

Chapter III

The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Trajectory of Ahasuerus: Fleeing the Conflagration or Seeking it?

In his monumental painting of the destruction of Jerusalem, Wilhelm von Kaulbach gave the legendary figure of the Wandering Jew striking shape as he flees the conflagration of the destruction of Jerusalem. It was further enhanced with the addition of the avenging demons pursuing the distraught Ahasuerus. As a pictorial motif, this was unprecedented.¹ Indeed, though there is a long iconographic tradition of representing the Wandering Jew in graphic illustrations and single-sheet prints, the origins of this particular motif appear to lie outside of art with Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart's "Der ewige Jude" (1783; "The Wandering Jew").²

In the German poet's lyrical rhapsody about the Wandering Jew, an "angel of death" appears before the transgressor, and a "black dæmon, let loose from hell upon Ahasuerus, goads him now from country to country."³ It is also Schubart who first places Ahasuerus at the scene of the conflagration. Desperately seeking his death, the poet's Ahasuerus precipitates himself "into the destructive flames" of Jerusalem, yet to no avail.⁴ Kaulbach appears to have assimilated and amalgamated both of these suggestions, though, quite significantly, he reverses the trajectory of Ahasuerus and projects it away from the burning Temple into the future.

1 See Ronen, "Kaulbach's Wandering Jew," 248 and Möseneder, "Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht," 124.

2 For Schubart, see Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, pp. 171–3.

3 This anonymous prose translation, entitled "The Wandering Jew," based on an earlier translation by P. W. in *The German Museum* (1801) and presumably a source for Percy Bysshe Shelley's fragment of an epic on *The Wandering Jew* (1811), appeared in *La Belle Assemblée; or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine* 6 (January 1809): 19–20; for the quoted passage, see 20. See also Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, "Der ewige Jude. Eine lyrische Rhapsodie" [1783], in *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Frankfurt a. M.: Herrmann, 1787), II, 68–73, 69: "Ein Todesengel trat / Vor Ahasveros hin, und sprach im Grimme: / 'Die Ruh' hast du dem Menschensohn versagt; / 'Auch dir sei sie, Unmenschlicher! versagt, / 'Bis daß er kömmt!!—/ Ein Höllentflohner / Daemon geisselt nun dich, Ahasver, / Von Land zu Land. Des Sterbens süßer Trost, / Der Grabesruhe Trost ist dir versagt!"

4 Schubart, "The Wandering Jew," 20; see also Schubart, "Der ewige Jude," II, 70: "Ich rannt' in die Flamme."

Yet the most influential literary manifestation of the Wandering Jew prior to Kaulbach's visualization was offered, as suggested in the previous part, by George Croly whose anonymously published novel *Salathiel* (1828)—itself presumably inspired by Schubart's poem, of which prose translations had become available in England in the early years of the nineteenth century—was widely disseminated across Europe. One or both of the two German translations published in 1829 and discussed in the previous chapter may well have been known to the artist. Kaulbach would moreover have been familiar with the debate about the figure of the Wandering Jew in contemporary German literature which was instigated by Karl Gutzkow's review of Julius Mosen's epic poem *Ahasver*.

Sebastian von Rittershausen's idiosyncratic attempt to engage with the destruction of Jerusalem in a tragedy predated both Croly's novel as well as the Ahasuerus debate in Germany. It is hence no surprise that he does not include the legendary figure in his *dramatis personae*. In fact, it took more than four decades after his early effort until a succession of dramatic poems and plays appeared in Germany, which engaged with the destruction of Jerusalem. Conspicuously, all of them feature the figure of Ahasuerus in connection to the historical occurrence; presumably, they were responses to the notoriety the legendary figure had acquired by the latter half of the century. They were also, of course, antedated by Kaulbach's *Zerstörung Jerusalems* and, intriguingly, they all acknowledge more or less explicitly the artist's painting as an intertext. There is, however, no obvious interaction in any of these plays with any of the oratorios mentioned in chapter I.

None of these dramas, like Rittershausen's, were presumably intended for actual stage performance, but the epic genre also appeared too limited for the adequate representation of the subject. In Germany, as discussed in the previous chapter, the epic failed to produce an adequate treatment of the destruction of Jerusalem. Instead, the legendary figure of the Wandering Jew inspired a proliferation of texts, some of which elaborated the historical occurrence in relation to the paradigmatic figure of the immortal Jew, as Croly had done in the genre of the novel. In his review of Mosen's *Ahasver*, Ferdinand Gustav Kühne, not fully satisfied with the poet's attempt in the epic genre, emphasized the fundamental unsuitability also of the narrative and dramatic genres for a convincing rendering of the Wandering Jew. He suggested that "[f]or the novel, the figure of Ahasuerus is too mythical, for the drama too little character and person."⁵ Instead, Kühne advocated a hybrid form, as in Goethe's engagement with the Faust legend.

5 Kühne, "Julius Mosen's *Ahasver*," 463: "Zum Roman ist Ahasver's Gestalt zu mythisch, zum Drama zu wenig Gestalt und Person."

Narrative fiction about the destruction of Jerusalem, in particular the novel, commenced in Germany in the late 1830s and began to proliferate in the second half of the century. In contradistinction to Croly's otherwise very influential *Salathiel* and other strains of the adaptation of the legend of the Wandering Jew in narrative fiction,⁶ none of these texts included an Ahasuerus figure, presumably because of its supernatural quality—an exception is a short novella by Anna Freiin von Krane published in the early years of the First World War (1915) in a series of literary texts directed specifically at soldiers, which is briefly discussed following on this chapter in my third digression.

The in the widest sense dramatic texts discussed in this chapter follow the tangent pursued by Croly with his focus on the Ahasuerus figure. This may, possibly, derive to some extent from the figure of the Old Man in Milman's *The Fall of Jerusalem*. Like Croly offers an idiosyncratic interpretation of the Ahasuerus legend and the corresponding figure of Salathiel in his eponymous novel, the various dramatic poems and plays emerging in Germany to engage with the legendary figure in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem similarly emphasized different aspects of this character which may, at least in some instances, originate in the reception of Kaulbach's monumental painting. Like Kaulbach—and perhaps once again in response to Milman—all of these texts, both dramatic or narrative, are replete with manifestations of the Beautiful Jewess who is mostly represented as an exemplar of the conversion narrative in contrast to the Wandering Jew.

In Leonhart Wohlmut's tragedy about the destruction of Jerusalem (1857), it is Ahasuerus who sets fire to the Temple. There appear also to be some echoes of Kaulbach's *Zerstörung Jerusalems* in the play. The playwright's conception of the Wandering Jew, owing much to Schubart, is more specifically derived from *Salathiel* and contributes, as Anderson observes, to "the Croly tradition or the Destruction-of-Jerusalem motif" it is said to have engendered.⁷

Translated into German in 1829, as seen in the previous chapter, Croly's text emerged as an influential rendering of the legend of the Wandering Jew in relation to Wohlmut's tragedy and to the third part of Otto Franz's *Messias* (1869; *Messiah*) trilogy, which similarly focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem and Ahasuerus; but it is in this context also related back to Kaulbach as a possible intertext for his painting.

Franz acknowledges in the scene description and stage directions of the final act of his tragedy that his *Messiah* trilogy as a whole was inspired by the fresco version of Kaulbach's *Zerstörung Jerusalems* in Berlin. He specifies that the scenic

⁶ See Körte, *Uneinholbarkeit des Verfolgten*, pp. 95–129.

⁷ Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, p. 189.

design for his fifth act should follow Kaulbach's model. The constellation of his figures and their entry and exit directions are clearly derived from the painting, though the High Priest is substituted with Simon bar Giora.

As in Wohlmuth and Franz, the Ahasuerus figure is only a minor character in Hans Herrig's tragedy inspired by the destruction of Jerusalem. In his *Jerusalem* (1874), like in the other plays, Ahasuerus is nevertheless a character who is significant either as a catalyst of the action or as a reflector figure in relation to the cataclysmic events. Herrig, more specifically, develops antisemitic stereotypes with regard to Ahasuerus. In all plays, as indicated already in Kaulbach's painting, the figure of the Wandering Jew is, consistent with his alleged immortality, suggested to be paradigmatic of the Jews through the ages.

Kühne's suggestion that the figure of Ahasuerus might only be approached through a hybrid literary form may have been an inspiration to Johann Gottlieb Rönnefahrt. The poet's own engagement with the figure of Ahasuerus (1855), discussed below, is indeed a hybrid which combines epic and dramatic elements. In addition, it thematically also interweaves the Faust legend with that of the Wandering Jew. Rönnefahrt's hybrid narrative poem articulates an idiosyncratic approach which implicitly suggests the historical occurrence of the destruction of Jerusalem as a prism for the author's forceful intervention in the politics of his own day and, more specifically, the build-up of the *Kulturkampf*, which provides a highly relevant context also to some of the other literary engagements with the subject of both Catholic and Protestant provenance and which is discussed in more detail in chapter IV.

Ahasuerus, Faust, and the First Stirrings of the *Kulturkampf*: Rönnefahrt

Published in 1855, the "basic epic treatment"⁸ of the Ahasuerus legend by Johann Gottlieb Rönnefahrt (1804–92) in his long narrative poem *Der Tod Ahasvers, des ewigen Juden* (The Death of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew) is a hybrid which combines epic with dramatic elements.⁹ While the destruction of Jerusalem is mentioned only briefly, it is nevertheless perceived as a pivotal occurrence and the author alludes at least implicitly to Kaulbach's painting. *Der Tod Ahasvers* moreover offers an idiosyncratic approach to the eponymous figure which removes it from

⁸ Ibid., p. 255.

⁹ Johann Gottlieb Rönnefahrt, *Der Tod Ahasvers, des ewigen Juden* (Tangermünde: Doeger, 1855). For Rönnefahrt's epic poem, see Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, pp. 255–6, whose account is inaccurate in some factual details which also skew his interpretation.

the context of the Ahasuerus debate two decades earlier, though Rönnefahrt's conception converges in salient points with Gutzkow's deliberations.

"Ahasver's Distant Past"¹⁰ is covered in the introduction in the guise of an epic poem, in which the destruction of Jerusalem is also mentioned. Following the pattern established by Schubart, Ahasuerus laments the futility of the struggle and his failure to die in the conflagration of the burning Temple.¹¹ The first chapter of the dramatic poem proper sees Ahasuerus awakening in a noxious swamp to which he had retreated in despair and where he lay dormant for centuries. Finding that civilization has been encroaching on his deadly refuge, he enters the world again to make the swamp his own and, initially, to hinder its further cultivation, but eventually, seeing the inhospitable bog having turned into a life force, he discovers hope for himself. Yet the world he enters is one of social unrest and exploitation, of political reaction and oppression. As he soon learns, a Jesuit conspiracy hatched by the Kirchwardein (church warden) threatens to suffocate the country; its young and irresponsible prince is not strong enough to confound the ecclesiastical wiles.

All through his long wanderings, Ahasuerus has never seen times as dire as this. He observes: "Time in warping labour must / With monsters pregnant be";¹² and mischievously exults:

When the joints of Time do yield,
Th' Heavens and the earth do tangle,
Then that He I surely am,
Who truly may th' deliv'ry speed.¹³

Ahasuerus subsequently takes on the identity of Count Faust von Pfaffenhut, who is murdered by highwaymen. As his intrigues multiply, he learns that the Pfaffenhut family are rumored to have been Jews in the distant past and that they have always been restless and driven. Ahasuerus is perplexed. He realizes that he is not alone, that he is not so much a symbol of Jewish condemnation, but a metonymy. The curse, it seems, befell not the individual Jew but a Jewish collective though not, apparently, every Jew. Ahasuerus muses:

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 3–47: "Ahasver's Vorzeit."

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 36.

¹² Ibid., p. 71: "Die Zeit muss bei verzerrenden Wehen / Mit Missgeburten schwanger gehen."

¹³ Ibid.: "Wenn die Zeit aus den Fugen weicht, / Himmel und Erde sich verwirren, / Dann bin ich freilich der rechte Mann, / Der die Entbindung fördern kann."

Can one be like the other[?]
 What miracle that a Pfaffenhut,
 Issued from the same blood,
 Should be like to Ahasuerus,
 Like to him, tossed through the sea of time?
 Thus two Ahasvers are there now
 That may not rest nor die, and no respite.
 Who knows how many, not just me,
 Such a life eternal drags all o'er,
 And vainly search for Heaven's gate?¹⁴

Even with his new identity, there remains a trace of the uncanny in Ahasuerus, which the other figures experience to differing degrees. The Prince chances in the palace of the Pfaffenhut family on a wall painting and reflects on the image:

A profound dread seizes my soul
 When I look upon yon tall figure of a man,
 That, bowed down by fate's heavy burden,
 Still raises his neck so straight and full of pride.
 The runes that pain in this forehead
 In indelible marks hath etched
 Tell of superhuman struggle of the soul.
 With what wrath and ire doth he gaze
 'Pon the blazing city and its fall.
 Fight he did. Yet all in vain! It tumbles!
 And yet like hazy mem'ries of sometime bliss
 Ineffably, a spirit of divine blessing
 In reconciliation thrusts itself forth from wrath!
 A man, he stands in potent manly vigour,
 That opposes destruction;
 Yet we behold only that spirit, whom eternity
 And sovereignty of mind hath bequeathed
 Victory in pangs of death to ward all earthly plight.
 Spirit more than body and yet corporeal.
 Th' eternal spiritual battle in the body's prison.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 89–90: “Kann Einer für den Andern stehn. / Was Wunder, daß ein Pfaffenhut, / Abstammend dazu aus gleichem Blut, / Sich ähnlich weiset dem Ahasver, / Gleich diesem geschleudert durch's Zeitenmeer? / So giebt's zwei Ahasvere nun, / Die dürfen nicht rasten und sterben und ruhn. / Wer weiß, wie Mancher außer mir / Solch ewig Leben schleppt umher / Und sucht umsonst des Himmels Thür?”

