

## SELF-IDENTITY AND THE JEWISH BODY: ASSIMILATED GERMAN-SPEAKING JEWISH AUTHORS ON TRADITIONAL JUDAISM

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### ABSTRACT

This article investigates portrayals of traditional Judaism and observant Jews in writings by assimilated German-Jewish authors. It thus explores notions projected onto traditional Jews – and particularly the Jewish body – as elements immanent to Jewish cultural production. At the centre of the enquiry are Heinrich Heine's *Hebräische Melodien* (1851), Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1902) and Joseph Roth's *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927). These writings construct speakers or narrators who endeavour to depart from traditional Judaism while at the same time questioning the feasibility of this effort. Following this dynamic, the article proposes that Anthony Giddens' notion of self-identity can elucidate the pre-occupation with the body in modern German-Jewish literature. This preoccupation illustrates individuals' internalisation of social norms as well as their active rewriting of these same norms.

Dieser Artikel untersucht Darstellungen des traditionellen Judentums und von praktizierenden Juden in ausgewählten Schriften assimilierter deutsch-jüdischer Autoren. Er beschäftigt sich somit mit Projektionen auf traditionelle Juden – insbesondere auf den jüdischen Körper – als ein der jüdischen Kulturproduktion immanentes Phänomen. Im Mittelpunkt der Analyse stehen Heinrich Heines *Hebräische Melodien* (1851), Otto Weiningers *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1902) und Joseph Roths *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927). Diese Texte konstruieren Sprecher oder Erzähler, die sich bemühen, sich vom traditionellen Judentum zu distanzieren, stellen aber zugleich das Gelingen dieser Bemühungen in Frage. Mit Bezugnahme auf diese Dynamik wird hier argumentiert, dass Giddens' Begriff der 'Self-Identity' die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Körper in der modernen deutsch-jüdischen Literatur verdeutlichen kann. Diese Auseinandersetzung erläutert die Verinnerlichung sozialer Normen ebenso wie deren aktives Umschreiben durch die Autoren.

Under the grave influence of German history in the twentieth century, numerous studies have set out to explore the undercurrents of anti-Jewish sentiments in German literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This scholarly trajectory takes writings by non-Jewish authors to perpetuate and produce portrayals of inherent and recognisable

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Jewish traits.<sup>1</sup> This article follows an alternative thread. It concentrates on 'intra-religious projection', understood as the stereotypical imagination of believers by members of the same religious community.

The emancipation of Jews into the German-speaking republic of letters since the late Enlightenment forms the backdrop for this enquiry. Since then, assimilated Jewish authors have been able to distance themselves from a traditional Jewish culture defined by adherence to unchanging rituals and to insular communal life. In this context, German-Jewish authors' public recognition as assimilated Jews has mobilised the circulation of their writings and their reception.<sup>2</sup>

Intra-religious German-Jewish literature constructs speakers who are invested in an ambivalent process of self-distinction from traditional Jews. On the one hand, their narratives centre on their demonstrable familiarity with traditional Jewish communities. As Jewish 'informants', these personas disclose to non-Jewish readers facets of a largely unknown lifestyle. Their close familiarity with Judaism intimates that the speakers are – or were – part of a traditional Jewish community. Yet on the other hand, the texts in question are generated by their authors' distance from the traditional community. Their mastery of German and of common literary conventions is what allows the communicability of the literary text to a broad audience. In this way, the cultural assimilation of European Jewry is translated into a narrative structure in which the speaker is identified as a liminal figure – a dual agent who hovers between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

I shall argue that a proliferating concern with the Jewish body mobilised the anxieties of Jewish authors regarding this liminal position. The analysis will build on Anthony Giddens' view that self-reflection is a constitutive modern phenomenon that responded both to the increasing abstractness of social constraints and to individuals' new responsibility for their social status. Giddens' critique of Foucault will advance the view of self-reflection as an embodied experience that responds to, or rewrites, public conceptions of social roles.

<sup>1</sup> Some examples include Hans Otto Horsch and Horst Denkler (eds), *Conditio Judaica* (2 vols); *Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Tübingen 1988–9; Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses*, Chicago 2003; Martha B. Helfer, *The Word Unheard: Legacies of Anti-Semitism in German Literature and Culture*, Evanston 2011.

<sup>2</sup> An early instance of the interest in traditional Judaism as mediated by an assimilated Jewish author is Goethe's 1772 review of Isaschar Falkensohn Behr's *Gedichte von einem polnischen Juden*. Behr was one of the first Jewish poets to write poems in German that engage Romantic or Rococo forms and themes, such as courtly love and Greek mythology. Goethe acknowledges Behr's considerable efforts in familiarising himself with prominent literary conventions in German. Goethe hints, however, at his disappointment that, notwithstanding the Polish-Jewish author's unique position, he does not supply innovations that differ from the work of contemporary German poets. Goethe's review is incorporated in the new edition of the collection in Behr, *Gedichte von einem polnischen Juden*, Mietau and Leipzig 2002 [1772], pp. 87–9.

My examination begins with Heinrich Heine, an author who could be said to model the phenomenon in question. In the canon of German literature, Heine's prominent status is connected to his identification as a Jew.<sup>3</sup> His poetic cycle *Hebräische Melodien* (1851) presents traditional Judaism as governing an insular communal life. At various moments of the cycle, the poetic speaker demonstrates Heine's Jewish origins through his familiarity with Jewish rites and liturgy. The cycle portrays life in the Jewish community as constricting, while its rites involve rudimentary bodily functions. Into this reality penetrate, however, thrilling instances of magic and spiritual exhilaration. The poetic speaker is able to grasp – and reveal to others – aspects of the Jewish faith that enliven this longstanding tradition. In so doing, the speaker constructs his own shift between an inferior position and its vigorous transcendence.

