
Nachtigallenwahnsinn and Rabbinismus:

Heine's Literary Provocation to German-Jewish Cultural Identity

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A persistent question about Romanticism centers on the continuity or discontinuity between Romanticism and our own critical present. Have we moved decisively beyond the historical and rhetorical parameters of the period in question, or are contemporary, critical reflections on Romanticism but distant echoes of the period's aesthetic and critical legacy? A related question concerns the features, literary and otherwise, that one ought to consider representative of Romanticism. Does the period *prima facie* encompass certain stylistic qualities, or is it defined by a spectrum of affective dynamics — such as nostalgia, sentimentalism, paranoia, millenarian enthusiasm, skepticism, or idealism? Does Romanticism stand for its subjects' immersion in an affective dynamic, or does it involve the reconstitution of affect in an iterable form — as a citation, mannerism, or cliché? Is it defined by the intensity of specific psychological experiences, or is it but a wary repetition of such experiences — a mostly formal-aesthetic pursuit steadily refined during the later nineteenth century in the disciplinary guises of aesthetic, philological, and appreciative criticism? Borrowing John Searle's (problematic) distinction, we may ask whether the aesthetic idioms most frequently associated with Romantic interiority amount to instances of "use" or "mention."

More than any other writer's, Heine's lyrics pose this question with unsettling persistence and, in so doing, undermine the Romantic myth of organic form — of aesthetic and psychological values seamlessly and respectably aligned. Both where Heine's *Lieder* appear at their most naïve ("Du bist wie eine Blume" [You are like a flower]) or sentimental ("Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen" [I wandered beneath the trees]), the speaker's cultivation of his own affect seems overly refined or mannered as he strikes, seemingly at will, poses of benediction ("Mir ists, als ob ich die Hände / Aufs Haupt dir legen sollt, / Betend, daß Gott dich erhalte" [I feel I should be laying / My hands upon your head, / Praying that God may preserve you]) or covert aggression ("Ich trage im Herzen viel Schlangen, / Und dich, Geliebte mein" [My heart holds many serpents, / And you, my love, as well]) (Heine [1997], 1: 131, 96). Time and again, a topically "lyric" affect reveals its prosaic other, what Nietzsche was to praise as Heine's rhetoric of "divine malice" (*göttliche Bosheit*) (Nietzsche [1980-b], 286). In uncovering the satire concealed within the god, Heine's deceptively simple and endearing lyrics open up a critical perspective on the philistine's and bourgeois' cherished inwardness and its unconscious other.

A case in point, poem no. 50 in "Lyrisches Intermezzo" (Lyrical intermezzo), demonstrates this point with deliberately coarse brush-strokes and to viciously satiric effect. Anticipating Honoré Daumier's sketches that were about to appear in Charles Philippon's newly founded satirical

magazines *La Caricature*, 1830, and *Le Charivari*, 1832, Heine here works with the concision and quasi-serial economy of the cartoon. An unidentified, indeed generic “They” opens the poem, incrementally revealed as the random sampling of middle-class men and women so succinctly labeled by Karl Gutzkow as “the pietist-bureaucratic-military world of Berlin” (*die pietistisch-bürokratisch-militärische Berliner Welt*) (Gutzkow [1998], 2: 1936). A couple from the lower gentry whose faded affluence has been exchanged for the studied banality of the *Bürgertum* augments Heine’s demographic cross-section. No less generic than this cast of characters, “love” serves as the topic for “much” conversation. Ranging in appearance from the merely vulgar to the physiologically defective, an emaciated mid-level bureaucrat, a wide-mouthed church-elder, and a lisping bachelorette combine into a grotesque update on the eighteenth-century conversation piece. All is *ennui* here, and Heine’s purposely flat-footed dialogue doesn’t spare us any part of it:

Sie saßen und tranken am Teetisch,
Und sprachen von Liebe viel.
Die Herren, die waren ästhetisch,
Die Damen von zartem Gefühl.

‘Die Liebe muß sein platonisch,’
Der dürre Hofrat sprach.
Die Hofrätin lächelt ironisch,
Und dennoch seufzet sie: ‘Ach!’

Der Domherr öffnet den Mund weit:
‘Die Liebe sei nicht zu roh,
Sie schadet sonst der Gesundheit.’
Das Fräulein lispelt: ‘Wieso?’

Die Gräfin spricht wehmütig:
‘Die Liebe ist eine Passion!’
Und präsentiertet gütig,
Die Tasse dem Herren Baron.

Am Tische war noch ein Plätzchen,
Mein Liebchen, da hast du gefehlt
Du hättest so hübsch, mein Schätzchen,
Von deiner Liebe erzählt. (Heine [1997], 1: 95–6)

[They drank tea and waxed theoretic
About love and its sinful allure;
The gentlemen stressed the aesthetic,
The ladies were all for *l’amour*.

Love must be strictly platonic,
The emaciated Councilor cried.
His spouse smiled slightly ironic,
And murmured, Oh dear me! And sighed.

The Prelate shrieked like a buzzard,
Love must not be rough, don’t you know,
Or else it becomes a health hazard!
The little miss whispered, How so?

The Countess sighed soulful and tender.
True love is a passion, she trilled,
As with a sweet smile of surrender
The Baron’s cup she refilled.

