Three-Way Street
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Published by University of Michigan Press

Morris, Leslie and Jay Howard Geller.
Three-Way Street: Jews, Germans, and the Transnational.

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Part 2

Germany, the Portable Homeland
Chapter 5

“I Have Been a Stranger in a Foreign Land”: The Scholem Brothers and German-Jewish Émigré Identity

Jay Howard Geller

Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as wife. She bore him a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”

—Exodus 2:21–22

As German Jews dispersed around the world in the 1920s, and particularly in the 1930s, they took with them their attitudes toward the practice of the Jewish religion and their attachment to German culture. While it would be an enormous project to track the development and decline of Jewish Germanness in emigration, the example of the Scholem brothers provides an interesting case study of how some German Jews related to Germany and Germanness after having emigrated from their homeland. Additionally, while considering the Scholems, it is interesting to ponder what “Germanness” even meant to German-Jewish émigrés. For most of them, it was a cultural identity frozen in time. As they did not regularly engage with the post-1949 Federal Republic of Germany or German Democratic Republic, they based their notions of German identity and German culture on an earlier Germany—one that lived on only in history books and in memories. A number of them did make multiple trips to postwar Germany for work or pleasure, and they faced the challenge of retaining or altering their views of Germany and its culture.

Arthur and Betty Scholem of Berlin had four sons: Reinhold, Erich, Werner, and Gerhard (later known as Gershom). Reinhold and Erich went into their father’s printing business and had comfortable bourgeois lives in Germany. Both brothers affiliated with Liberal Judaism and were only nominally
observant—effectively “three-day Jews.” Like their parents, their politics were essentially liberal. In contrast, Werner rejected his family’s heritage. By trade, he was a journalist, but his real vocation was politics. Even before the First World War, he affiliated with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands or SPD). Later he joined the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands or KPD) and rose to become one of the party’s leaders in the 1920s. His relationship with Judaism vacillated between ambivalence and hostility. The youngest member of the family, Gershom, also rejected his family’s heritage, but in a different manner. Rather than embracing the universalism of socialism, he devoted himself to the particularism of Judaism and Zionism. Rather than entering the world of commerce, he was an intellectual, and he became one of the leading Jewish thinkers of modern times.

Of the four, Werner was the only one to die at the hands of the Nazis. He was arrested shortly after the Reichstag fire, and he spent the next seven years in prisons and concentration camps. Despite repeated efforts, Werner’s family was unable to obtain his release, and he died in Germany. Therefore, this essay will focus on the three other Scholem brothers: Reinhold, Erich, and Gershom, who left Germany and made their permanent homes in Australia and Israel.

Before examining how the Scholems related to their German identity in emigration, it is necessary to examine how they regarded Germanness and themselves as Germans while still living in Germany.

Even as a teenager, Gershom Scholem rejected the idea that he had a German identity. At the age of nineteen, he wrote, “I am not a German Jew. I do not know if I ever was one, but I say this sentence with absolute certainty: I am not one.” Not only did he reject the very idea of German Jewish assimilation, but he also declared that he ceased to have “a German feeling” as early as 1913, when he was sixteen. From the start, he rejected World War I as a German war, not a Jewish war, and exhorted his fellow Jews to do the same. He wrote, “You are Orientals and not Europeans. You are Jews and people, not Germans and degenerates. Your God is named Hashem and not the belly. Therefore you should not walk along their path.” He managed to evade military service and could continue his university studies while his brothers and 77,000 other German Jews served at the front.

