

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

"WORK MAKES FREE":
THE HIDDEN CULTURAL MEANING OF THE HOLOCAUST

VOLUME ONE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 1994

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For Mom and Dad

And to all those who persevere in the unequal struggle for meaning.

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*Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
wir trinken und trinken. . . .*

Black milk of dawn we drink it at dusk
we drink it at noon and at daybreak we drink it at night
we drink it and drink it

—Paul Celan, *Death Fugue*

God's gift is a world that is new to us every morning—
and a person should believe he is reborn each day.

—The Baal Shem Tov

PREFACE

The motto *Arbeit macht frei*, and the genocidal practice with which it was associated, has come to epitomize Nazism in the modern imagination. This brutally terse phrase seems to encompass a world that otherwise is opaque and unspeakably painful. It does so with an epigrammatic power that is unsurpassed in human history. For inmates passing as slaves through the gateways of the death camp Auschwitz, this slogan was a physical assault, one which inscribed within their minds and bodies the diabolical parameters of their torture. Jewish prisoners in particular saw quickly that work did not liberate. To the contrary, the only freedom it brought was the escape offered by "annihilation-through-labor" (*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*), or the passage of the soul as smoke through the crematoria chimneys.

Today it is almost universally assumed that the phrase "Work Makes Free" was a device of the utmost cynicism, employed by the Nazis exclusively for the purpose of tormenting their victims. Growing out of the obvious disparity between the motto's overt meaning and the hopelessly double-binded reality of existence in the Nazi camps, this interpretation seems inevitable. In fact the assumption of the motto's essential cynicism has become a taken-for-granted of scholarly as well as popular explanation (for example, see Broszat in Höss, 1963:65). Having recognized the element of deception and chicanery which indubitably is a part of the slogan's character, we assume we have fully demystified the phrase and need not look more deeply. Why then are we left stunned and silent when we again confront the acts that took place behind the death camp gateway? The reason is to

be found, not only in the monstrosity of Nazism, but also in the culture-bounded narrowness of our view. Having stripped away the surface of the Nazi lie, we are confounded to find beneath it the organized vehemence of mass murder—a crime perpetrated on a scale we can scarcely imagine and with an unrelenting industriousness from which we recoil in disbelief. It is a crime which is foreign to us, its form an abomination. And yet its obscenity is couched in the fundamental terms whereby we construct our own lives—the terms of modern technology and medical science, of bureaucracy and mass media, of sentimentality and kitsch. No wonder we remain mystified. Removed though we seem to be from the terrible realities of Auschwitz and Treblinka, we are, paradoxically, too close to the phenomenon to discern its form clearly or decode its meaning.

In fact the taken-for-granted interpretation of "Work Makes Free" hardly exhausts the cultural significance of the motto or its import as an architectonic element incorporated into the form of the concentration and death camps. To the contrary, the assumption of a mere cynicism on the part of the SS actually serves to obscure the more profound realities of the Nazi camps. It does so by deflecting attention away from the significance which the phrase held for those who created them—the Nazis themselves. In so doing it also ignores the wider context of the camps as part of the meaning-imbued practice of Nazism as a movement of collective social transformation, dedicated to bringing about, at any cost, the racially-purified Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft* ("Volk Community") and its Thousand-Year Reich. For this reason the seemingly obvious interpretation of *Arbeit macht frei*—the tendency to discount its seriousness—actually typifies the limitations we bring to an understanding of Nazism at its most murderous.

In order to understand the full meaning of "Work Makes Free" it is necessary to set the phenomenon within temporizing "brackets" (cf. Husserl, 1970)—that is, to refrain from interpolating meaning drawn from our own limited presuppositions, and instead to plumb

the cultural embeddedness of the phenomenon itself. We cannot be guided by our own culturally-circumscribed sense of what is possible and what impossible, what rational and what insane. Instead we must explore the context of the phenomenon, gestalt-like, so that a full reconstruction of its native meanings, however distasteful, can emerge. Indeed, it will be our task to find a reliable method of retrieving from amongst them those meanings that are implicit as well as those that seem to stare us in the face. Only in this manner can the tacit world of Nazi genocide be induced to speak out, almost despite itself, and thereby reveal the unique cultural reality that generated such perverse innovations as the death camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka.

* * *

To a great extent, point-of-view provides the key to understanding the secret of *Arbeit macht frei*. As we have seen, for outsiders as well as for victims, the seemingly self-evident point of view is that of the camp inmate, since the motto was positioned over the gateways through which prisoners were forced to pass in order to enter, often for the first and last time, the confines of their imprisonment. There is an alternate approach to the phrase, however. It is one which takes in its physical positioning, but this time in relationship to the actual work that occurs in the camp, as well as the subjects and objects of that labor. This alternative requires a 180 degree shift in focus. Once this operation has been performed, an entirely new world of meaning opens up, one that reaches straight to the heart of National Socialism. What if *Arbeit macht frei* were less a manipulative device than a confession of Nazi intent and belief? What if it were, in essence, an act of self-revelation—a motto whereby the SS expressed for themselves, and for the entire German *Volk* which they claimed to represent, the basic principle which justified the camp and underlay its functioning?

In fact, as we shall see, this is precisely the case. The concentration and death camps were Nazi creations as well as Nazi domains. For this reason the work that was done

there—by the SS and their German contractors, by inmates, and by SS *upon* inmates—was German work. Just so, the messages that the camps encode do more than address prisoners. They are reflections of the jailor as well. "Work Makes Free" was not merely an attempt to manage the initial impressions of camp inmates (or to confuse and mock them, though this too was built into the phrase). Instead, "Work Makes Free" represents the ways in which the SS regarded their own work in camp. It reveals their purpose—although to an extent that surpasses even their own awareness—while disclosing, inadvertantly, the taken-for-granted cultural principles which underlay the practice of genocide.

It is my intention in the course of this study to explore this alternative—to turn the motto of the Nazi camp, or rather our assumptions about it, upside-down. If we are to perform this task together adequately, however, we cannot blunder into it head-on. Revealing the hidden cultural meaning of *Arbeit macht frei* requires that we first reconstruct the context within which the phrase and its speakers operated and out of which both emerged. Indeed, it will be necessary first to uncover the sociocultural context of the death camp itself. This means identifying its constituent components—the elemental cultural units of meaning and practice making up its institutional form. We must separate these elements heuristically so as to see them again later in combination, but this time in a fresh and revealing slant. Only in this manner can we begin to understand the means whereby these units came together for a purpose that previously would have been considered inconceivable. Above all else we must strive to explain that mystifying and perverse quality which lends the Nazi death camp its most emphatic characteristic: the factory-like structure of the killing process. Likewise, we must account for that cultural element around which the entire institutional form and ideological purpose of the death camps pivot: the Jew. The total annihilation of the Jew was the death camp's *raison d'etre*; it was for this purpose that its constituent units coalesced. Accordingly we must delve especially deeply

(if in a highly selective and typifying manner) into the sociogenesis of Nazi antisemitism, that is, into the historical constitution of its symbolic significance. In the course of doing so we will not necessarily be analyzing Jews as they really were, but the *Jew* as a German cultural construct. Inextricably intertwined with the history of German cultural identity itself, this overwhelmingly hostile representation persisted in crucial aspects of its form and meaning over the centuries even as the construction on the whole transformed decisively. The latter occurred in dialectic with changes in political economy as Germany itself transformed (by way of the Reformation, the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, and the collapse of the *Kaiserreich* following defeat in World War One) from a fragmented, feudalistic society into a capitalist one in existential crisis.

The motto of the Nazi camp thus must be approached as if from below. We must tunnel upward through the layers of impacted history as if to escape an enormous midden dense with a welter of evidence. Sifting all the while, we must seek out the underlying symbolic nexus of form, meaning and practice within which the death camps are lodged. It is only after this analytical task has been performed that we can return again to the motto *Arbeit macht frei* at the end of this study and confront it directly. Only then will we know whether or not we are to be permitted a small measure of satisfaction, however bittersweet, in our struggle to penetrate the implacable meanings of the sign over the death camp gateway and the genocide which it epitomizes.

* * *

When I, a second-generation American Jew, first arrived in Munich to plan my research, it seemed blasphemous to me that there was normal traffic on the streets—pedestrians who strolled and streetcars that stopped quietly at red and moved on again at green, as if nothing had ever happened here. Surely all of Germany should live in permanent mourning, I thought, or at least have the decency to pause once each day for silent self-reflection. Shortly after returning to begin the three years of my actual

fieldwork, however, I remember entering the Munich underground to attend a protest rally not too far from the city's cobblestoned center. It was a day or two after the neo-Nazi bombing at the *Oktoberfest* in 1980, when eleven people were killed or injured. All of the Bavarians around me, it seemed, were clothed in their expensive loden-green coats—for some reason these represented the essence of German complacency to me at the time—and I recall focusing-in silently, almost reflexively, on two older women sitting across from me, looking all-too-unburdened. Where were you, I thought, when the Jews were hauled off? In which direction were your arms outstretched?

When I left the subway, these women were not far behind. And when I arrived at the *Platz der Opfer des National-Sozialismus* (Victims of National Socialism Square), they were there too, walking arm-in-arm, only now with a look on their open faces that might be described as one of clarity. Or perhaps I was only projecting, once again, my own inward state. For as I found out, these two had been imprisoned years ago as German anti-fascists—as Communists—in the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women. Never after this did I allow myself to look upon German society under National Socialism, or contemporary Germany for the matter, as I had before—that is, without consciously prodding myself to keep in mind the tangled multivocality of its human and political dimensions. Such experiences—along with an uncommon personal relationship—helped me situate myself both morally and analytically within the painfully contradictory phenomenon that was Germany under National Socialism, and Germany thereafter.

And yet, even before this experience—indeed, from my earliest moments—I had heard the sounds of German song emerging gently from my mother's lips: *Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln, Gefälligkeit und Scherzen, erobert man die Herzen. . . .*¹

¹“With tenderness and kindness, friendly jests and coaxing, one conquers the hearts. . . .”

I provide these few experiences—these silences, sounds and images—because it has been argued that all histories, and those of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust in particular, possess a transferential quality. That is, the biographical relationship of writer to subject matter, whether a closely-implicated one or one that is more distanced, has a significant if less-than-conscious bearing on how he or she weaves the material at hand into the textual form of a "narrative" (cf. White, Anderson, Ginzburg and LaCapra in Friedländer, 1992).

It should be apparent already that the present work of historical anthropology does not conform directly to the structure and style of traditional historical narrative. However, a somewhat similar argument, if more cultural than biographical, has been made in recent years about ethnographies as well. For this reason—and at further risk of eliciting impressions that some readers, at least, might consider infelicitous—I feel obliged to provide one additional element in what obviously is by no means an exhaustive biographical "self-employment":

The analysis you are about to read has its immediate origins a decade-and-a-half ago (1978), in a sudden metaphoric leap. Actually, it was less a leap between metaphors than the discovery of a metonymic connection (see Jakobson & Halle, 1956:76-82). Metaphor implies, after all, no necessary linkage between two elements—their relationship is arbitrary, "merely" symbolic. On the other hand, metonym implies contiguity, an ineluctable connection, as in the insistent yet unspoken relationship of the absent person to the portrait of his well-worn shoes, or the efficacy of the fingernail in voodoo. . . . This, then, was more a sudden metonymic coupling—an exposure of underground connections where previously no connections, or perhaps only the metaphors of madmen, had seemed to exist.

The need for such a discovery had been born within me yet another decade earlier and more. It had arisen slowly at first, in the hollow left by the faces of an enigmatic family

portrait I had found in my grandmother's bureau draw, of loved ones she had left behind in the Ukraine. And then, abruptly, it exploded, as I—safe at home in the suburbs of Long Island—ached uncomprehending over still and moving images of children like myself reduced to tatters in the Lodz and Warsaw ghettos. A boy feeding his little sister—the bow in her hair, obviously placed there lovingly by someone, still managing somehow to perch upon her head like an enormous butterfly. . . older boys trembling before the rifles of SS men, shaking out from beneath lumpy shirts their miserable load of roots and tubers. . . a tiny smiling child like a monkey on a string, dancing in the gutters for pennies as once he must have danced for his relatives, in a drawing room filled with the pungent breath of slivovitz and marinated herring (see plates 1-3).

Confronting the sign *Arbeit macht frei* (it was perhaps fifteen years later), prepared for the sake of analysis to "bracket" and take it seriously, yet struggling in what seemed a near-vacuum for its tacit meaning, I thought suddenly of an image lodged within a passage of Marx's on the fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof.

Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language. The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labor, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labor spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labor appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves. . . (Marx, 1967 [1867]:74).

"Social hieroglyphic"—*that* was the image that struck me as I realized that the bodies of Jews at Auschwitz and even the remnants of their bodies were nothing other than Nazi German commodities. And if they were literally commodities, then, like all products of human labor, they must conceal within their seeming autonomy the cultural meanings of self, work and power belonging to those who had devoted themselves so obsessively to producing them. The bodies of Jews and the Jews themselves were social hieroglyphics of

German society under National Socialism. It followed, then, that in the weaving of the hair and the forging of the dental gold and the generation, recycling and disposal of the ash, I would discover, as if somehow secretly encoded, the meaning of the sign the Nazis had placed upon their own murderous labor—the meaning of *Arbeit macht frei*.



Plate 1. The author's maternal relatives *circa* 1938, Kremenets, Ukraine.



Plate 2. Brother and sister, Ghetto Lodz. (Source: Dobroszycki, 1984:104ff)



Plate 3. Dancing for pennies, Ghetto Warsaw. (Source: Chagoll, 1979:87)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Feigenbaum, seit wie lange schon ists mir bedeutend,
wie du die Blüte beinah ganz überschlägst
und hinein in die zeitig entschlossene Frucht,
ungerühmt, drängst dein reines Geheimnis.*

Fig tree, how long it's been full meaning for me—
the way you almost completely neglect to bloom
and then, without fanfare, pour your purest
secret into the season's determined fruit.

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*

Death Fugue, the poem which provides the overall epigraph to this study, was written in Czernowitz by the twenty-five year old Paul Celan at the end of 1944, shortly after learning of his mother's death in the killing fields of Transnistria. After reading it, Theodor Adorno is said to have revised his dictum, "no poetry after Auschwitz." Despite its varying appropriation over time, it has never been surpassed in its accomplishment.

Celan's poem knows more than we can say. When we hear it, we sense immediately, in the dialectic of its contradictory images, its jagged rhythms and driving cadence—and especially in its haunting refrain¹—not merely a secondary representation of the death camps, but the "irreducible reality" that lies behind that representation: the experience of extremity for Jews—and what is more, the cultural embodiment of that experience by Germans.

In a sense, the study before you—in all its many pages, and after all its many years of labor—is an attempt to spell out the implicit, telegraphic reality that Celan's poem captured. It is an attempt to work through the invisible, impenetrable barrier that has blocked us from

¹"*Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland* [Death is a Master from Germany. . . .]"

understanding for so long, in order to make the complex terms of that cultural embodiment of genocide explicit—and inescapable.

* * *

The concepts and approach developed in this study are based on the doctoral proposal presented to the University of Chicago's Anthropology Department in 1980 and subsequent European field research based in Munich from 1980 to 1983. The latter was supported by a two-year Fulbright Graduate Fellowship administered by the German Fulbright-Kommission, while the Wenner-Gren Foundation and a Charlotte Newcombe Fellowship of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation supported crucial stages in the final research and writing. I acknowledge these institutions and their staffs—respectively, Ulrich Littmann and Reiner Rohr, Lita Osmundsen, and Judith Pinch—most gratefully. I am also most grateful to the University of Chicago's Department of Anthropology and Division of Social Sciences (including Anne Ch'ien), the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (Dr. Jerry Hochbaum), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and The Furstenberg Fund of the University's Hillel Foundation under Rabbi Danny Leifer, all of which provided pre-doctoral funding.

A highly condensed version of this work was delivered at the American Ethnological Society conference in Atlanta on April 28, 1990; the portion of it analyzing *The Stroop Report* was drawn from a paper presented at the American Anthropological Association annual convention in Philadelphia, November, 1986.

My labors have taken me to many archives and institutions. Among them I wish to acknowledge, in Germany, Munich's Institut für Zeitgeschichte in particular and its able staff (including Frau Baass and Frau Emme), as well as the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and Barbara Distel of the KZ Dachau Museum archives; the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, especially Prof. Dr. Kahlenberg, Dr. Bucher and Rolf Zimmer of the Film Dept., Klaus Postupa of the Poster Dept., and Dr. Hoffmann of the Photo Dept. I also wish to thank the

Justizministerium Baden-Württemberg; Adalbert Rückerl of the Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen, Ludwigsburg; Herr Saar for the Hessische Minister der Justiz, and Herren Nickel and Winchenbach of the Justizvollzugsanstalten Schwalmstadt and Butzbach for facilitating interviews with former SS in prison.

In Poland, I wish to acknowledge the Auschwitz State Museum and its staff (including Drs. Smolen, Iwaszko and T. Szymanski); the Jewish Historical Institute (Dr. Horn and Jan Rochwerger), the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce (Dr. Pilichowski), all Warsaw; and especially the excellent Pan Kazimierz of the Polish Embassy in Cologne, who took special pains to arrange a visa for me for research in Poland during a most difficult (and fascinating) period for travel: six months into military rule.

My thanks to the Czech State Jewish Museum (Drs. Novak, Nosek and Sadek) and Dr. Desider Galsky of the Council of Jewish Communities in Prague; in Vienna, the KZ Mauthausen Museum archives; the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library in London (Walter Laqueur); and in Paris, the Center for the Documentation of Contemporary Judaism (Leon Poliakov).

In New York, I wish to acknowledge the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Blaustein Library of the American Jewish Committee, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust (New York Holocaust Memorial Commission), where I worked as Museum Historian and Holocaust curator. The MJH provided me with a professional base during a major portion of my writing, as well as ever-widening horizons in the study of European Jewry and the Holocaust; I am grateful to Dr. David Altshuler, Mary Beth Byrne, Deborah Dawson Wolff, Nava Schreiber, Fay Schreiber and the entire Museum staff for their friendship and support. Prof. Robert Seltzer of CUNY also has been a supportive friend and colleague, as has Jeshajahu

Weinberg, Director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, with whom I worked closely in New York and who provided me with a vital and deeply genuine connection to the historical world(s) which together we were trying to resurrect or account for.

Although this analysis is a highly formal culture-historical study, in fact it is imbued with the insights I received during my anthropological field work, including numerous interviews with former Nazis and SS officers in and out of prison, with Germans from every walk of life and representing every political perspective, with former non-Jewish concentration camp inmates across Europe—and of course, with Jewish survivors. In particular I wish to thank Richard Glazar, who spent hours—no, days—with me in Basel, going over every possible detail of the Treblinka death camp from which he escaped in the famous revolt. His articulate self-expression proved invaluable, as did his human insight and the example of his indomitable spirit. I also wish to thank the Lauschers of Prague. Despite their advanced age they accompanied me to Theresienstadt, giving me a personal tour—not only of the landscape within which they suffered and survived, but of the human spirit transcendent.

Occasionally I have relied heavily upon the work of particular scholars and journalists, amongst whom I wish to acknowledge Isaiah Shachar and London's Warburg Institute, Horst Karasek, Marie-Luise Könneker, Melita Maschmann, Morton Schatzman and Gitta Sereny, whose book on Treblinka inspired me, and who wrote me in the field with advice.

I consulted with many scholars, experts and writers over the years; some of whom are friends as well. I want especially to mention two mentors outside of anthropology: George Mosse, whose companionship improved Munich and whose continuing friendship I so value, as I do that of Sybil Milton, who, like George, facilitated both research and employment and whose breadth of knowledge never fails to astound. I also wish to thank Dr. Georg R. Schroubek of the University of Munich's Institut für Deutsche und vergleichende Volkskunde, who made sure, along with Prof. Dr. Thomas Nipperdey, that

my Fulbright was renewed. Hermann Langbein of Vienna shared his experiences and facilitated many interviews, for which I thank him most heartily, as I do Gordon Hitchens, founding editor of *Film Comment*, who offered every connection and generously allowed me access to his extensive files on German film. Further thanks are due to Jane Caplan, Ralf Dahrendorf, Lucy Dawidowicz, John Dornberg, Louis Dumont, Benjamin Ferencz, Karsten Fledelius, Peter Gay; Drs. Hans-Karl Galle and Stephen Dolezel at the Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film, Göttingen; Raul Hilberg, Paul Hockings, Walter Laqueur, Heiner Lichtenstein, Robert Lifton, Hans Marsalek; Alwin Meyer of Aktion Sühnezeichen-Friedendienste; Judith Muffs, Richard Plant, Leon Poliakov, and Edward Shils, among others.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Prof. Dr. Nickolaus Lobkowitz, President of the University of Munich in 1981, who intervened personally on my behalf to extend my stay at the Munich Olympic Village, thereby preventing an interruption to my research at a particularly crucial stage. The same holds for the staff of Amerika Haus—Edwin Pancoast, Klaus Kuertin in particular and Hermann Gutermuth—who made it possible for Fulbrighters to stay at the Oly on my request in the first place, and who helped facilitate interviews with members of the Freiheits Aktion Bayern.

I am also grateful to Leslie Barnett and Ann Johnston of Clare Hall, Cambridge for making me an Associate Fellow of my old college and offering me hospitality during an early period of my European research; likewise to German anthropologist Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp, who helped get me started in the field, as well as to Anna Bielecki, Marianne Haußleiter, Monika Richarz and Catherine Stodolsky for hospitality and assistance during the field period in Europe.

A special thanks to my Aunt Sheila Abrams, editor at the *Jewish Press*, who, like my Aunt Ruth Newborn, has always followed my labors with love and support. I'm grateful also to Studs Terkel, for taking extra steps to make for a special interview, indeed—and to

Rita Jacobs Willens, for her warmth and for the Baal Shem quote, from her incomparable *Roshinkes mit Mandeln*.

Thanks also to David Brent of the University of Chicago Press, Kathy Barnes, Lois Bisek and Anne Ch'ien of the Anthropology Dept., Toby Axelrod of the *Jewish Week*, and Margaret Carey, Fernando Coronil, Mariane Fermé, Tania Forté, Rose Gatens and Walter Renn, Gail Kligman, Andy Lass, Rabbi Danny Leifer, Bob Lerner, Karen Lofstrum, Kellie Masterson, Barbara Metcalf, Pat Michaelson, Althea Nagai, Carol Nagengast, Susan Rabiner, Rafael Sanchez, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Naomi Schneider, Helena Schwartz, Linda Scovill, Julie Skurski, Patsy Spyer, Avraham and Evelyn Sternklar, Jerry Sussman, Jacqueline Urla and Ken Wisaker, among others, for expressions of interest, support and friendship over time.

Invitations to lecture have always provided intellectual stimulation as well as funds during the writing period, while honing my performance skills. Although I cannot possibly list them all, I wish to thank Gerald Margolis, Director of the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, as well as the staffs of Goethe House in New York and the Goethe-Institut in Chicago, along with playwright/actress Lillian Garrett-Groag and the able staff of the Old Globe Theater, San Diego. The Cinema Arts Center of Long Island, an artistic oasis under the direction of my friends Vic Skolnick and Charlotte Skye, has made me their regular film lecturer on the subject of Nazi Germany, the Holocaust and European Jewry, always providing me with a chance to stretch my knowledge in new directions. I also wish to thank UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (Mimi Landau, Ellen Bayer, Shea Zames Lerner), Hadassah (Dorothy Kurland) and the Jewish Welfare Board (Sesil Lissberger) for facilitating many lectures on Holocaust-related subjects.

Dr. James M. Shuart, President of Hofstra University, offered me collegial access to Hofstra's library at one point during the writing process, for which I am grateful.

During the long years of writing-up on Long Island, the staff of the Plainview Public Library astounded me with their expertise and facility in turning up the most obscure of sources, ones that would have challenged librarians at the most august of academic institutions. They did so while acting as friends and supporters as well, so they are part of this study in every way, and I thank them from the heart—in particular Director Stanley Eddison, Sue Kramer, Marilyn Stolove, Carolyn Mernoff, Carol Clark, Ron Beaudrie, Claudette Caplin, Rhoda Orenstein, Nettie Fischer, Janet Hoffman, Margie Fifer, Wendy Rosen and of course, Judith Nerenberg.

* * *

This part of the journey, at least, is over. I might try to convey just how long and difficult it has been, but the effort would be too demanding, and probably far too intimate. Along the way there have been moments of profound exhilaration coupled with periods, all-too-brief it seems, of exquisite self-immersion—what Csikzentmihalyi and others call "flow." And although the stretches in between may have seemed sometimes a permanent fade to grey, beneath it all there was always an abiding sense of purpose that brought the distant image at the end of the tunnel back into focus, and made it beckon.

There were those whose boundless faith and support helped keep that image bright. I wonder, sometimes, that their patience didn't flag. My advisors at the University of Chicago were and are more than advisors; they are mentors and cherished friends. When I first proposed this anthropological study of the Holocaust, the idea was unconventional to say the least, given anthropology's firm focus even then on field work in traditional third-world contexts, and its difficulties in grappling with problems of history. For this reason I am so grateful for their faith and support, as well as that offered by the Anthropology Department—and indeed, the University—as a whole. Jean Comaroff inspired me from the outset with her tremendous energy and intellectual adventurousness. Nancy Munn shared her profound insights into the meaningful constitution of the social world open-

handedly, often spending hours over the phone long distance. Although I alone am responsible for the errors of this study, wherever it is best it is due in large part to the intellectual contribution made by Jean and Nancy, as well as the encouragement they offered. The latter only grew as time progressed, helping to keep me, and the work, alive.

Similarly, when conventional historians and political scientists expressed outrage at my challenge to the reigning paradigms—or stared at me with incomprehension—John Boyer in the History Department made the interdisciplinary leap without a blink. Indeed, he himself argued, in my favor, that it was about time anthropology made an attempt to explain the Holocaust. Again, I alone am responsible for any waywardness in my historiographical approach—but John's contribution nonetheless has been essential, and his support has never wavered.

My list of advisors does not end with the official committee as it finally assembled at my defense. Terry Turner's incentive to "rethink the Nuer" inspired me to apply my study of millenarianism to the modern Nazi case—sped along by his message in "Systems" that anthropology could have moral purpose after all, without compromising itself analytically. Raymond Smith shared his incisive understandings of social theory while supporting me personally—a contribution I shall never forget. George Stocking, the Department's historian of anthropology, looked in on my peculiar project from his unique perspective—one that manifested itself, to my good fortune, in intellectual assistance and personal support, without which I may well have shriveled up at the start. Barney Cohn, as both historian and anthropologist, likewise stood by my side, believing in me and thereby reinforcing my conviction, with George's help, that I *could* span the disciplinary divide after all. David Schneider, too, was one of the first to be won over to the possibility of an anthropological analysis of the Holocaust; I will always remember his support.

As for John Comaroff, like Jean, he was there from the start, expressing his faith in the significance of this project so generously that—respecting him deeply—I *had* to believe it

was so, however overwhelmed I may have felt over the years by the *hubris* of this undertaking.

I also wish to thank Dr. Ronald Wyatt, of the Nassau County Museum System, who might well have patronized me but instead was good enough to induct me into what Michael Polanyi has called the "society of explorers" when I was but a teen-age archaeology buff. And finally—last but certainly not least—I wish to thank my first anthropology professor and good friend, Dale Eickelman, who not only challenged me as an undergraduate but took me so seriously that I actually came to believe I, too, could contribute something as an anthropologist. His continued belief in me over the years has meant more than he probably realizes himself.

The pressure to meet the university's deadline makes me fear I shall leave out important friends, supporters and institutions—and so I must promise to rectify this in the book version of this study. But let me now mention those friends and colleagues who regularly tugged at my lifeline while I was in the tunnel, not only to make sure *I* was alive, but to keep my *spirit* alive as well. I cannot take time to say all that is in my heart—that would make Volume Five!—but I know they will understand. My incomparable friends and colleagues Ruth Mandel and Martha Lampland: Ruth always ready to open the world up for you—and more than anyone else, never allowing me to disappear too long inside my hermitage. Martha unwavering in her loyalty and belief in me, even when I felt myself *in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes*. . . . Likewise the wonderful and humane Martha Feldman, who appeared as if by magic in Munich, kept reappearing magically thereafter, and who with the excellent Tom Bauman offered her unique form of spiritual succor at the most crucial of junctures; Susan Rubinowitz, my indispensable oldest friend, literary heroine and fellow member of the Sacred Order of the Frog; Horst Conrad, my selfless German comrade, who—like Sue—was happy when I was happy, and ached when I ached; Susan Schultz—she who stood by me at the Gates of the English Garden, laughing

and crying—my trust-worthy fellow traveller and mutual propper-upper abroad and at home; Rick Imberman, Long Island artist-in-arms, confidant and kindred spirit, who reads my secret soul and is not only *sympatico* but *empatico*; Herb Bardavid, who kept me going with warmth, insight and a steadfast faith far beyond the call of duty; Sue Hyatt, who, with the ever-nurturing Erik Wogstad and Marjorie Skotheim, and with the empathic Barbara Roy, helped absorb my reverse culture shock when I returned from the field—and who somehow always manages to make me feel special, never forgetting that I am there; Sonja Oster Grossmann and Lisa Fittko, my living connections to the verve and political *engagement* of Europe's lost Jewish world; and of course Lynne Everett and David Weberman, of Everett, Newborn and Weberman, Inc.—not only a "going" concern, but for an important period a substitute family in the field. . . I free associate my thanks and love to you all, in words inadequate.

At the *nth* hour, Donald Hennessy of the Long Island Mac User's Group provided assistance *extraordinaire*—loaning me the use of his computer for months, sharing his tremendous expertise, guiding me through the challenge of reformatting a four volume work that had been done with antediluvian computer technology. I thank him from the bottom of my heart; Donald, I couldn't have done it without you! And thank you Sam Wilen, of the Office of Academic Publications, for stepping well beyond the boundaries of your office to guide me in these last weeks, with patience and kindness.

One leaves the most important for last. My family: how can I express what my mother and father have offered me, in the spirit of my European grandparents? The legacy of Judaism, the values of *Menschlichkeit*, the emotional and financial generosity that knew no limits. My pain was their pain; my exhilaration their exhilaration. I doubt any family could have participated—not only personally, but intellectually and creatively—more so than mine. My mother's creative wisdom and selfless nurture, her insight, her artistic spirit! Without her inspiration, this work could never have been conceived at all. My father's

unquestioning faith, his invaluable lessons of perseverance! I would never have achieved this analysis without his example. Kym, *mein Herzenskind*, who literally held me up to keep me going, while filling me with his unique spiritual strength. Thank you, Kym, for the gift of the runes—for being there, for being you. Ira, who understands my inner contradictions as no other, and who helped me find the strength to struggle when I'd lost the way, while providing financial support again and again, asking nothing in return. Eva, who stood by me when I needed it most, accepting me as I was—you know what I mean, and I shall never forget. And Stacey, blooming before my eyes, knowing to develop her own inner resources and thereby becoming a lesson to us all.

* * *

I have at home, on a shelf, something I brought back from the field—a little plastic film container with ash from Auschwitz Crematoria V, located deep inside the camp complex. I gathered it at the end of a long and numbing visit, when dusk was already descending. As a consequence I was locked into Auschwitz-Birkenau that night and had to scale a tall fence to get out, my heart beating wildly. I later discovered a small bone amongst the ash. I've been told it's from a child's finger. I brought it back with me so that during the writing process I should never lose sight of that "irreducible reality" which I was struggling so hard to account for.

I really shouldn't have it. Once the book is out I must bring it to a rabbi and have it buried.

CHAPTER ONE

"THE MYSTERY OF MASS EXTERMINATION"

A SHIFT IN PARADIGMS

The purpose of this study is to use the methods of symbolic anthropology—methods never before implemented for the task—in an attempt to explain the form of Nazi antisemitism and the genocidal practice which has come to be called the Holocaust. Indeed, the ultimate object and goal of analysis is the underlying cultural significance of the death camps themselves, and in particular the confounding quality of their industrial form as relentlessly mobilized against the Jews of Europe. Although it is this quality which provides the death camps with their most obvious and overwhelming character, the deeper cultural implications of assembly-line killing are rarely if ever examined and have never been explained.

In the course of this analysis, I argue that the factory-like mass murder of European Jewry as epitomized by *Arbeit macht frei*, the motto over the gateway to Auschwitz, was not simply an act of cynicism. Neither was it an irruption of collective psychopathology. It was, in reality, a profound and terrible transformative process. Contrary to popular assumption, the motto "Work Makes Free" ultimately refers less to Jewish camp inmates, I argue, than to a vehement and systematic labor of cultural transformation within which they were implicated—not as working subjects, but as helpless objects of an appalling German fascist diligence (cf. Newborn, 1990).¹

¹It should be noted that the use of the phrase *Arbeit macht frei* as a motto preceded the establishment of death camps and the "Final Solution," occurring first at Dachau and other concentration camps in which

The Holocaust as Incomprehensible

"Our subject resists the usual capacity of the mind," writes Irving Howe.

We may read the Holocaust as the central event of this century; we may register the pain of its unhealed wounds; but finally we must acknowledge that it leaves us intellectually disarmed, staring helplessly at the reality or, if you prefer, the mystery of mass extermination. There is little likelihood of finding a rational structure of explanation for the Holocaust: it forms a sequence of events without historical or moral precedent. . . (Howe, 1988:175).

As these words suggest, the ultimate incomprehensibility of the Holocaust is almost an accepted tenet of contemporary society. Despite the application of every major mode of analysis and interpretation and the enormous progress that has been made to date, the "profound dynamics of the phenomenon" continue to evade us, writes Saul Friedländer (1989:31)—a dilemma, adds Nora Levin, which is not likely to be helped by the "accumulation of more facts" (1973: xi). Accepting the centrality of Nazi antisemitism in understanding the Third Reich as a whole—a recognition which he holds to be inescapable for those historians "not encumbered with ideological or conceptual blinders"—Friedländer finds that existing approaches, whether Marxist, Freudian, or those of conventional narrative history, "lose their coherence" (Friedländer, in Fleming, 1984: xxxii). The effect is to leave us with an "irreducible anomaly" (Friedländer, 1984:120) of the sort that cannot be transcended, one must assume, without a fundamental shift in the paradigms which up till now have guided analyses of the Third Reich and structured attempts to explain the genocide of Europe's Jews (see Kuhn, 1962; see also Stocking, 1968:7-8).

non-Jews initially comprised the majority of prisoners. Although this fact might seem to suggest that the motto's implications do not bear specifically on Jews and their genocide, in fact it is from the fascist ideology of work that the motto draws its fullest meaning—an ideology that was fundamentally antisemitic, as I demonstrate below. In the penultimate chapter of this study (chapter 16) I return to the motto *Arbeit macht frei* and consider its explicit origin, uses and appearances in Nazi Germany as well as its implications in relationship to the ideological forms of antisemitism and their genocidal expression.

Friedländer, amongst those most creative in grappling with the problem of Nazi Germany in broad cultural terms, is not entirely alone in having sensed the need for such a shift in paradigms during the last decade or so. At the same time the nature of the new model that might take the place of older, less successful approaches has never been identified. Radical historian Tim Mason was probably the most explicit in pointing out the direction that such a fundamental rethinking of these issues must take (see Mason, 1981). Recognizing the impasse between so-called intentionalist and sociologically-inspired functionalist approaches to the study of the National Socialist state and the unfolding of its murderous policies,² Mason called for a new method that would delve beneath the overt expression of Nazi intentions and take "ideological metaphors" seriously (see Broszat, 1970:408)—something which he hoped would deepen "mechanistic" structural interpretations as well (Mason, 1981:35).³ Direction was to be found by considering the efforts of those disciplines which "systematize techniques for eliciting symbolic or hidden meaning—and thus for redefining the 'intentions' being studied" (pp.31-2). These meanings would have to be grounded, however, in a materialist analysis of the sociohistorical conditions which had given rise to National Socialism's Social Darwinist

²A review of the literature covering this debate is beyond the scope of this chapter, but several excellent overviews exist. In addition to Mason, 1981, see Friedländer, 1989; Marrus, 1987:31-54; Kershaw, 1989. See also n. 3 and 8 below, as well as chapters 9 and 17.

³In his seminal "functionalist" discussion of Hitler's role in coordinating Nazi polycentrism, Martin Broszat (1970) rejected an interpretation of Nazi history as the straightforward realization of Hitler's political intentions. Instead he saw the role of the "Führer," the symbolic terms of the ideology Hitler proffered, and the developing course of Nazi policy itself, as functions of the Nazi state's political fragmentation working out its structural tensions in conjunction with historical events. Within this analysis, Broszat treated notions of symbol and metaphor in implicitly conventional terms, as elements unreal in essence if possessed somehow of an obsessive motivating power—the latter to be accounted for by reference to the workings of an indefinable psychological component (1970:403). Ideology at the same time was treated "negatively" as a set of distant "symbolic goals" acceptable precisely because they had little "relation to the actual, rationally-demonstrable interests of concrete powers" (p.400). The more various aspects of Hitler's program proved "illusory" and the greater Nazism's polycentric tensions grew, the more Hitler was "forced to return" to the "ideological metaphors" at the idiosyncratic core of his worldview (those of antisemitism and *Lebensraum*) in order to hold the system together—until in the final analysis he was compelled to pursue literally what had only been "symbolic" before (p.408).

"politics of struggle." This was an "extremely difficult intellectual undertaking," Mason wrote, requiring "sustained analysis of the (shifting) relation of interdependence between the human agents and their power structures, a relation of a peculiarly complex kind." It was also likely to entail the use of "source materials the significance of which is often overlooked in conventional studies" (p.35). Such an approach, Mason observed, had yet to be developed. Struggling nonetheless to locate a method for providing that kind of analysis, Mason had turned to the disciplines of "psychology and literary criticism" where, he wrote vaguely, "notions of symbolic meaning are commonplace" (p.32).⁴

Friedländer also turns to some crucial but as yet unelucidated aspect of the "psychological" in order to explain the obsessive antisemitism that lies at the basis of National Socialism. He notes, however, that previous psychohistorical studies have been "excessively schematic" in their "application of concepts both too general and too worn out." The result has been a persistent failure to understand the "spell" Hitler's movement wove and "the actual mutation of behavior it set off" (1984:120-1). "At most one can speak of the emergence, unique to date," writes Friedländer, "of a messianic faith and an apocalyptic vision of history at the heart of the political, bureaucratic, and technological system of an advanced industrial society" (1989:31). However limited it may be, this characterization leads Friedländer to hope nonetheless that a means of linking "intentional"

⁴Mason pointed to Klaus Theweleit's psychoanalytical study of the *Freikorps* and its literature, published originally in Germany in 1977, as a promising exploration of symbolic meaning, if ambiguous in its implications for historical explanation. This work is without a doubt fascinating and fertile—and yet the reduction of symbolic forms to the structure of male psychic drives, whether oedipal or pre-oedipal, results in a hazing of the cultural boundaries and historical specificity necessary to explaining the generation of these forms, as well as their dynamic implications in the later development of National Socialism and its modes of practice. A heavy emphasis on the anti-feminine to the neglect of antisemitism, as well as a highly discursive editorial approach, compound these problems. As Benjamin and Rabinbach note in a pointedly critical but appreciative foreword to the English edition of Volume 2, Theweleit's work is best seen as a contribution to the "social-psychology of male sovereignty" (in Theweleit, 1989/2:xiii).

and "functional" approaches to the formation of Nazi genocidal policy might yet be found by exploring the psychological dimensions of Nazism as a "political religion."⁵

The recourse to these three domains—those of literature, psychology and religion—reflects a common tendency to regard the symbolic as if it were relegated to select dimensions of human experience or to forms of cultural production in which its workings appeared obvious. Such assumptions approach cultural symbolism in a relatively isolated and fragmentary manner, making it nearly impossible to conceptualize the means whereby the various domains of social life are interrelated. The self-evident resort to the psychological only reinforces the shortcomings of this approach. Generated by the assumption of the Holocaust's ultimate "irrationality,"⁶ it hazes cultural boundaries while reducing the formative dynamics of social experience—and their practical expressions—to inexplicable or ambiguous products of the human psyche. Similarly, the emphasis upon

⁵The approach to Nazism as a "political religion" is evident in Uriel Tal's essays, which Friedländer cites (Tal, 1980; 1981). Tal's is basically an interpretive exercise within the sociology of religious ideas and philology, placing a heavy emphasis on direct or disguised borrowings by Nazi ideologists from Christian theological sources. It bears little resemblance (as Friedländer seems to have implied) to modern structuralism. The Jew as "symbol" is treated here essentially as an isolated element of direct semantic reference, and does not articulate with a theory of signs as elements within systems of signification, or with the implications of the latter for the construction of the social world (see Giddens, 1979:107-8). In addition, Tal's notion that traditional forms of religion were more or less consciously "transferred" to the political sphere in Nazism (see Tal, 1981:51) obscures the fact that all modern systems of political economy are structured implicitly as symbolic systems, the terms of which must be identified, whatever the disguising tendencies of secularization and modern rationalist ideology.

⁶An article by Seeskin (1988) exemplifies, in broad terms, the epistemological limits of the psychologicistic dichotomy between the "rational" and the "irrational." These limits are not idiosyncratic of any single individual approach, of course, but are a culturally-embedded phenomenon of modern intellectual discourse itself (see Foucault, 1980; Kuhn, 1962; Stocking, 1968; Lukacs, 1971). Curiously, even the anthropologist Louis Dumont founders on this ingrained bourgeois dichotomy when he turns away from India (1970a) to consider Nazism. In these writings Dumont puts aside his own universally-valid insight (so important to the present analysis) that individual being is constituted within a hierarchically-encompassing world of social meaning, a fact which the dichotomy of rationality/irrationality obscures. Invoking instead his own sociocentric dichotomy of traditional "holistic" and modern "individualistic" societies, Dumont assigns Nazism (a variant of "totalitarianism") to the latter, reducing it to little more than a set of relatively empty ideas imposed violently upon an atomized society for the sake of power alone (Dumont, 1970b). If there is any meaningful element here, it is that of an underlying "individualistic" principle which operates as a kind of destructive, motivating drive. The revised versions of this argument (essentially a rather rarified treatment of Hitler's beliefs) do not alter its basic premises significantly (see Dumont, 1977:12; 1986:149-179).

religion tends to reduce the practical expressions of ideology to the consequences of "beliefs" that are consciously held (and often cynically manipulated), an assumption which undercuts our capacity to relate the problem of consciousness to the practical and taken-for-granted dimensions of "lived experience" within which it is formulated (see Comaroff, 1985:4; Giddens, 1979:183; Bourdieu, 1977).

The Postmodernist Turn: The "Limits of Representation"

The most recent interdisciplinary attempt to grapple with the conundrum posed by the Holocaust, although argued in a stimulating and highly nuanced manner, tends to reproduce many of these same assumptions. This is made evident in a recent essay collection, the title of which was chosen to characterize the current state of discourse: *Probing the Limits of Representation* (see Friedländer, 1992). Despite some protestations to the contrary (see pp.2-3), portraying the Holocaust as lying at or beyond the limits of "representation" comes perilously close once again to a categorical representation of the Holocaust as a *Mysterium* that exceeds the human capacity to represent *per sé*, and not simply the tools of conceptualization and analysis currently at our disposal. This precarious position is reflected in David Carroll's foreword to Jean-François Lyotard's "Heidegger and 'the jews' " (1990), from which Saul Friedländer, the anthology's editor, quotes in order to convey "precisely what is at stake":

We are required to judge the philosophical, literary, political, historical and moral effects of the different ways of talking or not talking about "that" [the Shoah] and yet we do not have the systems of belief or knowledge, the rules, the historical certainty or the philosophical or political concepts necessary to derive or determine judgement. If for Lyotard (and Kant), the lack of determining criteria characterizes the political and the aesthetic "fields" in general, this indeterminacy has special significance when it comes to the Shoah, this limit case of knowledge and feeling, in terms of which all such systems of belief and thought, all forms of literary and artistic expression, seem irrelevant or even criminal. This does not diminish the role of the critical faculty but on the contrary makes it all the more crucial and necessary (Carroll, in Friedländer, 1992:6).

Given the exigencies of this position, it is not surprising that at this advanced point in the study of the Holocaust the "representations" in question are not so much those indigenous to Nazi Germany as those secondary re-presentations through which historical narratives (along with aesthetic works) attempt to convey the significance of the Holocaust in some or all of its complex dimensions.

While accepting some of the most valuable contributions of current postmodernist thinking on this issue, many of the participants in this discussion argue rigorously against its more extreme positions. In his masterful introduction, Friedländer situates himself amongst those who are critical; at the same time he offers a particularly balanced summation of the arguments involved (see Friedländer, 1992:1-21; cf. Himmelfarb, 1994). As might be expected, the starting point for this debate is provided by the language of literary deconstructionism, with its "rejection of the possibility of identifying some stable reality or truth beyond the constant polysemy and self-referentiality of linguistic constructs" (Friedländer, 1992: 4-5; cf. White, in Friedländer, pp.37-53). The subjectivist exponents of this position extend this language now to historical narratives of the Holocaust. Given the shifting and fragmentary nature of the representational process itself as well as the fundamental intractability which the Holocaust presents to human comprehension, these narratives are assumed inevitably to be partial in their explanatory capabilities, regardless of their analytical ambitions or the nature of the models they articulate. They are treated, accordingly, as competitive "texts," replete with the epistemological and personal biases that are implicit within their authors' differing approaches and biographical relationships to the problem at hand. The position taken here is similar, of course, to certain postmodernist critiques within anthropology, which treat traditional ethnographies as tendentious and overly-homogenizing "texts" through which the "reality" of the non-Western "Other" is constructed—and all for the purpose of ethnocentrically reproducing bourgeois society itself (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: xiii). Although easily taken to excess, this kind of

epistemological self-reflection—by no means alien to the present analysis, as we already have seen—obviously has something important to offer, given the enduring difficulties which an explanation of the Holocaust has presented, as well as the dangers posed by its potentially promiscuous appropriation for a multitude of artistic programs and hidden ideological purposes.

However, despite its supposed "openness" to "what cannot yet be formulated in decisive statements, but merely sensed" (Friedländer, 1992:5), the postmodernist treatment of the Holocaust, with its requirement of interpretive multivocality, turns out to be part of the very problem it seeks to "represent." This stems from the nature of the Holocaust itself as, arguably, the first fully "postmodern" experience of contemporary Western society. As we will explore more fully later, National Socialism performed a brutal symbolic transposition by bringing the quintessentially modern forms of industrial genocide to bear upon the Jew as the living embodiment of modernity in its most alienating dimensions. However, instead of using these forms to transcend the atomizing effects that such alienation was felt to engender, what Nazism actually did was shatter modernity itself. Self-confidence in the progressive rationality and invincible scientific prowess of the civilizing process was replaced with shock over the horror which the modern world had generated, as well as a sudden sense of helplessness over the apparently ineffectual and fragmentary nature of human understanding (cf. Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972 [1944]). Auschwitz was thus perceived almost immediately as lying beyond "the limits of scientific explanation. . . too close and too overwhelming to be studied *sine ira et studio*" (Dahrendorf, 1969:355-6).

The current postmodernist approach seems itself an advanced reaction to this loss of a sense of wholeness. Rather than seeking to account for the Holocaust in a fundamental manner, it fully embraces the fragmentary nature of modern experience in the face of the catastrophe, speciously rejecting any attempts at comprehensive explanation as fascistic in

their drive for holism (see Lyotard, 1988, 1990; cf. Friedländer, 1992:5). This implicitly moralizing position, ironically, is shared by at least one intriguing exponent of deconstructionist anthropology (see Taussig, 1987; cf. Kapferer, 1988:94). At its most extreme, this relativistic approach becomes lost in the epiphenomenal "textuality" of the enterprise of explanation, with its reference to (or appropriation of) literary forms and devices. In the process it also risks reducing the social and empirical reality that lies behind its tendentious narratives—that is, the mystifying and brutal forms of social action through which Nazi genocide itself was constituted—to little more than literary texts themselves (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: xiv, 14). Ironically, by so threatening to deconstruct the Holocaust's "irreducible reality" along with the methods used to "represent" it (Vidal-Naquet, 1992; cf. Ginzburg in Friedländer, 1992:86; Friedländer, 1992:8), it is the most extreme of postmodernist approaches which bears the potential of providing fascism with a measure of triumph. This is because it projects its own decentering epistemological agenda no less sociocentrically onto the social worlds it would analyze than do those explanatory modes which it seeks to counter (see Kapferer, 1988). It thereby prevents us from extracting the "truth" about the Holocaust—something which in turn undermines our capacity to refute the meanings which the Nazi perpetrators assigned to their own genocidal program.

The Historical Dynamics of Signifying Practice

As usual, Friedländer is among the most discerning critics of this tendency. Despite the elusive and fragmentary nature of the Holocaust, he writes, there remains a tenacious sense that the "event, perceived in its totality, may signify more than the sum of its components" (see Friedländer, 1992:3). As this implicit appeal to the level of the *Gestalt* suggests, the phenomenon of symbolism (as well as the multiple forms of representation and action through which it is embodied) requires a far more implicit and—*pace* postmodernism—

holistic approach than that reflected in the range of perspectives discussed so far. In order to integrate analytically the intentions of National Socialist actors and the structures of state and society with the distinctive forms within which both were embedded, it is necessary to focus in a unified manner on the dynamics of signification as intrinsic to the social process itself. This holds whether these are expressed generatively in overt ideological systems and textual forms, in the cultural construction of social identity and the shaping of psychodynamics, or in the structuring of relations of power and production. Indeed, what is needed is a synthetic method of cultural analysis that fully acknowledges the profundity of the symbolic construction of social reality—a process which is both *non-rational* and *systematic*—by emphasizing the *meaningful constitution of social relations* at their most basic level. This method is realized analytically by exploring the objectification of that generative process in the historically-specific, meaningfully-interrelated forms and practices that make it possible for sociocultural systems (however more or less cohesively they may be defined) to reproduce themselves and their human agents while transforming over time (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Bourdieu, 1977; Comaroff, 1985; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991; Foucault, 1977, 1978; Giddens, 1979, 1987; Munn, 1974, 1986; Ortner, 1984; Williams, 1977).

Although by no means universal in its influence, this practice-oriented approach to symbolic meaning has moved increasingly to the cutting edge of anthropology in the years since the present analysis was first formulated (see Ortner, 1984; cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991:13-39). And of course it is within the anthropological mainstream that the study of sociocultural symbolism has long received its most thorough exploration. Considering the use of the term "representation" in the historiographical debate just examined, then, it may seem curious, at least to anthropologists, that these interdisciplinary discussions show little awareness of the manner in which such concepts are articulated in anthropological theory and practice. In fact there is little indication here of the existence of

anthropological perspectives or their possible relevance to a study of the Holocaust at all beyond an occasional reference, perhaps, to Geertz's by now-classical notion of "thick description."⁷

Of course, this lacuna may not be so surprising after all. To whatever extent anthropological approaches may have had an increasingly stimulating cross-disciplinary effect in recent years, for some of those turning their attention to the Holocaust—and surely they are not alone—anthropology presumably still conjures up images of traditional, small-scale societies located in third world contexts and analyzed in terms that are essentially ahistorical. On the other hand, even among anthropologists the capacity of the discipline to analyze as complex and "home-grown" a problem as that of the Holocaust is by no means obvious—and the effect of certain postmodernist criticism upon the discipline probably does not help build confidence (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). Indeed, as indicated above, it might even oppose any systematic attempt at explanation as being ideologically misguided, although it *could* contribute further to an examination of the presuppositions social scientists bring to those aspects of their own societies which perplex them the most (see Taussig, 1987; Geertz, 1988; Clifford, 1988; cf. Kapferer, 1988).

In any event, the shift in focus among anthropologists to the problems of modern Western society, itself a "postmodern" turn in the broadest sense, is relatively recent. Beyond the analysis of contemporary phenomena, these studies are still struggling, if with increasing success, to cope theoretically and empirically with the challenge of explaining

⁷A large number of the contributors to this volume, of course, are highly sophisticated exponents of cultural-historical and culture-critical analysis. However, see Volkov (1978b) for an admirable early attempt by a historian to apply notions of culture—in particular, Geertz's 1964 essay on ideology as a "cultural system" (in Geertz, 1973:193-233)—to the study of late nineteenth century German antisemitism, which she designates a "cultural code." Highly nuanced and suggestive though Geertz's hermeneutical model is, the definitions Volkov borrows, as well as her method of application, have their limitations, especially when seen in the light of later developments in anthropological theory (see Ortner, 1984:129-30). Thus Volkov treats "culture" in vague and somewhat reified terms as identifiable "beliefs, ideas and styles of life and thought" (1978b:32) that are accepted or rejected, as opposed to embedded relations of signification which may never "attain the level of discourse" (Bourdieu, 1977:87; cf. Comaroff, 1985:5) but which are articulated nonetheless in a variety of overt, formally classifiable symbolic forms and practices.

how symbolic forms and practices are generated historically and transform over time. This process has been sped along by, among others, the example of the English cultural marxist tradition, with its sophisticated articulation of a Gramscian notion of hegemony and its sensitivity to the Frankfurt School's culture-critical style (see Thompson, 1963; Williams, 1977; cf. Gramsci, 1971; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991; Hall, 1986; Lears, 1985), as well as by cultural histories in the manner of Foucault (1977, 1978). Anthropologists are also joined in this endeavor to some extent by the left-oriented German trend toward *Alltagsgeschichte*, or the historical analysis of "everyday life" (see Rosenhaft, 1987; cf. Medick, 1987; Sabeian, 1984; Hsia, 1988; Peukart, 1982), although this approach is not unproblematic in its more mainstream applications to the Nazi era, as the recent German *Historikerstreit* ["historians' dispute"] brought out (see Broszat and Friedländer, 1988; cf. LaCapra in Friedlander, 1992:120-27).⁸ Of course, anthropologists themselves are not necessarily exempt from the underlying assumption of the Holocaust's incomprehensibility—although, like Hannah Arendt (1973 [1951]), they are probably aware, intuitively and by training, that its sociocultural bases must somehow ultimately be accessible to explanation. Those few contemplating the subject nonetheless may still be daunted, and not without good reason, by the nearly overwhelming sense of complexity that its historical explanation in particular poses to the techniques of symbolic analysis, especially considering the extent to which these were refined originally in contexts far afield from the kind of problems facing students of modern Western society and history.

⁸My analysis—and its precipitating impulse—long predates this dispute of 1986-7, set off by Habermas's concern that reinterpretive trends in conservative German historiography were implicitly apologetic. There is no space here to discuss this dispute, which shifted attention away from the issues of "intention" and "function" without helping to resolve the prior controversy (see Friedländer, 1988; Eley, 1988; Kershaw, 1989:168-191; Maier, 1988; Evans, 1989). As will become clear, however, my general argument works against any attempts to "normalize" Nazi German history or "relativize" the Holocaust for subtle hegemonic purposes, while at the same time setting the profound and brutal specificity of National Socialism and its genocide within a wider comparative, cross-cultural framework.

For this reason the following brief comments may help in guiding the application of anthropological and culture-historical models of symbolic meaning to the admittedly complex sociohistorical context of National Socialist Germany. In the first place, such meaningful (or "signifying") practice⁹ as that just described cannot be considered uni-directional or treated simply as a response to factors "external" to the meaningfully-constructed social order. To the contrary, such practice is a mutually-dependent product of social subjects struggling to reconcile the "dynamic tensions. . . which force themselves upon human experience" in the process of historically constituting a particular social world (Comaroff, 1985:6). While the sociocultural forms and meanings making up that world may seem to represent a particular hegemonic order in a merely secondary manner through the workings of metaphor, in fact they simultaneously constitute that order metonymically in the social world as well as within the subjective experience of social actors. They do so by way of mediating sign systems embedded within the shared, meaningful structures of daily practice, as well as by creating a seemingly natural and physically-sedimented environment within which social action takes place. By assimilating a particular symbolic construction of power and reality—one which, however, is never fully exclusive or without contradiction (Williams, 1977:113, 125)—actors, groups and classes make the dynamic, constitutive nature of the system their own. They thereby attain a creative capacity to reformulate (from the perspective of their own social positions) the very symbolic forms which have contributed to the construction of their subjective experience and tacit knowledge. Such a capacity allows also for challenges to the status quo and the creation of counter-hegemonies. And finally it is within the taken-for-granted framework

⁹Although the term "signifying practice" originated with the aesthetic studies of the Tel Quel group (see Hebdige, 1979:117-127), the broader use of the concept here constitutes part of the renewed attempt in social science and the humanities to overcome static and idealistic approaches to systems of symbolic meaning while at the same time avoiding the limitations of an overly deterministic materialism (see Comaroff, 1985:6, 265, n.2; Bourdieu, 1977; Ortner, 1984).

of meaningful practice that intentions are formulated, acted upon, and revised (see Munn, 1986:6; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:5; Giddens, 1979:39-40; 70). For this reason the analysis of concrete sociocultural forms and practices provides a means for assessing how human agents articulate with, influence or seek to redress the encompassing hegemonic orders within which they act, as well as for grasping the abstract structuring principles which allow for the reproduction and transformation of the sociocultural order as a whole.

Within the context of this approach, the textual and aesthetic representations indigenous to National Socialism must be treated as but two rich modes of cultural expression amongst a wider array of historically-generated, meaningfully-interrelated symbolic forms and practices—including images, narratives, formulaic processes, institutional forms, epistemologies, spatial constructs and otherwise experientially-inscribed meanings—through which a specific hegemonic construction of sociocultural reality is both embodied and lived. Postmodernist qualms about objectivity notwithstanding, these elements constitute a corpus of phenomena which comprise an ethnographically- and historically-retrievable record, one that exists partially through, but also apart from the ethnographers and historians who select, order and examine them within the contexts of their own analytical "narratives."

Of course, not all cultural meanings, forms and practices are fully integrated into the hegemonic. Some contribute, if often in a partially-encompassed manner, to competing constructions of power, value and reality, while others co-exist but do not challenge, thereby managing to escape the hegemonic altogether (cf. Gramsci, 1971; Williams, 1977). As Comaroff & Comaroff remind us (1991:23, 27), this "fluidity" is intrinsic to a definition of the hegemonic itself as an historically-contingent "modality" drawn from a wider "field" of cultural meanings and experience, thereby generating a social reality which, although taken-for-granted, is nonetheless contestable. As will become apparent in the course of this study, this is especially so for the kinds of complex sociohistorical

contexts to which Germany belongs, regardless of whether one focuses in upon the early modern period, the *Kaiserreich*, or the era of National Socialism. After all, these were social worlds possessing not one, but multiple centers and peripheries (cf. Shils, 1975:3-16). The latter existed within a complex and by no means seamless hierarchical structure of power and society, struggling along its historic route from feudalistic fragmentation to the obsessive, uncompromising holism of the Third Reich. They were also worlds of divergent social experience, colored by the contradictions inherent in the differing perspectives and interests of estate and class, of rural and urban life, as well as the disjunctures generated by regional, ethnic, and religious diversity, along with those of gender and linguistic dialect. To these varieties of social experience and shifting points of reference might also be added, depending upon the kind of problem being analyzed, such factors relevant to phenomenologists as the diverging sociotemporal viewpoints of differing cohorts and generations (see Schutz, 1972 [1932]; Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Most, if not all of these 'lifeworlds' overlap to various extent, finding expression ultimately in the workings of the hegemonic—that is, in the means through which the hegemonic shifts in response to the pressures it must bear in coping with, repressing or accommodating the diversity, contradiction and challenge which this complex mosaic presents to a taken-for-granted, but implicitly interest-laden, construction of reality. Without losing focus, a sociohistorical analysis of the symbolic forms and practices contributing to the generation of any one phenomenon must at least be aware of the shifting character of the hegemonic in its many dimensions over time in order to provide an account that is as nuanced as possible while being specially tuned, of course, to the particular requirements of the problem being analyzed.

It is this multivocal, unfolding context of meaning and action—this flexible, structuring backdrop—which provides the framework within which social consciousness emerges and intentions (always less-than-fully conscious of that backdrop), are formulated. Indeed, the

problem of intentionality brings us back to the terms of the still unresolved historiographical controversy that Tim Mason conveyed. In attempting to comprehend the most basic underlying problems of Nazism—in particular the immediate manner in which the so-called "Final Solution" emerged (see Browning, 1985)—historians and political scientists within the last two decades have tended to focus upon the process of policy formation itself. As mentioned earlier, this explanatory effort has consisted essentially of a struggle to adjudge the relative importance of overt intentions as opposed to structural factors in the generation of policy, or to somehow strike a balance between the two.¹⁰ As the previous argument has implied, however, the process of policy formation is one which is *internal* to the encompassing, meaningfully-structured sociocultural context that comprised the "Third Reich." For this reason the process of policy formation ultimately cannot be explained without recourse to the wider framework of meaningful practice within which it unfolded.

The question of human agency in Nazi political contexts thus becomes but part of a wider anthropological analysis of the significance of Nazi antisemitism and the genocidal practice in which it culminated. My main purpose in this dissertation, accordingly, will be to employ a dynamic sociocultural approach to symbolic meaning in an attempt to provide the boundaries of that wider explanation. I do so by way of an analysis which expands upon Nazism's essentially "messianic" character, not in terms of "political religion," however, but in the context of an applied cross-cultural approach to millenarianism. Such a study must explain how and why antisemitism came to play so central a role in the Third Reich's millenarian project of social transformation. This in turn requires a complex analysis of the intermeshed symbolic constitution of the body, space and time in

¹⁰See n.2 and n.3, above. Also compare Mason, 1981; Broszat, 1970, 1977; Mommsen, 1976, 1986; Hildebrand, 1981; Bracher, 1976; Fleming, 1984; Browning, 1985; Dawidowicz, 1975; Jäckel, 1981; Hillgruber, 1972; Adam, 1972; Schleunes, 1970.

relationship to the pejorative construction of the Jew, and in dialectic with transformations in German political economy over the long transition from feudalism to a crisis-ridden capitalism and its fascist "solution." More specifically, it requires a consideration of how the cultural transformation implied in Nazi genocide relates to Nazism's wider transformative pursuits and programs. Finally, in order to transcend the dichotomy of "intention" and "function," it must also provide space within which to conceptualize the process whereby an ever-radicalizing antisemitism articulated with the polycentric political structure of the Nazi state.¹¹

NAZISM AS A MILLENARIAN MOVEMENT OF SYMBOLICALLY-STRUCTURED SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The practice of genocide was the most instrumental expression of the attempt by National Socialists to transform society along racist, social Darwinist and eugenical lines so as to realize their vision of the Aryan *Volk* Community and its "Thousand Year Reich."

As the collective terms of this radical transformative drive (as well as its ideological expression) suggest, Nazism can best be understood as a form of millenarianism. Despite any appearances to the contrary, it shares the fundamentals of that phenomenon with like movements the world over, regardless of whether these occur in simple or complex, traditional or capitalist societies. The purpose of these movements—defined here not in terms of their overt ideological forms alone, but as *comprehensive, symbolically-structured attempts at social transformation* (cf. Newborn, 1990, 1980, 1977)—is to revitalize as a whole the basic reproductive modes and values of a particular sociocultural order threatened with disruption and collapse. Formulated often from the perspectives of socially marginal,

¹¹Discussions of Nazi polycentrism are integral to the debate over "intentional" and "function," but see (in addition to n.2, 3 and 10) Hüttenberger, 1976; Caplan, 1978, 1988; Hildebrand, 1981 as well as Nyomarkay, 1967; Peterson, 1969; Schweitzer, 1964. Above all, see Geyer's unusual and valuable attempt (1984) to provide a more positive structural dynamic than that characterizing previous approaches (cf. Broszat, 1970).

relatively deprived, and declass  elements—and frequently in cultures experiencing the disorientation caused by foreign intervention and capitalist encroachment (see Adas, 1979)—these efforts consist essentially of a concerted attempt to empower the alienated by creating, once and for all, an idealized, populist hegemony. This is accomplished through intensive formulaic actions intended either to harness the apparently superior symbolic forms and practices associated with the reproductive modes of an impinging sociopolitical system, or to free society from the negative conditions associated with indigenous but seemingly ineffectual or alienating modes of social reproduction and the individuals, groups or forces perceived as controlling them. Such efforts are often performed under the guidance of a charismatic leader or prophet. He or she articulates the aspirations of the alienated in the widest possible manner, identifying the source of society's ills and defining the terms of the salvatory process, while simultaneously reforging the bounds of the polity, the identities of its members, and the means whereby political relations are constructed.

The basic modes of social reproduction which millenarian movements seek to transform inevitably articulate in a fundamental manner with cultural constructions of self and community. For this reason millenarian movements—like other, narrower attempts at social engineering (see Goffman, 1961)—invariably implement efforts to reformulate the practical symbolic code that mnemonically structures the body and insures its capacity to move coherently through social space and time (Bourdieu, 1977:94; see also Comaroff, 1985; T. Turner, 1980). Such reformative practice is rarely limited to the body alone, however, but extends as well to the symbolically structured work-and-living environments which the body inhabits and with which its organizing principles are symbolically interwoven (Bourdieu, 1977:89). Crucial to this practice are programmatic efforts to visualize and instantiate the ideal social whole—what Burridge (1969) calls the "new heaven, new earth"—as well as to create the new men and women who will populate it.

This is accomplished for the social whole by projecting its intended form iconically (see Peirce, 1955:98-119) in terms of model-like, full-scale refigurations or symbolic miniaturizations of inhabited space, as well as through "ritual" performance by social actors (often occurring within the context of such reconstructed space), in which case the model is conveyed through its collective physical enactment. Other transformative efforts are also undertaken so as to bring about the new social order. These take the form of a wide range of ritualized behavior and ideologically-guided projects—including acts of ecstatic behavior and destruction—intended to free society of the social ills or evil forces which the movement and its charismatic leaders have identified, thereby paving the way for the millennium. The final method to realize the goal of millenarian transformation is through symbolic reformulations of the body itself, emphasizing its mediatory role as a metonym to be manipulated, *pars pro toto*, in order to reformulate the encompassing sociocultural order (see Comaroff, 1985:8; Newborn, 1980; V. Turner, 1967:392).

The present work is not the first to consider the implications of National Socialism as a form of millenarianism. The limitations of the concept as applied in the past, however, have tended to elicit partial and unsatisfactory results. Those deliberating the "millenarian" characteristics of Nazism (as well as studies of millenarianism in general) have tended to presume a fundamental break in the structures of traditional and modern societies. Collective movements of the former are assumed essentially to be "magico-religious" while those of the latter are either "political-revolutionary" (Hobsbawm, 1959; cf. S. Taylor, 1979) or, failing that, "irrational" expressions of a "collective psychopathology" (Cohn, 1970) generating forms anomalous to the structures of modern society (Friedländer, 1989:31). There also has been a tendency to focus on ideological forms alone within a relatively narrow Christian millennialist tradition (cf. Cohn, 1970; Rhodes, 1980; Tal, 1980, 1981). Barkun's brief treatment of Nazism (1974) is a notable exception, appearing within a comparative social-psychological study that strives—like Adas's excellent

comparative socio-historical analysis (1979)—to transcend the compartmentalizing limits of traditional approaches. As these works indicate, however, the problems with the concept of millenarianism are not limited to the Nazi case. Even those ground-breaking anthropological studies of millenarianism which were keenly attuned to issues of culture in traditional third-world contexts (for example, Burrige, 1969; Lawrence, 1964; Wallace, 1956; Thrupp, 1962; Worsley, 1968; Wilson, 1973) failed, as do the former studies, to articulate systematically a dynamic model of the actual symbolic transformative structures which *underlie* attempts to construct a "new man" and which shape the intensive drive to create an idealized, populist hegemony (cf. Newborn, 1990, 1980, 1977). It is these transformative processes, however, which comprise the essence of millenarianism, as some recent studies are beginning to explore (see *Oceania* 63:1 [1992]). For this reason emphasis upon the common, underlying symbolic dynamics of millenarian transformation, rather than upon overt differences in ideological or political-economic form, can lend new power to the exploration of Nazism as millenarian, without foundering upon the seeming contradictions engendered by the watershed of modernity. It is these dynamics which the present analysis of National Socialism and the Holocaust attempts to bring out, specifically as they articulate with the symbolic forms of German capitalism—those of commodity fetishism—in fascist transformation.

Like other forms of social protest and reformation, millenarian practice takes on special characteristics in cultures confronted with the novel or unsettling effects of capitalism. Among traditional cultures facing the inroads of capitalism through colonial domination or an encroaching world market, the phenomenological effects of commoditization are commonly experienced in terms of profound alienation. The same is the case for those cultures reacting, like Germany, to the dissonance caused by their own uneven but essentially internal process of extended capitalist transformation (see Brown, 1985 [1959]; J. Schneider, 1989).

The reasons for this alienation can be attributed to the dynamics governing the transition from "gift" production and exchange (Mauss, 1966) to the production and circulation of commodities (Marx, 1967). Although the boundaries between these two forms in reality are ambiguous (see Baudrillard, 1981; Appadurai, 1986), many social scientists nonetheless treat the shift between them as ideal-typical of the fundamental structural differences that hold between traditional and modern capitalist societies (see Gregory, 1982). In gift (e.g., handicraft) production the person is not alienated from the products of his labor. To the contrary, these products circulate as "total social phenomena" (Mauss, 1966) bearing intimations of the producing self as part of an integrated moral fabric of social meanings and face-to-face relations. In commodity production the products of one's labor continue inevitably to bear intimations of the self. But in this case these are intimations of a self reduced to the form of a detached and manipulable quantity, one that circulates without control within a seemingly natural and autonomous market devoid of overt meaningful structure (see Ollman, 1971). In cultures habituated to capitalism, the implicit symbolic logic of commodity relations is usually experienced as natural and taken-for-granted. However, in contexts where the advent of capitalism is experienced as disorienting and disruptive, the alienating dimensions of this logic are often "driven to the surface" and cast in malevolent, personalized form. This frequently takes the shape of a evil entity secretly manipulating the abstract forms of capitalism, especially money, in order to drain its hapless laboring victims of their life blood and identities (see Taussig, 1980; cf. Comaroff, 1985:174; Nash, 1979; Brown, 1985 [1959]; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1990; Hansen, 1988:196-7; Burrige, 1969:41-6).

This was the case for Nazi Germany, where the Jew was focused upon as a biological parasite of enormous, hidden power, secretly dominating the German and disintegrating his collective racial health by manipulating the abstract and engulfing powers of capitalist exchange. Defined in dialectic with the so-called "Aryan," both of these constructions were

fully reified in bodily form. Blond, blue-eyed, light-skinned and hairless, the German was seen as an organic extension of the naturally-productive world within which he labored in order to enhance the statue-like hardness, purity and balance that was his racial birthright. The Jew, in contrast, was dark and hairy, fatty and disproportionate. An alien entity within the body of the German *Volk*, his predatory modes of biological self-reproduction ranged from an arcane control of monetary relations to all forms of sexual predation, thereby permitting a comprehensive disintegration of the German racial body itself as well as its commoditized work-and-living environment.

This fateful symbolic construction of the Jew, as well as the associated forms of antisemitic practice to which he ultimately was subjected, had its sociogenesis in Lutheran models of the salvatory process. These were formulated in concert with, and as an attempt to shape, the profound transformations occurring in German political economy at the time of the Reformation. The counterpart to this salvatory process was the supposedly predatory demonism of Jewish economic parasitism. Indeed, as we shall see, the identification of the Jew with the figure of the Devil was integral to German antisemitism¹² during the rise of capitalism (see Trachtenberg, 1943; cf. Newborn, 1980), serving as a comprehensive objectification of the negative dimensions attendant to those transformations. The meanings implicit in this Lutheran dialectic of Christian and Jew were biologized and technologized in step with the emergence of modern capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Bein, 1964; Postone, 1980). This meant their assimilation first to physiological models of society, in which social contradictions were treated in terms of the differentiated body seeking to maintain itself in functioning

¹²The term "antisemitism"—or more usually, "anti-Semitism"—was actually coined in the late nineteenth century by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr as an ideologically-biased scientization of the prior "Jew-hatred" (*Judenhaß*) (see Marr, 1879). This coinage accompanied the transition of the former to full-fledged racism. My own use of the term here is less specific, however, and (in keeping with current popular usage) refers to anti-Jewish attitudes and practices regardless of time or place.

homeostasis (see Cooter, 1979; Foucault, 1975, 1977). In the proto-fascist context, however—one marked by the tensions of a "delayed" authoritarian statehood combined with an overly-rapid capitalization—the rising alienation of the lower middle classes along with an overall exacerbation of class conflict generated a mounting drive for Procrustean social integration. This served as part of a complex and unfolding attempt to reformulate the prevailing hegemonic order, first of the late *Kaiserreich*, and then of a crisis-ridden Weimar Germany (see Eley, 1980, 1986; Volkov, 1978; Field, 1981:262-276; Jochmann, 1971, 1976).

Under these circumstances the symbolic terms of the model became ever more radically scientized. The underlying realities of social contradiction were transposed into a social Darwinian vision of racial struggle—the unified German against the biological weakness of his own race as well as against the allegedly alien and disintegrative racial presence of the Jew, as cast in the malevolent master role of biological parasite and "world conspirator" (N. Cohn, 1966; see Mosse, 1964). Along with this came the perceived need for sociobiological interventions designed to solidify the German "Volkbody" (*der Volkskörper*)—no mere figure of speech, but for many a lived reality—and secure it in a state of perpetual homeostasis.

The overall meaningful framework structuring Nazi antisemitic practice was an ideologically-defined process which I term *antisemitic status reversal*—that is, the attempt to appropriate the Jew's negative power and transform its alienating effects through actions designed to reverse the Jew's alleged domination and enslavement of Germans. Indeed, the quintessence of the Nazi project was the attempt to encompass the alienating dimension of capitalism within the forms of a revived "organic" community, while simultaneously harnessing capitalism's technological prowess as a supposed extension of a natural, artisanal economy (cf. Rabinbach, 1976; Postone, 1980; Herf, 1984). The key to this inversionary process was the complementary transformation of the Jew—the malevolent

symbolic embodiment of exchange-relations in all of their most alienating dimensions—into a *generalized symbolic medium of social interaction* (see Parsons, 1963; T. Turner, 1968; Munn, 1974). As such the Jew represented a potent conflation of the gift and commodity, as it were, within a single fetishized form. At once both ideological and material, the symbolic medium of the Jew circulated as common property throughout Nazi German society. Its definition, manipulation and eventual disposal was subject, however, to an intense competition that helped coordinate the polycentric structure of the Nazi state while providing the ultimate focus of the millenarian labor through which German self and society was to be fundamentally reformulated. Indeed, as we shall see, the fetishized form of the Jew became for Nazi Germany a "total social phenomenon" such as Marcel Mauss had described for traditional societies (1966:1), one containing within it "all of the strands"—including the political and the economic—of which the Nazi social fabric was composed. The comprehensive source of Germany's ills, the Jew was also the master key to its ultimate salvation.

In accord with the vehement implications of this model, the supposed Manichaeic struggle of Aryan and Jew found specific expression under National Socialism in an ever-more systematic effort to subjugate, constrict, and exhaustively exploit the Jews of Germany and Europe (see Hilberg, 1985 [1961]; Adam, 1972). This comprehensive program was formulated in dialectic with a more diverse and specialized set of undertakings designed to enhance the embodied German self and the social space it inhabited. Taken as a whole, this multifaceted program of Aryan racial regeneration included, first, the ruthless repression and punitive "re-education" of political opponents. This meant in particular those of the left wing and organized working class who had supposedly been misled by Communist propoganda, an alleged tool for the pursuit of "Jewish" interests.¹³ It also

¹³Although I emphasize the connection between antisemitism and the alienating terms whereby the phenomenological forms of capitalism were experienced in Nazi Germany, I am also attentive to the role of anti-communism in Nazi antisemitic ideology (see chapter 12). Contrary to frequent assumption, this

included all forms of racial hygiene and political discipline, from thorough-going racial legislation to sports and indoctrination in schools, workplaces and training camps. Efforts to eradicate the alienating effects of a supposedly Jewish-dominated capitalism upon the German landscape entailed the spatial and architectonic transformation of city, town and countryside; the draining of moors and the construction of a unifying network of *Autobahnen*; the "beautification" of factories and their surrounding settlements, and the "germanization" of the conquered *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe. Further eugenicist programs included selective breeding in the SS *Lebensborn* institutions; the sterilization and "euthanasia" of German and other so-called "defectives"; the subjection of non-conformists and socially marginal elements ("asocials") to brutal disciplinary labor; the incarceration and murder of homosexuals as alleged underminers of German reproductive strength; the genocide of Gypsies as a supposedly alien if petty criminal element; and the ruthless exploitation and decimation of racially "inferior" Slavs (see Burleigh & Wippermann, 1991; Proctor, 1988; Müller-Hill, 1988; Koehl, 1957; Berenbaum, 1990; cf. Milton, 1990).

These sociobiological interventions reached their culmination in the death camps of the so-called "Final Solution," located within the eastern margins of the alleged German *Lebensraum*, or "Living Space." Here the Jews of Europe, as the supposedly paramount agents of German racial decline, became the ultimate focus of a murderous, dialectical labor designed to bring the expanding *Volkkörper*, and the millennium itself, into perfect and enduring form.

In the following chapters we shall proceed to examine the extraordinary and insidious forms in which that labor was embodied, in hopes of thereby revealing the tacit cultural principles which underlay the Nazi practice of genocide (cf. Newborn, n.d. [1990; 1986]).

aspect did *not* constitute a separate agenda for Nazism. Underlying *both* Nazi anti-capitalism and anti-communism was the common symbolic role of the Jew as an alleged conspirator manipulating both world finance as well as ideologies and systems attractive to the common worker in order to achieve Jewish aims of domination and exploitation.

THE DEATH CAMPS

Indeed, it is the form of the death camps themselves which comprises our ultimate goal of analysis. Beginning with the opening of Chelmno in December 1941, these camps eventually numbered six in total, all of them erected by the Nazis on conquered Polish soil. Of these six, Auschwitz—the ultimate centerpiece of the so-called "Final Solution"—might seem to provide the most logical focus of analysis. Ideally situated to funnel in the Jews of Europe from every direction by rail, Auschwitz was eventually expanded in the form of the massive Birkenau death camp so as to take over the "task" of genocide after most of the other death camps had been liquidated. To be sure, both Auschwitz and Chelmno will be considered with varying emphasis in the course of this analysis, as will the prior operations of the SS mobile killing units at the Eastern front, as well as the remarkably condensed expression given the labor of genocide within the elaborate photo album prepared by SS Major-General Jürgen Stroop on the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. Nonetheless, it is in the analysis of the industrialized processes of mass murder as embodied within the three death camps of the so-called *Aktion Reinhard*—Belzec, Sobibor and especially Treblinka—that this anthropological study of genocide finds its fullest expression. Unlike Auschwitz and Maidanek, which evolved out of previously existing concentration camps and continued to maintain an enormous slave-labor component, the camps of the *Aktion* (or "Operation") *Reinhard* were constructed specifically and exclusively for the immediate mass annihilation of Jews. Small in scale and yet intensively structured and elaborated in both social, cultural and architectonic terms, these "pure" death camps provide a dramatic overview of the form of Nazi genocide while revealing its underlying cultural implications in the most emphatic and accessible manner. Rather than providing a complete ethnography of these camps, however, the analysis located toward the conclusion of this

study will focus-in upon the actual transformative processes that lay at their core, as well as the cultural forms in which these processes were embedded.

"Operation Reinhard" was named retrospectively to honor Reinhard Heydrich, mastermind of the "Final Solution," following his assassination in May of 1942. Beginning actually the previous March with the opening of Belzec (construction had begun in November of 1941), three camps were erected with the express purpose of murdering Poland's Jews, most of the latter concentrated in ghettos throughout the Nazi-administered General Government and numbering approximately 2,300,000. According to Nazi ideology, it was this community which supposedly comprised Judaism's biological core as well as the ever-renewable source of its alleged malignancy; for this reason the Nazis accorded the annihilation of Polish Jewry, more so than that of any other Jewish community in Europe, the highest priority. As the "Final Solution" gathered momentum, however, the camps of the *Aktion Reinhard* also received transports of victims from the separately-administered Bialystock and Minsk regions as well as from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Holland, Greece and Yugoslavia. Termed the "largest single massacre action of the Holocaust" (Arad, 1987:377), Operation Reinhard lasted twenty-one months, concluding with the demolition of Sobibor in November 1943. Nearly 2,000,000 men, women and children had been murdered, with at least 2,000 Gypsies also counting amongst the victims (p.153).

Efficient thought they were, the camps of Operation Reinhard were not stark sites of execution. To the contrary, they were organizationally complex, their physical form, social arrangement, and the structure of the killing process itself culturally elaborated, often in a manner nothing short of the macabre. Although a portion of these elaborations was undertaken for the purpose of managing the impressions and reactions of incoming victims, this ostensibly mechanical objective by no means exhausts the range of meaning intrinsic to the camp's form, function and ideological purpose. Indeed, as we shall see later, the camp

as a whole was structured, implicitly as well as overtly, in terms drawn from a wider kit of Nazi German sociocultural meanings and practices, particularly those associated with the negative cultural construction of the Jew.

The most extensive of these camps was Treblinka. Capable of "sluicing" as many as 15,000 Jews through its killing installation per day (see Arad, 1987:121), Treblinka had been purposely "beautified" by the SS to express the "importance" of their "task" as well as streamline its operation. The result resembled a neat SS factory settlement of about 45 acres, its killing installations supplemented with colorful flowerbeds, a guardhouse in handcrafted Tyrolean wood-cut style and even a zoo with a fancy birchwood gazebo, all of it ultimately dedicated to the systematic industrial processing of its ideologically-designated victims. By-products of this processing—the SS termed their recovery *Werterfassung*, or "value-extraction"—included all manner of household goods, valuables, personal and even bodily effects, from life's savings, baby carriages, silken undergarments and prosthetics to dental gold and women's hair. These "values" were meticulously stored, inventoried and then circulated by the SS amongst the agencies of state, including the Economic Ministry, the *Reichsbank*, German welfare organizations and the Hitler Youth; items were also distributed to private industry as raw material, sold or transferred to SS combat troops and the *Wehrmacht*, or given away as gifts. The actual quantities wrested by the SS from their Jewish victims are inestimable, considering the extent of SS embezzlement; an official inventory of January 1944 listed the value at nearly 180,000,000 RM, including currency from forty-eight different countries as well as 16,000 carats in diamonds and 2,910 kg of dental gold melted into bars. During 1942 alone, when the majority of deported Jews were dispatched to the *Aktion Reinhard* camps rather than to Auschwitz, a total of 825 freight cars loaded with textiles was reported shipped, including hundreds-of-thousands of complete men's, women's and children's outfits as well as 270,000 kg. of bed feathers and 3,000 kg. of women's hair (Arad, 1987:160-1).

While the basic steps in the death camp killing process are relatively familiar at least in broad terms, the actual reality of these camps, especially those of the *Aktion Reinhard*, is still little known. The following composite description—based partially on a crucial and well-known SS eyewitness account (the "Gerstein Report"), the cultural content of which will be fully analyzed for the first time in chapter 15—provides only a condensation of that incredible reality. Its purpose is to bring the ultimate analytical object of this study into focus and to help hold it in mind as we examine separately its constituent elements in subsequent chapters. Afterwards we will return again to the camps themselves, to see in greater detail how the strands of analysis converge to help explain the form and practice of genocide.

Bearing all of their belongings and valuables as instructed, deportees would arrive—usually after an extended, torturous journey in packed freight cars—to a false train station complete with *trompe l'oeil* clock and ticket windows as well as directional signs ("To Bialystock") and other printed instructions intended to generate the impression of a transit camp. To its incoming victims the camp as a whole resembled a hedged garden labyrinth—one to which the SS alone possessed the key—its perimeters and the fencing of its subdivisions all thickly interwoven with an ever-freshened green camouflage of pine branches and fir reaching from three to four meters in height. These subdivisions included the SS living camp (consisting of up to 35 SS and 130 Ukrainian guards); the so-called "ghetto" for the camp's enslaved Jewish maintenance workers (the latter numbering between 700 and 1000 in total); the "reception" camp; and the *Totenlager*, or killing installation, with its own sequestered slave contingent. At Treblinka the isolation of the *Totenlager* was additionally enhanced through use of a high concealing berm.

Leaving veritable mountains of luggage behind on the camp's "sorting square," the exhausted deportees, usually clinging to one another in family groups, would be instructed soothingly by the SS to prepare for showers prior to resettlement. Separated by sex, they

then would enter a long barrack with a series of tables, each manned by a different team of so-called *Arbeitsjuden* ("work-Jews") collecting a different article of clothing while the *Goldjuden* ("Gold-Jews") collected valuables. At the end of the barracks the women and girls, now naked, were diverted into a "barber" or "beauty" shop (the so-called *Friseur*) where their hair was rapidly shorn and stuffed into sacks for shipment to factories; here, too, they were forced to mount tables so as to have their body-openings searched for hidden valuables. Men, women and children were then regrouped and herded with whips into the "hose" (*Schlauch*), a narrow path—also called by the SS, derisively, the "road to heaven" (*Himmelfahrtalle*)—connecting the reception and killing areas. It was marked with the sign, *Zur Badeanstalt* ("To the Bathing Facility"). Fenced and camouflaged with branches, the "hose" made almost a 90 degree turn midpoint along its course, thereby preventing the death camp's disoriented victims from fully comprehending the nature of their destination. Beyond the fencing a small orchestra at times played sentimental German tunes so as to drown out the screams of those already in the gas chambers while keeping the SS and their Ukrainian auxiliary entertained.

Sheared and naked, the Jews were no longer persons but, in the words of the Treblinka camp commandant, "cargo" (*Ware*) (see Sereny, 1983:201, cf. 1980:223). Rounding the bend, deportees now were driven, breathless and terrified, into the gas chambers: a massive brick building with geraniums in urns on its stairs, a copper Star-of-David on its gable, and a synagogue ark-covering hung at its entrance-way, embroidered with the Hebrew words, "This is the gate through which the righteous pass." Along each side of the building's central hall were five gas chambers (ten in total) lined with white tile and equipped with false overhead pipes and shower-heads (the source of the gas); the air-tight doors were equipped with peep-holes for use by the SS. After the Jews had been packed in as densely as possible—infants were often stuffed between the ceiling and the heads of the adults to serve as chinking—gas from a diesel tank engine was pumped into the

chambers. Following the gassing (which could last anywhere from 15 to 40 minutes or more) cantilevered doors were swung open on the outside of each chamber, allowing the stiffened, soiled bodies to be separated and hauled out with hooks. Gold teeth were broken out of mouths by so-called "dentists" while body-openings were mined once again for precious stones. Corpses were then piled onto the *Rost*, or "grill"—an open-air furnace of red-hot iron rails laid out in a large pit—and systematically reduced to ash by the *Totenjuden* ("death-Jews") under SS direction. The ash was then sifted, mixed with sand and deposited in layers in ditches. These were eventually landscaped and planted with fir trees and lupine. Like other aspects of the death camp's operation, the SS had a special term for these ditches as well: they called them the "Kindergarten."

Following inmate revolts at Sobibor and Treblinka—at which point, in any event, these camps already had served their purpose—all three of them were liquidated. After ploughing under all surface traces of their existence, they were carefully camouflaged through landscaping with transplanted stands of pine trees and wild lupine, along with the erection of a farmhouse made to appear as if it had existed there for ages. A year later, having received the comprehensive inventory of processed values already mentioned, Heinrich Himmler, the *Reichsführer-SS*, replied in 1944 to SS and Police Leader Odilo Globocnik, his subordinate in charge: "I express to you my thanks and my acknowledgement for the great and unique services which you performed for the entire German people by carrying out Operation Reinhard. Heil Hitler!" (see Arad, 1987:375). Globocnik in fact already had offered an even more dramatic assessment of the significance of his "services" himself early on in the operation, at a point when bodies were still being buried rather than cremated. Asked if it were wise to leave such traces behind, Globocnik had replied, "Gentlemen, if there should ever come, after us, a generation so soft and weak-kneed that they do not understand our important task, then certainly all of National Socialism will have been in vain. On the contrary, in my view one ought to bury bronze

tablets stating that it was we who had the courage to carry out this great and vital work!" (*Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1953:189 [my translation]).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This, then, is the domain in which the "mystery of mass extermination" unfolded—one so unprecedented in nature and to outsiders so unimaginable in its contours that survivors found themselves referring to it afterwards as "another planet." A full accounting of the death camps does not end here, however. The preceding description only touches upon the cultural complexity of their physical form and division of labor. It says little of the gloating humor, the unmistakable *Schadenfreude*, which characterized all aspects of the killing operation. Neither does it recount the abusive rituals to which Jewish prisoners were subjected and the bizarre entertainments in which they were forced to participate—all opportunities whereby the SS further explored for themselves the meanings of genocide. Above all it provides no insight as yet into the symbolic nexus of meaning and practice within which the death camps and the Holocaust as a whole took shape.

Contextualizing Genocide

The attempt to reveal that nexus constitutes the main enterprise of the following chapters. In order to do so, it is necessary first to identify the basic constituent elements out of which the death camps are constructed, examining each of these intermeshed aspects separately in order to reveal its symbolic underpinnings as well as those specific ingredients which it contributes to the overall form and purpose of the camp. Building partially upon prior anthropological treatments of ritual, the death camp itself is approached as a sedimented assemblage of persons, specific practices, spatial constructions, institutional forms and associated cultural meanings drawn paradigmatically from various and more diffuse domains of social life. These constituent elements are combined in an innovative

manner to form a more powerfully integrated, hierarchically-encompassing whole (see Munn, 1974; see also Newborn, 1977, 1980; T. Turner, 1977a,b; V. Turner, 1969). Its purpose is to crystallize and thereby make accessible the basic reproductive and transformative processes of the wider society with which it exists in dialectic. The objectification and framing of these processes and their associated meanings in this manner allows in turn for their regulation or (as in instances of millenarianism) their potential reconstruction. In the case of Nazi Germany, the purpose of the death camps consists specifically of an attempt to harness and transform those basic sociocultural processes of German capitalism that were supposedly dominated by the Jew and implicated negatively in the construction of an alienated German self and social order.

The constituent elements making up the death camp can be subsumed most broadly under the following basic headings: 1) the Jew as an embodied German cultural category as well as its fundamental dialectical relationship to the German; 2) the industrial form of the killing process; 3) the encompassing institutional form of the "camp" itself; and finally, 4) the geo-political location of the camps in the east.

As we have already noted, it is the industrial form of the killing process—the mass production of death in factories—which lends the death camps their most fundamental characteristic. For this reason it is necessary to examine the forms and practices of work particularly as it relates to the ideologically-guided reconstruction of industrial labor and production in the Third Reich. This industrial component does not exist in isolation, however. It articulates with an encompassing, generic institutional form, that of "camp" itself (*das Lager*) as the paramount Nazi institution of social transformation. A wide range of such camps were used for the indoctrination and retraining of German citizens from all walks of life as well as for work programs and disciplinary incarceration. This aspect too must be examined, as well as, finally, the geo-political implications of the death camps as linchpins in what was a crucial aspect of Nazi Germany's core millenarian project: that of

"germanizing" its alleged eastern *Lebensraum*. The latter was to be accomplished through radical demographic programs, a racially-inspired "cultural" transformation of the landscape, and a subjugation of the indigenous Slavic population—a process which hinged as a whole upon the total prior elimination of the Jewish presence and the "danger" which the Jew allegedly embodied.¹⁴

Indeed, it was for this same purpose—to bring about the so-called "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem"—that all of the constituent elements of the death camp as enumerated above coalesced. As we will see, this "solution" took the form essentially of a murderous cultural transformation of the Jew for the purpose of wresting control over all that which he was made to signify under National Socialism. As the core element around which all else revolved, the Jew was the single most important defining component of the death camp. The basic forms and meanings of the constituent elements previously cited, in fact, ultimately were dependent upon the cultural construction of the Jew (and his dialectical relationship to the German) as it developed over the long transition from feudalism to capitalism and its fascist offshoot. Furthermore the pivotal importance of the Nazi construction of the Jew was not limited to the death camps alone. As we will see, antisemitism served as the orienting element within the wider ideological context of Nazi

¹⁴Although the so-called Nazi "euthanasia" program also provides a key component to the actual technological form and unfolding of the killing process, as I have written elsewhere (see Newborn, 1986a; cf. Klee, 1983; Hilberg, 1985), there is no space in the dissertation version of this manuscript to deal with this directly. However, this lacuna does not in fact alter the form and findings of the analysis. The Nazi targeting of the congenitally ill fits within the overarching framework of racial social transformation, as already indicated, within which the body itself played center role. It was the Jew, however, and not the congenitally ill, who constituted in Nazi ideology as well as in its practice the *comprehensive* sociobiological threat to the health of the "Aryan race," and whose elimination constituted a prerequisite for the millenarian transformation of Germany, even before mass killing in euthanasia institutions began. Such partial "cleansing" of the Aryan "Volk-body" of its own degenerative elements, already conveniently isolated within state-run institutions, would not permit the comprehensive transformation needed—but it did help provide the immediate inspiration for how to structure that broader undertaking once the "liberating" conditions of war had brought the mass of Eastern European Jewry under the Nazi sway. However, as we will see, it was the broader meaningful implications, forms and practices of German antisemitism within the overall context of the Nazi millenarian project which ultimately provided the most salient features to the construction of the Nazi genocidal process.

racism, its definition of Aryan identity, and its overall program to create a purified, organic *Volk* Community. Not surprisingly, it is therefore also linked dynamically to the definition, negotiation and disposal of power in Third Reich, a role which up till now has not been fully articulated.

For all of these reasons it is crucial before considering the other components of the death camp to examine the sociogenesis of the Jew as a German cultural category, establish its most basic characteristics, and elucidate the means whereby it articulated with the transformations in German political economy that culminated in fascism. In particular, it will be necessary to try and explain the significance of that aspect which, like the industrial quality of the death camps, provides antisemitism with its most essential and enduring character. This is the age-old identification of the Jew with money and its demonic manipulation for the purposes of parasitizing and dominating the Christian world. Although this demonized construction maintained in essence over the centuries, during the Nazi era it was transformed and intensified through the modern biologized terms of medical pathology and racial conspiracy. As we will see, the explanation of how this dimension of antisemitism articulates with the industrial form of genocide ultimately holds the key to solving the "mystery of mass extermination" and the secret of the Holocaust.

* * *

In order to explore these issues, this work has been divided into three broadly-defined time periods crucial to a sociohistorical understanding of the means whereby the Jew became lodged so pivotally in Nazism's millenarian program of social transformation. These are the late feudal and early modern period; the transition to modern capitalism in the nineteenth century; and finally, the Nazi era itself, which receives the greatest emphasis. For reasons of space, analytical focus and feasibility, however, this study does not promise a seamless historical narrative to connect these three time periods. Nor, in fact, does it deliver a general anthropology of German society over time (even if it does provide the

essential framework within which such a study for the Nazi period must be situated). Instead it identifies for each period case-study material that typifies, in a strategic but highly selective manner, the role and meaning of antisemitism as it transformed in tandem with changes in German political economy.

This long-range view is necessary to an understanding of the underlying symbolic significance of modern German antisemitism, as well as the confounding form of the genocidal policy which was its consequence. In his study of the Devil and commodity fetishism in South America, Michael Taussig has noted that "certain human realities become clearer at the periphery of the capitalist system, making it easier for us to brush aside the commoditized apprehension of reality" which characterizes our own, taken-for-granted understanding of social relations in modern capitalist societies (Taussig, 1980:10). The same holds for the late feudal and early modern periods in German history. During the latter period—so crucial to an understanding of the origins of modern German national consciousness—it is the epistemological presuppositions and symbolic terms of a precapitalist sociocultural order that are striving to comprehend the transformations engendered by an emerging capitalism. For this reason the structural implications of the emerging order—especially its alienating aspects—are still cast in rawly accessible symbolic terms. Later on, as the modern world comes to take the forms of capitalism for granted, these symbolic dimensions become progressively obscured by utilitarian and scientific-rationalist ideologies. It is therefore helpful to turn to this earlier period in order to clarify the implicit meanings of antisemitism as it shifts into its modern form.

As the prior statement should make clear, this attention to the implicit symbolic content of social relations is by no means teleological: this study does not hold the development of Nazism to be inevitable, nor does it view the forms of antisemitism as unchanging. To the contrary, the long-range view is designed to overcome as far as possible the unnecessary dichotomy between "continuity" and "discontinuity" that has long characterized

historiographical treatments of antisemitism, in which the effects of modernity are seen as merely exacerbating an age-old, cumulative process, or, conversely, as providing a fundamental break between pre-modern and modern forms (see Volkov, 1985). A context-sensitive approach is implemented instead, one which can identify those elements of antisemitism that prove enduring, while simultaneously showing how the phenomenological forms and social structural import of antisemitism changes over time. In addition the long-range view helps to fill in such older, psychologistic approaches to Nazi antisemitism as the "scapegoat" theory by providing the historically-conditioned cultural framework of meaning within which psychodynamics take on their social significance.

Accordingly, *Part One* of this study ("The Sociocultural Origins of Nazi Antisemitism") attempts to elucidate the symbolic meaning and pragmatic implications of antisemitism during the feudal and early modern period. This is accomplished by exploring the typifying role of the *Judensau* (or "Jew-sow"), a complex and long-lived antisemitic motif in German-speaking lands, the meaning of which has long remained obscure. After reviewing the multiple forms in which the *Judensau* has occurred over the ages, chapter 2 ("The Symbolic Underpinnings of German Antisemitism") reveals the significance of the pig as a polysemic symbolic category mediating the ambiguous and alienated relations that held between Christians and Jews during the feudal era. Chapter 3 ("The Jew, the Devil and Commodity Fetishism") then examines transformations in the form of this motif—in particular, the inclusion of a ritual murder component accompanied by the figure of the Devil—which help to reveal the visceral manner in which early modern antisemitic constructions articulated with the alienating dimensions of an emerging capitalism. The analysis is deepened in chapter 4 ("The Legacy of the Reformation") by considering the intensified role played by antisemitism in dialectic with the Lutheran construction of the body, work and salvation. Reference is made here to forms of status reversal and symbolic inversion that characterize both German antisemitic carnival traditions as well as Luther's

own programmatic approach to antisemitism. These meanings are contextualized fully in chapter 5 ("Antisemitism in Action: The Fettmilch Revolt") by examining the mediating role played by Lutheran antisemitism in the Fettmilch Revolt, a classic instance of popular agitation against vested authority in seventeenth century Frankfurt.

Part Two ("Antisemitism in the Transition to Modernity") explores the period of transition to a modern capitalist state, emphasizing the nineteenth century and the emergence of modern antisemitism. Chapter 6 ("The Rise of Organicism") examines, primarily through caricatures and texts, the means whereby the earlier symbolic construction of antisemitism secularized and biologized in step with the emergence of organicist models of society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The association of the Jew with bodily disorder, and the dialectical implications of this construction for the development of the modern German capitalist subject, is explored in particular by examining *schwarze Pädagogik* (or "black pedagogy"), the authoritarian German tradition of child socialization. This tradition is made accessible through an analysis of the classic German children's book, *Struwwelpeter*, as well as by reference to the notorious Schreber case. Chapter 7 ("The Biologization of the Jew") then shifts focus back to the Jew, showing the process whereby the Jew's demonic, fetish nature secularized. The reified equation of the Jew's biological form and analyzed, physiological processes with the anti-social dimensions of capitalist accumulation is explored. So too is the threat represented by his gradual emancipation, constructed as the dangerously inversionary release of the forces of unbridled capitalism from their former ghetto confines. Chapter 8 ("The Myth of Jewish World Conspiracy") explores the crystallization of modern antisemitic ideology in the late nineteenth century by analyzing the symbolic content of the original text which inspired the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and its racist theory of Jewish world conspiracy. As the pivotal force lying between the supernatural and the scientific, the fetishized construction of an antisemitic world conspiracy provided for a populist rearticulation of

modern German class structure as part of a radicalized, right-wing bid for hegemony that eventually paved the way for the Nazi take-over.

Part Three of this study focuses on antisemitism in the Nazi era. Chapter 9 ("The Political Dynamics of Symbolic Meaning") explores the role played by antisemitism as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction helping to coordinate the polycentric structure of Nazi state and society. The relationship of official antisemitism to popular culture is analyzed in particular by way of *Juden raus!*, an antisemitic family board game which typifies the terms and functions of antisemitic practice as well as the convergence of popular and official "state" culture.¹⁵

Part Four ("Locating Genocide") begins the examination of the institutional components and transformative cultural practices of Nazi millenarianism which converged with antisemitism to generate the form of the death camp. Chapter 10 focuses first upon the "camp" (*das Lager*) as a generic Nazi institution devoted to the transformation of Germans into Aryans as well as the coordination of their energies (and the energies of those deemed "uneducable") for the broader transformative projects which characterized the Third Reich. Chapter 11 then explores the industrial dimensions of genocide by examining the symbolic underpinnings of the Third Reich's "Beauty of Labor" (*Schönheit der Arbeit*) program. This was a program of aesthetic rationality dedicated to the fundamental transformation of the German worker and the industrial environment itself by freeing both from the malignant influences of an allegedly Jewish-dominated capitalism. Finally, chapter 12 ("Embodying the Millennium") examines the role of the "Final Solution" in the Nazi quest for Lebensraum. This includes, first, a consideration of the underlying antisemitism that unites both Nazi anti-communism and anti-capitalism, and its implications in structuring the

¹⁵There is no space in the dissertation version of this study to examine the symbolic dynamics of antisemitism in the step-by-step formulation of anti-Jewish policy and the decision to implement genocide. Such a study will be included, however, in the forthcoming book.

genocidal action of the SS mobile killing units, or *Einsatzgruppen*. This chapter also examines, second, the symbolic underpinnings of Heinrich Himmler's plans for "germanizing" the conquered east. It concludes with the third section, a study of the relationship of antisemitism, body symbolism and millenarianism as revealed in the memoirs of Melita Maschmann, a fanatical youth leader deployed in Himmler's germanization program.

Part Five ("Genocide") brings the prior strands of analysis together by focusing directly on the cultural forms and practice of genocide itself. Chapter 13 ("The Dialectic of Germanization and Genocide") reveals the pivotal role played by Chelmno, the first and most primitive death camp, in the transformation of Lodz (and its ghetto) into the sanitized German "Litzmannstadt." Chapter 14 ("The Stroop Report") analyzes the official SS account of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. Far more than mere secondary representation, the Stroop Report was a crafted Germanic family album which typified in condensed form the principles of genocide as transformative practice. Finally, chapter 15 (" 'Anus Mundi': Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka"), follows the fate of Europe's Jews as they are induced to undergo the murderous transformative processes embedded in Auschwitz and the camps of the *Aktion Reinhard* in particular. Special emphasis is placed here on the Gerstein Report, an extraordinary and profoundly disturbing SS eyewitness account, the cultural import of which has never before been fully analyzed. The study concludes with chapter 16 (" 'Death is a Master From Germany' "), followed by a general summation (chapter 17) and Epilogue. Here we return once again to *Arbeit macht frei*, the motto over the gateway to the death camp Auschwitz, in order finally to reveal its deepest ideological significance as well as its implicit relationship to the brutal practice of genocide as perpetrated against the Jews of Europe.

History in an Anthropological Mode

The present study is a work of anthropological history. What this means is that it is less a history of ideas, events, institutions, economic processes, political policies or even cultural traditions than an account of sociocultural reality itself in a particular and crucial manifestation, unfolding and transforming over time. Such an analysis no doubt possesses its own rules of textual "emplotment." These obviously cannot conform, however, to those governing a traditional historical narrative. Instead the "story" which I present is guided by the exigencies of the object of inquiry itself. Unconventional, even startling though this may seem to a student of German history, I must begin nonetheless with the ending—with the phenomenological form and practice of genocide in the Nazi death camp—tracing its entangled, generative threads back asymmetrically into the more complex and diffuse sociocultural world—or worlds—from which they were spun.

It is true that the dynamic approach underlying this struggle to lay bear the significance of the Holocaust was formulated in terms of cultural practice and within an emerging postmodern milieu. For the reason just stated, however, it also may be seen to share something with an older but still venerable tradition. I am referring, as I did briefly once before, to *Gestalt* analysis. It is as if one could cast the Third Reich and the meaningful location of its genocide within the framework of a Hieronymous Bosch oil executed by a pointillist. Looking closely, one sees nothing but a daunting chaos of colored dots, with hardly an inkling into the reasons for their juxtaposition. However, moving back and forth in an attempt to gain perspective, the points begin to coalesce into shapes that are recognizable if grotesque, and their web of meaningful relationship, complex as it is, comes slowly into focus. One need only—only!—add evidence as to the historical laying in of the individual points of color and their emergent (if sometimes incongruous) groupings within the frame in order to complete the act of revelation. Given the historical dimensions of this process, perhaps the equally venerable image of a "developing web"

would have been more accurate (see Weber, 1958 [1904]; cf. Geertz, 1973; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987). In the case of National Socialism, however, the metaphoric reference to Bosch and pointillism is especially apt. This is because the apocalyptic vision which National Socialism sought to realize was that of a revitalized organic community capable of dissolving within itself, once and for all, the alienations of capitalism. However medieval the inspiration, this vision of course was itself the brutal product of a skewed modernity.

Even if only meant to be instructive metaphorically, this analogy to *Gestalt* process reflects a firm conviction underlying this study. This conviction is that the disparate elements, multiple meanings and even contradictory perspectives that so trouble "postmodernists" can and must come together after all, if not to form a perfectly-bounded whole such as fascism itself might have labored to produce, then to uncover, nonetheless, that "irreducible reality" to which we referred earlier—that of systematic mass murder under Nationalism Socialism. The existence of this reality is one which we dare not question without throwing aside something that is of far more importance than the present analytical enterprise alone: our aspiration not only to explain the phenomena of social life, but also to be accountable somehow for their consequences, while at the same time remaining attentive to their potential reappearance, whatever their garb. The insubstantiality of memory and the appropriative tendencies of art and entertainment—not to mention the insidiousness of "Holocaust denial" (see Vidal-Naquet, 1992; Lipstadt, 1993)—provides sufficient cause to be definite about this, helping us to take moral position while insuring that we do not allow the seeming intractability of the problem itself to emasculate our analytical efforts.

As one would expect of a *Gestalt* analysis such as that just described, the materials used to construct it—true to Tim Mason's prediction—cannot be limited to those of conventional accounts. It must be constructed even more so of materials drawn from a wider (if perhaps less obvious) spectrum of historically-constituted cultural forms and symbolic practices

whereby the social world itself is embodied as well as lived. This welter of cultural forms and practices may seem bewildering at first. However, what the analysis of these materials usually begins to uncover is an implicit generative symbolism, not immutable but dynamic and capable of being transformed historically. Indeed, as implied earlier, this symbolism is responsive to, if not entirely subsumed by, the competition to define meaning that characterizes the hegemonic process itself in its attempt to assert closure over its own counter-hegemonic potentialities. Within the context of this unfolding process—and however contradictory its overt manifestations may appear—this symbolism is surprisingly concise, having narrowed the possibilities provided by the wider "cultural field" of signifying forms, practices and modes of representations from which it draws (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991:27). Thus one finds its structural principles working constantly to reiterate themselves from one social context to the next in as mutually-reinforcing a manner as possible. Indeed, it is the power of these principles to generate a seemingly natural and inevitable backdrop for social experience which provides relative continuity to social life, as well as a taken-for-granted foundation for the prevailing order. It is therefore the demonstration of this reiterative quality—that is, of the relational nexus that holds between these sedimented cultural forms and practices—which contributes to the persuasiveness of the argument (see Munn, 1986:6-7). This is especially so when performed in conjunction with an exploration of the spaces within that nexus which counter-hegemonic experience seeks to fill—remaining attentive all the while to those aspects that seem to "escape" the hegemonic altogether. It is this which makes accessible the fundamental structural principles and sociocultural processes from which all these elements derive their significance, while allowing one an opportunity to assess the means whereby those generative processes themselves may transform.

The materials used in this analysis (beyond the indispensable secondary literature itself) are, accordingly, those relating to or directly implicated in the sociocultural construction of

the death camp and the genesis of the underlying meaning-imbued processes in which it engages. Again, they are selected always keeping in mind that Nazism, its genocide, and the forms in which the latter was couched are not the inevitable culmination of German culture and history as some sort of undifferentiated and essentialist entity, but themselves the end-products of a long-term historical process of hegemonic co-optation and populist self-assertion. Among these materials (which obviously overlap in nature), are 1) *texts*, including official bureaucratic documents and military communiques; eyewitness accounts by perpetrators and victims; memoirs and autobiographies; political tracts and speeches; works of literature; 2) *iconography*, including caricatures and cartoons; broadsheets and posters; illustrated children's books; photographs and films; museum catalogs and exhibits; 3) *artifacts* of official and popular culture, ranging from carvings, woodcuts, numismatics and paper currency, board games, SS scrapbooks and photo albums to artifacts refashioned from Jewish ritual objects and human body parts; 4) *constructions of space* and the meanings embedded in urban, town and industrial form, ghettos, landscapes and their reformulation, as well as those institutions devoted to the process of transformation itself, particularly work, training and concentration camps; 5) *practices*, including those of work and production (both artisanal and industrial); those of socialization, indoctrination and bodily transformation, whether for children or adults; rituals of public humiliation and abuse; those practices shaping political discourse, the negotiation of power and the enactment of government policies; and finally the practice of genocide itself.

One final note. I mentioned earlier that when this project was first formulated, anthropology as a whole was still hovering between its traditional study of relatively small-scale, "exotic" societies—for which it was sometimes known only superficially and even stigmatized—and the challenge of applying increasingly dynamic anthropological techniques of analysis to Western European society and history, usually as the latter articulated itself within formerly colonial contexts. Since then (and in the wake of

transformations in world power structure, among other factors) the shift to "studying close" has gathered speed. Anthropology now struggles, in the trappings of this study at least, to penetrate a problem that lies like a black hole at the very center of modern Western culture and history. Left usually to the domain of history itself, it is, nonetheless, a conundrum that continues to challenge the limits of our own self-knowledge. If the success of the present analysis overrides its failures—or even if it fails interestingly enough—this study may help at least to reinforce what ought to be obvious: that anthropology is the study of meaningful practice as it is constructed and transforms, anywhere, anytime—and that this is an enterprise in which history itself collaborates.

Part One

**THE SOCIOCULTURAL ORIGINS
OF NAZI ANTISEMITISM**

CHAPTER TWO

THE SYMBOLIC UNDERPINNINGS OF GERMAN ANTISEMITISM

INTRODUCTION

Throughout most of German history (with the exception of a brief and ambivalent interlude during the middle of the nineteenth century) an alienated and derogatory image of the Jew has prevailed. At about the time of the Reformation and in the centuries thereafter, this image transformed dramatically and proliferated, its hostile representation of the Jew growing to a startling and repellant degree of intensity. With the rapid rise of capitalism and the growth of bourgeois society during the nineteenth century, this representation underwent the transformative effects of secularization, only to emerge during the crisis of the 1870s and thereafter in a form rivalling and surpassing the rancor of its prior manifestations. Not all segments of modern German society participated equally in this rancor, or, indeed, at all. Nonetheless, it was during the era in which they lived—the era of the Third Reich—that this pejorative construction became overwhelming in its murderous practical consequences.

What were the reasons for this deeply hostile and degrading image of the Jew? Why did it take on an increasingly demonized, frightful and violent form about the time of the Reformation—specifically through representations of the Devil and ritual murder—and why did this hostility resurface in modern times? Were there any defining elements crucial to the construction of antisemitism that maintained over the years despite other transformations? What in fact *was* the nature of the shift from traditional to modern

antisemitism—and how does it explain Germany's obsessive pursuit of genocide under National Socialism?

As we will see, at the base of the alienation expressed in German antisemitism is the form of the commodity fetish itself, and the epistemologically transforming cultural framework within which the latter was perceived and experienced as German society evolved over the centuries.¹

Nazi antisemitism, and its terrible fulfilment in the genocide of European Jewry, is the vehement culmination to the long and torturous development of a modern capitalist culture in Germany. Although this outcome was not inevitable, it nonetheless constituted the realization of a cultural logic inherent in German capitalism as it underwent the vagaries of the historical process. For all of the centuries that the capitalist mode of production was evolving its meaningful forms within feudal and early modern society in Europe, the Jew was associated above all else with the realm of money and its seemingly demonic manipulation, via usury, for the alleged purposes of dominating and parasitizing the Christian. Indeed, Jews came to be identified implicitly with the intangible yet impinging effects of generalized exchange itself. Ultimately they were made to represent the development of commodity relations as a whole. This association of the Jew with money and the effects of exchange was not a mere gesture of conscious, metaphoric identification, but something far more profound: it was an actual physical embodiment experienced as inevitable and taken-for-granted. Indeed, for Christians in German lands the Jew became a negative anthropomorphism of generalized exchange in all its alienating dimensions, first as

¹I first began developing this aspect of my analysis, as well as its significance for explaining the cultural form and meaning of Nazi genocide itself, in 1978 at the University of Chicago. However, my own theoretical and empirical development of the concept also has benefitted considerably, as will become evident, from the work of Michael Taussig (1980) and Moishe Postone (1980). My symbolic anthropological approach differs from the latter in ways that are spelled out in chapter 14 on the Stroop Report (particularly in n.11). Although these differences run implicitly throughout the analysis, see also chapter 15 and the conclusion to this study.

encompassed within the subsistence economy of feudal Germany but later as assimilated to the increasingly liberated forms of a burgeoning capitalism—the latter often experienced as an evil, life-draining force, ungovernable, destructive, and engulfing.

Although unique in its specific cultural forms and consequences, this hostility toward capitalism, and its demonization in the form of antisemitism, is part of a wider phenomenon seen the world over, as will soon become evident. It occurs wherever and whenever capitalism emerged or arrived to transform the integrated symbolic fabric of traditional societies into societies refigured by the alienating but pervasive principles of the commodity market.

During the time period in question and, indeed, up until their protracted emancipation in the nineteenth century, Jews were consistently treated as alien entities living within the Christian social body. At the same time that negative constructions of the Jew circulated through official and popular channels, Jews themselves were socially subordinated. Legally and even physically constrained, Jews were also narrowed into occupations—particularly money-lending, pawnbroking and second-hand trade—that only reinforced the association of the Jew with money and the pernicious effects generated by its seemingly unnatural manipulation. Similarly, the professional role of Jews as physicians underscored their alleged magical and supernatural powers while often seeming to place the body of the Christian at further risk of being manipulated, poisoned and parasitized. As a consequence of their ambiguous social structural position and the meanings attached to it, Jews were subjected at various times to defamatory accusations, intensive discriminations, brutal outbreaks, forced conversion, acts of murder, the burning of their homes and bodies, and wholesale expulsion. By so accusing, constraining, subordinating, expelling and murdering them, the attempt was made implicitly to also crystallize, contain, regulate, expell, and otherwise dominate the abstract and alienating forces of capitalism which Jews had come to embody.

To be sure, these forces were not located exclusively in the form and being of the Jew. Since the meaningful forms of capitalist exchange were imminent within a transforming feudal society, their alienating dimensions came to exist as negative properties of the Christian body as well. These were internalized as expressions of an innate and anti-social "egoism" which—like the Jew and his unbridled usury—was to be disciplined or even expunged, as the Lutheran salvatory process would have it. It is this shared embodiment of capitalism's alienating dimensions—that is, the implicit association of the Jew's evil with the "evil within"—which accounts for the visceral quality of antisemitism, as well as its explosive potential. The effort to maintain control over the Jew as negatively constructed was inseparable from the attempt to gain power over the productive, psychobiological energies of the laboring Christian body, inducing it through disciplinary measures to subordinate its inherent "egoism" in an increasingly taken-for-granted manner to the hegemonic requirements of an authoritarian capitalist state in the making. For this reason the dialectic of Christian and Jew was essential to the development of a German capitalist subject.

As the exigencies of the growing market increasingly came to be posed between Germans and the classes to which they belonged as well as internalized within bodily experience itself, the Jew, as the personification of exchange in all its alienating dimensions, thus took on a similar visceral position. Like the market itself, but in far more concrete, accessible and focusing a manner, the Jew became an increasingly charged ingredient of social life and being—a *tertium quid* through which Germans could define social identity and even negotiate political relations, particularly where access to the market was contested across lines of class and power. This was enhanced by the fact that the Jew's intimate identification with the negative aspects of a growing capitalism had been superimposed upon his marginal role as the necessary, subordinated "other" by which all things Christian and German were contrastively defined.

Like the generalized symbolic medium of money with which he was identified, the "Jew" himself became a concretized and circulating medium of social interaction through which the conflicting perspectives of social position and the contradictions of power could be crystallized and their effects transposed, for the purpose of an indirect but insistent self-assertion. Antisemitism was thus not merely a dispensable, secondary construction, but part and parcel of the historical process, the definition of identity, and the discourse of politics. No mere scapegoat for socioeconomic or psychological distress as popular belief would have it, the Jew was a bonafide structural element of German society as it was meaningfully constituted, his marginality enabling him—not for better but for worse—to thematize in his very person the unsettling dimensions of the profound and protracted social transformations that were taken place around him. Indeed, his structural marginality placed him at the cusp of these transformations, thereby making him the inevitable focus of the contradictions that prevailed between the classes as well as the in-built alienations that characterized the emerging system, particularly in times of existential distress generated by economic crisis and political upheaval.

In short, Jews became the concrete, living expressions of abstract forces and impinging effects, ambivalently internalized, about which Germans had little immediate understanding and over which they otherwise had minimal control. The evils of capitalism—inescapable and yet maddeningly elusive—became a palpable evil in the form of the Jew, whether in his demonic guise as the Devil incarnate or its modern racialized equivalent under Nazism.

TYPIFYING ANTISEMITISM: THE JUDENSAU MOTIF

In order to explore the significance of this embodiment and its ultimate implications for the Holocaust, it is necessary first to explain the actual forms of traditional antisemitism as well as the nature of their historical transformation into the modern period. The long-standing association of the Jew with money as well as his outright identification with the

figure of the devil must be addressed in particular. Although these two elements of antisemitism have long been recognized, neither has ever been fully explicated, nor has, more importantly, the crucial relationship that holds between them (cf. Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]; Hsia, 1988). This relationship, however, is essential to a full understanding of yet another core antisemitic representation, the accusation of ritual murder, as it is to an explanation of antisemitism as a whole.

The *Judensau* (or "Jew-sow"), a complex and widespread scatological motif culture-specific to German lands, provides a powerful opportunity to explore these issues in a single condensed form (see Shachar, 1974). Usually considered only in terms of its superficial defamatory content, this dynamic yet baffling motif serves as the most inclusive and long-lived typification of antisemitism prior to the modern period. Typifications are not idealized models, like Weberian ideal types, designed to be used as straw men against which to measure and define the actual social processes from which they have been extrapolated (see Gerth & Mills, 1946:59). To the contrary, typifications as defined here are themselves examples of concrete sociocultural forms and practices (see Williams, 1977:101).

Although a sociocultural system may never fully manifest its underlying structural principles in any single form, these diffuse and dynamic abstract principles nonetheless refract into a variety of concrete expressions, the interconnections of which are not always immediately manifest. It is possible, amongst this sociocultural array, to identify crucially-located expressions of social practice—whether historical characters, physically sedimented forms and artifacts, or sequences of structured, perhaps ritualized practice—which in their specific manifestations crystallize and thereby make accessible the principles of a more generalized sociohistorical reality. Though the selection of typifications is clearly a matter of interpretation and hermeneutic judgement, it is not merely so. So long as the structural position that typifications occupy is made explicit—so long as they are carefully

contextualized in time and space—their relationship to other social forms, as well as to the overall processes whereby sociocultural reality is constructed, can be established in a manner that is analytically justified and structurally sound, rather than merely impressionistic.

The *Judensau* motif can be treated in just this manner. This remarkably vital image was elaborated upon and disseminated in a variety of forms and contexts in German lands from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries—that is, from the feudal era through the Reformation, the growth of capitalism and the initial period of Jewish emancipation. More so than any other representation of the period, it serves as a core typification of the alienated and derogatory image of the Jew which persisted for years in German Christian society. Accordingly, its contextualization helps to shed dramatic light on the practice of antisemitism as it transformed into its modern ideological and scientific form. Regarding this motif, Eduard Fuchs, the Weimar-era cultural historian and specialist in caricatures, went so far as to claim that "indeed, no caricature in the world, and not simply ones pertaining to Jews, has found such long-enduring acceptance. Not a single caricature in the course of time was seen and admired by so many people" (Fuchs, 1921: 122-3). It is the art historian Isaiah Shachar, however, who has provided the most comprehensive description of the *Judensau*, and whose masterful detective work provides the basis for the following discussion of the motif's occurrence (see Shachar, 1974).

* * *

The simplest form of the *Judensau* motif—Jews embracing and dominating a sow, acting as sucklings, posed at its rectum or even seeming to engage in intercourse with it—appeared originally as part of the carved facades or choir stalls of German churches and cathedrals in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was used as one illustration within a series depicting cycles of sins and their addicts, in this case, *Gula* and *Luxuria*—greed and lustful self-indulgence. (The earliest *Judensau*, on the Brandenburg Cathedral and dating

from 1230, actually depicted a sow with the head of a Jew.) This narrow, iconographic use of the Jew for purposes of religious allegory and moralistic teaching found its source in Hrabanus's *De universo*, the leading encyclopedia of Christian knowledge from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, in which the Jew and sow are associated with heretics, backsliders, and "the sordid thoughts of carnal men, out of which depraved as well as diminished works proceed. . ." (see Shachar, 1974:70, n. 16). In its original form, the *Judensau* does not seem to have made direct reference to actual social interaction, and appeared occasionally in localities which at first had no Jewish communities. However, frequent anti-Jewish riots, immolations and temporary expulsions did occur during the same period that the *Judensau* was erected on cathedrals and churches in such cities as Xanten, Heiligenstadt, Colmar, Wittenberg, Nordhausen, and Magdeburg, all of which had existing Jewish communities. Other *Judensau* motifs of this early period also appeared in such cities as Cologne, Metz, Regensburg, Lemgo, Wimpfen, Eberswalde, Erfurt, and Freising.

About this time the use of the sow in the *Judeneid*, or Jew-oath, was also instituted in German lands: Jews giving legal testimony against Christians were compelled to stand upon the hide of a sow which had given birth within fourteen days of its slaughter; the Jew was required explicitly to stand upon the sow's teats (see Kisch, 1949:282; Shacher, 1974:73).

Foreshadowing transformations to come, the *Judensau* at Magdeburg is given greater emphasis than the other images with which it is linked in the traditional allegorical cycle: Jewish society as a whole is represented in proximity to the sow, by way of a woman, two youths and an elderly man or rabbi, the latter holding, this time, a scroll of Jewish law. Thus the motif begins its eventual emergence as a derogatory emblem of Judaism itself (see Shachar, 1974:21). In the cathedral of Cologne, the *Judensau* appears in skilled carvings on a wing of the choir stalls. Dating from 1322, three scenes include a depiction of Jews

surrounding a sow and sucking its teats, while nearby another Jew holds the hand of a boy with a halo about his head. This reference is apparently to "Good Werner," allegedly murdered by Jews in 1286; the entire series connects the allegorical representation of greed with an actual, local event of anti-Jewish import in the Rhineland that soon after its occurrence had been accorded the status of legend. Another important *Judensau* relief, this time at Wittenberg, marks a final point of transition from strictly allegorical to specifically abusive contexts (see plate 4). Here the motif, which includes representation of a Jew posed for intimate oral contact with the sow's rectum, occurs, not within an allegorical cycle but by itself and on the outer facade of the church, thereby proclaiming a pointedly defamatory message of apparent social relevance to Wittenberg's general populace.

Not long thereafter, the *Judensau*, resurfacing as a woodcut, acquired pictographic form and an immediate social application beyond strictly theological contexts. According to Fuchs, this version of the *Judensau* was one of the first woodcuts of a secular, non-devotional character in Germany, monumental in conception and masterful in style (see Fuchs, 1921:125-6; see also Kunzle, 1973:24; cf. Shachar, 1974:34-5). Dating to the first half of the fifteenth century and instrumental in the further dissemination of the motif, this woodcut depicts seven young Jews in characteristic pointed "Jew-hats" (*Judenhüte*) suckling beneath a massive, ferocious sow (see plate 5). They touch its anus and sit astride it to suck its tail, while two elderly, bearded rabbis stand about the pig, bearing messages on dialog scrolls: "This we should not forget—swine's flesh we must not eat [*des sollen wir nit vergessen swinen fleisch sollen mir nit essen*]" and "We Jews should all behold what came to pass between us and the sow [*wir juden sollen all ansehen wie untz mit der su ist geschehen*]." Meanwhile one of the boys instructs his friends to observe "how I fondle our dear mother [*wie ich unser mutter trütt*]" while another, standing beside a pile of excrement and pointing to the sow's anus, encourages his brother "Hartz" to suck harder on the tail "so I can blow up her arse [*so bloß ich ir in dr arß*]." The overall caption to the

woodcut proclaims in a rhymed couplet: "Because we do not eat roast pork, we are therefore yellow and our breath stinks [*um dz wir nit essen swinin brotten dar umb sind wir gel und stinkt untz der oten*]." Apparently this motif, as is evident by some of its few surviving copies, was designed to be printed on the reverse side of a woodcut of similar size, style and provenance depicting the crucifixion of Christ (Shachar, 1974:35; see plate 6).

Physical reproductions of the *Judensau* motif, ultimately known to be present in at least 37 localities, were soon commissioned by municipalities and displayed prominently, on *Rathäuser* (town halls) and in "liminal" threshold or boundary positions on bridges and gateways. The motif was given a further dimension through its appearance on the walls of private homes, and also supposedly appeared on inns in the Berlin area (see Shachar, 1974:40). During this period the *Judensau* almost always co-existed with ongoing Jewish settlement, and was often linked with restrictive legal measures as well as with anti-Jewish accusations and violence, occurring frequently in times of economic change or travail. In Salzburg a painted relief of the *Judensau* was commissioned in 1487 from two well-known artists and placed on the clock tower of the town hall; Jews were expelled from the city eleven years later, an event instigated partly by tensions connected with the famous "Simon of Trent" ritual murder libel (1475) and an accusation of "host desecration" at nearby Passau shortly thereafter. In Aschersleben a *Judensau* supposedly existed on a gate leading to the local fortress and called the "Sow Gate" (*Sautor*), through which Jews were expelled in 1494. The Hohenzollern castle at Cadolzburg has an explicit but now nearly obscured *Judensau* motif on its gate, next to the owner's coat of arms; despite its eroded state, town inhabitants still refer to it as "*die Judensau*" today (see Shachar, 1974:37).

Among those private homes known to have displayed the *Judensau* was the fifteenth century house of the patrician family Haiden on the main square in Wiener Neustadt,

showing an "agitated" representation of six Jews crowded about a sow (see Shachar, 1974:38). The town of Kelheim outside Regensburg had a group of particularly celebratory anti-Jewish representations. Originally set prominently within the facade of a private home facing the main road connecting Kelheim with its larger neighbor, the *Judensau* there was linked to the expulsion of the Jews of Regensburg in 1519, as its inscription indicated. On other private homes in Kelheim Hebrew tombstones taken from the Regensburg cemetery were set within facades along with similar inscriptions, while the house of the mayor himself was "graced" with an extensive celebratory proclamation to the same effect, as we will discuss below. Removed during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Kelheim *Judensau* nonetheless was preserved in the facade of the town pharmacy, surviving until the arrival of the Allies in 1945 (see Shachar, 1974:39-40).

This last use of the *Judensau* links it firmly within the tradition of the German *Schandbild* ("shame-picture") (see Shachar, 1974:40), defamatory portraits appearing first in the fifteenth century and used by municipalities as legal announcements to pillory reluctant debtors and other transgressors of secular law, including those of high social status. These portraits depicted the accused touching their seals to the rectum or genitals of a female domestic animal or castrating their horses. The related *Schmähbrieff* ("letter of defamation") against the Barons of Stolberg (1559) depicts them as grouped about a sow in a fashion almost identical to the *Judensau* (see Shachar, 1974: Plate 37c).

Martin Luther himself, working within the *Schandbild* tradition, published a personal commentary on the *Judensau* of Wittenberg in 1543 (*Vom Schemamphoras und von Geschlecht Christi*) claiming that the rabbi sought the ineffable Jewish name of God under the sow's tail. Luther used this motif in further bricolage as a *Schandbild* or *Kampfbild* in order to defame the Pope. Its meanings, as we will see below, should be examined in connection with his other writings on the Jew.

The *Judensau* underwent a crucial transformation just prior to the Reformation (a period which coincides with the formal ghettoization of Jews), when the subject of a ritual murder was inserted into the original motif. The most prominent and subsequently paradigmatic version of this more complex motif occurred as a painting on the busy inner passageway of the *Alte Brückenturm*, the Old Bridge Tower giving entrance to the city of Frankfurt-am-Main. Painted toward the end of the fifteenth century next to a depiction of the crucifixion, this highly visible image was commissioned by the city council and repeatedly restored. The development of printing not long before allowed for the reproduction and dissemination of this more complicated motif in a wide proliferation of forms (see plates 7-11). The complete Frankfurt *Judensau* of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries depicts a rabbi and other Jews constraining a sow, suckling at it, and, with the help of the Devil, licking its anus and eating its excrement; the rabbi's wife (set astride a goat, in the manner of a witch or prostitute) often looks on. The inserted ritual murder motif, which floats above the previous scene, shows the Christ-like body of a child, annotated as "Simon of Trent" (the subject of the previously mentioned ritual murder accusation of 1475), tied atop a ghetto wall by the Jews. Sometimes he is surrounded by instruments of torture designed to drain his blood for ritual use, as in the baking of Passover matzoh. Beneath the entire image, the following rhymed couplet almost always appears, if not more extensive commentary: "You drink the milk and you eat the shit/that is after all your favorite treat [*Sauff du die Milch friß du den dreck/das ist doch euer bestes geschleck*]."

Both the Frankfurt and Wittenberg *Judensäue* (the latter thanks to Luther) became models for further dissemination of the motif, sometimes appearing together in merged form. Already having found its way into the theater of carnival (the *Fastnachtspiel* of Hans Folz, in which the derogatory image was literally brought to life by performers, as we shall see below), variations of the motif also turned up on playing cards. This is seen in an early sixteenth century Nuremberg version of the deus card (known throughout Southern

Germany as the *Sau*) which featured a bearded Jew, sow and moneybag. In addition it occurred in a rhymed booklet of 1571 condemning Jewish usury, and in a *Wunderzeitung* ("news of wonders") of 1574, proclaiming the birth to a Jewess of twin piglets (plate 12). The motif also found its way into poetic compendiums and satires (among others, the *Saternalia* of Johannes Praetorius, 1633); this facilitated its movement into the vernacular in the form of jokes and epithets. The *Judensau* turned up in an eighteenth century print satirizing Sabbathai Zevi, the false messiah; in guides to Wittenberg for pilgrims; and in widely-known, learned accounts expounding upon Luther's earlier comments. The Frankfurt motif proved particularly resonant, occurring in a multiplicity of glass paintings, broadsheets, and copper engravings. These frequently documented the alterations accompanying each restoration of the original wall painting and often included extensive and abusive poetic commentary, in which the Jewish dialect is sometimes mimicked. It also inspired two notable broadsheets which we will analyze later at length. The first was *Der Juden Synagog*, a particularly vulgar and derisive Frankfurt broadsheet of the early seventeenth century placing an enormous sow in the center of obscene synagogue worship (plate 13). The second was titled *Der Judenbadstüb* (*The Jew Bathhouse*), a picture story in which three *Judensau* scenes are inserted to conclude an ostensibly unrelated piece, attesting thereby to the prior popularity of the *Judensau* and the salience of its implicit meanings (plate 14). Even Goethe in his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1949:25) commented upon the role which the Frankfurt *Judensau* played in his formative years in the second half of the eighteenth century, as we will see below.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the motif declined in importance, although it continued to find expression on playing cards and in various forms of German folk art. Examples include an explicit, polychromatic faience figurine and the carved handles of wooden walking-sticks as well as a metal dish in the shape of a sow excreting the head of a Jew (Shachar, 1974:Pl. 56; Ehrenthal Collection, N.Y.). It also appeared in

satires of Jewish disorderliness (*Die Judenschule*, 1823) and in an etching suggesting the new and invasive technique of vaccination to be a Jewish invention (see Shachar, 1974:62-4; see plate 15). Out of step now with nineteenth century, bourgeois notions of good taste, its style shifted while its meanings, articulating with the conditions of the emerging modern order, were converted into corresponding ideological expressions: in particular, the so-called *Judenfrage*, or "Jewish Question," as we will see later. Even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, variations of the motif remained alive in graphically attenuated form as cartoons, graffiti, and most especially as a common epithet (*Judensau* or *Saujude*). The most famous (and revealing) modern example of its abusive vitality was the slogan directed at the Weimar Republic's Jewish Foreign Minister, accused by the right wing of participating in Germany's subversion in World War One via the "stab-in-the-back": "Kill Walther Rathenau/the god-damned Jew-sow [*Schlag tod den Walther Rathenau/die gottverdammte Judensau*]." The slogan's intent was quickly realized in 1922, when Rathenau was assassinated.

Although the original elaborated *Judensau* motif itself nearly disappeared, the advent of the modern era by no means spelled the end of antisemitic iconography. To the contrary, the *Judenfrage* generated its own explosion of pictorial representations, with the old *Judensau* motif finding perhaps its most immediate (if internationalized) racist equivalent in the many depictions used to accompany editions of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. These usually showed the Jew as snake, spider or corpulent plutocrat malevolently encompassing the globe.² Meanwhile the pillorying quality of the *Judensau*, if not the motif itself, resurfaced in the early Nazi period. The most famous example of this is the frequently reproduced photograph of the German woman who has transgressed the

²It may seem curious that the emblem of the German antisemitic society which published the first non-Russian edition of the *Protocols*, and which appeared on the title page, was a tusked boar (see Cohn, 1966:Pl. 8; zur Beek, 1919) In fact, as we will see below, this is consonant with the polysemic capacity of the pig to represent the German as well as the Jew depending upon how it is contextualized.

Nuremberg Laws by engaging in sexual relations with a Jew. In punishment she stands in public surrounded by SA men, who have hanged a sign about her neck inscribed with the following rhymed couplet: "I am the biggest pig around, because I give myself only to Jews ! [*Ich bin am Ort das größte Schwein und laß mich nur mit J u d e n ein*]." Next to her stands a young Jew with a sign of his own: "As a Jewboy I *always* take only German girls up to my room!" (see plate 16 and Lorant, 1974:225). Thus the meanings implicit in the *Judensau*, and its implications for social practice, betray a startling continuity from the Middle Ages to the Nazi period, despite the new circumstances with which antisemitism articulated in the modern era.

This prior description of the occurrence of the *Judensau* should be more than sufficient to demonstrate just how extensive, flexible and long-lived the motif was—and more importantly, how intimately the motif and its meanings, shared even across the boundaries of class and region, were interwoven with daily life in Christian Germany, from religious to secular and from public to private contexts.

ANTISEMITISM AND ANALOGICAL REASONING

The sexual sadism and bestiality of the *Judensau* motif are obvious. So too are its visceral representations of the transgression of boundaries, the breaking of religious and incest taboos, and, especially in its later form, the secret inversion of power. To this one must add the scatological element which comes to dominate this once popular image as well as its threat of parasitism and demonic conspiracy. All this serves to weld the viewer's intellectual interest to a bodily response of excitement, humor, disgust, and fear: in short, it is a motif of highly-charged entertainment, couched in the idiom of scandalous revelation. Such an investment of interest and emotion, focused as it is upon a group that is vilified, socially subordinated but also ambivalently-situated in the overall social hierarchy, goes well with the deeper meaningful functions the motif entails. For despite overt appearances,

the *Judensau* motif is not merely a narrow indictment of the Jew as commonly held. To the contrary, it is, as we shall see, a dialectical image of unusual scope (see Williams, 1977:103), flexible in form and readily adaptable to changing perspectives and circumstances. It inscribes an entire hierarchical social order by representing the Jew, as the most subordinated and encompassed social element, posed simultaneously against all Christians, whatever their estate, as their polar opposite. This powerful and dynamic dual relationship of binary opposition and hierarchical encompassment is fundamental not only to the overall construction of power but to the basic production of meaning in language and society, allowing for the differentiation of distinctive features within meaningful systems (see T. Turner, 1977a).

This dual relationship is normally expressed in feudal and early modern Germany in the requirement that Jews be set off as a group against all Christians by the wearing of such distinguishing markings as a special badge or hat (both visible in various versions of the motif). The same meaningful relationship is replicated physically in the spatial arrangement of such cities as Frankfurt, where the ghetto is a narrow appendage, encompassed, not directly within the city, but adjacent to what was originally its outer wall, and thus subordinate yet separate (see plate 7 and Karasek, 1979:126; Soliday, 1974). The *Judensau's* implicit dialectical representation of the Christian social order, however, is not constructed simply by presenting the Jew as the Christian's despised antithesis. It also underscores the need to maintain the overall status-quo by simultaneously depicting the Jew's aggressive hazing of prescribed social boundaries through his unnatural interaction with the pig. This message intensifies later with the inclusion of the Devil and a paradigmatic instance of ritual murder, thereby expressing the threat of a potentially disastrous inversion of power at the hands of what is normally the social hierarchy's most subordinated yet alien element. The *Judensau* motif's condemnation of the Jew and his transgressive behavior thus serves a cautionary purpose. It acts to reinforce existing

hegemonic relations while simultaneously articulating the ambivalences inherent in their meaningful construction and maintenance, especially in face of the unsettling social transformations which the Jew and his vilified practices are made to signify.

The importance and vitality of this dialectical representation of Christian society is testified to by the contexts in which it occurred: the *Judensau* appeared first on churches under feudal conditions, shifting then with rising mercantilism to secular town contexts, and to emblematic positions crucial for collective Christian self-representation, from townhalls to city gateways. Its fundamental dialectical nature was underscored in the original woodcut version by the intended juxtaposition of the motif with a scene depicting the crucifixion itself, the core icon of Christian identity, on its verso (see Shachar, 1974:35). As a more individualized consciousness arose associated with printing and emerging capitalist modes of production, however, a secularized, contemporary reference to the victimization of the human body was inserted into the motif proper. The composite image then detached from its concrete forms and limited, official dissemination so as to circulate far more widely in the form of increasingly accessible broadsheets available to townspeople for purchase.

The circulation of this particular motif and its meanings did not exist in a vacuum, of course. Indeed, it has become increasingly apparent that antisemitism itself, far from being an issue of marginal importance, was part and parcel to the construction of social reality and the definition of social identity in early modern Germany. Speaking of what he has termed the "discourse of ritual murder," for instance, Hsia has described in detail the manner in which "magical beliefs" about Jews consolidated in the generations before and after the Reformation so as to grant an idiom for the expression of tensions between local interests and central authority, thereby permitting the assertion of communal solidarity (Hsia, 1988; cf. Dundes, 1991). Hsia (who sees the significance of this discourse attenuating rapidly by the seventeenth century) makes clear in this analysis the extent to

which a "field of political reference" is integral to ritual murder trials. However, richly contextualized though his study is, his treatment of antisemitism itself remains largely on the level of overt belief and religious cosmology without recourse to a deeper theory of symbolic meaning. Such an approach cannot account for the nature of antisemitic (or "magical") forms themselves, or their significance in relationship to the deeper issues of a transforming political economy and the means whereby that transformation is culturally embodied. All this is reflected in Hsia's separation of magic and moneylending, the motif of ritual murder and the concomitant, widespread hostility to so-called Jewish usury, elements which in fact are symbolically interdependent (cf. Hsia, 1988:65).

What Hsia has termed the "discourse" of ritual murder was more than simply a means for asserting sociopolitical interests in a magico-religious idiom. It was also a discourse of relative alienation to capitalism and its attendant transformative effects, expressed from diverging class perspectives yet focused nonetheless through the shared symbolic medium of the Jew and antisemitism. Indeed, the accelerating circulation of the *Judensau* and its associated meanings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—including its persisting reference to ritual murder—can be seen as helping to link together Germans of diverse backgrounds in what Anderson has called an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983) that transcended local boundaries and even class distinctions to a growing extent. The underlying significance of the message circulated between members of this community is confirmed in many printed versions of the Frankfurt *Judensau*, which (like numerous other antisemitic broadsheets) carry explanatory captions in rhymed couplets explicitly adjuring Christians to refrain from the despicable "Jewish" practice of usury. By so providing a shared existential language through which Germans of varying social positions could express their common revulsion to the Jew and, more importantly, to those alienating dimensions of the nascent capitalist order which his execrated practice signified,

antisemitism became indispensable to the development of an emerging modern German national consciousness.

In order to understand better the nature of the alienation experienced by Christians to the Jew in transforming Germany, and the cultural forms whereby it was expressed, it is important to understand the ways exchange value was evaluated and experienced in a society dominated by use-value production. It is also necessary to contrast this to the cultural forms of capitalism itself, which German feudalism experienced to a great extent as an invasive force seeking to destroy the organic order of society.

The Simple Judensau Motif: The Unnatural Relationship of Use Value to Exchange in the Middle Ages

In the *Judensau* motif, the relationship of the sow and Jews expresses the perceived relationship of use value to exchange in the transforming political economy of late feudalism in Germany. In particular, the motif's derogatory imagery reflects the traditional hostility with which usury was regarded for centuries (see Taussig, 1980:10-11; Shatzmiller, 1990; Le Goff, 1988). But the simple form of the motif—the sow and Jews alone—still resides in a precapitalist world. Thus the rampant aspects of exchange are not yet seen as having a pervasive transformative effect. Accordingly, the social dimensions of production, including the inherently alienating aspects of exchange, are still represented here in the familiar, organic form of humans and animals. As we will see, the traditional medieval hostility to exchange intensifies with the rise of capitalism, a development which is reflected in the transformations which the elaborating motif undergoes. In order to understand the alienation embedded in the motif's derogatory imagery, and the implications of its later intensification, it will help to examine attitudes toward production and monetary accumulation prevalent during the pre-modern period.

Moving from the principles of exchange contained in Aristotle's *Politics* and the economic theory of the late Middle Ages, Michael Taussig has explored the relationship of

use and exchange value in precapitalist contexts, and the analogic forms of reasoning which come to structure the experience of production as it transforms from one mode to the next (Taussig, 1980:129-32). The essence of the analogy is that money, used as a medium of exchange to satisfy needs in the householding or "natural economy," is naturally barren: it completes its function once it has been exchanged for the item required. But money, once it is used in usury to increase at interest, satisfies no needs; instead it breeds more money out of itself. Usury thus elicits from the naturally barren money an unnatural fertility. As Aristotle expresses it, "Money was intended to be a means of exchange, interest represents an increase in the money itself. We speak of it as a yield, as of a crop or a litter; for each animal produces its like, and interest is money produced out of money. Hence of all ways of getting wealth this is the most contrary to nature" (Aristotle, 1962:46; see Taussig, 1980:130). Aristotle's definition of money also makes a distinction between productive and nonproductive forms of activity. In the householding economy, money and animals are both part of the natural world and function productively, "to re-establish nature's own equilibrium of self-sufficiency" (Aristotle, in Taussig, 1980:133). In this context, the natural but barren form of money contributes to a true and natural wealth. But money-making itself has "no place in nature." To the contrary, the fertile form of money is both unnatural and nonproductive. Even more so, money as capital is destructive, for it upsets the natural balance which is the goal of monetary exchange in the householding economy. The traditional condemnation of usury, as expressed by Aristotle and the Schoolmen, held for medieval Germany and grew in intensity as capitalism began its breakthrough. Here the destructive characteristics of money were increasingly emphasized, with usury seen as threatening to invert and dominate a social order based essentially upon the production of use values (see Brown, 1985; Tawney, 1962:79-102; Taussig, 1980:29; Shatzmiller, 1990; Le Goff, 1988).

The simple form of *Judensau* motif—the sow and Jews alone—can be understood in light of this discussion of analogic reasoning. It entails first of all the identification of the Jew with usury, and thus with the unnatural and destructive characteristics of exchange value.

Establishing their tenuous legal residence essentially via contractual relations with the ruling princely and ecclesiastical figures or municipal authorities, Jews were seen in reduced terms of monetary utility. This social position is illustrated by the language of numerous charters of residence, for example the statement of Ludwig of Bayer, German Emperor from 1314 to 1347: "You belong to Us, in goods and body, We may deal, handle and dispose of you as We want and as We think good" (quoted in Karasek, 1979:26). Long associated with the practices of moneylending and usury into which they were compressed, Jews proved essential in their middleman functions of finance, helping to expand the economy through loans and the building up of mercantile relations. In addition they were considered monetary resources in themselves, and accordingly were subject to frequent acts of extortion and pillage. As is often the case with economic middlemen, the Jews' social role carried with it an implicit structural tension: it helped to maintain feudal conditions of dependence by bringing mercantile relations under feudal control, while simultaneously holding the lower estates in conditions of indebtedness, thereby cutting them off from full access to the developing market. This tension increased as the heyday of Jewish finance in medieval Europe passed and Jewish moneylending and pawning, increasingly small-scale in size, became inserted more directly between the higher estates and the localized artisan and lower classes, which were straining to compete with new methods of production.³ Complicating matters, the reproduction of Jewish life in German

³The financial role and international mercantile connections of Jews were challenged as early as the Crusades, contributing to their first expulsions from Western Europe (England, 1290; France, 1306). As large-scale Christian moneylending and trade expanded (as represented by the Fuggers of Augsburg), Jews were driven eastward to a still economically-backward Poland, while those who remained were increasingly

lands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries introduced new elements of competition for the artisan class in terms of peddling and trade in second-hand goods, attempts to enter handicrafts, and brokerage between towns and their rural hinterlands. Meanwhile the treatment of Jews expressed growing tensions between the neighboring prince or archbishop and town patricians, who were increasingly assuming control over Jews from central authority while having to share jurisdiction and income.

Ambivalence toward the Jew from clients of all classes hinged essentially upon the fact that his economic usefulness, linked as it was to wider developments and transformations in the political economy of Christian Europe, could not be perfectly encompassed by his social servitude or physical enclosure. Legally subordinated, encompassed eventually even by walls, the Jew nonetheless seemed able to transcend his containment by way of abstract exchange relations which knew no boundaries and impinged mysteriously upon Christian self and society. Not surprisingly, existential crises interfering with Christian social reproduction were frequently attributed to Jews or their alleged machinations, as will be demonstrated below in the cases of Regensburg/Kelheim and Frankfurt. This was often translated into further economic and residency restrictions, extortion, demands for remissions of Christian debts, accusations of ritual murder, outbursts of violence against Jews, and calls for their expulsion.

Consistent with the construction of usury as an unnatural breeding of money, attempts were often made to limit Christian practice of usury or prohibit Christians from it entirely. Yet even as Christians came increasingly to outnumber Jews in the practice of usury and outweigh them in influence (see Le Goff, 1988; Parkes, 1976), usury remained only one form of economic activity among the many in which they engaged. Jews, however, were prohibited from land ownership or other forms of "natural" production, as we have seen,

declassed. Jews would experience a somewhat similar if delayed declassing process in Poland too, inaugurated by the Chmielnicki massacres of the mid-seventeenth century.

and limited almost exclusively to moneylending, peddling and second-hand trade. In addition, the condemnation of usury as unnatural and requiring regulation went well with the image of Jews as hostile, untrustworthy interlopers in Christian society. Because of all this, Jews were the ones identified in Christian eyes with usury no matter who else came to practice it. This was reflected in the idiomatic expression "to take oneself to the Jew" (*zum Juden nehmen*) when officially borrowing money, regardless of whom one actually had approached; it was also common parlance to call the resulting interest *Judenschaden* (or "Jew-debts") even if it had been levied by a Christian (see Kirschner, 1968:63). Indeed, Christian usurers were often referred to as "those other Jews, called Christians," or *Kristen-Juden*, as if the practice were an evil Jewish invention which had been more widely adopted (see Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]:192; Shatzmiller, 1990). Likewise, in fifteenth century Germany, Christian usury was called "the Jew's spear" (*Judenspiess*), implying that the "cut-throat" financial means whereby Jews allegedly bled the Christian body dry had now become a weapon used by Christians against one another.⁴

Thus Jewish self-reproduction came to appear a wholly "unnatural" and imperfectly circumscribed element in Christian feudal society, based upon the parasitical breeding of monetary value out of productive Christians and their "natural" householding economy.

⁴The use of the terms *Kristen-Juden* and *Judenspiess* occurs most tellingly in a passage of Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* of 1493 bitterly condemning the growing practice of Christian usury (See Parkes, 1976:338-9):

The usurers practice a brutal trade.
 They are hard and harsh on the poor,
 Not caring that the whole world perishes. . . .
 What the Jews had asked was right tolerable,
 But the Christian-Jews drove them out.
 They themselves run about like the Jewish cut-throat [*Mit
 Judenspiess die selben rennen*]
 While the law and all justice remain silent about it.

Likewise Martin Luther acknowledged in his table talk of 1543 that there were greater Christian usurers than Jews, but laid the blame on the Jews themselves for having "instructed" Christians in the evil art (see Luther in Bienert, 1982:172).

Although condemned, the Jewish practice of usury simultaneously was made to serve a vital purpose in the construction of power relations. As we have already seen, by relegating the Jew to usury and interposing him between the classes, the ruling estates were able indirectly to extract an additional value from underclasses while simultaneously cutting them off from the expanding market. At the same time the Jew was forced to bear the brunt of the anxiety generated by the wider phenomenon of Christian usury and its unsettling relationship to the growth of capitalism. Accordingly the Jew—and his "unnatural" modes of production—became the focus of the tensions between classes and their relation to changing productive modes. Indeed, given these circumstances, it should not be surprising that hostility toward both feudal superordinates and the impinging effects of the market should have been symbolically, experientially and physically deflected onto the Jew, even to the extent of his demonization.⁵

The analogic construction of moneylending as "unnaturally fertile" is made evident in the German term for usury, *Wucher* (from the verb *wachsen*), which means unchecked or rampant growth (see Bein, 1964:7, n.12). The nominative form of the term (*der Wucherer*

⁵Similarly, J. Schneider shows that the ambivalence generated by new methods in the promotion of linen in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe was crystallized "in tales of misfits like Rumpelstiltskin, who were nasty yet helpful at the same time" (Schneider, 1989:208).

The demonization of Jews, however, did not find its origin in the contradictory economic role of Jews alone. During Greco-Roman times an antisemitic literature had already developed, based upon a perception of exclusivist Jewish practice, from monotheism and endogamy to dietary observance, as fundamentally contradictory to Hellenism and its heirs—a perspective also propagated in reaction to the considerable success which a vigorous Jewish proselytism was finding in western antiquity. Early Christianity adopted and radicalized these hostile perspectives in the course of its proselyting competition with Judaism, as well as in its attempts, as a dissident Jewish sect, to distance itself from its point of origins even as it challenged Judaism's legitimacy and heritage (note the early iconographic opposition of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoge*, the former youthful and new, supplanting the latter, aged and in collapse). Hence the accusation of deicide, the conspiracy of Jews with the Satan, and the pragmatic attempts to segregate and subordinate Jews by canonical law. And yet the bulk of early anti-Jewish hostility seems to have remained at first with the ecclesiastical authorities, sinking deeply and explosively into popular cultural consciousness only by the time of the Crusades (see Polikaov, 1974:33). Thus the demonization of the Jew predated the heyday of Jewish moneylending—but nonetheless articulated powerfully with the latter, locating Jews increasingly at the heart of structural tensions in the sociocultural order and its altering productive modes, and thereby helping to generate the fully-developed and tenacious form of antisemitism that has endured, with significant changes, into the modern period (see Cohn, 1970:79-80).

or *Wuchner*) was used as a common anti-Jewish epithet. Indeed, the words "usurer" and "Jew" were essentially synonymous (see Shatzmiller, 1990:47). This analogic reasoning, and the identification of the Jew with unnatural forms of monetary accumulation, is expressed concisely in the simple *Judensau* motif, as represented by the original woodcut (see plate 4). Here the sow represents the naturally productive "householding" economy, entrapped in an unnatural relationship with the Jew. The natural fertility of the sow is transferred to the Jew, who dominates the sow and forces it to suckle and sustain him; thus the sow is forced to reproduce, not a litter of piglets, but a litter of Jews. This is not only an unnatural, but a destructive relationship: not only must Christian society sustain itself through its own productive efforts; it must support the usurious and unproductive Jew as well. Thus the Jew is perceived as parasitical, draining the Christian of his life force and fertility, even as the sow is drained. The organic dimensions of "natural production," and the aspects of the human self invested within it, are seen as subverted by the quantifying power of exchange.⁶

An inverse image—a Jewess producing her own animal litter—reinforces the previous interpretation of the sow and Jews as an expression of the unnatural relationship of exchange value to use value. This image is contained in Johann Fischart's *Wunderzeitung* (or "news of miracles") of 1574, which announces the birth to a Jewish woman near

⁶The generalized significance of the deeper meanings associated with the linking of Jew and pig is evidenced by the *Judeneid*, or Jew-oath, another means whereby the unequal relationship between Christians and Jews was regulated. This naggingly mysterious legal ritual can be explained as follows. A Jew's testimony against a Christian was considered legitimate only if the Jew offered it standing upon the hide of a sow which had given birth within fourteen days; the maternity of the sow, as Shachar points out, was stressed by the requirement that the Jew actually stand upon its teats (Shachar, 1974: 73). Originally a goat's skin, the sow's hide seems to have been introduced once the *Judensau* motif came into use in the thirteenth century. Overtly, the Jew may seem to be "swearing by the soul of his mother" from the Christian perspective, a requirement intended to pressure or shame him into truthfulness. At the same time the Jew's social subordination is clearly being stressed by forcing him to stand upon the skin of an animal he abhors. Thus he is compelled to swear upon the symbol of Christian society's natural fertility—that is, the symbol of his anomalous economic interface with the Christian community, from which he is grudgingly permitted to draw his unnatural nurture. He also swears thereby upon his existential right to live and reproduce himself amongst Christians—a right which can be withdrawn should he prove untruthful.

Augsburg of twin piglets (see plate 12). Here the Jewess is herself the bearer of an unnatural fertility, giving birth as a sow would, to a litter (cf. Douglas, 1966). The Jewish identity of the piglets is clearly stated: their names, we are told, are "*Judenfärlin*" and "*Säujüdlin*," or Jew-Piglet and Little Sow-Jew (see Shachar, 1974:57). Thus Jewish practices of self-reproduction through traffic in interest are represented implicitly as the bearing of an unnatural yield out of money. The representation of that yield in the form of piglets, rather than some other animal species, serves to condemn Jewish practices as both dirty and immoral. Fischart goes further, however, and explicitly interprets the monstrous birth as a warning to Christians as well as Jews to refrain from "sowish" (*säulichen*) practices. The birth of the piglets thus also carries an implied condemnation of the wider growth of usury as represented by the usurious *Kristen-Juden* (or swinish Christians) whom the Jewish moneylender seems to breed.

Pig and Jew: Cultural Ambivalence and Structural Anomaly

So far we have identified the sow—perhaps surprisingly so—with Christian society, even though the Jew's interaction with the lowly-regarded pig is obviously used to disparage and abuse the Jew himself. This may seem contradictory but in fact poses no problem. The pig is a cultural category of considerable ambivalence, polysemic (or "multivocal") in its fan of symbolic meanings (see V. Turner, 1967). The manner in which these meanings are stressed in the motif hinges upon the mediatory role played by the pig between Christian and Jew. As will soon become evident, this role is governed by another underlying analogic relationship which structures the motif, whereby the overt representation of Jew and pig becomes a condensed statement about the broader relationship that supposedly holds between Jew and Christian. This analogic relationship in turn reflects the inherent ambivalence that structures the interaction of Christians and Jews, who are supposed to maintain relations of strict separation and clear-cut hierarchy,

and yet become enmeshed with one another in a manner which Christians experience as potentially disruptive and threatening. Indeed, it is ultimately the fear of a domineering status-reversal—a reversal not only of the Jew's lowly status but of all that which he signifies as well—which lies at the heart of the motif's brutal humor.

The Ambiguous Pig . . .

The pig is an important element in German culture, even today. An inescapable and ubiquitous food item, it is central to traditional German diet and the subject of endless culinary reformulation. It is also used in a variety of contemporary iconographic contexts, from satiric posters lambasting political figures or the sanitary habits of the German family to affectionate recyclings of standard cultural icons like the Mona Lisa, where use of the pig provides an incongruous comical effect. The pig is also seen in counter-cultural cartoons advocating free love and other forms of liberation from bourgeois restrictions (see Theweleit, 1978/2:115). These various uses are consonant with the long tradition linking the pig with carnality, slovenliness, and the vulgarity of "low" culture. At the same time the pig is associated with natural fecundity and figures in modernized if vestigial harvest and butchery festivals.

As these prior examples indicate, the pig is a cultural category surrounded by a good deal of ambivalence. The use of pig terms as epithets, alone or in compound forms, only begins to suggest this. For example, according to one standard dictionary, the term *Sau* denotes a slut, while the phrase *etwas zur Sau machen* means to wastefully destroy. *Schweinerei* is a common, popular term used to denote a filthy, vulgar, and deceitful business or behavior. Meanwhile the sarcastic question, "*Haben wir etwa zusammen Schweine gehütet?*" ("Did we once tend pigs together?") is used to rebuff someone who is taking unwelcome intimacies, as in the inappropriate use of the second-person familiar (*du*). Common similes, familiar in English also, include sometimes sarcastic, sometimes

callous phrases referring to the pain or misfortune of others: to "cry like a stuck sow" or "bleed like a pig" (see Wahrig, 1978: 651; 694-5). At the same time the multivocality of pig—and the ambivalence with which Germans regard the animal—is evident in the positive use of the term as a possession when referring to one's having had luck (*"Ich habe Schwein gehabt"*). A variation of the latter is reflected in the giving of tiny plastic sows (teats plainly visible) as Christmas gifts, thereby suggesting that one's good fortune should multiply as the pig does through its large litters. The phrase *kein Schwein* ("not a pig") is frequently used as a substitution for "nobody" or "not a person" as in *"Das weißt kein Schwein"* ("nobody knows the answer to that"). Finally, and with resonance for the *Judensau* motif's polysemic capacity to represent both Jew and Christian, the phrase, *jemanden zur Sau machen* (to make someone into a sow) means to deride someone without mercy—while the phrase, *halt ein armes Schwein* (just a poor pig) is a popular, sympathetic diminutive, sometimes self-reflexive, used in German to denote a helpless, simple person. It is equivalent to the term "average Joe" in English or the protestation, "I'm just a poor slob."

We can better understand the anomalous role which the pig occupies in German culture by turning to Edmund Leach's well-known essay on "Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse" (see Leach, 1964; cf. Stallybrass & White, 1986:45-7; Tambiah, 1969). Claiming that relations between kinship, topography and animals are homologous within any given cultural system, Leach sets up a series of grids structured in terms of progressive distance from the "self" as a common point of reference. Using European society as his example, Leach argues that the relations of progressive distance holding between the grid of kinship (self, sister, cousin, neighbor, stranger) are equivalent to that of topography (self, house, farm, field, far/forest) and finally that of animals (self, pet, livestock, game, wild animal). Similarly positioned elements on the grids thus become symbolical transformations of one another. The dog,

for example, is once removed from the self. Classified as a pet, it is a member of the household and thus close to us in the manner of kin; just as we would not engage in incest with parents or siblings, we would not treat the dog as food. The opposition that holds between the end points in each grid—self as opposed to stranger, forest and wild animal—serves through polar contrast to define the overall structure. The clarity of this opposition, however, becomes increasingly ambiguous midway along the progression, particularly in terms of the boundaries governing incest and ownership, thereby revealing a relationship of potent structural anomaly.

The pig, Leach argues, instantiates (and, indeed, embodies) this anomalous position most powerfully in traditional European society. More so than other animals, the pig transgresses the major oppositions and divisions of these interlocking grids, partaking ambiguously of both the qualities of man and animal, near and far, that which is tame (and thus friendly) and that which by contrast is wild, or hostile. The pink coloration of the pig's skin along with its appearance of nakedness, for example, is unsettlingly similar to the flesh of a human baby, thereby confounding the opposition between man and animal. This resemblance leads to further anomalous behavior arousing human disgust: the pig's habit of wallowing in mud, urine and dung to protect its delicate skin from sunburn (cf. Stallybrass & White, 1986:45). At the same time, however, this disgusting behavior underscores the prior resemblance to the human baby, which cannot control its bodily functions and becomes covered with filth if not regularly cleaned. As Stallybrass & White point out (1986:47), the transgression of the opposition between man and animal is further compounded by the fact that the pig was kept close to the household in rural Europe and fed from its leftovers. This put the pig in the anomalous position of overlapping the boundaries of home, farm and the wild, for the pig was nearly a member of the household, eating a semblance of human food rather than the relatively limited or alien substances associated specifically with animal digestion (e.g., grass or feed). And yet the apparent

dietary closeness of man and pig was transgressed again by the pig's role as scavenger, its food the unfit waste products of the human household—a contradiction further compounded by the anomalous and disgusting propensity of the pig to digest human and animal feces. To these negative connotations can be added transgressions of the opposition between wild and tame as expressed by the pig's semi-domesticated status. One can see the disturbing ramifications of this aspect when one shifts the location of "self" on Leach's grid of topography from a rural to an urban milieu (see Stallybrass & White, 1986:48-9). In this case the prior ambivalences generated by the pig become layered with its now invasive presence in the town, where it was customarily allowed to run free, thereby dirtying streets, threatening children with bodily harm, and otherwise unsettling the public order.⁷

The most significant thing about the pig, however, certainly in pre-modern German society, is its intimate but ambivalent role as the use-value par excellence. This relates to yet another point of anomaly between pigs and other livestock. Unlike sheep, chicken or cows, which serve multiple purposes during the course of their lives, pigs became valuable only when slaughtered. As Stallybrass & White point out, they lived, in effect, to die. And the method of their demise was, by custom, particularly brutal. The vivid example Stallybrass & White provide from an Elizabethan English manual clearly expresses not only the difficulty met in handling swine for slaughter but the profound ambivalence with which they were regarded: ". . . after he is brawned for your turn, thrust a knife into one of his flanks, and let him run with it till he die; [or] gently bait him with muzzled dogs" (see Stallybrass & White, 1986:47). In Germany the method often included the use of a sharpened stick which was thrust into the pig's heart once the animal had been physically confined. Here, too, the act was not necessarily conducted in a clinical or impassive

⁷Other contradictory factors associated with this otherwise highly valued animal include the pig's occasional tendency to cannibalize its own young, as well as its destructive rooting in earth.

manner but was couched, often intimately, within the symbolic terms governing the pig's significance in German social life.

A detailed scene of rural pig-slaughter in a remarkable modern German feature film, *Jagdscenen aus Niederbayern (Hunting Scenes in Lower Bavaria* [Peter Fleischmann, 1968]) provides considerable insight on this point. The film, which focuses upon the persecution of village non-conformists, depicts the pig slaughter as a semi-ritualized event with sexual overtones. The routine butchering of the pig is a bloody, hands-on affair conducted both playfully and violently, from the slaughtering of the pig to the draining of its blood and the hacking apart of its body, the splitting of the skull for brains, the removal of its entrails and the forcing of excrement from its bowels. All this is a process attended to collectively by men and women, complete with scatological and erotic joking behavior. This includes play with an intestinal casing blown up like a balloon, a man's waving of a pig tail teasingly in a woman's face, and other, more physical acts of flirtation. Such joking activity provides metaphoric variations on the violent intimacy of butchering a "dirty" but fecund animal, raised and nurtured only for the bodily use-value it provides, and upon which subsistence, as well as much physical pleasure, depends.

As the last comment begins to suggest, the positive dimensions that attend the pig as an ambivalent cultural category are actually of equal or greater import in German life than its negative connotations. If the pig's scavenging habits were distasteful, at the same time they provided for a tidy and economical recycling of household wastes. Wallow in filth though it did, its body once slaughtered and processed provided a wealth in hams, lard, knuckles, sausage and other products which were a mainstay of the homestead, carrying the promise of security in the coming months, whether in the form of provisions or as commodities brought to market. Indeed, the slaughter of a pig was a crucial event of the season, an occasion for celebration and feasting. This held for the homestead as well as the town butchery during the festivities of carnival, where the pig figured prominently, its

bladder (the prototype of the modern party balloon) blown up in raucous celebration of its earthy contradictions.

The pig was thus an animal with whom the German lived intimately if ambivalently, whether as agriculturalist or urban consumer, market-visitor and fair-goer. Representing an emotion-laden investment in human time and effort, the pig was a highly-valued resource raised diligently as part of the Christian household, and yet at the same time a greedy and invasive scavenger of human filth, destined for nothing but the smokehouse and stew-pot. Richly contradictory in its overlapping of the divisions between man and animal, the pig's "mode of life was not different from, but alarmingly imbricated with, the forms of life which betokened civility," write Stallybrass & White. "It is precisely 'creatures of the threshold' which become the object of fear and fascination" (Stallybrass & White, 1986:47). And yet the "poor pig" was also a creature with whom the Christian in many respects could identify, its simple, self-satisfying existence and ultimate vulnerability mirroring the bittersweet course of human life. Indeed, the negative connotations which the pig carried by no means overshadowed its positive attributes. However ambivalently it might be regarded, to be without it was unimaginable. With its crucial role in human sustenance and its notably large litters, the pig was a prime expression of natural fecundity and the rewards associated with an organically-structured economy. Like the fragile human baby whom it resembled with its delicate pink skin, it served as a contradictory focus for the vital if precarious reproducibility of Christian life in Germany. No wonder "having pig" in German meant to be in luck.

. . . The Anomalous Jew

It is precisely the rich ambiguity surrounding the pig which renders it a potent category for mediating contradictory relations, one capable of working on multiple levels (and expressing multiple perspectives) depending upon how the meanings in its overlapping fan

of reference are selective stressed when contextualized. All this is fully reflected in the *Judensau* motif. As a "creature of the threshold" capable of embodying both that which was human (i.e., Christian) and that which was not, the pig is strategically situated in the motif (as in the wider culture) so as to mediate the ambivalent interface of Christian and Jew, whose relations of strict separation and clear-cut hierarchy were rendered disturbingly ambiguous through their economic interaction.

The pig's mediating role is governed by the underlying analogical relationship which structures the motif as a whole:

Jew : Pig :: Pig : Christian

Because both sides of the analogy share the term pig in a mediating position, the first part of the analogy is able to serve as a condensed statement for the whole. Thus the overt representation of pig and Jew in the motif becomes a condensed statement about the broader relationship that supposedly holds between Jew and Christian:

Jew : Pig = Jew : Christian

The motif asserts that the Jew lives off the pig in the same manner that the pig lives off the Christian as outlined above. (This is emphasized in many later versions of the motif by showing the sow consuming a pile of excrement while the Jew simultaneously feeds at the sow's rectum.) Thus the usurious Jew is likened to the pig as a greedy scavenger living off the wasteful by-products of the laboring Christian, upon whom he has forced an unwanted intimacy. The pig—sometimes depicted as angry (as in the original woodcut) or as "bemoaning its fate" (see Shachar, 1974:56; see also Trachtenburg, 1983: Frontispiece)—serves in effect as a substitution for the supposedly victimized Christian as well as for the

productive householding economy, of which it is a valued extension. This substitution is underscored in the original woodcut version of the *Judensau* by the parallelism that holds between the Jew-dominated sow and the image of Christ's pierced body mounted on the cross, which appears on the verso. Thus the positive attributes of the pig—its rootedness in the organically-productive household, its natural fertility, its simple but hapless existence—devolve to the Christian, thereby supporting the sow's implicit capacity to represent Christian society.⁸ Meanwhile the negative aspects of the pig's ambiguous status are shunted onto the Jew. In particular, its human-yet-not-human qualities, when compounded with its role as scavenger and parasite, contribute in the motif to the construction of the Jew as profoundly "other" despite his human appearance. This aspect was played upon in the earlier example of the Jewish woman who supposedly gave monstrous birth to twin piglets, "smooth of skin/and not the least hairy [*Gar glatt von haut/und gar nichts harig*]" (see Schahar, 1974: Pl. 48). The Jew's human-yet-not-human identity is consonant with the apparent unnaturalness of a life dependent wholly on the seemingly parasitical pursuit of profit through usury and second-hand sale of the fruits of Christian labor.

The implicit identification of the Christian with the sow is reinforced by the role which the pig serves as a marker designating symbolic boundaries between Jews and gentiles (cf. Barth, 1969). This stems from a final and highly conspicuous anomaly regarding the pig from the Christian perspective, but this time pertaining specifically to Jews: the well-known

⁸Luther himself suggests something of this association in his essay of 1543, *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Arguing the superiority of the Christian messiah over the Jewish conception, which carries no promise of an afterlife, Luther declares that, if he could not be a Christian, he most certainly would rather be a sow than a Jew. "For a sow lies down on her featherbed, on the street, or on a dung-heap; she rests securely, snores gently, sleeps sweetly, fears neither king nor Lord, neither death nor hell, neither the devil nor God's wrath, and lives entirely without care so long as she has her bran. . . . And if the butcher performs his job with her, she probably imagines that a stone or piece of wood is pinching her. She never thinks of death, and in a moment she is dead. Neither before, during, or in death did she feel death. She feels nothing but life, nothing but everlasting life!" (Luther, 1971:293-4).

law of *Kashrut* which bans Jews from engaging in any contact with the animal. This taboo found its origin in *Leviticus*: "And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you" (*Leviticus* 11: 7-8).

Given the centrality of the pig in the reproduction of Christian life as well as the intimacy surrounding its husbandry and slaughter, this prohibition represented a glaring contradiction of mundane reality to Christians. It thereby contributed further to their sense of the Jew's "otherness" as an alien entity divorced from the natural world, living instead solely off the parasitical processes of exchange. These meanings are underscored by one of the dialogue scrolls appearing in the original *Judensau* woodcut, which makes reference to the Jew's stereotypical sallowness: "Because we do not eat roast pork," it reads, "therefore we are yellow [*gel*] and our breath stinks," (see Kunzle, 1973:24) i.e., the Jew is both unnatural and unhealthy, not only from living off the sow's recycled wastes instead of its wholesome pork but also by failing to work productively outdoors under the tanning sun, as is necessary in the husbandry of swine.⁹ The Jewish taboo against pork, however, did more than serve to separate Jews and Christians. By placing the pig once again squarely in the domain of the Christian, these two entities become paired in their role as the Jew's antithesis, representing everything he rejects. The Jewish taboo thus supports the implicit identification of pig and Christian in the *Judensau* motif, even as it underscores the necessity for Jews and Christians to remain separate.

The most crucial aspect of the pig's role as ethno-religious boundary marker, however, is the means whereby the motif now takes advantage of this fact to articulate the ambivalences of the Jewish-Christian interface. Using the devices of symbolic inversion in

⁹Although Shachar (1974:35) translated the term *gel* as lustful, as in the modern German *geil*, Kunzle's translation ("yellow [skinned]") is more consistent with the middle high German version of the modern term *gelb*. This is reflected today in the modern Yiddish term for "yellow"—*gel*, pronounced "gayl"—derived from middle high German.

a derisively entertaining but potentially inflammatory manner, the motif shows the Jew as transgressing his own most sacred religious prohibitions. He does so by dominating and draining the sow—the animal from which he is supposed to remain strictly apart, just as he should from the Christian with whom it is actually associated. The grotesque interaction of Jew and pig is charged with implications of sexual intimacy, suggesting all at once the transgression of Jewish taboos against intermarriage, commensality, incest and bestiality. It thereby gives powerful voice to the deep-rooted ambivalence Christians experienced toward the Jew when submitting to his services as moneylender. As we have seen, Jewish usury was a double-edged sword, involving a disturbingly ambiguous transgression of the boundaries of separation and hierarchy that ideally characterized Christian-Jewish relations. The Jewish moneylender was seen as a necessary evil whom Christians sought out for their own benefit—even to the extent of maintaining communities of Jews within the circumscribed confines of ghettos and *Judengassen*. At the same time, however, Jewish usury placed Christians in an anomalous relationship of partial dependence to their despised inferior through mounting debt and the potential loss of the goods, property and tools which had been left behind as collateral. The latter also generated the threat of additional unwanted competition through Jewish resale of the items so pawned. The ambiguities intrinsic to the Jew's role as usurer thus implicated the Jew intimately in the lives and work of his Christian debtors, even to the extent of lending him a semblance of unnatural power over their existence. So far as the *Judensau* is concerned, the capacity of the Christian to identify with the "poor pig" in its simple, vulnerable but natural existence comes into play here, for the "victimized" pig now becomes an object of Christian sympathy, an "innocent" and easily overwhelmed creature with whom to identify when seeking to condemn the allegedly manipulative and entrapping Jew. Indeed, if "having pig" for Germans meant to be in luck (in the sense of enjoying an unexpected but natural bounty such as derives from honest toil) then the image of the rapacious Jew dominating and draining the pig was

nothing other than an image of the Jew's exchange-nature supposedly preying upon the natural reproducibility of Christian society. These meanings again are underscored by the scene appearing on the verso to the woodcut, with its paradigmatic image of Christ's victimization and murder.