The second author under examination is notorious for his conflicted affiliation with Jewishness. In a famous – or infamous – chapter of his *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1902), Otto Weininger depicts Jewish men as effeminate, an accusation that, in line with his understanding of gender, presents them as damaging social beings. Weininger contends that Judaism creates unbreakable bonds to the family and the Jewish community. These bonds are necessarily destructive, to Weininger's mind, as they prohibit the independent agency at the core of healthy male political participation. His text is ambivalent about such individuals' ability to escape those bonds, presenting self-hatred as an intrinsic characteristic of Jewish men. Although potentially a driving force of self-change, self-hatred paradoxically also reinforces the view of Jewish personality traits as immanent.

The final case study, Joseph Roth's collection of essays *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927) signals intra-religious mediation as embedded in a proliferating modern phenomenon: global mobility. Roth's vignettes capture the mass migration of Jews from Eastern to Western Europe. They contrast, in so doing, Eastern European Jewish migrants with longstanding residents of the West. In the context of Roth's dire depiction of capitalist societies, the portrayal of traditional Jews as anti-individualistic turns them into resilient rebels against the modern social order. According to Roth, the immigration of Jews to the West requires their swift adaptation to modern pursuits, including a radically new physical appearance. That said, as in Heine and Weininger's respective *oeuvres*, Roth's collection hints at the troublesome incompleteness of Jewish assimilation. Each of these texts presents corporal visibility as unveiling the partial nature of assimilation.

<sup>3</sup> As Na'ama Rokem writes: 'Heine addressed the seemingly unrelated quandary of his place as a Jew in the German literary public sphere in an age defined on the one hand by emancipation and on the other by [...] the ever-growing limitation of the freedom and independence of the individual by the state. Heine was negotiating at the same time the opening of the German literary public sphere to his voice as a Jewish author and its closing to his voice as a social critic'; see Na'ama Rokem, *Prosaic Conditions: Heinrich Heine and the Spaces of Zionist Literature*, Evanston 2013, pp. 20–1.

## CONSTRUCTING THE MODERN BODY

Michel Foucault has famously argued that a new conception of sexual desire shaped homosexuality as a discernible secret of sorts:

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him [...] it was a secret that always gave itself away.<sup>4</sup>

In German-speaking central Europe, a proliferating discourse sought to define sexual diversity in medical terms. As Robert Tobin has shown, discussions of Jewish emancipation were linked in this context to new activism promoting rights for sexual minorities.<sup>5</sup> For both homosexuals and Jews, identity was taken as innate and was thus decoupled from its possible concrete manifestations in actions.<sup>6</sup> Discussing the pairing of Jewishness and homosexuality, Tobin cites Wendy Brown's view that the linking of Jewishness to sexuality relies on a new understanding of Judaism as a race, i.e., as something distinct from belief and national affiliation. As Tobin notes, Brown relies on Foucault's terminology in contending that, according to its new conception, 'Jewishness was something one carried individually, everywhere, and always'.<sup>7</sup>

Foucault's theory of sexuality has served a number of scholars who research the links between sexual diversity and Jewishness.<sup>8</sup> However, his work has evident gaps in its strict conception of the body as a social construct. Foucault's approach overlooks a salient aspect of the appearance of sexuality, particularly in the modern German-speaking world, namely the role played by introspection in shaping modern identities. In the scientific discourse on sexuality, autobiographical testimonies were an essential part of activist efforts to unearth voices from the social underground and disseminate scientific knowledge of sexual variability.<sup>9</sup> This pertains to activism in support of homosexuals, Jews or members of both groups, such

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, I: *An Introduction*, tr. Robert Hurley, New York 1978, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Deam Tobin, *Peripheral Desires: The German Discovery of Sex*, Philadelphia 2015, pp. 88–91.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> See Wendy Brown, 'Tolerance and/or Equality? The "Jewish Question" and the "Woman Question"', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 15 (2004), 1–31 (7–8).

<sup>8</sup> For a literature review that registers the dominant impact of Foucault in literature on Jews' embodied experience, see Naomi Seidman, 'Carnal Knowledge: Sex and the Body in Jewish Studies', *Jewish Social Studies*, 1 (1994), 115–46. Seidman makes some critical observations on Foucault's 'unequivocal stance against sexual surveillance' in this context (see 145, footnote 37).

<sup>9</sup> See the introduction to Joy Damousi, Birgit Lang and Katie Sutton (eds), *Case Studies and the Dissemination of Knowledge*, New York 2015, p. 7.

as the famous sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who built on autobiographical expression to establish the legitimacy of sexual divergences.<sup>10</sup>

The sociologist Anthony Giddens has become a major voice in viewing the emergence of an introspective self as seminal to modernity.<sup>11</sup> Giddens contends that modernity brought about a set of epistemological crises beset by the imploding of long-lasting social powers, such as religious institutions. Losing the confines of the traditional community – and the assurance they provided – compelled the individual to make an overwhelming number of new choices. Having lost clear social definitions, individuals were allocated new responsibilities for their social status, inducing disorientation and anxiety. Central to this dynamic is enhanced attention to the body:

The body is less and less an extrinsic ‘given’, functioning outside the internally referential systems of modernity, but becomes itself reflexively mobilized. What might appear as a wholesale movement towards the narcissistic cultivation of bodily appearance is in fact an expression of a concern lying much deeper actively to ‘construct’ and control the body.<sup>12</sup>

Giddens claims that the body stands in a complex set of relations to social transformations: bodily control is a central manifestation of one’s agency as a social actor. He thus observes that ‘routine control of the body is integral to the very nature both of agency and of being accepted (trusted) by others as competent’.<sup>13</sup>

However, Giddens does not adhere to a liberating vision for the social subject. He views anxieties regarding one’s body and sexual drives as an impulse to exercise one’s agency beyond the internalised social confines. It is through their constant, introspective self-control that individuals mobilise public discourse in new directions.<sup>14</sup> While social agents have a

<sup>10</sup> See Ina Linge, *Queer Livability: German Sexual Sciences and Life Writing*, Ann Arbor 2023, especially Chapter 2 (I thank Ina Linge for sharing her forthcoming work with me); Darryl B. Hill, ‘Sexuality and Gender in Hirschfeld’s *Die Transvestiten*: A Case of the “Elusive Evidence of the Ordinary”’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14 (2005), 316–32. While filling a seminal role in German-speaking studies of sexuality, the validity of first-person testimonies as scientific evidence was also questioned with doubts regarding their objectivity, particularly in the proliferating psychiatric analyses of sexual divergences. See Harry Oosterhuis, ‘Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll’, *Medical History*, 56 (2012), 133–55 (140).

