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Modern Genre

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Jewish Quarterly Review, Volume 99, Number 4, Fall 2009, pp. 505-546 (Article)



Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jqr.0.0059>

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# Jews as Postcards, or Postcards as Jews: Mobility in a Modern Genre

GALIT HASAN-ROKEM

*To the blessed memory of Margit and Joseph Hoffman*

I believe that I would gain numerous insights into my later life from my collection of picture postcards, if I were to leaf through it again today.

—Walter Benjamin

The wandering Jew can't be a major collector, except of postage stamps. There are few great collections that can be put on someone's back.

—Susan Sontag<sup>1</sup>

## IMAGES THROWN ON AN ABYSS

A PRIME EXPRESSION of Jewish mobility in modern times is the picture postcard. Benjamin's belief, quoted in the epigraph above, in the potential insights embodied in this particular genre of modern culture may well prove more generally true—as with so many of his personal observations—than was his original intent. The association of Jews with mobil-

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Earlier versions of this essay were shared in oral presentations at the 26th Israeli Inter-University Folklore Research Conference at Tel Aviv University in May 2007, as the Aaron-Roland Endowed Lecture at Stanford University's Taube Center for Jewish Studies in December 2007, and partly also as the Max and Gianna Glassman Israel Exchange Scholar lecture at the University of Toronto in November 2007. I thank all the organizers. I thank Miki Joelson for her invaluable help in preparing the illustrations. I am indebted to the editors for inspiration as well as help in a rather complex enterprise.

1. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 2:2, ed. M. Bullock and M. W. Jennings. (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 620; Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover* (London, 1993).

ity, although not born in modernity,<sup>2</sup> certainly acquired new impetus in cultural discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Postcards are in themselves modern products, invented and put into use in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> As the genre itself is marked both as mobile and modern, addressing Jewish mobility as mediated in postcards thus creates a kind of a “Chinese box,” reflecting on both Jews and mobility from various alternative and overlapping perspectives. Narratology, literary theory with a semiotic bent, has dubbed such phenomena reflecting on themselves *mise-en-abîme*—“thrown on an abyss”<sup>4</sup>—wherein a reduced model of the entire narrative structure is inserted in the text, thus creating a particular form of self-reference. Although mostly applied in the analysis of literary texts, this semiotic figure is derived from the terminology of a particular kind of visual representation—heraldic emblems. Using it here I am, at least partly, returning the concept to its pictorial sources.

Most of the Jewish postcards to be discussed in this study, conducted on the basis of a corpus of over seven thousand picture post cards,<sup>5</sup> stem from the period before the Shoah. The metaphorical contents of the *mise-en-abîme* thus acquire an additional dimension: a society facing an unseen

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2. E.g., George K. Anderson, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* (Providence, R.I., 1965); *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, ed. G. Hasan-Rokem and A. Dundes (Bloomington, Ind., 1986).

3. Richard Carline, *Pictures in the Post: The Story of the Picture Postcard and Its Place in the History of Popular Art* (1959; rev. ed. London, 1971); and in its wake, Frank Staff, *The Picture Postcard and its Origins* (London, 1966); see also Aline Ripert and Claude Frère, *La carte postale: Son histoire, sa fonction sociale* (Lyon, 1983). On the history of Jewish postcards, see Gerard Silvain, *Images et traditions juives: Un millier de cartes postales (1897–1917) pour servir à l’histoire de la diaspora* (Paris, 1980); Shalom Sabar, “Introduction” in *Past Perfect: The Jewish Experience in Early Twentieth-Century Postcards* (New York, 1998), 5–13; idem, “The Custom of Sending Jewish New Year Cards: Its History and Artistic Development” (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 19/20 (1997/98): 85–110.

4. Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. J. Whiteley with E. Hughes (Chicago, 1989); Moshe Ron, “The Restricted Abyss—Nine Problems in the Theory of Mise en Abyme,” *Poetics Today* 8 (1987): 417–38.

5. My research analyzes mainly postcards from the Joseph and Margit Hoffman Collection of the Folklore Research Center at the Hebrew University in the context of a project supported by the Israel Science Foundation, coordinated by Professor Shalom Sabar; my segment of the project deals with explicit visual motives of travel and migration. The postcards illustrating the article will be marked by their respective catalogue numbers in the collection. I have also enjoyed access to the diverse postcard collections of the the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley, Calif., where I thank especially Dr. Francesco Spagnolo and Elaine Grossbard.

abyss that becomes cognizable only from our postwar perspective. This in itself reveals some of the complexity of the relationship between documentation and interpretation with regard to picture postcards. It also underlines the role of postcards in the representation and commemoration of the Absent,<sup>6</sup> since Jewish postcards in general may often serve as the only tangible witnesses for buildings, communities, and an entire *Lebenswelt* that was lost forever.<sup>7</sup> In this sense the commemorative function of photographs is sharpened in pre-Shoah postcards.<sup>8</sup>

Postcards have attracted the interest of historians as important sources of information, mostly treated as “evidence” of “events” or “situations.”<sup>9</sup> In this essay postcards will be discussed as part of an attempt to interpret figures of mobility in and with regard to Jewish culture, rather than to elicit or confirm specific events.

#### THE WANDERING JEW

The Wandering Jew figure has been crafted by European culture in a long and by now relatively well-documented process of collective and

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6. Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago, 1987); Jeffrey T. Nealon, “Thinking the Postmodern: Representation, End, Ground, Sending,” *Boundary 2*, 20.1 (1993): 221–41; Sigrid Weigel, “Vorwort,” in *Flaschenpost und Postkarte: Korrespondenzen zwischen Kritischen Theorie und Poststrukturalismus*, ed. S. Weigel (Cologne, 1995), 2, 6.

7. Bernhard Purin, *Die Welt der jüdischen Postkarten* (Vienna, 2001), 47: “Alle hier abgebildeten Synagogen wurden während der NS-Zeit geschändet, viele von ihnen zerstört. Oft sind die Postkarten der Jahrhundertwende die einzigen bildlichen Zeugnisse.” The relevant illustrations in *ibid.*, 48–63; see also Shalom Sabar, “Between Poland and Germany: Jewish Religious Practices in Illustrated Postcards of the Early Twentieth Century,” *Polin – Studies in Polish Jewry* 16 (2003), focusing on Jewish popular culture in Poland and its afterlife, ed. M. C. Steinlauf and A. Polonsky, pp. 137–66.

8. The relationship between photography and memory has produced some seminal texts, especially Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, 1977); Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. R. Howard (New York, 1981). Notable is their relevance for the representational crisis evolving after the Holocaust, the classical discussion of which is in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* ed. S. Friedländer (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

9. E.g., John Fraser, “Propaganda on the Picture Postcard,” *Oxford Art Journal*, 3.2 (1980): 39–47; Paul J. Vanderwood, “The Picture Postcard as Historical Evidence: Veracruz, 1914,” *Americas* 45.2 (1988): 201–25; Brent Elliott, “A Brief Guide to the Use of Picture Postcards in Garden History,” *Garden History* 31.2 (2003): 218–24. Interesting critical perspectives emerge in some work on African postcards: David Prochaska, “Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal,” *African Arts* 24.4 (Special Issue: Historical Photographs of Africa) (1991): 40–47, 98; Bernard Gardi, “Djenné at the Turn of the

individual creativity.<sup>10</sup> This figure served multiple functions in European culture in its complex processes of change from medieval times through postmodernity, processes that encompassed theological, political, and economical negotiations of the status and image of Jews—and others—among Europeans. The figure offered Christendom a definable and contained embodiment of the theology of guilt related to the legendary episode between the Wandering Jew and Jesus, in which the former denied the latter rest on the wall of his house on the Via Dolorosa.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the figure of the Wandering Jew enabled a consolidation of the Europeans' self-image as indigenous inhabitants of their continent and later in their particular national territories, in counterdistinction to the itinerant Other.<sup>12</sup> The versatile figure of the Wandering Jew later transformed from outright demonization as the blasphemer of Christ, to Romantic idealization as an individualist or even a revolutionary hero. Finally the figure became a model of modern alienation *cum* psychological introspection in its various formations—for which James Joyce's Leopold Bloom is still a prime example.<sup>13</sup>

In my work on the subject I have emphasized the participation of the Jews themselves in crafting the figure of the Wandering Jew, instead of

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Century: Postcards from the Museum für Völkerkunde Basel," *African Arts* 27.2 (1994): 70–75, 95–96.

10. Anderson, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*; Hasan-Rokem and Dundes, *The Wandering Jew*.

11. Theological aspects of the Wandering Jew are discussed in depth in Hyam Maccoby, "The Wandering Jew as Sacred Executioner," *Jewish Quarterly* 29.1 (1972): 3–8; reprinted in his *The Sacred Executioner: Human Sacrifice and the Legacy of Guilt* (London, 1982), and in Hasan-Rokem and Dundes, *The Wandering Jew*, 236–60.

12. Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Ex Oriente Fluxus: The Wandering Jew—Oriental Crossings of the Paths of Europe," *L'orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe: L'invention des origines*, ed. M. Ali Amir-Moezzi and J. Scheid (Turnhout, 2000), 153–64.

