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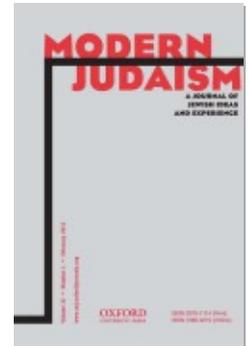
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## **Atheist Jew or Atheist Jew : Freud's Jewish Question and Ours**

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Jay Geller



## ATHEIST JEW OR ATHEIST *JEW*: FREUD'S JEWISH QUESTION AND OURS

My fellow unbeliever Spinoza.

—Heinrich Heine, cited in Sigmund Freud,  
*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*

I too should credit the believer's solution with containing the truth; it is not, however, the material truth, but a historical truth.

—Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*

Search in press and house.

—*The Diary of Sigmund Freud*

The title for this article takes its lead from Freud's famous self-description in his October 1918 letter to the Swiss Analyst-Pastor Oskar Pfister: "Quite by the way, why did none of the devout create psychoanalysis? Why did one have to wait for a completely godless Jew—*einen ganz gottlosen Juden?*"<sup>1</sup> Numerous analysts, scholars, theologians, and commentators have endeavored to parse the meanings of and relationships between *Godless* and *Jew* in Freud's pithy phrase and no-less pithy life. Their efforts have led to a plethora of sequels to Freud's own self-description: non-Jewish Jew, secular Jew, modern Jew, psychological Jew, self-hating Jew, renegade Jew, ambivalent Jew. After detailing some of Freud's own explicit assertions of Jewish identity, this essay will examine some of the ways and whys Freud's Jewishness has become a major focus of contemporary reflections on the man, his writings, and his legacy.

The diverse reactions to the phrase "Godless Jew" suggest an uncanny discomfort. There are actually at least two sources of discomfort. The first source is generated by the question: What is a Jew? Is "Jew" a religious designation? If so, then the notion of Godless Jew is either an oxymoron or an indirect representation, such as Freud analyzed in the dream work or noted in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, and it recalls Heine's witticism, cited by Freud in *Jokes*, "my fellow unbeliever Spinoza."<sup>2</sup> Or, conversely, is the notion of Jew related to the German term *Judentum*, which condenses three fields

often kept distinct in English: Judaism (religion), Jewry (people), and Jewishness (character and custom)? Consequently, how one translates *Judentum* into English betrays one's agenda.

The second source is the relationship between the construction of psychoanalysis and Freud's identity—let us call it his “Jewish” identity following Freud's own self-designation: whether in 1886, when, in a “political conversation” with Gilles de la Tourette chez Charcot, Freud “promptly explained that I am a Jew”; or forty years later (1926), when, in an interview with George Sylvester Viereck, Freud commented that “I considered myself German intellectually, until I noticed the growth of anti-Semitic prejudice in Germany and German Austria. Since that time I prefer to call myself a Jew.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Freud never did have a problem with affixing the label “Jew” to his person. In his letters, prefaces, and addresses he repeatedly laid claim to that identification. Thus, in his address to the Vienna B'nai B'rith on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, Freud remarked on why he gravitated to the group: “For I was myself a Jew, and it had always seemed to me not only unworthy but positively senseless to deny the fact.” He continued: “What bound me to *Judentum* . . . [what made] the attraction of *Judentum* and Jews irresistible—[were] many obscure emotional forces which were the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words, as well as a clear consciousness of inner identity, the safe privacy of a common psychological structure.”<sup>4</sup>

These remarks were echoed a few years later in his 1930 introduction to the Hebrew translation of *Totem und Taboo*, where he describes himself as one “who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature.” Freud then posed to himself the question: “‘Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?’ he would reply: ‘A very great deal, and probably its very essence.’”<sup>5</sup> In a letter to the translator of that work, J. Dwossis, Freud further commented that “I had felt myself to be a Jew even before [the recent antisemitic uprisings]—under the influence of German antisemitism of which repeated outbreaks occurred during my university years.”<sup>6</sup>

