

CONCLUSION

TOWARD THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

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This book has shown how at two transformative historical moments—around 1800 and around 1900—romantic love became a powerful model or metaphor for German-Jewish relations. If I have ended on two particularly emphatic visions of interreligious encounters in and through love, this is not to suggest any kind of teleology. Rather, chapter 6 once more conveys the precariousness of love as a model of interreligious or intercultural rapprochement. In Franz Rosenzweig and Else Lasker-Schüler, love indeed holds the promise of bringing people together across religious, national, and cultural boundaries. The romantic attraction between individuals gives rise to social structures—from the lovers' dyad to larger communities—that respect and in fact encourage the expression of difference. However, in "The Wonder-Working Rabbi of Barcelona," Lasker-Schüler uses an interreligious love story to comment on rising antisemitism. She depicts interfaith romance as a cause of social disruptions the Christians do not adequately process and to which they respond with violence. The novella preempts any view of love as a social panacea, while hinting at its capacity to establish new connections between different religious or ethnic groups. Before exploring how tropes of love were used to reimagine German-Jewish relations after the Holocaust, I would like to summarize once more the main arguments made in this book.

Since the Enlightenment, the literary dramatization of interreligious love has promoted the development of new concepts of pluralist communities. These include the Enlightenment conception of a secular state in which citizenship would be independent of religious affiliation; the early Romantic vision of communities that continue to absorb foreigners; and Franz Rosenzweig's notion of an infinitely open neighborhood. To highlight this political context, I have often read literary love stories together with the political writings of their authors or the movements they joined. In the late eighteenth century, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's literary staging of new social bonds—or what I call “affective kinship”—between members of different religions complements the appeal to brotherly love in the political-theological writings of Moses Mendelssohn. Around 1900, modern German Jewish writers such as Ludwig Jacobowski, Max Nordau, and Georg Herrmann write literary love stories to probe the reasons for the faltering of Jewish emancipation. In so doing, they pursue political goals from repudiating racial antisemitism to advancing new visions of Jewish distinctiveness within the larger human community.

In order to grasp the political effects of representations of love we have to reconsider the meanings of “failure.” Most of the literary love stories I have analyzed end unhappily. What message are we to take away from these unhappy endings? Sometimes they simply serve to bolster antisemitic claims about the impossibility of Jewish integration. This is the case in the later Romantic author Achim von Arnim, whose stories of failing Christian-Jewish love affairs illustrate the presumed dangers posed by Jews seeking integration into German society. There are modernist variants of this theme of which I have not yet made explicit mention. In Oskar Panizza's 1893 story, “The Operated Jew” (“Der operierte Jud’”), for example, a Jewish medical student who is portrayed in the worst antisemitic clichés undergoes a series of operations to acquire a Germanic body and soul: he lengthens his body through bone-stretching surgery, colors his hair blond, learns High German, and changes his name to Siegfried Freudenstern.¹ However, his fabricated German identity unravels on the night of his wedding to a woman of pure German stock, when his language reverts to gibberish, his body gradually disintegrates, and all of his hidden Jewish features reemerge. “The Operated Jew” illustrates the antisemitic tenet that intermarriage sets a limit on assimilation or reveals that assimilation has been a sham to begin with. As such, the story anticipates the protofascist novels of Artur Dinter and others, in which the failure of “interracial” marriages serves as proof of the alleged incompatibility of the races.²

1. See Oskar Panizza, “The Operated Jew,” in Jack Zipes, *The Operated Jew: Two Tales of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 47–74.

2. See Artur Dinter, *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (1918; Leipzig: Matthes and Thost, 1920).

Mixed Feelings certainly recognizes the possibility of such ideological usages of the motif of failing love. My main concern, however, has been with a different meaning of failure. The unhappy endings of love stories that cross religious, cultural, or “racial” boundaries do not have to reinforce a segregationist view. Rather, such endings can call for, gesture at, or otherwise help create new visions of socio-political integration. As I have argued, the impossibility of interfaith romance and the precariousness of affective kinship in Mendelssohn and Lessing give their writings a greater political urgency. Mendelssohn seeks to instill in his Christian readers the brotherly love he deems necessary yet still missing; Lessing makes it clear that a community in which the different religions would enjoy an equal status remains a desideratum. I have also suggested that in German Jewish modernism, the literary dramatization of failing “interracial” love relationships calls into question the racial ideology of the time. By having such relationships end before they produce children, modern German Jewish authors refuse to pass a final verdict on the compatibility or incompatibility of the “races.” In all of these works, love becomes socially and politically significant as the figure of a promise still awaiting fulfillment. The simultaneous invocation and interruption of love open up a space in which German-Jewish relations can be reimagined.