<sup>11</sup> Giddens finds that Foucault’s: ‘view of the body is substantially wanting. He cannot analyse the relation between the body and agency since to all intents and purposes he equates the two. Essentially, the body plus power equals agency’; see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 1991, p. 57. According to Giddens, ‘Reflexive appropriation of bodily processes and development is a fundamental element of life-political debates and struggles. It is important to emphasise this point in order to see that the body has not become just an inert entity, subject to commodification or “discipline” in Foucault’s sense’ (*ibid.*, p. 218).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Giddens’ theory has been the subject of extensive critical scrutiny. For a relevant critical contextualisation of his notion of self-identity, see Colin Hay, Martin O’Brien and Sue Penna, ‘Giddens, Modernity and Self-identity: The “hollowing out” of social theory’, in Christopher G.

mediated relationship to their bodies, this is exactly what elicits their social agency and permits them to ultimately rewrite social confines instead of being merely shaped by them.<sup>15</sup> It follows that the abstract form of modern institutions which has transformed the constitution of the self could explain the swift rise of introspective case studies as pillars of scientific disciplines.<sup>16</sup> Against Foucault's understanding of 'power-knowledge' as a confining element of modern subjectivity through its 'one-way intrusion',<sup>17</sup> Giddens develops reflexivity as a notion that concentrates on individuals' rewriting of sexual discourse.

As this article will establish, writings by assimilated German-Jewish intellectuals epitomised new introspective perspectives. These are engendered by the demand to self-monitor one's visible difference from other social agents. Anxieties regarding corporal and sexual self-governance led to the new conceptualisation of Jewishness as multi-layered, heterogeneous or dormant.

#### ANXIOUS ASSIMILATION IN HEINRICH HEINE

Heine is well known for turning his back on his Jewish background through two acts of conversion but also for his reflections on whether his renunciation of his Jewishness was irreversible. His literary persona depicts both the assimilation of Jews and the view of Jewish heritage as persistent. This duality reflected Heine's contentious role as a cultural critic. His *oeuvre* reflects an ongoing interest in traditional Judaism, often associating this interest with insular Jewish communities in Eastern Europe.<sup>18</sup>

The *Hebräische Melodien* (1851) is a cycle of three poems that ends Heine's collection *Romanzero*. It captures a dynamic of conflicted attraction

A. Bryant and David Jary (eds), *Anthony Giddens: Critical Assessments*, New York 1997, pp. 85–112. Hay, O'Brien and Penna refer particularly to *Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy* – the works that are the point of reference in my own analyses. As they observe, whereas Giddens reiterates Foucault's view that discourse is constitutive of social reality, he argues against Foucault's ultimately one-sided understanding of power relations, particularly in the field of sexuality (*ibid.*, p. 92). Central to their critical assessment of Giddens is his ostensible inability to provide a robust explanation of the relationship between abstract institutions and individual agency.

<sup>15</sup> As Hay, O'Brien and Penna note, Giddens is invested in describing a 'shift in the referentiality of the self', which he takes to lie in the abstract nature of modern institutions that have replaced the concrete confines of traditional institutions; see Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (note 11), p. 86. Whereas the constitution of the self in reference to social institutions is new to modernity, this era has shaken the long-standing authority of *external* social institutions that previously constituted self-understanding. The shift is therefore towards internalisation of social confines, which becomes crucial to one's existential orientation.

<sup>16</sup> In *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Giddens expands his critique of Foucault, proposing to accept Foucault's 'arguments about the social origins of sexuality but set them in a different interpretive framework'; see Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love & Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Oxford 1992, especially p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> See Philipp F. Veit, 'Heine: The Marrano Pose', *Monatshefte*, 66 (1974), 145–56.

to Judaism – one that is accompanied by feelings of repulsion. Heine's ambivalent portrayals of Judaism cite Jewish liturgy, turning some central Jewish motifs into lyric tropes. In this way, the poem 'Jehuda ben Halevy' opens with the line 'Lechzend klebe mir die Zunge' – a reference to Psalm 137 with its famous declaration of loyalty to Jerusalem, in which the forgetting of Jerusalem is said to carry with it the symbolic paralysing of the tongue. Because the biblical allusion launches the poetic narration, it is suggested that the speaker is fearful lest a corporal punishment should bring his first-person narrative to a halt. The biblical allusion encapsulates concurrent rejection and embrace: the penalty designated for Jews who have forgotten Jerusalem is said to be inscribed on the speaker's body, tying him irrevocably to traditional Judaism.

The poem then shifts in order to centre on the medieval poet Judah Halevy, who embarked on a long-desired journey to the Holy Land, where he met his death. In the first instance, Halevy is hard to discern among other Jewish men. The long beard that typifies observant Jewish men makes him merge with his surroundings: 'Manchmal kommen auch zum Vorschein/ Bärte, schattig lange Bärte –/ Traumgestalten, wer von euch/ Ist Jehuda ben Halevy?'<sup>19</sup> In addition to his poetic gifts, it is his exceptional, trademark act – Halevy's heroic, historic journey – which distinguishes him, however, from others. This act, which facilitates the Romantic-mythical singularity of the poet's figure, is ultimately associated with a tragic fate.<sup>20</sup>

In the poem, the allusion to a corporal penalty – the clinging of one's tongue to the mouth – exemplifies Heine's engagement with bodily transformation through the prism of traditional Judaism. This pre-occupation demonstrates an attraction to the absurd. His poetics, as well as his autobiographical reflections, engender grotesque figures. These negotiate, with their hybrid, agonising or twisted imagery, the social functions of the Jewish body. The distinctiveness of an individual's body is connoted with an unavoidable, tragic link to Jewish liturgical vocabulary – a link exemplified in Halevy's striving to reach Jerusalem.