13. For the complex interaction of philosophical and psychological considerations in the discourse on Jews of the Frankfurt School after Shoah, see Anson Rabinbach, "Why Were the Jews Sacrificed? The Place of Anti-Semitism in Dialectic of Enlightenment," *New German Critique* 81 (2000): 49–64, on the Wandering Jew, p. 60. For a discussion of the Wandering Jew in the context of the fin de siècle definitions of mental illness, see Jan Goldstein, "The Wandering Jew and the Problem of Psychiatric Anti-Semitism in fin-de-siècle France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985): 521–52; Ian Hacking, *Mad Travelers: On the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses* (Charlottesville, Va., 1998), 113–24; see also Ira Bruce Nadel, "Joyce and the Jews," *Modern Judaism* 6.3 (1986): 301–10, on Joyce's social relations with Jews rather than his symbolical reference to Jews.

seeing the figure as merely a projection of the majority.<sup>14</sup> This perspective implicitly considers Jews as an inseparable part of European culture, a tendency intensified in the most recent versions of the Wandering Jew tradition. I do not suggest that the images to be analyzed here were influenced by the actual image of the Wandering Jew in any linear mode of cultural dynamics. But as the dominant *Denkfigur* on Jewish mobility in Western culture, fully adapted in Jewish works from the mid-nineteenth century onward, I claim its relevance in the interpretation of any cultural expression of Jewish mobility, and sometimes of mobility in general. It is thus in functional similarity with Bakhtin's central concept of "chronotope"—a recurrence of spatial and chronological entities, in this case "wandering" and "eternity"—that the Wandering Jew, also frequently titled "the Eternal Jew," will be present in the following discussion.<sup>15</sup>

The Wandering Jew and Jews in general have served to destabilize the orderly world picture whereby the Europeans conceptualized themselves, and still sometimes do, as the West. Even the discoveries of the western hemisphere that changed Europe forever from the end of the fifteenth century have not completely changed this perception. But the oriental traces imprinted on the map of Europe by the imagined Jewish wanderers—notwithstanding their being for centuries a solid section of European urban as well as rural populations—secured the disturbance of the neat division between Europe and the Orient. The oriental origin of the figure is especially manifest in the rich visual material engendered as an inherent and significant part of the Wandering Jew tradition.<sup>16</sup> Thus in southern Sweden the Cobbler of Jerusalem—thus named in most Scandinavian traditions—is told to have appeared at the local market wearing "a long suit of intertwined horsehair, trousers and waistcoat of camel skin, and a headgear . . . made of tiger hide."<sup>17</sup> The enigmatic name

14. Galit Hasan-Rokem "Homo viator et narrans: Medieval Jewish Voices in the European Narrative of the Wandering Jew," in *Europäische Ethnologie und Folklore im internationalen Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 93–102. Ziva Amishai-Maisels convincingly demonstrates the Jewish influence, in particular of Menasseh Ben Israel's logo of the wanderer, on the visual representations of the figure: "Menasseh Ben Israel and the Wandering Jew," *Ars Judaica* (2006): 59–82.

15. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (1981; 10th ed., Austin, Tx., 1996), 84–258.

16. Richard Cohen, "Images et contexte du juif errant depuis le mythe médiéval jusqu'à la métaphore moderne," *Le Juif Errant: Un Témoin du Temps* (Paris, 2001), introduction 13–31, as well as the other articles of the catalogue.

17. Bengt af Klintberg, "The Swedish Wanderings of the Eternal Jew," in *The Wandering Jew*, 154–68, this reference on p. 157.

Ahasver, appearing from the earliest printed version of the full European legend of the Wandering Jew—to whose clarification David Daube has contributed by linking it to the popular image of the Persian king as a fool in Jewish folklore—also adds an oriental, Persian, tinge to the figure.<sup>18</sup>

I suggest therefore that when we investigate the images of Jews on modern postcards the visual conventions created by the traditions of the Wandering Jew must be taken into account along with the figure's narrative, ideological, and theological ramifications. Although this hardly provides a simple key to the material, it may serve both as a foil against which and a perception along with which the cultural work of the picture postcards was carried out.

#### TRAVELING ON POSTCARDS

The postcard has from its inception quite naturally served to mark routes of traveling and migration. The heyday of postcard production and performance coincided with the great migrations of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century together with the massive uprooting of populations during and after the First World War, creating "the most intensive era of migration in world history."<sup>19</sup>

The routes drawn by the travel of these postcards reproduce, and often even reverse, the routes taken by the Jews themselves. The dominant form of travel of modern Jews in the decades prior to the Shoah took place within the framework of massive migrations from Eastern Europe westward—mainly to North America, but also to the Middle East, and mainly to Palestine/Israel. However, as Jan Goldstein has suggested, the migrations of Eastern European Jews in the wake of the 1881 pogroms may also have contributed to the crystallization of the image of the Wandering Jew in French psychological and psychiatric discourse, well beyond clinical circles.<sup>20</sup>

With regard to these great population movements the postcards studied here may be seen as meta-migratory or para-migratory materials com-

18. David Daube, "Ahasver," *JQR* 45.3 (1955): 243–44.

19. Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York, 2005), 149; Ellen Smith, "Greetings from Faith: Early-Twentieth-Century American Jewish New Year Postcards," in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, ed. D. Morgan and S. M. Promey (Berkeley, Calif., 2001), 229: "[Postcards] gave visual expression to the confusion, disruption, complexity and promise of Jewish life during the height of emigration within and from Europe."

20. Jan Goldstein, "The Wandering Jew and the Problem of Psychiatric Anti-Semitism in Fin-de-siècle France," 535.

municated between individuals finding themselves in remote places. These postcards both concretely reproduce the actual travel made by real Jews and effectively mirror their travels. The irreversibility of the migratory move is thus metonymically alleviated by the countermovement of the postcard in the opposite direction. At the same time it is also metaphorically aggravated by its emphatic marking of the distance, as direct modes of communication become transformed into artistically and technologically mediated modes of communication, that is, a picture postcard itself traveling by land, sea, or air.

Without in any way claiming iconographic consistency of the Wandering Jew's representation in the postcards analyzed below, I will explore the continued associative value of the Wandering Jew in the interpretation of these new phases of Jewish mobility—mainly the radical effect of this figure in constantly and inherently deconstructing linearity and teleology with regard to wandering, on the one hand, and Jews on the other. Of course it would be wrong to claim Jewish monopoly on the theme of travel on postcards.<sup>21</sup> As a modern genre, postcards naturally often bear images of modern modes of transportation, and thus as a genre constitute an image of modernity itself.<sup>22</sup> The theme of travel in these postcards also reflects the dependence of this cultural genre on modes of transportation; ships, trains, and airplanes. In this they match up perfectly with traveling humans, and the same dependence also marks the increase of human migration in this period.<sup>23</sup>

From the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish migrants, especially those from Eastern Europe, have expressed the Diaspora's changing dimensions in postcards sent from "elsewhere," "home," or vice versa, and also in other directions. The diasporic space, or the space of dispersal,<sup>24</sup> is thus created in parallel and complementary ways by such performative practices as migratory travel and postal communication. This production of diasporic space fulfills Michel de Certeau's model for "spatial prac-

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21. Note, however, Yuri Slezkine's effective generalizing of the Jewish experience of mobility to encompass other mobilities, both geographical and social, in his *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, N.J., 2004). James Clifford, on the other hand, has strongly contested the claim for uniqueness of the Jewish experience of Diaspora in his *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 248–50; 272–73.

22. Naomi Schor, "'Cartes Postales': Representing Paris 1900," *Critical Inquiry* 18.2 (1992): 188–244. See also Sabar, "The Custom of Sending Jewish New Year Cards," 103.

23. Manning, *Migration in World History*, 145–47.

24. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Spaces of Dispersal," *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 339–44.



tices” in the eponymous third part of his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, especially in the highly suggestive seventh chapter “Walking in the City.”<sup>25</sup> Rather than being marked as a concrete area in any map, the Diaspora’s dimensions are drawn by the figurative footsteps of those who are in the Diaspora. Space is thus produced by socio-cultural practice.

#### TELLING PICTURES

The “Jewish” postcards that have been reviewed for the present essay reveal the dynamics of directions and the volatility of the concept of homeland in many ways. The semiotics of the pictorial representations on the postcards also reveal a great range of images of migration that further communicate the flexibility of the concept of Diaspora versus utopia as exemplified in “New World” images of the United States<sup>26</sup> and postcards of pioneer life in Palestine. These images are not included in the present discussion unless they include representations of travel. The cultural practice of sending postcards—especially those with themes of travel and migrations on the recto side—constitutes a major material mode of culturally performing Diaspora.

Radically abbreviating the masterful contemporary work by such scholars as Reinhart Koselleck and Martin Jay,<sup>27</sup> I would like to apply the rich and dangerous concept of “experience,” acknowledging Koselleck’s statement: “Historical change feeds upon the vanquished.”<sup>28</sup> The first postcard presented here is one that clearly encodes experience in an adequately complex interlacing of subjectivities, in the intricate sense of the word representation—both of and for.<sup>29</sup> Samuel Hirszenberg’s famous *Golus* (“exile”; 1904) (figure 1) displays the sheer sorrow of homelessness in a classical artistic representation, which has indeed acquired the status of a central cultural icon of the Jewish Diaspora.

25. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), 91–110.

26. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 177–87, adequately critiques the production of memory in the latter-day Ellis Island Museum.

27. Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. T. S. Presner and others (Stanford, Calif., 2002), 45–83; Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley, Calif., 2005).

28. Koselleck, *Practice of Conceptual History*, 83.

29. Elaborated, e.g., by Gayatri Spivak in her by-now classical “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Chicago, 1988), 271–313.



Figure 1. Catalog no. Hof9-0223. Exile—Samuel Hirszenberg. Printed in Germany—color.

