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“לשנה הבאה בירושלים”

**POST-SHOAH REFLECTIONS UPON RELIGION,
*ERETZ, ASHKENAZ, AND GALUT***

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ABSTRACT

The following dissertation is an interdisciplinary study of specific aspects of contemporary Diaspora Jewish thought. Taking as our main object of study autobiographical, essay, and philosophical works of Jewish intellectuals and Shoah survivors, we will discuss the convoluted and ambivalent dynamics of post-Shoah life, with a special emphasis on the works of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer. Drawing from current research on philosophy and anthropology of religion, we will tackle these authors' religious experience, the religious experience of the scholar; that which transcends the observer-observed dialectic and through which ritual is understood as mediation and foundation of a particular aesthetic formation. Drawing from the Jungian model of the psyche, we will furthermore discuss these authors' reorientation of religious aspirations and the use of a conversion rhetoric which constitutes different types of—what we have called—secularized sacredness. We have avoided a reading of these authors which would be confined to the cultural paradigms of their home or host countries. In order to come to a holistic view of these authors' experience, we have consciously proceeded with a "Jewish reading", a reading which aims to understand these authors' intertextual references as possibly belonging to diverse national backgrounds and their experiences not as paradigmatic of their home or host countries' Essences, but rather, paradigmatic of Europe's Other *par excellence*. This consciousness of Otherness is what we have established as these authors' *even pinah*: that which shapes all of their experiences, that which provides a core identity, a shaping prism, a unique *locus* from which to develop a *Weltanschauung*. Through this Jewish reading we will bear in mind, however, these conflicting identities, these ambivalences, the tensions of post-Shoah Jewish life as well as these authors' *Zwischenposition* regarding many Jewish tensions. We will discuss the lack of a strict adherence to essentialist categorizations of Jewishness while keeping in mind an understanding of the Jewish aesthetic formation as a constitutive shaping identity—of its national component—and thus, the rejection of considering Jewish nationalism and Israel—the polity—an ontological mistake. We will further tackle these authors' understanding of Jewish nationalism as a *conatus* towards self-affirmation during the Shoah and in the aftermath of it; establishing Israel as a physical place as well as a metaphysical and psychological one: a "place" which, nonetheless, provides the breeding ground for a life-long *Sehnsucht*.

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*A María
por ser
y ser conmigo*

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INTRODUCTION

Previous to the commencement of our doctoral scholarship, a crucial decision needed to be made: a decision which could have simply been regarded as a matter of topic preference was, nonetheless, nested in a wider reflection upon the epistemology to which we were to adhere in order to continue our academic path. For the last years, the astonishing advances in cognitive science (especially in the area of neuroscience) have been casting plenty of light upon questions which have troubled the thinker's mind for centuries. Given that, during the course of our studies, a special focus was placed upon philosophy and psycholinguistics, we were ready to adhere to this attempt at bridging philosophy and linguistics with analytic psychology, anthropology, and neuroscience. Proceeding with a bigger presence of cognitive science in our research meant, in a way, rejecting much of—what we then considered—excessive metaphysical remnants of continental philosophy. It was an unexpected visit to Auschwitz concentration camp that triggered not necessarily an alteration regarding our position towards the epistemological validity of cognitive science, but rather, a more than unexpected shift of focus. For there are Shoah survivors who question the purpose of opening concentration camps to the public. Some of them consider that the Shoah must only be accessed through the abstract—through the imagination, but *how* can one imagine a person climbing on top of a pile of weaker people—that is, men trampling women and kids' bodies—just to breathe for an extra second before an inexorable death? *How* can one grasp the idea of a man having been reduced to his most primitive state without having seen the fingernail scraps on the walls of a gas chamber?

Much time was spent in looking for answers to the question of 'how Auschwitz?' This took us to a first contact with Saul Friedländer's magnum opus, *Nazi Germany and The Jews* (2008), where Friedländer amalgamates—as no other had previously done—archival data and victims' testimonies, thus constituting one of the best accounts of the years of persecution and extermination of European Jewry; a work which could have only been written after the so-called *Historikerstreit*, which we will further discuss in chapter three. Nonetheless, the 'how' rapidly lost its procedural character: it went beyond the mere chronological or logistical aspects of the annihilation and became a question regarding the *arche* of Auschwitz (understood as a mere synecdoche). The question then turned into 'why Auschwitz?'. This took us from Lévinas' understanding of Nazism as an

awakening of primitive feelings, turning politics into *biopolitics* (1934), to Rosenzweig's idea that all Western thought before Auschwitz (not only German idealism), by its necessary idealist nature, inexorably led to Auschwitz (2002). Was then any idealist attempts to construct the world a justification for any political configuration which would eradicate essential Otherness and every possible contingency? Could that All be, in turn, simply a concept subject to mutation, but ultimately always justifying the annihilation of anything which could not be phagocytized into that same totalizing All? Most importantly, does that quest for finding a totalizing One—an *ultimate meaning*—necessarily lead to evil, and if so, is evil simply banal? as Arendt suggests. Was the necessary consequence of such banal evil, the reduction of life to biopolitics? as Agamben notes¹, the conversion of man to *homo sacer*? *the reduction of βίος to ζωή*?

Once again, we found ourselves colliding head-on with a question we feared from the very beginning: can we grasp the *arche* of Auschwitz if we only try to tackle it through history or philosophy? *Does philosophy suffice*? The questions proceeded as we initially supposed: what if a proper way to understand the Shoah inexorably lead us to the deepest and most hidden corners of the psyche? *What if we need to look for answers beneath thinking itself*? Jordan Peterson, an expert on the psychology of ideological belief, explains the psychological procedure of the one who has already adhered to a totalizing ideology: “The fascist says, ‘I know everything there is to know’—and cannot, therefore, make an error. But error is the mother of all things. The inability to admit to imperfection, therefore, means withdrawal from every informative situation. This means *death of continued adaptation*—and certain future re-emergence of the unknown, in negative guise.” (Peterson 1999, 268, emphasis added) Was then that idealist hubris the cause of sadist cruelty? Was there evil not banal, but banality *evil*? As Peterson suggests:

Fascist cruelty is motivated by the affective consequences of pathologically increased order. When the “water of life” dries up, nothing is left of existence but its inevitable pains and frustrations, compounded by terrible boredom.

¹ “La politicizzazione nella nuda vita è il compito metafisico per eccellenza, in cui si decide dell’umanità del vivente uomo, e, assumendo questo compito, la modernità non fa che dichiarare la propria fedeltà alla struttura essenziale della tradizione metafisica.” (Agamben 1995, 10)

Furthermore, anomaly inevitably accumulates, as order is imposed in an increasingly strict manner. This adds increased apprehension of chaos to pain, frustration and stultification. Individuals “subjected” to a surfeit of such emotions “have every reason” to be vengeful, aggressive and cruel—have placed themselves in a state where the emergence of such motivation is virtually certain. (Peterson 1999, 268)

If fascist/ideological cruelty was then not escapable by anyone, that is, if it is the pathological consequence of being *banal*, of being frustrated, could anyone potentially be a sadist perpetrator? Peterson answers this question as follows: “the Nazi actions—that is, the willful torture of innocents, and enjoyment of such—is well within the normal man’s range of capacities (and does not likely exhaust them). The individual is a terrible force for evil. Recognition of that force—real recognition, the kind that comes as a staggering blow—is a precondition for any profound improvement in character.” (Peterson 1999, 336) The idea that banality is evil (instead of evil banal) and that evil banality is within the psychopathological possibilities of any human being, inexorably lead to even more compelling questions. What triggers such force of evil, that state of frustration? Can we even tackle such behavior outside any *ethos*? Can we discuss the psychology of the ideologized outside the semantics of good and evil, outside a moral paradigm? One thing became clear to us after reading Peterson: *self-awareness evinces a turning point in the self’s psychology*. Bringing that force to consciousness would necessarily mean a *principium individuationis*. Could we then consider collective ideology as a compensatory reaction to an absence there to be *realized*? *Was ideology, then, a mere attempt of the mind-brain at reaching some kind of homeostatic balance?*

It was then when we approached the extremely intricate and terrifying world of Jungian analytic psychology, and we found what has become the cornerstone of our understanding of the human psyche: *the spiritual problem of modern man*. Jung’s early diagnosis of the problems of the modern man already tackled the question of the spiritual sphere, what he called the *Seelenprobleme*, as he notes in *Zivilisation im Übergang*. Per Jung, man’s spiritual problem was indirectly proportional to religious presence in society and directly proportional to the rise of mass society, thus creating man’s *Annullierung* and his need for unconscious compensation: “Der Eindruck des Individuums, schwach,

ja inexistent, zu sein, wurde somit kompensiert durch den Ausbruch bisher unbekannter Machtgelüste. Es war der Aufstand der Entrechteten, die unersättliche Gier der Habenichtse.” (Jung 2011, 250) A key concept then in the understanding of man’s necessary compensation in this state of spiritual crisis is the consciousness of such compensatory tendency of the mind-brain. Unconsciousness of these dynamics of compensation become, per Jung, extremely hazardous, thus constituting the basis of man’s embrace of collective ideology and mass movements:

Das Opfer einer Massenbewegung, ausgelöst durch einen Aufruhr von Kräften, die im Unbewußten schlummerten, bereit, sämtliche moralischen Schranken zu durchbrechen. Diese Kräfte waren, gemäß der Regel, die ich erwähnte, als Kompensation gemeint. Wenn eine solche kompensatorische Regung des Unbewussten in einem Individuum nicht ins Bewußtsein aufgenommen wird, führt dies zu einer Neurose oder gar zu einer Psychose, und das gleiche gilt für ein Kollektiv. (Jung 2011, 247)

Je größer die Menge, desto „nichtswürdiger“ ist der Einzelne. Wenn aber der Einzelne, im überwältigenden Gefühl seiner Winzigkeit und Futilität, den Sinn seines Lebens, der sich ja keineswegs im Begriff der öffentlichen Wohlfahrt und des höheren Lebensstandards erschöpft, verliert, dann befindet er sich schon auf dem Wege zur Staatssklaverei und ist, ohne Wissen und Willen, zu deren Wegbereiter geworden. (Jung 2011, 283)

Jung’s understanding of man’s inherent religious instinct became the basis of our understanding of the human psyche. After a process of secularization prompted by natural sciences, man’s spiritual problem leads to his unconscious attempt at compensating such loss, what Jung directly connects to the embrace of collective ideology. This religious aspiration bespeaks per Jung a more easily analyzable expression of this religiosity. Only through a process of *Selbstverwirklichung*—of *Individuation*—can man reach the necessary position to consciously recognize his psychological tendency towards some higher *auctoritas*. *God might be dead* to modern man, as Nietzsche reminded us, *but never God’s archetype*, an archetype which bespeaks per Jung a human tendency, *a psychic truth*—as we dare to call it; consequently, the modern man, according to Jung, will

recanalize this now drive into another set of totalizing axioms—apparently secular, but, as we like to call it, a set of *secularly sacralized axioms*:

Die Innigkeit der Beziehung zwischen Gott und Seele schließt jede Minderbewertung der Seele von vornherein aus. Es ist vielleicht zuweit gegangen, von einem Verwandtschaftsverhältnis zu sprechen; aber auf alle Fälle muß die Seele eine Beziehungsmöglichkeit, d. h. eine Entsprechung zum Wesen Gottes in sich haben, sonst könnte ein Zusammenhang nie zustande kommen. Diese Entsprechung ist, *psychologisch formuliert, der Archetypus des Gottesbildes.*” (Jung 1944, 23)

We came out of our Jungian psychoanalysis convinced of the crucial role of individuation. Maybe, after all, Jung’s dissection of modern man sufficed to explain the rise of ideology, the pathological and essential(ist?) annihilation of Otherness, and—more generally—modern man’s convoluted dynamics. Jung’s provided tranquility was, nevertheless, the breeding ground of a set of more compelling questions: Does *Selbstverwirklichung* and self-awareness, the necessary trademark of the *real* modern man², suffice then to stop evil? What are we to do with the increasing evidence stemming from neuroscience which challenges the concept of freedom, as we have historically understood it? *Is all truth then “psychic truth”*? What are the limits of self-control? In what terms and to what extent must we then discuss the freedom of the ideologized man? This series of questions which could have, once again, lead us to the realm of cognitive science, found a place in the study of the Shoah, as Jewish neurologist, psychiatrist and Shoah-survivor Viktor Frankl notes in his masterpiece *...trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen*:

Nach diesem Versuch einer psychologischen Darstellung und psychopathologischen Erklärung der typischen Charakterzüge, die ein länger dauernder Aufenthalt im Konzentrationslager dem Menschen aufprägt, müßte

² As Jung notes (and many salottini corroborate), “the mere fact of living in the present does not make a man modern [...] The man whom we can with justice call ‘modern’ is solitary.” (Jung 1933, 197)

man nun den Eindruck gewinnen, daß die menschliche Seele letzten Endes von der Umwelt her zwangsmäßig und eindeutig bestimmt wird. Ist es doch, innerhalb der Psychologie des Konzentrationslagers beispielsweise, eben dieses Lagerleben, das als eigenartige soziale Umwelt das Verhalten des Menschen scheinbar zwangsläufig gestaltet. Man wird daher mit Recht Einwendungen erheben können und fragen: wo bleibt dann die menschliche Freiheit? *Gibt es denn da keine geistige Freiheit des Sichverhaltens, der Einstellung zu den gegebenen Umweltbedingungen? Ist es wirklich so, daß der Mensch nichts weiter sei als ein Produkt vielfacher Bestimmtheiten und Bedingtheiten, seien sie nun biologisch gemeint oder psychologisch oder soziologisch?* Ist der Mensch also wirklich nicht mehr als das zufällige Resultat seiner leiblichen Konstitution, seiner charakterologischen Disposition und seiner gesellschaftlichen Situation? Und, im besonderen: zeigt sich an den seelischen Reaktionen des Menschen auf die besondere, sozial bedingte Umwelt des Lagerlebens tatsächlich, daß er den Einflüssen dieser Daseinsform, denen er gezwungenermaßen unterstellt ist, sich gar nicht entziehen kann? Daß er diesen Einflüssen unterliegen muß? Daß er »unter dem Zwang der Verhältnisse«, der dort im Lager herrschenden Lebensverhältnisse, „nicht anders kann“? (Frankl 2007, 106—107, emphasis added)

Viktor Frankl's questions—our questions—are answered by him through his non-transferable experience at Auschwitz: "*der Mensch [kann] sehr wohl »auch anders«.*" In fact, man's freedom to choose evil or not, even in the worst of scenarios, is one of Frankl's main teachings after Auschwitz. Of course, how could the negation of freedom be reconciled with Frankl's logotherapy? He, in a relatively similar Jungian manner, would find in what he calls "das existentielle Vakuum" the origin of what he called "noögenische Neurosen", neuroses resulting from existential frustration. The essence of Frankl's logotherapy becomes then the turning of the pathological "Wille zur Macht" to an existential "Wille zum Sinn." Still, Frankl's reflections on spiritual freedom did not quench our thirst for answers; for neuroscience still poses numberless questions regarding the conceptualization of freedom as we have historically approached such signifier. Frankl's reading—nevertheless—did propitiate the last of our questions regarding Auschwitz. The realization of our complete inability to encompass the questions we were inexorably leading to and the lurking shadow of a difficult-to-stop fallibilism, propitiated

a much less pretentious curiosity regarding the Shoah which we have finally crystallized in the present dissertation: *how after Auschwitz?*

It was when trying to answer this last question when we encountered Adorno's post-Shoah epistemology and moral philosophy. Adorno—the son of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother—suggests in *Negative Dialektik* that “Hitler hat den Menschen im Stande ihrer Unfreiheit *einen neuen kategorischen Imperativ* aufgezwungen: ihr Denken und Handeln so einzurichten, daß Auschwitz nicht sich wiederhole, nichts Ähnliches geschehe.” (Adorno 1966, 356, emphasis added) Through the idea that philosophers must neither affirm a transcendent sphere beyond the world we know *nor deny it*, Adorno situates his epistemology in a position from which he rejects both logical positivist antimetaphysics *and* traditional metaphysics. At first stance, the difference between Adorno's epistemological position and the Hegelian amalgam of speculative idealism and speculative materialism might not be clear. Adorno proceeds, however, bringing together epistemology and moral: “*Wahrheit*” (perhaps not understood in all its contingency, as Rorty would, later on, suggest by noting *the contingency of language itself*, but rather in its more practical application) can per Adorno no longer be grasped if the suffering which has built history is unheeded, especially a suffering which has become paradigmatic of human suffering, that is, the one related to the Shoah experience: “Das Bedürfnis, Leiden beredt werden zu lassen, ist Bedingung aller Wahrheit.” (Adorno 1966, 27)

Adorno's post-Shoah epistemology and Frankl's emphasis on *Sinn* made us finally put aside, perhaps simply postpone, the more transcendental questions regarding the Shoah and focus, instead, on post-Shoah life and thought. Our final decision to focus on the autobiographical and essay works of Shoah-survivors is then the conclusion of the influence of Rosenzweig, Agamben and Adorno, as well as Jung, Frankl and Peterson, and thus the reason why, in this dissertation, we have simultaneously made use of a set of semantics belonging to both philosophy and different branches of cognitive science. It was then a conscious search for the truth behind Auschwitz that lead us to *the truth behind suffering*. For, although the study of the Shoah is the study of the worst of man, it also reveals, if not his best, at least his most incredible side: man's ability to survive. This is the reason why we, first and foremost, decided not to focus on survivors who eventually committed suicide (or are thought to have done so): Jean Améry, Tadeusz Borowski, Paul Celan, Primo Levi... Some of them, however, will find their way through this dissertation

at certain moments. We, instead, wanted to focus on authors who are living proof of Shoah survival as well as living proof of the complex consequences of such survival.

For a brief period of time, we considered the works of Spanish writer Jorge Semprún, but we rapidly realized that the Otherness projected by political prisoners did not lie behind the ultimate Otherness which the German Essence was to eliminate. Understanding Nazi logic, therefore, meant more than understanding its political Other but rather, its *essential Other*. This essential Otherness of the Jew became clear once we encountered the autobiographical works of Jewish survivors. Gravitating towards Jewish authors was then part of the at-the-time logical reflection, for they constituted, in the context of the Shoah, *the Other par excellence*. A basic postulate which, however, did not escape, even then, the realization of a more than unexpected uncanny allure.

After having decided that our object of study was going to be Jewish Shoah survivors, we were to decide the kind of survivor on which we wanted to focus. We consciously chose authors who have become post-Shoah intellectuals, prominent scholars in their respected fields: that is, not only writers in the literary sense of the word but authors who bring from their respected areas of expertise a particular and unique tone to post-Shoah reflections: essay writings in which academic and personal elements are consciously amalgamated. Something became clear to us after having read dozens of autobiographical works and watched dozens of filmed testimonies: *the ambivalences of post-Shoah life*; ambivalences especially noticeable in—although obviously not limited to—Diaspora Germanic Jews. Three ideas then, we thought, needed to be tackled in order to portray the intellectual's post-Shoah life; these ideas, we consider, constitute the cardinal basis of ambivalence for many Jewish intellectuals: religion, Israel, and the Germanness-Jewishness tension. How to relate to religion and religious ritual after the Shoah? How to relate to Zionism, the Jewish nationalist movement, and the *Eretz*—the land, both *the physical and the metaphysical one*? And finally, *how to reconstruct an-already intricate identity after the experience of constituting a rejected and eliminable essential alterity*?

The two main authors we have then decided to discuss in this dissertation are Ruth Klüger (Vienna, 1931) and Saul Friedländer (Prague, 1932), Ashkenazi Jews—Shoah survivors, the product of the ashes of 20th century Europe, pariahs of post-WWII; at the time, refugees without a clear place to call home, nor a clear language to call their own:

Luftmenschen to a certain extent at certain moments in their lives. Survivors who, nevertheless, have become prominent figures in the humanities: Ruth Klüger as a Germanist, Saul Friedländer as a Holocaust historian. The analysis of these authors then challenges traditional cultural paradigms to which we would ascribe other types of authors more clearly connected to a specific cultural setting. For coming to a holistic view of these authors' experiences necessarily means proceeding with, what we consider, a "Jewish reading" of them, a reading which would understand their intertextual references as possibly belonging to diverse national backgrounds and their experience as not paradigmatic of their home countries' Essences, but paradigmatic of Europe's Other *par excellence*. This consciousness of Otherness is what we have established as these authors' *even pinah*. That which shapes all of their experiences, that which provides a core *identitas*, a shaping prism, a unique *locus* from which to develop a *Weltanschauung*.

A Jewish reading also needs to bear in mind these ambivalences, the tensions of post-Shoah Jewish life: the classic Jewish tension between tradition and modernity, between the oriental and the occidental character of Ashkenazi Jewishness, as well as the identity negotiation which befalls in a post-Shoah context when tackling European history and the European canon after having experienced the essential exclusion from it. We have chosen Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer for their particular *Zwischenposition* in the context of their *peripheral Germanness*—for being Austrian and Czech-born respectively—in addition to their *Zwischenposition* regarding many Jewish tensions: for their lack of a strict adherence to essentialist categorizations of Jewishness, as well as their acceptance of Jewishness as a constitutive shaping identity—of its national component—and thus, the rejection of considering Jewish nationalism and Israel—the polity—an ontological mistake.

Ruth Klüger's autobiographical works have been the object of academic discussions for many years now. When we first encountered *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, we were especially drawn to Klüger's treatment of the religious ritual; a subject which, for reasons we will explain in chapter one, does not attract much attention in academic circles. For even as a self-declared agnostic, Klüger's understanding of certain religious rituals evinces a *sui generis* way of relating to religious phenomena—the way of the scholar; a way which nonetheless made us question the premise that belief precedes practice. An idea which parallels current academic approaches to religious phenomena

outside the realm of theology. The thrilling discussion which takes place nowadays in fields like philosophy of religion, religious ethnology and anthropology we found especially salient. Still, we consider that a closer collaboration between philosophy, anthropology, and neuroscience would shed extra light upon the study of religious phenomena. Nonetheless, the current academic discussion in regard to a “culturalist” approach to religion is, in itself, rich as it contributes significantly to the discussion regarding the articulation and understanding of religion in modern times.

Self-writing becomes the arena to bring together an analytic disposition towards religion and a subjective religious experience in a way that no academic text would facilitate. Klüger and Friedländer’s description of Pesach is paradigmatic of how a modern scholar defines what could be considered a religious experience, analytical—sometimes even deconstructive—but *a particular way to amalgamate the positions of both an observer and a ritual partaker*. Klüger’s semantics parallels a semantics which we—to a certain extent—found in current religious studies scholars. This level of self-awareness in ritual which plays a crucial role in modern man’s identity, finds, in the case of Klüger, a bitter conclusion when such analytic approach to ritual leads to an understanding of ritual as a structure of power relations, an idea obviously influenced by a Foucauldian perspective on human dynamics. In this regard, this aspect regarding the totalizing role of power in religious performance could be challenged. This is also a current topic of discussion, for many religious studies scholars point out the establishment of dominance and honor which befalls in ritual, an observation which tends to lead to the understanding of hierarchies as systems of domination/subjugation, especially when dominance and honor become that interconnected³. The idea that hierarchy is necessarily a system of domination is one of the ideas which Klüger follows in her hermeneutical approach to ritual; an idea, articulated through a feminist prism, which prevents Klüger from a religious experience which she however searches and consequently recanalizes through other media, as we will discuss. This was just the first of a series of ambivalences

³ The lines between dominance, power, and honor are a current subject of debate between psychologists and neuroscientists like Jordan Peterson, Scott Barry Kaufman, Robert Sapolsky or Dean Burnett to name the most recent contributors to the discussion; for his discussion must be understood as nested in a wider and more structural discussion regarding the nature of human hierarchies, and the idea of alpha masculinity and its opponents.

we found in Klüger's autobiographical and essay works. Some of these ambivalences are regarded by Klüger as such in her writings; some others, however, we have—most recklessly perhaps—pointed out along this dissertation.

Our interest in Klüger's portrayal of religious rituals and her understanding of them as the arena for power negotiation constituted at the time the first topic we aimed to tackle in this dissertation. Bringing together our Jungian understanding of man, this culturalist approach to religion to which we adhere, and Klüger's analytic tone can result in what philosophers like Susan Neiman call a neo-Kantian take on religion. In the context of our understanding of ritual performance, we reject strict Kantian aesthetics. Nonetheless, such neo-Kantian position which would make use of religion for its rituality, mindfulness, and the ethical matrix it provides, bespeaks one way of adherence to religious observance. Within our understanding of religion, as portrayed in chapter one, we will provide an approach to religion which, we find, parallels Klüger and Friedländer's approach to religious phenomena. Such an approach to religion, however, does not define a way of religious *adherence*, but a way of religious *experience*. Indeed, such an approach can lead to a neo-Kantian way of adherence to religion. We, nonetheless, do not aim to come to a new heuristic term to reference the religious experience of the self-conscious ritual partaker, but we do aim at reconsidering what constitutes a religious experience, given the importance that is given in self-writing by authors who declare themselves agnostics. A process of *Individuation*, as Jung calls it, does not need to lead to a rejection of the “irrationality” present in religious rituals. It is perhaps at this meeting point where a neo-Kantian understanding of religion might find a comfortable place in the discussion to which we have wanted to contribute.

Ambivalences, as we said, are present in many parts of Klüger's autobiographical works. The consideration of these ambivalences has shaped the final outcome of this dissertation. Religion constituted the first topic we wanted to tackle; Israel was understood as the logical second point in the discussion of post-Shoah ambivalences. Klüger's relationship with Zionism and Israel does not follow that of many left-wing intellectuals in American academia. A close reading of Klüger and many other authors, however, facilitated the location of the ambivalence regarding Israel, for such ambivalence was not to be found in the political arena per se: no real criticism against certain Israeli policies or certain Zionist logic is to be found in Klüger's works. Klüger's

relationship with Zionism and Israel operates at a much deeper level; for Zionism, as we will discuss in chapter two, becomes Klüger's lifeboat during the Shoah: the only political movement through which Klüger was able to develop her Jewishness in a self-affirming way. Israel is hardly ever portrayed in Klüger's autobiographical and essay works as a *locus*. *Israel is a metaphysical and psychological place for Klüger*, a place which has been—consciously or unconsciously—kept at that level. It was only after having established that when we decided to delve further into the historical longing for Zion which constituted the Jewish Diaspora. But, most especially, the longing for Zion which was articulated in early Zionist writers or even secular intellectuals who, some in an attempt to find a solution to the growing anti-Semitism, others in an attempt to find roots, discovered in Zionism a way to revisit a very well-known longing for Zion. Questions regarding Zionism will then be discussed in chapters two and three, given that it signals the crucial point in Klüger's Jewish self-understanding: the development of an *in Abwehr* Jewishness, characteristic of many post-Shoah Jewish survivors. Chapter two and three are highly interconnected: one could not be understood one without the other. Understanding the portrayal of Zionist ideas in Klüger's writing became then understanding the nostalgia towards *Eretz Yisrael*, the experience of anti-Semitism and the self-deprecation/self-affirmation tension, the consciousness of Otherness, the interiorization of a feeling of exogenism, and the German-Jewish question among other things. All these topics we have tried to tackle to the best of our ability. We have tried to draw the general picture, which we believe could serve us as a reference to understand many Jewish writers and intellectuals of the period from the *fin de siècle* until 1967, or even until this day, in some cases.

After having clarified the three necessarily-interconnected topics we were to discuss in relation with Ruth Klüger, we wanted to find a complementary writer to illustrate all these questions. We searched for similar profiles: Germanic Jews, Shoah-survivors, writers or intellectuals; many were considered: Jurek Becker, Nelly Sachs, Edgar Hilsenrath, Fred Wander, Emil Fackenheim... Most of them pose questions which, still today, we find need to be discussed more deeply. A study of Hilsenrath's autobiographical fiction, for example, would need to tackle the convoluted and fugitive manners in which self-hatred is articulated after the Shoah. Also, Hilsenrath's return to Germany after having lived in Israel and the United States poses several questions regarding post-Shoah Jewish identity and highly contrasts with Klüger and Friedländer's

experiences in Germany after the Shoah. It was, nevertheless, the character of Emil Fackenheim (1916-2003) towards which we especially gravitated.

Fackenheim began his rabbinic studies in Berlin, but he was briefly imprisoned at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He would eventually be able to flee Germany and migrate first to the United Kingdom and then to Canada. Fackenheim, a Shoah-survivor, represented many of the ambivalences we saw in Ruth Klüger. This can be especially seen in the context of his philosophy and his integration of existence, essence, and transcendence. Nonetheless, it is also the mixed nature of his autobiographical work, *An Epitaph for German Judaism: From Halle to Jerusalem* (2007), that attracted our attention; a piece of work which not only portrays a personal introspective journey but also numberless intellectual reflections drawing from theology and philosophy, leading to what he calls a “theo-political” work. Fackenheim’s turning point in his intellectual life befalls after the Six Day War and it leads to him making Aliyah in the early 80s as well as embracing more conservative political positions. Fackenheim’s autobiographical work, although representative of many of the *Zwischenpositionen* for which we were searching became however rapidly eclipsed by Saul Friedländer’s autobiographical works.

As was previously mentioned, Saul Friedländer constitutes one of our cardinal references in the study of the history of the Shoah: he provides many crucial answers regarding the procedural aspect of the persecution and annihilation of European Jewry. His magnum opus *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination* won the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction in 2008, making Friedländer one of the most recognized Shoah historians of our time. Friedländer’s profile, as portrayed in his at the time only autobiographical project, *Quand vient le souvenir* (published in French in 1978), was regarded by us as one of the most *sui generis* cases we had until then encountered: born in German-speaking Prague, Friedländer survived the Shoah in different Catholic institutions where he converted to Catholicism and even decided to become a priest. At the same time, his parents—in an attempt to cross to Switzerland and escape the Nazis—were caught and taken to Auschwitz, where they were gassed, leaving their young son orphaned. Friedländer’s story, the story of a Jewish-Christian orphan who since the earliest stages of his life was not sure of his name (Pavel, Pavlíček, Paul, Paul-Henri-Marie...), nor of his religion or his cultural background, became one of the most

intriguing accounts we had until then read. Friedländer's sudden embrace of his almost forgotten Jewishness when being told the horrors of the Shoah is rhetorically one of the most compelling conversions we have found in the history of self-writing. A teenage Friedländer, without anyone to call family, nor anything to call his, embarks on an Irgun ship to illegally migrate to Israel in 1948, trying to find an identity which he lacked, trying to find a *communitas* which he could embrace, not as the essential Other, but as committed member of it: "J'étais seul... Partir en « Eretz », c'était joindre mon destin personnel à un sort commun, *c'était aussi un rêve de communion et de communauté, c'était dissoudre mes inquiétudes particulières dans l'élan d'un groupe.*" (Friedländer 1978, 178, emphasis added)

Friedländer's self-writing eclipsed many of other accounts we had until the time read. Still, we were not sure of how much of a complement to Ruth Klüger Saul Friedländer would be, for Friedländer's life has been so unusual that we feared not having enough material to tackle the three questions we aimed to discuss: religion, Israel, and post-Shoah identity. In the midst of our study, Friedländer published his last autobiographical work *Where Memory Leads* (2016), a highly political account of the second half of his life after Aliyah. The Zionist *pathos*, the conversion rhetoric and the *Wille zum Leben* which permeated *Quand vient le souvenir* meets a bitter tone in Friedländer's second autobiographical project, where he portrays the unmaking of his Zionist self and his return to a state of exile which totalizes his life experience. Friedländer, again in the Diaspora, finds in the identity vacuum which California represents, a place to keep on living, a place which is nevertheless—once again—not his, a place which finally corroborates Friedländer's impossible *Heimat* and impossible home. This bitter turn in Friedländer autobiographical project represents one of the most enthralling accounts of post-Shoah life and we, consequently, decided to include Friedländer as one of the main authors of this dissertation. The study of this second autobiographical work, however, posed several other questions and challenges; for Friedländer, given his particular political views, can potentially serve as a convenient target for critics on both his left and right side. We will tackle Friedländer's political views, but more importantly, we will place them in its literary *Sitz im Leben*, that is, in the context of self-writing. Conversion rhetoric becomes de-conversion rhetoric, the self-affirming actions of the newly converted, become the proactivity of the one who considers civil disobedience. Thus, Zionism, the most important enterprise of Friedländer's life, the

matrix of a set of all-encompassing axioms collapses, bringing Friedländer back to an always feared—but perhaps an always secretly desired—state of constant exile.

In chapter three, in an attempt to lay out the diasporistic tendency we perceive in many of these authors, we will explore the intricate questions related to modern Jewish identity. Identity, again, a highly liquid concept, will be understood by us as we have previously noted, as a shaping prism, as a self-recognized position from which to view the world and tackle its phenomena. Locating these positions—these identities—from which to view the world and from which to approach reality in the context of the Jewish experience will take us to discuss topics which have always troubled the Jewish mind in *Galut*, some which are more specific to the period from the emancipation onwards, and others which are directly connected to post-Shoah life. Some of the ideas we will discuss are very controversial in nature, but we have nevertheless found necessary to face such controversial topics in order to draw the general variables which partake in modern Jewish identity formation. In this chapter, many authors will make their way into our discussion: Moses Mendelsohn, Gershom Scholem, Hannah Arendt, Moritz Goldstein, Isaac Deutscher and Judith Butler. They represent different, sometimes totally antagonistic variants of Jewish self-understanding; different approaches to Jewishness which bespeak divergent ontologies, consequently leading to a plural repertoire of political stances, sometimes not only opposed but even incompatible.

We will furthermore make use of some fictional characters to discuss the most controversial aspects of Jewishness, like self-hatred, or the utopian embodiment of the completely self-affirming *Muskelf Jude*. The Jewish-German symbiosis or, by-some-regarded, *the Jewish-German illusion* will have a central position in the discussion of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer's post-Shoah identity. We will read their academic paths as attempts, in a way, to begin yet another Jewish-German conversation after the Shoah. Using their autobiographical and essay works we will discuss the limits of a post-Shoah Jewish-German dialogue, the limits of revisionism, the connection between historiographical epistemology and survivors' psychology, the light neuroscience casts upon the question of memory consolidation, and the failure at encountering meeting points which both historical revisionism and postmodernist thinking produce. Furthermore, we will discuss, the symbiotic dynamics of Germanness and Jewishness in these authors, the moments which propitiate such theoretical symbiosis or such dialectical

dynamics, as well as the moments where the symbiosis is abruptly disrupted: the moments when Jewishness is, consequently, embraced as a core *identitas*, when an exposition to anti-Semitism triggers the development of Jewish self-affirmation and the rejection—even repulsion—of Germanness.

This dissertation is then the conclusion of a process of interdisciplinary education: an amalgam of literary criticism, philosophy, and cognitive science. It started out as an attempt at understanding the event which has propitiated, during the second half of the 20th century, numerous currents of posttraumatic and postmodernist approaches to philosophy and art. This dissertation was an initial attempt at grasping Auschwitz, the quintessence of something we needed to conceptualize, or rather the failure at something which is still subject to debate. Searching for the truth behind Auschwitz which has troubled countless minds, then became a willingness to understand the truth behind suffering, behind survival, and the complex consequences of it. What initially commenced by being a search for Auschwitz's sadist πηγή and τέλος, became a search for its inevitable human συνέπεια. The scope of this dissertation was then aimed at being larger than just a philological approach to the two writers we chose to discuss. We have wanted to draw general pictures regarding each of the topics we considered crucial in order to provide a matrix in which we could insert many Jewish authors of the 19th and 20th century, a common matrix of meanings and intertextuality. In doing so, we have approached different academic paradigms and semantics without really fully cleaving to one in particular but rather combining all of them in an attempt to reach a more holistic view. This is, furthermore, the reason why the discussion of several other authors will find their way through at some points in this dissertation to illustrate common, antagonistic or complementary perspectives, thus enriching our understanding of the convoluted matters we have decided to tackle. This dissertation is also—ultimately—a goal in itself: it is not a duty; it is much more than a simple tick in a box. This dissertation is—first and foremost—a quest for knowledge

INTRODUZIONE

Prima ancora di iniziare questa nostra ricerca, era necessario effettuare una scelta fondamentale per quanto riguardava la strada da seguire: sebbene potesse essere considerata una mera questione di preferenze, ciò nonostante tale scelta faceva parte di una più ampia riflessione riguardante l'epistemologia cui aderire per continuare il nostro percorso accademico. Negli ultimi anni, gli sbalorditivi progressi compiuti nel campo della scienza cognitiva (specialmente nell'area della neuroscienza) hanno fatto luce su tante questioni che sono state oggetto di riflessione filosofica da secoli. Poiché nel nostro percorso accademico, oltre alla critica letteraria, una particolare attenzione è stata riservata a filosofia e psicolinguistica, eravamo pronti ad aderire al tentativo di collegare la filosofia e la linguistica con la psicologia analitica, l'antropologia e la neuroscienza. Continuare con una maggiore presenza della scienza cognitiva nel nostro percorso accademico significava, fra l'altro, rifiutare molto di quello che consideravamo un eccesso di resti metafisici della filosofia continentale a cui avevamo dedicato un tempo considerevole. È stata un'imprevista visita al campo di sterminio di Auschwitz ciò che ha innescato non tanto una necessaria alterazione della nostra posizione sulla validità epistemologica della scienza cognitiva, quanto piuttosto un inaspettato spostamento di interesse. Ci sono sopravvissuti della Shoah che mettono in discussione la finalità ultima di aprire vecchi campi di concentramento al pubblico. Alcuni sostengono che alla Shoah si debba accedere soltanto attraverso l'astrazione—attraverso l'immaginazione. E però, *come* si può immaginare una persona che scala una montagna di corpi quasi inerti, arrampicandosi su donne e bambini soltanto per respirare un ultimo secondo prima di una morte inesorabile? *Come* si può concepire di ridurre un uomo alla sua condizione più primitiva senza avere visto i graffi sui muri di una camera a gas?

Inizialmente, molto tempo è stato dedicato a cercare risposte alla domanda di 'come Auschwitz?' Questo ci ha portato a un primo contatto con l'opera di Saul Friedländer e specialmente col suo magnum opus, *Nazi Germany and the Jews* (2008), in cui l'autore amalgama, come nessun'altro prima, dati d'archivio con testimonianze di vittime e sopravvissuti, mettendo insieme uno dei migliori racconti degli anni della persecuzione e dello sterminio degli ebrei europei, un lavoro che si sarebbe potuto scrivere solo dopo la cosiddetta *Historikerstreit*, di cui si parlerà nel capitolo tre. Tuttavia, il 'come' ha rapidamente perduto l'iniziale carattere processuale per diventare una

questione relativa all'*arche* di Auschwitz (inseto come una mera sineddoche). La domanda quindi è mutata, trasformata in '*perché* Auschwitz?' Questa nuova formulazione ci ha portato dalla comprensione di Lévinas del nazismo come un mero risvegliarsi di sentimenti primitivi, trasformando la politica in *biopolitica* (1934), all'idea di Rosenzweig secondo cui il pensiero occidentale tutto, prima di Auschwitz (non solo l'idealismo tedesco), per la sua necessaria natura idealista aveva avuto come inesorabile risultato Auschwitz (2002). Voleva dunque dire che un qualche tentativo idealista di costruire il mondo serve da giustificazione di una configurazione politica che pretende di sradicare ogni possibile alterità essenziale e tutta possibilità di contingenza? Potrebbe allora quel *Tutto* essere, a sua volta, soltanto un concetto soggetto a mutazione, ma in definitiva sempre giustificando l'annichilamento di tutto ciò che non può essere fagocitato entro quello stesso *Tutto* centralizzante? E soprattutto, forse che questa ricerca dell'Uno totalizzante—*del significato ultimo*—necessariamente conduce al *male*? E se effettivamente ciò accade, forse che il male è semplicemente *banale*, come suggerisce Arendt? È allora la necessaria conseguenza del male *banale* ridurre la vita a biopolitica? come suggerisce Agamben⁴, la conversione dell'uomo in homo sacer? *La riduzione del βίος alla ζωή?*

Ci siamo di nuovo trovati a scontrarci con la domanda che dall'inizio temevamo: è possibile concepire l'*arche* di Auschwitz attraverso un approccio storico o filosofico? *È sufficiente la filosofia?* Il resto delle domande si è susseguito come supponevamo all'inizio: non sarà che il modo più corretto di avvicinarsi alla Shoah inesorabilmente ci conduce agli angoli più profondi e nascosti della psiche umana? *E se dovessimo cercare risposte sotto il pensiero stesso?* Jordan Peterson, esperto di psicologia del pensiero ideologico, spiega i processi di chi ha già aderito a una ideologia totalizzante: "The fascist says, 'I know everything there is to know'—and cannot, therefore, make an error. But error is the mother of all things. The inability to admit to imperfection, therefore, means withdrawal from every informative situation. This means *death of continued adaptation*—and certain future re-emergence of the unknown, in negative guise." (Peterson 1999, 268, emphasis added) Era allora l'hybris idealista la causa della crudeltà

⁴ "La politicizzazione nella nuda vita è il compito metafisico per eccellenza, in cui si decide dell'umanità del vivente uomo, e, assumendo questo compito, la modernità non fa che dichiarare la propria fedeltà alla struttura essenziale della tradizione metafisica." (Agamben 1995, 10)

sadica? Era allora il male non banale, ma la banalità stessa malvagia? Come Peterson suggerisce:

Fascist cruelty is motivated by the affective consequences of pathologically increased order. When the “water of life” dries up, nothing is left of existence but its inevitable pains and frustrations, compounded by terrible boredom. Furthermore, anomaly inevitably accumulates, as order is imposed in an increasingly strict manner. This adds increased apprehension of chaos to pain, frustration and stultification. Individuals “subjected” to a surfeit of such emotions “have every reason” to be vengeful, aggressive and cruel—have placed themselves in a state where the emergence of such motivation is virtually certain. (Peterson 1999, 268)

Se la crudeltà fascista/ideologica non era allora inevitabile o, per dirla altrimenti, se si costituisce come una conseguenza patologica “normale” dell’essere banale, allora chiunque potrebbe essere, potenzialmente, un criminale sadico? Peterson risponde a questa domanda: “the Nazi actions—that is, the willful torture of innocents, and enjoyment of such—is well within the normal man’s range of capacities (and does not likely exhaust them). The individual is a terrible force for evil. Recognition of that force—real recognition, the kind that comes as a staggering blow—is a precondition for any profound improvement in character.” (Peterson 1999, 336) L’idea che la banalità sia malvagia (piuttosto che il male sia banale) e che il male banale sia insito tra le possibilità psicopatologiche di un uomo qualunque, ha inesorabilmente suscitato domande ancora più coinvolgenti. Cosa scatena la forza del male, quello stato di frustrazione? È possibile affrontare una tale condotta anche al di fuori di un *ethos*? È possibile discutere la psicologia dell’ideologizzato al di fuori della semantica del bene e del male? Al di fuori di un paradigma morale? Una cosa è risultata chiara dopo la lettura di Peterson: *l’auto-coscienza evidenzia un punto di svolta nella psicologia dell’io*. Portare quella forza alla coscienza costituirebbe un *principium individuationis*. Potremmo allora considerare l’ideologia collettiva come una reazione compensatoria a fronte di una mancanza pronta per essere scoperta? *Era allora l’ideologia un mero tentativo della mente-cervello di arrivare a un qualche tipo di equilibrio omeostatico?*

È stato così che abbiamo affrontato il mondo estremamente tortuoso della psicologia analitica di Jung, e abbiamo trovato ciò che è diventato la pietra angolare della nostra comprensione della psiche umana: *il problema spirituale dell'uomo moderno*. Le prime diagnosi dei problemi dell'uomo moderno di Jung già affrontano la questione della sfera spirituale, ciò che egli chiamò i “*Seelenprobleme*”, come segnala in *Zivilisation im Übergang*. Secondo Jung, il problema spirituale dell'uomo è inversamente proporzionale alla presenza della religione nella società e direttamente proporzionale alla crescita della società di massa, avendo come conseguenza la *Annullierung* dell'uomo moderno e la conseguente necessità di compensazione inconscia: “Der Eindruck des Individuums, schwach, ja inexistent, zu sein, wurde somit kompensiert durch den Ausbruch bisher unbekannter Machtgelüste. Es war der Aufstand der Entrechteten, die unersättliche Gier der Habenichtse.” (Jung 2011, 250) Un concetto chiave nella comprensione della tendenza compensatoria dell'uomo che si trova in uno stato di crisi spirituale sarebbe allora l'autocoscienza della dinamica compensatoria della mente-cervello. L'incoscienza delle dinamiche di compensazione diventa, secondo Jung, particolarmente pericolosa, costituendo la base dell'adesione all'ideologia collettiva e dei movimenti di massa:

Das Opfer einer Massenbewegung, ausgelöst durch einen Aufruhr von Kräften, die im Unbewußten schlummerten, bereit, sämtliche moralischen Schranken zu durchbrechen. Diese Kräfte waren, gemäß der Regel, die ich erwähnte, als Kompensation gemeint. Wenn eine solche kompensatorische Regung des Unbewussten in einem Individuum nicht ins Bewußtsein aufgenommen wird, führt dies zu einer Neurose oder gar zu einer Psychose, und das gleiche gilt für ein Kollektiv. (Jung 2011, 247)

Je größer die Menge, desto „nichtswürdiger“ ist der Einzelne. Wenn aber der Einzelne, im überwältigenden Gefühl seiner Winzigkeit und Futilität, den Sinn seines Lebens, der sich ja keineswegs im Begriff der öffentlichen Wohlfahrt und des höheren Lebensstandards erschöpft, verliert, dann befindet er sich schon auf dem Wege zur Staatssklaverei und ist, ohne Wissen und Willen, zu deren Wegbereiter geworden. (Jung 2011, 283)

La comprensione junghiana dell'aspirazione religiosa intrinseca dell'uomo è diventata anche la base della nostra comprensione della psiche umana. Dopo il processo di secolarizzazione prodotto dalle scienze naturali, il problema spirituale dell'uomo risulta in un tentativo incosciente di compensazione di tale perdita, quello che Jung direttamente collega all'adesione a un'ideologia collettiva. L'aspirazione religiosa primordiale indica per Jung un'espressione più facilmente analizzabile di questa religiosità dell'uomo. Solo attraverso un processo di *Selbstverwirklichung*, di *individuazione*, l'uomo può arrivare alla posizione necessaria per coscientemente riconoscere la tendenza psicologica a una *auctoritas* superiore. *Dio potrebbe essere morto* per l'uomo moderno, come Nietzsche segnalò, *però mai l'archetipo di Dio*, un archetipo che rappresenta, secondo Jung, una tendenza umana, una "verità psichica"; l'uomo moderno, secondo Jung, riorienterà questa adesso pulsione verso un nuovo gruppo di assiomi totalizzanti—apparentemente secolari, ma, come abbiamo deciso di chiamarli, *assiomi secolarmente sacralizzati*.

Die Innigkeit der Beziehung zwischen Gott und Seele schließt jede Minderbewertung der Seele von vornherein aus. Es ist vielleicht zuweit gegangen, von einem Verwandtschaftsverhältnis zu sprechen; aber auf alle Fälle muß die Seele eine Beziehungsmöglichkeit, d. h. eine Entsprechung zum Wesen Gottes in sich haben, sonst könnte ein Zusammenhang nie zustande kommen. Diese Entsprechung ist, *psychologisch formuliert, der Archetypus des Gottesbildes.*" (Jung 1944, 23)

Siamo allora usciti dalla psicoanalisi junghiana convinti del ruolo fondamentale dell'individuazione. Dopotutto, forse la dissezione junghiana dell'uomo moderno era sufficiente per spiegare l'avvento e l'ascesa dell'ideologia collettiva, il patologico ed essenziale (essenzialista?) annichilimento dell'Altro e, più in generale, le complesse e intricate dinamiche dell'uomo moderno. La tranquillità della spiegazione che Jung ci offriva è tuttavia diventata il terreno fertile per altre, ulteriori questioni: L'individuazione e l'autocoscienza, il marchio dell'uomo moderno individuato, sono sufficienti per fermare il male? Che cosa dobbiamo fare del numero crescente di risultati della ricerca neuroscientifica che sfidano il concetto di libertà come storicamente lo abbiamo

compreso e metabolizzato? *È allora tutta la verità nel suo complesso “verità psichica”?* Quali sono i limiti dell’autocontrollo? In quali termini possiamo parlare della libertà dell’ideologizzato? Questa serie di domande che avrebbero potuto portarci, nuovamente, nel campo della scienza cognitiva, hanno trovato spazio anche nello studio della Shoah, come Viktor Frankl, neurologo e psichiatra sopravvissuto ad Auschwitz, segnala nel suo capolavoro *...trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen*:

Nach diesem Versuch einer psychologischen Darstellung und psychopathologischen Erklärung der typischen Charakterzüge, die ein länger dauernder Aufenthalt im Konzentrationslager dem Menschen aufprägt, müßte man nun den Eindruck gewinnen, daß die menschliche Seele letzten Endes von der Umwelt her zwangsmäßig und eindeutig bestimmt wird. Ist es doch, innerhalb der Psychologie des Konzentrationslagers beispielsweise, eben dieses Lagerleben, das als eigenartige soziale Umwelt das Verhalten des Menschen scheinbar zwangsläufig gestaltet. Man wird daher mit Recht Einwendungen erheben können und fragen: wo bleibt dann die menschliche Freiheit? *Gibt es denn da keine geistige Freiheit des Sichverhaltens, der Einstellung zu den gegebenen Umweltbedingungen? Ist es wirklich so, daß der Mensch nichts weiter sei als ein Produkt vielfacher Bestimmtheiten und Bedingtheiten, seien sie nun biologisch gemeint oder psychologisch oder soziologisch?* Ist der Mensch also wirklich nicht mehr als das zufällige Resultat seiner leiblichen Konstitution, seiner charakterologischen Disposition und seiner gesellschaftlichen Situation? Und, im besonderen: zeigt sich an den seelischen Reaktionen des Menschen auf die besondere, sozial bedingte Umwelt des Lagerlebens tatsächlich, daß er den Einflüssen dieser Daseinsform, denen er gezwungenermaßen unterstellt ist, sich gar nicht entziehen kann? Daß er diesen Einflüssen unterliegen muß? Daß er »unter dem Zwang der Verhältnisse«, der dort im Lager herrschenden Lebensverhältnisse, „nicht anders kann“? (Frankl 2007, 106—107, emphasis added)

Alle domande di Viktor Frankl, alle nostre domande, risponde lui stesso attraverso la sua esperienza unica, non demandabile, ad Auschwitz: *“der Mensch [kann] sehr wohl »auch anders«.*” Di fatto, la libertà dell’uomo di scegliere o meno il male—nella peggiore

delle ipotesi, Auschwitz—è uno degli insegnamenti più importanti che Frankl suggerisce. Naturalmente, come potrebbe la negazione della libertà umana essere riconciliata con la logoterapia di Frankl? Analogamente a Jung, egli troverebbe in ciò che chiama “das existentielle Vakuum” l’origine di ciò che chiamerà “noögenische Neurosen”, nevrosi risultanti dalla frustrazione esistenziale. L’essenza della logoterapia di Frankl deriva allora dalla trasformazione della patologica volontà di potenza (*Wille zur Macht*) in esistenziale volontà di senso (*Wille zum Sinn*). Tuttavia, le riflessioni sulla libertà spirituale dell’uomo non hanno soddisfatto la nostra curiosità, poiché la neuroscienza continua a porre seri interrogativi riguardo la concettualizzazione dell’idea di libertà come storicamente l’abbiamo avvicinata attraverso la filosofia. Ciò nonostante, la lettura di Frankl, ha propiziato l’ultima di una serie di domande intorno ad Auschwitz. La consapevolezza della nostra incapacità di afferrare tutte le questioni verso cui ci eravamo indirizzati e l’ombra di un fallibilismo difficilmente contrastabile hanno propiziato una curiosità molto meno pretenziosa che alla fine abbiamo cristallizzato nella presente tesi: *come dopo Auschwitz?*

Nel tentativo di avvicinarci a questa domanda, siamo arrivati all’epistemologia e alla filosofia morale di Adorno. In *Negative Dialektik*, il filosofo suggerisce che “Hitler hat den Menschen im Stande ihrer Unfreiheit *einen neuen kategorischen Imperativ* aufgezwungen: ihr Denken und Handeln so einzurichten, daß Auschwitz nicht sich wiederhole, nichts Ähnliches geschehe.” (Adorno 1966, 356, emphasis added) Attraverso l’idea secondo cui i filosofi non debbono né affermare una sfera trascendente oltre il mondo che conosciamo, né rifiutare tale sfera, Adorno colloca la sua epistemologia in posizione tale da rifiutare l’antimetafisica del positivismo logico, ma anche la metafisica tradizionale. D’acchito, potrebbe sembrare che la differenza tra la posizione epistemologica di Adorno e lo speciale amalgama tra idealismo speculativo e materialismo speculativo hegeliano non sia chiara. Ciò nonostante, Adorno unisce epistemologia e morale: la “*Wahrheit*” (allora non compresa in tutta la sua contingenza, come Rorty più tardi suggerirà nel sottolineare la contingenza del linguaggio stesso, sia pure nella sua applicazione più pratica) non può essere afferrata se si trascura la sofferenza che ha costruito la storia, specialmente quella assunta a paradigma della sofferenza umana, vale a dire l’esperienza della Shoah: “*Das Bedürfnis, Leiden beredt werden zu lassen, ist Bedingung aller Wahrheit.*” (Adorno 1966, 27)

L'epistemologia post-Shoah di Adorno e l'enfasi di Frankl sulla ricerca di *un significato ultimo* ci hanno fatto mettere da parte—magari solo per rimandarle—le questioni più trascendentali riguardanti la Shoah e concentrare, invece, sulla vita e il pensiero *post-Shoah*. La nostra decisione finale di focalizzarci sulle opere autobiografiche e saggistiche dei sopravvissuti della Shoah è allora la sintesi dell'influenza di Rosenzweig, Agamben e Adorno, ma anche dell'influenza di Jung, Frankl e Peterson, e quindi la ragione per la quale, in questa tesi, utilizzeremo una semantica mista appartenente alla filosofia, ma anche a momenti diversi della scienza cognitiva. Dunque, è stata una ricerca della verità “dietro” Auschwitz che ci ha portato a cercare la verità “dietro” la sofferenza. Questo perché lo studio della Shoah può essere considerato lo studio del lato peggiore dell'uomo ma anche, forse, di quello migliore, sicuramente del più incredibile: la capacità umana di sopravvivere. Conseguentemente, non ci siamo concentrati sui sopravvissuti che infine, dopo Auschwitz, si sono tolti la vita (o si ritiene che lo abbiano fatto): Jean Améry, Tadeusz Borowski, Paul Celan, Primo Levi... per quanto, alcuni di loro troveranno comunque uno spazio in taluni momenti di questa tesi. Ci siamo concentrati allora su autori che costituiscono una prova vivente della sopravvivenza, ma anche una prova vivente delle intricate conseguenze di essa.

Per un certo, sia pur breve, periodo di tempo, abbiamo considerato l'opera dello scrittore spagnolo Jorge Semprún, ma ben presto ci siamo resi conto che l'alterità progettata dai prigionieri politici non costituiva l'alterità ultima che l'essenza tedesca cercava di eliminare. Capire la logica Nazi significava più del capirne il suo Altro politico, piuttosto *il suo Altro essenziale*. L'alterità essenziale dell'ebreo ci è apparsa chiara dopo aver avvicinato i racconti autobiografici dei sopravvissuti ebrei. Gravitare verso autori ebrei faceva parte di una riflessione logica in quel momento, poiché, nel contesto della Shoah, gli ebrei sopravvissuti costituivano *l'Altro per eccellenza*. Dopo aver deciso quale sarebbe il nostro oggetto di studio, dovevamo decidere su quale tipo di sopravvissuti volevamo concentrarci. Coscientemente abbiamo scelto intellettuali, studiosi eminenti nelle loro rispettive discipline, cioè, non soltanto autori nel senso letterario, ma soprattutto autori che arricchiscono le riflessioni sulla Shoah e sulla vita dopo essa con una visione accademica particolare ed unica: saggi autobiografici o autobiografie saggistiche dove elementi accademici e personali vengono coscientemente incorporati. Un dettaglio è apparso chiaro dopo la lettura di dozzine di autobiografie e la visione di testimonianze filmate: *le ambivalenze della vita dopo la Shoah*; ambivalenze specialmente evidenti,

anche se non esclusivamente, in ebrei germanici della diaspora. Abbiamo pensato di riflettere soprattutto su tre tematiche: la religione, Israele e le questioni relative alla dimensione ebraico-germanica di questi autori. Come relazionarsi con la religione ed il rituale religioso dopo la Shoah. Come relazionarsi col sionismo, il movimento nazionalista ebraico, e con l'*Eretz*—la terra, quella fisica e anche quella metafisica e psicologica. E infine, come ricostruire un'identità, già da prima intricata di suo, dopo l'esperienza di aver costituito un'alterità respinta ed eliminabile.

I due autori che abbiamo deciso di discutere in questa tesi sono Ruth Klüger (Vienna, 1931) e Saul Friedländer (Praga, 1932), ebrei ashkenaziti—due sopravvissuti della Shoah, il prodotto delle cenere dell'Europa del Novecento, paria dopo la seconda guerra mondiale, rifugiati senza un luogo chiaro da chiamare “casa”, né una lingua da chiamare palesemente propria. In qualche modo *Luftmenschen* in alcuni momenti della loro vita. Sopravvissuti che tuttavia sono diventati eminenti studiosi dell'area umanistica: Ruth Klüger come germanista, Saul Friedländer come storico della Shoah. L'analisi di questi autori sfida paradigmi culturali tradizionali a cui potremmo ascrivere un altro tipo di autori più collegati a uno scenario culturale concreto. Al fine di arrivare a una visione olistica delle esperienze di questi autori, è necessario mettere in atto quella che consideriamo una “lettura ebraica”. Una lettura che colga i riferimenti intertestuali come possibilmente appartenenti a diversi contesti culturali e la loro esperienza come non paradigmatica delle essenze dei loro paesi di nascita, bensì paradigmatiche dell'Altro europeo per antonomasia. Questa coscienza di alterità è ciò che abbiamo stabilito essere la *even pinah* di questi autori. Ciò che dà forma alle loro esperienze e che proporziona una *identitas* di base, un prisma modellatore, *un locus unico* da cui sviluppare una propria *Weltanschauung*.

Una lettura ebraica deve anche tener presente le ambivalenze, le tensioni della vita ebraica dopo la Shoah: la classica tensione ebraica tra tradizione e modernità, tra il carattere orientale e occidentale dell'ebraismo ashkenazita, ma anche la negoziazione identitaria che avviene in un contesto post-Shoah quando si affrontano la storia e il canone europeo dopo aver sperimentato l'esclusione essenziale da parte di entrambi. Abbiamo deciso di scegliere Ruth Klüger e Saul Friedländer per la loro particolare *Zwischenposition* rispetto a tante tensioni ebraiche: per la loro non rigorosa fedeltà alle categorizzazioni più essenzialiste dell'ebraicità, e comunque per l'accettazione

dell'ebraicità come una identità costitutiva, come componente nazionale e, pertanto, segnata dal rifiuto a considerare il nazionalismo ebraico ed Israele, l'entità politica, un errore ontologico.

L'opera autobiografica di Klüger è da molti anni oggetto di discussioni accademiche. Quello che fin dall'inizio ci ha particolarmente attirato dell'opera di Klüger è stato il suo modo, davvero particolare, di capire l'esperienza ed il rituale religioso; un tema che, per questioni che spiegheremo nel primo capitolo, non ha attirato l'attenzione in circoli accademici. Nonostante l'autodefinizione di "agnostica", la comprensione di Klüger di certi rituali religiosi denota un modo *sui generis* di relazionarsi al fenomeno religioso—il modo dell'accademico, che tuttavia *sfida la premessa che la credenza preceda la pratica*. Si tratta in effetti di un'idea che si trovare riflessa rifletta in attuali approcci accademici al fenomeno religioso in settori di studio come la filosofia della religione, l'etnologia religiosa e l'antropologia. Anche se riteniamo che una più stretta collaborazione tra filosofia, psicologia, antropologia e neuroscienza farebbe più luce sullo studio della religione, l'attuale discussione accademica per quanto riguarda questo approccio "culturalista" al fenomeno religioso è in sé dinamica e ricca e contribuisce in maniera speciale al dibattito riguardo all'articolazione e la comprensione della religione nei tempi attuali.

L'auto-scrittura è diventata il medium per unire la disposizione analitica nei confronti del fenomeno religioso e l'esperienza religiosa soggettiva in modi che il testo accademico non potrebbe mai facilitare. La descrizione di Klüger e di Friedländer di Pesach è paradigmatica di come uno studioso moderno definisce quello che potrebbe essere considerato come una esperienza religiosa, analitica—a volte anche decostruttiva—ma *un modo particolare di amalgamare le posizioni dell'osservatore e del partecipante rituale*. In particolare, la semantica di Klüger ricorda quella che troviamo in studiosi della religione nel campo dell'antropologia. Il livello di auto-coscienza che svolge un ruolo cruciale nella identità dell'uomo moderno, trova, nel caso di Klüger, una conclusione amara quando tale approccio analitico del rituale conduce alla comprensione del rituale come una struttura di relazioni del potere, un'idea ovviamente influenzata da una prospettiva delle dinamiche umane dal chiaro pedigree foucaultiano (più in generale post-strutturalista). In tal senso, si potrebbe sfidare l'aspetto totalizzante del potere nella messinscena rituale. Ciò, tuttavia, costituisce un tema di discussione attuale, dato che

molti studiosi della religione segnalano la costituzione di dinamiche di dominanza ed onore che hanno luogo nella pratica rituale, un'osservazione che tende a diventare una comprensione delle gerarchie come sistemi di dominanza/sottomissione, specialmente quando la dominanza e l'onore diventano così interconnessi⁵. L'idea che la gerarchia è necessariamente un sistema di dominazione è una delle idee che Klüger segue nel suo approccio ermeneutico al rituale; un'idea, articolata attraverso un prisma femminista che ha come conseguenza un riorientamento della sua aspirazione religiosa, come discuteremo. Questa è soltanto una di tutta una serie di ambivalenze che abbiamo trovato nell'opera di Klüger. Alcune di queste ambivalenze sono considerate dalla stessa come tali; altre, tuttavia, le abbiamo segnalato noi in questo studio, rasentando forse l'azzardo.

Il nostro interesse nella descrizione dei rituali religiosi che Klüger ci offre e la sua comprensione di quelli come mezzo per costituire relazioni di potere sarà il primo dei temi che discuteremo in questa tesi. Nel tentativo di unire la nostra comprensione junghiana dell'uomo, questo approccio culturalista al fenomeno religioso e il tono analitico di Klüger potrebbero per alcuni risultare in una posizione che filosofi come Susan Neiman chiamano *un approccio neokantiano* al fenomeno religioso. Nel contesto della nostra comprensione del rituale, noi rifiutiamo la rigida estetica kantiana. Ciò nonostante, questa posizione neokantiana che costituirebbe un approccio alla religione che privilegia la ritualità come mezzo di acquisizione di un'attenzione cosciente (*mindfulness*) e una matrice etica di riferimento, indica certamente una modalità di osservanza religiosa. Attraverso la nostra comprensione del rituale, offriremo un approccio che corre parallelo alla comprensione di Klüger e Friedländer. Questo approccio, tuttavia, non definisce necessariamente una modalità di *osservanza* religiosa, bensì una modalità di *esperienza* religiosa. Certamente, un approccio del genere potrebbe condurre a una modalità di osservanza religiosa entro una concezione neokantiana. Non intendiamo suggerire un termine euristico per fare riferimento a questo tipo—forse non tradizionale—di esperienza religiosa del partecipante auto-cosciente, ma di sicuro

⁵ Le linee tra dominanza, potere ed onore sono un argomento di discussione piuttosto attuale tra psicologi e neuroscienziati come Jordan Peterson, Scott Barry Kaufman, Robert Sapolsky o Dean Burnett, per citare alcuni degli animatori più recenti del dibattito; una tale discussione però deve essere compresa entro una cornice strutturalmente più ampia, relativa alla natura delle gerarchie umane e all'idea della mascolinità alfa e dei suoi oppositori.

vogliamo reconsiderare cosa costituisca un'esperienza religiosa, data l'importanza che la religione ancora ha in autori che si dichiarano agnostici. Un processo di individuazione, come lo chiama Jung, non deve necessariamente risultare in un rifiuto della "irrazionalità" presente nel rituale religioso. Magari, potremmo trovare qui l'incontro tra una comprensione neokantiana della religione e la metodologia alla quale noi aderiamo.

Le ambivalenze, come abbiamo detto, sono presenti in molti momenti dell'opera autobiografica e saggistica di Klüger: in definitiva, la loro esplorazione ha modellato questa tesi. Se la religione costituisce la prima di queste ambivalenze, Israele è stata considerata il secondo tema logico con cui procedere. Il rapporto di Klüger col sionismo ed Israele non ricalca quello di tanti intellettuali di sinistra dell'accademia americana. Tuttavia, un'attenta lettura di Klüger, e di tanti altri autori, ha facilitato la localizzazione dell'ambivalenza riguardo ad Israele, dato che essa non si trova nell'ambito politico propriamente detto. Nell'opera autobiografica o saggistica di Klüger non si trova alcuna critica reale contro certe politiche israeliane o certe logiche sioniste. Il rapporto di Klüger col sionismo ed Israele opera a un livello psicologicamente più profondo; il sionismo, come discuteremo nel secondo capitolo, diventerà il salvagente psicologico di Klüger durante la Shoah: l'unico movimento politico attraverso il quale Klüger riesce a sviluppare la sua ebraicità in maniera auto-affermativa. A Israele come *locus* fisico si fa riferimento raramente; *Israele costituisce un luogo metafisico e psicologico*, un luogo che viene, coscientemente o inconsciamente, tenuto a quel livello. Dopo aver stabilito questa idea, abbiamo deciso di approfondire la questione della nostalgia di Sion che ha costituito la diaspora ebraica. Più specificamente, la nostalgia di Sion come viene articolata nei primi autori sionisti, molti intellettuali non osservanti che—alcuni nel tentativo di trovare una soluzione all'antisemitismo crescente, altri nel tentativo di trovare radici—scoprirono nel sionismo un modo di rivisitare una ben nota nostalgia di Sion. Tratteremo questioni sul sionismo nel secondo e terzo capitolo poiché, come diciamo, il sionismo costituisce la base dell'autocomprensione affermativa e lo sviluppo di un'ebraicità *in Abwehr* (in difesa) caratteristica di tanti autori ebrei dopo la Shoah. Il secondo e il terzo capitolo sono decisamente interconnessi: non si potrebbero comprendere separatamente, l'uno senza l'altro, poiché per capire le idee sioniste di Klüger non si deve soltanto comprendere il concetto della nostalgia di Sion, ma anche l'esperienza dell'antisemitismo e la tensione tra l'auto-disprezzo e l'auto-affermazione, la coscienza di alterità, l'interiorizzazione di un sentimento d'esogenismo, e la questione ebraico-tedesca, fra le altre cose. Tutte queste

complesse questioni le abbiamo affrontato al meglio delle nostre capacità, poiché l'obiettivo finale è capire la dimensione ebraica dell'opera di questi autori. Nel secondo e terzo capitolo di questa tesi, abbiamo innanzitutto delineato il quadro generale d'intertestualità che siamo convinti possa servire da riferimento per capire tanti autori e intellettuali ebrei dal periodo della fin de siècle fino al 1967, o anche fino ad oggi, in alcuni casi.

Una volta chiarite le tre tematiche, necessariamente interconnesse, che volevamo discutere rispetto a Ruth Klüger, abbiamo iniziato a cercare un altro autore in qualche modo complementare per la discussione. Abbiamo cercato profili simili: ebrei germanici, sopravvissuti della Shoah, scrittori o intellettuali. Molti nomi sono stati presi in considerazione: Jurek Becker, Nelly Sachs, Edgar Hilsenrath, Fred Wander, Emil Fackenheim... Di fatto, quasi tutti questi autori ancora pongono seri interrogativi che a tutt'oggi richiederebbero una discussione approfondita. Nello studio del romanzo autobiografico di Hilsenrath, ad esempio, occorrerebbe evidenziare i modi convoluti e fuggitivi in cui l'auto-disprezzo viene articolato dopo la Shoah. Inoltre, anche il ritorno di Hilsenrath in Germania dopo aver vissuto in Israele e negli Stati Uniti pone domande riguardo all'identità ebraica post-Shoah, poiché contrasta fortemente con l'esperienza di Klüger e Friedländer nel loro rapporto con la Germania dopo essere sopravvissuti. È stato, tuttavia, il personaggio di Emil Fackenheim (1916-2003) quello verso cui abbiamo gravitato in maniera speciale.

Fackenheim iniziò gli studi rabbinici a Berlino, prima di essere incarcerato nel campo di concentramento di Sachsenhausen, da dove più tardi uscì. Dopo un periodo nel Regno Unito, Fackenheim si stabilì in Canada. Filosofo, teologo, sopravvissuto della Shoah, Fackenheim rappresentava molte delle ambivalenze che vedevamo in Klüger. Questo può essere al primo contatto percettibile nella sua filosofia per la sua particolare integrazione tra esistenza, essenza e trascendenza. Ciò nonostante, è anche la natura mista della sua opera autobiografica *An Epitaph for German Judaism: From Halle to Jerusalem* (2007), ciò che ha attirato la nostra attenzione: un lavoro che costituisce un viaggio introspettivo personale, ma anche caricato di numerose riflessioni teologiche e filosofiche, che risultano in un lavoro "teo-politico". Di fatto, la vita intellettuale e personale di Fackenheim subirà un cambiamento considerevole dopo la Guerra dei Sei Giorni, un punto di svolta che lo condurrà a fare Aliyah negli anni ottanta e ad abbracciare

posizioni politiche più conservatrici. In effetti, il lavoro autobiografico e saggistico di Fackenheim rappresentava tante delle *Zwischenpositionen* che stavamo cercando, ma nonostante ciò la scelta è caduta sulle opere autobiografiche di Saul Friedländer.

Come già segnalato, Saul Friedländer è diventato uno dei riferimenti più importanti nello studio della storia della Shoah, fornendoci risposte cruciali riguardo agli aspetti più procedurali della persecuzione e dell'annichilimento degli ebrei europei. Il suo magnum opus *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination* vinse il Premio Pulitzer per la saggistica nel 2008, rendendolo uno degli storici più riconosciuti della Shoah. Abbiamo considerato il profilo di Friedländer, ritratto nell'unico progetto autobiografico al momento dell'inizio della nostra ricerca, *Quand vient le souvenir* (pubblicato in francese nel 1978), un caso davvero particolare: nato nella Praga germanofona, Friedländer sopravvisse alla Shoah in diverse istituzioni cattoliche dove si convertì al cristianesimo e decise pure di farsi sacerdote. Nello stesso periodo, i suoi genitori, nel tentativo di raggiungere la Svizzera, vennero catturati e internati ad Auschwitz, dove sarebbero stati uccisi, lasciando il loro figlio orfano. La storia di Friedländer—un ebreo cristiano orfano, che dall'inizio della propria vita non aveva avuto un nome fisso (Pavel, Pavlíček, Paul, Paul-Henri-Marie...), né una religione stabile, né un background culturale chiaro—è diventata uno dei racconti della Shoah più intriganti che avessimo trovato fino a quel momento. L'improvvisa accettazione della sua già quasi dimenticata ebraicità dopo aver sentito il racconto della morte dei genitori e gli orrori dell'Olocausto costituisce retoricamente una delle *conversioni* più coinvolgenti che avessimo reperito nella storia dell'autobiografia. Dopo questo momento di epifania, un Friedländer adolescente, senza nessuno di famiglia da chiamare, né niente cui rivolgersi che potesse reclamare come proprio, si imbarca su una nave dell'Irgun per emigrare illegalmente in Israele nel 1948, cercando lungo la strada di trovare l'identità che non aveva, ovvero una *communitas* da abbracciare, non come l'Altro essenziale, ma come un membro impegnato della stessa: “J'étais seul... Partir en « Eretz », c'était joindre mon destin personnel à un sort commun, c'était aussi un rêve de communion et de communauté, c'était dissoudre mes anxiétés particulières dans l'élan d'un groupe.” (Friedländer 1978, 178, emphasis added)

L'auto-scrittura di Friedländer ha eclissato parecchi degli altri racconti che fino a quel punto avevamo considerato degni di oggetto di studio. Tuttavia, non eravamo sicuri

della compatibilità tra Klüger e Friedländer. Poiché la vita post-Shoah di Friedländer è particolarmente inusuale, temevamo allora di non avere abbastanza materiale per collegare e tracciare paralleli tra i due autori e avere finalmente due analisi molto contrastanti della esperienza dopo la Shoah. Nel bel mezzo della nostra ricerca, Friedländer pubblicò, questa volta in inglese, la sua seconda opera autobiografica, *Where Memory Leads* (2016), un racconto altamente politico della seconda metà della sua vita dopo aver fatto Aliyah. Il pathos sionista, la retorica della conversione, il *Wille zum Leben* che permea *Quand vient le souvenir* trova nella seconda opera autobiografica un tono particolarmente amaro, là dove Friedländer ritrae la perdita dell'adesione al movimento sionista e, conseguentemente, il ritorno a uno stato di esilio che totalizza la sua esperienza vitale. Friedländer, nuovamente nella diaspora, trova nel vuoto identitario che costituisce la California, il luogo per andare avanti, un luogo che nonostante tutto, nuovamente, non sente suo; il posto che però corrobora la sua impossibile *Heimat*. Questo sapore amaro che in qualche modo conclude il progetto autobiografico di Friedländer rappresenta, dal nostro punto di vista, uno dei più appassionanti racconti della vita dopo la Shoah, e conseguentemente, abbiamo deciso di includerlo come oggetto di studio della nostra tesi. Lo studio di questo secondo lavoro ha però sollevato nuove domande, ma anche molte sfide, innanzitutto per la forte componente politica e per la particolare posizione di fronte alle questioni politiche che riguardano lo stato ebraico, elementi per cui Friedländer finisce per essere un facile bersaglio per le critiche sia da destra che da sinistra. In effetti, le sue specifiche posizioni politiche verranno discusse, ma Friedländer verrà soprattutto situato entro il suo *Sitz im Leben* letterario, vale a dire nel contesto dell'auto-scrittura. La retorica della conversione, pertanto, diventerà retorica della *de-conversione*: le azioni auto-affermative del nuovo convertito diventeranno la proattività di colui che considera la disobbedienza civile. Il sionismo, la più importante impresa della vita di Friedländer, la matrice di tutta una serie di assiomi totalizzanti, collassa riportando Friedländer a uno stato di costante esilio sempre temuto ma—magari segretamente—sempre desiderato.

Nel terzo capitolo, nel tentativo di esporre questa tendenza diasporistica che osserviamo in parecchi autori, si esplorano le intricate questioni riguardanti l'identità ebraica moderna. Il significante particolarmente liquido dell'identità viene interpretato, come già segnalato, come un prisma modellatore, una posizione auto-riconosciuta dalla quale percepire il mondo ed affrontare i suoi fenomeni. Situare queste posizioni, queste identità, da dove guardare il mondo e da dove avvicinare la realtà nel contesto

dell'esperienza ebraica, ci porterà a discutere temi che hanno sempre disturbato la mente ebraica in *Galut*: alcuni, più generali, si rifanno al periodo dall'emancipazione in avanti, mentre altri sono più specificamente connessi alla vita post-Shoah. Alcune delle idee discusse hanno una natura particolarmente controversa, ma abbiamo ritenuto necessario affrontare questi temi per tracciare le variabili generali che partecipano della formazione identitaria ebraica, specialmente quella tradizionalmente compresa come secolare. In questo terzo capitolo, trovano spazio nella discussione parecchi autori: Moses Mendelsohn, Gerschom Scholem, Hannah Arendt, Moritz Goldstein, Isaac Deutscher e Judith Butler. Essi rappresentano varianti diverse, a volte completamente antagonistiche, della autocomprensione ebraica; diversi approcci all'ebraicità che rappresentano ontologie divergenti che hanno conseguentemente come risultato un repertorio di posizione politiche non soltanto contrarie, ma del tutto incompatibili.

Inoltre, vengono utilizzati anche personaggi romanzeschi per discutere alcuni degli aspetti più controversi della ebraicità, come l'auto-disprezzo, o la personificazione utopica del completamente auto-affermativo *Muskelfude*. La simbiosi ebraico-tedesca o, come percepita da alcuni, l'illusione ebraico-tedesca, occupa anche una posizione centrale nella discussione dell'identità ebraica di Ruth Klüger e Saul Friedländer dopo la Shoah. Giacché riteniamo che le loro carriere accademiche diano forma a un tentativo di dialogo ebraico-tedesco dopo la Shoah, affrontiamo i limiti di un tale dialogo, quelli del revisionismo storico, la connessione tra l'epistemologia storiografica e la psicologia dei sopravvissuti, la luce che la neuroscienza getta sulla questione del consolidamento della memoria, e i problemi che creano il revisionismo storico e il pensiero postmoderno per ciò che riguarda la ricerca di punti d'incontro tra identità contrastanti. Inoltre, si discutono le dinamiche simbiotiche di germanità ed ebraicità nel caso di questi autori, i momenti che propiziano tali dinamiche dialettiche, ma anche i momenti in cui tale simbiosi è bruscamente interrotta: momenti in cui l'ebraicità è, conseguentemente, abbracciata come una *identitas* di base, quando l'esposizione all'antisemitismo propizia lo sviluppo di una auto-affermazione difensiva e, di conseguenza, il rifiuto della germanità, e persino la repulsione da essa.

Questa tesi è pertanto la conclusione di un processo di educazione interdisciplinare: un amalgama di critica letteraria, filosofia e scienza cognitiva. È iniziato come un tentativo di comprendere l'evento che ha propiziato numerose correnti di

approcci post-traumatici e postmodernisti alla filosofia e all'arte. Si è trattato di una iniziale curiosità lontana dal nostro percorso accademico fino a quel punto; un primo tentativo di afferrare Auschwitz, l'epitome di qualcosa che dovevamo concettualizzare, o forse il fallimento di qualcosa che è ancora soggetto di dibattito. Cercare la verità dietro Auschwitz, qualcosa che ha disturbato innumerevoli menti in tutta la seconda metà del secolo scorso, si è trasformato nel desiderio di capire la verità dietro la sofferenza, dietro la sopravvivenza, e le loro complesse conseguenze. Ciò che era iniziato come una ricerca del sadico *πηγή* e *τέλος* dietro Auschwitz è diventato uno studio della sua inevitabile *συνέπεια*. Quindi, la prospettiva di questa tesi mirava dall'inizio a superare un mero approccio filologico a due autori. Abbiamo voluto tracciare il quadro generale riguardo a questi temi che consideriamo cruciale per fornire una matrice in cui poter inserire numerosi autori ebrei del Novecento, di più, una matrice comune di significati e intertestualità. In tal modo, abbiamo avvicinato diversi paradigmi accademici e abbiamo fatto uso di diverse semantiche senza veramente aggrapparci a una in particolare. Da qui la ragione per la quale abbiamo deciso di discutere anche altri autori che ci aiutano ad illustrare prospettive comuni, antagonistiche o complementari, arricchendo in tal modo la comprensione dei temi che abbiamo deciso di affrontare. In ultima analisi, questa tesi è un fine in sé, non certo un mero obbligo, molto più che spuntare semplicemente una casella. Questa tesi è, anzitutto, una ricerca della conoscenza.

CHAPTER 1

RELIGION AND RITUAL

*Y es de tan alta excelencia
aqueste sumo saber,
que no hay facultad ni ciencia
que la puedan emprender;
quien se supiere vencer
con un no saber sabiendo,
irá siempre trascendiendo.*

San Juan de la Cruz

1. Religion and ritual

1.1. Why religion?

1.1.1. Beyond secularism

Why continue talking about religion? This might be the first question which many of us who choose to discuss questions related to religion are usually asked when explaining to our fellow grad students or many humanities professors our interest in religious expressions found—although by no means exclusively—in Shoah-related cultural production. Furthermore, the question which follows is usually ‘how’. How to approach religion in the 21st century? Certainly, ‘why’ and ‘how’ are cardinal questions which arise when trying to discuss religion, especially outside of the fields of Theology or Religious Studies, as it is our case. As suggested by the chronological order of the questions, the ‘why’ precedes the ‘how’, and it involves a less methodological approach which, according to the reactions which we have gotten from colleagues throughout these years, tends to arouse suspicions when trying to determine whether there might be a religious interest for our part, or if the dealing with such a topic might necessarily involve the expression of a certain religious agenda. These reactions, along with the extensive criticism which could be perhaps made about some of the assumptions we make in this chapter, we consider to be examples of a secularist approach which has always reigned in the field of Cultural Studies and which tends to ignore and challenge the importance of considering the articulation of religion in modern times, even considering the treatment of such topic as uninteresting or even futile: a mere atavism—some might say. It goes without saying that it does not particularly help when we continue by adding that the authors we discuss consider themselves agnostics. Nonetheless, it is precisely these authors the ones who, through their academic careers, achieve an understanding of religion and ritual which contributes to the synthesis of the believer-atheist dialectic, thus shedding plenty of light on the question of what the limits of the religious sphere are and who is to be considered religious, and how.

Our initial analysis on the religious expressions found in contemporary self-writing will proceed, as we have already mentioned in the introduction, from the basis of Jung’s conception of the man as an animal with a religious tendency, that is, what Jung calls the religious instinct (Jung 1995). Jung, by considering religion as the container of

numberless sets of symbols within the mind, understands religious archetypes as a crucial part of the collective unconscious. Religious phenomena then, according to Jung, should not be dismissed due to their irrational character. Highlighting the religious sphere, the religious instinct, of the human psyche—that is, introducing religion in psychology—does not affect Jung’s methodology—as it does not affect ours—which is, in many ways, phenomenological in nature.

The conscious disregard of religion might find its inception, on the one hand, on an excessive adherence to Freudian psychoanalysis which somehow still permeates, perhaps unconsciously, the pre-disposition to tackle topics related to religion. Freud, indeed, did not consider that psychoanalysis and religion could be reconcilable, thus predisposing the lack of a religious presence in any kind of criticism which adheres to this Freudian postulate. This conscious disregard of religion is, however, perhaps more strongly based on the fact that Cultural Studies was, as Morgan notes, “shaped [...] by British Marxist thought.” (Morgan 2008, 4) Both of these factors are, in one way or another, related to a prominent post-structuralist criticism on culture. The irony lies perhaps on the fact that it is also within these post-structuralist approaches through which addressing religion in modern times can also find a proper space, thus making us able to understand religion as cultural processes where meaning, hierarchy, and identity develop and consolidate.

1.1.2. Self-writing

Se olvida demasiado que el hombre es imposible sin imaginación, sin la capacidad de inventarse una figura de vida, de «idear» el personaje que va a ser. El hombre es novelista de sí mismo, original o plagiario.

Ortega y Gasset, *Historia como sistema*

With regards to the question of self-writing itself, the usefulness of these post-structuralist approaches appears to be an ongoing subject of debate. While on the one

hand, the notion of the death of autobiography⁶ announced by Paul de Man (1979, 919—30) contributes little to the study of the genre, a more post-structuralist approach can be especially helpful when dealing with other issues related to identity formation and the construction of the self; in our opinion, topics holding much more relevance than the semantic debate around the use of a proper signifier to define an autobiographical work, or the constant aim to establish the limits between reality and fiction in self-writing. We do not aim to fall into an inescapable Lacanian perspective on literary genres whose aim would not be other than deconstructing—dissolving, rather—categorizations themselves by noting the impossibility of defining genre. Later in this dissertation, we will tackle the historiographical debate around the epistemological validity of the witness, the *auctoritas* of the survivor, and the problematics which stem from an excessive post-structuralist approach to the concept of historical truth. This should cast plenty of light upon the convoluted questions regarding the categorization of self-writing. Nonetheless, we also hold that an excessive essentialist approach to the categorization of genres contributes little to the understanding of the cognitive states which self-writing triggers. By an excess of essentialism, we can also fall back to the myth of believing in a somehow unitary pre-existing self, a premise we reject in our study.

1.1.3. Self-writing and religion

A further challenge of our study is established by the agnosticism which the two main authors here discussed profess. A second reading is therefore necessary in order to refer to religion as—under the mantra of agnosticism/atheism—few scholars might even consider the religious references included in self-writing and the crucial role they play in the shaping of one's identity. Two challenges then we need to bear in mind if we aim to discuss contemporary religious expressions: firstly, a strong theoretical background needs to be settled to favor a cultural-religious reading of authors who find appropriate to tackle religious experiences in their self-writing, even when these religious experiences are not nested into a wider religious observance, as traditionally regarded; and secondly, this reading needs to depart from traditional conceptions of religious practice, giving space

⁶ It can also be argued that this is nothing but the logical extension of the post-structuralist idea *par excellence* by Roland Barthes: the death of the author.

therefore to alternative readings which would highlight religious mediation as a place for meaning and identity creation and negotiation, rather than a necessary connection with certain ontological truths; thus, ultimately, challenging the idea that belief precedes practice and the necessary theological and metaphysical readings of religious phenomena. We will not enter the discussion on whether a post-metaphysical and a post-religious culture might be desirable, as many contemporary—analytic and continental—thinkers defend; thinkers which, following that aspiration, would perhaps reject our approach. We simply highlight the fact that whether or not desirable, the metaphysical and religious spheres portrayed in self-writing illustrate cultural archetypes and are, thus, worthy of analysis for anyone whose interest pivots around Cultural Studies. We furthermore argue that, specifically in the context of self-writing, a certain type of rhetoric—always religious in origin—will find its way through in self-writing even when operating in apparently non-religious spheres. Following Jung’s ideas on religion and archetypes, we will see how religious instincts secularize, thus constituting new “religious” needs—if we understand the structuring of any set of totalizing secular axioms as the secularized evolution of an initial set of religious axioms. By an analysis of the rhetoric used in self-writing, we will discern an evolution from the religiously-sacred to the *secularly-sacred*, thus challenging the limits of such categorizations.

Self-writing and autobiographical essays are then our key object of study and it is indelibly connected to the question of ‘why religion’. The writing of the story of one’s life is full of challenges and opportunities; challenges and opportunities which would only arise when the autobiographer looks back, only with this perspective—*im Nachhinein*—can a life seem like a succession of events which would necessarily conclude with the present state: if not a state of total acceptance (something which is suggested by the believers in the existence of a unitary pre-existing self) at least a state of apparent understanding, even when this understanding is of total identity loss, as it is the case of many authors who struggle to (re)build a life from scratch after any kind of catastrophe. In order to understand the importance of religion in self-writing, it is crucial to understand the evolution of it: on the one hand, the reasons for such an introspective journey, the consequences of such journey, and, on the other hand, the ways it has served throughout the centuries as a medium for personal analysis and understanding of the individual, what—after extracting and abstracting the universals from the particulars—results, after all, in the analysis and understanding of humankind, of “*psychic truths*”, as we have dared

to call them. It also needs to be understood that a constant we see in self-writing is the development of a specific kind of rhetoric, a *conversion rhetoric*; a term (conversion) which although religiously-charged, must be understood, especially when bearing in mind its etymology, as a form of “turning into”, of “becoming”. It is then crucial to understand the initial articulations of such “becoming” in the history of self-writing, of ceasing to be one thing to be another. For if we understand that secularism is a form in which religion fugitively survives, the mere categorization of a “conversion”, of a “becoming”, by being branded as “secular” does not automatically imply a categorical departure from religion, as it is suggested constantly by secularist approaches. We would rather see it—again, following Jungian psychoanalysis—as part of a *continuum* which evinces cognitive tendencies.

It is the Enlightenment, as could only be expected, the point in which at the same time the process of the autobiographical writing is fully recognized as a crucial moment in one’s life while at the same time a process of secularization of religious values starts taking place. While autobiography commenced a process of progressive recognition in Western civilization, the latter started seeming a matter of a previous time. It is at this moment in history, as Misch (1907) (1950) notes, when the importance of autobiography was fully recognized. Until then, the nature of man was understood as something not vulnerable to change and therefore static at any time and under any circumstance. This process of recognition would eventually lead in the 18th century to the demand of the memoirs of “bedeutende Persönlichkeiten”, as Misch puts it; confessions, in a way, where the psychological complexity of the self started being considered. What are the captivating features of such a genre? It can be argued then that these captivating features lie in the emotional content of such writings, in the exposure on the part of the writer, something which attracts many readers. It is perhaps an expectation of *Selbstbewusstsein* on the part of the reader or the searching for a cathartic experience through the life of another. As the philosopher Dilthey expressed, “autobiography is the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life comes before us” (Dilthey in Hodges 1952, 29), but—we would add—it is also not only the understanding of life in all its logic but the understanding of that which escapes such logic and perhaps frightens the self-writer, that is, the understanding of the mixed feelings—of the ambivalences—to which life has lead.