There was still a place at the table,
That should have been yours, my dove;
You’d have been so eager and able
To tell them about your love.] (Heine [1982-a], 9)

There is mounting and worrisome evidence that the affective lives of late-Romantic individuals have become utterly atrophied. The gentlemen are merely *ästhetisch* — a word whose utter vacuity Heine emphasizes by rhyming it with, and almost anagrammatically deriving it from, *Teetisch*. And yet, even as the conversationists’ affective disposition appears but the default of their social setting, their furtive gestures and monosyllabic expressions point to a more complex substratum of lingering sensuality and covert rage — almost effaced by the passage of time or strangled by self-censorship. Thus the bureaucrat’s solemn affirmation of platonic love elicits both an “ironic smile” and a nostalgic sigh (“Ach!”) from his wife. While the smile may betoken an obvious dissent from her husband’s clumsy moralizing, the fleeting *Ach!* could be taken as stifled protest or as a wistful recollection of not-so-platonic moments. Likewise, in calling into question the church-elder’s peculiar rejection of “raw” (rough, physical) “love,” the bachelorette’s barely lisped “Wieso?” briefly opens the window on unspecified passions seething beneath — here *visibly* choked off by the formalisms of polite conversation. Already destabilized by such symptomatic signs and gestures, the poem’s initial opposition of platonic and sexual love, professed sentiments and genuine passions, crumbles toward the end. For the speaker, who as it turns out has himself been present at the *Teetisch*, now imagines how his own beloved might have “performed” in this society of fraudulent sensibilities. Far from transcending the mannered sentimentality that has defined the entire conversation thus far, the beloved, it is speculated, would merely have added yet another “trite” sententious statement to those already in circulation — thus undermining any assumptions about the superior authenticity of the speaker’s inner life.

Heine’s satiric style exposes such affect as a delusion, a vainglorious attempt by the late-Romantic subject to fend off overwhelming evidence that attests to the commodity character of inwardness. However excruciating the sociability of the *Teetisch*, Heine’s tapestry of petit-bourgeois “deceit,” “lies,” and “semblance” (*Betrügen, Lügen, Schein*) cannot simply be discredited as the mere antithesis of some true and benevolent inwardness. For the obscured Other is not some “authentic passion” but *ressentiment* itself, an undercurrent that not only persists beneath the banal petit-bourgeois inwardness that we are made to witness here, but also undercuts more ennobling, affective values, such as sobriety, moderation, objectivity, self-restraint, etc.

Ressentiment itself does not name a discrete affective state but, on the contrary, lays bare the intrinsic duplicity of all affect-based models of subjectivity. As Nietzsche was acknowledge, in an uncharacteristically deferential nod to Heine's "divine malice," it devolves to "Literature" (in the strong sense of the word) to unmask and reverse Romanticism's amalgamation of moral, sentimental, and aesthetic values. To unveil the symptomatic quality of Romantic affect thus requires a pugnacious, unrelentingly figurative style that will reveal any conceivable affective or intellectual repose as an instance of rhetorical self-deception. Both Heine and Nietzsche understand this "interiorization of man" (*Verinnerlichung des Menschen*) (Nietzsche [1980-a], 322) as a process whereby the moral and affective subtleties of the modern individual all but converge with the illusionist work of cultural and rhetorical form in the widest sense.

To "unwrite" this genealogy and the putative self-sufficiency of its affective and rhetorical values demands a radically new style, one capable of reproducing the social and rhetorical grammar of petit-bourgeois communities with such facility as to reveal the "commodity character" of both inwardness and its expressive inventory. Far from a lapse of aesthetic or philosophical sobriety, this formal strategy of persistent "stylistic infraction" (*Stilbruch*) aims to expose the untoward resentments seething beneath the polished aesthetic veneer of Christian-Romantic inwardness — its repressed social unconscious. To grasp *ressentiment* as the inescapable, negative "ground" of the Restoration era's educated and bureaucratic middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*, *Beamtenbürgertum*), requires an entirely different relationship to the expressive, formal-aesthetic possibilities of language. In Heine's view, Romanticism's ominous, affective coherence is no longer a viable model. At the same time, it cannot simply be overcome by means of scientific analysis. Instead, it is to be held at ironic arm's length by an entirely new, stridently performative mode of writing. Reading Heine means following his invitation into the countless alleys and byways of *ressentiment*, provided we understand that term to cut in many ways, and do so differently each time. Whether it is the radical nationalism of the student movement (*Burschenschaften*), the anti-Semitic and misogynist rant of Zelter's *Liedertafel* (Choral society) or Brentano's *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* (Christian-German society), or the Schlegel brothers' late-Romantic blend of political and confessional apostasy — mocked as "becoming catholic out of sheer anger" (*aus Ärger katholisch werden*) (Heine [1997], 4: 111) — Heine invariably strikes a pose of dissent. Time and again, his poetry, no less than his prose, locates a new subjectivity, that of the intellectual as a writer suspended between multiple ideological positions, all of them inadequate, insincere, and typically antagonistic. To this jumbled ideological landscape, Heine's style responds with a deliberate "confusion of categories" (Habermas [1996], 1126) that has become the veritable signature of the European intellectual. Thus, in his poetry, conventional images, motifs, and oppressively familiar melancholic set pieces are suddenly being presented as citations, often with serial monotony, only to be dismantled before the reader's eyes. Uncertain as to whether to embrace what seems the barest scaffolding of sentimental and melancholic effects, or to repudiate it as *Kitsch*, the audience is alienated from its own mystical longings by an idiom that has elevated *Stilbruch* into an operative principle.

Written at a time when the social enfranchisement of German Jews was widely understood to pivot on their linguistic assimilation and aesthetic "acculturation," Heine's lyrics reveal Romantic sensibility as a deeply conventional, serially reproducible, and hence suspect façade supported by "codified stage-props of proven efficacy" (Ederer [1979], 33). The iteration of

