

## Introduction

# THE JEWISHNESS OF WEIMAR CINEMA

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The postwar historiography of Weimar cinema blossomed from two seeds, Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947) and Lotte Eisner's *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (1952). Both Kracauer and Eisner delved into what have become the canonical works of Weimar cinema for evidence of a German national character: Kracauer in psychological and Eisner in aesthetic terms. In *Caligari to Hitler*, Kracauer argues that films reflect the deep layers of a national unconscious. He interprets Weimar cinema as the manifestation of a stunted and emasculated (implicitly male) German psyche that craved the mother's nurturing embrace and the leadership of a tyrannical father. In *Haunted Screen*, Eisner theorizes Weimar Expressionist cinema as the epitome of a brooding, uniquely German aesthetic, prefigured in German Romanticism.

The horror of National Socialist (Nazi) war crimes and the specter of Nazism cast long shadows on both *Caligari to Hitler* and *Haunted Screen*. Kracauer aims to explain how Weimar cinema presaged Hitler's rise. Eisner mourns a time when German angst produced great art, a time "before Hitler came to power, [when] the Germans liked to declare that their great poets, such as Goethe or Schiller, always emerged at times of national hardship."<sup>1</sup> In a review for *Sight and Sound*, Thorold Dickinson wrote of *Haunted Screen*, "Those who believe that film is a reflection of twentieth century history can find in this remarkable book and in the films it describes a compulsive impression of the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles."<sup>2</sup> Dickinson's words apply equally well to *Caligari to Hitler*.

In projecting Weimar cinema as a reflection of a tortured and menacing—even proto-fascist—German soul, Kracauer and Eisner both elide the question of the widespread involvement of Jewish film professionals in Weimar cinema and any particular effects this involvement may have had. It is difficult to ascertain how many Jewish people worked in Weimar film. According to Ofer Ashkenazi, before the Nazi takeover in 1933 around 20 percent of German film professionals were Jewish.<sup>3</sup> Yet, a naïve reader of *Caligari to Hitler* and *Haunted Screen* might not be aware of the Jewish backgrounds of many Weimar film industry leaders, like producer Erich Pommer, whose productions Kracauer and Eisner describe as exemplary of German psychology and aesthetics. Kracauer and Eisner do not write about German film professionals of Jewish heritage as psychologically, culturally, or artistically separate from the national character that their works purportedly exemplify.

Kracauer's and Eisner's parallel experiences (as Weimar film critics driven from their German homeland because of their Jewish ancestry) no doubt influenced their postwar writings. What it meant to be Jewish and/or German in the Weimar Republic was ambiguous. To what extent Jewishness and Germanness were coextensive or mutually exclusive was unclear, at least until the Nazis came to power and racialized diverse individuals as Jews and mixed breeds (*Mischlinge*), based on ancestry rather than religious identification, and began to excise them from German culture. Kracauer emigrated to Paris in 1933 and then to New York in 1941. Some early reviewers criticized *Caligari to Hitler* as a "refugee's revenge."<sup>4</sup> Eisner, who was raised Protestant by parents who had converted from Judaism, also had to flee to Paris in 1933 because of Nazi antisemitism. Richard Roud notes, "Like many 'assimilated' German Jews [Eisner] was as much (if not more) German than Jewish. 'I wrote my books out of longing for German culture and nostalgia for the 1920s,' she said in 1982 when she received the first Helmut Käutner prize endowed by the city of Düsseldorf."<sup>5</sup> By absorbing Weimar-era Jewish-German film professionals seamlessly into the larger category of German, *Haunted Screen* expresses nostalgia for a time when the categories German and Jewish were not mutually exclusive, when Eisner's identification with German culture was not yet troubled by Nazi racializations, and when her longing for that culture was not yet tainted by Nazi crimes.

Refusing to distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish German filmmakers, *Caligari to Hitler* and *Haunted Screen* react against Nazi antisemitism and film historiography. Nazis fixated on the involvement of Jewish people in Weimar cinema and blamed them for the industry's

aesthetic, moral, and economic ills. A representative 1933 article in *Der Angriff*, the Berlin Nazi newspaper, claimed spuriously that 90 percent of Weimar film professionals were Jewish and that this Jewishness had infected Weimar film morally and artistically.<sup>6</sup> In 1935 Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels described the German film industry as having been “almost exclusively in non-Aryan hands” before 1933.<sup>7</sup> Nazi film historians exaggerated and condemned Jewish influence on Weimar cinema, combining inaccurate information and antisemitic stereotypes. For example, Carl Neumann, Curt Belling, and Hans Walther Betz’s revisionist history of Weimar cinema, *Film-“Kunst,” Film Kohn, Film Korruption* (Film “Art,” Film Cohen, Film Corruption), detailed the Nazis’ *Kampf* (struggle) to replace Jewish-corrupted “film in Germany” with an artistically and racially worthy “German film.”<sup>8</sup> Neumann, Belling, and Betz claimed that Jews had controlled 90 percent of Weimar film studios and comprised 80–90 percent of film personnel.<sup>9</sup> They contended that Jewish greed had caused Weimar film’s moral decadence and aesthetic bankruptcy.<sup>10</sup> Writing in exile, Kracauer and Eisner challenged the Nazi narrative of Weimar cinema, which treated Jewishness as if it were opposed to both Germanness and art, by arguing that works by both Jewish and non-Jewish filmmakers similarly reflected a German national character and aesthetic tradition and by praising the artistry of Jewish filmmakers alongside non-Jewish ones. In not marking German film professionals as either Jewish or not Jewish in their writings, Kracauer and Eisner wrote as if they were blind to Jewish difference, in contrast to the antisemitic visions of Nazi film historians, who saw Jews everywhere.