In many of the love stories analyzed in this book, the lovers never really come together. One of my central arguments has been that some German Jewish writers turn this kind of “failure” into a structural feature of love. They conceptualize love as a structure of Twoness, an experience of indelible difference. Rather than as a fusion between two people, they see love as an opportunity for differentiation. Already around 1800, Dorothea Veit (much like her father, Moses Mendelssohn) evinces skepticism about the homogenizing effect of romantic love. In Veit’s novel *Florentin*, the hero’s pursuit of love and his quest for identity fail conspicuously, a failure that calls into question the Romantic love ideal and the reduction of difference it entails. Around 1900, when literary representations of Christian-Jewish love become central to the debates about Jewish acculturation, an alternative concept of love as a process of differentiation emerges. Modern German Jewish authors write stories and poems in which love both forges new connections between Jews and non-Jews and throws the differences between them into clearer relief. Thus Else Lasker-Schüler in several poems conjoins two biblical characters into a loving couple while highlighting the distance between them. The idea of love as a structure of Twoness finds its clearest articulation in Franz Rosenzweig, who in a letter to his Christian beloved posits that their love anchors each of them more firmly in their respective religious tradition rather than eliding the differences between them. In *The Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig makes similar claims about neighbor-love, which links people in their irreducible singularity. The idea that love can establish new connections between the particular and the universal continues to be relevant in the present.

After 1945

I began this book by citing Gershom Scholem's famous critique, in his 1966 essay, "Jews and Germans," of the "one-sided love affair" between Jews and Germans before the Holocaust. Scholem argues that the often-professed love of Jews for German culture blinded them to the political realities of emancipation and even contributed to their destruction. One of my goals in this book has been to turn Scholem's verdict around and show that the *idea* of love—including of the idea of failed love—has in fact been highly productive. The invocation of love in German Jewish thought and literature generated new models of social integration and new modes of critical intervention. I would argue that this is true even in Scholem's own essay. Scholem wrote "Germans and Jews" to intervene in the memory culture of postwar West Germany and protest against the ongoing idealization of the purported "German-Jewish symbiosis" of the past. After emancipation has turned into its opposite—into exclusion, expulsion, and genocide—any remnants of love must be replaced by analytical clarity: "Love, insofar as it once existed, has been drowned in blood; its place must now be taken by historical knowledge and conceptual clarity—the preconditions for a discussion that might perhaps bear fruit in the future" (73). However, despite his critique of love past and present, Scholem incessantly, indeed obsessively, returns to the notion of love—in part, I would argue, because it fulfills an important rhetorical function in his own text. Throughout the essay, Scholem grapples with the question of what kind of relations between Germans and Jews are possible after the Holocaust. He posits the necessity of objectivity, distance, and rationality but realizes that the "burden of emotions" (71) renders such attitudes impossible. He nevertheless ends his essay by evoking the possibility of an entirely new beginning of German-Jewish relations, of a bridge built over an abyss, the depth of which cannot be fathomed. What does love have to do with this?

By casting the historical process of emancipation and assimilation as an unhappy love story, Scholem emphasizes two structural features of love: nonsynchronicity and nonreciprocity. Thus he writes about Friedrich Schiller, the German classical writer whom many German Jews loved passionately: "To Schiller, who never addressed them directly, the Jews did indeed respond" (79). This slightly paradoxical remark—how can we answer someone who does not speak to us?—suggests that love is unrequited in essence, a response to a call that never occurred. And this idea of love as nonreciprocal and nonsynchronous is crucial for Scholem's own attempt to imagine the resumption of German-Jewish relations after the radical rupture of the Holocaust. To be sure, Scholem himself rejects love and instead recommends respect, distance, openness, and goodwill as the foundation of a future German-Jewish dialogue. But it is not clear that any of these can accomplish what needs to be accomplished in a situation of radical dissociation. Respect requires mutuality and a common ground; distance keeps people apart but does not bring them together; openness can await but not initiate newness; goodwill requires

concrete principles of action. The very mention of love, however, adds an element of drivenness, of unaccountable feeling and unsolicited calling. As such, it provides the extra energy needed to establish a new connection between radically distanced partners or, in Scholem's words, to bridge an abyss. Arguably, his allusion to the possibility of a new beginning of German-Jewish relations derives its power from the very affect he attempts to purge.

More explicitly than Scholem, Hannah Arendt revalorizes love as a mode of German-Jewish rapprochement. Born in 1906 into an assimilated German Jewish family, Arendt studied philosophy and wrote her dissertation on the concept of love in Saint Augustine. In 1933 she fled from Nazi Germany first to France, where she worked for several Jewish organizations, and then to the United States, where she eventually became one of the leading political theorists of the twentieth century. In the four years before her departure from Germany, already apprehensive of Hitler's ascension to power, Arendt began to write a book in which she reassessed the past 150 years of Jewish emancipation and assimilation: *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*.³ Rahel Varnhagen, the admired hostess of one of the Jewish salons of the Romantic era, was involved in several love affairs with Gentile men that garnered the attention of contemporaries and historians alike, although none of them made it the focal point of her life in the way that Arendt did.⁴ In her biography of Rahel, Arendt both critiques the pursuit of love as a strategy of social integration and promotes a certain kind of love—the pariah's love—as a source of political solidarity.⁵

This latter claim may sound surprising, since Arendt is known for excluding emotions as a source of politics in favor of a strict separation between private and public domains. In her later work, she presents the Greek polis as a model of a

3. See Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). All further citations of *Rahel Varnhagen* refer to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text. Arendt wrote most of the book between 1929 and 1933 and added the last two chapters, in which she elaborates the distinction between pariah and parvenu, in the late 1930s. However, the book was published only many years later, in English translation in 1957, and in the German original in 1959. For a detailed history of the biography's composition and publication history, see Weissberg's introduction to the book, "Introduction: Hannah Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen, and the Writing of (Auto)biography," 3–69.

