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Modernity, Identity, and Beyond: Historiography on the Jews of the Bohemian Lands in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*

Abstract: The author discusses the main developments in the historiography on the Jews of the Bohemian Lands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which has expanded considerably since the 1980s. The historiographical debates have been focused mainly on conceptions of modernization/modernity and identity/loyalty and are characterized by a desire to avoid linear and homogeneous ascriptions. Nevertheless, a number of gaps still exist in the research. So far, the Jewish history of the Bohemian Lands has been focused mainly on its center, Prague, and lacks distinct studies in comparative history, the history of cultural transfer and/or entangled history. These analytical restrictions need to be overcome in order to achieve a more succinct contextualization within modern European Jewish history.

Keywords: historiography, Jews, Bohemian Lands, modernity, identity, center, periphery, Czechoslovakia.

In the atmosphere of Czechoslovak cultural liberalization in 1967, the medievalist František Graus raised one of the key questions of Jewish history: "Were the Jews in the past a nation, a group with a clearly defined economic function, a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* [a community bound together by a common fate], or a religion?" To which he proposed the answer: "They were a little bit of all of these and yet none of the above—they

were a *sui generis* phenomenon that cannot be understood by applying the usual categories."[1] Graus emphasized that writing history within the "narrow borders of 'national history'" as established in the nineteenth century made little sense for history in general and even less so for Jewish history: "Using the traditional schemata of national history is, in this case, utterly useless."[2]

Although Graus and other Jewish intellectuals from the Bohemian Lands questioned an essentialist understanding of "nationhood," the historiography of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands and in the former Czechoslovakia has long been influenced by the paradigm of national history, including the concept of linear modernization. In the old master narrative of the Jewish history of the Bohemian Lands, it seems that Jews underwent manifold but linear transformations. In the course of the Josephine reforms and the Haskalah, they became secularized, emancipated, and urbanized middle-class Jews, who were assimilated and even integrated into German culture by the late eighteenth century or the early nineteenth. Then, by the end of the nineteenth century, they had to decide whether to remain affiliated with German culture or to assimilate with Czech culture as part of the growing Czech and German nationalisms in the Bohemian Lands. In this perspective, the Jews stood apart as a third community somewhere between Czechs and Germans. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Zionism offered a solution to this dilemma.[3] Antisemitism in the Bohemian Lands was seen first and foremost as an outcome of the Czech-German national conflict, and not in the broader context of the rise of modern antisemitism throughout Europe.[4] This traditional view has partly to do with the fact that most of the scholars who dealt with Bohemian/Czech/Czechoslovak Jewish history after 1945 were born in the Bohemian Lands or in Czechoslovakia before the Holocaust and were thus closely attached to the discourses of their adolescent years.

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[1] František Graus, "Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern," *Judaica Bohemiae* 3 (1967), 81.

[2] Ibid., 82.

[3] Concerning the master narrative, see Kateřina Čapková, *Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity and the Jews of Bohemia* (New York, 2012), 241–245, first published in Czech as *Češi, Němci, Židé? Národní identita Židů v Čechách 1918–1938* (Prague–Litomyšl, 2005; 2nd rev. edn., 2013), and Dimitry Shumsky, *Zweisprachigkeit und binationale Idee: Der Prager Zionismus 1900–1930* (Göttingen, 2013; in Hebrew, 2010), 27–73.

[4] Michal Frankl, *"Prag ist nunmehr antisemitisch": Tschechischer Antisemitismus am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2011), originally published in Czech as *Emancipace od Židů: Český antisemitismus na konci 19. století* (Prague, 2007).

Historians like Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein (1910–2002), Wilma A. Iggers (b. 1921), and the authors of the three-volume *The Jews of Czechoslovakia* nevertheless contributed tremendously to the historiography on the Bohemian and Moravian Jews, and already started to rethink modern Bohemian-Jewish and Moravian-Jewish history.[5] They thus prepared the paths for new generations of historians, who first started to publish in the late 1970s and the 1980s.

This caesura is also of importance from the point of view of the general changes that took place in historiography since the 1980s. The use of seemingly monolithic concepts like "modernity," "modernization," "assimilation," and "acculturation" in Jewish history has changed markedly since that time. "The primary focus shifted away from questions of homogenization and of the production of one 'master narrative' and instead turned towards the complexity, the plurality and the ambivalences of the development of a society," as the historians Werner Suppanz and Heidemarie Uhl concisely summarized the transformation of historiography in the last decades of the twentieth century.[6]

Since the 1980s the historiography on Jews in the Bohemian Lands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has experienced a certain upturn in both quantity and quality. Since then, a number of monographs have been published which are characterized by a shift away from a traditional, essentialist understanding of identity to an emphasis on the complexity of Jewish self-understandings and affiliations in the modern age. They are also informed by the insight that modernity and modernization occur at different places and times and take different forms within European Jewish history, and are constituted by the overlap of old and new patterns of structures and social and cultural practices. For this reason, I will in the first part of my article refer to the debate about modernization and

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[5] See Wilma A. Iggers, "The Flexible National Identities of Bohemian Jewry," *East Central Europe* 7 (1980), 1: 39–48; ead., *Women of Prague: Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Oxford, 1995); ead., *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: A Historical Reader* (Detroit, 1992; in German, Munich, 1986); and Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern. Teil 1: Das Zeitalter der Aufklärung 1780–1830* (Tübingen, 1969); ead., "The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands, 1848–1918," in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia: Historical Studies and Surveys*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia–New York, 1968); *The Jews of Czechoslovakia: Historical Studies and Surveys*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia–New York, 1968, 1971, 1984).

[6] Werner Suppanz, Heidemarie Uhl, "Einleitung," in eid. (eds.), *Moderne als Konstruktion II: Debatten, Diskurse, Positionen um 1900* (Vienna, 2006), 12. All quotations from German texts are author's own translation.

the Haskalah, which is one of the two key discussions in the historiography of the Jews of the Bohemian Lands. The historiography, however, has so far not been part of a broader debate on the term "modernity" ("modernization") and the shapes it has taken, as it has, for instance, in the historiography of the Jews of Poland and Russia.[7] In the latter case, the original and highly contested book *The Jewish Century* by Yuri Slezkine raises the question of how to write about Jews in the modern age. According to Slezkine, Jews embody modernity per se: "The Modern Age is the Jewish Age, and the twentieth century, in particular, is the Jewish Century. Modernization is about everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible. . . . Modernization, in other words, is about everyone becoming Jewish."[8]

Despite the relative absence of a methodological and theoretical discussion of Jewish "modernity/ies" in the Bohemian Lands and then in Czechoslovakia, "identity" has become the most influential term in the historiography on Bohemian Jews and reflects the transformation of general historiography on the basis of the cultural turn. I will take a closer look at these discussions of identity within the framework of Bohemian-Moravian/Czechoslovak/Czech Jewish history in the second part of this article. In addition to a critical approach to "identity," "loyalty" is often suggested as a supplemental term for the analysis of conflicting forms of self-understandings. With few exceptions, this discussion of modern Jewish identities has referred mainly to the *fin de siècle* and the interwar period. Nevertheless, it is increasingly extended to Jewish experiences during and after the Holocaust, which is why I will also briefly touch on these works, although they go beyond the main scope of this article. In addition, they contribute to a revision of seemingly fixed caesuras not only in the Jewish history of the Bohemian Lands, which was characterized by a separation of the analysis of society before and after the Holocaust. In this second major discussion within Bohemian-Moravian/Czechoslovak/

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[7] See Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004); Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict* (Oxford, 2005); Moshe Rosman, "Hasidism as a Modern Phenomenon: The Paradox of Modernization without Secularization," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts / Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), 215–244. See also Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York, 1989).