In an attempt to find a group of authors who represent similar and yet unique, comparable, but unarguably individual experiences of the Shoah, WWII, and post-Shoah life and identity, we have chosen some traditionally-understood autobiographical works as well as documentary films and essays where a certain level of self-writing takes place. The reading of these works will lead our way from the particularities of each author's experience to the general tendencies—the constants—we aim to extract, trying meticulously to reduce the margin of error by introducing in the discussion parallel reflections from thinkers whose concerns echo the ones our authors express, parallel reflections which—in turn—constitute as well, part of the intertextual references of the authors we will discuss.

In order to fully understand the intertextual background of these authors, we prefer to place at a central position, and consequently begin with, an analysis of the great writers of the self who have come before them, as a way of tracing the link and the problematics of the topic of religion, self-writing, narrative self-construction, and conversion rhetoric. Naturally, their personal backgrounds are crucial for the understanding of their self-writing. Nevertheless, we have decided to place that at a posterior place of analysis. Our aim is not only to indicate that there are inescapable cultural references for any person. Everyone living in the 21st century—willingly or not—is influenced—in a way or another—by the most-influencing minds who have shaped Western thought, and this does not necessarily imply that everyone must be explicitly familiar with their work. Their vocabulary, their hypotheses, and the social images which they once created are unavoidable cultural references to all of us. The authors whom we discuss in this dissertation do not only, as part of a—or rather various—Western society(ies) draw from this Western tradition and its intellectual *milieu*. As part of the Western *intelligentsia*, it would not be wrong then to assume they might be familiar with the authors and ideas that we are to analyze in the following subchapters: consciously or unconsciously, they do constitute the intertext of their works. Again, this does not imply that they, willingly, aim to echo any of them or their assumptions. It also does not mean that they deliberately shape their autobiographical narratives at the image of any of the following authors. There is indeed no evidence that would support that any of these authors might have read the authors we are about to mention. Nevertheless, the fact that they might be first-hand familiar with the great autobiographers remains secondary, as, as the scholars they are, they do reflect and draw from these builders of the narrative self, from this

autobiographical tradition. Consequently, they constitute the first intertextual layer for anyone willing to embark in a self-writing process, as our authors do.

1.1.4. Saint Augustine, the birth of (spiritual) self-writing

Although the roots of autobiography can be naturally found in the classical era, this genre never succeeded in finding a notorious place within the literary and philosophical tradition. As Misch (1950) notes, the reason for such a lack of recognition in classical antiquity can be traced back to Aristotle's idea of the μεγαλοψυχία and the μεγάλόψυχος, the magnanimous man, an ideal being, a great soul, who was never to discuss his life, nor the lives of others. Needless to say, the classical examples of autobiography (Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius...) must not be understood as narration for the mere sake of it, nor as a personal journey of introspection per se; they pivoted around the idea of didacticism, as Misch notes. If we aim to find a converging point between autobiography and religion, that would necessarily lead us to Hellenistic mysticism, being Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) and his most influencing work, *Confessiones*, quintessential for the study of self-writing, as it inaugurated the introspective mood for the Western man, elevating the category of autobiography and, in a way, also establishing the peculiarities of the genre. In the previous autobiographical examples that we can find in antiquity, we cannot find the level of exposure that we find in *Confessiones*. As Karl Weintraub (1978) explains, the way Augustine understands his life experience will have an immense influence in the centuries to come. The impact of Augustine up to the present day can be seen in the fact that his work is still being discussed in different research fields, and his *Confessiones* included not only in the curricula of Religious Studies or Philosophy programs as well as History and Literary Studies, being probably one of the few (if not the only) of the early Christian theologians who has not sunk into oblivion outside of the sphere of Christianity.

It can naturally be pointed out that Augustinian values are one of the foundations of Western culture, but our main interest stems from Brian Stock's (2011) argument that Augustine's autobiographical work meant a break with the tradition of ancient philosophers in two ways: first of all, by suggesting that the advance of the human being both in spiritual and educational terms, what Stock calls the "soul's progress", is directly

proportional to “the account of a particular life as it proceeds through historical time”, and secondly by—in a way—sacralizing the actual articulation, the wording—the translation into grammar and lexicon—of a particular human being’s life, since the whole of a life is impossible to know, especially to the autobiographer himself. It is particularly relevant for the study of autobiography the idea which stems from this ritualization of the wording, as we have dared to call it. By giving more importance to the word than to the fact, the latter is partially set aside. For the reading of an autobiography awakens, for us, special interest for what it says about the process of introspection for the self-writer, rather than the desire to acquire historical facts.

Augustine, Stock argues, identifies in *Confessiones* “the reflective self with the reader” and by doing this, Augustine “inaugurated the age of the self-conscious reader/thinker in Western literature.” (Stock 2011, 13) Diverging from other scholars, Stock argues that the fact that confessional writing became a new medium for discussing ethics through literature is a clear example of the new importance of reading in the Christian and Jewish worlds, being Augustine the pioneer in amalgamating literature and the study and analysis of ethics. The role of Augustine in the study of autobiography and especially in its connections with religion and ethics is unarguably crucial, therefore some categorical affirmations that are usually made within the field of Religious Studies supporting the idea that “all meditative reading is a form of Augustinian reading” (Otten 2011, 2) may not appear to be exaggerated. Even scholars who do not share the view that Augustine changed the direction of history and just see him as the product of an already-established Christian tradition which he helps to catapult would argue that “Augustine occupies no single point in history, providential or secular; rather he exists across time, constituted within and by his own historical moment, and reconstituted since.” (Dollimore 1991, 131) It would be a mistake, nevertheless, to overlook the point that some scholars (Marion 2011, 22–42) have made with regards to the salient role of Augustine in the history of autobiography: it is through confession that the human being is able to attain an identity. The negotiation of one’s self which occurs in the process of self-writing is a salient topic of discussion, and the process and conclusion of such negotiation, the main consideration from the point of view of this study.

Augustine discovers through the rejection of the outside world that God was closer to his moment of solitude than to any form of social event, and thus a rejection of

communitas. In fact, the famous passage of the pears—in hindsight—reinforces Augustine’s idea that sin is something potentially doable in community. On the contrary, a process of salvation cannot be done with anyone else but oneself. The didactic purpose behind *Confessiones* is secondary to this journey within the hidden corners of his *Geist*. As we will see later, the idea of a community, a welcoming one, is crucial to the adherence to the Protestant conversion rhetoric that takes place from the 16th century onwards. The idea behind the rejection of a community in order to find oneself necessarily triggers a sense of individuality that will eventually get lost in spiritual autobiography until, maybe ironically, the secularization of such discourse by Rousseau. Only in this process of individual soul-searching can man discover God. Augustine, then, drew parallels between individuality and God which necessarily linked the self-searching experience with the searching of a transcendent truth. Given the almost incalculable influence of Augustine, Otten words reveal the difficult task of severing the relationship between religion and self-writing.

The powerful rhetoric of conversion in self-writing, that is, the wording of the life change of a person through a moment of epiphany which Augustine initiated in the history of self-writing, will have its echoes in all the works we will analyze from now on. This moment of epiphany in the autobiographical project of Saint Augustine occurs outdoors when he hears the voice of a child who urges him to read something ‘tolle lege, tolle lege’. Augustine interprets this as a command from God and opens the Scriptures. This moment signals the beginning of a new path, where Augustine rejects his life of sin after reaching a state of total serenity. Oxytocin and dopamine begin to flow, thus the attachment to the text; Augustine’s pain decreases: trust grows, compassion ascends, making Augustine *convert* from his old self to a new one by virtue of the opening of the Scriptures which serve as the medium for the connection to a bigger and never-encompassable ontological truth. Augustine then *becomes* a new self, a self who self-abnegates, a self which, in turn, by virtue of this self-abnegation is, regarded as a self closer to the ideal one he is destined to *become*—to *convert* into—a self closer to the ontological truth herewith mediated:

Dicebam haec et flebam amarissima contritione cordis mei. et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis, quasi pueri an puellae, nescio: ‘tolle lege, tolle lege.’ statimque mutato vultu intentissimus cogitare coepi

utrumnam solerent pueri in aliquo genere ludendi cantitare tale aliquid. nec occorrebat omnino audisse me uspiam, repressoque impetu lacrimarum surrexi, nihil aliud interpretans divinitus mihi iuberi nisi ut aperirem codecem et legerem quod primum caput invenissem. audieram enim de Antonio quod ex evangelica lectione cui forte supervenerat admonitus fuerit, tamquam sibi diceretur quod legebatur: ‘vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelis, et veni, sequere me’, et tali oraculo confestim ad te esse conversum. itaque concitus redii in eum locum ubi sedebat Alypius: ibi enim posueram codicem apostoli cum inde surrexeram. arripui, aperui, et legi in silentio capitulum quo primum coniecti sunt oculi mei: ‘non in comessionibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudiciis, non in contentione et aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis.’ *nec ultra volui legere nec opus erat. statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt.* (Augustine and O’Donnell 1992, 101, emphasis added)

1.1.5. Protestant spiritual autobiography: *communitas* vs. individuality

Spiritual autobiography became especially popular within Protestantism in Europe and North-America, particularly in the English-speaking world and by those willing to break with or simply question the power of the Church of England, that is, mainly by Puritans or Puritan-related sects. This very salient branch of self-writing in the European tradition⁷ up until the 18th century, as Dorsey (1993, 44) points out, had always exemplified a tension between individuality and religious assimilation—as if adhering to a religion would necessarily entail a loss of identity, of uniqueness, even the loss of one’s self at the cost of a promised salvation. Esposito has precisely pointed out this Protean character of the community, which provides identity at the cost of some loss of it in turn: “Bisogna tenere sempre presente questo doppio volto della *communitas*: essa è contemporaneamente la più adeguata, anzi l’unica, dimensione dell’animale ‘uomo’ ma

⁷ It has also been pointed out the important role of spiritual biography in the invention of the novel. J. Samuel Press (1991, 441–66) has established connections between the creation of the novel and the works of Bunyan and Defoe.

anche la sua deriva potenzialmente dissolutiva.” (Esposito 2006, xv) The sense of community somehow becomes pivotal in this kind of spiritual autobiography and it is no longer regarded as a potential perverse influence. John Morris, when discussing the autobiographies of Methodist Christians points out that the inner conflict was such that the moments previous to the conversion necessarily generated a certain reticence on the part of the autobiographer, as if surrendering “to the sanctions of a religion that in its inclusiveness promises—or, as it appears to the self, threatens—salvation at the price of identity.” (J. N. Morris 1966, 139) as Esposito clearly explains. For community provides a sense of belonging to the individual by, precisely, this individual’s isolation from his surrounding communities, limiting his potential identity flexibility, his disintegration among other communities: his conceivable identity crystallizations at the expense of the potentiality of the *Seinkönnen*—eliminating the possibility of a lightness of being: “Munus: dono e obbligo, beneficio e prestazione, congiunzione e minaccia. Gli individui moderno divengono davvero tali—e cioè perfettamente individui, individui ‘assoluti’, circondati da un confine che a un tempo li isola e li protegge—solo se preventivamente liberati dal ‘debito’ che li vincola l’un l’altro Se esentati, esonerati, dispensati da quel contatto che minaccia la loro identità esponendoli al possibile conflitto con il loro vicino. Al contagio della relazione.” (Esposito 2006, xxi)

Spiritual autobiographers followed a very specific pattern in their self-writing, a pattern that was to be followed very carefully if one was willing to adhere to a new welcoming religious *communitas*: the young years had to be unquestionably full of recklessness and sin. Throughout the passing of time, a progressive development of a bad consciousness would make the sinful self enter a state of anxiety and fear for the future of its soul. Relapses would take place, moments when the to-be-converted falls back into a sinful lifestyle and its posterior repentance. Finally, a final state of grace and epiphany ensues and, hence, the *conversion into*—the *becoming of*— a better self. The moments of epiphany resembling Saint Augustine can be seen in this type of Protestant spiritual autobiography, especially in that of John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666):

Suddenly this sentence bolted in upon me, 'The Blood of Christ remits all guilt.' At this I made a stand in my spirit; with that, this word took hold upon me, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin', I John i.7.

Now I began to conceive peace in my soul [...] At the same time also I had my sin, and the blood of Christ thus represented to me, that my sin, when compared to the blood of Christ, was no more to it than this little clot or stone before me, is to this vast and wide field that here I see. (Bunyan 1798, 62)

There is no evidence which would suggest that spiritual autobiographers of 17th century England considered Saint Augustine a main reference, not even that they were familiar with his autobiographical work, *Confessiones*. In fact, John Bunyan, in his autobiographical work one of the most famous spiritual autobiographers in Christianity openly claimed to be following Paul's footsteps, nothing different from Augustine's case, as Bell notes: "throughout the *Confessions* [Augustine] models his development on earlier types of spiritual progress, especially Paul and Jesus." (R. Bell 1977, 111) Luther's influence in these Protestant spiritual autobiographies might be the first one to consider and it has indeed been widely discussed⁸. Notwithstanding, the *imitatio Christi* of these late spiritual autobiographies, especially in the case of Bunyan, signals a very specific turning point in the history of spiritual autobiography: the gradual collapse of a rhetoric not suitable for the new conceptions of the self of the years to come, a crucial element to fully understand the path that self-writing takes and the growth of secular—or rather, secularized—autobiographies in the century to come. As Robert Bell indicates: "Bunyan, and the Puritan sensibility, unknowingly signals the exhaustion of a particular version of the tradition, demanding the rise of new, secular modes of identity in first-person narration by such eighteenth-century writers as Franklin and Rousseau. By comparing *Grace Abounding* to the great archetype of spiritual autobiography, Augustine's *Confessions*, we may discover how traditional Bunyan is, and to what extent he faces new, insoluble problems." (R. Bell 1977, 109)

⁸ See Haskin, D. (1981) Bunyan, Luther, and the Struggle with Belatedness in "Grace Abounding." *University of Toronto Quarterly*. University of Toronto Press.

These convoluted questions were indeed already insoluble for the pre-enlightened man and therefore such struggles can only be understood if we take into consideration the period that John Bunyan was destined to live. Douglas Bush explains 17th century England in a very illuminating manner: “in 1600, the educated Englishman’s mind and world were more than half medieval; by 1660 they were more than half modern.” (Bush 1962, 1) This historical peculiarity, along with Protestant theology, makes Bunyan a less self-assured Christian, constantly being thrown into a state anxiety and confusion, as we can see throughout his whole autobiographical project. As Bell notes: “Bunyan is in the process of becoming a spiritual exemplum, but the process is never fully realized. It remains symbolic, and must be constantly verified.” (R. Bell 1977, 115) This constant need for assurance which Bunyan never fully gets makes Bell say that Bunyan “is never as sure as Augustine”. Partly because of the historical moment he was living, and partly—as Bell notes—because of a state of doubt “endemic to the Puritan view of things, forever poised between hope and despair.” (R. Bell 1977, 118) The tradition of spiritual autobiography initiated by Saint Augustine and the conversion process and rhetoric which he laid out is easily perceivable in subsequent spiritual autobiographies. In the cases just discussed, this conversion rhetoric holds a special “Puritan twist” which could make the Protestant experience seem, as it has been suggested by some scholars, never as compelling as that of Saint Augustine.

1.1.6. Rousseau and the secularization of conversion rhetoric

It goes without saying that the Enlightenment brought about a change in the search for truth, more precisely in the location of the source of truth. No longer was that to be found upwards—up in heaven—but horizontally—down in the world—and, more particularly, in the case of self-writing, *within oneself*. The Enlightenment also brought about a focus on individuality which contributed as well to this idea of identity loss, something which spiritual autobiographers resolved (or at least tried to) by personalizing the conversion experience, which inevitably led to the creation of a new tension: this time between the individuality and the non-transferability of the experience itself, and, at the

same time, the universality and ability to extrapolate the conversion experience⁹. Dorsey notes that this shaped the modern conception of autobiography whose premise suddenly became a “deterministic worldview”; ergo the subsequent secularization of religious values. We must remember, nevertheless, that by noting the path from traditionally-understood religious to traditionally-understood secular values, we will, however, challenge the clear-cut difference of both terms.

The next turning point of interest for the purpose of our study is to be found in the 18th century with the publication of *Les Confessions* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Needless to say, the influence of Rousseau’s thought can be seen in an immense variety of fields, but in particular *Les Confessions* did not only influence the novel and narrative technique, it also meant an important shift—never a break—with the until-then trend of autobiographical works indelibly connected after Augustine with the so-called conversion rhetoric. Rousseau is of crucial importance in the history of autobiography, because he does indeed make use of the aforementioned pattern. He does not define his confessions in opposition to those of spiritual autobiographers, but by “secularizing” the experience, that is, by transferring categories until-then connected with the religious realm to other fields usually lacking them, Rousseau achieves what no other had done previously: he adheres to a pattern which he, simultaneously, subverts. Salvation for Augustine required an introspective process of self-searching, something that was impossible to do in community, in the outside world. Rousseau eventually realizes that the community is willing to betray him, something which pushes him into a journey of self-discovery in Nature, his modern version of a conceptualized deity. It is crucial to understand the process of secularization Rousseau makes in his confessions, due to the fact that this does necessarily entail that Rousseau was not a believer. In fact, he commences his confessions by addressing the “souverain juge” with “ce livre à la main”, and although he does not seem particularly excited about the admission to a *communitas* of converts to Catholicism, he does not mind the Catholic education he obtains there; although later in his life, he will decide to go back to Protestantism. He also appears to be very aggravated by the poem which Voltaire sends him: “Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne.” Rousseau accuses Voltaire of making God seem like a wicked being, something absurd, according to Rousseau: “Voltaire, en paraissant toujours croire en Dieu, n’a réellement jamais cru

⁹As Dorsey notes, this change was propitiated by a “gradual substitution of inductive for deductive modes of thought and by the development of the scientific method.” (Dorsey 1993, 44)

qu'au diable, puisque son Dieu prétendu n'est qu'un être malfaisant qui, selon lui, ne prend de plaisir qu'à nuire. L'absurdité de cette doctrine, qui saute aux yeux, est surtout révoltante dans un homme comblé des biens de toute espèce, qui, du sein du bonheur, cherche à désespérer ses semblables par l'image affreuse et cruelle de toutes les calamités dont il est exempt." (Rousseau 1782, 343–44)

This conundrum regarding the source and meaning of evil which Voltaire portrays and Rousseau counterargues, echoes Saint Augustine's reflections on Manichaeism in book III. One of the challenges which Saint Augustine faces in his complicated love-hate relation with Manichaeism is precisely the puzzling question of the existence of evil in a world where God's omnipotence operates. If we are to consider that God is omnipotent and kind, what can come of God if not goodness? Manichaeans would understand God as not omnipotent and in an unceasing battle with the dark force of evil. Saint Augustine reaffirms God's omnipotence, as "non noveram malum non esse nisi privationem boni usque ad quod omnino non est." (Augustine and O'Donnell 1992, 28) Evil is then understood as the lack of good, the lack of God, for God is all-powerful and benevolent, just as Rousseau defends. It then must be clear that Rousseau's contribution to the secularization of the religious experience of conversion does not stem from a personal rejection of God or whatever form of deistic conception we can assign to Rousseau. This possible assumption, although disregarded, can be a logical one due to the intellectual conflict it incites, as Jonathan Israel notes: "Voltaire's chief difficulty in combating Rousseau, as in fighting Counter-Enlightenment to the right and Radical Enlightenment to the left, was that his position was indeed hard to render cogent intellectually. How does one express agonizing pessimism and skepticism and yet emphasize the role of divine creation, justice, and providence?" (Israel 2011, 54) Rousseau could and, in fact, did find a way to reconcile the idea that God was omnipotent and, at the same time, not to blame for the misery, corruption, and unfair old ways of the world around him. This is what draws special attention to Rousseau's case. Through the secularization of the conversion experience, the values and feelings usually assigned to the religious, somehow mystical, experience, Rousseau does not imply that God, or at least the traditionally institutionalized deism, is an atavism, a necessary obstacle to surpass. Yet by appropriating a conversion discourse which does not lead to a Christian conversion per se, an uncountable number of new possibilities with regards to autobiographical introspection, and hence with regards to the self and the numerous shapes that the self can potentially take, suddenly arises.

Voici le seul portrait d'homme, peint exactement d'après nature et dans toute sa vérité, qui existe et qui probablement existera jamais. Qui que vous soyez, que ma destinée ou ma confiance ont fait l'arbitre du sort de ce cahier, je vous conjure par mes malheurs, par vos entrailles, et au nom de toute l'espèce humaine, de ne pas anéantir un ouvrage unique et utile, lequel peut servir de première pièce de comparaison pour l'étude des hommes, qui certainement est encore à commencer, et de ne pas ôter à l'honneur de ma mémoire le seul monument sûr de mon caractère qui n'ait pas été défiguré par mes ennemis. (Rousseau 1782, 3)

Keen of contradictions, perhaps, Rousseau brands his work as “unique et utile.” A paradox which spiritual autobiographers also faced—as Dorsey notes—when articulating his self-writing as individual and, at the same time, universal. His special way of deconstructing his self serves as an exemplary piece of comparison “pour l'étude des hommes”. When encountering an essay contest with the question “Si le progrès des sciences et des arts a contribué à corrompre ou à épurer les moeurs”, Rousseau experiences an epiphany: “Je vis un autre univers, et je devins un autre homme. [...] Mes sentiments se montèrent, avec la plus inconcevable rapidité, au ton de mes idées. Toutes mes petites passions furent étouffées par l'enthousiasme de la vérité, de la liberté, de la vertu, et ce qu'il y a de plus étonnant est que cette effervescence se soutint dans mon cœur, durant plus de quatre ou cinq ans.” (Rousseau 1782, 355, emphasis added)

This apparent conversion, this *converting* into another man, leads him to become an engaged individual, part of society for some time, just like spiritual autobiographers would find a place in a Christian *communitas* after their conversion. The paradox, and hence the shift—never a break—with this more traditional way of encountering oneself in society, is to be found in the escapist tendency which he simultaneously develops when losing himself in nature. Setting the ground for the yet-to-come sacralization of nature by the Romantics, this escapism is not a mere way of escaping the banality and boredom of everyday life, but a means to find his true self, or at least another shape of this self to be found. It is with “la vue de la campagne, la succession des aspects agréables, le grand air” before his eyes, only in the absence of “tout ce qui me fait sentir ma dépendance, de tout ce qui me rappelled à ma situation”. Only in this situation, Rousseau says he can feel his

spirit free and be thrown into “l’immensité des êtres”¹⁰. This always cathartic nature, however, is not the master of man, as Rousseau explains: “je dispose en maître de la nature entière”. This sacralized nature, this new pre-Romantic deity is not only found on earth: it is also reduced to man’s desires.

In exploring his true self in both society and nature, Rousseau introduces the idea that one’s true self can also be found with the help of no one, but with this double epiphany originated from taking part in society and experiencing “l’immensité des êtres”, Rousseau opens the door to a constant tension, *the oxymoron of identity*. It has been suggested that given the fact that Rousseau claims that this second self is the true one, Rousseau was indeed more interested in calling for another way of understanding oneself, a way distant from the spiritual autobiographical manner of losing one’s individuality when immersed in a *communitas*. These two antagonistic epiphanies cast light on the importance of considering paradoxes with regards to identity, a more honest (and scientific) way of approaching a psyche. By opening the door to contradiction in various ways, Rousseau portrays a more faithful way perhaps of tackling and understanding human nature. The tension is no longer that which ensues between the sinner and the saved one, but within oneself.

One of the key elements which Rousseau introduces in his *Confessions*, and which means a total departure from the spiritual autobiography tradition, is the concept, or rather reconceptualization, of the conversion experience, as Dorsey notes: “For Augustine, God was the only source of grace, who in radical act of transformation gave meaning and value to an individual’s life. For Rousseau, conversion—although an experiential reality—had variable consequences. It could change one’s ideas, define one’s personality, merge one with a community or draw one into isolation. Less than an absolute good, conversion simply became a means by which one perceived the world.” (Dorsey 1993, 48) This new worldview, this understanding of converting as becoming one’s “truer” self every time leads to the identity problematics of the modern man. From a post-structuralist point of view, this new self is self-aware and also, or thus perhaps, constantly and ultimately self-divided, while verbalizing such division “in the rhetoric of a unique, unified or pre-existing self.” (Anderson 2001, 51) Hence, in part, the origin of such contradicted self: *in lack of harmony with itself and in lack of harmony with its own semantics*.

¹⁰ Very famously translated by J. M. Cohen and innumerable times quoted as “the vastness of things”.

1.1.7. Conversion rhetoric and Romanticism

The so-called Romantic mood propitiated by Rousseau, among others, came from the conclusion that the proliferation of culture had had mainly hurtful effects on mankind. The escapist tendency of Rousseau, that is, a revival of a somehow primitive attempt to go back to nature and fix man's soul, can be perceived in Romantic autobiographers. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850) is a great example of this sacralization of nature, this new and at the same time primitive deity of whom he speaks religiously. Nature, the developer of morality, the giver of man's greatest gifts, the eye-opener to beauty, the only transcendental instructor in Wordsworth's life: "O Nature! Thou hast fed / My lofty speculations; and in thee, / Fort his uneasy heart of ours, I find / A never-failing principle of joy / And purest passion." (Wordsworth 1992, 447–51 Book II) His autobiographical poem is full of praises to Nature as the giver of life as well as the fosterer of religious experiences. In Book XIV when mesmerized by the Welsh landscape, Wordsworth writes:

[...] it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts

And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power.

(Wordsworth 1992, 66–76 Book XIV)

Perceiving Nature as the medium for God's expression has been suggested as a possible reading of Wordsworth's poetic self-writing (Bloom 1971, 163). We hold, nevertheless, that this consideration disregards the constant sacralization of Nature which Wordsworth makes throughout his poem. The Nature he experiences as a young man is articulated in the poem by means of a rhetoric of evangelical Christianity (Dorsey 1993,

50): Oft in these moments such a holy calm / Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes / Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw / Appeared like something in myself, a dream, / A prospect in the mind. (Wordsworth 1992, 349–53 Book II) Just as Rousseau, Wordsworth idealizes his aimless wanderings, his morning and nocturnal walks, something which triggers a specific mood—a specific cognitive state—where he is able to discern the evolution of his soul. Both share a common secularization of certain cognitive states, and the rhetoric they elicit, which until then belonged in the realm of spiritual experience. The most salient point of contention between Rousseau’s and Wordsworth’s Nature is, however, the role of the *communitas*. We discussed how Rousseau’s shifting self resolves itself with the achievement of a truer version of himself in nature. Rousseau becomes eventually disenchanted with society, to an almost paranoid level. Wordsworth, on the other hand, expresses in Book VII how Nature occupies the most important place in his life. Without disregarding humanity, it still occupies a secondary position for Wordsworth until he turns twenty-two. A more mature Wordsworth concludes that this love for Nature he feels finds a logical extension in the love for mankind.

1.1.8. Stuart Mill and the intellectualization of conversion rhetoric

John Stuart Mill’s autobiography and some of his ideas published in a variety of different works throughout his life constitutes our next step in the study of the religious implications of autobiography. Although a great admirer of Wordsworth work, Mill’s view on nature differs considerably from one of his favorite poet’s: nature is no longer understood as a divine-like supernatural entity. As Mill lays out at the very beginning of his essay “Nature”, nature has always been in the history of mankind charged with sentimentality. Understanding nature also in a broader sense as all possible phenomena as well as everything which does not entail artificial or human interference, his view of nature depicts a very radical opposition to the one we have seen in previous writers. By equating nature with death and injustice, Mill’s rejects nature, by extension, as any possible source of morality, hence the demystification of the Romantic Goddess *par excellence*, Nature:

In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are nature's everyday performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives; and in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow-creatures. [...] Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve [...] All this, Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst; upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequence of the noblest acts. (Mill 1885, 28–29)

Mill's religion, the religion of humanity, also entails a rejection of any supernatural justification at all. This non-supernatural religion can work as the basis for morality (Oppy and Trakakis 2009, 147) and it would necessarily involve a rejection of any kind of mystical references, as supernatural religion does. This finds its inception in Mill's lack of a religious upbringing, as he himself explains in his autobiography: "I am thus one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it: I grew up in a negative state with regard to it. I looked upon the modern exactly as I did upon the ancient religion, as something which in no way concerned me." (Mill 2013, 42) The contradiction which we can find in Mill's thoughts on religion and conversion rhetoric contrasts with the one we saw in Rousseau's case. Rousseau, a believer, opened the door for numberless accounts of secularized conversion rhetorical devices. Stuart Mill, a non-believer, not only understands the utility of supernatural religion as a source of moral guidance but also makes use of conversion rhetoric: firstly, when encountering the utilitarian ideas of Jeremy Bentham. For Mill, the ideas of "Benthamism", as he puts it, mean a total departure from previous modes of reasoning deduced from secretly dogmatic premises like "law of nature", "right reason", "the moral sense" or "natural rectitude". Bentham overturns this dogmatism and such realization provokes Mill a sort of cathartic experience: "the feeling rushed upon me, that all previous moralists were superseded and that here indeed was the commencement of a new era in thought." (Mill 2013, 64) The intellectual tone of this realization is prolonged

for a few lines: “I felt taken up to an eminence from which I could survey a vast mental domain, and see stretching out into the distance intellectual results beyond computation.” (Mill 2013, 64–65) Nevertheless, this apparently intellectual revelation starts acquiring very fast a more spiritual tone that resembles nothing else than conversion rhetoric: “It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, *a religion*. The inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life. And I had a grand conception laid before me of changes to be effected in the condition of mankind through that doctrine.” (Mill 2013, 65–66, emphasis added)

It must be remembered that the “saint of rationalism”, as British Prime Minister William Gladstone named him, suffered throughout his life important psychological crises product of a very early and intense education. The epiphany experienced when encountering the utilitarian ideas of Bentham comes to an end when Mill realizes (at his early twenties) that the extensive and impeccable education he has gotten does not secure his happiness. It is at this point in Mill’s life when an emotional need sinks him into depression. In this precise moment, Mill finds consolation in Wordsworth’s poetry, as we have already seen, poetry portraying a sacralized nature that Mill would later on in his life completely demystify. For a much younger Mill, however, two autobiographical works (Wordsworth’s poetry and Marmontel’s autobiographical project) awaken something which Mill until then considered he lacked: emotion. Consequently, Mill finds of crucial importance a re-articulation of utilitarianism, one that would not limit man’s reason, but that would not ignore man’s affections; and just as Saint Augustine experiences an epiphany by the opening of the Scriptures, or Rousseau by accidentally discovering an essay contest when reading the newspaper, Mill comes accidentally to the passage of Marmontel’s memoirs where Marmontel recounts his father’s death and the fact that he was to fill his father’s shoes:

A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my burden grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me, was gone. I was no longer hopeless: I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character, and all capacity for happiness, are made. Relieved from my ever present sense of irremediable wretchedness, I gradually found that the ordinary incidents of life could again give me some pleasure; that I could again

find enjoyment, not intense, but sufficient for cheerfulness, in sunshine and sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs; and that there was, once more, excitement, though of a moderate kind, in exerting myself for my opinions, and for the public good. Thus the cloud gradually drew off, and I again enjoyed life: and though I had several relapses, some of which lasted many months, I never again was as miserable as I had been. (Mill 2013, 140)

The last step in the evolution of conversion rhetoric, for the purpose of our study, is then exemplified by Stuart Mill's self-writing. In this last case, we find a demystified rhetoric: the conversion, that is, the turning into, the becoming, of a new updated self—somehow a truer one, more representative and closer to the ideal—is not propitiated by virtue of a traditionally-holy scripture, as we saw in Rousseau or Wordsworth. Nevertheless, the triggering aspect of the conversion does not reside in an irrational mediation to a bigger ontological truth. What Mill commences in the history of self-writing, is the intellectualization of such moment of epiphany: no longer irrational or traditionally-mystical, but still an epiphany, a sudden turning point, a point which triggers the conversion into a new self. This conversion provides Mill with a clearer and somehow more elevated cosmovision; an experience which, although highly intellectualized by Mill, cannot escape an obvious connection with a religious semantics. Mill rhetorically connects his new cosmovision with a creed, with a doctrine. This experience, as intellectualized and secularized as it can be, takes Mill to the obvious source of such totalizing worldview: religion.

1.1.9. Self-writing, religion, and the problematics of feminist criticism

The authors we have so far included with the purpose of portraying the importance of religion in self-writing, and every *secularized sacralization* which from it necessarily stems, are all male writers, writers who constitute the literary and intellectual canon. One of the topics we will tackle in depth when discussing Ruth Klüger relationship with religion and ritual will be Klüger's feminist views. In order to understand feminist writers, we need to understand feminist optics. This feminist lens results in a necessary-conflictive view on history in general and—for the purpose of our study—on the history of self-writing, the relation between women and self-writing, spiritual autobiography or even

literature. For authors who adhere to such theoretical approach to art and history, discussing the evolution of self-writing and the narrative construction of the self, brings along the issue which stems from the low number of female writers and role models throughout history, that is, the low number of female authors who constitute the canon. Progressively, more and more attention is given to female writers, as the study of their works becomes less and less marginal (or perhaps the scope of Literary Criticism becomes more and more so). Be it as it may, it is by means of these studies how crucial questions arise with regards to the construction of the female self, the female expectations and the problematics regarding the feminist female relationship to the intellectual and literary canon. Within this theoretical framework of feminist criticism, the female self-negotiation in a genre shaped by male writers, triggers questions about gender expectations and the arduous way towards self-understanding for feminist female writers. This particular way of relating to literature, self-writing, and religion must be kept in mind when discussing authors like Ruth Klüger; for the relationship with the literary canon is, in general, a problematic one.

In one of her most acclaimed works, *Frauen lesen anders*, Ruth Klüger (1996) notes how the female reading experience differs significantly from the male reading experience. This does not only imply that young females are taught to read different works than their male counterparts, but that they are also taught to conceal the undisguised marginalization that women find in canonical works. The most striking aspect of Klüger's argument (that is not only portrayed in *Frauen lesen anders* but all throughout her academic work, her autobiographical works, as well as her documentary films) is precisely the appealing to sex differences instead of gender ones, establishing the dichotomy at a biological level and not at the level of gender performance. This reference to biological differences is a kind of claim which consistently becomes more and more discussed nowadays in any branch of the humanities which enters in contact with neuroscience, although it is still very far from the general tendency established in the Humanities, where the study of gender and the theoretical constructions in which it results is hardly ever contrasted with neuroscientific evidence. Only those who come into contact with neuroscience might adhere to such biological claims. They are, however, also characteristic of previous stages of feminist criticism. Thus, Klüger's feminist criticism, by distancing itself from contemporary feminist criticism (that of the so-called third-wave feminism) distances itself also from a very widespread understanding of gender as a

spectrum (main axiom of third-wave feminist criticism) instead of an unsolvable dichotomy based on biological differences (main evidence of neuroscientific research).

Per Klüger, women, in an attempt not to identify with the passive and suffering victims to which women conform in these canonical works, women are forced to identify with male protagonists, she defends. Klüger draws comparison with the way black readers relate to white authors¹¹, and the convulsive way in which they are forced to negotiate their self-understanding, and also the way Jews relate to anti-Semitic works. The point Klüger makes is that in order to achieve a more neutral discursive position, women require an extra effort than “more privileged readers”, per her, men. By demonstrating how female readings of canonical authors like Goethe might differ enormously from a male reading, Klüger introduces a now more interiorized premise in humanities circles. This dichotomy between female and male readers and the problematics which originate from antagonist approaches to the canon can be extrapolated to any minority which aims to come to a proper self-understanding in a necessary role of alterity. Understanding then the lens through which Klüger relates to the literary canon will help us to understand her way of relating to literature, religion, and the negotiation of power and honor which necessarily takes place within them; the consciousness of Otherness in relation to the canon is established by the different categories which constitute alterity when tackling historically-recognized pieces of literature.

When looking at and analyzing the few female examples who stand out in the history of autobiography as well as the references to women in some of the male autobiographical works, it is not difficult to perceive these gender problematics in authors who adhere to feminist criticism. Klüger’s argument can be taken to a next step when noting that this minority experience and the identification, or the will to, with a more privileged role model, encompasses the interiorization of a marginalization awareness; a premise we will see all over Klüger’s work and in relationship to different experiences of alterity. Following this approach, any female readings of the canon which does not manifest a necessary role of alterity can come to be seen as self-hating under the prism of feminist criticism. In the case of the female reading of Augustine, the first

¹¹ Probably the most famous work in which the problematics of gender and race are addressed in fictional form might be Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970). In Morrison’s work, the catastrophic consequences of a failure at developing a proper self-understanding avoiding self-hatred are addressed from the point of view of a young African-American girl.

autobiographical writer that we have considered in this chapter, this might be exemplified when female Religious Studies scholars—counterarguing feminist theologians or feminist critics who tackle religious questions—might be regarded as adhering to a self-hating condition when, for example, Augustine’s image of women might not be regarded as strictly misogynistic. To name one, the case of Ellen Weaver (1981) might come as one of the clearest examples of such non-feminist approach to the literary and religious canon. Weaver counterargues Rosemary Reuther’s feminist ideas with regards to the notion of the minority/majority or oppressed/privileged dichotomy which constitute the initial premise from which these readings of female alterity regarding the canon draw. Weaver interprets the opposition man/woman as a mere “rhetorical device”, as, according to her, it is a mistake to “interpret [Augustine’s] image of woman unilaterally on the basis of a dialectic concept of dualism.” (Weaver and Laport 1981, 116) Following Weaver’s reading, the problematics stemming from the fact that Augustine, as he explains in his *Confessiones*, does not let women live under his same roof, as a way to protect the clergymen living with him is rapidly eliminated. Moreover, Weaver plays down the importance of calling women “lower” given the fact that Augustine was part of a society where “woman commonly is in an inferior situation.” (Weaver and Laport 1981, 131) Through the lens of feminist criticism (and, more precisely, through this special kind of second-wave feminist criticism to which Klüger adheres), these female writers’ experience with religion differ considerably from those female writers who understand the *Sitz im Leben* in which a particular canonical piece of literature is produced. Thus, the latter achieve a disassociation (perhaps partial, but still crucial) from a strict experience of female alterity; ultimately resulting in the disappearance of any marginalization awareness and, by extension, a more positive ritual experience.

On a totally opposite side, we find Reuther’s feminist theology noting a more propagated reading of religion, a reading through which the “defects” of what she calls “patriarchal theology” are located and highlighted: mainly androcentrism, misogyny, and sexism. Thereby, in Reuther’s major work, *Sexism and God Talk* (1983), still the most salient contribution to the topic, Reuther criticizes how women are put in a complementary position defended by Augustine, something which reinforces their inferior and submissive disposition. Reuther also criticizes the Augustinian idea that women are not fully in divine image, that a woman is the one to blame for the fall of man or that in heaven, women’s bodies will not excite lust. This reading of canonical works, by focusing on the constant power relations established between men and women, entails

the willingness to create a more encompassing and inclusive theology and approach to divinity. As we will see, Ruth Klüger's ambivalent approach to religion, adheres to this critical perspective on religion: all the lexicon usually associated to feminist criticism will then be found in the discussion of her works. As we will note, this entails a constant frustration with many ritual activities and hierarchies and, as we will also discuss, a concluding ambivalent feeling towards her attraction to partake in (Orthodox) Jewish rituals.

Interestingly enough, some of the first examples of spiritual autobiographies which we can find in vernacular languages are written by women: Mechthild von Magdeburg (1207-1290) or Margareta Ebner (1291-1351) are representative of these first autobiographies in the German language, and Margery Kempe (1373-1438) in the English language. The latter is even considered, by some scholars, as the first example of an autobiographical work in English. When looking at different studies on autobiography, the problems with regards to the role of women in these writings constitute one of the main differences between studies conducted within or outside feminist criticism. Either by branding spiritual autobiography as a phallogentric genre or by acclaiming the role of female spiritual autobiographers, the social restraints which female writers present in their writing is, however, perceivable. Naturally, the female reality throughout these centuries do not resemble in any way that of the male one and, consequently, it would be a mistake to read female autobiography searching for the male characteristics we are to find in the canon.

The debate around whether female writers are belittled or not when dealing with autobiography might not stem from a quantitative lack of works written by women from the 17th up to the 19th century, but rather by other considerations. Some would contemplate some of these female writings as marginal, some others would fight to make them part of a canon which is, consequently, understood as too male-oriented. As Dorsey notes when counterarguing the idea that spiritual autobiography is a phallogentric genre: "Women spiritual autobiographers have had to negotiate their versions of self within the discourses of patriarchal culture, but these kinds of negotiations are present in all autobiographies written by women." (Dorsey 1993, 62) Therefore, branding autobiography as a mere male genre entails a constant negotiation of the autobiographical self and (as it is suggested by feminist scholars) this negotiation has historically translated

into an appropriation of a somehow male mood.¹² If we aim to consider the struggle of feminist self-writers in what is understood by them as a male-dominated genre, we need to understand that—regardless of whether we accept or reject such premise—the intellectual disposition of these feminist authors come from the belief that they, as female writers, are to fill men’s shoes.

1.1.10. Autobiography, religion, and conversion rhetoric

As it has been noted, Saint Augustine indelibly connected a kind of spiritual rhetoric regarding self-writing with the *ex post facto* analysis of one’s life and vital trajectory, until then connected, solely, with a sense of didacticism which did not permit the writer to enter the introspective and reflective mood which gave birth to the genre of autobiography as we know it. This autobiographical mood—and the spirituality with which Augustine indelibly linked it—has been subject to modifications throughout history: Puritans would emphasize the role of the *communitas* in contrast with Saint Augustine’s conception of community as the potential state for sinning. This introduced several problems to Protestant spiritual autobiographers with regards to the tension between individuality and community. A certain loss of oneself was linked with the coming into a spiritual community that created a constant and—in most cases—irresolvable conundrum between being oneself and the *Mitsein*, that is, being one with others. This is portrayed in many cases as the real drama of the self-writer, that is, whether to be faithful to oneself or faithful to the religion towards which the self-writer was heading. Nevertheless, this dramatic tension signaled a rhetoric that was already in decay, as it was no longer suitable for the soon-to-come modern man. This is why some scholars read John Bunyan’s autobiography, the most representative of Protestant spiritual autobiographies, as a dramatic case of someone who could not, in any way, be as assured as Augustine was, unable perhaps to avoid the skeptical mood towards which the modern man was inexorably walking in the 17th century.

¹² Barbara Johnson has gone as far as to reading Mary Shelley’s monstrousness depicted in *Frankenstein* “not as mere studies of the monstrousness of selfhood, not as mere accounts of human monsterdom in general, but as autobiographies in their own right, as textual dramatizations of the very problems with which they deal” (Johnson 1987, 145).

Rousseau initiated the most innovative contribution to the genre of autobiography: a whole set of feelings and rhetorical devices no longer were used to reference a traditional deity or a religious affiliation. Although a believer himself, knowledge and, thus, community, become sacralized for Rousseau. Hence, we can say that he adheres to a more Puritan pattern of community-centric rhetoric. Nonetheless, this welcoming conception of community is not bound to last, and Rousseau realizes after only a few years: the community is merely willing to betray him. An almost paranoid rejection of the community pushes Rousseau to the discovery of a new sacralized entity: Nature. Only in nature, only through escapism, Rousseau finds his true self, apart from everyone. Again, coming back to a more Augustinian conception of the true self in isolation, but while distancing himself from a conversion to a supernatural religion, Rousseau initiates in self-writing the use of a supernatural rhetoric that until then had no connection whatsoever with secular references. Wordsworth—quintessential of the Romantic mood—finds firstly in nature a state of grace that took Rousseau so long to discover, but this sacralized nature and the love that it inspires him only concludes in a love for humanity. Again, back to the community.

The last step in the evolution of conversion rhetoric we find in Stuart Mill's autobiographical work. Mill demystifies nature, as this is not gentle: it is a constant danger, a constant threat, although the beauty which emanates from the romantic sacralization of nature once helped him in his desolation. The epiphany—the conversion experience—for Mill follows the pattern of Saint Augustine or of early Rousseau: the opening of a new book, the reading of a new idea, the discovery of a revelation triggers the conversion experience, but this no longer finds its foundation in the traditionally-supernatural, or a traditionally-supernatural conception of nature or the community. Mill opens the door in autobiography to the intellectual epiphany that Rousseau never truly encountered, and so the conversion rhetoric finds a new articulation.

The tension between isolation and *communitas* can be seen throughout all these self-writers. The aim of the analysis of all these writers is to acknowledge that conversion rhetoric, as well as religion, need to be understood in broader terms. By understanding conversion rhetoric as a continuum between the religiously-sacred and the secularly-sacred, the line between secularism and religion becomes blurred. The negotiation of the community dynamics, as well as the articulation of a rhetorically-supernatural epiphany, is central in the works of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer. As we will see, they too used their own version of conversion—and deconversion—rhetoric to verbalize such

experiences. It would be impossible to understand their autobiographical works in these terms without acknowledging the evolution that autobiography, religion, and conversion rhetoric have undergone throughout the centuries. Only in this way, we can advocate a broader understanding of religion and religious experience in academia which would not only be restricted to traditional approaches of temple-based religion and that will be, perhaps, more faithful to the ways of encountering religion and conversion rhetoric in modern times.

The female experience, however, forces us to reconsider established expectations in self-writing. Through a feminist prism, reading Augustine's ideas towards women as well as the gender expectations of women in the Judeo-Christian tradition poses different challenges for feminist writers. In this sense, the negotiation of identity that a female self-writer undergoes differs considerably from that of a male self-writer. Self-writing, under such feminist prism, can be branded as a "phallogentric" genre, but our academic interest is far from such discussion. The point behind choosing to focus on an author like Ruth Klüger and her problematic relationship with religion is precisely motivated by the study of the consequences of the interiorization of such feminist premises.

1.2. How religion?

1.2.1. Religion as *culture*, culture as *media*

The theoretical approach we follow to discuss the articulation of religion and ritual in Klüger and Friedländer's self-writing was born within the field of Cultural Studies. The scholars to whom we will refer, belong to the fields of philosophy of religion, religious ethnology and anthropology. Our objects of study are, nevertheless, autobiographical and essay works of contemporary scholars. Therefore, several differences need to be born in mind: firstly, and most importantly, these writers identify themselves with agnosticism¹³. Their present-day selves show no adherence to traditionally-understood religious observance; still, religious references are to be found in many crucial moments of their self-writing, that is, in moments when a cardinal relationship with the *communitas* is reflected upon. On the one hand, this alone would suffice for the study of how religion is portrayed by agnostics who, due to this agnosticism and the fact that they are scholars, show a certain alterity, perhaps a more aseptic and dissective mood: an academic outsider's perspective and, hence, the ability to theorize and analyze the process of religious expression from a scholar's point of view. Secondly, we argue that Ruth Klüger's sacralization of certain Jewish rituals allows us to view her writing as more religious than a mere first-reading would suggest. In this chapter, we aim to discuss the conceptualizing of certain key terms we will use within this culturalist study of religion and which will provide us a matrix of terms—a semantics—which finds a proper place within the study of culture as it is usually approached in contemporary academic spheres. Our purpose is not to exceed a semantic discussion but to define and mark the boundaries of relevant concepts which help us to tackle religion in the context of modernity, and especially, in authors who are situated beyond the atheist-believer dialectic.

This so-called 'culturalist approach'—whose birth can be, as Morgan notes, traced to the publication of "A Culturalist Approach to Communication" by James Carey in 1975 (Morgan 2008, 3)—bridged the notion of communication with that of religion through

¹³ Atheism might be too strong of a term for the purpose of our categorization of Klüger and Friedländer's attitude towards religion. The use of it might presuppose a theoretical standpoint of the authors we discuss by suggesting a certain excessive proactivity regarding the defense of their lack of adherence to traditional observance.

the understanding of communication as “transmission” and as “ritual”, two concepts whose origins are religious. Drawn on John Dewey’s works, Carey notes that the goal of communication more than the mere diffusion of information, is precisely the creation and construction of meaning, that is, a “meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control or container for human action.” (1989, 18) Although, as we will see, many of the concepts and premises can be seen as having a Marxist pedigree, branding them as Marxist would be inaccurate, as they amalgamate different theoretical approaches.

The reflection upon the false prediction of the *Gott-ist-tot-Theologie* might be the starting point from these scholars who study a religious Renaissance in a world under—or perhaps rather after—modern secularism. Religion has not only flourished in its more fundamentalist forms but also in new religious movements which use media as their central medium for expansion. In recent years, however, the understanding of media transcends the conception of it as mere vehicles for communication. As Horsfield notes, media must be understood as “sites where construction, negotiation, and reconstruction of cultural meaning takes place in an ongoing process of maintenance and change of cultural structures, relationships, meanings and values.” (Morgan 2008, 113) The idea is understanding human interaction as constantly mediated, that is, in an ongoing process through which a constant negotiation of power occurs and hierarchies are established; hence, a constant creation of meaning takes place. This creation of meaning *creates* reality, but as Zito notes, there is a reciprocal relationship: “[mediation is] the construction of social reality where people are constantly engaged in producing the material world around them, even as they are, in turn, produced by it.” (Zito 2008, 726)

The beginning of this more cultural perspective on communication constitutes a premise for many scholars who, from 1990 onwards, have established themselves as pioneers in the study of religion within Cultural Studies. The nature of this approach does not encompass a genealogical study of religion: the Marxist epistemology present in this culturalist approach to religion is precisely the study of religious crystallizations in light of its contemporary performances. Moreover, although a Foucauldian influence is easy to perceive in the understanding of the power-relations originated in ritual, our study, given its non-genealogical nature, does not attempt to surpass the discourse itself and deconstruct the concept until a supposed elucidation of its own discursive impossibility, a rather recurrent Foucauldian tendency. Rather than starting off by a prescriptive account of what religion or culture is, this culturalist approach has opened the door to discussions around the meaning of those and other concepts related to religious expression. Along

with these scholars, we avoid a clear deterministic view based on historical, ethnic or even biological factors. We will discuss the importance and the particularities of a specific historical *Sitz im Leben*, the ethnic background, the national origin, and the gender of the authors whom we consider in our research, but rather than determining a kind of experience, we see them as modifiers of such experience.

Clifford Geertz added to the discussion on the study of religion by referring to its cultural dimensions. Noting the problematics which stem from the reference to culture, he argues that this concept must not be understood as a floating signifier: “it [culture] denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” (Geertz 1973, 89) Culture can be an ambiguous concept, used strategically to define certain productions or appeal to certain common practices. Zito proposes to understand culture through three phases: “culture as meaning, culture beyond meaning as practice, and finally, culture in terms of mediation.” (Morgan 2008, 70) Understood in these terms, culture and religion can share a similar description: they both provide believers with a matrix of meaning-making mediated rituals—a system of symbols—which ultimately attempts to—and, in fact, does—explain the world around and provides an ethical view of it.

Later in the discussion concerning this new approach to tackle religion and ritual, Stewart Hoover would stress the meaning-making function of religion as an essential part of it and Jesús Martín-Barbero would introduce the idea of “mediation”, meaning-making is mediated. Media, consequently, cannot just be understood as the mere physical vehicle (books, TV or movies) but, instead, we must view media “as the physical and mental space of interaction between the person producing the message within a particular media form, the media form itself, and what the person who receives the communication does with it.” (Horsfield in Morgan 2008, 119) Including this last step in a mediated process, that is, the consequences that media have on the receiver lets us discern one of the most conventional conceptions of ritual as the consequence of an already established belief. It is under this broader conception of media through which we can depart from a strict structuralist view of culture and religion as something static and rather stable, and start understanding it as a series of processes. We can say, then, that religion, media, and culture “occupy the same spaces, serve many of the same purposes, and invigorate the same practices in modernity.” (Hoover 2006, 9)

1.2.2. Religion-culture-media as *meaning* and *practice*

Following this approach, the creation of meaning is considered one of the main functions of religion and culture and—in this sense—the definition of religion which Clifford Geertz provides, contains the different phases that make up religious experience. Per Geertz, religion is: “(1) A system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.” (Geertz 1973, 90) This understanding of religion as a “set of symbols” provides us with a properly delimited concept of what it is we are studying when tackling religion, as it—furthermore—fits perfectly to a hermeneutical philological approach. These symbols can be interpreted, as well as the ground to which they lead, where mediation, power, and meaning can be analyzed and discussed. This conception of religion and ritual, nevertheless, can be taken a step further. For—following this approach to religion—it becomes clear who the observer and who the observed one is, that is, this conceptualization of what religion is does not exceed the dynamics between the analyzer and the analyzed subject. Given the particularities of the authors we are to discuss, we need an approach which—although understanding religion in these culturalist terms—must necessarily go beyond the analyzer-analyzed dichotomy, that is, it must surpass the idea that such categories are impersonated by different subjects. We are not studying spiritual autobiography in the sense previously discussed (at least not when referring to religion and religious ritual, traditionally understood). The approach to religion to which Klüger and Friedländer adhere—and which gives form to their own self-understanding as religious partakers—establishes itself beyond the atheist-believer and the analyzer-analyzed dialectic.

It is at this point of the conversion when the contribution of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu casts plenty of light upon the question regarding the prerequisites of religious adherence, given the attention he especially gives to ritual in his work *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (2000). By studying different social rituals among the Kabyle, he concludes by saying that, in social rituals, there is a constant negotiation of dominance and honor. He also concludes by challenging the traditional idea that belief precedes practice. More than understanding practice as the *Inszenierung* of a prefabricated set of cultural and religious values, practice is to be understood as the arena where several aspects of culture are challenged, defined, and redefined; thus—rather than recreating meaning and value—*creating* meaning and value. A crucial distinction

between the partaker who adheres to this set of power structures and the critical one is perhaps a level of self-awareness within ritual. If the ritual partaker rejects the idea that belief precedes practice—and, instead, understands that practice precedes belief—the religious dynamics are completely subverted; not because they bespeak another form of religious expression, but because they bespeak another level of religious understanding and, hence, of religious self-awareness.

Practice results, then, in another concept which within the study of religion needs to be expanded in order to explain intricate cultural phenomena. Originally a concept with a Marxist pedigree, it is usually understood as the praxis of an already self-understood observer. In the context of this culturalist approach to religion, Klassen however notes the following: “Conventionally speaking, a ‘practicing’ Christian, Buddhist, or Jew is one who cultivates her or his religious identity not only as a question of intellectual assent or accident of birth but in daily or weekly customary actions such as going to church, mediation, or observing holy days. Interestingly, however, we rarely speak of “practiced” Christians, Buddhists, or Jews as we would of a “practiced liar,” implying that the job of cultivating religious identity is never done.” (Klassen in Morgan 2008, 137) This understanding of practice helps us to discern different ways of being religious, especially in contexts where religiosity is marginalized, considered an already-forgotten atavism not even worthy of critical analysis. It is also especially helpful in seemingly secular spheres, or—as it is the case of our study—in authors who describe themselves as non-observant but who, nevertheless, reflect upon the meaning of moments of observance or adherence to religious rituals.

Within this culturalist approach to religion, the work of one particular scholar especially serves us to understand the portrayal of religion in Ruth Klüger’s works. B. Meyer casts light upon the question of community formation by coining the terms “aesthetic formations”, “practice of mediation”, and “sensational form”, concepts into which we will delve further once we discuss specific passages in Klüger and Friedländer’s autobiographical works. For the purpose of this brief introduction to this culturalist approach, we would like to highlight Meyer’s understanding of religion as “a practice of mediation that organizes the relationship between experiencing subjects and the transcendental via particular sensation forms.” (B. Meyer 2006, 18) It is precisely by reflecting upon the concept of practice through which we can start discerning several different ways of being religious and practicing religion, ultimately reflecting upon what constitutes a believer or an observer, how religious identities can still be found in authors

who do not consider themselves religious and, lastly, the role and influence of religious mediation in the construction of identity. As Klassen suggests, the question of practice as the necessary conclusion of belief is challenged. Would it possible, then, to talk about a practicing Christian and a practiced one? Does belief precede practice? Or does practice mediate between practitioner and ontological truth thus creating—rather than recreating—meaning and community identity?

Much of the research within the field of anthropology and ethnology is established upon a necessary hierarchical structure; a hierarchy between a rather not self-aware practitioner and the scholar. The practices of the observed one and their adherence to a religious affiliation serve as the object of study for the observer. This relationship between the scholar and the practitioner has been subject to analysis for many decades now, not only in order to tackle the perspective of the practitioner who feels observed but also the perspective of the scholar, as Bourdieu notes, “l’observateur observé” (2000, 225). Practice acquires a new nuance once the practitioner turns self-aware, as we have already suggested; hence, perhaps, able to bridge both perspectives. This unique view is hardly ever findable in anthropological studies, as the split between observer and observed is a necessary requirement of the anthropological research. We can find it, nevertheless, in Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer’s self-writing, that is, in non-fictional literature. This culturalist approach on media and religion lets us analyze more deeply Ruth Klüger’s articulation of some kind of religious aspiration, because—as Stewart Hoover notes— “[modern] audiences are self-conscious about their practices, and this self-consciousness plays an important role in modern identity formation.” (Morgan 2008, 39)

For the purpose of this dissertation, we are to firstly draw from academic sources which expand traditional notions of what constitutes a religious experience. Our aim is to come to a holistic view of what a religious experience means for these post-Shoah authors who, on the one hand, feel indelibly connected to a Jewish identity and, on the other hand, struggle to establish the way they are to relate to an ethnic religion like Judaism and its practices. It can be argued that the Jewish identity of these authors draws from the Shoah experience, and we are to adhere to such perspective¹⁴. Much of these authors’ Jewishness

¹⁴ The complexities of secular Jewish identity are, naturally, not new in the Jewish world and, needless to say, many are the examples of emancipated and almost-assimilated Jews throughout the centuries who have struggled with such tensions. In the context of our dissertation, however, our approach to these tensions necessarily pivot around the importance of the Shoah as the ultimate shaping factor of them.

is shaped during and after the Shoah and, thus, it must always remain in sight. Still, ritual practices do take place in the life of these authors: not only creating but constituting ethnic as well as religious shades to their identity. We will delve further into the constituents of Jewish identity, but for the understanding of the religious experience we will treat in this chapter, we believe that it would be a mistake to consider religion and belief equal. We do not adhere to the belief that belief itself precedes religion. Furthermore, we do not adhere to the understanding of belief as connected with any theological claim regarding God, God's nature or God's plan for mankind. Religious practice, as we understand it, operates in the arena of social practice. It induces the partaker to certain cognitive states through its rituality and—thus—creates, constitutes, shapes and reshapes identity, subject formation and sense of belonging.

1.2.3. Shoah, Jewish self-writing, and religion

The term 'Shoah Literature' has been used to refer to various kinds of texts written in the period from 1933 to 1945 which—in one way or another—deal with aspects related to the extermination of European Jews. The authors included within this category can naturally differ from one another in key aspects: sex, age, religious observance or nationality. Although it might seem obvious for most of us reading this dissertation, we want to highlight that each one of these texts—and the authors behind it—represent a very specific and unique Shoah experience. Understanding how every text might potentially raise unique questions concerning the Shoah experience must be an unarguable premise. Placing each text and author in their own category and trying to note all the possible analyzable variables which have played an important role in shaping their own identity is our task as scholars treating this topic. Although logical, it is a special difficult task for many since the Nazi annihilation of European Jewry had precisely an essentialist *telos*, reducing a group of human beings to one category: *Juden*.

In this study, the Shoah experience emanates from all the chapters here included. Nevertheless, we will avoid a study centered around concrete historical facts related to the Shoah which these authors tell. We will also avoid a study of the Shoah experience per se. Rather than focusing strictly on the years from 1933-1945, we have decided to look at these authors' autobiographical and essay works and understand through the study of their memories—and the posterior reflections upon them—how the Shoah experience have ultimately shaped and indelibly marked their way of relating to many questions

related to self-understanding, group adherence, and political self-awareness. The Shoah experience remains however pivotal; for the survivor was forced to (re)build his self from the scraps of, in many cases, an already-polymorphic one. Accordingly, although it can be argued that the Shoah might not be the real *arche* of many questions regarding religion, Zionism, and identity—questions around which this dissertation pivots—we understand the Shoah as the most extreme version in history of trying to eliminate the development of such questions. The Shoah—if not then understood as the definite *arche*—it is the definite shaping factor of contemporary Jewish experience: our *telos* then, that of examining post-Shoah life through the works of survivors.

1.2.3.1. Elie Wiesel and the problems of post-Shoah theodicy

— ווו איז גאָט?—האָט דער זעלבער מאַן, הינטער מיר, געפרעגט צום צווייטן מאָל.

עפעס אין מיר האָט געוואָלט אים ענטפערן:

— גאָט? ווו ער איז?—אָט הענגט ער, אויפן דאָזיקן שטריק.

¹⁵(Wiesel 1956, 132)

One of the most salient cultural references which might come to mind when dealing with the intersection between autobiography, Shoah, and religion might be those present in Elie Wiesel's autobiographical, fictional and essay works. These works have been read, by many, as an awakening to atheism: from a young devotion to God and his early interest in the kabbalah to his own representation of the death of God when seeing the hanging of another child. Nonetheless, reading Wiesel's works as a mere example of the *Gott-ist-tot-Theologie* confirmation might, as well, neglect layers of religious readings which would necessarily impoverish Wiesel's legacy as a Shoah writer. Indeed, in Wiesel's works, religion plays a very prominent role: more precisely the question of how to reconcile the existence of God with the reality of a world where evil pervades; a

¹⁵—Où donc est Dieu ? Et je sentais en moi une voix qui lui répondait :—Où il est ? Le voici—il est pendu ici, à cette potence... (Wiesel 1969, 74)

question which so troubled Augustine—as we discussed earlier in this chapter—and which, naturally, troubled many observant Jewish survivors during and after the Shoah experience. This type of post-Shoah theological reflection must be inserted within the so-called Holocaust theology. To this specific branch of theology which developed mainly within Judaism, we have to add—precisely because of the nature of such Jewish theology—the survivor guilt which necessarily characterizes the experience of many Jewish survivors in contrast with other kinds of KZ prisoners. The quest for answers after the Shoah experience in Wiesel's works pivots around these two questions: on the one hand, the problems which stem from the attempt at reconciling one's own existence in a world where such an event like the Holocaust has taken place and, on the other hand, the dilemmas regarding the *telos* of living in a world after having survived such an event. Moreover, a constant we see in Wiesel's works are the dilemmas which necessarily stem from an attempt at vindicating the existence of God after such a catastrophic experience; in short, θεόδίκη.

Wiesel's writing is religious, perhaps in a different sense in which we have chosen to tackle religion drawing from—what could be considered by many—a post-structuralist approach to religion. The religious layer of Wiesel's works pivots around questioning the meaning of life after Auschwitz, the destiny of a life after the crumbling identity of the one who survives. This approach to the quest of searching for meaning is a conventional way of being religious; a narrative theology which Wiesel creates through the prism of his Auschwitz experience. Works like *Le procès de Shamgorod tel qu'il se déroula le 25 février 1649* or even his famous *און די וועלט האט געשווייגן* (1956) bespeak a kind of theology which could only arise after Auschwitz. This more traditional approach to religion, to the theological questions—to theodicy—proves, nevertheless, insufficient for the post-Shoah Jewish intellectual whom Elie Wiesel represents. Many have been the teachings of Elie Wiesel throughout the years: he has casted plenty of light upon questions regarding post-Shoah theology and Jewish identity, but if we can extract an idea from his relationship to religion after the Shoah, that must necessarily take the form of an ambivalent feeling towards it. What stems from a close reading of his works is the impossibility of confirming God's justice, but, at the same time, Wiesel's unwillingness to strictly denying God's existence.

1.2.3.2. Primo Levi: Auschwitz and the impossibility of God's existence

Wiesel's personal exemplification of the death of God—the conclusion that he reaches during his Shoah experience—constitutes, along with Primo Levi's memoirs, the experience of many of these Jewish survivors, to the point that it has become perhaps the epitome of the Shoah experience; both authors stand as quintessential for the understanding of Auschwitz. Primo Levi's self-writing narrative constitutes one of the most effective Shoah narratives where nostalgia and trauma amalgamate with an objective and scientific account of Auschwitz and its aftermath. Elie Wiesel's reflections upon religious questions and the way he individually and collectively relates to religion follows a more traditional approach to the theme of autobiography and religion. But if Elie Wiesel's post-Shoah religious experience still pivots around the search for questions to which no answers are really found, Primo Levi's experience with religion after Auschwitz finds no place at all, or so he defends. Indeed, no theological question finds a proper place in post-Shoah life for Primo Levi; but even if such lack of any kind of theological inquisitiveness preceded the Auschwitz experience for Levi, the influence on any possible relationship to religion thereafter always carries, for him, the stamp of the camp: “la mia vera università è stata Auschwitz.” (Levi in Camon 2014, 78)

Theological questions are nowhere to be found in Levi's works; a real religious background (with all it entails: a specific suitable language and a specific set of cognitive moods) cannot be perceived. In terms of Levi's Jewishness, we can argue that it strictly stems from a consciousness of Otherness, from a sense of alterity which crystalizes itself in cultural form, as he himself said: “[il mio ebraismo è] un puro fatto culturale.” (Levi in Camon 2014, 86) In the context of this dissertation, we have already noted the potential amalgamation of concepts like religion and culture. We will not make a religious reading of Levi's religious references in any of his works. Firstly, because they are scarce and, secondly, because it will go beyond the scope of this dissertation. It could, however, be done if we adhere to the theoretical postulates elucidated in this chapter. It is perhaps his strictly apparently-objective mood in his autobiographical works what reveals scientific temperament, theoretically very far apart from any religious or mystical experience, understood in the traditional sense. But there is indeed this collective and personal identity marked on Primo Levi through the Auschwitz experience: “ormai ebreo sono, la stella di David me l'hanno cucita e non solo sul vestito.” (Levi in Camon 2014, 86) If Elie Wiesel represents the constant struggle of the one who embarks on the quest of theology after Auschwitz, Levi represents the denial of the articulation of such discourse in post-Shoah

life. For Levi, it is clear, there is a logical impossibility between the existence of Auschwitz and the mere ontological reflection upon the existence of any kind of deity: “C’è Auschwitz, quindi non può esserci Dio. Non trovo una soluzione al dilemma. La cerco, ma non la trovo.” (Levi in Camon 2014, 86)

1.2.4. Neo-Kantianism and a culturalist approach to the religious experience

Analyzing the religious references of authors for whom theological questions simply do not find a proper space must necessarily follow the path of a culturalist approach to religion. The main conundrum of many of these survivors in their relationship to Judaism and Jewishness is perhaps the impossibility of understanding themselves as something different than the possible victim of a possible future Holocaust; that is, the struggle to develop Jewishness outside the struggle against anti-Semitism. Many of post-Shoah Jewish thinkers, like moral philosopher Susan Neiman, adhere to a Neo-Kantian Jewish tradition which built on Kant’s insight which would necessarily relegate ontological and teleological questions regarding God; questions which within this Neo-Kantian philosophy are understood as being beyond human conceptual capability. Within this paradigm, nevertheless, a feeling of reverence, of humility, towards some kind of Absolute is regarded as a beneficial moral source, and hence the denial at denying human transcendental tendency and the cognitive states it bestirs.

The culturalist approach which we have decided to follow in order to understand the religious experience of the authors here discussed finds a logical conjunction with this Neo-Kantian approach to religion we have just mentioned. These are then the theoretical tendencies which influence our reading of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer in questions regarding religion and ritual. In order to understand these religious references then, a second reading is necessary; a reading which necessarily will go beyond traditional approaches to religion. These religious references which we will discuss are various. In the case of Ruth Klüger, they include the author’s specific reading of the story of Noah, the Tower of Babel, the story of Ruth, the celebration of Pesach, as well as the importance of Kaddish and Ma Nishtana in Jewish rituals. By branding herself as an agnostic, many scholars have ignored Klüger’s religious references and her reflections upon religious phenomena which although containing harsh criticism, bespeak a particular way of *relating* to religion. We have decided not to overlook them and understand them as

constitutive, as well as symptomatic, of a particular life experience, that of an Auschwitz survivor.

We must then understand Neo-Kantianism as the beginning of a post-secularist way of relating to the religious experience: a need to break with the theological questions which have traditionally occupied the religious mind for centuries, the development of a sense of humility towards the Absolute, and the beneficial aspects of the involvement of a shared community *ethos*—with the limits it presupposes and expects. The problems which stem from this initial Neo-Kantian way of approaching religion and the culturalist approach to which we adhere when analyzing religious rituals, nevertheless, have to do with antagonistic takes on the aesthetic experience. We will further discuss this issue when treating more specifically Ruth Klüger's account of Pesach. Even if a post-secularist Neo-Kantian approach to religion laid the ground for a different conception of religion, a necessary rejection of salient parts of Kantian aesthetics must also be regarded as necessary if we aim to encompass within this heuristic conceptualization of religion the full scope of the ritual aesthetic experience.

1.3. Ruth Klüger

The first author we have decided to include in this dissertation is the Austrian-American Germanist Ruth Klüger, born to Ashkenazi Jewish parents in Vienna in 1931. Although Klüger's Shoah experience—along with the experience of most Shoah survivors born during these years—can be said to begin a few years after her birth with the introduction of the Nürnberger Gesetzen (“Der Tod, nicht Sex war das Geheimnis, worüber die Erwachsenen tuschelten” (Klüger 1992, 9)), it is not until the age of eleven, in 1942, when Klüger was taken to Theresienstadt with her mother; there she was kept for two years. Right after, Klüger and her mother would be taken to Auschwitz (15/05/1944 – 7/7/1944) and later to Christianstadt, from where they were able to escape in 1945. Once the war was over, Klüger and her mother stayed for two years in Bavaria, finally migrating to the United States in 1947, where she has become a renowned professor of German Studies: first at Princeton University and subsequently at the University of California, Irvine, where she is currently Professor Emerita of German Studies.

Klüger's main autobiographical works include *weiter leben* published in German in 1992, and *Still Alive*, published in English in 2001. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to disregard other works and essays published throughout her academic career, as they sometimes introduce or complement ideas treated in her autobiographical works. Since the publication of her first autobiographical work, Klüger has received much attention, especially for her characteristic critical discourse which integrates, as an essential part of her writing, feminist theory and Shoah studies. Klüger published her third autobiographical work, *unterwegs verloren*, in 2008 portraying her experience as a Jewish woman in the United States and academia. Nevertheless, it was not until the release in 2013 of the documentary film *Das Weiter Leben der Ruth Klüger* directed by Renata Schmidtkunz, when we decided to include Ruth Klüger as one of the authors of this dissertation, as we considered that several aspects of her life have not been treated deeply enough in academic works which deal with her autobiographical and essay works. These topics include her treatment of and relationship with religion, Jewish ritual, Zionism and the Jewish State. Her way of combining these elements with feminist theory and Shoah studies results in a unique experience of Judaism and Zionism which is still worthy of analysis and discussion.

The three different topics which we want to discuss in relation to Ruth Klüger are indelibly connected to different stages of her life that she herself differentiates in her autobiographical works. Her childhood memories before the war draw special attention to the portrayal of religion, community, and ritual. Present-time Ruth Klüger considers herself an agnostic; nevertheless, the religious references she makes and the way she chooses to articulate her memories with regards to religious rites and religious questions serves us as a means to reconsider the limits of secularization in authors who although not yielding to traditional conceptions, hierarchies, or values of religion (in this case Judaism), they still make references to a religion to which they somehow relate. A necessary analysis of the portrayal of religion in her autobiographical works must be made, and this entails necessarily a discussion on what we can consider religion and to which realms religion can be extended. Klüger's works serve us as a way to open a current discussion with regards to the questions of why and how scholars who tackle questions in the realm of cultural and literary studies might consider beneficial to understand religion, perhaps understood as a heuristic term, in a way that will let us contemplate autobiographical works where certain religious aspects are introduced in a new light, beyond the limiting aspects of secularist thought.

Klüger's experience in Theresienstadt serves us to analyze the birth of a Jewish conscience and consciousness which would transcend the mere religious or ethnic component, and which will find a way of being articulated in a more political and national(istic) tone. It is at this moment in her life when Klüger's encounter with Zionism takes place, shaping a group identity which until then—due to the lack of necessity and her childish naiveté—had not been very much taken into consideration. As she explains in her autobiographical works, her family was “emancipated, but not assimilated” (Klüger 2001a, 43); a situation which for many Ashkenazi Jews from the *fin de siècle* onwards caused—sometimes more explicitly, sometimes in a subtler way—many problems in the European societies to which they simultaneously felt they did and did not belong. The *Endlösung* triggers for many Jews, emancipated and not, a reevaluation of a Zionist movement which was not new at the time, but that became more than an idea or a political stance; it became a necessity, not always materialized in an actual *Aliyah*, however, like in the case of Friedländer. This we will further discuss in chapter two.

Finally, the beginning of Klüger's life in the United States will bring about a still ongoing process for Klüger—the autobiographical self—of coming to terms with her past and trying to negotiate a problematic and never resolvable identity, that of the never-

ending self. Caught in between different worlds, thinking in different languages, Klüger—along with the other writers whom we have included in this dissertation—articulates the failure which is originated from a mixed multidimensional identity, a polymorphic nature, from being always an *Ausländerin*, no matter where. This feeling—shared by the other writers as well—opens the door to questions related to the concept of Diasporism, of the never-ending consciousness of alterity, which although will not have a repercussion in her views concerning Zionism, will have it at the level of choice-making, as we will also discuss in chapters two and three.

1.3.1. *Pesach*, the “*Gesamtinszenierung*”

In Klüger’s German autobiography, *weiter leben*, Klüger recounts the celebration of *Pesach* in the following way:

Ich muss gestehen, daß ich tatsächlich eine sehr schlechte Jüdin bin. Ich kann mich an kein Fest erinnern, bei dem mir wohl gewesen wäre. Ich denke hier vor allem an die Sederabende, in Wien. Diese rituale Mahlzeit, überfrachtet mit poetischen und symbolischen Bedeutungen, war sehr aktuell, denn sie feiert die Erlösung des Volks durch Flucht und Auswanderung. *Pesach* ist an und für sich das phantasievollste Fest, das man sich denken kann, eine *Gesamtinszenierung* von Geschichte, Fabel und Lied, von Folklore und Großfamilienesen, und hat noch im bescheidensten Rahmen einen Aspekt von Pracht und Welttheater. Nur ist es leider ein Fest für Männer und Kinder, nicht eines für Frauen. (Klüger 1992, 44)

Klüger expresses an individual perspective of a collective ritual central to Judaism. *Pesach*, the commemoration of the liberation of the Jewish people from their state of slavery in Egypt, is one of the most important Jewish celebrations and it is not temple-based, that is, not celebrated in the synagogue. This celebration differs from other *Yamim Tovim* like *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom Kippur*, where synagogue attendance is necessary. *Pesach*, on the other hand, constitutes a more home-based, familiar environment where the dialogue between generations remains pivotal, as well as the socialization of the youngest members of the family and their introduction and

involvement in Judaism and the history of the Jewish people. Due to the familiar character of the ritual performance we are discussing, Pesach constitutes one of the first ritual practices where a sense of belonging is constructed in all its performative potential. The special treatment of Klüger with regards to the Seder meal lies in its categorization not only as a “Großfamilienessen” but also as a “rituelle Mahlzeit überfrachtet mit poetischen und symbolischen Bedeutungen”. By categorizing the act of eating as a ritual act, Klüger surpasses a conception of ritual where the *Schwerpunkt* is laid on a Kantian conception of the constitution of an aesthetic experience. This understanding of religious ritual as a more encompassing performance where different senses partake follows the theoretical discussions taking place in the field of philosophy of religion and religious ethnology. Klüger’s description of Pesach as “Gesamtinszenierung von Geschichte, Fabel und Lied” follows as well recent discussions taking place within these fields with regards to the multisensorial aspects of religion and ritual and its broader understanding of ritual itself. Moreover, the categorization of the ritual as “Pracht” and “Welttheater” shares the trend in ethnology studies which aim to compare ritual with performance¹⁶.

Klüger’s way of approaching religion departs from Wiesel’s; rather than focusing on more ontological questions, on the theological aspects of the religious experience, on the question of theodicy, Klüger understanding of religion, by the depiction of it in more cultural terms, tackles once more in the history of self-writing the importance of the *communitas* constructed through religious mediation. The example of Pesach serves as a perfect example of a new perspective on religion: firstly because it is not confined to the traditional temple-based limitations and, secondly, because it emphasizes above all the community aspect, the development of such community awareness and inclusion, and its flourishing in the partaker by means of a performative act where different senses contribute and where a sense of splendor occurs. Pesach, through its performative character and its aesthetic power, entails the flourishing of a Jewish consciousness which—in terms of its crystallization on a specific type of *communitas*—could be understood as leaning towards a more ethnic type of community. It can then be argued that due to the embodiment of this specific kind of *communitas*, by

¹⁶ Klaus-Peter Köpping (2003, 340) notes that the ethnological discussion with regards to the differences between ritual and theater is not new. This ongoing discussion takes place between supporters of a theory which defends that the constitution of reality is possible through ritual and supporters of the idea that a necessary impoverishment of meaning occurs because of the redundancy of the act and the verbalization of ritual.

extension, the origin of a potential feeling of *Ahabat Yisrael* takes place during the embodiment of such identity. What we see in the example of the Seder meal provided by Klüger is precisely this connection between religion understood as a cultural system (hence, the levelling of both terms: religion and culture), the enactment (that is, the praxis) of a ritual, and the discourse of memory in an autobiographical work, something recurrent, as we have already noted, in the history of self-writing. Thus, Klüger's autobiographical work can—in many ways—be understood as part of this autobiographical tradition by which it is preceded.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the connections between religion and self-writing are found all throughout history. Nonetheless, religious references—as well as the conversion rhetoric usually used in spiritual autobiographies—have suffered multiple mutations throughout the centuries. The secularization of a specific tone previously indelibly linked with religion must make us question the idea that religion and secularism constitute a mere irresolvable dichotomy. Even when such references are especially valuable from the point of view of the study of the history of self-writing as well as the history of religion, the concept of religion—that is, the question of what constitutes a religious experience—is usually associated with a very narrow conception of it. As we have seen, the religious discourse in autobiography has evolved and gone through a process of secularization which—although understood by us as a constitutive part of a *continuum*—bespeaks a certain cognitive state, a certain narrative mood. It could be argued that a new heuristic concept is necessary in order to deal with religious aspects in modern times which do escape from the range of traditional understandings of religion, but our point is that by emphasizing the continuity aspect of religious and secular rhetoric, the universals can be easily extracted from the particulars. Understanding the cultural importance and implications of the description of the religious ritual that Klüger does, does not constitute a proselytizing attempt, nor tries to be exemplary, and hence the departure from religious (mainly Christian) self-writing. Klüger's understanding of Pesach as the bonding ritual it is supposed to be, however, draws special attention to the appreciation of a (religious) community that we saw in previous autobiographers, builders of the tradition of the autobiographical self.

1.3.2. Ritual and the creation of community

1.3.2.1. From the *communitas* to the aesthetic formation

The importance of the ritual must not be diminished in this example of the Seder meal, and in this direction, the work of the German scholar B. Meyer serves us as a means for reconsidering the importance of religion in Klüger's autobiographical work. In his most prominent publication, *Aesthetic formations* (2009), Meyer pleads for a consideration of the important role of media in religion, understanding new media and the possibilities they provide. Meyer, furthermore, highlights the importance of the body and the corporal feelings and—hence—understands religion not only as the object of representation but also as the place for this “mediation”. Although Meyer's research is mainly based on ethnographic studies in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, her way of challenging the famous concept of the Benedict Anderson's “imagined community” sheds plenty of light upon the question of what religion is, what purposes it serves, and how this religion is interiorized by the believer or the ritual partaker. The development of a Jewish consciousness in ritual can be understood in the terms Anderson suggests, that is, in the creation and establishment of an imagined community. Nevertheless, if we aim to expand our conception of the aesthetic experience through which this community starts being imagined, and the role of this in the creation of community and personal identity, the use of a more encompassing term might avoid a certain margin of error which would necessarily emanate from the conception of a *communitas* as something merely imagined and not performative and performed—as we understand it.

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities first coined in 1983 was meant to explain nationalism in a way that, per him, neither Marxism nor liberalism had been able to do. Anderson pointed out that a national community is not based on personal interaction among its members. In fact, a community is merely based on the idea that all members of the community belong to it. Although Anderson coined the term in order to tackle the question of nationalism, it can naturally be extended to any human community, not necessarily bounded by a presupposed—or, as he would put it, *imagined*—nation. In Anderson's view, this mediated imagination serves as a way of bonding members of a community which, in absence of physical interaction, replaces this physical distance with a feeling of closeness. Rather than rejecting Anderson's concept of the imagined communities, Meyer expands this concept by building upon Latour's (2005) non-essentialist understanding of a community. Instead of understanding cultural production

and produced symbols as the expression of an already existing community, Meyer's assumption is that it is precisely through the mediation and circulation of this set of cultural forms how the community defines itself. For a community to find its position in the individual imagination (ergo, in the collective imagination) these imaginations must be felt as real. This is the point where the ritual establishes itself as a crucial point in the development of a community identity. A social environment is needed where there is a space for the enactment, the performance, of rituals and thereby of corporal sensations: "in order to become experienced as real, imagined communities need to materialize in the concrete lived environment and be felt in the bones." (B. Meyer 2009, 5) This means a departure from previous understandings of community formation dynamics, for the development of a community and the understanding of it by the individual is, in a way, de-intellectualized. Thus, by bringing to a central position the study of how the community is embodied, Meyer introduces terms like "aesthetic formations", "practice of mediation", and "sensational form", which serve us to understand and read Klüger's Seder passage in a totally new light.

Even by only adhering to a strictly structuralist approach when tackling the problem of the role of language in the creation of these communities, the question remains undoubtedly problematic. If we accept the structuralist notion of the arbitrariness of sign, that is, the random connection between the signified and the signifier, it is hard to reconcile the idea that the medium for the establishment of ontological truths necessarily connected with the idea of divinity depends on a medium that it has been proven arbitrary. Although Anderson does acknowledge that even imagined, the community identity is powerful enough to make a member of the imagined community want to even die for it—and not necessarily a radical version of any nationalist or fundamentalist religious identity would trigger this—Meyer considers that the "sensational" aspect created by the performance, the *Inszenierung*—as Klüger herself calls it—needs to be considered, as it constitutes a further step in the understanding of how languages no longer considered truth-languages—no longer sacred—produce an ontological reality still not questionable for its members. Even if the consideration of the practice of mediation and the sensational forms does contribute enormously to the understanding of the imagined community—or rather the aesthetic formation—in the case of Judaism, nevertheless, the truth-language—classic Hebrew—has never left its central position in traditional Jewish rituals. Therefore, although this abandonment of classical languages in ritual would not affect directly the

specific ritual practices of Judaism, the consideration of mediation and bodily sensations does find its reflection in Klüger's recreation of Pesach.

1.3.2.2. Kant's *Ästhetik* vs. Aristotle's *αἰσθησις*: retrieving a more encompassing notion of the religious aesthetic experience.

By paying more attention to “the role played by things, media, and the body in actual processes of community making” (B. Meyer 2009, 6), Meyer consciously rejects the Kantian conception of aesthetics which has predominated from the 18th century onwards, a bend of the historical discussion of what aesthetics meant. Kant—an unarguably deeply methodological philosopher—developed a conception of the beautiful understood as an aesthetic delight which plays upon itself and generates a kind of bound and purposeful way of being. The experience of *das Schöne* is necessarily a disinterested one, that is, it lacks a private condition that could potentially individualize *das Urteil*. A simultaneously universal and subjective judgment that departs from a *Sinnen-Geschmack*, the judgment of the ‘agreeable’, a judgment that is conditioned by a sense of pleasure produced by the object. Instead, *das Schöne* is experienced through a previous reflection (*Reflexions-Geschmack*). It is the product of a universalizable cognitive state, not a judgment produced by a pleasure that is pathologically conditioned.

The Aristotelian concept of *aisthesis* proves to be a more enveloping notion which does not delimit itself to the realm of the experience of the beautiful in art, but which instead designates the physical or bodily ability to experience objects in the world through all our five senses, combining all of them and creating a matrix of sensorial experiences which responds to a more holistic sensorial experience of the world around us. As Meyer and Verrips (2008) note, there are several reasons why Aristotelian *aisthesis* became progressively less relevant throughout the history of thought. From a certain point onward, aesthetics became exclusively a term related to the beautiful and the philosophy of art. Immanuel Kant's aesthetic theory is regarded by scholars who try to understand the constitution of communities as a dynamic phenomenon where sensorial forms partake as a reductionist view of aesthetics in the sense that it disregards the experience derived from other senses and the active role of the aesthetic experiencer. This is especially hindering in the study of ritual and the religious experience, as it disdains the role of all other senses in the formation of communities. Meyer and Verrips (2008) also note that Neo-Kantian aesthetics—consequently—has only focused on the art that would fit the

characteristics of high culture, not only perpetuating distinctions between high and low art but disregarding the kind of imagery meant to be consumed by the masses. This split between high and low art suffered a process of secularization during the Enlightenment, by which art created by religious inspiration or portraying religious-related images was relegated to the category of low art. Pleading then for a reconsideration of aesthetics not only entails a reconsideration of the role of the body (in terms of the role of all the other senses in the formation of community as well as in the religious creation and recreation of aesthetic formations) but also a reconsideration of the role of religious art or religiously-inspired imagery, something which has been regarded as low and uninteresting within the context of Kantian and Neo-Kantian aesthetics.

The concept of aesthetic formations coined by Meyer means in a way retrieving a forgotten conception of the aesthetic experience, while at the same time surpasses a traditional understanding of the ritual experience. By the use of this concept, Meyer understands a *communitas* as a formation which is always constituting and reconstituting itself, and such constitution is possible through mediation where all senses partake, thus making us reconsider the categorization of the *communitas* as an aesthetic formation, rather than a pre-imagined community. This reconsideration of the notion of aisthesis supports the importance that Meyer gives to the embodiment of imaginations as the key factor for the laying down of them as ontological truths, as she notes: “Imaginations, though articulated and formed through media and thus “produced”, appear as situated beyond mediation exactly because they can be—literally—incorporated and embodied, thus invoking and perpetuating shared experiences, emotions, and affects that are anchored in, as well as triggered by, a taken-for-granted lifeworld, a world of, indeed, *common sense*.” (B. Meyer 2009, 7)

The pivotal role of mediation in the religious experience has been claimed by Dutch philosopher Hent De Vries (2001). Following José Casanova’s (1994) reconsideration of the role of religion in the modern world, De Vries pleads for a reevaluation of the importance of religion in cultural analysis, to understand religion as a means for cultural inquiry. What all these scholars share is precisely the overcoming of a secularizing rhetoric that ignores the revival of religion in modern contexts. By understanding the conjunction ‘religion and media’ as a pleonasm, Stolow brings to light the role of mediation in religion. Mediation is not understood as a constitutive part of religion (“religion and media”), Mediation—media—is religion (“religion as media”):

‘Religion’ can only be manifested through some process of mediation. Throughout history in myriad forms, communication with and about ‘the sacred’ has always been enacted through written texts, ritual gestures, images and icons, architecture, music, incense, special garments, saintly relics and other objects of veneration, markings upon flesh, wagging tongues and other body parts. It is only through such media that it is at all possible to proclaim one’s faith, mark one’s affiliation, receive spiritual gifts or participate in any of the countless local idioms for making the sacred present to mind and body. (Stolow 2005, 125)

Klüger’s portrayal of Pesach exemplifies how mediation itself can be sacralized; more than a means to an ontological truth, the mediation itself becomes the ontological truth. Klüger’s recount of Pesach casts light on the question of how religion is experienced outside the paradigm of traditional belief. In this experience, different senses partake. They all contribute to the religious experience that is not the conclusion of the aesthetic formation—not even the way in which the aesthetic formation is recreated—but the way in which it is *created*. Alternative terms have been coined in order to revert the so-called disembodiment of aesthetics, such as Pinney’s “corpoethetics”, or Shusterman’s notion of “somaesthetics”. In our case, we would like to avoid falling into the semantic reinforcement of bodily notions for they could perhaps contribute to the body-mind dialectic which we aim to somehow overcome. Nonetheless, following Meyer’s idea that aesthetic formations come to be when “felt in the bones” (B. Meyer 2009, 5), we understand Klüger’s religious experience of Pesach as the embodiment of the Jewish aesthetic formation.

