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Abstract

In 1930, Hungarian-born Jewish author Arthur Holitscher's book *Wiedersehn mit Amerika: Die Verwandlung der U.S.A. (Reunion with America: The Transformation of the U.S.A.)* was reviewed by one J. Raphael in the German-Jewish Orthodox weekly newspaper, *Der Israelit*. This reviewer concluded: "Despite its good reputation, America is a strange country. And Holitscher, whose relationship to Judaism is not explicit, but direct, has determined that to be the case for American Jews as well." The reviewer's use of the word "strange" (*komisch*) offers powerful insight into the complex perceptions of America held by many German-speaking Jews, which in 1930 were at best mixed and ambivalent. An earlier travel book by Arthur Holitscher (1869–1941) from 1912 depicts America more favorably, though it is widely believed to have provided inspiration for Franz Kafka's unfinished novel, *Amerika: Der Verschollene (Amerika or The Man who Disappeared)*, published posthumously in 1927), which famously opens with a description of the Statue of Liberty holding aloft a sword rather than a torch. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

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CHAPTER 8

America Abandoned: German-Jewish Visions of American Poverty in Serialized Novels by Joseph Roth, Sholem Asch, and Michael Gold

KERRY WALLACH

In 1930, Hungarian-born Jewish author Arthur Holitscher's book *Wiedersehen mit Amerika: Die Verwandlung der U.S.A.* (*Reunion with America: The Transformation of the U.S.A.*) was reviewed by one J. Raphael in the German-Jewish Orthodox weekly newspaper, *Der Israelit*. This reviewer concluded: "Despite its good reputation, America is a strange country. And Holitscher, whose relationship to Judaism is not explicit, but direct, has determined that to be the case for American Jews as well."¹ The reviewer's use of the word "strange" (*ko-misch*) offers powerful insight into the complex perceptions of America held by many German-speaking Jews, which in 1930 were at best mixed and ambivalent. An earlier travel book by Arthur Holitscher (1869–1941) from 1912 depicts America more favorably, though it is widely believed to have provided inspiration for Franz Kafka's unfinished novel, *Amerika: Der Verschollene* (*Amerika* or *The Man who Disappeared*, published posthumously in 1927), which famously opens with a description of the Statue of Liberty holding aloft a sword rather than a torch.²

But Holitscher's views of the United States markedly changed during the 1920s, particularly after he spent five months there in 1929. Accordingly, *Wiedersehen mit Amerika* offers cynical commentary on the covert antisemitism present in American businesses, the ephemeral nature of prosperity due in part to unequal capitalist wealth distribution, and the nature of Jewish life in the most destitute parts of New York City. As Holitscher observed in 1930: "In the peering filthy alleys of the oldest Jewish quarter, the benches of residents form

ranks, the residents driven out of their apartments by the heat and stench of neglected ruins, according to customs of the old home.”³ Such analogies comparing New York Jews to their destitute European counterparts exemplify a trend that gained currency in the early 1930s, prior to the shifts in and after 1933: that of decrying Depression-era America as beyond hope.

Indeed, Holitscher’s change in perspective from 1912 to 1930 is representative of a more general shift within the transnational Jewish public sphere in the late 1920s and early 1930s, from optimism to social critique of America. European Jews of different backgrounds exchanged stories and information about the immigrant American-Jewish experience in the pages of the interwar German-Jewish press. Major periodicals reached audiences in German towns and cities including Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich, and also crossed geographic, cultural, and political borders to connect readers in such locations as Breslau, Vienna, Prague, Zurich, Basel, Warsaw, Budapest, Copenhagen, Paris, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. The press thus warrants consideration in theoretical approaches to transnationalism, which has been defined by anthropologists as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.”⁴ Works of fiction that were serialized in the German-Jewish press, too, brought visions of America to doorsteps across Europe and thereby facilitated their dissemination throughout international Jewish networks.

Building on this notion of connections shared among different places, I examine German-Jewish transnationalism in two distinct contexts: in a literal sense, with respect to social relations of European Jewish migrants living in or traveling to New York; and in literary and print media, insofar as representations of Jewish life in America contributed to the construction of Jewish identities in Europe. More than only a place of settlement, the idea of America also provided an emotional haven for German Jews over the course of nearly two centuries, from the 1730s until the 1920s. Even before the mass immigration of eastern European Jews to America in the 1880s, at least 250,000 Jews from German-speaking lands had immigrated to America.⁵ Communication between American Jews of European origin and Jews in Germany yielded a transnational culture that flourished especially in periodicals and in literary works in circulation in multiple locations.

Various processes of translation have enabled the development of transnational Jewish cultures, many of which rely heavily on exchange among different national and linguistic traditions. To some extent part of a larger quest for authentic Jewish culture, interwar periodicals aimed at Jewish readers of German imported and translated literature from at least thirteen languages, includ-

ing English and Jewish languages, and especially Yiddish and Hebrew.⁶ This newly assembled corpus of modern Jewish literature constituted a print base through which German Jews engaged with and understood themselves as part of the global Jewish community. It was also by way of the German-language Jewish press that many central European Jews became acquainted with the changing circumstances of life in America.

Literary depictions of New York Jewry in German-Jewish periodicals reflected and reshaped Jewish life the world over. Through consistently negative representations of the United States that focused on poverty, and to some extent antisemitism, these depictions might have even discouraged immigration to America during the years leading up to 1933. A significant number of prominent, popular literary texts published and reviewed in the German-Jewish press from 1928 to 1932 dealt with impoverished Jewish immigrants on New York's Lower East Side. It was nothing new for German Jews to deliberate about immigration to America; as historian Avraham Barkai has demonstrated, German Jews were not only considered pioneers of Jewish migration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but they were also a population shaped by crises of migration.⁷ Nor was it unusual for readers of German-language Jewish periodicals to encounter reports of both successes and failures in America, yet through the early 1920s, they were more likely to come across favorable images of America as a supposed refuge for European migrants.⁸ What is striking, however, is the fact that the period from 1928 to 1931, when fiction and journalism joined forces to paint an overwhelmingly gloomy portrait of America, correlates almost exactly with the greatest period of decline in actual Jewish migration from Germany to the United States during the years 1920 to 1933, as Doron Niederland's research confirms.⁹ Statistics about migration during this period corroborate what the literature reveals: a familiarity with America's darker sides.

The notion of America as an idealized "golden country" of promise and salvation was first diminished by the implementation of increasingly restrictive immigration quotas in the 1920s, and was demonized in the German-Jewish press in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Three popular novels reprinted in the press from 1928 to 1931 conveyed in no uncertain terms that it would be best for would-be immigrants to abandon dreams of America: Sholem Asch's *Chaim Lederer's Return*, Joseph Roth's *Hiob: Roman eines einfachen Mannes* (*Job: The Story of a Simple Man*), and Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money*. Social critique appears on nearly every page of these narratives: the terrible working conditions of American factories drive men insane, such as the eponymous protagonist of *Chaim Lederer's Return*; Roth's Mendel Singer, a village

teacher who leaves his shtetl for America, is punished repeatedly as he and his family are visited by the plagues of shame, mental illness, and death; and finally, in Michael Gold's partly autobiographical novel, the young Mikey comes of age on the Lower East Side in what German Jews subsequently interpreted as a literal hell unfit for Jewish immigration. These novels appeared against a backdrop of variable interwar press coverage of American poverty; they were serialized and read during a period of extreme hardship.