As in many other cases, recognized “high” art, albeit in an ethnographic idiom, is in this postcard transformed into popular culture, embodying in a most concrete way what Walter Benjamin would characterize as “works of art in the age of reproducibility.”<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the painting whose original rendering has disappeared (strangely sharing the

30. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Reproducibility (Third Version),” *Selected Writings*, vol. 4: 1938–1940, ed. H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings, trans. E. Jephcott and others (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 251–83. Benjamin’s view in this particular essay must be seen as utterly Romantic, and suffering from the same limitations of his time that characterize his failed prediction that storytelling will end with modernity, idem, “The Story Teller,” *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn (New York, 1969), 83–109. For the critique of Benjamin’s concept of authenticity, see Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison, Wis., 1997), specific reference to Benjamin’s essay on pp. 181–82. The effect of the reproduction is in this case heightened by the variant production in color and black and white. On the economical base for this practice, see Sabar, “The Custom of Sending Jewish New Year Cards,” 104.

Other artists’ work was also frequently reproduced on Jewish postcards, see e.g., Shalom Sabar, “In the Footsteps of Moritz Oppenheim: Herman[n] Juncker’s Postcard Series of *Scenes from Traditional Jewish Family Life*,” in *Moritz Daniel Oppenheim: Die Entdeckung des jüdischen Selbstbewusstseins in der Kunst – Jewish Identity in 19th Century Art*, ed. G. Heuberger and A. Merk (Cologne, 1999), 251–71.



Figure 2. Catalog no. Hof9-0221. Exile—black and white.

fate of Alfred Nossig's sculpture of the Wandering Jew),<sup>31</sup> embodies wandering and instability in its changing colors and details in different versions, as Richard Cohen has astutely noted.<sup>32</sup> Significantly, however, far from losing its cultural worth or even its "aura"—in the most sacred sense of the word—it is precisely the picture's wide distribution that has ensured its privileged status as an icon of experience.

The scene reproduced in the *Golus* postcard carries deep personal meaning for me. As a twelve-year-old motherless immigrant from Helsinki, I was embraced in a relatively austere Tel Aviv apartment with heavy European oak furniture by my adopted Berlin-born grandmother and grandfather, who was born in Königsberg. On the dining room wall, behind Grandpa Nathan's chair, hung a black-and-white reproduction of the scene of a procession of refugees that I can today identify as Hirszenberg's famous work (figure 2). The homelessness of the figures seemed, on the one hand, to be of a radically different order from my

31. The earliest documentation of the sculpture is in the journal *Ost und West* 1 (January 1901): 5–6; the date of its production seems, however, unknown. On Nossig's complex ideological involvements and development as well as on his tragic end, see Hugh Raffles, "Jews, Lice, and History," *Public Culture* 19.3 (2007): 531–53, 562–66.

32. Oral communication at the Scholion Interdisciplinary Center for Jewish Studies, Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, the Hebrew University in January 2009. The author is grateful to all the members of the "Exegetical Imagination—Religion and the Arts" group for an enriching discussion.



Figure 3. Catalog no. Hof10-0289. Events of Figuig—June 1903 (Algeria). Publisher: Vieiffaure Edit. Photographer: Leroux Alger.

own tribulations, but at the same time echoed the depressed feelings of someone uprooted from familiar language, sights, and faces. In the context of my new family the scene signaled my grandparents' clear-sighted decision to leave Berlin in 1926, unlike many of their relatives whom I imagined seeing in the sad faces on the reproduced painting.

In the opposite pole of representation is the genre of postcards communicating “real events” in an emotionally detached mode. A prime example of this, in the corpus of Jewish postcards of travel in the Margit and Joseph Hoffmann Collection of Judaica Postcards at Hebrew University's Folklore Research Center, is a war scene from North Africa with a procession at first sight seemingly not so unlike Hirszenberg's *Golus* in its arrangement, albeit with much less visibility of individual expression (figure 3). But being a documentary postcard it informs us in detail about its message—almost opposite to that of the *Golus* postcards. The postcard's subtitle tells us that the picture is of “The events of Figuig—June 1903. The bombardment of Zénaga. The artillery with its '75 pieces protected by the [Foreign] *Légion* traverses the pass of the Jewess to take up a position before Zénaga.” The events represented in this postcard, which contemporary French journalists called “the incidents of Figuig,” were a French military intervention to secure their colonial rule in North Africa against local insurgence.

The last phrase of the subtitle discloses the reason the collector Joseph Hoffman acquired this item for his Judaica postcard collection: the troops are traversing the “pass of the Jewess,” thus revealing a Jewish identity inscribed in the landscape. An active Jewish community persisting until the mid-twentieth century is mentioned in various sources describing the life in the region.<sup>33</sup> Local Tamazghit (Berber) traditions include one relating to a legendary Jewish war heroine, the Kahina (visionary). As Abdelmajid Hannoum has shown, the Kahina was appropriated as both hero and anti-hero by almost every ethnic, religious, political, and gender group in the Maghreb.<sup>34</sup> Claimed by Berbers, Arabs, Moslems, Christians, men and women, the association of the Kahina (also known as Dihya) with Jews is dominant and mentioned already by the historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406). All her various identities have been activated in narratives and ideologies to mark boundaries and their crossings in various historical, geographical, and political settings. These include a heightened feminist awareness in an emphatically patriarchal society and a demonstrated common interest of North African Berbers and Jews against Muslim and Arab domination in areas colonized by the French. It is not impossible that her name hides behind the title “pass of the Jewess.” A typically liminal figure, moving between identities, her name would well suit the area of Figuig, whose history bears the marks of many struggles and negotiations over borders, especially between colonial France and Morocco.<sup>35</sup> The linkage between the military motif and the inscription of Jewishness in the native landscape rather than in the mobile colonial army testifies to the complex histories of Jewish entanglements in the intergroup relations of the area, crystallizing in the gradual liberation from colonialism characterizing the entire first half of the twentieth century in this region. As shown by Hannoum, the figure of the Kahina was implicated in no less complex and multivalent ways in the local history.<sup>36</sup>

Both these postcards thus reiterate in different ways the general idea

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33. Robert Attal, *Juifs du Maghreb—Catalogue de Cartes Postales* (Jerusalem, 1990), lists three Jewish postcards from Tunisian Beni-Ounif de Figuig nos. 247–49, on p. 26, not including the presently discussed one.

34. Abdelmajid Hannoum, “Historiography, Mythology and Memory in Modern North Africa: The Story of the Kahina,” *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997): 85–130.

35. A. S. Reyner, “Morocco’s International Boundaries: A Factual Background,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1.3 (1963): 313–26; Frank E. Trout, “Morocco’s Boundary in the Guir-Zousfana River Basin,” *African Historical Studies* 3.1 (1970): 37–56.

36. Abdelmajid Hannoum, *Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories: The Legend of the Kahina, a North African Heroine* (Portsmouth, N.H., 2001).

of Jews as wanderers, whether in the literal sense or in the more figurative sense of unstable identities such as embodied by the imagined Kahina. But they also demand a diversification of the interpretation of the looming Wandering Jew figure to include possibilities transcending any existing identity borders of Jews as a defined group—however complex and volatile that definition may be—in the first case by the universalizing effect of the work of art and in the second case by the adaptable identity of the Kahina.

“MOBILE MODERNITY”

The above title alludes to Todd Samuel Presner’s insightful 2007 book, subtitled “Germans, Jews, Trains.”<sup>37</sup> Readers soon learn that this applies not only to what must be their first association—train transportation during the Shoah—reinforced by the visual similarity reflected in the photograph on the book’s jacket, between the birch trees growing on the deserted rails of Berlin’s Anhalter station and the official site of commemoration of the deportation of Berlin’s Jews, “Gleis 17” at the Grunewald train station. Relying on powerful postmodern theorizing, and without succumbing to epistemological nihilism or unnecessary jargon, Presner investigates the dialogical webs of modes of mobility and discursive creativity that construct Jews as an inextricable part of modern German and European culture. Presner suggests two kinds of epistemologies for the cultural production of modern mobility. He identifies “the meta-epistemology of the ship” with J. W. Goethe’s travelogues in particular and sees its long continuity as “one of the greatest, most persistent and specific metaphors of existence in the Western cultural tradition.”<sup>38</sup> This meta-epistemology is further characterized by “clear and stable distinctions . . . between observer and observed, subject and object . . . an ideal or transcendental perspective” in parallel to “the basic structural distinction between sea and shore, alien and home” resulting in “a stable subject position” from which stems the possibility of “the historical subject to observe himself [*sic*] as an object.”<sup>39</sup> Presner further applies, in a versatile manner, Walter Benjamin’s concept “constellation” of “dialectics at standstill”<sup>40</sup> by which Hegelian linear modes of historicity borne by tran-

37. T. S. Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York, 2007).

38. Cf. Gerhard B. Ladner, “*Homo viator*: Mediaeval Ideas on Alienation and Order,” *Speculum* 42.2 (1967): 233–59.

39. *Ibid.*, 70–72, 75.

40. *Ibid.*, 8. Note Benjamin’s exact formulation: “image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at standstill.” Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin, on the basis of the German volume ed. by

scendent subjects that are resolved into a higher unity are replaced by more restless and disorderly interactive histories in which the subjects are constantly rearranged and lacking clear direction. From this emerges Presner's "meta-epistemology of the railway system, a configuration characterized by the dissolution of the very possibility of solid ground, the utter destruction of a knowing subject with a transcendental perspective on the world,"<sup>41</sup> which he correlates both with Sholem Aleichem's railway stories<sup>42</sup> and Kafka's *Amerika*<sup>43</sup> (notwithstanding Karl Rossman's long trip on the ocean liner to America).

