

PART II

1900

The Crisis of Jewish Emancipation and Assimilation

In jumping to the turn of the twentieth century, I bracket the mid-nineteenth century, a period in which literary representations of interreligious romance became more numerous and more openly political. During the nineteenth century the struggle for marriage reform, especially for the introduction of civil marriage, became central to liberal efforts to secularize society. Christian-Jewish love relationships emerged as a popular literary theme because of the challenge they posed to religious norms and institutions. The literary depiction of the plight of characters who fall in love but are unable to marry across religious lines, or who are forced to give up their religious identities in order to do so, became a vehicle of social critique. Thus Fanny Lewald's 1843 novel *Jenny* indicts the prejudice encountered by, and the conversion typically required of, Jews who wanted to marry a Christian. It is not always obvious in the novel that the establishment of civil marriage would solve the problems faced by interreligious couples, but its absence is certainly shown to contribute to these problems.¹ Here and elsewhere, the literary

1. On *Jenny* and other prose texts that advocate civil marriage by depicting the plight of Christian-Jewish couples, see Lezzi, "Liebe ist meine Religion!," 163–275. Among other things, Lezzi argues that the different representations of Christian-Jewish love and marriage in nineteenth-century literature reflect the growing differences between Reform-oriented, Conservative, and neo-Orthodox factions of Judaism. On the role of romance in nineteenth-century German Jewish middlebrow literature, see also Jonathan Hess, *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 111–56.

dramatization of thwarted interreligious love invites a critique of the incompleteness of Jewish emancipation.

Part II of this book focuses on a historical moment in which the debates about love, marriage, and Jewish assimilation intersect in new and pertinent ways. The Austrian-Hungarian and the German governments had granted legal equality to Jews in 1867 and 1871, respectively. Around 1900, however, the rise of racial anti-semitism had called into question the promises of emancipation and created a sense of crisis for many German-speaking Jews. At the same time, the introduction of civil marriage in the German Empire had led to a gradual increase of Christian-Jewish intermarriages and turned them into a focal point of public debates about Jewish identity and belonging. In what follows, I will highlight three ideological undercurrents in these debates—the homogenization of national identity and the racialization and feminization of Jewish identity—before I explore the responses of modern German Jewish authors to these new ideological challenges.

The introduction of civil marriage in the German Empire in 1875 greatly facilitated the contraction of Christian-Jewish intermarriages, and the number of such unions began to rise slowly but steadily.² Since it made civil marriage mandatory, the new law brought all marriages under the purview of the state, which meant that governmental institutions became involved in the wedding process, and marriage itself became a potential means of forging a national identity. In fact, in the German Empire civil marriage was introduced soon after the 1871 unification during the so-called *Kulturkampf*, by which the government attempted to quell the power of the Catholic Church and secure Protestant-Prussian hegemony throughout the empire. While Christian-Jewish intermarriage never took center stage in the public debates—the number of such unions was quite small compared with the number of Protestant-Catholic unions—it frequently figured in discussions of the “Jewish question.” The situation in Austria was more complex. The Habsburg Empire never introduced mandatory civil marriage, but an 1868 law stipulated the possibility of a *Notzivilehe* (emergency civil marriage) for couples who could not get married in a religious institution. Since Christian-Jewish couples in Austria faced additional restrictions—for example, the requirement that one of the partners convert to the other’s confession or become *konfessionslos* (unaffiliated with any religion)—they began to intermarry at a somewhat slower rate than in Germany.³

2. On the debates that led to the introduction of civil marriage in Germany and Austria, see Inken Fuhrmann, *Die Diskussion über die Einführung der fakultativen Zivilehe in Deutschland und Österreich seit Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998). On the social history of Christian-Jewish intermarriage in Germany, see Kerstin Meiring, *Die christlich-jüdische Mischehe in Deutschland 1840–1933* (Hamburg: Dölling and Galitz, 1998).

3. See the chapter “Intermarriage and Conversion,” in Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 127–46.

Especially in the first decades of the German Empire, the discussion of Christian-Jewish intermarriage was bound up with the quest for a homogeneous national identity. Non-Jewish publicists who championed a complete absorption of Jews into German society often recommended intermarriage as an important step in that direction, and they usually imagined the integration process to be unidirectional. In advocating Christian-Jewish intermarriage, they implicitly or explicitly required Jews to relinquish their separateness. This tendency is palpable, for instance, in the book *Baptisms of Jews* (*Judentaufen*, 1912) a compilation of the responses of (mostly non-Jewish) authors to three questions, one of which asked about the consequences of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage. The writer Richard Dehmel calls therein on Jews to adopt a more positive view toward intermarriage, reasoning: "We abolished the ghetto and can therefore demand that the Jews do away with a ghetto mentality."⁴ Dehmel's unwillingness to recognize claims to particularity as legitimate is typical of the dominant understanding of assimilation of the time. In Germany, the term "assimilation" came into wider usage only after full political emancipation was achieved, and was especially in the beginning bound up with nationalist attempts to define a homogeneous German identity. Whereas German Jews had been able to understand earlier terms such as *Verschmelzung* (fusion) and *Amalgamierung* (amalgamation) as a call for a religious and cultural renewal rather than a renunciation of collective identity, *Assimilation* implied a more complete effacement of differences.⁵ The willingness of Jews to intermarry became a measure of assimilation thus understood, a criterion of their national belonging and sociocultural integration.

That the call for intermarriage was a double-edged sword is evident in the use that antisemites made of it. One example is Heinrich von Treitschke, a German nationalist of originally liberal orientation who, to the great disappointment of many Jews, became one of the leading agitators in the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (Berlin debate on antisemitism) of the late 1870s. In an 1879 essay, Treitschke calls "blood mixing . . . the most effective means toward an equalizing of tribal differences" and chides Jews for their reluctance to convert to Christianity and marry Christians.⁶ He then elaborates this thought into a paradox. Treitschke argues that legal emancipation, which occurred in the wake of the 1871 foundation of the German Empire, made it less necessary for Jews eager to integrate into German society to convert to Christianity. This in turn decreased their chances of marrying, and thereby completely merging with, non-Jews, the majority of whom still fervently adhered to the Christian faith. Treitschke calls on Jews to fulfill their part of the emancipation bargain and integrate into German society, and at the same time

4. Richard Dehmel, in Werner Sombart et al., *Judentaufen* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1912), 25.

5. See David Sorkin, "Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and Their Application to German-Jewish History," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 35 (1990): 17–33.

6. Heinrich von Treitschke, "Noch einige Bemerkungen zur Judenfrage," in *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, ed. Walter Boehlich (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1965), 77–90; here 79.

intimates that this will not happen because emancipation actually hinders integration. While advocating for Christian-Jewish intermarriage, Treitschke effectively performs the same antisemitic gesture as Archim von Arnim, who rejects intermarriage: he simultaneously demands complete Jewish assimilation and questions its feasibility. By projecting an ideal of social homogeneity to which emancipated Jews by definition cannot conform, Treitschke issues a contradictory command to Jews, something like “Be like us! Know that you cannot be like us!”

Around 1900, the racialization of Jewish identity—and, arguably, of all identity—put pressures on the Romantic love ideal and its conflation of love, sex, and marriage. The debates about Jewish-Gentile intermarriage became tied up with racial discourses about procreation, heredity, and the mutability and immutability of the Jewish body. The establishment of racial science as an academic discipline focused attention on the biological origin and destiny of the Jewish “race.” Initially, Felix von Luschan’s 1892 theory of the Jews as a *Rassengemisch*, a medley of the three antique races of Semites, Hittites, and Amorites, was widely accepted. The discussion soon grew more polemical, especially with the widespread reception of the works of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and turned from history to the present. Racial scientists were alternately concerned with Jewish endogamy or “inbreeding,” to which they attributed negative effects such as degeneration and susceptibility to disease, and with interracial marriage, which they viewed as a source of racial destabilization and disharmony. As Veronika Lipphardt sums up, Jews were seen as being either biologically too close or biologically too distant from their spouses—in either case, incapable of a healthy marriage.⁷ One corollary of the development of racial science was an increased interest in the children of interracial marriages. As we have seen, the Romantic discourse of marriage was less concerned with procreation because children pose a potential threat to the imagined harmony of the married couple. In the rare speculations about Christian-Jewish intermarriage, children were even less of a concern because, as a result of social taboos and legal restrictions, few such marriages materialized. Around 1900, however, the offspring of intermarriages became a central concern as the increased number of such unions coincided with widespread interest in eugenics and racial hygiene.

The biological sciences began to shape the debates about assimilation and intermarriage. Biologistic thought informs the views of both supporters of assimilation, who promote intermarriage as a means of biological fusion between Germans and

7. See Veronika Lipphardt, *Biologie der Juden: Jüdische Wissenschaftler über “Rasse” und Vererbung 1900–1935* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2008), esp. 162–63. Lipphardt observes that around 1900, the discussion of Jewish inbreeding occupied center stage, while around 1915 the discussion focused mostly on intermarriage. Both inbreeding and racial mixing were occasionally credited with positive effects, such as the creation of pure racial characteristics or the opportunity for racial renewal. However, negative views of both inbreeding and racial mixing were more prevalent, especially among non-Jewish scientists.