In reality, of course, the *Judensau* motif's implied image of the victimized Christian actually inverts the facts of the Jew's social existence, reduced as he was solely to the economic utility he could provide while simultaneously limited as to his basic rights to land, labor and permanent residency. In this respect it was not the Christian at all, but the ever-insecure Jew who was the "poor" objectified pig, retained where useful and expelled or even slaughtered *en masse* when the disadvantages of his economic role seemed to outweigh the benefits. The outcome depended, of course, upon whose perspective was to prevail as circumstances shifted. Indeed, the recourse to expulsion, as we will explore in the next chapter, actually served to articulate yet another contradiction to Christian-Jewish relations which we have already mentioned briefly. This is the fact that the Jewish right to usury, although frequently abrogated, at the same time was protected by imperial law, thereby transforming the Jew into an added source of contention between central and local authority, the members of the patriciate and those of the guilds.

Thus we see that the pig in the *Judensau* motif is polysemic in its references, capable of denoting overtly the Jew who is derided—"made into a sow," as in the earlier semantic discussion—even while making a deeper allusion to the "poor pig" of a German supposedly entrapped by the Jew in a web of debt. It is this deeper reference to the Christian which reveals the motif's most profound dimensions. It is a dialectical image serving to construct the moral world of the "natural" laboring Christian subject through juxtaposition with a negative image of the exchange-oriented Jew. At the same time it gives voice to the overall tensions inherent in maintaining the hegemonic structure of a use-value

economy to which the processes of exchange as a whole must remain strictly regulated and subordinate.

We noted earlier that the ambivalence generated by the transgression of boundaries intrinsic to Christian-Jewish relations was expressed in the fully-developed *Judensau* motif as the threatening prospect of a domineering status-reversal on the part of the Jew and all that which he was made to signify. These meanings are less obvious in the carved versions of the original *Judensau* or the "simple" *Judensau* woodcut of the early fifteenth century, which focuses specifically on the interaction of the Jews with the pig (including its anal aspects) without, however, elaborating extensively on the role of excrement or incorporating other significant devices into the motif. However, the prominent debut toward the end of that century of the more complex motif on the Old Bridge Tower giving entrance to the city of Frankfurt, and the proliferation of broadsheets richly documenting each successive renovation of this city emblem in the next centuries, entail a growing emphasis on the consumption of excrement along with the startling appearance of the Jew-Devil and a gruesome act of ritual murder. In chapter 5 we will contextualize the Frankfurt motif through a case-study that allows us to explore its concrete implications for social action. For now, however, it is important to explain the significance of the transformations expressed in the motif through the demonization of its meanings.



Plate 4. *Judensau.* Wittenberg, Stadtkirche, early fourteenth century. Martin Luther expounded upon this image (see chapter 4). (Source: Shachar, 1974: pl. 26 and Institut für Denkmalpflege, Halle).



Plate 5. The *Judensau*. Woodcut, fifteenth century. Probably by Claus of Breisach. The figures are wearing characteristic "Jew-hats" (*Judenhüte*). (Source: Fuchs, 1921:8ff)



Plate 6. Crucifixion. Woodcut by Claus of Breisach, fifteenth century. Apparently intended as verso of prints made from the *Judensau* woodcut. (Source: Shachar, 1974: pl.31a, Schreiber, 1926-30: no. 947 and Historisches Museum, Frankfurt)



Plate 7. Detail of 1682 Merian Plan of Frankfurt. The ghetto (or *Judengasse*) curves at right outside the old twelfth century city wall. The *Judensau* was painted in the passage of the Old Bridge Tower, seen in the foreground. (Source: Karasek, 1979:126)

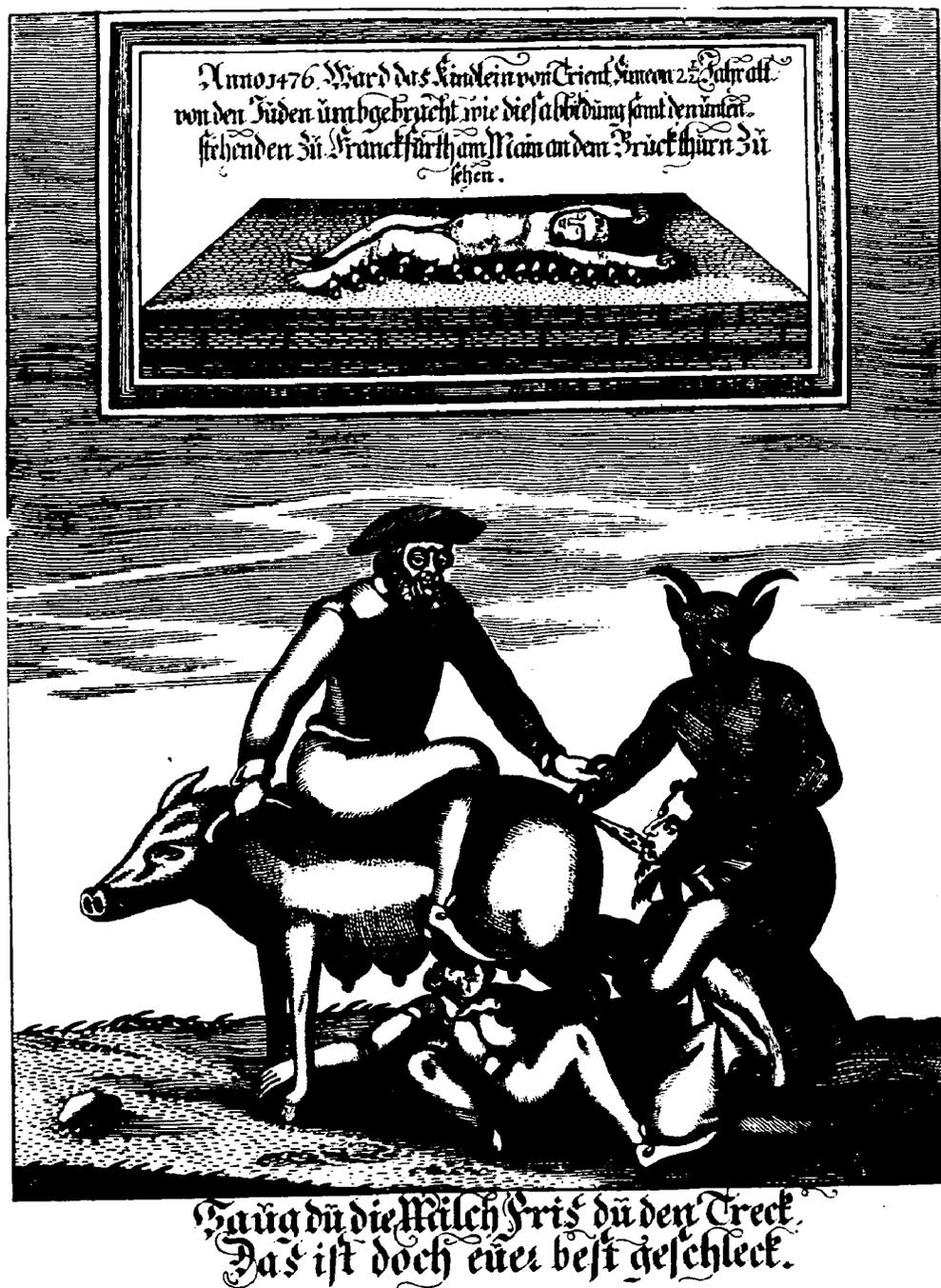


Plate 8. The Frankfurt *Judensau*. Broadsheet, seventeenth century. (Source: Shachar, 1974: pl.52 and British Museum)



Plate 9. The Frankfurt *Judensau*. Broadsheet, eighteenth century. The "Jew-Devil" receives an explicit label in this version. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:31)

Zu Ehren dem Gemäld / so erst renoviret unter dem
 Franckfurter Brücken-Turn / Anno 1678. im May.



Der Rabbi Schild ich / bin lang herum geritten/
 Auf dieser dären Sau / und habe sehr gestritten/
 Vor meine Brüder all / nun sie erlöset sein/
 So schenck ich ihnen gern auß diesem Weiber ein.
 Dem Schwanz ich hebte auff / der Zauffel wolte halten /
 Eines jeden Juden Kopf / von Jungen und von Alten /
 So spritz die liebe Milch von händen hren Saft /
 Dem Schmutzen in die Woch / es gebet ihnen
 Krafft.
 Die allerliebste Milch löset sie ein jeden fangen /
 Sie heilet euren Hirnd / sie dienet auch zur Laugen /
 Zu waschen eure Därt / zu reinigen den Wasch /
 Ach! allerliebste Milch / O lieblich Schweiner / Brust.

Ihr Bilder kommt herben / auch brauchet solche Pferde /
 Versammlet euch zu mir / daß wir nun eine Herde
 Wils yerlichst machen all / denn es ist die hohe Zeit /
 Daß wir ins 3. Reich / Land Marchieren ohngescheut.
 So mache sonst unser Noth / den wir vor längst erweisen /
 An eines Barbiers Kind / kumet werden und verdrossen
 Die Wogen wiederumb / die Rhodort zu Trient
 Gar brechen Hals und Bein / und machen uns ein End.
 Drum fort und schmeißt auch nicht / wir haben lang gestunken /
 Der Christen Schwetz und Binn / wie Boschheit einge-
 trunken /
 Verderben nunmehr Mann / entzogen sein Gewerth /
 Eilt auch so viel ihr Kömme / wir sind allschon zu merth.
 Den Galgen / und das Rad / wir haben längst erschuldet

Plate 11. The Frankfurt *Judensau* and Old Bridge Tower, from a 1678 broadsheet marketed to commemorate the painting's renovation. Note the rabbi in the tower passage, gesturing toward the original image. (Source: Hsia, 1988:215 and Historisches Museum, Frankfurt)

Am Bewisse Wunderzeitung von einer Schwange-
ren Judin zu Wunzungen/ vier meil von Augspurg/ welche kurzlich den 12. Decem-
ber/ des nächstverkommen 74. Jars/ an statt zweier Kinder zwei lebendige Schweinitz
oder Ferkeln gemacht hat. In der Zeitung/ so durch den Herrn Johann Fischart/
in der Stadt Augspurg/ am 12. Decem. 1574. gemacht worden. In welchem

Sowunderlich laub die geschicht
 Das was ichs nicht wer tobericht
 Wird ich mich schreien die zuschreiben/
 Das man nicht denken/ das was freiden
 Dülcht den Juden nur zu spott:
 Aber es hat der ware Got
 In augen es so klar gesit
 Das dar aus greif die ganze Welt
 Wie Christus der Messias recht/
 Das verpleit Jüdisch Talmudische
 In seiner andern zukunft nun
 Zur leg will zu spott püngen stum:
 In sei der gangen Welt was wissen
 Das da sie seine Ege nicht pachten
 Was sie sind für Messias werd/
 Namlich der Esau/ der rothen herd/
 Weil sie ain Jüdisch Reich doch tsarten
 Da sie um reollust nur erarten:
 Weil sie den höchstsalben entehren/
 Mögen mit Sarsch war sie sich sch merren:
 Das die sind nicht werd Gheist Was
 So sinnen schischheit und fleisch.
 Derwegen wisst/ sich hat begeben
 Den nächstverkommen Christmont eben
 Die meil von Augspurg zu Wunzungen
 Am Dorff/ welches thut angelangen
 Dem Haupte d Rüdweg Schärlein aigl/
 Da thut ain Juden sich erpangen
 Eche schwaers leiba/ und ging damit
 Nach schwanger Weiber Monatszeit/
 Als nun die zeit verlossen war/
 Da kam sie wider und gebar.
 Was aber? Da hiet lbe kreut
 Was Juden Kinder deiten hat:
 Zwei Schwein namlich sie gebar
 Für sie zwei Schwein/ das ist war:
 In zwei Nüstlich Ferkeln recht
 Daran kein Nüstlich güt war schlech/
 War platz von hant/ und gar nicht hart/
 Die ferkel ward vilen offentlich.
 Das erst ist von stunden gefordert/
 So bald es das lichte hat erwehret/
 Das ander hat gelicht ain stund/
 Dar nach zum Schupf es verschwente:
 Dar auf hat man die Zwillinglein
 Die Zwillinglein und Schweinitz
 Von ainem garten bald begraben/
 Da sie dem jetz eben noch haben.
 Inb ihem selig ist dem sein
 In sehen die Schweinitzen/
 Das all empfindt recht pferren/
 Der allien die dinstet auch waren.



In Ordnung

Und greif es ist ain reuhergschicht
 Wan man es tim dem grund besicht.
 Das wer erschrocken schon das Wort
 So wer kam Eau doch der gott leb/
 Dülcht so wer ain glid darsin.
 Welche Menschenart möchte jagen
 In dem so wer es nicht ain par/
 Auch außgeborn mit gefar:
 Aber da sieht man nichts dergleichen
 Damit es sich las was verfrischen:
 Drum ist gehalten für ain wunder
 Welche was zur warnung geschicht besunder:
 Was man darselbige berret
 Hab ich für etwas angebet:
 Doch ist am besten Got besant
 Der nie verfehlet sein wunder sant/
 Der auch durch unglückliche ermanet
 Das man auf Mühsüger stas recht banet:
 Das was der Juden hochverpöndens
 Soll zu dem waren Lute mich wendens/
 Und denken/ was dort Daulus sprach/
 Das so Got hat geschonet nicht
 Sem Doll/ den Nüstlichen Ferkeln/
 Was er den Einstimpfung werd jolgen/
 Das die wer an sie stat sind tochen
 Und nicht eben was sie han vernommen.
 Derhalten sollen diese jalden
 Gharten und Juden zur warnung rathen/
 Dem Schweiden leben jalden
 Das nach nächsterrn uns jammern/
 Das wer macher mit Nüchertait
 Erwarten Gots zukunft betraun.

Plate 12. Wunderzeitung announcing the birth of twin piglets to a Jewess. Broadsheet by Johann Fischart, Strasbourg, 1574. (Source: Shachar, 1974: pl.48 and Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg)

Der Juden Synagog.

Vff Teutsch Kirch oder Schul genandt/ Zu gefallen also das er dacht/
Damit es werdenn Reich befandt/ Der Leser wolts verachten nicht.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>A Aramens der gelchrte Narr
Zigt an den Seidel vnd Driffte erst
Die Spitzkopff zu vnterweifen
Wiese die Christen sollen beschessen.
B Zugmann der galgndicht/
Stöß den Heber in Arß sein tieff.
C Tunsman schlechtauf/ wart mit fleiß/
Diß die Sauw ihm ins Maul set eiß/
D Doctor Hünereper kam auch herbey/
Damit der Rath sein gang sey.
E Erzmänn spißub in der Karten/
Ehut des freßens vñ schleníens auch wart.
F Fore freßter fang auff/ friß geschwind/
Es ist gut für vnser Besindt.
G Humbel zum Seertrog macht sich leicht/
Freylieh ein Sauw die ander reucht.</p> | <p>H Hermann Suß ist mein Namen/
So kompt die Gesellschaft zusammen.
I Judas verrieth Christum behendt/
Auch das Rindlein zu Teyndt.
K Krogbeißer steht mit weiff/
Sicht an das Kalb an der Seul.
L Loxarth Xosaff heiß ich/
Die Sauw mit dem Strick führ ich.
M Muskopff bey der Stiegen/
Hat ein Buch lan frey drauß liegen/
Letlich vnser Freyheit nichts benommen/
Weil die Gesellschaft ist beyinander können.
Also bleibet ihr frey.
Daf euch der Teuffel reit.</p> |
|---|---|

Ein Ehrliebenden Christ die Noth zwingt/
Der Jude singt

Vnd der Teuffel springt/
Letlich das Feuer drine.

Plate 13. *Der Juden Synagog.* Broadsheet with engraving by Hans Wolff, Frankfurt. From the early seventeenth century—the period of the Fettmilch Revolt (see chapter 5). (Source: Fuchs, 1921:21)



Plate 14. *Der Juden Badstüb.* Broadsheet, seventeenth century (see chapter 5). (Source: Kunzle, 1978)



Plate 15. Etching satirizing Jewish support of vaccination. Hamburg, c. 1799. (Source: Shachar, 1974: pl. 57b and Alfred Rubens Collection, London)



Plate 16. The Nazi era, c. 1933: German woman pilloried as pig for having had sexual relations with a Jew. (Source: Lorant, 1974:225)

CHAPTER THREE
**THE JEW, THE DEVIL,
AND COMMODITY FETISHISM IN GERMANY**

As the prior discussion has begun to make clear, the representation of the paired relationship of Christian to Jew and of use-value to exchange did not remain static in feudal Germany. Beginning with the Reformation, transformations in the form of the *Judensau* motif went hand-in-hand with the explosive rise of capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This development brought with it an exacerbated sense of the invasiveness of exchange relations, and a concomitant demonization of capitalism. In particular, capitalism was experienced and represented increasingly as a diabolic extension of Jewish usury, seen as rapidly engulfing the Christian world. (Indeed, this is the origin of the notion of *Verjudung*, or "Jewification," which in secularized form in the nineteenth century would come to dominate antisemitism with pernicious effect [cf. Aschheim, 1985 and Rose, 1990].) Jews, in turn, were subjected to increasing hostility, while new and more profound attempts were made to subordinate them: this is the period when Jews were formally constrained behind ghetto walls, if not expelled outright from Protestant lands (see Israel, 1985:12-13).

As we will see, the profound social transformations encompassing Germany, and the meaningful forms whereby these changes were constructed and experienced, are reflected in the new additions to the *Judensau* motif. The simple motif belonged to a world of precapitalist values, in which the social dimensions of production, including the alienating aspects of exchange, still were represented in the familiar, organic form of humans and

animals. But the complex motif resides in a rapidly transforming world, in which the dimensions of the self invested in productive relations seem increasingly to be drained of their human and socially-defining content by the rise of the commodity market. Thus the alienating aspects of exchange, while still represented in a socially recognizable manner, take on increasingly demonized and threatening forms. In the elaborated *Judensau* motif, these forms include the condensed figure of Devil and Jew, the increased emphasis upon anality and the consumption of waste, and the insertion of a powerful ritual murder component.

THE ANALITY OF DEVIL AND JEW

To those alienated by the emergence of capitalist exchange relations and the commodity market in transforming political economies, capitalist accumulation often is perceived negatively as an unnatural reproduction, diabolical in origin and effect. Michael Taussig, for example, has shown how two diverse South American communities, one in Columbia and the other in Bolivia, both invoke the figure of the Devil to explain the dislocation they experience as the traditional holistic frameworks of social life are fragmented by the ascendance of a modern class structure along with the principles of wage labor (see Taussig, 1980: xi, 29). This demonization of capitalist exchange relations also holds for transitional Europe, where it is expressed most powerfully in the writings of Martin Luther.

According to Norman O. Brown, the age of the Reformation "experienced the Devil with a peculiar immediacy, power and pervasiveness" (Brown, 1985 [1959]:207). This is expressed particularly in the thought of Martin Luther, who portrayed the Devil in far more comprehensive terms than those entailed in previous medieval constructions. Luther's devil was an entity fit to express the new evil which clearly was afoot in Europe. This was an evil seemingly intangible in form yet palpable in its effects, a devastating force of

previously unknown breadth and reach, from which no man could escape. That evil, Brown writes, was capitalism itself.

Experience taught Luther that the Devil is the lord of this world—the experience of his age, the waning Middle Ages, and the rise of capitalism. All around him Luther felt the irresistible attraction and power of capitalism, and interpreted it as the Devil's final seizure of power in this world, therefore foreshadowing Christ's Second Coming and the Devil's final overthrow (Brown, 1985:218-19).

Previously the human world had been the domain of Christ, within which the Devil roamed to lead men astray through sin. But now, with the rise of capitalism, the Devil had transformed into an autonomous demonic power seeking and achieving world dominion.

The link between the Devil and capitalism is made explicit through Luther's focus upon the practice of usury as the prime example of the Devil's growing autonomy. "Accursed avarice and usury have utterly destroyed Germany," he wrote, proof that "the world is the Devil's, and the people in it have become pure devils." Norman O. Brown again elaborates: "Luther says that the traffic in interest, 'undoubtedly the greatest misfortune of the German nation,' was invented by the Devil. Usurers, 'the big world-eaters,' are denounced as the servants of Mammon and the Devil, or as devils. The general trend toward acquisitiveness is seen as bondage to the Devil: 'It is the world's way to think of nothing but money, as though it hung as soul and body' " (Brown, 1985:220). Usury thus took prime place within Luther's devil-oriented theology as a reification of alienating social change. No longer a mere sin, usury was now the primary devilish tool permitting the general conquest of mankind; usury was the Devil himself (see Brown, 1985:220-1). "Usury lives securely and rages," Luther wrote, "as if he were God and lord in all lands." In the kingdom of evil, Satan is a capitalist and man the Devil's property. If God created the world through the "true word," then today "money is the world of the Devil, through which he creates all things" (Luther, in Brown, 1985:221).

By emphasizing the Devil's new form and power, Luther sought to articulate and explain the ever-present yet intangible new principles of capitalism which seemed increasingly to be engulfing the old feudal order. In particular, Luther's reification of usury as a diabolic expression of the Devil's growing autonomy provided a means for objectifying the abstract effects of commodity fetishism and the market, which were coming to fundamentally transform social relations and structure subjective experience in transitional Germany. Luther's attack upon the Devil was thus, in essence, a critique of capitalism expressed from a position of extreme alienation.

But the circle of reasoning leading to the demonic reification of exchange only became complete with the transformation in the traditional relationship of Devil and Jew. As Joshua Trachtenberg demonstrated in his classic study, *The Devil and the Jews* (1983 [1943]), the medieval conception of the Jew was closely linked to the construction of the Devil. In numerous images and mystery plays, Jews were depicted as sorcerers and host-desecrators, acting in league with Satan. But in the period of the Reformation and the rise of capitalism, this association of the Jew and Devil condensed into an actual identification, mediated now by usury. This is seen in representations of Jewish financial activities, where the Devil, traditionally depicted as a combination of goat and vulture, takes on Jewish features, from beard to Jew-badge, and is shown participating in Jewish monetary transactions (see plate 17 and Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]:193-5). A variation appears in the *Juden Erbarkeit*, a rhymed booklet published in 1571 condemning Jewish usury; the woodcut on its title page depicts Jews as demons, one of whom rides a sow in the process of devouring a pile of excrement (see plate 18 and Shachar, 1974:56). Jews in turn were said to possess a characteristic stench, the *foetor judaicus*, related to the anal imagery with which the Devil, particularly in Lutheranism, is enveloped (see Brown, 1985:208-9; Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]:47-8; see also Dundes, 1984). As we will soon see, this analogy serves as a condemnatory link of Devil and Jew to capitalist accumulation.

Norman O. Brown made the association of the Devil and anality startlingly clear some years ago in his landmark study, *Life Against Death*, pointing out that Martin Luther's "grossly concrete image of the anal character of the Devil. . . made the privy the appropriate scene for his critical religious experience" (Brown, 1985 [1959]:209). Luther's "black and filthy" Devil accosted him with anal smells and sights, assaults which Luther himself described innumerable times with the German verb *bescheissen* (see Brown, 1985:208). Luther responded in kind. When a barrage of Lutheran doctrine failed to dispose of the Devil, Luther then resorted to the Devil's own weapon, routing him, he wrote, "*mit einem Furz.*" Luther's other weapons included instructing the Devil (in Brown's somewhat more delicate language) "to 'lick (or kiss) my posteriors' or to 'defecate in his pants and hang them round his neck,' and threatening to 'defecate in his face' or to 'throw him into my anus, where he belongs' " (Luther, quoted by Brown, 1985:208). "The last quotation," Brown writes, "exhibits the psychic logic and psychoanalytical understanding underlying Luther's warfare with the Devil. The Devil is virtually recognized as a displaced materialization of Luther's own anality, which is to be conquered by being replaced where it came from" (Brown, 1985:208-9; see also Erikson, 1958:243-50).

Luther elaborates on the Jew in similar fashion in his essay of 1543, *Vom Schemhamphoras und von Geschlecht Christi* (*On the Ineffable Name and the Descent of Christ*), in which he interprets the meaning of the Wittenberg *Judensau* of the fourteenth century (plate 4). Luther's purpose in this essay was to define the immutable, satanic nature of the Jew and historically ground the reasons for Christian hostility. Here the entire range of medieval accusations against the Jews are repeated, from black magic and well-poisoning to ritual murder. To this litany Luther then adds his own commentary on the meaning of the *Judensau*:

Here in Wittenberg on our parish church a sow is carved into stone; under it lie young piglets and Jews, who suckle; behind the sow stands a rabbi, who lifts up the sow's right leg, and with his left hand pulls the tail over himself, bends down and stares with great concentration under the sow's tail into the Talmud, as if he expected to read and discern something penetrating and remarkable; it is surely in that very place that they found their *Schemhamphoras* [ineffable name of God]. . . . That a learned and honest man should have planned and affixed this image shows he was an enemy of the Jew's filthy lies (quoted in Shachar, 1974:44; author's translation).

Luther then reveals what he considers to be a case of typical talmudic wordplay instigated by the Devil, demonstrating supposedly that the Hebrew term *Schemhamphoras* is, in reality, "*Scham Haperes*, that means, *Hier Dreck* [here dirt]; not the kind that lays in the gutter, rather that which comes out of the belly" (pp.44-5; see also Bienert, 1982:165).¹ In connection with this comment it should be noted that the Wittenberg *Judensau* was the first of the carved church versions of the motif to have been lifted outside of its former allegorical context to serve as a secular condemnation of Jews themselves (see Shachar, 1974:31). The scatological manner in which Luther built upon this status in *Vom Schemhamphoras* suggests that the Jew, like the Devil, is a "displaced materialization" of his own anality, to be "replaced where it came from" through involuntarily enclosure within the Christian social body in filthy ghettos. The alternative—as we shall see in the next chapter—is for the Jew to be expelled outright as a concrete substitution for the otherwise incorporeal Devil.

Martin Luther's writings establish not only the common anality of Devil and Jew, but also make evident the mediating role which usury plays in linking the two figures. For Luther, usurers were those who profitted from the growth of the commodity market, and were thus identified with its encroaching power: "There is therefore no worse enemy of mankind on earth, next to the Devil himself, than the covetous man and the usurer, for he

¹According to Shachar, it was presumably this commentary which inspired the alteration to the Wittenberg *Judensau* during the Reformational period, when the words *rabini* and *Schemhamphoras* were chisled in above it as a heading (Shachar, 1974:31). Bienert, however, states that this alteration was made two centuries after Luther's time (see Bienert, 1982).

wishes to become God over all men" (Luther, in Brown, 1985:221). Usury, as Luther refers to it here, is becoming the practice of all mankind. But as we have already seen, usury had long been synonymous, not with mankind as a whole, but with the Jew. Accordingly, the transformation in the concept of the Devil into a demonic autonomous power seeking world conquest through usury, required a concomitant transformation in the construction of the Jew. "Should the devil not laugh and sing," Luther wrote, "when he enjoys among us Christians such a fine Paradise, when he, through the Jews, his saints, devours our substance, and in return fills our mouths and nostrils with his effrontery, and mocks and curses God and man, in the bargain? (Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies* [1543], in Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]:193-4). Here the Jew and his usury become the concrete but alien human form through which the figure of the Devil and his supernatural power are encountered. But now Luther expresses the traditional negative construction of exchange value in the most visceral and destructive of terms, as a devouring of Christian bodily substance itself. As we will see, this deeply alienated formulation is appropriate to Luther's experience of capitalism as a demonic power that has extended itself out of the rampantly growing "Jewish" practice of *Wucher*, of usury.

These issues are fully represented in the complex form of the *Judensau* motif, which emerged prominently in Frankfurt as an official city emblem just prior to the Reformation, and proliferated in the form of reproductions well into the eighteenth century (plates 8-11). The prototype of the latter was the municipal wall painting inside the gateway of the Frankfurt *Brückenturm*, or Old Bridge Tower, placed in this crucial public passageway at eye-level by the city fathers in order to greet visitors arriving to Frankfurt and its international trade fairs as well as residents returning home. Like the original woodcut, which had a picture of the crucifixion on its verso, the more complex Frankfurt *Judensau* was juxtaposed pointedly with a painted representation of Christ nailed to the cross. It

remained there until 1801, when the Old *Brückenturm* was demolished (see Shachar, 1974:36-7; Kunzle, 1973:181; see also Hsia, 1988:62).

The new motif unites the Jews and sow with the figure of the Devil, and adds to this already potent mix the floating image of a Christian child being ritually murdered atop a ghetto wall. Not merely a participant in the action, the Devil stands behind the entire motif, supervising the operations of Jews and sow, particularly in its anal aspects. His appearance also has altered: the Devil now has semitic features and wears the Jew-badge, and his face is often identical to that of the Jew kneeling behind the sow. In some versions of the motif, the identity of this figure is explicitly labeled with the text, "This is the Jew Devil [*Dieses ist der Juden Teuffel*]" (see plate 9 and Shachar, 1974:54). Meanwhile beneath the *Judensau* the following rhymed couplet now makes its appearance: "You suck the milk, you eat the shit/that is after all your favorite treat [*Sauffs du die Milch friss du den dreck/das ist doch euer bestes geschleck*]." The eviscerated child floating above this scene is Simon of Trent, the subject of a notorious north Italian ritual murder accusation of 1475. The accusation, which resulted in the protracted torture of 17 Jews and the expulsion of the entire Jewish community from Trent, entered into German and European popular consciousness for centuries thereafter (see Hsia, 1988:42-65; see also Dundes, 1991). A text which usually accompanies the image makes the emblematic character of this ritual murder clear: "So long as Trent and the child are named, the Jewish crime will be known [*So lang Trient und das Kind wird genant/Der Juden Schelmstuck bleibt bekant*]." In addition an explanatory inscription is almost always added in some variant above the child's body "documenting" the authenticity of the event by making reference to the original wall painting from which the broadsheet is copied: "Anno. 1475 the little child Simon of Trent aged 2 1/2 years was murdered by the Jews as is to be seen in this reproduction along with those below from the Bridge Tower to Frankfurt am Main [*Anno. 1475 ward das Kindelein von Trient Simeon 2 1/2 Jahr alt von den Juden umbgebracht wie dies'*

*abbildung samt den unten Stehenden zu Franckfurth am Main an dem Brückthürm zu sehen]."*²

The inclusion of the Devil adds a crucial dimension to the motif's original representation of the Jew, in keeping with the alienated means whereby the rise of capitalism was experienced. Earlier the motif represented the "unnatural fertility" of exchange in simple terms, through the image of the sow forced to sustain a litter of Jews. But the complex motif suggests that the meanings associated with usury are undergoing a transformation. Now the principles of exchange, traditionally contained and circumscribed by Christian society in the form of Jewish usury, are shown as widening into a more abstract, structuring principle which stands behind usury itself, just as the condensed supernatural figure of Devil and Jew stands behind the operations of Jew and sow in the motif. The merging of the Jew with the Devil represents the subjective association of Jewish usury with the wider principles of the emerging commodity market. It expresses the subjective perception that capitalism is actually an extension of usury, a destructive invention of the Jew expanding beyond its ghetto confines to encompass society as a whole. The overall text to one printed version of the elaborated motif makes its meanings clear. Naming the Jew as the servant of the Devil, the text elucidates: "By this is clearly shown/The usury [*Wucher*] and wickedness of the Jews./Should not then a Christian be ashamed/Who is himself addicted to/This vice, even if he/Wears no ring [i.e., badge] as the Jews do?" (see plate 10 and Shachar, 1974:91, n. 269). Thus the inclusion of the Devil—and, as we shall see, the ritual murder as well—links the image powerfully to the rise of commodity relations, which, although elusive in nature, are competing ever more effectively with traditional feudalism.

²There is no space here to examine another frequent component of the Frankfurt *Judensau*, namely the figure of the rabbi's wife seen sitting astride a goat. The meaning, however, is clear, as the accompanying text often indicates: the wife is represented in the manner of both the witch and the prostitute, since she consorts with the Devil in his dual form as both husband and goat (see Shachar, 1974).

These meanings are further reinforced by the motif's enhanced emphasis upon anality in the relationship of Jew and Devil. This emphasis is reflected in the role of the condensed Devil-Jew, who supervises in particular the Jewish consumption of the sow's bodily waste, which is now depicted graphically as shooting into the kneeling Jew's mouth. As we saw, such imagery is consistent with the overwhelming anality associated with the Devil during the Reformation and thereafter. In addition it links up to the Jew, whose characteristic stench, as Luther would have it, serves as a conduit for the Devil's "effrontery," which "fills our mouths and nostrils." This enhanced anal dimension points significantly to the Jew as a personification of capitalist exchange relations, perceived as alienating and destructive. In order to understand this, it will help to consider briefly the role of anality in connection with money, a link which has been long observed in the psychoanalytic literature (see Brown, 1985:234-304; Freud, 1959 [1908]; Dundes, 1984:80-3).

The association of anality and money relates implicitly to the analogic relationship of exchange value and use value expressed in the theories of economy prevalent during this period. In the productive, "householding" economy, money should leave the household to circulate, as a medium of exchange permitting the satisfaction of wants through the purchase of necessities. When money instead is retained within the household in the form of capitalist accumulation, it does nothing to contribute to the general satisfaction of wants and needs and the reproduction of traditional society, but replicates itself wastefully for the profit of the individual alone. Money thus transforms again from a "naturally barren" element into an "unnaturally fertile" one, its unnaturalness expressed in this case not as a yield of crops or a litter, but as an accumulation of waste.

The Jew, of course, is seen as reproducing himself through a parasitic recycling of Christian production, by means of second-hand trade and traffic in pawned items. (In this he resembles the "greedy" pig, which is now shown scavenging from a pile of human

excrement.) The products of Christian bodily exertion are thus removed from their natural and socially affirmative applications, falling instead into the hands of the Jew, so as to sustain him in his unnatural monetary pursuits. All of this is symbolized in the sow's bodily waste, recycled from the Christian and passed on for the Jew to consume—under supervision of the condensed Devil-Jew. Thus the motif's anal imagery clearly links both Jew and Devil to capitalist accumulation, as a wastefully egocentric and therefore socially hostile activity. By adding the consumption of waste to the image of the sow's unnatural litter, the elaborated motif depicts capitalist accumulation as expanding out of the previously more limited Jewish practice of usury. This in turn reinforces the analysis of the motif as reflecting a growing alienation to capitalism, expressed through a representation of the Jew as the negative anthropomorphism of exchange.

THE DISCOURSE OF RITUAL MURDER

The alienating impact of a rising capitalism upon traditional social relations and upon human experience itself is expressed with special power and immediacy in the ritual murder component. This visceral new addition to the *Judensau* motif transposes the intensified meanings of Jew, Devil and sow explicitly to the human realm. Here we see a Christian child tied down atop a ghetto wall; his naked body is pierced with numerous cuts, or even eviscerated, while a row of awls as well as other instruments of torture surround him. The image is frequently framed and so inserted into the overall motif that it appears to float in a decontextualized manner above the scene of Jews, Jew-Devil and sow. The notorious nature of this most widely-recounted case of ritual murder—that of Simon of Trent—heightens the significance of the image, making it a typification of all ritual murders.

The new composite gains further impact as a whole through its juxtaposition with the crucifixion. In the simpler *Judensau* woodcut this traditional juxtaposition had meant that the earlier image was linked directly to the core icon of Christian identity and its implied

process of salvation through participation in the resurrection of Christ, whom the Jews supposedly had murdered. However, the insertion into the motif of an actual case of alleged ritual murder transfers the generalized meanings of the crucifixion to the concrete level of ongoing Christian/Jewish relations. It suggests that the Jew, as deicide and Christ rejector, seeks to re-enact the crucifixion of Christ, this time upon the bodies of his most vulnerable followers, thereby preventing the possibility of Christian salvation. Thus the child and his pierced body, like that of Christ in the crucifixion scene next to which it was painted, comes to stand for all Christians, united in the *corpus Christorianum*, the Christian social body. This symbolic role of the child is further reinforced by the parallelism of the ritual murder component with that of the dominated sow, which, as we have already seen, stands implicitly for Christian society and its forms of natural productivity. Indeed, the pink, "baby-like" pig has been transformed literally into the Christian *Kindelein*. Thus the overall relationship of Jews to Christians and to Christian society is newly elaborated in the complex *Judensau* motif, which refracts the subjective experience of the rise of commodity relations in images of exacerbated Christian vulnerability and victimization.

One recent study approached the Frankfurt ritual murder scene as if it were disconnected from the wider context of the *Judensau* motif within which it was set, while treating it primarily in terms of religious iconography (see Hsia, 1988:62). However, as we will see, the insertion of the ritual murder component into the *Judensau* motif—particularly in its form as a free-floating element—is of utmost importance. It reveals, in deeply alienated terms, the growing power of commodity fetishism to structure social relations and subjective experience, through a transformation in the construction of the body itself. But in order to fully understand this component and its fateful implications for the development of modern antisemitism, it is necessary first to examine briefly the nature of capitalism and its transformative effects, which the motif casts in alienated form.

Commodity Fetishism: "The Master Trope"

Within Europe itself and throughout the world, the advance of capitalism has entailed deep-seated transformations for traditional societies. This has meant not only a shift in modes of production, but a more profound transformation in the cultural constructions of self, labor and the body which meaningfully ground economic activity within living and reproducing social systems. In case after case where traditional societies are poised on the threshold of capitalist transformation—from the historical German case described in these pages, to such widespread instances of capitalist encroachment as those described by Jean Comaroff for South Africa (Comaroff, 1985) and Michael Taussig and June Nash for South America (Taussig, 1980; Nash, 1979)—by no means is the advent of capitalism perceived as a natural and taken-for-granted development. To the contrary, the shift to capitalism is almost always experienced to some degree as unnatural and alienating. Particularly when the transformation to capitalism is fresh or entails protracted difficulties, the straining shift of perspective and power drives the implicit, epistemologically structuring principles of capitalism to the surface, where their alienating characteristics become objectified in dramatic and socially compelling forms. In particular, the substitution of an impersonal commodity market for the coherent fabric of traditional social relations with which the precapitalist subject previously was interwoven, engenders an involuntary and mysterious dislocation of the laboring self. Often enough, this dislocation is represented in terms of bodily disease or even as a victimization at the hands of a frustratingly abstract but manipulating force of evil.

Marcel Mauss's notion of the "total social phenomenon" (Mauss, 1966:1) has become a common means of characterizing the integrated framework within which labor and social identity derive their meaning in precapitalist contexts. This in turn has been contrasted ideal-typically to the notion of alienation inherent in Marx's analysis of capitalism, in which the products of man's labor are detached from the producing self and community and

converted into commodities. The result is not only an alienation of labor, but a self-estranged and atomized personal identity as well (see Marx, 1967; Ollman, 1971; see also Comaroff, 1985:126, 174). In traditional societies, labor and the time invested within it are not abstract and measurable quantities, to be bought and sold on the market, but inalienable properties of the person, embedded within the multifaceted processes whereby the sociocultural system is reproduced. Precapitalist production—the paradigmatic production of "gifts" (e.g., handicrafts) rather than "commodities"—is not perceived simply as a utilitarian process. Instead it is a symbolic domain containing "all the strands of which the social fabric is composed" (Mauss, 1966:1; cf. Comaroff, 1985:74), from the religious and political to the economic and the moral. Within such a conceptual scheme, as Comaroff points out, "human subjects and material objects are not definitively set apart: the moral, spiritual, and physical components of the perceptible world exist in an integrated and mutually transforming relationship" (Comaroff, 1985:127). Not surprisingly, production in such a context has a humanizing function: persons invest a part of themselves in that which they produce, so that goods appear to bear the life force of their producers as well as the social context of production. Exchange of goods means, in turn, an extension of the self into social time and space; thus precapitalist production and exchange has the capacity to expand personal influence while simultaneously forging reciprocal social relations (see Gregory, 1982; Munn, 1986; 1977). Because gifts are "total social facts," condensing both the person and the moral world within which he reproduces himself, their worth "is highly subjective, situationally specific, and more a function of the relationship established than value supposedly inherent in the thing exchanged" (Taussig, 1980:193). Indeed, part of their value is their power to generate cooperation and mutually reaffirm the social identities invested within the goods themselves. This is by no means to assert an idealized quality to precapitalist societies, as if they did not possess their own inherent forms of alienation, deprivation, inequality and exploitation. The distinction between "gifts" and

"commodities," in fact, is an idealized one--and in the Nazi era, a highly-charged ideological one as well (see chapter 11 and below)--with the qualities of each overlapping from traditional to modern contexts (see Appadurai, 1986). The contrast nonetheless provides a useful heuristic for conceptualizing the differing location of the person in relationship to the overall social order in traditional as opposed to capitalist societies. In the former, personal identity and the products of labor, however diversely these may be constructed from culture to culture, are experienced as remaining meaningfully embedded within an interpenetrating field of social, material, and moral values.

This integrated pattern of meaning and practice undergoes a fundamental transformation with the rise of capitalism, as traditional society becomes increasingly defined by the phenomenon which Marx called "commodity fetishism" (Marx, 1967:71-83). Now the abstract principles governing the functioning of the market become interposed between people; social relations become mediated, not by persons, but by the things they produce. Labor becomes an isolated quantity to be bought and sold, while the time invested in labor is separated from the flow of social relations to become endlessly subdivided, atomized and measured by the clock. In fully developed capitalist societies, the market itself is not recognized as a symbolically meaningful refiguration of traditional social relations, but comes to appear as a natural arena of activity discontinuous from other domains of social life. Thus the rule of the market becomes taken-for-granted, an inevitable condition of human existence: "The market established basis of livelihood becomes in effect a constantly lived out daily ritual, which, like all rites, joins otherwise unconnected links of meaning into a coherent and apparently natural network of associations. The commodity paradigm for understanding humanity, social relations, and the world at large now predominates" (Taussig, 1980:26). Although the products of one's labor continue within this new context to bear intimations of the producing self, it is now a self reduced to the

form of a detached and manipulable quantity, one that circulates without control within a seemingly natural and autonomous market devoid of overt meaningful structure.

As the prior comment indicates, essential to the workings of the commodity principle is a process of decontextualization, in which social products—the products of labor, but also ideas and persons—become reified into thing-like entities. At the same time the social significance of these products is disguised as a natural property of the thing itself; thus they appear to take on an autonomous life of their own. Men come to confront the products of their own creative efforts as something alien and independent, while the manipulation of their labor in the form of commodities allows others to control the conditions of their lives (see Ollman, 1971:142). This process is reinforced by the workings of money in capitalism. Money is the quintessential form of the commodity fetish. The universal equivalent of value in capitalist society, money as interest-bearing capital appears to reproduce itself in a self-expanding manner, as if this were an organic property of money itself. In fact, the fetish nature of money is so powerful that money comes to appear as the sole repository of exchange value in capitalist society, while commodities are perceived as separate and natural items of utility alone. Thus the final step of commodity fetishism is to disguise exchange value and the workings of the market—that which converts use-values into commodities—and focus all awareness of exchange onto money alone (see Postone, 1980; Shatzmiller, 1990).

Along with the general reification of social relations that capitalism brings about comes the individualization of identity: each person becomes a microcosmic instantiation of society, of the commodity market and its organizing principles. This atomizing process is further naturalized by the rise of organismic imagery, which entails a reconstruction of the body into a biological unit interchangeable with others; the natural power it bears must be offered up for a price if the individual is to be sustained and society as a whole reproduced. This separation of the person from the defining web of social relations, and his reduction

into an isolated, biological entity, goes hand in hand with what Taussig has called the "epistemological canons of atomistic materialism" as reflected in the works of Descartes, Galileo and Newton, among others. "Man is individualized, as are all things, and organic wholes are broken into their supposed material constituents. Irreducible atoms related to one another through their intrinsic force and causal laws expressed as mathematical relationships form the basis of this cosmology, and in so doing, embody and sustain the commodity fiction of social reality" (Taussig, 1980:30). As Taussig points out, the epistemological perspective implicit within these scientific models provided capitalism with a naturalized aura, thereby disguising the social origins of its form and justifying its particular deployment of power. Darwinism is a case in point. The transposition of its principles "from organic nature" to the history of social relations in the form of Social Darwinism served, as Marx himself observed, to naturalize the inequalities implicit in power relations and justify capitalism's competitive principles, as if these reflected "eternal laws of human society" (cited in Taussig, 1980:34).

Thus we see that the power of the commodity to mediate social relations is not simply economic in nature. To the contrary, commodity fetishism is the core structuring principle of capitalist society—the "master trope" (Taussig, 1980; cf. Lukács, 1968)—which provides a new epistemological framework through which the self, body and labor are experienced. The nature of this transformation is so central to our ongoing analysis that it bears summarizing one more time in somewhat different language. It entails, in essence, the separation of labor power from its rootedness in the body and in the traditional social contexts of production, and its conversion into a free-floating symbolic entity—a commodity which can be bought and sold. For this to occur, the social actor must internalize the principles underlying this transformation, and then deploy them outward in a taken-for-granted manner. This means that the results of commoditization do not stop with the decontextualization of the social product, but entail a depersonalization of the producing

subject as well—a fateful reformulation of personal and social experience as implied by the world of "gift" production and exchange, as we have already noted. As Lukács has written, "this fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject" (Lukács, 1968:89); thus the person becomes increasingly dislocated from the orienting framework of traditional social relations to become himself an atomized entity "freely" yet of necessity offering up his labor to the impersonal rule of the marketplace. At the same time the reified products of bodily labor, detached from the social context of their creation, are reinfused with a seemingly autonomous life. The common, socially-rooted dimension which these products share—their exchange value—is disguised in the reified, utilitarian appearance of commodities, while money, the means whereby that common dimension is measured, comes to represent capitalism as a whole.

What this commoditization of the self, labor, and the body itself actually represents is their conversion into a unique form of naturalized symbolic media (see chapter 9 and Munn, 1974; T. Turner, 1968; Parsons, 1963) that circulate involuntarily throughout the market and society, their definition impinged upon by a wide array of vested concrete interests as well as by social forces that are far more difficult to pinpoint or conceptualize. For this reason those seeking to express the alienation inherent in this transformation focus on money and its manipulators, but not the deeper structuring principles of capitalism, as the reified "root of all evil" (see Le Goff, 1988; Shatzmiller, 1990). This is particularly so for persons in transitional contexts, where the shift to capitalism is still experienced as an unnatural but mystifying process. Here the subjugation they experience to the seemingly autonomous power of commodities is often focused solely upon the reified power of money, and its apparent parasitic capacity to breed itself by draining the substance of human life and bodily effort. The exchange-value dimension of the commodity fetish—the power that seems inherent in money—appears an abstract and intangible force, enormously powerful in its capacity to transform, to dominate, and to destroy (see Postone, 1980). But

the power of money must be activated—something which often entails, as we have seen, a concomitant personification of the alienating dimensions of exchange, of which the German "Jew-Devil" is a prime example.

The Commoditized Christian

The deep-seated alienation which the capitalist cultural transformation of self, labor and the body engenders is expressed viscerally in the ritual murder component of the elaborated *Judensau* motif—and in particular, its "free-floating" image of victimization. Here we see the Christian child torn loose from his familiar, humanizing environment and thereby denied his legitimate place within the rituals of the Christian life cycle and its practices of social reproduction. No longer safely a part of the Christian social community from which he derives his identity and to which he contributes his productive energies, the child has been abducted by Jews and placed in isolation upon the ghetto wall. There his body is bound, pierced and drained of its blood. Thus the image speaks overwhelmingly of the dislocation engendered by the transformative effects of capitalism, and its conversion of the body into a floating commodity, a mere object of use, manipulated by alien and mysterious forces. This interpretation is underscored by the increasingly secularized focus upon the body of a contemporary child, rather than upon the figure of Christ or a generic animal alone, thereby suggesting the growth of an atomized individuality that goes hand in hand with the rise of commodity relations. The child's decontextualization is completed by the manner in which the image of his ritual murder is framed and made to hover above the scene of the Jew-Devil and sow. This creates a parallelism of meaning between the two scenes of victimization, while placing the child's body helplessly within an alien social space defined by the Jew and his demonic and unnatural practices of self-reproduction.

In the ritual murder component, it is not the sow's milk or waste, but the Christian child's blood which now is drained to sustain the Jew and the arcane ritual practices

whereby the Jew reproduces his social life. The parallelism of this image to that of the sow reveals the assimilation of the motif's earlier meanings to the epistemologically structuring power of a developing commodity fetishism. Already in the simple form of the motif, the sow stood implicitly as the alterego of the Christian in his relation to the Jew. Thus the Christian identified himself as one with the natural and organic world of subsistence and use-value production which the Jew parasitized. In the later forms of the motif, the parallelism of the Christian child's victimization to that of the sow continues this identification. But the identification has intensified, in accord with the growth of capitalism and its effect upon the construction of subjective identity and the body. As the Jew comes ever more to personify encroaching capitalist exchange relations, the "natural" Christian body is perceived increasingly as having been commoditized by the Jew. Thus the Jew becomes a reification of exchange-value, while the organic qualities of the Christian body, defined by its embeddedness in the subsistence economy, now become structured contrastively in terms of the use-value dimension of the developing commodity fetish (see Postone, 1980). The earlier dialectic of Christian and Jew continues, but now in terms appropriate to the emerging capitalist order. The alienation inherent in this transformative process—and in capitalism itself—is expressed by the perception that use-value and exchange value are separable and diametrically opposed, rather than dual dimensions of the overarching commodity fetish. Thus the world of the Christian and of "natural" production is perceived as existing in bitter and vulnerable contradiction to the Jew and the expanding cash nexus, which threatens to parasitize and dominate the world by transforming all human meaning into commodity form.

The representation of the Jew as draining the blood of the Christian child, like Luther's reference to the Jew's devouring of Christian bodily substance, dramatically expresses growing alienation to the quantifying power of monetary relations. Again, the role of the body is crucial here. In any sociocultural system, the most powerful and encompassing

form of production is the production of children, for this represents the overall capacity of society to reproduce itself. At the same time, the self-contained circulation of blood within the body provides a natural metaphor for the circulation of goods, money and services in the subsistence economy. In the elaborated *Judensau* motif, the draining of the child's blood represents the syphoning off of the body's natural productive capacities, which are rechanneled involuntarily into the engulfing circulation of value in exchange. Thus the organic production of crops and crafts—and the overall reproduction of Christian society, as symbolized in the child's body—becomes enmeshed within the cash nexus, governed by the unnatural practices of the "blood-sucking" Jew and reified in his alien form and status. Just as the Jewish *Wucherer* extracts money from the natural production of the Christian and induces it into a rampant, self-serving growth, the Jewish ritual murderer entraps the Christian body and drains it of its blood so as to sustain himself. This, then, is the cultural means whereby the dislocation of the precapitalist subject, and the transformation of use-value into exchange-value, is expressed. The dimensions of the self invested in traditional productive processes are drained, in effect, by the rise of commodity relations. Subjectively experienced, *blood is transformed into money*—an alienated cultural construction which, rather than disappearing, will actually find its most extreme if secularized expression in National Socialism's antisemitic ideology and practice. This construction is not unique to Germany, however. The seeming voraciousness of money and its alleged manipulators for the organic—be it blood, cattle, children, the human soul, or the "natural" products of bodily labor—is common to the means whereby the alienating dimensions of capitalism are experienced the world over (cf. Nash, 1979; BurrIDGE, 1969:41-46; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1990; Taussig, 1980; Comaroff, 1985).

A dramatic example can be extracted from Eric Hansen's memoir of his travels in modern Borneo (Hansen, 1988:186-7). Among the Kenyah and other groups in the central highlands, reports Hansen, natives fear the *bali saleng*, or black ghost, a half-human jungle

spirit that abducts villagers, including children, and murders them for their blood. Now in their own villages, Kenyah require a blood sacrifice to sanctify any new building sites. In pre-colonial times they supposedly would have used the blood of a human captive or young girl, pouring it into a freshly-dug posthole before erecting a new longhouse. Today the blood of a pig or rooster is substituted, Hansen was told. During the modern period these two traditions have intersected with capitalism in a manner that bespeaks its disruptive effects upon indigenous culture and the rainforest environment. Traveling to coastal boom towns where they are recruited into a life of wage-labor, Kenyah and other natives confront what to them seem incredible construction projects, from high-rise buildings to bridges, roads and hydroelectric dams. In an effort to satisfy native beliefs and maintain the labor force, Indonesian companies, even Pertamina, the national oil company, enlist the aid of local shamans to make appropriate blood sacrifices for these giant projects.

Officially, animal blood has been substituted for human blood, but few, if any, inland people believe this. From the central highlands all coastal development plans are viewed with suspicion and fear. The villagers reason that if one longhouse pole traditionally required the blood of one human being, then how much blood from how many people is needed to construct a 30-story concrete office building? I had heard people from the highlands refer to construction projects in terms of their cost in human blood. By village estimates there are "200-person" hydroelectric schemes and "100-person" bridges. Development projects are rarely seen as employment opportunities (Hansen, 1988:187).

It is the role of the modern-day *bali saleng*, writes Hansen, to collect this human blood. Indeed, the *bali saleng* is said to be directly employed by the large companies, who pay the evil entity one million rupiahs—the equivalent of \$1,500—for five pints. The developers must retain several *bali saleng*, it is believed, when the project is a big one. And thus the undermining forms of capitalist encroachment and wage-labor, cast into a half-traditional, half-modern figure of evil, are seen as consuming the blood of the people.

Another example, this time from South America, is even more pertinent to our case. The accusation of ritual murder perpetrated by the Jew upon the Christian child—a practice

which Jews were still being accused of in twentieth century Europe (see Dundes, 1991)—is similar to the baptism of money which Taussig describes for a Colombian peasant society alienated by its transformation into a proletariat. There, in order to benefit from the encroaching practices of capitalism which are otherwise experienced as destructive of traditional society, some peasants are said to secretly substitute a peso bill for a child being baptized. This act supposedly allows money, normally inert and barren, to become animate and reproduce itself in an unnaturally fertile manner. Thus the use-value paradigm is inverted in the form of capitalism—but this is perceived as an unnatural and evil development, necessitating "the agency of the devil":

The problem that Marx set himself, the mystery of capitalist economic growth and accumulation of capital in which capital appeared to breed more of itself, is in this situation seen to occur by the aid of the supernatural forces that were invoked by the Christian baptism of the money bill. Once activated in this way, money becomes interest-bearing capital. An inert medium of exchange becomes a self-breeding quantity, and in this sense becomes a fetish—a thing with lifelike powers (Taussig, 1980:128).

But at the same time the deed is enacted "at terrible cost to the child," for it denies the child "his legitimate place in the rites of the life cycle" (Taussig, 1980:128). Consequently the benefits of the baptized bill can only be enjoyed in luxury items. When money gained in this illicit manner instead is invested as capital for subsistence and gain, its unnatural and socially hostile qualities are said to result in disaster for the individual and the community. Thus the quantifying power of money, and its apparent capacity to breed more of itself in caricature of the organic world, is represented as ultimately destructive to human life and social well-being.

In the Columbian society which Taussig describes, the baptism of the bill is a sleight of hand, intended to increase wealth rather than harm the child; but the child nonetheless is indirectly and secretly dislocated from the social community. The accusation that Jews commit ritual murder is a far more intense and direct expression of the alienating power of

capitalism. In this case the dislocation of the child, his transformation into a floating object of exploitation, is expressed as a hidden act of murder, which the elaborated *Judensau* motif reveals and renders concrete. Here the Jew is himself the force of capitalism, literally draining the child's blood and converting its life force into monetary value, so as to sustain the egotism of Jewish self-reproduction through exchange. Thus the Jew, like the self-replicating peso in the South American example, is himself a fetish form, a personified expression of the abstract and pervasive power of exchange value (cf. Postone, 1980). The ritual murder motif in turn expresses the contrast between the precapitalist world of production, in which the life force of the person is invested directly and positively in that which he creates, and that of capitalism, in which the products of human creativity take on a life of their own as manipulable commodities, alienated from their producers and from the humanizing world of traditional social values in which they previously were anchored.

The Ghetto Wall

In the composite *Judensau* motif, this alienating process of commoditization—the draining of the child's blood—takes place atop the ghetto wall. This *liminal* (or intermediary) positioning relates crucially to the motif's wider meanings, as a refraction of profound transformations in German political economy. As we already saw, the entire hierarchical order of precapitalist German society was expressed in the separation of Christian and Jew, and the subordination of the latter through his confinement within the encompassing physical and legal space of Christian society. This dual process of separation and hierarchical encompassment was even instantiated physically in Frankfurt's spatial layout, as we pointed out earlier, the narrow, walled *Judengasse* attached to the wider city's outer walls as a kind of subordinate architectural appendage (see plate 7). But the confinement of the Jew also implied the subordination of the unnatural productive practices which he personified, and which Christian society sought as a whole to define

and regulate. Thus the representation of the hierarchical order contained in the *Judensau* motif entails simultaneously an implicit hegemonic construction of power—not only of Christian over Jew, but by extension, of Christian society over itself and over the entire domain of production and exchange in transformation. The ghetto wall is the point mediating these transformations in production and political economy—transformations which are themselves embodied and realized only within an implicit but shifting cultural construction of self, labor and the body. The placement of the child's victimized, floating body in this charged liminal position expresses the alienated manner in which these transformations in political economy are subjectively experienced, and implies simultaneously a hegemonic message of the necessity to submit body and soul to newly articulating principles of regulation and control appropriate to an ascending capitalist universe.

The ghetto wall in the elaborated *Judensau* motif thus represents the symbolic division of the precapitalist, use-value defined society from Jewish usury and the rising force of capitalist exchange, which now threatens increasingly to overstep its confines and dominate the surrounding world. This is the point at which the hidden quality of the crime—and thus the hidden injuries inflicted upon body and soul by the abstract principles of a rising capitalism—are objectified and made concrete. The ghetto wall marks the point at which the Christian body is ripped free of its social embeddedness in the defining world of the subsistence economy and traditional social relations. It is here, at this juncture in meaning and power, that the labor of the body begins to float freely as a decontextualized symbolic entity, a commodity vulnerable to the manipulation of exchange which the Jew is seen as governing. At the same time the image is an expression of an *alleged status reversal*, of the inversion of the hierarchical relations whereby society is defined—a crucial point to which we shall return repeatedly in the course of this study (see chapter 4 and below). Through his control over the mysterious and lifelike powers of the commodity, the Jew appears to

escape his physical confines, even as his ghetto walls expand to encompass and entrap the wider society which originally had sought to shut him in. Through all this, the elaborated motif seeks to express the subjective and alienated cultural experience of exchange value expanding rampantly to swallow whole a social order previously dominated by the production of use-value. The depersonalizing rule of the commodity, in the form of the voracious, "world-eating" Jewish usurer, is rending and destroying the integrated fabric of traditional social life such as Marcel Mauss had described. This is the same order of meaning which Martin Luther sought to express through his perception of the Devil's growth into an autonomous demonic power engulfing the world through the Jewish practice of usury.

Thus the alienating structural effects of commodity fetishism are represented graphically in the decontextualization of the child and the further victimization of his body. This image transposes the meanings inherent in the demonized activities of Jews and sow—the escape of rising commodity relations from feudal containment—to the human realm, thereby depicting the alienating impact of capitalism upon human experience. As a whole, the elaborated *Judensau* motif expresses the dislocating process whereby Christian social identity, labor power, and the body itself come increasingly to be perceived as floating symbolic entities, ripped free of their rootedness in the humanizing social relationships of the precapitalist world and its modes of organic production. Now Christian social identity and bodily labor become manipulable commodities which circulate against Christian will in Jewish hands. Christian life force and productive energies, symbolized by blood and bodily substance, are converted into monetary value hoarded by the Jew and used egocentrically for his own socially-hostile forms of self-reproduction. This simultaneously provides the means whereby the Jew, as the demonic expression of the widening power of usury, can escape the ghetto to dominate Christian society.

By representing the destructive properties of exchange value in the form of the "blood-sucking" Jew, the natural but parasitized Christian body, like the commoditized sow, is identified with the use-value dimension of the developing commodity fetish. This logical development reveals something profound about the structuring power of commodity fetishism—for those seeking to express the alienation that capitalism engenders must do so increasingly within the enveloping epistemological framework which capitalism produces. Thus the principles of commodity fetishism are not only responsible for their alienation, but come to structure the very terms whereby that alienation is expressed. The elaborated *Judensau* motif is as much a product as well as an expression of the alienation implicit in the rise of capitalism. However resistant the motif's meanings may seem to the effects of capitalism, they do not free themselves from the alienated conditions which give them rise. Instead the alienation of capitalism is reformulated in the fetish form of the demonized Jew and his reified powers of exchange. Like Luther's apprehension of the Devil's growing power, the motif and its antisemitism is, ironically, an attempt to grasp deep-seated transformations that already are taking hold.

LIMINALITY AND THE REPRODUCTION OF HEGEMONY

The placement of the child atop the ghetto wall relates to the broader liminal positioning of both the simple and complex *Judensau* motif on gates, inns, bridges, and along main roads, a phenomenon which speaks profoundly of the motif's structural significance and dialectical import, and one which will resurface in modern form during the Nazi period (see chapter 8, plates 43-44).

Ever since Van Gennep's seminal essay on the rite of passage, it has been a commonplace of anthropology, but a remarkable fertile one, that such positions of transition or division are crucially placed to express structural tensions in the ongoing reproduction of a sociocultural order (see Van Gennep, 1960 [1908]); cf. V. Turner, 1969;

T. Turner, 1977b). Gates, bridges, walls, roads and doorways, as well as body margins and orifices (see T. Turner, 1980; Douglas, 1966, 1970), provide concrete opportunities to structure both the social world and bodily experience. Indeed, these liminal, or intermediary, locations are points of intersection between the individual and the collectivity, helping to organize the flow of social life through space and time as it is variously constructed. For this reason these transitional points become the focus of special attention, their construction a means of securing a vested relationship between the natural and the cultural, inside and outside, the personal and the social, the private and the public, the disenfranchised and the empowered, local production and wider marketplaces, indigenous practices and foreign ideas, etc. Liminal spaces and the passage through them (as well as the more intimate organization of bodily space and experience) provide, in effect, in-built opportunities to inscribe, reiterate and constantly reinforce the implicit structural principles whereby the person is articulated with and subordinated to the hegemonic order (see Bourdieu, 1977, 1973; Comaroff, 1985). The process of hegemonic encompassment is never seamless, however. This means that liminal spaces also become natural points to express the inevitable structural tension—indeed, the fear and anxiety—generated by the possibility of challenges to existing power relations as well as to the symbolically-structured moral order whereby those relations are established and maintained.

The role the *Judensau* plays in articulating the relationship of personal identity to the hegemonic social order is suggested strongly by its placement on private homes in prominent locations (the central square of Wiener Neustadt, for example, or the main road linking the town of Kelheim to the larger Regensburg). This permits a patrician, merchant or artisan to advertise and even assert his civic identity as well as his adherence to the principles of economic morality through dialectical reference to that which he is not—the supposedly egoistic, moneylending Jew. In this connection, it is well known that Jews mark the doorposts of their homes with the *mezuzah*, a narrow box sanctifying the

transition from outside to inside with a core sacred text which establishes Jewish identity.³ This rite also resonates with Passover, a holiday which hinges upon the similar marking of Jewish doorways in Egypt with lamb's blood, and commemorates the emergence of a specific Jewish collectivity through an historic event of liberation and rebirth as recorded in *Exodus*. In a sense, these German homes and town gates are similarly marked (if in a culturally more spontaneous and less prescribed fashion) with the *Judensau*, among other representations. Here the attempt to construct and reproduce an hegemonic order regulating the interface of the person with the socioeconomic world is monitored by a defamatory image of the Jew—an image of visceral power couched in terms of threats to bodily integrity and linked to notions of social decay and regeneration.

A highly revealing instance of this—one which includes the telling use of Jewish tombstones as well as the *Judensau*—occurs in the previously mentioned town of Kelheim, and relates directly to those aspects of social identity which are embedded in productive relations of work and political economy. Display of the motif in Kelheim was occasioned by an actual event—the expulsion of the Jews of nearby Regensburg in 1519—and expressed the triumph of a long and difficult campaign of broad political significance. Here both artisans and patricians, imperfectly united, attempted to assert themselves against the imperial authorities of the Holy Roman Empire, with the bishop and Duke of Bavaria prevaricating somewhere in between (see Hsia, 1988:66-85; Ben-Sasson, 1976:576-8). Both town council members and lower classes, seeking to account for the city's dramatic economic decline, found themselves focusing in common upon the city's ancient Jewish

³Trachtenberg (1983:91) reports that the *mezuzah* was considered a supernatural device by the German population, and was thus regarded with both suspicion and desire. Jews in the Rhineland were forced to cover their *mezuzot* in the thirteenth century to protect them from vandalism, while a fifteenth-century writer recommended that Christians affix *mezuzot* to their own doorposts despite the danger of being accused of practicing sorcery. Toward the end of the fourteenth century the Archbishop of Salzburg actually asked a Jew to give him a *mezuzah* to attach to the gate of his castle, a request which was denied by rabbinic authorities.

community. In accord with their anomalous structural role, Jews mediated between the classes, indebting artisans while providing all classes with financial competition. At the same time the continuing sovereignty of the emperor over the Jews, from whom he extracted war credits and other loans, circumscribed patrician municipal power and provided yet another instance whereby the local nobility was bound indirectly to the emperor. Municipal hostility to Jews increased with the growing dependence of the latter upon pawnbroking and retail trade—enterprises reaching beyond Regensburg into its hinterland—in order to offset losses caused by years of excess taxation and costly legal disputes revolving around their credit operations. In the context of Regensburg's political aspirations and changing fortunes, the presence of Jewish middlemen thus came to appear more of a liability than an advantage in the eyes of the city's patriciate.

Contesting imperial "ownership of the Jews," the town council claimed the Jews of Regensburg to be "*its* Jews, because they are surrounded by a wall and gates in its free city," arguing further that the Jews were "the slaves of all by reason of their transgression, and no charter of rights could release them" (see Ben-Sasson, 1976:576). The ongoing struggle, which endured for decades (1470 to 1519), included four separate accusations of host desecration and ritual murder in the first seven years, the last a show trial linked directly to the Trent case as well as the notorious Host desecration trial in Passau (see Hsia, 1988:72, 80). The attempt of the council was to create the impression of an arcane Jewish conspiracy stretching long-distance from Trent to Passau to Regensburg, that is, directly along major north-south European trade lines. Although the Jewish community weathered that storm through imperial intervention, they were forced to continue in their struggle to defend themselves over the years. They did so by acknowledging the commonly-experienced decline of the city but arguing incisively against any attempt to focus the blame upon their presence. Nonetheless the town council and artisans ultimately prevailed, expelling the thousand-year-old Jewish community in 1519 and pillaging the synagogue.

Kelheim was a smaller town in Regensburg's hinterland, dependent upon its larger neighbor for sale of its products and for connection to the wider international market. For these reasons one can presume that Kelheim had particular interest in the outcome of Regensburg's campaign to render itself *judenfrei* (free of Jews), especially as Kelheim apparently already had expelled its own Jews in 1442 and yet still did not consider itself to be "free" of them. Accordingly, the town's defamatory representation of the Jew became part of social identity as inscribed in the construction of public space. The *Judensau's* position—installed prominently on the wall of a private house facing the main street linking Kelheim with Regensburg—served to monitor the town's symbolic links with the impinging outside world. On this most crucial of thoroughfares appeared a carved relief depicting two Jews holding a sow, one of whom forced it to read a tablet with Hebrew lettering while another touched his seal to its rectum in the manner of *Schandbilder*; a third man sucked the sow's teat from below. Nearby was a simplified shield with Regensburg's municipal coat of arms, while the elements as a whole were grouped under the following inscription: "In the year 1519 A.D. the Jews of Regensburg were expelled" (see Shachar, 1974:39-40). A related celebratory inscription upon the house of the mayor himself established the hegemonic points all the more. It began by proudly drawing attention to the mayor's name.

Kaspar Amman
 Anno dom. 1519, on Monday on the eve of the
 festival of Peter's Throne, the Jews were expelled
 from the city of Regensburg and on the eighth day
 not one of them was seen any more.
 PRAISE BE TO GOD⁴

⁴ Kasper Amann
 Anno dom. 1519 am Montag am Abent Petri
 Stuhlfeyer sein die Juden aus der Stadt
 Regensburg geschafft und am acten tag
 gar keiner mer gesehen
 LAUS DEO

Even more revealingly, the demise of a living Jewish community and the Jew himself was actually incorporated into the private homes of several of Kelheim's inhabitants as well. They did this by installing into their outer walls that most prominent and seemingly magical symbol of Jewish death for Christians—Jewish tombstones, with their elaborate but mysterious iconography of palms, lions, impenetrable Hebrew lettering and weird Cohanic blessings. These inset tombstones were accompanied with inscriptions similar to those on the *Judensau* and mayor's house. Nor was this avid expression of *Schadenfreude* idiosyncratic to Kelheim alone;⁵ a similar display of tombstones removed from Regensburg's Jewish cemetery was made in other locales in the region (see Shachar, 1974:40). For the inhabitants of Regensburg and its hinterland, the effect of these displays was that of having traded Simon of Trent's death—and the attempted destruction of the naturally-productive Christian community for which it and all such cases of alleged ritual murder and Host desecration stood—for the collective death of the demonized Jewish community and its alleged parasitism. What was being celebrated, then, was the renewed salvation of the Christian through a supposed this-worldly resurrection of his ongoing socioeconomic life.

Thus the death of the Jew became, at once, a symbolic and material component in the construction of living German households, eagerly assimilated to personal and collective identity. Not only did the townspeople of Kelheim officially celebrate the vanquishing of the Jew; they displayed their civic personae by physically incorporating Jewish death into the continuation of their own lives. The *Judensau* motif and the tombstones in the walls of their homes—in near caricature of the Jewish *mezuzah*—became symbols of German Christian rebirth, of liberation from the Jew's alleged magical control over the wider

⁵Often considered an example of an "untranslatable" cultural term in German, *Schadenfreude*—literally, "joy over the misfortune [of others]"—can be glossed as "gloating" or "gloating pleasure."

commodity marketplace and over the aspects of the embodied German self as invested in the transforming political economy of 16th-century Germany.

This celebratory assimilation to the German self of Jewish symbols of death is integral to the phenomenon of *antisemitic status-reversal*—that is, the aggressive attempt to "turn tables" on the Jew, re-subordinating him in response to his alleged inversion of traditional power relations. As we shall see, the belief in the need to reverse the effects of alleged Jewish conspiracy as a means of German "liberation" (including emphasis upon Jewish symbols of death) remains a defining structural element of German antisemitism as it transforms over the centuries, manifesting itself fully in the forms of Nazi genocidal practice (see *Part Five* below). As for the Kelheim *Judensau* itself, it was removed during the first half of the nineteenth century in response to Jewish complaints and on order of a local judge, only to be transferred to the hall of the town pharmacy. The new location may not have been merely coincidental: belief in the Jewish physician's potentially poisonous intervention in Christian bodily health was a long standing element of German antisemitism, as we will see shortly in the case of Martin Luther himself (see chapter 4), and yet again later when we turn to the Nazi era. Nor did the *Judensau* disappear once the Kelheim pharmacy was rebuilt in 1895; instead it was reset even more prominently in the building's outer facade (see photo in Fuchs, 1921:3). There it remained through all the years of the Third Reich until finally being chiselled off in 1945 by order of a U.S. army officer (Shachar, 1974:40).

The position of the Salzburg *Judensau* was even more obviously hegemonic than the inscription on the mayor's house in Kelheim. Located right at the heart of this important archbishopric, it was painted on the clock tower of the Salzburg *Rathaus* itself, where it remained until 1785. Precipitated likewise by the Trent blood libel as well as by Passau's Host desecration trial of 1477, in which Salzburg's Jewish community also had been directly implicated, the mural had been commissioned in 1487 by the city fathers from two

well-known artists. One of them, a Master Valcknawer, was important enough to be selected later by Emperor Maximilian I to decorate the imperial tombs in Speyer Cathedral (see Shacher, 1974:37; 83, n.185). In addition to Salzburg, the *Judensau* at Cadolzburg also bears mentioning again (Shachar, 1974:37). Still referred to today by locals as "*die Judensau*" although nearly defaced by age, it was juxtaposed with defining impact next to the Hohenzollern crest on the castle gateway, thereby creating a composite icon of aristocratic identity at a point of strategic intersection with the general populace. However directly it may have referred to the Jew, its deeper purpose there as elsewhere was to serve as a *tertium quid* through which to propagate a shared yet vested definition of Christian social identity and moral comportment.

More dramatic even than these examples, however, was the prominent positioning of Frankfurt's widely-known *Judensau*, for it combined all of the hegemonic implications of the Salzburg or Cadolzburg motifs along with a location of unparalleled liminality. Situated in the bustling inner passage of the massive Bridge Tower giving entrance to one of the greatest German cities of the age (and the one with the largest Jewish community), this famous *Judensau* served along with Frankfurt's eagle crest as a veritable emblem of the city. The liminality of its positioning is manifold, for the *Brückenturm* stood (as did the city itself) at the intersection of two major international trade routes, the first an overland route and the other the river Main itself over which the bridge presided so regally. The motif thus accrued to itself the multiple liminality of bridge, thoroughfare and gateway. Condensing the potent structural implications of this strategic placement with its own intrinsically liminal imagery, the motif monitored the prime threshold between the inner moral world of the free imperial city over which Frankfurt's city council sought to prevail, and the far more elusive yet impinging outer world of foreign ideas, markets and distant imperial authority, all of which lay beyond the council's immediate control. Indeed, it was no accident that the symbolism of anality and the breaching of bodily margins should have

appeared here, at the walled city's prime point of entry: the body, its openings, and its physiological interaction with the surrounding world served as symbolic correlatives for the bounded Christian community itself, providing a natural means for expressing concern over potential challenges to the integrity of the prevailing hegemonic order and the dimensions of the self invested therein (cf. Douglas, 1970:70).

It was at this crucial juncture that the principles of the city were officially inscribed, confronting passers-by with an impact that was unavoidable, whether they were patricians or commoners, individuals visiting from Frankfurt's hinterland, or foreign merchants arriving to one of the city's famous international trade fairs. As we already have shown, however, the message of the *Judensau* was not simply to warn visitors about the potentially abusive behavior of the city's grudgingly-tolerated Jews. The threat of Jews overstepping the bounds of their proper enclosure within the ghetto, imagined here on the edge of the wider city's walls and at its grand entrance, underscored the necessity for Christians to refrain from economic practices deemed destructive to the moral order of society as a whole and threatening to the powers vested therein. At the same time it expressed deeper anxiety generated by the widening reach of abstract principles over which no man in fact could prevail, however much the Jew had been made to embody them. Indeed, although the idiom strategically shared across all boundaries of class was that of Jews inverting the moral order of society, the deeper vision of the *Brückenturm* motif was that of Christians struggling to hold bounds against the transformative effects of a world market impinging ever more directly upon each of Frankfurt's inhabitants, whatever their personal differences or social estate.

Although the development of printing and a wider marketplace allowed the *Judensau* motif to detach from its original liminal locations, this by no means indicates that the significance of its liminal positioning was lost. To the contrary, the printed versions of the motif—most of which refer to the Frankfurt *Judensau*—rarely fail to mention the original

location of the motif. A broadsheet of 1678, printed to commemorate the most recent official renovation of the original painting, even depicts a small version of the *Brückenturm* with a tiny human figure in the passageway, identifiably a Jew by dint of his hat, gazing upward and pointing at the image of his defamation (see plate 11). As we have seen, the inclusion in the Frankfurt *Judensau* of the ghetto wall, atop which Simon of Trent is ritually murdered, provides an even more powerful expression of liminality: the ghetto wall is positioned dramatically between Christian and Jewish society, and thus between the hierarchically encompassing, and the encompassed—or rather, that which Christian society would prefer to keep contained and under strict control, whether it be the Jew, the demonized processes of exchange, or the psychobiological energies the Christian body itself. In fact, the previously mentioned broadsheet actually contains a note advertising its presence on all three gates to the ghetto of Frankfurt, upon which it apparently had been posted.

Thus the highly-charged implications of liminality in the *Judensau* are conserved and even heightened within printed versions of the motif, which now serve to free those meanings from their immediate physical location. Indeed, the formerly concrete *Judensau* motif itself—in perfect complement to the atomized individuality represented by its image of Simon's floating, decontextualized body—has been abstracted from its fixed existence so as to circulate within the growing market in commodity form. Commercially reproduced by competing artisans and printers, the liberated *Judensau* with its prostrate Simon—indeed, antisemitism itself—has become an ever-more generalized symbolic medium of social interaction through which Christians of diverse backgrounds could negotiate their positions in the transforming social hierarchy as well as their relationship to the market itself (see chapter 5; see also Hsia, 1988:42). Housed now within the home as well as publicly displayed, its hegemonic meanings have been installed all the more within the

personal identity of those inside Frankfurt's gates as well as those living beyond its walls, all of whom will be coming to call themselves German as the centuries progress.



Plate 17. The Devil (in foreground, with Jew badge) participating in Jewish financial transactions (c. 1620). (Source: Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]:195)

Der Juden Er- barkeit.

Wie siehstu der Juden Tanz/
 Ir Gottes Lestung vnd Sinanz/
 Wie sie den Son Gottes verspeyen/
 All Christen vermaledeyen.
 Darzu all Christlich Oberkeit/
 Weils nicht gerhet so ist es in leid.
 Auch ir gewaltliche Wucherey/
 Noch sind sie bey alln Herren frey.
 Betrachte doch solchs du fromer Christ/
 Du seyst gleich hoch / odr wer du bist.
 Las dir dis Buch zu hertzen gan/
 Gott wird eim jeden gebn sein lohn.



ANNO. M, D, LXXI

Plate 18. Jewish demons and sow. Woodcut title page of *Der Juden Erbarkeit*, 1571, a tract against usury. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:13)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LEGACY OF THE REFORMATION

As we saw earlier, the hostility to the rise of commodity relations which the complex *Judensau* motif exemplified was not a perspective generated wholly from the outside looking in. To the contrary, the cultural form whereby that hostility was expressed—including its symbolic transposition onto the Jew—revealed the extent to which the epistemological principles of capitalism, however alienating, already were taking hold. These alienating qualities thus were not simply projected outward onto the Devil and Jew. As already demonstrated when outlining the effects of commodity fetishism upon the definition of social experience, these qualities were internalized simultaneously by the Christian as well. The result was a profound transformation in the construction of self, body and labor that prevailed in German lands about the time of the Reformation.

No one helped better than Martin Luther to crystallize this transformation and consolidate its effects. In particular, the special emphasis Luther placed upon the relation of the body to work for the achievement of Christian salvation had fateful consequences for the development of a bourgeois German capitalist subject as well as for the course of modern antisemitism. This is not to say, of course, that the forms and practices of early modern antisemitism were exclusive to Protestants. As Hsia has indicated, Germans in Catholic lands also participated in the discourse of ritual murder, host desecration and the like especially during the Counter-Reformation and well into the eighteenth century (see Hsia, 1988:136; 217-25). In fact, the blood libel never actually died away fully, but

continued to resurface throughout Europe even into the twentieth century (see Hsia, p. 2, n.3; see also Strack, 1909; Dundes, 1991). Nonetheless the fact remains that it was Lutheranism which secularized by the late nineteenth century (supported, however problematically, by the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s) to become the "civil religion" of a unified Germany (see Tal, 1975; Dahrendorf, 1969; cf. Bellah, 1970:168-89), complete with an implicit, taken-for-granted symbolic structure that helped to shape social experience. In order then to understand the articulation of Lutheranism with modern antisemitism as well as the resulting political consequences, it is important to explore the implications of Luther's formulation of the Christian salvatory process as well as the interface of the latter with the anti-Jewish constructions that increasingly came to dominate his thinking toward the end of his life. Thereafter we will have an opportunity to examine the political dimensions of these meanings in the context of Frankfurt's Fettmilch Revolt, a paradigmatic case-study in which the proto-modern forms of popular protest and antisemitism converged.

THE DIALECTIC OF SPIRIT AND FLESH

Martin Luther's formulation of a new salvatory process objectified a wide backdrop of socioeconomic change in sixteenth-century Germany. This included the attempt by local authority, in three hundred major princely territories, free towns and bishoprics, to assert their independence from the decentralizing Holy Roman Empire and its symbol of control, the Pope. Accompanying this was the rise of capitalism, with its disruption of feudal relations, its weakening of guild structure and its increasing substitution of traditional dependency with a new dependency upon the impersonal vagaries of the rising money market. Within this context, artisans, minor merchants and peasants were often threatened with proletarianization (see Borkenau, 1973:131). As a consequence they often sought means to preserve their socioeconomic status as centers of power shifted. Luther's

ideological formulations, which justified the existing social hierarchy while submitting autonomous economic activity to moral constraint, proved particularly appealing to members of these classes.

Luther located man's basic nature in the opposition of two contradictory qualities, one spiritual and the other bodily. In his essay on *The Freedom of a Christian*, Luther defined man's spiritual nature, or soul, as the "inner or new man," while man's bodily nature, or flesh, was conceived of as the "carnal, outward, or old man" (Luther, 1961:53). Luther expanded upon man's carnal nature (which he often called "old Adam") in his commentary on Paul's epistle to the Romans, describing it as an indwelling state of sin which encompasses all aspects of man's "self, body and soul, including our reason and all our senses" (p. 25). This carnal nature strives to dominate man's physical and spiritual being. Grace is achieved through a struggle to contain the nearly overwhelming impulse to sin, something which can be accomplished, however, only by submitting the body to a process of systematic self-discipline. Luther described this process in the most extreme terms. It is ". . . the battle of the spirit struggling against the flesh, and finally killing outright the sins and passions that remain alive after our justification" (p. 29). Indeed, wrote Luther, in order to "control the flesh" one must go so far as "to put old Adam to death" (p. 32). This, "the real work of faith," could not be accomplished through a single effort, however. It was a continual process to be undertaken daily and pursued with constant vigilance:

Throughout our whole lives, we shall be kept fully employed with our own selves, taming our body, killing its passions, controlling its members till they obey, not the passions, but the spirit. This self-discipline is needed in order that we might conform to the death and resurrection of Christ, and also that we might complete the meaning of our baptism; for baptism, too, signifies the death of sin and the new life of grace. The final goal is that we should be entirely liberated from sin, rise again in the body with Christ, and live for ever (p. 29).

Luther's writings clearly articulated an enhanced and even obsessive focus upon the body itself and its supposed inherent disorder, a formulation that appears to have been

made in step with the individualizing process implicit in the development of commodity relations as well as with the fragmentation of centralized power in the Holy Roman Empire. This focus upon the body was not static. To the contrary, it implied a dynamic process whereby bodily disorder could be conquered through its continuous—but ever-precarious—hierarchical containment. The basic elements in this symbolic construction of the body, as we have just seen, are its essential carnality, to be contained and encompassed within unyielding bounds through a rigorous, even annihilatory struggle of self-discipline, denial, and submission. This ordering process was developed further with Luther's notion of the calling (in German *Beruf*, which also means vocation). Here daily labor—the precarious but diligent extension of the flesh into the world of carnal distraction—was invested with salvatory significance (see Weber, 1958:80-1).

The Lutheran necessity to control bodily chaos required an accompanying emphasis upon systematic and regularized work processes, which submitted the needs, disorder and desire of the body to a shaping discipline. Extended outward, work also served to order and enclose the natural chaos of the outer world, imprinting upon its potential invasiveness the ordered face and forms of Christian domesticity. At the same time, work acted to relieve the anxieties intrinsic to Luther's double-binded symbolic structuring of the body as its own worst enemy. It did so by deflecting one's focus temporarily from bodily disorder and the fear that physical inaction would lead to a collapse of the self into chaos (cf. Fromm, 1969 [1941]:111). In this very particular sense, then, work had a "liberating" quality; it made one "free." And yet, in the manner of positive feedback, work also served to perpetuate the very anxieties it seemed to address. Ultimately it reinforced the necessity for more work, not only as a means to complete a particular task, but as an end in itself. No wonder, then, that work itself took on the form of a salvatory process. This process could appear supremely joyful, as so many German hymns attest ("*Arbeit, wie ich Dich Lieb*"). However, the contradictions inherent in Luther's formulation explain why work

also could become the focus of desperate need in times of personal distress. This also accounts for why work might appear eventually as a collective panacea for social disorder if applied with sufficient organization and rigour.

Luther's hierarchical construction of the body was not limited to the person alone. Inevitably, it posed one nested moment within a wider hierarchical structuring of society itself. Like the egoistic impulses of the body's "old Adam," the inherent disorder of society also had to be contained within disciplined bounds as defined by feudal relations of dominance and submission. Luther's well-known outbursts against the peasants in revolt or his more generalized statements supporting authority confirm this. These statements hinge upon his double-binded definition of freedom as an inward state of internalized obedience. "A Christian," Luther wrote in one of his most fundamental formulations, "is the lord of all things and subordinate to none; a servant to all things and subordinate to everyone" (my translation, but cf. Luther, 1961:53). Thus the subjective construction of the body as a submissive entity laboring to contain its own base impulses also articulated with the necessity to accept one's divinely-ordained social status (or vocation) in the world along with the authority of divinely-vested powers. In this manner Lutheranism helped to create a German-Christian subject who supported existing hegemonic relations as well as the work ethic by internalizing the necessity for both obedience and productivity within a taken-for-granted construction of personal identity (cf. Weber, 1958). As before, this process of hierarchical encompassment was a tension-ridden one. Perceived threats to one's capacity to maintain bodily autonomy, worldly well-being, and spiritual peace could inspire profound distress as well as vigorous attempts at resolution. This was almost always expressed, however, in symbolic terms that eschewed a direct confrontation with existing powers or the principles supporting them, and thus served ultimately to maintain the status-quo as well as the symbolic scheme upon which the construction of a secure but hegemonized personal identity depended.

The preceding discussion reveals something profound about the construction of an emerging capitalist subject in Germany. The dualistic Lutheran formulation at base is one of the body at war with itself. Defined as a wild domain of egoistic impulses, the body is an anti-social force which must be domesticated through hard productive labor upon the self. This labor requires that the body (and soul) give up its autonomy to the requirements of authority, social dictate, hierarchical position, church-defined morality, and ultimately, to the taken-for-granted disciplinary imperatives of the growing commodity market itself. We see here, albeit in incipient form, a treatment of the body as the object of its own self-alienated labor. The epistemological precepts governing the practices of capitalism are wielded by the self against the body and thereby internalized, something which also allows these precepts to be applied outwardly in the world of the labor market. At the same time their alienating dimensions, as we saw, are projected outward onto such figures as the Jew, thereby helping to maintain the overall construction. As we shall see more clearly later on when dealing with the secularization of these religiously-couched symbolic forms in the nineteenth century, the result of this dialectical process was the generation of an authoritarian capitalist subject fit to constitute a German civil society in the making.

THE LIBERATING POWER OF WORK

Like the relationship of Christian and Jew described in previous chapters, Luther's construction of Christian being and salvation entailed a powerful dual process of binary opposition and hierarchical encompassment: the disorder of the body was opposed to, but encompassed by, the discipline of Christian will. This construction of the body generated a hegemonized social identity, as well as a practice allowing for its reproduction. At the same time it articulated intimately with the relationship of Christian to Jew, who was set in opposition to all Christians as a step in his own hierarchical encompassment. The significance of this complementary process for the definition and reproduction of a

hegemonic social order—as well as the hostility and potential for violence implicit within it—was insured by the rootedness of the Jew in the construction of the Christian body itself, as well as in the salvatory process through which Christian identity was reproduced.

The dialectic of spirit and flesh implicit in Luther's reformulation of Christian identity, with its construction of the body as a dangerously fragile container, underscored the experiential necessity for personal and collective control. It enhanced the fear posed by the existential threat that the flesh would break out of its containment and dominate the spirit, engulfing one in chaos and thereby condemning one to eternal damnation. As we will soon see in the case of Luther himself, accompanying this underlying fear of chaotic outbreak or collapse was the obsession with the necessity to control the body's margins, and the fear of an invasion of the body by external forces articulating with and preying upon the body's inner weakness. It is at this point, at the bodily pivot in the process of hierarchical encompassment, that the role of the Jew—as "resident alien," demonic moneylender, and living remnant of the pre-Christian world—comes into play.

According to Luther, the Christian encompasses the "old Adam," the realm of pre-Christian, presocialized bodily disorder, within the spirit of Christ, and is thereby born anew. The Jew, however, has failed to accept the word of Christ and remains "old"; he exists in a state of enduring sin and thus is purely of the flesh, in body as well as in worldly comportment (see Luther, 1961:19-34). Thus the Jew is linked metonymically to the disorder of the Christian body, which the Christian must ever struggle to contain, to stifle and "annihilate." This places the Jew in an explosive position within German Christian society—for the Jew is experienced as an element of disorder existing both on the collective level, within Christian social space, and on the personal level, within each Christian body, in the form of the troublesome "old" flesh out of which the new Christian struggles daily to emerge.

The necessity to contain the Jew—as well as the egoistic impulses which he symbolizes in body and practice—thus engages on a collective social level a similar process of hierarchical encompassment as the Christian exerts against his own body. As the unruly flesh must be encompassed by the spirit of Christ, so too the recalcitrant Jew, sinfully persistent within the *Corpus Christianorum*, or Christian social body, must be subordinated and segregated, even walled off and enclosed within ghettos. But that enclosure, as the enclosure of the flesh, is an imperfect one. As we saw when analyzing the complex *Judensau* motif and the significance of its ritual murder atop a ghetto wall, the ungovernable impulse represented by both the Jew and the flesh strives ever to escape its bounds, thereby posing a general danger that the order of Christian society will be inverted as a whole.

Situated pivotally between Christian and Jew, as between the spirit and the flesh, is work itself. As we have already seen, work articulates in Lutheranism with the Christian salvatory process. Work upon the self and world provides the mediating process whereby the flesh and its wild impulses, and likewise the forces of nature, can be encompassed and tamed. At the same time work provides the essential difference between Christian and Jew. Jewish works are not those of the regularized body saved through productive acts, but of the self-indulgent body which satisfies its undisciplined carnal instincts and greed through an unnatural parasitism upon Christian labor. Thus the unproductive Jew, instead of harnessing himself to the plough, uses his moneylending skills to prey upon the weakness of the Christian in order to reproduce himself. Indeed, by seeming to invert his previously-described ideal social status as both separate and subordinate, the Jew threatens to penetrate the bounds which Christians strive to build about their bodily nature, as around society and the world.

Thus the formulation of body and work implicit in the Lutheran salvatory process articulates with the analysis already presented of the complex *Judensau* motif and its

episode of ritual murder, adding to its resonance. The ritual murder motif represents the Jew as inimicable to the Christian salvatory process, draining the vulnerable and immature Christian of life before he has an opportunity to "complete the meaning of his baptism," as Luther expressed it, and participate in the resurrection of Christ. In a sense, Christ is thereby crucified a second time. But these meanings are not floating ideological formulations, for the threat Jews pose to the Christian salvatory process is simultaneously a threat posed to the basic processes of social reproduction in which they are rooted. Indeed, the capacity of the Jew to reach out from behind ghetto walls to penetrate the Christian body as well as invade the spatial integrity of Christian society objectifies graphically all of those forces and developments, psychobiological and economic, over which Christian society as a whole seeks to maintain its hegemony.

In this manner the *Judensau's* visceral image of Jewish parasitism condenses the ambivalences inherent in the development of commodity relations as they evolve within a continuing framework of feudal control. This is a conundrum which is itself expressed in Luther's double-binded construction of the Christian body laboring its way to "freedom" through self-disciplined submission. The localization of authority and the rise of the capitalist marketplace shifts focus increasingly upon the body, which serves as the autonomous realm within which the abstract new principles of political economy are to be internalized. But the persistence of concrete feudal relations dictates that the full release of labor from its embeddedness in overt relations of obligation and dependence should be frustrated, even as the symbolic structures of commodity fetishism become anchored in the body itself. The Christian seeks proximity to and control over the expanding but unruly capitalist marketplace so as to secure the autonomy of his existence; yet he faces simultaneously the necessity of obedience to the feudal powers which continue in their exploitative rule. This means that even as the consciousness of the Christian is individualizing, the traditional order of society remains lodged within his identity,

providing a contradictory sense of impotence cushioned by the security of relative hierarchical position. Thus the Christian experiences a double dependence upon the feudal powers as well as upon the vagaries of the market.

Because of this, the contradictions inherent in the extended and imperfect transition from feudalism to capitalism in Germany do battle within the body of the Christian as well as with the cultural construction of the Jew, mediated by the character of the labor considered intrinsic to each. The productive labor of the Christian, a natural but domesticating extension of the body into the world, is experienced in opposition to the non-productive activities of the Jewish middleman, who is seen as manipulating the products of Christian labor through his magical mastery of money and exchange. Indeed, the Jew threatens to become master of the work itself over which the Christian must retain control in order to liberate himself and thereby achieve salvation. *Work* is thus the mediate term in the unequal but anomalous relationship of Christian and Jew. It is also the term linking the Jew to transformations in the socioeconomic order which the Christian experiences as a threat to personal bodily integrity, social status, and existential well-being.

This construction of Christian/Jewish relations in German lands is not simply a secondary model of social relations, but a dynamic paradigm shaping social experience. As such, it bears pragmatic consequences for ongoing social action—something which Martin's Luther's essays on the Jew bring out powerfully.

"ON THE JEWS AND THEIR LIES"

The need to continually control the negative impulses represented by both the Jew and the egoism of flesh provided Lutherans with a source of constant tension. This is because the alienating dimensions of capitalism which both represented could no longer be easily contained. To the contrary, the principles of capitalism were omnipresent if elusive; already they were coming to encompass the surrounding world, just as they were being

internalized increasingly within each Christian. Indeed, as the effects of capitalism came increasingly to challenge existing feudal relations, the natural order of society itself seemed to be turning topsy-turvy. In Luther's earlier phrasing, the world was being devoured by Mammon in the person of the Jews, his servants. And thus the Jew, in his contradictory role as moneylender, came to symbolize those forces which had escaped their properly hegemonized bounds to dominate the world.

Luther's own vehement solution to this dilemma was couched in the form of *antisemitic status reversal*, a crucial dynamic of antisemitism that continues to manifest itself throughout German history until culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust itself. It was Luther who first crystallized the terms of this dynamic most fully in an explicit antisemitic program outlined during the latter part of his life. This program can best be understood, however, as a rationalized variant of the same forms and practices of symbolic inversion that characterized the *Judensau* and other manifestations of antisemitism in German lands during the late feudal and early modern period.

Antisemitism and Status Reversal in Carnival

Although originally defined within the circumscribed ritual contexts of carnival, symbolic inversion and status reversal actually have far broader implications for the violent course of antisemitic practice than this might seem to suggest. As described by V. Turner among others (see V. Turner, 1969; cf. Bakhtin, 1984; Marriott, 1966), traditional rituals of status reversal usually involve actual social inferiors and superiors who trade positions in a kind of ritualized play without significant violence or lasting transformative effect.¹ This approach tends to retain a functionalist bias extending from the Manchester school, which

¹German folk tradition is replete with these kinds of temporary inversionary rituals. A prime example is that of the Cologne Wives, who still have one day set aside for them during carnival, when they take over the roles of husbands and male officials, all the while mocking their former "superiors" with ribald and abusive verse in rhymed couplets.

treated such cyclical rituals as "safety valves" for the temporary relief of tension caused by social inequalities and structural dissonances. Their purpose was thus to reinforce existing relations of power and gender (see Gluckman, 1954 and 1965:109). However, to whatever extent symbolic inversions such as those characterizing carnival may appear merely mechanical or secondary to the course of social life, in fact they are central, helping to "define a culture's lineaments at the same time as they question the usefulness and the absoluteness of its ordering" (Babcock, 1978:29). Indeed, because acts of status reversal and inversion allow the permutation of the hierarchical relations that exist between the basic symbolic categories that structure the social world, they have the capacity to do more than merely reinforce the status quo. They also provide potential access to underlying principles of structure which can be appropriated, however imperfectly, in an attempt to transform the moral and political order itself (see Babcock, 1978; Stallybrass & White, 1986; Bourdieu, 1973).

The forms and practices of symbolic inversion are crystallized most clearly in, but by no means limited to, what Mikhail Bakhtin called the "carnavalesque" (Bakhtin, 1984). Carnival itself entails a wide variety of public celebration the world over, including spectacles, fairs and processions marked by the use, among other elements, of comic or bizarre costumes and masks; exuberant dancing; all forms of folk humor, including obscene jokes and tricks; the display of human and animal oddities; the performance of vulgar farce in oral and written form as well as in pantomime, etc. In Central European culture carnival is well represented in the revelries of *Fasching* and the pre-Lenten celebrations of the Rhineland, which were often held in town and city marketplaces. The use of such sites is not fortuitous. As Stallybrass & White point out, the marketplace is a bounded enclosure as well as a site of open intercourse with the surrounding world, a domain "where limit, centre and boundary are confirmed and yet also put in jeopardy" (Stallybrass & White, 1986:27). A nurturing source of local identity, the marketplace is the

"imagined centre of an urban community and its structural interconnection with the network of goods, commodities, markets, sites of commerce and places of production which sustain it" (p.27). At the same time the openness of the marketplace to outsiders, new ideas and the impinging effects of the wider economy threaten an unsettling of the very identity it nurtures. For these reasons the marketplace becomes a prime location for the cyclical festivities of carnival and the ritualized transgressions through which it expresses the implicit structural contradictions of social life.

These transgression utilize a dynamic of symbolic inversion involving the abrogation, reversal or contradiction of what Bakhtin termed "official culture" and the normative structures, values and codes through which it perpetuates itself (see Stallybrass & White, 1986:16-17; Babcock, 1978:14). Frequently this entails outrageous entertainments that parody relations between the sexes or poke fun at otherwise sacrosanct individuals and institutions, from secular rulers and church leaders to local merchants and patricians, often through temporary, satiric reversals of social status and gender. Such inversions usually emphasize "low" culture as expressed most powerfully in the contradictory forms and processes of the "grotesque body" with its fleshy underparts, rude functions and gaping orifices. In European contexts the latter stood historically in contrast to the "high body" as exemplified in the inorganic and enduring form of classical statuary, with its smooth surfaces and perfect proportions displayed on pedestals high above the throng (see Stallybrass & White, 1986:21).

While the revelries of carnival often focus derisively upon the normative and powerful, they also entail processes of "displaced abjection" frequently accompanied by scatological forms of ritual degradation, in which they target the "low-Other." According to Stallybrass & White, this includes a popular transfer of satiric attention onto those social groups (such as Jews and Gypsies) or symbolic elements (such as the pig) already of low or marginal status (see Stallybrass & White, 1986:19). As we have seen, however, it is not simply the

lowly status of the Jew but his highly-charged anomalous structural position which makes him the brunt of a particularly hostile and potentially violent form of displaced abjection. With its mistaken attribution of supernatural power to the Jew, this form of displaced abjection leads to a complicated kind of symbolic inversion that transcends the ritualized bounds of carnival to apply its rites of degradation and status reversal in earnest.

We touched upon the special role of such status reversal earlier when exploring the fear of structural inversion implicit in the form of the complex *Judensau*. We also saw the response to this alleged threat in Regensburg's hinterland, when the citizens of Kelheim and elsewhere displayed Jewish tombstones to celebrate the destruction of their larger neighbor's Jewish community. The basic principles underlying antisemitic status reversal can be brought out further by examining an explicit resetting of the *Judensau* motif that occurs within the context of carnival as celebrated among the famed *Meistersänger* of Nuremberg in the period just prior to the Reformation. As Hsia points out, "carnival plays grew out of the life of the guilds" (Hsia, 1988:62). As we shall soon see in the case of the Fettmilch Revolt, it was these same guild members who experienced the contradictory effects of a rising capitalism most keenly. Desiring unbridled access to a vitalizing market free from patrician interference or outside competition, at the same time they sought protection from the bewildering impact of an unpredictable economy. All of this became focused frequently upon the Jew and his seemingly magical capacity to manipulate money so as to ensnare artisans in a demonic web of debt.

These ambivalences were among the factors structuring the Shrovetide revelry in Nuremberg, when journeymen, organized into acting troupes, would "burst into taverns, surprising and delighting the guests" with short sketches replete with the boisterous licence of carnival (p.62). The farces they enacted were written by masters of the handicraft guilds—the *Meistersänger* later enshrined by Richard Wagner—the most prolific of whom was the barber-surgeon Hans Folz. Folz wrote more than one hundred plays between

1459 and 1513, with *The Play of the Duke of Burgundy* counting among his longer efforts. In this *Fastnachtspiel*, Jews, arrayed before an actor playing the son of the reigning German Emperor, were exposed to be secret servants of the Antichrist, their false messiah. Under pressure the Antichrist reveals the Jews' age-old mission: to hate, kill, and rob Christians. "Oh how many are the young children," he cries out, "who are stolen and killed/and made red with their pure blood. . . ." When players were then asked what punishments should be meted out to the Jews, writes Hsia, "sadistic replies alternated with scatological jokes" designed to appeal to the audience's taste in humor (p.64). Jews were to have their tongues torn out and be forced to eat feces; to be "stuffed with powder and ignited" or forced to sit once a year in the public latrine; to be stripped, frozen, or burned.

In the end, a sow was led into the room, and the actors playing the Antichrist and the Jews, egged on by the fool and his wife, pretended to suck milk and eat feces to the merriment of the audience. After the scene with the *Judensau*, the court master ordered the fool to bind the Jews, to take them from the city, and to carry out the sentence, presumably, death by burning (Hsia, 1988:64).

In this literal enactment of the *Judensau's* transgressive symbolism we see the basic elements of antisemitic status reversal at work. Far from representing the Jew as a powerless "other" of low or marginal status, Folz's play "exposes" the Jew's alleged hidden nature: he is a malevolent force acting in collusion with the Devil to usurp the status of the Christian for purposes of power, profit and murder. Indeed, by invoking the blood libel, Jews are shown as seeking to destroy the possibility of Christian salvation altogether. Having revealed the Jew's secret crimes, the revelries of carnival now provide an entertaining opportunity for Nuremberg's actor-artisans and their appreciative audience to restore the proper hierarchical order of society with a vengeance. In keeping with the condensed meanings of the *Judensau*—the Jew as a pig-like scavenger living off the waste products of the naturally productive Christian—the methods chosen to reverse the Jew's alleged usurpation of power involve acts of degradation with an improvisational emphasis

upon anal themes. All this is followed by outright torture and death to pay the Jew back for his supposed parasitism on Christian blood. Folz's play thus executes a full turning of tables on the Jew. Humiliated and injured, the Jew is "restored" to a position of helpless subordination, an alleged reversal of statuses that is accompanied by the release of enormous *Schadenfreude* among playwright, actors and audience. This pleasure is not a mere by-product of the evening's festivities. To the contrary, the satisfaction and gloating humor that characterize this engineered table-turning on the Jew is integral to the process of antisemitic status reversal, and will reappear with revolting intensity during the Nazi era.

The unbridled hostility toward Jews which Folz reveals in his plays was not limited to carnival time. The temporary licentiousness of the season had only given voice to a phenomenon that was far more widespread in its significance and impact. Hsia stresses religious feeling over economic resentment as the source of Folz's hatred, but in fact its origin was an abiding structural tension which linked the two inextricably, in a manner both symbolic and pragmatic. What Folz's carnivalesque treatment of the Jew gives testimony to with its rituals of degradation and status-reversal is a fundamental fear of structural inversion—not only of Christian-Jewish relations, but of the entire hierarchical order of feudal society being *verjudet* or "judaized" (as the term would be applied later), that is, turned upside-down by the unsettling effects of capitalism. As we saw earlier in the case of Regensburg, because the Jew stood as the living embodiment of these alienating effects both structurally and culturally, manipulating him not only gave vent to these fears but also served as a method of struggle in the competitive effort to regulate the transformations taking place and so define one's position within the evolving social order. These factors would find their culminating expression in Folz's Nuremberg in 1499, when the city council, like that of Regensburg twenty years later, would prevail finally over the Emperor's wishes and succeed in expelling the city's ancient Jewish community.

Luther's Rationalized Program of Antisemitic Status Reversal

Far from being limited to the playful contexts of carnival or the pages of illustrated broadsheets, then, the brutal principles of antisemitic status reversal were visited regularly upon living Jewish communities throughout the course of German history. These were not acts of random hostility, but part of the means whereby Germans defined their own social identities as well as their relationships to one another amidst the disruptive pressures generated by an emerging capitalist social order. Indeed, like the liminal space of carnival with its temporary celebration of social contradiction, the Jew with his exchange-nature embodied—but permanently—an interstitial structural position between feudalism and capitalism. This anomalous symbolic status provided an idiom through which the German relation to capitalism itself could be addressed. The Jew thus provided the Christian with an opportunity to objectify the alienating dimensions of capitalism, while becoming at the same time a shared, objective category through which the contradictions of power themselves could be addressed and sometimes even challenged.

Given the profundity of this discourse, it should not be surprising that the man most central to defining the transformations of his own era, Martin Luther, was the one to articulate its implications most clearly. He did so in *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), one of his most extensive and hostile anti-Jewish polemics.

As we saw earlier, Luther's formulation of the Christian salvatory process placed new emphasis upon the body at war with itself, and at the same time represented an intensification of the bodily dimensions of antisemitism. With his allegedly anti-social exchange-nature and his refusal to subordinate himself to the word of Christ, the Jew represented a living expression of Luther's "old Adam," that grossly material and egoistic aspect of the flesh which Christian sought so desperately to contain through disciplinary labor. These unruly impulses were the same ones given temporary reign during carnival in the form of Bakhtin's "grotesque body," thereby articulating all that which the powers of

the Reformation sought to encompass so as to establish their hegemony. The Jew thus served as a constant reminder to the Christian of the existence of his own low body and the threat it posed to achieving salvation. To paraphrase Norman Brown once again, as the "displaced materialization" of the Christian's own anality, the Jew had to be returned, like Luther's Devil, to that despised lowly place from which he came—the ghetto—in order to conquer him. The alternative, in keeping with the gross dictates of these embodied German cultural meanings, was to expell the Jew entirely as in an act of defecation or the removal of bodily poisons.

Luther expressed this necessity in terms of the classic structure of status-reversal, not within the temporary context of carnival revelry, however, but in the rationalized form of a systematic political program. This program was to be visited upon the Jew as in a saving labor meant to liberate Christians from their unnatural servitude.

Although during his earlier years he had acknowledged the involuntary compression of Jews into moneylending and accordingly favored assimilation based upon their willing conversion (*That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, 1523, in Luther, 1971; see also Bein, 1980/I:125), now Luther reifies the Jew's anomalous position, attributing to the Jew a secret and manipulative power over Christian society. Repeating widespread accusations, he calls the Jew a poisoner of wells and a murderer of Christian children intent on "piercing them through with an awl. . . hacking them to pieces." The Jew is an alien and unproductive parasite, he writes in effect, sucking value from Christian labor; he is an enemy to his hosts, and "a heavy burden to us, like a plague, the pestilence, a useless misfortune [*Unglück*] in our land" (Luther, 1971:265; cf. Bein, 1980/I:128).² Luther then

²This last formulation resonates strongly with Treitschke's notorious formula, "*Die Juden sind unser Unglück* [The Jews are Our Misfortune]," which National Socialism later used so prominently on colorful rural signposts, on banners hung like gateways over the main streets leading into towns, and of course as a dominating wall slogan at party rallies.

gives full vent to the specious construction of the Jew as an exploitative usurper of Christian status and power:

In fact, they hold us Christians captive in our own country. They let us work in the sweat of our brow to earn money and property while they sit behind the stove, idle away the time, fart, and roast pears. They stuff themselves, guzzle, and live in luxury and ease from our hard-earned goods. With their accursed usury they hold us and our property captive. Moreover, they mock and deride us because we work and let them play the role of lazy squires at our expense and in our land. Thus they are our masters and we are their servants, with our property, our sweat, and our labor. And by way of reward and thanks they curse our Lord and us! (Luther, 1971:266).

Castigating the Jew as servant of the Devil, Luther now outlines the practical conclusions that Christians and their rulers should draw from his litany of Jewish transgressions:

What should we Christians do with this rejected and accursed folk whom we cannot suffer, because they are among us and we know so many of their lies, abuses and curses. . . . Nor do they allow us to convert them. If we wish to deliver some from the fire and the ashes, we must employ a sharp kindness together with prayer and the fear of God. . . . I shall offer my faithful suggestion:

First, that we set their synagogues or shuls on fire, and what cannot burn shall be buried with earth, so that no man shall ever again see any stone or remnant of it. . . .

Secondly, that one likewise smash and destroy their houses, since there they perpetrate the same deeds as in their shuls. One can put them under some roof or in a stall like the Gypsies, so that they may know they are not the lords in our land as they claim, but in exile and captivity. . . .

Thirdly, that one take from them all their prayerbooks and talmuds, from which such idolatry, lies, curses and blasphemy are taught.

Fourthly, that their rabbis henceforth be forbidden, on pain of torture and death, to teach. . . .

Fifth, that one completely deny the Jews freedom of passage on paths and streets, as they have nothing to accomplish [*schaffen*, i.e., fashion, produce] in the countryside. . . .

Sixth, that one prohibit them from usury and take from them all of their ready money and precious objects of silver and gold. And this is the reason: everything they have. . . they have robbed from us and stolen by usury, as they have no other mode of sustenance. . . .

Seventh, that one give the young, strong Jews and Jewesses flails, axes, hoes, spades, pitch-forks and spindles and let them earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. . . .

There is room for apprehension, to be sure, that they are liable to harm us. . . if they should serve us or work for us. . . . Let us therefore use the simple wisdom of other peoples like those of France, Spain and Bohemia. . . and expell them from the land forever (see Luther in Bein, 1980/I:128-9 and Bienert, 1982:149-50, see also Luther, 1971:268-306 for an alternate, complete English translation.).

Here Luther lays out most of the elements of antisemitism already condensed symbolically in the *Judensau*. Now, however, he also expounds explicitly upon their programmatic consequences. Luther's formulaic solution to this ostensible and perceived Jewish domination is to incite Christians to acts of supposed status-reversal: the Jew will be taught he is not "the lord of the land" by burning down and ploughing under all manifestations of his social being, by appropriating his stolen wealth, and by converting his unproductive manipulations of the Christian into forced "natural" labor upon the land. If before the Jew was a parasitical usurer, now his exchange-nature would be canalized and redirected productively for the good of Christian society. These are the ways to confine the Jew once more to the position of hierarchical encompassment out of which he has allegedly escaped; in this manner the natural order of society, which the Jew has dangerously inverted, can be restored. Here status reversal is performed as a punitive sequence of "productive" acts of Christian labor visited upon the Jew so as to bring about his absolute subjugation, dispossession and enslavement. It thus becomes, in its most violent and exploitative form, a practical alternative to the Jew's otherwise problematic assimilation as well as a prelude to his expulsion.

Luther repeats this program several times during the course of his essay with minor variations, always coupled with the accusation that it is the Jew who has imposed himself exploitatively upon the laboring Christian, getting "rich on our sweat and blood, while we remain poor and they suck the marrow from our bones" (Luther, 1971:273). Playing upon this image of bodily consumption, he concludes by adjuring all ruling heads with Jewish

subjects to "act like a good physician who, when gangrene has set in, proceeds without mercy to cut, saw, and burn flesh, veins, bone and marrow" (p. 292). Thus, in language that harkens to later Nazi constructions, the Jew is represented as a poison within the Christian social body, an agent of disease that must be burned out or cut away in order to restore the Christian to health.

This, then, is the essence of antisemitic status reversal. Responding to the Jew's anomalous structural position as well as his role as an objectification of the abstract forces of capitalism which have already been internalized, Christians assign the Jew secret motives, status and demonic power that he does not in fact possess. In particular he is accused of parasitism, reducing working Christians and their bodies to mere objects of Jewish greed and exploitation. He is then made the pleasurable brunt of violent and degrading efforts to "return" him to a position of helpless subordination and hierarchical encompassment, the ultimate expressions of which are either expulsion or outright murder. In Luther's version this process of status reversal takes the form of a disciplinary program visited upon the Jew in order to "liberate" the Christian. It is, in effect, a vehement application of the same saving labor that Luther would have Christians apply to themselves in order to annihilate their "old Adam" and thereby free themselves from the tyrannies of the flesh. Only here it is the Jew, not the Christian, who must bear the brunt of this labor, thereby helping Germans adjust their relationship to the alienating dimensions of capitalism which his flesh has been made to embody.

Luther's anti-Jewish program had direct and serious consequences. By way of his writings—and often at his direct instigation—many of Germany's Protestant states and cities undertook the expulsion of their Jewish communities. The drive began with Saxony in 1537, followed by Zwickau, Mühlhausen and other Thuringian towns in the 1540s. Brunswick was wracked by anti-Jewish riots 1543; ten years later an order of general expulsion was issued in that duchy as well as in those of Hanover and Lüneburg. The

decade of the 1560s saw a continuation of anti-Jewish agitation, culminating, according to Israel, with riots in Berlin in 1572, the destruction of the city's synagogue, and a writ of expulsion from all of Brandenburg a year later. Similar agitation in Silesia resulted in a near-general expulsion in 1582 (see Israel, 1985:12-13). At the same time the Jewish spokesman Joselman of Rosheim (1478-1554), playing partly upon the direct fealty of the Jews to the Holy Roman Emperor, was able to exert his influence at the imperial court to elicit various writs of protection as well as prevent publication of Luther's antisemitic tract in Strasbourg (see Spitz, 1985:359). Indeed, according to Israel it was only the repeated intercession of the Emperor which preserved any real vestige of Jewish life in German lands. This effort was supported by the Catholic prince-bishops, who used Jews as "a kind of counterweight" in order to engage the Emperor's assistance and so gain leverage against their own rising Protestant bourgeoisie (Israel, 1985:15). As this indicates, the Jew continued to serve a symbolic role as a *tertium quid* through which the classes and estates could assert their differing interests and negotiate issues of power.

Although "less virulent" than anti-Jewish drives of earlier centuries, then, the Lutheran campaign resulted nonetheless in "a more systematic, total and ideological assault than any which had preceded it" (Israel, 1985:10). Indeed, the deepest significance of Luther's formulation is the manner in which it rationalized the pre-existing terms of antisemitic status reversal, lending them explicit ideological form and heightened political potential while building implicitly upon their enduring symbolic constitution.

As the following pages will testify, throughout our examination of German antisemitism we will continue to encounter the forms and practices of symbolic inversion and alleged status-reversal, often accompanied at its most violent and harmful moments by acts of degradation and gloating humor. Especially in its systematic, disciplinary form, antisemitic status reversal would fulfill its perverse logic in modern times with more vehemence than even Luther or his contemporaries could have imagined. Indeed, the

resonance of the Lutheran formulation for Nazism was made clear by one of the prime inheritors of the pre-modern German tradition of obscene and defamatory antisemitic iconography, Julius Streicher. Publisher of the notorious *Stürmer* illustrated newspaper, Streicher justified himself during the Nuremberg Trials by claiming that the great Martin Luther himself ought to be seated in the defendants' dock. His reasons were that Luther had already propagated, long before and supposedly in even sharper terms, the same messages for which Streicher now stood accused (see Bein, 1980/II:66).

It was the modern methods of German fascism, however, which proved the sharper. Later on we shall see to what extent the Nazi attribution of a malevolent power to the Jew (and the tendentious construction of Germans as involuntary status inferiors) would result in fully intentional acts of nearly unimaginable humiliation and violence. These acts would be perpetrated against Jews by Germans not merely to provide temporary relief from the effects of structural dissonance, but in order to perform an uncompromisingly brutal and permanent inversion of the alleged statuses of Germans and Jews—and thereby adjust the relationship of Germans to capitalism itself.

LUTHER'S BODY AND THE JEWS:

The importance of Martin Luther for an emerging German national consciousness as well as for the implicit construction of self and body associated with it cannot be overestimated. Luther's dialectical construction of autonomy and submission, as focused through his structuring of the body and work, became lodged within individual experience. Through the reproduction of his sermons and pamphlets as well as his translation of the Bible into German, the dynamic processes implicit in Luther's thought became the personal property of the majority of German households. Luther's works helped to comprise the basis of the modern German language while providing the secularizing model which, as it naturalized, came eventually to embrace Catholics and even assimilating German Jews as

well as Lutherans (see Tal, 1975; Gilman, 1986). At the same time that his model declared German independence from papal authority, it helped establish the contradiction-ridden road to German personal and political authoritarianism. It did so through its articulation with the protracted transition to a "feudalized," state-sponsored German capitalism, marked by an imperfectly enfranchised bourgeoisie, a chafing working class, and a tension-ridden lower middle class situated ambiguously between the two (see Dahrendorf, 1969).

As for Martin Luther himself, the intimate location which the intensified construction of the Jew occupied in his own bodily experience is demonstrated by events occurring during his last months of life. In the winter of 1545, the Counts of Mansfeld, who ruled over Luther's birthplace of Eisleben, asked him to intervene in a complicated family dispute. Although already deathly ill, Luther agreed to make the difficult four-day journey from Wittenberg so as to "serve" the local nobility. In light of preceding chapters it should come as no surprise that the Jewish presence in Eisleben became one of the means through which the countship's broader conflicts were focused. Graf Albrecht wanted to expell all of the Jews of Mansfeld, while other family members sought to protect the right of Jews to residency (see Bienert, 1982:174). This issue in particular seems to have resonated for Luther. In one of the last letters of his life, written to his wife Käthe on February 1, 1546, Luther recounts how, upon approaching Eisleben with the image of the region's Jewish inhabitants in mind, he suddenly felt himself to be the brunt of an eerie bodily attack. The experience solidified his resolution to do everything within his power to see that the Jews were driven from his birthplace.

Dear Käthe, I became ill just before reaching Eisleben. It was really my own fault. But if you were there, you would have said that it must have been the fault of the Jews or their God. We had to pass through a village just outside Eisleben [Unterrißdorf] in which many Jews lived. Perhaps it was they who had blown so hard at me [*Vielleicht haben sie mich so hart angeblasen*]. (There are also over fifty Jews living right here in the city of Eisleben at this very moment.) On my honor, as I passed through that village, such a cold draft blew into the carriage from behind and right through my head that my brain almost turned to ice. This may have led to my vertigo. . . .

If everything slides properly into place, I will set myself to driving out the Jews. Graf Albrecht is their enemy and is prepared to be rid of them. But no one does a thing to them. With God's help, I will assist Graf Albrecht from the pulpit and give them notice myself (quoted in Bienart, 1982:173-4 [my translation]).

Two weeks later, prepared to deliver his last sermon in Eisleben's Andreas Church before returning to Wittenberg, Luther fell dizzy once more. He therefore offered a written sermon instead of mounting the pulpit. Its title: *A Warning Against the Jews (Eine Vermahnung wider den Juden)*.

"You still have Jews in the land, who do great damage. . ." Luther began.

They are our open enemies. . . and if they could kill all of us, they would do it gladly and often, especially those who present themselves as doctors, even if they appear to be helpful at the moment. The Devil helps them to triumph in the end. They know the medicaments. . . which bear a poison from which one must die, in an hour, a month, a year or even in ten or twenty years. This art they know.

"And so be unwavering with them," he continued, advising that the Jews be permitted to give up their usury and convert, or otherwise be recognized for the murderous blood-suckers they were and be driven from the land. This warning, he concluded, was made to "lord and underling alike," and offered as a sincere expression of concern from one of Mansfeld's own "native sons [*Landeskind*]" (quoted in Bienert, 1982:176-7).

Three days later, on February 18, Luther was dead.

The mistrust with which Luther regarded Jewish doctors is by no means an isolated theme in his life, nor is it alien to German culture itself during the period of the Reformation. To the contrary, this hostility represents another element integral to German antisemitism through to the Nazi era itself.

As Gilman points out, Luther's fear of Jews as poisoners was linked to his longstanding belief that Jewish doctors were magicians. This fear, dating back at least to 1520, includes several incidents over the course of his life in which Luther reported that Jewish doctor-magicians were conspiring to murder him (see Gilman, 1986:61). Not

surprisingly, when told during the course of his "table talk" in 1543 that the Jews had succeeded in ingratiating themselves with the German nobility thanks to the superiority of their medical skills, Luther's answer was, "the Devil can do much!" (see Bienert, 1982:172; Trachtenberg, 1943:93).

According to Trachtenberg, hostility against Jewish doctors grew virulently beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when a veritable campaign was waged against them by the Church as well as by their Christian competitors (see Trachtenberg, 1983 [1943]:93). Seeking to counter their vaulting but ambiguous reputations, such theologians as Johannes Eck—one of Luther's chief opponents, in fact—claimed in 1541 that the foremost goal of Jewish physicians was not to heal but to injure their Christian patients. "When they come together at their festivals," he wrote, "each boasts of the number of Christians he has killed with his medicine; and the one who has killed the most is honored" (Eck, quoted in Trachtenberg, p.93). A little over a hundred years later, in 1652, the Frankfurt clergy went so far as to complain officially to the City Council about the continuing popularity of Jewish doctors. "Sooner sick at God's will than healed through the devil and through forbidden means," they admonished. "To employ Jewish doctors means nothing else than to cuddle serpents in our bosom and to raise wolves in our home" (quoted in Trachtenberg, p.94). Likewise the clergy of Swäbisch-Hall protested publicly in 1657 when the city granted a Jewish doctor the right to practice: "It is better to die with Christ," they announced, "than to be healed by a Jew doctor with Satan" (p.94).

As with almost every other enduring component of German antisemitism, the fear of the Jewish physician is not an arbitrary expression of a generalized hostility to the Jew as "Other" or a vague product of "magical" thinking, but an element fully consistent with the underlying, historically-specific symbolic structure of antisemitism as previously analyzed. The necessity for the Christian patient to submit his body to the skilled but invasive ministrations of the Jewish physician requires that the Christian relinquish a degree of his

vested social superiority and control—and pay for the privilege. This apparently benevolent but potentially insidious reversal of statuses contains the same contradictory structural tensions as those governing the ambiguous socioeconomic interaction of the Christian with the Jewish moneylender, which result in the construction of the Jew as a parasite upon Christian life and labor. As before, the normal hierarchical dominance of the Christian and the strict social separation which is supposed to prevail in his relations with the Jew are apparently transgressed by the Jewish doctor—this time to the extent that the margins of the body are literally penetrated, whether through consumption of medicines or by blood-letting and surgery. This leads to the potential for a culturally-conditioned and socially-shared paranoid response characterized by suspicion and the fear of being victimized. The representation of the Jewish physician as secret poisoner is thus a powerful symbolic manifestation of the same underlying structural tension which generated the overt cultural lineaments of both the *Judensau* and the motif of ritual murder—two seemingly disparate forms which in fact merged together meaningfully about the time of Luther. The shared quality of all of these forms helps to confirm further the validity of the ongoing analysis. In all of these cases, the essence of antisemitism is the concretization of a malevolent, hidden force in the form of the Jew, who wields the magical tools of conspiracy, financial entrapment and bodily parasitism for the unnatural achievement of profit and power. These are characteristics which go well, as we have shown, with the means whereby the abstract and alienating effects of commodity relations are culturally objectified, not only in early modern Europe but throughout the world.

The underlying unity of these surface forms would seem to explain the otherwise arbitrary relocation of the Kelheim *Judensau* to the vestibule of the town pharmacy during the early nineteenth century, apparently as a kind of cautionary statement, and its insistent preservation there as an integral portion of the building's public facade until 1945 (see chapter 2). This relocation took place, of course, during the period of the Jewish

community's incipient emancipation, a protracted development to which the broader Christian community reacted with ambivalence and suspicion, as we shall see later. In a related vein, Jews begin to be depicted in cartoons of the same unsettling period as the secret inventors of the revolutionary but invasive technique of vaccination—in one case, apparently proffered in the best *Judensau* tradition by a pig-tailed Jew straddling a sow (see plate 15). Such an image clearly gave expression to popular fears awakened by the seemingly contradictory method of injecting weakened germs into the body in order to prevent disease (see Shachar, 1974:62). Rather than dissipating fully in modern times, the potential antipathy toward Jewish doctors (now including visions of their sexual predation on gentile women) will become a standard obsession of Streicher's antisemitic *Stürmer* newspaper during the Weimar era, with decisive anti-Jewish consequences under National Socialism. Nor is this image of the Jewish doctor's destructive, penetrative power of infection and sexual pollution separable from the fully reified, racist construction of the Jew himself as a living bacillus or cancerous tumor growing dangerously in the body of his Christian "host" nations, as will become apparent later.

Martin Luther's sudden, visceral response to the vision of Jews in his native town shortly before his death four hundred years earlier, occurring at this of all moments in his life, demonstrates powerfully the significance of the symbolic construction of the Jew as part of German Christian social experience. The cold shudder that ran through his ailing body had foreshadowed the sermon to come, in which he focused upon the bodily parasitism of the Jew in both personal and collective social terms. It is not surprising that at this moment, as Luther lost control over the integrity of his own bodily margins through chills, dizziness and a final physical deterioration, that he should find the theme of the manipulating Jewish physician the most powerful expression of the threatened inversion of status and power engendered by the anomalous interaction between Christian and Jew. At the same time, in leaving Eisleben with anti-Jewish warnings to "lord and underling alike,"

Luther sought not only to express his own experience, but to dissolve the conflicts troubling the local rulers of the region and their subjects by uniting them around the common bodily threat posed to all Christians by the alleged Jewish poison in their midst.

Thus, in what amounts to Luther's last ministry, written at a period of ultimate existential import, when the body itself was wracked with pain and threatened, along with the spirit, with extinction, Luther's mind turned once again to the pernicious image of the Jew for both cause and remedy.

* * *

Martin Luther's last sermon became yet another instance in the political discourse of antisemitism. The essence of that discourse was the capacity of the Jew to serve as a negative symbolic construct while functioning simultaneously as a generalized medium of social interaction—a *tertium quid* through which a common, populist language could be established for the negotiation of conflict and the assertion of special interest. Linked pragmatically to these issues, the meanings implied in Luther's symbolic construction of Christian identity and the Jew were ones which Luther lived himself, and in a manner that was both conscious as well as taken-for-granted. Articulating the shifts in power relations in Central Europe in a manner close to his own personal experience, Luther helped to realign the psychobiological energies of the body so as to comprehend—and support—an hegemonic order replete with the contradictions of a transforming political economy. In the process, the dialectical meanings of the Jew became installed ever more problematically within the Christian experience of social identity, salvation, and the labor of the body—a location which would prove fateful as the contradictory order of modern German capitalism emerged.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANTISEMITISM IN ACTION: THE FETTMILCH REVOLT

Frankfurt-am-Main was one of those cities where the discourse of Lutheran antisemitism articulated dramatically with the contradictory order of an emerging modern German capitalism. This was expressed by the reprinting of Martin Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* (among other inflammatory publications) during the notorious Fettmilch Revolt of the early seventeenth century (see Israel, 1989:69). At that time the meanings of antisemitic status reversal as embedded in Luther's tract came together with those of Frankfurt's *Judensau* to help galvanize a temporarily successful, populist bid to expell the city's Jews.

Frankfurt had the most prominent and populous Jewish community in the Holy Roman Empire at the time these events occurred, numbering over 2,000 out of a total population of approximately 20,000 (Soliday, 1974:35, 59). As we saw, it was also Frankfurt which had given life to the most important variant of the *Judensau* motif. This was the wall painting that adorned the inner passage of Frankfurt's massive *Brückenturm*, or Bridge Tower (plate 7). A fortified toll point as well as the city's main gateway, this tower occupied a key position overseeing international mercantile relations as well as entry to the inner city via Frankfurt's main street, the *Fahrgasse*. "Almost the entire international north-south trade passes over it," writes Karasek; "the *Brückenturm* is the needle's eye through which the two halves of Germany are linked" (Karasek, 1979:12). A gateway astride a river and a major thoroughfare, a connective point both local and international, through

which both goods and foreigners, new ideas and contradictory new modes of production passed: it was here, in this most highly-charged "liminal" position in the city, that the combined *Judensau*-and-ritual murder motif held its cautionary sway. Confronting natives and foreigners alike as they entered the city, this motif became—much to the distress of Frankfurt's Jews—an integral part of Frankfurt's civic identity as well as its self-representation to the world. Indeed, it became an emblem through which Frankfurt advertised dialectically the hegemonic principles implicit in its vision of the social order as a whole. With the invention of printing and the growth of illustrated broadsheets and pamphlets intended for mass circulation, this same version of the *Judensau* later served as an important source for that motif's wider dissemination, helping to construct the boundaries of a broadened "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983) by inscribing the motif within the shared social identity of Germans far beyond Frankfurt itself.

Frankfurt's *Judensau* thus was not merely a passive source of entertainment. But its role transcended even those purposes already noted, for it also converged fatefully with social action and political conflict. This occurred most notably in the previously-mentioned Fettmilch Revolt of 1614, a burgher rebellion in which Jews became the inevitable focus of structural tensions that threatened to rend the hegemonic fabric of the city in its entirety.

The Fettmilch Revolt was by no means the most brutal of anti-Jewish outbreaks in German history. In terms of the loss of human life and the destruction of community property, in fact, it was relatively mild in comparison. The case is nonetheless of dramatic import, not only because it was an attempt to expell the most important Jewish community in German-speaking lands, but because it articulated the terms and practice of antisemitism as part of the fundamental discourse of German political life. One of the most frequently cited episodes in German urban history as well as in the history of German Jewry, over the past three centuries this citizens' rebellion has been the subject of "scholarly investigation, polemical description, and literary treatment" as well as poetry, novels, plays, and a

television drama (Friedrichs, 1986:188-9). And yet there is still no consensus on the significance of the events in question, as Friedrich points out in his 1986 historiographical essay (p.227). While most historians acknowledge a relationship (however problematic) between the anti-patrician and anti-Jewish dimensions of the Revolt, the tendency—depending partly on the personal background and orientation of the historian—has been to emphasize one aspect at the expense of the other. Remarkably, at least one prominent historical expert on the subject has even ignored the Jewish dimension entirely (see Mauersberg, 1960:114-15; cf. Friedrichs, 1986:187-88). As a consequence, the uprising is treated either as an heroic middle class rebellion against corrupt authority or as a proto-fascist pogrom. For these reasons the Fettmilch Revolt serves as a historiographical paradigm for the problem of how German antisemitism is to be integrated, if at all, into a broader understanding of German history. At the same time it provides a critical case study for analyzing the symbolic forms through which early modern popular protest was embodied and expressed.

One factor which the case reminds us along these last lines is that populist forms of rebellion in a modernizing Europe (lasting even into the Nazi era itself) were not exclusively progressive or reactionary on the whole, but were often characterized by an intertwining of both elements (cf. Hobsbawm, 1959; Schoenbaum, 1966). This status was represented in the Fettmilch Revolt through the merging of its anti-Jewish and anti-patrician aspects. As Friedrichs points out, "the attack on city hall and plunder of the ghetto were part of a single process" (Friedrichs, 1986:188). In light of the foregoing analysis, the following discussion should do much to clarify the synthetic character of that process. It does so by underscoring the previously-mentioned role of the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction, allowing simultaneously for the expression of shared alienation as well as the assertion of diverging class interests in the ongoing competition for power. In the course of this discussion we will have an opportunity to

elaborate upon this role as well as upon several additional aspects of German antisemitism that later will prove indispensable to a full understanding of the seemingly incomprehensible forms through which Nazi genocide was embodied in the death camps.

**THE LUTHERAN ARTISANS OF POST-REFORMATION
FRANKFURT: HEGEMONIC CHALLENGE AND SOCIAL DECLINE**

From its outset, Lutheranism appealed particularly to the artisan and endowed peasant classes, something which was consonant with Luther's own social origins: he was the son of an ex-peasant who had escaped proletarianization by becoming a prosperous master in the mining guild (see Erikson, 1958). We have already encountered these classes in terms of their affinity to the forms of carnival via the case of Hans Folz and his antisemitic carnival sketches. The appeal of Lutheranism to these classes is exemplified more generally by one of Folz's more illustrious contemporaries: the shoemaker-poet Hans Sachs. As transfigured in Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Sachs' life and times would later come to represent the "golden age" of the guilds, especially to those members of the lower middle classes seeking antisemitic, proto-fascist solutions to their social alienation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Volkov, 1978). Sachs reveals his own religious affinities in one of his poems of 1523, in which he likens Luther's dour message to the song of the nightingale:

First Luther tells us that we all
Inherit sin from Adam's Fall,
In evil lust and foul intent
And avid pride our lives are spent;
Our hearts are black and unrefined
Our wills to horrid sins inclined,
And God, who judges soul and mind
Has cursed and damned all human kind.
Within our hearts we know this state,
Feel burdened with a dreadful weight
Of anguish, fear, bewilderment
That we should be so impotent.
Sure of man's inability
We change pride to humility

And then, and only then, we see
 The Gospel, sent to make us free. . .
 (see Dickens, 1976:142).

Given the findings of our prior analysis, the freedom to which Sachs refers here (as well as some of the potential labors that might be undertaken to achieve it) cannot help but resonate with the forms and practices of German antisemitism as already outlined. This assumption is confirmed, in fact, by the circumstances of the Fettmilch Revolt—an event which situates the hegemonic implications of early modern antisemitism against a portentous backdrop of unsettling socioeconomic change.¹

* * *

It is generally accepted by historians that the "nine critical years 1517-25" represented a period in German history incomparable in its general importance, "with the possible exception of those tragic years which saw the rise of National Socialism" (Dickens, 1976:102). The social forces unleashed during these years by the Reformation were expressed in a "torrent of pamphlets, cartoons, and caricatures which carried to the masses the basic tenets of the Reformation, outcries against social and political grievances, polemical thrusts and broadsides, and radical revolutionary programs" (Spitz, 1985:91). The years 1517 to 1524 alone saw a tenfold increase in the number of tracts published. Although antisemitic literature may have represented a relatively small percentage of this total output at first (see Hsia, 1988:57; cf. Oberman, 1984), the *Judensau* motif nonetheless was among those caricatures fated in this period and later centuries to enjoy an ever-wider circulation, particularly in its Frankfurt variant. The effects of Luther's Reformation in that city were felt early on: in 1524, the town's populace, acting in accord with the spirit of the Peasants' Revolt, "forced through a Reformation" together with street-

¹I have relied largely on Karasek's excellent account (1979) for portions of this discussion, as well as upon Friedrichs (1986), but see also the standard earlier histories by Kracauer (1925/7) and Bothe (1966 [1913]).

fighting, the looting of monasteries, and the announcement of a set of secular demands (Dickens, 1976:181). Thus Frankfurt began a long cyclical history of popular agitation and challenges to hegemony from below, something which would continue, in fact, even until the ill-fated revolution of 1848. Although these early bids for power may have redounded to the city's commercial success while the guilds were still in bloom, the heyday of Frankfurt's artisans would not last much longer than the first decades of the seventeenth century.

By 1600 Frankfurt, strategically located on the increasingly vital north-south European trade route, had become the commercial hub of central Europe. Privileged with the right to hold two seasonal fairs, Frankfurt was a free city directly subordinate to the Holy Roman Emperor, who was crowned in its cathedral beginning in 1562, and who had the right (among other privileges) to intervene in internal city conflicts. The position of the German Kaiser, however, was in decline, challenged by moves toward local authority in Lutheran Frankfurt as elsewhere. Thus Frankfurt's patricians, although committed to certain obligations, in turn fully dominated the town council in the Kaiser's name and conducted its domestic and international affairs with considerable autonomy.

Although they were in principle participants in city government, town burghers had seen the patricians render their rights vestigial by the late sixteenth century while leaving their social and financial obligations intact. The artisan class, attempting to maintain itself between its journeyman and day laborer underlings and the rising class of large-scale merchants, found itself in a particularly ambiguous social structural position, exacerbated by interference in the autonomy of guild operation by the council and the ever-present fear of proletarianization.

The ambiguity of their structural position was enhanced by the self-contained quality of the artisanal undertaking. Organized into approximately 40 guilds, Frankfurt's artisans led a strictly regulated life, oriented around a local production and distribution process that

encompassed domicile, tools, raw materials and workshop as well as the marketing of their wares. The need and aim to control life and work processes ranged from attempts to enforce guild exclusivity and fix prices, work hours and production methods, to control over the personal comportment of apprentices: "Every act, every commodity, every service that could be prescribed, regulated, weighed and measured was duly prescribed, regulated, weighed and measured. By law at least, people could not part their hair except by rules" (Dickens, 1976:13). Keeping in mind what we have said earlier about the salvatory significance of work, this totalizing approach would seem to put an especially heavy focus upon the need to control any aspects of the socioeconomic world which might escape regularization, in terms of the containment of disorder, including that associated with the body itself. This meant that artisans were liable to experience the exploitation of their feudal dependence in invasive terms. The powerful personalization of market forces in the form and being of Frankfurt's Jews gave this a particularly visceral dimension, especially when periods of economic difficulty widened the inroads being made during the Reformation and after into artisanal autonomy.

The eagerness of Frankfurt's artisans to escape their exploitative feudal dependence was crystallized by a severe economic crisis which rocked the city in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Up until then, Frankfurt's economy had flourished in an unprecedented manner, an upswing owed partially to the presence of Dutch Calvinists who had arrived several decades before in search of asylum, bringing with them their mercantile links to the new and growing industry of luxury textile production and dyeing. This industry, previously neglected in Germany, was characterized by a fully-developed putting-out system as well as progressive and mechanized means of production. With their expansive economic horizons, factory-like workshops and new modes of profit extraction, the budding Dutch capitalists presented both patricians and artisans of the Lutheran cloth guilds with a vigorous source of competition. So far as the artisans were concerned, this

disadvantage was partially offset by the unofficial support which the Dutch Calvinists lent the local guilds against the patricians of the town council. From the perspective of patricians, however, the Dutch were not only competitors but a thorn in the eye of Lutheran orthodoxy. In the early 1600s, accordingly, the town council instituted an increasingly repressive religious policy toward its resident Calvinists, who responded by relocating in growing numbers to nearby Hanau. The loss to Frankfurt was dramatic, with the sudden decline of the blossoming silk and dyeing industry widening into a general economic depression. Local Frankfurt artisans now found themselves hardpressed to compete with the flood of cheaper wares entering the city's market from a prospering Hanau and elsewhere. The actions of each element in the town's social hierarchy, seeking to cope with the crisis in terms of its own immediate interests, only worsened the situation. Primarily at fault, however, were the patricians, who exploited the sharp rise in prices by levying ever-more burdensome taxes and by speculating energetically on the cost of grain, the production and distribution of which they monopolized.

ARTISAN AND JEW: RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND THE REIFICATION OF EXCHANGE

Frankfurt's Jews occupied a particularly vulnerable and explosive position within this overall constellation of class and economic conjuncture. In the first place, Jews served two masters, both of whom strived to extract as much money from them as possible. The Jews meanwhile did their best to play the two off one another to their own advantage. The legitimacy and security of Jewish life was owed primarily to the Kaiser, who held *dominium eminens* over them. For a price, however, the city of Frankfurt had acquired *dominium utile* over the Jews, or the right (upon imperial revocation) to tax them and regulate aspects of their existence in the city (see Soliday, 1974:58-9). These regulations—called the *Judenstätigkeit*—had to be submitted to each new emperor for approval.

Positioned otherwise outside the estate system² and in principle subordinate to all, Jews essentially held the civic status of aliens who could potentially be fully disenfranchised and expelled despite their limited privileges. Indeed, it was only after the failure of the Fettmilch Revolt that they were granted the automatic right to repurchase their charter of residency every three years (see Soliday, p.177). We have already discussed the dynamic dual relationship of binary opposition and hierarchical encompassment implied in the Jew's anomalous structural position. This structuring principle was replicated not only in the physical placement of Frankfurt's ghetto, but in the mandatory wearing of a circular, yellow badge by Jews designed to distinguish them from all Christians, thereby underscoring their alien and polar oppositional role to Frankfurt's general populace.

Jews, in contradictory fashion to their social subordination and segregation, occupied a pivotal economic position as middlemen standing between patricians and artisans. Their primary dependence upon moneylending and second-hand trade (supplemented by trade in cattle and such agricultural by-products as hides and feathers) resulted in the necessity of charging high rates of interest to survive. The financial role of the Jews helped to serve patrician interests by keeping artisans and the lower classes indebted, cutting them off from the expanding market, and freezing them within relations of obligation. As Karasek points out, by manipulating the role of Jews, Frankfurt's patricians found several ways of extracting indirect values from town burghers, for example by lending Jews city tax revenues at a rate of 5%, leaving the burghers in the position of having to borrow back their own tax money at higher Jewish interest rates. Patricians exploited this ploy even further by unnecessarily "lending" the city monies from their own resources in order to pocket the resulting interest themselves (Karasek, 1979:28).

²Frankfurt's Jews were organized as a separate corporate community (see Soliday, 1974:176).

Artisans, although aware of patrician machinations, perceived themselves nonetheless as frustratingly dependent upon the monetary manipulation of the socially inferior Jews, to whom a "poor pig" certainly should not have to submit. Compounding this was the attitude of artisans toward Jewish moneylending itself. As it did not involve the actual crafting of goods or the raising of crops, it was perceived as non-productive while Jews themselves were seen as "*Schmarotzer*," as parasites living off the natural productivity of the Christian. (This is the same dialectic as expressed in the *Judensau* motif.) This was exacerbated by the necessity of providing Jews, at 10% of Frankfurt's population, with food and necessities, something artisans found particularly galling during a period of economic hardship.

Town burghers reacted with similar irritation to the concrete evidence of Jewish self-reproduction, which contrasted so dramatically to the artisanal mode of self-contained use-value production. Collected in ghetto cellars and the city vaults Jews rented were the results of their livelihood—the pawned goods of indebted Frankfurt burghers, which on condition of default could be placed on the market and sold in competition to artisan wares:

One is astounded by the quantity and variety of all that accumulated in the vaults. Here scholars could supply themselves economically with books which the printers and booksellers rid themselves of at cheaper prices if they remained unsold. Here the marriageable couple could purchase everything necessary for furnishing their household: beds, linens, table and bench covers, cushions, embroidered pillows, tableware and furniture, precious objects such as gems, silver and golden belts, combs, goblets, etc. Here those of moderate means could provide themselves with every sort of clothing article, since the blossoming of second-hand clothes dealing came naturally to the pawn business. Pawned items one found listed in the inventories from the earliest times included: skirts, doublets, jerkins, coats, headgear, hats, breeches, stockings, women's garments, veils. . . shoes, boots, etc. The merchant seeking to expand his stock also found in the ghetto textiles, metal, wine and grain, foodstuffs, gems, silverware, lace, notions [*Merceriewaren*], furs, etc. (Kracauer, 1925/I:316-7; see also Karasek, 1979:27-8).

Such sights aggravated the sense of real and relative deprivation experienced by Frankfurt's indebted artisans, as well as by their journeymen and day laborers, whose lives were even less secure. Confronting the seemingly cruel contrast of their mounting poverty with an

image of material wealth amassed through control over the pawned products of their own labor, they focused increasingly upon the Jews themselves as the aggravating and concrete symbol of their growing distress.

The Ghetto as Symbolic Space

This symbolization was not confined to the person of the Jew alone. In 1460, instigated by the competing Christian merchant and artisan classes, Frankfurt's town council had driven Jews from their previous residential quarter in Frankfurt's commercial center and confined them in an unappealing cul-de-sac known as the *Judengasse*, or Jew Alley. Described tellingly in later years as a "*Blindwurm*," or intestinal appendix, this long and narrow enclosure was placed in a former moat on the far side the twelfth century *Staufermauer* (but still within Frankfurt's wider and more modern fortifications), thereby cutting off the Jewish community from the rest of the city. It was not long after this that the *Judensau* and ritual murder scene set atop a ghetto wall was painted in the gateway of Frankfurt's Old *Brückenturm* as one of the city's "welcoming" emblems. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the ghetto had become grossly overcrowded and unhygienic, its two double rows of 195 houses leaning high above the narrow street with as many as five overhanging upper stories (see plate 7 and Karasek, 1979:127; Kracauer, 1925/I:313). Jews were confined within these looming walls between sunset and dawn as well as on the Christian sabbath and holy days, the three gates of the ghetto secured by locks and guarded by watchmen. As a further effort to control Jewish mobility, Jews were permitted to walk the streets of the wider city only singly or in pairs, and only when wearing the large yellow *Judenring* sewn on their outer garments in degrading self-advertisement. The size of the Jewish community itself was set at a maximum of 500 households. No more than six outsiders were permitted to move in yearly, each of whom had to have at least a thousand

gulden in assets. Such newcomers by law could marry only local girls, while only twelve new marriages were permitted each year for the ghetto as a whole (Soliday, 1974:178-9).

These rules had been spelled out anew in the revised *Judenstätigkeit* of 1616. Drawn up to accompany the official reinstatement of the Jewish community following the failure of Fettmilch's revolt, this *Judenstätigkeit* granted Jews greater protection than ever before while underscoring the general hostility with which Jews still were regarded. In addition it advocated the interests of burghers—despite their rebellion—through limitations on moneylending and Jewish retail trade. This was reflected, for example, in regulations favoring debtors over lenders, as Soliday points out (p.179). Those Christians deemed dependents—including males under the age of twenty-five—could not take loans from Jews without parental consent, while workers and household servants were no longer permitted to borrow at all. Widows were not required to repay loans under thirty gulden, nor were they liable for their husbands' larger debts unless they had co-signed the original transaction under city supervision. Finally, interest rates—which had averaged 24% prior to the Revolt—were now fixed for the most part at 8 percent. This was accompanied by the establishment of repayment terms favorable to the debtor, along with greater limitation on the range of objects which could be offered as collateral (Soliday, p.179).

So far as other economic activity was concerned, with the exception of those serving the community as butchers and the like, Jews were not permitted to work as artisans, nor could they own land. Although permitted to trade in secondhand goods, they were denied the right to operate retail shops, and accordingly were reduced to peddling their wares in the streets. Within the ghetto itself, Jews were prohibited from employing Christian servants or wet nurses except for Sabbath help. The *Stättigkeit* even went so far as to regulate mundane Jewish comportment. Jews were required to "behave modestly in the presence of Christians," writes Soliday, "especially at marketplaces, where they dared not touch fruits or vegetables (if they did, they were to pay for the soiled produce)." These

measures were designed to "preserve the Christians from contamination" (Soliday, p.178). Such Christians of the era as Johann Jacob Schudt, author of *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, or *Jewish Peculiarities* (1714), also justified this degradation of Jews, writes Soliday, as following naturally from their own degradation and murder of Christ—and hence within the terms of antisemitic status-reversal as discussed previously.

Contrary to the impression generated by the amassed by-products of moneylending, then, the life of Frankfurt's Jews as a whole was not one of secret power and luxury, but of mounting squalor and confinement. And yet, ironically, the miserable and forbidding visage of the ghetto itself actually served to reinforce the prior impression. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Isidor Kracauer, one of Frankfurt's great historians, recorded (albeit sympathetically) the effect which conditions in Frankfurt's *Judengasse* had upon Christian outsiders looking in during Fettmilch's time as well as later on.

It was now that the *Gasse* took on the dank and dirty appearance that offended every aesthetic feeling and for which it would later become notorious. The internal conditions and facilities made a mockery of every rule of hygiene. The narrowness of the streets, the height of the houses shut out sunlight and air; the small, dark courtyards were constantly damp and unclean, the sewage gutters in reprehensible and nauseating condition because of insufficient water to flush them out. Many homes lacked latrines. No wonder that the *Gasse* became a continual source of infectious diseases, and habitation in them an outright danger to health (Kracauer, 1925/I:313).

These conditions contributed, along with the earlier demonization of the Jew, to the mythification of the ghetto as a dark and labyrinthine source of disease and criminal perversion, home to an arcane power contained only imperfectly by the walls which encompassed it and the gates which sought to bar it nightly from the Christian world. This cultural interpretation and experience of the ghetto—which reasserts itself with instrumental effect during the Nazi period, as we will see later—was clearly an iconic construction of the Jew's anomalous role as represented in the *Judensau* motif, the works of Martin Luther and elsewhere. Kept strictly apart from the rest of the city and yet held deep within its bowels,

the ghetto constituted an objectification of the abstract but impinging forces of the market—forces which Christians sought to utilize but contain—as projected onto Jewish inhabited space. At the same time it represented a sedimentation of the anal body imagery through which the Christian experienced his socioeconomic relationship to the Jew as well as to the egoistic impulses of his own "lower body." Walled-in and yet potentially overwhelming, the *Judengasse* was Frankfurt's indispensable underside, the ever-beckoning, ever-leering source of capital's filthy lucre (cf. Brown, 1985).

RECONTEXTUALIZING THE JUDENSAU: THE JEW AS A GENERALIZED SYMBOLIC MEDIUM

In the first decade of the seventeenth century, as Frankfurt's depression worsened, the direct competition which Jews posed artisans through their second-hand sale of pawned goods added the final fuel to the fire caused by feudal exploitation, mismanagement and the general confrontation of Frankfurt's traditional modes of production with the effects of a rising capitalism. Jews, in their own attempts to cope with Frankfurt's economic crisis, took the sole outlet available to them and increasingly placed unredeemed items on the city's already flooded market.

Things came to a head in 1612. In April of that year the empire's princely and ecclesiastical electors sought to crown in Frankfurt a new and additionally weakened Kaiser, an event which required simultaneously the renewal of the burghers' traditional rights as well as their obligations. This encouraged Frankfurt's artisans, led now by the master baker Vincenz Fettmilch, to challenge the town council. Refusing to swear their fealty until their legitimate demands had been met, the burghers petitioned the Kaiser directly for the restoration of earlier burgher rights, pressed for reduction in the number of Jews in the city and the level of interest Jews could charge, further demanded the right to borrow instead from the city coffers at the rate of 5%, and called finally for the institution of a free grain market.

In this and following petitions, the town burghers focused upon the Jews with particular vehemence, expressing themselves in terms which resonate with the form and meaning of the complex *Judensau* motif and its image of ritual murder. For example, asking the Kaiser to consider the costs incurred in providing for so many thousands of burdensome Jewish souls, engaged, not in production, but in ungodly usury and deceit, the petition continued: "As they cannot live off the wind, where else do they derive their sustenance then but from our sweat and blood? They thereby become parasites [*Kostgänger*] upon us, leeches who do not desist until they have consumed the marrow from our bones and reduced us to beggary" (quoted in Karasek, 1979:47). In order to underscore the validity of their accusations as well as build support for their demands, the town's disgruntled burghers also saw to it that Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* was reprinted in the city (Israel, 1989:69).

This was by no means the only anti-Jewish publication produced in Frankfurt at about this time. Among them, two particularly interesting illustrated broadsheets come to mind. Both incorporate the *Judensau* motif, one in the form of a caricature with extensive poetic commentary and the other as part of an early cartoon strip. These broadsheets testify to the role of the Jew as the reification of exchange in all its alienating dimensions, elaborating variously on the anal or demonic aspects of this construction while adapting its meanings to the climate and concerns of early seventeenth century Frankfurt. In the process of doing so, they reveal several additional antisemitic constructions that endure into the modern period and that ultimately will prove crucial to an understanding of the form and meaning of Nazi genocide itself.

The Jew Bathhouse

The identification of the Jew with the alienating dimensions of capitalism is brought out explicitly in *Der Juden Badstüb* (*The Jew Bathhouse*, plate 14). Ascribing its provenience

to Frankfurt, Kunzle calls this broadsheet "an unusually comprehensive attempt to analyze, in metaphoric terms, the process by which Christians are fleeced by the Jewish financier" (Kunzle, 1973:179). The theme of the Jew Bathhouse, "a favorite of the popular theatre," originally appeared on its own in a poem composed in Frankfurt in 1535, but in this early seventeenth-century cartoon strip the *Judensau* has been appended to the last three panels. Lacking access to the motif's deeper meanings, Shachar and Kunzle both have suggested that the derisive image was borrowed here simply to invoke its by now standardized satiric effect (cf. Shachar, 1974:59; Kunzle, 1973:181). Its presence in this context is more significant than this, however, for it also testifies to the power of the specific message the condensed symbolism of the motif embodies as a condemnation of the growing evil of usury which Christians are seen as having adopted from the Jew—to the added distress of Frankfurt's frustrated underclasses.

"Dear God," read the rhymed captions at the top of the page, "prevent all pious men from entering this bathhouse, where one is so sweated out that neither money nor purse remain." The story then proceeds with an introductory panel of verse to set the stage:

... The Jew is the kind of bath-giver
 Who'll rob you of your sweat and blood.
 He has a lye so harsh and biting
 Oh woe to any that seek it.
 Whomever he torments [*zwagen*] with it
 Will come back completely threadbare [*kaal*].
 Therefore protect yourself from such a bath
 Which leaves one leached with shame and debts [*Schad*,
 also "harm"].

The last couplet makes clear the wider moral of the story to come:

Of course this isn't done by the Jew alone
 But by all usurers in common.
 [*Doch thut der Jud solchs nicht allein*
Sondern all Wuchner in gemein].

The story itself consists of 16 numbered, captioned panels followed by the three Frankfurt *Judensau* components, while a summary of the entire story runs along the base of the page. The equation of the Jew and Devil with usury is made prominently, while the language itself is full of *double entendres*. These play upon the shared bodily dimensions of the Jew's predatory medical practices and his parasitical moneylending, depicted as a demonic draining of Christian bodily substance. A wealthy merchant with big business plans (and presumably with motives similar to those guiding Frankfurt's self-serving patricians) approaches some Jews, who lead him into their *Judengasse* to dicker. Once there they offer to bath him with the secret help of their "colleague," the Devil. "My *GOIM*, isn't the bath sweet?" the Jews ask their victim as they sweat, scrub, scrape, and cup him "merrily." Next the Jews massage him, promising to "tweak" him "so hard that the whole town will know of it." Finally he is washed down so cleanly that "nothing at all is left in him." The merchant returns home, only to realize that he has "bathed" all his money away and gone blind: "I can see nothing of mine at all." The Jews, however, receive their ultimate come-uppance in the best tradition of antisemitic status-reversal (and in a manner that reverberates hauntingly for the modern reader): try as they might later to purify themselves in the river, the Devil fishes their sins out downstream and drives them to their own special bathhouse in hell, a monstrous furnace within which they will have to "sweat it out for eternity" (panel 16). The three unnumbered *Judensau* panels then follow with their usual inscriptions, including, above Simon's martyred body, the comment that the original *Judensau* images were to be seen on the Frankfurt *Brückenthor*, or Bridge Tower Gate. According to Kunzle, the purpose of the latter was to serve "as a reminder to returning residents, and as a warning to visitors to the Fair" (1973:181). In the context of Frankfurt's ongoing class turmoil, however, the comment seems also to serve as a reproach from the broadsheet's draftsman and publisher to town patricians, who act as if the principles behind the motif which they themselves commissioned are not meant for themselves, but only for others.

Shachar (1974:60) notes that Laurentius Tauweliuss' long poem *Deliciae Judaicae*, quoted by J. Praetorius in his *Saturnali* of 1663, interpreted the meaning of these three appended panels at length but in reverse order. The moral behind Simon of Trent's martyrdom refers specifically to the Jew's *Wucher*, the poem explained ("*Ihr Wucher wird im dritten Bild gedeutet an. . .*"), thereby equating the victimization of the child's body and the draining of his blood with the Jew's extraction of interest through usury. This native interpretation is consistent with the complaint quoted earlier from the petition to the Emperor by Frankfurt's burghers, who likened the Jew's *Wucher* to a draining of the blood or a sucking of the marrow from the bones of the Christian. Thus the appendage of the Frankfurt *Judensau* to the *Juden Badstüb* serves to underscore the cautionary message both bear, not only as condemnations of the Jew but also as warnings to Christians to refrain from the growing practice of usury or share the fate of eternal damnation with the Jews. At the same time—and in keeping with tensions in Frankfurt—the role of the victimized merchant suggests the attempt on the part of Frankfurt burghers to generalize their own perspectives by directing this tale pointedly at the patrician class itself. The implicit suggestion is that patricians, like the guild members they exploit, will suffer in the long run if they persist in their nefarious dealings with the Jew.

The Synagogue as Market Chaos

Like the *Jew Bathhouse*, the *Juden Synagog*, an accomplished Frankfurt broadsheet of the early seventeenth century, elaborates avidly upon many of the themes present in the *Brückenturm* wall painting, most especially its scatological dimensions (see plate 13 and Shachar, 1974:58). This grotesque publication features an engraved illustration by Hans Wolff, a glass painter who became a citizen of Frankfurt in 1612 and lived there until his death sometime within the following fifteen years. Thus the broadsheet can be pinpointed not only to Frankfurt but to the period of the Fettmilch Revolt and its aftermath.

An enormous sow with a jeweled collar around its neck (thereby equating it with profit) is shown as the obscene center of synagogue worship. The entire Jewish community, including its leading figures, gather about to eat the sow's excrement. The text makes clear, however, that these leaders, far far from being respectable, actually represent thieves and scoundrels of every ilk. Thus the Jewish community is depicted as the criminal inversion of the god-fearing Christian world, while synagogue worship is reduced to an orgy of anality feeding indirectly off the Christian. These meanings, in turn, are linked inextricably to the Jew's allegedly predatory practices of capitalist accumulation perpetrated at behest of the Devil.

Although the broadsheet's avowed purpose is to "make known throughout the Reich" the synagogue's supposed hidden reality, the pointedness of its satire generates the impression that the *Juden Synagog* is an attack precipitated by the circumstances of the Fettmilch Revolt and aimed specifically against Frankfurt's living Jewish community. Its underlying purpose is to express the frustration of the artisan classes over the continuing presence or reinstatement of the Jews and their alleged abuses, using, however, the officially sanctioned language of antisemitism consistent with Frankfurt's municipal wall painting on the Bridge Tower. Thus "Arawenos the learned fool" shows the assembled leaders the "purse and letters" (presumably the *Judenstätigkeit* and Jewish residency tax) in order to instruct them "how to shit on the Christians." "Butzmann [bogy man] the gallows thief/Sticks the tube right up the arse" of the sow while the trickster "Cuntzmann licks his lips," waiting anxiously for the sow to shit in his mouth. So too does "Ertzmann, the card swindler" and his associate "Fortzfresser [Fart-glutton]" because it is "good for our health." "Gumbel" defecates in the sow's trough, since, as the text states, "one sow smells the other." Meanwhile "Judas" is shown ready to betray the child Simon of Trent, who is depicted lying bound and prostrate beneath the *bima*, or praying podium, where a Jew stands wrapped in a prayer shawl. "Krotzebeisser" ["scratcher-biter," i.e., torturer or

penny-pincher?] looks pointedly at the Golden Calf on a column, while "*Lortzarse*" the Hebrew butcher leads the sow by the rope—and, by implication, the Christian—presumably to slaughter for sale and profit.

"Nothing spoils our freedom," the Jews declare, "while this company is assembled together"—probably an indirect protest against the confiscation by patricians of the existing *Judenstätigkeit* in 1613, which town burghers had circulated illegally to publicize alleged Jewish abuses, as we will see below. The broadsheet's satiric message is summed up in the concluding lines printed along the bottom of the broadsheet, which link the previous scatological meanings of Jew and sow to the Devil and the wresting of a shameful profit from the Christian through usury:

When need presses an honorable Christian,
The Jew sings,
The Devil jumps and springs,
And in the end the fire [of hell] burns.

Generated thus within the volatile context of the Fettmilch Revolt and its resentful aftermath, *Der Juden Synagog* gives new intensity to the analyzed dimensions of German antisemitism. It does so by utilizing the scatological principles of symbolic inversion (with its emphasis upon the grotesque body) to create a scathingly satiric image of the Jew and his allegedly parasitical exchange nature. In the course of this it also establishes one of the core German cultural representations of the Jew. This is the depiction of synagogue worship as a chaotic inversion of Christian morality and decorum revolving around criminal business transactions and finance. Indeed, the synagogue (and by extension, the ghetto which surrounds it) is seen as the egoistic source of market chaos, of capitalism itself in all its negative connotations. We will encounter this crucial antisemitic construction frequently over the next centuries. Just how crucial it is will become all too apparent later on during the Nazi era. Condensed with the retributory practice of antisemitic status reversal through which the story of *The Jew Bathhouse* was consummated, the pejorative

cultural meanings of *The Jew Synagogue* will reappear in the death camps themselves with devastating effect (see chapter 15).

The preceding two broadsheets demonstrate in the meantime just how vitally the city's official anti-Jewish logo lived within the minds of Frankfurt's often disaffected citizenry. Although the *Judensau* was commissioned and maintained by the town's patrician council, it was Frankfurt's artisans who repeatedly appropriated the motif, freeing it from its fixed position within the passageway of the city gate in order to circulate its reformulated meanings. Ironically, by packaging the motif in a manner intended to be edifying as well as entertaining, Frankfurt's artisans thereby commercialized its anti-capitalist, antisemitic message, transforming it into a commodity intended for mass marketing (cf. Hsia, 1988:58). As we have just seen, their apparent purpose beyond that of profit seems to have been to advocate the special perspectives of the artisan class during the period of the Revolt itself, or to express the intensity of their resentment in the period after its failure. This is supported by the evidential quality of the broadsheets, which are presented before the public as alleged exposés of Jewish iniquity in allegorical form. And yet, at the same time, their anti-Jewish message is not conveyed in a manner exclusive to the burghers, but in the kind of universalizing, populist terms that any German Christian of the era would be capable of appreciating, whatever his interests or estate. For this reason these broadsheets help once more to confirm the role of the Jew (and antisemitism itself) as a generalized medium of symbolic interaction. This was a discourse that transcended class boundaries, providing a common explanation for the mutually-experienced alienations of the day while affording an opportunity (however uneven) for the assertion of special interest and the negotiation of power.

THE PLUNDERING OF THE GHETTO

The transgressions of Frankfurt's town council were so egregious that, for a time, the efforts of the burghers seemed to bear fruit. A commission appointed by the Emperor went so far as to draw up a new civic compact [*Bürgervertrag*] which partially addressed their demands, permitting guild consolidation and expanded citizen representation on the council. In addition two burgher committees were established to examine the city's charters and financial records, while a vague promise was made to bring "order" to Jewish affairs. These stipulations may have appeared favorable to the citizens' cause, but the overwhelming majority of patricians on the council now saw to it that only burghers who identified opportunistically with council interests became representatives. Further attempts to obstruct the functioning of the burgher committees damaged the possibilities of compromise, even after the full extent of patrician mismanagement had been revealed to the additional wrath of the town citizenry. Finally, the town council made secret efforts to enlist the Kaiser's direct support of their positions, thereby endangering the city's autonomy by courting outright intervention.

The more the council resisted, the greater grew the demands of the artisans, supported by Frankfurt's underclasses. The still unresolved question of Frankfurt's Jewish presence proved the most difficult of all points to address, for in the Jews, chattel of the patricians and Kaiser, the town burghers confronted the most dramatic symbol of their own feudal dependence and exploitation, situated directly between themselves and their overlords, and linked directly to the economic forces now undercutting artisanal self-sufficiency.

However ambiguous the social structural position of the artisans might have been, it was more than surpassed by the extreme double-bind within which Jews—lacking rights, occupational freedom, and subject to summary expulsion—were trapped. This was demonstrated in 1613 by the unauthorized printing and distribution just mentioned of the existing Jewish charter of residency, annotated with accusations by artisans that Jews had

transgressed old city ordinances limiting their trade and commercial freedom. The town council, seeking to assert its right of censorship, confiscated the broadsheet, only to be threatened by Fettmilch and his companions. This time the artisans received the verbal support of the imperial commission to which they turned, in language not far different from their own initial petition and the subject matter of *Der Judenbadstüb*. "Now the Jewish multitude and rabble by nature pursues no undertaking," the imperial commission replied,

but must, through their Jewish petition of residency, support and feed themselves off the poor and needy Christians living in the city of Frankfurt as well as in bordering places; nor is it only the majority of the burgher of Frankfurt and the underlings of neighboring lords who fall thereby into such poverty, that soon they must leave house and hearth, wives and children and take up the beggar's staff; and all this primarily because, contrary to the Reichs constitution, they do not deal with the people in terms of the tolerable and usual interest, but—to be silent about other multiple acts of underhanded cunning and deceit—they permit themselves exceptional liberties of which they are famous, and take 20, 30, yes even up to 40 and 50 per cent, and then drive and press the tardy with such rapid measures, pawnings and arrests, that more than a few noble merchants must themselves in few years fall thereby into bankruptcy (quoted in Karasek, 1979:69-71).

Thus, despite differing social perspectives on the role Jews had been forced into and the interests they served, all elements of the feudal hierarchy ultimately shared in the pejorative construction of Jews as parasites. In fact, here as in the two broadsheets previously analyzed, the Jew acted as a *tertium quid*—a generalized symbolic medium through which upper and lower classes attempted to negotiate the commonly shared, but unequally structured terms of their relationship. The contradictory role played by the Jew is underscored by the fact that the imperial commission's apparent agreement with artisans in principle—expressed by their willingness to reduce Jewish interest rates to 8 per cent—in no way led them to advocate the artisan's repeated demands that the Emperor's Jews be expelled outright from the city. Indeed, grudging efforts by town patricians to negotiate with artisans for a limited expulsion of Frankfurt's poorest Jewish families were still greeted by the imperial commission as an affront to the Kaiser's feudal authority (Friedrichs, 1986:192). The guilds therefore responded with alternative efforts to sever

Christian/Jewish relations. Having already prohibited their members from purchasing meat from Jewish butchers the prior autumn, they now undertook scattered acts of violence against Jews in the *Judengasse* (see Karasek, 1979:71).

In May 1614, after an extended and unsatisfying attempt at further compromise, the guilds took matters into their own hands. Under Fettmilch's leadership, citizens invaded Frankfurt's *Rathaus* and imprisoned the patrician magistrates, forcing them after three days to resign and exit the city. This left Frankfurt essentially in the hands of Fettmilch and his adherents. Perceiving this act as an affront to imperial authority and feudal order, the Emperor's commission now ordered the citizens of Frankfurt to desist in their support of Fettmilch and declare personal fealty to the crown in writing. Whatever effect this pressure may have had on Fettmilch's individual support, those at the core of his rebellion responded with growing resentment.

Events came to a head on August 22, 1614, after the imperial commission had threatened journeymen who persisted in working for rebellious masters with the lifetime loss of their guild status. Focusing their resentment now on the most dramatic symbol of both their specific political dilemma as well as their general alienation, Fettmilch and a mob of burghers and journeymen reacted within hours by storming the ghetto. Jews attempted to defend themselves by barricading the main gate to the *Judengasse*, but the looters broke in through a decrepit corner building. According to both Christian and Jewish accounts the armed burghers were met step by step with formidable resistance from the Jews, who nonetheless were overpowered (see Karasek, 1979:98; Bothe, 1966 [1913]:429-30). Under Fettmilch's guidance the mob thereupon began its systematic and unfettered plundering of the *Judengasse*. It was only hours later, after the majority of the looting had been accomplished and darkness had long fallen, that the mayor finally directed armed guards to disperse the looters. The next morning Fettmilch ordered the expulsion of the Jewish community. Meanwhile news of the events in Frankfurt spread far and wide, with

familiar repercussions. At Worms, guild members pillaged the city's ancient synagogue, expelling all 1,400 of the city's Jews, a fate which the Jews in the territory of Baden also were made to share (Israel, 1989:69).

The Jews of Frankfurt later recorded their own account of Fettmilch's revolt in the form of an epic poem 103 verses in length; its title, the *Vintz-Hanss Lied*, was a mistaken version of Vincenz, Fettmilch's Christian name (see *Das Vincenz-Lied*, 1916; Karasek, 1979:96-100; Friedrichs, 1986:198-9). Composed by a Frankfurt Jew and set to the tune of a popular sixteenth-century German melody (*Die Schlacht von Pavia*), the lament was sung annually in Frankfurt for over two centuries as the central feature of a special "*Vinz-Purim*" celebrating the reestablishment of the Jewish community after Fettmilch's demise. Although formulated within the traditions of Jewish historical memory—Fettmilch is likened to Haman from the Scroll of Esther (see Friedrichs, 1986:198-9)—the poem nonetheless is consistent with Christian and later historical accounts in its basic rendition of events. Its most significant revelation is that the plundering of the ghetto was not an act of structureless violence, but an event guided pointedly by the terms of antisemitic status reversal as itemized in Luther's anti-Jewish tract. Thus the looters began by pillaging Jewish homes of "beds, gold and silver and ready money, also household belongings and clothes and jewels made by craftsmen together with much good wine" (quoted in Ben-Sasson, 1976:653), thereby fulfilling Luther's call for the expropriation of the Jews' supposedly stolen wealth. The mob did not stop here however. Apparently following Luther's advice on the confiscation of Jewish "prayerbooks and talmuds," the looters took special effort to remove "the precious Holy Books," some of which they burned "and baked dry meat on them" to underscore the character of their act as one of ritual degradation and defilement (see Ben-Sasson, 1976:653). Other Jewish "books of parchment both new and old, that were worth several thousand. . ." were stolen by the mob, the lament continues, and salvaged through sale "to a certain craftsman so that he should bind other

books with them" (p.653). Since Christians tended to see these books as an arcane source of Jewish power (see Trachtenberg, 1983; Gilman, 1986), this recycling served simultaneously to destroy their sacred Jewish identity and disarm their hostile effects. Now the books and their hidden magic had been appropriated for Christian use and profit, an act of recontextualization which resembled the incorporation of Jewish tombstones into the facades of Christian homes in Kelheim a century earlier. Meanwhile, in an even more instrumental act of Christian "liberation," Frankfurt's rampaging burghers and journeymen confiscated bonds and certificates of debt so as to remove all record of Christian indebtedness (see Ben-Sasson, 1976:653).

Although only two Jews (and one Christian), were killed during the riot (unlike earlier and more bloody outbreaks),³ the purposes of the mob were served perhaps even more thoroughly by subjecting the population of the ghetto as a whole to beatings and humiliation (see Israel, 1989:69). These actions reached their culmination the following morning when, according to the *Vintz-Hanss Lied*, the city's Jews were herded into their own cemetery "like beasts to slaughter," with armed guards posted outside its gates to prevent any from slipping away. Here Fettmilch appeared, as Christian sources confirmed (see Karasek, 1979:99). Claiming that the still-aroused mob was calling for their murder, Fettmilch offered them instead his own dubious protection in the form of their summary expulsion from Frankfurt under armed guard. The terrified multitude was thereupon escorted to the city's gates and docks, from which they departed by boat and on foot in order to seek shelter among other Jewish communities along the river Main.

³Acts of persecution and violence against the Jews of Frankfurt by no means started with the Fettmilch Revolt. Living at first amongst Christians in the commercially vital city center since at least the twelfth century, the Jewish community was nearly extinguished in the massacres and forced conversions of 1241, despite the protection of the German Emperor. Although his protection did serve them well during the anti-Jewish violence that hit southwestern Germany in 1336-7, in the plague year of 1349 the Kaiser (Karl IV) sold the Jews to the city council. Almost immediately there followed a massacre without recourse to conversion, and the thorough demolition of the Jewish Quarter by fire. After 1360 Jews were again in their old quarter in Frankfurt—but not for long.

The choice of the Jewish cemetery as the place to announce to the Jews the forced demise of their community was probably no coincidence. By herding the humiliated and pauperized Jews together amidst the symbols of their death, the Frankfurt citizenry enacted even more dramatically the same message of antisemitic status reversal which Kelheim's citizens had expressed a century earlier, when they celebrated the expulsion of Jews from their own region by displaying desecrated tombstones from Regensburg's Jewish cemetery. Now, in Frankfurt, the Jewish "parasites" supposedly had had the tables turned upon them once again. Enriched with their freshly-taken booty, Frankfurt's alienated middle classes in effect celebrated their "liberation" from the Jew by proclaiming their triumphant resurgence on the graves of their alleged former victimizers.

Thus the Jew readily became a condensed symbol conflating exploitative dependence to patricians with dependence on the uncontrollable market conditions which impinged existentially upon artisans, apprentices and day laborers. Within this context, Martin Luther's anti-Jewish program—and the wider traditions of antisemitic status reversal which it helped rationalize—became a kind of blueprint for action. Its use particularly in the context of obvious economic upheaval further underscored the tendency to personify the unsettling forces of capitalist exchange in the form and being of the Jew. The carnivalesque forms of symbolic inversion, applied here to the residents of the *Judengasse* in deadly earnest, fulfilled a deeply-felt desire on the part of Frankfurt's guild members to regain control over the socioeconomic order. At the same time this provided an immediate opportunity to dissolve debts and seize pawned goods—thereby restoring to the artisan that salvific sense of bodily integrity that was generated through his own capacity to control the regularized processes of work through which he reproduced himself. And finally such status reversal served as a displaced means of challenging the patrician class, whose failure to fulfill its feudal obligations had served to undermine further the social status and economic viability of Frankfurt's citizenry.