Working within a racist-nationalist framework that this volume wholeheartedly rejects, the Nazis were preoccupied with the contributions of Jewish people to Weimar cinema and what effects those contributions might have had. Burdened by such Nazi criticisms of Jewish filmmakers and their impact, postwar scholarship on Weimar film tended to downplay the ethnoreligious background of German-Jewish film professionals, following the lead of *Caligari to Hitler* and *Haunted Screen*. By the turn of the twenty-first century, a new approach to the Jewish presence in Weimar cinema that centered the contributions of Jewish filmmakers without reinforcing antisemitic assumptions was long overdue. In 2004 and 2005, respectively, Irene Stratenwerth and Hermann Simon’s edited volume, *Pioniere in Celluloid: Juden in der Frühen Filmwelt* (*Pioneers of Celluloid: Jews in the Early Film World*) and S.S. Prawer’s *Between Two Worlds: The Jewish Presence in German and Austrian Film 1910–1933* coaxed the Jewishness of many early film pro-

professionals in Germany back into the limelight. Through these books, some forgotten figures and the Jewishness of other better-known ones reentered contemporary scholarly consciousness. Increasing numbers of articles and book chapters thematized the Jewishness of Weimar film professionals and integrated tools and methods from contemporary Jewish, ethnic, and cultural studies into their scholarship on Weimar film.

In 2012, Ofer Ashkenazi's *Weimar Film and Modern Jewish Identity* re-framed Weimar cinema as a major site of German-Jewish experience, which provided a "unique sphere in which Jewish 'outsiders' could influence the shaping of mainstream bourgeois culture."<sup>11</sup> He argued that Weimar cinema's liberal cosmopolitanism reflected experiences of and debates around Jewish assimilation through a process of double coding, which exposed its Jewishness only to the canny eye. Ashkenazi's work opened the door to new ways of thinking about the role of Jewishness in the creation of Weimar cinema as well as its indirect expressions. *Rethinking Jewishness in Weimar Cinema* supplements Stratenwerth and Simon's, Praver's, and Ashkenazi's important contributions, offering additional historical, theoretical, and methodological approaches to Jewish involvement in the Weimar film industry, and presenting new case studies.

Writing about the Jewishness of Weimar cinema and Weimar film professionals poses thorny theoretical and methodological problems. How is it even possible to identify film professionals as Jewish? And whose guidelines do we use? Different approaches to these questions lead to the vastly different statistics cited above about the number of Jewish film professionals in Weimar and also to the different emphases on their Jewishness in the secondary literature. Believing, as this volume's editors and contributors do, that Jewishness encompasses not only religious but also secular identities and practices, how do we conceptualize it in a historically and theoretically responsible way, which not only accounts for observant Jews but also includes nonpracticing Jews and even people who may not have identified themselves as Jewish, while trying to avoid the pitfalls of historical discourses that treated Jews as a race? Answering this question requires both a historical and theoretical foundation.

The chapters in this volume consider Jewishness as both an ethnoreligious identity assigned to or embraced by various film professionals and a conceptual category within the larger framework of Jewish difference. Lisa Silverman theorizes Jewish difference as a widespread and influential signifying system in German-speaking interwar Europe.

Analogous to and intersecting with systems like gender, race, and class, Jewish difference codes people, behaviors, objects, representations, and the like as Jewish or non-Jewish. Such coding as Jewish or non-Jewish affects individuals' positions within a hierarchical social structure as well as the representations, identifications, and social structures available to them.<sup>12</sup>

Some Weimar film professionals openly discussed being Jewish and drew on their Jewish heritage in their work. Ernst Lubitsch, for example, began his career with comedies set in urban Jewish communities and drew overtly on Jewish traditions of humor. In a 1916 interview in the *Kinematograph* with Julius Urigiß, Lubitsch spoke about Jewish humor as central to his work and to cinema itself.<sup>13</sup> Not all Jewish artists in Weimar Germany, however, integrated their Jewishness into their work as overtly as Lubitsch did. Yet numerous film professionals are known to have had Jewish origins, for example actor Elisabeth Bergner and director Paul Czinner. In other cases, conversion, mixed heritage, and other factors make it difficult to decide whether to include particular artists in a study of Jewish film production or to interpret their work through that critical lens. Fritz Lang, director of Weimar classics such as *Metropolis* (1925–26) and *M* (1931), is a good example of such a problematic case. Lang was raised strictly Roman Catholic. He considered himself Catholic and it is easy to spot Catholic motifs in films like *Metropolis* and *Das wandernde Bild* (*The Wandering Image*; 1920).<sup>14</sup> Although Lang's Jewish-born mother had converted to Catholicism before he was born, the Nazi-era Nuremberg Laws classified Lang as a half-Jew; some later scholarship has also treated him as such.

