

Politics and Literary Capital in Tomer Gardi's *Broken German*

Abstract

The article investigates the solidarity between minority groups as a catalyst of literary capital and, correspondingly, as a point of departure for a critique of the literary industry. The case study is Tomer Gardi's *Broken German* (2016). Viewed enthusiastically by literary critics and scholars alike as a bold political statement, the work entertains that different minority groups hold an affinity based on their exclusion from hegemonic German culture. The exposure of the author's identity as an Israeli Jew suggests that the novel's language—broken German—marks the solidarity of Jews with other minorities. Concomitantly, however, the novel alerts to the hierarchical consideration of non-Western migrants in Germany. Those alerts complicate the parallel between minority groups that diverge from each other starkly on economic terms. *Broken German* thus forestalls the debates sparked by its own publication: polemics that approached its disjointed language as a gimmick and that questioned, correspondingly, its literary quality. The novel highlights the promotion of foreign authors as a self-seeking practice of cultural institutions, which raises doubts regarding the very standards that define literary merit.

Key words: contemporary German literature, Jewish literature, migration literature, literary competitions

Published in the summer of 2016, Israeli author Tomer Gardi's *Broken German* appeared as a literary anomaly. For one, as its title discloses, the work is written in German that does not adhere to ordinary grammar and syntax. The genre of the work is likewise hard to identify. Defined by its publisher as a novel, the book assembles anecdotes about the lives of immigrants in contemporary Berlin. The anecdotes appear interconnected, if loosely, by recurring scenes that illustrate the protagonists' estrangement from German culture. The anecdotes depict their precarious jobs and fear cohabitation of spaces in Berlin's cultural underground: shops, bars and low-cost restaurants. Because the narration places foreigners as its focalizers, the readers need to follow foreigners' perspective and disjointed language to decipher the novel's plot. Alongside descriptions of work immigrants' routine hurdles, *Broken German* presents an auto-fictional figure of an Israeli Jew who wanders the streets of Berlin. He presents himself sporadically as the book's author. His monologues ponder the social image of Jews in contemporary Germany considering the country's intensive preoccupation with its past.

Broken German provoked great interest, which grew steadily upon Gardi's consideration for the prestigious Bachmann prize. The novel's celebration is telling in light of the Bachmann prize's history. The competition has been opting to endorse bold and marginal voices as shown in its relative openness to works that question the hegemony of German as a national language. This agenda translated to Emine Sevgi Özdamar's winning of the prize already in 1991, an event that stressed her status as a non-native speaker of German.¹ Ensuing literary creations in Kanak Sprak, an invented dialect of youth of migration background, carried considerable public attention.² What is more, on the occasion of Gardi's candidacy, the winner was Sharon Dodua Otoo, a Ghanaian-British Black woman activist. Gardi's employing of "improper" German in literature sparked a unique controversy. At the time that the novel was published, Gardi was living in Tel Aviv, though he has been spending long

periods in Germany and Austria. Because his novel connotes disjointed German with underprivileged populations in contemporary Germany, it invites inspection of its author's political stance in identifying himself with his protagonists. The panel of judges put under scrutiny Gardi's aptitude as a candidate given his ostensible lack of command of German and discussed his Israeliness and Jewishness as elements that have provoked the attention to his work.³

Counteracting this discussion, critics have praised the novel as innovative and timely. The jury member who had nominated Gardi for the award, Klaus Kastberger, wrote that the novel demonstrates that contemporary German literature “*succeeds where European politics fails*. Providing a home to the refugee and to linguistic immigration, which arrived long ago and live among us, is among [this literature's] greatest tasks.”⁴ Kastberger mentioned in his account Gardi's activism for Palestinian rights.⁵ His reference to “linguistic immigration,” an expression that is both metaphorical and concrete, resembles Wiebke Sievers's view that “by moving beyond the borders of grammar, orthography and usage as they are determined by native speakers in German-speaking countries, the book claims German as a global literary language.”⁶ These descriptions of the novel's disjointed language qualify Anne Betten's description of *Broken German's* reception as “close to euphoric.”⁷

This reception presented *Broken German* as impervious to societal pressures. It thus overlooked, I argue, the novel's blunt commentary on the literary industry and, particularly, on this industry's instrumentalization of authors' political, ethnic and religious identities to prompt the commodification of their work. I will begin with a historical contextualization of the novel's appearance. Prevalent to this background were reactions to the arrival of a large group of refugees in Germany in 2015-16. I will examine the proliferating presence of Israelis in the German capital in the past decade as essential to understanding Gardi's political image. The second section will turn to the novel's occupation with the literary

industry. The novel ironizes, I argue, its own presentation as a courageous political statement, which is preempted by its discussion of literary institutions' embrace of foreign talent. The third section will turn to the novel's descriptions of Israeli and Jewish exchange with other foreigners. These encounters are portrayed as beset by their hierarchical consideration by the German public. The final section will present Gardi's performance at the Bachmann Prize competition as extending this occupation with the literary industry. What is unique about Gardi's novel is not the level of linguistic fragmentation that it makes us tolerate, nor the scandal that it has provoked, but the link of Gardi's public performance to the novel's comments on the instrumentalization of authors' ethnic and political identities to prompt their marketability.

The Long Summer of Migration

Gardi's celebration in the German-speaking world derived from his perception as a *certain* Jew—one who uses his privileged visibility in the German-speaking world to align with underprivileged minorities. *Broken German* appeared in a fraught moment of global demographic transformation. As of December 2016, more than 600,000 Syrian refugees reside in Germany; the Syrian population in Germany had more than tripled in less than two years. In 2015 and 2016, Chancellor Angela Merkel's asylum policies were widely criticized as too permissive. Concerns have been raised regarding the rapid changes of Germany's cultural values. Those concerns targeted the newcomers' unfamiliarity with Germany's culture and the foremost pertinence that it destines to the Holocaust as well as to Germany's commitment to the protection of Jews and the State of Israel. In those polemics, newcomers to Germany were signified as Muslim despite the fact that Syrian society accommodates multiple faiths.

The juxtaposition of minority groups to each other has shaped discussions of Germany's asylum policies. On the one hand, liberal voices have alluded to Germany's historical responsibility to shield individuals from the violation of human rights. On the other hand, both nationalist groups and center parties have cited the arrival of Muslims to Germany as a risk to Germany's Jewish inhabitants. Erika Steinbach, a member of the center-right CDU party, tweeted in November 2016, "In the course of one year we added one million anti-Semites to Germany."⁸ Concurrently, the swift popularity of the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland was facilitated by its politicians' vocal critiques of the government's policies toward refugees alongside their evading of accusations of anti-Semitism. The party's leaders have presented Muslims as a threat to Germany's values, while extolling Jews as its longstanding residents.