Jews, and antisemites who attack it as a vehicle of racial contamination and degeneration. In an 1899 article in the *Fackel*, Karl Kraus recommends intermarriage as “the only serious attempt” at a union between Jews and Christians.⁸ To be sure, Kraus sets out to repudiate notions of racial difference in favor of social, cultural, and religious explanations for Jewish separateness. Yet he nevertheless introduces biologicistic ideas when he broaches the topic of intermarriage. His remark that in the past Jews were able to resist the “temptations of the blood to contract . . . mixed marriages” implies that the same instinctual forces propel people into intermarriages in his own times.⁹ Opponents of assimilation often cite the alleged difficulties of Christian-Jewish intermarriages to claim that assimilation is impossible. The well-known sociologist Werner Sombart mentions the higher infertility and divorce rates of such unions and concludes that the “blood difference” between the Jews and “the ‘Aryan’ tribes” renders “a total assimilation, a total fusion” in the future improbable.¹⁰ Whereas Sombart still envisions a peaceful if unequal coexistence of Jews and non-Jews, the more rabid antisemites of his time transform the notion of racial incompatibility into a vision of racial war conducted by sexual means. They concoct fantasies according to which male Jews seek to infiltrate and ultimately dominate the Aryan race by spreading their semen among Aryan women.¹¹

The homogenization of German identity and the racialization of Jewish identity are two trends in which the debates about Jewish-Gentile intermarriage are wrapped up. A third trend is the feminization of “the Jew” that often follows from the use of love as a metaphor for interreligious rapprochement. When nineteenth-century writers compare the relationship between Jews and non-Jews to a love affair, they inevitably cast the Jew in the role of the woman. Correspondingly, they figure Jewish assimilation as the passive surrender of a minority to the majority culture, just as according to the mores of the time a wife would submit to her husband.¹² In 1892 the German Jewish journalist Maximilian Harden draws on this idea to combat the recent rise of antisemitism and carve out a space for Jews in German culture. He claims that past persecutions have in fact strengthened the Jews and endowed them with a special ability to adapt to new environments,

8. Karl Kraus, *Die Fackel* 11 (1899): 5.

9. Kraus, *Die Fackel* 11:4.

10. Werner Sombart, *Die Zukunft der Juden* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1912), 52.

11. See, for instance, Hermann Ahlwardt, *Der Verzweiflungskampf der arischen Völker mit dem Judentum* (Berlin: Grobhäuser, 1890), 220–21; and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 4th ed. (Munich: Bruckmann, 1903), 1:324.

12. This gendering of social roles had begun in the eighteenth century and continued during the nineteenth century. In his 1869 anthropological study *Der jüdische Stamm* (*The Jewish Tribe*), the prominent Viennese rabbi Adolf Jellinek ascribes to Jews the capacity to adapt to a great variety of different environments. He argues that they share this capacity with women, who are just as emotional, imaginative, and quick-witted but also as moody, unsystematic, and uncreative as Jews, and he compares the Jews' relationship to Gentiles and a woman's flirtatious behavior toward a man: “A woman is glad when she is pleasing to a man, and a Jew when he receives the compliment of a non-Jew.” Adolf Jellinek, *Der jüdische Stamm: Ethnographische Studien* (Vienna: Herzfeld and Bauer, 1869), 95.

which he terms, with Darwin, “mimicry.” Harden depicts Jews as feminine and their relationship to Germans as a marriage of sorts. This simile serves as both a warning to the antisemites to let go of their Jew hatred and a recommendation to the Jews to renounce their traditional ways of living: since divorce is impossible, the Jews would do wise to submit to the Gentiles’ will just as a wife submits to her husband’s will.¹³

As Ritchie Robertson has noted, the analogy between assimilation and marriage potentially undermines the argument for which it is mounted. If Jews assimilate to Gentile culture as women follow their husbands in marriage, a certain difference will persist, just like sexual difference.¹⁴ One way to solve this incongruity is to imagine the disappearance of such difference over the course of time, as did one of the contributors to the previously mentioned book *Judentaufen*. In response to the question about the consequences of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage, L. Gurlitt quotes Bismarck’s famous statement about the fine race that could emerge from the crossbreeding of a “Germanic stallion” and a “Jewish mare.” Citing the experience of his own family, Gurlitt predicts that the Jewish element in a mixed family will disappear within a few generations. In other words, he translates the notion of female submission into one of genetic recession.¹⁵ In these discussions of intermarriage, racial thinking and gender stereotyping combine to promote an idea of assimilation as the minority’s total adaptation to the majority.

Part II of this book examines modern German Jewish writers who seek to wrest love away from biologist thought and reinstate it as a model of sociopolitical integration. The focus is on authors of Jewish extraction because it is at this moment, around 1900, that a critical countertradition of German Jewish authors who use the idea of love to create new models of group relations emerges more clearly. Chapter 4 explores the work of three middlebrow authors—Ludwig Jacobowski, Max Nordau, and Georg Hermann—who write Christian-Jewish love stories in order to promote a larger political project, such as Zionism and the Liberal campaign against antisemitism. I show how these authors often participate in the racial discourses they seek to repudiate, and I speculate about what it means that their “inter-racial” love stories all end with the death of the Jewish partner. Chapter 5 turns to a place where the rise of modern antisemitism was of even greater concern: turn-of-the-century Vienna, which was governed by an openly antisemitic mayor. It is here that Arthur Schnitzler, in a novel that explores a range of Jewish reactions to the

13. See Maximilian Harden, “Sem,” in *Apostata: Neue Folge* (Berlin: Stilke, 1893), 155–56.

14. See Ritchie Robertson, “Historicizing Weininger: The Nineteenth-Century German Image of the Feminized Jew,” in *Modernity, Culture, and “the Jew,”* ed. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 23–39; here 27. Christina von Braun has argued that the feminization of the Jew in racial antisemitism served to turn religious difference into biological (and immutable) difference. See von Braun, “Antisemitismus und Misogynie: Vom Zusammenhang zweier Erscheinungen,” in *Von einer Welt in die andere: Jüdinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jutta Dick and Barbara Hahn (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1993), 179–96.

15. See Gurlitt, in Sombart et al., *Judentaufen*, 49–50.

crisis of modern Jewish identity, affirms the power of Eros in Jewish-Gentile interaction. In so doing he suggests an alternative to both Sigmund Freud's conspicuous silence about Jewish-Gentile love and Otto Weininger's definition of Jewish "self-overcoming" as self-annihilation. I end with a chapter on Franz Rosenzweig and Else Lasker-Schüler, two modernists who around the First World War offer emphatic visions of interreligious encounters in and through love. Yet in so doing, they redefine love as a force of disjunction rather than unification.

REFIGURING THE LANGUAGE OF RACE

*Ludwig Jacobowski, Max Nordau,
Georg Hermann*

At a time when intermarriage became a trope in the debates about Jewish emancipation and assimilation, literary representations of Christian-Jewish love affairs—now often considered “interracial”—could not help but offer socio-political commentary. Together with political debates, literary texts constituted a discursive network in which love and marriage were privileged metaphors for Jewish-Gentile relations. In this chapter, I will demonstrate this through an examination of three literary works that are plotted around Jewish-Gentile love affairs: Ludwig Jacobowski’s *Werther the Jew* (*Werther, der Jude*, 1892), Max Nordau’s *Doctor Kohn* (1898), and Georg Hermann’s *Jettchen Gebert* (1906 and 1908). Although no longer widely known today, these works had a significant public impact at the time of their publication. Jacobowski’s and Hermann’s novels met with great popular success, and Nordau’s play, though largely ignored by theater houses, was an important political statement by a rising leader of Zionism. The public impact of the works is one reason to begin our inquiry into modernist usages of tropes of love with these texts. Another one is the structural similarity of their plots. All three works dramatize a love affair that ends tragically with the (direct or indirect) suicide of the Jewish partner. What do these tragic endings imply about the position of Jews within German society? Should we read them

allegorically, as expressions of pessimism regarding the project of Jewish emancipation and acculturation?

This chapter explores the ways in which love stories intervene in the turn-of-the-century debates about the “Jewish question.” By reading literary texts in conjunction with journalistic and political writings produced by their authors, or by someone in their environment, I reconstruct their larger political projects. Both Jacobowski and Nordau confront racial antisemitism, the former as a member of the Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (Society for the Defense against Antisemitism) and the latter through his engagement with the Zionist movement. Although Jacobowski and Nordau opt for different political solutions, their literary love stories similarly highlight the obstacles faced by assimilated Jews in times of crisis. Hermann was much less concerned about antisemitism, at least during the time when he wrote *Jettchen Gebert*. Yet his novel, too, has a political dimension, as it partakes in the inner-Jewish debates about the effects of intermarriage on Jewish communities. By reconstructing these connections, I do not suggest that the literary texts “reflect” the issues brought up in nonliterary texts. Rather, I identify points of intersection between literary and political discourse and ask what the love story allows a writer to do that other modes of discourse may not do. How do literary love stories reference, recast, and rethink the problems left unresolved in political and theoretical writings?

The authors discussed in this chapter hold diverse political commitments, ranging from radical assimilationism (Jacobowski) to political Zionism (Nordau) to mainstream liberalism (Hermann). Yet their literary love stories share certain features that allow us to gauge the limits and the possibilities of love as a model of integration around 1900. On the one hand, the works analyzed in this chapter show just how ideologically fraught love at the time had become as a metaphor for group relations. As I have argued, the model of heterosexual love leading to marriage and procreation favors some visions of integration over others. Among other things, it tends to go hand in hand with an understanding of assimilation as a minority’s complete adaptation to a majority culture. Other ideological strictures imposed by tropes of love include the racialization and feminization of Jewish identity, both of which are noticeable in the works analyzed in this chapter. Overall, however, these works show how tropes of love potentially escape the ideological constraints of increasingly homogenized and racialized models of identity. The authors of all three works evoke but do not fully embrace racial or other essentialist notions of Jews and Judaism. Instead, the love plot generates a host of equivocations between the social and the biological, the particular and the universal, the individual and the collective, creating a metaphorical surplus that opens up new venues to rethink the project of Jewish assimilation. The fact that the love stories all end tragically takes nothing away from this potential. As I will argue, it may be precisely the failure of love on the level of the literary plot that enables its success as fuel for the social imagination.