As illustrated by the example of Fritz Lang, Jewish identity is defined and experienced differently from inside and outside and changes over time. In *Recovering Jewishness: Modern Identities Reclaimed*, Frederick Roden argues that “culturally mixed identities” and figures of cultural slippage such as Lang exemplify a modern Jewish identity that is always already split, hybrid, and liminal. Such liminality is key also for Sander Gilman. In the introduction to *Jewish Frontiers*, Gilman describes Jewishness as a border zone, characterized by intercultural contact and ambivalence. The Jews who occupy this space, according to Gilman, are those who understood themselves as Jews at a specific moment in time.<sup>15</sup> This would seem to return us, methodologically, to considering only individuals who self-identified as Jewish. Yet Gilman suggests that individuals' self-understanding as Jewish is not necessarily self-conscious. Gilman states, “The Jews are to be understood as a multiple yet single entity. Multiple because of the culture manifested

under that label and yet unitary because of the common archeology or cultural identity they believe they share—even those who are never self-consciously part of the Jews.”<sup>16</sup> This liminal, contradictory identity as elaborated throughout Gilman’s writings is a discursive construct that has been naturalized through scientific and biomedical discourses and internalized by Jewish subjects, whether or not—as Gilman posits here—they consciously identify with it.

Together with Gilman and other contemporary scholars in German-Jewish studies, the editors of this volume understand Jewishness in the Weimar context as a permeable, malleable, and constructed category at the contested border of Germanness, a position that people may occupy whether or not they are aware of it and that images and performances can signify, whether or not the artists behind them identify as Jewish. The flexibility, fluidity, and intangibility of the boundaries between Jewishness and Germanness correspond with Leo Spitzer’s account of the situational marginality experienced by people undergoing the process of assimilation, in which the social membrane that separates marginal and dominant groups remains inconsistent and permeable.<sup>17</sup> We propose that an understanding of how Jewishness was conceived in the Weimar Republic, filtered through a contemporary theoretical framework that emphasizes the construction, coding, and visibility of Jewishness, can provide a solid foundation for rethinking Jewishness in Weimar cinema. Such an approach considers historical rhetoric of blood and ancestry, spirituality, culture, and assimilation that were current in the Weimar Republic and applies different contemporary ways of thinking about the construction and representation of Jewishness to films produced in that context.

## Identifying Jews and Identifying as Jewish in Weimar

The parameters of Jewish identity in Weimar Germany were varied and ambiguous, bound up in notions of blood and ancestry; discussions of spirituality, politics, culture, and assimilation; and experiences of anti-semitism. In the period following World War I, Germany experienced a rise in antisemitism and nationalism, as is evident in the *Juden-zählung* (Jew count)—an effort to expose the supposed unwillingness of Jews to participate in the war effort. It was also believed that Jews were un-supportive of Germany through the allegiance of left-wing Jews who signed the Versailles Treaty. Additionally, some Germans blamed Jews for the 1918–19 socialist revolutions and eastern European Jewish

refugees for the urban blight that afflicted many German cities in the interwar years. Moreover, eugenic ideology legitimated a conception of Jews as afflicted by hysteria and prone to revolutionary ideas—not merely genetically different but also diseased.

German-Jewish intellectuals of the period including Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Gershom Scholem found a spiritual connection in various Jewish texts with particular focus on works from the kabbalistic tradition. Although each of these thinkers produced significant scholarly works, they were also clearly moved by their spiritual studies, as well as motivated to disseminate their learning to the wider Jewish community. Notably, Rosenzweig led the famous *Lehrhaus*, the Free Jewish School of adult learning in Frankfurt am Main. There was also increasing support among Jewish intellectuals for establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Gershom Scholem would ultimately move to Palestine, while other intellectuals including Walter Benjamin seriously considered this option. Socialism, spiritualism, and Zionism each offered young disenfranchised Jewish Germans an alternative to attempting to integrate into the wider culture.

Notwithstanding those Jews who identified with socialist and Zionist causes, the majority of German Jews were committed to full participation in Weimar society with respect to custom and language. In Oskar Karbach's 1921 article "Das Princip der Assimilation" (The Principle of Assimilation), he notes that the ideas of the Enlightenment brought equal rights to Jews through a system of individualism.<sup>18</sup> As members of a world community, Jews shared in the same privileges and problems as the rest of society.<sup>19</sup> As individuals, Jews could serve a higher purpose, which would benefit all members of society—Jews and non-Jews alike.<sup>20</sup>

Mose Beilinson was skeptical of the idea of Jewish integration. In his 1923 "Untergang der Assimilation" (Downfall of Assimilation), Beilinson notes that assimilation is always failing—Jews live in metaphysical exile: "The Jewish people can disappear from the world without a trace. . . . The spirit of Jewishness will only become more permanent from this act."<sup>21</sup> According to Beilinson, after integration into the majority culture, assimilated Jews will still possess a hidden emptiness and anxiety that belies full participation.<sup>22</sup>

In his article "Forget Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German-Jewish History," contemporary critic Scott Spector problematizes the notion of Jewish assimilation in early-twentieth-century Germany, so eloquently analyzed by Karbach and Beilinson. Spector notes that German-Jewish history is varied in the twentieth century—

individual Jewish subjectivity speaks against strong binaries of assimilation and dissimilation. Spector cites Gershom Scholem's 1966 lecture on Germans and Jews, reminding the reader that Scholem initially regards these categories as unstable in that not all Germans are Germans and not all Jews are Jews.<sup>23</sup> These generalizations used to categorize individuals are both dangerous and inaccurate, with an "excess of empathy" assumed by scholars who treat this problematic.<sup>24</sup>

Challenging the unstable categories, Spector notes that Jews who called themselves (or were called) assimilated could go beyond the term, and that we should try to capture how individuals lived in the world. Scholars should in turn look at cultural contributions in order to discuss how German Jews as subjects lived in their time period. We should not merely draw binaries in light of the destruction of the Shoah, but instead take into consideration nuance: "The historical exploration of subjectivity is a search for context."<sup>25</sup>

