Cosmopolitanisms and the Jews

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Chapter 2

Moving About: Cosmopolitanism from Jews in Coaches to Jews on Trains

The Enlightenment Imagines Cosmopolitan Jews

In 1749, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a German Protestant gadfly and author, wrote a one-act comedy, *The Jews*.¹ Short, pithy, enlightened, it tells the story of robbers masquerading as Jews and a Jew incognito as a Traveler who rescues the Baron and his daughter from the robbers. Lessing’s Traveler is the paradigm of Enlightened cosmopolitan gentility and courtesy, a model of the new bourgeois gentleman later sketched by the Mr. Manners of his day, Adolf Freiherr von Knigge (1752–96), whose handbook of correct behavior, *Practical Philosophy of Social Life* (*Über den Umgang mit Menschen*, 1788), became and remains the German best seller on social etiquette.² It provides a measure of what economic success looks like when the bourgeoisie have access to resources hitherto limited to the upper classes. Thus, traveling in a carriage with livery has become so middle class by the 1780s that Knigge observes that it is “an uncommon phenomenon to see a gentleman travelling on foot; as it excites the curiosity of the multitude, and innkeepers know not how to treat him” (K, 231). For “travelling renders us sociable; we get acquainted, and in a certain degree intimate with people whom otherwise we probably should not have chosen for companions, which can produce not bad consequences if we carefully avoid putting too much confidence in those strangers we meet on the road, lest we should be taken in by adventurers and knaves” (K, 224). Or even Jewish adventurers and knaves.³

The Enlightened man is gracious, generous, and brave, as Lessing’s Traveler remarks:

It’s no small pleasure for me that I’ve earned the thanks of so many decent people with such a slight service. Your gratitude is more reward than I need for what I did. I did it because I had to, because I care for people. I
felt it was my duty, and I would be content if it weren’t taken as anything else. You are too kind, dear people, to thank me for what you yourselves would undoubtedly have done with just as much zeal if I had been in a similar danger.\(^4\)

Here we have a far cry from Knigge’s warning about the new bourgeoisie and their anxiety about dealing with strangers, especially Jews. For though “at Berlin, many Jewish families cannot be distinguished in the least from those that belong to other religious sects” (K, 315): “It is necessary we should look very sharp in all our dealings with Hebrews of the common class. It is natural that a Christian should not rely upon their conscientiousness and solemn protestations.” Jews are entering the bourgeoisie, Knigge warns, and they are just like you and me (at least superficially); just watch out for the “common class” of Jews, who remain dangerous because they economically exploit the (Christian) middle class.\(^6\)

Indeed, the Baron’s invective against the Jews, which resulted from his robbery by individuals dressed as Jews, very much echoes Knigge’s warning, not Lessing’s sentiment. But Lessing seeks to show that this is simply a long-held belief, not a truth:

**BARON.** And isn’t it true that they have something in their face that prejudices us against them? You can practically read it in their eyes—treachery, unscrupulousness, selfishness, trickery, lying. . . . But why are you turning away from me?

**TRAVELER.** As I hear, sir, you are a great expert in physiognomy, and I’m afraid that mine. . . .

**BARON.** Oh! You offend me. How could you come to such a suspicion? Without being any expert in physiognomy, I have to tell you that I’ve never found such a sincere, generous and pleasant face as yours.\(^7\)

Prejudices, as the one philosopher that Enlighteners read on the topic, Georg Friedrich Meier, noted in 1766, were always formally wrong because they were based on insufficiently grounded judgment but could be—and here the Germans are quite different from the French Enlighteners such as the Baron d’Holbach—quite accurate in their content.\(^8\) Lessing clearly would have disagreed with Meier, Thomas Abbt, and others on this point. All prejudices against the Jews vanish when we see them as human beings and define them as well-dressed people who can afford a coach ride within the carriage, not on its roof. According to Knigge, truly cosmopolitan travelers “are the citizens of the
world at large, and feel as comfortable and as much at ease at the top of a stage coach as in a splendid chariot” (K, 319).

The flirtation between the Baron’s daughter and the Traveler seems to seal the claim that Jewish invisibility is the key to understanding the cosmopolitan Jew as an economically acceptable human being. All human beings are equal, at least when correctly attired, accompanied by servants, and traveling across the landscape in a bourgeois means of transport:

TRAVELER. Excuse me, miss. I just wanted to tell my servant to get everything ready for our departure.

YOUNG LADY. What are you talking about? Your departure? When was your arrival? Granted, if you had been here for a year and a day, then a moment of melancholy might have given you such an idea. But now? Not even to stay a whole day? That’s awful. I tell you I will be angry if you ever think of it again.

TRAVELER. You couldn’t threaten me with anything that would hurt me more.

YOUNG LADY. No! Seriously? You mean you would be hurt if I were angry with you?

TRAVELER. Who could be indifferent to the anger of a kind woman?

Indeed, the flirtation proceeds to the point where the Baron imagines the Traveler as a son-in-law. This moves the Traveler to reveal himself as a Jew, which ends all talk of the possibility of marriage:

TRAVELER. Even this offer is of no use to me, since the God of my Fathers has given me more than I need. All I ask as my compensation is that from now on you judge my people more kindly and with less generality. If I kept myself hidden from you it isn’t because I’m ashamed of my religion. No! But I saw that you had sympathy for me and antipathy for my nation. And a person’s friendship, whoever he may be, has always been priceless to me.

BARON. I’m ashamed of how I acted.

Yet the social impossibility of a liaison in a world still very much defined by religion underlines the key metaphor of this story, which is the physical mobility of all, with the coach transporting the Traveler and the others being the great leveler in society. This is the Enlightenment ideal writ large. Buy a ticket, pay a fee, and you can go where you want and be whomever you care to
be—with, of course, built-in and unspoken limitations. Here we have a set of core underpinnings of the Enlightenment, what modern historian James Joll has called in another context “unspoken assumptions”: you can become what you wish to be and go where you wish to go, unless there is a supervening qualification. But equality exists only among equals. Indeed, after the play was published in 1754, Göttingen theologian Johann David Michaelis complained in print that the problem with Lessing’s image of the Traveler was that such a version of the Jew as a German gentleman could never exist. Michaelis believed firmly that the Jews were a people of the desert, frozen in their nature as a “southern people.” No first-class coach ticket to London, Paris, or Berlin could change that.

In 1940, the National Socialists redid this scene of the cosmopolitan or at least nomadic Jew in their most successful antisemitic film, Veit Harlan’s Jud Süss. There, too, a Jew disguised as an eighteenth-century gentleman enters a coach with a young German woman and beguiles her with tales of travel across the world and through society. He is Joseph Süss Oppenheimer (played by Ferdinand Marian), who has tricked Karl Alexander, the Duke of Wurttemberg (played by Heinrich George), into giving him a pass so that he can enter the city of Stuttgart, forbidden to the Jews for more than a century. When we first see Oppenheimer, he appears as a ghetto Jew, with beard and side locks and the clothing associated with the ghetto. He is promising the duke economic support for frivolities such as a ballet that his economic councillors have denied. In the next scene, Oppenheimer is transformed into a traveler, clad like a gentleman, and is rescued from the side of the road after a coach accident by Dorothea Sturm (played by Kristina Söderbaum in all her blond glory). They enter the gates of the city after the guard checks that “Herr Oppenheimer, from Frankfurt” is on the list of those permitted to enter the city. As they enter the town in her coach, the naive young woman asks where he has traveled. He answers that he has been to Paris, Versailles, London, Rome, Madrid, Lisbon. When she asks where he feels most at home, he replies “Everywhere.” And when she asks, “Have you no home?,” he says that “the world” is his home. Everyone except the young woman, whom he will eventually rape, recognizes him as a Jew despite his attire and his entry into Stuttgart. She is amazed to learn that he is a Jew, pointing out that he was admitted through the city gates without question. After he is confronted and revealed as a Jew, it is strongly suggested that he take the next coach out of the city, since Jews were not allowed, even if they arrived by coach. Indeed, when Süss’s machinations permit the nomadic Jews to enter the city, they stream in on foot, clearly dressed as Jews. Mobility—the ultimate sign of cosmopolitanism for the National Social-
ists—is a curse, allowing Jews, with their essential gift of mimicry, to infiltrate and economically exploit German society.

The Enlightenment anxiety about mobility or its lack and the inability or ability of Jews to become cosmopolitan haunts the eighteenth century because it is the public means of demonstrating the social mobility associated with becoming cosmopolitan. The various courts from the seventeenth century on had proto-cosmopolitan Jews—the so-called Court Jews (Hoffaktoren) such as the real Joseph Süß Oppenheimer in Stuttgart, Meyer Amschel Rothschild at the Court of Wilhelm I of Hesse, and Daniel Itzig at the court of Frederick the Great. In the time they were seen as simultaneously inhabiting the world of these pocket principalities as well as the more global world of “Jewish” finance. The 1906 *Jewish Encyclopedia* labeled these men “cosmopolitan” when ruminating on the declining world of the Jewish bankers: “Of more recent years, non-Jewish financiers have learned the same cosmopolitan method, and, on the whole, the control is now rather less than more in Jewish hands than formerly.” Court Jews such as the Rothschilds are seen as typical of a “mobile, cosmopolitan minority people [that] had a genuine advantage in that early stage of banking.”

The major difference is the acknowledgment of economic as well as social mobility and the ability to move anonymously across borders and boundaries. But the Enlightenment enabled not only Jews but also members of a new, burgeoning economic class, the bourgeoisie, including (Jewish and non-Jewish) women, to be more mobile and therefore at least superficially cosmopolitan.

After Lessing wrote his play about travel and cosmopolitanism, he met the young factor of a Berlin silk weaving firm, Moses Mendelssohn, who came to fulfill Lessing’s idealization of a cosmopolitan Jew. Critics today speak, for example, of “Moses Mendelssohn’s religious cosmopolitanism” or quote Mendelssohn’s rejection of any improvement of the “human race” in light of the fact that only individual humans can move toward Enlightenment. Yet Mendelssohn’s account of his life in Berlin is hardly that of someone who has a cloak of invisibility because of the cosmopolitan nature of the society into which he has entered. Mendelssohn becomes Lessing’s embodied Jew: Mendelssohn is, as he himself would have said, an individual struggling with his own Enlightenment, but he becomes a living metaphor for Jewish adaptability and the new and contradictory cosmopolitanism advocated by the avant-garde.