Ludwig Jacobowski and the Sexual Myths of Modern Antisemitism

Jacobowski's 1892 *Werther the Jew* takes its cues from the most famous German love novel to depict the struggles of an assimilated young Jew in an increasingly antisemitic Germany. Though largely forgotten today, *Werther the Jew* was a major success at the time of its publication. It received favorable reviews in a number of journals, was translated into six languages, and went through seven editions by 1920. Jacobowski, who at the age of six had moved with his family from the East Prussian province Posen to Berlin and later studied literature, philosophy, and history, wrote the novel when he was only twenty-three years old. Around the same time, he joined the Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus, a largely non-Jewish organization founded in 1891 to educate the public about the dangers of political antisemitism.¹ The Verein espoused an ideology of emancipation that aimed at the effacement of differences between Jews and Christians. At one point it promoted intermarriage as a strategy of integration, as "one of the most practical and significant means to draw the different religious denominations closer to one another."² The Verein also addressed what it perceived to be Jewish weaknesses, implying that antisemitic prejudice had some basis in reality. Such arguments recall the apologetic discourse of Jewish "betterment" that accompanied Jewish emancipation in Germany from the Enlightenment on.³

Jacobowski, who was actively involved with the Verein and employed as its substitute treasurer, seems to have concurred that Jews were at least partially responsible for antisemitism. In one of three political interventions he published between 1891 and 1894, he debunks the antisemitic myth that Jews committed a disproportionate number of crimes. But he believes that, because of their overrepresentation in the trading profession, Jews were indeed disproportionately involved in professional crimes such as fraud, extortion, and bankruptcy. He demands a Jewish ethical self-reformation: "Here is the place where the old Jewish generation is mortal [*sterblich*]. Here is where the young generation has to begin its ethical reform so that this stain, too, can be washed off. Here it is necessary for the young generation to invalidate this important and accurate argument for antisemitism as well."⁴ Jacobowski was much more adamant in his rejection of the stereotype of Jewish moral depravity. In a response to Hermann Ahlwardt, a

1. On Jacobowski's biographical background and political engagement, see Fred B. Stern, *Ludwig Jacobowski: Persönlichkeit und Werk eines Dichters* (Darmstadt: Joseph Melzer, 1966).

2. *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* 4 (1894): 355; quoted in Meiring, *Die christlich-jüdische Mischehe*, 35.

3. See Barbara Suchy, "The Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus: From Its Beginnings to the First World War," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 28 (1983): 205–39, esp. 224–25.

4. Ludwig Jacobowski, "Der Juden Anteil am Verbrechen: Nach amtlichen Quellen dargestellt" (1892), in Jacobowski, *Gesammelte Werke in einem Band: Jubiläumsausgabe zum 100. Todestag*, ed. Alexander Müller and Michael Matthias Schardt (Oldenburg: Igel Verlag Literatur, 2000), 1074–1112; here 1104.

notorious antisemitic agitator who a short time later was elected to the Reichstag, he vehemently attacks Ahlwardt's use of sexual imagery. He calls Ahlwardt's remarks about adulterous Jewish women and Jewish seducers of Gentile women false and propagandistic.⁵ While this response betrays an Enlightenment belief in the power of rational argument, it was a qualitatively new form of protest against antisemitism. As other scholars have noted, compared to the apologetic tone of previous official Jewish reactions, Jacobowski's response was "suffused with a degree of righteous indignation and anger heretofore unusual in polemical works by Jewish liberals."⁶

This dual response to anti-Jewish prejudice—qualified acceptance of some and decided rejection of other stereotypes—also informs Jacobowski's novel *Werther the Jew*. The protagonist, Leo Wolff, is a philosophy student in Berlin and member of a new generation of young Jews "who grew up in an environment permeated by hatred."⁷ He encounters antisemitic sneers at every corner, from a stranger on the street, a member of his fraternity, even his Gentile girlfriend. In response he espouses a program of Jewish self-reformation reminiscent of the strategies recommended by the Verein and in Jacobowski's own political writings. Leo hopes to defeat antisemitism by embracing the highest ethical standards and leading an exemplary life. He likes to think that his father's righteous business practices will help reduce the stigma surrounding Jewish bankers (35). Personally, he seeks to implement the program of self-improvement in his relationship with his Gentile girlfriend Helene, a shop assistant who is deeply in love with him. While his fellow fraternity students boast about their sexual conquests, Leo pledges to behave chastely toward Helene, "for he had to remain true to himself if he wanted to be a Jew, pure to the world and to himself" (46). However, Leo's plan to refute the antisemitic stereotype of the morally depraved Jew utterly fails, and the novel ends with Helene's and his successive suicides. In the years following the novel's first publication, some Zionists read Leo's tragic downfall as evidence of the futility of Jewish assimilation. Jacobowski rejected this interpretation and, in the foreword to the third edition, of 1898, made his proassimilation stance explicit. The solution to the "Jewish question," he wrote, is a "complete absorption in German spirit and German ethos [*Gesittung*]" (12). How can a love story that ends tragically be a call to social and cultural integration?

Werther the Jew takes center stage in the literary history of the "German-Jewish love affair" because the text separates, to a previously unseen degree, sexual desire

5. Ludwig Jacobowski, "Offene Antwort eines Juden auf Herrn Ahlwardts 'Der Eid eines Juden'" (1891), in *Gesammelte Werke*, 937–56.

6. Sanford Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1980), 43–44.

7. Ludwig Jacobowski, *Werther, der Jude*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, 9–215; here 101. All further citations of *Werther the Jew* refer to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text and notes.

from love, marriage, and procreation.⁸ One effect of this separation is that desire appears to motivate the social process of assimilation; Leo is indeed “in love” with German culture and society. The splitting of the love object into several partial objects reinforces this impression. Rather than forming one-half of a Jewish-Gentile couple, Leo is attracted to a range of people, each of whom embodies an aspect of his relationship to German society. Helene represents the ideal type of the society into which he wishes to assimilate. In contrast to his Gentile friends, who prefer Jewish girls because of their reputedly greater passion and refinement, Leo is drawn to the Germanic archetype of female innocence: “He, however, was drawn to the blond Margaret-type with incomprehensible force. And especially to his girlfriend” (47). What separates Leo and Helene are class differences—as the future heir of his father’s large fortune, he is not expected to marry a girl from the lower middle classes—and the antisemitism of Helene’s family. Leo’s attitude toward Helene vacillates between love and vanity, compassion and cruelty. He frequently uses her as an outlet for his frustration with the antisemitism of his environment. As Mark Anderson argues, Helene “represents a kind of inaccessible and idealised other that parallels the Lotte figure in Goethe’s *Werther*. That Leo treats her sadistically . . . is only a consequence of his essentially masochistic relation to the social group she represents.”⁹

Different people among his friends and acquaintances fulfill different roles in Leo’s program of Jewish self-reformation. He enjoys the flirtatious overtures of Erna, the beautiful and youthful wife of his former principal who recently moved to Berlin, and develops a devotion to her strongly tinged with masochism. Because an affair with Erna would be a betrayal of both Helene and his beloved former teacher, the mere thought of her launches Leo into a cycle of transgression, remorse, and renewed efforts at self-improvement. Then there is Grete, Erna’s proud and enigmatic stepdaughter, for whom Leo harbors ambivalent feelings. It is never quite clear whether Leo and Grete hate each other—or rather, the Jew and the antisemite in each other—or are secretly attracted to each other.¹⁰ Finally,

8. See also Eva Lezzi, “*Liebe ist meine Religion!*,” 345. *Werther the Jew* participates here in a more general trend to decouple sexual desire from marriage and procreation. A symptom of this trend is the establishment of the science of sexuality as an independent field of inquiry. See Volkmar Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008); and Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject: Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008).

9. Mark M. Anderson, “‘Jewish’ Mimesis? Imitation and Assimilation in Thomas Mann’s ‘Wälsungenblut’ and Ludwig Jacobowksi’s *Werther, der Jude*,” *German Life and Letters* 49, no. 2 (April 1996): 193–204; here 199. According to Anderson, Jacobowski combines in Helene the figure of Gretchen, the archetypal victim who embodies Faust’s guilt, and of Lotte, the unattainable woman who highlights Werther’s social ostracism. Leo’s entry into German society is a form of Faustian striving that is ironically undercut by his identification with Werther.

10. During Leo’s long monologue on Jews and antisemitism, Grete and Leo pretend indifference to each other (100–104). Leo is convinced that she has “antisemitic tendencies” (105), yet Grete might just as well feel secretly attracted to him and offended by his coldness. When Leo is devastated about

throughout the novel Leo thinks of Richard Manzow, his best friend from childhood on. Richard takes on the role of William in Goethe's *Werther*, the absent male interlocutor to whom Leo can reveal his innermost thoughts and feelings in letters and imagined conversations. Their relationship is highly affectionate—Leo thinks of “his big, strong, faithful Richard” (190)—and distinctly gendered: Richard is a very manly man, previously the best dueler in Leo's fraternity, and generously accepting of Leo's “womanly weakness” (56). The very thought of Richard puts Leo at ease, because it counterbalances the antisemitic slander he experiences in daily life.

The erotic charge of Leo's program of ethical self-reformation is also evident in the figure of the “ideal Jew” to whom he repeatedly addresses his self-deprecations. Examples of this ideal Jew, who at the same time embodies the ideal human, are Spinoza and Jesus. Jonathan Hess has linked this train of thought to the tendency among nineteenth-century German Jews to appropriate Jesus as a Jew, an attempt to locate the resources for Jewish transformation in Judaism rather than in German culture.¹¹ Indeed, Leo's ideal Jew invokes the idea of a special ethical mandate carried by Jews, a secularized version of the biblical idea of chosenness that had become popular among assimilated Jews in the nineteenth century. In *Werther the Jew*, this idea takes on a strong affective charge. One crucial passage depicts the *jouissance* Leo experiences in his manic search for defects in himself and other Jews. His moral masochism culminates in an imagined confession to the superego-like figure of the “ideal Jew”:

He searched for defects and deficiencies where there were none and he conducted this search with a pleasure [*Wollust*] of sorts, with the pleasure of pain [*Wollust des Schmerzes*]. For whenever he unleashed in front of himself, in himself, with himself a furious speech against the Jews, he felt as if he were striking himself slowly and unfailingly in the heart. He felt then as if he were confessing his own defects in front of an ideal figure, who was with him and went, stood, and sat next to him, in front of the figure of the ideal Jew, as he imagined him.

(43; my emphasis)

Werther the Jew ultimately traces Leo's moral masochism back to a hostile environment the prejudice of which he has internalized. A member of a social minority that is held up to particularly strict moral standards, Leo strives to live up to these standards without questioning their ideological presuppositions. This becomes

her family's financial ruin and kisses her hand, she is gripped by “a rare feeling, which she could not account for” (185). As for Leo, it is the loss of Grete's fortune that torments him most about his father's speculations.