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 251–2: “Ein tiefes Graun erfasst die Seele mir / Beim Anschauen dieser hohen Mannsgestalt, / Die unter schwerer Schicksalslast gedrückt / Den Nacken noch so strack und stolz erhebt. / Die Runen, die der Schmerz auf diese Stirn / In unverilgbaren Spuren hat geprägt, / Erzählen übermenschlichen Seelenkampf. / Mit welchem Zorn und Grimm betrachtet er / Den Brand

The described painting appears to exhibit significant similarities with Kaulbach's *Zerstörung Jerusalems*. And yet, the resulting image is subtly different from that of the artist's Ahasuerus. Where Kaulbach's rendering conveys terror and abhorrence, guilt and drivenness, the likeness encountered by the Prince is characterized by defiance and mental strength, tempered with hope of reconciliation. Rönnefahrt evokes "a spirit of divine blessing," rather than a curse. The Prince recognizes: "'Tis Ahasver at Jerusalem's fall." And, deep in thought, adds: "Yes, yes! Thus the Son of Man doth walk this side the grave / On error's path—yet God is merciful—/ And love one day will be the noble victor's prize—"16

The scheming Kirchwardein's perception of the painting is very different:

I know not what arrests my gaze
And communicates so spookily in this picture—

.....
The Wand'ring Jew—like a guest of hell
The form thrusts itself from the picture—
This face—ha! am I surrounded by devils' tricks?
Cursèd! cursèd! It is the count's face
Full of wrath and scorn—what would'st thou, phantom—
Come! come!—turning back its gaze
It pushes on and strides towards me—
Ha! How it grows and wields the lance's shaft—
Woe is me! Here it comes17

The cleric is beset by the alleged superstitions of his faith which, as will emerge from the further discussion, were considered obsolete by Rönnefahrt. Indeed, as a stage direction indicates, the main figure of the painting covers a secret door, which is opened as the cleric takes flight. The optical illusion, just as Kaulbach's almost life-

der Stadt und ihren Untergang. / Er hat gekämpft. Umsonst! Sie stürzt dahin! / Und doch wie Ahnung einst'ger Seligkeit / Drängt sich versöhnend unfassbar ein Geist / Göttlicher Weihe aus dem Grimm hervor! / Ein Mensch steht da in mächt'ger Manneskraft, / Die sich dem Untergang entgegenstemmt; / Doch schau'n wir nur den Geist, dem Ewigkeit / Und Geisteshoheit unter Todesqualen / Den Sieg bestimmt ob aller Erdennoth. / Mehr Geist als Körper und doch körperfest. / Der ew'ge Geisteskampf in Leibeshaft."

16 Ibid., p. 252: "'s ist Ahasver bei'm Sturz Jerusalems. [. . .] Ja, ja! So geht der Menschensohn hienieden / Des Irrthums Bahn—doch Gott begnadet ihn—/ Und Liebe lohnt dereinst dem edlen Sieger—"

17 Ibid., p. 253: "Ich weiß nicht, was den Blick mir hält gefangen / Und spricht so geisterhaft an diesem Bilde—/ [. . .] / Der ew'ge Jude—wie ein Höllengast / Drängt die Gestalt sich aus dem Bild hervor—/ Dies Antlitz—ha! umgiebt mich Teufelsspek? / Verflucht! verflucht! Es ist des Grafen Antlitz / Voll Grimm und Hohn—was willst du, Truggestalt—/ Komm an! komm an!—Den Blick zurückgewandt / Strebt es hieher und schreitet auf mich dar—/ Ha! Wie es wächst und schwingt den Lanzenchaft—/ Weh mir! Es kommt"

sized rendering of the Wandering Jew, seems to tumble from the frame of his painting, then turns real as Ahasuerus steps through the hidden door.

Ahasver's 'tribal' relationship with the Pfaffenhuts explains the uncanny likeness in the painting. His theft of the identity of the murdered Faust von Pfaffenhut moreover associates him with the eponymous protagonist in Goethe's *Faust* (1808). Anderson notes that since the mid-nineteenth century, the "tendency to associate Ahasuerus with the protagonists of other legends" intensified.¹⁸ The association of the Wandering Jew with Faust may have been suggested to the author more specifically by one of the various continuations of Goethe's drama which proliferated in the early decades of the century and even after the publication of the tragedy's second part in 1832.¹⁹

One such attempt was Jakob Daniel Hoffmann's *Faust* (1833). In the play's concluding section, his eponymous protagonist ascends from the Savior's Tomb in Jerusalem, Mephistopheles and the Wandering Jew firmly clasped by the hand, to heaven. There they form a kind of mismatched trinity which encompasses striving, contradiction, and hesitation.²⁰ As the sweetly smiling divinity utters in conclusion, it is the stubbornly faithful Jew's charge to curb the others' dialectic exuberance and, when time rushes to gain the future, to anchor them in the past.²¹ Ahasuerus is thus given a redemptive function originating precisely in the spiritual inertia denounced only a few years later by Gutzkow as the condemning feature of Jewish idiosyncrasy.

Deriding Carl Christian Ludwig Schöne's earlier continuation of Goethe's iconic drama (1823),²² the literary historian Wilhelm Scherer vociferated in his *Geschichte der Deutschen Litteratur* (1883; *A History of German Literature*) that this "miserable production was even surpassed in worthlessness by a similar essay on the part of J. D. Hoffmann in 1833."²³ Rönnefahrt is not mentioned by Scherer, but it is likely that he would not have fared any better in the critic's estimation, though his narrative-dramatic poem is not a continuation, nor even quite

18 Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, p. 245.

19 See also [Göschel], *Ueber Göthe's Faust und dessen Fortsetzung*, pp. 262–3, where a comparison between Faust and Goethe's conception of Ahasuerus is elaborated.

20 Jakob Daniel Hoffmann, *Faust: Eine Tragödie von Goethe. Fortgesetzt von J. D. Hoffmann* (Leipzig: Lauffer, 1833).

21 See *ibid.*, p. 245.

22 See Carl Christian Ludwig Schöne, *Fortsetzung des Faust von Göthe: Der Tragödie zweiter Theil* (Berlin: Maurer, 1823).

23 Wilhelm Scherer, *A History of German Literature*, transl. Mary Emily Conybeare, 2 vols (New York: Scribner, 1886), II, 319; see also Wilhelm Scherer, *Geschichte der Deutschen Litteratur*, 8th edn (1883; Berlin Weidmann, 1899), p. 704: "[D]as elende Product wurde durch ein ähnliches Wagnis von J. D. Hoffmann (1833) an Erbärmlichkeit noch übertroffen."

an adaptation, of *Faust* but rather elaborates a number of parallels. Most significantly, in the context of this chapter, Ahasuerus not only assumes the identity of the enigmatic count whose name, Faust von Pfaffenhut, is evocative in more than one way. Yet more important still, are the conceptual parallels elaborated by Rönnefahrt.

Like his model, Rönnefahrt's Ahasuerus reclaims land and, in fact, strives to complete what Faust set out to accomplish. Where Faust, exhilarated by his vision of draining a baleful swamp and thus creating the freedom and the livelihood of millions,²⁴ experiences that moment of supreme bliss which brings him death and, effectively, redemption, Rönnefahrt's Ahasuerus eventually similarly endeavors to drain his malignant swamp in order to provide for the destitute. It is, as with Faust, part of his redemptive project with which he actively seeks to end the curse under which he labors.

Yet crucially different from Faust who, though he becomes involuntarily guilty by having to answer for the deaths of Philemon and Baucis, is redeemed as he expires,²⁵ Ahasuerus is still denied death. As the heading of the final part of Rönnefahrt's epic-dramatic poem indicates, he fails to find the path of righteousness.

Like Mephistopheles, described by Goethe as "[a] part of that power, which is ever willing evil and ever producing good,"²⁶ Ahasuerus, too, is willing to do evil, but his agency eventually produces good: the swamp is fully drained and cultivated; the various romantic entanglements are happily resolved; and the reformed prince creates an enlightened commonwealth which reconciles him with his subjects as the Jesuit plot is foiled and the clerics are banished.²⁷ This, how-

24 See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust II*, in *Faust*, ed. Gotthard Erler (Berlin: Aufbau, 1983), pp. 205–425: ll. 11562–86, prior to which Faust is seen to build dikes and dams to reclaim land from the sea.

25 See *ibid.*, ll. 11938–44.

26 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Dramatic Poem*, transl. A. Hayward (London: Moxon, 1834), p. 54; see also Goethe, *Faust I*, in *Faust*, ed. Erler, pp. 65–203: ll. 1336–7: "Ein Teil von jener Kraft, / Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft."

27 In *Goethe's Faust und Schiller's Wilhelm Tell*, Rönnefahrt idealizes Friedrich II, the Great, of Prussia, emphasizing that no prince ever ruled more absolutely, but that at the same time he fostered religious tolerance, intellectual freedom, and prosperity. He enthuses that "as King he was the living law embodied in himself, a law ruling over all strata of the state and to which the King, as an individual, subjected himself." Johann Gottlieb Rönnefahrt, *Goethe's Faust und Schiller's Wilhelm Tell nach ihrer weltgeschichtlichen Bedeutung und wechselseitigen Ergänzung* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1855), p. 120: "[A]ls König [war er] nur das lebendige, in ihm persönlich gewordene Gesetz, ein Gesetz, das über allen Schichten des Staatslebens waltend steht, und dem der König als Individuum sich selber anheimgiebt."

ever, does not extend to his own fate. As Mephistopheles remains a hellish fiend, thus Ahasuerus in the end remains the Wandering Jew. In this sense, the dramatic poem is misnamed, for death once more eludes the cursed Jew. Yet, while there is no hope for Mephistopheles, there is hope for Ahasuerus.

Severely wounded in a fight with the Kirchwardein—who crows in glee as he flees: “We remain invulnerable, invincible, / Rule firm as a rock the blind world!”²⁸—and close to death, Ahasuerus experiences visions which conjure up to him the figures of Moses, Pythagoras, Socrates, and Christ. Yet the redemption that seems so close is shattered by the apparition of pope Gregory VII, only to be followed by Luther, Calvin, and, finally, the poet Friedrich Schiller who invokes the power of virtue and concludes:

God’s throne be far in the highest heavens high:
He it is, who e’en our suffering turns to grace,
If willingly we do as Christ did teach,
And piously through loving-kindness Him revere²⁹

Finally asleep and bathed in the reflex of the light into which the apparition dissolves, the countenance of Ahasuerus is suffused with peace as the dramatic poem comes to an end.

The reference to Schiller reflects Rönnefahrt’s notion of historical progression. The author, who was the headmaster of a school for young gentlewomen at Stendal in Saxony-Anhalt,³⁰ published a number of interpretations of classical German literature, among which was also—in the same year as *Der Tod Ahasvers*—an exploration of *Goethe’s Faust und Schiller’s Wilhelm Tell nach ihrer weltgeschichtlichen Bedeutung und wechselseitigen Ergänzung* (1855; Goethe’s Faust and Schiller’s Wilhelm Tell according to their Universal Historical Significance and Mutual Complementation).³¹ Arguably, the study offers an interpretive key to his dramatic poem.

As Rönnefahrt explains in the preface to his study, his aim was to align poesy in a genuine relationship with the “living life.”³² He insisted in particular on its

²⁸ Rönnefahrt, *Tod Ahasvers*, p. 275: “Wir bleiben unverwundbar, unbezwinglich, / Regieren felsenfest die blinde Welt!”

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 283: “Ob Gott auch hoch in höchsten Himmeln thronet: / Er ist’s, der auch durch Schmerzen Heil verleiht, / Wenn willig wir geübt, was Christ gelehret, / Und gläubig ihn durch Liebesthat verehret”

³⁰ See Rönnefahrt, Johann Gottfried, “Indexeintrag: Deutsche Biographie,” <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd1035536560.html> (accessed January 9, 2024).

³¹ Rönnefahrt, *Goethe’s Faust und Schiller’s Wilhelm Tell*.

³² *Ibid.*, p. [iii].

poietic potential and practical impact on the formation of the human character (*Menschenbildung*). Universal history, with which he engaged in *Der Tod Ahasvers*, was understood by the author simultaneously as admonition and as consecrated prophecy.³³

Rönnefahrt argues that in the second part of Goethe's *Faust* (1832), progress in the natural sciences has deprived the devil of his magic, but that he has become obsolete also in a moral sense. With Philemon and Baucis and their chapel on the beach, Mephistopheles—wilfully misinterpreting Faust's instructions—destroys the last remnants of ecclesiasticism and thus the framework of belief and superstition which sustains his own existence.³⁴ This is presumably also why Mephistopheles makes no appearance in *Der Tod Ahasvers*. Rather, some of his characteristics are attributed to the conflicted figure of Ahasuerus, who is otherwise determined by Faustian elements. But Faust, too, in Rönnefahrt's system, occupies a stage of human and social development that has been superseded. While he embodies the principle of progress and of striving for ever more ambitious goals on which human dignity, human rights, and human happiness rely, he is nevertheless fettered by what Rönnefahrt describes as the rationalistic subjectivity and individualism of the late eighteenth century.³⁵

To Rönnefahrt, it was essential that the discovery of subjectivity be transcended into a balanced and synergetic collective in which individualities conjoin and collaborate in the creation of "humanity as the sum of all human beings."³⁶ True freedom, Rönnefahrt asserts, may only be found in the awareness of being an intrinsic part of the whole of humanity. Applied to Ahasuerus, it is striking that the author's endorsement of universalism is similar to Gutzkow's; and when he notes that stagnation and persistence in the particular will result in decay,³⁷ this too is reminiscent of Gutzkow's anti-particularist stance and his attack on the "Jewish" Jews.³⁸ It is also the refutation of Hoffmann's valorization of hesitancy embodied in his Wandering Jew.

According to Rönnefahrt, collectives enter history and recognize themselves and their actions as a product of the interaction of the totality of all being and

33 Ibid.

34 See *ibid.*, p. 123.

35 See *ibid.*, p. 128.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 131: "So bildet sich die Summe der Menschen zur Menschheit."

37 See *ibid.*, p. 130.

38 It is interesting to note that Rönnefahrt's Ahasuerus variously nonchalantly acknowledges: "Well, that's all over and done with," accepting change and adapting to it. See Rönnefahrt, *Tod des Ahasver*, p. 58: "Doch das ist abgethan."

becoming.³⁹ As collectives engage with one another, they engender human history and universal history, from which eventually emerges the ideal form of the state, in which each citizen, as a fellow citizen, achieves recognition as a fully entitled member of the collective in acknowledgment of their human essence sustained by their intellect and freedom.

Rönnefahrt emphasizes that a struggle is necessary before the ruling and the ruled elements of a state align into a rational relationship; before the rule of a miracle-mongering ecclesiasticism transforms itself into a healthy congregational structure determined by human parameters; and before each individual in the collective has been imbued with a practical awareness of their rights and duties according to their capabilities.⁴⁰ In *Der Tod Ahasvers*, this struggle has already commenced, but the appearance of the Wandering Jew acts like a catalyst and, eventually, Ahasuerus becomes a mediator.

The new age envisioned by Rönnefahrt must fulfil the unification of what is divided and separate into propitious action. This new age the author sees called to life by Schiller with Karl Moor in *Die Räuber* (1781; *The Robbers*) and prophetically given essence and its telos with Wilhelm Tell in the eponymous play (1804). In particular in *Wilhelm Tell*, Rönnefahrt finds this concept to have been transformed into palpable reality.⁴¹ Hence the inclusion of Schiller's concluding words in *Der Tod Ahasvers*.

