

Carson Phillips

Post-Holocaust Jewish Masculinity in German-Speaking Europe

Abstract

A rich body of scholarship has emerged which analyses the crisis of masculinity in German-speaking Europe following the end of the Second World War. The specific area dealt with in this essay covers the constructs of masculinity exhibited by German-speaking Jewish men who chose to remain in a German-speaking country after the war. Such men faced challenging circumstances as many official Jewish organisations declared Germany to be off-limits for the establishment or re-establishment of Jewish communities. Indeed, the World Jewish Congress passed a resolution in 1948 stating that Jews would never again settle on the “bloodstained soil of Germany”.

A critical and interpretive analysis of three memoirs demonstrates how models of Jewish masculinity were carefully constructed and performed, and how they were influenced by the effects of the Holocaust. These memoirs serve as exemplars of why some Jewish men felt almost compelled to live in the lands so deeply connected with the destruction of more than two thirds of European Jewry. They offer new information about the fragility, the resilience, and the evolutionary nature of Jewish masculinities.

*Bleib bei uns in Deutschland, es wird dir hier
Jetzt besser als eh'mals munden;
Wir schreiten fort, du hast gewiß
Den Fortschritt selbst gefunden.*

In Germany stay, and thou'lt relish things more
Than thou wert formerly able;
We're fast advancing, and thou must have seen
Our progress so rapid and stable.

Heinrich Heine – Germany. A Winter's Tale, Chapter XXV¹

Jewish men who remained in, returned to, or simply came to German-speaking countries after the Holocaust faced challenging and complex circumstances. In the immediate post-Holocaust period, many official Jewish organisations declared Germany off-limits for the re-establishment of Jewish life. In the wake of the genocide, it was believed that Jews should, and would, look to Israel, North America, or other countries as places to rebuild their lives. Indeed, living in Germany as a Jew was not understood or recognised as a realistic option by many representatives of the Jewish communities.

Ashkenazi Jewry, which constituted the majority makeup of Jewish communities in German-speaking Europe, had developed and even thrived in medieval times along the river Rhine. The everyday language used by the Jews was Middle High German, as spoken in the towns or in the country.² Hebrew however, was the lan-

1 This translation from Edgar Alfred Bowring, *The Poems of Heine. Complete, Translated into the Original Metres with a Sketch of his Life*, London 1859, 368.

2 Nachum T. Gidal, *Jews in Germany*, Cologne 1998, 32.

guage for religious study and prayer. When the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment) moved across Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its effects on countries and communities varied. In German-speaking Europe, it promised emancipation and full entry into civil society. Historian Matti Bunzl described how this quest for cultural normalisation was viewed by Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in positions of authority:

“While Jews were seen as debilitated by centuries of rabbinic solipsism and the harsh life of the ghetto, they could be reformed through *Bildung*, which would render them productive citizens of the German cultural nation. Jews themselves embarked on this process of transformation with great zeal; by the middle of the nineteenth century, they had become fully German.”³

Indeed, many Jews embraced German language, literature, and cultural and secular pursuits, further aligning themselves with a sense of German identity.

The Haskalah contributed to new self-conceptualisations among German Jews. Benjamin Maria Baader noted the development of “[a] new, scholarly, historical and critical approach toward Judaism that became known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Scholarship of Judaism)”.⁴ Some of the proponents of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* conceptualised the Jews as a *Volk*, independently of their religious traditions. Others, however, constructed Jews as a community within the German nation. Michael Brenner noted:

“Liberal Jews, though rejecting the concept of a Jewish nation, also employed such ethnic terms as *Abstammungsgemeinschaft* (community of common descent) to express their belonging to a Jewish *Gemeinschaft* [...] When such acculturated German Jews as Walter Rathenau spoke of a Jewish *Stamm* (and compared it to the Bavarians or the Saxons) to emphasize their Germanness, they clearly departed from the nineteenth-century conception of Jewish identity as purely religious.”⁵

Jews in Germany thus broadly developed a sense of identity that linked them to a common German nation and its cultural values yet were differentiated by religion.