4. In the mid-1920s, Arendt herself had been involved in an (adulterous) love affair with the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, which later became notorious because of Heidegger's support of the Nazi regime in the early 1930s. In what follows, I do not read *Rahel Varnhagen* in this context, in part because Arendt's physical affair with Heidegger was over, and they were rarely in contact when she researched the book and completed the draft. Furthermore, reading Arendt's book as a response to the affair would potentially reduce her complex account of Jewish assimilation to a mere gloss of her biography.

5. The best way to refer to Rahel Levin Varnhagen is an open question because she bore many names in her life, including Rahel Levin, Rahel Robert, Rahel Varnhagen, and Antonie Friederike Varnhagen von Ense. See Weissberg, "Introduction," 12 and n. 30. "Rahel Levin Varnhagen," as she is often called today, is in fact an artificial construction, a combination of her Jewish patronym and the surname of her Christian husband. For lack of a clear alternative, many contemporary scholars continue to refer to her by her first name "Rahel." I will do the same, following Arendt's own usage throughout the biography.

transparent public space whose participants disengage from purely private interests.⁶ However, Seyla Benhabib has traced an alternative conception of the public in Arendt's work and located its beginnings in the conception of salon culture in *Rahel Varnhagen*. According to Benhabib, Arendt's appreciation of the salon as a site of sociability that celebrates individual differences in tastes, manners, and lifestyles contrasts with her later valorization of the Greek polis.⁷ Along similar lines, I will argue that *Rahel Varnhagen* conjures a different kind of connection between love and politics than Arendt's subsequent critique of emotional politics suggests. Her biography of the Jewish *salonnière* is structured around the opposition between two types of sociopolitical behavior—that of the pariah and that of the parvenu—which are associated with two kinds of love. Arendt's central argument is that Rahel retained the pariah's love for humanity even after she became a parvenu enamored with social power, and that she inspired political rebels such as Heinrich Heine.

Rahel Varnhagen is initially quite critical of the idea of love as a mode of inter-religious or intercultural rapprochement. Rahel's various attempts to assimilate to German society through love and marriage epitomize the individualist model of Jewish emancipation Arendt rejects. Rahel's choices show the inability of Jews to seek political emancipation *as Jews*, their tendency toward an abstract individualism that left no ties among them but "that questionable solidarity which survives among people who all want the same thing: to save themselves as individuals" (87). Love is a key component in a strategy of social climbing Arendt associates with the parvenu. Rahel's Gentile husband, Karl August Varnhagen, who had a tendency to adore his employers and thus advance his career, exemplifies this behavior. Arendt generalizes: "All parvenus are familiar with Varnhagen's impulse, all those who must climb by fraud into a society, a rank, a class, not theirs by birthright. Making a strenuous effort to love, where there is no alternative but obedience, is more

6. In several of her later books, Arendt is critical of the infusion of emotions—and especially of love—into politics. She criticizes the French Revolution for being inspired by compassion for the poor, in contrast to the American Revolution, which aimed at the creation of a democratic public space. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 56–88. Arendt reasserted the distinction between love and politics in a public dispute with Scholem. When Scholem reproached her after the publication of her *Eichmann in Jerusalem* of lacking *Ahavath Yisrael*, or "love of the Jewish people," Arendt responded that she indeed loved only her friends, and that she reserved her love for individuals rather than collectives. See Gershom Scholem, "Letter to Hannah Arendt," trans. John Mander, in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, 300–306; here 303; Hannah Arendt, "The Eichmann Controversy: A Letter to Gershom Scholem," in Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, 465–71 (New York: Schocken, 2007), here 466–67. If politics needs to be protected from personal feelings, the reverse is also true. In a 1959 commentary on racial tensions in the United States, Arendt suggests repealing the existing laws against interracial marriage because they constitute an inappropriate political intervention into personal lives. See the summary of the article and the surrounding debate in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 309–10.

7. See Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996), 19–20.

productive of good results than simple and undisguised servility" (237). Jews, who were forced to become "parvenus par excellence" (238), were particularly prone to such an affective attachment to the institutions of power. Rahel was no exception. Arendt can hardly conceal her disdain when she describes Rahel's enthusiasm for the rise of German nationalism and her efforts to help during the wars against Napoleon: "She became thoroughly stupid and commonplace out of sheer wild delight that she was graciously being allowed to help, that she had something to do, that waiting and being a spectator had ceased" (234). Much like Scholem, Arendt suggests that the love of Jews for things German blinded them to the precariousness of their own situation and rendered them incapable of acting in solidarity with other Jews in times of crisis.

