THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

AT HOME IN MY ROOM: JEWISH SPACES OF LONGING AND BELONGING IN WORLD WAR I THROUGH WEIMAR BERLIN

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2022

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
Gnazim	Asher Barash Gnazim Institute
GSJHM	German-Speaking Jewry Heritage Museum
GStA PK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz
ICDPA	The Israeli Center for the Documentation of the Performing Arts
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin
LBI	Leo Baeck Institute
NLI	National Library of Israel
ZAGJD	Zentralarchiv zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to write this dissertation without the support and guidance of many people. First and foremost, I am lucky to have had wonderful advisors and mentors at the University of Chicago. Leora Auslander has been an incredible advisor throughout my graduate career, and I am profoundly grateful for her invaluable teaching, mentorship, and guidance. The amount of care, energy, and attention to detail that she has devoted to me and to my work has been unparalleled, and she has been more than I could ever ask for in an advisor. Na'ama Rokem took me on as a student a few years into the PhD program and eventually became the co-chair of my dissertation committee. I am deeply indebted to her generous feedback, thoughtful advice, and patience and understanding as she helped me navigate new terrains in the field of comparative literature for my project. Tara Zahra has also been an outstanding professor and very supportive throughout the years, providing crucial feedback and guidance along the way and at key moments.

I am grateful for many other faculty members at the University of Chicago who have contributed to my graduate training. Paul Mendes-Flohr introduced me to the life and work of some of the most important figures of Modern Jewish Thought, many of whom, are featured in this dissertation. Dan Laor guided me in understanding the complexities of S. Y. Agnon's literary corpus during my first year at the University of Chicago and always enthusiastically welcomed me in Tel Aviv during my many research trips. Faith Hillis, Alice Goff, and Eleonora Gilburd also provided helpful feedback on some of my chapters in progress. I am also thankful for my friends and colleagues from my PhD cohort and from the Jewish Studies Workshop and Transnational Approaches to Modern Europe Workshop at the University of Chicago. I

especially appreciate the feedback I received from Gregory Valdespino, Roy Kimmey, Tahel Goldsmith, Matthew Johnson, and Michal Peles.

Outside of the University of Chicago, I am thankful for the generosity and support of Paul Lerner, Kerry Wallach, Nils Roemer, Frances Tanzer, and Sheer Ganor, especially for their willingness to collaborate with me at various conferences and workshops. I am also grateful for the mentorship of Michael Brenner and for his many enlightening conversations with me. I am likewise indebted to my professors from my undergraduate studies at Oberlin College, Shulamit Magnus, Ari Sammartino, and Abraham Socher, who fostered my interest in Modern Jewish History and German History and encouraged me to pursue a PhD.

A number of institutions and organizations have generously supported my research and studies over the years. At the University of Chicago, I have been the lucky recipient of research travel grants from the Division of Social Sciences, the Department of History, and the Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies. The Leo Baeck Institute Fellowship that I received in 2018-2019 through the Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes was instrumental for the realization of my project. In addition to the members of my Leo Baeck cohort, Daniel Wildmann and Elisabeth Gallas provided thoughtful comments and critiques on my work in progress. I am also thankful for the financial support I received in the final stages of my dissertation. The Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Chicago provided me with a dissertation writing fellowship in 2020-2021, and the Association for Jewish Studies awarded me a dissertation completion fellowship in my final year of the program.

Among the many archives I visited to conduct research for this dissertation, I am grateful to the staff at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, the Central Archives for Research on the History of Jews in Germany in Heidelberg, and the Asher Barash Gnazim Institute in Tel Aviv.

In particular, Amiel Shefer provided guidance at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, and Dr. Monika Preuß helped facilitate my research at the Central Archives for Research on the History of Jews in Germany in Heidelberg in the Summer of 2019. I also cherish a series of thoughtful and enlightening conversations I had with Jan Price, the granddaughter of Elias and Grete Auerbach, whose family papers I examined while in Heidelberg and who feature prominently in the second chapter of my dissertation. I am likewise incredibly grateful for my cousin Steven Caplan and friends Esther and Brian Finglass, who graciously hosted me in their homes in New York and Israel during archival research trips. Above all, this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of the Asher Barash Gnazim Institute in Tel Aviv. The entire staff at Gnazim welcomed me with open arms during the Summer of 2018 and the Winter of 2019, and I am especially grateful for the support and guidance of Adiva Geffen and Hila Tzur. Thank you to Gnazim for making the basement of Beit Ariela my 'home' away from home while in Israel. I look forward to returning soon!

Finally, I thank my family for their constant encouragement. My parents, Eve and Steve, have always provided unconditional love and support over the years, especially as I embarked on my graduate studies. My sister Rebecca and my grandmother Hedy have also offered support and enthusiasm along the way. Most of all, my husband Peter has been nothing short of my rock, grounding me with his calm and steady presence, and steadfast love and companionship when I needed it most. We were blessed to become parents during the final year of this project. I dedicate this dissertation to our daughter, Talia, who has brought more happiness into our lives than I ever thought was possible.

Introduction

"If three things are needed for a man's peace of mind, the right woman [landlady], the right room [Pension], and the right furnishings, any combination of two should be enough for a temporary boarder."[1] This was the statement that S.Y. Agnon's narrator declared in his semi-autobiographical novel *Ad Hena* (To This Day), which documented the Jewish writer's search for suitable living quarters in Berlin during the First World War. In his account, the writer wanders from room to room, Pension to Pension, and lodging to lodging, as each dwelling that the author takes up residence in has some kind of flaw and turns out to be worse than the previous one. By the end of the novel, the disgruntled émigré eventually concludes that all the of the Pensions of Berlin have a grand conspiracy against him and he opts to abandon the city altogether. While also a novel about the metaphorical search for a 'home' for the Hebrew language, Agnon's account underscores the trials and tribulations with which Jewish émigrés searched for a feeling of rootedness and sense of belonging in their temporary dwellings in the urban metropolis of World War I through Weimar Berlin.

The process of leaving one's home and taking up residence in another—whether voluntarily or by force—is a defining feature of the modern Jewish experience. While migration has long been a recurrent catalyst for the fracturing of identity throughout Jewish history, the corresponding search for rootedness, authenticity, or spaces of belonging came to reflect one of the most basic realities of twentieth century European Jewry. This dynamic makes 'home' as a domestic space, both real and imagined, an especially important analytical category in the fields of modern Jewish history and Jewish studies. But what does it mean for Jews to feel 'at home' in

[1] S. Y. Agnon, *To this Day,* trans. Hillel Halkin (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2008), 169.

an inherently temporary space that is not one's own? This dissertation seeks to explain this cultural phenomenon by examining the spaces of rented dwellings, specifically the institution of the Pension and rented rooms let by landladies, for Jews in 1910s through 1930s Berlin.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Berlin, the former home of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), was the primary center of Jewish life in Germany, both demographically and culturally. Due largely in part to the migration of Jews from Eastern Europe, Berlin's Jewish population of 108,044 in 1890 had risen to roughly 173,000 by 1925.[2] This meant that this new wave of East European Jews accounted for one quarter of the Jewish community. During the Weimar years, Berlin was a center of Jewish scholarship, an important site of encounter for Hebrew, Yiddish, and German-Jewish writers with modernist culture and avant-garde artistic movements, and a hub of literary, artistic, and cultural activity to which many Jewish émigrés were positively attracted.[3] During and following the First World War, Jewish writers, intellectuals, and artists flocked to Berlin in record numbers.[4] Berlin was also a city that

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[2] Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland, 1918-1933* (Hamburg: Hans Christian, 1986), 76-78.

[3] As inflation enabled Jewish publishing houses to make use of German printing facilities, at the beginning of the 1920s, Berlin would emerge as a leading center of Hebrew and Yiddish literature and cultural activity. A publisher's paradise of sorts, the publishing scene in interwar Berlin guaranteed an ideal combination of low prices, high quality, and lax censorship, which attracted many Jewish writers and intellectuals who hoped to capitalize on this favorable situation. See Gennady Estraikh, "Yiddish on the Spree," in Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov, eds. *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture* (Oxford: Legenda, 2010) and Heather Valencia, "Yiddish Writers in Berlin 1920-1936," in *The German Jewish Dilemma: From the Enlightenment to the Shoah,* ed. Edward Timms and Andrea Hammel (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999): 193-207.

[4] Numerous important East European Jewish émigré artists lived and worked in Berlin during this period, including Marc Chagall, Issachar Ber Ryback, El Lissitsky, Henryk Berlewi, Natan Altman, Mordekhay Ardon, Mark Schwartz, and Yakov Adler. Among the coterie of Hebrew and Yiddish writers who made Berlin their temporary home following the First World War are Hayim Nahman Bialik and Shaul Tschernichovsky from Odessa, Zalman Shneur and Moyshe Kulbak from Vilna, D. H. Nomberg and David Frishman from Warsaw, Ya'acov Shteinberg and Yeshurun Keshet from Warsaw via Tel Aviv, Uri Zvi Greenberg from Lemberg, and David Bergelson, Leyb Kvitko, and Der Nister from Kiev. Others, such as S. Y. Agnon from the Galician town of Buczacz, David Shimoni from Bobruisk, and Micha Yosef Berdichevsky from Medzhybish, were already living in Berlin during the war.
Also on foreign writers and artists in Berlin, see Klaus Kändler, Helga Karolewski, and Ilse Siebert, eds., *Berliner Begegnungen: Ausländische Künstler in Berlin* (Berlin: Dietz, 1987). On Russian émigré writers

experienced massive housing shortages stemming from the years following the unification of the German Empire and due to industrial development and migration. As the formerly provincial capital struggled to keep up with the ever-increasing demand for housing in the decades that followed 1871, by the turn of the century, Berlin had transformed into a "city of Pensions."[5] The pervasive housing shortage that accompanied the rapid growth of the city meant that many locals and nearly all newcomers—Jewish or not—found themselves unable to secure personalized dwelling space in the form of an individual house or private apartment. They thus took up residence in Pensions and rented dwellings in record numbers. This dissertation is concerned with how Jews *felt* about these dwellings as well as the representation of these dwelling spaces in Jewish imagination and cultural life. The dissertation contends that the Pension, as a form of dwelling, is important in understanding the modern German-Jewish experience, specifically in the densely populated urban center of Berlin in the years leading up to World War I and through the Weimar Republic.

Historiographic Overview

Study of the Jewish relationship to urban and domestic space is a relatively recent phenomenon, as the 'spatial turn' that dominated the humanities and social sciences beginning in the 1980s reached the fields of Jewish history and Jewish studies somewhat late.[6] However, in

in Weimar Berlin, see Amory Burchard, *Klubs der russischen Dichter in Berlin 1920-1941: Institutionen des literarischen Lebens im Exil* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 2001).

[5] *Berlin und die Berliner: Leute, Dinge, Sitten, Winke* (Karlsruhe: J. Bielefelds Verlage, 1905), 429.

[6] For discussion of 'space' and 'place' in Jewish literature, culture, and scholarship, see Barbara Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 2000); Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "The New Spatial Turn in Jewish Studies," *AJS Review* 33.1 (2009): 155-164; Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Vered Shemtov, "Introduction: Jewish Conceptions and Practices of Space," *Jewish Social Studies* 1.3 (2005): 1-8. On Jews and urban space, see Joachim Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt: Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität 1822-1938* (Göttingen:

the past decade and a half, scholars from various disciplines have begun to engage in projects that investigate questions of space and place in the modern Jewish world. In recent years, Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke, Larisa Lempertienė and Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė, Alina Gromova, Felix Heinert, and Sebastian Voigt, as well as Barbara Mann, have all offered important volumes that theorize Jewish space from multidisciplinary perspectives.[7] In the German-Jewish context, Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup's volume *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History* offers several important studies that examine the relationship between literal and metaphorical spaces in the construction of German and Jewish identities.[8] Additionally, the publication of Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov's volume *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture* and Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan's volume *Transit und Transformation: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin, 1918-1939*, mark some of the first and most important scholarly attempts to explore the East European Jewish encounter with Berlin from an urban and spatial perspective.[9] These

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005). On the spatial turn in cultural studies, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). On space and gender, see Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) and Shirley Ardener, *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

[7] See *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, eds. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008); Barbara Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012; *Jewish Space in Central and Eastern Europe: Day to Day History*, eds. Larisa Lempertienė and Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context*, eds. Alina Gromova, Felix Heinert, and Sebastian Voigt (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2015).

[8] *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History,* eds. Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

[9] Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov, eds. *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture* (Oxford: Legenda, 2010); *Transit und Transformation: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939,* eds. Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010). On Jewish literature written in Russian in Weimar Berlin that deals with identity and space, see Britta Korkowsky, *Selbstverortung ohne Ort: Russisch-jüdische Exilliteratur aus dem Berlin der Zwanziger Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2013).

studies have all demonstrated the importance of using 'space' and 'place' as crucial components in studying the identity formation processes of German-speaking Jewry.

A significant part of the historiography on this topic has primarily focused on public or semi-public spaces of consumption.[10] In studying patterns of leisure and consumption, gender and class, migration, religious practice, and anti-Semitism, historians have explored how various spaces—from restaurants and coffeehouses, to clubs and department stores, and even spas—have shaped the nature of Jewish belonging in both in Germany and beyond. Historian Paul Lerner, for example, has traced the evolution of the German department store as a Jewish urban space. While demonstrating how, for Germans and Jews alike, the department store was a key site for the establishment of new forms of consumption and a powerful symbol of social and cultural transformation, Lerner has argued that the world and space of retail became a kind of cultural code for Jewishness in Weimar Germany.[11] With a similar focus on leisure and consumption, Mirjam Zadoff has traced the mapping of Jewishness onto the cultural space of three major Bohemian spa towns from the 1870s through the 1930s.[12] Using Michel Foucault's concept of

[10] On Jews and consumer culture in the modern European and German context, see *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life,* eds. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); *Longing, Belonging, and the Making of Jewish Consumer Culture*, ed. Gideon Reuveni and Nils Roemer (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Gideon Reuveni, *Consumer Culture and the Making of Modern Jewish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2018); *Jewish Consumer Cultures in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe and North America*, eds. Paul Lerner, Uwe Spiekermann, and Anne Schenderlein (Camden: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[11] See Paul Lerner, *The Consuming Temple: Jews, Department Stores, and the Consumer Revolution in Germany, 1880-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Paul Lerner, "Consuming Powers: The Jewish Department Store in German Politics and Culture," in *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life,* eds. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011): 135-156; Paul Lerner, Paul, "Circulation and Representation: Jews, Department Stores, and Cosmopolitan Consumption in Germany, c. 1880s-1930s," in *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and the Jews of East Central Europe,* eds. Michael L. Miller and Scott Ury (London: Routledge, 2015).

[12] See Mirjam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture,* trans. William Templer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

heterotopias, Zadoff has argued how the spa functioned as a kind of Jewish counterworld in the middle of Central Europe for German-speaking Jewry. Kerry Wallach, in her study of different modes of Jewish visibility (or invisibility) in Weimar Germany, has also elucidated the important role of the Jewish press in fostering Jewish belonging and informing Jews of their visibility in various public spaces.[13]

Study of the café as a Jewish space has garnered some of the most attention among cultural and literary historians. Historian Sarah Wobick-Segev has shown how, in both Imperial and Weimar Berlin, coffeehouses and restaurants functioned as sites for insider consumption and socialization in which Jewish belonging could be expressed, displayed, and performed.[14] Wobick-Segev has even gone so far as to argue that by frequenting certain cafes, Jews gained access to—and helped create—what became distinctively Jewish spaces in turn of the century through Weimar Berlin. In her most recent study, Wobick-Segev has shown how diverse spaces of leisure and consumption such as restaurants, cafés, meeting halls, and summer camps offered new spaces for socialization and modes for identity formation among Jews in Berlin, Paris, and St. Petersburg during the twentieth century.[15] Her works points to a 'spatial revolution' which transformed Jewish life from the intimate sphere of the family to wider levels of the community, which enabled distinct forms of Jewish belonging that were based on communal bonds, personal prerogative, and places of choice.

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[13] See Kerry Wallach, *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

[14] See Sarah Wobick-Segev, "Buying, Selling, Being, Drinking: Jewish Coffeehouse Consumption in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life,* ed. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York; Berghahn Books, 2011): 115-134; Sarah E. Wobick-Segev, "German-Jewish Spatial Cultures: Consuming and Refashioning Jewish Belonging in Berlin, 1890-1910," in *Longing, Belonging, and the Making of Jewish Consumer Culture*, ed. Gideon Reuveni and Nils Roemer (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 39-60.

[15] See Sarah Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away from Home: Jewish Belonging in Twentieth Century Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

Shachar Pinsker, who has made some of the most important strides in delineating the role of coffeehouses as meeting places for Jewish writers, has also directly addressed the complex relationship between Jews and the urban space of the café.[16] As Pinsker has demonstrated in multiple studies, coffeehouses functioned as spaces in which complex negotiations between Jews and Gentiles, between 'East' and 'West,' and between the local and the émigré, took place. Using the cultural geographer Edward Soja's notion of a 'thirdspace,'[17] Pinsker has shown how, for Jewish émigrés in various urban centers around the world, the café was a site of the enunciation of identity, lived experience, and contested meanings. In this regard, Pinsker has described Berlin's urban coffeehouses as a kind of 'third space' for Jewish émigrés, located "between real and imaginary, inside and outside, public and private, mass consumption and the avant-garde, [and] men and women."[18] The most recent of Pinsker's monographs has broadly traced how cafés emerged as significant spaces for the production of modern Jewish culture on a global level.[19]

Among those historians who have focused on the space of the Scheunenviertel, Tobias Brinkmann has positioned interwar Berlin as a space of transit, or one of several major points of

[16] See Shachar Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics of the Metropolis: Literary Topographies of Berlin in Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism," in *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture,* eds. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (London: Legenda, 2010: 28-53); Shachar Pinsker, "Spaces of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism," in *Transit und Transformation*, *Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939,* eds. Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010): 56-76; Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). Also on coffeehouse culture, see Jürgen Schebera, *Damals im Romanischen Café: Künstler und ihre Lokale im Berlin der zwanziger Jahre* (Leipzig: Büchergilde Guttenberg, 1988) and Alfred Rath, "Berliner Cafehäuser (1890-1933)," in *Literarische Kaffeehäuser,* ed. Michael Rössner (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999): 108-125.
[17] See Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[18] Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics," 32.
[19] See Shachar Pinsker, *A Rich Brew: How Cafes Created Modern Jewish Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

passage on a larger network of global Jewish migration.[20] Building on Brinkmann's work, as well as that of Jochen Oltmer, historian Anne-Christin Saß has demonstrated how the Scheunenviertel offered a space of exchange on multiple levels in the daily lives of Galician and Russian Jews in Berlin following the First World War.[21] In addition to the flow of people, Saß has shown how the localized nature of the Scheunenviertel fostered the exchange of ideas and information, and led to the creation of new migrant networks such as educational institutions, self-help organizations, and other social spaces which Jewish migrants created and utilized in order to make themselves 'at home' in their new environment. In her highly detailed panorama of life in the Scheunenviertel, Saß treats Berlin as a transit point or place of transmigration where spatial meanings are constantly in flux. Elsewhere, Saß has effectively argued that a main characteristic of the Scheunenviertel, as perceived through the twentieth century, was a continuous inconsistency between real and imagined space.[22] Other scholars who have recently studied the urban space of the Scheunenviertel have focused on the commercial aspects of this neighborhood as well as the prevalence of anti-Semitism. For example, in the second chapter of

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[20] See Tobias Brinkmann, ed., *Points of Passage: Jewish Migrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain 1880-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Tobias Brinkmann, *Migration und Transnationalität: Perspektiven deutsch-jüdischer Geschichte* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012); Tobias Brinkmann, "Topographien der Migration: Jüdische Durwanderung in Berlin nach 1918," in *Synchrone Welten: Zeitenräume jüdischer Geschichte*, ed. Dan Diner (Göttingen, 2005): 175-198; Tobias Brinkmann, "Ort des Übergangs – Berlin als Schnittstelle der jüdischen Migration aus Osteuropa nach 1918," in *Transit und Transformation*, *Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939,* eds. Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010): 25-44; Tobias Brinkmann, "From *Hinterberlin* to Berlin: Jewish Migrants from Eastern Europe in Berlin before and after 1918," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8 (2008); 339-355.

[21] See Anne-Christin Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012). See also Jochen Oltmer, "Verbotswidrige Einwanderung nach Deutschland: Osteuropäische Juden im Kaiserreich und in der Weimar Republik," in *Aschkenas* 17 (2007): 97-121; Jochen Oltmer, *Migration und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

[22] Anne-Christin Saß, "Reconstructing Jewishness, Deconstructing the Past: Reading Berlin's Scheunenviertel over the Course of the Twentieth Century" in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History,* eds. Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017): 197-212.

her recent monograph, historian Molly Loberg re-contextualizes the infamous 1923 pogrom in the Scheunenviertel in order to shed light on issues of commerce and policing in this specific urban streetscape.[23]

Though not necessarily focused on urban space, some of the most important historical studies on Jews in Germany during this time period have centered on the confluence between 'east' and 'west.' Following the First World War, German Jewry experienced a tremendous movement of cultural renaissance, a key component of which consisted of a fascination with the world of East European Jewry.[24] Instead of rejecting the Yiddish-speaking shtetl Jew, as was par for the course through the early twentieth century, German-Jewish enthusiasm for all things *Ostjudentum* would flourish beginning around World War I. This popularization of Jewish culture, or what some have described as the romantic 'cult of the Ostjuden,' made its way into new and often secular forms of art, music, literature, and education on various individual and institutional levels.[25] Scholars such as Michael Brenner, Steven Aschheim, Shulamit Volkov, and Sander Gilman, among others, have emphasized how the encounter between *Ostjuden* and

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[23] Molly Loberg, "From Problem Neighborhood to Pogrom," in Molly Loberg, *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin: Politics, Consumption, and Urban Space, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Also see Molly Loberg, "The Streetscape of Economic Crisis: Commerce, Politics, and Urban Space in Interwar Berlin," *Journal of Modern History* 85, No. 2 (2013): 364-402. In 1923, a series of violent riots against Jews broke out in the Scheunenviertel. See David Clay Large, "Out with the Ostjuden: The Scheunenviertel Riots in Berlin, November 1923," in *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History,* eds. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002): 123-140.

[24] Weimar Berlin was at the center of what historian Michael Brenner has characterized as a "renaissance of Jewish culture." See Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[25] See Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1880-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982). Arnold Zweig's 1920 book *Das ostjüdische Antlitz,* with illustrations by Hermann Struck, is one of the most well known examples that encapsulates this romanticized 'turning' of the German Jews to the culture of East European Jewry. See Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (Berlin: Welt Verlag, 1920) and Eva Raffel, *Vertraute Freunde: das östliche Judentum im Werke von Joseph Roth und Arnold Zweig* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2002).

Westjuden fundamentally shaped the culture of introspection characterizing German-Jewish modernism.[26]

Finally, in addition to historians, literary scholars have also positioned Jewish intellectual and cultural 'space' in Berlin in a similar fashion as a meeting point between 'east' and 'west.' In particular, Rachel Seelig's recent monograph, *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature between East and West, 1919-1933,* is a tremendous contribution to this line of scholarship. Rather than emphasizing diaspora and exile, concepts that evoke rupture and exclusion, Seelig has focused on Weimar Berlin as a site of transition, transfer, and transformation, all terms with 'trans' as a shared prefix that imply continuous horizontal mobility.[27] Though largely concerned with the question of literary or linguistic homes, Seelig treats the physical space of Berlin as a transit point in her study of four writers—Ludwig Strauss, Moyshe Kulbak, Uri Zvi Greenberg, and Gertrud Kolmar—who worked in different, and sometimes multiples languages. In a similar vein, Delphine Bechtel, in her studies concerning the transfer of Yiddish literature to the Jewish capital in Germany, has analyzed the meeting of 'east' and 'west' in Berlin as a two directional process which necessitated the reworking of many key themes into the culture of German-Jewish

[26] See Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture*; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*; Sander Gilman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East," in *Jews and Germans, 1860-1933: The Problematic Symbiosis,* ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979) 338-366; Shulamit Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews," in *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985): 195-211; David A. Brenner, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998). Also see Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Nicholas Block has also explored this process as a reverse phenomenon in which East-European Jews defined themselves vis-à-vis German Jews. See Nicholas Block, "In the Eyes of Others: The Dialectics of German-Jewish and Yiddish Modernism" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013). Block's current book project, based on his dissertation, is called *Schlepping Culture: The Jewish Renaissance Between German and Yiddish, 1880-1930.*

[27] See Rachel Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature between East and West, 1919-1933* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

modernism.[28] Likewise, Allison Schachter has identified Weimar Berlin as a shifting center of 'diasporic modernism,' and Naomi Brenner has shown how bilingualism was a defining feature of many of the Jewish literary projects and realms of cultural production in Weimar Berlin.[29] All of these studies emphasize the encounter between eastern and western Jewry as the catalyst in informing Jewish belonging and in spearheading new modes of Jewish cultural production.

In this large body of aforementioned scholarship, Berlin is often treated as a temporary threshold, a space of rootlessness, or a locus of non-belonging in which the possibility of feeling 'at home' does not come to realization. For example, Rachel Seelig has argued that Weimar Berlin was a *Zwischenraum* or 'in between space' of non-belonging for Jewish writers, Anne-Christin Saß has treated Berlin as a place of transmigration or *Durchwanderung* for Jewish migrants, and Shachar Pinsker has identified this center as a fleeting and temporary urban enclave of Hebrew modernism.[30] While Sarah Wobick-Segev has recently begun to counter this narrative of non-belonging by demonstrating how Jews were able to feel 'at home' in various urban social spaces such as cafés, restaurants, social halls, and cinemas, few sustained efforts have been made to investigate the spaces in which Jews actually resided. This neglected area of inquiry, I contend, poses a major problem. Belonging and at-homeness—as everyday modes of

[28] Delphine Bechtel, "Cultural Transfers between 'Ostjuden' and 'Westjuden:' German-Jewish Intellectuals and Yiddish Culture, 1897-1930" in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 42 (1997): 67-83; Delphine Bechtel, "Babylon or Jerusalem: Berlin as Center of Jewish Modernism in the 1920s," in *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria,* eds. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994): 116-123.
[29] See Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Naomi Brenner, *Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures in Contact* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016). Also relevant is David Myers, "Distant Relatives Happening onto the Same Inn: The Meeting of East and West as Literary Theme and Cultural Ideal," *Jewish Social Studies* 1.2 (1995): 75-100; and Jerold C. Frakes and Jeremy Dauber, eds, *Between Two Worlds: Yiddish-German Encounters, Studia Rosenthaliana* Vol. 41 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).
[30] See Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin*; Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen*; Pinsker, *Literary Passports.*

existence and as abstract categories of analysis—cannot be fully understood without examination of real *and* imagined space.

Positioning, Questioning, and Approach

This dissertation uses a thematic approach in engaging with the topic of Jewish space; it is concerned with both social and cultural dimensions of space and with the representation of space in literary accounts. While seeking to contribute to the growing body of scholarly literature that foregrounds space and place in historical analysis, the dissertation is concerned with how Jews experienced, felt, and thought about space—not with the end product of the spaces themselves. While space and place depend on each other by definition, it is space that endows place with value. Place implies a fixed entity that is firmly rooted topographically within a specified area, whereas space can designate the performative aspect of human behavior and existence. As dwelling spaces, Pensions and rented rooms are a useful platform for exploring the Jewish encounter with the urban environment of Berlin, and I thus see my work on Jewish dwelling space in this city as making an important contribution to the field of modern German-Jewish history.

Various scholars have theorized the meanings of space versus place in ways that are helpful to understanding and unpacking these concepts as they play out in the dissertation. As Yi-Fu Tuan has articulated, whereas place is specific and localized, space is more abstract and needs to be treated as such when utilized as a category of analysis.[31] In Michel de Certeau's explanation, a place indicates reliability and stability and is made up of things that are inert and do not move, whereas space can be defined in terms of movement, vectors, and the passage of

[31] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

time.[32] Henri Lefebvre has notably theorized space as an enacted and active social process that is both produced and characterized by movement, claiming that space "is at once result and cause, product and producer."[33] Among the most common theoretical premises for contemporary discourse on the space of the home is Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. In this pivotal work, Bachelard has shown how the house is one of the "greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind."[34] Referencing Jung, in this phenomenological and methodological study of the house and its contours, Bachelard concludes that there is ground for taking the house as a tool for analysis of the human soul.[35] In all of these accounts, space can be understood as a fluid process rather than a fixed entity, shaped by the discourses surrounding it as well as the people living in it.

When considering the space of the home, the question of belonging is of utmost importance. As a concept of place and space, homes naturally lend themselves to analysis beyond the physicality of particular dwellings. If traditionally taken as a central locus and space to retreat from the chaos and uncertainty of the outside world, both the definition of what a home entails, as well as what the sense of at-homeness means, are inherently complicated by the process of leaving the place one used to call home and taking up residence in another. In this dissertation, at-homeness is taken as encompassing a sense of material, emotional, and cultural

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[32] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[33] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 142. For Jews, a prime example of an 'enacted' space is the *eruv,* as a systematized network of inclusion and exclusion that produces a bounded Jewish space for one day of each week.
[34] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 6.
[35] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space.* Joelle Bahloul has also explored how the description of domestic space has meaning because it is the lived representation of a specific social and mental world. See Joelle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim household in colonial Algeria 1937-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Using material culture, Leora Auslander has also shown how "the power of homes to connect the present with the past lies in the repetition of the small gestures of everyday routine, done with the help of particular objects." See Leora Auslander, "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review* 110:4 (October 2005): 1015-1045.

comfort in one's surroundings. Moving to a new place and taking up residence in a space that is not one's own necessitates the process of renegotiating at-homeness and reclaiming a sense of belonging, a feeling that is in intimately tied to the meanings of home and often conditioned and constructed through the personal space of the dwelling in which one resides.

The dissertation approaches the concepts of longing and belonging as dynamic fields of inquiry. Nira Yuval-Davis has outlined an analytical framework for studying the concept of 'belonging' that is particularly helpful in this regard. Yuval-Davis conceptualizes belonging as relating to social locations, individuals' emotional attachments to various collectives, and the ethical political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belongings.[36] In this conceptualization, belonging denotes the desire for some sort of attachment, whether it be to other people or communities, to specific places or spaces, or to a certain ideology or way of life. Drawing on this framework, the dissertation examines how Pensions played a key role in the ways in which Jewish belonging played (or failed to play) out. It therefore utilizes the space of Pensions and rented rooms as a lens to explore the Jewish encounter—both real and imagined—with the city. In some cases, Jews who resided in Pensions were longing to belong to a wider community of likeminded individuals, and in other cases, they were merely trying to get by on their own.

By examining the space of the Pension from both a historical and literary perspective, I engage with several scholarly conversations. First, my research and analysis build upon recent literature that foregrounds the concepts of 'space' and 'place' as key to the formation of Jewish identities. While scholarship in the field of modern Jewish History has long been concerned with place, this dissertation follows the recent trend linked to a growing awareness that space also

[36] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40:3 (2006): 197–214.

matters, and that space does not simply provide a colorful backdrop to the 'real' story.[37] Though clearly a space in which Jews resided and spent their time, Pensions and rented rooms are largely absent in the historiography on this topic. Pensions are not included in the literature on spaces of consumption, because even though these dwelling spaces were businesses, their existence relied upon their ability to masquerade as just a domestic home. Nor are they included in scholarship on Jewish architecture, taste, and residential patterns, because even though Pensions were homes, residents lacked agency in deciding how to construct, design, and furnish them, and they also faced practical limitations concerning the types of objects they could bring with them.[38]

The Pension—a space that walks a slippery slope between home and business, public and private, inside and outside—does not squarely fit into any of the aforementioned spatial categories. My dissertation will address this glaring gap in the historiography and insert Pensions into scholarly conversation on Jewish space. The Pension is a space that is often glossed over, relegated to the background or as a backdrop, and deemed uninteresting and unimportant. My dissertation not only challenges this very notion, but also claims that an examination of Jewish experience in and representation of the Pension is crucial to broadening our understanding of Jewish belonging through spatial perspectives in the modern world. These provisional homes are not merely a setting, but part of the story itself.

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[37] For one of the best recent examples in this line of scholarship, see Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away from Home*.

[38] On Jewish taste, see Leora Auslander, "'Jewish Taste?' Jews, and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life in Paris and Berlin, 1933-1942," in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Kosher (Oxford: Berg, 2002): 229-331. On Jews and architecture and design, see *Designing Transformation: Jews and Cultural Identity in Central European Modernism*, ed. Elena Shapira (London: Bloomsbury, 2021). On the relationship between domestic objects and Jewish identities from an anthropological, sociological, and cultural studies perspective, see *Jews at Home: The Domestication of Identity*, ed. Simon Bronner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

Why Berlin? While this dissertation might have been written about boarding houses in London, rented flats in Paris, or communal apartments in Moscow, Berlin is the specific subject of this dissertation for a number of reasons. The first reason is that statistically, as Berlin absorbed tens of thousands of migrants during an already extreme housing shortage, Jews from all walks of life resided in Pensions in record numbers from the 1910s though the 1930s. Whereas Jews who migrated to other major European metropolitan centers during this time were also able to take up residence in Pensions if they desired to do so, in Berlin, Jews did not settle in Pensions by choice, as these dwellings were often the only forms of housing available to them. Additionally, Berlin is the focus of the dissertation because the quest for, and often discontentment with, the space of the Pension would become a dominant theme in Jewish literature written in and about World War I through Weimar Berlin. In fact, it is difficult to find a Hebrew, Yiddish, or German-Jewish novel from this period that is not, in some way, fascinated with dwellings, focused upon permanent or temporary lodgings, or preoccupied with homes, their rooms, or their interiors.[39] Because the phenomenon of housing—embedded in both concrete experience and imaginative narration—moves easily between fictional and non-fictional genres, the dissertation investigates both Jewish historical experience *in* and literary representations *of* Pensions and rented rooms in Berlin from the First World War through the Weimar Era. In doing so, I elucidate the instrumental role of dwelling space in the creation and

[39] The following authors are only some of the Jewish émigrés whose writings in and about Berlin engage domestic dwelling-spaces including but not limited to Pensions, lodging houses, rented flats, apartments, hotel rooms, and other transitional living spaces. In Yiddish: David Bergelson, David Eynhorn, David Hofshteyn, Moyshe Kulbak, Leyb Kvitko, Der Nister, Fishl Shneerson, and Meir Wiener. In Hebrew: S. Y. Agnon, Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, Hayim Nahman Bialik, Yeshurun Keshet, David Shimoni, Abraham Shlonsky, and Shaul Tschernichovsky. In both Hebrew and Yiddish: Uri Zvi Greenberg, Zalman Shneur. In German: Martin Beradt, Sammy Gronemann, Auguste Hauschner, Franz Kafka, and Hermann Kesten. In Russian: Ilya Ehrenburg, Lev Lunts, Boris Pasternak, and Viktor Shklovsky. In German by native Berliners: Georg Hermann, Georg Hirschfeld, and Gabriele Tergit.

formation of Jewish communities and identities in this urban center. Paying close attention to the gendering of this dwelling space, as well as the issues of genre, representation, language, and cultural production, the dissertation challenges the paradigm of Berlin as a mere threshold, transit space, or place of non-belonging for a diverse group of Jewish writers, artists, and intellectuals, many of whom simultaneously longed for other places and spaces while living in Berlin. Investigation into the space of Pension and the rented room as both a lived habitus of quotidian activity and as an imaginative site of speculation—both spaces in which longing and belonging are enacted and performed—ultimately reveals how Jews could and did feel 'at home' in their inherently temporary homes in World War I through Weimar Berlin. I show how the experience of living in a Pension or rented room deeply impacted Jews' sense of belonging, shaping everyday reality in the concrete and affective sense, and cultivating an imaginative sense of self in the world in the abstract emotional realm. Furthermore, the dissertation directly challenges the dominant interpretation of Berlin as a locus of non-belonging for Jewish writers and intellectuals.

It is also worth noting that German politics are largely absent in the dissertation—not because they are unimportant—but because they did not come up in relation to dwelling space in the large body of primary sources that I examined. In the same vein, among the thousands of letters and ego documents I examined, I encountered little mention of anti-Semitism. Surprisingly, anti-Semitism was a not a significant component of the story of Jewish experience in Pensions and rented rooms in World War I through Weimar Berlin.

Key sources utilized in the dissertation include ego documents such as letters and diaries, memoirs and autobiographical accounts, periodicals and newspaper articles, as well as literary accounts including novels, short stories, and poems. In navigating the rich literary output, I have

chosen to engage with a representative, rather than exhaustive, account of Jewish literature preoccupied with Pensions and rented rooms from the 1910s through the 1930s. Authors whose works that are examined in the dissertation range from the canonical (S.Y. Agnon, David Bergelson) to the lesser known (David Shimoni, Martin Beradt, Fischl Schneersohn).[40] The first three chapters utilize the methodologies of social and cultural history, and the final two chapters primarily draw upon literary analysis while also applying elements of cultural history. Methodologically, I treat published novels somewhat differently in Chapter 1 than in Chapters 4 and 5. In the first Chapter, I primarily use middlebrow *Bildungsromane* as a lens into the ways in which Pensions were experienced both as cultural institutions in the German context and in everyday life in the quotidian realm and domestic sphere. This is not to say that these novels provide a precise window into 'reality,' but rather, that they reflect larger societal trends and perceptions about dwelling and domesticity in inherently temporary spaces. In Chapters 4 and 5, I analyze a more established literary corpus through the eyes of a literary historian, as I grapple with the issues of literary representation.

Structure of the Dissertation

The five main chapters that follow focus on the relationship between Jews and Pensions and rented space in Berlin in different contexts and from different perspectives. Using the methodologies of social and cultural history, the first chapter provides a comprehensive history of Pensions and rented rooms as forms of dwelling in Berlin from the turn of the century through the Weimar Republic. This *histoire totale* of sorts both establishes the historical context of

[40] I categorize David Shimoni as "lesser known" here because his writings that I analyze in the dissertation have never received critical attention among scholars. I should also note that while it was not my original intention to only select works written by men for Chapters 4 and 5, I was unable to find any works written by women that engaged with the topic of Pensions and rented space in the same manner.

Pensions as dwelling spaces and explores the intricacies of everyday life in Pensions and rented rooms in World War I through Weimar Berlin, with specific attention paid to Jewish experience. The chapter relies on a wide variety of sources, including newspaper articles and periodicals, advertisements and address books, memoirs and autobiographies, letters and diaries, as well as popular literary accounts. The chapter argues that the Pension, as an institution, paradoxically offered its inhabitants a sense of rootedness and belonging that helped to counteract the ubiquitous precarity inherent in this form of dwelling.

The second chapter approaches the structure of the Pension as a lived experience, while using the Pension Struck as a case study and providing a microhistory of this residence. The chapter examines how this Pension functioned as a key site of Jewish sociability, belonging, and Zionist identity for Jews in Berlin from the years leading up to the First World War through the early 1930s. After all, this dwelling space housed an influential group of young German and East European Jews with a shared interest in Zionism, most of whom ended up migrating to Palestine. In showing how the Pension Struck functioned as a kind of 'third space' between Berlin and Haifa, the chapter argues that the concrete, material, social, and affective comforts of this domestic space enabled its residents to achieve a sense of at-homeness in Berlin while simultaneously engaging in imaginative speculation about the space of Palestine. Ultimately, the chapter argues that the communal and collective longing for the abstract space of Palestine—a phenomenon and a process enabled by the physical space of the Pension Struck—constituted a form of belonging. The source base for this chapter primarily consists of ego documents and unpublished correspondence between former residents and the Pension's landlady.

The third chapter of the dissertation uses memoirs and autobiographical accounts to examine two adjacent Pensions located within the same building on the Savignyplatz.

It focuses on the experiences of the Jewish national poet, Hayim Nahman Bialik, as well as a group of young East European Jewish actors who made their way to Berlin in 1923 and collectively took up residence in a single Pension and formed the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli.* The chapter demonstrates how the Pensions of the Savignyplatz served as sites of cultural production in which Jewish belonging could be felt, expressed, enacted, and performed.

Using the methodologies of cultural history and literary analysis, the fourth chapter examines the representation of the Pension in modern Jewish literature written in and about Berlin from the 1910s through the 1930s. The chapter brings together the modernist Hebrew poetry of David Shimoni, two Yiddish short stories by David Bergelson, and S.Y. Agnon's semi-autobiographical Hebrew novel *Ad Hena* (To This Day). All of these texts share a pervasive fascination with the meaning of 'home' and feature plots in which the Berlin Pension functions as the primary setting. The chapter argues against the relegation of the Pension as merely a setting or a backdrop, and instead offers an analysis that positions the Pension as an actant. The chapter also argues that the spaces of the Pensions themselves—both real and imagined—served as inspirational sources of cultural production that enabled these writers to experiment with new literary methods and styles and ultimately find their 'home' in the modern Jewish literary canon by dwelling on the unhomely aspects of their homes.

The fifth chapter ventures beyond the Pensions of west Berlin and lands upon the world of the Scheunenviertel, the area in the city in which the majority of East European Jewish migrants settled during the years of the Weimar Republic. In engaging with the space of the Scheunenviertel, this chapter is more concerned with the representation of the Scheunenviertel as an imagined space as opposed to the everyday realities of this neighborhood as a real place. The chapter offers an analysis of two radically different novels concerned with the same street—

Martin Beradt's German novel *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit* (Little Eternity Street) and Fischl Schneersohn's Yiddish novel *Grenadierstraße*. Untangling the concepts of longing and belonging in these works as they relate to Jewish space in Berlin, the chapter illuminates the ways in which the localized space of the Scheunenviertel had the capacity to serve as a space of identification and identity formation in the German-Jewish cultural imaginary.

Finally, the dissertation does not conclude in Berlin, but rather, it points to Palestine, the place in which many of the subjects of this dissertation ultimately ended up permanently settling. While briefly looking towards the afterlife of German-Jewish Pensions in mandatory Palestine, the conclusion of the dissertation points to the emergence of a phenomenon that might be referred to as *Pensionskultur,* a phenomenon that would flourish in the Yishuv and a topic that merits further study in its own right.

Chapter 1

Zimmer Frei: Jews and Their Rooms in World War I Through Weimar Berlin

Prior to, during, and following the First World War, Berlin was a major metropolitan center that absorbed tens of thousands of Jews seeking new homes. By the end of 1920, Berlin's population of four million included 137,000 Jews, of whom, 13,000 were from the former Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires.[1] By 1925, 44,000 *Ostjuden* (East European Jews) had migrated to Berlin, constituting roughly a quarter of the city's 173,000 Jewish inhabitants.[2] However, the city's pervasive housing shortage meant that many locals and nearly all newcomers were unable to secure personalized forms of dwelling such as individual houses or private apartments. Therefore, both native and new Berliners were left to take up residence in transitional living spaces such as Pensions and lodging houses.

After Berlin became the capital of the newly unified German Empire in 1871, this formerly provincial city experienced a period of tremendous population growth due to migration and industrial development, and the city would transform into a prominent central hub of cultural, economic, and scientific life. By 1905, Berlin was home to more than two million inhabitants.[3] But as the influx of newcomers to Berlin increased, the demand for short-term, furnished, and affordable living space grew as well. Overcrowding became part and parcel of daily life, and Berlin experienced a housing shortage of epic proportions that was intensified by both mass migration and mass speculation.[4] The situation grew so dire that by the turn of the

[1] S. Adler-Rudel, *Ostjuden in Deutschland, 1880-1940* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959), 165.
[2] Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland, 1918-1933* (Hamburg: Hans Christian, 1986), 78.
[3] Berlin Statistisches Amt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Berlin* 27 (1908-1911): 5.
[4] G. Berthold, "Die Wohnungsverhältnisse der ärmeren Klassen in Berlin, Ursachen ihrer Mängel, Versuche, und Vorschläge zur Abhilfe Derselben," *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv* 2 (1891-1892), 489-490.

century, Berlin had become a city of renters; in the early 1900s, homeowners made up less than one percent of Berlin's population.[5]

Beginning in the 1870s, one widespread solution to the problem of the housing shortage led to the creation of *Mietskasernen* (rental barracks), which catered to the lower classes in Berlin's working class districts.[6] These shabbily constructed and poorly lit tenement style buildings, often characterized by their lack of light and fresh air, housed families and workers in often-deplorable conditions. These structures also enabled the phenomenon of the *Schlafgänger* (bed lodger or night lodger) to grow exponentially.[7] Night lodgers were often deprived of access to their sleeping quarters during the daytime, and sometimes shared sleeping quarters with their landlords, landladies, or other tenants.[8] Already by 1880, more than fifteen percent of all Berlin households had between one and thirty-four night lodgers.[9] By the end of 1905, housing statistics for Berlin proper and its twenty-nine suburban districts recorded a total of 41,738 households that included roomers (*Zimmerabmietern*), and 63,435 households with night lodgers.[10] The cramped conditions of night lodging, which were commonly associated with dirt, disease, and moral decay, grew even worse in the aftermath of the First World War, and housing reformers continued to debate the societal 'evils' brought about by this form of urban living throughout the 1930s. While *Mietskasernen* and night lodging were part and parcel of everyday existence for a

[5] Heinrich Herkner, *Wohnungsfrage und Bebauungsplan* (Berlin: Wilhelm Ernst & Sohn, 1908), 8. This figure refers to Alt-Berlin only.
[6] The term *Mietskaserne,* literally meaning 'rental barracks,' is generally used to describe four to five story residential dwellings built between 1860 and 1914 consisting of a front house and side and rear wings that encircled an inner courtyard.
[7] On night lodgers in Germany, see Johannes Altenrath, "Das Schlafgängerwesen und seine Reform: Statistik, Schlafstellenaufsicht, Ledigenheime," Diss. phil. (Halle: 1916).
[8] Carl Flügge, *Großstadtwohnungen und Kleinhaussiedlunen in ihrer Einwirkung auf die Volksgesundheit* (Jena, 1916), 6. *Schlafsteller* was another term used to denote a person who rented a room that was shared with other tenants or the landlord or landlady.
[9] C. J. Fuchs, "Wohnungsfrage," in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* 8 (Jena, 1911): 873-928, 884.
[10] Victor Noack, "Wohnungen und Sittlichkeit," *Die Aktion* 2, Nr. 19/20 (1912): 584-586, 584.

large percentage of Berlin's population, a far more desirable option of urban living—for those who had the means—consisted of renting an individual furnished room (*möblierte Zimmer*) or securing a room in a Pension. While a large majority of Berlin's Jewish migrants settled in and around the Scheunenviertel, a center of room-sharing and night lodging in the city, the Jewish population that this dissertation examines—writers, artists, intellectuals, scholars, and students—flocked to the Pensions and furnished rooms of west Berlin.

The Letting of Rooms and the Rise of the Pension

The practice of subletting furnished rooms in private apartments in order to help finance the cost of rent became an increasingly common practice in Berlin by the middle of the nineteenth century.[11] In Imperial Berlin, the phenomenon of taking in lodgers in order to generate income was almost exclusively a female alternative to working for pay in the labor force.[12] Between 1875 and 1905, the number of female-headed households with subtenants tripled in Berlin, and unmarried and widowed women, in particular, began turning to the rapidly emerging room-letting industry.[13] The letting of individual rooms in an apartment required the permission of the owner, who had the right to refuse for any reason.[14] However, property owners in Berlin generally did not intend to restrict subletting, as they could charge higher rents in exchange for allowing their tenants to sublet rooms.[15]

[11] Robert Springer, *Berlin Wird Weltstadt: Ernste und heitere Culturbilder* (Berlin: Hausfreund-Expedition, 1868), 37-38.
[12] Rosemary Orthmann, *Out of Necessity: Women Working in Berlin at the Height of Industrialization, 1874-1913* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991), 107.
[13] Orthmann, *Out of Necessity*, 155; *Berliner Compaß*, 7 (1870), 58. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 8.
[14] Appropriate clauses allowing for subletting were standard practice in Berlin rental contracts.
[15] In Berlin, a 10% increase was the standard for allowing a renter to sublet.

While some considered the practice of taking in lodgers to be an entrepreneurial endeavor or a noble pursuit, the vast majority of women who turned to room renting initially did so as a survival strategy. Though the Berliners who took in tenants differed in terms of social origin and class, they were united by one common feature: an overwhelmingly large number were single or widowed.[16] In Berlin, the room-letting industry was deemed a 'widow's business' and landladies were often automatically regarded as widows by the turn of the century.[17] After all, though by no means easy, the decision to take in tenants was a practical and effective method of enabling middle class widowed women to remain in their homes or to maintain a certain standard of living after the death of their spouse. As journalist Käthe Schrey explained in 1915:

> When a woman of 'better standing' is suddenly unable to provide for herself, and perhaps her children as well, due to the death of the family breadwinner—she is faced with the difficult question of what to do…the more carefree the widow lived until then, the easier her decision will be: she will take in paying tenants.[18]

While the decision to take in paying tenants came from a place of economic hardship, this practice, to a certain degree, allowed women to maintain a semblance of their former lives in keeping with middle-class ideals. The letting of individual rooms was a clear manifestation of the loss of some social status, but the practice did not give rise to concerns about morality in the eyes of housing reformers, because unlike night lodging, there was no room-sharing involved. Thus, while German social reformers such as Eugenie von Soden deemed the letting of furnished rooms a "makeshift, necessary evil," the practice was considered a logical and respectable endeavor, as it "enabled families to maintain a higher standard of living [in] better parts of the

[16] Luise Gunga, *Zimmer Frei: Berliner Pensionswirtinnen im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1995), 88.
[17] Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 88.
[18] Käthe Schrey, *Hundert Berufe für Frauen und Mädchen des deutschen Mittelstandes* (Leipzig: O. Beyer, 1915), cited in *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 16 (1916), Nr. 3, p. 13 and Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 10.

city."[19] As the decision to take in tenants was among the most common of endeavors that widowed women undertook in order to augment their meager pension payments, the term 'Pension' quickly took on a double meaning in Germany.[20] When a woman took in multiple tenants at the same time and provided meals, her apartment could now be deemed a 'Pension.'

The term 'Pension,' used to denote a form of housing, began appearing in mainstream German dictionaries and encyclopedias in the 1890s.[21] This sector of the accommodation industry, which had long been in practice abroad in England and America, developed comparatively late in Germany but expanded rapidly. According to one German encyclopedia, the rising number of Pensions in Berlin at the turn of the century was a direct result of the "steadily increasing influx of foreigners" to the city.[22] The number of Pensions in the German capital multiplied so rapidly between the 1890s and the turn of the century that by 1905, a popular guidebook declared Berlin to be "the city of Pensions."[23] "The business of running a

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[19] Eugenie von Soden, *Das Frauenbuch: Eine allgemeinverständliche Einführung in alle Gebiete des Frauenlebens der Gegenwart: Stellung und Aufgaben der Frau um Recht in der Gesellschaft*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Franckh'sche Verlagshandlung, 1913/1914), 206.

[20] The pensions that widows of civil servants received in Germany were seldom sufficient in providing for families with children. Despite pension reforms and increases in pension funds between the 1880s and 1910s, widows' benefits only served to offset the increased cost of living. See Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 49-53.

[21] For example, see *Brockhaus' Konversations-Lexikon,* vol. 12 (Leipzig: Brochkaus, 1894), 1001-1002. The term did not appear in the *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon* until 1900. The word *Pensionsinhaberin* (Pension owner) first appeared in the *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau* in 1900. See *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau*, vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Oldenbourg, 1900), 310-312. In its earliest form, the word 'pension' was a payment, tax or regular sum paid to keep someone's loyalty. Derived from the Latin *pendere*, meaning 'to pay,' the word came to describe an annuity paid to a retired employee beginning in the sixteenth century. At the same time, the Latin word *pension* (payment) also simply denoted 'rent.' In the early seventeenth century, the phrase "en pension" was used to denote a system of lodging, with the native home of the Pension as a form of housing originating in Paris. In the early 1700s, the German, French and English elite also began using the term to denote a type of boarding school, with the word *Pension* being used interchangeably for boarding school and boarding house in France. In the German empire, the altered word "*Pensionat*" denoted a boarding school or finishing school for girls, but by the early 1900s, a *Pensionat* could also refer to a smaller version of a traditional Pension.

[22] *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau,* Vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Oldenbourg, 1900), 310.

[23] *Berlin und die Berliner: Leute, Dinge, Sitten, Winke* (Karlsruhe: J. Bielefelds Verlage, 1905), 429.

Pension in Germany," as Pension owner Anna Ahrens would thus assert in a lecture in September 1908, "has now become an important component of cultural life."[24] As a social critic explained the rise of this new form of accommodation in 1910:

> The Berlin *Pension* is a direct consequence of the increased number of foreigners in the city…Up until about two decades ago, Berlin hotels and what we know as 'chambres garnies' were sufficient in accommodating foreigners. But the rapid growth of the city, as well as its reputation, has attracted more and more foreigners from the German empire and abroad.[25]

In the German context, a Pension was a type of boardinghouse, almost always managed by a woman, that provided guests with individual furnished rooms and daily meals at set times. At the turn of the century, the *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau* defined a Pension owner (*Pensionsinhaberin*) as "the owner and manager of a Pension—a domesticity in which women and men are accommodated for shorter or longer periods of time, and an [institution] whose design represents an extension of family life."[26] In contrast to the common lodging house or rooming house, in which occupants shared sleeping quarters, Pension inhabitants always rented individual furnished rooms, usually on a monthly basis. Sometimes, maid service, towels, and linens were included in the total rent figure, although all 'extra' charges were up to the discretion of the landlady. In most cases, boarders could opt for 'full pension,' which meant that the cost of room and board included meals, or 'half pension,' which provided the tenant with a furnished room and breakfast, leaving one free to eat lunch and dinner elsewhere. Typically, all food and drink consumed between set mealtimes meals incurred extra charges.[27]

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[24] Anna Ahrens, "Die Pensionsleiterin," *Frauen-Rundschau* 9 (1908), Nr. 18, p. 553.
[25] F. W. von Hollink, "Pensionsmütter und Pensionäre," *Die Woche* 12 (1910), Nr. 4, p. 132.
[26] *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau,* Vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Oldenbourg, 1900), 310.
[27] "Pensionsinhaberin," *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau,* Vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Oldenbourg, 1900), 311.

The most significant difference between renting an individual furnished room (*möblierte Zimmer*) in a private household and a room in a Pension was the access to and benefit of regular meals at a set time, a provision that enabled a greater sense of inclusion and integration within the household. Dining rooms were usually the largest room in the Pension, and daily participation in the communal dining experience was a fixture of Pension life. While frequently served coffee and rolls in the morning, those who rented individual furnished rooms were usually expected to consume their lunch and dinner at a location outside of the household, such as a restaurant or *Mittagstisch* (lunch table). Pension residents also enjoyed comparatively greater spatial mobility within the residence, as many Pensions had a shared *Salonzimmer* where guests could socialize. These rooms generally contained additional seating in the form of sofas and armchairs, and sometimes a piano for communal use.[28] Thus, the cost of rent was almost always more expensive in a Pension than a furnished room, even for half board. For example, in 1913, the average monthly cost of a furnished room in Berlin was 30 to 40 Marks (not including 'extras' such as lighting and heating), whereas the average cost of monthly rent in a Pension was 120 Marks.[29] While landladies were encouraged to set fixed prices at a reasonable rate, rents generally varied within the confines of a single Pension.[30] Because the interior of a Pension was usually a formerly private apartment that was converted into a semi-private dwelling space, not all rooms were created equal. Thus, rates were set according to a variety of factors—the size of the room, the quality of the room's furnishings, the presence or absence of a personal washbasin,

[28] LAB A Rep. 342-02, Nr. 10136.
[29] Gerta Stücklen, "Untersuchungen uber die Soziale und Wirtschaftliche Lage der Studentinnen: Ergebnisse einer an der Berliner Universitat im Winter 1913/14 veranstalteten Enquete," Diss. phil. (Heidelberg: 1916), 85-86. The availability of hot water also contributed to the asking rent.
[30] M. Folkart, "Winke für Pensionsinhaberinnen," *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 25, 1908.

the size of the window, and the even the direction that the window faced—all contributed to the asking rent.

The size of Pensions ranged as well. In most cases, the presence of three paying tenants was enough to appropriately deem an establishment a 'Pension,' but twenty guests were often considered to be too many. This is because the Pension was supposed to function as a replacement 'home' for the tenant, and if it grew too large in size, then the traditional elements that gave the Pension its familial domestic character would be lost.[31] However, the definition of what constituted a 'Pension' was still relatively fluid in Germany. In 1910, one social critic declared that in Berlin, there were "few terms that appeared in so many different variations as that of the *Pension*,"[32] and in 1913, a group of Berlin Pension owners complained about the "lack of a definitive definition of the term *Pension*…which has led to all kinds of accommodations to be unjustifiably ascribed the title of *Pension*."[33] In fact, the terms for 'landlady' (*Zimmervermieterin* or *Zimmerwirtin*) and 'Pension owner' (*Pensionsbesitzerin* or *Pensionsinhaberin*) were constantly used interchangeably in Imperial through Weimar Germany, especially in the urban context of Berlin.[34]

Many Pensions were tailored to certain groups of guests who shared common characteristics, such as social class, religion, language, or occupation. While some of the larger Pensions were more likely to be 'open' to a wider array of prospective tenants, many catered to specific subgroups, from businessmen, to music students, to those seeking kosher food or 'authentic' Russian cuisine. A select number of Pensions even catered to the highly specific subgroup of Japanese university students and exchange students, and offered traditional Japanese

[31] F. W. von Hollink, "Pensionsmütter und Pensionäre," *Die Woche* 12 (1910), Nr. 4, p. 133.
[32] Ibid.
[33] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 7, p. 73.
[34] Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 10.

cuisine to replicate the feeling of 'home' through food.[35] One writer and Pension resident, in a 1911 opinion piece published in the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, identified a "new class of landladies in the western part of the city" who specifically sought out and nurtured the talents of young artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals in their Pensions.[36] Close-knit émigré communities comprised of writers, artists, and intellectuals also tended to take up residence in the same Pensions. For example, Rose Struck's modest family Pension in the Wilmersdorf neighborhood catered to Jewish intellectuals with a shared interest in Zionism, and two Pensions located in the same house on the Savignyplatz served as a hub for the Hebrew-speaking artistic community in Weimar Berlin.[37] Likewise, in the 1920s, some of the most famous Russian émigré writers—such as Ilya Ehrenburg, Vladislav Khosdasevich, Nina Berberova, Mikhail Gershenzon, and Andrei Bely—all took up residence in a single Pension, turning the space into a sort of 'colony' for the Russian intelligentsia in Berlin.[38]

University students, in particular, made up a large percentage of those who sought out and secured accommodations in Pensions and furnished rooms. In the winter semester of 1913-1914 alone, Berlin was home to over 10,000 students.[39] Pensions were considered to be the ideal living arrangement for foreign students, as they served "those who did not wish to burden themselves with the troubles of keeping house in Berlin."[40] For example, the Hebrew writer

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[35] Iwaya Sazanami, *Berliner Tagebuch* (November 12, 1900), trans. Annette Joffe (Berlin, 2007), 66-69. These 'specialty' Pensions had both live-in guests and dining-only guests who came for meals.
[36] M. Sch, "Frauen die arbeiten: die Zimmervermieterin," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, May 21, 1911.
[37] On the Pension Struck, see chapter 2. On the Hebrew-speaking artistic community who resided at Savignyplatz 5, see chapter 3.
[38] The aforementioned writers lived in the Pension Crampe, located at Viktoria Luise Platz 9.
[39] Stücklen, "Untersuchungen uber die Soziale und Wirtschaftliche Lage der Studentinnen," 82.
[40] Margarete Pochhammer, "Berliner Wohnungsverhältnisse," in *Was die Frau von Berlin wissen muss: Ein praktisches Frauenbuch für Einheimische und Fremde,* ed. Eliza Ichenhaeuser (Berlin: Loesdau, 1913): 231-238, 234.