When one has processed the seeming paradox that a ship on the seas may be seen as a more stable basis for producing subjectivity than a train running on iron rails well nailed into the earth, Presner's insight becomes applicable to reading some of the postcards. The universalizing effect of sea travel may be discerned, for instance, in the postcard showing Baron de Rothschild's yacht at Le Havre (figure 4). Its visible lack of any marks of Jewishness serves to characterize the wealthy family as part of a "general" European upper class. Although another nautical postcard, in contrast to that of the Rothschild's yacht, includes many Jewish elements, it too may be seen as universalizing (figure 5). Here the traditional New Year's wish in Hebrew characters, *Shanah Tovah* שנה טובה is coupled in the same frame with the German "Glück und Segen zum Neuen Jahre," suggesting an easy coexistence between the different life spheres of the German-speaking Jew. The postcard may display a positive approach to Zionism on the part of its designer/s, who added to the multilingual wishes the description:<sup>44</sup> "Ein Dampfer auf dem Wege nach Palästina" (a steamship on its way to Palestine).

More momentous is the fact that traveling to the Holy Land is pre-

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Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 462 (repeated with slight changes on p. 463). I thank Freddie Rokem for drawing my attention to the variation between Benjamin's and Presner's wordings, which makes the original even more applicable to our present discussion of actual visual images.

41. Presner, *Mobile Modernity*, 95.

42. I here follow Presner's spelling.

43. Also known as *Der Verschollene* (The Man Who Disappeared).

44. A structural-functional analysis according to Roman Jakobson's model of communication discerns here a combined conative-emotive function (the New Year's wish) in conjunction with a referential function (the description of the ship and its route). Roman Jakobson, "Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, ed. T. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass., 1960). This singularly influential essay has been reprinted numerous times. The accumulation of functions arguably adds to the communicative effectiveness of the encoded message.



Figure 4. Catalog no. Hof18-0237. Le Havre—“L'ATMA,” yacht du Baron de Rothschild, Aqua, Photo L.V. & Cie. Mailed in France to Calvados (Normandy).



Figure 5. Catalog no. Hof18-0047. Ein Dampfer auf dem Wege nach Palästina. Germany (?).



sented without specific ideological or religious signs. The air of European worldliness is emphasized by the smaller text on the ship's body identifying it as the *Kronprinzessin Cecilia*, named after the daughter-in-law (1886–1954) of the German emperor Wilhelm II, wife of crown prince Wilhelm of Prussia, who never became Kaiser and who, though he was liked by the modernized Jews at that time, later was to become a supporter of Hitler.<sup>45</sup> The *Kronprinzessin Cecilia* was built in 1906 in Stettin (then Prussia, now Poland), sailed between Bremen and New York until the outbreak of the First World War and carried immigrants, many of them Jews. It was captured by the United States in 1917, renamed the *Mt. Vernon*, and finally scrapped in 1940.<sup>46</sup> No travel of this ship to Palestine has been documented, and probably, as in many other similar cases, the postcard was initially not a Jewish New Year's card at all.<sup>47</sup>

Another postcard displays a much more complex interaction between Jewish linguistic, religious, and cultural resources at the beginning of the twentieth century (figure 6). The postcard is dominated by a large ocean liner and, behind it, the contours of Jaffa and its port. Under the ship, the picture of a train hints at additional travel before and after the sea voyage. Significantly, the ship is sailing out of Jaffa rather than into the Holy Land. In four corners inside round fields appear four holy sites: the city of Jerusalem in which the Haram e-Sharif's golden cupola is visible; the so-called David's Tower Citadel of Jerusalem; Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem; and finally, on the lower right, Zechariah's tomb, also in Jerusalem. Needless to say, none of these four sites is reachable by ship, which may explain the train's presence.

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45. "Crown Princess Cecilia, onetime Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, married to Prince Wilhelm of Prussia. Wilhelm renounced his rights to the throne of Prussia (and German Empire) on 1 December 1918 having fled to Holland on 12 November. He returned to Germany in November 1923 after he had given assurances that he would not participate in any political affairs. He was a supporter of Hitler." [http://www.btinternet.com/~allan\\_raymond/Mecklenburg-Royal\\_Family.htm](http://www.btinternet.com/~allan_raymond/Mecklenburg-Royal_Family.htm)

46. This information has been painstakingly culled from various websites of shipping companies. On the phenomenon of German maritime post offices "Marine Schiffspost" often staging a ship on their recto side, with special reference to the visit of the German emperor Wilhelm II in the Holy Land in 1898, see Ralph Perry, "Postal History of the Kaiser's Visit to the Holy Land," *Holy Land Postal History* 91/92 (2002): 417–23 [400–36]. Note the relative closeness in dates of the emperor's travel to Palestine, on steamship *Hobenzollern* and the date of building of the *Kronprinzessin Cecilia*. I have recently found out that the author is in fact my adoptive uncle, the youngest son of the grandparents described above.

47. Sabar, "The Custom of Sending Jewish New Year Cards," 85–110, esp. 101.



Figure 6. Catalog no. Hof18-0488. The ship of redemption. Publisher: Palphot Ltd. A reproduction by Beth Hatefutsoth of a postcard published in 1925.

This complex and value-laden configuration of stable sites and a sailing ship is further complicated by the texts adorning the postcard. The title of the postcard in Yiddish, situated at the top, *Eretz-Yisroel shifskarte*, signals a frequent motif in Jewish postcards.<sup>48</sup> On the left side a Hebrew New Year's wish that seems to contradict the direction of the ship: *shnat she-tolikhbenu komemiut le-artenu*—wishing a year in which God will lead us “upright into our land” in the well-known words from the liturgy, for example, *birkat ha-mazon*, grace after meals, and the *musaf* prayer of Yom

48. Ibid., 108–9 confirms the fact that the *shifskarten* were of American provenance and included the contradictory messages of Zionism and freedom in America. On Jewish seafaring in general, see Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton, N.J., 1998), an elaborated version of idem, *Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times: A Contribution to the History of Palestinian Culture* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1938). Ellen Smith's (“Greetings from Faith,” 232) observation that the language of the script or the print on the postcards is often not a safe indication of the place of production is important to keep in mind. On the concept of “Marine Schiffspost,” see Perry, “Postal History of the Kaiser's Visit to the Holy Land,” 417–23.

Kippur, based on God's words to the Israelites describing their Exodus from Egypt (Lev 26.13). On the right side a blessing quoted from God's words to the Israelites prior to their entrance into Canaan: (Dt 28.6.) *barukh ata be-vo'ekha u-varukh ata be-tse'etkha* (Blessed shall you be in your comings and blessed shall you be in your goings). The text in the lower part of the post card wishes "a year in which you will bless our going out and coming in" *shnat tse'etenu u-vo'enu tevarekh* (also rooted in the liturgy of Yom Kippur). The texts thus weave a dense web of associations referring to the mythical Exodus and entrance to the Holy Land as well as to the fateful decrees of the Day of Atonement—altogether dominated by the theme of travel embodied in two modern means of transportation: the (large) ship and the (small) train. Here too an important semiotic key is encoded in the ship's name *di ge'ule shif*—"the ship of Redemption," the postcard's underlying theme. The postcard's Zionist symbolism is clearly expressed in the two banners crossed underneath the train in blue and white with golden stars of David.<sup>49</sup> The text of the two banners brings the mythical ideal world of the postcard to a closer, more reality based present. On the right side banner the golden text quotes Isaiah: "for out of Zion shall the law go forth" (Is 2.3). On the left banner, in a somewhat incongruous combination, appear the words *gdud ha'avodab*, the "Labor Battalion"—the name of the socialist Zionist pioneering group founded by Third Aliyah immigrants from Russia. This dates the postcard to the decade 1920–30.<sup>50</sup> It also explains the seemingly contradictory messages in the pictorial and verbal messages, mixing the Hebrew and Yiddish languages that still coexisted in relative peace, and the Zionist-socialist ideology combined with a mission to build Jerusalem that the members of the group sought to fulfill with their own hands. Finally the blue ribbon connecting the two banners communicates the least complicated message of this New Year's card, however strongly resonating various classical Hebrew sources: *shnat hayim ve-shalom, sason ve-simha, parnasa ve-kbalkala, yeshu'a u-nehama*, namely: a year of life and peace, joy and happiness, livelihood and income, redemption and consolation, again with strong liturgical overtones. This postcard seems to accumulate many textual and pictorial messages that encumber the clean-cut universal subject predicated by Presner on the "meta-epistemology of the ship," naturally not applied by him to this kind of ethnographic practices. On the other hand,

49. A transitional form between Herzl's flag's seven golden stars and the flag of the state of Israel.

50. The reproduction by Bet Hatfutsot in 1997 printed here mentions 1925 as the original production date.



Figure 7. Catalog no. Hof18-0045. A train with the scene of Moses found by the daughter of Pharaoh. Germany (?).

the sheer multiplicity of messages—the coexistence of Hebrew and Yiddish, the ship’s inability to reach the holy sites or even the Holy Land altogether—may expose the internal contradictions that plagued the ideological group from which the card seems to have emerged, which led to numerous splits both inside the framework of Zionism and beyond it.<sup>51</sup>