The poem's second part thus returns to Psalm 137 and thereby makes palpable a new poetic voice. This section of the poem begins with a first-person plural description of Jewish exile: 'Bei den Wassern Babels saßen/ Wir und weinten, unsre Harfen/ Lehnten an den Trauerweiden –/ Kennst

<sup>19</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Säkularausgabe – Werke, Briefwechsel, Lebenszeugnisse*, 3 vols, III: *Gedichte 1845–1856*, Berlin 1986, p. 111. In her reading of the poem, Irene Zwiép argues that Heine seeks in Halevy a universal poet figure, and hence wishes to present him 'not only as a classic poet, but as the archetypal Jew, whose life and work exemplified the Jews' eternal longing in exile'; see Irene Zwiép, 'To Remember and To Forget – Jerusalem in Jewish Poetical Memory', *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 31 (1998), 54–66 (61).

<sup>20</sup> In his reading of 'Jehuda ben Halevy', Jonathan Skolnik argues that the poem juxtaposes *Halacha* (Jewish law) and *Haggadah*, taking the latter to combine 'the inspiring power of literary technique with a sense of tradition and historical mission'; see Jonathan Skolnik, *Jewish Pasts, German Fictions: History, Memory, and Minority Culture in Germany, 1824–1955*, Stanford 2014, p. 54.



du noch das alte Lied?’<sup>21</sup> This declaration is rapidly replaced by a visceral image pertaining to a singular speaker: ‘...die Zeit leckt meine Wunde,/ Wie der Hund die Schwären Hiobs’.<sup>22</sup> The collective national past gives way to a lament for the fate of an individual in line with the Romantic author’s introspection.<sup>23</sup> In the same gesture, the allusion to Job shapes the speaker’s bodily image – Job’s sufferings culminated in a painful skin disease. Corporal disfigurement has an irrevocable link to Jewish liturgy. Identification with traditional Jewish texts infiltrates, as it does with Halevy’s tragic journey to Zion, the poetic endeavour of the individual.

Through its concrete engagement with theological polemics, the poem ‘Disputation’ centres on the visibility of observant Jews in fourteenth-century Toledo. The public dispute concerning the veracity of Jewish beliefs could, in theory, have the outcome that the loser would be forced to convert to the other religion: ‘Daß der Jude sich der Taufe/ Heil’gem Sakramente füge,/ – Und im Gegenteil der Christ/ Der Beschneidung unterliege’.<sup>24</sup> Describing religious conversion as swift and contingent, the poem reiterates longstanding anxieties linked to circumcision as the marker of Christian-Jewish difference. While the exchange of arguments is comparable to a duel, the physical presence of a knife intimidates the public viewers. The reality that Christians are ‘safe’ from forced conversion does not dispel the danger of the ‘Jewish’ knives. Juxtaposed to the Christian sacrament, the physical marking of the male genitalia is an alert to the irreversibility of an individual’s identity as a Jew.

Counteracting the threatening physicality of Jewish ritual, the *Hebräische Melodien* reflect the striving for transcendence associated with the Jewish faith. Another much discussed poem from the cycle, ‘Prinzessin Sabbath’, a parodic history of Jewish modernity, correlates traditional Judaism with a hybrid bodily presence. Heine compares Judaism to a handsome prince who was turned into a dog by a magic spell. As a religion, Judaism is at its core a ‘Hund mit hündischen Gedanken’.<sup>25</sup> Yet this grim depiction leads to a redemptive moment that colours the poem: on the Sabbath, the dog magically turns back into a human being. Heine’s portrayal of Judaism has been taken to represent the lives of assimilated Jews – and to reflect, thereby, Heine’s own social status. Hannah Arendt, for example, reads this poem as one that captures Jews’ precarious political status in European societies. Arendt applied her famous notion of the ‘parvenu’ to Jews who built their lives on the partial and conditional granting of rights, a political concession based on the assumption that the social

<sup>21</sup> Heine, *Gedichte 1845–1856* (note 19), p. 116.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Paul Peters links the derogatory depictions of Jews in Heine’s work to the author’s self-parody, which Peters understands as a common strategy of Romantic literature; see Paul Peters, *Heinrich Heine “Dichterjude”: die Geschichte einer Schmähung*, Frankfurt a. M. 1990, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Heine, *Gedichte 1845–1856* (note 19), p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.



agent in question was benefiting the state (usually economically).<sup>26</sup> Heine demonstrates, according to Arendt, the active deployment of his societal marginalisation.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas Heine was conscious that the granting of political rights to Jews was, in general terms, a conditional and volatile provision, his poetic work celebrates, in Arendt's mind, the freedom gained by operating outside the prevailing social order. This characterisation leads Arendt to argue that

Heine is the only German Jew who could truthfully describe himself as both a German and a Jew. He is the only outstanding example of a really happy assimilation in the entire history of that process.<sup>28</sup>

Arendt understands 'Prinzessin Sabbath' in this light. The figure of the dog at its centre encapsulates the poet's liminal position as a fortunate outsider: 'This poem, we are informed by Heine, was especially composed for the purpose by the people's poet – the poet who, by a stroke of fortune, escapes the grueling weekly transformation of his people'.<sup>29</sup> Giddens' notion of the self may supplement this account in its view that 'the self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities [...] individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications'.<sup>30</sup>

According to this view, self-control elicits creative efforts to redefine one's religious, ethnic or sexual identity. As Noam Pines observes, Heine's depictions of Jews are not to be understood as the manifestation of Jewish self-hatred, but rather as 'sustained self-attempts at analysing the phenomenon of self-hatred'.<sup>31</sup> According to this reading, Heine's writings portray the individual's bodily self-perception as determined by social institutions variably and dynamically. Heine's images of traditional Jewry are intertwined with introspection on the corporal immanence of Jewishness.