Jews remained separated from the mainstream, non-Jewish German society by a dominant culture that saw them as well as their religious and cultural traditions as different. Since their arrival in Europe, despite the fact that the Jewish contribution to European life has been enormous, Jews have ever been imagined as outsiders.⁶ Whether it was their distinctive clothing, religious rituals, or dietary habits, Jews were coded as different from the majority non-Jewish populations among whom they lived. These differences were externally produced as well as a result of Jews supposedly being born with bodily differences. As George L. Mosse noted:

“The structure of the Jewish body was thought to be different from that of normal men [...] and that difference was made manifest through precisely those parts of the body that command most attention: nose, feet, neck, and coloration. All of these bodily features project ugliness as opposed to the standard of manly looks.”⁷

Some believed that Jews were born circumcised, adding an additional layer that differentiated them bodily and sexually from their non-Jewish neighbours. Sander Gilman convincingly demonstrated that male circumcision was the most prevalent

3 Matti Bunzl, *Jews and Queers. Symptoms of Modernity in Late-Twentieth-Century Vienna/Berkeley* 2004, 13.

4 Benjamin Maria Baader, *Jewish Masculinities. German Jews, Gender, and History*, Bloomington 2012, 11.

5 Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, New Haven 1998, 37.

6 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide. A Concise History of the Holocaust*, New York 2009, 7.

7 George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, New York 1998, 63.

marker of Jewish difference, at least in the popular perception of the non-Jewish communities Jews lived in: “The centrality of the act of circumcision in defining what a Jew is, made the very term ‘Jew’ in the nineteenth century come to mean male Jew.”⁸ For Jews, the *brit milah* (ritual act of circumcision) symbolises the covenant between God and the Jewish people and is perhaps the most significant marker of identity for Jewish men.⁹

This perception of alterity intensified in the nineteenth century as the term ‘Jew’ assumed a racial dimension. The social significance of the reliance on circumcision as the marker of Jewish difference in European medicine in the nineteenth century is evident when one considers that Western European Jews had by that time become indistinguishable from other Western Europeans in language, dress, occupation, the location of their dwellings, and the cut of their hair.¹⁰ For the community around them, circumcision marked Jews as different, weak, and effete. “Even after the Shoah”, wrote Gilman, “the sign of circumcision marked a group fantasy about the hidden nature of the male Jew’s body, even when the body in question was uncircumcised in German popular culture in the 1980s.”¹¹ Yet simultaneously, the Jewish male was also imagined to be sexually rapacious. As Mosse noted: “Jews, then, were often ‘feminized,’ though for the most part they were pictured with their passions out of control, predators lusting after blonde women.”¹² The prevalent view of the Jew as different and as an outsider survives through to contemporary times.

At the first post-war meeting of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), held in Montreux, Switzerland in July 1948, its political commission passed a resolution stressing “the determination of the Jewish people never again to settle in the bloodstained soil of Germany”.¹³ Jews who returned to German-speaking Europe did so without the blessing of the organised Jewish representative agencies. These Jews, and the communities that subsequently developed, were viewed with bewilderment and, at least initially, remained on the margins of the Jewish world.¹⁴ In 1949, further complications arose for Jews who remained in or returned to Germany. As the Federal Republic

8 Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, Princeton 1993, 49.

9 In the German imagination, circumcision occupied a dichotomous place – either inflicted upon the male body as a ritual act, or as some believed, Jewish men were born circumcised and thus inherently different. Yet educated Germans would likely have been familiar with Goethe’s memoir *From My Life. Truth and Poetry*, in which he spoke positively about his interactions with Jews at festivals and life-cycle events. Goethe stated: “I was consequently extremely curious to become acquainted with their ceremonies. I did not desist until I had frequently visited their school, had assisted at a circumcision and a wedding, and had formed a notion of the Feast of Tabernacles.”; see: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *From My Life. Truth and Poetry*, translated by John Oxenford, London 1848, 123. Additionally, Leonid Livak posited that visual artistic representations of Jesus’ circumcision often depicted old, knife-wielding Jewish men and a recoiling Mary and child. Livak noted: “Exegetes begin to view Jesus’ circumcision as the first shedding of blood homologous to the one during his Passion”, thus further solidifying the place of circumcision in the European imagination about Jews, and Jewish men in particular; see: Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination. A Case of Russian Literature*, Stanford 2010, 64.

10 Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 51.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 70.

13 Michael Brenner, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust. The Changing Image of German Jewry after 1945*, Washington, D.C. 2010, 3.