The postcards in this collection also provide material for testing Presner’s “meta-epistemology of the train.” One example possibly confirms Presner’s definition, of an unstable subject whose destination is unclear and who inhabits a poorly integrated myth (figure 7). In this New Year’s card the train’s locomotive approaches the viewer. Here too a bilingual, Hebrew and German, cultural universe is exposed with clearly differentiated messages. The Hebrew conveys the traditional *ketiva va-hatima tova* (probably articulated in a more Ashkenazi fashion), “[may you be] well written and signed” (referring to the belief that human destinies are writ-

51. Hillig Götz, “Petitionen an die Kominten aus Palästina (1926/27): Der Gdud Avoda ersucht um Unterstützung,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55.1 (2007): 56–66; Muki Tsur, “*mif’alot ha-bniya ve-ha-’asiya shel gdud ha-’avoda*,” *Ariel* 174 (2006): 57–60.

ten and signed at New Year or soon after it). The German wishes refer in a more concrete fashion to the pictured train, wishing “a happy journey during the new year” (*Glückliche Fahrt ins Neue Jahr*). The postcard’s most intriguing detail is a clearly superimposed small picture on the locomotive’s front, suggesting a two-dimensional figurehead of an implied ship (and its meta-epistemology?). Pharaoh’s daughter attended by three women is depicted in the midst of finding little Moses in his basket of bulrushes surrounded by a typically Nilotic landscape. The picture is subtitled *Die Auffindung Moses* (the finding of Moses). What are the semiotic interactions that occur between the postcard’s various messages? On one hand the Hebrew blessing is matched by the lucky and life-saving turn in the fate of Moses. On the other hand his rescue also leads to the liberation and rescue of the Israelites not present visually but alluded to by the collective authorship of the traditional Hebrew blessing. The German blessing may also hint at the successful travel that little Moses has already accomplished in his little vessel as well as express the hope that the addressee will embark on the Exodus “freedom train” as well.<sup>52</sup> Any allusion to Zionism, if intended at all, is minimal. The aesthetically challenged overlay of the biblical scene on an apparently non-Jewish New Year’s card with its original text in German displays a nonintegrated hybridity and an unsuccessful cultural adaptation. Other train postcards demonstrate the variety of potential messages associated with this vehicle, such as the unabashedly Zionist postcard featuring a Yiddish rhyme: *loyst a tsug nokh erets yisroel / ful hofnung und bitokhn . . . /s'brengt dos naye yor undz dokh / dem emesn nitsokhn! . . .* (A train runs to Erets Yisroel / full of hope and trust / that the New Year surely brings us / the true victory!)<sup>53</sup> The picture on this postcard shows a little girl dressed up and adorned with red ribbons beside a toy train filled with small pieces of printed paper, while the locomotive’s chimney spurts out “smoke” consisting of Zionist

52. The comparison to the image of the train as a symbol of freedom in African American imagination is complex and very interesting and cannot be accomplished here. An illuminating introduction to the theme may be found in John M. Giggie, “‘When Jesus Handed Me a Ticket’: Images of Railroad Travel and Spiritual Transformations among African Americans, 1865–1917,” in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, 249–66; e.g.: “by the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans widely viewed the train as a contemporary means to escape northward toward liberty and the Promised Land, intimating that they incorporated the railroad as part of their identity as a chosen people journeying from slavery to freedom as did the Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures” (p. 250).

53. *Past Perfect*, no. 70, 51: “To the Land of Israel we chug along / Full of hope and faith / May the new year bring us all / A real victory.” “Zionist New year’s Greetings. Williamsburg Art Co., New York/ Printed in Germany, circa 1915.”



Figure 8. Catalog no. Hof18-0086. Woman in sepia and white airplane. Publisher: Williamsburg Art & Co.

exhortations, some in Hebrew some in Yiddish. The fact that Palestine was not reachable by train from the American site of the postcard's publication undermines the pragmatic applicability of the ideological message, already attenuated and infantilized by the girl's age and attire, as well as the obvious fact that the train is a mere toy.

#### LUFTMENSCHEN

The dominant mode of mobility on the travel postcards studied for this essay is, in sheer numbers, neither the ship nor the train but the airplane. It is thus absolutely necessary to add to the two epistemologies named by Presner after two major modes of transportation, a third: the "meta-epistemology of the airplane." Yet I will try not to sublimate ship and train while introducing this most "transcendent" of transportation systems, air. Although my theoretical basis stems more from an ethnographically inclined semiotics of culture and literature than Presner's orientation toward the cultural history of ideas, I believe that, more often than not, our methodological paths converge. I thus suggest that the wider cultural and historical context needs to be pursued with regard to flying as he has done concerning travel by ships and trains.

Airplanes appear typically in the postcards that serve as New Year's greetings (figure 8), as for instance the single woman who navigates her plane upward above an urban landscape with her left hand while holding a Hebrew *shana tovah* sign in her right, bearing the traditional Hebrew formula subtling the entire scene: "*le-shana tova tikatevu.*" The most detailed message on this postcard is, however, a Yiddish rhyme situated

high in the clouds where she apparently aims to go, also suggesting that the message is “from above.” The rhyme anonymously describes the woman in an omniscient voice: “With a “New Year” (double meaning: the sign with the text and the whole new year) in her hand, / she floats out into the world; / somewhere in a distant land/ a warm heart anxiously beats / she is expected with hope” (*Mit a nay yor in hand, [sic<sup>54</sup>] / shvebt zi in der velt aroyts; / ergets in a vaytn land / klapt a varem barts geshpant/ kukt men ir mit bofnung oys*).

The vehicle’s modernity is reinforced by the pilot’s gender, emphasizing the modern approach not only to transportation but also to gender in these years in which women in many places make huge progress (although not enough) toward political and cultural equality, not the least as famous and daring pilots.<sup>55</sup> The picture’s empowering gesture seems to be enhanced in the rhyme’s first line, as if saying: “she’s got the whole year in her hand.” The three last lines seem ambiguously either to channel the strong emancipatory opening into a conventional romantic narrative or to project the woman as the people’s liberator in the “distant land.” If a Zionist allusion is intended by those words, it is well camouflaged under a romantic supertext. Another female pilot (figure 9)<sup>56</sup> is less ambiguously—thus more stereotypically—described.

Her plane, largely of the same model as the previous one, is steered by her right hand, earthward rather than to the clouds, and her left hand throws flowers down to the world underneath. The Yiddish text presents her reciting a childish first-person almost nonsensical rhyme: *fli, zhe, fli mayn fli-mashin / akh, ikh veyt nit vu ikh bin / ver es t’ mir antkegen kumen / yenem shit ikh mayne blumen* (Fly, then, fly my airplane / oh, I don’t know where I am / upon whoever comes my way / I shall strew my flowers).<sup>57</sup> Not only does the female pilot not know where she is (a completely inadequate situation) but also her interactive capacity of strewing her flowers seems sadly limited and stereotypical.

A third New Year’s card contains an airborne vehicle (figure 10) that looks more like a seesaw than an airplane. The man and the woman unre-

54. The Yiddish script on the postcard often reveals its German origin. I have retained a standard YIVO transcription even when contradicted by the spelling. Special thanks to Chava Turniansky.

55. E.g., Amelia Earhart (1897–1937) and Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1904–2001).

56. Cf. *Past Perfect*, no. 29, p. 29: “Williamsburg Art Co., New York/ printed in Saxony, circa 1915.”

57. *Ibid.*, 29: “Fly on, fly on, my flying machine / I know not where I am / Whosoever comes my way / With flowers I will spray.”



Figure 9. Catalog no. Hof18-0083. Woman in airplane with flowers. Publisher: Williamsburg Art & Co, ca. 1915.



Figure 10. Catalog no. Hof18-0082. A couple on an aircraft. Publisher: Williamsburg Art & Co., ca. 1915.

alistically balanced on it maintain a conventional division of labor: the man steers and the woman scatters Hebrew New Year’s blessings from a horn of plenty over the verdant landscape. The postcard is identifiably American,<sup>58</sup> and the traditional *le-shanah tovah tikatevu* in Hebrew is accompanied by the words “A happy New Year.” The Yiddish text in the upper right corner constitutes a contrast to the kitschy image: *mיר זאגן און די בעליה און עס קומט א שנה טאט / פון ליכט און שניין, פון גליק און פרייד / די היילע א שנה געטאט*

58. Ibid., no. 27, p. 28: “Williamsburg Post Card Co., New York/ Printed in Germany, circa 1915.”





Figure 11. Catalog no. Hof18-0077. A couple in a hot air balloon.  
 Publisher: Williamsburg Art & Co., ca. 1915

*di velt zi vert banayt!* (We bring you good tidings / a wonderful time is approaching / of light and radiance, of happiness and joy / the world will be renewed!).<sup>59</sup> The couple is thus hardly involved in a romantic adventure but rather in changing the world—or at least announcing its future change. The utopian message is enhanced by the image of a shining sun adorning it as well as by the trilingual adaptive discourse.

The airplane is not the only airborne vehicle found on these postcards; another one is the balloon in which yet another kinetic couple carries New Year's blessings (figure 11). The formulaic Hebrew and English blessing is printed in the postcard's lower left corner. On the balloon itself an anonymous Yiddish rhyme addresses the couple: *mit bagazh fun raykhtum, libe, glik / shvebt ir in dem himl-rakhves fray / ot azoy zol ayer leben zayn / shtendig zis un tray, shtendig lib un nay* (With baggage of riches, love and joy / you float free in the wide skies / so too shall your life be / always sweet and true, always loving and new). The wishes for the balloon trav-

59. Ibid., p. 29: "We come with good tidings / Good times lie ahead? Light and beauty, good fortune and good cheer / A world renewed."

elers are considerably more private than those for the couple on the airplane. The only signs of a more general connection are the verb *shvebn* and perhaps the adjective *nay* = new, which can also mean “modern.” The ballast weights on the side of the balloon’s basket are marked as the “baggage”: happy future, dollars, love, and faithfulness. The symbolism of the balloon is even more aerial than that of airplanes and lacks the technological—and in parallel sociological as well—emphasis on progress and modernity characterizing airplanes.

