At the Edges of Liberalism

Junctions of European, German, and Jewish History

Steven E. Aschheim

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2012

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Reflections on Insiders and Outsiders

The task of this chapter is to provide some kind of a general conceptual and historical framework for thinking about the categories of "insiders" and "outsiders" and for rendering explicit some of the assumptions and problems regarding these notions that usually remain implicit in treatments of this subject.[1] This is no easy assignment, for it would appear that "insiders" and "outsiders" are universal organizing categories. Societies, cultures, and individual as well as collective identities are constituted and function by dint of the fluid dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, by defining the conditions and content of "normalcy" and "abnormalcy," by openly or tacitly invoking conditions of belonging and nonbelonging, through the setting up of often ironically unstable and permeable exits and entrances.[2] For every in-group there will be those who are without, excluded.

One could, conceivably, write not just the whole of Jewish history, but perhaps even the whole of human history, in terms of the putative insider–outsider binary and its various refining permutations and indentations. In their different ways, anthropology and psychology—the social sciences in general—seek to provide us maps and perspectives of these processes. Thus, an entire discipline, "the sociology of deviance," represents an attempt to systemically capture the phenomenon. Outsiders, they tell us, are simply those groups and individuals who, for one reason or another, simply deviate from the normative rules that govern social and cultural systems. Their nature, given identities and location, are to be understood as standing in dialectical relationship to, and in tension with, these power structures and meaning-endowing norms.

There are many such kinds of theories, but their very generality does not provide much succor for historians, whose interests inevitably focus upon the context-bound nature of phenomena and the dynamics and nuances of particular cases and situations. To be sure, general questions and problems still arise. Who defines insiders and outsiders, and how are these constituted? Are modern variants to be differentiated from their premodern predecessors and examples? Do we employ objective and structural or subjective and psychological criteria of outsiderdom, or some combination of both? Viewed from the perspective of the insider, outsiders historically have typically been despised and stigmatized (which in turn often may have strengthened their internal

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cohesiveness), but they may also be relatively ignored, or tolerated, and in some cases, even valorized. Indeed, in our own times, as William Ian Miller has pointed out, we have witnessed a certain shift in emotional economy, resulting in a certain ambiguity toward outsiders. A widening of empathic capacities, not merely in traditional terms of class and rank, is being extended to minorities (or "internal" outsiders)—racial and ethnic minorities, the mentally and physically handicapped, etc.—in which the classical indifference, fear, contempt, or mistrust on the part of outsiders is mingled with a certain liberal guilt, anxiety, and self-doubt.[3] This certainly would apply to the most literal and visible outsiders of our time: the homeless.

There is a similarly wide spectrum regarding the possible personal and collective self-images of outsiders themselves. One may variously attempt to erase, blur, minimize, or simply put up with one's outsider status and identity. Yet at times it may be affirmed and become a matter of positive choice (this will certainly be true, in different gradations and inflections, when considering the modern Jewish case). The outsider condition, its freedom of maneuver and action, and its self-image will also depend upon the ways in which the normative "inside" defines it. There are too many variations and interactions to allow any simple or clear-cut *a priori* answers.

But we are already running ahead of ourselves. Given the ubiquitous nature of the insider-outsider divide, when it comes to thinking about the Jewish outsider, we need to establish a distinction between life in traditional or feudal and corporate society and more centralized modern states. In the former, Jews were patently "outside" the normative and religious structures of Christian society. Jews clearly were not Christians, and both parties elaborated a series of rituals and social practices that ensured separation and prevented mixing. To be sure, this does not mean that Jews were entirely cut off from wider contexts—they were engaged in various aspects of economic and political life and in various ways forged identities that ensued from, and were identified with, their particular local, cultural, and even religious environments. Indeed, in extreme cases, such as the Sabbatean and Frankist movements, there was apostasy to Islam and Catholicism, respectively.[4] On the whole, however, life lived within one's own identificatory framework provided a self-definitional security and value sustenance absent from later times. Under those pre-modern conditions, there could be no consciousness of being an outsider in the modern sense. Being Jewish was a datum that simply constituted the given in everyday life. Indeed, because Jews regarded themselves as an exilic community, this became paradigmatic of a positively conceived ideological formulation of nonbelonging.