Romantic affect yields to the uncanny emergence of *ressentiment*. In the present instance, the familiar surface of poetic melancholy and generic estrangement is shown to conceal Romanticism's hazardous ideological olio of Christian, nationalist, and philistine righteousness. Elsewhere, Heine restates this ideological scenario in more forthright terms by recalling how "at a time when there appeared to be an end to virtually all nationalities, . . . an obscure sect sprang into existence. It conceived the most bizarre dream visions about Germanness, indigenous culture, and nearly devoured oak and acorn [*Ureichelkraßtum*] . . . These people were thorough, critical, historical — capable of accurately determining the degree of one's descent required by the new order of things to have certain people disposed of." All that remained to be resolved was "the method of execution" (Heine [1997], 2: 634).¹ Heine's eerily prescient wit exposes the grotesque and manic fixations of anti-Semitic nationalists with his wicked new compound noun: *Ureichelkraßtum*. The word puns on "acorns" (*Eichel*) figurally devoured by nationalists whose fetishization of the German "oak" (*Eiche*) has taken an all too literal turn; nose to the ground, they appear bent on sniffing out and ingesting anything primordially German (*Ur-*). At the very least, such obsession with ethnic purity and authentic lineage confounds figural attributes (i.e., the oak [*Eiche*] as an emblem of Germanness) by literally seeking to devour it. Beyond that, however, Heine's neologism may also pun on Romantic nationalism's underlying obsession with telling apart Jews from Gentiles and hence obsessing on whether the tip of the male member (figuratively *Eichel*) had been circumcised or not. In Heine's view, the stylistic and logical explosions of wit (*Witz*) are best suited to expose the unholy alliance of Christian-Romantic mysticism and anti-Semitic nationalism. The modern writer unravels that ominous web of Romantic sentiment by mechanically reproducing its rhetorical conventions to the point where expression turns into *exposé* and cherished ideas disintegrate into puns and double entendres.

Yet Heine's irreverent enmeshing of Romantic sentimentality with serialization, cliché, and *Witz* not only disrupts the stylistic homogeneity of Romantic lyricism in such writers as Brentano, Uhland, Fouqué, Kerner, Schlegel, or Lenau. It also throws down a gauntlet taken up with ominous zeal by several generations of his critics, beginning by the mid-1830s and culminating (if not ending) with the National Socialists' systematic effort at expunging his name from German letters. Time and again, Heine's poetry is charged with insidiously emulating and — *qua* serial reproduction — cheapening Romanticism's vaunted synthesis of classicist aesthetics, Christian eschatology, and bourgeois inwardness. His style is repudiated as the quintessence of "linguistic forgery" (*Sprachfälscherei*) (Pfüzer [1997], 458) and as exhibiting but a "generic poetic veneer" (*allgemein poetischer Anstrich*) (Minckwitz [1864], 338). His "Feuilleton's style . . . of diseased, indistinguishable hybridity, neither fish nor flesh" (*sein Feuilletonstil . . . ein krankhafter Zwitterstil, weder Fisch noch Fleisch*) (Treitschke [1919], 424) is dismissed as nothing but a "virtuoso's ingeniously-clever recitation of Romanticism's entire tonal scale" (*ein Virtuose . . . der das ganze Register der romantischen Töne raffiniert-geschickt abspielt*) (Bartels

¹ Zu einer Zeit, wo fast alle Nationalitäten aufhören . . . just da entstand eine schwarze Sekte, die von Deutscheit, Volkstum und Ureichelkraßtum die närrischsten Träume ausheckte. . . Sie waren gründlich, kritisch, historisch — sie konnten genau den Abstammungsgrad bestimmen, der dazu gehörte, um bei der neuen Ordnung der Dinge aus dem Weg geräumt zu werden; nur waren sie nicht einig über die Hinrichtungsmethode (Heine [1997], 2: 634).

[1924], 361]). It is “mannered through and through” (Hehn [1909], 179) or, in Karl Kraus’s notorious harangue, little more than “scansioned journalism” (*skandierter Journalismus*) — an “artful stage-prop in the shopping window of a pastry shop or a feuilleton writer” (*eine kunstvolle Attrappe im Schaufenster eines Konditors oder eines Feuilletonisten*) (Kraus [1960], 202, 200). Kraus’s influential attack on Heine’s poetry as a new style (that of the feuilleton) that conceals its prosaic quality behind its canny prosodic scaffolding reveals just how eagerly nineteenth- and early twentieth-century criticism took Heine’s bait. For the target of all this vehemence — metric artifice glossing over a prosaic and dissociated sensibility — is openly advertised in Heine’s preface to the third edition of *Das Buch der Lieder* (The book of songs). There, rather than characterizing the poetry that follows, Heine merely reprints his latest incidental poems that had just appeared in the *Zeitschrift für die elegante Welt* (Journal for elegant society) of 3 September 1839. About the poem — synecdoche for those to come and hence generically entitled “Love” — Heine flippantly observes that “I could have said all that just as well in fine prose . . .” (*Das hätte ich alles sehr gut in guter Prosa sagen können . . .*) (Heine [1997], 1: 15).

It is the very consistency of these vituperative responses that reveals how acutely readers felt Heine’s stylistic subversion of Romanticism’s formal-aesthetic and psychological prescriptions. What Marcel Reich-Ranicki has called Heine’s “dismantling of high literary pathos” (*Entpathetisierung*) (Reich-Ranicki [1993], 79) struck a raw nerve because it was meant to. The shrewd amalgamation of lyricism and feuilleton in Heine’s work thus reproduces at the level of style a singularly divisive and adversarial network of politically, religiously, ethnically, and aesthetically charged languages. In tracing the ideological dispensations of the *Vormärz* (old-conservatism, Catholic *Reaktion*, nationalism, anti-Semitism, liberalism, left-Hegelianism, etc.), as well as the project of Jewish social and linguistic assimilation to their artificial, rhetorical foundations, Heine lays bare the pathologically adversarial state of any given community vis-à-vis all others, even as it purports to hold an all-encompassing solution to the challenges of modernity.