11. See Jonathan Hess, “Fictions of a German-Jewish Public: Ludwig Jacobowski's *Werther, the Jew* and Its Readers,” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 202–30, esp. 215.

increasingly clear as his program of Jewish self-reformation more and more fails. Taunted by his Gentile friends, he pressures Helene into sleeping with him. When Erna and her husband arrive in Berlin, Leo spends more and more time with them and begins to neglect Helene. In the novel's tragic denouement, Leo hastily leaves Berlin after he learns about the bankruptcy of the joint-stock company in which his father and, at his father's recommendation, many Gentiles of his hometown had invested money. Back home he understands that his father and his despised cousin, an *Ostjude* with a thick Yiddish accent, pulled out their own shares just in time to profit from the financial ruin of their Gentile friends. Deeply ashamed of his relatives, Leo falls ill for several weeks and misses the pleading letters of Helene, who is pregnant and commits suicide after receiving no response from him. Leo learns about her death in a letter from his fraternity, which includes a request for his resignation and the clip of a newspaper article, signed by Max von Horst, an openly antisemitic member of the fraternity. The article draws an analogy between Leo's seduction of Helene and the questionable business practices of his father, calling upon readers to join the antisemitic movement: "The old ones defraud the honest and upright Michel, and the young ones seduce his daughters! Are you still sleeping, dear Michel? Wake up!" (214). After reading the article, Leo, who had just decided to cut off all relations with his past and begin a new life together with Helene, despairs and shoots himself with a pistol, just as Werther did.

The ending of the novel combines two stock images of modern antisemitism: the Jew as sexual predator and as fraudulent speculator. This connection raises the question of whether Jacobowski participates in the antisemitism he seeks to combat. Ritchie Robertson, for instance, argues that Leo's seduction and abandonment of Helene does indeed come across as a sexual sin equivalent to his father's unethical business practices.¹² Even Leo himself perceives his sexual desire for Erna as symptom of a moral corruption that seems to lend credence to antisemitic prejudice: "Then he felt like a mean fellow who mouthed high words about the ethical reformation of the Jews and in reality was only a vulgar Jew, each inch a scoundrel, a scoundrel" (107).¹³ However, Jacobowski exposes rather than reproduces the sexual myths of modern antisemitism. Whereas he uses the cliché of the fraudulent Jewish speculator rather unreflectively, leaving little doubt that Leo's father and cousin knowingly contributed to the financial ruin of their Gentile friends, he subjects Leo's love life to a sociopsychological analysis in literary

12. Robertson, *The "Jewish Question" in German Literature*, 279. From a contemporary point of view, Jacobowski's critique of the sexual stereotypes of antisemitism indeed seems narrow and apologetic, especially since it goes hand in hand with his acceptance of other stereotypes. By highlighting the "Jewish" physiognomies of Leo's fraudulent cousin and father and their Yiddish-sounding language, Jacobowski even participates in racial discourse. However, my argument is that his critique of the sexual stereotypes of antisemitism is more successful, and the focus on sexual imagery indeed productive.

13. For example, the ability to resist the temptation of the principal's wife becomes a measure of the success of Leo's self-transformation (109).

form. The novel makes clear that the newspaper article sent by Max von Horst utterly and malevolently misconstrues the course of events. For rather than acting upon anti-Gentile impulses, Leo is all too eager to obey the imperatives of German society. He persuades Helene to have sex with him because the other fraternity students taunt him about his chastity and because he wants to refute the stereotype of the effeminate Jew (64–69). Not knowing that Helene is pregnant, he leaves Berlin in order to save his Gentile friends from the financial ruin caused by his father's economic transactions. Ironically, his attempt to refute the stereotype of the deceitful Jew ends up confirming, in the eyes of the antisemites, that of the sexually depraved Jew.

Werther the Jew renders Leo's wretched psychical condition, his tendency to torment himself and others, legible as a response to the impasses of Jewish assimilation. To be sure, the novel is aesthetically neither particularly complex nor particularly innovative. Its use of free indirect speech to give a richer texture to the inner life of literary characters, for instance, is rather schematic. Yet the book is important for highlighting the social dimension of Leo's erotic desires, for tracing an individual pathology back to a social pathology. Leo is attracted to Erna because she potentially raises his status in the eyes of others; he savors the fact that other men admire Erna, and initially praises her only to make Grete and Helene jealous. When he invokes the erotic license of students to justify his infatuation with a married woman (125), he indeed has a point, for the fraternity code informs his passions on all levels. Ultimately, the novel shows how a Jewish student who seeks acceptance in German society gets caught between two different codes of behavior. In order to assimilate, Leo has to obey two utterly contradictory social imperatives: he must be sexually licentious to be a true German (fraternity student) and sexually pure to be a true German (rather than the morally depraved Jew of the antisemitic imagination). *Werther the Jew* uses the literary devices of the psychological novel to dramatize Leo's tormented response to this contradiction. In so doing, the novel dismantles the antisemitic myth of the pernicious "Jewish seducer" of "Aryan" women.

Sexual imagery was crucial to the racial antisemites Jacobowski sought to combat. Hermann Ahlwardt, for instance, alleged that male Jews, spurred on by selectively permissive Talmudic laws, pursue non-Jewish women in order to seduce them (but never marry them). He portrayed the Berlin clothing stores as places where Jewish bosses sexually exploited Christian salesgirls. In so doing, Ahlwardt helped launch the pornographic antisemitism that would become virulent in National Socialism, in which Jews were depicted as seducers and rapists of non-Jewish girls, death-bringing demons who crucified their victims in acts of *Rassenschande* (racial defilement).¹⁴ Read against the backdrop of such imagery,

14. See Ahlwardt, *Der Verzweiflungskampf der arischen Völker mit dem Judentum*, 220–27. It has been argued that such sexual fantasies reflect the inversion of gender roles in the secularization of sacrifice. Whereas sacrificial death was traditionally a male prerogative—Jesus being its prime model—in the

Jacobowski's intervention becomes significant. *Werther the Jew* not only traces the social etiology of Leo's erotic desires but also validates them as sources of political protest. The novel adapts Goethe's critique of eighteenth-century society to an era that has rationalized and instrumentalized antisemitism. In Goethe, the protagonist's impossible love for a woman who is engaged to another man intensifies his sense of his self as well as his social ostracism. Werther's overflowing emotionality is a protest against the rationalism and utilitarianism of those around him, especially the eventual husband of his beloved Lotte. Jacobowski suggests that in an age of calculated hatred it falls upon the Jews, who in their upward mobility and social vulnerability resemble the eighteenth-century bourgeois male, to incarnate sensitivity and sensibility. In a programmatic passage, Leo pictures the opposition between himself and Max von Horst as an opposition between (Jewish) emotional sensibility and (German) instrumental reason:

Here the German and the Jew had opposed each other, both from the young generation of those who were supposed to build the future. Here they had exchanged roles, here Horst was no longer Werther, but it was he who represented with his whole heart the power of feeling. It was he who had to play Werther's role with his heart-blood [*Herzblut*] while Horst was the *sober* German nationalist and *careerist*, who felt Jew hatred from instinct and from *cold calculation*.

(190; my emphasis)

How might the end of the novel—the depiction of Leo's suicide—have advanced the goal Jacobowski states in the foreword to the third edition, to promote the “complete absorption” of Jews into German society? As several critics have noted, the novel's tragic ending may have been intended to produce a cathartic effect in German Jewish readers, who in the process of reading might overcome their own anxieties about assimilation. Moreover, *Werther the Jew* ends on two utopian visions: the love between Leo and Helene, which now seems true and mutual, and the friendship between Leo and Richard, which transcends even death.¹⁵ In the novel's very last scene, Richard, who has been physically absent throughout the novel, finally makes his appearance. He finds the dying Leo, kisses him, and lifts up his body: “Then the young German knew that he held a dead man in his arm, his old friend, the young Jew” (215). This sentence forms a stark contrast to the famous last sentence of Goethe's novel, which describes Werther's funeral in

modern imagination women tend to assume the role of the redeemer. See Christina von Braun, “Zur Bedeutung der Sexualbilder im rassistischen Antisemitismus,” in *Jüdische Kultur und Weiblichkeit in der Moderne*, ed. Inge Stephan, Sabine Schilling, and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlau, 1994), 23–49, esp. 48.

15. In “*Liebe ist meine Religion!*,” Lezzi points out that the suicides of Leo and Helene mirror each other (349).

the most laconic manner: "No clergyman attended."¹⁶ Whereas Werther's funeral drains death of all transcendence, the loving attention Richard, the minister's son, lavishes on Leo bestows some meaning on Leo's death and suggests that he will not be forgotten. It should be noted, however, that this redemptive ending reinstates the hierarchy implied in the marriage model of assimilation. The final scene in which the "young German" holds the "young Jew" in his arms highlights the imbalanced character of their relationship, the fact that the German has been the active and the Jew the passive partner all along.

Max Nordau and the Zionist Project of Remasculinization

In his 1898 play, *Doctor Kohn*, Max Nordau, an aspiring leader of the emerging Zionist movement, has one of the characters exclaim: "What hopes did our generation place on mixed marriage! We truly expected it to bring about the reconciliation of the races!"¹⁷ Convinced that antisemitism was inextirpable, Nordau ostensibly wrote the play to prove these hopes wrong. *Doctor Kohn* tells the story of Julius Christian Moser, a converted Jew married to a Christian woman, and their children, all of whom struggle with identity problems of one kind or another. When the acclaimed Jewish mathematician Leo Kohn wishes to marry Moser's daughter Christine and runs into the vehement opposition of her family, Moser recognizes that the program of assimilation he pursued all his life has failed. His antisemitic brother-in-law proclaims: "Mixed marriages are a misfortune and a disaster. We do not want them! Every time a Jew forces himself into a Christian home, crass materialism and moral insensitivity follow him, and the atmosphere of the family, as well as that of the children, becomes thoroughly unhealthy" (137–38). The brother-in-law refers here to the potential marriage between Christine and Leo, but his words apply of course just as much to Moser's own marriage, a fact that is not lost on Moser. He is outraged by his brother-in-law's words, yet in the end has to conclude that he remained a guest in his own house and a stranger to his wife; their marriage continues only with a sense of insuperable alienation between the spouses. The second Christian-Jewish love affair and potential intermarriage ends even more tragically, as Leo dies in a duel to which Christine's brother provoked him. Does this tragic ending signify, as has been suggested, the "immutability of Jewish identity and the impossibility of interracial marriage"?¹⁸ In what follows, I will argue that Nordau's stance toward intermarriage, like that of the

16. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, trans. Stanley Corngold (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), 150.