[8] Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton–Oxford, 2004), 1.

Czech Jewish history, the term "modernity" itself does not play a major role, although a modified definition of "identity" does imply a shift from a linear understanding of modernization and a homogeneous notion of modernity to an emphasis on its multiple forms.

Methodological approaches and research gaps on the broad research field of "modernity and identity" will be discussed in the last part of this article. This discussion aims at integrating the history of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands into European Jewish history, which is still often divided between west European and German-Jewish history on the one hand and east European Jewish history on the other, while the history of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands, with its linguistically mixed character, is often either left out or implicitly attached to German or east European Jewish history without further reflection.

The historiographic discussions in all three parts of the article do not aim to provide a complete bibliography on the modern history of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands (mainly) before the Holocaust and on recent discussions of (east) central European Jewish history. They tend instead to focus on works that include important methodological considerations on "modernity" and "identity" and, as in the last chapter of this article, also on "memory."

From Modernization to Multiple Modernities?

One of two important debates in the historiography of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands since the late eighteenth century is about the specific character of the Haskalah and the path to modernization prompted by an interplay of state policy—mainly the Josephine reforms and the obstacles to them—and Jewish reforms in the course of the Haskalah. There is broad agreement that the Haskalah had its specifically regional characteristics. With regard to the Bohemian Lands, historians point out that the Bohemian and Moravian Haskalah (as well as that in Hungary and Vienna) had a moderate program that expressed "esteem for the Hebrew language" and "respect for rabbinic tradition." Michael L. Miller has compellingly argued that the reason for this moderate approach lies not so much in the absence of Hasidism as it did in the "flourishing rabbinic culture" in the transitional period at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Above all, the prosperous *yeshivot* in Moravia played a crucial institutional role where "traditional rabbinic

culture was sufficiently rooted and secure to absorb new ideas without feeling threatened."[9] In her biography of the maskil Peter Beer, Louise Hecht also emphasizes the interplay of tradition and reform. By pointing out the ambiguities in his historiographical and educational work as well as in his writings on religious reform, she challenges the interpretation of Beer as a maskil with a radical program and thus as an exception in the Prague Haskalah.[10] In a similar vein, Iveta Cermanová has convincingly shown how blurry the boundaries were between traditional and modern understandings of Jewish history at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[11]

While the recent discussion about the Haskalah in the Bohemian Lands at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century has brought new and interesting insights into modernization and modernity, and challenging the notion of a radical break in Jewish history, few studies have yet to take a microhistorical view on the manifold transformations, the persistence of premodern patterns and their adaptation to the modern age in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[12] A thought-provoking exception is Martina Niedhammer's book on the *Lebenswelten* of Jewish entrepreneurs and their families in Prague between 1800 and 1867. In her discussion of *shtadlanut*, that is, intercessions of influential members of a Jewish community on behalf of their coreligionists, she traces "transformed" continuities between the premodern and the modern age.[13] Niedhammer's interpretation of *shtadlanut* thus corresponds with Dan Diner's hypothesis that Jews were "distinctive agents of lingering premodern patterns *within*

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[9] Michael L. Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution: The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation* (Stanford, 2011), all quotations, 64 and 65. See also Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley, 2000).

[10] Louise Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Der Pädagoge und Reformer Peter Beer (1758–1838)* (Cologne, 2008).

[11] Iveta Cermanová, "Der jüdische Historismus in Böhmen und Mähren am Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts," in Klaus Hödl (ed.), *Historisches Bewusstsein im jüdischen Kontext: Strategien – Aspekte – Diskurse* (Innsbruck–Vienna, 2004), 45–53.

[12] See Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden*; Věra Leininger, *Auszug aus dem Ghetto: Rechtsstellung und Emanzipationsbemühungen der Juden in Prag in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Singapore, 2006); Iveta Cermanová, Jindřich Marek, *Na rozhraní křesťanského a židovského světa: Příběh hebrejského cenzora a klementinského knihovníka Karla Fischera (1757–1844)* (Prague, 2007).

[13] Martina Niedhammer, *Nur eine "Geld-Emancipation"? Loyalitäten und Lebenswelten des Prager jüdischen Großbürgertums 1800–1867* (Göttingen, 2013), 143–153. For the importance of *shtadlanut* in the process of modernization c.1800, see also François Guesnet, "Die Politik der 'Fürsprache' – Vormoderne jüdische Interessenvertretung," in Dan Diner (ed.), *Synchrone Welten: Zeiträume jüdischer Geschichte* (Göttingen, 2005), esp. 83–90.

modernity" rather than "pioneers of modernity." Diner does not deny that "as individuals the Jews were quite evidently pioneers of modern time." But, he argues, "At the level of collectivity, premodern patterns stubbornly prevailed. The history of Jewish integration into modernity was accompanied by ambiguity and conflict."[14] By contrast, François Guesnet's observation about *shtadlanut* appears to be more reasonable: although these "transformed continuities" played an important role in the transitional period to modern politics, he claims, "the attempts to secure the conditions of Jewish existence on a general legal foundation prevailed as the most significant goal in the creating of Jewish political culture."[15]

The fluid transition between premodern and modern politics can also be observed in the seldom examined political Jewish communities of Moravia which were established after 1850 and remained in existence until 1918/19 (and in a very few cases even until the mid-1920s and early 1930s). As bodies of local self-government they also took decisions on religious matters until the 1880s, and thus bring to mind older forms of Jewish autonomy. While the elected leadership of these townships remained Jewish, the migration of the Jews into the urban centers and the influx of new non-Jewish inhabitants in the last decades of the nineteenth century fundamentally transformed the local societies.[16] According to Hillel J. Kieval, the very existence of the political Jewish communities illustrates that in Moravia "emancipation and Jewish autonomy were not considered irreconcilable conditions."[17] We still know little about the motivation, concepts of identity, and politics of the Jewish officials of these political communities, but there can be no doubt that these communities

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[14] Dan Diner, "Between Empire and Nation State: An Outline for a European Contemporary History of the Jews, 1750–1950," in Omer Bartov, Eric D. Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, 2013), 62.

[15] Guesnet, "Die Politik der 'Fürsprache,'" 90.

[16] On the political Jewish communities in Moravia, see Emil Goldmann, "Die politischen Judengemeinden in Mähren," *Zeitschrift für Volkswirtschaft, Sozialpolitik und Verwaltung* 7 (1898), 557–595; Peter Urbanitsch, "Die politischen Judengemeinden in Mähren nach 1848," in *Moravští Židé v rakousko-uherské monarchii (1780–1918) / Mährische Juden in der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie (1780–1918)* (Brno–Břeclav, 2003), 39–53; Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 331–339; Marsha L. Rozenblit, "Creating Jewish Space: German-Jewish Schools in Moravia," *Austrian History Yearbook* 44 (2013), 108–147; Daniel Baránek, "Die Entstehung der 'emanzipatorischen' israelitischen Kultusgemeinden in Mähren und Schlesien," *Judaica Bohemiae* 48 (2013), 2: 5–38.