Jewish groups were active in those debates. In late 2015, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster, called to curb the number of refugees receiving asylum in Germany since they may risk the safety of Jews living in the country. The contested view that certain critiques of Israel emanate from anti-Semitism enhanced this position. Following Schuster's statement, a group of young activists gathered to protest this position with the motto "Not in Our Name – Jews against Racism" announcing "We are ashamed of Josef Schuster's racist statements and distance ourselves from them very determinedly." Their protest culminated in a demonstration next to the Leo-Baeck-House in Berlin. The report of the protest in the *Jüdische Allgemeine*, Germany's foremost journalistic publication on Jewish life, shows a protestor holding Anne Frank's portrait.⁹

To compound matters, one should mention the group of some thousands Israelis who have immigrated to Berlin in the past decade. While their number is a fraction of other diasporic communities in Berlin, their visibility is considerable.¹⁰ This diasporic community yielded literary, academic and journalistic publications and artistic, cinematic, musical and

theater productions.¹¹ The Israeli diaspora in Berlin has brought forward a new argument in Germany's polemics on its changing demography. This group effaces, namely, the binary opposition of Jews to Middle Eastern cultures that permeates Schuster's statement and other expressions of concern. Must Jews be protected from the Middle Eastern newcomers? This question appears paradoxical upon the realization that the growing Israeli diaspora in Berlin is a collective of newcomers from the Middle East.

The Israeli expatriates have contributed to the dissociation of Arab culture from anti-Semitism, since they represent their Middle Eastern background as integral to Israel's demographic mix.¹² The appearance of many Jewish Israelis, particularly their skin color, contributes to their view as Middle Eastern, in the first instance, rather than as Israelis or Jews. Moreover, many Israelis resist their recruitment for the call to protect Germany's Jews from the Muslim newcomers. Self-identified as leftist activists, a number of Israeli expats in Berlin hone a critical perspective on Israeli politics, and on the view that present-day Jews seek a safe haven from Arab violence.¹³

Gardi's national identity brings to the fore his Jewishness. Readily identified as a Jew, Gardi holds a cultural capital that facilitates the dissemination of his German writings. His sought-after public appearances enable him to speak, voluntarily, in the name of less privileged foreigners, or—in a starkly different formulation—appropriate their voices.¹⁴ On the other hand, Gardi's Israeliness encapsulates responsive political involvement with Israeli policies, which complicates the view that Germany's commitment to Jews dictates their protection from Arab hostility. *Broken German* is Gardi's second novel; his first, which appeared in a German translation in 2013 under the title *Stein, Papier: Eine Spurensuche in Galiläa*, details an auto-fictional unearthing of Palestinian history and of early attempts to avoid military service disregarded by Israel's mainstream historiography.¹⁵ Gardi's activism

signals a sought-after political transgression of an Arab-Jewish binary opposition. His public persona thus resonates, as will now be shown, with *Broken German*'s narrator figure.

Precarious Solidarity

Broken German's opening scene offers a gesture of solidarity among minority groups in contemporary Germany. It follows teenagers Radili, Amadou and Mehmet who converse among themselves. Signaled by their names is the boys' divergent ethnic and national background (seemingly Middle Eastern and African). From the start, the novel founds an alliance of foreigners joined by speaking broken German.

The boys' casual stride is interrupted abruptly by a group of hostile, drunk soccer fans. The boys' behavior reveals a conundrum: an artificial and forced imperative to act normal. They appear alert to impending hate crimes:

...[T]he voices get closer and closer and the three continue and do not walk more quickly and continue talking only in order not to walk more quietly, scarily and uncannily. From behind someone then shouts at them. Hello y'all! Hello y'all! What kind of language are you speaking there! Radili and Amadou and Mehmet speak German but no Arian German rather their German same as my German that I write here and as I speak it.¹⁶

The dramatic climax of the scene is not the act of violence but the narrator's surprising statement of his affinity to the boys. The narrator makes himself into a fellow protagonist who is ontologically present in the storyline. Calling standard German "Arian" bluntly

connotes hegemonic cultural norms with racial violence. Broken German elicits an instantaneous distinction between the “us” and the “others”:

Then Radili stops and turns over and says, that it is German. Mehmet und Amadou stop together with him and also turn around. No, someone says. Bald. Red eyes from drinking. No, he says. That’s not German. What WE are speaking is German, he says. What WE are speaking is German. What you are speaking there is not German.¹⁷

The narrator’s self-presentation intimates that like his protagonists-focalizers, the writer (of disjointed German) is susceptible to aggressive scrutiny. Reappearing as an adult, the boy Radili will turn into a main protagonist whose tendency to make up stories conflates him, occasionally, with the novel’s author.

Building on references to Jewish history, the narrator suggests that his disjointed use of language is grounded in his Jewish origins: “My mother tongue is not my mother’s mother tongue. My mother’s mother tongue is not her mother’s mother tongue. Her mother’s mother tongue is not the mother tongue and so on. And so much so on” (91). The connection among Jewish family members appears to center on an unspoken trauma.¹⁸ Their inappropriateness as linguistic subjects appears integral to Jewish history.¹⁹

The narrator’s embrace of the vulnerability embodied in one’s disjointed language contrasts literary conventions that presume authors’ command of the language of narration. *Broken German* reflects on linguistic proficiency as endowing authors with power: “[W]hat is an author without authority? And what is an author without his command of language? And what is a Sir [Herr] without his sovereignty [Herrschaft]? And what is sovereignty without a subordinate?”²⁰ At first glance, Gardi’s own prose manifests its divergence from literary norms that render an author authoritative. Simultaneously, his prose intimates to the reader

foreigners' misguided attempts to assimilate into German society through verbal communication. Because it compels the readers to follow his protagonists' worldviews, Gardi's German becomes a literary achievement rather than a failure. Notwithstanding this efficacy, concerns following authors' loss of authority make for a main thread in the novel. *Broken German* comments copiously on the cynical fetishization of foreign authors in the literary market.

The Author as an Ape

In recurring scenes, the novel parallels immigrants' precarious existence as economic subjects to the publishing industry's treatment of authors. Authors appear dependent on the whims of literary institutions, including award competitions, presses and literary criticism. This dependency accentuates artists' image as untrustworthy and eccentric. The novel infers that catering to the taste of literary institutions may involve exhibiting one's foreign origins or Jewishness. Embracing ostensibly underprivileged authors fuels literary institutions' self-presentation as politically correct. However, with this embrace, literary institutions risk renouncing longstanding parameters for literary quality. *Broken German* places its own disjointed language at the center of this problematics.