Various scholars have, in fact, studied the way in which German Jews of the early twentieth century expressed their subjectivity within the context of historical circumstances. Michael Brenner in his work *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* mentions Jews who participated in a "particular Jewish sphere" as cultural realm, while still living in the majority culture.<sup>26</sup> These Jewish individuals, similar to Spector's assessment, occupied multiple subject positions, taking "inspiration from German myths and Hasidic tales."<sup>27</sup> The variety of practices, identifications, and cultural contributions by Jews in the Weimar Republic was in truth varied: some took part in traditional Judaism, while others were completely dissimilated from Jewish life.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, there were liberal Jews who sought to reform Jewish traditions into new "literary, artistic, and scholarly expressions." For these Jews, cultural associations and clubs "advanced a collective identity among German Jews" that differed from non-Jewish surroundings.<sup>29</sup>

The reform movement sought to refashion Jewish tradition by emphasizing spirituality over ritual. They believed they were drawing on authentic Judaism, which could serve as the foundation of genuine *Gemeinschaft* (community).<sup>30</sup> Obviously, not all scholarly works by German-speaking Jews contributed to this cultural tradition; Brenner notes that neither Sigmund Freud nor Albert Einstein was part of this movement, but only those Jews who were affiliated with Jewish organizations and thus consciously engaged in producing a specifically Jewish culture.<sup>31</sup>

Leora Auslander discusses the implicit ambivalence of constructing a Jewish identity in Weimar. German Jews at the beginning of the twen-



tieth century were able to negotiate multiple identities within mainstream German society.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Jews tended to socialize with other Jews, with whom they shared a sense of greater familiarity.<sup>33</sup> Auslander contends, “The majority of Berliners of Jewish origin were not divorced from Jewish sensibility, whether or not they were believers, practicing, or defined themselves as Jewish” and that German Jews had a unique relationship with “the senses, to time, to history, to the home and to the material world.”<sup>34</sup> While fully participating in the dominant German culture, German Jews thus retained a Jewish identity in which cultural practices were transformed and transmitted, even when they were not conscious of this fact.<sup>35</sup> Jews have a specific relation to time and space, since various historical events such as the exodus are integrated into ritual. The past is thus transmitted and renarrated through family and the wider Jewish community.<sup>36</sup>

Jakob Wassermann’s *My Life as a German and Jew* (1921), exemplifies the ambiguity of the Weimar Jewish sensibility. Wassermann explores his own Jewish identity while recognizing that his Jewish identity poses a threat to his Germanness. Wassermann regards his Jewishness as a racial identity rather than a conscious decision to join a religious group.<sup>37</sup> He believes that his Jewishness broadens his possibilities in life, intellectually and spiritually, and refuses to be judged by those who judged him on account of this: “I was a Jew; that told the whole story. I could not change it and did not wish to change it.”<sup>38</sup> Wassermann notes that he does not have stereotypical features that are considered Jewish—he mentions his “straight nose,” his “quiet demeanor” and his blond hair, but also concedes that these are primitive ideas.<sup>39</sup> In sum, he is proud of his Jewish heritage even if this identity comes with its own tensions and responsibilities.<sup>40</sup> While Wassermann notes that other Jews might desire to be “Aryan,” he refuses to associate with Christian symbols out of an unconscious experience that lay in the blood.<sup>41</sup>

Wassermann’s sense of his Jewish identity as rooted in his heredity reflects Weimar’s wider discussion of Jewish identity. According to Donald Niewyk, there was a common belief among Weimar Jews that unique mental and physical characteristics were in fact passed down to each successive generation.<sup>42</sup> Ludwig Holländer states in his 1932 speech, “Warum sind und bleiben wir Juden?” (Why are we and why do we remain Jews?) that appeared in the *Central-Verein Zeitung*, that there lives in each Jew the totality of their Jewish elders.<sup>43</sup> Jewish religion and custom are carried down from one generation to the next in a “long-term memory.” Holländer notes that the Jewish ideal is found in personality, religion, family, social-ethical behavior, as well as knowl-

edge. Jews are, for Holländer, the *Ebenbild Gottes* (direct reflection of God).<sup>44</sup>

One must be sensitive to the ways in which Jews themselves during this period appealed to the heredity of their Jewish identity and how this sort of racial discourse would be used against them by the Nazis. Ideas of racial consciousness were popular in the Jewish community, with Jewish writers positing that the Jewish “race” belonged to the plethora of races found in the German community. Kurt Alexander, member of the Jewish fraternity Sprevia, thus affirms that Jews are members of a *Gemeinschaft* because they have a soul created by blood.<sup>45</sup> He further contended that the strength of the Jewish community rooted in its bloodline will allow Jewish men to lift up the fatherland from the depths of defeat in World War I.<sup>46</sup> The resistance to rank the Jewish “race” as compared to other races distinguished Jewish thinkers from eugenic proponents like Eugen Fischer.<sup>47</sup>

The notion of the blood and soul of the Jew, popular in German discourse in the 1920s is also attuned to the ever-present antisemitism following World War I. Wassermann considers himself an ancestral Jew with a sense of justice born into him from the soul of a people who have lived through many generations of suffering.<sup>48</sup> This sense of innate justice forces him to bristle at the supposed German hatred that he is shown. As a German Jew, Wassermann feels German himself: “In my innocence I had always been convinced that I was a part of German life.”<sup>49</sup> He does not see the difference between the two groups, trying to fathom whether it is faith or blood that divides the two.<sup>50</sup>