Writers of Jewish descent, such as Heine, Börne, or Moritz Saphir, were uniquely positioned to comment on the disingenuous, often purely instrumental relationship between rhetorical form and ideological commitment, between affective claims professed *through*, and the various *ressentiments* repressed *by*, the various forms of public writing during the *Vormärz* period. Already Karl Gutzkow had surmised, with specific reference to Börne and Heine, how “perhaps a truthful and worthy reaction against our ideology, which was in the process of forging the manacles for a new slavery, could only emerge out of Judaism” (Gutzkow [1998], 2: 1168).² Heine’s awareness of his social, ethnic, and linguistic exile can already be located in his early correspondence. Responding to the pamphleteering of leading philosophers, philologists, poets, and public intellectuals (Fichte, Fries, Ruehs, von Savigny, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Ernst Moritz Arndt, Adam Müller, Clemens Brentano, and Achim von Arnim), Heine soon understood the integral role of anti-Semitism within the divisive cultural and social politics of a post-Napoleonic and emphatically Christian Romanticism. Only half-jokingly, Heine foregoes a longer

² Nur aus dem Judenthume konnte vielleicht eine so wahre und dankenswerte Reaktion gegen unsere Ideologie, die sich selbst die Fesseln einer neuen Sklaverei schmiedete, kommen (Gutzkow [1998], 2: 1168).

report about his impressions because “I am not a German” (*Wär ich ein Deutscher — und ich bin kein Deutscher*) (Heine [1959], 1: 100).

As Heine’s reference to the open anti-Semitism of these and other members of Germany’s cultural and academic establishment makes clear, the brief interlude of Berlin’s famous literary salons, organized by well-known and highly assimilated Jewish women (Rahel Levin [later Varnhagen], Henriette Herz, et al.) was finished. It had been displaced by a new, brazenly anti-Semitic and divisive paradigm of *Kultur*, embodied in such institutions as Karl Friedrich Zelter’s *Liedertafel* or the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*. Founded by Brentano and von Arnim in 1812, the *Tischgesellschaft* specifically excluded women, philistines, and Jews, mocking the latter as “flies left over from the Egyptian plagues and now to be found everywhere; among discarded clothes in one’s closet, with theater billets and aesthetic gossip at one’s tea-table, and with promissory notes at the stock exchange” (Brentano [1963], 965–6).³ As Heine summed it up in a miscellaneous note, “anti-Semitism only begins with the Romantic School; a delight in everything medieval, Catholicism, the nobility, intensified by the Germanomaniacs” (Heine [1997], 6.1: 648).⁴ To write German as a Jew around 1830 meant approaching language from an intrinsically exiled perspective, for “we are in exile/suffering” (*Wir sind ja im Gohles*) (Heine [1959], 1: 63). Heine’s deliberate choice of the Yiddish *Gohles* over the German vernacular *Exil* leaves no doubt that there is both an ethnic and linguistic dimension to such abjection. Indeed, Heine belongs to that first generation of writers who experienced — and whose professional identity was consequently shaped by — the enforcement of norms pertaining to the aesthetic propriety and social purity of German as a “literary” language.

From the very outset of his career, Heine understood the intrinsically “exiled” character of his ethnically marked voice, such as when musing “that, out of displeasure with the German [language] my muse tailored its German dress in a somewhat foreign manner” (Heine [1959], 1: 150).⁵ Not in spite but because of his familiarity with literary German as a repository of frequently divisive and exclusionary cultural meanings, Heine’s writings always “speak across a distance,” as Peter Weiss was to put it a century later. Yet this very distance, an inescapable feature of the German language when approached by the German-Jewish writer, also opened up remarkable opportunities. Indeed, from the start Heine’s career exhibits a unique, dual perspective on the German language. It is at once imbued with expressive possibilities and yet, because of its sentimental attachments to religious, affective, and aesthetic homogeneity — what Heine refers to as “nightingale-madness” (*Nachtigallenwahnsinn*) (Heine [1997], 6.1: 447) — remains profoundly alien to the Jewish outsider. In a short essay entitled “Die Romantik” (18 August 1820), Heine notes that the recent literature so labeled often appears confused in its attempt at an outright repetition or restoration of medieval, Christian poetry. Medieval romance sought to give expression to a radically new religious type of affect by “contriving new images and words

³ er kann diese von den ägyptischen Plagen übriggebliebenen Fliegen in seiner Kammer mit alten Kleidern, an seinem Teetische mit Theaterzetteln und ästhetischem Geschwätz, auf der Börse mit Pfandbriefen und überall mit Ekel und Humanität und Aufklärung, Hasenpelzen und Weißfischen genugsam einfangen (Brentano [1963], 965–6).

⁴ Der Judenhaß beginnt erst mit der Romantischen Schule (Freude am Mittelalter, Katholizismus, Adel, gesteigert durch die Teutomänen (Heine [1997], 6.1: 648).

⁵ Daß aus Unmuth gegen das deutsche meine Muse sich ihr deutsches Kleid etwas fremdartig zuschnitt (Heine [1959], 1: 150).

of precisely the kind that had a secret and sympathetic kinship with these new feelings and, as it were, able to conjure them up all over again" (Heine [1993], 10: 195).⁶ By contrast, contemporary Romantic writing often appears but a mechanical reiteration of stock-in-trade images derived from medieval Catholicism, Celtic mythology, and Mediterranean chivalry. The result, Heine contends, is a travestied and exhausted poetry that incessantly and aimlessly regurgitates "an olio of Spanish sentimentality, Scottish mists, and Italian melos, confused and intermingled images poured out of a magic lantern, as it were" (Heine [1993], 10: 195).⁷