Realizing the action against the Jews was actually directed at them as well, Frankfurt's patricians reacted to the violence and destruction of property with alarm. But though the burghers now pressed their position on the town council, new conflicts arose between the artisans and their increasingly disadvantaged journeymen, whom the guilds themselves had sought to reduce into a disenfranchised source of labor power. Taking advantage of this fragmentation among Frankfurt's revolutionaries, the Kaiser, intolerably challenged by the subversion of the established social order and the routing of his Jewish underlings, intervened directly over the following months. Declaring the burghers outlaw, he annulled all of their previous gains as well as their traditional feudal rights. At the same time he threatened to send troops into the city while having neighboring princes institute a blockade. The combined pressures proved too much for the town's revolutionaries. A citizen member of the town council and one of Fettmilch's former supporters sped the collapse by having Fettmilch arrested in November 1614, thereby tolling the death knell for the movement as a whole (see Karasek, 1979:100-10; Friedrichs, 1986:193).

**REASSERTING HEGEMONY:
THE ARTISANS REFEUDALIZED, THE JUDENSAU RESTORED**

The feudal order was now restored with such a vengeance that Frankfurt's middle classes would never truly recover politically. In order to drive home the immorality and danger of directly opposing the ruling class, Fettmilch's public execution was ordered for February 28, 1616, including the severing of two fingers from his right hand, decapitation and the quartering of his body for display on Frankfurt's four main thoroughfares. His family, along with those revolutionaries not executed, were expelled from the city, while his house was razed. In its place a column was erected with a "warning" aimed at future generations. Despite proof of their mismanagement, meanwhile, the original patrician town councillors were all reinstated, while guild autonomy was abolished and the burghers ruined by enormous fines and the confiscation of guild property (Karasek, 1979:111-19).

The Kaiser and patricians then delivered their *coup de grace* by turning once again to the highly-charged symbolism of the Jews, through which upper and lower classes both had come to funnel the terms of their unequal relationship. With fanfare and processions, Frankfurt's Jewish exiles were returned to the city under imperial protection the same day as Fettmilch's execution. A month earlier the Jews of Worms had been restored in similar fashion to their traditional quarter (Israel, 1989:69). The placement of the Kaiser's coat of arms upon the three gateways to the Frankfurt *Judengasse*, along with the words "Protection of his Imperial Majesty and of the Holy Empire," made the conditions of their reentry perfectly clear to Frankfurt's citizenry for years to come (see Soliday, 1974:177). At the same time, however, and despite its new protections, the revised *Judenstätigkeit* of 1616 continued to reinforce the Jews' despised social position. Similarly, broadsheets commemorating official renovations of the city's *Judensau* motif in later years continued to be posted on the ghetto gateways not far from the imperial eagle itself (see Shachar, 1974:91, n. 270). Through the very act of their restoration to Frankfurt, then, the Jews and ghetto became the symbol par excellence of hierarchical encompassment and subordination to the overall hegemonic principles whereby the established order of German Christian society reproduced itself as a whole.

Ironically, the heads of Fettmilch and his associates were displayed, following their execution, upon the same bridge tower over which the *Judensau* motif presided, again in counterpoint with the imperial regalia. Among the polysemic meanings expressed by the *Judensau*, it will be recalled, was a general fear of dependence upon the growing market as well as the necessity to subordinate the self to relations of feudal dependence. Now the image coexisted literally with the cautionary example of the town's most disruptive elements—men who had responded viscerally to both messages—brought to terms by a vigorous restoration of traditional authority. The *Judensau* motif itself was restored repeatedly, on order and at cost of the town council which originally had commissioned it.

But the actual restoration was executed, of course, by a series of skilled and respected members of the artisan class (see Shachar, 1974:37). The first time had been in 1507, and the second only three years before the Fettmilch revolt broke out. The motif was restored twice more thereafter, in 1678 and 1709, each time providing artisans with an impetus to appropriate the motif themselves and reproduce it in a variety of forms, thereby advertising their productive skills as guild masters while making the motif and its shared meanings available to all for purchase and ownership. And through this among other means, the hegemonic order managed to reproduce itself, however contradictory its effects.

These repeated restorations of the *Judensau* did not go uncontested by Frankfurt's Jewish community (see Hsia, 1988:210-213; Shachar, 1974:91-2, n. 272). As Hsia points out, in 1609 the community leadership petitioned the magistrates of the town council to remove the painting altogether, arguing their case with an almost desperate cogency.

And since the painting had been standing under the *Brückenturm* (with a naked child tortured to death with awls by Jews), we poor folks have to suffer all sorts of injuries and curses, from someone here and another there in passing, and have been condemned to numerous tortures and pains that one can always invent; and afflicted with such fear and fright, we know not how we should behave in such great anxiety. The common rabble can assume from such a daring painting that we Jews need to have Christian blood at all times, and that our ceremonies and faith are such, that we have to purchase or kidnap Christian children and murder them slowly. And since this is such a cruel and repulsive vengeance, it would be unchristian and unfair, that a single Jew should be left alive; rather, one should attack them, torture and kill them like inhumans [*unmenschen*] and slaughter them with less mercy than one would slaughter dogs (quoted in Hsia, 1988:211).

The authors of the petition took pains to point out that prior investigations by Christian scholars had so discredited the blood libel that Rudolf II himself had issued an imperial mandate in 1577 outlawing any future ritual murder trials by territorial authorities in the Holy Roman Empire. The wall painting had to be obliterated, they continued,

not least because the unreasoning common crowd [*der Gemein unverstendige Hauff*] are wrapped up in misunderstanding, and hold this painting in such power, as if the authorities themselves had rendered judgement, that everyone is allowed to pursue revenge with the sword (quoted in Hsia, p. 212).

This and additional appeals to justice and reason went totally unheeded—even though the town council actually repeated much of the petition's supportive argumentation itself when responding two years later to a request for legal assistance from the city of Cologne, as Hsia reveals. Given the prominence of Frankfurt's *Judensau* motif, it was natural that Cologne would turn to their southern neighbor for historical corroboration of the blood libel when investigating an accusation of ritual murder within their own boundaries. And yet, even after a month of pouring through 150 years of town records, Frankfurt's magistrates could come up with only two cases of ritual murder against the Jews of their region, both of which had been disproven. As they indicated to their counterparts in Cologne, the painting in the passageway of the Bridge Tower did not pertain to any actual event in Frankfurt but to a murder committed long ago, and in a foreign city at that (see Hsia, p. 210). At the Jewish community's behest, the good patricians even went so far as to enclose a copy of Kaiser Rudolf's mandate. And yet, less than a year later, in April, 1612, the council conceded only grudgingly to a further petition from their own Jews regarding the city's notorious emblem. Testifying indirectly to the widespread fame and power of the image, the Jewish community had pleaded with the council at least to have the *Judensau* covered temporarily during the upcoming election of the Holy Roman Emperor, "since different nations and foreign peoples would come here, and we might find ourselves in great danger on account of the said painting" (quoted in Hsia, p. 212-3). The council agreed, but only for Election Day itself—the same occasion which would unleash the resentment of Fettmilch's followers and lead eventually to the plundering of the ghetto.

The reaction of Frankfurt's Jews to the motif as well as the seemingly contradictory position of Frankfurt's town council only underscore the extent to which the degrading and provocative joint image of the *Judensau*-and- ritual murder was a nearly ineradicable part of Christian social reality in German-speaking lands at this time. However, it was not simply the presupposed historical authenticity of ritual murder that mattered (cf. Hsia, 1988:211),

but the phenomenological manner in which the complex motif was experienced—indeed, in which its meanings were lived. What was crucial was the visceral, taken-for-granted quality of the deeper messages which the wall painting's two interdependent iconographic components generated, as well as the "natural" manner whereby these meanings articulated with the ongoing discourse of German political life. The focus of the motif on the demonized Jew was unquestionably inflammatory and unjust, the very form of its protest already compromised by the reifying force of capitalist epistemology. Nonetheless the complex *Judensau* remained a vehement attempt to critique the effects of the otherwise elusive but profound sociocultural transformation that was underway. Its flawed purpose was to repossess the dimensions of the self drained incrementally by the creeping processes of commoditization. However alienating the encroachment of capitalist exchange might be experienced (and whatever the truth of ritual murder), Frankfurt's *Judensau*, at least, would remain the inalienable property of every Christian. It would remain the possession of all those who beheld its lurid form and assimilated its embedded messages to the core of their personal and civic identities—indeed, as Luther would have it, to their very bodies and souls. At the same time it would live on as a generalized symbolic medium through which the uneven process of political challenge and hegemonic co-optation would continue to play itself out—until the very transformations which the motif's antisemitism had sought to address would force it to evolve anew.

Looking backward 150 years without luck for positive evidence of ritual murder, Frankfurt's magistrates nonetheless had managed not only to maintain the city's popular anti-Jewish emblem with conviction, but to juxtapose it tellingly with the dismembered parts of those burgher revolutionaries who had appropriated it for their own cause when alive. Looking forward now ourselves over a similar span of time, we can turn to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's memories of his youth in mid eighteenth century Frankfurt in

order to determine just how strong an impression these same displays were still able to make even 150 years after Fettmilch's revolt had been crushed:

Among the ancient remains, from my childhood onwards I had been greatly astounded by the skull of a State criminal, which had been fixed up on the tower of the bridge; it, out of three or four, as the naked iron spikes showed, had been preserved through all the injuries of time and weather since 1616. As often as one returned from Sachsenhausen to Frankfurt this tower was before one, and the skull was before one's eyes. As a boy the story of these rebels was told to me. . . . At the same time there hovered gloomily before my young spirit the old legends of the cruelty of the Jews to Christian children. . . the large caricatures, still to be seen to their disgrace on an arched wall under the Bridge Tower, still bore witness against them extraordinarily, for it had been made, not through private ill-will, but by public order (Goethe, 1949:124-5).

Motif and skulls (the latter crumbling one by one) continued their mutually supportive counterpoint on the Old *Brückenturm* until 1801—the age of Napoleonic intervention, when the Bridge Tower was finally torn down, and the walls of the ghetto soon after.⁴ But the subsequent free movement of Jews into the city did not signify the attenuation of the old

⁴The later history of the *Judengasse* is a revealing one, its interstitial meanings of continued and often bittersweet relevance even to the present day. In 1796 French troops stormed Frankfurt, during which half of the ghetto burned. Thereafter, while homeless Jews were housed in the city itself, the ghetto walls were torn down and the ghetto itself formally extinguished with the destruction of its three gates in 1808. Frankfurt became temporarily part of Napoleon's Rhineland Confederation in 1806, while Jews were granted civic equality in 1808, an imposed status which lasted, however, only until the authoritarian restorations of the Council of Vienna.

In the late nineteenth century the Frankfurt *Judengasse* was "sanitized," [*saniert*] i.e., torn down, leaving only a remnant behind near Börneplatz, named for Ludwig Börne, one of the ghetto's most famous (and culture-critical) literary inhabitants. The conservative synagogue erected in 1882 on that square lasted only until *Kristallnacht* (November 9, 1938) when it was burned down by the Nazis. Not satisfied with this act alone, they also did their best to expunge evidence of its or of any Jewish existence in Frankfurt, changing the name of the square to "Karmeliterplatz." And yet they left the tombstones of the Jewish cemetery intact, presumably for reasons not dissimilar to those evidenced centuries earlier in Kelheim.

Only recently, in the middle of the 1980s, excavations by the Frankfurt municipality on this same site revealed—much to the consternation of the city's Gas and Electric Works—excellently-preserved foundations, including a mikvah, or ritual bath (see Boehlich, 1987:33). After bulldozers proceeded nonetheless to demolish two fifteenth-century dwellings and a twelfth-century wall, a youthful citizen's coalition, predominantly left-liberal in character (Greens, SPD, and several Christian organizations) physically occupied the site to prevent further destruction of the city's awkwardly resurfacing history. They chose their rallying slogan from the writings of Börne: "Where the dead are silent, the living stones speak." On September 2, 1987, these protestors were removed by the police on order of the mayor (see Zimmermann, 1987:25).

Ironically, counter-cultural and progressive members of Frankfurt's populace thus occupied the site of the ghetto with their own bodies—not to plunder it, as did Fettmilch's anti-mayoral mob, but to preserve its full memory from plunder. And so shift the terms, ever close-to-the-bone, whereby hegemony is contested and defined.

meanings associated with the *Judensau* motif so much as their relocation. The tumbling of the ghetto walls presaged the transformation of old alienations into new forms within which the Jew would continue to be implicated—but fraught now with an ominous logic that would lead to ever-more vehement and unprecedented solutions.

* * *

By any measure, the *Judensau* motif is a remarkable image. Long-lived and adaptable, a prominent and frequently renovated civic emblem on the town halls and gateways of such pivotal cities as Salzburg and Frankfurt as well as an endlessly proliferated, privately manufactured commodity—the *Judensau* motif is of central importance to understanding the transition from a traditional to a capitalist society in Germany. Indeed, as a typification of antisemitism (see Williams, 1977), the motif condenses, dynamically and viscerally, the meanings of an entire age in transformation. But it does so from a deeply alienated perspective, thereby expressing the culturally subjective means whereby those transformations were experienced.

By conflating the Devil and Usurer in the Jew, the age of Luther generated a concrete form in which the abstract and alienating principles of capitalist exchange—perceived as increasingly pervasive yet frustratingly intangible—could be objectified in socially recognizable terms. Thus the Jew became a human incarnation of the demonic principle. The evil of exchange, instantiated in an alien and negative human form, was thereby rendered palpable. Not only could it be identified; it could also be sanctioned and regulated, just as the Jew himself was subjected to symbolic manipulation and attempts at control, from social subordination and legal circumscription to physical containment in ghettos and acts of violent subjugation. As we have seen, this reification of the Jew also entered inevitably into the construction of hegemonic relations. By expressing the general principles of alienation entailed in the rise of capitalism, the Jew became a *tertium quid* through which power relations between the classes could be constructed and proximity to

the market either regulated or challenged—or, as the old German saying goes, "*Haust du meinen Juden, so hau ich deinen Juden* [if you beat up my Jews, I'll beat up your Jews]" (see plate 19 and Fuchs, 1921:109).

Given the prior analysis, this development should no longer be considered surprising. We argued earlier that people relate to one another in capitalism through their shared (if imperfect and partially involuntary) acceptance of a naturalizing market as well as through the taken-for-granted deployment of their own commoditized labor power within it. This does not occur, however, without a protracted struggle, one that often is never fully resolved even in the present. It becomes inevitable, then, that the German-Christian construction of the Jew as the expression of commodity relations in alienated form should also have become a shared term through which the negative effects of this process upon self and society were expressed. For the Jew was identified with money as interest-bearing capital—as the gold-like "yellow spot" or *Judenring* itself might suggest (see Zafran, 1973:13). Thus, like the commodity market itself, the Jew came to be interposed symbolically between persons as a shared element helping them to express, negotiate, and regulate their alienated relationship to a rising capitalism (and its governing powers) across the boundaries of class, region and religion.

Above all else, then, the *Judensau* and its representation of the Jew is the product of a raw but entrenching capitalism, in which the traditional condemnation of both usury and the Jew are reformulated into the new fetish forms which capitalism engenders. And yet the new principles of capitalist society which the motif reveals are not yet fully naturalized and taken-for-granted. To the contrary, these principles are experienced subjectively as alienating and unnatural, as destructive of social life and human well-being. Nonetheless, the reifying terms of capitalism structure this experience of alienation as well: the dual value dimensions of the commodity fetish, use and exchange, are represented as separate, the former vulnerable to the latter. Both are anthropomorphized, use value in the form of the

victimized sow and Christian child, exchange value in the demonic form of the parasitical Jew.

It is here that we find the core of modern German antisemitism at its rude inception. Abstract yet animate, intangible yet engulfing, elusive yet universal—the characteristics of exchange value are personified negatively in the form and being of the Jew (cf. Postone, 1980). They are manifested in his supposed capacity to breed money unnaturally out of the productive labor of the unsuspecting Christian, whose life-blood he has sacrificed at the altar of the "Golden Calf." Now all that remains is for this reification of exchange to undergo the superficially demystifying but ever-symbolical effects of secularization. As the coming chapters will demonstrate, its specter of magical predation will transform over the next few centuries into biological "reality." No longer that of a devil pure and simple, the negative construction of the Jew will slowly organicize into the form of an insidious racial parasite infiltrating the bodies of his "host" nations in the ruthless quest for world dominion.



119. Haust du meinen Juden, so hau ich deinen Juden. Illustriertes Sprichwort

Plate 19. "If you beat my Jews, I'll beat your Jews." Illustration of German folk-saying. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:109)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

"WORK MAKES FREE":
THE HIDDEN CULTURAL MEANING OF THE HOLOCAUST

VOLUME TWO

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BY
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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 1994

Part Two

ANTISEMITISM IN THE TRANSITION TO MODERNITY

CHAPTER SIX

THE RISE OF ORGANICISM

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the prior chapters we have used the *Judensau* motif as a kind of passkey into an otherwise alien and opaque world of meaning. These are the meanings governing the obviously hostile but often mystifying cultural construction of the Jew in German lands during the medieval and early modern era, as well as the ambivalent principles structuring his socioeconomic role. Distant though that world may seem, at the same time it is replete with forms, practices and underlying meanings that resonate with the period of National Socialism, if in a manner that still awaits full elaboration. As I pointed out in the introductory chapter, the recognition of these continuities is an old one to commonsense as it is to scholarship. So too, however, is the naggingly frustrating problem of how to specify their significance in relation to the striking discontinuities that also exist between the early modern and Nazi eras (see Volkov, 1985). Indeed, although clearly relevant *per sé*, the problem of continuity as it usually has been posed has led up until now into something of a dead end. What we are trying to do here instead is to offer a revitalized approach, one that entails an innovative shifting of emphasis from the question of continuity and discontinuity to the more sophisticated (if admittedly challenging) level of the sociocultural system itself, and the means whereby its symbolic structures transform over time.

What our prior anthropological analysis has established up until now is just how intricately antisemitism was woven into the sociocultural fabric of German society in

transition from feudalism to capitalism. In the process we have begun to reveal the cultural forms and practices whereby capitalism itself is constituted, specifically in terms of the symbolic forms generated by the phenomenon of commodity fetishism. This includes the intimate if problematic location occupied by the Jew within the emerging definition of the German capitalist subject. Integral to that definition, as we have shown, was the long-lived association of the Jew with the potentially engulfing powers of economic exchange, materialized in terms of anality and linked metonymically with the psychobiological forces of sexuality and bodily disintegration. Indeed, we have brought out the consequential role played by antisemitism in the interdependent symbolic construction of the body, work and inhabited space in general. The latter included the attempt by the German city to encompass and regulate ghetto, synagogue and cemetery as expressions of market chaos in its various alienating dimensions—a program so crucial that its meanings were not only installed within the Jewish spaces themselves but also incorporated into the wider city's most liminally-charged points of structure.

Above all we have explained the precise nature of the arcane and often demonic, magical power attributed to the Jew—expressed foremost in terms of the ritual murder libel—and have thereby revealed the implications of the age-old identification of the Jew with money and its alleged evils. This has brought with it, most importantly, an explanation for the origins of a crucial component of German antisemitism that would later be termed *Verjudung*, or "Judaization" (cf. Aschheim, 1985; Rose, 1990)—the belief in the insidious expansion of Jewish power, of "Mammonism," in a world that was actually coming to be dominated, not by Jews, but by the forms and forces of capitalism. Along with this has come an understanding of the scatological forms of symbolic inversion and status reversal, envisioned and enacted (often with gloating humor, sometimes with violence) in order to "liberate" the German from his supposed Jewish enslavement. We have also touched upon the associated practice of recontextualizing the artifactual

manifestations of Jewish life, incorporating them so as to appropriate their abstract power or render it harmless, thereby displaying the alleged restoration of German control over all that which the Jew had been made to symbolize. And finally, our analysis has shown how integral antisemitism was to the discourse of German political life, entering into the construction of power relations through the role of the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction. The result was the almost inevitable, troubled role that the Jew would continue to play in the construction of German national identity within the context of an emerging German "imagined community," one that transcended local boundaries of religion, class, and region.

As the last statement suggests, none of the medieval and early modern forms through which antisemitism was embodied actually disappear for good. To the contrary: the phenomenology of antisemitism transforms as it rearticulates itself in step with the evolution of modern German capitalism and the fascist response to its existential crises. So too do the practices whereby the meanings of antisemitism are enacted. What we shall be examining in the following chapters, accordingly, is the transformation of the meanings associated with the *Judensau* motif into its modern ideological and symbolic equivalent: the so-called *Judenfrage*, or "Jewish Question." As usual, this process does not occur in isolation, but takes place against a wider backdrop of profound transformation associated with the development of bourgeois society and the process of national unification in the nineteenth century. Crucial to this wider transformation was the rise of biological models of self and society, and the institutionalized practices through which the fundamental meanings implied by these models were inculcated and reproduced. For this reason we will first consider the rise of organicism and its implications for the emerging German bourgeois capitalist subject as conveyed by a crucial, authoritarian method of child socialization (one which actually prevailed into the Nazi era) and its associated representational forms. Thereafter we will shift attention back to the Jew. Looking

selectively at a set of caricatures, texts and other cultural forms, we will examine the means whereby his cultural construction shifted—a secularizing process which culminated in the economic crisis of the newly unified German state in the 1870s and the subsequent emergence of full-blown, modern antisemitism.

THE RISE OF ORGANICISM

As the preceding analysis has shown, the circumscribed role of the Jew as a despised, powerless and alien minority in pre-modern Germany belies the actual cultural significance of the Jew in German history. It was precisely the Jew's alien and subordinated status which made him a crucial ingredient in the hierarchical construction of the overall social order. At the same time, the relegation of the Jew to exchange functions placed him structurally and symbolically at the cusp of wider transformations in productive relations.

With the rise of capitalism, the meanings implicit within the *Judensau* and premodern antisemitism shifted, most especially the association of the Jew with the "unnatural" fertility of money as interest-bearing capital. Now, as commodity fetishism increasingly worked free of its feudal framework and became the structuring principle of society, the identification of the Jew with money expanded into an identification of the Jew with the exchange value dimension of the commodity itself. This reification of the Jew underwent profound transformations with the emergence of the bourgeois social order in the nineteenth century and the development of industrial capitalism. The new principles of civil society could not be consummated fully while the Jew remained confined within the ghetto, a living fossil of the old corporate order. Just as the subordinated status of the Jew in pre-modern times served to define the overall hierarchical structure of society, the full emancipation of the Jew provided the ultimate step necessary to establish the principles of civic equality and national identity within the developing free market economy of the modern nation state. For this reason Jewish emancipation became a fundamental necessity

for defining the new order, a last obstacle to be overcome by the liberal bourgeoisie—not out of philosemitism but in order to fulfill their vision of a social order in which their own interests would be secured (see Rürup, 1975; Sterling, 1969; Katz, 1980).

In reality, however, the loosening of economic strictures resulted in Jews being funneled into the domain of civil society long before they were actually accorded full emancipation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This gradual release of the still-anomalous Jew from his traditional confinement was greeted with dismay by those Germans structurally disadvantaged or threatened by the new developments, in particular, the petit bourgeois of small traders, craftsmen and peasants as well as traditional elites. Their reaction was inevitable: the heavy freight of negative meanings which the Jew traditionally bore had not suddenly disappeared with the arrival of the Enlightenment and its political consequences. To the contrary, the coincidence of Jewish emancipation—a highly visible process—with the emergence of the new order brought with it a fateful identification of the Jew with the most alienating dimensions of modernity itself. Devoted as he supposedly was to the principles of voracious economic competition, the "egoistic" Jew became responsible for the new reign of an uncontrollable commodity market, along with the inexorable and unsettling effects engendered by rapid industrial transformation. Indeed, it seemed that with the unfolding emancipation of German Jewry, the feared inversion of the hierarchical order which had always underlay German antisemitism was finally occurring; the walls of the ghetto had been torn down, only to release the insidious forces of commoditization which it previously had contained. Although these forces might still be experienced as demonic in their effects, the concomitant rise of rational ideologies, in particular that of biological science, resulted in the increasing naturalization of the Jew's reified status as the negative anthropomorphism of exchange. Thus the supernatural figure of the Devil disappears during this period, to merge fully with the Jew as the increasingly biologized embodiment of exchange in all its negative connotations.

Releasing the Forces of Exchange

The gradual emancipation of the Jews from their ghettos provided the most immediate and visible evidence that the security of the traditional hierarchical order had been rent and turned upside-down. This shift was anticipated in Frankfurt as early as the eighteenth century, with the construction of new municipal promenades. These promenades—generically termed *Bürgersteige*, in German, or "citizens' walks"—were themselves an index of the transformations occurring in Germany, for they provided the middle classes an occasion for displaying their emerging social prominence as affluent, productive and self-disciplined members of German society. One such promenade had been built along the old Ghetto wall itself—marked typically with the inscription, "*kein Jud' und kein Schwein darf hier nicht hinein* [no Jew and no pig may enter here]" (see Poliakov, 1975/3:19, n.28). Considering that the transformations in class were encompassing Jews as well as Christians, it is not surprising that the weight attached to such symbolic promenading resulted in a debate over whether Jews too should be permitted use of the walks. But Frankfurt's Bureau of Public Works officially denied them access in 1769, and with words that reveal dramatically the fears attendant to the prospect of releasing Jews from their traditional positions of separation, subordination and physical containment: "Were they to be allowed entry," the statement read,

almost immediately they would become the masters. Mobs of them would run about, great rows strolling arm in arm, turning aside for no one, troubling everyone, especially females, with their endless tobacco smoking, similarly monopolizing every available bench there, soiling them, most likely even infesting them with vermin, damaging the trees and hedges and perpetrating all of their usual disturbances. . . after all, what would a Jew not permit himself, once he had enjoyed a little freedom? (in Karasek, 1979:131).

The symbolic practices outlined by Martin Luther for containing inner disorder are revealed here in secularizing form, as the core of an emerging bourgeois social identity. In

order to constitute an orderly, self-disciplined and productive society, German burghers must impose new rules of self-restraint upon themselves, regulating the interaction of bodily impulses, boundaries, openings and surfaces with the surrounding social space into which their bodies intrude. This orderly comportment is contrasted to the innate egoism and aggressive disorder of the Jew, which provides a fundamental threat to the maintenance of Christian self-control and collective discipline. Freed to mix with wider society, the Jew takes over (or so the German imagines), imposing himself without constraint or consideration upon street, bench, bush and shrub. Along with the invasiveness of self-interested Jewish comportment comes the invasions which emanate from the Jewish body itself, as it emits its alleged odors, dirt and vermin. Even the domesticating order which the bourgeoisie has applied to the natural realm, through the creation of plantings and hedges to beautify the promenade, is endangered by the Jew. A sterile urban trader, the Jew is unaccustomed to nature and unable to exert the productive disciplines necessary to shape the natural world into an orderly extension of self and society. To the contrary, it is the crowded, winding cul-de-sac of the ghetto, with its foul smells and filth, which reflects the inner qualities of Jewish self-production: the unnatural pursuit of monetary parasitism.

Goethe's autobiography reveals something of these prevailing cultural meanings, as well as the actual conditions which characterized the Frankfurt ghetto during his youth in the 1750s:

Among the things which aroused the forebodings of the boy and even of the youth was especially the Jewish quarter of the city, properly called the Jewish street [*Judengasse*], as it consisted of little more than one single street, which in earlier times may have been hemmed in between the walls and trenches of the town, as in a prison. The narrowness, the dust, the crowd, the accent of an unpleasing speech, altogether made a most disagreeable impression, if one only looked in on passing by the gate. It was a long time before I ventured in alone, and I did not readily return again when I had once escaped the importunities of so many men never tired of demanding money and offering to traffic (Goethe, 1949:124-5).

Elsewhere Goethe provided a series of descriptive phrases to characterize traditional rabbinical comportment: ". . . fanatic zeal. . . repulsive enthusiasm. . . wild gesticulations. . . confused murmurings. . . piercing outcries. . . effeminate movements. . . the queerness of an ancient nonsense" (quoted in Aschheim, 1982:7).

In all of these impressions and derogatory imaginings, the history of the Jew's cultural separation, social subordination and enforced confinement is hypostatized in negative architectural space as in the pejorative construction of the Jew's arcane presence and alien nature, the alleged impurity of his body, and his uncontrollable physicality. The walls of the ghetto (and the legal constraints preserving Jewish subordination) become the last mechanisms whereby the incipient bourgeoisie can still hope to contain forcibly the disintegrative forces of Jewish chaos and all it symbolizes—most particularly, unbridled capitalism. At the same time German citizens strive dialectically to control the chaos of their own bodily impulses. Thus the primary aphorist of his age, the Enlightenment philosopher Georg Christian Lichtenberg, could write unselfconsciously that "next to my own wanton lusts, it is the Jews who have given me the greatest trouble" (Lichtenberg, quoted in Mosse, 1970:41)—for the Jew is, as before, the living objectification of "old Adam" in all his carnality and thus the index of Christian bodily disorder. It is these impulses which are to be canalized into capitalist activity, defined not in terms of an unnatural Jewish "parasitism" but as a "productive" German harnessing of exchange, and thus an extension of the "natural" values inherent in artisanal production (cf. Postone, 1980). We see here that the use- and exchange-value dimensions of the commodity fetish continue to be separated and reified in the dialectical contrast of German and Jew, but in increasingly "demystified" terms. Accordingly, the prospect of allowing Jews access to the *Bürgersteig* is experienced as a threatened release of Jewish egoism into society—a rampant, competitive individualism which would permit Jews to dominate Christians and become "the masters" of society.

The fear of Jewish influence thus expresses the contradictions faced by German Christians as they strive to harness the power of their own bodily labor as a step in the attempt to control the ongoing transformation to the modern bourgeois-capitalist order. As the quintessential "Other," the Jew is the repository of the negative dimensions of self and society—the egoism associated with capitalist exchange, and the alienation implicit in the commoditization of bodily labor and its products—projected outward and reified into a separate, distinct and antithetical human form. The unfettered introduction of Jewish exchange-nature into society comes then to represent the alienating possibility that the Christian will fail to control the process whereby his own labor and consciousness is commoditized. Instead the Jew, as the reified essence of the market, will prey upon the natural and undisciplined power of the Christian body, thereby dominating the Christian and the commoditized world in which he is forced to live.

"Poisonous Pedagogy" and the Body

The increased emphasis upon bodily discipline revealed here is part of a wider process in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe whereby organismic models increasingly helped to shape the form and experience of emerging bourgeois-capitalist social relations and forge a hegemony capable of containing the contradictions posed by the development of a modern class structure. Here physiology provided a means for naturalizing the inequalities of class within the single, reified model of society as an autonomous and integrated biological organism (see Cooter, 1979; Foucault, 1975; Figlio, 1978; Comaroff, 1985:181).

The term "model" is perhaps a misleading one, for the role which the body plays here, as in all sociocultural systems, is central, and transcends issues of representation alone. Bodily form does not simply provide analogous structures for metaphorical statements about the social order. Nor is the body a *tabula rasa* upon which social meanings are

arbitrarily inscribed. The physicality of the body provides continuity between the natural and the social world. The body thus becomes, inevitably, the material locus through which social relations are meaningfully constructed and rendered reproducible, as intersubjective components of human experience. During the process of socialization, the social actor trains himself and is trained in the meaningful practice which allows for the generation of coherent action from context to context. The principles structuring this practice, once they have been internalized, reside on a taken-for-granted level; naturalized within the body, they acquire the stamp of external reality. In the manner of *Gestalt* theory, these principles become a dynamic backdrop of meaningful potentials, a semi-coherent horizon of presuppositions existing around one, in symbolically ordered environments, as well as within structured bodily experience (see Comaroff, 1985:54; Bourdieu, 1977:89). Rather than attending *to* these principles in a fully conscious and deliberative manner, the social actor attends *from* them, as it were, in order to move coherently through social time and space (cf. Polanyi, 1966).

What this suggests is that the relationship between bodily experience and social meanings is not unidirectional, but mutually constitutive. The body provides a dynamic infrastructural array of physical attributes which can be symbolically structured, but in a manner which ties these symbolic meanings non-arbitrarily to the experiential dimension of human existence. As Jean Comaroff has pointed out, the physical facts of the body provide certain basic parameters for cultural structuring, in terms of elements, relations and processes. These entail "stable organic structures" which "coexist with, and occur within, the temporal processes of the biological life-span" (Comaroff, 1985:8). Thus the hierarchical arrangement of paradigmatic relations of contrasts (left/right; inside/outside; male/female; etc.) coexist with dynamic physiological states (stasis, growth, disease, decay) and transformative bodily processes (digestion, birthing, aging and death, etc.). The inter-relationship of these dimensions of human experience present a rich palette for

symbolic elaboration. But as Comaroff indicates, bodily experience is also characterized by contradictory states, for example, the coexistence of "stasis with disease and degeneration." This last articulates complexly with the contradictions inherent in relations of power, class, gender and production, most often providing ways in which those contradictions can be ostensibly resolved within terms that tend to reproduce a hegemonic order. But they also sometimes provide opportunities for transforming inequalities and repairing alienation. Systems of healing as well as attempts at the millenarian transformation of self and society provide cases in point. Here sociocultural conflicts resonate symbolically and experientially in terms of physical disease or bodily victimization, both personal and collective. The body thus becomes a metonym for contradictions of the social order, to be treated, "*pars pro toto*," in order to transform the surrounding world. Accordingly, attempts to heal the body, overcome the victimizer, or otherwise physically reformulate self and society, become means whereby the "debilitating effects of social disorder" (p. 8) or the hidden "injuries" of class and power (cf. Sennet & Cobb, 1972) can be addressed and treated, however effectively.

We have already explored the significance of some of these issues for early modern Germany. There we saw that the Lutheran construction of the body at war with itself entailed an attempt to create a new Christian subject capable of expressing and resolving the alienation inherent in the transformation to a modern bourgeois capitalist social order. The complementary forces of exchange- and use-value production became increasingly located within the individuating self and body, the struggle to dominate the flesh a means of generating a new, self-disciplined relationship to work. By encompassing the disruptive carnality of the "old Adam"—the egoism of exchange—within the fragile but disciplined container of the body, its powerful natural impulses could be harnessed productively, thereby insuring personal salvation. Labor-power emerged as a separable symbolic entity, a circulating commodity "freely offered" to God and society, while the products of work,

like the systematic processes which brought them into being, became tokens of an orderly self. The battle that the Christian waged against his own body thus served to reduce the causes of capitalist alienation to the level of the individual, thereby concealing inequalities of power and perpetuating the system.

This construction of the body drew its full meaning in dialectic with the German cultural construction of the Jew. The Jew took the full brunt of alienation inherent in this model at the collective level by representing the exchange dimension alone, in all its negative effects. He thereby came to embody the alienation generated by the double-binded subordination of the self to the principles of commoditization. The phenomenological separation of exchange value from use allowed the development of capitalism to continue, while providing an outlet for its negative effects, locating them not only within the body of the Christian, but in the opposing form of the Jew as victimizer. The Christian body was not only at war with itself; it was also collectively at war with the Jew.

The ideological content of this construction of Christian identity secularizes during the latter half of the seventeenth century into taxonomic biological models of self and society. This was part of the process whereby a modern bourgeois hegemony was forged to encompass the contradictions of a modern class structure. By the early nineteenth century, in Germany as in the rest of Europe, however, static anatomical models had been replaced by physiological ones drawn from both botanical as well as biological science (see Foucault, 1977). Just how powerful and pervasive such organismic constructions were in Germany is indicated by the extraordinary intellectual reaction to the work of Johann Gottlieb von Herder just prior to this period. His thorough-going application of the language of organicism (in this case, those drawn from botany) to an incipiently racist conception of national identity proved so salient to the changing conditions of social experience that it spread like wildfire, becoming what since has been termed the "root metaphor" of his age (cf. Ergang, 1931). In fact, this rapid adoption of organicism

indicates a process that transcends the workings of metaphor, for Herder's imagery was naturalized quickly into taken-for-granted constructions of the social world.

As the nineteenth century progressed, popular physiology in particular proved far more resonant for the purpose of constituting a bourgeois hegemony than did the earlier static anatomical models, for its holistic vision of organic structures bound in dynamic interaction suited a period of rapid transformation in political economy, when old social unities were being fragmented by the alienated structures implicit in modern capitalism (see Cooter, 1979). Medical popularizers, anxious to establish their own positions within the emerging bourgeois social order, vigorously propagated the physiological model in a wide variety of publications, from descriptive tracts revealing the mysterious inner geography of the body, to pedagogical manuals designed to monitor and direct the psychobiological development of the child into a healthy and productive adult. The digestive system, so central to the human experience of process and regularity, often took prime place within these pages, helping to convey the naturalness of the organismic model in terms of the obvious need for equilibrium as well as a healthy and systematic relationship with the material world (see Cooter, p. 77). Physiology provided a means whereby the new, differentiating order of urban industrial capitalism could hold itself together, for the growing contradictions of class were formulated into a functionally-interdependent model of organic growth and harmonious development. By transforming the inequalities of class into facts of nature, the ostensibly value-free epistemology of biological science eliminated the conceptual space that would have permitted a direct apprehension of alienation in modern capitalist society in terms of class conflict. Instead debates over social ills or the distribution of power were converted into the organic terms of norm, deviance, maladaptation and pathology. The result was that nineteenth-century Europeans, anxious to insure their proper adjustment to the needs and definitions of a stable bourgeois society, came to police their own bodies.

Capitalism was "assured by its fusion with the organismic metaphor" (p. 87) because its subjects were linked to the hegemonic order through their own biology.

But the policing of the body was not an isolated event. The transformation to bourgeois capitalism, and the accompanying adjustment in the symbolic construction of the body, was also accomplished through the development of totalizing institutions and practices which subtly encoded the principles of power entailed in the naturalizing models of biological science. Already in the eighteenth century, as Foucault has shown, a set of therapeutic, pedagogical and disciplinary practices were emerging, devoted to the regulation of personal and public health, the construction and control of sexuality and criminality, and the supervision of human development (see Foucault, 1977; 1978). Regimented environments came to embrace all domains of society, their physical space and practical organization sharing a common structural principle, expressed in the form of "well-drilled armies, rationalized workshops, regularized schools and routinized hospitals" (Geertz, 1978:4). Here the body was submitted to the controls of capital accounting, the surveillance of the questionnaire and examination, the treatment of therapy. Emerging in step with the development of the modern capitalist market, these institutional practices helped to locate the atomized individual within a new context of commoditized social values, thereby serving to distribute the labor force across the transforming lines of class and power. This was accomplished in essence by institutionalizing a deeply ingrained split between body and mind, supported ideologically by the scientized divorce of fact from value. The secularization of this alienating process, in Germany as elsewhere, saw the transformation of the body into a natural object of scientific observation. This allowed the body's subjection to a variety of disciplinary measures designed to harness its impulses—now not for explicitly salvatory purposes, but for the constitution of a healthy social body (see Foucault, 1975:198; Comaroff, 1985:181; Ackerknecht, 1953; Rutschky, 1977.)

The nuclear family takes prime place among these totalizing institutions, more subtle in its hermeticism than any of the others, for here the new principles of power are condensed, naturalized and privatized within the hierarchical relationship of parents and children. This relationship, and the exercise of power, takes on a degree of intimacy previously unknown, allowing for the intensified surveillance and manipulation of the child's psychobiological impulses and development according to supposedly disinterested and scientific tenets of socialization provided by physicians and pedagogues. Child socialization takes on an especially authoritarian form in Germany, consistent with the Lutheran's double-binded struggle to "annihilate" the carnal impulses of the body through the disciplinary exertions of the will. This is exacerbated by the failure of the bourgeoisie to effect a full political and cultural deconstruction of feudal power relations, at the time when industrial capitalism was receiving its scientized ideological framework during the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus the contradictory "freedom and obedience" of the Lutheran articulated with the need to legitimize and contain the intensifying conflicts of class within an authoritarian capitalist state structure (cf. Fromm, 1941; Reich, 1970; Dahrendorf, 1969). German social scientists, who only recently have identified these child socialization practices as a corpus, have termed them, critically, "*schwarze Pädagogik*" (see Rutschky, 1977). Alice Miller, seeking to bring out even more dramatically the oppressive qualities of these methods, has translated this as "poisonous pedagogy" (see Miller, 1983). *Schwarze Pädagogik* was the standard and prescribed method of child socialization in Germany from the late eighteenth century until after the Nazi era, and continues to some extent as a naturalized component of popular culture to the present day, despite the rise of a critical consciousness among intellectuals and the post-war counter-culture. As such it typifies the secularization of the Lutheran construction of Christian identity into its modern German capitalist equivalent.

In the ideology of the German *Kaiserreich* (and in the words of one of its chief exponents, the historian Heinrich von Treitschke) the bourgeois nuclear family was nothing

less than the "germinal cell of the nation." Here the dominant values supporting the rule of elites were inculcated, the "state's principle of subordination" instantiated by the father as "sovereign, he executes the law" (von Treitschke, quoted in Dahrendorf, 1969:133). The nuclear family thus became a key domain for the overall production of bourgeois identity, the body of the child a material locus within which the principles of social order were ingrained, mastered, and reproduced throughout life. It was within this context of the nuclear family that *schwarze Pädagogik* operated, seeking to lodge the principles of power firmly but surreptitiously within the body of the child. This was accomplished by enveloping the child in a totalizing web of doubled-binded constraints so thoroughly disguised that their origin as external authoritarian directives could no longer be perceived fully. Echoing a standard German idiom, the commandant of Auschwitz would explain later in the memoirs of his childhood how the necessity to obey "merged into blood and flesh [*das is mir im Blut und Fleisch übergegangen*]," becoming a nearly irresistible and almost unconscious experience of the body (see Höss, 1963:25 and chapter 16 below). *Schwarze Pädagogik* denied the child the conceptual or experiential space necessary in which to contradict authority or render its double-binded messages explicit; the only choices available to him were those of automatic obedience and self-constraint or the collapse of the world into chaos. Indeed, it was by building partly upon the principles of this kind of socialization that the SS developed its famous concept of *Kadavergehorsam* or corpse-like obedience, so useful later in insuring the perpetration of the so-called "Final Solution," however extreme the tasks involved.

The essential characteristic of *schwarze Pädagogik*, in keeping with its biological reductionism, was the inculcation in the child of a body-mind split. This permitted the isolation of the body and its "'rationalized" manipulation as object by parents and educators. Above all, the child himself was to learn how to contemplate his body from a distanced stance so as to master its psychic impulses and basic biological drives. This was

accomplished by a variety of mutually-reinforcing methods: 1) the deconstruction of bodily holism by reducing the body to a minutely detailed set of named components with which the child was to familiarize himself (cf. Barker, 1984); 2) systematic and sometimes functionally meaningless exercises allegedly designed to enhance the child's bodily control, as well as sharpen the senses and improve concentration; 3) "hardening" practices intended to strengthen the child's resistance to disaster, through physical endurance tests, enforced self-denial, revocations of parental love and other acts designed to inure the child to his own bodily needs and drives; 4) the inculcation of mindless obedience through demands for adherence to often random directives, accompanied by harsh punishment; 5) the use of technological devices and body hardware (harnesses, braces, etc.), designed to shape posture, prevent masturbation, and eliminate uncontrolled motor activity, thereby reinforcing the construction of bodily impulses as negative natural forces requiring constraint. All of these methods—often acts of rationalized sadism—were accompanied by the endless enumeration of so-called *Kinderfehler* or "child defects" as symptoms of alleged pathology or sickness. These ranged from "nervousness," "somnambulism," "yawning" and "talkativeness" to a wide variety of negative "tendencies"—toward crying, laughing, anger, fantasies, clapping, criticizing, foolish pranks, being alone, and "busying oneself with strange objects, examining them, experimenting with them and using them for play," as Strümpell explained in his 1890 publication, "Pedagogical Pathology or the Study of Defects in Children" (in Rutschky, 1977:140-7).

Katharina Rutschky (1977) has collected an anthology of standard socialization texts by nineteenth and early twentieth century German pedagogues. The essential themes of these works, as Rutschky effectively boils them down, clearly attest to the spirit of *schwarze Pädagogik* as applied to the generation of Adolf Hitler: "The Deadly Consequences of Disobedience"; "Education, an Eternal but Holy War"; "The Destruction of the World Through Masturbation"; "Punishment is Natural, Praise Artificial"; "Childhood as

Sickness"; "'Hardening, a Historical Survey"; "Self-Discipline in One-Year Old Children"; and, in the actual title of a handbook from 1887, "Pedagogical Beatings are Beatings of Love."

During the century of National Socialism—not the twentieth, but that fateful period between the failed bourgeois revolution of 1848 and the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945—the boundaries of hegemonic Germany were coterminous with the harsh world of *schwarze Pädagogik*. This was a world which reflected, with growing intensity, Michel Foucault's "political technology of the body":

The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. The political investment of the body is bound up. . . with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as a labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection. . . . This subjection. . . may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order. That is to say, there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body (Foucault, 1977:25-6).

THE STRUWWELPETER STORIES

As we shall soon see, the physicians who propagated the principles of *schwarze Pädagogik* sought to install their technology of power directly within the child's body, through comprehensive training manuals aimed at parents and educators. At the same time they strove to ground this process in taken-for-granted experience by subtly invading the imagination of the child from his youngest years. This goal is exemplified by Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, the single most important (if implicit) work of *schwarze Pädagogik* ever to appear in Germany (see plate 20 and Könniker, 1977). This vastly popular children's storybook, which has become something of the equivalent of *Alice in Wonderland* in its wider cultural application in Germany, represented the child's body as a

zone for the production of bourgeois order. Salient from the mid-nineteenth century until well after the Nazi era, this iconographic assemblage presents a striking dialectical contrast to the hopelessly egoistic and disorderly individual which the Jew supposedly embodied.

First published in 1845, the *Struwwelpeter* stories were assimilated into German culture so readily that the history of the book's origins eventually became a standard component of later editions. As Christmas, 1844 approached, Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann, a young doctor in Frankfurt, set out to find an appropriate picture book to serve as a gift for his four-year-old son, Carl. Yet try as he might, he could not find a book which would impart in an entertaining fashion the kinds of educational messages he wished his son to absorb. Hoffmann therefore sat himself down with pen and watercolors, and set about to illustrate his own moralistic stories. His efforts met with great success, particularly among his adult acquaintances, and quickly resulted in a published edition. *Struwwelpeter, or Pretty Stories and Funny Pictures for Children From Three to Six Years Old*, appeared in Germany in 1845, three years before the ill-fated bourgeois revolution. Its first edition sold out in one month, was expanded and reprinted; by 1876 the stories had already reached their hundredth edition, and even this was only the start. From the later half of the nineteenth century until the emergence in the 1960s of a skeptical and anti-authoritarian counter-culture in Germany, *Struwwelpeter* could well be described as the "most trusted friend in the nursery," just as its publishers claimed it to be (see Introduction to Hoffmann, 1876). Not long after reaching its five hundredth edition in the 1920s, *Struwwelpeter* went into the public domain, proliferating thereafter in cheap department store versions; today there is hardly a German adult alive who did not encounter the book as a young child. Its centrality in German culture is such that it has become the frequent subject of unattributed popular and literary references, as well as the butt of parodies both affectionate and critical, while its basic motifs have found their way into commercial advertising (see Könneker, 1977:1, n. 1; Waechter, 1970). The success of its naturalization is revealed by the fact that

many Germans are disturbed or even resentful when confronted with a critical approach to the *Struwwelpeter* stories, and tend to dismiss its authoritarian implications.

The date of *Struwwelpeter's* original publication is no accident, for it appeared at a time when the German bourgeoisie was striving to define its own identity and secure a place for itself within the emerging hegemonic order of nineteenth century German capitalist society. The resonance which the book found among the German bourgeoisie is telling, and shows the extent to which the book crystallized the socializing principles of a rising middle class, anxious about its social position and soon to trade direct political power for cultural status, social stability, and economic advantage (see Blackbourn & Eley, 1984). The relatively subtle means whereby *Struwwelpeter* inculcated its principles reveals something of its hegemonic impulse—for it did so in the form of ostensibly sympathetic and entertaining treats for children, which in fact contained a mutually reinforcing set of implicit, double-binded authoritarian messages. Dr. Hoffmann's opening poem establishes this quickly enough, at the same time mystifying the origins of the book itself, as Könneker has pointed out (1977:1):

If children are obedient
The Christ Child comes to them. . .
Bringing them plenty of goodies
And a lovely picture book.

In fact, as far as Hoffmann was concerned, *Struwwelpeter's* origins owed little to adults; it was the "children's world" itself which somehow had asserted its rights, demanding "I want *Struwwelpeter*!" (Hoffmann, quoted in Könneker, p.1). It was precisely this kind of ideological mystification which, in a variety of mutually-reinforcing contexts, allowed for an entire symbolic system of personal and collective order to be inscribed viscerally within the German child's earliest, taken-for-granted experience of self and body.

The deeper relationship of *Struwwelpeter's* messages to wider issues of hegemony and social order, as well as the potentially subversive qualities of the stories, is suggested by

the fact that one of its first cultural "reformulations" appeared only three years after the first edition was published. This was a caricature that appeared in the *Fliegende Blätter* during the 1848 bourgeois revolution; the title it bore was *Struwwelpeter as a Radical: Not a Denunciation, but a Warning* (see Könneker, pp. 209-211). Here the disheveled and recalcitrant Struwwelpeter is surrounded by state magistrates, who examine him with obvious distaste. Turning the meanings of Hoffmann's picture around, the accompanying text suggested that the form of Struwwelpeter, despite all appearances, actually had little to do with issues of personal hygiene. In reality he resembled the troublesome German revolutionaries of past ages. The scissors that fly threateningly about his head belonged, not to a barber, but to the state censor; and his wildly growing fingernails expressed nothing other than the "boundlessly growing power of the German *Volk*" (Dingelstedt, quoted in Könneker, p. 211). With this astute if satiric interpretation, the *Fliegende Blätter* appropriated *Struwwelpeter's* implicit meanings in a manner the good doctor certainly never intended. But the image of the masses as unruly Struwwelpeters was double-edged, for it also expressed the anxiety with which the bourgeoisie themselves regarded the supposedly childlike working classes, whose potential violence and self-assertion they feared to unleash. Hoffmann, himself a member of the provisional Frankfurt Parliament, made this clear enough by publishing his own satire, in which the ideologues and activists of revolution, symbolized by a grown-up "Peter Struwwel," were unambiguously derided as madmen and demagogues (see Könneker, pp. 230-238). And so the revolution's bourgeois mainstream—like Struwwelpeters who chose after all to comb their hair and clip their nails—undermined their own efforts for political change and thereby lost their chances for success (see Barraclough, 1984:414-16). Accordingly, it was the passive and double-binded implications of the Struwwelpeter image which ultimately prevailed, and not its counter-hegemonic possibilities. Hoffmann himself remained true to *Struwwelpeter's* most conservative messages, becoming the authoritarian director of Frankfurt's municipal mental

institution, where his primary therapeutic techniques consisted of admonishing lectures and the orderly benefits of hard work.

Considering these early satiric treatments, it should come as no surprise that most of the *Struwwelpeter* stories hinge on issues of power. While parental commands are usually explicit, the failure to obey authority and internalize principles of self-discipline does not result in parental punishment but in the intervention of natural disaster. Thus the principles of social power are naturalized and reified, becoming autonomous forces of chaos and destruction. These forces are ready at any moment to starve, crush, burn, dismember or otherwise destroy the child who has permitted the imbalance of his psychobiological impulses to unhinge his parents' orderly world—a world they seek through the child to construct and reproduce. Underlying all this is the essential disorder of the child's presocialized body, and the disorder of the undomesticated natural world as well. The practical message contained within the *Struwwelpeter* stories, as in all *schwarze Pädagogik*, is that the domain of the child's body, like that of nature, is one of raw and disorderly material which must be processed to generate order. The child must internalize the principles of parental discipline and work upon his own body ("*an sich selbst arbeiten*"), just as child and parent both must labor productively upon the natural world so as to harness its chaos and imprint upon it an image of domesticity. In other words, *Ordnung muß sein*.

These implicit messages must sound familiar. In fact the signifying practice embodied in *Struwwelpeter* and other "poisonous pedagogy" entails a secularization of the symbolic orders of meaning implicit within the works of Martin Luther, in terms of the physiological model just outlined. Here the salvatory aspects of the battle of the Christian will against the carnality of the presocialized body are converted from religious terms into a vocabulary more purely existential. The body is focused upon as a realm of psychobiological disorder—a organism caught permanently in a state of physiological imbalance. This

threatens to disrupt self and society unless the domesticating work of socialization has been performed upon the body, and taken within. Even then the disorder could resurge, if one's guard should drop; thus the ordering process must be continually reasserted and reproduced. To be sure this is so, it must be constantly objectified and displayed, in the systematic process of one's work itself, as well as in the objects of one's labor—be they efficient gardens (without weeds, of course), orderly children, or even such crafted "masterpieces" as a pretty picturebook of children's stories. A complex of such gardens—or a set of such children—become, of course, expressions of this ordering process on the collective level of society.

Struwwelpeter Himself: The Title Motif

The figure of Struwwelpeter, or Slovenly Peter, comprises the title motif for the stories (plate 20). Standing passively atop a pedestal inscribed with rhyming couplets that proclaim his disgrace, Struwwelpeter looks out shamefacedly upon his German readership. "See, here he stands," the caption beneath the pedestal cries out in derision,

Pfui! the Struwwelpeter!
 On both his hands
 He's failed to clip
 His fingernails for half a year;
 He does not comb his hair.
 Pfui! everyone cries:
 Ghastly Struwwelpeter!

It is hard to imagine another image that could testify more dramatically to the role of the body in grounding the sociocultural meanings of German capitalism as it transformed in the nineteenth century. With his hair extending out wildly from his head and his fingernails overlapping in a twisted nightmare of rampant growth, Struwwelpeter clearly represents the physiological model of society gone strategically awry. Indeed, the term *Wucher*, reserved usually for Jewish moneylending, could easily be applied to the image of Struwwelpeter himself, for the powerful forces of natural organic development have wildly

transgressed the margins of his body, extending outward in a frightening parody of uncontrollable growth. This is a vision of the body grown out of all proportion; it is the body out of balance, not only with itself, but with the social surroundings into which it so invasively intrudes.

This is the body which Foucault describes, entrapped in a field of power, marked, trained, and forced "to emit signs" (Foucault, 1977:25). Indeed, the figure of Struwwelpeter stands as a persuasive example of the import of the body in any society, be it traditional or Central European. As T. Turner has discussed, the body of the social actor becomes a microcosm of the body politic, a surface or "social skin" upon which the hegemonic meanings of a sociocultural order are inscribed and thereby realized (see T. Turner, 1980). Hair and fingernails in particular provide rich possibilities for such symbolic elaboration. Protruding outward from the body into social space, hair and fingernails are properties of the self and all its vitality; simultaneously, they are forms of inanimate matter that lend themselves to social shaping (see Mary Douglas, 1970; Jean Comaroff, 1985:110). They thus become tokens of the social self as it moves through time and space, their material evidence of growth and aging reformulated through styling to express transformations in social status. At the same time idiosyncracies in grooming may become expressions of poorly socialized selves, as well as attempts to achieve specialized status, critique society or challenge vested powers (see Hebdige, 1979; Beidelman, 1971). In nineteenth century European capitalism in particular, men tend to be shaven and shorn, thereby representing physically their self-disciplined and productive interaction with the material world, while women's psychobiological impulses are allowed to extend beyond the body margins in the form of long hair or nails. These are variously fashioned to become living signs of the socially reproductive powers which the man in capitalism has harnessed in the women he dominates, and canalized within himself through capitalist activity (see T. Turner, 1980). In the gender-ambiguous figure of Struwwelpeter, hair and

nails convey a socializing message about the need to harness the potentially productive but chaotic powers of the child's body. Struwwelpeter in addition wears the *altdeustche Rock* (see Könneker, 1977) or loose-fitting tunic, an outmoded garment of feudal origin. This form of dress has elements of the skirt and contrasts markedly with the increasingly severe and utilitarian suits which represent the "uniform of mature capitalism *par excellence*" (T. Turner, 1980:51).

This extraordinary image, like most of the others in the *Struwwelpeter* stories, did not emerge purely out of Dr. Hoffmann's idiosyncratic imagination; to the contrary, these pictures are reformulations of standard iconographic traditions in German culture, as Könneker has shown (see Könneker, 1977). Struwwelpeter himself can be seen as a secularization of the *Schandbilder*, or "shame pictures," which were mentioned briefly in connection with the *Judensau* motif. *Schandbilder* focused upon specific individuals, their lineages, and, in the case of the *Judensau*, social groups, using derogatory and inversionary sexual images in an explicit manner so as to condemn normative transgressions and challenges to vested powers. But the figure of Struwwelpeter reflects the secularizing process, in which these earlier social meanings are reduced to a purely physiological dimension, the acts of political and social transgression naturalized within the body itself as an isolated zone of psychobiological disorder. In this connection it becomes clear that Struwwelpeter also represents a secularization of Bakhtin's "lower body," transformed for didactic purposes into the relatively polite terms of *Biedermeier* society (see Bakhtin, 1984). Raised ironically atop a pedestal in the more positive exemplary manner of classical statuary, Struwwelpeter is an anti-model, displaying the dangers of the "lower body" should it be allowed to run rampant.

The shameful Struwwelpeter contrasts also with the popular image of the child which just preceded it, that of the cherubic *putti* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the organismic age of the nineteenth century, the new emphasis upon public health, along

with the reduction of infant mortality, brought the full-fledged concept of "childhood" into being as a distinct developmental stage in human life (cf. Aries, 1962; Foucault, 1975). The angelic, toy-like *putti* had condensed an idealized image of infancy and death. But now there was reason to assume that most children might survive into adulthood, and so in Germany the Struwwelpeter takes the stage. In the nineteenth century, the child's psychobiological development must bear the brunt of parental anxieties about the social order as a whole, concern for its balance and orderliness focused through the child's body. By converting the problems of social order into such dramatically existential terms, the process of hegemonic encompassment is facilitated. At the same time both parents and children are given an object upon which to practice their social realignment to German bourgeois society—their own bodies.

Though the figure of Struwwelpeter is an alienated one, the naturalized terms in which that alienation is couched thus represent a practical and epistemological adjustment to the fetishized principles of nineteenth century German capitalism. A familiar historical comparison can help to make this clear. In the ritual murder motif which was discussed earlier, the figure of the commoditized Christian child evoked sympathy, for it was the Jews who alone were responsible for his unnatural fate. But here it is the child himself who has failed to harness the powers of exchange expressed by the disorders of his own body; he therefore becomes responsible for his own victimization. Thus the alienating effects of commodity fetishism are reified as an inner problem of the child, and thereby fully internalized. Struwwelpeter, standing alone upon his pedestal, is no less isolated from the contextualizing values of his society than was Simon of Trent, bound upon the ghetto wall; only now the values from which the nineteenth-century child is dislocated are those of a naturalized commodity fetishism, with which he has failed—so far—to align himself. Thus the child is pilloried; he is hanged in effigy. And yet the purpose of Struwwelpeter is not to abandon him to his fate, but to offer him a characteristically modern

solution to the problem of dislocation. By mastering the principles and practices of the bourgeois capitalist social order—by subordinating himself to the disciplinary needs of the labor force—the child can relocate himself within the epistemological world of commodity fetishism and the market. His personal alienation can be assuaged, for he gains the company of a society in which alienation is taken for granted. In order for Struwwelpeter to rejoin the world of his parents, he need only render himself a productive and subordinate cell within the body of the German *Volk*.

Finally, in Struwwelpeter we see again that the Lutheran model of the body at war with itself, struggling to "annihilate the old Adam," has articulated neatly with the atomistic principles of biological reductionism. The disruptive carnality of the "old Adam" is localized within the body-as-organism, its physiological disarray posing a natural threat to the functional integrity of self and society. This places Struwwelpeter at the center of German culture, for he is nothing other than a representation of the emerging German capitalist subject itself: a volatile container of raw materials and rampant natural impulses, which must be processed into orderly and productive form. This is accomplished through acts of rationalized self-discipline, a training which harnesses natural impulses so they can be invested into productive activities. In the language of *schwarze Pädagogik*, this *arbeit an sich* (work on the self) "hardens" the body, transforming its raw materials into a useful social commodity: the orderly German citizen. (In terms of commodity fetishism, the chaos of the presocialized body is identified with the egoism of pure exchange, while the socialized body, hardened by the will, represents the power of exchange canalized into the productive form of capitalist use-values.) It is only after this socializing process has occurred—this subordination of the egoistic and invasive natural self to the constraints of an authoritarian capitalist society—that the person is considered to be truly human. No wonder modern Germany has been described as a "*kinderfeindliche Gesellschaft*"—a society hostile to children (see Miller, 1983; cf. Dahrendorf, 1969 74-5). Luther's unruly

old Adam has left the stage, only to return in despicable juvenile form. There he stands, just where the German bourgeoisie has placed him— upon a pedestal, the chaos of his body frozen in perpetual warning: ghastly Struwwelpeter.

The Remaining Stories

It is not so surprising that the story of Raging Friedrich follows the image of Struwwelpeter, for the inevitable reaction of some children to this kind of humiliation is to internalize the principles of authoritarianism, and then to "practice them"—that is, to take them out wherever possible upon those weaker than they are, or lower in the social hierarchy. And thus, with the help of his whip, Friedrich works out the psychological abuse he has received from his parents upon bird, cat and serving girl. But his actions cannot go without punishment—not so much because he is brutal, one assumes, but because he has dared to appropriate so explicitly the brutalizing principles of his parents' socialization methods. Accordingly he is soundly bitten by the dog and then forced by a much-satisfied doctor—no doubt a self-portrait of the author himself—to consume nasty medicines. The dog meanwhile takes his place at table, whip close by if needed. Thus Friedrich is well paid for having attempted to usurp patriarchal authority in the bourgeois household. Paulinchen comes next, with her "Truly Tragic Story of the Matches" (plate 21). Ignoring her mother's remembered warnings as well as those of the family cats, Paulinchen curiously lights a wooden match, only to burst herself into flame. Soon all that is left of the disobedient child are her little red shoes, and a smoking pile of ashes. As usual, parental concern is less for the child's well-being than that the child should adhere to their commands. But at least the two obedient little cats, Minz and Maunz—perfect examples of properly domesticated identities—are present to mourn the loss of their human alterego.

The next story reflects the heavy-handed and uncertain liberalism of the Frankfurt bourgeoisie just prior to the 1848 revolution. Three boys make fun of a little "Moor" who comes walking by with an umbrella. The punishment for their illiberalism is meted out then at the hands of a monstrous figure of authority, the giant "Nicholas" with his equally giant pot of ink. Rather like a reverse Santa Claus, Nicholas gathers up the children as if they were mere toys and dunks them by the hair in the inkpot, so as to make them "even blacker" than the Moor. The implicit reference, as suggested possibly by the colored Stars-of-David that illustrate the page, is to Frankfurt's Jewish population—but here even the attempt at a liberal message is couched in the the methods of authoritarianism. One cannot help but think of Bismarck's famous statement: "The great questions of the day will be settled not by resolutions and majorities—that was the mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron" (Bismarck, quoted in Barraclough, 1984:414). At the same time the "otherness" of the Moor is deemed an unalterable infirmity to be pitied, rather than a physical or social difference among human equals. And so the penalty the boys receive is fitting: they are transformed into that which they derided, apparently confirming that to be a Moor (or Jew) is punishment itself (cf. R. Schneider, 1980).

"The Story of the Thumb-sucker" tells viscerally of little Konrad, whose mother—a hulking figure brandishing a parasol, her back turned to the reader—abandons him with the command not to suck his thumb in her absence (plate 22). His failure to obey, she promises, will result in a visit from "the tailor with the shears," who'll appear at once and "cut off the thumb/As if it were made of paper." But as soon as she is gone, "*Wupp!*"—little Konrad, with the natural reflex of the child seeking nurture and consolation, sticks his thumb into his mouth (see R. Schneider, 1980). The punitive response is just as rapid: "*Bauz!*" and an enormous skinny tailor with flowing red hair dashes into the room, his shears eager and long as his arms. "*Klipp und klapp,*" he cuts off Konrad's little thumb, and the other one for good measure; three red drops of blood attest to the fulfillment of

mother's promise. Hoffmann's poetic text is markedly lacking in sympathy: "*Hei!* there screams Konrad loudly." Even the architectural structure of Konrad's physical environment contributes a contemptuous "serves your right" of its own, for his sitting-room includes a face which helps to form the arch of an entrance-way. This is the disembodied and reified image of a lurking parental authority, built into the space of the bourgeois home and intended to take up residence in an internalized fashion within the child himself. The parents' subliminal concern here, of course, is to prevent masturbation by threatening the child with an act of symbolic castration. Indeed, the frowning face reminds one of the German pedagogue Salzmann's design for a school, which, as Foucault points out, sought to prevent childhood masturbation by encoding the principles of surveillance within the school's architecture itself (see Foucault, 1978:27-9). Thus the face frowns when Konrad sucks his thumb, and gloats with *Schadenfreude* as Konrad stands miserably below in the stance of the shameful Struwwelpeter, lacking not only nails but digits as well.

The following story, that of "*Suppen-Kaspar*," or Soup Caspar, reinforces dramatically the punitive and personally disastrous consequences of recalcitrance (plate 23). The sound and healthy Kaspar, "a chubby boy, round as a ball," in a fit of pique refuses to eat his soup. No doubt he has already had more than enough to eat, but his disobedience will soon correct that. The next day, as we see, he has already grown thinner; but still he eats no soup. On the third day of his resistance, Kaspar is skinnier still, and on the fourth day he is hardly a twig. Weighing only "half a lot" and thin as a "thread," he stumbles off from the table and into the story's last panel, where his fate is sealed: there lies a grassy grave, marked with a cross bearing the name "Kaspar" and a tureen labeled "Soup."

Among the four remaining stories is that of "*Zappel-Philipp*," or Fidgety-Philip (plate 24). This story reminds one that, as in the case of German antisemitism, it is fear of an attempted status-reversal (in the case, by the child), that drives most of the episodes in

Struwwelpeter. Here a solidly bourgeois family is depicted sitting down to table, one of the primary rituals whereby the new nuclear family constitutes and represents itself. Father and mother sit in pompous dignity around the family stew-pot. "Will Philip sit quietly/At table today?" father asks, addressing the boy in the third person, as is usual in German when referring to underlings. But Philip is restless. Wiggling this way and that in his chair, he rocks once too hard and grabs vainly at the table cloth to stop his fall. The results are inevitable: Philip tumbles over, pulling food, wine, and shattering dishes down around him on the floor, while the table cloth settles over him like a shroud. Father is greatly distressed—not out of concern for Philip's well-being, but because now he has nothing to eat. By challenging parental authority, Philip has turned the world upside-down, thereby destroying the nuclear family's objectified self-image, as well as the fruits of parental labor. At the same time he himself collapses under the weight of bourgeois order, which he has brought down in chaos upon his own head through his uncontrolled motor activity. The full and tragic extent of his fate can be left to the imagination, already primed by the earlier stories of physical retribution.

* * *

The children in *Struwwelpeter* were the products of Dr. Hoffmann's personal industriousness and bourgeois enterprise. He wrote his own stories and drew his own pictures, all intended to shape the development of his child. In the course of this he propagated a physiological model of social order centered upon the essential chaos of the body and the necessity for its vigorous subordination and processing. And at the same time Hoffmann produced a capitalist commodity par excellence, one which not only earned him money and admiration, but was simultaneously accepted into German culture as a quintessential and beloved expression of the German attitude toward children and child-rearing. The vast success of *Struwwelpeter* as a commodity on the capitalist market thus confirmed the salience of its meanings as both expression of and guide to the production

and reproduction of orderly social identities in modern Germany. Child socialization becomes a means, not only to inculcate principles of orderly production in the child, but a practical and taken-for-granted opportunity for the adult to reproduce his own orderly relationship to his own bodily impulses and the world. This means that the principles expressed in *schwarze Pädagogik* also extend from child-rearing and secondary self-socialization to other forms of production in the wider capitalist marketplace, and in capitalist culture as a whole. At the same time *schwarze Pädagogik* contains an implicit critique of forms of capitalist activity deemed unproductive, chaotic, egoistic, or socially disruptive: in essence, the modes of capitalist exchange which Jews are seen to exemplify.

Given this biologized model, it should not be surprising that there was always potential here to consider the Jew, whether child or adult, as less than fully human. For the Jew by definition was unable to subject himself to this socializing process. As we shall see in the next chapter, however much the assimilated bourgeois German Jew aspired to Germanness, he was fated ultimately to fail—for his disorder was reified as a natural and enduring biological state. As the fleshy, hirsute and disproportionate body of the emerging Jewish stereotype indicated, the Jew was a full-grown Struwwelpeter, his lower body innately uneducable. Whether ridiculous or insidious, his attempts at Germanness expressed nothing other than the Jewish proclivity for biological camouflage and mimicry in the service of social parasitism.

THE SCHREBER CASE: METHOD AND "MADNESS"

Before concluding our discussion it will be useful to examine a more systematic if ultimately bizarre instance of *schwarze Pädagogik*, one addressed (as was more usual) to parents rather than children. This notorious case, that of Dr. D.G.M. Schreber, reveals fully the ideological rationale behind the tacit messages in Struwwelpeter—or the madness, as it were, behind the method .

Dr. Daniel Gottlieb Moritz Schreber (1808-1861) was a prominent orthopedist and best-selling pedagogue practicing out of Leipzig; some of his works remained popular until the turn of the century. Mostly forgotten in Germany today, he nonetheless provided the country with one of its most ubiquitous and characteristic features of physical culture: the countless Schreber gardens which surround German cities of every size and dot railroad rights-of-way, much to the surprise of foreign travellers. For most Germans, *Schrebergarten* is simply a noun, while the verb *schrebern* describes the special brand of orderly, community-minded gardening that gets done in these neat little plots. The naturalization of Schreber's invention is a telling one, for both gardens and child socialization methods existed, along with systematic gymnastics, within a wider system of meaningful practice that became second nature to most Germans from the mid-nineteenth century on, and helped to create a symbolic fit between a coalescing national identity and the unifying modern German state.

Schreberian methods for shaping personal and national consciousness were thus typifications of the practices whereby a hegemonic order came to be inscribed in Imperial Germany. Yet those who received Schreber's methods first hand—the doctor's own children—ended up, after overtly successful careers, as hysterics, madmen and suicides. Most prominent among them was Judge Daniel Paul Schreber (1842-1911), *Senatspräsident* of the Saxon Court of Appeals, and the most frequently quoted patient in psychiatric history (Niederland, 1984). It was Judge Schreber who, following his appointment to this highest rung in the feudalized service class of the judiciary, underwent a horrendous nervous breakdown. There followed thirteen years of institutionalization, culminating in 1903 with the publication of his memoirs (see D.P. Schreber, 1903). This extraordinary, systematic account of his "nervous illness"—published as a "contribution to the bio-scientific study of religion" as well as a plea for justice and recognition—became the case material from which Sigmund Freud developed his landmark theory of paranoia

(see Freud, 1963). But little known to Freud, for whom Judge Schreber's father had remained a respected if somewhat vague entity, there turned out to be quite a different method behind the Judge's madness. As Schatzman and Niederland have both revealed with varying psychological emphasis, that method was the reformulated symbolic content of Dr. Schreber's own, widely popular socialization techniques, which he had perpetrated with totalizing rigour upon the Schreber offspring from infancy on (see Schatzman, 1974 and Niederland, 1984 [1974]). I rely particularly upon Schatzman in my own cultural analysis of these methods and their effects upon Schreber's son, which spell out clearly if extremely the hidden impulse of *schwarze Pädagogik*.

The Method

The elder Schreber's texts were written at an early stage in the development of biomedical science, when, unlike today, its symbolic meanings were still relatively fresh and accessible, as was their continuity with pre-secularized forms. An anatomist working just prior to the discovery of bacteria, Dr. Schreber focused heavily upon bodily form and its manipulation as a means for containing the disruptive inner impulses which he considered responsible for hindering the development of "healthy bones and blood":

The child's moral character is exposed to serious dangers emanating from its own body. The widest consequences of these dangers can exercise a devastating effect upon the child's organism. These are the urges connected with sexual development. . . . [It is] especially important and crucial for the whole of life with regard to character. . . to form a protective wall against the unhealthy predominance of the emotional side, against that feeble sensitiveness—the disease of our age, which must be recognized as the usual reason for the increasing frequency of depression, mental illness, and suicide (Schreber, 1858: 276-281, quoted in Schatzman, 1974:15, 72).

These comments, as so many others in his numerous pedagogical works, reflect the ongoing secularization of Lutheran identity construction into an ends-means rationality, couched within the naturalizing epistemology of biomedical science. As before, the carnal

impulses of Luther's "old Adam" are still with us, only here they have been transformed into the language of a medicalized sexuality, their supposedly destructive physiological effects identified and confirmed through the objective methods of modern science. Now it only remains for Dr. Schreber to prescribe the means for constructing a "protective wall"—a ghetto wall?—around them. Another of his pronouncements, this time clothed in the legitimizing terms of botanical science and thus echoing Herder, provides a hint of what is to come: "The noble seeds of human nature sprout upwards in their purity almost on their own if the ignoble ones, the weeds, are sought out and destroyed in time. This must be done ruthlessly and with virgour. . ." (Schreber, 1858:140, in Schatzman, p.56).

Dividing the child's development into a series of stages from birth to age twenty, Schreber's method transformed the child's body into an attention-focusing symbolic medium which could be treated so as to hierarchically encompass disorder with order. This was done by placing the child's body within a dense and ever-tightening web of controls, regiments and technological apparatuses designed to create an irreparable rift between body and mind. The latter was to dominate the former, an orderly self emerging through the child's transactions with his body-parts, sensations, physiological processes, bodily movements and surrounding physical environment. The result was nothing other than the creation at home of a total institution for the production of an orderly German social identity.

At three months, the infant is to be bathed only by rubbings with cold water. At three years old he graduates to cold baths, and to unheated bedrooms at five. This is in keeping with the principle of *Abhärtung*, or hardening: like a greenhouse plant to be set outside, the child is exposed incrementally to ever-more hostile environments, so as to cut him off from the body's needs for nurture or comfort and inure him to the trials of physical existence. *Abhärtung* and other forms of induced stress and denial are not divorced from issues of parental power: Schreber's "law of habituation" for infants five-to-six months old reveals

how the implicit structures of parental control are to be imprinted into the sensate level of the child's psychobiological experience. In this manner power became tied inextricably to the manipulation of pain and pleasure, and all on a subconscious level:

Suppress everything in the child. . . . One must look at the moods of the little ones that are announced by screaming without reason and crying. . . . If one has convinced oneself that no real need, no disturbing or painful condition, no sickness is present, one can be assured that the screaming is only and simply the expression of a mood, a whim, the first appearance of self-will. . . . One has to step forward in a positive manner: by quick distractions of the attention, stern words, threatening gestures, rapping against the bed. . . or, when all this is of no avail: by moderate intermittent bodily admonishments consistently repeated until the child calms down or falls asleep. . . .

Such a procedure is necessary only once or at most twice and—one is *master* of the child *forever*. From now on a glance, a word, a single threatening gesture, is sufficient to rule the child. One should keep in mind that one shows the child the greatest kindness in this, in that one saves him from many hours of tension, which hinder him from thriving, and also frees him from all those inner spirits of torment that very easily grow up vigorously into more serious and insurmountable enemies of life" (Schreber, 1858:60-61, in Schatzman, pp.15, 23).

"Bodily admonishments" in Schreber's system included the application of enemas. These were especially recommended during a boy's puberty, to be accompanied by arm exercises so as to control "enfeebling pollutions"—that is, nocturnal emissions. This physical penetration of the child's body is a parental intervention designed to install obedience within the child as a perfectly internalized and taken-for-granted state. Freedom for the child becomes the necessity to obey, as well as the need to suppress the demands of the body. These allegedly scientific pedagogical methods clearly represents a transformation of Luther's notion that salvation entails the marriage within the physical body of the soul to Christ, a tenet which has not yet fully submerged within Dr. Schreber's consciousness:

The word of religion must not be left simply adhering to the ear and mouth, but its deep sense, the spirit of the word, should penetrate and wed the person's soul. The outer revelation and the inner (reason in its highest forms of development) are the two *rays* [*Strahlen*] which, the closer they come together, the more they are purified in everything human that had been clinging to them, until finally they come together

at a single point, the point of complete fusion (Schreber, 1858:254, in Schatzman, p. 78).

And thus all traces of human need are to be annihilated. In this spirit, the motto of Schreber's *Book of Health and of the art of Living According to the Arrangement and Rules of Human Nature* (1861b) begins, "Consider, God lives in your body. . . . "

Schreber sought through his pedagogical methods to structure all spatial and temporal dimensions of bodily experience, while his attempts at the rational improvement of body mastery even extended to the "sharpening" of the senses through such meaningless activities as tedious eye exercises. Perfect obedience was to be ingrained through the child's subjection to random controlling mechanisms, intended to teach self-control and self-denial: "If one asks a child to hand something to oneself with one specific hand but the child will use only the other hand, the intelligent upbringer will not rest until the act is done as demanded, and the impure motive is removed" (Schreber, 1858:137, in Schatzman, p. 27). "Imbalance" was deemed a major danger to the development of healthy bones and blood; hence children were ordered unrelievedly to shift position, even permissible ones, to prevent such imbalance. They thus reverberated helplessly between the poles of Schreber's double-bind: left and right hand must alternate when reaching up to turn a door-knob; girls must not carry dolls in one hand only, plait their braids one at a time, or sew with a long thread (this could deform the shoulder). Children should not be allowed to stand on one foot; lean; rest the head upon an elbow; or paint at an easel. Even playtime was a means of control, through surveillance of the child's habits at his "free moments." Here too, the bounds of spontaneity were strictly circumscribed: only one toy at a time, along with the imperative that "cleanliness, care for property and tidiness" become "firm rules" (1858:115, in Schatzman, p.60).

As the child grew older, Schreber increasingly explored the body's malleability through the application of technological devices. Part of the wider web of subtle controls, these

devices constrained the body by shaping its form, limiting its movement and directing its capacity for response. Thus the ends of socialization were projected into the iconic perfection of a machine. The child internalized these projections as his body molded to their physically-sedimented designs; taken within, their technological form could be dispensed with. Thus the child was to become nothing more than an automaton, a mere extension of parental will. These devices included the *Kopfhalter*—a strap tying the child's hair to his underclothes, so that any turning of the head sideways or forward would result in a painful pulling; thongs that tied a child into bed on his back, so as to prevent movements in sleep, including those of a sexual nature (see plate 26a); leg-braces to "prevent bow-leggedness" and straps that improved posture by holding the shoulders back. The patented "*Schreber'sche Geradehalter*" was a metal bar fixed to desks; a combination of a headstrap and pain to the collar bone forced the child to sit up straight in class or while studying at home. More subtle was the "Punishment Board," a means of capital accounting. Hung in the child's room in order to record all positive and negative acts, it was brought out at the end of the month for a humiliating public reckoning before the entire family and household staff. Here was recorded an account of parental input of time and productive energy toward shaping the ideal child, as well an account of how far all this had been internalized. The board was a projection of this dynamic process—a staring parental eye, removed when the child had installed it adequately within.

The ultimate goal of Schreberian socialization was to instill, simply from an eye-glance, the inner compulsion to obey, while rendering the child's awareness of that glance subliminal:

Our entire effect on the direction of the child's will at this time will consist in accustoming it to absolute obedience, which has been in great part prepared for already by the application of the principles laid down previously. . . . The thought should never even occur to the child that his will could be in control; rather should the habit of subordinating his will to the will of his parents or teachers be immutably implanted in him. . . . There is then joined to the feeling of law a feeling of impossibility of struggling against the law; a child's obedience, the basic

condition for all further education, is thus solidly founded for the time to come (Schreber, 1858:66, in Schatzman, p.17).

There could hardly be a more diabolically conscious awareness of the principles of hegemony, or what Foucault has called "power-knowledge" (see Foucault, 1980). Schreber the son, in his "insane" memoirs, brings out this double-bind, while inadvertently revealing the real man behind his delusional "God": "God himself was on *my* side in *His* fight *against me*, that is to say I was able to bring *His* attributes and powers into battle as an effective weapon in *my* self-defence (Judge Schreber, 1903:79, in Schatzman, p.24). The child's epistemological world is limited conceptually to those principles which reproduce the power of parents and the social world which they seek to create. At the same time these principles are so deeply ingrained within bodily experience that they become fully naturalized; they are thus rendered incontestible. The body becomes a self-alienated object of its own labor, offering up an orderly German social identity as a kind of surplus to be appropriated by the parent as a token of his own successful socialization.

But Dr. Schreber's methods, written during the drive for political unification in Germany, were designed for adult as well as child, "national" as well as physical organism. This hegemonic impulse runs throughout his works. *Medical Indoor Gymnastics* for instance, was designed for everyone (see Schreber, 1899). It comprised a large paradigmatic set of exercises, keyed somehow to muscle, organ, nerve, blood and bone, selectively combined to address particular problems of health, including special exercise sequences intended to prevent tuberculosis or "enfeebling pollutions." The latter were seen as a threat to national health and unity of course, not only because they represented a wasteful draining of the body's productive energies, but because they also constituted a frightening loss of control over the body's carnal impulses.

Schreber's *Pangymnasticon* was the German equivalent of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (cf. Foucault, 1977:201), in that it seems to capture fully the hegemonic

principles of its age. A forerunner of the modern universal gym, the *Pangymnasticon* deconstructed the adult body by reducing it into its component parts. This permitted a concerted and rational approach to its physically reformulation, allowing the disorder of uncoordinated muscle and impulse to be replaced by a newly unified, hardened entity. The disorder of the body mirrored the disunity of the German political world, while the rational and systematized ordering process reflected the processes whereby political unity was to be achieved, through the development of a unified capitalist market and the exertion of "blood and iron." The perfect realization of Schreberian disciplines compressed into one machine, the *Pangymnasticon* was an iconic projection of the German as an object of his own self-alienated labor, means and ends conflated into the technological complement of the perfect German citizen. The *Pangymnasticon* thus focused upon the German body as a means for pulling together the body politic, enclosing its fragmentary disorder within the hardened bounds of Empire. Schreber used his own body as model for illustrating its use; the *Pangymnasticon* was his functional *Doppelgänger*.

The "Madness"

Dr. Schreber's socialization methods were devoted expressly to the social transformation of Germany, as revealed by his elaborate book titles, with their frequent dedications "to the salvation of future generations":

EDUCATION TOWARD BEAUTY by Natural and Balanced Furtherance of Normal Body Growth, of Life-Supporting Health, and of Mental Ennoblement, Especially for the Use, if Possible, of Special Educational Means: For Parents, Educators and Teachers (1858).

GYMNASTICS FROM A MEDICAL VIEWPOINT Represented Also as a Concern for the State (1843).

CONCERNING THE EDUCATION OF THE NATION AND ITS UP-TO-DATE DEVELOPMENT, by Elevating the Teaching Profession and by the Bringing Together of School and Home (1860).

THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY as Pedagogue and Guide to Family Happiness, National Health, and Cultivation of Human Beings: for Fathers and Mothers of the German Nation (1861a).

In 1843 he approached the Assembly of the Diet of Saxony to ask for the general introduction of gymnastics by the state, calling himself a "humble organ of a general voice" representing the people's "vivid longing" (Ritter, 1936:18-19). He recommended, for the sake of "the preservation of the clear mind of youth. . . the most complete severity of school activity and *severity of discipline*," favoring a "modified military strictness" at all schools (Schreber, 1860:36, in Schatzman, p.141).

Like Rudolf Virchow, Schreber saw the responsibility of the physician, beyond that of political or philosopher, "to investigate the conditions of nature in which the life and well-being of the human (physical-spiritual) organism is based, both the individual organism and the *organism of the state*" (Schreber, 1860:3 in Schatzman, p. 142; cf. Ackerknecht, 1953). Those of the lower classes, if not educated towards "ennoblement of life in accordance with reason, with nature, and by moral power" were regarded as "tumours of the body of state," "rotten," "unviable," "injurious," "unhealthy," and as "weeds" (1860:14, in Schatzman, p.142). He accordingly designed the still popular *Schrebergarten*, where the working and lower middle classes could purify the blood through work in the soil, submitting themselves to the organizational control of garden-societies, continually exhibiting to one another evidence of inner orderliness as projected into neat and weedless rows. Each garden had its tool shack, constructed to look on the outside like a miniature bourgeois home complete with picket fence. Thus the *Schrebergärten* became idealized reproductions of the bourgeois order set up in controlled contexts where the principles of orderliness itself could be practiced, reinforced and exhibited to all.

The normative effectiveness of Schreber's socialization system is evident in the history of his son, whose exemplary career led to one of the highest positions in the state

bureaucracy. However, his history also reflects the extreme effects of an authoritarian over-socialization, having served as guinea-pig to his father's methods in their most extreme and thorough application.

Two times the son experienced "nervous breakdowns," the first when he challenged Bismarck's favored candidate for a seat in the Reichstag and lost; then again immediately following his appointment to the position of *Senatspräsident* of the Saxon Court of Appeals. His father had died when the future Judge was only nineteen, and his own marriage was never sexually consummated. Hence Schreber the son lacked children of his own upon whom he might focus in order to assert his own transformation into a position of dominance and control. In this he resembles Max Weber—and again like Weber (whose paralysis followed the death of his own authoritarian father), Judge Schreber's breakdowns were preceded by the inability to control innumerable "enfeebling pollutions" (see Schatzman, p. 69; Mitzman, 1969:285). Hence the inability to integrate "bodily disorder" and control sexuality became the overt symptoms indicating a dissolution of the principles that would have allowed both personality integration *and* the capacity to assume positions of authority within home and state.

Max Weber partially reconstructed himself after leaving the sanatorium by clarifying the nature of the Protestant Ethic; this was both a scholarly investigation as well as a liberating inquiry into the socioeconomic roots of his own troubled psyche. Schreber did something similar. Having internalized his father's control system, he voluntarily committed himself to the Sonnenstein Sanatorium—later to become, ironically, a Nazi euthanasia institution—under the care of one Dr. Flechsig. He thereby provided himself with another authoritarian figure in order to restore the order-producing relations of dominance and subordination with which he had grown up. As Schatzman and Niederland both have shown, in what appears to have been a self-programmed attempt to reformulate himself, Judge Schreber physically relived at Sonnenstein the acts of primary socialization that had been visited

upon him as a child. Having properly repressed the paternal origins of this socialization process, however, he never connected his terrifying bodily experiences with his father's earlier obsessive attentions. Instead he underwent inarticulable tortures which he called "*die verfluchte Menschenspielerei* [the cursed play-with-human-beings]," feeling himself mysteriously manipulated by tiny "*flüchtig hingemachte Männer* [fleeting improvised men]" who caused what he described as "miracles" of chest-compression, loss of the stomach, cold and hot flashes, involuntary eye movements, and the refusal to let him occupy one position for any length of time. (As Schatzman points out, these little men resemble the series of tiny models used by the father to illustrate his *Medical Indoor Gymnastics*.) Eventually Judge Schreber began to explore the inter-related structure of these unsettling events, organizing them into the form of an admirably coherent memoir which he offered as a contribution to the bio-scientific study of religion:

The human soul is contained in the nerves of the body; about their physical nature I, as a layman, cannot say more than that they are extraordinarily delicate structures—comparable to the finest filaments—and that the total mental life of a human being rests on their excitability by external impressions. . . . From the most tender beginnings (as the fruit of the womb—as a child's soul) they develop to a complex system which embraces the most widespread regions of human knowledge (the soul of mature man). . . .

The nerves of God are infinite and eternal. . . . They have in particular the faculty of transforming themselves into all things of the created world; in this capacity they are called rays [*Strahlen*]. . . . "Nerve-contact" was not allowed to become the rule. . . because for reasons which cannot be further elucidated, the nerves of *living* human beings particularly when in a state of *high-grade excitation* have such power of attraction for the nerves of God that He would not be able to free Himself from them again, and would thus endanger His own existence. . . . There was no danger for God in approaching *corpses* in order to draw their nerves, in which self-awareness was not extinct but quiescent, out of their bodies and up to Himself by the power of the rays. . . (Judge Schreber, 1988 [1903]:1-12.).

In his open letter to Dr. Flechsig which serves as the preface to his published tract, Judge Schreber implores him, in the name of scientific truth, to corroborate that his "hallucinations" in fact "consisted of *influences on my nervous system emanating from your nervous system. . . even while we were separated in space.*" Carried out originally

for therapeutic purposes, Schreber explained, these continued later on because Flechsig could not "resist the temptation" of using a patient in his care "*as an object for scientific experiments*" (pp.ix-x). The result, Judge Schreber said, was nothing less than an act of "*soul murder,*" made possible by the earlier rending of the "miraculous structure" that originally had connected him to "God."

This tract was interpreted by Freud and his followers as nothing other than an account of paranoid schizophrenia revolving around notions of repressed homosexuality. In fact it is a symbolic transformation of the father's diabolical socialization methods. Indeed, the books of both father and son serve as ideological objectifications of the same implicit symbolic principles, with the exception that the latter, ironically, is indirectly demystifying of the former. Here the "rational" and the "irrational" become two poles of a continuum expressing an order of reality that is social as well as psychological in import. Through its account of his own process of breakdown and reformulation, the son's "insane" tract reveals the essential principle shaping his father's popular socialization system: that of the child's body as a potentially uncontrollable raw material to be shaped in order to bring about a reciprocal construction of social identity in both parent and child. Thus the body becomes an object of its own self-alienated labor. Indeed, the process of socialization is carried out with a vengeance upon the body-as-fetish, the social relations of power congealed within sense, affect and consciousness through a systematic, technological manipulation. This process is then repressed, so that to hear (*hören*) is to obey (*gehörchen*). As we saw in the case of *Struwwelpeter*, these internalized controls are then directed outward in acts of secondary socialization that allow for the reproduction of an adult identity—one coterminous with structures that reproduce the power of the state. Thus the products of self-alienated labor—be they handicrafts or commodities, a garden or a book, the self or a child—become objects of intense focus, proof that the chaotic and

socially-inimicable impulses of the body have been hardened as a necessary step in the hardening the "national organism" itself.

Lest one assume the father's methods highly eccentric, even mad, Schatzman has pointed out that Freud never took into account the elder Schreber's role in the son's "illness," mentioning only, with accolades, the father's eminent reputation:

[He] was no insignificant person. . . [his] memory is kept green to this day by the numerous Schreber Associations which flourish especially in Saxony. . . . His activities in favor of promoting the harmonious upbringing of the young, of securing the coordination between educators in the home and in school, of introducing physical culture and manual work with a view to raising the standards of health—all this exerted a lasting influence upon his contemporaries. His great reputation as the founder of therapeutic gymnastics in Germany is still shown by the wide circulation of his *Medical Indoor Gymnastics* in medical circles and the numerous editions through which it has passed (Freud, in Schatzman, 1974:11-12).

This last was in its twenty-sixth edition in 1899, forty years after Schreber's death.

Gartenlaube, the illustrated magazine which served as primary reading material for the German middle classes, published an article by Dr. Schreber in 1861 and independently recommended his works, thereby providing the equivalent of the American "Good Housekeeping Seal-of-Approval." The failure by those of his era to recognize what today seems an unequivocal case of obsessive compulsion and licensed sadism only underscores the extent to which Schreberian attitudes and practices typified the principles governing the normative construction of personal and national identity in nineteenth century Germany. This is confirmed by Dr. L.M. Politzer, who, eulogizing Schreber upon his death, represented him in classic Hegelian terms as a "world-historical individual":

Every age produces its man who expresses its spirit as if with the power of Providence. . . the generation of our century demanded and created a man like Schreber (Politzer, 1862:2 in Schatzman, p.133).

Although the practice of *schwarze Pädagogik* itself continued, in the years that followed knowledge about the man behind the *Schrebergarten* eventually faded from collective

memory. Nonetheless the continuing salience of Schreber's role was not lost upon at least one doctoral candidate during the Nazi era. Writing in his 1936 dissertation at the University of Erlangen, philosophy student Adolf Ritter praised Dr. Schreber as a forefather of the newly triumphant movement to regenerate Germany through the principles of blood and soil (see Ritter, 1936).

CONCLUSION

In *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), Bruno Bettelheim argued for the therapeutic qualities of Grimm's notably bloody German fairy tales. Cruel as these stories of victimization and dismemberment may have been, they provided their listeners with a symbolic transposition of the conflicts of childhood. At the same time their narratives possessed an implicit transformative structure, one that permitted the resolution of the same conflicts which previously had been laid out in so visceral a manner. Thus the child was afforded the opportunity to identify with simple, childlike protagonists who stumbled through a variety of tribulations and travails, always to emerge with a new status and some kind of triumph in the end. Such stories allowed the child to assimilate prior conflicts without permanent threat. And like the fairytale protagonists with whom he or she had identified, the listening child emerged from out of the stories with an enhanced sense of personal autonomy (or at least the eventual promise of such), his identity intact.

The child reader of the *Struwwelpeter* stories was not so fortunate. No Hans-in-Luck or Red Riding-Hood, Dr. Hoffmann's children—like the unenviable objects of Dr. Schreber's attention—were forced instead to identify with the child as a shameful zone of psychobiological disorder, whose natural impulses lead only to the existential threats of natural disaster, physical dismemberment, social chaos, and the permanent revocation of parental love. Rather than providing the child with a way out from childhood conflicts over helplessness and oppression, the child of the *Struwwelpeter* stories is given nothing other

than a dead-end, a fate which symbolizes perfectly the authoritarian double-binds in which he is caught. Indeed, his only way out is to internalize the messages, contain the disorders of his body, and align his personal needs for autonomy with the demands of parents and society. Somehow he must struggle through this suffocating and nearly unresolvable trial so as to occupy his own position within the hierarchical structure of German power relations, relinquishing himself gladly to those above him, while simultaneously appropriating and exercising those degrees of power allowed him. It is from out of this struggle of psychobiological self-subordination and realignment, expressed through one's daily work in the world, that a bourgeois German identity emerges.

Judge Schreber, however, found himself less able than his more illustrious contemporary, Max Weber, to resolve the double-binds of patriarchal dominance and subordination that had plagued them both. And so he sought instead to renegotiate them. This he did by purchasing ribbons, jewelry and by otherwise inscribing "the cultivation of femininity" on his banner (Schreber, in *Niederland*, 1984:31). Indeed, at the time of his release from the institution in 1903 Schreber was satisfied to discover that he had developed breasts and other female attributes (or so he thought), thereby exceeding even the gender-ambiguous *Struwwelpeter* in his *altdeutsches Rock*. This remarkable but ultimately fitting self-transformation seems to have helped relieve the former Saxon *Senatspräsident* of his terrifying "delusions," at least temporarily, and he lived out part his later life quietly in the role of a kindly grandmother (see *Niederland*, pp. 31-2; see also Schatzman, 1974:5; Court Judgement, in *Judge Schreber*, 1988:352).

Meanwhile a book of children's melodies had been published in the latter part of the nineteenth century to accompany the 100th edition of the *Struwwelpeter* stories (see Hußla, [1876]). The cover illustration projects a peculiarly idealized image of German children, and by extension, the orderly society which they help to comprise as adults. At the same time it brings out, in an almost macabre manner, the inner realities of German socialization

methods. Seven of the *Struwwelpeter* characters, separated out from the contexts of their individual stories, are lined up to march in single file. Led by Struwwelpeter himself—his hair in shameful disarray, his arms outstretched as if in sleep-walking—these manipulated child victims stride across the songbook cover in a frightfully cheerful parody of military goose-stepping. Each bears the stigma of his disorderliness: Raging Friedrich, who marches jerkily along behind the passive Struwwelpeter, his whip frozen helplessly above his head; little Konrad, thumb returned permanently to his mouth; "Fidgeting Philip," the fateful tablecloth draped accusingly over his shoulder. And so it goes until one reaches "Soup Caspar," the walking child corpse who brings up the rear, his thread-like arms raised before his face, his left leg a spindly stick hovering weakly in the air (see plate 25).

If rituals of dance provide an essential symbolic means whereby traditional societies enact their collective identities (see Radcliffe-Brown, 1964) then marching in formation was the favorite means for modern Germans to project an image of the orderly social whole, within which the impulses of each person were canalized and brought into step (cf. Theweleit, 1977). The goose-step itself is an ultimate expression of collective discipline, since it is an exaggerated and unnatural stride based on the harnessing of imbalance to drive the body forward. Indeed, as a scene in Leni Riefenstahl's film of the Nuremberg Rally testifies (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935), the capacity to throw oneself into an almost death-defying goose-step could thrill a German crowd during the Nazi era. The goose-step is a form of subservience so headlong and self-abnegating that its contorted acrobaticism leaves one breathless. In a sense it is the ultimate circus dog trick, except that the audience identifies, not with the human trainer, but with the canine performer, and is thereby left with a feeling of heedless, fanatical devotion. At the same time the image of military precision generates a special sense of security and excitement. This was seen particularly during the Weimar period, when crowds in a demilitarized Germany, seemingly at the mercy of endemic class conflict and social anomie, went wild for the Tiller Girls, who

danced like the Rockettes in military formation (see Lorant, 1974:134-5). One should note, however, that the actual German term for goose-stepping is *Stechschritt*, or "stab-step." This suggestion of aggression is appropriate to the implicit social meanings of the overall performance, for *Stechschritt* requires the suppression of one's personal drive for autonomy. The frustration this generates is canalized in the form of sublimated aggression, which is socially coordinated and then projected outward in pursuit of collectively-defined goals—as in the symbolically-appropriating march through Nuremberg, or the destruction of the common racial enemy.

The *Struwwelpeter* characters actually combine *Stechschritt* with the literal German version of "goose-stepping," or *Gänsemarsch*, which is the term Germans use to describe the semi-comical marching in single file. Thus it is through acts of humiliation and absolute self-subordination that the marching column of *Struwwelpeters* comes into being, to be celebrated in song. Both are cheerfully proffered, and this innocence confirms the taken-for-granted nature of the meanings implicit within the *Struwwelpeter* stories. It is almost as if the picture, supported by a nodding chorus of parental purchasers, were saying: yes, this is what German childhood is all about. The fondness released by this picture is not for the children themselves, but for the subtle process of physical and psychological subordination whereby the child's bodily impulses and natural expressions of personal autonomy were squelched. It is a fondness for the means whereby that authoritarian socializing process can be publicly exhibited and socially reproduced throughout the course of one's lifetime, through expressions of orderliness, obedience and love of hierarchy. The affection this picture generates is thus for the repressive socializing process which makes children "human" and acceptable, and thereby helps to guarantee the orderliness of society.

This, then, is the way out, in Bettelheim's terms, that the *Struwwelpeter* stories as well as the more comprehensive, Schreberian forms of "poisoned pedagogy" allowed German

children. Not the freedom and resolution provided by the traditional fairy tale, but the stultifying conformity of children forced into an awkward marching column, all traces of personal autonomy repressed and rechanneled. Perversely enough, it is a reassuring image, for it promises safety from the punishment and natural disaster that inevitably follows expressions of personal and collective disorder. At the same time it is an inadvertant and grotesque caricature of the German child, and the adult he is to become. Dr. Hoffmann, *Struwwelpeter's* "father," is the best evidence for this. Seeking in his memoirs to explain the incredible resonance which his stories had found among the German public, Hoffmann declared, with unintended acuity, "The Germanic child is nothing other than the Germanic *Volk* itself" (Hoffmann, quoted in Könneker, 1977:2). Each marching child serves as a stigmatized variation upon the chaos of the presocialized self, the punitive signs of their disorder displayed so as to remind them how high are the costs of personal autonomy. Theirs is a parade of damaged identities, a march of the walking wounded—only the injuries to the self remains unrecognized and unacknowledged, for the meaningful process reflected here is one that is both normative and taken-for-granted, and above all else, socially shared.

More than anything, though, the procession is a powerful image of harnessed disorder. It therefore also becomes, implicitly, an image of those who fail as adults to subordinate themselves to society, or are deemed unable to do so—the revolutionary, the alcoholic, the homosexual, the criminal, and of course, the Jew—all gathered punitively to march in a reassuring public spectacle that displays the harnessing of their destructive impulses in the productive and controlled formation of the goose-stepping column. When looking at this procession of *Struwwelpeter* characters—and particularly the emaciated "*Suppen-Kaspar*" parading grotesquely at the rear—it is not hard to imagine columns of starved slave laborers being marched to their disciplinary work details in concentration camps, or even to their deaths by gassing, as marching bands play on (see plate 26b). Indeed, the marching

column of *Struwwelpeter* characters epitomizes the concept of *Kadavergehorsam* developed by Dr. Schreber and unmasked with such poignance by his hopelessly double-binded son—the "corpse-like obedience" that would reach its culmination during the Nazi era, with its endless goose-stepping processions, its Hitler Youth broiling for hours under the sun, arms outstretched; its constant demands for a self-abnegating compliance with racial necessity, whatever the price. Of course by then all this had "merged into blood and flesh," as the ever obedient commandant of Auschwitz had said.

Der Struwwelpeter



oder
lustige
Geschichten
und
drollige
Bilder

Sieh einmal, hier steht er,
Pfa! der Struwwelpeter!
An den Händen beiden
Ließ er sich nicht schneiden
Seine Nägel fest ein Jahr;
Kämmen ließ er nicht sein Haar.
Pfa! ruft da ein jeder:
Gerst'ger Struwwelpeter!

für
Kinder
von 3 bis
6 Jahren
von
Dr. Heinrich
Hoffmann

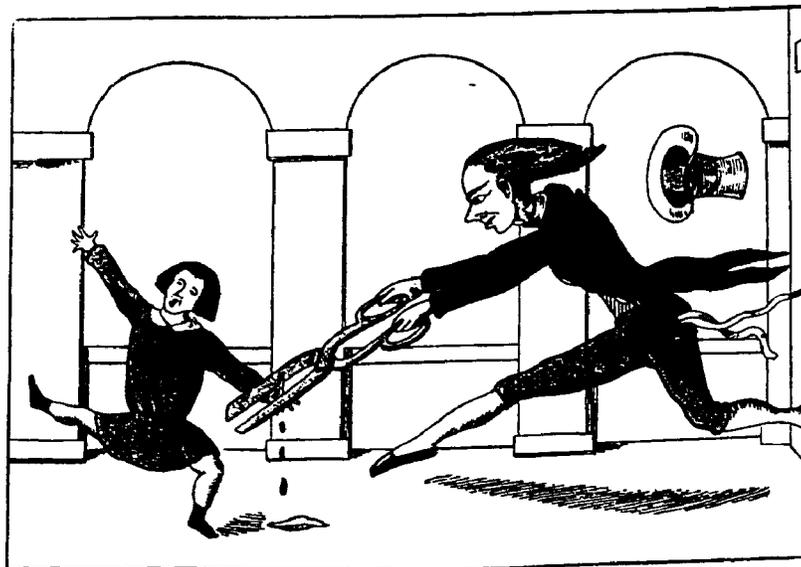
427

Verlag von A. Anton & Co., Leipzig

Plate 20. Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*. Originally published in 1845. This modern edition dates from the Weimar era.



Plate 21. "The Truly Tragic Tale" of Paulinchen and her matches. Excerpt from Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*.



Bauz! da geht die Türe auf,
 Und herein in schnellem Lauf
 Springt der Schneider in die Stub'
 Zu dem Daumen-Lutscher-Bub.
 Weh! Jetzt geht es klipp und klapp
 Mit der Scher' die Daumen ab,
 Mit der großen scharfen Scher'!
 Hei! da schreit der Konrad sehr.

Als die Mutter kommt nach Haus,
 Sieht der Konrad traurig aus.
 Ohne Daumen steht er dort,
 Die sind alle beide fort.

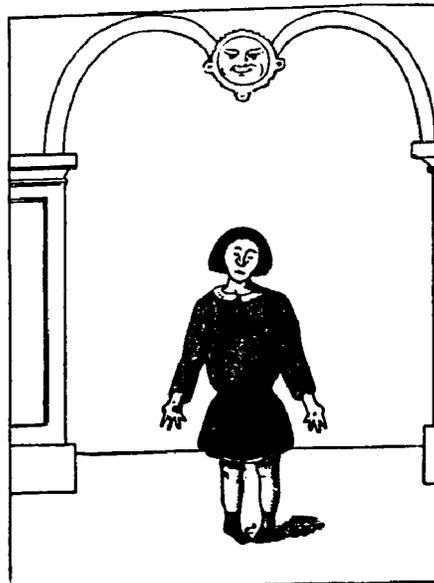
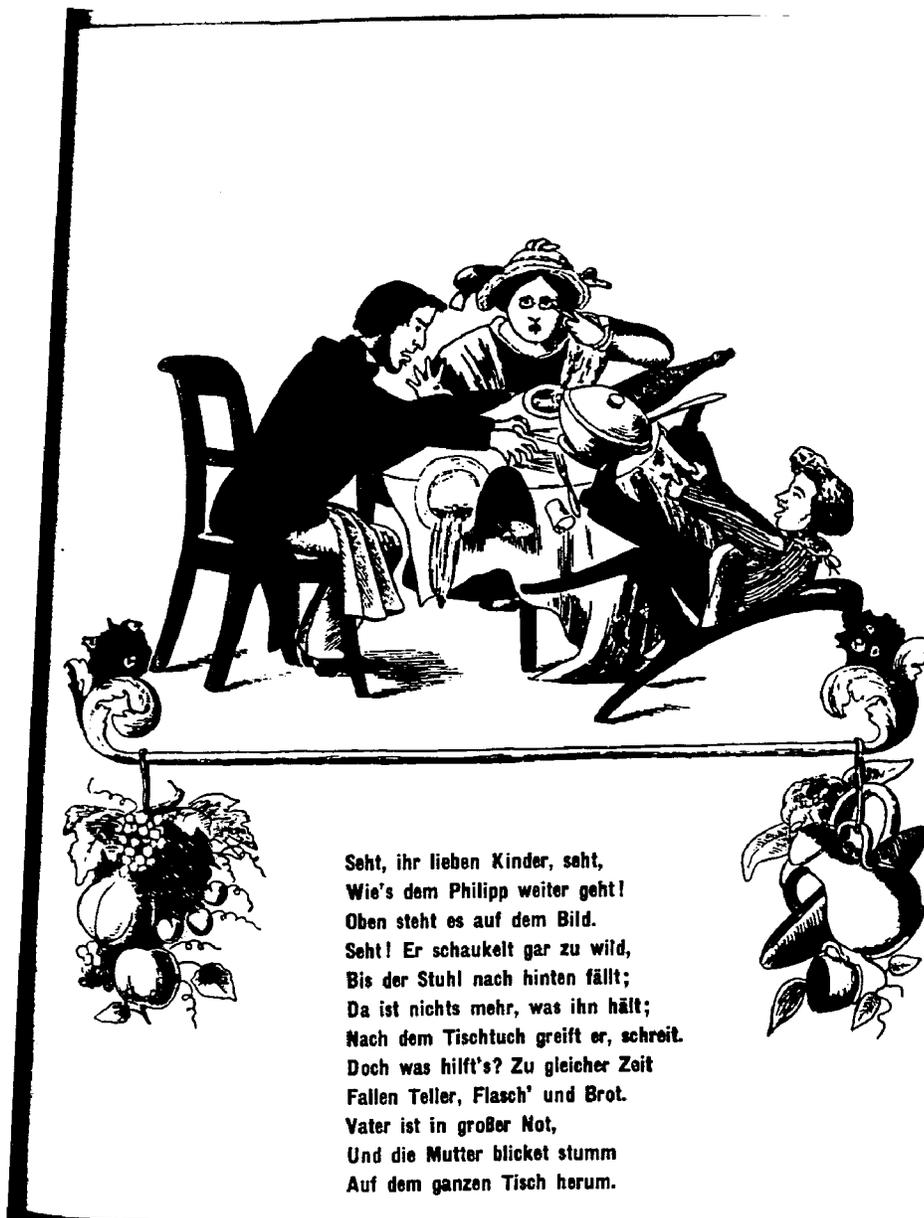


Plate 22. "The Story of Thumbsucker." Excerpt from Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*.



Plate 23. "The Story of Soup Casper." Excerpt from Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*.



Seht, ihr lieben Kinder, seht,
 Wie's dem Philipp weiter geht!
 Oben steht es auf dem Bild.
 Seht! Er schaukelt gar zu wild,
 Bis der Stuhl nach hinten fällt;
 Da ist nichts mehr, was ihn hält;
 Nach dem Tischtuch greift er, schreit.
 Doch was hilft's? Zu gleicher Zeit
 Fallen Teller, Flasch' und Brot.
 Vater ist in großer Not,
 Und die Mutter blicket stumm
 Auf dem ganzen Tisch herum.

Plate 24. "The Story of Fidgety Philip." Excerpt from Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*.

Melodien

Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann's

Struwelpeter



Zusammengestellt

von

Andreas Hußla

Plate 25. *Struwelpeter* characters in goose-step. (Source: Hußla, [1876])

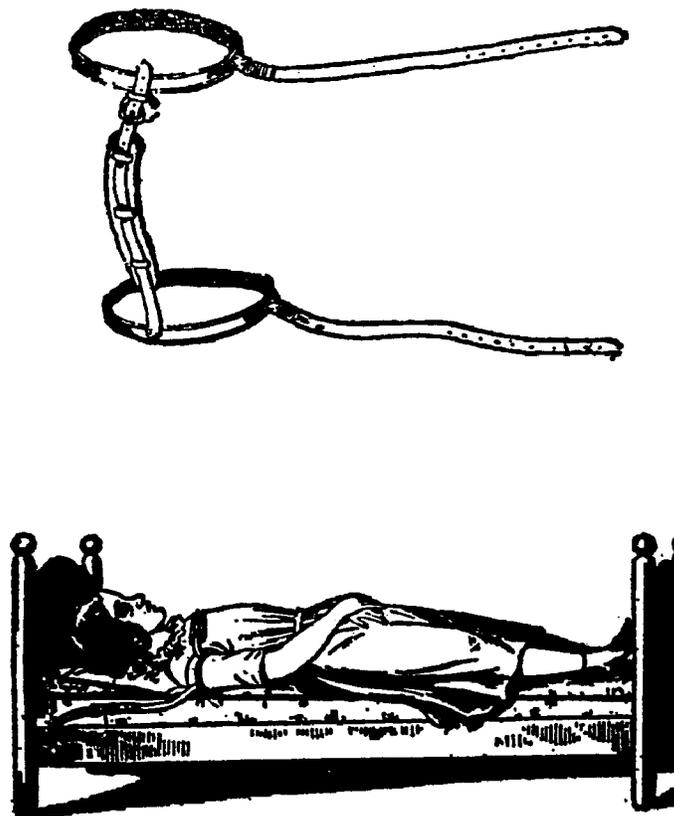


Plate 26a. Belt designed by Dr. D.G.M. Schreber to restrain a child during sleep.
(Source: Schreber, 1858:174, reproduced in Schatzman, 1974:40)



Plate 26b. The prisoners' orchestra at Mauthausen concentration camp plays while an inmate is led to execution. (Source: Arad, 1990:305 and Yad Vashem, Jerusalem)

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BIOLOGIZATION OF THE JEW

The forms and methods of *schwarze Pädagogik* reveal how intensely nineteenth century Germans sought to control the impulses of the body as a means of ordering society itself. No wonder, then, that the development of a biologized German capitalist subject during this period should be accompanied by an equally intensive but negative biologization of the Jew and all that which he personified. The old antinomies whereby Germanness and Jewishness were defined now secularized into an opposition between the organic and the inorganic, the healthy and the diseased. Supposedly unable to subordinate the egoism of his bodily impulses to the requirements of the social order, the Jew emerged as a full-grown Struwwelpeter clammering for social acceptance while simultaneously threatening society's physiological balance and spiritual well-being. As a result, the prospect of Jewish emancipation brought with it a renewed threat of status reversal no less symbolic than before, but expressed now in the modern ideological terms of *Verjudung*, or "Judaization." This entailed the fear that the Jew and his materialistic spirit would encroach upon everything natural and good, resulting in the domination of German society and the disintegration of its organic *Volk* being (cf. Aschheim, 1985).

EMANCIPATION AS STATUS REVERSAL

The Role of Caricature

Considering the identification of the Jew with the negative dimensions attendant to the emerging bourgeois-capitalist social order, it is not surprising that Jews continued to serve as particularly fertile subjects for caricature during this period. In fact, according to Fuchs, the period of Jewish emancipation brought with it a flood of anti-Jewish caricatures such as had not been seen since the sixteenth century (Fuchs, 1921:218). Fuchs is referring here primarily to graphic arts. However, pejorative representations of the Jew and of the problematic surrounding his social status pervaded nearly all domains of German social life, finding expression in all forms of cultural production. This ranged from actual political policies to the pamphlets debating them; from plays, novels, poems, and personal diary jottings to philosophical, medical and other scientific tracts; from painting and sculpture to popular song and cabaret, and from images to artifacts. The latter ran the gamut from folk art to the most sophisticated expressions of popular culture. These included carved wooden figurines as well as Hummel-like objects of porcelain and bronze; metal dishes with embossed antisemitic motifs; porcelain candlesticks in the form of stereotyped Jewish figures; walking sticks made of carved and painted wood, as well as those of metal or even silver, their handles caricatured Jewish heads with enormous noses; pipes, cups and cookie-presses; and, later in the century, mass-produced, trademark-protected beer steins with elaborate antisemitic images and aphorisms juxtaposed with portraits of the era's leading antisemites.

By the late nineteenth century the so-called "Jewish Question" would emerge as a standard subject-area for journalists and historians, as well as a focus for debate in nearly every political body. Specifically antisemitic newspapers and journals would also appear at this time, as would antisemitic clubs, organizations and political parties, while antisemitism

as an ideological force increasingly pervaded a wide variety of occupational interest groups and cultural associations (see Mosse, 1964; Jochmann, 1971, 1976). In addition, antisemitism would become the focus of special lectures, rallies, demonstrations and boycotts, while sensationalized ritual murder accusations and trials would continue appear, even generating legal depositions by scholarly consultants arguing for or against, in a secular, scientized version of earlier, medieval debates (see Strack, 1909; Dundes, 1991).

Among these varied forms of antisemitic cultural expression, the array of caricatures that appeared in publications as well as on handbills and postcards provides perhaps the most colorful and immediate access to German popular cultural attitudes toward the Jew from the late eighteenth century to the First World War. As with the *Judensau*, these caricatures continue to stand as dialectical images, objectifying the German experience of the alienating dimensions of social transformation through symbolic representations of the Jew as the quintessential "Other." In keeping with the secularizing process and the expansion of topical and politically satiric mass-circulation periodicals, these pictures are more variable and transitory than the *Judensau*, often providing more immediate perspectives on particular events or personalities. Nonetheless the motifs they employ are recurrent and provide variations on a basic theme: the Jew as monetary parasite and social egoist seeking to invade and dominate Christian society. This theme increasingly receives a physiological counterpart in the reified image of the Jew's "unproductive" and parasitical nature, which ranges from the bodily stereotype of the hairy, hook-nosed and ill-proportioned Jew to demonized images of Jews as monsters hybridized with vultures, spiders, snakes and other creatures of the animal or plant world deemed unproductive or parasitical. Once the germ theory of disease had been developed, Jews would become associated with those internal forms of parasitism considered most hidden and pernicious: bacteria, viruses and cancers.

The language accompanying these caricatures is usually in *mauscheln*, a German caricature of the Yiddish dialect, which Gilman has called the hidden language of the Jews (see Gilman, 1986:139). Fittingly enough, Gilman finds the earliest uses of the term in a broadside of 1622 chastizing Christians who minted bad coins; it was used to suggest the act of extorting usurious interest in the "Jewish manner." Derived from "Mausche," the German version of the name Moische, *mauscheln* grew out of the earlier attribution of magic to the inaccessible form and meaning of Hebrew, as well as from the identification of Yiddish with the jargon of thieves. It thus suggested conspiratorial plotting associated with the hidden process of monetary circulation which the Jew was thought to command. For this reason familiarity with "Jewish" language—like the earlier appropriation and recycling of Jewish sacred books and tombstones—was felt to convey a kind of power over the Jew and the domains he was seen to control. Accordingly both Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler (as well as other antisemites anxious to exhibit their "expertise") occasionally pepper their antisemitic comments with terms taken from Hebrew, Yiddish or even from *mauscheln* itself, thereby suggesting their special access to the Jew's hidden knowledge and secret intentions.

Mauscheln conformed to the construction of the Jew's exchange-nature as essentially parasitical and uncreative, for the language of the Jews was considered nothing other than a distorted and artificial borrowing from genuine German. The growing popularity of *mauscheln* in caricaturing Jews also reflected the secularizing terms whereby the Jew's exchange-nature was reified—for Jewish attempts to assimilate into German society were represented as artificial strivings inevitably belied by the immutable and sterile realities of Jewishness. Not surprisingly, the Jewish propensity to *mauscheln* was medicalized in the nineteenth century in at least one instance, as Gilman points out (1986:141-2). Anton Ree, a German Jewish educator writing in 1844, argued that, as language determines human nature, *mauscheln* reflects the essential sickness of the Jews, manifested in this case in a

"specific modification of their organs of speech." Ree attributed this maladaptation to Jewish isolation, and therefore concluded that the Jew could be "cured" through integration into German culture, which would result in a gradual physiological adaptation. Such sympathetic attitudes, however, were culturally anomalous. By the end of the century, *mauscheln*—now seen merely as a stage in the Jew's superficial mastery of German—would not simply represent the inability of Jews to assimilate. It would also testify to a positive biological fact about the Jewish race, namely the inbred Jewish capacity for mimicry, a parasitical strategy adopted by the Jew in his biological struggle for racial supremacy. Within that struggle, the secret language of the Jews—like the mysterious and abstract power of exchange itself—permitted the infiltration of German culture and its consequent degeneration, particularly through control of the press, of publishing, and eventually of the film industry and art world. All this was facilitated by the Jew's "nervous intellect," which seduced the German away from the healthy, the concrete and manifest, the representational, and substituted instead the dissipating distractions of superficial journalistic culture-criticism, sexual "freedom," cubism and even the twelve-tone scale (see Mosse, 1964; Laqueur, 1974).

The Invasion of Exchange

Over the course of the nineteenth century, as the process of Jewish emancipation began to gain ground, the fears expressed by Frankfurt's promenading burghers seemed to be fulfilling themselves. By 1817, following the Napoleonic destruction of the ghetto walls, Frankfurt's Jews had taken up residence in streets previously forbidden to them, renting 48 houses and 382 shops beyond the confines of the old Judengasse (Katz, 1980:85). A spokesman in the Frankfurt Senate, disturbed by this highly visible entry of Jews into surrounding Christian society, sounded the alarm: "Within a few years," he claimed, "most of the Christian residents will become beggars." Frankfurt, he continued, would

soon become a Jewish city, where the "offspring of the Christian merchants will be happy if the Jewish merchants employ them as caretakers in their warehouses." Noting that Jews had already amassed considerable wealth without the benefits of citizenship, the Frankfurt Senate spokesman argued that granting Jews further rights would only permit them the opportunity to increase their capital at the expense of the more socially-minded German: "Their own advantage is the only motive and also the only purpose of all their actions," he said. This was demonstrated by the fact that the economic freedoms they had been offered had not induced them to enter such productive, natural occupations as crafting; instead they had used their freedom for "the expansion of their traffic [*Schacher*] and unrestrained influence." Soon, he concluded, "we shall get Jewish lawyers, Jewish judges, Jewish tax collectors [*Einnehmer*], Jewish teachers, and finally Jewish ministers and perhaps even some kind of Jewish dynasty of rulers" (see Katz, 1980:85-6).

This alarming vision of a steadily encroaching Jewish power converts alienation over the development of capitalism into a fear of impending status-reversal. In this it is similar to Martin Luther's earlier outcry against the unproductive and usurious Jew, who dared to assume he had become "the ruler in the land". But the meanings are now applied to the ascending bourgeois civil order. The movement of Jews into society is seen as the invasion of a foreign and unnatural element. Released from its earlier legal and physical containment, the rampant egoism of unbridled profit-making and of monetary gain without social conscience is being imposed by the Jew over all of society, to the disadvantage of the productive Christians. The commonplace use of the pejorative term *Schacher* for Jewish trade, as opposed to the more neutral or positive *Handel*, allows capitalism itself to be divided into a negative and a positive dimension. By so doing, the alienating aspects of capitalist exchange and monetary relations—the exchange-value dimension of the commodity fetish—could be objectified, reified and projected onto the Jew. Meanwhile the use-value dimension of the commodity fetish could be reserved for the Germans capitalists,

who could be seen as engaging in morally-constrained productive activity which extended from the earlier artisan economy and was devoted to wider social well-being. Under these circumstances the traditional feudal-corporate social order now seemed to provide a measure of protection and identity to those less adept than the Jews at adjusting to the transforming conditions of economy and society. Yet this familiar world was apparently in the process of being replaced by dependency to an atomised social order based on commerce—an order easily identified with the visible movement of the trader-Jew into the rapidly evolving bourgeois-capitalist society.

The Jew as Soldier

The implicit fear of status-reversal and social inversion common to anti-Jewish caricatures and pamphlets throughout the first half of the nineteenth century reveals the extent to which Jewish emancipation served continuously as the prime index of the alienations implicit in the ongoing transformation to a bourgeois-capitalist order. Such a fear is expressed, for example, in the numerous images satirizing Jews as soldiers. The capacity to serve in a militia for the common defense was, of course, one of the essential new roles for citizens of the emerging European nation states. In one elaborate version from the eighteenth century (in Fuchs, 1921:48-9), small groups of Jews in frock coats and three-cornered hats are scattered across a parade ground on the outskirts of the city. In the foreground a Jew cries out, "A miracle of God!" as he beholds his brethren training to become soldiers. But each grouping reveals only the cowardliness and ineptitude of the Jewish recruit and the hostility of the Christian. The message is clear: Christian and Jewish soldiers cannot form a single disciplined unit; the introduction of Jews would only result in chaotic disarray and a disintegration of order. As if to demonstrate this point, everywhere on the field Jews stand helplessly with arms outstretched, crying out, "*Au Wey!*" Later on in the next century, as Gilman points out, the inability of Jews to soldier (and hence to

serve as *Mitbürger*, or co-citizens with Christians), would be reified in terms of the Jewish foot itself. This was depicted as congenitally weak, and thus an index of the Jew's overall, biologically programmed inadequacy (see Gilman, 1991:40).

If this relatively early image suggests the ludicrous effects of incorporating the chaotic Jew into the disciplined ranks of the military, later images use Jewish soldiers to represent the frightful consequences which would occur if the Jew was accorded full social emancipation. These caricatures proliferated during the revolutionary efforts of 1848, when Jewish emancipation became a hotly debated issue throughout Germany and Austria. One frequently reproduced motif depicts a motley band of Jewish soldiers marching riotously through the city to orders conveyed in a ludicrous *mauscheln* (see plate 27 and Fuchs, 1921:128ff). The banner under which they march is inscribed with the words, "Profit: Equal Rights with the Christians," and shows a crowned Jew riding a coach drawn by two naked Christians who take the place of horses. Here the principle of civil equality is represented by the spectacle of Jewish soldiers gathered from amongst the general populace to serve as members of the civic guard. But the Jew is incapable of subordinating his egoistic pursuit of money to the welfare of society as a whole. Instead his entry into society inverts the traditional relationship of Christian to Jew and of natural productivity to parasitical exchange. Once the most subordinated and alien element in society, now the Jew has become king, while the laboring Christian is reduced to a beast of burden, enslaved by the Jew in the name of profit. Thus the alienations of modern capitalism, evolving out of the traditional Christian hostility to exchange, continue to be projected onto the Jew as the bourgeois political order struggles to constitute itself in step with economic developments.

The Antisemitic Picture Postcard

This theme of status-reversal repeats itself *ad infinitum* in caricature and text in the second half of the nineteenth century, growing in intensity until reaching its most vehement forms during the Nazi era itself. One variant—to provide only one additional example here from later in the century—appears in a significant new medium: the picture postcard. Labeled *Subjugated Germandom* [*das unterjochte Deutschland*, or literally, Germandom Under the Yoke], it shows a tattered German family, complete with mother cradling infant, bent and harnessed to a plough driven by a Jew. Swarthy and hook-nosed, their stereotyped taskmaster is accompanied by circling crows or vultures while the furrows in the field they plough are littered with the skulls of the Jew's past victims. The message here is obvious, but the venue makes it even more notable, for the picture postcard represents an explosive new market and medium for the transmission of antisemitic themes in German-speaking lands. Whether at home or on vacation, Germans and Austrians so inclined now find themselves able to purchase postcards so as to exchange amongst themselves—and in a very public manner through the mails—ludicrous and often vehement antisemitic messages—messages which help, of all things, to cement bonds of friendship and family! The extraordinary thing is that this venue is normative, even when the themes it conveys are contemptuous and humiliating, vicious, inflammatory, or even verge on the obscene. In this, however, the use of postcards resembles the very public form that antisemitism in Germany has taken throughout the ages, and underscores the enduring but transforming role of the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction, something crucial to the emergence of modern antisemitism toward the end of the century, as we will see later in more detail. Like earlier broadsheets of the *Judensau*, ritual murder, or the obscene Jew Synagogue, these circulating images (among other modern forms of German antisemitic cultural production) help to construct German social identity. They help Germans to align themselves with one another through a commonly-shared

construction of, and opposition to, the Jew and all that he symbolizes. This permits Germans to insert themselves comfortably into the evolving "imagined community" of a modern Austria or Germany struggling to overcome the exacerbating class divisions which the crises of modern capitalism are making ever more ominous and inescapable (cf. Anderson, 1983).

THE SECULARIZATION OF THE JEW'S FETISH NATURE

The Jew as Living Abstraction

As we saw earlier, exchange-value in capitalism becomes the abstract common denominator by which labor and its products are measured and rendered equivalent. This commoditization process is fetishized in the form of money, the commodity par excellence, which appears as the sole repository of exchange value in capitalism. The exchange-value implicit within other commodities is hidden; instead they are taken at "face-value," as it were, appearing only in their manifest form, as concrete and "natural" use-values. In Germany, as we have seen, the abstract and defining characteristics of exchange-value were not only fetishized in money, but reified in the form of the Jew and his allegedly pernicious social influence.

In 1795, Ernst Traugott von Kortum (*On Jewry and Jews Primarily in Terms of their Influence on Bourgeois Well-Being*) had already expressed the secularizing fetish qualities of the Jew with particular clarity. According to Kortum, Christian commerce was imbued with a sense of honor and a consciousness of the need to contribute to the overall well being and productivity of society; it was not focused on profit alone. This contrasted to the commercial activities of the Jew. "Jewish trade, *even if conducted with thorough honesty,*" Kortum wrote, "*can never mean anything but harm to civic society* [italics in original]." Jewish existence was essentially parasitical: the Jew increased the price of labor

by drawing upon the services of productive craftsmen, without yet contributing to the overall supply of labor in society. At the same time, the Jew removed money from circulation. Kortum defined money in terms of a traditional use-value economy: to be useful to a state economy, money had to circulate perpetually from hand to hand, so that every person disbursed roughly that which he took in. "Jewish commerce does not advance this circulation. The Hebrew always returns less than he receives. He is a swamp that absorbs a great part of the water that passes through it." Finally, Kortum reveals the shift from the Jew as a concrete trader to Judaism itself as an abstract principle of capitalist accumulation standing behind the concrete activities of any single Jew: "The Jew never trades as a single individual, *but as a member of the most extensive trading company in the world. . . .* One thinks he sees one Jew working and in effect all of Judaism is in operation" (Kortum [italics in the original], quoted in Katz, 1980:61-2). Thus the Jew does not produce, but lives off the production of others, draining money out of circulation in order to accumulate a profit. And in so doing he acts not for himself alone, but for the benefit of Jews as an international entity. Judaism itself is the spirit of capitalist accumulation.

Kortum was not alone in his understandings. Rarely has the underlying identification of the Jew with the abstract characteristics of exchange-value been expressed as explicitly, albeit mildly, as in the writings of Heinrich Leo, a Hegel disciple who sought in 1828 to establish the "permanent features of the Jewish national character" (see Katz, p.160). The modes of abstraction which characterize Jewish thought and religion bore a direct relationship to the success Jews showed in commerce, he wrote, and simultaneously introduced a disintegrative influence into the surrounding productive world.

The Jewish nation stands out conspicuously among all other nations of this world in that it possesses a truly corroding and decomposing [*zerfressenden und auflösenden*] mind. . . the Jews from the very beginning until this very day, have transmuted everything that fell into the orbit of their spiritual activity into an abstract generality [*ein abstract Allgemeines*]. . . . The Jew in our time especially

distinguishes himself in that he always considers and compares all objects from the standpoint of their common money value. He is also wont to make the center of his life this value which is simultaneously both so general and so abstract. In the same way, already in ancient times, he was seeking out, even in all spiritual circumstances and relations, only an abstract generality. It is this peculiarity which is responsible for the fact that Jews were the first and most tenacious in maintaining the unity of the Divine Being (Leo, quoted in Katz, p. 161).

Leo's philosophical history is not lacking in perception: he recognizes implicitly the abstract principles of exchange-value, whereby the products of human labor become commoditized. But he misidentifies the Jew as the activator of capitalism.

Here, as in Kortum's representation of the Jew, the secularization of the meanings implicit within the *Judensau* motif and pre-modern antisemitism are becoming evident. Formerly the abstract principle of capitalist exchange was represented in the condensed supernatural figure of the Jew-Devil, who stood behind the concrete activities of Jews and sow. But in the allegedly "disenchanted" [*entzaubert*] context of emerging bourgeois society (cf. Weber in Gerth & Mills, 1946:129-56), with its increasingly scientific and rationalized cosmology, the negative principle of exchange—the invasive mobility of money—takes on the form of a modern philosophical abstraction: Judaism. The concrete Jew—as Marx was soon to point out—now becomes the instantiation of this abstract principle; he becomes the "empirical essence" of the "market and its presuppositions" (Marx, 1972:114). Meanwhile the negative characteristics of Jewish exchange are expressed in increasingly organic imagery, as reflected in Kortum's reference to the swamp—a wasteful, unproductive, disordered and entrapping element in the natural landscape. Here the swamp serves an extension of the earlier construction of capitalist accumulation as a destructive accumulation of waste. As capitalism develops in Germany in the nineteenth century, the Jew would become ever more literally the reified force behind the commoditization of the world. In step with the secularizing process, the supernatural form of the devil disappears, merging gradually into the concrete Jew as master of

commerce—only to resurface later, as we shall see, in the demonized forms of Nazi racism.¹

Commoditizing Nature

Kortum's identification of the Jew with the swamp can be contrasted, in a colored cartoon of 1820, with the Jew's own perception of nature. In this simple image, a wandering Jewish peddler, rucksack on back, delightedly mistakes the rising sun for "something gold-plated" (see plate 28 and Fuchs, 1921:88-9). The cartoon's title, *Rapturously Beholding the Sun (Schwärmerischer Blick in die Sonne)*, along with the rucksack, walking-stick and bucolic German landscape, couches the image in the language and form of German romanticism. But the Jew is not like Schubert's wandering miller, who restores himself after his productive labors by soaking in the beauties of his natural homeland. Instead the meanings of German romanticism are "Jewified" (*verjudet*): the Jew transposes all natural elements in the image into money, and all processes associated with fertility into the sterile but self-animated sphere of capitalist exchange. The wanderer's rucksack becomes the peddler's bundle of cheap wares and the sun, a piece of gold; its life-giving cycle is equated with the circulation of commodities. By implication the natural German landscape—and presumably, the German himself, who (as Herder would have it) is supposedly "rooted" within it—becomes for the "rootless" Jew a potential source of monetary profit, if the means for extracting it can be found (cf. Mosse, 1964:6, 28). Thus the cartoon presents the Jew as himself a living caricature of the German, incapable of authentic feeling about nature, but ever ready to commoditize his natural surroundings. Just so, the Jew's language, as the cartoon's accompanying poem makes clear, is in the

¹The motif of the swamp will become central to Nazi iconography later. The image of bare-chested German *Arbeitsmänner* digging ditches to drain swamps becomes one of the key symbolic practices through which a chaotic, conflict-riven Germany is "ordered" and "hardened" under the collective influence of National Socialism (see *Parts Four and Five* below).

Yiddishisms of *mauscheln*, the Jew's supposedly ludicrous appropriation and mangling of the German tongue.

We see a variant of these themes in the cover of a nineteenth century antisemitic pamphlet titled *The Secret Business Language [Geschäftssprache] of the Jews*. The subtitle reads: "An Advice- and Handbook for all who come into business contact with Jews and are ignorant of the Hebrew Language (the so-called "Market Language" [*Marktsprache*])" (in Fuchs, 1921:270). Elsewhere on the cover, now in a yiddishized *mauscheln*, a "nauseatingly" generous [*ergötzlichen*] appendix is announced, which includes a "Paean to Garlic" (a "trio for four voices") followed by a "Poetic Examination of Nature." Jewish language is thus reduced to the language of the capitalist marketplace, which is not a language accessible to all but a secret code which the Jews command for their own advantage. This market language contrasts intrinsically to all things natural or creative (including the Germany's countryside, music, and the German language itself), which the Jew debauches and, by implication, commoditizes. This construction of the Jew's language as essentially alien, whether or not he writes in German, is brought to its culmination in the Nazi period, when bookburning members of the German Student Union declared that any future books by Jews written in German must bear a notice declaring them to be "translations" (see Gilman, 1986:309).

ANTISEMITISM AND ANALITY: THE BIOLOGIZATION OF EXCHANGE

The Jew as Capitalist Accumulation: Little Israel Has Swallowed a Ducat (1820)

The secularization of the Jew as the reified expression of capitalist accumulation was not limited to the image of the swamp or the Jew's commoditization of nature. As the organismic meanings of biological science became increasingly salient to constructions of personal identity and social order, the anal dimensions of capitalist accumulation revealed

earlier in the *Judensau* motif also found secularized expression in the bodily form and processes of the Jew.

One particularly instructive color caricature, also dating to 1820, is cast in the form of a humorous account: it reports the allegedly "true story" of a Jewish child who has swallowed a gold ducat (see plate 29 and Fuchs, 1921:104ff). This evokes a family rescue effort aimed at recovering the ducat from the child's body. The family is gathered about the dinner table as if to dine. Instead of a meal, however, it is "Little Israel" who is set upon the table, his britches pulled down, his backside posed above a chamberpot. The entire family surrounds him, looking on affectionately as father administers laxatives and mother enemas. To the delight of all, the gold ducat emerges. The text, complete with Yiddishisms, elaborates:

Little Israel [*Israelchen*] notices the great love his poppa [Tate] Baruch has for gold. The boy thinks, "Ducats must be something delicious!" [*"Es muss doch seyn ebbes delicates um einen Ducaten!"*] He comes upon his parents' cashbox, sees the ducats, takes one, licks it—and swallows one! "Oy wey" is wailed! Tumult fills the house; the Kremnitzer [e.g., the coin] must come back into the light of day. Israel is set on the table. Poppa Baruch attacks from the front with rhubarb, while momme Rachel covers the rear with douches. Pesselche, Schmul and Løbche—who is wearing his new frock coat made of old trousers—nervously attend the rebirth of their brother, who has accrued 5.30 in interest [*harren ängstlich der Wiedergeburt ihres R/E5.30 mehr werthen Bruders*], and see, their darling golden son [*Goldsöhnchen*] doesn't keep them waiting!

This cartoon, with its elaborate text in *mauscheln*, represents the Jew and his family as the negative antithesis to the coalescing German bourgeois family unit in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In emerging bourgeois society material production is increasingly removed from the nuclear family. Instead the family becomes, as we saw in the discussion of *schwarze Pädagogik*, a unit for the reproduction of citizens socialized in the ways of the modern market, as well as a unit of consumption. As the cartoon makes clear, however, what the Jewish version of the bourgeois family consumes and reproduces is money, not as a contribution to social well-being but for the purpose of its own self-interest and parasitical expansion.

However peculiar the content and humor of this satire may appear to cultural outsiders, it should be noted that the cartoon represents a variant on the German *Ducaten-Scheisser* ("Ducat-Shitter"), an element of German popular culture so commonplace that when Freud mentioned it in his essay on anality he assumed its universal familiarity (see Freud, 1959 [1908]; cf. Dundes, 1984). Unlike "Little Israel," however, the *Ducaten-Scheisser* is an object of German affection, not derision. Found in candy stores and pastry shops, the *Ducaten-Scheisser* is a toy in the shape of a German child; when the proper handle is pressed, the child excretes a chocolate "coin" wrapped in gold foil (see plate 30). This little artifact helps to confirm the wider German cultural association of money and anality, in this case in a positive value context. Here chocolate is given anal expression not only because of its color and texture, but because chocolate itself is so precious—in terms of taste and cost—that it has been likened to money and packaged accordingly. Thus the child excretes a "precious treat"—not money at all, but a natural if luxurious use-value—to the delight of all.

What the Jewish child in the caricature produces is something quite different. Using puns and double entendres, the cartoon's caption describes the child's excretion of the coin simultaneously as an act of reproduction—the birth of a sibling attended to by the entire family. The "precious" Jewish child (the "*Goldsöhnchen*") and the excreted coin are thereby equated with one another, suggesting that the passage of money through the child's body is a dual "rebirth" which produces a profit [*Mehrwert*]. Thus the Jewish child is identified with money, while his body is attributed with the physiological capacity of generating interest, in caricature of natural reproduction. In this manner the Jew "breeds" an unnatural profit out of his loins. Likewise the Jewish bourgeois family's reproduction of both money and waste is condensed in the form of its children, who thereby become biologized expressions of exchange-value. This contrasts, of course, with the offspring of

the naturally-productive German family, who by implication become biologized expressions of use-value.

The cartoon reinforces these meanings through added reference to the sterile reproductive characteristics of "Israelchen's" older brother. Instead of buying a new coat from a craftsman, "Löbche"—presumably the shapeless figure in the foreground—wears one recycled out of old trousers. This act refers to the Jew's traditional trade in second-hand clothing. In the nineteenth century such trade became emblematic of the malignant means whereby emancipating German Jews (and later immigrating "*Ostjuden*") supposedly gained their first foothold in bourgeois society, thereby allowing them to amass their fortune and power as capitalists (see Boehlich, 1965; Aschheim, 1982). Like the child who squeezes interest out of his own loins, the Jew presses an additional value out of the productive labors of the Christian artisan, while robbing the craftsman of the positive monetary value he should have received for the purchase of a new coat. Or as Kortum would have it, the Jew is a swamp, draining value out of society. By extension, the bourgeois Jewish family unit is a dead-end; it consumes, but only to profit. Living off the productivity of surrounding Christian society, the Jewish family returns neither money and wares, nor the productive labor of its children. Instead it acts only in its own egoistic interest, producing parasitical Jewish children who have internalized the Jewish profit-motive rather than the productive values which allow bourgeois society as a whole to reproduce itself. Thus the cartoon caricatures the bourgeois Jewish family unit, which reproduces children in the same manner that it generates both capital and waste.

A cartoon published in the Viennese satirical periodical, *Kikeriki* in 1912 shows how these meanings persisted into the next century (in Fuchs, 1921:194;). Titled *The Circumcision (Die Beschneidung)*, the cartoon presents a ludicrously drawn Jew complete with beard, sidelocks and a sly expression, the latter generated as usual by half-closed eyes and a dissembling, self-satisfied smile. Presumably a tailor, he proudly holds up a ducat

which he has just clipped with a pair of shears—thereby demonstrating just how useful the tools of his trade can be if one is Jewish. The "circumsizing" of the ducat entails, of course, the dishonest practice of shaving metal from coins so as to reduce their value. Here the coin is identified with the Jewish penis and thus with unnatural reproduction. Once again the implication is that money is the Jew's true offspring. At the same time the cartoon hints, although lightly here, at the unnatural animism which the Jew supposedly brings to money, allowing him to manipulate its value and circulation to the detriment of his naturally productive Christian neighbors.

The meanings of the earlier cartoon are further elaborated in its satirization of the Jew as aspiring bourgeois. This can be compared instructively with the "Zappel-Philipp" episode from *Struwwelpeter* (cf. plate 24, ch.6). As we saw in that earlier discussion, dining together at table is the classic ritual of commensality whereby the newly emergent bourgeois family constitutes and reproduces itself as a unit of consumption. But in the Jewish family the ritual is inverted: the family gathers, not to dine but to watch their child defecate; the chamber pot upon which he is set takes the place of the traditional German stew pot. In bourgeois society, as we know, the family unit comprises the new domain for the intensified surveillance and control of bodily-processes and the inculcation of hegemonic principles within bodily experience. But in the Jewish family, as the cartoon demonstrates, bourgeois norms are inverted: toilet training takes the place of dinner. And in this case toilet training acquires an explicit monetary dimension, since the child is induced to excrete money at interest. The cartoon thus suggests that socialization in the "unnaturally fertile" or wastefully productive forms of capitalist accumulation becomes the central ritual whereby the Jewish bourgeois family defines and reproduces itself.

One notes here that "Zappel-Philipp" and the Jewish family indulge in related forms of inversionary behavior extending from the shared chaos of their bodies—only Philip possesses the potential to subordinate his disorderly impulses to the requirements of society

through a disciplined *Arbeit an sich*. The exchange-addicted Jew is incapable of this; his bodily disorder by nature is innate and unchangeable. If Philip's failure to obey could bring the entire edifice of the bourgeois family down upon his head, it is no wonder then that the thought of Jews being emancipated evokes even greater reactions of fear as well as derision. After all, their freedom presents a permanent affront to the collective order of society itself.²

This seemingly innocuous cartoon thus presents monetary circulation, the transformation of value and the accumulation of capital as a process taking place within the digestive track of the Jew. At the same time these meanings are condensed with those of reproduction. Thus capitalist accumulation is represented as an animate bodily process, a self-breeding of interest out of money. But this process is a negative one, resulting in the sterile production and accumulation of waste. By representing capitalist accumulation and the breeding of interest as an "unnaturally fertile" process of the Jewish body, the cartoon reformulates the Aristotelian analogic reasoning which pervaded the pre-modern *Judensau* motif—but it does so in the secularizing terms of modern organicism. Indeed, the body of the Jewish child has actually taken the physical position formerly occupied by the sow, only here he literally converts the values drained from Christian society into capitalist profit in order to "feed" the Jewish family unit. The cartoon is thus a dramatic, modernizing

²The household space within which the ducat is rescued is also suggestive. Affixed to the wall of the household are a scale for weights and measures, and two twin, pocket-sized timepieces set side-by-side on hooks. These accoutrements of the Jewish home, which help to shape the space within which the Jewish child is induced to excrete money at interest, would seem implicit references to the quantifying dimensions of capitalism. Not only are coins weighed to insure an accurate measure of value; time itself becomes a portable commodity, to be subdivided and quantified, so as to structure the investment of labor and regularize the pursuit of profit. The abstract and ubiquitous principles of exchange are thereby concretized and rendered animate.

The Jewish household in the cartoon reflects this realignment of time with money in capitalism. As expressions of commodity fetishism, both time and money seem to take on a mutually-reinforcing life of their own, routinizing personal activity and governing the deployment and purchase of bodily labor. By placing the Jewish child and his excretion of money within this reformulated bourgeois spacetime, the Jew is further identified with the animate and dominating power of capital, which is reified in his body and in the physiological processes whereby he interacts with his environment.

example of the fetishism of commodities: the animate qualities of exchange are reified in the bodily form and physiological processes of the Jew.

Here we see the beginning to the biologization of the Jew's supernatural powers of exchange, which will culminate in modern racial antisemitism. But the malevolent dimensions of the Jew's alleged power are not developed here. Like the simple *Judensau* motif, which appeared early in the rise of finance capitalism, this cartoon occurs at a time when the transformation to bourgeois society and industrial capitalism is still relatively early. Although highly derogatory, the emphasis here is on the comic dimensions of the Jew's innate "otherness," expressed in the reified equation of his physiological processes with the anal dimensions of exchange. By locating this anality within the context of the Jewish bourgeois family, the cartoon stresses the Jew's essential disorder, which produces the inverse of bourgeois civility. Thus the Jew can never become a productive member of bourgeois society; like his absurd mouthings of genuine German, his aping of bourgeois social norms and values are obvious extensions of his alien nature.

Such caricatures of the Jewish bourgeois family unit are common ones for period of emancipation. A prime example from 1848—titled "*Amancibation*" in *mauscheln*—shows a chaotic Jewish family gathered about the table, ready to devour a pig which has been crudely cut in two upon a platter (see plate 31 and Fuchs, 1921:121). Meanwhile a disheveled little girl sits on the floor across from a scrawny living piglet; the two stare at one another while the girl gnaws on a leg of pig. The scene is completed with the image of a squawling baby in a high-chair—which is set in turn above a chamber pot—reaching for its share of the feast. We see here again a secularized recycling of the inversionary themes which characterized the *Judensau* in past ages, including its ritual murder component. The good bourgeois German family may well gather about a nice *Schweinebraten* to enjoy, in orderly fashion, the fruits of its own honest labor. The modern Jewish dining room, however, is nothing but a pigpen, the meal an act of cannibalization, as implied by the

juxtaposition of child and piglet on the floor. (In a more grotesque vein, a small brass platter—presumably a nineteenth century candy dish or ashtray—bears the embossed motif of a sow which has swallowed a Jew whole: his feet (still shod) extend from her mouth, while his head, complete with beard and Jew-hat, protrude from her anus [Ehrenthal Collection, New York]). As before, the Jew is equated with the pig which lives off the waste of the Christian but which in turn is capable only of generating filth. The process of "*Amancibation*," as the corrupted term implies, is an act of hopeless mimicry, serving only to release the chaos of the traditional Jewish family into society at large.

Rothschild's Bowels

Comic though these cartoons may be, their representation of the Jew's alien nature also carries with it the threatening implications of status-reversal which continue to characterize all German antisemitism. The Jew's disorder, like the abstract powers of exchange, is rampant and penetrating. At the same time that it drains Christian society of its productivity, it injects society with the voracious principles of egoism and commoditized exchange which the Jew ultimately must command. The underlying fear—expressed pointedly elsewhere, as we have seen—is that the Jew's elusive and subtly manipulative power is fated ultimately to dominate and cannibalize the German. The fear of the Jew's disintegrative power was expressed in a particularly clear-cut fashion in an anonymous antisemitic pamphlet of 1848 protesting the apparent inevitability of Jewish emancipation. "Indeed," the pamphlet stated, "it is this very outward assimilation that enables the Jews to exercise a corrosive influence upon other nations and religious communities, intent on gradually dissolving them, in a political, social, religious and moral sense, in a primeval mash which they expect to be able to exploit at their leisure as a raw material" (in Rürup, 1981:46). The image here of a "primeval mash" (probably *Rassenbrei* in the original), equated with an exploitable raw material, is telling: the corrosive power of Jewish egoism

and exchange is seen as capable of breaking down the bodily armour which the methods of *schwarze Pädagogik* have labored so diligently to build up, leaving the German totally structureless and thereby vulnerable to the forces of commoditization. Accordingly, the revolutionary efforts of 1848 gave rise to a new ideological formula, one which grew in resonance during the last decades of the nineteenth century: it was not the emancipation of Jews that was needed, but the emancipation of Germans from the pernicious influence of the Jew (see Rürup, 1975).

In this intensifying vein, an elaborate German color caricature of 1845 dramatically extends the fetishized meanings of the "Little Israel" cartoon, relating them more directly to themes of conspiracy and hidden power. Here the enormous and darkly malevolent figure of banker Amschel Rothschild, labelled "the general pump," stands up to his knees in a large sack of money made to look like a well (see plate 32 and Fuchs, 1921:228). On each side of his outstretched arms, military officers from Europe to the Orient grasp hold of his fingers and work his arms, causing coins to stream from the slits of his coat and trouser pockets. These land in the hats or coffers of the natural rulers and aristocrats of the world, who surround his body like beggars before the reigning power of gold. Stretching across Rothschild's broad belly is the map of Europe with a louis d'or at its center in place of his navel, shining like the sun. Here in Rothschild's bowels is the *anus mundi*, the secret heart of capitalism and the center of world power (cf. chapter 15 below). Amschel Rothschild's body thus becomes a mechanism whereby money is generated in Europe and circulated internationally. The natural order of world rule is reversed: through the influence of capital, which he embodies, Rothschild has taken the place of the world's vested powers. As in the earlier cartoon of the Jewish child excreting the ducat, this caricature makes implicit reference to the "unnatural reproductivity" of money by identifying the cash nexus with Rothschild's digestive tract. The power of money which the Jew embodies is

animate, yet mechanized, thereby suggesting its sterility, while the mobility of money is suggested by its fluidity as a wasteful by-product of the Jew's body.

Yet another image, this one from 1840, shows Rothschild riding a money-box with wheels, drawn by two vultures. "How Rothschild coaches throughout the world," the caption reads, "bankruptcy/misfortune [*Pleitegeier*] in harness" (see Fuchs, 1921:112ff). The colloquial term for bankruptcy and general misfortune [*Pleitegeier*] is a compound which includes the word for vulture, *Geier*. The use of vultures also reflects a secularization of the earlier demonic representation of the Jew as Devil, complete with horns, claws and tail. Here the supernatural component drops out, leaving instead an unnatural animal equivalent for the Jew—the parasitic vulture, which is useless to mankind and lives off carrion, or in the case of Rothschild, human misfortune. The reference to Rothschild's international travels resonates with the legendary figure of the Wandering Jew, thereby suggesting the destructive mobility of money, which knows no boundaries and pervades the world (see chapter 8 below). In other later cartoons the supernatural element will resurface, not necessarily with the Devil but in monstrous biologized hybridizations of the Jew with his animal equivalents (see plate 33 and chapter 8, plates 39-40). These cartoons will combine both the reified body-image of the Jew, as icon of exchange, with a vulture, snake, or neo-mythological monster, as in the case of the "*Getreidetier*," or Harvest Beast (in Fuchs 1921:201). They do so in an attempt to render the hidden exchange nature of the Jew manifest, for in an ideologically "disenchanted" world, it is not the supernatural element but the Jew's stereotypical form which now becomes his taken-for-granted, biological "reality." Hybridized representations help bring out the implicit meanings of that stereotyping, thereby reinforcing metaphorically the naturalized meanings of the Jew as biological "Other."

Marx and Analogy: On the Jewish Question (1843)

Karl Marx is the author of a famous early essay that, curiously enough, can serve almost as an illustrative companion text to these popular antisemitic caricatures of the Jew as the analyzed expression of capitalist accumulation. Using the early Marx as an informant of German culture on this issue may seem ironic; after all, it is Marx's later discussion of the concept of commodity fetishism which underlies the present analysis of the Jew as a reification of exchange in German culture. But in order for Marx to systematically articulate his critique of alienation in capitalist society, that critique had to undergo a struggle to free itself from its own cultural embeddedness within the taken-for-granted terms of German antisemitism (cf. Carlebach, 1978; Aschheim, 1985; Rose, 1990). Among radical thinkers, the shift in the identification of the Jew with capitalism to a more objective sociological critique of capitalism itself is summarized neatly later in the century in August Bebel's formulaic description of antisemitism as "the socialism of fools." And yet even among later socialists, it was not unusual for this perspective to coexist with a personal "disdain for traditional Judaism" (Aschheim, 1985:222; see also Gilman, 1986).

On the Jewish Question (Zur Judenfrage) (1843) conveys with particular power the shifting cultural construction of the Jew during Germany's rapid transformation to industrial capitalism during the mid-nineteenth century. Marx's objective here is to reveal the alienated basis of civil society by way of the ongoing polemic over Jewish emancipation. Despite its vigorous attempt to deconstruct the terms of this debate, however, *Zur Judenfrage* is written almost wholly within the language of German antisemitism as political discourse. The terms of his critique are thus loaded with the familiar reifying freight whereby the prevailing negative cultural construction of the Jew was embodied and conveyed.

Here the image of excretion as a form of barren production likened to money finds remarkably crude expression. Marx identifies the Jew with the egoistic principles of

exchange which are set free by the dissolution of the old feudal order of obligation and dependence. The Jews seek emancipation into civil society, Marx writes, but civil society itself is not yet emancipated, for the essence of the Jew—"the market and its presuppositions"—has pervaded and enslaved it. Using organismic metaphors with parasitical overtones, Marx writes how the Jew previously occupied an "interstitial" place within the "pores" of feudal society, facilitating exchange in a world in which men were linked directly by relations of mutual obligation. But the loss of these human links brought the rule of the market to the fore, thereby allowing Christians to join Jews in the modern pursuit of profit without political or moral constraint. As a result, all of society now has become "*verjudet*"—that is, jewified or Jew-like. Here Marx recycles the early modern condemnation of Christian usurers as *Kristenjuden*:

The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner, not only by acquiring the power of money, but also because *money* has become, through him and also apart from him, a world power, while the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of the Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves in so far as the Christians have become Jews (Marx:1972 [1843]:46).

The supposed profane nature of the Jew—"practical need. . . self interest. . . huckstering [*Schacher*]. . . money"—has now become the abstract principle organizing civil society as a whole (p.46). Marx's language could not be more explicitly anal. "From its own entrails," he explains, civil society ". . . ceaselessly engenders the Jew" (p.48). Consistent with earlier German antisemitic traditions, Marx treats Judaism as the concrete expression of mankind's most selfish, practical needs—the needs of the Bakhtinian lower body. Thus he writes that Jewish monotheism "makes even the lavatory an object of divine regulation." Just as the Jew excretes money, as it were, civil society now excretes Jews, releasing the egoism of all its citizens, Christians and Jews alike, for the common pursuit of profit. "Money is the jealous god of Israel. . ." he continues. It is the "alienated essence of man's work and existence" which "abases all the gods of mankind and changes

them into commodities." It follows then that the emancipation of Jews can only occur when civil society has emancipated itself from the principles of "Judaism," thereby freeing the Christian and Jewish bourgeoisie alike from the alienating conditions of a market-oriented society which together they perpetuate.

As we see, Marx's polemic seeks to encompass both the Jew and the Christian within an overarching critique of bourgeois society. Playing relentlessly with the traditional German identification of "Judaism" with money, he attempts to broaden the analytical attack from the Jew alone to the underlying principles of civil society itself which the Christian wholeheartedly embraces. At the same time his terms are loaded with the taken-for-granted weight of German antisemitism; indeed, his unequivocal and almost vitriolic emphasis upon the "concrete Jew" as the analyzed essence of the market helps speed the transformation of traditional antisemitism into its fully reified, secular form. Rather than deconstructing the pejorative image of Jew, then, Marx only manages to shift the negative qualities with which he is associated to society as a whole. Accordingly, his essay hovers between the *emic* and the *etic*, that is, between a culturally-determined world view and an objective, scientific reflection upon the presuppositions whereby such world views are constructed. It was only later, in *Kapital*, that Marx completed the deconstruction begun here, abandoning the German cultural discourse on the Jew in order to substitute a more sophisticated analysis of "the market and its presuppositions" (see Marx, 1967 [1867]).

Marx's essay shows the extent to which the negative construction of Jew, and the debate over the "Jewish Question" as an index of ongoing social transformation, was part of hegemonic construction of political discourse in Germany, providing the terms within which even the most radical of critiques were forced at first to express themselves. It required considerable ingenuity to find an alternative conceptual space to raise critical perspectives, and even then it was rare that the limiting terms of the discourse ever were fully transcended. Thus, as Aschheim points out, "self-conscious liberal publications"

routinely identified Jews with the "mammonization" of Germany in caricatures and articles, while middle class popular novelists reproduced the taken-for-granted juxtaposition of productive German and parasitical Jew. "Liberal German *Bürgertum*, embracing capitalism but locked into an older, competing system of values, found it easy to project the distasteful activity of making money and the commercialization of society onto the Jew" (Aschheim, 1985:226; see also Mosse, 1970). As Aschheim (1982) and Gilman (1986) both have shown, the power of this discourse was so pervasive that even German Jews assimilated its negative terms to their own personal identities. Sometimes, as in the case of the philosopher Otto Weininger, they accepted the pejorative construction of the Jew as despicable "other" whole-cloth, fulfilling its logic through literal self-destruction (see Mosse, 1964). Other times they sought to reformulate it, disarm it, or pass its negative projections onto their Eastern European brethren, so as to distance themselves from the traditional condemnation of the Jew and thereby narrow the gap that separated them from their German countrymen (see Aschheim, 1982, and chapter 8 below). But almost always they struggled within the limits of its partly conscious, partly submerged requirements. If anything, this shows just how inescapable the German discourse on the Jew was, shaping reality in a taken-for-granted manner which helped to structure the personal and political experience of both Germans and German Jews.

Dingelstedt: Two Streets in Frankfurt

The immediacy with which antisemitic perspectives were embraced and articulated even by those positioned politically on the left, like Marx, indicates just how widely antisemitism resonated culturally in Germany during the period of Jewish emancipation. *Two Streets in Frankfurt* [*Zwei Gassen in Frankfurt*], a poem published in 1841 by Franz Dingelstedt, leftwing director of the Wiener Burgtheater and author of the previously-mentioned satire on Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, provides another revealing example (in Stoffers,

1939:351). Here Jewish emancipation is identified unequivocally with the bogey of *Verjudung*.

Emancipated, this tough *Volk*
Whom once you barricaded! The fashions change!
It has already long gathered itself into a mass [*Haufen*]
And stands before you now as a power!

The squire is driven from his estate,
The peddler is frightened away from market
And partly for gold and partly with servile jokes
[This *Volk*] sells its password as the *Zeitgeist*.

How can this tribe benefit from emancipation
Which has never emancipated itself from haggling [*Schacher*]?
What you wish to grant him, he has already taken
While you debate about principles.

Wherever you look, you find Jews,
Everywhere the darling *Volk* of the rulers.
Hurry, lock them up again in their old streets [*Gassen*],
Before they lock you up in a Christian Quarter!

The fear of status-reversal that stands at the base of German antisemitism could not be more powerfully expressed here. Exercising an almost mysterious self-expansion through the power of exchange, the Jews are seen as having literally escaped the confines of the ghetto. Now, almost imperceptibly, the spirit of Judaism has taken over. Wielding the power of money and haggling along with their characteristically sly and disarming intellectualism, Germany's emancipating Jews have secretly gathered into a force capable of engulfing Christian society as a whole. Indeed, the result of Jewish emancipation is not the absorption of Jews into German society, but the permanent imprisonment of Christians within walls more powerful than those which had confined the Jews, because, like capitalism itself, these walls are omnipresent yet intangible (see chapter 8, plate 41 and A. Rhodes, 1987:45). The attribution to the Jew of a malevolent, penetratingly abstract yet animate power—whether in the form of liberal ideas or of capitalism itself—confirms the Jew's identification with the fetishism of commodities. In Dingelstedt's nightmare,

furthermore, all Christians are threatened by the shared Jewish threat, from the traditional land elites to the petite bourgeois shopkeeper and peddler. We thus see in this brief poem many of the basic elements of modern antisemitism at the moment of their formation: the Jew as the negative agent of historical transformation, using the elusive power of money in a conspiratorial manner in order to infiltrate society on every level. At the same time, by posing the Jew as the underlying agent of capitalism in all of its diverse unsettling effects, a new populist discourse is forged—one capable of realigning the otherwise discordant, modern class structure which has emerged out of the ancient corporate order.

THE MODERN STEREOTYPE EMERGES

Schreber's Counterpart: The Operated Jew

The biologization of the Jew finds perhaps its most revealing expression in *The Operated Jew*, a grotesque but extraordinary short story written in 1893 by Oskar Panizza (1853-1921), a psychologically disturbed author and physician.

Panizza's story has received renewed attention recently (see Zipes, 1991; Gilman, 1991:203-5) and for good reason: its negative representation of the Jew is taken to such ludicrous extremes that it raises in relief the underlying cultural implications of the modern German antisemitic stereotype at the moment of its fullest development in the late nineteenth century. Here we see the endpoint of the secularization process, in which the Jew's alleged exchange nature has been fully reified through reduction to the dimensions of the body as defined by racial biology (see plate 34). Panizza's story is particularly revealing, however, for the author's psychological disturbance has provided him with an acute if extreme perspective on his subject, thereby rendering him all the more effective as a cultural informant. In fact *The Operated Jew* serves as a perfect complement to the notorious Schreber case, providing the antisemitic counterpart to the implicit cultural construction of

the German capitalist subject as conveyed by the disciplinary practices of *schwarze Pädagogik* which Schreber propagated. Like the German child trapped within Schreber's controlling web, Panizza's stereotyped Jewish hero, the young Itzig Faitel Stern, struggles desperately to reformulate the inbred disorder of his Jewish body by encasing it within the rigid armour of the Aryan adult. He does so by subjecting himself to a set of disciplinary exercises, by scaffolding his body within technological devices, and finally by submitting himself to radical surgery—confident all the while that even the impossible can be achieved if one has money enough to pay.

Like the instructively "ghastly" Struwwelpeter, Itzig Faitel Stern at the story's outset is immediately placed on a figurative pedestal by the author, so incredible is his "friend's" grotesque physical being and the heroic measures which he took to correct it. Itzig Faitel is the image of physiology gone awry, as the story's observing narrator reports, a Heidelberg medical student with "anthropological" interests. Disproportioned in body, imbalanced in action and crass in spirit, Faitel is the German pedagogue's nightmare grown into full form but projected onto a creature seen as fundamentally alien and "Other." "Who will help me," the author writes, "—what clown, what imitator of dialects, what mime—in my endeavor to depict Itzig in motion as he spoke and acted?" (in Zipes, 1991:48). Small, squat, bow-legged and twisted, Faitel had one shoulder slighter higher than the other, a protrusive, chicken-like breast, a prominent nose, oily and evil-smelling black hair, yellow, sweat-beaded skin, meshed eyebrows, fleshy lips and a "violet fatty tongue" (p.48). Understandable given his bodily deformities—not the product, the author stresses, of any spinal disease—Faitel's gait was stork-like and "convoluted." His speech patterns were no better, his bastardized "Semitic" German delivered with meows, rattles, bleats, sneezes and other "fatty guttural noises" along with bobbing motions, constant gesticulations and copious amounts of spit.

Itzig Faitel decides, on the advice of his German comrade, to visit an expert Heidelberg anatomist so as to have his body changed. "Geeve me sum new legs," he says. " 'I should pay vat it costs!' " (p.53). Although doubting Faitel's human parentage, the learned doctor agrees to serve as supervisor of his complete transformation. Faitel thereupon resolves to do everything necessary " 'to become such a fine gentilman just like a goymenera and to geeve up all fizonomie of Jewishness' " (p. 55). The first step was to hang night and day in orthopedic traction so as to straighten his spine, followed by encasement in a corset-like cast along with an operation to break and reset his crooked leg bones. Diligent work with costly gymnasts and trainers served to strengthen his newly "reassembled" skeletal "harness," while the wearing around his hips of a Schreberian barbed-wire belt (not unlike a spiked dog-collar) helped through painful jabs to keep his posture upright. Work with linguistic diagnosticians repaired his speech deficits, while secret formulas served to bleach his skin a "Caucasian" white and his hair a "magnificent golden blond." All that remained was for Itzig Faitel Stern to acquire a German soul, something he accomplished as best he could through memorization of dreamy poetry and the administration of a full blood transfusion from strong Black Forest peasants who were paid handsomely for their efforts.

Appearing now in public for the first time with the official new name of Dr. Siegfried Freudenstern, the tall, blond and well-spoken Faitel was ready for the last step: the taking of an Aryan bride. At the wedding itself, Faitel had to remain in complete control of body and comportment "to prevent a monster from becoming visible" (p. 68). But the stress of the occasion, along with the loosening effect of too much alcohol, proved overpowering. Step by step his inner Jewish reality began to break out of its artificial Aryan casing until a "bloodthirsty, swelling, crimson visage" had emerged once again, spewing "saliva from flabby drooling lips" to the shock of the wedding guests (p. 72). His posture collapsing, Faitel began

clicking his tongue, gurgling, and tottering back and forth while making disgusting, lascivious and bestial canine movements with his rear end. . . 'I done bought for me Chreesten blud! Waitererá, vere iss mine copulated Chreesten bride? Mine briderá! Geeve me mine briderá! I vant you shood know dat I'm jost a Chreesten human bing like you all. Not von drop of Jewish blud!' " (p. 73).

But by now his blond hair had begun to curl and turn black, his limbs quivering with palsy, his noxious Jewish scent—the foëtor judäicus—spreading through the fleeing assembly. Soon all that was left in the room, "crumpled and quivering," was "a convoluted Asiatic image in wedding dress, a counterfeit of human flesh. . . ." (p. 74).

The implications of Panizza's grotesque creation hardly require further elaboration. Captured by the reifying gaze of the story's medical narrator, the Jew has been reduced to the form of a scientific specimen, an "anthropological" curiosity in which the alienating effects of commodity fetishism have been fully biologized. Itzig Faitel's physical frame is convoluted and deformed, rather than straight and proportionate; it is a body suited only to the parasitical generation of profit rather than productive labor. In the fleshy carnality of his lips and protuberant nose the unnatural and penetrating forms of Jewish reproduction are represented, while the invasive fluidity of Jewish capital is represented in those insubstantial but noxious elements—the oil, odors, grease, and spit—that travel beyond the margins of the body to invade his surroundings. With his bobbing gestures and wildly careening gait, Itzig's bodily disorder threatens the physiological balance of German society which Drs. Hoffman and Schreber strove so hard to insure.

The construction of the Jew revealed in the stereotypical form of Panizza's Itzig Faitel thus provides the dialectical complement to that of the German articulated by the practices of *schwarze Pädagogik*. The Jew is a projection of the psychobiological disorder and internalized social contradictions that the German seeks within himself to contain through self-alienated labor on the body. The Jew, however, is racially incapable of subordinating himself to the authoritarian requirements of the German capitalist social order and its

emerging class system; indeed, he is the living expression of its alienating dimensions and potentially corrosive effects. Thus the Schreberian operations to which he submits cannot succeed; the wild forces of the Bakhtinian lower body, tied to the invasive forces of exchange, break out of the artificially-purchased armour through which he has sought to contain them. The process of Jewish emancipation and assimilation thus proves to be nothing other than a ludicrous attempt to conceal the unnatural and disruptive forces of Jewish exchange within the natural forms of German orderliness.

Although "comic" in tone, Panizza's story expresses well the visceral location of German antisemitism within the bodily experience of the German capitalist subject. However, as we will see in the next chapter, the secularized vision of status reversal which accompanies this biologization of the Jew's exchange nature has nothing humorous about it. To the contrary: the nightmare of an insidious and encroaching Jewish world conspiracy provides the underlying motor that ultimately mobilized the populist right-wing forces which generated Nazi millenarianism and the Holocaust.



Geht von Carl Blechen

Habts Acht! Nehmfs euch zusam Hascheln! mer können zu gehen vor unsern
Kümandanten sein Haus! Regimentstremder! schlog ein! trum! bum! trum!

Plate 27. Vienna, 1848: Jewish "soldiers" marching in the name of profit. Note the image of status reversal on the banner. The text is in *mauscheln*. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:128ff)



Gotts Wunder, welcher Glanz und Schein;
Das muß ep's rores von Vergilding seyn!

Schwärmerischer Blick in die Sonne

Plate 28. *Rapturously Beholding the Sun.* German caricature, c. 1820, satirizing the Jew's commoditized relationship to nature. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:88ff)



Israelchen hat einen Ducaten verschluckt. Wahre Begebenheit.
 Das kleine Israelchen bewirkt, wie sein Vater, Barmh. eine so große Liebe für das Geld hat. Der Knabe denkt: Es muß doch seyn abbei. delicates um einen Ducaten. Er kommt über die Eltern (so) nicht. Du wirst nicht so große Liebe für das Geld haben. Er wird Lärm im Hause, der Ziermutter muß wieder mal. Thierchen, die kommen und auf den Tisch setzen. Das Kind, magst du in der Front mit Haderbar, wählst du. Die viel magst du kommen in den Rücken fülle. Polische, Schmil und Lichte in der seinen neuen. Nicht auf alten Brandsteinen, an hat — harrn Angehörig der Wiedergabe, hier 1800, mehr weithin Bruders, und nicht, der kühnsten liegt. — nicht können waren.

Plate 29. *Little Israel has Swallowed a Ducat.* German caricature, c. 1820. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:104ff)



Plate 30. Modern candy *Dukatenscheisser*, Germany. (Source: Dundes, 1984:81)

Amancipation.

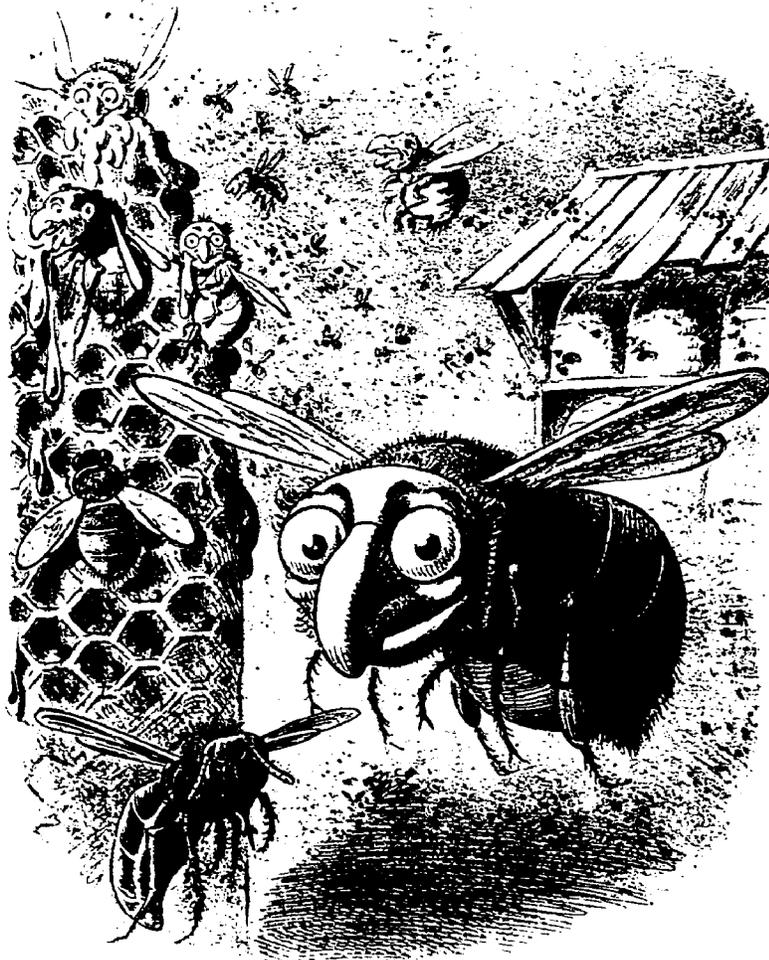


Plate 31. *Amancipation*, German satire, c. 1848. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:121)



Plate 32. *The General Pump.* Caricature of Amschel Rothschild. Note the Louis d'or at his navel. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:120ff)

Zur Bienezucht-Ausstellung.



Das nützt doch alles Fleiß der Arbeitsdienern,
 Sie müssen stets den faulen Drohnen dienen.
 Die ihres Fleißes Frucht verpehnen
 Und dabei schredlich sich vermehren!

Plate 33. *The Bee-Keeping Exhibition.* Kikeriki, Vienna, nineteenth century. Caption describes Jews as lazy drones who "wildly reproduce" while living off the labor of others. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:202)

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE MYTH OF JEWISH WORLD CONSPIRACY

The following two chapters cross the span from the late nineteenth century to the Nazi era by exploring two case-studies that reveal, in juxtaposition, the form and meaning of modern German antisemitism. The first case analyzes the underlying symbolic form and sociopolitical function of the myth of Jewish world conspiracy that emerged in the years after German unification in 1871. This modern nightmare of insidious Jewish power served as a counter-hegemonic instrument of the radicalizing right in its efforts to overcome the alienations of the modern German capitalist order—ultimately by placing antisemitism as the very center of Nazi millenarianism. The chapter that follows focuses on the Nazi era itself. It begins by outlining the theoretical underpinnings of the pivotal role played by the Jew in Nazi Germany as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction. It then focuses upon a remarkable and dynamic cultural artifact—an antisemitic board game—in order to reveal the interface of Nazi antisemitic politics and German popular culture, as well as the underlying symbolic forms which unite them both.

THE ORIGINS OF THE MYTH

If the *Judensau* typified the pejorative medieval and early modern German cultural construction of the Jew, then the German versions of the so-called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (and their accompanying visual motifs) with their express the core of the modern *Judenfrage*. This myth and image of an immensely powerful and malevolent Jewish

conspiracy finds its ultimate racist expression during the Nazi period. But its origins lie seventy years earlier, in the latter third of the nineteenth century, and mark precisely the juncture between traditional "Jew hatred" (*Judenhaß*) and modern antisemitism.

The *Protocols* were not the single invention of any one writer. Instead they were the product of a remarkable and extended collaborative process—one that began in Germany, crossed international boundaries, and returned after World War One, having transformed a sensationalized fictional account of Jewish conspiracy into an allegedly factual expose of malignant Jewish plans for world domination (see Cohn, 1966; Bernstein, 1971 [1935]). Thus the *Protocols* became the shared cultural property of German antisemitism. This is not to deny that the *Protocols* resonated with the themes of wider European antisemitism—but it was in Germany that antisemitism became an increasingly pervasive component of mainstream culture and politics, and, ultimately, the driving motor of National Socialist ideology and practice. Emerging out of the nineteenth century German identification of capitalism and its disorienting effects with the "judaization" of Germany, the *Protocols* helped to reformulate these projections of social alienation into an all-encompassing world view. This in turn articulated with racism. The result was an explanatory model (cf. Rürup, 1975) that bore the power of revelation, having identified the Jew as the underlying force shaping all "degenerative" developments in European history.