[17] Hillel J. Kieval, "Czech Landscape, Habsburg Crown: The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia to 1918," in id., *Languages of Community*, 33.

remained inscribed into the cultural memory of Moravian Jews even after the Holocaust.[18]

While focusing on the early decades of the nineteenth century, Niedhammer, Miller, and Kieval also link the often separated fields between the discussions on the Haskalah on the one hand and modern Jewish identities at the turn of the twentieth century on the other. More light still needs to be shed, however, on the cultural, economic, and social transition of Jewish society in the Bohemian Lands in the long nineteenth century. How did the Jews in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown initiate, experience, and appropriate various projects of modernity? Did they consider themselves to be "modernizers," or were they also aware of the necessity of "transformed" continuities? How did the various projects of modernity influence their Jewish identities?

From the "Jews between the Czechs and the Germans" to Multiple Jewish Identities and Loyalties in a Multiethnic Environment

As reflected in the Habsburg and Czechoslovak censuses since the 1880s, national identity was mainly defined according to the language of everyday use (*Umgangssprache* and *obcovací řeč* until 1918) and mother tongue (*mateřský jazyk* and *Muttersprache* after 1921). Such an understanding of identity was compatible with a traditional understanding of "assimilation" as well.[19] Questions of national affiliation, national identity, and national indifference[20] not only played a key role in debates about the

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[18] Arnold Hindls, "Vzpomínky na Lipník n. Bečvou," *Věstník židovských náboženských obcí v Československu* 38 (1976), 4; id., "Aus meinem Leben," in Albert Lichtblau (ed.), *Als hätten wir dazugehört: Österreichisch-jüdische Lebensgeschichten aus der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 1999), esp. 289; Max Zweig, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Gerlingen, 1987), 11, 16.

[19] On the importance of the census for inscribing the seemingly fixed (national) identities of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands and Czechoslovakia, see Čapková, *Czech, Germans, Jews?*, 41–55; Ines Koeltzsch, *Geteilte Kulturen: Eine Geschichte der tschechisch-jüdisch-deutschen Beziehungen in Prag (1918–1938)* (Munich, 2012), esp. 66–73; and, most recently, Vít Strobach, *Židé: národ, rasa, třída. Sociální hnutí a "židovská otázka" v českých zemích 1861–1921* (Prague, 2015), 115–119; Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging* (Bloomington, 2016), 89–139.

[20] For a reinterpretation of national concepts, see Jeremy King, "The Nationalization of East Central Europe: Ethnicism, Ethnicity, and Beyond," in Maria Bucur, Nancy M. Wingfield (eds.), *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, 2001), 112–152; id., *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton, 2005); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*

increasingly nation-based assumptions of and about society in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, but also became important topics of the historiography on the Jews of the Bohemian Lands.

The research was stimulated mainly by two path-breaking books, one by Gary B. Cohen and the other by Hillel J. Kieval in the 1980s. Despite their contrary perspectives and their distinct focus on the path of German-Jewish and Czech-Jewish integration in the Bohemian Lands, and especially in Prague, in the second half of the nineteenth century, both emphasize the importance of the multiethnic environment and of bi/multilingualism for the everyday life of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands and their conceptions of identity. Whereas Cohen stresses the everyday contacts of the often bilingual Prague Jews with the German- and Czech-speaking environments,[21] Kieval traces the origins of the Jews' bilingualism to the Bohemian countryside and to the huge impact that migration from there to the cities had on the cultural affiliations of the Jews. He observes:

> No simple model of urban adaption or cultural assimilation could predict the direction that Jewish culture, politics, and group identity would take over the next half century. . . . Nevertheless, it is clear that the demographic revolution that was occurring both within and outside of Bohemian Jewry was working to create an unstable situation in which further social, cultural, and political change of considerable magnitude was likely to ensue.[22]

Focusing mainly on the German Jewish intellectuals and their "networks of mutual promotion" in *fin de siècle* Prague, Scott Spector seeks to explain the cultural creativity, especially of Jews who migrated to and/or grew up in the Bohemian capital as the first generation.[23] Spector has advised against a romanticization of these Jewish "cultural mediators" or "middlemen" and especially against the concept of "hybridity" as

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(Cambridge, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, 2008); ead., "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69 (2010), 1: 93–119.

[21] Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861–1914* (Princeton, 1981; 2nd rev. edn., West Lafayette, 2006), and id., "Jews in German Society: Prague, 1860–1914," *Central European History* 10 (1977), 1: 28–54. Inspired by approaches taken in cultural history, Cohen stresses in his recent work the entangled character of cultures in Prague in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Id., "Cultural Crossings in Prague, 1900: Scenes from Late Imperial Austria," *Austrian History Yearbook* 45 (2014), 1–30.

[22] Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870–1918* (New York, 1988), 17.

[23] Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley, 2000).

formulated by Homi Bhaba. According to Spector, "these translations and translators [*sic*] can be understood not as pluralistic attempts to render closed cultural spheres more open to one another, nor as creatively hybridized products of cultural interaction, but as the very tension between identity and otherness itself."[24] Instead of a "third space," they created a subversive non-Jewish literature and a "middle ground" as an alternative "to the ideological complex binding essential peoples to eternal literatures and sovereign territories."[25] Spector's concept of a "middle ground" or a "middle nation" remains somewhat abstract, similar to Bhaba's "third space." He looks at cultural translation primarily as a concept, as an "ideological complex," and not so much as a situational, everyday practice. Spector's work, however, makes an important contribution to the discussion of cultural mediation in a nationalistically charged, multiethnic urban society in central Europe.[26]

Another milestone in the historiography of Jewish identities in the Bohemian Lands is Marsha L. Rozenblit's book about Jews in Habsburg Austria during World War I, published in 2001. Rozenblit suggests a model of a tripartite identity to help explain the various layers of self-identification of Habsburg Austrian Jewry. According to her, the Jews of Cisleithania "were Austrian by political loyalty, German (or Czech, or Polish) by cultural affiliation, and Jewish in an ethnic sense."[27] She focuses primarily on German-speaking Jews and emphasizes the maintenance of strong ethnic boundaries. Although the model of a tripartite identity suggests how to explore the flexibility and simultaneity of various conceptions of identity, in the course of her analysis Rozenblit somehow retreats to a more static view of identity. This leads to some inaccurate assumptions with regard to Czechoslovakia, for example, when she observes that "although Jews increasingly learned Czech, the number of Jews who identified as members of the Czech nation did not grow significantly in the interwar

[24] Scott Spector, "Mittel-Europa? Some Afterthoughts on Prague Jews, 'Hybridity,' and Translation," *Bohemia* 46 (2005), 1: 38.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Concerning this discussion, see Hillel J. Kieval, "Choosing to Bridge: Revisiting the Phenomenon of Cultural Mediation," *Bohemia* 46 (2005), 1: 15–27; Koeltzsch, *Geteilte Kulturen*, 179–212; ead., "Utopia as Everyday Practice: Jewish Intellectuals and Cultural Translation in Prague before and after 1933," in Ferenc Laczó, Joachim von Puttkamer (eds.), *Catastrophe and Utopia: Jewish Intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s* (forthcoming).