In his work, Wassermann outlines the blatant antisemitism that he has experienced as a German Jew: “Against me he [the German] wants to set himself.”<sup>51</sup> Wassermann’s German friend explains to Wassermann that the German and Jewish spirits cannot mix because Jews could never identify with the host nation in their supposed social and religious isolation, lack of will to identify as German, and pride in tradition; the friend additionally notes that Jews are “criminals” and “usurers.”<sup>52</sup> According to Wassermann, as a Jew living in Germany you cannot demand “full pay”—you are considered to be “pockmarked.”<sup>53</sup> Wassermann regards the antisemitism he experienced as a character flaw in the German people.<sup>54</sup> For Wassermann, the German and the Jew are antagonistic figures.<sup>55</sup>

Antisemitism was also a common theme in Martin Buber’s Jewish journal, *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift*. In the 1925 special issue entitled “Antisemitismus und Volkstum” (Antisemitism and Jewish National Characteristics), various German authors (both Jews and non-Jews)

commented on antisemitism in Germany and Europe. Writer Otto Flake in his essay “Antisemitismus und Zukunft” (Antisemitism and the Future) offers a particularly poisonous view of Jews, positing that the hatred of Jewry is a natural historical occurrence, appearing at the slightest provocation.<sup>56</sup> Behind the historical need to persecute the Jews is that Jews as a “race” supposedly crucified Christ. Flake maintains further that there is a price to be paid for living as a separate nation within Germany.<sup>57</sup> In their refusal to assimilate into the host country, Jews must give up the desire to take on a national German style of writing and expression of ideas. For Flake, Jews have no right to make demands.<sup>58</sup>

Coarse antisemitism like Flake’s was widespread at the time in Germany. Members of all classes believed that Jews controlled the German economy and German political movements, and were the arbiters of unwholesome cultural trends.<sup>59</sup> In particular, antisemitism was spread by the German *völkisch* (ethnic and nationalist) groups such as the League for Defense and Defiance, which considered Jews to be unpatriotic.<sup>60</sup> In his essay entitled “Pharisäertum,” Martin Buber decries Flake’s blatant stereotypes of the Jews and disagrees that Jews should be forced to assimilate into a supposed host culture. For Buber, the Jews will survive each onslaught of antisemitism: this sense of survival supposedly appears in every Jewish heart.<sup>61</sup>

Moritz Goldstein supports the ideas of Buber and offers the last word in the special issue. He notes that every young German Jew recognizes his condition and feels shame, together with a desire to break free of hate and mistrust, and to foster fair play.<sup>62</sup> Instead of interacting with those they mistrust, young Jews must recognize that they live in a world of enemies. The recipe is to protect oneself, avoid the ever-consuming talk about the German-Jewish situation, and grow and accomplish something beyond the shackles of antisemitism. For Goldstein, time is too valuable to discuss this matter endlessly. Many Jewish people in Weimar Germany followed Goldstein’s dictum, creating lives, cultures, and texts that transcended antisemitism, even as they reflected experiences, standpoints, and tropes that contemporary observers may or may not recognize as Jewish.

## Locating Jewishness in Weimar Film

Representations of Jewishness and Jewish difference in Weimar cinema can be difficult to recognize, because they were entangled in anxiet-

ies about visibility and performance. Darcy Buerkle analyzes E.A. Dupont's 1923 film *Das alte Gesetz* (*The Ancient Law*), which follows the travails of a rabbi's son, Baruch Mayer, and his flight from a small Jewish community in order to act on the grand stage in Vienna. Buerkle examines the identity and affect of the religious Jew, balancing the laws of the Torah with that of the majority culture, and notes that modern Jewish identity in the guise of assimilation is achieved through the practice of passing. With long mirror scenes and shot-reverse-shots, Baruch interrogates himself and is in return interrogated by the audience: "[Baruch] has left the shtetl in body but as a new arrival and as an actor, he has specifically chosen an existence that cultivates an audience. . . . He will have to make daily decisions not to be seen as a Jew."<sup>63</sup> *Das alte Gesetz* is a film about being a Jew in a secular world with an anxious subtext of hiding one's Jewishness.

According to Buerkle, the spectator is also always aware that Baruch is a Jew, and the constant negotiation of identity makes the viewer anxious on Baruch's behalf.<sup>64</sup> The anxiety that this passing provokes is felt by the assimilated Jewish spectator, as well as the spectator who is not a Jew in an essentialized sense or even a self-identified Jew. It is at once present for the historical spectator who is faced with this lived experience in Weimar Germany.<sup>65</sup> For all the positive discourse of assimilation in *Das alte Gesetz* (Baruch becomes a star, he marries his sweetheart from the shtetl, his parents see his performance), the danger of being seen as a Jew in Weimar is a potent message. Ultimately, Baruch's most notable sign of Jewishness, his sidelocks, must remain hidden so he is not seen as laughable. When he cuts off his sidelocks, his Jewishness becomes invisible to the audience, but his constant negotiation between Jewishness and assimilated existence never ceases; he carries a Siddur in his pocket when he is forced to perform on the High Holidays. The hidden prayer book is "a central affective circumstance for German-Jews during Weimar": living an assimilated life, the Jew may at any time be unmasked.<sup>66</sup>

Buerkle argues that Jewishness in Weimar is "a category that is both powerful and largely unspoken," one that was frequently silenced or displaced by anxiety, shame, and the "symbolic public effacement of Jewishness."<sup>67</sup> Kerry Wallach's readings of diverse cultural texts in *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* reveal the disclosure and concealment of Jewishness in Weimar Germany to have been an infinitely complex matter, which was governed by multiple varying factors, motivations, and dynamics between Jewish and non-Jewish performers and spectators—in life, on the page, on stage, and onscreen.