The novel ties cultural politics to the literary industry by showing how foreign authors are transformed into tokens of progressive politics. A main subplot presents an author of non-Western origins who is asked to hold a public reading launching the "Kafka Institute," a cultural center that would replace the Goethe Institute. He is selected for this role upon presenting himself as a winner of a prestigious literary prize. This culminates in a literary scandal: the prize is exposed as fake, and the publisher and other cultural institutions are implicated in the fraud. The indication that the author had to flee a country after his lie had

been discovered presents foreign authors as potential suspects. They are able to achieve success rapidly despite their incomppliance to standard scrutiny.

This subplot builds on *Broken German*'s use of intertextuality. In particular, the novel references Franz Kafka's short story "A Report to an Academy." In Kafka's story, a narrator details his transformation from an ape into a human. He confesses to emulating human behavior to escape from his cage having been captured and taken away from the African jungle. The humanized ape reports to the scientific community that his transformation was surprisingly easy. A landmark of this successful adjustment is his human speech, the aptitude that facilitates his report. In Gardi's adaptation, the signifier "the academy" gradually changes as it is revealed that the narrator addresses the audience that controls literary production and reception: critics, publishers and the media. As the narrative continues, the thematic infrastructure borrowed from Kafka centers on one's ability to narrate. The exhibited humanized ape is a migrant-author who details his transformation into a distinguished writer in a Western country.

Like Kafka's story, Gardi's version of the monologue conveys the speaker's sensations, angst and hybrid perception of the world. However, in contrast to Kafka's protagonist, the narrator attests that his own transformation has been unsuccessful. His involvement in a literary scandal taints his reputation in his home country, and he is revealed to be a scammer in his new country. The monologue raises doubts regarding the identity of the immigrant-author, questioning the credibility of authors and of the literary institutions that embrace them:

And the man, that writer, they continue gossiping, that is, the people, is me. To exchange the Goethe Institute with a Kafka Institute? A keynote speaker? Invited?

Requested? Nonsense, they say. A refugee. An immigrant. A guest worker. A guest worker in the prose of a distant, foreign, other language.²¹

Because artistic merit cannot be quantified, the initial revelation that an author's prestige was gained unjustly raises doubts regarding the literary awards. The narrator correlates the mistrust with which he may be met in the literary world to his foreignness. Foreign authors' reputation is questionable. By way of parallel, Gardi's objectives in writing in broken German raise questions regarding his literary merits, and by extension, regarding the anticipated celebration of the novel. Is Gardi's broken German merely a gimmick that prompts his marketability?

Having the celebration of authors raise doubts regarding the literary industry is intrinsic to the appearance of the literary gimmick in neoliberal cultures. Neoliberalism minimizes regulatory interventions in market relations in the name of liberal politics. Sianne Ngai presents 'the gimmick' as that which confers excessive monetary value on unexceptional goods. She argues that the gimmick is "capitalism's most successful aesthetic category but also its biggest embarrassment and structural problem." According to Ngai,

With its dubious yet attractive promises about the saving of time, the reduction of labor, and the expansion of value, it gives us tantalizing glimpses of a world in which social life will no longer be organized by labor, while indexing one that continuously regenerates the conditions keeping labor's social necessity in place. [...] [O]ur very concept of the gimmick implies awareness that, in capitalism, misprized things are bought and sold continuously.²²

If the novel's disjointed German is nothing but a gimmick, its hints at a political alliance between Germany's newcomers and Jews are revealed as empty and risk free. Gardi's broken

German would then seem to be a political gesture that is highly profitable while not carrying with it a genuine intention. Considering Gardi's broken German as a literary gimmick would expose the senselessness of capitalist economy and of the literary industry that is entrenched in capitalist logics.

Broken German thus alerts to progressive politics as a swift means to promote literary institutions and declare them relevant to the wider public. When old cultural institutions wish to present themselves as vital, they may endorse migration literature as exactly that.²³ Rapid success raises doubts concerning authors' merit, since it signals their possible instrumentalization. With the loss of the author's authority, a whole set of assumptions regarding the credibility of literary institutions collapses. In this way, improper German is unpalatable to many literary critics and academics; at the same time, however, unconventional language may spark literary prestige when it is appropriated as reflective of immigrants' genuine language and political identity.

In its reference to Kafka and to the reception of migration literature in Germany, the novel forestalls its own reception as a successful, marginal text. Its author enjoys the privilege of having his broken German amplify his literary voice, rather than silence it. The subplot draws attention to the rising current of migration literature in the German-speaking world and highlights the correspondence of this trend with political positions endorsed by Germany's literary, cultural, and academic institutions after World War II.²⁴ Kafka's reception was imbued in a global dissemination of literature as a national asset – a process that had matched literary capital with national territories worldwide.²⁵ The reception of Kafka's work as antinational advertised the overarching all-human relevance of his work. The contemporary endorsement of migration literature by literary institutions, which seek an affiliation with anti-discriminatory politics, is ingrained in a similar embrace of authors who are taken to transgress national boundaries.

The embrace by literary institutions yields financial capital in the form of book sales and literary prizes. At the same time, authors' labor resonates with capitalist economy in additional ways, including the cultural embrace of such notions as the creative prolificacy and the creative genius. The literary industry crowns literary stars, construing rapid success stories that mobilize foundational capitalist narratives of self-fulfillment. At the same time, as Sarah Brouillette has shown, literary texts are also able to question this contribution:

Writers have been contributing to a broader questioning of conceptions of culture that literary tradition has helped to constitute and legitimate conceptions emphasizing a self-referencing interiority and creativity, self-expression and self-invention, freedom from constraint of any kind, and that ideal of the autonomous artwork, expressive of individual genius and innovation, that has proven so useful to neoliberal capital.²⁶

Several of those longstanding conceptions of literary merits—particularly self-referencing interiority—have been rendered tokens of literary quality by literary prize competitions.²⁷ Against such tokens, *Broken German* suggests that authorial creation is entrenched in a fraud. In so doing, it shows how literary capital emanates from authors' ethnic, religious, and (anti)national affiliations. Contrasting a naïve endorsement of political writing, the novel questions the economic backdrop of literary writing and of the literary industry.