17. Max Nordau, *Doktor Kohn: Bürgerliches Trauerspiel aus der Gegenwart, in vier Aufzügen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Ernst Hofmann, 1899), 185. All further citations of *Doctor Kohn* refer to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

18. Sander Gilman, *Love + Marriage = Death: And Other Essays on Representing Difference* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 51.

Zionist movement in general, is more fraught and complex. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Zionists began to ponder the significance of endogamous marriage for the national reconstitution of the Jews, but their conclusions, including Nordau's, were far from clear. As I will show, *Doctor Kohn* is a Zionist call for Jewish remasculinization rather than an indictment of intermarriage. It is also part of Nordau's ongoing search for new forms of Jewish communality, for the sake of which he creatively adapts the language of race.

Nordau wrote *Doctor Kohn* in 1897 during a time of personal and political transition. Born and raised in the Hungarian city of Pest, Nordau lived in Paris for most of his life. For decades he identified as a cosmopolitan German intellectual and considered his Jewish background a contingency with negligible impact on his life. In the early and mid-1890s, however, he experienced a number of personal and political disappointments—among other things, he received antisemitic letters on the German island of Borkum and witnessed the beginnings of the Dreyfus affair in France—that focused his attention on the situation of the Jews in Europe. In 1895 Herzl won him over to the idea of a Jewish state; he soon got involved in the newly forming Zionist movement and became one of its most important leaders.¹⁹ Around the same time, Nordau began a love relationship with Anna Kaufmann, a Danish Protestant and the widow of his friend Richard Kaufmann. The couple had a daughter in January 1897 and got married a year later, even though Nordau worried that this step would compromise his position as a Zionist leader.

As a Zionist thinker, Nordau rejected love as a model or metaphor for Jewish-Gentile rapprochement. In his celebrated speech at the first Zionist Congress in 1897—written while he vacationed together with Anna, their daughter, and her four children from her first marriage—Nordau describes Jewish emancipation and assimilation as an excessive and self-destructive love for the social majority. It is the Jew's misfortune, Nordau writes, "that upon hearing emancipation's first call to love [*Liebeswort der Emanzipation*], he tore every trace of Jewish solidarity out of his heart in order to make room for the sole rule of love for his fellow countrymen."²⁰ In an 1898 speech delivered in Berlin, Nordau compares the Jews' relationship to Germany to a child's bond with his mother as well as a lover's nostalgic memories of his lost beloved.²¹ Love in this view is an inappropriate model for group relations, permissible only as a memory of the past or as an expression of pain caused by a necessary separation. It is thus not difficult to imagine why Nordau insisted that his

19. For a detailed and nonteleological account of Nordau's development into a Zionist, see Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin-de-Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). On Nordau's life and work, see also Christoph Schulte, *Psychopathologie des Fin de siècle: Der Kulturkritiker, Arzt und Zionist Max Nordau* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1987); and Petra Zudrell, *Der Kulturkritiker und Schriftsteller Max Nordau: Zwischen Zionismus, Deutschtum und Judentum* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2003).

20. Max Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 2nd expanded ed. (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1923), 54.

21. See Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 249–50.

own marriage was a purely personal decision and devoid of political significance. He tried to resolve the contradiction between his theoretical rejection and practical contraction of intermarriage by attributing the difficulties of such unions to rampant antisemitism in Germany.²² Perhaps he was able to imagine Paris—despite the raging Dreyfus affair—as a more neutral space in which a German-speaking Jew and a Danish Protestant could meet on equal footing.

Nordau's worries about possible political reverberations of his marriage to Anna Kaufmann turned out to be well founded, as some opponents of Zionism tried to use his marriage to discredit the movement. Reacting to these accusations in the periodical *Zion*, Willy Bambus emphasizes that the overwhelming majority of Zionists are opposed to intermarriage, but he also concedes that personal circumstances allow for exceptions from the rule and that anyone's family life deserves protection from public slander.²³ The Zionist stance toward intermarriage was anything but uniform, especially in the early days of the movement. Theodor Herzl had never been opposed to intermarriage. In fact, his remarks on the subject in *The Jewish State* uncomfortably echo Treitschke's: intermarriage is the only vehicle of true assimilation, since it brings about an "identity of feeling and manner" rather than a mere "external conformity in dress, habits, customs, and language."²⁴ However, Herzl thought intermarriage unlikely to provide a solution to the "Jewish question" because he expected abiding antisemitism in Europe to prevent such unions from occurring on a larger scale. From a Zionist perspective, Herzl explained when congratulating Nordau on his marriage to Anna Kaufmann, intermarriage posed no problem whatsoever, because a citizen of the future Jewish state would surely be able to marry a foreign woman and bring her to his country.²⁵ The stance of other Zionists toward intermarriage depended on the degree to which they espoused the racial theories of the time. Some Zionists cited racial arguments to promote Jewish endogamy, while others agreed with Herzl that the spouses and children of intermarried Jews would be welcome citizens of the future Jewish state.²⁶ Tellingly, Zionists who held positive views about intermarriage often focused on unions between Jewish men and Gentile women. In a 1904 article in *Die jüdische Rundschau*, an anonymous author signing as "Simplicissimus" writes that Gentile women could infuse the Jewish people with the positive

22. See Max Nordau, *Erinnerungen*, trans. S. O. Fangor (Leipzig: Renaissance, 1928), 186.

23. Willy Bambus, "Die Mischehe," *Zion: Monatsschrift für die nationalen Interessen des jüdischen Volkes* 4, no. 5 (May 1898): 19–21.

24. Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, based on a revised translation published by Scopus Publishing; further rev. and ed. by Jacob M. Alkow (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 77.

25. See Herzl's letter to Nordau: "If our work were already completed today, then it would not be prohibited to a Jewish citizen, that is to the citizen of the existing State of Jews, to marry a woman from another country. In this way she would become a Jewess, irrespective of confession, . . . If I am not mistaken, Moses was married to a Midianite." Quoted in Mark H. Gelber, *Melancholy Pride: Nation, Race, and Gender in the German Literature of Cultural Zionism* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), 79.

26. For a survey of Zionist stances toward intermarriage, see Alan T. Levenson, "Jewish Reactions to Intermarriage in Nineteenth-Century Germany" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1990), 175–207.

qualities of their peoples, including excellence in warfare and statesmanship.²⁷ This gendering circumvents one of the implications of the intermarriage model outlined above—namely, the feminization of Jews and Judaism. By dropping certain kinds of intermarriages from consideration, Zionists (like many of their liberal counterparts) put the Jews into the safe position of a male joining his female partner to his family and his people.

Doctor Kohn can be read as part and parcel of the Zionist program of Jewish remasculinization. The play attempts to refute the antisemitic argument against intermarriage by making it clear that the family's misery results from the emasculation of the Jewish husband rather than from racial incompatibility, a corrosive Jewish spirit, or anything along these lines. In order to gain acceptance, Moser has assumed a completely subordinate position in his wife's family and given up much of his paternal authority in his own family. Too weak to punish his children, he secretly pays off his younger son's debts rather than confront him with his financial irresponsibility; and in allowing his sons to grow up antisemites, he has committed what he now considers to be his greatest mistake. If Nordau reproduces the antisemitic stereotype of the effeminate Jew in the figure of Moser, he attempts to refute this stereotype in his depiction of Leo Kohn, a proto-Zionist whose own interreligious love affair appears to be based on a more equal footing. Leo Kohn and Christine Moser are obviously in love with each other and respectful of each other's religious background. Yet their love, too, ends tragically. After he suffers a grave insult from one of Moser's sons, Leo challenges his prospective brother-in-law to a duel, thus displaying the pride and honor he postulates as necessary for all Jews. But because he does not want to hurt the brother of his beloved, he shoots in the air and dies tragically.

Leo's passion for Christine and his duel with her brother instantiate a program of Jewish remasculinization meant to correct precisely the kind of mistakes committed by Moser. Leo, a highly gifted mathematician who has been awarded an international research prize yet denied a professorship at the local university, is clearly the hero of the play. His call for a revitalization of the Jewish people through a cultural revolution resonates with Nordau's own developing Zionist views. Leo's courtship of Christine provides him with ample opportunity to display the pride and honor he seeks to bestow on all Jews. He will shed blood for Christine but not suffer any ridicule (40); the tragedy of his situation only reinforces his sense of heroism (96). He makes it clear that he will claim the strong position in the family that Moser so obviously lacks: "I will not put myself in the position of thanking a Christian family with subservience for having admitted me into their clan" (94). Announcing that he will take his wife into his world rather than the other way around, he promises to

27. Simplicissimus, "Ueber Mischehen und jüdisch-nationale Gesinnung," *Jüdische Rundschau* 18 (May 1904): 189–90; here 190. The author speculates that the offspring from Jewish-Gentile marriages may help fight for Jewish independence and thus put an end to the misery of Eastern European Jews.

correct the “skewed” gender balance—the effeminacy of the Jewish man—he finds in Moser’s home.

Leo’s death in a duel carries a special symbolic significance because the duel was so crucial to the turn-of-the-century redefinition of male Jewish identity. Nordau wrote the play shortly after the antisemitic Deutsch-österreichische Studentenschaft (German Austrian Student Union) in their notorious *Waidhofener Beschluß* declared Jews *satisfaktionsunfähig* (unqualified to give satisfaction), because they lacked any sense of honor. On their part, assimilated Jews used military metaphors to denounce converts to Christianity and to assert their Jewishness in the face of growing antisemitism. In the 1890s numerous Jewish-national fraternities that practiced dueling came into being. While Nordau initially did not share this enthusiasm—he once called the duel “an irruption of primal human barbarism into our highly developed political and social institutions”²⁸—his depiction of the duel in *Doctor Kohn* is quite positive. As Mark Gelber has suggested, Nordau may have paid homage to Theodor Herzl, who had always supported dueling as a way of reestablishing male Jewish pride and honor. Herzl’s *The New Ghetto* (*Das neue Ghetto*, 1894) depicts the death of the Jewish protagonist in a duel with an anti-semitite as a worthwhile sacrifice. Yet Nordau describes the duel with a somewhat different accent. In contrast to Herzl, he recounts the grueling details of the duel on stage and, even more important, he grants significant space to the pain of Leo’s parents, Orthodox Jews who detest duels but tragically lose their only son in one.²⁹ Nordau’s nuanced representation of the duel in *Doctor Kohn* tempers his effort to counter the antisemitic stereotype of the effeminate Jew through an equally ideological program of Jewish remasculinization.