David Shimoni urged his girlfriend Dina Papiermeister to find a room in Berlin that provided 'full pension' for this very reason. As he wrote to her in July 1911:

> You must secure a room with full pension with a decent family, even if the cost is more expensive. When you are free of the little worries of breakfast and lunch and dinner…then you can indulge more deeply in your studies and bear the good fruits of your work. I want to be sure that you take this advice.[41]

The German writer Ernst von Wildenbruch also emphasized this phenomenon in his 1908 serialized novel *Tintenfisch*, noting that those coming to the city to pursue higher education rarely sought out private apartments and preferred to settle in Pensions in the western part of Berlin.[42] "In this way, freed from all household burdens and worries, [newcomers] could comfortably pursue and enjoy [their] education."[43] In the years leading up to the First World War, female university students in particular tended to seek out Pension accommodations in western neighborhoods such as Charlottenburg or Schöneberg. Even though Pensions in these areas were considerably more expensive and naturally required longer commutes to the university, female students could thus avoid "exposure to the questionable nightlife near the university."[44] Though a small amount relief would come in 1915 with the founding of Berlin's first proto-dormitory for female university students (Victoria-Studienhaus), debates about how to best 'house the female university student' persisted in the years to come.[45]

Those wishing to take lodgings in Berlin in the form of a furnished room or a Pension had several methods at their disposal in their search. For newcomers without any personal connections or contacts in the city, the classic method of obtaining lodging was to physically

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[41] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, July 26, 1911. In Shmuel Shimoni, *Eser Shanim: Ahavat Dina ve-David* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2002), 45.
[42] Ernst von Wildenbruch, "Tintenfisch," *Deutsche Rundschau* 137 (1908): 18-49.
[43] Ibid., 30.
[44] Ruth von Velsen, "Die Wohnungsverhaltnisse der Studentinnen," *Die Studentin* 2 (1913), Nr. 11, p. 12.
[45] Associations such as the *Vereinigung für Frauenwohnungen* were founded in order to help remedy the situation. See "Frauenbewegung—Vereinsnachrichten," *Frauen-Rundschau* 12 (1911), Nr. 22, p. 521.

walk through the streets and directly inquire with the landladies who had posted '*Zimmer frei*' (room for rent) signs on their building doorposts. While this method was generally more common for those seeking an individual furnished room, the success of obtaining one was dependent upon the timing of the room search. Moshe Smoira, for example, experienced significant difficulties securing a suitable room through this manner, as his search coincided with the middle of the academic semester. The Königsberg native who had moved to Berlin in order to attend university found himself frequently walking on foot throughout the city and inquiring with countless landladies who had posted 'Zimmer frei' signage on their doorposts.[46] Thus, the young student frequently complained to his parents about how his "search for a room was very difficult, as most of the good rooms were either already rented out or unavailable until the start of the next semester."[47]

Another common method was to consult the classified sections in Berlin's daily newspapers, such as the *Berliner Tageblatt* or the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger.*[48] As in other urban centers, by the turn of the century, the high demand for housing in Berlin led to the creation of special classified sections in daily newspapers and periodicals specifically devoted to rented accommodation. More often than not, 'Pensions' would have their own category and the advertisements were arranged by district of the city. By 1925, the *Berliner Tageblatt* went so far as to group Pensions by street. While rent prices were rarely mentioned in the advertisements themselves, the classified sections offered the opportunity for both tenants and landladies to

[46] CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, April 18, 1907; CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, April 19, 1907; CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, April 24, 1907; CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, October 21, 1907; CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, October 22, 1907.
[47] CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, October 23, 1907.
[48] The *Berliner Tageblatt* eliminated its classified section for Pensions in 1918, and reinstated it in 1921.

formulate specific requests. All advertisements issued by landladies included the location of the nearest cross-streets of their homes, and room seekers specified the neighborhoods in which they desired to live, as well as the proximity to specific bus stops, train stations, and squares. In the large majority of cases, landladies also stipulated the gender, age, and marital status of their prospective tenants. Common requests by room seekers included a desk in the room, access to a piano, and a quiet 'family like' atmosphere. Some specialty groups had their own accommodation agencies. In particular, women's academic associations often compiled and circulated lists of recommended landladies and 'reputable' Pensions, and housing handbooks such as the *Studentische Wohnungsanzeiger* issued by the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität provided students with the names of landladies who wanted to rent rooms to students.

However, despite the multitude of accommodation agencies and the overwhelming number of advertisements found in the daily newspapers, Pension rooms were usually sought out and rented based on verbal recommendations. Personal connections were vital in securing Pension accommodations, and many landladies relied solely on community networks in securing tenants, preferring to attract new clientele through word of mouth and personal references. This phenomenon is illustrated in Walther Harich's 1930 novel *Der Kunstfälscher*; when the protagonist arrives at the door of a Charlottenburg Pension seeking a room, the landlady immediately confronts him with the all-too-pressing question: "Who referred you to my Pension?[49] Landladies were encouraged to be choosy in their selection of guests, and many required some kind of security deposit, rent advance, or collateral.[50] For example, when the Jewish acting student Ari Kutai moved to Berlin in 1923 and sought to rent a room in the home

[49] Walther Harich, *Der Kunstfälscher*, *oder Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (Baden Baden: Merlin Verlag, 1930), chp. XI.
[50] *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau,* Vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Oldenbourg, 1900), 311.

of an elderly German-Jewish couple, the landlady interrogated him for two and a half hours. As Kutai recalls, the landlady sat him down and questioned him: "What country did he come from? Where are my parents? What can I live on in Berlin?"[51] Only after he answered these questions to the landlady's satisfaction and provided four weeks' worth of rent in advance, was Kutai granted a room.

Part of the reasoning for landladies' choosiness in their selection of guests was to help combat rent fraud and swindling, which were common problems for Pension owners in Berlin from the turn of the century through the Weimar era.[52] Daily newspapers were full of headlines about men and women renting Pension rooms using false identities, only to run off without paying the rent,[53] and contemporary crime novels set in Berlin capitalized on this topic, featuring plots in which tenants rented rooms in Pensions under false identities and swindled their landladies out of their livelihood.[54] For these reasons, many Berlin Pension owners kept secret black lists containing descriptions of tenants who fled without paying their rent.[55]

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[51] Ari Kutai, *Hayim u-vamah: hamishim shenot tea'tron, zikhronot, reshamim, shitot* (Tel Aviv: Yehoshua Orenshten, Hotsa'at Yavneh, 1972), 72.
[52] For example, see „Gerichtliches," *Friedenauer Lokal-Anzeiger* Nr. 120, March 24, 1907; „Festgenommen," *Friedenauer Lokal-Anzeiger* Nr. 169, July 21, 1910; "Eine Hochstaplerin," *Berliner Volkszeitung*, October 23, 1916; „Verhaftung eines internationalen Scheckschwindlers," *Berliner Tageblatt,* November 25, 1921; "Wertlose Dollarnoten: Die neuesten Schwindlertricks," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 12, 1922.
[53] For example, see "Betrügereien einer russischen Hochstaplerin," *Berliner Tageblatt,* October 30, 1912; "Die Erbschaft der Baronesse," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, December 21, 1915; "Unter der Maske eines Sittenpolizeibeamten," *Berliner Tageblatt,* November 5, 1918; "Internationale Pensionsdiebe: Verhaftung der Haupttäter," *Berliner Tageblatt,* January 14, 1921; "Verhaftung einer gefährlichen Hochstaplerin," *Berliner Tageblatt,* February 16, 1921; "Die Dollarschecks eines Hochstaplers," *Berliner Tageblatt,* October 26, 1921; "Die Vorbereitung des Mordes," *Berliner Tageblatt,* October 4, 1922; "Frau von Suckow verhaftet," *Berliner Tageblatt,* August 27, 1924; "Der Gast mit den dreißig Namen," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 3, 1925.
[54] For example, see Walther Kabel, *Der Klub der Toten* (Berlin: Verl. mod. Lektüre, 1923); Walther Harich, *Der Kunstfälscher*, *oder Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (Baden Baden: Merlin Verlag, 1930).
[55] Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 71.

The Pensions of Berlin and the Jewish Community

While Pensions made their way to Germany comparatively late, this new sector of the accommodation industry expanded rapidly. In his 1911 novel *Ablösung vor!* (*Relief Guard, Forward!*), the German-Jewish author Konrad Sittenfeld described the rise of the Berlin Pension in the first decade of the twentieth century as occurring in a two-step process. First, numerous two and three story homes in the Charlottenburg neighborhood, originally designed to house single families, were subdivided and subsequently converted into Pensions—a process that consequently "transformed the very character of the Charlottenburg streetscape."[56] Then, many of these homes were knocked down and replaced with 'mighty rental buildings,' which were quickly filled with and furnished by even more women who rented out rooms in their new apartments. As a result, the formerly small and quiet streets of Charlottenburg became virtually unrecognizable, as the streets were "quickly lined with Pension after Pension," giving the neighborhood a similar character as that of London's Bloomsbury district.[57]

Indeed, after the turn of the century, the number of Pensions in Berlin grew at a rapid rate. Between 1890 and 1900, the number of Pensions recorded in the Berlin business directory more than doubled from 190 to 430.[58] In the decade to follow, they continued to multiply: the business directory reported 697 Pensions in 1905, and exactly 1000 Pensions in the year 1910.[59] By the turn of the century, Berlin was considered to have an excess of rooms available for rent,

[56] Conrad Alberti (Sittenfeld), *Ablösung vor!* (Berlin: Vita, 1911), 6-8.
[57] Ibid., 8.
[58] *Berliner Adreßbuch mit Handels- und Gewerbeverzeichnis*, 1890; 1900. These figures only comprise Alt-Berlin.
[59] Ibid.

and by 1910, the oversupply of Pension accommodations created immense competition between Pension owners and led to a system of undercutting.[60]

However, because the business of running a Pension was unregulated during the period in question, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Pensions in Berlin at any given time. Travel guides such as the *Baedeker Berlin* only included a small selection of Pensions, and many were not listed in the Berlin address books or business directories. For example, while the 1920 Berlin business directory contained a list of 1192 Pensions in operation, more than double this number of individuals were recorded as running Pensions in the residential section of the address book that same year.[61] Additional discrepancies are revealed when comparing the records of the Berlin business directory to the individual residents lists. For example, out of the 1192 Pensions listed in the business section of the 1920 greater Berlin address book, exactly 37 were located on the Augsburger Straße. However, the individual registry for that same year shows that the Augsburger Straße was actually home to 52 Pensions. Likewise, examination of the Kantstraße in the 1920 business directory shows 18 Pensions, whereas the individual resident list records a total of 28 Pensions on this street. Further discrepancies are revealed when comparing Pension advertisements in the newspaper classified sections to those included on the official list in the business directory. For example, over 100 Pensions advertised in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in the year 1921 did not make it into the business directory that year.

Aside from the clusters of Pensions in the city center that catered towards university students, comparatively few Pensions were located in Berlin's proletarian eastern districts. Whereas furnished rooms could be found all across the city, Pensions were heavily concentrated

[60] Tilli Löwenberg, "Die Inhaberin einer kleinen Fremdenpension," *Die Deutsche Frau* 1, Nr. 45 (1911), 12.
[61] *Berliner Adreßbuch mit Handels- und Gewerbeverzeichnis*, 1920. These figures include Pensions in all districts of greater-Berlin.

in the more affluent districts in the west. The large majority of Pensions were located in western neighborhoods such as the Tiergarten, Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, and Schöneberg. For example, out of the 1192 Pensions recorded in the 1920 Berlin business directory, 912 were located in the Tiergarten, Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, and Schöneberg districts.[62] Certain streets in these areas—such as the Ansbacher Straße, Augsburger Straße, Joachimsthaler Straße, Kantstraße, Kurfürstendamm, Nürnberger Straße, Rankestraße, and Savignyplatz—commonly housed multiple Pensions in the same building, and in some cases, on the same floor of the building in question.

As expected, the locations of Pensions and rented rooms had a particularly strong effect on their rent. Pensions located in proximity to or within a reasonable walking distance from Berlin's major train stations charged higher prices accordingly due to the convenience provided by their locations.[63] However, Pensions located too close to train stations were largely considered undesirable. As the German-Jewish author Georg Hermann explained in his 1925 novel set in Berlin, a "house too close to the train stations was no longer a fine house [because] it was too noisy for tenants."[64] Pensions located directly next to or underneath of train lines tended to charge lower rents due to the noise that tenants had to endure, and experienced more frequent turnover rates between guests. In the Fall of 1907, Moshe Smoira, a Jewish university student from Königsberg, experienced this firsthand, as he opted to abandon his furnished room and seek out new accommodations in Berlin because he couldn't bear the constant noise from the adjacent tram line.[65] For observant Jews like Smoira, the location of Pensions was of utmost importance, as their living spaces needed to be within walking distance of a synagogue; those who resided in

[62] Ibid.
[63] "Erfahrungen beim Zimmervermieten," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 30, 1922.
[64] Georg Hermann, *Der kleine Gast* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1925), 548.
[65] CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, October 22, 1907.

furnished rooms needed to be in proximity of both a synagogue and a kosher restaurant. This too posed a problem, as the large majority of kosher restaurants were located in the city center either in or near the Scheunenviertel, and far away from the more 'respectable' Pensions and furnished rooms in the western part of the city.

The location of Pensions within Berlin meant that observant Jews faced unique challenges when it came to observing dietary laws. To begin with, compared to other major urban centers such as Warsaw or Vienna, Berlin had a relatively small number of restaurants, guesthouses, and other establishments in the accommodation industry that provided kosher food, despite being a focal point of Jewish migration. The process of obtaining an official kashrut certificate in Germany was a complicated, arduous, and costly procedure, as doing so often necessitated the reclassification of the establishment as a purely commercial operation and the obtainment of a restaurant license.[66] Only a tiny number of Pension owners in Berlin obtained a kashrut certificate from the Berlin rabbinate, and the majority of those that did were located in or around the Scheunenviertel. Thus, Jewish émigrés wishing to take up residence in a Pension in one of the more 'desirable' areas of Berlin, such as the Tiergarten, Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, or Schöneberg neighborhoods, often expressed great frustration and dismay upon their arrival in the city. For example, upon arriving in Berlin in 1907, the young Moshe Smoira explained to his parents that living and dining at separate locations was unfortunately the 'only option' available to him, since finding a *rituelle Pension* (kosher Pension) with an available room in a desirable location would have been an 'impossibility.'[67] Likewise, upon his relocation to Berlin in the late

[66] CAHJP P/352/71, *Restaurationen und Kaschrut*, 1911-1915.
[67] CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, October 23, 1907.

1920s, the Hebrew poet and literary critic Jacob Fichman noted how much easier it was to find a kosher Pension in Warsaw than in Berlin, and felt ready to 'throw in the towel.'[68]

In part to help remedy this problem, in Berlin, the few kosher Pensions with large enough dining rooms usually welcomed regular outside diners (*Tischgäste*) who did not live in the Pension for the daily *Mittagstisch.* A *Mittagstisch* was a kind of eating club or 'lunch table' that offered daily meals at fixed prices and at set times during the week. They were usually run women, located in a smaller restaurant-like establishment or a larger private home, and frequented by regular groups of guests. The *Mittagstisch* had long been a staple in the everyday lives of German university students; these communal lunch tables not only provided daily nourishment, but also had the potential to foster collegial community atmospheres. Around the turn of the century, the phenomenon of the *privat-Mittagstisch* (private lunch table) expanded both due to and alongside the influx of foreigners and the rise of temporary living accommodations. Due in part to the limited kosher options in the western part of the city, hundreds of Jewish women capitalized on and filled this crucial need, opening up their private homes to offer kosher lunchtime nourishment. As indicated in the diary of the Hebrew publicist Reuven Brainin, any kashrut-observing Jew who wanted to stay in a 'nice' Pension in Berlin would need to be content with taking their meals elsewhere. Brainin, during his many long stays in the city, always had to live and dine in separate locations.[69]

Because Pensions came in all shapes and forms, the possibilities of how to define what Berlin's 'Jewish' Pensions entailed are seemingly endless. A look at some of the various ways in which 'Jewish' Pensions were advertised reveals several possibilities:

[68] Gnazim 8/8. Letter, Jacob Fichman to Batsheva Fichman, undated.
[69] CAHJP P8/51. Reuven Brainin, Diary, September 11, 1926.

Figure 1. Advertisements from the *Berliner Tageblatt,* 1922-1926.

The term *jüdische Pension* could merely signify that the establishment catered to those who identified as Jewish, whereas a *rituelle Pension* indicated the provision of kosher food. Pensions that described themselves as *streng rituell* implied the highest standards of kashrut, and the phrase *nicht rituell* signified that the Pension in question was operated by and catered to Jewish guests but did not serve kosher food. In keeping with the room-renting trends of the time, Jewish landladies who marketed their homes as 'Pensions' (individual furnished rooms had their own separate category in the classified sections) often formulated specific requests about the characteristics of their desired tenants. In addition to specifying the basic requests of age and gender, many Jewish landladies called for 'educated' or 'upstanding' tenants, using descriptive words such as 'better' and 'decent' to describe the types of people they wished to welcome into their homes. The diverse ways in which these spaces were advertised also demonstrate the

fluidity of what constituted a 'Pension' in the first place. A 'Jewish Pension' could be defined as a kosher Pension, a Pension operated and inhabited by Jews, or simply the admission of tenants into a Jewish household. A matchmaking endeavor of sorts, finding an appropriate 'fit' was necessary when accepting an outsider into one's household, hence common requests for arrangements such as a "comfortable home for an educated middle-aged Jewish man offered in the home of an educated Jewish woman." Clearly, 'Jewish' Pensions were not open spaces into which any tenant could buy access for the price of monthly rent. These intentionally constructed living arrangements responded to the needs of the Jewish community in an increasingly mobile and urbanized world. Yet, whether or not they kept kosher, the importance of being part of a Jewish community was at the forefront. As expected with any migrant group, Jews emigrating to Berlin simply preferred to settle in Pensions with other Jews. As an acquaintance conveyed this notion to Zalman Shazar in 1914, "I was very happy to learn that you're living in the Pension Menasse and not with Amalek, and on the Grenadierstraße and not in *Grenadierkaserne*."[70] Likewise, as Shimon Finkel explained the reasoning behind his move from a Pension on the Nettelbeckstraße to a Pension on the Ansbacher Straße in 1922: even though the quality of the room was comparable and the rent was significantly higher, "I wanted to live among my people."[71]

[70] Gnazim 248/92964/95/1. Letter, M. Soloveichik to Zalman Shazar, August 31, 1914. Located at Grenadierstraße 43, the Pension Menasse was a popular *rituelle Pension* among new Jewish émigrés in Berlin. See Gnazim 248/82979/8. Shazar's stay there was very short, as the Scheunenviertel was not a desirable area for him. 'Amalek,' in this letter, is used metaphorically here to denote the biblical enemy of the Jews.

[71] Shimon Finkel, *Bimah u-kela'im: haye sahkan u-ma'avako le-'atsmuto* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'oved, 1968), 73.

„Eine Pension ist kein Hotel“ (A Pension is not a Hotel)

Though they were often grouped together in the broader category of the ‘accommodation industry,’ Pensions had a number of fundamental differences from hotels. Neither the letting of rooms in private households or Pensions was subject to special commercial or legal provision, and unlike hotels, Pensions were not subject to state regulation before the Weimar era.[72] Whereas hotels and restaurants required permits beginning in 1871, Pensions required no such license.[73] Because the act of renting several rooms, cooking for tenants, and deeming the operation a ‘Pension’ was not a taxable endeavor, activities of this magnitude did not officially constitute ‘profitable’ occupations under the eyes of the law.[74] Despite frequent public dispute as to when the line was crossed between making ends meet and profitable employment—even after the city of Berlin began to impose a weekly lodging tax in March 1921, neither the nature of Pension accommodations nor their pricing would be regulated by the state.[75] Instead, the new lodging tax simply gave Pension owners the option of either covering the taxes themselves or tacking them onto their tenants’ bills as a surcharge via an additional weekly invoice.[76] Aside from the lodging tax, Pensions were not made subject to the *allgemeinen Gast- und Schankkonzession* until 1930.

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[72] The only legal provision that applied to Pension owners concerned registration of their guests with the city police. Beginning in 1878, newcomers in Berlin were required to register with the police within 24 hours of taking up residence in a given dwelling, and beginning in 1888, Pension owners were required to provide their guests’ travel documents to the police as well. Through the Weimar era, Pensions and rented rooms (both furnished and unfurnished) were grouped into the same category for registration purposes. For example, see Auszug aus der Polizeiverordnung über das Meldwesen. III. Meldepflicht bei porübergehendem Aufenthalte. Berlin, June 3, 1930.

[73] Any hotel that contained a restaurant that served alcoholic beverages needed an additional liquor license.

[74] *Polizei-Handlexikon* (1896), 185. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 34.

[75] Berlin’s city council passed a lodging tax (*Beherbergungssteuer*) in January 1921, which went into effect in March 1921. See Vorlagen für die Stadtverordnetenversammlung der Stadt Berlin, No. 5 (53), 1921/01/17.

[76] “Beherbergungssteuerordnung,” in Stadtrat Brumby und Stadtamtmann Oattringer, *Berliner Steuerkodex: Berlins Steuerordnungen mit systematischer Darstellung* (Berlin: Spaeth und Linde, 1922): 55-57; “Die städtische Beherbergungssteuer,“ *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 6, 1921. The surcharge was calculated based on the size of the establishment, and citizens and foreigners were charged different rates.

Other distinguishing features between Pensions and hotels concerned the length of the guest's stay, the purpose of their visit, and most importantly, the origin of and ideology behind the running of the establishment. In theory, the Pension was designed to resemble a family life, with the 'full pension' boarders taking their meals together and often assembling in the evening in the drawing room. The communal dining experience was one of defining features that distinguished the Pension from the hotel. According to a popular Berlin guidebook, whereas the Berlin hotel, which was based on leisure and designed for an exclusive minority, was essentially a "system of closed cells," the Pension offered the possibility for "familiar cohabitation in a large apartment with a shared lounge and dining room."[77] As a 1913 article in the *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* propagated this concept of harmonious existence, "Everyone who dines at such a family table is a 'regular' guest. Everyone has his or her specific place. Everyone knows their amicable neighbors…everyone is used to each other and feels very comfortable and secure at the Pension dining table."[78] Because this type of dining arrangement was supposed to have a socially integrating function, Pension owners were encouraged to put a significant amount of thought and care into seating assignments at the communal table. As another long-time German Pension owner explained,

> It is especially important for the Pension owner to put the right people in the right place…she must determine which guests will fit together and place them at their table seats accordingly. The silent man in need of rest must not be placed next to the chatterbox; the shy young girl must not be placed next to the cheeky *Backfisch* who teases her. And yet, the appearance of intentional placement [at the dining table] must be avoided.[79]

The tax was raised in 1922 and faced enormous backlash. See "Erhöhung der Beherbergungssteuer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* February 8, 1922; "Proteste der Berliner Hoteliers," *Berliner Tageblatt,* February 14, 1922; "Die städtische Beherbergungsteuer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 5, 1922; "Gegen die Erhöhung der Beherbergungssteuer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 7, 1922; "Der Kampf um die Beherbergungsteuer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1922.

[77] *Berlin und die Berliner: Leute, Dinge, Sitten, Winke* (Karlsruhe: J. Bielefelds Verlage, 1905), 430.

[78] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 170.

[79] Anna Ahrens, "Die Pensionsleiterin," *Frauen-Rundschau* 9 (1908), Nr. 18, p. 554.

Pensions also differed from hotels in that hotels, by their very nature, were freely accessible and spatially 'open' to any person willing to pay for a room, whereas Pension owners had the utmost control in their selection of guests. Likewise, the restaurants housed within hotels were open and accessible to the consuming public, while Pension dining rooms were only accessible to tenants and regular diners accepted into the social circle. Thus, in Berlin, hotels were considered to be "intended for passersby, for travelers who want to see and enjoy the city without planting any roots, for people who want to come and go as they like without regard for time," whereas Pensions were intended for those who sought a more permanent "home away from home."[80]

Contemporaries generally agreed that the most important factor that distinguished Pensions from hotels in Berlin was not their size or the number of rooms, but their 'familial' domestic character.[81] According to writer and social critic Margarete Pochhammer, both the "personal character of the establishment" and the "personal care provided by the Pension owner or landlady" accounted for the "noticeable difference between Pension and hotel operations in Berlin."[82] This new form of semi-communal accommodation in Berlin was conceived as an extension of family life, in order to provide the newcomer with a sense of personal intimacy in the big city. In a 1913 article in the *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen*, one newcomer to the city recounted how his Pension landlady "selflessly and helpfully took me in and took care of me, instead of haughtily showing me away from her crowded Pension, as the hotel employees would have done."[83] The German-Jewish writer Georg Hirschfeld also captured this sentiment in his 1913 novel *Pension Zweifel*. "In the small kingdom

[80] F. W. von Hollink, "Pensionsmütter und Pensionäre," *Die Woche* 12 (1910), Nr. 4, p. 133.
[81] *Berlin und die Berliner: Leute, Dinge, Sitten, Winke* (Karlsruhe: J. Bielefelds Verlage, 1905), 429-430.
[82] Pochhammer, "Berliner Wohnungsverhältnisse," 234.
[83] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 12, p. 134.

of Berlin Pension," he explained, "people did not walk past each other with cold indifference, as was the case outside in the tangle of the streets of the metropolis."[84] Instead, Frau Hinzelmann's Berlin Pension was designed to be a space in which guests "could look into each other's eyes as if they were living in a small town."[85] In "such a community," the narrator declared, "people trusted one another."[86]

Finally, Pensions and hotels were markedly gendered spaces. Despite the fact that both hotels and Pensions were commercial operations, there was a difference between 'keeping' a Pension and 'running' a hotel.[87] Hotels were not meant to be synonymous with the nature of a private familial home, whereas Pensions sought to replicate and replace them. Hotels were seen as businesslike, while Pensions—though also businesses—often functioned under the guise of being 'just a domestic home.'[88] The situation was also gendered when it came to the owners; the 'professionalized' hotel business was controlled by men and the 'domestic' Pension business was dominated by women. For example, the 1920 Berlin business directory records a total of 1058 female-operated Pensions and 88 male-operated Pensions, but hotel proprietors outnumbered women at 318 to 69.

1920	Pensions (1192)	Hotels (402)
Female owned	1058 (88.76%)	69 (17.16%)
Male owned	88 (7.38%)	318 (79.10%)
Gender unknown	46 (3.86%)	15 (3.73%)

Table 1. Pension owners in Berlin in the year 1920, by gender. Source: *Berliner Adreßbuch mit Handels- und Gewerbeverzeichnis,* 1920.

[84] Georg Hirschfeld, *Pension Zweifel* (Munich and Leipzig: G. Müller, 1913), 51.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] A similar difference existed in the British and American context.
[88] See Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 81-83.

The interiors of hotels in Germany were also increasingly generalized as 'male' enterprises characterized by massification and mechanization and therefore devoid of human warmth, whereas Pensions were thought to provide the necessary feeling of *Gemütlichkeit* (coziness) that more impersonal types of dwelling spaces lacked. Whereas hotels were considered to be "cool sober giants" furnished with mass-produced 'neutral' items, significant thought was given as to how women should furnish their Pensions in order to provide a cozy and familial atmosphere.[89] However, above all, the differences would transcend the material realm. As Anna Ahrens explained in *Die Deutsche Frau*:

> While standard features such as external comfort, impeccable order, cleanliness, well prepared meals, and punctual service can be found in every good hotel—in the Pension, the guest requires something more. The Pension resident requires a deep inner comfort—which, like a delicate, unobtrusive, scent—flows through the domesticity led by a kind and sensitive woman.[90]

The Pension—as a locus of maternal domesticity—needed a motherly figure at its head.

Maternal Domesticity and the *Pensionsmutter*

The Pension was simultaneously a new space of modernity and a continuation of the domestic structures of the imperial bourgeois home. Among middle class circles, the subletting of extra rooms to lodgers was considered an acceptable form of supplementary household income, even for the wives and widows of professional and skilled male workers and civil servants in Berlin.[91] This is partially because the profession of the Pension owner was deeply intertwined with traditional notions of 'motherhood.' In imperial Germany, the predominant

[89] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 1, p. 1; *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 170. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 60.
[90] Anna Ahrens, "Die Fremdenpension," *Die Deutsche Frau* 1, Nr. 38 (1911), 8.
[91] Orthmann, *Out of Necessity*, 214.

ideology surrounding the running of Pensions maintained that unmarried, widowed, or childless women would be able to take over maternal functions by harboring other persons, and thus fulfill their 'natural' vocation as housewife and mother. The profession was thus deemed to be "so extraordinarily suitable for women, that it will certainly not be challenged by anyone, even the most enraged enemy of the women's movement."[92] As the German women's movement leaders Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer explained, the job of a Pension landlady "offers a mode of work that aligns with the very nature of womanhood and enables a modest livelihood."[93] According to longtime Pension owner and writer Anna Ahrens, the business of successfully running a Pension in Germany "requires the full commitment of a female personality" and "offers a rich field of cheerful work and creativity to [those] women gifted with domestic virtues and maternal qualities."[94]

This ideological concept, in fact, appeared time and time again in contemporary discourse about women working in Berlin during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Pension owners often formulated their self-image in accordance with the doctrine of *geistige Mütterlichkeit* (spiritual motherhood), a concept popularized by the emerging bourgeois women's movement in Germany.[95] Rooted in the belief that there were inherent differences between the emotional characteristics of males and females, the ideology behind the gospel of 'spiritual motherhood' considered women to have unique nurturing, caretaking, and moral

[92] M. Folkart, "Winke für Pensionsinhaberinnen," *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 25, 1908.
[93] *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung*, vol. 5, "Die Deutsche Frau im Beruf, " eds. Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer (Berlin: W. Moeser, 1906), 29.
[94] Anna Ahrens, "Die Fremdenpension," *Die Deutsche Frau* 1, Nr. 38 (1911), 8.
[95] On the history of the concept of *geistige Mütterlichkeit*, see Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Irene Stoehr, "Organisierte Mütterlichkeit: Zur Politik der deutschen Frauenbewegung um 1900," in Karin Hausen, ed., *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte: Historische Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1983): 225-253.

capabilities. While promoting women's entry into the public sphere through certain professions deemed compatible with these nurturing and caretaking characteristics—such as teachers, social workers, and reformers—the notion that women's primary occupation should be that of wife and mother was still widely prevalent in middle class German society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

But even though *Pensionsmüttern* differed from bourgeois women who engaged in voluntary social work in that they were financially compensated for their services, Pension landladies viewed their work as embodying the ideals of 'selfless motherhood.'[96] The unique emotional and spiritual qualities traditionally associated with motherhood—the 'female' qualities of care, gentility, devotion, and nurture—were deemed essential to the successful running of a Pension in imperial Germany. According to one prominent Pension owner who was also active in the German women's movement, only those with the "practical and maternal instincts of women" were well equipped to run a Pension.[97] Pension owners certainly saw their "peaceful cultural work"[98] in harmony with the special characteristics of women, since "the family Pension [*Familienpension*] brings culture and rich blessings to its fellow men."[99] Some even considered the duties of the profession of a Pension owner to be "so specific to the female character" that not all women, let alone men, could properly carry out this line of work to the fullest extent.[100]

The job of the Pension owner, as the editors of the 1906 *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung* articulated, was indeed among the most difficult and demanding lines of work available to

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[96] Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 60.
[97] Anna Ahrens, "Die Pensionsleiterin," *Frauen-Rundschau* 9 (1908), Nr. 18, p. 554.
[98] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 171. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 59.
[99] Ibid.
[100] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 16 (1916), Nr. 10, p. 60; Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 59.

women in Imperial Germany.[101] This is in part because, unlike hotels, the Pension owner had to juggle the unusual demands of providing both material *and* spiritual comfort.[102] As articulated in a 1916 article in the *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen*:

> The owner of a Pension must—under all circumstances—serve as the heart and soul of the whole establishment. The success of her work relies solely on her adaptability, the abandonment of her own personal interests, and her dedication to creating a replacement-home for each of her guests.[103]

Because the act of opening up the family dwelling and converting it into a business created a space in which community would function as an extension of or replacement for family, the owners of Pensions therefore felt as if they were serving their guests in the capacity of the *Pensionsmutter* who worked to extend her domesticity. According to a 1908 article in the *Frauen-Rundschau*:

> Whoever enters a Pension should feel *zuhause* ['at home']. While consideration should be paid to material desires and comforts…it is the appropriate [familial environment] that gives the tenant values which cannot be paid with money.[104]

In Berlin, a successful Pension was considered to be one that "becomes a substitute home for its guests."[105] And in theory, both the ability of the Pension to function as a replacement family and the tenant's ability to feel '*zuhause*' was dependent upon the maternal domesticity of the landlady. Even the leaders of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Pensionsbesitzerinnen-Verband* sometimes used the words '*Pensionsmutter'* (Pension mother) and '*Pflegemutter'* (foster mother) interchangeably in their writings and promotional literature. "Happy are those Pension guests," they declared, "who find such a good, dear *Pflegemutter,* and happy are those who honor her!"[106]

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[101] *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung*, vol. 5, "Die Deutsche Frau im Beruf, " eds. Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer (Berlin: W. Moeser, 1906), 29.
[102] F. W. von Hollink, "Pensionsmütter und Pensionäre," *Die Woche* 12 (1910), Nr. 4, p. 132.
[103] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 16 (1916), Nr. 10, p. 60.
[104] Anna Ahrens, "Die Pensionsleiterin," *Frauen-Rundschau* 9 (1908), Nr. 18, p. 553.
[105] F. W. von Hollink, "Pensionsmütter und Pensionäre," *Die Woche* 12 (1910), Nr. 4, p. 133.
[106] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 171.

The phenomenon of the loving *Pensionsmutter* was affectionately captured in both autobiographical and fictional contemporary German literature. The German-Jewish writer Georg Hirschfeld, in particular, authored many novels that featured Berlin Pension landladies who exuded maternal warmth and thus made their guests feel 'at home.' Most notably, Hirschfeld's semi-autobiographical 1906 novel *Das grüne Band: Roman aus jungem Leben*, reflected on the author's own experience living in a Pension that primarily catered to aspiring writers, artists, and intellectuals. In this highly autobiographical story of a young Jewish poet who took up residence in a Pension in Berlin's Schöneberg neighborhood, one of the protagonists declared that the 'motherly love' exuded by his Pension landlady "fertilizes the young artists [who reside in her Pension] more deeply than the most admired masters. If the young artist is deprived of this motherly love, then his works will leave a lot to be desired."[107] Thus, according to the young poet, the Pension Basse—a residence that catered to predominantly 'artistic' types—was a space in Berlin in which "homeless people [could] feel at home."[108] In fact, as he went on to proclaim to his fellow Pension residents:

> I think it is more or less clear to one another, my dear friends, that the artist's destiny is loneliness and restlessness…But sitting here at our Pension table, I believe that we all feel an inner community for our endeavors. In spite of our fate that we [as artists] will not be able to find a place to rest, here we feel the possibility of an island in the middle of the sea…the Pension Basse is like a lighthouse that comforts the lonely struggling spirit with its motherly light when it guides its ship through the raging sea of adversaries.[109]

Even though they were all young adults in their twenties and thirties, several of the Pension residents in Hirschfeld's novel lovingly referred to their landlady as "*Mutter Basse.*"[110] Because

[107] Georg Hirschfeld, *Das grüne Band: Roman aus jungem Leben* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1906), 95.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., 96.
[110] Ibid., 73-75, 76-78. In Adolf Wildbrandt's novel *Die Schwestern*, published in the same year, the adult Pension residents referred to their Berlin landlady as 'Mutter Lehmann.' See Adolf Wildbrandt, *Die Schwestern* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1906), 17-22.

Frau Basse had no children of her own, caring for her Pensioners in a motherly capacity provided the landlady her "only source of joy amidst her cramped and often troubled existence."[111] Ten years later, Hirschfeld returned to this theme in his 1916 novel *Die geborgte Sonne*, which featured a Berlin Pension run by a pair of unmarried Jewish sisters with strong maternal dispositions, which prompted their Pension to be regarded as a "peaceful cosmopolitan island [where] a long lost paradise flourished."[112] Midway through the novel, one of the characters made the grave mistake of moving to a different Pension on the Lützowstraße. This new Pension, run by an "*unheimliche Pensionsmutter*," failed to offer the longed-for shelter that the sisters provided, because "the quality of [homeliness] that the sisters offered was missing here…nothing reminded the homeless of what was lost."[113]

The notion of the Pension landlady providing a kind of motherly oasis or safe haven in Berlin was also prevalent in other German novels that featured Pensions as settings. For example, the German author Rudolf Presber used a similar metaphor as Hirschfeld in describing the setting of his 1925 novel *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels*; the widowed Berlin Pension owner and titular character "was filled with the awareness that she granted those who were more or less castaways (*Schiffbrüchigen*) a hospitable welcome and a beneficial existence for a reasonable price."[114] Similarly, in a short story published in 1920, German writer Heinrich Lautensack described the 'Pension Bavaria' in western Berlin as being "a tiny Bavarian island in the middle of the terrible Prussian sea."[115] Even the infamous Frl. Schroeder in Christopher

[111] Hirschfeld, *Das grüne Band,* 74-75.
[112] Georg Hirschfeld, *Die geborgte Sonne* (Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn, 1916), 58.
[113] Ibid., 124.
[114] Rudolf Presber, *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels* (Berlin: Dr. Eysler, 1925), 6.
[115] Heinrich Lautensack, *Altbayerische Bilderbogen* (Berlin: F. Gurlitt Verlag, 1920), 39.

Isherwood's Berlin Stories, despite her intrusive personality, acted in a motherly capacity towards her tenants: "*My* lodgers aren't lodgers…they're my guests."[116]

Indeed, the lucky Berlin newcomers were the ones who managed to find landladies with strong maternal dispositions and caring personalities when securing a Pension in the city. For example, when the young acting student Shimon Finkel moved to Berlin in 1922, he eventually found a sympathetic landlady who would take care of him in case he happened to fall ill.[117] Elias Auerbach was also deeply grateful for the 'maternal love' and 'homely atmosphere' created by his beloved Berlin *Pensionsmutter* Rose Struck during his yearlong stay in 1918-1919.[118] The Hebrew poet Jacob Fichman was similarly indebted to his Berlin Pension, as he was "treated like a family member" and cared for when he fell ill.[119] As he wrote to his wife from his Berlin Pension, "my room, my landlady, everything is according to my liking. My landlady serves me tea with lemon and takes care of me…What more could I ask for?"[120]

The Organized Pension Owners and their Self Image

While countless women turned to room renting as a way to make ends meet, a small but vocal group of women in Berlin viewed the profession in an entrepreneurial light. Founded in 1901 with the purpose of "celebrating and promoting the profession [and] establishing and implementing universal principles for maintaining Pensions," the *Vereinigung Internationaler*

[116] Christopher Isherwood, "A Berlin Diary" (Autumn 1930), in *The Berlin Stories: Goodbye to Berlin* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1963), 3. Feuilletons in mainstream newspapers also emphasized the "caring, host-like, and motherly hearts" of Berlin landladies, despite their 'inquisitive' and 'intrusive' nature. For example, see Willy Koslowski, "Die neugierige Wirtin," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung,* October 20, 1905.
[117] Finkel, *Bimah u-kela'im,* 73.
[118] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4. On the Pension Struck, see Chapter 2.
[119] Gnazim 8/8. Letter, Jacob Fichman to Batsheva Fichman, undated.
[120] Ibid.

Pensionen Groß-Berlin was the first organizational amalgamation of female Pension owners in the German Empire, as well as one of the first organizations in which economically independent businesswomen were organized.[121] The *Vereinigung Berliner Pensionsbesitzerinnen* was founded shortly afterwards with the same objective, and in 1905, the two groups merged to form the *Allgemeine Deutsche Pensionsbesitzerinnen-Verband* (ADVP), an umbrella organization headquartered in Berlin.[122] Designed to represent the interests of female Pension owners throughout the German Empire, the ADVP aimed to "educate its members on issues related to the running of Pensions and elevate the often-lacking status of Pension landladies."[123] Though no more than 20% of Pension owners in Berlin were ever organized or involved in these organizations, thousands of landladies sought practical advice from their associational organ, the *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen*.[124]

The Pension owners involved in these organizations saw themselves as socially acceptable women undertaking activities that required education, ladylike behavior, and salon abilities; they therefore called their Pensions *Kulturträger* (culture bearers.)[125] Though this self assessment did not go unchallenged, these middle-class landladies saw themselves as guardians of morality and decency; the organized Pension owners lauded the profession as enabling thousands of '*alleinstehenden gebildeten Frauen*' to transmit the essence of their good moral character to a wide array of social circles.[126] The Berlin-based writer and women's movement

[121] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 19, p. 217 and Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 100. The organization was affiliated with the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF).
[122] In 1910, the headquarters of the association were moved to Leipzig.
[123] Albrecht Liesecke, "Das Fremdenheimgewerbe: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis vom Wesen des Fremdenheims," Diss. phil. (Munich: 1927), 20. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 100.
[124] Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 108.
[125] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 170. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei,* 62.
[126] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 170.

activist Eliza Ichenhäuser even explicitly referred to the Pension business in Germany as a "culture-nurturing industry."[127] Indeed, by 1913, Margarete Pochhammer noted that the job of a Pension landlady "has increasingly become a more popular field of activity for specially trained women of the better classes."[128] The organized Pension owners saw themselves as entrepreneurs who carried out a socially relevant function, and sought to cultivate their image as such. Their professionalization efforts were a way to "bring calmness and continuity, peace and security into our profession."[129]

While the mingling of business and extended domesticity blurred the lines between work and home, the organized Pension owners couched their work in value-laden and 'civilizing' terms as an attempt at maintaining their standing in middle-class social circles. Even though they were being paid for their services, they emphasized that their work was 'different in nature' because the work of a Pension landlady occurred inside of the home. By engaging in work that allowed them to "remain a lady in its best and noblest sense,"[130] and by upholding the bourgeois family ideal through the creation of 'substitute families,' women could maintain the façade of *not* working and thus retain a degree of their former social status. This is why women who operated Pensions of the 'better variety' were encouraged to "avoid long stays in the kitchen to the greatest extent possible so as not to compromise [their] *Salonfähigkeit* (salon abilities), because cooking is seen as unladylike."[131]

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[127] Eliza Ichenhäuser*, Erwerbsmöglichkeiten für Frauen: praktischer Ratgeber für erwerbsuchende Frauen in allen Angelegenheiten der Vorbildung, der Anstellung und der sozialen Selbständigkeit : nebst Nachweis von Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen* (Berlin: F. Ebhardt, 1897), 120.
[128] Margarete Pochhammer, "Berliner Wohnungsverhältnisse," in *Was die Frau von Berlin wissen muss: Ein praktisches Frauenbuch für Einheimische und Fremde,* ed. Eliza Ichenhaeuser (Berlin: Loesdau, 1913): 231-238, 234.
[129] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 19, p. 218.
[130] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 14 (1914), Nr. 15, p. 114.
[131] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 17 (1917), Nr. 7, p. 37.

The image of the noble and cultured Pension owner can be found in some contemporary novels. In his 1906 semi-autobiographical novel *Das grüne Band: Roman aus jungem Leben*, Georg Hirschfeld described the heroic Berlin landlady, Frau Basse, as "maintaining a strong understanding and affection for art and culture...despite her preoccupation with the economic tasks of running her Pension."[132] Indeed, the cultured landlady, the "heart and soul of the Pension" who spoke five languages, was so devoted to art and culture that she specifically geared her clientele to artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals, so that she could surround herself with cultural finery.[133] Likewise, in Adolf Wildbrandt's 1906 novel *Die Schwestern*, the protagonist, who secured a room at a Pension in west Berlin, encountered a "dignified landlady" who "reigned with education and custom."[134] Rudolf Presber used similar terminology in portraying the Berlin Pension owner and titular character of his 1925 novel *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels*: the landlady is described as a "noble giver of grace" and as "having a princely demeanor."[135]

The self-image cultivated by Berlin's organized Pension owners was largely born out of an effort to defend their statuses to both their own tenants and to the outside world. Their professionalization efforts were part of a strategy to uphold the reputation of their profession and to simultaneously distance themselves from those Pension owners and landladies who engaged in illicit activity. One of the downsides to running a Pension in Germany, as Anna Ahrens explained in 1911, was the "unfortunate prevalence [of] some women who use their Pensions as a cover for dishonest purposes."[136] In Berlin, Pension owners and landladies were sometimes

[132] Hirschfeld, *Das grüne Band*, 75.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Wildbrandt, *Die Schwestern,* 17.
[135] Rudolf Presber, *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels* (Berlin: Dr. Eysler, 1925), 6.
[136] Anna Ahrens, "Die Fremdenpension," *Die Deutsche Frau* 1, Nr. 38 (1911), 8.

assumed to be concealing their 'actual' hidden intentions by using their businesses as a cover for other endeavors and thus forming an "essential part of the dark side of our urban social life."[137] A 1913 article in the *Tägliche Rundschau* highlighted some examples of these unfortunate occurrences, showing how 'reputable,' 'honest,' and 'upstanding' Pensions ran the risk of being "lumped into the same pot…as the pseudo-Pensions."[138] While a majority of Pensions were indeed reputable and upstanding operations, a subset of Pensions existed in Berlin that could be covers for anything from amateur pandering operations to full-fledged brothels run by professional madams, or sex trafficking rings, gambling operations, or even opium dens.[139] Pension owners and landladies in Berlin's city center, especially those in close proximity to the Friedrichstraße or Leipzigerstraße, were more likely to be suspected of such activities than those located in the western parts of the city. The organized Pension owners thus sought to combat the often 'ambiguous' image of landladies in an effort to dissociate themselves from the many 'pseudo-Pensions' that operated in Berlin.[140]

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[137] Gertrud von Beaulieu, *Das Weibliche Berlin: Bilder aus dem heutigen socialen Leben* (Berlin: Fischer, 1892), 141; Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 87.
[138] *Tägliche Rundschau* 33 (1913), Nr. 91, p. 4. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 92.
[139] For example, see "Der Spielklub im Pensionat. Gefängnisstrafen für die Unternehmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* May 8, 1921; "Die Rettung der sittlich gefährdeten Jugend. Verwahrloste Töchter und Söhne. Das beste Mittel ist die Erziehung der Jugend durch die Jugend," *Berliner Tageblatt,* June 30, 1921; "Wildpret: Eine Pensionsinhaberin als Kupplerin," *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 23, 1922; "Yoshiwara im Norden Berlins," *Berliner Tageblatt,* August 9, 1922; "35 Hausschlüssel für eine Wohnung: Geheimnisse aus der Klosterstraße," *Berliner Tageblatt,* December 21, 1922; "Die Geburtstagsfeier bei Tante Steinmaus," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung,* June 27, 1923; "Joshiwara im Zentrum Berlins. Hinter den Kulissen eines Fremdenpensionales," *Berliner Tageblatt,* August 29, 1923; "Pension Schwedt: Das Ende eines übelberüchtigten Hauses," *Berliner Tageblatt,* October 19, 1923; "Das Liebesnest im Norden Berlins," *Berliner Tageblatt,* October 29, 1924.
[140] *Tägliche Rundschau* 33 (1913), Nr. 91, p. 4 and Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 92.

„An Damen nicht vermietet“ (Not Rented to Women)

As the Berlin Pension owner and titular character of Rudolf Presber's 1925 novel *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels* staunchly asserted,

> As tenants, men are much more pleasant than women. They seldom ring [at the door], they don't lose their hairpins or purses, and they don't get the wrong items out of the wash as often… If a male tenant brings a lady into his room at night, he can still be regarded as a decent gentleman, because the lady was probably his cousin. But if a female tenant brings a man home with her, then she absolutely needs to move [out of the Pension], because the man in question was never her cousin.[141]

While the letting of furnished rooms was predominantly a female-led economic enterprise, women were often unwelcome as tenants in the Pensions and rented rooms of Berlin. At the turn of the century and in the years to follow, the question of housing was commonly regarded as the "the sorest point in the existence of a single woman living in Berlin."[142] At the time, the phenomenon of the single woman who resided in a furnished room was considered to be "a new creation of our times—not yet taken care of…floating in the air, so to speak."[143] In Berlin, women from all walks of life faced discrimination in their search for suitable housing due to the widespread belief that they were "much less desirable tenants than their male counterpart" and "overall more troublesome than male tenants."[144] This problem was continuously highlighted by many of the women's newspapers and periodicals, and mainstream newspapers such as the *Berliner Tageblatt* received endless complaints on the subject.[145] When inquiring about vacant

[141] Presber, *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels*, 11.
[142] Else Rema, "Berliner Frauenbrief," *Frauen-Rundschau* 8 (1907), Nr. 3, p. 100.
[143] Ada von Schmidt, "Die möblierte Dame," *Die Welt der Frau* 60 (1913), Nr. 27, p. 432.
[144] "Nochmals die möblierte Dame," *Die Welt der Frau* 60 (1913), Nr. 39, p. 628.
[145] For example, see Margarete Zepler, "Zur Wohnungsfrage alleinstehender erwerbender Mädchen," *Berliner Tageblatt,* November 15, 1907; Käthe Schrey, "Die Wohnungsfrage der alleinstehenden Berufsfrau," *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung* 25 (1912), Nr. 148; Ada von Schmidt, "Die möblierte Dame," *Die Welt der Frau* 60 (1913), Nr. 27, p. 432-433; "Nochmals die möblierte Dame," *Die Welt der Frau* 60 (1913), Nr. 39, p. 628; "Wohnung und Frau," *Berliner Tageblatt,* February 8, 1916; Emma Stropp, "Die Wohnungsnot der gebildeten Frau," *Die Welt der Frau* 65 (1918), Nr. 36 p. 286; „An Damen vermieten

rooms in Berlin, in both individual households and in Pensions, women frequently found themselves turned away, encountering the "thunderous declaration of the phrase *an Damen vermieten wir nicht*" and confronting "inhospitable doors that almost always shut in their faces."[146] A 1922 report in the *Berliner Tageblatt* estimated that the average single woman looking for a room in Berlin found herself rejected by prospective landladies eight out of ten times in her search.[147] In fact, from the turn of the century through the early years of the Weimar Republic, clauses such as "*An Damen wird nicht vermietet*" ('not rented to women'),[148] "*Wir vermieten nicht an Damen*" ('we don't rent to women'),[149] or "*Wir vermieten nur an Herren*" ('we only rent to men')[150] were included in many Berlin rental contracts.

Even though the institution of the Pension, in theory, was supposed to function as a replacement family 'home' for its inhabitants, the widespread prejudice against female tenants in Berlin was largely—and somewhat paradoxically—rooted in the belief that women would overstay their welcome in their new homes. The "ideal tenant of the landlady," as the Berlin-based writer Else Zehl explained in a 1907 *Frauen-Rundschau* article, "is the *Zimmerherr* who leaves his room early in the morning and doesn't return until the evening."[151] According to Zehl, many landladies and Pension owners in Berlin "would rather see the room in question remain empty than rent it to a woman who wishes to stay in the apartment during the daytime."[152]

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wir nicht: Der Wucher mit möblierten Zimmern. Der Notruf einer berufstätigen Dame.," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 25, 1922.
[146] Else Rema, "Berliner Frauenbrief," *Frauen-Rundschau* 8 (1907), Nr. 3, p. 101.
[147] „An Damen vermieten wir nicht: Der Wucher mit möblierten Zimmern. Der Notruf einer berufstätigen Dame.," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 25, 1922.
[148] Ella Mensch, "An Damen wird nicht vermietet," *Die Deutsche Frau* 2, No. 37 (1912): 7-8; "Nochmals die möblierte Dame," *Die Welt der Frau* 60 (1913), Nr. 39, p. 628.
[149] Stücklen, "Untersuchungen uber die Soziale und Wirtschaftliche Lage der Studentinnen," 86; "Zimmer Suchen," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 12, 1924.
[150] Else Rema, "Berliner Frauenbrief," *Frauen-Rundschau* 8 (1907), Nr. 3, p. 100-101.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., 101.

Likewise, in 1916, law student Anna Irmer explained that Pension owners in Berlin discriminated against female university students in particular "because the female student wants to spend a large part of her free time 'at home' ('*zu hause*'), where her work and relaxation take place, while her fellow male students prefer to socialize and relax in more public locales such as bars and club rooms (*Vereinsraume*)."[153] Such statements were very much in line with the results of the surveys that Gerta Stücklen conducted for her dissertation in 1913-1914, which revealed that female university students in Berlin preferred to spend far more time within the confines of their Pensions and rented rooms than their male counterparts.[154]

Another source of prejudice against female tenants in Pensions and rented rooms in Berlin involved access to the 'private' space of the kitchen. In fact, the contentious issue of kitchen access often led to quarrels and disputes between landladies and their female tenants. In 1912, *Frauen-Rundschau* editor Ella Mensch explained that women were considered difficult tenants, demanding extra services such as cooking facilities and the use of ironing boards.[155] In 1922, one Berlin landlady—a war widow who rented out the extra rooms in her Charlottenburg apartment in order to maintain her livelihood—related how some former female tenants excessively used her dishes and ironing boards, and even carried her dishes outside of the house.[156] In fact, along with the excessive use of gas and hot water, the incidence of overusing and accidentally breaking dishes was one of the most common grievances that landladies in Berlin conveyed about their female tenants.[157] For married couples as well, the tiresome question

[153] Anna Irmer, "Zur Wohnungsfrage der Studentinnen," *Die Studentin* 5 (1916), Nr. 2, 9-11, p. 9.
[154] Stücklen, "Untersuchungen uber die Soziale und Wirtschaftliche Lage der Studentinnen," 82.
[155] Ella Mensch, "An Damen nicht vermietet," *Die Deutsche Frau* 2, No. 37 (1912): 7-8. Cited in Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, 54.
[156] "Erfahrungen beim Zimmervermieten," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 30, 1922.
[157] "Beliebte und unbeliebte Mieter," *Berliner Tageblatt,* January 26, 1923; "Die das Vermieten erschweren," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, September 18, 1930.

of kitchen usage almost always played an essential role in determining the cost of rent, as married female subtenants in particular were widely known to 'overstay their welcome' in the kitchens of their landladies.[158] In Berlin, the privilege of kitchen access in a Pension sometimes came with up to 50% increases in the cost of rent, especially during the height of inflation during the Weimar era.[159]

A related source of bias was that women were also known to prefer to make their own coffee and tea, thus depriving landladies and Pension owners a part of their earnings by eliminating the opportunity to tack such 'extra' charges onto the weekly bill.[160] In her reports on living in Germany before the First World War, Cecily Ullman Sidgwick elaborated on this issue, recalling how she mistakenly and naively disclosed to her new landlady that she had a small spirit lamp with an Etna that she intended to use to make her own tea in the afternoons. When the landlady exploded in anger, Sidgwick was compelled to pack up her belongings and flee her room, seeking new accommodations elsewhere. After this experience, Sidgwick recalled, "I made up my mind that I would never confess to my small harmless Etna in German lodgings again, and would bolt the door while I boiled water for tea."[161] But regardless of gender, most tenants in possession of electric kettles and other devices used to make coffee and tea usually took great lengths to hide them. For example, when Dina Papiermeister went to retrieve some of her boyfriend's belongings from his Berlin Pension room while he was away on a trip in the summer of 1912, she knew better than to ask the landlady where his electric kettle was.[162] After moving to a new Pension in Charlottenburg later that year, he reported to Papiermeister once

[158] "Schlechte Konjunktur für möblierte Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1924.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Else Rema, "Berliner Frauenbrief," *Frauen-Rundschau* 8 (1907), Nr. 3, p. 101; Ada von Schmidt, "Die möblierte Dame," *Die Welt der Frau* 60 (1913), Nr. 27, p. 432.
[161] Cecily Ullman Sidgwick, *Home Life in Germany* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 240.
[162] Letter, Dina Shimoni to David Shimoni, August 8, 1912. In Shimoni, *Eser Shanim*, 90.

again, that his landlady forbid him from boiling water in his room to make tea, this time claiming that it would ruin her nice furniture.[163] Complaints lodged by Berlin landladies about female tenants secretly cooking in their rooms only intensified in the decades to come.[164]

Pension owners were also reluctant to rent rooms to unemployed women, whom they feared would linger and loiter around the Pension throughout the day. Women in jobless states, they believed, would make themselves "too much at home—washing, cooking, ironing, throughout the day, as opposed to the *Zimmerherr* (male lodger), who generally leaves in the morning and doesn't return until the evening."[165] Thus, when placing advertisements in the newspaper, women seeking accommodations often highlighted the fact that they were employed.[166] However, their efforts were sometimes in vain, as even working women (*Berufstätige Frauen*) were sometimes seen as too 'emancipated' to the liking of landladies.[167] While working women were gradually treated more sympathetically by prospective Pension owners, especially during the second half of the First World War when landladies needed to fill their empty rooms, they still faced considerable difficulties securing rooms well into the 1920s.[168]

Finally, many Pension owners turned women away out of fear for the reputation of their establishments, as women living on their own who sought accommodations in a Pension were sometimes suspected of engaging in illicit activity such as prostitution.[169] Social satirist Gertraut

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[163] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, Janaury 1913. In Shimoni, *Eser Shanim*, 122.
[164] "Untermieterin klagt ihr Leid," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung,* September 17, 1930.
[165] "Schlechte Konjunktur für möblierte Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1924.
[166] For example, see *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 19, 1922; *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 28, 1922; *Berliner Tageblatt,* April 30, 1922. Nearly every single classified section for the entire year of the 1922 *Berliner Tageblatt* had at least one advertisement of a 'Berufstätige Dame' seeing a room in a Pension.
[167] Ruth von Velsen, "Die Wohnungsverhaltnisse der Studentinnen," *Die Studentin* 2 (1913), Nr. 11, p. 12.
[168] "Schlechte Konjunktur für möblierte Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1924.
[169] *Frauen-Rundschau* 9 (1908), Nr. 20, p. 610.

von Beaulieu captured this phenomenon in her 1892 book *Das Weibliche Berlin,* documenting an exchange with a prospective landlady and the 'policing gaze' that she received when looking for a room in the city:

> "To women? She shouted at me, looking me up and down with a policeman's gaze…"
> "The owner does not allow us to rent to women; it is stipulated in the contract."
> "But why not? Tell me, where should these poor women go?"
> "Doesn't concern me. And why? Because it involves so much that is unwholesome. Wantons—you understand—that's out of the question, and reputable ladies always want to cook. I would never accept even a respectable lady, even if the owner did allow it."[170]

As von Beaulieu illustrated in her report, Berlin landladies who wanted to portray their homes as 'respectable' middle class spaces were often reluctant to assume the risk of taking in female tenants. This inherent doubt of the moral integrity of single women who sought out rented lodgings was due in part to Berlin's long and complicated history of certain associations between room renting and clandestine prostitution.[171] Like the realities that boardinghouse owners in London faced years earlier, the act of accepting female tenants into a Berlin Pension ran the risk of having one's establishment being falsely labeled as a cover for various types of illicit activity. The German-Jewish writer Ruth Feiner described this deep-seated prejudice in her debut novel *Katze über den Weg*: "Ladies were not welcomed as lodgers [because] landladies in Berlin assume as a matter of course that ladies who wish to live in furnished rooms must, in some way or other, be immoral."[172] Even into the Weimar era, landladies displayed strong prejudice against

[170] Gertraut von Beaulieu, *Das weibliche Berlin: Bilder aus dem heutigen socialen Leben* (Berlin: Fischer, 1892), 144. Cited in Despina Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 54.
[171] See Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 86-93.
[172] Ruth Feiner, *Cat Across the Path,* trans. Norman Alexander (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1935), 185.

prospective female tenants due to long-engrained preconceptions and continued skepticism about the morality of a single woman living alone.[173]

Furnishing a Pension

In a 1911 article in *Die Deutsche Frau,* Pension owner Tilli Löwenberg wrote:

> When a woman has nothing left but her furniture and is faced with the question: what am I going to do now? Nine out of ten women in this situation consequently decide to open up a Pension.[174]

Undoubtedly, one of the most important prerequisites for opening a Pension or taking in tenants was the ownership of furniture. Some Pension owners explained that the possession of furniture served as a motivating factor in and of itself to open up a Pension in the first place. For example, in 1905, one widowed woman explained that she decided to take in tenants because did not want to have to sell her furniture and subsequently move into a smaller apartment.[175] As another recently widowed woman recounted in her 1905 submission to a special issue of *Die Gartenlaube*:

> I wondered what I could do, in order to increase my income. The many pieces of furniture that I still had—some of which, though, had already gone to a dealer—gave me the idea to open up a Pension. I don't know where I got the courage from, but I had it inside me. I rented a large apartment on one of the cross streets of the Leipziger Straße, and merely eight days later, the first Pensioner moved in with me.[176]

[173] "An Damen vermieten wir nicht: Der Wucher mit möblierten Zimmern. Der Notruf einer berufstätigen Dame," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 25, 1922; "Schlechte Konjunktur für möblierte Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1924.
[174] Tilli Löwenberg, "Die Inhaberin einer kleinen Fremdenpension," *Die Deutsche Frau* 1, Nr. 45 (1911), 11.
[175] *Vor den wirtschaftlichen Kampf gestellt! Ein Preisausschrieben der „Gartenlaube"* (Leipzig: Ernst Keil, 1906), 25.
[176] Ibid., 150.