Given its inconsistent visibility, Jewishness and the corresponding conceptual frame of Jewish difference are not always easy to locate in Weimar films. Between the widespread involvement of Jewish film professionals, the multiplicities of German-Jewish identities and cultures, the tense affects around Jewish positionalities, and the complex dynamics around Jewish visibility in Germany, Jewishness circulates in Weimar cinema similarly to the “inferential ethnic presences” of Hollywood cinema, as described by Ella Shohat, which “penetrate the screen without always literally being represented by ethnic and racial themes or even characters.”<sup>68</sup>

Ashkenazi’s *Weimar Film and Modern Jewish Identity* provides important interpretive tools and historical context for locating subtle and elusive traces of Jewishness in Weimar cinema. Ashkenazi builds on the work of Henry Bial, who argues that Jewish-American identity has been shaped by the coding and decoding of Jewishness on stage and screen, by performances that are double coded, insofar as they are differently recognizable to Jewish and non-Jewish spectators.<sup>69</sup> By directing our attention to the performativity and double coding of Jewishness in Weimar cinema, Ashkenazi shows how Jews in the Weimar film industry could craft, albeit through hidden meaning, the hopeful process of acculturation and social mobility. Ashkenazi cites German sociologist Georg Simmel’s notion of the stranger as an analogy for the Jew in the modern world: “an integrated person whose presence nevertheless articulates ‘externality and opposition.’”<sup>70</sup> Ashkenazi theorizes that assimilation of Jews into Weimar Germany—the “absorption of bourgeois values and norms” into the modern Jewish experience—included the adoption of *Bildung* (personal cultivation and education) in crafting a liberal morality.<sup>71</sup> In an urban milieu that accepted various ethnicities, Jewish middle-class individuals could take part as equals in a formation of a multicultural and middle-class society.<sup>72</sup> Cinema was a medium whereby Jewish artists could influence the shaping of mainstream bourgeois culture and also provide the particular vocabulary that allowed for integration of the hopes and fears of Jews.<sup>73</sup> Through film and the double coding of Jewish difference, the contemplation of Jewish assimilation would take place in “the constitution of a multicultural, liberal community that would accept the notion of multilayered identity.”<sup>74</sup>

Deep knowledge of context and close attention to detail are required in order to recognize such subtle articulations of Jewish difference, knowledge and skill that the contributors to this volume all showcase in their analyses of the Weimar film industry. Their analyses expand

on Ashkenazi's work, introducing lesser-known films and figures, exploring the work of Jewish-identified Weimar film professionals, and analyzing different modes of Jewish visibility and the articulation of Jewish difference in Weimar cinema. Together, they offer a clear snapshot of the robust scholarly conversations taking place today.

Jewishness in Weimar Germany is a multifaceted phenomenon. Ancestry, spirituality, culture, and experiences of assimilation and anti-semitism constituted core traits for people who self-identified as Jews. Discourses of Jewish difference constructed, coded, and differentiated between the Jewish and the non-Jewish. The chapters in this volume explain different ways in which this complex phenomenon manifests in and around cinema of the Weimar Republic and they offer conceptual, theoretical, and methodological tools with which to unpack it. The chapters and the tools they deploy emphasize the visibility, construction, coding, and decoding of Jewishness in Weimar cinema. Most of them center around films and figures that have received little scholarly attention. In doing so, the chapters build on contemporary work at the intersection of German-Jewish studies, film studies, and cultural studies, contribute to our scholarly archive, and introduce new sites and methods for rethinking Jewishness in Weimar cinema.

In the first part of this volume, chapters by Maya Barzilai, Margrit Frölich, Kerry Wallach, Mila Ganeva, and Ervin Malakaj consider how and to what extent the Jewishness of select Weimar film professionals was on display, on and off screen. Case studies of Jewish-identified public figures, including Henrik Galeen, Alexander Granach, Maria Orska, Siegfried Arno, and Alfred Rosenthal, offer new perspectives on casting, stereotyping, self-representation, and strategic (in)visibility. These case studies delve into different modes of visibility, including typecasting, performance, humor, and film criticism, and explain what these different modes of visibility reveal about and how they may have shaped Jewishness in the Weimar film industry. They provide methodological and theoretical insights not only for German-Jewish film studies but also for ethnic studies in other film cultures.

In the second group of chapters, Philipp Stiasny, Valerie Weinstein, Lisa Silverman, and Anjeana K. Hans demonstrate how to decode markers of Jewish difference in films that on the surface do not appear to be about Jews. The films analyzed in this section cover a broad range, from *Zwei Welten* (*Two Worlds*; 1930, dir. E.A. Dupont), which thematizes antisemitism explicitly; to lighter fare like *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (*The Three from the Filling Station*; 1930, dir. Wilhelm Thiele) and

comedies starring Franziska Gaal, which she made in exile. Chapters in this part also scrutinize melodramas: *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*; 1919, dir. Richard Oswald) and *Die freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*; 1925, dir. G.W. Pabst). Both these films are well known for their political interventions regarding gender and sexuality, but the analyses here reveal how Jewish difference plays a significant part in these films as well. The diverse film analyses in this part of the volume highlight the importance of historical context for understanding Jewish difference in Weimar cinema, because Jewishness was often repressed, displaced, or expressed through markers of other kinds of difference. The authors of the chapters in this part both elaborate on salient features of Weimar culture and explain how this background helps them recognize signifiers of Jewish difference in various films, despite its seeming absence. They trace Jewishness and its absence across dialogue, character, narrative, and other filmic elements and explain their significance in historical perspective. The close readings and careful contextualizations in these chapters illustrate how and where to look for Jewishness in Weimar cinema when that Jewishness has been masked or double coded.