Further, the wide reach of the German-Jewish press enabled three authors—Asch, Roth, and Gold—born in regions with official languages other than German (Poland, Galicia, the United States), who originally composed texts in three different Germanic languages (Yiddish, German, and English) while residing in various world cities (Paris, Berlin, New York), to make an impact on a range of Jewish readers interested in discovering more about America. In this instance, the notion of “German Jewish” extends beyond national borders and even linguistic and other cultural ties. German was the common language that brought these Jewish authors and their stories together; the idea of America served as a third common denominator. The German-Jewish press provided a unifying forum for multidirectional transnational exchange.

Universal Hardships: America in the Interwar German-Jewish Press

Throughout the 1920s, German depictions of life in America became progressively grimmer, peaking after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. But it was already during the years immediately following World War I that the German-Jewish press began to contest idealized preconceptions of America. Not only was New York thought to be bursting at the seams from constant waves of migration, but American antisemitism also began to permeate German-Jewish consciousness. Only after a period of relative ambivalence during the mid-1920s did a range of German-Jewish periodicals begin to convey unequivocally negative images of America to readers who, given the worldwide economic crisis, may have opted to stay in Germany rather than risk entering an even worse situation. The hardships of Jews in the United States were increasingly assessed as similar to, or even worse than, what European Jews faced.

A few early 1920s critiques of New York, and America in general, presciently pointed out that Jews in the United States were likely to encounter many of the same universal problems they faced in Germany. For example, in

one 1922 piece in the liberal *C.V.-Zeitung*, the newspaper of the Centralverein, or Central League of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, writer Carl A. Bratter maintained that New York's Lower East Side was nothing but a collection point for the poorest Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. An American immigrant from Germany who authored several German-language books about America, Bratter provided insight into American culture for Jews and non-Jews alike.¹⁰ Like Holitscher's works, Bratter's article also voiced feelings of disillusionment: "In Germany there is a widespread misconception that anti-semitism in America is a new occurrence. Already when I arrived in America in 1885, there were newspaper ads that read 'No Jews,' or 'Hebrews not wanted,' or 'Hebrews need not apply.'" ¹¹ Bratter pointed out that although antisemitism in America was less explicit than in Europe, it nevertheless could be found everywhere. Similarly, the ubiquitous nature of poverty was reflected in literary works serialized in the early 1920s, such as American author Anzia Yezierska's "The Lord Giveth," which tells of the confiscation of charity food given to a starving family, and appeared in German translation in *Der Israelit* in 1924.¹²

Yet even while German-Jewish periodicals continued to publish stories about impoverished Jewish families who had managed to reach American shores, the further reduced immigration quotas (first instituted in 1921) and the Johnson-Reed Act of May 1924 ironically reinforced the notion of America as a land of unattainable promise. As the quota system greatly decelerated European Jewish immigration to America, it also slowed the brief wave of imagery disseminated about deplorable conditions. In the mid-1920s, the majority of articles in the German-Jewish press focused on the problem of what to do about the many eastern European migrants who otherwise would have been bound for American shores. Other journalists examined the role of Jews in American organizational life, from their affiliations with different religious groups to their engagement with social welfare work. American-Jewish women in particular were praised for their exemplary contributions in the field of social work.¹³

The year 1929 marked the most significant turning point for transnational Jewish visions of America: more restrictive immigration quotas and worsening economic conditions contributed to worldwide perceptions of America as an impossibility. As historian Tobias Brinkmann has determined, an executive order signed by President Hoover caused an immediate decline in overall Jewish immigration beginning in 1929.¹⁴ After the stock market crash of October 1929, German-Jewish periodicals took an even more cynical stance vis-à-vis the alleged prosperity of America, suggesting to would-be immigrants that,

even if they should be among the privileged few to receive permission to enter, they might be better off staying in Germany. Just as Holitscher changed his views in *Wiederseh'n mit Amerika*, others made similar observations about the sudden shift in America's quality of life. In one article in a Munich-based Zionist paper, *Das Jüdische Echo*, Bernhard Kahn, the European Director of the American Joint Distribution Committee, described the destitution he had witnessed on a recent visit: "Anyone who visits the East Side of New York today is affected by the atmosphere of gloom, which dominates a quarter once filled with a cheerful existence. Street begging, previously a practically unheard of occurrence, is now more noticeable there than in many Jewish cities in eastern Europe."¹⁵ Perhaps more visible in New York than in many eastern European cities, American poverty was readily apparent to the casual observer.

Beggars and penniless street peddlers, also typical protagonists of classic Yiddish literature, became symbolic icons of Jewish life in New York; poverty and antisemitism, despite their universal nature, similarly acquired an American connotation. To be sure, most of the Lower East Side's poorest Jews were of eastern European and not German origin; this was also the case in Germany, where immigration to America was sometimes viewed as a solution to the so-called *Ostjuden* problem. The origins of impoverished Jews notwithstanding, stories published in the German-Jewish press—ranging from the Orthodox *Der Israelit*, to the Zionist *Das Jüdische Echo*, to the best-selling, nonpartisan *Israelitisches Familienblatt*—served as cautionary tales aimed at all Jews. Several fictional texts seemed to target the consciences of German-Jewish readers by referencing the roles German Jews played in the class stratification of New York Jewry. Literature originally written in Yiddish, German, and English by some of the most prominent Jewish authors of the period portrayed New York as far worse than any shtetl: it was to be avoided at all costs.

Chaim Lederer's Shop-Sickness: Sholem Asch and the Poverty of the Mind

Remembered today in part for his controversial writings on Christian subjects, Sholem [Schalom] Asch was a widely known and beloved Jewish author during the first four decades of the twentieth century. His life during this period included regular travels between locations in eastern, central, and western Europe, as well as the United States. Asch (1880–1957) was born in Kutno, a Polish town near the Prussian border, and later moved to Warsaw. He studied the Bible and the Talmud; his father had hoped for a son who

would become a rabbi. But Asch was more inspired by the dramatic works of Goethe, Schiller, and Hebbel, which prompted him to compose his early works in Yiddish rather than Hebrew; he later attempted to write in Hebrew, only to return to Yiddish at the urging of author I. L. Peretz. Growing up in the 1880s, Asch observed masses of Jewish immigrants fleeing westward to escape Russian pogroms; he claimed to have been aware of the fantastical concept of “America” already in his earliest childhood years.¹⁶ Following the success of his provocative drama, *God of Vengeance* (1907), which director Max Reinhardt first brought to the Berlin stage in German translation, Asch traveled to America, where he lived for several years beginning in 1910. In New York, Asch witnessed firsthand much of the poverty that formed the subject matter of his later works, including the novels *Uncle Moses* (1918) and *Chaim Lederer’s Return* (1919).¹⁷ He became a US citizen in 1920, though he spent the final years of his life near Tel Aviv.