To oppose the narrowly confessional and proselytizing view of Christian Romanticism and its anti-classicism, as Heine sees it, is to contest the putative, affective, and ethnic homogeneity of the German language. Only three years later, Heine has expanded this dissent into a highly distinctive stylistic gesture — an idiom of calculated insubordination to the nationalist, religious, and ethnic menace of a *Christlich-Deutsch* Romanticism. Above all, Heine rehearses for friends and foes alike the uncanny *mobility* of the German word, its holographic complexity and penchant for alternately revealing nostalgic and satiric qualities, and for revealing the "rotten core of resentment" beneath the visionary glow of Christian-Romantic sentiment. In Heine's lyrics, the Romantic word — that self-proclaimed gold standard of (lately ominous) inspiration and high pathos — is being visibly displaced by the regime of paper currency. In an early letter (May 1823) to his friend Moses Moser, Heine (only half-jokingly) puts the matter as follows: "Your feelings are solid bars of gold, whereas mine are light paper-currency. The value of the latter depends on the people's confidence; . . . hasn't this image told you that I am a Jewish poet? No matter, why should I feel embarrassed; after all, we are speaking confidentially here, and I love conjuring up nationalist clichés [*Nationalbilder*]. Some day, when Ganstown has been built and a happier generation than ours blesses its palm branches and chews on unleavened bread on the banks of the Mississippi, and a new Jewish literature flourishes, then our mercantile, stock-jobbing expressions will form part of poetic diction itself" (Heine [1959], 1: 79–80).⁸

Besides referring to Heine's acquaintance Eduard Gans, a prominent Jewish scholar of law and, like Heine, a member of Berlin's *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (Society for culture and science of the Jews), "Ganstown" also alludes to M. M. Noah's short-lived utopia of a Jewish settlement on Grand Island, New York (Prawer [1983], 29). At the same time, the central metaphor of paper currency — emblematic of Heine's rapid-fire improvisation and wit — expressly plays on the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jew as a rootless and fiscal entrepreneur. The "new Jewish" literature here sketched by the young Heine brazenly associates a post-Romantic sensibility with the fluid and inscrutable movements of paper currency — with the

⁶ Es mußten jetzt neue Bilder und neue Worte erdacht werden, und just solche, die, durch eine geheime, sympathische Verwandtschaft mit jenen neuen Gefühlen, diese letztern zu jederzeit im Gemüthe erwecken und gleichsam herauf beschwören konnten (Heine [1993], 10: 195).

⁷ ein Gemengsel von spanischem Schmelz, schottischen Nebeln und italienischem Geklinge, verworrene und schwimmende Bilder, die gleichsam aus einer Zauberlaterne ausgegossen werden (Heine [1993], 10: 195).

⁸ Deine Gefühle sind schwere Goldbarren, die meinigen sind leichtes Papiergeld. Letzteres empfängt seinen Werth vom Zutrauen der Menschen; . . . hast Du am obigen Bilde nicht gemerkt, daß ich ein jüdischer Dichter bin? Doch wozu soll ich mich genieren, wir sind ja unter uns, und ich spreche gerne in unseren Nationalbildern. Wenn einst Ganstown erbaut seyn wird und ein glücklicheres Geschlecht am Mississippi Lulef bensch und Matzes kaut und eine neu-jüdische Literatur emporblüht, dann werden unsere jetzigen merkantilistischen Börsenausdrücke zur poetischen Sprache gehören (Heine [1959], 1: 79–80).

result that both affect and money become interchangeable figures of social relations. Rather than grounding the individual in an inalienable and unique psychological essence, "feelings" prove but another (self-deceiving) figure whose purchasing power depends on equally fluctuating longings (and loathings) indulged by a given community of readers, rather than on timeless aesthetic principles. As in his unsettling conversation piece — "They drank tea and waxed theoretic" — Heine's letter reproduces, and in so doing performatively reveals the iterable nature of, Brentano's callous tirade against Jews found "with theater billets and aesthetic gossip at one's tea-table, [and] with promissory notes at the stock exchange."

The modernity and potential success of a new literature thus center around the linguistic and rhetorical versatility with which the (Jewish) writer perceives and articulates continuities between the heretofore separate spheres of culture, religion, and economics. Zagari and Chiarini note that, "like the system of currency exchange (which at that time was becoming emblematic of modern society and culture) the literary word achieved its supreme effect only by a progressive and far-reaching neutralization that pared down individual traits to clichés and commonplaces" (Zagari and Chiarini [1981], 10). Far from giving evidence of Heine's supposedly "self-torturing" (Prawer [1983], 29) sensibility, however, the above passage shows Heine once again appropriating and exposing anti-Semitism as an unthinking regurgitation of rhetorical and affective clichés — a matter of "mention" rather than "use." What the anti-Semite harbors in the form of a deep-seated, unconscious *ressentiment* is brought out into the open by Heine's strategy of explicit invocation and citation. A poignant instance can be found in Heine's notorious attack on August von Platen in the third volume of his *Reisebilder* (Images of travel). Referring to von Platen's attacks on his Jewishness, Heine demurs: "Yes, dear reader, you aren't mistaken. It is indeed me to whom [Platen] is referring, and in his *Oedipus* you can learn that I am a true-bred Jew who, after having composed love lyrics for a few hours, proceed to sit down, counting ducats, keep a Sabbath's company with bearded hymies [*Mauscheln*] singing the Talmud, and how during Easter holiday I'll carve up some hapless Christian minor and, out of sheer malice, always select my victim from among the ranks of unfortunate writers. Indeed, dear reader, I won't lie to you. Such crafty images are nowhere to be found in Platen's *Oedipus*, and precisely their absence is what prompts my harsh critique of the book. Count Platen is occasionally driven by the best of motives, and yet he proves incompetent to put them to effective use. If only he had the smallest amount of imagination, he would have at the very least depicted me as a pawnbroker; what delightful scenes this would have offered up! It pains my soul to see this poor count miss every opportunity for effective, witty barbs" (Heine [1997], 2: 467).⁹