Freud had earlier (1925) written to the Jewish Press Center in Zurich that “I have always had a strong feeling of belonging together with my people and have always nurtured it in my children as well. We have always remained in the Jewish denomination.”<sup>7</sup> In that same year he commenced his “Autobiographical Study” with the direct statement, “My parents were Jews, and I have remained a Jew myself.”<sup>8</sup>

The selection could go on, but I must confess that I have been rather selective in my quotations. Virtually all of these passages enact

the pairing of *Gdless* and *Jew*. For example, filling in the ellipses to the earlier citation from Freud's address to the B'nai B'rith, it reads: "What bound me to *Judentum* was (I am ashamed to admit) neither faith, nor national pride, for I have always been an unbeliever and was brought up without any religion."<sup>9</sup> Again this structure repeats itself in the preface to the Hebrew translation, in which prior to affirming his Jewish identification Freud describes himself as one "who is ignorant of the language of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his father—as well as from every other religion."<sup>10</sup>

This disavowal of any taint of religious belief, practice, or prejudice coloring "ethnic" identification as a Jew is mirrored in another set of disavowals. In both his public and his private writings Freud explicitly endeavors to separate psychoanalysis from either the religious—here one thinks of *The Future of an Illusion* or the last of Freud's *New Introductory Lectures*, "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*"—or the Jewish. Freud would only concede that the sociological situation of Jewishness contributed to the formation of psychoanalysis. In his address to the B'nai B'rith he adds: "It was to my Jewish nature alone that I owed two characteristics that had become indispensable to me in the difficult course of my life. Because I was a Jew I found myself free from many prejudices which restricted others in the use of their intellect; and as a Jew I was prepared to join the Opposition and to do without agreement with the 'compact majority.'"<sup>11</sup> Comparable language is employed in his "Autobiographical Study." Some twenty years earlier (1903), he advised the music critic Max Graf upon the birth of his son Herbert (aka Little Hans): "'If you do not let your son grow up as a Jew,' he said, 'you will deprive him of those sources of energy which cannot be replaced by anything else. He will have to struggle as a Jew, and you ought to develop in him all the energy he will need for the struggle. Do not deprive him of that advantage.'"<sup>12</sup>

While Freud would regularly confirm to his Jewish colleagues like Karl Abraham and Sándor Ferenczi their "racial kinship" and common intellectual constitution, he insisted on severing any connection between their shared Jewish character and psychoanalysis.<sup>13</sup> In a letter to Ferenczi, Freud readily admits that "there are great differences between the Jewish and the Aryan spirit. . . . Hence there would assuredly be here and there differences in outlook on art and life." Nevertheless, he continues, "But there should not be a thing as Aryan or Jewish science. Results in science must be identical, though the presentation of them may vary."<sup>14</sup>

Conversely, Freud recognized how antisemitism—by attributing a Jewish character to Freud's work—generated significant resistance to psychoanalysis. While this recognition motivated a series of organizational moves—most notably the initial promotion of Carl Jung—to

prevent the appearance of psychoanalysis as “a Jewish national affair,” Freud at other times seemed, at least in private correspondence, rather proud of the resistances generated by his Jewishness.<sup>15</sup> Afraid that his case study of Little Hans will create an uproar, Freud wryly comments to Karl Abraham: “German ideals threatened again! Our Aryan comrades are really completely indispensable to us, otherwise psychoanalysis would succumb to anti-Semitism.”<sup>16</sup>

These rather narrowly disseminated statements about his Jewish identifications and the identification of psychoanalysis with Jewishness—Freud’s answers to his own Jewish Question—took a new and public turn after, as he writes to Arnold Zweig in 1934, “faced with the new persecutions, one asks oneself again how the Jews have come to be who they are and why they have attracted this undying hatred.”<sup>17</sup> Freud’s attempt at an answer, *Moses and Monotheism*, opens with the public acknowledgment of his own Jewish identity—“someone who is himself one of them”—and continues with a self-described compulsive effort to articulate and provide a genetic account of the *je ne sais quoi*’s by which he defined his own Jewishness: independence of mind, the highest ethical and moral standards, concern for social justice, and tenacity in the face of persecution, all of which mark the Jewish advance in intellectuality (*Geistigkeit*).<sup>18</sup>

Yet is it responsible to limit one’s answer to the question of Freud’s Jewishness to a list of his explicit self-references and to accept without question Freud’s protestations against seeking Jewish contamination of his work? Numerous scholars have attempted to triangulate Freud’s statements, like those already mentioned, with his entire corpus of writings in order to determine the character, meanings, and implications of his Jewishness.