Of course, exceedingly exceptional individuals, such as Baruch Spinoza, removed themselves from any such identification. But in the modern secular world, religious apostates hardly represent what we consider to be quintessential outsiders. In the new order of centralized (and, later, nationalized) states—characterized increasingly by principles of individual rather than corporate membership, aspirations to equal rights and citizenship,

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and ever-greater normative and cultural homogeneity—the production, structure, and very meaning of outsiderdom undergoes transformation. The novel possibility of integration renders outsiderdom itself a structurally relevant and problematic datum of consciousness, psychologized and questioned, a matter of potential identity strain and discomfort. At the same time, outsiderdom can also be dialectically transfigured into a source and space of separate positive self-assertion and pride.

Minorities, as Shulamit Volkov has perceptively pointed out, did not exist in feudal society and the world of estates. The notion of minorities, of numerical relevance and superiority, could only emerge in social structures characterized by categories of, and aspirations to, unity and equality. Volkov defines minorities thus: "a group permanently residing within a more or less homogeneous society, normally distinct by one or more than one objective characteristic, possessing a particular consciousness of itself as a group and ideologically committed to full equality and integration without abandoning its uniqueness."[5] This definition is astute, but requires qualification. It may apply more precisely to Jewish minorities than to some other modern minorities. Thus it is not certain that Europe's Roma and Sinti have, either historically or contemporaneously, aspired to integration, nor does it apply to religious groups such as the Amish in the United States.

What is certain, however, is that modern outsiderdom cannot be grasped outside of this emergent majority-minority context. Yet, both conceptually and socio-psychologically, we need to distinguish between the two. Minorities possess, and are defined by, fairly clear-cut objective characteristics. Outsiderdom is above all marked by the subjective existential and psychological dimensions. *This is because all the variations of self-consciousness, the dilemmas, discontents, and achievements of the modern Jewish or non-Jewish outsider arise out of the (possibly frustrated) potential for integration, the dynamics of partial connectedness, and a degree of presumed entitlement quite absent in traditional societies.*

Like Georg Simmel's stranger, the outsider is not entirely alien and external, not totally foreign, as, say, the barbarians were to the Greeks.[6] In order to qualify as outsiders there must, in some way, be a salient connection to the inside. The outsider, in this sense, possesses a certain relevance and can make claims that—no matter how disputed—have a certain standing. There are no centers without margins, insides without outsides; the inside is constituted by constructing the outside.[7] But this is a relationship that is always fluid, and in modern societies, and certainly in postmodern societies, all "essentialized" centers and identities come increasingly under question.[8] For, as David Rechter argues (although he refers to the case of Czernowitz, his observation has a more general application),

> The insider/outsider dualism proves to be something of a false dichotomy, perhaps better conceived, as noted at the outset, as two shifting poles of a continuum.... An insider/outsider framework implies an at least somewhat stable centre around which an individual or a collective situate

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> themselves. . . . But if the centre itself shifts, how to fix its boundaries? As a consequence, determining the relative status and meaning of insider/outsider is fraught with difficulty and these sometimes useful descriptors should be applied selectively and with due caution . . .[9]

This permeability will obviously affect the subjective psychodynamics of modern Jewish outsiderdom, whose self-definitions cover a wide and dynamic spectrum of positions ranging from the extremes of Benjamin Disraeli, who flaunted his outsider, "exotic" Jewish origins as a mark of superiority, to that of Otto Weininger's tortured ruminations on Jewish being. Dilemmas of personal and collective self-constitution will be newly defined and heightened when boundaries are most fluid and blurred. Paradoxically, this may apply not only to the more familiar situations where invisible barriers to integration still operate and where the power play of insider/outsider dynamics creates any number of tensions, ambiguities, and misunderstandings. The perplexing example of the Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian and his dependence upon, and torturous relationship with, his anti-Semitic Romanian mentor Nae Ionescu is a particularly charged case in point.[10]