⁹ Ja, ja, du irrst dich nicht, lieber Leser, das bin ich, den er meint, und im »König Ödipus« kannst du lesen, wie ich ein wahrer Jude bin, wie ich, wenn ich einige Stunden Liebeslieder geschrieben, gleich darauf mich niedersetze und Dukaten beschneide, wie ich am Sabbat mit langbärtigen Mauscheln zusammenhocke und den Talmud singe, wie ich in der Osternacht einen unmündigen Christen schlachte und aus Malice immer einen unglücklichen Schriftsteller dazu wähle — Nein, lieber Leser, ich will dich nicht belügen, solche gute, ausgemalte Bilder stehen nicht im »König Ödipus«, und daß sie nicht darin stehen, das nur ist der Fehler, den ich tadele. Der Graf Platen hat zuweilen die besten Motive und weiß sie nicht zu benutzen. Hätte er nur ein bißchen mehr Phantasie, so würde er mich wenigstens als geheimen Pfänderverleiher geschildert haben; welche komische Szenen hätten sich dargeboten! Es tut mir in der Seele weh, wenn ich sehe, wie sich der arme Graf jede Gelegenheit zu guten Witzen vorbeigehen lassen! (Heine [1997], 2: 467)

Heine's rejoinder brilliantly lampoons the crude character of anti-Semitic rhetoric, as well as its lazy, mechanical recitation in von Platen's *Anti-Oedipus*. Here, Heine's new literary paradigm of stylistic hybridity is in full swing. Breaking down the heretofore separate spheres of religion, politics, aesthetics, his prose unleashes a torrent of cartoon-style sketches, citations of postures and attitudes that shift, combine, and recombine at will. What von Platen lacks, aside from respect for Heine (a point on which the latter could be very sensitive indeed) is rhetorical versatility. Both in his hopelessly mannered lyrics and in his clumsy, anti-Semitic harangue, von Platen remains mired in the aesthetic formalisms of his manifestly impoverished aristocratic background. Heine's flippant remark in his earlier quoted letter to Moses Moser that some day the "mercantile jargon of the stock exchange" shall form part of German literary language thus proves to be more than a ephemeral display of wit. For what ultimately accounts for the uniquely modern character of his literary idiom is its mobility and reflexivity — qualities that Heine's poetry and prose throw into relief by way of their sustained reflection on the problem of language — the German language.

In so doing, Heine also responds to the linguistic reforms that were an integral component of the larger project of Jewish assimilation during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. A large number of German Jews perceived their political emancipation, social assimilation, and "acculturation" to pivot on a wholesale expurgation of their linguistic heritage. Without question, the catalyst for this development is Moses Mendelssohn, who throughout his writings would insist on discriminating between a defective, traditionalist, and hermetic Yiddish village-culture and the "pure" and "original" world of Hebrew, which he deemed wholly compatible with enlightenment values. His enjoinder that Jews should "use either German or the newly purified Hebrew of the Maskilim," as well as his ongoing transl(ite)r(ation) of the Pentateuch into high German (still printed in Hebrew characters), ensured that "knowledge of German became a prerequisite for an understanding of Hebrew" (Gilman [1986], 105). In fact, "Mendelssohn's critics anticipated . . . [that] the German translation would serve as a textbook for studying German rather than for understanding the Bible" (Katz [1998], 150). New journals for German Jews (Sulamith, founded in 1806) and "free schools" (*Freischulen*), as well as aggressive efforts to infuse enlightenment rationality into Jewish ceremonial law, show Jewish acculturation taking on an increasingly radical, secular edge under the leadership of Mendelssohn's heirs (David Friedländer, Saul Ascher, Leopold Zunz, Anton Rée). At no point, not even after having himself furtively baptized in the summer of 1825, did Heine ever identify with his Jewish co-religionists' outright assimilation to a monolithic standard language (high-German) or their embrace of an equally normative Goethean ideal of *Bildung* and *Kultur*. Indeed, Heine reacts with contempt to the "trick of obtaining both wealth and culture" entertained by German Jews eager to "save themselves as individuals . . . by escap[ing] from Jewishness" (Arendt [1997], 87–8). Reacting to the growing perception of Judaism as a scourge or blemish to be surgically removed by a mass baptism that David Friedländer had actually sought to negotiate with Provost Teller in 1799, Heine mockingly refers to Friedländer as a lowly "corn-cutter" (*Hühneraugenoperateur*) (Heine [1959], 1: 62). Nor would Heine ever share Leopold Zunz's satisfaction that "the usage of the so-called Jewish-German dialect . . . has altogether vanished from all public lectures, as indeed from all Jewish writings" (Zunz [1976], 1: 110).¹⁰

¹⁰ Der Gebrauch des sogenannten jüdisch-deutschen Dialekts . . . ist aus den öffentlichen Vorträgen, sowie aus den Schriften der Juden, ganz und gar verschwunden (Zunz [1976], 1: 110).

Similarly, Heine well might have agreed with Jewish educational reformer Anton Rée that "because of a still unfinished battle between two intrinsic forces, German Jews must feel a deep internal division" (Rée [1844], 29).¹¹ Yet even as such "self-division" (*Zerrissenheit*) figures as a recurrent motif throughout Heine's writings, he would never advocate the "wholesale expurgation of the Jewish dialect" and Jewish assimilation to German "popular culture" (*Volksthümlichkeit*) as a remedy against the social and affective division (*sozialer Zwiespalt; Zerrissenheit*) (Rée [1844], 39, 60).¹² For this frantic acquisition of a neutral, dialect-free, "high-German" standard language overlooked that no one except assimilated Jews ever spoke it. "The most serious charge against the Jews," Jacob Toury remarks, "had to be a qualitative one, namely, that they spoke a 'normative' language, and hence lacked a vernacular [*also keine Volkssprache*]. Indisputably, these educated [Jews] in large cities . . . availed themselves of a high language [*Hochsprache*], and they did so more consistently and in larger numbers than their educated, non-Jewish counterparts. A German professor could speak Saxon, Berlinese, Swabian, Viennese, or Goethe's Frankfurt dialect. An educated Jew would speak High German. Doing so was both his mark of pride and his shortcoming, for by virtue of it he did not belong to the autochthonous language family of his native locale [*seines Wohnsitzes*]" (Toury [1982], 84).