Rahel Varnhagen offers a succinct analysis of the historical settings and social dynamics of love. With utmost verbal economy, Arendt depicts Rahel's first love affair as a long-awaited chance to "escape from Judaism" (103). The introduction of her husband-to-be Varnhagen is similarly lacking in emotional intensity: "In the spring of 1808 Rahel met August Varnhagen in Berlin, and a few months later became his mistress" (194). This laconic sentence downplays feelings in a manner characteristic of the biography as a whole. Arendt, who always believed in the power of storytelling and chose to tell Rahel's life as a string of stories,⁸ refrains from telling persuasive love stories. She uses literary techniques of foreshadowing to have the love stories end before they even begin. The abstractness of her style, the lack of dialogue, descriptive detail, and character development, further undermine the power of narration. Instead of storytelling she offers a critical analysis of the sociohistorical dimensions of love. Rahel met her first great love, the Christian count Karl von Finckenstein, in 1795 at a time of increased social mobility and uncertainty. For her, a Jewish woman living in a period in which the dissolution of Jewish collectivity had begun yet Jewish acceptance into German society lagged, the prospect of marriage to a Gentile of high standing promised a place in society. For him, the representative of a class that had lost much of its political significance, the relationship with a poor yet high-spirited Jewish woman was a chance to experiment with new forms of individual freedom and cross-class sociability. Their love failed because the pull of their different backgrounds proved too strong. Unable to define himself as an individual and to thwart the expectations of his family that he marry within his class and religion, Finckenstein slowly but surely withdrew from Rahel, leaving her more isolated and vulnerable than before (103–21). Love as a strategy of social integration thus failed Rahel in two ways. First, it blinded her to the sociohistorical reality of acculturation. Second, it did not even grant her the illusion of social integration, since all her love affairs ended unhappily.

However, Arendt ultimately salvages Rahel's life and love by separating love from marriage, and the pariah's love of humanity from the parvenu's love for

8. On Arendt's use of storytelling, see Weissberg, "Introduction," 21–23.

social superiors. It is crucial to her conception that Rahel did not love the man she ultimately married and that she never became a complete parvenu. At the moment when baptism and marriage to a Gentile secured her a place in society, Rahel adopted an altogether different attitude, an embrace of social ostracism and solidarity with other outsiders. She contacted her old friend Pauline Wiesel, whose bohemian lifestyle made her a persona non grata in respectable society, and stayed in close contact with her for the rest of her life. As Arendt puts it, Rahel remained a sometime pariah when she could have become a complete parvenu. Arendt took the term *pariah* from Bernard Lazare (1865–1903), a legal adviser to the Dreyfus family and author of a book on the causes of antisemitism. Lazare regarded the Jews as a whole as a pariah people and called “conscious pariahs” those who turned the experience of social exclusion into principles of political action.⁹ Rahel’s greatest merit, Arendt concludes in her biography, was her recognition of the pariah’s truth in the midst of a parvenu’s existence. Rahel’s insights prepared the ground for more self-conscious pariahs, such as the writer Heinrich Heine, who turned their social ostracism into social critique and picked up the political struggle Rahel avoided.

When turning to the pariah qualities Rahel retained behind her parvenu appearance, Arendt discovers a love altogether different from the parvenu’s infatuation with social superiors. Quoting from Rahel’s letters and diaries, she calls this love: “the deeply humane love of all outcasts from society for the ‘true realities’—‘a bridge, a tree, a ride, a smell, a smile’” (245) and the pariah’s “‘love for free existence’” (249). These descriptions are quite vague, and it is perhaps best to broach the pariah’s love by stating what it is not: a ploy in the search for social advancement. If the parvenu improves his chances for social advancement by idolizing his superiors, this is precisely what Rahel was unable or unwilling to do. She resisted instrumentalizing love in this way. Toward the end of her life “she discovered that it was necessary for the parvenu—but for him alone—to sacrifice every natural impulse, to conceal all truth, to misuse all love, not only to suppress all passion, but worse still, to convert it into a means for social climbing” (244). According to Arendt, Rahel refused to do the same. Rahel’s ability to remain true to herself, which Arendt emphasizes throughout the biography, included an understanding of the social game of love and an unwillingness to play along. She held onto her knowledge of the mechanisms of social exclusion and her appreciation of everything human at the very moment when marriage to Varnhagen finally secured her a place in higher society.

Whereas the parvenu’s love leads to social acquiescence, the pariah’s love potentially leads to political rebellion and political solidarity. Arendt continues here a line of thought she first developed in her dissertation on Saint Augustine, especially in the discussion of neighbor-love. Neighbor-love, which is grounded in

9. See Weissberg, “Introduction,” 4; and Arendt, “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition,” in Kohn and Feldman, *The Jewish Writings*, 275–97.

the memory of one's origin and gratefulness for one's God-given life, allows for a human togetherness based on an equality of situation rather than a similarity of traits.¹⁰ This idea returns in *Rahel Varnhagen* in the depiction of political alliances that evolve not from a shared identity, but from the shared experience of marginalization. The pariah's love for things in and of themselves is the basis of an alternative model of politicization. Whereas the parvenu manages to fend off the claims of others and his own impulses, the pariah remains vulnerable and exposed, but for that reason also able to form new bonds with others, including political alliances with other oppressed people. The pariah's self-exposure in love, of which Rahel's unhappy loves are a prime example, enables the formation of such rainbow coalitions. Arendt writes of the aging Rahel: "It had been her privilege to have preserved a 'soft heart, of flesh and blood,' to have remained eternally vulnerable, to have admitted each weakness to herself, and thus, only thus, to have acquired experience" (244). Its excessive character prevents the pariah's love from becoming a mere means to an end.