1.3.3. Ritual, dominance, and honor

1.3.3.1. The experience of exclusion through ritual

One of the most characteristic aspects of Klüger’s self-writing is precisely her feminist tone, a tone easy to find all throughout her autobiographical works. In Klüger’s recount of her memories of Pesach, the crucial importance of the ritual is portrayed: Pesach is charged with meaning and it serves as a collective performance, where through

the participation of the youngest members of the family especially, they become integrated into the Jewish *ethnos* through the embodiment of a Jewish aesthetic formation. This apparently-inclusive *telos* of the ritual which Klüger explains in the first lines is roughly thrown off balance by the trenchant feminist interpretation Klüger does of the ritual; a reading through which women are understood as not permitted to enjoy the ritual as much as males or children, due to the hierarchical nature of the ritual, the established roles regarding the preparation of it, and the power-relations it thus establishes through the optic of feminist criticism. Thus, an initially-inclusive ritual abruptly becomes an exclusive one.

Following the work of Foucault, Bell points out that ritualization has a specific response on the body and its movements through which domination is established. Her argument proceeds as follows: “Ritual activity is not the ‘instrument’ of more basic purposes, such as power, politics, or social control, which are usually seen as existing before or outside the activities of the rite. [...] Ritual practices are themselves the very production and negotiation of power relations.” (C. M. Bell 2009, 196) The incisive tone with which Klüger concludes the explanation of the Pesach ritual lays bare the failure which takes place when negotiating her relation of power with the per-her-sexist hierarchies of Judaism. This criticism is recurrent in Klüger’s autobiographical and essay works, and it is repeated several times in *weiter leben* as well as in *Still Alive* every time a certain reminiscence or memory of her childhood is introduced; these memories serve to Klüger as examples of the impossibility which women have within a traditional Jewish religious context to revert power relations to which the other female members of her family adhered, but to which she does not resign herself: “Nicht einmal einem unerfahrenen kleinen Mädchen konnte die geschlechtsspezifische Rollenverteilung des Abends entgehen, da die Tanten den ganzen Tag erhitzt in der Küche standen, um die Gerichte zuzubereiten—was sie zu diesem Anlaß ohne die christliche Haushaltshilfe tun mußten—, die Gerichte, die dem ältesten Onkel dann dazu dienten, die Geschichte vom Auszug aus Ägypten feierlich auszulegen.” (Klüger 1992, 44)

Although, as she notes, even the youngest female members of the family could not escape an established gender expectation, Klüger remembers how as a child she tried to battle for the privilege of saying the *Ma Nishtana*: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” Her cousin’s argument on his favor is recognized by Klüger “der Jüngste ist nicht die Jüngste, und meinem Cousin gefiel es, sich auf sein männliches Vorrecht zu berufen.” (Klüger 1992, 45) Avoiding linking the posterior development of her

agnosticism (or rather the overall failure at achieving a stable faith) with the Shoah experience or the gender hierarchies of Judaism, Klüger admits that apart from never having been observant, due to perhaps a rather lack of interest in more theological questions of religion, both the Shoah experience and the gender ascriptions of traditional Judaism add up, nonetheless, to her feeling of disenchantment with religion and ritual practices: “Damals zankte ich mich meinem Cousin um die Ehre, die Frage stellen zu dürfen. Heute schätze ich ihre Dekonstruktion, weil mir das Wenige, was mir an jüdischem Glaubensbekenntnis geboten wurde, abbröckelte, bevor es gefestigt war. Das wäre auch ohne Nazis geschehen. Unter den Nazis war es die Enttäuschung, bei einem Schiffbruch eine morsche Rettungsplanke umklammert zu haben.” (Klüger 1992, 46) The influence of the feeling of exclusion Klüger feels as a woman attempting to occupy a central position in Jewish rituals traditionally assigned to males, proves to be more significant especially in moments where the ritual aspect has the most significance: saying *Kaddish* to a lost one; in Klüger’s case, to her father murdered during the Shoah. In the following passage, Klüger exemplifies Bell’s notion of ritual as the medium through which power relations are not only established but also negotiated within the aesthetic formation. Klüger rejects the obedience to a Jewish ritual where her position of power is ultimately decided by others upon her:

Bei uns Juden sagen nur die Männer den Kaddisch, das Totengebet. Mein immer freundlicher Großvater, den ich mir nur mit ausgestreckten Armen und Taschen voller Geschenke denken kann, soll mit gespielter Trauermiene zu seinem Hund gesagt haben: „Du bist der einzige hier, der Kaddisch für mich sagen kann.“ Vor seinen Töchtern hat er so mit seinem Hund gesprochen, und meine Mutter hat mir das unkritisch erzählt, hat die Herabsetzung hingenommen, wie es sich für jüdische Töchter schickte. Es war ja humorvoll gemeint. Wär’s anders und ich könnte sozusagen offiziell um meine Gespenster trauern, zum Beispiel für meinen Vater Kaddisch sagen, dann könnte ich mich eventuell mit dieser Religion anfreunden, die die Gottesliebe ihrer Töchter zur Hilfsfunktion der Männer erniedrigt und ihre geistlichen Bedürfnisse im Häuslichen eindämmt, sie um Beispiel mit Kochrezepten für gefüllte fish abspeist. (Klüger 1992, 25)

This same passage is revisited in Klüger’s *Still Alive*. In this case, nevertheless, a clarification between parentheses expresses the failure it would be not to observe the ritual

protocol: “Who is keeping you from saying any prayer you please? My friends ask. But it wouldn’t count, couldn’t be part of a prescribed communal ritual, so what would be the point.” (Klüger 2001a, 30) The role of the community with respects to the religious experience is brought to light. The community’s facilitation to a power position establishes a specific gender hierarchy. This gender hierarchy is criticized by Klüger who feels the need to fight her way up the gender scale. Nonetheless, not adhering to this gender expectations excludes her from taking the role that would mean for her a real ritual experience. Stepping away from these community expectations with regards to gender roles entails a lack of purpose in both taking part in the ritual as well as performing the ritual outside the community. Saying Kaddish to her father by herself, without the community and without the acceptance of her power position by this community, dispels the *telos* of the ritual and it brings about a feeling of exclusion. This way, Klüger exemplifies the use of ritual, on the one hand, as a potentially inclusive cultural system as well as the arena where subversive alterities are excluded, bringing into words ethnological aspects which are discussed at a theoretical level by scholars like Meyer or Bell. Klüger, nevertheless embodies herself the ritual experience and the exclusiveness which from it necessarily entails through the optics of feminist criticism. This means synthesizing the dialectic between the theoretical approach of the scholar and the practical experience of the ritual performer; in other words, the thought-action dialectic.

1.3.3.2. The experience of exclusion and the *Kotel*

The celebration of Pesach is again the example through which the exclusive character of ritual is exemplified in the documentary film *Das Weiterleben der Ruth Klüger*. The experience of exclusion, this time, does not stem from the particular female role during the preparation and performance of the ritual in question, but through the gender-structured access to one of the holiest places within the Jewish religious, the Wailing Wall or *Kotel*: “From early childhood, the Wailing Wall has been a century key of Jewry for me. At Passover [Pesach], when they said: “Next year in Jerusalem”, I imagined that a year later I would be standing at the Wailing Wall, but when I came here for the first time I realized that I couldn’t go to the wall, or just to a small corner of it, because only men are allowed to access the most sacred parts of the wall. And that goes for every man who’s wearing a Kippah.” (Schmidt-kunz 2013, sec. 56:47-57:21)

The situation here presented does not differ much from the other two experiences of exclusion included in Klüger's autobiographical works which we have previously discussed. In all these experiences of exclusion, Klüger's gender expectations in the context of religious ritual are not met. Pesach is regarded by Klüger as one of the most important Jewish celebrations. As she explains in her autobiographical works, the sense of Jewish community, what we have called the Jewish aesthetic formation, is created thereby, especially for young boys and girls. The desire of celebrating the next Pesach in Jerusalem is a cardinal part of this celebration which constantly reminds Jews who partake in this festivity where the cardinal point for Judaism is; considerably constituting and establishing the *Kotel* at a metaphysical level, especially when approached from the Diaspora, and more especially in the context we here discuss, that is, of pre-1948 European Jewish Diaspora.

Once again, Klüger understands that due to her gender, she is not able to access the most sacred parts of the wall, not being able therefore to finalize the every-year-repeated desire. Celebrating Pesach in Jerusalem is not an impossibility, accessing the holiest parts of the holiest place however is, says Klüger. The sense of community created through the aesthetic experience of Pesach does not seem to interfere with the assimilation of the Jewish identity thereby created. At first stance, however, a realization that—as a woman—Klüger is not able to participate in the rituals as males would, entails a partial feeling of detachment, a feeling of exclusion which concludes with a rejection of expected gender adscriptions rather than of Jewish rituals per se. Through ritual, these power relations are established and Klüger refuses to adhere to them. She goes to Jerusalem as a Jewess, as Pesach always reminded her of the holiest of places for Judaism. Encountering a gender division at the Kotel makes her realize once more the failure at reconciling her desired gender performance and the gender expectations of the religious community to which she appeals. Through this other ritual, praying in front of the *Kotel*, the same power relation is reinforced. Through the performance of ritual, male and female roles are negotiated, but, once again, Klüger rejects them.

In order to highlight the experience of exclusion she felt the first time she encountered the situation, she proceeds as follows: “At that time [the first time she goes to the Kotel], I am quite sure there were also some old Nazis. It rather upset me. And that feeling of outrage is coming back to me, so I'd rather not stay too long.” (Schmidt-kunz 2013, sec. 57:22-57:37) Her argument is then reinforced by the trenchant realization that men—any man as she suggests—can access the most sacred parts of the Kotel, even those

people who once supported the annihilation of the Jews. Just like in the first experience of exclusion she narrates: fighting with her cousin for the privilege of saying the *Ma Nisthana*, the Shoah experience appears again at the end of her reflection concerning the gender division at the Kotel. Just like the Nazis added to her disappointment regarding a religious faith which never got to be consolidated, the idea of male Nazis being able to access the *Kotel* while she, a Jewish woman, a Shoah-survivor, cannot, confirms this disenchantment, again, due to the exclusive power of religious ritual.

1.3.4. After exclusion: literature and *Aberglaube*

Klüger's rejection of traditional Jewish feminine roles ultimately means a rejection of traditional Jewish ritual tradition, something which leaves her unable to deal with the traumatic Shoah experience not only at a collective level—with the community—but also at an individual one. The impossibility of saying Kaddish to her father with the support of the community is trivialized by people, as Klüger points out: "Du unterschätz die Rolle der Frau im Judentum, sagen mir die Leute. Sie darf die Sabbatkerzen anzünden am gedeckten Tisch, eine wichtige Funktion. Ich will keine Tische decken und Sabbatkerzen anzünden, Kaddisch möchte ich sagen. Sonst bleib ich bei meinen Gedichten." (Klüger 1992, 25) And as she continues the reflection in *Still Alive*: "And why do you want to say Kaddish? The same people, who know me, ask in astonishment. We haven't seen you pray a lot, nor do you wear sackcloth and ashes in public. True, true, but the dead set us certain tasks, don't they? They want to be remembered and revered, they want to be resurrected and buried at the same time. I want to say Kaddish because I live with the dead. If I can't do that, forget about religion. Poetry is more helpful." (Klüger 2001a, 31) The crucial role of religion when having to cope with the past, and particularly when having to cope with the Shoah is brought to the discussion. The access to one of the functions of religion—accepting one's past and go on living—is understood by Klüger as denied to her through the impossibility of saying Kaddish. The role of literature ("meine Gedichten" / "poetry"), and its therapeutic function is offered as an alternative, although not the preferred one. Literature constitutes the isolating alternative to a community which denies a possible negotiation of power, the kind of negotiation which would only be accepted through the optics of feminist criticism. This isolation is the product of a failure in finding a place in the community.

In order to understand the importance of saying Kaddish to her father, we need to move forward in both *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, and understand Klüger's traumatic experience with her father's death. It not only reminds us once more the problems that originate from the absence of a proper burial, or some sort of remembrance of the lost one: "Wo kein Grab ist, hörte die Trauerarbeit nie auf." (Klüger 1992, 95) Klüger, however, does not refer to the physical lack of the lost one, the impossibility of having a physical signifier; the central reason for the never-ending mourning transcends the mere physical void. There is a more abstract level of suffering which stems from the mere ignorance, from the lack of proof of her father's death: "Mit Grab meine ich nicht eine Stelle auf einem Friedhof, sondern das Wissen um das Sterben, den Tod eines Nahestehenden." (1992, 95) In *Still Alive*, Klüger explains how this uncertainty triggers an unresolvable dialectic, an impossible reconciliation between memories and imaginations:

For only I know of his fate, I don't recall it. [...] I see my father as an authority figure in the life of a small girl. That he ended in a cramped room, naked, swallowing poison gas, most likely struggling for an exit, makes all these memories singularly insignificant. Which doesn't solve the problem that I can't replace them or erase them. [...] My memory presents my father as he politely takes off his hat to neighbors in the Burggasse, the nearest cross street to Lindengasse, but thanks to my informed imagination I see him die convulsively, murdered by the people whom he greeted on these streets or by their ilk. Nothing in between, no connecting links. [...] My father has become an unredeemed ghost. I wish I could write ghost stories. (Klüger 2001a, 34)

A ghost, the product of an interrupted transition between life and death, between knowledge and memory, as Klüger explains it in her work *Dichten über die Shoah*: "ein Gespenst ist etwas Ungelöstes, besonders ein verletztes Tabu, ein unverarbeitetes Verbrechen." (1992, 220) And a ghost-story, the impossible task of Klüger, as she herself explains in the same aforementioned work: "ein unfertiges Bruchstück über die Vergangenheit für die offenen Fragen des Weiterlebens." (1992, 220) As Catherine Smale (2009) notes, Klüger draws on the tradition of the ghost story that Smale traces back to classical antiquity. Smale draws parallels between Klüger's treatment of the ghost as

“etwas Ungelöstes” and this tradition. Klüger’s departure from the traditional model of the ghost story, however, is seen in her resignation. She knows it will be impossible to ever bury (and not necessarily in a physical way) her father. Her level of resignation can be perceived in the different vocabulary Klüger uses in *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*: “Gespenstergeschichten sollte man schreiben können.” (1992, 30) As Smale notes, the German verb ‘sollen’ might imply that she will not desist from trying to write them. The English version, nevertheless, implies a higher level of resignation: “I wish I could write ghost stories”.

Religion (Orthodox Judaism in the case of Klüger) does not provide her with the cathartic experience she needs to let go—or at least try to—the ghost of her father. Saying Kaddish, the only possible religious way for Klüger of symbolically burying her father is denied by the community. Literature appears to be the best alternative to obtaining peace of mind; “Meine Gedichte” is the product of such a search, but literature also proves to be ineffective for such a task. Therefore, the ghosts remain always around: “Wenn ich euch nicht versöhnen kann, dann laßt es bleiben. Ich kann nicht eure Gräber mit euch schaufeln. Wer nicht mit euch starb, muß anders und zu einem anderen Zeitpunkt sterben. Ich hadere mit ihnen (nicht mit Gott hadere ich, wie die frommen Juden es manchmal tun, weil der nicht einmal ein Gespenst ist).” (Klüger 1992, 99) While writing about her ghosts is considered by Klüger a kind of exorcism in *weiter leben* (Klüger 1992, 35), she acknowledges in *Still Alive* that “these stories have no end. As long as we live and care, they have no end.” (Klüger 2001a, 40) Although expressed sometimes in a jokingly way, and sometimes in a more seemingly-honest one, Klüger’s constant references to her ghosts, exorcism rituals, etc. denotes her belief in superstition (*Aberglaube*), maybe the only way to come to terms with her past:

Remembering is a branch of witchcraft; its tool is incantation. I often say, as if it were a joke—but it’s true—that instead of God I believe in ghosts. To conjure up the dead you have to dangle the bait of the present before them, the flesh of the living, to coax them out of their inertia. You have to grate and scrape the old roots with tools from the shelves of ancient kitchens. Use your best wooden spoons with the longest handles to whisk into the broth of our fathers the herbs our daughters have grown in their gardens. If I succeed, together with my readers—and perhaps a few men will join us in the kitchen—we could exchange magic formulas like favorite recipes and season to taste the marinade which the old

stories and histories offer us, in as much comfort as our witches' kitchen provides. It won't get too cozy, don't worry: where we stir our cauldron, there will be cold and hot currents from half-open windows, unhinged doors, and earthquake-prone walls. (Klüger 2001a, 69)

The ultimate function of this incantation does not differ from that of the Kaddish prayer. As communication theorists hold, religious texts offer the audience the possibility of addressing the dead, the ones not present: "all communication via media of transmission or recording [...] is ultimately indistinguishable from communication with the dead". (Peters 1999, 176) Kaddish, in this case, the mediating and mediated prayer between the dead and the alive, is rearticulated in this passage of Klüger. As Hofmeyr notes, "in the religious sphere, texts are tasked with onerous responsibilities. Whether prayers, hymns, or incantations, all must cross the forbidding barrier separating the living and the dead in an attempt to beguile the gods and ancestors to whom they are addressed." (Morgan 2008, 198)

From religion (*Glaube*)—a community which rejects her feminist demands—to literature—an isolation which proves to be inefficient—, from literature to superstition (*Aberglaube*), and so the search comes to an end. Proofs will never be obtained, and therefore always the tension between memories and knowledge. Faith crumbled before it got solid, and therefore never the comfort it entails. Ritual, the power of the *communitas*, of the aesthetic formation it creates and recreates, and its potential inclusiveness and relief, prove to be exclusive due to Klüger's rejection of traditional gender adscriptions to which more Orthodox branches of Judaism adhere. Literature, the best possible alternative, aims to be the bearer of tranquility, but ghost stories cannot be written. But it is through this medium, through which Klüger tries to exorcize her ghosts where the building of a new kind of community is suggested. In this last citation, Klüger rearticulates her own version of a ritual, a predominantly female one (although "perhaps a few men will join"). This new community is not ruled by patriarchal values, as it is understood through the optics of feminist criticism; to this "witches' kitchen", Klüger feels invited: not to prepare the food of which later the man of the family will make use for the ritual performance, but to make memories more digestible, only through the exchange of formulas to keep the ghosts from haunting, but always acknowledging that

one must keep on living and learn how to live with one's ghosts; that is, indeed, the task of the survivor, of the one who is still alive.

1.3.5. Other religious intertextual references

1.3.5.1. The Book of Ruth: transgression and identity

Apart from the ones just mentioned, there are several other religious references in Klüger's autobiographical works which are worthy of analysis due to the impact they have in the development of Klüger's post-Shoah Jewish identity. We will then focus in this section on the moments when Klüger makes use of biblical stories to explain how her Jewish identity came to be. Klüger's Jewishness is nothing of a passive characteristic of hers, the Jewish identity developed by Klüger in the aftermath of the Shoah draws from specific biblical (female) characters, their heroic deeds, and their moral rectitude. It can be certainly said that Klüger, along with the other authors here discussed, would have negotiated her Jewish identity in a very different way, had it not been for the Shoah experience and the anti-Semitism to which Jewish at the time were exposed. Indeed, the need for self-affirmation after Auschwitz constitutes the cardinal issue of the survivor who chooses to keep on living.

Klüger explains how, as a young girl, she was open to adhering to a national Austrian identity: "Ich war für ein Heimatgefühl sehr empfänglich gewesen." (Klüger 1992, 41) All of a sudden, however, Austria became Ostmark and Klüger's realization that she will never be "Austrian enough", as we will see in posterior chapters, echoes the feeling that many European Jews had in the period of the *fin de siècle*, when they realized that no matter how assimilated they were, they would never be accepted as full citizens of their home countries. Klüger's early embracement of her Jewishness, nevertheless, points out two aspects of Jewishness hard to differentiate even—or perhaps especially—for Jews. On the one hand, Klüger's failure at recognizing herself as part of a national identity triggers a Jewish identity which transcends the mere religious realm: "Now that my tentative faith in my homeland was being damaged by daily increments beyond repair, I became Jewish in defense." (Klüger 2001a, 42) In chapter two, we will discuss in more detail the political tone of such Jewish awakening, but for the purpose of the religious references which emanate from such becoming, one of the articulations of such nascent Jewish identity takes shape in the name of Ruth itself, a name Klüger connects with the

story of the biblical character and the connection between the story and the embracement of the name itself. Klüger makes use of a biblical character to shape an identity whose arousal finds its inception in an ethnic or national cause. Moreover, the rejection that Klüger feels when trying to adhere to an Austrian national identity is produced not precisely due to Klüger's religious adscription, but to Klüger's ethnic background, due to her *ethnos*, being the religious adscription a mere extension of a discrimination based on an ethnic/racial component.

Nevertheless, a biblical character of the *Ketuvim* is understood by Klüger as a role model; again, placing importance on religion as a medium for cultural and—in this case—ethnic recognition. The unique position of Klüger regarding her understanding of the religious character lies on the feminist reading of the character, a reading that would precisely fit the requirements of feminist theology: “For Ruth the Moabite emigrated not because of her faith, but because of another woman, her mother-in-law, Naomi. She was loyal to a person who was not a beloved or betrothed male, through her ‘Whither thou goest, I shall go’ is often misappropriated to that context. Hers was a freely chosen loyalty, beyond the limits of community and gender, from woman to woman.” (2001a, 42) Establishing Ruth as a transgressor, Klüger sees Ruth as a woman who disregards the patriarchal expectations of a woman at the time, a woman who decided to adhere to the rules of a foreign community and a foreign religion due to the companionship that she finds in another woman, her mother-in-law. The feminist reading of the story of Naomi and Ruth that Klüger makes only focuses on those words that Ruth says to her mother-in-law when deciding to follow her wherever she would go. Klüger's reading of the story of Ruth and Naomi stands as a counter-interpretation to the one that—per Klüger—a “male theologian” would make: “Diese Lesart des Buches Ruth wird mir kein Theologe rauben und schon gar nicht ein männlicher” (1992, 42) and as she extends in *Still Alive*: “No male theologian is going to rob me of my friendly namesake”, appropriating not only her reading of the story but also the character herself. Furthermore, the feminist reading of the story of Ruth and the reticence that such reading might create on male theologians serves for Klüger as a way of expressing a further feminist criticism: “Dafür schenk ich euch das Buch Esther und Makkabäer dazu. Die brauch ich nicht, diese Fabeln vom Sieg durch Sex und Gewalt, die könnt ihr so nationalistisch und chauvinistisch lesen, wie ihr wollt” (Klüger 1992, 42), suggesting that these examples of sex and violence were perpetrated by men, and it is by them that chauvinistic and nationalistic ideas come to be.

Anyhow, for the purpose of her feminist reading of the story, Klüger omits the interpretation of the fact that once back in Bethlehem, Naomi sends Ruth to where Boaz sleeps and "uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do" (3:4), exposing a level of submission to her nearest kinsman which would question Ruth's supposed free will and transgression of gender expectations when deciding to go with her mother-in-law back to Bethlehem. Klüger does refer to this scene later in *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, however, not as an inspiring passage in the life of Ruth, but as yet another example of exclusion. As a little kid, Klüger tries to find an interpretation of such scene of submission; Klüger's great-uncle's response to her thirst for knowledge serves as a way of expanding the discrimination which women encounter when approaching religious matters usually restricted to males. Young Klüger is unable to discern the power-relation portrayed in the scene where Ruth uncovers Boaz's feet, and it is a much older Klüger who realizes that such power relation is also articulated through her great-uncle's reaction:

Einmal angelte ich mir eine Bibel, um die Geschichte von Ruth nachzulesen. Ich war an der Stelle angelangt, wo meine Namensschwester Boaz' Füße aufdeckt, und hätte meinen Großonkel, der gerade da war, gerne um eine Auslegung gebeten. Statt dessen nahm er mir schimpfend das Buch weg. Ich verteidigte mich: Ich hatte nicht versucht, etwas Verbotenes zu lesen. Die Bibel sei nicht zur Unterhaltung da, so mein Onkel. Ein heiliges Buch. Aber ich wollte mich doch nur informieren, und keineswegs respektlos. Wenn ich ein Bub gewesen wär, hatte er mich anders behandelt, das wußte ich. Buben mußten für ihre Konfirmation, die Bar Mitzve, lernen, und bei ihnen war man froh und glücklich, wenn sie sich freiwillig mit der Bibel beschäftigten. Für Mädchen war das unnötig, die lasen nur zur Unterhaltung. (Klüger 1992, 52)

1.3.6. After Orthodoxy

Until now, we have seen how Klüger's relationship with religion, portrayed firstly in the way she refers to religious rites and hierarchies, is understood mainly in cultural terms. For no reflection regarding the question of theodicy or even the existence of God is to be found in her autobiographical works. Klüger's way of approaching religion follows an understanding of it which acknowledges the importance of the performance—

of the *Inszenierung*—, the experience of all the senses in the religious experience, and the pivotal role of the community and its potentially inclusive and/or exclusive character. Her choice of words to represent important rituals of Judaism lets us discern that ritual is understood by her as a mediation to no ontological truth, but a mediation which consummates itself within the ritual and through which the community bonds are not just recreated (as it is usually understood) but created. Through this more analytic portrayal of religion, the gap between the ritual partaker and the scholar becomes bridged. This can be understood by some as a secularization or a secular understanding of religion, reinforced by the fact that the author brands herself as an agnostic. The limits of secularization, nevertheless, must be discussed, and rather than understanding this process through which a more analytical stance predominates regarding the religious expression as a detached, unreligious or secularized vision, understanding religion as a heuristic term which facilitates the analysis of many other cultural aspects, bespeaks a new way of understanding religion which brings to light crucial aspects related to community identity and feelings of belonging.

Klüger does acknowledge the importance of ritual, as her desire to say Kaddish to her father suggests. Saying Kaddish would mean to be able to come to terms with her past, protected by the support of a community willing to let her lead such ritual performance. Secularizing readings of Klüger focus solely on the feminist claim: I (Klüger)—as a woman—demand to be able to occupy positions of powers in the important performance of ritual and therefore conduct such mediation. Consequently, they fail to point out the religious importance of saying Kaddish. Pointless would seem to Klüger to say Kaddish if she did not respect and adhere to the belief in the performative power of such performance. Klüger points out the absurdity of performing Kaddish by herself without the support of the community, and through this assertion, she also expresses not only respect but a belief in the spiritual importance of the ritual. Klüger, simultaneously, does not seem to sacralize the peculiarities of the performance, and hence the departure from a more orthodox understanding of religion might be suggested. Nevertheless, her rejection of participating in any other form of Jewish ritual conducted by other Jewish movements apart from Orthodox Judaism is a radical one. This does not seem to be an alternative she considers, an aspect that is left without further explanation in any of her autobiographical works, as well as her documentary film.

Her acknowledgment of ritual as a medium for creating and establishing power relations is also discernable in her portrayal of her feeling of exclusion in Jewish rituals.

Bridging this gap between the performer and the scholar suggests a certain necessary detachment from orthodoxy, what brings us back to a certain sacralization of the mediation, rather than the ontological truth towards which the ritual is supposed to mediate. Hence, the doubts regarding the possibility of alternative ways of performing rituals within Judaism which would escape from more orthodox/traditional articulations of religion. The importance of ritual, then, is unarguably the central concern of our argument, as it is through the performance of rituals that power relations are established. Power relations that, in the case of Klüger, collide with her feminist ideas. After having analyzed in what way and to what extent this experience of exclusion affects Klüger's religious positions, and due to the lack of theological questions that seem to preoccupy her, the next logical question would be: why then Orthodox Judaism?

1.3.6.1. Reform Judaism

Reform (and Conservative) Judaism saw the light in late 18th-century Europe, the product of the *Hashkala* or Jewish Enlightenment. It is at this moment in history when as Barnavi notes, "the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the manifesto of the French Revolution, inspired by the spirit of the Enlightenment, implied Jewish equality." (Barnavi 1992, 158) If we bear in mind the birth of political Zionism and the Jewish experience in general during the *fin de siècle* and the 20th century, equality—through this more diachronic perspective—might appear to be too big of a term. Nonetheless, Jewish emancipation, the intellectual revolution of the Enlightenment and the relative tolerance it entailed, permitted Jews to leave the ghettos to which until then they had been confined and take part in the building of a new society. Changes in lifestyle were only logical consequences of the immersion in a new—in principle welcoming—Christian society.

The emancipation, along with the new secular ideas which started permeating Jewish life brought about consequently a series of changes in the religious realm, as could only be expected. Noting this mutual influence between secular and religious life must not be overlooked, especially in the context of Reform Judaism, as it stood as the most profound attempt in developing a new way of understanding Judaism and, by extension, Jewishness. As Michael Meyer notes: "It [Reform Judaism] was not merely a movement for doctrinal or liturgical reform unrelated to the realities of Jewish existence, and therefore its history cannot be adequately studied using only the tools of the history of

ideas or the history of religions. It was a movement among Jews whose individual and collective motivations transcended the purely religious, even though they cannot be explained by simple reference to a fixed class orientation or to an overriding political purpose.” (M. A. Meyer 1995, ix)

In our analysis and understanding of Ruth Klüger’s relationship with Judaism and Jewish rituals, and her failure at reconciling religion and her feminist views, this awareness will prevent us from falling into a secularizing reading of Klüger, through which her portrayal of religion and the importance of the liturgical reform she suggests might become eclipsed by a more social or ideological concern: the performative equality of men and women in religious ritual. It can naturally be argued that it is Klüger herself the one who introduces this dialectic between modernity and tradition which she is unable to appease. Our argument, however, is that this tension between modernity and tradition lies at the core of Reform Judaism, and that her struggle is not new within this movement, but the *arche* of the movement itself.

Reform Judaism has been branded by several scholars as a radical development, or a movement initiated by radical *maskilim*; and although its official birth is usually dated at the end of the 18th century in Germany, we share the view that rather than understanding the Reform movement as an abrupt break with a previous tradition, it must be understood as a progression of feelings and ideas product of a wider and constantly evolving tension between tradition and modernity, as it is the same tension the one we see in the authors discussed in this dissertation, especially in the case of Ruth Klüger. Although Reform Judaism is not mentioned anywhere in her autobiographical works, the position in which Klüger finds herself, between tradition and modernity (exemplified perfectly in her willingness to participating in Jewish rituals, but her rejection of traditional gender adscriptions), echoes the concerns of many Reform Jews throughout history.

As Meyer (1995, 63) notes, the earliest example of a fundamental challenge for Judaism was introduced within Judaism itself. Spinoza (Amsterdam, 1632)—or how American philosopher Rebecca Goldstein called him “the renegade Jew that gave us modernity” (2006)—can be considered the first example of a Jew who promulgated a philosophy which collided head-on with the basic principles of Judaism. Spinoza rejected the possibility of an afterlife and man’s status as God’s chosen creature. He rejected the idea of the divine inspiration through which the Bible was written. Per him, God was no king or military strategist. He was also not an architect, nor an artisan. In fact, he has even

been regarded as a pantheist. Although it has been suggested that Spinoza's work was largely forgotten down the ages until Hegel and Wittgenstein took an interest on him, Meyer suggests that Spinoza's ideas on Judaism influenced Lessing, whose approach—subsequently—became essential for the task of the Reformers. Spinoza was naturally excommunicated from the Jewish community of Amsterdam in 1656, but like him, Reformers a century later rejected Jewish law being written through divine inspiration, or the necessity to adhere to *Halakha*, dismissing practices that did not exhibit ethical values, and rejecting *Kashrut* as well, Jewish dietary laws.

Conservative Judaism can be understood as a reaction to Reform (Barnavi 1992). Although it accepted the idea that humans were the writers of the Holy Scripture, their divine influence was not questioned: law comes from God. Moreover, while Conservative adhered to traditional Jewish obligations (such as marriage between Jews and observance of traditional Sabbath), American Reform Judaism accepted the recognition of patriarchal descent in 1983. Modern Orthodoxy is another 19th century Jewish development that took also place in Germany, product of the *Haskalah* as well.

What stems from the study of Reform Judaism is a progressive attempt to include different sensibilities which have historically felt displaced—or, perhaps, ideologically forced to feel so—within Judaism. American Reform Judaism especially has become accepting of most civil vindications articulated from the liberal/progressive side of the political spectrum. Although Reform Judaism respects and adheres to most Jewish rites, a certain desacralization of the ritual has taken place within this movement. Precisely by understanding the power of ritual in the creation and re-creation of aesthetic formations, this view on ritual exemplifies an understanding on religion closer to a cultural system than an irrefutable way of accessing certain ontological truths. The relationship between Reform and spirituality—therefore—detaches from more traditional, conservative or orthodox understandings of spiritual life. In a central document in the history of American Reform Judaism—The Pittsburgh Platform—the importance of overcoming certain Jewish observances is historically argued in paragraphs 3 and 4:

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern

civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation. ("Declaration Of Principles - 'The Pittsburgh Platform'" 1885)

Drawing parallels between Protestant Christianity and Reform Judaism, Temkin notes that according to Reform Jews, Jewish religious observance "were irksome and exotic, exemplifying the 'orientalism' which Kaufman Kohler was exhorting American Jews to drop." (Temkin 1991, 374) German-born American Reform rabbi Kaufman Kohler (1843) was one of the most prominent Jewish reformers. Within this orientalism that he was willing to abandon was also included an archaic conception of women, as he defended the emancipation of women as a pivotal vindication of Reform Judaism:

When the Reform movement, child of the period of German enlightenment, was started in the second half of the last century, the sympathy and support of the Jewess were enlisted and her religious emancipation proclaimed with the implicit hope and confidence that she would inaugurate a new era in Judaism, that she would kindle the smouldering fires of religion anew in the heart and the home. All innovations in Synagogue and school were made with the view of securing perfect equality between women and man before God. (Kohler 1916, 294)

Another very prominent German Reformer of the time, Abraham Geiger, criticized vehemently as well the role of women in Judaism: "Frauen, Sklaven und Rinder werden auf eine Stufe gestellt, und selbst die Förderung des geistigen Lebens unter den Frauen wird als gefährlich betrachtet." (Geiger 1837, 4) He considered that the only religious duties assigned to women—like the lighting of the Sabbath lights—in Judaism were more humiliating than anything else (1837, 8); a criticism that Klüger shares when rejecting her only possible role in Judaism: "She [the Jewish woman] may light the Sabbath candles after having set the table [...]. I don't want to set the Sabbath table or light candles; I don't live with tablecloths and silverware." (Klüger 2001a, 30–31) Geiger

also points out that women in other religions play a more prominent role and asks himself: “nur bei den Juden eine so geringe Theilnahme für das religiöse Leben unter dem weiblichen Geschlechte sich zeigt? Wohl nichts Anderes, als daß das bestehende Judenthum das Weib gewaltsam zurückstößt und ihm seinem empfänglichen Sinn für Religiosität erstickt.“ (Geiger 1837, 8) Is this not precisely the consequence that traditional female expectations of Judaism have on Klüger? That is, a rejection from any form of religious life, the same one that Jewish Reformers feared more than a century earlier.

What all these reformers understood was that giving women a more prominent role in Judaism was essential to the Reform movement: in religious life as well as in the liturgy. Just like Klüger, they emphasized the moments in Jewish history when a female character changed the course of Jewish history, exemplifying the fact that Jewish women have also had a place within history.¹⁷ They, nevertheless, also understood that these women in history experienced discrimination not only as women but also as Jews. Something which, according to Kohler, provided women with a special kind of sensitivity, essential for the reform.

The fact that Klüger never mentions in her autobiographical works the possibility of considering Reform Judaism or any other Jewish movement more open to her feminist claims (Conservative or even New Orthodox) seems uncanny; especially, in a country like the United States¹⁸. Under the mantra of her outspoken agnosticism, scholars have ignored the sacralized position in which Klüger locates the saying of Kaddish or the Ma Nishtana in her autobiographical works. When realizing in front of the Kotel that the most sacred parts of it are reserved only for men, Klüger’s remembrance of Pesach collapses. “Next year in Jerusalem” seems like a chimera if the position she is given as a woman does not do justice to the sacralization of the ritual that, in the first place, planted such

¹⁷ Geiger, especially, makes use of the character of Deborah to exemplify a woman who was not only a wife, but a prophetess and a judge, who was highly regarded and respected for her wisdom and who ultimately becomes a warrior and fights against the Canaanites (Judges 4).

¹⁸ Orthodox Judaism is not the preferred branch of Judaism among Diaspora communities, who identify—especially in the United States, the country with the largest Diaspora Jewish population—mainly with Reform and Conservative Judaism, according to the Pew Research Center (2015). Totally opposite is the case of the Jewish State, where Reform and Conservative Judaism are marginal branches among the Jewish population, even if—as recent JPPI surveys show (2018)—in the last years, more Jews in Israel identify with Reform/Conservative Judaism.

expectations. Klüger criticism towards gender inequality in Jewish rituals of Orthodox Judaism or other more conservative branches of Judaism transcends the mere feminist claim; it ultimately means—due to the adherence to such feminist view—a realization of the exclusive character of ritual, a disenchantment, and a consequent departure from religion and Jewish religious rituals.

Klüger's disregard for Reform Judaism makes us question to what extent this rejection of Reform movements within Judaism follows many Orthodox and Zionist criticism against Reform. In his book *Rom und Jerusalem* (1899), German Zionist leader Moses Hess referred to Reform Judaism as "radical". As it has been noted, one of Reform Judaism's main concerns was the emancipation of women within the context of Judaism. Nevertheless, Reform Judaism also supported the exclusion of any national Jewish feeling, as well as the use of the vernacular and, moreover, the removal of any references to Zion or Jerusalem in the prayers. According to Hess, Reform Judaism "[legte] die Axt an die Wurzel des Judentums, an seinen nationalen Geschichtskultus." (Hess 1899, 12) For Reform Judaism was understood by Jews unwilling assimilate—or disenchanted with the idea of assimilation—as a form of self-denial and, by extension, self-hatred: "Die jüdischen Nasen werden nicht reformiert, und das schwarze, krause jüdische Haar wird durch keine Taufe in blondes durch keinen Kamm in schlichtes verwandelt." (Hess 1899, 12)

The logical question which would follow is if Klüger would understand Reform Judaism also as a kind of betrayal to Judaism. This would be one of the reasons why Reform Judaism is not once mentioned in her autobiographical works when all of the concerns posed by Klüger regarding the role of women in Judaism had been already tackled by Reform Judaism a century before. Would she understand that Reform is nothing else but a way of making Judaism more appropriate within a Christian paradigm? As Michael Meyer notes, following Kant, Reform Judaism's main intention regarding the big changes in ritual practice was to accommodate to bourgeois German society. (M. A. Meyer 1995, 64–84) Klüger never mentions, explicitly, her opinions on Reform Judaism. Nevertheless, many of the concerns which Reform communities in the United States raise nowadays—regarding questions related to Jewish liturgy or the gender division at the Kotel—echo Klüger's. These are, indeed, important tensions in the context of the Israel-Diaspora relationships and although Klüger's criticism follows that of Reform Judaism, Klüger's relationship with Reform Judaism might be, as well, an ambivalent one.

In *Das Weiterleben der Ruth Klüger*, a German colleague of Klüger's, Herbert Lehnert—former member of the Hitler Youth—explains how German Jews play an important role in the context of his research; more specifically, assimilated German Jews (or in their way to assimilation), as he says, “die nichts als Deutsche sein wollten.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 42:03) By drawing a comparison between assimilated Jews (which would exemplify the so-called German-Jewish symbiosis) and his particular relationship with her, Klüger—an assimilated Jewish Germanist—is included by Lehnert within this particular kind of symbiosis which we will discuss more deeply in chapter three. Klüger's reaction to her colleague's appraisal of this type of Jews is, however, that of a complete rejection: “da würde ich sagen, dass gehöre ich nicht dazu. Denn ich habe schon ein bisschen Verachtung für diese Generation deutscher Juden, die nichts als Deutsche sein wollten.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 42:15) In many ways, Reform Judaism was born by these Jews who attempted to become—and, thus, ultimately be perceived—as simply Germans—understanding Judaism, by extension, only as a religion in the Western sense. Klüger's rejection of this type of performance of Jewishness which characterized and characterizes Reform Judaism might find a fitting place within a more general criticism of some of the assimilating tendencies of Reform Judaism; understanding, perhaps, Reform as an extreme case of assimilation, which would, therefore, entail Klüger's disdain.

1.4. Saul Friedländer

The second author we have decided to include in this dissertation is the Czech-born French-raised Israeli-American historian and essayist Saul Friedländer. Just like Klüger, Friedländer was born to German-speaking Ashkenazi Jewish parents; he, however, in Prague in 1932. This fact, however, did not interfere with a kind of German sense of self with which Friedländer grew up during his first years: “L’ingéniosité juive ne changea rien au fait que chez nous tout le monde se sentait allemande.” (Friedländer 1978, 14) Perhaps, to a certain extent, his Germaneness—or simply his awareness of a German cultural background—was earlier developed than his Jewishness, an identity that, he explains, was first realized during a weekly class in religion, when he—among other Jewish kids—were forced to leave the class and join a rabbi. This particular kind of Jewish life in Prague is nothing but the basis, perhaps an omen, of what Saul Friedländer’s life has been along the years: “Le mode de vie des juifs de Prague, au temps de mon enfance, était peut-être futile, «déraciné» au regard de l’histoire ; mais voilà : ce mode de vie était le nôtre, celui que l’on aimait.” (Friedländer 1978, 18)

A very young Friedländer was forced to leave Prague with his parents in 1939 after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. They made it to Nérès-les-Bains, part of the non-occupied part of France, but in 1942, Friedländer was taken to a Catholic boarding school in Montluçon, a kind of seminary called Saint-Béranger, while his parents attempted in vain to cross the border to Switzerland. In Montluçon he got baptized, changed his name from Pavel (birth name) to Paul-Henri and even decided he wanted to become a Jesuit priest afterward. Catholicism became Saul Friedländer’s passion during his years in France, while his parents were being gassed at Auschwitz for being Jews.

Friedländer’s adolescence was spent in different French educational institutions: after the boarding school in Montluçon, there came the Collège of St.-Amand-Montrond and finally the Lycée Henri IV in Paris. It was not until after the war was over when Friedländer is told by a priest the reality of World War II, Nazi Germany, and the KZs, something of which he had been ignorant throughout the years while growing up in France. A point of inflection in the life of Friedländer takes place at this moment, rediscovering—perhaps to some extent even discovering—a Jewish identity until then never even fully realized. This instant connection with a past that until then Friedländer understood as his triggered a *deconversion* from Catholicism and—subsequently—a

conversion to Zionism, which ultimately took him (literally on board of the Irgun ship Altalena) to *Eretz Israel* in 1948, a few weeks after the establishment of the state.

In Israel, Friedländer lived with his uncle Paul in Nirah, but the new-born State of Israel was not going to be Friedländer's final destination. Five years after arriving in Israel, he was already taking a plane back to France to study Relations Internationales at the Institut d'études politiques in Paris. Friedländer's professional and academic career took him to Sweden for a little while as well as New York (where he worked for Nahum Goldmann, founder of the World Jewish Congress) and again back to Israel, only to leave for Geneva in 1961, where he got his Ph.D. at the Graduate Institute of International Studies with a dissertation titled "The American Factor in German Foreign and Military Policy between September 1939 and December 1941". In Geneva, Friedländer has taught for more than twenty years: always back and forth between Switzerland and Israel: firstly, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and then at Tel-Aviv University.

In 1987, after a rather traumatic experience during a short stay in Berlin, Friedländer decides to establish himself in Los Angeles as a professor of history at UCLA. California has become eventually the city where Friedländer has lived longer than in any other place in the world. Perhaps not a mere coincidence, as he mentions in his documentary film: "California is the epitome of nowhere in the sense of identity". Friedländer taught at UCLA until 2011, the year he retired. It is here where he was able to entirely turn to the history of the Shoah, being awarded the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction in 2008 for his magnum opus *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination 1939-1945* published in 2007, a work which followed *The Years of Extermination: 1933-1939* published in 1997. After his retirement, Friedländer became professor emeritus of history at UCLA, and although vast is the number of works he has published throughout the years, his two autobiographical publications constitute the main object of our study: *Quand vient le souvenir* written in French and published in 1978, and the long-awaited second part *Where Memory Leads* published in 2016 and this time, written in English. As in the case of Ruth Klüger, some documentary films like *The Hidden Child* (2001) or *When Memory Comes: A Film about Saul Friedländer* (2013) will complement our analysis and study of the author, as well as various essay works published in French, German and English which will complement our analysis.

1.4.1. Assimilation and religion

At a first reading, Friedländer's particularity regarding his relationship with religion can stem from the conversion to Catholicism he undergoes at the boarding school in Montluçon where he was able to hide from the Nazis; an event which has a great impact on his identity during those years, especially in the context of the Shoah. It cannot be said that Friedländer ever (re)converted to Judaism after leaving the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, Friedländer's (re)awakening to his Jewishness necessarily entailed leaving Catholicism behind. As it will be noted, Friedländer's (re)discovery of his Jewishness is intrinsically connected with his encounter with Zionism, something which we will further discuss in chapter two of this dissertation. Still, some strictly-religious aspects can be isolated from Friedländer's self-writing, passages where specific reflections upon both Judaism and Catholicism are evinced, where both confessions—in a way—merge together somehow to provide Friedländer with a unique perspective on religion, ritual, religious aesthetics, and ethics.

Friedländer's religious background can be considered of an even more secular nature than that of Klüger's. As it has been noted, Klüger's encounters with religion and religious rituals can be said to be—at a first reading—mainly remembered as means of imposing a specific gender hierarchy which serves as criticism through the lens of the feminist theory to which she adheres. This sour feminist criticism which can easily totalize the religious experience and, thus, the religious reading we could make of it, on the other hand, also serves a means to understand the creation and recreation of the *communitas*, of community identities, of aesthetic formations; thus, bringing into the discussion the crucial role ritual has at the consolidation and propagation of collective and personal identity. Friedländer's treatment of religion, as well, serves to reflect upon the construction of identity and aesthetic formations, but—in his case—with an especially political tone to it.

Friedländer's first memories regarding religion and ritual evince a higher level of assimilation than Klüger's. The comparison of both authors' childhood memories, in fact, manifest the difference between emancipation and quasi-assimilation of European Jews during the first half of the 20th century. Klüger explains this apparently-subtle difference in *weiter leben* when recalling her first childhood memories: "Wir waren emanzipiert, aber nicht assimiliert." The difference between both types of European Jews, although perhaps minimum for many, resides—as Klüger's and Friedländer's words let us

discern—in the partaking of some religious rituals and holidays, without entailing a necessary belief on the part of the partaker, but which constituted—to a greater or lesser extent—a certain Jewish consciousness. Klüger continues explaining this difference: “Der Unterschied mag als Haarspalterei gelten, uns war er wichtig. Am Versöhnungstag aßen und tranken die Erwachsenen von Sonnenuntergang bis zum nächsten Sonnenuntergang nichts, und so war Erwachsensein unter anderem Fastendürfen. Wenn ich erst dreizehn bin, dann darf ich das auch.” (Klüger 1992, 42) Friedländer’s memories, on the other hand, lack any religious tone. No Jewish holidays and, by extension, no Jewish religious culture for that matter influenced any aspect of Friedländer’s upbringing:

Chez nous, pour autant que ma mémoire soit fidèle, le judaïsme, comme religion, avait entièrement disparu. Nous n’observions aucune des règles de vie imposées par l’orthodoxie, nous ne célébrions aucune des fêtes, ne respections aucune des coutumes... Je ne garde pas le moindre souvenir de l’Altneuschul, la célèbre synagogue, la plus vieille d’Europe dit-on, pourtant très proche de chez nous, non plus que de l’hôtel de ville juif avec son horloge marquée aux lettres hébraïques et dont les aiguilles tournaient à l’envers, ou encore du vieux cimetière, aussi célèbre et aussi ancien que la synagogue. Bref, rien. Enfin, presque rien, car on utilisait quelques termes venus du yiddish, notamment meshuge et nebuch : « cinglé » et « paumé ». Somme toute, nous étions des représentants typiques de la bourgeoisie juive assimilée d’Europe centrale. (Friedländer 1978, 16)

The extent of Friedländer’s assimilation is portrayed in the way he discovers his Jewishness: at school when not being able to stay with the Christian students during the weekly religious class and having to join a rabbi to hear Bible stories. Friedländer’s knowledge of the Torah or of Hebrew was extremely limited to these classes until making Aliyah in 1948, once the discovery of the bible: a fascinating book—as he recalls—was indelibly connected with his learning of the Hebrew language.

Years later, a twenty-four-old Friedländer would discover—almost accidentally—a religious layer in his Jewish identity at his uncle’s house in Sweden when reading Martin Buber’s *Die Erzählungen der Chassidim*. This brief episode in Friedländer’s life is one of the only ones we find in his essay and autobiographical works where a religious

dimension is introduced. In it, a clear difference between the secular identification with the Jewish state and a more religious identification with the Hasidim is experienced for the first time by Friedländer, in a way resembling more well-known stances of fascination towards the world of Eastern-European Jews and the Haredim¹⁹: their firmness of faith and their unassimilated pious lives, completely unabsorbed into the gentile culture of the countries they inhabited:

Je ne saurais dire aujourd'hui si je fus, à cette époque, influencé par le message intellectuel de ces minces volumes mais je me souviens avoir été profondément ému. Je les lus et les relus plusieurs fois et, sous l'effet du dépaysement, d'une certaine solitude aussi, je ressentis, comme jamais auparavant, la grâce cachée de ce monde secret du hassidisme. Mais, davantage encore, je sentis poindre pour la première fois une nette différence entre mon israélité, qui me parut, pour un temps au moins, superficielle et presque vide de signification, et une judéité dont certains aspects me semblaient, dans ce cadre inhabituel, dotés soudain d'une dimension nouvelle, mystérieuse, puissante et magnifique. (Friedländer 1978, 106)

In order to locate the first Jewish experience of Friedländer's, in contrast with Klüger's relative familiarity with religious rituals in childhood, we need to focus on Friedländer's first experiences of Otherness which, in this case, are strictly connected with a religious sphere. Friedländer belonged to a family of German-speaking Jews who did not adhere to the celebration of any of the traditional Jewish holidays, hence, the realization of his own Jewishness came first and foremost to him when at school he (along with some other Jewish kids) was to leave the classroom and join a rabbi once a week; young Saul was only six years old. Friedländer's shaping of Jewishness started taking place through the mediation of these weekly acts of differentiation, of confirmed alterity,

¹⁹ Kafka was also another Czech Jewish author who felt an enormous fascination for the world of the Haredim, as he expresses in many of his diary entries and letters. As in the case of Friedländer, this particular relationship with the world of Eastern-European Jews, the *חֲסִידִים* as they would be pejoratively called, usually comes at a much later stage in the life of these almost-assimilated Central European Jews who, many times, looked down at their Eastern European fellow Jews for symbolizing the ghetto-life and the reticence to embrace assimilation.

which were interiorized by a young Friedländer as “une humiliation répétée” (Friedländer 1978, 35); they were the proof and the inception of a consciousness of Otherness, which will—however—remain a constant in Friedländer’s life, no matter where. This new sense of Otherness comes to an ironic twist later in young Friedländer’s life when his parents put him in a home for Jewish children near Paris, at Montmorency after fleeing Czechoslovakia, and can be read as an omen of a posterior feeling of totalizing Otherness which seems to pervade Friedländer’s self-writing. In this passage, Friedländer recounts, his school peers were mostly Hassidic boys to whom his assimilated European-boy looks were understood as a warning symbol. These boys tied him to a tree and beat him, as Friedländer explains: “Je devenais juif au deuxième degré.” (Friedländer 1978, 50)

1.4.2. (Re)encountering Jewishness after the Shoah

It would not be until 1946 when an already-Catholic Friedländer is hit by reality through the words of a priest who tells him, “devant [d’un] Christ obscure”, about the Nazi persecution, the concentration camps, the gas chambers and the fate of his parents, gassed at Auschwitz. Friedländer explains this moment of epiphany as follows:

Je ne saurais le dire aujourd’hui mais, tout au long de cette journée décisive, j’avais l’impression que les pièces essentielles d’un puzzle jusqu’alors incohérent tombaient en place. Pour la première fois, je me sentis juif—non plus malgré moi ou secrètement, mais par un mouvement d’adhésion entière. Du judaïsme, il est vrai, je ne connaissais rien et, catholique, je l’étais encore. Mais, quelque chose avait changé, un lien était rétabli, une identité émergeait, confuse certes, contradictoire peut-être, mais désormais reliée à un axe central qui ne pouvait faire de doute : d’une manière ou d’une autre, j’étais juif—quelle que fût, dans mon esprit, la signification de ce terme. (Friedländer 1978, 141)

A young Catholic teenage Jew, an orphan, without any kind of Jewish religious upbringing, baptized and already convinced of becoming a priest, experiences a moment of epiphany. Not by the opening of the Scriptures, like Saint Augustine, or when accidentally discovering an essay contest when reading the newspaper, like Rousseau, nor even encountering some form of political philosophy like Stuart Mill. Friedländer

experiences a moment of epiphany in front of a Christ figure when hearing about the Shoah, about the extermination of six million Jews, including his parents. Instead of being exposed to more contradictions, Friedländer's contradictions in regard to his Jewishness seem to become neutralized and naturalized, and his sudden and unexpected encounter of it becomes liberating, just like the other writers of the self which have preceded him:

Être juif, alors qu'avec le judaïsme Pau-Henri Ferland n'avait plus aucun lien, n'était-ce pas une folie ? Car, catholique, je pouvais désormais le rester, sans hésitation aucune : mes liens avec le passé n'avaient-ils pas définitivement disparu ? Je rêvais sans cesse de mon avenir sacerdotal et j'étais convaincu de ma vocation. D'où venait donc ce besoin d'un retour, le retour vers un groupe décimé, humilié, misérable ? Né d'une famille « véritablement » juive, j'eusse au moins gardé la cohérence des souvenirs, mais dans mon cas cet obstacle intérieur, ce constant rappel, n'agissait pas : *j'étais libre*. (1978, 142, emphasis added)

These passages in the life of Saul Friedländer evince his particular background and profile: that of a young boy who did not only not fit within traditional paradigms of Jewishness (like many assimilated European Jews of the time) but also a young boy who even after having received a Catholic education and having considered becoming a priest, did not hesitate to embrace a Jewish identity which would ultimately take him to *Eretz Yisrael* on board of the Altalena in 1948. Many are the examples of assimilated Jews who embrace Zionism in its more Socialist and secular form, drawing from a religious sense of nostalgia which becomes rapidly secularized through a political reading of Jewish history rather than a religious one, with special emphasis on the catastrophic history of Jews. The case of Saul Friedländer stands as *sui generis* on its own due to his Catholic education and baptism, which we will further discuss in the following pages. The Shoah experience being what triggers such Jewish awakening. Finally, Zionism stands as the psychological way, the self-affirming one, of coping with the past.

1.4.3. *Pesach*: “ancree et assise au sein de la communauté”

In Friedländer’s first autobiographical work, *Quand vient le souvenir*, just like in Klüger’s first autobiographical work, *weiter leben*, an individual perspective of a collective ritual is introduced: the celebration of Pesach. Just like Klüger, Friedländer reflects upon the ritual from the perspective usually ascribed to the believer, in this case, the ritual partaker—and the scholar who dissects and analyzes the phenomenon. In the arena which the ritual provides, the creation of the Jewish aesthetic formation befalls; this occurs through the recreation of a collective history, the history of an *ethnos*. Through the recreation of such *ethnos*, the ritual—which is traditionally regarded as the mediation to an ontological truth—is then regarded as the mediation between the collective unconscious which constitutes such ontological truth and the aesthetic formation, inserting the ritual partaker within them and, thus, creating the belief, or the identity which will shape the self-perception of the ritual partaker. Friedländer locates himself—just as Klüger—in the intermediate position of the self-conscious ritual-partaker, being perhaps conscious of this bidirectional influence. Ritual is no longer understood as mediating to any ontological truth, but, instead, as a medium for constructing and reconstructing a collective historical consciousness and, as a result, an individual and collective identity.

In the Seder passage, Friedländer recalls the more traditional celebration of Pesach which he experienced at the house of his new guardian and his family after leaving Montluçon. His guardian’s family were Jewish Russian immigrants, who provided Friedländer with the Eastern-European Jewish traditions he had never experienced in Prague, that is, a less assimilated experience²⁰, and—as Friedländer expresses—a more meaningful one than more reformist celebrations of Pesach which he will later experience in Israel. This more meaningful character stems from the traditional readings of the Haggadah as well as the use of sacred words during the celebration. Friedländer’s understanding of the importance of the ritual lies in the enactment of these holy words as crucial in their role of mediators:

On fêtait la libération de l’esclavage, la fin d’une ère de ténèbres, l’aube d’un temps nouveau. Pourtant je l’avoue, la célébration traditionnelle, telle que je la

²⁰ It was also in this context where Friedländer encountered Zionism, as we will explain and analyze in chapter two of this dissertation.

vécus pour la première fois chez mon tuteur—et bien souvent par la suite—me paraît la seule significative : Ce sont les mots consacrés, répétés pendant des siècles, qui donnent au symbole général sa force particulière, qui marquent l’enracinement dans le groupe, l’enracinement dans l’histoire et dans le temps. Ce sont les mots consacrés qui, parce qu’ils ne sont jamais entièrement clairs, toujours ouverts à l’exégèse et à l’explication, ouvrent les portes de l’imaginaire et permettent au plus humble des participants de comprendre à sa manière le récit et le sens de la libération, tout en sachant que ces mots traditionnels lui servent d’ancre et d’assise au sein de la communauté. (Friedländer 1978, 155)

Friedländer suggests that it is the holy words “répétés pendant des siècles” which, with all their aesthetic impact create a powerful sense of long-lastingness and serve as a mediation and circulation of a particular set of cultural forms. By opening the door to imagination, the traditional holy words create in the believer—or in the ritual-partaker—a sense of belonging, as these imaginations are felt as real, as numina. This is what Meyer (2009, 5) calls “corporal sensations”, a key aspect in the understanding of the creation and consolidation of aesthetic formations. Friedländer’s understanding of traditional ritual as “d’ancre et d’assise” within the *communitas* follows this culturalist understanding of religion. Nevertheless, Friedländer’s reasoning can be taken one step further and thus conclude that they—the holy words—do not only constitute the foundation within the community, they themselves *found* such community by connecting the aesthetic formation to a wider collective unconscious from which the ontological truths are derived, giving a particular shape to a set of pre-existing archetypes. Rather than the ontological truth that they supposedly mediate, the *Inszenierung* of such holy words become the creating element of the *communitas*, that is, of the aesthetic formation which, in turn, shapes the final outcome of the archetypes through a dynamic of bidirectional fluxes.

In the celebration of Pesach, many senses partake. It is not only the hearing of readings from the Haggadah or the holy words of prayers which mediate the creation of the aesthetic formation, it is also the gustatory and olfactory aspect of Pesach which, together with the visual and auditory aspects, mediate the production of imaginations, thus preserving experiences which are understood as shared—a shared historical consciousness. This history becomes shared and appropriated by the individual, thus becoming part of the Jewish *Lebenswelt*. Björn’s Kraus recent epistemological

constructivist approach on this term backs up our understanding of the creation of aesthetic formations and helps us elucidate more precisely this concept of the *Lebenswelt*, understood by Kraus as “das subjektive Wirklichkeitskonstrukt eines Menschen, welches dieser unter den Bedingungen seiner Lebenslage bildet” which adds to our culturalist approach on religion. *Lebenswelt* would then contrast with what Kraus calls *Lebenslage*, “die materiellen und immateriellen Lebensbedingungen eines Menschen.” (Kraus 2013, 153) *Lebenswelt* can be then understood as created through the enactment of these mediated rituals which create shared imaginations (even if articulated individually in a unique way by the ritual-partakers) and a historical consciousness. While religious rituals would have nothing to impact on the *Lebenslage*, they become crucial for the development of the *Lebenswelt* and thus, the aesthetic formation.

The gustatory and olfactory aspect, the lower senses—as regarded by post-Kantian aesthetics—although traditionally neglected in the history of aesthetics remain of the pivotal claims of this culturalist approach on religion to which we adhere. In the case of Friedländer’s passage, it is noted how Friedländer’s lack of participation in the gastronomical aspect of the ritual does not necessarily entail a diminishment in the ritual experience. Nonetheless, Friedländer’s lack of participation in the gustatory aspect of the ritual is symptomatic of a crisis regarding the clear adherence to a specific religious group, which is although retold by Friedländer in almost comical terms: “Le repas commença donc ; quand la soupe fut servie, j’y participai sans rien dire mais, à l’arrivée des plats de résistance, la viande notamment, je m’excusai. Étonnement : « Serais-tu malade ? » « Non je me sens tout à fait bien. » « Mais alors, mange voyons ! » Je continuai à refuser. Il fallut m’expliquer : « C’est que, voyez-vous, aujourd’hui, je ne peux manger de viande ; nous sommes le Vendredi Saint...” (Friedländer 1978, 156) After many years of being a fervent Catholic, Friedländer’s still adherence to Catholic traditions conflict with these new Jewish traditions—which although new, were regarded as always having belonged to him. What was understood as a consternation for a young Friedländer is revisited by an older Friedländer as a moment of liberation. This culturalist approach on religion through which Friedländer sees the (re)discovery of his Jewishness is only understood in hindsight in the process of self-writing. That which—when first lived—was experienced as a moment of bewilderment, confusion and collision of two different religious ascriptions is revisited and understood by Friedländer as “une liberté retrouvée.” (Friedländer 1978, 155)

1.4.4. The *Akedah*, the sacred and secular destiny of the Jews

- א ויהי, אחר הדברים האלה, והאלהים, נסה את-
אברהם; ויאמר אליו, אברהם ויאמר הנני.
- ב ויאמר קח-נא את-בנך את-יחידך אשר-אהבת,
את-יצחק, ולך-לך, אל-ארץ המורה; והעלהו שם,
לעלה, על אחד ההרים, אשר אמר אליך.
- ג וישכם אברהם בבקר, ויחבש את-חמרו, ויקח
את-שני נעריו אתו, ואת יצחק בנו; ויבקע, עצי
עלה, ויקם וילך, אל-המקום אשר-אמר-לו
האלהים.
- ד ביום השלישי, וישא אברהם את-עיניו וירא
את-המקום--מרחק.
- ה ויאמר אברהם אל-נעריו, שבו-לכם פה עם-
החמור, ואני והנער, נלכה עד-פה; ונשתחוה,
ונשובה אליכם.
- ו ויקח אברהם את-עצי העלה, וישם על-יצחק
בנו, ויקח פינדו, את-האש ואת-המאכלת; וילכו
שניהם, יחדו.
- ז ויאמר יצחק אל-אברהם אביו, ויאמר אבי,
ויאמר, הנני בני; ויאמר, הנה האש והעצים, ואיה
השה, לעלה.
- 1 And it came to pass after these things, that
God did prove Abraham, and said unto him:
'Abraham'; and he said: 'Here am I.'
- 2 And He said: 'Take now thy son, thine only
son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get
thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him
there for a burnt-offering upon one of the
mountains which I will tell thee of.'
- 3 And Abraham rose early in the morning,
and saddled his ass, and took two of his
young men with him, and Isaac his son; and
he cleaved the wood for the burnt-offering,
and rose up, and went unto the place of which
God had told him.
- 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his
eyes, and saw the place afar off.
- 5 And Abraham said unto his young men:
'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad
will go yonder; and we will worship, and
come back to you.'
- 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-
offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and
he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and
they went both of them together.
- 7 And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father,
and said: 'My father.' And he said: 'Here am
I, my son.' And he said: 'Behold the fire and
the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-
offering?'

- ח וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲבֹרָהֶם, אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה-לוֹ הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה,
בְּנִי; וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם, יַחְדָּו.
- ט וַיָּבֹאוּ, אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים, וַיִּבֶן
שָׁם אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת-הָעֵצִים;
וַיַּעֲקֹד, אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ, וַיִּשֶׁם אֹתוֹ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ,
מִמַּעַל לְעֻצִּים.
- י וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶת-יָדוֹ, וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמַּאֲכָלֹת,
לִישְׁחֹט, אֶת-בְּנוֹ.
- יא וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה, מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם, וַיֹּאמֶר,
אֲבֹרָהֶם אֲבֹרָהֶם; וַיֹּאמֶר, הִנְנִי.
- יב וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל-הַנֶּעֱר, וְאֶל-תַּעֲשׂ
לוֹ, מֵאוֹמֶה: כִּי עֵתָה יָדַעְתִּי, כִּי-יִרְאֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶתָּה,
וְלֹא תִשְׁכַּת אֶת-בְּנֶךָ אֶת-יִחִידְךָ, מִמֶּנִּי.
- יג וַיִּשָּׂא אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶת-עֵינָיו, וַיִּרְאֵה נֶהֱגָה-אֵיל, אֲחֵר,
נֶאֱחָז בִּסְבָךְ בְּקֶרְנָיו; וַיֵּלֶךְ אֲבֹרָהֶם וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הָאֵיל,
וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַחַת בְּנוֹ.
- יד וַיִּקְרָא אֲבֹרָהֶם שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא, יְהוָה יִרְאֶה,
אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם, בְּהָר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה.
- טו וַיִּקְרָא מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה, אֶל-אֲבֹרָהֶם, שְׁנִית, מִן-
הַשָּׁמַיִם.
- 8 And Abraham said: 'God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.' So they went both of them together.
- 9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.
- 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.
- 11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said: 'Abraham, Abraham.' And he said: 'Here am I.'
- 12 And he said: 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.'
- 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.
- 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Adonai-jireh; as it is said to this day: 'In the mount where the LORD is seen.'
- 15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven,

טז וַיֹּאמֶר, בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נָא־יְהוָה: כִּי, יַעַן אֲשֶׁר
עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה, וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ, אֶת-בְּנִךְ אֶת-
יִחִידְךָ.
16 and said: 'By Myself have I sworn, saith
the LORD, because thou hast done this thing,
and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son,

יז כִּי-בָרַךְ אֲבָרְכְךָ, וְהִרְבֵּה אֲרַבֶּה אֶת-וַרְצֶךָ
כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְכַחֹל, אֲשֶׁר עַל-שְׁפַת הַיָּם; וְיִרְשׁ
וַרְצֶךָ, אֶת שַׁעַר אֹיְבָיו.
17 that in blessing I will bless thee, and in
multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the
stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is
upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess
the gate of his enemies;

יח וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּוַרְצֶךָ, כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ, עֲקֵב, אֲשֶׁר
שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי.
18 and in thy seed shall all the nations of the
earth be blessed; because thou hast hearkened
to My voice.'

(Genesis Chapter 22 בְּרֵאשִׁית 22)

As the recently-deceased Elie Wiesel noted in a lecture at 92nd Street Y in New York²¹ (2007), the Akedah is a story which “never lets us go”, a story which urges its reader to delve further into the dozens of interpretations which throughout history have been suggested by the greatest minds of Jewish and Christian theology. This search for the definite meaning behind the Akedah proves futile for many Jewish intellectuals, also for many Shoah survivors to whom the event at Mount Moriah appears to be an inexplicable one until this day, but an event which nonetheless constitutes one of the cardinal passages—if not the most cardinal one—in Jewish history. Elie Wiesel continues: “The more I explore it, the less I come close to a resolution. The more I dive into it, the more I find myself lost, as if in a thick black forest from which no way out leads to a single and maybe reassuring truth. All the questions I asked myself more than forty years ago here, since my first study on the subject, all of them remain vibrant and open.” (Wiesel 2007)

The story of Abraham and Isaac has troubled Jewish and Christian minds throughout centuries, from the regular believer to the most important sages of the Talmud,

²¹ The entire lecture, along with many other lectures given by Elie Wiesel, can be streamed for free at the Elie Wiesel archive on the 92Y website: <http://92yondemand.org/category/elie-wiesel>

to mystics and, of course, scholars. It is very probable for anyone acquainted with the Jewish or Christian tradition to remember the first time one heard the story of Abraham and Isaac with mixed feelings of, perhaps, rejection and fascination; and because of this, a story which has propitiated innumerable *midrashim* and commentaries throughout history. Many have been the readings of the Akedah suggested throughout the centuries. Louis Berman is the author of one of the most relevant works regarding the *Akedah* written in a language which is not Hebrew: *The Akedah* (1997). In a very exhaustive study of the binding of Isaac, Berman notes the main different interpretations which have taken place throughout history, with a special focus on modern readings of the Akedah by scholars who revive and expand medieval rabbinic readings of the story. In this work, Berman especially focuses on the Jewish interpretations as well as on the Christian ones.²²

In trying to discover God's purpose behind asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, some authors, like Martin Buber, have pointed out how Abraham was being punished by God for previous moments of doubt. Other authors have even suggested the connection between the Holocaust and the Akedah; thus, acquiring the theme of martyrdom, an interpretation which finds strong rejections on the part of many other scholars, including Elie Wiesel. In the context of Christian theology, Berman notes, the Akedah has served to denounce the primitive morality of the Hebrews, the people of the Old Testament. The sacralization of the New Testament, Berman defends, necessarily entails the depreciation of the status of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, the most compelling interpretation of the Akedah is that of God's test of Abraham's loyalty, either interpreted as an act of obedience or faith²³. The moral suspension which Abraham accepts when adhering to God's plan regarding the sacrifice of Isaac is, Berman notes, understood differently in both Jewish and Christian theology: "Christianity stressed belief, and so Kierkegaard describes Abraham as 'a man of perfect faith.' Judaism stresses action and would describe Abraham as a man of monumental obedience." (Berman 1997, 114)

²² Not so much attention is however paid by Louis Berman to the Muslim interpretations of the Akedah, a story which is included in the 27th Sura of the Qur'an and which includes a few lines uttered by Isaac where the submissive disposition of the young boy is introduced. An important point of difference from the account as portrayed in Genesis 22.

²³ Elie Wiesel in the aforementioned lecture would even go as far as to understand the test as bidirectional: God tests Abraham and Abraham, at the same time, tests God.

The Akedah understood as a test of obedience is the interpretation to which Saul Friedländer adheres. Something that—following Berman’s thesis—evinces Friedländer predominantly-Jewish reading of the Binding of Isaac, and which goes back to Friedländer’s first exposition to Genesis 22 at school as a young boy in Prague. This interpretation of the Akedah seems to survive Friedländer’s Catholic education (as we will see, an intense religious experience where Friedländer fully embraced Catholic doctrine and beliefs) until he finally migrates to Israel in 1948, an event after which Friedländer’s contact with religion does not occur in the context of observance, but in a more cultural setting and through a more culturalist understanding of religion. Friedländer remembers his first time hearing the Bible story in *Quand vient le souvenir* as follows: “J’imaginai Abraham cheminant dans le désert, tout courbé par les ans, avec, à ses côtés, son fils Isaac et, derrière eux, l’âne chargé des fagots et de l’épée du sacrifice. Le troisième jour, ils virent se profiler les contours du mont Moriah... Puis la question suscitée par le texte terrible tomba pour longtemps dans l’oubli ; mais elle resurgit et avec quelle force !” (Friedländer 1978, 35)

Out of all the Bible stories told by the rabbi at school, the Akedah is one of the passages which resonates more in Friedländer’s memories, a story which accompanies Friedländer until the writing of his first autobiographical novel in 1978. The Akedah’s central question concerning Abraham’s obedience to God does not leave Friedländer ever since first heard, a question which—mixed with the memories of the story first told by the rabbi—triggers many other questions regarding the nature of Judaism and the role of the Akedah in the creation of a certain submissive disposition in the Jewish aesthetic formation. Moreover, Friedländer’s account on the passage confirms Elie Wiesel’s words; the Akedah is indeed a story which “never lets us go”: “Pourquoi est-ce là l’un des premiers récits de notre peuple? Pourquoi la Bible l’a-t-elle conservé ? J’en ai lu toutes les interprétations et toutes les explications, mais ce texte ne me laisse pas en paix : « Prends ton fils, ton seul fils... offre-le en sacrifice... »” (Friedländer 1978, 35)

Friedländer’s questioning of the importance of the Akedah in Jewish history and its ultimate *telos* are left unanswered and, thus, remain a source of restlessness. Friedländer’s next words, however, reinforce the obedient disposition of Jews which stems from the interiorization of this passage, a character which he says has historically been characteristic of Jews. Rabbi Allan Miller shares this same take on the Akedah. Per him, in order to survive in the Diaspora, Jews needed to adapt their myths to the reality as a minority: “If the Jewish people were to survive, they could not have Promethean,

activist, aggressive myths. They had to have passive myths; myths in which their battles were fought exclusively with God.” (Miller, Riskin, and Zimmerman 1981, 35) Miller’s point, indeed, exemplifies many Jewish reactions to the Akedah. Abraham’s submissive obedience to God as paradigmatic of Jewish life in Diaspora for two thousand years collides head-on with the Zionist turn in Jewish history:

Look at the difference in educating our children today; look at the different role models children have today. You have your Jabotinsky, your Trumpeldor, your Moshe Dayan; you have your modern military heroes of the State of Israel, the pilots the heroes of the ’67 war. This is a whole different way of thinking; this is a mythological revolution. And I absolutely insist that the twenty-second chapter of Genesis is part of the passive hero model, the hero who obeys God and is prepared to accept whatever fate is meted out to him. The fact is that the angel stopped it at the last minute, at the eleventh hour. But conceivably it might not have been stopped. The Jews were being taught how to behave; this is one of the purposes of myth. The purpose of myth is to educate. Myth is collective, shared fantasy. It performs a very important role. It is adaptational. It is survivalist. It educates the group to act in such a way as to enable the group to survive. (Miller, Riskin, and Zimmerman 1981, 32)

By proposing as modern Jewish role models famous Zionists, Miller suggests an understanding of Zionism, on the one hand, as a revolutionary movement, but within Judaism, complicating the basic distinction between Judaism and Jewishness which is usually kept for the purpose of isolating different spheres of Jewish performance. Moreover, this quote could be used to emphasize the phenomenon of Zionism as constitutive of Judaism, rather than a secular break from it. By comparing Abraham with Jabotinsky, that is, a biblical character vs. a Zionist leader, a continuum from the old Jew to the new one is established; thus, accordingly, explaining Friedländer’s attitude towards the Akedah. For Abraham’s obedience to God does not only affect observant Jews, as Friedländer’s words let us discern; and, in turn, as Miller words let us discern, observant Jews do not feel unaffected by Zionist actions.

If obedience to a mysterious destiny has been historically representative of Jews’ actions in *Galut*—as Miller suggests—Friedländer proposes in *Quand vient le souvenir*

that this obedience has not disappeared from Jewish life. This obedience has, in turn, undergone a process of apparent secularization: “L’obéissance d’Abraham explique toute notre histoire. Aujourd’hui encore, les juifs sont le peuple de l’obéissance non plus aux injonctions de Dieu, mais à celles d’un mystérieux destin. Pourquoi cette fidélité ? Au nom de quoi ?” (Friedländer 1978, 36) This quote stands as a dissonant one—perhaps the only dissonant one—if we compare it with the general tone in *Quand vient le souvenir*, a piece of self-writing where Friedländer—while telling the story of his childhood—expresses a firm defense of Zionism and, accordingly, being Jewish nationalism expressed by Friedländer as the most important endeavor of his life. In chapter two, we will further discuss Friedländer’s Zionist journey and, furthermore, we will contrast the different performances of Jewishness portrayed in his two autobiographical works.

Friedländer’s reflections upon the Akedah contrast highly with other religious moments in Friedländer’s life—namely, Pesach. Just as in Klüger’s case, the Jewish religion is viewed from two different angles: a first almost-anthropological interpretation of religion, where the value of the aesthetic formation created through ritual activities is highlighted. Through rituals—especially Pesach for both authors—a feeling of community identity is developed, one that both authors, in one way or another, do embrace. A second approach to religion is a more psychological one: in both authors’ life accounts, we see a refusal to accept a submissive disposition. In the case of Klüger, a refusal to accept gender hierarchies and the gender impositions they bring along. In the case of the Friedländer, a refusal to accept a passive character in its more political terms, especially in *Quand vient le souvenir*, where a strong Zionist feeling pervades.

1.4.5. “*En dernier ressort, tout converge*”: a Jewish Christian, a Christian Jew

If there is a singular characteristic of Saul Friedländer’s life regarding his religious experience—a characteristic which strongly departs from Klüger’s religious account—is that of his conversion to Catholicism during his years at the boarding school Saint-Bérenger in Montluçon. Friedländer’s baptism and conversion to Catholicism, although obviously required by the institution where his parents left him, was fully embraced by a young Friedländer whose Jewish origin did not seem to interfere with his new confession, a perfect example of a different kind of aesthetic formation to which Friedländer adheres through the ritual activities which constituted it; with a special emphasis on the veneration to images. This ultimately leads a young Friedländer to the point of identitarily detaching

himself from his Jewishness (or, at least, from the particular identity of fully assimilated German-speaking Jews to which he knew he belonged or had belonged until then). The new Catholic identity eclipses the Jewish one which, although vague, was still his core identity during the Shoah period until his parents left him at Saint-Bérenger, as Friedländer explains in the documentary film *The Hidden Child*: “The ritual of the Virgin Mary strengthened me tremendously whilst kneeling before her statue, I rediscovered something of the presence of a mother. I confess that I have never again felt the emotion that used to grip me when kneeling in the chapel during mass, I heard the music. All Friedländer had disappeared. Paul-Henri Marie Ferland was someone else.” (Treves 2001, sec. 36:16) The process of detachment from Jewishness, although never fully completed due to Friedländer’s posterior embracement of Zionism, entailed at the time a dissociation from anti-Semitic references: “Qu’on parlât des méfaits des juifs, pendant la Semaine Sainte, ne me gênait en aucune manière.” (Friedländer 1978, 123).

In the context of the Shoah, this detachment from Jewishness and the acceptance of a new Catholic identity does not entail any theological dilemma. Friedländer, through the historical and political point of view with which he tends to narrate his life, does not stress the theological differences of the two religions nor are they the object of possible dilemmas. Through the eyes of the assimilated Jewish kid he was, without any religious background, and through the memory of the secular adult he is when he writes *Quand vient le souvenir*, Friedländer’s problematic regarding his assimilation into Catholicism is articulated in terms of the social and political reality in Europe during the Third Reich: “À mon échelle, j’étais devenu un renégat : conscient de mes origines, je me sentais néanmoins à l’aise dans la communauté de ceux qui pour les juifs n’avaient que mépris et, incidemment, j’attisais ce mépris. J’éprouvais le sentiment, non formulé bien qu’évident, d’être passé à la compacte et invincible majorité, de ne plus appartenir au camp des persécutés mais, en puissance, à celui des persécuteurs.” (Friedländer 1978, 123) Friedländer’s conversion to Catholicism is not only the result of a theological reflection (firstly, due to Friedländer’s age during this period) but also—as it is recognized by Friedländer in *Where Memory Leads*—because it was a “guarantee of survival.” (Friedländer 2016, 11) This does not exclude the fact that—strictly speaking—Friedländer’s only religious experience took place within the context of Catholicism, with a special passion for the imagery of Catholicism: its imagery and its architecture—a sublime and even ecstatic experience for Friedländer.

For present-day Friedländer, his forced conversion to Catholicism is understood as inexorably having led to agnosticism. If we aim to understand Friedländer's polymorphic identity, however, Catholicism remains—as the only religious experience in his life—a cardinal part of it, a religion which is apparent in many of Friedländer's reflections in both his autobiographical and essay works. These do not only consist in a special sensibility when it comes to Catholic art developed during those years. The biggest remnant of Catholicism in post-1948 Friedländer is instead a certain intellectual disposition which, although discernable regarding many of Friedländer's life choices, stands as the constitutive aspect of many of Friedländer's ethical and political views:

En évoquant ce changement, je ne puis m'empêcher de me poser la question : que m'est-il resté de cette éducation dans le monde tout autre qui allait devenir le mien ? Quant au fond, rien, je l'ai déjà dit. Mais, une certaine gêne peut-être dans mes rapports avec les êtres, une réticence que la rue de la Garde et ses tabous inculquaient sans doute de manière durable. Par ailleurs, l'ébauche d'une tendance, nourrie d'autres sources encore, à la passivité plus qu'à l'action, à la préoccupation morale plus qu'à la froide acceptation de la réalité. Bref, une certaine difficulté à vivre qui entrave la spontanéité, mais encourage le constant retour sur soi, l'insatisfaction persistante, ce qui ressemble d'ailleurs à une certaine attitude juive, celle des juifs en voie d'assimilation, pris entre deux mondes : le milieu qui avait été le nôtre. Ainsi, en dernier ressort, tout converge. (Friedländer 1978, 166)

By means of this citation, a crucial part of Friedländer's psychology is elucidated and, thus, many of Friedländer's life choices are easily understandable, especially after taking into account Friedländer's second autobiographical project *Where Memory Leads*. It is because of this constant dissatisfaction and self-examination the reason why no place is ever a good place for too long, why any commitment was good as long as a way out was always possible, when needed. For the condition of an assimilated Jew that Friedländer was in his early years abruptly came to an end during the Shoah. In this quote, Friedländer suggests that his life experience as a constant outsider—always caught in between different worlds—is, almost, a side effect of Catholicism. It is not, however, the Catholic experience itself, but its *Sitz im Leben*, that is, the particular take on Catholicism that a self-conscious Jewish orphan has on it. To classical Catholic guilt, there is to be

added an also classical Jewish one: that of the essential outcast. Friedländer's Catholic experience might, then, be understood as something merely temporary. His sudden awakening to Zionism might be understood as evincing a rather weak commitment to Catholicism and thus not carrying any strong remnant in post-1948 Friedländer. The personality he defends as having been developed in the aftermath of Catholicism, by resembling a classical Diaspora Jewish one which is ultimately responsible for many of his life choices, is introduced by Friedländer as the biggest irony of his life. As the author suggests, the irony lies on the fact that it was precisely Catholicism what made him more "Jewish" than he ever was.

CHAPTER 2

ZIONISM, *ERETZ*, AND ISRAEL

*¿Quién me dirá si estás en el perdido
laberinto de ríos seculares
de mi sangre, Israel? ¿Quién los lugares
que mi sangre y tu sangre han recorrido?
No importa. Sé que estás en el sagrado
libro que abarca el tiempo y que la historia
del rojo Adán rescata y la memoria
y la agonía del Crucificado.
En ese libro estás, que es el espejo
de cada rostro que sobre él se inclina
y del rostro de Dios, que en su complejo
y arduo cristal, terrible se adivina.
Salve, Israel, que guardas la muralla
de Dios, en la pasión de tu batalla.*

Jorge Luis Borges

2. Zionism, *Eretz*, and Israel

Writing about Zionism can be an arduous task. In the first place, because of the wide repertoire of Zionist performances which one can find in the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. It appears to many of us willing to tackle such a topic that any attempt to come to a holistic definition of Zionism which would aim to encompass the totality of the movement might end in failure: never accurate enough and always contestable. For there are countless ways in which “being a Zionist” has been—and is—articulated; sometimes not even entailing a Jewish heritage, an actual Aliyah nor a direct relationship with the Jewish State. Secondly—and this should be inserted into the controversial nature of discussing Jewish topics in general—because it seems that, in some academic circles, an aseptic approach to Zionism or Israel—instead of a clear bashing—is automatically regarded as an ideological stance which might be regarded as responding to some kind of political agenda or some pre-supposed political adscription, something which can even—worst-case scenario—entail academic ostracism. As in the case of religion, Zionism is also an extremely semantically loaded notion. Drawing from our outsider’s perspective, but still willing to treat such topic and the Jewish authors here discussed’s relationship to it, we have found ourselves in different academic situations in these last years which have made us conclude with the following ideas regarding the study and treatment of such a topic: the Zionist movement and the State of Israel are subject to a level of scrutiny which few other movements, ethnic groups or nations have endured throughout history. Zionism is nowadays sometimes understood as a radical, ultra-nationalist movement, by some, with a clear racist and xenophobic basis. Moreover, it is sometimes regarded as anti-democratic, (neo)colonialist, chauvinistic, and fundamentalist. In the most extreme cases, Zionism is even compared to Nazism and, by extension, the State of Israel is branded as a genocidal apartheid state. The anti-Zionist *pathos* usually connected with public and academic discussions regarding the history of Zionism and the State of Israel should always serve us as a warning sign.

It is hard—although not impossible—to dissect the inception of these more radical attitudes against Israel or Zionism as they can potentially come from different parts of the political spectrum, amalgamating somehow certain left-wing and right-wing anti-Semitic ideology. For anyone with a minimum understanding of Jewish history must be aware of the fact that only Jews throughout history have been accused of being supporters of totally

antagonistic currents: capitalism and communism, exclusivism and assimilation, materialism and intellectualism, atheism and ultra-Orthodoxy, of being the epitome of the ghetto life or the rootless cosmopolitans *par excellence*. In more academic circles, however, post-colonial criticism²⁴ might serve as the basis of such bashing, thus questioning the so-called ethics of cohabitation of Israel and the Jewish people. In some cases, a clear rearticulation of a never-ending anti-Semitism shows its teeth; an anti-Semitism which shamelessly echoes *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This kind of eternal anti-Semitism always seems to resurface in certain times and not always strategically, that is, not always with a clear discernable goal. This fact can make one question to what extent we deal with an anthropological constant, as it is sometimes suggested. We are by no means suggesting that any criticism against Israel must be anti-Semitic per se; this we would especially like to emphasize. Nevertheless, anti-Semitic topoi can be recurrently heard when discussing Zionism, Israel or Jews in general and—as scholars—we must rapidly realize, locate, and analyze them. The recurrent topoi heard in political discourse, academia or among *salottino* intellectuals are those which belong to political anti-Semitism (denial of the Jewish people's right to self-determination and/or de-legitimization of Israel as a state), ideological anti-Semitism (demonizing or 'Nazifying' Israel), and cultural anti-Semitism (a potpourri of the remnants of well-known European anti-Semitic attitudes), as professor Irwin Cotler has noted (Cotler 2001). These recurrent topoi should serve us, as well, as a warning sign.

The State of Israel stands as the perfect medium for the enunciation of this very well-known anti-Semitism nowadays—perhaps using different personae, or a spokeswoman instead of a spokesman—which finds its way through not when criticizing

²⁴ Edward Said's *Orientalism* published in 1978 is usually regarded as the founding text of postcolonial studies. *Grosso modo*, Said notes not only the concepts of Western superiority and eurocentrism which permeate the creation of images concerning the East: irrational, visceral, fundamentalist, etc. as well as the crucial role of cultural representations as a way of not only shaping but dominating and controlling Eastern civilizations. Edward Said was an advocate of the Palestinian cause, not of the so-called two-state solution. He supported the idea of one binational state in Palestine which would ultimately relegate Jews to a minority and which naturally entail the dismantling of the State of Israel. Said, along with many of his followers, have drawn a continuity between neo-colonialism and Zionism which have been openly interiorized by many scholars and which we will further discuss when noting Friedländer's academic struggle against anti-Zionism.

the State of Israel, but rather when *denying its right to exist*. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks noted in the European Parliament on 27th September 2016: “Anti-Semitism takes different forms in different ages. In the middle ages, Jews were hated for their religion. In the 19th and early 20th century, they were hated because of their race. Today they are hated because of their nation-state, the State of Israel. It takes different forms, but remains the same thing: the view that the Jews have no right to exist as free and equal human beings.” (Sacks 2016) The non-Jewish anti-Semitic criticism of Zionism and the State of Israel (be it political, ideological or cultural) can come—consciously or not—from a deeply rooted rejection of Jews and Jewishness which, we argue, bespeaks complex dynamics between the Essence—the reference group—and its essential Otherness, the Jewish alterity which has historically been understood as necessarily posing a threat to the Essence, as we will further discuss in chapter three. For *the Jew* (with all its semantic charge and in all metaphysical and mythic levels) has historically constituted *the Other par excellence*. We will see how facing these deeply rooted anti-Semitic dynamics constitutes one of the key aspects in Klüger and Friedländer’s post-Shoah experience. Facing anti-Semitic revisionism or any kind of *reductio ad absurdum* regarding the Jewish question, the Shoah or Israel ultimately reinforces—as we will discuss—their Jewishness.