Broken German links the ape-like author to the image of Jews in contemporary Germany. Another subplot—an unsolved murder of an Israeli visitor to the Jewish Museum Berlin—unearths the tension between the commemoration of Jews as absent from German society and the concurrent celebration of Jewish immigrants to Germany. As he unfolds this crime narrative, the narrator-protagonist's Jewishness collides with his identity as a work immigrant: an identity that is associated not with Jews in contemporary Germany but with

low-income laborers from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Exhibiting his Jewishness, he explains, is an opportunistic move grounded in the writer's precarious existence:

I said I am a work immigrant in the German language. A work immigrant in the prose of a foreign language. That I have things to do here in this language's prose. That is, that I have work to do in this language's prose. Only the cash-in-hand work [schwartzte Arbeit]. So don't worry. I am not stealing work from any German literate. So don't worry. I am only doing the cash-in-hand work. And therefore, I had to go into the Jewish Museum [...] For the cash-in-hand work. Into the German language. And because we writers are like that.²⁸

Dishonesty appears integral to literary writing. Authors are deemed dependent on literary institutions, which can grant them the dissemination of their work, income and prestige. The authors' empirical existence is therefore meaningless; what matters is the ability of cultural institutions to instrumentalize them in order to legitimate their own status. Is a Jewish author's identification with "Oriental" immigrants a publicity stunt? Critics have discussed the novel's disjointed language as pointing to just that. Gardi's candidacy for the Bachmann prize was a platform that advanced his challenge to the literary industry, which was prone to both celebrate and question his literary merits.

Social Hierarchies

The novel appears to challenge the nationalistic backdrop of linguistic homogeneity.²⁹ However, several scenes call into question the author's conflation of national backgrounds. Depictions of Berlin's linguistic underground point to the disparity between minority groups that hold starkly different socioeconomic positions and cultural capital.

While keeping their exact location unclear, the narrator links the plot to Berlin neighborhoods with large populations of Turkish and Arab immigrants. Several scenes take place in call shops—a mix of a convenience store, an internet café and a community center. Those shops serve foreigners in instructing each other, in broken German, about the intricacies of life in Germany. Those locations are associated with a rift: brokenness that relates to individuals' overall existence:

Where are we sitting now [...] This is your call shop. The brokenger. Bro. Your shop is the broken one. You shop is the broken-German-speaking-space [Gebrochenesdeutschsprachigesraum] (23).³⁰

Call shops are called after the telephone booths that are placed in them, which offer cheap (if yet outdated) means of calling home. This association with communication ironizes the position of the shops in Berlin's margins. The individuals who frequent them speak improper German. These margins host behaviours that are at odds with industrious society: alcoholism, smoking and overall idleness. The power relations that dominate language and render it (dis)appropriate are entrenched in economic logics.

The precarious nature of the protagonists' employment leads to a vicious circle of culpability and blame. In this way, Radili, who works in a food counter, is distressed over losing his job due to his drinking habits and tardiness. Realizing that he is late for work, he rushes to his workplace and pays for a cab ride that he cannot afford. It is revealed that his job entailed selling "orientalische Spezialitäten" (Oriental specialties). While Radili can sell the German public his "Oriental" heritage, the scene indicates that other immigrants have better goods. Arriving late at his workplace, Radili encounters his boss: Tomer Gardi. This

strict taskmaster decides on the immediate termination of Radili's employment evoking the theme of an author's authoritativeness:

And he looks back, Tomer Gardi, looks at Radili Anuan. Really Radili. Really, he says. If you don't want to be here, it's better you go home, ok? I don't need you here. And also not tomorrow and a day after tomorrow, also not. Go. Go now.³¹

Offering Germans "Oriental specialities," both Radili and Tomer attract the German audience with their non-Western heritage. Under this umbrella, however, the Israeli has a superior position. His employment diverges from the cash-in-hand arrangement of many Turkish and Arab work immigrants.

In what follows, Radili's stream of consciousness ponders the entrenchment of those market forces in Germany's memory culture. His reflections begin with the recognition that he is now suddenly free. Countering his status as unemployed, he associates the word "free" with the famous Auschwitz sign "Arbeit macht frei." This association makes him imagine that the sign would suddenly be missing its final letter: "Where is my I? Arbeit Macht Fre. Arbeit Mach Fre. Arbeit Macht I. Subsequently, the authorities find the missing letter in the snow. (31)"³² Radili's day dreaming, a marker of his idleness, leads him to connote the immigrant's precarious employability with the Nazi control of individuals. What links the two together is the ultimate dependence of one's selfhood ("I") on labor.

Broken German pursues this provocation. Radili explores the economic exploitation of foreigners while referencing both Germany's fascist history and its mobilizing of socioeconomic hierarchies:

What are they doing now? Hanging the sign again? Arbeit macht frei, hanging it again, big ceremony, holding speeches. It's important. Not to forget. Inviting

Germany's federal chancellor, Israeli army's chief of staff, deputy of the German employment agency, municipal administration, foreigners' office. Big ceremony. The Auschwitz guards are currently suspended, was written in the paper. Ha ha. Great. You couldn't make this stuff up. The government allocated 100,000 Euro for instillation, a modern surveillance system in the concentration camp. Cameras, wires, computers and monitors, new electricity in old fences. After 60 years, Auschwitz is once again safe. Guarded. That's also a lot of work. Costs a lot of money. Instillation and everything. 1 Euro jobbers can do it. Work immigrants. Asylum seekers. Recipients of unemployment payments. I could also join. I need a job now. Practical after all. Such a project would last for a while. They could let us all sleep there, in the empty barracks.³³

Radili's monologue illustrates an immigrant's perspective. He mentions the German authorities that an immigrant would encounter routinely including the foreigner's' office, the administrative centre in charge of deciding on immigrants' visas. His concerns further the association of Auschwitz's dehumanization of its inmates with the instrumental treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers in contemporary Germany. The narrative relates the endurance and practicality of occupational tracking to Auschwitz's mortifying functionality.

The monitoring of the site emerges as an uncanny reminder of Auschwitz's original function. "Guarding" the Holocaust's cultural assets suggests that these are used to map social actors' diverging economic roles.³⁴ The novel presents memory culture as a job-generating industry that preserves, through public funds, the correlation between individuals' cultural capital and socioeconomic position. The memory economy allocates high and low roles to different ethnicities and classes. State economy appears intertwined with its memory

politics. Radili differentiates those who administer Germany's cultural politics from those who follow their decisions. The scene reinforces Israelis' cultural capital, which derives from Israel's image as a safe haven for Jews that builds on the country's military resilience. In this blunt satire, the camp serves to reinforce the correlation between class, ethnic and national background, on the one hand, and employability, on the other hand.