Mendelssohn left Dessau for Berlin in 1743. When asked at Berlin’s Rosenthaler Gate why he wanted to enter the city, he supposedly answered, stammering in pidgin German, “Learn.” The sentry’s log for that day in October 1743 notes, “Today passed through the Rosenthaler Gate six oxen, seven pigs,
one Jew”—not a cosmopolitan view but one that in this provincial capital was
typical of the attitude toward mobility in the early eighteenth century. Mendels-
sohn’s life in Berlin was always tenuous. He avoided getting involved, for ex-
ample, in a 1771 public debate between Lessing and Swiss preacher Johann
Kaspar Lavater about Mendelssohn’s own potential for conversion. (If Men-
delssohn is really so smart, Lavater claimed, Mendelssohn should recognize the
truth of Jesus as preached by Charles Bonnet and convert or refute Bonnet.)
Even in 1763, when the king of Prussia, Friedrich II (Frederick the Great), con-
ferred on Mendelssohn the status of “a Jew under special protection,” he was
still not guaranteed the right to unrestricted residence. He remained unrooted in
a national identity but not, as he observed, in a religious one.

Mendelssohn wrote a 1784 essay on what it meant to “enlighten.” He
seems to look for universals here, but they are always universals in the context
of what came to be called Realpolitik. Thus, he notes that human enlighten-
ment can often come into conflict with the demands of citizenship. Here, the
question of public political cosmopolitanism—that is, the rational plurality of
systems of law—and the private sphere of belief overlap. Mendelssohn’s dis-
cussion of political identity implies economic identity: in a state dominated not
by economic classes but by inherited status, the role of the bourgeoisie re-
mained invisible. Indeed, the idea of “enlightenment” is fragmented: Frederick
the Great’s political enlightenment does not completely mesh with the claims
of Lessing and others as to what Enlightenment demands.

In Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews (1781), the classic statement of
Jewish emancipation, Christian Wilhelm von Dohm argued that one of the
ways that the Jews could become emancipated was to give up all of their tradi-
tional associations with commerce and capital. Even though Mendelssohn dis-
agreed with Dohm, many other Jews and non-Jews agreed that Jews needed to
abandon commerce.

If we are to examine these debates about the Jews as the touchstone of
cosmopolitanism in the Enlightenment in general and specifically within the
German-language Enlightenment, then the two conflicting definitions of the
Jews must first be separated. First, the Jews are a people who ascribe to a par-
ticular religious belief and practice and who at least potentially can freely fol-
low their beliefs in the new, Enlightened world of the European nation-state.
Second, the Jews are seen as the concrete manifestation of the exploitative
force of capital, and their rise parallels the establishment of such states.

Theologian and essayist Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) is torn be-
tween these two poles. In his Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind
(1784–91), he defines the nation as “a group of people having a common origin
and common institutions, including language”; the nation-state represents the union of the individual with the national community; each people is unique; polyglot entities are “absurd monsters contrary to nature.”

The Jews must join the body politic by integrating their linguistic practice into that of the naturally occurring nation-state. But can they? According to Herder, “The Jews of Moses are properly of Palestine, outside of Palestine there can be no Jew” (H, 351). Yet “a time will come when no person in Europe will inquire whether a man be a Jew or a Christian. Jews will live according to European laws and contribute to the state” (H, 486). Nevertheless, “each nation has its center of happiness in itself, like every sphere its center of gravity” (H, 486), he writes in Also a History of Mankind (1774). In his Theological Letters (1780–81), he approvingly quotes a remark by François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, that was later evoked by the Abbé Gregoire (and virtually every other Enlightened commentator on cosmopolitanism), “I love my family more than myself; more than my family my fatherland; more than my fatherland humankind.”

Yet for Herder, the status of the nation, of the fatherland, lies at the core of any and all questions of individual identity and thus individual happiness. The nation in question is not a racial entity but rather a linguistic and cultural one. (Indeed, in the Ideas and elsewhere, Herder rejects the concept of a biologically defined race.) For Herder, Jewish emancipation was anathema as it precluded any form of total cultural assimilation. His opposition was the exception to the rule that, according to Isaiah Berlin, stressed the primacy of communal belonging and the diversity of the other ethnolinguistic communities and their rootedness in historical and geographical environments. Herder’s views reflect those of the time as expressed by Johann Georg Schlosser in the critical poem “Der Kosmopolit” (1777): “It is better to be proud of one’s nation than to have none.” Are the Jews a nation or merely wandering cosmopolitans? If a nation, can or should they become part of another nation? Or are they a threat, as Johann Gottlieb Fichte notoriously stated in his 1793 pamphlet, A Contribution to Correcting Judgments about the French Revolution: “In nearly all the nations of Europe, a powerful, hostile government is growing, and is at war with all the others, and sometimes oppresses the people in dreadful ways: It is Jewry!” The Jews are a “state within the state,” incapable of any integration and thus damned to wander the world.

According to Herder, writing in the Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind, even if the Jews had stayed “in the land of their fathers, and in the midst of other nations, . . . they would have remained as they were; for and even when mixed with other people they may be distinguished for some generations
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downward” (H, 36). The “more secluded they live, nay frequently the more they were oppressed, the more their character was confirmed” (H, 36). In fact, he suggests that ideally, “if every one of these nations had remained in its place, the Earth might have been considered as a garden, where in one spot one human national plant, in another, another, bloomed in its proper figure and nature” (H, 36). The movement of peoples interferes with the natural function of language in defining people. But the reality of history is that almost every people on earth, as Herder points out, “has migrated at least once, sooner or later, to a greater distance, or less” (H, 36). The impact of this migration is shaped by the “time when the migration took place, the circumstances by which it was occasioned, the length of the way, the previous state of civilization of the people, the reception they met with in their new country, and the like” (H, 36).

And yet Herder sees the origin of “the coining of money” as one of the contributions of the “many little wandering hordes” in the Middle East, “according to the Hebrews” (H, 317). As the Jews spread across Europe “in the manner that they spread abroad as a people,” they held its nations in thrall thanks to their command of money. They did not invent usury, Herder states, but “brought it to perfection” (H, 335). The Jews move among and across the nations like everyone else, yet Herder is happy to quote from Kant’s lectures on practical philosophy: “Every coward is a liar; Jews, for example, not only in business, but also in common life.”

Contemporary “moral” philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum most often cite Kant as the central thinker on cosmopolitanism in the German Enlightenment and beyond, citing his essay, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), with its answer to Herder’s romantic speculation on the nature of man, and later his *Perpetual Peace* (1795). Kant’s 1784 argument is teleological—only among the European states, rooted in a universal cosmopolitanism, is there even the potential for a true civil society; theocratic non-European states entirely lack that potential. The end goal of history is a perpetual peace defined by a cosmopolitan order. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant contends that the “use of the right to the earth’s surface which belongs to the human race in common” will “finally bring the human race ever closer to a cosmopolitan constitution.” This belief is rooted in the idea that an innate rule of hospitality to the stranger, the Greek idea of *xenia* (guest-friendship), defines the cosmopolitan, for “cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality” (PP, 357). Hospitality is defined here as “the right of a foreigner not to be treated with hostility because he has arrived on the land of another” (PP, 357–58). This is the central theme ascribed to the physical as
well as social mobility of the Enlightenment Jew, which is quite different in the practice of the time. This is not yet Jürgen Habermas’s understanding of civic cosmopolitan in the transnational sense of a global community. Habermas’s view answers Kant’s assumption that the state not only exists but guarantees xenia. It is not, as many commentators have claimed, a version of Kant’s rewriting of the Golden Rule as his categorical imperative; rather, it invests in the state the ability to monitor the central cosmopolitan rule of hospitality. This may mean monitoring claims on the ability to cross (state or social) boundaries with impunity.

Kant refers to this right in a 1784 footnote concerning the Jews. He notes that we are bound by our sources in any argument concerning the historical record for the nature of the state, for “outside it, everything else is terra incognita; and the history of peoples outside it can only be begun when they come into contact with it. This happened with the Jews in the time of the Ptolemies through the translation of the Bible into Greek, without which we would give little credence to their isolated narratives” (UH 118). The Jews are included in Kant’s view, but only as a peripheral people, and even then only as mediated through the Greeks.

For Kant, the question of the Jews is only partly a question of the meaning of Judaism as a historical religion, for “Judaism is properly speaking not a religion at all.” Kant sees religion as available to the rational mind, with specific religions drawing on revelation for their internal coherence. Kant is not anti-Jewish in terms of his attitude toward Judaism as a religious practice per se; he sees Jews, like Christians and Muslims, as potentially having a rational religion. But their self-imposed isolation, combined with their universal presence, disqualifies them as true cosmopolitan citizens. In his view, as Pauline Kleingeld argues, “cosmopolitan egalitarianism trumps cultural pluralism,” at least as far as religious practice is concerned.

When Kant, like Herder, looks at the Jews not as a religious practice but as a force of capital, his view is radically different. In his *Anthropology* (1798), Kant footnotes his view of the Jews and money:

The Palestinians living among us have, for the most part, earned a not unfounded reputation for being cheaters, because of their spirit of usury since their exile. Certainly, it seems strange to conceive of a nation of cheaters; but it is just as odd to think of a nation of merchants, the great majority of whom, bound by an ancient superstition that is recognized by the State they live in, seek no civil dignity and try to make up for this loss by the advantage of duping the people among whom they find refuge, and
even one another. The situation could not be otherwise, given a whole nation of merchants, as non-productive members of society (for example, the Jews in Poland). So their constitution, which is sanctioned by ancient precepts and even by the people among whom they live (since we have certain sacred writings in common with them), cannot consistently be abolished—even though the supreme principle of their morality in trading with us is “Let the buyer beware.” I shall not engage in the futile undertaking of lecturing to these people, in terms of morality, about cheating and honesty. Instead, I shall present my conjectures about the origin of this peculiar constitution (the constitution, namely, of a nation of merchants).  