The picture is infinitely more complex when we deal with harsh anti-Zionist criticism coming from within the Jewish community. Some scholars—perhaps out of good-will or naïveté—tend to see contemporary Jewish anti-Zionist stances as representative of a sense of disillusionment, but a disillusionment whose foundation still bespeaks an attachment to the land and the Jewish community. We do not strictly reject this, but—furthermore—argue that the extremely opposed stances regarding Zionism and Israel within the Jewish community evince a radical collision between antagonistic performances of Jewishness, as we will discuss in chapter three as well. For the purpose of this introduction, we would like to stress again that we do not suggest that Jewish criticism against aspects of Israeli history or some Israeli policies—for example, the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank—necessarily bespeaks anti-Zionism or anti-Semitism. In this sense, we will contextualize Friedländer’s disillusionment with the Zionist project after many years actively supporting it. We will also not suggest that Friedländer’s detachment (what we will later call *de-conversion*) from Zionism bespeaks—necessarily—self-hatred, as some Zionists would, perhaps, rapidly insinuate.

Self-hatred, self-stigmatization or internalized oppression, can indeed be behind Jewish anti-Zionist rhetoric, as Friedländer himself notes and we will further expand; for it would be a mistake to think that anti-Semitism cannot be interiorized and that a possible response to such interiorization cannot be self-hatred. Nonetheless, reducing every Jewish criticism on Zionism or Israel's political tendencies to self-hatred can hazardously prevent us from a deep analysis of such criticism. This deeply controversial topic will be further discussed in chapter three: not so much the particular relationship between Diaspora Jews and Israel (a topic we will briefly hint at), but rather the intricate dynamics between self-affirmation and self-deprecation which deserve a deep analysis given the crucial role they play at the constitution and crystallization of modern Jewish identity. We will draw the general picture in order to operate from it, aiming to come to a deeper psychological understanding of the authors here discussed.

Ergo, avoiding a holistic definition of Zionism and seeking instead a precise approach to the Zionist views held by the authors here discussed, a bit of a historical semantic analysis—along with its proper *Sitz im Leben*—is especially needed to tackle this matter. Zionism has been conceptualized differently by different Zionist branches; moreover, within these various branches, it has also articulated itself in different ways at different times. Thus, we reject the reductionist view of Zionism to one specific branch or some of its most popular contemporary branches. The tendency to necessarily connect Zionism with religious messianism fails to view Zionism diachronically *and* synchronically and, thus, prevents us from understanding different manifestations of Zionism and the role of Zionism in the lives of, for example, non-observant, non-traditionally-understood or non-self-recognized religious Jews, and the specific meaning which Zionism holds for many Shoah-survivors. The authors we discuss in this dissertation are part of the Western European emancipated and—to some extent—quasi-assimilated Jewish *milieu*. These authors' adherence to Zionist rhetoric and ideas constitutes a *conatus towards self-affirmation*, a self-affirming way of approaching Jewishness, which—in the context of the Shoah, the years previous to it, and the immediate aftermath—is embraced as a psychological lifeboat. Moreover, Zionism cannot be approached—or even understood—disregarding other aspects intrinsically associated with its inception and evolution, namely anti-Semitism, the ghetto-assimilation tension, and, as we said, the Shoah. Disengaging anti-Semitism—the exogenous and the interiorized one—when analyzing Zionist or anti-Zionist views is the sometimes-grueling

task of the scholar who aims to tackle this topic as we—perhaps most recklessly—have decided to do in this chapter.

2.1. Political Zionism

Although many scholars tend to compare Zionism with other nationalist movements, political Zionism cannot merely be explained through the very generic nineteenth-century equation which gave birth to most nationalistic *risorgimenti* in Europe. Nevertheless, many nineteenth-century movements like nationalism—and even eugenics, gymnastics or social-Darwinism—did, in fact, affect and shape the articulation of the fundamental basis of political Zionism; they naturally constituted the numerous variables of the *Zeitgeist* we are discussing, and they can be perceived in the works of many early Zionist theorists who, nevertheless, belonged to different branches of Zionism. Thus, Zionism can and cannot at the same time be compared to other nationalistic movements in this period due to several reasons: the lexicon and arguments portrayed in *Der Judenstaat* do echo other nationalistic writings of the time, that is, the national aspiration is indeed similar. Nonetheless, the initial settlement enterprise²⁵ for which Zionism called, exceeded the mere territorial expansionism which might typify other national movements. This settlement enterprise was the necessary basis of Zionism: *a piece of land was needed* to escape anti-Semitism; in many cases, a matter of life and death.

At the same time, and bearing in mind this *sui generis* character of the movement, Zionism, probably unlike many other large political movements of the time, was a highly plural political movement, especially at the early stages of its development: from secular²⁶

²⁵ We have consciously not utilized the adjective “colonial” to brand such initial Zionist enterprise, given the potential misleading aspect of such categorization. Very crucial aspects of the dynamics of colonialism cannot be extrapolated to Zionism or the *Yishuv*. When discussing Friedländer’s Zionist journey, we will refer to Rodinson’s *Israël, fait colonial?* noting Friedländer’s criticism regarding the consideration of Zionism as a mere extension of European colonialism.

²⁶ Ahad Ha-Am (lit. “one of the people”), also called *the agnostic rabbi* is considered the father of Cultural Zionism, whose concerns were not necessarily shared with political Zionism, even if the relationship between both branches of Zionism might be understood as symbiotic. In an essay published in 1894 titled

to religious²⁷ Zionism, from liberal²⁸ to socialist²⁹ Zionism, from those who found in the image of Jesus the example of the Zionist par excellence³⁰ and therefore made use of his

“The Law of the Heart”, Ahad Ha-am wrote: “the true Hibbat Zion [what later in time would be understood as Cultural Zionism] is not merely a part of Judaism, not is it something added on to Judaism; it is the whole of Judaism, but with a different focal point. Hibbat Zion [...] stands for a Judaism which shall have as its focal point the ideal of our nation’s unity, its renascence, and its free development through the expression of universal human values in the terms of its own distinctive spirit. This is the conception of Judaism on which our education and our literature must be based.” (Ahad Ha-Am in Hertzberg 1997, 255)

²⁷ The relationship between religion and Zionism is an intricate one. First of all—semantically—because “religion” in the traditional Western sense might not be the most encompassing signifier there is to refer to Judaism; thus, many false dilemmas can arise from such linguistic confusion. Nevertheless, the discussion regarding the relationship between traditionally-understood religion and Zionism needs to be nested in a greater reflection upon the constitution and sometimes antagonistic crystallizations of the Jewish identity. For the purpose of this introduction, we must remember that, when discussing Religious Zionism in the context of modern Jewish nationalism, this branch of Zionism ultimately encompasses something more than a Torah-based territorial nostalgia, that is, a conscious amalgamation between more pious religious expressions and nationalism.

²⁸ Also called General Zionism for being the dominant trend at the beginning of the movement, exemplified, mainly, by Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann.

²⁹ Although sometimes not credited for it, German Jewish intellectual, Moses Hess (1812-1875), was the first Jew to amalgamate Socialism and some form of proto-Zionism. His importance within Zionism and Socialism is still subject to debate by some scholars. Sometimes criticized for being contradictory or hypocritical, due to his eventual lack of commitment regarding Jewish nationalism or his claim to a religion to which he was not even observant. Sometimes praised by his particular form of ethical socialism which was not shared by Marx and Engels, even though his influence on them cannot be denied. It is hardly ever contestable that Hess introduced Engels to Socialism. According to Hess’ biographer, Theodor Zlocisti, he was also influential on Marx. It has been suggested that his work by the time Nahman Syrkin wrote his essay “Die Judenfrage und der sozialistische Judenstaat” (1898) was already forgotten (Hertzberg 1997, 331), but Socialist Zionism, the branch of Zionism to which he is father, established itself throughout the decades as one of the most important branches of Zionism. Rather than pivoting around the idea of materialistic determinism of mainstream Marxism, it was based on a utopian and ethical Socialism whose reflection can be seen in the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* which would, later on, be established in Israel.

³⁰ In early 2017, the Israeli Museum of Jerusalem hosted the exhibition titled “Behold the Man: Jesus in Israeli Art”. It consisted of paintings, photographs and other works of arts made by early and contemporary Jewish Israeli artists who were fascinated by the figure of Jewish Christ. Some of them used the figure of Jesus as a bridge between Jews and Christians, others portrayed Jesus as an icon within Zionist thought: a metaphor for the rebirth of Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*. Moreover, there were some other artists who understood Jesus as a universal symbol of suffering and therefore used his image to portray their own personal sorrow.

image for the Zionist enterprise, to those who rejected anything that had to do with the “goyim”. There have been almost endless branches of Zionism which have discussed almost every aspect of the Jewish return to Zion. Firstly, even by questioning if Palestine was the best land to establish a Jewish home. Territorialist Zionists would pose the question of the possibility of any other available land: especially Argentina or Uganda³¹. Revisionist Zionists would argue, on the other hand, that *Eretz Yisrael* goes from the Mediterranean Sea past the Jordan River, the whole area that once included the British Mandate of Palestine, Transjordan included. The clear recent shift of mainstream Israeli Zionism to more religious-oriented and conservative stances do not diachronically represent the whole movement of Zionism and naturally goes hand in hand with the progressive development of a more center-right and right-wing attitude within the Israeli society.³² Many scholars try to refer to contemporary Religious Zionism or Zionist messianism as archetypical of the Zionist movement. This attempt, however, fails at

Curator Amitai Mendelsohn expressed in an interview to Israel Today News that although the relationship between Jews and Jesus has been problematic throughout history, the figure of Jesus within Jewish thought and art—although a taboo in Jewish culture—reflects “something very deep within Jewish identity”.

³¹ In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl considers the possibility of Argentina as it appeared to him “eines der natürlichreichsten Länder der Erde, von riesigem Flächen in halt, mit schwacher Bevölkerung und gemäßigtem Klima.” (Herzl 1896, 22) Uganda, in turn, was the place offered in 1903 by Great Britain. Herzl supported for years the idea of a temporary settlement in Uganda, but—as Michael Heymann deeply analyzed in his book *The Uganda Controversy* (1970)—during this period, the relationship between Herzl and a large part of these early Zionists became especially tense. The Uganda Program was finally rejected in 1905 at the Seventh Zionist Congress. Nevertheless, some members of the Zionist movement continued to support the idea even after it was formally rejected.

³² Many variables might have had an impact on this, which we will not discuss in this dissertation. Statistically, however, while in 2016 Israel joined the list of the Eight Great Powers published by the magazine *The American Interest*, Israel’s election results let us observe how Israel has become more politically conservative throughout the years. During the first two decades, conservatism in Israel was highly marginal; the country during this period being ruled by David Ben Gurion’s liberal Mapai Party. Liberal and Labor Zionism would eventually merge into the Labor Party, which retained a prominent position in Israeli politics until the 1977 elections where the Likud Party was elected the most voted party. During the 80’s and 90’s different right-wing and religious parties have appeared in Israeli politics which have progressively acquired more political representation and, by extension, more political power. All the election results since 1951 can be consulted on the official Knesset website: https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

coming to a faithful representation of the movement, for it only represents a specific branch of it. Furthermore, it could also be further argued that even Religious Zionism has been subject to mutations over the years, setting aside an initial ethos which pivoted around the idea of Torah and work and, instead, adhering to more traditionally-understood right-wing stances.

Nonetheless, it is not the purpose of this study to delve further into the different and sometimes even radically opposed ways in which Zionism has been articulated throughout the decades but to highlight the idea of the immense plurality which has historically comprised Zionist thought. Zionism is naturally not a floating signifier, but a highly semantically loaded term; a term which we—as scholars—need to delimit in the context of our research if we aim to tackle questions related to Zionism in the most academic of manners. We do not aim to demarcate what constitutes a Zionist discourse in general, but, more precisely, the specific relationship with Zionism we are tackling. Inserting the authors discussed in this dissertation within a proper Zionist framework serves us to trace the evolution of Zionism among Jewish intellectuals. The different attitudes towards Zionism held by these authors indicates not only how crucial their particular life experience has been at conditioning their Zionist views but also how their life experience has been shaped due to the evolution of the Zionist movement and their take on it over the years, an eternal reciprocity which could be understood as ultimately bespeaking the Jewish experience. This Jewish experience cannot be the same for Jews living in different countries. Obviously, parallels can be drawn between the development of certain feelings in Jewish communities (like for example the British and the North-American one), but Jewish communities in every different country are exposed to different challenges when it comes to negotiating their own sense of Jewish identity, the proper place for their alterity, and the performance of it. The Land of Israel, in this case, is an aspect—a physical place (sacred and/or secular) or a metaphysical one (also sacred and/or secular) shared, to a lesser or greater extent, by all.

Moreover, as we have discussed in chapter one of this dissertation, locating these authors within a broader analysis of self-writing, the psychological moods it triggers, and its ultimate *telos*, helps us to discern aspects of conversion rhetoric, which—in the case of these authors—are articulated through firstly a general understanding and reflection upon the Jewish identity, the need for the acknowledgment and interiorization of a certain

community identity which transcends the mere ethnic component in order to establish itself at a national level (therefore seeking a national and territorial aspiration), and finally, the proactivity which stands as the logical conclusion of such self-affirming political take on the Jewish question. Analyzing these authors' relationship with Israel opens the door to discussing many identity issues, but it also provides the space for a deeper psychological understanding of the human psyche after the Shoah. Before delving further on crucial aspects of Zionism, we need to clarify that, in the context of this dissertation (due to the nature of our object of study and the special experience as Shoah survivors the authors here discussed share) the adherence to Zionism, at some point in these authors' lives, stands as the most salient example of Jewish self-affirmation found in their autobiographical works. Therefore, a proper understanding of the authors here discussed cannot ignore the "Jewish reading", the Jewish prism, the Jewish aesthetic formation from which they draw, and its fundamental intertextual references. The first step we necessarily need to take must be, however, looking farther back than 19th century Europe; we need to ontologically comprehend *Galut*.

2.2. Zion: νόστος and άλγος

The relationship with Zion, the historic land of the Jewish people, is one key aspect of the Jewish Diaspora: it evinces the decentered dimension of Jewishness, the reason for its intrinsic Otherness, and the potential interiorization of essential exogenism. Zion is indelibly connected with a constant sense of longing, of nostalgia. As Allan Dershowitz notes: "Although most of the Jews of the First Aliyah were secular to the core, *the longing for Zion transcended theology*." (Dershowitz 2003, 17) The concept of nostalgia has acquired in specific historical periods a rather clinic meaning³³. It has also been regarded, especially since the Romantic period, as a strong inspirational feeling.

³³ In the late 17th century, the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer coined the term nostalgia in his medical dissertation. In it, Hofer defined nostalgia as a medical condition, thus departing from previous classical conceptions of the word. In the second half of the 19th century, this pathological understanding of nostalgia was reinforced by American Assistant Surgeon General De Witt C. Peters in his essay "Remarks on the Evils of Youthful Enlistments and Nostalgia" where he reported the psychological consequences of nostalgia in Union combats.

Although this Greek word has been subject to semantic modifications throughout history—pathologically-charged as well as artistically-infused—also acquiring different nuances in different languages, the modern-day use of the word ultimately encompasses feelings of yearning for whatever past thing or person. Etymologically though, the concept of the first word which constitutes the Greek compound *nostalgia* (νόστος + αλγία) is indelibly connected with the idea of homecoming. The image of the Homeric hero returning home by sea, which the word *nostos* evokes, and which has necessarily been lost throughout the centuries, cannot exemplify the Zionist take on the Jewish nostalgia for Zion in a better way. For a contemporary reader, however, the cultural reference which would first come to mind might have a more Hollywood tone: this Homeric hero might be a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jew, a tanned Jew emerging from the Mediterranean Sea named Ari Ben Canaan in the film *Exodus*, a *Muskeljude* played by Paul Newman. For Ari Ben Canaan represents the quintessential *Muskeljude*, the idealized Zionist man who Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau had in mind when theorizing about the ideal “New Jew”, as we will further discuss in the following pages.

Though initially rooted in secularism, political Zionism—as a movement born within Jews who aimed to group other Jews together within the framework of a common national aspiration—was not indifferent to this nostalgia, to this pain (αλγία) which emanated from the realization that living in the Diaspora—living in exile—was a constant reminder of a very well-known concept within the Jewish tradition: the yearning for home. Rabbis Yehudah Alkalai and Zwi Hirsch Kalischer are understood as the precursors of political Zionism not by revisiting a nostalgia which always constituted the Jewish aesthetic formation in exile, but by developing a proactive take on it; they suggested the creation of Jewish settlements in Zion as means of counteracting the almost inevitable tendency towards assimilation (“We, as a people, are properly called Israel only in the land of Israel” (Alkalai in Hertzberg 1997, 105)), and escaping anti-Semitism (“Throughout the days of our dispersion we have suffered martyrdom for the sanctity of God’s Name; we have been dragged from land to land and have borne the yoke of exile through the ages.” (Kalischer in Hertzberg 1997, 112) It is crucial to understand these two factors in the development of a political tone regarding the Jewish question: the initial rejection of assimilation understood as the dissolution of Jewishness, as well as the realization of the impossibility of such real assimilation in the face of anti-Semitic logic. The reflections upon assimilation and anti-Semitism hold a cardinal place in our analysis

of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, for their crucial role in the development of and adherence to Zionist views.

2.2.1. Physical and psychological *Galut*: nostalgia and the consciousness of exogenism

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| <p>א על נהרות, בְּכַל--שָׁם יִשְׁכְּנוּ, גַּם-
בְּכִינוּ: בְּזָכְרֵנוּ, אֶת-צִיּוֹן.</p> | <p>1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat
down, yea, we wept, when we remembered
Zion.</p> |
| <p>ב על-עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ-- תְּלִינוּ, כְּנָרוֹתֵינוּ.</p> | <p>2 Upon the willows in the midst thereof we
hanged up our harps.</p> |
| <p>ג כִּי שָׁם שְׁאֲלוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ, דְּבָרֵי-שִׁיר-- וְתוֹלְדֵינוּ
שִׁמְחָה:
שִׁירוּ לָנוּ, מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן.</p> | <p>3 For there they that led us captive asked of
us words of song, and our tormentors asked
of us mirth: {N}
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'</p> |
| <p>ד אֵיךְ--נִשְׁיָר אֶת-יְהוָה: עַל, אֲדָמַת נָכָר.</p> | <p>4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a
foreign land?</p> |
| <p>ה אִם-אֶשְׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם-- תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי.</p> | <p>5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right
hand forget her cunning.</p> |
| <p>ו תִּדְבֶּק-לְשׁוֹנִי, לַחֲכִי-- אִם-לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶכִּי:
אִם-לֹא אַעֲלֶה, אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם-- עַל, רֹאשׁ שְׂמִחָתִי.</p> | <p>6 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth, if I remember thee not; {N}
if I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy.</p> |
| <p>ז זָכֵר יְהוָה, לְבְנֵי אֲדוֹם-- אֵת, יוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם:
הָאֲמָרִים, עָרוּ עָרוּ-- עַד, הַיְסוֹד בָּהּ.</p> | <p>7 Remember, O LORD, against the children
of Edom the day of Jerusalem; {N}
who said: 'Rase it, rase it, even to the
foundation thereof.'</p> |
| <p>ח בַּת-בָּבֶל, הַשְׁדּוּדָה:
אֲשֶׁרִי שִׁישַׁלְמָה-לָהּ-- אֶת-גְּמוּלָהּ, שִׁגְמַלְתָּ לָנוּ.</p> | <p>8 O daughter of Babylon, that art to be
destroyed; {N}
happy shall he be, that repayeth thee as thou
hast served us.</p> |
| <p>ט אֲשֶׁרִי, שִׂיאַחֲזוּ וְנַפֵּץ אֶת-עַלְלִיךְ-- אֶל-הַסָּלַע.</p> | <p>9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth
thy little ones against the rock. {P}</p> |

(תהלים 137 Psalm)

Zion, a hill in Jerusalem outside the walls of the Old City, is used as a synecdoche, ultimately encompassing the whole *Eretz Yisrael*. References to Zion are constant in Jewish rituals and prayers (Amidah, Mussaf, etc.), and the word Jerusalem is mentioned six hundred and sixty times in the Tanakh³⁴, but if there is one text within the Jewish tradition emerges as the epitome of this yearning—of this longing for Zion—that is Psalm 137. Psalm 137 is one of the most well-known Psalms in Western culture as it has been used throughout history to exemplify different social vindications. Its *Sitz im Leben*, nonetheless, is the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BCE, and although the temple would eventually be rebuilt, this psalm can be read, as David Stowe notes, as the birth of the Jewish feeling of *Galut*, of a nation in exile (Stowe 2016, x). The historic uncertainty concerning the Babylonian Exile has been recently a means to categorize the exile as a mere myth. Nevertheless, as Rainer Albertz notes, “this event provoked a sudden increase of biblical literature in Babylonia and Judah that tried to cope with the catastrophe and find an orientation for a new beginning.” (Kelle 2011, 1–2) It was the experience of being in exile, in a strange land, what gave birth in a way to most of the Hebrew Bible, establishing the longing for Jerusalem, for Zion, as part of the Jewish consciousness in the Diaspora after the destruction of the Second Temple. Psalm 137 is revisited every year, being a central text during Tisha B’Av, a fast day when—among other disasters—the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians and the Second Temple by the Romans is commemorated. Either as a historical evidence or as a myth, the longing for Zion can be understood as one of the central premises of life in exile. Zion remains the ethereal place to return (עליה) someday, having been established in the Jewish collective imagination, for centuries, as a sort of utopia; Psalm 137 serving as a constant reminder of such loss and idealization.

The impact of Psalm 137 on Jewish life in *Galut* must not be underestimated but neither specific Rabbinic commentaries on the Psalm, like those included in the *Midrash Tehillim*. Particularly, we would like to highlight one of the commentaries on Psalm 137 included in the *Midrash Tehilim*, which reinforces the consciousness of exile through the establishment of powerful aesthetic expressions. In this reflection, the idea that Zion must never be forgotten and the nostalgia which necessarily emanates from such awareness

³⁴ This number is given by Lord Rabbi Sacks in his video “Rabbi Sacks on Jerusalem: The 50th Anniversary of Reunification” posted on his YouTube channel on May 17th 2017.

must be externalized and aesthetically represented as a constant reminder of a particular physical state—*exile*—and the psychological state which necessarily emanates from such exilic self-understanding—*nostalgia*:

אלא כך אמרו חכמים סד אדם את ביתו בסיד ומשייר דבר מועט וכו' (כדאיתא בבתרא דף
ס' ע"ב) עושה אדם כל צרכי סעודה ומשייר דבר מועט. ומאי ניהו. אמר רב פפא כסא
דהרסנא. עושה אשה כל תכשיטיה ומשיירת דבר מועט. ומאי ניהו. אמר רב בת צדעה.
שנאמר אם אשכחך ירושלים תשכח ימיני

(Sefaria 2017, MT P.137)³⁵

The awareness of this exilic condition, the constant feeling of nostalgia which constitutes the Jewish aesthetic formation in *Galut*, and the subsequent longing for Zion and the rebuilt of the Holy Temple are central ideas in several other biblical texts like those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. In these texts, there are constant references to the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. Due to its specific literary tone, we would also like to highlight one last biblical reference which nevertheless stems from the Book of Lamentations and which we understand as a cardinal reference if we aim to understand the ancient level of intertextuality present in the Jewish aesthetic formation:

1 Remember, O LORD, what is come
זָכֹר יְהוָה מֶה-הָיָה לָנוּ, הַבֵּיטָה (הַבִּיטָה)
upon us; behold, and see our reproach.

³⁵ “It is taught: if a man covers his house with plaster, he must leave uncovered a small space as a mourning reminder of Jerusalem. If a man prepares all that goes with a feast, he must leave out some small thing as a reminder of Jerusalem. If a woman is adorning herself, she must leave off some small things as a reminder of Jerusalem, for it is said If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget his cunning.” (Gillingham 2013, 68)

- Our inheritance is turned unto
strangers, our houses unto aliens.
ב נחלתנו נהפכה לזרים, בתינו
לנכרים.
- We are become orphans and
fatherless, our mothers are as widows.
ג יתומים היינו אין (ואין) אב, אמהינו
כאלמנות.
- For the mountain of Zion, which is
desolate, the foxes walk upon it.
18 יח על הר-ציון נשעמם, שועלים הלכו-
{פ} בו.
- Thou, O LORD, art enthroned
forever, Thy throne is from generation
to generation.
19 יט אתה יהוה לעולם תשב, כסאך לדור
ודור.
- Wherefore dost Thou forget us forever, and
forsake us so long time?
20 כ למה לנצח תשכחנו, תעזבנו לארד
ימים.
- Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we
shall be turned; renew our days as of old.
21 כא השיבנו יהוה אליך ונשוב (ונשוכה),
חדש ימינו כקדם.

(Lamentations: 5 איקה)

The longing for Zion must then be understood as a constitutive part of the Jewish aesthetic formation, operating at different levels during different times in the Diaspora, a nostalgia which is embodied through many textual references as well as different aesthetic experiences connected with Jewish rituals. Longing for Zion becomes then a constant and it is present in many Jewish rituals apart from Tisha B'Av. In chapter one, we referred to Pesach as one of the most salient rituals for the creation of the Jewish aesthetic formation and its embodiment in the younger members of the family. This celebration, moreover, always must be concluded with the phrase "Next year in Jerusalem" (L'shanah kaba'ah b'Yerushalayim / לשנה הבאה בירושלים), indelibly connecting the commemoration of the liberation of the Jewish people from their state of slavery in Egypt with the desire of being able to return to Jerusalem for next year's celebration. The connection between Jews and Palestine³⁶ is therefore not only reducible to that belonging to an ancient people. Indeed,

³⁶ The name Palestine was given to Judea by the Roman Emperor Hadrian after the Bar Kokhba's revolt in 132 C.E. Previously, it had been used to designate the coastal area populated by the Philistines. As Feldman notes, the aim of changing the name of the whole region of Judea was "to obliterate the Jewish character of the land with the name of the nearest tribe being applied to the entire area." (1996, 553) In the context of this dissertation, we make use of the name Palestine to refer to the portion of the land controlled by Great

it stands as a cardinal aspect of many shades of the Jewish experience; for—as we have previously mentioned—the understanding of the physical state of exile reverts in a psychological state of nostalgia, centering Judaism’s *locus* as well as the psychology of Jewishness. If the consciousness of exile physically constitutes *Galut*, longing for it psychologically constitutes the relationship between a Jew and his textually-established and aesthetically-embodied centering *locus*, and thus a Jew’s consciousness of essential Otherness. It can be argued by some, especially by those who aim to understand secularism as something different than a way in which religion fugitively survives, that this level of intertextuality would only serve to observant Jews. Nevertheless, as we see in Klüger and Friedländer’s self-writing, even the least of religious/cultural references to Judaism can have important echoes in a life. We furthermore argue that even the understanding of Jewishness as a “mere” awareness of one’s own alterity draw from the religious/cultural references which ontologically define *Galut* and the Jewish psychological mood towards the feeling of exile—the consciousness of exogenism—of not fully being when de-centered.

2.3. Theodor Herzl: “*Held und Chefideologe*”

The father of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, an almost assimilated Hungarian Jew born in 1860, was not an observant Jew. Some scholars have suggested that Herzl’s lack of a strict religious upbringing might have meant a necessary detachment from any sentimental connection with *Eretz Yisrael*, but we argue that the necessary level of assimilation required for the total oblivion of such Jewish cultural reference was hardly ever acquired by any Jew in Europe³⁷. It might be the case that this sense of nostalgia for *Eretz Yisrael* and Jerusalem might have been understood by Herzl as mythic, a rather romantic yearning, but in no case a realistic or even considerable enterprise. In fact, as Hertzberg notes, previous to his Zionist awakening, “Herzl held the conventional view of the westernized Jewish intellectual in the late nineteenth century, that progress was on

Britain from 1920 until 1948. The term *Eretz Yisrael* will be used when contextualized within its proper theoretical or theological framework

³⁷ There are more and more readings of Herzl nowadays which point out the religious dimension of Herzl’s upbringing and the importance that it had in his political articulation of Zionism. See Malach (2018).

the march for all mankind and that complete assimilation was both desirable and inevitable.” (Hertzberg 1997, 201) This level of assimilation was, as much as it was desired, never fully acquired, even in the German zone of influence in Europe where the so-called German-Jewish symbiosis is regarded by some as having taken place.

Before *Der Judenstaat* (1896), Herzl had never considered the possibility of constituting a politically organized movement which would end anti-Semitism and the so-called Jewish question, an issue which appeared to be beyond the control of 19th century European Jewry. In fact, as Hertzberg also notes, “Herzl’s pre-Zionist writings were marked by a tone of brittle irony, even by cynicism.” (Hertzberg 1997, 201) Several personal experiences triggered in Herzl the will to constitute a politically-organized movement based on the understanding of Jews as a nation in exile. All of them, however, pivoted around the same problem: encountering anti-Semitism. At a more general level, The Dreyfus case in France (1894), along with the pogroms which took place in the Russian Empire during the last two decades of the 19th century after the assassination of Czar Alexander II, forced Jews to flee their home countries. For the assimilated Jew that he was, Herzl’s national(istic) awakening could have found a place in the articulation of the national narratives which during this period were being written all over Europe, also in Hungary³⁸. Herzl, nonetheless, did not adhere to their home country’s nationalistic enterprise. It was after encountering anti-Semitism and empathizing with his fellow Jews from other parts of Europe when Herzl found no other alternative than leading a new and revolutionary national movement: Zionism. Assimilation had always been Herzl’s solution to the Jewish question. His political Zionism comes into play when Herzl realizes

³⁸ The Hungarian Revolution of 1848 (48 years before the publication of *Der Judenstaat*) meant a turning point in Hungarian history; Lajos Kossuth being the main agent of such Magyar revival. It can be argued that the rhetoric of Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat* was highly influenced by Kossuth’s speeches and publications. It is indeed true that many parallels can be drawn between the way in which they both articulated their different national aspirations: a special kind of nationalism which flourished within “multinational” empires (especially in Russia and Austria-Hungary). However, the supporters of this kind of nationalism articulated their national aspirations in the name of democracy. The Jewish question, nevertheless, transcended the idea of a people’s liberation from an oppressing empire, and although Herzl’s articulation of Jewish nationalism took place within the context of all these 19th century nationalist movements, his enterprise went beyond the fight for freedom and democracy of which his fellow Hungarian Lajos Kossuth was the father.

that such assimilation is not possible: “Antisemitismus [...] kann nicht behoben werden, solange seine Gründe nicht behoben sind. Sind diese aber behebbar?” (Herzl 1896, 18) The consequences of such impossibility meant for Herzl a necessary national recognition and a nation-building aspiration: “Wir sind ein Volk—*der Feind macht uns ohne unseren Willen dazu*, wie das immer in der Geschichte so war. In der Bedrängnis stehen wir zusammen, und da entdecken wir plötzlich unsere Kraft. Ja, wir haben die Kraft, einen Staat, und zwar einen Musterstaat zu bilden. Wir haben alle menschlichen und sachlichen Mittel, die dazu nötig sind.” (Herzl 1896, 20; emphasis added)

Before Herzl’s Zionist awakening, returning to Zion was probably considered by him something rather mythic, part of a somehow ever constant yearning for the land of the fathers, muse of many Jewish writings throughout the centuries in Diaspora communities all around the world. Once the return to Zion was expressed in political terms, Herzl understood that “Palästina ist unsere unvergeßliche historische Heimat. Dieser Name allein wäre ein gewaltig ergreifender Sammelruf für unser Volk.” (Herzl 1896, 22) Rather than understanding Herzl’s attempt to find alternative places as a lack of appreciation for the historic land of the Jewish people (as it is sometimes suggested), Herzl’s own description of Palestine in *Der Judenstaat* makes us discern that such aura of romanticism which surrounded *Eretz Yisrael* was still there, even in the most secular of European Jews, and that the consideration of other places must be regarded as a more strategic effort to find a solution to the Jewish question rather than a disregard for the historic land of the Jewish people.

The discussion around the figure of Theodor Herzl is of special interest in the context of our dissertation, due to the fact that Klüger and Friedländer, by being regarded as non-observant Jews, can sometimes be understood as not necessarily involved in a specific matrix of religious intertextual references; the impact of these religious references tends to be diminished and regarded as either not operating, or operating at a very subtle level. We argue that, in general, these religious/cultural references although not operating at a conscious level in the most peaceful of times during the history of European Jewry, they remain nevertheless—operating as a *basso continuo*. Many examples show how the rapid adherence to Zionist ideas during this time develop as a response to anti-Semitism. Herzl suggests in *Der Judenstaat* a constant within the Jewish experience “*der Feind macht uns ohne unseren Willen dazu* [ein Volk]”; this constant is

also experienced by authors who choose the self-affirming way of articulating one's Jewishness, what Klüger calls becoming "jüdisch in Abwehr".

Two aspects, then, must be extracted from Herzl's particular experience with anti-Semitism: Jewish textual references embodied through Jewish ritual—although dormant at certain points in a Jew's life—become more apparent when encountering extreme situations of anti-Semitism; in the context of the authors here discussed, the Shoah experience. Therefore, disregarding the religious references already embodied in "assimilated" or secular Jewish authors reverts in the lack of achieving a holistic view of the Jewish experience and—by extension—in the lack of achieving a broader understanding of the important meaning of Zionism in these authors' lives. Herzl argues that anti-Semites made the Jews nationally conscious. There are those who would take the reflection a step further—as Sartre did—and argue, through a phenomenological approach, that "le Juif est un homme que les autres hommes tiennent pour Juif... c'est l'antisémite qui *fait* le Juif." (Sartre 1985, 74–75) The matrix of cultural references through which the Jew attempts to overcome such anti-Semitism is not immune to the—perhaps dormant—yearning for Zion, which Zionism simply intensified and articulated in modern political terms. Many are the examples of assimilated Jews or secular intellectuals who, in the face of anti-Semitism, *converted* into Zionists: not only Herzl himself but intellectuals like Edmond Fleg, Moritz Goldstein or Ludwig Lewisohn would fit into this category as well. Therefore, we would suggest, through a more teleological perspective, that Sartre's phenomenological approach to Jewishness must be partially edited. Given the self-affirming *in-Abwehr* way in which Jewishness becomes performed in the face of anti-Semitism during this specific period of time we are dealing with, we would then conclude that *c'est l'antisémite qui fait le Sioniste*.

2.4. Israel-Diaspora relationship

Just like Zionism over the years has not been a static political stance, nor a static affect, the relationship between Israel and diaspora Jews in North-America and Europe has not been a static one either. The Israel-Diaspora relationship is a constant subject of debates among Jews, especially when specific political decisions arouse—tendentially—antagonistic reactions in Israel and in the Diaspora communities. In a panel organized by

the University of Michigan (Penslar, Schaffer, Waxman 2016), Dov Waxman explained how during the early years of the Zionist movement, the relationship between diaspora Jews across the Atlantic Ocean and Zionism was an unenthusiastic one. In Europe, the continent which saw the birth of Zionism, the attitudes toward this political movement might have been different, since the issues Zionism aimed to address were lived in first-person by European Jews. The Shoah constituted a point of inflection as well as the beginning of a somehow lighter version of what came to be known in psychology as survivor's guilt, this one being especially the mental condition which affected many European Jews who survived the Holocaust, as we will see once we start analyzing Klüger and Friedländer psychological effects after the Shoah. The transatlantic version of the survivor guilt took place however within Diaspora Jews. A special kind of guilt to which the pathos which emanated from the tragedy of the annihilation of six million Jews added. Derek Penslar marks 1948 as the date when the beginning of a romance between Diaspora Jews and Israel occurred. This relationship was no longer the same nostalgic one to which hundreds of references in the Bible contribute, but a romance which mixed parental love and nurture. The translation of this parental love was financial support with the investment in the so-called Israel bonds, a financial relationship with Israel which might be considered, by these supporters of the state, as sufficient to consider themselves Zionists.

The period of the 50's and 60's is of special interest for the purpose of our study. Firstly, because it is in this period when many European Jews who survived the Holocaust are able to migrate to the United States. Secondly, because it is during these two decades when the formal relationship between the United States (especially the North-American Jewish community) and Israel starts getting shaped. This particular relationship is of special interest in the study of Ruth Klüger, as she constitutes one of these post-Shoah Jewish refugees in the United States. In this particular moment in Jewish history, there is one film which exemplifies the relationship between the United States and Israel as well as the desires, fears, and fantasies on the part of the Diaspora Jewish community in regard to Israel. This film could be no other than *Exodus*, based on the 1958 novel with the same name by Leon Uris and starring Paul Newman in his role as Ari Ben Canaan.

2.4.1. *Exodus* (1960): the birth of idyllic Israel

A blond-haired, blue-eyed, European-looking Jew emerges in front of our eyes in the film *Exodus*. His tan skin makes us think of a Californian, a manufactured Hollywood product right in front of us. Nothing in him echoes the anti-Semitic stereotype of the weak and humble old Jew or the Holocaust survivor, the skinny and starved Eastern-European Jew of the concentration camps. On the contrary, there is even something mystical about the first appearance of Paul Newman in the film coming out of the sea partially naked to the point that it has been considered a “doppelgänger to Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*.” (Loshitzky 2001, 1) Paul Newman constitutes the ideal *Muskeljude* and—given the context in which he appears—also the Zionist revisit of a well-known mythical *nostos*. Ari exemplifies the resurgence of the most despised and harassed people in Europe, with a brand-new nationalist character and the conviction that his cause is the right one. The Americanness in Newman’s acting is not even partially avoided. His manners, his sassy ways (not to mention his accent), are so familiar to Westerners that the identification cannot even be questioned; especially not by the audience of the time, to whom the image of Brick Pollitt was unavoidable.

This Jew, however, is a sabra, an Israeli-born Jew. This is precisely the one sole feature of Ari Ben Canaan³⁹ that could seem alien to the audience, as it is to Kitty, an all-American girl who admits her decaffeinated anti-Semitism by saying that she does not feel very comfortable around Jews; a shared feeling among the all-American white audience of the time perhaps? As she also admits later in the movie, the strangeness that she initially felt around Jews wears off after she meets Karen: “I do feel strange among them, except for this girl. Somehow, she is entirely different. Her point of view, the way she works...She acts, feels and speaks almost exactly like an American.” (Preminger 1960, sec. 11:34) One wonders to what extent one can decode Kitty’s words and translate them simply as “she looks as white as I do”. And indeed, this is partially addressed in the movie in a later conversation between General Sutherland and Kitty, when he makes a joke about Karen swimming also “just like an American”. It is therefore not coincidental that the one character who starts changing Kitty’s perspective on the Jews seems as

³⁹ Ari Ben Canaan literally translates as “the lion (of God) son of Canaan”; not a mere coincidence in the context of the territorial dispute for Palestine.

WASPy as Kitty herself. Kitty—America—tries to assimilate this WASPy-behaving girl by offering her to come to America and become a US citizen one day. Karen, however, who is unsure at the beginning, hesitates for a while later on in the movie, but after embarking on the Exodus, the cause is clear again: Karen wants to go to Palestine (pre-1948 Israel), find her father, accept her Jewishness and hence conform with the young female version of the new Jew.

This process of breaking with the stereotypes of the old Jew is naturally also carried out by Ari, another apparently WASPy-looking character. Major Caldwell's anti-Semitism is not as subtle as Kitty's, but Ari's reaction to it is not as subtle as Karen's either. When stealing the identity of an English captain in order to take the refugees to the Exodus, a conversation between Major Caldwell and Ari takes place, where the first expresses his lack of interest concerning the current state of the Jews because they are "troublemakers":

Caldwell: Get two of them [Jews] together, you've got a debate. And three, a revolution.

Ari: Yes, and half of them are Communists anyway.

Caldwell: Yes, and the other half pawnbrokers. They look funny too. I can spot one a mile away. [...] A lot of them try to hide under Gentile names. But one look at that face and you just know.

Ari: With a little experience you can smell them out. (Preminger 1960, sec. 41:09)

In the movie, the new Jew approaches the subject of death from a different perspective as the old one. When Ari suggests that passengers of the Exodus go on a hunger strike, the character of Lakavitch, pumping his fist in the air, exclaims: "We are going to Palestine or we're going to die right here. [...] What is so unusual about the Jews dying? Is that anything new? [...] There is no excuse for us to go on living unless we start fighting right now. So that every Jew on the face of the earth can begin to start feeling like a human being again. Fight, not beg! Fight!" (Preminger 1960, sec. 53:35) This new image of the self-assured Jew who is not afraid of dying for the Zionist cause is also

exemplified by two women onboard who after being told that their kids were going to be returned to Karaolos approach Ari and tell him:

Mrs. Frankel: We have made a decision among the mothers. To send the children back to Karaolos now will show weakness. [...] We will take responsibility. We will not send them back, and we will not go back with them. [...] Look at these babies of mine. Born behind barbed wire. For the first time, they don't have to look out through a fence like little animals. They are free now, and nobody...no Englishman, no Haganak, will ever lock them up again.

Mrs. Hirschberg: I will not take him [her baby] back to Karaolos. He will go to Palestine with me, or here on this ship, we will die together. (Preminger 1960, sec. 1:09:10)

If Ari represents the image of the new *Muskeljude* in the most Nordau fashion, his father, Barak Ben Canaan, responds to the more agrarian idea of the New Jew as the worker of the land: "When I came to Palestine 47 years ago, it was not a musical reception with little cakes served. I came walking with my little brother all the way from Russia. And over in that valley, the swamps, and mosquitoes so big they were picking fights with the sparrows. Now we have changed those swamps into such fields." (Preminger 1960, sec. 1:25:40) Barak might represent the most moderate Zionist position, perhaps rejecting entirely his brother's association with the Irgun, as well as thanking the British soldiers for having "carried out the unrelenting policy of their government with tact and compassion." (Preminger 1960, sec. 2:55:34) He wants the British out of Palestine but rejects what he considers violence for the sake of violence. He invites the Arabs of the new state of Israel to remain in their land and work together in the building of the new country.

The love between Kitty and Ari is a no-brainer from the very beginning of the film and it obviously represents, as Loshitzky notes, "the love story between America and Israel." (Loshitzky 2001, 7) Kitty—America—is mesmerized by the confidence and proactivity of Ari, the New Jew, the *Muskeljude*. He is convinced of the cause, but he is not sectarian: his best childhood friend is an Arab (a Jewish-friendly one of course).

Together they aim to build up Palestine and make it a prosperous land for both of them. Nevertheless, the evolution of Kitty's attitude towards the Jews and the Zionist cause cannot be read in individual terms after having identified Kitty as America. During the first interactions between Ari and Kitty, Kitty expresses her desire to take Karen back home to the United States and "save a Jewish child", to what Ari responds: "Don't expect me to get hysterical over one Jewish child [...]. You're late, lady. You're ten years late. Almost two million Jewish children butchered like animals, because nobody wanted them. No country would have them. Not your country or any other. And nobody wants the ones who survived." (Preminger 1960, sec. 49:20) Kitty accepts her country's guilt and while her love for Karen and Ari grows, so does her love for the Zionist cause, as General Sutherland points out to her: "you're getting to be quite a Zionist" (Preminger 1960, sec. 1:11:04), a statement that is further evinced when Kitty disembarks on Israel after having travelled on the Exodus itself. After the partition has been granted by the United Nations, Ari wonders why someone like Kitty would like to be stuck in the middle of other people's fight. America says: "I'm going to stay as long as you'll have me". To which Israel responds: "I love you".

2.4.2. The aftermath of the Six-Day War

This stage in the relationship between America and Israel serves us to understand many of Ruth Klüger's thoughts on Israel. If the Shoah necessarily shaped a particular way to relate to one's Jewishness and the developing of a Jewish sense of identity which transcended the mere ethnic or cultural component and established itself at a political and national level, this second stage in the relationship between Diaspora Jews and Israel proves to be also crucial if we aim to understand the specific emotional tone in many of Klüger's references to Israel. Israel as a sort of utopia was the image established during these years and bespeaks the metaphysical character of Israel, the idea, more than the *topos*; the movie Exodus being not only the aesthetic confirmation of such utopian view on Israel but also the arena where this new Jewish identity was negotiated among Diaspora Jews, where this aesthetic formation was again not merely recreated, but rather—created. A new way to relate not only to this newly established country but to this new sense of Jewish identity, a self-affirming post-Shoah Jew who sacralizes his land—the secular(ized) and the always-sacred one—and fights for it.

It is a debatable matter when exactly this “Romantic” view of Israel ceased being as powerful among Diaspora Jews. It is also equally debatable when exactly more orthodox branches of Judaism became more prone to the Zionist enterprise when they initially rejected what they considered a secular enterprise. It could be suggested that the mere establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was the point of inflexion for many religious Jews, as the State became a reality more than a seemingly-impossible secular enterprise; it ceased being a way of taking the destiny of the Jewish people by Jewish hands, ignoring God’s divine plan for his chosen people. Maybe, after all—they might have thought—God was behind the return to *Eretz Yisrael*. This change in the attitude of religious Jews (in this case, however, ultra-Orthodox Jews) is portrayed in Chaim Potok’s book *The Chosen* (1968) which would, later on, be brought to the big screen by director Jeremy Kagan (1981). Through the eyes of Reuven, a young American Jew, and his familiarity with the secular and modern American society, we explore the unfamiliar and secretive world of Hasidism, Danny’s world. At the end of the film, Danny approaches Reuven and tells him that “the Jewish state isn’t an issue anymore, it’s a fact”, to which Reuven responds, “not thanks to you and yours.” (Kagan 1981, sec. 1:26:53) Danny’s departure from previous concerns about Israel and his rejection of Reuven’s proactivity exemplify this change in the attitude towards Zionism which many religious Jews shared during the years before the establishment of the State. In the book and the film, Zionism is portrayed as an enterprise of secular or moderately-observant educated Jews, a political movement rejected by Hasidic Jews who might eventually come to terms with Zionism, not without expressing his fears for the new-born State. As Danny tells Reuven in the same scene: “my father is frightened that Jews again will be killed”. (Kagan 1981, sec. 1:27:03)

In the previously-mentioned panel “Israel and Diaspora Relations: Past, Present and Future” held by the University of Michigan, Derek Penslar noted the fear for Israel’s existence which increased in the 60’s among Diaspora communities. This fear for the existence of Israel translated into an anger against the US government, which was blamed for abandoning Israel. Penslar also noted the rise of Shoah commemorations which took place in this decade, but it is precisely in this decade when some scholars locate the point of inflexion between Israeli-Diaspora relationships: the aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967, the war which astounded the whole world, when Israel defeated three different Arab armies and occupied the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, and the West Bank,

reunifying Jerusalem and reinforcing its military power. This special event along with the consequences the occupation has brought along the decades is crucial to understand Saul Friedländer's *de-conversion* from being a committed Zionist and his abandonment of the Zionist movement which decades before made him illegally migrate to Israel in 1948. As we will see in more detail in the following pages, Ruth Klüger's current relationship with Israel is still very much influenced by the Shoah experience, the encounter of Zionism in the concentration camps and perhaps the crystallization of such nostalgic view—always subjunctive—of Israel through a calculated distance: a relationship full of diasporic longing, charged with post-Shoah *pathos* and an ultimately utopian halo around Israel and its fate. Saul Friedländer, on the other hand, adheres to a more “mature love”—as Pensler would call it—a more complicated relationship with Israel which amalgamates feelings of shame and frustration with care and an impossible-to-eliminate affection, perhaps still love, which nevertheless does share still a diasporic quest for a never-ending nostalgia, but a necessary nostalgia—strategically kept, perhaps.

2.5. Rearticulating Jewishness within a Zionist paradigm

One of Ruth Klüger's particularities when tackling topics like Judaism and Zionism in her autobiographical works resides in her feminist tone, as we have already mentioned. As it has already been noted, during the 19th century, Europe experienced a wave of nationalism which established the basis of our modern conception of the nation-state. This new necessarily-bellicose way of understanding feelings of citizenship and national brotherhood required reinforcing male gender adscriptions which, although always part of the masculine ideals of the warrior or the ruler, were needed in order to carry out the important task of reshaping European borders. This way, once again throughout history, hyper-masculine imperatives such as heroic deeds, courage, and sacrifice among others were revived for the purpose of the building of the new nation-states. Nevertheless, the European *fin de siècle* is not only the period of nationalism. Concurrently, discourses waving the flag of regeneration found their place in this crucial point in European history, namely eugenics, social Darwinism or colonialism among others. It is in this period, as Daniel Boyarin has pointed out, when *the modern Jew is born*.

2.5.1. Nietzsche, an inspiration for “the New Jew”

When considering Nietzsche’s philosophy and the influence of his works on the realm of politics, the connection with Nazi ideology might seem, by some, as almost unavoidable⁴⁰. This is, first and foremost, a particularity on its own if we consider Nietzsche (as we could also consider Kierkegaard, Heidegger or even Foucault) as paradigmatic of the philosopher of self-creation and *Selbstüberwindung*, as Rorty (1989) has branded them, “writers on autonomy” in contrast with “writers on justice” (like Marx, Dewey or Habermas), whose concerns for the *communitas* might, a priori, be expected to lead to more social applications, that is, to constitute socially-shared ideology and the basis for social movements. The application of Nietzsche’s philosophy to the *communitas* might be considered, by some, as a first peculiarity of the ideological and political use of his philosophy: an elastic philosophy which has in the last century become the foundation of many antagonistic movements. Nietzsche’s philosophy found a good reception within Nazi ideologues and it is usually regarded as having constituted the basis of Nazi biopolitics, as it has however also founded the basis of many other antagonistic ideologies, as Aschheim notes: “every political movement constructs the Nietzsche it deserves.” (S. Aschheim 2001, 13)

Therefore, although the influence of Nietzsche’s philosophy in the Jewish world might rapidly be regarded as simply unfitting, we would like, however, to point out that in the context of Zionism, a specific Nietzscheanism was recurrently used by thinkers and authors for whom Jewish nationalism was nothing else than a logical extension of a willingness towards Jewish self-affirmation, as Jacob Golomb has thoroughly discussed (2004). This necessary new national(istic) *communitas* structured itself in the context of fin-de-siècle Zionism, which, as we have already noted, needs to be understood as the conjunction of many 19th-century ideologies. Zionism was provided by Nietzschean philosophy with a semantics of personal (and national) affirmation which aimed to

⁴⁰ As Aschheim notes: “Both National Socialists and their opponents tended to agree that Nietzsche was the movement’s most formative and influential thinker, visionary of a biologized *Lebensphilosophie* society, fueled by regenerationist, post-democratic, post-Christian impulses in which the weak, decrepit and useless were to be legislated out of existence.” (Aschheim in Golomb 1997, 3)

surpass the “aestheticism” with which philosophers of self-creation (and self-overcoming) are usually associated.

The connection between Nietzsche and Zionism should not be considered outlandish. Zionism found its inception in the heart of Europe and, as a product of the *Zeitgeist*, Zionism was also influenced by the ideas which affected European thinking during the period. As Mikhal Dekel notes when discussing the renaissance in Hebrew literature which took place side by side with the birth of the Zionist movement in Europe: “no European writer penetrated [the] Hebrew cultural scene as deeply and broadly as Nietzsche. No other European writer played a more prominent role in its emergent national fantasies.” (Dekel 2010, 171) The critique of religion and Judeo-Christian ethics, the will to power, and the glorification of masculinity became attractive concepts to a generation of ambitious Jews—especially, the so-called *Grenzjuden*—who were ready to leave behind “the old Jew”—the self-doubting, insecure and self-tortured marginal Jew always caught between worlds—and embrace the new emboldening Zionist movement: “There is the Wille zur Macht, the state, the army, the frontiers. We have been in exile; now we are to be to encourage feelings of pride, honor, glory that are part of the paraphernalia of the ordinary nationalistic patriotism.” (Magnes in Hertzberg 1997, 447)

Nietzsche’s philosophy provided the self-affirming Zionist enterprise with a proper semantics of *Selbstüberwindung* much needed to articulate Jewish nationalism, even if Nietzsche’s philosophy is not regarded as nationalistic in nature. His philosophy, nonetheless, provided these Jews with a totalizing account on the *arche* of Jewish suffering and a political *telos* for leaving behind European decadence and nihilism in an attempt to rediscover an already-forgotten type of Jew; in short, *amor fati*. The echoes of Nietzsche’s philosophy can be perceived all over Zionist essays, in the context of the German-speaking Jewish world and outside of it⁴¹, as Golomb notes: “Nietzsche became for them the great healer who assisted them in creatively accepting the traumatic experiences of their torn hearts and spiritual agonies.” (Golomb 2004, 8)

⁴¹ In chapter three, we will further discuss Nietzsche’s influence in the Zionist movement by pointing out not only the Nietzschean semantics which constituted much of the Zionist discourse from the *fin de siècle* onwards, as well as the connection between nihilism and Zionism through the essay works of Moritz Goldstein.

Although Nietzsche's feelings towards Jews and Judaism has been a topic widely discussed, for many years the discussion has focused on finding a coherent position on the part of Nietzsche regarding the Jewish question. The supporters of Nietzsche as a proto-Nazi ideologist tend to ignore the fact that Nietzsche kept friendships with prominent Jews, tried to prevent his sister's marriage to an openly anti-Semite from happening, and praised the Jews in different works: "Die Juden sind aber ohne allen Zweifel die stärkste, zäheste und reinste Rasse, die jetzt in Europa lebt; sie verstehen es, selbst noch unter den schlimmsten Bedingungen sich durchzusetzen (besser sogar, als unter günstigen), vermöge irgend welcher Tugenden, die man heute gern zu Lasten stempeln möchte." (Nietzsche 1988, 193) On the other hand, supporters of Nietzsche as a pro-Jewish thinker emphasize Nietzsche's anti-militaristic character, de-aryanize concepts like the *Übermensch* or the *blonde Bestie* and consider the idea about Jews he defends in *Genealogie der Moral* as an insignificant part of his writing. In the aforementioned work, Nietzsche identifies the Jews as the example of the priestly caste par excellence, accusing them of reversing moral values and associating the humble, the poor and the miserable with goodness:

Die Juden, jenes priesterliche Volk, das sich an seinen Feinden und Überwältigern zuletzt nur durch eine radikale Umwertung von deren Werten, also durch einen Akt der geistigsten Rache Genugtuung zu schaffen wußte. [...] Die Juden sind es gewesen, die gegen die aristokratische Wertgleichung (gut = vornehm = mächtig = schön = glücklich = gottgeliebt) mit einer furchteinflößenden Folgerichtigkeit die Umkehrung gewagt und mit den Zähnen des abgründlichsten Hasses (des Hasses der Ohnmacht) festgehalten haben. (Nietzsche 1988, 267)

Probably like most Europeans at the time, Nietzsche developed throughout his life different attitudes towards Jews and Judaism; in short, allo-Semitism. These attitudes towards Jews can be understood as ambivalent—or even contradictory—when approached through a diachronic perspective. We, however, consider crucial to understand these ambivalences as such, even if it could be regarded by some as a

commonplace to do so⁴². We argue that these ambivalences regarding the question of how one (Jew and non-Jew alike) is to relate to Judaism, Jewry, and Jewishness, are to be found also in Jewish writers and thinkers, due to the fact that it ultimately constitutes the identity crisis which some Zionists were to overcome in order to become the New Jew. For the willingness towards *Selbstüberwindung* necessarily proceeded—and proceeds—on the basis of a—perhaps multivalent—clear revision and rejection of a previous negative condition as well as the embracement of some self-affirming Essence. Indeed, the question of whether Zionism means a break from Judaism or if, on the contrary, Zionism is a logical development of Judaism which—by aiming to recuperate its most ancient attitudes—leads to a self-affirming essentialism, must be brought to the discussion. How is the Zionist *Muskeljude* to fit within a Jewish paradigm if not by changing it? Understanding Nietzsche's ambivalent views on Judaism and Jews as such will make us understand Zionists' views on Judaism and Jews also as contradictory—perhaps simply oxymoronic—thus constituting a new *conatus* towards national affirmation. We argue that these ambivalent feelings constituted the necessary breeding ground from which early Zionists could elaborate on the possibility of Jewish nationalism.

2.5.2. Creating the *Muskeljude*

The idea of the Jew as a hypersexualized and weak effeminized man has been recurrent in anti-Semitic discourses and as Daniel Boyarin has noted, it can be traced back to the thirteenth century. Whether these ideas were somehow justified or not, they—needless to say—contradicted the aspirations and requirements of the hyper-masculine man in the context of the European *fin de siècle*. This conception of the “eroticized male sissy”, as Mathew Biberman (2004) puts it, not only influenced the fathers of political

⁴² The most compelling attempt at trying to find a “non-contradictory ambivalence” regarding Nietzsche's ideas about Jews we have been found is Yirmiyahu Yovel's “Nietzsche and the Jews. The Structure of an ambivalence” where Yovel argues for an understanding of Nietzsche's “anti-Semitism” as directed towards ancient Judaism for “having begotten Jesus” (Yovel in Golomb 1997, 124) and not towards modern Diaspora Jews whom, according to Yovel, Nietzsche admired and assigned “a leading role in creating the nondecadent, de-Christianized Europe.” (Yovel in Golomb 1997, 119)

Zionism Herzl and Nordau, they were also considered not only an attack on Jewishness and Jewish masculinity but a hindrance which Zionists felt needed to overcome. Indelibly connected to this effeminized character of the male Jew are the conceptions of the Jew as self-effacing and passive rooted in certain Talmudic readings which Herzl rejected from the very beginning. Therefore Herzl, an (almost) fully-assimilated and learned Jew never found his place amid nationalist Europe, although he stuck to the gender adscription which was expected of a European man. Femininity (or rather queerness) as well as religion (or rather religious tradition) constituted remnants of the past that the Zionist, the New Jew, needed to leave behind necessarily.

Nevertheless, in order to understand how the New Jew came to be, noting the effeminized image of the Jew at the *fin de siècle* will not suffice. At this time in Europe, key processes shaped the final outcome of the modern Jew as thought by his fathers, Herzl and Nordau. These include regenerative discourses that dealt with eugenics and gymnastics. While Herzl held the idea that—in order to become passionate nationalists—Jews needed to transform themselves and leave behind the days of being branded as weak, Nordau articulated his discourse on the *Muskeljude* based on the premise that one of the fundamental problems of the time was the decadence of the fin-de-siècle man and his weakness. Although Nordau has been accused of “violence of language, arrogance, inaccuracy [and] inconsistency” (Cox, Seidl, and Hazeltine 1895, 736) among other adjectives, and although some scholars suggest that Herzl himself could partially hold these views at a certain point⁴³, Nordau’s ideas were crucial for the physical and psychological transformation of the Diaspora Jew which permitted him—in principle—to break free from self-hatred, become proud of his heritage and accomplish the task of (re)settling Palestine. However, it can be argued to what extent Herzl and Nordau held different ideas on what the new Jew should consist of. While Nordau appeared to call for the transformation of the Jew into a warrior, a reminiscence of the Hellenic Jew, Herzl’s idea of the New Jew lacks any apparent militaristic character. Due to the emphasis he puts on the idea of working the land, his concept of the new *Muskeljude* evoke the image

⁴³ Neil Davidson has discussed the relationship between Herzl and Nordau and holds the idea that Herzl found in Nordau an ally, although he might have considered his approach on art and literature “somewhat philistine.” (Davidson 2010, 77)

of a land-owning, agricultural public servant, a conception of the *Muskeljude* portrayed also in the movie *Exodus*, as we have already discussed.

The hypermasculinity which Zionism aimed to bring back to Jewish life did not naturally only affect young Jewish boys and men. The question which arises and especially for the purpose of reading Ruth Klüger's works is the one related to the role of women in this new enterprise which sacralized muscle, bravery, and honor? as Biale notes: "physical strength, youth, nature, and secularism were the constellation of Zionist symbols set against the degeneracy, old age, and urban and religious signs of the exile." Zionism, especially at this time, aimed to create "a virile New Hebrew man", while at the same time fought to eliminate the traditional inequality of women within traditional Judaism. (Biale 1992, 176) Zionism aimed to overcome traditional gender ascriptions found in Judaism through which women's sphere of power was more restricted to the domestic, rather than the public. The Zionist movement was one of the first movements that gave women the right to vote starting with the elections which would take place in the context of the Zionist Congress before the 20th century. This switch in gender ascriptions was not only limited to the more secular / less observant branches of Zionism, however. Rosenberg-Friedman (2005) notes that such a change partially took part within Religious Zionism as well, even if it was clearly a source of tension: that between tradition and modernity. (Biale 1997, 177)

The *kibbutzim*, as the example per excellence of the materialization of socialist Zionism, have been subject to many anthropological and sociological analysis throughout the decades, and although it is not the aim of this study to provide scientific evidence with regards to the success or failure at reaching gender equality to which these organized communities initially were destined, it is noteworthy to locate the gender politics to which they adhered to understand Ruth Klüger's hopes concerning the Zionist enterprise in its most socialist form. When reading early Zionist writings at the beginning of the 20th century, it is not hard to discern the socialist framework through which these authors theorize on the creation of a Jewish home in Palestine. Klüger does adhere to this socialist view of Israel: "Ich wollte nach »Erez Israel«, nach Palästina, um dort einen gerechten, das heißt einen sozialistischen und jüdischen Staat aufbauen zu helfen." (Klüger 1992, 204) Socialism is, then, understood as the only "*gerechten*" kind of state. Zionism, in these early years, rejected—following this socialist logic—traditional gender ascriptions

of Jewish life and religion; therefore, a conscious aim to achieve a more equal division of labor was promoted.

2.6. Ruth Klüger

Ruth Klüger's account of her early years in Vienna is full of religious-related memories: tradition, rituals, and the hierarchies they attempted to establish. The partial interiorization and rejection of these religious dynamics constitute a first stage at the development of Klüger's Jewish identity and the way this identity is posteriorly shaped. Klüger's account of her immediate subsequent years (Theresienstadt, Christianstadt, and Auschwitz) play a crucial role with regards to the growth of this Jewish identity, as, at the same time, it acquires a national tone. Moreover, it can be argued that it acquires a rather proactive political character. In a first stage, the *Inszenierung* of Jewish religious rituals served as a means for constructing a certain Jewish identity indelibly connected with religion and the idea of *ethnos* to which Judaism is necessarily connected. The logical evolution from a Jewish self-awareness to Zionism is exemplified by authors like Klüger during the Shoah experience. In this sense, Zionist rhetoric and Zionist aspirations comprise the first self-affirming way of relating to one's Jewishness and it cannot be disengaged from the Shoah experience. The development of Klüger's Jewish consciousness and her relationship to the historical land of the Jewish people are indelibly marked by her experience in different concentration camps. The crystallization of a self-affirming Jewish identity is developed by Klüger through the interiorization of much of the Zionist rhetoric to which she is exposed during this period, the new Jewish *communitas* she encounters and adheres to first and foremost at Theresienstadt.

2.6.1. Theresienstadt, becoming "*jüdisch in Abwehr*"

As Klüger notes, initially, Austrian nationalism awoke enthusiasm in a very young Klüger who, nevertheless, realized at a very young age that, because of her Jewishness, she was never going to feel part of the Austrian society to which she was trying to belong. A progressive awakening of a Jewish national patriotism befalls during her confinement in Theresienstadt; this time redirected towards her Jewishness and finding in early Zionism⁴⁴ a way of reconsolidating a Jewish identity this time articulated through the

⁴⁴ Klüger's connection with Zionism is—at its earlier stage—mainly with Herzelian political Zionism, although there are several aspects in Klüger's account of Theresienstadt which would signal the exposition

rhetoric of amity, brotherhood, kinship and nationalism: “Der Zionismus durchtränkte unser Denken, meines auf jeden Fall, nicht etwa weil wir nichts anderes hörten, sondern weil er das Sinnvollste war, dasjenige, das einen Ausweg versprach.” (Klüger 1992, 89) This same reflection, originally portrayed in *weiter leben*, is extended in *Still Alive*: “These half-grown children made a point of creating some group spirit and turned our forced community into part of the youth movement, be it Socialist or Zionist. Either one was an antidote to fascism, but Zionism was the be-all and end-all of our political awareness, and I was swept up in it, because it simply made sense. It was the way out of an unendurable diaspora, it had to work.” (Klüger 2001a, 76) For Ruth Klüger—along with many Jews, who in these years were exposed to the proliferation of Zionism—the politically organized return to Zion played a crucial role at shaping the way in which these emancipated—and even quasi-assimilated—Jews would relate to their Jewish identity in the most challenging of contexts. One of the most recurrent questions that these Jewish intellectuals are asked in interviews pivots around their self-understanding as Jewish and the means through which this Jewishness is articulated in their present-life, especially when crucial parts of the religious performance of Jewishness are rejected. In this sense, Klüger explicitly links the development of a self-affirming way of relating to her Jewishness with her experience at Theresienstadt, something which she considered externally-expected from her but, at the same time, freely-chosen by her: “Was gut [in Theresienstadt] war, ging von unserer Selbstbehauptung aus. So daß ich zum ersten Mal erfuhr, was dieses Volk sein konnte, zu dem ich mich zählen *durfte, mußte, wollte*. Wenn ich mir heute die unbeantwortbare Frage vorlege, wieso und inwiefern ich Ungläubige überhaupt Jüdin bin, dann ist von mehreren richtigen Antworten eine: Das kommt von Theresienstadt, dort bin ich es erst geworden.” (Klüger 1992, 104, emphasis added)

This national awakening to Zionism was the first (perhaps the only) sense of pride which Klüger experiences in these early years of her life. This self-affirmation manifests a way of coming to terms with Jewishness, which for emancipated European Jews during these decades was nothing to be proud of when interacting with their countries’ societies, as Goldstein notes: “The German Jews wanted desperately to be Germans and to be considered Germans. They endeavored to be indistinguishable from Germans. It was

to Socialist Zionism more particularly, which, in many ways, goes hand in hand with the exposition to Yiddish during this time.

considered offensive to call a Jew Jewish because he looked Jewish; it hurt his self-esteem.” (M. Goldstein 1957, 253) Zionism flourished especially during this period as the Jewish alternative for self-loathing, while, at the same time, it can be argued that it was –to a certain extent– the product of the interiorization of much of the anti-Semitic discourse which propitiated this same self-loathing in the first place; a peculiar aporetic dialectic which, however, bespeaks the particular aporetic dynamics between self-affirmation and self-hatred we see in many of the authors already discussed and to be discussed in this dissertation. Zionism, consequently, arose all over Europe when Jews realized that these essentialist national movements which flourished all around them in Europe had a peculiar way of considering and relating to its Jewish citizens.

A necessary requisite to become a citizen of any European country was leaving behind not only Judaism but also Jewishness. This tension between being Jewish or being a modern European citizen is a more updated version—a more Western European version—of the ghetto-assimilation dialectic which at this time was still the case in Eastern Europe. It signals, nevertheless, a crisis within European Jewish intellectuals of this time, trapped between different worlds on their way to an assimilation which never fully befell. In the context of the Shoah, Zionism propagated during these decades among young Jews who—in their inexorable way to the *anus mundi*⁴⁵—felt the need to politically organize, to develop the *Wille zur Macht*, for the first time since the Bar Kokhba revolt.

Klüger makes clear that this new way of relating to her Jewish identity could only have taken place at Theresienstadt, a concentration camp, in contrast with the experience at Auschwitz, that is, at an extermination camp. Throughout her autobiographical works, this constant tension between trying to nuance the different experiences in these two different camps and avoiding the trivialization of the experience at Theresienstadt is perceivable in her interactions with German citizens mostly. All these tensions arise when having to face comments which, although not necessarily anti-Semitic in nature, are feared by Klüger to hide some anti-Semitic character, be it a banalization of the Shoah

⁴⁵ This term is usually used to refer to Auschwitz as used by German SS Officer Heinz Tilo, one of the physicians in charge of the selections. (Czech 1989, 16) Tilo committed suicide after the war while being imprisoned, according to the BS Encyclopédie: “Les SS servant à Auschwitz et leur devenir”

experience or a decaffeinated anti-Semitic prejudice in disguise regarding several other aspects tangentially ascribed to the Shoah experience. Two of these situations with regards to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz are told by Klüger in her autobiographical works, where Klüger is put in a position of defending Jews, while partially accepting some criticism. These two conversations, furthermore, exemplify the strenuous tension between an anti-Zionist criticism and anti-Semitism, which the autobiographical Klüger tackles sometimes from a dialogical perspective and sometimes, however, from an *in Abwehr* position: “During a discussion with some youngster in Germany I am asked (as if it was a genuine question and not an accusation) whether I don’t think that the Jews have turned into Nazis in their dealings with the Arabs, and haven’t the Americans always acted like Nazis in their dealings with the Indians? When it gets that aggressive and simple, I just sputter.” (Klüger 2001a, 65) This initial reflection is introduced in Klüger’s English autobiography and it bespeaks a rejection of extremist takes on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a rejection of a reductionist understanding of the conflict and, by extension, a rejection of a conception of Zionism which would diminish the movement and its political *telos* to a mere unethical colonial enterprise, an extension of European colonialism which aimed to expand the territorial control of the kingdoms, countries or empires by which such an enterprise was planned.

This example shall be inserted within a larger picture though, as it signals a recurrent tension throughout Klüger’s autobiographical works. Klüger counterargues every attempt to trivialize the Jewish question, the Shoah, gentile-Jewish relationships as well as Zionism to the point that some questions—fearing the anti-Semitism they could potentially hide—could seem like accusations. In *weiter leben*, Klüger realizes and reflects upon the consequences that such defensive attitude can have, especially in salient and arduous issues like intergenerational dialogue and the building of a common memory between generations:

Ich sitze am Mittagstisch mit einigen Göttinger Doktoranden und Habilitanden. Einer berichtet, er habe in Jerusalem einen alten Ungarn kennengelernt, der sei in Auschwitz gefangen gewesen, und trotzdem, »im selben Atem« hätte der auf die Araber geschimpft, die seien alle schlechte Menschen. Wie kann einer, der in Auschwitz war, so reden? Fragte der Deutsche. Ich hake ein, bemerke, vielleicht

härter als nötig, was erwarte man denn, Auschwitz sei keine Lehranstalt für irgend etwas gewesen und schon gar nicht für Humanität und Toleranz. Von den KZs kam nichts Gutes, und ausgerechnet sittliche Läuterung erwarte er? Sie seien die allernutzlosesten, unnützeisten Einrichtungen gewesen, das möge man festhalten, auch wenn man sonst nichts über sie wisse. Man gibt mir weder recht, noch widerspricht man mir. Deutschlands hoffnungsvoller intellektueller Nachwuchs senkt die Köpfe und löffelt verlegen Suppe. Jetzt hab ich euch mundtot gemacht, das war nicht die Absicht. Eine Wand ist immer zwischen den Generationen, hier aber Stacheldraht, alter rostige Stacheldraht. (Klüger 1992, 72)

We can find an even sharper tone in *Still Alive* when revisiting this conversation: “Auschwitz was no instructional institution, like the University of Göttingen, which he attends.” (Klüger 2001a, 65) Klüger asks us to compare different life experiences, suggesting not only that the young student is unable to relate to the Hungarian Shoah-survivor whom he hardly criticizes due to the privileged life he has had but also to his age (“Eine Wand ist immer zwischen den Generationen.”) For those who see the Holocaust with historical perspective and emotional detachment, the logical connection between the Auschwitz experience and a posterior development of an apparent act of intolerance can seem unexpected. Previously in *weiter leben*, Klüger refers to this common teleologically-pedagogical understanding of suffering as she notes the criticism she receives for treating her mother-daughter relationship in such a seemingly-harsh way:

Die Leute [...] sagen, unter solchen Umständen wie denen, welche ihr in der Hitlerzeit auszustehen hattet, hätten die Verfolgten sich doch näher kommen sollen. [...] Das ist rührseliger Unsinn und beruht auf fatalen Vorstellungen von Läuterung durch Leid. Im stillen Kämmerlein und für die eigene Person weiß so ziemlich jeder, wie es wirklich zugeht: Wo es mehr auszuhalten gibt, wird auch die immer prekäre Duldsamkeit für den Nächsten fadenscheiniger, und die Familienbande werden rissiger. Während eines Erdbebens zerbricht erfahrungsgemäß mehr Porzellan als sonst. (Klüger 1992, 56)

By pointing out the easier life the young student has been able to live, and the fact that his age is not as advanced as hers, Klüger places the young student at a very difficult position to proceed with his argument. The use of a sentimental discourse to explain intolerance, more than a psychoanalytical explanation of how humans cope with extreme situations could be easily be perceived as a justification of an intolerant attitude. The defensiveness which Klüger uses in her autobiographical works to respond to attacks is indicative of this *in Abwehr* character of Ruth Klüger, which she very appropriately notes at the beginning of her autobiographical works, and which ultimately encompasses most of the conversations she portrays in the book with regards to most of the questions which she passionately defends; something which necessarily takes us back to her memories of Theresienstadt and the development of a self-defensive disposition as a means to perform Jewishness.

In a posterior passage, Klüger herself contradicts this idea that the Shoah experience turned Jews into intolerant beings. In the context of the camaraderie which flourished in Theresienstadt between *chaverim*, Klüger notes the following: “Später in der Freiheit hat mich nichts so gekränkt, nichts habe ich so sehr als pauschales Fehl- und Vorurteil empfunden wie die Unterstellung, in allen Lagern sei nur die brutalste Selbstsucht gefördert worden, und wer von dort herkomme, sei vermutlich moralisch verdorben.” (Klüger 1992, 91) A reflection which she continues in *Still Alive*: “Again, the blithe refusal to look closely, to make distinctions, to reflect a little.” (Klüger 2001a, 77) So, on the first hand, Klüger does make use of the Shoah experience to psychologically explain an apparent act of intolerance in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which due to the lack of condemnation of the act of hatred itself could be understood as a partial justification. This same idea is also used to validate the deterioration of her relationship with her mother. Nevertheless, in the context of the Zionist comradeship which Klüger developed, Klüger makes use of the great relationship between *chaverim* to exemplify an empathy which was able to develop as a result of the Shoah experience. We understand this complex—ambivalent—and, perhaps, never fully-resolved ways of self-affirmation when in the face of danger to be representative of a common tension of post-Shoah life. This same dilemma is portrayed by Elie Wiesel in *Dawn*; Wiesel’s questions, in the context of our dissertation, remain—to some extent—open: “When is man most truly a man? When he submits or when he refuses? Where does suffering lead him? To purification or to bestiality?”

Klüger's difficult position is that of the *Judin in Abwehr*, an example of a particular way of relating to the Jewish identity. This defensive attitude becomes a more delicate matter in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially since the conflict has turned over the last four decades into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ceasing to be the Israeli-Arab conflict it once was; thus, modifying also the role and the image of Jews in the conflict for sovereignty in Palestine and, in many political and academic circles, establishing a clear victim/oppressor adscription which naturally predisposes the formulation of many of the questions Klüger portrays in her autobiographical account of post-Shoah life. This defensive attitude is an especially arduous position to maintain due to some of the tensions which can potentially arise from a Zionist standpoint, but it is, in many ways, representative of a self-affirming *Wille zum Leben* which essentially constitutes Klüger's Jewish identity.

The place where Klüger's Zionist views were born, nevertheless, is a safer place for the performance of such disposition, even if also exposed to mixed feelings. Although Theresienstadt is remembered by Klüger, on the one hand, as a kind of *locus amoenus*, where self-worth and pride articulated through a powerful Zionist rhetoric were given a place to flourish, the fact that Theresienstadt was yet another institution of Nazi repression hinders—if not totally prevents—the reconciliation with such positive experience. This tension is portrayed by Klüger in a conversation with Gisela, the German wife of a colleague of hers, who tries to diminish the Shoah experience. This passage is revisited in both *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, being the latter an extended account of the memory, where also the German and American positions with regards to the Shoah are contrasted:

Theresienstadt wasn't all that bad, the German wife of a Princeton colleague said to me. This woman, whom I shall call Gisela, felt smug about belonging to a younger generation of Germans who couldn't be blamed for anything. She was always well groomed, her thoughts as immaculate as her dresses, and her tastes equally impeccable. She looked down for my enthusiasm for popular movies and stressed her preference for the opera. [...] She was determined to reduce the past until it fit into the box of a clean German conscience that won't cause her countrymen to lose any sleep. Some Germans, it would seem, are caught up in a kind of chamber of horrors cum melodrama, where the nuances of reality and its gritty surfaces disappear in a fog, and you can't make out any details, so why try?

Most Americans fit this pattern, too. They don't want to hear that for me life was better in Theresienstadt than it has been during the last months in Vienna, because to digest this bit of admittedly subjective information would mean that they'd have to rearrange a lot of furniture in their inner museum of the Holocaust. And others, like the aforementioned Gisela, refuse to get up from their upholstered sofas to look out the window. Unmoved by information, that is, by fresh air from outside, or by reflection, that is, by taking stock of the inventory and perhaps removing some shoddy pieces, they don't notice how much unadmitted guilt weights down their conclusions. Gisela's remarks were a provocation and unmistakably aggressive. (Klüger 2001a, 73)

The entitlement Klüger ascribes to Gisela's words activates Klüger's *in Abwehr* Jewishness once again. Indeed, Theresienstadt "wasn't all that bad", but the utterance of such claim must be preceded by some legitimacy which Gisela does not have, according to Klüger. Although it might seem that this lack of legitimacy comes from the fact that Gisela belongs to a "younger generation of Germans", it—on the contrary—resides on her willingness to reduce the complex matter of the Shoah into perfectly clear and undebatable, almost Manichean, explanations. Gisela, along with "most Americans", fails to come to a more holistic view of the experience which would encompass survivor's revisits of the Holocaust. Indeed, Theresienstadt "wasn't all that bad", but perhaps in ways Gisela does not—cannot—conceive, for the intellectual life which flourished in this place provided Jews with a kind of will to life, a force towards preservation wrapped up in Zionist rhetoric. This complete disregard of the experience is understood by Klüger as a provocation. Gisela's attitude prevents Klüger from expressing her positive experience in Theresienstadt, as it will merely serve to support an already pre-fabricated idea of the Shoah which will ultimately serve as an excuse for Gisela's reductionist and fixed ideas, a psychological way out perhaps, or merely a lack of interest in leaving the comfort zone which provides peace of mind. Klüger continues: "Theresienstadt was a ghetto for old people and Jewish veterans," she says, reciting a bit of German folklore. She would undoubtedly react to my evaluation of the ghetto with a triumphant: "There you are! You admit that Theresienstadt was even nicer for you than the lovely city of Vienna." (Klüger 2001a, 73) It is due to this already-expected lack of understanding on the part of Gisela why Klüger does not continue giving Gisela a full picture of Theresienstadt, maybe her—

Gisela—being the representation of that immovable mind which, as she notes, is shared by Germans and Americans alike. Klüger provides her readers with her true version of Theresienstadt though:

Heute ist mir Theresienstadt eine Kette von Erinnerungen an verlorene Menschen, Fäden, die nicht weitergesponnen wurden. Theresienstadt war Hunger und Krankheit, Hochgradig, versucht war das Ghetto mit seinem militärisch rasterförmig angelegten Straßen und Plätzen und hatte als Grenze einen Festungswall, über den ich nicht hinausdurfte, und eine Übervölkerung, die es fast unmöglich machte, gelegentlich eine Ecke zu finden, wo man mit einer anderen reden konnte, so daß es ein Triumph war, wenn man mit einiger Anstrengung eine solche Stelle doch auskundschaftete. Über einen Quadratkilometer hinaus hatte man keine Bewegungsfreiheit, und innerhalb des Lagers war man mit Haut und Haar einem anonymen Willen ausgeliefert, durch den man jederzeit in ein unklar wahrgenommenes Schreckenslager weiter verschickt werden konnte. Denn Theresienstadt, das bedeutete die Transporte nach dem Osten, die sich unberechenbar wie Naturkatastrophen in Abständen ereigneten. Das war der Rahmen der Denkstruktur unserer Existenz, dieses Kommen und Gehen von Menschen, die nicht über sich selbst verfügten, keinen Einfluß darauf hatten, was und wie über sie verfügt wurde, und nicht einmal wußten, wann und ob wieder verfügt werden würde. Nur daß die Absicht eine feindliche war. (Klüger 1992, 87)

Theresienstadt remains forever a place full of mixed feelings. On the one hand, the place for Klüger's awakening to a collective cause—bigger than the self—while at the same time crucial for her as an individual, a particular way of synthesizing personal autonomy and collective justice. Theresienstadt always remains in Klüger's memory the place for intellectual stimulation, for the development of a political awareness. The place to bond with people who quickly became kinship, the place to develop empathy: "Ich hab Theresienstadt irgendwie geliebt, und die neun-zehn oder zwanzig Monate, die ich dort verbrachte, haben ein soziales Wesen aus mir gemacht, die ich vorher in mich versponnen, abgeschottet, verklemmt und vielleicht auch unansprechbar geworden war" says Klüger and adds subsequently in her English autobiographical work: "The only good

was what the Jews managed to make of it, the way they flooded their square kilometer of Czech soil with their voices, their intellect, their wit, their playfulness, their joy in dialogue.” (Klüger 2001a, 86) However, Theresienstadt will always be a ghetto, a Nazi institution, where starved people were exposed to a constant uncertainty about their life, fearing the worst as a general norm, where people came and went and where the subject’s integrity was at the mercy of his enemy:

Ich hab Theresienstadt gehaßt, ein Sumpf, eine Jauche, wo man die Arme nicht ausstrecken konnte, ohne auf andere Menschen zu stoßen. Ein Ameisenhaufen, der zertreten wurde. Wenn mir jemand vorgestellt wird, der oder die auch in Theresienstadt gewesen ist, schäme ich mich dieser Gemeinsamkeit, versichere dem anderen gleich, daß ich bei Kriegsende nicht mehr dort war, und brech das Gespräch so rasch wie möglich ab, um einem etwaigen Angebot von Zusammengehörigkeit vorzubeugen. Wer will schon Ameise gewesen sein? Nicht einmal im Klo war man allein, denn draußen war immer wer, der dringend mußte. In einem großen Stall leben. Die Machthaber, die manchmal in ihren unheimlichen Uniformen auftauchten, um zu überprüfen, ob das Vieh nicht am Strick zerzte. Da kam man sich wie der letzte Dreck vor, das war man auch. *Einem ohnmächtigen Volk anzugehören, das abwechselnd arrogant und dann wieder selbstkritisch bis an die Grenze des Selbsthasses war. Keine Sprache zu beherrschen als die der Verächter dieses Volkes.* Keine Gelegenheit haben, eine andere zu lernen. Nichts lernen, nichts unternehmen dürfen. Diese Verarmung des Lebens. (Klüger 1992, 104, emphasis added)

Self-affirmation and self-hatred do not seem to stand that far away, and Zionism served as a way to find some hint of a will to live while being “der letzte Dreck.” These mixed feelings here portrayed do not defer from those of the early Zionists. Although not in the context of the Shoah, these contradictions are to be found in several other Jewish writers and they, in fact, constitute the basis for the creation of the New Jew: a certain “anti-Jewish” aspect was needed in order to reshape the old Jew, a certain repudiation of Jewish history and the Jewish *ethos* in the Diaspora, as a result of the naturalization of much self-criticism and the interiorization of much of the anti-Semitic discourse. Although in a more nuanced way, Klüger expresses these two sides of the same coin of

which early Zionism consisted and which she experienced in Theresienstadt. In *Still Alive*, Klüger expands this reflection originally expressed in *weiter leben*: “Decades later I sat in an automobile driving out of Theresienstadt, and it was like a bitter euphoria, if I may be allowed the oxymoron, that belated fulfillment of a childhood dream.” (Klüger 2001a, 87) This time in hindsight and through the tranquility which historical perspective provides, Klüger chooses to interpret her feelings as oxymoronic rather than contradictory, evincing a way of synthesizing the self-affirmation/self-criticism dialectic and continue living.

The response to Gisela is not that of the Zionist *Judin in Abwehr* Klüger became in Theresienstadt, nor that of the weepy and humiliated Jewess she rejected to be. The response Klüger gives to Gisela is perhaps that of the Jew aware of the oxymora of the post-Shoah Jewish experience: “Nein, antworte ich langsam auf Giselas Bemerkungen, so schlimm war es nicht, und fragte mich, ob die Deutsche einen Streit vom Zaun brechen will und ob sie erwartet, daß ich auf ihre aufsässigen Behauptungen mit Leidensgeschichten reagiere.” (Klüger 1992, 89) Gisela disappears in Klüger’s story, without having heard the importance of encountering Zionism in Theresienstadt, the political idea through which Klüger developed her self-affirming Jewish identity, without having heard Klüger’s deep analyses of her experience and ultimately without having empathized—thus *blocking the development of a post-Shoah Jewish-German dialogue*. And within the diversity of topics treated in her autobiographical works, Zionism—like religion—might become secondary for the regular reader, as well as for the gentile Giselas out there, but for Klüger (and many Jews who lived under similar conditions) Zionism constitutes a way of achieving proud self-affirmation *in extremis*, that is, in situations where the subject is from the very beginning exposed to tacit rejection. This proud way of relating to the Jewish people in the context of the Shoah could not have found any other articulation than through the ultimate self-affirming rhetoric of Zionist discourse.

2.6.2. Israel, the eternal subjunctive

After the publication of *weiter leben* in 1992 and *Still Alive* in 2001, Klüger decided to publish a second autobiographical work in 2008, *unterwegs verloren*. This

time published in German, and hitherto, no other autobiographical work nor any version of the book in any other language has been published. In contrast with their two previous autobiographical works, Klüger's emphasis on this book is put on her experiences in academia as well as her experience encountering sexism and anti-Semitism throughout the years in the United States and Europe. Not much light is however casted upon the question of her perspective of Israel or her relationship with Zionism from the diaspora, although the few references to Israel still make discernable the utopian view of Israel to which Klüger adheres. Renata Schmidtkunz's documentary, *Das Weiterleben der Ruth Klüger* (2013), on the other hand, casts plenty of light on several questions initially tackled in both autobiographical works with regards to Klüger's relationship with Israel. Schmidtkunz's documentary lets us see Klüger's journey from her home in sunny California to the home of her childhood memories in cloudy Vienna, from the ruins of Bergen-Belsen to a lively Jerusalem; and from the several reflections made by Klüger, an unconditional love for Israel is without any reticence expressed: "Israel ist irgendwie Bestandteil meines inneren Mobiliars. Denn dort wäre ich zu Hause gewesen und in Amerika eigentlich nicht." (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 53:14) In *Still Alive*, when discussing the reasons behind the occasional returns to Vienna, Klüger's American citizenship is portrayed as a lifeboat: a way out of the city of her childhood as well as her childhood memories and the anxieties these necessarily trigger: "I get depressed after a while and clutch to my American passport, eyeing the taxis that will take me to the train station or the airport." (Klüger 2001a, 60)⁴⁶. Nevertheless, America, which in previous chapters of her life proved to be a safe place—a place worthy of being called home—cannot be compared to Israel once Klüger sets foot in the only Jewish country in the world.

Israel does not—*cannot*—escape this sentimental connection for Klüger in any of her autobiographical works nor her documentary films or interviews. It always remains the land which had to be the answer to two thousand years of Diaspora, to end anti-Semitism, the land of which to feel proud, to build a more just society for the Jewish people. This set of ideas, especially recurrent in early Zionist discourse, triggered Klüger's *jüdisch in Abwehr* character in Theresienstadt, as we have already mentioned,

⁴⁶ Klüger explains later in *unterwegs verloren* how she decided to obtain the Austrian nationality: "Ich habe das Gefühl, er gehört mir, ich habe in Recht auf diese Staatsbürgerschaft, man hatte sie mir genommen, warum sollte ich sie mir nicht zurückholen." (2008, 214)

that is, a new proud way of relating to the Jewish identity. This pride includes for Klüger the State of Israel, the culmination of the Zionist project. The connection between a Jewish Shoah survivor and Israel is unarguably made in *unterwegs verloren* more than sixty years after the end of the war: “Wo gehörte eine mit der Nummer schon hin? Nach Israel vielleicht.” (Klüger 2008, 19) The current context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not affect Klüger’s views on Israel. Thus, Klüger’s position cannot be understood as a non-Zionist position, as Friedländer’s position can (never an anti-Zionist position though). The question of the conflict is hardly ever mentioned in Klüger’s works; not even a partial criticism on Israel or any kind of Israeli political decision is to be found in Klüger’s works.

