures a large part of the humor in his exceedingly successful comedy *Alles auf Zucker!* (engl. Go for Zucker!; 2004). Here it is Jackie (Jakob) Zucker’s non-Jewish wife, Marlene, who passes herself off as being Jewish and has to transform her household into a Jewish, kosher one before Jackie’s orthodox relations arrive for the burial of his mother.

*Alles auf Zucker!* is not about the solution to a *mixed* relationship constellation that is being portrayed as problematic. The relationship between Jackie and Marlene Zucker is strained by other difficulties, like Jackie’s gambling addiction. But ultimately there is no disagreement about having a nonreligious or even atheist lifestyle; the compulsion to perform Jewishness comes from external sources.<sup>7</sup> In *So ein Schlamassel*, the question of possible everyday differences and implications of different religious convictions and traditions is not even posed. The pressure to adapt or change seems to come from outside and the differences experienced are also shown. In a kitschy reconciliation sequence, the happy ending camouflages all of the conflicts and differences that had been touched upon during the film. It declines the opportunity to suggest options for action and possibilities for encounters with others.

The Jewish women in these two films have nothing in common with the well-known stereotype from the U.S. context, that of the Jewish American Princess (JAP), who is described as beautiful, boldly styled, and obsessed with sprucing herself up, but who is simultaneously characterized by a lack of sexual desire or sexuality. Her body exists to be decorated and adorned, she doesn’t hold a job,

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<sup>7</sup> It is interesting here that Jackie Zucker in *Alles auf Zucker!* seeks a greater proximity to Judaism at the end of the film after his play has been revealed and decides not just to take care of his family more responsibly, but also to go to the synagogue more often / occasionally. The reunion and the reconciliation with his (orthodox) brother and the discussion of Jewish traditions have led him closer to his Judaism.

and is first and foremost interested in her own needs.<sup>8</sup> These are spoiled, pampered girls who refuse to grow up.<sup>9</sup> The portrayals here have just as little to do with reality as the trope of the overprotective Jewish mother, who is also shown as nonsexual, but solely consumed by her own motherhood.<sup>10</sup> Only the aspects of being sheltered by the family and deified by the father – which produces the phenomenon of the spoiled Jewish Princess – are even rudimentarily present. In this respect, the relationship between Jil and her father Benno in *So ein Schlamassel* becomes particularly close due to the early death of the mother, and at one point, when he presses her about whether or not she wants to get married, she replies affectionately that she would most like to marry him. It thus becomes clear that for her, the sexual component of marriage is not in the foreground. The adult Alisha is also sheltered by her parents: she lives with them and works in the family business. Her father, Adam Grün, calls her “meine Alisha” (my Alisha).

These filmic portrayals seem to revolve around a mixture of the image of the *beautiful Jewess*, who is seductive and desirable but still remains a stranger,<sup>11</sup> and the sheltered and family-oriented daughter of good Jewish breeding. Both Jil Grüngras and Alisha Grün are depicted as being educated and having a close relationship to their families. Both are attractive, dark-haired women with long, slightly curly hair. In spite of their explicit attractiveness, the focus of their relationships is shown to be primarily nonerotic. During a sex scene between Jil and Marc in *So ein Schlamassel* – which is fittingly, however, romantically framed – they lie in bed together and talk about children and family, whereas the characters in “Die Gärten des Rabbiners” exchange only stolen kisses and tender looks. In both cases it is apparent that we are dealing with romantic love that is intended to end in marriage and family. Taken as a whole, what is striking in both films is that Judaism, thought of in terms of demarcation, is construed as a reason for

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8 Prell, Riv-Ellen, *Why Jewish Princesses Don't Sweat. Desire and Consumption in Postwar American Jewish Culture*, 331, in: Gilman, Sander 1994.