The *Denkfigur* that seems most useful for discussing the complex and seemingly contradictory messages arising from the visual representations of air travel on postcards and their sometimes accompanying verbal messages is, of course, the *Luftmensch*, which is itself, at least in part, a transformation of the Wandering Jew. Postcards traveling by air and/or reproducing air travel seem to reiterate, to idealize, and possibly even to critique the concept of *Luftmensch*—a cognate concept of the Wandering Jew, applicable to both Jews and non-Jews in the relevant period, which has been examined in depth by Nicolas Berg.<sup>60</sup> Berg’s eponymous book indeed opens up the possibility of substantiating the episteme in which the *Luftmensch* subject position is produced. The postcards reviewed here fit into the complex profile of the *Luftmensch*,<sup>61</sup> encompassing rootlessness—illustrated by the female pilot saying “I don’t know where I am”—and the limitless freedom associated with the utopian vision of “a beautiful time is approaching / of light and shine, of happiness and joy / the world will be renewed!” It is noteworthy that the Yiddish verb *shvebn* appears on two of the postcards (figures 8, 11) whereas Berg has identified its German equivalent *schweben* as a central marker of the *Luftmenschen* discourse. Flying vehicles became powerful images in the fierce debates between various Jewish ideologies—as in the case of Herzl’s use of the airship as a metaphor for the Jewish state<sup>62</sup>—while at the same time the high status of the new modes of transportation and their dependence on new scientific technologies added respectability to the discussants. At the same time the connection between Jews and air travel echoed folk beliefs about the Wandering Jew, especially with regard to characteristics common to him and the Flying Dutchman,<sup>63</sup> and served as a basis for anti-Semitic discourse regarding Jewish uselessness and lack of productivity. The use of the *Luftmensch* metaphor among Jewish au-

60. Nicolas Berg, *Luftmenschen: Zur Geschichte einer Metapher* (Göttingen, 2008).

61. *Ibid.*, esp. 21–85.

62. *Ibid.*, 71–75.

63. E.g., af Klintberg, “The Swedish Wanderings of the Eternal Jew,” 162–63.

thors ranged from Sholem Aleichem's loving depiction of Menahem Mendel, an emigrant to the United States, to the deeply tragic poetry of both Paul Celan (in German) and Dan Pagis (in Hebrew) locating the ephemeral remains of exterminated Jews in the air—perhaps to remind the heavenly deity, in the latter's words: "From heaven to heaven of heavens to the heaven of night / long convoys of smoke."<sup>64</sup>

It is thus not across such a nameable, though somewhat indistinct, identity border as the German Jewish constellations of dialectics that have been negotiated by Presner that the episteme of the *Luftmensch* must be negotiated but rather in a cloudier and more complex setting. Flight adds to movement not just a third dimension, verticality, lacking in mobility on land and sea, but it also carries many cultural associations connected with vertical movement—falling as well as rising.<sup>65</sup> The metaphors of flight thus resonate most seriously with the constellation of the materialist versus idealist dialectics at standstill, which has been a major ordeal of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, indeed involving both Jews and Christians, as well the members of other religions who believe in intense negotiation with those secular humanists who recognize only the material dimensions of existence. Instead of the compass of progress predicated by the Enlightenment on the process of secularization, the dialectics certainly have reached an undecided balance, tilted now and then, leaving both materialism and spiritual creeds changed forever and touched by each other. The postcards of humans in flight—probably not "originally" Jewish—coupled with the traditional blessings recalling God's writing of verdicts on New Year repeatedly and perfectly produce the constellation I have here attempted to delineate.

DREAMS ON WHEELS AND WAVES: ILLUSIONARY AUTOMOBILES,  
ROWING BOATS, AND BICYCLES

Among the Jewish postcards reviewed for this essay is a considerable cluster of New Year's greetings featuring happy, unworried, mostly young people in leisurely postures riding bicycles (figure 12),<sup>66</sup> rowing boats (figure 13),<sup>67</sup> and driving modern cars (figure 14).<sup>68</sup> Their message balances between a mimetic description of a free, modern, Western bour-

64. Dan Pagis, "Footprints," *Points of Departure*, trans. Stephen Mitchell, introduction by Robert Alter. (Philadelphia, 1981), 31.

65. A classical discussion of the spiritual aspects of travel from classical Greece to medieval Europe is in Ladner, "*Homo viator*."

66. See *Past Perfect*, no. 25, p. 27.

67. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 28, p. 28; no. 30, p. 29.

68. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 26, p. 27.



Figure 12. Catalog no. Hof18-0120. A girl on bicycle. Publisher: Williamsburg post card co. Printed in Germany.



Figure 13. Catalog no. Hof18-0079. Two girls rowing a boat. Publisher: Williamsburg Art & Co.



Figure 14. Catalog no. Hof18-0049. Four women in a car. Publisher: Central, ca. 1920.

geois life, unhampered by discrimination and untouched by any visible signs of ethnic difference, and a utopian vision of equality (especially gender equality) of the kind I have discussed with reference to postcards representing airborne vehicles, that associate strongly with the *Luftmenschen* cluster. Thus the postcard with the girl and her bike (figure 12) carries in addition to the standard blessings of “A Happy New Year” and *le-shanah tovah tikatevu*—revealing a probable American provenance—also a Yiddish rhyme: *Ikb ayl tu mayn libstn / a brokhe im gebn / un vintshn gezunt im / un gliklikhes leben* (I hasten to my beloved / to give him a blessing (card) / and wish him good health / and a happy life). Here again the text of the blessing refers to the genre and to its mode of communication, its ostensible performance by the card’s “protagonist,” the young braided girl carrying a large New Year’s card in her right hand. The card with the rowboat (figure 13) has the same Hebrew and English blessings as the bicycle card and carries the following rhyme in Yiddish: “The boat sails so tranquilly / two girl-friends sit aboard. / Oh, boat carry us / to the happy shore.”<sup>69</sup> In the car carrying four women, one of them, the driver, wears a hat adorned with the Hebrew word “Zion” (figure 14). The three others hold flowers in their right hands and a sign *le-shanah tovah*. This card bears no text in a non-Jewish language, an absence perhaps corre-

69. *es shvimit dos shifl sbtilerheyt/twey kbavertes derin /o trog undz shifele abin / tsum breg fun glik un frayd.*



Figure 15. Catalog no. Hof4-0140. The Cossacks plunder. Artist: S. Adam. Publisher: Wydawnictwo Salon Malarzy.

lated with its Zionistic message. All three cards are probably of American provenance and reflect the relative optimism of American Jews.<sup>70</sup>

#### MIGRATION, EXILE, LONGING

It would be unfair to say that all Jewish postcards lulled their senders and receivers into an idyllic calm. In fact, early twentieth-century postcards include relatively many representations of disaster, sorrow, and pain. We have already noted Hirszenberg's iconic *Golus* in which an archetypal exile mingles with a realistic snapshot of actual dislocation. Another postcard (figure 15) is even more explicit in its display of disaster, showing Cossacks in the background burning houses while a young woman, a child, (apparently hers), and an old man mourn in the foreground. The three individuals seem to have been chosen to represent society's weakest members. This is not a photograph but a painting, signed S. Adam,<sup>71</sup> presenting a symbolizing view of the events. Like Hirs-

70. Ellen Smith ("Greetings from Faith," 241) refers to the same postcard or to a very similar one (the black-and-white reproductions in her article do not always enable complete identification) with the following details: "Williamsburg Post Card Company, New York City. Printed in Germany. 3 5/8 in. 5 1/2 in."

71. I have not been able to identify the painter. Is this possibly a pseudonym modeled after the name of Albrecht Adam (1786–1862), a German painter specializing in military and equestrian themes? Perhaps the name Adam refers to humanity in general in stark contrast to the inhumane deeds of the portrayed Cossacks. The Hoffmann Collection has at least one other postcard representing

zenberg's more famous *Golus* this painting too strongly focuses on communicating an experience.<sup>72</sup> Surprisingly, though, in the Polish text on the postcard's verso, an apparently young woman, possibly a girl—with an almost identical name to Sonia the addressee, only in a more Polish orthography, Zonia<sup>73</sup>—writes naively about trivial private affairs of little consequence, complaining about her lack of talent.<sup>74</sup> One wonders if the sender even saw the picture on the recto side and if so whether she gave any thought to why she sent this particular postcard.

A postcard subtitled *EVENEMENTS DU MAROC. 524. MERRAKECH (Maroc). L'exode des Juifs et des européens* is stamped May 20, 1908, in the French occupation zone of the Algerian-Moroccan border (figure 16).<sup>75</sup> The term “exode” may echo a Jewish cultural association of being uprooted although those portrayed on the postcard are quite different in their appearance from the *Golus* wanderers or the Cossack victims in the East European scenes, thus perhaps rather associated with the liberation of Exodus.

The reality reflected in these postcards is thus not limited to nice situations. Numerous books have been devoted to the use of postcards by

a pogrom, a painting of St. Fabijński, not included in the discussion here since it lacks a motif related to mobility; indeed all the figures are dead.