The quest for an answer to Freud’s Jewish Question in his writings precedes Freud’s final publication. It goes back at least to the 1920s, with his onetime colleague Fritz Wittels’s ambivalent *Sigmund Freud: Der Mann, die Lehre, die Schule* and Charles E. Maylan’s anti-semitic *Freud’s tragischer Komplex*. Since the appearance of the Jewish philosopher Ernst Simon’s 1957 compendium, “Sigmund Freud, the Jew,” works have ranged from David Bakan’s (1958) kabbalistic speculations to Dennis Klein’s (1981) sociology of knowledge examination of Freud and the Jewish membership of the early psychoanalytic circle; from Carl Schorske’s (1973) depiction of antisemitic constraints on Freud’s career choices and dream thoughts to Jacques Le Rider’s (1990) analysis of the crises of gender, sexual, and Jewish identities in Freud’s Vienna; from John Murray Cuddihy’s (1974) meditation on Freud’s mediation of uncivil Jew and overcivil Gentile to Estelle Roith’s (1987) stereotype of the traditional Jewish misogynist; from Marthe Robert’s (1974) chart of the ambivalences of Freud’s Jewish

family romance and Marianne Krüll's (1979) speculations about Freud and his father to Peter Gay's (1987) "cordon sanitaire" against any imputation of Jewish religiosity to an atheist Jew.<sup>19</sup> Since 1991 studies of Freud the Jew have proliferated even more, with the series of responses to *Dem Mann Moses* (i.e., *Moses and Monotheism*)—the chain of readings initiated by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* and followed by Jacques Derrida's *Mal d'Archive* and Richard J. Bernstein's *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*—and the series of reincarnations of *dem Mann* Freud (i.e., the man Freud): Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct* and Sander Gilman's two-part work, *Freud, Race and Gender* and *The Case of Sigmund Freud*.<sup>20</sup>

One of the great values of the new literature on the Jewish Freud is filling in the silences that were his personal and cultural contexts, in particular the endemic presence of anti-Jewish representations in scientific as well as popular discourses and the variety of nineteenth-century Judaisms. The researches and reconstructions of a number of scholars have helped to remedy many of the earlier presentations of the religious training and environment of Freud and his family. Freud's knowledge of the Bible and of Jewish practices was clearly greater than he would acknowledge publicly, and his asserted ignorance of Hebrew and Yiddish now appears to be somewhat hyperbolic considering that the latter was indeed the *Mamaloschen*, his mother's language of choice. Similarly comments like the oft-cited "I think it's called Menorah," written to his wife after a 1907 visit to the Roman catacombs, seem more evident of a wittily or pitilessly ironic sensibility than of a shamelessly uninformed Jew.<sup>21</sup> Further, these researches have convincingly demonstrated the inadequate and inaccurate historical understanding of earlier writers who naively concluded that Jakob Freud's ties to the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment movement[s]), his possession of a Philippson Bible, and his wedding to Amalia (Sigmund's mother) under the auspices of Isaac Noah Mannheimer were indicative of a lapse in traditional Jewish piety. Jakob Freud was more a modern orthodox than a reform Jew.