Unlike the overwhelming majority of young German Jews, Gershom was active in the Zionist movement—a transnational movement that sought to create a new national identity—but his uncompromising view of Zionism and its role in the life of young German Jews was far from typical. While most of his
Zionist contemporaries engaged in athletic activities in an all-Jewish setting or participated in nonacademic debates on Jewish and Zionist topics, Gershom insisted on intense study of Judaic texts and immersion in the Hebrew language as the only way to achieve a genuine and meaningful connection to Judaism and the Jewish people. His view drew opposition, and a rival among the Zionist youth publicly belittled “Scholemism,” which “confines a person in the four walls of his study and fills up the brain with [Hebrew] vocabulary words at any cost!”\(^5\) Indeed, Gershom was drawn to the Hebrew language. He claimed that as a teenager, he studied Hebrew fifteen hours a week in addition to his regular schoolwork, and he joined a Hebrew club populated mainly by Russian and Polish Jews who spoke exceptional Hebrew.\(^6\) Still, during the era of his youth, the study of Judaic topics and even Hebrew was becoming more popular among a certain set of German Jews who sought Jewish vitality and authenticity amidst the seeming fecundity of their parents’ Judaism. Martin Buber, the great German-language Jewish interpreter of eastern European Hasidic life, had a considerable following. There was great appeal in learning “a language written in strange, forbidding square letters, against the grain of all European systems, from right to left.”\(^7\) For young Jews in rebellion against their assimilated parents, Hebrew represented “a world in every respect antithetical” to their parents’ bourgeois existence.\(^7\) While that might have been the case for Gershom, he was doubly drawn to Hebrew as the gateway to Jewish literature and historiography. He made no secret of his desire to immigrate to Palestine (Eretz Yisrael), which he regarded as the focal point of Jewish culture and tradition, and he left for Jerusalem via Trieste and Haifa almost immediately after completing his doctorate in Semitics at the University of Munich in 1923.

Gershom Scholem’s early relationship to Germanness was nearly the opposite of his brother Reinhold’s. Reinhold Scholem performed military service several years before World War I, and in August 1914, he was recalled to service. By the time the war ended, he had been promoted to lieutenant, which was a particular point of pride for him and his parents. After the war, he joined the right-liberal German People’s Party (Deutsche Volkspartei or DVP)—a somewhat unusual choice for a Jew, but not utterly unique. Later, looking back on his youth, he also claimed to have circulated in a fairly non-Jewish circle of friends.\(^8\) Erich Scholem’s pattern of affiliation in Germany had similarities to that of Reinhold, but was less extreme. He was set to commence his one-year voluntary military service in 1914 when the war broke out. He, too, served for the duration of the war and even for a few months longer. During the Weimar years, he probably supported the left-liberal German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei or DDP), like their mother.\(^9\) There is archival
evidence that Erich associated with prorepublican groups. Both brothers had an interest in print culture and were avowed bibliophiles. They, like most German Jews, left Germany only when they had to do so. Reinhold and Erich were able to immigrate to Australia in the summer of 1938, and their mother joined them in Sydney the following year.

Gershom Scholem left Germany voluntarily in 1923. He disavowed a German identity, and it had long been his goal to go to Palestine, which he considered the center of Jewish culture. On the other hand, two of his thoroughly integrated brothers, including the nationally oriented Reinhold, only left Germany when their lives seemed threatened. Considering this contrast, it would seem that Gershom would have embraced the Palestinian Jewish identity of the Zionist Yishuv and that Reinhold and Erich would have tried to create a (Jewish) Germany-in-exile while disdaining their compatriots who had rejected them. In fact, the situation is far more complicated.

Although Gershom Scholem spent most of his adult life in Palestine/Israel and became one of Israel’s leading public intellectuals, he retained a deep connection to German culture, customs, and norms (at least those of the pre-1933 era). The German language remained vitally important for him, even after he became known as a significant Hebrew writer. In the decades before the Second World War, he adopted neither the predominant political outlook nor the prevailing culture of the Yishuv. His political views were those of the Germanophone intellectual elite of Jewish Palestine, and he exhibited a marked preference for European products.

Linguistically, Gershom Scholem retained a strong connection to Germany, though he sometimes claimed or intimated otherwise. He told an audience at the Bavarian Academy of Arts in 1974 that for nearly half a century—namely since he left Germany for Palestine—his connection to the German language was lax. Elsewhere, he contended that in 1933—the year the Nazis came to power in Germany—he “lost contact” with German. However, his publication record seems to indicate otherwise. While he wrote innumerable academic and popular articles in Hebrew, he composed several of his most significant works in German, notably Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism and Origins of the Kabbalah. Robert Alter writes that Gershom Scholem’s biography of Shabbatai Zvi was his only major work originally written in Hebrew. His affection for his mother tongue and proclivity to use it for scholarship did not abate. He used it for scholarship, and he even wrote German-language poetry. When he was twenty-one years old he wrote, “I don’t want to become part of German literature, except as a translator of the Bible.” Nonetheless,
Gershom Scholem has attained nearly iconic status in modern German cultural and literary studies. Not only did he continue to use German for his writing, but he also used it as a spoken language in Palestine/Israel. For many years, if not decades, it was a lingua franca among his social circle. He even spoke it with his Galician-born, second wife, Fania, who never formally studied the language.\textsuperscript{20} While Gershom Scholem declined to consider himself a German, his sentimental ties to Berlin remained strong, and the Berlin dialect of German was a natural tongue for him, as he recalled in his memoir of his friendship with Walter Benjamin, a fellow Berlin Jewish intellectual.\textsuperscript{21}