Rudolf Presber's 1925 novel *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels* also highlighted this motivation, as the titular character, faced with the sudden death of her husband, decided to open up a Pension in Berlin "in order to stay afloat…due to the nice furniture that she possessed."[177]

The type, style, and quality of the furniture in question—the landlady's most valuable asset—played an important role in determining the location of Pensions within Berlin, as well as their prospective clientele. Women of more modest means who could only afford to furnish their Pensions simply or cheaply preferred to settle in the vicinity of the universities or near the city center, and those Pension owners who possessed nicer furniture generally resided in the western districts.[178] Some women with enough capital purchased new furniture for the occasion, and as the occupation expanded, furniture dealers marketed a new type of *Pensionsmöbel* (Pension furniture), that included beds, desks, dressers, bookshelves, rugs, and credenzas and buffet tables for the dining room.[179] However, the large majority of women began furnishing their Pensions by distributing the items they already owned, and gradually obtained additional pieces as they took in more tenants.

Both a typical furnished room (*möblierte Zimmer*) and a typical room in a Pension contained a bed, desk, chair, armoire or chest of drawers with a mirror, and sometimes a washbasin. In both living arrangements, bathing facilities were almost always shared.[180] Pensions of the 'better variety' usually contained additional seating in the form of an extra sofa or divan,

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[177] Presber, *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels,* 10.
[178] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 17 (1917), Nr. 6, p. 32 and Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 57.
[179] For example, see the advertisements in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on September 30, 1913; January 28, 1917; July 22, 1917; August 19, 1922; May 27, 1923; September 7, 1923; March 15, 1924.
[180] In Berlin, furnished rooms of the 'cheaper variety' in the university district near city center did not always come with regular access to bathing facilities. Tenants renting a furnished room without this amenity would have had to frequent a public bathhouse. See Anna Irmer, "Zur Wohnungsfrage der Studentinnen," *Die Studentin* 5 (1916), Nr. 2, 9-11.

which enabled tenants to receive visitors in their rooms with greater ease. Access to a private balcony was considered the epitome of luxury. Aside from the basic staples of a bed and dresser, desks were particularly important amenities in all types of Pensions and rented rooms, as most residents required a space to write letters and were sometimes expected to consume their morning coffee and rolls in their rooms. Desks were of utmost importance to students and writers, as their rooms frequently doubled as their workspaces. In the Autumn of 1911, the lack of a suitable desk in his Berlin Pension room not only caused the Hebrew writer David Shimoni to apologize for the blurriness of his handwriting in much of his correspondence, but this missing amenity prompted the young writer and university student to move out of his Pension and seek new accommodations entirely.[181] As the author of a 1925 feuilleton insisted, out of all of the objects in a furnished room, the tenant has a "special relationship with his desk."[182]

In Berlin, Pension owners were encouraged to furnish their establishments in a way that replicated the 'coziness' of home, because "the more the hotel style of furnishings are avoided and the character of the family apartment is preserved, the more comfortable the Pension guests will feel."[183] In keeping with the 'collector' mentality of the nineteenth century dweller, the idea was to replicate the interior of a respectable middle-class home by filling the dwelling space with objects and furnishings that evoked an atmosphere of comfortable domesticity. Pension owners were encouraged to adorn all rooms fully and completely, and empty wall space was to be avoided at all costs.[184] These ideas were rooted in the belief that by furnishing a Pension properly, the landlady could make this inherently makeshift living arrangement feel like a 'home

[181] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, November 13, 1911. In Shimoni, *Eser Shanim*, 71.
[182] Hans J., "Erinnerung an ein Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* December 5, 1925.
[183] "Pensionsinhaberin," *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau,* Vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Oldenbourg, 1900), 311.
[184] Ibid; *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 1, p. 1.

away from home' for the guest.[185] This connection between Pension furnishings and the feeling of at-homeness can be found in Georg Hirschfeld's 1916 novel *Die geborgte Sonne*, which features a cozy Berlin Pension run by a pair of sympathetic Jewish landladies, who filled their home with beloved family heirlooms and charming objects. When one of the main characters leaves this homely environment in order to take up residence in the 'Pension Moderne' on the Lützowstraße, the possibility of feeling 'at home' was now considered unattainable for the tenant. This was because the furnishings at his new home were too 'modern' and 'neutral,' and everything in the Pension appeared "for sale and unloving."[186]

However, because Pensions were primarily located in formerly private homes and due to the makeshift nature of their existence, they were often furnished haphazardly. Reporting on her time living in Germany before the First World War, Cecily Ullman Sidgwick explained how many Berlin landladies put their treasures in a sacred room they called *das beste Zimmer,* and fobbed off their tenants with old-fashioned furniture they did not value—a "roomy solid cupboard, a family sofa, a chest of drawers black with age, and a hanging mirror framed in old elmwood," complete with a "bright green rep tablecloth, snuff-colored curtains, and a wall paper with a brown background and yellow snakes on it."[187] Many Pensions and rented rooms in the city center that catered to university students were furnished in an especially makeshift and improvisational fashion. As one university student who rented a furnished room in Berlin explained in 1911, "After the death of her husband, the landlady hauls all of the unnecessary furniture and superfluous items into the other rooms in a heap, and thus the [accommodations]

[185] Anna Ahrens, "Die Fremdenpension," *Die Deutsche Frau* 1, Nr. 38 (1911), 8.
[186] Hirschfeld, *Die geborgte Sonne,* 58.
[187] Cecily Ullman Sidgwick, *Home Life in Germany* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 242. The daughter of German-Jewish parents, Sidgwick was brought up in London but spent significant periods of time in Berlin.

are ready."[188] The fact that the various pieces of furniture did not go together did not matter, as the student's landlady assumed that university students "only come home to sleep."[189] Vladimir Nabokov also depicted this phenomenon in his debut novel *Mary,* both set in and inspired by the author's own experience living in a Charlottenburg Pension in 1924 that catered to a group of Russian émigrés. In furnishing her Pension, the protagonist's landlady showed a 'singular, rather creepy kind of ingenuity' in the way she distributed the household articles she had inherited, as the tables, chairs, creaking wardrobes, and bumpy couches were divided among the rooms which she intended to let.[190] Separated and dismembered, the anthropomorphized furnishings made their way to various rooms in the Pension:

> Her late husband's desk, an oaken monster with a cast-iron inkwell in the form of a toad and with a middle drawer as deep as a ship's hold, found its way to room 1, where Alfyorov now lived, which the revolving stool, originally bought to match the desk, was parted from it and led an orphaned existence with the dancers in room 6. A pair of green armchairs was also severed: one pinned in Ganin's room, and the other one was used by the landlady herself…the bookshelf in Klara's room was adorned by the first few volumes of an encyclopedia, while the remaining volumes were allotted to Podtyagin.[191]

The separated pieces of furniture that once formed a unified household signify their now-hybrid and perverted status, reminding the tenant of his displaced state of being and reinforcing his feelings of alienation and homelessness.

Many novels, memoirs, and autobiographical accounts written in and about Berlin tend to describe the furnishings of Pensions and rented rooms as existing in a state of deterioration, emphasizing both the makeshift conditions of and the impermanence ascribed to this type of urban living. Vera Brittain, who briefly resided in a Pension on the Kaiserallee in the early

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[188] R. Corwegh (1911) in Fritz Elsas, *Die studentische Wohnungsfrage in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1914), 22ff. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 85.
[189] Corwegh (1911) in Elsas, *Die studentische Wohnungsfrage*, 22ff. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 85.
[190] Vladimir Nabokov, *Mary,* trans. Michael Glenny (New York: Vintage International, 1970), 6.
[191] Ibid.

1920s, related how the home was once an ornate private house, for its great rooms were "impressive with heavy furniture and richly embossed ceilings," but now its contents had fallen into a state of decay.[192] The motif of dust is also frequently employed: in the dining room of the Charlottenburg Pension in Nabokov's *Mary,* the two crystal vases that sat upon the sideboard "were once the cleanest things in the whole apartment but [were] now dulled by a coating of fluffy dust."[193]

Descriptions also tend to fixate on the wear and tear of the furnishings. In his 1906 autobiographical novel *Weltstadtbilder*, Adolf Stoltze described a typical Berlin furnished room as containing the usual bed, chest of drawers, vanity table and mirror, nightstand with a nickel-plated candlestick, plush sofa and set of armchairs, and an old-fashioned desk.[194] But in addition to these furniture staples, the room contained lithographs in bleached frames, worn out knick-knacks, plaster figures, and animal figurines, and a carpet whose "basic colors could no longer be determined."[195] Likewise, Hugo Bettauer described the 'typical Berlin furnished room' in his 1922 novel *Der Frauenmörder* as containing "the usual sofa with paneling, a wobbly armchair, a clock on the wall that does not work, a tattered carpet, but at least a large, handsome desk."[196] While signs of regular use give homes a sense of lived-in coziness, too much wear and tear reinforces the influence of the dwelling's previous occupants and reminds current tenants of their transient state. As one Berlin university student explained, if landladies wanted to make their tenants feel more 'at home,' then they should make an effort to cover up the stains, marks, and

[192] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925* (New York: MacMillian, 1933), 638-639.
[193] Nabokov, *Mary,* 6.
[194] Adolf Stoltze, *Weltstadtbilder* (1906), chp. 1.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Hugo Bettauer, *Der Frauenmörder: Ein Kriminalroman aus Berlin* (Vienna: Gloriette Verlag, 1922), chp. 10.

other visual manifestations left by previous tenants, because the permanent memories left by other individuals made the space *ungemütlich* (un-homely).[197]

Autobiographical and popular accounts also describe the interiors of both Pensions and rented rooms as being chockfull of unnecessary objects. Sometimes, the landlady's objects had the potential to invoke the cozy and personal charm of the middle class bourgeois dwelling, and brought their itinerant tenants a sense of comfort. As one Berlin tenant explained, "Above the bed, your furnished room contains a worthy portrait of a gentleman in his mature years…gradually, you become a 'friend' of this gentleman, who once owned the furniture."[198] Another dweller of a furnished room in Berlin used a similar metaphor:

> When I began to inhabit the room, I entered into a relationship with it…although the furniture was not my property…I felt that it was my room. All of the objects, even the walls themselves, were full of living breath and seemed to come out to me and draw me into their comforting calmness…The pieces of furniture were like the limbs of a single body, and all of the objects spoke to me…I had a friend.[199]

In both of these accounts, even though the landlady was the person furnishing the space with her own belongings and imprinting it according to her own taste, the tenant was the person who gained a sense of emotional comfort through their presence.

But while filling a dwelling space with sentimental objects could provide a sense of comfort to the individuals leaving these 'traces,' being constantly faced with the memories that belonged to somebody else often conjured up and reinforced negative feelings of foreignness and alienation. As a 1927 feuilleton published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* explained, the interiors of furnished rooms in Berlin were "filled with all sorts of objects…that express either something infinitely foreign or nothing at all."[200] One of the most common complaints by tenants about the

[197] Corwegh (1911) in Elsas, *Die studentische Wohnungsfrage*, 22ff. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 85.
[198] M. Sch, "Frauen die arbeiten: die Zimmervermieterin," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, May 21, 1911.
[199] Hans J., "Erinnerung an ein Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* December 5, 1925.
[200] Edmund Th. Kauer, "Der Primus," *Berliner Tageblatt,* September 21, 1927.

interiors of their Pensions and furnished rooms was the unwelcome presence of trinkets and photographs of deceased relatives that covered their desks.[201] In the winter semester of 1913-1914, one university student in Berlin reported that she "almost had to use force in order in order to at least remove [her] landlady's photographs and knickknacks from the desk."[202] Another Berlin university student recalled how his landlady displayed all kinds of imaginable knickknacks throughout the home: animal figurines with green shamrocks in their snots sat next to model cars and planes, and drawings by the landlady's daughter hung next to family photographs documenting important milestones.[203] However, this variety of miscellaneous objects, imbued with the memories of somebody else's family, were "strange and intrusive" to the student.[204] "The colorfully mixed up room furnishings," he recalled, "stared at me like an intruder."[205] The Berlin Pension room in Emmi Lewald's 1912 serialized novel *Die Rose vor der Tür* conveyed a similar source of alienation; the Pension room featured a desk that contained a photograph of the landlady's deceased husband with a "dusty wreath of immortality wrapped around it that peered rigidly and unkindly into the noisy present."[206] In fact, the old and dusty furniture led Lewald's protagonist to declare that she needed to remain "completely indifferent to her environment [in the Pension]…completely independent of its furniture and walls."[207] All of

[201] Christopher Isherwood, in his now-famous Berlin diary, is one of the many writers who fixated on the array of trinkets and knickknacks that his landlady placed on his desk. He emphasized how she "arranges them very carefully in certain unvarying positions." See Christopher Isherwood, "A Berlin Diary" (Autumn 1930), in *The Berlin Stories: Goodbye to Berlin* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1963), 2.
[202] Stücklen, "Untersuchungen uber die Soziale und Wirtschaftliche Lage der Studentinnen," 87.
[203] Corwegh (1911) in Elsas, *Die studentische Wohnungsfrage*, 22ff. Cited in Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 85.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Emmi Lewald, "Die Rose vor der Tür," *Arena* 28 (1912), Nr. 3, p. 1080.
[207] Ibid., 1081.

these objects, especially the ghostly presence of the landlady's deceased husband, were not signifiers of homeliness, but hostile sources of defamiliarization.

From Home to Business: Daily Life and Shared Space

Unlike the economic business models of other hospitality-oriented enterprises, such as hotels, restaurants, or cafés, the relationship between supplier and customer was much more fluid in the Pension. Because the large majority of Pensions in Berlin were operated from private homes, the formerly private space of the family dwelling would now function as a commodified and communal home. Once a landlady opened up her dwelling to boarders, the notion of individual privacy took on new meanings, as formerly private spaces now became the 'public' property of residents. Due to the improvisational nature of these living arrangements, spaces within the dwelling would now be utilized in ways that were not in keeping with their original intended use. This hybrid use of space often proved to be a logistical nightmare and caused major frustration on the part of Pension tenants. For example, during her research for her seminal study *Die Frauenfrage: ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Seite*, Lily Braun encountered a chambermaid in an elegant west Berlin Pension whose makeshift 'bedroom' consisted of a corner of a dark hallway which—although partitioned off by a curtain—every resident had to pass through on a daily basis.[208] Other tenants of Berlin Pensions frequently complained about their inability to able to access certain 'public' areas of the home because the entrance could only be reached through the landlady's bedroom.[209]

[208] Lily Braun, *Die Frauenfrage: ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Seite* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1901), 396.
[209] "Es gibt auch andere Untervermieter," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, September 12, 1930.

Being faced with physical reminders that the room was not being used in the way it was intended to had the potential hinder tenants' ability to feel 'at home' in the space, further reminding them of their transitory state. But the reversal of this notion can be found in the memoir of Josephine Pasternak. Pasternak lived in the Pension Fasaneneck in Berlin between 1921 and 1923, and switched rooms twice during her stay. While she ultimately managed to find a sense of peace and comfort in all of her rooms, the room in which she was able to feel most 'at home,' according to her, was the one that 'retained its original character.' Even though the room in question was actually a converted space, the fact that the room maintained its original shape "gave it warmth and made it cozy."[210]

The commercialization of dwelling space also meant that boundaries between landlady and tenant and power relationships between proprietor and resident were often quite blurred. In most establishments of this nature, daily life was experienced under the panoptic eye of the Pension landlady, as well as the internal domestic surveillance of the other residents of the dwelling space. The shared intimacy of Pension life and the intimate proximity of the individuals occupying the dwelling space eroded traditional notions of privacy and personal control, and meant that the formerly finite boundaries and thresholds of the bourgeois home were now often crossed.

Daily life in a Pension was governed by both written and unwritten rules, and landladies had considerable control in the relationship. Nearly every autobiographical account that describes the experience residing in a Berlin Pension makes note of rules and regulations that guests had to follow. In some Berlin Pensions, landladies would physically display a printed list of house rules in a public location such as the dining room, which contained information about

[210] Pasternak, *Tightrope Walking,* 170.

set meal times.[211] The organized Pension owners strongly encouraged landladies to display their written rules in a prominent place within the home. But while rules and regulations were essential to the smooth running of the operation, they also stripped away the personal agency that tenants craved. For example, one Pension owner related how a former tenant complained to her about the long list of printed house rules; they made him feel anxious, were unpleasant to look at, 'spoiled' his life in the Pension, and were overall too 'oppressive' for him to bear.[212] Others found the 'full pension' system stifling, as set meal times inhibited their social lives.[213] Thus, many Jewish émigré writers—especially those who worked on their own schedules—preferred to take up residence in Pensions that only offered half-board, as this gave them the flexibility to eat their meals at restaurants.[214] For the Hebrew writer S.Y. Agnon, who lived in a series of Berlin Pensions during the First World War, the many rules and regulations of Pension life were the bane of daily existence. He was often unable to partake in Berlin nightlife due to the written and unwritten curfews imposed by Pension landladies, and felt chained to his bed as a result. As he articulated in his semi-autobiographical novel *Ad Hena* (To This Day), "All the landladies of Berlin be damned! They expect you to live by their timetables…whoever leans on others forgets how to walk."[215]

One of the most contentious issues surrounding the rules and regulations of Pensions concerned the ability to receive visitors in one's room. Landladies who did allow visitors tended to enforce curfews, but many forbade the practice to begin with.[216] Due to prevailing ideals about

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[211] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 26, p. 277.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Gnazim 69/69007/1. Letter, Yosef Eliyahu Heller to Zvi Wislavsky, February 20, 1928.
[214] Gnazim 69/87747/1. Letter, S. Perski to Zvi Wislavsky, July 21, 1928; Gnazim 69/87747/1. Letter, S. Perski to Zvi Wislavsky, July 28, 1928; Gnazim 69/87747/1. Letter, S. Perski to Zvi Wislavsky, October 16, 1928.
[215] Agnon, *To this Day,* 110.
[216] For example, see "Untermieter und Mieter," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, September 16, 1930.

the morality of single women living alone, many women reported having an especially difficult time finding a Pension landlady who allowed her to receive guests. Such agreements were often informal in nature. For example, the Schöneberg Pension in which Dina Papiermeister resided in the summer of 1911 did not allow visitors; after much quarreling with her landlady over the right to receive guests, she decided to abandon her room and seek out a new Pension. She then wrote to her boyfriend:

> I really like my new landlady. She is a good woman and treats me very well. I made an agreement with her before I rented the room, that I would have permission to receive guests, and she agreed to the terms of this condition immediately.[217]

However, such agreements were often informal and did not always hold up. Less than three months later, Papiermeister explained to her boyfriend that she no longer wanted him to come visit her in her Pension because "these days, I am not well regarded by my landlady."[218] As the couple's son later surmised, the landlady must have changed her mind about this agreement.[219] Another common complaint about rules and regulations centered on electricity usage. In her memoir, Josephine Pasternak recalls being harshly reprimanded for excessive electricity usage in her room at the Pension Fasaneneck.[220] Franz Kafka's overuse of electricity in his Berlin Pension room, in which he tended to write late into the night, got him into trouble with his landlady as well. His short story 'Eine kleine Frau' (A Little Woman), composed between December 1923 and January 1924 in Berlin, was based on the landlady of his Berlin Pension who criticized his excessive use of electricity.[221]

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[217] Letter, Dina Shimoni to David Shimoni, August 1911. In Shimoni, *Eser Shanim,* 58.
[218] Letter, Dina Shimoni to David Shimoni, November 8, 1911. In Shimoni, *Eser Shanim,* 70.
[219] Shimoni, *Eser Shanim*, 70.
[220] Pasternak, *Tightrope Walking*, 146.
[221] See Franz Kafka, "Eine kleine Frau," in *Erzahlungen* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).

The power relationships surrounding this living arrangement meant that landladies could evict tenants for any reason they deemed appropriate. For example, in 1920, one Charlottenburg landlady kicked her tenant out of her Pension because she felt he was consuming too much alcohol.[222] Other landladies reported evicting their tenants due to their careless treatment of the furniture.[223] In his autobiography, the actor Shimon Finkel described his eviction from his Berlin Pension room in 1922 due to his habit of practicing voice exercises at night. Finkel recalled how one night, after midnight, he "heard knocking on [his] door, and the voice of the indignant landlady hissed: Hush now!"[224] The following morning, the landlady insinuated that she probably needed to rent the room to someone else, and the day after that, the gas lamp in Finkel's room went out. Finally, the following day, the young actor received a formal letter in which he was asked to vacate his room by the first of the month.[225]

Because the space of the Pension was neither fully public nor private, spatial intrusion—both real and imagined—was part and parcel of everyday life. Though many autobiographical accounts emphasize the homely and comforting environment that Pensions provided during formative transitional periods, the lack of privacy inherent in this form of living took a toll on tenants. In her travel notes, Ethel Mannin described her Charlottenburg Pension as a claustrophobic space under absolute supervision of her landlady:

> The landlady was like some evil bird of prey; I was terrified of her; I dreaded leaving my room for fear I should encounter her—for there was no *privacy*; the room was in a flat, and opened out into a hall, as did all the other rooms, and immediately opposite mine was the landlady's living-room, the door of which she kept ajar, and her black eyes and beak-like nose darted round it at the slightest sound. She was clearly determined not to miss any of the comings and goings of any of her lodgers. It was not possible even to go to the W.C. without being observed by her.[226]

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[222] LAB A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1182.
[223] "Untermieterin klagt ihr Leid," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung,* September 17, 1930.
[224] Finkel, *Bimah u-kela'im,* 72.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ethel Mannin, *Forever Wandering* (London: Jarrolds, 1934), 22-23.

While Pensions provided privacy to their tenants via access to individual bedrooms, the shared spaces of the bourgeois family dwelling—hallways, stairwells, entrances, and even bathrooms—now became 'public' spaces of surveillance. As Sharon Marcus has shown in her study of apartment houses in nineteenth century Paris and London, the fluidity of new semi-communal spaces such as hallways and building entrances brought the public sphere of the street into the private dwelling.[227] Thus, it is fitting that the paranoia-like discomfort evoked in Mannin's account is centered on the *Zwischenraum* (interstitial space) of the hallway. By turning a private household into a Pension, the formerly unproblematic connector between rooms becomes a contested space now under constant surveillance.

The loss of privacy inherent in the structure of the Pension likely contributed to the unflattering portrayal of Berlin landladies in the autobiographical literary realm and in popular imagination. While the figure of the Berlin landlady did not develop into a full-fledged literary type as it did in British boardinghouse folklore, the Berlin landlady shares some common characteristics: she is generally a widow, she has always 'seen better days,' she is either motherly or miserly, and frequently meddling. She is wearing a black dress, full of brooding worries that her tenants will ruin her furniture, and in most cases, the underlying culprit of the tenant's troubled emotional state. In both fictional and autobiographical accounts, Berlin landladies were somewhat despised figures, portrayed as intrusive, stingy, invasive, and controlling, though physical, spatial, and emotional means. In particular, feuilletons that featured Berlin Pensions as the setting frequently depicted landladies as prying, nosy, and intrusive, constantly rummaging through their tenants' belongings, reading their letters, and meddling in

[227] Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

their personal affairs.[228] Such accounts portrayed Berlin landladies and Pension owners as the prototype of the curious spinster with 'detective-like ears' who lives vicariously through her tenants in a voyeuristic capacity.[229]

For example, in her memoir, Josephine Pasternak recalls how the landlady of the Pension Fasaneneck summoned her into her office, incessantly questioned her about her current dating habits and her plans for her future, and tried to convince her to marry a fellow Pension resident.[230] The narrator and protagonist in Rudolf Presber's 1925 novel *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels* routinely hid certain personal belongings in his Berlin Pension room, as his landlady "frequently snooped around in the interest of cleanliness and order."[231] The spatially intrusive landlady can be seen in Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories,* as Frl. Schroeder was often found "peeping, spying, poking her short pointed nose into the cupboards and luggage of her lodgers."[232] Likewise, one of the characters in Georg Hirschfeld's 1906 autobiographical novel *Das grüne Band* complained about the "police-like surveillance" exerted by the landlady in the Berlin Pension in which his girlfriend resided.[233] Thus, he urged his girlfriend to move into a different Pension in Berlin where he could "visit her undisturbed," as he felt that the intrusive supervision of the landlady during their visits was "unbearable and degrading."[234] He even cautioned her as to refrain from disclosing the address of the new Pension in question, out of fear that the landlady might potentially track her down.[235] Stefan Zweig, in his autobiography, depicts

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[228] For example, see Willy Koslowski, "Die neugierige Wirtin," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung,* October 20, 1905; Hermann Heijermans, "Die Zimmervermieterin," *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 26, 1908.
[229] Hermann Heijermans, "Die Zimmervermieterin," *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 26, 1908.
[230] Pasternak, *Tightrope Walking*, 151-152.
[231] Presber, *Die Zimmer der Frau von Sonnenfels,* 281.
[232] Christopher Isherwood, "A Berlin Diary" (Autumn 1930), in *The Berlin Stories: Goodbye to Berlin* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1963), 2.
[233] Hirschfeld, *Das grüne Band,* 331.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid., 332.

the stingy Berlin landlady who charged him extra service fees for removing a small splash of ink from his desk and for sewing a trouser button onto his pants.[236]

Others reflected on the unequal power dynamics between landladies and their tenants, dwelling on the loss of the tenant's personal agency in this form of semi-communal living. One Berlin feuilleton depicted landladies and their tenants as being inherently at war with one another, and dozens of novels depicted landladies as 'dragons,' predatory figures who took advantage of their tenants.[237] The German-Jewish filmmaker Robert Siodmak used this popular association as the inspiration for his short film *Der Kampf mit dem Drachen oder: Die Tragödie des Untermieters* (Fighting the Dragon, or: The Tragedy of a Tenant), which premiered in 1930 in Berlin and followed a tortured boarder who murdered the landlady of his Berlin Pension. The unequal relationship was defined by the choice of characters; the protagonist was a meek young Jewish clerk residing in an upstairs room in a Berlin Pension run by a dragon-like landlady.[238] Drawing upon the 'dragon' mythology, every room in the household—bathroom included—was equipped with Chinese wind chimes so that the landlady could monitor her tenants' every movement from all corners of the residence. Because he was not permitted to smoke in the Pension, the tenant opened the window a slight crack and blew cigarette smoke through a long pipe that he hid in a grandfather clock. However, when the landlady soon found out about these misdeeds, she charged him the cost of having the curtains professionally cleaned. Eventually, the tormented tenant was pushed past his breaking point and killed his landlady in a fit of rage. Arrested for murder, he plead his case before a jury comprised of ordinary Berliners who have

[236] Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, trans. Anthea Bell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 135.
[237] Hermann Heijermans, "Die Zimmervermieterin," *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 26, 1908.
[238] The tenant was played by the Jewish actor Felix Bressart. Though the tenant's Jewishness was not explicitly stated (it was a silent film), the character's 'Jewish' features and seemingly timid disposition stood in stark contrast to the fat and grotesque elderly German landlady.

all at some point lived in rented rooms dominated by cruel landladies. In the end, the tenant was declared 'not guilty,' as the judge avowed, "We have all lived in that dragon's house."

However, the less-than-desirable representation of Berlin landladies should not necessary be taken at face value. Reflecting on his experience living in a Pension in west Berlin, one writer lamented how Berlin landladies were unfairly stereotyped; "Berlin is the city of the most sympathetic landladies, which is confirmed by all who have lived in the stiff atmosphere of a London boardinghouse or with a Parisian landlady."[239] Ruth Feiner similarly wrote that "Berlin landladies as a class are not the dragons they are usually represented to be."[240] Due in part to a housing crisis of epic proportions, in Weimar Berlin, lodging became a kind of cultural code for urban evil, and discontentment with lodging reflected the anxiety caused by the loss of privacy in contemporary urban domestic spheres.

The First World War and the Future of the Pension

During the First World War, Pension owners in Berlin faced a multitude of difficulties. The German property market collapse in 1912 resulted in an abundance of vacant flats, and by the onset of the war in 1914, Berlin was home to an oversupply of Pensions. The war further exacerbated Berlin's already-pressing housing crisis; with the onset of the First World War, the outflow of men sent off to the front triggered an increased vacancy rate in rented dwellings, and prompted the opening up of many more rooms throughout Berlin. This outflow, combined with the departure of countless students and foreigners, created a major problem for Pension landladies in Berlin. With their regular clientele significantly diminished, empty rooms

[239] M. Sch, "Frauen die arbeiten: die Zimmervermieterin," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, May 21, 1911.
[240] Feiner, *Cat Across the Path,* 185.

abounded, and many Pension landladies found themselves on the verge of financial ruin.[241] Hermann Kötschke, chairman of the *Verein der Berliner Wohnungsmieter*, empathized with the plight of the immense number of formerly middle-class landladies and Pension owners in Berlin. "These single women, who have struggled to make an income," as Kötschke declared in March 1915, "are now in danger of losing their furniture, their only assets, and sinking into the proletariat."[242] The situation grew so dire that Pension owners and landladies (*Pensionsinhaberinnen* und *Zimmervermieterinnen*) located in Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf were grouped into their own special category of those who were eligible to receive unemployment benefits as a result of the war.[243]

Landladies also faced practical difficulties during the war given the difficulty of procuring food and household essentials during a time of national shortage.[244] Mary Ethel McAuley noted in her Berlin wartime diary that during mealtimes when the potatoes were passed around the table, the landlady "tells you whether you can take two or three potatoes, or one big potato and one small potato."[245] McAuley also noted the effects of the linen shortage; shortly before she was about to depart from the Pension Köstermann during the summer of 1917, she found a printed card hanging up in the room in which she had resided for nearly two months. It read, "After August 1, people coming to this [Pension] for an extended stay must bring their own bedding with them. The washing will be done every four weeks."[246] As she wrote in her diary,

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[241] Franz Oppenheimer, "Die Arbeitslosigkeit der Frauen," *Berliner Tageblatt,* August 15, 1914; "Hausbesitzer und Mieter," *Berliner Tageblatt,* October 12, 1914.
[242] Hermann Kötschke, "Das Mietseinigungsamt und die Mieter," *Berliner Tageblatt,* March 27, 1915.
[243] "Groß-Berliner Kriegswohlfahrtspflege," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, May 4, 1916.
[244] Pension residents were required to hand over both their coal cards and food ration cards to their landladies (unless not under full Pension).
[245] Mary Ethel McAuley, *Germany in War Time: What an American Girl Saw and Heard* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1917), 61.
[246] Ibid., 87.

"After three weeks the sheets got a kind of gray color, and then they never seemed to get any dirtier."[247] The organized Pension owners championed the slogan "durchhalten und Opfer bringen" (persevere and make sacrifices) and filled their associational organ with advice columns on topics such as 'how to stretch food rations.'[248]

As the war progressed, the situation began to ease slightly for Berlin's Pension owners and room renters. Berlin experienced a significant deceleration of the construction of residential dwellings as a result of the war; for example, the city saw the completion of 4519 new dwellings in 1913, and only 53 in 1916. However, until 1916 at least, the effects of the construction stagnation were much weaker than those of the decrease in demand.[249] Yet, by the second half of the war, the demand for rooms had returned through a new clientele: while billeting occasionally occurred in Pensions, working women, officers' wives who temporarily gave up their homes while their husbands were away, and newly married couples filled much of the absence that students and foreigners left behind.[250]

The war also produced a new generation of landladies in Berlin: a critical mass of newly-widowed women, and those facing uncertain financial futures, now began to open up their homes. While the shortage of private apartments intensified, the supply of Pensions and furnished rooms increased exponentially during the Weimar era. By the mid-1920s, countless upper-middle class families throughout Berlin, who never would have considered renting furnished rooms in the past, were suddenly giving in to the pressure of their financial circumstances by renting portions of their apartments—usually the largest and best rooms—to

[247] Ibid.
[248] Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 124.
[249] Konstantin A. Kholodilin, "War, Housing Rents, and Free Market: Berlin's Rental Housing During World War I," *European Review of Economic History* 20.3 (August 2016): 322-344, p. 325.
[250] *Frauenberuf und Erwerb* 19 (1918), Nr. 1, p. 1.

subtenants.[251] Franz Roswalt described the typical scenario in his 1930 novel *Pension Atlantik*: one day, after the war, the widow of a senior tax official who faced a difficult and merciless future named her Kurfürstendamm apartment the *Pension Atlantik.* She kept two rooms for herself, and the other ten rooms became the *Pension Atlantik*. And a year or two later, there was "hardly a house in any of the main streets of western Berlin without its own version of the *Pension Atlantik*."[252]

In the wake of the war, as the housing crisis intensified, and ordinary Berliners were continuously encouraged to subdivide their dwellings and take in boarders.[253] An article published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in July 1924 reported that the current supply of furnished rooms for rent in Berlin was 400% higher than that of the previous year.[254] During the height of inflation in the Weimar era, the familiar sight of 'Zimmer frei' notes were now back on the residential doorways of Berlin's streets. As the newspaper declared, "Berlin has changed its face once again!"[255] Meanwhile, the housing shortage in Berlin would reach epic proportions. By 1930, Berlin city architect Martin Wagner estimated that in order to eliminate the housing shortage within ten years, 70,000 new apartments would have to be built in Berlin each year. According to the current policy at the time, only 25,000 new apartments were scheduled to be constructed in Berlin each year, of which, less than 20,000 were actually built.[256] Berlin had

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[251] "Schlechte Konjunktur für möblierte Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1924.
[252] Franz Roswalt, *Pension Atlantik* (Berlin: Schlesische Verlagsanstalt, 1930), chp. 5. The *Pension Atlantik* in the novel, located at Kurfürstendamm 62, was presumably based on the actual *Pension Atlantik*. Records from the Berlin Landesarchiv show an establishment called the 'Pension Atlantik' existing at Kurfürstendamm 62 and operated by a German-Jewish war-widow. See LAB A Rep. 342-02, Nr. 66358.
[253] "Mobilisierung von Fremdenzimmern. Wie sich Unterkünfte schaffen lassen.," *Berliner Tageblatt,* 9 April 1922.
[254] "Schlechte Konjunktur für möblierte Zimmer," *Berliner Tageblatt,* July 19, 1924.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Cited in Werner Hegemann, *Das steinerne Berlin: 1930 - Geschichte der größten Mietskasernenstadt der Welt* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930), 336.

arguably transformed from a city of Pensions into *the* city of Pensions. As Franz Roswalt conveyed:

> So much had changed. Everything had changed. Berlin suddenly resembled a giant Pension that housed and had to take in everything pushed inside of it: jobseekers from abroad, people from lost colonies, different parts of the county, and from the Baltic provinces, and people who intended to fight the very last fierce battle for bread and bare life here.[257]

But the Jews who emigrated to Berlin from the 1910s through the 1930s did not settle in Pensions by choice. In November 1919, Hadassah Calvary and her family desperately wanted to move to Berlin; they were wealthy and well connected, and eager to join their many friends and extended family members in the city. However, their plans quickly fell through their "inability to secure housing and the [lack of] available apartments for the foreseeable future."[258] David Bergelson, the highest paid Russian-Yiddish writer in the world at the time of his emigration to Berlin in 1921, did manage to secure his own rented flat, but only after having to live in a Pension for over two years time. The renowned Jewish historian Simon Dubnow also had no choice but to live in a Pension for several years until he was eventually able to move into a private apartment. As Dubnow explained, "obtaining an apartment for oneself would have been impossible...[émigrés] had to resort to renting rooms from landladies; given the dearth of apartments in Berlin, one must be content with that which one has."[259] In a diary entry dated January 1, 1923, he admitted, "never before in my entire life had I worked so intensively to find lodging."[260] Josephine Pasternak was also among the eventual lucky ones. After three years living in the Pension Fasaneneck, she relates: "I do not remember the details, but somehow my

[257] Roswalt, *Pension Atlantik,* chp. 5.
[258] CZA A 215/76, Nr. 6A. Letter, Hadassah Calvary to Esther Smoira, November 9, 1919.
[259] Simon Dubnow, *Dos bukh fun mayn lebn: zikhroynes un rayoynes,* vol. 3 (Buenos Aires: Alveltlekher yidisher kultur kongres, 1963), 25-27.
[260] Ibid., 82.

parents got hold of a flat. A flat! It seemed like magic. We could arrange the rooms as we liked, nobody would intrude on us."[261] But while Bergelson, Dubnow, and Pasternak eventually managed to procure the prized dream of a rented flat, this seemingly impossible feat remained no more than a fantasy for the large majority of Jewish émigrés who made their way to Berlin. Though inherently *not* a permanent home, they made their homes in the Pensions of Berlin as permanent guests.

[261] Pasternak, *Tightrope Walking,* 188.

Chapter 2

Between Haifa and Berlin: The *Pension Struck* as a Zionist Space of Belonging

A few short months after the publication of his 1927 literary masterpiece *Masada,* an autobiographical epic poem about the struggles that a Jewish migrant endured upon arriving and settling in Palestine in the 1920s, the young Hebrew poet Yitzhak Lamdan would find himself as an émigré once again—but this time, in the heart of Germany. Disenchanted by the harsh realities of 1920s Palestine, the Ukrainian-born poet of the Third Aliyah decided to venture to Berlin, which was then a flourishing center of Jewish literary culture. As a Hebrew writer, Lamdan reasoned, "It was important to spend some time here."[1] When he finally arrived in Berlin, the young man would endure a difficult first night, both emotionally and physically, as he was suffering from a severe summer cold during a heat wave of 39° Celsius.[2] The poet also experienced the typical shock and disorientation of an émigré who faced uncertainty in his new surroundings. With his senses over-stimulated, Lamdan initially felt like a tiny cog in the fast-paced machine of Weimar Berlin. At first, Lamdan's initial impressions of the social, material, and cultural landscape of Berlin's urban metropolis were relatively generic; they closely resonated with some of the most famous turn-of-the-century scholarly understandings of urban modernity and modernization, as well as the scenes described in Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* the archetypal big-city novel of Weimar Berlin.[3] As Lamdan reported to his friend Yehuda Karni:

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[1] Gnazim 196/53394/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Zvi Plotkin, October 16, 1927. Lamdan also indicated to Plotkin that because he was experiencing some health issues, it made sense to settle in Berlin.
[2] Gnazim 49/7288/142. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, September 15, 1927.
[3] See Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950); Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George

> As I look at everything around me, I look at Europe more closely—modern Europe, the new Europe—which has now become thoroughly 'Americanized' and lives according to a completely different tempo, in its entire shape and form. Electrical power, machines, and radios galore. In this new culture of life, technical innovation is the most important thing, and spiritual culture has been thrown to the side. Sports and entertainment—these are now the main components of cultural life…Anyway, this is my first impression. And the social contrasts are quite alarming too. Debauchery and indulgences on the one hand, and depression and poverty on the other hand. Perhaps it is possible to learn from all of this.[4]

However, an additional and more substantial dimension of alienation lay behind Lamdan's descriptions of a modern, disorienting, and fast-moving Berlin. Lamdan was not just in the modern big city, but also in the Jewish diaspora. As he wrote to Yehuda Karni:

> It is the evening hour, and I am now alone, living in a foreign land, in my Pension room…I'm still confused and scattered, [and] I have not yet managed to dispel the estrangement and alienation that I feel…This feeling of alienation began the moment I left the Zionist Congress in Basel, where I felt like I was in a 'kind of Israel,' but right after I left, I felt that I was indeed a stranger.[5]

Separated from his wife,[6] suffering from an extended cold, and lacking a stable source of income, Lamdan's melancholy was certainly justified. However, the young man's sense of gloom and alienation would substantially dissipate in the coming months, thanks to the material and affective comforts of his new dwelling space. In January 1928, Lamdan wrote to his friends Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch:

> You, Rabinovitch, are mistaken in thinking that I did not do well to settle here in the Pension [Struck]. This Pension has truly been my salvation…And this is not a Pension of migrants. At the moment, all of the guests are from Germany. And generally, when I'm at home—I sit in my room. I'm very happy that I was invited to stay in this Pension, where the treatment is wonderful and humane.[7]

Simpson (New York: Macmillan, 1933); Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1887). Also see David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985); Anthony McElligott, *The German Urban Experience 1900-1945: Modernity and Chaos* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[4] Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Anni Lamdan (nee Ballheimer) was living in Upper Silesia at the time, working for Keren Hayesod.

[7] Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.

While recognizing that Berlin was not his permanent home and that he would ultimately return to Palestine someday, the domestic environment and concrete space of the Pension Struck nonetheless provided the Jewish émigré with at least a temporary and partial sense of being at home. It was the atmosphere and environment of the Pension Struck, Lamdan claimed, that ultimately enabled him to "recover and recuperate" from the hardships of migration and thus feel at home in his new residence.[8] While Lamdan spiritually longed for Palestine, the Hebrew writer's dwelling space provided him with a source of rootedness, comfort, and belonging in his state of dislocation.

The Pension Struck was far from an ordinary Pension; this dwelling space housed countless personalities who would later become some of Israel's most famous scholars, writers, politicians, and social activists.[9] Yet, despite the influence of its inhabitants, the Pension Struck has been all but entirely neglected in the growing body of scholarship in the field of Jewish Studies that utilizes space and place as categories of analysis, as well as the more established scholarship on Zionism in Germany. In fact, the Pension Struck has only garnered attention in scholarly studies concerning the life and work of Gershom Scholem, as the young scholar of Jewish mysticism lived in this residence for several months in 1917 and subsequently wrote about his experiences there in his now-famous memoir, *From Berlin to Jerusalem.* Born into an

[8] Ibid.
[9] Some prominent residents of the Pension Struck included medical doctors Elias Auerbach, Zvi Kitain, and Chaim Berlin; editors Baruch Karo (Krupnik) and Max Mayer; Zionist activists Esther Smoira, Betty Frankenstein, and Gusta Strumpf; journalists Gerda Luft and Nanny Auerbach-Margulies; scientists and educators Shmuel Sambursky, Israel Reichert, and Pinchas Cohen; mathematician Jakob Gromer; painter Esther Berlin-Joel; dancers and choreographers Rivka Shturmann and Yardena Cohen; Hebrew writers Yitzhak Lamdan and Moshe Eliyahu Zhernensky (Zhak); politician Zalman Shazar; and scholar Gershom Scholem.

assimilated[10] Jewish household, the native-Berliner arrived at the Pension after his brother was arrested for participating in an antiwar demonstration and his enraged father threw both sons out of the house, embarrassed by their lack of German patriotism and newfound Zionist leanings. Despite an incredibly bitter personal tirade against his new residence in his diary, Scholem would paint a very positive picture of the Pension Struck in his memoir, in which, he dedicated an entire chapter to his time there.[11] In his memoir and later recollections, Scholem would nostalgically emphasize his 'good fortune' to have ended up at the Pension Struck, a space that deeply impacted his intellectual development. This was the space, as Scholem claims, in which the young scholar first came face to face with the 'authentic' world of East European Jewry.[12] Rejecting the political and cultural ambiance of German Jewry, Scholem maintained that the space of the Pension Struck was vital in leading him to embrace radical Zionism and immerse

[10] Throughout Western Europe, the term 'assimilation' was largely synonymous with adherence to German culture. This word—assimilation—can be problematic, as the term tended to have negative connotations; many Zionists used it as a term of contempt and disdain, implying traitorous behavior toward the Jewish people and/or subservience to gentile culture. I use this term due to the fact that Scholem himself described his family as 'assimilated' in his memoir, *From Berlin to Jerusalem.*

[11] In a diary entry on May 19, 1917, Scholem depicted the Pension Struck as the bane of his existence. He ranted about being disgusted by his landlady, sinking into nasty moods, the 'deeply corrupt petty bourgeois' tenants, and the sinking of his spiritual disposition. However, scholars have noted that Scholem was also deeply depressed during this time in his life. See Gershom Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth: The Diaries of Gershom Scholem, 1913-1919,* ed. and trans. Anthony David Skinner (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 171.

[12] The discourse of Jewish 'authenticity' was a defining feature of early German Zionism. Michael Brenner has identified the broader German-Jewish interest in *Ostjudentum* as a defining feature of the "renaissance of Jewish culture" in Weimar Germany. In their search for 'authenticity,' many assimilated German-Jews turned their gaze Eastward in order to 'rediscover' the cultural value of East-European Jewry and thus an embrace an 'authentic' form of Judaism. Arnold Zweig's 1920 book *Das ostjüdische Antlitz,* with illustrations by Hermann Struck, is one of the most well known examples that encapsulates this romanticized 'turning' of German Jews to the culture of East European Jewry. See Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (Berlin: Welt Verlag, 1920) and Eva Raffel, *Vertraute Freunde: das östliche Judentum im Werke von Joseph Roth und Arnold Zweig* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2002). Also see Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1880-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Sander Gilman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East," in *Jews and Germans, 1860-1933: The Problematic Symbiosis,* ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979): 338-366.

himself in the historical study of Kabbalah. As he later conveyed, the Pension Struck was a "wonderful place [in which] a large concentration of Jews from Russia, Poland and Galicia took shelter under the wings of Frau Struck."[13] Even though it is now well known that Scholem was deeply involved with several Zionist organizations and projects before moving into the Pension, he nonetheless chose to depict this dwelling space as the catalyst for his 'turn' to radical Zionism. This was a space in which, in an abstract sense, Scholem felt that he 'belonged.'

Recently, the study of Jewish space, place, and belonging in twentieth century Germany has garnered more attention.[14] Notably, Anne-Christin Saß has emphasized the importance of spatial networks for Jewish migrants in Weimar Berlin, and Sarah Wobick-Segev has demonstrated how Jews in Germany were able to feel 'at home' in various social spaces such as cafés, restaurants, social halls, cinemas, clubhouses, and libraries.[15] While Hagit Lavsky has touched upon the political spaces of the Zionist congresses,[16] and Miriam Rürup has investigated the ideological spaces of German Zionist fraternities and student groups,[17] and Barbara Schäfer has explored the cultural spaces of Berlin's Zionist organizations[18]—the category of dwelling

[13] Gershom Scholem, "Yeme Ne'orim im Z. Rubaschoff," in *Zalman Shazar: Nasi ve-sofer,* ed. Abraham Lis (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at sefarim Y. L. Perets, 1969): 19-23, 19.
[14] See, for example, Gideon Reuveni, *Consumer Culture and the Making of Modern Jewish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Mirjam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture,* trans. William Templer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Paul Lerner, *Beyond the Consuming Temple: Jews, Department Stores, and the Consumer Revolution in Germany, 1880-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).
[15] Anne-Christin Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012); Sarah Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away from Home: Jewish Belonging in Twentieth Century Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).
[16] Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).
[17] Miriam Rürup, *Ehrensache. Jüdische Studentenverbindungen an deutschen Universitäten 1886-1937* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008). Also on German Zionism and student organizations, see Moshe Zimmermann, "Jewish Nationalism and Zionism in German-Jewish Students' Organizations," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 27 (1982): 129-153.
[18] Barbara Schäfer, *Berliner Zionistenkreise; Eine vereinsgeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin: Metropol, 2003).

space is almost entirely absent from the historiography of German Zionism.[19] This chapter seeks to examine the overlooked intersections between Jewish dwelling space and Zionist belonging in Berlin from the 1910s through the 1930s, through a microhistory of the Pension Struck. This particular Pension, as a real place and inhabited space, must be treated as an actant[20] in its own right that fundamentally shaped the Zionist encounter with Berlin.

In order to reach a definition of what it meant for Jews to 'belong' in the context of World War I through Weimar Berlin, I partially rely upon sociologist Anne-Marie Fortier's notion of belonging as a "sense of place, a structure of feeling that is local in its materialization, while its symbolic reach is multilocal."[21] Similarly, Levitt and Glick Schiller's concept of a social field, or a "set of multiple, interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources" are exchanged, organized, and transformed, is all the more relevant for Jewish migrants whose belonging is rooted in more than one place.[22] In this chapter, I define 'belonging' not by physical ownership or assimilation into the dominant society, but by the process of attachment to certain places, spaces, milieus, or to the people who inhabit them. While 'house' and 'home' are not interchangeable categories, belonging is a feeling or sense that is intimately tied to at-homeness. The experience of migration necessitates regaining a lost sense

[19] For conventional accounts of German Zionism, see Stephen M. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany, 1897-1933: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1977); Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975); Yehuda Eloni, *Zionismus in Deutschland: Von den Anfängen bis 1914* (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1987); Donald L. Niewyk, "The Jew as German Nationalist," in *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). On the relations between German Zionism and nationalism, see Stefan Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen: Der deutsche Zionismus im Feld des Nationalismus in Deutschland, 1890–1933* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016). On German Zionism in World War I, see Stefan Vogt, "The First World War, German Nationalism, and the Transformation of German Zionism," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 57 (2012): 267-291.
[20] My use of the term 'actant' here draws on the work of Bruno Latour. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[21] Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 163.
[22] Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," in *The International Migration Review,* vol. 38, no. 3 (2004): 1002-1039, 1009.

of *Heimlichkeit,* a comfort or homeliness that is rooted in domestic space. On one level, domesticity anchors Jewish migrants in place and in time, forming a bridge between memories of a more rooted past and longings for a stable future. While belonging is concrete and affective in nature, belonging in the Pension Struck was also dependent upon the imagined space or point of return of Palestine. For the Jewish migrants who came to live in this dwelling place, the experience of migration cast these individuals into imaginative speculation about the space of Palestine. However, this collective longing—this imaginative speculation—also constituted a form of be-longing. Therefore, the intersection between house and home *is* worth pursuing in the case of this particular dwelling space. On one level, Jewish migrants felt 'at home' in the Pension Struck due to the concrete, material, and social comforts of their new domestic space. On the other hand, *Heimlichkeit* in this Pension also came in the form of a spiritual turn to or affirmation of Zionist identity, as abstract notions of Zionism—while exciting and divisive—also had the potential to be comfortable and homelike.

The Making of the Pension Struck

The story of the Pension Struck begins with a recently divorced German-Jewish woman who found herself in need of a new source of income. Born in Rampitz, Brandenburg[23] in 1880, Rose Struck (nee Broh) came from a large and well-established Jewish family who had resided in the greater-Posen area for at least six consecutive generations.[24] After the untimely death of her mother Auguste in 1881, her father, Lewin Broh, married her mother's younger sister Doris and the family moved twenty-four miles northwest to the city of Frankfurt an der Oder. Lewin

[23] Today the Prussian town of Rampitz is the village of Rapice, Poland.
[24] Rose Struck's mother, Auguste Broh (nee Schreiber), was a direct descendent of the distinguished Prussian Rabbi Meir Posner (1735-1807).

Broh, who would eventually father a total of twelve children, was a successful merchant and quickly became a prominent figure within the Frankfurt an der Oder Jewish community. In 1903, Rose married Leo Struck, an aspiring theater actor and childhood friend from Frankfurt an der Oder, whose father was the first cousin of the renowned Zionist artist Hermann Struck.[25] A few years after the newlyweds moved to Berlin, where Leo Struck's acting career failed to take off, the pair separated. By the winter of 1911, the recently divorced Frau Struck now needed a way to maintain an independent economic livelihood. While she easily could have returned to Frankfurt an der Oder to live with her father, stepmother, and younger siblings, Rose Struck was determined to remain in Berlin. Because she had no children of her own to look after, Frau Struck could have sought out a factory job or enrolled in a training school or vocational course.[26] However, for single middle-class women in early twentieth century Berlin, taking in tenants was considered to be a far more 'respectable' alternative to entering the labor force.[27] Having a large apartment and the means to do so, Rose Struck decided to turn her home into her business.

[25] Leo Struck's father, Abraham Struck (1847-1918), was the first cousin of the Zionist artist, Hermann Struck. Abraham's father Judah Struck (1823-1897) and Hermann's father David Struck (1837-1908) were siblings.
[26] On female factory workers in Wilhelmine Germany, see Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). On Jewish women and work, see Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[27] For more on this subject, see Rosemary Orthmann, *Out of Necessity: Women Working in Berlin at the Height of Industrialization, 1874-1913* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991).

Figure 2. Rose Struck, nee Broh (1880-1942). Photo Courtesy of Dorit Bendov-Gerst.

Though seemingly an ambitious feat, taking in tenants and opening up a Pension would have certainly been one of the most logical and practical means of maintaining a reliable source of income for an individual such as Frau Struck, or any widow, divorcee, or middle-aged single woman for that matter. During this time, the subdivision of large family houses and apartments into alternative living spaces was an increasingly common phenomenon in urban centers that faced housing shortages as critical as Berlin's. Furthermore, a talented cook and experienced hostess, Rose Struck already had hospitality experience under her belt. In the years prior to her divorce, Frau Struck had successfully opened up her home and operated a lively *Mittagstisch*,

which the young Moshe Smoira[28] and his university friends faithfully attended.[29] The daily kosher lunch there, as the young student from Königsberg reported to his parents at the time, was not only reasonably priced, but also was "excellent" and "tasted just like home…much better than a restaurant."[30] Thus, Rose Struck decided to divide up the rooms of her two adjoining ground floor apartments, located in Berlin's affluent Wilmersdorf neighborhood at the end of the street at Uhlandstraße 110/111, and open up a Pension. By September of 1912, these two garden level units would be officially known as the 'Pension Struck.'

Although Frau Struck catered to Jews, the Pension Struck was never an 'official' Jewish establishment.[31] It did not have kashrut certification from the Berlin rabbinate, it never appeared on the approved list of *Pensionen* from the *Centralverein*, nor was it ever advertised as being a '*rituelle Pension*' in any newspaper classified section. In fact, one of the only advertisements Frau Struck did issue simply highlighted her establishment's furnished rooms and amenities such as central heating and hot water.[32] Comprising eight guest rooms in total, each individual room within the Pension Struck contained a bed, nightstand, armoire, one to two chairs, and a desk—the object of utmost significance to a writer or scholar.[33] Each tenant received two sets of keys—one to the individual room in question and the other to the building's main entrance. Utilities such as electric lighting, heating, and hot water for bathing were all included in the overall cost

[28] Moshe Smoira, a native of Königsberg who moved to Jerusalem in 1922, later became a prominent jurist and the first president of Israel's Supreme Court.
[29] CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, January 9, 1907; CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, November 24, 1908.
[30] CZA A 215/4 A. Letter, Moshe Smoira to Eliezer and Perel Smoira, January 9, 1907.
[31] By 'official,' I mean religiously or halakhically Jewish.
[32] See *Berliner Tageblatt*, November 4, 1914, p. 20.
[33] CZA A 215/134, Nr. 1. Letter, Esther Smoira to Kurt Blumenfeld, October 21, 1912; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4; Gnazim 49/7284/148. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, October 17, 1927.

of rent.[34] Frau Struck employed one maid, who assisted with housekeeping, but Rose Struck generally took care of all of the cooking herself. The kitchen was her domain, and this was a space in which residents were not allowed access, unless by special invitation. In this establishment, residents typically opted for 'full pension,' which meant that the cost of room and board included three meals per day, in addition to two cups of coffee.[35] 'Half pension' provided the tenant with a furnished room and breakfast, leaving one free to eat lunch and dinner elsewhere. Local Berliners and non-residents could also opt to dine in the Pension Struck. Some notable examples of 'regulars' were the Hebrew writer S.Y. Agnon and the German Zionist architect Alexander Baerwald, who frequently dined in the Pension Struck despite never actually residing there. Despite the fact that the Pension, as an institution, was inherently designed to be temporary, many of these transient spaces actually became long-term homes for the migrants they took in. In the Pension Struck, the duration of a typical guest's stay could range anywhere from a few weeks or months to several years at a time. As former resident Elias Auerbach recalls:

> Here [in the Pension Struck], it was very rare to find 'hotel-type' guests who only stayed for a few days; people stayed here during their studies, or at least for the duration of their studies in Berlin. And people then returned here when they came back to Berlin for some time.[36]

While Frau Struck initially catered to Jewish university students when she first opened up her home to boarders, she gradually began taking in various types of tenants. Unlike the majority of

[34] CZA A 215/71, Nr. 5. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, September 21, 1922; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Rose Struck to Fridl Cohen, April 6, 1924. Frau Struck had new electric lighting installed throughout the Pension in 1924.
[35] Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.
[36] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4. Unpublished annotated draft of Auerbach's autobiography.

Berlin Pensions,[37] Frau Struck did not discriminate against women and happily accepted young and elderly women alike in her establishment.[38]

The earliest residents of the Pension Struck were primarily middle- or upper-middle class German Jews, many of whom were attracted to Zionism. The years leading up to the First World War were both a transformative and contentious period for German Zionism. At the turn of the century, Zionism in Germany was primarily a philanthropic movement aimed at providing a solution for the plight of East European Jewry. However, in the years leading up to the First World War, a younger and more radical cohort of German Zionists emerged who rebelled against the assimilationist aspirations of their forefathers and began to call for emigration to Palestine. The subsequent shift from political to practical Zionism was crystallized at the at the ZVfD[39] convention in Posen in 1912, at which, this younger generation of radical Jews challenged the 'old guard' Zionists, and succeeded in implementing the passage of a resolution that made emigration to Palestine a central part of the Zionist agenda.[40] However, despite the successful passage of the 'Posen Resolution,' in the period leading up to the First World War, German Jews with a serious interest in immigrating to Palestine made up an extremely small minority. While membership in the ZVfD was estimated to have peaked at nearly ten thousand by 1914,[41] by the start of the First World War, less than thirty German Jews were residing in Palestine, and only twenty had permanently settled there.[42] Most of the Jews who first resided in

[37] See Chapter 1.
[38] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Rose Struck to Grete Auerbach, June 30, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Rose Struck to Grete Auerbach, July 14, 1919. On discrimination against female residents, see Chapter 1.
[39] *Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland* (Zionist Federation for Germany).
[40] On this shift from political to practical Zionism, see Stephen M. Poppel, "The Radical Reorientation of German Zionism," in *Zionism in Germany,* 45-67.
[41] Jehuda Reinharz, "Ideology and Structure in German Zionism, 1992-1933," *Jewish Social Studies* XLII, No. 2 (1980): 119-146, 119.
[42] Richard Lichtheim, *Die Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus* (Jerusalem: R. Maas, 1954), 143.

the Pension Struck belonged to this second generation of German Zionists who devoted themselves to making *aliyah*[43] a reality. As an exclusive club of sorts, these individuals would soon belong to the intellectual elite of the German Yishuv in Palestine.

Another common denominator among the earliest residents of the Pension Struck was a particular connection to the city of Haifa. As Chen Bar-Itzhak has recently shown, Haifa, during this time, served as a kind of utopian 'human laboratory' for Jewish intellectuals that enabled encounters between diverse populations and provided a stage for examining questions of space, identity, and belonging.[44] In *Altneuland,* after all, Herzl had predicted that the first avant-garde Jewish metropolis would crystallize in the town of Haifa.[45] As such, the presence of the select yet highly visible group of Jews who first took up residence in and frequented the Pension Struck marked the emerging character of cultural exchange between Haifa and Berlin.[46] This milieu included the likes of the Haifa-based Zionist sport pioneer Ernst Hermann,[47] future Reali School[48] educators Arthur Biram[49] and Pinchas Cohen,[50] the architect behind Haifa's Technion

[43] The Hebrew word *aliyah,* literally meaning 'ascension,' refers to immigration to the Land of Israel.
[44] Chen Bar-Itzhak, "A Mixed Space: Literary Representations of the City of Haifa," (PhD diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2018).
[45] *Altneuland* (1902) was Theodor Herzl's utopian Zionist novel that outlined his vision for the Jewish state.
[46] On cultural transfers from Germany to Haifa, see *Deutsche und zentraleuropäische Juden in Palästina und Israel: Kulturtransfers, Lebenswelten, Identitäten Beispiele aus Haifa,* ed. Anja Siegemund (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2016).
[47] Ernst Hermann moved back and forth between Berlin and Haifa from the 1910s through the First World War. He generally resided in the Pension Struck while in Berlin. Hermann owned and operated a cement block factory in Haifa during this time.
[48] Founded in 1913 in close connection with the Technion, Haifa's Hebrew Reali School would become one of the most influential high schools in Israel.
[49] Arthur Biram never officially resided in the Pension Struck, but he dined there regularly and spent considerable time in this space. Rose Struck previously knew Biram from Frankfurt an der Oder, where his relatives were close friends of the Broh and Struck families.
[50] In 1911, the scientist Pinchas Cohen moved from Haifa to Berlin in order to study at the city's prestigious agricultural institute. His wife Miriam and one year old daughter Yardena shortly followed, and the family of three resided in the Pension Struck between 1911 and 1913.

