



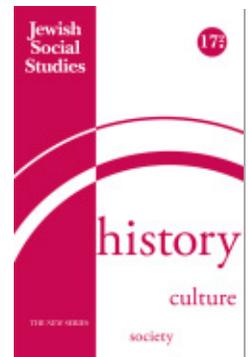
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Geller, Jay.

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Spinoza's Election of the Jews: The Problem of Jewish Persistence

Jay Geller

My title plays on that of the third chapter of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, "Of the Election of the Jews..." In that chapter Spinoza argues that the claim that the Jews are God's chosen people is no longer valid. Further, their former elected status was not a consequence of any qualities or religious beliefs particular to them but was the result of their past political good fortune. The fall of the Jewish state marked the end of their chosenness:

[T]he Hebrew nation was not chosen by God before others by reason of its intellect or of its peace of mind, but by reason of the social order and of the fortune by which it acquired a state and by which it kept [a state] for many years. . . . [S]ince God is equally well disposed to all and chose the Hebrews only with respect to their social order and their state, we conclude that . . . there is no difference between [a Jew] and a gentile.¹

That the Jewish people still existed as a self-identified entity some 1,600 years after the fall of Jerusalem was not, therefore, a sign of divine election. Nor, however, was their continued disempowered existence an index of divine rejection. Such persistence was a curiosity and a consequence of the separation between Jews and gentiles that had been maintained by hatred and the peculiarity of Jewish practices.

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[40] Spinoza's discussion of divine election and his analysis of the causes of Jewish persistence converge on a passage that Leo Strauss refers to as "Spinoza's Testament":

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The mark of circumcision is also, I think, of great importance in this connection [i.e., Jewish persistence]; so much so that in my view it alone will preserve the Jewish people for all time; indeed, did not the principles of their religion make them effeminate [*effoeminarent*] I should be quite convinced that some day when the opportunity arises [so changeable are human affairs] they will establish their state once more, and that God will chose them afresh.²

According to Strauss, this sentence delivered the coup de grâce to any claims that the continued existence of the Jewish people was a sign of divine chosenness. Moreover, it concisely asserted Spinoza's detachment of Jewry's ethnic identity and practices (such as circumcision) from any religious claims and principles (such as messianic hopes); the passage also reinforces Spinoza's political conception of Judaism in the face of the Jewish people's current apolitical existence. For Strauss, this passage represents Spinoza's final word on his relationship to *Judentum*, that condensation of ethnos, ethos, and ethic (of Jewry, Judaism, and Jewishness); hence neither apology nor repudiation, Spinoza's assertion is a testament to his neutral stance vis-à-vis the Jews, their beliefs, and their practices.

What else Spinoza may have intended by this combination of denigrating contemporary Jewry and opening the possibility of future statehood has been a frequent topic of speculation in the contemporary literature on the *Tractatus*. Is this sentence a response to the messianic movement of Sabbatai Sevi, or a final act of *ressentiment* directed at the community that had put him under the *herem* (ban), or, simply, a logical conclusion based on his representation of Judaism and his understanding of the rational laws of history?³

My concern, however, is less with Spinoza's intentions than with his line's various receptions. This article plots how this passage from the *Tractatus* has provided an optic through which leading Jewish and gentile writers and, more broadly, a variety of German (sub)cultures have seen Jewish-gentile relations and Jewish identity since the Enlightenment.⁴ This one sentence may not have shaped these authors' understanding of modernity as much as Spinoza's critique of scripture and revealed religion, his separation of reason and faith, and/or his ontologization of immanence, of this-world. Yet by breaking the connection between persistence and chosenness/election, distinguishing the sociological fact of Jewry's existence from its religious meaning, and op-

posing a political/legal conception of Judaism to its apolitical actuality, “Spinoza’s Testament” has, perhaps, had a greater effect on their perceptions of those interethnic relations and identities. These relations and identities were shaped by another key component of modern consciousness: the emergence of nationalism in the late eighteenth century.⁵

Although the question of which people were the true elect was pervasive, the growth and transformation of antisemitism that accompanied nationalism’s coeval partner, the Jewish call for emancipation and acculturation, was less a function of a rivalry among the chosen. Rather, this passage’s combination of Jewish body, gender, statelessness, and survival insinuated the specter of Jewish persistence and—particularly with its assertion that “the principles of their religion make them effeminate”⁶—the equally uncanny ascription of embodied Jewish gender identity: the feminized male Jew. Together these topoi posed a threat to post-Enlightenment Europeans by questioning their simultaneously supersessionist and sui generis constitution as autochthonous, autonomous subjects and transgressing the gendered bifurcation of their societies into the male-coded public and female-coded private spheres that secured those identities. And, as exemplified by Julius Wellhausen’s (1844–1918) appropriation of Spinoza and the third chapter of the *Tractatus* to herald the coming dissolution of Jewry, efforts had to be made to foreclose this menace.

For Jewish writers from Berthold Auerbach (1812–82) to Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), from Moses Hess (1812–75) to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Spinoza’s figuration posed other possibilities; it presented either an obstacle to Jewish admission into those virile societies that must be overcome or the promise of an “old-new”⁷ Jew. Still, the danger and promise posed by this one sentence lay less in its condensation of tropes than in the authority embodied in its source. Of Spinoza, Manfred Walther has written that “besides Moses and Jesus, no other thinker of Jewish descent made such an impression upon the non-Jewish world and in Germany since the Spinoza Renaissance (Herder, Jacobi) has been so acknowledged.”⁸ Whether “Spinoza’s Testament” functioned as focusing lens or distorting mirror, provided a clarion call or generated signal anxiety, this passage became a site for the contestation of the role and representation of a gendered Jewry in European culture that marked modernity. In line with the large body of literature⁹ on Judentum, gender, and sexuality that has emerged as well as with the growing recognition of identity as always already gendered and sexualized,¹⁰ this article examines how through direct citation or unmistakable allusion—often through the use of gendered

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language to describe Spinoza himself—modern Jewish identities were articulated.

[42] While I will refrain from taking sides in the centuries-old debate¹¹ as to whether Maledictus would have been a more appropriate Latinized form of Baruch than Benedictus, I will draw on the history of this dispute as to whether Spinoza was friend or foe of the Jewish people. Discussion of this passage emerges in these polemical exchanges as exemplary of the personae each disputant ascribes to Spinoza: renegade apostate, hater of Judaism, or traitor who gives aid and comfort to the enemy (for example, as the source for Kant's derogation of Judaism as a nonreligion); model of the emancipated Jew, of the secular Jew, of the possibilities and potentialities of the Jews, or, via Goethe's Spinozism, of the so-called German-Jewish symbiosis; noble, selfless saint, God-intoxicated man, prophet of the possibility of a secular Jewish state, incarnation of a third way (that is, the human) between observant Judaism and pious Christianity, or harbinger of modernity; Jew, Christian, or atheist.¹² The opposition of Maledictus and Benedictus has, in any case, been less about Spinoza than about the people—the Jews—whom the disputants would or would rather not have him represent, for this, "the Spinoza Question[,] interwove through the debates about Jewish identity in modernity."¹³

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A Persistent Stumbling Block

When both Jewish and gentile attention began in the nineteenth century to turn to Spinoza and his *Tractatus*, the ground of meaning and the source of European identities were shifting from religion and lineage to the nation (that is, history) and to the body (that is, nature).¹⁴ The zero-degree indicator of difference became the natural differences of male and female (later joined by those of race) as clearly marked by the separate spheres of the social body and the physiognomy of the physiological body.¹⁵ Jews became less identified with their religion, and discourse on Jews became less oriented toward either deicide or a Jewish dogma such as chosenness. Instead, as such discourse became more engaged in coming to grips with the factuality of the Jewish presence, Spinoza and his later readers (and readers of readers) endeavored to deal with what was and is perceived as the riddle of Jewish persistence. How is it that, though there are no more ancient Romans or Greeks, Sumerians or Assyrians, or other one-time world-historical peoples, there still exist groups who call themselves Jews and who identify and are identified with the community that in-

habited Palestine thousands of years earlier? A corollary to this is the question of how a people could continue to exist without a state.