The pariah's love allows for new connections between the particular and the universal. The political message of Arendt's biography is that Jews should demand political rights *as Jews* and form alliances with other marginalized groups rather than seek social integration at all costs. However, as Richard Bernstein notes, it is unclear what exactly it would mean to demand rights *as Jews*, for Arendt rejected most existing definitions of Jewishness in religious, ethnic, or national terms.¹¹ This is why the pariah's love becomes so important. It allows Arendt to conjure a model of political solidarity that begins in concrete existence and ends in abstract potentiality. For the pariah embodies a specific mode of thought and perception, a combination of attention to details and an ability to generalize. This mind-set transpires in the descriptions of the objects of her love, which include abstractions such as "free existence" (249) and simple things such as "a bridge, a tree, a ride, a smell, a smile" (245). This series of mundane things, stripped of all attributes and combined with indefinite articles, conveys a sense of uniqueness in generality. The pariah loves things outside of systems of social signification and relates to people in much the same way. She is conscious of the mechanisms of social exclusion and perceives the universally human behind the plurality of human beings, all the while insisting on her own difference and avoiding any pretense to social equality. The pariah embodies a universalism "from below," as opposed to the universalism "from above" promoted by the German Enlightenment with its pedagogical impetus and its quid-pro-quo model of Jewish emancipation.

10. See Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 100. The English translation is not the original dissertation, but a revision Arendt began in the mid-1960s and left unfinished. For a summary of the dissertation, see Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 490–500.

11. See Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 26–29.

I have attempted to do on a larger scale what Arendt accomplished for a specific case: recuperate love as a category for the study of German Jewish culture. Like Arendt, I do not suggest that loving and marrying across religious and cultural divides provides a “solution” to the “problem” of an increasingly pluralist society. As we have seen, intermarriage in particular can be a model with problematic totalizing implications, one to which German Jewish writers from Moses Mendelssohn to Georg Hermann objected. It is outside of fixed social forms—in erratic affects, momentary encounters, inevitable failures—that love unfolds its power to stimulate our sociopolitical imagination.

After 1990

The decade after the 1990 reunification of Germany saw a surge of interest in the topic of German-Jewish love. At this time of national renewal, the question of what it means to be German acquired new urgency, as did the question of how to publicly acknowledge German responsibility for the Second World War and the Holocaust. At this moment of re-remembrance, stories of Jewish-Gentile love were deployed in two different ways, which roughly correspond to earlier conceptions of love as fusion and love as differentiation. On the one hand, a number of German feature films dramatize interreligious love to highlight moments of solidarity between Jews and non-Jews during the Third Reich. On the other hand, the German Jewish writer Barbara Honigmann depicts the memory of the National Socialist past as a lasting obstacle to Jewish-Gentile love relationships. Whereas the films use love stories to project the possibility of German-Jewish reconciliation into the past, Honigmann uses such stories for the opposite end, to show how conflicts of the past continue into the present. But as I will argue, this is not a simple negation of love as a trope of interreligious or intercultural mediation. Love remains an important trope in Honigmann, one that allows her to imagine a new kind of German Jewish diaspora.

Lutz Koepnick has aptly spoken of a wave of “heritage films” that hit the German movie theaters starting in the late 1990s. The term *heritage film* was originally coined for late twentieth-century British films that cast the English past in a nostalgic light. While the new German films on the Third Reich can hardly be called nostalgic, they send a positive message in the sense that they “reclaim sites of multicultural consensus from a history of intolerance and persecution.”¹² These films construct a usable past that can be easily consumed and enjoyed by contemporary viewers, without reminders of trauma and irredeemable dispersion. Interreligious love stories play a crucial role in this representation. Thus Max Färberbock’s *Aimée & Jaguar* evolves around a lesbian love affair between a Jewish woman and

12. Lutz Koepnick, “Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and Holocaust in the 1990s,” *New German Critique* 87 (2002): 47–82; here 57.

the “Aryan” wife of a German soldier, and Joseph Vilsmaier’s *Comedian Harmonists*, which recounts the rise and fall of a popular German musical band during the 1930s, features three Jewish-Gentile couples. Both films depict the increasing oppression and persecution of Jews under the Nazi regime but shy away from a direct discussion of the Holocaust. Instead they focus on private dramas of love, jealousy, and reconciliation. The depiction of love affairs in which non-Jews steadfastly hold onto their Jewish partners, despite insults, threats, and dangers to their own life and liberty, adds to the feel-good quality of the films. Their central message is that romantic love inspired acts of solidarity and resistance that could have forestalled genocidal terror had they only occurred with greater frequency and on a larger scale.

This conciliatory message culminates in Margarethe von Trotta’s 2003 film *Rosenstrasse*, which turns love into a political program. The film dramatizes a real historical event, one of the very few instances of public protest against the anti-Jewish policies of Nazi Germany. When, in March 1943, Jewish men living in intermarriage—a status that had thus far protected them from deportation—were arrested, their non-Jewish wives and relatives gathered and protested until the men were released. The film *Rosenstrasse* focuses on the story of Ruth, a Jewish woman living in New York City who as a child in Nazi Germany had been rescued by one of the women participating in the protest. She has never talked about this until her daughter Hannah flies to Germany and, in a series of interviews with the woman who saved her mother, reconstructs her mother’s story as well as the history of the protest. The film evokes the idea of a “resistance of the heart,” as the title of a book on the protest by the historian Nathan Stoltzfus reads, and intimates that if such behavior had occurred on a broader scale, it could have curbed or even prevented the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Historians are actually still debating the effectiveness of the protest: it is unclear, for instance, whether the Jewish men were actually facing deportation, and if yes, whether it was the protest that prevented it.¹³ But the film quite unambiguously suggests that the wives’ love, devotion, and courage saved the husbands. According to its logic, intermarriage is a good thing because it creates kinship networks that protect minorities against persecution.