In his 'Berichtigung' of 1849, Heine publicly declared his inability to hold to the 'Hellenic identity' that he had previously claimed to pursue, an identity which he had contrasted with that of the 'Nazarenes' (identified as

<sup>26</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'The Jew as a Pariah: A Hidden Tradition', in *The Jewish Writings*, New York 2007, pp. 275–97.

<sup>27</sup> Bonnie Honig succinctly summarises Arendt's account: 'Between the isolation of the pariah and the self-betraying inclusions of the parvenu, Arendt locates a third way, that of the "conscious pariah", who does not seek mere social inclusion, but does not merely accept his pariah status either. Instead, he stakes a claim to a place in the world whether by demanding inclusion, voicing righteous outrage, claiming his (sometimes non-existent) rights, or mocking authorities'; see Bonnie Honig, 'The Laws of the Sabbath (Poetry): Arendt, Heine, and the Politics of Debt', *U.C. Irvine Law Review*, 5 (2015), 463–82 (464).

<sup>28</sup> Arendt, 'The Jew as a Pariah: A Hidden Tradition' (note 26), pp. 275–9 (p. 281).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>30</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (note 11), p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Noam Pines, *The Infrahuman: Animality in Modern Jewish Literature*, Albany 2018, p. 5.

adherents to Christian and Jewish morality).<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, Heine linked his forced renunciation of literary heresy – a position that he associates with his former admiration for Goethe and with Greek tropes – to his own corporal frailty:

ich bin kein lebensfreudiger, etwas wohlbeleibter Hellene mehr, der auf trübsinnige Nazarener herablächelte – ich bin jetzt nur ein armer todkranker Jude, ein abgezehrtes Bild des Jammers, ein unglücklicher Mensch.<sup>33</sup>

Thereby, Heine renounces his position as a sinner-poet who mocks the 'Nazarenes' for their confining morality. A grave illness unearths an innate quality of his corporeal essence: his Jewishness. Now revealed, this quality shows him to be incapable of resembling a victorious literary heretic.

As we have seen, however, Heine's writings also entertain – and reproduce – a view of Jewishness as an object of attraction and a promise of joy and longevity. The *Hebräische Melodien* present an introspective attempt to orientate oneself as a person caught between the socially deficient status of Judaism and attraction to Judaism's transcendental promise. In 'Prinzessin Sabbath', the hovering between the inferior and the sublime is paralleled with the difference between mundane routine and the experience of holy day. Intertwined with Heine's poetic persona, his poetic speaker is constituted by introspective juxtaposition to traditional Judaism. The speaker assumes his role via his reflections on the visibility of the Jewish body and on its radical transformative potential.

#### COMMUNITY AND SEXUALITY IN OTTO WEININGER

Whereas Heine responds to new social categories with poetic playfulness, Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1902) is notorious for the patent self-hatred that resonates in his attacks on homosexuals. In fact, however, Weininger's elaborated theory of sexuality promotes a new and more subtle understanding of minority identities via his notion of sexuality as a stratified phenomenon. This understanding corresponds with his presentation of Jewishness as an identity that can become manifest, in his opinion, to various degrees.

At the beginning of the chapter dedicated to Jews, *Geschlecht und Charakter* establishes that Judaism is a race by suggesting that Jews resemble in their features two other 'races' – the 'Neger' and the 'Mongolen'.<sup>34</sup> Clarifying this perspective, Weininger declares, however, that Judaism is 'keine Nation

<sup>32</sup> As Pines notes, this admission connoted Heine's poor health – a physical weakness that marked his Jewish identity; see *ibid.*, p. 6, and Noam Pines, 'Life in the Valley: Figures of Dehumanization in Heinrich Heine's "Prinzessin Sabbath"', *Prooftexts*, 33 (2013), 25–47 (26).

<sup>33</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften in 12 Bänden*, IX, ed. Klaus Briegleb, Munich and Vienna 1976, p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter*, Vienna and Leipzig 1909, p. 411.

und keine Rasse, keine Konfession und kein Schrifttum'. Rather than approaching Judaism as any of the above, he examines Judaism in relation to humankind as a whole, unearthing the Platonic idea of this entity.<sup>35</sup> His analysis soon shifts from biological traits to the social realm: Weininger declares that Jews are inherently inclined to a communal form of existence, a quality manifested in their inability to assume individual property.<sup>36</sup> This failure corresponds to what he describes as the Jewish inability to function as able citizens since healthy citizenship entails, in Weininger's mind, an intrinsic, self-governing self.<sup>37</sup>

Weininger's analysis of Judaism reinforces the leading insight of his gender theory. At the beginning of his analysis of Judaism, he declares: 'das höchststehende Weib steht noch unendlich tief unter dem tiefststehenden Manne'.<sup>38</sup> This exclusionary declaration notwithstanding, the dominant perspective it reveals is that of stratification, an approach which is conducive to subtleties that stand in contrast to his blunt aversion to certain groups. In this way, Weininger considers personality traits (including femininity and masculinity) to coexist in each and every individual.<sup>39</sup> Resting his argument on new biological findings, Weininger contends that each cell in the human body contains varying degrees of sexuality, which are informed by the diverging presence of both male and female components.<sup>40</sup> Weininger built on innovations in the study of biology to advance the view that homosexuality is grounded in sexual indeterminacy, an expression of the universal bisexuality that he perceived to be a biological fact.<sup>41</sup> This is a methodological perspective that resembles, importantly, his approach to Jewishness: 'Es gibt Arier, die jüdischer sind als mancher Jude, und es gibt wirklich Juden, die arischer sind als gewisse Arier'.<sup>42</sup> While Weininger viewed personality traits as innate,

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 416–19.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>39</sup> Nancy A. Harrowitz relates this theoretical sophistication to the interest in Weininger's work: 'Weininger, in his insistence that he is talking about "qualities" or "tendencies" rather than "people", intrigued his intellectual generation and one or two subsequent generations by his formulation of women and Jews into recognizable groups of traits that are, however, largely disembodied'; see Nancy A. Harrowitz, 'Weininger and Lombroso: A Question of Influence', in Nancy A. Harrowitz and Barbara Hyams (eds), *Jews & Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger*, Philadelphia 1995, pp. 73–90 (p. 86). On Weininger's appreciation among contemporary intellectuals, see Chandak Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna*, Chicago 2000, pp. 2–3.