Gershom Scholem’s enduring ties to Germanness were not limited to language. Before World War II and the Holocaust, he actively participated in the Jewish political discourse on Palestine; however, his views were considered both atypical and particularly “German” (or German-Jewish) in nature.\textsuperscript{22} During that era, Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism, whose roots lay in popular Jewish politics in eastern Europe, dominated the discussion. These two rival ideologies had different visions for the economy, administration, and boundaries of a future Jewish state, but neither contemplated abandoning the fundamental goal of political independence for the Jews in Palestine. In contrast, Gershom Scholem and his circle of friends and colleagues, including Ernst Simon, Arthur Ruppin, Samuel Hugo Bergman, and Judah Magnes, did not endorse the goal of an independent Jewish-majority state. These intellectuals, who were born in Germany and/or studied at German universities, promoted a program of Arab-Jewish rapprochement and proposed a binational, multilingual state of Arabs and Jews. They publicized their views through the organization Brit Shalom (Covenant of Peace), founded in 1925.\textsuperscript{23} This group, which is the subject of considerable scholarship despite its very small size, found its core support among German Zionists, though not all German-born Jewish residents of Palestine supported Brit Shalom, especially after 1929, and the organization dissolved in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{24} For a time, Gershom Scholem was among its most active members.\textsuperscript{25} Under the conditions of Palestinian politics in the 1930s, including anti-Jewish violence by Arabs and strident rhetoric from Revisionist Zionists, Brit Shalom failed to gain a mass following. Indeed, the idea of a harmonious multiethnic state seems to have been more a product of central Europe than the Levant.

While Gershom Scholem’s gastronomic and sartorial predilections are less significant than his intellectual, scholarly, and political decisions, they add texture to the story of his enduring relationship with Germany. Simply put, he strongly desired and even preferred German products long after emigrating from Germany. His mother acted as his personal purveyor of German goods
and services, and his letters to her are full of requests for clothes, fabric, and (presumably nonkosher) German delicacies. If the requested items arrived late, damaged, or spoiled, he grew testy. While his massive archive of personal correspondence demonstrates his great passion for Wurst and marzipan, there is scarcely a single mention of Middle Eastern specialties such as falafel or halva. Additionally, he did not adopt the casual style of dress popular among Jews in Mandate-era Palestine and Israel. While others wore open-collar shirts and khakis, he continued to wear suits and ties. Despite his devotion to cultural Zionism and Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael, his connection to his native culture was strong and enduring—in notable contrast to most non-Orthodox, eastern European Jewish immigrants to Palestine. As David Biale has written, Gershom Scholem “never severed himself from German culture, even as he rejected Germany.”

Perhaps even more intriguing is his relationship with Germany after the Holocaust. After 1948, Gershom Scholem became a leading figure in the Israeli intelligentsia. He was personally acquainted with Israeli prime ministers and presidents. He was a dean at the Hebrew University, and he served as president of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He weighed in on the important debates that roiled Israeli society. After the Six-Day War, he was one of the first public figures to oppose annexation of the occupied territories. He lent his stature to Peace Now, opposed the Gush Edumim settler movement, and voted for Ratz, a predecessor of Meretz. He was, by many measures, very much an Israeli. Even though he reengaged with Germany and spent a considerable amount of time there, he continued to represent himself as a Jew in Germany and not a German Jew. Shortly before his death, he was admitted to the highly prestigious Order Pour le Mérite—as a non-German member. He refused to eat nonkosher meat during a visit to Berlin although he did not observe the rules of kashrut in his own home.

Gershom Scholem worked to foster dialogue between Jews and Germans after the trauma of the Nazi years and the Holocaust, even as he expressed bitterness about the fate of German Jews. It was a complicated and sensitive project, but one to which he was seriously dedicated. His first postwar trips to Germany, in the late 1940s, were to rescue ownerless Judaic books left in post-Holocaust Europe and send them to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He characterized these visits as “some of the bitterest months of my life.” Even thirty-five years later, he felt that no Jews seriously interested in Judaic erudition could live in Germany. In 1966, when asked to contribute to a volume with the theme of “a German-Jewish dialogue, the core of which is indestructible,” Gershom Scholem wrote a now-famous essay entitled “Wider den
Mythos eines deutsch-jüdischen ‘Gespräches,’” in which he railed against the notion that there had been a Jewish-German dialogue.\(^\text{36}\) He also argued that none was possible under the current circumstances.