Regarded by writer Stefan Zweig as “the sole world-renowned only-Jewish author” alive in 1930, Sholem Asch was regularly translated into German and English, and his works found a vast readership in Germany and the United States during the interwar period.¹⁸ Within the context of the German-Jewish transnational sphere, Jewish newspaper editors in Weimar Germany notably reprinted translations of several novels by Asch that focused on American-Jewish life. In doing so, they followed in the footsteps of Abraham Cahan, the editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, the most popular American Yiddish-language newspaper. Cahan serialized nearly all of Asch’s works and was instrumental in making Asch one of the most highly acclaimed Jewish authors of his time, which he remained until 1939.¹⁹

Through their experiences with factory and sweatshop-related illnesses, Sholem Asch’s protagonists reflect a type of poverty that extends beyond material destitution, but which in his texts seems no less threatening. Serialized in two different newspapers in the late 1920s, the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* and *Das Jüdische Echo*, *Chaim Lederer’s Return* focuses on the spiritual journey of an established Polish-Jewish immigrant whose success as owner of a shirt factory would seem to exemplify the American Dream, though its protagonist never experiences the satisfaction he thought wealth would bring.²⁰ After Chaim Lederer retires at age sixty and leaves his business to his son, Morris, he finds he cannot escape the compulsion to work and feels continually drawn to his factory. Diseased and miserable, Lederer represents the fate of the eastern European immigrant who cannot find his way in America, illustrating for German-Jewish readerships the mentally unbalanced state of even the most successful Jews.

Shop-sickness, a poverty of the mind, confronts Asch's New York Jewish immigrants in the form of dehumanizing processes. The problems protagonist Chaim Lederer formerly encountered in Poland continue in American sweatshops: "Lederer soon came to realize that there was little difference between the shops here and in the old country; the shops here were marked by the same hopelessness and helplessness as were those at Lodz—in fact, they were a thousand times worse."²¹ Not only does life as a worker in America provide sickening continuity of the life he knew before, perhaps with fewer concerns related to hunger, but it also further strips Lederer of his desire to think for himself. Lederer becomes but a mechanized cog in the machine of the city: "He himself was suspended from the leather belts which passed over the wheels in his factory, and, like his machines, he too was driven to his work by some mysterious force."²² The "steel monster" of the subway spits Lederer out into different parts of the city; he becomes a slave to the business that tosses him back and forth from office to factory.²³

The pitiful man who Lederer becomes exists somewhere between Poland and America, Yiddish and English, textile shops in Lodz and sweatshops on the Lower East Side. In all of these spaces, the experience of poverty constitutes the very fiber of his being. Its privations are "in the very marrow of his bones and in his blood"; he barks at his family simply for their enjoyment of butter, sugar, and other luxury goods.²⁴ Envy for his loved ones and their connections to well-off presumed "German" families—New York Jews from Germany, Hungary, or Galicia, as opposed to Poland or Russia—contributes to Lederer's growing bitterness and instability. The rift between the Lederers and the civilized and sophisticated Nuernberger family, including the young Nuernberger fellow who hopes to marry Lederer's daughter, Stella, illustrates the stratification between Jewish groups of different origins. Yet unlike Lederer, the well-established old Nuernberger feels comfortable in his ongoing role as businessman. Asch depicts Nuernberger's position of "old wealth" as one that is perhaps enviable, and certainly unattainable, for all new immigrants.

Try as he might, Chaim Lederer cannot escape his dreams about the "golden time" of his earlier years in Europe, even while surrounded by material wealth in America. He feels alienated from his wife and children, who are better adjusted to their new, elevated social position. Like his devoted worker, Mottke, who leaves the shop but returns for lack of anything else to do, Lederer develops a sense of nostalgia for his work: "When we stop working and haven't anything to do, we want to go back; we're like old workhorses; they're so used to being in harness, they'd die any other way."²⁵ America has turned Lederer into a creature more animal than human; he needs a harsh master to guide him.

Asch's original Yiddish extends this metaphor more elaborately, stating that sweatshop workers are "exactly like the horse, the mule, the ox."²⁶ In defiance of expectations, Lederer determines he can enjoy life only while working, and he decides to embrace a "return to poverty."²⁷ His son finds the supposedly retired Lederer sitting in the shop among the workers, sewing shirts; a few weeks later he disappears, though the novel concludes with a report that Lederer has been seen working in a factory in Boston.

Written while Asch was living in Paris in the late 1910s, *Chaim Lederer's Return* contains a profound criticism of American affluence that rang true particularly as the economic bubble of success burst in the late 1920s. Literary scholar Dan Miron has argued that this and other novels by Asch from that period "clearly expressed his sense of alienation and his disgust" for America, which extended to those Jewish immigrants who partook in its material affluence.²⁸ An annotated edition of the novel found among Sholem Asch's papers suggests that by the time the book version of the German translation was first published in 1929, Asch had another title in mind for this work: *Chaim Lederers Shop-Krankheit*, or "Shop-Sickness."²⁹ Though the German novel never appeared under this title, but rather only as *Chaim Lederers Rückkehr*, a literal translation of the original Yiddish title (*Khayim Lederers tsurikkumen*), Asch's act of crossing out the original title in favor of a new one implies a wish to underscore the mental illness contracted by many shop and factory workers in America.³⁰

That *Chaim Lederer's Return* was serialized in two very different German-Jewish newspapers indicates not only that a variety of readers had access to its anti-American messages, but also that Jewish audiences in Germany were eager for a satisfying critique of America. For readers of the German-Jewish press, including some who owned or worked in clothing businesses in Germany, and who all would face the same migration difficulties were they to leave, Chaim Lederer's fate represented a universal (Jewish) problem that could not be solved through emigration. Prior to printing the novel, editors of *Das Jüdische Echo* characterized Asch's depiction of Lederer's psychological trajectory as a "Jewish fate characteristic not only of America," hinting that both shop-sickness and capitalist materialism were problems of global significance.³¹ In contrast, the *Familienblatt's* introductory paragraph prepared its readers to confront particularly harsh realities in America: "This story reveals the 'promised' land America in all of its ice-cold, naked, soulless brutality, which makes it impossible for the European immigrant to find a true home here."³² With the selection of the general term "European," the *Familienblatt* literary editor (likely Heinz Caspari) implied

that not only eastern European but also central European and German immigrants could not find adequate homes under these conditions. Together with Asch's novel, both of these introductory statements hint that Jewish immigrants in America immobilized themselves by orienting their entire lives around, and obsessing over, the very poverty they fought to overcome. The American Dream was gradually supplanted by the whirr of sewing machines and the whims of the steel metropolitan monster.