<sup>40</sup> Sengoopta has shown that this account incorporated the period's theories of 'idioplasm': the study of anatomical traits as a derivation of biological information. To Weininger, all individuals have a different and unique cellular make-up, allowing for variations and 'sexual asymmetries' on a local level (such as effeminate qualities in an otherwise masculine man); see Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna* (note 39), pp. 74–5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>42</sup> Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (note 34), p. 414.

their association with social categories is sporadic and partial as they are modulated by institutional confines.

Whereas earlier anti-Jewish accusations had referred to Jews as hypersexual or perverse, Weininger introduces a new focus by depicting Jewish individuals as effeminate – a transition concurrent, at this period, with the increasing power of the feminist movement.<sup>43</sup> To Weininger, the healthy ‘masculine’ man is first and foremost an individualist. Jewish men have qualities that demonstrate their intellectual potential, but their all-encompassing loyalty to the immediate community makes them unable to fully participate in the life of the state: ‘Daß der Jude nicht erst seit gestern, sondern mehr oder weniger von jeher staatsfremd ist, deutet bereits daraufhin, daß dem Juden wie dem Weibe die Persönlichkeit fehlt; was sich allmählich in der Tat herausstellen wird’.<sup>44</sup> Weininger’s own conversion from Judaism to Protestantism shortly before the publication of his only work (and shortly before his suicide) contributed to his reception as a self-hating anti-Semite who relentlessly but unsuccessfully attempted to avoid the faults that he associates with Judaism.<sup>45</sup> Giddens’ correlation of the modern scrutiny of the body with the emergence of introspection sheds light on the widespread reception of Weininger’s ideas. Even when such influential readers as Sigmund Freud did not accept his scientific conclusions on sex and identity, they still appreciated – and disseminated further – the case of a young assimilated Jewish man whose patently tormenting self-identity was reflected in an act of suicide. In this way, intra-religious Jewish projections converge with a proliferating interest in self-identity and, more generally, in the public scrutiny of intimate thoughts and behaviours.

Discussing what might lead the individual to assume ‘enhanced Jewishness’, Weininger argues that the family – a unit which in his eyes is maternal in essence – plays a most important role in Jewish life.<sup>46</sup> The family fosters unhealthy attachment – a suffocating embrace. Rather than pursuing individualism, Jewish men are trapped in familial customs and commitments. Both factors promote what Weininger sees as feminine behaviours, namely, that Jews allegedly take after others, imitate or push themselves into circles where they are unwanted.

Nevertheless, Jewish men are described by Weininger as having considerable potential. For one thing, the Jew embodies an enhanced form of intellectualism. Jews are not mentally inferior; rather, they demonstrate that the intellect, for practical purposes, may be counterproductive.

<sup>43</sup> See Ritchie Robertson, ‘Historicizing Weininger: The Nineteenth-Century German Image of the Feminized Jew’, in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds), *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 23–39.

<sup>44</sup> Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (note 34), p. 418.

<sup>45</sup> Most influentially, this interpretation of Weininger’s suicide is suggested by the Jewish philosopher Theodor Lessing in his work *Der jüdische Selbsthaß*, Berlin 1930.

<sup>46</sup> Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (note 34), p. 422.

Jews are plagued, to Weininger's mind, by constant doubt, scepticism and suspicion. Remarkably, this image not only complicates traditional prejudices regarding Jews' intellectual inferiority but also the more neutral presupposition according to which Jews' indebtedness to faith guides their existential orientation.

Anxiety-inducing introspection appears to be a central feature of Jews' detrimental intellectual activity. In line with the description of Jews as plagued by overwhelming reflection, a remarkable aspect of Weininger's reflections is the assertion that an individual's obsession with negative traits leads to self-identification with them. The following paragraph could be said to gesture towards its author. Here, Weininger alludes to the obsessive, incessant condemnation of certain personality traits that one detects in oneself:

Wie man im anderen nur *liebt*, was man gerne ganz sein möchte und doch nie ganz ist, so *haßt* man im anderen nur, was man nimmer sein will, und doch immer zum Teile noch ist. Man haßt nicht etwas, womit man keinerlei Ähnlichkeit hat. Nur macht uns oft erst der andere Mensch darauf aufmerksam, was für unschöne und gemeine Züge wir in uns haben.

The conclusion to this reasoning, according to which 'die allerschärfsten Antisemiten unter den Juden zu finden sind',<sup>47</sup> hints at an empirical author who confesses his own psychic dynamics in his critical generalisations on Jews. Weininger's conversion to Christianity only intensifies this impression: his descriptions of Judaism blend cultural and biological explanations, thus raising doubts as to whether conversion can in fact yield an irreversible change in a Jew's character. For Weininger, Jewishness signifies hidden, threatening truths about one's personality. Weininger concludes that the 'echte Jude hat kein Ich und darum auch keinen Eigenwert'.<sup>48</sup> Jews navigate their social position tarred by this initial lack.

This essentialism notwithstanding, an innovative aspect of Weininger's philosophy is the decoupling of biological and social categories. Situating Weininger against the background of his time, scholars have taken his comments on Jews, despite their negativity, as shifting from an exclusionary to an inclusionary discourse.<sup>49</sup> Weininger's account advanced a transformation in the study of sexology – a radical shift that was endorsed in activist calls to protect the rights of men engaging in same-sex relations. Like his contemporary Hirschfeld, Weininger perceives

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>49</sup> In this vein, Steven Beller argues that 'in his belief in the individual's ability and right to overcome one's lesser self, Weininger is politically very firmly in the liberal tradition'; see Steven Beller, 'Otto Weininger as Liberal?', in Harrowitz and Hyams, *Jews & Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger* (note 39), pp. 91–102 (p. 97). See also Bettina Bergo, 'Otto Weininger and the (Political) Problem of Categories', in Daniel Price and Ryan Johnson (eds), *Movement of Nothingness: Trust in the Emptiness of Time*, Aurora 2012, pp. 51–72 (especially p. 64).

sexuality not in the form of binary oppositions but as existing on a wide scale of potential behaviours. The radical implication of this approach is that each individual is not entirely heterosexual or homosexual. The attempt to distance oneself fully from 'perverse' sexuality is necessarily doomed to fail. The introspection of an author of Jewish origin is both instrumental and emblematic of this project. In line with this change, autobiographical and auto-fictional accounts by assimilated Jewish intellectuals engendered doubts regarding the (in)visibility of their Jewishness. Like sexual identification, Jewish religiosity could be perceived as a spectrum. Jewishness is not manifested equally, nor is it physically visible in all its adherents.