However, his own argument seemed to be belied by many of his actions. In the postwar decades, he regularly engaged in intellectual exchanges with German-speaking, European scholars. He frequently gave scholarly lectures in Germany. He was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin when it opened in the early 1980s. He was the recipient of numerous prizes from German institutions, and those prizes usually necessitated an award ceremony and speech by Gershom Scholem.\(^\text{37}\) In his famous (or infamous) essay, he may have decried the idea of German-Jewish dialogue, but he was addressing Germans, which naturally led to a dialogue. When he was not interacting with German-language audiences in the Federal Republic of Germany, he was speaking to German-language audiences in Switzerland. He was a frequent visitor to Zürich, and he was a leader of Eranos conferences on comparative religion, spirituality, and philosophy, held in Ascona.\(^\text{38}\) For him and for other Jewish intellectuals of German birth, Switzerland served as an intermediary venue for scholarly work and exchange with the German-speaking world after the Holocaust. Even as he denied that there had even been a real “German-Jewish dialogue,” he made an effort to foster meaningful discussion between Germans and Jews—albeit with the proviso that the Jewish interlocutors were regarded exclusively as Jews and not as “Jewish Germans,” “Germans of the Jewish faith,” or “Jewish fellow citizens.” During his own lifetime, he found a large audience among the German intelligentsia, which greatly valued his scholarship. The cultural elite of West Germany honored him with prizes and awards, and he became a staple of German-language religious studies and even comparative literature.\(^\text{39}\) Both the unending stream of German scholarly work about Gershom Scholem and the large number of works by Gershom Scholem still in print in German demonstrate his ongoing popularity in Germany.

In many ways, Reinhold Scholem is the opposite of his brother Gershom. Like many German Jews, he did not leave Germany and its cultural sphere voluntarily. He fled the Nazi persecution of Jews and the negation of Jewish life in Germany. Gershom claimed that he was not a German, but he continued to remain strongly tied to a German cultural world. One might even say that he never left the world of the German-Jewish intelligentsia. He simply relocated it from Charlottenburg and the Scheunenviertel in Berlin to Rehavia and Har Hatzofim in Jerusalem. Reinhold, on the other hand, continued to affirm his Germanness in exile, but it did slowly diminish.
Reinhold and Erich Scholem left Germany together in the summer of 1938. Even though they departed before Kristallnacht, they were unmistakably pleased to emigrate. They arrived in Australia on July 1, 1938, and Reinhold wrote to Gershom, “I can only say that since then, every day I have been happy to be out of Germany.” Life as an immigrant in Australia was a struggle for Reinhold Scholem. He moved several times, and his economic prospects were uncertain. However, by 1945, he had begun his long journey to upper-middle-class prosperity. He invested in machinery to manufacture plastic molding and, over time, attained prosperity. His son Günter even entered the same industry. Despite initial adversity, Reinhold enjoyed success in Australia. Considering his achievement in his new country, it is all the more interesting how he felt about Germany, the land of his birth.

Living in Australia, he maintained an emotional tie to Germany. He refused to let Hitler define for him what it meant to be German. Well into their seventies and eighties, Gershom and Reinhold Scholem conducted a running argument about the place of the Jews in German society. Reinhold claimed that before Hitler came to power, the Jews had comfortably integrated in Germany. On the other hand, Gershom insisted that Jews had never been truly welcome in Germany. He believed that they had willingly deluded themselves on that point. More than thirty years after fleeing Germany, Reinhold had a chance to return for a visit. He did not originally plan a trip expressly to Germany. In fact, he was planning a more general European vacation and contemplated visiting France and Italy. In the end, however, he chose Zürich, Düsseldorf, and Munich as his destinations. He was even willing to conduct business, presumably with Germans, in Düsseldorf. Back in Sydney, he socialized, at least occasionally, with fellow German émigrés. As an octogenarian widower, he had a romantic relationship with an elderly widow originally from Breslau. It would seem likely that their shared background was a significant point of connection.