14 Atina Grossmann noted that there were approximately 8000 registered members of the Berlin Jewish community in mid-1946. Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies. Close Encounters in Occupied Germany*, Princeton 2009, 97. Of this number, almost 5,500 had non-Jewish partners who had been instrumental in enabling them to survive the Nazi period. Michael Brenner noted: “By 1948, more than 100 Jewish communities had been founded, and a total of some 20,000 members were registered in the reestablished communities in 1948.” Brenner, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, 3. These numbers reflect those communities in what would become the Federal Republic of Germany and do not include Jews who were living in Displaced Persons camps. Brenner noted that it was not until the mid-1960s that Jews in Germany felt accepted by the worldwide Jewish community.

lic of Germany was emerging from Allied occupation as a sovereign state, the WJC decided it was not realistic to completely abandon the Jews who had decided to live there. It therefore took the important first step of establishing an office in Frankfurt am Main to maintain contact with the Jewish communities in Germany. During the decades that followed, Jewish communities re-established themselves in the lands where, in recent memory, National Socialism had flourished. For some individuals, German acculturation provided career opportunities that would otherwise not have been possible. For all, rebuilding a life in German-speaking Europe meant reconstructing models of Jewish masculinity intrinsically interwoven with geographic location and German culture as well as with their personal experiences in the Holocaust.

The memoirs of three prominent Jewish men who returned to German-speaking countries and established themselves there in the post-Holocaust period provide insight into post-Holocaust constructions of Jewish masculinity. Each chose to continue the long-established Jewish tradition of contributing to European life, and each offers insight into the reasons why Jewish men chose to return to German-speaking countries while evincing the intersection of masculinity with concepts of *Heimat*, community, justice, and culture.¹⁵ The three cases analysed here are Simon Wiesenthal, who remained in Austria after being liberated from the Mauthausen concentration camp, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, who returned to Germany from Poland in 1958, and Paul Spiegel, who returned to Germany from hiding in Belgium immediately after the Second World War.

Simon Wiesenthal, born in 1908, was 37 years old when he was liberated from the Mauthausen concentration camp in 1945. There was never any doubt in Wiesenthal's mind that Austria was where he would rebuild his life. In his 1967 memoir, *Doch die Mörder leben* (published in English translation as *The Murderers Among Us*), he detailed a life devoted to investigating, locating, and seeking to bring to justice Nazi war criminals. This commitment to justice for the victims of the Holocaust meant Wiesenthal had to continually interpret and negotiate his own position in Austrian society: as a Jew and an Austrian, and as a husband and a father. For Wiesenthal, these roles often appeared to be in conflict, yet his primary concern was always seeking justice for the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. He represents a construct of masculinity that seeks justice – not retribution – for those wronged. I refer to this conceptualisation of masculinity as the Solitary Justice Seeker.

Marcel Reich-Ranicki was born in 1920 in Włocławek, Poland, but spent his formative years from 1929 to 1938 in Berlin. He documented his life and meteoric career as a literary critic and arbiter of German literary culture in his 1999 German-language memoir *Mein Leben*. After remaining on Germany's bestseller list for 53 weeks, his autobiography was translated into English and published in 2001 as *The Author of Himself*. Reich-Ranicki's life, which was steeped in German literature, epitomised the intersection of German and Jewish cultures and provides insight into the connections between masculinity, high culture, and citizenship. George Mosse described this construct of masculinity as that of the *Bildungsbürger*, the educated, bourgeois man of letters. According to Mosse, the Jewish intellectual is the German Jew beyond Judaism, working out his role in society through acceptance of the level-

¹⁵ One senses from each of the three protagonists profiled in this chapter an at times unspoken sentiment similar to Sigmund Freud's comments upon his arrival in the United Kingdom after fleeing Austria in 1938: "The triumphant feeling of liberation", Freud wrote, "is mingled too strongly with mourning, for one had still very much loved the prison from which one has been released." Freud. Conflict & Culture, www.loc.gov/exhibits/freud/freud03a.html# (16 April 2018).

ling effect of the Enlightenment promise of equality, at least among intellectuals.¹⁶ Reich-Ranicki represents a Jewish bourgeois masculinity reminiscent of the inter-war period in Europe, which was predicated on an exacting knowledge of canonical German literature and other markers of high culture.

The final subject, Paul Spiegel, was born in 1937 in a farming community in the Westphalian region of Germany. He survived the Holocaust, along with his mother, in hiding in Belgium. Following a successful career as a journalist, Spiegel was elected President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany in January 2000, a position he held until his death in 2006. Spiegel's 2001 memoir, *Wieder zu Hause?*, which has to date not been translated into English, relates his experiences as a journalist and an executive member and eventually the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. Spiegel's construction of masculinity is informed by both agrarian values as well as the commitment to building community. I use the term Pragmatic Masculinity to define this conceptualisation.