The Ghetto as Market Labyrinth

Toward the end of the 1860s, during Germany's second decade of rapid capitalist expansion and just prior to unification, a German journalist named Hermann Goedsche published a novel under the pseudonym of "Sir John Retcliffe"; in it he created a scene which would become the model for the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (see Goedsche, 1868). Prior to taking up writing, Goedsche (1815-1878) had been a minor official in the Prussian postal service; but a scheme he had concocted to discredit a

democratic political figure backfired, resulting in his dismissal in 1849. Years later, having already produced a series of sensationalized political novels, Goedsche wrote *Biarritz*. The relevant chapter was called "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague" (see plate 35). The date of publication is telling, for by 1868 the process of Jewish emancipation was nearly completed. Unification was only three years away, as were the *Gründerjahre*—a period of wild speculation that would sweep millions of Germans into "a frenzied dance around the statue of Mammon" (Craig, 1978: 79). But the stock-market crash of 1873 would bring things to an exhausted and ruinous end; it also would usher in the first fundamental and extended crisis of the modern German state. The results would be the demise of the liberal ideas and political arrangements that had supported *the Gründerjahre*, along with an exacerbated and generalized alienation toward the effects of modernity—all of which would find cultural expression by the end of the decade in the breakthrough of modern antisemitism. Goedsche's fictional scene—which later in the century was merged with Maurice Joly's *Dialogues in Hell between Montesquieu and Machiavelli* to create the plagiarized *Protocols*—provides insight into the forms this breakthrough would take. In Goedsche's text, the development of bourgeois society and the concomitant emergence of the capitalist world market are clearly recognized as an historical process, yet identified as the product of a hidden force, demonic in form and purpose, which modernity has released.

Goedsche's scene presents a conspiratorial midnight meeting of Jewish elders in the cemetery of the Prague ghetto. Here representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel, attended by the mythic figure of the Wandering Jew, gather to plot world conquest through the ruthless manipulation of capital. Their assigned choice of secret weapon is far-reaching in its significance. As we will see, the unnatural animation of capitalist exchange underlies every aspect of Goedsche's Jewish Prague, condensed in the fetishized and mutually-reinforcing constructions of the Jew's physiognomy, the ghetto's labyrinthine patterns, the

hidden malevolence of the Jewish cemetery, and the events that take place there. None of this is a mere product of Goedsche's idiosyncrasies as an author. To the contrary, Prague presented Goedsche with a compelling cultural choice for the setting for his Jewish cabal. In the first place, its ghetto still awaited "sanitizing" [*Sanierung*], and thus comprised one of the last Central European Jewish ghettos still intact and within easy traveling distance for Germans (see Mosse, 1978:116). In addition, Prague was reputed to be the most ancient and powerful of European Jewish settlements, as its unique Jewish *Rathaus* seemed to attest, a building no less impressive than the town halls in any number of Christian cities. With its winding streets, exotic inhabitants—and above all, its extraordinary cemetery—the Prague ghetto seemed a living remnant of the Jewish lifeways which rapidly were disappearing throughout Germany. Here were ancient passageways filled with hurrying ghetto denizens speaking a language naggingly familiar to the German ear, and yet at the same time almost purposely obscure. These physical spaces seemed a kind of fossilized outcropping of all that was alien and mysterious about the Jew, these half-understood sounds and foreign shapes standing in testimony to the Jew's immutable nature, which had endured despite all attempts to absorb or eradicate it. Here was concrete evidence of the Jew's underlying identity, a truth that seemed to persist in hidden form even beneath the secularized appearance of the modern Jew as an emancipated member of the German bourgeoisie.

By 1868 the Prague ghetto had already become the prototype for all ghettos in the modern German imagination; its meanings would continue to apply to the Jewish quarters of Eastern Europe, which would exist well into the twentieth century, until their destruction by National Socialism. Standing astride two worlds, these ghettos provided Germans with a kind of a magic mirror onto the past. Looking backwards through the window of the ghetto, Germans saw the negative manifestations of exchange still clothed in its feudal garb. These manifestations were condensed in their mirror image of the Jew—his body,

his self-reproductive activities and the spaces he seemed, inevitably, to generate—as the negative antithesis of all things German. At the same time the ghetto served as a living reminder of the confined spaces from which the Jew had now passed in the course of his progressive "penetration" of the surrounding Christian world. Hence the view of the ghetto implied simultaneously a comparison of the Jew of old with the Jew of the modern age, and the changing conditions with which he was associated. This produced the uneasy sense of a hidden continuity between the two, for the alienating development of capitalism from medieval times to the present appeared as if telescoped in the Jew's seemingly protean and acculturating form. Because of this, contemplating the ghetto provided Germans with a means for thematizing the wider, disorienting social transformations which so rapidly had embraced Germany in an inescapable, and here personified, grasp. The ghettos of the east and their caftaned inhabitants in particular appeared now as "carriers" of capitalism, the source of its alien impulse and the agents of its expansion over the centuries. Looking backward from the modern era, the entire course of European and even world history seemed now to fall into focus. From this perspective, it appeared as if Jews first had imported the disintegrative powers of exchange into Europe from their ancient oriental homeland. During the medieval period they had endured a vigorous but imperfect attempt by Christians to contain them. Then, taking advantage of the Enlightenment, the Jews of Germany and the West had initiated a gradual outbreak. This had joined finally in the second half of the nineteenth century with the mainstream of traditional Judaism—the *Ostjuden*—flooding inward from beyond Germany's eastern borders (see plate 36). This immigration was experienced as a recapitulation of the original invasive movement of Jews out of their German ghettos. Although statistically never actually amounting to much, for many Germans the influx of *Ostjuden* seemed now to sweep into the Reich in a gathering force. By allegedly taking control of the capitalization process, these Jews threatened permanently to alter the forms of German life, upsetting the traditional spectrum of social

status and stratification, while generating a proletarianized working class which chafed, under Jewish influence, for recognition and power. Thus the idealized homogeneity of the German *Volk*—which had been rent, in fact, by the effects of industrialization—seemed at an end.

Prague's ghetto cemetery in particular comprised the revelatory core of the persisting Jewish mystery in all of its threatening dimensions, for it was like no other burial ground in Europe. Within its tiny confines Jews had been forced to bury their dead for hundreds of years. Over the centuries the pressure for space had become so intense that burials were tiered above and below ground level in layers as many as twelve graves deep. From sheer necessity the stones had been placed so closely together that they overlapped and ran at wild angles, while the further depredations of time had resulted in a partly toppled, partly careening effect. This crowded angularity was alive with meaning, for the cemetery's physical space was a sedimentation of the social subordination and enforced segregation under which Jews had lived for centuries, expressing as well the ingenious accommodations by which Jews had managed to survive. All of this had generated a compressed and almost frustrated dynamism embodied in geometry and stone. Germans like Goedsche discerned the sociohistoric import embedded in this masonry; but the meanings they decoded were consistent with their visceral cultural experience of the Jew as both the negative personification of exchange and the index of a burgeoning industrial capitalism in all its alienating dimensions.

Hence for Goedsche, the cemetery's implicit dynamism expressed more than the cumulation of history. It reflected a mysterious and alien power which had gathered over the centuries and which, under the pressure of confinement, had revealed itself only unwillingly to the human eye. Beneath the appearance of chaos, there seemed a malignant method at work—a principle of self-generation that solidified itself and spread in labyrinthine patterns, involuted and engulfing. This remarkable and enigmatic stone

mazeway seemed an iconic miniature of the ghetto itself—a tiny, huddled ghetto for the dead, designed to house their restless spirits. Here were uniquely shaped stones covered with the indecipherable fluidity of Hebrew lettering, along with an ancient and tactile iconography, cut in relief—biblical images of lions and grapes, or disembodied hands emerging from the masonry in Cohanic blessing—all of which carried the breath of magic. To Goedsche, these stones seemed ancient simulacra of the alien lives that once had moved inscrutably amidst the ghetto's winding streets. Along with the cemetery's architectonic pulse, these stones imbued the graveyard with a disturbing sense of the animate, each tomb a seemingly indestructible counterpart to an otherwise intangible human spirit, which long before had left its solid human shell to wander with its brethren abroad.

Wild self-generation; abstract forces that lurk beneath surfaces, ubiquitous and entrapping—all this conveys, in appropriately haunting terms, the taken-for-granted forms of commodity fetishism, and the alienating subjective effects of rapid capitalist transformation. For Germans, the form and meaning of ghetto and cemetery, the living Jew and his spirit in death, were mutually reinforcing, as fetishized variations upon the unnatural but lifelike power that seemed to animate the processes of capitalist accumulation and the circulation of commodities. The language and action of Goedsche's scene will make this clear, for it was here, within this culturally-charged setting, that Goedsche located his vision of Jewish conspiracy. Indeed, it is commodity fetishism which provides the unifying principle, the underlying structural thrust which unites Goedsche's imaginings with the coalescing forms of modern German antisemitism.

The Secret Power of Capital

Goedsche's scene begins first with a description of the Prague ghetto, and then slowly focuses in upon the cemetery. Prague, he says, is the only German city where Jews still live "entirely isolated from the nation whose name they have appropriated as if it were a

business firm, in order to exploit the privileges of civil society for their own advantage" (Goedsche, 1868:141-2). Here, as in the Jewish quarters of Paris and Vienna, live the petty traders and profiteers who prey upon the entire city, daily transacting "deals amounting to thousands" (p.142). This "dirty, foul market-place" reflects the deepest realities of Jewish nature; it is a treacherous maze of hidden import, to which only its inhabitants possess the key:

Opening onto these filthy, narrow allies—which for the most part carry no names, and create a labyrinth which only the inhabitants themselves know for sure—are not doors and entrance ways, but gloomy caverns [*Höhlen*] never brightened by the light of day; black passages [*Schlünde*] which spew out a race [*Geschlecht*] of huckstering, bargaining, clamorous [*schachernden, feilschenden, zeternden*] men, women and children, living, scrabbling and dying in the dirty rooms, filling the narrow allies during the day with the shoddiest of merchandise [*seltsamsten Kram*], when it isn't sweeping through the Christian city, there to pursue its trading and usury [*Wucher*]" (Goedsche, 1968:141).

In this single sentence—almost as winding as the phenomenon it seeks to evoke—Goedsche produces a powerful condensation of the fetishized meanings of German antisemitism. Jews are reduced in these lines wholly to exchange in all its negative connotations, and the ghetto to nothing more than a market-place for financial deals and second-hand trade. The rampant growth of *Wucher*, of usury, is replicated in the ghetto's labyrinthine and self-generating form. At the same time the ghetto is anally organized, thereby expressing the sterility of capitalist accumulation as the endless production of waste. Homes become dark holes, their entranceways filthy openings, or *Schlünde*, esophagi; as if from organs of human digestion and excretion, Jews are spewed out onto the streets. There they proffer their worthless goods, at one with the filth which the maze of the ghetto seems naturally to generate. Jew, money, commodity and waste: all become one, the common unwholesome product of the ghetto as market place.

But within this enclosed and labyrinthine space is yet a deeper, hidden courtyard—the "famous" Jewish cemetery, the "city of the dead." "The strange circle" formed by its high,

decaying wall, Goedsche writes, is enigmatic, forbidding. Surrounded by the rank and entangling growth of elder trees, and by ancient Jewish houses crowding forward as if in threat of collapse, this wall contains the unhealthy heart of what for Goedsche is the first and oldest Jewish community in Europe. This preeminence makes Prague the secret capital of Judaism; its cemetery is the living source of Jewish influence worldwide. A spirit different from that of Christian churchyards prevails amidst these tombstones. Here the spirit of a unique people resides, its bones lying not permanently at rest but in a kind of temporary shelter, attained

after long and restless wandering; here its entire terrible history is inscribed, full of suffering, struggling, resistance and indomitability. It is as if at any moment these unbelievably jumbled, worn, overgrown graves would open, these crumbling, thousand-year old stones would burst apart, to let out into the world once again the restless wanderer with a pack on his shoulders, a staff in his hands, free to move amongst the living peoples, cheating and enslaving them as he seeks his new Canaan: Hegemony! [*die Herrschaft!*] (pp. 142-3).

The figure Goedsche has summoned up, a figure that will return a few moments later in his narrative, is that of Ahasver, *der ewige Jude*—the Eternal (or Wandering) Jew, condemned for having mocked Christ on the way to Calvary. This figure shares the characteristics associated with the exchange-value dimension of the commodity fetish (cf. Postone, 1980). Abstract, ubiquitous, free-floating and malevolent—the Wandering Jew personifies the mobility of money in modern capitalism, and its seeming autonomy as the universal measure of value. At the same time he is an image of the traditional Jewish peddler, conflated with the biblical Jew who has denied the messianism of Christ. Thus he represents the perception of a malignant continuity between feudal exchange and modern "finance capitalism," experienced as a rampant and degenerative growth aimed at the destruction of Christian well-being and salvation. An enduring figure of German and European folklore (cf. Hasan-Rokem & Dundes, 1986; Gaer, 1961), Ahasver was immediately recognizable to Goedsche's readers, although the meanings associated with

him operated on an implicit level. Slinking restlessly across European borders with a pack on his back, the Wandering Jew—whether viewed literally or as metaphor—sows the seeds of capitalism everywhere he travels. Left behind are the fruits of his labor: urban blight, class conflict, and the tightening web of Jewish power.

Goedsche's resurrection of this medieval myth reveals how its meanings secularized, ultimately assimilating to the biological terms of an emerging racism. In fact, the figure of Ahasver would live on into the Nazi period as a major iconographic representation of the Jew. For those distinguishing then between legend and reality, the Wandering Jew reflected the healthy intuitions of an earlier age, when mythical figures were needed to express underlying racial truths. As we will see later, the Nazi versions of the Wandering Jew would adjust the relationship between the legend and "modern science," thereby preserving the earlier symbolic meanings within the naturalized terms of Nazi racial biology.

In Goedsche's Prague, the mysterious reality underlying the figure of the Wandering Jew finds expression even in the cemetery's Hebrew name: "*Beth Chaim*—the House of Life." The average tourist, uninitiated in the ways of Jewry, finds the name as enigmatic as the cemetery's physical form. But Goedsche has discerned the true meaning beneath appearances: "Yes, this resting place of the dead is indeed the House of Life!" he writes. "For here is the source of the mysterious, powerful impulse which transforms the exiles into masters of the earth, the despised into tyrants over all the peoples—the impulse that fulfills the promise made once from the burning thornbush to the children of the Golden Calf!" (Goedsche, 1868:144).

This remarkable formulation, chilling in its identification of hidden cause and effect, is as direct an expression as anywhere in modern German antisemitism of the fetish nature of capital, conflated with the form and spirit of the Jew. Only the fully biologized forms of Nazi racism would surpass it, by clothing its supernatural effects within the naturalized and

apparently incontestible terms of modern science. For the German confronting the triumph of industrial capitalism, Jews are no longer the offspring of the sow alone; now they are the children of the "Golden Calf." This creature is the Jews' own commoditization of nature, a useful and productive household animal converted literally into money. Having created that idol in their own image, Jews worship it in turn, invoking its power so as to thematize their plans of financial infiltration and world dominion. But the impulse Goedsche speaks of is more than the "Golden Calf"; it is also the malevolent power of Jewish death. Unlike the death of Christians, whose bodies return naturally to the earth, Jewish death is neither natural nor final. Instead it is a restless force which lives on invisibly amidst the peoples of Europe. Like the growing power of capital, which transforms the small businessman into a plutocrat and the artisan into a proletarian, this unnatural impulse bears the power of inversion. Escaping from its traditional confinement, the power of the Jew rises from the dead to encompass wider Christian society. The evil of the past joins with the inexorable forces of modernity to engulf the productive peoples of Europe; the hierarchical statuses of Jews and Christians are thereby reversed. No longer ghetto-dweller or pariah, the Jew has become the modern puppet master who manipulates his former rulers and pulls the strings that guide world affairs. The destructive power of Jewish death thus expresses the unnatural animation of capital. The ghetto cemetery in turn is the secret source of capitalism itself, the perverse birthplace of an impulse which has transformed the landscape of Europe, alienated its inhabitants, and irrevocably altered the contours of human life.

This hidden power of capital lurks everywhere in Goedsche's Jewish Prague. It lies behind all surfaces, and at the same time reveals itself in Jewish physiognomy. In the surrounding ghetto, we are told, the hovels of the Jews seem "poor, dirty and dark" from the outside—but on the inside they are filled with "splendid high mirrors. . . precious Belgian rugs. . . costly silver tableware." The women who earlier had carried trays through the "stinking allies" to peddle their wares now appear behind shut doors in "heavy

silk gowns with golden chains and bracelets," their diamonds and rubies glittering (pp. 150-1). Even the Jew's physical form betrays his hidden propensities: at dusk the streets are cluttered with "youths with their sharp and pointed faces and their slyly glittering eyes, the girls with their haughtily generous breasts and hips, which so ease the proliferation of this Volk. . . ." (p. 145). Jews thus dissemble outwardly, but in truth command the secrets of wealth and power. These secrets, though elusive, are not impenetrable: if the Christian trains himself in racial symptomatology, he can learn to recognize the hidden signs. For Jews display their exchange nature, not only behind the walls of their homes, but in the reified form of their fecund and penetrative bodies.

The noble qualities of Prague's Christian city, and of its German creators, stand in shining contrast to this hidden parasitism of ghetto and Jew. Nothing exemplifies this more for Goedsche than the city's splendid Charles Bridge, its sixteen double spans lined in uncluttered procession with the statues of saints and nobles. "What skill, what magnificence," Goedsche exclaims. This is the artistry of the German, clean of line, forthright, fully manifest and open. Its qualities, and those of the opposing Jew, are replicated in the juxtaposition of two young figures whom Goedsche arranges to have meet on the bridge. The first is a scholar with light blue eyes and a determined gaze; his face is "Germanic in type," as its clear and powerful expression attests. According to Goedsche, "any physiognomist, looking at him," would immediately have recognized his nobility of spirit, as well as the physical impact produced by years of devotion to science (p. 154). The second figure is a young Jewish convert; his name, "Lasali," is rather too close to that of Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), founder of the German Social Democratic party, to be mere coincidence. In the brief description that follows, Goedsche underscores those characteristics which by now have come to represent the immutable qualities of the Jew's racial nature. Innate sterility, an abstract and manipulative intellectualism, an inorganic

otherness—all of these characteristics render the Jew immune to the effects of religious conversion:

The color of his face was dull and waxen, without the slightest natural red in his cheeks; even his splayed and pleasure-seeking lips seemed bloodless. . . . His chin and nose were strongly developed, the latter protruding forward, narrow and bold, its characteristic hook betraying his Jewish origins. His forehead was high and wide, his entire head strongly developed, as his tight and light-brown mass of frizz hair, so similar to nigger wool [*Negerwolle*], revealed. An arrogant smile played about his mouth and flaring nostrils, often taking on gruesome, ridiculing expression; his bright green-gray eyes, more round than oval, had something of the vulture about them (Goedsche, 1868:156-7).

For Goedsche, as for the racists soon to follow him, inner spirit is biologically externalized. The German is creative and pure of form, a triumphal extension of the organic, like the crafts he produces and the bridges he builds. In contrast, the Jew's biological figure is a chaotic but potent consolidation of negative characteristics bent on exchange. Black and white are hybridized, imparting the Jew with animal-like qualities. The alleged physical inferiority of the negro, his lax sexuality, are harnessed unnaturally to the Jew's obfuscating intelligence and egoistic aggression (cf. Gilman, 1986:205-7). This mongrelism expresses itself solely in unproductive activity; it is perfectly adapted to the parasitical pursuit of Jewish self-interest. And thus the productive, use-value dimensions of the commodity fetish are expressed in the form of the German and the orderly spaces he produces, while the hidden dimensions of exchange, inhuman and destructive in their effects, are reified in the biological form of the Jew, and the maze of the ghetto.

The young German scholar once saved the life of the Jewish convert, Goedsche recounts; now "Lasali" proposes to repay the debt by serving as the Devil to the German scholar's "Doktor Faust" (p. 157). Having recently deciphered the hidden import of the Caballah, with which both men have long been fascinated, Lasali offers to share it with the German. This, the German scholar replies, will constitute an "invaluable service to science" (Goedsche, 1969:156). The plan is for the two to hide themselves within the

Jewish cemetery later that night, and thereby discover, unobserved, the secret of the Jewish elders. Thus the Jewish apostate offers to make accessible the veiled meanings of his race; in this way the hidden nature of the Jews will be revealed to the discerning gaze of German science.

The Cemetery Cabal

But now the action of Goedsche' story begins. It is dusk on the holy Sabbath, last day of the "Feast of Booths." At the gates of the cemetery, two Jews appear—two archetypal forms, one "in black silk mantle, with long earlocks, which showed that he was a Polish Jew; the other. . . middle aged, in modern clothes, with diamond studs in his shirt and a heavy golden chain on his vest" (p. 145). The latter figure is the banker "von Rosenberg," a trustee of the cemetery. The juxtaposition of these two stereotypes is potent. The former is a vision from the past; he represents the Jew's enduring essence as the reification of exchange. The latter is the secular Jewish businessman, who has merged into the German bourgeoisie and even bought himself a title; his true identity is concealed beneath the trappings of modernity.¹ The cemetery has been shut for the night; speaking to the cemetery's young watchman, the banker facilitates the rabbi's entry. Now the old Polish rabbi—who has maneuvered his way intuitively through the dark to the grave of the "holy Rabbi Simeon-ben- Yehuda"—reveals his mission to the young watchman. Arranging for the cemetery gates to be left ajar the entire night, the rabbi departs with his emancipated alterego, and the stage is set.

At the stroke of eleven, the cemetery gate creaks; a rustling of long coats is heard, sliding past stones and shrubbery. A "vague white figure" appears, slipping shadowlike through the cemetery until it reaches the "holy Rabbi's" grave. Whispering a prayer, it

¹Cf. Aschheim, 1985, who has described this contrast of "caftan and cravat" and discussed aspects of its significance.

kneels down and touches its forehead three times to the tombstone. Another figure approaches from the gate, a bent old man, moving slowly toward the same grave with coughs and sighs. Like the previous figure, he prostrates himself and performs the same ritual. Yet another figure appears, this one tall and impressive; he, too, falls to his knees, but only grudgingly. Now, one after the other, ten more figures approach, all of them old men clad in dragging caftans, their heads covered by prayer shawls, until thirteen figures kneel in a circle around the grave. As soon as the last figure has taken his place, the clock strikes midnight. At that moment a sharp metallic sound rings out on the tomb and a blue flame appears, lighting up the thirteen kneeling figures. A hollow voice calls out: "I greet you, Roshe beth Aboth, heads of the twelve tribes of Israel." He is Ahasver, the Wandering Jew; his demonic nature is made obvious by the reply he receives: "We greet you, son of the accursed." Now the name of each tribe is called out in roll, each elder responding in turn with the name of the city in which he has settled—Judah in Amsterdam and Simeon in Rome, Zebulun in Paris and Dan in Constantinople—until most of the nineteenth century's world centers have been named. The thirteenth figure, the "representative of the outcasts and wanderers," completes the network, for his purpose, as he reminds them, is to wander "all over the world in order that I may unite you" (pp. 164-5).

This is the council of Jewish elders, which gathers every one hundred years to further its plans for mastery of the world. The elder of the house of Aaron, the Levite, serves now as chairman of the council. Reviewing the preceding eighteen hundred long years of "Israel's struggle for supremacy," he concludes that today, finally, victory is nigh. "Mighty has grown the power which [Israel] wields both openly and in secret over the peoples and thrones," he announces. The secret of that power, he says, is gold. "Gold is the new Jerusalem—it is the ruler of the earth. Gold is power, reward, pleasure. . . all that human beings fear and desire. This is the mystery of the Caballah. . . ." Of all the

centuries that the Sanhedrin has met, he reports, "not a single century has been crowned with such success as this one." Although the previous centuries were hard, the evil times are finally over, for the "progress of so-called civilization among the Christian nations now serves as the ideal protection for our endeavors" (pp. 166-7). This progress, of course, is the progress of liberal ideas, which has emancipated Jews from their ghettos and allowed them gradually to infiltrate Christian society. The result has been nothing other than Jewish control over the capitalization process, through domination of the stock exchanges and the amassing of capital in every European financial and political center.

All this becomes clear as Goedsche continues his story, selectively mixing half-fact with eerie fiction. Before each elder makes his report, the current status of Jewish material power is evaluated. Moving city by city through the "seven world-markets of Europe," a long list of the wealthiest Jewish capitalists is compiled, from Moses Montefiore of London to Bleichröder of Berlin, from Warburg of Hamburg to the international House of Rothschild itself, its members the "princes of the stock-exchange." The results are heartening: the Jews dispose over billions in "ready capital." The elders congratulate themselves: the "Chosen People" possesses the "tenacity of the snake, the cunning of the fox, the vision of the falcon, the memory of the dog, the diligence of the ant, and the loyal sociability of the beaver" (p. 171). Even the increasing loss of Jews to Christianity through conversion reveals the secret power of race: "it is not the Jew who turns Christian, but the Christian who, over the generations, becomes a Jew through the mixing of the flesh" (p. 172). The hybridization of the Jew with animal forms—and here, the focusing of specific animal skills in combination upon the achievement of Jewish conspiratorial goals—is part of the general cultural attempt to objectify the unnatural qualities of the Jew's exchange nature. This will take on even more literal and culturally standardized forms in future, particularly in illustrations inspired by future publications of the *Protocols*. Similarly, the mixing of the secretly invasive Jew with the racially pure but vulnerable

Christian could yield nothing other than a hybridized human form in which the unnatural qualities of the Jew prevails. Thus Goedsche expresses the threat of *Verjudung*, which Europeans have unleashed by their ill-advised emancipation of the Jew.

But now it is time for strategizing. "By what means," the council eldest asks, "will the Jewish nation achieve power and supremacy over all other nations on earth?" (p. 173). Taking turns, each Jewish elder reports on the specific domain for which he is responsible, from trade and finance to science and the press. The representative of Reuben reports on the supreme importance of the stock exchanges as a weapon through which to indebt the princes and governments of Europe. "All movable capital must go into Jewish hands," he declares. Jews must take in mines and railroads as collateral for loans, while using the stock exchange to "lure the little people into stock gambling" as well, so as to appropriate their property and savings. "Transactions in securities," he concludes, "are a splending invention of our nation" (p. 173). The gathered elders murmur their approval. Simeon speaks next, recommending a scheme for breaking up the great estates. By indebting the young nobility and generating scandal, their land can be transformed into a commodity like any other. Heavy taxes must be levied on land owners, on pretext of relieving the poor; then, once the land is in Jewish hands, so too will be the Christian workers and tenant farmers, from whose labor the Jews will press a profit as never before. Judah details plans for the ruination of the artisan estate. By fostering unlimited freedom of trade, Jews can generate a merciless competition which gradually will reduce independent artisans to the status of unskilled factory workers, who then can be manipulated for political purposes. Meanwhile the Jewish manufacturer will take the place of the handicraft master, substituting Christian skill with Jewish cleverness. The council elder, speaking for the tribe of Aaron, recounts ongoing efforts to undermine the Christian Church. The seeds of skepticism, free-thinking and anti-clericalism must be sown, above all by infiltrating the school system with Jewish teachers, and by agitating for a full separation of church and

state. Issachar seeks the downfall of the military, which fosters patriotism and protects the throne. The army must be discredited, its officers degraded into police guards for the wealthy, and money must rule alone.

Although the Jews are a deeply conservative people, Zebulon argues next, Jews nonetheless must side with the forces of reform and revolution that are sweeping the world, so as to canalize social discontent and dominate the masses. This poses little challenge, he explains, for after all, "who shouts more loudly and more shrewdly than the Jews?" (p. 178). Dan, "a Jew of the lower order," recommends that Jews control all agricultural products which lend themselves to speculation—liquor, butter, wool and bread—so as to prey upon the public need, especially in times of crisis. Naphtali's concern is the government: Jews have already appropriated the ministries of finance in many states, but now they must dominate the entire bureaucracy. The real work will be carried out by the diligent and lowly Christian civil service worker; Jews instead must use their cunning to secure all positions of prestige and cultural influence, especially in the domains of Justice and Education. The council eldest concurs; laws must be passed, for example, that allow Jews at will to raise the price of money, which, after all, is a commodity like any other. Benjamin's advice is similar to Naphtali's, but focused upon the arts and sciences. Jews must infiltrate all cultural and intellectual pursuits that lend themselves to empty speculation and abstract theorizing, from acting to philosophy, dominating all honorary organizations so as to bestow medals upon themselves and thereby enshrine their perspectives. Medicine, too, is crucial to Jewish ends: "A physician penetrates the secrets of families and holds their lives in his hands" (p. 181). Asher demands free intermarriage of Christians and Jews. Jews thereby will gain in influence and wealth, while having Christian women at their disposal for carnal pleasures. The "*Goyim*," all agree, are nothing more than slaves; if Christian women expect jobs and bread, they must make their bodies available to their Jewish masters. Manasseh's is the last speech, rivaling only the Levite's opening

words in its portentousness. "If gold is the first power in the world," he says, "the press is the second" (pp. 182-3). Jews must use their wealth to attain control of press and publishing, so as to mold public opinion in every way. Only in this manner will Jews complete their tasks of deceit and manipulation; this is the final key which will guide Christians unknowingly into the Jewish trap which awaits them.

Having formulated their strategies for the coming decades, the elders are now ready to proceed with their evil work. All that remains is for the presiding Levite to formally conclude their convocation with a message of goodspeed. The Wandering Jew must spread the word among all Jews the world over, he says: wherever one Jew manages to place his foot, he must pull in another Jew with him, so that one hundred years hence, a coming generation will gather once again in the cemetery, this time to announce the successful enslavement of the world. "Renew our oath, sons of the Golden Calf," he cries, "and scatter to the earth's four corners!" (p. 185). The blue flame flares up once more as each elder throws a stone upon the tomb; for a moment it seems as if a monstrous animal form has shimmered amidst the flames before disappearing, along with the elders, into the black of night.

So the meeting ends. But what the council members do not realize is that their clandestine proceedings have been observed by Lasali and the young German scientist. "All of bourgeois society is threatened!" cries the latter, shaken by what he has seen and heard (p. 187). Lasali too is disturbed, but his reactions, despite his avowals, are violent and mixed. The German pledges to pit the power of "science, idealism and faith" in combat against the nefarious plans of World Jewry. Lasali laughs in scorn; he will use another power, and one more powerful, he claims, to fight the materialism of gold. This is the power of poverty and work—the power of Social Democracy. With these vows the two witnesses escape from the cemetery, each to fight the coming battle in his own manner. But Goedsche's enigmatic treatment of Lasali has left an uneasy feeling in the reader's

mind, not only about the Jewish apostate's motives, but about those at the helm of the organized German labor movement as well.

THE MOBILIZING POWER OF ANTISEMITISM

The Symbolic Significance of Conspiracy

This is the conspiratorial plot that takes place in the fetishized heart of European capitalism—a plot which seeks to convert the Jew's unnatural, hidden power of exchange into a modern, multi-pronged political strategy for world conquest.

Conspiracy itself is the pivotal force lying between the supernatural and the scientific. As the structures of the world market have come to embrace all of Germany, the hidden power of Jewish exchange is seen as having expanded as well; now it becomes the driving force of history. Like the traditional supernatural forms which preceded it, the modern phenomenon of conspiracy allows the alienating dimensions of capitalism to take on a demonic human face; only now the abstract structures of exchange, intangible and immense, have been personalized in terms credible to modern cosmology. Goedsche's perception of conspiracy thus lies precisely at the cusp between an overtly supernatural cosmology and a modern scientized world view, in which the symbolic meanings of the past submerge as they secularize, only to resurface in newly naturalized and taken-for-granted forms.

Although Goedsche tends to speak here in international terms, his points of reference, as his initial audience, are essentially German. This is so despite the indisputable resonance his themes held for the rest of Europe, as indicated by the reformulation of his cemetery cabal into the supposedly factual *Protocols* over the next few decades. His Jewish cabal represents the fulfillment of a century of German fear over the alleged growing power of Jewry, a fear that was tied inextricably to the incremental process of

Jewish emancipation and the explosive growth of German capitalism. The negative power of exchange, having been released from the ghetto, is depicted here as having grown immensely in the previous decades. Now it threatens to engulf Germans within a prison far more powerful than that which once enclosed the Jews, for its principle of confinement is the intangible and all-pervasive commoditization of German social life. As the review of Jewish assets in the "seven world markets of Europe" has demonstrated, the Jewish elders meeting in the Prague ghetto cemetery have already secured their financial domination of Europe; now they are on the verge of complete political and cultural mastery as well. The spirit of their venture, as in the past, is malevolent and supernatural—but their methods now take the form of concrete strategies systematically interlinked with one another and perfectly adapted to the emerging structure of modern capitalist society.

Jews, in fact, are identified unequivocally as the inventors of capitalism, a system they use to entrap and enslave the peoples of Europe. Consistent with past definitions, the capitalism which Jews command is defined here solely in terms of the negative effects of exchange, which takes on its reified form as the hidden power of gold. It is with this power that Jews seek to infiltrate all domains of German society and thereby establish "the new Jerusalem." The seemingly separable and productive dimensions of modern capitalism—industry and technological advance, like true science and culture—are viewed implicitly as extensions of the organic, and remain the domain of non-Jews. Jews instead are responsible for such unsettling financial innovations as the invention of stock companies. Although not actually a Jewish novelty, stock and banking companies did make their explosive appearance in Germany in the 1850s and 1860s. These institutions thoroughly restructured the financial basis of the German economy, and implicated the savings of even the common citizen. Along with the growth of foreign investment and trade, this development drew Germany fully "into the whirlpool of a fluctuating world economy for the first time" (Holborn, 1982/3:126). The devastating economic effects of

wild speculation in stock companies were to be felt during the crash of 1873, only five years after Goedsche's scene was published; this would be accompanied by the full emergence of antisemitism in politics and public debate along the modern lines laid out so presciently in Goedsche's scene.

After the Crash, a cartoon from 1875 published shortly after the stock market crash and during the extended depression that followed, reveals succinctly the relationship of antisemitism and the economic crisis following German unification (see plate 37 and Fuchs, 1921:160). Two young and elegantly appointed middle class women carrying parasols whisper fearfully to one another while glancing backward at the crude apparition of a Jewish peddler wandering by in the background. Here the naive bourgeoisie, only recently enticed to participate in the establishment of stock markets in Germany, are depicted as vulnerable young ladies, who have suddenly taken note, with horror and distress, of the alien and carnal figure of the wandering Jewish peddler in the background, whom, presumably they have previously failed to notice. Thus the Jew becomes the focusing symbol of the economic crisis, while the hidden menace which he poses is fully sexualized in terms of bodily invasion.

The symbolizing process which this cartoon represents is one shared by Adolf Hitler himself—something which should not be surprising, considering his "Schreberian" obsession with the integrity of bodily boundaries both personal and social, and his fears of sexual pollution. All this comes out in his description of the major formative event in his life, dating to the years before World War One. This is the account of how he became an antisemite; it provides the single sustained narrative in his otherwise disjointed political biography, *Mein Kampf*, and thus bears quoting at length:

There were few Jews in Linz. In the course of the centuries their outward appearance had become Europeanized and had taken on a human look; in fact, I even took them for Germans. . . . Then I came to Vienna. . . . Notwithstanding that Vienna in those days counted nearly two hundred thousand Jews among its two million inhabitants, I did not see them. . . .

Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought. For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in Linz. I observed the man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this foreign face, scrutinizing feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form: Is this a German? . . . Wherever I went, I began to see Jews, and the more I saw, the more sharply they became distinguished in my eyes from the rest of humanity. . . . In a short time I was made more thoughtful than ever by my slowly rising insight into the type of activity carried on by the Jew in certain fields. Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew in it? If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light—a kike! . . .

I now began to examine carefully the names of all the creators of unclean products in public artistic life. . . the liberal attitude of [the] press. . . pinpricks against William II. . . the relation of the Jews to prostitution and, even more, to the white-slave traffic. . . . When I recognized the Jew as the leader of the Social Democracy, the scales dropped from my eyes. A long soul struggle had reached its conclusion (Hitler, 1943 [1925]:52-60).

This passage provides an advanced and personalized description of the same dynamic process which unfolds in Goedsche's earlier account of international Jewish conspiracy: the transformation of the Jew into a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction. In Goedsche's prototypical version, as throughout *Mein Kampf*, the insidious manipulation of capital is seen as the main weapon through which Jews now seek to undermine Christian society. Their implementation of this weapon is distressingly multifaceted, for Jews intend to work their hidden power through every modern means available. This ranges from the manipulation of ideologies and social discontent, to invasions of the economy, the legal and educational systems, the bourgeois professions, and the entire domain of culture. By dominating the press, Jews will control public information, communication and opinion building, and thereby render Germans into unwitting accomplices in their own destruction. Thus the objective process of Jewish acculturation and assimilation is converted, in Goedsche's text, into a many-pronged strategy of infiltration.

As Goedsche's young scientist observed with horror, the entire spectrum of bourgeois society appears to be threatened. The landed gentry faces the loss of its privileges and the

commoditization of its estates, while peasants and tenant farmers are to be ruthlessly exploited. The artisans confront the inroads of mass production and distribution methods and the specter of proletarianization. The growing legion of white collar civil service workers and teachers meanwhile face their potential reduction into mere tools of a politicized state bureaucracy, dominated by so-called foreign elements. Jewish methods of infiltration and competition also threaten to undermine the professional class of physicians, journalists, attorneys, intellectuals, artists and university professors. Like the state bureaucracy, the two other bastions of traditional social values—the military and the church—are to be attacked under the manifold guises of liberalism and modernity. The bourgeoisie as a whole is threatened by the rise of the working class, whose discontent becomes the object of Jewish ideological exploitation. Even the sanctity of German womanhood is attacked, as modern economic conditions and liberal values, manipulated by Jews, lead them ever further into the workplace, where they become objects of Jewish carnality. All of these divergent fears of class and gender are summed up in the threat which the Jews present to the German and "Christian" race as a whole: an aggressive Jewish strategy of biological infiltration, pursued through sexual predation and intermarriage, will destroy the capacity of Germans to resist the parasitical influence which their hidden enemy exerts in every domain of social life.

The Jewish goal is thus to prey conspiratorially upon the insecurities and alienations experienced by the traditional estates as they face the transformative effects of modern capitalism. Wielding the omnipotent power of gold, Jews become the fetishized agents of modernity, threatening to dislocate each German from his symbolic anchorage within the traditional structuring environs of his class and community, his labor and even his own body. Germans are to be driven apart from one another, their supposed consensus of values broken down, their common source of identity shattered. Meanwhile the

hierarchical order of society, atomised by the effects of commoditization, transforms into a fractured and vulnerable class structure ideally suited to further Jewish exploitation.

* * *

This is the phenomenological content of Goedsche's scene. But the actual process which takes place here is something quite the opposite. The transformation of the traditional social order into the modern divisions of class is already advanced by the time of Goedsche's writing. What Goedsche's scene represents implicitly is not so much the breakdown of German unity as a vigorous attempt, from the populist perspective of a failed white collar bureaucrat-turned-journalist, to reformulate a cohesive social whole in step with the effects of modernity. As Goedsche's plot of a Jewish world conspiracy unfolds, we see coalescing, almost as if before our eyes, a populist rearticulation of modern German class structure in all its divisiveness and contradiction. Junker and peasant, artisan, civil servant and factory worker: every class and class fraction is invaded in turn, with each additional Jewish incursion representing yet another stratum of German society drawn into the common web of hidden Jewish machinations. However divergent or complex the actual causes of their alienation may be, all components of modern German society find in Goedsche's text a persuasive, shared explanation for the disorienting effects of capitalism, one which resonates with their deepest, taken-for-granted cultural experience. On the surface their economic expectations or political interests may seem to vary. But Goedsche's text allows them to discover beneath these differences a potential new basis for unity in their supposed victimization at the hands of the Jew, the common underlying agent of their distress.

Goedsche's scene visualizes a process of hegemonic transformation which will become the crucial factor in the emergence of National Socialism: the ever-more-successful attempt to reformulate the growing divisiveness of modern class and class fractions in Germany by

posing the Jew as the common source of alienation underlying the varied and often thoroughly contradictory experiences of Germans from all positions in the social formation.

This is a process which Eley has described as the "radicalization of the right" in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany (see Eley, 1980). Members of the old and new *Mittelstand* of artisans, shopkeepers, small farmers and white collar employees in private and state bureaucracies, experienced a growing socioeconomic marginality after German unification. They reacted by striving to distance themselves from the pressures of a growing working class, while positioning themselves favorably in relationship to the *Sammlungspolitik*, or the coalition of big landowners and big industry which dominated the *Kaiserreich* until the turn of the century. At first the *Sammlungspolitik*, which incorporated society through the institutions of the monarchy, the army, and the bureaucracy, proved unresponsive to petit-bourgeois attempts to defend their economic interests and preserve their social status through protectionist policies which would limit capitalist expansion. The petit-bourgeois did not react by challenging the prevailing hegemony directly; instead they sought to defend their interests by posing a populist, superorganic notion of the German *Volk*, in which the petit-bourgeoisie became the backbone of traditional German values of productivity, community responsibility, and social order. This perspective was buttressed by a wide, extra-parliamentary array of interest groups, economic organizations and protective associations which exerted considerable pressure from below. With the increasingly dramatic successes of the organized working class following the legalization of the Social Democratic party, the prevailing hegemonic interests found it increasingly necessary to secure mass support by realigning themselves with the petit-bourgeoisie. The result was an ever-more extensive incorporation of petit-bourgeois perspectives into the mainstream of the upper bourgeoisie, and the subsequent radicalization of the right.

Antisemitism proved one of the key connective elements in permitting the reforging of this hegemonic relationship. The notion of the superorganic *Volk*, one which supported the vested interests of German capitalism while seeking to disarm the working class, was created through juxtaposition with the Jew as the nefarious foreign element against which all Germans could define and defend themselves. The traditional role which the Jew had played in Germany over the centuries—the dialectical partner in the definition of German identity, as set against the backdrop of the development of capitalism in all its negative dimensions—took on enormous new significance as the modern tensions of class received their necessary politic expression. As shown previously in the case of the *Judensau*, the Jew became a *tertium quid* through which Germans could express their alienations to contemporary social conditions in terms of a common, symbolic discourse. This permitted them in turn to negotiating their perspectives across class lines, without yet having to fully oppose the power or underlying values of the status-quo in Imperial Germany. Antisemitism thus became a primary building block of a radicalizing conservative hegemony in the *Kaiserreich*, and one which grew in its efficacy and importance as the contradictions of class exacerbated. The Jew became a shared, generalized symbolic medium of social interaction (see chapter 9), its salience defined by its two, coterminous dimensions of meaning and function. As a cultural objectification of the implicit alienations of capitalism, expressed in terms of commodity fetishism, the Jew existed in contiguity to the most basic principles whereby social relations in Germany were meaningfully constructed and social reality defined. The immense and malevolent hidden power of the Jew expressed the seemingly unnatural, animating force of money, which stood to many Germans as an apparently autonomous power capable of reducing Germans to mere commodities in the hands of a manipulative and parasitical enemy. This was a persuasive and increasingly taken-for-granted means of expressing the abstract effects of capitalism upon German social life. At the same time the Jew, as a shared symbolic

medium of social interaction, became itself a structural element in the organization of German social life, open to "creative" manipulation and allowing for the pragmatic construction of power relations and the reformulation of political alliances. The posing of the Jew as a common enemy, in Goedsche's text as in German politics, thus was not an arbitrary device seized upon for its purely functional value of generating a unity of interest. To the contrary, the choice of the Jew was a culturally compelling one, generated by the taken-for-granted structures of German social experience. The common thread linking the class strata in Goedsche's text—a thread which Germans themselves wove and manipulated as they strove to express their personal identities and achieve their political ends—is that of the fetishism of commodities, as negatively anthropomorphosized in the parasitical form and alleged hidden power of the Jew.

Adolf Hitler: Stealing the Volkbody

There is no space in the dissertation version of this study to explore this process of hegemonic challenge further. However, the overt expression of its basic symbolic dynamic—the reformulation of the divisions of class into the unifying discourse of race—can be brought out by turning once again to the words of Adolf Hitler. Here we encounter the superorganic notion of the *Volkskörper*, or Volkbody, as a taken-for-granted ingredient of social experience, no mere metaphor but genuine biological reality (cf. Bein, 1964: 6; see also Klemperer, 1980 [1946].) Along with this comes a literal focus upon the pathological threat posed by the Jew as a parasitical organism of social disintegration and decay.

In a psychological study of Hitler's beliefs, Koenigsberg (1975) has broken down Hitler's ideology into a set of analytical tables filled with quotations culled from *Mein Kampf* as well as from Hitler's speeches. However limited Koenigsberg's decontextualized conclusions may be (he ultimately reduces the symbolic content of Hitler's

worldview to the psychological effects of an unresolved oedipal complex), his charts bring home better than most other studies the crucial role played by body symbolism in the construction of German antisemitism.

Thus we find a table titled thematically, "The Country is a Living Organism," and seventeen quotations from Hitler's writings in which the notion of the *Volkskörper* is embedded. Germany is subject to the "same laws as all other human organisms," Hitler states, while attempts to alter Germany's borders constitute "a bleeding of our national body." Economics, Hitler writes, is "a living process, one of the functions of that body which is the people," while the Polish corridor separating western Germany from East Prussia is "a strip of flesh cut from our body. . . a national wound that bleeds continuously." The German people are the flesh and blood, the substance of the nation (see Koenigsberg, 1975:5-6; 50). "The Purpose of Politics," as Hitler and Table 2 tells us, is to wage a life-and-death battle in order to "maintain the substance of the people. . . in bodily and mental health, in good order and in purity" (p.7). This struggle is a monumental one, for the German *Volkskörper* is mortally threatened by forces seeking to destroy it. These are the forces of disintegration and disease, the effects of a parasitical and devouring organism: the Jew. Repeatedly Hitler refers to the Jew as "no element of organization, but a ferment of decomposition" (thus echoing, pejoratively, Theodor Mommsen), a "disintegrator of peoples," acting to "dissolve the German people" so that it "falls to pieces" (p.8-11). The means to prevent this is to "burn out the symptoms of decomposition" and "immunize the German Reich." This can be assisted by the "inner welding together of the *Volkskörper*," creating a "closely knit body," one "bound up together as with iron bands," as solidary as "a single block of steel" (p.13-14).

"The National Body is Diseased," states Table 6, as do forty-three of Hitler's quotations listed there. Its affliction is an "infection," a "plague," a "pestilence," a "cancerous ulcer," a "tumor," and a "canker." The cause of the disease is the Jew

(sometimes referred to as a Bolshevik), taking the form of a "bacillus," a "virus," and a "toxin." Thus we learn that Germany must protect itself "against the infection of materialism, against the Jewish pestilence," an "alien virus" which has been mistakenly tolerated in the past. In order for Germany to preserve itself from "mortal decay," it is necessary to "avoid close contact with the carriers of these poisonous bacilli." For this reason, Hitler states, he "gave the order to burn out down to the raw flesh the ulcers of this poisoning of the wells" (p.16-19). The Jew is not only a disease but a parasitical organism consuming the *Volkskörper*, a "blood-sucker," a "spider," a "vampire" which "attaches himself to the body of peoples" to eat "poisonous abscesses into the nation" and thereby "devour" it. "The spider was slowly beginning to suck the blood out of the people's pores," he writes (p.19-20). The terms of Nazi antisemitic status-reversal are repeated here as well, the Jew "not the attacked but the attacker," a foe "to whom we had done no harm, but who none the less sought to subjugate our German people and make of it its slave" (p.33).

The nature of the Jewish threat and the means whereby it carries out its disintegrations, as Koenigsberg has elicited, is through various penetrations of the *Volkskörper*—through the injection of poisons (both physical, cultural and spiritual), and through sexual entry leading to the pollution of the blood. Thus "it seemed as though a continuous stream of poison was being driven into the outermost blood vessels of this once heroic body by a mysterious power," its identity the Jew who manages through multifarious means to "penetrate the bloodstream of our people unhindered" (p.23-25). This poisoning of the *Volkskörper* also took the form of sexual contamination. "With satantic joy in his face," Hitler writes in a much-quoted passage, "the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood." In this manner "hundreds of thousands of girls" have been seduced by "bow-legged, repulsive Jewish bastards," "black parasites" who systematically "defile our inexperienced young blond girls" (p.26-27). The

only way to counter this is to maintain the "purity" of the blood and race, the loss of which "plunges man into the abyss for all time" (p.28). Germany must combat its own inner weakness, it must "steel" itself and make itself "hard" if it is to resist Jewish domination (p.30-33). "He who will not be a hammer must be an anvil," Hitler states. "An anvil are we today, and that anvil will be beaten until out of the anvil we fashion once more a hammer, a German sword." And he continues elsewhere: "No nation can remove [the] hand [of the Jew] from its throat except by the sword" (p.34-35). Racial struggle, work and sacrifice, then, are the means to achieve this liberation. The individual ego must subordinate itself to the life of the community as a cell in the body of the *Volk*. "Only he has a right to live who is prepared to work for the community," Hitler states, and "you are nothing, your nation is everything" (p.44-45).

One can draw another quotation from Hitler to provide a pragmatic conclusion to this symbolic chain: "No salvation is possible," it goes, "until the bearer of disunion, the Jew, has been rendered powerless to harm" (p.10). If Germany can accomplish this, if it can summon the strength and self-discipline to work itself free of the Jew, then the German *Volk* will endure forever: "the substance, a substance of flesh and blood, our nation. . . that is what is permanent." This is the millenarian labor of the German people: "Since we believe in the eternity of this Reich," Hitler wrote, "these works of ours shall also be eternal" (p.48-49). Julius Streicher of the notorious antisemitic *Stürmer* newspaper said it even more explicitly—and in mass-marketed form—in his publishing company's logo, used even on children's books. It showed a malevolent Jewish face hovering darkly behind a star-of-David, below it the words. "Without a solution to the Jewish Problem, no salvation for humanity [*Ohne Lösung der Judenfrage, kein Erlösung der Menschheit*]" (see plate 38 and Bauer, 1936).

Thus we see how fundamentally National Socialism naturalized the metaphors of the body into taken-for-granted dimensions of social as well as personal experience. For Hitler

the body of the *Volk* and the purity of its blood must be maintained through work and struggle. The Jew is the reification of everything alienating in social life, an element of disintegration which plays upon the inherent weakness of the German. The only solution, if Germany is to endure forever, is to burn the Jew out of the Volkbody.

Hitler was not alone in these perspectives, of course; avowals such as these are legion throughout the history and pre-history of the Third Reich, as we know too well. Koenigsberg sees Hitler's ideology in isolation, however, assuming the constructions of the *Volkskörper* and the parasitical Jew to be "vague in meaning; often bizarre in substance," and clearly representing "highly selective, personalized views" (Koenigsberg, 1975:53). Thus he interprets them in terms of the oedipal complex, that is, the boy Hitler's distress over the father's violent penetration of the mother, which has left her cancered and diseased. From this Koenigsberg determines that Hitler's ideology is nothing more than "the projection of an unconscious phantasy onto social reality." Such a theoretical position becomes a caricature of psychohistory at its most reductionist.

In fact, the symbolic forms implicated in German psychodynamics, as we have already seen, take shape within an historically-specific sociocultural framework, one which shapes the experience of the body as well as the epistemology of social relations, even as it accommodates the infrastructural parameters which the body generates (see Comaroff, 1985; cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1977). Hence the significance of such psychological factors in the construction of worldviews, the shaping of personal motivations and the influencing of historical events cannot be assessed until they are located within this wider structuring context.

The technologized convergence of biology and industrial production as expressed in Hitler's notion of the necessity to "steel" the body is clearly a product of commodity fetishism as we have already defined it elsewhere. So too is the reification of society into the superorganic form of a collective Volkbody, as well as the personification of the Jew as

the corrosive agent of exchange. These constructions are radicalized versions of the nineteenth century adoption of physiological models for society as discussed earlier, in which social contradictions are treated in terms of the differentiated body seeking to maintain itself in functioning homeostasis. In the proto-fascist context, however, the rising alienation of the lower middle classes along with an overall exacerbation of class conflict have generated a relentless drive for Procrustean social integration. Accordingly the underlying realities of social contradiction have been transposed into a social Darwinian vision of racial struggle—the unified German against the biological weakness of his own race as well as against the alien, corrosive presence of the Jew. The aim of National Socialism is to overcome the divisive effects of capitalist modernity by securing the German *Volkskörper* in a state of perpetual homeostasis—a ruthless sociobiological program that ultimately fulfilled commodity fetishism's most dehumanizing symbolic implications, as we shall see, in the practice of genocide.

* * *

Before proceeding to a discussion of the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium in Nazi Germany, an examination of a few telling motifs of antisemitic iconography from the Weimar and Nazi periods will help clarify better the transformation of traditional German antisemitic meanings into their modern Nazi equivalents. One of the most revealing, condensed examples is the illustrated advertisement for a bestselling antisemitic novel published just after the First World War, Arthur Dinter's *The Sin Against the Blood* (cf. Mosse, 1964). Here a vulture with the head of a Jew is shown perched upon the back of an Aryan (see plate 39 and Fuchs, 1921:305). As common in such representations, the Jew's head is a caricature of a plutocrat—it is bald and adorned with glasses, and only lacks the usual cigar. The Aryan's blond head is bowed in helpless submission; the Jew-vulture's claws dig into his naked back.

The meanings of the *Judensau* motif are clearly rechanneled in this image, which condenses both the animal and ritual murder components into one. Previously the figure of the Devil had been combined with the Jew in order to express the identification of the Jew with exchange as an alien and manipulative force. Now the parasitical nature of the Jew is reified and biologized into the form of a vulture, while the sow and child are merged. Now, instead of preying upon a sow as token of the natural and productive Christian world, the Jew preys directly upon the Aryan, much as he did earlier in the ritual murder motif featuring Simon of Trent. Thus the use-value dimension of the sow is metonymized with the image of the helpless Christian child. The dual value dimensions of the commodity, now more advanced in its development and structuring power, are now represented in dramatic contrast as separable, reified forms, divided between the money-manipulative Jew and the natural Aryan. This biologization of value shows the underlying significance of the rise of racist antisemitism. The exchange nature of the Jew, as capitalist parasite, is biologized in the form of an animal, i.e. is naturalized, but it is a negative, destructive biological element that is chosen (cf. plate 40, an Austrian election poster).

The image of the vulture-like Jew actually represents a figure in the novel, the Jewish plutocrat. A passage from the novel elaborates:

The *Kommerzienrat* knew how to filch his gain from any work carried out by industrious people anywhere in the world. Hundreds of thousands, nay millions of human beings laboured in the sweat of their brows throughout the five continents, jerked on the wires assembled in his hand. Sitting like a spider in his office in Berlin, he drained through these wire-channels the marrow of these people, body and soul. . . . It was the big pitiless heart which sucked human blood, to transform it into cash, no matter whether it flowed from the veins of white men or black, yellow or red people, Christians or heathens (Dinter, in Bein, 1964:17).

Here the identification of the Jew with exchange could not be more clear. The Jew and his "cold-blooded devilish aims" is represented as the personification of a demonic and abstract power, standing behind productive peoples like a puppet master manipulating strings, or a spider who has entrapped them in a web of monetary relations. The contrast of exchange

and use is brought out in the image of the Jew devouring bodily substance, in particular blood, and converting it into cash, which he then can circulate internationally for his own profit.

Another cartoon of the era—actually a sketch for a poster—elaborates further on the shift from feudal to modern antisemitic form. Here a Jewish star made of bricks serves as a wall with chambers within which the peoples of Europe are divided and isolated from one another (see plate 41 and Rhodes, 1987:45). As we saw earlier, originally the ghetto wall constituted the symbol of the subordination and containment of the Jew's alien and dangerous exchange nature. Now—as in Dingelstedt's poem, *Two Streets in Frankfurt*, the mazelike ghetto encloses and encompasses the European. Thus the power of exchange has escaped its confinement to engulf society at large; the threatened reversal of Christian and Jewish statuses is complete.

Although the form of the complex *Judensau* and ritual murder image was long forgotten by the Nazi period, as was its most prominent location on Frankfurt's old Bridge Tower, the Nazi era raised images of its own and displayed them with similar prominence. The form and location of these images represent a striking continuity, at the same time revealing the shift in meaning that has occurred (see plate 44). A remarkable comparison is presented by the enormous antisemitic poster which was affixed to the facade above the entrance to Vienna's North Railway station (see plate 43). This poster was designed to advertise the appearance of a traveling exhibit, *Der ewige Jude*, shown in Vienna in 1938 just after the *Anschluss* in 1938 and installed in the hall of the station (cf. plate 42). This image condenses the transformations that have occurred since the premodern era. It shows the enormous frontal figure of a caftan-clad, bearded eastern or "Ghetto" Jew, his shoulders shrugging, his eyes nearly sealed slits, his head bent to the side. In one hand he holds gold coins; in the other he clenches a whip, while jutting out from under that arm is a small map of Germany inscribed with a hammer and sickle.

Here the Jew is represented as a dark and looming apparition; solid as he is, he is also less particularized and individualized than the several Jews that were grouped about the sow. His posture—a common iconographic representation of the Jew—suggests a dissembling stance, seemingly passive and inoffensive, deflective and placating; yet is somehow insinuating and sly. The gold in his left hand identifies him with capitalist profit, while the whip and the map beneath his arm, adorned with the slogans of communism, suggests his hidden domination under the guise of communist advocacy of the working population. Thus the Jew is now posed as an abstract power behind left and right, profiting through the manipulation of ideologies and the domination of the working German.

The location of this image on the Northern Railway station is also telling: like the Frankfurt *Judensau*, its position is still dramatically liminal, at a hub of transportation and communication in the capital of a formerly great empire, recently adjoined to the German Reich. In a sense, Vienna and its rail station can be seen as the liminal points at which the *Anschluss* is connected. Thus the image proclaims a message: it identifies the secret power behind Germany and Austria's disintegration, which must be combatted, while affirming the necessity for German integration. It affirms the common background of Austrians and Germans, as posed against the Jew, and the need for Austrians to align themselves with the values of the Nazi party.

Thus the "Eternal Jew" motif bears remarkable similarities to the *Judensau*, while revealing the shifts in meaning that have occurred. The Jew is now represented as a biologization of abstract principles of exchange, permitting the hidden domination of the German. The poster and exhibit "force" the Jew's elusive, hidden powers of exchange to the surface so that Germans and Austrians can take action against the Jew and thereby restore to themselves control over the forces of capitalism.

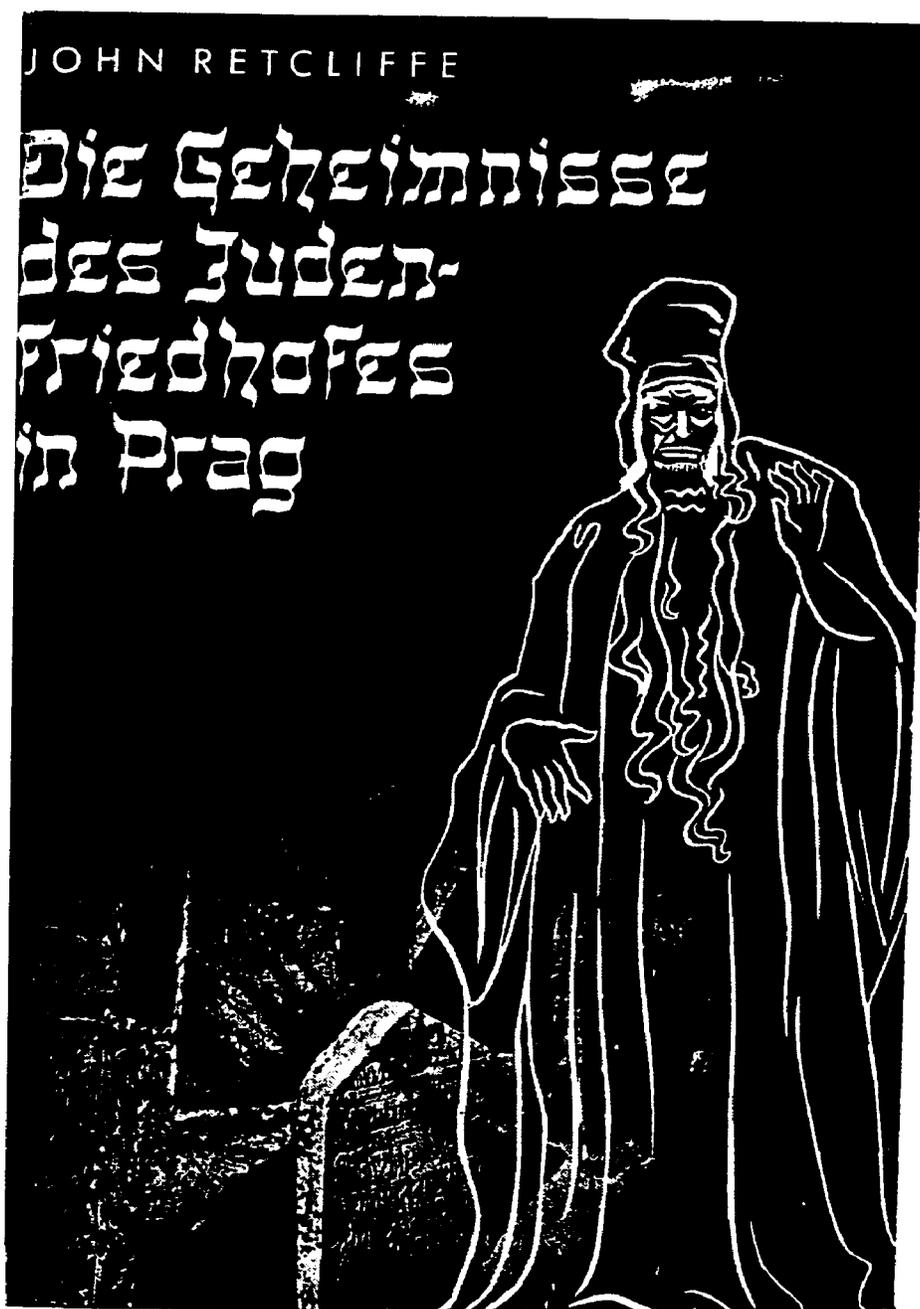


Plate 35. *The Secrets of the Jew Cemetery in Prague.* Nazi pamphlet produced for German tourists to occupied Prague. (Source: Leo Baeck Institute, New York)



Plate 36. "Thus they came out of the east. . . thus they stole. . . and so became the rulers of Germany." Caftaned Jews transform into seemingly "civilized" form. (Source: *Der Weg der NSDAP*, after 1934; Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 73/10/45)



Nach dem Krach

Plate 37. *After the Crash.* Anonymous Viennese lithograph, 1875. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:160ff)



Plate 38. "No solution to the *Judenfrage*, no salvation for mankind." *Stürmer Verlag* logo. (Source: Bauer, 1936)

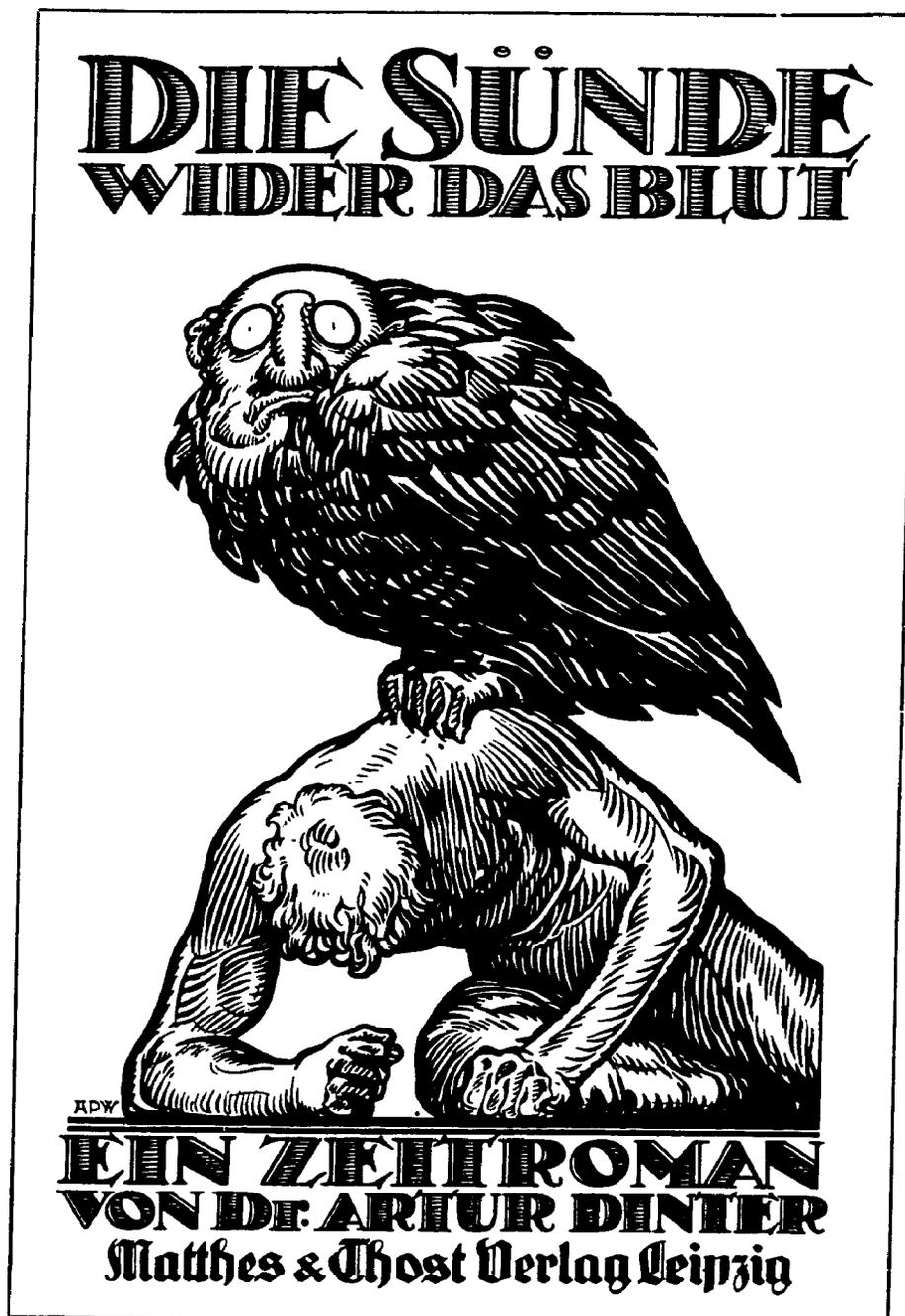


Plate 39. *The Sin Against the Blood.* Advertisement for Artur Dinter's 1920 bestseller. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:305)



Plate 40. Austrian election poster by Bernd Steiner, 1920. (Source: Fuchs, 1921:297)

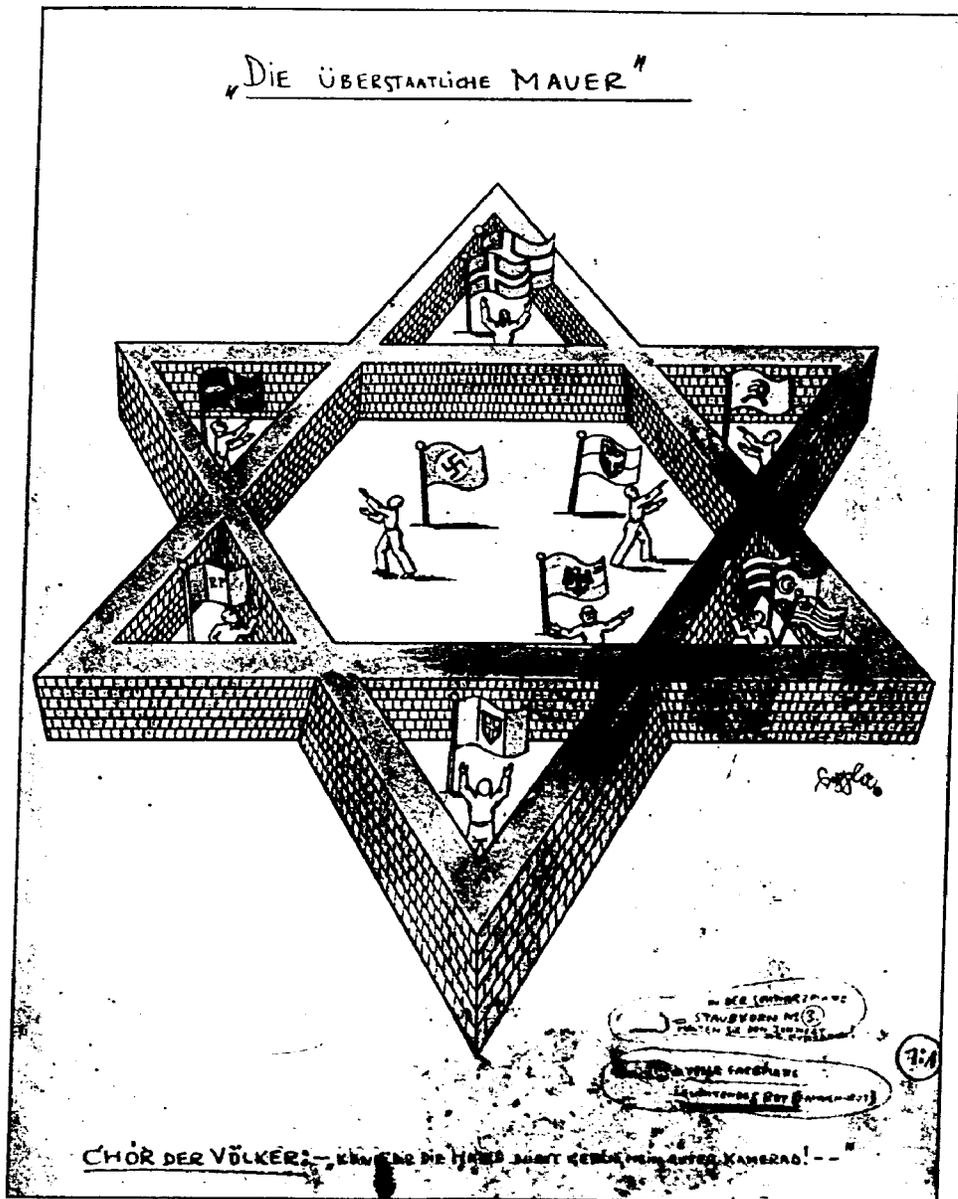


Plate 41. *The Wall Between Nations.* Sketch for a poster by "Seppla" (Josef Plank), Germany, c. 1920s/30s. (Source: Rhodes, 1987:45 and Library of Congress)



Plate 42. *The Eternal Jew.* Poster to the 1937 exhibition. (Source: Rhodes, 1987:49 and Library of Congress)



Plate 43. Massive poster on the Vienna *Nordbahnhof* advertising *The Eternal Jew* exhibition. The dramatic liminal positioning here, as in the pre-modern era, is obvious. (Source: Silvain, 1985)



Plate 44. Antisemitic sign on bridge trestle, Nazi era. "The Jew is our misfortune/we keep him far from our bodies." Reminiscent of the *Judensau* on the Frankfurt Bridge Tower. (Source: Szajkowski, 1977: No.69)

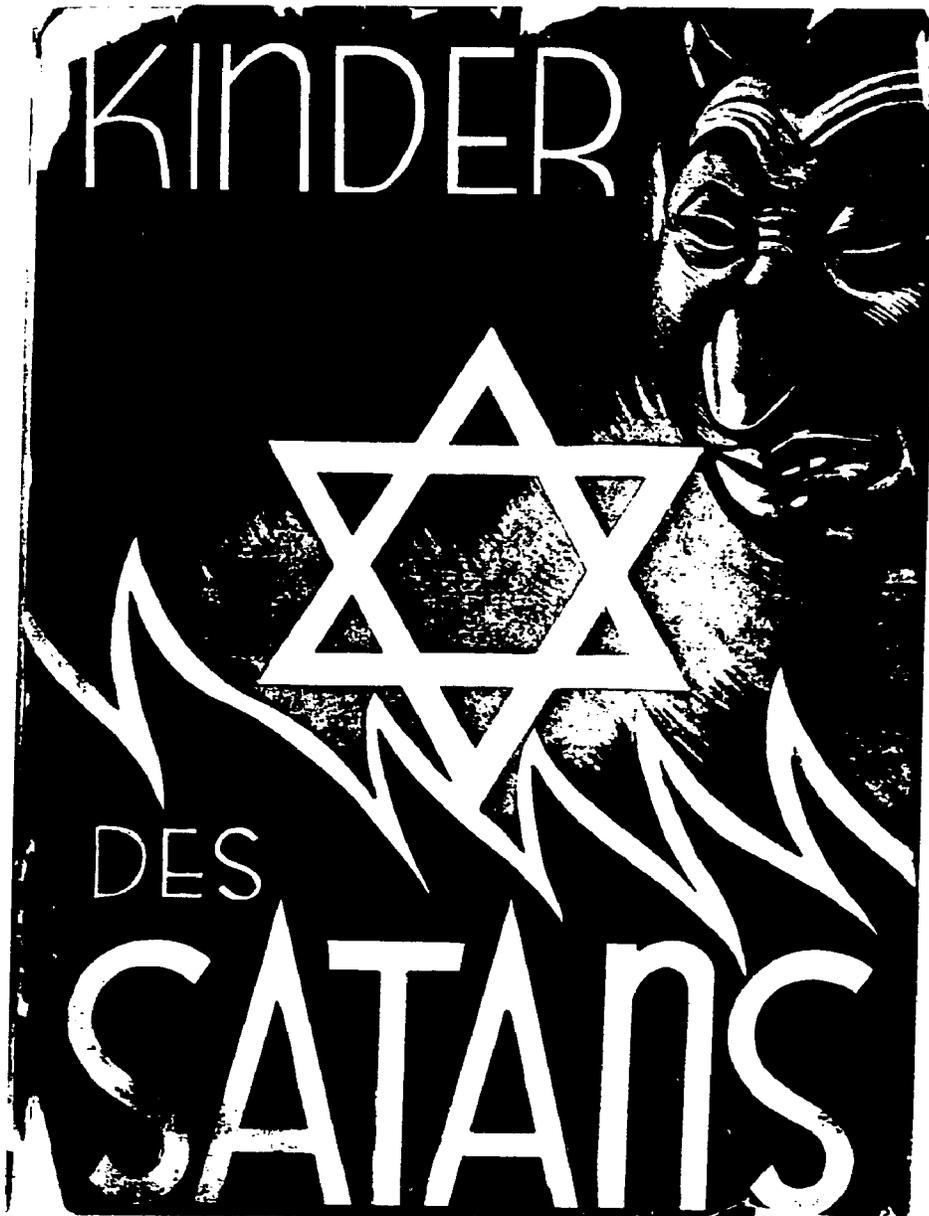


Plate 45. *Children of Satan.* Unusual dust jacket to Nazi-era novel. In the era of modern racism the devil motif is "merely" symbolic, while the alleged destructiveness of the Jew has been reified in terms of conspiracy and disease. A powerful image nonetheless. (Source: Blaustein Library, American Jewish Committee, New York)

Part Three

ANTISEMITISM IN THE NAZI ERA

CHAPTER NINE

ANTISEMITISM IN THE THIRD REICH: THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF SYMBOLIC MEANING

By now the course of Nazi antisemitic policy—the systematic legislative erosion of Jewish life—has been described fully and repeatedly in many studies, as well as its relationships to other Nazi programs of racial hygiene (see for example Hilberg, 1985; Adam, 1972; Dawidowicz, 1975; Burleigh & Wippermann, 1991, etc.). The symbolic dynamics underlying the politics of race and antisemitism, however, have never been analyzed. There is no space in the dissertation version of this study to trace these highly complex dynamics along the "twisted road" that led to Auschwitz (see Schleunes, 1970). However, the following chapter provides an means of conceptualizing the process whereby an ever-radicalizing antisemitism articulated with the polycentric political structure of the Nazi state, while serving as the meaningful fundament for the millenarian transformation of German self and society. After presenting this analytical model, the symbolic dynamics it describes will be explored in action in the form of a remarkable case-study: that of *Juden raus!* ("Jews Out!"), a privately-produced antisemitic board game mass-marketed in Germany beginning in 1938. As we will see, the form of *Juden raus!* as well as the ritual of play provide a dramatic condensation of the meanings underlying Nazi racial politics while shedding light on the problematic relationship between state policy and German popular culture under National Socialism. At the same time the analysis of *Juden raus!* will provide access to the fundamental symbolic construction of the Jew around which Nazi

Germany's programs of millenarian transformation—most crucially, that of the so-called "Final Solution"—revolved.

THE JEW AS A GENERALIZED SYMBOLIC MEDIUM OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

As we saw in the discussion of Goedsche's vision of Jewish conspiracy, the Jew served as a key element allowing for the creation of a new, populist hegemony in Germany. This radicalizing process of social and political realignment culminated in the Nazi era. Operating as the element of definition and focus within the Nazi ideology of race and its attendant program to create an Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*, antisemitism—and its reified expression in the form of the Jew—circulated as a *generalized symbolic medium of social interaction*. This provided Germany's otherwise hopelessly conflict-ridden society with a new shared discourse for creating social consensus, defining political identity, and coordinating the polycentric political rivalry which came to characterize the Nazi state under Hitler (see chapter 1, n.11; cf. Caplan, 1988; Hildebrand, 1981; Mason, 1981; Broszat, 1970; Peterson, 1969, etc.). It was the competition to participate in and control the circulation of this medium—a process occurring, of course, in tension with historical contingency—which structured the development of Nazi antisemitic policy and the evolution of the so-called "Final Solution."

Generalized symbolic media of social interaction—as formulated first by Parsons (1963), then broadened by T. Turner (1968), Munn (1974) and further adapted here—are objective categories or social forms which convert the particularities of social life into a single shared framework, thereby permitting subjective goals to be expressed and diverging aspirations to be negotiated in terms of common discourse of meaningful practice. Language of course is the most highly developed example of such a medium; time is another. However it may be culturally constructed and symbolically objectified (as in the form of the clock), time permits the particularities and flux of social life to be funneled into

a single generalized framework of shared meaning and coordinated action. Money likewise symbolizes a multiplicity of particular use-value forms, converted into the single, generalized terms of an exchange medium—one which also "models" implicitly the mode of relationship (that of buyer-seller) which its transactions initiate within the wider meaningfully-structured context of the capitalist market (see T. Turner, 1968:122-3). Ritual, finally, provides a powerful and more highly articulated example of such generalized media, converting a wide range of sociocultural meanings and practices into a shared but limited framework of symbolic vehicles. These vehicles consist of "acts, words, or things" which are manipulated by social actors in order to establish and regulate the basic reproductive and transformative processes of social life (see Munn, 1974:580).

Talcott Parsons originally conceived of all generalized symbolic media as "specialized languages," defining money (his paradigmatic example) as "a generalized medium of communication through the use of symbols given meaning within a code" (Parsons, 1963). Although generalized symbolic media do operate in fact as "communication currencies," my prior reference to "a common discourse of meaningful practice" is intended to stress the capacity of such media when circulated not only to communicate secondary messages about existing social relations, but to actually constitute those relations as well as allow for their reconstruction where prior discourses have disintegrated. While such generalized symbolic media as antisemitism do provide for the communication of common ideological identity and purpose—the shared "cultural code" which Volkov, building upon Geertz, outlined for Nazism's late nineteenth century precursors (see Volkov, 1978; Geertz, 1973:193-233)—they are not simply mechanisms of communication or political languages, but actual synthetic forms of sociocultural practice that help to define and structure the social world within which they circulate. As the prior example of ritual brings out most clearly, they do so by drawing upon complex sociocultural meanings and symbolic capacities "embedded in and generated by the ongoing processes of social existence" (Munn, 1974:580). These

they convert into shared iconic forms—ideological constructs, specific acts and practices, or objects and their assigned properties—that can be manipulated in social transactions. Freed from the diffuse social contexts in which they are embedded, these implicit meanings and capacities become generalized currencies which circulate between actors "at a new symbolic level of social interaction" (p. 580), thereby bringing a new set of reciprocal social relations into being. At the same time the operations performed upon or through the medium allow for the transformation of the social identities of those transacting its meanings, as well as the reformulation of the relationships of social actors to the social contexts from which the meanings of the medium are drawn and to which it remains keyed.

As the preceding discussion suggests, generalized symbolic media are characterized by two coterminous dimensions, one pragmatic and the other meaningful. The former dimension is expressed in the capacity of the medium to operate as a mechanism of integration, while the latter consists of the sociocultural meanings which the medium condenses and which serve to construct the social framework within which it circulates. Extending from the medium's integrative character is its further capacity (depending on the nature and purpose of the medium) to allow for the establishment and reformulation of power relations within a hegemonic order. This derives, in my definition, from the competition that ensues amongst those transacting its meanings to define the terms of the medium and to control or even monopolize the circulation of the values which are generated through those transactions. These values consist essentially of the capacities, powers or desired effects (see Munn, 1986:8-9) associated with the circulation of the medium and the meanings it condenses. This includes, of course, the previously stated capacity of the medium to generate new social relations and influence the construction of identities through its circulation. It also includes the degree of potential control which the medium offers over the varying domains of sociocultural life and dimensions of experience to which its meanings provide access.

It is this role of generalized symbolic medium which antisemitism, and the Jew as its reified expression, played in Nazi Germany. The Jew consisted of an especially potent symbolic category which condensed within its complex, polysemic form the negative effects associated with the basic processes of German capitalism, specifically, the process of commoditization as implicated in the construction of an alienated German self and social order. The overall meaningful framework structuring Nazi antisemitic practice was an ideologically-defined process which I term *antisemitic status reversal*—that is, the attempt to appropriate the Jew's negative power and transform its alienating effects through actions designed to reverse the Jew's alleged domination and enslavement of Germans. It was this practice of antisemitic status reversal which comprised the essence of Nazism's millenarian project of racist social transformation. Circulating the generalized medium of the Jew and performing operations upon him made available to Germans the symbolic values (or capacities) associated with the Jew's supposed negative power. These consisted essentially of the fundamental capacity to define German identity as implicated in the symbolic construction of the body, the work processes in which it engaged and the spaces it inhabited. It was the negative effects of the Jew's supposed control over this capacity which Germans struggled to convert—at any cost whatsoever—into positive forms which they could assimilate and from which they could benefit in the reproduction of their own social lives.

The specific values generated by the circulation of antisemitism as a generalized symbolic medium began first and foremost with its basic shared ideological value. This provided for the complementary definition and establishment of a common "Aryan" social and political identity while objectifying the alleged cause of Germany's alienation and social chaos in the personalized form of the Jew and his supposed pernicious effects. This basic value was expressed not only in ideological form but also practically in terms of the manipulation of the Jew's actual embodied self as a living entity dominated by Germans as

a whole, whether through rituals of humiliation, through the concrete effects of discriminatory race legislation, or eventually, through forms of slave labor. Relating to this ideological value and its practical expressions was the integrative value made available to German society through the shared competition to define and erode the Jew's existence as well as to purge all aspects of German culture of its "Jewish" influences. This aspect of antisemitic status reversal was part of the attempt by Germans to participate in and influence the direction of Nazi racial policy as a means of personal and political self-assertion in the course of solving those ills for which the Jew was supposedly responsible. A highly contested by-product of such antisemitic status reversal was the concrete property and other materialized economic values wrested competitively and progressively from the Jew and recycled amongst Germans.

The circulation of all of these values was increasingly monopolized by the SS—the Nazi ideological vanguard and agent of police power—as part of its competitive drive to dominate the Nazi hegemonic process. This SS effort reached its apogee during the war in the value generated through the attempt to dispose absolutely over the Jewish medium and its circulation—from the Jew's ideological significance to his property, his slave labor power, and his body itself—in ghettos, camps and throughout occupied Europe. This final form of value was generated most especially through control of the killing process in the death camps. Its ultimate and most "potent" circulating tokens consisted of the systematically-starved bodies of Jews as SS-controlled slaves, as well as the personal property and products mined from the Jew's murdered body in the death camps and redistributed amongst the agencies of party, state and society under the monopolizing direction of the SS. These tokens expressed in their condensed form the full domination of the German over the Jew *and all he symbolized*, and thus the triumphant completion of the Nazi transformative project.

Antisemitic "Emergency Money"

As I have just stated, the Jew circulated in Nazi Germany in a manner analagous to that of money (among numerous other potential examples of such phenomena cross-culturally) as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction. Theoretically speaking, the similarity between the Jew and money ends here—but in German culture the relationship of the Jew to money was also a strongly motivated one. One of the most extraordinary examples of this—one which helps confirm our entire preceding analysis of antisemitism—is the phenomenon of *Notgeld*, or "Emergency Money."

The identification of Jews with the alienating dimensions of capitalist exchange is represented during the Weimar era by the widespread production of antisemitic paper currency, both overprints and special issues. This richly iconographic form of currency was used by German and Austrian municipalities in substitution for official currency, beginning in 1918 and especially during the 1922-1923 inflation; it was also privately issued so as to serve as redeemable coupons and for private collectors (see *The Shekel*, 1984; Fergusson, 1975).

During the summer of 1922 in Germany itself, according to Fergusson (1975:90-1), the rapid rise in prices had made it impossible for private banks to meet the increased demand for currency. This lead them to ration the cashing of cheques—the values of which in any event began to dissipate almost as soon as they had been written. Business became paralyzed throughout the country. Meanwhile the general population began to panic as they realized that their wages were either insufficient or unavailable and their lifelong savings quickly becoming worthless.

Unable to keep up with the need to produce and distribute new currency, the *Reichsbank* passed a law licensing state and local authorities as well as industrial concerns to issue emergency money tokens—*Notgeld*—"against the deposite of appropriate assets" (p.90). As Fergusson points out, the law was actually designed to regularize a practice

which had been going on extensively at least since 1918. Only now the *Reichsbank* shared the printing costs and in many cases gave limited protection by sharing losses due to counterfeiting (see Herbert, 1984:38-9).

Many of these issues—whether produced by private business concerns or city municipalities—had explicit antisemitic motifs as well as anal imagery. One example is the official scrip in the value of 40 Heller issued by the municipality of Bruck in Austria in 1920 or 1921. Betraying a telling continuity with premodern motifs in a primitive folk art tradition, this color print showed a red devil with horns leading a Jewish plutocrat away from his piled money-sacks (see plate 46). As the inflation of 1922 and 1923 mounted to hysterical proportions, legitimate banknotes of inflation issue were diverted by private individuals, printers, antisemitic organizations and newspapers and overprinted with antisemitic slogans, satiric poems, swastikas, skull-and-crossbones as well as images of the devil and other devices. The crudest of these banknotes were not printed but scrawled in pen and ink with poems and pictures. Others reformulated banknotes with complex printed iconography (see *The Shekel*, 1984). One example, overprinted most likely by the Nazi party's Weimar era publication, the *Völkische Beobachter*, showed a Jewish plutocrat looking up in astonishment at the swastika and Hitler's name superimposed upon a rising sun. Beneath the Jew's feet, in gothic script, the legend states in Bavarian dialect, "God the Righteous! Once again a New Coming! Folk Comrades, come over to Hitler and become National Socialists!" (see plate 47).

A particularly complex and revealing example is a puzzle piece requiring that one collect the correct sections of six different thousand-mark banknotes (see plate 48). By fitting them together atop one another one came up with a single composite banknote, its front side showing the absurd value of 1 plus 18 zeros, along with the inscription, "*Die richtige Gannef-Mark unserer Affen-Politik*" ("The Proper Theft-Mark of our Political Monkeys"—note the use of the Yiddish word *Gannef*). This was accompanied by the warning, "*Wer*

diesem Bankjuden-Bandwurm machmacht, braucht Stempel, Schere, Kleister [Whoever counterfeits this Jew-bank-tapeworm requires dies, scissors and enemas]." On the back of the composite bill, the various overprinted sections came together to form a satiric listing of the members of the "*Reichskrankdirektorium*," or "Reichs Sickness Board of Directors" (here the word *Krank* is a pun on "Bank"). The names listed are all derisive (and frequently scatological) puns on Jewish-sounding names: *Isidor Treppengeländer* [Isidor Staircase-Landing], *Rosalie Darmgerassel* [Rosalie Bowel-Clatter], *Samuel Kanalgeruch* [Samuel Sewer-Stink], *Jakob Dunggrube* [Jakob Cesspool], *Rebekka Ungeziefer* [Rebekka Cockroach], *Chaim Schmutzlappen* [Chaim Dirt-Rag], *Itzig Ganzgeriebener* [Itzig All-Cunning], *Abraham Lausimpelz* [Louse-in-Fur]." The "solving" of the secret of such puzzle banknotes added to the fetish quality of the money, since the abstract and intangible forces influencing the disintegration of Germany's socioeconomic life were personified in the Jew as the secret wire-puller hiding behind the scenes, capable of being exposed if only one knew the key.

Other banknotes were printed with a variety of satiric verses, the most popular following the lines of a couplet appearing on an Austrian issue of 1922: "*Das Gold, das hat die Judenband/Der Dreck, der blieb in deiner Hand!*" [The Jew-Gang has the Gold, the shit is left in your hand]" (plate 49). Another transformed a 1000 mark German banknote of January 1, 1923 into a satiric one-way ticket to Jerusalem. Overprints of this sort continued to be produced on all inflationary issues of German money until the figure of 20,000,000 Marks was reached on September 1, 1923, just prior to the currency reform. Other complex forms of *Notgeld*, probably for private collection, were printed on silk with multicolored iconography in an attempt to infuse the currency with a luxurious, "natural" use-value in substitution for the meaningless exchange-value of the currency in circulation, which was literally not worth the paper it was printed on (not shown).

In all of these cases we see dramatic proof of the age-old German identification of the Jew with capitalist exchange in modern transformation.¹ Here the notion of Jewish *Wucher*, or the unnatural, cancerous growth of money as negatively fertile, has grown to absurd dimensions in the form of an hysterical, anomic inflation attributed to the Jew and his nefarious manipulations of the world money market (see plate 50). The identification of anality and Jew with the waste-like processes of capitalist accumulation could not be more explicit (see plate 51). What is most remarkable here is that when money as a generalized symbolic medium of exchange has broken down and become meaningless, the Jew and the shared symbolic elements of antisemitism become a means of reinfusing it with value. Indeed, the Jew becomes a meaningful substitute for money and thus an alternate form of exchange. The phenomenon of *Notgeld* is a means of personalizing the abstract forces of the market and money itself in an attempt to regain control over its circulation, and thereby restore coherence to the social world.

The widespread phenomenon of *Notgeld* thus demonstrates the indissoluble symbolic affinity of the Jew and the alienating aspects of exchange in German antisemitism. At the same time it reveals the potent role of the Jew and antisemitism as a generalized symbolic medium providing personalized access to the otherwise intangible forces of exchange. This in turn offers Germans a means of realigning themselves to one another as well as to the commodity-market in an effort to reclaim control over the capitalist social order itself and the dimensions of the self invested therein.

¹In fact the direct identification of the Jew with money predates Weimar *Notgeld*. See Kirscher, 1968 for examples of the *Kornjude* and other seventeenth century antisemitic coins identifying the Jew as the manipulator behind agricultural famine and associated economic crises.

Installing the Medium

Notgeld was not the only form of antisemitic cultural production in the Weimar and Nazi eras. Indeed, antisemitic cultural forms—political and theatrical posters, cabarets and caricatures, publications and associations, postcards, flyers, stickers and even sausage-wrappings—proliferated wildly after Germany's defeat in the First World War. But it was during the Nazi era that antisemitism truly flourished, and with a vitality that is almost mind-boggling in its scope and obsessive variety. This sanctioned perversity—which expressed itself in all of the traditional forms already mentioned—also took natural advantage of every modern technological development in the production of knowledge and the communication of information. During the Third Reich Germans harnessed every mode of cultural production for the creation and dissemination of antisemitism, from the hobbyist's arts-and-crafts (as we will see in later chapters) to the production of major motion pictures and the mass marketing of kitsch. As much as their activities were encouraged or even directed by state and party, their efforts also reflected considerable private initiative, something which also characterized the state's obsessive pursuit of genocide itself (cf. Browning, 1985).

These manifestations of Nazi antisemitism served as the all-pervasive backdrop to the systematic and ever-radicalizing degradation, exclusion and disemancipation of Germany's Jews during the twelve years of the Third Reich (see Hilberg, 1985; Adam, 1872). Although accompanied by acts of physical violence, this process was overwhelmingly structured by an increasingly thorough set of decrees—430 in total—that ultimately touched upon every aspect of life in Germany, thereby reorganizing German life around the issue of race (see Walk, 1981). At the same time there appeared a proliferation of agencies and offices dealing with the "Jewish Question." Indeed, almost every German state and party institution opened such an office no matter how distant their jurisdictional purpose may have been from issues of antisemitism, in order to be sure to participate in the definition,

circulation and disposal of the Jew as generalized symbolic medium of social interaction (cf. Adam, 1972). There is no space here to explore this process directly.² As the January, 1942 roster of the Wannsee Conference on the "Final Solution" indicates, however, it was ultimately the SS who managed to monopolize the Nazi *Judenpolitik* as well as the values so generated. At the same time the SS provided a continuing opportunity for every German state ministry and party office to make its "contribution" to this pivotal project in the production of the Thousand Year Reich (see Hilberg, 1985), just as later they would recirculate tokens of the successful completion of that transformative project amongst these same institutions. As we will see later, these tokens consisted, of course, of the personal effects and bodily products extracted from their Jewish victims on the assembly lines of Auschwitz and Treblinka (see *Part Five*).

Proving Aryan Ancestry

The installation of the Jew as symbolic medium in the definition of personal and social identity was accomplished, expressed and explored in ways almost too numerous to mention, but the necessity to establish legal proof of "Aryan" ancestry provides one obvious example. As a consequence of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, all German citizens were required to register their racial background by filling out *Ahnenpässe*, or ancestry identification booklets. These bore a resemblance to identity cards or passports and served a similar, but biological, function. Such pass books took on immediate existential import, since the discovery of any evidence of "racial impurity" in one's recent family past could immediately shift one in a detrimental biological direction along the inescapable continuum that led from German to Jew (see Seidler & Rett, 1982). And of course that meant a movement away from the natural, human orderliness of the Aryan toward the disintegrative

²The symbolic dynamics of antisemitism in the actual formation of the Nazi *Judenpolitik* will be handled in detail in the book version of this dissertation.

chaos of Jewish subhumanity. Not surprisingly, then, the possibility of black sheep in the family created anxiety for many Germans, and for some even an agony of private shame. It also generated fears of public disgrace, ostracism and potential disaster. Local rumors and gossip about one's racial background provided potent opportunities for character assassination, whether for reasons of jealousy, "patriotism," or in order to damage political competitors. Even such prominent Nazi figures as Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Hitler himself were not exempt from gossip over uncertain parentage. Hitler made every effort to eliminate any evidence of such ambiguity, tenuous as it may have been, even going so far as to obliterate his antecedents' graves in Döllersheim, Austria, by turning the entire village and its environs into an army training ground only a few weeks after the Anschluss (cf. Miller, 1983:155).

Personal vendettas notwithstanding, there were always instances when one's racial ancestry suddenly became subject to special scrutiny—for example, when applying for civil service posts, party positions (especially in the SS, the racial elite) or when facing military draft. Ultimately all Germans had to be categorized as to their racial background—Full Aryan, *Mischlinge* (or half-breed) First or Second Degree, or Full Jew—in order for the various agencies of the German state to accurately apply the law, whether this entailed occupational dismissals, the discriminatory distribution of rations during the war years, the confiscation of radios, or deportation to points east. Accordingly, as Hilberg indicates (1973:49), an entirely new profession of licensed special *Sippenforscher*, or family researchers emerged to help Germans negotiate their way through the confusions and pitfalls of genealogical research (cf. photograph in Vishniac, 1983:15). German citizens always made attempts to stretch ambiguities (for example, in cases of illegitimacy) as far as possible in acceptable Aryan directions. But there were numerous cases when the *Reichssippenamt* (or "Family Research Office") itself had to intervene to set things straight. Experts trained in racial anthropology would then submit those with cloudy family records

(or victims of rumor and denunciation) to interview and physical examination, guided by meticulous if specious biological criteria. It was up to these experts to determine whether it was the Aryan or the more insidious Jewish racial element which supposedly had managed to prevail. If at first the results of such examinations posed the difference between first and less-than-second class citizenship status, prejudicial judgements made in some borderline cases after 1941 occasionally meant the difference between life and death itself (see Seidler & Rett, 1982: Plate 50).

JUDEN RAUS!: PLAYING THE GAME OF ANTISEMITISM

The case of *Ahnenpässe* provides only one example of how the Jew became lodged existentially within German social identity as a symbolic medium of social interaction. But there are other examples, some that seem to the outsider so perverse as to leave one blinking in disbelief. And yet we will find that here, as in the most extreme practices of Nazi genocide in the death camps, these forms and processes are not aberrations after all, but highly revealing objectifications of Nazi antisemitic practice at its most characteristic. The parlour game *Juden raus!* (or "Jews Out!"), provides one such example (see plate 52). A kind of antisemitic Monopoly, *Juden raus!* reveals an almost incredible dovetailing of state policy and popular culture in regard to the "Jewish Question" and its practical meanings. Hardly the pathological offering of an isolated paranoid, nor yet a product of Josef Goebbels' propaganda ministry, this board game was produced privately for mass marketing in 1938 by the Fabricius Company of Neusalza-Spremberg, in Saxony. Later trade advertising (handled by the game's publisher, Günther & Company, Dresden), declared it the "*Hit of the Trade Fairs of 1939/1940!*" in Leipzig and Vienna, among other

places. Sales of nearly one million were claimed.³ The manufacturer obviously intended the game for the widest distribution: according to the instructions printed on the inside box cover, *Juden raus!* was "the timely and completely entertaining parlour game for grown-ups and children," an "extraordinarily pleasant and timely" diversion suitable for two to six players (cf. Vespignani, 1979:109; the illustration is apparently misdated). Advertising directed at dealers elaborated further:

Juden raus!, the new parlour game your customers will clamour for.

Juden raus! issued in irreproachably tasteful [*tadelloser, geschmackvoller*] form and clear design.

Juden raus! is a bestseller [*ein Verkaufsschlager*] for Greater Germany. . . .

Its sale is generously supported through advertisements in major daily newspapers and illustrated magazines.

Be sure to order today, so that you can fulfill the wishes of your customers and supply them promptly.⁴

The manufacturer, Rudolf Fabricius, made sure to declare his firm the game's "exclusive distributor." Ordering address and telephone number followed.

Like other forms of antisemitism, *Juden raus!* provided Germans with a personal opportunity to contribute to the production of the new Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*, even as they established competitively the extent of their ideological commitment. The game itself consisted of a multicolored playing board along with six brightly-painted, wooden playing figures equipped with conical heads. In addition there were thirty-six small, cone-shaped cardboard hats painted a color which the Nazis called "Jew Yellow" (*Judengelb*) (see Esh, 1961:148-9); each hat bore one of two grimacing, stereotyped Jewish faces outlined in

³See Leo Baeck Institute, New York, File Ar 120 No. 29 (National Socialism Collection). An example of the game itself can be seen at the Blaustein Library of the American Jewish Committee, New York.

⁴ Leo Baeck Institute, New York, File AR 120 No.29, NS Collection.

black on its surface. Collected during the course of the game, these Jew-hats (*Judenhütchen*) were designed to fit over the heads of the wooden playing pieces. The playing board itself was marked emphatically with the game's title, in bold-faced but decorative gothic script. It pictured a walled German town with six gates, each leading to six intersecting streets which converged in turn upon a central square within the city walls. These streets provided the game path for the playing pieces. At regular intervals the empty squares making up the game path were interrupted by circular stops, called *Judenhäuser*, or Jew-houses; there were thirteen in all. Each contained a magnified illustration of a little storefront or office entrance bearing a recognizable Jewish name: Herz Watches; Löwenstein Shoes; Dr. Hirschfeld, M.D.; Rosenbaum Confections; David Drygoods; Hirsch Second-Hand Books; Levin Luggage; Jacob Costume Rental; Salomon Moneylending; Stern Laundry; Cohn Flea Market; Gorstein Furs; and Goldmann Clothing.

Outside of the city walls, next to each of the six gates, a *Sammelplatz* or collection depot was reserved for each player. At the throw of the dice, each participant moved his playing piece the appropriate number of squares along his street within the city. Whenever a piece landed on one of the Jewish storefronts, the German player collected a yellow Jew-hat to place upon his figure's conical head, thereby indicating the capture of another Jew for collection at his depot outside the city walls. In order to keep the game's method and purpose firmly in the players' minds, two traditional rhymed couplets were printed on the board in clear roman script. These condensed the rules of play as well as the object of the game. "Show skill in throwing dice," the first one read, "so that you collect the most Jews! [*Zeige geschick im Würfelspiel/damit Du sammelst der Juden viel!*]." The second was even more explicit: "Succeed in driving out 6 Jews/and you shall be the victor without question! [*Gelingt es Dir 6 Juden rauszujagen/so bist Du Sieger ohne zu fragen!*]."

And so the "game" went. Working cooperatively yet competitively, German players vied with one another to purify the town. Moving back and forth between the inner city

and their collection depots, they personally transported the town's Jewish citizens beyond the city walls for temporary storage pending further deportation. An illustration on the lower right side of the board made clear that the object of the German players' skill and competitive efforts was not simply the Jewish shopkeeper, but the entire Jewish community. Three stereotyped, cartoon figures—a caftaned man with a bundle over his shoulder, his corpulent, large-nosed wife, and their child, a sallow schoolboy—are shown hurrying along, presumably in the direction indicated by the underlined text inscribed decoratively in gothic script beneath their feet: "*Off to Palestine!*"

The Ritual of Play

This remarkable Nazi artifact provides an excellent if complex phenomenon for symbolic analysis at its most dynamic. While most objects of human fabrication tend to be regarded in reified terms, the physical form and iconographic components of *Juden raus!* are more difficult to mistake for static elements, extrapolated from or secondary to the actual ongoing construction and reproduction of social relations. Instead the game's elements can be seen to articulate indisputably with the ritual of play, and it is from this signifying practice that they take on their full meaning. In *Juden raus!* the extent of this dynamic embeddedness is revealed even further, for the ritual of play also resides within the broader practice of Nazi racism and the *Judenpolitik* itself. The game is thus an actual instance of ongoing social process, and links up in the most profound manner with the overall import of antisemitism in National Socialism's millenarian project of social transformation.

As we saw earlier, the term ritual encompasses a wide variety of patterned social activity, in which symbolic meanings intrinsic to ongoing social life are converted into a "communication currency" (Munn, 1974:580); the messages so transacted create meaningful frameworks which help to structure the life situations from which their

constituent elements are drawn. The symbolic grist for ritual includes virtually all aspects of social and material life—words, acts and materials both natural and fabricated, as well as the human actors themselves and their battery of roles and relationships. By converting these elements into symbolic media, qualities otherwise diffused throughout social experience are freed from their normal sociotemporal constraints and circulated among participants at "a new symbolic level of social integration." It is the iconic properties of these media—the "component of likeness or perceptual continuity patterning the relationship between the vehicle's form and its meanings" (p.580)—which allow aspects of their prior paradigmatic associations to be carried over as they are repositioned within the novel syntagmatic chains which make up ritual action. As these symbolic tokens are brought into new relationships with one another, their qualities of intrinsic meaning are selectively emphasized and manipulated, thereby permitting transformations in meaning at the same time that social roles and relationships are symbolically reformulated.

In modern society (as over the ages), parlour games and games of strategy from chess to *Monopoly* provide an easily overlooked example of such ritualized activity. The seeming triviality of these games, as well as their obvious "symbolic" content, should not deceive one as to the importance of their meaningful embeddedness in the societies in which they were developed. In the case of chess, the elements of competition implicit in numerous social situations are converted into the form of a symbolic battlefield manned by a feudal army in complete hierarchical array. *Monopoly*, on the other hand, transposes the vagaries of the capitalist market into a game of chance and risk-taking. Invented in the 1930s, the game provided Americans with an opportunity to overcome symbolically the effects of the Great Depression; at the same time it used entertainment as a means of socializing them in the values of capitalism. It did this by providing, in iconic form, an immediate visual overview to otherwise impenetrable market conditions, while submitting the random aspects of the economy to a set of accessible rules. This made capitalism

predictable; it also generated the possibility of success through repeat playings, thereby luring players back into the game. As in capitalism itself, players were cast into new relationships with one another through the mediating effects of the market, that is, by sharing the rules of play as well by manipulating in common the game's symbolic tokens. The playing board itself corresponded iconographically to a modern urban landscape reduced to its market dimensions; this provided participants with a familiar if imagined social world to be inhabited through play and thereby mastered. All this helped to naturalize the principles of capitalism. At the same time, by converting wage laborers into real-estate tycoons, the contradictions of class seemed to disappear. Playing *Monopoly* thus helped to domesticate the economy, while literally training its participants, whatever their ages or class backgrounds, in the ways of modern capitalism.

Like America during the Depression, Nazi Germany was also a nation seeking to recover from the alienating effects of capitalism in crisis. Only here, consistent with the meanings of German antisemitism and the German experience of capitalism, the Jew took the place of play money. The stakes, accordingly, were all the more profound, as were the lessons which the players learned.

Juden raus! reproduced the process whereby the Jew was converted in Nazi Germany into a symbolic medium of social interaction. It did so by reformulating the Nazi *Judenpolitik* into condensed and privatized form, ideally suited for individual ownership and household use. This helped to ground the competitive principles of the *Judenpolitik* in popular culture and everyday life. By disseminating the meanings implicit in the practice of antisemitism, the game (and other forms of antisemitic practice) allowed each German a modicum of the power generated by participation in the manipulation of the Jew. The medium thereby continued to serve a coordinating function throughout German society especially after the events of *Kristallnacht*, as members of the state and party elite competed

ever more intensively to monopolize the *Judenpolitik* and so claim their full share of political power.

Nazi Racial Politics in Microcosm

The playing board's pictorial scheme is that of a traditional German town, its idealized hierarchical community symbolized by the enclosing feudal wall. The organic integrity of this community is marred, however, by the presence of Jewish shops within the boundaries of this protective enclosure; these symbolize the invasiveness of the Jew as a foreign element threatening the solidarity of traditional German social space. The foreignness of the Jew is reaffirmed by the "orientalized" cartoon family at the bottom right of the board, being marched off to Palestine. Their *Artfremd*, or basic biological foreignness, however, is clearly a somatization of the Jew's essential exchange nature—and it is this quality which dominates the board.

One can see at a glance that the names of the Jewish stores and businesses depicted on the board cover almost every aspect of German economic and social life in which Jews were claimed to play a dominating role, from medicine and theater to merchandising, money-changing and second-hand trade. The emphasis here is upon exchange rather than actual production, as well as upon the Jewish invasion of the German body and its spiritual culture, as in the case of the doctor's office and the theatrical costume rental. In addition, these Jewish storefronts are not actually referred to as businesses in the playing instructions, but are called "Jew-houses" (*Judenhäuser*), a derogative term which conflates Jewish domesticity and social reproduction with economic trade. Thus the Jew is reduced exclusively to the alienating exchange dimension which German antisemitism assigns him. This symbolic role is not "merely" metaphoric. To the contrary, the relationship of the game's iconographic scheme to German social reality is, by definition, a highly motivated one. This is confirmed all the more dramatically by an examination of a contemporary

business directory for the town of Neusalza-Spremberg, where the Fabricius Company was based. It showed that several of the shop names appearing on the board apparently had been taken from actual Jewish businesses located in town⁵—businesses which presumably were undergoing the appropriating process of "Aryanization" even as the game was being manufactured. *Juden raus!* thus mirrored German social reality—and the signifying practice of the *Judenpolitik*—even more closely than one might have presumed. Indeed, the game was undoubtedly being marketed and played by some Germans in Neusalza-Spremberg itself precisely during the period when the last of their Jewish neighbors, already wearing Yellow Stars sewn to their outer garments, were being deported to "points east."

Of course, what the board reflects is German social reality as filtered through the interpretive prism of Nazi ideology, and its practical expressions. Thus the interior of the walled German town is literally riddled with the Jewish economic presence. This presence is magnified and focused-in on the game board as if each of the thirteen Jewish shops were a specimen under the loop. The association to bacteria within the body or to vermin within German living space, while implicit, is fully consistent both with the Nazi ideological construction of the Jew as with the board's graphic design. This implication is made obvious in a remarkable *Stürmer* illustration which utilizes the same iconographic device. Entitled *Krankheitserreger*, or "Pathogenic Agents," it features a microscope revealing germ-like Jewish stars interspersed with dollar and pound signs as well as hammers-and-sickles (see plate 53 and Wuttke-Groneberg, 1982:282). This magnifying device identifies the Jew's supposedly hidden, alien presence. In the case of *Juden raus!* it detaches him from the surrounding German community in which he deceptively has sought to merge, and raises him in relief above the otherwise undifferentiated street scene. In this manner

⁵ Ibid.

the Jew is drawn, symbolically and pragmatically, to the attention of all Germans and thereby delivered as common property. The effect of the gameboard, as all Nazi antisemitic practice, is to "force the Jew to the surface" and in so doing, to concretize his abstract and hidden powers of exchange. This in turn permits further transformative operations to be performed upon the Jew so as to render Jewish exchange value ever more accessible to Germans—and in forms that personalize rather than alienate.

All of this is brought out in the ritual of play. The six full-bodied playing figures—complete with handlebar mustaches and tiny dots to indicate the position of their Aryan-sized noses—clearly serve as indexical tokens of the German players; their wooden material makes them natural and solid. The Jew, on the other hand, is reduced to a menacing apparition, outlined upon the surface of a cardboard hat—a nonhuman form, inanimate and relatively insubstantial. The mask-like quality of this playing token is consistent with the fetishized antisemitic construction of the Jew as an abstract and ubiquitous presence, elusive and insinuating, while the token's inanimate form corresponds to the Jew's alien essence. Furthermore, the hat's stigmatizing "Jew Yellow"—an unhealthy hue—condenses symbolically the colors of both cowardliness and of gold (i.e., money). All told, the contrast between the German and Jewish playing pieces is consistent with the meaningful dialectic of antisemitism, in which the Aryan takes on the natural qualities of the use-value, while the Jew personifies the unnaturalness of exchange. The intended dialectic of these two figures is made perfectly clear in an illustration on the bottom left of the playing board, where the two figures—one obviously human, the other wraith-like and weirdly geometric in shape—are reproduced side-by-side.

The dialectical contrast which these pieces represent is by no means a static one; to the contrary, the process of status-reversal implicit within the playing of *Juden raus!* entails a cycle of value-transformation similar to that describe by Nancy D. Munn when analyzing the meanings implicit in processes of cultural fabrication (see Munn, 1977). By landing on

a Jewish storefront, the Aryan player takes possession of a Jew-hat. The alleged insubstantiality of the Jew is thereby concretized into the form of a three-dimensional object, and his alienating power of exchange converted into a manipulable token. This token is a dramatic fetish form, serving a similar role in the game as play money in *Monopoly* or casino chips in roulette, but carrying a far more complex and potent freight of reified meanings. The Jew, who previously had insinuated himself unnaturally within the body and space of the German Volk, is now transformed symbolically into a hat-like figure which can be put on and taken off, transported, stored, recycled or destroyed. In this manner the Jew's disintegrative power is externalized and rendered detachable. At the same time, the conversion of the allegedly invasive Jew into the form of a hat symbolizes the transfer of the mobility of exchange into German hands and German control. The German no longer circulates as a mere commodity over which the Jew disposes; instead he reverses statuses and reformulates the Jew into a thing which can be easily exchanged or otherwise utilized. The elimination of the Jew from the German body and from German space thus becomes a physical labor, an object of productive German work, here reformulated in the form of play. Furthermore, placement of the Jew-hat upon the head of the German playing figures enhances Aryan identity, for the Jew's converted power becomes an extension of German will. As before, the hidden power of exchange which the Jew embodies is subordinated to the German, even as the Jew himself becomes an item of German use. In short, "hatting" a German player transforms him into an Aryan, and thereby empowers him. The Jew, and the once-alienating effects of his exchange nature, are now transformed, in the Maussian sense, into craft-like (or "gift-like") products of German work-and-play. The allegedly dehumanizing Jew becomes a token bearing "intimations" of German personal identity (see Munn, 1974:582; Mauss, 1966).

These Jew-hats bear a certain continuity to the *Judenhut* of the Middle Ages (as evidenced in the original *Judensau* woodcut, plate 5, ch.2), but their modern role

demonstrates dramatically the transformative effects of commodity fetishism upon the German construction of the Jew. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, Jews wore conical hats in German lands, first as a voluntary ethnic boundary marker, and then later as an enforced and defamatory symbol of Jewish inferiority and social subordination. These hats, which appeared prominently in medieval German iconographic representations of the Jew, identified the Jew just as strongly as the circular, yellow badge, so reminiscent of money itself, which eventually replaced them (see T. & M. Metzger, 1982:145-6). The Jew-hat of the *Juden raus!* game, however, clearly represents a fundamental transformation in the pejorative construction of the Jew. In the Nazi era, the hat is no longer merely an article of clothing worn by the Jew as an enforced means of identification; instead the entire biological Jew is transformed wholly into the form of a hat, which is worn by the German. Here the reifying structure of commodity fetishism has taken over completely. The Jew, reduced to his alleged exchange nature, is transformed into an object which the German appropriates. The Jew-hat still identifies the Jew in all his negative effects, but the wearing of that hat now represents the emergence of an Aryan identity, created by restoring to the German complete power over the Jew-as-thing. The medieval hierarchical relationship of German and Jew is thereby recreated, but in the thoroughly modern and dehumanizing terms of German fascism.

The Jew-hats in *Juden raus!* are thus symbolical correlatives of the Jew himself as a circulating medium of social interaction in Nazi Germany: they convert the dangerous but virile power of Jewish exchange into Aryan "legal tender." This takes the form of shared tokens which Germans can compete over, transact, circulate and hoard as they transform alienated class identities into "superhumanized" racial ones and thereby make their bids for social status and personal power within a millennially-transformed German capitalism.

This enhancement of personal and political identity is indicated by the manner in which the game is completed. Whoever has managed to transport six Jews out of town (on his

head, as it were), now makes his way as fast as possible along his street's playing squares to the center of the board, which is also the center of the walled town. This position marks the core of the now purified *Volksgemeinschaft*. The first player to land there wins the game. Not only has this player successfully eliminated the most Jews; he has also managed to dominate the process. This makes him the most fully national socialist of all the players, and thus the most powerful (cf. Mason, 1981:27). On the other hand, having taken part in the process of eliminating the Jew, none of the other players actually lose the game. Instead each player is instructed to continue playing at his own pace until all have collected six Jews and moved to the center of the board, there to take up the remaining prizes, from second to sixth. And so the symbolic medium circulates among all Germans, permitting each his measure of Aryan identity, social status, and political advancement. Money may be a scarce commodity in *Monopoly* as in German capitalism, dividing the "haves" from the "have nots" and the rulers from the ruled. But in the Aryan *Volk* Community at least, every German receives his fair share of the Jew.

The Jew as Symbolic Capital

Earlier we saw that the game's design, complete with Jewish businesses drawn partially from the actual town of Neusalza-Spremberg, closely mirrored German social reality. But the playing board's modeling function can be taken even a step further, for its iconographic scheme also condenses as a whole the alienating historical development of capitalism as phenomenologically experienced in German culture. Here the political emancipation of the Jew has become a token for the disintegration of the German racial body as well as its dislocation from the personalizing, pre-modern social framework such as Mauss described, to which it supposedly belonged (see chapter 3). Furthermore, by representing the Jew exclusively as an indexical extension of exchange relations, the abstract qualities which he betokens become accessible to Germans for concrete

manipulation, while making it possible to appropriate his alienating power. *Juden raus!*—and the wider antisemitic practice to which it belonged—thus presents Germans with a solution to the problem of capitalist dislocation, by way of an opportunity to reformulate German social relations and thereby reverse the alienating historical development of capitalism itself.

And this, precisely, is what the playing of *Juden raus!* is all about. An actual German town, transposed iconically into a gameboard, becomes a generalized and dynamic representation of an alienated and commoditized German social space in the process of being transformed collectively into its idealized Aryan form. By playing the game, Germans participate in bringing this transformation about. Jewish emancipation is reversed; *Gesellschaft* becomes *Gemeinschaft* once more, in appearance at least (cf. Tönnies, 1988). Ejected from the German heartland, the Jew is relegated to enclosed positions (the collection depots) outside of, but adjacent to the city walls. This model is reminiscent of old Frankfurt's spatial arrangement, as we saw earlier (see chapters 2 & 5)—only now each German comes to rule over his own individual ghetto. This restores the dialectical relationship of German and Jew which the Enlightenment had blurred: once again German identity and power is clearly defined by placing the Jew in a complementary position of binary opposition and hierarchical encompassment. At the same time the depersonalizing effects of exchange which the Jew commands are objectified, detached and returned to their traditionally subordinated position as tokens that circulate within the autarkic, humanizing boundaries of the laboring German community. This transformative process—embodied in the alleged status-reversal of Germans and Jews—allows Germans to establish their Aryan identity and at the same time enhances their sense of liberation from the impinging negative effects of capitalist modernity.

In this the game's players resemble the Germans of medieval Kelheim, who signified their domination over the Jew by incorporating Jewish tombstones into the facades of their

homes. The players of *Juden raus!* appropriate the Jew by transforming him into a hat, an item of personal property. The game itself, played within German living rooms in the company of relatives and friends, becomes a furnishing for the home. At the same time it is a domestic ritual which helps to define the solidary bounds of the German family, nesting family members securely within the wider racial community. The "game" of status reversal thus allows the alienating power of the Jew, and the engulfing effects of the market, to be appropriated, encompassed and domesticated. Control is restored to the German, not only over the Jew, but over the divisive effects of capitalism itself.

No wonder German antisemitism becomes such a perverse amusement during the Nazi era. Of course, an element of vindictive, carnivalesque entertainment has always been intrinsic to German antisemitism, as the Kelheim example or the parade of anti-Jewish caricatures over the centuries demonstrated. Similarly, the acts of alleged status-reversal entailed in the form and playing of *Juden raus!* are gleeful in quality: the game, as the advertiser states plainly enough, is "extraordinarily pleasant and entertaining." Precisely because of his alleged avoidance of productive labor, as well as the ambiguous insubstantiality of his power, the Jew is as ludicrous as he is evil; turning tables on him and his entire race constitutes an act of retaliation, a declaration of independence. This supposed liberation, pursued with a sense of justified vengefulness, releases normatively-sanctioned feelings of joy and good humor, while generating a sense of in-group belonging. As a wealth of first-hand accounts and Nazi photo-documentation attests, at no time did Germans experience this full-bodied *Schadenfreude* so fully as during the Nazi era, when those so inclined applied their sadistic impulses with unparalleled resourcefulness to the humiliation of Jews—acts which many of them found to be as satisfyingly "recreative" as they were dead serious.

But *Juden raus!* reflects more than a deceptive attempt to reverse the course of capitalism through reversing the statuses of Germans and Jews. The competitive aspect of

Juden raus! also reflects the continuing role of the Jew as a *tertium quid* in German society. This is a crucial dimension of the game and relates directly to the construction of power in Nazi Germany. Previous to National Socialism, Germans were disunited. Their society was wracked by class conflict, while their political culture, lacking a shared discourse, was incapable of generating an effective and encompassing hegemonic order. As a result, the political process frequently collapsed into violence. This anomie was widely attributed, especially by right wing forces, to the manipulative effects of the Jew as inventor of both modern capitalism and its marxist step-child. As we have seen, *Juden raus!* and the antisemitic practice of which it is a part attempts to transform class conflict into unified racial struggle: all Germans, realigned now as Aryans, are posed in seeming solidity against the Jew as their collective racial enemy. And yet the playing of *Juden raus!* is not simply an expression of racial unity—it is also, fundamentally, a contest. The shared principles of the game are competitive ones, as are the shared principles of Nazi racial politics as a whole. What this means is that the undercurrents of class conflict which continue to exist under National Socialist rule are given a symbolically-transposed outlet in which to express themselves, and one which reproduces Nazi hegemonic relations. Whatever their class backgrounds or inner-class rivalries, Germans jockeying for power within National Socialist society are provided a new discourse in which to pursue their vying aspirations. This, of course, is the functional essence of the symbolic medium, as we have already seen: it provides a shared objective means whereby subjective differences can be mutually expressed and negotiated. Manipulating the shared tokens into which the Jew has been converted becomes a means whereby Germans can resolve their conflicts and coordinate their energies within terms of the emerging Nazi hegemony; it provides both a shared language and a shared strategy for reconstructing German social relations and German social space. A new discourse of common values is created—one that is personal,

political and pragmatic—permitting a fascist reforging of hegemonic relations and a consequent revitalization of German society according to the dubious principles of race.

It is this power to restore hegemony which is at stake in the playing of *Juden raus!*, made accessible through symbolic operations performed upon the Jew. As German players transact among themselves the social meanings of the Jew as symbolic medium, what they actually contest is the chance to participate importantly in the process of producing the Aryan *Volk* Community—and by extension, in harnessing the power of modern capitalism. And this is one of the secrets of Nazi antisemitism: however helpless the Jew truly was, however vulnerable, for Germans the Jew was a source of power—the alienating power of exchange, the power of capitalism itself. As the Germans constructed him, the Jew was not simply a fanciful substitute for capitalist power, but an experiential index of that power, a meaningful and reified extension of that power into the German social world. Following the collapse of the *Kaiserreich*, that power had been unleashed, or so Nazi ideology would have it, in the form of street-fighting and hysterical inflation, unresolvable class conflict, factionalized political interests, and mutually-denying class and regional identities—all the hidden, conspiratorial work of the Jew. But Nazi antisemitism restored hegemony to Germans, by equipping them with a meaningful, convincing, and ever-more-essential common currency. In this way National Socialism reformulated the allegedly alienating and divisive power of the Jew into a source of German political capital, collectively shared if unevenly distributed.

Thus the symbolic meanings of the Jew, and the unifying function those meanings served in the construction and pursuit of political power in Nazism, were—to choose an apt phrase—two sides of the same coin. This is a basic characteristic of Nazism, and one which helps to explain to cultural outsiders the extraordinary directions Nazi antisemitism took, against all expectations of modern "rationality" and common sense. The meaningful and the functional dimensions of the Jew as symbolic medium were by no means separable

from one another. The iconic meanings of *Juden raus!* and the pragmatic management of these meanings in action are mutually-dependent aspects of a single cultural phenomenon which typifies Nazi antisemitism as signifying practice. In *Juden raus!*, as in all phases of the Nazi *Judenpolitik*, the construction of an enhanced Aryan social identity through subordination of the Jew's exchange nature was coterminous with the manipulation of the symbolic medium to assert subjective goals and achieve political power.

The Historical Conjuncture

The emphasis in the advertising of *Juden raus!* was no accident; the game was timely, indeed, for *Juden raus!* appeared at a crucial juncture in the Nazi *Judenpolitik*: the game's manufacture and marketing coincided with *Kristallnacht* and the subsequent radicalization of the *Judenpolitik* in 1939 and 1940. In the early stages of the Nazi *Judenpolitik*, local party leaders, legislatures and ministries, in addition to business associations and even individual hotel and restaurant owners, had sought to increase their political capital by pursuing a decentralized and frequently capricious and uneven anti-Jewish policy. For a time the Interior Ministry managed increasingly to counter this competitive, local-level politics and insure "law and order" by harnessing the political potential of anti-Jewish actions through an incremental and centralized legal policy (see Peterson, 1969). But that effort did not go uncontested among the higher echelons of party and state. While none wished for an entirely helter-skelter and disorderly *Judenpolitik*, all power factions within the Nazi political system competed with one another to define the course of anti-Jewish policies, thereby assuring their own access to the power which the Jew as symbolic medium was capable of generating.

Kristallnacht represented the culmination of this relatively undisciplined, "free-for-all" period of the Nazi *Judenpolitik*. A last-ditch effort by Josef Goebbels and the SA to define the course of crucial Nazi policy and thereby maintain access to power, *Kristallnacht* and its

nation-wide violence provided the most radical but increasingly marginalized elements of the party's rank-and-file with unbridled access to the symbolic medium and the power it seemed to unleash. The sudden, unopposed violence of *Kristallnacht* created a kind of nation-wide speculative frenzy for those who brokered in the Jew. By dramatically transgressing earlier legislative limits as well as the cherished boundaries of civic order, Nazi activists allowed the Jew as a symbolic medium to float on the open market, as it were, its political value "pumped up" in what almost amounted to an antisemitic gold-rush. While superficially this violent action might have seemed to restore Goebbels and the SA to a central position in Nazi politics, that ascendance was only temporary. What *Kristallnacht* actually did was open up new avenues of anti-Jewish action for those far more effective than Goebbels and the SA in competing effectively for power; it allowed Goering, the SS, and competing members of state and party to step in and appropriate the radicalizing value which the Jew held as symbolic medium (cf. Hilberg, 1985; Adam, 1972). The unbridled violence of *Kristallnacht* thus extended the range of possibility in exploiting the value of the Jew as symbolic medium of social interaction. In a context of exacerbating conflict and competition for power, *Kristallnacht* and its aftermath posed the Jew as an ever-more essential ingredient in coordinating the structure of state and party, as individuals and institutions contended with one another to mine the value ever further and so maintain or improve their positions within the Nazi hegemony.

Juden raus! reflects the "free-for-all" quality of the former dimension, in which the coordinating value of the Jew as symbolic medium is widely distributed throughout society. This continuing circulation was crucial if the latter dimension—the competition for power on the level of state—was to have any meaningful social basis whatsoever. But the game-like quality of *Juden raus!* allowed Germans at large to participate in a manner that no longer threatened the state monopoly, while simultaneously insuring the circulation of the medium in ever-more-radicalized form. What *Juden raus!* underscores through its "timely"

appearance in Germany in 1938, is that the game of antisemitism, while made available to all Germans, is no longer to be a free-for-all; Germans must play by the rules. While offering the *Judenpolitik* up to all Germans as common property, at the same time the game provides the necessity for discipline and orderliness, for submitting to the rules of circulation which members of the party and state elite seek, hegemonically, to regulate, and within that defining framework, to compete for as much participatory control as possible. *Juden raus!* thus insured that the meanings of the *Judenpolitik*, and their radicalization, continued to circulate among Germans "at a new symbolic level of social integration." It did so by giving its players a special opportunity to participate personally in the Nazi *Judenpolitik*, even as access to the power-political aspects of Nazi antisemitism were increasingly cut off and placed in the hands of the SS, the architects of the so-called "Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe."



Plate 46. *Notgeld* depicting Jew and Devil. Issued by the city of Bruck. (Source: Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York).



Plate 47. Notgeld. "A Surprise." (Source: *The Shekel* 18, 4:16, July-August 1984)

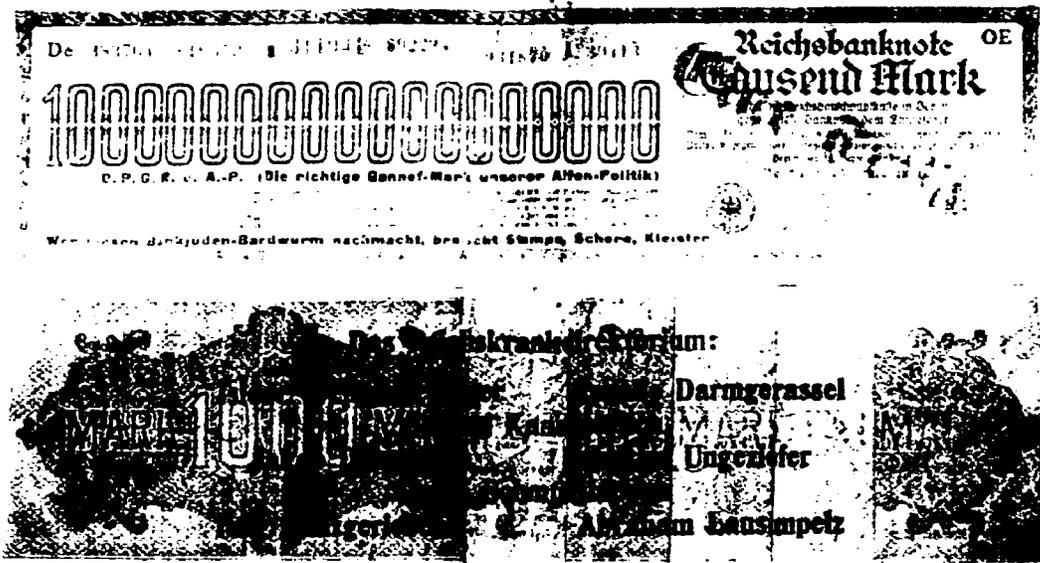


Plate 48. *Notgeld* puzzle piece. By assembling individual overprints in the correct sequence, one "discovered" the supposed hidden source of Germany's disastrous post-war inflation. (Source: *The Shekel* 18, 4:18, and Ref. Collection, Dr. Alan York)



Plate 49. Characteristic Notgeld, overprinted with analyzed antisemitic couplets.
 (Source: *The Shekel* 18, 4:34-6, Ref. Collection, Dr. Alan York)



Plate 50. "Nothing is holy anymore; every vice runs free." Antisemitic *Notgeld*.
 (Source: Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York)



Plate 51. A Jew convinces customers to purchase giant chamberpots. Analyzed *Notgeld* from Beverungen, May 1, 1921. (Source: *The Shekel* 18, 4:26, Collection of Theodor Isler)

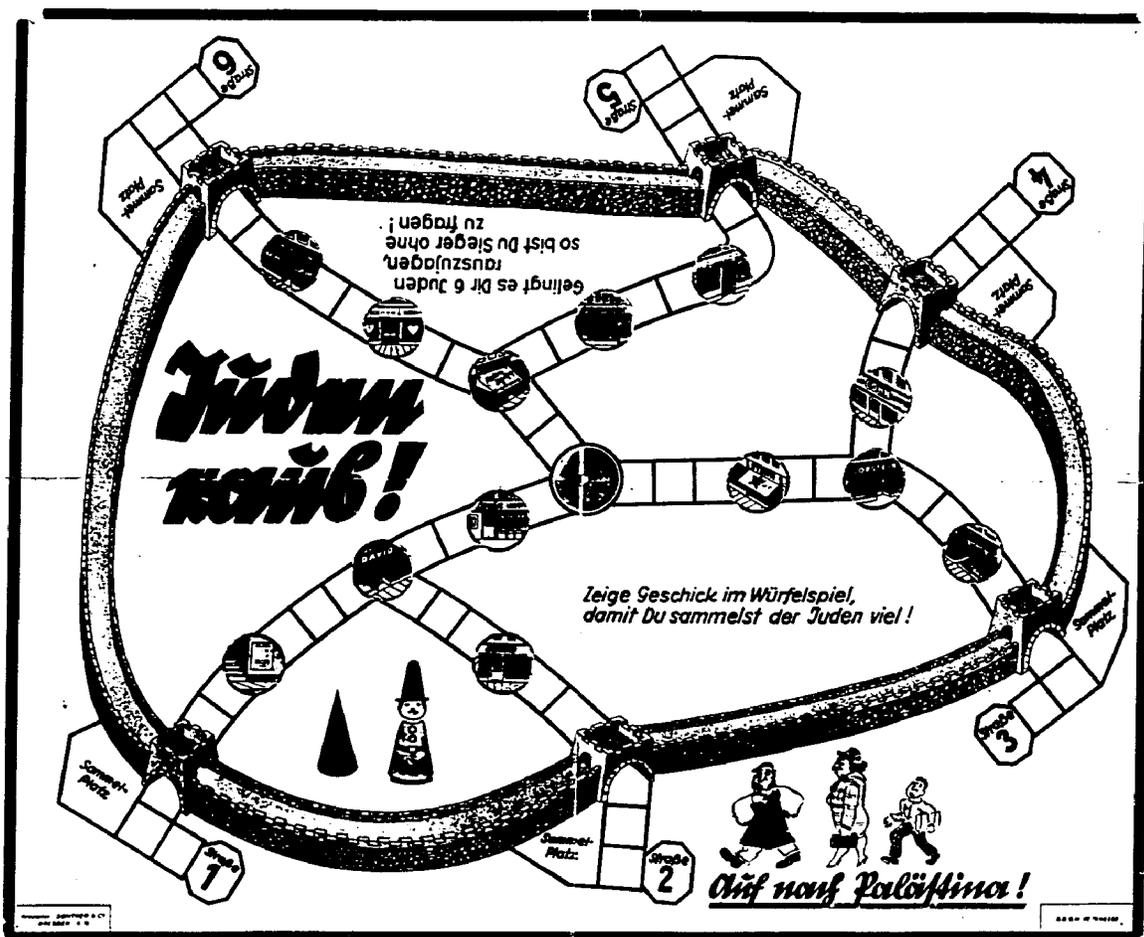
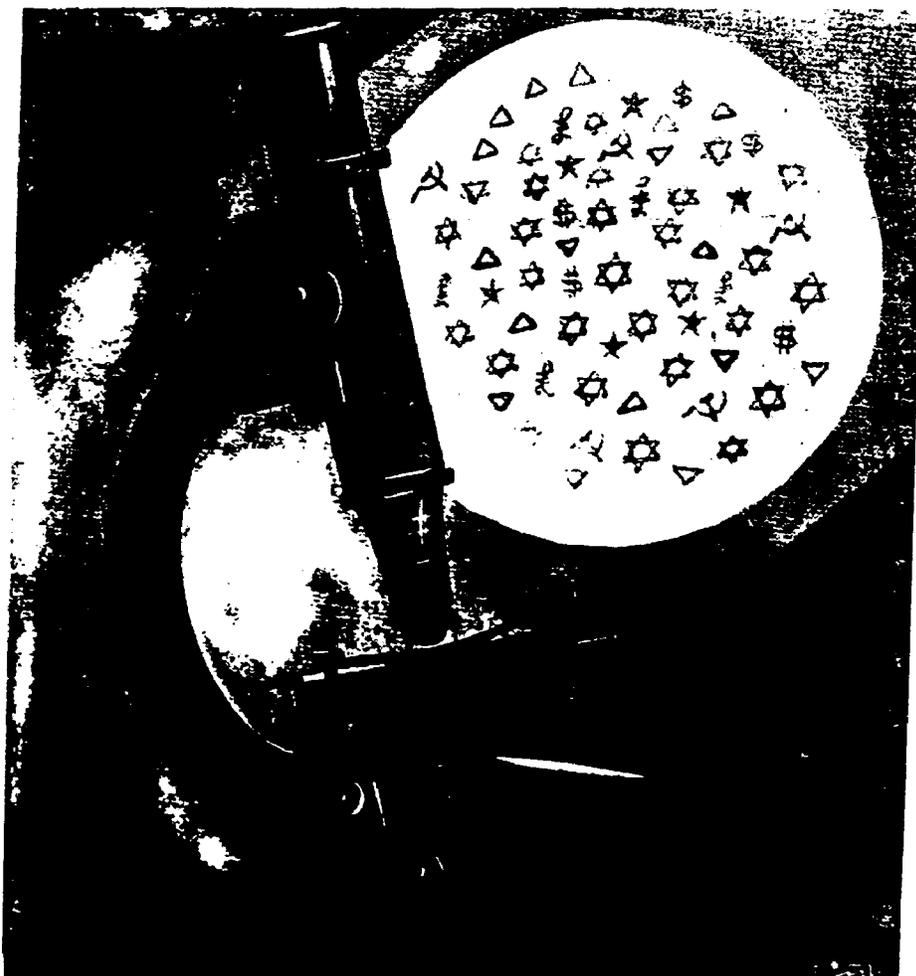


Plate 52. *Juden raus!* Photograph of the playing board, greatly reduced in size. The playing pieces are represented on bottom, left. (Source: Leo Baeck Institute, New York)

Krankheitserreger



Mit feinem Gift zerlegt der Jud
 Der schwachen Völker träges Blut,
 So daß ein Krankheitsbild entsteht,
 Bei dem es rasend abwärts geht.
 Doch bei uns lautet der Befund:
 Das Blut ist rein. Wir sind gesund!

Plate 53. *Pathogenic Agents.* Stürmer illustration, 1943. (Source: Wuttke-Gronenberg, 1980:282)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

"WORK MAKES FREE":
THE HIDDEN CULTURAL MEANING OF THE HOLOCAUST

VOLUME THREE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BY
JUD NEWBORN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 1994

Part Four

LOCATING GENOCIDE

*Denn das Schöne ist nichts
als den Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch gerade ertragen. . .*

For beauty's nothing
but beginning of terror we're still just able to bear. . .

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*

CHAPTER TEN

**THE "CAMP" AS A GENERIC NAZI INSTITUTION
OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

We have now explored the pejorative German construction of the Jew as it transformed over the centuries. We have also conceptualized the symbolic dynamics of Nazi racial politics, thereby spelling out the significance of the central role played by the Jew in National Socialism's political program of collective social transformation. In particular we have seen how the Jew became a symbolic medium of social interaction with two coterminous dimensions of meaning and function. As we saw in the analysis of the board-game *Juden raus!*, the functional dimension of that medium provided a means of coordinating the conflicts of power, interest and class in the Third Reich. This coordinating function operated, however, within the meaningful framework provided by the definition of the Jew as the alienating personification of exchange, a reified force seen as dominating the German and his society, necessitating an ever-more-radical "reversal of statuses."

This process of antisemitic status reversal reached its culmination in the death camps. In order now to understand fully the actual forms in which this process was couched, we need next to examine the institutional context of the death camps as well as the structured practices whereby genocide was carried out. Accordingly, we must first embark on a journey into Nazi German society as a sociocultural system, traveling through the domains of culture, economy and society which provide the forms, meanings and technologies from which the SS drew in order to construct the death camps. In the course of this we will

bring out the role of antisemitism in relationship to each domain and thereby further clarify the symbolic construction of the Jew around which the form and functioning of the death camps ultimately coalesced.

The most characteristic structural component to the death camps is their industrial form; accordingly, in a future chapter we will explore the Nazi transformation of the German industrial landscape in order to gain insight into this crucial dimension of genocide. Similarly, the geo-political location of the death camps in the east will provide essential information as to their ideological purpose and structural form. The death camps were ultimately designed to "free" Germany of the negative influence of the Jew and thereby bring about the millenarian transformation of Germany. For this reason, before moving on to the other domains cited, we must first examine the form of the camp itself—the *Lager*—as a generic Nazi institution of social transformation focused not only upon Jews or political enemies, but upon Germans as well.

DIFFERENTIATING DEATH CAMPS AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS

National Socialist death camps are usually seen in isolation. The details of their vehement operation are focused upon, personal accounts and scholarly descriptions are written; but their context is rarely if ever examined beyond that of their organizational embeddedness in the structures of the Nazi state. Although the latter is a difficult and crucial task, it is not sufficient to dispell the sense that genocide is aberrational. It does not adequately reveal the network of pragmatic meanings which must anchor the death camps within a wider sociocultural system of meaningfully constructed social relations. And yet it is these relations which give these seemingly "irrational" zones of brutality their indisputable systematicity and disturbing social coherence—qualities which we instantly apprehend, thereby compounding our overall sense of bleak and helpless incredulity.

Not only are the death camps seen in isolation; our actual knowledge of them is limited and riddled with misconception, despite an apparently widespread popular awareness of the fact of Nazi genocide itself. The confusion is seen first in the tendency to assume that death camps and concentration camps are identical with one another, the strange harshness of their names forming, in modern historical consciousness, an undifferentiated litany of the obscene: *Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen*. . . . In fact, the only camp among this list devoted to the extermination of Jews was Auschwitz, part of the so-called "Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe," pursued exclusively at six killing installations, all of them in conquered Polish territory and none of them functioning before the end of 1941.

These six camps differed from one another in form and extent, falling into two main categories: the combined slave labor/extermination camps of Auschwitz and Maidanek (under the SS WVHA, or Main Economic and Administrative Office) and the four pure killing installations—Kulmhof (Chelmno), Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka—which grew out of the Führer's Chancellery and its earlier euthanasia program, also ultimately under SS and Heinrich Himmler's jurisdiction. Of the second category (all of which were remarkably concentrated in size and form), Treblinka eventually became the most elaborate. This extraordinary universe sedimented incrementally out of the central function of factory-like killing without yet exceeding the size of a few football fields (see chapter 15).

On the other hand, the extent of Auschwitz is hardly dreamed at by most of us who are fortunate enough only to know its name by reputation: not one main camp at all, but three—one a prison camp and administrative center, one an I.G. Farben factory/laboratory installation, and one, Birkenau, a death camp with an enormous slave labor reserve. These three main camps combined to form a *Gutsbezirk* or private domain of 17 square miles which had been set aside for unlimited SS experimentation and exploitation (see Hilberg, 1985:881; Langbein, 1980). And yet, far from comprising the whole of the Auschwitz

complex, these main camps split in turn into a hinterland of as many as 40 sub-camps stretching well beyond the *Gutsbezirk* and dotting all of Silesia, with branches as far off as Warsaw and Riese, northwest of Dresden in Saxony (see Laqueur, 1980:22). Heinrich Himmler had similar plans for Maidanek as well: had the eastern front remained comfortably distant, Maidanek was intended, as blueprints show, to grow to mind-boggling size and continue on after the war, serving German needs in the east as an endless source of slave labor (see Marszalek, 1965, 1982).

These death camps did not end with their physical bounds of double-strung and electrified barbed wire, guard dogs, mines and anti-tank barriers. As we shall see later, they were also linchpins in a truly massive ideological project to physically transform the face of the conquered east. This was the area stretching from the German-Polish border all the way to the Urals, a region which, despite all facts to the contrary, had now become nothing other than the German *Lebensraum*. The process of transformation was termed "germanization"; the method was war and conquest, demographic planning (via forced population shifts and physical decimation of native populations), eugenics (involving humans, animals and plants), the reformulation of urban and rural space, and of course the genocide of the Jews. Genocide, in fact, was the presupposition for all the rest, to be carried out in concert with war and even, if necessary, despite war. The Jew was the hidden conspiratorial force behind both communism and capitalism, and eastern Europe the "eternal fountain" of Jewish racial strength and biological self-renewal. Thus the death camps of Poland were the key zones for in the Nazi project of transformation, processing the Jew so as to tame the fertile but dangerous margins of the Slavic east into German heartland.

These then, in short, are the death camps. But Auschwitz and Maidanek, in addition to being camps designed for the extermination of Jews, were also part of a much wider concentration camp system, the archipelago that included the well-known names of

Dachau, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, but also the less familiar names of Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, Neuengamme, Gross-Rosen, Ravensbrück, Natzweiler, Stutthof, Flossenbürg, and more. The main camps in this system ultimately numbered at least twenty, and each had a hinterland of sub-camps, as Auschwitz did. Some of these later developed into full-fledged camps of their own, like Buchenwald's sub-camp of Dora-Mittelbau, where V-2 rockets were produced (see Michel, 1979). Buchenwald ultimately had more than 130 such satellite camps and Dachau more than 60, with smaller commandos of prisoners bringing the total to at least 167 (see Antoni, 1979). These camps, part of an SS police and economic empire criss-crossing Europe, had their start in 1933, as soon as the Nazi party had taken power in Germany. They were established, not for the extermination of Jews (although many Jews died in them) but for the imprisonment of National Socialism's political opponents, as well as for other non-conformist elements deemed disruptive, genetically undesirable or "asocial." Thus the original concentration camp system was both a police system and part of the Nazi program of eugenics and collective transformation of German society along social Darwinist lines.

Part of the reason for confusing all concentration camps with the death camps of Poland lies in the way in which Nazi concentration camps were "discovered" at the end of the war (see Abzug, 1985). When the Allied Forces marched into Germany in April and May of 1945, they stumbled onto this confusing array of concentration camps and sub-camps, populated largely with emaciated Jewish inmates and littered with Jewish corpses "stacked like cordwood" (p.viii). Although there had always been Jewish prisoners in these camps, treated most brutally as the bottom line in the hierarchy of abused inmate categories, an influx of Jews had occurred since the middle of 1944. As the eastern front began to encroach upon the death camps of Poland, the Nazis initiated a brutal series of camp liquidations accompanied by death marches of inmates back into the Reich itself. It was the results of these evacuations which the Allies discovered in the camps and sub-camps of

Germany proper. Adding to the confusion, all camps had crematoria ovens to dispose of those who had died of starvation and abuse or had been executed; and in Dachau a gas chamber was in the process of construction. This factor actually points to the ultimate unity of camps, since any single camp could be converted from one function over to another.

And yet the concentration camp archipelago does not even end here. After the war the International Tracing Service at Arolsen published a compendium of camps under SS direction, including not only death camps and concentration camps with their extensive hinterland of sub-camps, but other categories of camps as well: 327 *Zwangsarbeitslager* (forced labor camps) for Jews throughout Germany and annexed territories, and another 356 in the Polish "General Government," as well as an additional 38 *Judenlager*, or special camps for Jews, in Austria in 1944; more of the same in the Baltic states and Russia, as well as approximately 80 *Arbeitserziehungslager* ("work-education camps") and another 25 camps for juvenile delinquents and for draining the moors in the Emsland, plus police prison camps, the special camp/ghetto Theresienstadt and a number of transit camps, collection camps, special educational camps and what have you. The Arolsen catalog ultimately lists a total of as many as *four thousand* punitive camps in existence sometime between 1933 and 1945 (see International Tracing Service, 1949-50, 1969.).

The six Nazi death camps, although specialized in function, can thus be seen as part of a strikingly extensive network of punitive camps under SS control. But the social form of the camp itself, as a generic institution in Nazi German society, does not end here. Indeed, even now we are only at the tip of an iceberg, its mass submerged within the mainstream of cultural forms and practices that shaped German life itself under National Socialism.

THE "CAMP" AS A GENERIC NAZI SOCIAL INSTITUTION

An examination of the institutional forms of the Third Reich reveals that the death and concentration camps are not isolated and insane instances of clausturation. To the contrary,

the camps set aside for the extermination of the Jews of Europe are the most extreme version of an even wider and more encompassing social institution—that of the *Lager*, or camp, itself. Once the Nazis had come into power, these camps multiplied over the face of the Third Reich with remarkable velocity, refracting into a comprehensive variety of related forms, each dedicated in its own specialized way to helping produce a strong and purified Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Origins of the Camp in the Weimar Republic

One cannot take the space here to investigate the entire social history of camps, which goes well beyond Germany's borders. But within the context of the emerging millenarian solution to Germany's crises of the 1920s, the voluntary *Arbeitslager* seems the most immediate predecessor and one of deep cultural import. Established first by groups of *Bündische Jugend*, the increasingly right-wing inheritors of the earliest German *Wandervogel* youth movement, two- to three-week work camps were set up in Silesia in the late twenties with the intention of breaking down the artificial boundaries created by an enervated bourgeois society so as to forge a new solidarity between students, workers and farmers. Reeling from the new economic and political crises of 1929, the proponents of this growing movement began to pressure the Brüning government to establish a voluntary work service throughout Germany to provide food, shelter and most importantly, ego-buttreassing labor for the growing number of the unemployed, especially young working-class males who were rapidly comprising a new German *lumpenproletariat* (see Lessing and Liebel, 1980).

In these camps, work was not simply an opportunity to fill stomachs; it was to have a pedagogical and disciplinary function, harnessed to a utopian social vision. Alienating forms of industrial labor were to be replaced by more simple, organic and healthful manual work and work itself rooted within a new German *Heimat*. The intention of the

Arbeitslager's right-wing ideologues, in best biologized language, was for the camp movement to generate a new *Lebensform*, to become "germ cells of a fortified, intensified and refined *Volk* Community [*Keimzellen einer gefestigten, vertieften und veredelten Volksgemeinschaft*]" (quoted in Lessing & Liebel, 1980:405). In fact, the ideology of the *Arbeitslager* and its institutionalization by the Brüning government in 1931 as the FAD (*Freiwillige Arbeitsdienst* or "Voluntary Work Service") expressed a typical right-wing process of cooptation—an attempt essentially to elide class into race, thereby "naturalizing" genuine socioeconomic contradictions and swallowing them up within a superorganic whole. This ideological program led increasingly to the creation of "closed" camps of 20 weeks or so, and rendered even those who had joined the camps for reasons of pure economic distress increasingly susceptible to fascist solutions. This latter was underscored by the affinity to the FAD of former *Freikorps* members, with their prioritizing of the *Fronterlebnis* (the brutal experience of trench warfare in World War One) and the paramilitary, social values of the *Männerbund* (see Lessing and Liebel, 1980:408). These extremists, soon to figure prominently in the SA, sought to impart these lessons to German youth as an implicitly social Darwinistic means to galvanize the "battle" against class war and unemployment.

With the racial principles of productive labor at its center, the *Arbeitslager* was thus, in Geertz's terms, a "model of" and "model for" a new Germany (1973:93-4), a germ cell intended to generate an encompassing organic *Volk* Community even as it modeled the form of that community "in miniature," as former Nazi youth leaders themselves later were wont to say (see Maschmann, 1979:35-6; cf. Steinbach, 1983:101-3). Not surprisingly, the work camp ripened soon under National Socialism's compulsory labor service, the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (RAD). Here, collectively coordinated physical labor, German labor, was the dialectical ordering process whereby this new social whole would emerge: the chaotic and egoistic impulses of working class interest and sexuality (expressed earlier by

proto-fascist *Freikorps* as the threat of the "Red Flood" [cf. Theweleit, 1987]) would be channeled through disciplined labor. The Aryan racial body would harden into its purest self even as it worked collectively upon the moist and fluid disorder of useless German moor and swamp. The Nazi stress on marching ("*im gleichen Schritt und Tritt*") and the image of straight drainage ditches criss-crossing the German countryside provided a neatly reinforcing iconography, generated out of a common underlying structuring principle: the culturally-defined need to canalize an otherwise uncontrollable flood of energy into an orderly, harnessed flow (cf. Theweleit, 1987, 1989). Parasitical weeds would be eradicated ("*ausgemerzt*") and invasive, foreign trees cut down, just as the native sick and weak would be ruthlessly pruned away and burned out—all radical surgery upon the German organism in order to purify the blood as well as the soil in which it supposedly was rooted.

The Term "Camp"

The word "camp" does not fully translate the implications of *Lager*, which carries within it more than simply the sense of a temporary encampment of military prototype.

A nominative form derived from *liegen*, or to lay, *Lager* itself refracts into a variety of linguistic forms and compounds. Numerous terms were coined to label the varying camp types, in what seems a potentially infinite series: *Schulungslager*, *Gemeinschaftslager*, *Kinderlandesverschickungslager*, *Hitlerjugendlager*, *Wehrtüchtigungslager*, *Arbeitsdienstlager*, *Arbeitserziehungslager*, *Zwangsarbeitslager*, *Sonderlager*, *Konzentrationslager*, *Vernichtungslager*, etc. (training camps, community camps, camps for children sent to the countryside to avoid urban bombing attacks, Hitler Youth camps, pre-military toughening camps, German Work Service camps, work education camps, forced labor camps, "special" camps, concentration camps, extermination camps). Other terms were created to modify aspects of the camp experience itself: *Lagererlebnis*,

-*gedanke*, -*leben*, -*zeit*, -*gestaltung*, -*ordnung*, etc. (camp experience, -thinking, -life, -time, -formation, -organization).

But beneath all this are terms usually implying storage, placement and transfer of place (*lagern*, *verlagern*, *umlagern*, or *Lager* itself: storehouse). The association to the manipulation of inanimate material is unmistakable (see Sternberger et al.:1962: 70-74). This potential is hardly absent even from the treatment of those Germans favored with membership in the *Volk* Community: consider the language of the camps, where German *Menschenmaterial* (human material) is subjected to a "toughening" (*ertüchtigen*). Or consider the general Nazi ideological tenets of personal self-sacrifice and total "deployment" of the self (*Opfersinn* and *Einsatzbereitschaft*) best expressed in Goebbels' call for total war—or the processing of "useless eaters" in euthanasia institutions and the use of their bodies for medical experiments, or finally Hitler's "scorched earth" policy, when defeat was imminent and German children enlisted as cannon-fodder to slow the inexorable approach of Soviet tanks as they neared the Führer bunker.

In the case of the death camps, however, the manipulation of persons as raw material came fully and literally to the fore. Here inmates (hardly people, as German camp trainees are referred to, but *Untermenschen*, "subhumans") were stored in overcrowded horsestalls and forced to rest on shelf-like tiers not unlike worn-out tools, turnips or, as one former inmate has it, roosting birds (see Pawelczenska, 1979:28-9). Especially and most thoroughly in the case of Jews, as we shall see, camp inmates were treated, not as *Menschenmaterial* (that compliment was reserved for "humans"), but as raw or work-material (*Arbeitsmaterial*) to be used-up (see Poliakov,1979:76). It seems almost unnecessary to recall that death camp inmates, unlike the inmates of any other kind of training or concentration camp, were marked literally with tattooed serial numbers. In light of this, it should not come as surprising that the German term for stock taking—*Lageraufnahme*—was used for the processing of incoming deportees. The camps' records

exist as nothing other than books of inventory. These records account not only for the coming and going of inmates, but for the vast array of personal and bodily property which the SS divested from them. This material ranged from luggage and combs to dental gold and hair, all of it labeled *Effekten*. The term means movable property, as in wares, as well as stocks or bonds (see Wahrig, 1978:224), and might well translate as "personal effects"—if it were not the entire person to which reference ultimately is being made. The persons to whom the effects belong, however, are not the deportees at all, who remain "subhuman." As the distribution and processing of this material made clear, these "effects" belong to the German *Volk* itself, which intends to make total use of everything in its reach—most especially, those elements which might otherwise drain it of the energy it needs to produce itself.

The Camp's Millenarian Identity

The *Lager* is an expression of National Socialism's millenarian quality. Their essential form is an ephemeral one—even the most extensive and solidly-built of camps (the fortress-like Mauthausen, or the expanse of Auschwitz and Himmler's foiled plans for Maidanek) reflect more the massiveness of the task of social transformation to which they are put, and their centrality in bringing that transformation about, than their necessary permanence.

As an ideal-type, the "positive" training camp is a temporary assemblage of individuals, faceless except for the shared "Aryan" contours their skulls are supposed to create; the basic style of construction is military, an arrangement of barracks erected by Germans on German soil (and therefore exhibiting, however temporary their purpose, an allegedly nordic sense of beauty and order, no less genetically inevitable than the skulls themselves). But the racial bases of face and soul (the so-called *Rassenseele*), however natural their origin, must be highlighted, driven into the awareness of each German, if they are to

destroy the Jew's obscuring web and thereby become the conscious fundament of a new Aryan social order.

The camps provide an opportunity for these natural facts to reveal themselves. Within their confining and ordering bounds, through a disciplined working of the body itself in military drill, coordinated sport, marches through the fir-studded Germanic countryside in "*gleichem Schritt und Tritt*," and of course through solemn camp ceremonies, the reality of a superorganic German *Volk* is supposed to reveal itself as enduring and concrete. This *Gemeinschaftserlebnis* ("experience of community"), generated by a ritual separation of the individual from his normal social embeddedness, is supposed to be carried back into society as a permanent sense of mobilization. Thus the transitory (but oft repeated) experience of camp is designed to suffuse daily life with a sense of expectancy and new preparedness, as Germans everywhere join efforts—through the collection and recycling of *Altmaterial* (old material, or refuse), through disciplined production on the factory floor, through the enhanced ideological dedication of teachers, lawyers and judges, and eventually through war itself—in struggling to produce a seamless and enduring *Volk* Community (cf. Gamm, 1962, 1964). At the same time, of course, the camp experience is one opportunity for the more acute *Volksgenosse* or *Volk* comrade to assimilate and if possible master the symbolic language of power, thereby carving out an ever more satisfying political position for him- or herself within the collective struggle for order.

As Gamm points out and as one well-known Nazi short film makes clear (see Gamm, 1962; *Das Wort aus Stein*, 1939¹) the *Volksgemeinschaft* itself is expressed less in the form of the neat jury-rigged camps than in the massive architectural edifices of the Third Reich, which embody "the word in stone," as the film proclaimed. The camps are less public representations of the whole achieved as functional expressions of the social whole

¹Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film, Göttingen, G 47/1959.

in mobilization, laboring to produce itself. Nowhere is this clearer than in the racial killing installations of the east, which, as we shall see later, become symbolic and pragmatic factory cities of the racial collectivity. However temporary in function and intention—and temporary they must be, since the Jew has to be totally eliminated and the Slav tamed if the *Lebensraum* of the east is to be fully *eingedeutscht*, or Germanized—they become, as especially in the case of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps (Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor), complex sociocultural spaces as fully elaborated as suits their pivotal role in the achievement of Nazism's most crucial goals.

TRANSFORMING GERMANS

Germany's *Lager* sought ultimately to encompass almost *all* social elements in Germany and millions more in Nazi-occupied Europe behind confining gates (often elaborate in decorative style) for periods of weeks, months, or even years. Some entered and soon left, while some stayed to climb the camp hierarchy and make careers. Others were never released at all, but disappeared into the sandy soil, where they became indistinguishable parts of the natural landscapes which had been drawn over them to disguise their fates. The candidates for these sojourns ranged from the most orderly, respectable and productive of Aryan citizens of all ages, both genders and from all walks of life to those creatures (whether Aryan or not) deemed *zersetzend*, or disintegrative of the social whole. Once behind the camp gates, they would be mentally indoctrinated, or schooled (the Nazis termed this *Schulung*), as well as physically trained through sport and disciplinary labor (this the Nazis called *Zucht*). Depending upon the definitions assigned the trainee-inmate and the purposes to which the camps were set, this training might well intensify until sport became torture (the Nazi termed this *Strafexerzieren*, or punishment exercises) and labor an extended means of killing (called *Vernichtung durch Arbeit*, or "extermination through work").

As usual everywhere in the Third Reich, antisemitism, especially in terms of its relationship to the meaning of work, underlies the philosophy and practice of all camps and defines their purpose. This should come as no surprise, since camps were dedicated to channeling the naturally productive energies of the Aryan into the disciplined and collective task of creating a new *Volk* Community. Konstantin Hierl, *Reichsarbeitsführer* in charge of the compulsory RAD camps in which all young Aryans were required to serve, made the underlying significance of this definition of work clear:

In order to raise in relief the nature of our National Socialist attitude toward work against the background of its exact opposite, one must distinguish the characteristics of that work attitude [*Arbeitsauffassung*] which prevails wherever the spirit of egotistical materialism is the rule. This is the case wherever the spirit of Judaism dominates.

The Jewish *Arbeitsauffassung* regards work as a curse. . . . The earning of gold is the measure for the valuation of work. Work and the working man are turned into commodities [*Ware*] with which one makes business. The pursuit of trading stands as the most desirable and respectable kind of work. At the pinnacle, however, is the winning of profit without any work whatsoever, through stockmarket speculation and similar money businesses (Hierl, in Götting, 1944:6).

In contrast, Hierl continues, stands German work—designed to create, not steal, and to serve, not earn: "That is why we honor work and speak of the *Adel der Arbeit* [the Nobility of Labor]." Thus, he concludes,

life in the closely-United camp community. . . allows class and estate-differences to disappear. . . and provides the leadership with the possibility of welding together their companies into a community solidified through loyalty, obedience and comradeship. . . and thus the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* has become the great social-political school of the *Volk*. . . (p.6).

If antisemitism underlay the "educational" principles of such "positive" training camps for Aryans as those of the Reichs Labor Service, small wonder that it should play a fundamental, structuring role in the concentration camps as well from their very beginning. This holds despite the fact that the first concentration camps were established primarily for political opponents of the regime, amongst whom non-Jews made up the majority until

after *Reichskristallnacht* in 1938. This structuring role is indicated by the fact that antisemitism served to define the overall hierarchy of inmate categories. This is demonstrated by the official symbolic system of colored triangles by which inmates were identified in all SS concentration camps (see Pingle, 1978; plate 54). While non-Jewish inmates were ascribed to only one category of imprisonment at a time (red for leftist dissident, green for habitual criminal, etc.), Jews were considered capable of cross-cutting all categories as once (e.g., Jew-dissident, Jew-criminal, etc.) because of the comprehensive racial threat while they allegedly posed. By choosing different colored triangles as inmate insignias, the SS could superimpose the yellow triangle designating "Jew" over the triangle of any other individual prisoner category so as to form a variety of multi-colored Jewish Stars-of-David. Thus the Jewish triangle was the master key, providing the overall parameters of the system as well as its underlying inspiration.

"Training Camps" for Aryans

The generic nature of all camps (including the death camps) as quintessential Nazi institutions of social transformation can be brought out by briefly examining two examples of so-called "positive" camps designed to awaken "orderly" Germans to the pulse of race and the spirit of *Gemeinschaft*.

The camp [*das Lager*] as a training ground [*Schulungsstätte*] and workplace for inner improvement [*innere erhebung*] has triumphantly conquered all of Germany, in a manner that can hardly be compared to any other similar phenomenon.

A network of camps criss-crosses our country from ocean to mountain range, from heath to the eastern forests to the industrial regions in the West. Camps for administrators, for the SA, SS and the HJ, for lawyers, artists, doctors, civil service officials, factory managers, for men and for women, for youth and for those of advanced years.

And this sweeping triumph [*Siegeslauf*] in so few years, really only since 1934! A miracle without compare! How can this miracle be explained? (Mertens, 1937:3).

This extraordinary paean to the camp was written by a member of the *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund* or NSLB (National Socialist Teachers Bund), *Schulrat* Adolf Mertens, and appeared in 1937 under the title, *Schulungslager und Lagererziehung (Training Camps and Camp Education)*. His enthusiasm for the camp is not surprising: the German teaching profession was amongst those finding Nazism most congenial. Between 1933 and 1936, when a moratorium was declared on party recruitment, thirty-two per cent of all NSLB members already belonged to the Nazi Party (and thus were old members from the *Kampfzeit*), a figure twice as high as that amongst another Nazi stronghold, the Nazi Civil Servants' Association. Fourteen per cent of teachers belonged to the leadership echelons of the party, and by 1938, two-thirds of all German teachers had been to camp, attending compulsory one-month training courses focusing on military drill, ideological indoctrination and physical exercise (see Grunberger, 1971:287).

Mertens confirms these figures in his own way:

Numerous educators have already visited camps, some of them already several times. They all became enthusiastic propagandizers of these successful cult places of the Community [*Kultstaette der Gemeinschaft*]. . . . It is difficult to speak of life in the *Lager* [*Lagerleben*] and not break into a song of praise. *Lager*-time is happy-time, because camps mean duty; *Lager*-life is *Hochzeit* [the high point] because it means the dissolving of every personal inhibition through the carrying power [*tragende Kraft*] of the *Gemeinschaft* (p. 9)

Mertens did not simply think the camp a good idea; he thought it intrinsic to National Socialism itself, a projection of the Aryan spirit perfectly adapted to shaping German bodies and personalities:

The training camp. . . is the most appropriate, surest and naturally determined expression [*naturbedingte Ausdruck*] for allowing the development of the German person [*des deutschen Menschen*]. The contemporary camp form is a unique manifestation. No Volk and no period can point to anything similar. And indeed, it would have been impossible earlier for any state or society to grasp the concept of the camp [*Lagergedanken*] and to realize it in the contemporary manner" (p3).

The camp, Mertens continues, situates the German "within the primeval bases of our very being" (p4), awakening within him an instinct for the purity of blood rooted in the soil, a community-oriented thinking which the confusions of the egoistical Weimar era had denied. The means to accomplish this awakening was through *Lagerertüchtigung* [camp-toughening], a strengthening and hardening of the body, which permitted a complementary strengthening and solidifying of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as well.

At the core of the camp experience is coercion, but in an internalized and self-alienated form. The camp participant works and in turn is worked upon; indeed, he works on himself, laboring to gain the discipline needed for a self-abnegating subordination to the will of the collective. This will is expressed in the camp leadership, a man who already "has worked upon himself [*an sich gearbeitet hat*]" (p. 15). The camp Führer must be "an embodiment, an outward, visible expression of the new German person [*einem Führer, der eine Verkörperung, ein sichtbar gewordener Ausdruck des neuen deutschen Menschen ist*]" (p. 17). Ideally he is a former trench fighter who has endured the humiliation of defeat and collapse, and understands the importance of collective struggle in bringing about a rebirth of the German nation.

A camp participant who fails to order himself into the greater whole, the "*Schädling*," or destructive pest, as Mertens calls him (p. 15), is to be publicly humiliated ("through pranks and jokes"), isolated, or reported to the authorities. Presumably the latter could lead, in the most intractable of cases, to a short sojourn in another kind of *Lager*, an *Arbeitserziehungslager* (work education camp) perhaps, where the recalcitrant spirit, reclassified an "asocial," can be educated more thoroughly than the *Schulungslager* can manage, by subjecting his unwilling body to more intensive methods of disciplinary labor. But the vast majority who manage to fall more or less happily into *Gleichschritt* in camp will undergo what Mertens calls the "wonderful experience of *Gemeinschaft* closing around them like an unbreakable band. They carry this security of belonging back into daily life,

into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. And the *Lager* thereby fulfills one of its tasks: we turn into a *Volk*" (p.16).

In order to perform this function, writes Mertens, National Socialism's network of training camps must counter the effects of the mechanistic "System Time" of the Weimar era, a "heartless damnable system" which once thrust the worker out of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and led him under the "spell of the *Volk*-murdering Jew" (p.44). In order to counter this process of social disintegration, camps must be placed "amidst the *Volk*" in nature, "amidst its work, its exertion, its needs, its joys," forging a renewed unity between farmers, workers, educators and others, thereby generating a fascist version of a *Ständestaat*—a feudalistic nation made up of hierarchically arranged estates rather than competing classes. Such a function, of course, will require that the camp focus upon the body itself in order to bring about a "renewal of power, nerves and muscle." After all, writes Mertens, camps were not "spas" like those of the "System Time" they seek to replace, where the "inferior [*minderwertigen*]" and those "least capable of sustaining the *Volk* received the tenderest of care" (p. 36). The reference here is not only to the soft bourgeoisie or the ill, about which Mertens will have more to say, but also by implication to the Jew, frequently represented iconographically in the Nazi press as a flabby plutocrat wallowing in pleasure at Marienbad and other famous spas, often with Aryan girls in tow.

Merten's makes clear the camp's collective socializing function, and its millenarian tendency, tied to a eugenicist ideology of collective social transformation on social Darwinist grounds. Camps are not simply for the immediate camp dweller, he explains; like schools, they serve collectively to educate the German *Volk* as a whole. In order to underscore the embeddedness of camps within Germany's overall program of social transformation along racial lines, Mertens accordingly recommends frequent field trips, for example to the "so-called healing and nursing institutions [*Heil- und Pflegeanstalten*] for the mentally disturbed, which unfortunately still exist in every part of Germany" (p.60).

Here the lessons in "racial hygiene and improvement [*Erb- und Rassenpflege*]" and the necessity for the state's new measures for the "elimination of congenitally ill offspring [*Ausaltung des erbkranken Nachwuchses*]" will be driven home in a "shockingly penetrating" manner. So too, visits to institutes for research in racial breeding (*Züchtungsforschung*) are also "incomparably" inspiring. There, for example, friendly staffpersons will guide the camp members through the experimental gardens and greenhouses, where plants are subjected to every kind of "remodeling and rebreeding [*Umarbeitung und Umzüchtung*]." But one might just as easily visit a particularly challenging section of the *Reichsautobahn*, Mertens states, to understand the significance of National Socialism's "gigantic plans for the new Germany," which stretch to the very "border of German eternity [*zur Grenze der deutschen Ewigkeit*]" (p.61).

The overall educational process in the camp thus is not simply a question of learning facts, principles and exercise sequences; it is biological at base. As Mertens would have it, camps are "the living pulse which drives the blood of the movement into every cell of the Volkbody [*sie sind der lebendige Pulsschlag, der das Blut der Bewegung in die letzten Zellen des Volkskörpers treibt*]" (p.24).

Beneath all of these social Darwinian discussions of camp and eugenics lies a millenarian urgency, as Mertens strives to make clear: everything expresses the "life's will of the cornered German Volk [*Lebenswillen des eingeengten deutschen Volkes*], born of dire emergency [*Not*]" (p.61). And yet the camp experience is not a somber affair; National Socialism's millenarian goals could also be accomplished by harnessing the community-productive forms of good German humor. We already saw a touch of this in Merten's recommendation that non-conformists in camp be brought into line through humiliating "pranks and jokes"—a practice that would reach its diabolical fulfillment in the death camps (see chapter 15). Another means was by staging cabarets and carnivals in a fascistic appropriation of German folk tradition. These are intended to serve as rituals of

self-representation, providing affectionate comment upon camp life as a means of "letting off steam" while simultaneously reinforcing the validity of camp principles.

In the Reich Youth Leadership's handbook for Hitler Youth camps, *Freude, Zucht, Glaube* (*Joy, Training, Belief*) (*Reichsjugendführung*, 1937), strict guidelines were issued for the staging of a great *Lagerzirkus* or camp circus: "It is necessary throughout the entire *Lagerzirkus*" the handbook reads, "to make a distinction between the traits of the 'Jewish joke' and German humor," the former tending to undermine German accomplishments through trivializing satire (p.144). German humor, on the other hand, was intended to "overcome" such effects. One prescribed example for doing so was by jury-rigging puppet shows. The resources for such activity in camps were limited, but Hitler Youth were encouraged to harness their creativity, for example by carving potatoes instead of wood:

Often it is only as one works that one realizes what is coming out. 'Look, that one looks exactly like Isidor Weiss!' And indeed, Isidor's slit eyes, his big mouth, the flat eyebrows are evoked with a few cuts. The crook-nose is carved out of a carrot and attached to the potato head with two matchsticks. The flabby ears, made of Linden leaves, are affixed with straight pins. . . . Bits of cloth, for example to create Isidor's black caftan, have to be found in the village of course. . ." (p.168-9).

And thus the ingredients for a puppet show emerge as if from the collective imagination of the *Volk*, in this case following the lines of those created by the *Stürmer* newspaper, in which the traditional Kasperl—the German version of "Punch-and-Judy"—is joined by such hook-nosed Jew puppets as the stereotyped Isidor (see plates 56-57).

Once the characters have been carved and decorated, the drama itself can begin. A dragon appears in a farmer's field; he steals the farmer's daughter and refuses to return her until he has been given a part of the field as a gift. The "horrible Isidor," who "talks with his hands," offers to serve as middleman—but he needs a sack of gold to offer the dragon.

The latter proves to be Isidor's "red commissar," who is steadily devouring the whole country with the assistance of his "currency-smuggling" co-conspirator.

Fortunately, Kasper comes to the rescue. When Isidor's back is turned, Kasper sneaks up behind him. "The knees of the *Jungvolk* in the audience [i.e., the pre-teen 'cub-scouts'] are bobbing with joyful anticipation—and bang! Isidor gets it in the skull. All cheer. Isidor trembles and shakes. Afterall, he is suuuuuch a nationalist, with war decorations even. . . ! But Kasper sends him sailing all the way to Palestine!"

"Kasper is not only a terrific fun-maker for little children," the handbook concludes; "he is also a fellow comically portrayed as living life in the correct manner" (p.168-9). The correct manner here is to pitch in with the joyful work of antisemitic status reversal and physically expell the wily Jewish capitalist, however violent the means, so as to help Germany regain control over the Fatherland.

* * *

Merten's ambition for the camps knows no bounds. Indeed, its fulfillment would see all of Germany embraced within the confines of a single, massive camp. "All German persons should become part-owners of the *Lager* idea [*Lageridee*], whether they know it or not," he writes.

All should be won over and fertilized by this new lifestream of the *Gemeinschaft*, directly and lastingly. A network of training camps of the party and its formations spreading out over the entire land in time will involve every German person in this great and unique developmental task. It will embrace all *Volksgenosse* [*Volk* comrades], all will become part of the visibly manifested idea of the indestructable *Volksgemeinschaft*. In the coming years the camps will succeed in enabling every German man and perhaps also the majority of German women to experience the new *Volksordnung* not only theoretically, but practically. Like the sun that shines over our homeland, so too the camps will shine over Germany's *Gaue* [party districts], warming and winning over every German (Mertens, 1937:24).

Given the tone of this fascist peroration, it is no wonder that Mertens ends his account of the *Lager* with the melancholy of departure. Uniforms are changed for mundane civilian clothing, the flag lowered for good; a few run back for a last walk through the barracks and

then, full of nostalgia, leave through the gate on their way home. "*O Lagerheim, O Lagerheim,*" they sing. "*Wie schön es war in dir!* [O camp home, how beautiful it was in you!]" (p.71).

Mertens' vision is all-encompassing, and yet Mertens' network of camps is incomplete, for he refers only to camps devoted to those Germans considered *Gemeinschaftsfähig*. To this already extensive array of camps one must add all those devoted to the less than orderly, the "asocial," the homosexual and the Jehovah's Witness, the vagrant and the hobo, the Gypsy and the juvenile delinquent, and of course, the Jew. Only by combining all of these camps does one come up with the total network, as well as the indivisible relationship between them all, as vehement workplaces for a procrustean transformation of Germany and the Jew-infested European continent it aspires to dominate.