The convert, whose identity is hinted at in Heine and in Weininger's respective *oeuvres*, refers to observant Jews' identity in order to define his own. Heine and Weininger's respective writings thus invoke their authors' familiarity with traditional Judaism. Their texts prompt the view of Jewishness as persistent while also drawing attention to the fact that an individual's categorisation as a Jew is shaped by social powers. From their position as assimilated Jews, these two authors develop inquiries into Jewishness as a cluster of irrevocable traits, both corporal and psychic. The allusions to traditional Jews allow the narrators to conceptualise a spectrum of possibilities which defines their own existence. As in the case of homosexuality, Jewishness emerges as a potentially latent quality which is referenced by the intimidating image of those who perform it: observant Jews. Even if one cannot lose one's Jewishness, its manifestations can vary.

Rather like Heine's description of Jewish physicality as threatening, Weininger's notion of the Jewish effeminate man could be judged as the symptom of an anxious personality. By contrast, Joseph Roth's account of Jewish immigration to the West rescues a forgiving understanding of Judaism while offering a socio-cultural scrutiny of the differences between observant and assimilated Jews.

#### GLOBAL MOBILITY AND SELF-LOSS IN JOSEPH ROTH

Roth's ethnographic essays, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927), depict the existential dilemmas of Jewish individuals, registering the transition from traditional ghetto life into a society in which Jews follow modern social and professional pursuits. The Eastern European migrants are associated with traditional Judaism (though they rapidly drift away from this communal affiliation upon their relocation to the West). Roth supplies a historical-anthropological contribution to the thread of intra-religious reflection. He attests to the circumstances that shaped swift social assimilation at the dawn of advanced capitalism and the related mass migration. Roth's work thereby documents tensions immanent in the Jewish community, in particular the hostility targeted at observant believers by assimilated Jews.

Roth's collection of essays empathises with the perspective of Jewish immigrants. In Eastern Europe, the Jewish ghettos are overcrowded and poor living conditions are inflicted upon their inhabitants. The Jewish emigrants strive, understandably, for a more comfortable life in the West, which they associate with humanism. Yet they encounter the opposite, being treated with suspicion and even with cruelty. Their dreams of empowering treatment in their new, chosen 'home' are shattered by a devastating reality as they experience xenophobia, disorientation and estrangement.

An essential element of Roth's forgiving approach to Jewish migrants is the parallel he draws between their naïve misconception of the West and Westerners' ignorant projections onto the East. The Western association of the East with strict customs and religious conservatism is as faulty as the newcomers' fantasies of the West. Upon their immigration, Eastern European Jews are met with suspicion. Their foreign-sounding names are emblematic of the suspicion displayed by administrative institutions. But bureaucratic procedures transform them into individuals whose presence is made acceptable, among other things, by changing their foreign names. An especially painful aspect of migrants' disillusionment, however, is their treatment by local Jews – although these, it is hinted, have undergone a similar acclimatisation entailing the radical transformation of their physical appearance. Their reaction is disappointing, given that many such Jewish residents in the West have experienced the hurdles of immigration and, more particularly, the transition from insular Jewish communities to the secular way of life enforced by their new surroundings.

While Roth's overall account is sympathetic, his condemnation of nationalism in all its forms also entails criticism of Jewish migrants. Roth's disdain for nationalist tendencies relates to his identification of assimilation with capitalism, a feature of modern life – especially of Western life – which he regards as an all-encompassing phenomenon. The willingness of Jews to die in war to protect their new European homelands is thus, in his account, as much a radical outcome of nationalist sentiments as it is a symptom of the economic constraints that enforce cultural adjustment. Expressing national loyalty to European states speeds the assimilation of Jews at the cost of their loss of religious and cultural particularity. Formulating this process in economic terms, the text moves swiftly from a description of their suffering on the battlefield to the topic of the bourgeois manners adopted by Jewish immigrants – a description that pertains to their routine social life. The rapid narrative transition echoes the Jewish immigrants' speedy transformation, which encompasses illness and bodily decay as well as a change of attire and belongings:

Sie starben, litten, bekamen Typhus, lieferten 'Seelsorger' für das Feld, obwohl Juden ohne Rabbiner sterben dürfen und der patriotischen Feldpredigt noch weniger bedurften als ihre christlichen Kameraden. Sie



näherten sich vollkommen den westlichen Unsitten und Mißbräuchen. Sie assimilierten sich. Sie beten nicht mehr in den Synagogen und Bethäusern, sondern in langweiligen Tempeln, in denen der Gottesdienst so mechanisch wird wie in jeder besseren protestantischen Kirche. Sie werden Tempeljuden, das heißt: guterzogene, glattrasierte Herren in Gehröcken und Zylindern, die das Gebetbuch in den Leitartikel des jüdischen Leibblattes packen, weil sie glauben, man erkenne sie an diesem Leitartikel weniger als an dem Gebetbuch.<sup>50</sup>

Covering their prayer books is emblematic of the overall masking of their identity. The new appearance of Jews in frock coats and top hats, as masters, contrasts with their previous, insular life in Eastern European communities.