[27] Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I* (New York, 2001), 4.

period" or that "most Jews in Bohemia persisted in their German identities, which they understood in cultural terms."[28]

In short, these prominent works partly failed to reformulate the simultaneity of various ties of belonging because they emphasize the prevalence of one conception of identity over another.

The first major attempt at a more detailed empirical analysis of the simultaneity and flexibility of Jewish self-identifications was Kateřina Čapková's groundbreaking book on the national identities of the Jews of the Bohemian Lands in interwar Czechoslovakia. In contrast to the previous research, she does not follow one "main path" emphasizing the strength or the decline of one or another conception of identity in her comparison of German-Jewish, Czech-Jewish, and Zionist conceptions of identity. Rather, Čapková highlights the openness and flexibility of conceptions of national (or ethnic) identity and emphasizes that the decision for one conception or another of national belonging, as well as the shift in different identifications, depended not so much on language and political program as it did on the multiple social ties among Jews and non-Jews. With regard to Bohemia's Jews in interwar Czechoslovakia, Čapková argues:

> On the whole, the question of the national identity of the Jews of Bohemia was unique and complicated mainly because there were only small differences between the possible choices. The Jews of Bohemia were in most cases united by their love for their native land, Bohemia, which stemmed in part from a lack of substantial Jewish immigration. They were also bound by their lukewarm attitude to the Jewish religion and, except for Communists of Jewish origin, by their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state and its leading representatives, Masaryk and Beneš. Because of that shared basis, it was not at all unusual for individual Jews from Bohemia to adopt another national identity without making great changes in their everyday lives; nor was it unusual to be without any clearly defined national identity.[29]

Both in parallel and after Čapková's book, further works were published which criticized the essentialist and ethnocentric understanding of identity. In his book about the Zionist intellectuals of the Bar Kochba association, Dimitry Shumsky stresses the impact that their multilingual and multicultural background had on their conception of Zionism. He states that the "simultaneous confrontation with two non-Jewish cultures that did not allow a monocultural assimilation" made them aware of their

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[28] Ibid., 149–150.
[29] Čapková, *Czechs, Germans, Jews?*, 253.

Jewish particularity and led them to understand the experience of multi-culturalism as a "feature of their Jewishness." Shumsky goes on to suggest naming those Jews who grew up in a Czech environment and were familiar with the Czech and German languages, "Czecho-German" Jews.[30] From my point of view, this attribution contradicts his intention to avoid ethno-centric positions and provokes new fixations with identities, but his book is nevertheless a highly important contribution to the investigation of plu-ralist conceptions of identity in *fin-de-siècle* Prague and Bohemia.

Shumsky's criticism of the older research is shared by Martin Wein, although he contradicts Shumsky's position that bilingualism of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands was exceptional. In contrast, Wein underlines that the Jews were inherent parts of their Christian environment in Bohemia and Moravia, sharing bilingualism. Not without a certain portion of irony, Wein suggests to label the Jews of the Bohemian Lands around 1900 as "Czecho-German Judeo-Christians."[31] Here, as well, the question remains whether such attempts to break down the multiple cultural, national, and religious identities to one conglomerate attribution will not produce new fixations and oversimplifications instead of leading to their dissolution. In his new, partly overlapping books Martin Wein did not really enhance this critical approach to the conceptions of Bohemian, Czech, and Czech-oslovak Jewish identities in the modern age, giving a rather traditional overview on the history of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands and Prague.[32]

In my book *Geteilte Kulturen: Eine Geschichte der tschechisch-jüdisch-deutschen Beziehungen in Prag (1918–1938)*, I prefer the concept of "sit-uational ethnicity," which Till van Rahden borrowed from sociological research on ethnicity and first introduced into modern Jewish history in his *Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860–1925.* This concept stresses the contextual meaning of identities.[33] I trace the self-understandings and senses of the collective

[30] Shumsky, *Zweisprachigkeit*, and id., "Introducing Intellectual and Political History to the History of Everyday Life: Multiethnic Cohabitation and Jewish Experience in Fin-de-Siècle Bohemia," *Bohemia* 46 (2005), 1: 39–67.

[31] Martin J. Wein, "Yehudim Czeho-Germanim vetu lo?," *Zion* 70 (2005), 3: 383–392. English translation, used here, available as "Only Czecho-German Jews?" http://www.mj-wein.net/publications/P-ChristianJews-Eng.pdf [retrieved: 22 July 2016].

[32] Martin Wein, *History of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands* (Leiden–Boston, 2015), and id., *A History of Czechs and Jews: A Slavic Jerusalem* (Milton Park–New York, 2015).

[33] Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Pro-testanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen, 2000), English edition: Till van Rahden, *Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diver-*

belonging of Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of Prague in four different urban macrocontexts—demographical statistics, local politics, the intellectual milieu, and popular culture. Whereas interactions in demographic discourses about the census and in community politics were nationally charged, those in intellectual and popular culture were characterized mainly by the intentional and unintentional transcending of ethno-cultural borders. Nevertheless, in all four contexts there is evidence of a permanent reconstruction and erosion of national ascriptions. Especially the many instances of Jewish intellectuals in Prague who sought to promote Czech and German literature within Czechoslovakia and abroad show the simultaneity and the changes of various concepts of belonging. People like Paul/Pavel Eisner, a Prague-born translator and essayist who converted to Protestantism, as did his colleague and friend Otokar Fischer, who was born in the small Bohemian town of Kolín and became a distinguished professor of German studies, a translator from German into Czech, a poet, playwright, and essayist, and dramatic adviser, and like Oskar Donath, born in a small Moravian town, who became a historian of literature by and about Jews and a teacher working in German and Czech, and promoting Czech-Jewish literature, show that various, sometimes seemingly separate concepts of belonging were not mutually exclusive.[34]

Following the debates in Jewish and general history about hybrid, mingled, and other concepts of identity, Martina Niedhammer, in *Nur eine "Geld-Emancipation"? Loyalitäten und Lebenswelten des Prager jüdischen Großbürgertums 1800–1867*, recently suggested supplementing the term "identity" with the term "loyalty." In her view, "loyalty"—which she understands, like Martin Schulze Wessel, as "shifting ties" (*sich wandelnde An-/Bindungen*) in a vertical as well as a horizontal direction—is more suitable for describing the simultaneity of premodern and modern patterns of identification.[35] Niedhammer shows that the economic success and the

sity and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860–1925 (Madison, 2008); id., "Weder Milieu noch Konfession: Die situative Ethnizität der deutschen Juden im Kaiserreich in vergleichender Perspektive," in Olaf Blaschke, Frank-Michael Kuhlemann (eds.), *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus – Mentalitäten – Krisen* (Gütersloh, 1996), 409–453; Koeltzsch, *Geteilte Kulturen*, 18–19. See also, more recently, Sarah Panter, *Jüdische Erfahrungen und Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 2014), 26–30.