Camps for Ethnic Germans

One German, a surviving member of the youthful "White Rose" anti-Nazi resistance, recalls serving in an *Arbeitsdienstlager* of the compulsory work service, which was later converted into a resettlement camp designed for *Volksdeutschen* (ethnic Germans) who had been transplanted from the Balkans (Franz Müller, p.c.). Such camps subjected culturally adulterated ethnic Germans to a typically strict German camp regiment of drills, sports, orderly barrack life and ideological training. It did so all in hopes of "germanizing" them, a process which Heinrich Himmler also sought to inflict upon the very landscape of the conquered east, as we shall see, the roots of which had been "proven" archeologically to be German, not Slavic. Following the departure of these *Volksdeutschen*—sometimes derisively called "*Hottentots*" by the SS—the one-time work-service camp was then transformed into a proper concentration camp satellite for political enemies and Jews.

To remind these "Hottentots" from around Europe who they really were—and what their time in camp was intended to transform them into—a patronizing poster was created in 1940 with the heading "The Ten Commandments for the Ethnic German Camps. . . ."²

The first commandment affirmed implicitly the notion of *Gemeinschaft*, affirming that, "as Germans and contemporaries of Adolf Hitler"—his name set in enormous, bold type—"we stand tightly together, consider others our *Volk* Comrades, and do nothing that might harm them." The next four commandments all began with the statement, "As Germans we love. . . ." beginning with "*die Ordnung*," (order) set again in bold type: "A life led in disorder is unbearable to us Germans [*Ein Leben in Unordnung ist uns Deutschen unerträglich*]. We therefore obey conscientiously the established rules of order not only in all rooms and halls of the *Lager*, but also in the courtyards and gardens as well and all other places belonging to the *Lager*."

It was also German, and—apparently, despite evidence to the contrary—a project of their own racial nature to love "*die Reinlichkeit*" (cleanliness) and "*die Pünktlichkeit*" (punctuality). But there was little Germans could love better than the fifth commandment, "*die Disziplin*" (discipline):

Subordination [*Unterordnung*] and obedience of the directives serving the *Gemeinschaft* have made the National Socialist movement great and powerful, have rescued the Fatherland from decline, have recaptured its freedom, freed millions of enslaved *Volk* Comrades and returned them home to the Reich, and finally created the presuppositions for our return to the homeland of our forefathers. Without subordination and the conscientious carrying-out of transmitted duties there would also be no *Gemeinschaft* in this ethnic German *Lager*, in which the Führer could take pleasure.

If that were not enough, they were also told that, as Germans, "we" raise our children to be good National Socialists, "instilling" within them nothing other than "the love of order, cleanliness, punctuality and discipline." This was evidenced by use of the "German

²Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Plakat Nr. 3/38/35.

salute," and by the general willingness to prove "useful to the *Gemeinschaft*." The ninth commandment explained that Germans do not indulge in morale-damaging behavior. The tenth, a confession of belief, reinforced the earlier messages of faith in the Führer, sent to Germany by God to save it from its "greatest danger." Accordingly, it contained the pledge to stand by the Führer day and night and in every hour of life with loyalty, love and obedience.

The case of these *Volksdeutschen Lager* makes clear perhaps more obviously than any the extent to which *Lager* in general performed transformative functions, and the principles structuring that transformation. Love of Führer and Fatherland, Order, Cleanliness and Discipline—these same principles had been a standard architectural component of concentration camps themselves since 1933, comprising a litany intended not only for the "re-education" of those politically misguided Aryans still considered redeemable, but also serving as an avowal of SS identity:

Es gibt ein Weg zur Freiheit. Seine Meilensteine heissen: Gehorsam, Fleiss, Ordnung, Ehrlichkeit, Sauberkeit, Wahrhaftigkeit, Nuchternheit, Opfersinn und Liebe Zum Vaterland [There is a road to freedom. its milestones are: Obedience, Diligence, Order, Honesty, Cleanliness, Truthfulness, Sobriety, Self-Sacrifice and Love of the Fatherland] (see Huebner et al., 1979:67).

These values, handed down from the antisemitic German artisan movement of the late nineteenth century and defined in supposed counterdistinction to the Jew (see Volkov, 1978a), were appropriated by the SS to grace, in great letters, the slanted rooftop of the Dachau administration building in front of the *Appellplatz* (parade ground). There inmates, hemmed in by the building's angled wings, were forced to line up and recite these *Meilensteinen* ("milestones") *ad nauseum*. These same values were painted word by word on the ends of the barracks at Sachsenhausen, which were arranged in a circle so as to form an *Appellplatz*, thereby literally encompassing the inmates with their sanctimonious and suffocating meanings (see plate 57). The SS displayed these values at Auschwitz too,

painted on posters in Gothic calligraphy and then hung on the walls of their own offices and living quarters. They also appeared, all-too-perversely, inscribed in double-binded fashion in filthy washrooms and abbreviated on the cross-beams inside the bare ceilings of Birkenau's death camp barracks. In these cases the Jew, as well as those Aryans whom he supposedly had "infected," were safely encompassed by the restored holistic values—and barbed wire—of the German *Volk* Community, their disintegrative energies canalized for its benefit in the form of slave labor. Indeed, when asked after the war why such inmates had been abused as slaves, Admiral Dönitz, Hitler's appointed successor, appeared surprised at the obviousness of the question. Even enemies of the Reich, he had replied matter-of-factly, had to be given their opportunity to serve the German *Volk*.

* * *

As the self-representational quality of the *Mielensteinen* indicate, the overall purpose of the individual camps in Nazi Germany's camp universe, whatever their intensity, was likewise to serve Germany, helping to coordinate its varied and heterogenous population toward the collective purpose of producing the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*.

"Our camp community [*Lagergemeinschaft*]," wrote one ardent former Nazi Hitler Youth leader,

was a model in miniature of what I imagined the *Volksgemeinschaft* to be. It was a completely successful model. . . . The knowledge that this model of a National Community had afforded me such intense happiness gave birth to an optimism to which I clung obstinately until 1945. Upheld by this experience, I believed, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that the pattern of our camp would one day be magnified on an infinite scale (see Maschmann, 1979:35-6).

Just so, for every Aryan and non-Aryan there was a special camp, where each received his due treatment and reward—*Jedem das Seine*, or "to each his own"—as the metal letters in the gate to Buchenwald proclaimed. Camps became ideal zones within which to exercise the symbolic practice of canalizing productive bodily energies—or of redirecting allegedly unproductive and disorderly impulses—within carefully controlled bounds, without fear of

distraction or interference from the outside world. The position of the famous, punitive camps within a far wider spectrum encompassing "Aryans" themselves points up the overall purpose of the camps, not simply prisons but transformative workshops in the Nazi millenarian effort to create a purified and hardened "Volkbody" intended to endure 1000 years.

It was the six Nazi death camps of the east, however, that ultimately were entrusted with the most crucial task in bringing the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft* permanently into being. As we shall see later, it was here that the most serious obstacle to the realization of that vision—the allegedly manipulative and engulfing power of the Jew, the source of all division in society—was to be systematically encompassed, deconstructed and finally assimilated to the German as the final step in the realization of Nazism's millenarian project of social transformation.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Kennzeichen für Schutzhäftlinge in den Konz. Lagern</h1> <p style="text-align: right;">EXHIBIT N°</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Form und Farbe der Kennzeichen</h2>						
	Politisch	Berufs- Verbrecher	Emigrant	Bibel- forscher	homo- sexuell	Rassial
Grund- farben						
Abzeichen für Unsaubere						
Häftlinge der Straf- kompanie						
Abzeichen für Juden						
Besondere Abzeichen	 Jüd. Rasse- schänder	 Rasse- schänderin	 Flucht- verdächtig	 Häftlings- nummer	 Brisetel	
	 Pole	 Tschече	 Wehrmacht angehöriger	 Häftling Ia		

Plate 54. "Insignias for Inmates in the Concentration Camps." Master chart of color triangles based upon the Jewish star which they combine to form. (Source: Distel and Jakusch, 1978:58 [Dachau Museum Catalog])



Plate 55. In this case campers are taught how to put on antisemitic shadow plays. Illustration from *Joy, Training, Faith*, the Hitler Youth camp handbook. (Source: Reichsjugendführung, 1937:155)



Plate 56. Above, Jewish children humiliated in class. Below, "fun" with antisemitic puppets. (Source: Chagoll, 1979:13)

Es gibt einen Weg zur Freiheit
 Seine Meilensteine heissen:
 Gehorsam, Fleiss, Ehrlichkeit,
 Ordnung, Sauberkeit, Nüchternheit,
 Wahrhaftigkeit, Opfersinn und
 Liebe zum Vaterlande!

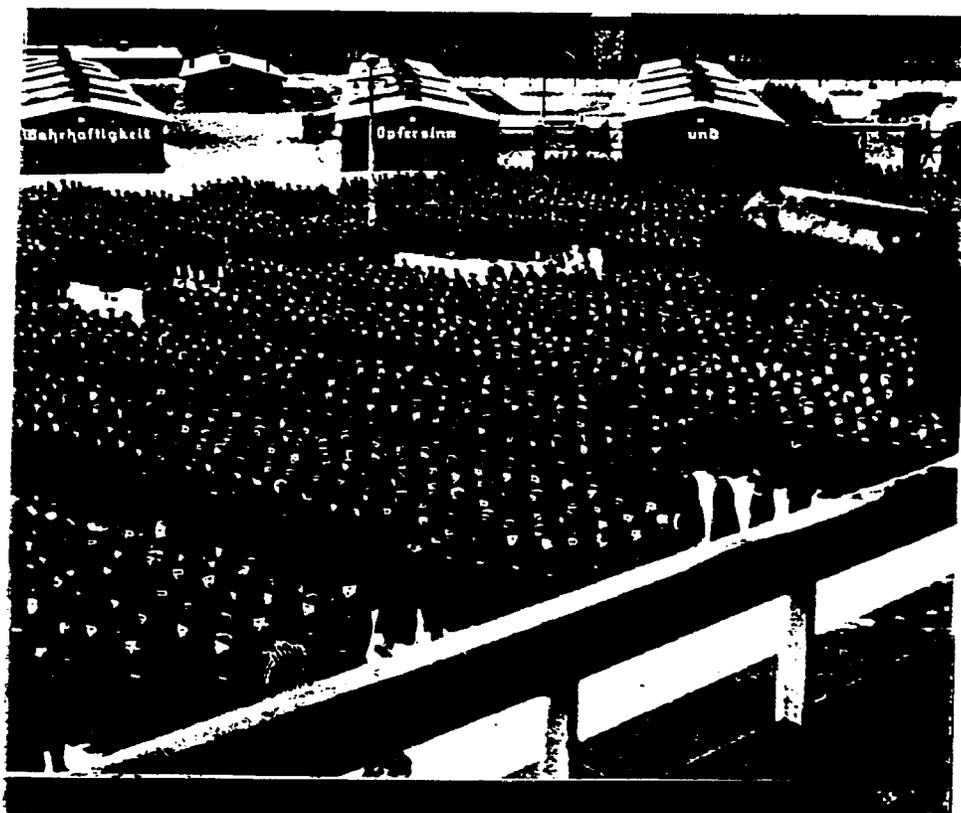


Plate 57. The *Meilensteinen* at *Sachsenhausen*. Below, enlarged detail shows how the "Milestones" surrounded the inmates at assembly. (Source: unknown [cf. Arad, 1990:308-9 and Yad Vashem])

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"BEAUTY OF LABOR": THE UNDERPINNINGS OF INDUSTRIALIZED GENOCIDE IN THE THIRD REICH

We have just examined the first element necessary for understanding the forms of Nazi genocide: that of the camp as the generic institution of social transformation in the Third Reich. This suggests the overwhelming transformative function of the death camp in the Nazi millenarian project, a function which both subsumes and meaningfully structures the killing process. But we still need to understand the specific and unique form which that transformative function took on in the death camps: that of industrialized mass murder in factory-like environments.

As we know, the industrial component of genocide is one of the most fundamental elements shaping the killing process. Indeed, it lends that process its most distinctive yet seemingly incomprehensible characteristic: the treatment of human beings as raw materials, their systematic processing to death, and the extraction of industrial values from this process. The latter included the recycling of their property as well as the manufacture of commodities out of their bodies and body products. Although the most highly visible aspect of Nazi genocide, this industrialized component at the same time is rarely examined or contextualized. In order to understand this aspect of genocide, as well as how it came to be amalgamated with the other constituent elements making up the death camp, it is necessary to consider the Nazi construction of the factory and worker in contexts independent of the genocidal process (though hardly disconnected from them). Such a study will reveal the underlying symbolic forms and meanings of Nazi "labor" and its

industrialized versions, as well as the significance of the cultural results it is intended to generate, whether actual commodities, the "Aryanized" workers producing them—or the industrial transformation of the Jew.

THE BEAUTY OF LABOR BUREAU: "LIBERATING" GERMAN INDUSTRY FROM THE NEXUS OF THE JEW

"Beauty of Labor" (*Schönheit der Arbeit*) was one of many programs of social transformation instituted in Nazi Germany. These ranged from the mandatory labor projects of the Reich Labor Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*), the demographic programs to "germanize" the eastern *Lebensraum* and the eugenicist programs of *Lebensborn* and the so-called euthanasia, to the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem" itself. All were intended to overcome the alienations of German capitalism and resolve the contradictions of class through collective efforts to produce a racially-purified, millenarian *Volk* Community.

Established under the authority of the German Labor Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, or DAF) and directed officially by architect Albert Speer, the Beauty of Labor Bureau's special focus was Germany's industrial environment. The factory workplace and its surroundings, worker housing and the body of the worker himself—all were to be transformed through the beautifying efforts of architects, interior designers and landscapers as well as plant engineers, efficiency experts and Nazi industrial psychologists, as Rabinbach's admirable account makes clear (see Rabinbach, 1976; see also Freimert, 1980). Beauty of Labor sought through these efforts to demonstrate both symbolically and pragmatically that National Socialism had wrested the factory and worker from the manipulative and dehumanizing conditions of the so-called "System Time." This was the period of the alleged Jewish domination of both capitalism and communism that supposedly had reached full bloom during the Weimar Republic.

As part of the Labor Front's "Strength through Joy" (*Kraft durch Freude*) program, Beauty of Labor played a significant role in the Third Reich's propaganda campaign.

Along with the slogan of the name itself went color posters, culture film shorts, a glossy, large-format magazine, and its own special paperback manual intended to make the program accessible to all: the *Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit*. The program's publicity was both seductive and entertaining, for its basic graphic premise was the juxtaposing of "before" and "after" images of the German factory and worker—before being the filth of the factory and its surroundings before Nazism, and after being images of the *Sauberkeit und Ordnung* (Cleanliness and Order) which prevailed in modernized model plants (see plate 58). In addition to the beautified factory itself, these model plants included church-like indoctrination centers with washing and shower facilities, decorative eating halls and auditoria, as well as gardens, child day-care centers and neat, *völkisch* worker settlements with cheerful walks and carved *völkisch* signposts. With its highly satisfying images of disordered space rendered beautiful through the diligent cultural shaping skills of the "value-creating" (*wertschaffende*) Aryan, Beauty of Labor was especially appealing to the millenarian premises of National Socialism. Accordingly the motto "*Schönheit der Arbeit*" became part of the slogan-kit for the politically-conscious German.

As elsewhere in Nazi Germany, antisemitism was a fundamental if sometimes tacit component of Beauty of Labor's transformative program. Antisemitism's underlying significance here, as well as its importance in structuring the millenarianism within which Beauty of Labor must be located, is something which is rarely attended to in studies of this and other Nazi programs of social transformation (cf. Rabinbach, 1976; Freimert, 1980; Schoenbaum, 1966). This scholarly inattentiveness results partly from a theoretical and methodological tendency to compartmentalize domains of Nazi society instead of exploring the underlying structures of cultural meaning and practice which unite them. Such a limited view may be reinforced further by Beauty of Labor's own tendency to focus primarily on the functional implementation of its program. Beauty of Labor's reticence on the subject of antisemitism is misleading, however, and can be explained by considering the class

background of its most serious exponents. Taking its tone from its titular director Albert Speer rather than from the German Labor Front's crudely antisemitic leader Robert Ley, under whose authority the Bureau ultimately belonged, *Schönheit der Arbeit* exhibited a refined, "aesthetic" approach to Nazi ideology. This was in keeping with those who considered themselves the embodiment of a so-called "noble National Socialism" (*edler Nationalsozialismus*), a social grouping which included professionals, artists, intellectuals and such members of the educated upper classes as Winnifried Wagner, the doyenne of Bayreuth during the Nazi era. These individuals had little affinity to Julius Streicher and the obscenity of his antisemitic *Stürmer*, which they regarded not only as tasteless but as intellectually unsophisticated. Such an attitude, however, in no way belied the integrity of antisemitism to their own definitions of race, nor did it curtail their efforts to contribute to the production of a new Germany purified of pernicious "Jewish" influences (see Herf, 1984; Proctor, 1988; Prieberg, 1982; Beyerchen, 1977; cf. Burleigh & Wipperman, 1991).¹ In this the upper class and professional exponents of "noble National Socialism" shared with the likes of Rudolf Höss, the stolid commandant of Auschwitz and the architect of its industrialized system of mass murder. As will be discussed later, Höss considered antisemitism a matter of deepest principle, not to be demeaned by a prurient and confusing appeal to the senses (see chapter 16).

Although seldom emphasized, antisemitism thus continued to underlay Beauty of Labor's efforts (within the wider context of the German Labor Front) to reformulate the

¹The underlying cultural foundations of such a position even predated the Nazi take over, to be shared by many who would not have called themselves National Socialists or later advocated the movement's most "radical" solutions to the so-called "Jewish Question." Thus in 1928, Bishop Dr. Otto Dibelius—one of those men of conscience to whom SS officer Kurt Gerstein later turned for help after having witnessed the horror of the death camps (see chapter 15)—made the following statement in a circular sent to pastors in his district:

In spite of the derogatory tone of the term, I have always felt myself to be anti-Semitic. It cannot be denied that, in all the manifestations of disintegration in modern civilization, Judaism always plays a leading role. . . (Dibelius, quoted in Friedländer, 1969:17).

German worker and workplace along the lines of technical rationality and racial aesthetics. This was inevitable; as we have already seen, antisemitism was inseparable from the Nazi definition of work, and at the same time was crucial to the Nazi definition of its historical mission, as Robert Ley's pounding antisemitism in the workplace indicated.² Indeed, Julius Streicher's introduction to Fritz Fink's manual for the teaching of antisemitism in the schools only emphasized a point which Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich's legion of ideologues and "Jewish Question" experts in every state and party organization had already established: "The National Socialist state demands that its teachers instruct German children in the race question. For the German *Volk*, however, the race question is the Jewish Question" (Streicher, in Fink, 1937:3). Fritz Fink elaborated: "The race- and Jewish Question is the core problem in National Socialist world view. The solution to this problem insures the endurance of National Socialism and thereby the endurance of our entire *Volk* for all times" (p. 5).

The author of *Beauty of Labor's* special paperback manual, the *Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit*, also affirmed the underlying centrality of antisemitism, but in a manner appropriate to the Bureau and the perspectives of its planners. "The notion '*Schönheit der Arbeit*' today has become so taken-for-granted as a formative factor in the life of the German plant," he wrote, "that one scarcely can imagine how it could have been possible to work in an atmosphere so heavily and hatefully poisoned by class hatred [*Klassenhass*] and mutual mistrust, as previously burdened the life of the fabricating person [*der schaffenden Menschen*]" (Hübbernet, 1938:17). The sources of this poisonous atmosphere, he continued, were the "prophets of the Jewish-bolshevist ideology," those who previously "had done practically everything to make work a suffering for [the German worker] and destroy his natural creative impulse [*Schaffensdrang*]." This they had done by preaching

²See, for example, "Die zeitlose Kampf um die Wahrheit." Propagandaamt der DAF, March 1944 (Berlin: Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront). Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, 1720/55 [Db76.01].

"hatred of work, hatred of the employer, and hatred of the plant, tricking him into destruction and murder as the only means of salvation" (p.17). These same Jews only recently had "dominated Germany's business life" with their "unbridled greed for profit," something which had expressed itself, for example, in the "senseless abuses [*unsinnige Auswüchsen*, literally, tumorous growths] in the area of advertising" (p.46).

Beauty of Labor's answer to this particular advertising problem was to replace the Jewish-inspired chaos of billboards, posters and "screaming signs on gables and roofs" (p.46) with the tasteful use of logos in the tradition of "beautiful medieval guild signs" and other handcrafted expressions of an earlier, humanized community. Such a solution might seem thoroughly anti-modern. However, as negative as Beauty of labor was about the effects of an allegedly Jewish-dominated capitalism, this did not mean they rejected modern forms of rationalized industrial production. To the contrary, Beauty of Labor was a prime exponent of the power and mastery of industrial technology, once fascism had freed it from its supposed Jewish domination and returned it to German control. This seemingly contradictory position is one which Herf (1984) has termed "reactionary modernism," that is, the Nazi celebration of technology as an allegedly natural extension of a pre-modern artisanal social order. The director of one of the Bureau's competitors ironically caught the essence of the Bureau's reactionary modernist approach when, seeking to criticize what he perceived to be the Bureau's increasingly functionalist emphasis, proposed that the "tempo of the machine be brought into harmony with the rhythm of the blood" (in Rabinbach, 1976:66). Goebbels himself, rhapsodizing on the ideological significance of the planned *Volkswagen* ("People's Car"), elaborated:

We live in an era of technology. The racing tempo of our century affects all areas of our life. There is scarcely an endeavor that can escape its powerful influence. Therefore, the danger unquestionably arises that modern technology will make men soulless. National Socialism never rejected or struggled against technology. Rather, one of its main tasks was to consciously affirm it, to fill it inwardly with soul, to discipline it and to place it in the service of our people and their cultural level. . . . We live in an age that is both romantic and steellike, that has not lost

its depth of feeling. On the contrary, it has discovered a new romanticism in the results of modern inventions and technology. . . . National Socialism understood how to take the soulless framework of technology and fill it with the rhythm and hot impulses of our time (Goebbels, in Herf, 1984:196).

As Herf points out, this affirmation captures the essence of Nazi reactionary modernism. Technology had been removed from the domain of *Zivilisation* and secured within the world of *Kultur*, rescued from the sterile formlessness of capitalist accumulation and imbued with the meanings of race, blood and creative German labor (Herf, 1984:224). Supposedly extricated from the nexus of Jewish exchange-relations and resituated within the *Volksgemeinschaft*, technology under National Socialism had "assumed clear and beautiful forms" (p.206).

But the liberation of industrial technology obviously could not be accomplished fully if the German working class was not liberated along with it as well. Thus the transformation of the worker himself went hand-in-hand with the transformation of the industrial environment. For the Jew, the standard Nazi slogans intoned, work was a curse, the drudgery to which he and mankind had been condemned for their sins in Eden. The Jew's answer was to transform "work and the working man into commodities [*Ware*] with which one makes business" (Hierl, in Götting, 1944:6). But as a graphically dramatic booklet, *Schönheit der Arbeit—Socialismus der Tat* (1936) made clear, in Nazi Germany "work is not drudgery—work is honor and service to the Volk! [*Arbeit is nicht Fron—Arbeit is Ehre und Dienst am Volk!*]" In order to make sure this was so, the parasitical hold which the Jew had exerted over the German working class had to be broken; National Socialism had to restore to the worker his sense of a common, racial destiny amongst all Germans, whether they were "workers of the fist" or "workers of the brain" (*Arbeiter der Faust und Stirn*), as Adolf Hitler called them.

Schönheit der Arbeit made this transformational goal explicit. The German worker, according to Robert Ley, was to be turned into "a proud, erect and equal *Volk* Comrade"

(n.p.). "The Bureau '*Schonheit der Arbeit*' with its tasks shows more than anything else the inner transformation [*innerlichen Wandel*] of German persons and their advisors." As the conclusion to the booklet emphasized, the efforts of *Schönheit der Arbeit*, in the context of National Socialism, had transformed the German working class "From proletariat—to Workers of Germany." "The 'proletarian' is dead," it continued. "The concept has been extinguished in the consciousness of the German Volk and will never again wake to life. . . . The Working Estate has been raised to the Honor Estate of the Nation. . ."

(n.p.). In order to underscore this transformation, the German Labor Front along with National Socialism as a whole abandoned modern, class-laden terms for production and substituted feudalistic words which carried the personalizing force of an earlier age. Thus production became *arbeit, schöpfen, schaffen, gestalten* (work, create, fabricate, form), while the products of labor were rechristened "works" [*Werke*], in the sense of artistic accomplishment. It was not the level of production that was raised, but "achievement" (*Leistung*) that was heightened. Factory workers meanwhile became the *Gefolgschaft* (followers), in the sense of feudal dependents bound by honor, while the term for community, *Gemeinschaft*, was applied to almost every aspect of plant life. This attempt to elide the divisions of class into the solidarity of race was summarized in a phrase frequently seen painted on the walls of German workplaces: "*Es wird künftighin nur noch einen Adel geben: Adel der Arbeit!* [In the future there will be only one nobility: the Nobility of Work!]"³

³This unified "nobility of work" was generated, of course, through the racial confrontation of German and Jew. In most factories, workplaces and offices the ongoing experience of this confrontation did not require an actual encounter with living Jews; the latter, after all, were being excluded progressively from the German economy, denied a means of employment or self-support, and driven (both literally and symbolically) into a corner from which there soon was no escape. Of course, it was precisely this willful exclusion of the Jew which underlay the reformulation of Nazi society as a whole. Thus even without Jews, the terms of racial confrontation comprised an ever-present structuring factor in the life of the National Socialist factory, something which was conveyed either overtly in the form of ideology, or encoded implicitly in the architectural spaces designed to give bounds to the new *Gefolgschaft* and thereby create racial "community."

The incorporation of the modern worker and work process into the renewed bounds of the racial community was to be expressed in the architectonic relationship of the beautified plant to the German environment as a whole. This was reflected in *Die neue Heimat* or *The New Homeland* (Wächtler, 1940), a book-length photo essay documenting the transformation of the German *Kulturlandschaft* (cultural landscape) under National Socialism. The book stressed that technology has been subsumed under the creative cultural will (*schöpferischen Kulturwillen*) of the German *Volk*, resulting in the transformation of workplaces into "work-homelands of the creating person [*Arbeitsheimat des schaffenden Menschen*] (p.144). Thus the factory-settlement, like the great network of the *Reichsautobahn*, was to fit as unobtrusively as possible into the natural landscape, thereby corresponding to the "cultural sensibility and living sense" of the German *Volk*. This formulation contrasts with the caricature we saw previously of the Jewish peddler who, wandering through the romantic German countryside one hundred years earlier, could spy nothing but gold and profit in the rising of the sun (see chapter 7).

Things were different for Beauty of Labor. "We do not regard the plant only as an association for economic purposes, as a means of housing a particular production process," the *Taschenbuch* asserted, "but as a living space [*Lebensraum*] of communally creating persons. . . . Afterall it is for the German person himself that the entire production has been set into motion. Keeping the German *Volk* healthy in body and soul, conserving his joy of creation and productive power—this must be the first and most important concern for everyone active in industry and commerce" (Hübbenet, 1938:30). Thus Beauty of

On the other hand, there were revealing instances during the early forties in which actual Jews continued to be encountered in the workplace. This occurred in those factories which were permitted to exploit the labor of Jews who had not yet been deported, a category which included those left behind in privileged mixed marriages. The linguist Viktor Klemperer, one such individual, tells of a kindly Berlin factory owner who went against the usual rules and allowed his Jewish slaves to use the *Gefolgschaftssaal* to eat their meager lunches after German workers had vacated it (see Klemperer, 1980:250). However, in order not to transgress the caste-like principles of purity and pollution that governed the new Germany (cf. Dumont, 1970a), the Jews were required to hang the following succinct sign as a warning over the entrance way: "*Juden!*"

Labor's transformation of worker and workplace had transcendent purpose. In accord with National Socialism's overarching principles of racial hygiene, Beauty of Labor emphasized, at least ideologically, the production of use-values for the healthful transformation of Germany as a whole, and not simply the production of commodities for profit.

In order to convey this, the Bureau created *Musterbetriebe*—model plants within which Beauty of Labor's idealized strivings could be fully realized and represented. Here as elsewhere, efforts were made to rationalize factory work spaces in accord with the spiritual and biological needs of the worker as well as the requirements of efficient production; thus the workplace was cleared and opened to light and air. Safety features were incorporated into machinery while tools and work chairs were redesigned for comfort and functionality. Picture windows gave restful views of landscaped plant grounds, gardens and sports fields. Special emphasis was given to plant entrances, on the principle that the "gateway to work should be appropriate to the worthiness of the creators [*Schaffenden*, i.e., producing workers] and not—as was often the case earlier—be mere holes in a dirty, dilapidated fence" (Wächtler, 1940:147). At the center of the beautified plant was the new "Comradeship House" [*Kameradschaftshaus*], a multi-purpose installation incorporating a range of facilities, including elaborate washrooms, libraries, infirmaries, as well as large eating and gathering halls that surrounded the worker with the trappings of Nazi ideology in the form of insignias, flags and *völkisch* wall-sayings. This building also provided a means of coordinating programmatic activities ranging from sports and theatricals to political indoctrination sessions in which the workers' roles as laboring cells within the great racial body (the *Volkskörper*) were affirmed.

Kindergartens received special emphasis on the plant grounds. Their importance was clear: by providing working mothers as well as spouses with day-care services, the beautified plant humanized the workplace. At the same time, in keeping with the principles

of racial hygiene that underlay such programs as the *Lebensborn* ("Fountain of Life") or the Hitler Youth, the plant community fostered the precious reproductivity of the working Aryan body, and thus insured the future health of the racially-purified *Volksgemeinschaft*. This purpose dovetailed with the construction of worker settlements on the outskirts of the plant grounds. The utopian model plant was made thereby to encompass the entire Aryan life-cycle within its holistic bounds, from kindergarten children and youthful apprentices to working adults with their spouses and infants in the family home. This meant that leisure time as well as the work day were structured by Beauty of Labor's built-in controls. And thus the Bureau's efforts to transform factories into model plants resulted in the creation of total environments.

The Kameradschaftshaus

The *Kameradschaftshaus* (Comradeship House) was the architectonic and ideological core of the beautified factory-settlement (see plate 59). Here the worker was subjected most dramatically and crucially to a spiritual and organic transformation through the application of Nazi ideological meanings embedded in practice as it was in the enveloping architectural space within which that practice unfolded. These meanings were not reserved to *Schönheit der Arbeit* alone. The fortress-like construction and steeped roof of the *Kameradschaftshaus* became standard components of almost every new Nazi community hall devoted to the indoctrination of National Socialist values, from those located in permanent Hitler Youth camps to those planned for the new Aryan village outposts with which Himmler intended to dot the conquered eastern *Lebensraum* (see Taylor, 1974; Ackermann, 1970; chapter 12 below).

Das Kameradschaftshaus im Betrieb (1939), a publication of the Beauty of Labor Bureau, suggested that the design for the "Comradeship Houses" did not emerge full-blown but was still evolving in tune with the functional needs of worker and workplace.

The *Kameradschaftshaus* nonetheless was fated to become the "center [*Mittelpunkte*] of the life of the factory community" (p. vii), a role it had taken on increasingly ever since the ascension of National Socialism to power. In line with this developing role, *Kameradschaft* houses were to be situated so as to be easily accessible, the centrality of their purpose physically distinguished through special architectural design, as in the case of Westfalen's Billstein Ironworks: "In contrast to the functional buildings of the plant, which are built of red brick, the outer walls of the *Kameradschaftshaus* are whitewashed, so that, corresponding to its significance, it lifts itself above the usual installations" (p.35) The illustrated pamphlet *Schönheit der Arbeit—Sozialismus der Tat* dubbed the Comradeship houses the "Symbols of a New Age," noting that in rural areas the *Kameradschaftshaus* often became the "center of the social and cultural life of the entire region" (1936: n.p.) Beauty of Labor's *Handbook* called the *Kameradschaftshaus* the "architectural symbol of the concept 'plant community' [*Betriebsgemeinschaft*]" with all its implications of nobility and nurture; it therefore "could not be made beautiful and worthy enough" (Hübbenet, 1938:138; see plate 60).

While affirming the importance of functional rationality consistent with "reactionary modernism," the design of the *Kameradschaftshaus* sought to enclose those principles within the meaningful framework of a Germanic architecture which had been developing since the turn of the century (see Taylor, 1974; Teut, 1967; Petsch, 1976). One of the major exponents of these principles was the art and architectural historian Paul Schultze-Naumburg. Inveing against the "building jungle" (*Bauwilderung*) which the values of the liberal-capitalist system had inflicted unnaturally upon Germany, Schultze-Naumburg emphasized that the inhabited spaces of a *Volk* inevitably must take on the "physiognomy" of its race. This was the case in Germany with the steeped *Satteldach* or saddle-roof, without which the German inhabited landscape would be unimaginable. "The spiritual person strives to lend a recognizable expression to his works which for him become

symbols. . . . When we look down from above upon German cities and villages, whether from a church tower or mountain, nothing determines our impression more strongly than the roofs" (Schultze-Naumburg, 1934:1). It followed from this that the proliferation of chaotic styles, flat, "Mediterranean" roofs or cube-like functionalist architecture in Germany during modern times amounted to nothing other than the destruction of Germany's racial heritage, through the superimposition of capitalism's crassest values.

We see. . . how the nineteenth century becomes a playground of commercial ideas under which handicrafts and art suffered the deepest travail. While earlier each product of handcrafted striving was a work to which the life's blood [*Herzblut*] of the master adhered, now the product was turned ever more into a commodity [*Ware*]. *The characteristic figure of the artisan was ever more suppressed by the figure of the businessman.* And so it could not be otherwise that the works developing out of this period. . . told no longer of the high value of medieval handicrafts-honor [*Handwerksehre*], but instead conveyed to us merely the meanings of sales [*Umsatz*] and money-making [*Geldverdienen*] (Schultze-Naumburg, 1934:1-2; emphasis in original).

Most *völkisch* architects agreed that it was the "Jewish-Bolschevist" who was responsible for this development (see Taylor, 1974:118-9). As we have already seen, this construction of capitalist spatial chaos was referred to constantly in Nazi antisemitism as an unnatural but inevitable extension of the Jew's chaotic racial physiognomy. The latter reflected the Jew's "racial-mix" [*Rassenbrei*], a biological hodge-podge incapable of creating the kinds of orderly forms and spaces which characterized the settlements of productive peoples (see Berning, 1964). To the contrary, the essential, social-darwinistic purpose of Jewish racial principles was to generate the enveloping labyrinths of the ghetto which so served the Jew's purposes of self-reproduction through concealment and cancerous expansion.

In contrast to the sterile and invasive forms of Jewish exchange, the vaulting German roof of the *Kameradschaftshaus* was a work of craftsmanship, a healthful, living form within which the upwardly-striving racial "*Herzblut*" of the German flowed once again. Clean of line, graceful in its simplicity, its casing hard as stone, the *Kameradschaftshaus*

rose up out of the northern German landscape like a natural outcropping. The *Kameradschaftshaus* was, in fact, a symbolic extension of the ideal Aryan body. Similarly, the protective hovering armour of its roof was an architectural correlative of the German soldier's steel helmet, which a judge at the opening of Hitler's "House of German Art" in Munich in 1937 had described as "the most perfect shape. . . that has recently been created in Germany" (Hanser, 1979:57). If the unyielding exterior of the *Kameradschaftshaus* served as a model of the ideal Aryan form, then its interior spaces were intended to shape and nurture the bodies which were fed into it. Thus the *Kameradschaftshaus* contained rooms corresponding to all of the body's functions, in rational but aestheticized forms evocative of Aryan cleanliness and creativity: the showers and dressing rooms, all of them designed for open, collective use; the modern rows of toilets and the chrome and porcelaine washrooms, with their collective troughs; and the all-important *Gemeinschaftssaal* (Community Hall). This room doubled as dining hall and indoctrination center, thereby using commensality as a ritual means for reinforcing the ideological principle of community. Surrounding it all was the beautified factory landscape, a garden environment designed to remind the worker of his rootedness in a Germanic landscape which he himself had shaped.

As we have seen, Beauty of Labor's emphasis upon physical hygiene runs through the program, in its concern for decent lighting, ventilation and noise reduction in the workplace, as well as in the provisions it made for exercise and relaxation within garden environments. This emphasis was symbolized especially in the prominent role played by the washrooms, showers and toilets housed within the *Kameradschaftshaus*. "The dirtier the work, all the more exemplary the washrooms!" went the accompanying slogan (*Schönheit der Arbeit—Sozialismus der Tat!*, 1936:n.p.) (see plate 61). Although in keeping with the plant's aesthetic functionalism, the emphasis upon cleansing facilities, like the role of the plant Kindergarten, was also consistent with the program's transcendent

purpose: the strengthening of the German *Volk* through a furtherance of its racial health. This effort was structured by the same principles of racial hygiene which underlay every domain of the Third Reich, from eugenics and sports to the program most fundamental in its collective transformative effects: the "purification" of the race from the disintegrative biological effects of Jewish filth and disease. The aestheticizing impetus of the plant thus extended not only from the principles of technical rationality, but from the structural imperatives implicit within the drive for race renewal, in which antisemitism played a central and defining role.

This role is brought out in a photograph from the German Labor Front exhibition of 1938, *Gesundes Leben, frohes Schaffen* (*Healthy Living, Joyful Production*). It reveals explicitly the meanings of antisemitism which were embedded within Beauty of Labor's interior decorative designs, just as they underlay the bureau's efforts to transform the German worker and workplace. In an exhibition hall designed to resemble the typical rectangular *Gemeinschaftssaal* of a Comradeship House, display cases jut out from the walls where the rows of seats would be, while the overhanging, horizontal ceiling beams are marked with lines of verse:

Brothers in mines and quarries
 Brothers behind the plough
 From factories and workshops
 You follow our banner's pull
 Hitler is our Führer
 He takes not the golden pay
 That from the Jewish thrones
 Rolls before his feet

In a Germanic hall encompassing the worker and the products of his work, the overarching message—an antisemitic message—is delivered: Hitler has freed the German worker and his working places from the manipulative pull of the Jewish puppet-master, and thus from the nexus of exchange. The culminating lines of the poem are inscribed on beams that

close in over the DAF logo (a swastika within a cog) affixed like an altar to the building's far wall (see plate 62).⁴

As the last comment suggests, the overall effect of the *Kameradschaftshaus*—one that is implicit as well as consciously intended—is that of a temple to National Socialism located at the center of the factory grounds and community. This religious identity is expressed in the external architectural features and centralized positioning which lends the building its heightened significance: its distinguishing brick- and stonework, its distinctive painting, its cleanly decorated portal, and its vaulting gable (marked often with a swastika where a cross or Star of David might be located) (see plate 63). It is expressed in the interior in the cathedral-like ceilings or overhanging beams of the *Gemeinschaftssaal* with its procession of torch-like wall lamps, the solemnity of its wall sayings, and the massive, swastika-embracing eagles or other insignia decorating the far wall and surrounding the podium like an altar (see photo of ideal *Gemeinschaftssaal* in Hübbenet, 1938:127). These religious meanings are expressed perhaps most explicitly in the prescribed inclusion of a *Fahnenecke* (flag-nook): a National Socialist chapel, a place for quiet contemplation on the meanings of *Volk*, race and *Arbeit*. At its center was a bust of the Führer or perhaps Nazi motifs in stained glass, all of it framed by rows of Nazi flags (see photos in Hübbenet, 1938:135). The *Kameradschaftshaus* on the whole suggests the characteristics of the feudal manor house, united with the fortress-like meanings of the Lutheran church—“*ein fester Burg ist unser Gott*” (see plate 64). These meanings are reformulated along racial lines, however, so that God is replaced by the biologized apotheosis of racism: the impregnable and encompassing Aryan Volkbody [*Volkskörper*].

⁴Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Photo 81/140/6.

THE FILM "GERMAN WORKPLACES": IMAGE AND REALITY

Image

Beauty of Labor was not simply propaganda. During the six years of its operation, from 1933 to 1939, nearly 80,000 factories were transformed (see Rabinbach, 1976:66), many of them equipped with Comradeship Houses and Community Rooms, all at a cost that exceeded 900 million Reichsmarks (p.46). Not surprisingly, the various public representations of this massive if partial reformatory program transcended the boundaries of a merely cynical propaganda to betray the underlying principles of Nazism as a movement of collective social transformation. Accordingly, one can turn to an offering of the Bureau's department of "Research and Enlightenment" in order to discover the essence of Beauty of Labor's program to transform the German worker and workplace. That essence was captured in *Deutsche Arbeitsstätten (German Workplaces, 1940)*⁵, a film which conveys not only the program's self-assertions, but also its implicit and contradictory cultural symbolism—one which has direct bearing on the form of the death camps, as we will see later on (see chapter 15).

The film opens with the camera panning across a black space until it hits a lighted triangle. This shape slowly reveals itself to be a work table on which a metal lathe is set, two disembodied, rough-hewn hands slowly caressing the lathe's governor as it turns. With this shot the film immediately creates an intimate image of worker and machine, suggesting that the machine is no longer an impersonal object of an alienated economic order, but as much an extension of the worker's guiding and shaping hands as are the tools of the artisan. At the same time the disembodied terms of the image operate in a reifying manner to bind machine and worker together even as all external and contradictory social

⁵Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 839/1-2.

relations are excluded from the screen. "Germany's wealth," the narrator intones, "lies in the labor power of its producing [*schaffenden*] people."

Streams of workers are seen setting out for factories in the sober light of morning. In the main hall of their *Kameradschaftshaus*, a group of men listen to their factory manager as he delivers the "theme for the day," taken from a speech by the leader of the German Labor Front, Dr. Robert Ley. "The most precious property [*Gut*] we possess is our race, our blood. Therefore our leadership will do everything necessary in order to make our people healthy and keep them healthy!" A bugle sounds; the workers "*Heil Hitler!*" and depart in military style for their machines. Here the racial basis of Beauty of Labor's transformation of the worker, and the significance of the *Kameradschaftshaus* in carrying out this transformation, immediately is conveyed. The worker's racial nature is a property of the *Volk*, a property which requires the same shaping labor that Germany's raw materials need, if the German *Volk* is to remain "healthy." The film will continue to develop these themes throughout.

The next shots show workers living and laboring within beautified and orderly work environments. A framed portrait of Adolf Hitler hangs upon a wall; through large picture windows a park-like landscape is visible. "Our primary concern," the narrator intones, "is the workplace. It must be functional and clean, roomy and light." "Before" and "after" images contrast the alienating filth of pre-Nazi workshops with the present. The crumbling brick of neglected factories and the dirt of bare-bulbed interiors are shown. Amidst the filth, seated next to their machines, disheveled workers eat from cracked and dirty bowls. "That is the past," the narrator announces, ". . . and this is the present. The formative power [*Gestaltungskraft*] of Community thinking [*Gemeinschaftsgedanken*] has triumphed everywhere over material obstacles; concern for our human and working comrades determines life and production [*Schaffen*] in the factory." In the *Kameradschaftshaus* eating hall, women in uniforms remove lovely ceramic eating ware from a carefully-stacked

and organized cupboard; men sit at beautiful, flower-bedecked tables, while signs on the walls proclaim the nobility of labor and the importance of *Leistung*, achievement.

Again, to underscore the remarkable, humanizing transformation that has swept the German workplace and Germany as a whole, "before" and "after" images are presented. A clean window is shown, with flowers cascading from windowboxes; this is an "after" shot, juxtaposed immediately to the "before" of an almost identical window, its panes smudged and broken, its sill bare of flowers. Beyond it, a filthy factory courtyard is seen, symbol of Weimar degeneracy and disarray, for which the Jew supposedly had been responsible—but now walls are knocked down as builders industriously set to work, raising the clean lines of the National Socialist factory, its gleaming dynamos standing like monumental sculptures within naturally-lit halls; clouds and sky are seen reflected in the building's glass facade. Next an entire beautified plant is seen, nestled amidst fir trees; then a spreading worker settlement is shown, the cottages in the foreground, the factory works and smokestack behind. Amidst rows of little one-family homes with steep, Germanic "saddle roofs" and picturesque half-timbered walls, idealic family scenes unfold. The overall effect is reminiscent of medieval German towns.

This domestic, personalized world is nurtured by the *Kameradschaftshaus*, the center of the factory community. To show its relationship to the plant, the camera first pans upward along the facade of a large factory building until coming to rest at the German Labor Front (DAF) logo—a swastika within a cog—affixed on top. In the factory garden the iron statue of a naked worker is seen, propping himself up with a sword; beneath the figure a sign reads, "To the Martyrs of Labor." Now the full image of a massive *Kameradschaftshaus* is shown, its Germanic "saddle roof," like those of the worker cottages, providing a sense of hovering protection while reaching into the sky with sharp and noble lines. The camera focuses in upon the entrance: several broad steps are seen, the second step graced at each end with large cement flower urns planted with geraniums.

Along the doorway's perimeters vines grow, helping "organically" to define it, while windows nearby are hung with flower-filled windowboxes. Panning slowly up the doorway, the camera reveals two lamps of intricate iron work to each side, while a sign with metal letters on the doorway's lintel announces the building's function:

Kameradschaftshaus. As if to demonstrate the centrality of this new institution and its ubiquity throughout Germany, the camera cuts to another, and yet another *Kameradschaftshaus*, the last one with a metal swastika set ornamentally within its gable. Workers are seen streaming in through the doorways, first to wash communally in gleaming, tiled rooms at modern troughs equipped with shower heads, then to enter large eating halls with cathedral ceilings, the tables set with flowers and rows of soup bowls, filled to the brim. "The striving for painstaking care and ever-increasing perfection [*immer werdende Vervollkommung*]," the narrator says, "applies not only to the workplace; the furnishing of kitchens, washrooms and eating halls also reveal the new relationship that exists between man and workplace."

To stress the role of the *Kameradschaftshaus* in generating this new relationship, the camera returns yet again to another *Kameradschaftshaus* entrance, its door this time a gateway of birds interlocked in patterns of the most intricate wrought iron. The emphasis upon traditional German handcrafting suggests that National Socialism has provided a threshold into a new social world, one which has encompassed the potentially disruptive energies of the working class as well as the alienating conditions of capitalism and reordered both along the humanizing lines of the traditional German working community. Germans are no longer separated from one another and from the products of their own labor by the engulfing maze of the Jewish-dominated capitalist marketplace. Now it is the personalizing values of German artisanship that pervade the capitalist production process, restoring to the German the dimensions of the self that had been drained by commodity relations.

The narrator confirms these meanings: "The large rooms of the *Kameradschaft* houses are not simply eating halls—they are the actual nurturing places [*Pflegestätten*] of the plant community [*Betriebsgemeinschaft*]." Indeed, this is the purpose of the *Kameradschaftshaus*. By shaping the mind and body of the worker, the divisive forces of class conflict are rechanneled into the solidarity of race. In this manner the worker's identity is reformulated into that of a German artisan laboring self-sacrificially to help produce the encompassing *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Aryan Volk Community. The film elaborates. Unlike conditions during the period of Jewish economic domination, workers under National Socialism supposedly participate in the cultural rewards of production, which are as suffused by the meanings of the Aryan race as is their own "creative" labor: sitting in rows in the main hall, the *Gefolgschaft* (a feudalized term for the factory staff) are seen listening in rapt attention to an orchestral concert, or reading in the plant library at tables graced with flowers. "Just so," the film intones, "all other staff facilities [*Gefolgschaftsanlagen*] serve the purpose of creating Community." Scenes of workers engaged in chess or target practice shift to images of communal sports amidst the plant's landscaped greenery. Running out into a garden past newly planted trees, men gather to play upon a field in which an arched berm provides the contours of a natural bowling green. Other workers stroll along garden verandas, the camera emphasizing their repose through close-ups of worker's hands resting on graceful railings. The factory's natural, life-giving environment is shaped by the German himself; hence its disciplined but organic lines are an extension of the German's racial form and identity. In this fertile but orderly environment, the most precious product of the German Volk's laboring energies is nurtured: the German child. Panning past a bronze sculpture of tumbling, *putti*-like children set amidst a large garden complex with paved walkways, the camera focuses in upon boys and girls at play. "Such Kindergartens," the narrator states, ". . . serve as beautiful examples of the growing realization that a factory can be more than merely a work

site at which one must earn one's money for better or worse; indeed—it can be a Community of the Working [*eine Gemeinschaft der Arbeitenden*]."

Now the camera cuts quickly to classic Nazi images of workers as disembodied ornaments of production: a bare torso fills the screen, the camera turning about it, showing first the muscles of the back and then the chest straining at work, until at last the camera rises to include the torso's face, staring with nearly expressionless resolve. Other close-ups show the details of assembly-line labor—hammering, sanding, filing, working at the vise—the camera's montage technique creating the impression of artisans at work. Marching out to the factory's *Appellplatz* (parade ground) to raise the Nazi flag, workers stand stiffly in military rows, the camera panning in from the left to show in a succession of profiles the craggy features of their "Aryan" faces. This standard Nazi film technique attests to their shared racial belonging; its intention is to bring out the reality of the developing, hardening *Volkskörper*, the collective "Volkbody" which these youthful apprentices, as cell-like parts of the whole, supposedly help to comprise. Now more apprentices are seen in formation, marching *im gleichen Schritt und Tritt* ("in identical step and stride") in and out of a *Kameradschaftshaus*, gathering amidst the beautified landscape for body-hardening calisthenics, then entering a training workshop to work on scale models of factory machinery. As the camera emphasizes their practice at model blast furnaces, a standard Nazi motif is evoked once more; this time it is the process of smelting, fusing and hardening steel from German ore, as the key Nazi icon of formative labor. "German youth will be the future carriers of the new work ethic [*Arbeitsidee*]. . . ," the narrator announces, as the shaping dialectic of German raw material, German youth, and the fusing German *Volk* is implied. "Decent comportment and clean work [*anständige Haltung und saubere Arbeit*]*—healthy, upright persons and factories capable of achievement [*leistungsfähige Betriebe*]*—will result from this deep-

reaching educational work [*Erziehungsarbeit*]. The places of production are transformed into places of *work!* [*Die Stätte der Produktion sind zu Stätte der Arbeit geworden!*]"

The film concludes with images of the orderliness and cleanliness of the plant environment and work process. Having internalized their lessons, apprentices return their tools with loving respect into a highly rationalized system of shelves, cupboards and cubby-holes, each tool awarded a place of its own and one to which it is perfectly suited, the entire system of tools visible at a glance. The film's implicit message is that the chaos of capitalist production—like the chaos of the Jew, who had preyed upon the worker's vulnerability—has been mastered yet again by the shaping force of the German's racial character. The lights dim, the factory empties, the work day ends. In a peaceful long shot, the camera reveals the spreading factory settlement, with its identical *völkisch* cottages, its neat little gardens and its children, all seeming to enclose concentrically the factory buildings and smokestacks which are visible just beyond it in the distance, with the *Kameradschaftshaus* at the core. "Beauty of Labor and Beauty of Leisure," the narrator intones,"—thus the circle of work and leisure closes. And both are equal concerns of the German Labor Front. For it is upon the health, the strong will-to-life [*Lebenswillen*] and the happy creative power [*Schaffenskraft*] of our people that the future of our Reich and our culture relies!" With this avowal of the social darwinistic struggle for racial survival, the film concludes.

Reality: The Industrial Transformation of the Aryan Worker

German Workplaces is pervaded with the themes of transformation. This is the millenarian transformation of German capitalism from a foreign and alienating system into a native, fascist order seeking to resolve all cultural and class contradictions within the encompassing embrace of the idealized *Volk* Community. Contrary to Nazi German self-understanding, however, the reality of this process is not really one of a humanistic

restoration. As is often inevitable with such attempts to reformulate deep-seated cultural contradictions for the purpose of personal and collective transformation, the symbolic forms with which they work already bear a freight of implicit meanings drawn paradigmatically from the system they seek to replace. These meanings are carried over when combined into the novel syntagmatic chains making up the new transformative system. Particularly in the case of efforts at rapid and thoroughgoing collective transformation, these implicit symbolic structures are often cast into dramatic and even vehemently manipulative new forms; nonetheless, such efforts "always perpetuate as they change" (Comaroff, 1985:198; chapter 5 above). Nazi Germany is a case in point, for the form of its millenarian transformation, however novel, is one structured as before by the principles of commodity fetishism, transposed however to the level of the social collectivity via the biologized terms of racism.

We see this fetishized theme expressed not only in the role of the beautified plant and the functioning of its *Kameradschaftshaus*, but also in the implied symbolic construction of the German bodies which occupy this space, the objects they fashion, and the encompassing spatial iconography of the entire factory-settlement. The interconnectedness of this symbolic scheme reflects a phenomenon basic to the symbolic structuring of human experience (see Bourdieu, 1977). This holds for modern societies as well as traditional ones, even though (as we have seen), the compartmentalizing effects of commodity fetishism, along with the supposedly demystifying terms of the individualistic, utilitarian-rationalist ideologies that accompany it, tend to disguise the unifying symbolic scheme that underlies fully-developed capitalist societies (cf. Comaroff, 1985; Taussig, 1980; Sahlins, 1976). We have already discussed the role of the body as the material locus through which social relations are meaningfully constructed and rendered reproducible (see chapter 6). But just as the body encodes the fundamental classificatory and organizational schemes of an encompassing sociocultural system, so too do the symbolically ordered environments of

"inhabited space" through which the body moves and from which it derives its complementary geography (see Comaroff, 1985:54; Bourdieu, 1977:89). As Comaroff has expressed it, building upon Bourdieu, "the signs and functions of the organism act as a 'memory,' a condensed model of the collective order. . . by the same token, significant changes in that order must entail a reconstruction of the mnemonic scheme inscribed in physical form" (Comaroff, 1985:124). In Nazi Germany, as in most millenarian movements, this mutually-reinforcing relationship is expressed in the multiplicity of programs designed to reformulate both the body and the space it occupies.

The spatial patterning of the beautified factory-settlement consists of a set of concentric circles. At the core is the German worker, whose body is encompassed within the form-giving boundaries of the *Kameradschaftshaus*. The *Kameradschaftshaus* in turn lies at the center of the beautified plant and the sculpted surroundings of its park-like landscape. All of this is enclosed within the domesticating embrace of the organic *Volk* settlement, from which the worker and capitalist work process finally derive their orderly and humanized (i.e., Germanized) contours. The development of such a symbolic scheme is not surprising in a culture which long had decried the inroads made by a modern and depersonalizing *Gesellschaft* into the holism of a lost *Gemeinschaft* (see Tönnies, 1988; Spengler, 1962). Indeed, the concentric patterning which Nazism sought to restore—the person relocated at center, defined positively by the humanizing boundaries of the encompassing collective, rather than compartmentalized within the "geometric grid of civilization" (Comaroff, 1985:143)—is a common construct of traditional societies. And yet the modern, dualistic contrast of these two ideal-typical patterns already betrayed the fundamental perspectives of capitalism (see Lukacs, 1971). In Nazi Germany, as we shall soon see again, the definition of the person returned to the center of the supposedly revived *Gemeinschaft* was one structured by the reifying terms of commodity fetishism, and thus the encompassing collective could be nothing other than a fetishism of the commodity writ

large. Here the phenomenological forms of use value and exchange, as Marx explained, are experienced as separate and opposing, the former encompassed unnaturally by the latter (see Marx, [1867] 1967/I:71-83; Postone, 1980). In order to reverse this exploitative and dehumanizing condition and thereby return to the humanizing values of a feudal era, German fascism seeks to rearticulate the contradictions of class into the seeming solidarity of race, while projecting the enduring effects of these contradictions upon the Jew as the age-old essence of exchange in all its malevolent, disintegrative power. Use value is to encompass exchange—and the German the Jew—once again. This results in what seems the "liberation" of the forms of modern industrial production from Jewish domination. Returned to the control of the naturally-productive Aryan, these forms can be devoted once again to the ever-more masterful production of use-values necessary for the strengthening of the Aryan *Volk* Community. Of course, in order to realize collectively this perfect but impossible encompassment of exchange value with use, Nazism created a rabidly ethnocentric and manipulative system far more exploitative and dehumanizing than the capitalism it sought to replace.

As we have seen, the seemingly contradictory, backward-looking social form of Nazism is what Herf (1984) has termed "reactionary modernism"—the German fascist rejection, not of capitalism as a whole, but of its *exchange* dimension, accompanied by the fervent embrace of its technological prowess as an alleged extension of artisanal production. (This theme predominated over the more traditional anti-modern strains in *völkisch* ideology in the 1930s, as National Socialism responded to the pressures of creating a viable power base. It is reflected in the shift in emphasis from the SA's more radically reactionary "artisan socialism" to the elitist racial technocracy of Himmler's SS [see Schweitzer, 1964; Mason, 1968; Rabinbach, 1976:67]). *Deutsche Heimstätten*

(*German Hometowns*, 1942),⁶ another German Labor Front film showing the construction throughout Germany of idealized settlements for factory workers, condenses the theme of "reactionary modernism" in one succinct shot. After contrasting the walled town of Erlenbach am Main with a modern Nazi settlement, the camera focuses in on a medievalized worker's cottage, like those depicted in *German Workplaces*. The house is shown complete with two traditional, built-in animal stalls, their swinging doors of finest *völkisch* craftsmanship. But while pigs are seen exiting the smaller stall, the viewer learns that the larger stall is intended, not for horses—but the family *Volkswagen!* The production of this affordable "Peoples' Car" was the pride of the DAF's "Strength through Joy" campaign as well as Beauty of Labor's "crowning achievement" in plant-and-settlement design (see Rabinbach, 1976:62). The car, of course, was never delivered; its plant was converted for the production of tanks. But at a time when the automobile still seemed an inaccessible luxury—while simultaneously bearing the stigma of modern assembly-line production—the *Volkswagen* as well as the model worker's city intended to surround its production plant came to epitomize the populist domestication of capitalist technology in Nazi Germany. As such it was consistent with Nazism's millenarian intent.

In the beautified "plant community" as represented in *German Workplaces*, to which we return, it is the symbolic construction of the body located at its core which generates, in an ever-more-encompassing hierarchical manner, the overall patterning of space. This symbolic model, a secularization of the meanings implicit within Lutheran constructions of the person and the salvatory process, treats the body as an amorphous zone of chaotic impulses which must be subjected to a disciplinary laboring process so as to generate a hardened, formative shell. An SS ideological text refers to this process explicitly as an *Arbeit an sich*, a working-upon-the-self in order to overcome one's *innere Schweinehund*,

⁶Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 837.

the internal "pig-dog" of rampant, egoistic emotionalism and chaotic self-satisfaction. It was not enough that National Socialist formations were comprised of "specially-selected racial *Menschenmaterial* [human material]," the text explains; it was also necessary that this internal material be shaped through an "iron self-discipline" (*eiserne Zucht*). When this process was internalized freely rather than enforced through punishment, the result was the production of a "whole person [*ein ganzer Kerl*]. . . forged in fire, hardened through cold. . . despiser of the inferior, the cowardly, the ugly [*im Feuer geschmiedet, durch Kälte gehärtet. . . Verächter des Minderwertigen, Feigen, Häßlichen*]" (Kotz, 1937:24-27).

Although the preceding formulation comes from the SS, the supposed Nazi racial vanguard, these meanings applied not only to them, but to all Germans. Civil servants for example expressed this process for themselves and for Germany as a whole in a film of the Nazi Civil Servants League, *Das Buch der Deutschen* (*The Book of the Germans*, 1936).⁷ There the process of producing a monumental, steel-encased copy of *Mein Kampf*, from the preparation of vellum from skins to the smelting of "German ore" in the blast furnace, symbolized the fusing together of the *Volk* Community out of its divided classes, its diverse regions and its variable geography. The latter was to be congealed through the exertions of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst's* land-reclamation projects and the tightening network of *Reichsautobahnen*. The massive, armoured copy of *Mein Kampf* served as a reified projection of the German body, purified and shaped into its ideal personal and collective form.

These meanings are brought out even more directly in another film, *Ein Lied von Stahl* (*A Song of Steel*, 1940),⁸ which juxtaposes the production of *Edelstahl* ("noble" or

⁷Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 89.

⁸Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 965.

refined steel) with the generation of a hardened German youth. This film conveys in an inescapable manner the identification of Germans as *Menschenmaterial*, the racial ore which, like pig-iron, must be shaped and hardened if it is to achieve the form most useful for the needs of the coalescing *Volk* Community. The ideal form this raw material is to take is demonstrated repeatedly through cross-sectional images of the various "sub-races" of steel and the concentric patterning they take on as they are shaped. "Working steel," the speaker says, is recognized by its "tough kernal surrounded by an exceedingly hard rind built of shell-like layers," while "*Edelstahl*. . . is the '*Rennpferd*' [the racing horse] of steel—it must achieve something quite special" (The thoroughbred race horse, of course, is a favorite fetishizing Aryan alterego in Nazism, as seen in the case of SS Major-General Jürgen Stroop, who identified himself with an Arabian steed he had supposedly "liberated" from the clutches of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto (see Moczarski, 1982:221 and chapter 14 below.) Throughout the film the inanimate forms of the natural German environment are infused with the qualities of the animate and vice versa; thus the molten steel is called the "flowing blood" as it is poured, while the Hitler Youth, excited by the image of massive steel blocks removed from the furnace and pounded repeatedly into shape, cry out, "We youth—of iron and steel!" Here the key Nazi motif for representing the fusing of self and society through work is fully developed: the smelting of ore into steel in the formative inferno of the blast furnace. This motif is reinforced at the film's conclusion, as the disembodied head of a blond Hitler Youth is superimposed over fiery flashbacks of the blast furnace at work. "Brothers of an iron time," youthful voices are heard singing, "we have become steeled [*Bruder aus einer eisernen Zeit/Sind wir stählern geworden*]." Thus the furnace becomes the quintessential racial workshop for the forging of a hardened Volkbody. In a context separate from the film, a Nazi poster soliciting recruits for the SA's *Panzer-Grenadierdivision* displays the results of such labor on self and society: the heads

and necks of two Hitler Youth—one flesh-toned, the other the color of steel—extend above a German tank as if emerging from a common, armoured body.⁹

In all of these cases—the SS, the Hitler Youth, and of course the worker apprentices in the beautified plant—the body is being worked upon to create a human version of the classicized, superhuman statues which proliferated throughout Germany during the Nazi period. Nothing brings out the fetish nature of the Nazi biologized construction of the body quite so clearly as these gigantic stone or metal extensions of the German superego, produced by such Nazi sculptors as Josef Thorak and Arno Breker and presented as the ideal Aryan form (cf. Wolbert, 1982). In a filmed portrait of Josef Thorak produced by Leni Riefenstahl (*Josef Thorak, Werkstaat und Werk*), the artist and his helpers are seen in a hanger-sized workshop, climbing scaffolds around their enormous dolls, patting and polishing like ants on an Aryan Gulliver. In the garden outside the heroic studio, the sculpted head of the artist is seen, neckless and enormous, resting upon the ground like a boulder. The monumentality of these statues expresses Nazism's millenarian character, by suggesting the enormous investment of productive energy that will be required for Germany to realize collectively the idealized reformulation of self and society which these statues represent.¹⁰

This fetishized construction of the person is implicit in *German Workplaces* as well. Like the Hitler Youth touring the steel works, the youthful apprentices in *German Workplaces* train at model furnaces. The meanings of this shaping practice—like the retrieval of tools from their organic storage niches, and their careful replacement—are intended to evoke a parallel ordering of the German along artisanal lines, ingraining the hierarchical code of community mnemonically within the body itself. As Burrige (1969),

⁹ Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Plakat Nr. 3/25/3.

¹⁰ Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; cf. BA Photo 72/26/55.

Goffmann (1961) and Bourdieu (1977:94) all have pointed out, this reformatory focus upon the details of bodily form and comportment accords with social attempts to produce a "new man," whether in the context of traditional initiation rites, in association with millenarian movements, or in the context of modern "totalitarian institutions" (Goffmann, 1961). Consistent with the latter, it is from the temple-like *Kameradschaftshaus* that the orderly meanings of the plant community radiate. It is into this centrally-positioned, symbolically-enhanced installation that the workers themselves are inserted; it is here that their minds and bodies will be shaped just as they, in turn, are expected to shape the raw material which is fed into the factory's furnaces.

Entering through the portal's prefiguring artisanry, the worker is enveloped in a reformulative ritual sequence encoded in space and practice. Here his fluid *Arbeitskraft*—the potentially engulfing "red flood" of the communist (see Theweleit, 1987), not unlike the molten steel's "flowing blood" from before—is rechanneled into ordered form. Thus the entire building is coordinated, functionally and symbolically, to the body it regulates. Almost automatically, the workers are funneled first into their changing rooms and then their washrooms and showers, facilities which receive special emphasis in the *Kameradschaftshaus*. Their communal washing comprises an inevitable motif in National Socialist film propaganda; it presents, in ritual form, the convivial washing-away of class distinctions, with the naked, fetishized truths of racial form and unity revealed beneath the concealing trappings of the external. At the same time this cleansing of the body is consistent with National Socialism's underlying biologicistic emphasis upon racial hygiene—the building of a healthy "Volkbody" purified of the filth and disease which the Jew above all epitomized, as the essence of exchange. The hardening effects of sports is also intrinsic to this strengthening process. Accordingly, workers in military formation are apportioned out into the beautified landscape. There they drill, work their own bodies in exercise and pay homage to the meanings embodied in the flags they raise, thereby expressing the

disciplined subordination of the self to the overarching form and requirements of the racial community. The same meanings are expressed in concerts, theatrical events and cabaret-evenings, and especially in *Gemeinschaftssaal* gatherings where workers combine to feed the body and orient its impulses to the transcendent meanings of the *Aryan Volk* Community. Throughout the building, as in its encompassing physical form, the facets of German craftsmanship and its implicit community values are installed—the graceful eating ware, the wooden *Stamm* tables for group seatings, the beamed ceilings, the ornamental detail and ironwork, and of course, the painted wall-sayings. These attest to the ennobling power of work ("*Arbeit adelt*") and the principles of self-sacrifice ("The Fulfillment of Duty—that means, please not the self, but serve the whole"). They might also well include one of Labor Front leader Robert Ley's solemn aphorisms: "Work means bringing order to the chaos of the material [*Arbeit heisst Ordnung bringen in das Chaos der Materie*]" (Ley, 1935:3). More than any other, this saying reveals the deepest meaning of the *Kameradschaftshaus*: *it is the racial workshop within which the National Socialist worker himself is produced*. This hygienic and aesthetically rationalized human factory now recycles the workers back into the orderly spaces of the workplace. There, struggling with the "chaos of the material," they engage the dialectical patterns of formative labor until finally they are returned to home and hearth in the encompassing *völkisch* settlement.

Thus the *Kameradschaftshaus* served a function parallel to that of the factory itself, shaping the potentially disruptive energies of the worker into the "useful" forms of race. The *Kameradschaftshaus* was the racial factory which produced the Aryan worker, ordering his impulses according to Nazi ideological principles, fueling his body so as to extract from it the highest *Leistung*, the greatest outlay of productive energy, not for profit but for the good of the community. Enclosed within these spaces, the German worker—supposedly a former pawn of the Jew, recalcitrant, internationalist and even revolutionary—was reformulated and realligned, his identity racialized, the potential

disorder of his *Arbeitskraft* productively rechanneled. Its work done, the *Kameradschaftshaus* released him back into the German factory-environment, there to tend his furnaces, lathes and dynamos—not as an unskilled proletarian, but as a German artisan-technician laboring to produce the greatest collective product of all, the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*.

* * *

Through the efforts of *Beauty of Labor*, it seemed as if the German worker had been relocated once more within a humanizing fabric of shared social values, the objects of his labor receiving once again the imprint of the person as in a precapitalist context such as Mauss defined (see chapter 3). But the truth was quite the opposite: it was not the objects of labor that had been humanized, but the person who had taken on the aestheticized quality of an object of production (see Rabinbach, 1976). Far from restoring control to the German over the dimensions of the self invested in the work process, German fascism had robbed the worker of those elements of control which he had battled for during the Weimar era: his independent trade unions, workers' organizations and political parties, his right to negotiate and lobby, to stage official strikes and to elect legislators (see Mason, 1977). Now, instead of the pursuit of class interest and working class culture, there was only the emasculating German Labor Front, along with wages frozen to depression levels and hindrances to job mobility, all encompassed within the inescapable discourse of race.

What *Beauty of Labor* had actually done, then, was reduce the worker to an ornament of the decorated factory (see Rabinbach, 1976:68; cf. Sontag, 1980). This reifying theme runs throughout the film. It begins with the initial, decontextualized image of hand and machine, fused together; it continues with the image of the worker's torso, disembodied and viewed from all sides as if it were turning automatically on an exhibition platform. One sees the effects of ornamentation in the rows of interchangeable worker bodies, washed, shaped through calisthenics, nurtured with food, organized within the prefiguring

geometric patterns of gardens, set in military formation and otherwise processed through the orderly spaces of the *Kameradschaftshaus* and beautified plant environment; they are as ornamental as the perfectly-placed tools they handle and the sculpture-like machines they tend. As the statue of *putti*-like children suggest, even the children in the Kindergarten are reduced to ornaments of the plant, to growing cells within the collective "Volkbody." This reductionist theme is summarized finally in the idealized form of the kneeling "Martyr of Labor," the worker who, having offered up his labor power self-sacrificially for the good of the whole, has literally fused into an iron fixture of the beautified factory-settlement. Thus does work "bring order to the chaos of the material," the worker as much a fashioned object of labor as the steel which the factory produces.

If the worker had been reduced to an ornament of the totalizing factory community, then the developing *Volksgemeinschaft* itself was nothing more than a collective fetish form, the combined, biologized product of its laboring cells. It was this which the concentric pattern of the beautified plant represented, just as the fetishized individual had been represented by the concentric structure of the cross-sectioned steel rods in the Hitler Youth film. All this contrasted to the fearful amorphism of Weimar capitalism and its Jewish creator. As the constant "before" and "after" images had shown, the beautified plant was a constant reminder of the world that the Third Reich was striving with millenarian fervor to replace. At the same time the plant's "ever-developing perfection" (*immer werdende Vervollkommung*) provided, like Melita Maschmann's labor-service camp (see chapter 10), a model in microcosm of the "purified" *Volksgemeinschaft* that supposedly was coming into being. It was inevitable, then, that the bounded holism of the plant's spatial pattern should exist in dialectic with the chaotic spaces that supposedly were generated by the invasive disorder of the Jewish body. As we have already seen, everything about the Nazi construction of the Jew betrayed the unnatural structuring principles of exchange—from the disproportion of his body with its fleshy protuberances,

slippery surfaces, traveling odors and overall imbalance, to the filth of his houses and synagogues; from his parasitical modes of reproduction to their cancerous expansion in the form of department stores and stock-exchanges; from the frightening labyrinth of his ghettos to the sterile yet expanding chaos of capitalism's modern architectural and industrial landscape, a maze within which Germans were divided from one another and hopelessly engulfed. In contrast to all this, Beauty of Labor had generated spaces that were perfectly comprehensible, the kinds of inhabited spaces which Robert Ley had said the productive German required: not a community "boxed up [*verschachtelt*] and "confused [*verworren*] by the Jewish "wire-puller [*Drahtzieher*], but "a simple, clear and clean community [*einfachen, klaren und sauberen Gemeinschaft*]. . . a community which he can take in at a glance [*Er will die Gemeinschaft übersehen können*]" (Ley, 1942: 55). True to Beauty of Labor's inordinate emphasis upon hygiene, it was a community, of course, that was *judenrein*—a community "cleansed" of Jews.

As an instantiation of Nazism's millenarian plan, Beauty of Labor sought to replace the disorderly living and working environment which the Jew allegedly had foisted upon the German. It did so by reformulating the chaos of that environment into German *Lebensraum*—the concentric, bounded living spaces which the hardened and productive German body was meant to occupy. In the process it released the forms of modern, industrial technology from their supposed embeddedness within the nexus of Jewish exchange. These it relocated within the "organic" confines of the racial community, where they could be applied in a rationalized manner to the further transformation of the German worker. Beauty of Labor's spatial patterning thus reflects the ideal German alternative to the alien and dislocating spaces of the Jew. At the same time its centrally-positioned Comradeship houses reveal the ideal institutional and programmatic means for achieving the mutually-dependent transformation of self and society upon which the Third Reich relied: through the beautified technology of modern industrial production.



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Plate 58. *Beautiful Workplaces—Greater Joy of Work.* Color poster with typical "before and after" motif advertising the "Beauty of Labor" Bureau. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 3/18/35)

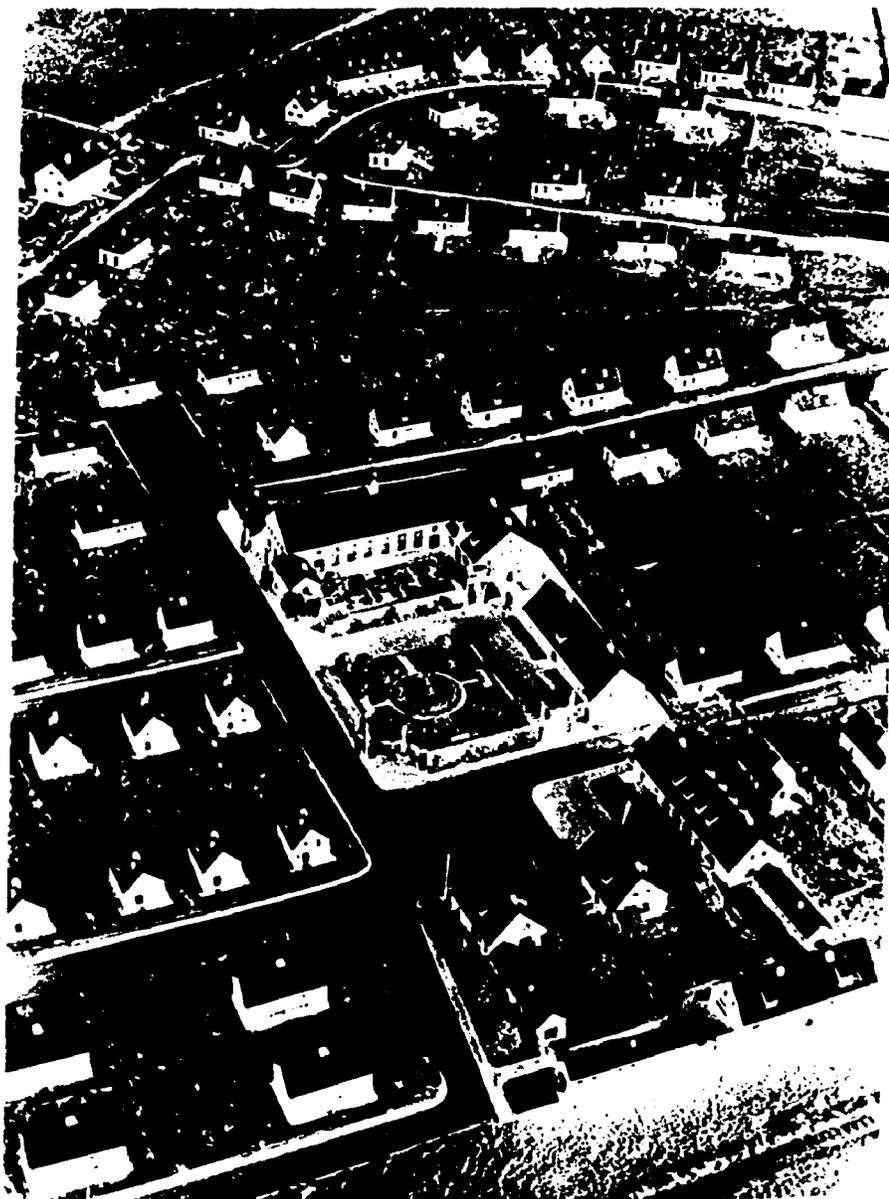
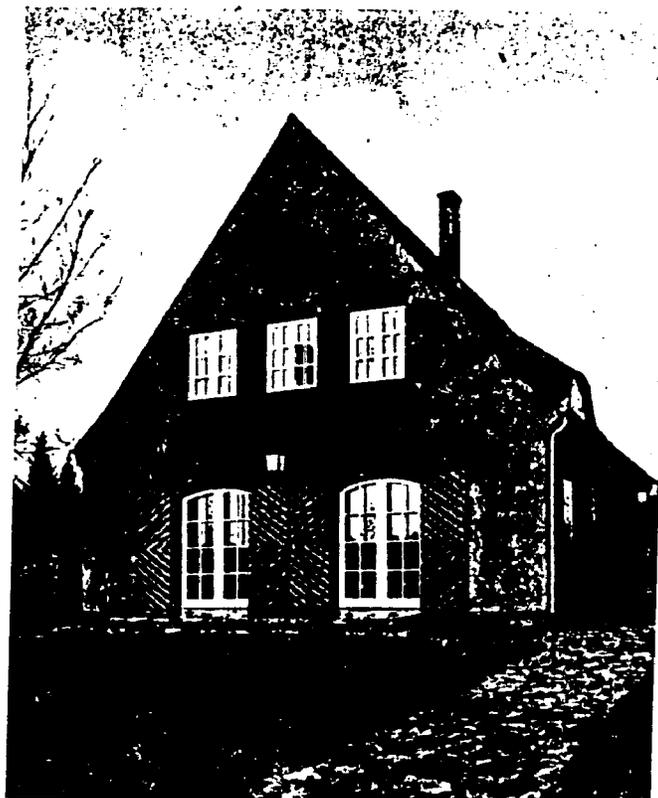


Plate 59. DAF factory settlement, with *Gemeinschaftshaus* at center. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 74/167/11A)



Kameradschaftshaus eines Mühlenbetriebes in Mecklenburg. Architekt: Ant. Schönheit der Arbeit

Plate 60. Typical "Beauty of Labor" *Kameradschaftshaus*. (Source: Hübbenet, 1938:139)

Reinlichkeit ist Gesundheit!



Saubere Wäschearbeiten:
Frauenbäder und brauereische
Abertankanlagen sind nicht nur
eine Förderung der Gesund-
heit, sie sind ein Zeichen der
Kultur und ein Quell rein-
licher Gemüts.

Schmutz schadet zu mancher
Arbeit, - aber nicht zum Ar-
beiter!

Je schmutziger die Arbeit, umso
vorbildlicher die Wäsche!

Plate 61. "Cleanliness is Health!" Showers and other sanitary facilities in the *Kameradschaftshaus* were a key component to "Beauty of Labor's" transformational program. (Source: *Schönheit der Arbeit*, 1934: n.p.)



Plate 62. Top: hall styled after *Kameradschaftshaus* at International Artisans Exhibition, Berlin 1938. (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 83/97/18A.) Bottom: antisemitic poem on ceiling crossbeams ushers visitors into hall styled after *Gemeinschaftssaal* at DAF exhibition "Healthy Living, Happy Producing," Berlin 1938. (Source: Bundesarchiv, 81/140/6)



Plate 63. "Strength Through Joy" color poster showing factory settlement with typical *Kameradschaftshaus*. Note swastika on gable. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 3/18/27)

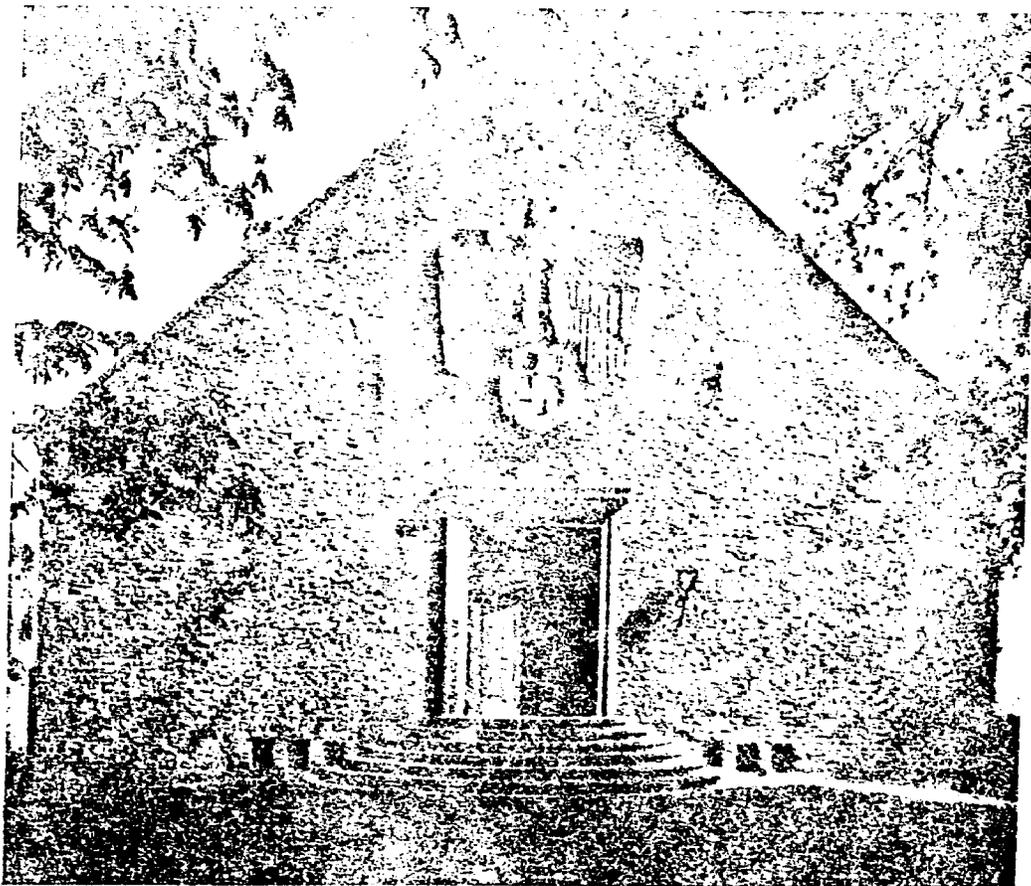


Plate 64. "Indoctrination Manor" (*Schulungsburg*) of German Labor Front (DAF), Erwitte. (Source: Teut, 1967:209)

CHAPTER TWELVE

EMBODYING THE MILLENNIUM: THE ROLE OF THE "FINAL SOLUTION" IN THE NAZI QUEST FOR "LEBENSRAUM"

CONQUERING "LEBENSRAUM": THE CENTRALITY OF ANTISEMITISM

So far we have focused upon two of the three essential paradigmatic components which, in conjunction with Nazi antisemitism, later came to be combined uniquely in the form and functioning of the death camps. The first was the camp form itself as a generic institution of social transformation in Nazi Germany. The second was the aestheticized technology of industrial production as represented by the Beauty of Labor program and later applied to the death camps in order to structure the killing process. Before we can proceed with an analysis of the death camps themselves, however, there is still one more component essential to an understanding of their final form as synthesized for the brutal purpose of industrially processing the Jews of Europe to death. That component is their physical and ideological location at the center of Nazi Germany's massive program for the geo-political transformation of Eastern Europe. This program of inner European racial imperialism—the drive for *Lebensraum*, or "Living Space"—entailed the demographic reconstruction of the east within a physically "germanized" landscape. It thus bears implications for the physical location of the death camps as well as the spatial and architectonic form within which the killing process was embedded. At the same time it provides the camps with their immediate ideological rationale as core institutions for Nazi Germany's millenarian transformation.

The Role of the East in the Nazi Millenarian Project

We have already explored aspects of Nazi Germany's millenarian character—its attempts at the collective transformation of body and space, self and society—as it was expressed at home in the "Old Reich," that is, in Germany proper. But the core of the Nazi millenarian project was focused, in fact, in the "East"—in Poland especially, but also in that broad area of East Central Europe stretching from Germany's Polish border all the way to the Urals. This region, the alleged hinterland of the ancient Teutons, was the fated German "*Lebensraum*." Here the German *Volk*, crammed formerly into its supposedly over-populated, resource-poor corner of Europe, was to find the necessary space for its biological survival and expansion. Accordingly the eastern *Lebensraum* became subject to a massive program of demographic manipulation and physical reformulation designed to "germanize" the region and thereby render it habitable for the German race. As we shall soon see, this included the screening of indigenous Slavic inhabitants for signs of Aryan "racial" characteristics; the deportation of "inferiors" from annexed regions and their replacement with *Volksdeutsche*, or ethnic Germans; the associated "germanization" of existing towns, cities and entire regions; the horticultural transformation of the countryside; and finally the plan to create an array of new, defensive villages populated by Aryan pioneers (cf. Burleigh, 1988; Gross, 1979; Koehl, 1957; Kamenetsky, 1961). All of these domestication efforts were presupposed, however, by the most ruthless and challenging program of all: the concentration of the Jews of Eastern Europe into ghettos and their subsequent annihilation. The latter took place first in the Soviet Union, at the hands of the *SS-Einsatzgruppen*, or mobile killing units, and then in the death camps of Poland, where the Jews of the east were joined by the entire Jewish population of Europe.

Part of the reasons for the coherence of the east with Nazism's millenarian vision reside in its conception as wide open space, unencumbered by the complexities of the Old Reich; a

region which, like new clay, awaited only its German imprint. "Here bureaucracy was not yet in command," wrote Melita Maschmann, a young participant in these colonizing efforts, whom we will encounter more fully later on in this chapter. "Here almost everyone was a little king in his own field of action. There was room for boldness, imagination and enterprise. . ." (Maschmann, 1979:75). However much National Socialism sought to transform the Old Reich, there it could never escape fully the encrusted centuries of German settlement and bureaucratic fossilization. There too the enduring contradictions of German society continued to be felt, however much they had been glossed over, as well as the novel chaotic effects of a polycentric Nazi political system, with its proliferation of endlessly competing hierarchies and its constant duplication of authority (see chapter 1, n.11 and Caplan, 1978; Hüttenberger, 1976; Geyer, 1984). Most importantly, though, the east lay beyond the inhibiting view of what the Nazi elite considered to be an essentially "bourgeois" population, one unaccustomed to the radical measures that would be necessary to achieve the millennium, however much those measures might extend from an implicit cultural logic that embraced the lives of its citizens as well.

On the other hand, anything could be done in the east—anything whatsoever—to explore the implications of Nazim's antisemitic, social Darwinist ideology and realize them most fully in action. Indeed, as Hitler himself had told his former confidante Hermann Rauschning years earlier on the eve of the Nazi takeover, "Our great experimental field is in the east. There the new European social order will arise, and this is the great significance of our eastern policy" (in Rauschning, 1940:39).

Part of the justification for this appropriation of the east, of course, was the desire to compensate for the unacceptable loss of Germany's African colonies as a result of the First World War. But the direct proximity of the east to the biologized boundaries of the German *Volkskörper* filled this compensatory drive with an intensified, existential import. The east was Germany's fated colonial reserve, a realm of endless resources and raw,

natural power to be shaped culturally and harnessed physically to the biological needs of the expanding German race. At the same time its power was a wild one, dangerous and potentially engulfing; after all, this was not only the home of the inferior Slavic horde, but the ever-renewable reserve of the Jew's malignant and encroaching power. This represented a perverse and involuted transformation of the European experience of "darkest" Africa—for what it meant, implicitly, was that the "formless expanse" of the east was the dark heart of capitalism itself. Again, one of Hitler's early statements to Rauschning identifying the Jew with capitalism makes this implicit connection clear.

It was the Jews, of course, who invented the economic system of constant fluctuation and expansion that we call capitalism—that invention of genius, with its subtle and yet simple self-acting mechanism. Let us make no mistake about it—it is an invention of genius, of the Devil's own ingenuity. The economic system of our day is the creation of the Jews. It is under their exclusive control. It is their superstate planted by them above all the states of the world in all their glory. But now we have challenged them, with the system of unending revolution" (Hitler, in Rauschning, 1940: 277-8).

For Europe's nineteenth century colonizing powers Africa and Asia became endlessly exploitable realms of raw "material," the only purpose of which was to fire the furnaces of capitalism at home—not only economically, however, but also in terms of the elaboration of its most taken-for-granted meaningful requirements. Thus the natural and cultural landscapes of these regions, as well as the actual bodies of their indigenous peoples, became open fields within which capitalism's most brutal realities—as well as its most subtle hegemonic forms—could be raised in relief as well as etched indelibly in experience (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). For fascist Germany, however, the inner-European east was not simply a distant, foreign realm to be appropriated for the purposes of self-reproduction. It was, instead, an opportunity to turn back what they themselves experienced to be the alienating and invasive forces of capitalism to which they, like the colonized of Africa and, indeed, the world as a whole, had become victim. Rather than simply using the east to stoke the furnaces of German capitalism at home, what they

sought, then, was to appropriate the power of capitalism at its alleged source, and in its Jewish embodiment. Their ultimate, inversionary aim was to encompass its alienating effects within the organic boundaries of a revived Aryan racial community—but what they actually accomplished, as we will see later, was to raise, in terrifying relief, the underlying contradictions of German capitalism itself in fascist transformation (see *Part Five*).

Of course, according to the Nazi vision the Jew was responsible not only for capitalism, but for bolshevism as well—a point which we will go to some trouble to demonstrate in the course of this chapter, and for good reason. This crucial symbolic identification has been ignored all too often in the past, in studies mechanistically separating Nazism's list of ideological opponents and then prioritizing them in a manner consistent with the atomistic and supposedly demystified tenets of modern sociology (see Nolte, 1986, 1987; Augstein et al, 1987; cf. Maier, 1988; Evans, 1989). This sociocentric analytical approach—motivated often by right-wing political agendas—fails to recognize the underlying symbolic relations that hold between these elements, and instead (as in this case) focuses upon communism and the Soviet Union itself as the "real enemy" behind the supposed obscurantism of Nazi "propaganda." In fact, despite the political realities of the Soviet system, for National Socialist ideology and practice exactly the opposite was true. The dominant ideology in the Soviet Union, bolshevism was supposedly another of the Jew's unsettling internationalist ploys designed to harness the dissatisfaction of the masses so as to deliver the property and fate of entire nations into the hands of the Jewish financial conspiracy (see plate 65; Hitler in Noakes & Pridham, 1974:501-2). This deep-seated Nazi ideological tenet dates back at least to Hitler's conversations with Dietrich Eckart, published by the latter in 1924 as *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin (Der Bolshevismus von Moses bis Lenin)* (Eckart, 1924). But it also echoes the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which Hitler had taken for gospel, and which owe their existence to Goedsche's late nineteenth century novelistic nightmare, with his identification of German social democracy as nothing

but another deceptive tool in the comprehensive apparatus of the Jewish world conspiracy (see chapter 8).

The power of the Jew thus represented to National Socialism a monstrous and nearly invincible force, one that could be domesticated only through the swift and massive outlay of the German's most relentless ordering energies—far more than had already been exerted to drain the German moors and bind the Old Reich in its network of *Autobahnen*. "We shall never be great statesmen," Hitler told Rauschning,

unless we have a nucleus of might at the center, as hard and firm as steel. A nucleus of eighty to one hundred million colonizing Germans! My first task will therefore be to create this nucleus which will not only make us invincible, but will assure to us once and for all time the decisive ascendancy over all the European nations (Hitler, in Rauschning, 1940:37).

It was a damming effort of unprecedented proportion (cf. Theweleit, 1987, 1989) that was needed to enclose the swirling formlessness of the east within the ordering bounds of the *Aryan Volkskörper*. It was only in this manner that the alienating force of the Jew and of capitalism itself, under the dominion of the German, could be captured and converted into the hardened power-cell of the great *Aryan Volksgemeinschaft*. This, as Hitler avowed, was Germany's "true object" and millenarian goal, "to set up our rule for all time, and to anchor it so firmly that it will stand firm for a thousand years. . ." (in Rauschning, 1940:39).

Within the symbolic terms of this millenarian drive, the promising frontier of the east constituted a previously untapped and limitless new arena for the idiosyncratic Nazi political system, a place where the implications of power could be defined, expressed, explored and expanded in absolute directions. Indeed, the German *Lebensraum* represented an exhilarating open market for Nazi polycentrism. Here the chafing powers at home could canalize their competitive urge for jurisdictional identity and economic spoils. At the same time the home front—otherwise divided by conflicts of class and personal

interest— could be focused outward in the concerted drive for "biological survival" through military conquest. Above all, this was the brutal playground for the ever-expanding SS in its struggle to take the lead in the definition and fulfillment of Nazi state policy.

Competing tirelessly and with increasing success against military authorities, party agencies and the civilian occupational administration along with state and private economic enterprises, the SS strove to maximize its power base in the east. This meant, among other factors, control over the definition of ideological priorities as well as over the pursuit of economic policy, both factors in which the Jew figured decisively. Indeed, as the linchpin in the definition of Nazi aspirations and political identity, and yet, simultaneously, as absolute chattel of the Nazi state, the Jew had become the paramount, sought-after form of "symbolic capital" in the Nazi political system (cf. Bourdieu, 1977). This should not be surprising, for the Jew's ultimate destruction had been deemed crucial to the successful fulfillment of the Nazi millenarian project. Indeed, speaking with remarkable if intuitive insight to this effect, Hitler's Governor-General for Poland, Hans Frank, had made the following announcement on December 16, 1941 to his senior administrators:

Do you imagine that [the Jews] will actually be settled in the *Ostland* in villages? . . . Gentlemen, I must ask you to arm yourselves against any feelings of compassion. We must exterminate the Jews wherever we find them and whenever it is possible to do so in order to maintain the whole structure of the Reich here (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1126-7).

Considering the Jew's pivotal role in the Nazi political system, then, it was inevitable that the SS struggle for political ascendancy would entail the attempt to maintain their control over every aspect of his existence. By countering the *Wehrmacht* and civilian administration in the utilization of Jewish slave laborers housed in ghetto workshops and concentration camps, the SS sought to prevail over the definition, exploitation and eventual disposal of the Jew as a generalized symbolic media of social interaction (see chapter 9). In this manner the SS strove to monopolize the ultimate source of power in the Third Reich—

that commonly-shared utility governing the coordination of Nazi polycentrism itself (cf. Hilberg, 1985; Höhne, 1970; Speer, 1981).

But all this took place within the structuring context of Nazi millenarianism. This provided Nazi Germany with a culturally-meaningful framework, not only for the construction of political action but for the shaping of personal experience as well. Just how compelling this framework was is indicated by the incredible fact that, even at the end of April 1945—with the Third Reich in ruins and the "Führer" himself on the verge of suicide—Hitler still could not resign himself to the failure of the Nazi millenarian vision. "The efforts and sacrifices of the German people in this war have been so great that I cannot believe that they have been in vain," he wrote as a postscript to his "Last Will and Political Testament." "The aim must still be to win territory in the East for the German people" (Hitler, in Trevor-Roper, 1962:253).

This self-deluding expression of millenarian fervor had been addressed to Field Marshall Keitel; it was to serve as the Führer's "valediction to the German Armed Forces" (Trevor-Roper, 1962:252). At the same time it follows directly upon the Führer's obsessive avowal in his will of antisemitism as the core of the Nazi millenarian project (see below and chapter 17). Together these comments constitute the Führer's last, desperate words before the end. Little could testify more clearly than this to the centrality of the east and of antisemitism in Hitler's life, his movement, and the entire Nazi war effort.

Genocide as "Necessity"

The conquest of *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe thus comprised one of the key elements in Nazi ideology—an element which has been recognized increasingly as one tied inextricably to antisemitism and genocide. As the foregoing comments should make clear, however, we are not dealing here with ideological elements of equal weight, as is so often assumed (cf. Jäckel, 1981; Hillgruber, 1972; Krausnick & Wilhelm, 1981). Antisemitism

and genocide did not simply go hand-in-hand with the quest for *Lebensraum*. Consistent with the crucial role of antisemitism in the construction of Aryan identity and Nazi worldview, the concentration, enslavement and destruction of Eastern Europe's Jews provided an *absolute prerequisite* for the definition and achievement of Nazi geo-political and demographic goals in the east.

Although these points already had been established to varying extent during the formative period of Nazi ideology and explored by such "Blood and Soil" ideologues as Walther Darre and Alfred Rosenberg (see Rauschnig, 1940), it was the actual onset of war in the east which led to their full crystallization. *Grenzkampf Ost (Border War East)*, an ideological "training" manual for the *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police) published in 1941, is a case in point. In the brief section entitled "Rebuilding the East," almost all of the basic elements of antisemitism are brought concisely together—the Jew as interloper, economic parasite, criminal and disease-carrier—in the context of National Socialism's millenarian quest for *Lebensraum*. "The German east," the piece begins in bold type, "was the geographic destiny [*Schicksalsraum*] of German man for centuries past. So it will remain for centuries to come." The invasion of Poland had initiated the first steps in securing this destiny, permitting the old to be torn down so as to make way for the new. Now it was necessary to begin a comprehensive reconstruction program—a völkisch "enmeshing" (*Verzahnung*)—so as to transform the east into an "eternally anchored part" of Greater Germany. This, however, was not merely a question of the "German-Polish Problem" or the problem of ethnic German minorities. In order to germanize the *Lebensraum*, National Socialism faced a greater problem than these, and one which required a solution "*an sich*," or in and of itself: the "*Judenproblem*" (*Grenzkampf Ost*, 1941:41).

In Eastern Europe, the manual continued, Germany confronted the Jewish Problem head on, for here Jewry existed "*in geballter Form* [balled or concentrated form]." Moving outward over the centuries of the diaspora, the Jews had entered Eastern Europe, not as

colonizers, but as "parasites," pressed ever westward by those peoples they previously had exploited, or following the in-bred Jewish urge for "business speculation." The manual proceeded in bold type:

Eastern Europe became the springboard [*Sprungbrett*] and power source [*Kraftreserve*] of Jewry. It was from here that ever-new bands of Jews [*Judenscharen*] moved westwards again and again and out into the world. It was also from the east that the bands of Jews came who flooded [*überschwemmten*] Germany and the former Austria during and after the World War (p.43) (cf. plate 36, ch.8).

The Jewish Problem, the manual stated, was more subtle and insinuating even than this, however. Eastern Europe had always exhibited a higher incidence of epidemic disease than other European regions—not only the bubonic plague, but also cholera, typhus, typhoid fever and dysentery. It was the ghettos which were the "breeding grounds [*Bruttstätten*] for these sicknesses. Germanizing the east thus required anti-epidemic measures of "gigantic proportions" in order for Germans to become "master of this scourge" (p.43) (cf. plate 53, ch.9).

Accompanying this frighteningly intangible danger, the manual reported, was the Jewish psychological propensity for crime. The ghettos, in fact, were outright "breeding grounds" for criminality and corruption. Not surprisingly, Poland's miserable standard of living "has its roots in Jewry," while the notorious notion of a "Polish-style economy [*die 'polnische Wirtschaft'*], with its inefficiency and corruption, was nothing other than an outgrowth of Jewish influence. Overcoming this "Polish-style economy" meant replacing it with "German order and German culture." This was a massive construction project and one requiring not only the "liberation" of Poland but the entire "eastern continent" from Memel to Kärnten, thereby placing in German hands the "raw material depots of the Asian east" (pp.43-4). In order to achieve this goal, entire villages would have to disappear and a German peasantry be reconstructed. The forests themselves—exploited ruthlessly by the Jew for mere profit—would have to be pulled from Jewish hands. "The totally wasted soil

must be newly constituted," the manual concluded, "and many regions must be planted totally anew. In this manner will we succeed in removing the face of a desolate cultural steppe [*das Gesicht der trostlosen Kultursteppe*] from these regions. . ." (p.45).

Der Untermensch (The Subhuman), an illustrated pamphlet initiated by Heinrich Himmler in 1942, elaborated on these themes especially in their applicability to the Soviet Union. Not only had the *Reichsführer* SS ordered the piece written; he even took pains to examine its text six times before releasing it for publication in a massive German edition of four million copies, with translations into fourteen other languages (see Ackermann, 1970:212). One can thus assume that the publication was not only of great importance to him, but that its lurid language and images closely reflected his own ideas.

Focusing heavily here upon the theme of space, Himmler contrasts the master race with the "subhuman," whom he identifies with the chaotic formlessness of the "endless steppes of Russia." On the western side of the frontier one finds "the well-ordered fertility, planned harmony of fields and carefully designed villages of Germany," but on the other side "the zones of an impenetrable jungle, of the steppes, of never ending primeval forests, where silting rivers painfully cut their ways. . ." (in Kamenetsky, 1961:191).

Expounding earlier on the nature of the eastern "subhuman" in a wordy, overblown and pseudo-mythic prose, Himmler withholds the identity of that bestial entity until midway in the text, hoping thereby to generate the effects of conspiracy and sudden revelation.

The Subhuman—that biological and apparently fully analogous natural creation with hands, feet and a kind of brain, with eyes and mouth, is in fact a wholly different, a horrifying creature, is only a semblance of a man, with humanlike facial traits—in spirit and soul, however, lower than any animal. Inside of this person, a brutal chaos of wild, uninhibited passions: unspeakable destructiveness, the most primitive of appetites, undisguised vulgarity. Subhuman—and nothing other! For not all things are equal which bear a human face. . . (in Kamenetsky, p.191; see also Hofer, 1957:280).

While genuine humans labored productively to create culture in the form of the plough, the family, and the orderly house, the subhuman lurked in the background, waiting for his

chance to wreak havoc and destruction. "Never did the subhuman serve the peace, never did he rest. For he needed the twilight, the chaos. He shrank from the light of cultural progress. He needed for his own sustenance the swamp, the hell, never the sun.— And this underworld of subhumans found their leader: —the eternal Jew! . . . Today the embodiment of this will to destruction is: bolshevism" (in Kamenetsky, 1961:191). Thus Himmler confirms yet again the accepted faith amongst the Nazi elite that it is the Jew who stands ultimately behind bolshevism and the Soviet Union, as he does behind capitalism as well. It was this same Jew who had instigated the historical struggle of nations against nations, as Himmler's epigraph to *Der Untermensch* (from his 1935 pamphlet on the *SS as an Anti-Bolshevist Fighting Organization*) made clear. This was a struggle which now was reaching its Manichaeian conclusion in the confrontation of the Aryan against the subhuman on the eastern front (p.189).

The SS-Einsatzgruppen and The Transition to Genocide

Indeed, it was in the war with the Soviet Union, launched in June of 1941, that the Nazi *Judenpolitik* made its transition to full-fledged genocide. The way had been paved by Adolf Hitler's radical definition of Germany's war-aims. It was not to be a conventional struggle, as the more conservative elements in the *Wehrmacht* may originally have assumed, but a "war of opposing world views," a racial war requiring a ruthless campaign to eliminate the biological basis of "Jewish Bolshevism" (see Dawidowicz, 1975; Krausnick & Wilhelm, 1981). As Browning has argued, this same message was conveyed verbally in general but unmistakable terms to *SS-Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing unit) commanders in their initial indoctrination in the months preceding the invasion (Browning, 1985). Once underway, the pragmatic terms of the operation were explored and expanded upon by the *Wehrmacht* as well as by the SS, as an increasingly explicit flood of SS field reports and military directives make obvious. What all this meant was that the immediate

combatants—the soldiers of the Red Army—were defined not simply as Slavs but as accomplices of the Jew, the actual conspiratorial power behind Bolshevism. And thus the enemy, in the broadest and most important sense of the term, was the entire civilian Jewish population of the east, as well as their militarized Soviet henchmen. In order to carry through the further, social Darwinian purposes of pacification and germanization, the mentally ill were also swept up in the "cleansing" operation, as were Gypsies. The latter were designated as racial "asocials" or vagrant criminal elements. Surprisingly, however, it was the asocial dimension that eventually took priority over the racial, since so-called "nonmigratory Gypsies," or those able to demonstrate two years of stable residence as of March 24, 1943, were actually exempted from the killing process (see Hilberg, 1985: 367, n. 107; cf. Milton, 1990). Of course, this dispensation came up rather too late for thousands of murdered souls.

Beginning, then, with the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* murder operation took the form of unimaginably brutal mass executions just behind *Wehrmacht* lines. During the preceding spring, Reinhard Heydrich of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) had established four large units, each roughly of battalion size. These in turn were divided into 19 sub-units of *Einsatzkommandos*, or special commandos. The total strength consisted initially of 3,000 men. Designated *Einsatzgruppen* A, B, C, and D, each SS mobile killing unit was assigned to a different region of the invaded territories, encompassing the Baltic states, White Russia, the Ukraine, the Crimea and the Caucasus (see Hilberg, 1985:289). Once in the field these units were supplemented by additional special commandos under the Higher SS and Police Leaders, as well as by a rapidly growing number of German Order Police along with indigenous units of Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians and Ukrainians. And then there were the troops of Germany's ally in the field, Rumania, who pitched in with genuine zeal pp.305-7; 374-5). The SS mobile killing units ultimately engaged in two sweeps

throughout the invaded territories of the Soviet Union—the first from June 1941 until roughly December and the second beginning in January 1942—separated by an intermediate but overlapping period during which Jews were exploited as slaves and otherwise strangled in temporary ghettos under German military and civil administration. During the second phase the number of German and auxiliary forces involved in the supervision of slave labor projects and the liquidation of ghettos had reached a figure in the low hundreds of thousands, while a total of at least 1,200,000 Jews had been murdered, directly or indirectly, by the end of the operations (see pp.370-371; 390; 1219).

By the time the *Einsatzgruppen* operations concluded, they had become but a primitive early phase in the evolving program to annihilate the Jews of Europe in death camps. They had begun, however, as a cooperative exploration of the means whereby the radicalizing *Judenpolitik* could help to focus and coordinate Nazi Germany's war of racial imperialism.

Prior to the beginning of the invasion, there had been no explicit written statement laying out the program to murder all Jewish civilians in the Soviet Union. Even Hermann Göring's famous directive empowering Heydrich to carry out an ultimate "Final Solution" for all of Europe—issued, significantly, on July 31 (or after the *Einsatzgruppen* killing spree were already a month underway)—was characteristically vague. This lack of specificity in written orders has been a vexatious historiographical problem for those historians trying to understand the evolution of the "Final Solution" (see chapter 1). The problem affects not only the attempt to pinpoint the actual beginning of genocide, but the effort to determine to what extent its emergence was either the product of long-held intentions of Nazi leaders or a previously unplanned development extending "functionally" from the polycentrism of the Nazi political system and precipitated by unforeseen and short-term historical events. But all this, as we now know, is in keeping with the terms whereby the competitive manipulation of the Jew as generalized symbolic medium of social

interaction was left purposely vague so as to allow it the maximum play in performing its ever-radicalizing coordinating function—something which required a progressive exploitation if it was to remain potent (cf. Broszat, 1970). The tendency to keep things vague was partly intuitive, suggesting the extent to which top Nazi leaders were attuned to the structural fine-points of the political system in which they competed to keep themselves afloat. Himmler, of course, benefitted particularly by leaving things open. Thus, when learning of an effort in early 1942 by the Ministry for Eastern Occupied Territories to usurp control over the definition of Jewish parentage by applying terms more stringent than the original Nuremberg Laws, Himmler wrote in protest to the head of the SS-Main Office:

I request urgently that no ordinance be issued about the concept of "Jew." With all these foolish definitions we are only tying our hands. The occupied eastern territories will be cleared of Jews. The implementation of this very hard order has been placed on my shoulders by the Führer. No one can release me from this responsibility in any case. So I forbid all interference (Himmler, in Hilberg, 1985:368).

At the beginning of the *Einsatzgruppen* operations, in any event, Hitler and his followers were still living out, in the context of unfolding historical developments, the pragmatic and culturally-shaded possibilities of how their resolution to eliminate the Jews of Europe might actually be accomplished. One tendency was already structurally predetermined, however, by the perverse cultural "logic" of Nazi antisemitic conspiracy theory, with its requirement of an alleged reversal of statuses between German and Jew. Now that the war had placed the Jews in German hands in their greatest European concentration, their manipulative exchange-nexus could no longer be allowed to entrap and destroy the German; it was the Jew now who would be engulfed, dehumanized and somehow destroyed (see chapter 15 and Seifert, 1940).

Thus on March 13, 1941, the Military High Command under Field Marshal Keitel had issued a special directive for "Operation Barbarossa," or the planned invasion of the Soviet Union that June. The *Reichsführer*-SS Heinrich Himmler, he indicated, would be

conducting "special tasks for the preparation of the political administration—tasks entailed by the final struggle that will have to be carried out between two opposing political systems" (in Dawidowicz, 1975:160-1). Two weeks later General Halder, Army Chief of Staff, outlined in his diary the key points Adolf Hitler had made to the *Wehrmacht* leadership concerning Germany's military objectives against the Soviet Union. Without mentioning Jews, Halder wrote that Hitler had made a "devastating assessment of Bolshevism"; the coming war was to be one of "extermination." His heading for the entry: "*Struggle between two Weltanschauungen*" (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1086). Explicit written orders to annihilate Russian Jewry still had not been issued, yet the ideological identification of the enemy in the Soviet Union, as we have seen, was already implied in the long-standing equation of bolshevism with the Jew. And even if this point were not perfectly obvious to all military leaders, such a perspective was, without a doubt, a taken-for-granted amongst the more ideologically rigorous SS. After all, Heinrich Himmler had published a serious and thoroughly antisemitic essay in the mid-thirties in which the SS was defined specifically as an "anti-bolshevist fighting organization" (see Himmler, 1937 [3rd ed.]). For these reasons the verbal indoctrination sessions which the SS-*Einsatzgruppen* leaders received prior to the invasion obviously must have been conducted with the same ideological points in mind, a point on which Hilberg and Browning concur (see Hilberg, 1985 :290; Browning, 1985:18).¹

¹Shortly after the war, at one of the Nuremberg military trials, SS General Bach-Zalewsky arose as a "question of principle" to contradict those who were denying widespread knowledge and complicity of mass murder from the earliest phases of Operation Barbarossa.

Regardless of whether it was damaging to me or not, I am anxious to establish the truth. . . . In view of my task, which was to wage total war against the partisans, I was probably the most traveled of the German generals during the war. I talked with hundreds of generals and thousands of officers of all ranks. . . . Anybody who traveled knew from the first day that the Jews were being exterminated, by methods which, at the beginning, were not systematic. Later, when the Russian campaign was launched, the killing was explicitly prescribed, with the object of exterminating Judaism (Bach-Zalewsky, quoted by Poliakov in Friedländer, 1969:139-40).

Browning has argued persuasively that Heydrich gave each *Einsatzgruppen* commander "considerable latitude to prove himself" (Browning, 1985:19) in the pragmatic exploration and fulfillment of his vaguely-defined tasks of mass murder. This included free play "to test the limits of local army tolerance of and cooperation with the mass murders, to incite local pogroms and enlist local collaboration, and to 'ease' his men into their task" (p.19). This too is consistent with the basic terms of Nazi polycentrism. The "market value" of the Jew as a symbolic medium of social interaction was about to be pumped up again, as had occurred during *Kristallnacht*. Only now it was happening on the eastern front, and amongst those powers seeking, cooperatively yet competitively, to define their future *modus vivendi* while simultaneously developing principles for pacifying and coopting significant elements among the indigenous, non-Jewish population. Now was the time for *SS-Einsatzgruppen* commanders to demonstrate competitively their own ideological commitment, while implicating the military in a hegemony-defining process controlled ultimately by the SS through its ideological discourse of antisemitic racial imperialism. At the same time this gave the military along with the soon-to-be established German civil administration an opportunity, however circumscribed, to participate in the radicalizing definition of the *Judenpolitik* and to exploit competitively the symbolic medium according to their own priorities and needs.

And indeed, as the actual operations got underway, this is precisely what happened. Each encompassing *Einsatzgruppe* as well as its subordinate commando units began issuing "secret" reports—often reproduced in batches of 50 or more (see Hilberg, 1985::296-7)—in which they strove to outshine one another. As Browning points out (1985:19), these reports revealed just how clear *Einsatzgruppe* commanders had been from the outset concerning the general murderous nature of their orders for the east, while at the same time demonstrating how thoroughly (if variously) they had learned to apply them. Thus the field report issued on October 15, 1941 by Commander Stahlecker of

Einsatzgruppe A, operating in the Baltic States, which also demonstrates how participation in anti-Jewish actions became a method whereby local populations were to be hegemonized:

. . . Native antisemitic forces were induced to start pogroms against Jews during the first hours of the invasion, though this proved to be very difficult. Carrying out orders, the Security Police was determined to solve the Jewish question with all possible means and most decisively. But it was desirable that the Security Police should not put in an immediate appearance, at least at the beginning, since the extraordinarily harsh measures were apt to cause a stir even in German circles. It had to be shown to the world that the inhabitants themselves took the first measures by way of natural reaction against the repression by the Jews over several decades and against the terror exercised by the Communists during the preceding period. . . . It was anticipated from the beginning that the Jewish problem in the *Ostland* [Baltic] would not be solved solely through pogroms. On the other hand, in accordance with basic orders, the cleansing operation of the Security Police had the goal of the most comprehensive elimination possible of Jews. Extensive executions were thus carried out by special units in the cities and the plains" (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1092-3).

Here, of course, the SS are attempting to build upon an "indigenous" practice in order to coopt the local population; by encourage pogroms, they are, in effect, offering the locals Jews to murder as a form of German political capital. The reference to the difficulty in provoking pogroms should not belie the fact that, at least initially, the SS did manage to get numerous pogroms off the ground, while formally-recruited auxiliary forces ultimately played a significant role in the *Einsatzgruppen* murder program (see Hilberg, 1985:310-12; Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1093). In any event, by mid-October Stahlecker's interpretation of SS objectives (with or without pogroms) had already resulted in the murder of 118,430 Jews (see Browning, 1985:19).

In a tone similar to the previous report, Dr. Rudolf Lange, operating a sub-unit of the same *Einsatzgruppe* in Latvia, reported in 1942 that "the goal that *Einsatzkommando 2* had in mind from the beginning was a radical solution to the Jewish problem through the execution of all Jews" (Lange, quoted by Browning: 1985:20). *Einsatzgruppe A* was no less explicit in its cumulative report for 1941: "The systematic cleansing work

[*Säuberungsarbeit*] in the east encompassed, in line with basic orders, the most thorough elimination of Jewry possible. This goal, with the exception of White Russia [*Weissruthenien*] essentially has been reached through the execution so far of 229,052 Jews" (in Ackermann, 1970:157). If this were not clear enough, the report was accompanied in best entrepreneurial fashion by a map with ingratiating little coffins next to the number of Jews killed per region; Estonia was labeled "*judenfrei*." *Einsatzgruppe A* clearly did not want the results of its enthusiastic labors to go unnoticed and unappreciated (see plate 66 and Poliakov, 1979:286)

On the other hand, Erwin Schulz, leader of sub-unit 5 working under *Einsatzgruppe C* in the Ukraine, quickly got a reputation for being "weak-kneed" (*schlapp*) as Browning indicates, while Dr. Otto Rasch, Schulz's commander, informed the entire staff of having been criticized for its far-too lenient treatment of Jews. This was to be remedied by the prompt killing of women and children in future (see Browning, 1985:19). The source of the criticism of Rasch's unit was the Higher SS and Police Leader Jeckeln, who had been sent in originally by Himmler to assist *Einsatzgruppe C* in the Ukraine but immediately tried to outdo them. According to Hilberg Jeckeln was "responsible for some of the greatest massacres in the Ukraine" (Hilberg, 1985:297). Paul Blobel, leader of *Einsatzkommando 4a* and apparently far more ambitious than his colleague Erwin Schulz, was having none of it: annoyed at the prominent role Jeckeln's units had played in the notorious massacre of 33,000 Jews at Babi Yar near Kiev at the end of September 1941, Blobel took pains to observe in his report of October 12 that, aside from this action, his commando had killed 14,000 Jews "without any outside help" (in Hilberg, p.297). Blobel was one of those who used his earlier successes to negotiate an entire career in mass murder. Placed in charge of the Special Commando 1005, the "Excavation Commando" [*Enterdungskommando*] operating independently throughout Eastern Europe under Himmler's direct order, Blobel later was instrumental in developing efficient means for

cremating the corpses of Jews which had been left behind in mass graves, so as to remove all traces of their existence. He even gave formal lectures on his methodology in Berlin to Eichmann's colleagues, and became a regular consultant in this regard for death camp commandants (p.977; cf. Poliakov, 1979 :138-9; chapter 13 below and plate 106, ch.15).

Once in the field, the leaders of the *SS-Einsatzgruppen* thus took the opportunity given them to explore competitively the underlying genocidal purpose of National Socialism's war in the east. In this connection it should be noted that, far from being psychopaths or marginals, the *SS-Einsatzgruppen* commanders represented a cross-section of the German and Nazi elite—including several lawyers, a physician, an opera singer and a pastor, as well as others with university training, most of them in their thirties (see Hilberg, 1985:287-9). The use of these individuals reflects obviously upon the composition of the SS itself, and resulted partly from Reinhard Heydrich's desire (as Hilberg argues) to implicate a wider spectrum of SS leaders in these brutal actions. The point was to insure a more general commitment to the ever-radicalizing anti-Jewish policy of the SS. Whether or not any of them actually sought command positions is unclear, although Hilberg notes that they all undoubtedly wanted "a certain measure of power, fame, and success" (p.289). Their command positions made such goals more accessible to them, providing those who had the stomach for it an opportunity to participate importantly in the further definition of this crucial area of Nazi state policy—to prevail in fact personally over the disposal of the Jew as a symbolic medium—and thereby establish competitively the importance of their personal contribution to the achievement of Nazi goals. At the same time the use of such distinguished professionals and members of the intelligentsia suggests just how central the annihilation of the Jews was, not only to the SS but to Nazi Germany itself. After all, the establishment of German racial superiority in Europe was, as they saw it, a cultural task of the highest order.

Significantly, the desire—or necessity—to participate in the radicalizing manipulation of the Jew as a symbolic medium was not limited to SS; on the contrary, it was a prerequisite for participation in the Nazi political system itself. This is made clear in several orders issued by Germany's usually more conservative military elite. Field Marshall Keitel's early directive of September 12, 1941, for example, clarifies the identity of the Jewish target while underscoring the necessity for cooperation with the SS: "The struggle against Bolshevism demands ruthless and energetic measures, above all against the Jews, the main carriers of Bolshevism" (in Dawidowicz: 1976:166). In a similar vein, the Nazi-oriented Field Marshall von Reichenau of the Sixth Army, seeking to insure the smooth cooperation of army troops with the *SS-Einsatzgruppen*, issued the following order. It was one which Adolf Hitler himself singled out—no doubt to the benefit of von Reichenau's career—as an "excellent" expression of Nazi goals in Operation Barbarossa, and a model to be incorporated into subsequent orders by all members of the military high command:

The essential goal of the advance against the Jewish-Bolshevist system is the total destruction of its means of power and the extermination of the Asiatic influence in the European cultural sphere. From this extend tasks for the troops which surpass a one-sided definition of soldiering. The soldier in the east is not only a fighter according to the rules of the art of war, but is also the carrier of an inexorable *völkisch* idea and avenger for all of the bestialities that have been suffered by German and race-related peoples. For this reason the soldier must have *full* understanding for the necessity of visiting a hard, but just expiation [*Sühne*] upon Jewish subhumanity. . . (von Reichenau, in Hillgruber, 1972:146; cf. Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1097).

Even the attempts by old-guard generals to uphold a more traditional code of soldierly ethics had to co-exist with the most radical of ideological avowals. Thus General von Manstein of the Eleventh Army, while asserting on November 20, 1941 the necessity for strict measures against any refractions of soldierly honor, expressed himself with proper ideological fervor in regard to the fight against partisans: "Jewry comprises the middleman between the enemy in the rear and the still-fighting remnants of the Red Army and the Red

leadership. Stronger than in Europe (sic), it holds all key positions in the political leadership and administration, has taken over commerce and handicrafts and furthermore comprises the cells for all unrest and potential uprisings. The Jewish-bolshevist system once and for all must be rooted out [*ausgerotet*]" (in Hillgruber, 1972:146-7). These genocidal affirmations all demonstrate the extent to which the language and practice of antisemitism had become essential to the structuring of politics in the Third Reich, facilitating the insertion of the *Wehrmacht* and other conservative elements within the otherwise chaotic hegemonic apparatus of the polycentric Nazi state.

In fact the *Wehrmacht* often cooperated with the SS on the front in excess of the minimum support functions guaranteed in their original agreement, as Hilberg points out (see Hilberg, 1985 :301). Thus in White Russia alone the army shot 19,000 Jews by December 1941 (p.303). At times the killings were even carried out in the best holiday spirit: "In Simferopol, the Crimean capital, the Eleventh Army simply decided that it wanted the shooting to be completed before Christmas. Accordingly, *Einsatzgruppe D*, with the assistance of army personnel and with army trucks and gasoline, completed the shootings in time to permit the army to celebrate Christmas in a city without Jews" (p.304). On the other hand, competition to define priorities in the Jewish Question—and retain for oneself the benefits of Jewish property, valuables and slave labor—was a constant factor in relations between the SS, the military, and the "civilian" (i.e., party dominated) colonial administration (see pp.341-368). Disputes over property, for example, were part of an ongoing struggle, for as Hilberg observes, "the implication was clear that whoever owned the Jewish property also owned the Jews" (p.360). To provide only one example of this competition in the case of labor, Karl Jäger, head of the subordinate *Einsatzkommando 3* in Lithuania, made the following proud announcement on December 1, 1941: "I can now state that the aim of solving the Jewish problem for Lithuania has been achieved by *Einsatzkommando 3*. There are no more Jews in Lithuania apart from the work-Jews

[*Arbeitsjuden*] and their families. . . . Unfortunately for Jäger, the effect of his announcement was marred by outside interference: "I wanted to bump off these work-Jews and their families but this brought me smack up against the civil administration (the Reich Commissioner) and the *Wehrmacht* and prompted a ban on the shooting of these Jews" (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1094).

Coming from the other side, it was Hinrich Lohse, *Reichskommissar* or colonial governor for the Baltic States, who had intervened in October 1941 to stop certain of these executions because, as his office asserted, "they were not carried out in a justifiable manner" (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1097; Hilberg, 1985:376-7). This prompted an SS complaint to Lohse's superiors in the Reich Ministry for the Eastern Territories in Berlin, the latter headed by that leading Nazi ideologue of antisemitism and racial imperialism, Dr. Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg's post was certainly a political plum; nonetheless his presence in this ministry underscores how seriously the war in the east was linked to Nazi millenarian goals. Rosenberg's ministry demanded a report from Lohse, who thereupon instructed one of his subordinates, *Regierungsrat* Trampedach, to request a clarification of policy: "I should like to be informed whether your inquiry of 31 October is to be regarded as a directive to liquidate all Jews in the east. Is this to take place without regard to age and sex and their usefulness to the economy (for instance skilled workers in the armament industry working for the *Wehrmacht*)." It is significant to note, however, that an appended comment in a different handwriting—probably that of Lohse himself—suggested someone's careful acknowledgement of the overall ideological constraints within which it was now necessary for everyone to operate: "Of course the cleansing of the east of Jews is a necessary task; its solution, however, must be harmonized with the necessities of war production. . . (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1097). Dr. Otto Bräutigam of the Ministry's Political Division provided an unequivocal written reply on December 18:

The Jewish question has probably been clarified by now through verbal discussions. Economic considerations are to be regarded as fundamentally irrelevant in the settlement of the problem. Moreover you are requested to settle questions which arise directly with the Senior SS and Police leaders (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1098).

This statement was of fundamental importance, as Noakes & Pridham point out. The hegemonic discourse of Nazi antisemitism was performing its coopting function, as Lohse's appended qualification already indicated; the most radical of definitions would prevail. So it did, and with unspeakable barbarity during the second sweep of the *Einsatzgruppen*, when civil servants in regional branches of the colonial administration joined the SS and sometimes even "outdid themselves to make their areas *judenfrei*" (Hilberg, 1985 :379), destroying their own labor forces in the process.

Such competitive self-sacrifice provided a kind of monstrous fascist potlatch through which to display one's ideological purity—giving away one's valuables, that is, not so much to one another but to the German *Volk* as a whole, so as to underscore the importance of the contribution one has made. This does not mean, however, that the higher-ups in the colonial administration actually enjoyed losing their portion of control over the Jew as a potent economic commodity and source of ideological power in the Third Reich. This tension comes out in the attitude of the Rosenberg ministry regarding Himmler's decision to convert the entire ghetto system, formerly under colonial administration, into concentration camps as a step penultimate to their total liquidation. Writing on May 10, 1944 to *Obergruppenführer* Oswald Pohl of the WVHA (The SS Economic and Administrative Main Office, in charge of the SS concentration camp system), the Rosenberg ministry "recognized the exclusive jurisdiction of the SS in Jewish matters," as Hilberg paraphrases. It also conceded that the SS now would administer the converted ghettos as well as all workshops and slave labor. Struggling however to maintain some degree of leverage in the *Judenpolitik*, even at this advanced date, the ministry " 'insisted' upon the continued payment of wage differentials to the Finance Office

of the *Reichskommissar*. The Rosenberg ministry simply could not 'resign' itself to this loss" (Hilberg, 1985 [1961]: 388). Thus the Jew continued to serve as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction, commonly shared but hotly contested, its circulation increasingly dominated by the SS as a source of the latter's ever-expanding power.

Nonetheless, and in keeping with the competitive principles of Nazi polycentrism, the assertion of genocide as an ideological priority over the economic benefits of slave labor, no matter how dire the war effort, was one which Heinrich Himmler himself would have to re-emphasize repeatedly during the widening course of the "Final Solution" from 1941 to 1944 (see Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1160-5; Pingel, 1978:139-144). This he did while striving to totally monopolize the market within which the symbolic medium of the Jew circulated. One of Himmler's methods for regulating the medium's value included renting out vital Jewish slave laborers to military workshops, the Speer Armament Ministry or private business enterprises (built preferably within the growing constellation of SS-run concentration camps or sub-camps), while applying the practice of "*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*" ("extermination through labor"). This ideologically "justified" method obviously effected supply-and-demand, since the principles of genocide were built into the labor process: brutal treatment and carefully-calculated starvation measures were designed "ideally" to drain the Jewish worker to death within three months' time (see Pawelczynska, 1979:76; Pingel, 1978; Borkin, 1978:125; Ferencz, 1979:25). Another method of pumping up the market value of the medium was more diabolical even than any supposed Jewish "finance hyena" (a favorite Nazi "endearment") could have imagined. First Himmler would dole out his Jewish slaves for rental—and then he would pry his sought-after commodities loose so as to consign them instead to the flames (see Speer, 1981; Mason, 1968).

Murder by Trial-and-Error

So far we have demonstrated the centrality of antisemitism and genocide in the Nazi conquest of *Lebensraum* in the east, as well as the continuing competition that characterized the circulation of the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium, even in the course of killing him. In the next chapter on Chelmno, the first stationary killing facility in the east, we will begin to explore the cultural construction of the genocidal process and its implicit symbolic meanings in depth. This will include reference to some of the highly-revealing forms which developed out of the *Einsatzgruppen* experience, including the occasional use of camouflaged gas vans, as well as the process Paul Blobel developed whereby bodies were exhumed for cremation during the latter phases of the second sweep. The rationalization of the killing process was by no means merely a technical development, however. Two brief examples here from the earlier period of the *Einsatzgruppen* will provide us with insight into the meaningful dimensions of that rationalizing process, as well as a fleeting sense of the terrible human consequences which the murderer's inhumanity had for his victims. The first example refers to the overt form of machine-gun executions and their implicit symbolic structure; the second to the comportment of Jewish victims and their executioners at actual mass murders.

One of the standard murder procedures developed by the *Einsatzgruppen* reveals particularly well the implicit symbolic structure of genocide as it was progressively explored and articulated from 1941 to 1944. An observing *Wehrmacht* officer called this procedure, all-too-aptly, the "sardines-in-oil method [*Ölsardinenmanier*]." Hilberg describes the process: "The first batch had to lie down on the bottom of the grave. They were killed by cross-fire from above. The next batch had to lie down on top of the corpses, heads facing the feet of the dead. After five or six layers, the grave was closed" (Hilberg, 1985:319). At Babi Yar, the notorious ravine outside Kiev where 33,771 Jews were murdered in only two days' time, the Jews were "sluiced" (*hineingeschleust*) into the ravine through several

narrow entrances, at which point they were met by two German policemen who were referred to literally as "packers" (the word is the same in German) (see Klee, 1988:67-8). The meanings of antisemitic status-reversal are perfectly synthesized here with rationalized mass murder. The Jews have not been forced merely to dig their own graves; they are actually compelled in life to enact their own efficient mass burial into deep, narrow ditches, thereby saving their murderers the trouble of an extra, messy step. In this manner the victims are built into the process designed to destroy them. A version of this incredibly rationalized and tidy burial method, so reminiscent of Beauty of Labor's industrial aesthetics, will soon become a standard component of assembly-line mass murder in most of the death camps. But even at this early, primitive stage of the "Final Solution" we find the murder of Jews conflated with a kind of neat industrialized packaging; they have become "sardines-in-oil."

The full implications of this incipient industrial processing will become more explicit later on (see *Part Five*). What this suggests to us now, however, is that the technologized component of genocide is not, in fact, merely a question of mechanical efficiency—a culture-bound assumption that derives from the general modern tendency to hypostatize the role of bureaucracy and its workings. To the contrary, it derives its meanings from the symbolic implications of Nazi antisemitism as a reversal of the German and Jew's alleged master/slave relationship. After all, it was these encompassing symbolic meanings which both *precipitated* and *prefigured* the actual effort to shape the forms of genocide in the first place, however much these meanings were explored and fine-tuned through trial-and-error in the ditches and death camps of Eastern Europe. Here, on the expanding edge of the "liberated" German *Lebensraum*, the Jew's unruly and manipulative exchange-nature is harnessed by his supposed former slave, the German, and used against him. It is used, in fact, to funnel the "slippery" and engulfing Jew into the narrow and enclosing confines of his own grave. Just so, the Jews whom the Germans have left alive temporarily are

concentrated now in sealed ghettos as a step in their own progressive and "retaliatory" engulfment. There they are humiliated and reduced to German chattel. Their potent but parasitical exchange-value is drained from them as slaves, to the exhaustive benefit of their German masters and the encompassing Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft* which they must help, through their deaths, to produce.

***Gendarmerie Sergeant Fritz Jacob:
Embracing Mass Murder***

If there is any doubt as to the structural importance of the Jew's alleged exchange nature in the spirit and practice of their killing, a series of private letters written by a German police officer at the front to his mentor, a police general back home, should help to dispell it. *Gendarmerie* Sergeant Fritz Jacob had written initially with pleasure about his impending transfer east, "as I can now get down to doing some good practical work for our Führer." At the same time, he wrote, "I hope that. . . this opportunity will finally permit me to advance myself. In Saxony promotion is slow to say the least. . . (in Klee, 1988:149). As usual throughout Nazi Germany, the desire to help bring the Thousand-Year Reich into being—and the practices implemented to achieve that goal—were coupled with the ambition of finding a nice place for oneself within it.

Soon Fritz Jacob had plenty of opportunity to prove himself: he was placed in charge of twenty-three German gendarmes and five hundred Ukrainian auxiliary policemen engaged in the mass murder of Jews and Roma (Gypsies) near Kamenets Podolsky in the Ukraine. At first he found the killing process gruesome and profoundly disquieting, as he had revealed on May 5, 1942, in another letter to his friend and colleague back home,

Obergruppenführer Querner:

Naturally we are cleaning up considerably, especially among the Jews. . . . I have a cozy apartment in a former children's asylum. One bedroom and a living room with all the accessories. Practically nothing is missing. Naturally, the wife and the children. You will understand me. My Dieter and the little Liese write often, after their fashion. One could weep sometimes. It is not good to be a friend

of children [*ein so großer Kinderfreund*] as I was. I hope that the war, and with it the time of service in the East, soon ends (in Hilberg, 1985:1017; cf. Langbein, 1964:51).

But in little over a month's time Jacob had so pulled himself together that he was able to write his confidante Querner the following letter on June 21:

Thank you for your reprimand. You are absolutely right. We men of the new Germany must be hard [*hart*] with ourselves, even if it means long separation from our family. Especially now, when we finally have a chance to settle accounts once and for all with the war criminals so as to build a more beautiful and eternal Germany for our children and our children's children. . . .

I do not know whether you, *Herr Obergruppenführer*, also saw such frightful kinds of Jews in Poland. I thank my lucky stars for having been allowed to see this bastard race [*Mischrasse*] up close. If destiny permits, I shall have something to tell my children. Syphilitics, cripples, and idiots were typical of the lot. One thing was plain; they were materialists to the last. Phrases like "please, we're skilled workers, you won't shoot us, will you," were to be heard from each of them. They weren't men, but monkeys in human form.

Oh, well, there is only a small percentage of the 24,000 Jews of Kamenetz-Podolsk left. The Jew-boys [*Jüdlein*] in the surrounding country are among our finest clients. We are making a clean sweep with a clear conscience and then. . . "The waves close over and then the world is at peace" [line from *Horst-Wessel Lied*]. . . . One further request, my dear General. Write me from time to time. It does so much good to get some friendly news from our homeland (in Klee, 1988:149-50, my translation).

For Fritz Jacob the ideological constructions of Nazi antisemitism and their taken-for-granted symbolic implications must come into play if he is to make sense of his onerous genocidal labor and simultaneously maintain the efficiency of the killing procedure. Thus he realizes that he has been given an ideal opportunity—an educational field trip, practically—to observe the hidden realities of the Jew's exchange nature close-up, once the superficial and obscuring curtain of western assimilationism has been ripped away. Now the seasoned Aryan police sergeant is getting a privileged view of the Jews in their Eastern European "breeding grounds." Here they lay in their killing ditches, accessible and unmoving, as if they were specimens of Nazi racial science arranged in petri dishes. Naturally Fritz Jacob next must bring the self-reflexive meanings of Nazi racism into gear,

if the full symbolic implications of genocide are to become operational. Thus he does a little *Arbeit an sich* in order to make himself *hard* (not "stern" or "tough," as the word is usually translated), while working dialectically to process the unrestrained and degenerative softness of his Jewish victims by packaging them neatly in their graves. "Syphilitics, cripples and idiots were typical of the lot" he claims, repressing now the likeness of the Jewish children to his own Dieter and little Liese back home. But above all else, the inbred identity of the Jews—whether working as slaves or lying in their mass graves—is that of incorrigible "materialists," absurdly preferring their supposed productive value at the moment of their deaths, as if they thought they could buy off their hard-working Aryan murderers so easily. We even get a little of the characteristic "humor" of status-reversal in Jacob's reference to the Jews (or "Jew-boys") of the surrounding region as counting among his "finest clients."

Thus we see that the need to appropriate and destroy the Jew's alleged exchange nature is an inevitable dimension of the killing process, whether it is articulated primitively, in simple mass executions on the Soviet Front, or more elaborately in the death camps of Poland. And all this in order to create a "more beautiful and eternal Germany," especially for Dieter and the little Aryan Liese, who have no say in the matter. . . and to whom Jacob thinks he will have a proud answer when they ask him, years later, "what did *you* do in the war, Daddy?"

On Tour at the Killing Sites

The second revealing example of the SS-*Einsatzgruppen* in action begins with a poignant description by eye-witness Hermann Graebe—neither a soldier, an SS man nor a Jewish survivor, but a German civilian and engineer allowed a full view of the *Einsatzgruppen* operations as they were conducted in 1942 during the "second sweep" in the Ukraine (see Huneke, 1985).

Hoping to prevent the deportation of Jewish workers needed in his engineering enterprise, Graebe arrived in Rowne on the evening of July 13, 1942. There he saw that the unarmed inhabitants of the ghetto by no means offered themselves up as willing victims. Although hopelessly entrapped by the SS, decimated in number, physically debilitated through slave labor and an intentional starvation policy, unarmed and without allies among the local non-Jewish population—the remaining Jews barricaded themselves in their homes with their children and the elderly and could be extricated only through use of crowbars, rifles and hand grenades. Those young people able to find it within themselves to abandon family members on their way to the execution sites tried to make their escape in the dark across nearby railroad tracks and a small river, only to become living targets for SS and military shooting by the light of flares (see Gilbert, 1985:379-81). A few months later, on October 5, Graebe witnessed an actual mass murder at Dubno. Observing a "heap of shoes that must have contained eight hundred to one thousand pairs, great piles of clothes and undergarments," Graebe turned to behold the victims.

Without screaming or weeping these people undressed, stood in family groups, kissed each other, said their farewells, and waited for a sign from another SS man, who stood near the pit, also with a whip in his hand. . . . I did not hear a single complaint or a plea for mercy.

I watched a family of about eight, a man and a woman, both about fifty, with their children of about one, eight, and ten, as well as two grown-up daughters of about twenty to twenty-four. An old woman with snow-white hair was holding the one-year-old child in her arms, singing something to it and tickling it. The child crowed with delight. The married couple were looking on with tears in their eyes. The father was holding the hand of a boy about ten, speaking to him softly. The boy was fighting back his tears. The father pointed to the sky, stroked the boy's head and seemed to explain something to him. . . .

I walked to the other side of the mound and found myself standing before an enormous grave. The people lay so closely packed, one on top of the other, that only their heads were visible. . . . I looked round for the man who had shot them. He was an SS man, who was sitting on the edge of the narrow end of the pit, his legs dangling into it. he had a submachine gun across his knees and was smoking a cigarette (Graebe, in Gilbert, 1985:478).

Far more graphic accounts exist of the murders than this, particularly those for the killing sites at Ponary and Babi Yar; this one, however, suggests the dignity with which those most thoroughly encompassed and double-binded by the incremental assault of the *Einsatzgruppen* often managed to face the inevitable (cf. Trunk, 1979; Gilbert, 1985). Indeed, their dignity stands in quiet contrast to the bestial method of their murder, as well as to the manner whereby the Germans attended their deaths. Even amongst common soldiers, for example, there were many who found the killings instinctively alluring. "Although we were forbidden to go there," one soldier later recalled, "it drew us magically" (in Hilberg, 1985:322). Hilberg elaborates: "Among the troops the shootings had become a sensation. . . . They watched, took pictures, wrote letters, and talked. With rapidity, the news spread in the occupied territories, and gradually it seeped into Germany" (p.322). Indeed, a German stationed in the Latvian port of Liepaja reported "scores of German spectators from the Navy and the *Reichsbahn* [railway]" arriving like tourists to observe the daily executions about which they'd heard so much (see Klee, 1988:124). Some soldiers attended these spectacles, even in the heart of the Ukraine, in bathing trunks, accompanied by civilian onlookers with wives and children. One regimental commander, considerably displeased with this contravention of traditional *Wehrmacht* ethics, described the killings as if they were being conducted on an open-air stage (in Hilberg, 1985:323-4). His concern obviously was not unfounded: there were even those German foot soldiers who—like their supposedly less disciplined Rumanian allies—got fully into the sport of things, helping out the SS unbidden, as if on the hunt for garden pests (p.325).

Of course it was the Nazis themselves who brought out, usually with approbation, the significance of their own actions. Hilberg draws attention to a German journalist who had noticed only four Jews during the entire course of his travels throughout the Ukraine in June 1943. Asking a high official in the civilian colonial administration about this peculiar absence, he received an answer which, writes Hilberg, "summed up the holocaust" in these

few words: "Jews were exterminated like vermin [*Juden wurden wie die Wanzen vertilgt*]" (in Hilberg, 1985:382).

This was no *mere* extermination job, however. The unfolding "Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe" was a mission of the highest "cultural" significance, or so the Nazis experienced it. The implications of this were not lost upon Paul Blobel, to provide just one other example from the *Einsatzgruppen* phase of genocide. As we saw, Blobel's expanding role entailed first murdering Jews with his own sub-unit in the Ukraine and then erasing their traces, not only in the area where he had been active, but from hidden mass graves scattered throughout Eastern Europe. Later testimony revealed that Blobel actually once took a visiting SS dignitary on a private round of the mass graves near Kiev, "like a guide showing historical places to a tourist," as Hilberg paraphrases it (Hilberg, 1985: 389). No doubt Blobel made sure once again to play up his own exemplary role in the murder of the nearly 34,000 Jews at Babi Yar.

This tendency to enshrine the sites of Jewish suffering and mass murder as historical landmarks for the edification of tourists was by no means limited to Blobel. The same sort of tourism took place in the Warsaw and other ghettos (see chapter 14), while the perverse desire to hang celebratory plaques with explicit legends comes up repeatedly, as we will see later in the case of Treblinka (see chapter 15). The reasons for this, as will become ever more evident, resided in the notion that the genocide of Europe's Jews was an event of world-historical importance, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Germans to turn back the inexorable biological course of history and liberate themselves from alleged Jewish domination. Like those soldiers and German civilians visiting the Warsaw Ghetto morgue on tour (see Keller, 1984), most of the average, camera-toting Germans whom we have just encountered (with the exception of such souls as Hermann Graebe) were drawn intuitively to the spectacle of mass murder not out of simple depravity (much as this became a cultural norm during the Third Reich) but in order to participate in the pleasurable

Schadenfreude of status-reversal. In a sense they found themselves inadvertently at the temporary, forbidden center of the Third Reich (cf. Shils, 1975:3-16), there to behold excitedly its foul millenarian labor; there to witness, with awe, the Aryan *Volk* Community in the arduous act of giving birth to itself. Later, in the death camps, this odious regeneration would become something more of a secret and thus less easy for the uninitiated to observe; all the more reason for German rail travellers, hoping for a good glimpse, to crane their necks expectantly as they passed by the camouflaged fences of Auschwitz and Treblinka (see chapter 15 and Poliakov, 1979:212; Hilberg, 1971:208-213; cf. Laqueur, 1980).

* * *

Of course, there was also the remarkable case of Nazi Party Gauleiter Wilhelm Kube, the Generalkommissar for White Russia during most of the war. The local head of the Security Police and the SD, SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Strauch, had arrested and executed seventy Jews, most of them presumably deportees from the Reich, working in Kube's office in Minsk in the summer of 1943. While Kube's intense reaction can be attributed partly to the workings of Nazi polycentrism, his mode of expression was anything if typical. In the first place (as Strauch paraphrased him in his own retaliatory complaint) Kube considered it a personal insult that Jews working under his jurisdiction had been murdered but those working for the *Wehrmacht* had been left alone. Prepared though he was to "help solve the Jewish Question"—indeed, he had already exhibited his "hardness" in the case of Russian Jews—he could not countenance the sadism that had been visited upon Jews "from our own cultural level" (in Hilberg, 1985:1015). "Even the fact," Strauch's complaint continued, "that expert physicians had removed in a proper way the gold fillings from the teeth of Jews who had been designated for special treatment was made the topic of conversation. Kube asserted that this method of our procedure was unworthy of a German man and of the Germany of Kant and Goethe." Strauch protested

in turn that "it was regrettable that we, in addition to having to perform this nasty job, were also made the target of mudslinging" (pp.386-7; 1015). Yet another time Kube stopped one of Strauch's policeman who was beating a Jew, and "shouted at the German whether perhaps *he* had an Iron Cross like the Jew whom he was beating" (p.432).

Kube's reactions—and Graebe's sympathetic eyewitness account all the more—indicate something important about the workings of the Nazi hegemonic. However totalizing its demands and aspirations, however indisputable the resonance of its populist appeal, it still was not consonant with some static or essentialist notion of "German culture" as a whole—a point we will touch on again later (see chapter 13). The case of the German leftwing, of course, makes this clear, as do studies showing the ways in which popular opinion at the German "grass roots" often diverged from the official party line on a wide variety of issues (see Steinert, 1977; Boberach, 1965; Kershaw 1983; Gordon, 1984). But even those Germans drawn into the vortex that comprised the center of Nazi millenarian efforts revealed frequently the extent to which German fascism was by no means a seamless modality, perfectly embodied and perfectly instrumentalized, but a constant, anxious drive to assert closure over its own hegemonic definitions. In Kube's case the seams cracked only when he looked into the familiar faces of the German Jews with whom he unaccountably identified. Other Germans—usually the uninitiated back home in the Old Reich—had similar reactions at times, as Himmler himself pointed out when discussing the "extermination of the Jewish race" with SS officers in Posen in 1943:

It's one of those things which are easy to talk about. "The Jewish race is being exterminated," says a Party member. "That's quite clear, it's in our programme—elimination of the Jews—and we're doing it, exterminating them." And then they come, 80 million worthy Germans, and each one has his "decent" Jew. Of course the others are vermin, but this one is a first-rate Jew. Not one of all those [Germans] who talk this way has witnessed [the extermination], and not one of them has been through it [himself]. . . .

We have taken from [the Jews] what wealth they had. I have issued a strict order. . . that this wealth should, as a matter of course, be handed over to the Reich without reserve. We have taken none of it for ourselves. . . . We had the

moral right, we had the duty to our people, to destroy this people which wanted to destroy us. . . . We have exterminated a bacterium because we do not want in the end to be infected by the bacterium and die of it. . . . All in all, we can say that we have fulfilled this most difficult duty for the love of our people. And our spirit, our soul, our character has not suffered from it. . . (Himmler, in Noakes & Pridham, 1974:492-3).

Although Himmler exaggerates, apparently the occasional impulse to exempt German Jews from the rest of Jewish sub-humanity was a relatively common one within the Reich itself, although one usually applied in a highly selective, rather than a categorical manner. Here it was the recent memory of actual personal relationships with individual Jews which kept threatening to open a tiny space in the hegemonic drive for closure. On the other hand, even Himmler, the master clerk of genocide, can be heard in this speech struggling to justify the necessity of the unyielding actions which he has directed—a struggle which somatized itself, not surprisingly, in the form of physical ailments which delivered Himmler into the able hands of his masseur, Felix Kersten, as we will see in the next section of this chapter.

Gendarmerie Sergeant Fritz Jacob, however, provides the starkest and at the same time, perhaps the most subtle, example of the functioning of the hegemonic—of its broadest, taken-for-granted dimensions as well as the alternatives of meaning and experience which it seeks through every means to deny. Unable at first to ignore the resemblance of the Jewish children he was murdering to his own little ones back home, Jacob had the choice of acknowledging the implications of that experience or rejecting it. But as we will see again and again, the closure provided by the hegemonic is by no means an easy one to break; it is founded as much within the implicit structuring of bodily contradiction itself as in the active manipulation of the human conscience. Jacob escaped the contrary pulls of the latter by repositioning himself thoroughly within National Socialism's uncompromising embrace, actively sealing off the gaps in the hegemonic all by himself, and as soon as they threatened to open. Indeed, he did such a good job of it that seventeen years later, having

corroborated his own supervisory role in mass murder operations, he still was able to declare that "in principle, I was not opposed to the Jews" (in Klee, 1988:260-1).

* * *

As the preceding discussions have indicated, the *SS-Einsatzgruppen* and their *Wehrmacht* accomplices conducted their relentless genocide on the eastern front in a manner as consistent as possible with the ideological themes conveyed by such SS publications as *Grenzkampf Ost* and *Der Untermensch*. This factor makes clear just how fundamental the definitive "solution to the Jewish Problem" was for the wartime pursuit of National Socialism's Thousand Year Reich. At the same time the exploration of the possibilities of genocide on the eastern front was part of an unfolding process whereby National Socialism struggled to establish its hegemonic definitions in all their totality. Embodied to a greater or lesser extent by the Germans who participated in it, this process was one which had to be asserted constantly in the face of those inevitable contradictions of meaning and experience that frequently attempted—and just as frequently failed—to force their way into consciousness.

Guided by the structuring discourse of antisemitism and the radicalizing Nazi *Judenpolitik*, the principles of Nazi polycentrism were extended to the east in Hitler's war of racial conquest. This exploration of the scope and limitations of power took shape, however, within the wider context of Nazi millenarianism. The problem of transforming the east, which began in Poland and continued in the war against the Soviet Union, was not simply a battle against the Slav, but a war of "worldviews" between opposing, Manichaean forces—those of good as represented by the Aryan, and those of evil as personified by the Jew, the secret master of Eastern Europe, whether capitalist or Bolshevik. The Polish east in particular was the ever-renewable source of Jewish "economic" power, an alien and essentially abstract force generating malignant waves that traveled westward in the biological form of its verminous Jewish carriers. Emerging out of their "breeding ground"

in the ghetto, armed with the intangible but disintegrative weapons of disease and criminality, these supposed racial degenerates slipped through Poland and across the German border to penetrate the Aryan "Volkbody" and take up residence in its bowels.

Securing Germany thus meant "liberating" the east of its dominating Jewish presence while converting the chaos of its formless expanse—the "desolate cultural steppe"—into a landscape with a German face.

GERMANIZING THE EAST

The Biological Transformation of the Lebensraum

The language dominating the Nazi conception of the annexed eastern *Lebensraum*, like that constructing the notion of Nazi state and society in general, was that of organismic biology. "The Reich is a living form [*ein lebendiges Gebilde*]," or so *Das Politische Reich* of 1941/2 would have it, "living from the unity of its racial substance and the unity of its leadership. It is not contained between borders as between walls, but breathes instead like an organism" (in Kamenetsky, 1961:184). Writing in a similar vein, SS-*Gruppenführer* Greifelt, chief of the staff serving Himmler as Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of Germanism (*Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*), composed a pamphlet outlining that office's plans for the east and its accomplishments up to about the year 1942.² The overall goal was to expand the German *Volkkörper* into the supposedly desolate living space of the east and to "root" it there as firmly as possible. This meant a combined program of enforced population movements along with the monumental

²SS Gruppenführer Greifelt, Chef des Stabshauptamtes des Reichskommissars für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums. [1942]. *Die Festigung deutschen Volkstums als zentrale Ostaufgabe*. Institute für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, 2242/58, Dc31.05.

resculpting of the eastern countryside into a palpably Germanic landscape within which "Aryan man" could feel firmly at home.

Reference to the organismic bases of this plan runs throughout Greifelt's writing. Eastern and Southeastern Europe, he explains, are scattered with unviable "splinters of the German *Volk*," racial elements which must be ingathered so as to strengthen the German *Volk* as a whole. This cannot be accomplished in the Old Reich, however, for there the German *Volk* has been compressed into too narrow a living space. For this reason the primevally-German regions of Eastern Europe (in particular the annexed regions of western and northern Poland) are needed for the purposes of the German *Volk's* natural biological expansion. The conquest of the east, rooted as it is in the principles of social Darwinism and racial struggle, has provided the opportunity for this expansion finally to take place. This program consists, writes Greifelt, of two overriding tasks. The first is the "purifying separation [*reinliche Trennung*] of German blood and the blood of alien peoples." The second is to populate this supposedly ancient German homeland with an "unbroken settlement" of Germans of the highest racial quality, so as to bring about the "indissoluble fusion" of this "hereditary [*angestammte*] German earth" with the best human material that Germany has to offer.³

Greifelt could not be more explicit about the implications of this biological program:

The fulfillment of the first task is guided by the principle that the German Volkbody is not to be fed any alien blood which could disintegrate or endanger its impenetrable unity [*dem deutschen Volkskörper kein fremdes Blut zugeleitet wird, das seine einheitliche Geschlossenheit zersetzen und gefährden würde*].

On the other hand not one drop of valuable German blood can be left for the beneficial use of an alien *Volk* [*Andererseits darf kein Tropfen wertvollen deutschen Blutes einem fremden Volkstum nutzbar bleiben*]."

Consequently, Greifelt concludes, the strictest social Darwinian "selection" (*Auslese*) of the local population is to be made according to racial, biological and hygienic criteria.

³Ibid., p.4.

Germans of today must strive now to recover the "powerful streams of Germanic blood" that flowed throughout the east during past centuries and "percolated" into its soil.⁴

For this purpose Himmler's office had composed a *Volksliste* or list of desirable Aryan-related peoples and ethnic groups. This racial selection did not end, however, with those whose German extraction could be established unequivocally through historical, linguistic and ethnographic research. It also entailed the physiognomic examination of ambiguous individual cases among marginally German as well as undoubtedly Slavic peoples to determine whether their outward appearance evidenced such predominantly "Aryan" physical traits as tall stature, long skulls, straight noses, blond hair and blue eyes. Evidence of racial "temperament" was also considered. Individuals considered sufficiently Aryan would be deemed *Eindeutschungsfähig*, or "capable of Germanization." Thus the superficial methods of physical anthropological measurement and racial personality analysis applied at home by the *Reichssippenamt* to ambiguous cases of Aryan-Jewish "*Mischlinge*" (see Seidler & Rett, 1982) were transferred to the occupied regions in an effort to syphon off every "valuable drop of German blood" from otherwise racially-undesirable peoples (see Kamenetsky, 1961; Koehl, 1957; Burleigh, 1988).

Greifelt describes some of the ethnic groups from the *Volksliste* which already had been moved into the annexed eastern regions, amongst them 62,000 Baltic Germans transported into the Reich on 41 ships and then transferred to the so-called "Wartheland" and Danzig-West Prussia, 130,000 *Volksdeutsche* brought in from Wolhynia and Galicia, and thousands of others brought in from the "General-Gouvernement," from Bessarabia, Lithuania and elsewhere. His list does not include, however, the native Polish populations deported from their homes and the number of villages razed (see Gross, 1979; Wytwycky, 1980); the kidnapping of Polish children deemed *Eindeutschungsfähig*; or the masses of

⁴Ibid.

indigenous Jewish inhabitants who had been gathered into ghettos and were now being readied for annihilation in death camps.

The germanization of the east, Greifelt continues, was not simply a question of population movements. Resettling the east meant "transplanting" (*Umpflanzen*) in the broadest sense of the term. While attempts to transform the Old Reich were focused on specific institutions, factories or worker settlements, the transformation of the east required a profound and total landscaping effort. Ethnic Germans needed to be rooted once again in their fated *Lebensraum*, and that meant the organic reformulation of the empty Polish countryside into an orderly Germanic homeland. Such a homeland, Greifelt stressed, would not reflect the values of capitalism, but instead would foster the principles of community.⁵ At the same time the reconstruction of the German peasantry in the east would be carried out, not in terms of a false sense of the romantic, but in line with the newest accomplishments of modern technology, including the mechanisation of the work process.⁶ Like the Beauty of Labor program, the vision Greifelt articulates thus is not an anti-modernist one—something which the ambitious scope of the project alone indicates—but one of reactionary modernism, in which the principles of capitalism and modern technological advancement are not rejected, but encompassed (see chapter 11 and Herf, 1984).

Greifelt sums up the principles underlying the germanization of the east by uniting his reactionary modernist perspective with the antisemitism which provides the fundament of Nazi millenarianism. The "triumph of *Volk* -thinking [*Volksgedanken*]," he writes, "is symbolic of the new age" which Germany is inaugurating for all of Europe. An "organic order founded upon the laws of blood and race" will "liberate" the world from the "dark

⁵Ibid., p.17.

⁶Ibid., p.20.

powers of Jewish-capitalist and internationalist-plutocratic interests." The latter are the pseudo-philanthropic forces which have enslaved their hapless Gentile minions in order to bring "chaos, distress and death over the continent in the form of the Bolshevist hordes."⁷ As the dominant *Volk* in the heart of Europe, Greifelt concludes, it is the mission of the Germans to "overcome the Bolshevism in the interior [*Überwindung des Bolschewismus im Innern*]" as the sign that a new age is dawning in Europe.⁸

Greifelt's biologicistic language, as well as his dialectical reference to the Jew, makes clear that the production of an expanding and impenetrable *Volkskörper* in the east is actually a fetish form expressing the use-value dimension of the commodity as it appears in the collectivized fascist version of German capitalism. This reified entity—a social organism rooted naturally in the soil, recycling an Aryan blood free of impurity, pollution and disease—is defined in contrast to the "Jewish-capitalist" and his "Bolshevist hordes." Rootless and international, the Jew is the alienating force of exchange itself, a "dark power" that is disintegrative, parasitical, and threateningly abstract.

It is within the context of this organismic and festishized geo-political transformation of the east that Himmler's plans for reconstructing a Germanic landscape take place—as does the physical construction of death camps for the perpetration of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe." In order to understand better the specific cultural forms in which that annihilation is couched, then, it is necessary to examine more closely Himmler's plans for the spatial reformulation of the eastern *Lebensraum*. Those plans come closest to articulating Nazism's enduring millenarian vision, by providing a purified and lasting natural environment within which future Aryan generations might come and go—embued

⁷Ibid., p.8.

⁸Ibid., p.22.

with the sense of continuity and security insured by the irrevocable annihilation of Europe's Jews.

**"My Love Likes Green So Well": Himmler's Plan
for "Shaping the New Settlement Areas" (1941-3)**

Himmler rhapsodized about his visions for the east in the summer of 1942, while laying upon the table of his masseur and confidante, Dr. Felix Kersten. Kersten's role was an extraordinary one during the war years; he was the only one capable of relieving the *Reichsführer*-SS of his crippling stomach cramps. Although Kersten's official mode of therapy for this purpose was massage, his bodily ministrations set loose an outpouring of confessions from his patient's mouth, followed usually by prompt if temporary relief (see Kersten, 1956). This suggested to Kersten the psychosomatic nature of the *Reichsführer's* illness—a variety of "dis-ease" Himmler seemed to share with Adolf Hitler as well (see Heston & Heston, 1980).

That the tensions of the Nazi political system were somatized in the bodies of its leaders should not be surprising. In the biologized world of German fascism, as we have seen, the contradictions of capitalism were reified in terms of inner bodily weakness. This state was exacerbated by a disease afflicting the personal body as well as the body social, the supposed ultimate source of that disease being the "Jewish bacillus." We already have encountered an earlier version of this model, one pre-dating the development of modern racism and the germ theory of disease, in the case of Martin Luther. As we saw, his final physical afflictions were associated symbolically with the presence of Jews in Eisleben, his birthplace, and the alleged long-term effects of the magical poisons wielded secretly by Jewish physicians (see chapter 4). In the case of the Third Reich, the reification of social contradictions in terms of bodily illness reached its full, biologized expression in the role played by physicians and medical science in the collective "healing" process of the "Final Solution." It was doctors, after all, who governed the "selection" process at the

Auschwitz-Birkenau ramp (see Mitscherlich, 1949, 1960; Proctor, 1988; Wuttke-Groneberg, 1980, 1982; Lifton, 1986).⁹ In the inner sanctum of the Third Reich, meanwhile, this same tendency allowed court doctors to attain positions of special influence over Germany's leaders (see Trevor-Roper, in Kersten, 1956:10-11). Kersten used his for good, often by subtly trading off the seemingly magical effects of his healing powers for humanitarian concessions from the superstitious *Reichsführer*. "Kersten massages a life out of me with every rub," Himmler is supposed to have said of Kersten's often outrageous but successful petitions for rescue (p.12, n.1). Those saved included political prisoners of every nationality, among them perhaps 60,000 Jewish souls (p.11, n.3).

While babbling on about a subject as satisfying as his plans for the east, however, Himmler needed no treatments; these millenarian visions, along with Kersten's ready ear, were clearly an adequate substitution for the temporary physical salvation which Kersten otherwise offered from the somatized travails of the Third Reich (see Kersten, 1956:135). Topping it all, of course, was Adolf Hitler's enthusiastic approval; Himmler had laid his plans out before his Führer's feet and was still floating from the *carte blanche* he had received. All of Germany's hopes for the future were to be focused upon germanizing the "empty" expanses of the east. This would be accomplished through a massive program of geo-political engineering, one that would transform the desolate domain of the Jew and his subhuman cohorts into what Himmler described as an orderly and disciplined countryside resembling "that of Schleswig-Holstein" (Himmler, in Kersten, 1956:137). "It's the greatest piece of colonization which the world will ever have seen," Himmler told Kersten excitedly, "linked too with a most noble and essential task, the protection of the Western world against an irruption from Asia" (p.133).

⁹I shared some of my anthropological perspectives on the role of antisemitism, healing, and the body in Nazism as a movement of collective regeneration with Robert Lifton shortly before leaving for the field in 1980; Lifton went on to develop certain aspects in his own manner in his psychological study of Nazi physicians (see Lifton, 1986:476-489).

As we saw earlier, Himmler had already made the underlying etiological implications of this "irruption" fully clear in the mid-thirties, in his pamphlet on *The SS as an Anti-Bolshevist Fighting Organization (Die Schutzstaffel als antibolschewistische Kampforganisation)* (1937, [3rd ed]). The SS had been created precisely to counter the "struggle of the subhuman organized and led by the Jew." This was a "life and death struggle" following the natural laws of biology, "like the struggle of mankind against some kind of epidemic, like the struggle of the plague bacillus against the healthy body" (p.3). Later, during therapeutic sessions with Kersten, Himmler elaborated on the necessity for a successful "Final Solution" in words which linked it fundamentally to the realization of Germany's millenarian plans for the east. "The Jews cause the rottenness on which they thrive," he said.

They dominate the entire world through the centres of news, the press, the cinema, art and practically everything else. The damage which the Jews have been doing for centuries—and the future would only be worse—is of a kind so comprehensive that it can only be met by eliminating them entirely. . . . It is the curse of greatness that it must step over dead bodies to create new life. Yet we must create new life, the soil must be cleansed of germs [*der Raum muß keimfrei sein*] or it will never bear fruit. It will be a great burden for me to bear (Himmler in Kersten, 1956:119-120; see also Ackermann, 1970:170).

The "extermination" (*Vernichtung*) of the Jews was thus a means whereby the soil of the east could be "cleansed" of "germs." In the process of fulfilling this prerequisite, however, the related geo-political problem of ordering and domesticating the eastern *Lebensraum* had to be conceptualized and set into motion. This would pave the way for the complete germanization of the Third Reich's eastern Imperium following Germany's final victory against the capitalist-bolshevist onslaught and the covert force animating it, International Jewry. No wonder Himmler was grateful to Kersten, whose regular therapeutic massage so relieved him, not so much of a troubled conscience as of the stress caused by trying to measure up to the "unpleasant" aspects of this Herculean labor.

Himmler elaborated on his plans for the east as formal state policy in *Shaping the New Areas of Settlement (Gestaltung der neuen Siedlungsgebiete)* (n.d. [1943]),¹⁰ a collection of previously-issued geo-political directives emerging from his role as the "Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of Germandom" (*Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*), to which he had been appointed just after the invasion of Poland. In these essays Himmler developed guidelines for the establishment of Aryan villages and agriculture, for the planning and formation of cities, and for the reformulation of the supposedly raw and waste-like eastern terrain into a landscape bearing the imprint of Germanic culture and values. Himmler's plans for the latter entailed the creation of a class of racially-elite *Wehrbauern* or Aryan soldier-peasants who would populate a defensive belt of German blood stretching hundreds of miles to the east of the Old Reich. Clusters of village hamlets surrounding main village centers would provide the basic model of settlement, set amidst a landscape botanically subdivided into a domesticated checkerboard of fields and greenery. The larger village centers, nestled organically amidst the landscape, would contain those economic and spiritual installations necessary to serve the community-nurturing needs of their hinterland. This included the "community houses" (*Gemeinschaftshäuser*) of the NSDAP, halls for the observance of community rituals (*Feierhallen*), warehouses, handicraft and repair workshops, schools, kindergartens, and Work Service Camps (*Arbeitsdienstlager*) for female youth. Insofar as Polish fieldhands were to be used, their homes were to be set well apart from German dwellings. Larger settlements too would be planned, ranging in size from towns to metropolitan centers, with places put aside for industry as well, scrupulously encompassed within the natural landscape. Every aspect was to be planned, from the kinds of horticultural stock used in

¹⁰Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Dc31.04.

creating subdivisions and the quality of materials implemented in settlement construction to the appropriate aesthetic design for Germanic cemeteries and garbage dumps.

The terms of Himmler's planned transformation were so comprehensive that even the climate of the east was to be engineered into a form pleasing to Germans. The crucial structuring principle for effecting this transformation, here and elsewhere, was that of green subdivision: "We will in fact erect wind-breaks everywhere, thus breaking up the landscape," Himmler told Kersten. "The countryside of the East will not be recognizable in a hundred years' time. It's a work of vast proportions which is coming into being. A new German race will overcome the unfavorable climate and construct a living space adapted to its character" (in Kersten:1956: 137).

*The Dialectic of Body Symbolism
in the Transformation of Landscape*

Although the tone of these plans is essentially bucolic, like Beauty of Labor they are shaped by the perspectives of reactionary modernism transposed to a millenarian scale and time frame. Such an impetus is dictated by the vast proportions of the planned reconstruction alone; it calls upon every technological resource of the modern state to accomplish its goals. The modernism of the plan is evidenced too in its thoroughgoing aesthetic rationality, in which an entire continental interior is to become the raw material to be shaped by the modern environmental engineer and integrated into a network of planned cities, towns and villages set amidst a totally landscaped environment, one systematically encompassing industry as well as field, farm, lake, canal and forest. As the latter suggests, the overarching context for Himmler's plans was the vast eastern countryside itself, to be transformed according to the superior ordering principles of the Aryan race into a germanized living space.

Although Himmler's references to the Jew in these pages are oblique—that unpleasant subject was being handled elsewhere—his vision of the east exists nonetheless in an

inevitable and taken-for-granted dialectic with the Jew's alleged parasitism. "Because of the cultural bankruptcy of an alien *Volk*," he writes, "great expanses of the countryside in the annexed eastern regions have been neglected, devastated, and laid waste through despoliation. To a great extent it has taken on, varying with local conditions, the qualities of a steppe" (Himmler, n.d. [1943]:23).¹¹ Clearly the Jew is seen as essentially unnatural and out of harmony with the organic environment, a force hostile to everything productive and growing. In contrast we have the "*germanic [germanisch-deutschen] man*," for whom "*interaction with nature is a profound requirement of life*" (p.23, stress in original). Himmler's concept of the "*Lebensgemeinschaft von Tier, Mensch und Pflanze* [the living community of animal, human and plant]" underscores this point (p.25, 27); it is the community of nature within which the German is at home and from which the alien and subhuman Jew of necessity is excluded. These formulations are consistent with the age-old contrast in German culture of the Jew as the alien essence of exchange and the German as the natural extension of a political economy oriented to the production of use-values.

The unproductive formlessness of the east is a result of the Jew's negative and exploitative influence. Such an environment generates a "laming and draining" effect (*lähmend und entseelend*, literally, "de-souling") upon Germans through its undifferentiated "monotony [*Einförmigkeit*], desolation and emptiness" (p.23). The racial creativity of the German, on the other hand, produces landscapes which "foster a feeling of abundance, fruitfulness, animation and order." For this reason Germanic man must do more than expell the Jew from the east; he must also imprint himself thoroughly upon the face of the land. This is to be accomplished by creating German "cultural landscapes" (*Kulturlandschaften*) such as we saw in the chapter on Beauty of Labor. In contrast to the desolation of the Jewish environment, these are projections of the creative principles of the

¹¹Ibid.

Aryan race, expressed first and foremost in the "articulation and demarcation [*Gliederung and Begrenzung*] of the countryside through forest, forest greenbelts, hedges, bushes and trees, the natural division [*Verbauung*] of the terrain and waters and the horticultural shaping [*Grüngestaltung*] of settlements. . ." (p.23). The means to transform the formless *Lebensraum* into "Heimat" (Homeland) then, is through a "rational, nature-attuned shaping of the countryside"—that is, a constant natural division and sub-division of empty space so as to generate a cumulative order which results ultimately in the "solidification [*Festigung*] of the German *Volk*" (p.23). In this manner the formerly alien landscape becomes, according to Nazi ideology, a spatial projection of the Aryan's racial physiognomy. In more precise terms, developing the countryside serves as the symbolic correlative of the process whereby the German subjects the "softness" of his body (that is, his own psychobiological disorder) to the hardening effects of disciplinary labor, as we saw earlier.

By projecting the dynamics of German body symbolism into the labor of landscaping, Nazi Germany transposes the meanings of social Darwinism back to nature. This is not the end of that process, however. As Himmler makes clear in one of his more bizarre formulations, the Procrustean requirements of National Socialist society are to be applied to the botanical kingdom as to the world of men. Thus the choice of plants for the greening of the east are to be made according to the principles of biological engineering, racial eugenics and even transliterated notions of enforced social conformity. "Only plants insuring the greatest productivity of wood and fruit—those that are indigenous, regionally appropriate and grown from seedlings of the best race—should be used," Himmler instructs.

Exceptional varieties with red, yellow, blue or multicolored foliage are to be avoided just as much as congenitally ill [*erbkrank*] plants, including plants reproducing themselves only asexually and evidencing hanging, twisting, stunted or climbing growth habits [*Hänge-, Dreh-, Kümmer- oder Steilwuchs*]. The choice of species and races is to be made only with permission of the forest authorities (p.29).

In this formulation we see, of course, the essence of the millenarian undertaking. Precisely because its aspirations for an absolute and enduring transformation of the world are ultimately impossible, no element can be allowed to escape its uncompromising drive for hegemonic closure without the entire enterprise threatening to unravel. For this reason all aspects of existence, even bushes, vines and the landscapes they constitute, must be forced to resignify according to the symbolic requirements of the German body. The latter includes, of course, not only its straight lines and hardened exterior—but also its constant fear of penetration and inner collapse. Thus Himmler sees to it that the state and its scientific authorities determine the identity of an acceptable plant population for the new German *Lebensraum*, just as they do the region's human population. Applying the unyielding principles of racial selection to the world of botany, they reject non-conformists as well as the congenitally ill while thoroughly excluding "races" that reproduce in a manner deemed unnatural and invasive, as well as those considered prone to aggressive, parasitical and strangulating modes of growth.

Within such a context—and in keeping with the enduring botanical imagery of nineteenth century German organicism (see chapter 6)—it should not be surprising that the terms used elsewhere for the annihilation of the Jewish "race" applied not only to the extermination of vermin but also to the elimination of undesirable plant growth: *ausrotten*, to root out, and *ausmerzen*, to eradicate, as in the case of weeds. On the other hand, valuable plants (like those members of the Slavic population whose physiognomy pointed strongly to supposed Aryan ancestry) were to be appropriated and protected according to the principles of a Germanic "nature conservation" [*Naturschutz*], for example by recording all important stands of indigenous growth in the "Reich Nature Conservation Book." Not surprisingly, the SS Commandant Rudolf Höss—entrusted with the dialectical task of eliminating all that was racially unnatural in Europe—expressed this same concern for preserving everything natural and good. This occurred in that eastern SS domain which so

prospered under the effects of his diligent rule: the death camp Auschwitz and its surroundings. Amongst his *Kommandantur-Befehl* (the official orders which he issued daily) one finds directives forbidding SS personnel from gathering the eggs of wildfowl or from straying off official paths running through the camp's natural environs.¹² One also finds an indignant order for May 15, 1943 entitled "Plucking of Lilacs [*Flieder*]":

I have determined—and complaints to this effect have been reported—that SS personnel in an entirely incomprehensible and radical form and manner [*in einer geradezu unverständlichen und radikalen Art und Weise*] have been breaking off the blooms from lilac bushes. . . .

I forbid inmates to bring even one more sprig of lilac into the camp, and as for the SS personnel I fully expect that, if they wish lilacs, they will do so in modest quantity, cutting the sprigs properly and in the most protective manner possible, rather than plundering and destroying these shrubs in a totally senseless manner. In the interest of all, for whom these lilac bushes sooner or later should serve as a beautification [*Ausschmückung*] of our entire camp area, I expect from all SS personnel complete understanding for this measure.¹³

Only a day later approximately 4,500 Jewish men, women and children from the ghetto in Salonika were delivered to the ramp at Birkenau, of whom 677 adults were selected for exhaustive slave labor. The remaining 3800 were killed in the gas chambers (see Czech, 1990:399). Some months later these same facilities were provided, as a relayed order from Höss to his chief horticultural officer indicates, "with a green strip of decorative shrubs, to serve as a natural boundary for the camp" (in Poliakov, 1979:215; cf. chapter 15 below.)

***"Reactionary Modernism"
and the Beautification of the East***

Himmler's plans also include detailed instructions for establishing settlements of all sizes organically within the germanized countryside. Along with the continuing structural importance of green subdivision, the overriding principle here is that of a rationalized

¹²Auschwitz State Museum, Kommandantur-Befehl, D-Au-I-1/71.

¹³Ibid., 4656/1 D-Au-I-1/31.

utilitarianism: everything is to serve the purposes of optimal exploitation, through multiple use and the productive recycling of land, resources and waste.

As usual, Himmler begins with the notions of landscaping. "Particularly careful attention must be given to the horticultural construction [*Grüingestaltung*] of the village, as this is a decisive means whereby the villages can be given a German imprint. This serves to maintain the inherited love of the German tribes for tree, shrub and flower (village oaks or village lindens)" (p.8). Likewise, Himmler continued, "fencing, hedges and walls, etc., demand painstaking consideration. These contribute significantly to the unity and beautification [*Verschönerung*] of the village profile" (p.8-9). These comments are made across from an illustration of the agricultural landscape and settlements of Dorf Minden in Zichenau, its checkboard of fields, hedges, and nestled hamlets representing the ideal for which Himmler was striving (see plate 67).