Alexander Baerwald,[51] Haifa agronomist Nathan Kaisermann, and three siblings from the Auerbach family—author and journalist Nanny Auerbach-Margulies,[52] Jewish welfare activist Johanna Auerbach-Loewe,[53] and Elias Auerbach,[54] a medical doctor and the first Jew from Germany to settle in the city of Haifa. In these early years, the Pension Struck both served as bridge to Haifa and quickly became part of the collective identity of the second generation of Zionism in Berlin. It was here, in the Pension Struck, where initial plans for the building and founding of Haifa's Technion[55] were put into motion, and it was here where Arthur Biram and Pinchas Cohen were first introduced to each other, and thus where the ideological basis behind Haifa's Reali School was conceived.[56] The experience of living and dining together reinforced loyalty for common purposes and would facilitate creative projects and collaborations among the members of this tight-knit Zionist circle. Through these collaborative projects, the Pension Struck functioned, for this group of German Jews, as a physical and cultural space to build bridges between their former or imagined lives in Haifa and the Berlin present.

These German Jews—individuals whose names are now synonymous with the intellectual and cultural life of modern-day Haifa—were soon joined by a family of East

[51] Baerwald did not reside in the Pension Struck, but was well known as a 'regular' who dined there on a consistent basis. Baerwald was commissioned to design the Technion building in October 1909, and first traveled to Haifa later that year to establish an office there and begin preliminary sketches.
[52] Nanny Auerbach-Margulies was a Zionist author, journalist, and women's activist. She was one of the only female contributors to the *Jüdische Zeitung*, and she organized the first women's Zionist meeting in Basel in 1911. She married the Zionist political economist Heinrich Margulies in 1915, after which, she moved out of the Pension Struck.
[53] Johanna Auerbach-Loewe (the wife of the renowned German Zionist Heinrich Loewe) did not reside in the Pension Struck, but frequented for meals and social activities.
[54] Dr. Elias Auerbach moved from Germany to Haifa in 1909 and founded the city's first modern hospital in 1911.
[55] Institute for Technical Education.
[56] Ruth Jordan, *Daughter of the Waves: Memories of Growing Up in Pre-War Palestine* (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1983), 72. As Pinchas Cohen's daughter explains, after becoming acquainted (in the Pension Struck), Biram would ask Cohen to serve on the staff of the new Reali School in Haifa, and a very important friendship was thus born.

European Zionists from Minsk who had migrated to Königsberg[57] in 1905. The Hurwitz family would form another central pillar of the Pension Struck community. In October of 1912, the Hurwitz family sent daughter Esther to live in the Pension Struck while she studied in Berlin, thanks to the recommendation of her future brother in law Kurt Blumenfeld. Blumenfeld, the leader of the second generation of German Zionists who would become the president of the ZVfD from 1924 to 1933, dined at the Pension Struck on a regular basis and occasionally rented a room there before he was able to settle into his own apartment. A few months after Esther reported to her family that she was satisfied with the Pension, she was briefly joined by her sisters Jenny and Shulamit. In fact, Esther's mother was so pleased with her daughter's experience at the Pension Struck that, after she moved out of the Pension in order to marry Moshe Smoira, the middle-aged woman took over her daughter's former room. Even though she did not like Frau Struck's cooking and her daughter Jenny strongly disapproved of her mother living there, Fanny Hurwitz ended up living in the Pension Struck on a mostly regular basis for the next two decades.[58] Jenny Blumenfeld, who had an extra room in her apartment in the same neighborhood, could not understand why her mother was so "drawn to Frau Struck" and why she opted to reside in the Pension instead of with her and her husband Kurt.[59]

The Pension Struck was not an 'open' space into which any person could buy access for the price of monthly rent. Unlike coffeehouses, restaurants, or hotels, unaffiliated individuals would not have been able to simply enter this establishment, rent a room or purchase a meal, and thus gain entry into the spatial milieu of the Pension Struck. This phenomenon is in contrast to

[57] Many Jews from Königsberg would end up residing in the Pension Struck, including Moshe Smoira, Gerda Luft, Batya Krupnik, and Shmuel Sambursky, among others.
[58] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 1. Letter, Jenny Blumenfeld to Fanny Hurwitz, October 2, 1918; CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, October 6, 1926.
[59] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 1. Letter, Jenny Blumenfeld to Fanny Hurwitz, October 2, 1918.

the concurrent trend of Jews buying access (and thus a sense 'belonging') into specific spatial milieus in urban centers such as Berlin—a phenomenon that Sarah Wobick-Segev has convincingly demonstrated in her recent study of Jewish spaces of consumption, leisure, and sociability.[60] Unlike the more 'open' spaces of Berlin's urban cafés, the Pension Struck was an establishment in which 'belonging' operated through social networks—tenants gained access to this space through a kind of referral system, or through a personal connection to a relative, friend, or colleague. Because the business of running a Pension was largely unregulated by the state, operating 'under the radar' and recruiting clientele almost exclusively through word of mouth spared Frau Struck from having to pay hefty lodging taxes during her first two years of operation. Thus, she solely took in guests to whom she had a personal connection, even after she was required to officially list her establishment as a 'Pension' in the Berlin address books in 1913.[61] Zalman Shazar, for example, was only able to secure a room there in 1916 thanks to the interventions of his cousin Esther Smoira and her mother Fanny Hurwitz, both of whom previously resided there.[62] In the winter of 1915, Fanny Hurwitz, who lived in the Pension at the time, often invited the young student to visit her for afternoon coffee.[63] There, once he got to know Frau Struck, Shazar was subsequently allowed to move into the Pension. A year later,

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[60] See Sarah Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away from Home: Jewish Belonging in Twentieth Century Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018); Sarah Wobick-Segev, "Buying, Selling, Being, Drinking: Jewish Coffeehouse Consumption in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life,* ed. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York; Berghahn Books, 2011): 115-134; Sarah E. Wobick-Segev, "German-Jewish Spatial Cultures: Consuming and Refashioning Jewish Belonging in Berlin, 1890-1910," in *Longing, Belonging, and the Making of Jewish Consumer Culture*, ed. Gideon Reuveni and Nils Roemer (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 39-60. Shachar Pinsker has also shown how Jewish writers and intellectuals utilized the space of the modern urban café as a site for newspaper reading, discussion, socialization, and cultural production. See Shachar Pinsker, *A Rich Brew: How Cafes Created Modern Jewish Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

[61] See *Berliner Adreßbuch* 1913, part v, 551.

[62] Gnazim 248/33187/3. Letter, Zalman Shazar to Rachel Katznelson-Shazar, January 19, 1915; Gnazim 248/97257/1. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Zalman Shazar, April 4, 1915.

[63] Gnazim 248/97257/1. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Zalman Shazar, April 4, 1915.

Shazar himself would convince Frau Struck to provide a room for his friend Gershom Scholem, who had recently been kicked out of his father's house due to his political leanings and new penchant for Zionism.[64] As Scholem writes in his memoir:

> The news reached my friend Zalman [Shazar]. 'A martyr of Zionism! Something must be done,' he cried out. We arranged to meet and he said, 'Don't worry! You must move into the Pension that I live in. Moreover, I'll make sure that you receive a special discounted price for a good room.' Of course, I accepted this suggestion. This is how I arrived at the Pension Struck.[65]

Even though Scholem had previously been familiar with the Pension Struck, as his good friend Max Mayer[66] had lived there since 1915, his narrative retelling of how he arrived there as a 'martyr of Zionism' casts the Pension as a space of refuge for marginalized young Zionists trying to find their place in Berlin. During this time, there was legitimate prejudice amongst many German Jews who rented rooms to those who openly embraced Zionism. For example, Alex Bein, a prominent biographer of Herzl who would later serve as the director of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, recalls a Jewish landlady in Germany who strongly criticized his interest in Zionism and warned against developing a friendship with her daughter, lest she follow him to Palestine.[67]

Similarly, in a 1928 letter, Yitzhak Lamdan likewise emphasized how grateful he was to have been "*invited* to stay in this Pension."[68] Though not all of her residents were Zionists, Frau Struck relied on specific community networks dependent on Zionist social mobilities in securing

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[64] Gershom Scholem, "Yeme Ne'orim im Z. Rubaschoff," in *Zalman Shazar: Nasi ve-sofer,* ed. Abraham Lis (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at sefarim Y. L. Perets, 1969): 19-23, 19.
[65] Gershom Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1982), 89.
[66] Max Mayer was a German-born Zionist and editor of the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the most important German Zionist periodical.
[67] Alex Bein, *Kan en mevarkhim le-shalom: zikhronot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1992), 146. Cited in Liora R. Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 13-14.
[68] Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.

the majority of her tenants. When her younger sister Fridl emigrated to Haifa in the mid-1920s, the young woman considered it her personal mission to recruit new Pensioners worthy of living in her sister's establishment.[69] A similar logic applied to non-residents and local Berliners who wanted to dine at the Pension Struck. Compounded by the fact that her dining room could only accommodate so many people at one given time, individuals generally needed an invitation or personal connection in order to frequent this social space. Thus, Jews who had heard about the Pension through word of mouth and subsequently wanted to live and/or dine there had to position themselves in close proximity to specific circles in order to gain access into this spatial milieu. Further contributing to the Pension's exclusivity was the fact that Frau Struck only had eight guest rooms in total, and these often tended to fill up quickly. For example, in 1917, when Hadassah Calvary advised her younger sister Rivka as to where she could live in Berlin, her first thought turned to the Pension Struck; although she had not spent much time there personally, she reasoned that it must be a "suitable place to live [because] both Gusta Strumpf and [her] Hebrew teacher Zalman Shazar lived there."[70] However, after inquiring further a few days later, she warned her sister that there might not be enough space available at the Pension Struck, and advised her to come up with a back-up plan.[71]

The Pension Struck was thus a site of both inclusion and exclusion on a social and spatial level. While this element of exclusivity certainly had the potential for stimulating feelings of intimidation and alienation, it actually accelerated the process of feeling 'at home' in this dwelling space. By gaining entry into the Pension Struck, these Jewish migrants were thereby granted access to something 'special'—they were granted access to networks and communities to

[69] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Rose Struck to Fridl Cohen, April 6, 1924.
[70] GSJHM G.F.0104/11. Letter, Hadassah Calvary to Rivka Manheim, March 14, 1917.
[71] GSJHM G.F.0104/11. Letter, Hadassah Calvary to Rivka Manheim, March 19, 1917.

which they could ultimately 'belong.' For example, when she first settled into the Pension Struck in the autumn of 1912, Esther Smoira explicitly attributed her sense of comfort in this space to the community of people living there. As she conveyed to her future husband at the time, "Despite the fact that I am sometimes seized by feelings of longing, I feel very comfortable here, [where] people are kind and friendly to me."[72] Upon arrival, the young émigré encountered a vibrant network of social connections and was promptly inundated with invitations to social events and gatherings. As she reported to her soon to be brother in law Kurt Blumenfeld, Smoira's schedule was fully booked with plans and social engagements for ten out of her first twelve nights residing in the Pension.[73] Similarly, a few short months after moving in, Shazar would convey to his future wife Rahel Katznelson that his closest friends in Berlin were those migrants who he happened to meet at the Pension Struck.[74] By 1918, Shazar collectively and affectionately referred to the residents of the Pension Struck community as the '*Struck-leute.*'[75] Surely, Pension Struck residents enjoyed the benefits of a built-in social network, as community and connection served as a social safety net.

[72] CZA A 215/7, Nr. 1. Letter, Esther Smoira to Moshe Smoira, October 18, 1912.
[73] CZA A 215/134, Nr. 1. Letter, Esther Smoira to Kurt Blumenfeld, October 21, 1912.
[74] Letter, Zalman Shazar to Rachel Katznelson-Shazar, September 26, 1916. In *Zalman Shazar, Ha-Nasi Ha-Shlishi: Mivhar Teudot me-Pirkei Hayav*, ed. H. Tsoref (Jerusalem: Israel State Archives, 2007/2008), 79.
[75] CZA A 215/71, Nr. 3, Letter, Zalman Shazar to Moshe and Esther Smoira, October 19, 1918.

Figure 3. Residents of the Pension Struck standing outside of the building, 1917. Pictured in the second row: Zalman Shazar (second from the left), Rose Struck (third from the left), Fridl Cohen (fourth from the right), Zvi Kitain (second from the right). Photo courtesy of the Machon Lavon Institute Archives, Tel Aviv, P13313.

Many former residents of the Pension Struck have explicitly linked their feelings of belonging—both in this dwelling space and in Berlin itself—to Rose Struck's maternal and sheltering disposition. By intentionally running her Pension like a 'family,' Frau Struck served as the comforting figure designed to combat the inherently unhomely[76] experience of migration for the many individuals she took in. According to Elias Auerbach, who resided in the Pension Struck on and off before the First World War and continuously from 1919 through 1920, Frau

[76] While more commonly rendered as 'uncanny,' I use *unhomely* here as a literal translation of Freud's notion of *unheimlich*. The Freudian concept of *unheimlich* refers to an instance in which something can be both familiar and foreign at the same time.

Struck viewed herself as the symbolic "mother of all of her guests."[77] In fact, despite being only two years his senior, Auerbach consistently employed the language of 'motherhood' when describing his relationship with Frau Struck. Upon learning about the death of his first wife, Rahel Rosenthal, in October 1918, Auerbach recalled in his memoir:

> The door was opened by Lotte Hermann from Haifa…She just nodded silently when she recognized me, tears running down her face…The good Rose Struck led me into a room, gave me strong coffee, and urged me to eat something. She implored me to lie down for a while. I complied like an obedient child.[78]

Years later, Auerbach explained just how much he was "deeply indebted to this Pension and its unforgettable soul, Rose Struck," as well as the Pension's "homely atmosphere," to which he owed much gratitude.[79]

Rose Struck was able to instill a familial atmosphere in this form of urban living by implementing seemingly small things and practices that make a house a home. For example, she often baked cakes for tenants to help celebrate their birthdays, and placed fresh flowers in guests' rooms in honor of special occasions and important milestones.[80] She also spent time with guests when they were lonely, and cared for them when they fell ill.[81] As Yitzhak Lamdan wrote to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch in January 1928, "I've gotten sick several times here, and now visit a doctor three times a week…Who would have taken care of me had I rented a room in some dingy flophouse?"[82] Former resident Batya Krupnik (born Betty Landau) even recalled that

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[77] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4.
[78] Elias Auerbach, *Pionier der Verwirklichung: Ein Arzt aus Deutschland erzählt vom Beginn der zionistischen Bewegung und seiner Niederlassung in Palästina kurz nach der Jahrhundertwende* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1969), 400.
[79] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4.
[80] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 5, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 31, 1919.
[81] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, September 1, 1926.
[82] Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.

during the latter half of 1918, when the nation-wide Spanish flu epidemic made its way to Berlin, Frau Struck and her housekeeper personally cared for nine out of her eleven sick guests. Thanks to the medical advice of Dr. Auerbach, whose clinic was located right across the street, Rose Struck nursed all of her guests back to health out of the goodness of her heart, asking for no compensation other than a simple 'thank you.'[83]

Additionally, because each guest had essentially been pre-screened by her extensive social network, Frau Struck was able to place tremendous trust in her tenants by taking them in on good faith and not demanding rent payments upfront—she allowed them to accrue debts and settle their payments later.[84] This particular courtesy and highly unusual practice[85] was crucial in helping the young Lamdan not only combat his initial destabilizing experience of emigration, but also comfortably settle into his new dwelling space, as the poet emigrated to Berlin without a stable source of income. Despite the success of his just-published *Masada*, Lamdan arrived in Berlin in 1927 "without a penny in [his] pocket."[86] When his intended employment for the Hebrew periodical *Eshkol* did not pan out, he lamented to his friend Yehuda Karni, "To sit in Berlin without a penny in your pocket—this is a punishment from heaven!"[87] However, once Rose Struck established that she would allow Lamdan to pay her later, after he had secured employment, the young man felt significantly—albeit not completely—more at ease. As he ruminated at the time, "What would I have done had I secured room and board [elsewhere]—

[83] Batya Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," in *He-'Avar,* vol. 20 (Tel Aviv: Agudah le-heker toldot Yehude Rusyah ve-Ukra'inah, 1973): 276-285, 277.
[84] Gnazim 175/85633/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Shimon Halkin, January 5, 1928; Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.
[85] See Chapter 1.
[86] Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927; Gnazim 49/7284/148. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, October 17, 1927; Gnazim 49/7298/152. Letter, Lamdan to Barash and Rabinovitch, December 6, 1927; Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Lamdan to Barash and Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.
[87] Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927.

what would I have done on those days without a penny in the cup—and these days are so frequent! Here, I can pay after the fact—and how important this is!"[88] By partially replicating certain aspects of the security and stability associated with the traditional 'home' as a conventional site of rootedness and belonging, Rose Struck herself was an important part of the process of 'belonging' for these Jewish migrants, both in the Pension Struck and in Berlin at large.

Frau Struck also created visual manifestations of familiality, homeliness, and a sense of *Gemütlichkeit* through her practice of hanging photographs and family portraits of long-time tenants on corridor walls. This conscious choice to display photographs of her tenants in 'public' areas of the Pension provided an aspect of intimacy, comfort, and homeliness that both infused the dwelling space with familiality and linked the past, present, and future. Notably, the practice of displaying family photographs of tenants in public spaces such as hallways was not at all typical of Pensions at the time.[89] Furthermore, Frau Struck's decision to *permanently* affix family photographs to her walls—where they would remain long after the guests in question had moved out of the Pension—had a particularly potent effect. After all, scholars such as Ernst van Alphen have demonstrated that Marianne Hirsch's concept of the "familial gaze" can actually be activated when looking at portraits of someone else's family.[90] Thus, the photographs adorning Frau Struck's corridors not only projected familiality onto both the portrayed subjects and onto the space of the Pension itself, but they also drew the onlooker into an extended network of

[88] Gnazim 49/7299/153. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, January 12, 1928.
[89] For some of the ways in which Pension owners adorned and furnished the interiors of their establishments, see Chapter 1.
[90] Ernst van Alphen, "Nazism in the Family Album: Christian Boltanski's Sans Souci," in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. Marianne Hirsch (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999): 32-50.

familiality. This photographic network of familiality created a permanent record for and provided a visual legacy of the Pension Struck 'family' that linked past and future.

In addition to providing a shared history, in some cases, this visual manifestation of 'family' life also provided a direct link between past and present on an individual level. For example, when Haifa-native Yardena Cohen paid an impromptu visit to the Pension Struck in 1933, as she wanted to find the dwelling in which she had spent two years living as a small child, she came face to face with the literal documentation of these formative childhood years. She recounts in her memoir:

> I rang the bell. The door was opened by a housekeeper wearing a tie and a white apron. I asked if the Pension Struck was here, because I was looking for a room...I did not give her a chance to answer, because my feet led me, as if I were sleepwalking, down the corridor…to a photograph of a plump young girl sitting on a table next to a white teddy bear.[91]

Seeing that the young woman was mesmerized by this photograph, the maid of the Pension Struck proudly proclaimed, "This little girl is now a dancer in Palestine. Do you know her?"[92] Cohen quickly realized that this *was* her, and recalls how she instantly froze into place, like the biblical story of Lot's wife, "into a pillar of salt."[93] Realizing who she was, Rose Struck quickly emerged to embrace the young woman and prepared a room for her. Cohen then spent the next several days listening to new stories about her own childhood. As the example of Cohen's experience illustrates, the retelling of the fate of the individual depicted in the portrait in turn provided a mythic continuity between past and present, with the materiality of the photograph serving as a temporal connector between Berlin and Haifa. Because the overwhelming majority of the Pension Struck's residents ended up immigrating to Palestine, the assemblage of

[91] Yardena Cohen, *Ha-tof ve-ha-yam* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1976), 44.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

photographs adorning Frau Struck's walls provided a tangible link between Germany and Palestine. This staging of family portraits of current and former tenants effectively positioned the Pension Struck as an 'in-between' space between Berlin and Haifa.

Privacy, Intimacy, and Everyday Life

Interpersonal relations in the Pension Struck, as in the majority of Pensions in Berlin, abided by certain social hierarchies and cultural codes. Unlike the economic business models of other hospitality-oriented enterprises, such as cafés or hotels, the relationship between supplier and customer was much more fluid in the Pension. The commercialization of dwelling space meant that boundaries between landlady and tenant and power relationships between proprietor and resident were often quite blurred. This is because once a landlady opened up her dwelling to boarders, the notion of individual privacy took on new meanings, as formerly private spaces now became the 'public' property of residents. In most establishments of this nature, daily life was experienced under the panoptic eye of the Pension landlady, as well as the internal domestic surveillance of the other residents of the dwelling space. The shared intimacy of Pension life and the intimate proximity of the individuals occupying the dwelling space eroded traditional notions of privacy and personal control, and meant that the formerly finite boundaries and thresholds of the bourgeois home were now often crossed. Issues of privacy and control, in particular, came to the forefront, and the Pension Struck was no exception to the problems brought on by such blurred boundaries.

When Grete Auerbach (nee Heilborn), for example, initially began visiting the Pension Struck in the summer of 1919, her frequent presence did not arouse suspicion, as Frau Struck's younger sister Fridl was one of her most beloved friends in Frankfurt an der Oder, and their

families had also developed a close friendship over the past several years. However, when the young woman began regularly corresponding with the recently widowed medical doctor Elias Auerbach, who then resided in the Pension Struck after having lived in Haifa for nearly a decade, the pair quickly became the subject of unwanted and unrelenting gossip.[94] As the young woman explained to her new boyfriend, "I learned from Mr. Stein how 'discreet' people are about our relationship at the Pension Struck. Everyone knows about our 'secret,' even Lotte Herrmann, and, you will be very embarrassed to hear it: the Joelsohn[95] family knows too."[96] Due to the watchful eye of their neighbors and that of Frau Struck herself, meeting and spending time alone together was a tremendous challenge.[97] Another source of Grete's anxiety was the lack of privacy concerning written correspondence sent through the postal system. Naturally, postcards were out of the question, and the couple constantly reminded each other to seal their envelopes tightly and securely.[98] After the pair became secretly engaged, Grete wrote, "My sweetheart, despite the fact that I'm in a hurry to write to you, I'm afraid of Frau Struck's ironic smile should so many letters arrive from [me]."[99] A few months later, even after their engagement was no longer a full-fledged secret, the young woman wrote to her fiancé, "What will Frau Struck say if you receive two letters from me in one day?"[100] The following day, Elias encouraged Grete to exercise restraint with the frequency of her letters, as he feared that "the onlookers [in the

[94] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, July 15, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, July 23, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, August 15, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, August 18, 1919.
[95] The Berlin siblings Dr. Fritz Joelsohn and Alice Braun (nee Joelsohn).
[96] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, July 23, 1919.
[97] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, June 9, 1919.
[98] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, August 15, 1919.
[99] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, July 15, 1919.
[100] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 84. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, October 5, 1919.

Pension] might get the impression that [they were] in love."[101] Even after their engagement was public knowledge, the pair still went so far as to 'ration' their letters to each other in order to avoid arousing further suspicion from the prying eyes of the Pension Struck residents.[102]

Indeed, a mere three weeks after Grete and Elias began spending more time with each other, the ever-perceptive Rose Struck inserted herself into their private affairs. Just a few weeks after they began secretly dating, Frau Struck wrote the following letter to Grete Auerbach:

> My dear Gretchen, it is very late and I am still undecided as to whether or not I should write to you. Gretchen, the look you gave Dr. Auerbach on your last visit haunts me. You may scold me recklessly, but I mean well and I mean it from the bottom of my heart that I have to speak with you. Gretchen, you know how much I idolized Frau Dr. Auerbach.[103] So I would be glad if her children get a mother like you. You would probably win their love and trust quickly. The main thing is that you are aware of the full responsibility that you take on your shoulders. A rich, beautiful thing lies before you! If you are clear with yourself, then you will fulfill your duties honorably—that I know… Gretelein, you do not need to answer this letter! You know that I express my opinions freely and openly to the few people who are closest to me. And I would have thus seen it as a falsehood to not write you.[104]

After she shared this highly intrusive letter with Elias Auerbach, the widowed medical doctor came clean and pleaded with Frau Struck to protect their 'secret.'[105] Fortunately for the young couple, Rose Struck came through on their behalf. As she wrote to Grete Auerbach in 1919, "So my suspicions have been confirmed…You can come [to the Pension Struck] at any time, and I'll make sure that you're not plagued by indiscrete glances. You can rely on me."[106] "As long as Dr. Auerbach is in Berlin," she assured her, "you can forge your future plans with Dr. Auerbach here

[101] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, October 6, 1919.
[102] Private Collection, Jan Price. Letter, Grete Auerbach to Elias Auerbach, November 21, 1919. Jan Price is the granddaughter of Elias and Grete Auerbach.
[103] Rahel Auerbach (Rosenthal), the first wife of Elias Auerbach, died in 1918 of Spanish influenza. They had two children together, Zeruja (born 1911) and Daniel (born 1913).
[104] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Rose Struck to Grete Auerbach, June 25, 1919.
[105] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Rose Struck, June 27, 1919.
[106] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Rose Struck to Grete Auerbach, June 30, 1919.

with me."[107] The pair did just that, and Dr. Auerbach remained in the Pension Struck up until the couple's wedding day.

Notwithstanding the seemingly invasive intrusion into the couple's privacy, Frau Struck's involvement in the personal lives of many of her tenants meant that she was highly invested in the wellbeing of her Pension's residents. Once tenants stayed in the Pension Struck, they became part of the extended 'Struck' family. Rose Struck frequently socialized with her guests and developed deep friendships with them. It was not uncommon for her to spend time with her tenants outside of the Pension at locales such as cafés, restaurants, theaters, and opera houses.[108] When Berl Katznelson stopped in Berlin on his way to Prague for the Eighteenth Zionist Congress in the summer of 1933, the Jewish labor activist admitted to his wife that the reason he forgot to write to her was because he was staying at the Pension Struck in Berlin and thus had a lot of catching up to do with Frau Struck.[109] Longtime Pension Struck resident Fanny Hurwitz was also very appreciative of her friendship and her company. As she wrote to her daughter, Esther Smoira, in 1926, "Currently, in Berlin, nobody except Frau Struck has time [to spend with me]."[110]

Rose Struck also came to the rescue for her current and former tenants in situations of need. For example, in the summer of 1922, Grete Auerbach needed to stay at a medical clinic for an extended period of time due to a pregnancy-related illness, and none of her relatives were able to look after her daughter and stepchildren. Auerbach had just spent the past year and a half

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[107] Ibid.
[108] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, June 20, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, August 25, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, October 6, 1919; Gnazim 196/8560/2. Letter, Menahem Sturmann to Yitzhak Lamdan, February 6, 1929.
[109] See Letter, Berl Katznelson to Leah Miron-Katznelson, August 26, 1933. In *Igrot B. Katznelson, 1930-1937*, vol. VI, eds. Anita Shapira and Esther Raizen (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1984), 130.
[110] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, September 1, 1926.

living in Haifa, and, like many German-Jewish women in the Yishuv, she struggled to learn Hebrew, found the climate unbearable, and felt compelled to return to Germany.[111] Her husband, who was still in Haifa at the time, reminded her that, "in cases of emergency, the loyal Rose Struck is always there to help. She will never leave you."[112] Auerbach followed her husband's suggestion and Frau Struck immediately took the children in and cared for them for the next several weeks.[113] Ilse Hausmann later declared that Frau Struck was the most 'loyal woman' in Berlin—at least, to "all of the Jews she helped over the years."[114] She certainly cared for her tenants and became quite attached to them. Frau Struck was reportedly devastated when Yitzhak Lamdan left her Pension in late 1928 in order to move back to Palestine, but overjoyed that the Hebrew writer opted to stay with her again in 1931 during an extended trip in Berlin.[115]

Frau Struck also relied on her extended network when in need, especially during Berlin's crippling food shortage during World War I. Due to the coffee shortage in Berlin during the First World War and its immediate aftermath, she often relied on current and former tenants to bring her large quantities of coffee—the staple beverage of the Pension Struck experience.[116] Grete Auerbach, in particular, occasionally stuffed a portion of her suitcase with coffee beans for Frau

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[111] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 79. Letter, Fridl Cohen to Elias and Grete Auerbach, October 12, 1920; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 79. Letter, Fridl Cohen to Grete Auerbach, November 10, 1920; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 79. Letter, Fridl Cohen to Grete Auerbach, November 23, 1920.
[112] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 19, 1922. Auerbach was eight months pregnant at the time.
[113] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 26, 1922.
[114] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 74. Letter, Ilse Hausmann to Grete Auerbach, December 17, 1938.
[115] Gnazim 196/50603/609/1. Letter, Rahel Brandshtater to Yitzhak Lamdan, December 18, 1928; Gnazim 175/85625/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Shimon Halkin, July 2, 1931; Gnazim 196/51519/1. Letter, Dov Lipetz to Yitzhak Lamdan, July 29, 1931; Gnazim 196/57340/1. Letter, M. Yardeni to Yitzhak Lamdan, August 7, 1931; Gnazim 196/51606/1. Letter, Yermiyahu Misler to Yitzhak Lamdan, August 12, 1931; Gnazim 196/53468/1. Letter, 'Moshe' (surname unknown) to Yitzhak Lamdan, August 21, 1931.
[116] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, August 25, 1919; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, September 1, 1919. On the food shortage in Berlin during the First World War, see Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Struck during her frequent trips between Frankfurt an der Oder and Berlin while she was dating her soon-to-be husband Elias.[117] After all, coffee was a necessity for the frequent nocturnal discussions and debates that occurred in the Pension Struck, which often dragged on until 2 in the morning.[118] Batya Krupnik recalls that, when an evening curfew was enforced in Berlin in 1918 and Frau Struck was short on coffee, she would invite groups of guests into the kitchen for a cup of tea.[119]

Despite the fact that the young scholar's mother secretly smuggled coveted delicacies such as roast goose liver to her son during his four-month residence in the Pension—in his memoir, Gershom Scholem retrospectively described Frau Struck as a woman who truly "knew how to economize during the terrible Turnip Winter of World War I."[120] As was customary of Pensions during this time of war, residents who opted for 'full Pension' were required to hand over their ration cards directly to their landlady.[121] But while residents who paid for the 'full Pension' treatment theoretically should have been provided with satisfactory meals, the pervasive food shortage during World War I meant that the Pension Struck community sometimes had to rely on packages from friends and relatives abroad. For example, while Zalman Shazar, Zvi Kitain, and Chaim Berlin were residing at the Pension Struck under the 'full Pension' system, they received packages containing sugar, rice, peas, and millet to supplement their nutrition.[122] In the spirit of cooperation, and given the fact that residents of the Pension

[117] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, September 1, 1919.
[118] Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim*, 92.
[119] Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," 277.
[120] Letter, Gershom Scholem to Meta Jahr, October 14, 1917. In Gershom Scholem, *Briefe I: 1914-1947*, ed. Itta Shedletzky (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1994), 114-115, 367 n. 7; Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim*, 92.
[121] Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim*, 92.
[122] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 1. Letter, Michael Hurwitz to Esther Smoira and Sulamith Hurwitz, March 24, 1918.

Struck lacked private kitchen access, they generally shared these procurements with Frau Struck.[123] In return, Frau Struck would often surprise her tenants with a sponge cake or torte late at night.[124] Significantly, Scholem claimed that even during the severe food shortage, Frau Struck was able to maintain a kosher kitchen.[125] He even went so far as to explicitly link the access to kosher food with the sense of 'belonging.' According to Scholem, even though the majority of the residents of the Pension Struck "no longer abided by the laws of kashrut," they nonetheless "felt 'at home' in a kosher space."[126]

The Pension Struck was also a space in which residents could take their meals in order to celebrate Jewish holidays. From Passover to Rosh Hashanah, Frau Struck regularly provided special meals and celebrations for residents and locals alike. For example, when Jenny Blumenfeld knew she would feel too overwhelmed to turn over her kitchen for Passover during the spring of 1921, as she had just recently given birth to a daughter, she and her husband Kurt opted to dine at the Pension Struck instead; she secured their space at the dining table a few weeks in advance for the duration of the holiday.[127] Because her mother Fanny was residing in the Pension at the time, the Hurwitz family matriarch quickly took it upon herself to make sure that Frau Struck would also have enough room for her daughter Shulamit and nephew Chaim (who was travelling to Berlin especially for Passover) to dine there as well.[128]

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[123] On the issue of kitchen access in Pensions, see Chapter 1.
[124] Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim*, 92.
[125] Ibid., 89. On Kashrut in Germany during the First World War, see Steven Schouten, "Fighting a Kosher War: German Jews and Kashrut in the First World War," in *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe*, eds. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Rachel Duffett, and Alain Drouard (New York: Routledge, 2016): 41-56.
[126] Scholem uses the term 'Ba-Bayit' here (in quotation marks in the Hebrew edition of the memoir) to describe the feeling of being 'at home.' See Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim*, 90.
[127] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, April 7, 1921.
[128] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, April 28, 1921.

In addition to the affective at-homeness which Rose Struck provided, the Pension Struck also offered an important social, intellectual and cultural space of belonging for Jews in Berlin. In imperial Germany, many owners of Pensions saw themselves as socially acceptable women undertaking activities that required education, ladylike behavior, and salon abilities; they therefore called their Pensions *Kulturträger* (culture bearers.)[129] As an enlightened harbinger of *Gemütlichkeit* and a bearer of petty-bourgeois culture, Rose Struck viewed both herself and her establishment in this cultured light, linking herself to the Jewish salon tradition. According to Scholem, Frau Struck "described herself as a fine, cultivated lady," and she surrounded herself with likeminded individuals.[130] Betty Joelsohn, one of Frau Struck's acquaintances who often visited her shortly before she began taking in tenants, was described by Elias Auerbach as "well educated lady with a deep and genuine love for art and an inner drive for further intellectual cultivation."[131] In this salon-like spirit, Frau Struck threw costume parties and house-balls (albeit on a smaller scale given the limited size of her dining room) for the residents of her Pension and her extended social circle.[132]

This mixed-gender space, which was constantly abounding with guests and visitors from tight-knit Zionist social circles, was bound to foster romantic relationships. As Sarah Wobick-Segev has recently shown, leisure spaces such as coffeehouses and restaurants provided a crucial

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[129] *Allgemeine Rundschau für Fremden- und Familien-Pensionen* 13 (1913), Nr. 15, p. 170. Cited in Luise Gunga, *Zimmer Frei: Berliner Pensionswirtinnen im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1995), 62. For more on this term, see Chapter 1.
[130] Gershom Scholem, Diary entry, May 19, 1917. In *Lamentations of Youth*, 171.
[131] Auerbach, *Pionier der Verwirklichung*, 96. Betty Joelsohn died in Berlin in 1910. Her children Fritz and Alice continued to visit the Pension Struck regularly through the entirety of its existence.
[132] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 79, Letter, Fridl Cohen to Grete Auerbach, January 18, 1921; CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, February 24, 1921; CZA A 215/80, Nr. 3. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, February 3, 1926. For a study of the role of space (broadly defined) in Berlin Jewish salon culture of the previous century, see Liliane Weissberg, "Literary Culture and Jewish Space around 1800: The Berlin Salons Revisited," in *Modern Jewish Literatures: Intersections and Boundaries*, eds. Sheila E. Jelen, Michael P. Kramer, and L. Scott Lerner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011): 24-43.

physical context for the social changes in Jewish courtship, marriage, and matchmaking in urban centers such as Berlin, Paris, and St. Petersburg in the early twentieth century; these spaces played an integral role in undermining the institution of arranged marriage and enabling autonomous decision-making.[133] The Pension Struck was also a popular but self-selecting site for marriage and matchmaking within the Zionist community. Out of the residents who would find their life partner at the Pension Struck, most recall first meeting their significant other in the Pension's dining room. Batya Krupnik, a Königsberg native who lacked any relationship to Zionism before moving into the Pension Struck, recalls that she first encountered the man who would later become her husband one morning at the dining table.[134] There, the two read the morning newspapers together, and "this is the manner in which [they] got to know each other."[135] Whereas the Auerbachs were able to maintain a greater semblance of privacy during their period of courtship, as only one partner lived at the Pension Struck, the relationship between Baruch and Batya Krupnik was unavoidably public in nature. Krupnik explains that due to the spatial constraints of their dwelling space, "Our acquaintance evolved into 'friendship' before the eyes of the whole Pension. We would go out together and more and more often, we would come back together."[136] Partially due to the watchful eye of their neighbors, their courtship progressed more quickly than usual, and they soon married. Their 'honeymoon,' Krupnik explains, was moving out of the Pension Struck into a rented garden-level apartment a few blocks away, where the newlyweds could have more privacy.[137] The pair furnished their new

[133] "A Place for Love," in Sarah Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away from Home: Jewish Belonging in Twentieth Century Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018): 47-73.
[134] Batya Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," in *He-'Avar,* vol. 20 (Tel Aviv: Agudah le-heker toldot Yehude Rusyah ve-Ukra'inah, 1973): 276-285, 277.
[135] Ibid, 278.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid, 280.

rented apartment as sparsely as possible, as they believed that they were "already more or less on the way to Israel."[138] Unfortunately, little did Krupnik know that she would spend the next thirteen years living in a semi-furnished apartment that lacked the "neighborly relations" of her former dwelling space.[139]

Similarly, when the nineteen-year-old Margarete 'Gretchen' Marcus, a distant relative of Frau Struck herself, first took up residence at the Pension Struck in 1918, she harbored no Zionist leanings whatsoever. According to Gershom Scholem, the young German Jewish woman was captivated by fellow resident Moshe Eliyahu Zhernensky, a writer from Lithuania who "spoke a fancy and elegant Hebrew."[140] Batya Krupnik vividly recalls how the young woman, with her piercing blue eyes, would sit in the dining room staring "for hours and hours listening to Zhernensky speak in Hebrew, [all the while] not understanding a word…Then one day they suddenly got married."[141] Like the Krupniks, as soon as they were married, the Zhernenskys moved out of the Pension Struck. While Frau Struck welcomed already-married couples who wanted to live in her establishment, individuals who met their partner within the space of the Pension itself almost always moved out as soon as they were married.

The Pension Struck as a Zionist Space

As a semi-private space, the Pension Struck provided a meeting place where topics could be discussed and debated that would not have been possible or acceptable in more public spaces such as coffeehouses or restaurants. In her memoir, former resident Gerda Luft described the

[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Scholem, *Mi-Berlin Le-Yerushalayim,* 90.
[141] Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," 277.

Pension Struck as "one of the most important meeting points for Zionists in Berlin."[142] As Yitzhak Lamdan reported to his friend Shimon Halkin, the frequency with which important guests visited the Pension Struck sometimes even made it difficult for him to concentrate on his writing.[143] Yehuda Braginsky, one of the founders of the HeHalutz movement who would later serve as a Mossad representative and head the Jewish Agency's absorption department in Israel, likewise recalls that the Pension Struck "served as a refuge for Israelis staying in Germany."[144] Despite all of the danger involved, Frau Struck would often take Braginsky in at a moment's notice, thus bypassing the need to register with the police for the night. According to Braginsky, because Berlin was one of the most appropriate and convenient meeting places for Zionist activists from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia at the time, important Zionist meetings often occurred there—and oftentimes, in the Pension Struck. As late as January 1939, Braginsky remembers how he gathered in the Pension Struck with Jewish Agency representative Max Zimels, Mossad emissary Moshe Averbuch, and HeHalutz emissary Aryeh Schindelmann. There, the men discussed and implemented concrete plans involving the clandestine emigration of German Jews to Palestine.[145]

However, largely due to the nature of the semi-private communal dining experience that Frau Struck offered, the Pension Struck also provided a more 'open' meeting space. The Pension Struck—specifically, the social space of its dining room—enabled an intellectual intersection of the many forces shaping Zionist discourse, ideology, and practice. Logistically, the Pension's physical proximity to specific locations in Berlin enabled certain individuals and communities to

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[142] Gerda Luft, *Chronik eines Lebens für Israel* (Stuttgart: Erdmann, 1983), 70.
[143] Gnazim 175/85633/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Shimon Halkin, January 5, 1928.
[144] Yehuda Braginsky, *Am Hoter el Hof: Hamesh-esreh Shana be-Sherut Aliyah bet* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1965), 140. Braginsky uses the term 'Eretz-Yisraelim' to describe those 'Israelis' staying in Germany.
[145] Braginsky, *Am Hoter el Hof*, 140.

dine there on a consistent basis. For example, because Alexander Baerwald's architectural office was located directly across the street from the Pension Struck up until 1911, taking his meals there on a daily basis was initially a matter of convenience.[146] Likewise, Elias Auerbach noted how beneficial it was to have his medical clinic located so close to the Pension Struck, given that he could complete the walk from one locale to the other in less than two minutes.[147] Similarly, in October 1929, Ilse Hausmann excitedly reported to her older sister Grete Auerbach that her new apartment was located so close to Frau Struck's Pension; the young woman was thrilled that she could now walk there in under five minutes.[148] The German-Jewish artist Walter Herzberg and his wife Edith had the most compelling reason to start dining in the Pension, as they already lived in a different rented apartment in the same building.

Far away from the Scheunenviertel,[149] the Pension Struck was located in the heart of the affluent western Wilmersdorf neighborhood—the central hub of Zionist activity in Berlin. Indeed, the Pension's proximity to Berlin's Zionist headquarters (initially located at Sächsische Straße 8 before the move to Meinekestraße 10 in the year 1924) enabled individuals such as Kurt Blumenfeld and Betty Frankenstein[150] to dine there on a daily basis long after having moved out of the Pension. These buildings collectively housed all of Berlin's most important Zionist organizations and institutions, from the offices of the ZVfD and the WZO, to the newsrooms of the *Jüdische Rundschau*, to the classrooms of the *Hebräische Sprachschule*. The reasonable

[146] Between 1907 and 1911, Baerwald's architectural office was located right across the street (less than a 90 meter walk from the Pension Struck) at Uhlandstraße 118/119. See *Berliner Adreßbuch* 1907, part I, 87 through *Berliner Adreßbuch* 1911, part I, 107.
[147] Auerbach's medical clinic was located at Uhlandstraße 104, a 200-meter walk to the Pension Struck. ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4.
[148] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 74. Letter, Ilse Hausmann to Grete Auerbach, October 3, 1929.
[149] It would have taken approximately one hour and thirty minutes to walk from the Pension Struck to the *Neue Synagoge* on the Oranienburger Straße. For more on the Scheunenviertel, see Chapter 5.
[150] Betty Frankenstein, a senior official of the ZVfD, lived in the Pension Struck in 1912.

fifteen-minute walk from the Pension to Berlin's Zionist headquarters easily enabled Shmuel Sambursky,[151] Baruch Krupnik, and Moshe Eliyahu Zhernensky to work as teachers at the *Hebräische Sprachschule* while they resided in the Pension Struck.[152] David Tesher, the vice chairman of the Berlin Histadrut[153] in the 1930s, also explicitly noted the centrality of the Uhlandstraße for the Zionist community in Berlin during this time, given that so many important people active in Zionist affairs lived in the Pension Struck.[154]

The Pension also served as the informal headquarters of Martin Buber's periodical *Der Jude*. Between 1916 and 1917, the Pension Struck's street address was even prominently featured on the back cover of the periodical, as the journal's editor, Max Mayer, resided in the Pension Struck during this time.[155] Not only did the Pension Struck function as the physical receiving point for letters to the editor, but editorial meetings were also frequently held in the Pension Struck dining room.[156] After all, a large number of Pension Struck residents contributed to the periodical.[157]

Already during the early years of the running of her establishment, Frau Struck's domicile was a central hub for often-divisive discussion and stormy debates, as topics of conversation revolved around the many shades of Zionism. In Berlin, the Pension Struck was the

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[151] Shmuel Sambursky, who moved into the Pension Struck in November 1919 at the age of nineteen in order to attend university, was born into a Hebrew-speaking Zionist family in Königsberg. After moving to Palestine in 1924, he became a world-renowned physicist and served as the dean of Hebrew University's faculty of science.
[152] NLI, Shmuel Sambursky. Interview by Hagit Lavsky, OHD 8 (183), May 27, 1982. The *Hebräische Sprachschule* was founded by former Pension Struck resident Moshe Smoira, one of the few German Zionists with a perfect knowledge of Hebrew.
[153] The General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine.
[154] NLI, Interview with David Tesher, OHD 16 (183), July 31, 1992.
[155] See *Der Jude* 1, Nr. 1 (April 1916), p. 64 through *Der Jude* 1, Nr. 9 (December 1916), p. 640.
[156] CZA A 215/134, Nr. 4. Letter, Zalman Shazar to Esther Smoira, June 1, 1917.
[157] Pension Struck residents who wrote for the periodical include: Max Mayer, Zalman Shazar, Baruch Krupnik, Gershom Scholem, Elias Auerbach, Kurt Blumenfeld, Israel Reichert, and Arthur Joel. Pension Struck habitués who wrote for the periodical include: S.Y. Agnon, Leo Herrmann, Berl Katznelson, Heinrich Margulies, Heinrich Loewe, Walter Preuss, and Else Bodenheimer-Biram.

go-to physical point of discourse about the future of the Hebrew language in the Second Aliyah. During this time, a so-called 'war of languages' was playing out in Berlin and Haifa over the language of instruction (Hebrew or German) in Palestine's first institute of higher education—an institution whose building was personally designed by Pension Struck habitué Alexander Baerwald.[158] In the meantime, the controversy resulted in Arthur Biram, along with Pension Struck resident Pinchas Cohen, establishing the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa in 1913. The larger debate, which eventually culminated in the decision to have Hebrew, rather than German, be the official language of instruction at the high school, meant that the *Technikum* would become the *Technion.* This bitter debate resulted in the increased isolation of Zionists within the German Jewish community.[159] However, in the process, because the majority of the individuals who had the highest stakes in this debate both frequented and resided at the Pension Struck between the years 1913 and 1914, this dwelling space became synonymous with Zionist discourse about the intersections of home, language, and identity.

Frau Struck's dining room was also a hotbed of political debate in the subsequent years. In 1917, news of the Russian Revolution aroused particular excitement amongst the residents of the Pension Struck. Gershom Scholem noted that the Pension Struck was a place in which fiery debates "made the whole house echo,"[160] and "the ideal place for [Zionists in Berlin] to follow these decisive events."[161] Likewise, Zalman Shazar later recalled, "Sitting in the dining room of the Pension Struck, I still remember the vibrations that penetrated my heart, even being so far

[158] The project was backed by Berlin's *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* (Aid Association of Jews in Germany, then known as 'EZRA' in Palestine), whose founder and director Paul Nathan attempted to insist upon German as the official language of instruction at the new school in Haifa.
[159] Jay Ticker, "Max I. Bodenheimer: Advocate of Pro-German Zionism at the Beginning of World War I," *Jewish Social Studies* 43.1 (Winter 1981): 11-30, 14.
[160] Gershom Scholem, *Tagebücher: Nebst Aufsätzen und Entwürfen bis 1923,* Vol. II., eds. Karlfried Gründer, Herbert Kopp-Oberstebrink, and Friedrich Niewöhner (Frankfurt am Main: 2000), 21.
[161] Scholem, *Mi-Berlin Le-Yerushalayim,* 91.

away from the scene."[162] Indeed, Scholem himself claimed that during these months, the mood of the Pension Struck quickly became anti-German and pro-Russian—an ambiance that Frau Struck certainly did not support.[163] In her recollections, Batya Krupnik also noted how the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg in January 1919 awakened intense political debate during mealtimes in the Pension. Krupnik recalled how fellow tenant Jakob Gromer, then Albert Einstein's assistant, would frequently rise to his full height, knife and fork in hand, and violently wave his hands in the air whenever he disagreed with a point made at the table. In fact, she claims that the mathematician who espoused communist leanings often 'scared the hell out of the residents of the Pension Struck without realizing it'—not due to his physical deformity from which he suffered, but due to his raw passion and fiery temperament.[164] As Zalman Shazar similarly recalled:

> One day during lunch in the Pension, Gromer did not feel comfortable—there were strangers at the table that he had seen for the first time, and suddenly he noticed that one of the flatterers to the rich and powerful had offended a poor man. With all of his might, he violently protested. His large hands thumped the table and his grotesque face became as white as chalk. His eyes flamed with fire; he became incoherent with rage and looked completely like a dumbstruck prophet. In the ensuing silence there was a holy shiver.[165]

Because many Pension Struck residents and diners used this dwelling space as a forum to reconcile their Zionist and socialist views, what resulted was a spatial milieu in which belonging operated through lived intellectual discourse.

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[162] Cited in *Zalman Shazar, Ha-Nasi Ha-Shlishi: Mivhar Teudot me-Pirkei Hayav*, ed. H. Tsoref (Jerusalem: Israel State Archives, 2007/2008), 81.
[163] Gershom Scholem, "Yeme Ne'orim im Z. Rubaschoff," in *Zalman Shazar: Nasi ve-sofer,* ed. Abraham Lis (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at sefarim Y. L. Perets, 1969): 19-23, 20.
[164] Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," 277. Gromer suffered from a rare form of acromegaly that led to the enlargement of his limbs and extreme facial disfigurement.
[165] Zalman Shazar, "Jakob Gromer," in *Brest-Litovsk Yizkor Bukh,* ed. Eliezer Steinmann (Jerusalem: Ferlag fun Ensiklopedyah shel galuyot, 1958), 302-303.

Belonging Through Longing

Because this was a space that housed individuals who were constantly coming and going to and from Palestine, the Pension Struck also served as a literal transit point for the exchange of letters and material goods. When those connected to Frau Struck's social network needed to quickly and cheaply get something to Palestine, the Pension Struck was one of the first logical places to find an individual willing to transport the items in question.[166] For example, when Esther Smoira needed to get a lengthy and important letter to her husband in Palestine during the winter of 1925, she left the envelope with a Pension Struck resident who happened to be traveling to Palestine on that same day; the man physically brought the letter with him on the ship in order to expedite the slow international postal system.[167] Later that summer, when the young Hebrew writer Yosef Aricha stayed in the Pension Struck in the summer of 1925, fellow tenant Fanny Hurwitz loaded him with packages containing jackets and shirts to bring to her daughter Esther in Jerusalem.[168] The exchange of goods went in both directions. While Rose Struck sent German products to her friends in Haifa, her older brother Arthur Broh often requested that former Pension Struck residents send specific 'Palestinian brand' items to him in Berlin.[169]

The Pension was also a site of exchange for the latest Jewish books, journals, and newspapers.[170] Writing *from* Palestine in 1916, Rachel Katznelson conveyed that she was able to combat her longing for Zalman Shazar, and 'feel closer' to his social milieu in the Pension

[166] CZA A 215/71, Nr. 5. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Esther Smoira, April 18, 1924.
[167] CZA A 215/7, Nr. 5. Letter, Esther Smoira to Moshe Smoira, January 6, 1925.
[168] CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, July 22, 1925; CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Fanny Hurwitz to Moshe and Esther Smoira, August 26, 1925.
[169] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 79, Letter, Fridl Cohen to Grete Auerbach, November 25, 1921; CZA A 215/80, Nr. 2. Letter, Arthur Broh to Moshe and Esther Smoira, June 2, 1932.
[170] NLI Arc. 4* 1599/01/0356.1. Letter, Grete Brauer to Gershom Scholem, June 23, 1917; Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927.

Struck, by reading the latest copy of the *Jüdische Rundschau* that he had sent her, backwards and forwards.[171] Similarly, Yitzhak Lamdan explained that his ability to receive newspapers and journals from Palestine in the Pension Struck brought him a much-needed sense of comfort. As he wrote to Yehuda Karni in October 1927:

> These newspapers are where I find myself in the thick of all of our affairs and problems [in Palestine], where I feel the smell of the land of Israel, where I learn about what's happening there, and where I can enter this picture, as I mentally sketch myself onto a kind of world map.[172]

One month later, Lamdan thanked his friends for sending him the two most recent issues of the Hebrew literary journal *Hedim* from Tel Aviv, since his ability to read these journals "revived his soul."[173] According to Lamdan, physically "having these writings in [his] hand" provided him with a spiritual at-homeness, and a sense of peace in the diaspora of Weimar Berlin.[174] For the residents of the Pension Struck, newspapers and periodicals certainly served as a medium for a kind of 'imagined community' that connected the physical home of Berlin to the emotional home of Palestine.[175]

While living in the Pension Struck, Lamdan also took comfort in writing letters to his friends and family abroad.[176] For most of the individuals who resided in the Pension, communication with family and friends was sustained through the exchange of letters—a seemingly quotidian activity that, in and of itself, provided another layer of belonging for the residents of this dwelling space. As a social and discursive practice, letter writing provided a

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[171] Gnazim 248/33617/3. Letter, Rachel Katznelson-Shazar to Zalman Shazar, May 14, 1916.
[172] Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927.
[173] Gnazim 49 (no archival number). Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, November 13, 1927.
[174] Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927.
[175] On the concept of "imagined communities," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).
[176] Gnazim 49/3560/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Yehuda Karni, October 13, 1927.

medium through which real and imaginative distances could be reduced. In the Pension Struck, letter writing was often a group activity that had the capacity to foster camaraderie and collaboration, as well as enhance the collective longing for Palestine.[177] Letter writing also provided a medium through which individuals could embrace new identities by taking on new names, as names served as exterior markers that inscribe belonging. For example, a few months after moving into the Pension, Esther (formerly 'Emma') Smoira began signing her letters under her Hebrew name. Initiating the switch from 'Emma' to 'Esther' in writing later eased the transition in person.[178]

Letter writing between lovers, especially in the context of migration, also provided the literary space to capture one's presence in absence.[179] In the many love letters exchanged between Elias and Grete Auerbach during their courtship between 1919 and 1920, this presence was often mapped onto the Pension room itself, as well as the contents within it. For example, as Elias Auerbach wrote to his lover in July 1919:

> When I enter my room [in the Pension Struck], everything still reminds me of the last beautiful days of your presence. The asters are still here, fresh and blood-red like our young love; there is still a piece of cake with which you have pleased me with, and there is the beautiful pillow—into which—your diligence has woven so much affection.[180]

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[177] CZA A 215/7, Nr. 1. Letter, Esther Smoira, Erich Dresel, Gertrud Haase, and Lene Propp to Moshe Smoira, October 18, 1912; Gnazim 196/8560/2. Letter, Menahem and Rivka Sturmann, Rose Struck, and Arthur Broh to Yitzhak Lamdan, February 6, 1929; Gnazim 196/52826/1. Letter, Rose Struck, Menahem and Rivka Sturmann, Esther Warschauer, and E. Kindel to Yitzhak Lamdan, May 5, 1929.

[178] Other women also assumed new names or took on their Hebrew name while living in the Pension Struck. For example, 'Betty' became 'Batya' Krupnik, and 'Margarete' became 'Margalit' Zhernensky.

[179] On the practice of letter writing between lovers, see Sonia Cancian, "My Dearest Love … Love, Longing, and Desire in International Migration," in *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Michi Messer, Renee Schroeder, and Ruth Wodak (Vienna: Springer, 2012): 175-186. As Cancian explains, love letters in the context of migration (especially international migration) were powerful media of intimacy that provided writers with the literary space to evoke the presence of an absent lover. See Cancian, "My Dearest Love," 182.

[180] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 31, 1919.

While the materiality of these objects reflected the reality of his lover's absence, they simultaneously had the capacity to offer comfort. During their time apart, Elias Auerbach's Pension room and the contents within it stood as a kind of placeholder for the feeling of domestic comfort and intimacy that he longed for in his partner.

Even though her domicile served as a space of sociability and belonging for displaced Jews who shared an interest in Zionism, Berlin was Rose Struck's true home. Of course, due in part to her clientele, Frau Struck was familiar with the inner workings of the Zionist community in Berlin and closely followed developments in the various Zionist organizations. For example, in a 1921 letter to her friends in Haifa, she reported on the latest developments in the offices of Berlin's *Zionistisches Centralbureau*, and she explained how the shocking suicide of the Zionist essayist Fritz Mordecai Kaufmann left a "gaping hole" in the offices of the *Jüdische Arbeitsamt* (Jewish Labor Exchange, which operated under the auspices of the *Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland*).[181] However, Frau Struck never came to embrace the same second-generation Zionist 'radical' views of her tenants. She was staunchly devoted to Germany and German culture, and she was initially critical of her younger sister's decision to immigrate to Haifa in the mid-1920s.[182] While most self-proclaimed German Zionists did not envision themselves immigrating to Palestine until the 1930s, Rose Struck would never end up leaving Berlin. She even went so far as to refuse an all-expense paid emigration visa in 1937 because she "couldn't see herself living anywhere other than Germany" and she was "unwilling to be buried anywhere

[181] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 70. Letter, Rose Struck to Elias and Grete Auerbach, May 1, 1921.
[182] All three of Rose Struck's sisters immigrated to Israel—one out of Zionist conviction and a longing to be near her friends in the mid-1920s (Fridl Cohen), and the other two (Grete Nobel and Alice Friedmann) in order to escape the rise of Nazism in the late 1930s. Fridl Cohen expressed her desire to move to Palestine as early as November 1920. See ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 79. Letter, Fridl Cohen to Grete Auerbach, November 10, 1920. All three of Rose Struck's brothers (Arthur, Alfred, and Walter Broh), remained in Germany and perished in the Shoah. These figures do not include her siblings who died in infancy, or her younger sister Else Philippsborn, who died in Berlin in 1920.

other than the Weisensee Cemetery."[183] However, as migration is propelled by social networks, and networks come from being together in this social space, Rose Struck profited off of Zionism. This was her clientele, and the relationship was mutually beneficial.

The Pension Struck was not simply a neutral space in which Zionist intellectuals gathered, but a Zionist space of belonging. Indeed, it was 'certainly no coincidence,' according to Elias Auerbach, that the Pension Struck was home to countless personalities whose names would become synonymous with the intellectual, cultural, and political life of Israel. As Auerbach reminisces, "This was a Zionist Pension to its core, and the only one of its kind in the great city of Berlin. It was simple and inexpensive, and not at all 'elegant'—but the Pension Struck had a soul to it; it had a special atmosphere that truly made its residents feel at home."[184] Similarly, Miriam Rafalkes-Cohen, one of Frau Struck's earliest tenants who moved from Haifa to Berlin in 1911, simply refers to the Pension itself—rather than the people living inside it—as being a 'Zionist' space.[185] Even Scholem admitted that "the atmosphere of the Pension Struck was a purely Zionist one," as this was the space which, after all, rescued the young 'martyr of Zionism' from the streets of Berlin.[186] On one level, the Jewish 'homeland' here was not simply a utopian fantasy, but a real space and lived place in which many of these Jews had spent significant time. On the other hand, the Pension Struck, as a physical space and cultural place in Berlin, provided a stage for Jews to develop ties to Palestine independent of their previous relationship to Zionism.

[183] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 74. Letter, Ilse Hausmann to Grete Auerbach, December 17, 1938.
[184] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4.
[185] Miriam Rafalkes-Cohen, *Zikhronot,* cited in Yardena Cohen, *Ha-tof ve-ha-yam* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1976), 16.
[186] Scholem, *Mi-Berlin Le-Yerushalayim,* 90-91.