America as Evil Cause of Affliction in Joseph Roth's *Hiob*

Like Sholem Asch, Joseph Roth (1894–1939, born Moses Joseph Roth) found his way from his Eastern birthplace in Brody, Galicia, to points farther west: first Lemberg and Vienna, and, following the First World War, most notably Berlin and Paris, and also Frankfurt, Vienna, and Amsterdam. Roth's success peaked with his position as a journalist for the mainstream *Frankfurter Zeitung*; he continued working intensively in the field while also writing fiction, and he was better known as a feuilletonist than as a novelist.³³ Not all too pleased with Berlin and Germany, Roth spent the better part of his life in France after 1925. By 1934, Roth and Asch often referenced each other in letters to mutual friends including Stefan Zweig; they likely spent time together in France. In one letter, Roth calls Asch “the greatest Jewish writer of our day.”³⁴ When given the opportunity to travel to America for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1926, Roth declined.³⁵ Roth's *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (*The Wandering Jews*, 1927) instead paints a highly unfavorable portrait of the Jewish experience in America as construed from afar: Roth despised America and Americanization almost as much as he professed to hate Berlin.³⁶ In fact, literary scholar Marc Caplan compellingly interprets Roth's America as a signifier for Berlin.³⁷

The monstrous city of New York similarly engulfs unsuspecting Jewish immigrants in *Hiob*, Roth's best-known Jewish-themed novel, which bears some similarities to the biblical Book of Job. After disembarking from a fifteen-day voyage by ship across the ocean, Mendel Singer is simultaneously confronted with the Statue of Liberty and the foul stench of New York, both of which portend the evils and hardships that await the Singer family. In contrast to Karl Rossmann, the protagonist of Kafka's *Amerika*, who incorrectly perceives a dangerous sword in the statue's hand rather than a torch, Roth's protagonist learns that the light in Lady Liberty's torch cannot be extinguished, for it is lit using electricity.³⁸ The power of this torch is deceptive: though benign

at first glance, it represents the subtle “tricks” performed in America, which figure in *Hiob* as a manifestation of the hidden evils to be found there. It is my contention that in Joseph Roth’s *Hiob*, America figures as the villainous, devilish force that causes Job-character Mendel Singer’s many afflictions. Even with its technological advances and modern configuration, America sends Singer to the brink of despair and makes him long for his previous life in Russia, the difficulties he encountered there notwithstanding.

Unease and extreme physical discomfort constitute but two symptoms of America’s effects on the Singer family. Having experienced great loss already before arriving in New York, midway through the novel, Mendel Singer is ill-prepared for his situation to worsen. In highly subtle ways, Joseph Roth draws on motifs that recall Karl Rossmann’s arrival in America, thereby amplifying the novel’s sense of apprehension and mysterious struggle. Whereas Karl Rossmann plunges back into the depths of the ship on a disorienting quest to find his lost umbrella in Kafka’s *Amerika*, Roth’s Mendel Singer notably remembers his umbrella while disembarking—but finds that its wooden handle “was hot and couldn’t be touched, as if it were made of red iron.”³⁹ Aflame with warning, Roth’s umbrella signifies danger and triggers a physical response. Along with an overload of sensory provocation, the umbrella and surrounding chaos prompt Mendel Singer to lose consciousness: “America besieged him, America broke him, America shattered him. After a few minutes he fainted.”⁴⁰ In Roth’s novel, the anthropomorphized specter of America causes unexpected physical damage to its inhabitants.

Its initial success as a book, coupled with the novel’s highly visible presence in a range of periodicals, ensured that a large number of German Jews in 1930 had access to the text of *Hiob* and its many reviews, all of which warned readers of the universal nature of the immigrant encounter with poverty and the sinister character of America. In fact, *Hiob* was by far the most popular German-language Jewish-themed novel of 1930, and possibly the entire interwar period; it was serialized or reviewed in at least eight different German-Jewish periodicals, including the papers with the largest circulations—to say nothing of its serialization in periodicals intended for a general readership, such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.⁴¹ Because the entire novel appeared in the literary supplement of the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, approximately 35,000 subscribers—or an estimated 90,000 to 100,000 readers, over 15 percent of the Jewish population in Germany—had the full text of *Hiob* delivered to their doorsteps.⁴² In addition, large advertisements promoted the book widely, often alongside reviews by Stefan Zweig, who believed in the success of *Hiob* and acted as a patron to Joseph Roth, who was constantly broke.⁴³ Indeed, 8,500

copies of the book were sold in the first six weeks after it appeared in October 1930, and it was promptly translated into numerous other languages including English and French.⁴⁴

Through the trials and tribulations of Roth's Mendel Singer, an eastern European Jew, German-Jewish readers of *Hiob* gained both new perspectives on, and critical distance from, the early years of Depression-era America. Dirty, dark, acrid, and pest-filled, the New York tenement buildings appear to the Singer family as a prison of poverty. As Germanist Thomas Kniesche has noted, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* contains a description of the Statue of Liberty as visible for third-class ship passengers only through the "prison bars" of steerage, thereby negating America's guarantee of freedom.⁴⁵ For the Singer family, this prison comes in the form of a lack of resources so severe that for Mendel's wife, Deborah, Russia appears bright and sunny.⁴⁶ At age fifty-nine—nearly the same age as Asch's retiree, Chaim Lederer—Mendel Singer, too, realizes that he has never seen the supposedly glorious parts of America.⁴⁷

Even from his limited perspective, Mendel Singer battles more than his share of plagues imposed by America, including a number of creatures. He observes the rats, the fleas, and other vermin as they reproduce in his apartment: "The vermin [*Ungeziefer*] in Mendel Singer's apartment multiplied unstopably." The bedbugs, too, are characterized as relentless: "The bedbugs crawled in long orderly rows down the walls, [. . .] waited in bloodthirsty malice for nightfall and fell onto the beds of the sleeping."⁴⁸ Even more than the biblical Book of Job, these vermin recall the plagues of the Book of Exodus; the word *Ungeziefer* appears in the Luther Bible with respect to the fourth plague in Egypt, usually translated in English as "lice." In an inversion of the biblical command to be fruitful and multiply—and the American directive to flourish—Roth points out that it is parasites, and not people, who are able to multiply and prosper at the expense of New Yorkers. Read in a German literary context, the word *Ungeziefer* in *Hiob* also invokes the large beetle into which Kafka's Gregor Samsa finds himself transformed in *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915). Roth's usage of the term *Ungeziefer* thus further cements the links between Roth's America and a Kafkaesque world of horror, or the "Amerika" Kafka might have described had he lived to see the transformations it underwent in the late 1920s.⁴⁹

Like the biblical figure Job, both Mendel Singer's body and his family are attacked by America despite the so-called freedoms present there. The waking nightmare continues as two of Mendel Singer's sons are killed in the First World War, and Deborah dies of a broken heart. Roth portrays Mendel as a member of the living dead: "I am no longer Mendel Singer, I am the remains

of Mendel Singer. America has killed us. America is a fatherland, but a deadly fatherland.”⁵⁰ In the same way Gregor Samsa is able to continue living for some time despite the gradual loss of his faculties, Mendel Singer carries on like one of the deceased. His daughter, Mirjam, who some argue is a reflection of Roth’s wife, Friedl Reichler, is institutionalized as mentally ill after cheating on her beloved.⁵¹ Singer realizes he was mistaken in perceiving America as a land of freedom; rather, it is worse than Russia and rife with even more insidious opportunities for tragedy.

America, producer of endless amounts of vermin and cause of mental instability, further reveals its demonic character in ways that recall the trope of a Judeo-Christian notion of hell as a torturous inferno. From the hot umbrella that burns Mendel Singer’s hands, to the overwhelming summer heat, to the fire he builds for the purpose of burning his prayer books and phylacteries, Singer’s encounter with America is replete with subtle signifiers of hellfire. Roth gradually introduces this metaphor by analogizing the hot wind blowing in Mendel Singer’s face to “the fiery breath of hell.”⁵² Later, the comparison becomes more explicit when Mendel Singer wishes to confront God, claiming: “I am not afraid of hell, my skin is already burned, my limbs are already lamed [. . .] all the torments of hell I have already suffered.”⁵³ Left to its own devices, America serves as a raging hotbed of pain and affliction. Not until an intervention from Russia, when Mendel Singer’s youngest son, Menuchim, miraculously shows up unexpectedly, does the novel reach a turning point and resolution. The novel closes on a hopeful note, hinting that Mendel Singer may be able to escape from America by returning to Europe with his son.