Literary Scandals

The Bachmann Prize competition's website presents Gardi with few details that capture his positioning in a certain political context.³⁵ It mentions that Gardi served as the editor of *Sedek: A Journal on the Ongoing Nakba* and of a corresponding book series ('Nakba' portrays in Arabic the 1948 war and ensuing Israeli sovereignty as disastrous). Nonetheless, the excerpt from *Broken German* that Gardi read in the competition problematizes his presentation as a political activist. Gardi chose a section that details the arrival of the narrator and his mother in Berlin. The two lose their baggage and either mistakenly, or more plausibly deliberately, snap two suitcases from the baggage carousel. Upon arriving at their hotel, the narrator observes that the suitcase he stole is marked with the nametag "Abd Alkarim Hamdan" (52). He wears pants from this stranger's suitcase, which are too large for him. The exchange of Israeli-Arab identity entertains a mismatched identity theft.

Subsequently, the narrator describes how his mother walks into his hotel room, where the two smoke and drink whiskey. In an apex of their misconduct, she strips naked in front of him. The markers of a foreign identity, the clothes that she has stolen do not cover her naked body:

Then she stands up, my mother, throws the cover away, standing naked in space. She is tall and shameless and smiles as she picks up one of the underwear, sticks a foot in,

pulls the underwear up. It suits her up until her knee, not further. Way too small.

[With] a pantie on her knee, she picks up a white shirt. Sticks an arm in, the other one she already doesn't manage, she lets the skirt hang there. I begin to laugh and she does too, the tiny underpants around her knee, half an arm inside the shirt. Then she looks for another shirt, sticks her other arm inside, looks for another underwear, sticks her other foot in, pulls it up to the other knee. Cheers, mom! Cheers!³⁶

The mismatch in sizes animates a playful carnival that encompasses mindless crime, intoxication and incestuous tension. The scene bluntly disrupts the expectation of harmonious alliance between newcomers from the Middle East.

Gardi's evocative reading of the extract, in accented German, preempted the discussion of his blunt evading of cultural decorum. He was wearing an unbuttoned Hawaii shirt with tropical print exhibiting his chest hair and a thick golden bracelet. The audience viewed Gardi's reactions projected on a screen as the members of the jury discussed his rampant use of disjointed German. The video recording of the competition captures Gardi's blunt body language as he listens to panel conversing about his work. He at one point interrupted the jury's discussion of his German to demonstrate, to the audience's laughter, that he in fact understands what is said.

While his appearance canceled out Western cultural norms, the fact that Gardi was not an immigrant—and not a typical “Oriental”—informed the novel's discussion at the competition, where speculations regarding the authenticity of his writing bore the comparison to works by immigrants of Turkish origins. Gardi commanded the German language, having spent several years in Vienna in his youth. Between the lines of the novel's ‘inappropriate’

German emerge, moreover, evidence to his erudition and educational background, primarily through his use of intertextuality.

The jury's discussion played into the hands of *Broken German's* blunt commentary on cultural institutions' unreflective reliance on progressive agendas. They presented Gardi's inclusion in the competition as a token of opening the floor to marginal literary voices. Meike Feßmann thus asked whether there is "liberalism of language use" that elicits openness to Gardi's prose. In a clichéd note on Jewish authors' historical right for self-expression, she added that what was "broken" is Jews' connection to German culture, which is gradually recovered in the present. Gardi's prose elicited, also in that instance, a metaphorical treatment bound with recent history. Hildegard E. Keller followed those comments with a comparison of Gardi's prose to migration literature by work immigrants. Gardi's book is, Keller contended, a poetic pidgin of sorts. Like Feßmann, Keller implied that Gardi's Jewishness and Israeliness compel critics to accept his disjointed German prose as legitimate. Her account takes Gardi to present a sophisticated play on language acquisition and migration. This consideration juxtaposes Gardi to genuine self-expression of youth of Turkish origins.

Gardi's nomination was an invitation to speak in public in broken German at a moment that garnered questions regarding the orchestrating of an author's public performance as a political gesture—questions that are pertinent in the case of Jewish authors.³⁷ The novel predicted that invitation. It also anticipated the doubts regarding its own merits, making the scrutiny of foreign authors' credibility into a literary motif. Exhibiting the foreign Jewish author—a leftist Israeli who challenges the opposition of Jews to Arabs—catered to the taste of literary institutions that are constantly asked to adjust to demographic transformations and pressing political polemics. In its comments on the publishing world, *Broken German* indicates that its language would stir discomfort. The text also resists the gravity with which Germany's history overshadows its reception by rejecting a sense of

reconciliation and by stressing the instrumentalization of Germany's memory culture by literary stakeholders.

Presenting writing as precarious labor and literary merit as beset by self-seeking agendas, the novel resists the appropriation of literature for idealized presentations of creativity. Gardi drew attention to his exclusion from the discussion by making himself present, using pronounced body language that drew the camera to him. The promise for inclusion was undermined by the framing of the Jew in compliance with the dominant culture and under its terms. The foreign author has turned into an ape.

German-Jewish Stuttering

In an interview to a Hebrew Berlin-based magazine, Gardi was asked what made him write the book in German. His response referred to the political valence of the publication in times of accelerated global mobility. He expressed his wish to represent co-speakers of disjointed German:

I wanted to write a book in the broken language that I spoke and am still speaking, because I thought it's beautiful, and it is also an important political claim, for myself, and for the rest of the people who live in the German-speaking realm, whose German is improper in their mouth and keyboard, [I wanted to write] about the beauty in this impropriety, and about the beauty in this impropriety in times of migration and asylum-seeking in Europe.³⁸

Gardi then stated that while being a political act, his broken German is also "very personal." Writing in broken German, for him, means embracing vulnerability. Gardi explains that his biographical encounters with German created a fissure in his linguistic expression:

When I was a kid, I moved with my family to Vienna for three years. After about half a year, I think, I began stuttering. A very heavy and dominant stutter. It was an incredibly deep crack in my tongue, and in the entire oral cavity of self-expression. Even after we returned to Israel and to Hebrew I continued stuttering, the stutter was a part of me [...] With time it disappeared. And with its passing, I began missing this quality of my speech, something that was mine and that I lost. And German is deeply connected to this stuttering that I introduced to Hebrew and from which I have moved on. And it is this that I looked for in writing in this language, which is stuttered in my mouth. This is the very private side in choosing to write in this language. And it does not cancel out, or stand in hierarchy to, as either superior or inferior, to the political choice to write in this language. I think that after World War II, a new symbolic order has been set between Germans and Jews. Before the Holocaust, Jews were blacks of sorts. After the Holocaust, the German whitened the Jews, made them semi-Europeans, accepted them into their white collective. The Jewish part of that deal was supposed to be that the Jews accept their whiteness but shut up about everything that happens with other non-white. Broken German, concomitantly to its private dimension, goes against this ethnic redistribution, objects to it, disagrees with it.³⁹

Gardi defines his status as a Jew as a liminal position: Jews hold the memory of social expulsion. In contrast, in the present, they enjoy the association with Europeans. He correlates Jews' social standing to racial conflicts. Once Jews have been "whitened," they can protest against the treatment of non-whites. It follows that Jews should use their new cultural capital to speak for those who are currently excluded from "the white collective."