9 Kalmar, Ivan, *Trotsky's, Freuds, and Woody Allens. Portrait of a Culture*, Toronto 1994, 216.

10 The discussions of stereotypes of Jewish women that are encouraged and cemented through U.S. Jewish popular culture demonstrate that popular Jewish culture is sexist. Jewish wit, for example, spares Jewish men to the greatest possible extent, whereas Jewish mothers, wives, and daughters are perhaps the most frequent targets of such humor. As Kalmar explains, it has to do with a strategy of dealing with anti-Semitism by giving priority to sexist treatment: Jewish women are exposed to ridicule, but as women, not as Jews. Kalmar, Ivan, *Trotsky's, Freuds, and Woody Allens. Portrait of a Culture*, 206.

11 According to Martin Gubser, the beautiful Jewess is a key component in the arsenal of Jewish characters in literature and vacillates between untouchability and oriental eroticism, located between virgin and courtesan, forever remaining other because the societal spheres from which she stems are distant and other to both the author and the recipient. Gubser, Martin, *Literarischer Antisemitismus*, Göttingen 1998, 110-111.

secrecy. Hence, Jil's Jewish family has a problem with her going out with a Goy, a non-Jewish man, not to mention her marrying him. Although there are anti-Semitic tendencies in Marc's family – the problems of which are expounded upon in one scene in which Jil visits them at home and an open conflict arises after an uncle's anti-Semitic joke – Marc's parents express no reservations about his Jewish girlfriend. Even in "Die Gärten des Rabbiners," Gerd's father's rejection of the relationship is more due to economic competition and personal antipathy between the fathers than reservations he has about his daughter choosing a Jewish partner. For Adam Grün, Alisha's father, in addition to personal motivation, he also just wants a Jewish son-in-law.

## Erotic Attraction and Forbidden Affairs

In the reverse constellation, the focus is on Jewish men and their powers of attraction over non-Jewish women, which is why sexual stereotypes of the Jewish man in this context are significant, just as the reflections are on what makes Jewish men attractive for non-Jewish women, specifically in a German context.

A powerful and inherently ambivalent sexual stereotype is the image of the Jewish man as a "sexual Shlemiel."<sup>12</sup> Although already established through literature and the Yiddish theater since the turn of the century, this image has been frequently repeated and reinforced in American culture, in particular by Philip Roth and Woody Allen. "He [Woody Allen; author's note] gets a lot of the credit for disseminating many of the popular stereotypes of the Jewish male, his sexual self-doubt and obsession with gentile women."<sup>13</sup> In an ambivalent construction, Jewish men are neurotic and impotent, self-conscious and self-doubting, but also very sexualized. Here, this stereotyping collides with the anti-Semitic image of the perverted, sex-hungry Jew who threatens the chasteness of Christian women.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Biale, David, *Eros and the Jews*, 205. Ivan Kalmar also describes the "sexual shlemiel" as the *Jewish nerd*: "And every Jewish man has to come to terms with being potentially thought of as an unmasculine, sexually placid shlemiel, or, to use a very rough yet in this context appropriate translation, a nerd." Kalmar, Ivan, *Trotsky, Freuds and Woody Allens. Portrait of a Culture*, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Biale, David, *Eros and the Jews*, 206.

<sup>14</sup> This image of the neurotic, sexually inhibited Jewish man is set in opposition to the omnipotent Israeli, who has escaped being unmanned by the Diaspora. The Israeli is not only militarily but also sexually potent, which is why Zionism can also be described as a sexual revolution: "One of the central claims of Zionism was that the Jews lived a disembodied existence in exile and that only a healthy national life could restore a necessary measure of physicality or materiality. This political ideology was not only used on the body as a metaphor;