God is for Rönnefahrt a force immanent in the world and in humanity that drives historical development. Indeed, as he insists on the fall of an imaginary heavenly redoubt of the divinity, Rönnefahrt emphasizes that God in fact neither dwells imperiously in an impervious beyond, nor, quoting from Acts, "in temples made with hands."⁴² The latter is, of course, the very word of Jesus which served to cement the notion of supersession and which gave divine sanction to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the internal dissent by which it was precipitated appears to be invoked in Rönnefahrt's dramatic poem as a scenario that carries a serious warning. The figure of Ahasuerus is the connecting device between the historical occurrence and the present of the mid-nineteenth century, in which internal strife, fomented—as the author suggests—once again by zealous priests (and he clearly means Catholicism), threatens the commonwealth.

There is no suggestion of any other external enemy and the association with the fall of Jerusalem is not presented as a type that corresponds in every detail to

³⁹ See Rönnefahrt, *Göthe's Faust und Schiller's Wilhelm Tell*, p. 132.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 134–5.

⁴² See *ibid.*, pp. 127–8 and Acts 7:48.

the present. And yet it carries weighty implications. Most significantly, perhaps, it evokes the bane of theocratic rule. Yet in Rönnefahrt's hybrid text, it is the voice of moderation and conciliation which finally triumphs and in response to which an enlightened constitutional rule is established which unites the people and the prince in the contentment of a peaceful and thriving commonwealth.

Obviously, published in 1855, only a few years after the mostly unsuccessful revolutions in the German lands, the text is highly topical. Indeed, Rönnefahrt's text is unique in the corpus of engagements with the destruction of Jerusalem discussed in this chapter in that it is the only one to suggest—if only implicitly—the historical occurrence as a pervasive interpretive pattern for contemporary events. It is clearly a highly politicized literary response to the revolutions of 1848–49 and the Weavers' Uprising in Silesia in 1844, more famously commemorated in Gerhart Hauptmann's naturalistic play *Die Weber* (1892; *The Weavers*). More specifically, the text takes a very firm anti-Catholic position within the wider context of the incipient *Kulturkampf*. Any form of organized religion, but particularly Catholicism, is pilloried as inherently inimical to worldly authority which it ultimately seeks to usurp.

Ahasuerus, Destroyer of the Temple: Wohlmuth

The idiosyncratic treatment of Ahasuerus in Rönnefahrt's *Der Tod Ahasvers*—which shifted the emphasis from the historical destruction of Jerusalem to its exhortatory potential and, through the association of Ahasuerus with Faust, envisaged a redemptive end to the curse of Ahasuerus—was 'revoked' in Leonhart Wohlmuth's (1823–89) much more conservative *Die Zerstörung von Jerusalem* (1857; *The Destruction of Jerusalem*).

Wohlmuth, a writer of little talent and less success, who later was to seek the safe haven of a position as a teacher,⁴³ eventually settled in the Franconian city of Bayreuth, where Rittershausen had languished in his exile. In his tragedy, the author re-visited the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem. He also re-established the familiar configuration of the major historical actors to whom he added once again the Beautiful Jewess in the guise of the daughter of the High Priest—who predictably converts to Christianity—as well as various Christians and the Wandering Jew. Simon abducts the Beautiful Jewess, incongruously called Judith. The young woman is rescued by the appearance of her father who seeks to mediate between Simon and John.

43 See Erdmuthe-Annika Eben, "Wohlmuth, Leonhart," in DLL (2015), XXXIV, col. 657.

More interesting are Wohlmuth's idiosyncratic divergences from, and additions to, the established narrative. Of particular significance is the figure of Josephus. Corresponding to the construction of Titus as the play's enlightened and merciful hero, Josephus is presented as the Roman's sincere envoy. Resigned to the fate that will befall Jerusalem, he pleads with the emperor to allow him to persuade his aged mother, Salome, to leave the doomed city.

The old woman is represented as blind in both a literal and a figurative sense. In the ensuing confrontation with her son, Salome curses Josephus for defecting to the enemy.⁴⁴ Her wrath is such that she even prays for her senses of hearing and touch to be confounded as well, so she may banish him fully from her life.⁴⁵ In a hurtful move, she calls out to the gathered people for a "poor, orphaned child, / Yearning for a mother's heart,"⁴⁶ to whom she promises to give solace as a substitute for the son so hateful to her. It is Judith's brother, the insane Ephraim, who eventually answers her call. He believes to hear his own mother's voice. Together, they symbolize the misguided obstinacy of the Jews and the loss of bearings they suffered. When the two move away, Ephraim once again utters the cries of woe of the Prophet of the Jews.⁴⁷ This presumably also foreshadows Salome's fate who henceforth is seen no more, while Ephraim, his sanity briefly restored, is later said to have died in battle.⁴⁸

Salome's figurative blindness is blamed by Josephus on the tyrants. Her unnatural rejection of her son is, moreover, implicitly paralleled by Wohlmuth to the gruesome act of teknophagy perpetrated by Mary of Betheszuba. The unfortunate woman is not mentioned by name, but the responsibility for her unspeakable offence is similarly imputed to Simon.⁴⁹ Accusing the tyrant of the perversion of the order of nature, the Jewish officer Judas uses the unnatural deed of Mary of Betheszuba to mark the climax of this corruption:

If children their mother may slay,
The mother hath that same right to do to her child.
Is not the fatherland the common,
The Mother sacred to all children of man,
That no mortal with impunity doth wound?

⁴⁴ Leonhart Wohlmuth, *Die Zerstörung von Jerusalem: Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen* (1857; Munich: Schurich, 1861), p. 97: "For his mother and his mothersoil / He left and to the enemy he defected [Weil er die Mutter und die Muttererde / Verließ und zu dem Feinde übergang]."

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99: "kein arm verwaistes Kind, / Das sich nach einem Mutterherzen sehnt?"

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101: "Wehe."

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 118.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 91.

And didst not thou stab thy brazen murd'rous steel
 Into the widow's bosom of thy fatherland?⁵⁰

Judas is mentioned only briefly. He is nevertheless interesting because he engages in secret negotiations about a surrender to the Romans, an action which seems to explain his name, because it associates him with the eponymous betrayer of Christ.⁵¹ Yet the officer's betrayal initially seems justified with the dire situation of the besieged city and the madness of its unpredictable and cruel rulers. Judas, who would rather emulate Judas Maccabee, offers a pragmatic alternative to the inexorable destruction. However, as such his actions are indeed another betrayal also of Christ, because—without knowing it—his aim is the subversion of the prophecy of Jesus of the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Wohlmuth's tragedy, it is Ahasuerus who eventually becomes the instrument of divine providence and ensures the fulfilment of the prophecy. Ahasuerus returns to Jerusalem to seek his own destruction in the anticipated conflagration in a rendering whose antecedents can be traced at least as far as Schubart's influential "Der ewige Jude".⁵²

Jerusalem fell. I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the Romans; but, alas! alas! the restless curse held me by the hair, and—I could not die.⁵³

As they prepare to abandon the city, the figure of Ahasuerus is understood by the Christians in Wohlmuth's play

as a marvel
 To strengthen and increase our faith,
 A living, a horrible testament is he,
 And yet a joyful one, that
 The word of the Lord is pure and true.
 That this word should fully true become
 The earth no grave to Ahasver allows.
 As this threat terribly was fulfilled,

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 92: "Wenn Kinder ihre Mutter tödten dürfen, / Hat gleiches Recht die Mutter auf sein [sic] Kind. / Ist nicht das Vaterland die allgemeine, / Die allen Menschenkindern heilige Mutter, / Die ungestraft kein Sterblicher verletzt? / Und stießest Du nicht Deinen frechen Mordstahl / In Deines Vaterlandes Wittwenbrust?"

⁵¹ For the historical figure, Judas ben Jairus, see Josephus, *Jewish War*, pp. 390–1 (7.6.5).

⁵² For Schubart's poem and its influence on the transmission of the legend, see Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, pp. 171–3.

⁵³ Schubart, "Wandering Jew," 20; see also Schubart, "Ewige Jude," 70: "Jerusalem sank. Ich knirschte den Säugling, / Ich rannt' in die Flamme. Ich fluchte dem Römer; / Doch, ach! doch, ach! Der rastlose Fluch / Hielt mich am Haar, und—ich starb nicht."

Thus that other one will be fulfilled as well,
That the Saviour cast against Jerusalem.⁵⁴

The same connection between the fate of Ahasuerus and Jerusalem is later dramatically enacted by the Wandering Jew himself: Ahasuerus wields the fatal firebrand in search of atonement and of his own death.⁵⁵ Consigning the destructive torch to Ahasuerus may have been suggested to Wohlmuth by Croly's *Salathiel*, where—for the first time—it was not hurled by a recalcitrant Roman soldier, but a demonic figure actively promoting the destruction of the Jews and the Temple under the guise of religious and national enthusiasm.

Yet Ahasuerus emerges unscathed from the conflagration of the burning Temple and, after accepting God's judgment and a final farewell to Judith and Ruben, a young Christian and friend of Titus, he quickly makes his way "towards the colonnade" which, as a stage direction explains, is stage left.⁵⁶ This moment is clearly reminiscent of Kaulbach's painting. Earlier in the play, Ahasuerus had mockingly bared his chest to Simon's sword,⁵⁷ which similarly associates the visual representation, the more so as he does so to aid the escape of the Christians who simultaneously leave the stage on the right in obvious emulation of Kaulbach's conception.⁵⁸

More significantly, Ahasuerus's action is also his conscious fulfilment of Jesus's prophecy of the destruction of the Temple: "The Nazarene's words shall be / Fulfilled even to the last letter!"⁵⁹ In an earlier confrontation with the Christian elder Mathias, in an eruption of self-pity, defiance, and obstinacy, Ahasuerus seeks to set himself apart from all creation by his hate. He upbraids the old man:

So you, too, are inflexible and cold
And cruel towards me like the others!
Yet, so be it—if I may not love,
Yet will I hate, deep and ardently I'll hate,
Hate men, for they are happy,

54 Wohlmuth, *Zerstörung von Jerusalem*, p. 76: "Ihn hat der Herr uns wunderbar gesandt / Zur Stärke und zum Wachsthum unsres Glaubens, / Er ist ein lebendes, ein schreckliches / Und zugleich freudenreiches Zeugnis, daß / Das Wort des Herrn die laute Wahrheit ist. / Damit dies Wort zur vollen Wahrheit werde, / Vergönnt dem Ahasver kein Grab die Erde. / Wie diese Drohung furchtbar sich erfüllte, / So wird auch jene in Erfüllung gehen, / Die ob Jerusalem der Heiland sprach."

55 See *ibid.*, p. 121.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 122: "nach dem Säulengange"; see also p. 111.

57 See *ibid.*, p. 107.

58 See *ibid.*, p. 108.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 120: "Des Nazareners Worte sollen sich / Erfüllen bis zum letzten Laut!"

Hate Heaven, for it made me
To have a creature for it to curse.⁶⁰

Yet his despair is tempered when, induced by Judith's pity, Mathias gives hope to Ahasuerus:

Not eternally, like to man, the Lord is angry,
Not a vengeful God is He; no, mercy
Is in His crown the pearl most beauteous and rich.
Howsoever great thy sin, He shall forgive,
When by the penance of thy life in remorse it is atoned,
He, who hath redeemed all sin of man,
He shall show thee yet His paternal grace.⁶¹

The promise of redemption to the Wandering Jew is simultaneously another articulation of the supersession, which is confirmed at the end of the play, when Eleazar returns mortally wounded from the battle to die on the stairs to the Temple.

Again, as if he were following Gutzkow's claim of the supremacy of poesy over painting, Wohlmuth divides the temporal unity of Kaulbach's composition into different sequential strands. Ruben and Judith have returned to the Temple. The High Priest's daughter accordingly is next to him as her father dies, but Wohlmuth rewrites the scene represented by the artist. For one, Eleazar—armed with the sword of David—associates the figure of the Levite rather than that of Kaulbach's High Priest. He does not seek his own death, nor does he forcefully restrain his daughter. Instead Eleazar gives Judith his blessing and dies, a potent symbol of supersession as he asks Judith to close his eyes⁶² and acknowledges with his last breath the Christian truth: "His is the victory, the man of Nazareth's—/ Follow his star—it is the Star of Truth!"⁶³

His final words indicate the trajectory toward stage right that will shortly after be followed by Judith and Ruben as they are invited by Titus to Rome and as

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 72–3: "So bist Du auch starr und kalt / Und fühllos gegen mich wie all die andern! / Doch sei es drum—wenn ich nicht lieben darf, / So will ich hassen, tief und glühend hassen, / Die Menschen hassen, weil sie glücklich sind, / Den Himmel hassen, weil er mich erschuf, / Um ein Geschöpf für seinen Fluch zu haben."

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 74–5: "Nicht ewig zürnt der Herr, dem Menschen gleich, / Er ist kein Gott der Rache, nein, die Gnade / Ist seiner Krone schönste, reichste Perle. / Wie groß auch Deine Schuld, er wird vergeben, / Wenn reuig sie gesühnt Dein Bűßerleben, / Er, der getilgt hat alle Menschenschuld, / Er zeigt auch Dir noch seine Vaterhuld."

⁶² See *ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 121: "Er hat gesiegt, der Mann von Nazareth—/ Folgt seinem Stern—es ist der Stern der Wahrheit!"

Ruben articulates the concluding assurance: “A New Age commenceth on this day, / The Age of Love and the Age of Grace!”⁶⁴

Anderson sees Ahasuerus in Wohlmuth’s play as “a proponent of an international and universal kingdom of a worldly Messiah.”⁶⁵ Yet he is so only to a degree, and only up to his re-emergence from the burning Temple and his acceptance of divine providence. It is rather in Otto Franz Gensichen’s *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* (The Destruction of Jerusalem) that the notion of a worldly Messiah gains prominence. Ahasuerus is given here a role similar to Wohlmuth’s play, yet he is side-lined by the figures of Judas Iscariot and his (fictitious) mother Lea who, akin to Salome in Wohlmuth’s play, seeks to advance her son.

Bringing Art to Life: Franz

Both Emil Naumann’s cantata and August Klughardt’s oratorio were explicitly based on Kaulbach’s *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, yet no record is known of the scenic use of the painting as a backdrop to any of their performances. While there is also no record of Otto Franz’s *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* (1869; The Destruction of Jerusalem) ever having been performed on stage, the dramatist’s stage directions are nevertheless very clear on the use of the fresco version of Kaulbach’s artistic composition for its scenic backdrop. The explicit reference to the painting distinguishes his play from all the other dramatic engagements with the subject discussed in this part, none of which explicitly indicates Kaulbach’s influence. However, as seen in the discussion of Wohlmuth’s tragedy, there is a suggestion in this case that the author may have derived the sequence of his scene settings as well as some plot elements from the monumental painting, while Rönnefahrt seems to have adapted the pictorial representation of Ahasuerus from Kaulbach’s work.