But discomfort may apply, too, when one's particularity is threatened by too "successful" an absorption, too much "assimilation." Many West European and American Jews regard themselves as trapped within a kind of double bind: the integrative ease that comes with the narrative of an inclusive "Judeo-Christian" civilization, and the concern of being swallowed by it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the balance between full integration (insiderdom) and the maintenance of a distinctive, separate identity (outsiderdom) is an exceedingly fine one and that, ironically, Jews were, and still are, not entirely comfortable with either condition.[11] This may account for the fact that, as David Biale has observed, Jews possess a consciousness of "occupying an anomalous status. They represent the boundary case whose very lack of belonging to a recognizable category creates a sense of unease."[12]

In related fashion, much of the elaborate discourse—in praise, condemnation and fear—surrounding the modern outsider is tied to divergent perceptions of the respective, putatively emancipatory, dissolutive and corrupting influences of that most powerful modernizing and shared institution: the city. At the same time that cities are portrayed as the source of newfound opportunity, integration, and freedom for previously disenfranchised groups, a persistent counternarrative holds such urban centers to be the breeding-grounds of corruption, internal subversion, decadence, crime and degeneration, places of refuge and succor to any number of invidious outsiders: criminals, radicals, homosexuals, Jews, and so on.

All these themes converge in George L. Mosse's suggestive thesis as to the connection between the making of the modern outsider and the overall development of middle-class society and what he calls its accompanying "bourgeois morality." In this schema, not just Jews, but all purported

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outsiders are endowed with similar negative characteristics, stereotyped as antithetical to middle-class moral, aesthetic, and economic criteria of "respectability" and "normality." The "normal" (and ideal) bourgeois is held to be manly, self-controlled, honest, healthy, clean, and handsome; outsiders are abnormal, effeminate, nervous, sickly, wily, dirty, and ugly. Such constructions of normality and abnormality, the fundamental yardsticks of respectability, act essentially as mechanisms of social control, the means by which all can be assigned their designated place: the normal and the abnormal, the healthy and the sick, the rooted and the restless, the native and the foreigner, the productive and the profligate.

Most radically, Mosse has argued that, in this sense, Nazism represents the most extreme expression of bourgeois morality. Its classical victims—gypsies, homosexuals, asocials, the mentally and physically handicapped—correspond exactly with constructions of the bourgeois "outsider."[13] But what of Nazism's ultimate victim, the Jew? For, after all, within nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western and Central Europe, Jews had determinedly undergone a process of cultural, political, and social *embourgeoisement;* their aspirations, comportment, and self-definition were decidedly bourgeois. In order to deal with this dilemma, Mosse demonstrates the manifold ways in which anti-Semites and those opposed to Jewish emancipation and integration determinedly read the Jews out of the middle-class by repeatedly attributing to them the "non-bourgeois" traits of typical outsiders. Jews were effeminate, nervous, peripatetic, sickly, schemingly parasitic, and so on.

Mosse's insights, linking the nature and content of modern outsiderdom to the specific dynamics of bourgeois morality, are intriguing. Moreover, his insistence that all outsiders, non-Jews as well as Jews, are endowed with similar characteristics provides us with a salutary reminder that post-emancipation Jewish history inevitably operates within wider, rather than self-enclosed, contexts. Yet its applicability may be somewhat limited. It does not really provide space for an autonomous (or relatively autonomous) consciousness; in this view, the outsider is almost exclusively the Sartrean creation of normative fears and prejudices. Nor does this perspective allow us to follow the contestational dynamics that determine who shall be insiders and outsiders *within* Jewish communities themselves. Perhaps most important, Mosse's work applies most directly to developments centered around Western and Central Europe, rather than the somewhat different East European Jewish experience. To be sure, the East–West divide is both problematic and to some extent artificial, yet in overall terms more traditional, prebourgeois and pre-emancipation patterns prevailed on the Eastern side of the divide. This is so even if we grant that Mosse's model understates a continuing specifically Christian anti-Judaic animus running through emergent secular bourgeois society, and if we grant that within various areas of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Eastern Europe "modern" bourgeois patterns of integration and dilemmas of identity became increasingly apparent.