Both of the following examples deal with highly erotically connoted relationships or affairs, which are, by way of the story's plot, construed as doubly forbidden and therefore cannot end happily. Whereas in the television series *Berlin, Berlin* (2001–2004) the Jewish restaurant owner Moshe, for whom the female (non-Jewish) protagonist Lolle works, is married, in the film *Liebe unter Verdacht* (Love under suspicion; 2002), the police superintendent Eva Bartoc begins an affair with Daniel Kahana, a suspect in an ongoing case. It becomes clear just how strongly the (erotic) power of attraction of these Jewish men effects the non-Jewish women who cross boundaries for them: Lolle steps over a moral boundary by getting involved with a married man, and Eva violates her professional ethics and ultimately crosses the boundaries of legality by covering up for Daniel at the end of the film. Moshe is a religious man who runs a kosher restaurant in Berlin. The tall, dark-haired and strikingly serious man is married to Sarah and has two children with her. He promises Lolle that he will leave his wife, something he keeps putting off using various excuses. The relationship between Moshe and Lolle is portrayed as highly sexual, even if there are romantic ambitions that ultimately remain unfulfilled. They separate at the end of the episode "Die Geliebte" (the lover), after Moshe decides to move with his family to the United States in order for his son, who is suffering from a cardiac illness, to get treatment from the best specialists. *Liebe unter Verdacht* is about a not quite so stereotypically sketched Jewish male. Daniel Kahana is the son of the murder victim, Baruch Kahana, who is portrayed as an important orthodox religious figure in the Jewish community in Berlin. Daniel is in fact well versed in Jewish religion and traditions, but identifies himself as an atheist. He neither eats kosher food nor observes the Shabbath, much to his father's disdain. At the same time, Daniel Kahana is depicted as educated and cultivated; he quotes from the Talmud, he is a pediatrician, and a superb cook. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is not just Eva Bartoc who

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it sought, in addition, to transform the Jewish body itself, and especially the sexual body. [...] In the spirit of the literature of national renaissance, Zionism promised an erotic revolution for the Jews: the creation of a virile New Hebrew Man but also the rejection of the inequality of women found in traditional Judaism in favor of a full equality between the sexes in all spheres of life." Biale, David, *Eros and the Jews*, 176–177. A satirical, excess application of this image to Israelis can be seen, for example, in the U.S. comedy film *You Don't Mess with the Zohan* (2008). Admittedly, in the context of this article the image of the Israeli is of subordinate significance, but it is an active trope in German films in which the plot leads to Israel. For example, in an episode of *Rosa Roth* (1994 to present), "Jerusalem oder die Reise in den Tod" (Jerusalem or the Trip toward Death), the police superintendent, Rosa, begins a short, passionate holiday romance with an Israeli, Uri, who works for the military and is frequently shown in uniform. Moreover, this image of the Israeli is significant as the antithesis of or foil for the Jewish man in the Diaspora as a sexual *Shlemiel*.

succumbs to his powers of attraction; one of his medical colleagues also lies for him and provides him with a false alibi.

Ivan Kalmar accounts for the interest of Jewish men in the Shiksa, i.e., the non-Jewish woman, with recourse to Woody Allen, who acts out this motif both on and off the screen.<sup>15</sup> The Jewish *ejí man*, Kalmar's acronym for "Embarrassed Jewish Individual,"<sup>16</sup> is marked by a lack of self-confidence. He fears that he is unattractive to Gentiles and to women in general, and believes that the best way to counteract these fears is in relationships with non-Jewish women.<sup>17</sup> Jewish men's obsession with having non-Jewish partners, and the powerful motif of the (blonde) Shiksa as the object of desire is founded in the sexuality of the Jewish man a being delineated as neurotic, self-doubting, and ultimately shaped by impotence (symbolized by circumcision). In the end, it is not just about overcoming the image of the effeminate, impotent Diaspora Jew, but also about the overcoming of Otherness. If one asks the question the other way around, what is it that accounts for the attractiveness of the Jewish man for the non-Jewish woman, one stumbles upon two significant aspects of this question: first, on which general image of the Jewish man is this interest founded? Second, how can this interest of non-Jewish women be localized and interpreted within a German context?