[34] Koeltzsch, *Geteilte Kulturen*, 198–213. On Eisner, see Ines Koeltzsch, Michaela Kuklová, Michael Wögerbauer (eds.), *Übersetzer zwischen den Kulturen: Der Prager Publizist Paul/Pavel Eisner* (Cologne–Vienna, 2011).

[35] Niedhammer, *Nur eine "Geld-Emancipation"?*, 24–25. See also Martin Schulze Wessel, "'Loyalität' als geschichtlicher Grundbegriff und Forschungskonzept: Zur Einleitung," in id.

ennoblement of the Jewish entrepreneurs in the textile industry were not, contrary to what has often been claimed in earlier works, accompanied by a loss of Jewish "identity." Indeed, the *Lebenswelten* of Jewish bourgeois families were characterized by multiple ties to the Jewish and the non-Jewish environment. Niedhammer underlines the fluid character of the religious self-understandings of these families, which oscillated between Reform Judaism and Orthodoxy.

The term "loyalty" is not really new in the discussion of Bohemian/ Czech/Czechoslovak Jewish identities, although it was previously used mostly with regard to the relationships between Jews and the state they were living in (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Habsburg Empire). Already in the 1990s, Éva Kovács suggested the term in her Ph.D. thesis on Jewish identities in the interwar Slovak town of Košice; the Ph.D. was published in Hungarian in 2004, and parts had been published even earlier as articles in German and English.[36] In contrast to the older social historiography on Hungarian Jewry, which used a traditional concept of assimilation, she proposed differentiating between loyalty towards the state (as expressed mainly in the census category of nationality) and concepts of assimilation, dissimilation, local and regional identities, as well as new conceptions of ethnic identity and Jewish nationalism. Kovács points out:

> Whereas in Hungary after the First World War Jews chose assimilation, in Czechoslovakia Zionism, integration into Slovak society, leftist positions, as well as retaining the Hungarian language and culture were possible as well. This multiple perspective led sometimes—*without ambivalence*—to the formation of hybrid concepts of identity (as, for example, Hungarian-speaking Jewish national Social Democrats) or to the emergence of a regional or local identity (represented by a Slovak Hungarian Jew, a Jew of Košice).[37]

(ed.), *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918–1938: Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten* (Munich, 2004), 1–22.

[36] Éva Kovács, "Identität oder Loyalität: Die Juden von Košice (Kaschau, Kassa) von der Ziehung der tschechoslowakisch-ungarischen Grenze bis zum Ersten Wiener Schiedsspruch," in Peter Haslinger (ed.), *Grenze im Kopf: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Grenze in Ostmitteleuropa* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 103–114; ead., "Die Ambivalenz der Assimilation: Postmoderne oder hybride Identitäten des ungarischen Judentums," in Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, Moritz Csáky (eds.), *Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis* (Innsbruck–Vienna, 2003), 197–208; ead., "Electoral Behavior as an Indicator of National Identity at Košice between the Two World Wars," *Regio* 2 (1995), 56–84; ead., *Felemás asszimiláció: A kassai zsidóság a két világháború között (1918–1938)* (Somorja–Dunaszerdahely, 2004).

[37] Kovács, "Die Ambivalenz der Assimilation," 205.

Kovács's interpretation of Jewish loyalties and identities in interwar Košice was partly picked up by Rebekah Klein-Pejšová in her recently published *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia*, which focuses primarily on the loyalty relationship with the state. Based on a broader geographic perspective and on new sources, Klein-Pejšová corroborates Kovács's earlier but less-known research.[38] Current studies on Jewish citizenship and government policy, as well as on total/vertical loyalties in the twentieth century, are of particular relevance because they outline the macrohistorical conditions of Jewish existence in an age of extremes.[39] The prevalent focus on relationships between the state and the Jews, however, tends to lead to a static vertical interpretation of "loyalty" and "identity," as in the work of Klein-Pejšová, who claims: "Loyalty precedes identity in modern Jewish history. Identity arises from the loyalty relationship with the state."[40] By contrast, microhistorical research, like that of Éva Kovács and, more recently, Veronika Szeghy-Gayer or Martina Niedhammer, has an important advantage—namely, it underscores the importance of the "reproduction of the local" or the local *Eigensinn*. As Kovács has pointed out, "multiple perspectives have always existed in particular places where individuals and groups shaped their politics of identity."[41]

The discussion on Jewish identities and loyalties is not, however, restricted only to the interwar period, but was naturally extended to the period of the Holocaust and the postwar period.[42] Taking on

[38] Although Klein-Pejšová cites Kovács's Ph.D. manuscript (but, surprisingly, not the published version from 2004) and especially the interviews conducted by Kovács with survivors in her chapter on contested loyalties, but does not explicitly refer to Kovács in the discussion of loyalty as a point of departure for exploring Jewish identities. Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia* (Bloomington, 2015), 2–3, 90–91.

[39] See Michal Frankl, Miloslav Szabó, *Budování státu bez antisemitismu? Násilí, diskurz loajality a vznik Československa* (Prague, 2015), esp. 104–107.

[40] Apart from Klein-Pejšová, see, for Czechoslovakia, Hillel J. Kieval, "Negotiating Czechoslovakia: The Challenges of Jewish Citizenship in a Multiethnic Nation-State," in Richard J. Cohen, Jonathan Frankel, Stefani Hoffman (eds.), *Insiders and Outsiders: Dilemmas of East European Jewry* (Oxford–Portland, 2010), 103–119.

[41] Kovács, *Die Ambivalenz der Assimilation*, 204. See also the more recent research by Veronika Szeghy-Gayer, "'Vráťme si mesto!' Prejavy nespokojnosti 'mestského občana' v politickom diskurze v Prešove 1918–1938," *Forum Historiae* 9 (2015), 2: 56–68, http://forumhistoriae.sk/documents/10180/1273455/4_szeghy-gayer.pdf [retrieved: 13 July 2016].

[42] Anna Hájková, "To Terezín and Back Again: Czech Jews and Their Bonds of Belonging from Deportations to the Postwar," *Dapim* 28 (2014), 1: 38–55. On Jewish concepts of identity in Theresienstadt and in postwar Czechoslovakia, see also Lisa A. Peschel, "Survivor Testimony on the Cultural Life of the Terezín Ghetto, 1945–47: Finding a Place in Postwar Czechoslovakia," in Arnold Suppan, Richard Lein (eds.), *East European Identities in the 19th and 20th Century* (Vienna, 2009), 55–74; ead., "Touha po milované vlasti:

deconstructivist conceptions of identity, such as those prominently proposed by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper in their article "Beyond 'Identity,'" Anna Hájková explores the bonds of belonging that were felt by Czech Jews during and after the Holocaust. On the one hand, she claims that clear-cut boundaries existed between Zionists, Jewish Communists, and "Czecho-Jews" (adherents of a Czech-Jewish conception of assimilation) in Terezín (Theresienstadt), but, on the other hand, she highlights that many other inmates "did not belong to one of the three mentioned groups." According to her, these were mainly elderly inmates, "German-speaking Czech (*böhmisch*) Jews," and parents with children. "For this group," Hájková argues, "everyday needs, such as finding food, clothing, holding the family together, were far more pressing than ideological issues."[43] It is hardly surprising when she finally concludes that the Jewish sense of belonging during the war and immediately after was highly situational and arbitrary.