Kant’s image of the Jew is the Jew in Poland, the Jew as the cosmopolitan nation of usurers spread throughout Europe. We could claim, as the Encyclopédie does, that this is a mere prejudicial continuation of medieval attitudes toward the Jews and money, but the dichotomy between Kant’s understanding of cosmopolitanism and his more complex discussion of Judaism as a religious system is belied by his representation of the Jew as merchant. Capital is central to his differentiation.

Nonetheless, Kant’s notion of a rational religion held a strong appeal for the proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah, who would argue from the 1790s onward for the universal core of Jewish religion. In so doing, these maskilim (followers of the Jewish Enlightenment) laid the foundation for the later perception of ancient Judaism itself as a forerunner of the cosmopolitan, a perception that twentieth-century Jewish cosmopolitanist writers would promote. Mendelssohn, the father of the Haskalah, had argued that rational and therefore transcendental truths, which may be a force for individual good, may come in conflict with the demands of citizenship. This is echoed in Jerusalem (1783), where he clearly distinguishes between the absolute obligations of the individual to the state and the persuasive power of religion on the individual: the state can order and punish, while religion should only educate and persuade. How this works out within the world of the mobile Jew in the real Prussian state is reflected in Mendelssohn’s short essay on “what is the best constitution for the state.” As in Jerusalem, he echoes John Locke and the central notion of that a tolerant modern state can mandate some actions and punish those who violate these mandates, but the state cannot command individual conscience. The boundary between religion and the state is manifest, but the idea of religion is limited by the state’s obligations to respect the dictates of individual conscience that do not violate the mandates of the state. The cosmopolitan thus is bound by the dictates of the local, not the universal, in terms of
the state; religion, however, allows the cosmopolitan to have access to religious belief that transcends the local.

In this context of the ideal state, Mendelssohn not only reflects Montesquieu’s notion that each state can be good for its own citizens as each reflects the needs and desires of the citizenry but simultaneously dismisses the idea of nomadism as compatible with an understanding of Enlightened culture. Mendelssohn dismisses the role of European Jews as “service nomads,” to use Yuri Slezkine’s transhistorical concept—that is, a group, like the Chinese in Southeast Asia, whose role was mainly the delivery of goods and services. Yet haunting Mendelssohn’s views is also the Enlightenment image of the stigmatized Gypsies, defined by their perceived impermanence in society and their perpetual mobility, adding nothing of value to civilization. Mendelssohn saw the Jews as rooted in the Enlightened, Greco-Roman (read: German) world of eighteenth-century intellectual culture, a location that assured individual happiness. “Should the Greeks and the Romans have not lived like the Bedouins?” he asks, answering, “NO! The progress to a higher bourgeois perfection was the intent of Divine providence that determined these human beings; that it was more appropriate for their happiness than that simple nomadic life, that for a few millennia had assured the happiness of the Bedouins.” Irrespective of the fall of the ancient world, it was inappropriate for them, for all kingdoms must eventually fall. Kant later observed the natural tension between a human desire for what comes to be called privacy and the fact that human beings “have an inclination to associate with one another because in such a condition they feel themselves more human, more in a position to develop their natural predispositions” (PP, 21). Mendelssohn sees the form of that association as reflected in the nature of the state. Not nomadic wanderings for the new European but rather the fixity of empire and city-state. Borders, not pastures; high urban culture, not the tents of wandering shepherds.

In what may be the first volley fired by modern racial antisemitism in Germany, Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Grattenauer, hiding behind a pseudonym, “the Voice of a Cosmopolitan,” published Against the Jews (1803), bringing together all of the earlier charges against these nomads from the Orient, “The Jew in general, the Jew everywhere and nowhere.” Grattenauer’s book is a riposte to Dohm’s 1781 On the Civil Improvement of the Jews, which demanded true reform within the Jewish community before emancipation but saw emancipation as the goal. Dohm implicitly accepted the local notion of a cosmopolitanism defined by the standards of European (read: Protestant) society, which became the benchmark for the integration of Jews into the Prussian body politic. He was opposed by the universal cosmopolitanism espoused by
diplomat and thinker Wilhelm von Humboldt, who argued for a universal model of the citizenry in which the Jews should be accepted as individuals, not as the idealized form of the Jew theorized by Protestant writers such as Lessing in his *Nathan the Wise* (1775). For Humboldt, Jews constituted a community of believers, analogous to the one of the Christians, not a national entity analogous to the Germans. Prussian minister Leopold Freiherr von Schrötter had made the same argument in his 1808 draft for a new constitution for the Jews in Prussia, which sought to transform Jews into “useful citizens” and to which Humboldt had been asked to respond. Enlightenment “tolerance” might suffer the Jews as a collective, but admitting Jews as individuals into a new idea of the nation-state demanded an acknowledgment and acceptance of individual differences. This is the voice, according to Grattenauer, of the true cosmopolitan, not that of Jewish mendicants and merchants such as Moses Mendelssohn, Lessing’s model Jew, “who extort their claims of their rights of citizens to inflict damaging interest on innocent Christians” (G, 2). They are not truly cosmopolitan; they are, according to Grattenauer—who defines himself as the true cosmopolitan—in the end merely Jews using this claim for their own pernicious ends.

**Writers in Coaches**

The assumptions about cosmopolitanism’s roots in the nation were reiterated in the late-eighteenth-century emergence of Romantic cosmopolitanism, which argued that Germans represented the cosmopolitan nation per se. As August Wilhelm Schlegel wrote in his 1804 *Vorlesungen über schöne Litteratur und Kunst* (Lectures on Belles Lettres and Art), “Universality, cosmopolitanism is of truly German nature”; consequently, the German language would soon become “the common means of communication among the educated nations.” In a religious variant of this argument, Friedrich Novalis claimed in his 1799 *Christianity in Europe* that Germans would lead the restoration of European unity to the Christian commonwealth that had existed during the Middle Ages. Over the nineteenth century, these ideas of a specifically German national and religious cosmopolitanist mission were transferred to the Jews in writings by both Jewish and non-Jewish authors. Acculturated German-speaking Jews in particular saw this special mission as yet another imagined point of convergence between German and Jewish culture.

But the idea of mobility as a means of representing the flexibility of Enlightenment attitudes toward the Jews as both cosmopolitans and newly
integrated citizens of the nation-state can be seen most clearly in the work of a minor yet engaging Jewish writer, Ephraim Moses Kuh (1731–90). A frequent guest in Mendelssohn’s home, Kuh was one of the first Jewish poets to write in German. He was one of the *maskilim* who also understood (as did their bourgeois non-Jewish contemporaries) that mobility implied a universal cosmopolitanism.

Mendelssohn equated Judaism with “natural religion” (that is, rational religion) and argued that Jewish ritual practice was merely another logical means of following the same rational path as Christianity and other religions. His disciple, David Friedländer, saw conversion to a rational form of Christianity (one that did not embrace the divinity of Christ) as a pathway for charging his readers to abandon the generalities about the Jews and their lack of decorum and the threats that such a lack implied to the society in which they lived. The “stronger,” he noted, had a duty “to extend an arm to the weaker” and “say ‘let us be friends.’” Indeed, stressing the corrupt nature of the manner by which Jews worshipped and acted only exacerbated hatred of the Jews.

Moses Ephraim Kuh was born in Breslau in 1731 to traditional Orthodox parents. His education followed a pattern common among the *maskilim*. Coming from a merchant family of some means, he was introduced to Western letters only after an intense Jewish education that, according to biographer Moses Hirschel, comprised “scholastic dogmatics, sophistic hypothesis, artificial subtleties, and other such nothings.” Such a traditional rabbinic education provided Kuh with an extremely good command of Hebrew and the Talmud. His teacher was, however, a disciple of the German Enlightenment who also introduced Kuh to German rationalist philosophy. Trained as a bookkeeper, Kuh was interested in foreign literature, especially British and French belles lettres. After much effort, he learned German, even though he felt that German lacked the elegance and grace of either French or English, a view shared by many others of his time, including Frederick the Great. Kuh went to Berlin in 1763, after the death of his father, ostensibly to assume the position of bookkeeper in his uncle’s gold and silver business. However, his primary reason for going to Berlin was to seek out the company of the new generation of German Enlightenment thinkers, among them Mendelssohn and Lessing. Under their tutelage, Kuh for the first time turned seriously to the pursuit of German letters. He mastered the highly artificial style of the mid-eighteenth century, with its elaborate rules for prosody patterned after an impression of classical poetry. His German quickly became polished under the direction of Karl Wilhelm Rainier, a friend of Lessing’s and Mendelssohn’s and editor of *The German Museum*, a periodical that printed Kuh’s early poetry. All the while Kuh was
spending his inheritance on “good works”—supporting Christian as well as Jewish students, giving money to almost anyone who asked for it—with a sense of generosity that sprang from his newly found position in the German Enlightened community.

In 1768 Kuh left Berlin and undertook the classic European voyage to Italy. He toured the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, and the German states in the manner of any Enlightened traveler of the late eighteenth century. Accompanying him on this long and arduous trip were three huge trunks full of books, the treasures of British, French, German, and Latin letters. On his return to Berlin in 1771, an incident completely altered his life. Jewish merchants were forced to pay a duty when they crossed any of the innumerable borders between the petty German states. But when Kuh crossed the border into Saxony, he refused to acknowledge his identity. As one of Kuh’s contemporaries described a decade later, he “dared to travel . . . as a simple human being and merchant without admitting to the customs officials his faith. He was discovered and had to pay duty, not on goods, but on the oldest faith in the world, a duty amounting to several thousand dollars.”