In *Hiob*, America does more than fail to deliver its promises of health and wealth; instead, it actively engages as a powerful form of evil incarnate. America preys upon Jewish immigrants by means of vermin, war, poverty, and psychosis, leaving them to navigate the fiery streets of New York. Though Roth refrains from conflating America and the devil directly, it becomes evident from the depictions in *Hiob* that little imaginable could be worse than America. The thousands of German Jews who had access to this work, both in serialized form and as a best-selling book, were thus familiar with America’s hellish potential.⁵⁴

Damnation on the Lower East Side in Michael Gold’s *Jews Without Money*

Unlike the novels by European-born Sholem Asch and Joseph Roth, the stories of Michael Gold (1893–1967) offer a truly Americanized glimpse of New York

Jewish life, though not one that was any more favorable. Literary scholar Gabriella Safran has postulated that as someone who was raised in America, Gold maintained a distance from the Old World that enabled him to adopt a perspective of nostalgia about Europe and skepticism about America.⁵⁵ In fact, American-Jewish author Michael Gold's semi-autobiographical novel *Jews Without Money* (1930) provided German Jews with the most explicit critique of Jewish poverty on the Lower East Side to date. The child of immigrants from Romania and Hungary, Gold—who changed his name multiple times, first from Itzok Isaac Granich to Irwin Granich, then to Michael “Mike” Gold in 1921—created “Mikey,” the protagonist of *Jews Without Money*, in his own youthful image. A Harvard dropout turned communist journalist who traveled to the Soviet Union, and whose writings appeared in numerous left-wing newspapers, Gold wrote to incite outrage and a desire for radical change.⁵⁶ Interestingly, Gold was later read and studied as a cherished author in communist East Germany; his writings about the struggles of the American proletariat under capitalism held international appeal that extended far beyond Jewish circles of the 1930s.⁵⁷

The German translation, *Juden ohne Geld*, appeared on the literary scene in early 1931, when German Jews were becoming more aware that the global economic crisis had prompted a rise in antisemitic incidents. The translation further combined the efforts of international Jewish artists: its book cover bore a photograph of a poor New York bag peddler taken by German-Jewish photographer Ruth Jacobi in 1928.⁵⁸ Due in part to various reprintings of *Jews Without Money*, contributors to the German-Jewish press writing in 1931 expressly concluded that New York, and with it, capitalist America as a whole, was thoroughly unfit and even akin to a hell for Jewish immigrants. Although the entire text of Gold's book was not reprinted in the German-Jewish press, it was excerpted, advertised, and widely reviewed; its depictions of filth, deprivation, illness, and hunger portrayed America as utterly unfit for potential immigrants.⁵⁹

The press's coverage of the book showcases Mikey's antisemitic encounters and the defense instincts he acquired growing up on the Lower East Side. One half-page ad in a short-lived magazine, *Freie jüdische Monatsschau*, describes the book's subject matter in this way: “The Jews had fled from the European pogroms, moved to the new land of promise still full of faith. Poor and foreign, the East Side awaited them with its sweatshops, brothels, and great affliction.”⁶⁰ The accompanying excerpt from *Juden ohne Geld* explains, using the first-person, how Mikey was forced to eat nonkosher soap by his antisemitic schoolteacher: “Soap eating is nasty. But my parents objected because soap is made of Christian fat, is not kosher. I was being forced into pork-

eating, a crime against the Mosaic law. [. . .] O Teacher for little slaves [. . .] you should not have called me 'Little Kike' (*kleiner Saujude*)."⁶¹ Class struggle and antisemitism are intertwined in Gold's stories; the well-off oppressors are bigoted Christians, the poor oppressed are persecuted Jews.

Like Asch, Gold describes the dehumanizing aspects of impoverished life in New York, with a particular focus on navigating the tensions of its street life. "Buffalo Bill," the chapter of *Jews Without Money* reprinted in German translation in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, tells of exotic yet "primitive" sights and sounds in New York, but also describes the violence between Jews and non-Jews.⁶² Mikey dares to walk toward Mulberry, a predominantly Italian street, only to pay a high price: "Bang. I had been slugged over the head. I jumped in surprise and turned to see who had hit me. I was in the hands of the enemy! Eight Italian boys with sticks surrounded me, whooping like Indians. [. . .] 'Christ-killer!' someone yelled. All the boys took up the ancient cry."⁶³ Instead of mechanical cogs, Gold's young Jews are transformed into gangsters out of an urgent need for self-defense. America hardens them; they learn to become resistant to pain.

For Mikey, as for Roth's Mendel Singer, immigrant tenement life further consisted of a hopeless battle against America's plagues of bloodsucking vermin. An entire chapter in Gold's novel poses the age-old question: "Did God make bedbugs?" Here, Mikey describes his mother's efforts to rid their home of these pests: "It wasn't a lack of cleanliness in our home. My mother was as clean as any German housewife. [. . .] What was the use; nothing could help; it was Poverty; it was the Tenement."⁶⁴ With this reference to German cleanliness, Gold's words read as a threat to those who believe themselves to be beyond the reach of such tribulations. In Gold's writings, poverty was the great equalizer of the Lower East Side, and all new immigrants residing there—even German Jews—were subject to indiscriminate torment.

Reviews of Gold's novel in the German-Jewish press characterized the Lower East Side as a prisonlike hellish space in which Jews of all national origins were transformed into members of the proletariat. The *Familienblatt* described *Jews Without Money* as "a powerful warning against the so-called joys of the 'New World,' [. . .] which conveys the gray facts and gruesome experiences of simple people, who are tethered to their misery and hopelessly shake the bars of their cage."⁶⁵ Again we encounter Kafkaesque descriptive imagery of people as imprisoned, caged animals, unable to escape from the terrors of everyday life. The editor of *Das jüdische Echo*, Ignaz Emrich, further deduced from Gold's book that America "was oftentimes a hell; to get stuck on the East Side was to be permanently damned." Along with a documented rise in antise-

mitic incidents, *Jews Without Money* provided Emrich with hard evidence that “America can no longer be regarded as a site for Jewish immigration.”⁶⁶

From this statement and others, we can deduce that literary depictions of America circulated by the German-Jewish press contributed to the notion that European Jews should reconsider immigration to America in the years immediately prior to 1933. Quotas aside, immigration prospects appeared dim and not worth pursuing when such extreme poverty awaited new arrivals; in contrast, Germany may have seemed like a relative paradise. In fact, fewer than six hundred German Jews immigrated to America during the whole four-year period from 1929 to 1932, down from nearly seven hundred in 1926, over five hundred in 1927, and nearly four hundred in 1928.⁶⁷ These numbers correspond to a similarly drastic drop in the total number of European Jews who immigrated to the United States at this time, from 12,479 in 1929 to only 2,755 in 1932.⁶⁸ This sharp decline also coincides with the most vivid depictions of American-Jewish poverty that appeared in German-Jewish periodicals between 1928 and 1932. It is worth noting that once the Nazis seized power in early 1933, many German Jews became desperate to emigrate to the United States and elsewhere regardless of the economic situation; however, these impressions of America may well have lasted into the years following 1933.