Jews' attempted assimilation into German society has been entangled with the accusation that they corrupt the German language.⁴⁰ This history frames Gardi's public performance and experimentation with linguistic hybrids.⁴¹ Richard Wagner has famously claimed that Jews' rootlessness makes them inapt in producing performance art. The notion that Jews speak a corrupted dialect of German had echoes in German theatre wherein Jewish actors' performances evoked critiques of their non-standard dialect, permeating the training of Jewish actors that opted to rid them off their "Jewish dialect." The long theatrical career of Shimon Finkel illustrates these efforts.⁴² Born in Belarus, Finkel came to Berlin and studied theatre in 1923. He later joined a Zionist theatre group and became one of Israel's foremost actors and directors. In his autobiography, he described his time in Berlin as an incessant effort to lose his Jewish traits. His Yiddish accent undermined his performances. A most radical attempt to mask his Jewish identity ensued: Finkel had his nose and mouth operated in order to change his tone of voice and make it more palatable for his German audience.⁴³

An author's Jewishness could prompt his idealization, as Gardi's public statements convey. Gardi's self-reflective reading subsumes a long history of Jews' attempts to speak standard German in public: endeavours of ridding themselves of Jewish particularism and attaining the universality expected from cultural influencers. However, Gardi embraces the view of broken German as integral to Jews' ongoing cultural position. Gardi recalls that his stuttering in German has impacted his Hebrew. This testimony deconstructs the concept of the mother tongue—an act that he deploys vis-à-vis his mother tongue, Modern Hebrew, the language that marks Jewish cultural independence.

Broken German Studies

Because the literary industry grants provocateurs a place of honor, invalidating its institutions appears paradoxically hard. In this way, critiques of literary prizes are subsumed into the economy of literary prestige. As James F. English has shown, antiprize rhetoric configures the ideological apparatus that makes literary prizes relevant. Antiprize protest, he argues, draws attention to prizes, rather than eliminate their cultural significance. Literary competitions repeatedly elicit scandals, which “ultimately derive from the scandalous fact of the prizes’ very existence, their claim to a legitimate and even premier place on the fields of culture.”⁴⁴

Broken German’s undermining of conceptions of literary merit bears a lesson to scholarship. In abstaining from relapsing to an idealized celebration of the autonomy of literature, the novel grants literary texts political valence, which emanates from literature’s reflexivity vis-à-vis the market powers. Problematizing its status as a political token, I have argued that Gardi’s work and public appearances accentuate the symbolic capital encompassed in Jews’ solidarity with other minority groups. Subsequently, the novel ironizes its appeal to progressive politics. In so doing, Gardi’s novel disables authors’ portrayal as noble political actors. In its comments on the publishing industry, the novel unearths the commercial considerations behind authors’ casting as political agents.

The case of an Israeli-Jewish author who writes in disjointed German unearths the political etiquette that guides literary institutions on a transnational level. The celebration of foreign talent artificially reverses societal currents that deprive non-Western immigrants. It makes authors pawns in service of a political dynamics in a national culture to which they are foreign. Alerting to this dynamic, *Broken German* may thus serve to expand literary sociology into new directions in pointing out the amalgamation of national mobility, market forces and political activism.

¹ For an argument regarding Özdamar's treatment as the "ethnic Other" under the auspices of the competition's attempted multiculturalism, see Karen Jankowsky, "'German' Literature Contested: The 1991 Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize Debate, 'Cultural Diversity,' and Emine Sevgi Özdamar," *The German Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1997): 261–276, here 263. Similarly, Leslie A. Adelson criticizes the view of German-Turkish literature as intercultural as a "rhetorical conceit" that posits authors as bridges between two worlds. *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature. Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 6.

² Feridun Zaimoğlu's coinage, the term garnered anti-assimilatory voices on immigrants' lives.

³ Reviews on the book that referred to the competition appeared on *Die Zeit* online edition (19.8.2016); the weekly *Der Freitag* (4.7.2016); and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* Blogs (3.7.2016), among others. Deutschlandfunk Kultur released a coverage of the reading under the title "Fragezeichen in Klagenfurt" on 2.7.2016. A radio adaptation of the novel (Hörspielfassung) won in 2017 a prize for the best radio play in Germany. Gardi's numerous public readings, interviews, and public performances have demonstrated that he does, in fact, command German to a high level.

⁴ Quoted and translated in Eshel and Seelig, "Editors' Introduction" in *The German-Hebrew Dialogue: Studies of Encounter and Exchange* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 1–18, here, 2. The emphasis does not appear in the German text. Eshel and Seelig present the novel as a landmark in the reception of migration literature in the German-speaking world, since Gardi's nomination for the Bachmann prize "points to the loosening of norms surrounding the aesthetics and politics of German" (*ibid.*, 1). They also describe Gardi's intervention into the cultural politics revolving German as marking a new stage in the

reception of German in Israeli culture, which for many years considered the language a taboo (ibid., 2).

⁵ Klaus Kastberger, “Wir schaffen das!” *Die Zeit*, 19.9.2016

<https://www.zeit.de/kultur/literatur/2016-08/literatur-migration-tomer-gardi-broken-german>

⁶ “From Monolingualism to Multilingualism? The Pre- and Post-monolingual Condition in the Austrian Literary Field,” *Austrian Studies* 26 (2018), 40–56, here 50.

⁷ “Broken German – Tomer Gardis literarische Einmischung in die deutsche Gegenwart und Geschichte.” *Chilufim: Zeitschrift für jüdische Kulturgeschichte* 24 (2018): 31–69, here 32.

⁸ “Innerhalb eines Jahres haben wir mehr als eine Million Antisemiten zusätzlich in D.”

⁹ (24.11.2015) <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/protest-gegen-zentralrat/>

¹⁰ Because many Israelis hold European passports, it is hard to know their exact number. In a recent publication of the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Dani Kranz writes that there are about 15,000 Israelis in Germany. The number rises to 20,000 to 25,000 if we include dual citizens and individuals who are potential citizens (for example since they have an Israeli parent). “Israelinnen und Israeli*nnen in Deutschland” (21.3.2021)

<https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/329053/israelinnen-und-israelinnen-in-deutschland?rl=0.1425189058691233#rate5> In an earlier publication, Kranz

reflects on the disparity between the Israeli immigrants’ modest number and their visibility, particularly in Berlin. She cites Germany’s support of artistic and intellectual projects as what encourages many Israelis to come to the country, if yet as temporary residents.