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These more general theories apart, there is a rather vast literature on intellectuals and their creative role as outsiders who sometimes are able to influence, and even penetrate, the center. This is the burden of Peter Gay's analysis of the greatness, anxiety, and excitement of Weimar culture: "the creation of outsiders, propelled by history into the inside, for a short, dizzying, fragile moment."[14] Gay's portrait did not single out Jews in his rather dazzling list of intellectuals and artists. For the most part, however, they are regarded as double social outsiders, presumed to possess a kind of privileged perspective unavailable to those locked into the conventional prejudices and presuppositions of the inside.[15] Paul Mendes-Flohr has portrayed the modern Jewish intellectual as a cultural and cognitive insider but a social outsider;[16] Georg Simmel's "stranger" has very similar characteristics. The stranger "is an element of the group itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it." He cites the history of European Jews as the classical example of this type, and in many ways his portrait may be autobiographical.[17] While, typically, most of these analyses refer to the Central European experience,[18] they clearly have a far more general application.

Thus, most famously, Isaac Deutscher (born in Chrzanów, Poland) includes the Polish-born Rosa Luxemburg and Russian Leon Trotsky in his list of admired "non-Jewish Jews," together with Baruch Spinoza, Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. He writes:

> You may, if you wish to, place them within a Jewish tradition. They all went beyond the boundaries of Jewry. They all found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfillment beyond it, and they represent the sum and substance of much that is greatest in modern thought....Did they have anything in common with one another?...in some ways they were very Jewish indeed. They had in themselves something of the quintessence of Jewish life and of the Jewish intellect. They were *a priori* exceptional in that as Jews they lived on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the borderlines of various epochs. Their mind matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their respective nations. Each of them was in society and yet not of it. It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future.[19]

It is worth pointing out, parenthetically, that for those with a more positive internal Jewish commitment, this question of detached estrangement is seen neither as an inevitable nor a desirable response to modernity. Leo Strauss, perhaps the most articulate expositor of this viewpoint, explicitly inveighed against one of Deutscher's models in this regard. Spinoza is upbraided for taking for granted "the philosophic detachment or freedom from the tradition

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of his own people; that detachment is 'unnatural,' not primary, but the outcome of a liberation from the primary attachment, of an alienation, a break, a betrayal. The primary is fidelity, and the sympathy and love that go with fidelity."[20]

In many ways, the narrative of the privileged intellectual perspective of the outsider is a highly consolatory, self-validating point of view. "Because I was a Jew," declared Freud, "I found myself free from many prejudices which limited others in the employment of their intellects and as a Jew I was prepared to go into opposition and to do without the agreement of the 'compact majority.'"[21] This functions both as an explanation of, and a kind of triumphalist justification for, secular Jewish achievement. To be fair, this is not merely an exclusively Jewish perception. The Polish Catholic philosopher Leszek Kolakowski has put forward the case most eloquently:

> It was only by, as it were exiling themselves from their collective exile that they [the Jews] became exiles in the modern sense. However hard they may have tried, they failed (at least, most of them) to lose entirely their identity of old and to be unreservedly assimilated; they were looked upon as alien bodies by the indigenous tribes, and it was probably this uncertain status, the lack of a well-defined identity, which enabled them to see more and to question more than those who were satisfied with their inherited and natural sense of belonging.... precisely because by barring to them the path to the moral and intellectual safety of the tribal life—whether French, Polish, Russian or German—they left them in the privileged position of outsiders.[22]

In many ways this fits into a larger existentialist cult, a species of male rite of passage from painful adolescence into manhood popular during the 1950s, in which the outsider was defined by a kind of ruthless honesty, an authenticity marked by a kind of radical nonconformity. Albert Camus described his by now classical outsider simply as someone who refused to lie to himself as well as to others.[23] In related fashion, the modern outsider in general, but the Jewish one in particular, is held to be above all characterized by a kind of cosmopolitan borderlessness, a skepticism concerning conventional and epistemological boundaries, a viewpoint in which all versions of essentialized and fixed identities are questioned and refused.