Basic "community houses" (*Gemeinschaftshäuser*), to be built according to standard party specifications, must include the village equivalent of the factory *Kameradschaftshaus*—a "Village House" with a community room, schoolroom, kindergarten, bathing facilities and associated Hitler Youth hostel. A sports field is also required, with a place reserved, in the best traditions of the soldier-peasant, for "small caliber shooting." These community buildings are to be clustered in such a manner as to create a central *Appellplatz*, or marching square. Thus the community buildings, like the Beauty of Labor *Kameradschaftshaus*, serve to mobilize and give bounds to the German population, shaping it into the rationalized and disciplined formations which come to instantiate the *Volkkörper*, the collective Volkbody. As all of the preceding suggests, Himmler's plans obviously have far more in common with the Beauty of Labor Bureau's aesthetically rationalized "Beautiful Village" department than with the traditional German village. At the same time Himmler's settlements must bear the projection of a sentimentalized bourgeois vision of harmonious village life, as reflected not only in the

necessity for "village oaks and village lindens", but in a statement he makes as an unwavering aphorism: "In the village belongs, fundamentally, a bell tower [*Ins Dorf gehört grundsätzlich ein Glockenturm*]" (p.9). This might just as well be the perverse title to a folk song for Himmler's new Aryan eastern pioneers, recycled in the best traditions of nineteenth-century German romanticism; indeed, all this gives one the impression of a regular fascist Schubertiana (cf. Hermann Glaser, 1979). Of course, the need for a bell tower has little to do with traditional village life or with Christian religion, to which the SS was hostile. Like the intrusive presence of a central marching square, the necessity for a bell tower suggests instead the fascist notion of an embattled *Volk* capable of being mobilized at any moment for collective self-defense.

We see more of the principles of reactionary modernism in Himmler's instructions for the construction of farm buildings in the germanized east. These are to reflect the age-old customs of the German people, with the proviso that a "mere imitation of old forms is to be avoided, but good, old building traditions are to be carried over into the new age" (p.10). Thus, for instance, the emphasis upon raising farm productivity will require the importation of the most progressive technological advances of modern agriculture to the primitive east, including a far-reaching mechanisation of the work process. The application of Beauty of Labor's architectural aesthetics—and its dialectic with the entrapping forms of the Jew's exchange nature—are also evident here. "Functionality and clarity of outline are dependent upon one another," Himmler writes. "The involuted boxing [*Ineinanderschachteln*] of rooms under all circumstances is to be avoided" (p.11). As we saw earlier, the term *Ineinanderschachteln* suggests unmistakably the "Jewish" form of the ghetto and its modern urban equivalents: the labyrinthine disorder, the confusion of boundaries, and the trapped, box-like effect of its seemingly mindless design (see chapter 11). These chaotic Jewish spaces are to be replaced by germanized villages, towns and cities, their "technical realization" to be accomplished in the most solid of fashions, with "good local material"

processed in a "painstaking, artisanal manner" (p.11). Half-timbered construction [*Fachwerk*] is to be used only in areas naturally rich in wood while electrical connections are to be as inconspicuous as possible. Beauty of Labor had railed against the screaming capitalist billboards of the Weimar "Jew" Republic; so too the German *Lebensraum* was to avoid insistent advertising in favor of restrained signboards executed in "indigenous [i.e., German] artisanal manner." Finally Himmler stresses that the "village profile" is not to be lifted artificially out of its natural surroundings through the use of false colors; everything must be done to create a sense of organic unity, of a racial habitation rooted inextricably in the emancipated soil of the east.

Himmler's plans for the east leave no detail uncovered—and it is in such repetitive and mutually-reinforcing ethnographic detail that we will discover the underlying generative principles structuring the death camps and the "Final Solution." Thus for aesthetic reasons the wire fences used to contain and manage cattle are to be hidden within growing hedges so as to blend beautifully into the overall subdivision of the Germanic landscape (p.30). The necessary use of an inorganic material to organize space and to control the undisciplined movement of animals is itself enclosed within the forms of the organic. It thereby becomes an integral part of the structuring system whereby the undifferentiated and unruly space of the east is encompassed, domesticated and given a German face. Not surprisingly, this technique is also integral to the domestication of the Jew as well, something which shall become clear in the following chapters on the liquidations of Jewish ghettos and the architectonic form of the killing process at Treblinka (see *Part Five*).

However bucolic Himmler's plans for the east were, they did not exclude urbanization or industry. Neither were to be allowed to develop, however, in the chaotic manner of capitalism, as alien growths upon the natural landscape. Instead both aspects were to be carefully planned and controlled so as to fit themselves harmoniously into the overall conception of a germanized countryside. For this reason there was to be an organic

interaction of city and country, with small towns serving to bind larger metropolitan centers together with their rural hinterlands. As part of this program, green areas were to be planned as components of an "integrated system" leading from the city interior to the open countryside. Meanwhile German industry was to expand into the supposedly empty spaces of the east, thereby relieving pressure upon Germany's compressed industrial center in the Old Reich and allowing it to renew itself, but always within the overarching terms of a rationally aestheticized Germanic landscape.

As elsewhere, the principles of reactionary modernism were evident in Himmler's comments on the building of cities. The existing cities of the east, Himmler claimed, were founded by early German colonists, whose racial superiority was testified to by the architectural excellence of their surviving monuments, cathedrals and medieval city centers. Nonetheless the ordering principles of modern National Socialism, like those defining every great era in human history, had to find their own unique "expressive forms" (*Ausdrucksformen*) appropriate to modern times. This was especially important for a "border area and region of struggle [*Grenzraum und Kampfgebiet*]," where community buildings were to express the leadership principle (*Führerprinzip*) structuring National Socialist society, just as earlier the forum or the cathedral expressed the reigning principles of ancient or medieval society. In order for these buildings to accomplish this great task, it was necessary that they be "raised above their surroundings" and distinguished architecturally (p.22). This emphasis resembles that placed upon the *Kameradschaftshaus* in the Beauty of Labor program, only here it was the Germanic town hall (*Rathaus*) that was to form the center of city life (p.19).

As in the beautification of cattle fencing and other agricultural features, the principles of aesthetic rationality are to be applied assiduously to settlements of all sizes as well. Thus special attention is to be paid to streets, which should be "wide, free and clean," while "lawns and ornamental installations [*Schmuckanlagen*]" are to be created for beautifying

purposes and the pleasure they afford (p.31). The role of such installations is not insignificant in understanding the implications of Himmler's plans to germanize the east, as we will see in subsequent chapters; these ornamental focal points become, in a sense, metasymbolic, in that they raise in relief the symbolic principles that underlay the domestication of the wider mundane environment within which they are set. In this connection as well, Himmler writes of the necessity for green spaces to be set aside for the ritualistic commemoration of Germanic holidays, like May Day and the summer equinox. The meaning of such celebrations are enhanced by special "Village, Tribal [*Sippen*], House, Life and Remembrance Trees," which should be freely planted as symbols of the German's inextricable unity with nature (*Naturverbundenheit*) (p.31). This focus upon trees resonates with the role of domestic animals in the film *The Eternal Jew* (*Der ewige Jude*, 1940).¹⁴ There Germans identified with cattle and sheep as their natural alteregos, while here the tree and plant world becomes the reified extension of the supposedly organic German persona.

This emphasis upon the solid, long-lived and homeostatic character of arboreal life points up the National Socialist attempt to eschew the vicissitudes of time and the disintegrative effects of organic decay—something symbolized in the supposed lifelessness of the Jew's urbanized exchange identity, and his role as a "ferment of decomposition." The German alternative is revealed in Himmler's emphasis upon the proper form for graves and cemeteries in the eastern regions. Graves must express the "*Naturfrömmigkeit*" of the German *Volk*, that is, their solemn, religious attitude toward nature. At the same time they must convey the continuity of life in the form of the encompassing and enduring German *Volk*. Graves are abodes where "nature and belief come together"—here Himmler naturally means belief in the fundamental laws of racial struggle—which means that they must

¹⁴Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 3002.

become "high points of graceful landscaping" (p.31). "Tree and grave belong together," Himmler states aphorismically, and then goes on to prescribe the exact form such graves should take. Only indigenous tree species are to be planted, including evergreen needle-bearing varieties. Likewise associated stones and monuments are to be made only of natural materials shaped in a genuine artisanal manner; under no circumstances should the "tasteless products of the artificial stone, cement and metal industries" be utilized (p.31). Thus even the creation of graves must express the organic relationship of the German to a nature which he has struggled to domesticate, and which he continues to order and control, even in death.

One cannot help here but recall Goedsche's nineteenth century nightmare of Jewish world conspiracy unfolding amidst the chaotic jumble of Prague's ghetto cemetery (see chapter 8 and plate 35). The Jewish graveyard represented the cumulative, historical sedimentation of capitalism in all of its unhealthy and involuted effects—each careening tombstone a symbolic correlative of Jewish rootlessness, and with it the invasiveness of exchange relations. No wonder Jewish gravestones throughout Europe—like the medieval Jewish stones found later in the walls of Kelheim—were torn loose by the Nazis and, in a frenzy of symbolic degradation, recycled (whether whole or in fragments) to pave roads, sewers and latrines, as well as to create staircases and a swimming pool (see plate 68 and Szajkowski, 1977/I:50-2; *The Black Book*, 1981 [1946]:315; cf. ch. 3). In a similar fashion Hans Frank, Governor-General of Poland, made sure that the entrance to the new ghetto in Cracow would be an architectural model fit for the city that had been designated his colonial capital. With characteristic *Schadenfreude* he apparently had it specially designed to resemble tombstones, thereby surrounding the entrapped Jewish community, even before the form of the "Final Solution" had been fully adumbrated, with an indisputable inversionary message (see plate 69 and Poliakov & Wulf, 1983:187; Dawidowicz, 1975:277). Meanwhile Himmler was making sure in his own plans for the

east that the Aryan graves which superceded those of the "rootless" Jew would make fully manifest the continuity of Aryan life, *sans* living Jews, with the organic forms a precapitalist age. This was to be symbolized in the straight lines of the Germanic fir trunks used as memorializing monuments, rooted, like the Aryan body itself, in the natural purity of the germanized soil.

Himmler expresses a similar organic relationship in the production, utilization and disposal of refuse—something which takes special place in the autarchic world of the fascist economy, where every utility is to be endlessly recycled for the production of a stable and self-sufficient social organism. "A trash disposal place is to be set aside for every larger settlement," Himmler writes, "in which no longer useable garbage [*nicht verwertbare Abfälle*] and rubbish can be accommodated in deep trenches and covered with sufficient top soil [*Mutterboden*]" (p.32). As usual, value is to be extracted as far as possible from refuse before it is fully assimilated into nature through an aesthetic composting. Similarly, industrial waste is to be recycled and then naturalized in a system subordinating capitalism to the principles of a rationalized economic aesthetics: "Refuse places (slag hills, garbage dumps, rubbish heaps) of every kind are not to be visible amidst the landscape. They should be planted over and devoted to some far-reaching use. While it is impossible to transform garbage heaps into artificial mountains, it is necessary to make them permanently green again" (p.36).

This perverse version of modern ecological principles is to be applied to major construction sites, which of necessity will riddle the transforming east, at least temporarily. "It is not enough to restore the cleared areas with a sufficient covering of top soil," Himmler writes. "They must also be devoted to such productive purposes [*Leistungen*] as serve the countryside as a whole. Here is included all kinds of debris generated when creating clearings, levelings, earth movement and works for the purposes of water conservation. Reforestation already should be performed on portions of the site during the

actual construction period. Following upon the feet of every clearing operation must come another reconstruction measure, so that it fits itself meaningfully into the orderly profile of the landscape" (p.36). As we will see later in our discussion of the Stroop Report, this principle was applied assiduously, on Himmler's order, at the former site of the demolished Warsaw Ghetto. There every bit of debris that formerly constituted Jewish homes was to be recycled for new German building projects, while enormous quantities of top soil were to be shipped in to create out of the chaotic labyrinth of the ghetto a healthy Aryan Volkspark (see chapter 14). We will see the same principle applied in the following chapter to the formerly Polish-Jewish city of Lodz as it was germanized into Litzmannstadt, and again in the obscene landscaping methods whereby the SS sought to erase the traces of their crimes in Treblinka and other death camps (see chapter 13).

As for industry, Himmler's formulation, although succinct, again reflects that of Beauty of Labor: industrial areas should take on an external form "that corresponds to the meaning and the worthiness of practical labor" (p.36). For the agrarian-oriented Himmler this meant that technological installations as a whole were to be enclosed in nature, the inevitable "wounds" made by industry encompassed and hidden away—as would the death camps themselves (see chapter 15)—within the growing boundaries of the natural landscape. And with this reactionary modernist perspective in mind, Himmler concluded his visionary plans for the reformulation of the eastern *Lebensraum* into a domesticated German *Heimat*.

Conclusion

The National Socialist writer Hanns Johst, traveling with Himmler through the "Polish Colony" in 1940, provides a particularly expressive summing-up of Himmler's mood as well as the domesticating terms whereby the eastern territories were to be appropriated and germanized.

We were on the journey from Lodz to Warsaw. Again and again the *Reichsführer-SS* stopped the car, climbed over the slippery ditch, stepped into the fields torn by grenades, took between his fingertips a pinch of earth, smelled it deliberately with cocked head, crumbled the clods between the fingers and then, full to overflowing with this good, nourishing earth, looked out over the wide, wide expanse. And so we stood like ancient peasants, smiling blindingly at one another. . . . So all this was now German earth! Here the German plough soon would transform the image of the landscape. Soon tree and schrub would be planted here. . . hedges would multiply, and weasel and hedgehog, hawk and falcon would protect the unripe harvest from destruction by mice and vermin. . . . This cultural labor [*Kulturarbeit*]. . . would cause windbreaks to act, dew to increase, encourage the massing of clouds, cause rain, and thereby draw a more productive climate further into the east. . . . And so we stood upon the fields, holding conquered earth in our hands, and looked far and wide over the loveless, neglected plain. . . . We envision it populated with villages, embedded in rustling orchards. . . . We see forest edges, and out of the dark-green hedges sound playful songs from the throats of birds from our homeland, who have moved in along with us. . . (Hanns Johst [*Ruf des Reiches—Echo des Volkes! Eine Ostfahrt*, 1942], in Ackermann, 1970:227-8).

This sentimental image—silent yet fully knowing of the extraordinary brutality needed to accomplish its aims—evokes strongly the naturalizing process whereby the alien territories of the east were now to be domesticated into German form. Emancipated from the spoliative influence of the Jew and his Slavic hordes, the German *Lebensraum* lay open before Himmler's feet, awaiting only the Reichführer's joyful touch and the effects of his formative labor.

Himmler's plans for the east provide the ideal iconographic image of the Third Reich and the millenarian community it is struggling to create. This utopian Nazi vision exists of course in dialectic with the spaces it seeks to replace—those supposedly generated by the uneven collaboration of Jewish racial physiognomy with that of the Jew's Slavic underling. This alien and unhealthy living space expresses itself in the amorphous expanse of the east as in the associated forms of the ghetto labyrinth, with its sinuous alleys and "involuting boxing," its *Ineinanderschachteln* of rooms. Both spaces are variations on the basic chaos whereby Germans experience the effects of "Jewish" exchange—the mazeway of the ghetto

reproducing itself like a cancerous and entrapping webwork in order to fill up the urban sectors of an otherwise vast and engulfing wasteland.

Guided by Beauty of Labor's aesthetic rationality and the principles of reactionary modernism, the alienating "before" gives way to an Aryan "after" as the emptiness of the "soul-devouring" east is encompassed in the natural and productive forms of German cultural design. Green subdivision is the key means of accomplishing this domesticating labor. This is the ideal structuring device whereby an organic German pattern can be imprinted upon an otherwise formless and enveloping countryside. Indeed, it is a means of channeling the threatening fluidity of that space into bounded, German forms (cf. Theweleit, 1987, 1989 [1977]), forms structured by the cultural imperatives of the German body itself. Like the population that is to inhabit it, this horticulturally-structured landscape is to be subjected to the principles of Nazi eugenics and biological engineering; nothing alien, unnatural, genetically inferior, or invasive is to be figured into the blueprint for the germanized "After." Indeed, the "unnatural" will be processed and eliminated through recycling, even as the "natural" is protected and conserved. Beautified villages, towns and cities will dot the landscape, with "ornamental installations" and Germanic town halls raised in relief so as to express the reigning superiority of German domesticity. Likewise special party structures and marching places will serve to shape the population and mobilize it, just as the formlessness of the countryside has been ordered, into living instantiations of the Aryan *Volk* Community. The blemishes of debris left behind during the course of this monumental construction effort, along with the "wounds" of industry itself, will be healed over by a living skin of forest and greenery. Even the refuse heaps will be organically recycled, while the graveyards will testify to the means whereby the German *Volk* has defeated the ravages of time and the influences of organic decay. And thus the alienating effects of an allegedly Jewish-dominated capitalism will be inverted and encompassed in its very heartland by the hardened, form-giving boundaries of the Aryan *Volk* Community.

But as Himmler indicated elsewhere, the Jew himself must be eliminated from the east and from Europe as a whole if this transformative effort is to succeed. This is the prerequisite for a "germ-free soil" just as it is the means whereby the German *Volkskörper* will be cleansed of parasites and the hidden effects of pathogenic agents. The implications for this process will be developed in the following chapters, but even now they should be clear: the Jew will have to be subjected to the same kinds of domesticating labor as the spaces he formerly dominated if the Thousand Year Reich is to come fully and securely into being.

The effort to realize this vision for the *Lebensraum*, of course, was not Himmler's alone, but a collective labor taking on the essential character of a millenarian enterprise. This is indicated by the massive scope of Himmler's transformative project, the heightened sense of an altered, urgent time frame within which it was to be completed, and the necessity for the self-sacrificial investment of German society's every productive energy in order to achieve success. "The enormity and once-in-a-lifetime character [*Einmaligkeit*] of this task in the eastern territories," Himmler announced, "requires special measures in planning and execution. . . . The reconstruction of the eastern countryside is trail-blazing. It requires the energetic collaboration of all powers in the settlement areas and of every Reich agency, as well as the deployment of youth in the construction and the ideational nurturing of this *völkisch* creation (Himmler, n.d. [1943]:24).¹⁵

The call to youth is appropriate, for it was the spirit and energy of fascist rebirth that was implicated in Hitler and Himmler's stiflingly ethnocentric attempt to transform the east and thereby insure the future of the Third Reich in perpetuity. For this reason we turn now to one of those fanatical young people—"fanatisch" being a common and favorable Nazi term for political commitment (see Klemperer, 1980:62-67)—who helped to realize this

¹⁵Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Dc31.04.

ideological vision in reality. Here too we will discover, on a level of indisputable if errant sincerity, the intersubjective reality of the *Volkskörper* (the body of the *Volk*) within which this millenarian vision was embedded, as well as its role in relationship to the so-called "Final Solution."

EMBODYING THE MILLENNIUM

Living Proof: The Memoirs of Melita Maschmann

We can gain more insight into the meanings of the Third Reich's millenarian vision of *Lebensraum*, and its relationship to the Nazi construction of bodily space and time, by considering some of the experiences of Melita Maschmann, a determined young National Socialist who found her personal center in the germanizing east. This former Hitler Youth propagandist and German Labor Service (RAD) camp leader had internalized the principles of "Blood and Soil" so profoundly that, following the demise of the twelve-year Reich in 1945, it would take her nearly another twelve years to make her final break with National Socialism. She accomplished this in a memoir of thorough, even uncompromising self-disclosure (Maschmann, 1979 [1963]). The latter is suggested by the title she chose for its English edition: *Account Rendered: A Dossier on my Former Self* (Maschmann, 1964).¹⁶ One can distance oneself just so far from one's own roots, apparently: the memoir is shaped in the best Nazi elitist tradition of a hard *Arbeit an sich* (work-upon-the-self). This explains its sense of an often cramped humanity even in the act of recantation. And yet for this very reason—as well as its intelligent self-awareness—it ranks with the memoir of the unrepentant Rudolf Höss, Auschwitz commandant (see chapter 16 and Höss, 1963), as one of the most valuable inside statements that exist on the cultural meanings of Nazism as it was lived by thousands of Adolf Hitler's most convinced followers.

¹⁶Unless noted otherwise, all translations below are my own, from the original German edition.

Maschmann, the product of a right-wing, upper middle class family, grew up in perfect harmony with the Third Reich. We have already encountered something of her experience in the camps of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, where the joy of self-abnegating labor transformed her from a "lump of aching flesh" into a hardened, self-sacrificing cell in the great and growing body of the *Volk* (see chapter 10 and Maschmann, 1979:34) Maschmann later went on to become a top member of the Hitler Youth press and propaganda office at home and in the so-called "Wartheland." It was in the latter that she spent an important two-year hiatus first as a trainee and then as a camp leader [*Lagerführerin*] for the RAD's colonizing "*Osteinsatz*" ("Eastern Venture"). In such camps the task of the young women—both volunteers and conscripts—was to help "germanize" the Wartheland by renovating the farmhouses of indigenous Poles who had been expelled, and otherwise smoothing the way for the new *Volksdeutsche* resettlers being brought in as part of Himmler's demographic master plan for the East.

In harmony with Nazism's millenarian vision, the youthful Maschmann describes herself as having been drawn almost inexorably to the east, for there more than anywhere else in so-called Greater Germany "something new had to be built up" (Maschmann, 1979:65). Based first in Poznan—called Posen by the Germans—Maschmann looked upon the native Polish population as "grudgingly tolerated intruders, who would remain only so long as we needed them" (p.66-67). She, on the other hand, was a representative of the "Master Race," pompous though the phrase might seem, and obliged to act like one. "I was glad to be allowed to work in the Wartheland," she writes, "and I would not have wanted to change places with anyone in Germany. My colleagues and I felt it an honour to be allowed to help in 'conquering' this area for our own *Volk* and for German culture. We had all the arrogant elan of the 'culture bringer' [*Kulturbringer*]" (p.75). Any sense of the greenhorn, as evidenced by an initial "thoughtless sympathy" toward Poles, soon disappeared as Maschmann encountered the necessity for a ruthless social Darwinism.

Saving Polish children from starvation, for example, was actually a kind of suicide. It ignored the biological preponderance of the inferior Slavic race, which, like all inferior races, was capable by dint of its sheer primitive reproductiveness of overrunning races more intelligent and refined (p.68-9). Even back in high school her "racial science" (*Rassenkunde*) lessons had prepared her to accept the fate of the Poles, which she now was working so hard to fulfill: consistent with Himmler's plans, they would be allowed to live on, but only as German helots (see Himmler in Kamenetsky, 1961:193-6).

As for her attitudes toward the Jew, these had already been established in essence during her childhood, and in terms consistent with classic Nazi antisemitism. She did not really connect her Jewish classmates, she writes, with "*the Jews*." "Those Jews remained something mysteriously menacing and anonymous. They were not the sum of all Jewish individuals. . . they were an evil power, something with the attributes of a specter. One could not see it, but it was there nonetheless, an active force for evil" (p.40). Belief in the magical existence of fairytale figures might have dissipated during growing up, she writes, but not so knowledge of the "evil Jew." His reality remained omnipresent, if only because Maschmann and her cohorts "experienced daily how adults believed in it." It was a taken-for-granted, she explains, like the roundness of the earth: "one did not consider it necessary to prove or disprove it" (p.40). For Maschmann, then, antisemitism was a cultural assumption, a symbolic construct experienced as natural and inevitable. In classic fetish terms, the "Jew" was the personification of something abstract and threatening; he was an "active force for evil." Maschmann's later assignments in the east brought her only obliquely into contact with the Jew; thus she rarely speaks directly of his supposed role there. We know from her reactions to the Lodz Ghetto, however (see chapter 13), that she continued to see the Jew, in the manner of *Juden raus!* and its game board (chapter 9) as a hidden and parasitical force rendered concrete and accessible through its collection and imprisonment. This concentration of the Jew behind walls, as we will see in the following

chapter, was a crucial step in Himmler's germanization plans, for it rendered the supposed subhuman master of the east powerless before ever-radicalizing German rituals of punitive status reversal and domestication.

The significance of antisemitism in Maschmann's life, however, goes even deeper. One sees this in the literary device which she has chosen to structure her entire memoir: that of an imaginary dialogue with a former Jewish girlfriend and classmate whose fate she has lost track of. The appropriateness and obvious efficacy of this structuring device suggests just how crucially the dialectic of German and Jew exists at the core of "Aryan" identity. It becomes the key whereby Maschmann reconstructs her coming of age and consciousness as a National Socialist helping to realize the millennium. At the same time explaining herself to her Jewish alter ego becomes the means whereby she acts, more than a decade after the war, to deconstruct that Aryan identity and find for herself a new human center. Maschmann's antisemitism had been the fundament, in fact, upon which all else was erected, something she acknowledges at the end of her memoir. "You will no doubt be waiting," she addresses her long-vanished Jewish schoolmate, "to hear how I came to grips with my former antisemitism. I avoided tackling that question for as long as possible. I could well foresee that it would be the hardest one of all" (p.229).

The Altered Time Frame of Nazism's Millenarian Labor

Maschmann's memoirs help to reveal the extent to which the German spatial reconstruction of the east was rooted in an altered millenarian time sense, one which owed its keenly-felt requirement for speed to the impossible dimensions of the task at hand. This was the need to radically transform an entire social order as well as half the European continent, dissolving all physical and social contradictions in the process. At the core of this undertaking lay the necessity for an unprecedented "cleansing" action—a genocidal labor to be perpetrated categorically against a racial enemy whose evil was deemed to be as

insidious as it was overwhelming. If Nazism's ideological vision was to be realized perfectly in action and for all time, such an effort would have to be massive, uncompromising and rapid enough to hold bounds permanently against the superior forces of chaos and collapse.

Accordingly this altered millenarian time sense was accompanied by the necessity for an intense and heightened framework of activity—the actual pursuit of the millennium (cf. N. Cohn, 1970). Maschmann again reveals the ways in which this millenarian labor was conceived as well as its implications for her own life's work. Work, indeed, was the key: "Fanatical hard work [*das Arbeitsfanatismus*] had become a passion for many of us," she writes.

. . . Why did we hurl ourselves into this fanaticism for work? . . . At a reception on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday Hitler is said to have expressed himself as follows: My colleagues sometimes complain that I maintain too swift a tempo and thereby overturn developments which should be completed slowly. I know that this is so but I must ask you to keep pace with me. The Third Reich must be built up and secured while I am still at the height of my powers. What we cannot achieve now will never be achieved (Maschmann, 1979:94-5).

This formulation left a strong impression not only upon Maschmann but upon her colleagues as well, who frequently repeated these words as a means of framing their own efforts in the east. Maschmann reveals this line of thinking:

Hitler is right, I thought. We must not spare our strength for a single minute. In their enthusiasm for the Führer most Germans are still ready to make every sacrifice that he demands of them. It is only at this historic hour that Greater Germany can be built. Then when Hitler dies we shall only have to hold on. Then the inspiration he has given us and the general willingness to make sacrifices will be extinguished.

"This conviction lay behind all that I did," Maschmann wrote, "and drove me along from minute to minute" (p.94-5).

Like the German soldiers drawn "magically" to the site of *Einsatzgruppen* killings on the eastern front, Maschmann too experienced the urgent excitement of the millennium in her own domain of action. In the Nazi view, the violent, uninhibiting effects of war in the

east—war defined as a struggle between races and world views—had created the ideal but short-lived conditions under which the millennium actually could be achieved. A special moment was at hand, and one of world-historical dimension: the Jew was to be dealt with in his heartland, once and for all, the onslaught of his bolshevik hordes blocked, the *Lebensraum* domesticated, and the alienating effects of capitalism thereby inverted. Now if never again, Germans had the unique opportunity to reverse the inexorable biological course of European history. This was their chance to restore a sense of mastery to their lives and fulfill the Nazi racial vision. In order to do this, however, it was necessary that each German internalize the fascist principle of *Opfersinn*, of collective self-sacrifice, and offer up every ounce of his or her bodily energy for the achievement of Nazism's millenarian goals and the production of the Thousand Year Reich. In the case of those entrusted with the central task of finally "solving" the Jewish Problem, this meant the necessity to pursue the "logical" presuppositions of Nazi racial antisemitism to the utmost, no matter how "awesome" or difficult the undertaking. Only in that way could the body of the *Volk* be purified and fully "hardened"; only then could the Aryan *Volk* Community be realized permanently on earth, and the dominion of its leaders insured.

**The Aryan Volkskörper:
The Bodily Spacetime of Nazi Millenarianism**

To a great extent Maschmann's fanatical efforts to germanize the east were preventative ones, energized by the "specter of belonging to a 'dying race' [*das Schreckgespenst, einem 'sterbenden Volk' anzugehören*]" (p.73). This nightmare, against which she labored so intensively during the war years, articulates with an even deeper theme underlying her memoirs: that of the German *Volkskörper*, of which she felt herself to be an inextricable part. Perhaps no other memoir or ideological text brings out as well as Maschmann's how much that superorganic symbolic form was a subjective reality for many Germans living amidst the racist, social Darwinist, and eugenicist policies of the Third Reich.

One encounters this reality, for example, in her reaction to the news of the war's beginning. Staring out the window of a train traveling near the Polish border only days after the German invasion of Poland, Maschmann recalls an unforgettable conversion she had with herself. " 'It is war,' " a voice inside of her said. " 'Now you have nothing more to fear.' " The thought seemed enigmatic; it took some time before the answer came clear to her: " 'When you are dead you have nothing more to fear—have you? . . . Well, for yourself you are now dead. Everything that once was I has now been absorbed into the Whole' " (p.63). Maschmann herself describes this quintessential nationalist experience as a "release from the ego" and a simultaneously subordination of the self to the "*Volk* or *Volk* Community" (cf. Anderson, 1983). But in the case of Nazism, of course, that community was defined in the collective terms of an encompassing "Aryan" body. This was a reality which was experienced subjectively rather than simply being defined; it was lived. Thus Maschmann felt herself mysteriously "invulnerable" during the war. "The whole which I served was not endangered by the dangers which threatened me" (p.64).

Nowhere did the experience of the *Volkskörper* resonate so powerfully for Maschmann as during the period of her colonialization efforts as head of women's RAD camps in the Wartheland. Not surprisingly, the role of the camp, like that of the *Volkskörper*, runs throughout Maschmann's life as a National Socialist. As it will be recalled, for Maschmann the teenager, as for so many of her contemporaries, the labor service camp was the place where the as yet unrealized vision of the great *Volksgemeinschaft* was successfully instantiated in miniature; it was both a model of that dream and a dynamic blueprint for its production (see chapter 10). There, under compulsory but willingly-endured conditions, Maschmann's own role as a self-sacrificial, laboring cell within the body of the *Volk* had been ingrained within her flesh and blood. Now, guiding her *Arbeitsmädchen* in their reclamation of Poland from its indigenous inhabitants, she revealed

the extent to which she had assimilated the tools of the camp as the generic Nazi institution of social transformation par excellence.

Reformulating the alien and conquered east into German *Lebensraum* meant the application of a formative discipline to the Poles and their "filthy" villages; to the imported *Volksdeutsche*, who had to be taught the simplest fundamentals of German hygiene; and finally to the self. Maschmann had an opportunity to apply these lessons when Polish partisans set fire to one of the villages she was appropriating for German settlers. Faced with the loss of their homes and livelihoods, the Polish villagers collapsed into panic. The resulting human chaos filled Maschmann with the same horror she had experienced as a child when accosted by a madwoman. Feeling herself being drawn into that same chaos, Maschmann instead called upon her years of National Socialist training; "a cold calm" came over her. Driving the villagers without mercy—not out of concern for their well-being, she writes, but so as to prevent them later from burdening the German *Volk*—she organized them into teams to fight the fire. In the process she became filled with "a cold, almost intoxicating feeling of superiority" (p.113) Fighting the fire and the panic about her, Maschmann felt herself "measuring my strength against some unholy power" and emerging triumphant.

This fascination with fire is a common theme in National Socialism. It expresses itself self-reflexively in the nighttime ritual of Hitler Youth jumping over bonfires; we also saw it in the ominous red-hot glow of the factory furnaces in the film *Jugend aus Eisen und Stahl* (see chapter 11). Indeed, the theme of fire comes up in lines by Walter Flex which count amongst the most frequently recited poems during the Third Reich, especially in youth contexts: "*Wer andere will entbrennen zu Flammen hell und rein/der darf nicht Asche kennen, muß selbst ganz Flamme sein!* [He who wishes to ignite others into flames bright and pure/cannot himself be ashes, but must be entirely of flame!]" (in Steinbach, 1983:100). In a subsequent chapter on the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, we will

discover SS Major-General Jürgen Stroop's absorption with the devastating effects of fire as focused upon the Jew (see chapter 14). As we will see also in the case of Adolf Hitler toward the end of this chapter, this fascination entails a recognition of fire's destructive power, as well as the capacity to control that power so as to forge out of the objects of German labor, including the self, a new, steel-like hardness. This was the essence of the formative discipline which Maschmann sought to bring to the Polish countryside; we shall encounter its full effects later, in the crematoria furnaces of Auschwitz and the incineration pits of Treblinka (chapter 15).

Maschmann's memoirs of this period include a long passage in which she describes her visceral reactions to the Polish countryside. At the same time this passage also reveals, implicitly, a great deal about the symbolic terms whereby Germans experienced that spatial reality and sought to transform it, in dialectic with a complementary symbolic construction of German space and the body inhabiting it. Although these musings are consistent with Himmler's plans for the east and other formal expressions of National Socialist ideology, their special value lies precisely in their personal and subjective nature. In addition, unlike the rest of Maschmann's memoir, they are not written in retrospect but instead are culled from letters she actually wrote at the time. As Maschmann herself explains, this passage is made of "authentic material" (Maschmann: 1979:99)—immediate observation, unfiltered by memory or changes in motivation that might have influenced surreptitiously her attempt to write a responsible and accurate post-war account. Even more importantly, the particular value of such impressionistic passages lies in their capacity to highlight the interface between "propagandistic" formulations—those which, for some readers no doubt, remain suspect as to their deeper social significance—and the more profound level of symbolic meaning which serves inescapably to structure human cultural experience.

Maschmann, quoting from her letters, writes about how her feelings for the Polish countryside fluctuate. When in Berlin, she writes, she is homesick for the east, and thinks

of it as "our country," the land on which she and her comrades work and proves themselves. "But on days like today," she continues, "I am afraid of it and I would almost say I hated it":

Nothing but stubble fields, rank pastures, waste land and unmade roads that threaten to swallow one up [*in deren Grundlosigkeit man zu versinken droht*]. They eat into the farmland on both sides, because every vehicle hugs the edges where it is firmer. The whole countryside is as formless and blurred [*formlos und verschwommen*] as these roads. In the dull autumn light not even the horizon presents a clear line; it, too, merges into an undefined sky. Scattered far and wide, little farmsteads cower under poplar trees, which only have leaves at the very tops of their tall stems.

It is hard to feel at home [*heimisch*] in this landscape. There is an emptiness about its spaciousness. It lies before us without creative movement. But perhaps that is the wrong word. This country is certainly not 'empty' although it is only thinly populated. I mean something else when I say that the sensation keeps forcing itself upon me that we are surrounded by an 'emptiness' which drains the strength out of us, body and soul [*Kraft aus Leib und Seele saugt*]. What this country lacks is that heritage of history which speaks to the people of the present time through the monuments and traditions of former periods. Where are the cathedrals, where the castles, the abbeys and town halls? Where the buildings of old merchant companies and the patrician houses? Has this country produced no people in the course of the centuries who gave expression to their piety, their civic pride or their sense of beauty and proportion in buildings? (pp.107-8).

Anyone who has visited Poland, even in the wake of its devastation during the Second World War and its drab, utilitarian post-war reconstruction under Communism, would have to be stunned by such blindness to the historical manifestations of its indigenous cultural traditions, however expansive its fields might appear when one is traveling overland. But draining the east of its historical identity and then rehistoricizing it according to German requirements is essential to Nazism's appropriative inner-European imperialist project—something which Nazism shares, in fact, with European colonial projects throughout the world (see B. Cohn, 1989, 1983; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). Maschmann participates in this undertaking entirely on automatic. Seeking to relieve the oppressive sense of an alien formlessness, Maschmann finds her way cross-country to something "unexpectedly precious," the ruins of what she considers to be an old Teutonic

castle rising consoling out of the empty countryside. Running amidst the remnants of its old gateways and towers, she feels an all-too-tenuous sense of connection to the racial qualities supposedly inherent in its architectural form. "Seven hundred years ago history was made here," she writes, "and we must seize hold of it. But can our *Volk* still summon up the strength of blood and spirit to bridge such a time span? . . . (p.108).

What is remarkable here is how consistently Maschmann's experience of the east jibes with the implicit cultural dynamic of the body in Nazi Germany. In the first place, all of the terms she uses to describe the subjective effects of the landscape are tied to the dual dimensions of formlessness and unproductivity which the German must struggle to counter in his own body as in the space it inhabits. The east is a wasteland of stubble, a realm without structure, its emptiness an inevitable extension of the racially-inadequate physiognomies of those who inhabit it. Even its roads, which might bind the land together and provide direction (like Hitler's *Autobahnen*), lack firmament; the German sinks as if into quicksand, and hugs the edges in search of boundaries. Everything, even the division of sky and land, is blurred and empty—and all because it has not yet felt the shaping discipline of German labor. For this reason the east is experienced as encroaching upon the margins of the German's body, blurring his hard-won sense of personal integrity. The formlessness of the east places him unwillingly in touch with the natural, presocialized emptiness within himself, that which he seeks through *Arbeit an sich* continually to encompass, structure and contain. Reaching across the boundaries of the body, the chaotic emptiness threatens instead to deconstruct his buttresses and break down his damming wall, to drain his productive energies and swallow him up within its vast expanse (cf. Theweleit, 1987, 1989).

Just how closely this symbolic construction of the eastern space lies to the bone of German bodily experience is revealed in an event that occurred a few months after Maschmann wrote this letter. While attending a set of compulsory lectures for leaders of

the women's Labor Service, Maschmann heard a top figure from an important state agricultural agency indulge in what she thought to be "irresponsible prophecies" about the extension of German *Lebensraum* to the east. As he "raved about how the German peasant would secure the country for our people as far as the Urals," something highly unaccustomed happened to Maschmann, an ideologically-orthodox, hierarchy-oriented and, above all else, emotionally self-disciplined young National Socialist. As she relates it, "I lost my self control."

"What utopian madness!" she exclaimed, with a vehemence that stunned the lecturer. "You can only make plans like that sitting at a desk. Who knows if we can ever make the *Warthegau* into a German country? In three generations the east will suck out [*aufsaugen*] our strength with its space and emptiness. . ." (p.109). Asked to explain herself, she continued. "I find it hard to talk objectively about this question, which is a daily source of anxiety to me. . . . I am often oppressed by the feeling that the true Germany is thinly stretched over this huge area like a net. If the net has to be stretched much farther, as far as the Urals. . . it will become so painfully thin [*hauchdünn*—thin as a breath] that it will break in countless places" (p.109). The explanation left the lecturer unimpressed. Maschmann arose, despite the rules of decorums, and left with the comment, "I refuse to listen to such nonsense." However, once she reached the corridor, her sense of anger and frustration so overflowed that she "burst into tears." Thereafter, she says, the "image of the net of German life [*Netz des deutschen Lebens*] stretched over foreign territory, breaking at every end and corner, became a kind of obsessive fantasy" (p.109).

Outside of the vehement Nazi descriptions we have already seen of the Jew as a parasite in the German body, there is probably no more personal and revealing expression than this of the *Volkskörper* as a lived reality articulating with Nazi Germany's pursuit of its millennium. Losing her sense of bodily control, a young Nazi inadvertently uncovers the emotive, culturally-structured source of an obsession that will haunt her as she struggles

over the next years to "germanize" the east. Maschmann calls it a "net of German life," but the underlying impulse is that of Germany as a human skin, "thin as a breath," stretching ever-more-tenuously to encompass and shape a formless expanse—and rending itself to shreds in the process. This fearful image is consistent with German fascism's conflation of the symbolism of healing with the waxing of political power, expressed in terms of bodily expansion or inflation. It is also a secularized version of the Lutheran process of identity-construction which we have seen earlier (chapters 4 and 6). The necessity for a disciplinary shaping of the self through work, and simultaneously the imperfect displacement of uncertainty over the problem of individual salvation, is raised by fascism to the collective level and charged with the anxiety attendant to the pursuit of the millennium. Now the struggle against the "old Adam" has become the struggle of the *Volkskörper*, and of each of its self-sacrificially laboring cells, to encompass the tensions of a conflict-ridden class structure as well as the alienations of capitalism itself. This is to be accomplished through a racial labor that is also intended to overcome the contradictory bodily dimensions of space and time. The product of that labor is the *Volksgemeinschaft*—seamless and intended to endure one thousand years.

The role of the east in all this is evidenced in an opinion Himmler had expressed, one far more optimistic than Maschmann's, while addressing his officers gathered in Posen in October of 1943. If every German age-group will spend its winters every other year somewhere within the harsh vastness of his great eastern Imperium, he said, the effects would be salubrious, for "then we shall never grow soft. . ." (Himmler, in Noakes & Pridham, 1974:618).

Society in German fascism thus becomes the reified object of its own collective, self-alienated labor; it is a perfect commodity-fetish form raised to the level of the social whole. And yet the production of so perfect and everlasting an object, as Maschmann's reaction reveals, cannot but be fraught with millennial anxiety, for it is driven by the urge to bring

about the impossible—to expand itself to the point of bursting. Hence it is haunted by the fear of being overwhelmed, of pushing its bodily limits too far; of being drawn back into the chaos of worldly contradictions where the bulwarks of form and meaning are swept away and all chance for collective salvation drowned. Considering the biologized terms of this millenarian labor, as well as the degree of existential desperation attendant to its pursuit, it is not surprising that the need for ordering work becomes a German bodily imperative, something which Maschmann describes as a "thirst burning within" (p.118).

The essentially bourgeois terms of this fascist nightmare, and the force of discipline that must be exerted to restrain it, are brought out in an illustration by A. Paul Weber, the graphic artist whose dark etchings express so powerfully the subterranean realities of National Socialism. Titled *The Last Privateer*, the etching shows, from above, the classic German bourgeois idyll of the neat one-family home with its steeped roof, surrounded by its orderly garden of fruit trees, planted urns, a topiary walkway and even the proverbial *Gartenlaube*, or gazebo (in Glaser, 1969:150). Sitting securely in the entrance-way, some chickens scratching nearby, is the tiny figure of the homeowner in robe and smoking hat, pipe in hand. But as we see from the bird's-eye view which Weber has given us, all this order is insured only by the massive and encompassing battlements that have transformed our *Spießbürger's* home and garden into an isolated island rising resolutely above an endless, roiling sea of apocalyptic destruction (see plate 70). Weber started work on this etching in 1944—the year the fortress-like boundaries of Germany's over-expanded *Volkskörper* began their progressive collapse to the size of the Führer's underground bunker in Berlin, and indeed, to the faltering dimensions of Adolf Hitler's own body.

* * *

As the latter suggests, for Maschmann and numerous other Germans it was Hitler himself who ultimately embodied the *Volkskörper*.¹⁷ This meant that he also represented the millenarian outlay of collective energy which National Socialists were generating to secure the boundaries of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and purify it totally of Jews. "For us he embodied in his person the unprecedented effort which had made the German *Volk* take over the leadership of the continent," Maschmann wrote. "In looking at him one saw the sum total of all the countless sacrifices of lives, health and property which that effort had demanded" (Maschmann, 1979:189). Thus it is inevitable that, during the last months of the war, Hitler should also have embodied the nightmare of the *Volkskörper's* impending collapse, when Germany was surrounded by evidence of its own progressive wasting and diminishment. During these last days, Maschmann writes, "I always had to fight back tears when I heard Hitler's voice on the radio or saw him on the newsreels. One's conscious mind might refuse to recognize the signs of an imminent collapse, which were becoming more and more obvious, but the immediate impressions one received through one's eyes and ears could not be falsified, and one's heart was gripped with fear at the appalling truth: the newsreels showed an ageing man, who walked with a stoop and glanced anxiously about him. His voice sounded shrill with despair. Was he, then, destined to founder? . . . Had all this been in vain?" (p.189).

Maschmann's personal fears had already been confirmed several years earlier, however, during another training course held in January 1942. This was the same period as the Wannsee Conference, when plans for the annihilation of European Jewry were finalized (see Hilberg, 1985::403-7). At her own conference Maschmann learned the related news that the German Imperium indeed was to stretch all the way to the Urals. It

¹⁷Hitler's role here is characteristic of the leaders of millenarian movements throughout the world, who embody the social whole in all its contradiction, thereby demonstrating access to the energies needed to overcome those contradictions and achieve an enduring, this-worldly salvation (see Newborn, 1977, 1980).

was now official state policy; Germany would create, through conquest and settlement, a "frontier wall of pure German blood" [*ein rein deutschblütiger Grenzwall*] to enclose the endless expanse of the east and transform it into German *Lebensraum* (Maschmann, 1979:131). For the moment, at least, Maschmann's obsession seemed too close to reality; she could stand the strain no longer. Her solution was to travel from the grim Polish-Jewish industrial city of Lodz to Würzburg, a train journey of two days and nights, just so as to be able to spend a day once more in a "beautiful old town." Würzburg was noted for its splendid German ecclesiastical architecture, its bridges and lovely old town center with steep, clustered roofs. This was, for Maschmann, the essence of German space in its most protective and consoling form: huddled and *heimisch*, structured and sub-divided. Here the German skin, still within the manageable bounds of the Old Reich, had succeeded in filling its inner emptiness with the sedimented forms of productive, German labor; here it was anchored securely in the German racial soil. Renewed by this brief experience, Maschmann returned to the Wartheland, there to import the lessons relearned at Würzburg through a restored "work fanaticism" projected outward onto alien soil.

Apocalyptic Self-Consumption: Fulfilling Nazism's Fetishized Millenarianism Logic

Although Maschmann's furlough in Würzburg helped her to come to terms with the ominous implications of National Socialism's racial imperialism, this period of her life nonetheless put her permanently in touch with that frightening nihilism which so often constitutes the underside of millenarian fervor. Along with the fear of being unable to hold back the engulfing tide of emptiness and disintegration, there comes for convinced National Socialists and others a deadening of the self and senses. One's role as an expendable cell within the body of the *Volk*—and at the same time, of course, the underlying desire to survive—induces a willingness to do anything to achieve the goals of the millennium, no matter how superhuman the task, even if the effort should come to resemble a headlong

drive into disaster. It is almost as if one revels in the apocalypse and the power it unleashes—as if the full meaning of millenarian revival is fulfilled only in the final, explosive confrontation of the body itself with the violent energies of order and chaos, birth and death, creation and disintegration. Adolf Hitler himself was never far from these meanings, even when on the brink of success of 1933. "We shall not capitulate. . ." he had said in interviews with Hermann Rauschning, all the time humming Wagnerian motifs. "We may be destroyed, but if we are, we shall drag a world with us—a world in flames" (Hitler, in Rauschning, 1940:5).

Speaking for Germany as a whole, Hitler's Propaganda Minister, Josef Goebbels revealed this same megalomaniacal spirit on February 18, 1943 in the Berlin Sports Palace, shortly after the devastating defeat of the *Wehrmacht* at Stalingrad. Struggling to rouse the German *Volk* behind the war effort, renew the Führer's confidence and spirits, and in the process restore himself to a paramount position in Hitler's eyes, Goebbels had prepared the most important public demonstration of his career. He did so as if he were orchestrating Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, transforming the ignominy of defeat at the hands of the "subhumans" into Germany's superhuman last stand, the apotheosis of the Thousand-Year Reich. His audience consisted of fifteen thousand, with radio microphones poised to transmit the words spoken on this historic occasion into every German home; newsreel cameras were set to pan across the rows of faces grouped before the stage. First came the casualties of the eastern front; then rows filled with ministers of government, high Party leaders and the generals of the *Wehrmacht*. Behind them came a physical instantiation of the German *Volk* itself, a wide cross-section carefully selected from all over Germany—tradesmen, office workers, artists, doctors, engineers, civil servants, ordinary soldiers, teachers—gathered to chant in unified response to the ten questions Goebbels would pose.

"I ask you," Goebbels began, "do you believe with the Führer and with the rest of us in the final total victory of the Germany people? I ask you, are you determined to follow the

Führer through thick and thin in the struggle for victory, and to put up even with the heaviest of personal burdens?" Would the German people accept the mobilization of all women? The death penalty for "shirkers," "profiteers" and anyone who interfered in any way with the war effort? Devote all its strength to giving "Bolshevism its mortal blow?" After each question there followed explosions of consent, as if the crowd were a single body, calling out its "*Ja!*" with one voice. Spontaneous demonstrations broke out with banner-waving, along with shouts of "*Sieg-Heil!*" and "Führer, command—we follow!" The gathering may have been hand-picked, the event orchestrated. Nonetheless the effect transcended that of mere crowd manipulation; Goebbels was touching upon the deepest symbolic chords of collective identity and millenarian labor in the Third Reich.

In the process of raising the emotional excitement of this representative and loyal Nazi crowd to its highest pitch, Goebbels delivered the ultimate question. "I ask you," he screamed, "*wollt Ihr den Totalen Krieg?*"—"Do you want Total War?—if necessary, do you want it more total and more radical than we can even imagine it today?" Newsreels document the response of the crowd: it was a shattering paroxysm of assent, accompanied by a nearly orgasmic, self-abnegating release of energy. "I asked you," Goebbels replied hoarsely at the end of his address, his voice choked, "and you gave me your answers. You are part of the German *Volk* and from your mouth the will of the German people has become manifest. . . . Now, *Volk*—arise! Storm, break loose!" (see Hofer, 1957:250-2; Noakes & Pridham, 1975:664-6; Reimann, 1976:263-267; cf. Dumbach & Newborn, 1986).

Within the context of National Socialism's belief in the existence of a World Jewish Conspiracy manipulating the course of war, the implications of Goebbels' reference to delivering Bolshevism its mortal blow could not have been lost upon the German audience. Indeed, the same basic point which Goebbels made in his diary entry of March 4, 1943 had been driven home repeatedly through every propaganda outlet at his command: "We have to

be exceptionally careful about Bolshevism. Russia is not a bourgeois but a proletarian Jewish state. If we don't exert every effort it may someday overrun us. Our slogan should be, now more than ever: 'Total War Is the Imperative Need of the Hour' "

(Goebbels, 1948:272). We will soon encounter the culturally-shared reality of this eschatological labor as focused more directly upon the Jew in Jürgen Stroop's destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, where he likened himself to a great conductor directing an apocalyptic Wagnerian opera (see chapter 14). As we will see, the same affinity to the powers of cataclysm—representing, of course, the dialectical rebirth of the revitalized Aryan *Volk*—is manifested in the repetitive photographs of the flattened, smoking ghetto with which Stroop concludes his celebratory album. As Saul Friedländer points out, the exhilarating joy released by the dialectical possibilities of holocaust is also made manifest in Albert Speer's account of Adolf Hitler's fascination with fire:

I would unhesitatingly say that fire was Hitler's proper element. Though what he loved about fire was not its Promethean aspect but its destructive force. That he set the world aflame and brought fire and sword upon the Continent—such statements may be mere imagery. But fire itself, literally and directly, always stirred a profound excitement in him. I recall his ordering showings in the Chancellery of the films of burning London, of the sea of flames over Warsaw, of exploding convoys, and the rapture with which he watched those films. I never saw him so worked up as toward the end of the war, when in a kind of delirium he pictured for himself and for us the destruction of New York in a hurricane of fire. He described the skyscrapers being turned into gigantic burning torches, collapsing upon one another, the glow of the exploding city illuminating the dark sky (Speer, in Friedländer, 1984:35).

Nazism's construction of the Jew as world conspirator included, of course, the certainty that it was Wall Street's Jewish financiers who truly ruled New York and by extension, the world market, just as the American president's hidden ancestry was revealed in the probable transformation of his name to Roosevelt from "Rosenfeld" (see Hitler, 1981:103, 124; cf. chapter 13 below, n.6). Similarly, Goebbels in his diary claims that the United States "can certainly be described as a Class-1 Jew State," while noting in connection with Allied measures in liberated Algiers that, "wherever the English and the Americans go, their

first act is that of rescinding the restrictions for Jews. It proves that in London, as well as in Washington, the Jews play a decisive role, even though it be back-stage" (Goebbels, 1948:332, 300).

Hitler was not alone in his fascination with fire, of course. Only a moment ago we observed the "cold, almost intoxicating feeling of superiority" which Melita Maschmann experienced when "measuring" her strength against the "unholy power" of the conflagration threatening to consume the village she wished to germanize. Toward the end, Maschmann found herself caught up increasingly in her own personal versions of Nazism's nihilistic practice. Often in the thick of the fighting during the last days of the war, for example, she took no precautions to protect herself, but walked directly within range of the bullets.

I was firmly convinced that I would not outlive the "Third Reich." If it was condemned to go under, then so was I. The one thing would automatically follow the other without my having to do anything about it. I did not picture my death as a last sacrifice [*letztes Opfer*] which I should have to make. Nor did I think of suicide. I was filled with the shadowy impression that "my world" would be flung off its course, like a constellation in a cosmic catastrophe, and would drag me with it—like a tiny speck of dust—into outer darkness.

I must sometimes have been disturbed by the vague fear that I would miss the end which was intended for me and would then be forced to outlive my "world." Perhaps I was also secretly afraid that when the crucial moment came I should cling to life like a coward. This, I could see, would condemn me to a life of bitter self contempt—indeed worse, to an existence robbed of all inner possibilities of life. . . . I did not wish to dodge the bullet that was meant for me (Maschmann, 1979:163).

This extraordinary sense of psychic and physical subordination to an abstract yet living whole greater than the self brings out just how strongly Maschmann felt herself to be nothing more than a biological cell, dependent yet expendable, in the German *Volkskörper*, the body of the *Volk*. At the same time it reveals how thoroughly the symbolic reality of the Third Reich had fused together for many Germans to create a perfectly closed system permitting no space for alternate discourse or critical distancing. Albert Speer, Hitler's

visionary architect and armaments minister, had been among those raising their arms most fervently at Goebbels' Total War rally, as newsreels testify. Speer discloses a hermeticism similar to Maschmann's in the autobiography he wrote later, while pondering the significance of the Third Reich's collapse from the inescapable perspective afforded by his Spandau prison cell. Referring to the emaciated bodies of the Jewish slave laborers whom he had rented from Himmler and kept brutally occupied in underground munitions factories, even during the last days, Speer confessed: "What disturbs me. . . is that I failed to read the physiognomy of the regime mirrored in the faces of those prisoners—the regime whose existence I was so obsessively trying to prolong during those weeks and months. I did not see any moral ground outside of the system where I should have taken my stand" (Speer, 1971:480; cf. Michel, 1979).

Faced with the collapse of their worlds, Speer and Maschmann may not have thought of taking their own lives directly, but that was a course of action which extended inevitably from the existential reality of the Third Reich. This was testified to by the incredible spate of suicides committed at the end of the war by Nazis both high and low and even by average Germans, as Margaret Bourke-White's photographs documented unforgettably (see plate 71 and Bourke-White, 1946:43-51; Lorant, 1974:336-7). They did so not simply to escape Allied retribution (that is, the retribution of the alleged "Jewish World Conspiracy"), but to go down with a world beyond which there seemed to lie no "moral ground" for continued existence. Indeed, the biological laws of Nazi social Darwinism, as brutal as they were for enemies of the Reich, could not help but come full circle: as one of Hitler's widely-displayed aphorisms stated, "a *Volk* that has ceased to fight for its existence in this world of eternal struggle has given up all right to survive."

The most obvious example of this are the last trance-like days in the Berlin Führer bunker, when Adolf Hitler and his consort, Eva Braun—with the Russians pounding, as it were, at the gates—married on the edge of their own funeral pyre. No one and nothing

was exempt from the inexorable laws of racial struggle: prior to his own suicide the Führer had had his beloved Blondi killed—his pure-bred Alsatian. He also gave his two secretaries poison capsules as a parting gift. All propaganda aside—or perhaps as a final confirmation of its underlying sincerity—Goebbels too demonstrated his personal commitment to the implications of "Total War." Earlier, after seeing the rushes for *Der ewige Jude*, he had sworn that he would kill his entire family if the Jews ever took over (see Hippler, 1981:214). Now, true to his word, he tenderly poisoned his six children before having an SS orderly shoot their mother and himself in the head. He had left firm instructions for their bodies to be burned, like that of his Führer (see Trevor-Roper, 1962:255-290).

There were many additional suicides up and down the Nazi and SS hierarchy—although the majority submerged and tried to escape. Some, like Adenauer's post-war state appointee Hans Globke, who had helped formulate the Nuremberg Laws, even took up where they had left off without a thought to the possibility that they might have done anything wrong during the Third Reich (see Arendt, 1963:19; Hilberg, 1985:1090-1109). Himmler—thinking perhaps that he had reached the kingpins of the alleged International Jewish Conspiracy—actually succumbed to the arguments of his masseur, Felix Kersten, and began negotiations with representatives of the modest but likely-sounding World Jewish Congress, on the principle that Germans and Jews now should put all this behind them, as it were, and let bygones be bygones (see Kersten, 1957:275-290). Later on, under arrest and in the process of being examined by a British medical officer, Himmler bit into a capsule of cyanide hidden behind his teeth (see Trevor-Roper, 1962:289). As for lower-downs, Margaret Bourke-White tells of moving through office after office of Leipzig's ornate Rathaus on April 20, 1945, only to discover the bodies of officials and their relatives slumped over desks or arranged in neat family groupings. "The whole inside of it is like Madam Tausaud's wax-works," a *Life* magazine associate said to her (see

Bourke-White, 1946:49-50). And then there were those like one "poor *Schwein*" of an average Nazi in Hanover who could not bear to have his wife and young son live on after the ignominious defeat of the Third Reich, and so he shot them. Then he reconsidered his own fate and decided (to the regret of his future step-son) that there might, after all, be life after the death of his Führer (personal communication).

This average Nazi was not the only one, especially just prior to Germany's defeat, to have considered such thoughts as natural as the air he breathed. Indeed, Friedrich Reck-Malleczewan, a Bavarian aristocrat, conservative but non-National Socialist, recounts in his wartime diary the case of the female party leader who arrived one day in 1944 to boost the morale of local peasants. There was little cause to worry "in case the war should have an unhappy end," she assured them, because the Führer "in his great goodness had prepared for the whole German people a mild death through gassing. . ." (in Arendt, 1963:110). Reck-Malleczewan himself got a bullet in the head for not obeying, at age 60, a last-ditch conscription call for the local militia (see Reck-Malleczewan, 1950). In a vein similar to the last anecdote, Count Hans von Lehnsdorff tells in his *Ostpreussisches Tagebuch* of a woman in Königsberg dawdling behind while the Red Army was knocking at the gates. "The Russians will never get us," she said when encouraged to flee. "The Führer will never permit it. Much sooner he will gas us" (in Arendt, 1963:111). Hannah Arendt, recounting these two stories, thought the woman in the last might well have completed her comment by adding with a sigh, "And now all that good expensive gas has been wasted on the Jews!" (p.111).

These citizens obviously were more in tune with the symbolic world of the Führer than those less-encompassed or thoroughly disenchanted Germans recording these anecdotes with incredulity. As he was to do for himself and his bride, so too Hitler had hoped to do for his loyal subjects—if not putting them all literally to an end (which was not feasible), then curtailing at least their capacity to survive after defeat. After all, "only those who are

inferior" would be left behind (Hitler, in Speer, 1971:557). Thus the Führer, the embodiment of the *Volkskörper*, issued his notorious "scorched earth" orders of March 19, 1945 to Albert Speer. Nothing was to be left behind for the succor of the Allies or the comfort of the vanquished, not a bridge, roadway, factory, railroad, telephone cable or other line of supply. The German *Volk* had failed to assert itself for its own survival and now it was to receive the fate it deserved (p.557; see also Noakes & Pridham, 1974:676). The *Volkskörper*, assailed on all sides, would preempt its annihilation from outside forces by a last-minute act of collective self-immolation; the burning of the Führer's lifeless body would complete the process. Luckily for Germany, Speer was not as driven by the meanings of National Socialism's millenarian labor as was his Führer. Like several other top Nazis operating to save their own skins (or even that of the *Volkskörper*) in the last days of the Third Reich, Speer suddenly took his own initiative: he betrayed the Führer in favor of the *Volk*.

Thus the Nazi flirtation—indeed, its Faustian marriage—with the dialectical forces of destruction was intrinsic to the structure of Nazi millenarianism (and indeed, to millenarianism everywhere, as such cases as Jonestown testify). In order to create the new Aryan and his heaven-on-earth it had been necessary to overcome all worldly contradictions, sweeping away the old and laying out the new upon an unyieldingly brutal Procrustean bed. This was by definition an all-consuming task, within which the absolute destruction of the Jew and all that he signifies had taken precedence, as we soon shall see. However, as the forces of evil mounted ominously and seemed finally to prevail, this struggle reached, for Germany as a whole as for the most loyal of its followers, its logical culmination in suicide. This is, after all, the ultimate that one can offer in the biologized world of Nazi racism: the self-sacrificial expenditure of the last ounce of one's productive bodily energy—one's life. Thus the commodity fetishism which structures both the reified definition of the Aryan as well as that of the Jew and his industrialized destruction reaches

its fulfillment in Germany's self-alienated effort to produce the millennium, once and for all time, or consume itself in the process.

Nazism's Millenarian Time Frame and the "Final Solution"

It was indeed the Jews, however, for whom the gas had been saved. At first this destructive effort had been initiated, as we shall see in detail in the next chapter, as an indispensable step in the dialectical process of germanizing the east and thereby achieving the millennium—that same effort to which Melitta Maschmann, in her own small way, had contributed. Later it became part of an ever-more desperate and almost metaphysical attempt, even when it became clear that the war was lost, to hold back the engulfing forces of chaos and forestall the apocalypse—to accomplish the definitive act of German collective social realization before the Allies had destroyed, along with Germany's cities, its existential ability to rid itself of Jews. The ever-mounting intensity whereby this annihilatory obsession was pursued indicates the extent to which the genocide of the Jews resided, not apart from National Socialism's urgent millenarian time frame, but at its very core (see *Part Five*).

Even the ominous term which the Nazis chose to designate that program—the so-called "*Endlösung*" or "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem in Europe"—is replete with the spirit of Armageddon.¹⁸ Hitler himself had initiated this sense of a final reckoning with the forces of evil during his enthusiastically received address to the *Reichstag* of January 30, 1939. Taking on the quintessential role of the millenarian leader as prophet, the "Führer" defined the Manichaeic terms of war while simultaneously predicting its outcome, and all to the "persistent wild applause [*anhaltender stürmischer Beifall*]" of his audience (in Jäckel, 1981:75), as the official stenographic protocol had indicated:

¹⁸For use of the term *Endlösung*, see Göring's empowering order to Heydrich and well as the Wannsee Conference protocol (in Hilberg, 1985:401-7).

One thing I should like to say on this day which may be memorable for others as well as for us Germans. In the course of my life I have very often been a prophet, and have usually been ridiculed for it. During the time of my struggle for power it was in the first instance only the Jewish race that received my prophecies with laughter when I said that I would one day take over the leadership of the State, and with it that of the entire *Volk*, and that I would then among other things settle the Jewish problem. Their laughter was uproarious, but I think that for some time now they have been laughing out of the other side of their face.

Today I will once more be a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the peoples once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe! (Hitler, in Noakes & Pridham, 1974:485-6).

This was not the last time these words would be heard. A newsreel clip of Hitler delivering this portentous speech, so full of the violent ridicule of status-reversal, was used soon after to conclude *Der ewige Jude* (1940), thereby revealing that widely-distributed antisemitic film to be a springboard for the radicalized millenarian labor of genocide soon to come. The Führer's "prophecy" clearly had not fallen upon deaf ears.

Other Nazi leaders disclosed a similar perspective on the significance of genocide, once that murderous process was fully underway. On March 27, 1942, Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels recorded in his diary his discovery that Globocnik, the SS and Police Leader in Lublin, was in the process of constructing death camps in the east. "The procedure," he wrote with the awe of the deeply initiated, "is. . . not to be described here more definitely."

Not much will remain of the Jews. . . . [Globocnik] is doing it with considerable circumspection and according to a method that does not attract too much attention. A judgment is being visited upon the Jews that, while barbaric, is fully deserved by them. The prophecy which the Führer made about them for having brought on a new world war is beginning to come true in a most terrible manner. One must not be sentimental in these matters. If we did not fight the Jews, they would destroy us. It's a life-and-death struggle between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus. No other government and no other regime would have the strength for such a global solution of this question. Here, too, the Führer is the undismayed champion of a radical solution necessitated by the conditions and therefore inexorable. . . (Goebbels, 1948:147-8).

"There is nothing funny in it for the Jews," he concluded, implying of course that there was considerable *Schadenfreude* in it for Germans. He makes this evident a year later, on March 20, 1943, in a diary entry written in connection with his announcement that Berlin had been rendered *judenfrei*—something he considered "one of the greatest political achievements of my career" (p.335): "The Führer is happy over my report that the Jews have for the most part been evacuated from Berlin. He is right in saying that the war has made possible for us the solution of a whole series of problems that could never have been solved in normal ways. The Jews will certainly be the losers in this war, come what may" (p.314).

Seeking to demonstrate that Nazi leaders held a "complete view of the destruction process," historian Raul Hilberg paraphrased Hitler's other right-hand men as they expressed themselves in a similar vein. "Göring spoke of burned bridges, and of a position 'from which there is no escape.' Himmler. . . explained that the 'Final Solution' was a task that could not have been postponed, because in world history there was only one Adolf Hitler and because the war had presented to the German leadership a unique opportunity for 'solving the problem.' Later generations would have neither the strength nor the opportunity to finish with the Jews" (Hilberg, 1985:406-7).

Hitler confirmed all this to the German public and the world in the Berlin Sports Palace on September 30, 1942, as the German press reported. Referring back to his earlier address to the *Reichstag*, Hitler resumed once more his role of millenarian prophet, as he would on at least two other prominent occasions that same year (see Jäckel, 1981:75). His purpose this time, however, was to proclaim the advent of Armageddon—that his apocalyptic prophecy of two-and-a-half years earlier was now in the terrible, awesome stages of fulfillment. In the course of doing so, Hitler mistakenly dates his earlier "prophecy" to September 1, 1939 or the invasion of Poland, and not to the correct date of January 30. In so doing Hitler reveals just how deeply he identified this "Final Solution to

the Jewish Problem" with Nazi Germany's fundamental millenarian purpose, that of waging war as a means of social transformation and race renewal:

In my *Reichstag* speech of September 1, 1939, I spoke out on two things: first, that now that the war has been forced upon us, no array of weapons and no passage of time will bring us to defeat, and second, that if Jewry should plot another world war in order to exterminate the Aryan peoples of Europe, it would not be the Aryan peoples which would be exterminated [*ausgerottet*], but Jewry. . . .

At one time, the Jews of Germany laughed at my prophecies. I do not know whether they are still laughing or whether they have already lost all desire to laugh. But right now I can only repeat: they will stop laughing everywhere, and I shall be right also in that prophecy (Hitler, in Hilberg, 1985 :407; Jäckel, 1981:75).

In the following chapters we will encounter, all-too-intimately, the aching immediacy of this millenarian labor. This occurred in the death camps themselves, at the very heart of the expanding *Volkkörper*—or rather in what SS doctors, on call to regulate the "excretion" [*Ausscheidung*] of the Jew and his exchange-nature from the body of the German *Volk*, identified as nothing other than the "*anus mundi*"—the searing bowels of the Third Reich (see chapter 15 and Himmler in Ackermann, 1970:170; Kremer, in Langbein, 1964:82).



Plate 65. *Behind the Allies: the Jew.* Photo of Nazi poster. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 79/2/18,19)



Plate 66. Using coffins as symbols, *Einsatzgruppe A* proudly displays its "achievement" in clearing the Baltic states of Jews. (Source: Poliakov, 1979:286)

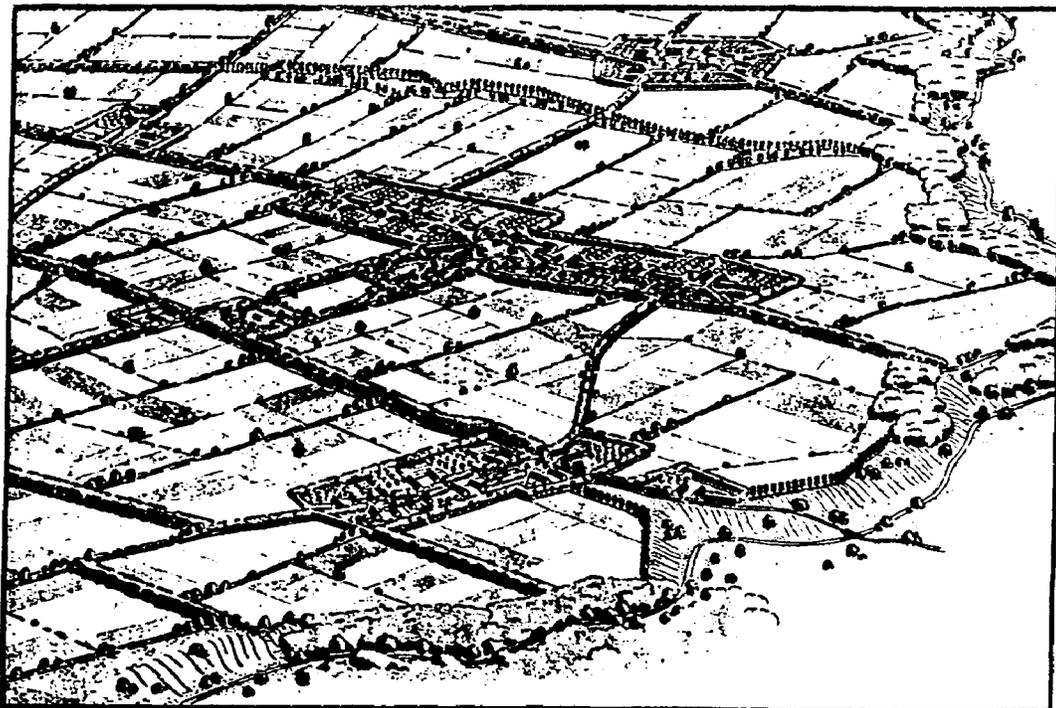


Plate 67. Himmler's idealized conception for germanizing the newly-won *Lebensraum* in the east. (Source: Himmler, n.d. [1943]:9, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Dc31.04)

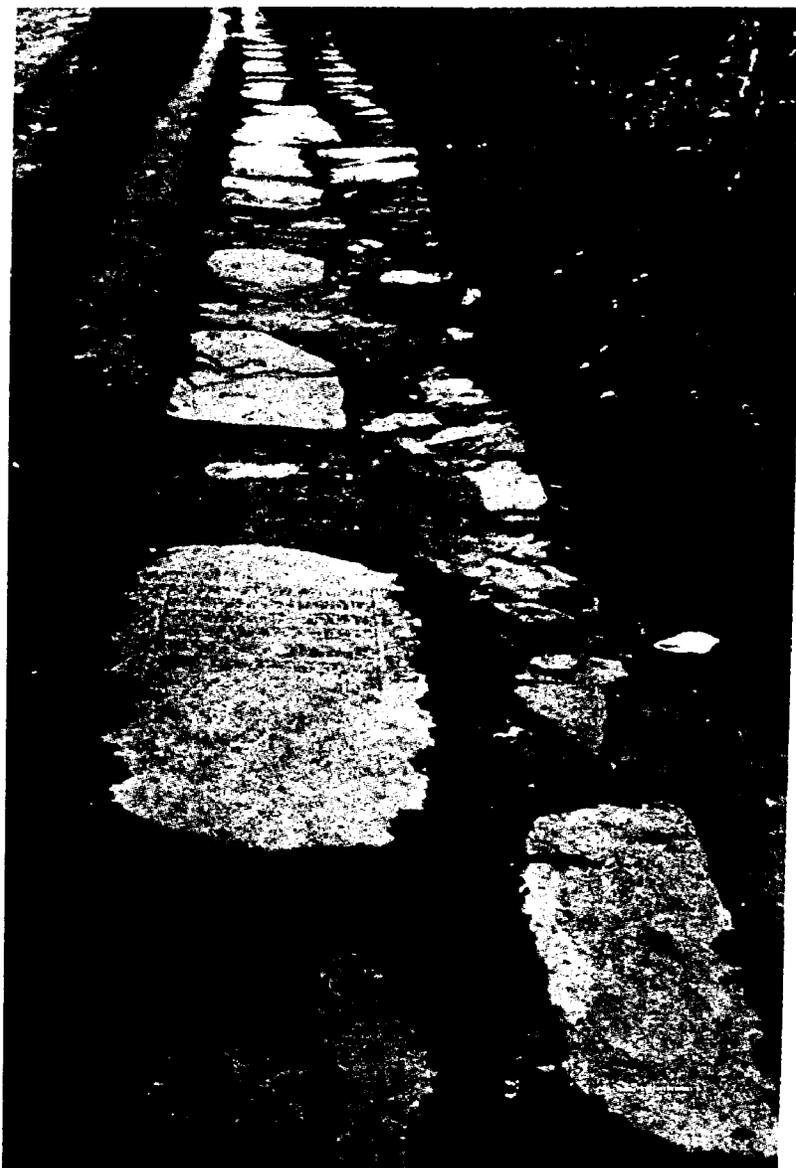


Plate 68. Jewish tombstones, recycled by the Nazis as paving for roads, latrines and other purposes. (Source: Szajkowski, 1977:150-2)



Plate 69. Tombstone-like entrance to Krakau's so-called Jewish "Living Quarter" (*Wohnviertel*). (Source: Poliakov & Wulf, 1983:187)

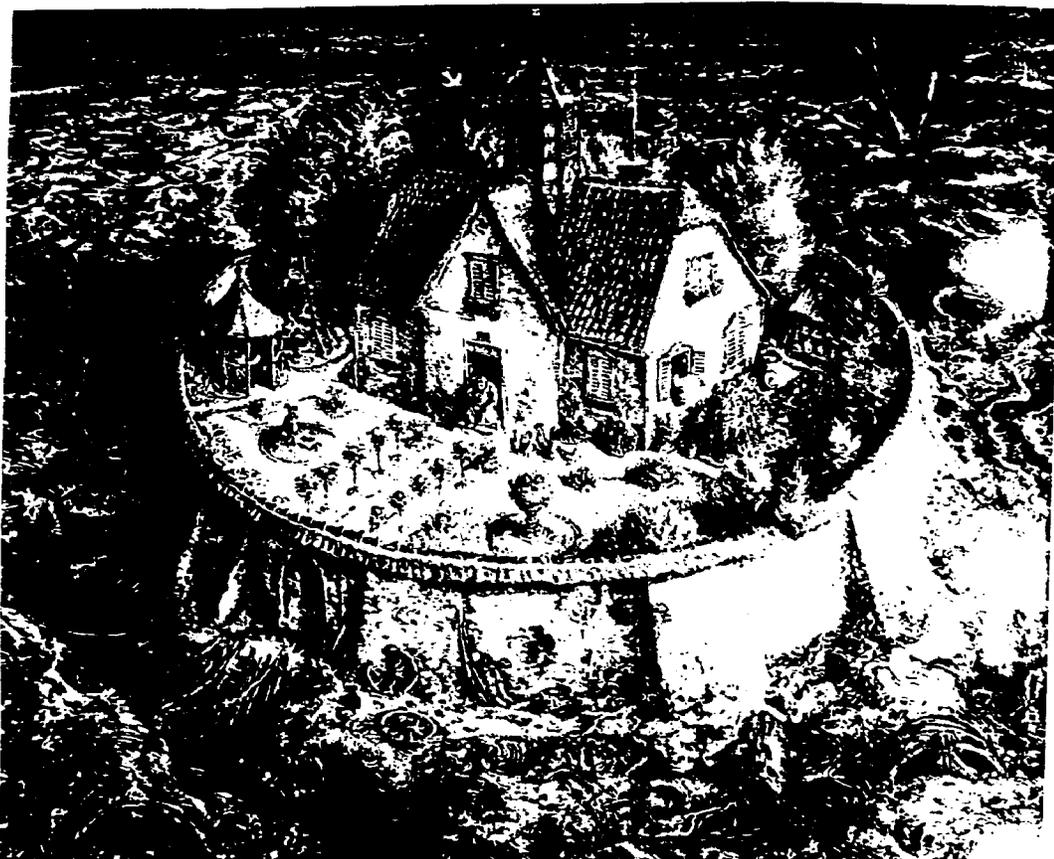


Plate 70. A. Paul Weber, *The Last Privateer*. (Source: Glaser, 1969:150)



Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

TO LIVE OR DIE UNDER HITLER. A Leipzig lawyer and his family committed suicide, preferring death to living in a free world.

Plate 71. Apocalyptic self-consumption: German suicides, discovered by the Allies and photographer Margaret Bourke-White in March and April, 1945. (Source: Lorant, 1974:336-7)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

"WORK MAKES FREE":
THE HIDDEN CULTURAL MEANING OF THE HOLOCAUST

VOLUME FOUR

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BY
JUD NEWBORN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 1994

Part Five

GENOCIDE

*dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith*

—Paul Celan, *Todesfuge (Death Fugue)*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE DIALECTIC OF GERMANIZATION AND GENOCIDE

"LODZ BECOMES LITZMANNSTADT"—

We have just examined the crucial role of antisemitism in the Nazi quest for *Lebensraum*, as well as the symbolic implications of genocide as expressed incipiently by the *SS-Einsatzgruppen*, or mobile killing units, in the Soviet Union. Now we can proceed to consider the actual forms of genocide as they were developed in the stationary killing facilities of Poland.

The first case is one particularly appropriate to the themes of demographic and spatial transformation discussed in the last chapter. It deals with the Polish-Jewish city of Lodz, its germanization into the Aryan city of "Litzmannstadt," and the role of genocide in this characteristic process of millenarian transformation. As we will see, the city of Lodz was the most fully "germanized" of any Nazi-occupied city. At the same time it contained the first major ghetto to be established in Eastern Europe. The history of this ghetto was linked fatally to the development of Chelmno, the first and most primitive death camp in Poland. Thus the story of the Lodz ghetto is essentially that of its protracted demise—an event which took place, however, within the wider context of the Nazi plan to germanize the city.

In order to understand the cultural implications of this process, as well as the fundamental dialectical relationship of germanization to genocide, the present chapter once again places a Nazi propaganda film at its core. Curiously enough, this film is all but silent about the Jew, the ghetto, and most certainly the death camp at Chelmno. And yet, as we

shall soon see, it is this very silence which ultimately betrays the perverse cultural significance of Nazi mass murder as it was perpetrated in the death camps of Poland.

The Hidden History of the Lodz Ghetto

Lodz Becomes Litzmannstadt (*Aus Lodz wird Litzmannstadt*, [1941/2]),¹ a silent propaganda film produced after the German annexation of Western Poland, the so-called "Wartheland," typifies the meanings implicit in the "germanization" (*Eindeutschung*) of the conquered *Lebensraum*. The film, one of a series on the subject, relies upon the "before" and "after" technique of the Beauty of Labor Bureau to "document" the Nazi transformation of the Polish city of Lodz into the German city of Litzmannstadt. The new name was chosen in honor of the German general Karl Litzmann, who fell here during World War One (see plate 72).

The themes of collective social transformation which we have already encountered in the discussion of the last few chapters—the transformation of ethnic Germans in camps, the beautification of the industrial environment, the domestication of the natural landscape—are reiterated here, centered now, however, at the heart of Germany's millennial vision, the great eastern *Lebensraum*. As in the earlier Beauty of Labor film (chapter 11), the role of the Jew remains essentially implicit; the "before" images continue to serve as silent indices of his hidden presence and malevolent effect. Nonetheless, and more so than elsewhere, the "Eternal Jew" remains the tacit center around which the film, the geo-political goals of germanization in the east which it serves, and indeed the entire millenarian project of the Third Reich, revolves. At the same time the content of the film sheds essential light on the cultural form and meaning of the death camps and the "Final

¹Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 3578.

Solution," where the symbolic practice of German millenarian transformation are most thoroughly articulated.

In order to bring out the silent yet pivotal role which Nazi antisemitism plays in relationship to the film's subject matter, it is necessary first to fill in the hidden history of the Lodz Ghetto as it relates to the germanization of the city.

In the first place, the essence of the Nazi transformation of Lodz into Litzmannstadt is not contained by reference to Lodz as a Polish city alone. With nearly 250,000 Jews in the 1930s, or 33% of the total population (see Dobroszycki, 1984: xxx), Lodz was more accurately a Polish-Jewish city, not only in terms of statistics but in line with the Nazi conception of the east as well. Closer to Germany's eastern borders than Warsaw or Galicia and with the second-largest Jewish community in Poland, this industrial city was often seen as the immediate springboard for the supposed Jewish infiltration of Germany during the late nineteenth century and especially after World War One. Compounding this, the city itself was an ugly manufacturing center bearing the worst stigma of industrialization. (Melita Maschmann, the fanatic young Nazi colonizer whom we have just encountered, remembers Lodz as "the ugliest city I have seen in my life," and one in which the black market was rampant to boot [Maschmann, 1979:80]). Its rapid growth out of a Polish backwater in the late nineteenth century was attributed less to Poles than to the influx of Jews and the effects of their influence. As it was the Jew who was the actual "carrier of capitalism," it followed that the dull but hard-working Pole had only been borne along as the servant of Jewish interest. The presupposition for the germanization of Poland and the prerequisite for the subjugation of its population, then, here as elsewhere, was the "rooting out" of the Jew.

Accordingly, one of the first steps in the transformation of Lodz into Litzmannstadt was the creation here of Poland's first major Jewish ghetto. Established over an extended period in what had been one of the city's grimmer slum districts, the "Litzmannstadt

Ghetto" was sealed officially on May 20, 1940, prior outward migration having diminished the Jewish population to approximately 163,000 (see Dobroszycki, 1984: xxxix). During its existence approximately 20,000 foreign Jews primarily from the Old Reich and Czechoslovakia were also deported to Lodz, along with 5,000 German and Austrian Gypsies (p. lvii). In keeping with the priorities of germanization as indicated above, SS-*Brigadenführer* and *Reigerungspräsident* Friedrich Uebelhör, staff chairman for the planning of the ghetto, made clear that the Jewish quarter was not to be a lasting institution. "The creation of the ghetto," Uebelhör wrote on December 10, 1939,

is, of course, only a transition measure. I reserve the right to determine at what time and with what means the ghetto—and thereby also the city of Lodz—will be cleansed of Jews. In any event, our ultimate goal must be to burn out this plague sore entirely [*Endziel muss jedenfalls sein, dass wir diese Pestbeule restlos ausbrennen*] (Uebelhör, in Hilberg, 1985:222; Dobroszycki, 1984: xxxvii).

Clearly the SS knew what they had inside the fence they had erected around the ghetto. Additional elaboration was always useful, however, as the SS—champion contenders in the all-too-literal game of the Jew—competed amongst themselves for a share of control over the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium. *Kriminalinspektor* Bracken of the Kripo (Criminal Police), for instance, vying with the Gestapo (State Secret Police) for positions of power inside of the fence, justified himself successfully with the following statistical exaggeration, supported by a taken-for-granted of Nazi ideology: "In the ghetto live, at any rate, about 250,000 Jews, all of whom have more or less criminal tendencies" (Bracken, in Hilberg, 1985:223).

Meanwhile germanization continued apace. Indeed, "wartime Lodz was not only germanized," writes historian Lucjan Dobroszycki, "but Nazified like no other large city in occupied Europe" (Dobroszycki, 1984: xxiv). The tendentious scientific justification for the process was the assertion that Lodz and the entire Wartheland owed its original cultural character and bloom to early Teutonic settlers who later had been displaced by Slavs and

Jews. The Nazi invaders accordingly changed all street names from Polish to German, using linguistic equivalents when possible, as if to suggest a reversion to the "original" German. The Polish language was banned and the Polish population marginalized, while the local ethnic German population was more than doubled by an influx of new German "pioneers" from the Old Reich as well as *Volksdeutsche* resettled from all parts of Eastern Europe. Its demography revised and its factories appropriated, Litzmannstadt was now one of Germany's eastern-most industrial centers and a linchpin in the Third Reich's wartime economy.

***Antisemitic Cultural Production:
The Jew as "Gift"***

The ghetto played a key role here, becoming a vast if provisional network of slave labor workshops and a focus of utmost exploitation for German military needs in particular. Over 75,000 Jewish slaves were employed in more than 90 enterprises working with cloth, wood, metal, leather, fur, down and paper to produce everything from uniforms and field supplies to electrical and telecommunications equipment (see Dobroszycki, 1984: lx). The illusory hope among the Jewish population was that work would render the ghetto essential and thereby insure the survival of its inhabitants. The desperate extent of that hope is indicated by the fact that 5000 German uniforms could be produced in the ghetto within a week's time. Some of these were outfitted with the leather accessories—amongst them, presumably, the whips seen frequently after the war—that had been refashioned from the quantities of phylacteries [*tefillin*] arriving mysteriously at ghetto workshops (see plate 73 and Dobroszycki, 1984:424ff; cf. Hilberg, 1985:516). These had been appropriated, of course, from the Jewish victims annihilated at Chelmno and other death camps. In the workshops of other ghettos and camps, similarly, torah parchments are said to have been cut according to graduated shoe forms to provide ersatz insoles, supposedly for *Wehrmacht* boots (see Eschwege, 1979:194; Arnold Shay Collection). These two instances of

refabrication, like the conversion of Jewish prayer shawls (*taleysim*) into ladies' dresses (see Szajkowski, 1977:140), seem also to have been performed individually by Germans themselves, an example of the hobbyist's antisemitic recrafting of the Jew (see plate 74).

The inversionary dynamics underlying this kind of antisemitic cultural production bear discussion, for they figure also in the transformative processes depicted in the film as well as in the subsequent treatment of the ghetto's inhabitants in the death camp of Chelmno. Here we see the principles of antisemitic status reversal (the reversal of the fictitious master/slave relationship of Jew and German) at work again. As in the *Juden raus!* game, the attributes of the Jew—in this case, the sacred straps of leather whereby, each morning, the Jew "binds" himself into the law—are assimilated to the body of the German in his role as Nazi officer, and thereby reformulated into components of Aryan identity (see chapter 9). The whip, of course, is the quintessential status mark of the Master Race, something Franz Stangl, commandant of the death camp Treblinka, was careful to demonstrate (see Klee, 1988:205 and plate 107, ch. 15). As this suggests, the German, supposedly once dominated by the Jew, is restored to his position of mastery as indexed by the appropriated leather whip or other accessories which complete his uniform—or in the case of the shoe insoles, the torah parchment upon which he treads, custom-fitted to his Aryan foot. At the same time the alienating dimensions of capitalist exchange as represented by the arcane forms of the Jewish religion become economic resources for "productive" German labor. This holds whether that labor is executed by Germans themselves or, better yet, by the Jewish slaves they dominate, and whom they use to perform their "dirty work" as tool-like extensions of their own "lower" selves (cf. Bakhtin, 1984 and chapter 4 above). (We encountered a similar dynamic of reformulation centuries earlier in Kelheim, where Jewish tombstones were incorporated into the facades of German homes; and during the Fettmilch Revolt, when sacred Jewish books were recycled vindictively to satisfy mundane German needs [see chapters 3 and 5].) In this manner—as in the case of the Aryan playing tokens

"Jew-hatted" in the game *Juden raus!*—the inimicable characteristics of the Jew become positive, even empowering attributes of the Aryan in his all-consuming effort to realize the vision of the Thousand-Year Reich.

Some might be inclined, with an all too culture-bounded cynicism, to attribute the reformulation of these Jewish artifacts to the exigencies (or whims) of sheer utility. But it is by no means a taken-for-granted of economics or some accident of war that the Jew and everything about him should suddenly become something totally alien to his genuine human nature—a comprehensively exhaustible natural resource like the whale to the Eskimo or the buffalo to the American Indian, as popular imagination would have it. To the contrary, the refabrication of Jewish property on the scale of mass production, along with the utilization of Jewish slave labor, extends from the fetishized bodily dimensions of German antisemitism, expressing the meanings of antisemitic status reversal on the collective level of the *Volkskörper*—that is, Nazi racial state and its ideologically-dominated economy (see Mason, 1968; Milward, 1976:379-412). Within such a context it becomes clear that the details of how the Nazis actually operated are not arbitrary, but crucial to historical understanding; indeed, it is within these details that the meaning of the Holocaust lies. Thus we see that the encompassment of an alienating capitalism by the personalizing values of the racial community—and its assimilation to the "natural" demands of the German body—is expressed concretely when the German "hobbyist" personally reformulates *tefillin* leather, torah parchments or prayer shawls (i.e., symbolic tokens of the Jew's exchange-nature) into whips, wallets, insoles, drums, tambourines and dresses (i.e., German handicrafts). He thereby performs on his own a recrafting of the Jew from commodity to gift, as in Mauss's classic definition (see chapter 3 and Mauss, 1966; see also Gregory, 1982).

A somewhat more traditional version of this symbolic recrafting can be seen in the more obvious "cultural" labors of the Lodz ghetto's so-called Research Institute, established in

connection with the Litzmannstadt branch of Alfred Rosenberg's Frankfurt-based *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for Research on the Jewish Problem). Here thirty-five Jewish artists and craftsmen were assigned the excruciating task of creating exhibit pieces for a proposed antisemitic "Exhibition of the Manners and Mores of Eastern European Jews." Judaica scholars Professor Emmanuel Hirschberg (a rabbi) and his daughter were placed nominally in charge, under the direction, however, of Adolf Wendel, Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Breslau. Between 1942 and 1943, some two hundred dolls of wire, clay, porcelain and textile were constructed. These were arranged for display in thematic groupings (e.g., "A Jewish Wedding"; "Ghetto Types") selected and interpreted according to the best pejorative principles of Nazi antisemitism in one of its ethnographic guises (see Dobroszycki, 1984:169; 209-10; 334; 348; 359; 362). This Litzmannstadt exhibition was obviously created for the purposes of a perverse kind of salvage, this time "cultural" rather than "economic." In this it resembles Reinhard Heydrich's Central Jewish Museum in Prague, where the implications of the German triumph over Jewish subhumanity were to be preserved for posterity in a "museum of an extinct race" (see Altshuler & Cohn, 1983:16-45; Weinreich, 1946). Such museums practice the art of "collection" to appropriate the whole for which these "despicable" Jewish artifacts stand and to which they give access. Indeed, having "turned tables" on the commoditizing Jew, these museums become instead "high" cultural warehouses within which the German can display his mastery over all that which his revitalized *Volk* Community has supplanted. They thereby become inversionary spaces within which the formerly engulfing nexus of Jewish exchange can be fully encompassed and inventoried in concrete form (cf. Mitchell, 1991; Orvell, 1989).

Even in the *abatoir* of Auschwitz, Commandant Rudolf Höss set up a little museum in Barrack 24 of the main camp. This he filled with artifacts of Jewish ritual (including torahs, phylacteries and prayer shawls) as well as photos and documents demonstrating the

supposed racial degeneracy of the camp's Jewish and Gypsy victims. Considering the incredible human resources at his disposal as well as the irreversible consequences of that labor he was performing for Germany, Höss could not miss the unique opportunity of plumbing the heart of the International Jewish Conspiracy. To this end he actually had Jewish "tutors" brought to his museum so as to initiate him into the arcane secrets of Jewish law (see Heubner et al., 1979; Czarniecki, 1989:7). Similarly, the "spacious" Birkenau crematoria, with their telephones, radio and "ultra-modern dissecting room," also possessed a "museum of anatomical specimens," as one inmate-doctor reported, thereby leading one SS man to proclaim these facilities "the best of their kind which have ever been built" (in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1181). Given the importance of this material to the German *Volk* as a whole, this dissecting room did not hoard its scientific treasures, of course, but shipped specimens out regularly to stock collections as far afield as the anthropological museum in Berlin-Dahlem and Professor August Hirt's notorious ethnographic collection of whole Jewish skeletons at the Reich University of Strasbourg—the one hundred or so individual items having been specially "selected" for him on request while still alive (see Nyiszli, 1960:54, 132; Nuremberg Military Tribunal [Green Series], 1949:738-59). As Prof. Hirt himself explained it when making his application for state sponsorship, these "Jewish Bolshevik Commissars. . . personify a repulsive, yet characteristic subhumanity." Procuring their skeletons would therefore provide an invaluable "opportunity of obtaining tangible scientific evidence" (p.739).

Like these museums and the Lodz Research Institute's antisemitic dolls, the refabricated phylacteries or torah insoles mentioned previously are thus instances, if somewhat more subtle, of Nazi Germany's wide-ranging antisemitic cultural production—a production located at the heart of Nazism as a political system, and one figuring crucially in the definition of identity and the contention for power. To this must be added the cultural transformation on the death camp assembly line of the Jew himself, as well as his property

and labor power, into sources of German raw material controlled by the SS and distributed for use throughout the Third Reich (see chapter 15).

Whether relatively abstract or concrete, systematic or idiosyncratic, all of these modes of antisemitic cultural production are expressions of the Jew's indispensable coordinating role in the Third Reich as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction. This was a form of circulating symbolic capital that was both material as well as ideological; it was one within which all of the strands in the Nazi sociocultural fabric, to paraphrase Mauss, were fatefully interwoven (see Mauss, 1966:1). Indeed, if capitalism no longer allowed people to relate to one another directly, but only in an alienated manner through the mediating role of the commodity, then in the course of its antisemitic labors German fascism had sewn for itself, stitch by stitch, a face upon that commodity—one within which they were able to see, as if within a flexible, inversionary mirror, their own (racialized) identities reflected once again. Having thereby conflated the commodity with the gift (at least insofar as their own ideological constructions were concerned), they now could share its beneficial, personalizing effects, not only by circulating the fetishized tokens of their labor but by competing politically to control that circulation (see chapter 9). The Jew thus became for Germans a "total social phenomenon" of German society under National Socialism—a means whereby the atomizing effects of capitalism itself could be reversed and the bonds of racial kinship reforged. This was accomplished within the resurrected boundaries of the Aryan *Volk* Community, its Germanic "tribal" members linked anew through the processes of a perverse exchange that was all of their own making.

All of the preceding examples only serve to point out, then, the extent to which all work of Jews in the ghetto, including the most obviously utilitarian and seemingly impersonal, was structured by the appropriating and transformative cultural principles of antisemitism. This meant also that it was double-binded in the extreme. For here (as everywhere in Nazi-occupied Europe) the laboring Jewish population was forced to collaborate over an

extended period, not only in their own demise, but in the deconstruction of their Jewishness as well. This wretched labor did not merely satisfy the Nazi craving to humiliate the Jew; it was, perversely, a pivotal step in the dialectical construction of the Aryan *Volk* Community. One is reminded of this by the fact that toward the end the Lodz ghetto was required even to produce cribs and Christmas toys for German children, as well as prefabricated housing for Germans left homeless by Allied bombing raids. Jews, on the other hand, were prohibited on threat of execution from collecting scrap wood to heat their freezing homes and cook for their starving families (see Dobroszycki, 1984:402; 414).

***Prisoner, Artifact, Specimen:
Enframing the Jew's Exchange Nature***

Slave labor notwithstanding, for National Socialists Jews remained Jews. Thus Melita Maschmann, Hitler Youth propagandist and fanatical representative of the Nazi colonization project in the east, took every opportunity offered to peer inside the ghettos and see the "real" Jew close-up. During 1940, or shortly after the Lodz ghetto had been sealed, she made the following comment while driving through its streets.

I said to my companion at the time: 'Look at these people. They are strolling about as if they were on the Kurfürstendamm in peace time.' To my surprise there were quite a few well-dressed men and women among the prisoners. I saw costly fur coats and carefully made up faces. But what not merely amazed but angered me was that the detainees apparently were not required to do work of any kind.

The Germans in Lodz told one another that the Jews had great hoards of gold, jewels, furs and fabric hidden away and that one could only force them to hand over their treasures by threatening to cut off their supplies of provisions (Maschmann, 1979: 89-90).

For Nazis like Maschmann, the Jews are still defined by their parasitical exchange natures, even when imprisoned as slave laborers in the ghetto. Here they stroll about and (in a vision reminiscent of Goedsche) sit like kings upon the hidden riches of capitalism (see chapter 8). Only through acts of the most coercive status-reversal can they be forced to

reveal their secret wealth and relinquish it into German hands.² As in more traditional, third world millenarian contexts—those of the so-called "cargo cults"—here the Jew embodies both the threat and promise of cargo. Consistent with our earlier discussions of Nazi antisemitism, he is the elusive source of the commoditizing forces which disrupt the basic processes of German social reproduction, as well as the magical repository of the power Germans must harness in order to restore control over their fragmenting social universe (see chapter 1).

Unlike this mysterious Jewish wealth, the principles of status reversal were no fantasy of the German imagination, nor were they limited to the level of state policy. To the contrary, these principles (like the recrafting of the Jew) were enacted by individual Germans all across occupied Europe, wherever they encountered Jews upon whom they could practice their vengeful sport. Again in Lodz, Maschmann provides a mild example of such a ritualized encounter. To her envy, one of the girls she worked with had a chance to accompany the city *Kreisleiter* on an "inspection tour of the Jews, for no other reason than simple curiosity. . . . She wanted to see something of the customs of the Jews and their way of life" (Maschmann, 1979 :90). Here, as elsewhere—from the magnified storefronts of the *Juden raus!* game board and Police Sergeant Fritz Jacob's *Einsatzgruppen* victims in

²Seifert speaks similarly about the Jewish "parasites" hoarding gold deep within "their" ghettos:

And so the Jews sit atop their pack-rat heaps [Hamsterlagern], having squirreled away and partly walled off everything that has value and that one needs to live. Constantly the German police find entire stores of textiles, a bricked-in cellar with rotting cabbage heads, and at the same time valuable art objects, and then filthied plunder once again. Amidst it all, caches of money, entire fortunes. The Jew only excavates just enough as he needs in order to vegetate. . . . Whoever today travels through the ghettos of Tschenstochau, Krakau, Warschau, or Lublin finds confirmation of this at every step" (Seifert, 1940:85).

Here of course, the Jew's hidden exchange nature is confirmed in the secret hoards of gold whereby the Jew supposedly commands the most basic (and otherwise inaccessible) processes of German capitalism. Apart from the meaningful implications of these observations, they are all the more grotesque when compared with the reality of Jewish "life"—if it deserves that term—within the involuntary, starving confines of the ghetto.

For similar comments by Himmler, see chapter 15 below.

their killing ditches to the nude photographs of characteristically "degenerate" Jews which we will encounter later (see chapter 14)—the mysterious and hidden Jew becomes an accessible and concrete specimen for scientific observation, once he has been "forced to the surface" and enclosed within a frame (cf. plates 52-53, chapter 9).

As in the case of the museums just mentioned, this process represents a general symbolic dynamic of Nazi antisemitism within a modern commodity universe transformed by millenarianism: everything is done to fix in memory, to render permanent, the encompassment of the Jew and the inversion of the exchange-nexus he betokens. Thus the Jew is transformed through multiple technologies into an image of that nexus in the process of being dominated and inverted. He is stereotyped in the imagination and then marked with a prominent yellow star when walking down the street so as to fix the otherwise tenuous and imperceptible transformation. Now he is ready to be further humiliated in reality—whether through beard-plucking, enforced street-scrubbing or scatological abuse—and always with a camera ready to catch the event and hold it steady (cf. Milton, 1984, 1986, 1987). Thus he is detached from his embeddedness in society and circulated as a photograph; he is enclosed as an artifact in a museum or viewed as a specimen under the loop (cf. Benjamin, 1969; Mitchell, 1991). Not only is he collected; he is literally concentrated in ghettos and camps, to be visited by tourists, dignitaries and scientists—some with their eyes glued to the gas chamber peephole—while later the tokens generated by the industrial processing of his body will be inventoried and warehoused prior to being shared and circulated (see chapters 14 & 15; Keller, 1984; MacCannell, 1989). As we will see later, certain death camp architects will even contemplate erecting signs and monuments to proudly label the significance of the mass graves they have labored to produce, should future generations chance upon them (see chapter 15).

Everything must be done to render the encompassment of the Jew—and the resurrection of the Aryan—irreversible. No wonder the process provoked anxiety: any threat to the

validity of the stereotype might disrupt German closure over the meanings of this precarious inversionary process, thereby allowing the Jew to "escape" the confines of his captivity. After intruding upon women in a ritual bath, Maschmann's touring girlfriend is taken to the book-filled study of a young rabbi. "The *Kreisleiter* ordered him to perform a complicated prayer on the spot, like an oriental prince commanding an acrobat whose skill he wishes to show off before a guest: Turn three somersaults!" (Maschmann, 1979:90-91). The rabbi obeyed, initially with a sense of contempt, later becoming totally immersed in his prayer. This disturbed Maschmann's girlfriend, who experienced a "feeling of utter defeat" in the presence of his obvious exaltation. Despite the Nazi attempt to reduce him to the status of a trained seal, apparently this sublime young rabbi continued to possess a "tenacious" and unyielding Jewishness—something which the Nazis would devote themselves in the next few years to completely expunging.

In the Lodz ghetto the spiritual annihilation of the Jew was supposed to be but transitory, giving way as soon as possible to the literal thing. And yet the ghetto inhabitants, intermittently decimated at the Chelmno death camp, continued their ever-more alienating labor for nearly four-and-a-half years, until the contingencies of war shifted the site of their final liquidation to Auschwitz-Birkenau in August 1944. This made the Lodz ghetto the longest lasting—as well as the most hermetical and desperately isolated—of all the major eastern European ghettos.

The Film's Surface: Reconstructing the German at Lodz

The Nazi strangulation of the city's Jewish population, as well as the means whereby every token of their lives and bodily labor was encompassed and reformulated, provides *Lodz Becomes Litzmannstadt* with one half of its tacit but essential background. Having raised this aspect briefly in relief, we can proceed now to recount and then analyze the

film's specific content, returning finally to fill in the second and indispensable half of its unspoken context—the death camp at Chelmno.³

In order to justify the germanization of Lodz as a city settled only recently by non-Germans, the film's opening sequences seek to establish the *Urdeutsch* or primeval German identity of the town's surroundings. Archeology does the trick, with "Vandal" artifacts in museums testifying to the historical roots of racial conquest, in the form of swords, helmets and pottery vessels bearing the tell-tale imprint of the swastika. Upon this once-German soil, the city of Lodz was founded, the squalid product of its Polish/Jewish mixture. Illustrated charts are used to depict the character and proportions of this population. As of 1915, ethnic Germans, represented by a tiny Aryan figure, are a distinct minority at 14% of the population. Poles, depicted in the form of a large, sturdy figure in a work cap, comprise the majority at 53%. Following heavily upon their heels at 33% of the population are the Jews, their presence represented by a slightly smaller Jewish figure rendered in the iconographic tradition of an "Eternal Jew" (see plates 42-43, chapter 8). This standard of Nazi antisemitism, as we have already seen, showed a bearded Jew with sidecurls, his body enclosed within an "oriental" and form-concealing caftan. His arms are hidden as well, except for the white (and clearly non-laboring) hands, which gesticulate disarmingly in the air. This haggling gesture, together with the slyly-cocked head and closed eyes, creates an image of deception and shrugging dissemblance; it is the

³Like the films of Leni Riefenstahl (and despite her apologetics), this film is, all at once, both documentary and propaganda (cf. Sontag, 1980). The film "documents" an ideologically-laden Nazi project of transformation and serves also to "propagate" the hegemonic meanings it conveys. Indeed, the film itself *embodies* those meanings, and thereby becomes a step in the germanization of the *Lebensraum*. Like Nazism's obsessive documentation of genocide itself, the film's overall being and instrumentality stems from the exigencies of Nazism as a millenarian movement struggling to "hold steady" the meanings of the collective transformation it seeks to bring about. Likewise Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* can hardly pose as mere documentary. Not only does it embody fully the meanings of the Nuremberg rallies; even the film-maker's contemporaneous published account of her own filming process reveals the basic dynamic of Nazism's millenarian labor. This is the intense and obsessive collaborative drive to capture, hold steady—and fully reify—the otherwise ephemeral manifestation of the fettered *Volk* Community coming into being at Nuremberg (see Riefenstahl, 1935). For further discussion on the role of photographic documentation in Nazi millenarianism, see chapter 14).

iconographic equivalent of capitalist exchange itself in all its abstract and alienating dimensions. This image was not consigned to graphics alone, however, but was a more widespread part of the culture, as Melita Maschmann reports. During a Hitler Youth training conference she recalls one teacher who found a clever way to dispose of Jewish protests over the ritual murder canard. Waving his hands about in what was taken to be the evasive gesticulation of an eastern European Jew, he would ask the question, "No ritual murder?" and then provide his own reply: "Very funny" (see Maschmann, 1979:47).

Such a racial mixture as represented on the film's charts is, according to the tenets of Nazi ideology, incapable of "productive" or "creative" work; it can only generate disorder. In the best tradition of *Beauty of Labor's* "before" and "after" (see chapter 11), the film confirms this by presenting images of Lodz as the Nazis encountered it upon invasion: squalid homes, workers laboring under the dim light of unprotected gas flames and eating in smoke-filled, debris-strewn corners, their only sanitation facilities ugly outhouses in the factory courtyard. Sewage flows down the middle of filthy alley ways and pours into the open gutters of larger streets. A horse-drawn milk wagen becomes mired in the muck of an unpaved street; footprints are left behind in the city's muddy, undeveloped lots. Everything testifies to the unhygienic conditions of an inhabited space created by degenerates and cultural inferiors.

The transformation of this racially-induced physical chaos begins with the arrival of Nazi troops, seen marching in orderly columns throughout the city. Suddenly empty city lots are filled with workers and fences are erected. An animated map shows the paths of *Volksdeutsche*, or ethnic Germans, converging upon Lodz from the Baltic states, Rumania and points east. Signs proclaim the Lodz branch of the Ethnic German Welfare Service, (*Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*) or the VOMI. Ethnic German settlers are seen being processed at a *Gemeinschaftslager*, or community camp; the camera focuses in upon a representative *Volksdeutsche*—a man with a big, droopy mustache—looking stolid and mystified. No

doubt he and the others are being treated to the reformulatory *Ten Commandments for Ethnic Germans in Camp* which we encountered earlier, thereby seeking to imprint upon their recalcitrant genes the supposedly innate German love of order, work, and inflexible self-discipline (see chapter 10).

Now "before" becomes "after" as the camera pans over scenes of Aryan industriousness, the Polish-Jewish town of Lodz transformed into the orderly German Litzmannstadt. Vast areas of the city are leveled and cleaned, graded streets are built and paved, sewers constructed, tram lines established. Workers are seen laying bricks; a modern apartment house appears. True to the Nazi penchant for model-building, a three-dimensional plan for the new settlement is shown, complete with contour landscaping. To underscore the transformation, additional "before" and "after" scenes are juxtaposed in succession: first a sewage-filled gutter, and now a newly-paved road with a clean, well-defined curb. Trenches are dug for underground sewage pipes, beneath Nazi banners and signs proclaiming proudly the famous names of private German contractors—*Siemens-Schukert* of Berlin, *Berkefeld-Filter-Gesellschaft* of Celle near Hannover—who have devoted all of their technological know-how to sanitize the city and thereby realize this state-fostered project of Aryan social hygiene.

Another "before" and "after" ensues, this time emphasizing the German cultural domestication of an unruly natural world. First a large, empty flood plain outside the city is seen, a dirty stream with sandy banks flowing down its middle. Next the flat is cleared and the stream banks straightened for flood control. Finally the entire flat is landscaped and filled with water, its peripheries planted with trees. Now the aftermath of German industriousness appears in full bloom: in the midst of what has become a graceful lake, a woman in a canoe paddles leisurely along. A swimming and diving area has been constructed, while man-made paths wind beneath newly planted trees on the banks of the lake. And so the unimproved flood plain has become an Aryan *Volkspark*. The theme of

domestication is completed by the views of a newly-constructed zoo nearby. SS men arrive with their families and stroll beside pavilions. Children stroke dromedaries and monkeys and gaze at bears and a tiger. Meanwhile their parents sit about in the *Lustgarten* restaurant in happy *Gemütlichkeit*, enjoying their *Kuchen* and *Kaffee*.

Consistent with the "before" and "after" approach and the themes of germanization, it is time in the film for *Kultur* to come to Litzmannstadt. And so, in a newly-built music school, a blackboard scored with staves is seen. A child practices piano; the camera cuts then to an adult's hands moving fluidly across the keys of a harpsichord, another on the neck of a violin, then the fingers of a flutist. Practice segues into a chamber concert complete with audience: first the concert hall is seen from the outside, a swastika draped across its facade, and then the orchestra on the stage, the German audience in rapt attention. The spiritual desolation of the Polish-Jewish frontier is filled with the melodic strains of Germany's superior cultural heritage.

Appropriate to the prime role of work in the Nazi vision of millenarian transformation, the earlier shots of alienating industrial environments are now contrasted in the manner of *Beauty of Labor* with a landscaped factory grounds. A little garden with pavilion have been constructed in its midst, the latter complete with *Satteldach*, the steeped Germanic roof which serves as the architectural equivalent of the orderly Aryan body, rooted in German blood and soil. Now workers march in orderly columns through a factory interior, passing tidy looms and other textile machinery as they make their way to a large and beautiful *Gemeinschaftssaal*. Each table there is covered neatly and set with a vase of flowers; the chairs are carved in the best tradition of German handicraft culture. On the wall over the room's far entrance, next to a framed portrait of Adolf Hitler, a wall saying is seen. Although it cannot be made out fully in the shot, we know from the *Beauty of Labor* program what its words must proclaim: the nobility of labor, the necessity for self-sacrifice, the "order" that work brings to the "chaos of the material." Finally a sparkling

white infirmary is seen, where German workers are protected from the bodily threat of tubercular infection. One recalls the words of Robert Ley in the *Beauty of Labor* film discussed earlier: it is through such beautifying programs as these that National Socialism carries out its promise to do "everything necessary in order to make our people healthy and keep them healthy!" (see chapter 11).

The film's penultimate sequence shows Germany's future itself, the children of Litzmannstadt's resident and imported *Volksdeutsche* transformed into uniformed Hitler Youth, marching with flutes and drums into an enormous stadium. There, within the stadium's perfect contours, the boys engage in an ornamental display of coordinated mass exercise. These interchangeable laboring units corporealize the expanding boundaries of the Volkbody—the Aryan skin which has stretched eastward, by way of its orderly-multiplying human cells, to enclose the ever-widening expanse of Germany's restored *Lebensraum* (see plate 77). The film concludes with a shot of the Litzmannstadt's new municipal insignia, a double-tanged swastika. And so the cycle of history—one which had been interrupted almost fatally by the cancerous growth of a Jewish capitalism born in the east—is closed. The swastika of the ancient Germanic Vandals takes its place once again upon the heraldic shield of the proud new city of Litzmannstadt.

The Film's Subtext: Deconstructing the Jew

So as not to betray the empirical content of the film in the preceding summary, I have postponed until now any substantial analytical reference to the Jew's tacit presence. As we have already seen, the only overt mention of the Jew is the *ewige Jude* icon which appears at the film's outset and establishes succinctly the Jew's dissembling parasitism and spiritual preponderance in Lodz. After this image, neither the Jew nor his fate are referred to again in the film. One of the reasons for the silence is obvious: having depicted the effects of the Jew in terms of Lodz's squalor, it is no longer necessary to populate a visual account of the

city's germanization with what for the Nazis was the grossly unaesthetic visage of its supposed former master. Nonetheless the ghetto, its exploitation, and its incremental liquidation constitute without doubt the secret heart of the film. In this the film shares with Himmler's formal plans for *Shaping the New Areas of Settlement* just discussed, which make no direct reference to the unpleasant subject of exterminating Jewry precisely because the necessity for a comprehensive "solution" to the "Jewish Problem" is already a taken-for-granted (see chapter 12). In the case of the film and its makers, one cannot say for sure whether or not these factors operate on the level of overt intention; nonetheless they comprise a taken-for-granted of the wider meaningful dynamic within which the film is formulated. It is this ongoing process of antisemitic status reversal, after all, which allows the dialectical transformation of Lodz into Litzmannstadt in the first place, a point we shall take up again most fully when we examine the death camp at Chelmno.

The Lodz of "before" is an index of Jewish mastery over Poland, expressed in the multiplex and dehumanizing terms of capitalist disorder. All aspects of the city's spatial arrangement—its squalid residential areas, its filthy workplaces and the natural waste of its undeveloped spaces—reflects the parasitical dimensions of the Jew's physiognomy, visited upon the inhabited environment of the uncreative Pole whom he dominates.⁴ The spatial degeneracy of Lodz is thus a sedimentation of history; it condense the alienating development of an ancient Jewish capitalism which has found its strongest foothold in the

⁴There is no space here to discuss the Nazi symbolic construction of the Pole or Slav. However, Himmler's comprehensive (if less than astute) plans for the east make clear that the supposed culturally and intellectually inferior Pole will live on in decimated form as easily-dominated German helots. Their children, Himmler wrote, are to be taught "simple arithmetics up to 500 at the most; writing of one's name; the doctrine that it is a divine law to obey the Germans and to be honest, industrious and good. I don't think that reading should be required" (Himmler in Kamenetsky, 1961:194; cf. Burleigh, 1988). However, as Himmler's own publication, *Der Untermensch* (1942), makes obvious (see chapter 12), the Jew remains the Pole's puppet-master as well as the diabolic source of disorder in the east. He exists in ultimate opposition to the German, and thus must be eliminated categorically for a germanized *Lebensraum* to emerge. Although the film's makers may or may not have known the actual details of the Nazi genocidal program, the meanings of their film are formulated, tacitly as well as intentionally, within the overarching context which this ideologically-defined practice provides.

east. This is the "ever-renewable source" of Jewish power; this is the origin of capitalism itself, which over the course of the last century has penetrated the borders of Germany and enclosed the entire world in its strangulating nexus of exchange. National Socialism's millennial labor is to invert the effects of this historical development and contain its wild and invasive impulse, something to be accomplished partially through the "creative" methods of German work depicted in the film. Of course the *Lebensraum* in its entirety cannot be transformed exclusively through the work done in one locale. Specific projects such as the transformation of Lodz must be coordinated with the more crucial labor of genocide being performed for Germany as a whole in the death camps of Poland.

The film abounds nonetheless with hints of this taken-for-granted dialectical labor. The first hint hides behind the scenes of *Volksdeutsche* in their "community camp," awaiting processing by the Ethnic German Welfare Office established to facilitate their settlement in the city. Although the film naturally makes no mention of it, this office is, in fact, one of the principle recipients of the property appropriated from Jewish victims in the death camps of Poland (see Hilberg, 1985:960). The transformation of ethnic Germans into the Aryan masters of Litzmannstadt—like the complementary reduction of the Jew to German use-value—begins in camp. There the Jew remains until his ultimate exhaustion on the death camp assembly-line. The ethnic German, on the other hand, receives the tokens of that industrial processing, via the courtesy of the SS and the Ethnic German Welfare Office, which recycles household goods and especially Jewish clothing amongst the *Volksdeutsche* of Litzmannstadt and elsewhere. Now the resettling German can leave his training camp and move into the modest apartments vacated by expelled Poles and the poorer Jews who have been transferred to the ghetto and beyond (the better apartments, of course, having been reserved as plums for the German elite). Once again, Jewish property is used to constitute the households of the German: the clothing of the murdered Jew becomes the apparel of the reformulated German, while the real-estate of the Jew becomes the German's

hearth-and-home. This is, in effect, a complementary process of domestication. Destructive Jewish value is tamed and thereby rendered useful. Now it can be assimilated to the homes and bodies of the ethnically-adulterated German so as to reconstruct his identity and draw him back within the humanizing bounds of the Aryan *Volk* Community. In this manner tokens of the Jewish "before" are domesticated into the attributes of a German "after."

But before the *Volksdeutsche* can move into their new homes (whether formerly Polish or Jewish), the living space of the entire city must be renovated—*saniert*, sanitized—of its degenerative Jewish influence. This theme of sanitation, which runs throughout the film, is particularly evident here. Everything about the Polish-Jewish city, from the flow of open sewage to the treachery of the muck-filled alleys, is keyed to the symbolism of fluid waste. This emphasis upon effluvia resonates with the dimensions of anality, which, as we have seen in the case of the *Judensau* as well as the treatment of the ghetto in Goedsche, have long been associated with "Jewish" exchange (see chapters 3 and 8). The German solution is consistent with the principles of industrial aesthetics and technological rationality which we encountered in the Beauty of Labor program—only here the techniques of transformation are focused not only on the urbanized and industrial symptoms of Jewish-capitalist degeneracy, but even more directly upon formerly inhabited Jewish space itself. This underscores the fact that the transformation of Lodz, like that of the German industrial workplace, is performed not only in the name of aesthetic rationalization, but according to the overarching principles of racial hygiene within which antisemitism plays a defining role. Thus the film emphasizes the grading of the streets, the growing network of trenches, and the construction of a comprehensive, large-scale sewage system with the assistance of Germany's most technologically-advanced contractors. Inevitably, models are built to visualize the millenarian transformation of the city and guide this phase of its completion; the rationality of such model-building is intrinsic to a

millenarianism conducted within the framework of reactionary modernism (see chapter 11; cf. Herf, 1984). Meanwhile the filth of the Jew—that elusive mass that "quivers through the fingers like protoplasm, just as it streams through the alleyways. . . (Seifert, 1940:12)—has already been canalized, as it were, into the holding area of the ghetto. There it collects to become, in Uebelhör's perfectly conventional Nazi description, a "plague sore" to be burned out, as soon as it has worked itself dry.

The productive recycling of fluid waste is seen once more in the sequence depicting the construction of the Litzmannstadt *Volkspark*, complete with lake and zoo. Here the theme of domestication reaches its highest expression, this time through emphasis upon the taming of nature in the raw. A flood flat on the city's outskirts—a dank and hostile waste area, threatened continually with engulfment from the stream's unhealthy flow—receives the shaping imprint of German civilization. The flood is harnessed and forced to pool within newly-constructed banks, a placid setting for the carefully-tended paths, the benches, and the landscaped plantings amongst which Germans stroll in family groups. Like the parks of the Old Reich itself, of course, this is a park in which "*Juden haben keinen Zutritt* [Jews May Not Enter]." It provides a modern Nazi solution to the dilemma we encountered two centuries earlier of the Frankfurt promenade, which threatened to be engulfed (or so the city's burghers had feared) by the mob of uncontrollable, vermin-bearing Jews who had been released from their confinement in the old ghetto (see chapter 6). In Litzmannstadt, on the other hand, the ghetto has been restored, its ugliness hidden somewhere behind the scenes. Meanwhile the park, like the entire city of modern Frankfurt, has been rendered *judenrein*. The process of domestication is completed with the creation of a classic bourgeois idyll. This is expressed above all in the form of the tiny zoo-and-restaurant, a *Schmuckanlage* (decorative focal point), installed nicely in line with Himmler's specifications for beautifying the east. Here the wilds of nature have been diminutized, inverted and confined for German viewing pleasure, an index of the German's

triumphant encompassment of Poland's "soul-devouring" expanse (as Maschmann described it). The zoo, the park, and the new Litzmannstadt itself are all indices of the Nazi Volkbody at the apogee of its triumphant expansion; its order-giving boundaries have not yet shrunken to the embattled dimensions of A. Paul Weber's barricaded island home in the etching we saw earlier, *The Last Privateer* (see plate 70, ch. 12).

Another index of the Jew and the hidden dialectic of his transformation with the German is to be found in the film's segment on music. After the long hiatus of Polish-Jewish domination, German high culture has returned at last to Litzmannstadt in all its racial splendor. Children play pianos, flutes and violins; the new municipal orchestra concertizes under the banner of the swastika. Later on we encounter the Hitler Youth, celebrating the city's German future with the music of a marching band. But what is the source of all of these musical instruments? The return of German culture to Litzmannstadt, ironically, was made possible by the Lodz Jewish community. All of the musical instruments still in Jewish hands, from serviceable children's instruments to magnificent specimens of concert quality, were confiscated by the SS. Hans Biebow, head of the German ghetto administration, determined the distribution of the booty, with assistance from the general manager of Litzmannstadt's new municipal theater, along with a musical consultant hired by the city (see Dobroszycki, 1984: 470-1). The recipients were the municipal orchestra, the mayor, the Hitler Youth music school, and the Reich Chamber of Music. In this manner fifteen master violins, two of them priceless instruments over 300 years in age, became German property, for the token price of 7 RM apiece. Another forty-four violins found their way to the tender fingers of the Hitler Youth. Other confiscated instruments included pianos, cellos, guitars, mandolins, zithers, lutes, clarinets, saxophones, trumpets, cymbals, accordians, and trombones—enough to keep the entire musically-inclined German population of Litzmannstadt happily occupied while the SS finished liquidating the ghetto's "subhumans" at the death camps of Chelmo and

Auschwitz-Birkenau. Thus the Jewish inhabitants of the ever-dwindling ghetto, starved not only for food but for spiritual sustenance, were forced to serve up the tokens of their cultural accomplishment in a veritable banquet.

As we have already seen, the overall transformation of Lodz as represented in this film shares with the transformative principles inherent in Beauty of Labor's program to reformulate the alienated German industrial landscape into total living and working environments. Those principles are also explored specifically in the segment of the film focusing in on one of the city's factories, a subject matter appropriate not only to the Nazi ideology of work but to the role of Lodz as an important manufacturing center. Seen earlier in the film in its squalid "before," now the factory is treated to a classic Beauty of Labor renovation. Outhouses, debris and smoke-filled industrial dungeons—all tokens of its former Jewish ownership, a Nazi assumption one can take for granted—have given way to gracefully-landscaped grounds and shining machinery. Above all, there is the gracious *Gemeinschaftssaal* (located presumably in the plant's new "Comradeship House") with its wall sayings and its tokens of a German artisanal past harnessed to the powerful forms of modern technology.

Not surprisingly for Lodz, the factory in question is a beautified weaving mill. European textile manufacture was an area of industry in which Jews were frequently active (although in Poland not only as owners but as manual laborers); the conversion of the factory might be seen therefore to imply the "liberation" of this particular branch of the economy from alleged Jewish domination. This fact, however, does not exhaust the hidden relevance of this segment to the subject of Jewish victimization. Although the further implications are neither direct nor immediately apparent, the germanization of this weaving mill resonates with one of the most literal and relentless aspects in the Nazi transformation of the Jew. We have learned already that the *tefillin* of Jewish death-camp victims, along with other items of their property, were recycled in the Lodz ghetto

workshops and elsewhere. This is not the extent, however, of the role which the Jew was forced to play as a raw material for Germany industry. Although not necessarily in Litzmannstadt itself, the shorn and disinfected hair of Jewish girls and women murdered in the death camps was rough woven or processed into felt, among others at the Firm Alex Zink of Roth bei Nürnberg, in the heart of the Old Reich (see KL Auschwitz, 1980:170-1). The Zink firm bought it from Auschwitz (where the last of the Lodz Jews were annihilated) for 1/2 RM per kilo (see Langbein, 1980:503; Hilberg, 1985:954). Voluminous quantities had already been sent by train to such factories, part of the thousands of freight-car loads of appropriated Jewish products sent out to various German recipients from all of the camps (p.955, n.29). This commercial flow was interrupted only by the Soviet liberation of Auschwitz, where seven tons of hair, hastily left behind by the retreating SS, were found in the camp tannery partly packaged and awaiting shipment (p.983; Eschwege, 1979:280; cf. Boehncke, 1980) (see plates 75-76).

This hair was meant for Herr Zink, but—given the wider context of signifying practice within which the germanization of Lodz belongs—it might just as well have been consigned to the new Litzmannstadt weaving mill depicted in our film, there to be spun on tidy looms into felt slippers and shoe linings. These could be worn, as were the products of Herr Zink's factory, by employees of the *Reichsbahn*—perhaps some of the same trainmen who were speeding along the deportation of additional European Jews to Auschwitz or Treblinka, where more hair could be shorn from those consigned to the gas. Beauty of Labor thus completes itself in Poland. The Jew, alienating symbol of capitalist domination and disorder, circulates into the death camps as living freight and out again as inanimate raw material, to be processed into comfortable German footwear by reformulated Aryan workers in beautified German factories.

Now that we have been equipped, appallingly, with this wider perspective, we can be sure that the function of the beautified plant infirmary depicted in the film is not merely to

tend cuts and cure a few cases of tuberculosis. Instead it suggests just how seriously (and how far) Robert Ley's earlier affirmation was meant to be taken. When he stated that National Socialist leadership would do "everything necessary in order to make our people healthy and keep them healthy," he invoked the willingness of National Socialism to explore the most radical implications of Nazi racial hygiene. It was not the individual German worker alone, but the *Volkskörper* itself which was to be sanitized and strengthened, and that meant the elimination of the "Jewish bacillus." The purpose of the penultimate sequence of mass exercise in the Lodz-to-Litzmannstadt film, as we saw, was to corporealize the expanding margins of this collective biological entity. No longer ethnic Germans but young Aryans, the Hitler Youth of Litzmannstadt march with their appropriated Jewish instruments into Germany's bright millennium. Funneled like the Litzmannstadt park's formerly flooding stream into the perfect enclosure of their stadium, the pure-blooded bodies of Germany's reformulated youth converge into a single, composite unit, its margins stretching symbolically to encompass the "soul-devouring" expanse of the "Subhuman" (see plate 77). This they convert into the hardened inner space of the German *Lebensraum*. It is a beautiful, disciplined space, an Aryan space, one that is sanitized and sub-divided, landscaped and ordered. It is a space that is healthy and productive. Above all, it is a space free of Jews.

Thus we see the extent to which Nazi antisemitism and the intensifying practice of genocide provided the tacit center around which the millenarian transformation of Lodz and the German *Lebensraum* revolved. Jewish Lodz, the essence of an alien and encroaching capitalism, is worked upon as an object of "creative" German labor. Applying Beauty of Labor's principles of industrial aesthetics and technological rationality in the service of racial hygiene, a beautified sense of German order is brought to the "chaos" of the Polish-Jewish "material." Lodz becomes Litzmannstadt, and in keeping with the aesthetic requirements of this process, the Jew himself is no longer anywhere to be seen.

But where have the Jews disappeared to? We know that they must have gone somewhere, for the film itself proclaimed their supposedly obnoxious presence at its outset. As with all beautiful cities, Litzmannstadt too must have somewhere its tireless backstage, a hidden zone where the indispensable dirty work is done: an abatoir or charnel house, a power plant or sewage facility—or perhaps even a ghetto and death camp—grinding on inscrutably behind a pretty barrier of hedges or *trompe l'oeil* (as existed, indeed, at Auschwitz and Treblinka), so that the frontstage can keep up its immaculate facade. . . (see chapters 12 and 15; cf. Goffmann, 1961; Foucault, 1977). Where, then, and in what manner is the Litzmannstadt portion of the Aryan *Volkskörper* actually being purged of its so-called Jewish baccillus?

The film *Lodz Becomes Litzmannstadt* does not answer this question; it makes no reference to the final and most radical step in the transformation of the city—the murder of its Jewish inhabitants in the nearby Chelmno death camp. Even if they had been permitted to reveal the "secret," no doubt the film's producers would have considered it tasteless in the extreme to include such reference. Nonetheless these details provide the last scene in the act of germanization and therefore must be filled in if we are to bring the film's story to its full conclusion.

—AT CHELMNO

Cleansing the Wartheland

Paralleling the relationship of the Warsaw Ghetto to the more advanced death camp of Treblinka (something we will encounter in the next chapter), we see in the pairing of Lodz and Chelmno the essential dialectic of germanization and genocide. The death camp, situated in a little Polish locale some thirty-five miles northwest of Lodz and one of the least known, functioned as the central killing facility for the whole of the Wartheland. It is true,

of course, that the last of the Lodz ghetto inhabitants were liquidated at Auschwitz-Birkenau in August 1944, but this was a last-minute shift in location "necessitated" by the pressures of war: the advancing Red Army was little over an hour's train journey away, and as usual the SS did not want so important a cleansing operation to be interrupted, even by an impending defeat (see Dobroszycki, 1984: lxv). With this one contingency, Chelmno remains the intended destination of the Lodz Jews. And just as Lodz, the source of at least half of Chelmno's victims, had been transformed into Litzmannstadt, so too the village of Chelmno had been renamed "Kulmhof." Also like the far larger Litzmannstadt, tiny "Kulmhof" had its modest share of fervent Aryan homesteaders; it even had a new German grade school (see Lanzmann, 1985:3-4). Thus Kulmhof was integrated fully into the germanization of the Wartheland, with German settlers building the town and their own lives anew, even as the Jews of Lodz and its environs were being herded to their deaths next door.

Beginning operation on December 8, 1941, Chelmno was the first stationary killing facility, and, with its gas-van technology, the most primitive. Located in a former villa intended originally for the so-called euthanasia program, Chelmno was converted for genocide following a successful attempt by Gauleiter Greiser of the Wartheland to obtain permission from Himmler to dispose of 100,000 Jews in his administrative region (see Hilberg, 1985:871; Dobroszycki, 1984: lvi, n.148). The camp remained under his jurisdiction and thus was administered separately from the other five death camps in Poland (see Hilberg, 1985:948). Although Greiser obviously did not initiate the "Final Solution" himself, his request is only one indication that the idea of mass murder was by no means alien to the thought processes of Germans at various levels of the Nazi state, as Browning reminds us (see Browning, 1985). Somewhat earlier, for example (on July 16, 1941), SS-*Sturmbahnführer* Rolf Heinz Höppner of Posen had written to his "dear comrade Eichmann" in the RSHA to solicit his opinion regarding proposals made at a series of local

conferences devoted to exploring "the solution of the Jewish Question in the Wartheland." The primary suggestion was to establish an enormous labor camp for all Jews in the region so as to concentrate their labor power, reduce the need for guards, and lessen the threat of epidemic in existing ghettos. Several additional proposals were also suggested by conference participants, as Höppner reported:

There is a danger of not being able to feed all the Jews this winter. It should be seriously considered whether it would not be the most humane solution to dispose of the Jews, insofar as they are unfit for work, through some quick-acting agent [*ein schnellwirkendes Mittel*]. In any case it would be more pleasant than to let them starve.

In addition the proposal was made to sterilize all the female Jews in this camp from whom children could still be expected, so that for all intents and purposes the Jewish problem will be completely solved with this generation (Höppner, quoted in Rückerl, 1977: 256-7; cf. Browning, 1985:3-4).

"These things sound somewhat fantastic," Höppner told Eichmann, "but in my opinion would be entirely feasible" (in Rückerl, 1977:257). Such proposals underscore the fact that Nazi antisemitism evolved within a social Darwinist project of social transformation and collective renewal. The "Final Solution" itself emerged within a political system already using methods of eugenics, mass murder, and brutal demographic planning in the East to create a "purified" German *Volk* Community that would dominate Europe. Considering the pivotal role of antisemitism in Nazi ideology and power politics, it is inevitable that the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe" would take a central role within this project of inner European imperialism, adapting methods which had been explored previously by the Nazi state, but applying them on an unprecedented scale and in a manner exceedingly more vehement.

The functioning of the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium obviously was not lacking in all this, as Höppner's conference notes make clear; everyone wanted to make their contribution to defining this most crucial aspect of Reich policy, and preferably, their bid for a measure of control as well. It was apparently clear to all present, for instance, that

Uebelhör, the president of the Lodz region, had been quite serious six months earlier when he had said that he alone would "reserve the right to determine" at which point and in what manner the Lodz Ghetto would be liquidated. "One had the impression," Höppner wrote to Eichmann, "that *Regierungspräsident* Uebelhör does not wish the ghetto in Litzmannstadt to disappear, as it seems he is able to earn quite a good profit from it." This apparently inspired Höppner to do a little background research for his and Eichmann's own potential benefit. "As an example of how one can profit from Jews [*wie man an Juden verdienen kann*]," Höppner continued, "I was informed that the Reich Labor Ministry pays 6 RM from a special account for every Jew set to work, and yet the Jew costs only 60 Pfennigs" (p.256-7). The identity of the Jew in this ruthless capital accounting is not that of a simple laborer or even a slave, but rather a piece of "*Arbeitsmaterial*" (in Poliakov, 1979:76), a force of production to be harnessed, if possible for personal as well as collective gain, but always as a step in the pursuit of the overriding goal: the total exhaustion of the Jew unto death, the war effort notwithstanding.

This final goal was achieved at Chelmno in the large villa which served as the base for the killing operation. After having been transported into the village by train or trucks on pretext of work assignment, Jews were deposited at the villa, where they were met by SS men disguised as doctors. Told to surrender their valuables and undress for disinfection baths, victims were herded down through the villa's basement and then up through a ramp-like passage that ended at a loading dock. Here a gas van would be backed up with its doors open, leaving nowhere for the naked victims to go but into the van's interior. Gassing, by way of a hose leading from the engine exhaust into the van's hermetically-sealed chamber, often took place at the ramp while the motor idled. According to witnesses in the film *Shoah*, the villa later would be bypassed and the Jews stored temporarily in the village church, whence they would be loaded directly into gas vans and then asphyxiated enroute to the burial ditches in a nearby forest compound. Once trapped, the victims saw

the meaning of it all in a flash; they pounded in desperation on the vehicle's walls. Death took eight minutes in theory, but could last much longer, preceded by nausea, vomiting and tremors (see Rückerl, 1977:271).

Up until January 1, 1943, according to a report by Himmler's Inspector for Statistics, Dr. Korherr, 145,301 Jews had been "*durchgeschleust*," or "sluiced through" the Chelmno death camp (in Rückerl, 1977: 291). In other reports the operation was referred to as a "purification" (*Bereinigung*) or "cleansing" (*Säuberung*) of the Wartheland (p.289). The term Korherr used—one common to the Nazi language of genocide at all death camps—implies the industrial hosing of waste material. This suggests once again the anal dimensions of the "Final Solution," not only in terms of the Jew as the filth of exchange, but the death camps as digestive tracts in the German Volkbody, a point to which we shall return later (see chapter 15).

After the camp's temporary shut-down the end of March 1943, Chelmno resumed operation from the spring of 1944 until January 1945. Another 7,176 were estimated killed during last period, bringing the total Nazi estimate to over 150,000, the remaining Jews of the Lodz ghetto having been "disposed of" at Auschwitz-Birkenau. To the previous figure must be added the 5,000 German and Austrian Gypsies who had been incarcerated along with the Jews in the Lodz ghetto on grounds of being foreign and burdensome "asocials" in the body of the *Volk*. They too, along with hundreds of thousands of their brethren who met their fates at the hands of the *Einsatzgruppen* or in Auschwitz and other death camps, were swept up in the annihilatory system which the Nazis had established to destroy the Jews of Europe (see Kenrick & Puxon, 1972; Zülch, 1979).

The Jew as Cargo: Bureaucracy as Cultural Practice

The pedestrian evil of the Holocaust—and the implicit cultural terms within which that evil was couched, as well as its socially-shared nature—are rendered accessible in a

remarkable document issued in connection with the functioning of these gas vans at Chelmno and elsewhere. Such vans already had been in partial use for some time by the Führer's Chancellery, which had been conducting the so-called euthanasia program. However, upon inspecting his *SS-Einsatzgruppen* in their murder of Jews in the Soviet Union, Himmler expressed the need for a method more "humane" for his SS executioners than mass shooting. Those working on the problem soon hit upon the gas van. But the existing vans used bottled carbon dioxide as the source of their gas, the regular delivery of which could not be assured under conditions of war; a more efficient method was needed. As Browning's detailed reconstruction shows (see Browning, 1985:57-67), in order to solve such technological problems, Reinhard Heydrich, head of the RSHA (Reich Security Main Office) and the man in charge of the "Final Solution," turned to the engineers and scientists of the *Kriminaltechnische Institut* (Criminal Technical Institute) of the Kripo, or Criminal Police, and the mechanics of the Security Police motor pool garage. Their primary task was to determine if exhaust fumes from van engines could be fed back into a sealed compartment, thereby creating a perfect (and lethal) recycling system.

Once proposals were developed, the private German automotive firm of Gaubschat was brought into the picture to perform conversions on large Saurer and smaller Opel and Dodge trucks, apparently thirty in total, of which twenty were delivered. As it turned out, however, the large Saurer trucks, although lethal, were by no means perfect. In the first place, their purpose became increasingly obvious to the civilian population, something which the SS supervisor in the field had tried to remedy by having *trompe l'oeil* windows, like those at Treblinka (see chapter 15), painted on the sides and hung with shutters. The idea was to make them resemble "mobile homes" and not "death trucks," as the local populace began calling them (see Browning, 1985:64; Becker in Poliakov, 1979:124). Even more serious, the vans used in Russia were suffering from the uneven terrain, resulting in breakdowns and damage to the hermetical sealing. At times the engines ran too

fast, creating an impure mixture of carbon dioxide. The suffocation of the victims took all the longer, and when the SS moved to clean out the van, they found themselves confronted with a task they could hardly describe for themselves as "humane": removing excrement-covered corpses with "horribly distorted" faces (see Browning, 1985:64). Finally, one of the vans at Chelmno exploded upon being started, its back doors blowing open to spew out some of its still-living victims.

Willy Just, a mechanic in the SS motor garage pool, proposed a solution to these difficulties in a memo of June 5, 1942 which Browning calls "astonishing for its euphemisms, even by Nazi standards" (Browning, 1985:64). The frequent tendency to reduce the language of Nazi documents to mere euphemism, however, fails to account for the deeper implications of cultural transformation which run throughout the genocidal process. The attempt to conceal, legitimize and nullify the brutal realities of the "Final Solution" was far more than simply another example of bureaucracy's universal, dehumanizing mechanisms at work. Instead the language of this memo is in keeping with the Nazi attempt to reverse the degenerative effects of the Jew's chaotic exchange nature and regain control over him, by transforming him ever-more-literally into cargo. As every phase in the unfolding history of the Holocaust makes evident, deception and concealment, as well as the ordering effects of bureaucratic and industrial rationalization, are some of the key methods whereby this alleged reversal-of-statuses was accomplished.

Just's apparently unsolicited suggestion was to shorten the ten Saurer vans still awaiting conversion. The existing vans were able to manage the terrain only when filled with partial "loads," thereby leaving too much empty space in the van to be filled with gas. Just's solution, on the other hand, did not require a reduction in the "number of pieces" (*Stückzahl*) per load. Contrary to reservations mouthed by private contractors, Just felt sure that shorter vans carrying full loads would operate more efficiently. Referring to Chelmno, Just continued:

Since December 1941, ninety-seven thousand [i.e., Jews] have been processed [*verarbeitet*] by the three vehicles in service. . . . The manufacturers told us during a discussion that reducing the size of the van's rear would throw it badly off balance. . . . In fact, the distribution of weight is automatically restored, because the loaded cargo [*das Ladegut*] in its struggle toward the back door during the operation [*beim Betrieb*] is always found lying there afterwards in preponderate number. So the front axle is not overloaded. . . .

The lighting must be better protected against damage than hitherto. The iron grill must be arched over the lights so that damage to the covers is no longer possible. . . . Experience shows that when the rear door is closed and therefore when it goes dark, the load [*Ladung*] always presses hard against them. This is because the load naturally presses toward the light when darkness sets in, which makes closing the doors difficult. Furthermore, it has been observed that the noise [i.e., screams] always begins when the doors are shut presumably because of fear brought on by the darkness. It is therefore desirable for the lighting to be switched on before and during the first few minutes of the operation. The lighting is also useful for night operations and for cleaning the inside of the vehicle. . . .

Willy Just attends here even to the inevitable anal dimensions of this process—a dimension generated, not by the victims, but by those structuring their death:

To facilitate cleaning of the vehicle, there should be a sealed drain in the middle of the floor. . . . The drain cover. . . should have a syphon so that thin fluids can drain off during the operation. To prevent blockages, the syphon should be covered with a seive. Lumps of dirt [*dicker Schmutz*] can be flushed out through the large drain opening when the van is cleaned. . ." (Just, in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1202-3; Browning, 1985:64; Lanzmann, 1985:103-5).

As Browning suggests, this document reflects once more the extent to which the specific form of the "Final Solution" developed not only via initiatives from the pinnacle of the Nazi leadership, but also through a "grass-roots" collaboration of Germans located lower down in the Nazi party hierarchy. At the same time it condenses all dimensions in the signifying practice of genocide. Like the players in the game of *Juden raus!* and others competing for power in the actual *Judenpolitik*, Willy Just hopes by his suggestions to participate importantly in solving the gas-van problem, and thereby to establish his role, however limited it may be, in a policy crucial to the construction of power in the Third Reich. In the course of doing so, he reveals also the extent to which the implicit "cultural logic" of genocide is a socially-shared phenomenon in Nazi society. One cannot say

without further evidence just how far such a logic extended specifically into the thought processes of the automotive contractors in the private business sphere, although they could hardly have been in the dark about the significance of feeding carbon-dioxide gas into sealed vans. At the same time there is more than sufficient evidence from the role of I.G. Farben at Auschwitz, among others, to conclude that the perverse "cultural logic" of genocide was by no means foreign to German industrialists (see Borkin, 1978; Ferencz, 1979; Levi, 1985; cf. Hayes, 1987). Indeed, prisoners in the factories and nearby mines of I.G.'s Auschwitz-Monowitz labor camp were told when arriving that they were there not to live "but to 'perish in concrete,' a reference to the practice of throwing the corpses of prisoners who died on the job into the trenches dug for cables which were then concreted over" (Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1186; Hilberg, 1985:930). (The term *Arbeitsmaterial* referred to earlier, in any case, is found in a letter of complaint from a German building contractor in a middle-sized, private enterprise, who is angry that he must keep maintaining his rented Lodz "work material" even though their labor power is being used-up by the local county government, which regularly requisitions them [see Poliakov, 1979:76].) Finally, the construction of the Jewish victims as a "load of cargo," as "pieces" or "items" to be "processed," reveals all at once the essential unity of the symbolic and the pragmatic in the signifying practice of genocide, as we shall see again at Treblinka (chapter 15)—for the language of the memo is not merely a "matter of speech," a floating ideological conceit, or even a clever cover-up of something else that is actually happening. To the contrary, it is integral to the actual workings of bureaucracy and German technology as harnessed by National Socialism for the literal transformation of the Jew to death at Chelmno.

**From "Figure" to Dust:
Immobilizing the Fluidity of Capital**

Chelmno had only three survivors (see Rückerl, 1977:253). One of them, Simon Szrebnik, a thirteen year old boy at the time, was a member of a work detail. His mother

had been gassed, but the SS kept him alive for his melodious voice and his agility in jumping contests which they arranged to relieve their boredom. One recalls the memorable opening scene to Lanzmann's film *Shoah*, which recreates the boy's regular boat journeys up and down the Narew river on SS errands, singing favorite Prussian military tunes on command: "When the soldiers march along. . . [*Wenn die Soldaten durch die Strassen marschieren. . .*]." An ethnic German settler in Kulmhof, interviewed by Lanzmann years later, had no trouble completing the verse: ". . . the girls open their windows and doors. . . [*. . . öffnen die Mädchen ihre Fenstern und Türen. . .*]" (see Lanzmann, 1985:95). Polish villagers remembered his songs as well, and understood too the essential transformation to which the SS had subjected him: ". . . the Germans made him sing on the river. He was a toy to amuse them. He had to do it. He sang, but his heart wept" (p.6).

After the victims had gone through their death wrattles, the SS drove the gas vans two-and-a-half miles to the Rzuwowski Forest in Precinct 77 of the surrounding county. There shackled Jewish inmates were forced to empty and clean the vans (thereby relieving the SS of that inhumane task), search bodily openings for valuables, break out gold teeth from the jaws, and throw the corpses into a pit. Mordechai Podchlebnik, another survivor who was forced to unload the corpses of his own wife and children from a gas van, recalled through an interpreter the way that the bodies of the Jews were arranged: "It was in the winter of 1942, in early January. The bodies. . . were buried, and each row was covered with dirt. . . . There were around four or five layers. The ditches were funnel-shaped. They dumped the bodies in these ditches, and they had to lay them out like herrings, head to foot" (p.11). Even before Chelmno had actually begun operation, the cultural implications of such a "burial" had been made known to Heinz May, the local German Forest Inspector, as he motored through the area in the fall of 1941 with the Nazi party regional leader. "As we were driving through the forest," May later recalled, "[*Kreisleiter*] Becht said, pointing

in the direction of Precinct 77, 'Your trees will be growing better soon.' When I looked inquiringly at him, he replied that Jews make good fertilizer" (May, in Dobroszycki, 1984: 1v).⁵

At age thirteen, the singing Simon Srebnik may have been converted temporarily into a toy, but this was to have been his real fate, like that of Podchlebnik's children: to line a ditch like herring arranged in the best fashion of an orderly German fishmonger or a German organic gardener preparing compost for Himmler's great eastern landscaping plans. One recalls yet again the words of Seifert in *The Jew on the Eastern Border*: "This is no people [*Volksmenge*], this is a mass that one cannot grasp hold of, that quivers through the fingers like protoplasm, just as it streams through the alleyways. . ." (Seifert, 1940:12). Elusive, protean, slippery yet engulfing—the Jew and his disorder were rationalized in the ditches of Chelmno. Compressed into ever-narrowing space, the value of his body extracted in the form of hidden jewels and dental gold, the Jew and the unruliness of his exchange nature were subjected to a German ordering process, thereby reducing both aspects to inert form. Podchlebnik calls them herrings laid out head to foot; they could easily be described as sardines packed in a German can. In fact we have already seen them described during the *Einsatzgruppen* phase of genocide precisely in this manner—only there it was living Jews who had had to arrange themselves in rows, head to foot, five layers deep, and await cross-fire. The Germans, however, had a more standard term than "sardines-in-oil" for the neat products of their "bloody *Handwerk*," (Himmler, in

⁵This comment may have surprised Heinz May—but by 1943 jokes about the fate of the Jews were frequent amongst the supposedly uninitiated throughout Germany. This testified, if not to their actual knowledge of Nazi genocidal practice, then to their apprehension of the underlying cultural logic of the genocidal process (something that should not come as all that surprising, considering the circulation of the board game *Juden raus!* discussed earlier). It was common, Poliakov reports, to joke about Jews "going up the chimney" (1979:212). One Gestapo officer is reported having told Jews in Frankfurt that they would "be made into compost" (Friedländer, 1969:142). And of course there was the common joke going the rounds that the letters RIF impressed on an inferior brand of rationed soap stood, not for *Reichs Institut für Fettauswertung* or whatever, but—the letters I and J being interchangeable in German—"Rein Judenfett" or "pure Jewish fat" (Ino Arndt, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, personal communication; see also Pawlak, 1979:117). (In fact the processing of human fat into soap was the subject of experiments [see ch. 16]).

Hilberg, 1985:332). They called them "*Figuren*"—figures, like dress-maker forms or mannequins arranged in a row, anonymous as cyphers lined up in a column—and would have them referred to by no other name (see Lanzmann, 1985:13; Auerbach in Donat, 1979:38-39). In this manner the malignant abstraction of the Jew, like the fluidity of capital, had been fully congealed and rendered immobile. All that was left now was the Jew's eventual reduction into nature itself, so as to guarantee that the transformation be irreversible and complete. ("No salvation is possible," Adolf Hitler wrote, "until the bearer of disunion, the Jew, is rendered powerless to harm" [in Koenigsberg, 1975:14].) And so the bodies at Chelmno were exhumed and incinerated on heated rails, the unburned fragments crushed to powder, sacked, and scattered in the Narew River from the height of a convenient bridge.

All this was by no means limited to Chelmno, of course; as we know, the same occurred at all of the death camps and murder sites scattered throughout Eastern Europe, something we shall soon see in more detail for Treblinka.⁶ The temporary use on the

⁶There was, in fact, one other term which the SS used, in addition to *Figuren*, to refer to the bodies of Jews. They called them the *Scheisse*, or shit—and did their best to make that transformation a reality. Indeed, Becht's earlier joke about Jews as fertilizer (if joke it was) is confirmed by the following account, which also reinforces our analysis of the significance of rendering the Jew's exchange nature immobile by "packaging" him in ditches.

Wanda Koprowska, a former Auschwitz inmate, describes human ash as a component in the camp's recipe for organic compost—something which had to be created in specified layers, and in perfect geometric form:

The worst was the compost. There I worked endlesses as "corner-maker [*Kantenmacher*]". . . . Is it not insignificant what a heap of manure looks like? No. We had to layer the compost in exact and equal measures, so that pretty squares emerged with exaggeratedly equivalent sides. . . . First on the bottom one put down a lot of straw and then a bit more on the margins. Then Jews brought in liquified manure [*Jauche*] in pails and poured it over the straw. Atop this layer one placed squares of sod, piled them with human ashes and pour the dung-water on this yet again. Soon one stood up to the ankels in excrement. The margins of the compost heaps were 10 meters long and their height reached up to 6 meters. When the prism [*Prisma*] was proclaimed large enough, one covered it yet again with straw and sod and then bestrew the top as well as the sides once again with human ashes. From far off these compost prisms looked like enormous cakes" (Koprowska, 1967:114ff; see also Wuttker-Groneberg, 1982:35).

The sense of German "anal compulsion" imposed here quite literally upon camp inmates is inescapable, for not only did they have to come in contact with the "waste" matter of Jewish bodies and excrement among other ingredients, but they were forced to shape the ashen remnants into perfect geometric forms. Thus the

eastern front of "mobile homes" to disguise death trucks, for example, expresses in a particularly literal and perversely appropriate manner the means whereby Germans rendered the fluidity of the Jew's exchange-nature manageable. Karl Loewenstein provides an eye-witness account of these "*Wohnwagen*," which he saw in use at Minsk. "From a distance these vans really looked like mobile homes. They had painted windows, curtains, shutters and even a chimney. When I saw this chimney for the first time, it occurred to me that it was newly lacquered and in contrast to the van showed no signs of use" (Loewenstein, in Hofer, 1957:311). What better way to domesticate the "*ewige Jude*"—that rootless nomad—than this: to load his people onto homey, German-run caravans, pipe in carbon monoxide, and then deliver the now-concretized "figures" to their final resting places?

wild, parasitical exchange-nature of the Jew was rendered literally into perfectly-ordered, packaged "tortes" of fertilizer—an unspeakable act of symbolic transformation perfectly "consistent" with the lethal immobilization and packaging of the Jew performed at Chelmno as well (cf. Des Pres, 1976).

This was not, however, the end of the anal ingenuity displayed by the SS at Auschwitz in their efforts to wrest all value from the Jew and thereby gain full control over all aspects of his exchange nature. At Birkenau monstrous tanks were built and filled with the human excrement of those in the process of being worked to death, or awaiting their ends in the crematoria. The hope, incredibly, was to recycle whatever methane gas was released (see Pressac, 1989).

Meanwhile, at Maidanek, the British reporter Alexander Werth encountered something similar to Koprowska's testimony while participating in a walk through the recently liberated camp in August 1944. Coming upon a vegetable field, he noticed that

the large heads of cabbage were covered with a fine dust. Someone explained: a layer of manure, a layer of ash, that's how it was done. . . . All of these heads grow in human ash. . . . The SS men brought the largest part of the ash to their model farm [*Mustergut*] located somewhat further along, a picture-perfect operation. They ate the enormous cabbage heads with relish, and the prisoners ate them the same, although they knew that within a short time, with great probability, they too would end up as manure for cabbages just the same. . . (quoted in Antoni, 1979:85).

Here the assimilation of the transformed Jew to the bodily substance of the German—the literal processing of the Jew through the German digestive tract so as to "nurture" the emerging Aryan—is all-too-thoroughly completed. The stomach turns.

Finally, one might note that, again at Maidanek, the area in front of the crematorium was "affectionately" nicknamed by the SS *der Rosengarten* or *Rosenfeld* ("Rose Garden" and "Rose Field") (see Hilberg, 1985:879-80). Here "typical" sounding surnames of the Jews about to be gassed are combined with the idea of using Jewish ash as fertilizer, this time in the gloating, carnival-like humor characteristic of German antisemitic status-reversal and the inversionary practice of genocide. Likewise the massive liquidation action of November 3, 1943 was code-named *Erntefest*, or "Harvest Festival," thereby suggesting, in best humor, the positive dialectical effects for Germans of extirpating Jews (see Marszalek, 1981:138ff; Donat, 1978).

To provide only one other example here of this transformative process: in a monstrous *corvée* labor surpassing the brutalities of Pharaonic Egypt, Leon Weliczker Wells, a teenage Jew assigned to an exhumation brigade two years after the *Einsatzgruppen* murders began in the area of Lvov, was forced to construct carefully-stacked pyramids of up to 2,000 *Figuren* intended for incineration. "*Nur anständig und sauber* [just do it clean and proper]," the SS master would instruct his slaves, while a "tabulator" recorded the number burned in orderly columns on a piece of paper, only to burn that as well later on. The next step in the process was to comb through the ash for jewels, rings or gold coins left behind after burning, as if these items were almost a natural by-product of the unnatural Jewish body. Those prisoners assigned to this task were called the "Gold Prospectors of Alaska [*Goldsuchern von Alaska*]" by their SS overseers. But here the SS were being merely playful; in truth the living Jews in their eyes were not men at all, as Wells reports. Having lost the wild autonomy of their exchange natures, they too, like their parents, wives and children now consigned to pyres, had become faceless abstractions, walking *Figuren* whose fates were sealed—as in, "*Zehn Figuren heraustreten!* [Ten figures step out!]" (Wells, 1978 [1963]:146; 179-183; 196). At Auschwitz this status was formalized by the use of the now well-known tattooed identification numbers, thereby entering each Jewish inmate as another piece of *Arbeitsmaterial* in a mounting inventory of the dead and near-dead.⁷

The Nazi reification of the Jew into a faceless "figure" demonstrates well the sacrificial role which the Jew was forced to play in German fascism, a role to which the processes of symbolic mediation were crucial. Such processes were not limited to Nazi Germany, of

⁷Unlike the other prisoners at Auschwitz who were also eventually tattooed, for Jews as a whole registration meant only temporary diversion from the gassing ramp. This was because the principle of their inexorable destruction had been built into the death camp's basic practices; it was part of its *raison d'être*. Thus the number etched into their skin, while later an aspect of the camp's wider bureaucratic dehumanization of all inmates (with the exception of Germans), nonetheless contributed an additional layer to the unique web of transformative meanings within which Jews, specifically, were caught.

course, but are common to the structuring of ritual and other processes of cultural transformation the world over (cf. Hubert & Mauss, 1964; Munn, 1974). It seems only fitting that we should draw an example from the lives of those whom the Nazis dominated so murderously through the unyielding demands of their own symbolic practice. It is therefore the voice Leon Wells whom we again hear as he reveals for us the efficacy of such symbolic relations. He does so this time in the poignant context of a traditional Eastern European *shtetl* culture which now has vanished, and during a period in his youth that only a few years later must have seemed to him more distant than a dream.

On Thursdays, in preparation for the Sabbath, his mother would begin to plan the special *Shabbes* foods—the *bube*, or potato cake; the fresh-buttered *pletsl*, its dough fragrant with poppy seeds and onions. . . . Later in the evening the poor would arrive to collect their rightful measure of charity. "On Thursdays, too, Father would cut the children's fingernails, and his own, wrap them in a piece of paper, add wood shavings, and burn them." The choice of Thursday for this task was the belief that fingernails took three days to resume growth, and thus the body would remain totally at rest until after the Sabbath had ended. As for the mode of disposal: "It was also believed that the nails must be burned so that one's soul would have peace in death. Otherwise the soul would have to gather up all its lost fingernails" (Wells, 1978:3; cf. Zborowski & Herzog, 1952). For the Jews of the *shtetl*, fingernails mediate two contradictory yet intermeshed dimensions of human experience. An extension of the living body, fingernails are lifeless yet capable of growth. Once detached, however, they become scattered extensions of the body in death, maintaining its spiritual force and presence unnaturally in the realm of the living. For this reason the fingernails must be collected and reduced to nothingness. This will rescue the soul from a sense of loss, severing it from its earthly bounds so that it need not travel abroad in the world of man—and thus the abstract yet impinging realm of the spirit is kept

properly peaceful, apart, and in balance with the realm of the living (cf. Evans-Pritchard, 1956; Lienhardt, 1961; Munn, 1974).

These same transformative principles—couched now in the scientific and dehumanizing ideology of race—were later applied by the Nazis to the children of the *shtetl* themselves along with their families in the ravines of the east and on its flaming pyres. Unlike the earlier example, however, the fetishizing effects of racism have made the Jew in his entirety into a condensation of that larger whole with which he was associated: he is not merely fingernail, but full embodiment of the abstract and alienating realm of capitalist exchange. Manipulating the Jew—collectively identifying him, cornering him, working upon him as raw material, extracting his bodily values and then finally reducing him to ash—empowered the Nazis against what they experienced to be the physical and spiritual depredations of an exchange growing out of bounds like a cancer (cf. Koenigsberg, 1975). At the same time, of course, focusing symbolically upon the Jew as a circulating medium of social interaction also allowed them to transpose the divisive contradictions of German class structure into the unifying solidity of race. In this manner they sought to create a seamless and imperishable social whole, restoring a common discourse to German political action while at the same time transforming permanently their own alienated relationship to capitalism.

The Jew as *Figur* represents an advanced step in this process of value-conversion. At once both a number and a solid form, the Jew has become a concretized expression of exchange, no longer chaotic but now rendered appropriately anonymous and interchangeable. At the same time, as a regular feature of genocide, the Jew is induced to participate in a double-binded fashion in his own destruction. He has become an automaton—an extension, not only of exchange, but of the manipulating German as well. In this remarkable manner the Jew mediates symbolically and pragmatically the overall relationship of the German to capitalism; he is a part of both. All that remains is for the

Jew to be completely utilized, and thereby totally expunged—not merely to keep the invasive realm of exchange separate from the German *Volk*, but to encompass it fully, along with the contradictions of class, within the renewed bounds of the Aryan racial community. Thus the Jew in Nazi Germany became the *tertium quid* between the forces of capitalism and its alienating effects as they were experienced intrinsically within the German body, both personal and social, which they structured. Like the fingernail in sacrifice, the fate of the Jewish body in its entirety was to be appropriated, enclosed and worked upon. The positive values extracted from this conversionary labor were to be assimilated. The negative remnants were to be burned and reduced thereby to nothingness.

This reduction of the immobilized Jew to dust was not the absolute end of the transformative process in the death camps, of course. It still remained for the accumulated value extracted from the multitude of Jewish bodies to be recycled for the good of the German *Volk* in its efforts to renew itself. Thus, at Chelmno, the array of property and clothing appropriated from the victims during the course of the killing process were returned to the SS ghetto administration in Litzmannstadt, some to be sorted and reused in the ghetto itself, the best of it to be transmitted to the Ethnic German Welfare Office, as we already have seen. This would help keep their resettled German pioneers warm and make their new lives as comfortable as possible. Jewish furs, however, were reserved for the *Waffen-SS* (see Hilberg, 1985:948, 960). 2,650,000 RM in currency remained with the ghetto's German overseers. Certain other items of value—jewelry, diamonds, watches, objects of silver, and, incredibly, dental gold itself—were offered for sale as a fringe benefit to any German civil servant or military employee who could prove he or she already had been resident in the Wartheland for several months. All one had to do to apply was fill out a form and check off the desired item (see Ruckerl, 1977:272-3, n. 62). No doubt the language of these forms was relatively discreet. Nonetheless one recalls Maschmann's comment about the "Germans in Lodz" and what they told one another: the Jews in the

ghetto were sitting on "great hoards" of gold and other valuables, to be extracted from them only by use of mortal force. Accordingly, applicants included everyone from German office personnel at every level of the bureaucracy to the wife of a general. Meanwhile the contents left behind in the former ghetto were to be utilized by the Wartheland government, and the grounds themselves turned over to the Litzmannstadt municipality (see Dobroszycki, 1984: lxii).

As the embodiment of capitalism, so it went, the Jew had depersonalized the hard-working German and atomized his society; all that was left by the time of Weimar chaos was the battle of class against class and brother against brother. Now, by circulating the booty extracted through hard German labor from the body of the Jew—primarily by formal distribution amongst the agencies of state, but also by sharing these goods through every form of exchange, from gift-giving and welfare bequests to benevolent sale at reduced prices—German social relations were reforged and the boundaries of the "purified" *Volks* Community defined.

Of course, like the application forms of Jewish dental gold, these things were to be handled judiciously. This was especially the case when the recipients, like ethnic German resettlers, were still being treated (no doubt with some bewilderment) to their transformation into Aryans. Thus the National Socialist Welfare Office (NSV) in Poznan, a branch of the Winter Relief, was pleased at first to be given a low price by the Lodz ghetto's SS administrators for the 3,000 suits, 1,000 dresses and sundries urgently needed for resettlers. Unfortunately, as Hilberg reports, when relief officials at local offices opened their first shipment of crates, they discovered merchandise far inferior to the samples they had viewed at Kulmhof. Not only were the pieces mismatched, the Winter Relief representative wrote in complaint, but "the greater part of the clothing is heavily stained and soaked through with filth and bloodstains." Even more troubling, he wrote, (and merely by way of example), "of 200 coats 51 coats still had not had their Jew-stars

[*Judensterne*] removed!" Seeing as most of those unpacking the crates were Poles, this presented the danger that the as-yet uninitiated ethnic German resettlers would find out where their clothing had come from, thereby "discrediting" their benefactors (cf. Hilberg, 1985:952-3).⁸

The Jews left behind in the Lodz ghetto encountered similar intimations of their own complementary deconstruction as well, although with varying awareness of its full significance, depending upon the date. Not long after the first deportations to Chelmno, for instance, huge shipments of personal belongings, mostly clothing and bedding, began arriving in the ghetto. Many items of clothing were ripped at the seams; sometimes, to the puzzlement of the population, there was even an occasional ghetto identification paper left behind in the pockets (see Dobroszycki, 1984: xx). Meanwhile more and more people, including children and the elderly, were being transported from the ghetto for "resettlement" or to "work camps." Lonia H., a witness later for the West German courts, reports:

My daughter wore a pair of little red boots given to me by a Czech couple which had been resettled in the Lodz ghetto. Such shoes were simply never seen in the ghetto, not ever. Amongst the pieces of clothing coming back into the ghetto my husband, who worked in the sorting detail, found these boots. I recognized them immediately too, by their arch supports (in Ruckerl, 1977:279).

Center and Periphery in Nazi Germany

We saw earlier that Willy Just's memo revealed the extent to which the perverse symbolic "logic" of genocide was located on an implicit and shared level of cultural meaning in Nazi state and society. The game *Juden raus!* had already suggested the same

⁸In fact the concerns of the *Winterhilfe* were moot, as Oswald Pohl (director of the WVHA, ultimately responsible for such collections) pointed out at Nuremberg, in contradiction to Kaltenbrunner: "In the case of textiles and valuables everyone down to the lowest clerk knew what went on in concentration camps" (in Friedländer, 1969:144).

in the even wider terms of Nazi popular culture; the circulation of the death camp booty, however surreptitiously its origins sometimes were treated, would seem to confirm it. Certainly the meanings and consequences of antisemitism, as part of the racial transformation of German society, provided an inescapable backdrop to mundane life in the Third Reich. And in his book, *The Terrible Secret*, Walter Laqueur points out with revelatory effect the ever-widening network of Germans involved to a greater or lesser extent in helping to maintain the actual mechanisms of deportation, genocide, and the economic recycling of Jewish belongings and estates (see Laqueur, 1980:17-32). To this one need hardly add the numerous business firms, large and small, using "commandos" of rented slave labor endlessly shuttled in and out of nearby concentration camps (see International Tracing Service, 1949-50, 1969). "To prepare and carry out the 'final solution,'" Laqueur writes, "the active participation of thousands in many walks of life was needed" (1980:18). To these thousands are joined the millions of people who maneuvered their lives relatively unproblematically through National Socialism's thoroughgoing racist renewal of German society.

This certainly does not mean that every German knew the actual details of the death camps, or that everyone agreed equally in the messages of Nazi ideology. The problem of "knowledge" is a complex one, however, and there is certainly no space here to provide the kind of nuanced analysis needed to adequately represent the range and diversity of German society under Nazism on the route from full complicity to outright resistance. Nonetheless one should note that in every sociocultural system, a certain proportion of the population finds itself distanced from the center (or what has become the center) of society (see Shils, 1975:3-16). This means that knowledge, power and values are not evenly distributed across the lines of hierarchy, class, and region—especially in such cases as that of National Socialism, where differential access to state secrets served, even more so than in other modern states, to construct the boundaries of power. "Culture" thus becomes, not some

reified and homogenous entity, but a set of overlapping "lifeworlds," each articulating their own variant of cultural meaning and practice, some sharing with the center as with one another, others diverging based upon differences in social positioning and experience.

Some, like the German Communists and members of the organized working class who opposed the Weimar Republic and battled the Nazis as well, are sufficiently distanced to formulate values that challenge crucial aspects of the sociocultural order from which they and their opponents both emerge (see Peukert, 1982). The suffering and torture of hundreds of thousands of these and other German political and religious dissidents from every class and background during the Nazi era is surely proof enough (see Weisenborn, 1962; Dumbach & Newborn, 1986). To this one must add the persecution of those so-called "deviants," like homosexuals, otherwise heterogeneous in social background and political orientation but forced by Nazism's uncompromising definitions into even more desperately marginalized positions than they might otherwise have held (see Plant, 1986; Stümke & Finkler, 1981). And yet even in these cases the process of formulating counter-hegemonic positions takes place within the limitations created by the unsuspected internalization of at least some of the same implicit hegemonic meanings--for example, those associated with notions of work and bodily "order"--from which the opposing system also draws in order to forge, as in the case of Nazism, its own dehumanizing variant (cf. Gramsci, 1971; Williams, 1977; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991).

Others may seek to express their non-conformism or disaffection in symbolic forms that often fail altogether to articulate with a clear-cut political consciousness (see Hebdige, 1979). In Nazi Germany this could range from recalcitrant "swing youth" and jitterbuggers—Goebbels had condemned the dance as an expression of Negro degeneracy—to a considerable number of troubled "inner emigrants," most of them passive but some few actually daring, for example, to help the so-called Jewish "U-Boats" who had gone underground in Berlin and elsewhere in order to escape deportation (see Gross,

1982). However, the majority of those middle-class inner emigrants who found themselves personally at odds with the regime (even if only in terms of its "crudeness") sequestered their radically-varying degrees of disaffection carefully behind the security of their own "four walls," opening their doors only with great circumspection to select circles of the "*Gleichgesinnte*" (the like-minded) while otherwise conforming outwardly in the course of daily life. Indeed, it was the desperate attempt to mobilize this suspected multitude of "well-meaning" but politically passive Germans of their own class which inspired the "respectable" young members of the White Rose to the stunning acts of resistance which ultimately resulted in the sacrifice of their own lives (see Dumbach & Newborn, 1986). Even those circles which eventually came, all-too-late, to comprise the Putsch attempt of July 20, 1944 differed fundamentally in terms of their political motivation and courage, its members (drawn from the nobility, the civil service, the officer corps and the organized working class) running the gamut from arch-conservative to radical left (see Weisenborn, 1962).

As for "average Germans," there were always those who emphasized Nazism's overt political platform selectively, shrugging aside an antisemitism which they might not themselves have placed quite at center stage, in order to enjoy the otherwise overwhelming benefits of a Germanic socioeconomic revival (see Merkl, 1975). Then, of course, there were those who successfully expressed opinions critical of specific Nazi programs, even going so far as to oppose the regime where their own personal interests were at stake—as in the euthanasia of their own relatives or the removal of crucifixes from their own churches—without otherwise challenging any other aspect of National Socialism, especially so fundamental a policy as the dehumanization and deportation of their Jewish neighbors (see Steinert, 1977; Boberach, 1965; Kershaw, 1983). On the other hand, the phenomenon of German *Flüsterwitze*, or political "whisper jokes" indicates that the more embattled the regime felt as the war turned sour, the more expressions of popular humor—

tolerated previously as a kind of affectionate insiders' critique—became grounds for arrest and even execution (see Gamm, 1979; Hartmann, 1983).

As the latter suggests, the meaningful dimensions of German fascism—like the underlying construction of the Aryan body itself, solid as rock and yet ever in danger of collapsing upon its own contradictions—were not seamless, however much Goebbels might have liked to propagate an image of the Third Reich as monolithic. To the contrary, it was the impossible millenarian characteristics of National Socialism which released the vehemence of its political system while rendering the drive to establish its hegemonic meanings as precarious as it was obsessive. We saw this in the preceding chapter in the case of *Generalkommissar* Kube, who understood the necessity to eliminate Russian Jews but drew the line at those from Germany; and in the person of *Gendarmerie* sergeant Fritz Jacob, who had a momentary lapse in thinking about his own children while murdering those of his Jewish victims. We saw it even more so earlier in this chapter, in the case of the Lodz rabbi who totally unsettled the young female Nazi observing him simply by maintaining his dignity and that of the Jewish liturgy he had been instructed to perform. One can well imagine, therefore, just how vehemently the SS would react to the attempt by Jews—allegedly cowards by race—literally to escape Nazi closure through recourse to arms, as will become evident, in fact, in the following chapter. It was this same obsessive need for closure which induced the Nazis to accelerate their genocidal program even as the Eastern front was collapsing—and then to evacuate back "*Heim ins Reich*" (along with the dismantled components of their crematoria) the barely-living remnants of their Jewish "capital" whose extermination had become so crucial to the meaningful functioning (and overall survival) of their political system, as Poland's Governor-General, Hans Frank, had reminded us earlier (see chapter 12; Czech, 1990:779ff.).

Despite the growing coerciveness with which Nazism expressed itself toward the end—even to the extent of sacrificing its own in a scorched-earth policy—it must nonetheless be

stressed that the capacity of the center to hold, with the exception of totally unpopular regimes, is based not simply on the exertion of outright force, but on the extent to which the power of the center encompasses and appropriates, but also resonates with, the taken-for-granted cultural forms and meanings at its peripheries. (see Broszat & Friedländer, 1988). After all, the regime may have tried to monopolize the details of its genocidal plans; the SS may have tried to "hoard" the Jew and the means of his disposal in the end—but the bulk of Nazism's racialist ideological iceberg, as it were, had been above water all along, providing the major focal point whereby all Germans were induced, some far more easily than others, to orient themselves. Nor had it emerged full-blown out of nowhere, as the first part of this analysis already has taken pains to demonstrate. Indeed, it could well be argued that, however incredible the extremes to which the SS had taken the principles of their antisemitism under the partially-unforeseen influence of historical events, the perverse cultural logic underlying the form of the death camps already was implicit, nonetheless, in modern German antisemitism from the outset. This was a phenomenon, in turn, bearing a symbolic structure inseparable from the most basic means whereby personal identity and bodily labor had been constructed in German society before the take-over. And thus the millions of people who joined Laqueur's thousands suggest that the signifying practice of Nazi genocide—however repugnant to the uninitiated and however much a radicalized perversion of mainstream German cultural traditions—was, at the same time, embedded in that wider field of cultural meanings and practices from which "average" Germans drew to construct the variant "lifeworlds" that shaped their social consciousness—as well as their principles of human conscience (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). It was this growing multitude of the alienated who had given birth to Nazism in the first place; their continuing presence across class lines testifies to the success of the Nazi populist bid for hegemony in Germany.

If all this were not sufficient proof, however, one need only consider the ingenuous eye-witness testimony of Frau Michaelsohn, solicited by Claude Lanzmann in his film *Shoah*. A former German settler—a member of one of two German families from the Old Reich who had volunteered for Kulmhof because of their "pioneering spirit"—Frau Michaelsohn personally witnessed the gas vans shuttling back and forth from the castle at Chelmno to the burial ditches. "People wanted nothing to do with all that," she told Lanzmann when asked if she had ever bothered to speak to the victims. "Do you see? Gets on your nerves, seeing that every day. You can't force a whole village to watch such distress. . . ." (in Lanzmann, 1985:93-94). Her comment suggests why—apart from reasons of strategic entrapment or state secrecy (however ill-maintained)—our good German filmmakers would have left out mention of Chelmno in their film about the germanization of Lodz. This was, after all, the real thing, the backstage, the crucial dirty work upon which all else depended. It was radical, and not very pretty to watch; its proper place was behind the scenes. "A sad sight," said Frau Michaelsohn, and one has the impression she is referring to the unavoidable spectacle of cattle being processed through a slaughterhouse. "They screamed. They knew what was happening. . . . Sad, sad, sad" (pp. 93-94).

"But necessary," one is inclined to fill in for her. It is in the annihilatory transformation of the Jew to disposable cargo, to neatly-laid herring in a ditch, and the concomitant transformation of the likes of a Frau Michaelsohn into the Aryan master of "Kulmhof," that one finds the essential Nazi dialectic of germanization and genocide. It therefore must be with the reduction of the Wartheland Jews to ash at Chelmno that the city of Lodz finally becomes "Litzmannstadt." And it must also be here that the Nazi filmed vision of Germany's millenarian transformation of the *Lebensraum* truly ends.