The stumbling block (*skandalon*) that Jewish persistence proved for Europeans was more than the cognitive dissonance generated by this conundrum. Jews occupy a peculiar place in the modern West's cultural imaginary. Although they were generally perceived as older than Christian Europe, they had apparently been superseded by their rival for world hegemony and divine election. Yet still they persisted. While their lack of control over their political and economic destinies insinuated a lack in their cultural (or racial) makeup, their very persistence under conditions of European domination questioned the grounds of a Christian European culture that privileged (its own) *sui generis* constitution. This threat is part of a more general subversion that is perhaps coeval with the constitution of the modern West. Contact with otherness—both the indigenous heterogeneous populations of modern European society (such as women, Jews) and the different peoples contacted in colonial expansion—undermined the narcissistic fantasy of European wholeness. In order to foreclose this danger, stereotypical political, gendered, and “natural” Jewish bodies, both of specific individuals and of the community at large, provided symbolic substitutes for and objectified representations of the threatening Other. By rendering the Other visible—especially the Other who sought to assimilate—the exchange of these fetishizing representations in a variety of European scientific and popular discourses served simultaneously to disavow, affirm, and, above all, forestall the perceived threat to the Europeans' white, Christian, male, heterosexual, bourgeois claims to identity and authority. These exchanges become evident in the transformed Spinoza discourse of the nineteenth century.

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Spinoza and Redemptive Jewish (Hu)manization

During the first half of the nineteenth century, when German gentile philosophy was still playing out the Spinoza-intoxicated (*betrunkenen*) pantheist controversy spurred largely by his *Ethics*,¹⁶ the emancipation-desiring, acculturation-pursuing Jewish intelligentsia in Germany were abandoning Moses Mendelssohn's relative silence about and silencing of Spinoza.¹⁷ The years 1837–38 mark a significant turn in the reception of Spinoza and his “Testament” with the appearance of Auerbach's translation of Spinoza's works and of his historical novel about Spinoza;¹⁸ perhaps gathering less notice was the publication of *The Holy History of Mankind by a Young Disciple of Spinoza*.¹⁹ The young

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disciple proved to be “The Communist Rabbi,” the often forgotten father of both German Socialism and theoretical Zionism, Moses Hess. Auerbach, described by many as the first modern Jewish novelist,²⁰ chose an interesting word to translate *effoeminarent: weibisch* (womanish). Rather than *verweichlichen* (render soft or effeminate) as in most subsequent German translations, including the standard Gebhardt edition, Auerbach’s choice leaves no doubt about the gender implications of “Spinoza’s Testament.” Auerbach also stages this passage in his novel about Spinoza.

The scene commences just prior to the formal procedures for Spinoza’s herem, or excommunication, were completed. Spinoza is engaging in a conversation with several gentile friends. One, Meyer, wonders about the persistence of the Jews and hence the incompleteness of their mission and the likelihood that they will once again act in history. Auerbach has Spinoza respond:

Nothing is abnormal; everything has its definite cause, from which it must arise necessarily and logically in its destined order. If the ordinances [*Einrichtungen*] of their religion did not rob them of their manliness [*Männlichkeit*], I should unhesitatingly affirm that the Jews, as is quite possible in the whirling wheel of human affairs, would one day when the opportunity occurred, again obtain their kingdom, and God would choose them anew. . . . But the mission of the Jews is fulfilled. There is nothing wonderful in their preservation; it is only the hatred of all the nations that has preserved them, and they have set themselves apart from all nations by their customs[, and especially by circumcision].²¹ These customs may disappear like all other laws of ceremonial, which have only a local signification, and the hatred of the nations may change to love.²²

After this rehearsal of the concluding sentiments of the *Tractatus*’s third chapter—albeit with Auerbach replacing his translation’s feminizing *Grundsätze* (principles) with the Jews’ feminizing *Einrichtungen* (ordinances; the ritual of circumcision is such an ordinance)—Meyer draws the implications for the construction of a Jewish identity, an identity epitomized by Spinoza: “The free Jew, who has cut loose from his own already torn traditions is the only unbiased stranger in the world, armed with all the weapons of the masculine intellect.”²³ Signaled by this strategic shift in terminology, the “cut[ting] loose” that apotropaically substitutes for the feminizing cut of circumcision, and the use of gendered language—“manliness,” “masculine intellect”—Auerbach’s characterization of Spinoza on the eve of emancipation portends the Jew as the model of the virile citizen of the world.

Auerbach’s understanding of the Spinoza passage, as revealed in

his substitution of “Einrichtungen” for “Grundsätze,” of practices in place of principles, apparently generated other reverberations in his own life. By 1852, when Auerbach’s son was born, most of the debates both between reform-minded and traditional Jews and among different communities of reformers over the meaning, healthfulness, primitiveness, and aesthetics of infant circumcision had gone somewhat into abeyance; the emerging general consensus supported the retention of the ritual—under medical supervision.²⁴ Many German states and cities, including Saxony and its capital Dresden where Auerbach lived, still required the circumcision of male Jewish babies in order to register them as legal inhabitants. Following his son’s birth, Auerbach took on Saxony’s chief rabbi Zecharias Frankel and insisted that the child not be circumcised; instead, Auerbach proposed a different Einrichtung, a ceremony at his home to welcome his son into the community of humanity, a community that included both Jews and gentiles. Although a lower court initially ruled in his favor, the decision was overturned. Auerbach then returned to his native state of Württemberg, where circumcision was not required for civil status, and registered his son there.²⁵ Perhaps not surprisingly, Auerbach discretely excised from the second edition of his Spinoza novel the reference to circumcision as the chief custom responsible for setting the Jews apart from the nations. As far as Auerbach was concerned, circumcision was one custom that at this time had already “disappeared.”

When he published a second edition of his translation in 1871, Auerbach appended a biography. It suggested psychological motivations for Spinoza’s characterization of the Jewish people that belie the novel’s saintly characterization of Spinoza—notably impetuosity, delight in the attack, and bitterness toward the Jews (*hervorbrechende Angriffslust und Erbheit gegen die Juden*).²⁶ In the corresponding note, Auerbach cites passages from chapters 1 and 9 of the *Tractatus* as he remarks that Spinoza “here allowed himself a mode of expression that does not correspond to his later developed, thoroughly temperate composure.”²⁷ Auerbach also makes reference to the end of chapter 3, where Spinoza demonstrates little sympathy for the position of the Jews in Spain and Portugal. Then, in an apparent non sequitur, Auerbach invokes Spinoza’s indication of a possible future Jewish state that concludes his “testament.”²⁸ Could this reference be a synecdochic allusion to the rest of the “Testament,” those “furious traces of personal agitation”²⁹ that were too provocative even to provide page references for?