The foci of the new (as well as much of the old) literature on the how and the why of Freud's Jewish identity have been upon Freud's two key lifelong identifications—his father Jakob and Moses—and the two primary sites of their appearance in Freud's corpus—*The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Moses and Monotheism*. At the beginning of his career in his first major work and culminating achievement of his self-analysis, Freud recounts a childhood conversation with his father. Jakob Freud told him how one Shabbat when he was young a Christian lout accosted him, knocking his *Streimel* (fur hat worn by Hasidic Jewish men on Shabbat) into the mire and telling him to get off the sidewalk. When his son asked him what he then did, the senior Freud

quietly replied that he stepped into the street and retrieved his hat. Freud recalls that the young Sigmund became quite disturbed by his father's "unheroic conduct" and immediately contrasted it with the action of Hamilcar Barca, who forced his son to swear vengeance against the Romans.<sup>22</sup> Since at least Robert and Cuddihy, this scene of the unmanned traditional Jew has assumed the place of the primal scene for the unfolding of Freud's Jewish identity. This family romance (i.e., substitution of one father for another) and crisis of identification are finally resolved in the killing fields (well, deserts) of Midian, where the great man, the Egyptian Moses, is murdered in the climax of Freud's first and last extended treatment of *Judentum*.<sup>23</sup>

It is no surprise that the father of the father of the Oedipal Complex would become the object of analysis or, given the highly charged character of Freud's recollection, that attention would be focused upon this apparently traumatic scene. While most scholars, including Gilman, have read this scene of impotence and passivity—unmanning—in the face of antisemitism as emblematic of the gendered and sexual character of Jewish identity (as of any identity), some, including Yerushalmi, recently have taken another tack. They have transvalued Jakob Freud's *Shabbos* encounter from a humiliation to a testimony for self-restraint. Daniel Boyarin mediates the two poles. He recognizes Freud's introjection of Austro-Victorian models of masculinity as well as the dominant representations of the Jew and consequent repudiation of his father's "feminine" behavior; however, Boyarin no less recognizes Jakob Freud's behavior as exemplary of a traditional Jewish male identity that refuses to indulge in *Goyim naches*—the violence prided upon by Gentile men: "There is something correct—although seriously misvalued—in the persistent European representation of Jewish men as a sort of woman. Rather than just an antisemitic stereotype . . . the Jewish ideal male as countertype to 'manliness' is an assertive historical product of Jewish culture."<sup>24</sup>

In place of the humiliation of Jakob, the pivotal moment of the analyses of Yerushalmi and a number of other recent scholars is the interpretation of Jakob Freud's inscriptions in the family Bible that he presented to his son on his thirty-fifth birthday. These analysts have concluded that Jakob Freud composed it entirely in *Melitzah*, "a mosaic of fragments and phrases from the Hebrew Bible as well as from rabbinic literature or the liturgy, fitted together to form a new statement of what the author intends to express at the moment."<sup>25</sup> Line-by-line analyses of this inscription reveal that Jakob Freud, far from the lapsed Jew, was still immersed in the texts and practices of traditional Judaism. Further, rather than this image of passivity, Yerushalmi and others portray an individual who rises to make a claim upon his son, "a call for Sigmund's return and reconciliation."<sup>26</sup>

These readings have indeed redeemed the image of Jakob Freud from his son's earlier biographers; the *nebbish* or wimp who could no longer hold on to his religion, let alone a job, has become an inwardly resilient, life-enjoying practicing Jew. But such is not their only or their primary goal. By attending to the inscription they would redeem a Jewish son. Freud's own claims for the objective, impersonal, scientific nature of psychoanalysis, the efforts of Ernest Jones and others to de Judaize psychoanalysis—and Freud—in order to make them acceptable to an Anglo-American audience, and Peter Gay's continuation of these traditions through an overly narrow definition of Jewishness and an overly generous acceptance of Freud's claims for scientificity together necessitated a perhaps overcompensatory attempt by Yerushalmi and others to reconstruct Freud's (and their own) more than psychological Jewishness.<sup>27</sup> Freud's Jewishness is no longer characterized as the mediation between an accident of birth and the necessities of antisemitic Vienna, universal science, and Oedipus; rather, Freud is now seen as continuously confronting—whether consciously or unconsciously—the particularities of Jewish religiosity. Yerushalmi makes the strong claim that “it is this Hebrew text of Jakob's alone that offers even the possibility of reaching a psychological understanding of Freud's involvement with Moses, from the *Moses* of Michelangelo to the culminating *Moses and Monotheism*.”<sup>28</sup>