In Schmidtkunz’s documentary, an Arab-Jewish conversation is introduced, one between Klüger and Nazmi Al-Jubeh, Professor for Art History at Bir-Zeit University in Ramallah. In this Arab-Jewish conversation, Al-Jubeh suggests that Israel is becoming progressively an “apartheid state”, taking the example of Hebron as paradigmatic of the situation. In response, Klüger notes that Jews in Hebron live “in einer kleinen Festung” since most the population are Arabs. Klüger also, in an attempt to delve further into the source of the conflict rather than remaining acquiescent, notes during Al-Jubeh speech that Hebron has always been problematic and that both—Jews and Arabs—claim their right to have control over Hebron due to Abraham’s grave. When asked by Al-Jubeh how she—as someone “die von draußen anschaut”—understands the conflict and what she expects from it, Klüger’s Zionist experience in Theresienstadt emerges as pivotal to the way of responding to Al-Jubeh’s question: “Since childhood, since I was eight years old, I’ve had quite sentimental feelings about this country. I kind of grew up with the idea that they built not only a viable country but also a very just country. And what has happened here in my lifetime had made me happy, on the one hand, but hurt me on a personal level. I hope very sincerely that a more just state is built here. I don’t know exactly how that will happen or what it will be like.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 1:09:00)

Klüger’s reference to the inception of her feelings for Israel takes us necessarily back to Theresienstadt, a take on Israel which seems to remain static throughout the years, never losing that utopian dimension, that metaphysical aspect, which once characterized the image of Israel. She never mentions any of the wars which from the Palestinian perspective are generally considered catastrophes: starting from the Balfour Declaration

in 1917⁴⁷ and followed by many historical events during those decades until the Israeli War of Independence in 1948, the Al-Nakbah⁴⁸ for Palestinians, and especially the Six-Day War in 1967—the “Aggression of June the Fifth” from the Palestinian perspective (‘Adwān, Bar-On, and Naveh 2012, 185). Al-Jubeh’s answer to Klüger’s hopes for more just state is that “Gerechtigkeit ist in diesem Land unmöglich”, probably adhering to the common Palestinian perspective that Jewish migration to Palestine is merely an extension of European colonialism. “Ich fordere mehr eine faire Lösung als [eine] gerechte Lösung“, he continues, “Wenn ich die totale Gerechtigkeit fordere, dann gibt’s keine Lösung.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 1:09:44)

Klüger’s response is not that of the *Judin in Abwehr* we have seen in the different German-Jewish conversations we have analyzed in this dissertation, that is, the Jewess who needs to be in defensive mode when dealing with the memory of the Shoah. This time, Klüger’s off-camera reaction to Al-Jubeh’s remarks are that of the little girl in Theresienstadt who wanted to help creating a new and more just country to escape anti-Semitism, a place for Jews to be able to feel at home: “Man hört überhaupt nicht gern” says Klüger while gazing at the arid landscape of the *Eretz Yisrael* of her childhood dreams. In a much previous essay work, “Wiener Neurosen”, Klüger revisits the discontent which arises from the realization that the *Eretz Yisrael* of her dreams is not only the metaphysical but also the physical, with all the problems which physical places are indelibly connected to: “Der Zionismus war die einzige Ideologie, für die ich mich je erwärmt habe, und der Glaube an eine bessere Welt überfällt mich in Israel wie ein schwindliges Gefühl und stößt sich an der Wirklichkeit (ein Land wie andere Länder, mit spezifischen Problemen, wie andere Länder), stößt sich daran, wie ein Mensch, der im Dunklen in jedes Möbelstück hineinrennt, das ihm im Weg steht.“ (Klüger 2001b, 26–27)

An older Klüger, almost a decade later, still appears to us as lost in reverie walking along the arid landscape of Israel in the documentary film by Schmidtkunz. From the

⁴⁷ From the Palestinian perspective, the Balfour Declaration changed the map of the world (especially the Middle East) considerably. It is considered “the cornerstone and basic pretext for the British mandate over Palestine” and it necessarily represented “the unholy marriage between Britain and Zionism.” (‘Adwān, Bar-On, and Naveh 2012, 9)

⁴⁸ Literally, the “catastrophe”.

distance of the one who still sees the Jewish State from the Diaspora, Klüger expresses her love for Israel, the idea (this time, secular or, rather, secularized), and the place (also the secular or secularized one): “Israel...Das ist nicht mein Land, das ist absolut nicht mein Land. Ich hätte nur ganz gerne, *es wäre mein Land geworden*” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 1:10:43, emphasis added) confesses Klüger. Israel, the place which was plucked from her hands as a young girl, the place which could have always been called home, but afterward never the place to go, never the place to make Aliyah: “As a young girl, I went to this emigration agency. They advised against going to Israel. They didn’t need me. They needed soldiers for the war. Then I went to university and married. Then I had children. It is...It was...They were the circumstances, or coincidences.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 1:01:40) Thus, Israel remains always that utopian place which could have happened but never did, perhaps if only to remain always a case of “what if”, perhaps if only to be kept a reverie. And while considering that hypothesis, that state of unreality to which always come back, Klüger walks out of the frame shot letting the audience appreciate Israel’s mountainous landscape: “Das ist eine andere Sache”, says Klüger while reflecting about the possibility of having had Israel as her *Heimat*. “Aus Israel wäre ich nicht wiedergekommen” (Klüger 2008, 19) expresses Klüger at the beginning of *unterwegs verloren*, while an interviewed Klüger years later concludes “Konjunktiv”, and at that hypothetical level must Israel always remain.

2.6.3. Other examples of *Jüdischkeit in Abwehr*

Sometimes in the most unexpected of places, one is to find cardinal cultural references within Judaism and an excellent portrayal of the Jewish experience. In an attempt to delve further into the *in Abwehr* Jewishness which Klüger reflects in her autobiographical works as well other cardinal questions regarding her relationship with Israel, that is, her decision to never make Aliyah and keep Israel as the eternal subjunctive, fiction will serve us, once again, as a suitable medium for a better understanding of the problematics which stem from the Jewish post-Shoah experience. The fictional work we will discuss is an extract⁴⁹ from the American TV series *Mad Men* (Hunter, Hamm, and Moss 2010), set in 1960’s New York. In episode 6 “Babylon” included in the first season,

⁴⁹ It can be freely accessed in the following link: <https://youtu.be/BBgyUXN1SY0>

the following scene is portrayed: surrounded by a 60's halo of glamour and expensive dresses with an impeccable photography and suggesting angles, the Casanova Don Draper (played by Jon Hamm), Creative Director of Manhattan advertising firm Sterling Cooper, approaches Rachel (played by Maggie Siff), the very wealthy Jewish head of a department store in Manhattan. In a scene full of sexual innuendos, several crucial aspects with regards to the Jewish diaspora, the Shoah, Zionism and the Jewish State are treated.

In this scene, Don is having a hard time trying to find a way to handle new Israeli clients and trivializes the impact of the Shoah experience and even the legitimacy of the State of Israel. After Rachel suggests that he get informed about the subject instead of approaching her in the first place, he responds "I have, it's all sentimental. World War II trivia, oranges, kids in blue and white hats." Rachel, who from the very beginning of the scene rejects the mere idea of her expertise on the matter based on her Jewish background rapidly becomes *jüdisch in Abwehr*. She responds: "Well, here's some more World War II trivia, they just arrested Adolf Eichmann in Argentina last week. Have you seen his résumé?" Don rethinks his strategy and tries to redirect the conversation to the question of tourists going to Israel, to what Rachel responds: "I don't know what I can say. I'm American, I'm really not very Jewish. If my mother hadn't died having me, I could have been Marilyn instead of Rachel and no one would know the difference." It is at this point in the conversation when Rachel realizes that Don's attitude towards Zionism and Israel comes—more than from an ideological rejection of Zionism or a fundamental despise of Jews—from his lack of awareness; the product, perhaps, of the unconscious influence from a certain political agenda, or perhaps from mere ignorance with respect to the Jewish experience—the experience of exile—and post-Shoah Jewish identity. Don naïvely asks: "what is the difference?" Rachel pauses, looks down, as if more than two thousand years of history are passing at a vertiginous speed in front of her eyes: "Look, Jews have lived in exile for a long time. First in Babylon, then all over the world...Shanghai, Brooklyn, and we've managed to make a go of it. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that we thrive at doing business with people who hate us. [...] A country for those people, as you call us, well, seems very important." Don, who starts empathizing with Rachel at a whole new level is intrigued to know a very recurrent question of gentiles and Jews alike, especially during these years when this scene takes place: "Why aren't you there?" "My life is here", Rachel responds, "My grandfather came from Russia, now I have a store on

Fifth Avenue. I'll visit, but I don't have to live there. Just... has to be. For me, it's more of an idea than a place."

The idealization of Zion to which Rachel adheres, draws from this nostalgia for Zion frequent in the Jewish tradition throughout the centuries, as we have already noted. Rachel, a successful businesswoman from New York, does not feel the need to move to another country, regardless of how important it is at a theoretical level (and thus producing psychological comfort) to know Jews populate the area. Similarly, Ruth Klüger's feelings towards Israel evince a particular way of caring about the Jewish State, which although does not materialize itself in an actual Aliyah, nor in a financial support for the Zionist cause, it, however, establishes itself as a psychological need, the existence of a *locus*, Israel—the forever *Eretz Yisrael*—metaphysically-charged beyond the usual religious content traditionally associated with it, that is, beyond the actual recognition of the *locus* as representative of a holy piece of land. As we have discussed at different moments along this dissertation, the secularization of such idea although not strictly structured within traditional religious semantics still represents a *locus* equally emotionally charged; a place which ultimately needs to exist, due to the metaphysical and psychological aspects associated with it. With the phrase "Zion just means Israel; it's a very old name", Rachel represents the transposition from the large metaphysical Zion to the small physical State of Israel, and it signals something extremely deep in her relationship with Jewishness, something which necessarily triggers her *in-Abwehr* character, for it goes to the core of her self-understanding as a Jewess. After the recognition of such ideal character of Israel, the *jüdisch in Abwehr* mood dissipates. Don touches her hand, "utopia", he utters. She gently smiles, but feels uneasy "maybe", she says, and takes her hand away from his. Don is married and at the same time clearly trying to seduce her. She continues: "Utopia, the Greeks had two meanings for it: εὐτόπος meaning the good place, and οὐτόπος, meaning the place that cannot be." Don looks down, as the reflection upon the utopian take on Israel rapidly becomes a reflection upon the nature of both character's relationship. While Israel becomes suddenly secondary, Don realizes that some things cannot be achieved, that some places—indeed—*cannot be*.

In this scene, crucial aspects of the relationship between Diaspora Jews and Israel are evinced while at the same time *double sens* are introduced to create the sexual tension between both characters. To understand Rachel, Don needs to understand her Jewishness,

her way to relate to (Jewish) history and Zionism, which by extension also means a particular way of relating to her Americanness. An important distinction must be introduced at this point, due to the different nature of the Jewish relationship to the United States, in comparison to Germany. We previously mentioned Goldstein's idea on the impossibility of reconciling Jewishness and Germanness in the context of 19th and early 20th century Germany. With regards to Goldstein's experience in the United States, he notes in the same aforementioned essay: "The bulk of American Jews are Jews and do not wish to be anything else. They know that this does not diminish their status as American citizens." The particular comfort of American Jewishness finds also its way through the scene signaling the lack, at first glance, of real identity problematics in the context of American Jewry. Later in the episode, the idea of Zion is revisited. This time, the camera shows us Don at a bar with her lover Midge; the band on stage starts playing Don McLean's song Babylon: "By the waters, the waters of Babylon / We lay down and wept, and wept, for thee Zion / We remember thee, remember thee, remember thee Zion." Psalm 137, a cardinal text in the configuration of the yearning for Zion induces Don into a reflexive mood: he stares at the stage while the word Zion triggers images of Rachel and her wife. The camera shows us Don one more time, this time, gazing into infinity. The good place and the place "that cannot be" collide. Has he, after all, understood?

2.7. Saul Friedländer

At its most initial stages, Friedländer's relationship with Zionism shares many similarities with that of Ruth Klüger's regarding several aspects: the awakening of both authors' Jewish and Zionist identities befalls during the Shoah years. From 1947 onwards, however, both authors' relationship with Zionism undergo very different paths. We hold that Klüger's idea of Zion remains, in the aftermath of the Shoah, highly influenced by the encounter with Zionism in Theresienstadt and therefore remains utopian for many years, until the 1960s, where this time a more American utopian view of Israel crystalizes the utopian (and socialist) society of Labor Zionism, especially after the film *Exodus*, which highly influenced the American perspective on Israel and signaled, as we discussed, the "love story" between the two countries. In the case of Friedländer, his take on Zionism and Israel will acquire a more proactive political tone, even diplomatic (in a way) in the first decades of the State. As Friedländer expresses in his first autobiographical work: "Dès l'automne de 1947, le sionisme devint ma principale préoccupation" (Friedländer 1978, 169). In *Quand vient le souvenir*, Friedländer explains how he came to *convert* into a Zionist, that is, his Zionist awakening. This awakening is strongly connected with his sudden knowledge of the Shoah, the assassination of his parents and a *sui generis*—conflicted and contradicting—Jewish identity which flourishes in this specific context; an epiphany takes place through which Friedländer embraces his Jewishness and articulates it via Zionist militancy.

Wanting to discuss Friedländer's second autobiographical work necessarily entails the discussion of many of Friedländer's essay works where the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is treated. In this second autobiographical work, *Where Memory Leads* (2016), we will see a progressive disenchantment with specific Israeli policies in the context of the disputed land of Palestine and the political and ideological direction to which the country starts leading after 1967; a direction which makes Friedländer progressively distance himself from his ideal Israel—a more secular, liberal and center-left-leaning country. The willingness to do a "Jewish reading" of this work, given the presence of such an open political tone included in it, has necessarily forced us to step into the convoluted realm of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this second work, Friedländer's criticism, originally very lukewarm, acquires a harsher tone as time passes and as specific policies regarding the Israeli settlements in the West Bank are tackled.

Thus, we will first analyze Friedländer's *conversion* to and *deconversion* from being a Zionist. Furthermore, we will insert this harsh political criticism within a broader analysis of the scholar's problematic relationship with nationalism and national identities; this must always keep in mind for it constitutes a particular way of identity crystallization, thus a particular *locus* from which to view the conflict itself. Friedländer, nonetheless, and this must also be especially highlighted, never adheres to the rhetoric or the ideas of anti-Zionism. At a certain point in Israeli history, given the disruption in what until this point was a shared *ethos*, Friedländer chooses to disengage himself from the Zionist enterprise and militancy which characterized the first decades of his life. Nevertheless, Friedländer will never question the basic postulates of Zionism which brought him to Israel in 1948, that is, he will never question the Jewish national aspiration in Palestine, the legitimacy of the State of Israel or Israel's *raison d'être*.

2.7.1. *Eretz Yisrael* before 1945

The lack of a strictly-speaking religious upbringing must consequently entail—from the point of view of the establishment of a Jewish aesthetic formation—a lack in the exposition and interiorization of the metaphysical aspects of *Eretz Yisrael* and the nostalgia usually ascribed to it by religious texts, rituals, and festivities. We have already noted that the classes with the rabbi at a very young age served Friedländer to develop a consciousness of Otherness, which at those early stages must not have necessarily been interiorized by any feeling of exogenism, of not belonging to his natal country or his natal continent. Friedländer recount of his early years in Europe and Israel do not hold the sense of psychological exile which, later in Friedländer's life, will become a constant, shaping his relationship with any country or movement. The yearning for Zion is not recalled by Friedländer as having been established in any way in years previous to his encounter with Zionism. In this aspect, Friedländer's experience differs from that of Ruth Klüger's, for which this nostalgia—or perhaps some tendency to its ever development—could have easily been part—even at the minimum of intertextual levels—of the aesthetic formation to which she begins to belong due to the performance of many Jewish rituals she experienced as a young girl. Those classes with the rabbi which Friedländer mentions in his autobiographical works could have contributed to the creation of such Jewish identity from a strict feeling of alterity, as the understanding of them as “une humiliation répétée”

suggests. These weekly sessions with the rabbi as well—given their *informative* rather than *performative* character—contribute less to the creation of the Jewish aesthetic formation as being constituted through an aesthetic experience. Nevertheless, Friedländer's life experience evinces how his Jewish identity—which in his case was especially dormant and confusing in comparison with Ruth Klüger's—experiences a flourishing right after the awareness of the Shoah and the contact with Zionist ideology. The early Jewish influences in Friedländer's life included the development of a consciousness of Otherness, first through the religious lessons which introduced such alterity; an alterity which will be later confirmed and reinforced by the Shoah experience, the need to escape from the Nazi persecution, and Friedländer's parents' death at Auschwitz.

Friedländer's first feeling of attachment to *Eretz Yisrael*, that is, the necessary development of a sense of exogenism—a sense of dissonance with the host country and culture—of potentially belonging to an external *Eretz* outside from “one's own”, was an idea initially, from a very young age, framed within a Zionist framework. This entails the particular secularized form of nostalgia from non-religious branches of Zionism, which were the branches of Zionism to which his family members were exposed, and to which he will later on adhere. Years before Friedländer was forced to separate from his family, in 1937 (eleven years before the establishment of the state), Friedländer's mother along with his two uncles decided to travel to Palestine. In no way, as he explains, this trip was as a kind of pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The trip to the soon-to-be Israel is remembered by Friedländer as a merely secular enterprise; furthermore, even produced by political curiosity on the part of Friedländer's uncle: “Rien, au niveau de la tradition religieuse certes, mais chez ma mère et ses frères, un intérêt, plus ou moins active, pour le sionisme.” (Friedländer 1978, 31)

1937 Palestine caused antagonistic views on Friedländer's family members: his uncle Hans experienced a disappointment, as a result of his personal idealization of the soon-to-be Israel, a land where Arabs and Jews could coexist regardless of their extremely different backgrounds: Middle-Eastern Muslims and some Christians on the one hand, and European Jews on the other hand; Jews among whom a natural tendency towards political Zionism was developing in the years previous to the Third Reich. Friedländer's memories of his family's trip to Palestine corroborate how Zionist ideas, especially the

ideas stemming from non-religious branches of Zionism (liberal Zionism and Socialist Zionism mainly) were flourishing among almost-assimilated Jews of the time. The result of the interiorization of these ideas necessarily entailed the development of a sense of exogenism. It is at these early stages of Zionism, however, when Friedländer recounts his first experience regarding a disenchantment with the Zionist movement which, years later, would, nevertheless, become the most important enterprise of his life: “Il [Hans] avait été frappé par l’absence de toute compréhension de la position arabe, par le militantisme des kibboutzim même, alors qu’il s’attendait à trouver une société tolstoïenne, égalitaire, idéaliste et pacifiste. Mon oncle Hans se détacha donc du sionisme et se tourna vers l’anthroposophie.” (Friedländer 1978, 32) Friedländer’s other uncle, on the other hand, did not reject the proto-Israeli society which was brewing at this time in Palestine.

Friedländer’s account of his family’s trip to Palestine and the mixed views which created in them corroborate, nevertheless, how a particularly very-assimilated part of European Jewry was considering Zionism. Religious or secular, Socialist or liberal, the interiorization of the possibility of considering an arid place in the Middle East—fundamentally constituted by desert—the potential home of a modern European Jew was a postulate rapidly accepted as plausible, and considerable, by many almost-assimilated European Jews of the time. We suggest that this is a crucial element to bear in mind when discussing the development and evolution of European Jewry regarding Zionism. It needs to be highlighted, and Friedländer’s account helps us formulating it, how Zionism was considered by those Jews who had become the less distinctive of all, that is, the most assimilated ones. Hans’ disenchantment with the idea of the Jewish state, as Friedländer remembers it, does not stem from a theoretical rejection of the basic postulates of Zionism. The consideration, acceptance, and interiorization of a specific state of exile occurred in the minds of almost-assimilated European Jews; thus, the self-acceptance of the Jew as Europe’s essential Other. Hans’ disenchantment with Zionism operates on the basis of a perhaps unbellicose tendency, or even a pacifist and mystical one, as his later becoming an anthroposophist suggests.

2.7.2. “*Une identité juive sans failles*”: encountering a Jewish aesthetic formation

It has been already noted how Friedländer’s Jewishness was constituted, during the Shoah years, by a strict consciousness of Otherness. Escaping from the Nazis and surviving at a Catholic institution not only contributed to but constituted the interiorization of such Otherness during those early years. This persecuted and eliminable Otherness which Friedländer interiorizes at such a young age cannot escape the understanding of Jewishness, at this first stage, as making him the potential victim of a potential extermination. This, perhaps the most negative way of interiorizing Otherness, comprises the basis of many Shoah-survivors, especially those who survived the Shoah as children. Nonetheless, at these early stages, Friedländer’s Otherness did not necessarily entail the interiorization of a necessary-exogenous character, that is, the interiorization of exogenism which would establish Jewishness, and its performative character, beyond the limits of European borders and European culture.

A more familiar setting would then be the context where Friedländer encounters another side of Jewishness, until then unknown; another way of relating to Jewish essential Otherness: that of the tradition, the family reunions and the home-based festivities, outside of the framework of persecution and death, even if—after the Shoah—necessarily marked by it. This new shape of Jewishness comes into Friedländer’s life via his new tutor after 1945, a Jewish tradesman, and the Eastern-European Jewish community to which he introduces a young Friedländer, a *communitas* with deep roots, speakers of Yiddish, fond and carriers of their traditions—in short, “la souche russo-polonaise qui, en définitive a fait Israël.” (Friedländer 1978, 151) This family represented the total opposite side of the Ashkenazi spectrum; Friedländer’s family was a very assimilated bourgeois one, respected no Jewish traditions, observed no Jewish festivities, spoke German (the language of *Hochkultur*) while living in the Czech Republic. Friedländer’s tutor’s family exemplified the Eastern-European Ashkenazi Jewish family *par excellence*: “Face au raffinement et à la culture, cette vitalité fruste et quelque peu primitive ; face à un souci de distance, aux émotions retenues, à la froideur apparente dont j’ai parlé, une exubérance bruyante, très vite portée aux extrêmes ; face à l’absence quasi totale de judéité é aussi, une atmosphère saturée d’émotions, de références, de coutume et de manières juifs.” (Friedländer 1978, 152) It is in this context of familiar Jewishness, carrying the reminiscences of the ghetto life, full of *pathos* and *chutzpah*,

where Friedländer is exposed to “une identité juive sans failles”, but it is not also the encounter with a standardized Jewishness of non-assimilated Jews. In this context of Eastern European Jewishness, Friedländer is introduced to the political idea which would change the whole course of his life: Zionism. Following the Jewish tradition of rabbinical debate, Friedländer is suddenly exposed to long conversations (in Yiddish) about Zionism in the context of his tutor’s home.

2.7.3. Friedländer’s *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* awakening

Friedländer’s first contact with Zionism was highly influenced by the so-called *השבת השחורה*, more mundanely called by the British as Operation Agatha, the largest British operation against the Yishuv during the period of the British Mandate of Palestine in 1946, thus ignoring the recommendation of an Anglo-American commission to let Jewish refugees, Shoah survivors, who were still somehow managing to survive in European camps (mainly German and Austrian), into Palestine. The Irgun, Menachem Begin’s paramilitary organization, bombed King David Hotel, as it has been noted, the most “sensitive, symbolic, and operational target” (Golani 2013, 16) there could have been. As Friedländer explains, thousands of Jews at this time decided to risk their lives and head for Palestine in old ships provided by another Jewish paramilitary organization, the Haganah: “De semaine en semaine, de mois en mois, nous vécûmes toutes les péripéties de ce combat : les navires illégaux arrivaient en vue des côtes d’Eretz-Israël.” (Friedländer 1978, 161) Friedländer’s awakening to Zionism is strongly marked by these events: Shoah survivors trying to migrate to Palestine while the Royal Navy would send them instead back to European ports. As David Engel notes, “between April 1945 and January 1948, 63 ships carrying over 70,000 would-be immigrants tried to land in Palestine without British authorization. Only about 5,000 Jews made it through the British blockade; of those who were caught, some 52,000 were deported to detention camps in Cyprus.” (Engel 2009, 127) The case of the iconic ship Exodus 1947 had a great impact and attracted a great deal of media attention, as the passengers were firstly sent to France, and ultimately to Germany, being placed in refugee camps there; too much a resemblance from the previous camps out of which they had previously escaped. Public opinion was rapidly astonished by “the sight of Jewish Holocaust survivors being forcibly turned away from their ancestral homeland and held behind barbed wire under armed guard.” (Engel

2009, 127) Friedländer sadly recalls this period of time as follows: “Le portes de la Palestine restaient fermées ; un drame immense se déroulait sous nos yeux.” (Friedländer 1978, 161)

After the Balfour Declaration in 1917, when the British government “view[ed] with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”, no other president had ever made a similar declaration. Such was the international impact of the Exodus crisis, that in the fall of 1946, American President Truman lent public support to the Zionist cause by demanding that 100,000 Jewish refugees be let into Palestine and by apparently holding a favorable view of a partition solution (Golani 2013, 93): “Un État juif...” repeats Friedländer in his first autobiographical work, as if lost in reverie. Friedländer, moreover, explains how his image of *Eretz Yisrael* before making Aliyah was a sort of amalgamation between the information he received from his mother and uncles’ trip to Palestine, therefore mainly transplanted memories of Haifa and Tel Aviv: “maisons très blanches et mer très bleue des cartes postales envoyées par ma mère” (Friedländer 1978, 161) and the images which were evoked by the Jewish festivities to which a teenage Friedländer was exposed at his guardian’s house, images which were highly influenced by religion and Zionism and, therefore, necessarily bringing along the metaphysical dimension contained in the yearning for *Eretz Yisrael*. Friedländer’s Zionist awakening in political terms, nevertheless, befell at a summer camp for young Zionists in France near the Lac de Chalain and it can be said to signify for him the departure from Judaism to Zionism at these early stages in the development of Zionism, if we understand such departure as strictly regarding religious observance. Friedländer’s “Judaism” at this time, that is, his way of performing his adherence to the Jewish people in these convoluted years, became Zionism.

The essentialist postulates which at the time became the only logical way to proceed in the aftermath of the Shoah, are recounted by an autobiographical Friedländer as already provoking the realization of “une fissure interne”, unable to relate to his peers at a deep level: the Yiddish and Hebrew songs of the young Zionists revealed his lack of a real Jewish background as well as, perhaps, his posterior impossibility of fully being able to adhere to the nationalist—necessarily collectivist—enterprise which constituted Jewish nationalism. By this time maybe slightly disgruntled by the fact that his way of relating to Zionism lacked that of his peers, Friedländer comes to see his conversion to

Zionism as the consequence of simple logic: “Je ne devins pas sioniste par une reprise de contact avec des couches émotionnelles enfouies, mais par suite d’un argument, un argument simple qui, à cette époque-là, me parut décisif néanmoins.” (Friedländer 1978, 163) The main argument included in this reflection echoes Klüger’s when recounting her embrace of Zionism in Theresienstadt: “Der Zionismus durchtränkte unser Denken [...], nicht etwa weil wir nichts anderes hörten, sondern weil er das Sinnvollste war, dasjenige, das einen Ausweg versprach.” (Klüger 1992, 89) and as she adds in *Still Alive*: “it simply made sense.” (Klüger 2001a, 76)

This interiorization of Zionism’s basic postulate—that the real home of a Jew is in the Middle East: in the Land of Israel—is symptomatic of an interiorization of a feeling of exogenism, perhaps externally suggested, but internally corroborated⁵⁰. This was the product of an awareness of rejectability, an easily-corroborable alterity, and—furthermore—the interiorization of an oriental character, that which haunted assimilationists, as well as the pioneers of the Reform movement. This oriental character, ultimately interiorized by all branches of Zionism, established the European Jew beyond the limits of European culture, perhaps to some, a clear fact which indeed shapes the ontological configuration of Jewishness, but a fact which, at some points in history, was highly discussed and even challenged.

After the interiorization of the exogenous character of Jewishness, the expected-rejectability of the Jewish alterity and, what we will call, *der orientalische Trieb* (established as the state produced by the homeostatic disturbance of European Jewry), reverting the passivity which was commonly held as characteristic of the victims of the Shoah became a cardinal way of inspiring young Zionists in the aftermath of the Shoah. The idea of “never again” constituted the basic axiom, the essential teaching of Zionist youth movements throughout Europe. Consequently, a defensive—in *Abwehr*—attitude was encouraged. This was necessarily translated into a physical response to physical or

⁵⁰ The interiorization of a feeling of exogenism is especially salient in the context of almost-assimilated European Jewry. Nonetheless, as some historians argue, the feeling of exogenism which is usually implied to come from an anti-Semitic stance bespeaks a much complex bidirectional flux, that is, a mutually-imposed Otherness is discernable throughout European Jewish history, and this can be seen in anti-Semitic postulates supported by many non-Jewish personalities throughout European history as well as through the Jewish rejection of strict assimilation.

psychological violence and had an immediate impact on a young Saul Friedländer. Empowered by Zionist rhetoric, Friedländer decides to rebel against his bullies at school and counterattack, evincing the *arche* of the converted Zionist which Friedländer becomes:

Comme je ne ressemblais vraiment pas aux gars du pays, je fus choisi, tout naturellement, comme cible d'un systématique « bizutage » [...] *Ne fallait-il pas abandonner notre rôle de victimes, ne fallait-il pas répondre à la violence par la force, même si l'État juif n'était encore qu'un rêve ?* Sans hésitation aucune, j'identifiai ma situation personnelle à celle de la communauté : j'étais prêt à affronter nos ennemis, les armes à la main ! Ainsi fut fait. Le lendemain soir, dès que le surveillant éteignit les lumières, je fixai une pierre préparée d'avance, au bout de ma ceinture et lorsque l'ennemi approcha de mon lit en rampant, je frappai de toutes mes forces. (Friedländer 1978, 164, emphasis added)

2.7.4. “*Un rêve de communion et de communauté*”: leaving for *Eretz Yisrael*

During the years between 1945 and 1948, many Zionist organizations across Europe sent dozens of ships to Israel. Many of them suffered the blockade of the British and only 5,000 Jews made it to Palestine. (Engel 2009, 127) Saul Friedländer was one of these 5,000 Jews who arrived safe and sound to the Israeli shore days after the proclamation of the creation of the State of Israel, in 1948, during the First Arab-Israeli War. After an initial refusal by the Labor Zionist youth movement Habonim Dror due to Friedländer's age (he was only 15 years old), Friedländer modified his ID birth date and joined the Revisionist youth movement Bethar. This rapid change of youth movements made by Friedländer is exemplary of how the Zionist cause permeated his whole life during his teenage years⁵¹. Friedländer explains that, during these years, both communism

⁵¹ Labor and Revisionist Zionism held totally different strategies with regards to the future of the Jewish state in terms of ideology. Both branches of Zionism supported the idea that the creation of the Jewish State could not only be achieved through diplomatic efforts, as Theodor Herzl or Chaim Weizmann defended. Both Labor and Revisionist Zionism mistrusted, to a certain extent, powerful nations like Great Britain or the Ottoman Empire; Revisionists would, however, also extend this mistrust to Arabs in general and,

and Zionism appealed to him; being for him the first one a natural option for any young man at the time as well as a logical consequence of his fervent Zionist views during those teenage years: “Au communisme, je vins naturellement ou presque—car pouvait-on être jeune sans être communiste à cette époque-là? Mes convictions sionistes sortaient renforcées de ce changement : en 1947, les communistes appelaient à la création d’un État juif en Palestine.” (Friedländer 1978, 167) Nevertheless, after being rejected by the Habonims, Friedländer does not hesitate to take a chance and join Bethar. What could be considered a mere strategic move in order to get to Israel, might perhaps be symptomatic of a progressive disenchantment with communism: “Je commençai à m’écloigner du communisme. Restait *le sionisme*. J’en fis, à cette époque, *la grande affaire de ma vie*.” (Friedländer 1978, 168, emphasis added) Although not representative of an adherence to Revisionist Zionism, this rapid change could be read as representative of the development of more lukewarm attitudes on the part of Friedländer towards more right-wing branches of Zionism.

Following the conversion rhetoric which characterizes Friedländer’s awakening to Zionism, a 15-year-old Friedländer (with a fake ID) embarks on the Bethar/Irgun ship *Altalena* (*nom de plume* of Jabotinsky) to fight in new-established Israel. Leaving for *Eretz Yisrael* being a way to fight his own personal despair:

Je commençais alors à comprendre de manière précise ce qu’auparavant je n’avais fait que passivement ressentir : *j’étais seul*. On me disait parfois que j’avais l’air triste. Je n’étais pas vraiment triste, mais il m’arrivait de retomber dans une sorte de mélancolie et, bien qu’en apparence mes plans d’avenir fussent clairs, il m’arrivait de plus en plus souvent, au fur et à mesure que j’approchais du baccalauréat, de me demander ce qu’il adviendrait de moi. Partir en « Eretz », c’était joindre mon destin personnel à un sort commun, *c’était aussi un rêve de*

especially the Arabs of Palestine. Although sharing the same reflection, their political strategies differed from one another considerably. Labor Zionism would claim that only through a progressive Jewish proletariat could Israel be created. Revisionist Zionism was originally developed by Ze’ev Jabotinsky, a much more militaristic leader than many other supporters of liberal Zionism. Revisionist Zionism claimed (and still does) that a Jewish state must be established on both banks of the Jordan: including Transjordan. This constituted a crucial difference between both movements.

communion et de communauté, c'était dissoudre mes anxiétés particulières dans l'élan d'un groupe. (Friedländer 1978, 178, emphasis added)

Friedländer concludes in the last pages of his first autobiographical work including the letter he sent to his godparents before leaving for Israel. A 15-year-old Friedländer already converted into a Zionist expresses a *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* character resulting from the exposition to the Zionist discourse. Ready to leave behind the Catholic French community which protected him from being killed by the Nazis and embrace, instead, a new Jewish identity; not the kind which he had experienced before, that is, not secluded to religious practice, nor that which emanates from old Yiddish songs or Ashkenazi festivities and recipes, but instead the new Israeli one, a Zionist identity, aware of the problematic subsistence in the new-born state and thus, *in constant need for self-defense*. The break from traditionally-regarded Diaspora life to Zionism is not then problematic for a never-fully-settled, never-fully-attached young and orphan Friedländer for whom Catholicism served as a strategic way of fighting despair, but a faith which, nevertheless, did not prove to be embraceable enough, and ultimately irreconcilable with his flourishing Jewish identity when exposed to the reality of the Shoah and the logical postulates of the Zionist movement.

Friedländer's letter to his godparents evinces the conversion from a diasporic and passive Jewishness to a necessarily nationalistic and militaristic one; and it is paradigmatic of early Zionism, especially among young Jews of the time. Being Jewish is then portrayed by Friedländer as synonymous to being a Zionist, as—within this paradigm—only in a proud way can one come to be a Jew: “les derniers événements ont réveillé dans mon âme un sentiment qui y dormait depuis longtemps, celui que j'étais juif. Et voilà ce que je veux prouver en partant combattre aux côtés de tous les juifs qui meurent en Palestine...” (Friedländer 1978, 181) Uncertainty, however, was the biggest concern of this group of Zionists fighting in the First Arab-Israeli War to which Friedländer was heading to, but uncertainty, as he explains, has always characterized the Jewish experience, a *modus vivendi* which prevented Friedländer from hesitating: “Elle [l'incertitude] a toujours représenté notre manière d'être au monde et, à bien des égards, elle a, pour le meilleur pour le pire, fait de nous ce que nous sommes.” (Friedländer 1978, 185)

A Shoah-survivor—a Zionist—reads Jewish history in the only possible way in the period right after the Shoah: a series of catastrophes, perhaps with brief periods of tranquility, but which ultimately led to the *Endlösung*. Through this reading of Jewish history, Friedländer—full of the irresistible Zionist *pathos* which totalized every aspect of his life—embarks on an Irgun ship to Israel, fully convinced of the Zionist cause, and ready to fight and die for it. The fact that never a word about the Arab population of Palestine is mentioned, nor their national aspiration, was a necessary characteristic of this wave of Zionists for whom the Arab population had proved to be a threat for the new-established Israel. As we will see later, this original attitude of Friedländer towards the Arabs of Palestine suffers a considerable modification in the following decades; but, at the time of leaving for Israel, the State is portrayed by Friedländer as the only possible solution to put an end to despair, hatred, and annihilation for centuries: “Parfois, quand je pense à notre histoire, non pas celle de ces dernières années, mais à son cours tout entier, je vois se dessiner un perpétuel va-et-vient, une recherche de l’enracinement, de la normalisation et de la sécurité, toujours remise en cause, à travers les siècles, et je me dis que l’État juif aussi n’est peut-être qu’une étape sur la voie d’un peuple venu à symboliser, en sa particulière destinée, la quête incessante, toujours hésitante et toujours recommencée, de tout l’Humanité.” (Friedländer 1978, 186) Friedländer’s take on Zionism and Israel echo his own father’s. In a letter to a friend when staying temporarily in Paris (before leaving young Friedländer in the Catholic boarding school in Montluçon where he was baptized) Friedländer’s father explains in a state of despair the only options Jews at the time were given and his lack of resignation: “Je ne veux plus recommencer la même comédie dans un autre État ou dans un autre pays et j’aime mieux rester un « schnorrer⁵² » toute ma vie ou faire la guerre avec les Arabes.” (Friedländer 1978, 47) Rather than a disregard of the Arab cause, “faire la guerre avec les Arabes” is portrayed as a necessary step in the way for a livable existence.

The narrative style in *Quand vient le souvenir* is a fragmented one. Friedländer writes his first autobiographical work in 1977 jumping back and forth in time, but in terms of his relationship with Zionism, we can see the narration of a conversion, that is, a special focus on the first stage of his relationship with Zionism is portrayed. In *Quand vient le souvenir*, Friedländer mainly focuses on his experience encountering Zionism and it

⁵² Transliteration from Yiddish שְׁנאָרער, and this from German *Schnorrer*: a beggar or a freeloader.

follows a very similar pattern to the conversion narrations which we introduced in chapter one: including a moment of epiphany (in his case: the discovery, in front of an image of Christ on the Cross, of the reality of the Shoah and his parents' death at Auschwitz), one's acceptance of the new identity within the new *communitas* (taking part in youth organizations) and giving oneself body and soul to the cause (illegally migrating to Palestine on an Irgun ship). This last step was never taken by Ruth Klüger. This conversion is this time not a strictly-speaking religious one, as in the case of Saint Augustine or John Bunyan. However, as we saw in chapter one, there is always some religious aspect which any form of secular (or rather secularized) conversion brings along. Coming "back" to Zion and making Aliyah, although an idea extremely secularized by some initial branches of Zionism, cannot escape an *arche* strictly constructed at a religious level, an ethnic-religious level, but unarguably constituting the metaphysical aspect of *Eretz Yisrael* through the symbolic and mythical aspects of religious rhetoric. Friedlander's conversion is, moreover, not triggered by a new deity, Nature, as in the cause of Rousseau or Wordsworth, although this is not an idea not at all foreign to Zionism⁵³. It can be argued that Friedländer's conversion experience resembles Stuart Mill's kind, that is, an intellectual epiphany, as Friedländer comes to Zionism "par suite d'un argument".

As we have previously noted in chapter one, drawing mainly from Jungian psychoanalysis, we understand the path from religion to secularism as a psychological continuum, where the same religious aspiration operates. Nonetheless, we want to emphasize that Friedländer's conversion into a Zionist is, in his own words, not characteristic of any religious experience, like the ones he had previously experienced. As he explains in *Where Memory Leads*, the only religious experience he experiences during his teenage years took place within the context of Catholicism. Leaving a Catholic religious *communitas* and giving himself completely to Zionism and Israel, his new—per-him-understood secular—*communitas*, proved to be, however a more fulfilling enterprise than the religious community he was leaving: "an even more compelling one,

⁵³ We can see a mystical rhetoric in connection to nature in some Zionist authors, especially in Aaron David Gordon (1856-1922), "the heterodox Hasidic master of the Labor-Zionist movement." (Hertzberg 1997, 371) Gordon believed that only through physical labor and a life with nature in *Eretz Yisrael*, Jews would become whole again.

to which I came irresistibly drawn. I embraced the idea of Israel and the dream of total acceptance.” (Friedländer 2016, 10) And in contrast with the Protestant autobiographers who feared a loss of identity and individuality as a consequence of entering the religious *communitas*, Friedländer does not hesitate and decides to dissolve and assimilate into a collective *telos*, into the collective enterprise of Jewish self-affirmation, that is, into a welcoming and totalizing Zionist *communitas*, where Otherness no longer entailed exogenism but, instead, a necessary adherence to the new Essence.

2.7.5. After *Aliyah*

After making *Aliyah* in 1948, Israel did not remain Friedländer’s final destination. This should especially be considered when discussing Friedländer’s diasporistic tendency, a dynamic about which he himself wonders in his own works. Only five years after disembarking on the shore of Kfar Vitkin (situated on the Mediterranean coast between Haifa and Tel Aviv), Friedländer decided to go back to France and study Relations Internationales at the Paris Institute of Political Studies. This is not a one-time event in the life of Friedländer, for whom life in Israel has always been something simultaneously permanent and temporal: always keeping a residence and a connection in Israel as well as keeping university positions abroad. Years after making *Aliyah*, in 1958, following a disenchantment with the Graduate Studies program in Near-Eastern Studies at Harvard University, Friedländer realizes that even if an Israeli –thus a Middle-Eastern– he had “no compelling interest in learning Arabic, in the history of Islamic civilization, in village life in Anatolia and all that went with it.” (Friedländer 2016, 56) From a self-recognized Eurocentric interest, Friedländer would occupy different jobs in the subsequent years, which, in one way or another, would have a somehow Zionist diplomatic goal: working with Nahum Goldman (1958-1960), the founder and at-the-time president of the World Jewish Congress and the Zionist Organization, and working at the Office of Israeli Vice Minister of Defense from 1960-1961. During this period, no criticism or even reflection upon the basis of the Zionist cause is to be found in Friedländer’s thought; if anything, the personal realization that although *donné corps et âme* to Zionism, a possible way out, an emergency exit, was always needed. Rather than understanding this as an already-flourishing dissension with Zionism, we argue that this evinces a psychological way, very characteristic of Saul Friedländer, of coping with a

polymorphous and fragmented identity which might require a constant need for a feeling of exile; something that could easily be branded as Diasporism.

2.7.6. Before the Six-Day War:

During a first stage (1948-1967), Friedländer's political views, along with many new Israelis and Diaspora Jews, were entirely supportive of the new state. During these years shortly after the Shoah, and immediately after the 1948 War, Israel finds itself in control of twenty percent more of the land included in the UN Partition Plan for Palestine. Even so, Israel's future as a world power was everything but discernable. The small new country, still trying to gather as much international support as possible, feared the hostility of its Arab neighbors, as well as demographic issues which although partially alleviated after the war, still meant a serious threat in terms of political legitimacy and power of the new-born state. Friedländer recounts his lack of concern with what was going to become the new diasporic Other and the consequences of the 1948 War: Israel's existence was in danger and so the moral dilemmas which we see in a later Friedländer regarding the Palestinian question are not to be found in Friedländer's first autobiographical work. "Very few Israelis admitted in those years—and for several decades—that in quite a number of cases, it was the Israeli army that forced the Arabs to leave, probably on orders from the top: tens of thousands of Palestinians were the victims of a brutal military expulsion. During the following years, many Arab villages in the country were forcibly evacuated, often destroyed and when reoccupied by Jewish inhabitants, they received Hebrew names." (Friedländer 2016, 61)

In this first stage, more precisely in 1961, Friedländer decides to resume his education and applies for Grad School at the University of Geneva. This point in Friedländer's life indicates the beginning of an academic career and his eventual role as a public intellectual. Even if his field of research was Holocaust Studies (or perhaps because of it) Friedländer became engaged with politics, and especially the politics of Israel, never as a political actor, but always from an intellectual perspective: never really critical in this first stage and always supportive of the state.

2.7.7. 1967: The beginning of a *deconversion*

It is hardly ever disputed among scholars that 1967 marked a before and an after in the history of Zionism and Israel. Earlier that year, Nasser Gamal Abdel Nasser, the then President of Egypt told a press conference that “the Arab people [was] firmly resolved to wipe Israel off the face of the earth” (Nasser in Tessler 1994, 393), and the director of the Voice of the Arabs in Cairo, Ahmed Said, said on the Damascus Radio a month before the war: “Every ... Arab has been living for the past 19 years on one hope— ... to see the day Israel is liquidated.” (Said in B. Morris 2001, 310) What could have meant, once again, another attempt to annihilate the Jewish people, this time in their new-born state and with the Shoah wounds still fresh, resulted in a flabbergasting victory of Israel. As Benny Morris notes, the motivation factor played a crucial role in the outcome of the Six Day War: “The Egyptian, Syrian, or Jordanian soldier may have been filled with hatred, or at least animosity, toward the usurping Israeli—but he failed to regard the battle with Israel as a war for very survival. The Israeli believed he was fighting for his life, his family, and his home.” (B. Morris 2001, 311) As a consequence, an important territorial expansion of the 1948 borders took place: this time the minuscule country tripled its size to include not only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. As Friedländer notes, “some Israelis were already hearing the footsteps of the Messiah” (Friedländer 2016, 177), and Morris corroborates: “A messianic, expansionist wind swept over the country. Religious folk spoke of a ‘miracle’ and of ‘salvation’; the ancient lands of Israel had been restored to God’s people.” (B. Morris 2001, 329) The feelings of religious Jews after the Six-Day War can be perfectly summarized in Hagi Ben-Artzi’s *The Six-Day War Scroll* (מגילת ששת הימים)⁵⁴: “In the entire 4,000 years of Jewish history, there has never been a war in which the Hand of God has been as evident and obvious as in this one.” (2013 בן-ארצי, XVI)

Friedländer acknowledges how after the victory of 1967, a palpable increase of nationalist feelings among Israelis befell, and also a logical, yet completely unknown feeling for Jews, a “new sense of power, almost of superpower.” (Friedländer 2016, 118) This feeling of superpower was not only shared within Israelis, as Waxman notes, “the

⁵⁴ Hagi Ben-Artzi’s publication differs significantly from many other historical accounts on the Six-Day War, given the fact that it provides a messianic reading of the war and it is written in the form of a *Megillah*.

Six-Day War was a quasi-religious experience for many Jews, both in Israel and the Diaspora” (Waxman in Samuel 2017) and Morris corroborates: “The May crisis and the war also generated a surge of unity and self-confidence among the world’s Jews; it even gave rise to a modest wave of immigration to Israel from western Jewish communities.” (B. Morris 2001, 329) Friedländer, a non-observant Jew who, although a faithful supporter of Israel, refuses to adhere to excessive nationalistic elations, expresses in his second autobiographical work that although not really keen on the “noise” produced by the exhilaration which followed the victory “in my heart of hearts, I shared the euphoria” (Friedländer 2016, 121); for as Morris notes: “Religious folk spoke of a ‘miracle’... *Secular individuals were also swept up.*” (B. Morris 2001, 329, emphasis added)

2.7.8. *Hubris*: the limits of self-affirmation

As it is usually noted by historians, 1967 propagated a messianic fervor and a religious resurgence in a movement whose modern political inception was structured in secular terms. For some religious Jews, Zionism had previously meant taking control of Jewish history and leaving behind a God-fearing role which characterized Diaspora religiosity⁵⁵. There are also the cases of philosophers and theologians, like Fackenheim, who experienced 1967 as a turning point, given that the scenario of post-1967 provided a breeding ground which facilitated a theo-political approach to the conflict. While for many authors and intellectuals the Six Day War signaled the crystallization of Jewish self-affirmation, for authors like Friedländer, the consequences of such victory had a clear impact on a kind of behavior beyond self-affirmation: an overgrown feeling of power which easily appeased the development of *hubris* towards the different types of Others which such desperate need for self-affirmation necessarily configured. The new Other the Six Day War created would not only be the Other within the conflict, but also the Other regarding the general self-affirming trend. According to Friedländer, the rejection of this new Other would not only be towards the one not willing to adhere to the new powerful Essence, but anyone who, by extension, could easily be phagocytized into any of other categories of alterity. In this sense, we find of special interest Friedländer’s

⁵⁵ This understanding of Zionism as contrary to the will of God is still held by some anti-Zionist religious groups like Neturei Karta or Satmar Hasidim.

reflections upon the transposition of a weaker alterity (usually, within the Zionist paradigm, reserved for Diaspora Jews) to not only Arabs but *Mizrahim* as well. This particular reading might bespeak the dynamics of over-self-affirmation and it might serve as a possible vector of influence to consider in the study of the dynamics between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi/Sephardi Jews in Israel ever since:

While a general sense of superiority in regard to the Arabs became widely shared after 1967, it was not only, in my opinion, the cumulative effect of the victories of 1948, 1956, and 1967 but mainly the deeper reaction of a people that had suffered from a long history of humiliations weakness, and—just a few years earlier—an attempt at total extermination. This specific Israeli pathology stemmed at first from Diaspora history and from the Zionist reaction to it: “You, the Diaspora Jews, went like sheep to slaughter; we the proud youth of Eretz Israel, will show you what self-defense and strength mean.” Now that stereotype of European Diaspora Jew had yielded, as symbol of inferiority to that of the Oriental Jew, often identified with the indistinct mass of “Arabs.” (Friedländer 2016, 148)

Friedländer analyzes, what he considers, Israeli hubris after 1967 as being the product not only of a series of political victories but also as the product of the Shoah itself. Friedländer understands this as an overgrown extension of this new way of understanding Jewishness—and, in this case, also Judaism—under the umbrella of the Zionist paradigm, that is, under a self-defensive and self-affirming performance of Jewishness. The great departure with the original secular and political Zionism resides, as Dox Waxman notes, in the birth of a messianic take on Israel’s victories, which led to a widespread religious Zionism, nowadays a very present branch of Zionism in Israeli politics. Nonetheless, the effect that The Six Day War had on Diaspora Jews, especially on American Jews, was, as some scholars choose to brand it: “Israelotry... The new civil religion of American Jewry”, as Daniel Elazar put it. Nevertheless, this seemingly-pejorative way in which some scholars choose to categorize the meaning of Israel for Diaspora Jews can be seen in authors like Ruth Klüger, as we have already noted. In Klüger’s case, rather than

idolatry, Israel stands as an idea, more than a *locus*; a utopia perhaps but also, a psychological need for many Diaspora Jews and, in the case of Klüger, a Shoah-survivor.

This new Israeli attitude forged after 1967 combines, then, a more powerful messianic approach to Israel's victories and Israel's fate and the exaltation of a hyper-confident attitude, which is not only the product of a series of victories but also a psychological way of resurging from the ashes of the Shoah in the most Zionist way. This demeaning way of relating to Diaspora Jews for being representative of an inferior Jewishness shifted necessarily, according to Friedländer, to personify Arabs and Oriental Jews. Finally, while, progressively, a religious take on Israel's fate originated in Israel, as Waxman notes, a kind of secular adoration directed to Israel emerged in America. The sacred place, secularized by some of the most influencing branches of early Zionism, now rediscovered sacred in new and broader terms amalgamates after 1967 both sacred and secular characteristics whose ultimately sacred or secular character depends on the own viewer's way of articulating its vision of Israel. Religious and/or secular, messianic and/or political, Israel starts to become in 1967 an unstoppable power, a power defended by the Tsahal and, thence, the final militaristic character of post-1967 Israel. Friedländer, along with many scholars, locates in 1967 the beginning of the new face of Zionism, that which is usually regarded as representative of Zionist ideology nowadays in many circles, personified in religious settlers in the West Bank. According to Friedländer, this messianic character, always latent in Jewish history, simply finds a rearticulation in the context of post-1967 Zionism.

The Six-Day War has turned into a crucial landmark in the history of Israel; it became the end of an epoch and the beginning of a fateful evolution, the outcome of which cannot yet be surmised [...]. The victory of those days activated a deep, preexisting impulse within Jewish history, albeit shared only by a small minority at first: closure to the surrounding world and the nurturing of a fanatical, messianic identity, whether in strictly religious terms or in its extreme nationalist equivalent after the rise of Zionism. (Friedländer 2016, 122)

Due to the failure of diplomatic negotiations in the aftermath of 1967, Israel kept control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This is regarded by many historians nowadays one of the main dimensions of the conflict; according to some of them, the biggest obstacle for peace in the region; an idea to which Friedländer adheres. Although at first supportive of Israeli control of parts of the West Bank, Friedländer wonders “How didn’t I perceive that notwithstanding the economic benefits enjoyed by many Palestinians (the term was not yet commonly used), humiliation was lurking and that it was just a matter of time for humiliation to turn into a thirst for revenge, a need to inflict pain on the occupier by any available means?” (2016, 122)

2.7.9. Discrepancies and dialogue

Friedlander’s attitude, although somehow reticent to the nationalist articulation of the Six-Day War victory, can be branded as lukewarm during the immediate subsequent years. Friedländer does hold the view that pre-1967 borders were impossible to defend and that the destruction of the Egyptian air force was necessary. His first discrepancies with post-1967 Israeli politics, nevertheless, pivoted around two ideas: the evolution regarding the settlement policies in the occupied territories and, what he considers, the lack of a real initiative for peace. According to him, several political characters in the years following 1967 contributed (due to a mere strategical political interest or a latent collaboration to the cause) to the expansion of the settlements: Levi Eshkol, “a Menshevik of sorts” and Golda Meir, “a stone-hard Bolshevik”:

In the fall of 1967, Eshkol accepted the settling of Gush Etzion, south of Jerusalem, on the site of the former Kibbutz Kfar Etzion, destroyed by the Jordanian army during the 1948 war; more precisely put, Eshkol did not oppose the national religious initiative, given that the location of the new settlement (camouflaged at first as a military outpost) was included in the outline of new defensible borders, later known as the Allon Plan (named after the vice prime minister Yigal Allon, who had authored it), a *sine qua non* condition for any peace agreement. (Friedländer 2016, 143)

In the years following the aftermath of the Six-Day War, Friedländer accepted and supported the main logic regarding the partition of the West Bank as portrayed in the Allon Plan. Although being a supporter of the initial stages of the occupation, Friedländer's account of the settling of Gush Etzion lets us discern a criticism on what could have been the first political use of settlers to safeguard a Jewish presence on these strategic spots. More than the occupation per se, Friedländer points out that Eshkol's concession to the aspirations of national religious initiatives—although perhaps strategically used—was only the beginning of large wave of religious settlers. Apart from this critical perspective on Eshkol's move regarding the settling of Gush Etzion, Friedländer's first real discrepancy with Israeli policies takes place under Golda Meir, as Friedländer calls her "our Iron Lady": "The Ukrainian-born, Milwaukee-raised, chain-smoking, first-generation leader of the new state was a formidable presence, 'the only man in the cabinet' [David Ben-Gurion's], as the quip went. She had the basic immutable belief of those early Zionist political figures in the Jews' exclusive historic rights to a state in Palestine, and she was ready to fight for those rights with a fierce determination that she hammered in with a heavy American accent." (Friedländer 2016, 147)

The reason for Friedländer's discrepancy with Golda Meir resided in a very recurrent aspect of Golda Meir's political discourse: rather than the negation of the existence of a Palestinian people (as it is usually regarded as, also by Friedländer), a resistance from the semantical evolution that the terms "Palestinian" and "Palestine" were undertaking, especially after 1967. In a famous interview broadcasted by the British channel Thames TV in 1970⁵⁶, Golda Meir reflects upon the Palestinian identity as follows:

Where were Palestinians born? What was all this area before WWI? When Britain got the mandate over Palestine, what was Palestine? Palestine was then the land between the Mediterranean and the Iraqi border. East and West Bank was Palestine. *I'm a Palestinian*. From 21 until 48, I carried a Palestinian passport. There was no such thing in this area as Jews and Arabs and Palestinians. There

⁵⁶ This interview is available on Thames TV YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/w3FGvAMvYpc>

were Jews and Arabs. (“Israel - Prime Minister Interview - Golda Meir” 1970, sec. 18:42-19:22, emphasis added)

Friedländer, as the diplomatic scholar that he was during these years, was not granted by Golda Meir the permission to attend a meeting in the United States with a Palestinian. Years later, after this first discrepancy with Golda Meir and Israeli politics in general, Friedländer would start to dialogue in several occasions and in different formats with Arabs and Palestinians in an attempt to establish alternative dynamics to the ones towards which the conflict was heading.

2.7.10. Anti-Zionism, *Linksfaschismus*, and the one-state solution

Friedländer’s account of post-1967 Europe is crucial to understand the evolution of contemporary anti-Zionist rhetoric. The Vietnam War, which lasted more than twenty years, had already by this time made a significant impact on public opinion. This meant the progressive public disapproval of the so-called domino theory and, thus, an understanding of the Vietnam War as a mere imperialist move on the part of the United States, without any doubt the most powerful country in the world after WWII. In the aftermath of the Six-Day War and once Israel consolidated itself as a strong power in its region as well, Friedländer notes how “the Israeli occupation of densely populated Arab territories became prime examples of Western domination.” (2016, 134)

Few weeks after the outbreak of the Six-Day War, Jean Paul Sartre’s journal *Le Temps Modernes* published the first of a series of articles on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first of these articles was called “Israël, fait colonial?” by Maxime Rodinson, a French Marxist historian, sociologist, and orientalist. Rodinson belonged to a poor Yiddish-speaking Jewish family who had fled the pogroms of 19th century Russia. With the introduction that “la légitimité de certaines revendications arabe ne venaient pas d’un « amour » préférentiel pour les Arabes en général...mais d’une appréhension de certains faits méconnus et de l’application de certaines règles de cohérence rationnelle et morale” (Rodinson 1967, 153), Rodinson portrayed in his article the basis of the anti-Zionist

campaign which was led by many Diaspora Jews in Europe at this time: an understanding of Zionism as a clear colonial enterprise with all the connotations colonialism entailed.

Rodinson claimed that Socialist Zionists (which constituted the core of the Yishuv movement as well as the main Zionist branch during the first stage of Zionism)—although Socialists—needed, however, to be understood as imperialist colonizers, even if their colonies set, per him, the best and most advanced example of Socialist collectivist life: “J’admets bien volontiers que les colonies collectivistes israéliennes ont souvent donné l’exemple, le plus poussé peut-être qui soit attesté, des vertus que peut développer le mode de vie communautaire inspiré par une idéologie humaniste même intégrée dans une synthèse nationaliste.” (Rodinson 1967, 222) Rodinson, however, differentiated between the motivations of early Zionists and that of any colonial powers. The colonial character of Zionism—rather than stemming from the mere idea of making Aliyah—would, then, find its inception in what, according to Rodinson, is the willingness to ignore that Palestine was an already-occupied land. At the same time, Rodinson did acknowledge the legality of Jewish purchase of land, although per him this still constitutes a clear case of colonization: “La régularité juridique des achats de terre sionistes n’est donc nullement un argument contre le caractère colonial du yishouv” (Rodinson 1967, 227), as the *modus operandi* is to be found in European colonialism in history.

What constitutes Rodinson’s main argument against Zionism—from the point of view of a Marxist anti-colonial orientalist—is what he considered a clear umbilical connection between European-American nations and the Yishuv, through which any action of the Zionists was regarded, by extension, as an echo of any European-American colonial power. Although it would seem impossible to draw parallels between the motivations of early Jewish Zionists to migrate to an underdeveloped and disease-full land and that of European colonial settlers across the globe, Rodinson finds that “l’eupéanité des sionistes pouvait leur permettre de présenter leur projet comme se rattachant au même mouvement d’expansion européenne que chaque puissance développait pour son compte.” (Rodinson 1967, 175) In what constituted the main writing representative of left-wing anti-Zionism, Rodinson appealed for an understanding of Jewish rebellion against the British as exemplary of the quintessential colony-fatherland tension and, thus, representative of the colonial aspiration for independence of the Yishuv from the European country it belonged; according to Rodinson, Great Britain in this case.

Indeed, this question of regarding Israel as a colonial state is one of the first topics tackled by Allan Dershowitz in *The Case for Israel*:

Unlike colonial settlers serving the expansionist commercial and military goals of imperial nations such as Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Spain, the Jewish refugees were escaping from the countries that had oppressed them for centuries. These Jewish refugees were far more comparable to the American colonists who had left England because of religion oppression than they were to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English imperialists who colonized India, the French settlers who colonized North Africa, and the Dutch expansionists who colonized Indonesia. (Dershowitz 2003, 14)

In *Israël, fait colonial?*, Rodinson chooses to disregard the cluster of communities which constituted the Yishuv. Europe, Euro-America or rather the West as a whole, seems to be the colonial fatherland of these early Zionists who legally acquired land and established their collectivist communities before 1948. Rodinson also consciously failed to see that the mere act of making Aliyah was in a way spurning one's own nationality in the hope for a better life and although constantly reinforcing the Western interest on a "western" presence on the Middle East, he also fails to see that the main economic relation and eventually tension between a mother country and its colonies was also not the case between the Yishuv and any Euro-American nation. In fact, the quotas which Great Britain imposed on Jewish migrations, especially after the Jewish tragedy, restricting the flow of Jewish refugees to the soon-to-be Israel constituted one of the main tensions between Great Britain and the Yishuv.

A banalization of the Jewish experience and the Shoah as well as a delegitimization of Jewish self-determination characterized then and characterizes now the anti-Zionist campaign. Rodinson brings up in *Israël, fait colonial?* the fact of the genetic diversity of Jews as a way to counterargument Jews connection to Palestine. Claiming how European European Jews were was probably a thought shared by Theodor Herzl (previous to his Zionist awakening) and many assimilated Jews of the time who would later in their life embrace Zionism as the only way to effectively fight anti-

Semitism, that is, through the establishment of a Jewish state. Klüger and Friedländer do indeed explain how very European they felt before the Shoah and even after, an identity which they both carry along with their Jewish one. Rodinson rebels against this *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* character, this Zionist identity, and the *Wille zur Macht* which characterized the Zionist movement; the response to the idea that no place was a good place for Jews, an idea forged precisely in Europe, and by non-Jews. Pointing out the European genetic influence of European Jews has historically proved to be not an argument for non-Jewish Europeans against the annihilation of the Jewish people. Rodinson, along with many left-wing anti-Zionists, contemplated Diaspora as the only viable option for Jews, delegitimizing the State of Israel and rejecting its right to exist as the only Jewish state in the world. In short, anti-Semitism; a particular case of Jewish anti-Semitism to which Friedländer refers in *Réflexions sur l'avenir d'Israël*: “Il n’y a malheureusement rien d’étonnant que les porte-parole les plus virulent de certaines thèses anti-israéliennes soient juifs : la haine de soi (Selbsthass) de certains Juifs est un corollaire pathologique de l’antisémitisme ; c’est un phénomène aussi vieux que la Diaspora.” (Friedländer 1969, 15)

Friedländer refers to this anti-Zionist attitude which propagates among left-wing intellectuals during these years, as a consequence of a progressive radicalization of Marxist, orientalist, and anti-imperialist intellectuals very much influenced by the role of the United States after WWII and the progressive establishment of Israel as a Middle-Eastern power. Several are the scenarios Friedländer recounts in *Where Memory Leads* where former friends become political enemies or simply strangers, especially within academic circles. Even if Friedländer becomes progressively more critical of Israel’s attitude towards the Arabs after the Six-Day War, this more radical rhetoric which starts establishing itself among Marxist intellectuals made Friedländer distance himself from left-wing ideas which had previously characterized his political views : “I soon became disappointed by the dogmatism of the extreme left, by what I considered their total misunderstanding of Nazism and fascism, tags they applied so easily to the existing democratic systems, either out of ignorance or in bad faith; by their naïve infatuation with Mao or Che Guevara; and by their rabid hatred of Israel, which at times sounded like anti-Semitism.” (Friedländer 2016, 136) Friedländer’s experience in the years after 1967 serves us to confirm how the lines between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism—if any—become more and more blurred during these years, a rhetoric still present in much of the

left-wing ideology and which articulates itself in several anti-Semitic acts which progressively become more and more normalized among left-wing activists⁵⁷, as Friedländer notes: “The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas was right in calling leftist extremism “Linksfaschismus” (left fascism). Much later, I encountered remnants of these ideological zealots who mostly called themselves Trotskyites, but were nothing less than purebred Stalinists.” (Friedländer 2016, 136)

In *Where Memory Leads*, Friedländer does not explicitly refer to the origin of the Arab rejection of the state of Israel, nor does he clarify the evolution of the different attitudes towards Jewish immigration along the decades previous to the establishment of the state, nor during the first decades of it. These topics, however, he treats in other publications like *Réflexions sur l’avenir d’Israël*. In *Where Memory Leads*, Friedländer concentrates on the anti-Semitic character of much of the anti-Zionist discourse in Western countries without focusing on the anti-Semitic aspects behind Arab anti-Zionist discourse. Friedländer does acknowledge the radical attitudes developed among Palestinian Arabs, which he connects with the growing terrorist Islamic ideology which affects Middle-Eastern and Western countries, but claims that Israel is, in part, responsible for such radicalization as well. Palestinian radicalization is, according to Friedländer, not only strictly derived from the growing Salafi or Wahhabi ideology of the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda or any form of jihadist terrorist group, which has influenced young Muslim Arabs worldwide. Through his analysis of the factors involved in both extremist positions of both sides of the conflict, Friedländer, once again, situates himself at a difficult political position, constituting a potential target for critics situated on both sides of the political spectrum.

Additionally, Friedländer notes that left-wing attitudes towards Israel have become more extreme throughout the decades, especially after the Six-Day War and the growing rejection of American “colonialism”. Nowadays, it is not strange to hear the intellectual and political left in both Europe and America radically deny the legitimacy of Israel and its right to exist. In 1991, Friedländer recalls a passage when out of a “gut

⁵⁷ In June 27th, 2017, three women were expelled from an LGBT march in Chicago for carrying Jewish pride flags, as the Star of David—a generally recognized symbol of modern Jewish identity and Judaism—was understood by the organizers of the event as a symbol of Zionist oppression. The news was covered by The New York Times: <https://nyti.ms/2thlT4l>

reaction”, he decides to fly back to Israel. This was when Iraqi Scud missiles were launched by Saddam Hussein’s government toward Israeli cities. Friedländer recalls this moment as follows:

People were frightened and when sirens announced an oncoming Scud, many took refuge in sealed rooms and put on gas masks. A few persons died of heart attacks, other left Tel Aviv for safer areas, particularly in Europe [...] In the Palestinian territories, the population cheered the Scuds and celebrated the destruction of the Jewish state [...] For my leftist colleagues, rushing to Israel meant that I was not on their side of the barricade [...] Over the following years, the hostility toward Israel that spread among some faculty members became painful to watch. (Friedländer 2016, 239)

In 1995, after the 1993 Oslo agreements, Friedländer participates in a debate with the famous Palestinian-American orientalist and founder of post-colonial studies, Edward Said, as Friedländer notes, “one of the most brilliant advocates of the Palestinian cause.” (Friedländer 2016, 237) Said’s initial positions with regards to the conflict contrast with that of Rodinson’s and many left-wing attitudes towards Israel in one basic factor. Apart from his criticism on Israeli policies after 1967, Edward Said, in many of his writings and lectures, has acknowledged the Jewish claim to the land of Israel, but this claim he situates at a secondary position to the Arab one. In earlier lectures and interviews, Said remarks the necessity of educating about the Shoah, what he considers the main justification to the Israeli treatment of Palestinians. In *Culture and Resistance* (2003), he even acknowledges the absence of Israeli and Hebrew studies at Arab universities, what he considered a problem. In this debate, Friedländer confirms, however, that Edward Said’s views on the conflict would inexorably lead to “the extinction of Israel” (Friedländer 2016, 238): the defense of the one-state solution; a solution which would necessary entail the return to Israel proper of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and, at the time and even today, a demographic change which would compromise Israel’s Jewish majority. As Friedländer notes, Said’s initial ‘moderate’ discourse becomes progressively more aggressive as it is increasingly more shared among left-wing scholars. When asked to debate again with Said three years later, this time Friedländer declines.

2.7.11. The messianic view and *Gush Emunim*

Early Zionists firmly believed that the establishment of a Jewish home would normalize the relations between Jews and the rest of the nations in the world. In the context of 19th-century nationalisms, Zionism, that is, Jewish nationalism could be understood as only another European attempt to (re)unite a certain group of people under the umbrella of nationalism. This process naturally included both essentialism and othering, but in this case, with the peculiarity of the international, non-racial, and even non-religious character of the concept of Jewishness which served as the main framework in which to articulate a national understanding of the Jewish people. It was precisely the lack of a territorial reality what constituted one of the principal *sui generis* characters of Jewish nationalism, something considered ‘anomalous’ in the context of 19th and 20th century Europe and that necessarily entailed a settlement enterprise, an enterprise, however, which differed notably from other colonial motivations, as we have already noted; in the words of early Zionists: it was a matter of life or death. Real nationhood and, by extension, statehood were thought to be the crucial factors which would make Jews “like all the nations”, as the lack of it was believed by many Zionist thinkers to be the cause of anti-Semitic hostility. The idea that Israel could never be a nation “like all the nations” was quickly corroborated after the establishment of the Jewish State, and thus, the Diaspora feeling of Otherness, which we will deeply discuss in chapter three, has still been kept alive even in a country with a Jewish majority:

Menachem Begin (1913-1992) [...] clearly reflecting the impact of the Holocaust, maintained that Jews were uniquely destined for eternal obloquy and attack. The Jewish state, he taught, could not end that condition; it could only give Jews the weapons they needed to ward off its effects. In his view, Jews were fated to remain, in a biblical phrase he quoted often, ‘a people that dwells alone’, the State of Israel an outcast among the international community. (Engel 2009, 171)

The idea that “a people that dwells alone” was able to defeat three Arab states and triple its size favored a messianic approach to the Six-Day War victory in a certain part

of the Jewish spectrum, as we have previously noted. The messianic view which we will treat in this section must then be understood, once again, as the religious canalization of the Six-Day War victory, for it stands as the moment in history which provided the breeding ground for a theo-political approach to the conflict. It can furthermore be understood, in secular terms, as the trigger of a psychological change in Jewry, nonetheless. Given that we are discussing Saul Friedländer's self-writing, we have focused on two of the obstacles which prevented him from continuing his adherence to the Zionist enterprise. This first one, as we have already noted, is the sense of hyperconfidence which the Six-Day War propitiated, what Friedländer understands as hubris, a (secular) nationalist exaltation, and the consequences of such attitude. The second factor which contributes to Friedländer's disengagement from the Zionist movement is the religious exaltation stemming from the Six-Day War, that is, the messianic reading of Israel's fate and the search for the Hand of Providence within the conflict.

More specifically, Friedländer focuses on *Gush Emunim* (גוש אמונים / The Bloc of the Faithful), "the political movement that arose on the morrow of Yom Kippur" (Friedländer 2016, 167) which became, per Friedländer, the religiously-infused ideological backdrop of the new settlement enterprise in the newly conquered territory. A Messianic reading which commenced after Israel's victory in 1967 and its territorial expansion, was only confirmed in 1973 again with a victory which, although technically explainable, was still unexpected and astonishing; the theo-political meaning of these victories was provided by Gush Emunim. Following this theo-political approach to the conflict, Zionism became the instrument through which God was to fulfill his plan for the Jewish people. Friedländer's view of Gush Emunim and everything it entailed is bluntly expressed in *Where Memory Leads* as follows:

Gush Emunim openly aimed at tightening Israel's grip over the West Bank, the occupied Palestinian territories west of the Jordan. It became one of the most vocal, active, and dangerous ingredients on the Israeli political scene at that time. The movement's messianic fervor, its total disregard for the Palestinians, its relentless drive for establishing ever more new settlements in the occupied territories, made of it an example of "authentic Zionism" in the eyes of many and

seemed to offer a new credo to the tens of thousands of Israelis dispirited by the war and losing all faith in the traditional political establishment. (Friedländer 2016, 157)

Friedländer suggests how out of strategy (or perhaps a partial conviction), left-wing parties submitted to the demands of Gush Emunim, whose organized militancy led to a compelling growth of settlements between mid-1974 and the elections of May 1977, that is, during the first government of Yitzhak Rabin. (Tessler 1994, 506) Shimon Peres was then defense minister, “the driving force within the government for cooperating with the fanatics of Gush Emunim [...]. I had to admit—notwithstanding my previous admiration for him—that, at this juncture, Shimon appeared to me as a sheer political opportunist.” (Friedländer 2016, 158) Friedländer’s main object of criticism seems to be what he considers the religious origin behind the settlement enterprise nonetheless, that is, Gush Emunim. We, in turn, suggest that a missing part in Friedländer’s criticism regarding the settlement enterprise beyond the Green Line is the secular dimension of such enterprise; although, perhaps, these secular public figures who supported the idea of Greater Israel are included in what Friedländer calls the “dispirited by the war”. Indeed, 1967 propitiated a messianic reading of Israel’s victory for many religious Zionists who became specially active, but key public figures like Alterman, Shamir or Tabenkin who stood behind a secular approach to the same idea of Greater Israel are not mentioned by Friedländer:

The idea that the whole Land of Israel/Palestine, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean—for the first time in the modern era wholly under Israeli rule—should permanently remain under Jewish control, had received a major boost. [...] Some secular Jews, moved by the grandeur of the moment, were driven to embrace the vision of “Greater Israel,” meaning a policy geared to permanently holding onto the newly conquered territories for both historical-ideological and strategic reasons. Writers like Natan Alterman, Israel’s leading poet, and Moshe Shamir, a major novelist—both men of the Left—signed on, as did a host of lesser figures, not only from the traditional Right but also from the center-socialist

mainstream. Alterman called 1967 “the zenith of Jewish history.” (B. Morris 2009, 82)

Yitzhak Tabenkin, the ideologue of the socialist Ahdut Ha‘Avodah Party, argued that the country was indivisible for practical geographic reasons and that a Greater Israel (*eretz yisrael hashleima*, the whole Land of Israel, or *ahiduta shel haaretz*, the country’s unity) was necessary for reasons of immigrant absorption and settlement. But Tabenkin was also keenly attentive to the country’s historical cachet, which drew Jews to Zion in the first place; without Hebron and Bethel and Jerusalem, the Jewish state would arise devoid of the magnetic loci of the historic homeland. (B. Morris 2009, 48)

Furthermore, whether it could be considered (as it is considered by Friedländer) that Gush Emunim constituted and constitutes the ideological basis of the settlement enterprise, the reality of the current settlement enterprise draws a slightly different picture, given that many different types of settlements are now established in the West Bank. Strictly speaking, only around 30% are considered religious settlements (Orthodox), and thus perhaps motivated by religious, ideological, and/or nationalistic goals. Another 30% are considered Haredi settlements, that is, communities which, although religious, should not have—in principle—ideological or nationalistic motives regarding the settling of biblical Judea and Samaria. The other 40% is constituted by either secular or mixed communities, that is, communities which, although secular in origin or nature, contain some religious population.⁵⁸

2.7.12. The progressive unmaking of a Zionist: *Réflexions sur l’avenir d’Israel* (1969), *Arabs and Israelis* (1975), and *Where Memory Leads* (2017)

Friedländer’s view on and relationship with Israel suffers a deterioration from 1969 until 1987, when he finally moves to the United States. This evolution, a progressive

⁵⁸ All the information regarding the settlers’ religious ascriptions have been consulted on the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics website and contrasted with the information provided by the non-governmental organization Peace Now (*Shalom Achshav*).

critical view on Zionism and—what we have called in this dissertation—a *deconversion* from Zionism, is especially palpable when comparing Friedländer's publications with regards to Israel in the years before his last autobiographical work *Where Memory Leads* where although a clear attachment to Israel is still perceivable, a total detachment from Zionism, as a political movement, is also verbalized by Friedländer. This progressive detachment takes place while he abandons the conventional views he held in *Réflexions sur l'avenir d'Israël*, published two years after the Six-Day War. In this publication, Friedländer defended at the time the recent occupation of the territories acquired during the war, as he was aware of the impossibility of defending pre-1969 borders: “Un postulat est évident : Israël ne pourra abandonner le contrôle militaire des territoires occupés avant que les opérations de sabotage aient pris fin” (Friedländer 1969, 106), but rejects the idea of Israeli expansionism, as “une garantie de non-expansionnisme de la part d'Israël est la condition première de l'instauration d'une paix réelle.” (Friedländer 1969, 104)

In 1969, a still-Zionist Friedländer considered the creation of some sort of autonomous Palestinian government, but under the military control of Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, until 1969 territories of Jordan and Egypt respectively: “La création d'une entité palestinienne autonome ne représenterait pas une menace pour la sécurité d'Israël, puisque le contrôle militaire de son territoire resterait aux mains de l'Etat juif.” (Friedländer 1969, 116) According to Friedländer, history has shown us that the absence of a clear political authority in Jerusalem has led to constant frictions and conflicts. At the time, Friedländer rejected the possibility of internationalizing Jerusalem due to its political status capital of the state: “Internationaliser l'ensemble de Jérusalem est évidemment exclu, car ce serait internationaliser... la capitale d'Israël.” (Friedländer 1969, 112), but suggests the possibility of giving the control of Muslim sacred places to Arabs:

Pour éviter que les lieux saints musulmans ne soient soumis à un contrôle juif, on pourrait concevoir que les représentants de chaque religion aient le contrôle absolu de leurs lieux saints et le drapeau jordanien ou celui de l'entité palestinienne pourrait flotter sur le dôme de la mosquée d'Omar et de la mosquée Al Alksa... L'Etat d'Israël s'engagerait évidemment à respecter le libre accès de

toux aux lieux saints et, répétons-le, la souveraineté israélienne ne s'exercerait pas sur les lieux saints non-juifs eux-mêmes. (Friedländer 1969, 112)

In 1969, Friedländer did adhere to the official position of Israel after the Six-Day War, as he himself recognizes. Even if Friedländer himself categorizes his reflections in *Where Memory Leads*, as “neither very audacious nor very original” and his concerns as “pseudo-moral” (Friedländer 2016, 133), we do see a rejection of a full-scale occupation, as well as the Israeli expansionism which he would later formally reject in following years. In *Réflexions*, Friedländer suggests that behind Arab countries’ refusal to peace, what stands is the anti-Semitism of their leaders, which constitutes the main argument against the instant return of the land acquired during the War, as well as the decrease on Israel’s power in the region; an anti-Semitism which Friedländer exemplifies using the words of President Nasser. Friedländer portrays how behind Arab leaders’ attitudes towards Israel, the desire to see Israel’s disappearance prevails: “Une attitude bien plus répandue est celle de la plupart des gouvernements arabe : « pas de traité de paix avec Israël, pas de reconnaissance d’Israël, pas de négociations avec Israël, et pas de marchandage au sujet de l’avenir du territoire et du peuple palestiniens », ainsi que le déclarait le président Nasser, le 24 juillet 1968.” (Friedländer 1969, 31)

A key factor in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict is introduced by Friedländer in *Réflexions*, a factor which Friedländer ceases to highlight after as his criticism of Israeli policies grows harsher, but which—nevertheless—constitutes one of the main reasons in the escalation of the conflict, as well as the development and implementation of harsher policies towards the Palestinians. At this key moment in the history of Israel, after 1967, Friedländer notes the different attitudes in Israel and the Arab countries regarding peace negotiations:

Les attitudes actuelles à l’égard de négociations de paix ne sont pas symétriques en Israël et dans les pays arabes : en Israël, la majorité de la population et du gouvernement accepte de telles négociations sous certaines conditions. Dans le monde arabe en revanche, le désir de négocier semble être le fait d’une minorité,

alors que la majorité considère une prolongation du conflit comme une étape sur la voie de l'ultime liquidation de l'Etat d'Israël. (Friedländer 1969, 61)

Arabs and Israelis is a transcription of a debate which took place between Friedländer and Mahmoud Hussein. In it, Friedländer holds many of the Zionist principles he portrayed in *Réflexions*. He rejects, once again, the basic anti-Zionist argument: that the state of Israel is nothing else but an expansion of Western colonialism, an artificial creation in the land of Arabs. As he tells Hussein: "If you cannot understand that *Zionism is the result of an aspiration that is literally almost two thousand years old*, then you cannot understand anything about Israel, about its will, its tenacity." (Hussein and Friedländer 1975, 34) Arab rejection of a Jewish state is brought once and again by Friedländer by remembering the Arab attacks against Jews in 1929 and 1936, the rejection of Arabs of a binational state supported by prominent members of the Yishuv like Buber, Ruppin and Magnes, as well as the rejection of the 1947 partition plan of the United Nations, the war of 1948, Arab refusal of a peace treaty afterward, etc. Also, the use of classic anti-Semitic commonplaces during the years before the Six-Day War as portrayed in the anti-Zionist propaganda, which, according to Friedländer, echoed the famous book *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which was translated into Arabic during the 60's.

In contrast with the explanation of Israeli hubris made in *Where Memory Leads*, Friedländer justifies this necessary hyperconfidence as a necessary consequence of the Arab rejection of the State of Israel, which is crystallized by the three no's at the Khartoum conference: "a certain arrogance went with the victory, by any group of people would have reacted in the same way, whether it was naturally chauvinistic or not." (Hussein and Friedländer 1975, 26) In *Arabs and Israelis*, Friedländer defended the idea that Zionism has been forced to be something he was not willing to, as a result of the Arabs' total rejection of the possibility of a Jewish state, their lack of empathy towards them and, as he himself notes, the "Arabs own intransigence", making Zionism be "exactly what Zionism has never wanted to be, but has perhaps been forced to become" (Hussein and Friedländer 1975, 41).

There are similar aspects in both books which seem unnegotiable for Friedländer: the necessity of a Jewish majority in Israel and the control of Jerusalem. However, and

this does mean a departure from previous writings regarding Israel, Friedländer introduced the first nuances which symbolize the beginning of a departure from the official Israeli position. These personal ideas can be summarized into three: firstly, the creation of a Palestinian state within the borders before the Six-Day War, something which would necessarily entail Israel withdrawal from the West Bank. Secondly, the division of Jerusalem: remaining under Jewish control the new Jewish part, the Jewish section of the Old City and specific quarters like Ramat Eshkol, Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives, but letting the Arab Old City be under Arab control. Thirdly, Friedländer's final departure from the official Israeli position resides in his support for free movement among the Jewish and the Arab state, entailing the return of some of the refugees. The final departure from Zionism is however portrayed in his last autobiographical project, *Where Memory Leads*, while at the same time Friedländer provides his political formula for the end of the conflict: the end of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and a two-state solution.

2.7.13. The two-state solution

Two states for two peoples have always appeared to be the moderate solution for a conflict which has prolonged itself until this day, as Morris notes “the overwhelming majority of Israelis, as opinion polls have consistently shown for decades, support partition and a two-state settlement of the conflict.”. A two-state solution was the initial idea behind the Peel Commission in 1937 and the UN General Assembly partition proposal in 1947. Naturally, as we have already discussed, many are the advocates for a one-state solution; a solution which will necessarily entail the dissolution of the Jewish state, and, worst-case scenario, the disappearance of the Jewish people in Palestine. This option, as Benny Morris⁵⁹ notes, is mainly supported by “Arabs and their Western supporters” (B. Morris 2009, 14), many of them Jews, however. After several wars

⁵⁹ One of the most well-known ‘new-historians’ on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict who has made a name for himself for his honesty in his portrayal of the conflict and exposing the atrocities committed by everyone involved in it. He is frequently cited by scholars supporting antagonistic positions regarding the conflict, namely Noam Chomsky or Allan Dershowitz.

throughout the decades and the subsequent development of more radical views on both sides, a real peaceful solution has not yet been reached.

The Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, which was hosted by Spain due to the historical significance of the country and which filled Spanish society with pride, was the first of a series of peace processes led by American diplomacy. After fifteen years and more than ten peace processes, the same issues have been brought to the table time and again: borders, security, refugees, settlements and the status of Jerusalem. It can be said without much reticence that peace negotiations have been completely inefficient at trying to reach a solution to the conflict. Many of the best historians and political scientists have worked on a solution for decades; most of them inexorably led to a feeling of hopelessness, as Benny Morris expressed in an interview he gave for the newspaper *Haaretz* in 2012: “the decades of studying the conflict, which led to nine books, left me with a feeling of deep despair. I’ve done all I can. I’ve written enough about a conflict that has no solution, mainly due to the Palestinian’s consistent rejection of a solution of two states for two peoples.” (Ben-Simhon 2012)

In 2017, according to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel’s population stood at a record 8.7 million: 6.5 million (74.7%) makes up the Jewish population; 1.8 million (20.8%) are Arabs (Muslims and Christians). In 2016, and according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 4.75 million Arabs living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and 1.47 in Israel proper. Grosso modo, the population of Arabs and Jews in the land west of the Jordan River seems to be approximately the same. While 1.8 million Arabs live in Israel proper, it is hard to find updated information regarding the exact number of settlers in the West Bank, although it is estimated that more than 400,000 settlers live beyond the Green Line⁶⁰: “I remain resolutely in favor of the two-state solution, which means putting an immediate end to the expansion of settlements and, beyond that, of being ready, on principle, to accept difficult concessions regarding the withdrawal of some settlements, an exchange of territory, and even a political (not social) division of Jerusalem.” (Friedländer 2016, 278)

⁶⁰ This information has been extracted from the West Bank Jewish Population Stats which is based on the Israeli Ministry of Interior Population Registry and has been contrasted with the statistics provided by the non-governmental organization Peace Now (*Shalom Achshav*).

Expanding on Morris' last reflection upon the state of the conflict, the two-state solution which Friedländer gives in *Where Memory Leads* could also be understood as mere wishful thinking also from the Israeli point of view if we pose the following questions: firstly, would any Palestinian leader ever agree to a settlement amounting to less than 22.5% of the land west of the Jordan? And secondly, would any Israeli government attempt to remove more than half a million settlers from the West Bank after the traumatizing experience of evacuating the 8,000 Israeli settlers living in the Gaza Strip in 2005? The image of settlers, especially the most religiously-committed ones, crying and fighting back while the army destroys all the settlement infrastructure is one any Israeli government would avoid repeating, as Benny Morris notes: "The political, ideological, and economic trauma of such an uprooting, which could result in a Jewish civil war, would be too great for Israel to bear. Hence, it will not happen." (B. Morris 2009, 8) Indeed, the last solution that Benny Morris provides in his last publication about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a federation between Jordan and Palestine: a Palestinian-Jordanian state. This option, supported by one of Israel's leading historians, is, however, never considered by Friedländer.

2.7.14. Friedländer's Zionist journey: conversion and deconversion rhetoric

Friedländer begins his autobiographical project recalling two of the most important moments in his life. As it's already been noted, Friedländer's Jewish identity does not develop in any strictly-speaking religious terms: it always brings about an ethno-cultural character which necessarily translated into a national one once Friedländer encountered Zionism. Just as Klüger, Friedländer's Zionist identity is nothing but the political crystallization of a *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* attitude, an attitude strongly influenced by Zionist rhetoric, especially the rhetoric that takes shape during and after the Shoah period. If *Quand vient le souvenir* represented Friedländer's awakening to his Jewishness and his conversion to Zionism, *Where Memory Leads* represents the opposite journey: a deconversion from Zionism with yet an intact Jewish identity.

As it was noted in chapter one, in the history of autobiography, conversion rhetoric has always held an important position in self-writing. In Friedländer's first autobiographical work, we see a pattern of conversion rhetoric which draws from

different stages of conversion rhetoric: the role of the community is crucial in Friedländer's conversion to Zionism. Friedländer's sense of Jewishness originates from a collective feeling of calamity, of Shoah. Friedländer's *in-Abwehr* Jewishness is, in turn, originated from the contact with a welcoming aesthetic formation whose collective struggle bound Jewish people together. Nonetheless, just as many spiritual autobiographers were faced with a constant tension between individuality and community, Friedländer says to feel "une fissure interne" with a community to which it is impossible to belong completely. This could be read as an omen of a later rejection of Israel, perhaps, not only through the specific policies which Friedländer criticizes but due to a wider rejection of collectivist enterprises.

Friedländer's conversion to Zionism is the product of a logical reflection, a logic which finds through Zionism a way to become crystallized, and hence Friedländer portrays the return to Israel as a demystified conclusion, in an attempt to escape from the *pathos* usually connected with Zionism, at least that is how an autobiographical Friedländer aims to understand his sudden embracement of Zionism. In this sense, Friedländer's conversion rhetoric resembles that of Stuart Mill in its intellectual character. Just as Mill finds in utilitarianism a valid ethical theory to which to adhere, Friedländer's finds in Zionism a logical and just political solution to give an answer to the historical consciousness of persecution and extermination of the Jewish people which—although politically originated at the end of the 19th century—gets articulated as the logical reaction to the *Endlösung* and the Shoah.