Born in Driesen in the Margraviate of Brandenburg (present-day Drezdenko in Poland), Otto Franz Gensichen (1847–1933) studied mathematics, philosophy, and classical philology in Berlin. In 1869, not yet 23 years of age, he was awarded his doctorate and not long afterward became dramaturge at the Wallner Theater in Berlin. In the same year, Gensichen—under his pen-name Otto Franz—also published his first creative works, a volume of poetry and his dramatic trilogy *Der Messias* (1869; The Messiah) of which *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* was the third part.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 125: “Mit diesem Tag beginnt die neue Zeit, / Die Zeit der Liebe und die Zeit der Gnade!”

⁶⁵ Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, p. 248.

⁶⁶ Otto Franz [i.e., Otto Franz Gensichen], *Gedichte* (Berlin: Heimann, 1869) and *Der Messias* (Berlin: Heimann, 1869). For Franz’s tragedy, see Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, p. 248. Franz ac-

Like most of the other engagements with the subject, Franz's trilogy articulates Christian supersession. It is interesting in particular for the way in which it not only explicitly refers to Kaulbach's painting but in fact offers a dramatization of the artist's composition which ties the visual representation into the wider context of the biblical narrative and the historical episode. The latter is achieved in particular through the inclusion of Flavius Josephus among the *dramatis personae* in the final play of the trilogy.

The historian is characterized as "a paragon of priestly egotism"⁶⁷ and otherwise of little significance in Franz's *Zerstörung Jerusalems*. He appears briefly as the emperor's envoy, in vain entreating the Zealots to surrender. It is, however, worth noting that he introduces an element of German nationalism into the trilogy when Josephus admonishes his stubborn compatriots:

And yet consider,
That the Teutons even are Roman slaves,
They, who in courage and bodily strength,
In their love of freedom, surpass
All the nations all around the inhabited earth.
And yet eight Roman legions
Constrain this wild, impetuous people.⁶⁸

As this is immediately followed by Simon's attack on the priesthood for their suspected collusion with Rome, an allusion may be intended to the anxieties of liberal circles in Germany of being constrained by another Rome, of ecclesiastical provenance. This seems to be another indication of the incipient *Kulturkampf*, as in Rönnefahrt's dramatic poem, though the topic—presumably in deference to restrictive censorship—achieved more prominence in narrative fiction about the destruction of Jerusalem which, as will be discussed in chapter IV, was frequently instrumentalized by either side.

With regard to the biblical narrative, Franz most significantly offers a comprehensive reinterpretation of Judas Iscariot. The trilogy (and each of its parts) is appositely prefaced with an epigraph from Heraclitus: "A man's character is his fate." This indeed appears to be the governing principle of the dramatist's charac-

knowledges that he had to pay for the printing of his early works out of his own pocket, see Otto Franz Gensichen, *Kulissenluft: Wallnertheater-Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Paetel, 1909), p. 103.

⁶⁷ Otto Franz, *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* (Berlin: Heimann, 1869), p. 8: "Ein Musterbild der priesterlichen Selbstsucht."

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56: "Bedenket doch, / Daß selbst die Deutschen Römersclaven sind, / Sie, die durch Tapferkeit und Leibesstärke, / Durch ihre Freiheitsliebe alle Völker / Der rings bewohnten Erde übertreffen. / Und dennoch halten acht Legionen Roms / Dies wilde, ungestüme Volk in Schranken."

terization of his figures, but it is perhaps most obvious in the case of Judas. Franz eschews the stereotypical representation of Judas as a shifty villain who sells his Lord for a paltry sum of money. Since the Middle Ages, the character of Judas had frequently been used as synonymous with the Jews. As such it had not only supported stereotypes of Jewish materialism but also constructions of Jewish obstinacy in rejecting salvation, which prompted anti-Jewish excess. In Franz's trilogy the one character flaw of Judas is, as Macbeth's in Shakespeare's eponymous play, his ambitious pride which makes him susceptible to the suggestions of another, in his case his dominant mother.

Initially, Judas is portrayed by Franz as a righteous character who does not hide his aversion to Jesus. He proudly asserts: "I never learnt how to dissemble."⁶⁹ As he comes to acknowledge the prerogative of Jesus and links his own political destiny with that of the man from Galilee, he nevertheless can agree neither with the objectives nor the means of his former rival. Alleging that Jesus confuses the imagination of the people with the spiritual dimension of his mission, he insists: "Deeds are called for, only deeds can save us."⁷⁰ Yet his own deed proves to be a disastrous political miscalculation, a betrayal not only of Jesus, but of himself, which turns him involuntarily into a "dissembling villain"⁷¹ because he completely misjudges the historical moment and its players.

Like some of the oratorios discussed in chapter I, Franz aims to create a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), as it had also been envisioned by Kaulbach. Yet in the same way that the artist must have been aware of the pitfalls besetting such an endeavor, Franz must have realized that his trilogy was not suitable for stage performance. The fifth act of the young dramatist's tragedy is explicitly linked to Kaulbach's fresco version of *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* through his acknowledgment that it inspired the whole of his trilogy. His detailed description of the final tableau as a simulacrum of the fresco in conjunction with resounding triumphal music, which signifies the climax of his narrative, therefore must be considered an appeal to the imagination that presupposes the familiarity of the reader with the author's visual model. Indeed, though Franz himself may have been inspired by the fresco in the Neues Museum, Kaulbach's painting was further disseminated in a new engraving by Gustav Eilers (1869; see Figure 14) in the very year in which the *Messias* trilogy was published and it is likely that the dramatist too worked with this reproduction, as it included additional details from the artist's cartoon that proved relevant to his interpretation.

⁶⁹ Otto Franz, *Jesus von Nazareth* (Berlin: Heimann, 1869), p. 55: "Ich hab' das Heucheln nicht gelernt."

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56: "Der That bedarf's, die That nur kann uns retten."

⁷¹ See Otto Franz, *Judas Ischarioth* (Berlin: Heimann, 1869), p. 62.



Figure 14: Gustav Eilers, after Wilhelm von Kaulbach, *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* (1869); engraving, in *Wilhelm von Kaulbach's Wandgemälde im Treppenhause des Neuen Museum zu Berlin: In Kupfer gestochen von G. Eilers, H. Merz, J. L. Raab, A. Schultheiss. Mit erläuterndem Text herausgegeben unter den Auspicien des Meisters*, ed. Alexander Duncker (Berlin: Duncker, 1872), fol. 3.

Franz inserts in the stage directions the *dramatis personae* of his play into what is effectively a description of the architectural frame and background of the painting:

The scenic arrangement of this final act is to correspond as closely as possible to *Kaulbach's* fresco at the Berlin Museum by which the poet was first inspired to the composition of the Messiah trilogy. On the left hand, the front and the flight of open stairs of the Temple, which form an obtuse angle. To this is joined towards the right a colonnade in such a manner that it forms on the right-hand side another obtuse angle corresponding to the flight of stairs on the left. In the middle of the obtuse angle on the right is a gate. On the flight of stairs on the left are sitting *Lea* with the harp, *Ahasuerus*, people. On the stage are *Levi*, *Simon*, *John*, *Merton*, *Alexas*, *Jairus*, *Gyphäos* and people.⁷²

⁷² Franz, *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, p. 75: "Das scenische Arrangement in diesem letzten Akte ist möglichst übereinstimmend zu machen mit dem im Berliner Museum befindlichen Wandge-

Indeed, the whole drama, as this suggests, unfolds a narrative that utilizes and effectively explains the figural constellation of Kaulbach's painting. The concluding setting, finally, has Franz's characters arrive at a tableau which corresponds to that of the artist, although it includes a number of significant substitutions:

The final scene should be arranged as follows: on the open flight of stairs on the left are standing *Merton*, *Jairus*, *Gyphthäos*, people. In the very foreground on the left, *Ahasuerus* is fleeing. On his right, *Levi* is cowering, with a sword in his hand. In the middle of the stage *Simon bar Giora* stands above the corpse of his eldest son who is covered with [a cloak of] royal purple, next to him are his two wives on whom he has drawn his sword. Between *Levi* and *Simon* are sitting women in the background who prepare to stab their children with knives. In the background on the right *Titus* enters through the colonnade, riding on a white stallion and followed by his army. In front of him *John of Giscala* is led by *Julian* as a captive. The Romans carry their banners into the Temple. In the very foreground on the right are the withdrawing Christians, carrying palm [fronds]; among them *Mary Magdalen*, *Tabitha*, *Diotrephes*, *Cypria*, *Demetrius*. The [final] curtain falls to resounding triumphant music.⁷³

Probably the most significant divergence from Kaulbach's composition is Franz's substitution of the High Priest, central in the fresco, with Simon bar Giora (Simon Bargioras). In the play, the High Priest Ananus—as well as Matthias and Nikodemus—have been murdered earlier at the behest of Simon to whom is attributed by Franz the condemnation of the priests by Titus as recorded by Josephus and reiterated with disgust by the Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz: "Priests must per-

mälde *Kaulbachs*, durch welches in dem Dichter die erste Idee zur Abfassung der Messiastrilogie geweckt wurde. Links die Vorderfront und Freitreppe des Tempels, welche eine stumpfe Ecke bilden. Daran schließt sich nach rechts hin eine Säulenhalle, welche den Hintergrund der Bühne bildet. Diese Säulenhalle zieht sich dann so, daß auf der rechten Seite eine stumpfe Ecke gebildet wird, entsprechend der Freitreppe auf der linken Seite. In der Mitte der stumpfen Ecke rechts ist ein Thor. Auf der Freitreppe links sitzen *Lea* mit der Harfe, *Ahasverus*, Volk. Auf der Bühne sind *Levi*, *Simon*, *Johannes*, *Merton*, *Alexas*, *Jairus*, *Gyphthäos* und Volk."

⁷³ Ibid., p. 84: "Das Schlußbild ist folgendermaßen zu arrangieren: Auf der Freitreppe links stehen *Merton*, *Jairus*, *Gyphthäos*, Volk. Ganz im Vordergrunde links flieht *Ahasverus*. Rechts von ihm kauert *Levi*, ein Schwert in der Hand. Mitten auf der Bühne ganz im Vordergrunde steht *Simon Bargioras* über der mit dem Königspurpur bedeckten Leiche seines ältesten Sohnes, neben ihm seine beiden Weiber, auf die er das Schwert zückt. Zwischen *Levi* und *Simon* sitzende Weiber im Hintergrunde, welche Messer auf ihre Kinder zücken. Rechts im Hintergrunde reitet *Titus* auf weißem Hengste durch die brennende Säulenhalle ein, gefolgt von seinem Heere. Vor ihm wird *Johannes von Gischala* als Gefangener von *Julianus* geführt. Die Römer tragen ihre Fahnen in den Tempel. Ganz im Vordergrunde rechts die ausziehenden Christen, Palmen tragend; unter ihnen *Maria Magdalena*, *Tabitha*, *Diotrephes*, *Cypria*, *Demetrius*. Unter rauschender Siegesmusik fällt der Vorhang."

ish with the Temple.”⁷⁴ The replacement of the High Priest’s daughter in the fresco with one of the two wives of Simon is in line with these alterations. In Franz’s conception, it is instead the daughter of the Pharisee who represents the figure of the Beautiful Jewess. In contrast to the High Priest’s daughter in Kaulbach’s *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, who appears to be torn between Judaism and Christianity, Tabitha has adopted the new faith and is therefore among the Christians leaving the city who, in Franz’s play, do not correspond entirely to the artist’s figural constellation; nor did Franz include the Jewish orphans. Instead, he added to the figures as represented in the fresco the captive John of Giscala.

Yet even with these minor alterations in mind, the whole drama remains in effect a narrativization and as such an expansive interpretation of Kaulbach’s fresco. Indeed, as the final play in Franz’s trilogy, originally published in one volume, *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems* should not be read without reference to the preceding plays, which commence with the emergence of John the Baptist in *Jesus von Nazareth* (Jesus of Nazareth) and conclude with the suicide of Judas in *Judas Ischarioth*. In addition to the comprehensive thematic development from Jesus’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem as related by Ahasuerus⁷⁵ to the final cataclysmic moment of the fall of the Temple and the blasphemer’s horrified flight recreated in imitation of Kaulbach’s fresco, Franz knits his three plays closely together through the consistent and recurrent use of the central characters, though their prominence varies in relation to the shifting historical contexts elaborated across the trilogy.

Given the significance accorded by the author to Kaulbach’s mural, he must in fact have imagined those characters which in the final scene are inscribed into his recreation of the painting from the very beginning with their position and expression as visually established by the artist. Those of his *dramatis personae* he did not find in his pictorial model, he simply added to the multitude of figures in the painting according to their various affiliations.

Perhaps the most notable among the characters consistently employed by Franz across the trilogy are Mary Magdalen (Maria Magdalena), Ahasuerus, Levi, and Lea, the mother of Judas. No less significant, though of course no longer among the *dramatis personae* of the final play, is Judas himself whose character is developed by the dramatist across the first two plays of his trilogy in parallel to that of Jesus—who in fact never makes an actual stage appearance—and in relation to Mary Magdalen and his mother Lea. Though obviously also not among the Jews represented in Kaulbach’s fresco, Judas is in fact a crucial figure in Franz’s

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 58: “Priester müssen mit dem Tempel sterben.”

⁷⁵ Franz, *Jesus von Nazareth*, p. 40.

engagement with the biblical narrative and the historical episode and his earlier presence still reverberate in the final scene of the trilogy.

Jesus von Nazareth commences in imitation of biblical genealogy with Judas being informed of his lineage. With her claim that he is from the house of David, Lea incites her son to think of himself as the Messiah who, by force of his arms, shall become the savior of his people and free his country from the Roman yoke. Judas is, moreover, in love with Mary Magdalen. After their first night together, the young girl is accused of fornication. Brought by the religious court before Jesus to test him, he responds: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."⁷⁶ Mary Magdalen, her original death sentence commuted to being outcast, renounces all worldly love and abandons Judas in order to follow Jesus. Frustrated moreover also in his political endeavors by the people's belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Judas initially is consumed with hatred of the other. Yet he soon also falls under the spell of the Nazarene and dreams of joining forces with the gentle Galilean.

Characterized as heroic and beloved by the people, unyielding and courageous toward the Roman occupiers of Judaea, Judas is nevertheless shown to be easily swayed by his mother and her fierce ambition—both characters, if in a slightly different constellation, in fact seem to be modeled to some extent on Shakespeare's Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In *Judas Ischarioth*, it is his mother's scheming and the intrigues of the priests, in particular of Levi, that in conjunction with the jealousy by which he is tormented for being deserted by Mary Magdalen make Judas ultimately betray not only Jesus but also his own honorable nature. Indeed, Franz presents Judas as a tragic hero whose pragmatism and indomitable spirit are shattered as he confronts the otherworldly meekness and power of Jesus.