The attractiveness of Jewish men can generally be explained by their image as responsible husbands and fathers who promise security. They are viewed as good spouses, who do not drink or hit their wives,<sup>18</sup> and are considered to be kind and nonmacho.<sup>19</sup> Combined with the anti-Semiticly motivated stereotype that all Jews are extraordinarily clever and educated and, in addition to this, earn a lot of money, their attractiveness can be explained in spite of the stereotype of their neurotic sexuality. Furthermore, the Jewish man in the German context – more than in the U.S. one – is exotic, is the *Other*. Daniel Kahana's character in *Liebe unter Verdacht* is in accordance with this image is: he is educated, he listens, and he is very attentive to Eva, who has plunged into a crisis of belief. Thus, he takes off her gold crucifix necklace – which she has thrown away in deep shock at the start of the film after the death of a young colleague – and sends it to her at the end of the film although their relationship has already ended. She cannot cook so he cooks for her; his fathering qualities are shown in his profession as a pediatrician, which he practices lovingly and passionately. Ultimately, Moshe also corresponds to this image of the kind man. Although he begins an affair with Lolle,

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<sup>15</sup> Kalmar, Ivan, *Trotsky's, Freuds, and Woody Allens. Portrait of a Culture*, 234.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.



he does not leave his wife and he continues to meet his responsibilities to her and his family, especially when his son becomes sick. In spite of the slip-up of infidelity he remains a dependable husband and father as well as a conscientious and engaged businessman.

An interpretation of the interest of non-Jewish women in Jewish men, specifically in the context of German society, cannot be undertaken without consideration of contemporary German-Jewish relations. In doing so, one must consider not only the perpetual significance of the Shoah, but also the German interest in Jewish culture, which has been increasing since the late 1980s/ early 1990s. This interest should not be mistaken for an actual flourishing of the Jewish way of life in Germany,<sup>20</sup> which, according to Ruth Ellen Gruber, would lead to a *virtual Jewish culture*,<sup>21</sup> to a supposed Jewish culture that would, however, be primarily produced by non-Jews for non-Jews. There are various reasons for this rising interest in and increasing attention to Jewish issues. For one thing, from the early 1980s, after years of focussing on “dead Jews”,<sup>22</sup> young Jews became more prominent in cultural and political contexts, and thus became more visible. This second generation born after the Shoah started looking into its identity as Jews and Germans.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, this interest is of course significant in relation to German national identity, although the reasons for the wish to have a visible, lively Jewish culture in Germany need to be questioned. Katharine Ochse describes these reasons as contiguous with the National Socialist past and its continuous influence: “They

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20 “In the first place, speaking and writing about Jewish culture proves nothing except that there is an interest in having such a culture.” Ochse, Katharina, “*What could be more fruitful, more healing, more purifying?*” *Representations of Jews in the German Media after 1989*, 118, in: Gilman, Sander 1994.

21 “This is a process [the process of universalization of the Jewish phenomenon; author’s note] that in turn encompasses the creation of a ‘virtual Jewishness,’ a ‘virtual Jewish world,’ ‘virtual Jews who perform – or, as Bodemann put it, enact – Jewish culture from an outsider perspective, alongside or often in the absence of local Jewish population. In doing so, they may take over cultural and other activities that would ordinarily be carried out by Jews. In other cases, they create their own realities that perpetuate an image of Jewish presence.” Gruber, Ruth Ellen, *Virtually Jewish*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2002, 11.

22 “From 1945-80, it appeared that there was no such thing as a true German-Jewish culture any more. Germans paid homage to dead Jews, émigrés, outsiders, or exceptions” Zipes, Jack, *The Contemporary German Fascination for Things Jewish. Towards a Jewish Minor Culture*, 18, in: Gilman, Sander 1994.

23 This tendency was especially apparent in the field of literature, e.g., in Lea Fleischmann’s *Dies ist nicht mein Land. Eine Jüdin verlässt die Bundesrepublik*, Henryk M. Broder’s *Fremd im eigenen Land. Juden in der Bundesrepublik*, or more contemporary examples like Maxim Biller’s and Doron Rabinovici’s latest novels. Sander L. Gilman speaks of a regenerated/new self-confidence that has been increasingly articulated. Sander L. Gilman, *Reemerging Jewish Culture in Germany. Life and Literature Since 1989*, New York 1994, 1.

are to be traced back to the non-Jewish Germans' need to break free from the victim/persecutor relationship in which they seem locked."<sup>24</sup> The invisibility and absence of Jews in Germany has become a visible sign of the Shoah and its consequences, filling this void would thus mean deleting this visible sign.