"Freud's view of Moses as both insider and outsider," Edward Said tells us, "is extraordinarily interesting and challenging." Freud's most profound insight, stemming from his claim that the founder of Jewish identity was himself a non-European Egyptian, according to Said, posits the limits of the most tightly knit communities. For Freud, Said concludes, "identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flaw which will not be repressed, because Moses was Egyptian, and therefore always stood outside the identity inside which so many have stood, and suffered—and later, perhaps, even triumphed."[24]

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But there are clearly problems that arise from this notion of a privileged, unhoused, outsider perspective. In a diasporic age of mobility and globalization, immigration, population movements, refugees and exiles there exists a current tendency to universalize what was previously an essentially Jewish narrative. As Michael Walzer has pointed out, the achievement of critical distance and intellectual detachment should by no means be confused with the marginality of outsiders. Indeed, he argues, marginality may equally act as a thoroughly distorting factor, undercutting the capacity for critical judgment, similar to the related, but opposite, danger of overidentification with the normative centers of power. “Detachment,” he writes, “stands to the marginal and the central in exactly the same way: free of the tensions that bind the two together.”[25]

Still, given the peculiarly complex and fluid inside-outside and the remarkably creative relationship of Jews to modern culture, these notions must surely possess some validity.[26] But identifying the role that their “Jewishness” or Judaism plays in these creative moments remains an enormously subtle and complex task in which both blanket denial of its relevance (in effect, the refusal of any autonomy to the dimensions of Jewish existence) and willful attributions as to its overwhelming significance (which overlooks the thick influence of the tempting blandishments and the by now quite natural, internalization of cultures outside that tradition) need to be scrupulously and skeptically analyzed. No wonder the definitive history of the modern Jewish intellectual has not yet been written, although, as Richard Cohen makes clear, much of the work done by Ezra Mendelsohn serves as an excellent prolegomenon.[27]

The field is rife with any number of temptingly attractive propositions linking modes of outsidership with Jewish intellectual insight and creativity. They are usually as problematic as they are suggestive. Take, just as one among many instances, the notion that modern theorists and historiographers of nationalism have typically been a species of double outsider, which is enunciated by Jews (not necessarily ones who were identified with Judaism) who left their formerly multinational imperial homelands and migrated into different civilizations (thus Hans Kohn, Karl Deutsch, Ernst Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm hailed from Austro-Habsburg lands and traveled respectively to Palestine, the United States, and England, while Elie Kedourie left his Iraqi birthplace and the former Ottoman Empire for the British Isles). Being situated themselves on the borders of richly textured, multicultural societies at a time when national tensions became increasingly apparent, and then emigrating, clearly rendered them sensitive to and critical of the structures, constructions, inclusions, and exclusions of nationalism.

These are, to be sure, telling examples (although in each case the nature and role of Jewishness would have to be somehow validated), yet one would want to be wary of too easy, self-congratulatory generalizations. One should keep in mind that none of the earlier great thinkers and theorists

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of nationalism, such as Herder, Renan, Michelet, Lord Acton, Fichte, and so on, and presumably none of its prominent contemporary theorists and historians, such as Benedict Anderson, Rogers Brubaker, Adrian Hastings, and John Breuilly, can be said to be outsiders in any significant sense, or even Jewish.

Posed in this way, the issue now seems to be rather overworked, if not sterile, and it is one of the central achievements of Jonathan Frankel's essay "The 'Non-Jewish Jews' Revisited: Solzhenitsyn and the Issue of National Guilt" that he has taken the discussion of Isaac Deutscher's secular and universalist "non-Jewish Jews," outsiders to both normative and Jewish society, in a new and provocative direction. In what sense, Frankel asks, can radicals such as Marx, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxemburg—who all dismissed any meaningful relationship to their Jewish origins—be regarded as Jews, part of the parameters of Jewish history? In what ways, despite everything, were they not simply self-proclaimed outsiders to the Jewish world but also insiders? Frankel addresses himself to the highly sensitive charge that these Jewish communists played a central role in the horrors of the 1917 Revolution, the implementation of Bolshevik rule, and the running of the Gulags. Taking up Solzhenitsyn's moral question and challenge, Frankel poses the question thus: If all the Bolsheviks, Russians and Jews alike, were outsiders to their communities, "schismatics," in his terms, at what point do their numbers become statistically significant? Can peoples and communities disavow their own schismatics? Was there not an obligation to remember their own progeny? Frankel's contribution sensitively and acutely engages the relevant distinctions and nuances such an obligation may or may not entail. Invoking Karl Jaspers's important distinction between guilt and shame, Frankel's conclusions, for a Jewish historian, are remarkably frank, refreshingly unapologetic. [28] We cannot with any degree of consistency, Frankel argues, praise the Jewish outsiders we admire and disclaim those who may reflect poorly upon us:

> Solzhenitsyn's insistence that the Jewish people cannot simply shrug off the Trotskys, Uritskys and Yagodas as "non-Jewish," as outsiders, is certainly persuasive. If Jews take pride in Heinrich Heine, Felix Mendelssohn, Benjamin Disraeli and Boris Pasternak, who were Jews by birth but were baptized into the Christian faith, can it be logical as distinct from comfortable—to disown the "non-Jewish Jews" who as Bolsheviks participated in destroying Russia's emergent democracy in 1917; in establishing a brutal (albeit "proletarian") dictatorship; and in provoking a ferocious civil war across the length and breadth of that vast country?[29]

If Frankel's reflections on these Jewish outsiders bring with them a measure of discomfort, Ruth Wisse's treatment of a different kind of outsider—one who decidedly belonged to the Jewish community, yet worked against it—is not likely to create a greater sense of ease. Her examination of the Jewish

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moser or *malshin*, the informer and denunciator (the negative counterpart of the traditional *shtadlan*, the intercessor who works on behalf of community interests) elucidates perhaps the most morally problematic and extreme form of internal rupture. Betrayal or treason is, by definition, a matter of insiders turning against their own, although what constitutes betrayal or treason and who defines it will always be a matter of contestation. Wisse's analysis of these defectors—be they well-intentioned reformist *Maskilim*, idealists, or simply unscrupulous opportunists, extortionists—illuminates, as she puts it, not the usual corruptions of power but those of powerlessness and the temptations that accompany vulnerable minority status.[30]

Clearly, however, Wisse does not believe that this is purely a by-product of the lack of sovereignty and majority status, for she argues that with the creation of the State of Israel similar phenomena continue to apply. Israel, she insists,

> is not only besieged by enemies, but also subjected to the kind of de-legitimization that Christianity and Marxism, in their time, applied to Judaism and the Jewish people. The contemporary pressure against Israel on many fronts encourages Jewish defection and 'tale-bearing,' which will probably rise in proportion to the vehemence of the attacks.... enemies exploit divisions for their own hostile ends, by conscripting allies from within the polity to help destroy its democratic unity. The Jews and Israel have never been without enemies at the gate, enemies many times their political and demographic strength. The latitude enjoyed by Israelis in blaming their government and one another is subject to exploitation for anti-Jewish ends.[31]

This is not the only, and certainly not the most central, insider-outsider irony that Zionism has produced. The attainment of statehood, of course, did successfully transform the Jews from a vulnerable minority into a sovereign majority, thus creating a new center, a new "inside." But this also inevitably produced its own framework and system of inclusions and exclusions. Zionism does not abolish the insider-outsider condition, but inverts and reinscribes it.[32] If the Jewish outsider now becomes the insider, this entails a dual act of both Jewish diasporic and Palestinian displacement and the creation of a new set of outsiders.

In nuanced fashion, Zvi Jagendorf has acutely demonstrated how both these themes have become part of Jewish consciousness and have permeated the poetry of Yitzchak Manger and Avot Yeshurun (Yehiel Perlmutter). In different ways, their work confronts, and is haunted by, the refugee status of both Jews and Palestinians and their yearnings for "home," and by the impossibilities and ironies implicit in that search. To be sure, Zionism for Yitzhak Manger was never really an option or a goal. Indeed, as Jagendorf demonstrates, in his world outersidership is a kind of existential given; home is as much a burden

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as a comfort, an unresolved longing shared by all uprooted people. Manger, that "chameleon poet," working both inside and outside Jewish nostalgia, ultimately does find home in Canaan, but it is demystified, "just dry earth as we are all."