At stake in Leo’s love affair with Christine is the question of how to balance the quest for community with the claims of individuality. In *Doctor Kohn*, Nordau uses the language of race to think through the nature of Jewish communality. The play, which begins with two Gentiles exchanging anti-Jewish views, reflects a dilemma that characterizes many of his Zionist writings: racial antisemitism appears to set the discursive bounds within which any definition of Jewishness has to stay, wittingly or unwittingly, approvingly or disapprovingly. Before his conversion to Zionism Nordau embraced a voluntarist, language-based definition of nationality that allowed him to identify staunchly as German. In his Zionist writings he faces the problem of how to define a Jewish nationality without assuming a shared religion, language, or biology. Nordau questions the racial definition of Jews and Judaism but seems unable to do entirely without it. One way of solving the dilemma is

28. Max Nordau, *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit* (Leipzig: B. Elischer Nachfolger, 1883), 327.

29. See Gelber, *Melancholy Pride*, 75. Gelber emphasizes the fact that Kohn is dueling with his prospective brother-in-law, which turns the duel into a no-win situation, since he will lose no matter what happens. Kohn’s shooting in the air also recalls a famous 1841 duel between Salomon Strauß and Heinrich Heine, after which Heine commented that a duel could never give satisfaction anyway.

an orientation toward the future. Nordau argues that the Jews may not have much in common in the present but that this can change quickly if antisemitism continues to oppress them. Just like the Pilgrims, who were good Englishmen who founded the American nation, and the Spanish, who gave birth to new peoples in South America, Jews from various European nations can and must become a distinct nation in the future.³⁰ Nordau further temporalizes the grounds of Jewish communality when he posits the existence of a Jewish character (*Wesen*) that remains, however, curiously undefined.³¹ He refers to this character only in passing, as that which is lacking or repressed in assimilated Jews, a memory of a shared past or the potential for a shared future. His notion of a Jewish character takes on a function similar to the idea of Jewish blood in Martin Buber in that it constitutes a ground of communality that is either no longer or not yet fully realized.³²

In *Doctor Kohn*, Nordau's wrestling with the language of race plays out in Leo's views about the nature of Jews and Judaism. When Leo speaks about the Jewish "race," he usually refers to the beliefs of antisemites, whose notion of an indelible racial difference between Germans and Jews he rejects. Yet at times he, too, characterizes Jewishness as an inborn quality, a "soul" or "character," just as Nordau himself did. The play figures such an essence, for instance, through gestures. Leo suggests that even if he tried to hide his Jewishness from the Gentile family, he would inevitably betray himself through an inflection of his voice or a movement of his hands or shoulders (93–94). This is exactly what Moser does when he appears on stage "with a Jewish gesture, ducking his head, drawing his arms up, both hands opened and facing forward" (26). In another passage, Leo's oscillation between the vocabularies of interiority and exteriority raises the question of how receptive the Jewish soul is to education and historical change: "They take our Jewish soul away through education and instruction and do not allow us to realize fully the German soul they *breathe into us*. That is the great crime committed against us. They make us renounce our own natural character, they *dress us up* in a foreign one, and then let us feel that it is a *disguise* by which we make a fool of ourselves" (86–87; my emphasis). The shift in this passage from a notion of breathing to one of disguise retracts the idea that the transformation of the Jewish soul is possible or desirable; instead Leo demands the recovery of the true Jewish soul.

Leo is aware of the contradiction between his affirmation of Jewishness and his wish to marry Christine. He tries to resolve this contradiction by positing a human

30. See Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 8–9. Nordau's article was originally published in *Die Welt* 2 (1897).

31. See, for instance, Nordau's speech at the first Zionist Congress on August 29, 1897, in Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 51.

32. On the future-orientation of Nordau's conception of Jewish communality, see also Caspar Battagay, *Das andere Blut: Gemeinschaft im deutsch-jüdischen Schreiben 1830–1930* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), 162–73. Battagay shows how Nordau shunned the racial discourse of blood—which reduces the individual to the group of his origin—and preferred the metaphor of muscles, with its implications that the individual Jew can strengthen himself, and in turn his people.

right to individualism, the free choice of a love object: "My apparent contradictions find a higher resolution in the purely human. I love Fräulein Christine. My love is a most personal affair with which neither my forefathers nor my race have any connection. Here I am an individual and nothing else, an individual who loves and who fights for the happiness of his life" (96).

Leo touches here upon a problem that also occupied Nordau in his pre-Zionist writings—namely, the relationship between the feelings of the individual and the demands of society.³³ In his *The Conventional Lies of Our Civilization* (*Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit*, 1883), Nordau reconciles the individual's right to love and society's right to control its population by recasting romantic love in evolutionary-biological terms. He deplores the decline of marriage to a union based on economic calculation and advocates the contraction of love marriages. He argues that marriages of convenience threaten the harmony of family life, the biological health of the offspring, and the evolution of the human race, whereas love marriages ensure individual and group happiness and the perpetuation of a healthy race. His emphasis on the collective good distinguishes Nordau from earlier proponents of love marriages. In a distinctly Social Darwinist idiom he argues that the attraction to a genetically compatible member of the opposite sex serves the purposes of selective breeding: "Love is a being's instinctive recognition that he has to form a pair with a particular being of the opposite sex so that his good qualities will be increased and his bad will be leveled, and his type will be preserved in his offspring in an at least unstunted and, possibly, in a more ideal form."³⁴ Nordau goes on to explain why love-based marriage is historically a relatively new phenomenon. Since people from "primitive" cultures or lower social classes are less psychologically differentiated and compatible with most people of their environment, they do not need love to produce strong and healthy offspring. The need for love arises from the mental and psychological differentiation of educated people in modern civilization, in which romantic love promotes the rights of both the individual and the species. Based on this theory, Nordau throughout *The Conventional Lies* valorizes the kind of individualism displayed by Leo.

To be sure, in *Doctor Kohn* individual desires and social demands are much more at odds with each other. As his fate shows, Leo never manages to reconcile his Zionist search for Jewish communality with his Romantic longing for individuation in and through love.³⁵ What enables Nordau to mediate between Romantic individualism and Zionist collectivism is the construction of Christine, the child

33. On the continuities between Nordau's pre-Zionist and his Zionist writings, see also Jay Geller, "The Conventional Lies and Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation: Max Nordau's Pre-Zionist Answer to the Jewish Question," *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 129–60.

34. Nordau, *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit*, 265.

35. This may reflect a widespread sense among Zionists that the reconstitution of the Jewish people requires sacrifices on the part of the individual. Nordau himself said that he would not have entered an interreligious love affair if he had already been a Zionist.

of an interfaith marriage and the embodiment of the "purely human" (96) the existence of which Leo postulates so emphatically. Christine is the mouthpiece of a humanism never entirely discredited in the play. As such she gets the play's final line: "Oh Daddy, why do humans hurt each other so much?" (200). She is aware of her own mixed background and hopes that it will facilitate her crossing of the religious divide. The fact that she is a hybrid who looks like both her Christian mother and her father's Jewish mother (107) makes Christine the most versatile element in the play's plot. Because she is both Jewish (and thus compatible with her Jewish lover) and non-Jewish (and thus proof of love's transcendence of ethno-religious boundaries), the figure of Christine allows Nordau to posit Jewish distinctiveness while repudiating racial antisemitism. More precisely, this figure allows him to hover ambiguously between acceptance and rejection of racial theories. For throughout the play it remains unclear to what extent the affection between Leo and Christine springs from shared Jewishness. Christine describes herself as a typical faithful "German girl" (55) but also mentions that her love for Leo has made her aware of the Jew within her (69). She gladly accepts the pejorative epithet "Jew girl" (131) when she faces her family's vehement resistance to her union with Leo. In so doing she confirms the suspicions of her antisemitic uncle, who has always thought her quite recalcitrant to Christian religious teachings and surmises that her demeanor encouraged Leo to begin with (119). The play never entirely dismisses the possibility that the antisemite has a point here: that the girl Leo loves is a Jew at heart.

In *Doctor Kohn*, the succession of two Christian-Jewish love affairs, the second of which amends some of the problems caused by the first, has an effect akin to the temporalization of Jewishness in Nordau's Zionist writings. The play leaves open the question of whether the relationship between Leo and Christine represents a return to origins or a departure into the future: Does love bring out the Jew in Christine or create a new *mélange* between Judaism and Christianity? Does love further Leo's attempt to recover a Jewish essence or persuade him to seek new arrangements between personal life and religious affiliation? The tragic ending helps sustain the play's fundamental ambiguity, for Leo's death saves Nordau from having to reveal much about the strength and the nature of the second Christian-Jewish love relationship. Rather than making a conclusive statement about "interracial" love and marriage, the ending of *Doctor Kohn* turns to the past in order to open up a future. In the final scene, Moser concludes that he has remained and will always remain a stranger in his conjugal family. The reason for this estrangement, however, is not the purported incompatibility between the races but Moser's failure to educate his sons properly. Moser realizes that although he cannot return to the Orthodox Jewish world of Leo's parents, he nevertheless has the obligation to transmit his knowledge of this world to his children: "But it is still my flesh and blood, though no longer my soul, and this I ought to have taught my children" (200). By dissociating his changeable "soul"

from the quintessential ciphers of racial discourse, “flesh and blood,” Moser refers the question of Jewish belonging once again to the future.