Jewish-identified filmmakers and spectators, however, were not alone in coding and decoding Jewishness in Weimar cinema. Therefore, we include a third group of chapters in our volume that examines how Weimar-era antisemites coded and decoded Jewish difference and their role in constructing Jewishness in Weimar and Weimar cinema. These chapters, by Barbara Hales, Brook Henkel, Christian Rogowski, Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert, and Ofer Ashkenazi foreground antisemitism's performative function in respect to Jewishness. Just as Nazi law racialized people as Jews or *Mischlinge*, based on their ancestry, and thereby reshaped their identity and fate, antisemitic discourses made films and filmic representations Jewish by proclaiming them such. The chapters in this part explain how antisemitic discourses constructed Jewishness in and around sexual hygiene films, in the outraged reception of Hanns Walter Kornblum's *Die Grundlagen der Einsteinschen Relativitätstheorie* (*The Basic Principles of the Einstein Theory of Relativity*; 1922) and Ludwig Berger's *Der Meister von Nürnberg* (*The Master of Nuremberg*; 1927), and through the Nazi-era excision of Jewishness from *Brennendes Geheimnis* (*Burning Secret*; 1932–33, dir. Robert Siodmak) and remakes of *Die Geierwally* (*The Vulture-Wally*; 1921 and 1939–40) and *Peter Voss, der Millionendieb* (*Peter Voss: Thief of Millions*; 1932 and 1943–46). Such antisemitic constructions of Jewish difference,

which were a component of Weimar cinema's complex and contradictory relation to Jewishness, would become dominant in Third Reich cinema and in Nazi film historiography.

As a coda we include Cynthia Walk's brief chapter about the process of film preservation and the restoration of E.A. Dupont's *Das alte Gesetz* and Hugo Bettauer's *Die Stadt ohne Juden* (*The City Without Jews*; 1924), followed by a more formal afterword. Walk's chapter on film preservation helps us consider how to restore Weimar cinema's Jewishness today. Film restoration grapples with questions similar to our scholarly ones: How can we reconstruct Weimar film from its remaining fragments and how do we frame it for a contemporary audience? Where was Jewishness located in that past and how was it received? How can we make it legible to audiences today? How do we balance what we think we know about the past with today's resources, interests, and needs? The pragmatic, artistic, and historically informed decisions made by *Das alte Gesetz's* and *Die Stadt ohne Juden's* restoration teams inspire our scholarly inquiry. Our conclusion reflects on the results of that inquiry, questions it has raised, and on future directions it might take.

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## Notes

1. Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 310.
2. Thorold Dickinson, "Review of *The Haunted Screen, Sight and Sound*," 39 (1, Winter 1969): 52.
3. Ofer Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film and Modern Jewish Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 159.
4. Leonard Quaresima, "Introduction to the 2004 Edition: Rereading Kracauer," *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947; reprint Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), xl.
5. Richard Roud, "The Moral Taste of Lotte Eisner," *Sight and Sound* 53 (2, Spring 1984): 140.
6. "Verjudung und Geschäftemacherei im 'deutschen' Film," *Der Angriff*, 1 March 1933, first insert (1. Beilage).
7. A[]lbert S[chneider], "Dr. Goebbels vor den Filmschaffenden: Ein neues Bekenntnis zum Film," *Lichtbild-Bühne*, 16 December 1935.
8. Carl Neumann, Curt Belling, and Hans-Walther Betz, *Film "Kunst," Film Kohn, Film Korruption* (Berlin: Verlag Hermann Scherping, 1937), 15.
9. Neumann et al., *Film "Kunst,"* 26, 39, 106.
10. Neumann et al., *Film "Kunst,"* 5 et passim.
11. Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film and Modern Jewish Identity*, 3.
12. Lisa Silverman, "Reconsidering the Margins: Jewishness as an Analytical Framework," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8 (1, March 2009): 103–20; Lisa Silverman, "Beyond Antisemitism: A Critical Approach to German Jewish Cultural History," in *Nexus 1: Essays in German Jewish Studies*, 27–45 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011); Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture Between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
13. Julius Urgiß, "Künstlerprofil: Ernst Lubitsch," *Der Kinematograph*, Düsseldorf, 30 August 1916, rpt. *Lubitsch*, ed. Hans Helmut Prinzler and Enno Patalas, Munich 1984, 89–90.
14. Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Fritz Lang: Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 163.
15. Sander Gilman, *Jewish Frontiers: Essays on Bodies, Histories, and Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 25.
16. Gilman, *Jewish Frontiers*, 26.
17. Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, and West Africa, 1780–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
18. Oskar Karbach, "Das Princip der Assimilation," *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift* 6 (9, 1921–22): 522.
19. Three-quarters of German Jews in Weimar were liberals. Liberal pressures from the outside also urged Jews to "amalgamate and disappear" as conservative critique intensified: after World War I, "thousands of Jews quietly changed their names and religion, and frequently intermarried as well." Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2001), 96.
20. Karbach, "Das Princip," 524.
21. Mose Beilinson, "Untergang der Assimilation," *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift* 7 (3, 1923): 174. (Das jüdische Volk kann spurlos in der Welt zerrinnen. . . . Der Geist des Judentums wird davon nur noch fester werden.)
22. Beilinson, "Untergang der Assimilation," 174.