Consumed by prospects of social and economic mobility, Jews embraced *Hochdeutsch* as a means of shedding any residual ties to village or small-town culture, and of escaping their inherited dialect culture and its regional and local permutations. Thus a "hyper-correct language usage" (Freimark [1980], 260) emerges as the linguistic and cultural default for a community bent on voluntarily expurgating the cultural memories embodied by its rich and variegated dialect culture — commonly referred to as "Jewish intonation" (*jüdische Mundart*) or openly disparaged as *Mauscheln*.

Deeply distrustful of the social opportunism and cultural bankruptcy of "acculturation," Heine instead seeks to transform the referential scope and social value associated with German as a literary language. His texts — nervous and self-conscious hybrids of social cartoon, citation, and ephemeral sentimentality — prove studiously distrustful of the complex myth of Romantic cultural production. Reacting to the specious synthesis of medieval, Catholic, folk culture "revived" by Romantic historicism and post-Kantian theory specifying the transcendental laws of formal-aesthetic and ethnic-nationalist (Fichte) "purity," Heine's *Romantische Schule* (Romantic school, 1833) offers an ironic gloss on the philological and poetic dream-worlds of Jena and Heidelberg. Offering a sketch of medieval Christian scholars clandestinely searching out the historical (Hebrew) origins of their faith, the passage is vintage Heine, at once satirizing Romanticism's specious longing for origins and tokens of cultural purity and exposing the persecutory energies unleashed when the "discoveries" turn out to contradict that longing: "The knowledge of Hebrew had completely died out in the Christian world. Only the Jews, who kept themselves hidden here and there in some corner or other of the earth, still preserved the traditions of this language. Like a ghost that watches over a treasure once entrusted to it, this

¹¹ Der edlere Jude der Gegenwart muß in Folge des noch nicht beendeten Kampfes zwischen den zwei in ihm lebenden Elementen eine eigene Zerrissenheit empfinden (Rée [1844], 29).

¹² So muß er seinen Dialekt vollständig verbannen . . . Volksthümlichkeit . . . allein kann seiner Zerrissenheit ein Ende machen (Rée [1844], 39, 60).

massacred people, this ghost of a people, sat in their ghettos and guarded the Hebrew Bible. And into these hiding places of ill repute German scholars could be seen stealthily creeping down to unearth the treasure in order to acquire knowledge of Hebrew. When the Catholic clergy noticed the danger thus threatening them, that the people might by this bypath arrive at the true Word of God and discover the Romish falsifications, they would have liked to suppress the Jewish tradition as well. They set to work to destroy all Hebrew books, and on the Rhine there began th[e] book-persecution . . ." (Heine [1973], 311–12).¹³

In typically ambivalent manner, Heine's prose here simultaneously conjures the specter of Jewish isolationism, and spiritual and linguistic traditions clandestinely preserved in a catacomb-like exile. Thus the passage remarks with grim irony how a furtive curiosity prompts Christians to seek (forbidden) knowledge of the primordial Hebrew culture of scripture and poetry and, consequently, to find their own creed exposed and invalidated as "Roman forgeries." The ensuing persecution of Jewish books on the banks of the Rhine also constitutes a pointed allusion to Metternich's censorship legislation which reached its peak in the very year (1835) that Heine published this passage in his *Zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Religion in Deutschland* (History of philosophy and religion in Germany). Spurred by Wolfgang Menzel, whose notorious review of liberal writers had indicted the so-called "young Germans" (*das junge Deutschland*) as "young Palestine" (*das junge Palästina*), Heine's prose identifies both performatively and conceptually with the repressed and almost forgotten treasures of Jewish religious and linguistic culture. Ghettoized and seemingly asleep in the midst of German mainstream culture, the explosive force of Jewish linguistic and cultural history effectively prefigures and legitimates Heine's paradigmatic vision of the writer as intellectual, the unpredictable harbinger of a volatile modernity. Unlike the historicist projects of Brentano, von Arnim, Creuzer, or Bopp, however, Heine's genealogy remains strictly improvised and performative. While retaining irony as his guiding literary principle, Heine also uncouples it from the formal and theoretical esotericism of the Jena school. Thus, well beyond the semantic and conceptual tensions articulated in the pages of the *Athenaeum* a generation earlier, irony now has been extended into an ambitious *montage* of literary styles that removes Heine's authorial persona from the reach of any definitive stylistic, affective, or theoretical categorization. Embracing and exemplifying his open-ended, performative conception of the intellectual as writer, the avowed atheist Heine offers us this supremely reflexive epistolary reference: "Having scorned all positive religion, I shall yet convert to the most ruthless rabbinism, simply because I consider it to be a proper antidote" (Heine [1959], 1: 74).¹⁴

¹³ Aber die Kenntnis des Hebräischen war in der christlichen Welt ganz erloschen. Nur die Juden, die sich, hie und da, in einem Winkel dieser Welt verborgen hielten, bewahrten noch die Traditionen dieser Sprache. Wie ein Gespenst, das einen Schatz bewacht, der ihm einst im Leben anvertraut worden, so saß dieses gemordete Volk, dieses Volk-Gespenst, in seinen dunklen Gettos und bewahrte dort die hebräische Bibel; und in diese verrufenen Schlupfwinkel sah man die deutschen Gelehrten heimlich hinabsteigen, um den Schatz zu heben, um die Kenntnis der hebräischen Sprache zu erwerben. Als die katholische Geistlichkeit merkte, daß ihr von dieser Seite Gefahr drohte, daß das Volk auf diesem Seitenweg zum wirklichen Wort Gottes gelangen und die römischen Fälschungen entdecken konnte, da hätte man gern auch die jüdische Tradition unterdrückt, und man ging damit um, alle hebräischen Bücher zu vernichten, und am Rhein begann die Bücherverfolgung . . ." (Heine [1997], 3: 545).

¹⁴ Ja, ich der Verächter aller positiven Religionen, werde vielleicht einst zum krassesten Rabinismus übergehen, eben weil ich diesen als ein probates Gegengift betrachte (Heine [1959], 1: 74).