## Mixed Families and Mixed-Jewish Backgrounds as a Void in Filmic Representation

The notion that Jewish and non-Jewish Germans can be distinctly differentiated between is an illusion that is not exclusive to contemporary Germany. During the Weimar Republic there was a substantial number of mixed marriages, which meant that National Socialists were faced with the task of subverting these associations, preventing 'mixing' or 'hybridization,' staging Jews specifically as Others distinct from Germans, and bringing about an ethnic rupture by way of propaganda and laws.<sup>25</sup> The number of Jews in Germany with Gentile (marital) partners illustrates that the separation of Jews and non-Jews as it is staged in the filmic presentations analyzed here, represents at the very most *one* part of the reality of the contemporary Jewish way of life in Germany. Hybrid Jewish identities remain a filmic void: people with part-Jewish backgrounds, who are to some extent held to be Jews (if they have a Jewish mother), even if they are not religious or were not brought up religiously, can also be held to be non-Jews (if they "only" have a Jewish father). Such hybrid or fragile Jewish identities are barely represented in the contemporary German film and television landscape. They can be characterized by the fact that they are ambivalent, they cannot be precisely assigned to one category, they cannot be set in opposition to the non-Jewish German as exotic or Other and, above all, with respect to the (various) categorizations as Other – for example, Jews and Gentiles – their images of self differ starkly. In films like the coming-of-age teen film *Max Minsky und ich* (Max Minsky and I; 2006/2007), in which the adolescent, Jewish protagonist Nelly Sue Edelman grows up in Berlin with her Jewish-American mother and her non-Jewish father, even when such mixed familial constellations do emerge they are mentioned peripherally rather than explicitly broached as subjects or problematized in relation to the localization of the character's identity. For Nelly, the questions that are posed

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<sup>24</sup> Ochse, Katharina, "What could be more fruitful, more healing, more purifying?" *Representations of Jews in the German Media after 1989*, 120, in: Gilman, Sander 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth, *Juden. Deutsche und andere Erinnerungslandschaften*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, 53-55.

in the course of her growing up are related to the role family, Jewish tradition, and her Bat-Mitzvah play and should play for her; these questions, however, are not brought into the context of her non-Jewish father and her mixed background. They are more or less continuously, and quite in accordance with Halakha, signified as being Jewish. In Dani Levy's *Meschugge* (1998), the paternal role is also not expounded upon: Lena Katz is brought up as a Jew and correspondingly considers herself to be one, until she finds out that her maternal hereditary line is not Jewish, and her grandfather, the Nazi Max Weiss, passed himself and his family off as Jewish in 1945 in order to escape prosecution for his crimes. After this discovery, Lena, now non-Jewish, gives her Jewish friend David her necklace with a Star of David pendant, which continuously appears during the film as a symbol of her Jewish identity. It is only at the periphery, on the level of the characters' names, that the spectator finds out that Lena Katz possesses the last name of her father, who her mother, named Ruth Goldberg, has divorced. That her Jewish identity is not based solely on deceit, and is therefore not completely false because she has a Jewish father, is not elaborated upon, even though the film explicitly asks, or rather, hints at the question of what constitutes Jewish identity. Whereas Lena's non-Jewish first name already refers to the discovery at the end of the film, and this identity complexity is already alluded to from the beginning, it is her Jewish last name that delivers the reference to her (only) part-Jewish ancestry.