This inscription in the middle of his life would set Freud (and these analysts) on a Dantesque journey that would end with him attempting “to answer the hitherto unanswerable question of what makes [Freud] a Jew.”<sup>29</sup> The earlier humiliation is not then the repressed trauma compelling Freud to deny his fellow Jews their claims to divine election and the discovery of monotheism, to subject them to what Yerushalmi calls “the fourth humiliation”—after Copernican heliocentrism, Darwinian evolution, and the Freudian unconscious had displaced the privileged position of the earth, the human, and the ego.<sup>30</sup> For these scholars, in writing *Moses and Monotheism* Freud is hearkening his father's call to return and reconcile even as he is attempting to come to understand what motivates the Nazis' murderous antisemitism and not, as Robert, for example, claims, seeking to combat his fear that in his old age he is becoming his father, a poor *schmo* sitting in a corner, ever at the mercy of antisemites.

Yet this literature is responding to more than the academic desire for greater historical accuracy and hermeneutical understanding. It is responding to a series of cultural developments, at least in the United States, that have contributed to the revaluation of “Jewishness” as a constituent part of the analysis of a “Jewish” writer's corpus. There are theoretical factors: for instance, under the headings of new historicism and cultural studies, approaches to texts have emerged that

understand them and their producers as embedded in a matrix of cultural discourses. These new hermeneutical positions have also drawn on earlier rethinkings of the relationships between writers and their works. A certain S. Freud taught them how their productions often exceed their intentions. In *Moses* Freud provides perhaps his most graphic statement of this relationship and most generous warrant for their readings. Speaking of the Torah, he writes

The text, however, as we possess it today will tell us enough about its own vicissitudes. Two mutually opposed treatments have left their traces on it. On the one hand, it has been subjected to revisions which have falsified it in the sense of their secret aims, have mutilated and amplified and have even changed it into its reverse; on the other hand, a solicitous piety has presided over it and has sought to preserve everything as it was, no matter whether it was consistent or contradicted itself. Thus almost everywhere noticeable gaps, disturbing repetitions, and obvious contradictions have come about—indications which reveal things to us which it was not intended to communicate. In its implications the distortion of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces.<sup>31</sup>

There are also, in North America, institutional factors that have contributed to the reevaluation of the import of Jewishness: one is the increase in *baalei tshuvah*, the return of many Jews to a religiosity they never possessed; another is the rise of multiculturalism, with its frequent assumptions of the representative and expressive character of marginalized cultural productions and producers; still another involves university politics in which African American, Chicano, “lesbigay,” Jewish, subaltern, and women studies compete for legitimation and budgets. More problematic is the far-too-often exclusion of things Jewish from that all-inclusive rubric of the multicultural. This takes various forms, such as the exclusion of Jewish groups from student multicultural organizations, the omission of Jewish studies from ethnic studies, and *Judentum*’s elision from or derision by, broadly speaking, multicultural analyses.

Corollary to these expulsions is the widespread belief that Jews—particularly Jewish men—have made it into, if not are identical with, the white power structure or that they form part of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. As a consequence, the marginality, otherness, and particularity of *Judentum* have been forgotten. With the much-reported death of Christianity as the dominant ideology of our dominant academic discourses, it was assumed that Christianity’s other had died along with it. *Judentum* has become, in the words of Freud, “to some extent a fossil.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, Jews have been written out of critical feminist studies by placing the onus for misogyny on “traditional Jewish culture” and for patriarchy on the “Old Testament.” Even Sander Gilman, who has perhaps more than anyone inventoried the leavings of European modernity’s pandemic of antisemitic discourses, has let

the indigenous misogynist discourses of Europe off the hook by “explaining” Freud’s discourse on women as his defensive displacement of the discourses of racial antisemitism.<sup>33</sup>