In addition to catering to established and devoted Zionists, the Pension Struck was also home to some Jews who had little if any substantial relationship to Zionism. Batya Krupnik, for example, claims that she only left her native Königsberg to take up residence at the Pension Struck because her close friend Gerda Luft (Goldberg),[187] who wanted to attend graduate school in Berlin, was reluctant to make the journey alone and begged her to come along. Having little desire to leave her 'beloved Königsberg,' Krupnik agreed to accompany her friend because, during the great inflation of World War I, she hoped that she could sell some of her family's gold watches and other heirlooms in Berlin. Luft, who was well connected to Zionist circles at the time, first learned about the Pension Struck through Gershom Scholem, and secured rooms for the pair through the help of other personal acquaintances. Raised in an assimilated German-Jewish household and harboring no Zionist leanings, Krupnik would suddenly come face to face with a very foreign environment. In her words, when she arrived at the Pension Struck in 1918, she encountered a "strange bunch [that] subscribed to Zionism or socialism, and some even to both, and very seriously!"[188] While her initial plan was to stay in Berlin long enough to sell her family's watches and jewelry and then return to her hometown, these plans changed when the handsome young journalist Baruch Krupnik moved into the room across the hall from her that summer. The *lack* of a shared definition of 'Zionism' was crucial in the process of 'belonging' in and of itself—the Pension was an open and dynamic space in which new ideas were explored, worked out, dissected, and evaluated. This open intellectual space is what enabled individuals like Krupnik to embrace a newfound Zionist identity and ultimately move to Palestine. Similarly,

[187] Königsberg native Gerda Luft (nee Goldberg) was an influential Zionist journalist and activist, as well as the first wife of Chaim Arlosoroff, one of the most important Zionist leaders during the Mandate period.
[188] Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," 277.

the Pension's "spiritually open atmosphere," according to Elias Auerbach, is what made him feel 'at home' as a Zionist in Berlin.[189]

The familial connection to the 'Struck' family name also contributed to the Pension being automatically regarded as a Zionist space. By the time Rose Struck began taking in tenants in 1911, the German-born Zionist artist Hermann Struck was a household name and his work had become synonymous with the developing Zionist aesthetic of the emerging Jewish state. Struck's 1903 etching of Theodor Herzl proved to be *the* most popular and enduring image of Zionism during this period, and reproductions of this famous portrait adorned the walls of many Jewish homes across Europe and decorated consumer goods such as postcards, calendars, teapots, drinking glasses, cigarette boxes, tobacco pouches, and pocket watches.[190] In fact, during this period, Zionist offices, meeting halls, or reading rooms without Hermann Struck's etching of Herzl prominently displayed were unlikely to be found.[191] Given the tight-knit nature of Zionist networks and social circles, it should thus come as no surprise that Frau Struck's establishment was commonly associated with the famous artist. When Zalman Shazar began corresponding with Rachel Katznelson shortly after his move to the Pension Struck, she mistakenly assumed that he lived with Hermann Struck, despite insisting that she "knew the exact street that he lived on, because [the Uhlandstrasse] was one of [her] most beloved streets in Berlin."[192] Despite her divorce from Leo Struck of the Frankfurt an der Oder Struck family branch, Rose and Hermann Struck's social circles were so deeply integrated that they would have been impossible to sever.

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[189] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 4.
[190] David Tartokover, ed. *Herzl in Profile: Herzl's Image in the Applied Arts* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum, 1978-1979). Cited in Michael Berkowitz, "Re-Imagining Herzl and Other Zionist Sex Symbols," in *Theodor Herzl: From Europe to Zion*, eds. Mark H. Gelber and Vivian Liska (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 2007): 73-84, 78.
[191] Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135.
[192] Gnazim 248/33617/3. Letter, Rachel Katznelson-Shazar to Zalman Shazar, May 14, 1916.

Some of Hermann Struck's closest lifelong friends were none other than Elias Auerbach and Alexander Baerwald—two central pillars of the Pension Struck community. In fact, both Auerbach and Baerwald would become Hermann Struck's actual neighbors in the mid-1920s, as all three families built their permanent homes on the same street in Haifa's Hadar HaCarmel. To complicate matters, Hermann Struck's own house in Hadar HaCarmel would serve as *the* meeting ground for many of the Pension Struck residents who moved or returned to Haifa. Furthermore, after the completion of their large house in Haifa, the Struck family took in guests of their own (mostly family and friends), which sometimes prompted Hermann Struck's wife Mally to affectionately refer to their Hadar HaCarmel home as "Hotel Struck."[193]

Conclusion

Eventually, after nearly thirty years of continuous operation, Rose Struck was finally forced to vacate her Pension and surrender her establishment to Nazi authorities in early 1939.[194] While nearly all of her guests "arrived to the land of Israel in some way or another,"[195] Frau Struck perished in the Shoah.[196] The "most loyal woman in Berlin," as Ilse Hausmann declared, was "abandoned by her own people."[197]

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[193] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Lotte Baerwald to Grete Auerbach, June 28, 1926; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, June 30, 1926; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 99. Letter, Hermann and Mally Struck to Elias and Grete Auerbach, undated. On Hermann Struck's home in Haifa, see Ruthi Ofek, "Hermann Struck in Haifa," in *Deutsche und zentraleuropäische Juden in Palästina und Israel: Kulturtransfers, Lebenswelten, Identitäten Beispiele aus Haifa,* ed. Anja Siegemund (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2016): 265-277.

[194] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 70. Letter, Margarete Heilborn to Grete Auerbach, February 7, 1939; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 70. Letter, Margarete Heilborn to Grete Auerbach, April 4, 1939.

[195] Karo, "Hamishim shana 'im Baruch Karo," 277.

[196] Rose Struck was deported to the Riga Ghetto on December 14, 1942, after which, her whereabouts are unknown. See Bundesarchiv Berlin, *Liste der jüdischen Einwohner im Deutschen Reich 1933-1945* (1995), 1262.

[197] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 74. Letter, Ilse Hausmann to Grete Auerbach, December 17, 1938.

Ultimately, the layers of meaning ascribed to Frau Struck's dwelling space were profuse; dwelling, in the Pension Struck, was both a material and imaginative process. On the one hand, the young Hebrew poet Yitzhak Lamdan absolutely knew that Berlin was not his true 'home.' Despite being the 'favorite' of Frau Struck and the 'darling'[198] of his fellow tenants, Lamdan eventually began counting down the days until his return to Palestine.[199] As he conveyed to his closest friend Shimon Halkin in April 1928:

> This temporary stay in Germany has many positive aspects in all regards…But I'm already looking forward to the day when we will return to Israel…To live in a foreign land—no! We can no longer do that. Home! To our shattered, miserable, gloomy, but miraculous, home—it is indeed our home, and we have no other![200]

However, the material and affective comforts of the Pension Struck, as well as the welcoming community that took him in, enabled Lamdan to feel a semblance of at-homeness in Germany. The Pension Struck, as a physical place, was a node on a network of displaced Jews in both Berlin and Haifa, most of whom shared an interest in Zionism and would thus long for a broader notion of at-homeness for the Jewish people in the more abstract space of Palestine. But the concrete environment of the Pension Struck only provided a temporary and partial sense of being 'at home' to uprooted Jews navigating their way in and through Berlin. The notion of 'home' is contingent upon location, whether the location in question is real or imagined, or a space of longing or belonging. While the Pension Struck helped Jews feel rooted 'at home' in Berlin in the affective sense, it simultaneously, in turn, offered a kind of springboard from which they could imagine building or returning to a future in Palestine. This imaginative speculation was a crucial part of being at home, albeit, away from the 'true' home of Eretz Yisrael. The Pension

[198] Gnazim 49/7284/148. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Asher Barash and Yaakov Rabinovitch, October 17, 1927.
[199] Gnazim 175/81798/1. Letter, Yitzhak Lamdan to Shimon Halkin, April 25, 1928.
[200] Ibid.

Struck was a medium through which primarily young Jews with a shared interest in Zionism could satisfy their personal needs of rootedness and belonging, and through which they could share a communal and collective longing for Palestine. Ultimately, 'belonging' in the Pension Struck depended upon and was achieved through a longing for Palestine.

Chapter 3

At Home on the Savignyplatz: The Making of Hebrew Space and Jewish Place

When the 17-year-old aspiring actor Shimon Finkel moved from his hometown of Grodno to Berlin in 1922, he faced many obstacles and a long road ahead. Finkel wanted to perform on the German stage and follow in the footsteps of Alexander Granach, a Jewish actor fifteen years his senior who hailed from Galicia and managed to become highly acclaimed in the German theater scene. However, Finkel's experience in Berlin was fraught with difficulties. Despite hundreds of hours of lessons and coaching, as well as three surgical operations to improve the intonation of his voice, he did not find his place in the German acting community. He struggled with the German language, failed to mask his Yiddish accent, and was not accepted as an *Ostjude* in the German capital. Finkel was ultimately and only able to find a sense of at-homeness when he turned to Berlin's emerging Hebrew theater scene, which, at the time, concentrated in a modest Pension on the Savignyplatz where a group of Jewish actors resided together. As Finkel reflects in his autobiography, "When I met my new friends [on the Savignyplatz] I immediately felt at home."[1] As he describes his experience in the Pension, which served as the headquarters for this group of actors, "Every day we would gather in the rooms of the Pension…in these rooms, we would dream, sing, lecture, and even make a racket at times."[2] Though Finkel's turn to Hebrew theater initially stemmed from a desire to be accepted and find a community rather than from a Zionist ideological orientation, he quickly learned Hebrew, mastered his craft, and would later join the Habima theater troupe and become one of its greatest

[1] Shimon Finkel, *Bimah u-kela'im: haye sahkan u-ma'avako le-'atsmuto* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'oved, 1968), 76.
[2] Finkel, *Bimah u-kela'im,* 83. According to Finkel, the "living spirit of these meetings" was Menahem Binyamini, who was a 'clown' at heart.

stars. Though the Pension in question was not an official Jewish establishment, it would function and be remembered as a 'Jewish space' and it would become an important historic site for the development of Hebrew culture in Weimar Berlin.[3]

This chapter will focus on a brief episode of Jewish experience at two adjacent Pensions located at Savignyplatz 5—the Pension Köstermann at Savignyplatz 5 I, where Hayim Nahman Bialik resided from 1921 to 1922, and the Pension Frau Dr. Dieckmann at Savignyplatz 5 II/III, where the actors of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* resided from 1923 to 1924. Like the Pension Struck, entrance to and acceptance into these spaces was procured through some kind of personal connection to the Hebrew cultural, literary, artistic, or Zionist community. However, unlike the Pension Struck, a dwelling space in which 'at-homeness' was largely dependent upon and cultivated by the maternal domesticity of the owner, notions of 'belonging' in the Pensions of Savignyplatz 5 were fostered entirely by the residents themselves.

As historian Sarah Wobick-Segev reminds us, social spaces in which Jews could gather voluntarily and informally were not neutral sites, but rather, highly charged spaces imbued with many layers of meaning.[4] The Pensions of Savignyplatz 5 were no exception. In fact, both of these Pensions might be considered as what cultural geographer Rob Shields has termed a 'place-myth,' or the various discrete meanings ascribed to real spaces based on a collective set of associations.[5] After all, representational space, according to Henri Lefebvre, is the lived social space appropriated by its inhabitants.[6] As the examples in this chapter also demonstrate, while

[3] Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam: zikhronot* (Ramat Gan: Masadah, 1971), 122.
[4] See Sarah Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away from Home: Jewish Belonging in Twentieth Century Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).
[5] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 60-61.
[6] See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

'Hebrew' space and 'Jewish' space have many overlapping qualities, they were not always synonymous. Both Pensions, however, served as spaces in which Jewish belonging could be felt, expressed, enacted, and performed.

Bialik in Berlin: The Pension Köstermann and the Aura of the Savignyplatz

In October of 1921, Hayim Nahman Bialik and his wife Manya moved into the modest quarters of a 16-room Pension run by Frau Blanka Köstermann, for what they thought would be a brief stay but ended up serving as their place of residence for the next eight months. Bialik was one of the many Jewish writers and important cultural figures positively attracted to Berlin, which he viewed as a thriving metropolis conducive to creative literary and artistic output. In contrast to Palestine, which, at that time, Bialik viewed as "deserted and far from the cultural centers of Europe," the famous Jewish poet saw Berlin as an important emerging Hebrew literary and cultural center.[7] Despite Bialik's attraction to Berlin as a vibrant and exhilarating cultural hub between East and West, once in the German capital, Bialik poured himself into his work, almost to an extreme. He single-mindedly focused on fostering Hebrew culture as a cornerstone of the Zionist project, spending his days either writing or focusing on his publishing pursuits in seeking to merge the *Moriyah* and *Dvir* publishing houses. As Bialik's autobiographer Avner Holtzman writes of the poet's time in Berlin, "Bialik and his friends, however resonant and engaged in their intellectual pursuit, were like an island of Hebrew culture and creativity in an ocean of indifference."[8] Simon Rawidowicz, a Jewish scholar and publisher who was close to Bialik during that period, spoke of the bubble that the Hebrew poet created for himself: "He lives

[7] Cited in Zohar Shavit, "On the Hebrew Cultural Center in Berlin in the Twenties," *Gutenberg-Jahrbukh* 68 (1993): 371-380, 374.
[8] Avner Holtzman, *Hayim Nahman Bialik: Poet of Hebrew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 155.

in Germany and knows nothing of what is taking place in the spiritual, vibrant Germany of the Weimar days."[9] Nonetheless, Bialik's arrival in Berlin, according to historian Michael Brenner, more than any other event, "underlined the new position of the German capital as *the* center for Hebrew culture."[10] With Bialik occupying such a central role in solidifying Berlin as the center of Hebrew culture, it was only natural that his dwelling-space and new home—his Pension—would become what might be considered a 'Jewish space.'

By the time Bialik arrived in Berlin, he was already a prominent Hebrew writer with a large following, a sizable international readership, and many fans who constantly flocked to see him. Some Jewish émigrés would depict and remember Bialik's Pension abode as a vibrant Jewish space due to the sheer number of people who descended upon the dwelling and gathered there in order to see Bialik. The writer Yeshurun Keshet remembers that because of the Hebrew poet's presence, "the Pension Köstermann, the place where Bialik resided, was always crowded with Jews speaking Hebrew and Yiddish."[11] To both insiders and outsiders, the Pension appeared as a Jewish space due to the familiar languages spoken and heard there. It also figured as a Jewish space due to the content of the topics debated and discussed there. For example, as Zvi Wislavsky noted in a letter to Yehezkel Kaufmann dated June 22, 1922, "The residence of Savignyplatz 5 is in an uproar: Jews, Jews of all sorts from different countries [are] responding to the optimistic Arthur Ruppin and the pessimistic Richard Kauffmann."[12] In this recollection, Wislavsky lumps the 'residents' together into a collective 'residence'—the dwelling itself—as

[9] Simon Rawidowicz, *Conversations with Bialik* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1983), 46. Originally recorded on March 14, 1923. Cited in Holtzman, *Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 152.
[10] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture,* 198.
[11] Yeshurun Keshet, "Sofrim ve-'anshei-meyse: k'tey zikhronot me-berlin shel shanot ha-20," in *Moznaim* 3/4 (1973): 190-196, 191.
[12] Zvi Wislavsky to Yehezkel Kaufmann, Berlin, June 22 1922, in Zevi Wislavsky, *Igrot Tsevi Voislavski: kines ve-hosif mavo, he'arot hesber u-maftehot Gedalyah Alkoshi* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1973), 65.

opposed to the individual people under its roof—are in an uproar while debating about important Zionist matters.

According to Yeshurun Keshet, the constant flood of Jews who congregated in the guest hall of the Pension Köstermann to see Bialik was so overwhelming that the poet had no leisure time whatsoever as a result.[13] As Wislavsky also recalled, the number of visitors frequenting Bialik's Pension room was so great that the talented writer constantly felt 'bothered' and 'disturbed' in his private living quarters.[14] Likewise, Shelomoh Zaltsman indicated in his memoir that "because of Bialik, the Pension rooms were always full of guests."[15] Simon Rawidowicz also reported how uninvited guests constantly invaded Bialik's privacy in the Pension, and on occasion, they would curiously watch the national poet as he dressed, ate, spoke with his wife about her personal affairs, or even brushed his teeth.[16] Whenever Bialik descended to the building's lobby, he regularly encountered odd stalkers seeking his blessing of their work or asking him to join them in assorted projects, as they all wanted to be connected with the famous writer in some way, shape, or form.[17] These constant interruptions would eventually present a problem for Bialik, as he preferred the comfort of his Pension room over the café as a workspace in which to produce his literature and his poetry.

Unlike many other Jewish literary giants, who constantly frequented and utilized the numerous cafés and coffeehouses of Berlin as a kind of working desk, Bialik was known to have favored the privacy of his Pension room as a workspace in which to produce his literature.[18]

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Zvi Wislavsky to Yehezkel Kaufmann, Berlin, June 22 1922, in Wislavsky, *Igrot Tsevi Voislavsk*, 65.
[15] Shelomoh Zaltsman, *Min he-'avar: zikhronot u-reshumot* (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at ha-mehaber, 1943), 227.
[16] Simon Rawidowicz, *Conversations with Bialik* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1983), 52-53. Originally recorded on March 14, 1923. Cited in Holtzman, *Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 155.
[17] Holtzman, *Hayim Nahman Bialik*, 155.
[18] Avner Holtzman, *Hayyim Nahman Bialik* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2009), 183-184.

Zalman Shneur, for example, vividly recalls Bialik "in his room at the Pension Köstermann at Savignyplatz 5, always hunched over at his desk, from morning to evening, writing furiously."[19] According to his protégé, "every free hour Bialik spent in his Pension room, bent over the proofs of books for 'Moriah' and 'Dvir' until he collapsed into unconsciousness."[20] Occasionally, but not without difficulty, Shneur succeeded in 'physically pulling Bialik from his work in the Pension' to take his mentor for a stroll through the parks of Berlin.[21] Yeshurun Keshet, who also remembers Bialik as "eternally occupied with something day and night in his Pension room," vividly recalls witnessing Shneur 'physically pull' the sleep-deprived poet away from his desk in order to 'get some fresh air by the Zoologischer Garten.'[22] In Bialik's case, the merged boundaries of home and work-space are testament to the dual function of the dwelling-space of the Pension. Longtime friend and colleague Zevi Wislavsky, who also preferred to work from his Pension room as opposed to cafés or libraries, was surprised that Bialik opted to stay in the Pension Köstermann for as long as he did, given the constant interruptions. Wislavsky regularly moved around for this very reason. For example, in 1927, he was so fed up with the noise of people conversing and the telephone ringing in his Charlottenburg Pension that he decided to abandon his Pension and move back into the room on the Pestalozzistraße where he previously resided many years earlier in his days as a student.[23] Apparently, Bialik was more willing to tolerate the interruptions of Pension life because he realized that he would attract a following of people wherever he went.

Both Bialik's presence in and his reputation for producing literature in this Pension

[19] Zalman Shneur, *Hayim Nahman Bialik: U'vene doro* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1958), 115.
[20] Zalman Shneur, *Hayim Nahman Bialik: U'vene doro* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1958), 115.
[21] Holtzman, *Hayyim Nahman Bialik,* 184.
[22] Keshet, "Sofrim ve-'anshei-meyse," 191.
[23] Zevi Wislavsky to Yehezkel Kaufmann, Berlin, January 28 1927, in Wislavsky, *Igrot Tsevi Voislavski,* 137.

helped solidify the dwelling as a space that was central to Hebrew culture in Berlin. Although Bialik only resided in the Pension for as little as eight months, by 1922, the author's presence had, in some respect, become synonymous with the space as a gathering point of the Hebrew émigré milieu in Weimar Berlin. Long after the Hebrew poet relocated elsewhere, Jewish Berliners and émigrés alike from all walks of life would frequently "show up at the Pension door, looking for Bialik."[24] Even one of his closest friends, the bilingual Hebrew and Yiddish poet Zalman Shneur, recalls that, long after Bialik had moved to a different Pension, he mistakenly showed up at the writer's former living quarters for a meeting one evening. His attempt to open the door of Bialik's former Pension room resulted in the current tenant "screaming in horror that a robber sought to break into his room."[25] While in this instance, the other tenants who knew Shneur luckily and quickly cleared up the misunderstanding, Shneur's mistake demonstrates the extent to which the space was engrained with Bialik's presence for years to come.

As spaces of socialization, having the ability to receive guests was an important component of belonging when living in a Pension, and Bialik's experience was no exception. In contrast to the 'public' spaces of the building where Bialik was always observed by others—the lobby, the guest hall, the corridors, or the café on the ground floor—the poet's individual room in the Pension provided a more secluded space that allowed for socialization and private discussion. Zalman Shneur fondly described Bialik's Pension quarters in Berlin as the only semi-private location in which the two old friends could spend time with each other without being watched, where they could converse freely in whatever language they desired, where they could 'catch up' and 'tell stories from their childhood and youth,' and, perhaps most importantly, a

[24] Zalman Shneur, *Hayim Nahman Bialik: U'vene doro* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1958), 116.
[25] Ibid.

space "in which we could laugh freely."[26] Free from the surveillance of strangers and acquaintances, Bialik's individual room provided some of the privacy that he craved.

The individual rooms in the Pension offered a similar degree of privacy to other members of the Hebrew and Zionist émigré community in Berlin. Around the same time, Moshe Sharett noted in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law Dov and Rivka Hoz during an extended stay in Berlin dated September 21, 1922, "All of us—Berl Katznelson, Zalman Shazar, and David Ben-Gurion—were situated in the same Pension at Savignyplatz 5."[27] The rooms in this Pension, he related, were "properly furnished in a humane manner, and not at all like the black holes in which we stayed in Vienna."[28] However, "for some reason," Sharett writes, his other sister and brother-in-law, Eliyahu and Ada Golomb, "occupy two rooms here—this is very important."[29] As Eliyahu Golomb explained in a letter to Dov and Rivka Hoz on October 3, 1922, "The days we spent with Moshe were days full of chaos and noise."[30] As émigrés in the city, they could "seldom have conversations in private" and lamented the "lack of a space or room in which all of us could confer about confidential matters."[31] But now, Golomb explains, "Here we have two adjoining rooms, which gives us the possibility to gather here."[32] In this particular situation, having an intimate meeting place that was not public enabled the Jewish émigrés to discuss important details about the emerging Hagganah.

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[26] Ibid., 114-116.
[27] Moshe Sharett to Dov and Rivka Hoz, Berlin, September 21 1922, in Moshe Sharett, *Yeme London: mikhteve Mosheh Sharet mi-yeme ha-limudim*, v. 2 (Tel Aviv: ha-Amutah le-moreshet Mosheh Sharet, 2003), 191. This meeting at the Pension is also referred to in: Zalman Shazar to Rachel Katznelson-Shazar, Berlin, June 2 1923, in Rachel Katznelson-Shazar and Zalman Shazar, *Ha-Hofim ha-shenayim: mikhtavim, 1909-1963* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit 'al-yad ha-Histadrut ha-Tsioynit ha-'olamit, 1999), 145-146.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid. Also see Ahuvyah Malkin, *Ha-Aktivist: Sipur hayav shel Eliyahu Golomb, 1893-1929* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2007), 387-390.
[30] Eliyahu Golomb to Dov and Rivka Hoz, Berlin, October 3 1922, in Sharett, *Yeme London*, 191.
[31] Ibid. "All of us" refers to Eliyahu and Ada Golomb, Sharett, Ben-Gurion, Shazar, and Katznelson.
[32] Ibid.

While Bialik's residence in the Pension Köstermann was brief, his strong presence in this space provided a central pillar of Jewishness that encompassed the Savignyplatz. His presence and the attention it attracted helped cast the space as an intimate Jewish enclave as opposed to a neutral meeting ground. As a figure, Bialik functioned as a magnet, with his presence contributing to Jews from all walks of life descending upon the space. With the café situated on the bottom floor of the building functioning as avenue to gain access to Bialik as well as the Hebrew-speaking émigré community, catching a glimpse of Bialik became a kind of pastime. His presence created an aura encompassing the Savignyplatz, transforming the space from an ordinary residential building into a center of Hebrew life.

The Pension Dieckmann and the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli*

Shortly after Bialik's residence at the Pension Köstermann came to an end, a group of five Eastern European Jewish actors who had recently relocated from Tel Aviv made their way to Berlin and settled in a different Pension in the same building. For the actors, taking up residence in this location was an easy decision. In part, their choice of location was a matter of convenience, as most of their studies were concentrated in the 'Konservatorium des Westens' nearby, but they were also attracted to the space of Savignyplatz 5 because this was the same building in which Bialik, the crowned Jewish national poet, had recently resided. In 1923, the group of actors who had first gathered together in Tel Aviv in the early 1920s—Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, Ari Kutai, Menahem Binyamini, Yosef Oxenberg, and Michael Gur—all took up residence in the Pension of a middle-aged German housewife named Eveline Dieckmann.[33]

[33] At the time, Kutai, Binyamini, Oxenberg, and Gur were amateur actors who had worked in semiprofessional acting venues in Tel Aviv. Of the group, only Bernstein-Cohen had formal acting training.

Located at Savignyplatz 5 II/III, the Pension was situated on the second and third floors of the building, directly overtop of the always-bustling Café Savigny.

For some, settling into the Pension was not an easy adjustment. After just a few days lodging at the Pension Dieckmann, the 23-year old Ari Kutai was fed up with the environment. While he enjoyed being in the company of his friends and colleagues, the young actor felt that the quarters were too close, and he wanted a greater degree of separation of work from home. He thus decided to move into a different rented room nearby on the Kantstraße. However, in these new living quarters, he quickly got in trouble for hanging clothing items on the windows facing the street and suffered from insomnia due to the chiming of the large clock on the wall of his room that struck each hour. Kutai faced significant clashes with his landlady over both of these issues and was eventually asked to vacate his room. He then managed to take up residence in another rented room, but not without difficulty. As he recalled in his autobiography, "It was not easy in those days to find a room in Berlin, because the city was full of immigrants and refugees, especially from Russia, and all the small rooms with modest rents were occupied."[34] Nevertheless, Kutai secured a room with an elderly and childless German-Jewish couple, who rented the room to him under the condition that no female visitors were to be allowed. After reassuring the couple that his girlfriend was in Tel Aviv finishing up her studies and then enduring a two and a half hour long interrogation, Kutai was granted access to the room. However, exactly two weeks later, the landlady's husband tragically suffered a heart attack and died. The landlady insisted that it was not acceptable for a widow and a foreign man to live in the same apartment under one roof, so Kutai was left without a room again; he thus had no choice but to return to the Pension Dieckmann and rejoin his friends.

[34] Ari Kutai, *Hayim u-vamah: hamishim shenot tea'tron, zikhronot, reshamim, shitot* (Tel Aviv: Yehoshua Orenshten, Hotsa'at Yavneh, 1972), 72.

After the group began taking lessons at the conservatory nearby, they recruited another aspiring actor, Shimon Finkel, to join them. As the newest member and the youngest of the group, the 17-year-old Finkel initially travelled from his Yiddish-speaking home in Grodno to Berlin with the goals of studying in the acting school of Max Reinhardt, following in the footsteps of Alexander Granach, and acting on the German stage. However, these hopes did not come to fruition. Finkel struggled to learn German and master the German accent, faced discrimination as an Eastern European Jew, and felt overall unwelcome in both the German acting community and in Berlin as a whole. Initially, Finkel lodged at a Pension run by a middle-class Prussian German family on Schöneberg's Nettelbeckstraße near the Wittenbergplatz. In his autobiography, Finkel described his experience in the Pension as entirely bitter and full of loneliness and isolation, which culminated in his eviction due to his habit of practicing voice exercises at night in order to improve his German accent.[35] Shortly after he managed to secure a room with a Jewish landlady on the Ansbacherstraße, in which he felt more comfortable, he ran into the Hebrew actress Rivka Pfeffer on the street, who told him about the group of five Jewish actors who resided together on the Savignyplatz and sought to form a Hebrew theater troupe. Although he was not a Zionist, barely knew any Hebrew, and his attraction to the Hebrew theater group did not seem to stem from any ideological orientation, he opted to join them.[36] He quickly packed up his belongings and moved into the Pension Dieckmann. At the same time, Finkel abandoned his attempt to master German and mask his Yiddish accent, and instead began to focus his energies on learning Hebrew.

As the actors began taking their studies more seriously, Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, the

[35] Finkel, *Bimah u-kela'im,* 72-73.
[36] As Shelly Zer-Zion, has explained, Finkel's attraction to the Hebrew theater seems to have been based on its sympathetic and supportive social circle rather than on ideological orientation. See Zer-Zion, "The Shaping of the Ostjude," 186.

leader of the group, recruited the journalist, translator, and Zionist leader Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky as a language coach in order to help them perfect their Hebrew accents and achieve the 'proper' Hebrew pronunciation on stage. Even though Jabotinsky was not a man of theater and almost never attended plays, Bernstein-Cohen saw him as the ideal coach because he "understood the vital need for the revival of theater in our own language and culture" and he was already well regarded for his wider efforts in encouraging young Zionists to speak in the Sephardi accent rather than the Ashkenazi one.[37] Furthermore, she knew that Jabotinsky would be willing to help, because he believed that the matter of a Hebrew theater troupe was an integral part of the Zionist project. In her recollections about Jabotinsky, Bernstein-Cohen claims that she 'happened to run into' Jabotinsky in the café underneath the Pension in which the actors resided, and that this is how she recruited him. She vividly describes this meeting: while sitting in the café one evening while chatting with fellow Hebrew émigré actor and Pension neighbor (and ultimately future husband) Michael Gur about their exciting plans for the new theater troupe, the actor suddenly exclaimed, "Look! There in the corner, is that not Jabotinsky? Indeed it was him!"[38] This meeting, according to Bernstein-Cohen, would bring about one of the most "important and interesting developments for the future of Hebrew theater," because it led to Jabotinsky's enthusiastic and intimate involvement with the theater group's productions.[39]

Bernstein-Cohen's framing of this 'initial' meeting with Jabotinsky served to heighten the importance of the space encompassing the Savignyplatz. Her message to her readers is that—if it were not for the café located directly underneath the Pension Dieckmann—then she might

[37] Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, "Bishvil'ey Ha-etmol," in Vladimir Jabotinsky, *Demut ha-ishah be-'ene Z'abotinski: 'arakh Yosef Nedavah, rishumim Ester Perets-Arad* (Tel Aviv: Mekhon Z'abotinski be-Yisrael, 2012): 155-163, 159, and Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam,* 126.
[38] Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, "Bishvil'ey Ha-etmol," 159.
[39] Ibid and Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam,* 126.

not have run into Jabotinsky at all. In her account, this is the space that brought the two into contact. However, what Bernstein-Cohen fails to mention in this account is that Jabotinsky had long been a close friend of her family back in Kishinev and Odessa. Her father, the famous Zionist leader and medical doctor Jacob Bernstein-Cohen, had even worked together with Jabotinsky on various projects and the two were regular guests in each other's homes. While in her autobiography, she does acknowledge that Jabotinsky immediately recognized her when she approached him, by resituating her initial 'encounter' with Jabotinsky in the café located underneath the Pension, Bernstein-Cohen effectively positions the space of the Savignyplatz as an important zone of contact for Hebrew cultural life in Weimar Berlin.

Finally, once the group had decided to officially form a 'troupe,' they asked Menahem Gnessin, one of the original founders of the Habima theater, to be their director.[40] Gnessin agreed, and he, his wife Bertha, and their small child moved into the Pension Dieckmann, where the young family occupied two rooms. The group decided to call themselves the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* (Eretz Israel Theater Company, also known as the Palestine Theater).[41] Institutionalizing a theater group under the name *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* bore an overt ideological-cultural statement about the Zionist nature of the theater, since in forming the troupe, Gnessin's primary purpose was to create a "culture of Hebrew"—not a universal-European theater that simply performed in the Hebrew language.[42] Although Gnessin would function as the dominant figure,

[40] Menahem Gnessin was also the younger brother of the famous Hebrew writer Uri Nissan Gnessin. Gnessin had recently split from Nachum Tzemach, quit the Moscow Habima troupe, and travelled to Berlin.
[41] For a comprehensive study of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli,* see Shelly Zer-Zion, "Ha-Teatron Ha-Eretz Yisraeli: Tnu'ah beyn periferiyot tarbutiyot," *Zmanim* 99 (2007): 16-25. Also see Shelly Zer-Zion, "The Shaping of the Ostjude: Alexander Granach and Shimon Finkel in Berlin," in *Jews and the Making of Modern German Theater,* ed. Jeanette R. Malkin and Freddie Rokem (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010): 174-196.
[42] Zer-Zion, "Ha-Teatron Ha-Eretz Yisraeli," 21.

the newly-formed *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* was a 'collective,' meaning that the actors made decisions regarding the repertoire, local and international tours, and even management decisions.[43] Unsurprisingly, this collective organizational structure lent itself to constant debate concerning the intricacies of the Hebrew language, the accent, and the content of plays themselves.

Now that nearly all of the members of the troupe, as well as its director, resided together in the Pension Dieckmann under the same roof, they began preparations for their first full-scale production. Gnessin decided upon the play *Belshazzar*—a combination of drama, music, stylized movement, acrobatics, and dance that was based on the work of the French dramatist Henri Roche. In this modern adaptation of the Old Testament story of the fall of King Belshazzar, the young Shimon Finkel made his acting debut in the starring role of the Prophet Daniel. Jutta Klamt, the expressionist dancer who choreographed the play, was the only non-Jewish artist who the group came into intimate contact with in preparing for the production. In preparation for their first production, Jabotinsky held frequent coaching sessions, for which he composed 'humorous skits to practice the proper rules for the pronunciation of Hebrew together,' which mostly occurred inside of the Pension.[44] In fact, the group would begin and end each day with one such humorous skit.[45] Striving for a type of play he deemed "Hebrew-heroic," Gnessin's interdisciplinary production, which premiered in Berlin in 1924, was a great success. The play would later tour and perform over fifty times in Palestine in the following year.

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[43] Michael D. Birnhack, *Colonial Copyright: Intellectual Property in Mandate Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 114. However, the theater troupe was not a collective in the financial sense (like Habima), as the TAI was funded by shareholders among the inhabitants of the Yishuv. See Shelly Zer-Zion, "The Archive of the Habima Secretariat: Margot Klausner and the Making of a National Stage," *Jahrbuch des Dubnow-Institut* XVII (2018): 497-516, 512.
[44] Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, "Bishvil'ey Ha-etmol," 159, and Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam,* 126-127.
[45] Ibid and Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam,* 126-127.

Jewish Belonging and a Hebrew Home in Berlin

Having all of the actors of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* lodging at the same site both had a unifying effect for the group and also had important implications for Jewish belonging. Unlike the Pension Struck, the Pension Dieckmann was not a 'Jewish' Pension in the traditional sense, and the owner of this dwelling-space never intended to cater to Jewish residents. Frau Dr. Dieckmann was actually a devout Christian who frequently served unkosher meat in her dining room. None of the residents who lodged at the Pension Dieckmann would describe the family in a positive light. Miriam Bernstein-Cohen remembers that the Dieckmann's eldest son, a Prussian officer who found himself unemployed after the First World War and lived in the room next to her with his wife and baby, would whip their newborn son every night with a military belt so that he would stop screaming.[46] According to Bernstein-Cohen, the family's dog was treated with more patience and forgiveness, and she 'naturally assumed' that this child would grow up to be capable of working in a concentration camp by 1942.[47] In fact, while Bernstein-Cohen claims that the Dieckmanns were "already in essence a pre-Nazi family as early as 1923, even before the advent of Nazism," Ari Kutai recalls that Frau Dieckmann would officially declare her loyalty to the Nazi party in 1933 and that her two sons would later become high-ranking officers of S.S. squads.[48] The Pension Dieckmann was not a 'Jewish space' simply because Jews gathered in this venue—rather, the space of the Pension was appropriated as a Jewish social and cultural space of belonging by this group of East European Jewish theater actors. In this case, the meaning of the 'home' as the center of human existence was crystalized in this Pension as both a

[46] Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam*, 133.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid. and Ari Kutai, *Hayim u-vamah: hamishim shenot tea'tron, zikhronot, reshamim, shitot* (Tel Aviv: Yehoshua Orenshten, Hotsa'at Yavneh, 1972), 72.

material and spiritual structure.

One example of the transformation of the Pension into a 'Jewish space' was acutely expressed during the Chanukah of 1923. "In honor of Chanukah," Miriam Bernstein-Cohen states, we "**turned the Pension of Frau Dr. Dieckmann into a Jewish home**."[49] During this holiday in particular, the Pension would function and later be remembered as a 'Jewish space' in which identity and belonging could be expressed, enjoyed, performed, and enacted. In her autobiography, Bernstein-Cohen reconstructs the celebration, which would last for several days: "Tables were placed throughout the dining room and the owners (Frau Dr. Dieckmann and her family) were 'knocked out,' compelled to retreat into their private quarters."[50] Thus, the kitchen was made available to Bertha, Gnessin's wife, who was an 'artist of cooking,' and served the party with the help of a German cook. Mrs. Gnessin prepared a "grand festive meal with a buffet featuring roasted turkey and potato latkes" for the large group of Jewish actors, musicians, artists, writers, intellectuals, and Zionist political elite who partook in the celebration.[51] In Bernstein-Cohen's account, both the ability to cook one's own food and the capacity of food to offer and help create a sense of familiar comfort were necessary components in fostering Jewish belonging. Her account also illustrates a kind of 'kitchen Judaism' or the notion in which Jewish identity is enacted around special meals such as holidays.

Some of the most important Jewish personalities were present during this Chanukah celebration, including David Ben-Gurion, who, at that time, was on his way from Moscow on a mission to Palestine. In a diary entry dated December 7, 1923, Ben-Gurion related that he "received an invitation from Gnessin and Bernstein-Cohen to attend the 'Chanukah ball' of the

[49] Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam*, 132. *Note: Bernstein-Cohen's wording here is 'Jewish home,' not 'Hebrew home.'
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 132-133.

Teatron Eretz Yisraeli."[52] While initially, Ben-Gurion was surprised that this celebration was to occur inside of a Pension, he later noted how the Pension Dieckmann served as a crucial 'gathering point' in Berlin not only for the Jewish theater community, but also for all of the Hebrew-speaking community in exile— for "young and old alike, thanks to Gnessin, the 'father,' and Bernstein-Cohen, the 'queen.'"[53] However, it was Bialik, according to Ben-Gurion, who was the 'heart and soul' of this Chanukah ball. "Always good-humored and in good faith," Ben-Gurion related, the poet "sang a delightful Hasidic *nigun,* told anecdotes and gave impromptu *d'rashim*, and [then], like a young boy, belted out Hasidic *nigunim* and exulted in the land of Israel."[54] Bernstein-Cohen recalls that the party "drunk—all of us thoroughly drunk—all night long and sang and danced until dawn."[55] How this 'binge' was allowed by the Dieckmanns, Bernstein-Cohen reflects, "I still do not understand!"[56] Indeed, while the troupe paid Frau Dieckmann extra rent that month for the use of the space, Bernstein-Cohen recalls, "Though the celebration was not 'free,' as the Dieckmanns received fair compensation, nothing could compare to the pleasure and warmth that prevailed at that Chanukah party."[57]

Chanukah was not the only Jewish holiday for which the Pension Dieckmann served as a Jewish site of gathering and celebration. In a letter to Avraham Liesen, Yiddish poet David Hofstein, who briefly resided at the Pension of Frau Dr. Dieckmann in 1924 and later in 1925, recalls the fantastic Purim-spiels performed in the Pension by the actors who permanently resided there.[58] In the Pension, Hofstein would befriend Menahem Gnessin and later draft his

[52] David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot,* vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1976), 266.
[53] Ibid., 267.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam,* 133.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] David Hofstein to Avraham Liesen, Berlin, 1924, in *Briv fun Yidishe Sovetishe shraybers: tsuzamengeshtelt mit heores un an araynfir fun Yehezkel Lifshits un Mordekhai Altshuler,* ed. Mordekhai

own three-act Purim-spiel for the theater troupe to perform. The very staging of a Purim-spiel—a literal performance of Jewishness for everyone in the Pension—demonstrates the degree to which Frau Dr. Dieckmann's establishment had been appropriated as a Jewish social and cultural space of belonging. As art and theater historian Ahuva Belkin has explained, as the locations of Purim-spiels were not designated places of performance, but private homes, by accepting the players who negotiated with them, these dynamic spaces became separate from the mundane world.[59] In this way, this example of 'environmental theater,' which necessitates close forms of contact between audiences and performers, can be viewed as having transformed the provisional space of the Pension into the intimate theatrical space of the Jewish tradition. This extension of the individual space of the 'home' into the communal space of the 'theater' blurs the boundaries between performer and performance.

The Pension Dieckmann was not only experienced as a Jewish space, but also as a Hebrew space. Miriam Bernstein-Cohen recalls that with the many Zionist public figures coming to frequent the Pension, the young theater troupe would gradually become an important cultural element of Hebrew life in Berlin.[60] In this Pension, she explains, "**We created a Hebrew home**—a home in which we received our guests from Israel and the Hebrew language echoed throughout its upper two floors."[61] An earlier version of her manuscript slightly elaborates:

> We created, for ourselves, a real home—a Hebrew home—a home in which we received our guests from Israel, and they visited us on their way to Moscow, Paris and back to Israel. It was a lively and vibrant house and the Hebrew language echoed throughout its upper two floors.[62]

Altshuler (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Center for Research and Documentation of East European Jewry, 1979), 128. Also see Gnazim 399/1028/31/2. Letter, David Hofstein to Yaakov David Kamzon, March 14, 1925.

[59] Ahuva Belkin, "Ritual Space as Theatrical Space in Jewish Folk Theatre," in *Jewish Theatre: A Global View,* ed. Edna Nahshon (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 13-24, 17.

[60] Bernstein-Cohen, *Ke-tipah ba-yam*, 132.

[61] Ibid., 123. *Note: Bernstein-Cohen's wording here is 'Hebrew home,' not 'Jewish home.'

[62] ICDPA 79.11, p. 153.

The unedited version of Bernstein-Cohen's description both highlights the notion that a 'real' home entails a space where Hebrew can be spoken freely, and it positions the space of the Pension as a node on a larger network of cultural importance in the international Zionist community. The fact that Bernstein-Cohen specifies a 'Hebrew' home instead of a 'Jewish' home in this instance is significant. The actors of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* were not simply trying to transport Jewishness or Jewish culture to Berlin, but they sought to create something *new* through their use of the Hebrew language. While retaining common languages from one's homeland is often regarded as a means of capturing the past when considering the cultural practices of émigré communities, language here functioned differently, as the East European Jewish actors were not drawing upon their pasts, but rather—they were looking towards the future and longing to create new communities in Palestine. For them, Hebrew was the language of the Zionist project and the language of the future. In the de Certeau sense, by offering a space for Hebrew, a language which was only newly spoken in its modern form and full of vectors and movement, the Pensions of Savignyplatz 5 offered an ideological space of belonging.[63] As Ari Kutai reflects, this ideological positioning was fitting in that, as members of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli*, "we, the actors in this group, were considered to some extent to be representatives of the new Eretz Yisrael."[64]

Though the Jewish émigrés who made up the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* always had their minds on fostering a new Hebrew artistic culture and returning to Palestine, they actively sought out artistic recognition from German artists and cultural critics while in Berlin. Part of this recognition was rooted in the desire for confirmation that the theater they were creating

[63] See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[64] Kutai, *Hayim u-vamah*, 81.

measured up to universal aesthetic standards. As Shelly Zer-Zion has explained, Hebrew theater groups during that time needed recognition from the German-Jewish elite in order to gain legitimacy as important cultural agents with the Zionist nation-building organizations, and the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* was the first troupe to forge such relationships.[65] In addition to artistic recognition, they also needed their financial assistance. Thus, the actors of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* sought and found support in the German-Jewish intelligentsia for their theatrical endeavors. For the Hebrew actors, the Pension Dieckmann provided a space where they could invite members of the German-Jewish intelligentsia to gather in an informal setting and foster these important relationships. As a result of their efforts, individuals such as Leopold Jessner, Alexander Granach, Ernst Toller, and Sammy Gronemann would regularly visit the Pension. These relationships fostered by the members of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* also set the stage for the ways in which the German-Jewish cultural elite would legitimize and finance the Habima theater troupe in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Conclusion

While Bialik's and the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli*'s residence in the Pensions of Savignyplatz 5 was brief, their impact in fostering Hebrew culture both in and through these spaces cannot be understated. Though neither Frau Köstermann nor Frau Dieckmann were Jewish, both landladies made their Pensions available to the Jewish and Hebrew-speaking community in ways that allowed the residents to create a sense of belonging amongst themselves and engage in a set of performative practices in order to do so. On the one hand, their use of the Pension was part of a

[65] Shelly Zer-Zion, "The German-Jewish Elite and the Formation of Jewish/Zionist Theater: The TAI (Eretz-Israeli Theater) and Habima in Berlin, 1916-1931," in *Mütterliche Macht und väterliche Autorität: Elternbilder im deutschen Diskurs,* ed. Jose Brunner (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008): 369-373, 369.

larger effort among émigré Jews to carve out spaces where they could maintain cultural norms. On the other hand, the Pension, for them, was also a space that allowed them to create new communities and collaborate on new forms and manifestations of the Zionist project. While Bialik's presence helped solidify the strong Jewish cultural atmosphere at this address, the Hebrew theater actors of the *Teatron Eretz Yisraeli* compounded upon this presence, engraining Hebrew culture in the urban landscape on the Savignyplatz in Weimar Berlin.

Chapter 4

Unhomely Homes: The Representation of the *Pension* in Modern Jewish Literature

"A home, I thought, is exactly what I need. Not having one, however, the next best thing was my Pension. Although it had no air, no light, no joy, no life, and no anything, it was the only place there was."[1] This was the sentiment expressed by S. Y. Agnon in his semi-autobiographical novel *Ad Hena* (To This Day), based on the author's experience living as a Jewish émigré in Berlin from 1912 to 1924. *Ad Hena,* a book dominated by discussion of lodgings and living arrangements—specifically those experienced by Jewish émigrés in Berlin—is set against the background of the housing crisis in Berlin near the end of World War I. With the protagonist with whom he shares the name 'Shmuel Yosef' wandering from one Pension to another in a kind of Kafkaesque *perpetuum mobile,* in the words of the narrator, *Ad Hena* is the story of "a man who had neither a country nor a room, having left the land he lived in and gone to live in another, where he lost even the four walls that he had [and was] forced to wander from place to place, from room to room."[2] In Agnon's semi-autobiographical account, the Pension appears as an intermediary between home and homelessness—a temporary refuge for the prototype of the wandering Jew. The narrator's subsequent wanderings from one Pension to another is rooted in his belief that each room has a fatal flaw; each compels him to search for a better one that then turns out to be even worse.[3] While the traditional motifs of émigré literature—the railway, the suitcase, the passport—make their appearance in Agnon's narrative, it is the space of the Pension

[1] S. Y. Agnon, *To this Day,* trans. Hillel Halkin (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2008), 74; Hebrew version: S. Y. Agnon, "Ad Hena," in *Kol sipurav shel S. Y. Agnon*, vol. 7 (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1960 [1952]): 5-170.
[2] Agnon, *To this Day,* 99.
[3] Halkin, in Agnon, *To this Day* (introduction), 2.

that stands out as shaping the Jewish émigré's sense of belonging, or lack thereof, in Berlin. In Agnon's Berlin, which is depicted as a transnational and transitional space through the use of train stations, boarding houses, and other sites of convergence and transfer, the Pension acts as the formative agent of the entire narrative, interacting with and shaping the protagonist's experiences and emotions, and functioning as the spatial medium that conditioned the estranged relationship of the Jewish émigré to the city.

Though Agnon's experience is one of the most thoroughly documented and elegantly written, his story was certainly not unique. The quest for and discontentment with the Pension room is a dominant theme in Jewish émigré literature written in and about Berlin from the 1910s through the 1930s.[4] In fact, countless Hebrew and Yiddish novels from this period are fascinated with dwellings, focused upon permanent or temporary lodgings, or preoccupied with homes, their rooms, or interiors. In this large body of literature, the Pension often functions as the representative embodiment of the undesirable aspects of Jewish transitory émigré existence. Thus, these living spaces are characteristically imbued with loneliness and isolation, estrangement and alienation, and indiscriminate intrusion into private, personal space. Nonetheless, the sense of gloom and skepticism with which Pensions were portrayed on paper is contradicted by the immensely rich creative output produced in these rented rooms themselves. Though the obsession with living quarters in the literary realm may be interpreted as a search for 'home' or a sign of *non*-belonging, rented space was not just a point of reference.

This chapter explores the representation of the Pension in the works of three East-European Jewish writers who settled in Berlin between the 1910s and 1930s—David Shimoni, David Bergelson, and S. Y. Agnon. In navigating the rich body of Hebrew and Yiddish literary

[4] For a list of some of the Jewish émigrés whose writings in and about Berlin engage domestic dwelling-spaces, see the footnotes of the Introduction.

output during this period, I have chosen to engage with a representative, rather than exhaustive, account of the Jewish émigré literature set in the Berlin Pension. Each of these writers emigrated to Berlin for different reasons. In 1910, the 19-year-old David Shimoni, who had just spent a year living in Palestine, wanted to attend university in Berlin, where he would remain for the next four years. After a three year sojourn in Palestine, the 24-year-old S.Y. Agnon—encouraged by his friend Arthur Ruppin and attracted to Berlin's European cultural ambiance—arrived in the city in 1912, marking the beginning of his twelve year residence. In 1921, Berlin would become a place of exile for the 37-year-old David Bergelson. In the German capital, the highly acclaimed Yiddish writer would be able to enjoy greater artistic freedom, where, like Agnon, he would remain for the next twelve years. Shimoni, Bergelson, and Agnon all had creative, successful, and productive stays in Germany. Though writing in different languages and genres—the poem, the short story, and the novel—each of their works produced in and about Berlin share a pervasive fasciation with the meaning of 'home' and feature the Pension as the setting. It is likely not a coincidence, as I will show, that all three of these men lived in a series of Pensions, precarious types of homes nestled between the private family dwelling and the cosmopolitan international city.[5]

In much of the established scholarship that examines the literary output of these Jewish writers, the space of the Pension has often been overlooked as unimportant and uninteresting, either relegated to a mere backdrop or taken as a metaphor to describe the 'place' of Jewish literature.[6] For example, Mikhail Krutikov has argued that the locations of the conflicts and dramas of David Bergleson's Berlin stories, which play out in rooms and corridors of Pensions

[5] The Pensions in which these authors both lived and wrote about were not located in the Schuenenviertel, but in the affluent western neighborhoods of Berlin.
[6] Aside from a brief discussion in Shachar Pinsker's *Literary Passports*, no scholars have engaged with the works of David Shimoni that feature Pensions as the setting.

or rented flats in the western parts of the city, are "of little significance for the stories."[7] Though briefly acknowledging the reality that many Jews lived in Pensions, Marc Caplan argues that the space of the Pension in Bergelson's stories functions as a way to illustrate the transience and spectacle of Yiddish literature in Weimar Berlin.[8] Likewise, many of the most renowned scholars of Agnon, such as Arnold Band and Dan Laor, have argued that *Ad Hena,* like the majority Agnon's body of work, is a novel about the problem of finding a home or place in *language*, and that in the Hebrew tongue specifically. According to Maya Barzilai, the author-narrator's move between rented rooms in Berlin should be read as metaphoric for his mental straying among Hebrew linguistic permutations.[9] However, this chapter suggests that the Pension—as the physical and spatial vantage point from which these stories were created and told—merits further attention in its own right.

One of the earliest literary descriptions of a Pension can be found in the opening of Honoré de Balzac's 1835 French Realist novel *Le Pere Goriot*, in which, a direct link is established between the widow-landlady and the milieu that she inhabits. Before painting a portrait of the Pension landlady, Madame Vauquer, the author provides a detailed description of the dwelling space that mirrors that of its owner. In his famous study of realist poetics and the representation of reality in western literature, Erich Auerbach used this description in identifying a kind of 'atmospheric realism,' which is produced by the harmony between the landlady and her milieu. The relationship is characterized as one from implicit to explicit, as the shabby, cheerless,

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[7] Mikhail Krutikov, "Oberflächenäußerungen und Grundgehalt: Weimar Berlin as a Memory Site of Yiddish Literature," in *Transit und Transformation*, *Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939,* eds. Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010): 274-292, 274.
[8] Caplan, *Yiddish Writers in Weimar Berlin*, 106.
[9] Maya Barzilai, "S.Y. Agnon's German Consecration and the Miracle of Hebrew Letters," *Prooftexts* 33.1 (2013): 48-75, 49. Barzilai does acknowledge in her recent book that there are some autobiographical resonances. See Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

and dilapidated impression evoked in the description of the Pension implies the moral atmosphere; the relationship is not necessarily logical, but suggestive, directed at the mimetic imagination of the reader. In this way, as Auerbach has suggested, "the person explains the Pension, just as the Pension implies the person."[10] According to the poetic conventions of nineteenth century realism, the milieu—as a space that is described in detail—works stylistically to fuse the character and the place into a harmonious whole.

However, unlike the style of atmospheric realism that Auerbach identified in Balzac's prose, and also unlike the realist tradition that dominated German-Jewish *Bildungsromane* featuring Pensions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the relationship between place and person is anything but harmonious in the Hebrew and Yiddish Pension narratives of David Shimoni, David Bergelson, and S.Y. Agnon.[11] Though each of their narratives are autobiographically inspired in certain respects, they steer away from realist devices, centering instead in new modernist directions which enable them to produce highly experimental works. In these texts, the milieu is no longer passive and in the background, but comes to life as an active character in the narrative. Their own knowledge about Pensions came from their lived experience residing in these spaces, and they each used the Pension as a platform to explore, critique, and grapple with the meaning of 'home' in the modern metropolis. The Pension, as a real space and lived place, not only stimulated their creative activity, but also enabled them to move beyond the realist tradition and experiment with literary modernism.

As such, my analysis positions the Pension not as a backdrop, but as a contested space and as a kind of actant that shaped the Jewish writer-narrators' encounters with and relationship

[10] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 471.
[11] For some examples of the German-Jewish *Bildungsromane* that featured Pensions as the setting and conformed to the realist tradition of the nineteenth century, see Chapter 1.

to the city. Drawing on the work of Bruno Latour, my use of the term actant implies a non-human entity that modifies other actors (in this case, the writer-protagonists) through a series of actions.[12] In these Hebrew and Yiddish texts, the Pensions come to life and function as non-human entities, creating an experience that—as I show—can be described as 'unhomely.' The term 'unhomely' or *unheimlich* carries the double meaning of both not homey and eerie or uncanny, related to privacy and secrecy as implied by *heimlich*. Sigmund Freud explored this ambivalent etymology in his 1919 essay *Das Unheimliche*, suggesting that the sense of 'unhomeliness' involved far more than simply not belonging. Rather, according to Freud, the *Unheimliche* is evoked though the process of deciphering, when a spectator or observer uncovers something that is intended to remain hidden. As Anthony Vidler has demonstrated in his study *The Architectural Uncanny*, the Freudian notion of *unheimlich* found its metaphorical home in architecture. As an aesthetic dimension, the uncanny is a "mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming."[13] Indeed, the notion of the 'unhomely home' is all the more relevant for migrants who come to settle in inherently temporary homes, as the process of migration necessitates a mental renegotiation of the place left behind. Inherently *not* a permanent home, Pensions posed a significant challenge to the traditional notion of 'home' as enabling rootedness in a specific place, as these dwelling-spaces generally housed mobile populations. As a liminal space on the threshold, the Pension lends itself well to literary tropes that occupy the realm of the uncanny or unhomely.

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[12] See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[13] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 11.

In these works, the Pension is defined by a series of tensions: freedom and entrapment, public and private, homely and unhomely. As a provisional dwelling-space imbued with migrant melancholia, the Pension functions in these works as an *unheimlich* home, as a Jewish trope for the anxiety, urban paranoia, loneliness, and economic instability that came with displacement in Berlin. While using the Pension as the setting enabled these authors to explore the themes of home and homelessness in their writings, the space of the Pension itself also played an instrumental role in the production and the plots of these very stories. Simply put, the rooms themselves are an important part of the story of what makes the home *unheimlich* for Jewish émigrés in the urban environment of Berlin. A reading of these texts that positions the Pension as a key player can also enable an understanding of what the rented room might have meant, both socially and culturally, for Jews in World War I through Weimar Berlin.

A Place to Dream: The Space of the Pension in the Dream-Worlds of David Shimoni

David Shimoni was one of the first East European Jewish émigré authors in Berlin to directly dwell upon the space of the Pension in his writings. Shimoni (born Shimonovitz) was a student of oriental philology and philosophy, and later agronomy in Berlin between 1910 and 1914. A native of Bobruisk, the young writer had initially ventured to Palestine in 1909 after being denied university admission due to the government restrictions placed on Jews. After scraping by for a few months as a night watchman in Rehovot, Shimoni later joined his friend and colleague Yosef Haim Brenner in Jaffa, and the pair resided together in a rented room at the Odessa Hotel.[14] Shimoni's year long experience residing in Palestine proved to play a seminal role in his career, as he made the permanent switch from writing in Yiddish to Hebrew during

[14] David Shimoni, "Memories of Brenner," *Israel Argosy*, vol. 5 (1957): 178-200, 182.

this time. After a short trip home to Bobruisk in 1910, the nineteen-year-old Shimoni moved to Berlin, where he enrolled in university, edited the Hebrew literary collection *Netivot* with Shay Ish-Hurwitz, and began to produce a significant body of poetry.[15] Shimoni's new life in the city was marked by constant motion, as the young writer frequently moved from one Pension to another during his time in Berlin. His friends often struggled to keep track of his current address in Berlin, and letters intended for him often got held up in Bobruisk before finally being relayed to Berlin.[16] As Shimoni conveyed to his future wife, "Berlin, of course, is not a place to rest."[17]

By the time he arrived in Berlin, Shimoni already had personal experience with the cramped and inconvenient conditions of rented lodgings. For example, while working on an orange grove in the settlement of Ein Ganim in 1909, Shimoni's rented room could only be reached by passing through the landlady's bedroom. Therefore, if he wanted to leave the house early in the morning before his landlady woke up, he had to exit through the window.[18] In fact, Shimoni's cold and dark Berlin Pension rooms were largely a step up from his provisional

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[15] Though it was not until the 1920s that Berlin became a full-fledged Hebraist colony, the origins of Hebrew literary culture in the city precede the Weimar era. By the time Shimoni arrived in Berlin in 1910, East European Jewish émigrés such as Shay Ish-Hurwitz, Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, Itamar Ben Avi, Shmuel Horodetsky, Reuven Brainin, Aharon Hermoni, Ya'akov Kahan, Marcus Ehrenpreis, and Shimoni himself, had turned Berlin into a small, somewhat ambiguous, but nonetheless important, Hebraist center. See Zohar Shavit, "On the Hebrew Cultural Center in Berlin in the Twenties," *Gutenberg-Jahrbukh* 68 (1993): 371-380; Naomi Brenner, "Only a World War Could Bring Us Such Elegance: Milgroym, Rimon, and Periodic Bilingualism in Berlin," in *Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures in Contact* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016): 31-75; Stanley Nash, *In Search of Hebraism: Shai Hurwitz and his Polemics in the Hebrew Press* (Leiden: Brill, 1980); Stanley Nash, "Temunot Mi-hug Soharei Ha'Ivrit be-Berlin, 1900-1914," in *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 3 (1978); Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, *Ginzey Micha Yosef,* vol. 7 (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1997), 90-113; Itamar Ben Avi, *Im shachar atzma'utenu* (Tel Aviv: Magen, 1961); Reuven Brainin, "Shpatsiergeyng durch Berlin," *Der Yud* 23 (1902), 6-8; Aharon Hermoni, *Be-ikvot ha-bilu'im* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1951).

[16] Gnazim 165/5976/1. Letter, Yitzhak Dov Berkowitz to David Shimoni, December 9, 1910; Gnazim 165/5980/1. Letter, Yitzhak Dov Berkowitz to David Shimoni, October 23, 1912; Gnazim 165/75735/1. Letter, Hayim Greenberg to David Shimoni, January 19, 1913.

[17] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, July 22, 1911. In Shmuel Shimoni, *Eser Shanim: Ahavat Dina ve-David* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2002), 40.

[18] David Shimoni, "Memories of Brenner," *Israel Argosy*, vol. 5 (1957): 178-200, 193.

dwelling spaces in Palestine in terms of the comparatively greater sense privacy that the rooms afforded him. While his Berlin body of work was most potently influenced by the conditions of his immediate surroundings, Shimoni's experience residing in rented lodgings in Palestine probably also shaped the author's ideas about dwelling space in Berlin, as well as his thoughts about the relationship between dwelling and artistic creativity. Though written a few years before the outbreak of the First World War, certain aspects of Shimoni's description of the Pensions in which he resided can be regarded as a precursor to the spatial poetics used to depict the urban space of Berlin in the Weimar era. Two poems, in particular, engage with the ambiguous space of the Berlin Pension, featuring a disenchanted urban city-dweller who seeks refuge in an imaginative wilderness from his Pension room. Though the poems were both written and set in Berlin's Charlottenburg neighborhood, where Shimoni himself resided, his Berlin is not an easily recognizable city. With street names and landmarks entirely absent from the body of these works, they easily could have taken place in any German city.