Auerbach ascribes the source of Spinoza’s intemperate remarks to personal reasons (*aus innern Gründen*) and to a polemical apologia against his excommunication. Auerbach’s judgment may also reflect

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his recognition that Spinoza's criticism of the Jewish situation in and separation from the gentile world had contributed to the appropriation of Spinoza by gentile readers, not as the model for a third, human identity³⁰ but as a Judentum-repudiating Christian.

For Moses Hess,³¹ like Auerbach,³² Spinoza was the harbinger of modernity, of Hess's *Holy History's* third period of the revelation or knowledge of God. The first period—that of God the Father—follows the Tanakh and covers creation to Second Temple Judaism. In this period, which is guided by an orientation outward, fantasy (*Phantasie*) and representation mediate knowledge of God. The second—the period of God the Son—reigns during the first 1,500 years or more of the Christian era. Knowledge of God is mediated by “feelings of the soul” (*Ahnung der Gemüthe*), and humanity is oriented inward. The birth of Spinoza inaugurates the third age of God the Holy Spirit. God is beyond representation. The revelation is neither Jewish nor Christian but universal and apperceived by the clear light of the understanding. Unfortunately, Hess laments, Spinoza's significance remains largely unrecognized or, worse, misrecognized and attacked.

Each period of Hess's history is gender coded. The age of the Jewish fantasies is primarily characterized as passive and feminine; although, in one place, Hess writes: “So the holy, manly fantasy . . . proceeds constantly forward” (*So schritt die heilige, männliche Phantasie*).³³ The age of Christianity is largely described as active; indeed, when Hess provides a recap of his holy history in the second division of the text, which is addressed to the future, he describes Christianity as the manly principle.³⁴ The age is characterized by the severing of manly, spiritual religion from effeminate, material politics; although, curiously, the period commences with Christ's passive yielding to his fate. For Hess, the third age reunites masculine and feminine, religion and politics, spirit and body. There and then the human proceeds with “a firm, quiet, and manly stride” and clear consciousness on the path to “his” eternal life in God.³⁵ This third age, the modern, has learned its lessons from the two great examples (Judentum and Christianity) of what not to do. Drawing obviously from the conclusion of the *Tractatus's* third chapter, in which Spinoza analogizes the recently conquered and queue-wearing Chinese with the stateless and circumcised Jews,³⁶ Hess says of the Jews and the Chinese that they both died long ago but, like ghosts, are still around. The Jews are an “ethereal fog” (a spirit without a body), and the Chinese are a “rigid cadaver” (a body without spirit).³⁷

Hess returns some 25 years later to the third chapter in the *Tractatus*, with his vision of the revival of Israel, of Jewish nationality, *Rome and Jerusalem*.³⁸ He takes his lead, as many future Zionists would with

regard to the possibility of a secular Jewish state, from an over-reading of the “Testament’s” last clause: “some day when the opportunity arises [so changeable are human affairs] they will establish their state once more, and that God will chose them afresh.” Or, in Hess’s rewriting: “Spinoza conceived Judaism to be grounded in Nationalism, and held that the restoration of the Jewish kingdom depends entirely upon the will and courage of the Jewish people.”³⁹ Here Hess inverts Spinoza’s characterization of Jewish effeminization by invoking Jewish will and courage. Spinoza remains for Hess the prophet of modernity, but he has severed—like Spinoza in the third chapter—Judaism from the Jews:

And finally, when after the long struggle between the pagan world of sensuality and barbarous force, on the one hand, and the spiritual, mystic, Jewish view[,] on the other, the sun of modern humanitarian civilization shed its feeble rays upon a better and more perfect world, it was a Jew [Spinoza] who was able to signal to the world that the final stage of the process of human development had begun.⁴⁰

Hess’s optimistic 1862 solution to a world in which the separation of Jew and gentile is taken as a racial given but not as a violent reality is repeated by George Eliot. Nineteenth-century England’s most important mediator of German (largely anti-Jewish) religious critique through her translations of David Friedrich Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu/The Life of Jesus* and Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christenthums/The Essence of Christianity*,⁴¹ Eliot also worked for several years on a never-published translation of the *Tractatus*⁴² and later on a posthumously published (1981) translation of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Her 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda* recounts her eponymous hero’s gradual coming to recognition of his Jewish identity and the responsibilities such an identity entails. It is a curious work built around a silence: the virile Deronda’s never-mentioned circumcision.⁴³ Spinoza explicitly emerges in a passage that will later find its way into German Spinoza-reception (discussed further below). It is an apparent allusion to that last clause of “Spinoza’s Testament”⁴⁴ by the character Mordecai, who becomes Deronda’s guide to Judaism before he learns the secret of his identity. Mordecai expounds:

The heritage of Israel is beating in the pulses of millions; it lives in the veins as a power without understanding. . . . Let the reason of Israel disclose itself in a great outward deed, and let there be another migration, another choosing of Israel to be a nationality whose members may still stretch to the ends of the earth, even as the sons of England and Germany, whom enterprise carries afar, but who still have a national hearth and a

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tribunal of national opinion. Will any say, "It cannot be"? Baruch Spinoza had not a faithful Jewish heart, though he had sucked the life of his intellect at the breasts of the Jewish tradition. He laid bare his father's nakedness and said, "They who scorn him have the higher wisdom."⁴⁵

Mordecai's opening figuration of Spinoza is remarkable in its possible allusiveness. Is Eliot here anthropomorphizing "Spinoza's Testament" where the "breasts of the Jewish tradition" are an allusion to the feminizing principles of Judentum and the father's nakedness a reference to the hate-inducing circumcision? Is she thereby suggesting a new Holy Family consisting of mother Judaism, father Jewry, and little Baruch? Or is she picking up the contemporary echoes of Spinoza's passage by depicting Judentum rather as an androgyne, as a feared and/or scorned transgressor of the sexual differentiation on which European modernity is grounded?⁴⁶ Although one can only speculate about any specific reference to the "Testament," Mordecai's use of corporeal language clearly sets the stage, like Spinoza, for a gendered vision of the Jewish people: they embody the male virtues necessary for the resurrection of their nation. Mordecai continues:

Yet Baruch Spinoza confessed, he saw not why Israel should not again be a chosen nation. Who says that the history and literature of our race are dead? Are they not as living as the history and literature of Greece and Rome, which have inspired revolutions, enkindled the thought of Europe, and made the unrighteous powers tremble? These were an inheritance dug from the tomb. Ours is an inheritance that has never ceased to quiver in millions of human frames. (596)

Without specifically referring to Spinoza's discussion, Mordecai calls attention to the peculiarity of Jewish persistence. Although he does not—unlike Spinoza—seek to explain that persistence, the discussion does then move to the topic that serves as Spinoza's explanation: gentile hatred of the Jews. To one of his auditors', Gideon's, response that "Our people [that is, Jewry] have [also] inherited a good deal of hatred. There's plenty of curses still flying about, and stiff settled rancor inherited from the times of persecution." Mordecai adds:

But what wonder if there is hatred in the breasts of the Jews, who are children of the ignorant and oppressed—what wonder since there is hatred in the breasts of Christians? . . . The degraded and scorned of our race will learn to think of their sacred land, not as a place for saintly beggary to await death in loathsome idleness, but as a republic where the Jewish spirit manifests itself in a new order founded on the old, purifies, enriched by the experience our greatest sons have gathered from the life of

the ages. How long is it?—only two centuries since a vessel carried over the ocean the beginning of the great North American nation. The people grew like meeting waters—they were various in habit and sect—there came a time, a century ago, when they needed a polity. . . . Let our wise and wealthy show themselves heroes. (597)

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Mordecai's solicitation of a heroic Jewry that transforms the memories of the past with a "vision of the better" in order to create a new polity contrasts with the representation in the epigraph to Eliot's chapter, a passage from Leopold Zunz's *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*. There the Jewish hero has been, through the ages, not a founder of a new order but instead a player in and chronicler of a history of pain and suffering. Mordecai continues:

They have the memories of the East and West, and they have the full vision of a better [polity] . . . a covenant of reconciliation. . . . I say that the strongest principle of growth lies in human choice. The sons of Judah have to choose that God may again choose them. The Messianic time is the time when Israel shall will the planting of the national ensign. . . . Shall man, whose soul is set in the royalty of discernment and resolve, deny his rank and say, I am an onlooker, ask no choice or purpose of me? That is the blasphemy of this time. The divine purpose of our race is action, choice, resolved memory. Let us contradict the blasphemy and help to will our own better future and the better future of the world. (597–98)

Clearly, Mordecai's apparent commentary on "Spinoza's Testament" is rife with the masculine language of heroism, action, choice, resolution, and will. In lieu of Spinoza's picture of a feminizing religion impeding Jewry from being chosen again and reestablishing a state, Mordecai projects a vision of a virile race choosing and changing its national destiny.

Hess's and Eliot's visions contrast sharply with still later readers of Spinoza who lived in a world where antisemitic political polemic and pogrom became endemic and gender identities even more ossified. The Russian Jewish physician Leo Pinsker, for example, was driven to despair over the fate of the Jewish people following the violent pogroms that ripped through the Pale of Settlement in 1880–81. He realized that they were instigated as much by inflammatory newspaper articles of the urban elite as by the assorted motivations of the ignorant rural rabble. When Pinsker came across that crucial third-chapter passage, he had a moment of enlightenment that eventuated in the call for the "auto-emancipation" of the Jews: "they must become a nation."⁴⁷

His resulting pamphlet, "Auto-Emancipation," not only reflects the

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enthusiasm generated by the “wise and prudent” Spinoza’s assertion of Jewish national possibilities but also offers a series of images that reflect how the Jews’ persistence after the loss of their state—and not their claims for chosenness—has brought on the hatred of the people. “Among the living nations of the earth the Jews occupy the position of a nation long since dead.” Israel did not die after the loss of its state, of its actual existence; rather, it has continued its spiritual existence. Pinsker then evokes the frightening image of “the uncanny form of one of the dead walking among the living.” This “ghostlike apparition . . . makes a strange and peculiar impression upon the imagination of the nations.”⁴⁸ On Wilhelm Wundt’s ethnopsychological notion of an inborn fear of ghosts, Pinsker lays the blame for the long-festering prejudice against the Jews, hatred of the Jews, fear of the Jews. Race and gender are not sufficient explanations for this Judeophobia. Although discrimination directed at Jews and their need for emancipation are comparable to the experience of blacks and women, Pinsker rather crudely notes that Jews are of a nobler race and include men of great stature (as well as important women). Beyond the positivistic distinctions Pinsker makes among groups is his attempt to separate the “real” Jews from the discourses that figure the Jew as Negro and/or as woman(ish). Furthermore, all allegations against the Jews that blame them for their own victimhood are just rationalizations to explain and justify the persecutors’ hatred and to quiet their conscience over their evil acts. Judeophobia is rooted and naturalized as demonopathy, but, unlike other ghosts or the ghost-imagery of Moses Hess, the Jew is “a being of flesh and blood, and suffers the most excruciating pain from the wounds inflicted upon it by the fearful mob who imagine it threatens them.”⁴⁹ Thus, Pinsker’s call for Jewish auto-emancipation not only was catalyzed by Spinoza’s deduction of a possible Jewish state but also drew on his connection between gentile hatred and Jewish persistence. Pinsker, however, inverted Spinoza’s argument that such hatred had facilitated the persistence of the Jews to read that Jewish persistence had itself generated that hatred.

Another Spinoza-influenced response to the surge of antisemitic activity after 1879 came from a surprising source: a Christian musicologist at the University of Berlin. But Dr. Alfred Christlieb Kalischer was not your ordinary German-Christian academic; he was born Salomo Ludwig Kalischer, fourth son of Rabbi Zvi Kalischer, a leading religious proto-Zionist whose plans for the repatriation of the Jewish people to Palestine are extensively cited by Hess.⁵⁰ In his second contribution to the Berliner Antisemitic Dispute, the 1884 *Benedikt (Baruch) von Spinoza’s Stellung zum Judenthum und Christenthum*, A. C.

Kalischer hopes to put an end to the assaults on God's chosen people. He asks Christians to read Romans 9–11 and those of the "Mosaic confession" to attend to the long neglected and/or maligned Benedikt von Spinoza, "the greatest creative Spirit of Israel since the birth of Christ." Like Hess, Kalischer compares Spinoza to Christ—pure and stainless, having an air of the unexplainable, the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, and a breeze from the future about him.⁵¹ Kalischer argues that an understanding of the third chapter of the *Tractatus* is perhaps most important for his and Germany's present situation. He writes that the idea of chosenness is the only thing that *das Volk Israel* has raised to a religious dogma, and, because of maintaining this dogma, which is not without any kernel of truth, they have suffered "misery, wretchedness, anguish, and death pangs."⁵²

After citing the leading nineteenth-century German novelist Gustav Freytag on the heroic courage (*Heldenmuth*) of these weaponless folk,⁵³ Kalischer expresses his disagreement with Spinoza's judgment of Jewish chosenness as indexed by statehood. Instead he argues that the Diaspora is providential; its purpose is to further God's goal of a united humanity. He then cites the last two pages from Auerbach's translation of the third chapter (omitting only the paragraph on the Chinese), which Kalischer later describes as Spinoza's "*corpus delecti*" that caused so much bad blood both among the Jews and between them and the gentiles.⁵⁴ Kalischer follows his extended Spinoza citation with Auerbach's commentary on the passage as well as a longer version of the selection discussed above from *Daniel Deronda* (though complaining of its "sickening sentimentality"). In line with the medical imagery that pervades late-nineteenth-century discourse on the Jews,⁵⁵ he calls Spinoza one of the "true physicians [*echten Heilärzten*] [who are prepared to provide] a fundamentally radical cure without any palliative" for having written these pages. He also speculates that, if Spinoza were alive today (that is, 1884), he would abandon his mistaken argument that the sign of "the highest tastelessness, uncleanness and aesthetic chaos," circumcision, has preserved the Jews.⁵⁶

Then Kalischer asks whether Spinoza would have achieved more fame had he kept silent about this "truth," his truth. To answer his rhetorical question, Kalischer inverts Spinoza's judgment of Judentum and applies it to him: "[H]ad he [not] opened his mouth, he would have manifested a very effeminate nature and not [been] that proud, heroic thinker valued by the world."⁵⁷ With this move, Kalischer betrays a rhetorical trope that became utilized by both Spinoza's supporters and detractors—displacing the ascribed gendered identity from the Jews to Spinoza.