Still, why this return specifically to Freud, even as he is being excoriated in the pages of American journals of opinion, such as *New York Review of Books*, dismissed in departments of psychology and psychiatry, and considered *Trayf* (nonkosher) by most feminists, positivists, and multiculturalists? In the United States Freud was always already a locus of Jewish identification, as recent autobiographical remarks by such American scholars as Bruce Lincoln, Elaine Marks, Judith Gardiner, and Nina Auerbach testify.<sup>34</sup> Freud served for their generation as perhaps the Jewish ego ideal: he was the genius Jew who transformed modern (i.e., Gentile) culture. Today groups busily seek ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual “role models” in order to generate and market their identities and differences. Freud would be so positioned to play such a role for contemporary Jews and defiantly to assert Jewishness in a culture that, however, too often erases Jewish identity and difference. Further, who better as “a role model” than the *father* of the (post)modern identity, the theorist of identity formation, from whom most contemporary theories of the social construction of identity take off from—even in negation? If this secular bourgeois gentleman can now be demonstrated to be Jewish, Jews get more than *naches* (Yiddish for an exultant feeling of pride) or gain an extra boost toward the pursuit of acceptance by and assimilation into the dominant culture. If he can be shown to have an identity that is not merely negative (the impossibility of not-being a Jew) and if that Jewishness is not merely factual or incidental but, indeed, productive of his discourse, then recent Jewish cultural history can offer something besides the *Shoah* (and Israel) as the answer to the question, “What is a Jew?” And if he can be shown to have a disposition toward some form of Jewish religiosity—this desire is clearly evident in Professor Yerushalmi’s *Freud’s Moses—oy Gottenyu*. . . .

Actually, in attempting to discern the contours and contexts of Freud’s Jewish Question and ours—the question of “What is a Jew?”—I have come to the conclusion that Freud’s religiosity or irreligiosity, no less than Moses’ possible Egyptian origin, is a red herring.<sup>35</sup> Much of the recent discussion of where to place the emphasis in the phrase “Godless Jew” probably has less to do with Freud’s letter to Pfister than with the implications of words Freud wrote in his *Diary* over sixty years ago, less than three months before he would be departing from Vienna for the last time.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps even as Hitler was addressing a vast crowd in the Heldenplatz, Freud noted: “Search in press and house”; on March 15, 1938, two separate bands of Storm Trooper thugs searched his home and the offices of the press.

The Holocaust hovers over both the reception of Freud and the determination of, at least, North American Jewish identity. Regarding the latter, during February and March 2001 Peter Novick and Norman Finkelstein undertook book tours through Central Europe touting their interpretations of the role of discourse of the Holocaust in American life.<sup>37</sup> Novick argues that the *Shoah*, as the one common referent point of self-identified American Jews, has become the basis for their Jewish identity and indeed has become an ersatz religion in Jewish communities. My own experience of teaching courses on the *Shoah* has revealed that the Holocaust is no less identified with Jewishness by non-Jews; Gentile students often inform me that they take my classes to learn more about their Jewish friends or, in a number of instances, to learn about Judaism. Or to provide another example, a New Testament colleague of mine was invited to address a gathering of Baptist campus ministers and their student congregations in December 2001 in Washington, D.C., at a conference whose goal was “challenging [the college students] to engage the world’s diverse peoples.” As a part of this event, students would visit “places such as the Holocaust Museum, the Islamic Center, the Hindu Center, the Buddhist Congregational Church, and others.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, by situating the Holocaust Museum in this series, the conveners were identifying it as a center of Jewish religious observance.

Novick, however, adopts the rather facile *Gleichschaltung* (the *Nazi-deutsch* term for the synchronization, coordination, or consolidation of associated institutions) of trauma and repression one finds in the likes of Frederick Crews and company and places the onus of justifying the “inevitable development” of the ascension of the Holocaust to a central position in American life on the “sometimes explicitly, always implicitly Freudian” notion of Holocaust as traumatic event.<sup>39</sup> Taking a very different tack, many of those reinvestigating Freud’s Jewishness are seeking for an alternative to Holocaust-determined identities. They are looking at the work that Freud was completing as the twisted road to Auschwitz was under construction. Admittedly, some of those have transformed Freud, writing as “the new enemy” encroached upon pre-*Anschluss* Vienna (i.e., prior to the Third Reich’s annexation of Austria), into a prophet, of whom it could be told: “There was someone in darker times who thought the same as you.”<sup>40</sup> But others see the author of *Moses and Monotheism* as providing a model for the way Jews (and non-Jews, too) can and do work through their tradition.