Destroyed by his betrayal, Judas one by one denounces his now tarnished virtues of which pride is the last to which he clings. Yet his pride is at the same time his fatal flaw. As Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* seeks to equal God, his pride casting him "out from Heaven,"⁷⁷ thus Judas has the presumption to think of himself as the Messiah. Like Satan, he cannot bear to be second and would indeed have been destined to be first had not his adversary been so inhumanly superior.

The emphasis on Judas may seem immaterial in relation to Kaulbach's pictorial composition. Yet his is a crucial, if historically contingent, absence in the artist's *Zerstörung Jerusalems* no less than in the dramatist's. As recognized by Franz and elaborated in his trilogy, there is a profound affinity between Judas

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 72. See John 8:7.

⁷⁷ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 357 (l.37).

and Ahasuerus. Like Judas, Ahasuerus was seen as “a symbol of the Jewish people”⁷⁸ and both are eternally punished for their rejection of Christ. Though manifest before the middle of the nineteenth century, this was a theme that developed “strongly during the remainder of the century.”⁷⁹

Kaulbach may already have been aware of the link between Ahasuerus and Judas that was also elaborated in the second part of Franz’s trilogy. In addition to the various pictorial sources meticulously researched and discussed by Möseneder,⁸⁰ the artist’s constellation of the demons and the precipitate figure of Ahasuerus arguably owe their inspiration also to an illustration of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock’s *Der Messias* (1748–73; *The Messiah*) by Heinrich Friedrich Füger. The illustration to Canto IX of the widely disseminated religious epic represents Judas as he is cast into Hell by Abbadon, one of the Angels of Death and, more specifically, the Angel of the Abyss (see Figure 15). Incidentally, Füger’s design was engraved by Johann Friedrich Leybold who in 1787 also crafted the frontispiece of the second volume of Schubart’s poems which represents the enraged Ahasuerus casting off the craggy cliffs of Mount Carmel the skulls of the long line of those of his kin and progeny survived by him.

Precipitate, like Kaulbach’s Ahasuerus, Judas staggers in the left foreground of Füger’s illustration toward the abyss and, with eyes wide, stares in horror at the beholder.⁸¹ Behind him the central figure of Abbadon points imperiously into the depths; the flaming sword in the angel’s other hand indicates Jesus on the cross in the top right corner of the background. Two other winged figures behind the Angel of the Abyss, shying away from the precipice, complete the diagonal axis between the crucified and his betrayer which is additionally emphasized with a bolt of lightning next to the Redeemer’s cross. Their recoiling movement and Abbadon’s pointing hand in the very center of the composition as well as the momentum of Judas’s lurching body suggest his inevitable trajectory toward the burning pit in the right foreground out of which a serpent rises to claim the betrayer of Christ.

78 Anderson, *Wandering Jew*, p. 248.

79 Ibid.

80 See Möseneder, “Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht,” 123–6.

81 Füger’s Judas was clearly also an inspiration for Samuel Hirszenberg’s (1865–1907) striking painting of *Żyd wieczny tułacz* (1899; *The Wandering Jew*); oil on canvas; 343 cm × 293 cm; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Like Kaulbach’s composition, this shows Ahasuerus fleeing the conflagration of the destruction of Jerusalem. For Hirszenberg’s painting as a response to Kaulbach, see Ronen, “Kaulbach’s Wandering Jew,” 251–4. For Hirszenberg’s sources, see also Richard I. Cohen and Mirjam Rajner, “The Return of the Wandering Jew(s) in Shmuel Hirszenberg’s Art,” *Ars Judaica* 7 (2011): 33–56, who do not, however, include Füger’s illustration to Klopstock in their discussion.



Figure 15: Johann Friedrich Leybold, after Heinrich Friedrich Füger, *Klopstock's Messiah*. *Neunter Gesang* (1799), in *Der Messiah. Ein Cyclus von Darstellungen nach Motiven aus Klopstock's Messiah gezeichnet von H. Füger* [. . .] 14 Platten mit erläuterndem Text (Stuttgart: Göpel, [1846?]; engraving; British Library, London (General Reference Collection Tab.1349.c.). (With kind permission.)

In terms of the composition, the influence of Füger's illustration on Kaulbach's painting is suggested not only by the constellation of the three portentous figures of the angels in relation to the fugitive to which correspond the three avenging demons. His position in the left foreground is also similar, as is the wild aspect of his face and eyes. While obviously derived from the Erinyes, and perhaps even more directly from Schubart's "dæmon, let loose from hell," the snakes wound around the demons' heads in the *Zerstörung Jerusalems* appear to be prefigured by the unruly locks blown wildly around Abbadon's head.

In addition to these parallels, a conceptual similarity between Judas and Ahasuerus is moreover suggested by Klopstock's verse. The "trembling spectre" of the "Traitor's ghost,"⁸² Judas, already dead by his own hand, pleads with the angel to kill him with his flaming sword. He, like Ahasuerus, seeks to end his punishment and to find rest. Yet his fate is "death that ne'er sleeps."⁸³ Like Ahasuerus, he is condemned to perpetual pain, never to be redeemed, though not on earth but in eternity.

Perhaps more significant still is the change in the perception of Judas which was initiated with Klopstock's epic. In the third canto, Satan swoops down in Gethsemane on the sleeping form of Judas and forces an evil dream upon him in which the ghost of his father not only insinuates to him the feeling of being slighted and hated by Jesus but suggests to him to hasten the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah through his contrived betrayal:

Lo, the Messiah lingers to fulfil
 His great redemption; to establish yet
 His promis'd kingdom! Nought, meantime, can prove
 More hateful to the souls of Israel's chiefs,
 Than to obey, as king, the Nazarene.
 Daily they plot his death. Dissemble then!
 Feign to be willing to give up thy Lord
 Into their Elders' hands; not to avenge
 His causeless hatred, but to urge him on,
 Weary of persecution, to arise
 In formidable wrath, his foes to quell,
 To smite them to the earth with scorn in shame,
 And blind confusion, and at once t' erect
 His long-expected kingdom. [. . .]⁸⁴

⁸² Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, *The Messiah: A Poem*, [transl. Catherine Head,] vol. 2 (London: Longman, etc., 1826), IX: 553, 562; see also Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, *Der Messias* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1839), I, 319: "ein bebender Todter [. . .] der Geist des Verräthers."

⁸³ Klopstock, *Messiah*, IX: 596; see also Klopstock, *Messias*, I, 323: "hier schläft der Tod nicht."

⁸⁴ Klopstock, *Messiah*, III: 605–18; see also Klopstock, *Messias*, I, 97: "Sieh', der Messias säumt mit seiner großen Erlösung / Und mit dem herrlichen Reich, das er aufzurichten verheißen. / Nichts ist den Großen verhaßter, als Nazareths König zu dienen. / Täglich sinnend sie Tod' ihm aus. Verstelle Dich, Judas, / Schein', als wolltest Du ihn in die Hand der wartenden Priester / Ueberliefern, nicht, Rache zu üben, weil er dich hasset, / Sondern, ihn nur dadurch zu bewegen, daß er sich endlich / Ihrer langen Verfolgungen müd' und furchtbarer zeige, / Daß er, mit Schande, Bestürzung und Schmach sie zu Boden zu schlagen, / Sein so lang' erwartetes Reich auf Einmal errichte."

Suggested by Satan through the dream specter of Judas's father, the expectation of the Messiah's kingdom articulated here is clearly political, not spiritual. It reflects the materialism attributed to Judas in the epic which is indeed introduced as the incentive for his betrayal of Christ: "as foll'wer of a dreaded Chief" the sooner to gain, "[d]rear as it is, thy heritage."⁸⁵

Yet Klopstock's suggestion of personal greed as the underlying motivation for Judas's political engagement was subsequently superseded with his more idealistic political zeal. This notion was elaborated, for instance, by Goethe in his plan for an epic poem on Ahasuerus. The posthumously published "Der ewige Jude," mentioned above as seminal to the renewed interest in Ahasuerus since the 1830s, may have been known to Kaulbach, and presumably also to Otto Franz. The fragment itself does not include the Judas episode. Yet in the poet's plan, published already in 1830 in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, it occurs in a rudimentary form, which reveals it to be a further development of Klopstock's conception.

In Goethe's plan, Judas confides after the betrayal in despair over his misguided deed to Ahasuerus:

He had been, he said, as well as the shrewdest of the other disciples, firmly convinced that Christ would declare himself regent and head of the nation. His purpose was only, by this violence, to compel the Lord, whose hesitation had hitherto been invincible, to hasten the declaration. Accordingly, he had incited the priesthood to an act which previously they had not courage to do. The disciples on their side, were not without arms, and probably all would have turned out well, if the Lord had not given him up, and left them in the most forlorn state.⁸⁶

This shift in the perception of Judas, sustained and promoted in particular by the historical research into the life of Jesus that emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century,⁸⁷ was expressed quite succinctly by Thomas de Quincey in his

⁸⁵ Klopstock, *Messiah*, III: 619, 621; see also Klopstock, *Messias*, I, 97: "ein Jünger von einem gefürchteten Meister; / Dann, dann würdest du auch dein Erbtheil früher Erlangen! / Ist es auch klein [. . .]."

⁸⁶ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *The Auto-Biography of Goethe. Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life. The Concluding Books*, transl. A. J. W. Morrison (London: Bell, 1874), p. 36. See also Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit. Dritter Theil*, p. 304: "Er sey nämlich, so gut als die klügsten der übrigen Anhänger, fest überzeugt gewesen, daß Christus sich als Regent und Volkshaupt erklären werde, und habe das bisher unüberwindliche Zaudern des Herrn mit Gewalt zur That nöthigen wollen, und deßwegen die Priesterschaft zu Thätlichkeiten aufgereizt, welche auch diese bisher nicht gewagt. Von der Jünger Seite sey man auch nicht unbewaffnet gewesen, und wahrscheinlicher Weise wäre alles gut abgelaufen, wenn der Herr sich nicht selbst ergeben und sie in den traurigsten Zuständen zurückgelassen hätte."

⁸⁷ See, e.g., David Friedrich Strauß, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols (Tübingen: Osiander, 1836), II, §115, pp. 392–3.

essay on “Judas Iscariot” (1852). With reference to developments in Germany, de Quincey argues that Judas, failing to appreciate the spiritual dimension of Jesus’s mission, expected him to establish an earthly kingdom and to restore the throne of David. Thus misunderstanding the nature of the Messiah, as did many others, Judas, de Quincey suggests, had the presumption of precipitating the prevaricating Jesus into action by his apparent betrayal so that

he would be forced into giving the signal to the populace of Jerusalem who would then rise unanimously, for the double purpose of placing Christ at the head of an insurrectionary movement, and of throwing off the Roman yoke.⁸⁸

This absolves Judas from base desires and absolute evil. It potentially even establishes him as a tragic hero. Consequently, as Hyam Maccoby observes, “[t]his version of events has proved popular not only with scholars but with authors of novels and film-scripts about Jesus and early Christianity.”⁸⁹ Franz’s conception of the figure of Judas clearly is also indebted to this school of thought, though his suggestion of the defiant disciple’s doubts about his own chosenness as the Messiah goes far beyond these considerations.

Richard Wagner, too, was intrigued by the shift in the perception of Judas in the wake of Goethe’s conception. In the draft for an abandoned opera project on “Jesus von Nazareth” (1848; Jesus of Nazareth), the composer elaborated the tension between conflicting expectations of a political and a spiritual Messiah.⁹⁰ Like Goethe, and like Franz after him, Wagner conceived of Judas as a Zealot. In his fragmentary draft, Judas, serious and sincere, but materialistic, urges Jesus to declare himself and instigate an armed revolt against Roman rule and the Jewish theocracy. Yet Jesus explains that he conceives of himself not as a scion of David but as the Son of God.⁹¹ Jesus, that is, chooses the universal over the particular, while Judas, with his expectation of a worldly messianic realm, remains effectively mired in the Jewish particularity denounced by Gutzkow and Wagner.

From 1843–49 musical director at the court theater in Dresden, Wagner had a strained relationship with Gutzkow, who was appointed the theater’s dramaturge in 1846. Yet his notion of the destruction of Ahasuerus as the exemplar of Jewish redemption through the destruction of Jewish particularity, articulated in his notorious essay on “Das Judenthum in der Musik” shortly after he abandoned the

⁸⁸ Thomas de Quincey, “Judas Iscariot” [1852], in *Judas Iscariot and Other Writings* (Edinburgh: Black, 1863), pp. 1–34, p. 6.

⁸⁹ Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 136.

⁹⁰ See Richard Wagner, *Jesus von Nazareth: Ein dichterischer Entwurf aus dem Jahre 1848* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887).

⁹¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 6, 12 and 23–5.

“Jesus von Nazareth” project, may well have been influenced by the writer, whose alleged affinity with the Jews the composer was later to denounce with disgust as he ascribed supposedly Jewish character traits to him.⁹²

It is not likely that Franz would have been familiar with Wagner’s treatment of Judas, which was not published until 1887, four years after the composer’s death. Jewish particularity in itself is also not a prominent concern of the dramatist. Beyond the potential influence of Fügen’s illustration to Canto IX of Klopstock’s *Messias* on Kaulbach, the construction of Judas as a Zealot is intriguing in the present context in particular inasmuch as it is related by Franz to the Berlin fresco and as such suggests a further dimension to the representation of the destruction of Jerusalem. After all, the eradication of the city and the Temple is the absolute negation of the messianic hope of which Judas and his condemnation become emblematic no less than the Ahasuerus figure.

Descended into madness after the death of her son, Lea is associated by Franz through Ananus with Ahasuerus as metonymy for an obsolete Judaism: “Embodied / Appears to be in these ancient figures / The Judaism of old; two shrill types / For a painter’s brush.”⁹³ Mention of the painter’s brush may well be considered a further reference to Kaulbach whose Ahasuerus is indeed a “shrill” figure. Lea’s character, however, is another absence from the artist’s fresco, though Franz found a way of inserting her by association.

The High Priest, like Levi, seeks to promote peace. Both fear the upheavals and power shifts resulting from either a Jewish or a Roman victory. Yet Lea craves to re-establish the Jewish royal line through her son. She is therefore a threat to the power of the priests, if no longer—in the final part of the trilogy, after the death of Judas—in actuality. In her madness, she fantasizes about welcoming her victorious son as the Jewish king upon his return from battle. With her song and harp, she assumes a prophetic voice with which she extols Zion’s rise from destruction and abjection. But her vision is obsolete and lacks divine sanction. In the final act, which in particular was inspired by Kaulbach, she calls with increasing despair for her son as the Lion of Juda. When she is not heard, in complete desolation, she rips in a frenzy of destruction the strings of her harp before she shatters the instrument and finally casts herself off the Temple Mount.