Friedländer's *deconversion* is instead the product of what he presents as an ethical reflection, an ethics of cohabitation which is per him not defensible anymore under the new Zionist logic after 1967. Throughout his essay works, a rejection of the new mainstream Zionist logic of expansionism leads to a disassociation with the movement portrayed in *Where Memory Leads*. This deconversion does not fall, strictly speaking, into the category of anti-Zionism or, what many would describe as, self-hatred: the establishment of the Jewish state is still considered by Friedländer an accomplishment deserving pride, and his emotional connection to Israel is not diminished. Still, the moments of epiphany found in *Quand vient le souvenir* find a bitter resolution in *Where Memory Leads*: the first encounters with Zionist Youth groups where a Jewish and Zionist aesthetic formation was being formed are replaced by harsh disagreements with the

mainstream Zionist tendency after 1967, and more especially with the more nationalist and religious branches of Zionism. Calling for social disobedience and participating in the protests organized by *Shalom Achsav* represent the counter moments of epiphany before leaving Israel, almost 40 years after having made Aliyah.

Friedländer's conclusion in *Where Memory Leads*, as well as Klüger's conclusion on the subject in *Das Weiterleben der Ruth Klüger*, holds a bitter tone. While Klüger's bitterness, nevertheless, stemmed from the still nostalgic view of the converted Zionist, still longing a Zion which always need to stay at that level of idealization and "Konjunktiv", that is, the land that could have been—but never was—hers, Friedländer's bitterness is that of a deconverted Zionist. After following the Zionist dream of making Aliyah and contributing to the Zionist cause more than to any other cause in his life, Friedländer's rejection of Israeli policies after the Yom Kippur War and its progressively shift towards, what he considers, radical right-wing positions—articulated through a disregard of the Palestinians and, thus, a lack of an ethics of cohabitation—entail a bitterness, which goes beyond the mere nostalgic element expressed in Klüger to establish itself as a scream for peace: "If the present is not reversed, if the settlements policy is not stopped, if a government guided by a vision of peace is not elected, then, metaphorically speaking, regarding the values Israel once held dear, regarding the survival of an Israeli democracy, there is nothing more to say than 'God help us.'" (Friedländer 2016, 279)

This *deconverted* Zionist's criticism does not articulate itself, strictly speaking, in the form of self-hatred, which usually characterizes radical Jewish anti-Zionist stances. As Friedländer, who from the very beginning and all through his two autobiographical works reminds us, does not regret having belonged to the Zionist movement and just as he despises the use of his teachings about the Shoah to defend anti-Arab policies, his criticism towards Israel must not then be used to defend anti-Semitic views: "Criticizing Israel's policies is not only justified, it is necessary. However, questioning Israel's right to exist is a very different matter. Sometimes one gets the feeling that, in the American academic environment, the first attitude easily leads to the second one. As for the second attitude, *it often smells of more than a whiff of anti-Semitism.*" (Friedländer 2016, 277, emphasis added)

CHAPTER 3

JEWISHNESS, *ASHKENAZ*, AND *GALUT*

*Du bist ein Kind wie all die vielen,
die auf der ganzen Erde sind,
wie all die anderen Gespielen
und doch bist du so anders, Kind.*

*Du bist ein Kind, dem Heimat fehlt,
in allen Städten bist du fremd.
So lang dich nicht das Wort beseelt:
Heimat, dein Herz ist ungehemmt.*

Erika Taube

3. Jewishness, *Ashkenaz*, and *Galut*

In the last chapter of this dissertation, we will tackle the question of post-Shoah Jewish identity. Naturally, identity questions have arisen throughout this dissertation at different points when arguing these authors' relationship with religion, Zionism and Israel. Nevertheless, in this last chapter, we will focus, firstly, on the convoluted relationship of Klüger and Friedländer—European Jews of Germanic background—with Germany and Germanness, and the limits of a post-Shoah German-Jewish dialogue. These aspects encompass not only questions related to the relationship of Jews with Germany—the polity—after the Shoah but also the relationship of these Jews with everything which emanated from Germany, that is, its culture, its language, and its history. Secondly, we will tackle the intricate and plural ways in which Jewishness can be crystallized and performed after the Shoah and, especially, after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948; an event which has influenced enormously post-Shoah Jewish identity and Jewish self-understanding in *Galut*.

3.1. The German-Jewish symbiosis

In 1948, the World Jewish Congress passed a resolution that underlined “the determination of the Jewish people never again to settle on the bloodstained soil of Germany” (Resolutions 1948, 7, quoted in Geller 2005, 62) and while the vast majority of German survivors never came back in Germany⁶¹ still, for some Germanic Jews, leaving behind completely their German culture was never an easy job, being the remnants of German culture and the German language kept for life. Coming to terms with the fatal past of Nazi Germany has ever since been crucial in the understanding of modern

⁶¹ There are indeed examples of German survivors who came back to Germany, as it is the case of writer Edgar Hilsenrath who came back to Germany in 1975 after having lived in Israel and the United States. When asked in an interview in 2016 for Die Stadtredaktion about his return to Germany, Hilsenrath responded: “Ich kam nicht nach Deutschland, sondern zur deutschen Sprache zurück.” For a deeper analysis of the problematics stemming from the Jewish refugee problem in the aftermath of the Shoah, see *Finding Home and Homeland* (Patt 2009)

Jewish identity, a past which will not go away and, hence, will always affect survivors' relationship with Germany and Germanness.

If we look back at the 19th century, Germany, perhaps, would have never been expected to be the logical perpetrator of the Shoah. Needless to say, anti-Semitism in Europe was present in every European country, but, as we discussed in the previous chapter, the development of political Zionism, understood as a response to anti-Semitism, was, in general terms, a reaction to the Dreyfus Affair in France and the ongoing pogroms in Czarist Russia. Unlike most of the other European Jewish communities, Jews in Germany reached their maximum level of assimilation, adopting German as the vernacular, the language of *Hochkultur*; being the Weimar Republic the moment when assimilation reached its highest points, as it is suggested by many historians. The so-called Jewish-German symbiosis has been widely debated, especially in the aftermath of the Shoah, and it is still subject of debate. For many, such symbiosis was an undeniable reality and it could not be understood as a Jewish imposition on Germans. Germans were, under this view, somehow and partly, accepting of such cultural amalgamation. For others, such symbiosis never existed: it was merely a Jewish illusion.

Understanding the German-Jewish question as a symbiosis might even be considered an intellectual offense after the *Endlösung*. Rather than arguing for or against such relationship and thus entering the debate, for the purpose of this study, we want to commence highlighting the points of cultural and social contact between Germans and German Jews which propitiated the so-called German-Jewish conversation, and posterior “symbiosis”, since the 18th century onwards, after the publication of Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem, oder, über religiöse Macht und Judentum*. We will continue with the discussion of what we consider key aspects of Germanic Jewishness and we will finish focusing on the particularities of both Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer as portrayed in their autobiographical and essay works. We will discuss their examples as personal accounts regarding the resolution of the tensions stemming from Germanic Jewishness after the Shoah, but we will also read their accounts as yet another attempt at a Jewish-German conversation; accounts which, although personal, we will, however, understand as paradigmatic and responding to general tendencies.

Moses Mendelssohn, speaker of Yiddish and the product of a strictly religious education, represents the first Jewish intellectual who challenged his German contemporaries: liberating himself from the ghetto and following the German idea of *Bildung*. Mendelssohn, in order to include Judaism—and, by extension, Jews—in the intellectual conversation, highlighted the Jewish nature of Christianity by paraphrasing one haggadic tale: “Ein Heide sprach: Rabbi, lehret mich das ganze Gesetz, indem ich auf einem Fuße stehe! Samai, an den er diese Zumuthung vorher ergeben ließ, hatte ihn mit Verachtung abgewiesen; allein der durch seine unüberwindliche Gelassenheit und Sanftmuth berühmte Hillel sprach: Sohn! *liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst*. Dieses ist der Text des Gesetzes; alles übrige ist Kommentar. Nun gehe hin und lerne!” (Mendelssohn 1783, 58)

Moreover, through the portrayal of Leviticus 19:18 and Leviticus 19:34, Mendelssohn argued for a logical understanding of Jews and Christians in intellectual life. He highlighted the idea of traditional religion which although was very much rejected in the *Weimarer Klassik*, served to contextualize Western culture, and trace it back to Judaism at a time when, per him, traditional religion had been put aside and rejected from the intellectual dialogue in what Bernd Witte has called “a radical anthropological turn.” (Witte in S. Aschheim 2015, 46) By noting the commandment of love’s origin (Christianity’s *Primarii Lapidis*), Mendelssohn aimed to (re)introduce Judaism in the public discourse thus inaugurating the so-called German-Jewish conversation:

<p>יח לא-תקם ולא-תטור את-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ, וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ: אֲנִי, יְהוָה.</p>	<p>18 Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.</p>
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<p>לד כְּאֶזְרָח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר הַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם, וְאָהַבְתָּ לוֹ כָּמוֹךָ--כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: אֲנִי, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.</p>	<p>34 The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.</p>
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It can be argued, nevertheless, that from the beginning of this German-Jewish conversation, it built upon a Jewish illusion. As Witte notes, at the time of the Weimar Classicism, the young Jewish *intelligentsia*—who was trying to synthesize religious tradition and Western culture—thought to have found another “people of the book”, but German classicism’s criticism of Judaism⁶², though perhaps not anti-Semitic in nature, implied a rejection of the Jewish religion and tradition: “They excluded the Jewish religion and the Jewish way of life at the very moment when Jews in Western Europe were trying to draw nearer to the civilization of modernity. They represented an attempt to eliminate monotheism from the European cultural memory by denigrating those who invented it” (Witte in S. Aschheim 2015, 57)

In 1964, in a letter directed to Manfred Schlösser, Gershom Scholem rejected the ever existence of a German-Jewish dialogue: “Ich bestreite, daß es ein solches deutsch-jüdisches Gespräch in irgendeinem echten Sinne als historisches Phänomen je gegeben hat. Zu einem Gespräch gehören zwei, die aufeinander hören, die bereit sind, den anderen in dem, was er ist und darstellt, wahrzunehmen und ihm zu erwidern.” (Scholem 1964) Conditions which, according to Scholem, were never to be found in Germany, even when the Jews, according to Scholem, tried in every possible way to contribute to such dialogue: “Gewiss, die Juden haben ein Gespräch mit dem Deutschen versucht, von allen möglichen Gesichtspunkten und Standorten her, fordernd, flehend und beschwörend, kriecheisch und auf trotzend, in allen Tonarten ergreifender Würde und gottverlassener Würdelosigkeit. [...] Von einem Gespräch vermag ich bei alledem nichts wahrzunehmen.” (Scholem 1964) For others, there were indeed points of contact and—to a certain extent—a love story between *Deutschtum* and *Judentum*. The term symbiosis is however usually regarded as too strong of a term, being sometimes understood as a Jewish illusion of a relationship which, if understood in love terms, must, however be understood, as Scholem himself thought of it, as a story of an unrequited one. (Scholem 1963, 39)

If there is another point in time in Germany when the idea of a German-Jewish symbiosis was revisited, that is at the time of the Weimar Republic. As Peter Gay (1968) has discussed, it is in the Weimar Republic the moment when the Jew—the outsider *par*

⁶² See “The Anti-Judaism of Goethe and Schiller” in Aschheim (2015, 55–56)

excellence—became an insider in Germany. This thesis is, however, hotly counterargued by Jewish historians. If the Weimar Republic is understood as the prelude of Nazi Germany, such symbiosis might even be considered an offensive term to use. The logical reflection which emanates from the juxtaposition in history of those two antagonistic political regimes must necessarily call into question the understanding of Jewish-German relationships as a symbiosis—even as a real dialogue. Our concern, in the context of this dissertation, is then related to the understanding and conceptualization of the Jewish-German relationship per se, and how such relationship is affected by questions related to the particularities of the Jewish experience and the Jewish self-perception in *Galut*.

3.2. Language and the Jewish Other

Plurilingualism has always been part of the Jewish experience in *Galut*, and this is naturally not restricted to *Ashkenazim* or *Sephardim*. Post-structuralist theory, for the purpose of this study, serves us—strategically—to develop a broader understanding of the influence of plurilingualism in the life and works of Jewish authors. Kristeva's concept of intertextuality introduces the idea that the insertion of a certain language does not merely mean the insertion of a mere grammatical structure in one's brain. It is this new structure and, more importantly, the cultural heritage which constitutes new possibilities for the study of intertextuality. For this cultural heritage—indelibly linked to the language in which this culture finds a way out—carries not only a long literary and philosophical tradition, but, furthermore, the semantics to which it is linked crystallize, in one way or another, this particular cosmovision. "A man with one language is like a man with one eye" says an older Brother Benedict to a younger and fearful Brother Sebastian in MacLaverty's book *Lamb* (1999). And so, having more than one eye has historically constituted the Jewish experience in the Diaspora. A way to understand Jewish history in *Galut* is precisely through literature—perhaps one of the most intellectually-pleasing ones—for who has written the history of Judaism in *Galut* if not its men of letters? Literature is one of the most important tools to delve into Judaism and Jewishness during centuries where Jewish historiography did not exist. Bearing in mind this amalgam of possible intertextual relations has constituted the core of this dissertation and this has not only been reduced to the literary level but also to the academic one. For

German, French or English are languages linked to a specific cultural production as well as to specific academic traditions. Given the plurilingual nature of the Jewish experience, as well as the particular plurilingual reality of these authors, the limits of intertextuality are sometimes hard to delimit, although perhaps not as hard to locate if one aims to seek intertextuality through the language at these authors' disposal.

Up to the Enlightenment, three were the languages which generally constituted the Jewish experience in the context of Ashkenazim: the מאמע לשון (mame loshen), in this case Yiddish, mainly spoken at home or within the community, the פאטער לשון (foter loshen), Hebrew, the language of school and the yeshivot; and the language of the host country.⁶³ The authors we discuss in this dissertation, mainly Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, were part of the highly emancipated, almost assimilated Jewish *milieu*. This includes first of all the disappearance of Yiddish as the mother tongue as well as the disappearance of Hebrew as the language of education. In the case of both authors, German is the new mother tongue, the mother tongue of the “assimilated” Jew in the German world. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that both authors are part of a peripheral Germanness: Austria and the German-speaking Czech Republic. While Ruth Klüger was only exposed to German previous to the Shoah experience, Saul Friedländer's linguistic input included his parents' German and Prague's Czech. Due to the Shoah experience, other languages became new media for these authors: Friedländer is introduced to French during the Shoah, a language connected to a Catholicism which he embraced for some years, but it is also during the Shoah—and because of it—when these authors are introduced to the Jewish languages which did not constitute the reality of assimilated Jews anymore: Klüger is introduced to Yiddish in Theresienstadt, a language she connects with the development of her Jewish political conscience and her adherence to Jewish nationalism. Later on, Friedländer would assimilate Hebrew, a language which brought along the necessary learning of the Torah. Finally, both authors would be introduced to English, the new lingua franca; the global language to access culture, science, and thought.

⁶³ Needless to say, this linguistic scenario can still be found nowadays in non-assimilated Haredi communities all over the world, especially in Belarus, Argentina, and the United States.

These are crucial aspects to bear in mind when tackling these assimilated authors' awakening to Jewishness and Zionism. For they, representative of the most assimilated of the European Jews, were suddenly exposed to unarguably Jewish languages: Yiddish and Hebrew; the Shoah being the trigger. In chapter two, we discussed Ruth Klüger's encounter with Zionism was indelibly linked with her experience at the different concentration camps to which she was sent during the Shoah years. Ruth Klüger's contact with Zionism also meant contact with the Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jew with which Western European Jews highly contrasted. Klüger points out the power of language in one's behavior. For Yiddish was connected with a certain cultural paradigm, with certain literary references but also with a certain attitude even: certain behaviors and psychological moods: "Ich [hatte] in Christianstadt viel Jiddisch gelernt und, wenn ich nicht scharf aufpaßte, leicht eine jiddische Redewendung gebrauchte. Zudem kritisierten die beiden mit Vorliebe meine Körperhaltung, meine Bewegungen und meine Art zu gehen, zum Beispiel mit den Händen auf dem Rücken. *Wie ein Bocher im Cheder* (ein Schüler in einer orthodoxen Schule), spotteten sie, was mich nicht wenig ärgerte." (Klüger 1992, 178, emphasis added)

Friedländer's encounter with Yiddish is not much referenced in his autobiographical works. Nonetheless, Hebrew—his new, and first, Jewish language—could not escape the context in which it was also inserted at the time of the new-born State of Israel: "apprendre l'hébreu, c'était, avant toute autre chose, découvrir la Bible." (Friedländer 1978, 20) This first contact with Hebrew means the contact with an ancient history, a history which, in the context of Zionism, has a special ethnonational and political reading. Friedländer's name change from the Frenchified Paul to the Hebraized Shaul must be read in this direction. Through the new language, a whole new repertoire of intertextual connections is open and, thus, the recognition in the cultural legacy of the language and the domains in which that language operates. Friedländer's recognition in Hebrew ancient history—his new ancient history—is imminent:

Très vite, la Bible me fascina et les passages les plus simples que nous lisions étaient peut-être ceux qui portaient le plus puissant message, la plus intense poésie. Pour moi, par exemple, qui avais changé mon nom de Paul en Shaul (Saul) en arrivant dans le pays, l'histoire de ce premier roi d'Israël, racontée avec tant

de force contrôlée dans le livre de Samuel, devint l'image même du tragique : appelé contre son gré, puis abandonné de tous, même de Dieu qui ne lui répond pas, Shaul, à la veille de sa plus grande épreuve, en est réduit à recourir à la sorcellerie pour apprendre de la nécromancienne d'Ein Dor quel sera son destin. (Friedländer 1978, 20–21)

3.3. Self-hatred

Où trouve-t-on Dieu ? Dans la souffrance ou dans le refus ? Quand un homme est-il humain ? En disant oui ou en criant non ? Où la souffrance mène-t-elle l'homme ? A la pureté ou à la bestialité ?

Elie Wiesel

Little could be said about the so-called German-Jewish symbiosis if we avoid the always-controversial topic of Jewish self-hatred; for the mere conceptualization of such symbiotic dynamics bespeaks a psychological process on both sides of the equation: not only for the Essence, that is, the reference group but also—and especially in the context of this dissertation—for the Other, the Jew. Naturally, the dynamics of self-hatred could always be found in the experience of anyone who would constitute to some extent an Other; that is, it is naturally not only a Jewish phenomenon. There is no need to mention the classical Others throughout history. These are well interiorized in our collective imagination, thus comprising our historical conscience. We do relate to those Others—in some way or another—considering our position of power—an imagined power but which we will incessantly struggle to keep, perhaps if only rhetorically. Naturally, even if we have not historically been part of the Other, the Other can be found within us: all of us can become Others at a certain situation, confronting certain cultural paradigms or when interacting with a certain social group. This reflection might perhaps exceed the purpose of this study, for—although some might read a pedagogical ambition behind such a reflection on our part—in the context of this dissertation, we do not aim to tackle those levels of individual issues or place our discussion regarding Otherness in a strict *Ich-Du* scenario. It must be clear by now that we are treating individual authors, but they—from

the very beginning of this dissertation—have been framed within the study of the Jewish experience, more specifically, of the post-Shoah Jewish experience.

Any willingness to abstraction is based on the particularities of these authors. They are treated in this dissertation as paradigmatic, and any abstraction must be understood as potentially containing some margin of error. We have not aimed, nevertheless, to treat these authors as unconnected individuals whose struggles, dilemmas, and experiences represent only theirs. That approach, which has been sometimes suggested to us, will necessarily lead to a failure at a proper understanding of these authors. For they can be framed within a particular period of Jewish history, bespeaking a particular experience of Jewishness and thus—although naturally shaped by personal and non-transferable circumstances—their common reflections and ambivalences indicate common psychological ways of coping with a past which haunts both of them. In chapter one, where religion and ritual constituted the main topics of discussion, this Jewish Otherness was precisely not on stage. Instead, the female Otherness promoted by feminist criticism was discussed in relation to the religious dynamics of Orthodox Judaism; for Klüger, this female Otherness results in a constant *locus* from which to approach religion and religious ritual. Nevertheless, the Jewish dimension of the problematics discussed in this dissertation has always been a constant one for us; thus the “Jewish reading”. For it is the Otherness applied to groups (in this case, the Otherness applied to Jews) the one which we will treat, that is, the individual experience of these authors from the perspective of the Jewish Other.

Self-hatred is, needless to say, a controversial topic, no matter the context of Otherness in which this self-hatred is discussed. We reject the idea that any of the two authors here discussed, Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, fit into the categorization of self-hating in traditional terms. It is not precisely self-hatred what can be found in these authors’ autobiographical and essay works. Moreover, both authors explicitly criticize traditionally-regarded Jewish self-hating attitudes; that also shapes their particular understanding of Jewishness: a criticism against assimilationists and anti-Zionists is introduced in both Klüger and Friedländer’s works. Nevertheless, and bearing this in mind, we will discuss, perhaps riskily, a tendency in both of these authors to a certain “being in the air”—to *Luftmenschlichkeit*—a certain tendency to find “comfort” in a rootless condition, destined to estrangement, a condition which transcends the critical

attitude expected of a scholar and which directly tackles more convoluted identity issues and life choices. When discussing these topics in authors who have historically constituted and have particularly experienced an essential Otherness, the question of how some aspects of self-loathing are resolved becomes especially salient.

Out of the ashes of the Shoah, the complicated psychological dynamics of these authors include the intricate task of managing the survivor's guilt, the tension between the interiorization and rejection of the hatred to which they were exposed, and the willingness—still—to keep on living⁶⁴. We argue that the tendency to Diasporism (understood not only in physical terms but also, or mostly, in psychological ones) bespeaks a particular state, which—although not constituting traditional self-hatred (suicide, conversion or disguise) as more extreme examples do—can, nevertheless, be understood as a kind of identity loss, a totalizing feeling of exile, which we understand as a direct consequence of the Shoah experience and which constitute a state of self-loathing, as Friedländer explains in conversation with Frank Diamand: “I’ve lived all over and you may say that this is because there were opportunities. No, it’s a kind of strange restlessness which I attribute to my early experiences of moving from place to place and hiding. I need to change places maybe as a kind of running away from some danger.” (Diamand 2013)

3.4. The dynamics of self-hatred: the tension between self-destruction and *Selbstüberwindung*

Anti-Semitism directed at oneself was an original Jewish creation. I don't know of any other nation so flooded with self-criticism. The

⁶⁴ In 2005, a study conducted by doctors of the Abarbanel Mental Health Center in Israel and researchers at Tel Aviv University concluded that there is indeed an increased risk of attempted suicide among aging Holocaust survivors: three times higher than aging non-Holocaust survivors. As it is noted in the study, “aging of survivors is frequently associated with depression, reactivation of traumatic syndromes, physical disorders, loss, and psychological distress.” (Barak et al. 2005) Furthermore, one of the authors discussed in this dissertation, the Italian Shoah-survivor Primo Levi, died in 1987 in what was officially considered suicide, 42 years after having escaped Auschwitz.

Jewish ability to internalize any critical and condemnatory remark and castigate themselves is one of the marvels of human nature.

(Aharon Appelfeld in Roth 1988, New York Times, February 28)

In chapter two, we discussed the image of the New Jew in the character of Ari Ben Canaan, from the film *Exodus*. Through the discussion of Paul Newman's character, we exemplified the ideal New Jew of the Zionist movement, a self-assured, strong and powerful Jew who fights for dignity and the right cause. Paul Newman's character, we discussed, contributed extremely during the 60s to the creation of an idyllic Israel. Many are the examples which would come to mind when thinking of Paul Newman's alter ego: the self-hating Jew. By many, such character could be embodied in the neurotic personality of characters like Woody Allen. Nonetheless, in this dissertation, we will discuss another blond-haired, blue-eyed, Aryan-looking Jew: a Jewish neo-Nazi, a self-hating Jew, Danny, the character of the film *The Believer* (Bean 2003). It is no coincidence that in order to exemplify both the self-affirming *Muskeljude* and the self-hating one, we have chosen fictional characters. It is also no coincidence that both characters represent, on the one hand, an extreme idealization: a conventional hero; and on the other hand, an extreme antihero. Henry Bean's film portrays the most extreme case of self-hatred: a case of self-hatred whose categorization as such is not subject to the *telos* of a particular political discourse. The case of Danny, an unarguably extreme case, we will use to exemplify the limits of self-hatred. Maybe drawing from a fictional character, we will be able to treat topics which are recurrently found in Jewish self-hatred. Just like Ari, Danny appears for the first time in the film shirtless, but instead of emerging from the Mediterranean Sea, Danny appears covered in his own sweat, lifting weights, while we hear the first dialogue of the movie between a much younger Danny arguing with his Yeshiva teacher about the real meaning behind the akedah: "it's not Abraham's faith. It's about God's power. God says, 'you know how powerful I am? I can make you do anything I want, no matter how stupid. Even kill your own son, because I'm everything and you're nothing.'" (Bean 2003, sec. 1:24)

The relationship of this *Muskeljude* to Judaism is—as expected—a problematic one from the very beginning. Nevertheless, the overlapping of the memory and the scene

in which Danny struggles to lift weights suggest that this problematic relationship is the result of a deeply spiritual crisis that finds its inception in the theological questions that Danny poses to his Yeshiva teacher. While taking a look at his old notebook later on in the movie, Danny remembers once again this argument about the Akedah. The logical evolution from Judaism to Nazism is represented by his way of distorting the letter aleph and turning it into a swastika. Chasing, insulting, punching and kicking a young Yeshiva student on the street seems only a logical part of the cycle of self-hatred, as it is a way of chasing, insulting and beating his (old?) self. Yelling at the young guy to hit him back is part of this self-loathing ritual, a way of trying to take the Jewishness out of the boy, a way of trying to make him overcome what for Danny is nothing but a sickly state of being, that in the case of the Yeshiva boy takes shape in his humble and apparently submissive disposition in comparison to Danny's manly and aggressive ways; as he articulates later on in the movie "a Jew is essentially female." (Bean 2003, sec. 24:21) Once again, going back to the old anti-Semitic topos which the precursors of Zionism themselves were to face a century earlier. The manly, aggressive, and Nazi aesthetics through which Danny reinvents himself are part of the break with Judaism and his Jewishness, his own version of the post-Holocaust self-hating Diaspora *Muskelfjude*.

As an apparently well-read and cultured person—and also as a Jew—Danny articulates his anti-Semitism by dropping names of famous Jewish thinkers as well as by appealing to anti-Semitic topoi which are to be found all throughout history and written by many famous authors:

The real Jew is a wanderer. He's a nomad. He's got no roots and no attachments. So, he universalizes everything. He can't hammer a nail or plow a field. All he can do is buy, sell, invest capital and manipulate markets. You know, it's like all mental. He takes the life of a people that's rooted in soil, and then he turns it into this cosmopolitan culture based on books and numbers and ideas. You know, this is his strength. Take the greatest Jewish minds ever—Marx, Freud, Einstein—what have they given us? Communism, infantile sexuality, and the atom bomb. In the mere three centuries it's taken these people to emerge from the ghettos of Europe, they've ripped us out of a world of order and reason. They've thrown us into a chaos of class warfare, irrational urges, relativity, into a world where the

existence of matter and meaning is in question. Why? 'Cause it's the deepest impulse of a Jewish soul to pull at the fabric of life till there's nothing left but a thread. *They want nothing but nothingness. Nothingness without end.* (Bean 2003, sec. 25:50, emphasis added)

These two last powerful lines are uttered later on in the movie by Rabbi Malcolm Greenwald. When drawing a parallels between the thirteen minutes that the power cell on the bomb timer gave out and the thirteen attributes of God, the Rabbi explains to the reporter how the highest of all these attributes is “Ain Sofa”, which means “without end” or sometimes “nothingness without end.” (Bean 2003, sec. 26:53) Danny, a former fully observant Orthodox Jew or—as he calls himself in front of his Yeshiva schoolmates—“the only one who does believe”, uses Jewish terminology to argue his anti-Semitism, a high contrast to the other neo-Nazis who appear to be deeply ignorant of Judaism, Jewishness or Jewish history. This is perhaps the biggest irony of the movie: Danny, a Jew, is the only anti-Semite in the whole movie who actually gives reasons for being so. Danny rebels against the omnipotence of God, whom he compares to a “conceited bully”. He rebels against the regulations of Kashrut, against not being able to have chicken with milk, but being able to have chicken with eggs, because for him religion is “about the incomprehensible, not the idiotic.” (Bean 2003, sec. 38:52) But it is not only God’s thirst for power, or the illogical laws that Jews are to follow what makes Danny become an anti-Semite. It is this abstraction, and the nothingness to which it necessarily leads, which permeates the memories of his youth. It is the absence of logic that leads him to rebellion. A rebellion that is nothing but a desperate search for values and beliefs based on the experienceable, on the palpable, on something beyond the narrative. Danny rebels against the Jewish Jew, the yeshiva student, the believer. But Danny’s rebellion is also against the break with that same tradition: against the level of complexity which the non-Jewish Jew suggests by his “lightness of being”, by his ability to move around different paradigms. For, per Danny, the non-Jewishness of the Jew is as Jewish as the Jewishness of the Jewish one.

Although there is something especially unique in the way Danny uses Jewish terminology to construct his anti-Semitic discourse, this type of discourse follows the Nietzschean idea of the Jews as the distorters, as the subverters of values, the kings of

slave morality, who in the Nazi period became another anti-Semitic commonplace and which we discussed in chapter two when reflecting upon Nietzsche's influence on the Zionist movement. This is articulated in a similar way by Yudka, the character of Haim Hazaz' *The Sermon* (2005) when talking about Jewishness and Judaism throughout history. These two characters, although part of very different scenarios, echo common ideas within Jewish self-hatred:

עולם של חושך, של שלילה וסתירה... הצער נעשה אידיאלי יותר מן השמחה, הכאב נעשה יותר מובן מן האושר, הסתירה יותר מן הבנין, השעבוד יותר מן הגאולה, החלום יותר מן המציאות, התקוה יותר מן העתיד לבוא, האמונה יותר מן השכל הישר, וכך עד סוף כל ההפכים... איום! נוצרת פסיכולוגיה אחרת, כמין פסיכולוגיה של לילה (הזז 1952)⁶⁵

Breaking with this Judaism and, in this case by extension, with Jewishness seems like a necessary step for both characters who regard Zionism as a new creation, as a break from the burden of religion, from this psychology of the night. As Danny says when interviewed by the reporter: "A real people derives its genius from the land, from the sun, from the sea, from the soil. This is how they know themselves. But Jews don't even have soil. *Israelis [...] are not Jews*. It's a fundamentally secular society. They no longer need Judaism, because they have soil." (Bean 2003, 25:27, emphasis added) And as Yudka corroborates:

אין הציונות והיהדות דבר אחד, אלא שני דברים שונים זה מזה, אולי גם שני דברים הסותרים זה את זה. בודאי שני דברים הסותרים זה את זה! על-כל-פנים לא היינו הך. כשאדם אינו יכול להיות יהודי הוא נעשה ציוני (הזז 1952)⁶⁶

⁶⁵ "A world of darkness, paradox and negation: sorrow replaces happiness as an ideal, pain becomes the norm rather than pleasure, tearing down rather than building up, slavery rather than redemption, dream rather than reality. Vague hope rather than real plans, faith rather than common sense—and so on and so forth, one paradox after another [...] A different psychology comes into being, a psychology of the night." (Hazaz 2005, 238).

⁶⁶ "Zionism and Judaism are not the same thing at all, but two entirely different things, perhaps even two contradictory things. A man becomes a Zionist when he can't be a Jew anymore." (Hazaz 2005, 245)

Overcoming Judaism and Jewishness entails for both characters a necessary aggressive tone, that in the case of Danny is expressed through actual physical violence, but that in the case of Yudka stays only at a rhetorical level. Nevertheless, he makes clear on several occasions that going from Judaism to Zionism is not a peaceful conversion, but a dramatic event:

הציונות מתחילה ממקום הריסת היהדות... הציונות לא המשך, לא רפואה למכה.
שטויות! היא עקירה והריסה, היא ההיפך ממה שהיה, הסוף...⁶⁷

אנו מחבבים יסורים, שהיסורים מכשירים אותנו להיות יהודים, שאנו משתמשים בהם ומתקיימים בהם ונראים על-ידיהם גיבורים ועזים, עזים יותר מכל העמים שבכל העולם כולו. (הזז 1952)⁶⁸

Both characters argue that there is something inherently destructive in the Jewish identity. According to Yudka, this *Todestrieb* is a necessary quality of the Jew, this longing for external destruction which turns out to be nothing else than an internal act of destruction. Yudka suggests that there is a perverse direct proportionality between the hatred and humiliation that a Jew receives and his feeling of superiority and strength to the point that it has become “our second nature.” Danny holds this exact same idea (“the worse the Jews are treated, the stronger they become”), but goes further by saying that the Jew “wants to be hated, longs for our scorn. He clings to it as if it were the core of his being.” After rediscovering Judaism, Danny still holds these anti-Semitic ideas but instead proposes an alternative way of canalizing his anti-Semitism. Not through killing, but through love: “So if the Jews are, as one of their own has said, a people who will not take yes for an answer, let us say yes to them. They thrive on opposition? Let us cease to

⁶⁷ “Zionism begins with the destruction of Judaism. [...] [It] is not a continuation or a cure for a disease. It’s an act of destruction, a negation of what’s come before, and end.” (Hazaz 2005, 246–47)

⁶⁸ “We love to suffer. It is the suffering that enables us to be Jews, that maintains us and makes us appear strong and heroic, more heroic than anyone else on the face of the earth.” (Hazaz 2005, 239)

oppose them. The only way to annihilate these insidious people once and for all is to open our arms, invite them into our homes, and embrace them. Only then will they vanish into assimilation, normality, and love.” (Bean 2003, sec. 1:18:58)

How can we reconcile Danny’s new way of approaching his anti-Semitism with his suicide later on in the movie? Does Danny fully realize that killing Jews is not the answer, that, perhaps, the only Jew he needs to kill is himself? In response to Wiesel’s quote: Danny sees in rebellion the only way of truly becoming a man. He tries to submit but ends up refusing. Towards the end of the movie, Danny’s girlfriend—who from the very beginning of the film exposes her masochistic sexual desires—seems to find in Judaism her ultimate way of submission: “what if submitting, being crushed, being nothing, not mattering—what if that’s the best feeling we can have?” (Bean 2003, sec. 1:24:24) Danny, nonetheless, cannot accept this intellectual submission. His refusal leads him to bestiality, unable to reconcile his Jewish identity and his anti-Semitism, his Jewish culture and his anti-Semitic logic, incapable of resolving these tensions, this eternal conundrum that his life has become. When talking to the Holocaust survivors, Danny gives them some advice, “kill your enemy”, something that he himself follows. His death is of course as contradictory as his life: Danny dies holding the Torah in a Synagogue, blown up by a bomb that he himself set up, which leads to various interpretations around the question of who kills whom, if we understand Danny as both the murderer and the victim.

What is the purpose behind the analysis of these extreme examples of self-hatred? The analysis of the films *Exodus* in chapter two and *The Believer* in this chapter exemplify two very different ways of coping with anti-Semitism and the consequent self-hatred. On the one hand, interiorizing old Jewish stereotypes can be constructive insofar as it helps in the creation of a new *conatus*, Zionism, as we discussed in chapter two. Ari Ben Canaan forgets about the Jewish past and concentrates only in the present and future of Israel; the Zionist cause permeates every aspect of his life, just like our authors, Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, at some point in their lives, were permeated by it. There is not a trace of self-destruction in Ari, only the will to build a new country. When trying to break with Jewish history, Danny adheres to the physical aspects of the *Muskeljude* as well. However, this post-Holocaust Diaspora Jew’s self-hatred is articulated through the extremism of the neo-Nazi anti-Semitic discourse and aesthetics, which leads him to the

view that “the modern world is a Jewish disease”. With his idea that Zionists are not Jews, Danny makes clear what his object of hatred is; a hatred that although rhetorically directed to Diaspora Jews in general, cannot escape the boundaries of the most profound self-hatred.

The character of Yudka finds its way into this discussion, as he supports many of the ideas that conform to Danny’s anti-Semitic thinking. The similarities between these two characters’ criticism of Judaism and Jewishness challenge our ideas of what constitutes an anti-Semitic discourse, as the boundaries between Jewish self-criticism and anti-Semitism tend to blur to the point that one wonders if criticism of Judaism and Jewish history necessarily entails a certain anti-Semitic aspect. The questions raised by early Zionist theorists like Herzl and Nordau which led to the creation of the New Jew seem to be unresolved in the characters of Yudka and Danny, the latter, based on the real story of Daniel Burros, a former member of the American Nazi Party, who killed himself after it was made public that he was Jewish. The goal behind these examples of extreme self-hatred is the acknowledgment that these questions are still recurrent in many Jewish authors, as we see in the authors here discussed.

Art—literature and cinema in this case—provides us with the proper *locus*, the arena where we can appreciate and analyze such complex dynamics of the human psyche. In these two examples here discussed, we have wanted to shed light upon the tension between self-affirmation and self-hatred which we have seen and will continue to see in many authors. Danny’s self-hatred is the hatred towards Diaspora Jewishness: but it is the hatred towards its religious dimension and its secular one: towards the irrationality of religious belief as well as the, per him, pathological rationality of the one who aims to wander between paradigms and conclude with a relativistic worldview. Danny’s rebels against the self-assurance of the believer and the self-doubt of the atheist, for Danny rejects exile, dispersion; in short, Otherness. Danny’s hatred is directed towards alterity, towards finding one comfort’s zone in an essential Otherness, to not fully belonging to one own’s cultural paradigm, for being attracted to be the Other. But Danny rejects categorizing Zionism as a form of Jewishness. For the Zionists not only have *Blut*, they also have *Boden*. And thus, in a particular manner, Israel escapes Danny’s neo-Nazi anti-Semitism.

The question which arises after this reading of the character of Danny we hold as a key one in the discussion of what constitutes contemporary Jewish self-hatred. If Jewishness is only performable in its essential Otherness, in its alterity regarding a reference Essence, is then the attraction towards a peripheral identity an act of self-hatred per se? A pathological way to develop one own's *in-der-Welt-sein*? Is Jewish nationalism, that is, becoming the reference Essence in a new state, the only act of self-affirmation? And if anti-Zionist Jews feel self-assured in their dynamics of always relating to the new Other and opposing a new Essence, are they self-hating per se? When does one cross the line? These questions we will try to answer in the following pages.

3.5. *Grenzjuden*: the non-Jewish Jew

When discussing the different ways in which Jewishness is articulated in modern times, we could tend to fall back to the Manichean perspective of the “Jewish Jew” and “non-Jewish Jew”, that is, either a Jewish nationalist, a Zionist, perhaps a religious observer (although by no means necessarily). The image of the Jewish Jew is usually connected with a necessary essentialist take on Jewishness. On the other hand, the rootless, the heretic, the Jew who aims to overcome Jewish tradition for finding it too limiting. Positions historically connected—naturally—with specific political ascriptions. Deutscher's concept of the non-Jewish Jew we find crucial in the understanding of contemporary Jewish Diasporism and anti-Zionism, a predominantly left-leaning stance. For Deutscher's atheism made him reject Jewish religion, and his internationalism made him reject Jewish nationalism. His remaining Jewishness is constituted by a consciousness of Otherness and the empathy towards any persecuted minority. The non-Jewish Jew, the type of Jew to which Deutscher adheres, has historically gone beyond traditional cultural paradigms. He is, according to Deutscher, the representative of the Diaspora Jewish intellectual par excellence. Nonetheless, this particular performance of the non-Jewish Jew's Jewishness is as oxymoronic as it sounds, constitutive of the non-Jewish Jew's un-Jewishness. The tension of the non-Jewish Jew is clearly his consciousness of Otherness, as we have pointed out. For it is this consciousness of Otherness, this constant *Zwischenposition* that enables the Jew to wander between paradigms—symptomatic of and, at the same time, reinforcing—a liquid identity, an aspiration towards a more universalist and more encompassing notion of the human being:

They [the non-Jewish Jews] had in themselves something of the quintessence of Jewish life and of the Jewish intellect. They were a priori exceptional in that as Jews they dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the borderlines of various epochs. Their minds matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their respective nations. They were each in society and yet not in it, of it and yet not of it. It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future. (I. Deutscher 1968, 26)

Using the Jewish intellectual as the example of the non-Jewish Jew, Deutscher analyzes the Jewishness within un-Jewishness, the intellectual disposition of Jewish thinkers like Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud; authors who can be considered the epitome of the un-Jewish Jew (and therefore worthy of praise) for contemporary authors like George Steiner as well. By noting the Jewishness of their un-Jewishness, Deutscher—like Steiner—simultaneously includes and excludes this type of Jew from Jewishness: thus, opening the debate around what constitutes Jewishness in *Galut*. It then becomes clear that un-Jewishness is as Jewish as Jewishness itself, that is, the Jewishness of the non-Jewish Jew must be understood as a particular way of relating to one's Jewishness, be it subject to criticism by the so-called Jewish Jew or not. We believe that this tension has constituted—and still does—the biggest tension between Jews nowadays, especially in the political realm, as these colliding *Weltanschauungen* are—as one can only expect—translated into clear political tendencies. The rootless state of the non-Jewish Jew, Deutscher argues, finds “the deepest roots in intellectual tradition and in the noblest aspirations of their times.” (I. Deutscher 1968, 33)

But how does the non-Jewish Jew—theoretically detached from essentialist categories like the ones emanating from tradition—negotiate his Jewishness when confronting anti-Semitism? Deutscher, who is best known for being the biographer of Trotsky, includes in his essay extracts from a letter that Trotsky writes to Bukharin in 1926 after having been subject to anti-Semitic insults in the context of a dispute between

him and Stalin. Apparently, Stalin and many of his fellow socialists, Deutscher notes, made use of anti-Semitic remarks when confronting Trotsky's views: "Is it possible..."—and you can feel in the words and in his underscorings the anguish, the astonishment, and the horror of the man—"is it possible that in our party, in workers' cells, here in Moscow, people should use anti-Semitic insults with impunity? Is it possible?" (I. Deutscher 1968) Deutscher finishes his essay without connecting the embracement of the nation-state (exemplified in the Jewish State) with the constant and never-ending phenomenon of anti-Semitism. For Deutscher, it is "the decay of bourgeois Europe" what forced Jews to embrace the "atavism" which, per him, constitutes the idea of the nation-state, making Jews return to, what Deutscher considers, an anachronic way of government which compartmentalizes a world which becomes more and more interconnected each day. Jews are not to blame for their nationalism, Deutscher claims, but a world which is not ready for "universal human emancipation."

The purpose behind the introduction of the concept of the non-Jewish Jew is precisely to note its background, its aspiration, and the problematics which stem from the ever embracing of such non-Jewish Jewishness. Furthermore, we argue that such concept, although casting plenty of light upon the understanding of the Jewish *Weltanschauung* in *Galut* for centuries, is not sufficient to explain the psychological dynamics of the post-Shoah diasporic Jew we have discussed in this dissertation. For the two authors we have analyzed, Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, do not conform to any of the two clear-cut attitudes towards Jewishness. Understanding both authors within the context of non-Jewish Jews due to their agnosticism and their diasporic condition would fail to perceive a much deeper level of Jewishness which is articulated in their works: for even if agnosticism is the simplistic label which could be used to discuss these authors, their attraction to the Jewish ritual, especially in the case of Ruth Klüger, bespeaks a deeper religious aspiration which Klüger tries to recanalize, as we discussed in chapter one. Furthermore, Klüger's relationship with *Eretz* does not fit into the expectations of neither the non-Jewish Jew nor the Jewish Jew. Thus, the particular *Zwischenposition* of Klüger in her relationship to Jewishness, Judaism, and Zionism must escape such specific differentiations, as we will develop in the following pages. Saul Friedländer's case must naturally be understood in the same terms, especially in his complex and multifaceted relationship with Israel, and his polymorphic identity. What differentiates these authors from the non-Jewish Jews which Deutscher analyzed in his famous essay is, we claim,

the Shoah experience and the creation of the Jewish State. The tension then between non-Jewish Jewishness and Jewish Jewishness exceeds the mere diasporic or internationalist attitude of non-Jewish Jews and the nationalistic identity-wise-essentialist attitude of Jewish Jews.

3.6. Contemporary Jewish anti-Zionism

In Jewish post-Shoah life, these tensions which we have already discussed, find a way through the question of Zionism and the State of Israel. This subchapter, which could have perfectly fit in chapter two, finds a logical placement nevertheless within this ongoing discussion about the problematics of Jewish post-Shoah identity with which we have dealt to this point. Needless to say, public interest in Israel remains very strong both in Europe and America. Nevertheless, we do not aim to tackle the question of why Israel attracts so much public attention, the impact European and American media coverage of Israel has on public discussions or the reasons behind the focus on a particular side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We aim to focus, instead, on Jewish voices in the Western world critical of Israeli politics, society, and, furthermore, its *raison d'être*. For it is not merely the criticism against certain political decisions what stands as the cardinal question in these debates. When discussing Friedländer's Zionist journey, we delved further into Israeli politics and the effect that current Israeli politics has on Friedländer's relationship with the Zionist movement overall. Nevertheless, the tensions between antagonistic Jewish positions regarding Israel or Zionism itself do bespeak antagonistic *Weltanschauungen* and, furthermore, we argue, antagonistic psychologies.

In the last seventeen years, more than twenty-eight books have been published by Jews critical of Zionism and Israel⁶⁹. The points of conflict tend to revolve around war,

⁶⁹ Some of these include works mainly in English and German: *The Tragedy of Zionism: how its revolutionary past haunts Israeli democracy* (Avishai 2002), *Kritik des Zionismus* (Brumlik 2007), *The crisis of Zionism* (Beinart 2012), *How long will Israel survive?: the threat from within* (Carlstrom 2017), *Zionism and its Discontents: a Century of Radical Dissent in Israel/Palestine* (Greenstein 2014), *Overcoming Zionism: creating a single democratic state in Israel/Palestine* (Kovel 2007), *Israels Irrweg* (Verleger 2008), *Israels Schicksal : wie der Zionismus seinen Untergang betreibt* (Zuckermann 2014), *The myths of Zionism* (Rose 2004), *My promised land: the triumph and tragedy of Israel* (Shavit 2013), *Israel*

the concept of the nation-state, nationalism, and religion. These Jewish intellectuals critical of Israel might not be representative of the general intellectual opinion towards Israel or not even of the general Diaspora Jewish opinion towards Israel, but they do constitute a certain critical disposition towards Israel which, moreover, has established itself as politically correct in intellectual and non-intellectual circles all over the Western world.

When discussing Klüger's and Friedländer's relationships with Zionism, we will refer to specific political ideas which directly stem from certain Israeli policies, but, for the purpose of this introduction, we would like to draw the general picture which will cast plenty of light upon posterior analyses of specific political views. What we see at the core of the Jewish criticism against Israel (again, not merely Israeli politics, but the concept of Israel itself as a Jewish state) is a very radical difference in the conceptualization of Jewishness, a non-Zionist way of understanding Jewishness through which the mere creation of Israel is understood as an ontological mistake. Judith Butler's *Parting Ways* (2012) stands as one of the most influential works in this direction, given Butler's reputation as one of the most influential voices of postmodern thinking. Butler's criticism against Israel and Zionism lies around an ethics of cohabitation which, she defends, stems from Judaism itself. Butler's defense of postnationalism leads her to support the creation of a binational state in Israel/Palestine with the subsequent loss of Jewish majority: "Can binationalism be the deconstruction of nationalism?" (Butler 2012, 110) with the hope of "a commitment to the postnational in the name of global cohabitation." (Butler 2012, 111) This binational/postnational aspiration of Butler follows Edward Said's idea of two diasporic conditions (Jews and Palestinians) meeting in Israel/Palestine: "cohabitation may be understood as a form of convergent exiles." (Butler 2012, 121)

The decentered state of the constant diasporic self is then understood as the constitutive state of the Jew per Butler; many of her arguments against Zionism and Israel follow such a premise. *The sacralization of the exilic state* is, of course, not something new in the Jewish world and it follows the take that many 20th-century Jewish authors had on their exilic condition and ultimate Otherness (Herman Cohen or Franz

and Palestine: reappraisals, revisions, refutations (Shlaim 2009), *After Israel: towards cultural transformation* (Svirsky 2014).

Rosenzweig, for example). Butler—a proud diasporic self—finds in *Galut* (not only a physical one but a psychological one) the preferred way of *in-der-Welt-sein*. The authors Butler includes in her work to illustrate her points do follow her diasporistic considerations, namely Hannah Arendt and Primo Levi. The rejection of Zionism by these authors bespeaks a wider and more theoretical rejection of any essentialist categorization of Jewishness. For Jewishness—per them—does not only transcend the Jewish Otherness; Jewishness is, ultimately, a state of essential exogenism produced by the mere categorization of this Jewish alterity. This serves to legitimize both assimilationists and Zionists, Butler argues: “When Arendt refuses to love ‘the Jewish people,’ she is refusing to form an attachment to an abstraction that has served questionable purposes. Generated by a historical logic which insistently separates the abstract principle, ‘the Jewish people,’ from the living plurality of beings it claims to represent, this version of the Jewish people can only reinforce both anti-Semitism and its wrong-minded opponents.” (Butler 2012, 136)

This reference to Arendt’s “lack of love for the Jewish people” is extracted from a correspondence of letters between Arendt and Scholem. After Arendt published her controversial *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Scholem accused Arendt of lacking “Ahavat Yisrael”: “Es gibt in der juedischen Sprache etwa durchaus nicht zu definierendes und voellig konkretes, was die Juden Ahabath Israel nennen, Liebe zu den Juden. Davon ist bei Ihnen, liebe Hannah, wie bei so manchen Intellektuellen, die aus der deutschen Linken hervorgegangen sind, nichts zu merken.” (Arendt and Scholem 2010, 429) Arendt, after rejecting the accusation of being a left-wing intellectual, adds:

Sie haben vollkommen recht, dass ich solche »Liebe« nicht habe, und dies aus zwei Gründen: Erstens habe ich nie in meinem Leben irgendein Volk oder Kollektiv »geliebt«, weder das deutsche, noch das französische, noch das amerikanische, noch etwa die Arbeiterklasse oder sonst was in dieser Preislage. Ich liebe in der Tat nur meine Freunde und bin zu aller anderen Liebe völlig unfähig. Zweitens aber wäre mir diese Liebe zu den Juden, da ich selbst jüdisch bin, suspekt. Ich liebe nicht mich selbst und nicht dasjenige, wovon ich weiss, dass es irgendwie zu meiner Substanz gehört. (Arendt and Scholem 2010, 439–40)

This exchange of letters lets us discern that both thinkers, two of the most influential German-Jewish intellectuals of the 20th century, maintained considerable divergent viewpoints regarding the debate around what constitutes Jewishness and how this Jewishness ought to be performed. They both had common commitments (namely that to the memory of Walter Benjamin), but while Arendt's philosophical background and references have been branded by some as Eurocentric, Scholem always claimed a Judaic tradition, thus embracing an orientalism which was, perhaps to some extent, rejected by Arendt. This is also symptomatic—or perhaps—consequential of divergent conceptualizations of Jewishness, to this day, hard to reconcile. For if Scholem represents the Jewish intellectual who unconditionally commits to Zionist Jewishness very characteristic of the immediate post-Shoah Jewish experience, Arendt, on the other hand, exemplifies *the ambivalent condition of the intellectual aiming to synthesize constant Jewish dialectics*. For although Arendt strongly opposed Jewish assimilationism, she also strongly opposed Jewish essentialism, and while opposing assimilationism might hold a certain acknowledgment of the Jewish orientalism (rejected by Jewish reformers), Arendt's clear eurocentrism strongly demarcated the limits of her own understanding of Jewishness outside of Europe. Neither Zionism nor assimilationism, neither Zionism nor anti-Semitism, neither the nation-state nor a dissipated global identity. The question of self-hatred, of Jewish anti-Semitism, was and is brought once and again by her critics, and although Scholem never publicly branded Arendt as self-hating, one wonders to what extent he would have been of the same opinion.

In the 21st century, a certain sector of Diaspora Jewish anti-Zionist intellectuals supports the dismantling of the Jewish State and the creation of just one state including Israel proper, Gaza, and the West Bank. They, among who we count Judith Butler, furthermore, embrace movements like the BDS Movement, rejecting its intrinsic anti-Semitic nature⁷⁰ and hence the self-hating aspect which, from the Zionist perspective, is normally associated with the endorsing of such anti-Israeli movements. For the purpose of the discussion of our authors' relationship to Zionism and Israel, it is relevant to note that this rejection of Israel's policies transcends the mere ideological question (although it naturally leads to a specific ideological side of the political spectrum): it goes to the

⁷⁰ Gabriel Schoenfeld introduced in his book *The Return of Anti-Semitism* (2004) the concept of 'antisemitism-denial' to refer to this kind of stances.

core of the different conceptualizations of Jewishness, and if—as we have suggested—intellectuals like Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt represented at the time this ongoing tension within the Jewish intellectual milieu, nowadays authors like Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler or Norman Finkelstein, to name some of the most influential left-leaning public figures, are representative of the legacy of diasporistic anti-Zionist Jewish intellectuals⁷¹. All of the aforementioned, by supporting the so-called one-state solution, support—by extension—the end of the Jewish majority in Israel and the destruction of the Jewish State. The authors who we have chosen to discuss in this dissertation, Klüger and Friedländer, represent a very *sui generis* category regarding this ongoing tension within Jewishness. For although partially sharing a diasporistic state and the ethical dilemmas which arise when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, none of them—not Ruth Klüger nor Saul Friedländer—support or have supported any anti-Israel movements, nor the dissolution of the Jewish State, nor have they questioned Israel’s *raison d’être* or the understanding of it as an ontological mistake.

The lines between the categorizations of Jewish self-criticism, Jewish anti-Israelism, Jewish anti-Zionism, Jewish anti-Semitism, and Jewish self-hatred do seem to be indeed categories subject to debate in many cases. In fact, authors like Judith Butler reject the categorization of “self-hating” by supporting that her problematic relationship with the concept of the Jewish State is to be traced to its ontology; her political support of BDS—she claims—does not stem from any form of anti-Semitism or self-hatred but, instead, from a Jewish moral standpoint; a moral standpoint which naturally originates in the moral superiority she must necessarily attribute to her exilic condition; once again, following Rosenzweig idea of exile as the state in which an improvement of Jewish morality can exclusively take place. The lines between what we consider a self-hating condition are naturally subject to debate; for one might doubt that self-hatred could indeed be behind such self-loving expression of one’s own moral authority. Jewish anti-Zionism, however, crosses a crucial line when theoretical disagreements with Jewish nationalism lead to an embracement of active political action against the Jewish State. Nonetheless, it

⁷¹ As we discussed in chapter 1, the limits between religion and secularism are diffused and arguable. Nevertheless, given the academic nature of the authors here discussed, we will avoid treating other anti-Zionist religious groups like Neturei Karta or Satmar Hasidim, ultra-orthodox groups who oppose the modern State of Israel, understanding the state as an anti-messianic act. See Inbari (2016)

should be noted that the arguments for the categorization of this type of Jewish intellectuals as self-hating would fit within a historical and broader dynamics within Jewishness: Jewish self-hatred is indeed a very Jewish phenomenon as Sander Gilman (1989) has excellently noted, but one wonders if introducing such a categorization to any Jewish anti-Zionist position may necessarily incur a reductionism and, perhaps, a neglect of a deeper analysis of anti-Zionism as a Jewish phenomenon: a phenomenon which, until recently, grows all over the West, especially in left-leaning intellectuals.

The difficult task for anyone aiming to delve further into such complex topic is precisely coming to a holistic and aseptic view of the matter, for especially anti-Semitism is to such an extent entrenched in Western thought that one might find hard to disentangle it from any political discourse regarding Jewry or the Jewish State. As Assaf Sagiv has excellently noted, even Jewish authors who would not bespeak traditional, or expected, forms of Jewish self-hatred are victims of their own sources and can incur in anti-Semitic rhetoric by echoing anti-Semitic commonplaces recurrent in Christian theology or German philosophy: the foundation of their intellectual background (Alexander and Bogdanor 2006, 56). In fact, Zygmunt Bauman's concept of *allosemitism*⁷² fits very conveniently the phenomenon we aim to explain. For it is the ambivalent figure of the Jew in Western public imagination what makes the analysis of Jewish authors especially challenging.

Noting the different, diverse and contradictory manifestations of anti-Semitism would definitely be a subject worthy of being delved further, but for the purpose of the understanding of the complex crystallizations of these authors' identity after the Shoah, it is crucial to highlight that it would be a mistake to understand the Jewish author as only the passive victim of anti-Semitism/*allosemitism*. This, naturally, needs further

⁷² Zygmunt Bauman popularized the term *allosemitism* (originally *allosemitizm*) in his essay "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern" (Cheyette 1998), a term which was however previously coined by Polish literary critic Artur Sandauer in his work *O sytuacji pisarza polskiego pochodzenia żydowskiego w XX wieku: (rzecz, którą nie ja powinienem był napisać...)* (Sandauer 1982) and which aimed to make reference to the ambivalent prejudices usually connected with Jews. Rather than understanding the relationship of non-Jews towards Jews as strictly negative, Sandauer, and subsequently Bauman, aimed to point out the contradicting feelings in this relationship of non-Jews with the Jewish Other, a relationship which necessarily amalgamates positive and negative attributes.

explanation: the response of Saul Friedländer and Ruth Klüger to anti-Semitism during the Shoah period and in the aftermath of it is asserting Jewishness; something which necessarily leads them to embrace, in one way or another, Zionist ideas⁷³. Each one of these authors follows a different path in their relationship to Zionism and Israel as we have already noted in chapter two and will continue to discuss in this chapter from a slightly different point of view. Asserting (one's) Jewishness is, however, not the only response to anti-Semitism. As we saw when analyzing the character of Danny, *self-hatred is yet another response to anti-Semitism*. For the responses to anti-Semitism throughout the centuries have been numerous, as Ben Rafael notes: "Jews have illustrated over the centuries a most varied gamut of reactions to the hatred turned against them. These reactions run from suicide, conversion to Christianity or Islam to emigration to more tolerant places, turning to mysticism or disguisement." (Ben Rafael 2014, 27) Some scholars⁷⁴, who tackle the controversial topic of Jewish self-hatred, do agree that radical anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist positions do bespeak self-hatred. Some other scholars clearly make a difference between Jewish anti-Semitism and Jewish self-hatred. Furthermore, these scholars see the potential aspects of identity politics present in the use such

⁷³ It could also be argued that *Bundism* and, more precisely, the *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbetersbund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland*, (אַלגעמיינער יידישער אַרבעטערסבונד אין ליטע, פּוילן און רוסלאַנד) was another political way of asserting Jewishness in the context of the *fin de siècle* / early 20th century Eastern Europe. See Chaim Zhitlowsky : *Philosoph, Sozialrevolutionär und Theoretiker einer säkularen nationaljüdischen Identität* (Schweigmann-Greve 2012) and *The tragedy of a generation: the rise and fall of Jewish nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Karlip 2013). For a specific analysis between the irreconcilable views of both Jewish nationalist movements (Bundism and Zionism), see "Here-ness, There-ness, and Everywhere-ness: The Jewish Labour Bund and the Question of Israel, 1944-1955" (Slucki 2010).

⁷⁴ We have already made reference to Sander Gilman's *Jewish self-hatred* (1986) where Gilman explicitly notes that Jewish self-hatred lies behind the radical opposition to the Jewish State. Harvard psychiatrist Kenneth Levin has also explained Jewish self-hatred as a kind of Stockholm Syndrome which can be found in populations under siege: "Segments of populations under chronic siege commonly embrace the indictments of the besiegers, however bigoted and outrageous. They hope that by doing so and reforming accordingly they can assuage the hostility of their tormenters and win relief. This has been an element of the Jewish response to anti-Semitism throughout the history of the Diaspora." (Levin 2006) Levin also goes further and compares the psychology of self-hating individuals with that of abused children. The most recent article published on the topic to this day is Irving Louis Horowitz's "New Trends and Old Hatreds: Antisemitism in the Twenty-First Century" (Horowitz 2017).

categorizations⁷⁵. Naturally, the study of particularisms is crucial in order to understand from where an author is coming and how their relationship to Jewishness is articulated. We do not aim, in any case, to categorize these authors, in absolute terms and in a static way, as self-hating or self-affirming. We, from the very beginning of this dissertation, have preferred to brand these dynamics as self-hating or self-affirming *attitudes*: the eventual development of a static state of self-affirmation or self-hatred includes many other variables beyond the mere initial attitudes. It needs to be noted, nevertheless, that these categories are the object of study of a long literature. They have historically represented a real phenomenon in Jewish history and still do; hence, the sometimes-heated discussion around the question of who is to exemplify a self-hating or a self-affirming Jew constitutes, as well, part of the collective consciousness, and the intertextuality, of the authors here discussed.

3.7. Jewish *Halbheit* and *Hypereuropäismus*

In chapter two, we noted the importance of the Shoah experience in the development of the Zionist Jewishness of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer. The embrace of Zionism during the Shoah years and in the immediate aftermath can be read as an affirmation of Jewishness when exposed to anti-Semitism, hence the development of this *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* character to which we have repeatedly referred. When tackling the topic of the flourishing of Zionism among European Jews from the *fin de siècle* until the aftermath of the Shoah, Zionism as a response to anti-Semitism is introduced as the cardinal idea. We have seen how Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer initially understand Zionism in this way. At this point of this dissertation, nevertheless, we would like to refer to Moritz Goldstein's writings regarding the German-Jewish question. For Goldstein (1880-1977) is yet another Jewish perspective of all the variants we have analyzed in this chapter. An author like him needs to be brought into the conversation, especially given the fact that his two main essays regarding Zionism and the Jewish question, written in German, have not been translated into other languages. Goldstein has remained until

⁷⁵ See *Pathologizing dissent: Identity politics, Zionism and the 'self-hating Jew'* (Finlay 2005)

today a not-enough discussed Jewish author, even when he stands as archetypical of the ambivalent position of the German-Jewish intellectual.

Goldstein's writings appear to us as crucial in the understanding of Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, for he represents Jewish self-affirmation in the face of anti-Semitism, a rejection of self-hatred and the embrace of Zionism at a theoretical level. But Goldstein also represents the Jew who was too European to become really engaged in the Zionist project; the epitome of the ambivalence of European Jewry during the first half of the 20th century. Like many authors here discussed, Goldstein, in his 1912 and 1913 writings, understood Zionism as a way of Jewish self-affirmation, rejecting assimilation—and assimilationists—and calling, instead, for *a dissimulation from German society after the notable failure of the German-Jewish symbiosis*. However, noting the impossibility of synthesizing Germanness and Jewishness is not the only theoretical conundrum for Goldstein: while denouncing the lack of a Jewish public sphere in Germany and, thus, the idealist view of a real Jewish-German symbiosis⁷⁶, Goldstein also reflects upon the difficulties of rejecting Germanness in the context of the beginning of the 20th century in Germany: “Könnten wir je aufhören zum größeren Teil Deutsche zu sein?” (M. Goldstein 1912, 291)

“*Halbheit*” is the Jew's state; a state which bespeaks a constant tension between Germanness and Jewishness in the public sphere. Assimilationists, that is, those Jews who would reject “their Jewish side”, are regarded by Goldstein as the real enemies of the real Jew: “unsre wahren Feinde” (M. Goldstein 1912, 293), as he calls them. For they are the ones who do not realize that a real inclusion in German and Western-European society is simply a myth: “Wir Juden, unter uns, mögen den Eindruck haben, als sprächen wir als Deutsche zu Deutschen—wir haben den Eindruck. Aber mögen wir uns immerhin ganz deutsch fühlen, die andern fühlen uns ganz undeutsch.” (M. Goldstein 1912, 286) The self-hating Jew, even if this term is by no means used by Moritz, would then be “die Juden, die nichts merken, die unentwegt deutsche Kultur machen, die so tun, als ob, und sich einreden, man erkenne sie nicht” (M. Goldstein 1912, 294), that is, the Jew who does

⁷⁶ “Es gibt keine jüdische Öffentlichkeit; es ist in Deutschland, überhaupt in Westeuropa nicht möglich, zur Gesamtheit der Juden als Juden zu sprechen, soviel wir auch über uns sprechen lassen müssen.” (M. Goldstein 1912, 282)

not realize that he is being expelled from the European society (if he was ever included), as the following years would corroborate.

Germanness and Jewishness are understood by Goldstein as in a constant state of collision, an irresolvable tension, but like Klüger, Goldstein praises the Jewishness of German culture: “deutsche Kultur [ist] zu einem nicht geringen Teil jüdische Kultur [...] Der deutsche Frühling ist auch uns ein Frühling, wie der deutsche Winter unser Winter war.” (M. Goldstein 1912, 291) A year later, in 1913, Goldstein’s rhetoric becomes highly Zionist. The initial reflecting nature of *Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass* bespeaks an awakening to Jewish nationalism and self-affirmation: making Aliyah and a process of Hebraization are suggested by Goldstein as plausible alternatives to life in Germany, while at the same time he praises Jewish Germanness. This specific articulation of Jewish nationalism does not have an explicitly Zionist motivation, even if it was highly praised among Zionists, and even if many of the initial Zionist ideas of the time are perfectly discernable in Goldstein’s writing. In Goldstein’s *Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass*, we see the recognition of a failed symbiosis, the end of a love-affair: “Unser Verhältnis zu Deutschland ist das einer unglücklichen Liebe” (M. Goldstein 1912, 292), and, consequently, the adherence to a national(ist) conception of Jewishness. The initial tension portrayed in *Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass* regarding Jewishness and Germanness is now synthesized in *Wir und Europa* and inserted in a larger theoretical reflection and ontological revision of what constitutes Europeanness. Recognizing the Jewish foundation of European Christian ethics, or the Jewish contribution to European thought throughout the centuries constitutes of the first steps in the Jewish self-affirming process; a means to claim an inclusiveness which is denied to the Jew; “Die Juden waren Voreuropäer” notes Goldstein. In *Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass*, the return to some kind of Jewish orientalism is then portrayed as a laudable possibility in this context. In *Wir und Europa*, nevertheless, Goldstein synthesizes the Jewishness-Germanness dialectic through the understanding of Jewishness, a highly Zionist Jewishness, as not only the original Europeanness, but as *the future of Europeanness*. In order to continue with the European legacy, that which per him originated with Jewish ethics, Jews need to leave Europe: “Europäisch sein heißt für uns über Europa hinausgehen. Wollen wir eine jüdische Nation sein, so müssen wir uns aufs neue außerhalb Europas stellen und das werden, was wir im Grunde sind: das Volk der Idee.” (M. Goldstein 1913, 205)

We noted, in chapter two, the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy in Zionist rhetoric and thought. In early Zionist writings, Nietzschean concepts like the *Wille zur Macht* or the *Übermensch* are sometimes used explicitly. Nietzschean positive nihilism lies at the base of many articulations of Jewish Zionist self-affirmation and Goldstein explicitly recognizes such influence without disregarding the irony which lies behind it:

Wenn die Juden überhaupt etwas wert sind so sind sie es als nationales Individuum. Sie haben etwas zu bedeuten, weil auch sie ein Volk sind—oder wenn sie es noch nicht sind, so müssen sie es werden. Mit dieser Konsequenz war der Zionismus gegründet, nämlich der Zionismus, der mit einem Male werbende Kraft besaß und Anhänger gewann. Nicht als Reaktionäre, sondern als sehr moderne Menschen sind wir Nationaljuden geworden. Man könnte paradox sagen: Wir sind es geworden als Schüler Nietzsches. (M. Goldstein 1913, 196)

Behind such positive nihilism, however, stands always the shadow of the nothingness; a tension between a more positive take on nihilism and a more negative one (bespeaking perhaps only different cognitive states to understand the same set of nihilist postulates). It is in response to this nothingness how Zionist rhetoric finds its full political power and *Wir und Europa* stands as one of the most standing examples of it. In it, Goldstein affirms his Jewishness, his need for a public sphere, his need for a *Sprachgefühl* and, thus, it must be understood as an affirmation to some kind of Jewish essence which transcends any strictly-religious aspect, that is, a Jewish *ethnos*. Zionism represents for Goldstein not only a national and ethnic affirmation but a way—if not the only way—to fight European nihilism, a state of *Angst* and lack of purpose. Zionism stands for Goldstein as a way, if not *the* way, to overcome “die Sinnlosigkeit des Daseins”. Positive nihilism, its rhetoric of *Selbstüberwindung* and Zionism are portrayed as a logical philosophical and political option; it indeed bespeaks a particular *Zeit* and *Volksgeist*: “Wenn die Welt keinen Sinn hat und wenn wir doch ohne diesen Sinn nicht leben können, so muß der Mensch, vermöge seiner Fähigkeit des Wertsetzens, ihr einen Sinn geben. Dieser neue Sinn ist, in Nietzsches Formel bekanntlich *der Übermensch*.” (M. Goldstein 1913, 205, emphasis added)

The reformation of Judaism is understood by Goldstein as a lack of Jewish self-affirmation, it would be inserted within the set of assimilationist initiatives and, therefore, rather than a fight against the meaninglessness of Jewish European life, Reform Judaism would consequently mean a defeat. Goldstein's establishment of the limits regarding the negotiation of both opposing essences does acknowledge the intrinsic paradoxes which necessarily stem from such convoluted dynamics of *Halbheit*. For it is the constant *consciousness of Halbheit* that triggers such need for a more crucial—in psychological terms—negotiation between self-hatred and self-affirmation. The Goldstein we see in *Wir und Europa* is strongly influenced by Zionist rhetoric at a time previous to the most catastrophic event in modern Jewish history. Goldstein's self-affirmation does not understand Zionism and the return to Zion only as an embrace of the oriental character of the Jew. It does mean a return to a presupposed Jewish essence which necessarily includes some oriental aspect. Nevertheless, Goldstein's Jewish inclusion in European ethical and intellectual reality makes him able to synthesize the oriental and the occidental character of European Jewishness. Zionism and the return to Zion are, thus, understood as the only way for European Jews to continue Europeanness, a continuation which, per Goldstein, needs to take place necessarily outside of European borders:

Nachdem wir einen und vielleicht den stärksten Anstoß zur Bildung des geistigen Europa gegeben haben, nachdem wir lange Jahrhunderte nur unterirdisch im Strom der europäischen Entwicklung mitgeführt wurden, nachdem wir endlich zum modernen Europäismus erwacht sind und aus ihm die Kraft zu nationaler Widergeburt gesogen haben: stellen wir uns nun, als letzte Konsequenz europäischer Lehren, entschlossen außerhalb Europas. *Wir werden hypereuropäisch*, und zum zweiten Male im Laufe der Weltbegebenheiten geht von Judäa das Heil aus. (M. Goldstein 1913, 209, emphasis added)

Moritz Goldstein represents in these two essays the initial rejection of any form of interiorized anti-Semitism and, thus, self-hatred, making use instead of Nietzschean and Zionist rhetoric to semantically crystalize Jewish self-affirmation. A much later essay by Goldstein, *German Jewry's Dilemma* (1957), this time written in English after having migrated to the United States, portrays the quandaries inherent to the logic of the two

previous essays we have discussed. Goldstein never made Aliyah: his apparent strong support to the Zionist cause stayed always at a theoretical level and thus, the idea of Israel, remains—as in the case of Klüger—an eternal subjunctive. Goldstein’s embrace of the Zionist cause and Jewish self-affirmation contained, as articulated through the Nietzschean/Zionist rhetoric of the time, in hindsight, a logical dilemma, even if Goldstein aimed to reconcile the oriental and occidental characters which necessarily constituted European (Ashkenazi) Jewishness, even if Israel was defended by Goldstein as the only way to continue being European, a way of continuing Western tradition necessarily outside of Europe. For a much older Goldstein—by then, already, an American citizen—“the dilemma asked for some bold decision: either to become wholly Jewish or wholly German.” A much older Goldstein is still unable to synthesize Germanness and Jewishness, that is, the at-the-time Zionist offer and the pro-European assimilationist alternative. For the relationship between Jewishness and Germanness always contained a Manichaean logic, a necessary collision of essences which stemmed from Goldstein’s desperate attempt at achieving self-affirmation in the face of anti-Semitism. For the already-triclinic and conflicted German-Jewish identity of Goldstein, in desperate need for synthesis, never achieved it.

Just like many intellectuals of the 20th century who faced the most extreme form of anti-Semitism, the Shoah, either by being a victim or a hopeless observer, and who were exposed to the rhetoric and the hopes of Zionist self-affirmation, Goldstein (like Hannah Arendt, Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer as well) faced a tension hard (if not impossible) to resolve; a tension which always pivoted around the question which Goldstein in his first essay portrays and which in his second essay aims to reconcile: the tension of how to negotiate Jewishness and Germanness/Europeanness. An option we see in many authors who never properly come to a solution of this dilemma—within the dialectical relationship between Europe and Israel—is precisely this one Goldstein exemplifies: rejecting Zionism or life in Israel as an option but not adhering to anti-Zionism per se (or in the case of Friedländer, dismissing life in Israel). If authors like Goldstein or Ruth Klüger exemplify the Jew who never decided to embrace the idea of Jewish life in Israel (and instead always kept it at a subjunctive mood), Friedländer exemplifies a particular case of the Jew who chooses *Galut* after having made Aliyah, that is, after the impossibility of adherence to Jewish national affirmation.

Nevertheless, what all these authors share is not a rejection of the Zionist cause per se nor the understanding of Israel as an ontological mistake. These authors do not get involved in anti-Zionist movements nor understand their Jewishness strictly in opposition to Zionism or Israel, that is, in opposition to Jewish nationalism and in accordance to a presupposed ethical superiority regarding *Galut* life. Israel bespeaks more than a physical place: it bespeaks a metaphysical, a psychological one; a place that *needs to be*. However, it is not only Israel—both the metaphysical and the physical place—the alternative to *Galut* in Europe. *Galut* proves to be still an option even after having adhered at some point in their lives to the Zionist logic. America—mostly *de facto*—is portrayed by Goldstein, as well as it is portrayed by Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer, as a particular type of chosen *Galut*. It does not reach the level of considering America “the new Zion”, as Nathan Zuckerman—the fictional novelist of Philip Roth’s novels—would suggest. Goldstein finally leaves Europe: the only way to become “hypereuropäisch”, as he defends in *Wir und Europa*. Nevertheless, “Judäa” is not his destination: America is. As he explains, “no intellectuals were needed over there [in Israel] but strong arms to build roads and break the arid soil.” (M. Goldstein 1957, 243) “Need I be ashamed of that indecision and inability. I don’t know” reflects a 77-year-old Moritz Goldstein who, after never having made Aliyah, reflects upon his Zionist journey: a journey which nevertheless never took him to the secularly-sacralized *Eretz Yisrael* of his early writings. Israel, nevertheless, remains Goldstein’s principal hope for the Jewish people: “it [the State of Israel] will show a new kind or rather the ancient kind of Jew to the world again. It will give to world Jewry a new dignity, or rather restore its ancient dignity” (M. Goldstein 1957, 254) as well as the United States, Goldstein’s second hope; the country where Jews “are Jews and do not wish to be anything else.” (M. Goldstein 1957, 253)

Goldstein’s case constitutes a particular one on its own, naturally. It, nevertheless, echoes many ideas we have discussed in this chapter. On the one hand, Goldstein was profoundly against assimilationists, like Hannah Arendt, but his early writings cannot be understood outside the framework of Zionist rhetoric and ideas. Indeed, we would argue, they can be used as perfect examples of Zionist writings, for they echo the same tensions and provide the same solutions. His later decision to move West instead of East indicates a state which we have seen in other authors who, in the end, do not comply with their early Zionist expectations. It has been argued that Goldstein was neither an assimilationist nor a Zionist and, to some extent, it is true if we strictly focus on his decision not to make

Aliyah. Nonetheless, the German-Jewish question and the process of dissimilation which takes place in the Jewish mind from the *fin de siècle* onwards, Jewish self-affirmation, and the constant tension with anti-Semitism and Jewish self-hatred cannot be fully understood if we ignore the Zionist phase of many of these authors, Goldstein included. Zionism constituted a new never-previously-seen-in-*Galut* Jewish identity whose ultimate goal was one of national affirmation but also *Selbstüberwindung*. Furthermore, even if Zionism was not fully embraced, it constituted—and marked—a new way of relating to Jewishness outside the paradigm of *Galut* life and identity.

3.8. Ruth Klüger

A high number of studies which have dealt with the life and works of Ruth Klüger pivot around Klüger's feminist views. It is not coincidental that her identity as a woman—as a feminist woman—is regarded as one of the principal ones, especially when most of these studies take place under the optic of feminist criticism. In the first chapter of this dissertation, we tackled topics related to Klüger's feminism, especially in the context of the conflict between her feminist views and her religious aspirations. As we saw, Klüger's criticism on religion must not solely be understood only through the collision between traditional religion and feminism. Klüger's lack of consideration for alternative branches of Judaism was suggested in chapter one as symptomatic of a certain attraction to ambivalences. In chapter two, we also exemplified these ambivalences when dealing with Klüger's relationship with Zionism and Israel: the country which she always felt hers, where a language which always felt hers was spoken after an experience which made her feel Jewish. These constant ambivalent feelings which we have discussed in this dissertation find a logical conclusion in this last chapter, where we aim to delve further into these ambivalences regarding identity. These ambivalences must also be understood as part of a general post-Shoah condition which we see in many Jewish authors, especially—although, naturally, not only—in Shoah survivors. Therefore, although some of the ideas we will discuss in this chapter draw from points previously made, the inclusion of more psychoanalytic tools will aim at casting light on one of the most difficult and controversial areas to discuss when dealing with Jewish authors, especially in the post-Shoah context.

The concept of identity can naturally be subject to discussion. It is nowadays—unsurprisingly—semantically very loaded and, in the last decades, it has even become a rather feeble concept. The linguistic-philosophical debate to which the delimitation of such concept leads must, once again, take us back to the authors' own conceptualization of it. It is the particular way in which these signifiers are used what can shed light upon the question of how post-Shoah life experience articulates itself. For the construction of identity and the recognition of it as a convoluted—sometimes conflicted—and always polymorphic construct will give us plenty of space to come to a more holistic view of the different vectors which play a role in the post-Shoah Jewish experience. Furthermore, it will give us clues to answer the question of how to delimit the intertextuality present in

our authors' writings. For the discussion of Ruth Klüger's intertextuality and identity vectors, three different paradigms must be considered: those pertaining to Germanness, Jewishness, and Americanness.

3.8.1. A post-Shoah Jewish Germanist

Needless to say, after the Shoah, a process of *de-germanization* of Jewish life was more than expected both in Israel as well as in the context of the new Diaspora from Europe to the American continent. Klüger's initial choice at the university, as well as many other choices regarding the use—or rather the lack—of the German language in a familiar context can be read in this direction. Klüger never spoke in German to her children, nor even to her husband, who happened to be a Berliner. The indelible link between language and literature and the culture and history in which it must always be contextualized necessarily offers, to anyone who chooses to study it, a battleground for identity negotiation. For from what perspective is one supposed to look at the literature of a certain nation? Especially if it is written in one own's mother tongue. Becoming a Germanist is thus explained by Ruth Klüger as also a source of questions, as she notes in *unterwegs verloren*: “Warum hast du eine sichtbare Nummer? Warum? Weil ich im KZ war, ihr Idioten. Und trotzdem fragte mich einer eines Abends, als man kollegial zusammensaß, voller Erstaunen: »Was, du hast einmal den Judenstern getragen?« Ja, ich bin doch aus Wien, das weißt du doch, aus dem Wien, das der Hitler angeschlossen hat. Und denk mir: *Und du willst Germanist sein?*” (Klüger 1992, 24, emphasis added)

For the victim—who also happens to be a scholar—coming to terms with the land and the culture of the perpetrators finds a logical path in the study of its language, its philosophy, and its literature: that is, the cultural production of its greater minds. Nevertheless, the same questions always arise, even if one avoids the “Jewish reading”: how is one to negotiate the essential Otherness the text necessarily projects on the Jewish reader, particularly after the Shoah? And, especially in Klüger's case, that is, not the Jewish reader for whom the culture might perhaps seem alien (Klüger's American family, for example), but the Jewish reader who has previously been expelled from the culture and society in which this production flourished. The path of the Jewish Germanist—Ruth Klüger—entails a break with the general trend in post-Shoah Jewish thought, for instead

of a degermanization of Jewishness, Klüger decides to go back to Germany and its culture, go back to *Ashkenaz*—rather than physically—first through literature.

In many ways, Klüger's Germanist path could be read as another attempt at the German-Jewish dialogue. Finding the Jewish side of Germanness, as well as the German side of Jewishness, can be seen in different essay works of Klüger. Going back to the German language is nothing but another attempt at trying to rescue the German Ashkenazi identity, that which during and after the Shoah was negated to the Jew; for the Essence was, once again, willing to exterminate the Other within it. Delving further in German culture was not only an attempt at understanding the culture which gave Klüger its native language but also trying to understand her fragmented post-Shoah self; the side effect being that the post-Shoah Jewish Germanist is always connected to the history of Germanness and, thus, can always find himself stuck in a naturalized state of self-aware Otherness: a state which could be especially pronounced in the case of the post-Shoah Jewish Germanist.

Finding the Jewish space within Germanness is a necessary move when tackling the Jewish-German question from the point of view of the Jewish Germanist. In Klüger's works, it could be argued, there is a disregard of the orientalism which could be exemplary of Jewish life previous to the emancipation. Instead, Klüger praises the Jewish adherence to the German *Hochkultur* and the Jewish inclusion in it. The secular Jew became in Germany not only a decent thinker who was able to respond to the intellectual necessities of German concerns. Moreover, the German Jew helped to shape not only German thought but Western thought in general. Klüger praises the secularization of the Jew and its inclusion in European intellectual life: "For language is the strongest bond there is between an individual and a place. *German, strange as this statement may sound, is a Jewish language.* Consider that until the Holocaust, most of the world's prominent secular Jews spoke and wrote it: Kafka, Freud, Einstein, Marx, Heine, Theodor Herzl, and Hannah Arendt." (Klüger 2001a, 205, emphasis added) For Klüger praises Jewish emancipation and its inclusion in modernity, the German society, and the Jewish cultural production in the Germany language. German was the language of the Jewish *intelligentsia*, of the Jewish intellectual *milieu* from modernity onwards, a very specific phenomenon which took place especially in Germany.

There is, however, a line which—as fine as it might seem to some—means a completely different psychological state of the Germanic Jew. In chapter one, we discussed how the creation and *re*-creation of aesthetic formations constitutes a crucial stage in group identity formation. In the context of the Shoah, as we have incessantly argued in this dissertation, the *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* character of the Jew flourishes: that is, a necessity to survive, to overcome a state of denigration and self-hatred when exposed to Nazi anti-Semitism and its racial ideology. When discussing the negotiation between Jewishness and Germanness which takes place in the context of Reform (and Conservative) branches of Judaism, we alluded to Klüger's rejection of non-Orthodox branches of Judaism to perform a ritual which would entail the possibility of exonerating the ghost her father becomes. When tackling the level of Otherness which is acceptable in the Jewish mind when living within the host culture, a conversation between Klüger and a German colleague of hers, Herbert Lehnert, elucidates significantly the subtle line between total assimilation and the preservation of some kind of Jewishness. Complete assimilation necessarily involves forgetting one's Jewishness; this can consist perhaps on becoming baptized and, thus, the idea of fully adhering to the host culture entails Klüger's rejection as it might be understood as mere self-hatred: "My Jewish liberal background decreed that Orthodox Jews were fanatics and baptized Jews were spineless assimilationists." (Klüger 2001a, 194)

The above-mentioned and below-cited conversation between Herbert Lehnert and Ruth Klüger serves us to understand the difficulties of a real German-Jewish conversation. It manifests, furthermore, that even if a dialogue can take place, a mutual understanding is, perhaps, not even reachable. For, again, we can discern the constant tension between the Essence and the necessary Otherness which inexorably flourishes within, and in contrast to, it. This particular Other, although trying to contribute to the Essence, aims—without even wanting to perhaps—at editing it. The Essence—Germanness in this case—collides with the Otherness: German Jewishness in this case. For Jewishness, in the eyes of Lehnert, resembles not a mere peculiarity of a heterogeneous society. It is not only another shade of the Essence: it is the Otherness *par excellence*, whose peculiarity needs to be eradicated and, thus, eliminated. Naturally, with these words, we are operating at a very abstract level. Hence, we understand the possible margin of error which can be contained in the dynamics portrayed in our reflection. Nonetheless, the theoretical conflict we point out still persist in the post-Shoah

conversation between the German and the German Jew, for it represents the conversation, still, between colliding essences, that of *Deutschland* and *Ashkenaz*:

Lehnert: We must look at the Hitler era in absolute terms. It was a terrible time. It was especially cruel for you, but it was just an episode. In my research work, German Jews play a very important role. And this period of assimilation for German Jews who just wanted to be Germans, in a way, you can revive this period. Sometimes I think of our friendship in these terms.

Klüger: Yes, but I wouldn't say I'm part of that, because to a certain extent I despise that generation of German Jews who wanted to be nothing but Germans. I'd also add that childhood is not just an episode. It is much more important. You're trivializing childhood by saying that it's only an episode in life: it's the root. (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 41:30)

For the Otherness of Jewishness transcends its mere oriental character, something that the fathers of the Reform movement were unable to understand at their time and context, thinking that perhaps a westernization of Judaism would suffice. Jewishness itself transcends its religious manifestation in a secular—or secularized—world between secular—or secularized—people. Jewishness seems, in Lehnert words, to represent the failure of the Essence in its tension against the Other, the failure of the idealist conception of identity when confronted with its polymorphic—perhaps even dysmorphic—counterpart. And thus, this conversation, between a post-Shoah German immigrant and a post-Shoah Germanic Jewish refugee in the United States still echoes the eternal tension inherent to the Jewish-German question.

The difficulties of the Jewish-German dialogue are also portrayed in Klüger's reference to his long-time friend and colleague Martin Walser⁷⁷. The question of the epistemological validity of the victim's account is again tackled in yet another Jewish-

⁷⁷ References to Walser are to be found in both *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*. In *weiter leben*, however, Walser's name is Cristoph. Thus, perhaps, due to the benefit of anonymity, their relationship is delved further in Klüger's German autobiography than in the English one.

German dialogue. Cristoph—Walser in disguise—appeals to one of the ideas supported by the German historians of the 80s involved in the *Historikerstreit*, also supported by Broszat during the exchange of letters with Friedländer, as we will further discuss later: “Ohne mit einer Unhöflichkeit rund herauszukommen läßt Cristoph durchblicken, ich könne kein gemäßigtes Urteil fällen über die Katastrophen, die uns heute bedrohen, denn für mich sei von Haus aus alles katastrophal, und auch das Prinzip Hoffnung verstehe ich aus biographischen Gründen nicht.” (Klüger 1992, 219) As we will also see in the Friedländer-Broszat exchange, nevertheless, accusing the other of being emotionally biased can be argued bidirectionally: “Ich [Klüger] antwortete, daß vielleicht auch die Urteilsfähigkeit der früheren Hitlerjungen durch ihre Erziehung beeinträchtigt sei. Die Bemerkung hält er für unangebracht.” (Klüger 1992, 219)

As we will further discuss in depth when tackling the *Historikerstreit*, the problem which lies at the core of the failure regarding the Jewish-German conversation is the one which stems from the dynamics of a post-Shoah generation of Germans when approaching Germany’s catastrophic past, that is, the problematics originating when this generation aims to find and, furthermore, support a positive patriotic stance. In *Still Alive*, Klüger’s references to Walser are more ambivalent. While acknowledging Walser’s lack of bad intentions, the dynamics to tackle the past which Walser uses, echo the same ones used by the revisionist historians involved in the *Historikerstreit*:

He is attacked by the liberal intellectuals; they wrongly accuse him of nationalism and associate these ideas with Nazi ideas. [...] He doesn’t talk enough [...] about the Nazis, according to his critics. In fact, he has put himself into the line of fire by arguing in public that Germans have to move on and put the Nazi past behind them. My old friend is a convenient target, to be sure, for simple-minded generalizations, but also a far too convenient rallying point for those who want to swear allegiance to the entire Germanic past. [...] He is the focus of controversy that has at its core the question of *how to be a German patriot*.