In a similar vein, the text refers to the 'poor observant Jew' as confined by the inherited belief that fortune is gifted by God – a belief shared by other, non-Jewish religious individuals.<sup>51</sup> Although Roth rejects the 'radical revolutionary' view of Jews as an anti-Semitic myth, he establishes that a certain group of traditional Jews – among whom are the Torah scribes, the Jewish teachers and others employed in religious service – could be described as a 'confessional proletariat'.<sup>52</sup> *Juden auf Wanderschaft* traces the transformation of male immigrants against the background of intensifying economic constraints. Notwithstanding the restrictions entailed in placing one's faith in divine providence, authentic Jewish religiosity is also depicted as a rare haven from capitalism.

Roth's description of the transformation of traditional Jews is first and foremost a tale of cultural geography. *Juden auf Wanderschaft* depicts the Jewish migration from Eastern to Western Europe as a movement prompted by illusion and desire. The immigrants aspire to an imagined lifestyle that they have long fostered but which differs radically from the disillusioning reality they encounter in the West. The aspiration to wander is described as grounded in a powerful inner drive:

*Viele wandern aus Trieb und ohne recht zu wissen, warum. Sie folgen einem unbestimmten Ruf der Fremde oder dem bestimmten eines arrivierten Verwandten, der Lust, die Welt zu sehen und der angeblichen Enge der Heimat zu entfliehen, dem Willen, zu wirken und ihre Kräfte gelten zu lassen.*<sup>53</sup>

As in a sexual act, the traditional Jews who seek to assimilate lose the contours of their identity. The result is the momentary shaking of a stable identity that had been defined in longstanding communal terms and religious rites.<sup>54</sup> It is telling that this account defines the desire to assimilate

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, Cologne and Amsterdam 1976, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14 (emphasis added).

<sup>54</sup> In her reading of this paragraph, Katja Garloff investigates Roth's presentation of Jews' will to assimilate, which she views as 'sensual attraction to the non-Jewish world' that is mostly associated

in sensual vocabulary. As a result of migration, intimate anxieties pertaining to bodily appearance come to the fore. The ability to merge with the bourgeois class exposes Jewish individuals as exceptionally malleable. In other words, the aptitude to be seen as normal encapsulates perversion.

Roth's close analysis of strikingly divergent *milieux* poses the question: who is the apt observer of the Jews' swift transformation? In Roth, the reporting persona appears omnipresent, regnant in distant geographical regions and generations.<sup>55</sup> The narrator emerges as a figure who combines an omniscient presence with an intimate knowledge of human vulnerabilities. Representations of the body as transformative are pointers not only to an insider's knowledge but also to the narrator's social position as a mediator.

Covering different chronological stages in the development of German-speaking, assimilatory Jewry, I have sketched intra-religious projection against the background of the increasing role played by introspection as a social phenomenon. The conceptualisation of sexuality as variable can serve to define the boundaries between traditional and secular Judaism. Weininger reflects on this co-dependency in his explicit theory of sexuality; it can be said to be anticipated, to a certain extent, in Heine's references to the Jewish body as both malleable and innately dissimilar to that of non-Jews.

#### VISIBLE BODIES

In the late nineteenth century, the medicalisation of sexual desire constituted a new understanding of social minorities. This trend reinforced the status of biological structures as a driving force of social existence at the margins of human society. Equipped with Foucault's theory of sexuality, scholars have sought to show that the view of marginal identities as innate is limited. Supplementing this theoretical paradigm, I have argued that, in order to understand how sexuality and Jewishness have constituted each other reciprocally, one should consider introspective practices. Giddens' understanding of modernity is effective in scrutinising self-identity as a proactive negotiation of social pressures. At the same time, however, Giddens' theory could also be expanded by the case of assimilated German Jewry. The authors in question supply, namely, a more robust account of

with women; see Katja Garloff, 'Femininity and Assimilatory Desire in Joseph Roth', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 51 (2005), 354–73 (355); emphasis added. She takes female characters as the main agents mobilised by this desire (her primary focus is Roth's 1930 novella *Hiob*). Garloff also considers, among other examples, Heine's *Rabbi of Bacharach* and Weininger's theory of sexuality when placing Roth in a German-Jewish lineage that links assimilation with destructive female desire (which she finds in Heine's novel) and with the figure of the emasculated Jew in Weininger; *ibid.*, 356–7.

<sup>55</sup> For a recent biographical focus on Roth as a transnational migrant, see Heinz Lunzer, 'Das Werk, das Leben Joseph Roths', in Artur Pelka and Christian Poik (eds), *Joseph Roth. Unterwegs in Europa*, Leiden 2021, pp. 3–20.

the persistence of religious identity in modernity, supplementing a theory that regards religion primarily as an absence.

Investigating the lineage of inter-religious encounters, I have argued that the modern attention to sexuality allowed for a stratified presentation of inherent tendencies. Assimilated German-Jewish writings reflect on innate inclinations as a range of possibilities rather than as normative and non-normative polarities. The emergence of figures whose words mediate between traditional and modern societies demonstrates how self-identity both absorbed social attention to the manifestation of Jewishness and engaged with it creatively.

This theoretical context helps to explain depictions of 'the Jewish body' in writings by assimilated German Jews. Heine's references to traditional Judaism are entangled with existential distress. His poetic persona pronounces the bonds tying his imaginary speaker to a collective religious myth. Of the three authors, Weininger is most readily identified with the discourse on sexuality and its hazardous essentialism. His work is self-referential in its concern with Jewish belonging and its irreversibility; given the impact of its reception, its engagement with sexual abnormality may well have influenced further self-referential depictions by German-Jewish authors. Heine and Roth's respective *oeuvres* – while engaging with sexual topics more implicitly – also depict Jews' assimilatory efforts in terms of striving, drives and corporal transformation. Intra-religious reflections build on the rise of confessional case studies in the late nineteenth century. In this way, self-identity rests on the introspective negotiating of Jewishness as an inherent quality. Anxieties about the corporal manifestations of Jewishness dominated this trend. The issue of corporal visibility imbues the Jewish body with a new form of anxiety. This openness also draws public attention to divergence and heterogeneity as defining features of modern Jewish identity.