While Shimoni is usually regarded as a late romantic poet in Hebrew literary historiography, belonging to the generation of Bialik and often compared to Jacob Fichman, these particular Berlin poems demonstrate how he took the traditions of Russian and German Romantic poetry in new modernist directions.[19] As Shachar Pinsker has pointed out, while the poems retain some of the formalist elements of Pushkin's Romantic genre, Shimoni manages to employ it in a way that enables him to present autobiographical material in an ironic and self-conscious fashion.[20] In both of the poems in question, the Pension is depicted as a realm that inherently confuses illusion with reality and real space with imaginary space. The uncertainty experienced in the interstitial space of the Pension echoes the émigré's ambivalence with which

[19] Pinsker, *Literary Passports*, 126-127.
[20] Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics," 34.

he sees himself as a Hebrew writer in Berlin—can this metropolis be a real 'home' that is conducive for writing, or is it all merely an illusion?

In his 1911 narrative semi-autobiographical poem *Chalom leyl choref* (A Winter Night's Dream), Shimoni tells the story of a young Jewish poet residing in a frigid and shabby Charlottenburg Pension during a particularly harsh and cold winter. Struggling to eke out an existence, the young writer, who refers to himself as 'the poet of the Hebrews,' is about to be evicted from his dark and dingy Pension room—his provisional home—because he can no longer afford to pay the rent. Like his protagonist, in a letter sent in January 1911, Shimoni hinted that for whatever reason, he "could not stay in [his] room" in Berlin.[21] The poem begins:

> I am the poet of the Hebrews—and my room in winter is not heated:
> Of course, the Creator is certain that I am warm from the Divine Spirit.
> And my landlady believes that I have no concept of
> Coldness or 'the first of the month.'
> 'On the first of the month'—the esteemed landlady warned—
> 'There is a custom in the world to pay monthly rent,
> But if the gentleman will have contempt for this supreme custom,
> He is welcome to leave my place of dwelling.'
> So she told me face to face with fondness and pleasantness,
> I lowered my head for her and I bowed politely.
> I am the poet of the Hebrews, and immense is my trust in the Lord,
> In the victory of goodness and justice and in my lucky star:
> An abandoned lair of a dog, the Creator will certainly prepare for me,
> In the time in which I will be thrown out of my place of dwelling.[22]

Shimoni's landlady—the provider of dwelling—is depicted as a god-like ruler who exercises complete sovereignty over her subordinate tenants and ultimately controls the poet's fate.[23] Indeed, after the punitive landlady ironically conveyed her harsh warning in a 'fond' and

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[21] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, January 27, 1911. In Shmuel Shimoni, *Eser Shanim,* 14. In this letter, the word 'couldn't' was subsequently erased and replaced with the phrase 'forced to.'
[22] David Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," in *Sefer ha-poe mot,* Vol. I (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1952): 3-32, 3. All translations of Shimoni's poetry are my own.
[23] Here, Shimoni's description of the landlady is very much in keeping with that of the German *Pension* narrative. On the representation of landladies in German and German-Jewish literature in the early 1900s, see Chapter 1.

'pleasant' tone, the speaker literally "lowered [his] head for her and bowed politely."[24] But, as spartan of a setting it may have been, this small rented room was, for better or worse, the poet's home in Berlin. As he wistfully reflects, although the temperature in his Pension room was extremely cold, "the Creator [was] certain that [he was] warm from the Divine Spirit."[25] Now, this soon-to-be-homeless 'poet of the Hebrews,' as he refers to himself, is left to take comfort in his hope that God will prepare an "abandoned lair of a dog" for him when he is "thrown out of [his] place of dwelling."[26] The poet-speaker then continues:

> The landlady just went out and I sat next to the frozen window
> To study[27] flowers on the ice of the window panes:
> Day died out and faded away, its luminosity became pale and weak,
> The evening is already tied up to the tails of shadows bursting out.
> At this time, as it is known, dreams and feelings are born
> That lack dialect and expression…Yours truly will also be captured in the net:
> I forgot all about the study of plants, And I sunk into inconsistent napping.[28]

At this point, the autobiographical nature of the poem is readily apparent, as the winter of 1911 coincides with Shimoni's own decision to take up the study of horticulture in Berlin.[29] At this point in Shimoni's life, the young poet incessantly grappled with his decision to either continue to pursue his university studies or to become a full-fledged Hebrew writer. Here, Shimoni's Berlin Pension room is depicted as a space of introspection, as the scene is set for the reading of objects; in this stanza, the Hebrew verb used for 'study,' which can also be translated as 'pore over,' generally implies the act of reading a text. As he abandons his study of plants on the

[24] Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," 3.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] The word used for 'study' (also translated as 'gaze upon' or 'pore over') is לְעַיֵּן, a term which generally denotes the act of *reading*.
[28] Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," 3.
[29] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, July 26, 1911. In Shmuel Shimoni, *Eser Shanim*, 45.

window-threshold, this 'poet of the Hebrews' is already concerned with the interchange between abstract thoughts and written word, or the fuel for his writing.

As the poet attempts to digest the fact that he will soon have no roof over his head, he slips from the world of reality into that of dream, and in doing so, the space of the Pension transitions from an earthly room to a transcendent one. Playing on the interchange between real space and imaginary space, the Pension is portrayed as a locus of mysterious wander. A space to dream, it is imbued with a hallucinatory power inclined towards self-analysis. In this way, the space of the Pension serves as the objective correlative of the psychological state of the narrator. Here, it is the poet's anxiety about his impending eviction from his Pension room that triggers the onset of the dream. As the 'day died out and faded away' and its 'luminosity became pale and weak,' the speaker enters into a hallucinatory dream-like state in which the 'Winter King,' is revealed to the poet and transports him to the 'secret world' of Berlin.[30] The poem continues:

> Who is knocking? Who is here?
> He stood before me, and did not stir,
> He stood and shined, from head to toe,
> In sapphire and diamond, in agate and ruby,
> He stood and gazed and shined without a sound.
> Did he land from the moon or rise from hell?
> 'Behold—who are you, mysterious one, and where do you reside?'…
> I am spellbound and I shiver from the coldness.
> And suddenly he laughed and the laughter quivered,
> Rolled and approached and dissipated and went further away,
> In him, the joy of annihilation and grief is encrypted.[31]

As the nocturnal figure makes his way through the door of the Pension to the narrator's bedside, the poet, with the anxiety of his lodging dilemma eating away at his core, immediately asks the creature, "Behold, who are you, mysterious one, and *where do you reside*?"[32] Struggling to

[30] Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," 3.
[31] Ibid., 4.
[32] Ibid.

interpret his surroundings, the poet cannot discern if the Winter King—an ambiguous creature—had descended from a heavenly abode or risen from the depths of hell.[33] Just like the flowers on the icy window panes of the poet's Pension room that needed to be deciphered, the Winter King is also presented as creature that needed to be *read*—he is a being in which the seemingly incompatible emotions of joy and annihilation are encrypted. As the Winter King then declared to the poet:

> 'I am the ruler of the Winter and the ruler of the cold!
> You often dedicated immense praises of magical beauty to me,
> I love thee, the poet, I have lots of mercy for you!
> So yearned for is your heart, so it descended from its prison cell
> To the hidden secrets of Winter, to its mourning and its joy,
> And I heard its humming, full of weakness,
> And I rushed to bring him help and salvation!'
> On my jeweled wings, come up, come up,
> Where there is healing for your gloomy and proud heart!
> We will ride the universe from border to border,
> In tunnels of snow we will have a feast,
> In the halls of crystal on the icy path,
> There, the daughters—my storms—will pleasantly deliver a song to you.'[34]

Like the figure of the lictor in Heinrich Heine's 1844 epic poem *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (*Germany: A Winter's Tale*), Shimoni's Winter King is not completely foreign, but an uncanny and familiar figure from an earlier time—after all, the poet had previously 'dedicated immense praises of magical beauty' to him. After the Winter King proclaims that he wishes to take the poet on a journey to the ice caves in the North Sea in order to explore the 'hidden secrets of winter,' the poet allows the creature to grab him by his limbs. As the young man finally jumps on the creature's wings, the narrator, still partially grounded in reality, worries

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 4-5.

how "tomorrow, the beautiful face of [his] landlady will become furious," as she will howl, "Oh neighbor, oh debt!"[35]

During this modernist journey, the poet meets Nimrod, the primordial hunter who chases after ancient mammoths, and Nebuchadnezzar, who, in the poem, physically transforms from a human into a polar bear. The poet's flight from his Pension room into the frozen forests is not only an escape from human civilization into the world of nature, but also from his despair with the city into his mind. Again, the displaced Jewish poet struggles to interpret his surroundings:

> Is this the land of Shinar, the landscape of sun and desire?
> Answer me, answer me, my leader and my master! …
> Not Shinar! Not Babylon! This is a land where people are free,
> This is a refuge for the seer, here is a shelter for his dreams![36]

While the notion that the poet has encountered a possible 'shelter for his dreams' greatly excites him, his winter journey soon turns sour. The primordial oneness with nature that the poet seeks is unattainable, due in part to the corruption of the modern city. In this modernist journey, during which the poet is able to witness the city from a new vantage point, Berlin emerges to the narrator as a dark industrial city, where 'pure snow' becomes 'black and dirty' and 'dreams and flowers' quickly die out.[37] In this underworld, he encounters seedy taverns teeming with prostitutes and discovers a modern urban experience characterized by sexual debauchery and devoid of human warmth:

> And a female prostitute approached me
> She fainted upon me in her degeneration…
> Oh Ruler in the Winter! Hurry, hurry
> To the plains of the wilderness or the honeysuckle,
> To the darkness of the heavens or the great abyss,
> But not in the contamination of the crowded city…
> Here, my heart is strangled, my heart is torn into pieces.
> Fly, fly! A wind, strong and cold, consoled me,

[35] Ibid., 5.
[36] Ibid., 8.
[37] Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics," 36.

The Ruler of the Winter embraced me in his wings.
He covered my face in his wings,
Passed the large city with its applause and its flash.
Quietly I moaned in the wings of my guardian angel:
'Damned, cursed be the large city forever!
May all signs of life be strangled in its stench.'[38]

Like the example that Freud would later use in his seminal 1919 essay *Das Unheimliche*, it is the poet's encounter with the space of commodified female sexuality that conjures up his sense of *unheimlichkeit.* Echoing the sentiment conveyed in Shimoni's short poem *Be'ir nochriyah shokekah*, also written in and about Berlin and published during the same year, the speaker is in turn revolted by the 'contamination' of the modern city and yearns to retreat into the wilderness.[39] Revolted when he is approached by a female prostitute, only the Winter King can rescue the poet from the situation; thus, the poet decides to abandon mankind altogether, to leave this nauseating 'humanity in ruins'[40] and to become a hunter in the empty space of the mighty ice-ocean like Nimrod. Only then, the speaker wakes up from his dream:

Tumult and screeching…Suddenly I fall.
Who is making this noise? Around me together, light and darkness…
I'm sorry…Ah, my room! The door is open,
Opposite me, my landlady stands and curses:
'Leave my room, you rascal, stealing my rent money!
Day in and day out I say, and he scorns my words!
As if he hasn't been warned! And he is sound asleep!'
—Why, pleasant lady, is your tongue so foul?
And the woman went away, her mouth full of curses.
Now my frightened soul understands everything:
It must be: a simple night, I dozed off in my place,
Until the damned woman cut off my dreams.[41]

[38] Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," 24.
[39] David Shimoni, "Be'ir nochriyah shokekah," in *Shirim,* Vol. I (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1954), 180-183.
[40] This sentiment closely resonates with the speaker's statement, "Human beings are wretched because their end is to rot," in Uri Zvi Greenberg's apocalyptic narrative poem *Eima gedola ve-yareach* (1923), which also takes place in Berlin. See Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Eima gedola ve-yareach* (Jerusalem: Beit ha-sefarim ha-le'umi veha-universita'i bi-rushalayim, 1983).
[41] Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," 31-32.

Alas, the poet now realizes that his Pension room was not a 'real home,' but a place of entrapment—or quite literally—a 'prison cell,' where the relationship between landlady and tenant was purely transactional.[42] Unlike the many Berlin landladies featured in Georg Hirschfeld's novels, whose motherly love fertilized and nurtured the artistic talents of the young Jewish poet, Shimoni's landlady is responsible for cutting off the artist's dreams.[43] But Shimoni's Pension is still an ambiguous space—while the space of the Pension both generates and houses his dream-like imaginative speculation, it is also the very structure that inhibits the struggling artist's dreams from coming to fruition. Under the logic expressed by Bachelard, Shimoni's Pension cannot be a 'home' because it does not protect the dreamer, nor does it allow its inhabitant to dream in peace.[44] The Pension room cannot offer the necessary sanctuary for the inhabitant's dreams, nor can the poet's dreams provide a complete escape from the Pension.

Shimoni's 1913 narrative poem *B'Zoharei Drachim* (In the Splendor of the Roads) is also about the meaning of home and the act of dreaming (and writing) in an inherently temporary home. One of the earliest examples of Hebrew poetry written in the urban, modernistic tradition of the flaneur, the poem is also told from the perspective of an East European Jewish émigré residing in a Charlottenburg Pension. With Passover as the poem's frame of reference, the narrative follows the Jewish émigré's dream-like wandering through the streets of Berlin after being temporarily kicked out of his Pension so that his landlady could partake in the ritual obligation of cleaning before Passover. This frame of reference is appropriately fitting, as Passover, which celebrates the Jewish exodus from Egypt and subsequent wandering in the

[42] Ibid., 4.
[43] On the representation of Pension landladies in the novels of the German-Jewish writer Georg Hirschfeld, see Chapter 1.
[44] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 6. Bachelard is referring to day-dreaming rather than night dreaming in this context. For Bachelard, the house—as a space of intimacy and security—is a refuge where dreaming and memory intermix.

desert, is essentially a holiday of emigration. Early one *Nissan* morning in his Pension room, the narrator relates:

> Why should I leave my bed? / How short the duration of life is...
> Don't dreams have limits? / Death narrowed in on them…
> I lie down quietly and await: / How short the duration of life is...
> But how encouraging was / The call of the rooster in the yard.
> What is going on here, / Rooster, stubborn rooster?
> But the rooster continued his calling / And did not ask for the bills.
> On the opposite wall, a rusty window opened and squeaked
> A maiden above chuckled, / A young lad below whistled.[45]

Notably, the poem opens with an aural, rather than visual, description of the narrator's Pension room. The room is invaded by the sounds of other tenants, highlighting the shared thresholds of this form of semi-private urban living. The sounds also signify the narrator's spatial perspective in that he hears the sound of a window opening, but he is not the person who opens the window himself. As Bachelard has suggested, these types of sounds—especially the opening and closing of thresholds such as doors and windows—are "gestures that make us conscious of security or freedom [and] are rooted in a profound depth of being."[46] By opening the poem with an aural rather than visual description of the room, Shimoni also indicates that the narrator is probably still in the liminal state between wakefulness and sleep and has not yet opened his eyes. As in *Chalom leyl choref,* the narrator is actively thinking about the act of dreaming, and considering how the Pension room might serve as a space that enables its inhabitant to engage in dreaming. The next verse squarely places the narrator in his Pension room:

> The widow entered my room, / With a pail and broom in hand,
> Standing at the entrance with her cleaning utensils, / As a bride adorns herself in jewels.[47]
> She chuckled to me flirtatiously: 'Perhaps you'll go for a walk?
> I want to scrub the room / In honor of the coming holidays.

[45] Shimoni, "B'Zoharei Drachim," 59.
[46] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 224. While Bachelard is referring to the opening and closing of doors in this example, a similar logic could be applied to windows.
[47] The Hebrew wording that Shimoni employs for the phrase "as a bride adorns herself in jewels" is a direct quote from Isaiah 61:10.

And why is the gentleman bored? / And why his mournful face?
The parks are bustling with people, / Wandering in pairs...
It's not good for men to be by themselves. / Oh my husband, of blessed memory...'[48]

While the individual Pension room can offer a place for dreaming, is it not a truly private space; although the door can be locked from the inside, the landlady possesses a key and has the right to cross this threshold at any time without warning. The inherently unequal power dynamics between the characters are also underscored through the sexual undertones used to describe the widow-landlady. The initial ambiguity with which she stands at the interstitial space of the doorway, "as a bride adorns herself in jewels," is quickly confirmed by her flirtatious tone in requesting that her tenant leave the Pension for the day so that she can clean his room. The narrator continues:

I took my cane and I walked out, / The noise and brightness welcomed me.
My landlady was right, / Spring has arrived!
In my youth I would have written: / 'In all His Glory Spring appeared…'
Oh, how many beautiful rhymes, / I would have had for the word *Hofiah*!...
And even if I did not know the meaning, / Of a few words here and there, …
The sound of rhymes / brought me comfort.
And what if the poetic phrase is difficult, / And what if the words are unclear?
We all know that some questions and difficulties,
Have already long been waiting for the prophet Elijah!
At that time I was a teenager, / And my heart beat quickly,
And that which was omitted from my verses, / Was filled with the pounding of my heart.
And I took a gamble / on the solutions of Elijah.[49]

At this point, it becomes clear that the narrator is a poet himself, and like Shimoni, one who had transitioned to writing in Hebrew during his teenage years. However, unlike the protagonist of *Chalom leyl choref,* this poet is a middle-aged man whose forehead is later described as having wrinkles; he reminisces about the formative time in his youth in which writing in the Hebrew language had been new to him.[50] In these recollections, the mere sound of rhymes brought him a

[48] David Shimoni, "B'Zoharei Drachim," in *Sefer ha-poemot,* Vol. I (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1952): 57-86, 59.
[49] Shimoni, "B'Zoharei Drachim," 60-61.
[50] Ibid., 65.

sense of relief, and in this memory, he was able to achieve at least a semblance of personal comfort through the act of writing, regardless of his physical location.

In what follows, the Jewish émigré obliges his landlady's request and leaves his Pension room to become an urban wanderer, a flâneur, in Berlin, losing himself in the sites, sounds, and textures of the city. Walking around in a dream-like state, the poet's melancholy persona is quickly lifted by the chirping of birds, the gleaming rays of sunlight, the sounds of the laughter of children, and the overall excitement of the city streets. The protagonist now recognizes that both his mood and the content of his writings had been dependent upon his milieu. He thus apologizes to the roosters and hens for "disrupting the joy of Spring with [his] gloom" and for having "poured the blood of [his] sorrow upon the pure flowers of Spring" back in his Pension room, where he sat evening after evening, observing the shadows on the dark wall opposite his window.[51] With his mood now uplifted, the poet takes in the sights and sounds of the bustling metropolis, observing the 'signs of stores and barbershops,' the 'glass-front department store windows full of dresses,' and "women—gentle like the winds—floating in the splendor of the roads."[52] While the poet enjoys observing the reflective surfaces of the city streets in a typical flaneur-like fashion, his slippage into a deeper state of self-reflection is triggered by passing by a store that *sells* mirrors. The familiar now becomes uncanny as the protagonist encounters a double-mirror of sorts:

> I passed by the store where they sell mirrors / I see my face in the mirror,
> A young maiden passes me / And fixes her hair.
> I only saw her fingers / Dainty and pure and clear:
> Gentleness and lightness intertwined / In the done-up locks of her hair.
> I will follow you, pleasant one / After you, my dear, I will run…
> Perhaps you are the summoned one? / Perhaps it is me you are waiting for?
> The sun lights up my journey / And a refreshing wind gurgles…
> Inspire me, moisture of the Spring! / Inspire me, flowers and trees!

[51] Ibid., 63.
[52] Ibid., 60-61.

The flames of many winters and summers / Have scorched my soul.
I still remember forgotten memories, / Meanwhile the maiden disappeared…
To the other side of the crowded city, / My feet soon march.[53]

Standing in front of the double mirror leads the subject to declare that he "still remember[s] forgotten memories," and causes his feet to involuntarily march, as if in a dreamy haze, to the other side of the city. Indeed, while the street as a space in which people float is a recurrent topos of modernist city literature, Shimoni's Jewish émigré ends up leaving the city proper and entering the forests surrounding Berlin, where he encounters 'dark and wet trees,' 'cold shadows deep in the thicket,' and the lone remaining lumps of snow that had not yet thawed.[54] He relates:

And a musty smell rises up, / The smell of leaves rotting...
Why is my heart oppressed? / Why do wounds drip?
Withered leaves will rot, / But their pieces are not lost forever![55]

Within the depths of the forest, the protagonist seeks to uncover that which is hidden, since this secret forest is a place where "delightful dreams will sound and will be revealed."[56] Specifically, he is concerned with accessing and uncovering the meaning behind dreams so that he, as a poet, can transform this content into the written word. Evoking the imagery of the Kabbalistic *shevirat ha-kelim* (breaking of the vessels), he hopes that the hidden dreams will be become accessible when, like the sound of pottery, an external force will cause the ice of frozen dreams to crack open, scatter into shards, and reveal themselves to him.[57]

There, within the depths of the forest, the poet encounters an empty tavern covered in fragrant pines. In the spirit of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, the Jewish poet gazes through the glass window of the abandoned structure and mourns the death of

[53] Ibid., 65-67.
[54] Ibid., 67.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 70.
[57] Ibid.

the God Pan: "My soul filled with sadness, I will daven *Mincha* to Pan, the Lord of produce…Pan, the great Pan!"[58] This particular image bears striking resemblance to Uri Nissan Gnessin's 1909 novella *Be'terem* (*Beforehand*), which features a protagonist who leaves his rented room let by a landlady in the city, descends upon a forest, and laments the destruction of the mythical Pan and the holy forest.[59] Shimoni's use of the mythical deity was also likely inspired by the titular character in Knut Hamsun's 1894 novel *Pan*, a work that Shimoni deeply admired. Back in Palestine a few years earlier, Shimoni had attempted to lift the dejected spirit of his friend Yosef Haim Brenner by using the example of Thomas Glahn, the hero of Hamsun's story and the lone hunter who was able to find consolation and solace in the natural world.[60] However, Shimoni later explained that his words of encouragement had no effect, and even prompted Brenner to exclaim, "Why, we haven't even any forests [in Palestine] in which we can seclude ourselves. We have nothing."[61] In a similar fashion, in *B'Zoharei Drachim*, Shimoni's protagonist realizes that he cannot take comfort in nor draw creative inspiration from the forests of Berlin, as Pan is not an ancient deity, but merely a local drunkard arrested by the police and sent to languish in jail.

Later during that 'clear *Nissan* evening,' the émigré eventually returns from the forests to the city proper, back to the world of electric street lamps and glass storefronts, and sits down next to a fountain with a monumental iron statue of the Kaiser Friedrich the Great. He falls asleep, and in his dream, the poet converses with the Kaiser. In this dream, the Jewish poet

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[58] Ibid., 75-76.
[59] See Uri Nissan Gnessin, "Be'terem," in *Kol kitvei Uri Nissan Gnessin*, eds. Dan Miron and Israel Zmora (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 1982).
[60] David Shimoni, "Memories of Brenner," *Israel Argosy*, vol. 5 (1957): 178-200, 181.
[61] Ibid. A few days later, Brenner complained in a letter to Asher Beilin about the harsh climate of Palestine: "The climate of the country is hard, one eats miserably here, there's nothing to earn a living—nothing!" See Shimoni, "Memories of Brenner," 182.

indulges in nostalgic memories of his long-lost childhood shtetl; in observing the dried mud of the shtetl streets, the straw-covered roofs of its homes, and "a Yahrzeit candle flickering in the window of a house of prayer," he mourns the death of his former childhood home.[62]

Unlike the ending of *Chalom leyl choref*, in which the narrator discovers 'humanity in ruins,' *B'Zoharei Drachim* ends on a semi-positive note when the émigré finally wakes up by the fountain at dawn. As Shachar Pinsker has suggested, the poem ends with a thin sense of hope that comes from the speaker's realization that he can continue wandering in the 'splendor of the roads' of urban modernity.[63] In the final stanza, the wandering Jew concludes:

> I bowed my head underneath / The trickle of the fountains.
> I scrubbed my eyes, which were heavy with sleep, with the dust of emeralds,
> And I listened: the winds of the morning / Slowly, their voices sound:
> And I see, opening before me / The four winds of the earth:
> The heat of the sky wanders, / And the heat of the earth and flowers wander too,
> And I go with the winds of the morning, / To wander in the splendor of the roads.[64]

The Jewish émigré is not homeless, but he is still wandering—he is not yet at home and is left to take comfort in and achieve his sense of belonging through the imaginative act of dreaming. In both of these poems, the Pension is an ambiguous space, oscillating between the real and the imaginary, either promoting the slippage into the dream world or prohibiting the poet from engaging in the act of dreaming. Not only is the Pension the physical vantage point from which these interior journeys can happen, but the conditions of this space cast him into his uncanny dreaming in the first place: in *Chalom leyl choref*, his lodging dilemma stimulates his escape into a winter dream, and in *B'Zoharei Drachim*, the landlady's need to clean his room forces him out of the Pension, inducing his urban wandering and dream-like flânerie.

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[62] Shimoni, "B'Zoharei Drachim," 85.
[63] Pinsker, *Literary Passports,* 129.
[64] Shimoni, "B'Zoharei Drachim," 86.

Indeed, while the prototype of the cold and lonely room inspiring introspection and casting its inhabitant into a dream like state has long been a staple in literature concerning urban anxieties in the modern world, in Shimoni's poems, the rooms themselves are not necessarily the catalyst of his dream-like state. Rather, it is the anxiety about or experience of having to *leave* these rooms that inspire the poet's inner stream of thought. This might suggest that Shimoni, as well as his protagonists, did have some degree of attachment to or even pensive comfort in their lonely rooms. After all, Shimoni was never searching for a permanent home in Berlin to begin with; he emigrated there in order to attend university, knowing that the city would *not* be a "place to rest."[65]

Ultimately, in Shimoni's poems, the transition from an earthly room to a transcendent one is not a traditional familiar-turned-strange scenario from the comfortable secure world of the physical house to the unfamiliar dream world. Rather, the inherently uncomfortable conditions of the Pension reinforced and helped to produce the protagonist's dreams, which, he hoped, would translate into poetry. Shimoni's modernist journeys are not a passage from the homely to the unhomely, but rather, a blurring of the two. While the sense of belonging as articulated in these poems is largely a mental process, both poems are concerned with the very idea of the spatial uncanny—the protagonists descend, through their mind, to the hidden netherworld of Berlin in order to uncover some kind of essential secret. This might suggest that young Jewish writers and artists who emigrated to the urban environment of Berlin could indeed gain a sense of comfort through the acts of dreaming and writing, and that the Pension, as an *unheimlich* space, could perhaps serve as a space to dream.

[65] Letter, David Shimoni to Dina Shimoni, July 22, 1911. In Shmuel Shimoni, *Eser Shanim*, 40.

Homes, Hallways, and Heterotopias: The Spatial Poetics of David Bergelson's Pension Stories

Like Shimoni's experimental poetic style, employing the Pension as a setting also enabled Yiddish writer David Bergelson to depict the Jewish émigré's sense of uncanny longing that came with emigration. Born in the tiny Ukrainian shtetl of Okhrimove near the tsarist province of Kiev in 1884, Bergelson grew up in an affluent and devout Hasidic home. The youngest of nine siblings, Bergelson was afforded an eclectic education that combined traditional Jewish studies with secular subjects taught by a local *maskil*, thus enabling the youngster to acquire fluency in Hebrew and Russian, in addition to his native Yiddish tongue.[66] Having moved regularly between Kiev, Odessa, Vilna, and Moscow between 1908 and 1919, Bergelson devoted himself to the development of new Yiddish literary and cultural institutions made possible by the Russian revolution, such as the Kiev *Kultur-Lige* and the Yiddish cultural journal *Oyfgang.* Only in 1921, after the Bolsheviks had consolidated their control, did Bergelson opt to relocate to Berlin because, according to his son Lev, he "feared the dangers of pogroms and found himself in disfavor as a bourgeois artist."[67] Unlike Shimoni, Bergelson would arrive in Berlin not as an impoverished young novice, but as a highly respected and well-recognized professional author. By the time he left Moscow in 1921, the already-acclaimed Yiddish writer had published a number of major works, the importance of which was recognized when the Berlin-based publishing house Wostok issued his collected body of writing to date in six volumes in 1922.[68] By then, Berlin had become a major Yiddish literary center, home to more

[66] It is worth pointing out that, as a teenager, Bergelson's earliest attempts at authorship were not in his native Yiddish tongue, but in Hebrew and Russian. See Joseph Sherman, "David Bergelson (1884-1952): A Biography," in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism,* ed. Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh (London: Legenda, 2007): 7-78, 7.
[67] Lev Bergelson, "Erinnerungen an meinen Vater: die Berliner Jahre," in David Bergelson*, Leben ohne Frühling: Roman,* trans. Alexander Eliasberg (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000): 281-291, 283.
[68] Leo Fuks and Renate Fuks, "Yiddish Publishing Activities in the Weimar Republic, 1920-1933," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 33* (1988): 417-434, 431. Cited in Sasha Senderovich, "In Search of Readership:

than twenty journals and a plethora of publishing houses.[69] Bergelson's time in Berlin was to become one of the longest periods of foreign 'exile' of all of the Yiddish writers of the period, as he was to remain there until he settled in the Soviet Union in 1934. As Bergelson's son later described the family's move, "Jewish literary life in Berlin appeared to be so rich, exciting, and promising that my father decided to move us all permanently to the German metropolis."[70] Thus, "Seriously and firmly [they] settled in Berlin, and spent thirteen happy years there."[71] However, as the younger Bergelson continued, "Yet, it seems to me, we always regarded ourselves as temporary and not particularly welcome residents."[72] Notwithstanding the anti-Semitism of the time, as many scholars have shown, David Bergelson saw Berlin as a temporary satellite of an emerging international Yiddish culture as opposed to a literary center proper.[73] Located halfway between New York and Moscow, Bergelson's Berlin was a de facto center—a temporary outpost on the borderless map of Yiddish culture.[74] Indeed, while Berlin's central location in the capital of German culture opened up new opportunities for intellectual exchange and material support, many Yiddish writers would become haunted by the paradox of being geographically distant from the Jewish masses that were both the subject of and audience for their work.[75] This was one

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Bergelson Among the Refugees, 1928" in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism,* ed. Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh (London: Legenda, 2007): 150-166, 153.

[69] See Delphine Bechtel, "Babylon or Jerusalem: Berlin as Center of Jewish Modernism in the 1920s," in *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria,* eds. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994): 116-123.

[70] Lev Bergelson, "Memories of my Father," 81.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Rachel Seelig, "Between Center and Periphery: Transnational Jewish Literature in Weimar Berlin" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011), 153.

[74] Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin,* 6. See Bergelson's most famous essay "Dray tsentren," *In shpan* I (1926): 84-96.

[75] Cecile Esther Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 37.

of the central dilemmas Bergelson would grapple with during his twelve-year residence in Berlin.

In this light, in Bergelson's Berlin writings, the city itself does not develop as a foreground character as it does in, for example, Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*; rather, Bergelson turns his attention to individuals trapped in their own isolation and alienation.[76] In *Tsvishn Emigrantn* for example, the protagonist is so isolated that despite the fact that the story is set in a Pension, the central figure of the landlady never makes an appearance. In this respect, Bergelson's story is a radical departure from the traditional *Pension* narrative, in which, the landlady occupies a central role. Indeed, his stories set in Berlin portray East European Jewish émigrés against a backdrop of a city in which, with few exceptions, they have no home, family, or reasonable means of earning a living.[77] As scholar Dafna Clifford has argued, Bergelson was perhaps the most effective Yiddish writer of his time at narrating the physical and emotional discomfiture of exile and building a picture of the humiliations to be endured daily that ultimately produce the disoriented personality of the émigré.[78] Specifically, Bergelson focuses on the Jewish émigré's physical and emotional struggle of exile, and his attempt to feel 'at home' in his new environment—this new environment being the physical (and spiritual) dwelling-space of the Berlin Pension. In Bergelson's Berlin stories, 'home' becomes a metonym for the indefinite space of the metropolis and the motif of the Pension room—as a locus of unbelonging—functions as an embodiment of the Jewish émigré's alienation and loss of self.

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[76] Joachim Neugroschel, *The Shadows of Berlin: The Berlin Stories of Dovid Bergelson,* trans. Joachim Neugroschel (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005), VI. See also Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007).
[77] See Dafna Clifford, "From Exile to Exile: Bergelson's Berlin Years," in *Yiddish and the Left,* ed. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (Oxford: Legenda, 2001): 242-258, 251.
[78] Ibid.

Though works of fiction, Bergelson's Yiddish stories were, at least on some level, inspired by the author's real lived experiences in Weimar Berlin. In 1928, fellow Yiddish writer and literary critic Shmuel Charney was quick to praise Bergelson's Berlin fiction as depicting life "how it is, and not how it should be," while still retaining its artistic quality.[79] Dafna Clifford, for one, has even gone so far as to argue that Bergelson, as a chronicler of Jewish émigré daily experience in Berlin, was 'completely dependent on his environment' to provide subject matter and imagery for his imagination to shape into stories.[80] Indeed, when he first arrived in Berlin in 1921, Bergelson resided in a small Pension on the Grolmanstraße by the Kurfürstendamm, before later moving into another one on the Turmstraße in the Moabit quarter with his wife and young son. Lev Bergelson recalls that the latter Pension, in which the Bergelson family lived for slightly over a year, was run by a Frau Engel, the widow of a German officer killed during the First World War, who had a large sheepdog called Rolf.[81] Considering the impact of the writer's physical abode on the content of his literature, Bergelson's own son believes that Frau Engel and Rolf were the prototypes for his father's short story *Tsvey Rotskhim* (Two Murderers).[82] After a year spent in the rooms of Frau Engel and countless failed attempts to find a suitable inexpensive flat, the Bergelson family eventually managed to find shelter in the white-collar district of Zehlendorf, where they rented a small flat in a semi-basement originally intended to house the gardener of a luxury villa owned by wealthy relatives of Bergelson's

[79] Shmuel Charney, *Lezer, dikhter, kritiker* (New York: Yidisher kultur farlag, 1928), 156.
[80] Clifford, "From Exile to Exile," 255.
[81] Lev Bergelson, "Memories of my Father: The Early Years (1918-1934)," in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism,* ed. Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh (London: Legenda, 2007): 79-88, 83.
[82] Ibid. See David Bergelson, "Tsvey Rotskhim," in *Ale Werk,* vol. 6 (Vilna: Kletskin, 1930): 203-212.

wife.[83] It was in this dwelling-space, according to the younger Bergelson, in which the Yiddish writer's creative activity would reach its peak.[84]

In addition to Bergelson's own son, literary historians have likewise claimed that many of the characters and specific places in Bergelson's Berlin stories are based off of the author's actual experiences as a Jewish émigré in Weimar Berlin. For example, Harriet Murav has suggested that the fictitious characters Max Wentzl and Dr. Mer, who are found in Bergelson's story *Mit eyn nakht veyniker* (One Night Less), in all likelihood refer to the real-life writers Franz Werfel and Alfred Kerr, respectively.[85] In the same light, Bergelson's story *Far tsvelf toyznt dolar fast er fertsik teg* (For 12,000 Bucks He Fasts 40 Days), which tells of a Jewish émigré undergoing a forty-day fast in the middle of a Berlin restaurant in order to collect a prize of twelve thousand dollars, depicts a type of performance art well-known in Weimar Berlin, made famous by Franz Kafka's 1922 story 'The Hunger Artist.'[86] Clifford also notes that Bergelson's description of modern Yiddish literature in the inaugural issue of *Milgroym* as "a young hag powdering herself with the smoke of big-city cigars" could be taken straight from a painting by Otto Dix or Georg Grosz.[87] But while most scholars agree that certain characters and places are based off of Bergelson's experiences in Berlin, very few have treated the space of the Pension in his writings as anything more than a metaphorical backdrop employed by the author

[83] Lev Bergelson, "Memories of my Father," 83.
[84] Ibid, 84.
[85] Harriet Murav, "Bergelson, Benjamin and Berlin: Justice Deferred," in *The Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture, 1917-1937,* eds. Jörg Schulte, Olga Tabachnikova, and Peter Wagstaff (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 201-217, 202. See David Bergelson, "Mit eyn nakht veyniker," in *Ale Werk,* vol. 6 (Vilna: Kletskin, 1928): 187-202.
[86] See Franz Kafka, "Ein Hungerkünstler," in *Erzahlungen* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946) and Murav, "Bergelson, Benjamin and Berlin," 202. The Yiddish story was first published in the *Forverts* on March 30, 1926.
[87] Clifford, "From Exile to Exile," 247; David Bergelson, "Der gesheyener ufbrokh," *Milgroym* I (1922), 42.

in order to make a claim about the state of Yiddish literature in exile.[88] However, I argue that the space of the Pension is central to understanding Bergelson's Berlin stories. The setting of the Pension functions as a key player, or a central character itself, in two of his stories—*Tsvishn Emigrantn* (Among Emigrants) and *In pansion fun di dray shvester* (In the Pension of the Three Sisters).

Originally published in 1923 and later reprinted in *Shturemteg* in 1929, *Tsvishn Emigrantn* (Among Emigrants) is Bergelson's most well received story in which Berlin functions as the setting. The story is told through an unnamed frame narrator—an established Jewish writer who is relatively settled in Berlin and probably a likeness of Bergelson himself. The plot follows a young Jewish writer from Volhynia who believes that the Ukrainian man responsible for the pogroms that destroyed his shtetl, murdered his grandfather, and drove him out of his hometown, is living in the room across from him in a local Berlin Pension. The young man appeared in the frame narrator's apartment one day and relayed his life story: his town had been ravaged by a pogrom, so he decided to become a pioneer in Palestine out of spite. But when the prosperous families from his town later decided to move to Palestine, the young man ventured to Berlin in hopes of becoming a writer. Likening his life story to a Jewish pauper who is terrorized in a Christian neighborhood, he explained:

> Listen, he's here now, in Berlin…Listen, for nearly three weeks now I've been living 'with him,' here, in this city, in a squalid Pension. I, in room number three. He, in room number five—our doors facing one another. I'm a stranger here. No one knows me. He doesn't know me either. But I know him very well.[89]

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[88] One notable exception is Shachar Pinsker, who has acknowledged the importance of the Pension as a setting in Bergelson's Berlin stories. See Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics."

[89] David Bergelson, "Among Emigrants," in *The Shadows of Berlin: The Berlin Stories of Dovid Bergelson,* trans. Joachim Neugroschel (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005): 21-43, 24. For the original Yiddish version anthologized in *Shturemteg*, see David Bergelson, "Tsvishn Emigrantn," in *Ale Werk*, vol. 5 (Vilna: Kletskin, 1929): 173-199.

Within the space of the Pension, the Jewish émigré's emotional anxieties are immediately rendered in spatial terms, as they are projected onto the room directly opposite him.[90] Here, Bergelson inverts the structuring principle of the Pension as a microcosm of urban modernity. As a space that brings disparate individuals together in intimate proximity, the Pension functions as an *unheimlich* and defamiliarizing force, as it necessitates the protagonist's confrontation with his uncanny 'other.'

While considering these spatial poetics, it is important to remember that in Berlin, the overwhelming majority of Pensions were no more than private homes converted into businesses when single or widowed women needed to provide for themselves or supplement their income.[91] Once a landlady decided to take in boarders, formerly private spaces of the family dwelling now became the public property of residents. And because of the improvisational nature of these living arrangements, many spaces within Pensions would now be utilized in ways that were not in keeping with their original intended use. As Sharon Marcus has shown, the fluidity of new semi-communal spaces such as hallways and building entrances brought the public sphere of the street into the formerly intimate private dwelling.[92] While Pensions provided privacy to their

[90] Many scholars have interpreted this type of spatial poetics as representative of the Yiddish literary imagination in exile. For example, Marc Caplan has pointed out that most of Bergelson's Berlin stories include a particular kind of spatial poetics that depict the social dislocation and cultural peripherality of East European Jewish emigrants who were 'exiled' both from the Yiddish-speaking centers that the author had defined in his famous 1926 essay *Three Centers*, and from the German-speaking environment of Berlin in which they had provisionally settled. See Marc Caplan, *Yiddish Writers in Weimar Berlin: A Fugitive Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), 96. Likewise, in her analysis of *Tsvishn emigrantn*, Rachel Seelig has posited that the unbridgeable space created between door three and door five (the *Zwischenraum*) signifies a kind of no-man's land between victim and perpetrator, fulfillment and loss, or desire and revenge, representing the field of "moral disorder and existential anxiety" that informed the Yiddish literary imagination in exile. The space between the two doors is an interstice— *Zwischenraum,* in German—the space of simultaneous relation and distance. See Seelig, "Between Center and Periphery," 170-171.

[91] On this topic, see Chapter 1.

[92] Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

tenants via access to individual bedrooms, shared spaces of the bourgeois family dwelling such as hallways and stairwells now became 'public' spaces of surveillance. The corridor, as a phenomenon of nineteenth century modernity, essentially transitioned from a functional and neutral connector to a charged node of social interaction. The corridors of apartment buildings were simultaneously public and private spaces, and within the confines of a Pension, the inherently contested space of the hallway brought about new norms of social behavior.

It is thus no coincidence that the paranoia-like discomfort evoked in Bergelson's account crystallizes via the interstitial space of the hallway. The Jewish émigré relates that early one morning, he heard a faint noise in the Pension corridor mixed with the sharp sounds of Ukrainian:

> I looked out into the corridor, and first saw a chambermaid. She was carrying two heavy valises; and then I saw him in the flesh, with his cheerfully twirled moustache. He was respectfully followed by some younger man. 'Oh yes?' he asked the younger man in Ukrainian and he sniffed the air. 'Aren't there any Jews here?'[93]

Standing by the door of his Pension room, stupefied, the Jewish émigré watches the chambermaid take the Ukrainian man to the room directly across from him—to room number five. At that moment, suddenly, a 'feeling of lightness' comes to him in a daze, as though he 'wasn't alone anymore.'[94] As the domestic thoroughfare of the hallway transforms into a space of social surveillance, in this Pension, connections between neighbors are created by imaginative projections via the space of the corridor rather than lived social interactions. The corridor is thus not a backdrop, but a significant connective climax of this story. Given the makeshift nature of Pensions, corridors were uncanny spaces in which the rules and norms of social behavior were continuously being worked out:

[93] Bergelson, "Among Emigrants," 29.
[94] Ibid.

> Sometimes: we bump into one another in the corridor. At the entrance there's a worn red doormat—both of us wipe the dust off our boots. You understand—on the very same mat…and then: as he passes, he glances at me. I bolt into my room, and I can still feel his glare right here and here.[95]

As the in-between spaces of formerly private dwellings transform into vantage points for visual observation and exhibition within the confines of the Pension, seemingly familiar and mundane actions such as wiping off one's boots on a doormat or a passing glance now take on new meanings and become the ultimate defamiliarizing force for the Jewish émigré.

The Jewish émigré, having become thoroughly obsessed with his villainous neighbor, soon begins to track the man's every move and eventually resolves to obtain a gun in order to assassinate the alleged pogromist. But lacking a community to support his efforts, the would-be Jewish terrorist is unable to acquire a weapon and is rendered powerless. He laments, "There's no one I can get a gun from… I'm a stranger in this city, this cauldron."[96] Here, the displacement of the Jewish émigré's social anxieties is rendered again in spatial terms, and the characters themselves are transposed onto their Pension rooms:

> Our two doors glared at each other harshly. I tell you, the only doors that can glare at each other like that are the doors in a Pension where that thing has to happen. Door number three glared at door number five and appeared to be saying: 'My man, who lives behind me, is going to kill your man, who lives behind you.' Have you ever seen such doors? You sleep in your room all night long. You seem to be sleeping very soundly, but in your sleep you remember their numbers—number three glares at number five.[97]

Here, the space of the Pension is animated through the personification of the doors, as door number five and door number three actively glare at each other in a hostile manner. Indeed, within the space of the Pension, the Jewish émigré and the pogromist develop a 'perverse bond'—they are both fugitives, connected not by their common location but by their common

[95] Ibid., 24.
[96] Ibid., 34.
[97] Ibid., 32.

dislocation.[98] For the protagonist, surveillance of the pogromist becomes so much of an obsession, that it has turned into a strange and twisted kind of comfort:

> I peeped into the corridor and saw that our boots had been put out for shining: mine at my door, and his at his door. Mine—worn out Jewish boots with sagging elastics that had already been to Palestine, and his—solid goyish boots with shafts that go up under the trousers. 'He's here *at home,*' I thought to myself…From then on, I started watching him in the Pension…It was good to know that he was there, in the room across from me, behind door number five. And I always felt desolate whenever he went off somewhere and his room remained empty. The hours would stretch and stretch, and the minutes too. I'd shuffle about my room and through the corridor, and I'd feel: 'If he doesn't come back in the next few minutes, my heart will explode!'[99]

While his engagement with his doppelganger is purely observational and relegated to his mind, the Jewish émigré simultaneously identifies with and condemns his presence. As the familiar becomes strange, and the strange becomes homely, the space of the Pension does not allow its inhabitant to feel 'at home.' Indeed, both he and the pogromist are controlled by the space of the hallway: "Both of us are guarded by that place by the phone—that place now controls us both."[100] By enabling the émigré's nervous condition and voyeuristic obsession with the pogromist, the Pension is partially responsible for his psychological unraveling.

In this way, the dwelling-space of the Pension functions as a psychological barrier that prevents the Jewish émigré from gaining a sense of personal comfort or belonging in Berlin. Because the émigré can only experience Berlin through the prism of the Pension, he cannot actually gain a sense of footing in the city, as his body is trapped in his room and his mind is still back in the shtetl from which he originated. As Allison Schachter has suggested, this blurring of the spatiotemporal division between Berlin and the landscape of the Jewish shtetl functions as a narrative distortion of time and space in which Berlin itself becomes the new landscape of the

[98] Seelig, "Between Center and Periphery," 170.
[99] Bergelson, "Among Emigrants," 32-33.
[100] Ibid., 34.

Jewish past.[101] Thus, as a result of this spatial and temporal distortion, the Jewish past looms over the expanse between the urban center and the Jewish periphery.[102] The walls of the Pension function both literally and metaphorically as an unhomely vantage point, casting its inhabitants into an alternate reality, through which its Jewish émigrés must inevitably see and experience the city.

In what follows, unable to secure a weapon through the Jewish community, the émigré turns to the frame narrator for help, because he is a writer, and "writers, I thought, were the conscience of the nation."[103] But the frame narrator fails to come to his aid, leaving the émigré trapped in his own isolation. This particular statement that the writer is the 'conscience of the nation' has garnered the attention of many Bergelson scholars. While David Roskies equates the figure of the frame narrator to a kind of *talush*[104] who is incapable of making decisions, Marc Caplan suggests that the writer's failure to represent the Jewish émigré's perspective provides an instance of how the narrator serves as an inversion for the protagonist.[105] Delphine Bechtel interprets the protagonist as a kind of shadow figure (*Schattenfigur*) of the frame narrator as Bergelson's alter ego, and Sasha Senderovich links the protagonist's statement with Bergelson's own inner conflict in Berlin about a nonexistent readership.[106] All of these interpretations, which hint at the autobiographical undertones behind the story in terms of the writer's relationship to

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[101] Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 116.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Bergelson, "Among Emigrants," 42.
[104] The *talush,* a central figure in Hebrew literature at the turn of the twentieth century, represents a rootless, isolated, alienated, or socially un-integrated individual who feels disconnected from the Jewish tradition.
[105] David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 147; Caplan, *Yiddish Writers in Weimar Berlin*, 116.
[106] Delphine Bechtel, "Dovid Bergelsons Berliner Erzählungen: Ein vergessenes Kapitel der jiddischen Literatur," in *Jiddische Philologie: Festschrift für Erika Timm*, eds. Walter Röll and Simon Neuberg (Tübingen: Max Niemer Verlag, 1990), 263; Senderovich, "In Search of Readership," 153.

his subject, underscore the dislocation between the writer and his milieu. In this light, it is useful to consider Michel Foucault's positioning of the mirror in his discussion of heterotopias as self-reflexive counter sites:

> In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself... such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy.[107]

Just as the space of the Pension does not bring about any kind of solidarity or collectivity, the empty space between the protagonist's Pension and the frame narrator's apartment exists as an uncanny yet self-reflexive kind of void. In this counter-site, the writer meets his inverted self, but the modes of interaction between the two displaced men ultimately fail.

In the end, the story concludes with the protagonist's suicide note, reading: "Behind the mirror that hangs in my room, number three, in the Pension, there is a hook. The rope on which the mirror hangs is strong enough…I understand everything now: I'm an emigrant…among emigrants…I don't want to be one anymore."[108] Just one year earlier in his 1922 epistolary novel, Russian-Jewish émigré author Viktor Shklovsky made a similar conclusion within the walls of his Berlin Pension: "We are refugees. No, not refugees but fugitives—and now squatters[109]…How clearly I feel this!"[110] "In Berlin," he warned, "Loneliness will make a person do anything."[111] Nonetheless, despite the suicide of Bergelson's would-be Jewish terrorist, the barely discernable line between reality and imagination in the space of the Berlin Pension

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[107] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22-27, 24.
[108] Bergelson, "Among Emigrants," 43.
[109] Svetlana Boym has pointed out that the Russian term Shklovsky used here for 'squatters' can be more appropriately (and literally) translated as 'house-sitters.' See Svetlana Boym, "Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky," *Poetics Today* 17:4 (1996): 511-530, 518.
[110] Shklovsky, *Zoo*, 63.
[111] Ibid, 98.

persists. In the end, it never becomes clear to the reader if the figure of the pogromist, seen only through the eyes of the young Jewish émigré, is actually who the narrator claims him to be, or purely a figment of his imagination.

While the space of the corridor serves as the connective glue in *Tsvishn emigrantn,* the Pension becomes an even more potent actant in Bergelson's 1927 story, *In pansion fun di dray shvester*. First published in the New York communist newspaper *Frayhayt* on April 10, 1927, *In pansion fun di dray shvester* depicts the projected longings of a group of East European Jewish boarders towards three (supposedly married) sisters—also East European Jewish émigrés—who run a Berlin Pension. Written in the implied second person, the text theoretically offers a sort of 'guide' for émigré readers navigating the dwelling-space of the Berlin Pension in their confusing new surroundings.[112] In contrast to *Tsvishn emigrantn,* where the protagonist seeks shelter in a Pension that is anything but homely, this Pension, at least on the surface level, bears the semblance of a home. In fact, the description of the Pension in the very first paragraph suggests the struggle with which the East European Jewish émigré interprets the nature of the space as a suitable 'home.'

The door of the Pension—when the prospective tenant rings the bell—is opened by a polite, attractive, and nicely dressed young lady, who "looks at this person with eyes that see more in him than many other eyes see."[113] She immediately helps the man out of his overcoat

[112] As Sasha Senderovich has suggested, in the context of Yiddish literature and literary activity in Weimar Berlin, the matter of the addressee is all the more crucial, as the addressee is 'connected to the addresser through context, message, contact, and code'—that is to say, these crucial aspects of the literary process that involve the written and published text are dependent on the presence of the reading public. See Senderovich, "In Search of Readership," 151.

[113] David Bergelson, "The Boarding House of the Three Sisters," in *The Shadows of Berlin: The Berlin Stories of Dovid Bergelson,* trans. Joachim Neugroschel (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005): 45-55, 45. For the original Yiddish version, see David Bergelson, "In pansion fun di dray shvester," in *Ale Werk*, vol. 6 (Vilna: Kletskin, 1930): 99-111.

"with movements that make him feel he has finally reached a hospitable home—he has reached a shore."[114] As the émigré makes his way inside the threshold:

> Feet feel rugs under them and instantly start walking on them softly, like springs. All around, from the walls of the open, warmly furnished room, pictures and photographs of women peer down, with faces absorbed in pious thoughts, with averted heads and misty, passionate eyes. The shadowy corridor recalls one such picture, a too naked image: you feel you are both in the city and very remote and isolated from its millions of inhabitants.[115]

As discussed in Chapter 1, the presence of photographs adorning Pension hallways effectively cast these spaces as visual repositories of the landladies' memories. While family photographs that reflected the stability and comfort of family life created an environment that replicated the coziness of the bourgeois home, being faced with memories belonging to somebody else also had the potential to conjure up and reinforce negative feelings of foreignness and alienation. In this instance, Bergelson's Jewish émigré struggles to read the furnishings and interpret the contents of the dwelling space. The familiar space is thus rendered as *unheimlich,* or uncanny, making the émigré feel as if he is simultaneously both in and outside of the city.

Indeed, as the disoriented émigré begins to navigate his search for personal urban space in the metropolis, he must attempt to assess whether or not he deems this dwelling-space inhabitable—whether it could be, for him, a hospitable 'home.' This decision is not to be taken lightly, as the émigré will not be a mere guest for the night, but, "after all, he will remain in the Pension for a long time."[116] As he debates with himself internally, "You instantly think about the Pension: A decent place, definitely…Yet on the other hand…"[117] Now it becomes clear to the émigré "why, of all the streets in Berlin, the Pension sought out this very street, in an area that is

[114] Bergelson, "In pansion fun di dray shvester," 45. On the metaphor of the Berlin Pension as an island or shore in early twentieth century German-Jewish literature, see Chapter 1.
[115] Bergelson, "In pansion fun di dray shvester," 45.
[116] Ibid, 48.
[117] Ibid.

neither too noisy nor too quiet."[118] The Pension, as a space of instruction, leads the boarder to quickly reach the conclusion that "the Pension itself is that kind of place—it teaches everyone who comes in: 'Don't be too noisy and don't be too quiet.'"[119] Indeed, the confused Jewish émigré feels that "everything you see around you elicits both suspicion and doubt that the entire Pension has been arranged deliberately to elicit some kind of suspicion, and then the thought crosses your mind that you may be mistaken."[120] Already in the first paragraph of the story, the Pension is depicted as an uncanny kind of actant—this dwelling-space (both the dwelling space itself and the people and contents within it) causes its inhabitants to read between the lines and question themselves and others, apprehensive of what might lurk under surfaces. In this light, Bergelson has invested both the space of the Pension and the inanimate objects it houses with a peculiar Flaubertian anthropomorphic quality: "The Pension sought out this very street," "the shadowy corridor recalls one such picture." Indeed, as Daniela Mantovan has pointed out, anthropomorphic descriptions, the animalization of objects (and the merging of the two), are repeatedly present throughout many of Bergelson's texts.[121] In this story of a provisional home, dwelling-spaces, interiors, and moods come to partake in a unique mode of loss and emptiness. However, unlike Bergelson's 1913 novel *Nokh Alemen* (*When All is Said and Done*), which was heavily influenced by the Realism of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* both in terms of style and

[118] Ibid., 46.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid. Following the logic Shachar Pinsker has laid out, the space of the Pension in this story functions as a visual façade that is extremely difficult to decipher. See Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics," 46.
[121] Daniela Mantovan has shown how this practice is characteristic of a large body of Bergelson's prose. See Daniela Mantovan, "Language and Style in *Nokh alemen* (1913): Bergelson's Debt to Flaubert," in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism,* ed. Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh (London: Legenda, 2007): 89-112, 101.

execution, *In pansion fun di dray shvester* offers a modernist alternative by making the Pension both an actor and the milieu.

At this point in the story, as soon as the émigré steps into the reception area, the emphasis is on the commercial aspect of this prospective 'home' and the transactional nature of the Pension as an institution. With the commercial element of this homely establishment in the foreground, the eldest of the three sisters "scrutinizes the unfamiliar guest as if trying to decide whether he will not only be suitable as a boarder but also work out as a close friend."[122] Bergelson relates:

> She settles down with him in one of the coziest nooks of the room; but then she changes her mind and leads him to another nook, a cozier one…At that moment, you agree to pay the high price for boom and board…You forget whether you can afford the high rent or not; you forget how old you are.[123]

It is important to note that this type of scrutinizing was not just a literary trope that Bergelson employed. In Berlin, landladies were encouraged to exercise the utmost discretion in their selection of guests, and any prospective tenant seeking accommodation in a Pension without a personal reference in hand would have expected to be looked upon with judgmental eyes.[124] The notion of the Pension as an ambiguous sexualized space was also very much rooted in public perception surrounding these dwelling spaces in the previous decades. In Berlin, Pension landladies had long been suspect of engaging in various types of illicit activity due to the ways in which they commercialized domestic labor. The notion of a woman receiving remuneration for the traditionally unpaid domestic duties of running a household was uncomfortable to middle-class sensibility. Thus, since the turn of the century, Pension owners and landladies in Berlin were sometimes assumed to be concealing their 'actual' hidden intentions by using their

[122] Bergelson, "The Boarding House of the Three Sisters," 46.
[123] Ibid., 46-47.
[124] On this phenomenon, see Chapter 1.

businesses as a cover for other bordello-like endeavors and thus forming an "essential part of the dark side of urban social life."[125] Even one of the most popular guidebooks in early twentieth century Berlin characterized the Pension as an "ambiguous space"—a space in which "all kinds of chicanery might [occur] behind glass windows with elegant crepe de-chine curtains."[126]

It is thus unsurprising that Bergelson's Pension initially seems like a luxurious brothel full of "soft rugs" and "passionate eyes."[127] As Marc Caplan has aptly pointed out, the Pension is actually the opposite of a brothel, in that its economic model depends on frustration and temptation rather than quick and efficient consummation of desire in order to function; while the sisters' attractiveness is coupled by their inaccessibility, their bodies—just like the shop windows in Berlin—are essentially put on 'display' to lure in business.[128] Indeed, this suspension of erotic desire pervading Yiddish writing—the act of burrowing under the surface—is one of the most prominent themes in Berlin émigré literature, post-war nostalgia for Weimar Berlin (as evident in the film *Cabaret*), and in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* literature.[129]

In this context, the act of scrutinizing is a mutual endeavor, as the narrator needs to carefully decipher the space of the Pension and the contents it houses in order to figure out what is real and what is manufactured. The eldest of the three sisters, for example, actually turns out to

[125] Gertrud von Beaulieu, *Das Weibliche Berlin: Bilder aus dem heutigen socialen Leben* (Berlin: Fischer, 1892), 141; Gunga, *Zimmer Frei*, 87.
[126] Berlin und die Berliner (1905), 429.
[127] Bergelson, "The Boarding House of the Three Sisters," 45.
[128] Caplan, "The Corridors of Berlin," 51.
[129] Ibid, 52. The act of burrowing repressed sexual desires and fantasies under the surface is also a characteristic manifestation of what Janet Ward has called the 'surface culture' or 'cult of surface' in Weimar Germany. Through meticulous examination of the surface culture of architecture and design in Weimar Germany, Ward has shed light on this most critical tension that comprises Weimar modernity—the tension between the "apparent ludic pleasure and liberation inherent in surface culture, and a new form of punishment or internalized (self) reification if one buys into surface culture too completely." See Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Ewing: University of California Press, 2001), 37.

be 'younger and more beautiful' than her picture, which hangs on the wall.[130] This discrepancy functions as a disorienting affront to the émigré's understanding, threatening his perception of his new surroundings. The all-pervasive ambiguity of the space even extends to the marital status of the two elder sisters, who became separated from their husbands on route to Berlin, somewhere in Riga or Bialystok, and are described as "looking like half widows and half deserted wives."[131] Nonetheless, their existence depends upon remaining in this in-between state. This is probably why they sense that if their husbands were to join them, then the Pension would become a "normal, ordinary place like any other Pension," and the dwelling-space would function as a proper family home rather than their self-inflicted broken home—which functioned preciously as the ambiguous sexualized space that they depended on for their business.[132] In addition to the sisters, even the mood of the Pension is explicitly described as being in an intermediate state, akin to the days of *Chol HaMoed* of Passover and Sukkot.[133] And all the while, as the narrator relates, somebody has been 'softly and ecstatically' playing piano in a nearby room. The sound of the piano itself is simultaneously familiar and strange: there are "notes that perish because of deep emotions—fading heartache notes as if from the Jewish prayer for the dead, and notes that cheer themselves up with new hopes, with new questions."[134] While the sound of the piano might typically serve as a homey reminder of middle-class domesticity, here in the Pension, the notes also conjure up an eerie yet nostalgic terror associated with the Jewish prayer for the dead.

[130] Bergelson, "The Boarding House of the Three Sisters," 46.
[131] Ibid., 49.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid., 48.
[134] Ibid., 47.