72. The addressee is Fräulein Sonia Rosner, Wien II, Praterstrasse 52/42. The subtitle in three languages—Polish, German, and Hungarian—declares laconically “Plundering Kossacks,” while it also probably reveals an Austro-Hungarian sending address (in Galicia?). On the representation of pogroms on postcards sent for raising funds to support and aid the victims, see Sabar, “Between Poland and Germany,” 141.

73. The identical names may tell us of a family relationship between the two according to Jewish naming practices.

74. The text and its translation: “Najdroższa Soniu, / Kartę Twoją otrzymałam / dziękuję Ci za nią że Ci się dobrze powodzi / cieszy mnie bardzo U nas nic nowego / Rita już Bogu dzięki, / wyzdrowiała / Przepraszam Cię że tak brzydko piszę, muszę / się jeszcze dużo / całuję Cię / Zonia dla [? Distorted; probably Pozdrowienia dla = Greetings for] / całusy dla wszystkich.” (Dearest Sonia, / I got your postcard / thank You for it / that You are well / I am very glad [i.e. I am very glad that You are well] / By us nothing new / Rita has already, thanks God / gotten better [i.e. she had been ill] / I am very sorry I write so ugly [i.e. my handwriting is bad or I make a lot of mistakes], I have to / [[learn] much yet] / a kiss for You / kisses for everyone.) I am very grateful to Dr. Pawel Maciejko of the Hebrew University for his generous help in transcribing and translating the text.

75. The manufacturer's name is also, unusually, on the recto: Boumendil—Photo: Sidi Abbe. The text on the verso: “Embrasse bien tout la famille. / A toi, ma petite femme chérie / mille bons baisers que tu partageras / avec mon fils. / Bertrand (?).” Cf. Attal, *Juifs du Maghreb*, no. 826, on p. 61.



Figure 16. Catalog no. Hof10-0224. Exodus of Jews and Europeans (Marrakesh, Morocco). Publisher: Edit. Boumendil. Posted in 1908.

soldiers in World War I, where they clearly functioned as news media in addition to their personal communicative value. I have elsewhere reflected on the chapbook tradition of the Wandering Jew as a premodern mode of news distribution,<sup>76</sup> furthermore linking the postcard and the Wandering Jew.

As we have noted, the heyday of postcards paralleled the great waves of modern migrations. These events also found their way into the illustrations. One finds such emotionally charged scenes as the moment of collective departure (figure 17) breathing the hopeful stance of the young people going together *nokh erets-yisroel*, looking more like bourgeois tourists than pioneering immigrants, thus probably reflecting their pasts more than their imminent futures. This postcard also contains the formulaic New Year's greeting *le-shanah tovah tikatevu* and a Yiddish rhyme,<sup>77</sup> in which the holiness of the land, the vitality of the body, and bright hopes for future all come together in a naively unproblematic manner. No third, non-Jewish language invades the face of this straightforwardly Zionist

76. Galit Hasan-Rokem, "The Wandering Jew—A Jewish Perspective," *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, division D, vol. 2 (Jerusalem 1986), 189–96.

77. *bald firt shoyfn di shif tsu dem heilikh breg / tsu lebn un frayheit, tsu likhtiken teg / klapn di hertser, shlogt beyser dos blut / vert azoy zis un mekbayedik gut . . .* (Soon the ship sails to the holy coast / to life and freedom, to bright days / the hearts beat, and warmer throbs the blood / so sweet and so delightfully good will it be).





Figure 17. Catalog no. Hof18-0044. “To Eretz Israel.” 1925–35. Publisher: S. Resnik (Warsaw and New York). Printed in Germany.

postcard picture, and Yiddish and Hebrew are still able to express together the dream of Zion.

The leave-taking on another postcard is of a more personal or private character: It (figure 18) is titled *a brivele der mamen*, in which a mother’s anxious words to *mayn kind*, *mayn treyst* express her sorrow and her hope that he not forget her, indicating that the journey on which he is about to embark is hardly a short one.

In two cases the separation caused by migration is starkly represented in the postcard’s graphic design by separately framing the old world and the new (figures 19, 20). The ship carrying the migrating son or husband and father, which also constitutes the carrier of the postcard itself, is set between the Old World and New World scenes constituting symbolically the Atlantic Ocean. The whole arrangement clearly points to America as the location of the son/husband and to Europe as that of the parents/wife and children—although in a reversed order, since America would naturally be on the left side and Europe on the right. In the postcard featuring the wife and the children (figure 20) the port of departure is clearly indicated by New York’s Statue of Liberty. The ship’s major function must thus be carrying the postcard itself and perhaps also bringing the family over. Both these postcards state emphatically the central role of the postal system, and of postcards in particular, in maintaining relationships in times of great separations such as caused by migration, by showing in one of the postcards the post offices on both continents and in the other the writing husband and the reading wife. The strong subject



Figure 18. Catalog no. Hof18-0054. Son and mother. Artist: H. Goldberg.



Figure 19. Catalog no. Hof18-0456. Old parents in Europe and son in the United States. Published by the National Library in Warsaw 1990. A reproduction.



Figure 20. Catalog no. Hof18-0055. Wife and child in old country. Publisher: Central, Warsaw.

position is that of the migrant, who has reached America where the postcards were produced. The communicative act of posting the card is thus marked as an act of empowerment and adaptation compared with the situation of those left behind in the Old World.<sup>78</sup>

In both these cases the text both replicates an imaginary message inscribed by the distant relative and describes the postcard's journey to the dear ones. The postcard, as Susan Stewart has suggested, is at the same time the site of longing, and its communicative expression,<sup>79</sup> and here it seems also the attempt to alleviate the hardship of longing. In postcards where the card's practice is transformed into its visual message, indeed becoming both the site of longing and its expression, the imaginary personal text carries a comforting message (figure 20):<sup>80</sup> "The husband writes a New Year's letter / his wife lets fall a silent tear / God, please give us luck and income / and do not separate us anymore."

And in the postcard with the old parents picking up a New Year's card

78. Cf. Smith's ("Greetings from Faith," 237) reflection: "Memory in these cards thus becomes less about nostalgia—which locates the present in the past—than about using the familiar as an element in the building of new lives . . . recognize . . . a family that has been disrupted by immigration . . . they also encompassed the viewer . . . The viewer is the additional visitor at the table . . . re-forming Jewish life."

79. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore, Md., 1984), 138.

80. *Shraybt der man a briv tuum nay-yor / falt zayn vayb a sbtile trer / shenk undz, got, parnose, mazl / un tvesheyd undz shoy'n nit mer.*



Figure 21. Catalog no. Hof18-0208. Arriving immigrants (with emblems). Publisher: Hebrew Publishing & Co., New York

at the post office, the son exhorts the postcard itself to fulfill its important task in connecting the continents:<sup>81</sup> “Carry yourself over distant seas / fast and quick my blessing [postcard] / bring my father and my mother / happiness, health and success” (figure 19). Compared especially with these moving presentations of a migratory moment, the pompous portrayal of the collective welcome offered by old-timers to prospective newcomers across the Atlantic in its disproportionate representation (figure 21), adorned by the winged emblems of Russia and the United States, is devoid of feeling and breathes the spirit of propaganda, echoed in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s critical discussion of the recently established Ellis Island museum.<sup>82</sup>

81. *trog zikh iber vayte yamen / shnel un flink mayn brokhe! / breng mayn taten un mayn mamen / glik gezunt, batslokhe.*

82. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 177–87. See also Ellen Smith’s (“Greetings from Faith,” 240) brief reference to this postcard or to a very similar one. Cf. also *Past Perfect*, no. 61, p. 46: “‘Immigrants on Ellis Island’ featuring an immigrant family on the shore with New York’s skyscrapers and the Goddess of Liberty in the background.”



Figure 22. Catalog no. Hof4-0138. Jewish family returns from the fair, Sarny. Sarny, 1915. Publisher: Contragency A. S. Suvorin & Co. Press: Phototipye Sherer, Nabholz & Co.

#### RECTO AND VERSO, CENTER AND PERIPHERY

My discussion has so far primarily addressed the *recto* side of the postcards on which the picture is printed. This is a natural consequence of the fact that most items in postcard collections are unused. I would like to present two used postcards, *recto* and *verso*, from the Hoffmann Collection in order to investigate the Wandering Jew's echoes in both. When studying the verso sides with their private texts we should remind ourselves, as Jan-Ola Östman has written, that "the postcard is semi-public: it is explicitly personal (addressed to only one person), but implicitly public (since its text, picture, and stamp are readily visible). Since the sender of a postcard cannot be sure who will read the postcard, he or she will typically adapt his/her linguistic expression on the postcard accordingly."<sup>83</sup>

The first postcard, a black-and-white scene of a family on a horse cart (figure 22), has the following text on the *recto*:<sup>84</sup>

83. Jan-Ola Östman, "The Postcard as Media," *Text: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 24.3 (2004): 423. See also Brooke Baldwin, "On the Verso: Postcard Images as a Key to Popular Prejudices," *Journal of Popular Culture* 22.3 (1988): 15–28.

84. I thank Sasha Senderowich of Harvard University for the translations of both postcards from Russian, for much of the contextual information, and for his insights as well as his unbounded intellectual passion for the investigation of traveling humans.

Сарны No.4 [series of postcards from Sarny]

Sarny No. 4

Еврейская семья возвращается с ярмарки.

Jewish family returning from the fair.