When Kuh reached the border at Sachsen-Gotha, his coach was again stopped by customs authorities. They asked whether anyone had anything to declare, and Kuh did not answer. They then asked whether any passengers were Jews. Again Kuh did not answer. After asking some more questions, the guards identified Kuh as a Jew, although he was dressed as a gentleman, much as Lessing’s Traveler must have been dressed. How could the guards have known that Kuh was a Jew? It must have been through his accent. As a native Yiddish speaker who learned German fairly late in life, he probably spoke with a Yiddish accent. Language was the key to Kuh’s unmasking as a counterfeit, as a Jew in intellectual’s dress. Stripped of his money and his clothes, Kuh was forced to fall back on his non-Enlightened Orthodox family in Breslau. In one of the very few biographical poems written during the resulting madness, Kuh recapitulates his experience at the border:

**The Customs Official in E. and the Traveling Jew**

**official:** Hey you, Jew, you have to pay three dollars.
**jew:** Three dollars? So much money? Why, sir?
**official:** You ask me? Because you’re a Jew.
If you were a Turk, a heathen, an atheist,
We wouldn’t want anything from you.
But as a Jew we must collect from you.

JEW: Here is the money! Does your Christ teach you this? (Kuh, 1:187)

The customs official’s tone—he addresses the Jew in the familiar—is that of the state addressing the Jew. But the official’s harsh tone clearly represents a response to the Jew having identified himself as a Jew. Kuh’s refusal to identify himself resulted in the confiscation of all his money and goods. The poem replays the situation, but rather than undergoing the humiliation of being revealed to be a Jew and being forced to turn to his family for aid, the Jew in Kuh’s poem wins the confrontation. Unlike Martial’s open-ended epigrams, this one concludes with the lesson the writer needs to have his readers draw from his text. True Christians do not—cannot—act like the customs official, like the state. But, of course, they do, and their brutality exceeds that of the situation portrayed by Kuh.

After returning, impoverished, to his family in Breslau, Kuh began to write compulsively, poem after poem. His depression concerning his state, a depression that his contemporaries described with the fashionable eighteenth-century term *melancholia*, turned to mania. Kuh’s madness, which his contemporaries saw as the result of “his thankless treatment by mankind,” turned into a sense of being persecuted by the traditional Orthodox community in Breslau. He saw in his poetry, in his ironic comments, the reason for their hatred of him. Calling on his rights as a citizen of Prussia, he began to attack the Breslau Jewish community for persecuting him.

The attacks on the Breslau Jewish community caused Christian missionaries to take a strong interest in Kuh, who appeared to be a perfect subject for conversion, and they launched an intense attempt to bring him into the Protestant fold. However, Kuh’s belief that the Breslau Jews were persecuting him did not induce him to desire conversion, and he rejected the Protestant advances. His shattering experience at the Saxon border had revealed to him the limitations of the Christian world. He wrote another epigram aimed at the conversion of Elector August II of Saxony to Catholicism to obtain the Kingdom of Poland-Lithuania in 1697. This poem mirrors Henri IV’s 1593 statement that “Paris was worth a mass” when he converted to Catholicism:

*The Polish Jew, Who Became a Christian*

A great noble, who is not threatened by anything
Denies his religion
To aspire to a new title, a new throne:
And I—lacking roof and bread—
You mock with bitter laughter. (Kuh, 1:157)

He withdrew as much as possible from any contact with human beings, becoming phobic when approached by anyone. The form of his phobia was not unexpected. He saw all strangers as religious fanatics out to rob him of his freedom of conscience or, indeed, to murder him. Under close supervision by hired nurses, he saw them as members of this same conspiracy. He began to fixate on the danger that he felt from members of the Prussian garrison in Breslau, seeing in this uniformed authority a force that intended him bodily harm. This force was personified in the Prussian monarch, Frederick the Great, who stated in 1740 concerning Huguenot and Catholic toleration, that “in my kingdom everyone can be blest, according to their fashion.” The state was Frederick II, and Frederick II was toleration epitomized—except, of course, when Johann Georg Sulzer wanted to have Mendelssohn join the philosophical department at the Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1771. That effort took equality too far.

The notion of physical movement as an index for social movement is revolutionary within the German Enlightenment. Friedrich Schiller’s 1782 drama, The Robbers, certainly presents the conflict between the Moor brothers, the good economic revolutionary and the conservative advocate of the status quo, around Karl Moor’s new occupation as a robber. He, unlike Lessing’s highwaymen, is a noble thief, as one of his confederates recounts:

**RAZMANN:** The other day we were told at a tavern that a rich count from Ratisbon was about to pass through, who had gained the day in a suit worth a million of money by the craftiness of his lawyer. The captain was just sitting down to a game of backgammon. “How many of us are there?” said he to me, rising in haste. I saw him bite his nether lip, which he never does except when he is very determined. “Not more than five,” I replied. “That’s enough,” he said; threw his score on the table, left the wine he had ordered untouched, and off we went. The whole time he did not utter a syllable, but walked aloof and alone, only asking us from time to time whether we heard anything, and now and then desiring us to lay our ears to the ground. At last the count came in sight, his carriage heavily laden, the lawyer, seated by his side, an outrider in advance, and two horsemen riding behind. Then you should have seen the man. With a pistol in each hand he ran before us to the
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carriage,—and the voice with which he thundered, “Halt!” The coachman, who would not halt, was soon toppled from his box; the count fired out of the carriage and missed—the horseman fled. “Your money, rascal!” cried Moor, with his stentorian voice. The count lay like a bullock under the axe: “And are you the rogue who turns justice into a venal prostitute?” The lawyer shook till his teeth chattered again; and a dagger soon stuck in his body, like a stake in a vineyard. “I have done my part,” cried the captain, turning proudly away; “the plunder is your affair.” And with this he vanished into the forest.51

But for Schiller, the role of the robber is not unblemished. Lessing’s robbers were simply peasants turned villains; Schiller’s seem to be revolutionaries manqué. Yet the social mobility of the newly cosmopolitan Jews makes the calling of the revolutionary suspect. Moritz Spiegelberg, the hidden Jew as bandit, seduces and corrupts. That he is a Jew is clear. Schiller shows Spiegelberg’s duplicity by having Spiegelberg deny his Jewish identity—exactly what the nomadic Jew does. The character refers to himself as having been “miraculously born circumcised” yet advocates circumcision for all others.52 His denial of the religious origin of his circumcision is a comment on the nature of the Jew, seen, at least by Schiller, as mendacious.53 He claims that all of the robbers should become Jews and therefore become truly cosmopolitan:

SPIEGELBERG. (jumping up). Bravo! Bravissimo! you are coming to the right key now. I have something for your ear, Moor, which has long been on my mind, and you are the very man for it—drink, brother, drink! What if we turned Jews and brought the kingdom of Jerusalem again on the tapis? But tell me is it not a clever scheme? We send forth a manifesto to the four quarters of the world, and summon to Palestine all that do not eat Swineflesh. Then I prove by incontestable documents that Herod the Tetrarch was my direct ancestor, and so forth. There will be a victory, my fine fellow, when they return and are restored to their lands, and are able to rebuild Jerusalem. Then make a clean sweep of the Turks out of Asia while the iron is hot, hew cedars in Lebanon, build ships, and then the whole nation shall chaffer with old clothes and old lace throughout the world. Meanwhile—54

Schiller may have been a revolutionary in terms of the rising bourgeoisie, but his engagement with Jewish emancipation was limited, except perhaps on a literary level, as he admired Lessing’s Nathan the Wise as a drama.55 Here the
robber as nomad dominates the portrait of the Jew as mock revolutionary. Lessing’s Jerusalem in *Nathan the Wise*—the space where the Abrahamic religions can resolve conflicts—becomes Spiegelberg’s cosmopolitan Jerusalem.

Later in the nineteenth century, emancipated Jews became obsessed with Schiller’s life and work as the embodiment of revolutionary change; however, his view of the Jews here, at least in Spiegelberg, falls very much within the paradigm of the dangers of Jewish mobility. Karl Moor may be a noble Robin Hood, but Spiegelberg is clearly nomadic only in the most negative sense that he is a man of the world. This prefigures Humboldt’s claim in his comments on the 1808 draft for the inclusion of the Jews in a new state constitution that among the primary qualities that defined Jews were their “nomadic life often subordinate to foreign power,” their “religious practice, which often does not even rest of true belief,” and their “pattern of self-isolation.” These problems were to be ameliorated by their inclusion in the Prussian state not as a religious community but as individuals. Even Spiegelberg had a chance to become a valuable member of the Prussian state if he shed those qualities that had isolated him from the true body politic.

Spiegelberg is not the ideal of that most cosmopolitan of eighteenth-century poems, Schiller’s “On Joy” (“An die Freude”) written in 1785 and published in Schiller’s periodical *Thalia* the next year (and revised again in 1803 in the version best known to readers and listeners). Following Beethoven’s highly abridged setting emphasizing the early stress on universal brotherhood, this text becomes in the twentieth century the anthem for global cosmopolitanism.

Joy, beautiful sparkle of the gods,  
Daughter of Elysium,  
We enter, fire-drunk,  
Heavenly one, your shrine.  
Your magics bind again  
What custom has strictly parted.  
[1785 version: What custom’s sword has parted.]  
All men become brothers  
[1785 version: Beggars become princes’ brothers.]  
Where your tender wing lingers.  

Spiegelberg may have been one of the nomadic beggars who become princes’ brothers in *The Robbers*, but by 1803 he is replaced by the claim that “all men become brothers.” Schiller’s poetic cosmopolitanism was focused on the national and when it spoke of a universal meant only the idea of primus
inter pares. He may have espoused a pantheistic cosmopolitanism, but it had a religious veneer that defined who is among the equals, who gets to travel inside the carriage, who can cross borders.

Schiller’s anxiety about the meaning of cosmopolitanism and the Jews was not limited to his early drama and his rather crudely cosmopolitan Spiegelberg. In 1790, Schiller wrote an essay on the origins and nature of the Jews, “The Legation of Moses.” Martha Helfer has provided a close and detailed reading of this essay, which is important because Schiller placed it as the lead essay in *Thalia*. Schiller picks up two strands from the Enlightened discourses about Judaism: that it is a rational religion (and thus the basis of a rational Christian and Islam) and that it is thus the underlying causal structure for the Enlightenment itself. In spite of such claims, the Jews and the Enlightenment pose major problems for Schiller. The Jews are inherently corrupt as a consequence of their persecution (in Egyptian exile and then, by extension, in Christian Europe), and in contrast to the mid-eighteenth-century arguments of Enlightened thinkers such as Dohm, that corruption is irrevocable. They are “the coarsest, most malicious, most depraved people on earth, made savage by three hundred years of neglect, made despondent and embittered by slavish oppression, debased in their own eyes by an inherited infamy that clung to them, enervated and lamed to all heroic decisions, through such a long-standing dumbness finally case down almost to the level of the animal.” In addition, they are infected by leprosy, which mars their bodies as well as their souls and poses a danger to the people around them.