23. Scott Spector, "Forget Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German-Jewish History," *Jewish History* 20 (3–4, 2006): 350. See Gershom Scholem, "Jews and Germans," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, Gershom Scholem. Ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012), 71–92.
24. Spector, "Forget Assimilation," 350.
25. Spector, "Forget Assimilation," 391.
26. Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 2.
27. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 2.
28. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 2–3.
29. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 5.
30. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 6–7. Both cultural production as well as social welfare were a part of this collective experience.
31. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 5.
32. Leora Auslander, "The Boundaries of Jewishness, or When Is a Cultural Practice Jewish?" *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8 (1, March 2009): 57.
33. Auslander, "Boundaries," 60.
34. Auslander, "Boundaries," 57, 59.
35. Auslander, "Boundaries," 48.
36. Auslander, "Boundaries," 57, 59. Auslander does not support a simplistic determined identity—"No one cultural location completely saturates an individual's mode of being"—but she does support a construct of identity that is passed on even when we are not conscious of it. We live in a world of marked categories, and we are creators/transmitters of ideas. Auslander argues not to let all Jewish history stand in the shadow of the Shoah, in order that we should not let Third Reich racial classifications "impoverish our analytical imagination and therefore the history of prewar European Jewry." Auslander, "Boundaries," 60.
37. Jakob Wassermann, *My Life as a German and Jew*, trans. S. N. Brainin (New York: Coward-McCann, 1933), 16–17.
38. Wassermann, *My Life*, 170.
39. Wassermann, *My Life*, 11–12.
40. Wassermann, *My Life*, 90.
41. Wassermann, *My Life*, 23.
42. Niewyk, *Jews in Weimar*, 100.
43. Ludwig Holländer, "Warum sind und bleiben wir Juden?" *Central-Verein Zeitung: Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 11, no. 51. Berlin, 16 December, 1932, 513.
44. Holländer, "Warum sind und bleiben wir Juden?," 513.
45. Kurt Alexander, "Tendenzrede: gehalten auf dem Festkommens zum 25. Jubiläum der 'Sprevia' am 3 November, 1919," *K.C. Blätter: Monatschrift der im Kartell-Convent Korporationen* 9 (11–12; November–December 1919), 181.
46. Alexander, "Tendenzrede," 180–81. This speech was given on 3 November 1919 in a celebration of the Jewish fraternity Sprevia's twenty-fifth anniversary. The defeat mentioned here would be Germany's defeat in World War I.
47. Some of the more famous scientists involved with the German racial hygiene movement include Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer, and Ernst Rüdin, all with medical degrees working across a wide range of disciplines including anthropology and psychiatry. The intention of these doctors was to support the procreation of the healthy members of society, while curtailing births from groups deemed to be asocial, criminal, or mentally disabled.

48. Wassermann, *My Life*, 272–73.
49. Wassermann, *My Life*, 81.
50. Wassermann, *My Life*, 77–79.
51. Wassermann, *My Life*, 171.
52. Wassermann, *My Life*, 172, 83, 86.
53. Wassermann, *My Life*, 150.
54. Wassermann, *My Life*, 221.
55. Wassermann, *My Life*, 221.
56. Otto Flake, “Antisemitismus und Zukunft.” *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift* 1 Sonderheft, Antisemitismus und Volkstum (1925): 11.
57. Flake, “Antisemitismus,” 12.
58. Flake, “Antisemitismus,” 15. For Flake, Jews must be forced to suppress their Jewishness.
59. Niewyk, *Jews in Weimar*, 43.
60. Niewyk, *Jews in Weimar*, 47.
61. Martin Buber, “Pharisäertum,” *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift* 1 Sonderheft, Antisemitismus und Volkstum (1925): 131.
62. Moritz Goldstein, “Leisten, nicht grübeln!” *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift* 1 Sonderheft, Antisemitismus und Volkstum (1925): 136.
63. Darcy Buerkle, “Caught in the Act: Norbert Elias, Emotion and The Ancient Law.” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8.1 (March 2009): 93.
64. Buerkle, “Caught in the Act,” 93.
65. Buerkle, “Caught in the Act,” 94.
66. Buerkle, “Caught in the Act,” 95–96.
67. Darcy Buerkle, *Nothing Happened: Charlotte Salomon and an Archive of Suicide* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 3, 4. Also, Buerkle, “Caught in the Act.” One example of the social and symbolic domination of both Jews and women in the Weimar Republic is the disappearance of new women coded as Jewish from advertising images in the early 1930s. See Darcy Buerkle, “Gendered Spectatorship, Jewish Women and Psychological Advertising in Weimar Germany,” *Women’s History Review* 15 (4, September 2006): 626.
68. Ella Shohat, “Ethnicities-in-Relation: Toward a Multicultural Reading of American Cinema,” in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman, 215–50 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 223.
69. Henry Bial, *Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
70. Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film*, xv. Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 601.
71. Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film*, 1–2. Although many German Jews in Weimar chose amalgamation into German culture, leaving Jewishness behind, the majority of liberal Jews instead supported assimilation or a mutual relationship of the majority culture and Jewish custom: “Jews would always have a separate identity, and they would be no less good Germans for it.” Niewyk, *Jews in Weimar*, 99–100.
72. Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film*, 2.
73. Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film*, 3.
74. Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film*, 11.

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- . "Gendered Spectatorship, Jewish Women and Psychological Advertising in Weimar Germany." *Women's History Review* 15 (4, September 2006): 625–36.
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