For Heine, the antidote to his times is to be found in the opulent imagery of Indian, Persian, and Hebrew myths, many of which had only recently been recovered and translated by philologists like Georg Forster, Franz Bopp, Friedrich Creuzer, Friedrich Schlegel, or Sir William Jones in England. Thus the *Buch der Lieder* commonly deploys images — cypress, myrtle tree, palm tree, cedar, hyacinth, lotus flower, etc. — emblematic of distant realms (Persia, India, Palestine). While used to richly varied effect, these emblems in one way or another seek to probe the cognitive and emotive tensions between the divisive culture of Restoration Germany and past worlds of rich and seductive imagery. In a fulsome tribute to his declared spiritual and poetic precursor, the eleventh-century Sephardic poet and philosopher Jehuda Ben Halevy, Heine revisits the old claim (familiar to English readers through Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 1754/1787) of Hebrew as *the* archetypally poetic language. In sharp contrast to the legalistic and disputatious tradition of the Halakah, the Aggada's inexhaustible treasure of legends, fables, and anecdotes is imagined to have furnished Jehuda Ben Halevy with a figural sanctuary:

Letztre aber, die Hagada,
Will ich einen Garten nennen,
Einen Garten, hochphantastisch
Und vergleichbar jenem andern,

Welcher ebenfalls dem Boden
Babylons entsprossen weiland —
Garten der Semiramis,
Achtes Wunderwerk der Welt.

Königin Semiramis

.....
pflanzte
Einen Garten in der Luft —

Hoch auf kolossalen Säulen
Prangten Palmen und Zypressen,
Goldorangen, Blumenbeete,
Marmorbilder, auch Springbrunnen,

Alles klug und fest verbunden
Durch unzählge Hängebrücken,
Die wie Schlingepflanzen aussah
Und worauf sich Vögel wiegten —

Große, bunte, ernste Vögel,
Tiefe Denker, die nicht singen . . . (Heine [1997], 6:1: 132–3)

[But the latter, the Haggada,
I would rather call a garden,
A phantasmagoric garden
That is very like another

And the quaver, the Shalshleth,
He trilled like a feathered warbler.

As for Onkelos's Targum,
Which is written in that special
Low-Judaic idiom
That we call the Aramaic

And which bears the same relation
To the language of the prophets
That the Swabian has to German —
In this garlic-sausage Hebrew

Was the boy instructed likewise . . .] (Heine [1982-b], 656)

Stressing the near homophony of German and Jewish dialect culture (*Aramäisch / Schwäbisch / Hebräisch*), Heine goes out of his way to blur historical, linguistic, and cultural/ethnic boundaries of all sorts. Jehuda's apprenticeship in the study of the five books of Moses (Targum Onkelos) simultaneously marks his initiation into an inherently hybrid culture. Here, of course, the real target of Heine's wit are those self-styled Swabian custodians of German literary purity (Gustav Pfizer and Wolfgang Menzel) whose conspicuous dialect (metonymically focused by Heine's regionalism *Gelbveiglein*) actually resembles the linguistic and cultural hybridity of the eleventh-century Sephardic poet. Indeed, in the course of juxtaposing the Greek and Judeo-Christian (or Nazarene) sensibilities, Heine was to label the confirmed anti-Semite Wolfgang Menzel a "Jew" (*der Jude Menzel*). In the above passage from "Jehuda ben Halevy," Heine also deploys his considerable rhetorical and lexical gifts to transpose the distinctive euphony and opulent imagery of the Pentateuch into German. Yet in stark contrast to Moses Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah into High German — transliterated and printed in classical ("pure") Hebrew characters — Heine's "Hebrew Melodies" stress the phonetic richness of the "low Judaic idiom" (*plattjudäisch*) of Onkelos's paraphrase of the Pentateuch. With a linguist's technical precision, Heine foregrounds the beauties of precisely that Jewish "ancient tradition of singing speech" (*der uralt hergebrachten / Singsangweise, Tropp geheißen*) and its rolling trills ("Schalscheleth" [Hebrew = chain, necklace]) that cultural assimilationists such as Maimon, Mendelssohn, Friedländer, Zunz, or Anton Rée had been so anxious to expunge. Far from rendering Halevy's language "vaguely comic [and] somewhat degenerate" (Gilman [1986], 181), Heine's imaginative and richly textured depiction of Aramaic affirms its ethnic and spiritual charisma. The point is only reinforced by Heine's sly juxtaposition of Aramaic and Swabian dialect culture. Each idiom appears needlessly self-effacing and bashful in relation to the idea of a normative, "pure" language (Hebrew; High German) that may represent an aesthetic ideal for militant nationalists but, it turns out, has never been spoken by any actual person. It is through this imagined and highly specific linguistic kinship with Halevy that Heine at once mimics and mocks a fiction of linguistic and aesthetic purity. Thus a poetry unimpeachably well crafted and vividly High German — Heine's authorial trademark — celebrates its own Other. The German Jew Heine emulates *at will* a normative language (*Hochdeutsch*) and, in so doing, evinces the latter's serial reproducibility — in short, its post-Romantic modernity. The point becomes

inescapable precisely insofar as Heine's linguistic and rhetorical talents are devoted to the imitation of Jewish dialect culture and the rich lived existence of which it is an expression. Where Mendelssohn and Rée emphasize the need for flawless High German so as to enable their co-religionists to "forget" their own, native Yiddish culture, Heine recalls (in perfect German) precisely that imperiled Jewish linguistic past by relating it to the dialect culture of German gentiles (Swabians). It is just this performative conception of the intellectual as writer that Heine sums up when observing how, "my lasting contempt for all positive religion notwithstanding, I shall yet adopt the crudest rabbinical method, simply because I regard it as a proper antidote to the *status quo*" (Heine [1959], 1: 74).

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