In Egyptian slavery, these Jews also maintained their essential nature, however. They “lived segregated from the Egyptians, segregated both in their choice of living quarters and in their nomadic status, which made them the abhorrence of the native inhabitants of the country and excluded them from all participation in the civil rights of the Egyptians” (S/H, 40). They become a nation within a nation (Schiller anticipates Fichte’s 1808 “Addresses to the German Nation”), for “such a segregated mass of people at the heart of the realm, made idle by its nomadic lifestyle, who kept themselves very precisely and had no common interest whatsoever with the state, could be dangerous in an enemy attack, and could easily be tempted to avail themselves of the state’s weakness” (S/H, 41). Moses, filled with a “bloody hatred” against the oppressors in Egypt, marks the Jewish soul, which he “carried with him into the Arabian desert. His mind was full of ideas and plans, his heart was full of bitterness, and nothing distracted him in this unpopulated desert” (S/H, 50). In the desert, then, the nomadic spirit of the Jews, their self-segregation, and Moses’s anger and bitterness coalesce into the character of modern Jewry.
This theme of the nomadic mobility of the Jews quickly became part of the Enlightenment representation of the Jew. Poet and Merchant (Dichter und Kaufmann) (1839), the second novel by Bertold Auerbach (1812–82), Germany’s first popular Jewish novelist, retells Kuh’s life story. (Auerbach had previously published essays on Kuh’s life and writing in 1836.) Set in the time of Mendelssohn (as indicated in the subtitle to the 1855 revision) among the Jews of Breslau, the novel opens with Jews gathered at an inn, having “wandered there begging from city to city, from village to village,” on foot.\textsuperscript{61} It was rare, Auerbach notes, that such Jews “were able to raise themselves out of this life of a gypsy [Zigeunerleben]” (A, 2). Persecution in the midst of civilized Europe has reduced them to the nomadic state of their ancestors in the “Arabian desert” (A, 3). Yet on the Sabbath, they entered into the community of Jews wherever they were. In a bow to Kantian cosmopolitanism, Auerbach writes that these wanderers “were called by the name ‘Guests’ which quickly took on a pejorative meaning” (A, 2). For Auerbach (A, 38) the Jews are the barometers of humanity—their treatment enables one to judge the nature of the state—friendship, toleration, and emancipation. Into this world comes Kuh, whose life as an artist is part of his family’s claim on bourgeois rather than nomadic identity, but his experiences in Enlightened Europe force him to return to Breslau in tatters. The notion of the wandering Jew discomfits Auerbach, for Jewish cosmopolitanism represents the absence of a grounded Judaism, a Judaism as a confession rather than as a ethnic or tribal identity. Wandering, not traveling by coach as a full member of society, remains anathema to Auerbach. As late as 1872, he despaired at the thought that large numbers of Romanian Jews would emigrate to America: “This very thought of a mass emigration evokes something gypsy-like among the Jews. . . . We are rooted where our parents and ancestors lie in their graves.”\textsuperscript{62} In this view, Jews were neither nomads nor cosmopolitans but members of a national cultural community.

Auerbach quotes from Kuh’s poetry throughout the novel, well before the character meets Lessing, who sees in Kuh the new Jewish poet. Kuh has exemplary adventures with Enlighteners of all strands—Lavater and Mendelssohn as well as the Jewish physician-playwright Elcan Isaac Wolf and the Jewish Kantian Salomon Maimon—as Auerbach places his character in the context of this new, rooted, German Jewry. Another wanderer, Venetian adventurer Giacomo Casanova, introduces Kuh to the Prussian Court disguised as an Italian count, but the mask is ripped from him and he is revealed as merely Rabbi Ephraim. Stripped of all his possessions, he returns to Breslau, and Auerbach labels him a new Werther, Goethe’s mad lover. Ritchie Robertson has noted that Kuh’s descent into madness may be Auerbach’s attempt to judge the im-
possibility of such integration in terms of the Enlightenment. From the standpoint of the early nineteenth century, however, the novel argues that the new cosmopolitan Jew is seen always as the nomadic Jew. *Poet and Merchant* may be a novel of modernization and therefore not of integration, as Jonathan Skolnik argues, but the litmus test for modernization is whether the nomadic can be transformed into the cosmopolitan. Auerbach’s character returns in much the same state as the begging Jews who open the novel, and his decline into madness is the price paid for his cosmopolitanism as poet and traveler. Michael A. Meyer’s claim that the Enlightenment caused Jewish identity to become “segmental and therefore problematic” is at least supported by Auerbach’s reflections in the 1830s.

Some newly emancipated (and culturally active) Jews may have interpreted the new nationalism as incorporating this viewpoint because the older idea of the nation espoused by Herder and others seems to be strangely mired in an agrarian—indeed, prelapsarian—utopia. This older conception is distinct from the rootless nomadic existence represented by the Jews but is also the antithesis of the modern city, which the Jews equally come to signify. The Enlightenment viewed the new eighteenth-century mega-metropolis—London, Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt, Milan—with particular horror. The modern metropolis is the haunt of the Jews in the form of the Rothschilds, the avatars of capitalism, and contemporaries came to see the Rothschilds as both nomads and city dwellers. Thus, the limits of cosmopolitanist benevolence are quickly reached, as when Friedrich von Müller recounted his September 23, 1823, exchange with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe concerning the recent law that permitted marriage between Jews and Germans: Goethe became “violently enraged,” prophesying the “worst and most frightful consequences,” particularly the “undermining of all moral feelings of families that rest in religious feelings.” He sought to prevent such marriages from enabling a Jewess to become *Oberhofmeisterin* in his court. Goethe stated that “those abroad must believe in bribery to understand the passage of this law; who knows whether the all-powerful Rothschild is responsible for it.” In the end, all corruption flows from the cities and has its roots in capital. The implicit cosmopolitan who crosses borders here is the Jew who violates the taboo of sexual contact and social boundaries.

In imagining his ideal society, Goethe reifies the modern city-state in complicated ways, removing from it such things as intermarriage. While Goethe would come to represent the cosmopolitan for nineteenth-century Europe, he is much more focused on the particularist local than on the global. Today, of course, we remember primarily Goethe’s universalism and his claims about
world literature (Weltliteratur). Although Jewish writers later claimed Goethe as their hero, Goethe’s idea of a cosmopolitan art and indeed a world literature made no specific reference to the Jews. In 1801, for example, he wrote,

It is to be hoped that people will soon be convinced that there is no such thing as patriotic art or patriotic science. Both belong, like all good things, to the whole world, and can be fostered only by untrammelled intercourse among all contemporaries, continually bearing in mind what we have inherited from the past.68

In other words, society is defined not by adventurous expansionism but rather by the space of the garden. “Hier oder nirgend ist Amerika!,” Goethe had written in Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship (1795–96): “I will return, and in my own house, my own orchard, in the midst of my own people, I will say: ‘Here or nowhere is America.’”69 The orchard metaphor also appears in Goethe’s reading of the “Decalogue in His Two Important yet Unasked Biblical Questions” (1773), where he calls the Jews a “a wild, unfruitful stock that stood in a circle of wild, unfruitful trees”70 Likewise, in his paean to the emigrants driven from revolutionary France, Hermann und Dorothea (1796–97), he uses similar imagery in his description of the cosmopolitan, Der Weltbürger:

Ne’er would I censure the man whom a restless activity urges,  
Bold and industrious, over all pathways of land and of ocean,  
Ever untiring to roam; who takes delight in the riches,  
Heaping in generous abundance about himself and his children.  
Yet not unprized by me is the quiet citizen also,  
Making the noiseless round of his own inherited acres.71

Such views of the ideal state, with the German rooted, as always, in an agrarian, precapitalist society, dominate the conservative view of the nation. Indeed in Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship, the mysterious Society of the Tower that silently but powerfully shapes Wilhelm’s education comes to replace the romantic world of the blind and mad harper, Augustin, and his daughter, Mignon. The harper, a nomad whom people might even think to be Jewish, is marginalized; the members of the Tower Society give expression to some explicitly antisemitic sentiments and are the new wanderers, investing in America and Russia, never staying in one place.72 Rootedness is the antithesis of those “untiring to roam,” but in Goethe’s sense, the modern Jew, whom he time and again defines as the transgressive wandering merchant, is also not a
real cosmopolitan. He is merely a usurer, unlike the wandering members of the Society of the Tower, who are not motivated economic concerns.

Traveling in a coach certainly seems a natural place for the converted though still very Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, at least when he wrote Germany: A Winter’s Tale (1844) in Paris about returning home to Hamburg in 1843. Heine had positioned himself carefully against the German nationalism of Friedrich “Turnvater” (Father of Gymnastics) Jahn. In 1810, Jahn had declared that “a nation without a state is a dead, floating chimera like the nomadic Gypsies and Jews. A state and Volk together create a Reich, but the power of the Volksthum preserves it.” Nomads cannot have any sense of national identity; they are zombies because “they have died and yet are not dead, they continue in this corpse life like a madman’s horrific double,” damned to eternal wandering. In The Romantic School (1833), Heine bemoans such abandonment of what he considers the German contribution to the Enlightenment, “that universal brotherhood of man, that cosmopolitanism which our greatest thinkers—Lessing, Herder, Schiller, Goethe, Jean Paul—and all German scholars have always revered,” simultaneously evoking the antisemitism of such German nationalists as Jahn and Fichte.

In exile in France since 1839, when his works were banned in the German-speaking states, Heine’s ironic voice in Germany: A Winter’s Tale is that of the German poet returning to the land of his birth to be healed:

The German heart within my breast
Is suddenly ailing;
There’s but one doctor, in the North,
Who’ll cure it without failing.

His cures are famous, his cures are fast,
They are world-wide renowned;
Yet, I confess, I already dread
The mixtures he will compound.