Even more problematic than the film’s rather facile celebration of love as political resistance is its implication that Jews objecting to intermarriage might be to blame for their own persecution. This message is conveyed by the frame narrative, which shows how Ruth after her husband’s death suffers from psychical symptoms including anxiety, flashbacks, and overly ritualistic behavior during the *shiva*, the weeklong Jewish mourning ritual. Among other things, she suddenly

13. The film begins by announcing “the events that unfolded on Rosenstrasse in Berlin from February 27 till March 6, 1943 are a historical fact,” yet it distorts historical reality in several ways. See Beate Meyer, “Geschichte im Film: Judenverfolgung, Mischehen und der Protest in der Rosenstraße 1943,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1 (2004): 23–36.

and vehemently rejects Hannah's fiancée because he is not Jewish. During her trip to Germany, Hannah learns what must be the reason for her mother's strained behavior: Ruth herself had a non-Jewish father, who during the Third Reich abandoned her and her mother, thereby indirectly causing the deportation of her mother. Upon her return to the United States, Hannah apparently persuades Ruth to recognize the story of her life and remember the bond with her adoptive Gentile mother.¹⁴ This restoration of trust—made possible by the memory of the Gentile women who courageously stood by their Jewish husbands—seems to have a curative effect on Ruth, who in the final scene can be seen happily attending Hannah's wedding and blessing her son-in-law.¹⁵

By framing the history of the public protest with the story of a Jewish woman who learns to overcome her objections to intermarriage, *Rosenstrasse* at best pathologizes the victims and at worst blames them for their own persecution. The film suggests that Ruth's opposition to intermarriage is a pathological condition, a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder rather than, for instance, a theologically justifiable position. *Rosenstrasse* leaves no room for expressions of particularity such as the commandment to marry within the faith, which is important in traditional Judaism. In its portrayal of Ruth, a Jewish woman who rejects the claims of love in favor of a rigid adherence to traditional rules and customs, the film revives one of the oldest religious stereotypes: the opposition between Jewish law and Christian love. In casting romantic love as the fusion of opposites, and Judaism as a source of stubborn resistance to such fusion, *Rosenstrasse* harks back to the early Romantic thought of F. Schlegel and G. F. W. Hegel. In what follows, I will contrast this view with that of Barbara Honigmann, who belongs to a new generation of German Jewish authors that began to emerge during the 1980s. Perhaps more than anyone else today, Honigmann continues to elaborate the trope of the German-Jewish love affair. Akin to earlier German Jewish writers such as Rosenzweig and Lasker-Schüler, she depicts love as a deepening of difference—in her case, between the descendants of victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust. And like these earlier writers, she ascribes to love a certain cultural productivity—in her case, the capacity to spawn a new German Jewish diaspora literature.

14. On the significance of mother-daughter relationships in the film, see Anna M. Parkinson, "Neo-feminist *Mütterfilm*? The Emotional Politics of Margarethe von Trotta's *Rosenstrasse*," in *The Collapse of Conventional German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 109–35.

15. As Sara Horowitz points out, the wedding is only ambiguously coded as Jewish. It contains some elements of a Jewish ceremony, especially the breaking of a glass, but not others, notably the canopy. The film leaves open the question of whether Luis converted to Judaism or whether the couple is having an interfaith ceremony, thus continuing the themes of intermarriage and hybridity through the end. See Sara R. Horowitz, "Lovin' Me, Lovin' Jew: Gender, Intermarriage, and Metaphor" in *Anti-semitism and Philosemitism in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries: Representing Jews, Jewishness, and Modern Culture*, ed. Phyllis Lassner and Lara Trubowitz (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 196–216; here 211.

Barbara Honigmann was born in 1949 to Jewish parents who had returned to East Germany in 1947 after years of exile in Paris and London. While Judaism in a religious or cultural sense played no role in her parents' home, Honigmann herself began in the 1970s what she describes as a "search for a minimum of Jewish identity in my life."¹⁶ She started learning Hebrew, got married in a Jewish ceremony, and in 1984 left the GDR for Strasbourg, a French city close to the German border that is home to a sizable and vibrant Jewish community, with members of various geographical origins and religious orientations.¹⁷ It is here that she wrote her first collection of prose, which upon its publication in 1986 became an instant success on the German book market. Honigmann would stage and restage this central fact of her life—that she became a German-language writer at the very moment she left Germany—in a series of autofictional texts. One of the main motives of her literary oeuvre is the birth of writing out of the spirit of exile; another is the failing love between Jews and non-Jews.

In Honigmann's *A Love Made Out of Nothing* (*Eine Liebe aus nichts*, 1991), the narrator, a young Jewish woman working at a theater, leaves the GDR for Paris in the hope of gaining new experiences and perspectives. The novel figures her need for distance from her native Germany, among other things, through an impossible love story. While still in Berlin, the narrator has an oddly secretive and distanced relationship with a theater director named Alfried. Even when together, they cannot look into each other's eyes; they communicate mostly through brief written notes; the narrator can barely get herself to say her lover's overly Germanic name. Her sense of incompatibility culminates in a nightmarish vision of a monstrously divided child that would be born to them: "I saw the child in nightmares, the way it was put together loosely from individual pieces and then came undone and fell apart and couldn't stand upright."¹⁸ The involuntary bond between Alfried and the narrator—she calls their love a "connection or even an adhesion that we couldn't pull away from" (33/46)—epitomizes what Dan Diner has called the "negative symbiosis" between Jews and Germans after Auschwitz. Since 1945, Diner argues, German and Jewish identities have largely been constituted in relation to the Holocaust and the, naturally opposed, traumas it inflicted on the collective of the perpetrators and that of the victims. This situation has created a new, negative interdependency of postwar Jews and Germans, who need

16. Barbara Honigmann, "Selbstporträt als Jüdin," in *Damals, dann, danach* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1999), 11–18; here 15.