None of the figures in Kaulbach’s pictorial composition corresponds to the character of Lea, yet the engravings by Merz as well as Eilers and Eichens, based on the Munich and Berlin cartoons of the artist, respectively, include in the fore-

⁹² See Jacob Katz, *The Darker Side of Genius: Richard Wagner’s Anti-Semitism* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1986), p. 18.

⁹³ Franz, *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, p. 45: “Verkörpert / Erscheint in diesen greisigen Gestalten / Das alte Judenthum; zwei grelle Typen / Für eines Malers Pinsel.”

ground a broken harp (see, e.g., Figure 14), a detail omitted in either of the completed versions of the painting.⁹⁴ It would seem that Franz, inspired by the image of the shattered harp and its implications, extrapolated from it the character of Lea. The broken instrument denotes the absence left by the old woman and the utter destruction of the hope of the restoration of a Jewish kingdom as embodied in the trilogy by her and by Judas, though Kaulbach may rather have conceived of it as a symbol of the failure of the royal line of the house of David. He may also have included it as a further instrument of radicalization in comparison to the destruction of the First Temple after which, as suggested in Psalm 137—and as represented in Bendemann's painting—the Jews hung their harps in sorrow in the trees. The broken harp in Kaulbach's painting cannot be retrieved or mended.

Ahasuerus envies Lea's madness, as insanity would offer him release from the curse weighing upon him.⁹⁵ His character too, like hers and Levi's, appears already in the first part of Franz's trilogy but gains prominence mainly in the second and third parts. In an inversion of Kaulbach's pictorial representation, Ahasuerus is hounded by the spirit of vengeance to revisit the site of his transgression. When he returns to Jerusalem, eternally driven and restless, he is deeply affected by his encounter with the aged Mary Magdalen whose face impresses on him "the splendour of the beatific peace of rapture" that eludes him.⁹⁶ His is another voice of despair and destruction, but different from Lea's. Ahasuerus—as in Schubart, Croly, and Wohlmuth—seeks his own death in the imminent conflagration.⁹⁷

In Franz's play, Ahasuerus's prophecy of doom is therefore also different from Mary Magdalen's who foretells the destruction of the old order as she heralds the new. As already suggested by Wohlmuth, it is the fate of Ahasuerus himself which she elaborates as paradigmatic of the whole of Israel:

Oh, Land, Land, Land, hearken to the word of the Lord.
All of Israel will wander the earth
Without a home, like Ahasuerus,
And towards its fulfilment time is thrust.
The hour of the Last Judgement has come,
Defiled is the Holy of Holies
And Adonai's abode insolently profaned.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ This detail was omitted for unknown reasons in both the final Munich and Berlin versions, see Menke-Schwinghammer, *Weltgeschichte als "Nationalepos"*, p. 42.

⁹⁵ See Franz, *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, p. 46.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 12: "[...] deren Antlitz / Im sel'gen Frieden der Verklärung strahlt."

⁹⁷ See ibid., p. 20.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 21: "O Land, Land, Land, vernimm das Wort des Herrn. / Ganz Israel wird heimatlos die Erde / Durchschweifen müssen wie Ahasverus, / Und der Erfüllung drängt die Zeit entgegen. / Des Weltgerichtes Stunde bricht herein, / Geschändet ist das Allerheiligste / Und Adonai's Woh-

Mary Magdalen condenses into these lines almost the whole of Kaulbach's artistic conception. Peace is denied to Ahasuerus because his transgression—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—cannot be forgiven. Yet Mary Magdalen exhorts him to recognize Jesus as his redeemer:

I say unto thee, thou shalt find no peace,
Unless thou rest beneath His cross.
The Vanquisher of Death and Prince of Peace
Alone can give you true tranquillity.⁹⁹

This future hope is what ultimately distinguishes Ahasuerus from Judas. The betrayer of Jesus cannot be redeemed. As he watches the crucifixion from afar, Judas braves the tumult of the elements and defiantly describes the hour of horrors as the birth hour of the messianic realm he seeks to establish:

Firm, firm, the hour
Of labour approaches and I as physician
First receive from the womb
The child, the child of affliction, the new Empire,
That in Israel I seek to create.¹⁰⁰

Yet he collapses senseless, a lesser man than he believed himself to be. When he awakens, Ahasuerus, pursued—as in Kaulbach—by avenging spirits, identifies both as traitors. Yet he takes comfort in the knowledge that with Judas there is one who is more evil than himself.¹⁰¹ Almost stoned by the frenzied people, Judas eventually makes his escape and, all his dreams shattered, curses himself and his mother. And yet, once more does he try to rally the priests in support of his messianic ambitions. When he is mocked and cast out, he finally despairs and kills himself—in contrast to biblical tradition—with a dagger. The significance of the cross-shape of the weapon is not lost on him: “Thus the cross to both of us delivers death.”¹⁰² Yet he is, once again, the lesser of the two.

nung frech entweiht. / Die Römer nahen eilig unsrer Stadt, / Als die Vollstrecker göttlicher Befehle, / Damit das Wort des Herrn erfüllet werde.”

99 Ibid., p. 20: “Ich sage dir, nicht eher findest du Frieden, / Als bis du ausruhst unter seinem Kreuze. / Der Todbezwinger und Friedefürst / Kann dir allein die wahre Ruhe geben.”

100 Franz, *Judas Ischarioth*, p. 58: “Fest, fest, es naht / Die Stunde der Geburt, und ich als Arzt / Empfange aus dem Mutterleib zuerst / Das Kind, das Schmerzenskind, das neue Reich, / Das ich in Israel begründen will.”

101 See *ibid.*

102 Ibid., p. 73: “So giebt das Kreuz uns beiden also Tod.”

In the concluding part of Franz's trilogy, Levi too anticipates the impending catastrophe and the exile of the Jews.¹⁰³ The Pharisee's response, once again different from that of the other characters, is a debilitating sense of futility and failure as well as the anguished and grudging acknowledgment of supersession. His choice is to die in the conflagration as a representative of the old order, thus eventually to achieve what is denied to Ahasuerus. For Levi, too, wishes to die but is initially forced to live on to witness the iniquities perpetrated by John of Giscala and his followers.¹⁰⁴

In *Jesus von Nazareth* and even more clearly in *Judas Ischarioth*, Levi emerges as an evil schemer whose lust for power and obsession with the status quo compel him to instigate the betrayal of Judas and the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus. However, in *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems*, set more than three decades later, he appears worn down by doubts about his own actions in the past. His frequently reiterated realization—"Thine is the victory, Nazarene,"¹⁰⁵ an echo of Eleazar's dying words in Wohlmuth's play—punctuates the rapid progress of doom in the final part of the trilogy:

Unstoppable the old into itself does
Fold, and the new gains in power.

.....
And all I so proudly built disintegrates.
One thing, one alone, is left to me, the love of a child.¹⁰⁶

Yet his daughter Tabitha too is lost to the Pharisee when the Beautiful Jewess, once again confirming the gendered conversion narrative, leaves her father's faith. The constellation and the individual trajectory of either figure is similar to Eleazar's and Judith's in Wohlmuth's play. Together with the Christians, among them her betrothed, Tabitha withdraws from the doomed city. Levi is resigned rather than incensed but will not follow her:

Away, away, I will not curse you,
Yet nevermore do I wish to lay my eyes on you.
All alone will I die on the ruins of
Jerusalem, true to the God of my Fathers
E'en in death. Oh, fiercely a canker

¹⁰³ See Franz, *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27: "Du hast gesieget, Nazarener"; see also pp. 29, 66, 84.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: "Unhaltbar stürzt das Alte in sich selbst / Zusammen, und das Neue wächst an Kraft. / [. . .] / Und Alles bricht, was ich so stolz gebaut. / Eins, Eins nur blieb mir, eines Kindes Liebe."

Gnaws within me, and eternally resounds
The word: "Thine, Nazarene, is the victory!"¹⁰⁷

The new dispensation is articulated with supersessionist certainty by Tabitha when she finally abandons her father in the Tempel: "You die for the God of Vengeance and of Wrath, / For the God of Love Tabitha will live."¹⁰⁸

In the first two parts of Franz's trilogy, the Beautiful Jewess was embodied in Mary Magdalen. In the concluding part, the type is represented by Tabitha. If only very briefly, there is a suggestion that both may be closely connected in that the older woman has taken on the role of a motherly confidante for the presumably motherless daughter of the old Jew.¹⁰⁹ In this particular case, Mary Magdalen is moreover an eye witness to the unfolding eschatological events whose truth she transmits. The constellation of older converted woman and motherless daughter is particularly effective and is occasionally reiterated in dramatic and narrative representations of the destruction of Jerusalem, though not in the oratorios.¹¹⁰

As in Wohlmuth's play, the gruesome narrative of Mary of Bethzuba is used by Franz as a signifier of the worst of the depravity perpetrated in the doomed city. And as in the earlier play, her individual guilt is deflected onto John and Simon. Her unnatural deed is portrayed as a symptom of the corruption that was engendered by these men among the population of the besieged city. Again, to some extent as in the earlier play, Mary becomes a kind of touchstone against which the true mettle of the Jewish leaders is tested.

John of Giscala is and remains evil; he seeks to plant internal strife for his own ends and his iniquity and moral corruption is without bounds.¹¹¹ He is an opportunist without beliefs, as is indicated also by his proto-communist demands, which he exploits for his own benefit: "The communion of goods, and of all women / Be henceforth law in Jerusalem."¹¹² John is moreover a coward and will

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 29: "Hinweg, hinweg, nicht fluchen will ich euch, / Doch nimmer mag ich euch mit Augen sehen. / Vereinsamt werd' ich sterben auf den Trümmern / Jerusalems, dem Gotte meiner Väter / Auch noch im Tode treu. O, heftig nagt / Ein Wurm im Innern mir, und ewig tönt / Das Wort: 'Du, Nazarener, hast gesiegt!'"

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 83: "Du stirbst dem Gott der Rache und des Zornes, / Dem Gott der Liebe wird Tabitha leben."

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.* For the frequent effacement of the mother figure of the Beautiful Jewess, see Sicher, *Jew's Daughter*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., the figures of Rahel and Miriam in Hans Herrig's tragedy *Jerusalem* (1874), discussed below; in Jutta Ihlenfeld's novel *Ruth, die Nichte des Apostels Paulus* (1899), which is examined in chapter IV, the figures of Ruth and her old slave Iras are converted simultaneously.

¹¹¹ See Franz, *Zerstörung Jerusalems*, pp. 14, 30–2.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 36: "Gemeinschaft aller Güter, aller Weiber / Sei künftig Satzung in Jerusalem."

not die honorably, like Simon;¹¹³ shifty, and once more thinking only of his own advantage, he seeks to escape the conflagration he incited. He is construed as the very embodiment of modern stereotypes of degenerate Jewishness. His character clearly plays to the anxieties of an imaginary modern audience inculcated with antisemitic stereotypes. But when he is led away a captive by the victorious Romans, those anxieties are laid to rest.¹¹⁴

Simon, similar to Judas, is a noble soul who has been corrupted by the depravity of his times and, more specifically, by the wiles of the self-serving priests which compelled him, as he recognizes himself, to stray “sideways off the path of virtue” and therefore provoked his vengeance and his hubris.¹¹⁵ He realizes: “my soul hath crushed itself” and defiantly seeks to wreak destruction.¹¹⁶

I through noble deeds could have been great,
Yet the times are not propitious,
Thus I want to stand, in unyieldingly stiff
Defiance, mocking death, head
And shoulder above the petty monsters
That ever lived as the scourge of a world.¹¹⁷

Simon’s heroic and ultimately honorable nature reasserts itself as he prepares to kill his family and himself. He is shaken by the perversions perpetrated within the city and in particular by the unnatural act of Mary’s teknophagy. Confounded by the sheer scale of the iniquity in Jerusalem, Simon entreats God to bury it under the ruins of the Temple.¹¹⁸ He thus turns into the imposing and heroic figure Kaulbach gave to the High Priest and as which he was conceived by Franz.

Ahasuerus, in a parallelism which equates his sin with that of the doomed city, uses the same image, ultimately derived from Schubart: “Cover me / With thy ruins, sacred Temple / And put an end to my great torment.”¹¹⁹ As in Wohl-muth’s play, this articulates the admission of his guilt and eventually, as he flees the conflagration, the continuation of his cursed wanderings. Yet where in the

¹¹³ See *ibid.*, p. 80.

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 83.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63: “Seitwärts vom Pfad der Tugend.”

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70: “meine Seele hat sich selbst vernichtet.”

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*: “Ich könnte groß durch edle Thaten sein, / Der Zeiten Ungunst hat es nicht gewollt, / So will ich denn durch todverhöhnenden, / Unbeugsam starren Trotz um Hauptes Länge / Die kleinen Ungeheuer überragen, / Die je als Geißel einer Welt gelebt.”

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79: “Des Kinderfraßes Gräuel / Mußt du bedecken mit des Tempels Trümmern, / Denn länger darf die Sonne nicht bescheinen / Den Ort, wo Mütter ihre Kinder schlachten.”

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80: “Decke mich / Mit deinen Trümmern, heil’ger Tempel, zu / Und setz’ ein Ende meiner großen Qual.”

earlier play Ahasuerus accepts the redemptive nature of God's punishment, this dimension is absent from Franz's drama.

Mary upbraids the Zealots as cowardly and exhorts them to follow her own example and abandon the last vestiges of any moral restraints. At the same time, she accuses them of having prompted her unnatural act: "Yours is the blame, / Who to such horrors mothers do compel."¹²⁰ Hence, Mary invokes her cannibalized child as an "avenging spirit" to haunt "the iniquitous corrupters of Zion" and to become "a fable for posterity"—as in Franz's trilogy.¹²¹ Yet even more important, the author shows Mary's unnatural deed to goad other mothers into seeking to kill their children and to revert to the human sacrifice of the Moloch cult, which had been superseded by the Ten Commandments delivered by Moses.