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From Emancipation to *Entmannung*

[52] In an age of gender crisis, of concerns about individual and national virility, of effeminacy and degeneracy, ascriptions of effeminacy would render the Jews unfit for citizenship and a threat to the nation's health.⁵⁸ Consequently, Jewish critics after 1870 have sought to defuse the force of Spinoza's reference to Jewish feminization. Some describe this clause as, in the words of the philosopher Rabbi Manuel Joël, the "poisonous addition";⁵⁹ others dismiss the explicit reference to the effeminacy of the Jews either cavalierly or with silence. Some make yet another move: they dwell on the meaning of the "addition" in order to question Spinoza's male qualities.

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Foremost among Spinoza's despisers was the Jewish philosopher and neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen, who unleashed diatribe after diatribe against Spinoza's notions of the state and religion as well as against his understandings of Judaism and Christianity. Where Spinoza sees no necessary relationship between Jewish practices and Jewish religious principles, Cohen finds practice and principle, *Gesetz* and *Geist*, in Judentum as inextricably bound together. As discussed above in his "Testament," Spinoza distinguishes a practice (here, specifically, circumcision) from feminizing principles, but Cohen sees only the essence of Judentum in both references. Hence, he describes this clause as one of "demonic" irony. Cohen claims that Spinoza insists the Jewish people must abandon what⁶⁰ preserves them—and here is the irony—but the now *vernichtete Volk*, the now-defunct people, thereby gains the possibility of a resurrected state. Cohen himself would indulge in such irony when he asserts that the contradictions in Spinoza's argument indicate that the inborn love of one's own people would overcome [the German reads *übermannnt*—overmanned] Spinoza's hardness of heart.⁶¹ Was Spinoza's sin then a matter for Cohen of logical contradiction, or was the sin one of confirming the anti-Jewish representations of the dominant culture? Exacerbating the situation for Cohen is that Spinoza had been granted such authoritative status by gentile culture. He was the exceptional Jew, the Jew who almost transcends his Jewishness for figures such as Schopenhauer, Dühring, and von Hartmann (no friends of the Jews here);⁶² Spinoza's assertion is both anti-Jewish—since one is known by the company one keeps or by which one is kept—and treasonous.⁶³

Although avoiding an explicit citation of our passage—he employs instead Joël's phrase, "the poisonous addition"—the philosopher Jacob Freudenthal employs similar gender language in the first modern biography of Spinoza (1904). Freudenthal comments that

Spinoza's discussion of the singular responsibility of circumcision for the preservation of the Jewish people reveals that "despite often proving his courage [Spinoza] cannot be said to have been free of unmanly fear."⁶⁴ Another fervent Spinozist of the early twentieth century, the philosopher and convert to Christianity Constantin Brunner (né Leo Wertheimer), also endeavors to avoid discussing this passage. Yet as Siegfried Hessing points out in his 1977 prologue to the sequel of his original 1933 Spinoza Festschrift, this time marking the three hundredth anniversary of Spinoza's death, Brunner virtually reproduces the passage in his diatribe against Zionism in *Der Judenhass und die Juden*. Brunner's passage is rife with the language of cutting/*schneiden* (*Zerschneidung, zerschnittene*)⁶⁵ as well as (now impotent) phallic imagery. Regarding Zionist "dreams" of reinstalling a Jewish state in Palestine, Brunner writes: "A nail sticks in the wall, but once taken out, it is no use to put it back into the old hole: it will not stay there anymore."⁶⁶

In perhaps the most abrupt elision of this addition, Julius Wellhausen—Spinoza's eventual successor in desanctifying the text of the "Old Testament"—concluded his article on the history of "Israel" for the famous ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* with a long passage from Spinoza. Here the reader encounters Spinoza's discussion of Jewish preservation: from his lack of surprise over that peculiar fact to the first clause of our much-discussed sentence. In Wellhausen's hands, Spinoza once again became prophet; this time, however, Spinoza prophesied the "extinction of Judaism." Where Cohen saw in "Spinoza's Testament" a logical contradiction between preservation and extinction, Wellhausen read a still deferred desire: "The persistency of the race may of course prove a harder thing to overcome than Spinoza had supposed."⁶⁷ Wellhausen had no desire to continue the passage, because to broach the feminization of the Jewish mind would also open up the possibility of the Jewish people abandoning their fundamental passivity and dependence and, if historical conditions so permit it, restoring their state.

But, as noted at the beginning of this article, the political philosopher Leo Strauss had no such fear in confronting the feminization of Judaism.⁶⁸ As a student in Weimar Germany, he had turned to Spinoza in search of a more masculine Jewish philosophy.⁶⁹ The perceived necessity of undertaking such a search thereby confirmed, if not Spinoza's judgment, then the internalization of how the dominant culture saw male Jews of all persuasions and professions: as feminized, as a threat to devitalize the male public sphere, and thereby as potential subverters of the world of fixed identities and traditional power relations.

In his 1932 "Das Testament Spinozas," Strauss conceded that the

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feminization line was “extremely questionable”—and even “unintelligible.”⁷⁰ After rhetorically asking whether Spinoza had forgotten what consolation Judaism had given to the victims of the Inquisition, Strauss, as Spinoza’s mouthpiece, responded: Consolation is fine, but a state needs religion to edify and provide the force to command. *Pace* Cohen and Wellhausen, Strauss saw no contradiction at work in “Spinoza’s Testament.” Spinoza for him is making a distinction between the practices of the Jews and the religious principles, doctrines, and beliefs that underlie Judaism. The rituals can remain to preserve the nation; that they have so far was no miracle, just historical law. The principles, doctrines, and beliefs are what impede the renewal of the state. The Jewish state has no need for Judaism, and Judaism has no need for the state.⁷¹ Unfortunately, Strauss was living at a time when the dominant culture recognized neither contradiction nor distinction. And ritual circumcision reinforced the representation of the feminized male Jew—whether the sexless Yeshiva *bocher* or the (like Woman) sex-driven, black-haired young Jewish truant stalking European maidenhood.⁷²

One more heir to “Spinoza’s Testament” would appear before the descendants of Spinoza’s contemporaries were deluged by the Shoah: Sigmund Freud. This passage served as a palimpsest on which Freud composed his only extended study of the skandalon of Judentum: *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). As I have argued elsewhere,⁷³ Freud’s last completed work (like the third chapter of the *Tractatus*) knots anti-semitism, circumcision, gendered Jewish identity, and persistence. Reading Freud as one last stop in the reception history of “Spinoza’s Testament”⁷⁴ helps clarify many of the innumerable puzzling aspects of *Moses and Monotheism*, including the curious final paragraph of Freud’s text. There Freud concedes that, while his investigation has shed some light on how the Jewish people came to acquire their characteristic qualities, less light (*weniger Aufklärung*) has been shed on the problem (*das Problem*) of how the Jews “have been able to retain their individuality till the present day.”⁷⁵