In Dani Levy's aforementioned comedy *Alles auf Zucker!* one also finds such references on the level of characters' names: Jana, the – in the Halakhic sense – non-Jewish daughter of Jackie and Marlene Zucker chooses the name Sarah for her daughter. It is not just that she chooses a Jewish name, which might refer to a more strongly felt proximity to Judaism than her (not practicing Jewish) father might embrace, a running joke in the film is that Jackie always accidentally calls his granddaughter Sandra. Other side issues show that Jewish and non-Jewish spheres are not segregated and that questions about who is actually Jewish and what constitutes Jewish identity are not so easy to answer, although the Halakha, on the one hand, provides a clear answer and, on the other, the non-Jewish German side, if anything, also shows an interest in preserving a clearly defined, folkloric, *other/different* Judaism. Thus, the old and sick mother of the Jewish murder victim Michael Schulmann in "Die Gärten des Rabbiners," Sarah Schulmann, converts to Christianity, which is why Michael Schulmann secretly took care of her. And the waiter in the bar into which Eva Bartoc in *Liebe unter Verdacht* frequently takes flight, proves, in the course of an incidental conversation, to be Jewish. In spite of this, he cannot help her with her questions about Judaism, God and religion not really being his 'thing'; he has not been to the synagogue since his Bar Mitzvah. Fragile Jewish characters appear on the periphery of filmic por-

trayals. In the center of the plot, on the other hand, one tends to find more exotic, *other* Jewish characters, who appear to be both folkloric and traditional, while at the same time evoking American-Jewish characters from Philip Roth's or Woody Allen's arsenal.

## Conclusion

By way of the above film descriptions, it is clear that a power of attraction between Jews and Gentiles is a construction in German film and television that ultimately depends on a differentiation between the two. The identity implications of these mixed relationships, which arise on a long-term basis for these couples and families, are therefore hardly broached as issues. As Sander L. Gilman notes, the construction of the Jewish body is characterized by a proximity to an anti-Semitic world view and to an understanding that the Jewish body is inherently different from that of the Christian and, later, the German, the British, that is, the nationally constructed body. The body is thereby a mere visible symbol of the absolute otherness or difference of the Jews.<sup>26</sup> The construction of Jewish characters as different is thus necessary if one is to understand their power of attraction for the non-Jewish characters in the context of philo-Semitism and a strengthened German interest in Jewish issues and Jewish culture. The wish to make the last visible consequences of the Shoah – the visible absence of the Jewish way of life and Jewish culture – invisible and to close this remaining void may be linked to the wish for clearly demarcated, exotic-attractive Jewish characters. At the same time, the frequency and the schematism of the topos of the (romantic) relationship between Jews and Gentiles cannot be exclusively accounted for in the German context; too many stereotypes of contemporary Jewish popular culture from the U.S. realm are seized upon and processed for this to be the case. This shows how aspects of relations between a Gentile majority and a Jewish minority that are specific to Germany merge with stereotypes and topos of a global popular culture.

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<sup>26</sup> Gilman, Sander L., *The Jewish Body. A Foot-Note*, 223. In: *People of the Body. Jews and Judaism from an Embodied perspective*, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Ed.), Albany, N.Y.: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992, 223–242.

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## Filmography

- Alles auf Zucker!* (GE, 2004, dir. Dani Levy)
- Berlin, Berlin* (GE, Television Series, 2001–2004)
- Der Golem oder wie er in die Welt kam* (GE, 1920, dir. Paul Wegener, Carl Boese) (English Title: *The Golem or The Golem: How He Came Into The World*)
- Keeping the Faith* (USA, 2000, dir. Edward Norton) (German Title: *Glauben ist alles!*)
- Liebe unter Verdacht* (GE, 2002, dir. Jorge Papavassiliou)
- Max Minsky und ich* (GE, 2006/ 2007, dir. Anna Justice)
- Meschugge* (GE/ CH/ U.S., 1998, dir. Dani Levy) (English Title: *The Giraffe*)
- Pfarrer Braun. Die Gärten des Rabbiners* (GE 2008, dir. Wolfgang F. Henschel)
- Rosa Roth. Jerusalem oder die Reise in den Tod* (GE, 1998, dir. Carlo Rola)

*Seinfeld* (USA, Television Series, 1989–1998)

*Sex and the City* (USA, Television Series, 1998–2004)

*So ein Schlamassel* (GE, 2009, dir. Dirk Regel)

*The Nanny* (USA, Television Series, 1993–1999)

*You Don't Mess with the Zohan* (USA, 2008, dir. Dennis Dugan)