Long dismissed as an expression of a writer long past his prime, *Moses* is a most curious work; it is composed of a mixed multitude of styles and marked by “noticeable gaps, disturbing repetitions and obvious contradictions,” as well as a host of questionable historical,

ethnographical, and Lamarckian assumptions.<sup>41</sup> It bears the characteristics of the compulsiveness that drove Freud to this project as it tormented him “like an unlaidd ghost.”<sup>42</sup> Yet now *Moses* has become recognized as a text that testifies to two times. Not only was Freud attempting to work through trauma, but he has also provided us with a text to help us understand the consequences for our times of the trauma that was then in the process. Once the object of disavowal by the international Jewish community, the text has now come to be seen as a testimony to Jewish persistence and resistance. In a culture that sees itself working through traumatic memory and postmemory (how the silences, projections, parapraes, expectations, seemingly nonsensical statements, and so on of trauma victims affect their descendants—and we are all their descendants), it is Freud’s analogy of individual traumatic experience with the role of tradition in Jewish history that has paved the way for thinking about all forms of traumatic experience.<sup>43</sup>

Such an understanding presumes neither the centrality of the Holocaust nor the apotheosis of the victim. For unlike many of his despisers in the recovered memory movement and among oppressed groups (women, postcolonial subjects, etc.), Freud viewed trauma not as an event with inevitable (if variable) consequences but, rather, as a process: “Early trauma—defense—latency—outbreak of neurotic illness—partial return of the repressed.”<sup>44</sup> In *Moses* Freud proposes an analogy between this process and the development of Judaism as a way of understanding the gap between Moses’ original profession of ethical monotheism and its return centuries after its abandonment by the people of Israel. The past event in its actuality is less the precipitating cause than is the relationship of the present—the present of writing, or narrating, or redacting—to an event that was never experienced, narrativized, given meaning. That present is the text: whether the Bible, or *Moses*, or this article. Hence one more answer to Freud’s Jewish Question may be found in a passage from a perhaps unlikely source for a gloss on Freud—Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah* (book 1 [*Knowledge*], *Treatise on Repentance*, chap. 10, ¶5): “Whoever occupies himself with the Torah, neither out of fear nor for the sake of recompense, but solely out of love for the Lord of the whole earth who enjoined us to do so, is occupied with the Torah for its own sake. The sages, however, said ‘One should always engage in the study of the Torah, even if not for its own sake; for he who begins thus will end by studying it for its own sake.’”<sup>45</sup> So following the sages, although Freud did not see his practice as guided by Jewish intentions, that does not preclude us from recognizing that in the end they have come to embody for us a viable form of Jewish practice.

## NOTES

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9. Freud, "Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith Vienna," p. 271.

10. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. xv.

11. Freud, "Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith Vienna," pp. 273–274.

12. Max Graf, "Reminiscences of Professor Sigmund Freud," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 11 (1942), p. 473.

13. Sigmund Freud, letter to Karl Abraham, May 3, 1908, in Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, *A Psycho-analytic Dialogue: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham (1907–1926)*, eds. Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud, trans. Bernard Marsh and Hilda Abraham (London, 1965), p. 34.

14. Sigmund Freud, letter to Sándor Ferenczi, June 8, 1913, in Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi, 1908–1914*, eds. Eva Brabant, Ernst Falzeder, and Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, trans. Peter T. Hoffer (Cambridge, MA, 1993), p. 491.

15. Sigmund Freud, letter to Karl Abraham, May 3, 1908, in Freud and Abraham, *A Psycho-analytic Dialogue*, p. 34.

16. Sigmund Freud, letter to Karl Abraham, December 26, 1908, in Freud and Abraham, *A Psycho-analytic Dialogue*, p. 64.

17. Sigmund Freud, letter to Arnold Zweig, September 30, 1934, in Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Elaine Robson-Scott and William Robson-Scott (New York, 1970), p. 91.

18. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *S.E.*, Vol. 23, p. 7.