The characterization of American Jewry as both impoverished and subject to discrimination had significant implications for the transnational readership of the German-Jewish press. Popular literature serialized during the early years of the Great Depression reveals that authors and readers alike harbored no pretenses about Jewish life in America. For the years before and after 1930, mass-circulated Jewish literature, including novels by Sholem Asch, Joseph Roth, and Michael Gold, and to some extent Holitscher’s travelogues and Kafka’s *Amerika*, provided scathing critiques of the circumstances endured by Jews in America. As the reviews suggest, their focus on the dire economic situation of Jews on New York’s Lower East Side became especially relevant as a provocative contrast to right-wing political attempts to place blame for the worldwide economic depression on the Jews. In demonstrating that New York Jews also suffered from antisemitism and pennilessness, Gold’s book in particular broke down stereotypes by refashioning Jews as victims rather than perpetrators of the economic downturn.

Through repeated serialization of literary depictions of Jewish life, the German-Jewish press debunked myths of America as a golden land of promise and freedom. It did so by generating widespread awareness of the many Jews who left Europe only to find new battles with poverty, antisemitism, and ill-

ness. Newspaper editors presented readers with chilling stories about the harsh realities of New York tenement life, antisemitic discrimination, and the severe impact of the Great Depression on Jewish immigrants. As representative sufferers of these harsh conditions, Asch's Chaim Lederer, Roth's Mendel Singer, and Gold's Mikey entered the homes of many Jews faced with the dilemmas of transnational migration. Taken together as published in widely circulated German-Jewish periodicals, these works with origins in at least three different lands and three different languages yielded a convincing refutation of the American Dream.

NOTES

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1. "Amerika ist trotz seines guten Rufes ein komisches Land. Und Holitscher, der in nicht ausgesprochen direkter Beziehung zum Judentum steht, hat das bei den USA-Juden ebenfalls festgestellt." J. Raphael, "Von amerikanischen Juden," *Der Israelit* 71, no. 52 (December 24, 1930): 10.

2. Arthur Holitscher, *Amerika heute und morgen. Reiseerlebnisse* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1912). See Mark Harman, "Translator's Preface," in Franz Kafka, *Amerika: The Missing Person: A New Translation, Based on the Restored Text*, trans. Mark Harman (New York: Schocken Books, 2008), xxi. See also Ritchie Robertson, "Introduction," in Franz Kafka, *The Man who Disappeared (America)*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiii.

3. "In den schmutzstarrenden Gassen des ältesten Judenviertels reihen sich die Bänke der Bewohner, die durch die Hitze und den Gestank des verwahrlosten Gemäuers aus ihren Wohnungen vertrieben worden sind, nach der Sitte von [. . .] der alten Heimat." Arthur Holitscher, *Wiederseh'n mit Amerika: Die Verwandlung der U.S.A.* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1930), 21; see also 39–49. On Holitscher's travel writings, see R. Seth C. Knox, *Weimar Germany between Two Worlds: The American and Russian Travels of Kisch, Toller, Holitscher, Goldschmidt, and Rundt* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 11–47.

4. Linda Green Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (London: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 7. For a use of this definition with respect to Jewish immigrants in America, see Daniel Soyer, "Transnationalism and Americanization in East European Jewish Immigrant Public Life," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 47–66; here 48.

5. See Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994), 6–9.

6. This was the case particularly after 1925, when a quantity approaching half of all literary works published in German-language Jewish periodicals was translated from other languages. Literary works with Jewish themes were translated into German from Yiddish, Hebrew, Ladino, English, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, French, Spanish, Italian, Danish, and Dutch. Approximately 40 percent of the novels serialized after 1925 in the best-selling *Israelitisches Familienblatt* were translated from other languages, for example. Not surprisingly, the largest percentage was translated from Yiddish into German. On literature serialized in the Weimar Jewish press, see Kerry Wallach, *Observable Type: Jewish Women and the Jewish Press in Weimar Germany* (Philadelphia: PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2011).

7. See Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out*; and Avraham Barkai, "German-Jewish Migrations in the Nineteenth Century, 1830–1910," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 30 (1985): 301–18.

8. On earlier positive depictions of America in the German-Jewish newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (1837–1922), see Sonja L. Mekel, "'Salvation Comes from America': The United States in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 60, no. 1 & 2 (2008): 1–23.

9. Statistics taken from Doron Niederland, *Emigration Patterns of German Jews 1918–1938* (Jerusalem: PhD Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988) (Hebrew), 21–23. Cited in English in Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 104.

10. See, for example, Carl Adolf Bratter, *Amerika, von Washington bis Wilson* (Berlin: Ullstein & Co., 1916); and Carl Adolf Bratter, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika: Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1928).

11. "Es ist eine in Deutschland verbreitete irrige Meinung, daß der Antisemitismus in Amerika eine neue Erscheinung sei. Schon als ich in Amerika ankam, im Jahre 1885 [. . .] konnte man in Zeitungsinseraten [. . .] lesen: 'No Jews,' oder 'Hebrews not wanted' oder 'Hebrews need not apply.'" C[arl]. A. Bratter, "Der amerikanische Jude," *C.V.-Zeitung* 1, no. 14 (August 10, 1922): 179–82; here 182.

12. See installments of Anzia Yezierska, "Der Herr gibt. Skizze aus dem amerikanischen Leben der Gegenwart, Übersetzung aus dem Englischen des Menorah-Journals von A. M.," *Der Israelit*, 1924, nos. 7–10.

13. See, for example, Anitta Müller-Cohen, "Die jüdische Frau in Amerika," *Die jüdische Frau* 2, no. 4–5 (April 26, 1926): 1–3; Bertha Badt-Strauss, "Eine amerikanische Jüdin (Rebekah Kohut)," *Jüdische Rundschau* 32, no. 23 (March 22, 1927): 167; Bertha Badt-Strauss, "Noch eine amerikanische Jüdin (Leah Morton)," *Jüdische Rundschau* 33, no. 60 (July 21, 1928): 433–34.

14. Brinkmann uses statistics compiled by the American Jewish Committee to arrive at this conclusion. He further points out that changes to the quota system in 1929–30 are frequently overlooked. Tobias Brinkmann, "Permanent Transit: Jewish Migration during the Interwar Period," in *1929: Mapping the Jewish World*, ed. Hasia R. Diner and Gennady Estraiikh (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 53–72; here 56–57. See also Tobias Brinkmann, "Points of Passage: Reexamining Jewish Migrations from Eastern Europe after 1880," in *Points of Passage: Jewish Transmigrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain 1880–1914*, ed. Tobias Brinkmann (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 1–23; here 17–19.

15. “Wer heute das Eastend von Neuyork besucht, ist betroffen von der gedrückten Stimmung, die dieses einst von fröhlichem Leben erfüllte Viertel beherrscht. Der Straßenbettel, eine früher fast unbekannte Erscheinung, macht sich jetzt dort starker bemerkbar als in manchen jüdischen Städten Osteuropas.” “Die Wirtschaftslage der Juden in Amerika. Äußerungen Dr. Bernhard Kahns,” *Das Jüdische Echo* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 1931): 9.