This subtle gap between clearly defined boundaries on the one hand and the statement of situational ethnicity on the other is perhaps characteristic of most of the works on Jewish identities and loyalties considered here. One possible solution to the pitfalls of "identity," "ethnicity," "assimilation," and other related terms, even if dealing with them from a deconstructivist standpoint, lies in the spatial approach to history and to explore the simultaneity and the contradictions of various concepts of identity and loyalty from a microhistorical and spatial perspective. At least Martina Niedhammer's book on Jewish entrepreneurs in Prague in the first half of the nineteenth century, Mirjam Zadoff's book about modern Jewish countercultures in the west Bohemian spa towns, and—with a nod to other historiographies—Anne-Christin Saß's book about east European Jewish migrants in Weimar Berlin, as well as Karen Auerbach's book on Jewish families in postwar Warsaw, convincingly show the analytical value of space as a category for considering processes of self-identification and collective belonging without falling back on static,

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Svědectví o české kultuře v terezínském ghettu a o poválečné reintegraci," *Česká literatura* 58 (2010), 4: 444–463; Alena Heitlinger, *In the Shadows of the Holocaust and Communism: Czech and Slovak Jews since 1945* (New Brunswick, 2006); Kateřina Čapková, "Germans or Jews? German-Speaking Jews in Poland and Czechoslovakia after World War II," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów / Jewish History Quarterly* (2013), 2: 348–362. For a general perspective, see Chad Bryant, "Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939–1946," *Slavic Review* 61 (2002), 4: 683–706.

[43] Hájková, "To Terezín and Back Again," 48. See also Rogers Brubaker, Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 1: 1–47.

homogeneous perspectives.[44] In the general debate about space in Jewish and non-Jewish history, these authors point out that the conceptions of identities, including their paradoxes and overlaps, can be clarified by looking through the lens of real and imagined places. As Zadoff neatly summarizes in her introduction:

> The upshot was that during the summer season, Jews constituted a dominant population group in spas in the western reaches of Bohemia. Their presence left its stamp on the thriving watering places, serving to shape and constitute their nature. But that presence was not conspicuous in official census figures and registers. Rather, as a loose association, their number, the diverse protagonists and their articulation, were constantly changing. Another factor was that this transient community turned out in practice to be largely heterogeneous and disconnected, because spa guests, doctors, and entrepreneurs from all across Europe differed from the local Jewish Communities and from one another, not only by dint of their nationality but also their differing cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. Yet in the easy-going atmosphere of their spa experience, circumscribed and compacted in space and time, they developed a communicative space for observation and encounter. It imbued the spas not only with the image but the reality of being Jewish places, and indeed concrete counter-worlds of Jewish modernity.[45]

Although the spa towns had their specific characteristic as transitional spaces per se, the perspective taken by Zadoff and others can be applied to all urban communities that were marked by processes of moving, staying, leaving, and commuting, and by arbitrary, intentional, elusive and long-lasting encounters. Moreover, as especially Auerbach demonstrates, the explicit self-reflection of a scholar in the research process—something more common to ethnologists than to historians—helps to avoid reproducing seemingly fixed, generally recognized hypotheses and to carve out hidden layers of identities and loyalties.

Gaps and Prospects

Even though the modern Jewish history of the Bohemian Lands is not a major research field in European Jewish history and considering that modern Jewish history lacks an institutional foundation at Czech

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[44] Niedhammer, *Nur eine "Geld-Emancipation"?*; Mirjam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture* (Philadelphia, 2012; originally published in German, in 2007); Anne-Christin Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 2012); Karen Auerbach, *The House at Ujazdowskie 16: Jewish Families in Warsaw after the Holocaust* (Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2013).

[45] Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad*, 6.

universities, the elaboration of the concepts "identity" and "modernity" since the 1980s is impressive.[46] Fifty years after the publication of Graus's article, the attempts to deconstruct national narratives now outweigh works that reproduce the oversimplified views of the "Jews between the Czechs and the Germans" and of the modern age in the long nineteenth century. The attempts to discern the plurality of Jewish identities beyond the binary paradigm of assimilation and acculturation and thus to emphasize the variety of paths to modernity are highly important.

Despite these achievements, the current historiography on the Jews of the Bohemian Lands and Czechoslovakia still lacks distinctly comparative and entangled studies that would enable a more succinct contextualization of the history and memory of the Jews of the Bohemian Lands in the European Jewish history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the situation is beginning to change, historiography is held back by enquiring primarily into histories within a state or within linguistic borders and thus adhering to the general framework of national histories.[47] This narrow perspective is surprising because, as Dan Diner, Shulamit Volkov, and others have emphasized, the history of the Jews, even more than other histories, is characterized by its trans-nationality and trans-territoriality.[48] Although the Bohemian Lands were not a major destination for Jewish immigration from eastern Europe, their territory served as a transitional

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[46] Except for the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Centre for Jewish Studies in Olomouc and the Centre for Jewish Studies in Prague—the latter, however, lacks scholars of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish history—modern Jewish history in the Czech Republic is still run by scholars based at various academic institutions. See the website http://www.jewishhistory.cz/ [retrieved: 16 Feb. 2016], which was started by Kateřina Čapková (Institute for Contemporary History, Prague), Michal Frankl (Jewish Museum in Prague), and Ines Koeltzsch (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences). See also Marie Crhová, "Jewish Studies in the Czech Republic," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 10 (2011), 1: 135–143.

[47] Among the few exceptions in comparative histories are Philipp Lenhard, *Volk oder Religion? Die Entstehung moderner jüdischer Ethnizität in Frankreich und Deutschland 1782–1848* (Göttingen, 2014); Panter, *Jüdische Erfahrungen und Loyalitätskonflikte*; Stephanie Schlesier, *Bürger zweiter Klasse? Juden auf dem Land in Preußen, Lothringen und Luxemburg* (Cologne, 2014), and in transnational and entangled histories, Anna Lipphardt, *Vilne: Die Juden aus Vilnius nach dem Holocaust. Eine transnationale Beziehungsgeschichte* (Paderborn–Vienna, 2010), and Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen*.

[48] Dan Diner, "Geschichte der Juden: Paradigma einer europäischen Historie," in Gerald Stourzh (ed.), *Annäherungen an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna, 2002); Shulamit Volkov, "Jewish History: The Nationalism of Transnationalism," in Gunilla-Friederike Budde, Sebastian Conrad, Olivier Janz (eds.), *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen, 2006), 190–201. See also Trude Maurer, "Plädoyer für eine vergleichende Erforschung der jüdischen Geschichte Deutschlands und Osteuropas," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001), 308–326.

space for various types of mobile actors like migrants heading west or to Vienna, tradesmen and entrepreneurs, spa guests and other tourists, rabbis and cantors from other parts of the Habsburg Empire or other countries. Furthermore, the Bohemian Lands and, later, Czechoslovakia served as a temporary home for Jewish refugees during World War I, in the 1930s, and in the first years after the Holocaust.[49] Native Jewish inhabitants in Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian/Czech Silesia experienced mobility and migration in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century in various ways. Future research needs to take these movements and their impact on the modern experiences of Bohemian, Moravian and Austrian/Czech Silesian Jews into account more seriously.