19. Fritz Wittels, *Sigmund Freud: Der Mann, die Lehre, die Schule* (Leipzig, 1924); Charles E. Maylan, *Freuds tragischer Komplex: Eine Analyse der Psychoanalyse* (Munich, 1929); Ernst Simon, "Sigmund Freud, the Jew," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, Vol. 2 (1957), pp. 270–305; David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (Princeton, 1958); Dennis Klein, *The Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (New York, 1981); Carl Schorske, "Politics and Patricide in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 78 (1973), pp. 328–347; Jacques Le Rider, *Modernité viennoise et crises de l'identité* (Paris, 1990); John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York, 1974); Estelle Roith, *The Riddle of Freud: Jewish Influences on His Theory of Female Sexuality* (London, 1987); Marthe Robert, *D'Oedipe à Moïse: Freud et la conscience juive* (Paris, 1974); Marianne Krüll, *Freud und sein Vater: Die Entstehung der Psychoanalyse und Freuds ungelöste Vaterbindung* (Munich, 1979); Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven, 1987).

20. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Intermittent* (New Haven, 1991); Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: Une impression freudienne* (Paris, 1995); Richard J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (Cambridge, 1998); Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, 1997); Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton, 1993); Sander L. Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Baltimore, 1993).

21. Sigmund Freud, letter to Martha Freud, September 21, 1907, in Freud, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, p. 261.

22. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *S.E.*, Vol. 4, pp. 217–220.

23. Cf. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 10.

24. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, p. 23.

25. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, p. 71.

26. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, p. 73. Among the many others who would read the Jewish identities of Freud *père und fils* through this inscription are Mortimer Ostow ("Sigmund and Jakob Freud and the Philippsohn Bible [with an Analysis of the Birthday Inscription]," *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 16 [1989], pp. 483–492), Emanuel Rice (*Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home* [Albany, NY, 1990]), and Moshe Gresser (*Dual Allegiance: Freud as a Modern Jew* [Albany, NY, 1994]), as well as Derrida, in *Mal d'Archive*.

27. Cf. Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 3 vols. (New York, 1953–1957).

28. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, p. 74.

29. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, p. 77.

30. See Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, pp. 4–5.

31. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 43.

32. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 88.

33. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, pp. 36–48; cf. Diane Jonte-Pace, *Speaking the Unspeakable: Religion, Misogyny, and the Uncanny Mother in Freud's Cultural Texts* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 77–81.

34. Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, 1999), p. xiii; Elaine Marks, “Juifemme,” in *People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on Their Jewish Identity*, eds. Jeffrey Rubin-Dworsky and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (Madison, 1996), pp. 344–345; and on Gardiner and Auerbach, Susan Gubar, “Eating the Bread of Affliction,” in *People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on Their Jewish Identity*, eds. J. R. Dworsky and S. Fisher Fishkin, p. 20.

35. The lecture on which this article is based was given soon after the advent of Lent when Viennese engage in the *Heringschmaus*, herring feast.

36. Freud wrote in his *Diary* sixty-three years ago to the day, March 15, 2001, when I presented the lecture upon which this article is based, in Freud's former apartment before the Sigmund-Freud Gesellschaft.

37. This was during the period immediately preceding and contemporaneous with my original lecture. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York, 1999); Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry* (London, 2001). I was shocked to learn a month before delivering this lecture that Finkelstein's book was the number two best-seller at Amazon.DE and that a poll performed by the leading German news magazine, *Spiegel*, indicated that a majority of German respondents accepted, with minor modifications, Finkelstein's thesis of—there is no other way to put it—a world Jewish conspiracy.

38. The invitation was received by Professor Amy-Jill Levine of Vanderbilt University, who provided me with a copy of it.

39. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 2. See Frederick Crews, *The Memory Wars: Freud's Legacy in Dispute* (New York, 1995); and Frederick Crews, ed., *Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend* (New York, 1998).

40. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 56.

41. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 43.

42. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 103.

43. Cf. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Post-memory* (Cambridge, MA, 1997); and Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore, 1996).

44. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 80.

45. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: The Book of Knowledge*, ed. and trans. Moses Hyamson (New York, 1937), p. 93a.