17. On the heterogeneous character of Strasbourg's Jewish community and Honigmann's conception of diasporic writing, see also Christina Guenther, "Exile and the Construction of Identity in Barbara Honigmann's Trilogy of the Diaspora," *Comparative Literature Studies* 40, no. 2 (2003): 215–31.

18. Barbara Honigmann, *A Love Made Out of Nothing* and *Zohara's Journey*, trans. John Barrett (Jaffrey, N.H.: Godine, 2003), 33. For the original German, see Barbara Honigmann, *Eine Liebe aus nichts* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1993), 46. Further citations from these editions will be included parenthetically in the text, with the page number in the English translation followed by the page number in the German edition in italics, as here (33/46).

each other to work through the “screen memories” that cover up the core of each collective’s trauma.¹⁹ What happens, however, if one conveys this idea through an impossible love story rather than a theoretical concept such as “negative symbiosis” or “distanced dialogue”? In other words, what is the theoretical, artistic, or political purchase of love?

One of the things the rhetoric of love does for Honigmann is help carve out a space for diasporic writing. In an essay titled “On My Great-Grandfather, My Grandfather, My Father, and Me” (“Von meinem Urgroßvater, meinem Großvater, meinem Vater und von mir,” 1995) she recalls her family’s commitment to German culture in terms quite similar to those of Gershom Scholem. She describes how her ancestors’ models of acculturation—including her great grandfather’s struggle for political rights, her grandfather’s commitment to academia, and her father’s membership in the East German Communist Party—were fueled by love for German culture. All of these ancestors were, in addition to their professional occupations, authors of literary texts. Like Scholem, Honigmann believes that the devotion of Jews to German culture did not help them but only blinded them to the precariousness of their situation. Her ancestors “desired [the German culture], reached out for it, and stretched and contorted themselves unbelievably in order to unite themselves with it. Instead of unification, they mostly experienced denial and repulsion, and my father was given the privilege of witnessing the final destruction of German-Jewish history with his own eyes.”²⁰ Honigmann decides to distance herself from this model of acculturation, conceptually by giving up the idea of a social avant-garde and geographically by moving from Germany to France.

However, she finds that she remains connected to Germany through her writing in two ways. First, all of her writing circles around the failed hopes and the unrequited love experienced by her ancestors. She may no longer try to spearhead ideas as they did, instead recycling and recharging the words of everyday life, but she nevertheless remains thematically focused, even fixated, on her family’s failed love affair with German culture. Second, and more important, she uses the rhetoric of love to depict her own development as a writer. The primary scene of her literary work—how she became a German writer by going into exile—is now recast as a romantic breakup. Her writing is a form of farewell from Germany, comparable to the letters composed by lovers after a separation. This separation, she conjectures, guarantees an abiding attachment. Her writing is still a form of love, now

19. See Dan Diner, “Negative Symbiosis: Germans and Jews after Auschwitz,” in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 423–30.

20. Barbara Honigmann, “On My Great-Grandfather, My Grandfather, My Father, and Me,” trans. Meghan W. Barnes, *World Literature Today* 69, no. 3 (1995): 512–16; here 513. For the original German, see Honigmann, *Damals, dann, danach*, 45. Further citations from these editions will be included parenthetically in the text, with the page number in the English translation followed by the page number in the German edition in italics, as here (513/45).

understood as a desperate appeal to an Other, who may or may not be listening. Here is this passage, quoted at some length:

But perhaps writing was also something like homesickness and an assurance that we really did belong together, Germany and I, that we, as they say, could not get away from each other, especially not now, after everything that had happened. . . . My writing had in effect come from a more or less fortuitous separation, just as couples write each other love letters at the very beginning of their infatuation and then not again until their breakup. . . .

I wanted to present myself completely differently than my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my father, and now I saw myself, just like them, speaking again to the Other, hoping to be heard, perhaps even to be understood, calling to him, "Look at me! Listen to me, at least for five minutes." . . .

I understood that writing means being separated and is very similar to exile, and that it is in this sense perhaps true that being a writer and being a Jew are similar as well, in the way they are dependent upon the Other when they speak to him, more or less despairingly. It is true of both that approaching the Other too closely is dangerous for them and that agreeing with him too completely will bring about their downfall.

(513f./46–47)

While the connection Honigmann establishes here between writing, exile, and Jewishness is not an entirely new idea, the rhetoric of love adds an interesting twist, as it creates a sense of continuity with the earlier tradition of German Jewish literature. Even if Honigmann's German-language texts are farewell letters to a lover rather than the wooing calls uttered by her ancestors, they are still driven by the same impulse. In fact, they for the first time render this impulse fully tangible. According to Honigmann, writing means to sustain a tension between distance and proximity, to endure the dependence on another whom one addresses but from whom one remains separated. All writing is a desperate call across a necessary distance, a one-directional communication with someone who potentially misunderstands everything. As a self-professed diasporic writer, Honigmann does in a conscious and critical manner what her forefathers did unconsciously, desperately, and futilely.