However, it is unclear to the Jewish émigré if the seemingly cozy surroundings of the Pension are a sign of homeliness or a carefully staged site of seduction. His attempt at deciphering does not reveal an answer, but instead confuses him further and makes him question himself. Indeed, when the eldest sister asks if he would prefer tea or coffee, she peers into his eyes and suddenly guesses 'coffee.' This causes the émigré to feel with all of his senses that she is right, that he truly does prefer coffee, but also leads him to explain: "you are surprised at yourself for being a fool all these years and drinking tea."[135] Bergelson flips the nineteenth-century convention of Realism on its head by presenting the Pension as a kind of surreal heterotopic space imbued with a self-reflexive power. The new social order and spatial regime of the Pension is established as Herr Moses—due to the fact that he was the very first tenant—earns the right to frequently open his door a crack into the hallway, stand there with a partially eaten orange in his hand, and "delightfully watch everything that happens in the sisters' Pension."[136]

As the story unfolds, the Jewish émigré is unable to discern if the Pension is a true home or merely a façade. As one of the other boarders declared,

> I believe the whole business is a lie…The sisters probably aren't even sisters…You [can bet your life—something's not kosher here. Everything is deliberately aimed at confusing us. The whole business is deliberately aimed at making you think that I get something from the sisters.[137]

Indeed, the conditions of the Pension have cast an additional boarder into an alternate reality; a wealthy tenant with lame legs, who occupies three richly furnished rooms, has convinced himself that he will marry the youngest of the three sisters once he regains his health. Of course, this alternate reality is both manufactured and reinforced by the sisters, who "created a certain mood

[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 52.
[137] Ibid., 53.

[in the boarder's rooms] as if having lame legs were a special pleasure, which not everyone is worthy of."[138]

Just as the reader never finds out if the figure of the pogromist was a real person or a figment of the émigré's imagination, the ending of *In pansion fun di dray shvester* also leaves the reader in the lurch; it never becomes clear if the sisters' establishment is a ruse. While the Pension may have seemed a homely dwelling on the surface, in the end, the Pension of the three sisters offered a pseudo-home—a kind of ersatz home merely masquerading as an 'authentic' home. In this light, 'home' becomes a nostalgic dream rather than specific tangible living quarters. Ultimately, both of Bergelson's stories depict the Pension as space embodying the notion of false pretense, which in turn, generates an environment in which ordinary people, constantly reading between the lines, question themselves and others, fearful of what might lurk under surfaces. In this sense, the space of Bergelson's Pensions can be regarded as an inherently modernist kind of heterotopia, a world within a world or a space between spaces that existed only in the threshold, whose social and spiritual meaning is unsettling and uncanny.

From Allegory to Actant: The Place of the Pension in S.Y. Agnon's *Ad Hena*

No other Jewish author has dealt with the space of the Berlin Pension as extensively as Shmuel Yosef Agnon. After several years of living in Jaffa, the Galician-born writer arrived in Berlin in 1912 and remained in Germany until 1924. There, he joined a thriving Jewish intellectual community and became an adored Eastern European writer by members of the German Jewish intelligentsia, such as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Franz Rosenzweig, and Zalman Schocken. Written over a long period of time well after Agnon's stay in Germany, *Ad*

[138] Ibid., 51.

Hena was published in Hebrew in 1952. On one level, the text is a presentation of the horrors of the First World War as reflected in the city of Berlin from a vantage point that partially coincides with Agnon's own experience at the time, as during the course of the narrator's wanderings, he navigates streets flooded with cripples, encounters broken families, and struggles to cope in a country engulfed by the chaos of war. However, the book is just as much about Weimar culture and infused with themes characteristic of the Weimar period. This can be seen, for example, in the narrator's preoccupation with clothing, fashion, and architecture. Indeed, far from being oblivious to the contemporary modernist discourse and preoccupations of Berlin, both Agnon and his narrator in *Ad Hena* were intimately engaged with issues of visuality, body, gender and sexuality, and surface (*Oberfläche*).[139] Janet Ward has shown how these issues were inextricably linked not only to Weimar modernist high culture, such as Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), but also to the new forms of modernism in art, literature, theater, cinema, philosophy, and architecture that planted its roots in Berlin in the early twentieth century.[140] Thus, I read *Ad Hena* not merely as an account of World War I Berlin in a temporal sense, but also as an account of Weimar Berlin in a cultural sense.[141]

Like many of his Jewish literary contemporaries, much of Agnon's body of work can be characterized as having a documentary and autobiographical quality.[142] Unlike the anonymous

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[139] See Pinsker, *Literary Passports,* 139.
[140] See Ward, *Weimar Surfaces*. Also see Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003) and Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
[141] Literary scholar Nitza Ben-Dov has taken this argument ever further, claiming that the First World War is entirely peripheral to the book. See Nitza Ben-Dov, "S. J. Agnon and the Art of Sublimation," in *Tradition and Trauma: Studies in the Fiction of S. J. Agnon,* ed. David Patterson and Glenda Abramson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994): 89-105.
[142] Glenda Abramson has argued that, in reproducing the environment and atmosphere of Berlin with fidelity and attention to descriptive detail, *Ad Hena* 'provides almost documentary descriptions of the city.' See Glenda Abramson, "Ad Hena: S. Y. Agnon in Berlin," in *Hebrew Writings of the First World War* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008): 147-180, 148. Avraham Holtz has argued that Agnon's novel

space of Shimoni and Bergelson's Berlin, Agnon's frequent use of street names, addresses, places, and landmarks provides *Ad Hena* with a topographical specificity. Though he took some artistic liberties, Agnon did in fact follow the same basic itinerary as his protagonist, with whom he also shares a name. In this semi-autobiographical account, Shmuel Yosef's main preoccupation is finding and keeping a room in Berlin after leaving his Pension for a day trip in Leipzig and returning to find his former room occupied. In early 1917, Agnon resided at the Pension Körber in Berlin, located at 31 Fasanenstraße, just a five-minute walk from the Reform Synagogue down the street.[143] A small Pension of modest means, owned and operated by Valla Körber, this Pension was a reputable establishment among the Jewish community where even Martin Buber occasionally rented a room.[144] As a vegetarian, Agnon likely would have felt comfortable there, as Frau Körber's Pension was known for its vegetarian cuisine and specifically catered to tenants who maintained vegetarian diets.[145] After relocating to Leipzig later that year, Agnon complained to his patron Zalman Schocken about his living conditions there, and inquired about "the availability of a room in the Pension of Frl. Körber on Fasanenstraße," since he would "return in a heartbeat."[146] In fact, many of the descriptions of

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Only Yesterday constitutes the clearest example of 'documentary fiction.' Holtz's historical research involved unearthing Agnon's original sources in diaries, journals, newspapers, and speeches. See Avraham Holtz, "Hit'bonenot befrati T'mol Shilshom," in *Kovets Agnon,* vol. I, eds. Emuna Yaron, Rafael Weiser, Dan Laor, and Reuven Merkin (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at ha-sefarim 'a. sh. Y.L. Magnus, ha-Universitah ha-'Ivrit, 1994): 178-221. Gershom Scholem has also noted "Agnon's peculiar gifts as an anthologist." See Gershom Scholem, "S. Y. Agnon—The Last Hebrew Classic," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays,* ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012): 93-116, 101. Also see Dan Laor, "Agnon in Germany, 1912-1924: A Chapter of a Biography," *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 18:1 (1993): 75-93 and Dan Laor, *Haye Agnon* (Tel Aviv: Schoken, 1998).

[143] NLI, ARC Ms. Var. 350/008/65.1. Letter, S.Y. Agnon to Martin Buber, June 25, 1917.

[144] NLI, ARC Ms. Var. 350/008/704.2. Letter, Zalman Shneur to Martin Buber, December 25, 1917. Valla Körber often issued advertisements for her Pension in Jewish newspapers and periodicals such as the *Jüdische Rundschau*. For example, see *Jüdische Rundschau,* Nr. 31/32, April 17, 1935, p. 47.

[145] *Jüdische Rundschau,* Nr. 31/32, April 17, 1935, p. 47.

[146] S. Y. Agnon to Zalman Schocken, Leipzig, February 1917, in *Sh. Y. Agnon – Z. Shoken: Hilufe igrot,* ed. Emuna Yaron (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1991), 39-41.

Agnon's various Pension quarters in his personal correspondence with Schocken closely match those in *Ad Hena.* Indeed, Agnon's personal experiences must have served as a platform for *Ad Hena,* and his protagonist is a clear autobiographical reflection of the author. The affinities between the author and his protagonist are more than striking; the narrator, like Agnon himself, is a Galician Jewish writer named 'Shmuel Yosef' who spent three years living in Jaffa before moving to Berlin as an émigré, and finally back to Palestine. In stark contrast to the intimate small town and close-knit community from which Agnon (and his narrator) hail, the urban metropolis of Berlin provided a disorienting experience for the author-newcomer. In fact, Agnon had the basic plot for *Ad Hena* planned out early on. In early 1917, Agnon penned a Hebrew poem addressed on a postcard to Martin Buber from the Pension Körber in Berlin, the first stanza of which, reads:

> I received your books, / I was happy about them.
> I read a lot in them, / And I will read some more.
> But if God desires / My return to his stronghold[147]
> Then I'll rent a room, / And will designate a closet there (for the books).[148]

Though published in 1952, long after Agnon had left Berlin and permanently settled in Palestine, *Ad Hena* is one of his most formally experimental works. Agnon, perhaps more than any other Hebrew writer of his generation, was thoroughly obsessed with the literary motif of 'home' as the object of the protagonist's search, and issues of home and homecoming permeate the vast body of his prose. However, unlike the rented rooms and homes in his other stories and novels, the Pensions in *Ad Hena* take on a life of their own and become an integral if not *the* central part of the plot. Stylistically, *Ad Hena* is a rather peculiar text due to its disjointed structure and unsatisfying ending. While on the one hand, the text stubbornly refuses to conform to any

[147] Zechariah 9:12.
[148] NLI, ARC Ms. Var. 350/008/65.1. Letter, S.Y. Agnon to Martin Buber, June 25, 1917.

literary genre, the novel is also full of instances in which the author reverts to his typical 'Agnonian' language and style that is characterized by irony, allegory, and pastiche. While some scholars such as Glenda Abramson view the novel as inherently anti-modernist due to the seemingly tacked-on ending, having a setting that turns out to be an actor is actually a highly modernistic presentation of the Jewish émigré experience in World War I Berlin.[149] In parts of *Ad Hena,* Agnon presents the internal, spiritual, and psychological aspects of his situation by dwelling upon the external, physical properties of the dwelling-space of the Pension itself and his own presence within it.[150] Yet in other instances, Agnon fuses the setting and the actant together. While in *Ad Hena,* the Pension room ultimately acquires a metaphysical significance for the narrator who is struggling to find his place in the world, it also serves as the tangible reality that shapes the entire story. Although the novel's basic plot should be regarded as metaphoric for the author's search for a Hebrew linguistic home, the rooms themselves should not merely be read as a backdrop, but an important part of this very story, as they are the places that physically house the writer and the spaces in which the literature in question can be produced.

Ad Hena opens with a description of the shortcomings and limitations of the narrator's Pension room on the Fasanenstraße in West Berlin. Describing the degraded physical condition of his cramped Pension lodgings, this hypersensitive, often paranoid, and somewhat neurotic narrator obsesses over the material details of his room. From the outset, the notion that the Pension room has cast the narrator into a state of isolation is readily apparent, as Shmuel Yosef admits, "Not once during my stay there did I speak to the landlady or the other boarders," as "everyone had his own troubles; no one had time for anyone else's."[151] In fact, the only time he

[149] Glenda Abramson, *Hebrew Writing of the First World War* (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 162.
[150] See Arnold J. Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare: A Study in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 217-218.
[151] Agnon, *To this Day,* 17-18.

had spoken to the landlady was on the day he rented his room, when her daughters came to welcome him. Even the chambermaid, who brought him a cup of coffee and two or three slices of bread each morning, "knew [he] didn't like small talk and came and went without a word."[152] Upon bringing the bill once a week, Agnon's narrator simply "left the rent on the tray with a tip for her."[153] After all, as the narrator recalls, "In those days, I had so little contact with the world that I can recall every person I met. A mere name, face, or even smell can bring back an entire conversation."[154] Absorbed in his separate life and enclosed in his room, Agnon depicts the space of the Pension as a kind of agent of isolation for its émigré inhabitant. Of course, the isolation was in part due to the fact that the narrator spent most of his actual time cooped up in his Pension room. Despite the fact that, even during the war, Berlin was an important center of art, literature, theater, cinema, philosophy and architecture, the narrator felt the need to confine himself to his room in the Pension. Detached from his surroundings in Berlin, Shmuel Yosef depicts the room itself as having cast the narrator into a state of depression. He recalls:

> I could feel my room getting smaller. Half of it was perpetually dark and half was perpetually cold, and neither got any sunlight. There's a saying that not even the sun likes living in darkness, and I suppose that's what kept it from my room. And I, who had lived in Palestine and knew what a real sun was like, had a craving for light. Yet each time I stepped out on the balcony to warm up I had to retreat inside at once, since the trees were full of dust that the breeze blew everywhere…And so I spent most of my time in my room, going from its cold half to its dark half, neither of which had any air or light.[155]

A powerful marker of alienation, even from the outset of Agnon's account, the Pension is presented not as a passive vessel, but as the very agent of the narrator's isolated state.

Nonetheless, it is through the chambermaid that the narrator then learns about the private life of the Pension's owner. When the chambermaid "forgot herself and stayed to chat a bit," the

[152] Ibid., 17.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid., 20.
[155] Ibid., 18-19.

narrator learns that the landlady, Frau Trötzmuller, was a widow whose husband had been killed in a duel, leaving her with three daughters and a son who had disappeared at the front.[156] While Frau Trötzmuller and her daughters did not impose their grief on the boarders and their boarders in turn did not inquire about the missing son, Agnon's narrator, a poor sleeper, often heard the grieving mother sobbing for her son during the night.[157] The chambermaid also revealed to the narrator other details about the occupants: the largest room housed a wealthy lady from the provinces, across from her lived an official from the Tax Bureau, and adjacent to him was an elderly couple who had fled the war zone.[158] Indeed, the narrator admits to his readers, "I'm telling you things I never asked to be told about myself."[159] Not only is the atmosphere of Frau Trötzmuller's Pension presented as a series of awkward encounters that made it difficult to create meaningful social bonds, but this provisional intimacy of strangers embodies the émigré condition of living under surveillance—both real and imagined. In addition to actual scrutinizing, a kind of obsession-driven surveillance plagues Pension residents with anxiety and urban paranoia. This probably resulted in Agnon's narrator having a dream that "Pharaoh's policemen arrived and buried [him] alive in the brick wall of a house."[160] He recalls, "I groaned so loudly from within the bricks that God heard me and delivered me, putting me back to bed. Yet the policemen kept trying to choke me. I thrashed about and sent them sprawling."[161] The narrator then recounts how the official from the Tax Bureau who lived across from him, having drunk too much that night at a party, "had mistaken my room for his own and crawled into bed with me,

[156] Ibid., 17.
[157] Ibid., 18.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 79.
[161] Ibid.

and now he was lying on top of me and crushing me."[162] However, it is unclear if this strange incident actually occurred, or if it was only part of the narrator's dream.

This blurring of real and imagined invasion of personal space demonstrates the detrimental effects of the Pension on the narrator's psyche, and this is partially responsible as a force that prohibits him from feeling 'at home.' Indeed, as the narrator would later report, "Being looked at makes a person look back and being thought about makes a person self-conscious."[163] At another Pension, the narrator recalls how the landlady's daughter flirtatiously "lingered in the doorway looking at [him]"[164] and would stand "with her ear glued to the door"[165] of his room during his conversations. Nonetheless, like the spectatorship in Bergelson's story, the act of scrutinizing is mutual. When Shmuel Yosef later arrives as a tenant at Frau Tanzmann's Pension in the Hallensee district, he studies the landlady's face in order to determine if she was Jewish or not. He explains, "The first time I saw her, I was sure she was Jewish. The second time, I was sure she wasn't. The third time, I wondered what made me so sure the first two times."[166] In addition to people, material objects are also subject to surveillance, and anything not locked away becomes the object of scrutiny. Upon receiving a visitor in a different pension, the narrator recalls: "[She] had itchy fingers. Whatever she saw in my room, she had to touch. If she had found the Kaiser sitting there, she would have reached out and fingered his mustache."[167] In the Pension, life is neither public nor private, but experienced under the watchful, panoptic eye of the landlady and the real and imagined gaze of other of all of the residents who occupy this semi-communal dwelling-space.

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[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., 138.
[164] Ibid., 116.
[165] Ibid., 127.
[166] Ibid., 111.
[167] Ibid., 124.

After having introduced Frau Trötzmuller's Pension, the plot of the narrative is soon interrupted when a letter from the ailing widow of a late scholar in the Saxon town of Grimma arrives, asking the narrator to help retrieve the scholar's library of Judaica. Agnon's narrator agrees to help, opting to leave his room in Frau Trötzmuller's Pension. Nonetheless, he admits that his decision to leave is really based on the "vague hope of finding a room in the country for the summer,"[168] or the desire of seeking out better living quarters. In *Ad Hena,* each move is prompted by the narrator's intolerability of life in his current lodgings. In this way, Shmuel Yosef's Pension room, or his provisional 'home,' has become more than just a space to sleep at night. It has taken on a life of its own, as it is the shortcomings of his Pension lodgings that compel him to move from place to place and induce his exilic wandering. Of course, the search for a tangible personal space in which to reside is essential to the formation of any émigré identity. But with Agnon, it is place, not plot, which determines the course of the narrative.

Once the narrator is in Grimma, his thoughts wander back to Frau Trötzmuller's Pension, and he cannot help but think about his former room while trying to fall asleep in his hotel room in the Saxon town. Similarly, as he later makes his way to Lunenfeld, all the narrator can think about is returning to his room in Frau Trötzmuller's Pension and collapsing on its bed.[169] He explains, "Although it may not have been paradise, it was a sight better than being a homeless vagrant, [as] the knowledge that I had a room to return to came as a relief."[170] Clearly, the narrator is fooling himself, as he knows very well that this is no guarantee. While still in Frau Trötzmuller's Pension, before even embarking on his trip, the narrator acknowledges, "There was no need to fear my room remaining empty. With every house in Berlin full of refugees, it

[168] Ibid., 39.
[169] Ibid., 57.
[170] Ibid.

would be snapped up in no time."[171] Indeed, on the train ride back to Berlin, the narrator experiences massive anxiety about *not* having found another room, because he "couldn't count on getting [his] old one back. Berlin was full of refugees, no new housing was under construction, and empty rooms were grabbed in no time."[172] As the train nears, he reflects, "I had to get to a Pension in which I didn't know if I was still a boarder, because my room had most likely been rented and there wouldn't be another."[173]

Finally, when the narrator does set out to return to Frau Trötzmuller's Pension, the dwelling-space is depicted as that which prevents the émigré from integrating into the city at large. As he leaves the train station and walks through the streets of Berlin, Agnon's narrator notices that, despite it being almost midnight, the city is wide awake:

> The streets were crowded, the streetcars were running, and the taxis, which were never available when you needed them, sped back and forth between the cabarets and the taverns. For every German who had gotten rich from the war, another cabaret or tavern had opened, and if you didn't bump into a man dressed as a woman every time you passed one of them, you bumped into a woman dressed as a man.[174]

However, the émigré is unable to participate in this nightlife because he is chained to his Pension, which is located not in the city center, but out in the domestic hub of Charlottenburg. Indeed, as the narrator reaches the Fasanenstraße and passes the giant Reform Synagogue, he notes that the "streets quieted down" and "all the houses were sleeping."[175] When Agnon's narrator returns to the Pension at midnight, he scolds himself:

> You've timed things badly, I told myself. The Pension has gone to bed and you'll have to ring and wake everyone…Now the entire Pension would suffer…I would rob them of their sleep when I rang…This would be a pity, because [the landladies] worked hard to

[171] Ibid., 21.
[172] Ibid., 71.
[173] Ibid., 74.
[174] Ibid., 75. This description is a good characterization of Weimar surface culture. On this topic, see Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Ewing: University of California Press, 2001).
[175] Agnon, *To this Day,* 75.

> make the boarders happy and needed their sleep to get through the next day. I should have taken to my heels and run in the other direction. But not only didn't I run, I felt too guilty even to walk. The whole street was sound asleep, each house in its fashion. The heavy stone houses slumbered dreamlessly.[176]

Certainly, written and unwritten curfews were one such component that prohibited Pension residents from partaking in Berlin nightlife, and in *Ad Hena,* the narrator's anxiety about waking up his fellow tenants is by no means unfounded.[177] As one of his landladies proclaimed, "Nobody has the right to disturb us at this time of night."[178] Later in the novel, Agnon's narrator would likewise recall feeling literally trapped at night—chained down to his bed due to the fear of waking up his landlord. Reminiscent of David Shimoni's language of entrapment employed in *Chalom leyl choref,* in which he explicitly refers to his Pension room as a "prison cell,"[179] Agnon explains, "I might as well be in shackles as in fear of waking my landlord and his wife…[At dawn,] the house begins to stir. My landlord and his wife awaken. Doors open and shut. I'm freed from my chains."[180] Like the Jewish author-narrators in Shimoni's modernist poems, Shmuel Yosef ponders if the space of the Pension room can perhaps serve as a place to dream: "Although I might as well be in shackles as in fear of waking my landlord and his wife, my mind is free to roam and it wonders: who started this race, the people or the streetcars? Since it's impossible to think with so much noise, I never come to any conclusion."[181] However, like Shimoni's landlady who cut off his dreams, Agnon's narrator cannot uncover the answer to his question due to a disruptive force—in this case, the noise—invading his Pension room.

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[176] Ibid., 75-77.
[177] On curfews in Berlin Pensions and the ways in which landladies implemented them, see Chapter 1.
[178] Agnon, *To this Day*, 81.
[179] Shimoni, "Chalom leyl choref," 4.
[180] Agnon, *To this Day,* 110.
[181] Ibid.

As Agnon's narrator embarks on the journey back to the Trötzmuller Pension, an *unheimlich* home awaits him; the three Trötzmuller girls, to whom he had never given a moment's notice while living with them under one roof, "now appeared to me large as life."[182] When he finally returns to this Pension on the Fasanenstraße, he learns that Frau Trötzmuller's long lost son, Hanschen, has returned and is now occupying his former room. Stranded, with the streetcars having stopped running for the night, the émigré narrator reflects:

> I stood in the hallway, midway between Hanschen's room and the front door…Everyone was asleep except me, the only one without a place to lay his head. I stood looking at the doors of the rooms, which had dissolved into a magical tableau. The light in the hallway gleamed on the doorknobs, every one of which was locked. Twenty-four hours ago I had lain in a comfortable bed, reading a charming legend about an architect who walked through a door painted on canvas.[183] Now I stood before the doors of real rooms and not one would open for me...I was left all alone in the hallway. At first I felt conspicuously large. Then I felt insignificantly small. Then I stood like a golem[184] awaiting orders. There was no one to give them.[185]

Like in Bergelson's *Tsvishn Emigrantn*, the climax of the protagonist's anxiety that also sets the rest of the plot into motion plays out in the intermediate space of the Pension hallway. The Pension is subsequently depicted as a perverted space; with no available rooms at Frau Trötzmuller's Pension that night, and with the dining room repurposed as sleeping-quarters for the chambermaids, the Jewish émigré resorts to sleeping in the bathtub. The fact that these rooms are not being used for their original intended purpose reminds the narrator of his transitory and alienated state. This hybrid space of the bathroom, in fact, would reappear two more times in the novel. Later in a different Pension, the bathtub would be used for storing dirty linens and washing vegetables, leading the narrator to argue with his landlady and exclaim: "This isn't what

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[182] Ibid., 76.
[183] For an analysis of this legend, see Nitza Ben-Dov, *Agnon's Art of Indirection: Uncovering Latent Content in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).
[184] For an analysis of Agnon's use of the golem metaphor in *Ad Hena,* see Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).
[185] Agnon, *To this Day*, 83-84.

bathtubs were made for."[186] And in yet another Pension, the bathtub is a space for breeding puppies. For the protagonist, these realities not only serve as a logistical inconvenience, but they also demonstrate the Pension's ongoing staging of a comfortable image of domesticity; therefore, the Pension inhabitant must be constantly on the lookout for signs of deception.

The next day after his experience sleeping in the bathroom, Shmuel Yosef embarks on the search for new living quarters. He experiences significant difficulty in finding a suitable room, trudging from street to street and Pension to Pension, pounding the pavements of Wilmersdorf and Charlottenburg and Hallensee, as even the streets themselves seem to reject him.[187] In a stroke of luck, the disenchanted émigré manages to find lodging with the German-Jewish Lichtenstein family, who treat him kindly. The motherly Frau Lichtenstein does his laundry, feeds him well, takes care of his other 'bachelor needs,' and makes sure that he is comfortable. Unlike the cold, dark, and alienating atmosphere of the Trötzmuller Pension, the home of the Lichtenstein family reflects the cozy charm of traditional bourgeois domesticity. Indeed, this spacious six-room apartment is tastefully furnished, with different rooms styled in oak, mahogany, and pear wood, and full of carpets and comfortable armchairs that smell of flowers and tobacco. Likewise, the walls leave no empty space and are covered with paintings—some by well known contemporary artists and others reproductions of the old masters—and wall to wall and floor to ceiling bookcases. The perverted internal partitions characteristic of a typical Pension are nowhere to be found in the Lichtenstein home. Shmuel Yosef no longer spends his time ensconced in his room, as the boundaries of the house are demarcated; Frau Lichtenstein believes that "no one should have to spend his daytime hours in the same room he sleeps in at

[186] Ibid., 115.
[187] Ibid., 88-89.

night."[188] Here, each of the rooms are used in accordance with their intended purpose, and the Lichtenstein family treat the narrator as one of their own; he eats with them regularly and spends his days reading books from Herr Lichtenstein's library. Indeed, out of all of the author's provisional homes in Berlin, the Lichtenstein's apartment is the space in which he is able to attain the largest degree of personal and emotional comfort. In this way, by juxtaposing his eviction from the disjointed Trötzmuller Pension and his integration into the Lichtenstein's nuclear family home, Agnon casts the space of the Pension as a heterotopic domestic 'other' or a non-home, existing as a binary opposite or antithesis of home.

However, the 'halcyon days' with the Lichtenstein family are short lived, as a publishing company purchases the entire building, displacing the thirty-three families it once housed in the process. This is how the narrator comes to meet Simon Gabel, the expressionist architect hired to renovate the building and redesign its interior. Shmuel Yosef is simultaneously fascinated by and critical of the architect's methods. Though praising the architect's ability to make use out of every inch of space in his designs, it seems to pain him that 'good solid apartment buildings' would be wiped away of their memories in the process. As he reflects on the principles of the *Neues Bauen* movement, "Once, when people's needs were smaller and their hearts were larger, they preferred ornament to convenience; we, whose needs have grown as our hearts have shrunk, like it the other way around."[189]

At this point in the novel, the narrator's relationship to the city is ambiguous and full of contradiction. On the one hand, Agnon's narrator is depicted as being completely detached from his surroundings in the urban metropole. As a boarder at Frau Trötzmuller's Pension, he "had so

[188] Ibid., 102.
[189] Ibid., 104.

little contact with the world that [he could] recall every person [he] met."[190] In fact, the émigré is so aloof from the world, so he claims, that he does not even read the newspapers.[191] But on the other hand, the émigré narrator is neither fully isolated nor wandering in the air of aimless detachment. Rather, like Agnon himself, he is intensely embedded in the urban fabric of the city and basks in its intellectual and cultural fervor. Unlike the works of Kafka, in which the existential alienation of modern man is the primary concern, both Agnon and his narrator were only partially alienated. In *Ad Hena,* the narrator spends days and evenings at what could only be *Café des Westens,* where he frequently runs into old friends and new acquaintances.[192] The *Café des Westens,* located on the elegant Kurfürstendamm, was arguably the most important coffeehouse associated with Berlin modernism and the emerging movement of expressionism before the First World War, and a chief gathering place for modernist writers and artists from all over Europe.[193] Indeed, when Agnon himself arrived in Berlin in 1912, he spent copious amounts of time at *Café des Westens,* where he became acquainted with numerous German Jewish writers and intellectuals, and relished in evenings of poetry readings, performance, and music.[194] As Maya Barzilai has also shown, Agnon was especially attuned to German cinema during these years; he later described his frequent visits to Berlin movie theaters, especially on winter

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[190] Ibid., 20.
[191] Ibid., 110.
[192] As Shachar Pinsker has pointed out, during the course of the narrator's wanderings, he describes a number of grotesque scenes in Berlin that are based on Agnon's first-hand familiarity with *Café des Westens.* See Pinsker, "Spaces of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism," 69.
[193] For example, in 1905, Hans Ostwald, the avid and perceptive chronicler of Berlin, asserted that "Bohemian life in Berlin is gathered almost exclusively in the *Café des Westens*." Hans Ostwald, Berliner Kaffeehäuser (Berlin: Seemann Nachfolger, 1905), 4. Also see Ernst Pauly, *20 Jahre Café des Westens: Erinnerungen vom Kurfürstendamm* (Berlin: Richard Labisch, 1914); Alfred Rath, "Berliner Cafehäuser (1890-1933)," in *Literarische Kaffeehäuser,* ed. Michael Rössner (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999): 108-125; Roy F. Allen, *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983).
[194] See Immanuel Ben-Gurion, *Reshut ha-yachid* (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1980), 64-72 and Micha Yosef Berdyczewski's German diary published in *Ginzey Micha Yosef*, vol. 7 (1997), 90-113, cited in Pinsker, "Spaces of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism," 64.

afternoons in which the Jewish library closed its doors.[195] Likewise, Gershom Scholem remembers that "one could often find Agnon in the company of young men and girls" in Berlin, where he often "attempted to step out of himself."[196] And certainly, during their time in Germany, both Agnon and his protagonist became familiar with contemporary German and European literature.[197] Furthermore, Agnon's deep connection to the city he inhabits is also reflected in the fact that the narrator, not only acutely attuned to clothing, fashion, and mass culture, is also writing a book about the universal history of clothing and even used to be the costume designer of the famous former actress Brigitta Schimmermann. Highly attuned to the modernist culture of the spirit of the times, the Jewish émigré places himself in contemporaneous modernist architectural discourse, and even personally knows 'Simon Gabel'—a character, whom Agnon later revealed, was none other than his close friend Erich Mendelsohn.[198] Nonetheless, just as he stood stranded in the interstitial *Zwischenraum* of Frau Trötzmuller's Pension with nowhere to rest his head, the narrator is also trapped in a suspended condition in which he is simultaneously both 'located' and 'dislocated' in the city. The experience of living in the Pension has cast Agnon's narrator into a paradoxical state where he is neither in Berlin but also not entirely out of it. The Pension—the paradigm of modern, rootless society—parallels he who resides under its roof.

[195] S. Y. Agnon, *Me'atsmi el 'atsmi* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000), 78-79. Cited in Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters*, 119.
[196] Gershom Scholem, "Agnon in Germany: Recollections," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays,* ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012): 117-125, 118.
[197] See, for example, the correspondence between Agnon and his patron Zalman Schocken in *Sh. Y. Agnon – Z. Shoken: Hilufe igrot,* 78-79.
[198] See S. Y. Agnon, *Pitchey dvarim* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1973), 121-123, cited in Pinsker, "Deciphering the Hieroglyphics," 49.

After having to leave the Lichtenstein home, Agnon's narrator finds yet another unhomely home, or, as he relates, "out of sheer sadism, the room found me."[199] In this Pension room, the writer's privacy is invaded by all kinds of disruptive forces; sights, sounds, and smells infiltrate the dwelling space, as the Pension is located directly overtop of a butcher shop. Not only do these smells reinforce the intrusion of the external landscape of the street into the interior confines of the home, but the butchering of animals is an additional affront to the sensibilities of the narrator, who, just like Agnon himself, is a vegetarian. Unable to tolerate the invasive smell, he moves once again, this time to a Pension on the Dahlmannstraße run by a Frau Munkel. Yet, in his new Pension, the narrator is confronted with even more smells, as his window faces a courtyard that looks into another apartment building with thirty-six kitchens. Though he has since abandoned traditional religious practices, in this Pension, the narrator nonetheless emphasizes the smell of bacon, a non-kosher signifier that reinforces his perceived dislocation as an unwanted Jew in a hostile urban city.

Aside from the fact that the apartment building that houses the Munkel Pension is physically guarded by a gatekeeper, the narrator explicitly likens his room there—which is long and narrow and facing thirty-six kitchens—to an animal's maw.[200] Strikingly reminiscent of the way in which Russian-Jewish émigré author Viktor Shklovsky described his Berlin Pension room in his 1923 autobiographical epistolary novel *Zoo*, Agnon too paints this living space in animalistic terms.[201] As if it locked its victims in a cage, this Pension room makes the narrator,

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[199] Agnon, *To this Day,* 109.
[200] Ibid., 114.
[201] See Viktor Shklovsky, *Zoo*, *or Letters not about Love,* trans. and ed. Richard Sheldon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 27. For a discussion of how Shklovksy used writing as a way of constructing the Soviet writer's experience of émigré life in as an exile in Berlin, see Asiya Bulatova, "Displaced Modernism: Shklovsky's Zoo, or Letters not about Love and the Borders of Literature," *Poetics Today* 37 (2016): 29-53.

like a caged animal, "spend [his] time ensconced in [his] bed, as the room was too narrow for pacing."[202] Occasionally, though, Shmuel Yosef is able to escape, but only to start this vicious cycle over once again. As Agnon writes, "The less a boarder wishes to know about his Pension, the more he finds out."[203] Later, discussing another Pension, the narrator's acquaintance laments, "All the landladies of Berlin be damned! They expect you to live by their timetables. If you want to be free, you'll make your own meals and be independent. Whoever leans on others forgets how to walk."[204] Shmuel Yosef, taking these words to heart, subsequently takes the first stride to 'freedom' by purchasing an electric kettle—a bold move indeed—so that he no longer has to rely on his landlady for tea.[205] In this instance, the *heimlichkeit* that Shmuel Yosef covets involves regaining a lost sense of personal control. With his new electric kettle in hand, the Jewish émigré can now make his own tea for breakfast "just as I had done in Palestine, when I was my own master and cooked my own meals on an alcohol burner."[206] Nonetheless, his efforts prove worthless. Three days later, his landlady exerts her power by turning off the electricity, trapping him once again into the reality of his Pension life, which, for him, functions as a site of isolation and imprisonment.[207]

Indeed, Shmuel Yosef is also bombarded with unwanted visitors in his new room; though Frau Trötzmuller's three daughters had previously not given the narrator the time of day, once he is no longer living under their roof, they constantly seek him out. There in Frau Munkel's

[202] Agnon, *To this Day,* 114.
[203] Ibid., 116.
[204] Ibid., 136.
[205] In Berlin, landladies often forbid their tenants from using electric kettles to make their own coffee and tea in their rooms, as this deprived them of the opportunity to tack extra charges onto the tenants' weekly bills. On this phenomenon, see Chapter 1.
[206] Agnon, *To this Day,* 136-137.
[207] On the phenomenon of Pension landladies turning off their tenants' electricity as a way to exert power, see Chapter 1.

Pension, the narrator's room exerts it agency by controlling the topic of conversation, as "subjects that were talked about elsewhere were apparently not meant for [his] room."[208] The space of the Pension is bound up in a kind of irresolvable tension—it cannot be a home for the narrator because the more familiar it becomes, the more entrapping it is. Constantly, the narrator would "make up [his] mind to move again, this time to a place where nobody knew [him] or could bother [him]…where there was no danger of meeting anyone [he] knew."[209] As the pervasive surveillance of Pension life strips away the privacy that the narrator craves, the more settled one becomes in a Pension, all the more urgent is his desires to escape.

In the narrator's next Pension, located in Berlin's Friedenau neighborhood, Shmuel Yosef initially finds a tastefully furnished room, complete with a handsome desk, soft carpet, and walls adorned with woodcuts and illustrations from German folktales and the *Niebelungenlied*.[210] The well-outfitted room provides a sense of comfort for the narrator, as he is able to take pleasure in its nice furnishings. When sitting at the desk and switching on the lamp, he explains, "The chair was comfortable and everything seemed to welcome me. Even the knight Hagen, looking down at me from the *Niebelungenlied,* had a friendly look on his naively cruel face."[211] However, it would soon become clear to the narrator that the homeliness of his new room was merely a farce. This atmosphere of cozy domesticity was purely staged, as the landlady's son, who had since died on the front, had purchased these furnishings explicitly for the purpose of attracting reputable tenants. After another brief sojourn in Leipzig, the narrator returns to his room, only to learn that the police have seized the furnishings because the deceased son who purchased them had not paid his creditors; in his absence, the landlady has replaced the room's contents with

[208] Agnon, *To this Day,* 125.
[209] Ibid., 132-133.
[210] Ibid., 133.
[211] Ibid., 134.

'hideous junk.' The familiar and formerly harmless face of the knight now appears hostile and threatening, as the anthropomorphized Hagen, who previously welcomed Shmuel Yosef into the room, stares angrily back at the narrator. The knight's 'thin bony face' and 'melancholy eyes' are suddenly "hard and cruel with a touch of something else—something midway between despair and bottomless lust."[212] Indeed, as long as the room had boasted of its furnishings, the narrator had not noticed this about him; but now that they were gone, "Hagen was showing his true colors."[213]

As the narrator opts to abandon his lodgings once again and makes his way to what would be his final stop in Berlin, Shmuel Yosef's Pension room itself—just like the doors that came to life in Bergelson's *Tsvishn Emigrantn*—is thoroughly personified. In this final room, he relates: "The [old] room had been spreading gossip about me and my new room's walls heard it and passed it on to the chambermaid. The chambermaid relayed it to the landlady, and the landlady began to treat me like a disreputable character."[214] By now, the émigré has wandered all throughout Berlin, moving from one rented room to another in an endless cycle of despair. The personified rooms now appear as living organisms and take the form of a syndicate: "If any member of it was told, 'You bad room, you, how can you be so mean to a perfectly good tenant,' it answered its accuser, 'Very well, then, he's now yours. Let's see you do better.'"[215] Condemning the Pensions of Berlin as having a 'grand conspiracy of rooms against him,' the narrator admits that, "Though I should have looked for another room, I didn't bother to. By now I knew from experience that every room was worse than the one before."[216] In Agnon's ironic

[212] Ibid., 169-170.
[213] Ibid., 170.
[214] Ibid., 171.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.

style, the ideal room is always imagined to be the next one, and the perfect Pension will never be found.

Feeling that God was punishing him for leaving Jaffa in the first place, the émigré's search for a room in Berlin ends in his belief that his only possible 'home' is *Eretz Yisrael*. He explains, "Because I couldn't find a good room in Germany, I had the good fortune to return to Palestine…Unable to find a room in Germany, I was *obliged* to return to Palestine."[217] The narrator reflects about his experience in the third person, and the sub-plot of Dr. Levi's books also comes to realization:

> Consider what happened to a man like me. Living in cramped quarters without pleasure or sunlight, he received a letter from Dr. Levi's widow asking to consult with him about her husband's books; traveling to see her, he found her hopelessly ill; returning to Berlin in frustration, he had nowhere to lay his head, his room having been given to another; finding another room that he liked, he was soon driven from it and forced to wander from place to place, from room to room, and from tribulation to tribulation, his worries multiplying without cease. And yet just when it seemed that he could no longer bear one more of them, God had mercy and delivered him and returned him to the land of Israel.[218]

It is not coincidental that, 'because he could find no room outside Eretz Yisrael,' *Ad Hena* ends with the narrator permanently emigrating to Palestine. Amidst the realization that his real home was not in Berlin, but in Palestine, at the end of the book, the narrator decides to emigrate to Palestine, just like Agnon himself. In a tragic turn of events, Agnon's residence in Germany was burned to the ground by a raging fire that broke out in June 1924. The loss of all of his manuscripts and papers, as well as his invaluable Hebrew library, was a catastrophic experience for the writer and would mark a major turning point in his life. As Gershom Scholem remembers, after the fire, his dear friend "was never again the same" as, after all, "who can fathom the

[217] Ibid., 173-174.
[218] Ibid., 175.

impact of such a blow on the personality of a great artist?"[219] It was then that Agnon decided to return to Jerusalem, where he would settle permanently.

Once Agnon's narrator finally reaches Palestine, he purchases a plot of land and builds a house with several rooms. The book ends with the narrator walking around this empty house, which he imagines will soon be filled with the books from Dr. Levi's library. While this conclusion seems dissonant and abrupt on the surface, the final image harkens directly back to Agnon's poem that he sent to Martin Buber in 1917 from his Pension room on the Fasanenstraße: "I received your books, / I was happy about them. / I read a lot in them, / And I will read some more. / But if God desires / My return to his stronghold / Then I'll rent a room, / And will designate a closet there (for the books)."[220] Agnon scholars have long struggled with how to interpret this unsatisfying and seemingly disjointed 'throwaway' ending. Arnold Band suggests that had the story ended with the narrator's dream at the end of Chapter 7 (while sleeping in the bathtub at the Trötzmuller Pension), then it would have likely ranked as one of Agnon's finest achievements in the genre of the short story.[221] As Glenda Abramson argues, the seemingly tacked-on ending of the narrator's return to Palestine reverses the novel's inherent modernism, supplying the narrative with an ideological conclusion that removes the narrator from the unexpected to the ordained.[222] More recently, Maya Barzilai has argued that *Ad Hena* is a self-consciously aborted novel, and that given the narrator's relationship to his unfinished manuscript on the universal history of clothing, the asymmetry is deliberate.[223]

Regardless of Agnon's actual intentions in ending the novel with his narrator's return to

[219] Scholem, "S. Y. Agnon—The Last Hebrew Classic," 101.
[220] NLI, ARC Ms. Var. 350/008/65.1. Letter, S.Y. Agnon to Martin Buber, June 25, 1917.
[221] Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare*, 352.
[222] Abramson, *Hebrew Writing of the First World War*, 162.
[223] Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters*, 116.

Palestine, it is clear that the place of the Pension in *Ad Hena* is not simply a background, but merits analysis both in its own right and in conversation with the writings of Shimoni and Bergelson. In Agnon's *Ad Hena,* the narrator is not in control of his wanderings, but his rooms and their many unhomely conditions control him. Whereas Shimoni's narrator is thrown out of his Pension and propelled into a state of dreaming, and Bergelson's narrator is caught in the uncanny heterotopic space of the Pension-as-threshold, in *Ad Hena,* the capacity of the Pension to control the person is also uncanny and unsettling. Spaces which might typically serve as a backdrop to human characters are pushed towards an agentive position, resulting in the reversal between setting and actor.

Conclusion

For many Jewish émigré writers seeking a sanctuary or a temporary new home, the favorable intellectual and cultural environment of World War I through Weimar Berlin would become a place of unprecedented creativity. While Shimoni and Agnon eventually made their way back to Palestine, and Bergelson likewise returned to the Soviet Union, each of these writers had a highly productive extended stay—not necessarily in spite of, but perhaps because of—their experience living in unhomely homes. The Pension, as an inherently precarious form of dwelling, serves as a microcosm of insecure and unstable living conditions. Thus, the Pension provided the perfect domestic platform and literary tool for the laying of plots. Rather than serving as a realist backdrop, the Pension is an active force in the Berlin-based literary canon of David Shimoni, David Bergelson, and S.Y. Agnon. While the rented room is central to the identity formation of each narrator, as they are all émigrés in a new city, Pensions are places from which they must inevitably escape. For Shimoni, Bergelson, and Agnon, the Pension—as

an unsettling space between two worlds—served as a fuel that enabled them to eschew the realist tradition in favor of experimental modernist modes.

But it is no coincidence that the material and metaphysical issue of living space, as well as the imagery of home and lodging, are dominant themes in the Jewish émigré literature of World War I through Weimar Berlin, and it is also no coincidence that Jews wrote both in *and* about Pensions. In this rich body of work, the Pension is not merely the tool for exploring the condition of émigré life in general—it is a material and emotional space that causes the individual to either feel "at-home" or the lack thereof. Due in part to the widespread housing crisis in Berlin, lodging in literature became a kind of cultural code for urban evil and non-belonging, and discontentment with lodging reflected the anxiety caused by the loss of privacy in contemporary urban domestic spheres. Ultimately, the Jewish literature of the Pension became a way of symbolically systematizing the experience of living in a home that was inherently unhomely.

Chapter 5

Real Places, Imagined Spaces: Longing and Belonging in Berlin's Scheunenviertel

As the journalist and ethnographer Hans Ostwald described the Scheunenviertel, Berlin's Jewish quarter, in the first volume of his series *Großstadtdokumente*:

> Old, disheveled women. Bearded men with gaunt faces—or fat shaven heads. Four, five, young girls are standing in front of a cellar entrance… Here and there one can see a young Jewish man in the latest English fashion with suit, garish tie, and top hat. Almost every one of them is surrounded by an air of Galicia, Poland, and Russia.[1]

In this account, which was one of the earliest attempts to explore the 'Jewishness' of the neighborhood's ghetto-like character, Ostwald fixates on the foreignness of the residents, the majority of whom were migrants, and the 'air' of the East that surrounds the space. Ostwald was not the only writer to describe the Scheunenviertel as a kind of Eastern Jewish ghetto in the middle of a modern metropolis. From the turn of the century through the Weimar Era, many writers and journalists depicted the Scheuenviertel as a kind of space from a bygone era, frozen in time. In an ethnographic feuilleton entitled "Das Berliner Ghetto," written by the German-Jewish author Hans Ermy and printed in 1911 in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, the Scheunenviertel is described as just that—a static and unchanging ghetto that is unconnected to the rest of Berlin.[2] In his account entitled 'Ghettowanderung,' the sight of caftan-wearing men and poor Jewish children from the 'eternal East' caused Adolf Grabowsky to question the space of the Scheunenviertel upon strolling down the area's street: "Is this even Berlin?"[3] Likewise,

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[1] Hans Ostwald, *Dunkle Winkel in Berlin* (vol. 1 of the series *Großstadtdokumente,* 1904): 37-47, p. 41. Cited in Anne-Christin Saß, "Reconstructing Jewishness, Deconstructing the Past: Reading Berlin's Scheunenviertel Over the Course of the Twentieth Century," in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*, eds. Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017): 197-212, 199.

[2] Hans Ermy, "Das Berliner Ghetto," *Israelitisches Familienblatt,* 14 September 1911.

[3] Adolf Grabowsky, "Ghettowanderung," *Die Schaubühne,* 3 February 1910, 124-126.

upon walking on the Grenadierstraße, Alfred Döblin concluded that the Scheunenviertel was not all that different from a Polish shtetl.[4] The Scheunenviertel is also explicitly coded as a Jewish space in the beginning of Döblin's 1929 expressionist masterpiece *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in which the protagonist encounters an Orthodox Jew upon his release from prison.[5]

While the Scheunenviertel may have appeared as a strange and foreign world to journalists and ethnographers, the Jews of Weimar Germany had a multifaceted relationship with this neighborhood as both a concrete physical place and as an imaginative space laden with various layers of meaning. Using two very different and largely forgotten literary accounts that are focused on the same street within the Scheunenviertel, this chapter will demonstrate how the space of the Scheunenviertel served and functioned as a larger metaphor for spaces of longing and belonging in both Jewish literature and cultural life during the Weimar Era. While Pensions do not feature prominently in this chapter, my analysis aims to show how new meanings of 'space' and 'place' took hold in Jewish imagination in the 1930s.

For the many East European Jews who made their way to the German capital during and following the First World War—especially those fleeing poverty, persecution, and pogroms—Berlin was largely a point of transit, or a temporary 'way station' where pressing circumstances prevented the flow of migration to other locations.[6] Many of these Jewish migrants would settle in and around the Scheunenviertel, the city's former Jewish ghetto located in the central Mitte district. The term Scheunenviertel, literally meaning 'barn quarter,' derives from the stables that were erected outside the city in the late seventeenth century to store hay for the cattle market in the area that once occupied the Alexanderplatz. It was also the district in which Friedrich

[4] Cited in Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 114.
[5] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag), 2007.
[6] Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft: Berichte aus der Wirklichkeit*, vol. 4, ed. Eduard Trautner (Berlin: Verlag Die Schmiede, 1927), 65.

Wilhelm I first allowed Jews to settle in Berlin in 1737. Situated northwest of the Alexanderplatz between the Rosenthaler Platz and Rosa Luxemburg Platz, the Scheunenviertel was a relatively small and narrow network of streets that possessed a population density five times higher than the Berlin average and the highest population density in the city.[7] More often than not, the East European Jews who concentrated in the Scheunenviertel lived in poverty and retained their traditional occupations as peddlers, petty traders, tailors, bookkeepers, and shoemakers.

Colloquially regarded as part of Berlin's *Elendsviertel* (misery quarters), the Scheunenviertel was known for its slum-like character. Houses in this area were predominantly comprised of *Mietskasernen* (rental barracks), which catered to the working classes and began popping up beginning in the 1870s as a solution to combat the city-wide housing shortage. These shabbily constructed and poorly lit tenement style buildings, characterized by their lack of light and fresh air, housed families and workers in often-deplorable conditions. Particularly following the First World War, the housing shortage resulted in the widespread conversion of rudimentary basement apartments, which had previously been deemed uninhabitable by the housing authorities, into 'Schlafstellen.' In these dwellings, overcrowding was rampant and indoor plumbing was minimal. According to Berlin's municipal housing office, in 1925, only six percent of all apartments in the Scheunenviertel had bathing facilities, and around fifty-five percent of households in the Scheunenviertel used communal toilets located in stairwells, backyards, or courtyards.[8] Even as late as the 1930s, one housing commissioner surveying a section of the Linienstraße found several buildings in which seventy-five residents shared just

[7] Eike Geisel, ed., *Im Scheunenviertel: Bilder, Texte, und Dokumente* (Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1981), 13.
[8] Cited in Anne-Christin Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012), 99.

five toilets.[9] A 1925 survey carried out by the *Gesellschaft für Gesundheitsschutz der Juden* also found that thirteen percent of Jewish families living in the Scheunenviertel resided in basement apartments that were dark and wet and a further five percent lived in spaces that doubled as workshops.[10]

The Scheunenviertel was home to very few Pensions. Rather, the phenomenon of the *Logierhaus* (lodging house) and *Gasthof* (guest house or inn) persisted in this area from the Imperial era through the late 1930s. Unlike the western neighborhoods of Berlin, where middle-class Jews settled in Pensions, the Scheunenviertel was an area in which poorer Jews often settled as a last resort, due to cheap rents and a low cost of living. But as was the case in Pensions scattered across the city, dwelling spaces in the Scheunenviertel were often subdivided haphazardly in order to accommodate the largest possible number of residents. The living conditions of these rooms ranged from barely tolerable to horrendous. In his autobiographical account *Talisman Scheherezade*, the German-Jewish writer Max Fürst described the rudimentary nature of his lodgings on the Münzstraße, where he lived in 1927. His 'room' was created by dividing a bathroom into two parts and blocking off a staircase in what the author described as a 'still-bourgeois house,' and the apartment of an acquaintance contained a ceiling from which "large chunks of stucco fell down whenever they were touched."[11] Fürst also recalled the Scheunenviertel's poor state of sanitation, as he "found not a single apartment in the whole neighborhood where a constant battle was not being waged against bedbugs."[12] Unlike Pensions in which residents occupied their own individual rooms (even if the 'room' in question was

[9] GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 151 IC, Nr. 12199/1.
[10] Cited in Saß, *Berliner Luftmenschen,* 100.
[11] Max Fürst, *Talisman Scheherezade: Die schwierigen Zwanziger Jahre* (Munich: Karl Hanser Verlag, 1976).
[12] Ibid.

created via a rudimentary partition), room sharing and sometimes even bed sharing was not an uncommon occurrence in lodging houses in the Scheunenviertel.

The Scheunenviertel, particularly in the years following the First World War, gained a notorious reputation as a space in which poverty, vice, and criminality went hand in hand. A postwar climate characterized by inflation and unemployment contributed to the unstable nature of the neighborhood's environment. In the years following the First World War, the Scheunenviertel was a central hub for the black market of rationed goods and was a frequent site of political agitation and riots. Raids, arrests, and anti-Semitic attacks occurred frequently, and the Scheunenviertel suffered a series of notable violent pogroms in November 1923.[13] The Scheunenviertel was also an entertainment and commercial district, home to gambling dens, pawn shops, brothels, cabarets, and movie theaters, all scattered throughout its overcrowded narrow streets and dark and winding alleys. In many ways, the Scheunenviertel, with its high crime rates, pervasive street hawking, frequent political agitation, and seedy nightlife, represented the dark side of postwar urban commerce.[14] The Scheunenviertel's high crime rate also contributed to the neighborhood becoming a kind of synecdoche in German public discourses, embodying the 'ills' that were associated with East European Jewry.[15]

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[13] On these pogroms, see Molly Loberg, "From Problem Neighborhood to Pogrom," in Molly Loberg, *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin: Politics, Consumption, and Urban Space, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), and Molly Loberg, "The Streetscape of Economic Crisis: Commerce, Politics, and Urban Space in Interwar Berlin," *Journal of Modern History* 85, No. 2 (2013): 364-402. Also see David Clay Large, "Out with the Ostjuden: The Scheunenviertel Riots in Berlin, November 1923," in *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History,* eds. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002): 123-140.

[14] On this topic, see Loberg, *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin.*

[15] See Anne-Christin Saß, "Reconstructing Jewishness, Deconstructing the Past: Reading Berlin's Scheunenviertel Over the Course of the Twentieth Century," in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*, eds. Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017): 197-212.

While in reality, no more than 30% of the Scheunenviertel's residents were Jewish during the Weimar era, the visible presence of Ostjuden who spoke Yiddish and dressed according to the customs of traditional Jewish observance contributed to the Scheunenviertel becoming regarded as *the* Jewish space in Berlin. In this neighborhood, Hebrew and Yiddish letters and signage inundated the streetscape as kosher grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants, synagogues and prayer rooms, and Jewish book stores and libraries lined the streets. Ethnographies such as those by Joseph Roth have tended to portray the Scheunenviertel as a foreign and ghetto-like space—a separate and strange world not a part of the rest of Berlin.[16] In his observations about the Scheunenviertel, Franz Hessel likewise observed streets that "remain unto themselves a kind of home for the eternal outsider…that is, until a new wave of people comes from the east and pushes out the old timers."[17] Contemporary novels also reflected this phenomenon. In Sammy Gronemann's 1920 novel *Tohuwabohu* (Utter Chaos), the space of the Scheunenviertel is depicted, somewhat predictably, as a separate entity, unconnected to and completely cut off from the rest of city. When one of the main characters in the novel first encounters the Dragonerstraße, Gronemann writes:

> He was apparently no longer in Berlin or Germany but somehow had been magically transported to a Russian or Galician Jewish town. To the right and to the left there were Hebrew letters staring down at him from the storefronts; at cellar entryways Oriental-looking women wearing long shawls...[and] men with cork-screw sidelocks in long caftans.[18]

The concentration of *Ostjuden* in the Schuenenviertel created the appearance of a strong Jewish presence that was only amplified by anti-Semitic rhetoric, and for many assimilated German

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[16] See Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft: Berichte aus der Wirklichkeit*, vol. 4., ed. Eduard Trautner (Berlin: Verlag Die Schmiede), 1927; Joseph Roth, *Werke: Das journalistische Werk.* 3 vol., ed. Klaus Westermann (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch), 1998, 1990, 1991.
[17] Franz Hessel, "Spazieren in Berlin," in *Sämtliche Werke in fünf Bänden,* vol. 3: *Städte und Porträts,* ed. Bernhard Echte (Oldenburg: Igel, 1999), 58.
[18] Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu*, 163.

Jews, the Scheunenviertel represented a palpable threat against their assimilation, or a visible reminder of their collective and not so distant past.

While the Scheunenviertel represented a so-called 'backward' way of life for many assimilated German Jews, the years leading up to and especially following the First World War also saw a transformation in German-Jewish cultural consciousness. As early as 1901, Martin Buber called for a "Jewish renaissance" in Germany, which would eventually result in an intellectual, spiritual, and cultural renewal of post-traditional Jewry.[19] After World War I, during which many German Jewish soldiers encountered East European Jews while fighting for the Fatherland on the eastern front, the perception of East European Jewry as unenlightened and backward would radically shift in German-Jewish life, and East European Jewish culture came to acquire a new significance in German-Jewish imagination. Repulsion turned into a fascination with East European Jewry, which became integral to Weimar Jewish culture. Historian Michael Brenner has famously referred to this renewed interest in East European Jewry as a "renaissance of Jewish culture" in Weimar Germany.[20] In addition to Brenner, scholars such as Steven Aschheim, Shulamit Volkov, and Sander Gilman, among others, have emphasized how the encounter between *Ostjuden* and *Westjuden* shaped the culture of introspection characterizing German-Jewish intellectual life in the Weimar period.[21] As prominent intellectuals such as

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[19] See Martin Buber, „Jüdische Renaissance," *Ost und West* (1901), no. 1, 7-10.
[20] Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
[21] See Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1880-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Sander Gilman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East," in *Jews and Germans, 1860-1933: The Problematic Symbiosis,* ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979): 338-366; Shulamit Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews," in *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985): 195-211. Also see Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Nicholas Block has also explored this process as a reverse phenomenon in which East-European Jews defined themselves vis-à-vis German Jews. See Nicholas Block, "In the Eyes of Others: The Dialectics of

Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber helped to develop this distinctive (Zionist-inflected) German-Jewish search for spiritual 'authenticity,' glorification of the lifestyle of the Eastern Jew would become a defining feature of the Jewish cultural renaissance in Weimar Germany.[22] Instead of rejecting the Yiddish-speaking shtetl Jew, as was par for the course through the early twentieth century, German-Jewish enthusiasm for *Ostjudentum* flourished beginning around World War I. As the space in which most East European Jews in Berlin resided, the Scheunenviertel was both the literal and figurative center of the newfound fascination with all things *Ostjudentum*.

The Scheunenviertel has appeared as a site of identity formation in many Jewish literary works. In Sammy Gronemann's 1920 German novel *Tohuwabohu* (Utter Chaos), which was also his debut novel, the Scheunenviertel figures as the physical space where assimilated German Jews encounter their long-lost Jewish brethren from the East, and it functions as an instructional space where such young men can discover their Jewish roots and learn about the 'authentic' form of Jewish culture that their parents' generation had abandoned.[23] In the 1923 German novel *Das Ghetto von Berlin* (The Ghetto of Berlin), a crime thriller written by the German-Jewish journalist Adolf Sommerfeld, the Scheunenviertel is a kind of German Odessa, full of Jewish

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German-Jewish and Yiddish Modernism" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013). Block's current book project, based on his dissertation, is called *Schlepping Culture: The Jewish Renaissance Between German and Yiddish, 1880-1930.* Also in the literary domain, see Naomi Brenner, *Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures in Contact* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016); Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); David Myers, "Distant Relatives Happening onto the Same Inn: The Meeting of East and West as Literary Theme and Cultural Ideal," *Jewish Social Studies* 1.2 (1995): 75-100; and Jerold C. Frakes and Jeremy Dauber, eds, *Between Two Worlds: Yiddish-German Encounters, Studia Rosenthaliana* Vol. 41 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

[22] Arnold Zweig's 1920 book *Das ostjüdische Antlitz,* with illustrations by Hermann Struck, is one of the most well known examples that encapsulates this romanticized 'turning' of the German Jews to the culture of East European Jewry. See Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (Berlin: Welt Verlag, 1920) and Eva Raffel, *Vertraute Freunde: das östliche Judentum im Werke von Joseph Roth und Arnold Zweig* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2002).

[23] Sammy Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag), 1920.

gangsters, criminals, and thieves in every direction.[24] In Gertud Kolmar's 1931 German novel *Die jüdische Mutter* (A Jewish Mother), the physical space of the Scheunenviertel is a site of self discovery; as the main character enters this neighborhood, she embarks on a path towards rediscovering her formerly suppressed Jewish identity.[25] And in Leah Goldberg's Hebrew modernist novel *Avedot* (Losses), which was written between 1936 and 1939 and published posthumously, the space of the Scheunenviertel plays an important role in the protagonist's scholarly interest in 'Oriental' culture and in his journey in studying the relationship between Jewish and Islamic mysticism.[26] The space of the Scheunenviertel is largely absent in Yiddish literature set in Berlin, with the notable exception of Israel Joshua Singer's 1943 novel *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* (The Family Carnovsky), in which the author paints a colorful picture of the neighborhood.[27] In most works featuring the Scheunenviertel as a setting, the space functions as a kind of 'Other,' or an in-between space that is not fully inside nor outside of Berlin.