The best of young Germans shrug it off; the worst of the old Germans blame the Jews and the foreigners. Then there is a broad middle section with Martin Walser as their spokesman. I admit that sometimes I avoid him for months. There have been times when I never wanted to see him again. Or read him again. He leaves

out too much and defends the omissions. He doesn't whitewash the past, but he straddles a fence. Not untypical of his countrymen. Then I do read his latest book and love the way he strings words together. Then I do visit, and there is both the distance and the human warmth. Now in his seventies, he is still what he was in his twenties: the epitome of what *attracts* and *repels* me about his country. (Klüger 2001a, 169, emphasis added)

In the interaction between Walser and Klüger, many of the dilemmas inherent to the post-Shoah German-Jewish conversation emerge. Klüger's account portrays the difficulties, or even, the impossibility at developing an aseptic-enough approach to tackle the past and develop a new identity without the burden of it. Klüger acknowledges the issue of colliding memories and, thus, the impossibility of a post-Shoah Jewish-German understanding, at least, for their generation: "Im Gespräch mit Christoph [Walser] fang ich, wie ein Streichholz Feuer fängt, den Geruch, das unsagbare Gespür, das prickelnde Fingerspitzengefühl jener Nachkriegsjugendjahre. *Erinnerung verbindet uns, Erinnerung trennt uns.*" (Klüger 1992, 220, emphasis added) It is this collision of memories that disables a mutual understanding and, thus, the Jewish-German symbiosis again proves to be partially true and partially false: a place for ambivalent feelings. *Ashkenaz*, Germany, and Germanness, is familiarity, but it is also fear. It is *Hochkultur* as well as Nazism and the Shoah. For this generation of Germanic-Jewish intellectuals, if German *Hochkultur* made them Germanic, the Shoah made them inevitably Jewish, more Jewish than they would have ever felt under different circumstances, that is, *jüdisch in Abwehr*.

These conversations with Lehnert and Walser, as well as the conversation with Gisela, activate Klüger's Jewishness as in a sudden need to defend her integrity. Klüger, an Auschwitz survivor, cannot help but going back to the fear and the humiliation of her young years when encountering some sort of attempt at attacking her memory, as these years shaped a whole life, forever. In the midst of one of these conversations, Klüger's body unconsciously responds and the need to know there is a way out totalizes Klüger's worries; the fight/flight/freezing system rapidly activates: "Ich, in nervöser Reaktion, krame in der Handtasche nach meinem amerikanischen Reisepaß, um mich zu vergewissern, daß er da ist, wie ein Kind, das schnell sein Kuscheltier streicheln muß." (Klüger 1992, 220) For although we can see how these authors try to relate to the Jewish

past in more positive terms, the Shoah experience always lurks around, resulting in a specific way of relating to one's Jewishness from a place of fear and high sensitivity.

In short, colliding memories; memories which link the carrier of such memories and the event to which those memories connect. For the purpose of the discussion of the German-Jewish dynamics, it must be pointed out that these memories were wired in the brain, and then interpreted and reinterpreted (in the working memory) through the use of the common language, the German language, and in the context of a common culture, the German culture. Memories which, moreover, refer to the same event, to a war which no one really fled. Klüger lets us know once and again the possibility of a German-Jewish dialogue, but the impossibility of a real German-Jewish understanding. Exceptions are always included, Klüger encounters "righteous gentiles" as it is usually expressed in post-Shoah language, but the emphasis on the colliding memories of Germans and Jews constitutes one of Klüger's main frustrations regarding the German-Jewish dialogue. These colliding memories do not eventually synthesize and constitute a common one in Klüger's case. When inexorably coming to the realization that the transmission of one's memories is accompanied by enormous difficulties, Klüger reflects upon the goal of autobiography, and as we have wondered in some occasions throughout this dissertation: what are the limits of empathy? Can one relate to what one completely ignores? How can the Essence understand its essential Other? Is it just a mere act of narcissism to think that a subject can fully understand another subject's experience?: "if there is no bridge between my memories and yours and theirs, if we can never say 'our memories,' then what's the good of writing any of this?" (Klüger 2001a, 93)

3.8.2. The new diasporic self: the impossible *Heimat* and the United States

After the Shoah, Klüger's relationship with *Ashkenaz* is highly connected to language; thus, an initial reconciliation with the land of the perpetrators comes in its cultural form: literature. The Essence-Otherness tension in the case of Ruth Klüger follows a special path when it comes to the German-Jewish question. Klüger's initial rejection of Germany and Germanness is far from Friedländer's. For although German was the vernacular language for both writers, Klüger's Auschwitz survival and posterior migration to the United States occurred in the company of her mother. While Friedländer

“became Frenchified” in a way during the Shoah years, German always remained Klüger’s L1, even in New York and, later on, California. The decision of choosing English Studies as a university major can be understood as a way of Americanization, first of all expected from any refugee and desired by any good-willed migrant. Negotiating Germanness and Jewishness in the context of a new, welcoming but—to some extent—totalizing Americanness constitutes the first of the new-diasporic post-Shoah identity issues of Klüger: the battleground for the finding of a new identity, not only made out of the remnants of the ones already there but also having to find their place in the context of the US. Klüger exemplifies these tensions when explaining her relatives’ behavior in New York:

Alle wollten uns zeigen, wie amerikanisiert sie waren. Sie korrigierten und verspotteten einander beim Englischsprechen. Und verachteten sich selbst, weil sie nicht zu den Einheimischen zählten. Sie sagten etwa geringschätzig: Der ist auch nicht mit der Mayflower gekommen. [...] Sie suchten die Selbstverachtung durch Prahlereien, wettzumachen und verspotteten dann wieder die Prahlereien. Da sie entwurzelt und deklassiert waren, lachten sie über die Wichtigtuerei der Entwurzelten und Deklassierten. (Klüger 1992, 226–27)

This original reflection, as portrayed in *weiter leben*, tackles the difficult task of the diasporic self when it is forced to negotiate the building of a new identity in a new context against the backdrop of an already-crumbled and polymorphic identity. For this specific type of migrant is, above all, a refugee. They despised themselves for not being American, for being rootless immigrants in apparent search of new roots. In *Still Alive*, this reflection is taken a step further, for the self-deprecating new-diasporic post-Shoah Germanic Jew does not—cannot—completely disregard his past, no matter how much he despises it: “They were also proud of Justice Felix Frankfurter, the Viennese Jew on the Supreme Court, and they tried to compensate for their low self-esteem by inflating their former positions in Europe and then made fun of their own exaggerations.” (Klüger 2001a, 175) In contrast with Friedländer’s imminent post-Shoah experience in Israel where European Shoah refugees were more than welcome—they were needed, Klüger’s

search for a new identity still takes place in the context of *Galut*; thus, still exposed to the quandaries which the outsider is always to face:

Wie hatten auch eine „echte“ amerikanische Familie, wer hatte die nicht. Das waren Leute, die schon längst dort ansässig waren, Englisch fehlerlos und akzentfrei sprachen und uns so behandelten nämlich von oben herab, wie unsere Großeltern-Generation die polnischen und russischen Juden behandelt hatten, die von den Pogromen im Osten nach Deutschland und Österreich flohen und deren Deutsch leicht ins Jiddische umkippte, wie hier in Amerika unser English ins Deutsche. (Klüger 1992, 228)

Unlike Klüger's relatives, the impossibility to relate to a *Heimat* is perfectly discernable all over Klüger's autobiographical and essay works, as the essay *Wiener Neurosen* (2001b) also corroborates. For where is *Heimat* to be found if this does not lead to the home country (Austria) nor the host country (United States) and not even to the utopian society of early Zionist thought (*Eretz Israel*)? The mere consideration of *Heimat* makes it already inexistent; the mere questioning of it is symptomatic of a lack of it. *Heimat*, explains Klüger, exceeds the objective character of the place of birth, the place of residence. *Heimat* is, ultimately, a signified; an idea, more than a *locus*: "»Heimat« ist, anders als »zu Hause«, subjektiv psychologisch, wenn Sie so wollen, geistig. Staatsbürgerschaft und Wohnort sind objektiv, von der Gesellschaft genehmigt, man zeigt sie vor, wenn nötig. Ein Heimatgefühl hingegen läßt sich nicht an- und abmelden." (Klüger 2001b, 27) Klüger lacks this *Heimatgefühl*, a feeling which—according to her—cannot be the conclusion of a reflection but a constitutive feeling of one's identity.

Klüger concludes her essay after having delved further into the complexities of a *Heimatgefühl*, but the question of *Heimat* is—once again—kept floating, ambivalent, never defined. There is, however, the conscience on the part of Klüger of a potential sublimation of such loss, of such indefinability, and although never concluding, the search for the closest thing to *Heimat* leads to many of Klüger's reflections. For this a priori indefinability is used in all its potential, leading to a critical disposition which the defined Essence struggles to obtain:

Die Heimatlosen wissen vielleicht mehr über Heimat als die Bodenständigen. Wenn ich auf meine Heimatlosigkeit zu sprechen komme, so fragt man mich öfters insistierend: aber irgendwo muß man doch verwurzelt sein. Und ich antworte gern: Ich bin doch keim Baum, ich habe Füße statt Wurzeln, mit denen ich in der Welt herumlaufen kann, wohin es mir gefällt. Aber ich weiß wohl, daß das Thema damit nicht erledigt ist, denn das Heimatsgefühl ist bei den Heimatlosen nicht ausgelöscht, nur frustriert, in Frage gestellt, eventuell in andere Kanäle geleitet. (Klüger 2001b, 21)

But if *Heimat* is nowhere to be found for Klüger, then the United States stands as a refuge. This is especially clear in the many passages we have quoted when the American passport—as ultimately symbolic of the American nationality—is understood by Klüger as a safe vest every time the fight/flight/freezing system gets activated as a result of a conflict with some reminiscence from the past. Grabbing her American passport or making references to her Americanness—her status as an American tourist, for example—always provides a safety net from which Klüger relates to its surroundings in Germany and Austria, or in conversation with Germans and Austrians. As in the case of Friedländer, California (“the epitome of nowhere”) is the more fitting place to be rootless, a place to escape from danger, to keep a liquid identity in a context lacking any reference to any past, just a constant look to the future; the place to keep on living: “Das ist ein Land, dessen Geschichte darin besteht, daß seine Einwohner hierher flohen, um der Geschichte zu entinnen, der europäischen und der asiatischen, und schließlich auch der amerikanischen Geschichte, sofern sie sich weiter östlich zugetragen hat. [...] *Keine gemeinsame Vergangenheit bindet uns, darum ist jede Vergangenheit persönlich.*” (Klüger 1992, 280, emphasis added)

Klüger’s Americanness is also a shaping factor in Klüger’s understanding of the past. For although her children understand her mother as “Austrian, [...] not an American, [...] bicultural, [...] but European” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 14:07), Klüger’s Americanness, as perhaps only Americanness does, does not prove to be an exclusive identity; it is moreover always a safety vest, it is a comfort zone: “The US is the place I’ve spent the greatest part of my life and I have American children. That’s an important fact for me. It influences my self-perception, seeing myself as the mother of American

children. My life has been about English and German literature [...] and now I see myself kind of caught between two stools, because every year I spent a few months in Europe. [...] Two thirds of my identity is American.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 13:17) America has provided Klüger with the freedom to flourish personally and intellectually, but it is also the place where her children have fully assimilated and have forgotten about Judaism and Jewishness. Ultimately, the place where the idea—as well as the land—of Israel lacks any meaning, where Jewishness dissipates in the vast amalgamation which constitutes American culture. (Klüger 2001b, 26) Klüger’s children, monolingual second-generation Americans, do not hold either any emotional links to Europe (besides the second-hand ones transferred from her mother’s accounts of it) and thus the polymorphic identity, the conflictive relation between Germanness and Jewishness, the ambivalence of the Shoah survivor finally appears to disappear in the second-generation post-Shoah Jewish refugee. As an 82-year old Klüger notes in her most recent documentary film, this lack of a shared common cultural background results in a distance between mother and kids (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 27:39). Moreover, it results in a lack of a proper mother-son dialogue, due to the inability to access their mother’s “*halbes Leben*”, that is, without the access to a full understanding of the consequences which the post-Shoah life of some of these authors brings along. This post-Shoah life—this “*halbe Leben*” very similar to Goldstein’s concept of *Halbheit*—is necessarily led by a conflicted identity: a life filled with naturalized ambivalences.

3.8.3. *Galut* and Diasporism

Following the line of Friedländer’s reflection⁷⁸ upon his lack of commitment to a place, his lack of commitment to any fixed identity—to any Essence, Klüger’s remarks

⁷⁸ “J’avais vécu en marge de la catastrophe ; une distance infranchissable peut-être me séparait de ceux qui, directement avaient été happés par le cours des choses et, malgré tous mes efforts, je restais, à mes propres yeux, plus qu’une victime—un spectateur. J’allais donc errer entre plusieurs mondes, les connaissant, les comprenant, mieux peut-être que beaucoup d’autre, mais incapable néanmoins de ressentir une identification sans réticence aucune, incapable de voir, de saisir et d’appartenir d’un seul mouvement immédiat et total.” (Friedländer 1978, 158)

on her appeal to contradictory and mixed feelings must be understood as symptomatic of this post-Shoah condition:

Today, when I write a poem, or should I say verses, I often try to describe ambiguities. For example, I've written several poems about my reaction to Vienna. I try to illustrate this. On the one hand, there's this...I don't know how to explain it. This sense of belonging I feel towards my native city which I can't call "hometown" for obvious reasons, and at the same time this feeling of a permanent threat. That's what I try to express by saying that I could drown in a fountain in Schönbrunn park, which is a silly thing to say. It's impossible. Or imagining the streets of Vienna as trenches. And I try to express these irrationalities in my poems. I like that. I like to express the conflicting nature of emotions and feelings. (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 36:45)

In conversation with Frank Diamand⁷⁹, Friedländer also expresses this feeling of permanent threat, which he—from a perhaps deeper psychoanalytic knowledge on the matter—directly attributes to the Shoah experience. This reflection parallels Klüger's thoughts on the feelings Vienna creates on her: "I've lived all over and you may say that this is because there were opportunities. No, it's a kind of strange restlessness which I attribute to my early experiences of moving from place to place and hiding. I need to change places maybe as a kind of running away from some danger."

Survival then, for Klüger, as well as for Friedländer, entails not only a normalization of ambivalences but a necessary self-recognition in them, a constant restlessness perhaps, a constant sense of fear always operating as a *basso continuo*, the development of a refined sensibility to danger, and—furthermore, as we have seen throughout this dissertation—a *constant sense of exile*. Klüger's sense of exile is articulated through her lack of *Heimat* and her third autobiographical work *unterwegs verloren* must be read in this direction. Klüger notes once again her appeal to ambivalences, her natural tendency to the state of the *Luftmensch*; a polymorphic identity

⁷⁹ The interview can be viewed on the following link: <https://youtu.be/7sc-lgMstlY>

without a place to call home. Klüger's *weiter leben* and *Still Alive* come to a logical but cruder conclusion in *unterwegs verloren*, following the words of Herta Müller's: "einmal ging ich unterwegs verloren / einmal kam ich an wo ich nicht war."

Klüger is not only a diasporic self, that is—a *Self* forced to exile—a self who longs for the home to which returning is chimerical. Klüger stands as an example of a diasporistic Self, for—as in the case of Friedländer—we see this tendency to Otherness, to a partial belonging in America but never completely. Klüger's multiple identities naturally avoid a definite one. The lack of it bespeaks the ambivalent and self-doubting condition of the diasporistic Self. In contrast with Friedländer, Klüger never makes Aliyah and—as we mentioned in the previous chapter—Israel always stands as representative of everything that could have been, but never was. Israel, and everything Israel entails, serve as the theoretical anchor which must always be kept; the place which could always have been home, but never was: "I'm sure I'd have felt more like part of a majority here [in Israel]. I'd have integrated much better here than in any other place." (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 1:02:08)

By always carefully keeping the rhetorical tension between a desire to embrace an Essence—an Israeli one, a Zionist one—and the constant sense of Otherness in *Galut* which life in California offers, Klüger stands as the diasporistic Self who longs for a home which—although never chosen—can always be regarded as having been kept from her due to "circumstances, or coincidences." This diasporistic Self understands his approach to the question of *Heimat* from the aseptic view of the one who does not have one, in that particular psychological state of the Self who no longer fights to synthesize impossible dialectics; thus, offering the aseptic *Weltanschauung* of the rootless.

3.8.4. Return to Germany: *der Kampf*.

Klüger explains in her documentary films as well as in her autobiographical works that Germany and (her) Germanness was something she avoided for years after moving to the United States. It was not until graduate school and after having been a mother when a career in German Studies appealed to her. The concept of a Jewish Shoah-surviving Germanist brings along a necessary tension. Klüger even explains in *Still Alive* how her

mother even considered her career choice “an embarrassment.” (Klüger 2001a, 210) For the mere idea of contributing to the study of German culture might have been regarded by Klüger’s mother as an offense; Klüger herself reflects upon this in several of her essay writings. It is truly perceivable that there is indeed something of an ambivalence on the part of Klüger in pursuing a career in German Studies, as we have already pointed out; an ambivalence which stems from the tension between Germanness and Jewishness. The negotiation between both facets of these Germanic Jewish authors takes place strategically; neither a total rejection of Germanness nor a total acceptance: there is always the familiarity in and the fear of *Ashkenaz*; an attraction to and a rejection of the culture which simultaneously constituted and rejected them.

After a logical rejection of Germany and Germanness, Klüger’s choice in graduate school could be understood as the beginning of a process of coming to terms with the past. In the late 80s, a real physical return to Germany takes place when Klüger becomes the person in charge of the abroad program of her university. Coming back to Germany (to Göttingen, a city in principle free of Nazi reminiscences) is something of a pending subject for Klüger: “In the late eighties I realized that I had unfinished business with a past that’s an ongoing story. Something pulled me back [...] I had to go back to where it was spoken and give myself time enough to understand, if not the killer culture of the past, at least the next generation and a bit more of my own.” (Klüger 2001a, 205)

For this Germanic Jewish survivor seeks for a past which was also hers, a past where both the Essence and the from-it-emerging Otherness brewed. This going to the past, which is physically articulated as going back to Germany, is explained by both authors as a crucial moment in the context of the Jewish-German tension. This first contact with the land of the perpetrators is not safe from incidents for Klüger. For the memory of a real danger always remains in the mind of the survivor. In the case of Klüger, rather than an academic issue, it is a physical accident what triggers a new state of fear. Short after returning to Germany, in 1988, Klüger is run over by a bicyclist in an accident which led her to a coma. Klüger recounts the accident as illustrative of the internal fight between Germanness and Jewishness, recounting the accident in phrases juxtaposed by commas. Through the use of a parataxic structure, Klüger transmits a sense of abruptness and anxiety, portraying thus both the external and the internal fight. The reader is unable to find a stop, like Klüger, who is unable to put an end to the conflict; a fight for her life,

but a fight which aims to illustrate her fight as a survivor still struggling for a place to persist, physically as well as psychologically:

Er kommt gerade auf mich zu, schwenkt nicht, macht keinen Bogen, im letzten Bruchteil einer Sekunde springe ich automatisch nach links, er auch nach links, in dieselbe Richtung, ich meine, er verfolgt mich, will mich niederfahren, helle Verzweiflung, Licht im Dunkel, seine Lampe, Metall, wie Scheinwerfer über Stacheldraht, ich will mich wehren, ich zurückschieben, beide Arme ausgestreckt, der Anprall, Deutschland, ein Augenblick wie ein Handgemenge, den Kampf verlier ich, Metall, nochmals Deutschland, was mach ich denn hier, wozu bin ich zurückgekommen, war ich je fort? (Klüger 2001a, 271)

The bicyclist seems to follow Klüger, aiming to hurt her. “Metall” resounds between the short and abrupt sentences, like the “Metall” which once kept her from freedom. A fight (*ein Kampf*) becomes the fight (*den Kampf*) and an adult Klüger returns to her childhood behind the barbwire of Auschwitz. In an *in extremis* scenario, where life and death depend on a fine line, the fight/flight/freezing system does not suffice. Between the tinkling sound of the metal, a signifier which simultaneously represents Essence and Otherness, intellectuality and rejection, *Hochkultur* and annihilation, emerges: “Deutschland”, “nochmal Deutschland.” This time, Klüger is unable to rummage around in her pocket and rapidly grab her American passport: no exit seems discernable; is this the end? She wonders. Suddenly, her escape to New York—yet another Diaspora—proves at this particular time futile; for physically returning to Germany seems to carry along still a danger. Moreover, a paralyzed Klüger wonders if she has ever left Germany; not only physically but psychologically: Germanness; not only psychologically but essentially: *Ashkenaz*.

3.8.5. Return to Vienna: memory and ambivalence

Klüger and Friedländer’s peripheral Germanness provides both authors with a certain distance when relating to Germany and the catastrophe. There is naturally always

the familiarity, the common cultural background, even the appreciation and the logical—but momentary and always subjected to external forces—feeling of inclusion within German culture. Vienna—Klüger’s hometown—is also an ambivalent place, a stronger ambivalence than the one we see in her relationship with Germany: “Wien ist Weltstadt, von Wien hat jeder sein Bild. Mir ist die Stadt weder fremd noch vertraut, was wiederum umgekehrt bedeutet, daß sie mir beides ist, also heimatlich unheimlich.” (Klüger 1992, 68) This familiar unfamiliarity is the closest to a *Heimatsgefühl* Klüger holds, but it remains—as Klüger’s oxymoronic combination of words willingly aims to express—always an ambivalent feeling. Even if “in Vienna, even the cobblestones breathe anti-Semitism.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 51:47), Vienna always remains—if not Klüger’s *Heimat*—Klüger’s childhood’s home, the home of one of the most important parts of one’s life, Klüger defends: “Childhood is more than an episode, it’s the root of everything you’ll ever be. It keeps on rumbling and never rests. Here in Vienna, my childhood talks to me. And it’s not all negative.” (Schmidtkunz 2013, sec. 1:12) It is language—as only language does—that which fastens one to the world, even if (or precisely because) through its necessary symbolic and mythical qualities. For not only childhood memory but also language—precisely language—tethers Klüger to Vienna: “the speech of my childhood with its peculiar inflections and rhythms, a sense of humor that Germans often don’t get, and a wealth of malicious half tones that would be obscene in any other tongue; also an intense lyricism that easily degenerates into kitsch.” (Klüger 2001a, 59)

The study of these survivors makes clear the impossibility of inserting them within a clear cultural and national paradigm. A more holistic (and ambitious) perspective is, thus, needed in order to understand the identity quandaries which stem from the Jewish as well as the Shoah experience. This reflection, which could be shared by many scholars discussing these or similar authors, must, however, bear in mind the realization that such fragmented identity is more than a desire towards unrealized potentials; it transcends the mere modern postulate that all existing clothes are always too small when it comes to defining modern man’s identity. The fragmented identity of this type of refugee is, indeed, a psychological reality, not a postmodern pose. *Jewishness* (however it comes to crystallize) is a constant in Jewish self-writing which requires the scholar to delve further into the articulations of such self-ascription.

The Germanic/Austrian and Jewish identities have already been framed within the complex dynamics of symbiosis and contraposition. The Jewish-German symbiosis, as well as the Jewish-German disruption, are dynamics to which authors like Klüger adhere. There is naturally the linguistic factor as well as all the linguistically-related cultural references. Thus, especially for Klüger, language holds such a crucial position. Through language and literature, a first stage in the post-Shoah German-Jewish question is reached. It is the acknowledgment of a common German-Jewish background the medium through which a willingness towards post-Shoah self-reflection and self-discovery is articulated. As scholars aiming to understand these authors in their proper context, we need to leave behind traditional conceptions of fixed cultural identities. This, a clear starting point in the context of Jewish Studies is sometimes overlooked when these authors are discussed as belonging to the language and the culture of a fixed community. Thus, authors like Ruth Klüger cannot be understood as merely Austrian, merely Jewish, merely Germanic, or merely American, but as a necessary unperfect amalgamation—always subject to symbiosis and disruption. Hence, the questions and dilemmas present in these authors' self-writing bespeak a level of intertextuality, not unknown in the realm of Jewish Studies, but perhaps overlooked when these authors are approached from other areas of the Humanities.

The presence of all these cultural, intellectual, and linguistic references, however, we insist, must never be understood as an a priori harmonic combination. We have seen how the Jewish and the Germanic aspects present in Klüger's texts always hold some level of tension. Aiming to erase Germanness, although being one of the initial reactions to the Shoah, proves to be impossible for Klüger, who goes back to the study of German culture and literature. Furthermore, a physical return to Germany appears to be necessary for Klüger as well, as we see with her decision of becoming in charge of the abroad program of her university. Coming back to Germany, however, poses its considerable risks and any unexpected situation—as in the case of the accident—triggers a further reflection upon the contraposing nature of Jewishness and Germanness. In moments where a synthesis is somehow expected, there is always some abrupt disruption of it. Through this disruption, once again, the Essences become contraposed in the most Manichean of manners; Jewishness (*in Abwehr*) is then always embraced.

The emancipated Jew, slowly moving towards assimilation, was (is) exposed to a different linguistic reality than the bearers of the linguistic triad usually associated with European Jewish life throughout the centuries previous to the emancipation. It is not then coincidental that Klüger's real awakening to a self-affirming Jewishness goes hand in hand with an exposition to Yiddish. Only in the context of the Shoah, such an exposition could have been taken place. For the almost-assimilated family to which Klüger was born spoke German, *Hochdeutsch*, and probably disregarded the use of Yiddish. Klüger's exposition to Yiddish brings along a specific way of relating to her Jewishness, but this is only transitory, during Theresienstadt. In the aftermath of the Shoah, it is English (American English) the new language, the spoken language in the United States, her host country, her home country, even if "home" does never entail "*Heimat*."

3.8.6. Reconciling memories: Klüger's Bundestag speech

Klüger's relationship with Germany/Austria and Germanness is kept ambivalent from the first to the last of her autobiographical and essay works. These dynamics of ambivalence are discernable in many aspects of Ruth Klüger's life, as they constitute a cardinal characteristic of the diasporistic Self. As in the case of Friedländer, Klüger's relationship with Germany and Germanness after the Shoah is characterized by a stage of rejection, a psychological need to undergo a certain process of degermanization in the aftermath of the Shoah. The beginning of a career in German Studies can be read as the beginning of a post-Shoah Jewish-German conversation, a first stage at relating with this past which could have—however—been easily rejected in the context of the United States, as Klüger's mother's words suggest. Klüger's constant contact with German culture in the context of *Auslandsgermanistik* bespeaks, nevertheless, a kind of *academic Heimat*; that removed from its original *locus* and, instead, transplanted in the United States.

Klüger's academic Germanism, nonetheless, holds a clear Jewish reading of German literature and culture. Therefore, finding the Jewishness within Germanness has been one of Klüger's academic contributions; not only through highlighting the importance of Jewish-German authors but also pointing out the anti-Semitism present in many works of German literature, a necessary stage in the development of a post-Shoah

Jewish-German dialogue.⁸⁰ There are, however, two moments in the recent life of Ruth Klüger which might suggest somewhat of a reconciliation with the past, at least a sort of coming to terms with it. A much older Klüger explains in *unterwegs verloren* how after many years, she applied for the Austrian nationality: “Ich bin wieder Österreicherin geworden, das heißt, ich habe die doppelte Staatsbürgerschaft beantragt und bekommen und besitze einen EU-Reisepaß, nicht nur, weil er das Reisen in Europa erleichtert, sondern auch, weil ich das Gefühl habe, er gehört mir, ich habe in Recht auf diese Staatsbürgerschaft, man hatte sie mir genommen, warum sollte ich sie mir nicht zurückholen.” (Klüger 2008, 214) A much older Klüger than the one who had to flee Austria and Germany understands the need for a restitution articulated, in this case, through the (re)obtaining of the Austrian nationality.

In January 2016, during the “Gedenkstunde zum Tag des Gedenkens an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus”, Ruth Klüger accepted the Bundestag invitation to address the German parliament⁸¹. At the end of her speech, an 84-year-old Klüger directly tackled the question of the European refugee crisis which began in 2015 and praised Germany’s willingness to accept the highest number of refugees in Europe. Klüger—as a refugee herself and as a victim of the Shoah—and her words—words of knowledge of what it means to survive from the ruins of the catastrophe—lets us discern one last stage in her relationship with Germany (and Germanness). Through the acceptance of other refugees, Klüger aims to see Germany as a new country; a country deserving of her approval: “Dieses Land, das vor 80 für die schlimmste Verbrechen des Jahrhunderts verantwortlich war, hat heute den Beifall der Welt gewonnen dank seiner geöffneten Grenzen und die Großzügigkeit mit der syrischen und anderen Häftlinge aufgenommen haben und noch aufnehmen.”

⁸⁰ Klüger’s publication *Katastrophen* (1994) stands as one of the main examples of this Jewish reading on German literature. In it, Klüger tackles the sometimes-neglected subject of anti-Semitism in German literature and the variety of ways in which it is portrayed. Of special interest is Klüger’s reading of post-1945 German literature and the subtleties in which anti-Semitism is depicted in these works: “Die literarische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Antisemitismus wird von seiten einer Literaturwissenschaft, die sich noch immer an den höheren Werten orientiert, vernachlässigt. Ich fülle, beziehungsweise ich skizziere also eine Lücke der Literaturgeschichte.” (Klüger 1994, 63)

⁸¹ Klüger’s speech can be freely accessed online in the following link: <https://youtu.be/-K02wZPcrLM>

3.9. Saul Friedländer

Few other Shoah survivors might exemplify the complexities of post-Shoah Jewish identity as Saul Friedländer does. For although many were the Jews who had reached by 1938 a high—almost impeccable—level of assimilation, many were the particularities which still anchored them to a certain sense of Jewishness, as it is the case of Ruth Klüger. The case of Saul Friedländer, on the other hand, might come close to a total case of assimilation in the particular German society to which he belonged, that is, the society of German-speaking Czech Republic. It is this peripheral Germanness which also contributed to a level of assimilation which could have been impossible in a strict German society. For the daily interaction with ethnic Czechs would reinforce a sense of Germanness on the part of Friedländer's family. After all, an identity is constructed through the negotiation with the surrounding identities, especially in a place, like German-speaking Eastern European lands, where the ethnic and linguistic background of a citizen played such an important role in the negotiation of social status. The identity of the German—the carrier of high-culture—was indeed an identity embraced by many German-speaking Jews in these regions of Europe, partly by the self-interiorization of it and partly by the projection of such identity on German-speaking Jews by ethnic Eastern Europeans.

This is the main reason why—rather than a rediscovery of Jewishness—Friedländer's post-Shoah identity was created by a discovery of Jewishness itself. For Friedländer was born to a family of “non-Jewish Jews”; a family where circumcision was considered a forgotten atavism. Everything Jewish which after 1945 was internalized by Friedländer as part of his identity was as new and foreign as—in the aftermath of the Shoah—meanwhile logical and perfectly embraceable. Thus, in many ways, Friedländer is representative of the post-Shoah identity tensions of German Jews at its most complex stages: fully assimilation was almost reached, and this includes a household where German was spoken and where an adherence to German high-culture took place, including, by extension, a total reluctance to religious observation. As he notes in his first autobiographical work, “l'ingéniosité juive ne changea rien au fait que chez nous tout le monde se sentait allemand.” (Friedländer 1978, 14) A level of Germanness which other Western-European Jews were unable to reach to such a high level. Nonetheless, Friedländer's Germanness is, first of all, essentially peripheral. This initial Germanness

was, however, rapidly superposed by Friedländer's French upbringing, hence the French language and the French culture constitute an important part of Friedländer's identity. Israel was never Friedländer's final destination and, although always attached to Israel, Friedländer has always lived in between different worlds and identities, holding university positions in different countries and constantly moving from one place to another. This way, Friedländer represents a *sui generis* case on its own, and while his works serve us to identify common tensions in the post-Shoah German Jewish identity, his polymorphic identity (as he himself calls it) serves us to take the identity problematics a step forward; identity tensions whose consequences cannot only be seen in Friedländer's relationship with religion but in his relationship with Israel and in his relationship with Germany and Germanness.

3.9.1. Germanophobia

The evolution of Friedländer's relationship with Germany is perceivable in his autobiographical and essay works over the years. An initial Germanophobia took place in 1962, as it is explained by Friedländer in his first autobiographical work where the Germanness of everything in Germany is indelibly connected with his memory and academic knowledge of Nazi Germany:

A la hauteur de Mannheim, le paysage sans opacité aucune qui défilait des deux côtés de la route commença, pour moi, à changer d'aspect. Je ne saurais parler d'anxiété ou de panique, mais d'un étrange sentiment de désolation : cette autoroute m'enfermait en Allemagne pour toujours ; de toutes parts, l'Allemagne, de toutes parts, des Allemands. Je me sentais pris dans une trappe sans issue. Dans le lourdes voitures qui filaient, les visages m'apparaissaient soudain bouffis d'une graisse rougeâtre et mauvaise ; sur les bas-côtés, les panneaux de signalisation— en allemand !—signifiaient autant d'injonctions froides, émises par une bureaucratie toute-puissante, policière et destructrice... (Friedländer 1978, 148)

This initial rejection of Germany and Germanness evolves into a more complicated relationship. The same source of fear and repulsion is, after all, a familiar one: “D’une part la menace, le piège, l’accablement, mais en même temps un sentiment de familiarité, d’agréable familiarité.” This second step in the relationship with Germany and Germanness entails a cultural self-recognition in the culture of the perpetrator, a culture, which was also the culture of the victim. It is still at this second stage impossible to detach knowledge from memory, a process especially characteristic of the survivor-scholar, as we have mentioned when discussing Ruth Klüger’s post-Shoah experience. It is still at this second stage when this Germanophobia—not strictly understandable as irrational nor as a rational fear—emerges, even after having experienced a sense of familiarity. Nevertheless, the post-traumatic fear appears and, thus, the sudden—and alerting—detachment between Jewishness and Germanness occurs: “mais, quand venait le soir, combien de fois n’ai-je pas hésité entre l’attrait d’une Weinstube familière comme tout le reste et l’impératif besoin de faire mes valises sur-le-champ, m’enfuir aussi vite que possible, repasser la frontière à tout prix...” (Friedländer 1978, 149)

3.9.2. Friedländer’s take on the Jewish-German question

From the point of view of a historian, Friedländer’s does not fully negate the existence of a Jewish-German symbiosis. In fact, he sees 20th century Jewish-German identity as part of that symbiosis. Although in historical terms, he does not fully adhere to the use of the term symbiosis to refer to the Jewish-German question; Friedländer’s understanding of the dialectical process which gave birth to Jewish-Germanness is seen as a process affecting personal identity. With this view on the Jewish-German question, Friedländer criticizes a too exacerbated attempt in the aftermath of the Shoah to de-germanize Jewishness, especially in Israel. After all, Ashkenazi Jewish culture was the result of a synthesis between a supposedly-oriental Jewishness and a western Germanness:

The German Jews who could have been considered the mentors of the Hebrew University well into the sixties were unable (or unwilling) to recognize that much of German culture and society, their cradle and their intellectual

compass, has also been the cradle of Nazism. They were torn. In the early sixties, Scholem declared that there had never been a “German-Jewish symbiosis,” but he took this back later on. Wasn’t he in many ways a typical product of that symbiosis? (Friedländer 2016, 125)

It is this shared cradle that, per Friedländer, evinces—more than anything else—the existence of such symbiosis. However, Friedländer points out that there is something extremely unsettling—*unheimlich*—about referring to a common breeding ground from which both 20th century German Jewish Zionism and Nazism emerged. It is this tension between a known cultural background from which Jewish Germanness draws and a visceral rejection of the same cultural background which aimed to annihilate its Other. At this third stage in his relationship with Germany and Germanness, this tension does not only articulate itself as the rejection of Nazi ideology per se. Post-Shoah Germanness at this stage, for the post-Shoah Germanic Jew, is indelibly tinted by Nazism; it is understood as the inexorable breeding ground for such ideology. However, the tension does emanate from the attraction to such cultural background: not only as a mere act of self-recognition or familiarity but as an uncanny magnetism to it. This attraction to and rejection of Germanness evinces the main cognitive dissonance of post-Shoah Jewish Germanness for many survivors and authors of the post-Shoah period. Furthermore, it is one of the tensions that keep these survivors, who after the Shoah were unable to fully embrace any kind of essentialist identity, fixed in a permanent state of *Luftmenschlichkeit*, oxymoron intended. Saul Friedländer is one of these authors who most clearly expresses this particular post-Shoah Jewish-German tension, the next step after the failure of the historical Jewish-German symbiosis.

In the 2001 documentary *The Hidden Child* directed by Michael Treves, Friedländer expressed the following: “I do have a visceral repulsion to everything Germanic, because of Nazism, because I’m so aware of it. It’s a real rejection, but at the same time there’s always a strong attraction.” (Treves 2001, sec. 5:50) And as he continues: “Today when I come back to Germany, I always feel a sense of threatening and an urgent impulse to quickly pack my suitcase and get the hell out of there before it’s too late, but that does not express my full attitude. There is sometimes a certain feeling of deep acquaintanceship with this place, even a sense of closeness.” (Treves 2001, sec.

6:08) In these lines, we see the three stages of the relationship with Germany and Germanness: an initial repulsion and fear followed by an act of self-recognition and familiarity and, finally, an attraction to the land and the culture of the perpetrator.

3.9.3. Disrupting the symbiosis: the limits of representation and the *Historikerstreit*

Friedländer's identity negotiation in the context of the Jewish-German question, which, as we argue, is never—could never be—a fully dialectical process, proves to stay at a particular antithetical level when interacting with what suddenly appears to be the enemy. It is, once again, this *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* behavior which arises when the Jewish-German symbiosis is disrupted, a disruption which occurs, in the case Friedländer, when confronted by historical revisionism in regard to Nazi Germany, a surpassing of what he considers the limits of representing and depicting the Shoah.

Many are the studies that deal with the problems of representation in the realm of fiction; the idea that there is an impassable chasm between the real events and the always linguistic-mediated fictionalized world is, of course, a topic of discussion in Literary Studies, especially when tackling autobiographical fiction, oxymoron intended. When dealing with Shoah literature, this problem is perhaps enhanced due to its proximity in time, and the existence of victims, perpetrators, authors writing about the event, and an audience (also of survivors) reading about it as well. Perhaps followed by Adorno's well-known statement that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, the debate tends in many cases to focus on the possibility, or not, of fully representing the Shoah in fiction. A more pragmatic approach is introduced by Saul Friedländer in his book *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (1992), where Friedländer, rather than strictly limiting his reflection to the problematics which stem from the idea of depicting the Shoah, extends his concerns to the boundaries which this representation of the Shoah should have:

The extermination of the Jews of Europe is as accessible to both representation and interpretation as any other historical event. But we are dealing with an event which tests our traditional conceptual and representational categories, an "event

at the limits.” [...] What turns the “Final Solution” into an event at the limits is the very fact that it is the most radical form of genocide encountered in history the willful, systematic, industrially organized, largely successful attempt to exterminate an entire human group within twentieth-century Western society. (Friedländer 1992, 2)

The problematics which stem from the representation of the Shoah transcends the world of literature. Friedländer’s view is that in any writing about the Holocaust there are always two limits: “a need for ‘truth’ and the opaqueness of the events and the opaqueness of language as such.” (Friedländer 1992, 4) Friedländer’s search for a general narrative of history contradicts any post-structuralist approach to history (Lyotard, Foucault): that which would deny the existence of a unified view of history, but that meanwhile would demand –somehow– the true story. Friedländer’s idea is indeed that history is real and can be depicted. The realm of history does not, however, escape the problems originated from the depiction of the Shoah. These methodological problems, which affect enormously memory and, hence, politics proved to be especially controversial during the 1980’s with the so-called *Historikerstreit* and the exchange of letters between Broszat and Friedländer years later; the latter being a less known debate which, however, could only be understood as a logical extension of the *Historikerstreit* and which becomes especially salient in the context of our study of the post-Shoah German-Jewish conversation.

The so-called *Historikerstreit*, introduced by German historian Ernst Nolte and German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, has come to exemplify a filled-with-pathos debate between a rather “conservative” faction of German historians against a supposedly “liberal” faction of authors and historians whose main topic of discussion revolved around the limits of historiography when tackling the Shoah and Nazi Germany. According to the first faction of historians, there was at the time a moral blockade regarding the methodology of approaching the study of the Nazi years and, therefore, they supported a historical revision of these years. The historical revisionism supported by Ernst Nolte is of special interest for our study of Saul Friedländer, due to Friedländer’s encounter with Nolte in 1985, months previous to the beginning of the *Historikerstreit*, a

passage which Friedlander recounts in his second autobiographical work *Where Memory Leads* (2016).

It could be argued that, at the core of the debate, lies a common goal: trying to explain *how* it was possible that something like the Shoah took place; a task which transcends the realm of history and establishes itself as a problem needed to be tackled from the fields of philosophy and psychology as well⁸². Nonetheless, aiming to explain the Nazi years through this revisionist perspective had at the time –according to the “liberal” historians and the post-Shoah Jewish-German survivor– a clear political *telos*, that is, the building of a German national pride and, hence, the reason why many historians still view the *Historikerstreit* as an essentially political debate, for it ultimately revolved around the convoluted question of how to be a German patriot after the Shoah. This necessarily entailed, on the part of the revisionist historians, the establishing of some distance from the *Schuld*—from the stigma—associated with the Shoah and Nazi Germany. However, by suggesting external influences⁸³ and establishing Nazism as the logical response “gegen die bolschewistische Bedrohung”, many historians and intellectuals saw in this new historiography merely apologetic arguments for Nazi crimes. Furthermore, these so-called non-German Germans (as Habermas himself put it, “postnational” Germans) rejected the articulation of a new national pride which had as a consequence a rejection of the stigma which the Allies had imposed on Germany. Habermas, indeed, suspected that the main political *telos* behind such revisionism was the rebirth of a German nationalism which he, and other liberal intellectuals, rejected:

Der einzige Patriotismus, der uns dem Westen nicht entfremdet ist ein Verfassungspatriotismus. Eine in Überzeugungen verankerte Bindung an universalistische Verfassungsprinzipien hat sich leider in der Kulturnation der Deutschen erst nach -und durch- Auschwitz bilden können. Wer uns mit einer

⁸² The most recent attempt to this day at trying to explain these questions not from a strictly historical perspective is the recent publication of Peter Hayes, *Why? Explaining the Holocaust* (2017).

⁸³ Ernst Nolte, by equating Nazism and Bolshevism’s *modus operandi*, suggested that the Russian Bolsheviks were the ones to blame at first stance for being pioneers in the kind of mass murder which was afterward imitated by Nazi Germany. (Nolte 1986)

Floskel wie „Schuldbesessenheit“ (Stürmer und Oppenheimer) die Schamröte über dieses Faktum austreiben will, wer die Deutschen zu einer konventionellen Form ihrer nationalen Identität zurückrufen will, zerstört die einzige verlässliche Basis unserer Bindung an den Westen. (Habermas 1986)

The fact that the Shoah was a uniquely evil act against humanity was in no way debatable for Habermas and many other intellectuals and historians. Germany, according to Habermas, could not go back to this old articulation of nationalism. On the contrary, now Germany had a moral responsibility after Auschwitz. It was one step ahead from 19th-century nationalist ideology and should—according to Habermas—focus on this “Verfassungspatriotismus”, rather than on a chauvinistic and apologetic way of relating to one’s own land and its past; nationalism (and especially German nationalism) is for the “non-German German” an atavism, just as Jewish nationalism was understood as an atavism for “non-Jewish Jew”. It can be argued that Nolte and the rest of historians who argued for a historical revisionism (Michael Stürmer, Klaus Hildebrand and Andreas Hillgruber among others) never achieved their apologetic purpose in the context of the *Historikerstreit*. For has Germany, after all, not accepted its responsibility in regard to Nazi crimes and made it the keystone of the German reunified identity after 1990?

It can be argued that many of the rebuttals made by Nolte and other revisionist historians were not aimed at justifying Nazi Germany and its crimes but, instead, to explain and overcome them in order to rebuild German national pride. In 1985, months previous to the beginning of the *Historikerstreit*, Friedländer’s encounter with Nolte, nevertheless, casts plenty of light upon the question of the real interest behind Nolte’s revisionism as, in many ways, this passage preludes many key points of debate in the context of the *Historikerstreit*. In hindsight, and thanks to Friedländer’s account of his months in Berlin, we can understand the breeding ground in which the *Historikerstreit* was originated. In this passage, after having been invited to dinner by Nolte, Friedländer recounts the following conversation between both historians:

“Her Friedländer, what is it actually to be a Jew? Is it a matter of religion or of biology?”

I sensed early signs of danger and tried to defuse them by mentioning Ben-Gurion's decision, soon after the establishment of Israel, to ask some thirty Jewish scholars how they would define Jewishness; he received thirty different answers and decided to keep them under lock and key.

Nolte was not so easily put off and repeated his question. I then told him, still in as much of a matter-of-fact way as I could, that the Knesset had debated the issue and, in order to assuage the religious parties, members of the governing coalition, had accepted the traditional religious definition: whoever is born of a Jewish mother is a Jew.

"Then," said Nolte, "it is ultimately a matter of biology."

"Not really. Anybody can convert to Judaism and become a full-fledged Jew."

The silence that had descended on the dining room did not last long.

"Herr Friedländer, you cannot deny that there is something like world Jewry [Weltjudentum]."

"How so?"

"Well, isn't there a World Jewish Congress?"

I tried to explain why and when the World Jewish Congress had been established. It didn't help, nor did the fact that I had been secretary to the president of the World Jewish Congress bolster my authority. The sniping continued.

"Didn't Weizmann declare, in September 1939, that world Jewry would fight on the side of Great Britain against Germany?"

"Her Nolte, I hoped that you wouldn't bring up the weird arguments that you presented in your article of last year. Indeed, Weizmann declared that Jews would fight against Nazi Germany. Not that this Zionist leader in any way represented Jews of different countries, but given the way the Third Reich was hounding the Jews and given the nature of the regime, he assumed quite rightly that Jews, wherever they lived, would be on the side of Great Britain."

"But, Herr Friedländer, didn't it mean that World Jewry was thereby at war with Germany and thus that Hitler could consider the Jews as enemies and intern them in concentration camps as prisoners of war, as the Americans did with the Japanese?"

So it went. Everybody was silent around us. Nolte was red in the face and I was pale, or perhaps it was the other way around. The soup was cold. My host

carefully added, “Concentration camps, not extermination camps.” The entire situation was becoming unbearable, but Nolte was far from done.

“Did you know, Her Friedländer, that Kurt Tucholsky wrote in the 1920s that he wished the German bourgeoisie would die from gas?”

“Her Nolte, where do you read such insanities?”

“I find them, for example, in Wilhelm Stäglich’s *Der Auschwitz Mythos*.”

“You use neo-Nazi literature as your source?”

“Of course. I find in it many unknown facts, then I go back to the references and check whether the facts are correct. Soon I shall bring out a book where many things, unsaid up to now, will come to light.”

“What you have ‘discovered’, in a nutshell, is that soon after Adolf Hitler state in *Mein Kampf*, ‘Had some tens of thousands of Hebrews died by gas, the war would have turned out differently,’ the Jew Tucholsky was wishing a similar fate to the German bourgeoisie.”

“That is correct.”

For me, this was it. I got up and asked for a taxi. [...] As we were being driven back to our homes, I physically trembled. [...] *I wished for one thing only: to leave Berlin and Germany as quickly as I could.*

(Friedländer 2016, 216–218, emphasis added)

Nolte’s first article “Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will”, which began the *Historikerstreit*, was only published a few months after this passage recounted by Friedländer. Nolte’s attack to Friedländer, as explained and experienced by Friedländer, resuscitates common anti-Semitic ideas with a clear apologetic goal: transgressing the limits of the truthful portrayal of the Shoah and, thus, trying to defend the Nazi idea that the Jew and the *Weltjudentum* was indeed an enemy whose “leaders” had declared war on Germany first. Nolte’s misreading and strategic use of Chaim Weizmann’s declaration of support for the Allies in Palestine is followed by a decontextualized citation by Kurt Tucholsky, as Friedländer himself explains:

Tucholsky, a converted Jew and a brilliant satirist of German society, was a staunch left-wing pacifist. When, under national conservative pressure, the

Reichstag, in the late 1920s started debating the building of a cruiser for the German navy, a furious Tucholsky addressed the German nationalist middle class: “If you want war again you will have it and die by gas” (as so many soldiers did during the Great War). (Friedländer 2016, 218)

For the purpose of our study of Friedländer’s relationship with Germany and Germanness, it is especially worthy to note the physical and psychological consequences which the encounter with Nolte has on Friedländer. The encounter with a hostile—yet highly educated—form of, what is considered—and experienced—by Friedländer, anti-Semitic revisionism carries Friedländer back to his Geneva days, that is, to the first step in the post-Shoah relationship with Germany and Germanness, which we previously mentioned. This entails, once again, a strong rejection of everything Germanic; a logic which leads to a sudden break of the Jewish-German symbiosis and which activates the fight/flight/freezing system. Furthermore, Nolte’s apologetic revisionism activates Friedländer’s *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* state, a state of necessary defensiveness which prevents the development of any Jewish-German dialogue, as corroborated in Friedländer’s posterior interactions with Germans after Nolte’s remarks:

A few days after the Nolte evening, I was invited for dinner at the Lepenieses’ (Wolf and his wife Annette), together with Wapnewski, his wife Gabrielle, and Nike Wagner. I should mention here that at the end of the conference, Lepenies’ words to me were particularly warm and kind. The dinner was very pleasant: excellent food, splendid wine, and lively conversation. I surely had nothing to complain about and was merely slightly astonished by the fact that the host served an outstanding 1943 white wine as aperitif and that, toward the end of the dinner, for whatever reason, Wapnewski started quoting the words and humming the tune of an apparently well-known hit of the 1970s, “Theo, wir fahr’n nach Lodz...” On the spot, I merely wondered about the fact that both the 1943 wine and traveling to Lodz from Grunewald (where we were) didn’t ring a bell, except for me. (Friedländer 2016, 219)

In this *jüdisch-in-Abwehr* state—a state of constant watchfulness—Friedländer tries to locate any possible threat. After Nolte’s encounter, every movement seems like a potential punch. Every piece of advice, a possible poisoned dagger. Every gesture, maybe an accusing finger. And so, Friedländer in this special state of the post-Shoah Jew who, after going back to the forever-in-his-mind land of the perpetrator, encounters, once again, what forever-in-his-memory sounds like anti-Semitism, is unable to consider the German-Jewish symbiosis which many before him tried to achieve. In this state—willing to find reconciliation but unable to fully escape from a necessary process of essentialism and otherness—this German-speaking Jew who was never circumcised, nor ever raised religious, is—in the aftermath of the Shoah—sure of what his essence is: who “they” are and who “we” are: “The episode, as minute as it was, continued to bother me, and whereas I assumed that traveling to Lodz couldn’t mean a thing for anybody except me, serving a 1943 wine could have been avoided. But then, I thought, how remarkable it was that “we” and “they”—*the best among them*—still have such different perceptions of dates, sites, events, or such different memories of them.” (Friedländer 2016, 219–220, emphasis added) It is precisely this awareness of a shared history but different—sometimes antagonistic—memories that preludes a more problematic moment in Friedländer’s Jewish-German symbiosis: a moment of collision between memories exemplified in the exchange of letters with German historian Martin Broszat.

3.9.4. Colliding memories: the disruption of the Jewish-German symbiosis

Saul Friedländer was not an active participant in the exchange of articles which constituted the *Historikerstreit*. He, however, was part of a perhaps less controversial moment in the debate between historians which took place in the aftermath of the *Historikerstreit*. German historian Martin Broszat was highly critical of the *Viererbande* during the *Historikerstreit*. He, too, adhered to the thesis that the revisionist perspective on the Third Reich was nothing but apologetic. Nonetheless, in May 1985, Broszat published an article called “Ein Plädoyer für die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus” which, per Friedländer, appeared to adhere to many of the ideas raised by the revisionist historians of the *Historikerstreit*. Per Broszat, a new methodological shift needed to be implemented in the study of the Nazi period which, in a way, could serve as an

emancipation from recurrent hindering approaches to it. Broszat pleaded for an epistemological change which would consist on shifting the focus of attention from the top layer of powerful Nazi politicians to the *Alltagsgeschichte* of the German society, that is, the study of the lives and doings of German citizens not directly connected with the political decisions of the Third Reich. Nazi Germany also should not, according to Broszat, be judged only by its calamitous end; thus, an avoidance of moral interferences in the study of the period needed to be implemented in the historiography of Nazi Germany, he defended. Friedländer responded critically to Broszat publication and was subsequently contacted by Broszat. He was interested in exchanging a few letters with Friedländer which would, later on, be published in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*.

For the purpose of the study regarding Friedländer's relationship to the Jewish-German question and symbiosis, we would like to highlight several aspects of this exchange of letters which directly tackle questions related to the Jewish-German dialogue as well as the German-Jewish identity and memory. The treatment of these topics had a necessary consequence both in Friedländer's posterior academic decisions as well as in his relationship with Germany and Germanness, ultimately shaping his Jewish identity and his ultimate role as a historian within academia. In the context of the Broszat-Friedländer exchange of letters, and after introducing his methodological and epistemological positions regarding the study of the Third Reich, Broszat proceeds as follows:

Zur Besonderheit auch der wissenschaftlichen Erkundung dieser Vergangenheit gehört das Wissen darum, daß sie noch besetzt ist mit vielerlei Monumenten trauernder und auch anklagender Erinnerung, besetzt von den schmerzlichen Empfindungen vieler vor allem auch jüdischer Menschen, die auf einer mythischen Form dieses Erinnerns beharren. [...] Der Respekt vor den Opfern der Nazi-verbrechen gebietet, dieser mythischen Erinnerung Raum zu lassen. (Broszat and Friedländer 1988, 343)

Broszat, therefore, suggested that the victims, the Jews, and their descendants were so heavily influenced by the Shoah that, although their “mythical memory” needed to be respected, it was—nevertheless—an obstacle in the building of a more rational type of historiography. This argument meant, in the context of the conversation between Broszat and Friedländer, a direct delegitimization of Friedländer’s academic professionalism: putting into question his capacity for scientific accuracy. By contrast, “they”, German historians—only forty years after the end of the war—needed to plea for a full historiographical rationality which was however accessible to them due to the fact that their role was not as victims of the Third Reich.

Friedländer—after trying to exploit the limitations of Broszat’s argument and the necessary contradictions to which it leads—answered to this personal delegitimization with the following question: “Warum sollen Ihrer Meinung nach Historiker, die zur Gruppe der Verfolger gehören, fähig sein, distanziert mit dieser Vergangenheit umzugehen, während die zur Gruppe der Opfer gehörenden das nicht können?” (Broszat and Friedländer 1988, 347) By using the same argument as previously used against him, Friedländer redirects Broszat’s question back at him to try to make him answer why he, a former member of the Hitler Youth, was expected to hold a less mythical vision of the Third Reich and, thus, a more scientific—less subjective—approach to the historicization of the period between 1933 and 1945. Friedländer’s initial guess regarding Broszat belonging to the Hitler Youth was confirmed in the following letters. In what was perhaps understood by Broszat as an ambush, Broszat attributed to his belonging to the Hitler Youth the reason why, after the war, a more critical stance regarding Nazism was originated; for Nazism and Nazi ideology—Broszat lets us discern—permeated all social and personal aspirations at the time. Thus, belonging to the Hitler Youth is portrayed by Broszat as a logical—almost necessary—step in the process of a more accurate historiography: “Hätte ich nicht dieser HJ-Generation angehört und ihre spezifischen Erfahrungen gemacht, wäre es für mich nach 1945 wahrscheinlich nicht ein solches Bedürfnis gewesen, ich so kritisch, und, wie wir damals empfanden, zugleich mit „heiliger Nüchternheit“ mit der NS-Vergangenheit auseinanderzusetzen. [...] Ein wichtiges Stück Jugend-Traum-Potential war von der Nazi-Welt besetzt, andere, bessere Träume hatten nicht geträumt werden können.” (Broszat and Friedländer 1988, 361)

Friedländer's intention behind bringing Broszat's past into question must not be understood as a delegitimizing tool in the context of the discussion regarding the limits of historiography. Rather, by bringing up Broszat's past, Friedländer's invites both Broszat and the readers to reflect upon the arguments behind the plea to delegitimize the victims' voice and their descendants (be it survivors or Jewish historians), a plea which was beginning to take place in West Germany during the 80s. The question which Friedländer aims to raise in the context of the discussion regarding the methodology and epistemological revisionism commenced by the revisionist historians is then the following: if a victim of the Shoah was then considered forever hampered and thus unable to tackle Nazi Germany scientifically enough, why would a former follower of the perpetrators' movement be any less hampered? Had he not participated also in another type of mythical memory? What was the ultimate goal of such approach? Was it perhaps political? Or was it perhaps psychological? In his concluding lines, Friedländer tackles the question of the motivation behind such revisionism, what Friedländer understands – perhaps, it could be argued, with some degree of naïveté– as a mere human tendency:

Zwischenkategorien der Darstellung, die gerade noch genug von jenen substantiellen Elementen enthalten, die für da Regime doch charakteristisch waren, werden in der Wahrnehmung zu den dominierenden werden—um dies nicht etwa, weil jedes Bewußtsein die Schrecken der Vergangenheit verschwinden lassen möchte, sondern weil das menschliche Erinnerungsvermögen durchaus einer Tendenz zu erliegen neigt, die nichts mit nationalen Besonderheiten zu tun hat: Es zieht das Normale dem Abnormalen, das Verstehbare dem schwer Verstehbaren, das Vergleichbare dem Schwervergleichlichen, das Erträgliche dem Unerträglichen vor. (Broszat and Friedländer 1988, 372)

It would not be until fifteen years after Broszat's death when it was known that Broszat did not only belong to the Nazi Youth. In 1944, Broszat also joined the Nazi

Party, and although Broszat's motivation behind such decision has not become clear, it has been branded by some historians as a lifetime lie.⁸⁴

3.9.5. A post-Shoah *deutsch-jüdisches Gespräch*? The limits of a contemporary dialogue

The Broszat-Friedländer debate is of special relevance not only in historiographical terms, that is, not only in regard to the theoretical and methodological points made by both historians in the context of the study of Nazi Germany. This debate is also, in many ways, exemplary of the possibilities and limits of a contemporary post-Shoah Jewish-German dialogue. The question regarding the possibility of such dialogue is brought into the discussion by both Friedländer and Broszat and, in essence, this exchange of letters can be seen as a German-Jewish dialogue in itself. Within many circles, it is possible to find some common ground and many, not only the Broszat-Friedländer debate, are the examples we can find in this direction. It is even possible to find room for synthesis of ideas between the two parties, as Friedländer rightly notes in his last letter to Broszat. Nonetheless, if we aim to understand this German-Jewish dialogue as a mutual understanding between the two parts, many are the obstacles we are to find in the way, as this debate shows, due not only to a—perhaps—collision of interests, but most importantly due to *a collision of memories*, rather than a collision of antagonistic historiographical methodologies and/or epistemologies. These opposing memories which are ultimately used to legitimate or delegitimize one's contribution to the topic, thus hindering the establishment of any real dialogue.

The idea of a general German-Jewish conversation is firstly tackled by Broszat who wonders about the possibilities of a real dialogue: this time between perpetrators and victims (and their descendants). At the core of the conflict we find an apologetic view of

⁸⁴ Years after the death of Martin Broszat, German historian Nicolas Berg published *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker* (2003). His 784-page book follows the line of argument also supported by Saul Friedländer. A year before the publication of his book, Berg published an article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* where he stated that Martin Broszat had indeed joined the Nazi Party in 1944. References to this fact are also to be found in his before-mentioned book. One of Broszat's disciples, the British historian Ian Kershaw, explains how this "startling information astonished Broszat's family, friends and colleagues." (Kershaw 2004)

the bystanders colliding with a non-apologetic view, due to the bystanders' awareness and implication in the Nazi structure. This new historiography is considered by Friedländer as a "shift of focus" produced by an exacerbated interest in the *Alltagsgeschichte*, to the point that a more holistic picture of Nazi Germany and its calamitous end remains, according to Friedländer, at a second level: "aber der Historiker kennt das Ende [...] Diese Kenntnis sollte die Erforschung aller möglichen Wege und ihre Interpretation nicht behindern, aber sie zwingt den Historiker, die zentralen Elemente zu wählen, um die herum seine breit entfallende Erzählung implizite aufgebaut ist." (Broszat and Friedländer 1988, 356)

Many were the aspects which hindered a possible German-Jewish symbiosis before 1945 and, as we have discussed in this chapter, the main difficulty which many 20th century Jewish intellectuals pointed out was the established dynamics of non-reciprocity which constituted the German-Jewish dialogue from the emancipation onwards. The question which remains open to discussion is tackled by Habermas: can a contemporary German nationalism be erected without a necessary revisionism of recent German history? Is an apologetic view of German history by an exacerbated focus on the *Alltagsgeschichte* of the bystanders strictly originated by a search for national pride? Is, then, impossible to reconcile German nationalism and the recognition of its *Schuld*? Or is it perhaps this awareness of Germany's past and *Schuld* that triggers, necessarily, a new way of relating to the German *Vaterland*, as Habermas suggests? In short, *what are the limits of a post-Shoah German-Jewish dialogue*? What can be extracted from the Broszat-Friedländer exchange is that a conversation between perpetrators and victims collides with German national pride for this particular generation of scholars we are discussing. A common ground can easily be found between Jewish survivors and the so-called non-German Germans, as the *Historikerstreit* lets us discern, but can there really be a conversation between Jewish survivors and the so-called "German Germans"?

Friedländer's last reflection upon Germany in *Where Memory Leads* does not resolve this ongoing tension for the Germanic Jew. The image of Germany will always partially remain for Friedländer that of the survivor and the scholar deeply informed by his scholarship, but *Ashkenaz* will always hold a familiarity and, thus, the Germanic Jew's self-recognition in its culture. The relationship must always remain one of rejection and attraction, yet another ambivalence of post-Shoah life for the Germanic Jew. If there is,

however, one final variable which takes Friedländer closest to a real reconciliation with Germany and Germanness, it is perhaps a new blood bond. This bond is what, it can be argued, finally prompts a partial reconciliation. And just as Ruth Klüger, Saul Friedländer, as well, exemplifies this last stage in the relationship between the post-Shoah Germanic Jew and Germany: “It took years before I felt somewhat more at ease in Germany; yet eventually I almost did. My two Berlin grandchildren, Yonatan and Benjamin, could not imagine anything else.” (Friedländer 2016, 198)

3.9.6. The *auctoritas* of the survivor

Friedländer’s magnum opus, *The Years of Extermination*, was awarded with the Pulitzer Price for General Nonfiction in 2008. This book, nonetheless, cannot be fully understood outside the context of the *Historikerstreit* and the Broszat-Friedländer exchange. In many ways, this work is, in historiographical terms, a reaction to many of the arguments raised by the revisionist historians involved in the *Historikerstreit*. Due to a perhaps strategic political *telos*, or a mere methodological disagreement, these revisionist historians mistrusted the survivors’ memory (and, by extension, the memory of their descendants). There is room for a wider epistemological debate which would follow the claim that history is indeed only composed by the facts, by the statistics. This could prompt the beginning of a wider debate whose central concern would be the consideration—or delegitimization—of the survivors’ epistemological validity in historiography.

Many are the points of view from which we could tackle the problem of the epistemological validity of the witness. Grosso modo, in strictly (continental) philosophical terms, the validity which Kant gives to the empirical consciousness, by associating this as a logical conclusion of experience, can also be put into question, as Benjamin does. Thus, following Benjamin, one could argue that any empirical consciousness is ultimately pure mythology if it is regarded, as Benjamin criticizes, as a valid and transcendental consciousness: “Es ist nämlich gar nicht zu bezweifeln daß in den Kantischen Erkenntnissbegriff die wenn auch sublimierte Vorstellung eines individuellen leibgeistigen Ich welches mittels der Sinne die Empfindungen empfängt und auf deren Grundlage sich seine Vorstellungen bildet die größte Rolle spielt. Diese

Vorstellung ist jedoch Mythologie und was ihren Wahrheitsgehalt angeht jeder andern Erkenntnismythologie gleichwertig.“ (Benjamin 1991, 161)

If we briefly aim to take this argument to a more scientific level, the problematics which stems from the epistemological validity of statistics vs. the witness' narration becomes even more complex, but it does perhaps shed light on the question of the role of the witness, and—in this context—the survivor, when it comes to creating *Erkenntnis*. Delving further into the question of whether we can find truth, or even truthfulness, in a survivor's narration (be it an autobiography⁸⁵, a recording or a diary) leads us to a necessary philosophical question which although worthy of debate would ignore some empirical facts that would immediately alter our main focus when reading autobiographies. Meeting points between different areas of knowledge within natural sciences is usually—although not always—very much appreciated within scientific circles. Somewhat of a reticence can be found in humanities circles when the reality is that both psychologists and literary critics aim to tackle the same problems which emanate from the human experience. Although this tendency has started to change in the last decade, we still consider that the profit of introducing different scientific approaches and perspectives in literary criticism and cultural analysis is still to be discovered. It has served in the 20th century to the establishment of new sciences. Thus, we will briefly introduce some neuroscientific facts which we believe can highly enhance our debate regarding this topic of the epistemological validity of the witness.

Neuroscientific studies with regards to memory (Rubin & Greenberg in Fireman, McVay, and Flaagan 2003) reaffirm the complexity of memory formation, codification, consolidation, and its subsequent editability or reconsolidability. The idea that memories—after having overcome a “labile state” previous to its wiring into the brain—stays immutable (what is known as memory consolidation theory), has become obsolete. Whereas more neuroscientific studies take place, there are more and more reasons to

⁸⁵ Friedländer especially makes use of many autobiographical works in the writing of his magnum opus *The Years of Extermination*. Although we will further tackle the question of the idea behind the inclusion of such writings, the reflection upon the truth or truthfulness behind an autobiographical narrative becomes especially salient in this context due to fact that autobiographical works and diaries serve Friedländer as paradigmatic of the voice of the victim.

believe that memories do not stay in a static state in our brain where they can be accessed without any further edition or mutation. Memories can and, in fact, do become vulnerable to disruption after they have been fixed in our brain, what is known as reconsolidation. This goes beyond the idea of remembering as a constant reconstruction, something that is somehow tackled in studies concerning autobiography and self-writing. That idea is still based on the false premise that memories are immutable, as it were, and that the various ways of verbalizing such memory are a series of different reconstructions of a fixed memory. Accepting reconsolidation theory would necessarily entail the acceptance of the fact that memories themselves are subject to constant mutation and edition *every time* a specific act of remembering triggers the reconsolidation of such memory. This would mean that by the mere act of uttering or writing memories, these are being edited and, therefore, changed.

Many are then the questions which can be posed immediately after this reflection. If we proceed on the basis that memories, if remembered (semantic redundancy intended), are thus located in an inexorable state of updating and editing when taken to the working memory, many are the neuroscientific arguments which could back up the idea that the witness' testimony could never be fully faithful to "real" events. An important reflection must be introduced here: can we, by extension, understand the witness, the survivor, as a necessary liar just because his neurological procedures favor the editing of their memories? Where are then the limits of self-deception? We certainly do not consider the witness as a necessary liar. However, and this is perhaps the point of contention between law and philosophy-science, the witness is capital in the legal thought, but, as Benjamin notes, it must not be so in philosophy or in any theory of knowledge: the subject is not a witness of truth, because truth is either objective or intersubjective, but never strictly subjective. Proceeding with this reflection upon the quest for objectivity would lead us, as it leads to Benjamin, to the idea of reaching a kind of decentralized subject, a chimerical homo sapiens.

Given the fact that trying to understand the witness as a witness of truth leads us indeed to convoluted questions regarding our conceptualizations of the subject, knowledge, and truth, are we then to understand the witness for its legal validity instead? Is that the direction to which the Broszat-Friedländer exchange must necessarily lead? Nazis knew very well the importance of the witness, for bodies were turned to ashes and

ashes were fanned away. The members of the *Sonderkommando*, perhaps the most epistemologically-valid victims (in legal terms) were also systematically eliminated. Given the difficulties we are to find when equating a witness' memory with truth, one could be tempted to accept the idea that, after all, statistics and numbers can indeed explain the Shoah. But what would Auschwitz be without its witnesses, without its survivors? Who turns the statistics into a concentration camp? Only the witness, only the survivor does. The statistical part of Auschwitz is well-known nowadays. This can be even shared by the witness, also because their memory is, as has been noted, constantly subject to update and editing, but there are things which transcend the mere statistical part, things that—without any pretension of objective truth, speak for themselves—as Jorge Semprún reminds us:

¿Sabe usted qué es lo más importante de haber pasado por un campo? ¿Sabe usted qué es exactamente? ¿Sabe usted que eso, que es lo más importante y lo más terrible, es lo único que no se puede explicar? *El olor a carne quemada*. ¿Qué haces con el recuerdo del olor a carne quemada? Para esas circunstancias está, precisamente, la literatura. ¿Pero cómo hablas de eso? ¿Comparas? ¿La obscenidad de la comparación? ¿Dices, por ejemplo, que huele como a pollo quemado? ¿O intentas una reconstrucción minuciosa de las circunstancias generales del recuerdo, dando vueltas en torno al olor, vueltas y más vueltas, sin encararlo? Yo tengo dentro de mi cabeza, vivo, el olor más importante de un campo de concentración. Y no puedo explicarlo. Y ese olor se va a ir conmigo como ya se ha ido con otros. (Semprún 2000, emphasis added)

This discussion will inevitably take us back to the beginning: what are the limits of representation? If literature poses the problems of how to accurately depict the Shoah, the same question can thus be posed from a scientific point of view. How can science accurately depict the Shoah? This is the greater historiographical debate: how to reconcile the testimony of the witness and statistics? Memory and science. As we noted previously, truth is either objective or intersubjective, *but can it be plural?* And if it is so, is there a real room for synthesis? How then not to fall into the post-structuralist logic of rejecting any totalizing view of history for its potential contingency? *Is memory then always*

contingent, because language itself is? And—in an attempt to see beneath our own reflection—is a resulting post-structuralist thinking a logical psychological process when facing such conundrums? If the (post)modern man can be content with what comes to be believed as truth in the course of a dialogical encounter (as post-metaphysical thinkers like Rorty or Habermas suggest), what is that same man to do when forced to find an explanation to the inexplicable?

Friedländer comes to rescue and warns us of the “aesthetic fantasy” to which this postmodern thinking necessarily leads and thus the “need for establishing a stable truth.” (Friedländer 1992, 5) Nevertheless, the historian knows the end and cannot reject the memory of the victim, the massacre and the singularity of the event, whether it could potentially be somehow related to previous events or not. Several aspects cannot be rejected from the scientific production of the Shoah historian: the personal experience – the testimony– of the survivor. If something, then, characterizes Friedländer’s historical writings, it is precisely the integration of the survivor’s memory, his own personal memory and experience, and a strictly aseptic historical approach to the events based on numbers and statistics. This is Friedländer’s concept of a master narrative (a concept rejected by poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault or Lyotard⁸⁶). Thus, Friedländer methodology, which serves us to synthesize the before-raised dialectical questions regarding the valid approach to the Shoah, consists on combining both: statistics and testimony; thus, perhaps, science and literature?

Not only the survivor but the witness in general, is given by Friedländer *auctoritas*. In Friedländer’s works, the witness contributes to history as much as the numbers and the dates do. This is a constant in Friedländer’s *The Years of Extermination*, exemplified in the use of diary accounts and autobiographical works which always find a place during Friedländer’s historical narration. The power of these accounts is undeniable, for Friedländer combines the narration of an objective history with the introduction of highly subjective accounts; accounts which introduce an unquestionable

⁸⁶ “En simplifiant à l’extrême, on tient pour « postmoderne » l’incrédulité à l’égard des métarécits. Celle-ci est sans doute un effet du progrès des sciences ; mais ce progrès à son tour la suppose.” (Lyotard 1979)

Jewish dimension but ultimately corroborate the objective narration as well. Friedländer, then, personifies the suffering as no objective narration could do:

An individual voice suddenly arising in the course of an ordinary historical narrative of events such as those presented here can tear through seamless interpretation and pierce the (mostly voluntary) smugness of scholarly detachment and “objectivity.” Such a disruptive function would hardly be necessary in a history of the price of wheat on the eve of the French Revolution, but it is essential to the historical representation of mass extermination and other sequences of mass suffering that “business as usual historiography” necessarily domesticates and “flattens.” (Friedländer 2008, xxvi)

The discussion of Friedländer’s personal reflections on these methodological and epistemological issues is first of all relevant due to the relevance they are given in the context of the *Historikerstreit* and the Broszat-Friedländer exchange, as they are used by some to legitimize or delegitimize certain types of historiographical approaches. The logical connections made by Friedländer, especially in his second autobiographical work, regarding these academic debates, evince a wider psychological and emotional dimension to the debate. This dimension directly shapes a certain way of relating to Germany and Germanness. Although it can be further discussed to what extent these negative experiences affect certain historical positions held by Friedländer, these experiences as related in Friedländer autobiographical works serve, if anything, to legitimize those positions: namely a moderate intentionalism and, especially, one of his most controversial concepts in *The Years of Extermination*, the concept of “redemptive anti-Semitism”: “Hitler perceived his mission as a kind of crusade to redeem the world by eliminating the Jews. The Nazi leader saw “the Jew” as the principle of evil in Western history and society. Without a victorious redeeming struggle, the Jew would ultimately dominate the world. This overall metahistorical axiom led to Hitler’s more concrete ideological-political corollaries.” (Friedländer 2008)

3.9.7. Other types of revisionism

3.9.7.1. Kitsch and postmodern nostalgia: the prowl of relativism

Friedländer's concern with historical revisionism regarding the Shoah has already been presented as a key element in the struggle for a history and a memory worthy of its victims. Shifting the focus entails a necessary disregard, perhaps even to a certain extent a banalization of the *Endlösung*. The extermination of millions of people in a systematic way, bringing people from all over conquered Germany to a place strictly designed to the killing of human beings should, according to Friedländer, always stay at a central position regarding any approach to the Shoah, be it historical or fictional. This unprecedented killing machine might perhaps not be incomprehensible; it can be—and has been—conceptualized and contextualized, but Friedländer's main academic resistance has been against any hint of trivialization of the event, especially when it reveals a clear ideological purpose or a dubious pedagogical interest.

Previously, we warned about the issues triggered by postmodern approaches to history, approaches to which—or so can be argued—such a collision of memories can perhaps lead. Friedländer seeks truth; this can—and must—be built in history, but this plural truth must, per Friedländer, embrace also subjective accounts and not be portrayed as mere aseptic numbers and facts. Contrary to what many might think, this is not, however, compatible with a postmodern approach to history, and Friedländer warns about the dangers of such approach: it can give wings to dangerous revisionism, especially when this revisionism claims to be articulated against a moral blockade, another concept—morality—which postmodern thinking problematizes. The representation of the Shoah is a cardinal preoccupation of Friedländer and this, as has already been noted, is necessarily connected with his own representation of the country from where this per-him-not-acceptable portrayals of the Shoah come.

In 1974, Susan Sontag published an essay titled “fascinating fascism”. With the title, she was, in fact, referring to this new fascination which Nazism was again gaining within German art, especially German cinema from the late 1960s onwards. This “fascinating fascism”, what Friedländer calls the new “Hitlerwelle”, referred to films like Visconti's *The Damned* (1969), Joachim Fest's *Hitler, a career* (1977), Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970) and, later on, Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen* (1981). Nevertheless, if there

is one film among all this which stands among all this, that is perhaps, Jurgen Syberberg's *Hitler—ein Film aus Deutschland* (1977), a 429-minute film (more than 7 hours). *Hitler—Our Hitler*, as it was translated into English, is the one which breaks the taboo like no other does and it was branded by Sontag as “the most extraordinary film I have ever seen.” In a film aiming to represent everything, Syberberg's explains the ideology behind the Shoah: Nazism, and its place within German culture.

What was considered by Sontag the most fascinating film ever, was interpreted in a totally different way by Friedländer. This new fascination for the Nazi époque and its then-retro brought about an until-then expression of *pathos* which for more than 20 years had not had its place in German art. It was this particular—although inescapable—atmosphere of cheap and kitschy sentimentality, fascination and nostalgia what alerted Friedländer, as he explains in *Reflets du nazisme*: “C'est la juxtaposition de l'esthétique kitsch et des thèmes de mort qui suscite la surprise, ce frisson particulier, caractéristique du nouveau discours sur le nazisme, mais semble-t-il, du nazisme également.” (Friedländer 1982, 22) It is this particular mixture portrayed in this “nouveau discours” what Friedländer considered dangerous. Firstly, the focus on Hitler's superstar dimension entails a necessary *übermenschlichen* character, but the present kitsch also trivializes death, not the death of the particular, but of millions. Moreover, it can lead to the banalization of the idea of utter destruction. The theme of destruction is then depicted in a halo of pseudo-spirituality with “manœuvres de l'exorcisme” (Friedländer 1982, 37).

In the documentary film *When Memory Comes* (Diamand 2013), Friedländer recounts some of the conversations between him and Syberberg which took place after the release of the film. As in the case of Broszat, Friedländer does not presuppose a necessary revisionist impulse behind Syberberg's work. His first remarks against Syberberg's film are articulated in aesthetic terms: it is this grandiose image of Hitler, with his portrayed *Übermenschlichkeit* and its romantic and kitschy aesthetics which, Friedländer feared, could reawaken the well-known feelings which took Hitler to power. By portraying the superstar accompanied by Wagner's music as a constitutive part of a grandiose German culture and all its theatrical potential, the prospective mocking of the figure which could take place through the seemingly bad taste of the *mise en scène*, necessarily entails a sense of melancholy—even when the protagonist is being a caricature of himself—which results in a kind of *Götterdämmerung*. Friedländer warned

Syberberg about the dangers of creating a new fascination for Hitler and Nazism, to what Syberberg responds “aber es war ja faszinierend!” Friedländer explains: “It was authentic, there was no reason not to say it. It was unreflected. Nazism indeed fascinated those who grew up in it. [...] It was a *cri du coeur*. [...] It was a genuine expression of feelings which were stuck somewhere in adolescence and were coming back.” (Diamand 2013)

Many are the similarities between the debates Friedländer holds with Broszat and Syberberg. Friedländer’s concerns always revolve around the ways in which the Shoah must be represented and how a representation of it must not trivialize and disregard the catastrophic end of Nazism. This catastrophic end must not be portrayed as the twilight of a God nor the nostalgic rise and fall of an idol. The end, per Friedländer, is nothing else but the end of all the victims. Broszat represents for Friedländer an attempt at a historical revisionism: a shift of focus; while Syberberg through postmodern aesthetics achieves, nonetheless, a very similar goal; and although it could be discussed to what extent there is an apologetic goal or even side effect of the artistic production, the (re)creation of a romantic and fascinating way of relating to Nazism, brings about a mythical dimension to it, which Friedländer understand as crucially dangerous.

Following Broszat’s own idea, that is, that one is forever hampered by virtue of his own mythological memory, we could conclude by saying that both Broszat and Syberberg shared a common past: they were teenagers during the Nazi period, and as Friedländer’s reflections let us discern,—although not perpetrators themselves—these teenage Germans, who became fascinated by Nazism, necessarily identified with the perpetrators, never with the victims. In these two discussions we have treated, the German-Jewish tensions become perfectly clear as well as the limits of a post-Shoah Jewish-German dialogue: both historical revisionism and postmodernism have a trivializing effect on the Shoah and, consequently, trigger Friedländer’s *in-Abwehr* Jewishness. For there is not only a sudden need for the establishment of historical truth and fidelity for the sake of history itself but a truth and a fidelity worthy of its victims.

3.9.7.2. Post-structuralist thinking: relativism vs. master narrative

What could be then extracted from Friedländer's academic feuds against revisionism and postmodernism in the context of German historiography and German cultural production is then the following: both academic or artistic tendencies require not only a diachronic consciousness but a moral conscience as well. There are ways of historicization and representation which transgress what Friedländer would consider a proper way of portraying the Shoah. For many, postmodernists included, this would be a moralistic stance. No limits must be established in the portrayal of anything, as the postmodern logic goes and, naturally, not moral limits. The main conundrum of remembrance and the so-called historical memory might be the political use of it, that is, the distorted and distorting use of the past for future political vindictiveness. This might force some to reject any moralizing-sounding discourses regarding memory and especially Holocaust remembrance. Accusations of hypersensitivity, of "being stuck in the past", can easily lead to banalization, and it might perhaps evince a wider problem regarding essentialist approaches to life, especially to the life of the Other: or how should the Essence relate to Otherness? How the perpetrator to his victim and vice versa? Especially in a world where Neo-Marxism has exploited victimization perhaps to its limits, how can there be achieved a common culture of remembrance?

In Primo Levi's magnum opus *Se questo è un uomo*, Levi reflects upon the role of his readers, holders of judgment, builders of the dynamics of relating to the past: "Pensavo che la mia parole sarebbe stata tanto più credibile ed utile quanto più apparisse obiettiva e quanto meno suonasse appassionata; solo così il testimone in giudizio adempie alla sua funzione, che è quella di preparare il terreno al giudice. I giudici siete voi." (Levi 2005, 233) Limits, and in this case, the limits of relating to the past must be negotiated in the context of their potential relativity. This takes us to another academic discussion between Friedländer and, this time, American historian Hayden White, which initially took place between him—White—and another famous Italian historian, Carlo Ginzburg.

Previously, we pointed out the epistemological and methodological problem which aroused during the *Historikerstreit*. This type of revisionism very probably had a clear political and apologetic goal. The problematics which stems from the postmodern approach to representation of the Third Reich might not perhaps share this political aspect

necessarily, although—as Friedländer points out—it contributes to a dangerous feeling of fascination, which ultimately—Friedländer feared—could lead to a *risorgimento* of fascism. In this case, Hayden White’s approach to history bespeaks certain issues which transcend the epistemological and even methodological questions: the question of language and the problems language itself poses are brought to the discussion: “Narrative accounts do not consist only of factual statements and arguments; they consist as well of poetic and rhetorical elements by which what would otherwise be a list of facts is transformed into a story.” (White in Friedländer 1992, 38)

The problems which language poses are generally a concern to be found in poststructuralism as a general tendency and continue as a shared axiom in analytic philosophy (Rorty, for example, problematizes the idea of truth by emphasizing the contingency of language itself). The idea that a signifier—rather than referring to a signified—refers to another signifier, and this to another, *ad infinitum*, constitutes the basis of the post-structuralist approach to language. Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida do pose several problems in this direction and establish as a central concern—from a deconstructive perspective—the role of power in the written text. That is, rather than focusing on the content, the focus might be shifted to the text as its potential use as a tool for power on the part of the author to privilege himself among others. As we mentioned in chapter one, these post-structuralist approaches are used strategically in the context of this dissertation, as their claims are extremely powerful, even if, in many cases, they lead to more than questionable ends. Nevertheless, their focus on power does provide the scholar with a semantics and a matrix of a priori-expected dynamics, even if they might not be the only ones which operate (is dominance and submission the unarguable constant in social interaction?). Moreover, this totalizing view of power can then be especially useful when tackling authors, like Ruth Klüger, who adhere to philosophies where power-relations are especially highlighted. In the case of Saul Friedländer, we do not see an adherence to these post-structuralist tendencies in academic terms, even if a more post-structuralist approach is of special help when tackling questions like polymorphic identities, as his is.

In academic terms, Friedländer rejects these post-structuralist approaches to history, especially when tackling topics like Nazi Germany. The reason is clear: these approaches (be called postmodernist, post-structuralist, etc.) can be seen as an open

invitation to relativism; some may argue that they even result in a general cynicism (and ultimately, nihilism). Furthermore, this type of approaches, especially in the context of the historiography of the Third Reich, can easily lead to historical revisionism, Friedländer's main academic concern. There are narrative structures or stylistic options which, by its excessive aestheticization or glamourization, can ultimately collide against morality and taste, for example, a sadomasochistic fantasy.⁸⁷ Hayden White, however, gives the example of *Maus*, as "a particularly ironic and bewildered view of the Holocaust, but [...] at the same time, one of the most moving narrative accounts of it." (White in Friedländer 1992, 41)

Friedländer's academic fight for a history worthy of its victims contains an emphasis on the ethical aspect of representation, but any approach which disregards the possibility of any master narrative should per him also be rejected, especially when tackling Nazi Germany and the *Endlösung*. Language—and by extension, the language chosen to account for something—does indeed shape reality (even if in all its contingency, as Rorty would suggest). Hence, a total disregard of the issues brought by poststructuralism would evince a clear ideological bias. In the case of contemporary history, Friedländer's view of these post-structuralist approaches to history is the same as any other type of revisionism.

It is precisely the "Final Solution" which allows postmodernist thinking to question the validity of any totalizing view of history, of any reference to a definable metadiscourse, thus opening the way for a multiplicity of equally valid

⁸⁷ Many are the authors who refer to the sadomasochistic fantasies which stem from the context and aesthetics of Nazism. Susan Sontag, more concretely, explained this phenomenon as follows: "Sadomasochism has always been an experience in which sex becomes detached from personality, severed from relationships, from love. It should not be surprising that it has become attached to Nazi symbolism in recent years. Never before in history was the relation of masters and slaves realized with so consciously artistic a design. Sade had to make up his theater of punishment and delight from scratch, improvising the decor and costumes and blasphemous rites. Now there is a master scenario available to everyone. The color is black, the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death." (Sontag 1975)

approaches- This very multiplicity, however, may lead to any aesthetic fantasy and once again runs counter to the need for establishing a stable truth as far as this past is concerned. (Friedländer 1992, 5)

3.9.8. The constant Diaspora

Pavel, Pavlíček, Paul, Paul-Henri-Marie, Shaul, Saul are all the names which have come to make reference to Saul Friedländer at different moments in his life. *Friedländer is then the epitome of the fragmented diaspora identity*, a diaspora identity which did not cease to be so at any moment of Friedländer's life, not even after having moved to Israel; always living, teaching, and doing research in different countries for long periods of time: having, thus, always a way out of Israel, as well as a way out of any other country. Friedländer's polymorphic and fragmented identity can be argued to be the one of the one who cannot help but having it. This diasporic tendency then rapidly turns into a diasporistic one; a tendency always predominant in his life, previously to his disillusionment with Zionism. It would be then inaccurate to state that Friedländer's *yerida* is strictly connected with his political discrepancies with Israel. As has already been noted, Friedländer's criticism of the settlement enterprise after 1967 entailed a progressive detachment from Zionism (although not from Israel per se) which, in some cases, has made him state that he is not a Zionist anymore.

Diasporic identities can naturally be found all over Jewish literature: from the Bible to Kafka. Also, the figure of the wandering Jew is a common one in Jewish tradition. There is definitely the aesthetics of the diasporic wandering Jew in Saul Friedländer with the adding trauma of the Shoah. For the diasporic Self longs for a home which might have been, which could even ultimately be, but *the diasporistic Self ultimately longs for a lack of real Heimat*; it praises its lightness of being, its lack of a real anchor. *The diasporistic Self reaffirms itself in its lack of a real self-affirmation*. For the diasporic Self, Otherness is a given, a necessary part of *Galut*, of the diasporic condition; perhaps a punishment, an injustice, or even a way to salvation. For the diasporistic Self, however, there is something irremediable about a self-imposed diaspora, a self-imposed Otherness. There is the attraction of being something, but not completely, of being able to be part of different worlds: "J'avais vécu en marge de la catastrophe ; une distance infranchissable peut-être

me séparait de ceux qui, directement avaient été happés par le cours des choses et, malgré tous mes efforts, je restais, à mes propres yeux, plus qu'une victime—un spectateur. J'allais donc errer entre plusieurs mondes, les connaissant, les comprenant, mieux peut-être que beaucoup d'autre, mais incapable néanmoins de ressentir une identification sans réticence aucune, incapable de voir, de saisir et d'appartenir d'un seul mouvement immédiat et total." (Friedländer 1978, 158)

As a son of the catastrophe, Friedländer's experience as a young boy seems to have marked a never-ceasing lack of identity negotiation. These mixed feelings, this cognitive dissonance, with regards to Germanness due to the disruption of the Jewish-German symbiosis must be understood as the first in a series of identity-negotiation failures. This particular psychological state emanates from the Shoah experience, as he explains, rather than the one of the victim per se, the one of the spectator. It thus exemplifies the cognitive state of the constant outsider, a diasporic state which differs slightly from any other pre-Shoah Jewish one. For the diasporic Self longs for its home; moreover, the diasporic Self knows that there ever was a home, even at a strictly theoretical level. This new diasporistic self, unable to negotiate its place within the Jewish-German tension, displays both facets strategically, or—what has become a leitmotif of this dissertation—in *Abwehr*. Thus, perhaps always feeling too European in Israel, perhaps always a little too Jewish in Europe, this new post-1948 diaspora Jew could furthermore even be an Israeli (as Friedländer is), but home is ultimately nowhere.