Georg Hermann and the Inner-Jewish Debates on Inter-marriage

Political antisemitism was on a temporary decline in Germany when Georg Hermann, in his time one of the most popular German Jewish writers, seized upon the theme of interfaith love. Hermann was born in 1871 as the youngest child of a Jewish family long established in Berlin. After studying art and literature, he began writing articles for about forty different newspapers and journals. When his novel *Jettchen Gebert* appeared in two parts in 1906 and 1908, it quickly became a best seller and its author a mainstay of the German literary establishment. In 1909 Hermann cofounded the Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller (Association of German Authors), and most of Germany’s leading literary authors joined within a few years. As for Hermann’s relationship to Jews and Judaism, throughout his life he embraced liberalism and rejected political Zionism. According to Hermann, he did not experience any anti-Jewish discrimination before the First World War. It was only afterward that rising antisemitism—first evident in the notorious 1916 *Juden-zählung* (Jew count) in the German military—was brought to his attention. But later in life he said that his writing had always been informed by Judaism and his literary characters were overwhelmingly Jewish, even if he had worn his Judaism like a vest, “beneath the coat of a reputable European.”³⁶

Jettchen Gebert, one of the most detailed accounts of Jewish family life in German literature, appears to advocate Jewish endogamy. The novel leaves little doubt that its Jewish heroine belongs with her Jewish uncle despite her infatuation with a Gentile writer. Set in the Biedermeier period, in 1839–40, a historical period that was fashionable at the time and that Hermann reconstructs with great care, the novel takes place among the acculturated Jewish bourgeoisie of Berlin. In contrast to the works of Jacobowski and Nordau, antisemitism plays practically no role in Hermann’s novel, which rather presents Jews as quintessential members of the German middle class. This social mainstreaming may explain why *Jettchen Gebert* enjoyed enormous popular success among Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike. Yet the balancing act it accomplishes is still striking. Given the ideological stakes in the intermarriage debates, how could a novel simultaneously promote Jewish assimilation and Jewish endogamy—and meet with such widespread approval? In what follows I argue that this

36. Quoted in Cornelius Geerard van Liere, *Georg Hermann: Materialien zur Kenntnis seines Lebens und seines Werkes* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1974), 180. On Hermann’s relationship to Judaism, see also Hans-Otto Horsch, “Über Georg Hermann: Plädoyer zur Wiederentdeckung eines bedeutenden deutsch-jüdischen Schriftstellers,” *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 77 (1987): 73–94.

feat hinges upon the novel's creative reworking of the semantics of family. As *Jettchen Gebert* depicts the victory of family affection over romantic love, "family" functions as both a cipher of racial endogamy and a common denominator between middle-class Jews and Gentiles.

The slow but steady rise in the number of Christian-Jewish marriages after the introduction of civil marriage led to intense inner-Jewish debates between 1890 and 1914. Next to conversion and communal secession, intermarriage was one of three forms of "defection" passionately discussed by a growing sector of the German Jewish public. While some advocated intermarriage as a vehicle of assimilation, others, including many liberals and Zionists, expressed concerns about the detrimental effect of intermarriage on Jewish communities.³⁷ The debates began with the publication of serial stories and novels in leading German Jewish periodicals and continued with the appearance of several academic studies, including Arthur Ruppin's *The Jews in the Modern World* (*Die Juden der Gegenwart*, 1904) and Felix Theilhaber's *The Demise of the German Jews* (*Der Untergang der deutschen Juden*, 1911), that drew on the new discipline of demographic statistics. These academic works deplored the losses the Jewish communities suffered through intermarriage, largely because the offspring of such unions tended to be raised Christian, and asked how Jews could survive as a distinct group without relying upon religion as a cohesive factor. While social and political commentators of the liberal Jewish mainstream were largely critical of intermarriage during the first decade of the twentieth century, the literary stories and serial novels published in their periodicals slightly earlier convey a more complex message.³⁸ Typically, the Jewish partner feels genuine love for her (sometimes his) Gentile partner but finds herself (sometimes himself) betrayed. While romantic love is capable of transcending ethno-religious boundaries, social constraints, in particular the abiding antisemitism of the Christian environment, ultimately prove stronger than love.

37. On the inner-Jewish debates about Christian-Jewish intermarriage, see Levenson, "Jewish Reactions to Intermarriage." As for the actual marriage behavior of Jews, most social historians agree that the trend toward endogamy persisted throughout the German Empire. Endogamous marriages had always been important to the preservation of Jewish group identity and became even more so during the nineteenth-century processes of secularization and acculturation. If endogamy had traditionally created a diasporic network of affiliations and alliances, the relegation of Judaism to the domestic sphere further increased its significance. The home became the very site of Jewishness, a place in which Judaism was still practiced to some degree and which offered a refuge from antisemitism. The Jewish home was often reserved for family life and gatherings with other Jews, while social interaction between Jews and non-Jews occurred largely outside the home. As the family became the principal site where Jewish values were inculcated and Jewish identities created, the liberal Jewish mainstream sought to defend Jewish endogamy despite its general support of acculturation. For an overview of the demographic trends, see Monika Richarz, "Demographic Developments," in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, ed. Michael A. Meyer, with the assistance of Michael Brenner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-98), 3:7-34, esp. 13-17; and Steven M. Lowenstein, "Jewish Intermarriage and Conversion in Germany and Austria," *Modern Judaism* 25, no. 1 (2005): 23-61.

38. See Meiring, *Die christlich-jüdische Mischehe in Deutschland*, 50-70. For examples of stories and serial novels, see 166-67, nn. 94, 96.

Hermann's message regarding the power of family ties resonated with the views of the Jewish liberal mainstream in turn-of-the-century Germany. In two reviews of the novel in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, at the time the most important German Jewish periodical, Ludwig Geiger applauds *Jettchen Gebert* as an exemplary Jewish novel. He ponders the obstacles in the way of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage: "Where does the *inner* detachment of Henriette from Kößling come from? It comes—if you want to express it in lofty language—from the insight into the disparity between Judaism and Germanism [*Germanentume*]." ³⁹ Geiger goes on to contrast the Gentile's individualism and future orientation with the Jew's faithfulness to family and tradition, which survived the decline of formal religiosity. Around the time of his review, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* also featured a number of stories and serial novels about Jewish-Gentile love affairs and marriages. In fact, these feuilletons began to appear several years before intermarriage became a subject of social and political debates, indicating, perhaps, that literary texts are more capable of achieving the balancing act the topic required. As Alan Levenson has noted, liberally minded Jews who were interested in the continuation of Judaism, such as the typical reader of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, faced a certain dilemma. How could they lay claim to a German identity while defending the practice of Jewish endogamy—especially at a time when willingness to intermarry became a criterion of their social integration? ⁴⁰

One way of avoiding the dilemma was to distinguish between love and marriage. One of the feuilletons that appeared in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, Clara Baumbach's "Faith and Love" ("Glaube und Liebe" 1904) provides a salient example of how to caution against Christian-Jewish intermarriage while promoting love as a means of improving interreligious relations. ⁴¹ The serial novella relates the story of Melitta and Grittano, a German Jewish woman and an Italian officer, who meet at a resort and become powerfully attracted to each other. Although Grittano is free of antisemitism and willing to antagonize his family and his superiors by marrying a Jew, Melitta decides against their connection and departs earlier than planned, breaking into tears as the train leaves the station. The text prepares the reader for the unhappy ending by cautioning against Grittano's readiness to ignore social conventions and against a passion that is powerful enough to rob Melitta of her free will. "Faith and Love" also plays on widespread anti-Catholic sentiments in the German Empire to convey the unlikelihood of happiness in intermarriage. It is in a Catholic church that Melitta realizes that she does not want to abandon her God and that she will remain a stranger in Grittano's environment: she could just

39. Ludwig Geiger, "Henriette Jacoby," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 72, no. 23 (1908): 271–73; here 272. See also Geiger's earlier review, "Jettchen Gebert," *AZdJ* 70, no. 49 (1906): 585–87.

40. See Levenson, "Jewish Reactions to Intermarriage," 81–110.

41. See Clara Baumbach, "Glaube und Liebe," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 68, nos. 20–24 (1904): 239–40, 248–50, 261–63, 272–75, 286–88.

as well be a Protestant unwilling to marry a Catholic. Yet the story leaves no doubt that Melitta and Grittano have genuine feelings for each other and that these feelings foster a better understanding between Jews and Christians. Like other feuilletons published in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, "Faith and Love" intimates that interfaith love can cure the social ills caused by prejudice, as when Melitta's charms win over an antisemitic baron. The serial novella sends a double message: love between Jews and Gentiles is possible, but marriage is not advisable.

Hermann's *Jettchen Gebert*, which appeared in two parts in 1906 and 1908, resembles these feuilletons in its depiction of the love between a Jewish woman and a Gentile man who are not destined to marry.⁴² The relationship between Jettchen Gebert and Fritz Köbbling, a friend of Jettchen's intellectual and freethinking uncle Jason, is a classic case of romantic love, marked by fatefulness, uniqueness, and idealization. It is never quite clear whether the obstacles to their union are more socioeconomic (Köbbling is poor, and Jettchen used to a lavish lifestyle) or religious (the Geberts do not practice Judaism but take pride in never having given up their religion despite the pressures of the Christian environment). In any case, the relatives with whom the orphan Jettchen grew up vehemently oppose the marriage, and Jettchen marries a cousin of hers, an *Ostjude* of stocky stature and questionable morals whom Herrmann portrays in the most stereotypical manner. Convinced that she can never love her husband, Jettchen secretly departs from her own wedding banquet.

If the first part of the novel dramatizes the opposition between Jettchen and Köbbling's affection for each other and the stuffy atmosphere, philistine minds, and constant quarreling in the Gebert family, the second part inverts this opposition. After her departure from the wedding, Jettchen moves to the home of her uncle Jason and gradually discovers her love for him. Jettchen continues to meet Köbbling and ostensibly harbors hopes to marry him, but their relationship is marred by all kinds of misgivings and misunderstandings. Just as Köbbling is finally about to gain acceptance in Jettchen's family, Jettchen sleeps with him once and shortly afterward commits suicide by thrusting a needle into her heart. In her farewell letter, which is addressed to Köbbling but read by Jason, she explains that she cannot marry Köbbling because she belongs to someone else (i.e., Jason), whom she cannot marry because she has already belonged to (i.e., slept with) Köbbling. The tragedy unravels not because the family thwarts Jettchen's happiness or because Jettchen cannot sustain the courage she displayed at her wedding banquet, but because she realizes that she will never enjoy with Köbbling the emotional intimacy she experienced with Jason.

42. The two parts of the novel are *Jettchen Gebert* (1906) and *Henriette Jacoby* (1908). In what follows, I will cite from the following edition by Gert and Gundel Mattenklott: Georg Hermann, *Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, *Jettchen Gebert*; and *Werke und Briefe*, vol. 3, *Henriette Jacoby* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1998). Further citations from this edition will be included parenthetically in the text with the abbreviations *JG* and *HJ*.