Heine’s disease is the classic illness cured by travel home in the nineteenth century, the disease of Swiss soldiers abroad first described in the late seventeenth century by Johannes Hofer—homesickness. By the time of Heine and the German Romantics, especially Jean Paul in Selina (1819), homesickness has become a metaphor for creativity. Travel away from home causes it; travel home cures it—even travel back to Germany.

If Heine’s identity, to again evoke Meyer, is segmental and therefore prob-
lematic, his voice is neither. He writes in this and other texts of the 1840s as a German-language poet resident in France, a model for the European cosmopolitan since the days of Rousseau’s friend, Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm. Yet the disease from which he suffers is not purely a German one. Heine’s ironic tone speaks elsewhere of a disease carried not by Germans distant from their homes but by cosmopolitan Jews, even in Germany, when they travel. In his 1842 poem on the founding of the Hamburg Jewish hospital, “Das neue israelitische Hospital zu Hamburg,” Heine channeled Schiller’s view of nomadic Jews and disease:

A hospital for the poor and weary Jew,
For sons of man that suffer three-fold ills;
Burdened and band with three infirmities;
With poverty, disease, and Judaism!
The worst of all has ever been the last,
The Jewish sickness of the centuries,
The plague caught in the Nile stream’s slimy vale,
The old unwholesome faith that Egypt knew.\textsuperscript{77}

The anticosmopolitan disease of the German is nostalgia for a specific rooted space; for the Jew, the nomadic wanderer, travel is marked by the disease, religion, brought from the Middle East.

But in 1844, as Heine parodies the nostalgic German longing for his Heimat, he quickly reaches a border, like Kuh, but for Heine it is the Rhine boundary of the new German Customs Union. As early as 1828, Heine had written about the border between France and the German states in Jewish terms: “Paris is the new Jerusalem and the Rhine is the Jordan, that separates the promised land of freedom, from the lands of the Philistines.”\textsuperscript{78} He is stopped and searched at that border between civilization and the Philistines (in the sense that Matthew Arnold later adapts the usage), not as a Jew but as a potential revolutionary:

The Prussian customs searched my trunk,
Looking for hidden treasures.

They sniffed everything, rummaged through
Shirts, pants and handkerchiefs, for hidden
Needle-point lace or for gems,
And for books that were forbidden.
You fools that search inside my trunk!
There’s nothing for you to find:
The contraband that travels with me,
Is hidden in my mind.

Here the travelling cosmopolitan is not humiliated by being revealed as Jew, for his contraband is his poetic and therefore most dangerous gift. He concludes the poem with a restatement of the dangerousness not of the Jewish cosmopolitan but of the cosmopolitan poet’s calling:

Have you ever heard of Dante’s hell,
With its frightful verses and rhyme?
Whoever the poet imprisons there,
No God can ever free on time.

No God, no Saviour can deliver him
From those flames that burn.
Beware! O king and better behave,
For soon may well be your turn!

Heine sarcastically comments that the Customs Union also demands a unity of German spirit and thought, quite different from his own self-conscious sense of a fragmentary German and Jewish and cosmopolitan sensibility. Such is Theodor Adorno’s reading of “Heine’s Wound,” where Heine represents the damaged sensibility of those “today, after the destiny that Heine felt has actually been fulfilled, everyone has at the same time become homeless; everyone is, in their being and language, just as damaged as the outcast was. His word is representative of theirs: there is no other homeland than a world in which nobody else would be cast off, that of a truly liberated humanity.” Yet Heine’s response to his world is hardly the sort of reaction that we see in Kuh or indeed in Auerbach’s retelling of Kuh’s life. Rather, Heine’s response constitutes an acknowledgment that the neutral claims of cosmopolitanism were always rooted in the parallel claims of national identity.

The metaphor of the cosmopolitan poet has him traveling outside on a coach beyond the border through the German states. Despite the dirty, uncomfortable, and unpleasant journey, the traveler is buoyed by the fresh air of the “fatherland”:

The fare from Cologne to Hagen costs
Five Prussian thalers six groschen.
As the coach was full, I had to use
The trailer that was open.

The coach-wheels ploughed in mud,
In a late autumn morning dark and grey;
A sense of well-being pulsed through me,
Despite the bad weather and the way.

It is the air of home again,
That my glowing cheek could feel!
Even the filth on the country-roads
Carried my fatherland’s appeal!

The fatherland is reached through the coach, and the further the poet travels, the less he suffers from homesickness. Riding on the outside of the coach, he appears merely to be a traveler, like all of the others. His Germanness reflects his sense that his national identity is but one more form of camouflage that enables the cosmopolitan to move invisibly across borders. But his goal is Hamburg and his very Jewish mother:

And when I reached my mother’s place,
She trembled with an immense joy;
She clapped her hands and cried:
“My sweet and darling boy!

Thirteen years must have elapsed,
Since I last saw you, my sweet!
Surely, you must be starving,
Just say, what would you like to eat?

I’ve got some fish and some goose,
And lovely oranges after that.”
Then give me some fish and some goose,
And lovely oranges after that.

For Heine, the movement across borders is a question of taste—in every sense of the word, from that of food to that of politics.80

“My dear child! What are your views now?
Is your addiction still strong
For political matters?
To which party do you belong?”

The oranges, dear little mother,
Are good; I swallowed their sweet juice
With true delight. On the other hand,
For their peel, I have no use.

The cure for homesickness is ironic distance from the role of the dutiful son. Heine’s Jewishness, unstated but omnipresent in the poem, makes the metaphor of travel even more ironic. In retrospect, the fact that Heine is confined to his “mattress grave” in his Paris apartment after 1849 makes the link between disease, travel, and identity even more telling.

Heine’s ironic cosmopolitanism rooted in the very fragmented nature of a Jewish identity in the diasporic Enlightenment is very much paralleled by that of Karl Marx in the early 1840s. Heine’s long if not epic poem was published in installments first in Vorwärts!, a radical periodical funded by Franco-Jewish composer Giacomo Meyerbeer to which Marx and many other German radicals in Paris, among them Friedrich Engels and Georg Weerth, contributed. According to Eleanor Courtemanche, Marx was in a dialogue with Heine in 1843–44 regarding the nature of true cosmopolitanism, which she calls “economic cosmopolitanism.” Courtemanche notes that “Marx’s ‘Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law’ argues that Germany must accomplish a difficult backward somersault (“salto mortale”) over the dialectical boundary of the Rhine to transcend the impasses of French politics and British industrialism” (Co 58). For her, “both Heine and Marx transformed their critique of Prussian autocracy into a more generalized cosmopolitan radicalism, though Heine’s aestheticism is sometimes confounding to Marxist critics” (Co 58). In the end, “Marx’s engagement with the German tradition of Nationalökonomie is complex: while he critiques the Prussian nationalist use of free trade theories, the internationalism of his economic vision brings him closer to the British classical tradition of Smith and Ricardo than to German romantic protectionists like Friedrich List” (Co 58).

Courtemanche mentions but does not highlight the fact that for Marx, baptized as a child in Trier, did not see such an economic cosmopolitanism in a neutral manner any more than Heine did. If the word Jew does not appear in Heine’s nostalgic trip back home (even though its echoes are present throughout the text), Marx’s works of the time focus clearly “On the Jewish Question,” written in 1843 and published in 1844 in the forerunner to Vorwärts!, the German-French Yearbooks (Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher).
1843 Marx had moved to Paris, thus associating himself with Heine and the other Jewish liberals who lived there and wrote in German. Contemporaries—both allies such as the coeditor of the *German-French Yearbook*, Arnold Ruge, and ideological opponents such as Eduard Müller-Tellering—saw Marx’s writings as the product of a Jew. Marx was linked in the popular mind with other “Jewish” radical writers such as Moses Hess, who advocated an eclectic anarchosocialism that interested the young Marx. Indeed, Marx evidently used an unpublished essay by Hess in formulating his answer to theologian and historian Bruno Bauer’s 1843 book, *On the Jewish Question*. Bauer had argued that the Jews had to abandon their sectarianism to become truly emancipated in the modern secular state. The strength of the association between Bauer and Hess, between the idea of the Jew and the radical, is evident not only in Hess’s unpublished paper but also in Marx’s essay “On the Jewish Question,” which constitutes his first attempt to deal with materialist categories of history and to counter the idea of the cosmopolitan Jew as a model for the new world citizen.

Hess later explicitly rejected the idea of a Jewish cosmopolitanism in his *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question* (1862). There, he advocates for a Jewish national state using his early engagement with Marx’s concept of the Jew as a psychological category and rejecting an economic cosmopolitanism that is not tied to a Jewish national identity, even to the exclusion of emancipation: “Even the rationalistic Mendelssohn did not know of a cosmopolitan Judaism. It is only in modern times that, for the purposes of obtaining equal rights, some German Jews denied the existence of Jewish nationality. Moreover, they have convinced themselves, contrary to the fact that the further existence of Judaism will not be at all threatened by the elimination of its innermost essence.” While in the 1840s Hess’s views were much less articulated in regard to a Jewish national identity, he and Marx had already clearly rejected the idea of the cosmopolitan Jew.

Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” can be read in this complex matrix of striving to provide an understanding of the Jews and their world within the highly esoteric world of his sojourn in Paris. “On the Jewish Question” rejects the abstractions in which Bauer clothed his argument but accepts much of the basic structure of that argument. Marx agrees with Bauer’s characterization of the nature of the Jew and of the Jews’ lack of a place in the historical process and with his rejection of Jewish particularism. But most important, Marx accepts Bauer’s view of Judaism as a cult of egoism. Marx reflects Ludwig Feuerbach’s heightening of Kant’s refusal to see Judaism as a religion. In 1841, Feuerbach labeled Judaism a gastronomic cult, since Jews perceive the world through their stomachs. Indeed, when Heine evokes...
his mother’s kitchen, he is turning such claims into a claim for a nostalgic Jewish past (and repast). Marx offers his own reading of the nature of the Jew based on Bauer and Feuerbach.