Of course, the reader does not realize that this was a problem for Freud until the opening lines of the second part of the third essay of *Moses*, when it emerges like Harry Lime in the *Third Man*. And Freud’s text, despite his final protestation, had answered the question: from the extensive concern followed abruptly by a virtual abandonment of his leitmotif—what he refers to as the *Leitfossil* circumcision—to the gendered aspect of Freud’s construction of Jewish identity, he repeatedly emphasized the masculine character of Judentum. Yet to acknowledge the answer was also to recognize the threat and danger that

answer posed. Unlike many of his predecessors in this reception history, Freud could not rhetorically elide the question of Jewish persistence, even if he managed to displace its answer; the times had changed. Tragically, Freud's belated attempt in *Moses and Monotheism* to distinguish gentile castration fantasies from Jewish masculine—albeit circumcised—actuality was to no avail. And *pace* Spinoza, instead of preservation, revelation of the inscribed symbol of the covenant promised death.⁷⁶

Yet, though Spinoza was no seer—and would not claim to be one, for by his own definition he privileged the intellect over the prophet's power of imagination—the philosopher-*cum*-lensmaker did become, as assimilating Jewry crossed the boundaries into European modernity and its public sphere, both a focal point for and the site of the contestation over Jewish identity. This article has chronicled the reception history of “Spinoza's Testament” and its combination of circumcision, gender, statelessness, and persistence by which he would explain the gentile hatred of the Jews. Whether as spur or proleptic anticipation, its image of a threatening, persisting, circumcised, and feminized Judentum would not only emerge in the discourses of Jewish identity by both Jew and gentile but also crystallize in the appropriations and repudiations of both Spinoza and his *Tractatus*. Consequently, these interpretations of the “Testament” were less mimetic rewrites than mirrors of European representation practices that developed in the face of Jewish claims for human status and endeavored to render the Jew as an object, gendered, and sexualized (and racial) body.

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Notes

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1 Baruch Spinoza, *The Political Works*, trans. A. G. Wernham (Oxford, 1958). The longtime, lone available English translation by R. H. M. Elwes (1883) reads “Of the Vocation of the Hebrews . . .” (*A Theological-*

Political Treatise and a Political Treatise [New York, 1957]).

2 *Ibid.*, 63. Spinoza is not suggesting a new religious covenant between God and the Jewish people; the reestablished state is not a consequence of renewed

election. Rather, the existence of the state is an index of the chosenness that God awards any people, Jew or gentile.

- 3 For the variety of responses, see, e.g., Leo Strauss, "Introduction," in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York, 1965); Leo Strauss, "The Testament of Spinoza (1932)," in *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings, 1921–1932*, ed. and trans. Michael Zank (Albany, N.Y., 2002), originally published as "Das Testament Spinozas," *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung*, Nov. 1, 1932, pp. 322–26; Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1989), 1: chap. 7; and Ze'ev Levy, *Baruch or Benedict: On Some Jewish Aspects of Spinoza's Philosophy* (New York, 1989).
- 4 See Heinrich Heine, *Die romantische Schule*, in his *Beiträge zur deutschen Ideologie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), 178: "All our present-day philosophers, perhaps often without knowing it, see through glasses that Baruch Spinoza has ground."
- 5 See William R. Hutchison and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *Many Are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 1994).
- 6 What Spinoza may have specifically been referring to by his use of "effoeminant" in this passage has also generated a wide range of interpretations: Is he indicating an absence of warlike aggression, or a lack of political will needed to secure a state? Is he referring to a passive waiting for God and the Messiah to usher in the Jews' return to Zion

and their blind, rote obedience to laws that are no longer binding? Is he alluding to Machiavelli's discussion of the deleterious effects of Christianity on the pagan state, or commenting on the *luxus* and indolence of the Amsterdam Jewish community (not unlike the picture of [future] Manchu court society that Spinoza juxtaposes with his testamentary statement)? See the sources cited in n. 3 as well as Sylvain Zac, "Spinoza et l'état des Hébreux," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 167 (1977): 201–32, and Geneviève Brykman, "L'élection et l'insoumission des Hébreux selon Spinoza," in *Spinoza, science et religion: De la méthode géométrique à l'interprétation de l'Écriture sainte*, ed. Renée Bouveresse (Paris, 1988), 141–50. Shlomo Pines, "Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isidore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 506–8, cites the discussion of the Jewish pursuit of peace instead of war as a "natural explanation" of their wretched plight in Isaac ben Joseph ibn Pollegar (Pulgar), *Ezer ha-dat* (early fourteenth century) and Machiavelli's analysis of how a particular understanding of Christianity had rendered Christendom *effeminatio* in his *Discourses on Livy* (I.6.4, II.2.2).

7 This is an allusion to Theodor Herzl's utopian vision of a Zionist Palestine, *Altneuland* (1902).

8 Manfred Walther, "Spinoza und das Problem einer jüdischen

- Philosophie,” in *Die philosophische Aktualität der jüdischen Tradition*, ed. Werner Stegmaier (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 284.
- 9 See, e.g., the work of David Biale, Daniel Boyarin, Christina von Braun, Bryan Cheyette, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, Sander Gilman, Klaus Hödl, Jacques Le Rider, Laura Levitt, Ann Pellegrini, Miriam Peskowitz, Riv-Ellen Prell, and Naomi Seidman.
- 10 See the work of Judith Butler, such as *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York, 1993).
- 11 Debates would be more appropriate, both within the Jewish community and among the gentiles, as Walther points out in “Spinoza und das Problem.” See Ernst Altkirch, *Maledictus und Benedictus* (Leipzig, 1924); Levy, “Introduction: Benedictus or Maledictus—Blessed or Accursed?” in *Baruch or Benedict*; and, more recently, Ze’ev Levy, *Baruch Spinoza—Seine Aufnahme durch die jüdischen Denker in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 2001).
- 12 See the sources cited in n. 3 as well as David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (New York, 1995), and Joseph Klausner, “Der jüdische Charakter der Lehre Spinozas,” in *Spinoza. Dreihundert Jahre Ewigkeit. Spinoza-Festschrift 1632–1932*, 2nd ed., ed. Siegfried Hessing (The Hague, 1962; orig. 1933). The indirection of this paragraph is modeled on Klausner’s rhetoric.
- 13 Walther, “Spinoza und das Problem,” 285. Echoing this claim from a very different perspective than that assumed here is Carsten Schapkow, “Die Freiheit zu philosophieren”: *Jüdische Identität in der Moderne im Spiegel der Rezeption Baruch de Spinozas in der deutschsprachigen Literatur* (Bielefeld, 2001).
- 14 While, perhaps, glossing over the uneven developments across the European continent and the continued role of religious identification whether implicit or explicit as well as eliding other identity markers, most notably class, this characterization nevertheless holds for the general shifts in European self-identity. See the work of and inspired by Michel Foucault: idem, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C., 1995); and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995).
- 15 On the separate spheres, among numerous works see Karin Hausen, “Family and Role-Division: The Polarization of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The German Family*, ed. Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (Totowa, N.J., 1981). See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), on the shift in the anatomical understanding of