The corruption in the city thus results in Jewish regression as opposed to the progression of the Christians: the law is revoked and perverted into inhumane abjection in one case and transcended to divine grace in the other. Christian supersession is variously affirmed in the trilogy; it is also triumphantly reiterated in the conclusion to the drama and the *Messiah* trilogy as a whole by the withdrawing Christians among whose number is Levi's converted daughter Tabitha: "Praised be Christ! Our faith is / The victory that will overcome the world."¹²²

The Eternal Jew and Encroaching Antisemitism: Herrig

In the preface to his *Jerusalem* (1874), Hans Herrig (1845–92) noted his fascination with the period of "the fall of the ancient world and the rise of Christianity." He considered this to be "the most magnificent and tragical phenomenon in all of the history of the world" and, moreover, the only one in which inheres a "reconciliation."¹²³ The dramatic poem appears to have been the first in a tetralogy left unfinished by the author in which he intended to address the main ideas of Christianity in the crucial moments of its emergence and of which his *Nero* (1883),

120 Ibid.: "Euch trifft die Schuld, / Die ihr zu solchen Gräueln Mütter zwingt."

121 Ibid.: "Ein Rachegeist / Sei er den schändlichen Verderbern Zions," and: "Sei eine Fabel für die Nachwelt."

122 Ibid., p. 84: "Gelobt sei Christus! Unser Glaube ist / Der Sieg, der überwinden wird die Welt."

123 Hans Herrig, *Jerusalem* (Leipzig: Fritzsche, 1874), p. V: "ich [halte] den Untergang der alten Welt und die Erstehung des Christenthums für die großartigste und tragischste Erscheinung der ganzen Weltgeschichte und zwar für die Einzige, welche in sich selbst eine Versöhnung trägt, und [habe] deßhalb mir vorgenommen, wenn meine Kräfte reichen und das Schicksal es gestattet hat, dieselbe noch nach anderen Beziehungen hin zu schildern, und zwar in den bedeutungsvollen Gestalten eines Nero, Diocletian und Julian."

though first in the chronological sequence, was the second to appear.¹²⁴ Herrig's projected plays about Diocletian and Julian the Apostate were never published.

Already in 1875, shortly after the publication of *Jerusalem*, Herrig was discussed in the year's review of continental literature in the London-based *Athenæum* as one of "[t]he dramatists of modern Germany [who] seem to be in a fair way to annihilate the distinctions between the epic and dramatic forms of presentation."¹²⁵ His latest play was described as a reworking of Josephus's narrative "into an epic series of effective historical pictures." The article nevertheless insisted that "[t]he delineation of periods in the world's history" was "a task that epic poetry alone can undertake" and as such was beyond "the capabilities not of the actual only, but of any possible stage" which, in the author's estimation firmly relegated plays, such as Herrig's, not unreasonably to being read only.

The historical drama of Schiller, the author suggested, was being turned by these new writers into dramatic history. Indeed, Herrig is mentioned next to Heinrich von Kleist and Christian Dietrich Grabbe as one of the "genial but uncouth *Kraftdramatiker*" who are regarded as "dramatic forerunners" of Wagner's music theater.¹²⁶ Herrig was in fact an ardent admirer of Wagner and it has been observed that his "melodic" use of language is reminiscent of the composer's *leit-motifs*.¹²⁷

The Prussian victory over Austria in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 has been described as another external influence supposedly crucial to Herrig's development as a writer. A contemporary critic argued that it made him recognize the significance of history and, more specifically, of national history:

All his plays are historical, their subject matter taken partly from national and partly from universal history. For Herrig is not at all of the opinion that only those plays are national whose subjects are based on the history of one's own nation.¹²⁸

In this context, Herrig's supposedly realistic construction of Ahasuerus simultaneously as a historical and symbolic figure that, echoing Gutzkow, embodies "the

¹²⁴ See Ludwig Fränkel, "Herrig, Hans H.," in ADB (1905), L, 234–43, 237.

¹²⁵ Robert Zimmermann, "Germany," in "Continental Literature," *Athenæum* (December 25, 1875): 857–78, 864–8, 865.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Arnold Fokke, *Über Hans Herrig*. Wissenschaftliche Beilage zum Programm des Königlichen Gymnasiums zu Wilhelmshaven, 1891 (Wilhelmshaven: Süss, 1891), p. 36.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 19: "Alle seine Dramen sind historische, der Stoff derselben zum Teil der vaterländischen und zum Teil der Universalgeschichte entnommen. Denn Herrig ist keineswegs der Meinung, dass nur das Drama national sei, welches seinen Inhalt aus der Geschichte des eigenen Volkes schöpfe."

deification of the most blatant egotism”¹²⁹ has been suggested to be particularly effective:

There is nothing of the mystical drapery in which he [i.e., Ahasuerus] otherwise is cloaked, so as to incite the imagination by the veil of mystery; clear and transparent like other men who with overt actions pursue a particular purpose, thus the Wandering Jew is presented to us, in speech and deeds most acutely defined.¹³⁰

Ahasuerus, in this contemporary reading of Herrig’s play, symbolizes the inclination not just of the Jews, but of all humankind, toward the worldly and carnal. In this sense the destruction of Jerusalem as a historical occurrence is once more given the character of an exemplum that is, however, dissected into what is common to humanity and the Jewish particular which, according to Arnold Fokke, “after the fall of Jehovah in the drama no longer has the right to exist.”¹³¹

Herrig’s dramatic poem presents another confrontation between political and spiritual conceptions of the Messiah, in relation to which Ahasuerus is given much prominence. He is indeed drawn in analogy to Judas Iscariot and represented as an active promoter of the idea of political messianism. His singlemindedness and fierceness is emphasized by his orphaned great-granddaughter Rahel, who suffers from his lack of affection and excess of religious zeal. Rahel is in the familiar configuration once again a manifestation of the Beautiful Jewess who, in a long-drawn process, converts to Christianity. While not, in this instance, the daughter of the High Priest, she is nevertheless betrothed to his son, Juda. Pained by the emotional distance maintained by Ahasuerus, she is divided between her love of Juda and her affection for Miriam (Mirjam). The old woman has been like a mother to her and, in a configuration encountered already in Franz’s *Messiah*, introduces her to Christianity. Exposed by Juda as a former prostitute, Miriam is a Mary Magdalen figure (like Maria Magdalena in Franz’s trilogy) who herself embodied the Beautiful Jewess in the past but whose spiritual trajectory becomes the model for the virtuous Rahel who does not reject the maternal confidante even in the light of the revelations of her past.

When Simon bar Giora enters the city at the head of his troops, Ahasuerus, described by Rahel for his “divine raptures” as a “resurrected Jeremiah,”¹³² hails

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 6: “Das Symbol dieser Gottsetzung der krassesten Selbstsucht [sic] ist der Ahasver.”

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 6–7: “Da ist nichts von der mystischen Gewandung, in welcher er [i.e., Ahasuerus] sonst erscheint, um durch den Schleier des Geheimnisses die Phantasie zu erregen; klar und durchsichtig wie andere Menschen, welche mit offenem Thun einen bestimmten Zweck verfolgen so tritt der ewige Jude vor uns hin, in Reden und Handeln aufs schärfste umschnitten.”

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 22: “nach dem Sturze Jehovas im Drama nicht mehr existenzberechtigt.”

¹³² Herrig, *Jerusalem*, p. 14: “in göttlichen Verzückungen, / Ein auferstand’ner Jeremias.”

the Galilean in biblical language as the bridegroom of Jerusalem and as the Messiah.¹³³ Juda, representing a younger, heroic, but similarly misguided generation of Jews, shares his enthusiasm. In open confrontation with his father, who seeks the reconciliation with Rome, he, too, welcomes Simon as the Messiah. Juda elaborates on the wedding metaphor, which, although he dissembles modest hesitation, is nevertheless indirectly also picked up by Simon himself.¹³⁴ Yet when he is welcomed as God's anointed, Simon claims that he will not be anointed as the earlier kings with oil but with the blood of both friend and foe.¹³⁵ Denounced as charlatan by the High Priest, Simon is initially denied Anan's blessing, upon which the presumptive Messiah accuses the aged priest of being blind.¹³⁶

And yet, comparing himself to Jesus, Simon still will not directly arrogate to himself the title: "Am I the Messiah, / Never o mouth, say this proud word yourself, / As that Nazarene did!"¹³⁷ Rather, in an accomplished demagogic manipulation, he has himself acclaimed by the people.¹³⁸ They nevertheless soon begin to doubt him when the situation gets increasingly dire, though Herrig does not focus very much on the deprivations and moral deterioration in the city; thus, he has no interest in the teknophagy of Mary of Bethzuba, who is not mentioned at all in his dramatic poem. Challenging Simon, Rahel promotes a political messianic vision: "Why so timid dost though walk the earth."¹³⁹ Hailed by Simon as a prophetess, Rahel's invocation of royal might and splendour is exploited by the would-be Messiah to consolidate his worldly position. Yet it is built on an empty imaginary informed by poetic metaphors which do not participate in the spiritual truth of the messianic mission of Jesus.

To prove his legitimation, Simon eventually brazenly enters the forbidden Holy of Holies. Like Herrig's Titus, who declares the blind belief in the gods a thing of the past,¹⁴⁰ he clearly is not a believer himself, but seeks to exploit the people's superstitions. When he rushes out of the Holy of Holies, he stabs Anan to death without hesitation. With this unprecedented and daring move, he succeeds once more in winning the support of the shocked throng, and, after an intense debate, even that of Juda, the victim's son.

¹³³ See *ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32: "Bin ich Messias, / Nimmer o Mund, sag selbst dies stolze Wort, / Wie jener Nazarener es gethan!"

¹³⁸ See *ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57: "Weßhalb so zag' auf Erden wandelst Du."

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Eventually, Simon indeed claims to be the Messiah and ruthlessly leads the final Jewish sortie. Earlier, disgusted with the despondence of the Jews in Jerusalem, Ahasuerus defiantly described the Cherubim guarding the Holy of Holies as “violence and terror.”¹⁴¹ His recognition of both qualities in Simon after having faced the shrine is therefore to him nothing less than a confirmation of the Zealot’s messianic legitimacy. Intoxicated with the false news of a Jewish victory, Ahasuerus envisions Jewish world domination. Yet his dreams are shattered when the truth of the final defeat asserts itself.

Furtively hiding in the subterranean passages underneath the Temple, Simon confesses that his motives were never innocent and pure:

What then! Messiah? King I craved to be,
For rather would I treat *myself* to it than any *other*!
Well, dost think, that any man waxed ever great,
Ever others great did make, who not of himself,
Who did not think of himself foremost!?¹⁴²

By the time he emerges from the dark and dank passages after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Simon is blind and deranged. He now truly believes himself to be the Messiah:

Not such a Messiah was I as he was feigned
By the Christians, who suffers at the cross, dies,
And who, transported then to distant heaven,
With the earth has no more truck. No!
As the Lion of Juda dreamt him:
Sword in hand did I enter this world,
And have created now a realm
As only may be gained by the might of the sword.¹⁴³

The irony of Simon’s words is caustically pointed out by Ahasuerus: “The realm of the sword? Well do I see it all around, / Yes, monarch of the earth is the

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 50: “Gewalt und Schrecken.”

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 81: “Was doch! Messias? König wollt’ ich sein, / Weil ich’s *mir* lieber gönnte als den *andern*! / Ei, meinst Du, daß ein Mensch je groß geworden, / Je andre groß gemacht, der nicht an sich, / Der nicht gedacht vor Allem an sich selbst!?”

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 97: “Nicht ein Messias war ich, wie die Christen / Ihn lügen, der am Kreuze leidet, stirbt, / Und der zum fernen Himmel dann entrückt, / Nichts mit der Erde mehr zu thun hat. Nein! / Wie sich der Löwe Juda ihn geträumt: / Das Schwert kam in den Händen ich zur Welt, / Und euch gestiftet hab ich nun ein Reich, / Wie’s nur die Macht des Schwertes erwerben kann.”

sword.”¹⁴⁴ Yet his cynical assertion lacks insight. It is not the rule of the sword as such that is challenged by Ahasuerus but that his dreams of Jewish world domination should have come to naught against the superior power of the Roman Empire and that Jehovah should have abandoned Israel in its struggle.

His obstinacy, no less than Simon’s delusion, still does not recognize the failure of the political model of messianism and, by extrapolation, of Judaism. Yet Simon’s explicit comparison to, and continued rejection of, the spiritual mission of Jesus in effect reinforces the significance of his failure and that of the political conception of the Messiah which Ahasuerus also adheres to. While Simon descends into madness, Ahasuerus remains unrepentant to the very end of the play. He eventually kills the impostor as the embodiment of the failed hope of messianic glory, just as he feels that God obliterated this very hope.

Like the “resurrected Jeremiah” as whom he was apostrophied earlier by Rahel, Ahasuerus laments the end of Jerusalem and all his hopes, when Josephus enters and joins his lament. They are construed as opposites and when Ahasuerus mourns Israel’s passing, Josephus counters: “Israel did not die. Do not you and I live?”¹⁴⁵ Referring to the already existing diaspora of the Jews in Rome, Alexandria, Spain, and Babylon, Josephus extols its potential for survival:

Prosperity they enjoy, and good morals,
Are respected by their fellow citizens,
Many a one gained honourable fame
For his worldly wisdom and piety. They gather
On the Sabbath in the synagogue,
To listen to the Torah’s noble admonition;
In the mornings they kneel before the creator
And their faces cover in their shawls;
They wait for the Messiah, Who cometh[,]
And leave matzos for Him on the evening
Of Passover—¹⁴⁶

Josephus confronts Ahasuerus with the fantasy of Jewish life in prosperity and contentment in the diaspora, of which he is an embodiment himself. Herrig’s is

144 Ibid.: “Das Reich des Schwerts? Wohl seh’ ich’s rings umher, / Ja, der Monarch der Erde ist das Schwert.”

145 Ibid., p. 102: “Israel starb nicht. Leben wir nicht beide?”

146 Ibid., p. 103: “Des Wohlstands freun sie sich, der guten Sitten, / Sind angesehen bei ihren Stadtgenossen, / Manch einer auch erwarb sich hohen Ruhm / Durch Weltweisheit und Gottesfurcht. Sie sammeln / Am Sabbath in der Synagoge sich, / Der Thora edles Mahnwort zu vernehmen; / Des Morgens knien sie vor dem Schöpfer nieder / Und hüllen sich das Haupt in ihren Mantel; / Sie harren des Messias, welcher kommt / Und legen hin die Mazzen ihm am Abend / Des Passahfestes—”

indeed the only engagement with the subject in the nineteenth century in which the diaspora is valorized simultaneously as pre-existing to the destruction of Jerusalem and as an intrinsically desirable, comfortable, and comforting mode of living. It is important that this acknowledgment of a flourishing Judaism in the diaspora is an explicitly Jewish vision. Earlier in the dramatic poem, Ahasuerus and his granddaughter are alone in the burning Temple and the old man laments that he has lost the center of his life, his home (“Heimath”). Rahel’s consolation that his home will now be everywhere, like God’s, who once resided in the Temple and nowhere else, is recognized, and rejected, by Ahasuerus as Christian in nature.¹⁴⁷ Yet the diasporic idyll sketched by Josephus is no more acceptable to him. He responds despondently, but also with defiance:

Israel should be alive—that’s a lie!
 Jerusalem, its crown, was split asunder
 And Palestine, its body, carved up!
 Where should its heart then beat—where resound
 Our nation’s language? Think you, a nation
 Were nothing but a band of those who pray?
 Think you, when on a Sabbath you sing the psalms
 In a language you hardly comprehend,
 Or, when you, gathered in the stillness of the house,
 Forgetting the day’s business, timidly
 Dredge up the old home’s sounds,
 That Israel yet had a mouth?
 No! Israel is dead! No nation lives
 Whose language not from the proud mouth of a king
 Issues laws to the world, not his victories doth
 Sing to himself and posterity in a bold song.¹⁴⁸

Ahasuerus stubbornly holds on to the political conception of Judaism. The notion of a merely spiritual community—be it Christian or Jewish—is abhorrent to him.