As Jonathan Sperber has noted in his superb biography of Marx, “During the mid-nineteenth-century debate on Jewish emancipation, their theological position was politicized. It was used to condemn Jewish economic practices as self-interested, immoral, and exploitative, and to assert that individuals tied to a self-centered and particularist faith could not act as citizens of a wider polity, along with people not sharing their religion.” Indeed, that had been the theme of Bauer’s essay, which depicted Judaism as “particularist and self-centered.”

For Marx, modernity reflects the “secular cult of the Jew” that articulates their egoism. True emancipation for “our age” would be the “emancipation from haggling and money.” Western society has already become Judaized in that it has accepted the role of money as the basis for social order. Thus, the Jews have emancipated themselves in turning society into a cult of money. “The god of the Jews has been secularized and has become the god of the world. Exchange is the actual god of the Jew. His god is only the illusion of exchange” (M, 68). This illusion is the Jew’s answer to the creativity of the non-Jewish, Western world:

> What lies abstract in the Jewish religion, a contempt for theory, art, history, man as an end in himself, is the actual, conscious standpoint, the virtue of the money man. The species relationship, the relationship of man to woman, etc. becomes an object of commerce! Woman is bartered. (M, 68)

Marx bases his argument on the difference between economic and civil emancipation within the modern (German Christian) state. He concludes by seeing that state not as German Christian but as Jewish. And the Jewishness of that state is manifested in the language (“haggling”), the aesthetics (“contempt for theory, art, history”), and the sexualized nature of the Jew (“Woman is bartered”). Marx sees his own life—his recent marriage to his noble Protestant wife; his writing, especially this essay; and his poetic creations—as the antithesis of this image of the Jew. He sees himself not as a bookkeeper but as a creator of books. And he sees himself as the antithesis of the money Jew: in the “practical Jewish spirit, Judaism or commerce,” the this-worldliness of the Jew is manifest. Marx’s economic determinism begins, then, with the pun inherent in the German use of the concept Jew, a term that by analogy had come to mean commerce in the vilest and basest sense.
For Marx, this is the transformation of the settled world of the European Protestant into the wandering world of the cosmopolitan Jew. If Goethe admonishes his reader that “America must be HERE (In Europe) or nowhere;” Marx sees the New World as a model for mobility and transformation. He quotes Thomas Hamilton’s *Men and Manners in America* (1833) regarding the nature of economics in the new United States:

The devout and politically free inhabitant of New England is a sort of *Laocoön* who makes not the least effort to escape from the snakes that enlace him. *Mammon* is his idol, they adore him not with their lips alone but with all of the strength of their body and soul. In their eyes the world is nothing but a Stock Exchange and they are convinced that here on earth their only vocation is to become richer than other men. The market has conquered all their other thoughts, and their one relaxation consists of bartering objects. When they travel they carry, so to speak, their wares or their display counter about with them on their backs and talk of nothing but interest and profit. If they lost sight for a moment of their own business, this is merely so that they can pry into someone else’s. (M, 66)

The new American has become the wandering Jew, at least as a metaphor. According to Marx,

This is no isolated fact. The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner, not only because he has acquired financial power, but also because, through him and also apart from him, *money* has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of the Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as the Christians have become Jews. (M, 66)

This is the cosmopolitanism of capitalism. It is the world of the *Hoffaktor* now read as the model for all modern states and actors. And on this point, Marx quotes Bruno Bauer, whom he otherwise rebuts:

The Jew, who in Vienna, for example, is only tolerated, determines the fate of the whole Empire by his financial power. The Jew, who may have no rights in the smallest German state, decides the fate of Europe. While corporations and guilds refuse to admit Jews, or have not yet adopted a favorable attitude towards them, the audacity of industry mocks at the obstinacy of the material institutions. (M, 66)
Jewish cosmopolitanism is destructive because it is the spirit of capital. Marx adds a further implication to the idea of Jewishness. “On the Jewish Question” responds to an essay that posits the rhetoric of the Jew as immutable until converted into Christianity; Marx, however, sees all of Christianity as already converted into the basest nature of the Jews. But he also sees Bauer’s argument as reflecting the type of attack lodged against the writings of Jews or those labeled as Jews. The Enlightenment rejection of religion as a litmus test for citizenship or, indeed, for national identity has been reversed:

Man emancipates himself politically from religion by banishing it from the sphere of public law to that of private law. Religion is no longer the spirit of the state, in which man behaves—although in a limited way, in a particular form, and in a particular sphere—as a species-being, in community with other men. Religion has become the spirit of civil society, of the sphere of egoism, of bellum omnium contra omnes. It is no longer the essence of community, but the essence of difference. (M, 54)

Marx adapts Bauer’s rhetoric to criticize that world with which, by implication, Bauer has associated Marx—the world of Jewish cosmopolitanism. For Marx, the Jew is that internal cosmopolitan who turns all into the search for profit.

Over the first half of the nineteenth century, the nomadic state of the Jews, past and present, set them apart from the universalist Enlightenment idea of the cosmopolitan. The rootless state of the nomadic Jews, which is seen as originating in their biblical wanderings through the desert, renders them essentially different from the rooted cosmopolitanism of Christian Enlightenment thought. Thus, like Goethe, Bismarck opposed intermarriage with Jews in the 1847 Landtag debate on civic emancipation although in 1869 he advocated for virtually full emancipation. His reason was clear at both moments. Jews had “no real home, . . . they are generally European, cosmopolitan, nomads. [But] there are good honest people among them.” Most writers see the Jews’ rootless nomadism as the source of their mental and spiritual corruption in modernity or at least as marking their character is ways different that others in the Enlightened world of the nineteenth century.

Jews Writing Their Own Cosmopolitanism

J. G. Herder’s Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784–91) had provided a rather standard Enlightened Protestant theological reading of the
Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) that presented the Jews as a nomadic people. Whether or not this account was ever historically true, the texts assembled into what Christians called the Old Testament are clearly the product of city-states. Whether or not the Jews were just one of “many little wandering hordes” (H, 51), as Herder describes them, the Old Testament, at least in Genesis, represents a nostalgia for a simpler time and space that came to be defined in the Enlightenment as “nomadic.” Herder lists all of the innovations of these nomads, including the invention of “trade by weight and measure”—capitalism (H, 52). Herder sees the Jews as one of the “cultures” of the ancient world, but the Jewish Volksgeist that defined the rise of protocapitalism. Given that Herder probably coined the term nationalism (Nationalismus), Jewish cosmopolitanism came to define its antithesis.

In Herder’s The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry (1782–83), the Jews’ cultural corruption began with their diasporic dispersion. Whereas ancient Hebrew had matched the sublimity of Arabic, rabbinical Hebrew began to distort “the genius of [Hebrew’s] original structure” as “this unfortunate people was dispersed throughout the world” (SHP, 163). In contrast, Herder argues, biblical Jews had in their previous nomadic state in the Holy Land produced an authentic and sublime culture tied to their own land, which they roamed. The pure spirit of biblical poetry reflects the close relationship with nature resulting from this genuine nomadism and even prefigures the modern Enlightenment: “The poetry of the Hebrews belongs under the open sky and, if possible, in the light of the early dawn. . . . Because this poetry was itself the dawn of the enlightenment of the world” (SHP, 172).

In Letters Concerning the Study of Theology (1819), Herder went even further, arguing that the incomplete history of the Jews was the stuff of universal poetry and that it anticipated the future history of humanity at large. The analogy here between Jews and Germans—both of them peoples without a nation-state in the age of nationalism—is implicit. The history of the Jewish teachings, which then found their universal mouthpiece in Christianity, represents “the most encompassing plan for all humanity and certainly that which develops our whole, earthly labyrinth.”

Although the Jews no longer figured in Goethe’s concept of world literature, Jewish writers from the mid-nineteenth century onward increasingly invoke the notion of world literature to argue for the universal nature of Jewish literature. In this viewpoint, a truly cosmopolitan Jewish culture emerged in the diaspora, particularly Islamic Spain, when the Jews encountered European culture. Once estranged from its “original soil” of Asia, Michael Sachs argues, Judaism was forced to adapt to a new course that brought it into contact with
new cultures and forms of knowledge. This tendency had been present even during antiquity, for “Judaism as a divine institution . . . has been an open eye to the world at all times.” Yet this cosmopolitan spirit came to full fruition only in the medieval Spanish diaspora, with its “rich cultural life,” which finally “severed European Jews’ connection with Asia.”

Leopold Zunz’s *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (On History and Literature), also published in 1845, develops a full-fledged argument for Jewish literature as world literature. Rooted in antiquity and at the same time closely aligned with Christianity and the medieval sciences, Jewish literature is both universal and particular: indeed,

it is supplementary to general literature. Its peculiar features, themselves falling under universal laws, are in turn helpful in the interpretation of general characteristics. . . . If the aggregate results of mankind’s intellectual activity can be likened unto a sea, Jewish literature is one of the tributaries that feed it.

The Christian diaspora, however, had caused Jewish culture to remain stagnant and even regress. Unlike Islamic Spain, which was culturally and linguistically connected to the scientifically advanced Islamic world, Christian countries lacked a common lingua franca, and so did the Jews in these countries. Furthermore, Christian cultures of the time were far inferior to the Jews’, for “the literature of each nation hardly yet deserved to be called such, and their lesser developed cultures were no match for their congenital Jewish counterpart.” Medieval Spain, in contrast, enhanced both the particular and the universal nature of Jewish culture. Here, Jews became once again a national entity and had a common language, Arabic, that again mediated between them and the world.

In *Judaism and Its History* (1865), Abraham Geiger similarly stresses the universal potential of ancient Judaism’s ability to “behold the innermost nature of Human Morality,” which he assumed to be universal. Ancient Greece had proved itself “the most talented nation of Antiquity, which was distinguished by noble culture and exercised the most profound influence upon the development of the whole human race” (JH, 23). The Jews, in their encounter with Greek culture and language, had adopted many of its traits without abandoning their religion. By being open to new influences while maintaining their particular practices, the Jews once again emerge as mediators between cultures. In the third volume of this work, Geiger even claims that the cosmopolitan spirit represented the essence of ancient Judaism. In contrast to other ancient peo-
oples, which had seen themselves as “the perfect embodiment of humanity” (JG, 2), Judaism, despite maintaining its ethnic particularity, had continually “striven beyond the nation” (JG, 3) and “toward entire humanity” (JG, 4).