Plate 72. "On Order of the Führer this city is named Litzmannstadt." (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 74/151/14)



Plate 73. Recrafting the Jew in "Litzmannstadt." Phylactery straps sent to the ghetto were refashioned into leather accessories. (Source: Dobroszycki, 1984:424ff and YIVO, New York; photo: M. Grossman)

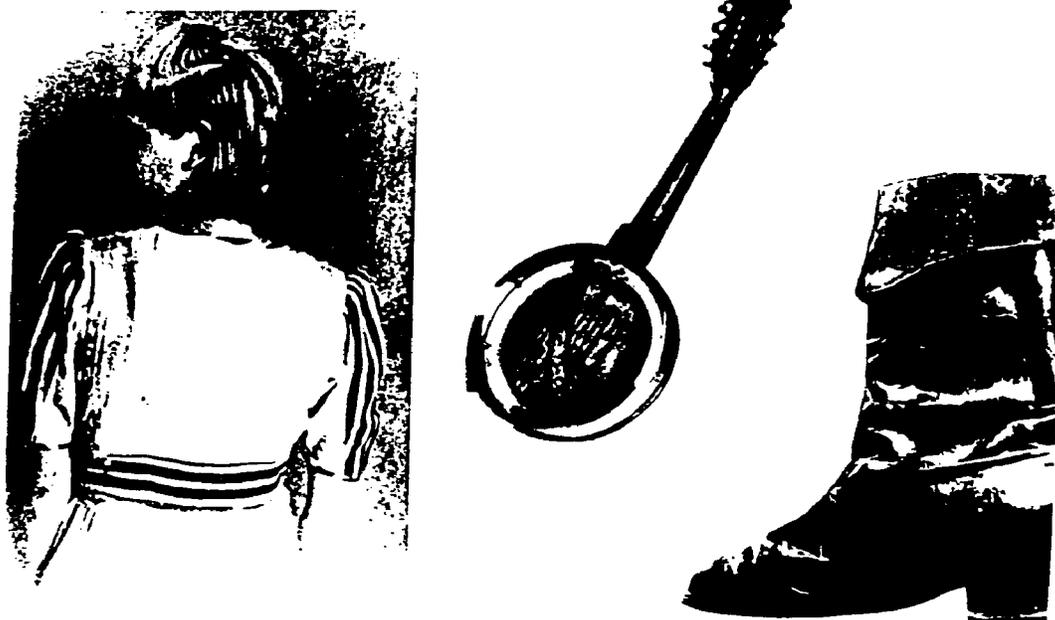


Plate 74. Jewish sacred items refashioned by German hobbyists. (A dress from a prayer shawl, a tambourine and boot from torah parchment.) (Source: Szajkowski, 1977:No.433; Eschwege, 1979:194)

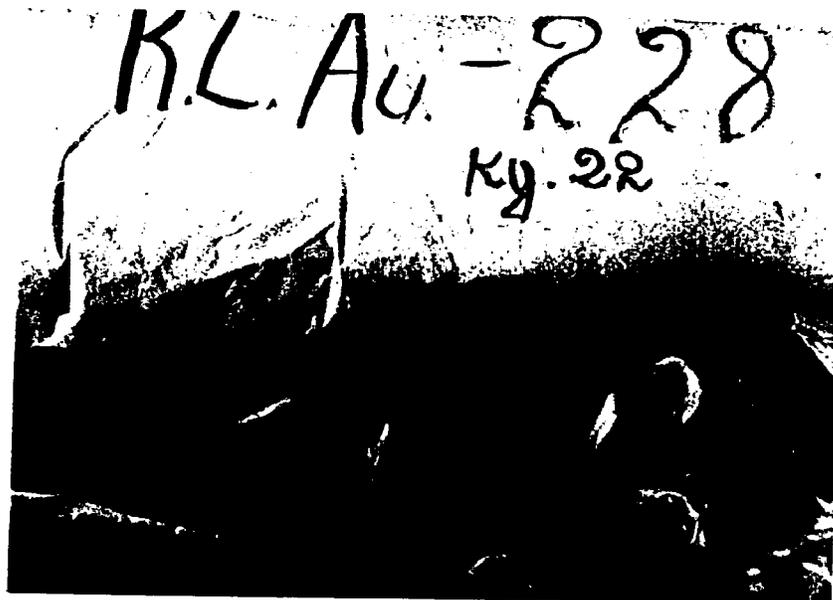


Plate. 75. Top: sack of human hair awaiting shipment, from amongst the many tons discovered at Auschwitz. Bottom: burlap woven from human hair, according to the Auschwitz State Museum. (Source: KL Auschwitz, 1980:171)



Was enthält ein Mensch?

Genug Eisen, um davon sechs 6 cm lange Nägel schmieden zu können. Und genug Phosphor für $\frac{3}{4}$ Million Streichhölzer.

Plate 76. "Was enthält ein Mensch?" ["What Does a Person Contain? Enough iron to forge six 6 cm. long nails. And enough phosphorous for 3/4 million matches."] The Nazi commodification of the Jew extended, if less literally, to Germans as well, as indicated by this 1936 excerpt from the family magazine *Volk und Welt*. (Source: Boehncke, 1980:294)

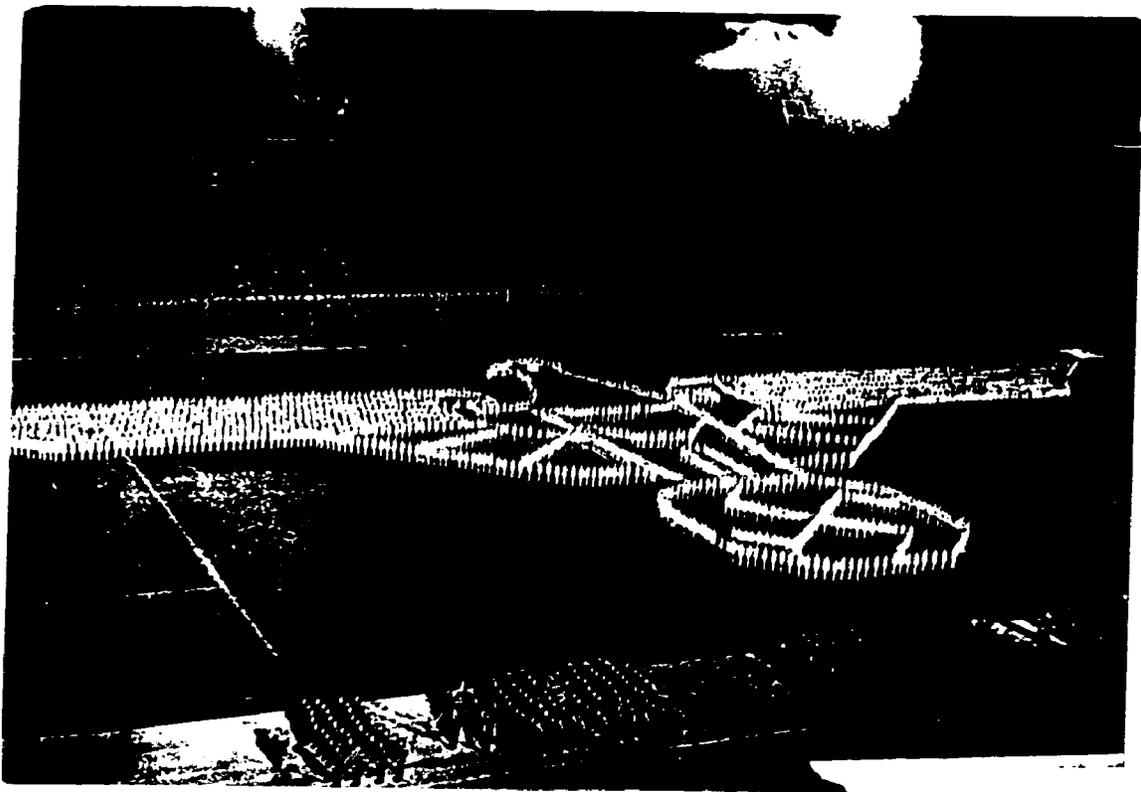


Plate 77. Each German a cell in the *Volkskörper*. Composite eagle formed at the festival celebrating "700 Years of Berlin." (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 79/95/1A)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"THE STROOP REPORT" ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WARSAW GHETTO: GENOCIDE AS TRANSFORMATIVE LABOR

INTRODUCTION: A "WAR BETWEEN RACES"

Like the history of the Lodz ghetto and Chelmno, the life and death of the Warsaw Ghetto was linked inextricably with the establishment and relentless functioning of a death camp. This time, however, it was the largest ghetto of all—the supposed literal source of malignant Jewish power in the east—that had been paired with Treblinka, the "purest" and most highly elaborated of the death camps, for the purpose of thoroughly germanizing the fated Aryan *Lebensraum*. Indeed, the death camp Treblinka was created expressly to annihilate the Jews of Warsaw and to serve, by extension, as the linchpin in the perverse triumverate of camps designed to destroy the Jews in their greatest European concentration. These were the camps of the so-called *Aktion Reinhard*—Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka—established in late 1941 and early 1942 to "cleanse" the Polish General Government once and for all of its Jewish population.

This pairing of the Warsaw ghetto and Treblinka bears obvious ideological weight for National Socialism. The concentration of the Jews of Warsaw and its surroundings in the ghetto, and their progressive liquidation in a camp readied, expanded and even "beautified" (*verschönert*) for that task alone, provided National Socialism with an unimpeded and ultimately unsurpassed opportunity for working out the pragmatic, sociocultural implications of genocide to date. This lasted until the combined slave labor and

extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau—larger, but also more differentiated and diffuse than Treblinka—could be prepared to take over the more complex task of annihilating the remainder of Europe's Jews while fully exploiting their labor power.

There is yet another, unique dimension, however, to the pairing of the Warsaw ghetto and the death camp Treblinka in the history of the "Final Solution." Potent as the role of the Warsaw ghetto itself already was to the realization of Nazi millenarian goals, an extraordinary and unforeseen historical event in 1943 actually placed the ghetto and its destruction even more crucially at the ideological center of the "Final Solution" while helping to crystallize the role of genocide in the Nazi war effort itself. This event was the Warsaw ghetto revolt—one of the most remarkable chapters in the annals of human resistance to oppression.

Launching the first urban revolt against the Nazis anywhere in occupied Europe, without significant aid from the national Polish underground and while the nearest front lines were still 1200 kilometers away, the hopelessly outnumbered ghetto fighters held the Nazis off for nearly a month, longer than it had taken Germany to conquer several sovereign European nations (see Gutman, 1982; Newborn, 1986b).¹

* * *

Prior to the revolt, in the summer of 1942, the already long-suffering inhabitants of the Warsaw Ghetto had been subjected to a massive, brutal deportation designed to inaugurate Treblinka's gas chambers. "These measures are required," wrote Heinrich Himmler in his order of July 19,

¹Indeed, Jewish resistance to the Nazis—in the face of obstacles far exceeding any experienced by other subjugated European peoples—managed to run the gamut from every kind of armed insurgency and underground activity to the insistent, secret observance of Jewish ritual even in the death camps, where a rotten potato needed desperately for sustenance would be transformed, with the help of a little rancid margarine, into a Chanukah menorah (see Newborn, 1986b; Krakowski, 1984; Levin, 1985; Handlin, 1962; Trunk, 1979; Landes, 1983; Steinberg, 1974).

with a view to the necessary ethnic division of races and peoples for the New Order in Europe. . . . Every breach of this regulation spells a danger to the quiet and order in the entire German sphere of interest, a point of application for the resistance movement and a source of moral and physical pestilence. For all these reasons a total cleansing is necessary. . . (in Arad, 1987:47).

Within the course of the next two months, some 265,000 Jews had been taken (see Gutman, 1982:197). Invoking their usual gloating modes of symbolic inversion, the Nazis had timed the start of these events to July 22 or Tisha b'Av, the Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of the Second Temple.² The deportation measures placed such enormous burdens upon the transportation system, however, that Himmler was forced to have his chief of staff, SS *Obergruppenführer* Karl Wolff (see plate 109, ch.16), turn to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Transport, Dr. Theodor Ganzenmüller, for help. Although Germany's rolling stock was occupied in the urgent task of supporting the war effort on the eastern front, Ganzenmüller nonetheless wrote Wolff with assurances of assistance. Wolff's relief was palpable, as his reply of August 13, 1942 reveals; in fact his good humor fairly leaps from the page:

Hearty thanks in the name of the Reichsführer-SS for your letter of July 28, 1942. With great joy [*mit besonderer Freude*] I learned from your announcement that, for the past fourteen days, a train has gone daily to Treblinka with 5,000 'members of the Chosen People' [*Angehörige des auserwählten Volkes*] . . . I would be grateful if you would give these things your continued personal attention (in Arad, 1987:51 and Hilberg, 1985:491).

These official, high-level expressions of antisemitic *Schadenfreude* had been accompanied all along, of course, by countless inversionary rituals of humiliation and licensed abuse generated by individual Germans in occupied Poland, exploring for themselves the cultural meanings of antisemitism. This they did with cameras ready, thereby enabling them (except where matters of "good taste" were concerned) to detach the

²In like fashion the Jewish neighborhoods of Warsaw had been singled out for bombing raids during the German invasion on Yom Kippur, 1939, while the proclamation establishing the ghetto itself in 1940 coincided intentionally with Rosh HaShanah that year. The Nazis used this kind of timing for antisemitic actions intentionally throughout the twelve years of the Third Reich.

enframed meanings of their "table-turning" and export these back to Germany for home consumption.

Rituals of degradation ranged from beard-plucking, staged "boxing" matches and forced gymnastics for orthodox men gathered at random on the streets, to incidents of sexual sadism. These often involving "gynaecological" searches for the supposedly hidden dollars and diamonds which the bodies of Jewish women were always expected to be harboring. "One never knows how deep the Jewish swindlers can hide their jewels," one Jewish psychiatrist overheard a group of German officers and civilians saying while conducting one such "examination" at gunpoint (in Gilbert, 1985:100, 138). In a variant of this theme of monetary power, one Jewish woman, having affronted the SS by passing by in an expensive-looking Persian lamb coat, was forced to scrub Gestapo headquarters in Warsaw in the nude with her own underwear. Afterwards she was made to don the wet, soiled garments before being thrown out this way onto the cold street (see Donat, 1978:10-17). Not surprising considering the analyzed dimensions of German antisemitism, which will soon become apparent, these incidents also included every conceivable form of "excremental assault" (cf. Des Pres, 1976). In one locale Jews gathered together in the town marketplace were ordered to dance about a bonfire of torah scrolls singing "*Wir freuen uns, wie das Dreck brennt* [We rejoice that the shit is burning]" (see *The Black Book*, 1981[1948]:140). Elsewhere they were forced to clean their own excrement or the latrines of their German tormentors with torah scrolls, prayer shawls and other sacred vestments, or, as was done in the case of young girls, with their own clothing (in Gilbert, 1985:91;105). These incidents also entailed the endlessly adumbrated ritual of harnessing so-called Jewish "parasites" of all ages and every physical condition (but especially the orthodox) for the brutal "productive" labor of building a Greater Germany with their bare hands, brick by brick. Meanwhile, in Gniewoszow, Makow and Przemysl, synagogues were transformed into stables or factories; elsewhere they were reincorporated into German

life as places of entertainment, as health spas—and, in Ciechanow among other locations, as public latrines (p.141).

* * *

Eight months after the first SS deportation action in Warsaw, on April 19, 1943, the Germans resumed their deportations, only now under orders from the *Reichsführer-SS* to totally liquidate the remaining 40,000 to 70,000 Jews and level the ghetto. The action had been coordinated this time with the start of Passover (the Jewish holiday of liberation) and most likely to serve as a birthday present for Hitler. Now, however, it was the Jews who turned the tables, meeting their oppressors with a barrage of gunfire, grenades and Molotov cocktails. At one point that day the Germans actually asked the ghetto insurgents for a truce; the response was more gunfire. Two days into battle, Commander Mordechai Anielewicz of the Jewish Fighting Organization wrote to his second in command: "We must realize that what has happened exceeds our most audacious dreams. Germans twice fled the Ghetto. One of our sectors held out for forty minutes; another six hours. . . I have the feeling that what we have dared is of great significance" (in Levin, 1975:350). Anielewicz was not the only one to think so. "Very serious clashes reported between the Jewish rebels and our police—and some with the Army," wrote Propaganda Minister Goebbels in his diary on May 1, 1943. "In fact the Jews have succeeded in fortifying the Ghetto for defense purposes. . . . This just shows what you can expect from Jews if they lay hands on weapons" (Goebbels, in Kermish, 1976:560; cf. Goebbels, 1948:351).

The Warsaw ghetto's Jewish freedom fighters thus forced the inexorable and largely bureaucratic process of genocide into the forms of direct armed confrontation. Suddenly the implications of the war as a fundamental struggle between two opposing races—something the SS had pressed so tendentiously during the invasion of the Soviet Union (see chapter 12)—became literal; indeed, the meanings of German fascism could allow no other interpretation. Nazi Germany responded with a combination of anxiety and

exhilaration, bringing its full military force to bear against a handful of exhausted and practically unarmed civilians as if waging an apocalyptic confrontation with the powerful forces of evil itself.

These meanings were too crucial to be allowed to dissipate once the ghetto insurgents had been crushed. After four weeks of protracted battle, SS Major-General Jürgen Stroop, called in by Himmler to quell the Jewish revolt, was ordered to summarize his daily communiques for his superiors. Stroop responded by investing all of his creative energies in the production of a document that was, at one and the same time, a military report, a bureaucratic file and, above all else, a Germanic family photo album, complete with carefully penned captions, deckel-edged paper and fancy leather covers bound with braided cords ending in tassels (*The Stroop Report*, 1979; cf. Newborn, n.d. [1986]).³ On its title page, in handcrafted gothic calligraphy, solemn but not without flourish, appear the words: *Es gibt keinen jüdischen Wohnbezirk—in Warschau mehr!* ("The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is no more!"). Stroop presented two originals of this album to his superiors as a gift, retaining a third one for himself as a cherished souvenir; he received the Iron Cross and a promotion in return (see plate 78).

STROOP'S HANDIWORK: RECRAFTING THE JEW

As its precipitating circumstances indicate, Stroop's diligent and ingratiating handiwork occurred, not at the periphery of Nazi society, but at its developing center (see Shils, 1975:3-16). It not only documented, but helped to *complete* what its maker and recipients considered to be a "world historical event": the liberation of the German from his alleged enslavement at the hands of the mythical "World Jewish Conspiracy." This meant, in effect, the harnessing of the underlying force of history itself. For this reason Stroop's

³All references to Stroop, unless otherwise indicated, are from this unpaginated facsimile. The translations, however, are my own.

album is more than merely an individual token of cultural production. It is, to the contrary, a disturbingly concise account of an entire society in the act of making itself. At the same time it is an actual, harrowing instance in the dialectical construction of a politically actualized Aryan self.

Stroop's report consists of three main sections—a summarizing introduction, a collection of daily communiques utilizing the language of work, of bureaucracy and the military, and a photographic section—all pulled together into a meaningfully-ordered framework by the report's overall artifactual form as an album. Each section documents the so-called "Grand Operation," or *Großaktion*, with a different technology; each recapitulates the meanings of that operation, implicitly reinforcing a vehement, but taken-for-granted message: that the practice of liquidating the ghetto was not simply the capture and murder of Jews, but a fundamental labor of cultural transformation.

In Stroop's introduction and communiques, Jews are referred to consistently as "subhumans" while the ghetto itself becomes a "quarantine zone" to contain the supposedly inevitable danger of Jewish epidemic. Jewish living places within that zone are "housing labyrinths" and it is within this "chaos" (*Wirrwarr*) that Jews are to be discovered: in a dense riddling of underground passages, in bunkers, in sewers. The only correct method for dealing with such *Kreaturen*, such "creatures," Stroop declares, is to smoke them out, to burn them out, to flood them and poison them, anything to "frighten them from their hiding places," the places in which they are "embedded" (*festgesetzt, eingenistet*). Their numbers are more than numerous—they are an "*Unmenge*," a monstrous infestation, found behind woodwork and inside stairway casings. The act of burning them out is a "cleansing" action, a "combing-through," a "purification" (*eine Säuberung; Durchkämmung; Bereinigung*).⁴

⁴The following description is almost identical to the language and meanings in the Stroop Report, even though it was recorded ten years earlier and when Nazi antisemitic policy was only just being formulated. It thus shows how widespread and fundamental these meanings were to Nazi antisemitism.

Once the elusive Jew has been "forced to the surface" and thereby rendered concrete, the language used to represent him changes, as does the contexts in which he is set. Now, encompassed and controlled, the Jews becomes "booty" (*Beute*). Jews are not simply removed from armament firms, but "confiscated" (*entzogen*), while their library, repository of the human and spiritual, is converted into storage for the purely utilitarian; it becomes a raw materials depot. Finally, the lives of Jews are subsumed within a capital accounting of all the valuables extracted during the battle, an inventory which converts the account of destruction into a recycling process. The steps that follow the apprehension of the supposedly parasitical Jew conform to the overall process of "further utilization" (*weitere Verwertung*)⁵ of every bit of useful ghetto debris, as Jews are brought to the railroad freight yard (*der Umschlagplatz*) to be "loaded" (*verladen*) onto box-cars and shipped out. They are sent either to slave-labor camps, which they man in a draining unto death of their now productive energies, or else to the death camp Treblinka, where they are subjected to a direct, factory-like processing of their bodies, the details of which we shall see in the following chapter.

Published in the *Kakenkreuzbanner*, it tells of a large raid conducted by the SA in the *Scheunenviertel*, Berlin's Jewish quarter, on April 7, 1933, on the day of the first official Anti-Jewish Boycott. Here we see the Nazi construction of the Jew as elusive vermin, the act of "forcing them to the surface," a means whereby the most hidden reality of their racial being can be revealed and concretized in all its alleged degeneracy.

Every single house is systematically combed through [*durchkämmt*] from top to bottom for treasonous elements [*hochverräterischen Dingen*] and—above all—East Galician inhabitants. The picture one sees is all too horrifying. Damp, suffocating air hits one in the face. . . the apartments are dirty, filth-filled caves. . . and the inhabitants the same. Filthied and dirtied, they are torn free from out of every possible corner and hiding place. With trembling knees they stand before the officials, not like human beings, but rather like a semi-human something. East Galicians, indeed, a selection [*Auslese*] of the most repulsive specimens. . . (in Steinbach, 1983:62).

⁵Andrej Wirth, in his perceptive introduction to the published facsimile of *The Stroop Report* (1979), is one of the few to have recognized, even briefly, the significance of this process as part of the dialectic of German fascism.

The photographic section of Strop's report serves as the emphatic and irreversible finale to the process of value transformation implicit in the destruction of the Jews of Warsaw, showing the cycle that the negative power of the Jew takes as it is converted into a positive attribute of the German (cf. Munn, 1977, 1986). The symbolic efficacy of these images is located in their iconic and indexical properties (see Peirce, 1955:98-119; Munn, 1974), for each is, respectively, a miniature and slice of reality, a model as well as an actual piece of a particular space and time (see Sontag, 1977:4). Strop's specific narrative arrangement of these paradigmatic elements asserts a transformation in their relationships (see T. Turner, 1977a), and thereby becomes a dynamic reformulation of reality itself (see Sontag, 1977:156). Simultaneously, the indexical quality of the gothic legends he has handcrafted beneath each picture (along with the crafted quality of the album) betrays the imprint of an orderly and disciplined Aryan persona in the act of self-creation.

Jewish spacetime is seized by the order of the images, forced into an irreversible process of cumulative compression. At first, the Jew still occupies the building of his supposedly autonomous *Judenrat*, its heavy architecture suggesting institutionalized Jewish power (see plate 79). But soon the Jewish department heads of factories are seen lined up along the street, hands over their heads. For Strop they are the assimilated ghetto elite, cleverly "disguised" in the western garb they have used to infiltrate and undermine Aryan society, but distinguished now with white identification tags hanging from their necks, as if they were specimens or items of cargo. The images represent a cutting off of the Jew from his alleged economic power, a step in laying bear his secret and conspiratorial nature. The alleged statuses of German and Jew have been reversed (see V. Turner, 1969:166-203)—a potent symbolic process which we know by now is fundamental to Nazi antisemitic practice and its millenarian implications (see plate 80).⁶ That process of antisemitic status

⁶In Nazi acts of antisemitic status reversal, the attribution of a malevolent power to the Jew (and the construction of Germans as involuntary status inferiors) results in fully intentional acts of nearly unimaginable humiliation and violence. These acts are perpetrated against Jews by Germans not to provide

reversal is revealed in the multitude of Jewish families compressed now at gunpoint into the orderly form of marching columns (see Theweleit, 1987:429), photographed on their way to the freight-yard. Around them flames leap from windows; the ghetto burns as they depart. "Pulled from the bunkers by force," the graceful captions state, and "To the *Umschlagplatz*." ⁷ For Nazis such images release great *Schadenfreude*, for they recall triumphantly the medieval expulsion of Jews from German towns, while heralding the re-establishment of a supposedly organic and decommunitized German social order (see plates 81-82).

Soon one comes to the structural heart of the album itself. Two naked men stand, backs to the viewer, faces and fronts turned to the wall. "Dregs of humanity" (*Abschaum der Menschheit*) the caption reads, each end marked off with a curlicue. Their soft posteriors are exposed, their sexually-penetrative powers of reproduction cut off; their bodily form is revealed for objective viewing. The man to the left contrasts to the Aryan ideal: he is low-slung, almost squat, short of stature, his skull rounded, his ears protrusive. The man to the right is even more obviously "degenerate"—his spine is twisted dramatically (see plate 83).

As the photograph is meant to demonstrate, the outbreak of open racial war has brought these secret creatures into the light of day and put them into SS hands; their bodies, to use Foucault's words, are forced to "emit signs" (Foucault, 1977:25). "A Jew is not fully human," Stroop elaborates elsewhere. ". . . Their blood is different, their. . . bone-structure. . ." (in Moczarski, 1982:225). Supreme Party Judge Walther Buch, in one of

temporary relief from the effects of structural dissonance as in classic descriptions of status reversal rituals (see chapter 4), but in order to perform an uncompromisingly brutal and permanent inversion of the alleged statuses of Germans and Jews, thereby "restoring" to Germans power over capitalism itself.

⁷Amongst these photographs one finds a classic of Holocaust iconography: the famous but decontextualized picture of the frightened little boy in the misshapen cap, his hands held high above his head (see plate 81)

his ostensibly scholarly articles of 1938, was even more explicit. The Jew, he said, "is an appearance of putrescence," a "fission fungus" that crept into a weakened German people after the Thirty Years' War to "rot" it from within (in Mosse, 1966:336-7). In polar contrast, Stroop's image of the Aryan is one of purity and proportion, of smooth hard surfaces without openings, elongated and light of color, betraying no indication of the decay that, quoting Stroop, "always emanates" from the unnatural body of the Jew.

In this bodily dialectic we encounter a dramatic elaboration upon what Comaroff describes as "the dynamic interplay of structural form and physiological process," of synchrony and diachrony—those elemental, contradictory dimensions of human bodily experience which become the infrastructure upon which the multiplex forms of cultural meaning are arranged (Comaroff, 1983; 1985:8). Through this process the body comes to serve as the primary mediator between the natural and sociocultural world—a material locus grounding the cultural means whereby the reproduction of self and society is structured in time and space (Newborn, 1980).

In keeping with German fascism's radicalized physiological model for society, Stroop's standard version of the Aryan ideal represents a clear-cut attempt to overcome the inevitable effects of physical disintegration and organic decay. No wonder the Third Reich's supposedly natural image of the Aryan was actually nothing other than its preferred art form, the statue (see Wolbert, 1982)—an artificial object of personal shaping and societal production, a fetish form in which the body's normal physiological life history is frozen at the moment of optimum health and performance.

National Socialism's racialized German self was, in essence, the hardened product of a self-disciplinary labor process designed to encompass the psychobiological chaos of the body within a static and enduring shell. An SS ideological text (one which we have mentioned once before in passing) refers explicitly to this process as an "*Arbeit an sich*," a working-upon-the-self in order to overcome one's "*innere Schweinehund*," the internal

"pig-dog" of rampant egoism, emotional softness and carnal self-satisfaction. It was not enough, the text explains, that National Socialist formations were comprised of "specially selected racial *Menschenmaterial* [human material]"; it was also necessary that this inner material be shaped through an "iron self-discipline [*eiserne Zucht*]". When this process was internalized freely rather than enforced through punishment, the result was the production of a "whole person. . . forged in fire, hardened through cold. . . despiser of the inferior, the cowardly, the ugly" (Kotz, 1937:24-27).

As we already have seen, this construction was defined in sharp contrast to the allegedly unnatural form of the Jewish body as the instantiation of the organic in all its ravaging, or negative, dimensions. Instead of containment, the Jewish body represented the invasive overflowing of its corrosive, fluid interiors into the surrounding world, and the expansion of the organic in the unchecked and insidiously penetrating forms of cancerous growth, verminous reproduction, and bacterial infection. All this was revealed time and again, of course, in Nazi Germany's ubiquitous and pejorative iconography of the Jew, often presented in explicit juxtaposition with that of the German (see plate 34, ch. 7 and Bauer, 1936; Himmler, 1942). Fleshy, malodorous, darkly hirsute and disproportionate, the Jew presented an image of the body's physiology gone out of control, the disintegrative effects of time (and social conflict) personified in its predatory and hidden forms. Having thus projected the negative dimensions of temporal existence on the Jew, it was a life-and-death necessity for the German to regulate the Jew's alien presence while simultaneously hardening the Aryan body against the Jew's noxious incursions.

It was in this remarkable manner that National Socialism sought to resolve the tension between organic stability and physiological decline which all sociocultural systems somehow must embody. These specific cultural forms were not simply expressions of a universal bodily dynamic, however. To the contrary, they were symbolic objectifications of the contradictory principles structuring a crisis-ridden German capitalism. We can

ground this crucial assertion by turning to the novel *Michael*, written by Josef Goebbels during the last years of the Weimar Republic. In these pages Goebbels evokes the meanings of work in relationship to both the German and the Jew.

"Nobody can remain neutral when two enemies, armed to the teeth, battle each other for the future. . . ," writes Goebbels. "Money has enslaved us," he proclaims, "but work shall make us free [*die Arbeit wird uns frei machen*]" (Goebbels, 1935 [1929]:118).

There is the telling phrase—but who is the enemy he speaks of? Goebbels soon supplies the answer: "Money/Jew," he writes, "this thing and person belong together" (p.137).⁸ In the German he uses a hyphen to merge the first two terms: "*Geld-Jude, das ist Sache und Person, die zusammengehören.*"

"Money is the curse of mankind. It smothers the seed of everything great and good. . . . While the soldiers in the Great War offered their bodies for the protection of their homes and two million of them bled to death, the speculators coined gold out of their red and noble blood. . . . Money rules the world. . . . Money/Jew: they belong together. Money is without roots. It stands above the races. Slowly it eats its way into the sound bodies of nations and little by little poisons their creative force. We must deliver ourselves from money through struggle and work. We must destroy this delusion inside of ourselves. Then the Golden Calf will come crashing down (p.137-9).

This formulation contains in condensed form the essential dialectic of German and Jew while resonating with the ominous strains of antisemitic status reversal. Like the creative labor he performs, the German is organic; he is made of blood, seed and roots. The Jew, like the money he commands, is alien and abstract, malignant and consuming, a "poison that eats its way into the sound bodies of nations." Not merely the German's polar opposite, he is the German's devouring master as well, "coining gold" from the German's

⁸The direct identification of the Jew with money in the form of Weimar-era *Notgeld* was discussed earlier (see chapter 9 and associated plates).

"red and noble blood."⁹ The Jew himself, like the worship of the "Golden Calf," has penetrated the mind and body of Germans to become, as Goebbels states it, an alien "delusion" festering within—a disease which must be purged from each individual German as from the "*Volkskörper*," the collective racial body of the Volk.¹⁰

Here we encounter the German confrontation with capitalism as an alien force, invading from without and consuming from within. This last image resonates with a seminal essay by Adolf Hitler's mentor, Dietrich Eckart, the man to whom *Mein Kampf* was dedicated. In *Jewishness In and Around Us* (1919) he describes the Jew as the necessary intestinal bacterium without which the German Volkbody could not survive.

. . . Judaism [*das Judentum*] belongs to the organism of mankind just as, let us say, certain bacteria belong to the human body, and indeed just as necessarily as these. As we know, the body contains a host of small organisms without which it would perish, even though they feed on it; and similarly mankind requires the Jewish strain [*des jüdischen Einschlages*] in order to preserve its vitality until the fulfillment of its earthly mission. . . . Thus we are obliged to accept the Jews among us as a necessary evil for who knows how many thousands of years to come. But just as the body would atrophy if those bacteria were to increase beyond a salubrious level, so too our *Volk* (to speak only in the most limited terms) would gradually succumb to a spiritual infirmity if the Jew were to grow totally out of bounds. That which Zionism wants or at least pretends to want—to leave us entirely—would be just as fatal as the Jew dominating us. . . Eckart, 1938 [1919]:217-18).

This formulation of the Jew as an abstract and intangible element of decomposition hidden within the German himself—destructive if allowed to run rampant, yet indispensable if kept in check—reveals dramatically the symbolical transposition which Nazi antisemitism performs. What Eckart and Goebbels identify in the Jew are actually the fetishizing terms

⁹As we saw earlier, the construction of money as destructive of that which is "natural" and organic is not unique to Germany, but common to the means whereby the alienating dimensions of capitalism are experienced the world over (see chapter 3).

¹⁰Goebbels' reference to the "Golden Calf" is consistent with Goedsche's earlier construction in his late nineteenth century evocation of an international Jewish conspiracy (see chapter 8). We will develop further important implications of Goebbels' overall formulation below, especially in terms of its relevance for understanding the motto *Arbeit macht frei* (see chapter 16).

of capitalism itself (Marx, 1967:71-83; Lukacs, 1971)—that which Nazism seeks to encompass but fails, in fact, to transcend. As Postone also has argued with insight,¹¹ commodity fetishism—like the alleged bacteria of Jewish exchange—remains part of German self and society. It remains part of both the German reification of the Jew as the depersonalizing essence of exchange, and the German definition of the Aryan as that which is useful, good and natural. Together these two value-dimensions—exchange and use—make up the structure of the commodity in capitalism (Postone, 1980; Marx, 1967). By reifying them as separate entities, National Socialism, like so many other movements of social alienation, protest and reformation, has installed within its own transformative framework the defining terms of the system it seeks to overthrow. The attempt at thorough-going transformation is a vain one, and all that is achieved is a perverse magnification of the commodity fetish, its alienating logic reified on the collective level of the racist "Volkbody" and the organic "*Volk Community*" which the latter is supposed to constitute.

* * *

Let us return now to the conclusion of Stroop's album, having revealed the meaning of the bodies encountered at its core. The living spaces from which these Jews have been

¹¹Postone's focus on the dual value-dimensions of the commodity fetish helped me refine my exploration of antisemitism as a fetish form. However, my own treatment of the Jew's "commodity nature" differs from his in certain fundamental ways. Unlike Postone, I set the reified construction of German and Jew within the context of a dynamically-conceived system of sociocultural meanings and symbolic practices, of which the Nazi case is but one culturally- and historically-specific instance. This has important analytical consequences. Thus, rather than seeing the Holocaust as Postone does basically in terms of the (futile) destruction of the Marxian exchange-value personified in the Jew, I understand it in terms of the symbolic *transformation and encompassment* of the Jew's embodied exchange-nature. This transformative process generated the capacity to reconstruct German social relations and social identity. It did so through the shared circulation of the symbolic values produced in the course of implementing Nazi antisemitic policies, a process of alleged "status reversal" which began, not in the death camps, but with the Nazi assumption of power in 1933 (see chapters 15 and 17). Culminating ultimately in genocide, this overall process of symbolic value transformation (see Munn, 1986) served, in my definition, as the core signifying practice in Nazi Germany's millenarian project of social transformation—the latter of which entailed, more broadly, the systematic transformation of the bodies of Germans and Jews and the work-and-living spaces they inhabited.

pulled, their "so-called residential bunkers," as Stroop's contemptuous caption reads, are seen in a sequence of five shots. The bunkers show a clutter of piled mattresses, suitcases and bundles; one bunker seems to be centered around an encrusted toilet. These filthy dens—in reality the desperate, resourceful last refuge of the oppressed—seem almost a direct quotation from the antisemitic pseudo-documentary *The Eternal Jew (Der ewige Jude, 1940)*¹² (cf. Welch, 1983:292-306). Unlike Aryans, Jews are incapable of constructing healthful living environments, Stroop implies. They dwell instead in the vermin-infested filth which automatically extends from their bastardized bodily form and habits (see plate 84).

As this and prior descriptions of the Jew as an intestinal bacterium or "appearance of putrescence" indicate, *anality* continues to provide a crucial dimension to the Nazi construction of the Jew as the embodiment of exchange. As we saw earlier (see chapter 3 and 7), the link between money and anality has long been observed in the psychoanalytic literature (see Freud, 1959 [1908]), a link which Norman O. Brown grounded in his discussion of Lutheranism as an alienated response to the rise of capitalism (Brown, 1985:234-404). And of course the wider role of anality in German culture—a role which the folklorist Dundes (1984) has documented thoroughly—is almost a taken-for-granted of popular culture. As we already have demonstrated, modern German antisemitism constructs capitalist accumulation as the sterile and fluid generation of profit, a process of wild self-replication identified with the bodily form and functions of the Jew and the anti-social means whereby he supposedly reproduces himself within German society. As a consequence anality plays an active role in structuring Nazi antisemitism's transformative practice, as we have seen, as well as the humiliating and torturous effects which that practice had upon its victims (see Des Pres, 1976:51-71).

¹²Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 3002.

It was three years prior to Stroop's action, in 1940, that the Nazi writer Hermann Erich Seifert used the example of Lublin's ghetto to convey, in essence, the wastelike fluidity of the Jew's alleged exchange nature. For this reason his words bear quoting once again. "Here trade takes place. . . within dark entranceways and in the backrooms of ill-defined dwellings," he writes. "Here the Jew Folk [*Judenfolk*] lives in its inbred filth. This is no people [*Volksmenge*]," Seifert exclaims, "this is a race that one cannot grasp hold of, that quivers through one's fingers like protoplasm, just as it streams through the alleyways" (Seifert, 1940:12). This construction represents a powerful reification of the mobility of capital as an abstract force that flows through the ghetto maze to engulf the surrounding world. For Seifert as for Stroop, the ghetto labyrinth is an icon of the market; it is an icon of the alienating logic of German capitalism itself (cf Ollman, 1971; Peirce, 1955). If Stroop were to have his way, the former ghetto's sewer-like convolutions would be reformulated into an orderly Germanic settlement, one of rose bushes and gothic streetsigns, of houses graced with red roofs and green trim, their windows hung with flower boxes. A "Stroop Boulevard" running down the middle would complete the plan (see Moczarski, 1982:223-4). In reality, even more grandiose transformative projects than this already were underway in Lublin, Lodz and throughout occupied Poland, as we already have seen (chapters 12 & 13). Himmler considered the former ghetto unfit for human (i.e., German) habitation, however, given the supposed degeneracy of its former "subhuman" inhabitants (in Poliakov & Wulf, 1983:170-1). Using a portion of the ghetto's exhausted Jewish remnant as temporary slaves, his plan instead was to truck in tons of good German *Mutterboden* (topsoil) and create a healthful Aryan *Volkspark*—of course, only after recycling every usable pipe and brick for German building projects (see Hilberg, 1985:514). Meanwhile the rest of Warsaw—otherwise "forever a perilous source of disintegration and revolt [*immer ein gefährlicher Herd der Zersetzung und Aufstand*]"—was to be reduced in size and transformed into a quaint and harmless garden

spot, as plans for "Warsaw, the New German City" indicate (see map in Teut, 1967:342). Whatever the ultimate form, all of these supposedly chaotic and "judaized" (*verjudete*) expressions of capitalism from Lodz to Warsaw are in the process of being "germanized" (*eingedeutscht*)—refigured, that is, in the orderly and encompassing forms of the Aryan Volkbody and the organic yet sanitized spaces it labors to produce.

Penultimate to the album's conclusion, "The leader of the Grand Operation" himself is portrayed, serenely surveying the raging fires he has ordered set (see plate 85). Then one comes to the album's final images. After the first caption, they are left to speak for themselves: "This is how it looked in the former Jewish quarter after its destruction" (see plate 86). Jewish existence negated, disappearing into the empty spaces of the ghetto, desolate and aflame. Ten apocalyptic images—the culmination, according to Stroop, of a Wagnerian opera of which he was the conductor (in Moczarski, 1982:170)—confirm the finality of this negation. The last of the captured Jews have been loaded for shipment; in Treblinka their bodies will be disassembled and the last vestiges of hidden power harnessed from their parts. Meanwhile, amidst the ghetto rubble, between Stroop's productive, Aryan hands, the family album of the new German *Volksgemeinschaft* itself arises, enclosing the ashes of the Jews in its domesticating leather covers, preserving the memory of their slaughter as an act of procreation.¹³

* * *

Stroop's document, and the cultural form it takes, is a "typification" of Nazi genocide (Williams, 1977:101-107)—not merely a secondary representation of that practice, but a condensation of its underlying structural principles. At the same time it is an active *recycling* of the Warsaw Ghetto—of the meanings that adhere to its destruction, and of the values released for circulation by that process. The Jew, essence of the commodity,

¹³The dialectical implications are underscored by the manner in which Stroop commemorated his triumph: he blew up the ghetto's main synagogue in a carefully-planned spectacle (see Moczarski, 1982).

becomes an object of German labor, his wild powers of generalized exchange recrafted into the concrete, personalized form of a gift, to be exchanged between members of the Nazi racial elite (see Mauss, 1966; Gregory, 1982). Stroop thereby attempts to redress the historical development of German capitalism itself, reformulating its alien logic so as to seize control over the dimensions of the self drained by commodity relations (cf. Comaroff, 1985:174). Indeed, the literal gift-like quality of his album, as well as the political capital it represents through its circulation and exchange, makes it the quintessential expression of the fetishized Jew as a "total social phenomenon" of German society under National Socialism. It therefore bears a continuity to other artifacts fashioned by Germans—systematically or as hobbyists—out of the body of the Jew and the tokens of his existence during the course of the Nazi antisemitic practice which culminated in genocide (see chapter 13; Newborn, n.d.[1988]).

Acting thus in proxy for the German *Volkskörper* as a whole, Stroop performs a dialectical *Arbeit an sich*. Laboring upon the Jew, he simultaneously reinforces the contours of his own personal identity in objectified form—and he does so as an enterprising step in his own political self-aggrandizement. In this his report resembles similar self-serving offerings of "creative" energies made by other Germans at all levels of the state and party bureaucracy—like the technician Willi Just's helpful memo on the gas truck "problem"—to the development of antisemitic policy, the pursuit of an effective "Final Solution," and the concomitant production of the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft* (see chapter 13; Browning, 1985). The monstrous handiwork which Stroop has fashioned out of the Jew and his destruction thus serves as a characteristic personal contribution to something that was, at one and the same time, a competitive political undertaking as well as a fundamental dialectical process: the millenarian transformation of German self and society.

DOCUMENTING GENOCIDE

Sometime during the course of the ghetto battle, Strop's SS superior Krüger supposedly told him to photograph everything. "This will serve as invaluable tools for future historians of the Third Reich," Krüger said, "—for the Führer, for Heinrich Himmler, for our National Socialist poets and writers, as SS training materials, and above all, as proof of the burdens and bloody sacrifices endured by the Nordic races and the *Germanen* for the 'dejewification' [*Entjudisierung*] of Europe" (in Moczarski, 1982:202).

As this bombast reveals, the special purpose of Strop's album is to hold steady the meanings of genocide as an irreversible process. Strop is not alone here, however. The Nazi compulsion to document runs throughout the entire course of the Third Reich, arising from the collective needs of a society to represent itself in permanent millenarian renewal. Even the specific form Strop's report takes on as a family album is not the idiosyncratic product of an aberrant mind, but the instantiation of a cultural regularity (see Schoenberger, 1979:6; Milton, 1984:47). Repetitive images of German Jews being marched silently from city to train station were found after the war in an album with the careful annotation, "Departure of the Children of Israel from Beautiful Würzburg!" (see plate 87a and Huebner et al., 1979:41). Kurt Franz, adjutant to the commandant of the death camp Treblinka, made an album of his service (complete with pictures of the excavation machine used for digging mass graves and the *trompe l'oeil* train station), which he inscribed laconically, "Happy Days. . ." (*Schöne Zeiten*) (see chapter 15; Sereny, 1983:190ff; Klee, 1988). And at Auschwitz, a special album was made, most likely by one of the camp's official photographers, to record the particularly intensive effort at extermination of the Hungarian Jews, carried out in the face of the advancing Russian lines and after it was obvious that the Third Reich would be defeated (*The Auschwitz Album*, 1981 and 1980 [Klarsfeld edition]).

Perhaps more than any of the others, this album resembles Stroop's. It begins with people in street clothing, carrying their luggage, disembarking from cattle cars and lining up, men segregated from women and children, to be "sorted out" (*aussortiert*) by SS doctors; it witnesses the transformation of women into subhumans, their skulls scarred by the razor, which has left tufts of hair behind, their bodies hung in a motley assortment of ill-fitting dresses, giving them the appearance of sad clowns. It documents twisted, racially "inferior" figures, who have been selected for special photographing before proceeding onward; and it concludes with images of heaped belongs, destined for recycling. As in Stroop's album, each portion is carefully labeled with ornate gothic calligraphy, from "Selection" to "Still Able-Bodied" and then "No Longer Able-Bodied" men, women and children, through to the final section, "Personal Effects." Thus every step in the transformative processing of Jews—except the secret finale of the gas chambers—was recorded in elegant script and with carefully mounted photographs, all of it couched in the meaning-laden "euphemisms" of an official report (see plates 87b-89)

Crucial as this mode of documentation was to the pursuit of the "Final Solution" and the production of the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*, this practice and its associated meanings was by no means limited to those persons engaged pivotally in that all-important enterprise. Long before Stroop documented his destruction of the Warsaw Jews, the ghetto—and especially its cemetery—had become favorite attractions for camera-toting Germans. According to Keller, "the majority of these picture-hungry tourists came from the ranks of soldiers on furlough and workers on organized 'Strength through Joy' trips. To them the Warsaw ghetto was simply a kind of Baedeker sight, and they recorded its 'picturesque' scenes with monstrous innocence for display in souvenir albums, as we must assume" (Keller, 1984: x). A ghetto survivor reports what so many others recorded in contemporary diaries of the time:

. . . it was not only the funeral processions that made the cemetery so strangely lively, but the constant presence of hundreds of German soldiers. They gleefully photographed the dead and the accompanying relatives, and even went as far as taking snapshots of the corpses as they were laid out in the mortuary. The Nazis were particularly active in this respect on Sundays, when they would visit the cemetery with their girlfriends. This, rather than a cinema, was a place of amusement for them. The bereaved regarded them with scorn and loathing, but in the circumstances silence was the only protest (M. Zylberberg in Keller, 1984: x).

What is it that brought them there? Were they merely drawn by the sensationalism of the scene, or did they sense the meanings implicit within the graveyard, meanings which they participated in and somehow completed by clicking the shutters of their cameras?

Various groups of excursionists—military men, private visitors—keep visiting the graveyard. Most of them show no sympathy at all for the Jews. On the contrary, some of them maintain that the mortality among the Jews is too low. Others take all kinds of photographs. The shed where dozens of corpses lie during the day awaiting burial at night is particularly popular (Ringelblum, 1974:181).

In Theresienstadt, another ghetto which was the focus of extraordinary cultural elaboration by the Nazis, antique horse-drawn hearses confiscated from the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia were provided for the use of the ghetto's involuntary inhabitants—not for their traditional purpose, but to serve as buses for Jewish children on their way to school (see Green, 1978:61). In nearby Prague as we saw earlier, Reinhard Heydrich established a Jewish museum, filled with the cultural artifacts of Czechoslovakian Jews, to serve as documentation of an "extinct race" (see Altshuler & Cohn, 1983; ch. 13). This attraction to Jewish death is telling. As we saw in the Middle Ages, in Kelheim, Regensburg, Frankfurt and elsewhere (see *Part One*), the profanation of Jewish sacred burial ceremonies represents the ultimate reversal of the domination Jews are said to assert through the strangulating nexus of exchange which they control and which their maze-like ghettos and graveyards are seen to represent. The gloating appropriation of Jewish death thus serves as an affirmation of German power and, above all else, of German liberation and rebirth. Here in Warsaw, the Jewish racial body, the supposed secret source of parasitical decay in all its comprehensive human and social effects, had been exposed fully at last in specimen form. Now it could be celebrated as it disintegrated safely in

confinement along with the families that had produced it and the communal spaces in which it had lived. No wonder German soldiers flocked to the ghetto mortuary with their girlfriends, cameras ready. Like the civilians who had brought their wives and children to witness the machine-gunning of Jewish families in the ditches of the east (see chapter 12), they were there to behold the fulfillment of an enduring promise for the future which National Socialism had made to them. What better sight than this for young German lovers?

In a like vein, the Auschwitz album's documentation may not have ended with the immolation of Hungary's Jews. Indeed, there is a possibility that the photographer assigned to creatively preserving the meanings of that "action" may have had, *ex post facto*, an unexpected collaborator.

The album itself was actually found by a young Jewish survivor named Lili Jacob in a former German barrack shortly after her liberation. This occurred not at Auschwitz but at Dora-Nordhausen, the camp 400 miles to the west to which she and other slave laborers had been brutally evacuated as Reich's property following the Soviet advance. When she opened it, she found, to her shock and indescribable grief, pictures of the rabbi and townspeople of her own home town in Hungary's Carpathian Mountains. Among them were members of her own family, seen standing on the ramp in front of the airless boxcars they had just exited. She also noticed an inscription within the album's inside cover, as well as, apparently, two new photos affixed at the end, the contents of which we shall relate in a moment. Hellman seems to think the inscription predated the use of the album at Auschwitz itself, and this may well be the case (see *The Auschwitz Album*, 1981:xxvi). However, it could just as easily have been inscribed afterwards, as Serge Klarsfeld thought (see The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation "scholarly" edition of *The Auschwitz Album*,

1980).¹⁴ All this is speculation of course. In light of our prior findings, however, the following explanation can hardly be deemed far-fetched.

According to this scenario, after the chaotic evacuation of Auschwitz in 1944, this album fell into the hands of a lower SS man, probably an uneducated ethnic German, as his mistake-ridden inscription suggests. He brought the album to the camp of Dora-Nordhausen, to which he must have been transferred. Perhaps there, with the simple directness and naivete of one not trained in the niceties of the German bureaucracy, he even completed the album's perverse cultural logic by himself, affixing to it photographs of the Dora crematorium ovens, with the charred remnants of bodies visible within. And then he inscribed the album with the words, "As a remembrance of your dear and unforgettable and ever faithful Heinz [*Andenken/von Deinen/Lieben und Unvergesslicher/und Treubleibender/Heinz*]" (see plates 90-91). Like Stroop's album then, this one too would have been a gift; and however little this lower SS man had been responsible for its contents, through his *bricolage* he would have sought nonetheless to participate in its meanings and make them his own.

Systematic extermination of Jews, evidence of a self; token of love.¹⁵

¹⁴Despite his prevarications, the album seems most likely to have been produced officially by SS *Hauptscharführer* Bernhard Walter, chief of the Identification Service at Auschwitz, along with his assistant, *Unterscharführer* Ernst Hofmann. Walter had a studio and photo lab at his disposal in block 17 of the main camp; he and Hofmann were the only SS authorized to carry cameras in camp (see Hellman in *The Auschwitz Album*, 1981:xxiv-xxv). Although the SS frequently recycled items of value, it seems unlikely that Walter would have left a crudely-scrawled inscription on the inside of an otherwise meticulously-produced report—one which served, like Stroop's album, as a reflection of his own identity and expertise.

¹⁵Speculative though these thoughts may be on the "collaborative" completion of *The Auschwitz Album*, there is no question at all about the diary of Felix Landau, member of an *Einsatzkommando* murdering Jews in the east. The entire diary—in which pitiless mass murder is juxtaposed with the tragic musings of the self-styled Germanic hero—is written as a love letter to his girlfriend Trude (see Klee, 1988:87-104; Langbein, 1964:54-73). In this Landau bears an uncanny resemblance to the death camp commandant in Paul Celan's chilling 1945 poem *Death Fugue*, writing home to "Margarete" of the golden hair while his Jewish victims burn (see Celan, 1988:60; see also Neugroschel in Schwartz & Rudolf, 1980:937-8 for a preferred translation).

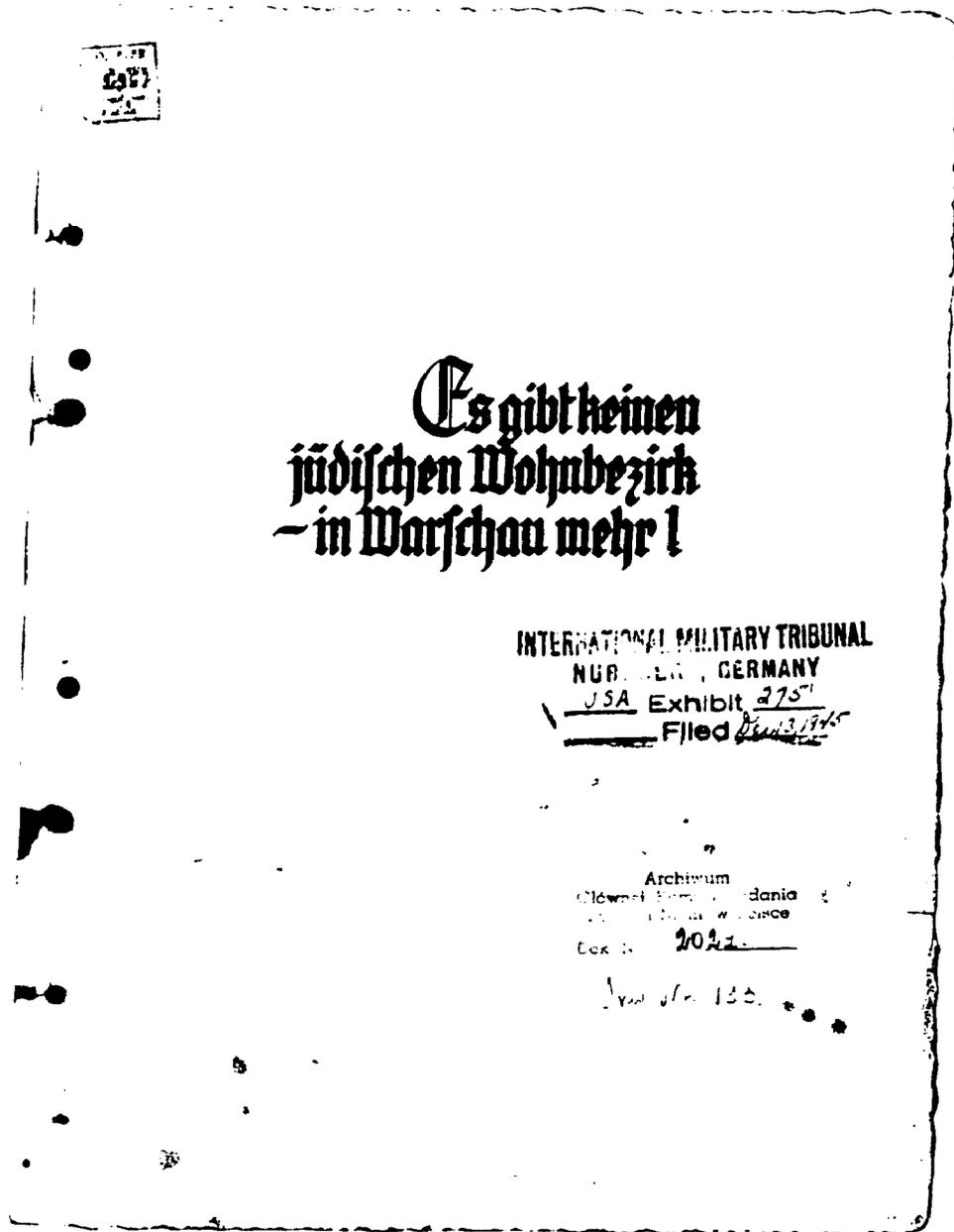


Plate 78. "The Jewish Quarter in Warsaw is No More!" Title page, *The Stroop Report*. (Source: Facsimile edition, 1979)

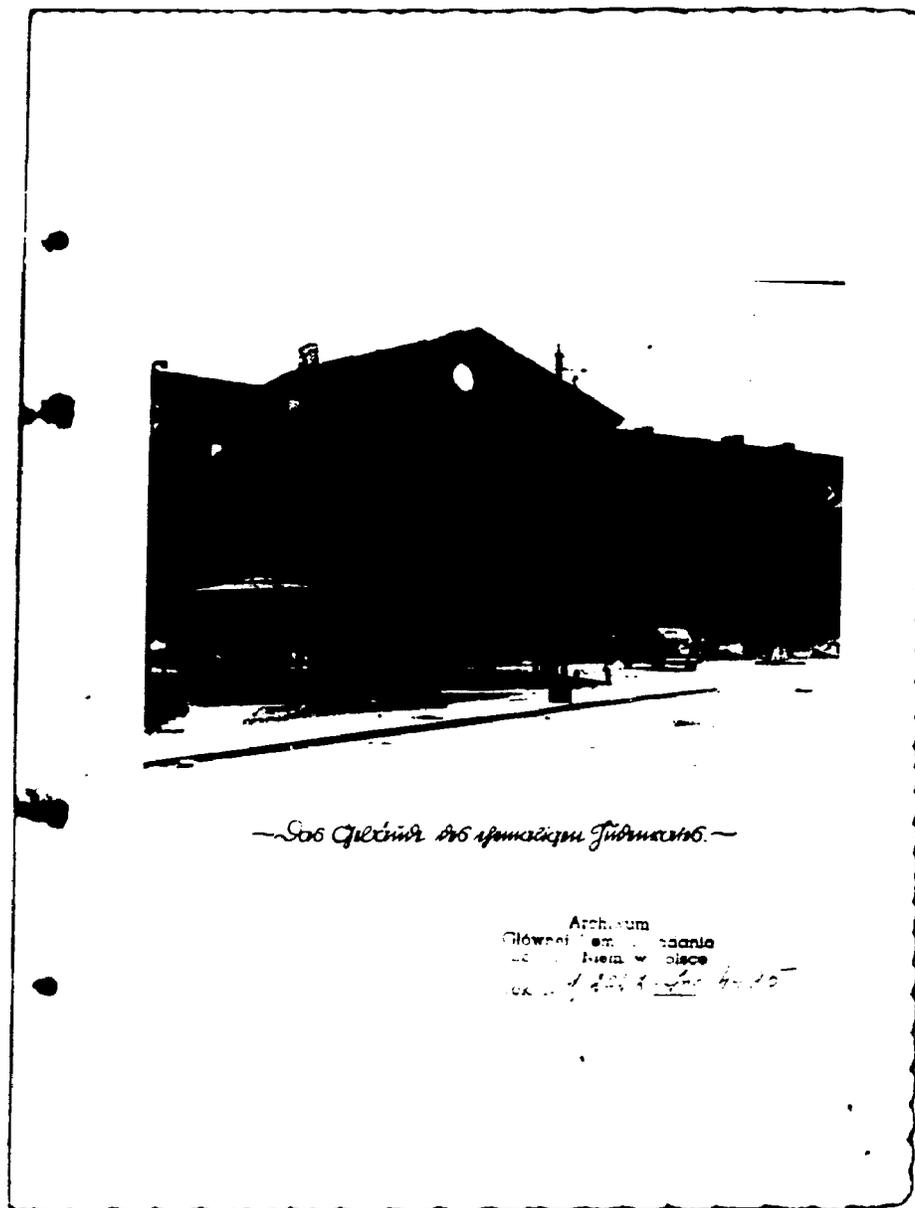


Plate 79. "The building of the former Jewish Council." (Source: Ibid.)

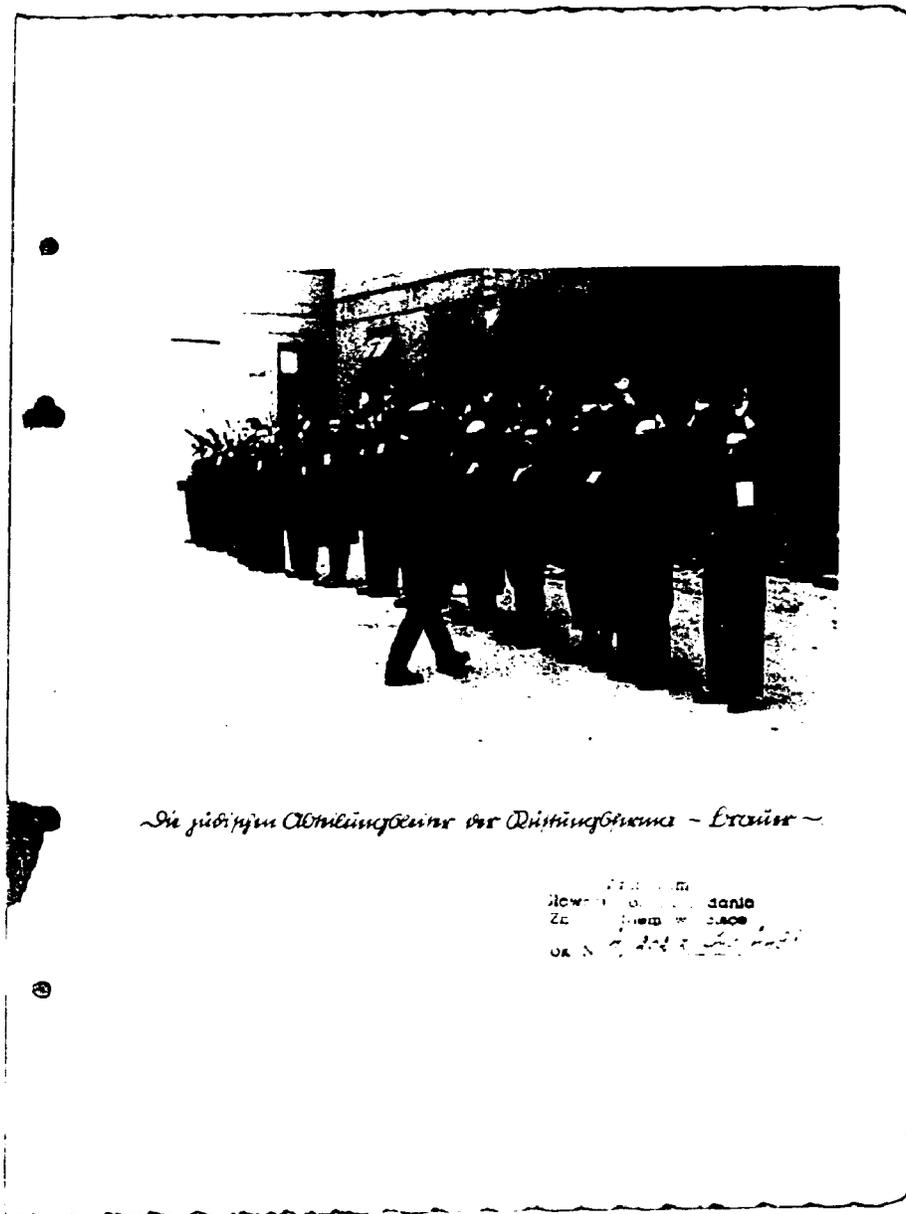


Plate 80. "The Jewish department heads of the Brauer Armament Firm." (Source: Ibid.)



~ *Wszystkie osoby z bunkra przyciągnięte.* ~

Główny Niem. w. 1940
Zbrodni Niem. w. 1940
Dok. N. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

Plate 81. "Pulled from the bunkers by force." (Source: Ibid.)



— József DeLima. —

Główny Zarząd
Zbiórka Niem. w Polsce
Dok. N. 2/1941

Plate 82. "Jewish rabbis." (Source: Ibid.)

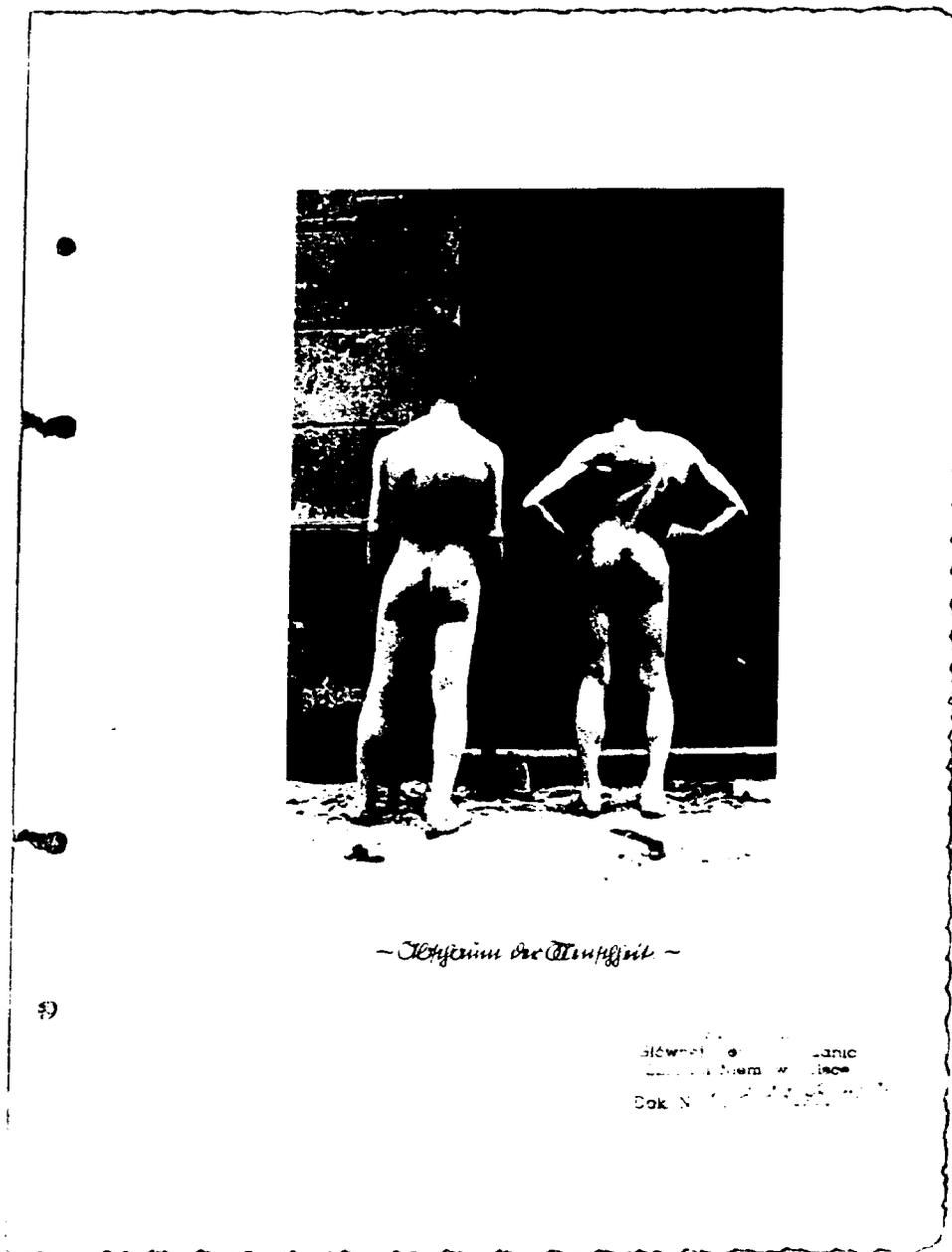


Plate 83. "Dregs of humanity." (Source: Ibid.)

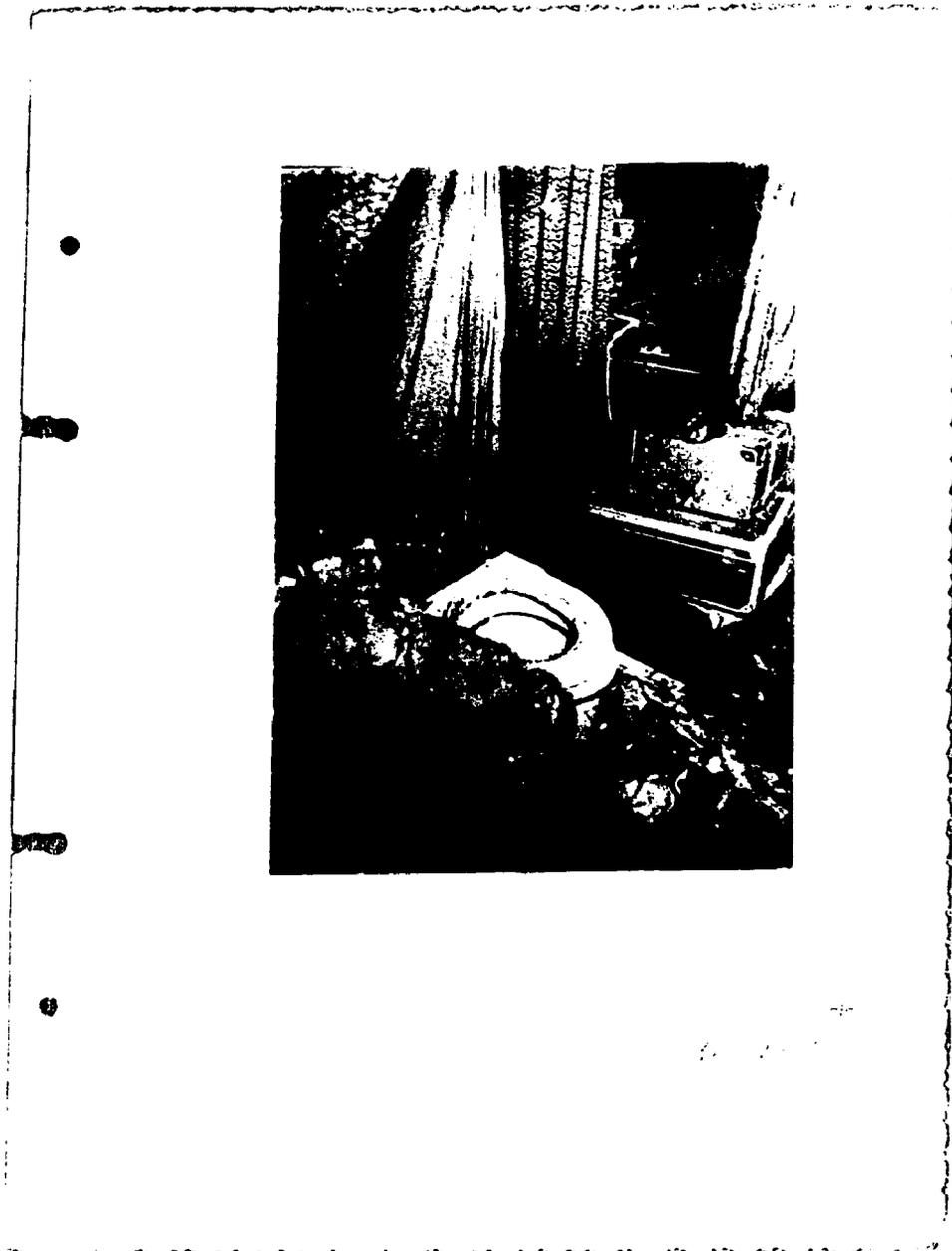


Plate 84. To Strop's eye, evidence of the Jew's innate filth. (Source: Ibid.)



Plate 85. "The *Führer* of the *Großaktion*." Strop himself. (Source: Ibid.)

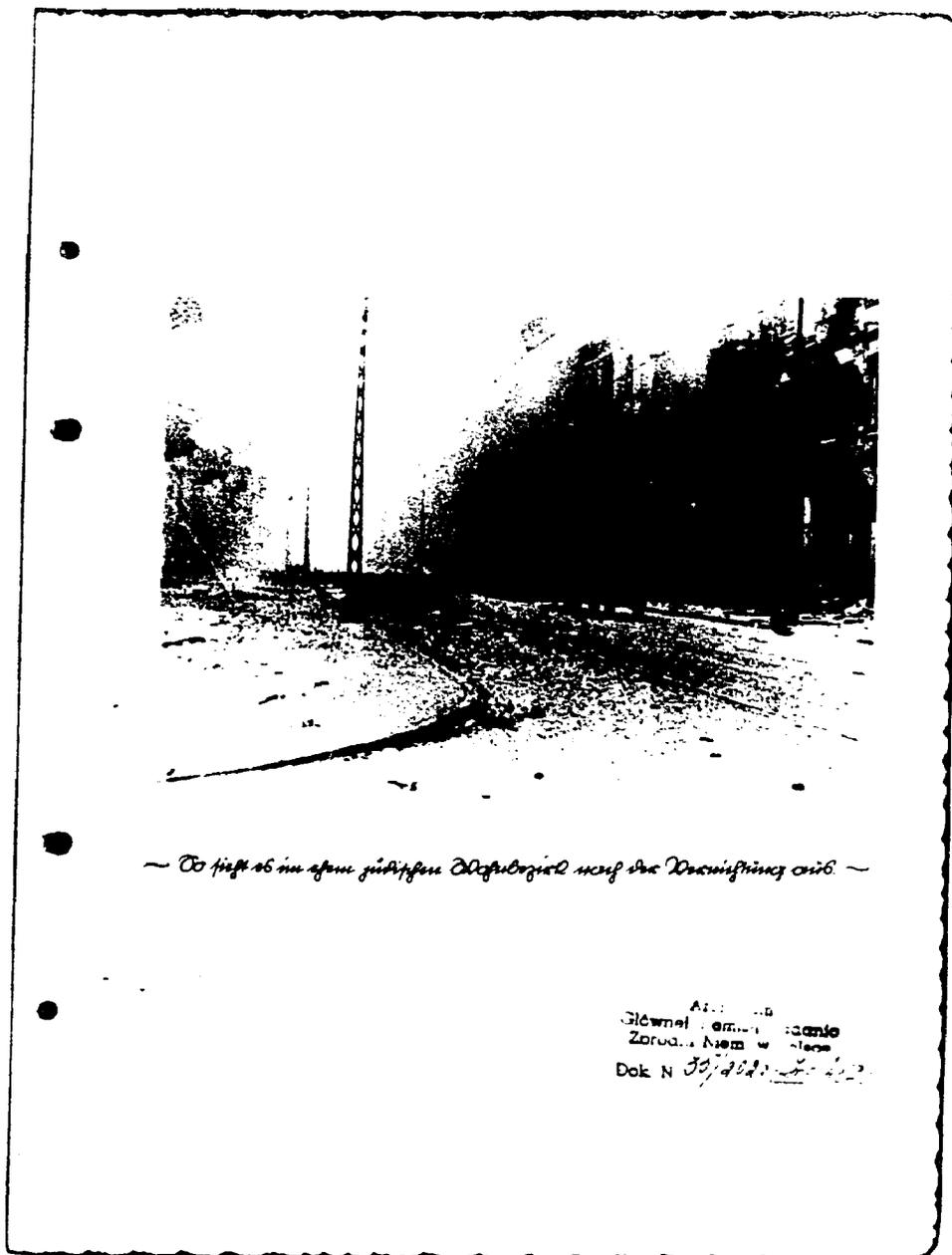


Plate 86. "This is how it looked in the former Jewish quarter after its destruction."
(Source: Ibid.)

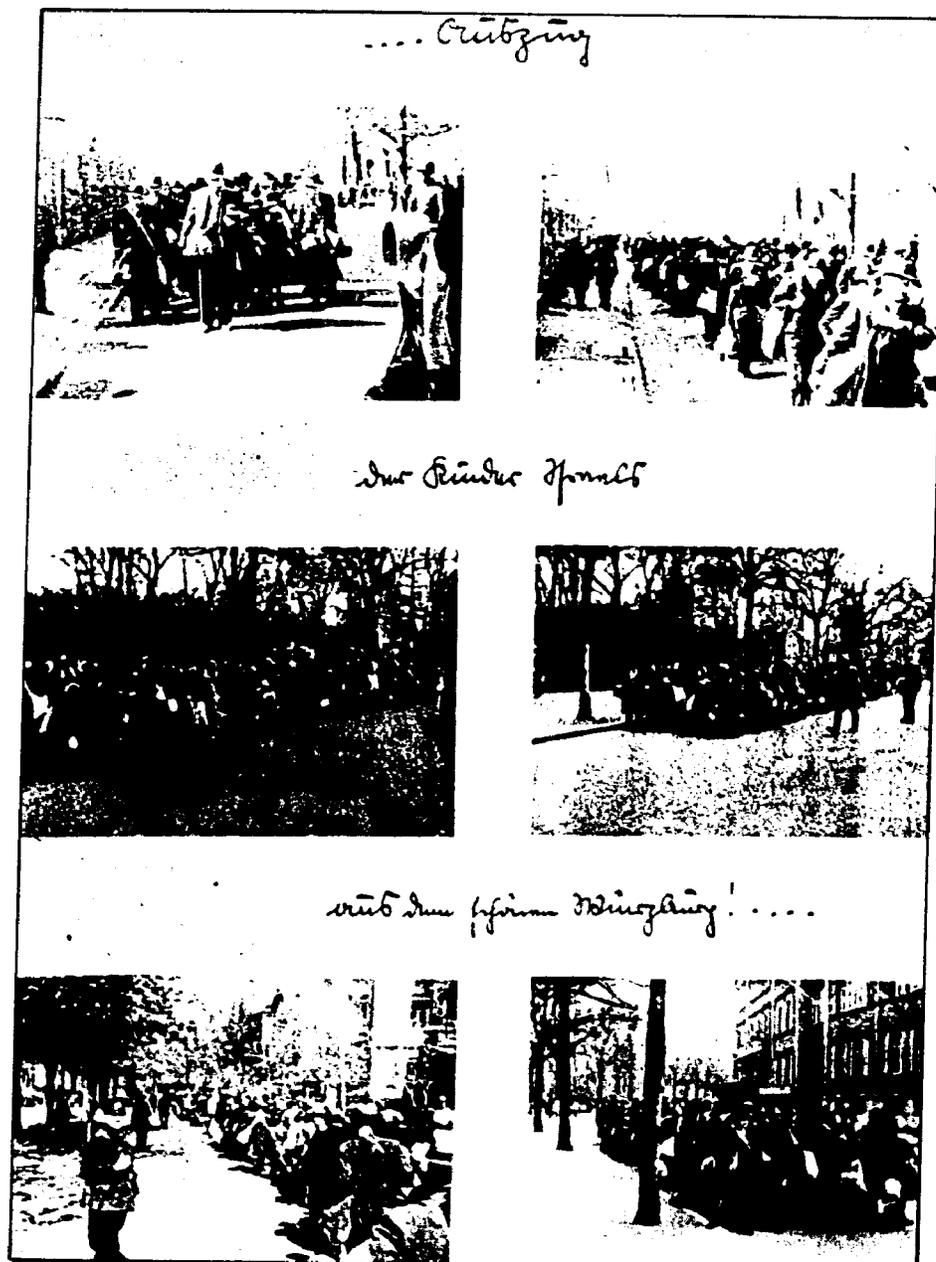


Plate 87a. "Auszug der Kinder Israels aus dem schönen Würzburg! . . ." The photo album of an SS man. (Source: Huebner, et al., 1979:41 and Auschwitz State Museum)



Umsiedlung der Juden
aus Ungarn

Plate 87b. "Resettlement of the Jews from Hungary." Title page of official SS album documenting the mass murder of Hungary's Jews at Auschwitz. Found later by Lili Jacob at Dora, with certain "amendations." (Source: Facsimilie of *The Auschwitz Album*, 1980 [Scholarly Edition, Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, New York])



Plate 88. New female inmates at Auschwitz-Birkenau, heads shorn. Uniforms were in short supply, so they were clad in garments drawn randomly from the camp's store of appropriated Jewish belongings. (Source: *The Auschwitz Album*, *ibid.*)



Plate 89. As in Stroop's album, supposed images of Jewish "subhumanity." (Source: *The Auschwitz Album*, *ibid.*)



Plate 90. Inscription, inside cover of *The Auschwitz Album*: "As a remembrance of your dear and unforgettable and ever faithful Heinz." (Source: Ibid.)

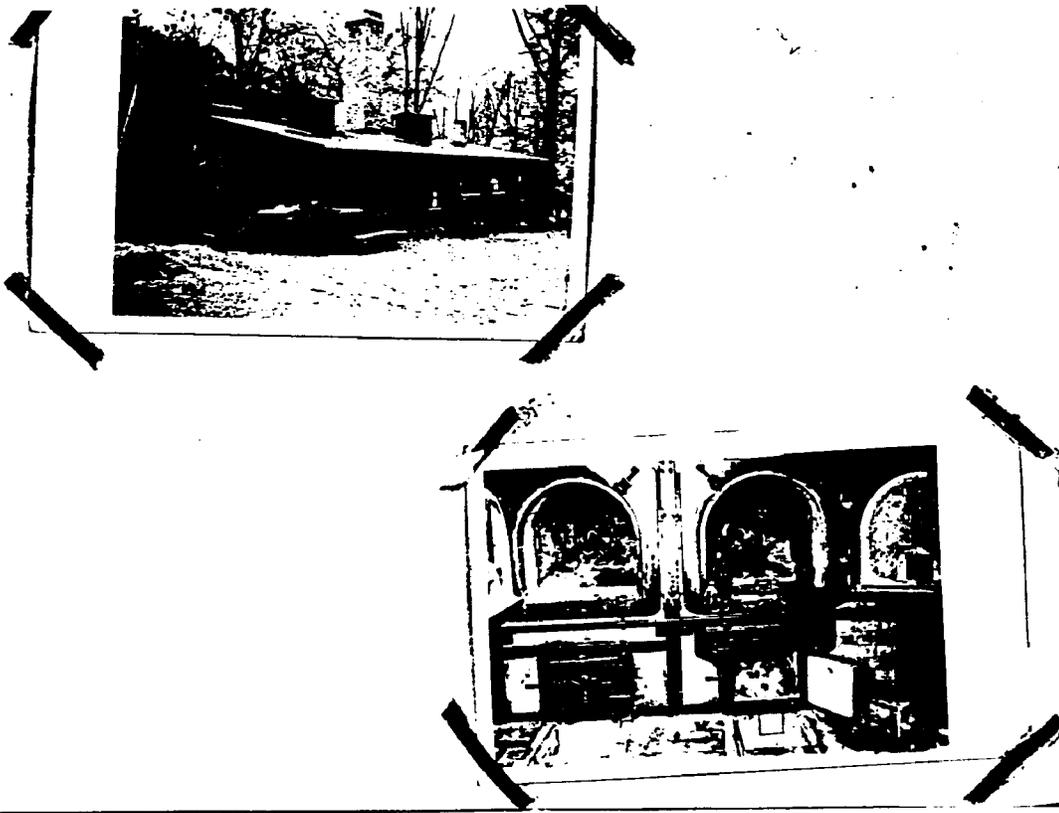


Plate 91. Photos of the Dora-Nordhausen camp ovens, affixed afterwards by unknown individual to last page of *The Auschwitz Album*. (Source: Ibid.)

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"ANUS MUNDI": BELZEC, SOBIBOR, TREBLINKA

*We are near, Lord,
near and graspable.*

*Handled already, Lord,
clawed into one another, as
though each of our bodies were
your body, Lord.*

*Pray, Lord,
pray to us,
we are near.*

—Paul Celan, *Tenebrae*

INTRODUCTION

Stroop's recrafting of the Warsaw Ghetto and its inhabitants was one step, neither isolated nor merely figurative, in the transformative labor of genocide. Let us now examine the implications of that process as extended to the bodies of Jews arriving at Treblinka and the other death camps.

These camps—and especially those of the so-called *Aktion Reinhard* (Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka)—synthesize all of the crucial institutional forms and meaningful dimensions discussed in previous chapters while carrying forward the evolving cultural technology of genocide from its primitive beginnings at Chelmno to its most condensed and articulated form.

In the first place, these killing installations were the most highly developed of all Nazi camps in their role as generic institutions of social transformation. The focus here,

however, is not upon individual German citizens or political delinquents who are to be perfected and educated, however brutally. Instead its focus is upon the allegedly collective, alienating source of German disorder—Jews and their bodies—which must be literally processed in order to transform Germany as a whole. Second, the death camps were conceived and constructed in the context of the Third Reich's plans for the geo-political transformation of the conquered east. This program was intended to germanize and beautify the fated *Lebensraum* by cleansing Poland (and Europe) of its dangerous and unhygienic Jewish element. And finally, the form of the transformative operations performed upon the Jew at Treblinka and the other death camps was structured by the same reactionary modernist principles which underlay the Beauty of Labor program: that of an aestheticized and technically rationalized harnessing of modern industrial production. Its purpose, to replace the alienating conditions of capitalism (for which the Jew was allegedly responsible) with the "positive" values of a renewed German *Volk* Community.

As indicated already in the introduction to this study, although the findings here hold for Auschwitz, which continues to figure in the ongoing analysis (see especially chapter 16), the *Aktion Reinhard* camps (especially Belzec and Treblinka) bear the brunt of attention in the pages that follow. Remarkable for their condensed form and culturally-elaborated structure, these camps provide dramatic access to the meanings implicit within Nazi genocide. For reasons of focus, however, the following analysis does not constitute a complete ethnography of the camps. Instead it makes use of a crucial and culturally-revealing SS eyewitness account in order to close in upon the core transformative process that lies at the very center of these camps—the process of industrialized mass murder—as well as the pragmatic, cultural forms within which that process was embedded.

Unlike Auschwitz, the attention of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps was undivided and their purpose unmitigated: they were devoted exclusively to the killing of Jews. This factor can be attributed partially to the differing origins of Auschwitz, Maidanek and the camps of the

Aktion Reinhard within the competitive, polycentric structure of the Nazi state. Thus the massive Auschwitz camp complex developed directly out of a pre-existing concentration camp, and remained part of the wider SS concentration camp system to the end, maintaining a large non-Jewish inmate population even as the extermination of European Jewry took center stage. In contrast, the *Aktion Reinhard* camps were never formally part of the SS-WVHA, the Economic and Administrative Main Office which ran the concentration camp archipelago, although they worked with it cooperatively. In addition, although the *Aktion Reinhard* camps operated under the direction of Himmler and the SS, they selected their key personnel from those formerly active in the euthanasia program originating in the Führer's Chancellery in Berlin, to which they retained certain administrative links. This means that, from their outset, these camps drew directly upon the experiences of a program of social transformation in which the systematic killing of German (and German-Jewish) "defectives" was articulated specifically for the eugenical improvement of the so-called German *Volkskörper*—a program which they adapted and radically expanded for the more comprehensive purpose of eradicating Europe's Jews (see Klee, 1983 cf. Newborn, 1986a; see also Hilberg, 1985:863-916 Arad, 1987:9, 16-19; 181ff).¹ Also unlike Auschwitz, the form and functioning of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps were not adapted in any manner to the changing fortunes of the war effort; thus they never came to incorporate a massive slave-labor component, to be doled out to German industry or used by the SS in its own enterprises. Furthermore, although Auschwitz-Birkenau ultimately had larger capacity gas chambers and a large bank of crematorium furnaces, these did not actually surpass in efficiency the gas chambers and open incineration pits of Treblinka (see Arad, 1987:178).

¹See chapter 1, n.13 for further comments on the role of "euthanasia" in relationship to Nazi genocide.

Finally, there was never any intention, following the extermination of the Jews, of maintaining and expanding these camps as bases of SS imperial power in the east, as the massive postwar plans for Auschwitz and Maidanek reveal for those institutions (see Marszalek, 1965, 1982). To the contrary; these camps were more perfectly in line with the millenarian dimensions of National Socialism and the "Final Solution," for their purpose was provisional. After performing their pivotal role in the overall task of exterminating Europe's Jews—that is, the elimination of Jewry's supposedly most tenacious and intractable racial element in its eastern "reservoir"—these camps were to be dismantled and all traces of their existence eradicated. And this is exactly what was done with them, in a manner perfectly consonant with Himmler's plans for germanizing the *Lebensraum*, as we shall see.

It was in all of the death camps, but especially at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, that the meanings of antisemitism—those which we have seen running throughout all of these prior programs of social transformation, and, indeed, throughout all the centuries of German history—came to the fore. The Nazi construction of the Jew—and the literal bodies of Jews themselves—became the key elements around which all of these institutional forms and transformative practices were focused, allied to one another and synthesized. Indeed, all of the death camps as a whole were instrumental to that inversionary process through which the amorphous Jewish "plague sore" [*Pestbeule*] of the east—the overflowing source of capitalism itself, in all its negative dimensions—was to become the hardened geo-political core of the expanding German *Volkskörper*. The Jews of Europe were to be in-gathered and encompassed, their insidious exchange-nature dominated through the forms of modern industry and their identity expunged, even as the positive values harnessed from this process were recycled for the production of a purified Germany intended to endure one thousand years.

**THE GERSTEIN REPORT:
AT THE CRUCIBLE OF THE THIRD REICH**

The Wannsee Conference which Reinhard Heydrich chaired in an affluent Berlin suburb on January 20, 1942 formalized the terms of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe" while offering the diverse agencies of the Nazi state an opportunity to participate importantly in the manipulation and disposal of the Jew. The conference had been postponed twice, however, from the previous autumn, a period during which the most crucial component to that "Final Solution"—the systematic mass murder of Eastern European Jewry, numbering approximately 2,300,000—was already unfolding in Poland. Later on, after Heydrich's assassination in Prague on May 27, 1942, this component was code named "*Aktion Reinhard*," or "Operation Reinhard," in his memory.

"Operation Reinhard" had its headquarters in Lublin, under the command of Odilo Globocnik, SS and Police Leader in that city and the former Nazi Party Gauleiter of Vienna. Globocnik in turn was directly subordinate to the *Reichsführer*-SS Heinrich Himmler, whose order to commence genocide was delivered verbally. The core of the extermination operation (which included 450 Germans and over 300 Ukrainian guards) were 92 members of the so-called euthanasia program, who had been transferred first to Lublin with the cooperation of the Führer's Chancellery between October and December of 1941. Their immediate superior—and the "creative" mind behind the structuring of the killing process itself in all three of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps—was the *Kriminalkommissar* Christian Wirth, a crude individual who had served formerly as inspector of euthanasia institutions in Greater Germany. Wirth along with the rest of those euthanasia personnel transferred to *Aktion Reinhard* were placed personally under an oath of silence by Himmler (see Hilberg, 1985:562).

Belzec was the first and smallest of the three *Aktion Reinhard* camps and thereby served as prototype; construction began in November of 1941. There Christian Wirth instituted the basic form that would become the pattern incorporated—and improved

upon—in the other two death camps. It began operation on March 17, 1942, beginning with the Jews of Lublin. Having benefitted from the experience gathered at Belzec, Sobibor was constructed during March and April of 1942, again using Jewish labor in the region; its gas chambers were inaugurated in early May. Treblinka, the largest of the camps, began operation on July 23, 1942, coordinated, as we saw, with the beginning of mass deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto (see plates 92-94b).

All of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps were built by district offices of the *Amt Haushalt und Bauten* (Budget and Construction Department) of the SS *Wirtschaft- und Verwaltungshauptamt* (WVHA). They also contracted with private firms while drawing additional German construction experts—masons, carpenters, electricians—from the SS or from regional administrative offices of the German occupation. In the case of Treblinka, the SS Central Building Office for the Warsaw district contracted with the firms Schönbrunn of Liegnitz as well as with the Warsaw-based Schmidt and Münstermann—the same firm that had been contracted to build the Warsaw ghetto wall, complete with its embedded shards of glass (see Hilberg, 1985:877). The connection to the Warsaw ghetto did not end here. Warsaw ghetto Jews were conscripted to serve as slaves in the actual building of the camp installation. In addition, Dr. Eberl, the camp's first commandant and a former physician in the euthanasia program, wrote the ghetto's SS overseer to request building supplies that were "needed urgently"—including ignition cable and switches, a starter button, nails for the field railway track, and 120 rolls of wall paper ("samples should be shown beforehand") (see Hilberg, 1971:207).

The double-binding principle of antisemitic status-reversal could not be more clear: in the death camp designed expressly to eliminate the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto, the Warsaw Jewish community was to participate unwittingly in its own destruction, and with the help of its own resources (see Hilberg, 1985:877). This same principle had already been instituted during *Kristallnacht*, when the German Jewish community had been forced to

pay for the damages inflicted upon them; it was encountered again and again in the east, where Jews were forced to desecrate their own religious relics and dig their own graves. Soon they would be maneuvered into compiling their own deportation lists. In this manner the Nazis saw themselves as changing places with the alleged Jewish "wire-puller" [*Drahtzieher*], redirecting the Jew's supposedly elusive yet alienating power by turning the Jew against himself. The unproductive Jew, parasitical and manipulative, was thereby induced to perform the most "productive" labor to which he possibly could be subjected—labor which for Germans was supposedly the most liberating of all: the labor of self-annihilation.

* * *

The most compelling account of the *Aktion Reinhard* death camps—indeed, one of the core texts of the Holocaust—is the eyewitness report compiled by Kurt Gerstein. An SS officer who evolved into an opponent of the regime on Christian and humanitarian grounds, Gerstein infiltrated into the workings of the "Final Solution" in order to expose its criminal functioning (see Friedländer, 1969). He thereby placed himself in a tortuously ambiguous position: as chief disinfection officer in the Main Hygienic Office of the Waffen SS, Gerstein was partly responsible for the handling of "poisonous disinfectant gases," that is, the *Zyklon-B* used not only for the extermination of vermin but of human beings in the death camps. Thus Gerstein became a continuing participant in genocide. Ordered by the RSHA (the Reich Security Main Office) to the *Aktion Reinhard* camps in the third week of August, 1942, Gerstein was to explore the possible advantages of *Zyklon-B* over the diesel engine exhaust currently in use there. During the actual trip he was accompanied by one Dr. Wilhelm Pfannenstiel, Professor of Racial Hygiene at the University of Marburg and an SS *Obersturmbannführer*, who had been given special permission to view the camps after expressing his interest to Globocnik.

Following his inspection—and, it must be noted, on the anxious request of the diesel killing method's designer, Christian Wirth, who did not want his own "achievements" cast in a negative light—Gerstein buried the supply of *Zyklon-B* which he had brought with him, using the pretext of its decomposition. Thereafter he attempted to disseminate news of the mass murders to the Allies through contacts with Sweden and the Vatican, as well as with members of the German and Dutch undergrounds. Surrendering to the Allies at the war's end in order to offer testimony, Gerstein created several versions of his report, including one in French. The ambiguity of his role worked against him, however: languishing in prison under suspicion of war crimes, consumed also with a sense of failure, guilt and personal responsibility, Gerstein committed suicide in his cell on July 25, 1945.

The French version of Gerstein's report (dated Rottweil, April 26, 1945) is the one which, translated back and forth into English and German, was used by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg.² This version, which is occasionally awkward in expression, is the one most widely reproduced—but always with certain mistranslations and often with important omissions (see Friedländer, 1969:104-113; cf. Dawidowicz, 1976:104-109; Arad, 1987:100-102). I rely instead upon a slightly later version of the report which Gerstein left behind for his wife at the Hotel Mohren in Rottweil on May 4, 1945, and which he composed in his own German³ (see Friedländer, 1969:212). This version also has been reproduced in German and English, but again with various omissions, including one brief but crucial comment attributed to Prof. Pfannenstiel which until now has never been restored fully and accurately in published form in any language (*Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1953:177-194; cf. Schoenberger, 1969:134-5;

²Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Nuremberg Document PS-1553.

³Ibid., IFZ 844/53.

Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1149-1153).⁴ Although the two variants are nearly identical, it is the German, not surprisingly, which is closer to the natural voice of its author. This version possesses a quality that in comparison to the French is rather more nuanced and spontaneous, from its reproduction of colloquial German dialog to its feeling of hurried composition and breathless disbelief. The latter is enhanced by its frequent use of the present tense.

Here the entire killing process—as well as the form of the gas-chambers and the attitudes of the SS "at work"—is laid out with excruciating immediacy. The fact that it is an SS officer who serves as eyewitness renders the report all the more valuable as evidence in establishing the authenticity of the Nazi killing operation. For this reason the report is usually treated in a purely documentary fashion. But Gerstein's account does more than document events. It also contains a semantic content which is rarely examined or contextualized, but which provides remarkable insights into the German cultural meanings of mass murder. These meanings are conveyed by way of a complex layering of perspectives. Gerstein provides the shaping sensibility, of course, in his double role as an outwardly approving but inwardly horrified spectator. Then there are the reported perspectives of the SS, both those who have created the killing process and those who observe with obvious approval. And finally there is the account of the victims themselves. Their responses are filtered partly through Gerstein's hidden sympathies—he never loses sight of their suffering humanity—and partly through the callous perceptions of the SS, who see them as distasteful raw material to be managed, as sources of incredible value, as troublesome waste-products, or as fascinating objects for detached, scientific observation.

There is one quality, however, which pervades the report beyond all this. That quality is its fundamental sense of awe. It is the awe of witnessing a society pushing its own

⁴The previously cited translation published by Dawidowicz, which relies primarily upon the French version, incorporates certain elements from this later German version while making the usual omissions.

cultural logic to the extreme; it is the horrified amazement we share with Gerstein as he watches his own society taking the steps that it has deemed necessary, no matter how "radical" or perverse, in order to produce itself once and for all. For this reason Gerstein's report on the death camps becomes a quintessential expression of Nazism as millenarian, provided by an eyewitness at the crucible of the Third Reich.

In the following account I occasionally include, italicized in parentheses, translated variants from the French version which may enhance the text or provide instructive comparison, especially in terms of the necessity for semantic analysis and cultural contextualization. Other comments or phrases printed in italics within brackets are examples of Gerstein's original German. Finally, my own account is not a complete version of the report. Like authors and editors before me, I have used my own judgement in order to omit portions of the report—always indicated with ellipses, without brackets for the German and within italicized parentheses for the French—which distract from the narrative or seem to me of secondary pertinence to the cultural analysis at hand.⁵

The Report

Gerstein begins his immediate eyewitness account of the death camps by explaining the circumstances of his assignment and his reasons for accepting it. Told by SS *Sturmführer* Günther of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) that his mission was to be made in connection with "a top secret Reich operation," Gerstein was instructed to transport 100 kilograms of prussic acid (the generic name of *Zyklon B*) to a destination known only to the driver of the car in which he would be traveling. Although he already had strong suspicions concerning the nature of his assignment, Gerstein agreed to it, he claims, so as to investigate matters more closely. At the same time he felt assured that his expertise and

⁵For a translation of the complete French version, see Friedländer, 1969.

authority in the handling of prussic acid would make sabotage an easy matter: using some likely excuse, he could declare the poison unfit and dispose of it, thereby deflecting it from the murderous application to which it was intended.

Sometime in the middle of August, 1942, Gerstein departed for points east, accompanied—"more or less by chance"—by Professor Dr. med. Pfannenstiel, SS *Obersturmbannführer* and Professor of Racial Hygiene at the University of Marburg on the Lahn.

We then set off with the car for Lublin, where SS Gruppenführer Globocnek [i.e., Odilo Globocnik] was awaiting us. . . . Globocnek told us: "This whole affair is one of the most secret matters that there is to date, in fact one can say the most secret of all. Anyone who talks about it will be shot on the spot. Only yesterday two babblers were shot." He then explained to us: "At present"—this was August 17, 1942—"there are three installations in operation":

- (1) Belcec [i.e., Belzec], on the road and railway line between Lublin and Lemberg [Lvov] on the edge of the former border with Russia. Maximum performance [*Höchstleistung*] per day: 15,000 persons. (*Seen!*)
- (2) Tréblinca [i.e., Treblinka], 120 km. [75 miles] NNE of Warsaw. Maximum performance: 25,000 persons per day. (*Seen!*)
- (3) Sobibor, also in Poland, I don't know where exactly. 20,000 persons maximum performance per day.
- (4) Then under construction—Majdanek, near Lublin.

I personally made a thorough inspection of Belcec, Tréblinca and Maidanek together with Police Captain Wirth, the head of these installations (*the head of all these death factories. Earlier, Wirth had been put in charge by Hitler and Himmler of the murder of the mental cases at Hadamar, Grafeneck, and various other places*).

Globocnek turned specifically to me and said: "Your particular task is to disinfect our very extensive textile holdings. The entire *Spinnstoffsammlung* ⁶ actually is only being done in order to provide an explanation for the origin of the clothing given to *Ostarbeiter* ⁷ and to present this as the result of the self-sacrifice of the German Volk (*only to obscure the source of clothing taken from Jews, Poles,*

⁶This term refers to the drive to collect clothing from Germans to aid soldiers and resettlers, known also as the *Winterhilfe*, or Winter Relief.

⁷"Eastern workers," i.e., conscripted foreign laborers.

Czechs, etc.). In reality, the amount produced by our installations is 10 to 20 times that of the whole *Spinnstoffsammlung*. . . .

"Your other and far more important duty is the conversion of our gas chambers, which at present function on diesel engine exhaust, to something that is better and quicker (*to improve the service in our gas chambers*). I am thinking above all of prussic acid. (*What is wanted is a more toxic gas that works faster, such as prussic acid.*) The day before yesterday the Führer and Himmler were here.⁸ On their instructions I must take you there personally; I am not to hand out any written passes or permits."

Pfannenstiel then asked: "But what did the Führer say?"

Globocnek: "Faster, carry out the entire operation faster." His [the Führer's] companion, *Ministerialrat* Dr. Herbert Lindner [i.e., Linden] then asked: "Herr Globocnek, do you consider it right and proper to bury all the corpses instead of burning them? Another generation may come after us which does not understand all this!" Globocnek replied: "Gentlemen, if there should ever come, after us, a generation so soft and weak-kneed [*schlapp und knochenweich*, literally, "limp and soft-boned"] that they do not understand our important task, then certainly all of National Socialism will have been in vain. On the contrary, in my view one ought to bury bronze tablets on which it is recorded that it was we who had the courage to carry out this great and vital work [*Werk*]." The Führer then said: "Good, Globocnek, that is my view exactly!"

Nevertheless, it was the other [Dr. "Lindner's"] view which prevailed subsequently. The corpses were then placed on large grills which were improvised out of train track rails, and burned with the help of gasoline and diesel oil. (. . . .)

The following day we traveled to Belzec. A small special station (*with two platforms*) had been set up especially for this purpose against a (*yellow sand*) hill, immediately to the north of the Lublin-Lemberg road (*railway*). South of the road there were some houses (*service buildings*) with a sign saying: "*Sonderkommando Belzec der Waffen-SS.*" Since the actual head of the entire killing installations, Police Captain Wirth, was not there yet, Globocnek introduced me to SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Obermeyer (from Pirmasens) [i.e., Josef Oberhauser]. That afternoon the latter only let me see what he absolutely had to show me. I saw no dead that day, but in the hot August weather the smell hanging over the entire area was pestilential, with millions of flies everywhere. Just next to the small, two-platformed station was a large barrack, the so-called Cloak Room [*Garderobe*], with a large counter for valuables [*Wertsachen*]. (*Alongside the station was a large hut marked "Cloak Room" with a counter marked "Valuables."*) Then came a room with about one hundred chairs, the Hairdressing Room [*Friseurraum*]. (*Further on, a hall, designated "Hairdresser". . . .*) Then a small path in the open air under birch trees, (*about 150 meters long*) fenced in on the right and left by a double row of barbed wire, with signs reading: "To the Baths and Inhalation Rooms"! [*Zu den Inhalier- und Baderäumen!*] In front of us a kind of bathhouse with (*large urns of*) geraniums (*and other flowers to the left and right*), then a little staircase, and then, to the left and right, three rooms on each side, 5 x 5 meters, 1.9 meters high with

⁸Globocnik exaggerates; there is no evidence that Hitler also was present.

wooden doors like garages. On the rear wall, hardly visible in the darkness, large wooden platform doors [*Rampentüren*]. On the roof, as a "little practical joke" [*"sinniger kleiner Scherz"*], a (*copper*) Star of David!! In front of the building a sign: "Heckenholt Foundation"! I was not able to see anything more that afternoon.

Next morning, shortly before seven, I was informed: "The first transport will arrive in ten minutes!" And in fact a few minutes later a train did arrive from the direction of Lemberg. 45 freight cars with 6,700 people, of whom 1,450 were already dead on arrival. From behind the small barred windows children were looking out, their faces dreadfully pale and frightened, their eyes filled with the fear of death; there were men and women as well. The train pulls in: 200 Ukrainians tear open the doors and drive the people out of the freight cars with their leather whips. Instructions come from a large loudspeaker: Undress completely, artificial limbs as well, eyeglasses, etc. Turn valuables in at the counter (without receiving a voucher or receipt). Tie shoes together carefully (*with small pieces of string handed out by a little Jewish boy*) (for the *Spinnstoffsammlung*, because otherwise in the 25 meter high pile of shoes no one could have found out ever again which shoes belonged together). Then the women and girls must go to the barbers who, with two or three chops of the scissors, cut off all their hair, which disappears into potato sacks. "That's to be put to some special use in U-boats, for caulking or the likes!" the SS *Unterscharführer* on duty says to me.

Then the procession begins to move. (*On either side of them, left and right, barbed wire; behind, two dozen Ukrainians, guns in hand.*) Led by a young girl of striking beauty, they walk along the path, all naked, men, women, children, (*cripples*) without their artificial limbs. I myself am standing with Captain Wirth up on the ramp between the chambers. Mothers with nursing infants at the breasts move forward, hesitate, step into the death chambers! On the corner stands a formidable SS man who tells the wretched people in a pastoral voice: "No harm will come to you! Just breathe in deeply in the chambers. That strengthens the lungs. This inhalation is necessary to prevent sickness and epidemics" (*"It's a good method of disinfection!"*). In reply to the question what was going to happen to them, he says: "well, naturally, the men will have to work, building houses and roads, but the women needn't work. Only if they want to, they can help out with the housework or in the kitchen." For some of these poor creatures, a ray of hope which suffices to take them unresisting the last few steps into the chambers—the majority already sense the truth, the stench tells them what their fate is to be! And so they climb the little flight of steps and then they see everything. Mothers with infants at the breast, small naked children, adults, men and women, all naked—they hesitate but they enter the death chambers, thrust forward by those behind them or driven on by the leather whips of the SS. Most of them without saying a word. One Jewess of about forty with eyes flaming calls down upon the murderers the blood being spilled here. She receives five or six lashes in the face with a riding whip from Captain Wirth personally, then she too disappears into the chamber. Many people are praying (*while others ask: "Who will give us water to wash the dead?" [Jewish ritual?]*).

I pray with them. I press myself into a corner and cry out to my God and theirs. How gladly I would have gone with them into the gas chambers, how gladly I would have died their death with them! Then they would have found a uniformed SS officer in their chambers—the matter would have been considered an accident and so treated: missing, presumed dead [*sang- und klagelos verschollen*]. And so

I must not do it yet, first I must make known what I am experiencing here!
(. . . .)

The chambers fill up. "Pack them in well" [*Gut vollpacken*]⁹—that is what Captain Wirth has ordered. People are standing on each other's feet. 700 to 800 to every 25 square meters [i.e., 270 square feet], in 45 cubic meters! The SS forces as many in together as is physically possible. The doors shut. Meanwhile, the others were waiting outside in the open, naked. Someone tells me: "It's the same in winter!" "But they could catch their death!" I say. "Well whaddya think they're here for? [*Ja, grad for das sinn se ja doh!*]" replies an SS man in his *Platt* [i.e., in dialect]. Now at last I understand why the whole apparatus [*Einrichtung*] is called the "Heckenholt Foundation." Heckenholt [i.e., Lorenz Hackenholt] is the driver of the diesel engine, the little technician who also constructed the installation [*Anlage*]. The people are going to be killed with diesel exhaust fumes. But the diesel engine won't start! Captain Wirth comes up. He is clearly embarrassed that this had to happen on the very day that I am there. Yes indeed, I can see the whole thing! And I wait. My stopwatch faithfully records it all. 50 minutes, 70 minutes—still the diesel won't start! The people wait in their gas chambers. In vain. One hears them crying, sobbing. "Just as in the synagogue," observes Professor Pfannenstiel, his ear glued to the wooden door. (*Furious at the delay,*) Captain Wirth lashes out with his riding whip 12, 13 times at the Ukrainian who is supposed to be assisting *Unterscharführer* Heckenholt with the diesel. After 2 hours and 49 minutes—all recorded by stopwatch—the diesel catches. Up until this moment the people have been (*shut*) alive in these four (*crowded*) chambers, four times 750 people in four times 45 cubic meters! [i.e., four times 1590 cubic feet]. Yet another 25 minutes drag by. True, many are now dead. One can see that through the little peephole when the electric light inside illuminates the chambers for a moment. After 28 minutes, only a few are still alive. At last, after 32 minutes, they are all dead!

Men in the work squad open the wooden doors from the other side. Themselves Jews, they have been promised their freedom and a small percentage of all the valuables which are found as a reward for their frightful duty⁹ The dead stand upright in the chambers like basalt pillars, pressed against one another. There wouldn't have been room to fall down in any case or even to bend over. Even in death one can still tell the families. They are still holding hands, stiffened by death, which makes it difficult to tear them apart so as to empty the chambers for the next batch. The corpses are thrown out—wet with sweat and urine, soiled with excrement, menstrual blood on their legs. The corpses of children fly through the air. There is simply no time, the riding whips of the Ukrainians sizzle down upon the work squad. Two dozen dentists open mouths with hooks and search for gold. "Gold to the left, without gold to the right." Other dentists break the gold teeth and crowns out of the jaws with plyers and hammers.

Amidst everything Captain Wirth runs about. He is in his element. Other workers inspect genitals and anus for gold, diamonds and valuables. Wirth calls me over: "Just heft this can full of gold teeth—and that is only from yesterday and the day before!" In an incredibly vulgar yet affected manner of speaking he tells me: "You have no idea what we find every day by way of gold and diamonds [*Brillanten*]"—

⁹There is no evidence, nor is it likely, that such promises were ever actually made.

he mispronounced it—"and dollars. But see for yourself!" And then he led me over to a jeweller who was responsible for all these treasures and had him show me everything. They then pointed out to me a former director of the *Kaufhaus des Westens* in Berlin¹⁰ and a violinist (*the little man was being forced to play the violin*): "He was a captain in the old Imperial Austrian Army, a Knight of the Iron Cross, First Class"—who now is the camp senior [*Lagerältester*] of the Jewish work squad!

The naked corpses were carried on wooden stretchers only a few meters to the pits, each about 100 X 20 X 12 meters (*which had been dug close to the gas chambers*).¹¹ After a few days the corpses swelled up and then collapsed firmly so that one could throw a new layer on top of the old one. Then ten centimeters of sand would be strewn on top so that only an occasional head or arm stuck out. (*Subsequently, I was told, the bodies were piled on train rails and burned to a cinder with diesel oil.*) In one such spot I saw Jews working in the pits, clambering about on the corpses. I was told that by an oversight those who had arrived dead on the transport had not been undressed. These naturally had to be caught up with because of the clothing and valuables which they otherwise would have taken with them into the grave. . . . Police Captain Wirth asked me not to propose any modifications to his apparatus in Berlin and to leave everything as it was and as it has been best practiced and proven. I personally supervise the burying of the prussic acid, on the purported grounds that it has begun to deteriorate.

Gerstein concludes his immediate account of the death camps with the next paragraph.

The following version, from the French, is the one which most often has been published in the past:

(The next day we drove in Captain Wirth's car to Treblinka, about 6 miles [sic] NNE of Warsaw. The equipment in that death camp was almost identical to the Belzec installations, but on an even larger scale: eight gas chambers and veritable mountains of clothing and underwear, 115 to 130 feet high. Then, in "honor" of our visit, a banquet was held for all those employed at the establishment. Obersturmbannführer Professor Doctor Pfannenstiel, Professor of Hygiene at the University of Marburg/Lahn, made a speech: "The work you are doing is a great work and a duty so useful and so necessary." To me, he spoke of the establishment as "a blessing and a humanitarian arrangement." To all present, he said: "When one sees the bodies of these Jews, one understands the greatness of the work you are doing!" . . .) (in Friedländer, 1969:112-3).

¹⁰ "Great Western Department Store"—the leading Berlin department store for decades, originally Jewish-owned.

¹¹ At his trial, Josef Oberhauser, Wirth's adjutant, estimated the burial pits to have been approximately 30 x 20 x 6 meters deep—large enough "to have fit a house inside comfortably" (in Rückerl, 1977:142). These estimates, especially that of depth, seem more likely than Gerstein's, although he may also have been calculating in the height of earthen walls on the pits' perimeters, made from excavated soil.

This remarkable paragraph reads with somewhat different emphasis in the version of the report which Gerstein wrote in his own German a few days later, presented here without the usual omissions:

The next day—August 19, 1942—we went in Captain Wirth's car to Treblinka 120 kilometers NNE of Warsaw. The installation was basically the same, only far larger than in Belzec. 8 gas chambers and veritable mountains of suitcases, textiles and underclothes. In our honor a banquet was laid out in the community hall [*Gemeinschaftssaal*] in Himmler's typical old German style [*typisch-Himmler'schen altdeutschen Stil*]. The meal was simple, but there were masses of everything. Himmler himself had ordered that the men of these *Kommandos* should receive as much meat, butter and other things, especially alcohol, as they wanted. Professor Pfannenstiel made a speech, making clear to the men the necessity of their task and the importance of their great mission. To me he spoke of "very humane methods" and of "Beauty of Labor"! [*Schönheit der Arbeit!*] I swear that he actually said this incredible thing to me! [*Ich verbürge mich dafür, dass er dies ungläubliche wirklich gesagt hat!*] To the company he said in particular: "It is only when one sees these Jew-bodies [*Judenkörper*] that one fully realizes how grateful we must be for the task you are performing [*wie dankenswert eure Aufgabe ist*]"¹²

As we have just seen, in almost all published translations into English of the French version of this extraordinary and distressing paragraph, the phrase "*Schönheit der Arbeit*" with which Pfannenstiel described the killing installation is translated as "a blessing" or, alternatively, "a kindness" (see Dawidowicz, 1976:109). The only exception is the English translation used in the so-called "Doctors' Trial" at Nuremberg in 1947. But this version of the French document is hardly better; the phrase remains unrecognizable, having been translated prosaically as "beauty of the task" (Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1949:870, Exhibit 428). (On the other hand, one should note that the individual who prepared the *German* version of the same document—one Leo Ratzersdorfer, most likely a native-speaker—did recognize the phrase and render it correctly.¹³ In the published transcription and subsequent translations of Gerstein's own German version, meanwhile, the phrase

¹²Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, IFZ 844/53.

¹³Ibid., IFZ PS-1553-1650.

does not appear at all. The omission was made originally on the grounds that comments attributed by Gerstein to Pfannenstiel were of a "purely personal" nature and thus had no bearing on the "facts" (*Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1953:188, n. 36a; 192, n. 49a). Pfannenstiel, who otherwise corroborates the content of Gerstein's report, himself refers pointedly to this statement in his Marburg testimony of February 9, 1951, anxious to deny that he could ever have made such a comment. But in this case the phrase is translated as "fine work" ("How could I have spoken in that connection of 'fine work?' ") (Pfannenstiel, in Friedländer, 1969:121). As we now know, however (see chapter 11), the reference in both cases is not to some obscure German idiom for which one must struggle to find an English equivalent. To the contrary, Pfannenstiel clearly meant the phrase to be taken literally, as indicated by Gerstein's astonished reaction in the German version ("I swear he actually said this incredible thing to me!"). What Pfannenstiel had done, of course, was invoke the official name of the well-publicized Nazi program to transform the German worker and factory environment as a step in the production of the "Aryan *Volk* Community" and its Thousand Year Reich.

It is only one misunderstood phrase to be sure. And yet, as we shall see, Professor Pfannenstiel's reference to "Beauty of Labor" actually contains in abbreviation the secret to the Holocaust, as well as to the baffling yet inescapable coherence of the cultural forms in which it was couched.

Genocide as Sanitation

It may seem astounding that the person behind these appallingly knowing words of congratulation was not, in fact, one of those long initiated in the ways of these top secret "installations," but only a chance visitor who had tagged along at the last moment in order to satisfy his own curiosity. Certainly historians have treated Pfannenstiel as something of a grotesque afterthought, attending to him only insofar as he was able to substantiate

Gerstein's account (cf. Friedländer, 1969:121; Arad, 1987:103-4). And yet it is both apt and revealing that Pfannenstiel should have been asked to serve as "guest speaker" at a banquet held in testimony to the importance of the "Final Solution" and to those perpetrating it. Pfannenstiel was, after all, a Nazi academic and racial hygienicist. However coincidental his presence at the death camps, this rank and training would be seen as having equipped him to speak formally on behalf of those less articulate SS personnel actually engaged in carrying out the task of genocide. But Pfannenstiel's expertise was not merely academic. In fact, although it might not seem so immediately, the professional labors which had brought him to Poland in the first place were by no means disconnected from the murderous task at hand. Pfannenstiel himself unwittingly implies the existence of such a link in a Darmstadt court deposition of June 6, 1950, in which he sought to underscore his own status as innocent bystander. "At Lublin, I carried out my assigned tasks," he stated. "In this connection, I learned that there was a camp at Belzec where Jews were killed. I wanted to see it" (in Friedländer, 1969:117).

Pfannenstiel's "assigned tasks" in Lublin had been, as he states it, to "assist in an advisory capacity in urban sanitation work (supply of drinking water, sewage disposal)" (in Friedländer, 1969:116)—that is, to function in a crucial aspect of Heinrich Himmler's program to germanize the *Lebensraum*. We know just how crucial such a role was from the obsessive focus placed upon sewage and sanitation in the film *Lodz Becomes Litzmannstadt* (see chapter 13). The canalization and disposal of fluid waste was among the key tropes whereby the process of germanization—the reformulation of an engulfing and essentially Jewish chaos into the orderly forms of Aryan domesticity—was represented and realized.

We can be even more specific, however, about the nature of these tasks in Lublin, the site of Pfannenstiel's governmental assignment and the headquarters of the *Aktion Reinhard* death camps. As in Lodz and everywhere else, a critical phase in the

germanization of Lublin—indeed, the ideological linchpin—involved the Jewish population and its historic living quarter. The latter was set in an allegedly insidious manner between the supposedly ancient German city center and the Polish fortress on a nearby hill. In *Jews on the Eastern Border (Juden an der Ostgrenze)*, a 1940 party publication which we have encountered twice before, Hermann Erich Seifert already had used the example of Lublin's Jews to capture what for the Nazis was European Jewry's supposed essence—the wastelike fluidity of its exchange nature. The passage, which appears in his opening chapter ("Lublin, A Look In"), bears quoting yet again: "Here the Jewish *Volk* lives in its inbred filth," Seifert writes. "This is no people, this is a mass that one cannot grasp hold of, that quivers through the fingers like protoplasm, just as it streams through the alleyways. . . ." (Seifert, 1940:12). Having provided a glance into the alleged inner reality of Lublin and the source of its disorder, Seifert concludes his booklet with "Lublin, the Outlook" and a description of the gathering efforts to eradicate the Jewish threat. "Since February 1940," he writes, "we have begun in Lublin especially to attack the Jewish Question—not through such 'humanitarian' nonsense and sentimental pleading as is considered good taste in democracies. . . but with new methods, with order and work [*Ordnung und Arbeit*]. . ." (p.86). The first of these measures, taken in connection with the Four Year Plan, was to divert the supposedly traditional and disintegrative modes of Jewish exchange into the useful confines of a German-directed slave labor: "Jewish work power [*Arbeitskraft*] for the first time in history has been ordered and organically mobilized; for the first time the Jew performs productive work" (p.86). The second measure, undertaken since April 1940, was "the gigantic hygienic and sanitary cleansing [*Reinigung*] of the ghetto," Seifert writes. "The full meaning of that can only be comprehended by one who actually has experienced first hand this mind-boggling filth and this indescribable stench. It must be a ghastly labor [*eine grauenhafte Arbeit*]" (p.87).

This measure was not designed for the benefits of Jews, of course. To the contrary, its purpose, like that of the first measure, was to eliminate the threat posed to Germans by the Jew's alleged parasitism: "it divests Jewry of its danger to the *Volk* [*Volksgefahr*] as a carrier of epidemics," writes Seifert, "exactly as the workshops finally harness the Jews for orderly work" (p.88). Note that in this equation we see once again the telling identification of the Jewish "pathogenic" threat with the disintegrative effects of Jewish economic practices. *Both* serve as expressions of alienation to the exchange dimension of the commodity, fetishized in the form of an alleged Jewish "parasitism" upon the body as well as upon the means whereby it reproduces itself. However, such measures as the two just described, Seifert continues, are "naturally only preparations for the solution to the Jewish Question. To speak today about what this finally will look like would be premature." One thing was certain, however: Jews, he says, would not be allowed to continue living in enormous European reservations such as had been planned for the Lublin district but abandoned in the course of 1940 (see Hilberg, 1985:206-7). This measure too had posed "no final solution [*endgültige Lösung*]. . . . But we needn't busy ourselves further today with this question," Seifert reiterates. Instead he concludes his booklet with a promise to his readers which, however vague, can only be construed as ominous: "The last word has not yet been spoken, but it will be spoken at the right hour from authoritative quarters [*aus massgeblichem Mund*] in order once and for all to liberate *Volk* and Reich from the curse of Europe, from"—he pauses for effect—"Jews on the Eastern Border!" [emphasis in original] (Seifert, 1940:88).

In Lublin Germans would not have to wait long for this final word. Shortly after publication of Seifert's booklet, Jews living outside of their traditional quarter were ejected from the wider city and enclosed temporarily in a sealed ghetto (this took place in March 1941). This was, of course, a further step in the racial sanitation of Lublin. A year later, on March 16, 1942, the first 1600 Jews were deported from the ghetto to Belzec, followed

the next week by another 10,000 (Gilbert, 1985:302). With this human shipment the first of the advanced Nazi death factories had been inaugurated.

The deportation of Lublin's Jews to Belzec was thus an advanced step in the "hygienic and sanitary cleansing of the ghetto" which Seifert describes, a project which in turn was pivotal to the overall SS plan for the germanization of Lublin and the wider Aryan *Lebensraum*. Professor Pfannenstiel's "assigned tasks" as a racial hygienicist and disinfection expert consulting on the problems of sanitation and sewage were part of this germanization program. They thus were integral to the culturally-structured process of geo-political transformation which had placed the "solution to the Jewish Question" at its core—a project which by the time of his assignment had reached its final and most radical form.

It was in connection with these "assigned tasks," then, that Pfannenstiel had felt the necessity to see for himself how Jews from Lublin and elsewhere were being disposed of at Belzec and Treblinka, sites of the newly-instituted "Final Solution." This also explains Pfannenstiel's obvious expertise as guest speaker at the latter camp. What remains unclear, however, is why Pfannenstiel—"professional" curiosity notwithstanding—should have been granted special permission to accompany Gerstein on his official inspection tour. That tour was top secret, after all, as was the very existence of the death camps. Again one can turn to Pfannenstiel himself for an unwitting answer to this question. Top secret though the project was, Globocnik, said Pfannenstiel, "was very proud of his institution" (Pfannenstiel, in Friedländer, 1969:117). Apparently the head of the *Aktion Reinhard* death camps could not pass up the opportunity of showing off his master disposal system to a true sanitation expert! After all, these unique installations had been created to perform the most important and innovative "sewage and sanitation" project of all—ridding the so-called *Lebensraum* of the Jew and the dangerous waste generated by the fluidity of his exchange nature. This was to be accomplished by using the network of the railways to

drain Poland—that "gigantic collecting basin" [*gigantische Sammelbecken*], that "unquenchable fountain" [*unerschöpflicher Brunnen*—of its Jews (respectively, *Der ewige Jude*, 1940;¹⁴ Seifert, 1940:13). It would do so by channeling them into the obscure sites of the death camps, there to "sluice" them [*durchzuschleusen*] through the "hose" [*der Schlauch*] and into the tiled "bathhouse" [*die Baderäume*] of the gas chambers, extracting valuables from their bodies along the way [*"Werterfassung"*] as if panning mechanically for gold.

SWALLOWING CAPITALISM ALIVE: THE DYNAMICS OF SYMBOLIC INVERSION

Perhaps Gerstein could not reconcile the horror of mass murder with the overtly positive forms and purpose of the Third Reich's "Beauty of Labor" program. As the quintessential Nazi intellectual, however, Pfannenstiel had had no difficulty in recognizing the indisputable affinity between the two. Of course, such an explicit statement of comparison by an eyewitness is not necessary in order to establish analytically the relationship between the two programs. However, it does provide important confirmation from the perspective of a cultural native. Pfannenstiel's recognition was more profound than one based upon a premise of mere analogy. This Nazi racial hygienicist and "sanitation" expert sensed that the form of rationalized killing was constructed according to the same racially-motivated principles of aesthetic technology which structured Beauty of Labor and served the same underlying purpose of social transformation—but it did so in even more fundamental terms, and with an instrumentality that was as awesome as it was far-reaching. Indeed, what Pfannenstiel's comment confirms is that the mass murder of the Jews was by no means an aberration within the Nazi universe, nor yet another

¹⁴Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 3002.

transformative project among many, but, as we shall see, *the* definitive program upon which Nazi Germany's overall collective transformation hinged.

The Gas Chambers

As the sardonic form of the *Aktion Reinhard* gas chambers reveals, their monstrous entranceway marks the portal into an inverting space. Indeed, they are the pivots of an entire inversionary world in the making (cf. Bourdieu, 1973, 1977:89-91; Babcock, 1978). By crossing the symbolically-elaborated openings that comprise their thresholds, the Jews of Europe are ushered into the final stages of the comprehensive inversionary process which lies at the core of the death camps, and which the camps fully embody as the industrialized digestive centers of the emerging Aryan *Volkskörper*.

In the fate of the Jewish men, women and children disappearing into the sandy soils of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, we see the implacable meanings of German antisemitism—meanings that have endured and transformed throughout the ages—realizing themselves in their most extreme and concrete form. One recalls *Der Juden Synagog* (*The Jew Synagogue*) of early seventeenth-century Frankfurt, the illustrated broadsheet in which Jewish worship was represented (in inverse to that of Christian spirituality and decorum) as a gathering of financial criminals engaged in an egoistic orgy of anality focused obscenely around the body of a bejeweled sow (see plate 13, ch.2). Indeed, the Jew was, in substitution for the incorporeal devil, the materialized anality of the Christian body. In turn, the synagogue—located deep within Frankfurt's bowel-like ghetto—represented nothing other than the chaotic, carnal source of capitalism itself in its demonic and analyzed exchange-dimension (see chapter 5). It was this intangible force which the Christian sought, ever more hopelessly, to barricade behind the ghetto's anxiously-guarded but ever-permeable gates. As the companion-piece to this broadsheet, *Der Juden Badstüb* (*The Jew Bath House*), made clear, the early modern solution to the encroaching threat of the Jew's

predatory exchange-nature was to subject him to a process of symbolic inversion, one which would restore him to the inescapable confines within which he belonged, or expell him entirely from the boundaries of the *corpus Christorianum*. Thus, having "sucked the marrow" from the bones of the Christian through the deceptive practices of Jewish usury (as depicted in the sweating, 'cupping" and "tweaking" of the Christian merchant's body), the Jews in *Der Juden Badstube* in turn were forced to enter, for all eternity, the Devil's own bathhouse—in reality a blazing furnace, the entrance to which was the maw of a monstrous beast which swallowed them alive (see plate 14, ch. 2; chapter 5).

In the Nazi era the Jew was seen as already having escaped the confines of the ghetto to encompass and commoditize the world as a whole, reducing the body of the natural, laboring Aryan to little more than a ware to be manipulated, exchanged and exhaustively exploited in the manner of a spider with its prey. In an SS slideshow, *Blut und Boden*, the first part (*The Blood: its Meaning, the Maintenance of its Purity, and its Improvement*) contains a slide showing a synagogue with portraits of a bearded *Ostjude* (Eastern Jew) and his modern, biologically "camouflaged" Western counterpart superimposed in front (Slide 30). "Here, in this synagogue, the Jew bargains with his God Jahwe over his share of profit or a possible punishment," the text reads. "The Jew is not only the world's parasite [*Schmarotzer*]; he is also proud of it. The god of his blood proclaimed to him this law in the Fifth Book of Moses: 'All peoples whom your god Jahwe delivers to you, you shall annihilate [*vertilgen*] without mercy.'" ¹⁵

In accord with the distorted principles of antisemitic status reversal revealed here—and as the historical culmination of its practical implications—the purpose of the Nazi death camp gas chambers is to function in the manner of a whirlpool, syphoning-in these

¹⁵Reichsführer SS, Chef des Rasse- und Siedlungs-Hauptamtes. *Blut und Boden. Lichtbildvortrag*. "Erster Teil: Das Blut, seine Bedeutung, Reinerhaltung und Verbesserung." Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Dc 25.10.

infectious "carriers of capitalism," and with them the enveloping nexus of exchange within which they supposedly have entrapped and parasitized the healthy peoples of the world. Indeed, like the furnace which devours the Jew within its monstrous body in *Der Juden Badstube*, the *Aktion Reinhard* gas chambers (as well as those of Auschwitz and Maidanek) swallow alive the Jews of Europe along with all of the meanings which National Socialism has forced them to embody—only here the transformation of the Jew's reified exchange nature, and the industrialized process of symbolic inversion to which he is subjected, is not figurative but agonizingly literal.

Flushed naked through the death camp's naturalized, alimentary "hose" [*der Schlauch*], relieving themselves involuntarily in their terror along the way, the bodies of Europe's Jews—and along with them, the waste-like fluidity of exchange which they betoken—are forced physically over the threshold of a building that conflates within its seamless structure the elements of both synagogue and bathhouse. Even without these specific cultural elaborations the utilitarian functioning of this edifice, like that of the more "elegant" but understated industrial installations at Auschwitz-Birkenau, would derive its full significance from the overall transformative structure within which it is set. In the intensive and sharply-focused contexts of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps, however, the significance of the gassing facility is raised in relief by its copper Star-of-David and its embroidered ark curtain at Treblinka,¹⁶ along with the usual sanitary "washing" facilities with their gas-

¹⁶The overt symbolic elaboration of the death camps is often treated as macabre but secondary to its essential form. For this reason one cannot always be sure if descriptions of the facilities at each camp are complete. This is especially so in the case of Belzec, which only had 2 survivors and thus, despite Gerstein's report, is lacking in full eyewitness testimony. In addition, all of the camps were rebuilt and expanded during their operation under the guiding influence of Christian Wirth, including the construction of larger and more solid gas chambers among other "improvements." This provided a "creative" opportunity to further objectify the implicit significance of the camp and its structures through acts of rationalizing "beautifications." This seems to have included the use of Stars-of-David on the gas chambers at Belzec, Treblinka and probably Sobibor as well, but it is not clear if all utilized stolen synagogue ark curtains as did Treblinka. As the most fully elaborated, perfected and advanced of all the camps, however, Treblinka and its elaborations can be taken as the most characteristic of the meanings implicit to all three.

emitting shower-heads and tiled floors and walls to expedite cleaning.¹⁷ All of these are inextricable elements of the inversionary symbolism in which the Nazis cannot help but indulge, inspired as they are by the pivotal importance of their task as well as by its transformative dynamics, to which the traditional forms of antisemitic status reversal are integral.

So too are the avid expressions of *Schadenfreude* they release. This gloating humor is conveyed with silent impact in the use of the stolen synagogue ark curtain at Treblinka. Embroidered in Hebrew with the traditional motto, "This is the gateway to God through which the righteous enter," this heavy velvet curtain was used to conceal the central entrance hall behind which the gas-chambers were arranged. During the gassing process this curtain would be drawn closed (Rückerl, 1977:226). Thus the next group of victims would have to wait its turn several meters down the "hose," able to hear the screams but not to see what went on behind the curtain. When the SS were ready for the next "load," the curtain was pulled open again. As if this were not enough, the SS had elaborated ironically on the taken-for-granted implications of the "hose" by also christening it the *Himmelfahrtallee*, or "Avenue of Heavenly Ascension." During the first period of the camp's operation these inversionary meanings were enhanced even further by forcing musicians drawn from amongst the camps' Jewish slaves to play lively operettas and Viennese salon music so as to partially drown out the sounds of agony coming from the gas chambers, while simultaneously keeping the SS entertained.

In this grotesque manner the indigenous cultural forms and practical skills of the Jews—even their mastery of "German" music—are used against them, to deceive, disorient and mock them all at once. Indeed, here as elsewhere, the functional requirements of

¹⁷Unlike Sobibor and Treblinka, the six chambers within Belzec's expanded gassing facility seem to have been lined with *Zinkblech*, or sheeted zinc, rather than tiles, to facilitate cleaning (see Rückerl, 1977:133).

"crowd management" are seamlessly combined with the German antisemitic celebration of the perverse status reversal which the death camp personnel are in the process of performing.

In Jewish practice, the ark is the center of the synagogue and the focus of worship. It is located on an elevated platform known as the *bima*, usually at the top of several broad steps. Modeled after the "holy of holies" in the ancient Temple, it is here that the torahs, the storehouse of Jewish history, law and collective identity, are safeguarded. Normally the torah curtain, or *parokhet*, is kept closed, thereby separating the sacred from the profane. But at repeated, strategic moments in the service, individuals are called up to the ark to draw open the curtain and thereby reveal the torah scrolls to the community. When this is done, all must rise. Others, similarly honored by being called up to the ark, may retrieve scrolls for reading and worship, or return the scrolls and close the curtain, thereby allowing the congregation to resume their seats. The torah curtain thus symbolizes the crucial rite-of-passage whereby synagogue worship is structured: the individuals who have been honored and the entire community pass literally and figuratively through the dividing curtain and into the ark in order to pay homage to the fundamental and sacred source of Jewish ethics, history, and communality. In this sense the torah curtain with its embroidered motto—often the personal handiwork of congregation members—becomes the "gateway to God through which the righteous enter" (see Birnbaum, 1964:60-1; see also D. Altshuler, 1983:118-30) (see plates 96-97).

However, at Treblinka, where the Jews of Warsaw were killed, the use of a torah ark curtain to conceal the gas-chamber entranceway corresponds directly to the culminating scene in the synagogue sequence of the film *Der ewige Jude* (1940)¹⁸ (cf. Welch, 1983:292-306). There the vision of the synagogue was that of a filthy domain located deep

¹⁸Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 3002.

within the bowels of the Jew's eastern racial "breeding ground," a secret space within which the unnatural processes of exchange take the place of genuine worship. Jewish religious teaching, the film intoned, was nothing other than the secret "political indoctrination" of a "parasitical people." The ultimate focus of these bobbing-and-weaving bodies—their fully reified, racial nature cloaked now within the hidden recesses of their caftans and prayer-shawls—was conspiracy itself, as represented by Jewry's comprehensive plans for world dominion. These plans were contained in the cryptic language of the Jewish torah, tightly-scrolled and impenetrable, stored within the ark, the synagogue's holy-of-holies. While Jews simultaneously prayed and haggled over their business deals, the camera moved in for a close-up of the embroidered curtain behind which the torahs were concealed, focusing in dramatically upon the fluid Hebrew script and the Star-of-David, while the narrator's voice rose, indignant and revelatory. "This is no religion and no religious service," he exclaimed. "It is a conspiracy against everything non-Jewish, the conspiracy of a cunning, unhealthy, contaminated race against the health of the Aryan peoples and against their moral laws!"

In this antisemitic nightmare the central significance of the synagogue ark maintains as the repository within which the source of Jewish historic identity is stored—only now Judaism's indigenous meanings are inverted with malevolent effect: the ark becomes the hidden source of abstract Jewish power, the arcane text of its scrolls condensing, in their account of Jewish origins, the historical expansion of European capitalism. Indeed, the embroidered ark curtain conceals the mysterious processes of value-conversion itself, for it is from within this secret inner chamber that the Jewish infection spreads over all of Europe and the world, its cancerous flow accelerated by the dynamism implicit within the filth-laden, winding alleys of the ghetto as the ever-expanding source of the commodity market's enveloping, labyrinthine effects.

Rearticulated within the dynamic structure of the death camp gassing facility, the curtain of the holy ark, from which these alienating forces supposedly sped forth, now becomes, instead, the portal into a vehement inversionary process performed upon the Jewish community as a whole. Despite the appropriated synagogue elements, however, the inescapable space into which they are fed is by no means Jewish. To the contrary, it is a germanized space—one defined, most emphatically, by the meaningful requirements of Nazi antisemitism. This is indicated first and foremost by the building's overarching form as an aesthetically-rationalized *Kameradschaftshaus*, a version of the generic Nazi *Gemeinschaftshaus* as adapted to the needs of the Beauty of Labor program (see chapter 11).¹⁹ As we saw earlier, these imposing structures were the focal points of the reformulated factory-settlement. Their specific purpose was to bring the Aryan racial "community" into being by transforming the German worker, with his atomized class identity, into an Aryanized *Volksgenosse* (*Volk Comrade*). This they supposedly did by liberating him from the filth-ridden maze of a Jewish-dominated capitalism. This was accomplished first by funneling his potentially disruptive energies into their formative spaces and then by releasing his cleansed and hardened body back out into the beautified Aryan industrial landscape which the Beauty of Labor program had struggled so hard to wrest free from Jewish control. The *Kameradschaftshaus* thus served as the Third Reich's racial factory, its end-product nothing other than the Aryan worker himself.

¹⁹As we saw earlier, the *Kameradschaftshaus* was but one particular version of a more encompassing, ideologically-inspired category of Nazi architecture at its most dynamic—that of the *Gemeinschaftshaus* (see chapter 11; Taylor, 1974; Petsch, 1976). Like the "camp" form itself as a generic institution of social transformation, these structures sprang up all over Germany in villages, towns and cities at home and in the colonized east, for use by the Hitler Youth and other party formations, as well as by average citizens attending Nazi functions (see n.16 below). Like the *Kameradschaftshaus*, these *Gemeinschaftshäuser* were crucial to the rearticulation of Germans from every background as members of the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*, and thus embodied the collective reformatory principles of National Socialism as a whole.

The parallels between the *Kameradschaftshaus* and the forms within which the death camp gassing "facilities" are couched are particularly strong—and for good reason, given the role of antisemitism in the Nazi ideology of work as well as the industrial processing to which the Jews of Europe are subjected. It must be stressed, however, that this is no simple one-to-one relationship. It is not so much the product of a direct application of the forms of one individual Nazi program to another (although this too is present) as an expression of the implicit symbolic structure which both share, keyed to their specific functions within Nazism's overall transformative program. This is revealed partly by the frequent characterization of the gas chambers as "the heart of the camp" (Spiess, in Lanzmann, 1985:66; see also Krzepicki in Donat, 1979:102). They were its most impressive edifice and, at the *Aktion Reinhard* camps, its only stone building, meant to perform the massive and enduring millenarian labor around which the otherwise provisional camp structure had coalesced. As the overall configuration of its architectonic elements indicated—from its Nordic *Satteldach* (steeped "saddle" roof) and its imposing brickwork to its emphasis upon entranceways and ornamentation—the gas chamber facility was, like the *Kameradschaftshaus* of the Beauty of Labor settlement, "the center of the life of the factory community," constructed so as to "lift itself above the usual installations" (*Das Kameradschaftshaus im Betrieb*, 1939:vii; 35). As the nurturing "architectural symbol" of the German plant community as a whole, the gas chamber, like the *Kameradschaftshaus*, "could not be made beautiful and worthy enough" (Hübbernet, 1938:138).²⁰

²⁰At Auschwitz-Birkenau, Crematorias II and III were given the greatest attention as to design and detail, as numerous photographs, plans and drawings reveal (see Pressac 1989). Indeed, they can well be considered the apotheosis of the gas chambers as aesthetically-rationalized factories within the overall context of the industrialized camp complex (see plate 99).

No architectural plans or photographs exist of the gassing facilities at the *Aktion Reinhard* camps. However, Jankiel Wiernick, the surviving Treblinka camp carpenter who was present at the reconstruction of the gas chambers and who, unlike other inmates, had free access to all subdivisions of the camp, created a model of Treblinka at the Museum of Lochamei Ha-Ghettaot, the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz in Israel.

However, at the Nazi "death factories"—a term Gerstein and others used²¹—the specific architectonic elements of the *Kameradschaftshaus* had to be fundamentally refigured so as to embody as well as facilitate the unique and comprehensive transformative function to which its spaces now were dedicated. At Auschwitz-Birkenau this was accomplished simply by devoting the crematoria's noble lines and sanitary spaces to the elegantly-rationalized functions of gassing and burning, the significance of which we shall see in a moment. In the smaller-scale (but no less efficient) workshops of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, this refiguration is more explicit. Thus the copper Star-of-David takes the place on the building's gable occupied normally in the Beauty of Labor settlement by the symbol of the DAF (the German Labor Front), the swastika-within-a-cog. Similarly, the embroidered synagogue curtain at Treblinka, with its softly-concealing pleats and sinuous Hebrew lettering, takes the place of honor at the all-important *Kameradschaftshaus* entrance, above the welcoming stairway with its beautifying urns of geraniums at each end of its five broad steps. This Nazi objectification of Judaism's supposedly hidden parasitic effects marks the crucial transformational threshold usually occupied by the solid, handcrafted gateways of wrought iron so indicative of the formative labor through which the Aryan is thought to manifest the natural contours of his value-productive (*wertschaffend*) racial nature (see Arad, 1987:120; Rückerl 1977:204; cf. Donat, 1979:259).

Although the model is lacking in some detail and is not constructed to scale, his representation of the gas chamber facility nonetheless gives one a sense of its actual form (in Donat, 1979:259) (see plate 98).

All existing maps, plans and drawings of Treblinka show discrepancies as to detail, layout and scale of camp facilities. The most frequently reproduced plan of the overall camp layout is a composite stemming from the German trial record (see Rückerl, 1977; Sereny, 1974:146-7; Arad, 1987, 1990). However, Treblinka survivor Samuel Willenberg has produced a detailed three-dimensional drawing which helps bring these schematic representations to life (Willenberg, 1989:Frontispiece) (see plate 95).

²¹The usual SS designation of the death camps was *Vernichtungsanlage* (Extermination Facilities), but native Germans (both Nazis and their opponents), Jewish inmates, and outside observers all were quick to characterize the industrial production of Jewish death for what it was. Indeed, it was precisely the inescapable identity of these camps as "death factories" (*Todesfabriken*) which created the sense of incredulity and incomprehension that has prevailed since the details of the Holocaust became public knowledge.

It is thus within the encompassing, "community"-productive spaces of the Nazi *Kameradschaftshaus*, this time custom-tailored to the collective transformational goals of the Nazi death factory, that the elements of synagogue and bathhouse are conflated. The resulting temple-like edifice—itsself a racialized version of the Lutheran church²²—dominates the entire camp complex just as it does the Aryan factory-settlement (see plates 98-99; cf. plates 59, 60, 62-64, ch. 11).

"Cleansing" the Volkskörper

Gerstein immediately recognizes the copper Star-of-David which the SS have placed on the gable of the gas chambers to be " 'a little practical joke' [*sinniger kleiner Scherz*]"—another perverse elaboration upon familiar German carnival practices with their grotesque inversionary humor. The horror and amazement with which he beholds this monstrous desecration—he uses two exclamation points to express this—is only compounded an instant later, however, when he learns that at Belzec the building itself is called the "Heckenholt Foundation" after the German who ran the diesel engines (see Klee, 1988:219). This private "witticism" further underscores the already sarcastic inversion of the synagogue as a "Bathing- and Inhalation Facility." But it also personalizes the entire transformative industrial processing to which the Jew's reified exchange-nature is subjected inside. This assembly-line killing—one accompanied at every step along the way by the progressive appropriation and assimilation of value from the Jewish body—is the ultimate form of antisemitic cultural production in the Third Reich. This is because its final goal is

²²The relationship of the organized Lutheran Church to the Third Reich was ambiguous enough that an explicitly anti-Nazi faction, calling itself the *Bekennede Kirche*, was forced to split off under the leadership of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (see Dumbach & Newborn, 1986). Nonetheless it must be pointed out that Nazism as a whole was anti-Christian. Indeed, as Gerstein's overall revulsion indicates, the reformulation of elements of church architecture along racial lines, particularly in the context of the death camps, is a perverse expression of the Nazi attempt to appropriate mainstream German cultural forms and meanings in the course of establishing its own hegemony.

nothing other than the production of the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft* itself. For those members of the SS directly engaged in this lethal activity, their ingenious killing facilities—like their beautified camps as a whole—are at once extensions of their own productive identities as well as a means of recovering, for all of Germany, the dimensions of the German self drained by commodity relations as embodied by the Jew.

Sheared and naked, the Jews of Europe are thus forced into a space which, like the *Kameradschaftshaus* itself, is intended to enclose and reformulate the physical body in line with the requirements of the organized German factory—the factory that personalizes, rather than alienates. Only here its manifold transformational functions are now wholly reduced to the industrialized "cleansing" operation they must perform upon the Jew as vermin in order to "purify" the German *Volkskörper* as a whole.

From "Puppet-Master" to Commodity

This shift in the productive focus of the *Kameradschaftshaus* could only have taken place once the conditions favoring a "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" had unfolded historically. Its essential principles, nonetheless, were already implicit to *Schönheit der Arbeit* from its outset, as one of the bureau's inaugural publications had indicated eight years earlier:

Certainly there will always be underworld types [*Unterweltnaturen*] everywhere who cannot adapt themselves to order and cleanliness [*Ordnung und Sauberkeit*], to conditions worthy of human beings. But one cannot make the German working class in its entirety responsible for these elements or do penance. Systematic training and enlightenment [*planmäßige Schulung und Aufklärung*] will insure that the *Gefolgschaften* strive amongst themselves to maintain a clean and comradely spirit in the plants. The totally uneducable, however, will be expunged from the producing community [*Die ganz Unbelehrbaren aber werden aus der schaffenden Gemeinschaft ausgemerzt*] (*Schönheit der Arbeit*, 1934: n.p.).²³

²³Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Kartei Nr. 4° 37/245.

Ausmerze, of course, is the most radical form of "natural selection" in the social Darwinian vocabulary of National Socialism, as Cornelia Berning's dictionary indicates (1964:31). For the death camp's "subhuman" victims—"sluiced" into holding tanks at the core of the German *Lebensraum*, and yet totally unassimilable in their autonomous racial form—this ultimate, dialectical step in Germany's collective transformation begins by "packing them in well" as Wirth has ordered, cramming them together so tightly that they no longer have any freedom of movement. In this they resemble the Jewish victims laid out in ditches on the eastern front like "sardines in oil" by the SS mobile killing squads, only here the process of industrial packaging has reached its zenith of efficiency and compression. Often, according to the Treblinka trial report, "infants and young children were simply tossed into the remaining spaces over the heads of the standing adults" to serve as chinking, thereby reducing further the available oxygen (in Ruckerl, 1977:224; cf. Donat, 1979:311). At Treblinka as many as 700 persons were packed in this manner into each of the six to ten gas chambers arranged on either side of the facility's central corridor.

In the extraordinary interviews journalist Gitta Sereny conducted with Franz Stangl during the period of his trial in the early 1970s, Treblinka's former commandant reveals the essential transformative character of this industrial packaging, as well as its relationship to the implicit body symbolism whereby the *Aktion Reinhard* death camps were structured. According to Stangl, the worst place in the camp for him was not the gas chambers or burial pits, but the undressing barracks. "I avoided it from my innermost being," Stangl told Sereny. "I couldn't confront them. . . I avoided at any price talking to those who were about to die: I couldn't stand it" (in Sereny, 1974:203). What Sereny was about to discover, however, was that for Stangl the Jews lost the last shreds of their humanity only after they had been rendered naked. More than anything else, it was having to witness this perverse transition in their symbolic status which Stangl was "avoiding at any price." But what was it that the Jews were being turned into?

Sereny elicits the answer to this question as well. Rather than looking in on the disrobing women, it was Stangl's penchant instead to stand high above the camp on the earthen wall separating the lower camp from the upper camp or *Totenlager*, the subdivision in which the gas chambers were housed. Dressed in a white jacket which he had had specially tailored and bearing his characteristic whip—the SS symbol par excellence of the "Master Race"—Stangl appeared to those below like a "Napolean surveying his domain" (p.202) (see plate 107). From this empowering vantage Stangl could command a view of the inversionary labyrinth which he had helped to create. Indeed, it was from here that he could supervise the most highly-charged, liminal transition in the camp's entire transformative operation, for it was from this position, as Stangl tells Sereny, that he could look down upon the Jews being forced naked through the hose and into the gas chambers. When asked by Sereny whether he felt that the Jews below "weren't really human beings," Stangl begins to free-associate.

"When I was on a trip once, years later in Brazil. . . my train stopped next to a slaughterhouse. The cattle in the pens, hearing the noise of the train, trotted up to the fence and stared at the train. They were very close to my window, one crowding the other, looking at me through that fence. I thought then, 'Look at this; this reminds me of Poland; that's just how the people looked, trustingly, just before they went into the tins. . . .'"

Sereny interrupts him. "You said 'tins'. . . . What do you mean?" But Stangl, as if in a daze, proceeds without hearing.

"I couldn't eat tinned meat after that. Those big eyes. . . which looked at me. . . not knowing that in no time at all they'd all be dead. . . ."

"So you didn't feel they were human beings?"

"Cargo," he said tonelessly. "They were cargo [*Ware*]" (in Sereny, 1974:201; cf. Sereny, 1979:223).

Stangl's slip of the tongue reveals as clearly as anything the essential transformative process which the death camp performs, as well as its implicit bodily dimensions. For him

the Jews on the way into the gas chambers had been divested of their autonomous and unruly human form; they had been transformed instead into a dominated status akin to cattle, about to be processed and packed into tins as spam. This slip is not merely "Freudian" but gives access to the underlying, shared cultural meanings whereby the camps were experienced by the Germans who built them. As we shall see, within the overall context of the camp, the fetishized role of the hose and gas chambers is digestive as well as industrial: their purpose is not simply to eliminate the Jew, but to domesticate his malignant exchange nature and render its values assimilable so as to harness the power of capitalism itself. Indeed, it is through this digestive processing of the Jew that the camps perform National Socialism's final, distorted act of antisemitic status reversal, for it is no longer the commoditized German who is supposedly reduced to a ware in the hands of his victimizer, but the Jew whose "parasitical" exchange-nature has been rendered inert, manipulable and ready to be sucked dry for the good of the German *Volk*.

Later on in Gerstein's report, when the outer doors of each chamber are swung open to reveal their "processed" contents, Gerstein will describe the victims as standing upright "like basalt pillars, pressed against one another" as if they have been fused together like slag. This description is a common one, not only in the *Aktion Reinhard* camps but in Auschwitz, where the survivor Filip Müller describes people tumbling out of the gas chambers "like blocks of stone, like rocks falling out of a truck" (in Lanzmann, 1985:124-5). For SS officer Franz Suchomel of Treblinka, however, the "people fell out like potatoes" once the doors to the over-stuffed gas chambers had been swung open (p.54). Whether immobilized like rock or tumbling out like potatoes, the Jew's waste-like fluidity has been literally congealed, his abstract exchange-nature concretized and rendered tangible. Indeed, it is through this means that the SS, like the workers of the German Labor Front, "bring order to the chaos of the material" as Dr. Ley had instructed (see

chapter 11 and Ley, 1935:1). They thereby produce dialectically that object which is National Socialism's ultimate millenarian goal: the hardened Aryan *Volkskörper*.

Rationalizing the Killing Process

For Gerstein, however, the immediate end-product of the German death factory is unbearable. Still, even this sympathetic observer (in the French version of his report) cannot keep himself from a moment of "ethnographic" observation, one which emphasizes the exotic "otherness" of the death camp's victims. "Jewish rite?" he asked parenthetically in response to the cry of despair he hears as they enter, undeceived, their macabrely-decorated mausoleum: "who will give us water to wash the dead?" At one point he claims to pray along with them, crying out "to my God and theirs," even imagines his own body pressed in amongst theirs, so that the shattering incongruity of an SS uniform will be discovered, fused to the mass. And yet Gerstein is the visiting industrial engineer at the *Aktion Reinhard* camps, there to insure that the gassing at this most crucial of industrial installations conforms to the highest standards of productivity in a Germany struggling to revitalize itself according to Beauty of Labor's principles of aesthetic rationality.

These principles were by no means foreign to the SS personnel, of course. SS man Erich Bauer, known to the prisoners at Sobibor by the guild-like title of "*Gasmeister*," reported a revealing conversation to this effect amongst Sobibor's top officers in the camp's "canteen." Comparing "the number of victims in the extermination camps of Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor," Bauer said, his colleagues "expressed their regret that Sobibor 'ranked last' in the competition [*äußerten aus Konkurrenzgründen ihr Bedauern, daß Sobibor 'an letzter Stelle rangierte'*]" (in Klee, 1988:211). Indeed, the commandants at all of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps were keenly aware of peaks and troughs in the levels of their *Leistung*, a personalizing term that meant "achievement" as well as "productivity," as we saw earlier. Thus at Treblinka the SS described the camp as working at *Hochbetrieb*,

or "full steam" during its busiest periods, when the gas chambers had to keep up with as many as five transports arriving at intervals of only 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours, each with a cargo of approximately 6,000 new "pieces" [*Stücke*] to be "processed" [*verarbeitet*] (see Rückerl, 1977:226-7). On the other hand, the SS characterized a months-long drop in the number of transports in the winter and early spring of 1943 as the *Flaute*, or "Depression," during which time the camp was intermittently "without work" (Richard Glazar, personal interview; Sereny, 1974:200-220; Lanzmann, 1985). It was partly during this lull in operation that Franz Stangl, the camp commandant, instituted the "beautifications" [*Verschönerungen*] that further highlighted the encompassing "Germanic" significance of the camp's industrialized killing process even while heightening its efficiency.

The motivation behind these "improvements" may also have been Stangl's awareness that the principles of aesthetic rationality were being realized even more spectacularly that spring at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where four massive, state-of-the-art gassing and crematoria facilities were nearing completion (see Czech, 1990:295). "The Central Building Administration of KZ-Auschwitz was so proud of their accomplishment [*so stolz auf ihre Leistung*]," wrote SS political officer Pery Broad in his memoir, "that they openly displayed a montage of photographs from the crematoria in the vestibule of their main offices." In the process they totally disregarded the fact that "civilians constantly coming in and out this way" would be confronted with "blow-ups of fifteen immaculate crematoria furnaces in a row [*Grossaufnahme von fünfzehn sauberlich nebeneinanderliegenden Verbrennungsöfen*]," the purpose of which was supposed to be top-secret (see plate 100). Of course, secrets of such collective significance could not help but become common German property at least to some extent, seeing as these and other camp installations had been built with the collaboration of numerous private German contractors and civilian technicians (see Broad in Bezwinka & Czech, 1981:181; see also Pressac, 1989:183ff,

379ff).²⁴ With similar pride the Central Building Administration also produced an extensive photographic album about this time in order to impress camp visitors. As might be expected, the album included images of porcelain washing troughs and neat toilet bowls lined up in rows (see Pressac, 1989:507ff). True to the camp's consistently double-binding reality, however, the toilets were available to almost no one; indeed, inmates were more likely to drown in open latrines after slipping from filthy perches. The only available alternative was to use their own precious eating bowls as chamberpots. Meanwhile the washrooms, although standard in some parts of the camp, were transformed into cruel jokes given the disease, filth and gross overcrowding that prevailed, not to mention the frequent lack of any water with which to wash (see Des Pres, 1976; Pawelczynska, 1979).²⁵

Enframed, Exposed

Back at Belzec, however, it is the summer of 1942 and the camp is functioning at *Hochbetrieb*. This is as good a time as any to arrange a trial "extermination" for the visiting Gerstein so as to show off the efficiency of the *Aktion Reinhard* death camps as a whole. No wonder, then, that Wirth is mortified when the diesel engine won't catch. Consistent with the dynamics of Nazi polycentrism, the competition at Auschwitz has instituted the use of *Zyklon-B*, and now his most basic creative contribution to the "Final Solution" may be thrown into question, along with the Iron Crosses he and Globocnik covet (see Arad, 1987:375).

²⁴Secret or not, the industrialized "capital" of Himmler's exterminatory empire was, in fact, a colonial cross-road not only for civilian contractors but for visiting German artists and performers as well (see Kremer in Langbein, 1964:75-113).

²⁵Similar to Beauty of Labor and other Nazi communal installations elsewhere, the walls of the Auschwitz washrooms, as well as the crossbeams in the miserable prefabricated horsestalls that posed as inmate housing, were inscribed with typical, but horribly double-binding, sayings advocating cleanliness, order, discipline, and the virtues of *Arbeit* (see Huebner, et al., 1979; cf. plate 62, ch. 11).

Gerstein's stop-watch records the delay: the Jews are trapped in their agony for 2 hours and 49 minutes. "One hears them crying, sobbing," he reports. Meanwhile Professor Pfannenstiel is there, "his ear glued to the wooden door," ready to do some intellectual processing of his own. "Just as in the synagogue," he observes with scientific detachment. With this pronouncement Pfannenstiel helps to complete the antisemitic meanings associated with the form of the gassing facility and the killing process itself. He does so by likening the death cries of the slowly suffocating Jews to the market-like "chaos" with which Germans, looking in from the outside, have long regarded Jewish forms of prayer. One recalls the vitriol with which Richard Wagner, in *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850), broached the theme of synagogue chaos as evidence of the pernicious link between the Jew's traditional character and Judaism's modern encroaching spirit. Having affirmed the sterile, monetary basis of Jewish life, Wagner exclaims,

Who has not had the occasion to convince himself of the travesty of a divine service of song, presented in a real Folk-synagogue? Who has not been seized with a feeling of the greatest revulsion, of horror mingled with the absurd, at hearing that sense-and-sound-confounding gurgle, jodel and cackel, which no intentional caricature can make more repugnant than as offered here in full, in naive seriousness? (Wagner, 1966:90-1).

Hardly the exclusive province of the intellectual, this construction is related to the association of synagogue "chaos" with the language of trade and the bedlam of the stock market (see Gilman, 1986:144). It also links up with idioms still used by some Germans today to characterize a noisy or disorderly environment: *Hier geht es so wie in eine Judenschule* ("It's like a Jew-school in here") or *Lärm wie in der Judenschul* ("Noisy as a Jew-school") (see Bein, 1980:1/259). Within the gas chambers of the *Aktion Reinhard*, however, the aggressive and encompassing abstract force which this chaos betokens has been confined once and for all within the hermetical boundaries of the inverted, germanized synagogue and thereby fully exposed.

This alleged unmasking of the Jewish body's hidden racial degeneracy is consistent with the symbolism which structures both the shower-like gas chambers and the Beauty of Labor "Comradeship Houses" as sanitary facilities within the Third Reich's wider program of racial hygiene. As we saw earlier, the interior spaces of the *Kameradschaftshaus* were devoted to the collective reformulation of the bodies of the German workers it encompassed. Within this context physical hygiene and sanitation took prime place (cf. plate 61, ch.11). Indeed, the ritual of communal washing in immaculate showers served as an inevitable motif in Nazi film propaganda, representing the resurgence of a racially-defined community, once the divisive effects of Jewish ideologies had been won over and the naked reality of the body's shared Aryan contours revealed in its place. This cleansing of the body was also in keeping with the necessity to produce a healthy "Volkbody" freed of the filth and disease for which the racially-degenerate Jew was held responsible.

As Pfannenstiel, Globocnik's fortuitous "sanitation consultant," is quick to notice, the death camp "showers" have likewise stripped the Jew bare—in this case, of the concealing Westernized garb through which he allegedly sought to disguise himself—in order to reveal the hidden ugliness of his degenerate exchange-nature. This is the "reality" which Pfannenstiel, Professor of Racial Hygiene, hears through the door; it is the same reified "truth" which he sees through the gas chamber peepholes, as he relates later at the SS banquet held at Treblinka in honor of his and Gerstein's visit. "It is only when one sees these Jew-bodies," he proclaims, using the term *Judenkörper* as a single, unified concept—"that one fully realizes how grateful we must be for the task you are performing"²⁶ (see

²⁶The gratitude Pfannenstiel offered the death camps' SS personnel in the name of Germany is not surprising. As one of his own publications from 1935 indicated, this Nazi academic had long been prepared to foster the health of the Aryan *Volkkörper* by adjudicating over life and death in his own little way: "To the medical man life as such can only signify the highest value [*Wertbegriff*] so long as its carrier displays no abnormalities or incurable sicknesses. Under these circumstances non-existence [*das Nicht-Sein*], or, as the case may be, death, will have to be valued more highly than life" (Pfannenstiel in Wuttke-Groneberg, 1982:31).

plate 101). In this endless, one-way procession of Jewish "subhumanity," Pfannenstiel means to say, the core of Nazi ideology itself is suddenly spread out triumphantly before one's eyes, its tenets no longer theory but inescapable fact. These Jews have been extracted from their positions of infiltration within wider European society, their parasitical hold upon the *Volkskörper* torn loose; their foul exchange nature funneled now in a constant and ever-more concentrated stream into the aestheticized confines of the Aryan death factory.

Thus at Treblinka the death camp's core transformative sequence commences with the signal, "Ivan, water!", thereby underscoring the "cleansing" process that is about to be completed. This signal may seem "merely" functional in its deceptive implications, but by this time deception—like previous instructions to "inhale deeply" as a "good method of disinfection"—could hardly serve any purpose other than to reinforce for the SS the sadistic humor of the brutal inversion they were setting into motion. It is the meaningful context of Nazi antisemitism that generated the "solution" of the camouflaged gas chamber in the first place; accordingly, here as everywhere within the practice of Nazi genocide, form and function go hand-in-hand and cannot be separated. Thus the showers not only mock and disorient; so far as the SS is concerned, the substance which their shower-heads emit *does* serve a "cleansing" function, even if it is not water. At the same time their meticulously tiled walls and floors provide the most efficient means, in preparation for the next "load" of victims, for hosing down the blood, excrement and other bodily fluids which the gassing process has left behind.²⁷ This too is in keeping with Beauty of Labor's most sacred principles: "No plant with dirty work should lack showers [*Brausebäder dürfen in keinem Betrieb mit schmutziger Arbeit fehlen*]" and "The dirtier the work, all the more exemplary the washrooms! [*Je schmutziger die Arbeit, umso vorbildlicher die*

²⁷At Auschwitz-Birkenau, sewage processing tanks were created with the intention of recycling excrement from camp inmates for the production of methane gas (see Pressac, 1989).

Waschräume!]" (see chapter 11 and *Schönheit der Arbeit—Sozialismus der Tat*, 1936).

Such guidelines seem custom-made for the Nazi death camps. This is because Germany as a whole can have no dirtier labor than that whereby it disinfects itself of its disease-bearing Jewish "filth," the supposed "carriers" of capitalism. No wonder the *Schlauch* empties its unbearably-burdened symbolic freight into a chamber that is more toilet than shower, an anal cul-de-sac within the Aryan *Volkskörper* itself. Indeed, just as the Aryan factory worker cleanses all evidence of the assembly-line from his body prior to joining the *Gemeinschaft*, for the death camp workers as for Germany as a whole, it is the corpses of the Jews which constitutes the clinging detritus of the industrial labor they perform, to be washed away in order to leave *Volkskörper* purified and its *Lebensraum* immaculate.

Likewise the existence of peepholes—"necessary" in order to check the progress of the gassing—is more than merely functional within the German network of antisemitic meaning. Like the magnified images of the Jewish storefronts on the *Juden raus!* gameboard, or the *Stürmer's* microscopic slide (see plates 52-53, ch. 9), the gas-chamber peepholes allow the Jew to be examined "up close," in the manner of specimens brought to light by the penetrating gaze of German science. At the same time they conspire to create a sense of added voyeuristic control. As we have seen repeatedly, this effort to corner the Jew and lay him bare is a reifying constant in the commoditized universe of German antisemitism: Goedsche's heroes had to penetrate the maze of Prague's Jewish cemetery to observe the secret Jew in his own element, while Hitler saw the Jew behind every "form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life. If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light—a kike!" (see chapter 8 and Hitler, 1943 [1925]:57). Himmler likewise recounted later how the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto kept reappearing behind one's back as if by magic, even after their housing blocks had been destroyed. He attributed this to the catacombs, passages and canals which the Jew always had at his

disposal—this, he said, was the "ancient system of the primeval nomad [*uralte System uralter Nomaden*]." Once they had been flushed out, however, one could hardly imagine the "piles" of gold that were brought out afterwards, so much, Himmler exclaimed, that one could hardly tear one's eyes away (in Ackermann, 1970:164-5; cf. chapter 13, n.2). In Warsaw, accordingly, Jürgen Stroop used methods normally reserved for driving out vermin to "force" the elusive Jew to the "surface" once and for all, as we saw, at which point he was hung with tags and crammed like cargo into sealed freight cars, ready for shipment to Treblinka. No more did the "eternal Jew," the essence of capitalism in all its mobility, wander unchecked across the borders of Europe with his peddler's sack. Instead he was "sluiced" through the gas chamber entranceway and compressed, together with his brethren, into a solid, filth-covered mass.

"Werterfassung": The Anal Seizure of Value

The peepholes in the death camp gas chambers, whether those at the *Aktion Reinhard* camps or at Auschwitz, give access to this world-historical event. For here the Jews are revealed in their last hidden act; here, indeed, their last "secrets" are given up. Weeping "as in a synagogue," their chaotic nature expressing itself even in death, their bodies are forced under pressure to generate a natural yield of filth, gems and gold. In the Nazi imagination, as we saw earlier, the synagogue ark curtain concealed the mysterious processes of value-conversion—the transformation of the Aryan's parasitized use-values into the Jew's ever-expanding cash nexus. Now, in the encompassing, personalized spaces of the beautified SS death factory, the German forces this process to run in reverse. Here, within the death camp's inner sanctum—at the very center of the German *Lebensraum* itself—the SS witnesses the hidden, magical transformation of value in capitalism itself. Only now it is the Jew's malignant exchange nature and not the Aryan's easily parasitized body which has been enveloped, its abstract essence compressed in order to seize hold of its concretized

value—a transformation which the SS term *Werterfassung* ("value-seizure") literally conveys. It is a secret, hellish process—like the moment of nuclear fission or the pulsing of magma in chambers hidden deep within the earth—which the SS, through unrelieved effort and concentration, has managed for a moment to harness with perfect control. The alienating power of the Jew has been encompassed and congealed, its capacity to engulf inverted; the "carriers of capitalism" have been swallowed alive within the alimentary passages of the Aryan *Volkskörper*, which takes permanent shape around them.

Thus Gerstein's report moves seamlessly from an enumeration of the varieties of effluvia so produced—"sweat and urine. . . excrement, menstrual blood. . ."— to the gold, diamonds and valuables pulled on SS command from genitals, anus and mined especially from the mouths of the still-warm corpses. Organized according to a strict and efficient division of labor, this last is performed by "two dozen dentists" armed with hooks, plyers and hammers, forced along with other assembly-line "specialists" among the *Totenjuden* (the "death-Jews") to sort and plunder the corpses once the outer garage doors along the sides of the building have been swung open to allow access into each chamber. Despite his earlier moment of almost desperate "ethnographic" detachment, Gerstein, unlike Professor Pfannenstiel, still has not forgotten the essential humanity of the Nazis' Jewish victims. Even now he recognizes the "families. . . still holding hands, stiffened by death," so that their soiled bodies must be torn apart with hooks.

Captain Wirth, on the other hand, "is in his element," as Gerstein observes with revulsion. Running about excitedly amidst the corpses and the sewage, Wirth displays the booty as if the SS has discovered, within its own rectum, a Germanic Eldorado—one which the Germans have produced themselves by dint of their own fanatical millenarian labor.

Of course, the apparently tremendous wealth these camps seemed to have excreted was less an index of Jewish prosperity than a product of the enormous number of victims being

funneled into the camp each day. Although these included members of every economic class, the majority were people of moderate means. Unperturbed by this fact, Franz Stangl, Treblinka's commandant, came up with the following explanation when pressed: " 'Nobody had nothing, he said. 'Everyone had something' " (Stangl, in Sereny, 1974:232). This, of course, was not far from the truth. Richard Glazar, an upper middle-class Czech Jewish survivor, reports:

Even those from the extreme East of Poland, the poorest, brought something. . . . I remember working on their clothes: they wore padded tunics, very much like coolies' in China. They were awful to handle, full of lice—*white* with lice along the seams. One time I was just about to put one of them into a bundle I was making up and somebody said, 'Wait.' He ripped it open and there, glued together inside the padding, were dozens and dozens of hundred dollar bills. Another day, one of the SS came in with a basket full of food. 'Pull up your sleeve,' he said to me 'and put your hand in all the way.' I did. It was full—elbow deep—of gold dollars (Glazar, in Sereny, 1974:232).

However surprising such discoveries may have been, the truth is that prior to their deportation these Jews, whether rich or poor, had hoarded what valuables they had in the hopes of easing their promised "resettlement," sometimes converting the remains of their property and life's savings into gems or hard currency. Others had little more than a wedding ring or other family heirloom. These they sewed into the linings of clothing or in their desperation hid in body crevices, never dreaming that their persons would be systematically violated in this fashion. That some of these bodies and their enclosing garments were lice-infested and covered with bodily exudations—all a result of the inhuman conditions in the ghettos and freight cars—only furthered the association of the money with the alleged excremental nature of the Jew. Indeed, for the SS this rapid accumulation of dental gold and other valuables, seemingly secreted within the body's dankest cavities like pearls within oysters, confirmed for them the reality of the Jew's "putrescent" exchange nature.

Considering the extent to which all aspects of the camp were organized for the extraction, sorting and redistribution of value seized from its incoming "cargo," it is not surprising that these anal constructions crop up everywhere. "When the transports came in," Richard Glazar reports,

the SS were swimming in valuables, in money and gold. . . . This was Treblinka's 'Mammon.' The SS played the wealth down, though, calling it 'such shit' [*so eine Scheisse*]. . . . Some SS would come into the sorting barracks, for example, and say, 'Go on and pick something out—look there Hans, from the ladies' coats—would you find a Persian for me? A Persian—what might that cost? Oh my, thousands and thousands—what a lot of shit!' I remember one SS *Unterscharführer*. . . he would offer Karel a cigarette from his own tobacco can, light it for him with a 1000 zloty banknote (Glazar, personal interview).

Franz Stangl, Treblinka's second commandant, had been transferred from his command position at Sobibor to help reorganize Treblinka shortly after it began operating. According to later SS testimony, the camp's first commandant, Dr. Irmfried Eberl, had been anxious "to reach the highest possible numbers and exceed all the other camps" (in Arad, 1987:87). His "ambition" had been excessive, however; the camp was soon overwhelmed by the pace of incoming transports from the Warsaw Ghetto (see Mentz in Klee, 1988:222). Stangl's initial, horrified reactions to what he discovered, elicited by Gitta Sereny in her prison interviews with him, dramatically reinforce the extent to which the Nazi killing process concretized the deep-rooted German symbolic equation of money and anality, and its long-standing association with the Jew.

"Treblinka that day was the most awful thing I saw during all of the Third Reich"—he buried his face in his hands—"it was Dante's Inferno," he said through his fingers. "It was Dante come to life. When I entered the camp and got out of the car on the square [the *Sortierungsplatz*] I stepped knee-deep into money; I didn't know which way to turn, where to go. I waded in notes, currency, precious stones, jewelry, clothes. They were everywhere, strewn all over the square. The smell was indescribable; hundreds, no thousands of bodies everywhere, decomposing, putrefying. Across the square, in the woods, just a few hundred yards away on the other side of the barbed-wire fence and all around the perimeter of the camp, there were tents and open fires with groups of Ukrainian guards and girls—whores I found out later, from all over the countryside—weaving drunk, dancing, singing, playing music. . ." (Stangl, in Sereny, 1974:157).

Unlike Wirth, Stangl claims to have been horrified at first by the combined cesspool of Jewish gold, corpses and bodily waste-products through which, it seems to him, he must wade, "knee-deep." That he may have exaggerated the quantities of valuables present (cf. Suchomel in Sereny, 1974:158) only confirms the symbolic impact which the German cultural equation of these elements held for him. Thus Stangl experiences a wave of terror as the accumulated excrement of capitalism threatens to engulf him. Like the SS personnel manning the gas chambers, his task for Treblinka and for Germany as a whole is to "bring order to the chaos of the material." As his ensuing "beautification" efforts reveal, he did so by feeding the putrescent product of the ghetto labyrinth into an encompassing SS maze that reflects, not the bodily chaos of Jewish exchange, but the German's supposedly innate and organic sense of order, cleanliness and control (see plates 102, 105). Thus one of Stangl's first suggestions—as if he were trying to tame the unruly physiological processes of the camp as well as the Jew—was to institute a tidy system which he had already come up with at Sobibor. This was to have "shit buckets" placed along the "hose" for the Jewish women, who otherwise stood about looking desperately for a place to relieve themselves or involuntarily befouled the sandy path as they were driven into the gas chambers.

True to his own excremental "element," however, Wirth was indifferent to Stangl's solution. "I don't give a shit [*Es ist mir scheissegal*] what you did with the shit in Sobibor," he was reported to have told Stangl. "Let them beshit themselves. It can be cleaned up afterwards" (in Sereny, 1979:169). Accordingly *Arbeitsjuden*, ("Work-Jews") were assigned instead to clean the path after each transport. But like everything else at Treblinka, this too confirmed the anality of the Jew's supposed exchange-nature. Ordered by the SS to this work detail, the Jewish survivor Abraham Krzepicki remembers: "As we came closer to the path, we saw the 'trash' which they wanted us to clean up before the new transports arrived. This 'trash' [probably *Dreck* in the original German] consisted of a

veritable windfall of banknotes. . . . We were given special birch brooms and rakes for the job. With the rakes, we raked up gold coins, jewels and diamonds from the sand" (Krzepicki, in Donat, 1979:102).