The verso reveals that the postcard was printed in 1915 in Moscow and sent from Sarny (Rovno district, on the Slucz River) on January 26 and apparently received in Odessa on January 29, 1916.<sup>85</sup>

The addressee given is:

г. Одесса	Odessa
Новосельская 56	Novosel'skaia Street #56
кв 8 ЕВБ	apt. 8 EVB
М & Mlle Евградовой	M & Mlle Evgradov

And finally here is the written message on the postcard:<sup>86</sup>

On the 30th or the 31st Ferd. will come to your place on the occasion of [his] pay increase. Give me as a gift one box of those *MINT* candies that you had once bought at Abrikosov's [probably a shop owner/name of the store]. There is no need for more than one box because my brother will bring me some from another place. Do write.

Unlike the young Polish girl mentioned above, this postcard's sender uses the medium for entirely instrumental purposes. The spatial social relationship between Odessa and Sarny is clearly one of center and periphery.<sup>87</sup> Obviously there are goods that are more easily obtained in the former than in the latter, goods that may seem trivial for the Odessans but are luxuries for the Sarnyans. It is thus worthwhile to send a

85. Possibly January 29, 1916, according to the prerevolutionary calendar; there is a third stamp from Sarny, possibly replicating the first stamp.

86. Числа 30/31го къ Вамъ явится Ферд. по случаю полученной прибавки. Угостите меня одной коробочкой тех **МЯТНЫХ** конфетъ, что покупали Вы когда то у Абрикосова. Больше одной коробки не нужно т. к. мне привезет брат из другого миста [*sic.*] Пишите.

87. Whereas Odessa lies in the most southwestern part of Ukraine, on the Black Sea, Sarny is located in the northwestern part of the country on the border of Belarus. Sarny was a part of the Kingdom of Halych-Volhynia. It was later annexed by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, followed by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. From 1795 it was considered a part of the Russian Empire, as part of the Volyn Guberniya. In 1921, the city became part of the Second Polish Republic.

postcard in order to secure their supply. “Ferd.,” whoever he may be for the sender—son, brother, son-in-law, neighbor—is traveling to the big city as a consequence of his increased pay. Moreover the sender’s wish is modest, only one single box of candy, since he will be able to get more from somewhere else with his brother’s help. The almost Chekovian longing for the big city’s sweetness and its pleasures (and Odessa was famous for a variety of pleasures) is condensed into the box of mints. The most urgent need seems to be expressed in the last staccato sentence: “Do write.” Here again the medium is reflecting upon itself as a site of longing and its expression (following Stewart’s formulation).

The requested goods themselves deserve some explication. Whereas the mint plant has been known for its healing effects since antiquity, the manufacture of mint candies seems a modern Western European invention. Their popularity grew in the nineteenth century, while they also spread into the continent and even further east.<sup>88</sup> For those living in Sarny, mints may not have lost their touch of glamour and luxury even in the early twentieth century.

The second postcard, with its private message, was from another part of the East European Jewish world, a portrait of an aged Jewish man, resembling portrayals of the Wandering Jew, painted by Leonid Pasternak (1862–1945, father of Nobel laureate Boris) (figure 23). This postcard was sent, according to a stamp on its verso, from Libau, in the *gubernia* of Kurland,<sup>89</sup> on the Baltic coast to Volkovvysk in the Grodno area, both located within the Lithuanian Jewish cultural sphere.<sup>90</sup>

The recto consists mostly of a reproduction of a painting attributed to Pasternak, with the captions “*Le’an?*” (Hebrew) and “*Wo hinaus?*” (German) underneath. The postcard’s writer has translated the Hebrew

88. I have not been able to find any systematic study of the history of mint candies; I thus rely on scattered information from various websites, partly commercial.

89. Либава, Курляндск[ая губерния]

90. In addition to the stamps, the verso side includes the word “postcard” in twelve languages, apparently communicating the universality of the genre of postcards; and the address

à M-lle Анне ХейнтейвЪ	à M-lle Anna Heynteyv
У. дентистки [?]	Dentistka [?] street
г. ВолковыскЪ	Volkovysk
Гродненской губ.	Grodno gub[ernia]
[???	[???





Dear Anna! I have just received your letter and am very grateful to you for your attention. I am sure you know that anything that concerns my sister [and . . . ] nieces [ . . . ]—I am ready to give [them; give away] anything. Thank you that you led me to think that [ . . . ] But, you see, I am faced with a difficult choice: I don't know which [periodical] to subscribe for them, whether some Jewish [Yiddish] ["Evreiskii" could mean both Jewish and Yiddish; but most likely it's "Yiddish" here.] magazine or Russian. If a Russian one, then I think *Putevodnyi ogonek* [The Guiding Little Light/Lantern].<sup>92</sup> I saw an advertisement for it on the last page of the *Novosti* [News] newspaper. I ask you that, immediately upon the receipt of this letter, [ . . . ] yours and my [ . . . ]. Think it over and decide—I think some Russian [magazine.]

Sasha Senderovich suggests that the postcard is written from a province with a higher rate of assimilation, Kurland, to a province where assimilation was less acute. The choice of languages for the education of the younger generation is thus of consequence: will the sender's nieces read Russian and follow his or her cultural model or read Yiddish and perhaps adhere to a more familiar cultural model? The relationship between center and periphery is much less clear in this case than in the postcard from Sarny to Odessa. The sender seems consistent in her/his Russian Jewish cultural choices as he/she clearly prefers the Russian journal to the Yiddish one, but also in the choice of the painting by Pasternak, whose son Boris would become a significant author in the Russian language. However the ambivalence lingers in the choice of the painting's motif—a traditionally dressed old Jew. It is of course possible that this portrayal of a traditional Jew hides the message that young Jews should break with tradition and adapt to the majority culture. In contradiction to this the postcard's picture is subtitled only in Hebrew and German; however, the sender adds the Russian translation to the title "Where to?" We cannot know whether the obviously highly sophisticated sender chose the picture since its message translates her/his own dilemma into a "linguistic movement' from the Jewish language to the imperial language that offers more

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видишь ли затрудняетъ выборъ, не знаю что для них выписать. Еврейский ли какой журнал или русский. Если русский, я думаю "Путеводный огонекъ." Я видел этотъ анонсъ в газ. "Новости" на последней странице. Прошу тебя немедленно по получению сего письма, . . . твоим и моим . . . Подумайте и решите—я думаю какой нибудь русский.

92. According to the Brockhaus-Efron encyclopedia, *Putevodnyi ogonek* was a bimonthly "scientific-literary" magazine for older children/young adults, published in Moscow starting in 1904, edited by A. A. Fedorod-Davydov.

possibilities for ‘social mobility’.”<sup>93</sup> Thus the postcard from Kurland to Grodno is yet another example of the metalevel of reflection on the postcard genre itself.

#### CONCLUSION<sup>94</sup>

The picture postcard emerged during a period when the figure of the Wandering Jew became gradually less theological and more psychological and existential and—following secularization and the growing adaptation of Jews to modernity—came to signify the human condition in its estrangement rather than an ethnic, religious, or national identity. In its

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93. This is a verbatim quote from Senderovich’s interesting suggestion in a private communication.

94. The travel narrative of the Jew as a postcard or of postcards as Jews cannot be seen as consummate by what has been explored in this article, and much more has to be told and shown: postcards documenting Theodor Herzl’s journey to Palestine in 1898 in which the protagonist’s cross-legged posture on the deck of the ship bringing him to the Promised Land is a forceful statement aiming at the redemption of the Diaspora Jews from what was considered their alienation from the wet element. Another vivid meeting of the Wandering Jew and Zionism is the postcard with the Fabian painting of the Wandering Jew and his wife autographed in Hebrew by a number of delegates to the eleventh Zionist Congress in Vienna 1913. A different flash of an insight can be derived from the postcard of the single Arab wearing his *kufyah* seen from his back side watching—with us—the steamer *Tel Aviv* docking at the harbor, while figures possibly representing Jewish immigrants appear closer to the waterfront. Another untied narrative thread: A week after I had first presented my work on Jewish postcards at Rutgers University in March 2007, I received in the mail a moving letter from Judith Sherman accompanied by a postcard. The top of the postcard was personally captioned with a pen above the representation of the Ravensbrück camp’s official site of commemoration (the flags show that the postcard was still a GDR production although sent in 1995): “I am sending this postcard to myself—I will be home to receive it! Ravensbrück 1995.” The postcard was sent to her home address in the United States from the fiftieth anniversary of the camp’s liberation, where she together with other survivors had been invited and was consequently published in her autobiography. One is reminded, by inversion, of the postcards that the inmates of Theresienstadt were forced to send to their families with false messages on their well being, distorting the generally cogent idea that postcards serve “as the ‘unofficial media’ for minorities to maintain a feeling of togetherness and belonging, especially in times of hardship” (Östman) in the general framework of the total collapse of human values in the Nazi universe. The direct association leads to the topic of anti-Semitic postcards and their proliferation, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, mostly but not only in Germany. Also this weighty theme must be postponed to another occasion, although the image of the Wandering Jew that has accompanied us through this discussion is never very far away from anti-Semitic discourses.

ostensibly marginal status the postcard genre has carried some of the Jews' central existential load as moderns in particularly visible and non-exclusive expressive modes compared with other, especially textual genres, as could be learned from the borrowing of images as well as from the use of multiple languages. Postcards have embodied the particular modes of Jewish mobility in modernity, referring, however, with great versatility to the cross-cultural and transcultural elements of Jewish mobility, and to Jews in various cultural milieus as producers and consumers of cultural production.