Taking this idea even further, Moritz Steinschneider claims that the cosmopolitan core of Jewish tradition persisted from biblical times through modernity in his 1872 *Ueber die Volksliteratur der Juden* (On Jewish Popular Literature). Like Geiger, Steinschneider argues that the consistent trait of Jewish culture lies in the Jews’ role as mediators and translators of the other cultures with which they come into contact:

The Jews, however, had long since become polyglots even before their Bible was published as a polyglot, that is, in many languages . . . , and since that time Jews never stopped being their own translators and that of other nations.

Once in exile, Steinschneider argues, the Jews compensated for their exclusion and seclusion from and in life through lively literary exchanges, which nourished in them the seed of the cosmopolitanism that the prophet’s universal promise had planted in the Jewish awareness.

This cosmopolitan potential, literary scholar Gustav Karpeles argues in his 1886 *Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur* (History of Jewish Literature), reached fruition in Islamic Spain. Jewish literature had already evinced its universal nature in the ancient homeland, for “the cradle of human culture is also the cradle of Jewish literature.” Through medieval Jewish writers such as Yehuda ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, and Moses Maimonides, Islamic Spain had produced “all greatness and beauty . . . in world poetry” (GJL, 447). This account reflects the special status attributed in the circles of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Studies of Jewry) to medieval Spanish Jewish culture as the locus of Jewish cultural authenticity in the diaspora. Like others writing in this vein, Karpeles sees the great cultural and scientific achievements of the medieval Spanish Jews coming to fruition in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. After centuries of Jewish cultural destitution in the German-speaking lands, he claims, the rise of *Wissenschaft* has led to the cosmopolitan renewal of German-Jewish literature as one stream leading “into the vast sea of world literature” (GJL, 429).

For most nineteenth-century Christian writers, however, ancient Judaism’s nomadism had impeded any significant cultural developments and set
Jews aside from the civilized nations. Literary historian and Orientalist Richard Gosche argued for the essentially antithetical nature of nomadism and genuine literature in his 1870 *Idyll and Village Tales in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*: “Culture and Nomadism must be contrasted against one another. This rupture is most evident in various verses of the *Song of Songs.*”\(^{104}\) Solomon’s songs, however, remained but a brief interlude in the stunted development of a genuine Jewish culture, which failed altogether when ancient Jewry lost the struggle for its homeland.

At the close of the nineteenth century, French philosopher Ernest Renan (1823–92) saw in the Jews the survival of “nomadic instincts” and the “nomadic nomos” in modern times, while René Guenon wrote of the “perverse nomadism of the Jews.”\(^{105}\) In a widely translated 1883 lecture, Renan stressed both the mixed racial nature of the Jews and their important contributions to the progress of humanity at large. Although Renan saw only Hinduism and its progeny, Buddhism, as well as Christianity and Islam as “universal religions” because they could be found across different races, the Jews emerge as a both particularist and universalist force in Renan’s claim that the prophets “made this cult of Yahweh into the universal religion of the civilized world.”\(^{106}\) Subsequently, “the whole world entered in” (JRL, 92). Conceded Renan,

The Israelite race has rendered the world the greatest services. Assimilated to different nations, in harmony with diverse national units, it will continue to do in future what it has done in the past. By its collaboration with the liberal forces of Europe, it will make an eminent contribution to the social progress of humanity. (JRL, 100)

As Renan expanded in his 1887 *History of the People of Israel*, the Jews’ catalytic nature had emerged only in their encounter with other cultures. During antiquity, “the Semitic shepherd” and “nomad Semite” had been among “the first to conceive sentiments of order and the pride which is born of self-respect, . . . contribut[ing] in a certain measure to morality.”\(^{107}\) But they had mostly kept to themselves to maintain their “purity of blood” (HPI, 1: 14). This limited racial predicament had been reflected in their stunted language and cultural imagination. At the same time, the limited imagination of these “Semitic hordes” (HPI, 1: 11) had led them to create the purest religion because they were least inclined toward superstition. This, Renan contended, had been a blessing for humanity at large: “And yet these ancient patriarchs of the Syrian desert were in reality corner-stones for humanity. . . . Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism all proceed from them” (HPI, 1: 51). For Renan, however, ancient
Judaism delivered only the raw ingredients for a universal narrative of humanity, most likely as a consequence of Judaism’s limitations. The great homogenizing force was Rome, an idea that was developed in the cosmopolitanist works of such twentieth-century Jewish writers as Stefan Zweig and Lion Feuchtwanger. Argued Renan,

The world, before it was ready to accept Hellenism and Christianity, had to be prepared and made smooth, so to speak. A great humanizing force had to be created—a force powerful enough to beat down the obstacles which local patriotism offered to the idealistic propaganda of Greece and Judea. Rome fulfilled this extraordinary function. Rome, by prodigies of civic fortune, created the force of the world, and this force in reality served to propagate the work of Greece and the work of Judea, that is to say, civilisation. Force is not a pleasant thing to contemplate, and the recollections of Rome will never have the powerful attraction of the affairs of Greece and of Israel; but Roman history is none the less part and parcel of these histories. (HPI, 1: x)

In his two lectures on *Babel and Bibel* (1902–3), German Orientalist Friedrich Delitzsch further underlined Renan’s argument about ancient Jewry’s lack of cultural imagination. According to Delitzsch, biblical lore itself was devoid of any authenticity. Ancient Israelites had merely borrowed and in so doing corrupted and destroyed the creative imagination originally present in these stories. Merely the YAHVE faith itself was genuinely Israelite in origin, and it displayed the limitations of the Semite’s nomadic mind. Jews and Jewish culture thus emerged as the particularist paradigm and thus implicitly as the antithesis of the cosmopolitan universal:

> Even the Yahwè- faith, by which, as under a banner, Moses bound together in unity the twelve nomad tribes of Israel was, and continues to be, with kinds of human limitations: . . . above all, with Israelite *exclusiveness*. 108

Theology and ideology merge here in the debates in the public sphere (if they were ever separate), and civil society becomes the contested ground for the Jew as imagined nomad. As Jewish writers in the German-speaking world reflected on their rootedness as cosmopolitans, the world of fiction became a thought experiment for conservative German writers, who imagined how this process would play out in their fictive Germany. 109 In Wilhelm Raabe’s antisemitic novel, *The Hunger Pastor* (1864), the arch-Jew Moses Freudenstein
points out that being German is a garment easily discarded, and he transforms himself into an immoral and corrupt Frenchman, Théophile Stein. As Freudenstein becomes a European, in his Jewish identity is equally easily discarded:

I have the right to be a German when I so desire it and the right to give up this honor at any given moment. We Jews are indeed the true cosmopolitans, Weltbürger by the grace of God, or if you will, by God’s ungraciousness. From the creation to the 10th of Ab in 70 AD we have lived in extraordinary circumstances and after the destruction of the Temple this remained for us, if in a somewhat different manner. . . . Since they stopped murdering us as well-poisoners and the murderers of Christian children, we are much better off, than all of you, however you want to call yourselves, you Aryans: Germans, French, English. . . . My friend Harry Heine in Paris remains, in spite of his white catechist’s robe, a true Jew, for whom all the baptismal water, all the French champagne and German Rhine wine could not wash the Semitic blood out of his veins.110

These dismissals of cosmopolitanism mirror the ranting about Jewish exceptionalism in Gustav Freytag’s best-selling Debit and Credit (Soll und Haben) (1855), one of Raabe’s evident models. Freytag’s novel presents the conflict between the rootless and dishonest Jewish father and his son, whose rejection of his parentage and desire for total assimilation leads inevitably to his suicide. As George Mosse has noted, such novels were immensely popular (Freytag’s had more than fifteen different editions within a few years after publication) and populated the libraries of Jewish households throughout Germany.111 Such views were further developed in a series of best-selling antisemitic novels from Adolf Barthels’s The Dithmarchers (1898) to Josefa Berens-Totenohl’s Der Femhof (1934).

For such writers, the nation-state is predicated on citizens who are rooted in place and do not wander the world, and it must defend itself against outsiders who seek to enter. A state that manages this can accomplish great things, as Renan proclaimed in an 1882 lecture, “What Is a Nation?” He defined the nation by the desire of a people to live together, which he summarized with what has become an oft-cited phrase: “having done great things together and wishing to do more.”112 But this idea became a commonplace by the 1920s, echoed by thinkers such as Carl Schmitt in his dichotomy of “friend and foe” in The Concept of the Political (1927). Schmitt argues that the potential for conflict between nation-states defines them. In “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” (1921), another early twentieth-century Jewish thinker stated succinctly,
Every time two families become connected by a marriage, each of them thinks itself superior to or of better birth than the other. Of two neighbouring towns each is the other’s most jealous rival; every little canton looks down upon the others with contempt. Closely related races keep one another at arm’s length; the South German cannot endure the North German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion upon the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese. We are no longer astonished that greater differences should lead to an almost insuperable repugnance, such as the Gallic people feel for the German, the Aryan for the Semite, and the white races for the coloured.

But the symbolic meaning of such contrasts between the rooted and the cosmopolitan defines the identities of the members of each collective. Aryan and Semite (however each is defined) define the other. The rooted versus the cosmopolitan is part of this symbolic language of nomadism and the agrarian world.

Over the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea of exclusivity closely bound to the nomadic came to shape the Jewish interest in cosmopolitanism. The idea declined after 1848, when assimilation became the dominant paradigm, rejecting both the nomadic and the cosmopolitan in favor of the national. In response to this new nationalism at the close of the nineteenth century, Jewish nationalism was recuperated in the form of Zionism and in the extraordinary expansion of antisemites’ charges of permanent Jewish nomadism. Jewish cosmopolitanism became a third force, torn between essential definitions of the Jew as a national citizen (German or Zionist) or a modern nomad. The antisemite defined the Jew as an impossible candidate for true citizenship because of his nomadic nature, proven by his desire to return to the desert in the Zionist project. This is hammered out most clearly not in Imperial Germany but in the complex world of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where modern Zionism is formulated.