The "Pleasures" of Status Reversal

Wirth's lack of concern about the "shit"—indeed, his apparent sense of pride—seems perfectly in keeping with his own acute awareness that his "performance" at Belzec is being evaluated by a German of higher rank and social status. For this reason he tries to impress the visiting Gerstein. "You have no idea what we find every day by way of gold and diamonds," the crude SS captain says, using the fancy French loan-word *Brillanten* for the latter, but mispronouncing it by voicing the two "L's." Gerstein is disgusted by the depraved incongruity of this affectation, but Wirth's self-importance is understandable given the circumstances in which he finds himself: after all, he has been placed in charge of the Third Reich's most pivotal, top-secret operation in its own self-production—one in which Germans actually have managed to turn the basic order of the capitalist universe upside-down.

Nothing brings this out more clearly than the two Jewish slaves whom Wirth proudly displays to Gerstein, one formerly the director of Berlin's *Kaufhaus des Westens* (Great Western Department Store, known throughout Germany as "KdW"), the other a former captain in the "old Imperial Austrian Army, a Knight of the Iron Cross, First Class." Wirth is clearly amazed that he, an uneducated, working class German should now be ordering the head of Germany's greatest luxury department store to ransack the corpses of his brethren for valuables, while a Jewish recipient of the Habsburg Empire's highest military decoration is forced to play the violin to make things even more *gemütlich* for the SS. In this manner the inversionary meanings that structure every aspect of the death camps and the "Final Solution" as a whole—the meanings of antisemitic status reversal—are enacted

and their pleasures reinforced at every turn. The "little" violinist, for example, is probably assumed to have acquired his distinction through unfair influence, as Nazi definitions dictate. Now, at Belzec, one of those Jews held responsible for the *Dolchstoß*, or the supposed stab-in-the-back that resulted in Germany and Austria's devastating defeat in the First World War, is made literally to play another tune.

The vindictive delights of table-turning are etched even more satisfyingly for the SS, however, in the figure of the former KdW director. The image of the Jewish-dominated department store, of course, had long been a staple of Nazi antisemitism. Such enormous warehouses supposedly constituted one of the main mechanisms whereby the parasitical Jew prevailed over the artisanal output of the hard-working craftsman as well as over the livelihood of the honest small shopkeeper, flooding the market with cheap merchandise and thereby reducing the "value-producing" German to little more than a commodity squeezed dry between Jewish hands. For this reason the demand for "communalization of the great department stores and their leasing to small businessmen at low rents" had been one of the basic points in the Nazi party platform ever since its inception in 1923 or earlier (see Lane & Rupp, 1978:40-1). This, like all of the other measures in the 25 point platform, was designed specifically "to combat the Jewish-materialistic spirit in and around us [*den jüdisch-materialistischen Geist in und außer uns*] in the belief that a lasting recovery [*Genesung*] of our *Volk* can only come about from the inside out [*von innen heraus*]. . . ." (Feder, 1938 [1927]:16-18). Borrowed from Dietrich Eckart (see chapter 14), such phrasing suggests the bodily implications of this obsession, a phenomenon which had been brought out even more dramatically in the film *Der ewige Jude*. There the cancerous modern growth of Jewish *Wucher* began with Germany's invasion by caftaned *Ostjuden* bearing peddler's trays and push-carts, only to end up in the form of multi-levelled

department stores and massive villas occupied by camouflaged Jews in elegant Western attire.²⁸

Now, however, the "bacillus" of Jewish exchange has been extracted from the body of the *Volk* and enclosed within the inverting boundaries of the death camp Belzec. Here, under the lowly Wirth's ecstatic guidance, KdW's exalted former director must participate in the agonizing reduction of Europe's Jews to the status of German raw material. Reduced himself to an alienated tool in the hands of his SS overseers, he is forced to strip their bodies of every ounce of useable value before disposing of the "rubbish" in secret deposits left behind by the "recovering" Aryan *Volkskörper*.

Recycling

The enslavement and destruction of the Jew is not the final step, however, in the process of antisemitic status-reversal which the death camps perform. That reversal is completed only when the values that have been extracted from the Jew's processed body have been sorted and inventoried, exchanged and recycled.

All of the death camps had sorting barracks in which stolen property was meticulously laid out, awaiting shipment in railway cars to all points within Greater Germany. At least 1200 railroad freight cars filled with Jewish belongings are estimated to have left from Treblinka alone during the period of the camp's operation (see Arad, 1987:159). Following strict specifications issued by the SS-WVHA (the Economic and Administrative Main Office) on September 26, 1942, the *Reichsbank* in Berlin was sent all "foreign currency, rare metals, diamonds, precious stones, pearls, gold teeth, and pieces of gold" (in Arad, 1987:154-5). According to the final inventory sent by Globocnik to Himmler on January 5, 1944, these valuables (minus those quantities pilfered by the camp's SS

²⁸Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Mag. Nr. 3002.

personnel) totaled 178,745,960 Reichsmarks; it included money from forty-eight countries as well as 2,910 kg of gold bars, 18,734 kg of silver, and 16,000 carats in diamonds (see Arad, 1987:161). Pure silk underwear went to the Economics Ministry, while the WVHA itself received fine furs, as well as a variety of items to be resold at favorable cost to the SS and combat troops. These included "watches, fountain pens, lead pencils, shaving utensils, pen knives, scissors, pocket flashlights, and purses." The Public Health Office received eyeglasses (so long as the frames were not made of gold) while the VOMI (the Ethnic German Welfare Office) was sold the greater bulk of non-luxury items, including shoes and clothing, eiderdowns, quilts, blankets, scarves, umbrellas, canes, thermos bottles, ear mufflers, baby carriages, combs, handbags, leather belts, tobacco pipes, sunglasses, mirrors, cutlery, suitcases, bed linens, tableclothes, etc. And then, of course, there is the matter of hair. This was classified under "textile materials," and in 1942 alone amounted to 3,000 kg, sent to the Reich Economic Ministry for processing into felt (see Arad, 1987:160).

Moving into the regions of eastern Poland liberated by the advancing Russian front in August of 1944, the American journalist Alexander Werth discovered irrefutable evidence of this recycling process when he visited the Lublin warehouse where, in this case, the personal effects of the Jews of the death camp Maidanek were temporarily stored.

In Chopin Street—what grim irony that Poland's foremost composer should be mixed up in all this—in an unfinished five-story building of the *Lublin Action Catholique*, is one of the world's largest department stores.

The departments are labeled, *Herrenschuhe, Damenschuhe, Krawatten* [Men's Shoes, Women's Shoes, Neck-ties], and dozens of others.

In one room thousands of safety razors are piled up, next to them are thousands of penknives, in another room are mountains of darning and knitting wool and thousands of reels of cotton yarn.

Next one comes to a gallery of women's frocks, dresses, costumes and blouses, and there is even a toy department with teddy bears, pink celluloid dolls, marbles, domino sets, ladders and jigsaw puzzles. A little farther along are school children's notebooks, penholders and erasers. . . .

One cannot help thinking in terms of individuals—the child who owned an American-made Mickey Mouse, now in the Chopin Street warehouse; or the German-Jewish composer Ernst Weil, whose manuscript for Violin Sonata, Opus 15, is in the junk department in the Chopin Street 'store' (see Werth, in *The Black Book*, 1981 [1946]:379-80).

Here, in what Alexander Werth aptly calls "one of the world's largest department stores," the tokens of Jewish identity shipped in from just one of the six Nazi death camps are arranged and categorized with characteristic German precision. Werth has stepped into a world of meaning that is not his own; for the American journalist each item is an index of an individual, the fragment of a life. For the SS these heaps of property betoken something quite different. For them all this provides evidence that the Jew's wild exchange-nature has been recontextualized and domesticated through the ordering power of German labor. The Jew in the abstract has been rendered concrete, from his recyclable Mickey Mouse dolls to his "worthless" musical scores; all are reduced to German inventory. Nothing reveals quite so clearly the nature of Nazi genocide as a process of status reversal intended to harness the forms and values of capitalism itself. Not only has the Jewish department store czar, as symbolized by the former KdW director, been captured and enslaved; his body and that of his brethren have literally been disassembled, the multitude of their personal effects transformed into a comprehensive, German-run department store designed to nurture the German *Volk* and serve its every need.

Burial: The "Kindergarten"

Although Gerstein is aware of changes later, at the time of his visit to Belzec and Treblinka the *Aktion Reinhard* camps are still burying rather than burning the corpses of their victims. The disadvantages of this procedure had made themselves apparent from the start, as Franz Stangl learned upon his own visit to Belzec shortly after the gassing began there in the middle of March 1942. This was the moment, he claims, when he first

discovered the true nature of the role to which he had just been appointed as an *Aktion Reinhard* camp commandant. "I can't describe to you what it was like," Stangl said to Gitta Sereny almost thirty years later.

. . . Oh God, the smell. It was everywhere. . . . Wirth wasn't in his office; they said he was up in the camp. I asked whether I should go up there and they said, "I wouldn't if I were you—he's mad with fury. It isn't healthy to go near him." I asked what was the matter. The man I was talking to said that one of the pits had overflowed. They had put too many corpses in it and putrefaction had progressed too fast, so that the liquid underneath had pushed the bodies on top up and over and the corpses had rolled down the hill. I saw some of them—oh God, it was awful (in Sereny, 1974:111-12).

The Germans had a term all ready to describe this troublesome liquid by-product of decomposition, which they encountered in their prodigious burial pits throughout Eastern Europe; they called it "*Leichenwasser*"—"corpse-water" (see Rückerl, 1977:173). By the time Gerstein arrives at Belzec and Treblinka, however, five months have passed and the method of burial has been improved somewhat. Thus the *Leichenkommando*, or "Corpse [Transport] Team" of approximately 100 men, under the cracking whips of the camp's Ukrainian guards, transport corpses to the burial pits on stretchers while the bodies of infants are tossed through the air, no doubt reflecting an acceleration of the already standard, rapid work-tempo so as to give Gerstein the "best" impression possible. Then the burial detail is forced to deposit the corpses in the deep pits as tightly as they can, head-to-foot, dusting them with a disinfectant of chlorinated lime before applying a thin layer of sand (see Rückerl, 1977:204). According to survivor Richard Glazar, at Treblinka the term which the SS used for this dusting was "*einpudern*." "Powder the corpses" was the order which the SS gave (Glazar, interview).

This term may link up with another used by the SS at Treblinka to designate the burial pits, once these had been surrounded by a camouflaging screen of pine saplings. According to contemporary accounts by Treblinka survivor Abraham Krzepicki as well as the Yiddish writer Rachel Auerbach (who edited the manuscript he wrote upon his escape

in 1942), the SS called this area the "Kindergarten" (see Krzepicki, in Donat, 1979:107; Auerbach, in Donat, 1979:58). This designation may only have been a transitory one; nonetheless, it is consistent with the inversionary "humor" of the camp, with the features of the Beauty of Labor plant-settlement, and indeed, with the natalist meanings that characterized Nazi millenarianism as a whole.

As we saw earlier, the principles of Nazi racial hygiene were furthered in every Beauty of Labor installation through the construction of Kindergartens with landscaped playgrounds. In this manner the entire Aryan life-cycle was encompassed within the holistic bounds of the beautified plant-settlement, thereby insuring the future health and reproductivity of the Aryan *Volk* as a whole. Of course, this focus on reproduction was by no means limited to the Beauty of Labor program. Throughout Germany prospective mothers were constantly encouraged to "give the Führer a child" (*schenkt dem Führer ein Kind*), with the *Lebensborn* program providing an opportunity even for the unmarried to do their duty, usually in spas and sanatoria appropriated from Jewish welfare institutions (see Hillel & Henry, 1975). Thus the fetishizing tendencies of German fascism led to the transformation of Germany's women into "*Gebärmaschine*," or breeding-machines, as those who disparaged these programs were inclined to say (cf. Koonz, 1987). This is not to suggest that the efforts of Germany's stalwart mothers went unrewarded. To the contrary, the most productive amongst them were actually granted "*das Ehrenkreuz der deutschen Mutter*," or "The German Mother's Cross of Honor." Styled to resemble the military's Iron Cross, this medal was awarded with similar fanfare, only in this case the designations of "First" and "Second Class" were calibrated to the quantity of Aryan offspring in the winning brood (see plate 103 and Chagoll, 1979:42-3). "Happy, healthy squads of children [*Kinderscharen*] everywhere one looks," the Nazi propaganda pamphlet *Sieg der Waffen—Sieg des Kindes* (*Triumph of the Weapon—Triumph of the Child*) announced in 1940. "This must be the trademark [*Merkmal*] of every German province.

Deutschland muß Kinderland werden [Germany must become the Land of Children]" (in Chagoll, 1979:56).

However, as Lydia Chagoll made clear so poignantly in her film and book, *Im Namen des Führers: Kinder hinter Stacheldraht* (*In the Name of the Führer: Children Behind Barbed-Wire*), the revitalization of Germany through the nurturance of its youth was linked inextricably with the gradual debilitation of the Jewish child (see Chagoll, 1979). This began in Germany in 1933 with the ritualistic degradation of Jewish school children in front of the classroom, where they were treated as handy living "specimens" for lessons in Nazi racial theory (see plate 56 [top], ch.10). By the middle of the war years it had progressed (at least so far as formal legislation was concerned) to the mean-spirited reduction of Jewish infants' paltry milk rations from whole to skim, as part of the starvation measures that had been gradually intensified within Germany proper since 1939 (see Hilberg, 1985:149-154). Himmler followed through on this measure in May 1943 in his own way, and without bothering to turn to any of the German ministries for their legislative "seal of approval." He did so by sending several hundred copies of a new book titled *Jewish Ritual Murder* to the leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the field, hoping to lend their men some moral support when confronting the thousands of Jewish children into whom they were pumping the contents of their machine guns (see Ackermann, 1970:168).

It was in the "Final Solution," then, that this dialectical process found its culmination. Indeed, as Gerstein now discovers, it is only by filling up Treblinka's *Kindergarten* with Jewish corpses to overflowing that Germany ultimately becomes the Aryan "*Kinderland*" to which it aspires. Here in the *Aktion Reinhard* camps it is the Jewish life-cycle, not the Aryan, which is fully encompassed, but only in order to run it, like the process of capitalist expansion itself, in reverse. Here the weed-like Jew is surrounded by an aesthetically-camouflaging border of the racially-kindred pine and fir so beloved by Germans, whose forests the Jew is alleged to have ruthlessly exploited (see chapter 12). Here the bodies of

Jewish parent and infant alike are "powdered" before being organically sealed off, their "verminous" reproductivity destroyed for all time. No wonder, given these meanings, that any of the camps' female *Arbeitsjuden* showing signs of menstruation were immediately consigned to the flames. Not only did the SS find these blood stains "unaesthetic" (see Sereny, 1974:237-8); this "red flow" also gave evidence of that engulfing and disintegrative Jewish fertility which the SS was dedicated so obsessively to expunging within the domesticating confines of its germanized Jewish "Kindergartens" (cf. Theweleit, 1987).

"Credit Where Credit is Due"

As we will soon see, this domestication of the Jew within naturalized boundaries, so consistent with Himmler's plans for the germanization of the eastern *Lebensraum*, finds its fullest expression in the manner by which the death camp corpses ultimately were disposed of and the camps themselves liquidated. Sometime between March and June of 1942 Heinrich Himmler had decided that the burial of Jewish corpses was not enough; all traces of the Jew had to be eradicated throughout the German *Lebensraum* if the Aryan race was to live on, secure, healthy and free. For this reason Himmler ordered the exhumation and burning of corpses in every killing field and death camp of Eastern Europe—a procedure perfected by Paul Blobel, the ambitious *Einsatzgruppen* murderer whom we encountered earlier at Babi Yar (see Arad, 1987:170; Hilberg, 1985:977; chapter 12 below).

However, this order was implemented only gradually at the Atkion Reinhard camps, first at Sobibor in the late summer and fall and then at Belzec between November 1942 and March 1943. Himmler actually made an inspection tour to Globocnik's Nazi fiefdom in mid February of 1943, only to discover that his order still had not been carried out at Treblinka, the largest camp of all. Accordingly, the massive exhumation and burning of the 700,000 corpses which Treblinka had produced to date began immediately thereafter

(see Arad, 1987:173-4)—but not before the SS back at Sobibor had staged a special demonstration of their own facilities "in Himmler's honor" (Rückerl, 1977:193-4). In line with Beauty of Labor's highest aesthetic specifications, "a group of young, attractive Jewish women" were specially selected at a nearby labor camp and brought to Sobibor. There they were gassed "for show" after having been forced to scurry naked down the hose (p.194; see also Arad, 1987:166; Rashke, 1982:99, 364). Afterwards the SS, in full uniform, treated their honored guest and his entourage to a lovingly-prepared repast in the camp canteen, complete with *hors d'oeuvres*, eggnog and flowers at every table (see Bahir in Novitch, 1980:155-6; Lichtman in Arad, 1987:166) (see plate 104).²⁹

If Globocnik had had his way, the bodies of these girls would have been buried, rather than burned. Like Christian Wirth and Franz Stangl, Globocnik identified strongly with the killing methods which all three had innovated in "their" *Aktion Reinhard* camps, and which constituted their claims to fame and power in the Third Reich. This made Globocnik all the more willing, at least to some extent, to test the latitude provided by the realities of Nazi polycentrism. Along with the technical inconvenience involved, this probably explains his hesitation in shifting procedures already "tried and true," as Wirth had said to Gerstein when pleading for the continued use of diesel exhaust in the gas chambers. Being the real man in charge, however, Globocnik was even more outspoken—at least to underlings. This is revealed at the outset of Gerstein's report, when Globocnik recounts the concern Herbert "Lindner" [i.e., Linden], a minister in the Führer's Chancellery, expressed over the delay in carrying out the Reichsführer's orders. "Another generation may come after us which does not understand all this!" Linden is supposed to have said. The reply Globocnik claims to have made is filled with *braggadocio*; indeed, he even invents Adolf Hitler nodding enthusiastically from the sidelines. Within the context of

²⁹Two photographs in Klee, 1988 (pp.214, 220) give one an idea of what these festivities may have looked like, one of which is reproduced as plate 104.

Nazism's millenarian meanings, however, Himmler's old friend "Globus" could not have been more on target. "Gentlemen," Globocnik supposedly announced, "if there should ever come, after us, a generation so soft and weak-kneed that they do not understand our important task, then certainly all of National Socialism will have been in vain. On the contrary, in my view one ought to bury bronze tablets on which it is recorded that it was we who had the courage to carry out this great and vital work [*Werk*]."

Here self-justification is combined with enormous pride in this most secret of all missions, as well as acute awareness of its pivotal importance for the Third Reich as a whole. The symbolic content of Globocnik's spontaneous blustering is particularly telling in this regard. Consistent with the implications of Nazism's antisemitic ideology of labor, for example, the extermination program which he is spearheading is not only work but a great "*Werk*"—a feudalized expression of Aryan creativity at the crucible of its ultimate, fascist resurgence. Indeed, as we will hear Himmler himself confirm a year later in a notorious speech to his officers at Posen, to endure and carry out this destruction and recycling of Europe's Jews is precisely that which is making Germany "hard" (see *Epilogue*). Thus Globocnik spouts that their entire task will have been in vain if later a generation should arrive on the scene so "soft and weak-kneed"—his German for the latter is literally "*knochenweich*," soft-boned—that they do not understand the significance of the gigantic labor which has been performed in their name.

Like almost every other unbelievable statement and action by Germany's fascist henchmen, even Globocnik's grotesque fantasy of claiming credit by burying celebratory bronze plaques along with the bodies of Europe's Jews is by no means idiosyncratic. As we saw earlier, after brutally quelling the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto, Jürgen Stroop had indulged himself similarly with a grandiose vision of "Stroop Boulevards" running down its Aryanized middle (see chapter 14). Small minds think alike: the meanings underlying Globocnik's fantasy circulated throughout the Third Reich, being drawn from the same

commonly-shared cultural source. Thus a German railway policeman, assigned the job of switching train after train of suffocating human freight at the Rzeszow-Belzec junction, told Wilhelm Cornides, a German noncommissioned officer passing through, the following on August 30, 1942: "In Rzeszow a marble plaque with golden letters will be erected on September 1, because then the city will be free of Jews [*judenfrei*]." Nor was he at all unclear about the "top-secret" methods whereby that "freedom" had been accomplished: "The transports with the Jews pass almost daily through the switch yards, are dispatched immediately on their way and return swept clean, most often in the same evening. 6000 Jews" from the town of Jaroslav, he continued, "were recently killed in one day" (in Hilberg, 1971:211).

Small wonder Globocnik saw no need for circumspection, much less shame. In fact a number of average Germans visiting the region seem to have agreed with him completely. Cornides encountered several of them on the train from Rawa Ruska to Chelm—a much-traveled route running right past the Belzec death camp—and recorded their comments in his meticulous diary on August 31, even as they spoke.

Boarding the train at 4:40 p.m., Cornides chats with the woman sharing his compartment, a railway policeman's wife there to visit her husband. She promises to show him the Belzec camp when they come to it. In the meantime they compare notes on the lengths of the empty transports passing by in the opposite direction. A figure is chalked on the outside of each car for all to see, "obviously the number of Jews that were carried inside," Cornides notes. According to his traveling companion, "these transports are now passing through daily, sometimes also with German Jews. Yesterday 6 children's bodies were found along the track. The woman thinks that the Jews themselves had killed these children" Cornides writes, "—but they must have succumbed during the trip." At 5:40 p.m. the train make a brief stop while another returning transport passes slowly alongside. Cornides calls out to the policemen riding atop the passenger car in front. " 'Going back

home to the Reich?' Grinning, one of them says: 'You know where we come from, don't you? Well for us the work does not cease.' " Finally, at 6:20 p.m., they near the death camp.

When the woman called, "Now it comes [*Jetzt kommt es schon*]," one could see a high hedge of fir trees. A strong sweetish odor could be made out distinctly. "But they are stinking already [*Die stinken ja schon*]," says the woman. "Oh nonsense, that is only the gas [*Ach Quatsch, das ist ja das Gas*]," the railway policeman said laughing. Meanwhile—we had gone on about 200 yards—the sweetish odor was transformed into a strong smell of something burning. "That is from the crematory," says the policeman. . . . One of the sheds was open; one could distinctly see that it was filled with bundles of clothing to the ceiling. As we went on, I looked back one more time. The fence was too high to see anything at all. The woman says that sometimes, while going by, one can see smoke rising from the camp, but I could notice nothing of the sort" (Cornides, in Hilberg, 1971:210-211 and 1985:965).

Not only are Globocnik's undertakings the subject of widespread knowledge in Galicia; amongst most of those associated even marginally with maintaining the operation, they are met with approval as well—although Cornides also encounters at least one German deeply troubled by a deportation he has witnessed in Lvov.³⁰ Nor must one tell the Germans imported to the region why all this is being done; as one policeman explained to Cornides in the Chelm beer hall [*Ratskeller*] when asked, the Jews have been passing on information to the Russians, and in any event "are also responsible here for the entire black market and driving up prices. When the Jews are gone, one will be able to put into effect reasonable

³⁰Again, even in these distressing accounts one finds that the fascist hegemonic was not seamless and all-defining. Amongst the people Cornides encountered Rawa Ruska's "German House"—the local colonial *Gemeinschaftshaus*—was also at least one man, an engineer and a Nazi party member, who found the loading of a deportation train which he had witnessed (in Lvov) deeply troubling. "With tears in his eyes," he recounted "how these people were driven down by the SS, sometimes with sticks and horsewhips, and how they were pushed into the cars, that was a sight I won't forget for the rest of my life." Likewise a "Sudeten German peasant official," told of a drunken SS man "bawling like a child. He said that he was on duty in Belzec and if that was going to go on for another 14 days he will kill himself because he can't stand it anymore" (see Cornides in Hilberg, 1971:212). In the latter case, however, one can't say for sure whether it is the elimination of the Jews or, as is more likely, the gruesomeness of the task itself which most disturbs this SS man (cf. Höss in chapter 16).

Cornides himself appears to be at least marginally sympathetic as well as capable of critical thinking, if only because he has presented both perspectives while letting the words of those he encounters speak for themselves. On the other hand his account is so clinical that it is hard to say for sure where he stands in relation to all he has witnessed. Perhaps he is just a "walking camera."

prices again" (p.212-3). This commonplace explanation is provided without knowledge of Nazi master plans and without reference to Nazi ideology in all its intricacies. Nonetheless we see in its popular construction the defining framework of Nazi antisemitism. The Jew is the illicit manipulator of exchange who drives the market wild; by eliminating him, Germans restore to themselves control over capitalism. Given the self-fulfilling nature of this system, it is not surprising that the policemen and passengers already see the fruits of this restoration in the mountains of appropriated clothing visible outside the camp. They also see it in the table-turning "good business" they and the death camp's Ukrainian helpers profess to be doing on the side, through the transformation of the desperate deportees—willing to exchange a wedding ring for a drink of water—into a German-generated source of value and exchange (see p. 212).

Completing the Inversion

As for the German policeman and "witty" German *Hausfrau* so eagerly anticipating Belzec's plumes of smoke, apparently their cultural imagination has already filled in for them the inevitable manner in which Germany's mass murder of the Jews must end: according to all available sources, the exhumation and burning of the 600,000 corpses Belzec had produced to date did not actually begin there until at least one month later, in November of 1942 (see Arad, 1987:172-3). Perhaps what these two have noticed are preliminary experiments or premature attempts to deal with overloaded graves (cf. Arad, 1987:94). Or perhaps it is Belzec's refuse pits in action. As a result of Franz Stangl's initial "beautification" efforts at Treblinka toward the end of 1942, a similar pit at that camp became, along with the *trompe l'oeil* train station, a fully elaborated element of the killing operation, one which also foreshadowed the underlying significance of the conflagration to come.

The "Infirmarium"

Dubbed the *Lazarett*, or the "Infirmarium," this huge pit came to represent the camp's killing process in microcosm, complete with "clever" disguises, a labyrinthine entrance and a purpose designed to complete the inversions which Nazi antisemitism had begun. Covering an area of approximately 150 to 200 square meters in the lower camp (see Willenberg, 1989:pl.2), the *Lazarett* was a roofless enclosure surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence thickly interlaced, like all the camp's fences, with ever-renewed branches of pine and fir so as to give the impression of a living hedge. According to SS officer Franz Suchomel and others, a white flag with a red cross was hung at its entrance; there was also a sign marked "Infirmarium" in German (see Lanzmann, 1985:120; Arad, 1987:122). Yet another rationalized component in the industrial killing process, the *Lazarett* was intended first and foremost to remove, in as unobtrusive a manner as possible, any of the weak, aged and infirm who might clog the "hose" and thereby impede the cleansing process to which the camp as a whole was dedicated. "The way in," reports survivor Richard Glazar,

was a narrow passage, very short, but somewhat similar to the "funnel" [i.e., the "hose," a mistranslation]. A sort of tiny labyrinth. In the middle of it was a pit, and to the left as one came in, there was a little booth with a kind of wooden plank in it, like a springboard. If people were too weak to stand on it, they'd have to sit on it, and then, as the saying went in Treblinka jargon, SS man Miete would "cure each one with a single pill": a shot in the neck. In the peak periods [i.e., "*Hochbetrieb*"] that happened daily. In those days the pit—and it was at least ten to twelve feet deep—was full of corpses. . . . The "infirmarium" was also for us, the Treblinka slaves, the last stop. Not the gas chamber. We always ended up in the "infirmarium" (Glazar, in Lanzmann, 1985:120-1).

Treblinka survivor Samuel Willenberg's further elaborations jibe with the German trial records; his description provides perhaps the most vivid account of this installation's inversionary form and labyrinthine effects. Having been instructed routinely to collect all "papers, documents and photographs" from amongst the clothing of deportees being sorted after arrival, Willenberg is ordered to the "infirmarium" with his bundle:

I wrapped the wad of papers in a sheet and strode to the hole in the brown-green fence. Passing through, I walked along a narrow trail between two high fences camouflaged with branches. Finally I reached a little room camouflaged at every angle; even some benches along the walls were covered with red velvet rugs. Elderly and crippled men sat on the benches, and an orderly [a Jew] wearing a white apron and a Red Cross armband stood in the middle of the room. He turned to the older people and, with great deference, asked them to undress for a medical examination. . . . Noticing my presence, the orderly ordered me to leave at once through a door in the right. As I obeyed, however, I found a wall of shrubbery in my way; to circumvent it, I turned left and climbed to the top of a raised bank of sand. Ahead of me, a bored Ukrainian sentry sat on a little chair, clutching a rifle. Before him, down below, was a deep pit. At its bottom were heaps of corpses which had not yet been consumed by a fire burning under them. . . . The sizzling, half-burnt cadavers emitted grinding and crackling sounds. . . . I threw the documents as far away as possible and turned around to escape this hell (Willenberg, 1989:52-3; see also Ruckerl, 1977:202; Arad, 1987:122).

The pit hidden behind the earthen wall Willenberg describes was kept constantly burning—for as Willenberg and Glazar both make clear, the "infirmary" was not simply a site of execution; it was the camp's garbage incinerator. "What was garbage in Treblinka?" Glazar asked rhetorically. "Jewish family albums. . . SS garbage was usually buried or taken away, but camp garbage was burned here" (Glazar, personal interview).³¹ The photo albums making up a part of that garbage were present in abundance: hoping against hope that they might indeed be "resettled," the Jews of Warsaw and elsewhere had taken special care to squeeze them into their suitcases before being crammed themselves into freight cars bound for this site.

But people too were garbage, and not only the aged and infirm. As Glazar and Willenberg indicate, any of the camp's inmates who had been "*gestempelt*" ("stamped"), or intentionally marked by the SS with wounds caused by whips and blows, were consigned to destruction in the camp's rubbish fire and not its gas chambers (see Ruckerl, 1977:230;

³¹The practice of keeping SS garbage separate from the "rubbish" in the *Lazarett* incineration pits may have changed in the spring of 1943. According to Willenberg, at that time the SS, following the suggestion of the Jewish camp overseer, entrusted a Jewish inmate with the task of emptying rubbish from whitewashed barrels which the SS had placed along paths in the German and Ukrainian *Wohnlager*; he transported it in a pram to the *Lazarett* for burning. The reason for the suggestion was to give Jewish inmates greater access to the SS sections so as to facilitate the organization of a camp underground for the purposes of launching a rebellion (see Willenberg, 1989:138-9).

Sereny, 1974:118; Donat, 1979). Thus the SS physically inscribed the status of "damaged goods" upon the bodies of any slaves with whom they were unsatisfied, and disposed of them accordingly. Indeed, as Abraham Krzepicki reported, all of Treblinka's inmates were nothing but "human material" in the process of being worn out, at which point the "rejects" were "ready to be turned into 'scrap,' as the saying went" (in Donat, 1979:118). Thus even *Totenjuden* ("Death Jews") normally kept strictly separate in the camp's segregated, inner death sanctuary were marched back down into the lower camp when "used up" in order to be burned in the "infirmary's" incineration pits (see Willenberg, 1989:101). This too was the destination of those few women slaves mentioned earlier, whose bodies still managed, despite the extremity of "life" in camp, to produce signs of lingering fertility, and whose menses could not be adequately concealed with rags or the leaves of wild burdock.

The form of the *Lazarett* was thus yet another practical joke for the SS to enjoy, serving the functional needs of impression management even as it helped embody the symbolic transformation which the death camp perpetrated at every step. Consistent with its inversionary shell—from its red cross flag to its "healing pills"—the inner reality of the *Lazarett* was to reduce Jews to garbage. This was accomplished not only by burning their bodies in the camp dump, but by using their passports and family photo albums—those elements that established their human, social identities—as fuel to fan the fire. And thus the Germanic family album which we examined earlier—the one fashioned by SS Major-General Jürgen Stroop in Warsaw (see chapter 14)—arises not only out of the rubble of that city's ghetto, but literally out of the ashes of Warsaw's Jews, whose own photo albums are consumed at this site, along with the families they depict. At the same time SS garbage was rarely burned here, but removed from the camp or buried elsewhere, as Glazar related. Perhaps the rationale behind this, Globocnik's "views" notwithstanding, was to avoid any telltale evidence of German identity that might somehow be left behind amidst the ashes of their victims. However, the probable intuitive motivation for this curious action is

far more revealing. By keeping the offcasts of their own lives (and identities) separate, the SS maintained National Socialism's barriers against racial "pollution" in the best anal-compulsive fashion of the death camp. At the same time this measure prevented any hint of ambiguity that might interfere with the principles of dialectical transformation to which their hermetical killing installations were devoted.

As the prior reference to Stroop's Warsaw album indicates, the *Lazarett's* role in this dialectic is as clear-cut as it is unbearable. And yet the dialectic does not end there. Still another souvenir album rises from these ashes, this time *in situ*. It is the album of Franz Stangl's good-looking but brutal adjutant, Kurt Franz, known to the camp's Jewish slaves as "Lalke," or "The Doll."

It was Franz who would set his mongrel Saint Bernard dog "Barry," trained to bite off the genitals, on any Jewish male unfortunate enough to catch his eye. The inversionary command Franz gave to "Barry" was "*Mensch, faß den Hund!* [Man, get that dog!]" (see Rückerl, 1977:230; Klee, 1988:225).³² It was Franz, too, who created the most

³²Anxious to determine if "Barry"—otherwise "good-natured and lazy" as the SS and others had testified—could actually transform, as it were, from Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde, the German courts during the Treblinka trial in the early 1970s actually brought in an expert "scientific" witness in the form of an animal psychologist, the Director of the Max Planck Institute for Behavioral Research. The court's impulse, as well as that of their consultant, was well-intentioned and helpful in corroborating the often nearly-incredible testimony of the death camp survivors. Nonetheless, the arguments used, as well as the extensive attention paid to authenticating this detail "scientifically," have an exceedingly ironic flavor given the issues at hand:

According to the photographs of Barry made available to him by the Court of Assizes, he [the consulting witness] was able to determine that this was no pure-bred [*reinrassiger*, literally, "racially-pure"] Saint Bernard, but must rather have been a mongrel [*Mischlingshund*], although one predominantly showing the racial characteristics [*Rassenmerkmale*] of a Saint Bernard. Mongrels are much more sensitive than pure-bred [*reinrassige*] animals. If they attach themselves to a master and thereby enter into a so-called dog-master relationship, they are able literally to sense their master's wishes. A dog's behavior is a 'reflection of his master's subconscious mind,' and this is particularly true in the case of *Mischlingshunde*. . . (in Rückerl, 1977:236-7).

The theme of status reversal revealed in the way "Barry" was commanded to attack ("*Mensch, faß den Hund!*") was expressed more formally at Auschwitz, where special attention was paid to creating spacious, sanitary, climate-controlled kennels for attack dogs, while Jewish inmates in contrast were forced to live amidst filth in crowded horsestalls and sleep upon three-tiered wooden shelves as if they were turnips (see Langbein, 1980; Pawelczynska, 1979).

significant photographic documentation of Treblinka that exists: an album whereby, in the best fashion of the Hitler Youth and Merten's ubiquitous "training camps," or *Schulungslagern* (see chapter 10), one's fond memories of the *Gemeinschaftserlebnis* (experience of racial community) could be preserved, should the effects begin to fade after leaving the camp's temporary embrace. "Everyone brings home souvenirs in the form of numerous *Lager* pictures," Mertens had written, "yet they all pale in comparison to the ideal picture that everyone carries in heart and soul" (Mertens, 1937:72). Thus Treblinka's pretty little birchwood zoo (ironically, the product of a Jewish craftsman) is shown with its native foxes, as well as the camp's feudalistic watch-tower. Franz also makes sure to save a space for the beautified "Kurt Seidel Street" along which he no doubt strolled on pleasant summer nights—as well as the enormous excavator which the SS used to exhume Jewish corpses, and an open mass grave filled with boards and rubbish to keep their camp fires bright. "Camp impressions" represent one's "commitment to the *Volk*," wrote Mertens; they are "unforgettable and endure for an entire lifetime. . ." (p.72). The death camps were no exception; indeed, they represented the apotheosis of that commitment. Kurt Franz knew this well: written at the top of one of his album's pages, above its cleverly arranged photographs and his own self-portrait, are the sentiments through which Treblinka's second-in-command managed to sum up the death camp's inversionary significance for the SS as well as for Globocnik's "hardened" generations yet to come. "*Schöne Zeiten*," he wrote; "Happy Days"³³ (see plates 105-107).

³³Various photo excerpts from this album (including its inscribed title page) can be seen in Arad, 1987:90-95; Klee, 1988:205-9, 222-5; Sereny, 1974:192ff; Donat, 1979:263. The original is in the possession of the Staatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf.

The "Grills"

Whether or not an incineration pit such as Treblinka's *Lazarett* provided the source of the smoke which Cornides' traveling companions greeted so cheerfully, none of the visitors to the region would have had any trouble missing the acrid clouds that began to rise over Belzec's skies a month or so later. The nauseating smells so produced were already invading Sobibor's surroundings and would soon envelop Treblinka as well. Gerstein had referred to the origin of all this pestilence toward the end of his report: it was the enormous cremation pits which were working day and night to complete the inversionary process to which the Jews of Europe were being subjected, thereby ushering in the end of the *Aktion Reinhard* camps themselves. This form of cremation had been developed by Paul Blobel's "Exhumation Commando," also code-named *Kommando 1005*: dozens of train rails were brought in and set upon concrete pedestals to create open-air furnaces. Their resemblance to monstrous barbecue pits was no accident, and the SS did not mince words: they called them *Rosten*, or "grills" (also translated literally as "roasts" or "roasters"). Franz Stangl remembered later how Blobel's findings had been conveyed to him at Treblinka: "Wirth told me that according to the experience of this *Standartenführer* one could burn corpses on grills [*Rosten*]*—that worked wonderfully [das ginge wunderbar]*" (in Rückerl, 1977:205-6).

We already encountered Blobel's grills in operation earlier, at Chelmno and in the killing fields outside Lvov (chapter 12). There we saw how, in keeping with the Jew's elusive exchange nature, the corpses into which he had been transformed were referred to as *Figuren**—*abstractions that had been immobilized and congealed prior to their final reduction into the basic elements of nature itself. At Belzec, where no fresh transports of human cargo were to be received, two grills were set up to perform this operation upon the 600,000 or more corpses that were already in the ground; each grill was capable of burning from 2,000 to as many as 3,000 per day. Sobibor and Treblinka continued to receive new

transports; these "pieces" were now burned immediately after gassing. But at Treblinka, the largest of the camps, there was already a minimum of 700,000 corpses awaiting exhumation as well; accordingly the number of grills there was raised to six, capable of burning a total of 12,000 or more corpses per day (cf. plate 106). As Arad points out, these open-pit furnaces were actually more efficient than the four "state-of-the-art" crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Each of those had eight furnaces capable of burning 1750 bodies a day, bringing their total capacity to approximately 7,000, assuming there were no breakdowns (see Arad, 1987:175-8). Indeed, during the frightful Hungarian "action" of 1944 which Lili Jacob's *Auschwitz Album* documents in part (see chapter 14), the pressure of eliminating 400,000 Jewish corpses within a few months time was so great that the muffles in the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau cracked from the stress. Accordingly, open incineration pits equipped not with grills but with every kind of flammable rubbish the camp complex could produce were established nearby, as the only known photograph to document the cremation of Jews at Auschwitz testifies (see Müller, 1979:130-1) (see plate 108).

More than a year earlier, however, the SS at the *Aktion Reinhard* camps were finding their own way by trial and error, as usual rationalizing their labor process ever more thoroughly until they had reached the pinnacle of efficiency. Thus at Treblinka they experimented first with rails which they had hoped to recycle from a narrow-gauge field trolley no longer in use. These proved to be far too weak, however; they buckled from the intense heat. Instead real train rails were brought in. So too were enormous excavators with cranes, rented from private contractors; these were used to exhume the rotting corpses. The scoop dangling from the end of the crane would dig out six or eight corpses at a time, as Arad reports, dumping them at the edge of the pit; there a special team of Jewish slaves transferred them on stretchers to the edge of the grills (see Arad, 1987:175). "We always had to run," one survivor reported, "and we had to be careful never to carry

just one adult corpse, but always to add a couple of children—otherwise it would have looked as though we were shirking" (in Sereny, 1974:220). The inescapable knowledge that their own family members were pressed somewhere amongst the wasting corpses made the torture of this task all the more unbearable, as did the SS penchant for dumping corpses directly onto the workers, often injuring them in the process (see Reichman in Arad, 1987:175; see also Lanzmann, 1985:12). Later on the SS divided the labor yet again, creating a special team just to place the bodies on stretchers; this kept the exhausted stretcher-bearers in continuous motion. In addition new grills were erected closer to the mass graves so as to save time in transferring the bodies. Once the corpses were at the grills, yet another team, the *Feuerkolonne*, or "fire column" was forced to arrange them along with scrap wood in alternating layers to a height of 2 meters, ultimately stacking as many as 3000 at a time. Dry wood and brush placed beneath the grills served as tinder.

Most of Treblinka's Jewish slaves living in the Lower Camp had never seen the *Totenlager* at all. For them, nonetheless, the evidence that something had changed was overpowering. Richard Glazar recalled one evening how the SS chased all of the prisoners back into their barracks.

Suddenly, from the part of the camp called the death camp, flames shot up. Very high. In a flash, the whole countryside, the whole camp, seemed ablaze. It was already dark. . . from the window, we kept on watching the fantastic backdrop of flames of every imaginable color: red, yellow, green, purple. And suddenly one of us stood up. . . he'd been an opera singer in Warsaw. . . . And facing that curtain of fire, he began chanting a song I didn't know: "My God, my God/why hast Thou forsaken us?/We have been thrust into the fire before/but we have never denied Thy Holy Law". . . (in Lanzmann, 1985:14).

Samuel Willenberg remembers seeing the upper half of the crane rearing up over the 5-meter-high sandbank that separated the Lower Camp from the *Totenlager*.

As its scoop rose in the air, we saw corpses fall between its serrated edges. We did not see where they landed, because the bank blocked our view. Then a tongue of fire thrust out, accompanied by a plume of smoke dozens of metres high. . . . We saw pieces of human bodies flying in the air. Little strings dangled from the teeth of the scoop; they were human intestines. . . . The crane toiled thus,

dumping bodies into the blazing furnace, for days on end." (Willenberg, 1989:107-8).

The view was not limited to those imprisoned within the death camps' confines. These cranes towered so high that Poles living in the surrounding area, like Maria Daniel of the Belzec township, had no trouble observing the "machine that took out the corpses from the graves and threw them into the fire. . ." (in Arad, 1987:173). A prisoner in a penal camp located a full three kilometers from Treblinka had similar recollections: "The spring winds brought with them the smell of burning bodies from the nearby extermination camp," he reported. "We breathed in the stench. . . . We heard the clatter of the excavators for days and nights on end. . . . At night we gazed at skies red from the flames. Sometimes you could also see tongues of flame rising into the night" (in Arad, 1987:177).

This hellish perfection was not achieved all at once. At first, according to survivor Jankiel Wiernik, the SS at Treblinka could not get the grills burning properly, despite the copious quantities of gasoline which they poured over the corpses to encourage the flames. Frustrated by this unsatisfactory level of "production," the SS initiated competition between the labor details to see who could cremate the largest number of bodies. "Bulletin boards were rigged up and daily scores were recorded," Wiernik reported.

Nonetheless, the results were very poor. . . . When corpses of pregnant women were cremated, their bellies would burst open. The fetus would be exposed and could be seen burning inside the mother's womb. All this made no impression whatsoever on the German murderers, who stood around watching as if they were checking a machine which was not working properly and whose production was inadequate" (Wiernick, in Donat, 1979:170).

Such problems were quickly rectified, however, by *Oberscharführer* Herbert Floss, the SS "expert" called in from one of the other camps to supervise the cremations. Known to the camp inmates as "*Tadellos*," or "Perfect," Floss wore "a perpetual smile on his face" as he went about rationalizing the burning process (p.170). His primary secret, according to survivor Yechiel Reichman of the *Feuerkolonne*, was "to put women, particularly fat

women, on the first layer on the grill, face down (in Arad, 1987:175). The fat of their bodies transformed them into "kindling" (Wiernik, in Donat, 1979:170). Subsequent layers of corpses and wood provided the additional fuel and air-circulation necessary to produce a perfectly balanced fire—one true to the autarkic principles of German fascism as well as antisemitism, for it recycled human fat, thereby saving all that expensive gasoline while once again forcing the Jews, even in death, to do the work of consuming themselves. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, where 9 incineration pits were ultimately set up during the Hungarian "action," this principle was refined even further: sloping channels were carefully dug from the center of each pit toward a corner and lined with brick. Pans were then placed at the bottoms of these channels to catch the sizzling fat, which was "scooped out with buckets on a long, curved rod and poured all over the pit" to keep the flames alive (see Müller, 1979:130ff; 136).

Like Wirth, Stangl, Hackenholt and the rest, "*Tadellos*" approached his work like a true German craftsman, throwing himself wholly into the labor of status reversal to which the camps were devoted. SS-*Unterscharführer* Karl Ludwig of Sobibor conveyed the essence of that labor when, inebriated, he had confided in Franz Stangl's wife about the gassing, and how terrible it was. "But we are doing it for our Führer. For him we sacrifice ourselves to do this. . . . Can you imagine what would happen if the Jews ever got hold of us?" (in Sereny, 1974:136). Indeed, it was through the self-abnegating millenarian labor of genocide that Germany as a whole sought to do the impossible: to reverse the historical development of capitalism itself and thereby recover the dimensions of the German self that had been drained by the processes of commoditization. No wonder, then, that Floss and his associates took such pleasure in their accomplishments, as Wiernik relates—revealing the origins of Floss's nickname in the process:

They toasted the scene with brandy and with the choicest liquers, ate, caroused and had a great time warming themselves by the fire. Thus the Jews were of some use to them even after they had died. . . . The *Oberscharführer* who had created this

inferno sat by the fire, laughing, caressing it with his eyes and saying, "*tadello*" ["perfect!"]. To him, these flames represented the fulfillment of his perverted dreams and wishes (Wiernik, in Donat, 1979:171).

But even the warming heat thrown off by the incineration pyres was not the last use-value which the SS were to extract from the Jew through the transformational labor of genocide. During the daytime, after the corpses had been burned and the fires had died down, any charred bones and fragments that had not collapsed on their own were crushed by the *Aschkolonne*. Then, in testimony to the Nazi obsession with *Werterfassung*, the ashen remains were subjected to yet another step in their exhaustive recycling for value: they were sifted or put through a "screening machine" so as to separate out any valuables that might have been missed earlier, while providing another opportunity to crush any bone fragments that failed to drop through (in Arad, 1987:173). As for those Jewish slaves forced to participate in the cremation process, they labored only to be thrown onto the burning grills themselves.

Now came the final step in the inversionary process to which the Jews had been subjected: the pulverized ash of their bodies, stripped of any remaining value, was mixed with sand and buried in layers in the pits within which their bodies had previously been packed so tightly. A portion of the ash was retained, however, in order to combine disposal with the extraction of one final ounce of German value: truckloads were used to pave the road connecting Treblinka with the penal camp 3 kilometers away, from which its fires had been observed. ("The ashes had turned the street black as funeral crape. . ." wrote Wassili Grossman after the war, when he returned to inspect the site. "As I drove over it, the whole time I heard coming from under the wheels a mournful, quiet sighing, like stifled moans" [Grossmann, 1945:57].) Meanwhile the former burial pits were carefully landscaped, their perimeters obscured and their surfaces seeded with wild blue lupine. Pine and fir saplings of various sizes were also planted so as to create naturally-

appearing stands of vegetation. Then, having fulfilled their task of eliminating the Jews of Europe's heartland, the *Aktion Reinhard* camps as a whole were ready to be liquidated.

The means chosen by the SS to disguise the sites of their former death camps reveals that this was no act of camouflage driven by simple utilitarian motives, much less guilt. The death factories of the *Aktion Reinhard* were the core industrial installations for the germanization of the eastern *Lebensraum*; they represented the "dirtiest" as well as the most radical of all those temporary transformative projects designed to bring the millenarian perfection of the Third Reich into being. For this reason it was crucial that the temporary industrial "wounds" which they had inflicted upon the countryside—the debris of mass murder, as well as all traces of the Jew's malignant racial being—be carefully eradicated in a manner consistent with Himmler's comprehensive plans for domesticating the east.

As we saw earlier, Himmler had ordered the creation of "trash disposal" places "in which no longer useable garbage [*nicht verwertbare Abfälle*] and rubbish can be accommodated in deep trenches and covered with sufficient top soil [*Mutterboden*]" (see chapter 12 and Himmler, n.d.[1943]:32). It was necessary, however, that "every clearing operation" be followed by "another reconstruction measure, so that it fits itself meaningfully into the orderly profile of the landscape." For this reason such "refuse places," were "not to be visible amidst the landscape. They should be planted over and devoted to some far-reaching use. . . it is necessary to make them permanently green again" (p.36). This racially-motivated perversion of ecological principle held all the more so for those sites designed to eradicate the destructive presence and effects of the Jew, "that *Volk* that was put together," as Himmler had written,

out of the waste products [*Abfallprodukten*] of entire peoples and nations of this planet. . . . We do not underestimate him, because we know him for centuries, we do not overestimate him, because we believe in the sacred mission of our *Volk* and the resurrection of our power through the leadership and work of Adolf Hitler (Himmler, 1937:30).

The danger represented by that "*Abfallprodukt*" was too thoroughgoing and comprehensive to be treated only to half measures. If the dialectical resurrection of the Aryan was to be insured—indeed, if the forces of capitalism itself were to be conquered—the inversion to which the Jew had been subjected would have to be rendered irreversible and complete. That meant reharmonizing all traces of the Jew's unnatural exchange nature with the organic and encompassing forms of the Aryan *Volkskörper*.

Himmler's Germanic landscaping and reforestation efforts provided an especially potent means to accomplish this ultimate act of symbolic encompassment. "The life form of the forest is so intricately connected to the conditions of human life," wrote Hermann Bousset in an SS *Leitheft* article of 1939,

that we—the German *Volk*-soul [*die deutsche Volksseele*]—cannot endure a leveling of the forest. . . . We recognize the hard characteristics [*harte Züge*] of the German forest as racially kindred, the biological kindred of *our* race [*artgemäß, u n s e r e Art gemäß*]. . . for this reason we speak of "good racial wood" [*gut rassigem Holz*]. . . (Bousset, 1939:37-41).

It was the barren, soulless Jew who supposedly was responsible for the plundering of Germany's forests, no mere act of economic exploitation, but an affront to the German's deepest racial being. Now the factories that had consumed the Jew and naturalized his malignant exchange-nature would be replaced by a living skin of German forest. Accordingly, the same landscaping process used to disguise the pits within which the camps' incinerated Jewish "rubbish" had been dumped was extended now to the sites of Himmler's former death factories as a whole: all installations were dismantled and the debris cleaned away, while more lupine and stands of young forest were planted over the entire area. Then, in order to prevent neighboring Poles from disturbing the plantings in search of Jewish "gold," bricks from the dismantled gas chambers were recycled to create a farmhouse at each site. A Ukrainian farmer was installed in each farmhouse to serve as both guard and alibi, while the houses themselves were artificially weathered so as to look

as if they had been in place for ages. These final acts of camouflage served not only to eradicate the "evidence," but to conceal the last ugly traces of the industrialized killing process and its supposedly unnatural subject. Both had been domesticated within a naturalized landscape, in keeping with Himmler's plans for the former Warsaw ghetto and for germanizing the east as a whole (see Ackermann, 1970).

CONCLUSION: THE "HUMANITARIAN" DIMENSIONS OF GENOCIDE

In *Jews on the Eastern Border*, Seifert had suggested that the Jewish Question would not be solved by such " 'humanitarian' nonsense and sentimental pleading as is considered good taste in democracies. . . but with new methods, with order and work" (Seifert, 1940:86). And yet in a seemingly incongruous aside which Gerstein found shocking, Prof. Pfannenstiel had characterized the brutal killing process which we have just encountered in terms of "very humane methods" and "Beauty of Labor." How can one explain this apparent contradiction?

As usual, the answer requires a 180 degree shift in focus: instead of assimilating these words to our own commonsense perspectives, we must view them, however repellant it may be to do so, from the peculiar angle held by those who had been capable of uttering them in the first place.

From the Nazi perspective, the "humanitarian" character of the death camps was two-fold, neither aspect of which had anything whatsoever to do with the welfare of the Jewish victims. In the first and narrower sense, the industrialized, assembly-line killing method of the stationary death camps represented a direct "humanization" of the killing process for the German perpetrators, as Hilberg has pointed out. This emerged following Himmler's visit in mid-August, 1941 to Minsk, where Commander Arthur Nebe was leading *Einsatzgruppe B* in its mass executions. Having nervously witnessed the shooting of one hundred people (mostly women) specially selected for his benefit, Himmler was all-the-more disquieted by

comments Nebe made to him regarding the effects of the operation on the SS men manning the machine guns. "Look at the eyes of the men in this *Kommando*, how deeply shaken they are!" Nebe said. "These men are finished [*fertig*] for the rest of their lives. What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages!" (in Hilberg, 1985: 332-3). Himmler responded with a speech to all assembled, explaining that he too found this "bloody *Handwerk*" repulsive, but that the work of eliminating Jews was as necessary as the destruction of bedbugs, rats and other vermin, however unpleasant the task might be (p.333). Nonetheless, Himmler instructed Nebe afterwards to find a "more humane" killing method—that is, one which would spare the *German* soldier while heightening the efficiency of the killing operation. Nebe's first suggestion was to try out dynamite on a group of mentally ill people. Not surprisingly, this experiment (which resulted in a scattering about of body parts) proved even less "humane" for the murderers than shooting had been. The next solution was the gas-van. As we saw earlier in the discussion of Chelmno (chapter 13), this was another less-than-perfect option which soon evolved, through the cooperative, problem-solving efforts of Germans at all levels of the SS hierarchy, into the stationary killing installations in Poland.

Struggling to exonerate himself after the war in his 1950 court deposition, Pfannenstiel tried in his answers to affiliate himself with the meanings of "humanitarianism" such as actually prevailed amongst the civilized peoples of the world. Accordingly, he attempted to shift the focus of the term from the SS death camp personnel to their victims. The good doctor was unable, however, to fully conceptualize a world of values beyond that of National Socialism. And so he revealed instead his implicit acceptance of the necessity for eliminating the Jews, and thereby provided inadvertent evidence of the second sense in which the Germans held the death camps to be "humanitarian": "The fact of my having asked to visit the camp may no doubt be attributed to a certain curiosity on my part," he stated. "*I wanted to know in particular if this process of exterminating human beings was*

accompanied by any acts of cruelty" (in Friedländer, 1969:118, his emphasis)—as if the "extermination" itself was not a cruel and inhuman act! As it turns out, Pfannenstiel did indeed find something questionable about the process: *"I found it especially cruel that death did not set in until eighteen minutes had passed,"* he reported (pp.118-119).

Apparently Pfannenstiel could admit now, and with professional indignation, that the killing method had had its flaws. Such oblivious self-justifications—expressed here in the characteristic legitimizing language of "scientific detachment"—underscore dramatically the taken-for-granted cultural level at which the practical meanings of Nazi antisemitism operated.

In a separate deposition ten years later Pfannenstiel acknowledged similarly that Belzec at first sight had appeared to be "in perfect order, that it possessed clean sanitary facilities and had approximately 1000 Jewish prisoners" (in Klee, 1988:217). However, upon accepting Wirth's invitation to view the disposal of an incoming transport of Jews, he realized he would have to change the report he had been intending, privately and on his own initiative, to offer to the *Reichsarzt-SS* in Berlin later on. Certainly the gas chambers were "bright and friendly" with their fresh paint and urns of geraniums, all of which gave the impression of a "normal delousing installation" (p.219). "During the destruction of the corpses," however, "I determined in fact that the entire affair was not entirely hygienic [*Bei dieser Vernichtung der Leichen habe ich dann auch festgestellt, daß die ganze Angelegenheit nicht hygienisch einwandfrei war*]" . Apparently the sanitation consultant from the University of Marburg was concerned that the layers of corpses had not been completely burned before being sandwiched with soil (p.221). Again, Pfannenstiel's reservations have nothing to do with the overall moral implications of the killing process, but pertain to the possible deleterious effects aspects of that process might have upon the health of the SS personnel and the German *Volkskörper* itself if not conducted according to the strictest of "professional" standards. Even by 1960, fifteen years after the fall of the

Third Reich, the Professor Doctor is still unaware of the implications his statements bear or the effects they might have upon his listeners.

Pfannenstiel's dubious rationalizations help to reveal the second, broader sense in which the Germans considered the death camps to be "humanitarian": the genocide perpetrated there was supposedly a service being performed for the good of all Germans and by extension for "humanity" as a whole. Naturally Jewish "subhumanity" was excluded from these benefits. Only a few weeks prior to Pfannenstiel's speech, Alfred Rosenberg, the Führer's personal ideologue, had occasion to clarify this second "humanitarian" sense while addressing Hermann Göring and representatives of the military administration for the occupied areas in the east. (As was common Nazi practice, the stenographer recording the comments included the audience reaction in parentheses.)

Jewish emancipation was pursued during the eighteenth century as if it were a humanitarian solution. . . . We seriously deceived ourselves however. In the place of humanity one discharged filth [*hat man den Schmutz. . . ausgegossen*] amongst the peoples of the earth. And now we are setting about to root out this filth once and for all, and what is happening now with the removal of the Jews from all states on the European continent is also an act of humanitarianism, indeed, a hard biological humanitarianism [*eine harte, biologische Humanität*] (enthusiastic applause).

It means that the Volkbody [*Volkskörper*] once again is being made clean, healthy and human [*menschlich*] (renewed enthusiastic applause), as it had been earlier. . . . We cannot allow ourselves to be satisfied only in shoving the Jews from one state to the next, so that perhaps here and there a large Jewish ghetto remains stuck. Instead our goal can be only the old one: the Jewish Problem in Europe and in Germany is solved only when there are no more Jews left on the European continent (enthusiastic applause). . . (Rosenberg [August 6, 1942] in Poliakov & Wolf, 1983:330).

In this statement the construction of the Jew in terms of fluid waste and anality could not be more apparent: the Jew is an alien "filth" that has been "discharged" from its traditional ghetto confines and "poured out" (*ausgegossen*) amongst the indigenous peoples of Europe. Now, to be sure that nothing remains "stuck," it must be flushed permanently from the Volkbody, leaving the latter "clean, healthy and human."

Robert Ley, head of the German Workers Front (DAF) to which Beauty of Labor was subordinated, was even more concise than Rosenberg about the methods that would be implemented to perform this cleansing. Writing on May 14, 1944 in Propaganda Minister Goebbels' newspaper, *Der Angriff*, he proclaimed openly: "Jewry is being forced to perish to save humanity" (in Friedländer, 1969:138; see also Poliakov, 1979:212).

Pfannenstiel's characterization of the death camps thus was perfectly accurate after all. The "very humane methods" he observed being used to process the Jews of Europe to death were identical with the "new methods" of "*Ordnung und Arbeit*" which Seifert as early as 1940 had predicted would be used, instead of a so-called democratic humanitarianism, to "liberate *Volk* and Reich from the curse of Europe." If these methods were humane, then it was in the German fascist sense that "Beauty of Labor" was humane—a commonality which the learned Prof. Dr. Pfannenstiel had recognized immediately and intuitively.

The genocide of Jews in the death camps was an act of "humanity" constructed in the best traditions of Beauty of Labor. By embedding mass murder within the rationalized and functionally aestheticized methods of an "aryanzed" industrial production, the SS had humanized the genocidal work process for its German laborers. At the same time they had drawn out the cultural import of the operation for Germany. The assembly-line killing of Jews constitutes a supposedly benevolent geo-political cleansing of all those national organisms whom Germans have deemed human. The death camps perform this purgative function; indeed, they are not only assembly lines but, implicitly, spatial and architectonic models of the collective German body, their mode of operation an extension of its physiological functioning. The killing process is a digestive tract, absorbing the values it extracts from the Jew while eliminating the waste.

This was the "excretion process" (*Ausscheidungsprozess*) to which Himmler and others referred (see Ackermann, 1970:170). This, too, was the meaning of one SS

doctor's much quoted description of the death camps as the "*anus mundi*" (Kremer, quoting Dr. Thilo, in Langbein, 1964:82). This native formulation expressed not so much disgust as the awesome realization that at Auschwitz the SS stood at the Third Reich's formative vent, from which issued the processed tokens of German purification and social regeneration. That this bodily labor should be constructed in terms of an analyzed factory work process should no longer be surprising. By biologizing the forms of industrial production, it seemed as if they had been extracted from the alienating nexus of Jewish exchange in which they supposedly were embedded. The permanence of this liberation could only be insured, however, by performing an act of symbolic inversion. That meant seizing the "putrescent" embodiment of exchange and "sluicing" it through the factory's processing maw, thereby to encompass organically the alienating effects of capitalism while harnessing its prowess.

For this reason the transformation of the Jew could not end with his immobilization and reduction into dust. Carrying the implications of Strop's reformatory practice further, the industrial processing of the body to death was extended to the recrafting of its parts, as in the reduction of hair into felt (see Arad, 1987:109) or the recycling of ash as fertilizer (see Koprowska, 1967:114ff). Along with these products, the personal effects extracted from the multitude of disassembled Jewish bodies were then redistributed—silken underwear for SS wives, phylactery leather for *Wehrmacht* uniforms (see Dobroszycki, 1984:424ff), dental gold for the Prussian Mint—all this for the good of the German *Volk* in its efforts to renew itself (see Hilberg, 1985:947-961). Through the controlled circulation of these wrested values, German racial kinship was defined and the boundaries of the purified German *Volkskörper* sealed; the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*—the true subject of Strop's monstrous family album—was resurrected at last. The German was no more engulfed by the forces of capitalism; he had encompassed them within the social body once and for all by devouring the Jew.

* * *

In his discussion of the grotesque realism that characterized the travesties of carnival, Bakhtin celebrated the creative force of "low culture," its irreverent exponents and its inversionary forms (see Bakhtin, 1984). Perhaps the most important finding to emerge from that and related studies is a realization of the profound access which the forms of symbolic inversion provide (especially in millenarian contexts) to the most fundamental meaningful processes whereby society itself is constructed and transformed.

Degradation here means coming down to earth, to contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving (Bakhtin, 1984:21).

There is nothing intrinsically good or bad about the forms of symbolic inversion or the elemental sociocultural processes—the human processes—to which they give access. However, like the power of the atom itself, it all depends upon how they are harnessed and by whom, with what vehemence, and toward what ends.

The death camps completed a perverse transformational process which began, not with the inauguration of the gas chambers, but with the Third Reich's first measures of antisemitic status reversal in 1933. These acts of progressive degradation were performed in dialectic with the myriad programs whereby Nazism sought to bring about the racial regeneration of the Aryan *Volk*. For the SS, its collaborators, and Germany as a whole, it seemed as if the fundamental forces of the modernity had been harnessed and capitalism itself turned inside-out. And yet the view from beyond National Socialism's suffocating boundaries is quite different. What the SS had actually accomplished through their

distorted acts of status reversal was to take on in reality the imaginary, nightmarish roles which Nazism had projected so ruthlessly onto the Jews of Europe. It was the SS, and not their victims, who had fulfilled the most depraved and inhuman potentialities of a commoditized universe in fascist transformation. It was Germany under National Socialism, following the dictates of its own, embodied alienations, which had become the very "parasite" it had sought to eradicate through its industrial "extermination" of Europe's Jews.

Camp I—Reception and Administration Area

1. Entrance gate
2. Guards' house
3. Ukrainian living quarters
4. Barber, clinic, dentist for the SS and Ukrainians
5. Ukrainian kitchen
6. Railway ramp
7. Garage
8. Tailor's and shoemaker's workshops for the SS and Ukrainians
9. Living quarters for Jewish prisoners
10. Kitchen and laundry for Jewish prisoners
11. Storeroom for belongings taken from the victims
12. Gallows
13. Undressing barrack
14. Room in which women's hair was cut
15. A courtyard enclosed by a wooden fence leading to the "tube"

Camp II—Extermination Area

16. Gas chambers
17. Gas engine
18. Burial pits
19. Anti-tank trench used as a burial pit
20. Shelves for cremating the bodies
21. Living quarters for Jewish prisoners
22. Kitchen for Jewish prisoners

Outside the camp

23. The SS living quarters and offices
24. Warehouse for the belongings taken from the victims—former locomotive shed

Plate 92b. Key to Belzec plan in plate 92a. (Source: Arad, 1987:436 and Ibid.)

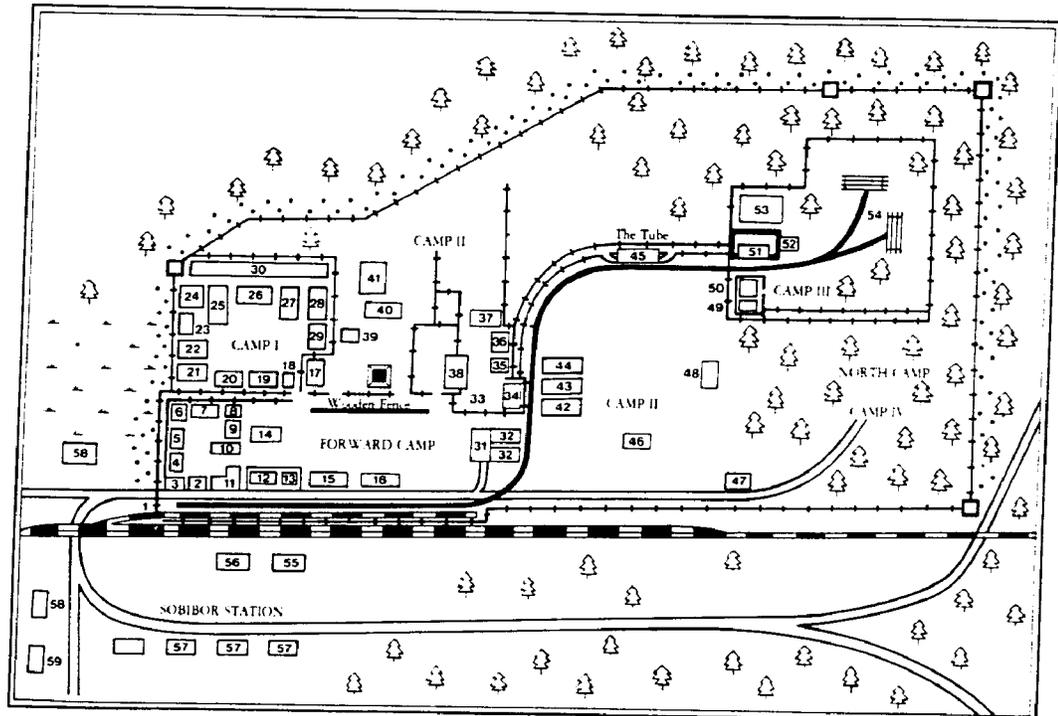


Plate 93a. *Vernichtungslager Sobibor.* For key, see plate 93b. (Source: Arad, 1990:296, composite adapted from German trial records, Staatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf)

Forward Camp

1. Unloading platform
2. Dentist and jail for Ukrainian guards
3. Guard house
4. SS clothing store
5. SS quarters
6. SS quarters
7. Laundry
8. Well
9. Showers and barbershop for SS
10. Garage
11. SS kitchen and canteen
12. Living quarters of the camp commanders
13. Armory
14. Barracks for Ukrainian guards
15. Barracks for Ukrainian guards
16. Barracks for Ukrainian guards
17. Bakery
35. Electrical generator
36. Storage of silverware
37. Stable and barns
38. Administration building and storeroom for valuables
39. SS ironing room
40. Shoe warehouse
41. Garden
42. Barracks for storing property
43. Barracks for storing property
44. Barracks for storing property
45. Barracks where women's hair was cut
46. Incinerator
47. Former chapel
48. Latrine

Camp I

18. Dispensary
19. Tailor shop for SS
20. Shoemaker and saddler shop for SS
21. Smithery
22. Carpentry
23. Latrine
24. Painters' shop
25. Barracks for male prisoners
26. Barracks for male prisoners
27. Prisoners' kitchen
28. Barracks for female prisoners
29. Shoemaker shop for Ukrainian guards
30. Water ditch

Camp II

31. Undressing barracks where deportees deposited their clothing and luggage
32. Barracks where luggage was sorted and stored
33. Undressing yard
34. Storage warehouse for food brought by the deportees

Camp III

49. Barracks for Camp III prisoners
50. Barracks for Camp III prisoners' kitchen and "dentist" workshop
51. Gas chambers
52. Engine room for gas chambers
53. Fenced yard
54. Mass graves and outdoor crematoria

Sobibor station and village

55. Railway station building
56. Living quarters of Polish railway workers
57. Houses of local agriculture workers
58. Farms of Polish peasants
59. Living quarter of railway workers

Watchtower

Minefield

Railroad

Narrow-gauge
railroad

Barbed wire fence

Camouflaged
barbed wire fence

Forester's tower



Plate 93b. Key to Sobibor plan in plate 93a. (Source: Arad, 1987:34 and Ibid.)

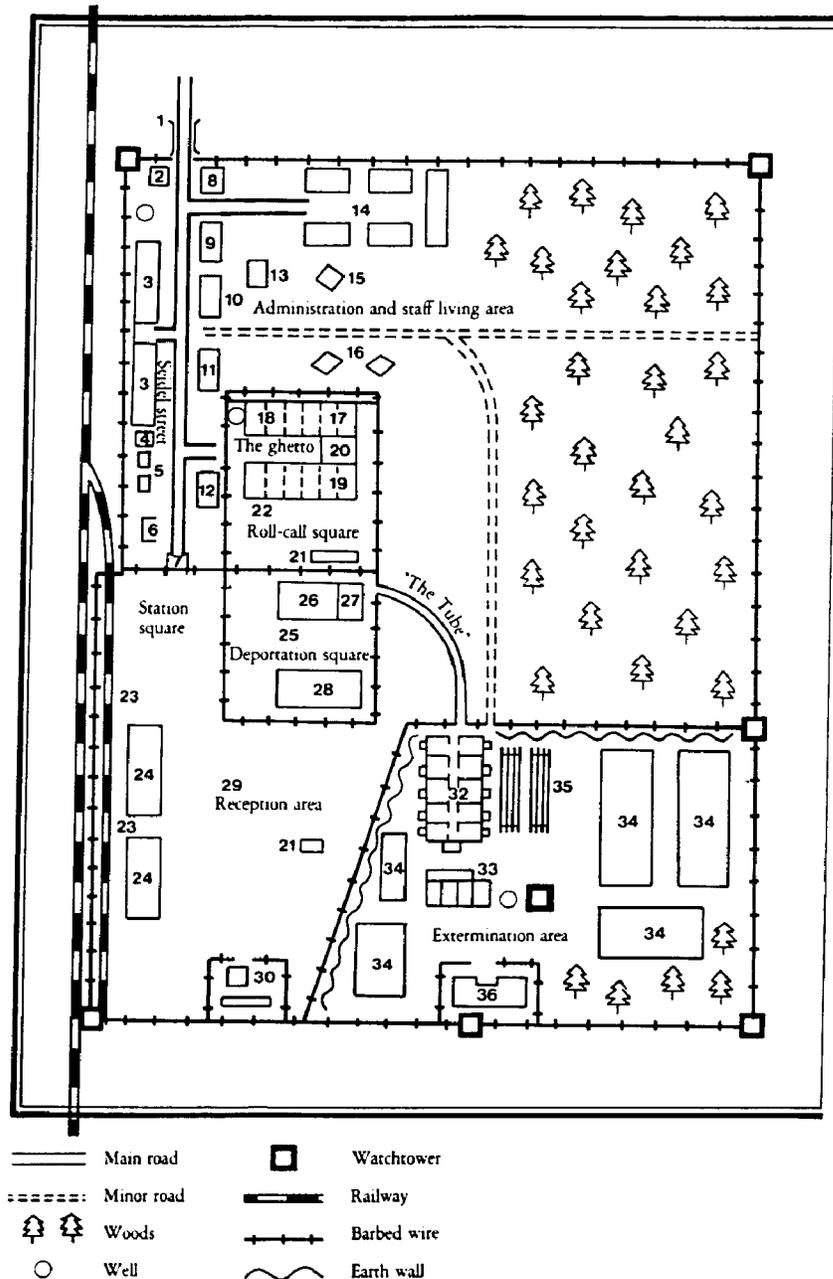


Plate 94a. Vernichtungslager Treblinka. For key, see plate 94b. (Source: Arad, 1990:298, composite adapted from German trial records, Staatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf)

Administration and Staff Living Area

1. Entrance to the camp and Seidel Street
2. Guard's room near the entrance
3. SS living quarters
4. Arms storeroom
5. Gasoline pump and storerooms
6. Garage
7. Entrance gate to Station square
8. Camp Command and Stangl's living quarters
9. Services for SS—barber, sick bay, dentist
10. Living quarters of domestic staff (Polish and Ukrainian girls)
11. Bakery
12. Foodstore and supply storeroom
13. The barrack in which "gold Jews" worked
14. Ukrainian living quarters—"Max Bialas barracks"
15. Zoo
16. Stables, chicken coop, pig pen
17. Living quarters for capos, women, tailor shop, shoe-repairs, carpentry shop, and sickroom
18. Prisoners' kitchen
19. Living quarters for men prisoners, prisoners' laundry and tool room
20. Locksmithy and smithy
21. Latrine
22. Roll-call square

Reception Area

23. Station platform (ramp) and square
24. Storeroom for belongings taken from victims—disguised as a station
25. Deportation square
26. Barrack in which the women undressed and relinquished their valuables
27. Room in which women's hair was cut
28. Barrack in which men undressed, also used as a storeroom
29. Reception square
30. "Lazarett"—execution site
31. "The Tube"—the approach to the gas chambers

Extermination Area

32. New gas chambers (10 chambers)
33. Old gas chambers (3 chambers)
34. Burial pits
35. "The Roasts" for burning bodies
36. Prisoners' living quarters, kitchen, and latrines

Plate 94b. Key to Treblinka plan in plate 94a. (Source: Arad, 1987:38 and Ibid.)

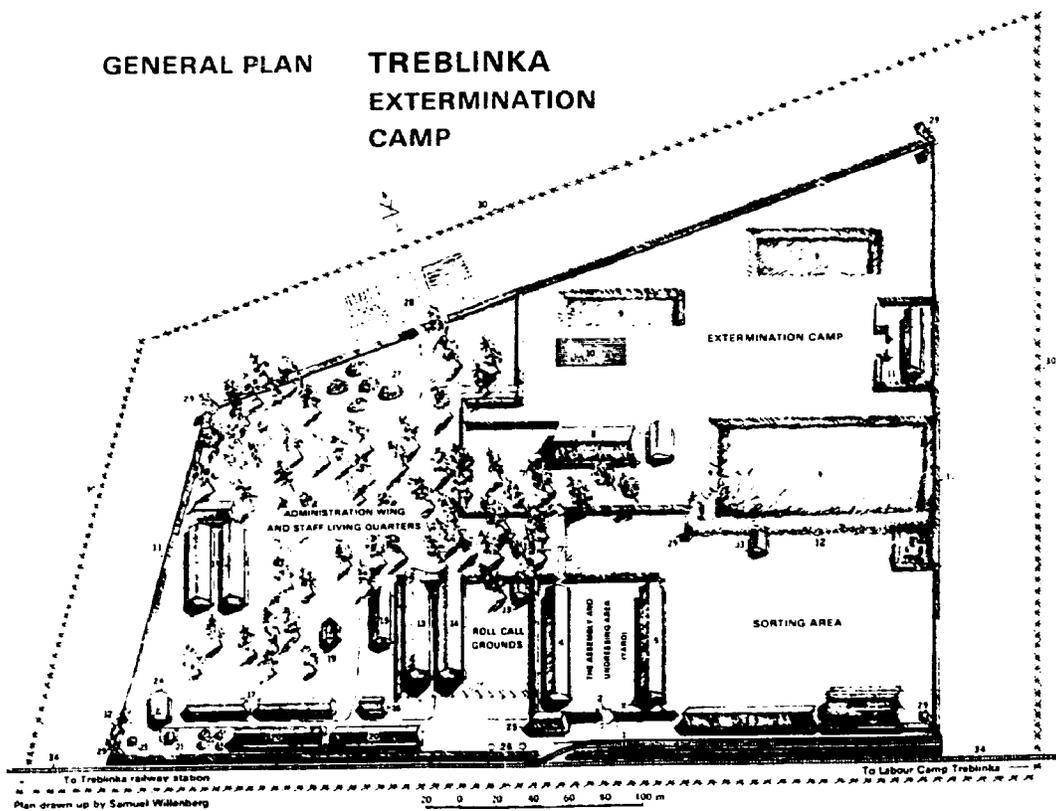
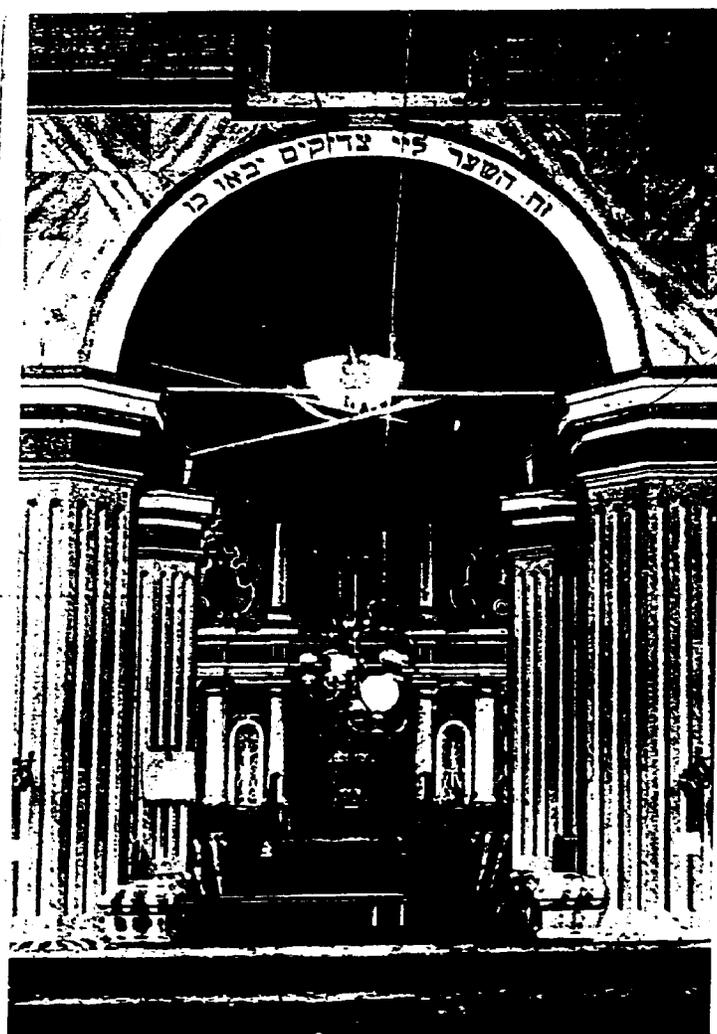


Plate 95. 3-D realization of Treblinka camp plan by survivor Samuel Willenberg (key missing). Compare to prior 2 plates. (Source: Willenberg, 1989: Frontispiece)



Judenschule (Synagoge) in einer russischen Stadt, mit Bogeninschrift:
 „Das ist das Tor zu Gott, wo fromme Leute kommen hin.“

Plate 96. "This is the gate to God through which the righteous pass." Inscription over *bima* and holy ark, Russian synagogue, on postcard c. 1914. (Source: Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, Heimann Coll.)

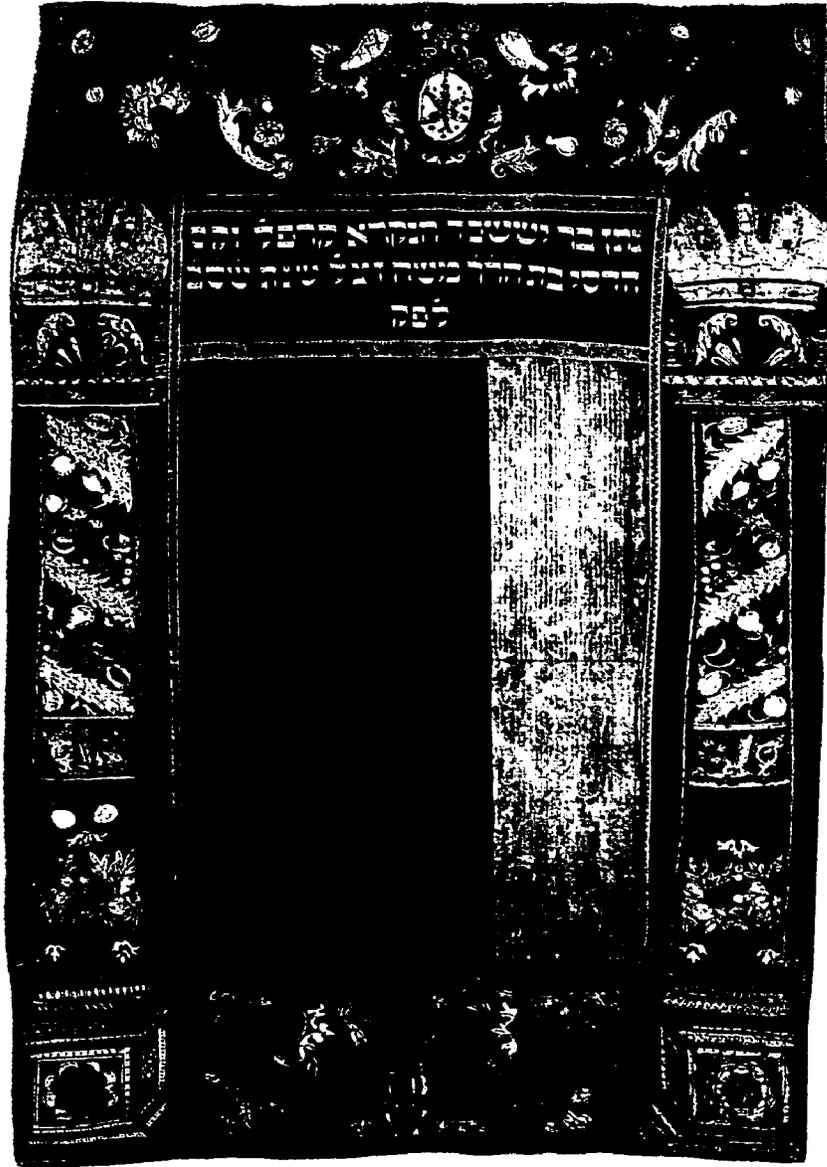


Plate 97. Embroidered synagogue *parokhet*, or torah curtain, Prague 1601/2. The SS used similar curtains to "decorate" and conceal the entrance-ways to the *Aktion Reinhard* gas chambers. (Source: Altshuler, 1983:129 and Czech State Jewish Museum)



Plate 98. Model of Treblinka by survivor Jankiel Wiernik. Although not produced to scale, it gives an idea of what the gas chambers may have looked like. (Source: Donat, 1979:259 and the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz Museum, Israel)



Plate 99. Sketch of Crematorium II at work, Auschwitz-Birkenau. Drawn in 1945 by a member of the Soviet Investigating Commission, based on official SS project drawings. Despite minor discrepancies, the image shows the architectural similarity to "Beauty of Labor's" *Kameradschaft* Houses (cf. plates following chapter 11.) (Source: Pressac, 1989:344 and Auschwitz State Museum)

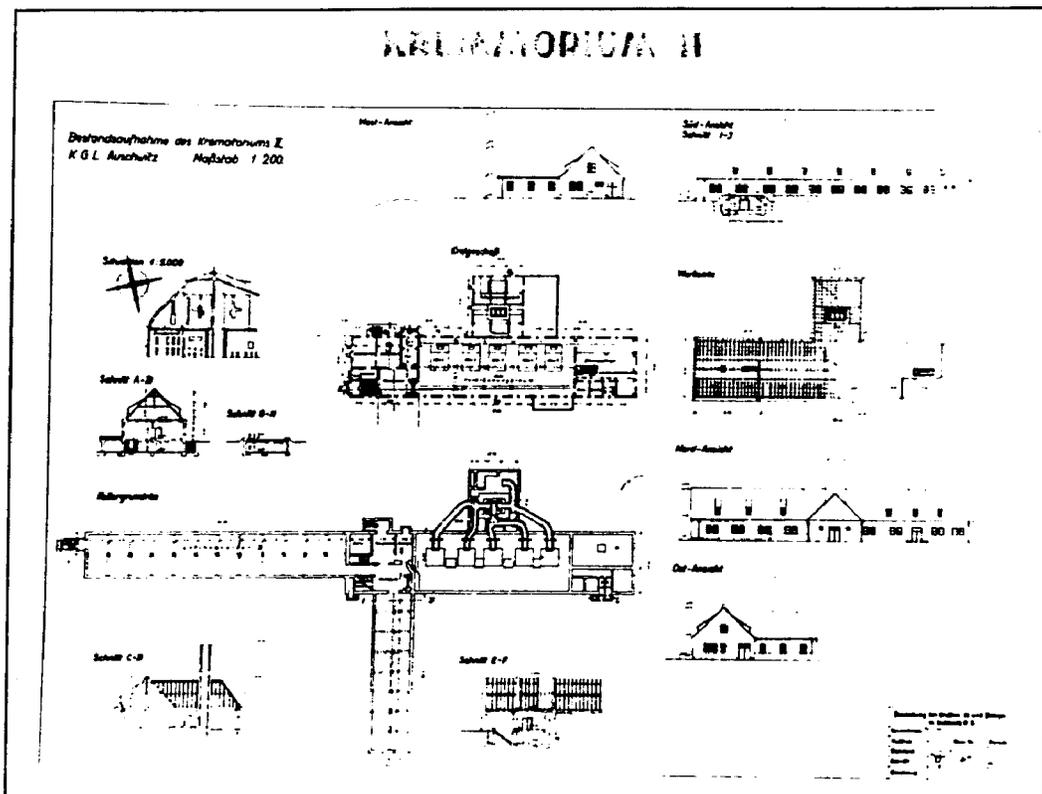


Plate 100. Official SS blueprints such as these for Crematorium II adorned the outer vestibule of the Auschwitz Building Dept. for all to see. (Source: Pressac, 1989 and Auschwitz State Museum)



Plate 101. Dachau commandant Theodor Eicke addresses guests on the occasion of Dr. Robert Ley's visit, November 2, 1936. Prof. Pfannenstiel's honorary address in the Treblinka *Gemeinschaftssaal* may well have resembled this gathering. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 16/5/36)



Plate 102. Facilities for the SS at Dachau. This was the effect Stangl was striving for in his "beautification" of Treblinka, for which he was commended (cf. plate 104). (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 83/86/7A and 83/86/36A)



Ehrenkreuz
der Deutschen Mutter



Plate 103. *Ehrenkreuz der Deutschen Mutter.* (Source: Chagoll, 1979:43)



Plate 104. Members of Sobibor's SS staff, with then Commandant Franz Stangl at center. The repast prepared later for Himmler following the gassing of Jewish girls in his "honor" may have resembled this. (Source: Klee, 1988:214)

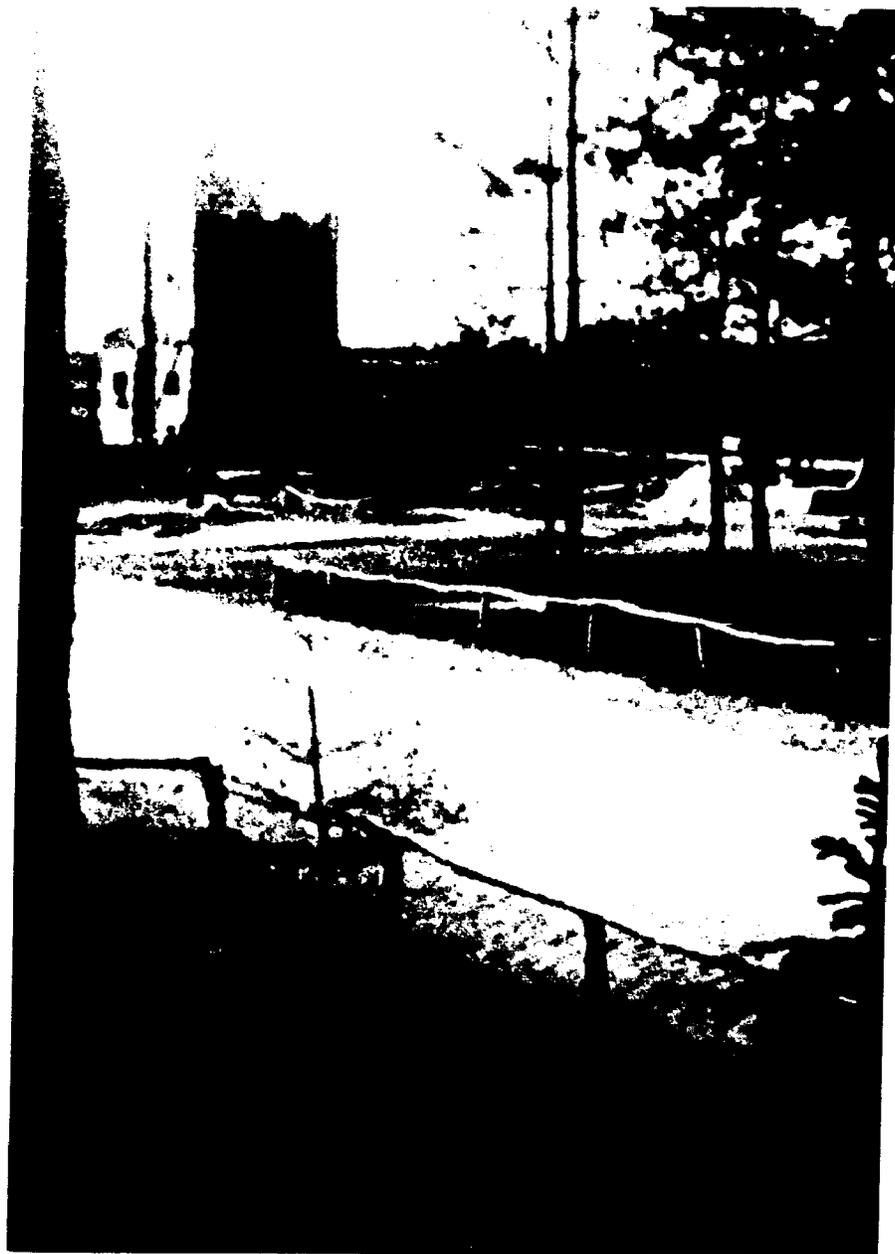


Plate 105. "Kurt Seidel Street" and feudalistic watch-tower, Treblinka. Commandant Franz Stangl used Jewish inmate craftsmen (ideologically considered incapable of creative labor!) to build both, as part of his "beautification" efforts. (Source: Kurt Franz album, Staatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf, and Arad, 1987:91)



Plate 106. Top: excavator used at Treblinka to exhume bodies for burning. Bottom: open grave, probably a "grill" fully stacked and ready for to be ignited. (Source: Kurt Franz album, Staatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf, and Arad, 1987:95)



Plate 107. "*Schöne Zeiten.*" The title page of Kurt Franz's Treblinka photo album. (The word "*Schöne*" has been erased.) Note bottom, in white riding jacket, Treblinka Commandant Franz Stangl. (Source: Klee, 1988:206 and Staatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf)



Plate 108. Photo taken secretly by prisoner at Auschwitz-Birkenau shows the burning of corpses in the pit near Crematoria V during the "Hungarian action" of 1944. (Source: Czech, 1990:639 and Auschwitz State Museum)

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"DEATH IS A MASTER FROM GERMANY"

Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
—Paul Celan, *Todesfuge (Death Fugue)*

Over the course of the preceding chapters we have struggled to demystify the meanings of German antisemitism and explain the confounding perversity of its form under National Socialism. But there is still one element left which we have not unmasked fully. It is the symbol of Auschwitz and the death camps themselves, of the Holocaust and, indeed, of the Third Reich in its entirety; it is the terse embodiment of that apparently unanswerable question which so many studies have sought, however obliquely, to address. That element is the motto *Arbeit macht frei* and the enigma of its underlying meaning as posed at the outset of this analysis. Until we have settled this gnawing question as far as we are capable, we cannot put the subject of the Holocaust, at least within the compass of this study, to rest.

"WORK MAKES FREE" AT DACHAU

The transformation of the concept behind *Arbeit macht frei* into a standard Nazi epigram can be attributed to Theodor Eicke, first commandant of Dachau and later Inspector of Concentration Camps (see plate 101, ch.15). It was "Papa Eicke" (as his SS trainees called him) who had the phrase shaped in wrought iron and placed as a motto on the Dachau gateway when the camp opened in 1933. The form and placement of the motto is telling. As we know, the smelting of German ore into crafted shapes was a key icon of German

formative labor. Thus the threshold to Dachau—like the entrance to the Beauty of Labor *Kameradschaftshaus*, or the doors to the *Aktion Reinhard* gas chambers themselves—became the portal into an inverted and inverting world.

Established allegedly for the good of the German *Volk*, Dachau and its sister camps removed those elements deemed detrimental to Germany's collective "health," consigning them to disciplinary cells within the expanding *Volkskörper*. Here those infected with the divisive principles of a Germany engulfed by "Judaism"—an array of German leftists, religious dissidents, homosexuals, Gypsies, vagabonds, hardened criminals and, of course, Jews of all types—were to be encompassed and refigured instead by the ordering principles of productive German labor. At the outset at least, those of good racial stock who mistakenly had "withdrawn themselves from the *Volksgemeinschaft*" by dint of their political "obsessions" had the chance of being "returned to the *Volk*" following their successful "re-education." This was the one specific instance in which work actually "liberated" camp inmates. As time went on, however, it was all the more likely that they would be deemed uneducable (see Pingel, 1978). Work nonetheless continued to liberate, but now in a more profound sense, for the disruptive energies of non-educable prisoners were to be harnessed permanently for the good of the *Volk*, to build its monuments, strategic defenses and otherwise protect it from harm. In the case of the racially-alien Jew—the underlying source of Germany's distress—return to the *Volk* was never a possibility, except (as we saw) through slave labor, or in the form of useful commodities rendered industrially from Jewish bodies and recycled from their belongings.

Dachau served as a prototype for subsequent camps as well as a training grounds for many of their commandants, whom Eicke had imbued with the so-called *Dachauer Geist*, or "Spirit of Dachau." Indeed, Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz, credits Eicke as the man who gave the Nazi concentration camps their basic "form and shape" (see Höss, 1959:265). By inscribing the motto in wrought iron on the entry-gate to Dachau, Eicke

thus started something of a tradition as evidenced in the gateways of many other (but by no means all) camps, sub-camps and work prisons. At the same time he helped standardize the phrase as a motto for Nazi Germany as a whole.¹

As this indicates, the use of the phrase *Arbeit macht frei* as a camp motto preceded the establishment of death camps and the "Final Solution," occurring first at concentration camps in which non-Jews initially comprised the majority of prisoners. This fact might seem to suggest that the motto does not bear specifically on Jews and their eventual genocide, but refers in an equal and identical manner to all prisoners, whatever their backgrounds. The truth, however, is that antisemitism was always essential, if implicit, to the motto's broadest meaning. Of course it was only over time that the motto's deeper ironies were brought out with growing intensity, as the identity of camp inmates shifted along with the purpose of the camps themselves—the most significant evolution of meaning being that which accompanied the transformation of the Auschwitz concentration camp into the capital of all death camps and the linchpin in the so-called "Final Solution."

¹It should be noted that Eicke's motto was accompanied by the so-called *Meilensteinen*, or "Milestones," another, longer slogan of equal significance inherited from the populist, *Mittelstand* code of Germany's alienated, antisemitic artisans of the late nineteenth century (see Volkov, 1978a,b) (see chapter 10). This one also became a standard architectural component of concentration camps, reinforcing the abbreviated meanings of the former: "*Es gibt ein Weg zur Freiheit. Seine Meilensteinen heissen: Gehorsam, Fleiss, Ordnung, Ehrlichkeit, Sauberkeit, Wahrhaftigkeit, Nüchternheit, Opfersinn und Liebe zum Vaterland* [There is a road to freedom. Its milestones are: Obedience, Diligence, Order, Honesty, Cleanliness, Truthfulness, Sobriety, Self-Sacrifice and Love of the Fatherland]."

Painted in huge letters across the slanted roof of the Dachau's Administration Building in front of the *Appellplatz*, inmates were forced to stand in the broiling sun or freezing cold sometimes for hours with this slogan perpetually in view (see Huebner, 1979:67). At Sachsenhausen, as noted previously (chapter 10), the slogan was painted on the ends of the barracks that surrounded that camp's *Appellplatz*, thereby encompassing camp inmates with its suffocating message.

The SS displayed these values at Auschwitz too, painted on posters in Gothic calligraphy and then hung on the walls their offices; they also appeared, all-too-perversely, inscribed in double-binded fashion in filthy washrooms and abbreviated on the cross-beams inside the bare ceilings of Birkenau's barracks, which were actually prefabricated horse stalls (see Huebner, 1979). According to some inmates, the "Milestones" also appeared on the roof of the Birkenau kitchen barracks (Vrba, & Bestic, 1964:194; personal communication [Arnold Shay]) As in the case of the camp's portal, here too the Jew and those whom he supposedly had "infected" were safely encompassed by the restored holistic values—and barbed wire—of the German *Volk* Community, their disintegrative energies canalized for its benefit in the form of slave labor.

Finally, we noted earlier that Kurt Gerstein's authoritarian father, with whom the son (not surprisingly) came in frequent philosophical conflict, had an earlier version of the SS concentration camp "Milestones" displayed on his desk (see Friedlander, 1969:202).

As we shall see later, it was here that the meanings implicit in the motto found their fullest expression.

In order to expose the presuppositions which the motto bore from its outset—as well as explain the enigma which *Arbeit macht frei* represents as a whole—we must first examine further its self-reflexive German significance as well as the antisemitism that is intrinsic to its meaning.

"WORK MAKES FREE" IN THE KAMPFZEIT

In this connection it will come as a revelation to many scholars and layman alike that the slogan *Arbeit macht frei* was by no means limited in Nazi Germany to the concentration camps and their prisoners. Intrinsic to the wider Nazi ideology of labor—something which itself was inseparable from antisemitism—the concept linking work and freedom actually circulated amongst Germans throughout the history of the Third Reich. Considering its central ideological significance, in fact, it should not be surprising that the essential ingredients of the motto actually appeared first during the so-called *Kampfzeit* of the 1920s, a period which thus predated its use by Theodor Eicke at Dachau.

Goebbels Reprised: The Jew as Money

We encountered the most important early Nazi ideological reference to the liberating power of work in our previous discussion of the *Stroop Report*. This reference emanated from the pen of Josef Goebbels during the Weimar era (see chapter 14). Using his *Volk* hero Michael from the eponymous novel as his mouthpiece, the later Nazi Propaganda Minister makes the telling proclamation: "Money has enslaved us, but work shall makes us free [*Das Geld hat uns versklavt, die Arbeit wird uns frei machen*]." Referring at first obliquely to "two enemies" engaged in a Manichean battle for the future itself, he rants on for pages about the "disintegrating forces of gold," a "delusion" which not only "eats" at

the German *Volkskörper* from without, but "poisons" it from within. Only then does he reveal the true face of his alleged opponent—not simply identifying the Jew with money but eliding the two terms together in German with a hyphen: "*Geld-Jude, das ist Sache und Person, die zusammengehören* [Money/Jew, this thing and person belong together]" (Goebbels, 1935 [1929]:118, 137-9; cf. Mosse, 1966:104-112).

Thus the person-like quality of the Jew and the thing-like quality of money come together in one fetishized form: the Jew as the unnatural, malignant embodiment of all that which is alienating about capitalism. And yet these alienating dimensions are cast in the form of a parasite—something which exists not only as an independent, external projection but also as an internal agent of decomposition, one intrinsic to the German's mutually-fetishized experience of self, body and society as an organic extension of the naturally productive world. Within the terms of this closed system, the only means of salvation for a Germany ensnared in the web of Jewish exchange is to reverse the alleged statuses of Jewish master and German slave—something which can be accomplished only through the natural powers of "productive" work.

Goebbels makes clear that, from the very beginning, the ideology of antisemitism and that of "productive" German labor as a means of liberation were inextricably interwoven. This dialectical formulation served through its polar contrast of "productive German" and "parasitical Jew" to define, above all else, *German* identity, as well as the means to "liberate" it from the forces which supposedly had sought, by dominating the process of commoditization, to debase it. Of course, these forces included, first and foremost, the divisive communist ideology of "the Jew Marx-Mordechai" which supposedly had infected the German leftists making up the earliest concentration camp inmates (see chapters 10, 12). Thus, although the use of the motto *Arbeit macht frei* occurred first in conjunction with camps holding non-Jewish inmates as well as Jews, the motto nonetheless always

drew its fullest meaning from the fascist ideology of work—an ideology that was fundamentally antisemitic.

Emphasis upon the underlying "Jewish" identity of Marxism and its leaders is bought out by the kind of "re-education" which occurred in concentration camps from their outset. For example, an anonymous leaflet distributed in the fall of 1933 describes a common method employed, in this case, by the SA during its interrogation of prisoners in its Fühlbuttel camp. A picture of Lenin was hung in the special torture chamber to which members of the German Communist Party (KPD) were brought. Asked the identity of the man in the picture, the prisoners "are beaten in inhuman fashion, until finally they realize the correct answer: 'That is a Jew' " (in Pingel, 1978:44).

In the event the connection between *Arbeit macht frei* and antisemitism at Dachau requires more supportive argument, however, one should note that yet another of Dachau's entrances was specially marked, this time with a decorative signpost pointing the way into camp. This *Wegweiser* was no mere two-by-four, but a tall and solid stone column marked "*Konzentrationslager*" and topped with a brightly-painted frieze. This showed (in the best tradition of antisemitic carnival humor) German soldiers driving three cowering figures into camp—among them, naturally, a peddler and a plutocrat, and *all* of them stereotypically Jewish.² The death camp Treblinka also had this sort of signpost, as did a sub-camp of Auschwitz and probably several others (personal communication [Richard Glazar]). This is not surprising, as signposts elaborated with antisemitic carvings were a culturally standard form of antisemitic iconography in Nazi Germany (see Kershaw, 1979,

²As we pointed out earlier (see chapter 10), the fundamental, structuring role of antisemitism in the concentration camps from the very beginning is indicated by the fact that it served to define the overall hierarchy of inmate categories. This is demonstrated by the official symbolic system of colored triangles by which inmates were identified in all SS concentration camps. The reader will recall that by choosing different colored triangles as inmate insignias, the SS could superimpose the yellow triangle designating "Jew" over the triangle of any other individual prisoner category so as to form a variety of multi-colored Jewish Stars-of-David. Thus the Jewish triangle was the master key, providing the overall parameters of the system as well as its underlying inspiration.

1983; Szajkowski, 1977:109-113). "Creative" appurtenances such as these reflected the pride with which the camp had been constructed as well as the camp's overall purpose and meaning. This made them obvious stops for dignitaries on guided inspection tours of camp, as documented in a photograph of Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess, and Karl Wolff standing in front of the signpost at Dachau on May 8, 1936, obviously enjoying the feelings of status reversal which the antisemitic iconography evoked³ (see plate 109).

Gottfried Feder and The Nazi Party Platform: Working Ourselves Free From Jewish Chaos

A construction of the liberating power of work reinforcing that of Goebbels appears in another of the Nazi Party's early ideological tracts—*The Platform of the NSDAP*, an official and oft-reprinted booklet written by another early Nazi ideologue, Gottfried Feder (see Feder, 1938 [1927]). This key publication, which first appeared in 1927, already had reached 350,000 copies in print by 1933 alone; its centrality to the "struggle" was indicated by the fact that Adolf Hitler himself had written the forward.⁴ In this tract Feder establishes unequivocally the connection of the Jew with the chaos of exchange, a chaos from which Germans must struggle to liberate themselves.

Having first laid out the party's twenty-five point program, Feder backtracked to explain the origins of National Socialist thinking and the fundamental principles underlying the twenty-five points. Biblical and overblown, Feder's writing takes on mythic tone. As if describing a second Genesis—the genesis of a Jewish-dominated German capitalist democracy—Feder links the Jew again and again to the primeval "chaos" into which the

³Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, "Wolff, Himmler und Heß vor Wegweiser KZ-Dachau, 8.5.1936" (no photo filing number provided).

⁴The twenty-five theses of this program in fact dated back at least to 1923 (see Lane & Rupp, 1978:40-1).

world of productive, creating Germans has been thrown by the economic manipulations of the Jewish capitalist and his secret brother in anarchy, the Jewish Marxist:

Out of the Chaos emerged the world, out of Disorder, Order, out of the turbulent whirlwind, the Organic.

Chaos rules today on earth, confusion, struggle, hate, envy, conflict, oppression, exploitation, cruelty, egoism. . . .

Confused are the minds! The so-called circles of justice cannot see that there cannot be and never shall be friendship and cooperation between the eagle and the snake, between the cattle and the lion, between the human and the cholera bacillus. . . .

Confused are the minds! The entire economy is debased, depersonalized, transformed into stock market companies. The producers [*Schaffenden*] have placed themselves in the hands of their greatest enemies, Finance Capital. . . .

Chaos and confusion! . . . (Feder, 1938 [1927]:20-22).

The source of this chaos and confusion, the infectious "carrier" of capitalism, is none other than the Jew:

The same terrifying picture of chaos [reigns] amongst every possible manifestation of public life, whether art, literature, theater, cinema, radio, church, school, everywhere the "Ferment of Decomposition," the great disintegrator [*Zersetzer*] and destroyer, the Jew and free-mason, visible at the most important posts or invisible behind the scenes as the wire-pulling puppet-master [*Drahtzieher der Puppen*], dancing like "Strese-men or Scheide-men"⁵ on the open stage, or unrevealed as Jakob Goldschmidt, Warburg, Wassermann, Levy et. al., who through control of the press and the brutality of interest [*Zinspeitsche*] stupefy and exploit the German Volk. . . . (See plate 110.)

The "gigantic task which National Socialism has assigned itself," Feder says, is to rescue the world from the chaos of the Jew and bring it once again into order.

Despite all the anticapitalist shrieking of the Marxists, despite the pious mouthings of the Center Party, despite the outcry of the economy over tax and interest burdens—there has not yet been a clear recognition of the World-Enemy: *that of world-eclipsing Big Capital and its carrier, the Jew*. . . [stress in original].

⁵Here Feder satirizes the political leaders of the Weimar Republic, Scheidemann and Stresemann, as pawns of the "secret" Jew.

All genuinely serious National Socialists share the conviction that the solution to this question means in essence the intelligibly-translated *solution to the Jewish Problem*. . . .

Antisemitism is so to speak the *emotional fundament* of our movement [stress in original] (p.25).

Thus Feder affirms the centrality of antisemitism to the National Socialist struggle—a fact which so many post-war scholars fail to give proper weight. The familiar formula itself appears as the culmination of Feder's treatise, converted into the mobilizing verse of a Nazi marching song, one which sums up for him the meaning of the Nazi battle against the Jew and capitalism. Referring to the movement's flag, he declares that the image of the swastika, "shining within its sun-like circle," symbolizes the "newly awakening life" which National Socialism is bringing the German. The song says it all:

We are the army of the swastika
Holding high the red flag,
We want to build the way to freedom
with German work!
[*Der deutschen Arbeit wollen wir,
Den weg zur Freiheit bahnen!*] (p.60).

Here again, the epigram *Arbeit macht frei* appears in an early variant. The chant of SA hooligans marching through German cities during the last gasp of the Weimar Republic only states what already was taken-for-granted: "*Deutsche! Macht euch frei/von der Judentyranei!* [Germans! Make yourselves free/from the Jewish tyranny!]." Other all-too-popular songs of the day were even more explicit: "When Jewish blood spurts from the knife/then things will go well again! [*Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritz/dann gehts nochmal so gut*]" (cf. Dumbach & Newborn, 1986:36-8).

The way to free Germans from the chaos of capitalism and the manipulations of the hidden Jewish conspirator, Feder indicates, is through productive, German labor—the form-giving labor that wrests order from chaos and value from the clutches of the parasite. Of course, given the vehemence of these terms, even mass murder itself could be

approached eventually as work. As Feder's song thus suggests (and as we shall soon see clearly enough), the underlying cultural logic of *Arbeit macht frei*—the genocidal practice of the death camps—was already imminent in the Party's Weimar-era platform.⁶

THE NAZI ERA: GERMAN WORK, GERMAN FREEDOM

Songs Without End

It probably will come as no great surprise that the motto *Arbeit macht frei*, once it had been institutionalized, should have found its way into the official Dachau concentration camp song. Such songs were diabolical, compelling camp prisoners to conform in double-binded unison to the values and identity of their jailors. Thus the rhythms of word and music coordinated the involuntary march of inmates to a punitive labor that increasingly had nothing at all to with liberation, for them at least. "Barbed-wire, loaded with death/so our world is strung" the song began, referring to the camp's electrified fence. There followed the refrain:

But we've learned the key to Dachau
and have become steel-hard thereby.
Be a man, comrade,
stay a man, comrade,
work hard, pitch in, comrade,
for work, work makes free!
[*denn Arbeit, Arbeit macht frei!*]

The song reveals the self-reflexive aspect of work in Nazi ideology—work as formative of the self, hardening the body and mind through its disciplinary, self-abnegating effect. This

⁶Although these meanings are potential within the underlying symbolic structure of Nazi antisemitism—one which structured the formulation of intentions as well as the parameters of the sociocultural system within which such intentions were formulated—the form and timing of their eventual manifestation in genocide was dependent (as others also have argued) upon many factors, including the dynamics of Nazi state polycentrism over time as well as the historically-contingent course of Nazi military policy as the war unfolded. As argued earlier, then, this assertion is not to be understood in terms of the debate between "intention" and "function" in the development of Nazi genocidal policy, nor is it teleological in its reasoning (see chapters 1, 9 and 17).

too is the nature of the liberation it brings: for the political prisoner, liberation from the chaos and egoism of the self; and for Germany, freedom from the disintegrative dangers which the political prisoner poses to the orderly *Volksgemeinschaft*.

This same self-reflexive meaning is demonstrated convincingly by the fact that the slogan *Arbeit macht frei* was not limited to the songs of concentration camps. German youth of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (German Labor Service), drafted to labor honorably at swamp-draining and *Autobahn*-building, sang a song all their own:

The dark night now has passed
and gloriously the morn begins,
Comrade, grab hold! *Die Arbeit macht frei!*
Arise, we'll give it our best. . . (in Heyer, 1980:79).

Here the song refers to the ending of the "dark night" of Germany's domination at the hands of Weimar's "Jew-Republic" and the dawning of a new, Nazi age in which all Germans, class differences aside, unite in the common goal of renewal through physical labor. The processing of useless wasteland into ordered and productive form, or the binding of Germany in a unifying network of highways, is itself an index of the liberation work delivers—liberation from the divisive egoism of liberal democracy, and the chaotic entrapment of a Jewish-dominated capitalism.

"Our Work Makes Us Free"

Such songs demonstrate that the principles underlying the motto "Work Makes Free" are not limited to concentration camp inmates nor designed (with whatever irony) essentially or exclusively for their attention. Indeed, Goebbels' version of this aphorism later became part of a prescribed reading for Hitler Youth on jamboree (see *Reichsjugendführung*, 1937:119). Just how crucially the motto actually circulated among the party elite, however, is made clear by an important but rarely noticed wartime issue of the Nazi Party's central monthly, *Der Schulungsbrief* ("The Training Newsletter"), in

which the motto served as a unifying motif. Robert Ley, head of the German Labor Front, began the issue with an article that showed decisively the wider relevance of the slogan as well as its self-reflexive character for Germans. His essay was titled *Unsere Arbeit macht uns frei*, or "Our Work Makes Us Free" (Ley, 1943:2-4) (see plate 111).

"The meaning of life is eternal struggle," Ley began. This struggle was inseparable from work, both of which extended inevitably from life's "natural laws." "Work and struggle so often transform into one another that one is no longer able to distinguish them. . . ." It followed from this, Ley argued, that Germans would have to work and struggle if they were to achieve a new social order based on nature's principles. "Work and struggle alone make the person free!" But definitions of freedom differed depending upon the character of one's race. "It is not true," Ley wrote, echoing the common Nazi slogan, "that all things which carry a human face are equal [*Es ist nicht wahr, daß alles, was Menschenantlitz trägt, gleich ist*]." For Jews, freedom meant the "unbridled carnality [*Treibhaftigkeit*] and orgy of the senses fostered by Jewish Marxism and Bolshevism." For Germans this "licentiousness [*Zügellosigkeit*]" was not freedom, but "chaos."⁷ In contrast, Germans were strong and healthy; they "love order and submit themselves in voluntary obedience" to principles that are higher and stronger than themselves. This meant nothing other than the "true socialism" of the *Volk* Community: "Man is free when he feels himself a valuable member of an ordered, strong and healthy *Volksgemeinschaft*."

Accordingly, Germans must be free to produce a healthy and racially-purified *Volk* Community, something which only could be accomplished by regaining control over the conditions of work as well as by securing sufficient living space in the east. National Socialism was working and struggling to fulfill these requirements. "We have thrown

⁷Ley's formulation here—made, ironically, by a man known for his coarseness and instability—is consistent, of course, with the historic German cultural association of the Jew with the Bakhtinian "lower body," as we saw earlier (chapter 4).

wide open the gates of freedom," Ley proclaimed, allowing "true socialism" to move "freely and with head held proudly erect through the most beautiful spaces of our state and community buildings [*Gemeinschaftsgebäude*]." Using standard Nazi antisemitic slogans, Ley made clear that this socialism was by no means that of the Jew, but the socialism of a Germany freed from the manipulative grasp of the Jewish financial parasite:

The domination of finance capital [*Herrschaft des Finanzkapitals*] and the servitude to the usury of interest [*Knechtschaft unter Zinswucher*] and the machinations of the stock-exchange [*Börsenmachenschaften*] are broken. Money and gold once again have become servants of the economy. The factories and workplaces are no longer dependent upon stock-market jobbers and obscurantists [*Dunkelmänner*] as before, like Jakob Goldschmidt, Max Warburg and other finance hyenas [*Finanzhyänen*] (Ley, 1943: 4).

Ley's article thus made clear that work was the essence of racial struggle. This meant in turn that *Germans could undertake no labor more "productive" than that which they performed in their struggle against the Jew*. The egoism of the Jew produced nothing but the chaos with which he engulfed and enslaved the German; but through work Germans freed themselves, creating order at home and German *Lebensraum* in the east. In order to bring these meanings together with demographic and geo-political programs in Poland—the region, of course, in which the so-called "Final Solution" was taking place by now—Ley's article was followed by a one-page picture essay. It included images of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* laboring to "germanize" the conquered eastern territories through backbreaking roadwork. The title to the piece read, "The East Will be Ours—Conquered Through Blood; Shaped Through Work."

Yet another article in the same issue of *Der Schulungsbrief* clarified the difference between the German attitude to work and that of Germany's "enemies." It argued in essence that the Jew in the last century had destroyed the "organic bond" which once had existed between work and capital, thereby reducing the person and his labor to a "defenseless object of Jewish power and exploitation" (Rollwitz, 1943:8). National

Socialism, on the other hand, had reforged that bond, so that "work no longer took man into account as mere work power [*Arbeitskraft*], but as a personality" (p.5-6). An illustration accompanying this article showed—in the manner of a precapitalist woodcut—an anvil in a dark smithy. Two German workers pound metal into shape, a furnace glowing brightly in the background.

As we saw again only a moment ago, images of Germans forging metal at anvils and furnaces provide the most prominent icon of formative labor in National Socialism. The implicit themes in this issue of *Der Schulungsbrief* would have been even more tellingly illustrated, however, if a related image from an earlier *völkisch* publication had been reproduced. Like the one actually used, it shows a German smith, this one bare to the waist, his Aryan muscles straining in productive labor. The glowing material which he has removed from the furnace is not an ordinary iron rod, however. Instead it is the Star-of-David at which he hammers, laboring to obliterate its form by breaking off its points. This image was picked up again later in a poster of the Nazi era as part of the logo of *Der Eisenhammer* (*The Iron Hammer*), an antisemitic periodical which the poster advertised.⁸ Standing above the logo is the stereotypical form of the Jew himself—dark, corpulent and bow-legged. "Au wai!" he cries out, grimacing ludicrously at the prospect of the periodical's imminent appearance and the discomfort it will cause him (see plate 112).

If one allows the mind to follow the logical extension of the symbolic practice represented by this image, one realizes that it conveys, in the most thorough and potentially barbarous terms imaginable, the German domination of the Jew. The image accomplishes this in an irreversible manner by transforming the Jew into German raw material. Subjected to "formative" German labor, the parasitical Jew in essence is reworked, the concretized symbol of his alien identity and conspiratorial power reduced and rendered

⁸Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Plakat Nr. 3/20/14.

increasingly unrecognizable. (In the Nazi poster the inclusion of the caricatured Jew crying out in distress makes explicit the identification of the Star-of-David with the actual person; it also makes clear the painful effect which the ever-intensifying practice of antisemitism is intended to have upon the Jew.) By so manipulating the Jew, the German seeks to reformulate the unequal relationship which the two racial enemies supposedly share, reversing statuses, taking power, and simultaneously converting the otherwise unassimilable Jew into a harmless and useable German form. This kind of labor is, by German definition, productive of the self as it is *wertschaffend*, or productive of value. It follows then that the Star-of-David in this image is not simply destroyed, but reshaped into nothing other than a gift-like extension of the German self, that is, a supposedly non-commoditized expression of the crafting German. In this it evokes an antisemitic cultural practice which we have already encountered briefly—the actual refashioning of Jewish ritual objects, from prayer-shawls to torah parchments and tefillin, into objects of German use (see chapters 13-15 and Mauss, 1966). Similarly, it resembles the Aryan playing tokens in the game *Juden raus!*, which are completed only when topped with a "Jew-hat." In all of these instances, the Jew is appropriated by the German and assimilated physically to his body and identity as tool or item of dress, thereby allowing the German to master the alienating dimensions of exchange which the Jew embodies (see chapter 9).

Extraordinarily concise and yet at the same time disarmingly figurative, the picture of a German reshaping the Star-of-David at furnace and anvil condenses bluntly the Procrustean solution which Germans soon would find to the alleged problem of Jewish domination. The Jew is seized between German hands, his elusive power concretized, broken down and reformulated into German value. Reduced through heat and fire, processed through German industry, the Jew's disintegrative energy is harnessed for the good of Germans and recycled amongst them as a product of German work, its controlled circulation serving to generate the personalizing bounds of the Aryan *Volk* Community. The unspeakable

consequences of this status-reversal already were being suffered all-too-literally by the time Ley's article in *Der Schulungsbrief* appeared: in Poland as we saw, Jewish slave laborers were being referred to as *Arbeitsmaterial* by their masters and as *lebendfrisches Material* ("living-fresh material") by experimenting SS doctors in Auschwitz (see Poliakov, 1979: 76; Kremer in Langbein, 1964). In this and other camps their hair already was being processed systematically for the weaving of industrial textiles and their teeth mined for precious metals (see Arad, 1987:109); their bodies were being burned and their personal effects redistributed through sale to the *Wehrmacht* and civil servants or as gifts for ethnic Germans, as we saw earlier (chapter 13 and Dobroszycki, 1984:424ff; Hilberg, 1985:947-961). Their flesh was being recycled for the growing of bacterial cultures and their organs and skeletons prepared for special anthropological collections (see Müller, 1979:46; Nyszli, 1960:54, 132; Langbein, 1965:139-41; Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1949). Their ash was being added to compost and applied as fertilizer for vegetables, as well as being used for insulation, to line fish ponds and pave pathways (chapter 13, n.5; Koprowska, 1967:144ff; Langbein, 1980:40, 227; Zieba, 1970:51; Piper, 1978:126). Even the production of soap from Jewish fat was experimented with at the Danzig Anatomical Institute, if never actually implemented, notorious (but by no means unreasonable) rumors to the contrary (see *Der Nürnberger Prozess*, 1957:396-99; Kraus & Kulka, 1963:323-27; cf. Friedman in Eisenberg, 1981:259). On a more idiosyncratic level—the level of the antisemitic hobbyist's "arts-and-crafts"—the gold teeth freshly broken from the mouths of Jews were being fashioned into custom-made rings and their skulls into ashtrays and paperweights (see Sereny, 1974:129). In one reported instance at least, a human bone was carved to serve as a pocket-knife handle and then engraved with the words "Genuine Jew" in German (see Blumenthal, 1961:56). Likewise at Auschwitz an antisemitic Polish surgical assistant, one fully assimilated to the meaningful practice of the camp's German medical experimenters, dried and tanned the scrotum of a Jewish man.

This he made into a tobacco sack, displaying his creation proudly because, he said, it "lacked a seam" (see Langbein, 1980:256).

Fraught though the preceding image of the star-at-anvil may be with these ominous meanings, it was not included in the issue of *Der Schulungsbrief* under discussion. Nor can one be sure that even the SS themselves would be capable of drawing its implications into full consciousness, however fundamental these implications were to the meanings of antisemitism and genocide as the core of the Nazi millenarian project. Nonetheless, a final offering in the same issue of the Nazi Party monthly makes these themes, as well as those underlying *Arbeit macht frei* itself, more obvious. In fact the title of the piece, a two-page picture spread, could not be more explicit: "*Unsere Arbeit für unsere Volk macht uns frei*"—"Our Work for Our Volk Makes Us Free." The caption read as follows:

"Juda's degradation of mankind quickened during the period of decline [*der Verfallszeit*] with the reduction of work to drudgery [*Fron*]. Adolf Hitler gave the German back his work and honor. Artwork influenced by Jews did not see the working man in Germany as he was, but rather as they wanted him to be: enslaved, ugly and miserable. We see him again as he is: confident and strong" (*Der Schulungsbrief*, 1943:10-11).

To the bottom left was a painting of men harnessed like work-horses, trudging miserably through a swirling wind. At center, in contrast, were images of the rescued Aryan, depicted in quintessential fetish form as massive nude statuary lifting boulders and standing in proud repose, the solidified products of their own *Arbeit an sich*. Here the theme of alleged status-reversal implicit in "Work Makes Free" becomes apparent. With the advent of capitalism the parasitical Jew had enslaved the productive German—but Germans under National Socialism, struggling to rid their *Volk* and Europe of Jews, were working once and for all to make themselves free.

The Commandant of Auschwitz at Work

Having traced the meanings of *Arbeit macht frei* into the Nazi heartland, we can now return to Auschwitz and its gateway, to see what sort of meanings the motto held for the death camp's industrious commandant. These meanings are to be found in several key pages of the extraordinary memoirs which Rudolf Höss composed while awaiting trial after the war. Work is the subject about which he writes so diligently. As master of the world's greatest death factory and slave labor camp, it should not be surprising that Höss had some serious thoughts on the matter—yet his comments about the salvatory effects of work transcend the double-binding boundaries of the camp to provide the contours shaping his own life as well (see Höss, 1963; cf. Hoess [English trans.], 1959).

Höss makes clear that the motto *Arbeit macht frei* applies in his mind to Germans as a whole, whether as National Socialists or as concentration camp prisoners. That the concept also embraces the Jew, but in less obvious and far more constricting a manner, emerges when one considers the nature of the work Höss himself undertook and directed as commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Höss introduces, somewhat enigmatically, the contradictions of *Arbeit macht frei* in a nutshell: "Work plays a very large part in a prisoner's life," he writes. "It can serve to make his existence more bearable, but it can also lead to his destruction" (Höss, 1963:64).

"Under normal circumstances," Höss continues, "work is a necessity" for the prisoner. It "fills an inner need," helping one to overcome the emptiness of imprisonment. In fact if the prisoner can approach his occupation (Höss uses the term *Beruf*, or "calling") "freely" and with a sense of "inner readiness," the "inner satisfaction" that this will bring him, even under conditions of enforced labor, will suffuse his entire life. Of course, there were always those individuals—"notorious idlers and loafers and other types of asocial spongers [*Schmarotzern*]" who could "vegetate quite happily without work, and without the least mental anguish." Nonetheless, "work in prison," Höss explains, is ". . . a means of

educational training [*ein Erziehungsmittel*] for those prisoners who are fundamentally unstable, who need to learn the meaning of endurance and perseverance, and for those who can still be pulled away from criminality through the salutary effects of work. . . . Only thus can the motto *Arbeit macht frei* be understood" (pp.64-5).

It should not seem surprising if these comments sound familiar; they are secularized versions of the Lutheran ethic of salvation-through-work which we first encountered in the earliest part of this study (see chapter 4). In fact the conditions which Höss calls imprisonment could easily be described for the Lutheran as life itself. It is the daily confrontation of the spiritual self with the monotony, pain, and temptation of the carnal world within which one is trapped, as within the egoistic "old Adam" of the body. The only way to achieve freedom from this engulfing formlessness is through the disciplined and ordering effects of work, offered freely and in perfect obedience to one's superiors, whose will and values one internalizes in place of one's own. It is only in this way—by fitting oneself subordinately within a hierarchically-encompassing system, whether it be an authoritarian Reich, a prison, the Aryan *Volksgemeinschaft*, or the rigidity of one's own body and emotions—that bounds can be held against chaos (cf. Theweleit, 1987 [1977]).

Although Rudolf Höss was born a Catholic, his account of his early life makes clear the extent to which the principles of Lutheranism provided a secularized civil religion embracing Catholics and Lutherans alike in Germany. His father, despite differences with Reich policy on account of religion, "never ceased to remind his friends that, however strong one's opposition might be, the laws and decrees of the state had to be obeyed unconditionally" (Höss, 1963:25). Rudolf in turn was raised with the need for submission to authority and immediate, unquestioning obedience, a set of principles "constantly impressed" upon him in such "forceful terms" that the compulsion to obey actually became physical necessity: "These basic principles on which I was raised became part of my flesh and blood [*Diese Erziehungsgrundsätze sind mir in Fleisch und Blut übergegangen*]"

(p.25). As a child Höss obviously was forced to overcome the *Struwwelpeter* in himself, just as later, as an SS man, he continued working successfully to annihilate his *innere Schweinehund* through unrelieved "work upon the self [*Arbeit an sich*]" (see chapter 14 and Kotz, 1937). Although there is no space to explore this aspect of Höss' memoirs further, it is clear that the commandant of Auschwitz, like Adolf Hitler himself, was the perfectly-realized product of a education conducted according to the best principles of "black pedagogy" (see chapter 6 and Miller, 1983). In fact, long before Höss received his orders for the "Final Solution," his murderous self-labor had already produced within him the desired effect—as we shall see, an effect later to be visited literally upon death camp inmates as well. The SS called it *Kadavergehorsam*, or the obedience of a corpse.

Considering the important role which work plays within this process of identity-construction, it is not surprising that Höss' comments on the meaning of work for concentration camp prisoners take on a special significance in the context of his own self-disclosures. This passage on work serves, in fact, as the core of his memoirs and has an effect tantamount to a confession of faith.

Segueing unselfconsciously from the subject of the concentration camp prisoner, Höss affirms the pertinence of work to his own life. "Throughout my entire life I have worked gladly and willingly. . . . *I can justly maintain that I know what work means*, [stress in original] and that I am well qualified to evaluate work-capacity [*Arbeitsleistung*]" (Höss, 1963:64). This skill, one should note, was crucial at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Jewish deportees arriving at the ramp were consigned either to work or the gas depending upon a rapid evaluation of their capacity for labor, as documented in the *The Auschwitz Album* (1980, 1981; see also chapter 14).

Speaking with what seems an almost anal passion, Höss continues: "I myself am only satisfied when I have completed a good piece of work [*ein gut Stück Arbeit*]." This attitude, Höss writes, has accompanied him throughout his life, from his earliest days

through his own imprisonment for a politically-motivated murder during the Weimar period, during which time work, even the pasting of paper bags, spared him "hours of useless and enervating self-pity. . . ." The same attitude followed him throughout his command at Auschwitz, and now was standing him in good stead once again under Allied imprisonment. "The worst punishment for me would have been if my work had been taken away from me," he writes. "In my present confinement I miss terribly the lack of physical work. How thankful I am for the assigned writing work [*Schreibarbeiten*], which satisfies me fully and completely" (p.65). Indeed, these memoirs are the last "piece of work" Höss was to enjoy producing before being executed.

In his German edition of the Höss memoirs, the historian Martin Broszat dismisses Höss's comment on the meaning of *Arbeit macht frei*, characterizing Höss as obtuse for failing to see the essential cynicism of the motto (see Höss, 1963:65, n.1). In so doing Broszat in effect dismisses the motto's wider cultural context, and thereby overlooks its deeper significance in relationship to the Holocaust. In fact there is no reason to doubt Höss's basic intelligence or to second-guess his perspectives, which in their matter-of-factness are even more distressing than one might have imagined. The commandant of Auschwitz was so defined by the boundaries of National Socialism that for all intents and purposes he was incapable of stepping outside of them to dissemble.

* * *

Earlier Höss has written that, although prison work had an educational and liberating effect upon inmates, this only applied under "normal conditions." How then did the principles of work apply under "abnormal" conditions, as he presumably implies Auschwitz-Birkenau to be? That the principles of work apply here, too, Höss makes clear at the conclusion to this passage. "I have written exhaustively on the subject of work," he states, "because I myself have had such ample opportunity to appreciate its psychological value, and because I wished to show the beneficial effect it always has on a prisoner's

mind, as *I* know from first-hand experience." Having closed the circle between work in the life of the order-loving German (himself), and work in the life of the German prisoner (with whom he clearly identifies), Höss segues unselfconsciously once again, this time back to the death camp: "I shall write later about what was afterward done in this matter of work and the planned use of inmate labor" (Höss, 1963:66).

We can fill this in ourselves for Höss. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jewish inmates were subjected to two kinds of labor, both of which ultimately dove-tailed. The first was the labor performed upon the body of the Jew as an object to be experimented upon, processed (the verb used by the SS is *Verarbeiten*), gassed and cremated. Naturally the SS administered this labor—it was, after all, their own—but forced the Jewish crematoria *Sonderkommando*, in the best double-binding traditions of "poisonous pedagogy," to perform this tortuously self-alienating dirty work themselves. The second form of labor in which Jews engaged, again as an extension of SS will, was *Vernichtung durch Arbeit*, or "extermination-through-labor." Following a Himmler directive of September 1942, the intention was to kill two birds with one stone by utilizing inmates in the process of destroying them. Applied most assiduously at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jewish prisoners were worked as slaves, but without rest and on a carefully-planned starvation diet designed to result in the absolute draining of their life-energies within three months' time, at which point they were "ready" for gassing (see Pingel, 1978:129, 147).

This is the way the principles of work were applied directly to Jews: as objects of German labor. Slowly one begins to discover the full (if implied) significance—not to Jews, but to Germans—of "Work Makes Free" in Auschwitz. It is clear, for example, that Höss personally extended his own work creed in both a conscious and a taken-for-granted manner to his tasks as Auschwitz commandant. As Höss himself writes, "From the very outset it was obvious to me that something useful could be made of Auschwitz only through the tireless, tenacious work of everyone, from the commandant down to the last

prisoner" (Höss, 1963:91). Elsewhere he tells us that "From the very beginning I was fully absorbed, yes, obsessed with my task. Every fresh difficulty only increased my zeal. . . . I lived only for my work" (p.96). But what, actually, did Höss's work consist of? The answer is simple. His work consisted of constructing and expanding the camp, solving the technical problems necessary for the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem," and then running and maintaining the murderous assembly-line while overseeing the collection of Jewish valuables and personal effects. All this was his own, special work, indeed, the most important and challenging work of his career.

If this assertion should raise any trace of skepticism, one need only return to Höss's memoirs to be satisfied. "I had to see everything," he writes.

I had to watch hour after hour, by day and by night, the removal and burning of the bodies, the extraction of the teeth, the cutting of the hair, the whole grisly, interminable business. I had to stand for hours on end in the ghastly stench, while the mass graves were being opened and the bodies dragged out and burned.

I had to look through the peephole of the gas chambers and watch the process of death itself, because the doctors wanted me to see it.

I had to do all this because I was the one to whom everyone looked, because I had to show them all that I did not merely issue the orders and make the regulations but was also prepared myself to be present at whatever task I had assigned to my subordinates (Höss, 1963:132).

When questioned by visiting dignitaries—all of whom were "deeply impressed" by what they were shown—how he and his men were able to stand the onerous work at hand, Höss's "invariable answer," he writes, "was that the iron determination with which we must carry out the Führer's orders could only be obtained by a stifling of all human emotion. Each of these gentlemen declared that he was glad the job had not been given to him. . . ." (p.133). There is more than a hint of self-pity here as elsewhere in Höss's memoirs, but this can be countered by two other statements Höss made. The first, which we have already heard, was that "The worst punishment for me would have been if my

work had been taken away from me . . ." (p.65) and the second, "In Auschwitz I truly had no reason to complain that I was bored" (p.133).

Why should the Jew be the object of so monstrous a labor? Part of the answer is to be found in Höss's image of the Jew. Consistent with the Nazi construction of Jews as the embodiment of alienation in capitalism, Höss sees them as sources of egoism, disunity and discord, everywhere manipulating and undermining discipline—even in concentration camps!—through the effects of their economic machinations (see pp.111-114). Indeed, in fetishizing terms reminiscent of Goebbels ("Money/Jew, this thing and person belong together"), Höss actually declares that the "Jew-gold" extracted through the extermination process at Auschwitz-Birkenau—part of the camp's very reason for being—was actually the cause of the camp's "undoing"! (p.169).⁹

Nonetheless, in these pages Höss does not condemn the Jews as individuals; in fact he takes special trouble to stress that he "never hated the Jews personally" (p.114). To the contrary—Höss's antisemitism was comprehensive. In order to clarify his own position, Höss refers to *Der Stürmer*, Julius Streicher's antisemitic weekly. He was opposed to it, he claims,

because of the disgusting sensationalism with which it played on people's basest instincts. Then, too, there was its perpetual emphasis upon the sexual in an often savagely pornographic manner. This paper caused a lot of mischief and, far from serving serious antisemitism [*ernsthaften Antisemitismus*], did it a great deal of harm. Small wonder that after the collapse it was learned that a Jew edited the paper and wrote the most dissolute of its inflammatory articles (Höss, 1963:112).

The key phrase here is "serious antisemitism." Like Albert Speer's Beauty of Labor Bureau and other exponents of a so-called "noble National Socialism," (see chapter 11), Höss rejects *Der Stürmer* because its pornographic crudity gives National Socialism a bad reputation. Its prurience repels those who are thoughtful and of good taste, instead of

⁹"Das Judengold wurde dem Lager zum Verhängnis" (Höss, 1963:169).

awakening them to the more serious, underlying danger which the Jew represents. Serious antisemitism, in contrast, was based upon a sober and comprehensive recognition of the Jew as the hidden conspirator manipulating all aspects of modern life in order to achieve world dominion. (This was evidenced by the incredible fact that even *Der Stürmer* turned out to be a subtle tool of Jewish interest!). It was only by spreading the word of National Socialism, Höss continues, that "Jewish supremacy" could be abolished. Antisemitism was universal, "manifesting itself sharply whenever the Jews have pushed themselves forward too much in their quest for power, when their nauseating machinations have become all too obvious to the general public." Serious antisemitism thus meant opposing the Jew fundamentally and in principle. "If one wished to combat Jewry spiritually," Höss writes, "then better weapons would have to be used" (p.113).

Höss used those weapons at Auschwitz. Himmler assigned him the task, verbally, and with the following explanation: "The Jews are the eternal enemy [*ewigen Feinde*] of the German *Volk* and must be extirpated [*ausgerottet*]. All Jews accessible to us now during the war are to be destroyed [*zu vernichten*] without exception. If we don't succeed now in destroying the biological fundament of Jewry, then the Jews someday will destroy the German *Volk*" (Himmler, quoted in Höss, 1963:157). Höss used an even more pointed formula when asked by underlings at Auschwitz (rhetorically, one gets the sense) whether this particular "Final Solution" was truly necessary: "I had to tell them that this extermination of Jewry was necessary in order to free Germany and our descendants forever from their most relentless of adversaries" (p.131-2).

It was thus a question of liberation, of freedom; Germans had to be liberated from their alleged enslavement to the Jew. As Himmler made clear to Höss, the methods to accomplish this, however complex they might be, are precisely those which we should now have come to suspect: "*Es ist eine harte und schwere Arbeit*," Himmler said. "It is

hard and difficult work, requiring the commitment of the entire person, without consideration for any emerging difficulties" (Himmler, quoted in Höss, 1963:157).

Adolf Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* twenty years earlier. At the time he could not yet have known the actual form this collective German labor would take. And yet even then he had identified it, implicitly, as intrinsic to the symbolic meaning of the swastika, and in so doing had located it at the very heart of National Socialism. The swastika stood for "the mission of struggle for the victory of Aryan man," Hitler wrote. It thereby represented nothing other than "the victory of the idea of creative work [*schaffenden Arbeit*], which always has been and always will be, in essence, antisemitic" (Hitler, 1943 [1925]:497; cf. Hitler in Glaser, 1974:114).

Josef Goebbels was no less prescient. The Jew, disguised as money, had enslaved the Germans, but work would make them free. "The new German man will be born in the workshops," his Weimar hero had predicted (Goebbels, 1935 [1929]:119). "Work! To use one's hands! To be master! Conquerer! King of life!" (p.137).

Fourteen years later, in the furnaces and crematoria workshops of the death camps, the SS achieved that mastery. In the appalling womb of Auschwitz and Treblinka, Goebbels' prophecy was fulfilled.

* * *

Thus we see that the motto *Arbeit macht frei* condenses within its brief compass multiple meanings and multiple points-of-view, however contradictory.

Amongst these is the self-satisfying *Schadenfreude* released in German fascists by entangling the Jew in his own, double-binded destruction. Accounting for the torturous cynicism of the phrase, this vindictive humor is intrinsic to the fabricated table-turning that Germans have performed upon the Jew throughout centuries of antisemitic cultural practice, as we have seen. The diabolical entrapment which the slogan *Arbeit macht frei*

signified for Jewish inmates and deportees at Auschwitz was thus essential to the broader meanings of the motto as an expression of the German's alleged "liberation" from the Jew.

At the same time, it becomes clear that the most important and encompassing aspects of the motto are not those assumed by camp inmates or post-war observers, but the meanings and points-of-view that extend definitively from the cultural practice of the Nazis themselves. The slightly expanded titles of the articles we encountered in *Der Schulungsbrief* have filled in the crucial little pronouns which the rest of the world had not even realized were missing: *Our Work for Our Volk Makes Us Free*.

On an individual level, the freedom work brought Germans was the secularized salvation derived from a disciplined *Arbeit an sich*, that is, a freedom from the chaotic and undermining egoism of the self, achieved by working the body into its proper, orderly form as a subordinate cell within the *Volkskörper*, the racial body of the *Volk*. This egoism of the self, however, was not an isolated condition, but one associated directly with the egoism of the marketplace. As such, it was a weakness upon which the Jew supposedly preyed as parasite. Penetrating body and mind, self and society, the Jew destroyed the health of the German. Having rendered Germans vulnerable, he then proceeded to debase them, just as he had debased the objects of their labor, by transforming both into mere commodities. On a collective level, the freedom work brought was thus a freedom wrested from the domination of the Jew and the nexus of exchange over which he supposedly prevailed; it was a freedom achieved by encompassing the chaotic effects of the capitalist marketplace within the ordering boundaries of the Aryan *Volk Community*.

Or as Robert Ley had proclaimed so macabrely, the German "gates to freedom"—like the entranceway to Auschwitz itself—had been opened widely. Jewish gold no longer engulfed the German in the filth of its alienating labyrinth. Now it circulated in controlled

form within the "beautiful spaces" which the death camps had produced, paved with the ashes of their victims.



Plate 109. Heinrich Himmler's adjutant, Karl Wolff, the *Reichsführer* himself and Rudolf Heß "enjoy" the antisemitic signpost pointing the way into Dachau concentration camp. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, dated May 8, 1936)

Reichsorganisationsleiter Dr. ROBERT LEY

Unsere Arbeit macht uns frei

Das Leben ist ein ewiger Kampf und ein ununterbrochener Kreislauf von Sorgen und Mühen, Überwinden von Hindernissen und Beseitigen von Hemmungen, gepaart mit Bitternis und Ärger, abgelöst von Freude, Genugtuung, Stolz und Erfolg. Begriffe wie Frieden und Krieg, Feiertag und Alltag sind nicht etwa Gegensätze, sondern drücken nur mehr oder weniger heftige Phasen dieses ständigen Ringens und Kämpfens aus. Bald ist das Tempo stürmisch und verlangt von dem einzelnen Menschen den letzten und höchsten Einsatz bis zur Hingabe des Lebens; bald ist das Tempo wieder geringer und gemächlicher und erlaubt dem Menschen ab und zu, Einkehr zur Besinnung und Beschaulichkeit zu halten. Der Kampf läßt ihn jedoch nie los, und wenn eine Sorge überwunden ist, türmt sich bereits eine neue Sorge vor dem Kämpfer auf. Das ist das Leben und sein Sinn.

Arbeit und Kampf sind Zwillingsgeschwestern, die aus dem ewigen Naturgesetz des Lebens hervorgingen. Arbeit und Kampf gehen so oft ineinander über, daß man sie nicht mehr zu unterscheiden vermag und die Arbeit zum Kampf, sowie Kampf zur Arbeit wird. Wenn beide, die Arbeit und der Kampf, die Kräfte des Menschen übersteigen, werden sie zur Last. Jedoch ist diese Last immer noch besser zu ertragen, als ohne Arbeit und ohne Kampf zu sein. Das Schrecklichste aller Dinge ist, arbeitslos zu sein und Langeweile zu haben. Ein solcher Zustand entnervt die Menschen, macht sie gemein und nimmt ihnen jeden Halt. Wer einmal in seinem Leben arbeitslos gewesen ist, oder wen das Leben so mit allen materiellen Gütern ausgestattet hat, daß ihm das Schicksal jeglichen Lebenskampf vorenthält, ist vom Schicksal schwer geschlagen.

Die Arbeit unterscheidet den Menschen vom Tier. Sie adelt den Menschen und erhebt ihn über die Niederungen der Sinne und der Gemeinheit. Der Volksmund sagt: „Wer arbeitet, kommt auf keine dummen Gedanken.“ Selbst die schwerste Arbeit gibt dem Menschen, wenn sie von Erfolg gekrönt ist, das Gefühl der Zufriedenheit, Genugtuung und des Stolzes. Die Träger schwerer Arbeit, wie der Bergmann, der Hochseefischer, der Landmann, der Hüttenmann am Hochofen und viele viele andere mehr offenbaren in Gesinnung und Haltung mehr Takt und Feingefühl, mehr Anstand und Kameradschaft, mehr Mut und Einsatzbereitschaft, als alle Lebemänner der feingestriegelten und gebügelten sogenannten Gesellschaft zusammen. Wirklicher Adel der Seele sowie Arbeit und Kampf gehören unzertrennlich zusammen.

Die einfachen Menschen, insonderheit der Arbeiter und Bauer, sind an sich nicht gegen eine Gesellschaftsordnung. Im Gegenteil. Sie wissen als natürliche Menschen um die Rangordnung in der Natur, in den Rassen und Arten. Sie wollen gerade eine gerechte Rangordnung in der Gesellschaft der Menschen, jedoch eine solche, die sich allein auf Arbeit und Leistung aufbaut. Wenn der Arbeiter in der Vergangenheit gegen die bürgerliche Gesellschaftsordnung angekämpft hat, so nur deshalb, weil er in ihr das große Unrecht sah. Er sah in ihr eine Ordnung, die weder mit Leistung, noch mit Können und Fähigkeiten auch nur das geringste zu tun hatte. Deshalb muß es unser unverrückbares Ziel sein, eine neue Gesellschaftsordnung aufzubauen, die sich nur auf Arbeit und Leistung begründet. In ihr kann sich jeder den Platz erobern, auf den er nach seiner Leistung und seinem Können Anspruch hat. Diese Gesellschaftsordnung ist alsdann gerecht, und das Recht allein verbürgt die Freiheit des Menschen. Damit machen die Arbeit und der Kampf allein den Menschen frei!

Was ist die Freiheit der Menschen?

Der Duce des faschistischen Italien sprach einmal die Worte: „Die Freiheit gibt es nicht. Ich kenne nur Freiheiten, und die Summe vieler Freiheiten gibt ein Gesamtgefühl der Freiheit.“

Der Obdachlose hat beispielsweise keinen anderen Wunsch, als eine Behausung, um damit einen Schutz vor Wind und Wetter zu erhalten. Hat er diese Behausung, so fühlt er sich im Augenblick frei: frei von der Sorge, obdachlos zu sein. Im gleichen Augenblick tritt jedoch ein neuer Wunsch an ihn heran und er empfindet nun, daß er hungrig ist. Keine andere Sorge beherrscht ihn, als Brot zu besitzen. Hat er diese Sorge behoben und seinen Hunger gestillt, so ist er wieder frei von einer Sorge, und so geht es fort. Jeder Wunsch und jedes Bedürfnis erzeugen eine neue Sorge, und jede Befriedigung erzeugt von neuem das Gefühl der Freiheit.

In diesen Wünschen und Sorgen, Erfüllen und Befriedigen gibt es zwei Arten von Freiheiten, über die wir etwas mehr darlegen müssen.

1. Es gibt für die Menschen gleichen Blutes und gleicher Rasse eine allgemeine Plattform, von der aus diese Menschen ihren Lebenskampf erst beginnen können, es müssen gewisse Voraussetzungen erfüllt sein, um dieser Rasse den Kampf überhaupt möglich zu



Plate 112. *Es kommt der Eisenhammer.* Nazi color poster advertising appearance of *Der Eisenhammer*, an antisemitic newspaper in the *Stürmer* tradition. Note logo at bottom: a Jewish star being reforged. (Source: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 3/20/14)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CONCLUSION

This, then, was the millenarian labor of the Third Reich—a murderous process of cultural transformation.

Adolf Hitler, above all others, held fast to the meanings of that labor—as fast as he was held by them. Nothing reveals more the extent to which these symbolic meanings had become an ineradicable component of his flesh and blood than his "Last Will and Political Testament," composed and witnessed in Berlin on April 29, 1945, only one day before his suicide and sacrificial self-immolation.

It was not the Germans who had instigated the war, Hitler declared at the outset of his testament, but "those international statesmen who were either of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interests." In a pivotal speech made shortly before the outbreak of war, Hitler continued, he had publicly identified "the real criminal in this murderous struggle" to be the one responsible for having reduced the peoples of Europe to "mere shares [*Aktienpakete*] to be bought and sold by these international conspirators in money and finance: Jewry! [*das Judentum*]." Accordingly, he had left no doubt that Jewry would have to "atone" for the guilt of war it had brought upon the world.

Despite everything, Hitler's testament went on, the preceding six years of war had demonstrated valiantly the "*Volk's* will-to-live [*Lebenswillens*]." Now, however, it was time for the Führer to share the fate of his people—and at the same time to avoid falling "into the hands of an enemy who is looking for a new spectacle organized by the Jews for

the amusement of their hysterical masses." The Führer accordingly had chosen death in the Reich's capital, joined by the many "courageous men and women" who likewise "have decided to unite their lives with mine unto the very last."

Penultimately, the Führer expelled Göring as well as Himmler from the Party for having conducted "secret negotiations with the enemy." Then, having settled accounts with the traitors in his midst, Hitler made his final declaration to the world:

Above all else I adjure the leaders of the nation and its members to painstaking observance of the laws of race and to merciless resistance against that universal poisoner [*der Weltvergifter*] of all peoples, International Jewry. Given in Berlin, this 29th day of April 1945, 4 a.m. [Signed] Adolf Hitler (in Jäckel, 1981:78; see also Noakes & Pridham, 1975:677-680).

The next day Hitler shot himself through the mouth with a pistol. His corpse and that of Eva Braun were soaked in gasoline, ignited, and reduced as much as possible to ash. The remnants then were scratched under, probably in a shell crater in the Chancellery courtyard (see Trevor-Roper, 1947:261-3).

The only prior adult experience comparable in existential import to this final night and day in Hitler's life was the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, which he had only just managed to survive. Having touched the edges of his own mortality, it is understandable that the Führer should immediately have instituted practical methods to protect himself in future. And yet, at this nearly supreme moment of personal bodily threat, the Führer's mind turned instead to notions of the hidden Jew. In this connection Adam has noted that no officer with Jewish ancestry had been even "remotely involved in the plot" (see Adam, 1978:140), while military recruiters at this point were "scraping the bottom of the barrel" to offset the acute requirements of Total War. Nonetheless one of Hitler's first orders after the assassination attempt was that any remaining *Mischlinge* (those with any trace of mixed Jewish blood) as well as those Germans involved in mixed marriages be cleared out of the *Wehrmacht* and civil service. Just so, in his "Last Will and Political Testament"—his final

opportunity to face the profound realities of life and death—it is to antisemitism and the necessity for genocide that Adolf Hitler fatally returns.

Along with most other analysts, Adam's only recourse in comprehending Hitler's anti-Jewish actions is to assume they were "determined by dark psychological impulses" and that they therefore "elude rational explanation" (p.140). In the wake of the preceding anthropological analysis, however, we can see now that the reason for Nazi antisemitism and mass murder lies in the symbolic constitution of Nazi social reality—including the economic and the political—as it articulates with the historically-determined contours of German bodily experience.

Thus, on the precipice of death, the Führer refers back yet again to his *Reichstag* "prophecy" of January 30, 1939—i.e., to his avowed intention of annihilating the Jews of Europe. The fulfillment of this intention—something which took on pivotal importance in the war effort of the preceding six years, as we know—has testified to the *Lebenswillen* of the German *Volk*, its will-to-live. Hitler thereby showed just how fundamental a role antisemitism played in the practices of the body—its "defensive" thoughts and actions—as he struggled to shape the most existential moments of his personal and political life, and to extend that shaping to the "life" of Germany as well. True to those bodily imperatives, the world conspiratorial Jew is seen returning at the *nth* hour, his diabolical exchange-nature revealed in his capacity to manipulate Germans and the entire world like "shares to be bought and sold." And yet this arch-capitalist parasite is, at the same time, the power behind the Red Army—those "hysterical masses" marching even now upon the Führer bunker. This is the mob from whom the Führer seeks his ultimate escape, so as to prevent the ravaging of his body in what he expects will be a Purim-like ritual of vengeful celebration. The same Jew—once the only element common to an otherwise anarchic state structure—now has managed even to invade and divide the Führer's inner circle in the form of Göring's desertion and Himmler's betrayal. It will be recalled that the *Reichsführer-SS*,

hoping to ease his post-war lot and in line with Nazi conspiracy theory, had entered into negotiations with, of all people, the tiny World Jewish Congress (see chapter 12 and Kersten, 1957:275-90).

That it is the margins of the body to which all this finally devolves is made clear by Hitler's final words, cried out as if into the wilderness. The compulsive urgency revealed in these words would be almost pathetic if their terrifying realization for millions of human souls did not already lay behind him. "Above all else," Hitler screams out—the *Volkskörper* deflating around him—the "laws of race" must be "painstakingly observed" and the poison of "International Jewry" opposed with every breath of the German body and every drop of its blood. This definition of the Jew as the "*Weltvergifter*," the "poisoner of the world" and its peoples, betrays the appalling persistence of antisemitism's most essential principles even as it has transformed over the centuries along with the changing structure of European political economy. For like the dying Martin Luther 400 years before him—shuddering viscerally over the divisive presence of Jewish *Wucherer* (money lenders) in his conflict-ridden birthplace, or railing out in his last sermons against Jewish physicians and their nefarious medicines (see chapter 4)—Hitler too focuses in his death throes upon the hidden poison of the Jew. Despite everything he has done to eradicate it, it has lived on secretly within the bodies of the world's peoples, and even now was consummating its pernicious business of spiritual dissolution and physical decay.

Thus at his very last moment, personal as well as political, Adolf Hitler's mind returned to the ideological linchpin and obsession with which he had begun his political career in 1919. But by the end of the war the previously expanding boundaries of the Aryan *Volkskörper* had shrunken to the margins of Hitler's own withering body. The bodily spacetime of the millennium had imploded to the undefendable armor of the encompassing Führer bunker, and the altered time frame of millenarian labor had become an accelerating spiral into self-destruction. Hitler had become, increasingly, A. Paul Weber's *Last*

Privateer (see chapter 12), the restraining walls of the Chancellery, the bunker and finally of his body itself collapsing against the force of the deluge. It is true that the Jew had been annihilated—and yet the alienating logic of capitalism as well as the continuing effects of its social contradictions had not been overcome after all. To the contrary, they had been incorporated so thoroughly into the dehumanizing racism of the Third Reich that they had prefigured its very downfall. The polycentric structure of the Nazi political system was also collapsing, through betrayal and the egoistic drive for survival, into its discrete and conflict-ridden parts. This left behind nothing but that one unifying element which previously had held it all together—and the man who had prevailed over that element's definition, management and ultimate disposal. It was this same symbolic medium which now provided Hitler with the only possible focal point for comprehending the vortex into which he was about to plummet: *der ewige Jude*.

* * *

Granted that National Socialism targeted a wide array of "enemies" through its policies of rabid, racist Social Darwinism, it is nonetheless remarkable how often and easily the underlying symbolic and structural imperative of antisemitism has been lost in secondary accounts of National Socialist ideology and Hitler's worldview. This has resulted from a mechanistic reduction of antisemitism to but one of the negative elements in Nazism's adversative pantheon, amongst which anti-Bolshevism in particular often is seen as separate and taking "actual" precedence. The related tendency to see in Nazi antisemitic ideology the cynical ploys of "mere propaganda"—or, conversely, an aberrant psychopathology operating beyond the borders of "rational" explanation—has aggravated this epistemological error. In the holistic context of the present symbolic anthropological analysis, however, Hitler's "Last will and Political Testament" should restore the role of antisemitism and the Jew to the position which they actually occupied within the ideology of National Socialism as in its signifying practice: the center. Antisemitism shares that

position, of course, with one other fundamental element that connects both nature and culture, the symbolic and the material, almost as if with an umbilicus: the body itself.

Modern antisemitism was the symbolic means whereby the contradictory structuring effects of commodity fetishism—effects internalized within the body and implemented in its labors—were objectified for the German under National Socialism. Indeed, racial antisemitism provided an effective means first of thematizing and personifying, and later, of coordinating the exacerbating internal divisions of class and value which plagued German society in the early twentieth century. Essential to the symbolic constitution of the body, social identity and power as a capitalist culture developed in German lands over the centuries, antisemitism transformed in the nineteenth century into a scientized, political ideology of alienation *par excellence* without yet losing its implicit symbolic significance. Articulated first by those petit-bourgeois and declassé elements marginal to the emergent modern system, it soon broadened to encompass those who found, in the hegemonic aspirations of the former, an increasingly salient if radicalized paradigm for their own social dislocation. At the same time it provided the means for forging a far more encompassing and effective hegemony of the right. Hitler (like many others) thus incorporated within the margins of his own body the alienating dimensions of German capitalism, symbolically transformed into the poison of Jewish exchange. Likewise the debilitating social contradictions of German society became transposed into a unified struggle of the race against the Jew, as against the disintegrative effects of a physiological system gone wildly out-of-kilter.

This transposition helps to explain an element crucial to the symbolically-structured interplay of "intention" and "function" in the development of Nazi genocidal policy. This is the efficacy of antisemitism as a *generalized symbolic medium of social interaction* (see chapter 9)—a hegemonic instrument capable of coordinating class conflict, of constructing personal and political identity, and of structuring the competition for power under

conditions of otherwise insoluble rivalry and polycratic confusion. By offering the terms of this orienting political discourse for general circulation, Hitler and National Socialism provided Germans with a new-found capacity to act together politically. Far from operating merely as the mechanism of an empty power politics, however, this discourse and its coordinating capacity were meaningfully grounded in the symbolic forms and practices of *antisemitic status reversal* which we have revealed during the course of the preceding analysis. Thus the essence of Nazi racial politics from 1933 onward—and the core practice for producing the so-called *Volksgemeinschaft*—became the competition to participate in, define and if possible monopolize the circulation of the medium of antisemitism and its associated values as the orienting element *within* the wider ideological context of Nazi racism and its transformative project.¹ It was through this process that the rivalrous agents in the Nazi polycentric system struggled to establish their political identities *vis-à-vis* Adolf Hitler, who served as the ultimate source and universally accepted guarantor of these generalized values (see Broszat, 1970; T. Turner, 1968:122-3) as well as the unifying apex of the polycentric pyramid.

However, in order for the symbolic medium to maintain its effectiveness, it was necessary for it to be ever-more radically mined of its integrative value and coordinating capacity. What this meant was the increasingly radical articulation and pursuit of antisemitism (Broszat, 1970; Mommsen, 1976)—a process eventually dominated, of course, by the SS. Indeed, this was the ultimate means whereby Germans could represent themselves, in Tim Mason's terms, as "most national socialist" *vis-à-vis* others in an otherwise discordant sociopolitical arena (Mason, 1981:27), that is, by demonstrating their continuing readiness to assist in producing the greater German *Volksgemeinschaft*. This

¹This competition, to provide only one example here, was reflected in the proliferation of offices and departments devoted to the "Jewish Question" which were established in almost every party and state agency to facilitate their participation in this crucially defining aspect of Nazi political life, no matter how marginal this issue might seem to their actual purpose (see Adam, 1972:97-108).

was an endeavor to which antisemitism provided the linchpin—not only by dint of its operation as a generalized medium, but because in the final analysis its symbolic goals were considered a *prerequisite* to the emergence of an empowered and unified Aryan race as well as to the successful conquest and "germanization" of *Lebensraum*. Given the priority of its meanings, then, as well as the endemic conflicts and inner contradictions which the symbolic medium of antisemitism regulated, the progressive exploitation of its coordinating capacity was structurally inevitable. It was intrinsic to the process whereby National Socialism struggled to maintain the momentum that was essential to the consolidation of its hegemony as well as to the progressive fulfillment of its underlying transformative purpose, while simultaneously responding to the impinging effects of historical developments as they unfolded.

Indeed, without being fully conscious of the implications, the Nazi governor of occupied Poland, Hans Frank himself, had proclaimed the indispensability of antisemitism and genocide to maintaining "the whole structure of the Reich" in the East (see chapter 12 and Frank in Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1126-7). There is, however, another, even more powerful factor (beyond Hitler's last words themselves) which confirms the indispensability of antisemitism to the meaningful constitution of the Third Reich itself, mass murder notwithstanding. This is the seemingly irrational ingathering of Germany's surviving Jewish slaves—those whom the SS had been working so hard to expunge—back within the disintegrating boundaries of the *Volkskörper* via ruthless "death" marches between January and April 1945, following the liquidation of camps in the east and Germany's imminent collapse (see Abzug, 1985; Gilbert, 1985:767ff; Czech, 1990:779ff). Even the crematoria components at Auschwitz-Birkenau were dismantled carefully for shipment home. This obsessive, even desperate need to retain control over the Jew—whether to monopolize his labor power or "exterminate" him—again underscores the pivotal role of the Jew as "symbolic capital" in Nazi Germany.

It must be stressed once more that antisemitism as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction was not simply a mechanical device to cynically manipulate attitudes and mobilize popular support, or to coordinate competing power factions with a sort of meaningless functional glue, the use of which one was "forced into" by the system's fragmentation (Broszat, 1970:408). On the other hand, neither was it merely an element of "belief" belonging to some floating realm of ideology professed by fanatics. To the contrary, the Jew as a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction was, all at once, *a meaningful component of ongoing social process*—an implicit factor in the pragmatic construction of German social relations as well as an accessible, manipulable element in the management of goal-oriented action, both individual and collective. The Nazi symbolic construction of the Jew and its Aryan counterpart provided both an experiential, taken-for-granted backdrop *from* which participating Germans attended (see Polanyi, 1967), as well as a focusing set of shared terms, tokens, practices and persons which could be consciously manipulated in order to negotiate one's way through Nazi Germany's racialized sociopolitical landscape. The latter was not merely a process of utilitarian self-interest, but part of the means whereby social actors were implicated more or less profoundly in that process which lay at the core of Nazism's millenarian project: the multidimensional transformation of German self, space and society.

This, then, is the way in which Martin Broszat's "ideological metaphors" can be taken seriously, as Mason had wanted, without stumbling into the pitfalls of "intentionalist" or "functionalist" accounts—much less the shifting byways of postmodernist indeterminacy (see chapter 1; cf. Friedländer, 1992): within the context of a systematic and socioculturally-integrated approach to the political dynamics of symbolic meaning. Operating himself within the symbolic terms of this discourse and the structural tensions it mediated, Hitler's millenarian labor was to restore the dysfunctioning social body, once and for all, to a state of permanent homeostasis—that is, to harden the *Volkskörper* for all

time, "steeling" it, like some monstrous tank or battleship (Hitler, 1943 [1925]). Through this collective *Arbeit an sich*, the German body, both personal and social, became the product of its own self-alienated labor: a classic commodity-fetish form raised to the dehumanized level of the fascist collectivity.

The method to accomplish this was a healing labor focused dialectically upon the Jew as upon the body of the *Volk*; its ultimate purpose, to reverse the alleged master-slave relationship of German and Jew. The latter—in reality a heterogeneous European minority without significant political power—had come to personify the dominating power of capitalism itself, while the German had become his progressively enslaved structural inferior. However inaccurate this attribution of status relations was—and it was horrendously so—the practical enactment of its symbolic implications placed the basic principles structuring German capitalism within the hands of that system's disaffected millenarian offspring. Antisemitic status reversal thereby became a potent element in the construction and transformation of social reality, allowing for the release of pragmatic values which could be converted into a shared social currency and discourse of meaningful practice. Indeed, in their relentless effort to encompass the alienating effects of capitalism within the personalized bounds of a renewed *Volk* Community, the Nazis transformed the Jew into nothing less than a "total social phenomenon" such as Marcel Mauss had described for precapitalist societies (1966:1; cf. Appadurai, 1986). Only here the culturally-experienced distinction between "commodities" and "gifts" was seemingly overcome within the compass of a single fetishized form. At once both material and ideological, this form contained within itself "all of the strands" of which the Nazi sociocultural fabric was composed, from the moral and the legal to the economic and the political.

Circulating the generalized medium of antisemitism and performing operations upon the Jew (its reified expression) made available to Germans the symbolic values or capacities

associated with the transformation and harnessing of the Jew's supposed malignant power. As we have seen, the latter consisted essentially of the negative effects associated with the process of commoditization and its implications for the construction of an alienated German self and social order. These negative effects were expressed polysemically in terms of Jewish bodily form, its modes of self-reproduction, and the supposedly pernicious effects these had upon the German body, the work processes in which it engaged, its forms of cultural production, and the spaces it inhabited. It was these negative effects which Germans struggled to convert—at any cost whatsoever, even that of industrialized mass murder—into positive, organic and supposedly unalienated forms which they could assimilate for the beneficial reproduction of their own social lives.

This was the transformative labor to which Nazi Germany as a whole devoted itself, and with a fanatical vigour such as only possesses those enmeshed in the ruthless and impossible "pursuit of the millennium" (N. Cohn, 1970). By so personifying exchange in the form and being of the Jew, it could be manipulated; by so concretizing alienation, it could, it seemed, be conquered. That which devours could be devoured; he who had been slave could become master. Like Dietrich Eckart's avowal of the Jew as the necessary intestinal bacterium without which the German *Volk* could not survive—and consistent with Hegel's definition of the master-slave relationship as one of mutual dependence (Hegel, 1967:234ff)—the Jew was integral to Nazi Germany's self-definition as to the coordination of its polycentric political structure.² In the even more radical and fully reified versions of antisemitism espoused by Hitler and practiced by the Third Reich, it only remained to find a new means, once the war was underway, whereby this otherwise inimical "ferment of decomposition" could be held in check, contained, and thereby

²Eckart's overt formulation on the necessity for Germans to retain the Jew *in some form* may not have been espoused literally by later Nazis. Nonetheless it betrays with remarkable clarity the underlying transformative logic of Nazi antisemitism and the murderous form in which its implications ultimately were realized.

rendered useful. That meant the industrious conversion of the Jew's supposedly alienating essence into a concrete extension of German being, in the form of object, thing and value; it meant a literal transformation of Jewish power into German substance.

In this sense the gateway to Auschwitz was indeed the door to a distorted kind of freedom—the freedom of the German from the Jew, and from all that which the Jew had been forced, so perversely, to embody.

This was the impossible, merciless liberation which the death camps offered; this was the freedom work made.

EPILOGUE

LIBERATING OURSELVES: THE STRUGGLE FOR MEANING

*Denk dir:
das kam auf mich zu,
namenwach, handwach
für immer,
vom Unbestattbaren her.*

Just think:
this came towards me,
name-alert, hand-alert
for ever,
from the unburiable.

—Paul Celan, *Denk Dir*

As many layers of meaning and points-of-view as we have discovered in the motto *Arbeit macht frei*, there is yet another message and yet another viewpoint which we have not yet mentioned, hidden within the sign leading to the factory of death. It is with this last perspective that one would like to leave the camps and their analysis firmly behind.

If one examines closely the wrought-iron sign over the Auschwitz gateway, one notices that there is something peculiar about the letter "B" in the word *Arbeit*. In the past one may have sensed this subliminally. Now, suddenly, it is obvious: the letter is larger on top than on the bottom. It has been welded upside-down inside its frame (see Heubner et al., 1979:181) (see plate 113).

We know that the main camp, a former Austrian military barracks, was refurbished and expanded with the use of slave labor, including three hundred local Jews (see Noakes & Pridham, 1988:1173; Czech, 1980:17ff and 1990:9ff, 42, 103). In fact all of Auschwitz

was built by those it imprisoned and destroyed. Could it be that one of the inmates—perhaps even a skilled Jewish craftsman, like those used in Treblinka and indeed in all of the death camps—turned the letter "B" over intentionally, welding it fast while the SS were looking the other way?

* * *

The Nazis did more than dispose over the bodies of their victims; they also sought to dispose over the significance of genocide, over history itself. What they called the "Final Solution" thus became a hopelessly unequal struggle for meaning. We have seen the German version of this struggle—indeed, they defined almost unilaterally its terms and strategies—in the glut of their antisemitic cultural production, from board games, works of scholarship, films and museum exhibits, to shoesoles made from torahs and cloth from hair. We have seen it in documents of destruction like *The Stroop Report*, an Aryan family album lethally recycled out of the debris of Jewish lives.

At the same time the Nazi drive to document was not without contradiction. Particularly as the course of the war turned against them, this drive was countered by an increasingly paranoid effort to obscure the consequences of their antisemitism. We encountered the tension between these two tendencies in a conversation Gerstein reported, where "Lindner" (i.e., Dr. Herbert Linden), fearing the judgement of future generations, advises that the SS cremate the corpses in the *Aktion Reinhard* camps instead of burying them. "Gentlemen," Globocnik replied, "if there should ever come, after us, a generation so soft and weak-kneed that they do not understand our great task, then certainly all of National Socialism will have been in vain. On the contrary, in my view one ought to bury bronze tablets on which it is recorded that it was we who had the courage to carry out this great and vital work!" (see chapter 15 and *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1953:189).

It was not Globocnik's, but the voice of furtive caution which prevailed in the end. And so the SS scurried about Eastern Europe from mass grave to mass grave, first to

exhume the corpses and burn them in pits, afterwards to pound the charred remnants into an ash that could be spread in water, mixed with earth, or scattered to the wind.

For the Nazis, their work of genocide was a "world-historical" event, portending the liberation of the German from his enslavement by the alleged World Jewish Conspiracy, and thus the harnessing of the underlying force of capitalism itself. It was from this that their compulsion to document arose—from the collective need of a rabidly ethnocentric society to represent itself in millenarian renewal. Accordingly, the Nazi elite continued to propagate ever-more-vehemently the supposed necessity for liberation from the Jew, while at the same time monopolizing the actual details of how that liberation was being accomplished. Nothing would be allowed to interfere—neither the hesitations of those too "soft" to comprehend the "necessity" for such "radical measures," nor the supposed conspiratorial retribution of imagined Jewish power. The Nazis would obliterate all traces of their murderous deeds, consign all evidence of the Jew and his human autonomy to the hole of history, thereby to render his annihilatory transformation, and their supposed liberation, irrevocable and complete.

The words of Heinrich Himmler, addressing a gathering of SS officers in Posen, October 6, 1943:

I am referring to the clearing out of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish race. . . . Most of you know what it means when a hundred corpses are lying side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have stuck it out and at the same time, apart from exceptions caused by human weakness, to have remained decent, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and must never be written. . ." (in Noakes & Pridham, 1975:492).

One might conclude a discussion of the Nazi genocide of Europe's Jews with these chilling words. But the historical dialectic does not—and must not—end solely with the Nazi construction of its significance.

The visceral urge to bear witness is an apparently inevitable part of Jewish experience in the face of the Nazi onslaught, appearing as consistently as the Nazi compulsion to document the crime of genocide even while expunging its traces. Chaim Kaplan, alone and isolated in the Warsaw Ghetto, but by no means unique, faithfully kept a diary which outlived him. "In a spiritual state like the one in which I find myself at this time," he wrote on May 2, 1940, "it is difficult to hold a pen, to concentrate one's thoughts. But a strange idea has stuck in my head since the war broke out—that it is a duty I must perform. This idea is like a flame imprisoned in my bones, burning within me, screaming: Record!" (Kaplan, 1973:144).

In Auschwitz and other camps, as one survivor recounts, SS guards "took pleasure in telling us that we had no chance of coming out alive, a point they emphasized with particular relish by insisting that after the war the rest of the world would not believe what happened; there would be rumors, speculations, but no clear evidence, and people would conclude that evil on such a scale was just not possible" (quoted in Des Pres, 1976:35). And so the urge to bear witness found expression even in manuscripts buried like messages in bottles amidst the ashes of the Auschwitz crematoria. "Dear finder," one of them concluded,

search everywhere, in every inch of soil. Tens of documents are buried under it, mine and those of other persons. . . . Great quantities of teeth are also buried here. It is we, the crematoria workers [*Sonderkommando*], who expressly have strewn them all over the terrain, as many as we could, so that the world should find material traces of the millions of murdered people. We ourselves have lost all hope of being able to see the moment of liberation. . . (quoted in Bezwinska, 1972:80).¹

In the course of this and other studies, we too have struggled—not under the same unimaginable extremity, but in a troubled aftermath of disorientation and despair.

¹At Treblinka too, death camp workers who had been required to reduce corpses to ash for camouflaged burial managed nonetheless to embed whole skeletons in the walls of the graves, along with bottles in which they, too, inserted messages (see Arad, 1987:176).

Profoundly dislocated by the effects of the catastrophe, at times unwilling or unable to confront head-on its unsettling implications, we have struggled nonetheless to find footing. Stunned by what have seemed unfathomable contradictions, we have wandered on amidst a painfully enigmatic landscape, erring our way through the untold complexity of history and the problem of meaning in society, struggling not only in our search for answers, but even in our efforts to pose the proper questions.

Persevering nonetheless, we have scoured the terrain of Germany, uncovering the superimposed layers in hopes that telling contours might reveal themselves. We have sifted the remains for evidence—the desecrated human fragments, the commemorative bronze plaques—forcing ourselves, despite the obscenity, to consider seriously their juxtapositioning. Like insistent sleepwalkers in a dream, we have shifted from the *trompe l'oeil*, the camouflaging branches and the spikes of lupine to the deceptive quiet of the pine forest—cycling endlessly between detail and distance in our struggle for perspective—waiting anxiously for a salient framework to emerge, one which would allow the disparate parts to coalesce and take on meaning.

During the intervening years the struggle for history has continued to assert itself in the battle against revisionism and denial, sensationalism and trivialization, apathy and the betrayal brought by forgetfulness (see Lipstadt, 1993; Vidal-Naquet, 1992). All these are tendencies which would silence the voices of witness or blunt their message, thereby realizing Himmler's goal for a "glorious history, unwritten and never to be written." Using instead the sharpening tools of scholarship—sometimes clumsily, at times with grace—we have struggled to seize back control over history from the Nazis. In the process we have revised the boundaries of our own mental geography. Now we have contributed the synthetic methods of cultural analysis to the struggle, hoping to induce the tacit meanings of Nazi genocide to speak out, almost despite themselves, and so reveal their deepest secrets.

What then about the telltale "B" in the sign *Arbeit macht frei* at Auschwitz? Is it a token of spiritual resistance? A subtle effort, desperately circumscribed, to betray the brutal inversion which the motto concealed—inverting it yet again, as if thereby to repossess the word *Arbeit*, and freedom itself?

We can only suppose that this is so. And yet—however tenuous the act, however fragile the supposition—it is in this same spirit of liberation that the present work has struggled to recapture from Nazi Germany the meaning of the Holocaust.



Plate 113. The gateway to Auschwitz (detail). (Source: the author)

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