16. See Schalom Asch, “Schalom Asch erzählt sein Leben,” *Menorah* 8, no. 11–12 (November 1930): 511–38.

17. Both novels treated the problems of Jewish sweatshop workers and were first published in installments in the Yiddish *Forward*. Siegfried Schmitz’s translations of both into German were serialized in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* in 1927 and 1928, respectively, and in 1929 *Chaim Lederers Rückkehr* became one of only five novels ever to appear in installments in *Das Jüdische Echo*. A filmic version of *Uncle Moses* made in 1932 went on to become the most prestigious Yiddish talkie of all time. On the film *Uncle Moses*, adapted from Yiddish actor Maurice Schwartz’s stage adaptation of Asch’s novel, see J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press and University Press of New England, 2010), 161–66.

18. Stefan Zweig, “Geburtstagsgruß an Schalom Asch,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 32, no. 44 (October 30, 1930): 2.

19. Yiddishist Anita Norich has written extensively about the attack waged against Sholem Asch by Abe Cahan following the publication of Asch’s *The Nazarene* in 1939. See Anita Norich, *Discovering Exile: Yiddish and Jewish American Culture during the Holocaust* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 74–95.

20. First published in Yiddish as *Khayim Lederers tsurikkumen*, the novel appeared in serial installments in the American Yiddish newspaper *Forverts* in 1919, and in book form in Yiddish in 1927. Siegfried Schmitz’s German translation, *Chaim Lederers Rückkehr*, was serialized in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* in mid-1928, and the German book version appeared with two different Viennese publishing houses (P. Zsolnay and R. Löwit) in 1929. The German book notably received a glowing review in the *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung*. See Ludwig Davidsohn, “Schalom Asch: Lederers Rückkehr,” 9, no. 28 (July 10, 1929): 8.

21. Sholem Asch, *Three Novels: Uncle Moses, Chaim Lederer’s Return, and Judge Not* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1938), 12–13. All references to the English text of *Chaim Lederer* cite this translation.

22. Sholem Asch, *Three Novels*, 14.

23. Sholem Asch, *Three Novels*, 4–5.

24. Sholem Asch, *Three Novels*, 29.

25. Sholem Asch, *Three Novels*, 86.

26. “[P]unkt azoy vi der ferd, vi der moylezl, vi der oks.” Sholem Asch, *Khayim Lederers tsurikkumen* (Warsaw: Kultur Liga, 1927), 109. Downloaded from the Steven Spielberg Digital Yiddish Library, no. 03645 (Amherst, MA: National Yiddish Book Center, 2010).

27. Sholem Asch, *Three Novels*, 101.

28. Miron also explains that Asch later developed a near-messianic veneration for America and its leaders. Dan Miron, “God Bless America: Of and Around Sholem

Asch's *East River*," in *Sholem Asch Reconsidered*, ed. Nanette Stahl (New Haven, CT: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2004), 147–216; here 179.

29. Likely a sample cover proposed by the publisher, the book jacket of this never-printed edition bears the title *Lederers Rückkehr. Roman. Ein Schicksal aus den Schwitzhöllen New-Yorks*. On the title page, the word *Rückkehr* is crossed out; written in Sholem Asch's handwriting above it is the term *Shop-Krankheit*. Sholem Asch Papers. GEN MSS 115. Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven.

30. Ben Siegel points out that in addition to appearing in Asch's handwriting in the German edition located among Asch's papers, "Shop Sickness" also appeared as the title of the fourteenth, or final, chapter when the novel first appeared in English translation in 1938. Siegel further notes that the novel was translated into German, Russian, and Polish before it appeared in English. See Ben Siegel, *The Controversial Sholem Asch: An Introduction to His Fiction* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976), 247 n. 15.

31. "[N]icht nur für Amerika charakteristisches jüdisches Schicksal." "Unser neuer Roman: Chaim Lederers Rückkehr," *Das Jüdische Echo* 16, no. 2 (January 4, 1929): 9.

32. "Diese Erzählung enthüllt uns 'das gelobte' Land Amerika in seiner ganzen eiskalten, nackten, seelenlosen Brutalität, die es dem europäischen Einwanderer unmöglich macht, hier eine wahrhafte Heimat zu finden." "Chaim Lederers Rückkehr. Roman von Scholem Asch," *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 30, no. 23 (June 7, 1928): 1.

33. Michael Hofmann, "Introduction," in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, trans. and ed. Michael Hofmann (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), xiii.

34. Joseph Roth to Blanche Gidon, April 11, 1935, in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, 405. Other letters that point to a friendship between Roth and Asch include: Joseph Roth to Stefan Zweig, November 5, 1933, in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, 277; and Joseph Roth to Félix Bertaux, October 25, 1934, in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, 384. Sholem Asch's papers also contain a congratulatory letter from Joseph Roth to Schalom Asch, December 23, 1934, as well as a letter from Hermann Kesten (in Nice) to Schalom Asch, December 25, 1934, which references Roth. Sholem Asch Papers. GEN MSS 115, Box 14, Folder 168 "R" and Folder 162 "K," respectively. Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven.

35. Joseph Roth to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 2, 1926, in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, 82–83.

36. See Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006), 86–96.

37. Marc Caplan convincingly argues that Mendel Singer's "journey from the Pale of Settlement to the US becomes an epic refiguring of Roth's own migration from Brody on the Austrian border of the Czarist Empire, to Berlin." Marc Caplan, "Osterbrot or Matzo? Translation, Transubstantiation, and Temporality in Joseph Roth's *Hiob*," in *Recasting the "Other": Readings in German-Jewish Interwar Culture and Its Aftermath*, ed. Karin Neuberger, *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 147–70; here 150.

38. Joseph Roth, *Hiob, Roman eines einfachen Mannes* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008), 99. All German-language references to *Hiob* cite this Ger-

man version. All English translations are taken from Ross Benjamin's 2010 translation of the novel: Joseph Roth, *Job, the Story of a Simple Man*, trans. and with an afterword by Ross Benjamin (Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2010).

39. "Krampfhaft zwischen die Knie geklemmt hatte er seinen Regenschirm, dessen hölzerner Griff heiß war und nicht anzufassen, als wäre er aus rotem Eisen" (102). English translation: Joseph Roth, *Job*, 111.

40. "Amerika drang auf ihn ein, Amerika zerbrach ihn, Amerika zerschmetterte ihn. Nach einigen Minuten wurde er ohnmächtig" (103). English translation: Joseph Roth, *Job*, 113.

41. See installments in the "Jüdische Bibliothek" supplement of the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 32, no. 49 (December 5, 1930) through 33, no. 11 (March 12, 1931); Joseph Roth, "Hiob," *Menorah* 8, no. 9 (September 1930): 433–43; Josef Roth, "Die Lästerung," *Das Jüdische Echo* 17, no. 44 (October 31, 1930): 623–25; Hans Bach, "Der Dichter Joseph Roth," *C.V.-Zeitung* 9, no. 48 (November 28, 1930): 620; Sch. Gorelik, "Ein Hiob-Roman von Joseph Roth," *Jüdische Rundschau* 35, no. 93 (November 24, 1930): 627; Johanna Meyer-Lövinson, "Joseph Roth 'Hiob,'" *Blätter des jüdischen Frauenbundes* 7, no. 1 (January 1931): 10–11; Otto Meller, "Vom Durchbruch des Religiösen in der neueren Literatur," *Der Morgen* 6, no. 5 (December 1930): 497–501; and "Bücherbesprechungen," *Der Israelit* 71, no. 44 (October 30, 1930): 12. On the novel's serialization in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* from September 14 to October 21, 1930, see Wilhelm von Sternberg, *Joseph Roth: Eine Biographie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2010), 373; and Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, *The Grace of Misery. Joseph Roth and the Politics of Exile, 1919–1939* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 71.

