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Acknowledgments

This book grew out of my curiosity about a figure of speech. During years of studying and teaching German Jewish culture, I came to wonder why so many scholars characterized German-Jewish relations from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust as an (unhappy) “love affair.” Is it reasonable to compare a complex historical process of social, cultural, and political integration with love, I asked? Does this trope not risk identifying the individual with the group, suggesting that emotions drive history, and downplaying questions of power and inequality? As I came to discover, however, critics draw on a long history of viewing German-Jewish cultural relations through the lens of a love affair. And so my misgivings gave way to appreciation. I wrote this book to illustrate how literary love stories comment on social processes; how the rhetoric of love underscores political demands; how philosophies of love generate new models of pluralist communities.

The book is indebted to a number of scholars who view German Jewish literature and culture as both interesting in its own right and inspiring in contemporary debates about multiculturalism, human rights, and the particular in relation to the universal. Special thanks are owed to William Donahue and Martha Helfer, who established a new forum for the field, the Biennial German Jewish Studies Workshop at Duke University. It was there, as well as at numerous conferences of the German Studies Association and the Association of Jewish Studies, that I regularly met scholars, including Abigail Gillman, Malachi Hacohen, Jeffrey Librett,
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I began this book with a buoyant spirit, as a recently tenured professor enjoying the freedom to pursue the research projects about which she cared most. I put the last touches on it while I was in deeper grief than I could ever imagine. The outpouring of love from the many communities that helped bring the book into existence was likewise crucial in sustaining me and my family through this terrible time. To all the people who brought us meals, took us out for some distraction, went with me on nature walks, or simply listened: I will be forever grateful to you—as I will be to my parents, siblings, and the members of my extended family in Germany, France, Israel, and Australia, who rallied to our support. I would also like to thank my husband, Asher Klatchko, for loving me unfailingly, for cooking delicious meals, for retaining an independent spirit—and for being able to grieve with courage and dignity. Every day I think with love and longing of our older son, Binya; I dedicate this book to his memory. Our younger son, Yona, was born while I was first developing the ideas for this book; we gave him the Hebrew name Yair, without fully knowing then how much he would grow into just that: the light of our life.

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A note on quotations and translations: I quote in English throughout the book. For quotations from literary texts, I often provide the page number for the German original as well. I have used published translations whenever possible. All other translations are mine.
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