“Das Körnchen Wahrheit im Mythos: Israelis in Deutschland – Diskurse, Empirie und Forschungsdesiderate.” *Medaon* 14 (2020), 27, 1–15 URL:

http://www.medaon.de/pdf/medaon_27_kranz.pdf

¹¹ For an account of Israelis' proliferating cultural activity in Berlin that considers their political solidarity with Palestinians, see Sa'ed Atshan and Katharina Galor, *The Moral Triangle: Germans, Israelis, Palestinians* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2020).

¹² The majority of Israelis in Germany are of European origins (Kranz, "Das Körnchen Wahrheit im Mythos: Israelis in Deutschland – Diskurse, Empirie und Forschungsdesiderate," 8). However, this group is also associated with the Middle East given Israelis' immediate place of origins and the familial background of some of its members. On the visibility of Mizrahi Israelis in Berlin and its challenges to German memory culture, see Yael Almog, "Migration and its Discontents: Israelis in Berlin and Homeland Politics." *TRANSIT: A Journal of Travel, Migration, and Multiculturalism in the German-speaking World* 10, no. 1 (2015): 1–10.

¹³ This trend made visible protests mobilized by Israeli activists in the German capital. See Almog, "Illusionary Diasporas." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 37, no. 2 (2019): 63–70. For a contextualization of Israeli emigrants' activism in Berlin in relation to other Israeli diasporas, see Hila Amit, *A Queer Way Out: The Politics of Queer Emigration from Israel* (Albany: SUNY, 2018), 149–168. Amit grounds this activism in a large ideological project of establishing a Hebrew Diasporist community. See also her "The Revival of Diasporic Hebrew in Contemporary Berlin," in *Topographies of the New Berlin*, ed. Karin Bauer and Jennifer Ruth Hosek (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2018), 254–271. Hadas Cohen and Dani Kranz take Israeli immigrants in Berlin to be continually occupied by Israeli social concerns and particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "Israeli Jews in the New Berlin," in *Topographies of the New Berlin*, ed. Karin Bauer and Jennifer Ruth Hosek (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2018), 322–346.

¹⁴ In a theologically focused examination of European minority management, Anja Topolski discerns that present-day Muslims are held back from political engagement. "Good Jew, Bad

Jew ... Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: “Managing” Europe’s Others,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 12 (2018): 2179–2196. In a forthcoming publication, Kranz succinctly differentiates between the images of Israelis and Palestinians in contemporary Germany: “Israelis are reconstituted as Jews, which means they move from foreign strangers to known and desired Jewish guests in German perception despite prevailing German antisemitism, while Palestinians shift from foreign strangers to less desired, if not dangerous, intruders.” “The Politics of Hospitality: Welcome and Not So Welcome Middle Easterners in Germany,” forthcoming in *Sociology of Religion*.

¹⁵ Translated by Markus Lemke (Zurich: Rotpunktverlag, 2013).

¹⁶ Die Stimmen werden aber näher und näher und die drei machen weiter und gehen nicht schneller und reden weiter nur um nicht leiser zu gehen, angstvoll und unheimlich. Von hinten schreit sie dann jemand nach. Hallo ihr! Hallo ihr! Was für Sprache redet ihr da! Radili und Amadou und Mehmet reden Deutsch aber kein Arien Deutsch sondern ihr Deutsch wie mein Deutsch auch die ich hier schreibe und wie ich die rede. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Gardi, *Broken German* (Graz: Droschl, 2016), 6.

¹⁷ Dann hält Radili und dreht sich um sagt dass es Deutsch ist. Mehmet und Amadou halten mit ihm und drehen auch um. Nein sagt eine. Glatze. Rote Augen von Trink. Nein, sagt er. Das ist kein Deutsch, sagt er. Was WIR reden ist Deutsch, sagt er. Das was WIR reden ist Deutsch. Was ihr da redet ist kein Deutsch. Ibid.

¹⁸ Daphne Maria Seemann describes the congruities of contemporary German Jewish literature with the genre of the family narrative. She discerns the uniqueness of German Jewish literature in grounding the family construct in a traumatic origin. *Generation, Gender and Identity in German-Jewish Literature after 1989* (Wurzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2020).

¹⁹ In an ethnographic study, Vanessa Rau establishes that Berlin's urban space creates an experience of Jewishness grounded in complexity and ambivalence rather than in unity. This experience is informed by transformative experiences such as migration and conversion.

Contesting the Secular and Converting Space in Berlin? Becoming Jewish in an Urban Scene, PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 2019.

²⁰ Denn was ist ja eine Autor ohne Autorität? Und was ist ein Autor ohne sein Sprachherrschaft? Und was ist ein Herr ohne sein Herrschaft? Und was ist ein Herrschaft ohne Untergeordnet? Ibid., 15.

²¹ Und der Mann, diese Schriftsteller, plaudern die weiter, die Menschen also, bin ich. Goethe Insitut zu Kafka Institut umtaufen? Hauptreder? Eingeladet? Bestellt? Quatsch, meinen sie. Ein Asyl. Ein Migrant. Ein Gastarbeiter. Ein Fremdarbeiter in die Prosa eine ferne, fremde, andere Sprach. *Broken German*, 64–65.

²² *Theory of the Gimmick: Aesthetic Judgment and Capitalist Form* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2020), 2.

²³ In recent years, the Goethe Institute has promoted such migrant authors as Iraq-born Abbas Khider, Saša Stanišić (born in Bosnien-Herzegowina), and Ilija Trojanow (originally from Bulgaria). See the Goethe Institute's website that presents 25 contemporary authors in German as representative of German culture:

<https://www.goethe.de/ins/es/de/kul/sup/lit/aut/ssc.html>

²⁴ According to Anderson, extensive endorsement of Jewish authors has shaped the academic curricula of German studies in Germany and, subsequently, abroad. Mark M. Anderson, "German Intellectuals, Jewish Victims: A Politically Correct Solidarity." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 19 (2001): 1–10.

²⁵ Pascale Casanova has argued that Kafka's post-mortem meteoric success builds on his marginal national identity. As she notes, Kafka's Jewishness and multilingualism mark his

liminal national belonging (to a German-speaking minority in Czechoslovakia). Authors such as Kafka, she argues, subverted the binary options of being marginalized as outsiders to any major national tradition or integrated into such major traditions. *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, Mass/London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 180.