The narrator conveys the changing meaning of family primarily through Jason's eyes and mind. If Jason initially maintains an ironic distance from his family's shallowness and conventionality, he gradually comes to appreciate the warmth and stability afforded by family bonds. Among the events that intensify the sense of family connection are Jason's contraction of typhus, the death of his nephew, and Jettchen's move back to her aunt and uncle, which inspires in her a sense of responsibility for the family's reputation. While family ties emerge as the most reliable basis of human relations, elusive yet indelible psychological differences cause a gradual alienation between Jettchen and Köbbling. When Köbbling despairs over his bleak prospects in work and love and rediscovers Christianity, Jason begins to fear for the happiness of Köbbling and Jettchen: "He, Jason Gebert, suddenly felt that it really caused deep differences in character and feeling, which one could perhaps conceal but hardly reconcile" (*HJ* 163). Tellingly, these differences do not transpire in specific religious traditions but in the affective response to such traditions whatever their origin. Thus Jason and Jettchen take Christmas much more seriously than Köbbling because they cherish the opportunity to express affection toward their loved ones. It is a sour point in the relationship between Köbbling and Jettchen that he forgets to buy her a Christmas present (*HJ* 166). Jason and Jettchen, in contrast, have successfully transformed the Christian holiday into a celebration of family bonds.

Jason's belief in temperamental differences between Jews and Gentiles echoes the reflections on Jews as a race in Hermann's art criticism. After attending art-historical lectures as a student of the University of Berlin, Hermann published several articles on Jewish artists in *Ost und West*, a journal committed to the renaissance of Jewish culture in Germany. Although Hermann always distanced himself from political Zionism and, according to his own testimony, felt at best latently Jewish before the First World War, his articles employ the rhetoric of race typical of cultural Zionism. Hermann argues that even though no overt thematic or stylistic features distinguish them from the works of non-Jewish artists, the paintings of Max Liebermann and Camille Pissarro are in an elusive yet essential way Jewish.⁴³ In a 1903 article, he describes the differences between German and Jewish art as one between muscles, coldness, and idealism on the one hand, and nerves, warmth, and esprit on the other. The vagueness of this depiction is characteristic of cultural Zionism, whose rhetoric of race could attach itself to almost any feature of a given artwork.⁴⁴ In *Jettchen Gebert*,

43. See Georg Hermann, "Camille Pissarro," *Ost und West* 4, no. 1 (1904): 16; and "Max Liebermann," *Ost und West* 3, no. 6 (1903): 377–80.

44. See Georg Hermann, "Max Liebermann," in *Juedische Kuenstler*, ed. Martin Buber (Berlin: Juedischer Verlag, 1903), 107–35, esp. 110–14. See also Arpe Caspary, "Usumes Maske: Vom gesicherten und ungesicherten Schreiben," in *Aber ihr Ruf verhallt ins Leere hinein: Der Schriftsteller Georg Hermann (1871 Berlin–1943 Auschwitz)*, ed. Kerstin Schoor (Berlin: Weidler, 1999), 57–86; here 62; and Gelber, *Melancholy Pride*, 155–56.

family becomes just such a racial marker of Jewishness when Jason and Jettchen emphasize the importance of family ties for Jews (*JG* 145, 275). The incestuous character of their relationship, both real and symbolic, establishes another, more elusive link to racial thought. Jason is not only Jettchen's uncle but also a father substitute; he taught her most of what she knows and instilled his dreams in her. His symbolic fatherhood culminates in a Pygmalion vision that casts Jettchen, who finally returns his love, as Jason's creation awakening to life (*HJ* 266). It has been argued that the proliferation of incest motifs in modern literature reflects a growing concern with race and racial purity, and that sibling incest in particular comes to signify intraracial desire and harmony.⁴⁵ *Jettchen Gebert* participates in this revaluation of incest in suggesting that a shared family origin produces the psychological attunement required for lasting love.

While the invocation of family serves to delineate boundaries between racial groups, it also fosters a constant flux and exchange between Jews and Gentiles and the categories habitually employed to distinguish them. The narrative focus on the members of one Jewish family creates the impression that Jews are the norm and Gentiles the exception. Furthermore, the valorization of family life that here comes to justify Jewish endogamy has been a centerpiece of bourgeois morality since the eighteenth century. With the shift from arranged to love-based marriage, the intimate sphere of the family became the idealized site of bourgeois subjectivity, at least in the literary imagination. The eighteenth-century bourgeois tragedy contrasts familial intimacy with the representative character of courtly life, pitting bourgeois privacy, authenticity, and morality against aristocratic publicity, artificiality, and licentiousness. *Jettchen Gebert* redeploys elements of this literary tradition in detailed descriptions of Jason's and Jettchen's domestic life in the face of public adversity. A series of displacements and inversions further propels the novel's Jewish figures into the center of German society. Most important, Kößling, the only Gentile portrayed in some detail, is structurally positioned as a Jew whose social ostracism and existential worries reflect a constant struggle for recognition. While the Geberts embody tradition and establishment, Kößling is poor and depends on his intelligence for social advancement. His restlessness and homelessness contrast with Jettchen's sense of belonging, as does his alienation from nature with her enjoyment of nature. Hermann's representation of urban space as both static and dynamic, both closed and open, aids this inversion of social roles typically associated with Jews and Gentiles. Jettchen, who moves almost exclusively in the old town center, is securely located in Berlin, whereas

45. See Christina von Braun, "Blutschande: From the Incest Taboo to the Nuremberg Racial Laws," in *Encountering the Other(s): Studies in Literature, History, and Culture*, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 127–48. One would have to add that the marriage between uncle and niece was legally permitted at the time. See Max Marcuse, *Vom Inzest* (Halle: Carl Marhold Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1915), 66. In fact, such marriages were at some point quite customary in Jewish circles. See Lezzi, "Liebe ist meine Religion," 87–88.

Kößling, who likes to explore Berlin's outer districts, never loses the stigma of the newcomer.⁴⁶

Love and Death

These three case studies show how the love story around 1900 functions as a medium of political intervention. The authors' literary texts work in tandem with the political writings produced by them and by other participants in the public debate: Jacobowski analyzes the social psychology behind erotic attachments and dismantles the sexual stereotypes of racial antisemitism. Nordau espouses the program of Jewish remasculinization, which was central to political Zionism. Hermann aids the cause of liberal Judaism, which seeks to repudiate racial antisemitism while preserving Jewish distinctiveness. Their works demonstrate a very interesting potential for love while precluding the intermarriage to which love seems directed. The combined message of the three is one of familial segregation within even an integrationist political model. As such they continue the political vision of Enlightenment thinkers such as Moses Mendelssohn.

What do we make of the fact that all three works end with the (quasi) suicide of the Jewish partner of the love affair? Are these endings further evidence that modern German Jewish authors are caught up in racial discourses, including ideas about racial incompatibility? There is something to be said for this argument. Death is associated with the mode of the tragic and a sense of inevitability, the poetic equivalent of biological destiny. The works discussed in this chapter are indeed tragic in the sense that they culminate in a catastrophe caused by a fundamental flaw or an irresolvable conflict. In *Werther the Jew*, Leo Wolff's efforts to combat antisemitic stereotypes entangle him only more deeply in what he perceives to be the guilt of the older Jewish generation. In *Doctor Kohn*, Leo Kohn's irreconcilable conflicts between Romantic individualism and Zionist collectivism make catastrophe appear inevitable. The same is true of Jettchen Gebert's inner conflicts between romantic love and family affection.

As a plot element, however, death may well enable love to function as a model or metaphor of the social bond. To offer a concrete observation, in all three works discussed in this chapter, the literary staging of death creates new interconnections between Jews and Gentiles or renders existing ones visible. In Jacobowski, death

46. It has often been noted that Kößling is an alter ego of Georg Hermann, who also came from a poor background. Kößling in fact bears the name of one branch of Hermann's family. Another allusion to Kößling's (metaphorical) Jewishness can be found in Jettchen's suicide. The suicide is modeled on the 1834 death of Charlotte Stieglitz, a famous woman of the Vormärz era of whom Jettchen learns from a book of Jason's. In her farewell letter, Charlotte Stieglitz expressed the hope that her death would empower her husband, the frequently depressed writer Heinrich Stieglitz, who was born Jewish and converted to Christianity at the age of thirteen. Like Kößling, Stieglitz earned his living as a librarian and tutor. See Charlotte Stieglitz, *Geschichte eines Denkmals*, ed. Susanne Ledanff (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1986).

reunites Leo Wolff with his beloved Richard and Helene. In Nordau, death finally bestows on Leo Kohn the status of equality with Gentiles for which he fought. *Jettchen Gebert* ends with a scene in which Jason reads Jettchen's suicide note, which Kößling was meant to receive but did not—he apparently committed suicide when he heard about Jettchen's death. The story of the letter's writing and reception continues the love triangle between Jason, Jettchen, and Kößling that structures the novel as a whole. The three main characters harbor strong affections for each other, and even as the narrative focus is on the Jewish-Gentile couple, Jason is always present, whether in reality or in Jettchen's thought. The final scene once again emphasizes this interconnectedness. Even if the Gentile writer is but an intermediary between the Jewish lovers, he is still necessary, for it is to his imagined presence that Jettchen can finally voice her love for Jason.

To offer a more speculative thought, death potentially disrupts the teleological force of love stories. The death of one partner is the surest way to have the inter-religious love affair fail and in that process be raised to a model. In general, failure in one specific case does not invalidate a model, because the failure can always be blamed on the particular circumstances of that situation. In addition, the failure of love usually forestalls reproduction, and it is in reproduction that biology most easily ushers in teleology. Only the children of intermarriages can prove or disprove claims about the purported effects of "blood mixing," whether these claims are lodged in biologicistic ideas about miscegenation or in the antisemitic injunction to the Jews "Be like us! Know that you cannot be like us!" As I have argued, Treitschke and others conjure the idea of biological fusion only to posit its impossibility, thereby foreclosing the imagination of less totalizing models of social integration. Literary representations of "interracial" love affairs that fail before they produce children avoid, at the very least, the trap of this double bind.