42. Circulation data taken from *Sperlings Zeitschriften- u. Zeitungs-Adreßbuch. Die wichtigsten deutschen Zeitschriften und politischen Zeitungen Deutschlands, Österreichs und des Auslandes*, 55. Ausgabe (Leipzig: Verlag des Börsenvereins der Deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig, 1929), 369–71.

43. See, for example, the advertisement for *Hiob* published in the *C.V.-Zeitung* on November 7, 1930, 581. On Joseph Roth, Stefan Zweig, and *Hiob*, see correspondence in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, especially the letter dated September 22, 1930, 161–62.

44. Letter from Joseph Roth to Stefan Zweig, November 20, 1930, in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, 171. Sales of the novel increased further when Marlene Dietrich pronounced *Job* her favorite book in 1936 (see Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, *The Grace of Misery*, 71); Albert Einstein, too, wrote of his adoration for "this consoling book" in a letter to B. W. Huebsch, February 24, 1931, in *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*, 398.

45. Thomas Kniesche, *Projektionen von Amerika. Die USA in der deutsch-jüdischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2008), 63.

46. Joseph Roth, *Job*, 120.

47. Reiner Frey points out that Mendel Singer and Chaim Lederer possessed other similarities, namely that they were considered greenhorns by their Americanized children. See Reiner Frey, *Kein Weg ins Freie: Joseph Roths Amerikabild* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1983), 126.

48. "Das Ungeziefer in der Wohnung Mendel Singers vermehrte sich unaufhaltsam." "Die Wanzen zogen in langen geordneten Reihen die Wände hinunter, [. . .]

warteten in blutlüsterner Tücke auf den Anbruch der Finsternis und fielen auf die Lager der Schlafenden" (121). English translation: Joseph Roth, *Job*, 132.

49. Historically, the term *Ungeziefer* has also been used in a derogatory, antisemitic manner to describe Jews, and indeed was later co-opted by many Nazi propaganda films that compared Jews to a plague of rats or other vermin. This sense of the word is less relevant for Roth's use of the term here.

50. "Ich bin nicht Mendel Singer mehr, ich bin der Rest von Mendel Singer. Amerika hat uns getötet. Amerika ist ein Vaterland, aber ein tödliches Vaterland" (134). English translation: Joseph Roth, *Job*, 146.

51. Upon first reading the novel, Stefan Zweig claimed to see Friedl (Friederike) reflected in the character of Mirjam. Beginning around 1926, Friedl suffered from schizophrenia; she was institutionalized in various sanatoriums and clinics and eventually killed by the Nazis (after Roth's death) in 1940. Understandably, Roth suffered tremendously under these circumstances; Roth biographer David Bronsen has pointed to evidence that Roth wrote the entire second half of the novel while drinking uninterruptedly. Others have argued that mental illness similarly affected Roth's ability to write. See David Bronsen, *Joseph Roth. Eine Biographie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974), 388–89. See also Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, *The Grace of Misery*, 76–80.

52. "[D]er feurige Atem der Hölle" (102). English translation: Joseph Roth, *Job*, 112.

53. "Ich habe keine Angst vor der Hölle, meine Haut ist schon verbrannt, meine Glieder sind schon gelähmt . . . Alle Qualen der Hölle habe ich schon gelitten" (146–47). Joseph Roth, *Job*, 159–60.

54. Twenty thousand copies of the German book version of *Hiob* were printed in 1930, and an additional five thousand copies appeared in an Amsterdam-based press in 1933. In fall 1931, the first English translation was selected for the Book of the Month Club. On the novel's early success, see Wilhelm von Sternberg, *Joseph Roth: Eine Biographie*, 378.

55. Gabriella Safran, "Patterning a New Life: American Jewish Literature in 1929," in 1929: *Mapping the Jewish World*, ed. Hasia R. Diner and Gennady Estraiikh (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 171–84; here 173.

56. For biographical details about Michael Gold, see Michael Folsom, "Introduction," in *Mike Gold: A Literary Anthology*, ed. Michael Folsom (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 7–20.

57. On American literature studied in East and West Germany after the Second World War, see Armin Paul Frank, "American Literature in Germany," *College English* 27, no. 6 (March 1966): 497–98.

58. See Michael Gold, *Juden ohne Geld*, trans. Paul Badisch (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1931). See also Ruth Jacobi, "Aufzeichnungen," and "Taschenverkäufer, Lower East Side 1928," in *Ruth Jacobi. Fotografien*, ed. Aubrey Pomerance (Berlin: Jüdisches Museum Berlin & Nicolai, 2008), 46 and 97.

59. See Michael Gold, "Buffalo Bill," *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 33, no. 19 (May 7, 1931); "Juden ohne Geld," *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 33, no. 29 (July 16, 1931): 12; Michael Gold, "Die Juden der East-Side," *Freie jüdische Monatsschau* 1, no. 1 (March 1931): 44–52; and Marta Pfeffer, "Michael Gold, 'Juden ohne Geld,'" *Blätter des jüdischen Frauenbundes* 8, no. 12 (December 1932): 11.

60. “Die Juden waren vor den europäischen Pogromen geflohen, voll Glauben in das neue Land der Verheißung gezogen. Arm und landfremd erwarteten sie in der East-side die Schwitzbuden die Bordelle und die größte Not.” “Juden ohne Geld,” advertisement, *Freie jüdische Monatsschau* 1, no. 1 (March 1931): 62.

61. Michael Gold, *Jews Without Money* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1984), 36–37. All English-language quotes refer to this version of the text.

62. American Studies scholar Rachel Rubin connects Gold’s “Buffalo Bill” allusions to Mark Twain’s tales about American boys and the frontier. See Rachel Rubin, *Jewish Gangsters of Modern Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 80f.

63. Michael Gold, *Jews Without Money*, 187–88.

64. Michael Gold, *Jews Without Money*, 71.

65. “[E]ine eindringliche Mahnung vor den sogenannten Freuden der ‘Neuen Welt’, [. . .] [die] graue Tatsachen und grausame Erlebnisse einfacher Menschen wiedergibt, die in ihr Elend eingespannt sind und hoffnungslos am Gitter ihres Käfigs rütteln.” “Juden ohne Geld. Von Michael Gold,” *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 33, no. 29 (July 16, 1931): 12.

66. “[O]ftmals eine Hölle war und daß im East Side stecken zu bleiben, hieß, auf Dauer verdammt zu sein.” “Amerika kann nicht mehr als Gebiet jüdischer Einwanderung angesehen werden.” I[gnatz] E[mrich], “Juden in Amerika,” *Das Jüdische Echo* 18, no. 20 (May 15, 1931): 303–4.

67. Statistics taken from Doron Niederland, *Emigration Patterns of German Jews 1918–1938*; cited in English in Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe*, 104.

68. See Brinkmann, “Permanent Transit,” 57.