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- woman's sexual organs: from being conceived as a smaller, weaker, lesser form of the man's to being viewed as something absolutely different.
- 16 See, e.g., Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987); Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, vol. 2; and Heinrich Heine, "Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland," in Heine, *Beiträge*, 92–93.
- 17 Moses Mendelssohn mentions Spinoza only once in *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism* (1783). However, the current consensus holds Spinoza and, in particular, the *Tractatus* as a significant, if unacknowledged, influence and foil on Mendelssohn's work, not the least because of its apparent appropriation by Kant for his depiction and denunciation of Judaism; see Walther, "Spinoza und das Problem," 290–93. Although Mendelssohn early in his career defends Spinoza, he later goes to some length to distance Gotthold Lessing posthumously from identification with Spinoza following Friedrich Jacobi's initiation of the pantheism controversy.
- 18 Berthold Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein historischer Roman* (Stuttgart, 1837); the second edition was published under the title *Spinoza: Ein Denkerleben* (Mannheim, 1854).
- 19 *Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit: Von einem Jünger Spinozas* (Stuttgart, 1837); *The Holy History of Mankind and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Shlomo Avineri (Cambridge, Engl., 2004).
- 20 Jonathan Skolnick, "Writing Jewish History Between Gutzkow and Goethe: Auerbach's *Spinoza* and the Birth of Modern Jewish Historical Fiction," *Proof-texts* 19 (1999): 101–25.
- 21 "[U]nd vornehmlich durch die Beschneidung" only appears in the first edition of Auerbach's novel (part 2, pp. 182–83) and not in the second edition or the English translation.
- 22 Berthold Auerbach, *Spinoza*, trans. E. Nicholson (New York, 1890), 341–42.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 342.
- 24 See John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History* (New Haven, Conn., 2001), esp. 222–33, and Jay Geller, "Blood Sin: Syphilis and the Construction of Jewish Identity," *Fault Line* 1 (1992): 21–48.
- 25 Jacob Katz, "The Struggle Over Preserving the Rite of Circumcision in the First Part of the Nineteenth Century," in his *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem, 1998), 349.
- 26 Auerbach, "Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's," in *Spinoza's sämtliche Werke*, ed. and trans. Berthold Auerbach, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1871), 1: xl. See Alfred Christlieb Kalischer, *Benedikt (Baruch) von Spinoza's Stellung zum Judenthum und Christenthum: Als Beitrag zur Lösung der 'Judenfrage'* (Berlin, 1884), 40.
- 27 Auerbach, *Spinoza's sämtliche Werke* 1: xl n. 1.

- 28 Ibid., 1: xl n. 2. Auerbach ties it to the mass movement following the false messiah Sabbatai Sevi.
- 29 Ibid., 1: xl n. 1.
- 30 In the epilogue to the novel, Spinoza envisions an encounter with the Wandering Jew, who, thanks to the emergence of the “free Jew” that Spinoza embodies—“a Savior to mankind” (*Spinoza*, 443)—can now stop his wandering, die in peace, and take with him “that doom of that Israel which slew Jesus Christ on the Cross” (ibid., 444).
- 31 Moses Hess has recently left his relative obscurity, thanks to Pat Robertson’s revival of anti-semitic conspiracy theory in his antimodern book *The New World Order*—where Robertson sees Hess’s 1840 tract, *The European Triarchy*, as a harbinger of the notorious Trilateral Commission and argues that “the precise connecting link between the German Illuminati and the beginning of world communism was furnished by the German [read Jewish] radical named Moses Hess.” Robertson’s text often verges on plagiarizing Nesta Webster’s antisemitic diatribe, *The World Revolution: The Plot Against Civilization* (London, 1921), though he excises virtually every reference to an individual’s “Jewishness.” On Robertson and Hess, see Michael Lind, “Reverend Robertson’s Grand International Conspiracy,” *New York Review of Books*, Feb. 2, 1995.
- 32 Auerbach, *Spinoza’s sämtliche Werke* 1: xl n. 1.
- 33 *Die heilige Geschichte*, 79 (Avineri, *Holy History*, 19).
- 34 E.g., *Die heilige Geschichte*, 333 (Avineri, *Holy History*, 91).
- 35 *Die heilige Geschichte*, 176 (Avineri, *Holy History*, 43).
- 36 See Jay Geller, “Judenzopf/Chinensenzopf: Of Jews and Queues,” *positions* 2, no. 3 (1995): 500–537.
- 37 *Die heilige Geschichte*, 339–40 (Avineri, *Holy History*, 94). Leo Pinsker’s “Auto-Emancipation: An Appeal to His People by a Russian Jew,” in his *Road to Freedom: Writings and Addresses*, ed. B. Netanyahu, trans. D. S. Blondheim (New York, 1944), the Spinoza-inspired 1882 pamphlet that catalyzed the formation of secular “Zionist” organizations in Central and Eastern Europe, also employs this haunting metaphor to describe the Jewish people; however, that “ghostliness” is not an existential category but an ascription by the oppressive, dominant culture (see the discussion later in the text).
- 38 Published in English as Moses Hess, *The Revival of Israel: Rome and Jerusalem, the Last Nationalist Question*, trans. Meyer Waxman (Lincoln, Neb., 1995).
- 39 Ibid., 64.
- 40 Ibid., 211.
- 41 See E. S. Shaffer, “Kubla Khan” and the Fall of Jerusalem: *The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770–1880* (Cambridge, Engl., 1975), 225–91, and Jay Geller, “It’s ‘Alimentary’: Feuerbach and the Dietetics of Antisemitism,” in *Cultures of the Abdomen: Diet, Digestion and Fat in the Modern World*, ed. Christopher E. Forth and Ana Carden-Coyne (New York, 2005).

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- 42 We have little knowledge of George Eliot's translation methods of the *Tractatus*, but we do know that she consulted the other extant translations of the *Ethics* in French and German. Hence it is not unlikely that she had consulted Auerbach's 1837 translation of the *Tractatus*.
- 43 As many commentators have remarked, Eliot could only sustain her narrative of Daniel Deronda's quest to learn his origins so long as neither he nor Eliot noted his circumcision. See Steven Marcus, "Human Nature, Social Orders, and Nineteenth Century Systems of Explanation," *Salmagundi* 28 (1975): 20–42.
- 44 There is no explicit reference to the *Tractatus* let alone to the "Testament" in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* notebooks. However, the markings in her copy of Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von der dauernden Ansiedelung der Marranen in Holland (1618) bis zum Beginn der Mendelssohnischen Zeit (1760)*, vol. 10 of *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1868), indicate that she read his chapter on Spinoza; see Jane Irwin, ed., *George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda" Notebooks* (Cambridge, Engl., 1996), 356 n. 2.
- 45 George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (New York, 1967), 596. Prior to this commentary, Mordecai had remarked that "the effect of our separateness will not be completed and have its highest transformation unless our race takes on again the character of a nationality" (*ibid.*, 594). Hereafter, the page numbers of quotations from this work are given parenthetically in the text.
- 46 On the terror and anger induced by a more familiar, barrier (boundary) breaking figure of overdetermined gender, Marianne, see Neil Hertz, "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria Under Political Pressure," *Representations* 4 (1983): 27–54.
- 47 Levy, *Baruch or Benedict*, 74.
- 48 Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation," 77–78. Pinsker's language of uncanny form (*unheimliche Gestalt*) and strange and peculiar impression (*eigentümlichen, fremdartigen Eindruck*) recalls Freud's discussion of how circumcision, by recalling the feared castration, is one of the deeper motives for the hatred of the Jews in *Moses and Monotheism*: "a disagreeable, uncanny impression" (*einen unliebsamen, unheimlichen Eindruck*; in vol. 23 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. J. Strachey et al. [London, 1964], 91). Although Pinsker does not explicitly refer to circumcision and, indeed, refrains from referring to Jewish practices at all (perhaps to keep the blame for the persecution where he felt it belonged—on the persecutors), he does employ cutting, circumcision- (or castration-) suggestive figuration to describe the Jews: "clipped wings" (*abgeschnittenen Flügeln*), "maimed limbs" (*mit verstümmelten Gliedern; das Glied* regularly signifies the penis). See Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation," 86, 91, and *Autoemanzipation: Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen*