Coming to Israel as an orphan teenager, Friedländer embraced a new Jewish and Israeli identity, although never fully, and not definitely. Friedländer has repeated in many occasions his uncomfortable relationship with the Hebrew language (in its written form especially) and his lack of self-recognition in Israeli nationalism. His lack of commitment to actual living in Israel exemplifies an impossibility to fully commit to one country's destiny. Friedländer's academic career and his works can be read as a commitment to Jewishness: always counterarguing revisionist and anti-Semitic tendencies in historiography and academia in general. Friedländer's life, however, bespeaks a more complex way of relating to his Jewishness. This cannot be understood outside the framework of modern Jewish identity: its ambivalences and its tensions. Friedländer's identity is paradigmatic of the never-static Jewish identity. An identity which could be articulated at different moments and at different stages of one's life through a set of

religious performances, a proactive political rhetoric, through academic writing or through life choices. It would be inaccurate, however, to say that this is only a characteristic of modern Jewish identity: it is indeed to be found in many different cultural paradigms, but it is especially salient in the study of Jewish writers due to the particularities of Jewish history and identity. The negotiation between the centrifugal and the centripetal forces which act upon Jewishness can be a life-time one. Thus, the sudden embrace of Zionism by a teenage Friedländer can only be understood as an increase of the centripetal force of Jewishness acting upon a young orphan boy. This centripetal force rapidly decreased, although never ceased, never has, and never will. Living in Israel and outside of it for many years bespeaks Friedländer's constant tension, constant negotiation between Israeli essentialism and Jewish diaspora life under the cloak of Otherness. It can be argued that it is likewise a Jewish phenomenon to seek the center (centripetal force) as it is to pull away from it (centrifugal force). The latter, that is, the periphery-seeking mood, still needs the centripetal force to acknowledge its periphery; *it requires the tension both forces create*. It is likewise "Jewish" to reaffirm oneself in a supposedly-static Jewishness as it is so to radically detach from it and aim at its dilution. From a Jewish essentialist point of view, the assimilationist, the cosmopolitan, the Jew with the liquid identity can be the epitome of the self-hating Jew. From the perspective of the cosmopolitan Jew, Jewish essentialism is nothing else than an atavism, a way of wanting to homogenize a group of people under the umbrella of an imagined community.

It is likewise Jewish to fluctuate between both, never conforming to one sole category: never fully accepting the basic axioms of any side, finding in the tension of non-definability one's comfort zone. No longer a Zionist, but never an anti-Zionist, Friedländer's relationship with Israel is an intricate one, as has soon been discussed in chapter two. In terms of his identity, Friedländer's Jewishness—after having lived in many countries—seems to find a logical space in the non-definability and identity liquidness of California (and more concretely, Los Angeles), perhaps the closest to a *non-lieu*: "There is some logic in me having ultimately landed in the simulacrum of a real place, in a city that, despite countless areas of natural beauty, (almost) everlasting spring weather, and the magnificent ocean coast, does not touch you, take hold of you, doesn't make you sign ecstatically, even for a brief moment." (Friedländer 2016, 235)

California, the epitome of nowhere, was the place which provided Friedländer the (head)space to focus exclusively on the history of the Shoah. From this decision came Friedländer's magnum opus and his posterior Pulitzer Prize, even if such decision entailed a sense of loss: "When I think of the early years in Los Angeles, I remember them as somehow wrapped in a thin veil of sadness [...]. *I felt in exile*. But exiled from where and from what?" (Friedländer 2016, 248–249, emphasis added) For the diasporic self longs for a home it probably does not know, but the diasporistic Self looks for the longing of a place it might perhaps intuit but not recognize as such. Friedländer, the diasporistic Self *par excellence*, did not keep the tension of never making Aliyah, as Ruth Klüger always kept. Friedländer, in the state of loss of the one who does not know what home even means, tries to go to the core of his feeling of exile: "A sense of exile persisted. I often attempted to grasp its nature, then and later, always in vain [...]. I probably missed a medley of tiny elements that belonged to several worlds and to diverse phases of the farthest past had always missed it. [...] But the blandness of Los Angeles, its real and symbolic distance from familiar domains of sensibility, and also, the emotional loneliness that I experienced at that time, created the kind of void that allowed for the rise of a low-grade tristesse." (Friedländer 2016, 249)

Friedländer, our example of the diasporistic Self, has no home; if an essence, a fragmented one. And an initial lightness of being which he experienced during his young years in Europe after becoming an Israeli and of which he was proud, becomes an inescapable sadness. A constant sense of exile, of nostalgia—an *algos* for the *Heimat* which does not exist. And so, Friedländer's case can be used to exemplify the diasporistic Self; the Self that—rather than choosing *Galut*—is determined to it. This diasporistic Self does not fall into anti-Zionism: Friedländer never questions—furthermore, he supports—Israel's right to exist, an achievement to which he contributed and of which he is proud. Friedländer questions the meaning behind being Jewish without aiming at ending it. His critical positions against religious right-wing essentialism bespeaks, however, a resistance against being drawn to that particular manner of understanding Jewishness and, as the pacifist he comes to be, his reconciliation with Israel necessarily entails a cease of an expansionist and excessively militaristic performance of Jewishness. With all these different positions Friedländer can and—in fact, is—target to many. As we have seen in this dissertation, these conflicts take place mainly in the context of historical debates with non-Jewish revisionists or anti-Zionist intellectuals, but they also occur—in fact, they

especially do—within the Jewish world; a highly plural world. Friedländer’s positions are subject to criticism on both sides of the Jewish spectrum: by “Jewish Jews” and “non-Jewish Jews” alike, for his particular life experience and political stances can be regarded as *sui generis*, as many of them transcend the non-Jewish Jew / Jewish Jew tension.

3.9.9. The non-Jewish Jewish Jew?

In the introduction to this chapter, we discussed Deutscher’s notion of the non-Jewish Jew. A notion which could initially be used, as well, to describe the authors we here discuss, due to their agnosticism and their diasporic state. In order to aim to understand the intricate psychological dynamics of the post-Shoah diasporistic Jew which Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer exemplify, we need to understand their particular cases as part of the perhaps-expected constellation of oxymora which constitute the experience of the Other *par excellence*; that is, without decontextualizing their experience through a process of extreme particularization. The repertoire of intertextuality we have analyzed in this dissertation is a crucial shaping factor in the articulation of the Jewish post-Shoah experience. Nonetheless, and particularly in this chapter where we confront identity issues at such psychological levels, we want to highlight the notion of the *Zwischenposition*, and understand the complexities of the diasporistic Self in all its seeming contradictions.

This tension between the “non-Jewish Jew” (who would reject the idea of a Jewish nation-state, and who—furthermore—would consider the creation of a Jewish nation-state a historical and ontological mistake) and the “Jewish Jew” (who would indeed embrace the only Jewish nation-state, and perhaps even the Jewish religion) includes many shades of grey. Rather than arguing where the lines between self-affirmation and self-hatred lie, we want to note that both Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer do not conform to any traditional form of Jewish self-hatred (nor of Jewish self-affirmation). Moreover, none of these authors consider the creation of Israel a historical mistake and, thus, accept the nation-state as a still valid way of maintaining a Jewish life in the 21st century. What we see in these two authors is a particular *Zwischenposition* which naturally transcends their view on Israel, for it is located at a particular *Zwischenposition* regarding their own articulation of Jewishness.

Friedländer: the constant *Luftmensch*, holding positions at different universities in different parts of the world simultaneously, without a clear language to call his own, nor a country to which return, rejects being part of a society which experienced a *risorgimento* in its religious character, but Jewishness—his personal way of understanding and articulating it—lies at the core of his identity: “I’m a Jew. Ultimately I’m nothing else.” (Friedländer 2016, 17) Even if present-day Israel does not coincide with his hopes of a secular—and perhaps less nationalistic—society, questioning Israel’s right to exist constitute for Friedländer an act of anti-Semitism (Friedländer 2016, 277). For submitting to a clear-cut Essence is not Friedländer’s way of articulating his Jewishness. Israel is, for Friedländer, not the idyllic land many Zionist theorists pictured, and many Zionists live. But Israel—per Friedländer—accomplishes a mission, even if he, particularly, does not—*cannot*—be part of it.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

I

RELIGION AND RITUAL

- 1) In this dissertation, we have, first and foremost, challenged the idea that the discussion of religion in contemporary literary and cultural criticism constitutes an atavism. In fact, we consider that a conscious disregard of religion or religious phenomena is rooted in ideology, a secularist ideology which perhaps dismisses religious phenomena due to their irrational character. We have not challenged this last postulate, that is, the irrationality of religion, but rather, the conscious neglect of religious phenomena for their apparent irrationality. This has not affected our methodological approach to the subject matter, that is, we have not stepped at any moment into the field of theology. We have pointed out (and challenged) the power-dynamics present in cultural processes, religion included. Moreover, we have not disregarded throughout this dissertation questions related to ethnicity, national formation or identity. We have, however, included religion as the first topic of discussion in this dissertation so that it may serve as a cardinal example of such analyzable social phenomena.
- 2) Drawing from Jungian psychoanalysis, we have established human religious aspiration as a fundamental aspect of the human experience. We have followed Jung's ideas on religion as the containers of countless sets of symbols within the mind, evincing the existence of religious archetypes. We have taken as a starting point Jung's idea of the constant religious aspiration, which, however, can become secularized and constitute what we have called, in the most oxymoronic of ways, *secular(ized) sacredness*, understanding the structuring of any set of totalizing secular axioms as the secularized evolution of an initial set of religious ones. This idea has operated, like a *basso continuo*, as the basis of our understanding of the human psyche.
- 3) Self-writing has been the chosen medium through which we have analyzed religious phenomena and their secularized transpositions. From Augustine's spiritual autobiography to contemporary self-writing, we have noted the moments

in the history of self-writing in which special contributions have been made, thus shaping, editing and transforming our understanding of the religious experience which self-writing, in one way or another, seems to trigger in the writer who aims to undergo such *ex post facto* introspective journey. We have noted the tension between the *communitas* and the individual; a tension which seems an anthropological constant, a convoluted negotiation that often results in no resolution, a constant, seemingly-dialectical process, where identity crystallizations are rapidly challenged. In this regard, we have followed Roberto Esposito's idea on the Protean character of the *communitas*: the self faces the *communitas*, for it is the only dimension in which the self understands itself as such, while at the same time the *communitas* threatens the self's dissolution in it. Nonetheless, as cognitive science shows us, this seemingly-dialectical process we have noted, includes many more actors than the initial dualism any dialectical process suggests: the self's shaping is always multileveled and multiplayer. Although the self is highly shaped by its social dimension (by the *communitas*) the *molecular*, the *neural*, and the *psychological* levels in which the self also structures itself are in a highly intricate state of constant interaction. Even if not the only one, the *communitas*-individual interaction is a less convoluted and perhaps a more suitable level of analysis for self-writing, due perhaps to the cognitive mood self-writing itself bestirs. For this reason, our main analysis and the semantics which we have utilized in order to do so, have then focused on such *communitas*-self interaction.

- 4) Through the analysis of Augustine, Bunyan, Rousseau, and Mill, we have noted the *continuum* from the traditionally-understood religious experience to a secularized one in self-writing. Needless to say, other authors could have been included in this section, but we have chosen the ones we have considered crucial for the understanding of the evolution of *conversion rhetoric*: we have established Saint Augustine as the father of introspective thinking and self-abnegation in self-writing, from which all modes of self-writing necessarily emerge. Bunyan, the Protestant representative of self-writing, draws from many of the tensions Augustine points out in his complex journey towards his best self, especially highlighting the *communitas*-individual tension which ultimately shapes self-understanding for Bunyan. Rousseau deserves special attention for his role in the

secularization process of a conversion rhetoric which, until then, was strictly connected to the traditionally-understood religious experience. Rousseau adheres to a pattern which he, simultaneously, subverts. Nature becomes the modern version of a conceptualized deity. The relationship between Rousseau and the *communitas* is also convoluted, evincing the Protean character of the *communitas*: the deceptive and disappointing character of the *communitas* pushes Rousseau to self-discovery, but it is also the participation in the *communitas* that allows the self to progress. Perhaps the most cardinal contribution of Rousseau to the understanding of the self is his portrayal of *the self as contradictory*: a tension which should not be understood as dichotomic, but rather, as oxymoronic and part of a dialectical process. Stuart Mill introduces the last aspect we have wanted to highlight: *the intellectualization of conversion rhetoric*. God is not relevant for Mill, nor Nature (which he demystifies through the consideration of it as a monster rather than a deity). Mill introduces the idea that the self can *convert into a better version of itself by means of a logical reasoning*, which—nevertheless—provides the self with a similar totalizing set of axioms ultimately giving meaning and purpose to the self's existence.

- 5) The tendencies of contemporary feminist criticism pose several challenges to the feminist female self-understanding within self-writing and the conversion experience we have discussed, due—grosso modo—to the problematic relationship between feminist criticism and the canon in general. Topics like self-writing and religion, necessarily understood as androcentric under the feminist prism, will pose challenges to the feminist female writer who decides to begin a self-writing journey where religious phenomena are portrayed, as it is the case of Ruth Klüger. The interiorization of by-the-canon-marginalized female alterity must always be taken into consideration when discussing feminist female writers and the challenges which, under the interiorization of such postulates, they encounter when defining their female self in self-writing and via religious expressions.
- 6) Jung's ideas on religion have been our guiding principle in the understanding of the self as being shaped by a religious drive. Therewith, we firstly challenge the *Gott-ist-tot-Theologie*, not by necessarily negating the secularization process

which from the Enlightenment on has ensued, but nevertheless challenging it because such theological claim ignores—first of all—the secular(ized) transposition of sets of axioms which previously had indelibly been linked to the belief in a deity. Secondly, because such claim also ignores the religious revival in modern times which makes use of new media as their central way of expansion.

In order to discuss religion in an academic language, we have chosen to adhere to an understanding of religion which draws from recent studies in the fields of philosophy of religion, religious ethnology and anthropology. This, what we have called, a *culturalist* take on religion, fosters an understanding of *religion as culture*, *culture as media*, and the triad religion-culture-media as *meaning* and *practice*. Therewith, we challenge the idea that belief precedes practice, and, in turn, we want to understand religious ritual as *mediation*. In the eyes of the believer, such mediation is to certain ontological truths which provide meaning and an *ethos*. We, in turn, have focused on how ritual becomes the arena where meaning is constructed, negotiated and reconstructed. The self is then by us understood, at the social level of the *communitas*, as *produced by such mediation*.

- 7) The self-conscious ritual partaker has been our main object of study. In this sense, we have understood Klüger and Friedländer's position when they tackle religious matters in their self-writing. For they go beyond the observer-observed / analyzer-analyzed dialectic, as well as the atheist-believer one. By rejecting the postulate that belief precedes practice, the ritual partaker subverts the traditionally-understood religious dynamics of the believer who, by virtue of his belief, practices religion. Through their self-aware, analytic—almost deconstructive—tone, authors like Klüger and Friedländer corroborate the idea introduced by this culturalist take on religion that *practice precedes belief*. This belief, in their case, is not the experience and interiorization of an omnipresent and omnipotent deity (שכינה), but their own self-understanding as constitutive parts of the Jewish aesthetic formation and, as Klüger's writing especially shows, their role within this aesthetic formation. We have then posed the question of the understanding of these authors, rather than as “practicing” Jews, as “practiced” ones. We hold that this subversion of the religious dynamics regarding the self-aware

conceptualization of practice especially shapes modern identity formation in the context of religious or ritual performativity.

- 8) *Pesach* stands as a cardinal Jewish ritual for both Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer. In it, the performance of history and myth intermingle with singing and eating in its more ritual form. By highlighting the fundamental role of the performative aspect of the ritual, of its *practice*, Klüger's understanding of *Pesach* operates within a conception of religious ritual as *practice of mediation*. Via this mediation, the construction of a social reality ensues, ultimately producing a specific cosmovision, meaning and an *ethos*; the ritual partaker being, thus, *produced by such practice of mediation*. The aesthetic experience of *Pesach*, by being constituted by more than just the experience of *das Schöne* in art, needs to be articulated in Aristotelian terms. Thus, following Meyer, we retrieve a conception of *αἴσθησις* which proves to be more encompassing when discussing the religious aesthetic experience. Through this Aristotelian notion of *αἴσθησις* and making use of Klüger's explanation of *Pesach*, we suggest the logical evolution from the traditionally fixed concept of *communitas* to that of the *aesthetic formation*. A concept through which the concept of *communitas* is then finally understood as something partially fickle and more dynamic, constituting and re-constituting itself constantly via (ritual) acts of mediation. As Klüger explains, *Pesach* is the "rituale Mahlzeit" as well as the "Geschichte, Fabel und Lied". It is "Folklore und Großfamilienesen" as well as "Pracht und Welttheater", that is, *das Schöne* and *die Inszenierung*.
- 9) This initially-inclusive *telos* of ritual proves to be an exclusive one through the feminist prism through which Klüger views, interprets and relates to religious rituals. For ritual activity is the arena where power relations are produced, negotiated and *embodied*. The unarguably-Foucauldian aspect of this understanding of hierarchies as necessarily created by power relations is regarded by us as a crucial one to consider when discussing contemporary authors. Firstly, because it necessarily predisposes the scholar to look for the establishment of dominance and honor, as well as it predisposes the ritual partaker (especially the self-conscious one) to negotiate them. In this sense, Klüger's unacceptance of (Orthodox) Jewish gender hierarchies is interpreted by Klüger as an example of

the exclusive character of ritual as exemplified in Pesach, the saying of *Ma Nishtana* or *Kaddish*, or the gender separation at the *Kotel*.

10) Klüger's autobiographical project can be read as the search for and construction of an alternative ritual outside of a traditionally-understood religious framework, a *literary ritual*, a new panegyric, where—rather than *Glaube*—poetry and *Aberglaube* serve as the *secular(ized) reorientation* of Klüger's religious drive. The literary ritual becomes for Klüger the new practice of mediation through which to exonerate her father's "Gespenst". Nonetheless, Klüger's simultaneous attraction to and rejection of various traditional Jewish rituals and her lack of consideration for less traditional religious rituals within Judaism (like those of the Reform and Conservative branches more in line with her gender aspirations) makes us consider the need to insert this complex relationship with religion within a wider tension between tradition and modernity, which we have also treated in depth in chapter three.

11) Friedländer, as well, adheres to the understanding of *Pesach* as the constitutive mediation through which the Jewish aesthetic formation is constructed and embodied. It is particularly the traditional celebration of Pesach that inserts the ritual partaker into the collectively-interiorized history, "*l'enracinement dans le groupe, l'enracinement dans l'histoire et dans le temps*." Friedländer introduces the idea that the sacred words produce in the ritual partaker not only an experience beyond *des Schönen*, but an experience of being part of an *acquis*, a wider Jewish tradition and history, bigger than the mere individual. The interiorization of this apparent never fully encompassable history which could perhaps lead to a feeling of "*Unbegrenztheit*", as Kant suggests with his concept of the mathematical *Erhabenheit* (Kant 1990, sec. § 23), is thanks to Pesach an accessible aesthetic experience which ultimately constitutes "*ancree et d'assise au sein de la communauté*", *the metaphysical and psychological anchor of the Jewish aesthetic formation*.

The appropriation by the individual of a specific history, in this case, the history of the Jewish people becomes part of the ritual partaker's *Lebenswelt*, using Kraus' concept. At a first level, we establish ritual as the *performance*, a mediation

through which *the collective unconscious* (using Jung's term) becomes the provider of the ontological truths for the ritual partaker. Once this set of metaphysical aspects become interiorized, and *embodied* (using Meyer's term), through the aesthetic experience, the history and the tradition of the group *constructs the ritual partaker's self*, thus becoming part of the self's *Lebenswelt*.

- 12) The *Akedah* is another crucial intertextual reference in Friedländer's first autobiographical work. Friedländer adheres to the predominantly-Jewish reading of it as an act of obedience, of *submission* to God, a reading which nevertheless collides with the Zionist tone of Friedländer's first autobiographical project, unable to resolve the meaning behind Abraham's obedience to God and the moral conundrum it necessarily triggers. A "secularized" reading of this submission to God is however suggested by Friedländer, in a way evincing his doubts concerning Jewish nationalism in general. Friedländer wonders about the extent to which this submissive disposition has really been subverted by means, perhaps, of Zionism. We hold, however, that Friedländer's first dissonant note on *Quand vient le souvenir* bespeaks his inability to fully commit to a collective(ist) movement. For his reflections upon the meaning of the Akedah serve as an omen for *Where Memory Leads*. It shows a *post-Shoah wandering Jew*, never egotistical, but an *empathetic individualist*, able to understand and sympathize with different movements without committing to any of them. We consider this a crucial aspect of Friedländer's psychology; for although we note his political and ideological disagreements with *Gush Emunim's* philosophy and the settlement enterprise, his inability to fully commit to an aesthetic formation is a psychological constant we can see in Friedländer's works.

II

ZIONISM, *ERETZ*, AND ISRAEL

- 13) Regarding Zionism, we have especially delimited our object of study when tackling such a topic through a proper historical semantic analysis and its correspondent *Sitz im Leben*. This has been a crucial step in our research, given the usual difficulties scholars face when tackling topics like Zionism and Israel in academia, given their convoluted and controversial nature and the recurrent use of anti-Semitic topoi which are to be found in anti-Zionist stances in academia and all over university campuses. This has been one of the arduous tasks we have endured in order to approach the subject-matter in an aseptic way, and thus, be able to tackle the articulation of Zionism, Zionist ideas, and the relationship to both the metaphysical and psychological *Eretz Yisrael* and the physical State of Israel in the works of Saul Friedländer and Ruth Klüger. *Political Zionism*, as it is approached by these authors exemplify *a conatus towards self-affirmation—a Wille zum Leben*—a self-affirming way of approaching Jewishness, which in the context of the Shoah, the years prior to it and the immediate aftermath, is embraced as a psychological lifeboat in the face of the most extreme account of anti-Semitism in history.
- 14) Both synchronically and diachronically, Zionism has been and is a highly plural movement with one common aspect: the relation with *Eretz Yisrael*, the historic land of the Jewish people. The longing for Zion, nevertheless, is a constant in many Jewish authors of early Zionism—observant or non-observant, Socialist or Liberal—for “*the longing for Zion transcended theology*”, quoting Allan Dershowitz. This *αλγία* originated by the lost home and the desire to *νόστος*, *homecoming*, is the central aspect of the physical *Galut*, but also the psychological consciousness of Diaspora, a constitutive part of the Jewish aesthetic formation in *Galut*; a nostalgia interiorized through many Jewish texts and rituals, like in the case of the last words of the traditional Pesach Seder, the promise of the *νόστος* (לשנה הבאה בירושלים / Next year in Jerusalem). In Klüger and Friedländer’s works this *νόστος* becomes not a longing for a *locus* but *a longing for utopia, a Sehnsucht*.

- 15) The image of Theodor Herzl, father of political Zionism, became the face of the Zionist leader *par excellence*, in Klüger's words, "Held und Chefideologe" during the Shoah years. Using Herzl as the quintessential secular and quasi fully-assimilated Jew who becomes a Zionist, we have argued that secularist approaches which aim at diminishing the power of operating religious/cultural references present in early Zionism fail to come to a holistic view of the Jewish aesthetic formation. Anti-Semitism by being the trigger of Jewish self-affirmation in many early Zionist authors conforms to a specific articulation of Jewishness which Klüger calls "*jüdisch[keit] in Abwehr*". A self-defensive attitude which in the period from the Dreyfus Affair until the Shoah (perhaps until 1967) constitutes the intellectual position of many quasi-assimilated Jews who embrace the Jewish aesthetic formation as articulated by means of Zionist rhetoric and logic. Through the apparent phenomenological approach to which Sartre adheres when noting that "c'est l'antisémite qui *fait* le Juif", we, in turn, suggest through a teleological perspective that, given the self-affirming *in-Abwehr* Jewishness developed during this specific period we are dealing with, *c'est l'antisémite qui fait le sioniste*.
- 16) The concept of *the New Jew*—the *Muskeljude*—is a key one to understand the development of the self-defensive and self-affirming attitudes grown by Klüger and Friedländer during the Shoah years and its aftermath, as they constituted the basis of the Zionist ideal man. Nietzsche's philosophy of *Selbstüberwindung* (along with the ideas associated with the *fin-de-siècle Zeitgeist*: nationalism, eugenics and gymnastics i.a.) became the basis for the articulation of much Zionist writing during this period with the explicit use of Nietzschean concepts like the *Wille zur Macht* or the *Übermensch*. We suggest that Nietzsche's contradictory views on Jews and Jewishness, nevertheless, although potentially brandable as *allosemitic*, constituted shared concerns among these Zionist writers who were to break with the old Jew, overcome it, and construct the new one. Understanding the concept of the New Jew is crucial to understand the shift in Klüger and Friedländer's attitudes towards Jewishness during the Shoah years and its aftermath and their relationship to such new Jewishness during those years and, in the case of Friedländer, years after, during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

17) This interiorization of Zionism's basic postulate: that *the real home of a Jew is in the Middle East*, in the Land of Israel, constitutes the interiorization of a *feeling of exogenism*, externally suggested, but internally confirmed. This was the product of an awareness of rejectability, an easily-corroborable alterity, and—furthermore—the *interiorization of an oriental character*, that which haunted assimilationists, as well as the pioneers of the Reform movement. This oriental character, ultimately interiorized by all branches of Zionism, established the European Jew beyond the limits of European culture and geography; perhaps to some a clear fact which indeed shapes the ontological configuration of Jewishness, but a fact which, at some points in history was highly discussed and even challenged. After the interiorization of the exogenism of Jewishness, the expected-rejectability of the Jewish alterity and, what we have called, *der orientalische Trieb* (established as the state produced by the homeostatic disturbance of European Jewry), reconfigured Jewish performativity and the passivity which was commonly held as characteristic of the victims of the Shoah. This performative reconfiguration became a cardinal way of inspiring young Zionists in the aftermath of the Shoah. The idea of “never again” constituted the essential teaching of Zionist youth movements all over Europe. Consequently, a defensive—in *Abwehr*—attitude was encouraged and promoted.

18) Klüger's encounter with Zionism is strongly marked by her experience in different concentration and extermination camps: Theresienstadt, Christianstadt, and Auschwitz. Zionism is then understood by Klüger as *the only self-affirming response to anti-Semitism* during the Shoah. Klüger's *Wille zum Leben* in this context articulates itself through the rhetoric and national aspiration of Jewish nationalism. In this sense, the KZs—especially Theresienstadt—always holds this ambivalent nature: on the one hand, a type of *εὖ-τόπος* where self-affirmation and political awareness were developed, the place for intellectual stimulation, for the awakening to a collective national cause: *the place to synthesize personal autonomy and collective justice*. On the other hand, Theresienstadt always remains the ghetto, a Nazi institution, the memory of starvation and a constant state of uncertainty about one's life. Decades later, Klüger's return to Theresienstadt is explained by her as a “bitter euphoria”, an oxymoron rather than

a contradiction, and thus perhaps the synthesis, the normalized ambivalence of post-Shoah life.

19) *Israel signifies Klüger's psychological even pinah*; a place which is—consciously or unconsciously—kept at a calculated distance, at some level of idealization, given its fundamental role as a physical and metaphysical anchor for the development of Klüger's self-affirmation during the Shoah. Israel is constantly referred to by Klüger as the place which *could have always been* a real *Heimat*, but which never was. For the demystification of Israel, and its transition from *Eretz Yisrael* to the State of Israel is something which Klüger never endures, and so Israel is always kept—again, consciously or unconsciously—at a subjunctive mode: *Konjunktiv*.

20) In the aftermath of the Shoah, Friedländer and Klüger's paths diverged considerably. Friedländer, by virtue of making Aliyah, becomes part of the new Israeli society; thus, the metaphysical *Eretz Yisrael* progressively becomes for Friedländer the physical country—the *polity*—of Israel, with its own peculiarities and always subject to criticism. Klüger's migration to the United States, in contrast, inserts her into the post-Shoah American society. We thus suggest that her relationship to Zionism and Israel is then highly influenced by the 1950's and 1960's Diaspora attitudes towards them and the posterior commencement of the Israel-United States relations. Little of the political aspect of Israel is mentioned by Klüger, whose defense of the Jewish State prevails.

21) Friedländer's works—autobiographical and essay works—during this first stage of his relationship with Zionism (from the aftermath of the Shoah until the 1970s) evince *the making of a Zionist*. As in the case of Klüger, Friedländer's Jewishness is articulated through Zionist rhetoric and ideas: that is through pride, defensiveness, and nationalism. As it was noted in chapter one, conversion rhetoric has always held an important position in self-writing. In Friedländer's first autobiographical work, we see a pattern of *conversion rhetoric* which draws from different stages of the conversion pattern we discuss in chapter one: the role of the community is crucial in Friedländer's conversion into a Zionist. Friedländer's sense of Jewishness originates from a collective feeling of calamity,

of Shoah. Friedländer's *in Abwehr* Jewishness, in turn, is originated from the contact with a welcoming *communitas* whose collective struggle bound Jewish people together.

In contrast with the Protestant autobiographers who feared a loss of identity and individuality as a consequence of entering the religious community, Friedländer does not hesitate and decides to dissolve and *assimilate into a collective telos*, into the collective enterprise of Jewish nationalism, that is, into a welcoming and totalizing Zionist *communitas*, where *Otherness no longer entailed exogenism, but a necessary adherence to the new Essence*. Friedländer's conversion into a Zionist is the product of a by-him-portrayed *logical reflection*, a logic which finds in Zionism a way to crystallize itself, and hence Friedländer portrays the return to Israel as *a demystified conclusion*, in an attempt to escape from the *pathos* usually connected with Zionism. In this sense, Friedländer's conversion rhetoric resembles that of Stuart Mill for its *intellectual epiphany* and political character. Just as Mill finds in utilitarianism a valid *ethos* to which to adhere, Friedländer's finds in Zionism *a logical and just political solution* to give an answer to the historical consciousness of persecution.

- 22) Friedländer's *deconversion—the unmaking of a Zionist*—is instead the product of what he presents as the failure of the previously-interiorized *ethos*, a revision of an ethics of cohabitation which is, according to him, not defensible anymore under the Zionist logic after 1967. A rejection of the new mainstream Zionist logic of expansionism and its predominant religious component leads to a disassociation with the Zionist movement. This deconversion does not fall into the category of anti-Zionism: the establishment of the Jewish state is still considered by Friedländer an accomplishment deserving admiration and pride, and his emotional connection to Israel is not diminished. Still, the moments of epiphany found in *Quand vient le souvenir*, find a bitter resolution in *Where Memory Leads*: the first encounters with Zionist Youth groups where a Jewish and Zionist aesthetic formation was being constructed are replaced by harsh disagreements with the mainstream Zionist tendency after 1967, and more especially with the more conservative and religious branches of Zionism. Calling for social disobedience and participating in the protests organized by *Shalom*

Achshav represent the counter epiphany before leaving Israel, almost forty years after having made Aliyah.

The enthusiastic conversion rhetoric becomes a bitter de-conversion rhetoric, the self-affirming actions of the newly converted, become the proactivity of the one heading towards an ideological schism. Nonetheless, as noted in conclusion 14, it would be a mistake to understand Friedländer's de-conversion as only the product of post-1967 Zionist logic. Zionism, the most important enterprise of Friedländer's life—the matrix of a set of all-encompassing axioms—collapses. Deconversion denotes the return to a specific state of ambiguity. Israel, Zionism: Friedländer's only attempt at achieving an Essence in the aftermath of the Shoah crumbles; and thus, Friedländer's de-conversion from being a Zionist must be understood as return into a previous state, *a return to a diasporistic state*: bringing Friedländer back to an always feared—but also perhaps an always secretly desired—state, that of the *Luftmensch*, the diasporistic *Dasein*, who constantly longs for exile.

III

JEWISHNESS, *ASHKENAZ*, AND *GALUT*

- 23) In chapter three, we have analyzed Ruth Klüger and Saul Friedländer's articulation of Jewishness, for both authors agree that their Jewish identity lies at the core of their being: it constitutes the basis of their self-understanding, and thus the reason why the Jewish reading of their works had been a constant in this dissertation. Tackling questions related to self-understanding and identity transcend, however, the mere categorization which one can impose on oneself: the crystallization of an identity, even when this results in a triclinal form, has a clear echo in life-choices, political ascriptions and it predetermines the attitude with which anyone is to tackle any issue. In this sense, we have decided to understand *the quasi-floating signifier of identity as a shaping prism, as a self-recognized locus from which to develop a Weltanschauung*
- 24) The so-called Jewish-German symbiosis has been brought to the conversation in order to build the general framework from which to commence the analysis of Klüger and Friedländer's relationship with Germany and their understanding of *Ashkenazi* Jewishness after the Shoah. The Jewish-German symbiosis, rather the Jewish-German conversation, which is said to have begun with Mendelssohn's attempt at reconciling Christianity and Judaism in the context of the Enlightenment, is after the Shoah considered to a certain extent a mere Jewish illusion. It, nonetheless, bespeaks an underlying layer regarding the relationship of quasi-assimilated Germanic Jews of the time regarding Germany and their survival during the Shoah. As Friedländer and Klüger evince, Germany always remains simultaneously the familiar and the dangerous, the self-recognized cultural framework and the rejecting one as well, *the attraction and the repulsion*; in short, *an uncanny magnetism and a visceral abhorrence* for the land and the culture of both victim and perpetrator.
- 25) Klüger's career choice, that which defines her as a post-Shoah Jewish Germanist, can be understood as yet *another attempt at a Jewish-German dialogue*. In Klüger's prolific academic path, a search for the general space of the Other in German literature is easy to see, especially the female Other and the Jewish Other,

but also the search for the amalgamated nature of the Jewishness within Germanness and vice versa. Klüger praises the secularization of the Jewish intellectual *milieu* and its inclusion in European intellectual life from the Enlightenment onwards, but Klüger also *rejects assimilation*, that is, the oblivion of the constitutive Jewish Otherness, and thus, perhaps, her lack of consideration of Reform movements within Judaism. Yet, this Jewish Germanness, this German Jewishness, that we have wanted to compress in the term *Ashkenaz*, is a source of tension for the post-Shoah Jewish Germanist: finding no possible balance on both sides of the equation—an *impossible synthesis* regarding the sometimes-apparently dialectical sometimes dichotomic relationship between Jewishness and Germanness in post-Shoah life.

26) Friedländer understands 20th century Germanic Jewry as the proof of the existence of such symbiosis. Still, Germanness and Jewishness collide, especially when encountering historical revisionism regarding the Shoah and the problematic reconstruction of German patriotism after it. Friedländer's partial involvement in the *Historikerstreit* and his academic feuds with Martin Broszat and Ernst Nolte (as well as Klüger's problematic friendships with Martin Walser or Herbert Lehnert) evince *the limits of a post-Shoah Jewish-German dialogue*, the quandaries which stem from the collision of antagonistic memories, and the attempts at reconstructing a German national character under the watchful eye of Germany's essential Other *par excellence*, the Jewish Shoah-survivor.

27) Klüger and Friedländer challenge through their works the German search for a patriotism, the German quest to rebuild a German national(istic) enterprise; for Germany's essential Other always observes. Klüger and Friedländer as the intellectual observers—not completely endogenous, nor entirely exogenous—the Shoah-survivors, those who remind us of *the potential failure at (re)constructing and reconciling antagonistic Essences when they share a common history but not a common memory*. Authors like Klüger or Friedländer do not foster a post-structuralist deconstruction of human identities *ad infinitum* nor a utopian and naïve praise for post-nationalism. They, nonetheless, remind us of the limits of highly essentialist and nationalistic political and philosophical stances.

28) The always controversial topic of Jewish self-hatred has found a place in this dissertation, first of all, for its relevant role as a psychological constant regarding the Jewish experience throughout the centuries, the product of the interiorization of anti-Semitism, as Harvard psychiatrist Kenneth Levin (2006) notes. We suggest that *self-hating attitudes evince a particular psychological canalization of a consciousness of Otherness applicable to the experience of any essential Other and its always-intricate relationship with a rejecting Essence*. Many scholars, including Sander Gilman (1986), directly draw a connection between radical Jewish anti-Zionism and self-hatred. In the context of this dissertation, fearing that such categorizations could hazardously prevent us from a deep analysis of the philosophical *arche* of such criticism, we have chosen to talk about self-hating attitudes rather than self-hatred as a static state, something that we have only used in the discussion of the fictional character of Danny, given that it constitutes a clear and unarguable case of Jewish self-hatred.

29) The fictional character of Danny exemplifies an essentialist rejection of—what he considers—submissive religious attitudes, Diaspora, and Diaspora standards of masculinity. Danny represents the self-hating *Muskeldjude* (just as Ari Ben Canaan epitomized the self-affirming *Muskeldjude*). By drawing parallels between the fictional character of Danny and the fictional character of Yudka, a secular Zionist, we conclude that self-hating attitudes regarding *Galut* (and all *Galut* represents) constitute, on the one hand, a common object of rejection, which—nonetheless—do not necessarily share a common *telos*. Moreover, Danny's criticism of Jewish masculinity standards echoes early Zionist concerns with the Jewish body regarding the development of the *Muskeldjude*. The goal of such analysis is to conclude that the self-hating attitudes which we can find in the character of Danny can be found in (early) Zionist writers as well, thus concluding that *self-hating attitudes do not necessarily lead to a static state of self-hatred, but those self-hating attitudes which do not constitute a conatus towards self-overcoming and self-affirmation, remain as self-destructive*.

30) Deutscher's concept of *the non-Jewish Jew* we find crucial in the understanding of contemporary Jewish identity as well as of Jewish *Diasporism* and anti-Zionism. Deutscher's atheism made him reject Jewish religion and his

internationalism made him reject Jewish nationalism. His remaining Jewishness is essentially constituted by a consciousness of Otherness—that of the *Grenzzjude*—and the empathy towards any persecuted minority. The non-Jewish Jew, Deutscher outlines, is the one able to move between paradigms, due to his *Zwischenposition*, his liquid identity, that of the *Luftmensch*, and thus his aspiration towards a more universalist and more encompassing notion of the human being. This constitutes the cardinal characteristics of the Diaspora Jewish intellectual, what Deutscher ascribes to Spinoza, Heine, Freud or Marx, i.a. The adoption of Jewish nationalism is understood by Deutscher as symptomatic of the exposure to anti-Semitism.

31) Moritz Goldstein constitutes yet another position within the Jewish spectrum that deserves more attention, and particularly in the context of our study on Friedländer and Klüger, it exemplifies a crucial position for their understanding. “*Halbheit*” is Goldstein’s way of conceptualizing the state of the quasi-assimilated European Jew of the time: stuck between Germanness and Jewishness. Goldstein represents Jewish self-affirmation in the face of anti-Semitism, a rejection of self-hatred, of assimilation, and instead, a “*dissimilation*” from *German society* and the embrace of Zionism, at a theoretical level. Returning to Zion is what he expresses as a way—as *the way*—of being more than European: “*hypereuropäer*.” But Goldstein also represents the failure of such Zionist aspiration and his final rejection of making Aliyah, choosing instead the American *Galut*. Goldstein is the epitome of the ambivalence of European Jewry during the first half of the 20th century, unable to come to a resolution of the tension between the oriental drive of Zionism and a secular European background.

32) Hannah Arendt and Gerschom Scholem’s *Briefwechsel* sheds plenty of light upon the question of how to articulate and perform Jewishness after the Shoah. Arendt’s philosophical background and references have been branded by some as Eurocentric, while Scholem always claimed a Judaic tradition, thus *embracing an oriental character* which was perhaps, to some extent, rejected by Arendt. This is also symptomatic—or perhaps—consequential of *divergent conceptualizations and performances of Jewishness*, to this day, hard to reconcile. For if Scholem represents the Jewish intellectual who unconditionally commits to Zionist

Jewishness, Arendt, on the other hand, exemplifies *the ambivalent condition of the intellectual aiming to synthesize constant Jewish dialectics*. For although Arendt strongly opposed assimilationism, she also strongly opposed Jewish essentialism, and while opposing assimilationism maintains a certain acknowledgment of the Jewish oriental character with which Jewish reformers aimed to finish, Arendt's eurocentrism strongly demarcated the limits of her own understanding of Jewishness outside of Europe: *Neither Zionism nor assimilationism; neither Jewish nationalism nor anti-Semitism; neither the nation-state nor a weak and dissipated global identity*.

33) In the 21st century, diaspora Jewish anti-Zionist intellectuals embrace movements like the BDS Movement, rejecting its intrinsic anti-Semitic nature and hence the self-hating aspect which is usually associated with it from a more Zionist prism. If Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt represented at the time this ongoing tension between two antagonistic intellectual positions regarding Jewishness, nowadays authors like Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler or Norman Finkelstein, to name some of the most influential public intellectuals, are representative of the legacy of diasporistic internationalist and anti-Zionist Jewish intellectuals; all of them supporting the establishment of a binational state in Palestine and—by extension—the end of the Jewish State.

34) Saul Friedländer and Ruth Klüger represent a very *sui generis* category regarding this ongoing tension within the Jewish world, a *sui generis* performance of Jewishness. For although sharing the ethical dilemmas which arise when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, none of them—neither Ruth Klüger nor Saul Friedländer—support or have supported anti-Israel movements, nor the dissolution of the Jewish State; they neither reject Israel's *raison d'être* nor understand Israel as an ontological mistake. Nonetheless, Klüger and Friedländer could also be regarded as having synthesized many Jewish dialectics: neither observant nor completely rejecters of human religious pulsion or atheists; neither assimilationists nor essentialists; neither Zionists nor anti-Zionists; neither entirely diasporistic nor entirely essentialist; neither “non-Jewish Jews” nor “Jewish Jews”; neither traditionally self-hating Jews nor fully self-affirming ones.

35) Diasporism—not as a political stance, but as a post-Shoah cognitive state—is Klüger and Friedländer’s crude conclusion in their autobiographical projects. A feeling of exile, of ambivalence—*of loss*—permeates and closes their introspective journeys. *Zionism as the only conversion experience* is either never materialized (Klüger) nor the ultimate self-affirming and reconstructing Jewish movement (Friedländer). The result is multiple, triclinic, fragmented identities, yet no definite one: a tendency towards a state of self-doubting. They exemplify how the negotiation between the centrifugal and the centripetal forces which act upon Jewishness can be a lifetime enterprise. And if a tendency toward Otherness, toward *Galut*—to simultaneously belonging and not belonging to any group—prevails, can we understand that as a yet another manifestation—if not *the* manifestation—of the self-hating modern condition?

Klüger and Friedländer offer yet another shade of Jewishness, a particular post-Shoah shade of Jewishness. They remind us that *a Manichean prism fails at encompassing a self*. They represent a story of survival and ambivalence, but a Jewishness which constitutes their core-identity: an essential Otherness, but still an Essence; and ultimately, nothing else.

CONCLUSIONI

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I

RELIGIONE E RITUALE

- 1) In primo luogo, in questa tesi abbiamo lanciato una sfida all'idea che la discussione sulla religione nella critica letteraria e culturale contemporanea costituisca un atavismo. Di fatto, abbiamo considerato che tale disinteresse per la religione e i fenomeni religiosi affonda le proprie radici in un'ideologia secolarista che accantona la discussione sui fenomeni religiosi per la loro irrazionalità. Non abbiamo lanciato la sfida a quest'ultimo postulato, ovvero l'irrazionalità della religione, ma al rifiuto consapevole dei fenomeni religiosi per la loro apparente irrazionalità. In ogni caso, ciò non ha condizionato il nostro approccio metodologico alla materia, dato che in nessun caso abbiamo seguito un quadro di riferimento teologico. Abbiamo sottolineato le dinamiche del potere presenti nei processi culturali, religione inclusa. Inoltre, non abbiamo evitato la discussione di questioni relative all'etnicità, la formazione nazionale o l'identità. Tuttavia, abbiamo incluso come punto focale della discussione la religione prima di ogni altro fenomeno sociale da analizzare.
- 2) Utilizzando come riferimento di base la psicoanalisi junghiana, abbiamo stabilito l'aspirazione religiosa umana come uno degli aspetti fondamentali dell'esperienza umana. Abbiamo aderito alle idee junghiane della religione come contenitori di innumerevoli simboli nella mente, dimostrando l'esistenza di archetipi religiosi. Abbiamo scelto come punto di partenza l'idea junghiana della costante aspirazione religiosa che, nonostante tutto, può diventare secolarizzata e costituire quello che abbiamo chiamato, nel più ossimoronico dei modi, *sacralità secolarizzata*. Ergo, comprendiamo la costituzione di un gruppo di assiomi totalizzanti come l'evoluzione secolarizzata di un gruppo iniziale di assiomi religiosi. Questa idea ha operato, a mo' di un bordone di basso continuo, come fondamento di tutta la nostra comprensione della psiche umana.
- 3) L'autobiografia è stata il medium prescelto per analizzare i fenomeni religiosi e le loro trasposizioni secolarizzate. Dall'autobiografia spirituale di Agostino fino

alla auto-scrittura contemporanea, abbiamo segnalato dei momenti nella storia dell'autobiografia in cui vengono avanzati i contributi più speciali, dando forma, editando e trasformando la nostra comprensione delle esperienze religiose che il processo di auto-scrittura, in un modo o nell'altro, pare provocare nell'autore che decide di imbarcarsi nel viaggio introspettivo *ex post facto* che costituisce un'autobiografia. Abbiamo segnalato le tensioni tra la *communitas* e l'individuo; una tensione che sembra una costante antropologica, un'intricata negoziazione che conduce, in molti casi, a un'eterna irrisoluzione, a un costante processo apparentemente dialettico in cui le cristallizzazioni identitarie vengono rapidamente sfidate. Al riguardo, abbiamo seguito l'idea di Roberto Esposito sul carattere proteico della *communitas*: l'io affronta la *communitas*, dato che questa è l'unica dimensione in cui l'io comprende a sé stesso come tale, mentre, al tempo stesso, la *communitas* minaccia la dissoluzione dell'io in sé stessa. Ciò nonostante, come dimostra la scienza cognitiva, questo processo apparentemente dialettico che abbiamo segnalato include più attori rispetto al dualismo iniziale che suggerisce l'intero processo dialettico: il modellamento dell'io opera sempre a diversi livelli. Anche se l'io è fortemente costituito per la sua dimensione sociale (la *communitas*), i livelli *molecolare, neuronale e psicologico* nei quali l'io viene anche strutturato si trovano in un intricato stato di costante interazione. Anche se non l'unica, l'interazione *communitas*-individuo costituisce un livello più adeguato all'analisi di qualche processo di auto-scrittura, magari anche per lo stato cognitivo che l'auto-scrittura favorisce. È per questo motivo che la nostra analisi, e la semantica che abbiamo utilizzato per svolgerla, si concentra sulla interazione *communitas*-individuo.

- 4) Attraverso l'analisi di Agostino, Bunyan, Rousseau e Mill, abbiamo segnalato il *continuum* dall'esperienza religiosa tradizionalmente intesa fino alla sua versione secolarizzata nell'autobiografia. Certamente, avremmo potuto includere altri autori in questa sezione, tuttavia si è preferito scegliere quelli ritenuti cruciali per la comprensione e l'evoluzione della *retorica della conversione*: abbiamo stabilito Agostino come il padre del pensiero introspettivo nel contesto dell'auto-scrittura, dal quale derivano un po' tutte le modalità di auto-scrittura. Bunyan, il rappresentante protestante dell'auto-scrittura, viene anche influenzato delle tensioni che Agostino segnala nel complesso viaggio per diventare il proprio io

migliore, in particolare sottolineando la tensione *communitas*-individuo, la quale in definitiva costituisce la sua autocomprensione. Rousseau merita un'attenzione speciale per il suo ruolo nel processo di secolarizzazione di una retorica della conversione, la quale fino ad allora, era strettamente connessa con l'esperienza religiosa tradizionalmente intesa. Rousseau aderisce a un modello che lui allo stesso tempo sovverte. La natura diventa la versione moderna di una deità concettualizzata. Il rapporto tra Rousseau e la *communitas* è anche contorto, dimostrando il carattere proteico della *communitas*: il potenziale carattere ingannevole e deludente della *communitas* spinge Rousseau all'auto-scoperta, però è il coevo prendere parte alla *communitas* ciò che consente all'io di procedere e svilupparsi. Forse il contributo più rilevante di Rousseau per quanto riguarda la comprensione dell'io è *la raffigurazione dell'io come ente contraddittorio*: una tensione che tuttavia non va intesa come necessariamente dicotomica, ma ossimoronica e parte di un processo dialettico continuo. Stuart Mill introduce l'ultimo aspetto che vorremmo sottolineare: *l'intellettualizzazione della retorica della conversione*. Dio non è rilevante per Mill, e neanche la natura—una natura che egli demistifica attraverso la considerazione che ne ha come mostruosità, piuttosto che come divinità—lo è. Mill introduce l'idea che l'io possa *convertirsi* in una sua versione migliore in virtù di un ragionamento logico che, nonostante tutto, fornisce all'io un gruppo di assiomi totalizzanti che insomma procurano significato e uno scopo alla sua esistenza.

- 5) Le tendenze della critica femminista contemporanea sollevano diverse sfide all'autocomprensione femminile nel contesto dell'auto-scrittura e l'esperienza di conversione che abbiamo trattato, dato il problematico rapporto tra la critica femminista e il canone in generale. Temi come l'auto-scrittura e la religione, necessariamente compresi come androcentrici attraverso il prisma femminista contemporaneo, sollevano sfide alla scrittrice che decide di iniziare un processo di auto-scrittura in cui, accanto ad altri, si ritraggono fenomeni religiosi, come avviene nel caso di Ruth Klüger. L'interiorizzazione di un'alterità femminile marginalizzata per il canone deve essere sempre presa in considerazione quando si discute una auto-scrittrice. Anche si devono prendere in considerazione le sfide in cui, a causa della interiorizzazione di quelli postulati, s'imbattono al momento

di definire il suo io in un processo di auto-scrittura e attraverso espressioni religiose.

- 6) Le idee di Jung sulla religione sono state la nostra bussola quando è stato il momento di capire l'io come ente psicologicamente costituito da una aspirazione religiosa. Con ciò, in primo luogo lanciamo una sfida alla nozione della *Gott-ist-tot-Theologie*, senza ovviamente negare il processo di secolarizzazione che è avvenuto dall'Illuminismo in poi, ma sfidandolo nonostante tutto, dato che quell'affermazione teologica tende innanzitutto a ignorare la trasposizione secolare/secolarizzata di un gruppo di assiomi i quali, prima, erano connessi alla fede verso un qualche tipo di divinità tradizionalmente intesa. Secondariamente, perché tale affermazione ignora oltretutto il revival religioso attualmente in corso, che fa uso dei nuovi media per diffondersi.

Per mettere in discussione la religione in maniera accademica, abbiamo deciso di seguire una comprensione del fenomeno religioso influenzato degli studi recenti nei campi di filosofia della religione, etnologia religiosa e antropologia. Questo approccio—un approccio *culturalista* alla religione—favorisce una comprensione della *religione come cultura*, *cultura come media*, e il trio religione-cultura-media come *significato e pratica*. Con ciò, sfidiamo l'idea che la fede o la credenza preceda a pratica e, a propria volta, capiamo il rituale religioso come *mediazione*. Dal punto di vista del credente, questa mediazione è verso una certa verità ontologica che offre un significato e un *ethos*. A nostra volta, noi ci concentriamo su come il rituale diventi l'arena in cui il significato viene costruito, negoziato e ricostruito. Così comprendiamo l'io, al livello sociale della *communitas*, come *prodotto di quella mediazione*.

- 7) Il partecipante rituale consapevole costituisce il nostro oggetto di studio. In tal senso abbiamo capito la posizione di Klüger e Friedländer quando affrontano questioni religiose nel contesto della loro auto-scrittura. Klüger e Friedländer vanno oltre la dialettica osservatore-osservato e analista-analizzato, ma anche quella ateo-credente. Respingendo il postulato che la credenza precede la pratica, il partecipante rituale consapevole sovverte le dinamiche religiose tradizionalmente intese. Mediante il loro tono autoconsapevole, analitico—quasi

decostruttivo—autori come Klüger e Friedländer corroborano l’idea introdotta mediante questo approccio culturalista al fenomeno religioso: *la pratica precede la credenza*. La credenza, nel loro caso, non è l’esperienza e interiorizzazione di una divinità onnipresente e onnipotente (שכינה), ma la loro autocomprensione come parte costitutiva della formazione estetica ebraica e—come dimostra soprattutto il testo di Klüger—il loro ruolo all’interno di essa. Noi proponiamo, pertanto, la comprensione di autori del genere, non come ebrei praticanti, ma *praticati*. Riteniamo dunque che questa sovversione della concettualizzazione consapevole della pratica e delle dinamiche religiose, dia forma, in modo particolare, alla formazione identitaria moderna nel contesto della performatività religiosa/rituale.

- 8) *Pesach* costituisce il rituale ebraico di base per Ruth Klüger e Saul Friedländer. In *Pesach*, la messa in scena della storia e del mito si mescolano col canto e il cibo nella loro forma più rituale. Sottolineando il ruolo fondamentale dell’aspetto performativo del rituale, della sua *pratica*, la comprensione di *Pesach* da parte di Klüger opera all’interno di una concezione del rituale religioso come *pratica di mediazione*. Attraverso questa mediazione risulta la costruzione di una realtà sociale, che produce infine *ethos* e *significato*; il partecipante rituale risulta *prodotto da questa pratica di mediazione*. La esperienza estetica di *Pesach*, essendo costituita per lo più dall’esperienza di *das Schöne* nell’arte, va necessariamente articolata in termini aristotelici. Pertanto, seguendo Meyer, abbiamo recuperato una concezione di αἴσθησις che risulta più inclusiva al momento di discutere l’esperienza estetica religiosa. Attraverso questa nozione aristotelica di αἴσθησις, e utilizzando la spiegazione di Klüger riguardo a *Pesach*, suggeriamo l’evoluzione logica dal concetto tradizionalmente statico di *communitas* al concetto più dinamico, forse anche volubile, di *formazione estetica*, una *communitas* che si costituisce e si ricostituisce costantemente attraverso atti rituali di mediazione. Come spiega Klüger, *Pesach* è la “Mahlzeit rituale”, tuttavia anche “Geschichte, Fabel und Lied”. *Pesach* è “Folklore und Großfamilienesen”, però anche “Pracht und Welttheater”, cioè, *das Schöne* e *die Inszenierung*.

- 9) Questo *telos* inizialmente inclusivo del rituale risulta esclusivo a causa del prisma femminista attraverso il quale Klüger esamina e interpreta il rituale religioso. L'attività rituale è l'arena in cui le relazioni di potere vengono prodotte, negoziate e *impersonate*. L'aspetto incontestabilmente foucaultiano di questa comprensione delle gerarchie come necessariamente create attraverso le relazioni di potere è considerato da noi come fondamentale al momento di discutere autori contemporanei. Innanzitutto, perché necessariamente predispone l'accademico a cercare la messa in scena di dinamiche di dominanza ed onore, e inoltre, predispone il partecipante rituale consapevole ad negoziare attivamente tali dinamiche. In questo senso, la mancata accettazione delle gerarchie di genere del rituale ebraico (ortodosso) è interpretata da Klüger come esempio del carattere esclusivo del rituale esemplificato da Pesach, la lettura del *Ma Nisthana* o del *Kaddish*, o la separazione di genere nei luoghi sacri, come il *Kotel*.
- 10) Il progetto autobiografico di Klüger può essere letto come una ricerca e una costruzione di un rituale alternativo al di fuori della struttura e del paradigma religioso tradizionale, un *rituale letterario*, un *nuovo panegirico*, dove—più che *Glaube*—sono la poesia e l'*Aberglaube* che servono da *riorientamento secolarizzato dell'aspirazione religiosa* di Klüger. La letteratura diventa per Klüger una nuova pratica di mediazione attraverso la quale può esonerare il "*Gespenst*" che la tormenta nel contesto post-Shoah. Tuttavia, la simultanea attrazione e rifiuto dei vari rituali tradizionali ebraici da parte di Klüger e l'apparente mancata presa in considerazione di rituali ebraici non ortodossi (specialmente riguardo le aspettative di genere) entro l'ebraismo (come quelli dell'ebraismo riformista o dell'ebraismo conservatore) ci fanno considerare questo intricato rapporto con l'ebraismo come parte costitutiva di una più ampia tensione tra tradizione e modernità, elemento che abbiamo approfondito nel terzo capitolo di questa tesi.
- 11) Inoltre, Friedländer segue questa comprensione di Pesach come la mediazione costitutiva per la quale la formazione estetica ebraica si costruisce. Nello specifico, per Friedländer è la celebrazione tradizionale di Pesach ciò che inserisce il partecipante rituale nella storia collettivamente interiorizzata, "*l'enracinement dans le groupe, l'enracinement dans l'histoire et dans le temps.*" Friedländer

introduce l'idea che le parole sacre producono nel partecipante rituale non soltanto un'esperienza estetica oltre *das Schöne*, ma l'esperienza di far parte di un *acquis*, una tradizione e una storia ebraica più grande del semplice individuo. L'interiorizzazione di questa apparentemente irraggiungibile storia che potrebbe risultare in un'esperienza traboccante, un'esperienza per alcuni più vicina all'*Erhabenen* matematico kantiano, è grazie a Pesach un'esperienza estetica accessibile che insomma costituisce “*ancre et d'assise au sein de la communauté*”, *l'ancora metafisica e psicologica della formazione estetica ebraica*.

L'appropriazione da parte dell'io di una storia specifica, in questo caso della storia del popolo ebraico, diventa parte del *Lebenswelt* (nel senso di Kraus) del partecipante rituale. Nella prima fase, istituiamo il rituale come una messa in scena, una mediazione attraverso la quale l'inconscio collettivo, per usare il concetto junghiano, serve come contenitore da cui estrarre le verità ontologiche per il partecipante rituale. Una volta che questo insieme di aspetti metafisici viene interiorizzato ed impersonato (*embodied*, come dice Meyer) attraverso l'esperienza estetica, la storia e la tradizione del gruppo *costruisce l'io del partecipante rituale*, diventando pertanto parte del *Lebenswelt* dell'io.

- 12) *L'Akedah* costituisce un riferimento intertestuale cruciale nell'opera autobiografica di Friedländer. Friedländer segue lettura ebraica predominante: l'Akedah come atto di obbedienza, di sottomissione a Dio, una lettura che, tuttavia, si scontra col tono sionista del primo progetto autobiografico dell'autore per l'impossibilità di risolvere il significato dell'obbedienza di Abramo e il dilemma morale che necessariamente essa scatena. Una lettura “secolarizzata” di questa sottomissione a Dio—per altro, suggerita dallo stesso Friedländer—attraverso cui l'autore esprime tutti i dubbi che il nazionalismo ebraico (ma anche il nazionalismo in generale) gli suscita. Friedländer si chiede fino a che punto l'atteggiamento sottomesso di Abramo viene sovvertito mediante il sionismo. Va dunque detto che, ciò nonostante, la prima nota dissonante presente in *Quand vient le souvenir* rivela la difficoltà di Friedländer nell'impegnarci per una causa collettiva. Le riflessioni sull'Akedah sono fondamentali, dato che annunciano il tono che poi troveremo in *Where Memory Leads*. Friedländer rappresenta *l'ebreo*

errante post-Shoah, mai egoista, ma *un individualista empatico*, capace di comprendere e simpatizzare per diversi movimenti, pur senza riuscire a far parte di alcuno di loro. Questo è certamente da considerare quale aspetto fondamentale della psicologia di Friedländer, nonostante i disaccordi con la filosofia di *Gush Emunim* e gli insediamenti israeliani.

II

SIONISMO, *ERETZ* ED ISRAELE

- 13) Per quanto riguarda lo studio del sionismo, abbiamo delimitato il nostro oggetto di studio al momento di affrontare questo tema attraverso un'analisi semantica e un'analisi del corrispondente *Sitz im Leben*. Questo è stato un passo fondamentale nel contesto della nostra ricerca, anche considerando le difficoltà che alcuni studiosi trovano nell'affrontare temi relativi al movimento sionista e lo Stato d'Israele, data la natura intricata e controversa di tali temi e l'uso ricorrente di luoghi comuni antisemiti rintracciabili nelle posizioni apertamente antisioniste nell'accademia e nei campus universitari. È stato questo uno dei compiti più ardui, quando si è dovuto affrontare questo tema in maniera asettica così da poter discutere l'articolazione del sionismo, le idee sioniste e il rapporto tra l'*Eretz Yisrael* metafisico e psicologico e il *locus* fisico, lo Stato d'Israele, nell'opera di Saul Friedländer e Ruth Klüger. Il sionismo politico esemplifica nell'opera di questi autori un *conatus verso l'auto-affermazione*—un *Wille zum Leben*—una modalità auto-affermativa di affrontare l'ebraicità. Nel contesto della Shoah, il sionismo è abbracciato come un salvagente psicologico contro l'esposizione all'antisemitismo estremo.
- 14) Sincronicamente e diacronicamente, il sionismo è stato, ed è, un movimento altamente plurale con un aspetto comune: la relazione con *Eretz Yisrael*, la storica terra del popolo ebraico. La nostalgia di Sion, tuttavia, è una costante che possiamo osservare in vari autori ebrei dell'inizio del sionismo—praticanti o meno, socialisti o liberali—visto che “*the longing for Zion transcended theology*”, come indica Allan Dershowitz. Questa *αλγία* originata dalla casa perduta e dal desiderio del *νόστος*, del ritorno a casa, è un aspetto cardinale della *Galut* fisica, ma fa anche parte della coscienza psicologica dello stato diasporico, costituendo una parte cardinale della formazione estetica ebraica nella diaspora. Una nostalgia interiorizzata e impersonata attraverso innumerevoli testi e rituali, come nel caso delle ultime parole del tradizionale *seder* di Pesach, la promessa del *νόστος* (לשנה הבאה בירושלים / L'anno prossimo a Gerusalemme)

15) L'immagine di Theodor Herzl, padre del sionismo politico, diventa in questi anni quella del leader per antonomasia del movimento sionista, nelle parole di Klüger, "Held und Chefideologe." Usando Herzl come archetipo dell'ebreo secolare e quasi-assimilato che diventa sionista, sosteniamo che gli approcci secolaristi che intendono diminuire il potere delle referenze religiose/culturali presenti nel primo sionismo temprano non riescono ad arrivare a una visione olistica della formazione estetica ebraica. L'Antisemitismo, il fattore scatenante della auto-affermazione ebraica in diversi autori sionisti, costituisce una articolazione specifica della ebraicità, quella che Klüger chiama "*in Abwehr jüdisch[keit]*" [ebraicità in difesa]. Un atteggiamento autodifensivo che dal periodo dell'affare Dreyfus fino alla Shoah—e magari oltre, fino al 1967—costituisce la posizione intellettuale di diversi ebrei quasi-assimilati che abbracciano la formazione estetica ebraica articolata mediante la retorica e la logica sionista. Attraverso l'approccio apparentemente fenomenologico che Sartre segue quando indica che "c'est l'antisémite qui *fait* le Juif", noi, a nostra volta, suggeriamo, attraverso un approccio più teleologico, che data la dinamica auto-affermativa attraverso cui l'ebraicità comincia ad articolarsi e inscenarsi in questo periodo, *c'est l'antisémite qui fait le sioniste*.

16) Il concetto del *Nuovo Ebreo*—il *Muskeljude*—è fondamentale per capire lo sviluppo degli atteggiamenti autoaffermativi ed autodifensivi maturati da Klüger e Friedländer nel corso della Shoah ed in seguito, dato che questi atteggiamenti costituiscono la base del sionista ideale. La filosofia del *Selbstüberwindung* di Nietzsche (insieme a tutte le idee associate con lo *Zeigeist* fin de siècle: nazionalismo, eugenetica e ginnastica i.a.) diventa la base filosofica per l'articolazione di svariati testi sionisti del periodo, quando si osserva un uso esplicito di concetti nietzschiani come il *Wille zur Macht* o l'*Übermensch*. Suggeriamo che le posizioni divergenti rispetto agli ebrei e l'ebraismo, tuttavia, per quanto potenzialmente definibili come *allosemitiche*, costituiscono preoccupazioni ampiamente condivise con intellettuali ed autori sionisti che aspiravano a una rottura con l'immagine del vecchio ebreo, per trascenderla e costruirne una nuova. Comprendere il concetto di "Nuovo Ebreo" diventa pertanto cruciale quando bisogna capire il cambiamento di posizione riguardo al valore costitutivo dell'ebraicità durante la Shoah, ma anche nel periodo successivo, per

Friedländer, in particolare, riguardo alla mascolinità ebraica nel contesto del conflitto israeliano-palestinese.

17) L'interiorizzazione del postulato sionista di base, ovvero che *la patria reale di un ebreo è in Medio Oriente*, nella Terra d'Israele, costituisce *l'interiorizzazione di un sentimento che abbiamo chiamato di "esogenismo"*, suggerito esternamente, ma confermato internamente. Ciò risulta dalla consapevolezza di "rigettabilità", un'alterità facilmente comprovabile, e inoltre, *l'interiorizzazione di un carattere orientale*, quello che tormentava gli assimilazionisti e i pionieri del movimento riformista. Questo carattere orientale, in definitiva interiorizzato per tutti le branche del sionismo, stabiliva l'ebreo al di là dei limiti della cultura e della geografia europea; per alcuni si tratterebbe forse di un fatto puro e semplice che, in effetti, configura ontologicamente l'ebraicità, per quanto sia un fatto ampiamente discusso in taluni momenti della storia ebraica. Dopo l'interiorizzazione di questo sentimento di esogenismo, la prevista rigettabilità dell'alterità ebraica e ciò che abbiamo chiamato *la pulsione orientale (der orientalische Trieb*, costituita come lo stato prodotto dalla perturbazione omeostatica dell'ebraismo europeo) ha riconfigurato la performatività ebraica e la passività che dopo la Shoah era comunemente intesa come caratteristica della vittima della Shoah. Questa riconfigurazione performativa è divenuta la modalità fondamentale dell'ispirazione di tutta una generazione di giovani sionisti dopo la Shoah. L'idea "mai più" ha costituito l'insegnamento fondamentale dei movimenti giovanili sionisti in tutta Europa. Conseguentemente, un certo atteggiamento autodifensivo veniva promosso, psicologicamente e fisicamente, come ritroviamo nella prima opera autobiografica di Friedländer.

18) L'incontro di Klüger col sionismo è fortemente caratterizzato dalla sua esperienza nei campi di concentramento e sterminio: Theresienstadt, Christianstadt ed Auschwitz. Il sionismo è poi interpretato da Klüger come l'unica risposta auto-affermativa all'antisemitismo durante la Shoah. Il suo *Wille zum Leben*, nel contesto della Shoah, viene articolato attraverso la retorica e l'aspirazione nazionale del nazionalismo ebraico, il sionismo. In questo senso, i diversi campi di concentramento e sterminio, specialmente Theresienstadt, contengono sempre una natura ambivalente in retrospettiva: da un lato, una specie di "*locus amoenus*"

dove si sviluppano auto-affermazione e coscienza politica, il luogo per la stimolazione intellettuale, dove si per la prima volta si è fatta strada l'idea di lotta per una causa nazionale: *il luogo per sintetizzare autonomia personale e giustizia collettiva*. Dall'altro, Theresienstadt sempre rimarrà il ghetto, un'istituzione nazista, la memoria dell'inedia di un costante stato di incertezza quanto alla sopravvivenza. Alcuni decenni dopo, il ritorno di Klüger a Theresienstadt è spiegato come una “*bitter euphoria*”, un ossimoro piuttosto che una contraddizione, e quindi—forse—la sintesi, l'ambivalenza normalizzata della vita dopo la Shoah.

19) *Israele costituisce la even pinah psicologica di Klüger*; un luogo che è—consapevolmente o inconsciamente—tenuto a una distanza calcolata, a un certo livello d'idealizzazione, dato il suo ruolo fondamentale come ancora metafisica nello sviluppo del processo di auto-affermazione durante la Shoah. Klüger si riferisce costantemente a Israele come il luogo che *sarebbe potuto essere per sempre* una patria (*Heimat*) reale, ma che mai è diventato tale, dato che è sempre rimasto il luogo in cui desiderare una vita non esistente. La demistificazione d'Israele, la transizione della *Eretz Yisrael* metafisica al fisico e politico Stato d'Israele non viene mai operata volontariamente da Klüger; quindi Israele è sempre tenuta—consapevolmente o inconsciamente—in modo congiuntivo.

20) Dopo la Shoah, le strade di Friedländer e Klüger si dividono diametralmente. Fatto Aliyah, Friedländer diventa parte della nuova società israeliana; così la *Eretz Yisrael* metafisica della mente del giovane Friedländer a bordo dell'Altalena progressivamente diventa il paese fisico, lo Stato d'Israele, con le sue particolarità e sempre potenzialmente criticabile. L'emigrazione di Klüger verso gli Stati Uniti, invece, la inserisce in una società ebraica americana dopo la Shoah attraverso un cammino particolare. Sugeriamo che questo rapporto idillico col sionismo ed Israele, cristallizzatosi durante gli anni cinquanta e sessanta, sia fortemente influenzato dall'atteggiamento della diaspora americana per quanto concerne il nuovo stato e le successive relazioni tra Israele e gli Stati Uniti. Abbiamo tuttavia sottolineato che Klüger tiene a distanza la discussione strettamente politica sulle questioni dello Stato d'Israele. La sua difesa dello stato, la *raison d'être* d'Israele, occupa sempre una posizione principale.

21) I lavori saggistici e autobiografici di Friedländer nella prima fase del rapporto col sionismo (dalla Shoah fino agli anni settanta) indicano *la formazione del sionista*. Proprio come per Klüger, l'ebraicità di Friedländer si articola in questi anni attraverso la retorica e le idee sioniste, vale a dire attraverso l'orgoglio e la difesa nazionale. Come abbiamo segnalato nel primo capitolo, la retorica della conversione detiene un posto fondamentale nella storia dell'auto-scrittura. Nel lavoro autobiografico di Friedländer osserviamo uno schema della retorica di conversione influenzato per diverse fasi dal modello di conversione che abbiamo ampiamente discusso nel primo capitolo: il ruolo della comunità è fondamentale per la via alla conversione sionista di Friedländer. Il sentimento di ebraicità si origina da un sentimento collettivo di calamità, di Shoah. L'ebraicità "*in Abwehr*", autodifensiva, sionista, ha origine, a propria volta, dal contatto con una *communitas* accogliente che condivide la lotta collettiva dell'antisemitismo, tuttavia con un *telos* nazionale.

In contrasto con gli autobiografi protestanti che temevano la perdita dell'identità e l'individualità come conseguenza dell'ingresso in una comunità religiosa, Friedländer non esita e decide di dissolversi e di *assimilarsi in un telos collettivo*, nell'impresa collettiva del nazionalismo ebraico, cioè, nella *communitas*, la formazione estetica, sionista, *dove l'alterità non comporta esogenismo, ma una necessaria aderenza alla nuova essenza di riferimento*. La conversione di Friedländer è il prodotto di una *riflessione logica*, da lui stesso descritta, una logica che trova nel sionismo un modo specifico di cristallizzarsi. Ergo, Friedländer rappresenta il ritorno a Israele come *una conclusione demistificata*, nel tentativo di fuggire dal *pathos* normalmente connesso al discorso sionista in quel tempo. La retorica di conversione di Friedländer assomiglia a quella di Stuart Mill per *il carattere intellettuale e politico della epifania*. Mill trova nelle idee dell'utilitarismo un *ethos* valido al quale aderire; analogamente, Friedländer trova nel sionismo *una soluzione politica giusta e logica* per dare risposta alla storia di persecuzione del popolo ebraico.

22) La *de-conversione* di Friedländer—*la decostruzione del sionista*—è invece il prodotto di quello che è presentato come il collasso del già interiorizzato *ethos*,

revisione di un'etica di coabitazione che, secondo Friedländer, non può più essere difesa secondo la logica sionista dopo il 1967. Il rifiuto del nuovo *mainstream*, la nuova logica espansionista e la forte componente religiosa ha come risultato, secondo Friedländer, una dissociazione dal movimento e dalla militanza sionista. Ciò nonostante, questa *de-conversione* non rientra nella categoria dell'antisionismo: la creazione dello Stato è ancora considerato per Friedländer un grande risultato che merita ammirazione ed orgoglio, e la sua connessione emotiva con Israele non viene meno. Tuttavia, i momenti di epifania e conversione che osserviamo in *Quand vient le souvenir* si scontrano col tono amaro di *Where Memory Leads*: ai primi incontri coi gruppi giovanili sionisti in cui la formazione estetica ebraica e sionista veniva messa a punto, per i forti disaccordi si sostituisce la tendenza sionista dopo il 1967, e più precisamente i brani più conservatori e religiosi del sionismo israeliano. L'invito alla disobbedienza civile e la partecipazione alle manifestazioni organizzate da *Shalom Achsav* rappresentano la *contro-epifania* prima di lasciare Israele, circa quarant'anni dopo aver fatto Aliyah.

L'entusiastica retorica di conversione diventa un'amara retorica di de-conversione, e le azioni auto-affermative del nuovo convertito diventano la proattività di colui che si avvicina alla scissione ideologica. Tuttavia, come abbiamo segnalato nel punto 14 della conclusione, sarebbe un errore interpretare la dissociazione di Friedländer dal movimento nazionalista ebraico unicamente come la reazione alla logica sionista post-1967. Il sionismo, l'impresa più importante della vita di Friedländer, la matrice di tutta una serie di onnicomprensivi assiomi, collassa. La de-conversione segnala il ritorno a uno stato specifico di ambiguità. Israele, il sionismo, l'unico tentativo di Friedländer di raggiungere un'essenza dopo la Shoah cade a pezzi; e quindi, la de-conversione di Friedländer va intesa come il ritorno a uno stato precedente, uno stato diasporico: è il passaggio in cui Friedländer ritorna a uno stato sempre temuto, ma forse sempre segretamente desiderato, lo stato del *Luftmensch*, del *Dasein* diasporico, quello che sempre anela l'esilio.

III

EBRAICITÀ, ASHKENAZ E GALUT

- 23) Nell'ultimo capitolo di questa tesi, abbiamo analizzato l'articolazione dell'ebraicità di Ruth Klüger e Saul Friedländer, dato che i due autori concordano sul fatto che l'identità ebraica, quale che sia la sua configurazione ontologica, è alla base della loro autocomprensione. Per questo la "lettura ebraica" è stata una costante in questa tesi. Affrontare le questioni relative all'autocomprensione e all'identità, trascende, tuttavia, la mera categorizzazione che il proprio autore si autoimpone: la cristallizzazione dell'identità, anche se risulta in *una forma triclinica*, ha un chiaro eco nelle scelte di vita e nelle preferenze politiche, e predetermina tutta una serie di atteggiamenti. In questo senso, abbiamo deciso di interpretare *il significante quasi flottante dell'identità come un prisma ermeneutico, formatore e scultore della realtà, un locus auto-riconosciuto da dove sviluppare una propria Weltanschauung.*
- 24) La cosiddetta simbiosi ebraico-tedesca è stata introdotta nel discorso per costruire il quadro generale da cui far partire l'analisi del rapporto degli autori con la Germania e la loro comprensione della ebraicità germanica-askenazita dopo la Shoah. La simbiosi ebraico-tedesca, invece della conversazione ebraico-tedesca, che prende le mosse col tentativo di Moses Mendelssohn di riconciliare la teologia cristiana ed ebraica nel contesto dell'Illuminismo, è dopo la Shoah considerata in qualche modo una mera illusione ebraica. La germanità ebraica nondimeno costituisce uno strato sottostante rispetto al rapporto degli ebrei germanici quasi assimilati in questo periodo e alla loro sopravvivenza durante la Shoah. Come dimostrano Friedländer e Klüger, la Germania rimane sempre contemporaneamente il familiare e il pericoloso, il paradigma culturale di riferimento ma simultaneamente un paradigma esclusivo, *l'attrazione e la repulsione*: in sintesi, *un magnetismo inarrestabile e un'avversione viscerale* per la terra e la cultura condivisa dalla vittima e dal carnefice.
- 25) La scelta della carriera accademica di Klüger, ciò che la definisce come una germanista ebrea post-Shoah, può essere compresa come l'ennesimo tentativo di dialogo ebraico-tedesco. Nella carriera accademica di Klüger è facilmente

osservabile una consapevole ricerca dello spazio dell'Altro nella letteratura tedesca, specialmente dell'Altro femminile e dell'Altro ebraico, ma anche la ricerca della natura amalgamata dell'ebraicità entro la germanità e viceversa. Klüger elogia il processo di secolarizzazione del milieu intellettuale ebraico e la sua inclusione nella vita intellettuale europea dall'Illuminismo in avanti. Ciò nonostante, Klüger rifiuta l'assimilazione, ovvero l'oblio della strutturale alterità ebraica, e da qui, forse, viene la sua mancata considerazione di movimenti riformisti dentro l'ebraismo. La germanità ebraica, l'ebraicità germanica, ciò che abbiamo voluto comprimere nel termine *Ashkenaz*, è una fonte di tensioni e divergenze per il germanista ebraico post-Shoah: non trovando un vero equilibrio tra i due membri dell'equazione—una sintesi impossibile delle dinamiche tra l'ebraicità e la germanità nella vita dopo Auschwitz: a volte dinamiche apparentemente dialettiche, a volte apparentemente dicotomiche.

26) Friedländer comprende l'ebraismo germanico del Novecento come prova irrefutabile della simbiosi ebraico-tedesca. Eppure, la germanità e l'ebraicità di Friedländer si scontrano, specialmente al momento d'incontrare il revisionismo storico rispetto alla Shoah e i problematici tentativi di ricostruzione del patriottismo tedesco dopo di essa. Il coinvolgimento di Friedländer nella *Historikerstreit* e le sue faide accademiche con Martin Broszat ed Ernst Nolte (così come i problematici rapporti di Klüger con Martin Walser e Herbert Lehnert) dimostrano *i limiti del dialogo ebraico-tedesco dopo la Shoah*, i dilemmi che derivano dalla *collisione tra memorie antagonistiche* e dai tentativi di ricostruire il carattere nazionale tedesco sotto l'occhio vigile dell'Altro essenziale per antonomasia della Germania: il sopravvissuto ebraico della Shoah.

27) Klüger a Friedländer, attraverso le loro opere, contestano la ricerca del patriottismo tedesco, il tentativo di ricostruire l'impresa nazionale/nazionalista) tedesca. Klüger e Friedländer come osservatori intellettuali—né completamente endogeni né interamente esogeni—come sopravvissuti, ci ricordano *il potenziale fallimento nel ricostruire e riconciliare essenze antagonistiche se condividono una storia, ma non una memoria comune*. Autori come Klüger e Friedländer non promuovono una decostruzione post-strutturalista *ad infinitum* delle identità umane, né elogiano un post-nazionalismo utopista e naif. Malgrado ciò, ci

ricordano, dalla posizione dell'alterità europea per antonomasia, i limiti di una posizione antagonista, vale a dire i limiti di posizione politiche e filosofiche altamente essenzialistiche e nazionaliste.

28) Il sempre controverso tema dell'auto-disprezzo ebraico ha trovato il suo posto nel discorso innanzitutto per costituire una costante psicologica della esperienza ebraica nel corso dei secoli cui Klüger e Friedländer fanno riferimento in diversi momenti del loro racconto autobiografico. L'auto-disprezzo ebraico, come lo psichiatra di Harvard Kenneth Levin segnala, è il prodotto della interiorizzazione dell'antisemitismo. Noi suggeriamo che *gli atteggiamenti di auto-disprezzo dimostrano un particolare riorientamento di una coscienza di alterità applicabile alla esperienza di qualsiasi Altro essenziale ed il suo sempre intricato rapporto con una essenza esclusiva*. Molti studiosi, incluso Sander Gilman, stabiliscono un nesso tra il radicale antisionismo ebraico e l'auto-disprezzo. Nel contesto di questa tesi, tuttavia, nel timore che tali categorizzazioni potessero impedirci di effettuare un'analisi approfondita dell'*arche* filosofico di tale critica, abbiamo deciso di utilizzare la categorizzazione di "atteggiamenti auto-dispregiativi" piuttosto che auto-disprezzo come stato statico; una categorizzazione che peraltro abbiamo utilizzato per discutere il personaggio fittizio di Danny, poiché costituisce un caso indiscutibile di auto-disprezzo ebraico.

29) Il personaggio fittizio di Danny esemplifica un rifiuto essenzialista di quello che lui considera atteggiamenti religiosi di sottomissione, la diaspora e i suoi standard di mascolinità. Danny rappresenta il *Muskeljude* auto-spregiativo (così come Ari Ben Canaan rappresentava il *Muskeljude* auto-affermativo). Paragonando alcuni degli atteggiamenti che intercorrono tra Danny e il personaggio fittizio di Yudka, un insicuro sionista secolare, concludiamo che gli atteggiamenti auto-spregiativi riguardo alla *Galut* (e tanto di quello che la *Galut* rappresenta) costituiscono un oggetto di rifiuto condiviso che, in ogni caso, non condivide necessariamente un *telos* comune. Inoltre, la critica di Danny per quanto riguarda gli standard di mascolinità ebraica riecheggia preoccupazioni e critiche di autori dell'inizio del sionismo, come Max Nordau, per quanto atteneva al corpo ebraico e allo sviluppo del Nuovo Ebreo, il *Muskeljude*. L'obiettivo di quest'analisi è concludere con l'idea che gli atteggiamenti auto-spregiativi che troviamo nel personaggio di

Danny possono essere trovati anche in autori dell'inizio del sionismo. *Dunque, osserviamo che gli atteggiamenti di autodisprezzo non necessariamente risultano in uno stato statico di autodisprezzo; quelli atteggiamenti di autodisprezzo che però non costituiscono un conatus verso l'autoaffermazione, rimangono autodistruttivi.*

30) Il concetto di Deutscher dell'*ebreo non ebraico* è divenuto sempre più cruciale per la comprensione dell'identità ebraica contemporanea, ma anche per la comprensione del concetto di diasporismo e di antisionismo ebraico. L'ateismo di Deutscher gli fa rifiutare la religione ebraica ed il suo internazionalismo gli fa rifiutare il nazionalismo ebraico. Il resto della sua ebraicità è essenzialmente costituito di una coscienza di alterità—quella del *Grenzzjude*—e dell'empatia verso una qualche minoranza perseguitata. L'ebreo non ebraico, spiega Deutscher, è quello capace di muoversi tra diversi paradigmi, a causa del suo *Zwischenposition*, della sua identità liquida, quella a cui il *Luftmensch* tende, dunque la sua aspirazione verso una nozione più universalista ed onnicomprensiva dell'uomo. Questo atteggiamento costituisce la caratteristica fondamentale dell'intellettuale ebreo diasporico per eccellenza, quella che Deutscher attribuisce a Spinoza, Heine o Marx, i.a. L'adozione del nazionalismo ebraico si spiega con Deutscher come sintomatico dell'esposizione dell'ebreo all'antisemitismo.

31) Moritz Goldstein costituisce un'altra posizione entro lo spettro ebraico degna di migliore attenzione, che nel contesto dello studio su Friedländer e Klüger esemplifica una posizione cruciale per la loro comprensione. "*Halbheit*" è il modo in cui Goldstein concettualizza lo stato dell'ebreo europeo quasi-assimilato dell'inizio del Novecento: incastrato tra ebraicità e germanità. Goldstein rappresenta l'auto-affermazione ebraica di fronte all'antisemitismo, un rifiuto dell'autodisprezzo, dell'assimilazione e, piuttosto, una "*dissimilazione*" (dissimilation) *dalla società tedesca* e l'adozione del sionismo, a un livello teorico. Ritornare in Sion è ciò che lui difende come un modo—se non *il* modo—di essere più che europeo: "*hypereuropäer*". Goldstein, però, esemplifica anche il fallimento dell'aspirazione sionista e il suo rifiuto finale di fare Aliyah, scegliendo invece la diaspora americana. Goldstein rappresenta *l'epitome dell'ambivalenza*

dell'ebraismo europeo del momento, senza arrivare alla risoluzione della tensione tra la pulsione orientale sionista e lo sfondo secolare europeo.

- 32) Il *Briefwechsel* tra Hannah Arendt e Gerschom Scholem fa luce sulle diverse questioni relative all'articolazione e allo svolgimento dell'ebraicità dopo la Shoah. Lo sfondo filosofico ed i riferimenti culturali secolari di Arendt, facilmente considerabili eurocentrici, contrastano *la rivendicazione della tradizione giudaica* di Scholem, che abbraccia, sia pure fino a un certo punto, *il carattere orientale dell'ebraicità* rifiutato da Arendt. Anche questo è sintomatico, o forse *la conseguenza di diverse concettualizzazioni dell'ebraicità che risultano in diverse sue messe in scena*, a tutt'oggi, difficilmente compatibili. Se da un canto Scholem esemplifica l'intellettuale ebreo che senza riserve s'impegna per la causa del nazionalismo ebraico e la messinscena sionista dell'ebraicità, dall'altro Arendt rappresenta *la condizione ambivalente dell'intellettuale inteso a sintetizzare costanti dialettiche ebraiche*. Sebbene Arendt si opponga all'assimilazione, si oppone anche all'essenzialismo ebraico, e mentre l'opposizione all'assimilazione mantiene un certo riconoscimento del carattere orientale ebraico con il quale i riformisti volevano chiudere, l'"eurocentrismo" di Arendt circoscrive fortemente i limiti della sua comprensione dell'ebraicità al di fuori delle frontiere fisiche e intellettuali europee. *Né sionismo, né assimilazionismo; né nazionalismo ebraico, né antisemitismo; né lo stato-nazione, né un'identità globale debole e dissipata.*
- 33) Nel XXI secolo, alcuni intellettuali ebrei antisionisti della diaspora simpatizzano con movimenti di boicottaggio ad Israele come il BDS, negando la loro natura antisemita e il carattere autodispregiativo tipicamente associato con tali movimenti da un prisma sionista. Se Scholem e Arendt rappresentano la tensione tra due posizioni intellettuali a confronto sulla concettualizzazione dell'ebraicità, oggi giorno personaggi come Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler e Norman Finkelstein sono rappresentativi dell'eredità dell'intellettuale ebraico antisionista *diasporistico* e internazionalista, che difendono uno stato binazionale in Palestina e, per estensione, la dissoluzione dello Stato ebraico.
- 34) Saul Friedländer e Ruth Klüger non aderiscono a una tale categoria di intellettuali della Diaspora. Il loro rapporto col sionismo e con Israele e la loro posizione in

relazione a questa tensione nel mondo ebraico sono davvero *sui generis*. Anche se condividono certi dilemmi di carattere etico riguardando il conflitto israeliano-palestinese (specialmente Friedländer), né Klüger né Friedländer difendono o hanno difeso movimenti anti-Israele, né la dissoluzione dello Stato ebraico; non rifiutano la *raison d'être* d'Israele né la concezione dello stato come un errore ontologico. Tuttavia, Klüger e Friedländer potrebbero anche essere considerati portatori di una sintesi di diverse dialettiche ebraiche: né osservanti né completamente atei, né assimilazionisti né essenzialisti, né puramente sionisti né antisionisti; né ebrei non ebraici né ebrei ebraici, né ebrei autodispregiativi, né completamente autoaffermativi.

- 35) Il diasporismo—non come posizione politica, ma come stato cognitivo post-Shoah—è la cruda conclusione del progetto autobiografico di entrambi gli autori. Un sentimento di esilio, di perdita, di ambivalenza, permea e conclude il loro viaggio introspettivo. Il sionismo come l'unica esperienza di conversione non si materializza mai (Klüger), e nemmeno l'ultimo movimento autoaffermativo ricostruttore dell'ebraicità (Friedländer). Il risultato sono identità multiple, tricliniche, frammentate, identità auto-riconosciute come non definite, tendenti a uno stato di insicurezza. Friedländer e Klüger raccontano come la negoziazione tra le forze centrifughe e centripete che agiscono sulla complessa identità ebraica possa essere l'impresa di tutta una vita. E se la tendenza a cercare un'alterità identitaria, alla *Galut*, predomina, possiamo interpretare la condizione post-Shoah di Friedländer e Klüger come un'altra manifestazione—ovvero *la* manifestazione—più sottile della condizione auto-dispregiativa moderna?

Infine, Klüger e Friedländer offrono un'altra sfumatura dell'ebraicità, una particolare tonalità post-Shoah di essa. Klüger e Friedländer ci ricordano che qualche prisma manicheo non riuscirà mai a coprire *l'io moderno, complesso e triclinico*, specialmente dopo la Shoah. *Friedländer e Klüger rappresentano una storia di sopravvivenza e ambivalenza*, però una ebraicità, comunque sia articolata, che costituisce un'identità di base auto-riconosciuta, un'alterità essenziale, ma comunque un'essenza e, in ultima analisi, nient'altro che questo.

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