Here we find one reason interreligious love is so important in Honigmann, although she mostly stages its failure. Love is central to Honigmann's conception of the relationship between self and other in the diaspora. Love stories capture the constant negotiation between proximity and distance, recognition and rejection, collaboration and conflict, in the diaspora. In that process, love itself becomes redefined as a force of disruption rather than of fusion. Another novel by Honigmann that is structured around a failing relationship between a Jewish woman and a Gentile man depicts the gradual surfacing of ever more differences between the two. Furthermore, one of the novel's central lines—"Where there is love there is

also betrayal”²¹—posits that love is inherently disruptive. I would argue that the repeated failures of Jewish-Gentile love affairs in Honigmann are a sign of this disruptive potential rather than the result of psychological incompatibility, irresolvable historical conflict, or anything along these lines. I would further argue that this inherent negativity of love is part of its appeal as a trope for interreligious relations—for Honigmann as well as for contemporary critics in search of new models of particularity and universality. When we understand love as a force that proliferates differences rather than creates a union, it makes for not quite so cheesy a metaphor, not quite so conciliatory a story.

This alternative conception of love can also change our understanding of what the interaction between ethnic or religious groups might look like. Rather than a union or dialogue, such interaction may take the form of a disjointed, noncontemporaneous exchange between multiple parties. Honigmann’s essay “On My Great-Grandfather” itself provides an example of such a disjointed exchange. This essay has a frame narrative I have thus far neglected. Honigmann’s meditation on her family’s past is triggered by her encounter with a German Turkish (presumably Muslim) family that now lives in Strasbourg and that confronts her with some well-worn stereotypes about Jews. When the family wonders why Honigmann and her husband do not have a shop like all the other Jews, she is mentally transported to her ancestors’ decidedly intellectual pursuits. After telling the story of her ancestors, she reminds the reader that she did this only in her head and avoided responding to the question of the Turkish family in reality. Instead of attempting to overcome the barriers between her and her Turkish neighbors, she decides to play ball with one of the children:

I walk a ways and play with [the Turkish child] . . . because I find doing so less stressful than explaining to his parents why we have no shop, less stressful than setting straight their picture of Jews—a picture which is apparently just as distorted as ours is of them—less stressful than clearing away all the misunderstandings that emerge between us in just this one afternoon and telling them the whole story of my great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father, and me.

(516/55)

Ironically, what the narrator refuses to do for her Turkish neighbors—to explain her family’s background—she has just done for her German readers, from whom she presumably feels no less separate. This is an example of how one failed dialogue generates another form of exchange, one that is written rather than spoken, distanced rather than immediate, unidirectional rather than reciprocal. We can see the potential of this model by looking at the actual effect of Honigmann’s

21. Barbara Honigmann, *Alles, alles Liebe* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2000), 103, 160.

essay. While the essay itself describes her unwillingness to engage with her Turkish neighbors, to dispel their prejudices and establish a common ground, it subsequently became an inspiration for the contemporary German Turkish writer Zafer Şenocak. Şenocak cites Honigmann's text in one of his own essays, which traces points of contact between Turkish Islam and the secularized Christianity of the German Enlightenment. Among other things, he recounts how his Turkish ancestors, who were pious Muslims, eagerly read the German classics, which one of them adorned with jottings in Arabic script. Şenocak also writes that life stories and family genealogies such as Honigmann's inspired him to reconstruct this history of transreligious and transcultural exchange. According to him, cultures open up to each other in the singularity of personal experience, which registers but also exceeds cultural influences. For Şenocak, the German Jewish experience described in Honigmann and others becomes a model of Turkish German transculturation.²² In other words, the failed Turkish-Jewish encounter *described* in Honigmann's essay generates the indirect Jewish-German exchange that *is* Honigmann's essay, which in turn generates the complex Turkish-German-Jewish exchange that is Şenocak's essay. I would venture to say that here we have another explanation as to why love supplants dialogue as a privileged trope of mediation in Scholem, Arendt, and Honigmann: love—and especially unrequited love—can inaugurate potentially infinite chains of encounters.

22. Zafer Şenocak, "Mein Erbe spricht auch Deutsch: Vergessene deutsch-türkische Verwandtschaften," in *Deutschein: Eine Aufklärungsschrift* (Hamburg: Edition Körber-Stiftung, 2011), 172–90, esp. 180–82. One may add here that the history of German-Turkish relations is long and complex, and their character not uncontroversial. The political alliance between the Wilhelminian and Ottoman empires, the flight of German Jewish academics to Turkish universities in the 1930s, and the influx of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) into postwar German society provided much intercultural contact yet were far from being equal exchanges. A firm believer in Enlightenment principles, Şenocak tends to idealize German-Turkish relations and to downplay the anti-Muslim biases of many German intellectuals. One may even speak here of another "one-sided love affair" between twentieth-century Turkish and German thinkers. I believe, however, that this takes nothing away from Şenocak's point that German Turkish writers in search of new models of transculturation may draw inspiration from German Jewish writers.