Besides these methodological shortcomings, the historiography on the Jews of the Bohemian Lands in the modern age suffers from important research gaps regarding space, social actors, and time. Works on the modern history of the Jews of the Bohemian Lands are in general geographically focused on the center, that is, Prague. With few exceptions, we know little about modern Jewish *Lebenswelten* in smaller towns, in the countryside, and in the border regions of the Bohemian Lands and later Czechoslovakia.[50] Although we have a considerable number of regional and local Jewish histories written by scholars and also well-informed amateurs, these studies often lack a clear methodological approach and are not integrated into general historiographical debates.[51] But, then, why is it important to look at the peripheries of the Bohemian Lands? How are they interconnected with the center(s)?

The historiography on modern central-European Jewry has in general been written primarily as a history of urbanization and urbanity. Research has typically focused on the success of Jewish emancipation and integration, that is, on the urban Jewish middle class and Jewish intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the

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[49] Kateřina Čapková, Michal Frankl, *Unsichere Zuflucht: Die Tschechoslowakei und ihre Flüchtlinge aus NS-Deutschland und Österreich 1933–1938* (Vienna–Cologne, 2012), which is translated from *Nejisté útočiště: Československo a uprchlíci před nacismem, 1933–1938* (Prague, 2008), and Michal Frankl, "Exhibiting Refugeedom: Orient in Bohemia? Jewish Refugees during the First World War," *Judaica Bohemiae* 50 (2015), 1: 117–129.

[50] For recent work, see Daniel Baránek, *Židé na Frýdecku a Místecku: Židovské společenství a jeho tvůrci* (Prague, 2015), and the survey provided by Lenka Matušíková, "History of the Jews and Jewish Communities in the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries in Czech Popular Educational and Specialist Literature of the last Decade," *Judaica Bohemiae* 40 (2004), 227–290.

[51] Ibid.

twentieth century. This focus can be traced back to contemporary perceptions of the migration at the end of the nineteenth century. For example, in his famous essay *The Jews as City Dwellers* (1903), the Zionist sociologist Arthur Ruppin described this migration as a target-orientated process, focusing on its final destination: the big city.[52] This corresponds with the general focus of migration studies which tend to be about migrants and their destinations rather than about those who stayed behind.[53]

Interest in the modern history of rural and small town Jewries in central Europe, for example, in Germany, grew after the destruction of Jewish life in rural areas during the Holocaust. The impetus came from the few survivors who wrote down the histories of their families, often describing themselves, "in mourning and with pride," as the "last rural Jews" of a given region. In these autobiographical sketches, Jewish life in the countryside before the Holocaust was often represented in a positive and nostalgic way, as Monika Richarz, a "pioneer" of the social history of rural Jews, has pointed out.[54] Only since the 1970s has the interest of academic scholars increased, first of all amongst German ethnologists interested in the pre-history of the Holocaust and thus focusing mainly on the exclusion of Jews in rural regions. These studies were followed by regional studies by social historians who focused mainly on southern Germany. At the same time, in the 1980s and 1990s, the first modern socio-historical studies on the rural Jewry of Alsace and studies of the newly established communities in small towns after full emancipation in Lower Austria were published (often written by Bohemian and Moravian Jewish migrants).[55] Few microhistorical attempts, however, have been

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[52] See Joachim Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt: Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität 1822–1938* (Göttingen, 2005).

[53] Marita Krauss, "Zurückbleiben: Ein migrationshistorischer Perspektivwechsel," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* [hereafter, *ÖZG*] 19 (2008), 1: 79–91; Annemarie Steidl, "Ein ewiges Hin und Her: Kontinentale, transatlantische und lokale Migrationsrouten in der Spätphase der Habsburgermonarchie," *ÖZG* 19 (2008), 1: 15–42.

[54] Monika Richarz, "Ländliches Judentum als Problem der Forschung," in Monika Richarz, Reinhard Rürup (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben auf dem Lande: Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1997), 1–8, and ead., "Die Entdeckung der Landjuden: Stand und Problem ihrer Erforschung am Beispiel Südwestdeutschlands," in Karl Heinz Burmeister (ed.), *Landjudentum im süddeutschen- und Bodenseeraum* (Dornbirn, 1992). See also Barbara Staudinger, "Juden und Migration im ländlichen Raum vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert: Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung," in Lars Amenda, Ernst Langthaler (eds.), *Kulinarische "Heimat" und "Fremde": Migration und Ernährung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck–Vienna, 2014), 198–202.

[55] See Utz Jeggle, *Judendörfer in Württemberg* (Tübingen, 1969, 2nd edn., 1999); Paula E. Hyman, "The Social Contexts of Assimilation: Village Jews and City Jews in Alsace," in

made to research relations between Jews and non-Jews in rural regions and small towns after 1848.[56]

One encouraging exception is Stefanie Fischer's book about Jewish cattle traders in northwestern Bavaria, which offers new perspectives on the dynamics of Jewish history in the countryside before the Holocaust. Fischer applies concepts that were developed for urban centers, and has transferred these to her analysis of the countryside. She agrees with Till van Rahden's concept of "situational ethnicity," which he developed using the example of the relations between Jews and non-Jews in Breslau (Wrocław). Fischer points out that individuals in the countryside and small-town societies also had to balance "a plurality of particular and situational identities."[57] The experience of inclusion and exclusion in the economic relationships between Jewish cattle traders and peasants depended on the social situation as well. Moreover, Fischer questions the dichotomy of tradition and modernization in her case study. She concludes:

> from the perspective of the cultural historian, Jewish cattle traders are important because they are simultaneously representatives of old structures and of modernity, being for the most part religious Jews in an important and evolving field of business. Their example shows that retaining a Jewish religious way of life was in no way at variance with the emergence of a modern, small or medium-sized entrepreneurial culture.[58]

Fischer's hypothesis that tradition and modernity are not contradictory is an important insight, and should be applied to the history of the Jews of the Bohemian Lands outside Prague. Although it is reasonable to assume that for the most part the rural and small-town societies

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Jonathan Frankel, Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), 110–129; ead., *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1991); Steven M. Lowenstein, "Decline and Survival of Rural Jewish Communities," in Michael Brenner, Derek J. Penslar, *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918–1933* (Bloomington, 1998), 223–242; Christoph Lind, *Kleine jüdische Kolonien: Juden in Niederösterreich 1782–1914* (Vienna, 2013).

[56] See Ulrich Baumann, *Zerstörte Nachbarschaften: Christen und Juden in badischen Landgemeinden 1862–1940* (Hamburg, 2000); Sławomir Tokarski, *Ethnic Conflict and Economic Development: Jews in Galician Agriculture 1868–1914* (Warsaw, 2003); Ursula Mindler, *Grenz-Setzungen im Zusammenleben: Verortungen jüdischer Geschichte in der ungarischen/österreichischen Provinz am Beispiel Oberwart/Felsőőr* (Innsbruck–Vienna, 2011); Schlesier, *Bürger zweiter Klasse?*

[57] Stefanie Fischer, *Ökonomisches Vertrauen und antisemitische Gewalt: Jüdische Viehhändler in Mittelfranken, 1919–1939* (Göttingen, 2014), 293.