²⁶ *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 14.

²⁷ Calling the liberal literary object “managerial,” Brouillette proposes that major literary competitions, the Nobel Prize in particular, have advertised a self-reflective and self-involved literary voice as a token of literary merit. See her “Literature is Liberalism”

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/literature-is-liberalism>

²⁸ Ich sagte ich bin ein Arbeitsmigrant in der deutsche Sprache. Ein Arbeitsmigrant in der Prosa eine fremde Sprache. Dass ich hier Sachen in die Prosa diese Sprache zu tuhn habe. Also, in die Prosa diese Sprache Arbeit zu tuhn habe. Die schwarze Arbeit nur. Also keine Angst. Ich nehme keiner Deutsche Literat sein Arbeit weg. Also, keinen Angst. Die schwarze Arbeit mache ich nur. Und deshalb musste ich in der Jüdische Museum rein, sagte ich weiter. Und desshalb musste ich das Jüdische Museum Besenkammer Tür aufmachen. Für die schwarze Arbeit. Ins deutsche Sprache. Und weil so sind wir Schriftsteller (101). The German phrase “Schwarzarbeit” (literally: black work) could be said to intimate racist associations attached to migrants’ work.

²⁹ Yasemin Yildiz postulates that non-German German authors challenge the “monolingual paradigm”: the view of linguistic homogeneity as the default of the surroundings in the modern state. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

³⁰ Wo sitzen wir jetzt. [...] Dein Call Shop ist das. Das Gebrochenesde. Geb. Nein. Dein Shop ist das Gebrochenes. Dein Shop ist das Gebrochenesdeutschsprachigesraum.

³¹ Und er gukt zurück, Tomer Gardi, gukt an Radili Anuan. Wirklich Radili. Wirklich, sagt er. Wenn du hier nicht sein willst, geh lieber nach Hause, ok? Ich brauch dich hier nicht. Und auch morgen nicht und auch übermorgen nicht. Geh. Geh jetzt (30).

³² Where is my I? Arbeit Macht Fre. Arbeit Mach Fre. Arbeit Macht I. Das verlorene Buchstab haben aber die Behörde unter der Schnee dann gefunden.

³³ *Broken German*, 32. Was tuhen die jetzt? Schild wieder hängen? Arbeit macht Frei, wieder hängen, grosse Ceremonie, Reden erhalten. Ist wichtig. Nicht zu vergessen. Bundeskanzlerin einladen, Israelische Armee Chief of Staff, Vertreter Deutsche Arbeitsamt, Ordnungsamt, Ausländerbehörde. Grosse Ceremonie. Auschwitz Wachkräfte zurzeit von Dienst suspendiert, stand im Zeitung. Ha ha. Toll. Sowas kann man sich nicht ausdenken. Regierung hat fast 100,000 Euro für Instillation Moderne Überwachungssystem im KZ zur verfügung gestellt. Kameras, Wires, Computers und Monitors, neue Strom in alte Zäune. Nach 60 Jahre Auschwitz wieder sicher. Gesichert. Viel Arbeit ist es auch. Kostet viel Geld. Instillation und alles. Könnten 1 Euro Jobers tuhn lassen. Arbeitsmigranten. Asylbewerber. Harz IV Empfänger. Konnte ich auch mit machen. Brauch ja ein Job jetzt. Doch praktisch. Dauert auch eine weile, so eine Projekt. Könnten ja uns alle dort auch in die leere Baraken ubernachten lassen.

³⁴ For sociological perspectives on this dynamics, see Irit Dekel, *Mediation at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Victoria Bishop Kendzia, *Visitors to the House of Memory: Identity and Political Education at the Jewish Museum Berlin* (New York: Berghahn, 2018); and Esra Özyürek, “Muslim Minorities as Germany’s Past Future: Islam critics, Holocaust memory, and immigrant integration,” *Memory Studies* (online June 2019): 1–16 [doi:10.1177/1750698019856057](https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698019856057).

³⁵ <https://bachmannpreis.orf.at/v3/stories/2773156/>

³⁶ Ending the passage with “ima” (Hebrew for “mother”) accentuates the passengers’ national identity: Dann steht sie auf, meine Mutter, wirft das Decke von ihr, steht da nackt im Raum. Sie ist gross und schamlos und lächelt als sie eine der Unterhose nimmt, steckt ein Fuss rein, zieht die Unterhose rauf. Biss zum über ihr Knie geht es, nicht weiter. Viel zu klein. Unterhose über ihr Knie, nimmt sie ein weisses Hemd. Steckt ein Arm rein, die andere schafft sie schon nicht, lässt das Kleid da hängen. Ich fang an zu lachen und sie auch, die winzige Unterhose um ihre Knie, ein halbes Arm in ein Hemd. Dann sucht sie noch einen Hemd aus, steckt ihr andere Arm rein, sucht aus noch eine Unterhose, steckt rein das andere Fuss, hebt es, bis zum andere Knie. Zum Wohl Ima! Zum Wohl! (53)

³⁷ Sonja Boos has established that a cluster of post-war public addresses by Jewish intellectuals to German audience have interfered into Germany’s building of its post-war public sphere on a vision of redemption. *Speaking the Unspeakable in Postwar Germany: Toward a Public Discourse on the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014). Gardi’s performance is a telling continuation of that strand, since it was not followed by winning honours, but quite the reverse, by doubts regarding his merits.

³⁸ *Spitz Magazine* 12.08.2016

http://spitzmag.de/culture/8765?fbclid=IwAR1Yls_Ndv_xglaxEPRxMNDv8FYDuLeA7G0OkqRB4XvfPppoXoi2YXog-o

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ A pertinent reason for that was Jews’ association with Yiddish, which was perceived as a corruption of German. See Sander L. Gilman, “Jewish Writers and German Letters: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews.” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 77, no. 2/3 (1986-7): 119–48.

⁴¹ Marc Volovici observes that German blurs the “distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish languages.” *German as a Jewish Problem: The Language Politics of Jewish Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 5.

⁴² See the summery of Finkel’s biography and attempts to assimilate into Berliner’s theatrical scene in Shelly Zer-Zion, “The Shaping of the Ostjude: Alexander Granach and Shimon Finkel in Berlin,” in *Jews and the Making of Modern German Theatre*, ed. Jeannte R. Malkin and Freddi Rokem (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 2010), 174–96.

⁴³ Zer-Zion contends: “Finkel’s operation served the purpose of correcting his ‘Jewish’ voice and transforming it into the accepted sound of the ‘universal’ actor who could then play the classical roles of the European canon.” *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.