With his insistence on the nation-building significance of language and, more specifically, the anticipation of the decline of Hebrew and its escalating disjunction

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 103: “Ein Israel gäb’s noch—das ist gelogen! / Jerusalem, das Haupt, ward ihm zerspalten / Und Palästina ihm, der Leib, zerstückelt! / Wo schlug da sein Herz—wo klänge noch / Die Sprache unsers Volks? Meint ihr, ein Volk / Sei nichts als eine Schaar von Betenden? / Meint ihr, wenn ihr am Sabbath singt die Psalmen / In einer Sprache, die ihr kaum versteht, / Oder, wenn ihr, im stillen Haus zusammen, / Vergessend da des Tags Geschäfte, zag / Der alten Heimath Laute sucht hervor, / Es hätte Israel noch einen Mund? / Nein! Israel ist tot! Es lebt kein Volk, / Deß Sprache nicht aus stolzem Königsmund / Der Welt Gesetze giebt, nicht seine Siege / Sich und der Nachwelt singt in kühnen [sic] Lied.”

from an increasingly hollow liturgy, Ahasuerus articulates an alternative perspective on diasporic Judaism which illustrates the reverse of the image elaborated by Josephus. Both arguably reflect developments contemporary to Herrig's dramatic poem.

In *Rom und Jerusalem* (1862; *Rome and Jerusalem*), which presumably would have been known to the dramatist, Moses Hess strongly criticized contemporary attempts within Reform Judaism of eliminating Hebrew from Jewish life.¹⁴⁹ Other than Ahasuerus in Herrig's dramatic poem, Hess ascribes a cohesive function not only to Hebrew but, more specifically, to liturgical texts in the holy language:

They [i.e., the Jewish reformers] fancy that a recently manufactured prayer or hymn book, wherein a philosophical theism is put into rhyme and accompanied by music, is more elevating and soul-stirring than the fervent Hebrew prayers which express the pain and sorrow of a nation at the loss of its fatherland. They forget that these prayers, which not only created, but preserved for millenniums, the unity of Jewish worship, are even to-day the tie which binds into one people all the Jews scattered around the globe.¹⁵⁰

Hess's proto-Zionist treatise confronted tendencies of assimilation and antisemitism ("Judenhass") in Germany with the notion of Jewish national cohesion and patriotism and, ultimately, the return of the Jews to Palestine and the creation of a national state.

To some extent, Herrig seems to reiterate and, in the figures of Ahasuerus and Josephus, to give dramatic expression to the contemporary internal Jewish dichotomy described by Hess between the pious Jew (Ahasuerus) and the new Jew (Josephus):

The pious Jew is above all a Jewish patriot. The "new-fashioned" ["neumodische"] Jew, who denies the existence of the Jewish nationality, is not only a deserter in the religious sense, but is also a traitor to his people, his race, and even to his family. If it were true that Jewish emancipation in exile is incompatible with Jewish nationality, then it were the duty of the Jews to sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ See Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*, transl. Meyer Waxman (New York: Bloch, 1918), p. 62; see also Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem, die letzte Nationalitätenfrage: Briefe und Noten* (Leipzig: Wengler, 1862), p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, p. 95; see also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, p. 47: "Ihnen [i.e., to the Jewish Reformers] dünkt ein selbst fabrizirtes Gebet- oder Gesangbuch, worin ein philosophischer Theismus in Reime gebracht und in Musik gesetzt ist, weit erbaulicher, als die rührenden Gebete in hebräischer Sprache, die überall den Schmerz um den Verlust des jüdischen Vaterlandes ausdrücken,—Gebete, welche die Einheit unsres Cultus geschaffen und Jahrtausende lang erhalten haben, welche noch heute das Band sind, das alle Juden auf dem ganzen Erdenrunde umschlingt."

¹⁵¹ Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, p. 62; see also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, p. 18: "Der fromme Jude ist vor allen Dingen jüdischer Patriot. Der 'neumodische' Jude, der die jüdische Nationalität verleugnet, ist nicht nur ein Apostat, ein Abtrünniger im religiösen Sinne, sondern ein Verräther an

Even though he sketches an idealized image of the “Judæo-Spanish cultural epoch” and its reconciliation of both tendencies,¹⁵² Hess ultimately seeks to promote the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, although he does not envisage a “total emigration.”¹⁵³ In fact, he acknowledges that “[e]ven after the establishment of a Jewish State, the majority of the Jews who live at present in the civilized Occidental countries will undoubtedly remain where they are.”¹⁵⁴

To Herrig the Jewish restoration to Palestine is irrelevant. While clearly informed by his reading of Hess, his perspective is diametrically opposed to that of his Jewish contemporary. The centripetal force imagined by Hess is a centrifugal one in Herrig. His Ahasuerus becomes the Wandering Jew of Christian legend and he is in fact branded as such by the head of the Christian community in the dramatic poem. In a way, Herrig turns Hess against himself with Ahasuerus’s insistence on essentialism—i.e., the particularism denounced already by Gutzkow in the Ahasuerus debate of almost four decades before. Hess seeks the reconciliation of a Jewish national renaissance with the persistence of the diaspora. Yet Herrig’s dramatic poem seems to suggest that this is not an option. Ahasuerus retreats eternally to the margins. Juda, the High Priest’s son, dies a convert. But his redemption is not of this world; nor is Rahel’s, who, though also converted, enters a life of slavery. Not even Elymaeus, paradigmatic of the Jewish Christians, escapes the antisemitic scourge.

Josephus is portrayed as a traitor, and the assimilation he envisages is an idyllic fantasy whose reality must have seemed shaky at best to the contemporary reader. Elaborating on the divergent constructions of Jewish identity, Herrig has his Josephus cynically remark toward Ahasuerus: “Thus, methinks, the only Jew you may well be, / And those whose carcasses here do rot?”¹⁵⁵ The fundamental irreconcilability of both conceptions—an essentialist construction and the assimilative, evolutionary model—is emphasized by Ahasuerus with the atmospheric

seinem Volke, an seinem Stamme, an seiner Familie.—Wäre es wahr, daß die Emanzipation der Juden im Exil unvereinbar sei mit der jüdischen Nationalität, so müßte der Jude die Erstre der Letzern zum Opfer bringen.”

152 Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, p. 108; see also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, p. 59: “Spanisch-jüdische Culturepoche.”

153 See, e.g., Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, pp. 116, 260; see also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, pp. 66, 233: “allgemeine[] Auswanderung.”

154 Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, pp. 260–1; see also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, p. 233: “Selbst nach der Herstellung eines modernen jüdischen Staates werden ohne Zweifel die relativ wenigen Juden, welche die civilisirten Länder des Occidents bewohnen, meist dort bleiben, wo sie ansäßig sind.”

155 Herrig, *Jerusalem*, p. 103: “So wärest du ja der einz’ge Jude wohl / Und jene, deren Leiber hier vermodern?”

evocation of the gothic imaginary of the Wandering Jew rampant in the nineteenth century:

O, when you then at succot, the Feast of Booths,
Peacefully the silver lamps have lighted,
And the prayer said to that God,
Who now no longer is yours, then, perhaps,
Late at night a beggar knocks on the door
With burning eyes and tousled beard,
Covered in rags, sore his feet,
Seat him with your servants, call him guest,
Of the children of Israel, he's one,
One of the host of exiles!¹⁵⁶

Again, there is a suggestion that the evolution undergone by Judaism has broken the covenant: their God is no longer the same. This God is no more the Jewish God than Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Ahasuerus reflects once more on the meek nature of Jesus in contrast to all expectations and credibility. "He who did die there between the malefactors, / He should be the Messiah,"¹⁵⁷ he exclaims disdainfully. Yet the allusion to Luke 23:43, in which is told how one of the two malefactors crucified next to Jesus mocks him while the other believes and repents, is in effect merely another iteration of the previously observed dichotomy.

Whereas Ahasuerus is clearly associated with the unrepentant villain, Juda is correlated with the compliant malefactor. Both Jews, and therefore all Jews, it is important to note, are implicitly represented as malefactors. The implied dichotomy does not allow for the continuation of Judaism. Yet the son of the High Priest, mortally wounded, finds solace in the story of the two malefactors which is recounted to him by Elymaeus. Recognizing the significance of the occurrence to himself, he converts in his final moments.¹⁵⁸ When Rahel is led past as a slave, Juda's last words to her—and the concluding words also of the dramatic poem—are those of Jesus as they were told to Juda by the old Christian: "Verily I say unto thee, / Today shalt thou be with me in paradise!"¹⁵⁹

156 Ibid., p. 104: "O wenn ihr dann am Lauberhüttenfest / Die Silberlampen friedlich habt entzündet, / Und das Gebet zu jenem Gott gesprochen, / Der nun der eure nicht mehr ist, dann klopft / Vielleicht noch spät ein Bettler an die Thür / Mit glühenden Augen und zerzausten [*sic*] Bart, / Gehüllt in Lumpen, an den Füßen wund, / Setzt ihn zu euren Knechten, nennt ihn Gast, / S'ist [*sic*] eines von den Kindern Israels, / S'ist [*sic*] einer aus den Schaaren der Verbannten!"

157 Ibid., p. 105: "Der dort verschieden zwischen Schächern war, / Der wäre der Messias."

158 See *ibid.*, p. 110.

159 Ibid., p. 112: "Wahrlich, noch heute / Wirst du mit mir im Paradiese sein!"

Ahasuerus, unrepentant like the first malefactor and echoing the Old Man in Milman's *Fall of Jerusalem*, insists on his essential and inalienable Jewish identity: "A Jew I'll be, as always I have been!" His assertion, even as it is another instance of his obstinacy, has a profoundly tragic resonance, when he adds: "The last, the only one—."¹⁶⁰ As specified in the stage directions, his dark silhouette is seen against the morning sky as he wanders off, and Elymaeus pronounces him: "The Eternal Jew!"¹⁶¹

The "Eternal" Jew, it should be remembered, is German for the Wandering Jew, "der ewige Jude." The temporal dimension evoked by the epithet is crucial to an understanding of the subtext delivered by Elymaeus. The old Christian affirms Ahasuerus's unchanged and, quite importantly, unchangeable nature—he is eternally a Jew, a Jew as defined by the essentialist conception of Ahasuerus himself. At the same time, Elymaeus is implicitly credited with coining the term which is so highly charged with anti-Judaic and, more recently, also antisemitic significance. To the reader or spectator it evokes all the stereotypes associated with the eternally lonely wanderer.

Although the dramatic poem evidently promotes the notion of Christian supersession, it nevertheless appears to be alert to—and potentially also complicit in the articulation and perpetuation of—an uncomfortable dissonance heralding a paradigm change. This is visible in the ambivalent conferral of the epithet of the "eternal" Jew to Ahasuerus. But Elymaeus himself, who brands Ahasuerus as such, is also subject to antisemitic slurs. The way in which Herrig emphasizes Elymaeus's Jewish "race" over his faith is particularly interesting in this context. It reflects the encroachment of antisemitic stereotypes which invalidate the spiritual dimension and subject it to a biological determinism. It moreover once again appears to be derived from the author's reading of Hess.

Close to the beginning of the dramatic poem, as he seeks to chastise Elymaeus for planning to desert the besieged city, Juda taunts him: "will they not all recognize thee at once / And cry: Behold, a man from Palestine."¹⁶² That Juda refers to racial stereotyping becomes clear in what follows: "O man, by your nose, / By your eye, I beseech thee."¹⁶³ The suggestion is that the racial slur trumps religious affiliations. A similar claim is made by Hess: "The German hates the Jewish reli-

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 111: "Ich bleib ein Jude, wie ich's stets gewesen! / [. . .] / Der letzte, einzige—"

¹⁶¹ Ibid.: "Der ew'ge Jude!"

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 22: "erkennen dich nicht Alle gleich / Und rufen: Seht, ein Mann aus Palästina."

¹⁶³ Ibid.: "O Mensch, bei deiner Nase, / Bei deinem Aug' beschwör' ich dich."

gion less than the race; he objects less to the Jews' peculiar beliefs than to their peculiar noses."¹⁶⁴

Elymaeus may propose to transcend the markers of his Jewishness with his religious affiliation, yet this is a strategy which, as history demonstrates and as Herrig's contemporaries already knew, was successful only to a degree—and, as they were yet to learn, for a limited period.

Contrasts and correspondences are the governing structural principles of Herrig's *Jerusalem*. In an almost typological approach, the earlier occurrence is systematically challenged and superseded with the latter: the seed of a new time is proclaimed by both Simon bar Giora and the old Christian Elymaeus;¹⁶⁵ Simon stabs the High Priest Anan to death and is in turn stabbed to death by Ahasuerus;¹⁶⁶ Anan is said by Simon to be figuratively blind, while Simon turns literally blind at the end of the dramatic poem;¹⁶⁷ Titus maintains that the time of the gods is past, and yet he becomes God's instrument.¹⁶⁸ But the most important dichotomies are those between the self-proclaimed Messiah Simon and the Christian Messiah and between Jewish particularism as embodied by Ahasuerus and the universalism symbolized by Josephus.

The latter may be an echo of the Ahasuerus debate initiated by Gutzkow almost four decades earlier. Yet the introduction of antisemitic parameters in relation to Elymaeus suggests another dichotomy, of Jew and non-Jew, which maintains on an involuntary, biological level the essentialism promoted by Ahasuerus and in this sense profoundly challenges the vision of co-existence offered by Josephus. Herrig's dramatic poem in this way conveys the deeply disconcerting suggestion that it is not just Judaism which, as was observed by Fokke, has no longer a right to exist, but also the Jews.

¹⁶⁴ Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, p. 58: "No reform of the Jewish religion, however extreme, is radical enough for the educated German Jew. But the endeavors are vain. Even conversion itself does not relieve the Jew from the enormous pressure of German Anti-Semitism. The German hates the Jewish religion less than the race; he objects less to the Jews' peculiar beliefs than to their peculiar noses"; see also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, p. 14: "Keine Reform des jüdischen Kultus ist dem gebildeten deutschen Juden radikal genug. Selbst die Taufe erlöst ihn nicht von dem Alpdruck des deutschen Judenhasses. Die Deutschen hassen weniger die Religion der Juden, als ihre Race, weniger ihren eigenthümlichen Glauben, als ihre eigenthümlichen Nasen."

¹⁶⁵ Herrig, *Jerusalem*, pp. 52, 108.

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 64, 100.

¹⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 32, 97.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 86.