However, even as Reinhold Scholem maintained ties to Germans and Germanness, he was clearly Australianizing. While he corresponded with brother Gershom in German, Reinhold’s German got worse over time, and he began to use ever more Anglicisms mixed in with his German. At times, he wrote a rather charming Denglish. Unlike Gershom, whose professional life necessitated the use of German and who visited Germany frequently, Reinhold truly was losing contact with Germany and Germanness. His son Günter was born in Germany in 1922, and as a teenager, he began studying English intensively in anticipation of emigration. By the time Günter was in his fifties, he no longer felt able to read or write German proficiently.
er’s children spoke no German at all. They communicated with their Berlin-born Opa in English.\(^47\) Also, as Reinhold became integrated in Australia, he engaged in mainstream Australian politics (as opposed to specifically émigré politics, Jewish special interest groups, or even a group like Gershom’s Brit Shalom). He was a strong supporter of the Liberal Party, just he had been a member of the liberal DVP in Germany.\(^48\)

Reinhold Scholem’s relationship to Judaism also reflected his German (or German-Jewish) heritage. Like most German Jews, he was not religiously observant and attended services only for the High Holidays. On such occasions, he went to Berlin’s Lindenstrasse Synagogue, a typical exponent of German Liberal Judaism. He did know some prayers but not well.\(^49\) Nazi persecution strengthened his Jewish identity, and his son had a bar mitzvah ceremony in 1935.\(^50\) Still, Reinhold’s attachment to Judaism was more cultural than theological and might even be characterized as specifically “German Jewish.” In Sydney, he affiliated with a progressive Jewish temple and did not become more observant or religiously erudite. When his brother Erich died, he needed assistance to recite the kaddish prayer.\(^51\)

Reinhold Scholem presents an interesting case of an assimilated German Jew who continued to think of himself as a German Jew—even in emigration—yet who gradually became Americanized, Anglicized, or, in his case, Australianized. This should, of course, be no surprise. Though he lived in Germany for the first forty-seven years of his life, he lived an additional forty-seven years in Australia, where he eventually enjoyed financial and social success. Moreover, unlike Gershom, Reinhold did not retain active links to ongoing German culture once he was in exile, though he claimed to regard that culture more highly than Gershom.

Erich Scholem’s case is slightly different. Like his brother Reinhold, he thought of himself as a good German, and he was deeply integrated into the fabric of German or German-Jewish society. He did not emigrate willingly. In contrast to Reinhold, however, his life in Australia was not a success story. In addition to suffering from significant health problems (which were unrelated to his emigration), he was unable to achieve economic success.\(^52\) He operated a number of businesses, but he never experienced the same stability that he had enjoyed in pre-Nazi Berlin.

Unfortunately, we know relatively few details about Erich Scholem’s life in Australia. Not only was he a reserved man who rarely communicated his feelings in letters, but he also had a major falling-out with Reinhold, and the two did not speak for many years. As a result, Erich’s direct contribution to the
family archive in Jerusalem is minimal, and there is scant indirect documentation about his life. Nonetheless, there are a few interesting indicators of how he felt about Germany and his situation as a (formerly) German Jew. It seems that his feelings about Germany developed very negatively in the twenty-seven years that he lived outside of Germany.

He was the first member of the family to gain Australian citizenship, and at that time, he claimed that his previous status was “stateless,” not “German.” During the Second World War he enlisted in the Australian army. He did not participate in any battles, especially not against the Germans, but his desire to serve his new country, even at a relatively advanced age, is remarkable. In contrast to Reinhold, who had little emotional difficulty in planning a trip to Germany, Erich harbored a great resentment of Germany and the Germans. He first returned to the country of his birth in 1960, twenty-two years after fleeing. Berlin still attracted him. He thought that the city was exciting and interesting, though he was disturbed to see how much of it still lay in ruins. In contrast to his positive feelings for Berlin, he expressed very negative feelings about his former compatriots. He found the Germans to be pushy, argumentative, and insufferably self-important, though individual Germans were “not quite so bad.” It angered him greatly when ordinary Germans, completely unsolicited, would tell him that they had known nothing about the Nazis’ crimes. Rather, they emphasized what they had had to endure, and they groused about the bombardment of German cities “when the Allies already knew that they would win the war.” According to Erich, Hitler was the Germans’ scapegoat even though “half of them voted for him in 1933. It was always the others.” After departing Germany, he expressed no fondness for the German people: “I must say that I feel considerably better outside the German borders. The longer I was there, the more they got on my nerves.” In fact, German culture did not appeal to him any longer. Although Germany had been his cultural sphere until 1938, when he was forty-five years old, he regarded himself as an Anglophile, and his trip to Germany merely confirmed that view. In Australia, he absorbed English-language culture, even if he found the local version to be rather second-rate.