[58] Ibid., 10.

in Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian/Czech Silesia had different social fabrics than northwestern Bavaria, new research on the countryside in the Bohemian Lands, where a fifth of the Jewish population lived at the beginning of the twentieth century, would certainly contribute invigorating approaches to the mainly "urban" discussion of Jewish modernity. It would also show that the center and the peripheries were intertwined in manifold ways and that concepts of urbanity and rurality overlapped.

The current research is, furthermore, restricted by its narrow social perspective. Scholars have mostly focused on successful Jewish cultural, political, and economic elites and the Jewish middle class in urban centers, and few have included a gender perspective.[59] This is also partly true of research focusing on Communist and Socialist Jews who, among others, rebelled against their liberal, well-to-do middle-class homes.[60] The Jews of the Bohemian Lands lacked a significant working class, but they did have a wide range of social experiences, including failure. It is reasonable to assume, for example, that the massive migration from the countryside to the towns (large and small) was related to the experience of economic decline, poverty, and lack of prospects in rural society, which was undergoing massive economic, social, and cultural transformations in one of the most urbanized and industrialized regions of central Europe.[61] But the urban "newcomers" did not succeed immediately either, and the process of adaptation to the new environments took a long time and had no linear direction. It was not unusual for migrants to move back and forth between the countryside, small towns, and big cities until they decided to settle down.

Finally, research needs to take into account that the perception of time is also a cultural construct. The complex transformations of the long nineteenth century were reflected in a new perception of time by Jews and non-Jews. "Nostalgia"—aptly defined by Peter Fritzsche "as a vague, collective longing for a bygone time rather than an individual desire to return

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[59] Concerning the importance of gender and family in research on the Jewish history of the Bohemian Lands, see the article by Martina Niedhammer in this issue.

[60] See Daniela Bartáková, "Die jüdische Pionierjugend in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik zwischen Zionismus und Kommunismus," in Christiane Brenner, Karl Braun, Tomáš Kasper (eds.), *Jugend in der Tschechoslowakei: Konzepte und Lebenswelten (1918–1989)* (Göttingen, 2016), 133–152.

[61] For an early discussion of the reasons for the "flight from the countryside," see Theodor Haas, *Die Juden in Mähren: Darstellung der Rechtsgeschichte und Statistik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Brno, 1908), 54–55. Haas mentions also the role of anti-Jewish violence. For more on this, see Michal Frankl, "'Silver!' Anti-Jewish Riots in Bohemia, 1866," *Judaica Bohemiae* 45 (2010), 1: 5–34.

to a particular place"[62]—became a key term in everyday language due to the new experiences of temporal discontinuity and the longing for continuity. The process of emancipation and the rapid urbanization of the Jews thus led to the emergence of a specific modern Jewish cultural memory in central Europe beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, which was also part of the identity projects of Bohemian and Moravian Jewry in the modern age. German- and Czech-language Jewish fiction in particular helped to establish an ambivalent longing for a more authentic Judaism, as it was ascribed to the pre-emancipatory experiences of parents and grandparents mainly in the countryside and in small towns and east of the Bohemian Lands, combined with a love for the Bohemian and Moravian landscape. In other words, not only did Prague and Vienna become vanishing points in the modern topography of the memory of Bohemian and Moravian Jewry, but so too did the numerous small towns and villages. Similar to the *shtetl* in east European Jewish memory culture, the village and the *jüdische Gasse* of small-town Bohemia and Moravia offered a projection screen for ambivalent feelings in the modern age before and after the Holocaust. But, in contrast to research on the cultural memory and the memory politics of the *shtetl*, historical research of Jewish memory practices in the Bohemian Lands and Czechoslovakia is still only at the very beginning. It is centered on the early modern age and the period after the Holocaust, and, in the latter, mainly, if not exclusively, on the Jews in non-Jewish memory culture.[63] Yet memory practices after the Holocaust cannot be understood without considering the emergence of modern Jewish memory culture in the second half of the nineteenth century.[64] A first real step towards a history of Jewish memory culture in the Bohemian Lands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was made by Magda Veselská in her *Archa paměti* [The Ark of Memory]. Although she has written here primarily an institutional history of the Jewish Museum in Prague since the late nineteenth century, Veselská emphasizes the various individual engagements, strategies, and backgrounds of the principal staff members of the Jewish

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[62] Peter Fritzsche, "Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity," *American Historical Review* 106 (2001), 5: 1591.

[63] Rachel L. Greenblatt, *To Tell Their Children: Jewish Communal Memory in Early Modern Prague* (Stanford, 2014), and Tomas Sniegon, *Vanished History: The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture* (New York–Oxford, 2014); Peter Hallama, *Nationale Helden und jüdische Opfer: Tschechische Repräsentationen des Holocaust* (Göttingen, 2015).

[64] Ines Koeltzsch, "Die Anwesenheit des Abwesenden: Nostalgie und das kulturelle Gedächtnis böhmisch-mährischer Landjuden vor und nach der Shoah," *S:I.M.O.N.* 3 (2016), forthcoming.

Museum in Prague in creating a modern Jewish cultural memory. Taking issue with earlier research, she convincingly demonstrates the continuities between the museum before and after 1938/39, despite the shrinking scope of the Jewish staff who, on the eve of the Holocaust, tried to preserve what they could of Jewish heritage from the many Bohemian and Moravian Jewish communities.[65]

When dealing with seemingly fixed concepts such as "identity" and "modernity," we should, to sum up, be aware of their "complexities, ironies and paradoxes," as Michael A. Meyer has pointed out in reaction to the debates on "assimilation" and "acculturation" in modern Jewish history. Till van Rahden, for one, has convincingly applied this approach in his analysis of the conceptions of assimilation among German Jewish scholars before 1933 and after 1945.[66] As recent works on the Jewish history of the Bohemian Lands (and of Poland) have shown, microhistorical approaches with an emphasis on space are particularly well suited to discovering the *Eigensinn* (as Alf Lüdtke has put it) of historical actors and their individual roads to modernity and modern conceptions of belonging.[67] The next step would be to open up the research to further comparative and entangled approaches, focusing not only on the distinctions but also on the common ground of central and east European Jewish experiences in the modern age.

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[65] Magda Veselská, *Archa paměti: Cesta pražského židovského muzea pohnutým 20. stoletím* (Prague, 2012). See also the review by Benjamin Frommer in *Judaica Bohemiae* 48 (2013), 2: 149–152.

[66] Michael A. Meyer, "German Jewry's Path to Normality and Assimilation: Complexities, Ironies, Paradoxes," in Rainer Liedtke, David Rechter (eds.), *Towards Normality? Acculturation and Modern German Jewry* (Tübingen, 2003), 13–25; Till van Rahden, "Verrat, Schicksal oder Chance: Lesarten des Assimilationsbegriffs in der Historiographie zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden," *Historische Anthropologie* 13 (2005), 245–264.

[67] On the term *Eigensinn*, which is still a thought-provoking point of departure in historiography, see Alf Lüdtke, "Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie, historische Anthropologie," in Hans-Jürgen Goertz (ed.), *Geschichte: Ein Grundkurs* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1998), 557–578.