For Avot Yeshurun, who came to find a home in Palestine, the pain of abandoning his parents' house in Poland and the discovery that Palestine was a "home" to another people became thoroughly intertwined. Jagendorf writes that

> Yeshurun believed he was coming home when he was ferried off the boat at Bat Galim in 1925 by an Arab porter. Home, for this young man from Przedmiescie/Krasnystaw in Poland, was Eretz Israel. But throughout his work he is haunted by the guilt of being an accomplice in the ruin of homes, first that of his parents in the *shtetl* and then the homes of the Palestinian Arabs, whose villages and traditional way of life seemed to him to mirror his parents' world. This guilt constitutes the burden of much of his poetry

The fact that Yeshurun uses the Arabic word "*hirbet*" (an abandoned ruined house) in his advocacy of the instability of language, Jagendorf tells us, is a key to "a man torn between languages, places, and ruins. His language, he is telling us, should be read as evidence of ghostly presences that we might hurry to ignore. The ruin demands to be examined, it blurs distinctions between inside and outside, it reveals traces of lives lived, homes abandoned, and languages once spoken."[33]

Obviously, Zionism represents a diametrically different paradigm from, and indeed a quite deliberate revolt against, the more general, modern "exilic" experience of Jewish outsiderdom. To be sure, the individual and collective mediations between universality and particularity; the constitution, fluidity, interconnections, reinforcements, blurrings, and erasures of identities; and the formation, contestation, breakdown, and reconfiguration of physical, mental, social and geographical borders, of belonging and nonbelonging, are general human issues. They do, however, acquire a special sharpness and urgency within Jewish history, in both its internal dimensions and its relations with the wider world. They represent a history and consciousness almost always perched perilously at the edge.

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12 Reflections on Insiders and Outsiders

1. This piece, slightly revised in the present version, was originally written as the introduction to a volume (in honor of Ezra Mendelsohn), dedicated to an exploration of "insiders" and "outsiders" in modern East European Jewish history. See Richard I. Cohen, Jonathan Frankel, and Stefani Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders: Dilemmas of East European Jewry* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010).
2. The classic work by Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), remains one of the most insightful general approaches to the question.
3. See William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 235. In the chapter in the present book, "The Ambiguous Political Economy of Empathy," I provide a somewhat different perspective on the problem.
4. See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, translated by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973); also Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
5. See Shulamit Volkov's "Excursus on Minorities in the Nation-State" in her *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Chapter 8.
6. See Simmel's "The Stranger" in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed., Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 402–408.
7. This is a recognition that is shared both by formal classical sociology and in different form by contemporary deconstruction. As Edward Shils formulates it: "Society has a center. There is a central zone in the structure of society.... Membership... is constituted by relationship to this central zone." See his "Center and Periphery," in *Center and Periphery: Essays in Microsociology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 3.
8. For a provocative discussion of these issues in general, and with regard to matters Jewish in particular, see Michael P. Steinberg's impassioned plea against essentializing conceptions in his *Judaism Musical and Unmusical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
9. David Rechter, "A Jewish El Dorado? Myth and Politics in Habsburg Czernowitz," in Cohen, Frankel, and Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*, pp. 207–220. The quote appears on p. 220.
10. See Leon Volovici, "Mihail Sebastian: A Jewish Writer and his (Antisemitic) Master" in Cohen, Frankel, and Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*, pp. 58–69.
11. For an interesting analysis of this condition see Rael Meyerowitz, *Transferring to America: Jewish Interpretations of American Dreams* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), especially pp. 262–263.
12. See the introduction to David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susan Heschel, eds., *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 5.
13. See especially Mosse's *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985).
14. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. xiv.
15. Many of George Steiner's writings point in this direction. For one example, see "A Kind of Survivor" in his *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1977). See too Isaiah Berlin's rather surprising

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essay, "Jewish Slavery and Emancipation," in Alexander Manor, ed., *The Jews and the National Question* (Tel Aviv: Ichud Habonim, n.d.).