- von einem russischen Juden, 2nd ed. (Brünn, 1903), 16, 19.
- 49 Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation," 78.
- 50 Hess, *Revival*, 173–75.
- 51 Kalischer, *Benedikt (Baruch) von Spinoza's Stellung*, 4, 11; in the latter passage Kalischer is paraphrasing Heine's description of Spinoza in "Zur Geschichte," 48.
- 52 Kalischer, *Benedikt (Baruch) von Spinoza's Stellung*, 26.
- 53 Because the highly reputed Freytag's negative depiction of the Jewish merchant Veitel Itzig in his very popular novel *Soll und Haben* (Debit and Credit; 1855) was repeatedly cited in anti-semitic literature, Kalischer may have felt compelled to employ Freytag by taking a contrasting position on the Jews in his polemic. See George L. Mosse, "The Image of the Jew in German Popular Literature: Felix Dahn and Gustav Freytag," in his *Germans and Jews* (New York, 1970).
- 54 Kalischer, *Benedikt (Baruch) von Spinoza's Stellung*, 39–40.
- 55 Even Pinsker begins with an extended discussion of antisemitism as a sickness; see "Auto-Emancipation," 77–80. Plague imagery also permeates the anti-semitic diatribes of the Kaiser's court preacher, Adolf Stoecker; see Stoecker, "Unsre Forderungen an das moderne Judentum," in his *Christlich-Sozial. Reden und Aufsätze* (Bielefeld, 1885).
- 56 Kalischer, *Benedikt (Baruch) von Spinoza's Stellung*, 44.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 58 See the works of Robert A. Nye: *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, 1984), and *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York, 1993).
- 59 Manuel Joël, *Spinozas Theologisch-Politischer Traktat auf seine Quellen geprüft* (Breslau, 1890), 42–43. Joël's writing had a dual purpose: to demonstrate Spinoza's reliance on Jewish sources, and to contribute to Joël's ongoing examination of Jewish influences on the non-Jewish world.
- 60 Cohen perhaps misread practical principles for principal practices. In any case, since Cohen does not separate practice from principle, to give up one is to give up the other.
- 61 Cohen's language recalls that of Schopenhauer, "Fragments for the History of Philosophy," in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1974), 1: 73, who writes how Spinoza in part 4 of the *Ethics* "speaks [with regard to animals] in accordance with the first and ninth chapters of Genesis, just as the Jew knows how to, so that we others, who are accustomed to purer and worthier doctrines, are here overcome [*übermannt*] by the *foetor Judaicus* [Jewish stench]."
- 62 Kalischer cites extensively from them in the last section of his pamphlet to support his claims about Spinoza.
- 63 Hermann Cohen, "Spinoza über Staat und Religion, Judentum und Christentum," in his *Jüdische Schriften*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1924), 333.

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- 64 Jacob Freudenthal, *Spinoza. Sein Leben und seine Lehre. Bd. 1: Das Leben Spinoza* (Stuttgart, 1904), 201.
- 65 In German, “circumcision” and “circumcised” are, respectively, *Beschneidung* and *beschnitten*.
- 66 Constantin Brunner, *Der Judenhass und die Juden* (Berlin, 1918), 113, cited in a parallel column to Spinoza’s statement on the persistence of the Jews and their possible reevaluation by Siegfried Hessing, “Prologue with Spinozana—Parallels via East and West,” in *Speculum Spinozanum, 1677–1977*, ed. S. Hessing (London, 1977), 32. In his “intermezzo on circumcision as viewed and previewed by Spinoza,” Hessing prefaces the extended citation of Brunner by remarking “I have to mention[,] on such historical occasion as this homage to Baruch de Spinoza, that a contemporary pupil of Spinoza, although so eager to revive his spiritual legacy, could not face and endure such dilemma and discrepancy. . . . Constantin Brunner did back and support Spinoza with much enthusiasm in his essential basic teachings save only when it came to such a superdelicate crux latent in Spinoza’s prediction of the re-establishment of the lost Jewish homeland” (ibid., 31; ellipses in original).
- 67 Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Atlanta, Ga., 1994), 548.
- 68 But he seems to have felt some trepidation about employing the word “feminizing.” Strauss appears to be employing the Auerbach translation of the *Tractatus* rather than the already standard Gebhardt translation when he finally cites the passage he claims as Spinoza’s testament; *effoeminarent* is translated as *weibisch* rather than *verweichlichen*.
- 69 Strauss, “Introduction.” See Michael P. Steinberg, “Introduction: Benjamin and the Critique of Allegorical Reason,” in *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996), 12.
- 70 Strauss, “Testament,” 220.
- 71 Ibid., 221.
- 72 See Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1943), 325.
- 73 Jay Geller, “A Paleontological View of Freud’s Study of Religion: Unearthing the *Leitfossil* Circumcision,” *Modern Judaism* 13 (1993): 49–70.
- 74 Did Freud have access to that text? A bit of a problem, insofar as, according to the concordances to both the *Standard Edition* and the *Gesammelten Werken*, Spinoza only appears twice in Freud’s corpus—and once is a witticism from Heine about their “fellow unbeliever Spinoza.” Further, the extant holdings of Freud’s library do not contain a copy of the *Tractatus*. However, there is one record of his possessing a work that contained the Spinoza citation in its entirety and that, based on his letter expressing gratitude to its sender, Freud had at least skimmed: Klausner, “Der jüdische Charakter,” in Hessing, *Spinoza Dreihundert Jahre Ewigkeit*, 125, a collection to which Freud had

been invited to submit a chapter but in which only his gracious letter of refusal appears (196–97). Freud’s thank-you letter to Hessing appears in its entirety in Siegfried Hessing, “Freud’s Relation with Spinoza,” in Hessing, *Spinoza Speculanum*, 229. Of the Festschrift, Freud writes that “It produces an impression by its rich content and by the many sided points of feeling.”

75 Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 136–37.

76 The threat posed by the discovery of one’s circumcision to male Jews hiding or fleeing from the Nazis and their collaborators is a major topos of the mem-

oir literature of the Shoah, from Jakov Lind, *Counting My Steps: An Autobiography* (London, 1969), and Solomon Perel, *Europa, Europa*, trans. M. B. Dembo (New York, 1997), to Michael Skakun, *On Burning Ground: A Son’s Memoir* (New York, 1999), and Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York, 2001). It is no less prominent among the “fictions” of survivors such as Arnost Lustig, *Night and Hope*, trans. George Theiner (New York, 1976), Louis Begley, *Wartime Lies* (New York, 1991), and Piotr Rawicz, *Blood from the Sky*, trans. Peter Wiles (London, 1964).

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