Another interesting and curious aspect of his relationship with German- ness after 1938 is his family’s life. He divorced his first wife not long after leaving Germany. He married a fellow German-Jewish émigré, but his ex-wife, Edith, married a native Australian, and both families were pleased with the latter match, according to Betty Scholem. Erich’s son, Arthur, Jr., did not marry an Australian or a German-Jewish émigré; he married a German. In 1952, he rashly married a young woman whom he met while traveling through East
Germany. Arthur told his uncle Gerhard (as Gershom was still known to family and close friends) that he had to marry in London and could not marry in Germany because his mother refused to give him some important document that he needed. She probably did not approve of his marriage. Arthur’s first cousin Renate, whom he met in London, commented, “It seems strange somehow that Arthur Scholem should have been able to make this marriage so easily and quickly when he himself was a victim of the Germans.” Even more surprising, after living and working in Africa for many years, Arthur returned permanently to Germany, settling in the Harz Mountains. His father could not stand the Germans and felt uncomfortable in Germany, but Arthur, who fled Germany with his family when he was eleven or twelve, both married a non-Jewish German and returned permanently to Germany.

Another interesting aspect of Erich Scholem’s life as a German Jew was his relationship to Judaism. He was not particularly religious in the 1920s, and he nominally affiliated with the Liberal Lindenstrasse Synagogue. However, as the family drew closer to Judaism in the 1930s, he took it upon himself to recite the customary blessings as the family’s Shabbat dinners. Although he revealed little about his religious life in Australia—and thus we have little information in the archives on this topic—when he died, his brothers discovered that he had become a member of an Orthodox synagogue.

Erich Scholem was a German Jew who would have gladly remained German for his whole life, but after he left the country, he seems to have exited its emotional and cultural orbit. Considering the prosperity that he had enjoyed in Germany and his lack of success in Australia, he might have romanticized his former life in Germany and maintained positive feelings for his native land or he might have resented being deprived of the stability that he had known there. He chose the latter option.

The three surviving Scholem brothers provide an interesting insight into how some German-Jewish émigrés navigated their German identity after having left the land of their birth. Gershom Scholem, who left Germany by choice and settled in Mandatory Palestine, rejected the notion of having a German identity—even while still living in Germany. In his own eyes, his identity was 100 percent Jewish. However, Gershom remained remarkably tied to Germans and German culture, even in Palestine/Israel. Despite his perfect command of Hebrew and love for Eretz Yisrael, one might say that he only semi-assimilated to life in his adopted home, at least before the 1940s. Moreover, since he left Germany voluntarily long before the Holocaust—and did so expressly as a Zionist or national Jew—he may not have had the same feelings of loss that his
brothers and many other German Jews felt after involuntarily leaving Germany in the 1930s. Despite his bitterness during visits to Germany immediately after the Holocaust, he frequently visited the country for the rest of his life.

Reinhold Scholem presents a slightly different case. He embraced his German identity while living in Germany. After his forced emigration, he still considered himself German and did not seem to harbor pronounced resentment about the loss of his homeland. (Or at least he did not particularly express his resentment in writing.) At the same time, his ties to Germany naturally loosened as he integrated into Australian life. He assimilated well, and his family became real Australians. Finally, Erich Scholem, who joined Reinhold in Australia, rejected Germany. Unlike Gershon, who rejected a German identity because he saw himself as purely Jewish, Erich rejected Germany out of bitterness at having been rejected himself. He became an Australian and volunteered to fight for his new homeland, and he resented the Germans for the past.

Though this essay considers the biographies of only three brothers from a single family, there is something representative about their paths. Thousands of German Jews, who had negotiated the passage between their German and Jewish identities in Germany, confronted this challenge once again in emigration. The journalist and novelist Joseph Roth wrote,

Émigré German Jews are like a new tribe: Having forgotten how to be Jews, they are learning it all over again. They are unable to forget that they are German, and they can’t lose their Germanness. They are like snails with two shells on their backs. Abroad, even overseas, they appear German. It’s difficult for them to deny, if they are to be truthful.  