Against this backdrop, this chapter will examine the ways in which two Jewish writers—Martin Beradt and Fischl Schneersohn—engaged with the space of the Scheunenviertel during the Weimar era in their German and Yiddish novels, in part as a way to work out conflicts regarding their own Jewish identities. In doing so, I will pay particular attention to the representation of space in their works, as I show how the role of real and imagined space—particularly dwelling space—informed their imaginations and infused their creativity. My analysis aims to show how the local concrete space of the Scheunenviertel provided an

[24] Adolf Sommerfeld, *Das Ghetto von Berlin* (Leipzig: Ostra-Verlag), 1923. Odessa was largely regarded as a major center of Jewish criminality in the first quarter of the 20th century.
[25] Gertrud Kolmar, *Die jüdische Mutter* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag), 1999.
[26] Leah Goldberg, *Avedot* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim), 2010.
[27] Israel Joshua Singer, *Di mishpokhe Karnovski* (New York: Matones, 1943).

imaginary medium for these writers to make larger claims about German-Jewish identity, longing, and belonging in Weimar Germany.

The Shtetl within the Stadt: Martin Beradt's Street of Little Eternity

Born in Magdeburg in 1881 to Orthodox parents who had migrated from a small town in the province of Posen, Martin Beradt's family moved to Berlin when he was just ten years old and settled on the edge of the Scheunenviertel on the Jüdenstraße in 1892, where he initially received a traditional Jewish education. Beradt then attended *Gymnasium*, quickly adapted to the customs of German Jewry, and by the turn of the century, the family left the Scheunenviertel for good and settled in the affluent Wilmersdorf neighborhood. After completing his university and graduate studies, Beradt became a highly successful lawyer, setting up his own law office in Berlin in 1909. At the same time, Beradt also began to write novels on the side.

As early as the First World War, Beradt began to experience some internal guilt about having possibly assimilated too much, and having shed the traditional Judaism of his parents' home. It was during this time, around the year 1912, in which he began to sketch preliminary notes for a novel about the Grenadierstraße, which would eventually take the form of the novel *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit* (Little Eternity Street).[28] Completed in 1933, the novel was published posthumously in 1965, sixteen years after the author's death, and only through the insistence of his wife Charlotte, since he was unable to find a publisher interested in the book during his lifetime.[29] *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit* provides a sort of montage of the life and

[28] In 1912, Beradt drafted ten densely written pages of notes under the title "Die Gasse zu den Grenadieren" under the heading "Roman." In this notebook, he sketched the locations of houses in great detail and noted the occupations and characteristics of the residents. See Kirsten Steffen, *Haben sie mich gehasst?: Antworten für Martin Beradt* (Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1999), 343.
[29] After his arrival in New York in 1940, Beradt reached out to several American publishers in effort to publish his work, to no avail.

death of Berlin's Grenadierstraße—a very small street, only 400 meters long, that was arguably the heart, soul, and essence, as well as the main thoroughfare, of the Scheunenviertel. In the author's own words, the novel "describes the life of Polish Jews in the Grenadierstraße, the single ghetto-like street in Berlin. It is crowded with many persons, most of them living in a small Jewish guest house and in the building facing it."[30] In the novel, the Grenadierstraße is depicted as a beloved island of misery that the East European Jewish migrants cling to in order to feel at least a semblance of at-homeness in the hostile urban environment of Weimar Berlin.

Taking place between the autumn of 1927 and mid-summer of 1928 and encompassing a very short snapshot in time of less than a year, the novel is not concerned with the development of the Grenadierstraße, but rather, it seeks to encapsulate the state of the street before it was destroyed. As he explained to his friend Ismar Elbogen in 1942, Beradt expressed his "actual intention to write an Eastern Jewish novel, and not to do so through conventional means, but rather in the style and means of representation of a Western European novel."[31] The organizing principle of the novel is the polyphony of the narratives it contains, with the characters being united only by their spatial commonalities and their relationships to the houses in which they reside. The fragmentary quality of the text, which resembles that of Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, gives the novel an almost cinematic quality. Though most parts of Beradt's novel fall predominantly into the Social Realist genre, like the representation of Berlin itself in Döblin's modernist epic, Beradt effectively transforms the Grenadierstraße into a character without giving the street anthropomorphic qualities.

[30] Letter, Martin Beradt to Maurice Jacobs, 25 April 1941. LBI Archives, AR 2286 II 1.7. The original title of the book was meant to be *Die Beiden Seiten der Straße* (Both Sides of the Street).
[31] Letter, Martin Beradt to Ismar Elbogen, 10 February 1942. Cited in Steffen, *Haben sie mich gehasst,* 364.

The plot of the novel is fragmentary in structure, loosely held together by the East European Jewish émigré Frajim Feingold who travels to Berlin from his hometown of Piaseczno, Poland in the autumn of 1927 and takes up residence on the Grenadierstraße. Throughout the novel, Beradt makes a conscious choice in referring to the street as a 'Gasse' as opposed to a 'Straße,' which serves to emphasize the small-town nature of communal life. His employment of the term 'Gasse' effectively reduces the already-small size of the street and carries the additional connotations of narrowness and confinement. For Frajim, Berlin is largely a point of transit; his parents choose this city both in hopes that their son will become a successful merchant, and because Berlin was already 'halfway' to New York.[32] Once in Berlin, Frajim is taken in by a kind and caring Jewish landlady, Frau Jenny Warszawski, in her humble abode on the Grenadierstraße. An East European émigré herself, the seventy-six-year-old Frau Warszawski had endured a life of hardship; during her thirty years living in Berlin, she had lost both her husband and her children. Unlike the cold, heartless, and greedy landladies who dominate much of the Hebrew, Yiddish, and German-Jewish fiction set in Berlin's western neighborhoods, Frajim's landlady is depicted as the quintessential warm, compassionate, and longed-for Jewish mother. She feeds her tenants well, saves them from the brink of starvation, does not kick them out when they are unable to pay the rent, tries to help them find employment, and plays the role of mediator to resolve all sorts of conflicts that arise on the Grenadierstraße. Nobody works harder than her or sacrifices more than her, and the oft-repeated dictum can be found throughout the novel: "When God didn't help, Frau Warszawski helped."[33]

In the novel, all of the subplots revolve around questions of home and issues of housing, and the characters and their episodes are connected spatially through the four houses on the

[32] Beradt, *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*, 53.
[33] Ibid., 99, 268.

Grenadierstraße in which they reside. The novel has no true hero—the hero is the street itself, and the entirety of the action takes place only in these four dwellings. For the unemployed Frajim, who is rejected from job after job and completely fails to live up to his parents' hope of 'making it big' in Berlin, the question of housing is always front and center on his mind. He often spends his days poring through Berlin's address books in order to learn where the Jewish people in Berlin live. While at times, he fixates on the Jewish bankers who occupy elegant villas in the western parts of the city, he does not envy them, as he imagines that they must be terribly lonely, unlike those who reside on the overcrowded and intimate Grenadierstraße.

Many of the other characters in the novel live in the kosher guesthouse of the innkeeper Lesser Joel, located directly across the street from Frajim's abode. The guesthouse is presented as a kind of equalizing entity among its Jewish inhabitants—a space in which—as Beradt indicates—piety and wealth stand at equal rank and the distinction between rich and poor becomes less sharp.[34] This large house is constantly busy and three to four people share a room at times; regulars have their own beds and passersby sleep on the floor. Despite its crowded and somewhat chaotic state, this is not a residence in which travelers frequently stop as a guest for the night, but a semi-permanent locale that houses most residents for a significant length of time.

The Joel guesthouse is explicitly described as the living, breathing, Jewish center of the Grenadierstraße. It contains a prayer room in the courtyard where the Jews of the Scheunenviertel regularly "throng twice a day"[35] and serves as a central meeting place and shelter for all Jews who find themselves stranded in Berlin. The space of the guesthouse is consistently painted in a pious light, and the owner's reputation for maintaining stringent kashrut

[34] Ibid., 87.
[35] Ibid., 92.

standards is "firm as far as Poland."[36] Because the guesthouse contains a place to pray, the whole space is rendered as sacred and is thus described in terms of exaltation. As Beradt writes with undertones of nostalgia, "In a city as worldly as Babylon, the Joel guesthouse stood in the deeply dedicated street, sublime and holy as the house of prayer in the courtyard; there was no other building located as close to God's heart."[37] Despite this lofty description, the space is imbued with contradiction; excessive holiness did not appeal to Herr Joel in daily life, as he "fetched the money that poor boys owed to him with lust," succumbing to the age-old stereotype of the 'greedy' Jewish businessowner.[38]

Located across the street from this holy guesthouse is a mysterious and dilapidated yellow-painted building owned by a non-Jewish woman, Frau Dippe, and primarily occupied by prostitutes. Frau Dippe is the widow of a carpenter who met a violent death and caused a heavy burden to his only legacy—the house—by severely damaging the foundation wall. Ever since, the widowed landlady has waited every day for orders to tear down the house, but stubbornly refuses. Unlike the openness and constant coming and going in and out of the Joel guesthouse across the street, the so called 'yellow house' is shrouded in mystery and secrecy; visitors and guests can only gain entry through a locked gate, and no Jews live there.

Throughout the novel, both the Jewish guesthouse and the yellow-painted house occupied by prostitutes are subject to constant police visits. When a police sergeant is first called to the Joel guesthouse, the owners are not targeted as Jews, but due to a rumor (planted by a fellow Jewish resident) that the house contains fungus in the ceiling. Subsequent police visits are due to accusations of structural problems in the building's foundation. In fact, most of the raids on the

[36] Ibid., 226.
[37] Ibid., 164.
[38] Ibid., 165.

guesthouse throughout the novel are due to rumors that the building is structurally unsound and on the verge of collapse. Only on one occasion does a raid result in the arrest of two or three Jews—out of a total of two hundred—who are illegal residents without a passport. However, the purpose of the raid is still rooted in the building being potentially structurally unsound, and significantly, the owners and residents of the guest house are not targeted for their Jewishness in this respect.

The interiors of both houses are described in a similar light. The state of decay in the yellow-painted house is apparent: the rooms look miserable, the plaster has fallen by the meter from the ceiling, the wallpaper is peeling off the walls like scabs, there is no paint left on the door, the bolts rattle in the windows, and the water pipe—missing its rubber seal—drips steadily all day long.[39] In fact, all four of the houses that Beradt describes are in a serious state of decay. Throughout the novel, nearly all of the characters obsessively express fear about the prospect of their homes on the Grenadierstraße physically collapsing or being demolished in favor of new commercial and administrative buildings.[40] As these worries are vocalized by one Jewish resident in the novel:

> One day, everything here [on the Grenadierstraße] will be demolished, and then new commercial buildings will pop up, and administrative buildings, and so forth. I hope everything stays the same as long as I live here. I don't want to move again, and above all, the street shouldn't disappear.[41]

These worries are not unfounded, as various construction companies seek to purchase the buildings on the Grenadierstraße with the intention of tearing them down. One of the Jewish migrants rounds up enough money to outbid the *Gesellschaft für Grundbesitz und Areal*, and manages to purchase the yellow-painted house himself. By this time, the two street vendors and

[39] Ibid., 210.
[40] Ibid., 145-146, 184, 211-212.
[41] Ibid., 145.

sisters in law Julchen and Riwka had already been displaced from their dwelling, as the *Gesellschaft für Grundbesitz und Areal* had taken over the building in which they previously resided. Another Jewish migrant becomes a real estate agent, decides to leave the Grenadierstraße and makes it his mission in life to sell houses and arrange mortgages; however, this episode does not last long, as he quickly returns to the Grenadierstraße because he feels lost in the "exile" of the big city, with his heart too far away from the Scheunenviertel.[42]

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Beradt does not shy away from depicting some 'realities' of the Scheunenviertel and the multiplicity of its residents. Beradt's Grenadierstraße is far from an idyllic shtetl in the middle of the metropolis, but rather, it is home to prostitutes, petty thieves, and hardened criminals, both Jewish and non-Jewish. A number of the Jewish characters are involved in crime rings and the smuggling and trading of black market goods. The diversity in question is reflected in the fact that the Joel guesthouse, the 'holiest place on the street,' directly faces a brothel.

Despite the recurring obsession with physical homes and houses, the characters throughout the novel are more often present on the street itself as opposed to indoors. This phenomenon is typical of other literary and autobiographical depictions of the Scheunenviertel's main thoroughfares from the 1900s through the Weimar Era. In one of the earliest popular literary depictions of the Scheunenviertel, Georg Hermann, in his 1906 novel *Jettchen Gebert*, describes the residents of the Scheunenviertel sitting outside the doors of their houses, eager and ready to greet the protagonist as she strolls down the street.[43] Likewise, in Sammy Gronemann's 1920 satirical novel *Tohuwabohu*, one of the main characters, an assimilated Jew who encounters the Dragonerstraße for the first time, is surprised to find that the majority of residents are not in

[42] Ibid., 252.
[43] Georg Hermann, *Jettchen Gebert* (Berlin: Hofenberg, 2018), 117.

their houses, but spend their days on the street itself.[44] In the eyes of Gronemann's protagonist, the Dragonerstraße itself is not an inherently Jewish space, but the presence of Jewish residents physically transforms the space of the Scheunenviertel into an East European shtetl. In many literary depictions, the anonymity of the 'big city' transforms into the familiarity of a 'small town' once the protagonists enter the safety of the Scheunenviertel. However, Beradt's Scheunenviertel is the opposite of a safe place, as the mood of the entire novel is characterized by impending doom and the fear of displacement. After a raid on the Joel guesthouse which results in a police officer discovering a fungus progressively growing in the building's foundation, Beradt evokes the age-old 'wandering Jew' trope in conveying the precarious nature of life in the Scheunenviertel:

> The street was haunted, one could see that…It was no longer safe here, all these events were signs: something is approaching, Jews, be on your guard, gird your loins, your wanderings are beginning! One slept badly, one stood around and consumed oneself in horror at something that was inevitable and that was coming closer.[45]

The imminent threat of the houses physically collapsing and of the fall of stability in the world are also reflected in the author's foreboding statement, "From morning to evening the world can be destroyed."[46]

Though marked by poverty and decay and on the verge of collapsing, the houses on Beradt's Grenadierstraße are still very much described as vibrant and exciting spaces of belonging. Despite its oppressive gray walls, peeling wallpaper, and limestone deposits occasionally falling from the ceiling, the Joel guesthouse is a warm and cozy space in which the Jewish residents feel at home. Through the character of Israel Wahrhaftig, Beradt nostalgically depicts the cozy charm of small spaces. Here, in his residence in Berlin's Scheunenviertel,

[44] Gronemann, *Tohuwabohu*, 163.
[45] Beradt, *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*, 284.
[46] Ibid., 277.

Wahrhaftig "has it good [because] he doesn't have to go from room to room to look for his wife."[47] In this instance, Beradt's choice to use the German word 'Stube,' which carries more domestic connotations than the impersonal 'Zimmer,' reflects a certain fondness for the space.

For other characters, ignorance is a means of enduring the misery of the houses on the Grenadierstraße. Beradt writes of the character Frau Spanier, who finds herself aimlessly wandering along the Grenadierstraße on the anniversary of her father's death:

> Frau Spanier couldn't bear to stay in her room; she was drawn into the street. Down the row of houses it was still light. The dull paint, washed off by the pouring rain, could still be seen, some of the thousand cracks, some of the bare spots in the peeling plaster… Frau Spanier did not repel the oppressive grey walls, nor the regularity of the windows, which were shaped without feeling. She did not see – did not see – that was a means of enduring the misery of these houses. But she also failed to notice the color that wiped into the street before dawn, the delicate glow with which the day fell through the cracks in the roofs before the sun set. 'It will be dark soon,' that was the only thing she thought. 'Hurry up,' others thought, so that the [work will be finished] before dark. The landlords of some apartments on the first floor praised the lantern in front of the house, in the light of which one could crochet and sew longer by the window. For the Jews, dusk brought another serious duty: those who had not thought about their unearthly part earlier now dropped everything and stood against the wall for the second time to pray—the third would occur after nightfall.[48]

This scene is peculiar in that the narrator repeatedly switches between personal perception and objective observation. In this passage, Frau Spanier fails to notice the beauty of the sunset, which is something that the reader can only appreciate through the independent perspective of the omniscient narrator. Similarly, while she fails to notice the misery of her surroundings, the poverty of the neighborhood is evident from the description of the cracks in the walls and the peeling spots in the plaster. The passage is also explanatory, as the narrator lays out the ritual significance of sundown for the Jewish people. The text continues:

> A junk dealer dragged himself along a pack: 'It's called living,' he breathed with the last of his strength. A craftsman carried a tin tub on his shoulder and called to Frau Spanier over his free shoulder:

[47] Ibid., 68.
[48] Ibid., 183.

> ‘You have funny people!’
> ‘How so?’
> ‘Poke through the tub with a pair of scissors until it rips open!’
> ‘What doesn’t break these days?’ interjected an old man. ‘Everything breaks. Wool tears, iron tears, tomorrow they’ll tear up the pavement here!’
> ‘And the day after tomorrow the houses will be demolished,’ cried a third…
> Suddenly Monasch stood in front of her. ‘You see?’ He asked when she didn’t back down.
> ‘Don’t I always see?’
> ‘That’s what I mean.’
> ‘No, not in the way you think.’[49]

This scene is perhaps where Beradt comes closest to employing some of the literary devices related to the montage processes that are present in *Berlin Alexanderplatz.*[50] As it becomes clear that there are numerous people on the street, and as the junk dealer calls out to Frau Spanier, the narrating voice becomes the organizing element of the scene, like a tracking shot in a film. The polyphony is evident as Beradt paints a comprehensive picture of the street; the scene comes full circle at the end of the chapter, when Monasch, who is enamored with Frau Spanier, pokes a hole in his tub with scissors.

In other places in the novel, most notably in Beradt’s description of the Grenadierstraße on Tisha B’Av, the Scheunenviertel is depicted as a kind of island of misery in which the houses anchor themselves onto the streets. Whereas the street is like a dark, excited sea, the houses are like ships, and the few people visible in the windows of the houses on the Grenadierstraße are ‘reminiscent of passengers in the ship’s hatches.’[51] The atmosphere is dull, gloomy, and full of impending doom, as everything hangs together as a poisonous vapor overhead and pollutes the air.[52] In this environment, the rancid smells of rotten debris physically lift the lids of the bins in

[49] Ibid., 184.
[50] Tobias Gruenthal has elaborated on some of the literary devices in this scene in his master’s thesis, „Ein Schtetl in der Stadt – Jüdische Identitätsräume in Texten von Martin Beradt und Sammy Gronemann“ (2010).
[51] Beradt, *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*, 291.
[52] Ibid.

the courtyards, wrestle themselves out of cellars, free themselves from discarded sacks of rubbish, and fight their way to emerge from underneath the stairs.[53] Now, on the eve of Tisha B'Av, the air is polluted, and there is nothing left of the fresh draft that the residents of the Grenadierstraße had in the morning. As Beradt describes the scene:

> In the morning they (the Jews of the Grenadierstraße) had lined up as if the trumpet was calling into battle, as if they were the garrison of the holy city and saw Roman field snakes cringing their necks against the walls from the battlements. Now they are collapsing, and even the old, tougher than the young, only think violently of the end of the siege, albeit with such pain as if it was not their ancestors who had fallen but their biological fathers, their brothers. Three weeks ago, they mourned the city because the Second Temple wall fell on that day 1858 years ago, today they mourn the cremation of the temple. But temple and city are one, and today we also mourn the downfall of the city, the end of the nation, and the departure from home to foreign countries.[54]

This description of the Grenadierstraße on Tisha B'Av is one of the few instances in the novel in which Beradt explicitly connects the meaning of the houses to that of the street. If the individual houses are like ships anchoring the Jews to their physical surroundings, then Beradt is essentially imbuing the houses with holiness or a sacred quality. By using the Tisha B'Av metaphor, in which temple and city fall together in ancient Jerusalem, Beradt is inscribing the decrepit yet sacred houses on the Grenadierstraße as an essential part of the Jewish topography of the Scheunenviertel. The rest of the novel from this point on is inescapably marked by the rise of National Socialism; overshadowing this physical destruction is the imminent expulsion of the Jews from the Grenadierstraße during the Shoah. As Jewish history repeats itself, it is no longer only the characters in the novel who lament the death of the street, but now the collective "we" who mourn the destruction of the homes, as the fall of these houses marks a major turning point in the Jewish history of the German city.

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

Near the end of the novel, the Joel guesthouse, while in the middle of hosting a wedding celebration, experiences one final raid that is fundamentally different in nature from the previous ones. After a piece of the ceiling falls and crushes a resident, the *Baupolizei* contacts the *Fremdenpolizei*, who intervene and round up the Jews without proper passports. Whereas the previous raids in the novel were solely directed at the structural stability of the house, the owner now believes that the raid of his guesthouse is also an attack on the Jews as a people.[55] The guesthouse, which actually "turned out to be a city" due to the number of people living there from all walks of life, is thoroughly swept through by the police and nearly two hundred Jewish residents find themselves displaced.[56] The house diagonal from the guesthouse and to the right of the yellow painted house, owned by the rag dealer Herr Lewkowitz and in which many other Jews reside, is also cleared out at the same time due to its decaying state. The scene is described as a kind of chaotic battlefield. While those who wish to fight the police contemplate their defense, the Jews move out of the houses; as a thunderstorm hits and rain pours down onto the ground, women lead their children into the streets wrapped in towels, and strong men sling the elderly over their shoulders, terrified that the houses might collapse at any moment. As Beradt describes the scene:

> Let yourself be killed by the houses? No, better to remain in the street. Furniture was taken from the Lewkowitz house, and boxes and suitcases from the guesthouse. Hundreds of people made a disorderly mess in the street. Rain fell, everything was dripping, children had hoods over their heads, women pulled up their skirts—skirts without color, without value, but pulled up like treasures…By midmorning both houses were empty, although it wasn't at all clear that they were going to be vacated. The fear of the houses collapsing had worked faster than the police.[57]

[55] Ibid., 332.
[56] Ibid., 335.
[57] Ibid., 340-341.

However, upon this raid, the Jews are determined to fight back against the police, and they are joined by the angry 'mob' of their fellow non-Jewish Grenadierstraße residents, which includes 'prostitutes, pimps, people who had slipped and had accidents, and wayward people who had beaten God or who had brought people down.'[58] While the residents of the Grenadierstraße are ready to riot, and even form their own nightly security force, no actual fighting occurs in the end. Instead, a local rabbi serves as mediator at the police headquarters, an agreement is reached, the houses are spared, and the Jews move back in. The overjoyed Jewish residents of the Grenadierstraße, feeling that their houses had been saved by God, exult in their victory and rejoice in the street.

Initially, the novel ended in the year 1928, with the Jews of the Grenadierstraße defending themselves against the police and the construction companies, with God saving their houses, and the Jews rejoicing in the street, and becoming one with the street into eternity. The various fates of the individual characters vary; some remain in Berlin while others immigrate to distant locations. The disillusioned Frajim, who fails to secure steady employment in Berlin, decides to return to his native Poland at the end of the novel. Other characters leave for Palestine or New York in hopes of building a more stable future. For a fleeting moment in the final pages of the novel, it appears as if potentially just one period in the history of the Grenadierstraße is coming to a close. When Frau Warszawski's aunt asks her what would happen now that so many of her tenants have left the street, she exclaims, "There will be others."[59] However, her hope does not come to fruition.

Shortly after he fled Nazi Germany, Beradt added an epilogue that he tacked onto the end of the novel, long after its completion. Beradt's wife Charlotte later recalled that a few days

[58] Ibid., 340.
[59] Ibid., 348.

before the couple fled to England, her husband spent his time walking alone through the streets of the Scheunenviertel in deep sadness, pacing up and down the Grenadierstraße, "his street—in whose preschool he had learned Hebrew as a child."[60] Unlike the rest of the novel, Beradt inserts himself into the narrative via the epilogue; this final chapter is narrated in the author's own personal voice and documents the rise of National Socialism and ultimately the deportation of the Grenadierstraße's Jewish residents. "How hated must a street be," Beradt asks his readers, "that the outsider didn't feel its glorious splendor and intoxication?"[61] The date is July 1939, as Beradt wanders along the street for the very last time before his impending emigration from Germany: "I saw [the street] a few weeks before the outbreak of war, it was unrecognizable. It was an afternoon, not a particularly busy time, but not a quiet one for the street either. How many hundreds otherwise stood around in it at this time! Now it was dead!"[62] While the dilapidated houses still stand, the reason that this 'holy' street is dead in the eyes of the author is that the houses are now inhabited by other people, and no longer by Jews.[63]

After describing the events of Kristallnacht, the subsequent deportation of many of the Grenadierstraße's Jews, and the nearly 'dead' landscape of the street, the author encounters Tauber—one of the characters in the novel who constantly spouts Jewish parables and religious anecdotes—for the very last time. Tauber, one of the last remaining Jews on the street who has yet to be deported, is combative and argues with the author about the unfolding events in what turns out to be the closing lines of the book. Unable to anticipate the extent of the forthcoming annihilation of Europe's Jewry, he exclaims:

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[60] Charlotte Beradt, "Martin Beradt—Sein Kreis und sein Werk," Bulletin für die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft der Freunde des Leo Baeck Institute, Tel Aviv, 29.8 (1965): 41-54, p. 53.
[61] Beradt, *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*, 350.
[62] Ibid., 351.
[63] Ibid.

> 'What does it matter if Jews are expelled from one or two or three places in the world, if Jews in other places in the world are allowed to live in peace? What does it matter?' He repeated, 'Not at all!,' and with a movement of his hand he wiped away everything around him.[64]

Essentially, like Arnold Zweig does in *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, with this novel, Beradt is able to relate himself to the world of East European Jewry without defining himself as a part of it. At the same time, through the epilogue, Beradt is able to mourn the death of his own childhood home on a personal level.

Throughout the novel, the house or apartment, as a place of warmth, security, and love, is constantly challenged by the prospect of displacement. This fear of displacement is brought on by both external and internal forces—the fear of the police descending upon the houses to force the Jews out, and the concern about the houses themselves crumbling into pieces due to neglect. Jewish belonging is tied to the houses, and without their houses, the Jews of the Grenadierstraße are lost in the world. By assigning Jewish belonging to the homes themselves, Beradt essentially anchors 'Jewishness' onto the streets, thus casting the Grenadierstraße as a Jewish space and transforming the space of the home into an important component of Jewish belonging in Weimar Berlin. While Beradt's Grenadierstraße is a generic street in that the novel does not contain any references to specific landmarks within Berlin, all of the events in the novel take place at an exact date in time. The negotiation between a sense of at-homeness and the impossibility of being at home is expressed through both the physicality of the houses and the multiple meanings imbued in the space of the Grenadierstraße within Berlin. Beradt's Scheunenviertel, with its beloved sites and sacred houses, is most certainly *not* merely a 'way station' for East European Jews, but a permanent home and space of belonging—albeit one that has been ultimately stripped away from the Jews of Berlin.

[64] Ibid., 353.

The Scheunenviertel Inside the Soul: Fischl Schneersohn's *Grenadierstraße*

While Jewish 'belonging' in the Scheunenviertel of Martin Beradt's novel is dependent upon the houses on the Grenadierstraße itself, Fischl Schneersohn's Yiddish novel *Grenadierstraße*, written around the same time, approaches the space of this street in a much more abstract manner. Born in Ukraine in 1887 to descendants of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Fischl Schneersohn was raised in a traditional and esteemed Hasidic household and received rabbinic ordination at the age of sixteen. Deciding to pursue a secular education, Schneersohn passed his Russian Abitur at age eighteen and moved to Berlin in the winter of 1910 to study medicine at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität. He then completed his doctorate in St. Petersburg, taught psychiatry in Kiev after the Revolution, and finally moved back to Berlin, where he established himself as a prominent psychiatrist in the medical field and a public intellectual in the wider Jewish community. Though he adopted many secular practices in Berlin, Schneersohn never lost touch with his Hasidic roots, and he remained relatively comfortable in both religious and secular worlds. In Berlin, Schneersohn belonged to a large circle of Jewish intellectuals, published and lectured widely in the field of social psychology and on topics such as Jewish ethics, and from 1925 to 1928, he collaborated with David Koigen and Franz Hilker in publishing the journal "Ethos," which sought to define a new social ethics in the wake of the catastrophe brought on by the First World War. In 1937, Schneersohn immigrated to Tel Aviv, where, a few years later, he collaborated with S.Y. Agnon and Martin Buber in founding an organization dedicated to informing the public about the mass murder of Jews in Europe.[65] After the Shoah, Schneersohn briefly returned to Germany to visit displaced persons camps and finally

[65] Anne-Christin Saß, "Einführung," 14.

spent the rest of his career in Tel Aviv as a psychologist working with Holocaust survivors who settled in Israel.

While living in Berlin—first as a medical student and later as a psychiatrist—Schneersohn also began to write literature on the side, which is how the novel *Grenadierstraße* came to be. Published in 1935 as a supplement to the Yiddish *Literarishe bleter* in Warsaw and set in the years just prior to, during, and following the First World War, Schneersohn's Yiddish novel *Grenadierstraße* follows the journey of Johann Ketner, a young, sensitive, and highly educated German-Jewish intellectual from a wealthy and assimilated Berlin home in his newfound quest for Jewish spirituality. Writing as an East-European Jew for a Yiddish-reading public, Schneersohn's novel takes the perspective of a German Jew in order to provide an example of the younger generation of German-Jewish intellectuals who came to idealize the 'authentic' cultural value of East European Jewry.

Unlike the fragmentary and episodic nature of Beradt's *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*, the majority of Schneersohn's *Grenadierstraße* is written in the style of a traditional *Bildungsroman* and follows a linear storyline documenting the life journey of the protagonist. The novel primarily focuses on the protagonist's psychological journey to uncover his true and hidden identity as a Jew, which had been previously concealed through a history of assimilation. But despite the novel's title, the protagonist does not physically reach the Grenadierstraße until the very last page of the book. Instead, the Scheunenviertel functions as a symbolic place and an imaginative space of longing, marking a distinct sphere or separate mysterious world of its own that stands at the endpoint of his spiritual quest. While the action takes place in many other homes and spaces, the protagonist unconsciously orients himself towards the Grenadierstraße

throughout the entire journey. Unlike Beradt's novel, Schneersohn's Grenadierstraße functions almost entirely as an imaginative topos as opposed to a physical place.

The novel begins on the Alexanderplatz in the early 1920s, where Johann Ketner and his wife Helene happen to witness a large group of religious Jews from the Grenadierstraße who have come to greet a famous Hasidic rebbe upon his arrival in Berlin. The rest of the text traces Johann's life story from the early 1900s up until that point, as he engages in a spiritual search for the meaning of life and his own Jewish identity. As Mikhail Krutikov explains, the novel is didactic in nature, as the narrator of Schneersohn's *Grenadierstraße* "proceeds like an inquisitive ethnographer observing the tribe of German Jews, whose perspective resembles that of German Jews on the life of the Jews of Eastern Europe."[66] As a character, Johann personifies the newly awakened German-Jewish interest in the cultural value of East European Jewry, particularly that of the youth who rebel against the assimilation of their parents. He believes that there is something inauthentic about the 'bourgeois' nature of German-Jewish society, and he feels that there must be something more to life and to Judaism that lies hidden in plain sight.

After a traumatic experience witnessing his mother on her deathbed as a young boy, Johann's nerves are heightened and he ultimately experiences a psychological breakdown. Johann's father, the distinguished Adolf Ketner, believes that the origin of his son's distress, and eventually his hysteria, is rooted less in the death of his mother and more so in his longing for the Grenadierstraße.[67] For Johann's father, a highly respected and wealthy banker, the Grenadierstraße functions as an explicit space of danger—danger not due to the fear of anti-Semitic attacks, but danger that the space of the Grenadierstraße could lure his son back into the world of traditional Jewish life that their family had worked so hard to distance themselves from.

[66] Mikhail Krutikov, "Nachwort," in Schneersohn, *Grenadierstraße*, 252.
[67] Schneersohn, *Grenadierstraße*, 50.

As he prepares for his Confirmation ceremony (the equivalent of a Bar Mitzvah in the German liberal Reform tradition), Johann confronts his father, exclaiming, "What is this *Jud-a-ism* and why are you hiding it from me?"[68] At this point, Johann's father now regrets his decision to hire a religion teacher for the boy to prepare for his Confirmation, as his son begins endlessly showering the teacher with all kinds of questions about Judaism and the 'fanatical' Hasidic world of the Grenadierstraße, which he has still only heard about in passing conversation.

When Johann comes of age and begins his university studies, he encounters a group of Russian Jewish medical students in the anatomical laboratory. As Schneersohn describes, the Russian Jews who Johann encounters during his university studies "looked like gnarled forest trees among elaborately trimmed, decorative and ornate park trees."[69] Johann is particularly shocked to discover that these students have beards. The other German Jewish students in the room, feeling compromised and embarrassed by the appearance of their co-religionists from the East, mutter 'Grenadierstraße' under their breath in a derogatory fashion. But for Johann, the mere sight of these Russian Jewish students, who reside on the Grenadierstraße, "evoked in [him], like the wanderer from the East, an original, almost forgotten feeling of home."[70] After encountering the Russian Jewish medical students at the university, Johann's curiosity piques:

> Johann finally wanted to know what this 'Grenadierstraße' was all about, a street whose name he had already heard more than once. It was explained to him briefly: old-fashioned Jews from Poland, Galicia and Russia, fanatics in long caftans and with long beards, immigrated to Berlin and settled in the area around the Grenadierstraße. Most are beggars, peddlers or craftsmen…In this way, a bearded, begging hotbed of fanaticism has emerged in clean-shaven, civilized Berlin.[71]

[68] Ibid., 47.
[69] Ibid., 72.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 74.

After his experience at the university, Johann considers joining various Zionist student organizations, thinking that they might be a path to the Grenadierstraße, but they are ultimately of no use to him. In these groups, in which paying shekels, hosting an occasional debate, or studying a pinch of Hebrew is "considered enough to be a Zionist," Johann feels restricted.[72] As Schneersohn explains, "Just as the liberals make a kind of compote out of Judaism that one only nibbles on every jubilee, so Zionism appeared to Johann as a kind of new compote, a party program that one only occasionally remembers."[73] Unsatisfied by what the Zionist groups can offer him, Johann's fiery nature instead craves "more momentum, greater deeds, and more heroic struggles."[74] Employing the Kabbalistic 'breaking of the vessels' metaphor, Johann "sensed the cracks of the magnificent present that were still emerging in secret," slowly seeping from the Grenadierstraße into his mind.[75]

When Johann decides to reconnect with some of his relatives from his mother's family in Hamburg, who follow the neo-Orthodox traditions of Samson Raphael Hirsch, his father is worried that he will become influenced by their 'kitchen Judaism' and that he might desire to explore the family's Jewish roots. Upon his visit to these relatives, the rooms of Johann's childhood home are juxtaposed with how he imagines those on the Grenadierstraße to be. His childhood rooms are repeatedly described as too large, dark, and lonely—their empty silence physically makes their inhabitants pace back and forth, heightens their nerves, and conjures up all kinds of confused thoughts and feelings.[76] However, the homes of his kashrut-observing extended relatives are warm and cozy spaces because they contain objects and signifiers that

[72] Ibid., 70.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 37, 44, 97-98.

remind him of his long lost Jewish origins. At the home of his great uncle, a painting of a Jewish ancestor in a yarmulke and peyes, a silver samovar and oak carved buffet table from Eastern Europe, and the taste of borscht all cause Johann to "feel an original sense of home, a kind of warm roots."[77] The material possessions in his uncle's home are transformed from ordinary objects into Jewish ones. In this instance, the dishes are imbued with Jewishness and Jewish values to Johann because the people who use them observe the dietary laws of kashrut.

Upon this visit to his uncle's home, Johann quickly strikes up a courtship with one of his extended relatives, a cousin Helene Grünstein, and the two become engaged shortly after. By now, Johann is fascinated with the world of Hasidism and the study of Kabbalah, although they are still foreign to him. When he returns home to continue his studies after his engagement, Johann reconnects with a different extended relative from his mother's side of the family in Berlin and attends an Orthodox synagogue service for the first time. At the Friday night synagogue service, the mere sight of 'rooted' East European Jews "awakened a warm, original feeling of home in him."[78] Similarly, at the dinner table of this relative, simply hearing the sound of Yiddish being spoken "evoked a half forgotten, original feeling of home in him"[79] and an encounter with a Hasidic *meshulach* (charity collector) that same evening "awakened in Johann a deep-seated and yet vague memory that he could not grasp now and that he would become aware of later."[80] It is this encounter with the Hasid from the Grenadierstraße that inspires Johann to begin studying the history of Jewish religious movements and Jewish mysticism.

The rest of the plot of the novel proceeds as follows: Johann devotes himself to his university studies and to painting, marries his cousin Helene, and travels with her on a year-long

[77] Ibid., 113-114.
[78] Ibid. 180.
[79] Ibid., 186.
[80] Ibid., 189.

educational trip to the Orient. Shortly after the pair return to Germany upon the outbreak of the First World War, Johann's father dies of a heart attack. Johann suffers a nervous breakdown and spends the entirety of World War I in a sanatorium in one of Berlin's western suburbs under the care of various doctors, and his wife rents a private apartment nearby for the duration of his stay. Following the war, Johann recovers from his melancholic crisis and is released from the sanatorium. The couple settles into a cozy Berlin villa with an attached art studio, and Johann becomes a well-known scholar of the philosophy of religions as well as a painter who produces works highly reminiscent of the style and content of Hermann Struck. The couple's new home and art gallery exudes a 'warm comfort' that contributes significantly to the space becoming a central gathering point for a wide variety of circles, including fellow young German Jewish intellectuals.[81] Here, Johann is able to successfully write and publish an important philosophical work on the phenomenology of 'longing,' which attracts much interest and generates enormous enthusiasm among Germany's scholarly youth. After the publication of his book, Johann devotes himself almost entirely to painting. He paints portraits and landscapes inspired by his international trip to the Orient before the First World War and creates a masterpiece landscape depicting a caravan in the desert, which is put on display at an exhibition. After his initial success as a painter, Johann begins to read German translations of Hasidic folktales and renews his interest in Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism.

Suddenly, in the final pages of the novel, Johann remembers the Hasidic *meshulach* from the Grenadierstraße from his encounter years ago while attending his very first Orthodox synagogue service in Berlin:

> From his earliest childhood he remembered the long-bearded wanderer from the Grenadierstraße, who walked the streets of Berlin, a stranger, someone with deep roots, who triggered an original, long-forgotten and yet familiar sense of home in the Jewish

[81] Ibid., 239.

> children who had grown up in the tradition of German culture. This vague feeling penetrated the depths of his soul like a powerful aroma.[82]

In these final pages of the novel, the space of the Grenadierstraße not only occupies the mind of Johann, but it also penetrates the souls of an entire generation of German Jewish children who become fascinated with the customs of East European Jewry. Johann now believes that his salvation, or his 'treasure of a genuine Jewish inwardness,' lies hidden in the study of Jewish mysticism, and especially in the Jewish popular movement of the Hasidim.[83] He and his wife Helene participate in founding a "Society of Jewish Mysticism," which attracts many young German Jews who are interested in the 'authenticity' of East European Jewish culture and who seek a spiritual awakening. Finally, the text returns to the opening scene: Johann and his wife Helene encounter the arrival of the rebbe, and they physically follow a parade of Hasidic Jews to the Grenadierstraße; Johann's soul is finally at peace. In the end, Schneersohn's message is that Johann's longing, which is always directed towards the Grenadierstraße, was not necessarily brought about by an external force, but was unconsciously inside of him throughout his entire life. It now becomes clear to the reader that Johann's eternal longing for the Grenadierstraße functioned as the source of his creativity as an artist and a thinker, inspiring his greatest works.

While on the surface, *Grenadierstraße* is primarily didactic in terms of its function, and its message is rather simplistic and straightforward, Schneersohn's transfiguration of a real place into an abstract space is quite innovative. By rooting this abstract longing in the concrete local space of the Scheunenviertel, Schneersohn is making a point about people versus place. Other than the Russian Jewish medical students at the university and the Hasidic *meshulach* at the synagogue service, East European Jewish characters are completely absent from the bulk of the

[82] Ibid., 246.
[83] Ibid.

novel. By locating Johann's longing not in the people who bring the customs of East European Jewry to Berlin, but in the *place* of the Scheunenviertel, where they settle, Schneersohn magnifies a specific topographical area into a larger idea. In Schneersohn's novel, the Grenadierstraße becomes larger than life; it is not just a street or a space within Berlin, but an entire lifestyle. Significantly, Schneersohn implies that this cultural and religious enlightenment is rooted topographically within Berlin and can be achieved within the space of Berlin itself. He also thereby implies to his readers that the German-Jewish interest in all things *Ostjudentum* was fundamentally an internal phenomenon, albeit brought out through the help of encounters with East European Jewry. One did not need to physically venture to the East in order to be reawakened, but rather, enlightenment could be found by looking inside one's soul.

Conclusion

While both Martin Beradt's *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit* and Fischl Schneersohn's *Grenadierstraße* helped propagate the myth of the Scheunenviertel as a shtetl in the middle of the Berlin metropolis, the space of the Scheunenviertel functions very differently in each account. Whereas Beradt moves from the concrete to the abstract throughout the course of his novel, Schneersohn moves in the opposite direction. In Beradt's narrative, it is not the people who transform the Scheunenviertel into a Jewish space—rather, the Scheunenviertel itself exudes Jewishness to begin with, and the streets and its residents are one and the same. Beradt's Grenadierstraße is a living, breathing, organism; upon the rumor that the Jews are about to be displaced, the collective "street" fights back as opposed to the individual residents on the street, and when the Jews are ultimately evicted, the street dies.[84] In Schneersohn's narrative, the

[84] Beradt, *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*, 339.

Scheunenviertel is a kind of western Jerusalem, and the hearts of young German Jews involuntarily yearn towards the Grenadierstraße, a concrete space that becomes an idea, larger than life. While Beradt never even mentions the Grenadierstraße by name in the entire novel, as this location is implied, Schneersohn uses this precise street to signify and represent an entire lifeworld. Whereas Beradt reduces the size of the Grenadierstraße into an intimate and localized small-town 'Gasse,' Schneersohn metaphorically amplifies and enlarges the space of the street into an entire way of life in the modern Jewish world.

While these writers led double lives—Beradt as a lawyer and Schneersohn as a psychiatrist—both ultimately used the local place of the Scheunenviertel as a way to reflect on their own identities in Weimar Germany, positioning themselves either in or outside of the East European Jewish world. Beradt's treatment of the houses in his novel—homes that the Jews are intimately attached to—physically anchors the Jews to the streets and fuses the people and their environment together into a collective and symbolic whole. Marked by the rise of National Socialism but completed before the full extent of the Shoah, Beradt's novel evokes a nostalgia for a particular way of Jewish life that was slipping away before his eyes. The impending doom throughout the entire novel, characterized through the decaying state of the Jews' beloved houses and especially in the dictum 'from morning to evening the world can be destroyed,' is probably what prompted Eike Geisel to refer to the novel as "an obituary during one's lifetime."[85] By equating the street with its inhabitants, the absence of the Jews who reside there signifies the death of the street, which in turn leaves an empty space upon the annihilation of Europe's Jewry during the Shoah. By removing the Grenadierstraße from the reality of Berlin and as a real place until the very last page of the novel, Schneersohn also participates in the mythologizing of this

[85] Eike Geisel, "Nachruf zu Lebzeiten," 355.

space, casting the Scheunenviertel as an emotional and metaphysical space of German-Jewish longing. While the Grenadierstraße functions as a kind of empty space throughout the bulk of the novel in that the protagonist has never set foot on this street and its existence is only experienced within his mind, Johann's longing for a deeper and more 'authentic' type of Judaism is precisely rooted in an exact physical place. Though neither of these novels would be considered literary masterpieces, and these works, especially that of Beradt, have mostly faded into oblivion, both contribute to a greater understanding of the multiple meanings ascribed to the Scheunenviertel for Weimar Jewry, while also shedding light on the complex relationship between real and imagined urban spaces.

Conclusion

Individually, each chapter in this dissertation makes an important contribution to the study of Jewish dwelling, domesticity, and belonging in the years leading up to the First World War through the Weimar Republic. Chapter 1 establishes the historical context of Pensions and rented rooms as dwellings in the German capital, providing both a social and cultural history of the Pension as an institution. It also demonstrates how the experience of both living in and renting out rooms in a Pension was a gendered phenomenon. The chapter reveals the fundamentally paradoxical situation that Pensions posed by enabling rootedness and at-homeness in a specific place for traditionally mobile populations. Chapter 2 brings together the often-neglected axes of Jewish migration, domesticity, and belonging by offering an intimate micro-history of the Pension Struck. Significantly, this chapter broadens conceptions of cultural Zionism by positioning Zionism as a mode of at-homeness and sociability in Berlin. Chapter 3 shows how Pensions were spaces in which culture making could take place. It demonstrates that cultural projects utilizing the Hebrew language were integral to the cultural practices of being a Zionist in interwar Europe. Chapter 4 enters new terrains in the field of modern Jewish literature and demonstrates why the Pension should be treated as an actant rather than a backdrop when considering issues of Jewish at-homeness and belonging. It also demonstrates how the Pension served as a tool that enabled Jewish writers to experiment with literary modernism. Finally, Chapter 5 moves beyond the world of the Pension and centers on the space of the Scheunenviertel. It shows how this concrete and localized place could be mapped out and coded as an abstract space in the German-Jewish cultural imaginary.

As a whole, this dissertation demonstrates that the Pension, as a form of dwelling, is important in understanding fundamental aspects of the Jewish experience in Berlin in the years leading up to World War I through the Weimar Republic. The space of Pension is neither a backdrop nor a background setting. Rather, Pensions and rented rooms are part of the 'main story' and warrant thorough examination in their own light. Above all, my research suggests that both Jewish historians and literary scholars should not overlook any type of space as unimportant or uninteresting. Everyday domestic spaces *are* important, and all types of spaces have the potential to shape how we view the world and experience the world, especially when considering issues of belonging.

In addition to filling an existing gap in the historiography by shedding light on a previously understudied aspect of Jewish experience in Berlin, this dissertation offers important methodological contributions in the field of Jewish Studies and makes a strong case for the future of interdisciplinary study in the field. Significantly, my project demonstrates that *longing* and *belonging* are interconnected processes; in dissolving these binaries, my dissertation thereby contributes to a larger effort to bridge the gulf between the fields of modern Jewish history and modern Jewish literature. I hope that my dissertation will serve as a model for Jewish Studies as an interdisciplinary way of thinking.

Epilogue

A Room of Their Own: The Future of the Pension in Mandatory Palestine

By 1932, around two thousand German Jews had immigrated Palestine, and by 1935, that number had risen to nearly 25,000.[1] As German Jews made their way from Berlin to mandatory Palestine, they brought many of their habits and customs with them. Despite now having permanent homes of their own, Jewish immigrants from Germany continued to operate, frequent, and reside in Pensions. Once in Palestine, the role of the Pension for the German Jewish community shifted from residential necessity into a function of socialization and leisure. For the most part, the various German Jewish women who opened up Pensions in cities such as Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem did not take in boarders out of economic necessity, but rather, they saw their efforts as entrepreneurial business endeavors. Pensions—or what might be referred to as *Pensionskultur* (the culture of Pensions)—were part of a larger effort to carve out spaces where the German Jewish diasporic community could maintain cultural norms through leisure and socialization.

One such place was the Pension Wollstein in Haifa's Hadar HaCarmel, which served as a popular meeting place for the German Jewish community. Opened in 1927 and run by the Berlin-born Hedwig (Heta) Wollstein, the Pension contained nineteen guest rooms along with a communal dining room that offered kosher food. Structurally, the Pension Wollstein was more similar to a hotel than a Pension in the traditional sense that Jews were used to back in Berlin. After all, whereas Pensions had constituted their own category of accommodation in German

[1] Katharina Hoba, *Generation im Übergang: Beheimatungsprozesse deutscher Juden in Israel* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2016), 80.

newspapers and address books, in Palestine, they were grouped together with hotels.[2] Here in the Pension Wollstein, residents enjoyed a degree of privacy that one would normally expect in a hotel, as each room had its own bathroom and balcony.[3] The most important distinguishing feature from Pensions back in Berlin was that the Pension Wollstein was an 'open' space designed for a consuming public. Unlike the tight-knit nature of German Pensions, where access was dependent upon personal connections to the landlady or the community, anyone could theoretically gain access to the Pension Wollstein by making a reservation or purchasing a meal in the dining room. The Pension was routinely frequented by locals who, despite having settled into homes of their own, wanted to enjoy the company of others in a communal setting. Regulars included Elias and Grete Auerbach, Hermann and Mally Struck, Yitzhak and Anni Lamdan, Moshe and Esther Smoira, Kurt and Jenny Blumenfeld, Max and Ilse Elk, Max and Erna Mayer (who later became co-owners of the Pension), Moses Calvary, and many other members of the German-Jewish intelligentsia. In fact, the Pension served as the informal headquarters for many of the former residents of Berlin's Pension Struck.

Another popular space of socialization and leisure for the German Jewish émigré community was the Pension Käte Dan, located in the northern end of Tel Aviv near the beach. Upon immigrating to Palestine in 1922, the Berlin native Käte Dan (originally Danielewicz), initially opened up a small Pension in Safed in an old Arab house that she rented. As longtime friend Gerda Luft later recalled, "It was the idea of an immigrant from Germany, that an accommodation need not be merely functional but could also be comfortable."[4] In Käte Dan's

[2] *The Palestine Post,* September 4, 1938, p. 4.
[3] *The Palestine Post,* May 12, 1939, p. 2.
[4] Gerda Luft, *Heimkehr ins Unbekannte: Eine Darstellung der Einwanderung von Juden aus Deutschland nach Palästina vom Aufstieg Hitlers zur Macht bis zum Ausbruch des Zweiten Weltkrieges 1933–1939* (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1977), 66.

small Pension, the woven rugs on the floor, colorful drapes in the windows, fine tablecloths on the tables, and pleasing silverware at the meals, all provided a sense of *Gemütlichkeit* to German Jewish immigrants and made them feel at home.[5] Despite the primitive condition of the old house and the lack of running water, electric light, and indoor plumbing, Käte Dan took great care to make sure that "everything in the Pension looked clean and tidy."[6] The Pension served as a kind of outpost of German-Jewish culture in the early years of the German Yishuv. Frequent guests included Alexander Baerwald, Hermann Struck, Franz Oppenheimer, Ludwig Strauss, and Hayim Nahman Bialik and his wife Manya, who spent several summers there. Baerwald and Struck even designed posters and artwork which adorned the walls of the Pension.

After the house in Safed was taken over and dismantled during the 1929 Palestine Riots, Käte Dan relocated back to Berlin for the following year in order to recuperate from the traumatic events. She then returned to Palestine in 1930 and opened up a new Pension in Tel Aviv in a small rented property on the beach called Beit Svorai. Eager to expand her entrepreneurial pursuits, she purchased a plot of land at 97 Hayarkon Street with the intention of opening up a new and improved Pension, and called upon her close friend Lotte Cohn to design the building, which was completed in 1933. The modern building that housed the Pension, which Cohn designed in the style of the Bauhaus movement, boasted large and airy rooms, each with its own telephone, and excellent cuisine with reasonable prices.[7] The main attraction of the Pension was a communal dining room that opened up onto a large terrace overlooking the beach and the

[5] Gerda Luft, *Heimkehr ins Unbekannte*, 66.
[6] LBI ME 104, MM 17. Käte Dan-Rosen, "Aus Meinen Erinnerungen," in *Mitteilungsblatt*, May 14, 1965.
[7] Designing this building was one of Cohn's first major projects. A traumatic event occurred shortly after the new building opened to the public when Chaim Arlosoroff was assassinated after eating dinner at the Pension while walking on the beach. The following year in 1934, Käte Dan married Josef Rosen (Rosenbluth), the brother of Israeli politician Felix Rosenbluth (Pinhas Rosen).

port of Jaffa. Like the Pension Wollstein in Haifa, Käte Dan's Pension in Tel Aviv also attracted its own crowd of 'regulars' who often stayed for long periods of time. Kurt Blumenfeld, for example, stayed at the Pension Käte Dan so frequently that he often has his personal mail sent there.[8] This initially modest 21-room Pension that catered to German Jewish émigrés eventually transformed into the Dan hotel chain, which is now one of Israel's largest hotel businesses.[9] Other Pensions run by close friends of Käte Dan, such as Grete Ascher, Helene Cohn, and Trude Zucker in the Rehavia and Beit Hakerem neighborhoods of Jerusalem, were also gathering points for the German Jewish community, with regulars such as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, and S.Y. Agnon.

Figure 4. Exterior of the newly completed Pension Käte Dan, 1933.

[8] CZA A 222/90 13. Letter, Alfred Gruenbaum to Kurt Blumenfeld, March 4, 1934.
[9] After Käte Dan sold her Pension to Yekutiel and Shmuel Federmann and lived out the rest of her life in Haifa, the brothers transformed this formerly modest Pension into a large-scale chain tourist destination. They retained the name "Dan" in honor of the Pension's original owner.

From their inception, the Pension Wollstein and the Pension Käte Dan functioned as central meeting locales for the German Jewish community as spaces where émigrés could gather and socialize in various capacities. Both Pensions were popular spots for convening all kinds of lectures and society meetings, presentations and poetry readings, and performances and recitals.[10] The Pension Wollstein regularly hosted lectures conducted in German on topics related to German Jewish art, literature, and culture, and the Pension Käte Dan functioned as the unofficial headquarters for meetings of the German Settlers Association and the Jewish Agency's management.[11] Both were also popular sites for hosting weddings and Bar Mitzvah celebrations, and even bris ceremonies among the German Jewish community.[12] Guests could also make reservations at the Pension Wollstein and the Pension Käte Dan for Sukkot meals, Shavuot gatherings, Passover seders, Chanukah parties, and other Jewish holiday festivities.[13] Securing a seat at a Passover seder was not an easy feat; many German Jewish immigrants preferred to spend their Passover holidays in Pensions as a matter of convenience so that they did not have to turn over their kitchens, and spots were in high demand. Elias Auerbach, who regularly led Passover seders at the Pension Wollstein, was also a captivating orator and attracted a large

[10] For example, see the advertisements in: *The Palestine Post,* May 7, 1934, p. 7; *Do'ar ha-yom,* September 18, 1935, p. 8; *The Palestine Post*, February 23, 1936, p. 8; *The Palestine Post,* December 6, 1936, p. 7; *The Palestine Post,* April 27, 1937, p. 15; *Haaretz,* June 5, 1939, p. 4; *Ha-boker,* July 28, 1939, p. 7; *The Palestine Post,* October 25, 1939, p. 6; *Ha-Tsofeh,* December 1, 1939, p. 4; *Haaretz,* January 15, 1940, p. 4; *Haaretz,* February 4, 1940, p. 4; *Haaretz,* February 25, 1940, p. 4; *The Palestine Post,* March 19, 1940, p. 6; *The Palestine Post,* April 2, 1940, p. 2; *The Palestine Post,* May 15, 1940, p. 6; *The Palestine Post,* July 19, 1940, p. 2; *The Palestine Post,* April 8, 1941, p. 2; *Haaretz,* December 7, 1942, p. 3; *Davar,* October 29, 1944, p. 3.
[11] *The Palestine Post,* February 18, 1936, p. 8; *The Palestine Post,* April 21, 1937, p. 8; *The Palestine Post,* June 8, 1937, p. 3; *The Palestine Post,* December 6, 1939, p. 7.
[12] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, March 1, 1928; *The Palestine Post,* February 21, 1934, p. 5. As Sarah Wobick-Segev has shown, back in Berlin, hotels were popular venues for German-Jews to host and celebrate weddings. See Wobick-Segev, *Homes Away From Home*, 122.
[13] *Haaretz,* October 12, 1932, p. 1; *The Palestine Post,* March 26, 1934, p. 6; *The Palestine Post,* March 30, 1937, p. 5; *The Palestine Post*, June 11, 1940, p. 2.

following, which resulted in reservations at his communal seders being hard to come by.[14] Auerbach, the first German Jew to settle in Haifa, routinely took his meals at the Pension Wollstein and dined with friends and family there. Despite having plenty of room available in his family's large house situated nearby in Hadar HaCarmel, Auerbach's family decided to hold his seventieth birthday party at the Pension Wollstein.[15]

The Pension Käte Dan, which was slightly larger and more centrally located compared to the Pension Wollstein, was known for its lavish Purim costume balls and weekly Saturday night entertainment and dancing with live musicians, which became somewhat of an institution in Tel Aviv throughout the 1930s.[16] As Pensions became a staple of German Jewish leisure and consumption in the Yishuv, these weekly post-Shabbat dances also provided a self-selecting space for courtship, where German Jews could meet future partners. The Pension Käte Dan was also an overt space of consumption in that Frau Dan sometimes allowed merchants from abroad to set up shop for the day and market their goods. On these occasions, Pension habitues could browse and purchase some of the latest special goods and brands from abroad; anything from men's and women's hats, coats, and suits in the latest fashion, to chewing gum that could be ordered in bulk, was put on display for purchase.[17]

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[14] *The Palestine Post,* April 16, 1940, p. 2.
[15] ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 27, 1952; ZAGJD B 2/21, Nr. 83. Letter, Elias Auerbach to Grete Auerbach, July 28, 1952. Similarly, a sixtieth birthday party was held at the Pension Wollstein for Moses Calvary. See *The Palestine Post,* February 3, 1936, p. 5.
[16] *The Palestine Bulletin,* March 2, 1931, p. 8; *The Palestine Post,* June 16, 1933, p. 6; *The Palestine Post,* February 23, 1934, p. 7; *The Palestine Post*, March 18, 1935, p. 6; *The Palestine Post*, February 24, 1937, p. 8; *The Palestine Post,* October 24, 1937, p. 2; *The Palestine Post*, October 28, 1938, p. 2. Interestingly, Käte Dan charged different prices for tickets to Purim balls for men and women. See the advertisement in *The Palestine Post*, Marcy 19, 1935, p. 1.
[17] *The Palestine Post,* April 29, 1936, p. 12; *The Palestine Post*, May 6, 1936, p. 2; *The Palestine Post,* April 15, 1949, p. 4.

Despite their modern amenities and exteriors, the Pension Wollstein and the Pension Käte Dan were furnished in accordance with a cozy and homey-like atmosphere that in some ways, replicated the nature of Pensions in Berlin. With the help of Lotte Cohn, Käte Dan put significant thought into which colors to use in painting the dining room in order to create an inviting and welcoming environment, and the pair spent hours contemplating the perfect shade of blue.[18] Heta Wollstein went even further in furnishing her Pension in a way that resembled a relaxed familial home. For example, the furniture placed against the wall in the dining room of the Pension, here decorated for Sukkot as seen in the photo below, evokes the intimate nature of a private living room in a family home. If it were not for the multiple dining tables in view, these mundane objects and pieces of furniture—a sofa, an armchair, a lamp, a painting, a radio—could easily be mistaken for an average family's living room or salon. These objects of everyday use reminded their users that they were in both a familiar and familial environment.

[18] LBI ME 104, MM 17. Käte Dan-Rosen, "Aus Meinen Erinnerungen," in *Mitteilungsblatt*, May 1965.

Figure 5. The Pension Wollstein dining room, decorated for Sukkot. Photo courtesy of the Ben-Tzur family, http://wollstein.info.

As hubs of socialization and leisure, spaces such as the Pension Wollstein and the Pension Käte Dan allowed German Jews to maintain communal bonds and customs and served as a way of preserving and fashioning distinct German Jewish social and cultural spheres in the Yishuv. Whereas in Berlin, Jewish discourses surrounding and experiences in Pensions were entangled with a larger unease about the loss of personal space and the evils of modern urban living, Pensions in Palestine were by and large much happier places. Despite the fact that they no longer needed to live in Pensions, the transfer of these spaces provided German Jewish immigrants with a sense of familiar comfort and enabled them to maintain specific forms of belonging in social spheres. At the same time, Pensions became a defining feature of the patterns of consumption and leisure familiar to German Jewry in the Yishuv.

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ICDPA, Israeli Center for the Documentation of the Performing Arts (Tel Aviv)
LAB, Landesarchiv (Berlin)
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