16. See the essay, "The Study of the Jewish Intellectual: A Methodological Prolegomenon," in Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), especially p. 37.
17. "The Stranger" appears in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed., Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 402–408. The quote appears on p. 402. On the Jews as the quintessential strangers, see p. 403.
18. See, most prominently, George L. Mosse's *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). For a more popular treatment, see Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Prophets without Honour: A Background to Freud, Kafka, Einstein and Their World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
19. See the essay "The non-Jewish Jew," in Isaac Deutscher's collection, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968). The quote appears on pp. 26–27.
20. See Strauss' preface to the English translation of his *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 24.
21. Thus Freud to members of the Viennese B'nai Brith, May 6, 1926. Quoted in Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 137.
22. Leszek Kolakowski, "In Praise of Exile" in his *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 56–57.
23. In a similar vein, see Colin Wilson's self-indulgent 1954 work, *The Outsider*. James Thurber's satirical question is apt here: "Why do you have to be a non-conformist like everybody else?"
24. See Edward W. Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso, 2003). The quotes are from p. 16 and p. 54 respectively. I am fully aware of the highly ideological and political charge contained in Said's book. I am using this piece agnostically and as yet another example of the ways in which Jewish intellectuality, dual outsiderdom, and a certain cosmopolitanism have been linked. In critiquing Said's advocacy of the non-Jewish Jew, a rather outraged Leon Wieseltier asks, "then why not the non-Palestinian Palestinian?" See his piece entitled "The Ego and the Yid," *The New Republic*, April 7, 2003, p. 38. Said and Wieseltier represent diametrical opposites. The former insists upon denying and opposing "essentialized" identity while Wieseltier writes: "The Jews are not Europeans and they are not non-Europeans. They are Jews, an autonomous people with an autonomous history that had directed them, in different times and in different places, against their will and according to their will, toward certain peoples and away from certain peoples." But for "outsiders" both "non-essentialist" *and* "autonomist" assumptions may be problematic and their choices in practice more gray, and less stark.
25. See Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), Chapter 2,"The Practice of Social Criticism," especially pp. 35–40.
26. I have tried to address some of these aspects in *Beyond the Border: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), a work that could have profited from some of the more critical observations made here.
27. See Richard I. Cohen,"The Project of Jewish Culture and Its Boundaries—Insiders and Outsiders," in Cohen, Frankel, and Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*, pp. 17–29.
28. For a sensitive philosophical and historical treatment of these questions in general, see Jerzy Jedlicki, "Heritage and Collective Responsibility," in Ian Maclean, Alan Montefiore, Peter Winch, eds., *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

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29. Jonathan Frankel, "The 'Non-Jewish Jews' Revisited: Solzhenitsyn and the Issue of National Guilt," in Cohen, Frankel, and Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*, pp. 166–187. The quote appears on p. 185.
30. See Ruth Wisse's provocative essay, "The Jewish Informer as Extortionist and Idealist," in Cohen, Frankel, and Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*, pp. 188– 204.
31. From Wisse's "The Jewish Informer." The quote appears on p. 204.
32. Hannah Arendt put it thus: "After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved—namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory—but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people." See her *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1958), p. 290.
33. See Zvi Jagendorf, "Gott fun Avrohom: Itzik Manger and Avot Yeshurun Look Homewards," in Cohen, Frankel, and Hoffman, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*, pp. 30–39. The quotes appear on pp. 34 and 39.

13 Toward a Phenomenology of the Jewish Intellectual: The German and French Cases Compared

1. See the (1956) preface to Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 82.
2. There are too many examples of Arendt's work to be listed here. But, the above work notwithstanding, see especially the essays in Part I ("The Pariah as Rebel") of her anthology *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed., Ron. H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, 1978) and, most crucially, her marvelous piece "Walter Benjamin: 1892–1940" in her *Men in Dark Times* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968).
3. For a very fine example that documents and seeks to explain "the startling productivity of the German-Jewish symbiosis," see David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1740–1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), especially the conclusion.
4. This is evident in almost everything Steiner writes. See especially but not exclusively "A Kind of Survivor," in his collection of essays, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1977) as well as his autobiographical comments in *Errata: An Examined Life* (London: Phoenix, 1997).
5. See George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington and Cincinnati: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. ix. In his autobiography, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), Mosse writes about *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, that it "is certainly my most personal book, almost a confession of faith" (p. 184).
6. See the analysis of Mosse, "George Mosse at 80: A Critical Laudatio" in my *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans and Jews* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001). This originally appeared in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April 1999).
7. I explore the personal and autobiographical dimensions of these predilections in an essay, "Growing up German-Jewish in South Africa," in *In Times of Crisis*. This appeared originally in *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. XL, No. 2 (November 1988).

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