The lives and choices of these three Scholem brothers, and their sons in two cases, illustrate how Jews of German birth either continued to embrace a German identity or purposely rejected this identity after leaving Germany. Moreover, their notions of “Germanness” were not uniform. Reinhold Scholem could emphasize (and possibly romanticize) positive aspects of Germany before the National Socialist era. Erich Scholem chose to focus expressly on the Germany of the Nazi era. Both brothers visited the country in the 1960s or 1970s.

Among the surviving brothers, Gershon Scholem’s transnational experience of Germanness is the most interesting. Over the course of many decades, he had the experience of witnessing the attenuation of German identity among German-Jewish immigrants to Palestine/Israel (the so-called Yekkes). They
contributed considerably to academia, the judicial profession, and business life while remaining largely without influence in the all-important trade unions and political sphere, and ultimately they had a limited role in shaping Israeli culture. Today, virtually nothing remains of the Yekke tradition in Israel. At the same time, as Gershom Scholem witnessed the creation of Israeli culture and contributed to it, he was a regular visitor to West Germany and East Germany. There, he witnessed the development of new German identities. Well into the 1980s, he wrote and spoke in German for scholarly audiences. Nonetheless, despite his continued visits to the country, he claimed his German language faculty ceased developing in 1930 or 1933. He could have allowed post-1945 (or post-1968) German society to shape some aspect of his identity, but that was antithetical to his self-concept. He could have allowed post-1945 German to influence his language, but he did not, and one must wonder how much conscious effort was required to maintain 1920s diction fifty years after the fact.

Curiously, Gershom Scholem, a man who lived between two cultures, also has two tombstones: one in Berlin and one in Jerusalem. He died in Jerusalem on February 21, 1982 (28 Shevat 5742) and was buried in Jerusalem’s Sanhedria Cemetery. His tombstone there recalls him as “Gershom son of Arthur Shalom” and characterizes him as “a man of the Third Aliyah,” a seminal scholar of Kabbalah, and someone with a divinely granted intellect. However, at some point after his death, a relative (most likely his cousin Ernst Scholem) had his name added to the tombstone above the family grave in Berlin’s Weißensee Cemetery. On his Berlin memorial, he is recalled as “Gerhard G. Scholem.”

Additionally, the Scholem brothers, like most émigrés, essentially experienced a unique variety of German culture that existed only among expatriates, and, in their case, it was a variety specific to the German-Jewish bourgeoisie. Thus, Reinhold Scholem in Sydney probably had more in common with a Hamburg-born, Jewish physician in San Francisco than he did with a Polish-born Jewish businessman who also came to Australia as a refugee in 1938 or even a non-Jewish German immigrant to that country. He and thousands like him partook of a transnational and, ultimately, ephemeral culture. This phenomenon lasted one generation. The émigrés’ children, and certainly their grandchildren, were true Americans, Australians, or Israelis with virtually no traces of German identity, either contemporary or pre-1933. Thus, the Scholems and thousands of émigrés like them represent two (if not three) lost cultures, complete with their own habits, media, language, politics, and underlying assumptions: that of the pre-1933 German (Jewish) bourgeoisie and that of the émigré who has lost one homeland but not completely gained another.
NOTES

The author would like to thank Leslie Morris, Sharon Gillerman, Gershom Greenberg, Thomas Kovach, Jerry Muller, and Gil Ribak for their comments and suggestions in revising this essay.


8. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, February 29, 1972, Gershom Scholem to Reinhold Scholem, May 29, 1972, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.


10. He was a member of the liberal Democratic Club in Berlin. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, July 18, 1977, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599. Additionally, on Constitution Day (August 11), the Weimar Republic’s national holiday, Erich participated in “the deployment of black-red-gold [republican] water clubs.” Betty Scholem to Gershom Scholem, August 12, 1929, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.

11. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, March 27, 1928, Betty Scholem to Gershom Scholem, November 15, 1926, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.


13. The *Yishuv* was the Hebrew name for the Jewish settlement in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel.


Benjamin, November 10, 1933, and June 20, 1934, Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, *Briefwechsel 1933–1940*, 112 and 149.


25. According to his colleague Samuel Hugo Bergman, even after the anti-Jewish Arab riots of 1929, Gershom became “completely a politician and more extreme in his view than he was before.” Scholem belonged to the society’s most radical wing, and Bergman ascribed the “soul” of the group’s activities at that time to Scholem. Samuel Hugo Bergman to Robert Weltisch, September 19 and 25, 1929, Schmuel [sic] Hugo Bergman, *Tagebücher und Briefe*, vol. 1, *1901–1948*, ed. Miriam Sambursky (Königsstein: Jüdischer Verlag bei Athenäum, 1985), 289–91; Ratzabi, *Between Zionism and Judaism*, 146.


40. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, October 18, 1938, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.
41. Scholem, Von Berlin nach Jerusalem, 47.
42. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, February 29, 1972, Gershom Scholem to Reinhold Scholem, May 29, 1972, Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, January 19, 1980, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.
43. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, April 22, 1971, and May 9, 1971, ibid.
44. The world’s largest trade fair for the plastics and rubber industry was (and still is) held in Düsseldorf, and Reinhold Scholem, who owned a plastic molding firm, planned to attend while on his vacation.
46. Betty to Gershom Scholem, June 17, 1937, Mutter und Sohn im Briefwechsel,
263; David Scholem to Gershom Scholem, April 22, 1979, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.

47. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, June 19, 1974, ibid.


49. Betty Scholem to Gershom Scholem, April 19, 1924, April 19, 1925, September 20, 1925, February 2, 1926, September 18, 1928, and October 9, 1929, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.


51. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, March 4, 1965, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.

52. The Berlin-based lawyer who handled Erich’s restitution case felt that his health problems, which at various times included colon cancer, lung cancer, and a heart condition, had been exacerbated through neglect as a result of Erich’s having to deal with his persecution and emigration, but Erich was doubtful. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, April 20, 1960, ibid.


54. Betty Scholem to Gershom Scholem, November 5, 1944, and March 25, 1945, Mutter und Sohn im Briefwechsel, 514 and 524.

55. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, April 20, 1960, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.


57. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, July 10, 1960, ibid. One bright spot in his trip was a visit with some of his friends from the Weimar Republic-era Democratic Club, whom, he had feared, the Nazis had killed. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, April 20, 1960, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.


60. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, September 30, 1941, and end December 1963, ibid. Erich complained about the quality of theater productions in Sydney. Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, end December 1963, ibid. His views on Sydney found even greater expression after his visit to Europe. He wrote, “Despite its two million inhabitants, Sydney is the largest village in the southern Hemisphere and correspondingly provincial.” Erich Scholem to Gershom Scholem, December 24, 1961, ibid.


62. Arthur Scholem, Jr., to Gershom Scholem, July 8, 1952, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.
63. Renate Goddard-Scholem to Gershom Scholem, August 16, 1952, ibid. Renate was the daughter of Werner Scholem. While her father was imprisoned by the Nazis, she was able to flee Germany and settled permanently in Great Britain.

64. Betty Scholem to Gershom Scholem, September 18, 1928, and October 9, 1929, ibid.


66. Reinhold Scholem to Gershom Scholem, March 4, 1965, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599.


68. Gershom Scholem, “Sprache,” undated, NLI, Archives Department, Arc. 4°1599, 277-I, 56 [Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache]. Gershom Scholem’s translator, Werner J. Dannhauser, agreed with this assessment: “Scholem left Germany at the beginning of the 1920s and was thus spared any contamination by the corrupted German of much of the twentieth century. . . . One need not dwell on the irony of the fact that today’s most classic German may well be written by a Jew living in Israel.” Werner J. Dannhauser, editor’s preface to *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, by Gershom Scholem, xi.

69. The family grave in Berlin is extremely curious. First, it bears the names of Arthur Scholem, Betty Scholem, Werner Scholem, Erich Scholem, and Gerhard G. Scholem [sic], even though only Arthur was buried there. Second, the inscriptions contain several mistakes. Betty’s place of death is misspelled. Werner’s year of death is incorrect. And Gerhard’s German middle name was “Arthur.” Gershom’s post-

*Aliyah* middle name was “Gerhard.” Thus, he should have been “Gerhard A. Scholem” or “Gershom G. Scholem,” not “Gerhard G. Scholem.” For more on Gershom Scholem’s Berlin tombstone, see, Honigmann, “Doppeltes Grab,” 97; Bill Rebiger, “‘Das Wesentliche spielt sich nicht auf der Leipziger Straße ab, sondern . . . im Geheimen’—Gershom Scholem und Berlin,” *European Association for Jewish Studies Newsletter* 16 (spring 2005): 96 and 99; Jay Howard Geller, “From Berlin and Jerusalem: On the Germanness of Gershom Scholem,” *Journal of Religious History* 35, no 2 (June 2011): 232.