The authors of the memoirs chosen for analysis here are all exceptional. Their stories demonstrate attachments to land, culture, and history. Simon Wiesenthal's case provides a poignant and compelling account of a life devoted to hunting Nazi war criminals; Marcel Reich-Ranicki's case provides a glimpse into the guarded and private life of one of Germany's most prolific literary critics; and, finally, Paul Spiegel's case reveals an attachment to Germany's rural farmland. An examination of each text elucidates the juncture of models of masculinity, hybrid identities, as well as the intersection of sexuality with cultural, social, and religious identity markers of Judaism.

The Man Who Lived for the Dead: Simon Wiesenthal

Wiesenthal spoke sparingly in his memoir about his personal and familial life. Since Wiesenthal made not a single reference to his wife and daughter in *The Murderers Among Us*, and in order to assess how he separated his personal and public life into two distinct spheres, it is necessary to look to his 1989 memoir *Justice Not Vengeance*, in which he succinctly stated: "I am married, I have a daughter, I have grandchildren – they mean everything to me, but they are of no interest to the general public. Of interest alone is my life in relation to Nazism: I have survived the Holocaust and I have tried to preserve the memory of the dead."¹⁷ This reveals Wiesenthal's desire to protect his family and shield them from public scrutiny, but also something of his ego.¹⁸ In a patriarchal manner, Wiesenthal decided and declared what would be of interest for readers of his memoir: namely, his work and dedication to tracking down Nazi war criminals that made him a household name in Europe and North America. His wife Cyla also survived the Holocaust, and it is reasonable to assume that her experiences in Austria following the Holocaust and her role in supporting her husband and raising their daughter in German-speaking Europe would have been of interest to some readers. Wiesenthal's reticence about discussing his person-

¹⁶ Gilman, Freud, Race, and Gender, 24.

¹⁷ Simon Wiesenthal, *Justice Not Vengeance*, New York 1989, 1.

¹⁸ Wiesenthal was consumed with bringing Nazi war criminals to justice, and it quickly became his *raison d'être*. Describing his work habits and demeanour, he wrote: "My work kept me up all day until late at night. When I went to bed and tried to sleep, things I'd read and heard during the day would fuse with memories of the past. Often, after a bad dream, I woke unable to separate the dream from reality."; see: Simon Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, London 1967, 59-60.

al life while declaring that his professional life alone was of interest to the reader may also be indicative of the manner in which he viewed women's roles in his life as of a secondary or supporting nature.¹⁹

The English translation of Simon Wiesenthal's 1967 memoir bears the provocative title *The Murderers Among Us*, evoking the 1946 DEFA film *The Murderers are Among Us* (*Die Mörder sind unter uns*). This expressionist film by Wolfgang Staudte was the first film made in Germany after the war and dealt with the crisis of masculinity that resulted from the Second World War, which Wiesenthal symbolically invoked in his memoir's title.

Wiesenthal's attitudes towards German men, women, and minorities and the manner in which he carefully crafted his own image reveal much about the masculine construct of one of Austria's most prominent Jewish men. The male ideal remained unchanged in its characteristics for Wiesenthal after the end of the war, but the SS, which represented the Aryan male, no longer exemplified it. They had been replaced by the American G.I., who symbolised power, control, and justice in the post-war era. The crucial moment for Wiesenthal came when he witnessed the interrogation of SS officers by US-American officers:

"Now I stared; I couldn't believe it. The SS man was trembling, just as we had trembled before him. His shoulders were hunched, and I noticed that he wiped the palms of his hands. He was no longer a superman; he made me think of a trapped animal. He was escorted by a Jewish prisoner – a former prisoner."²⁰

The Aryan construct of masculinity Wiesenthal witnessed in the captive SS officer had not only been delegitimised, but also dehumanised and criminalised. It was evidence for Wiesenthal that a new era was commencing. Describing the change in his own perception of the SS men, Wiesenthal wrote: "I had always thought of them as the strong men, the elite, of a perverted regime. It took me a long time to understand what I had seen: the supermen became cowards the moment they were no longer protected by their guns. They were through."²¹

To better understand Wiesenthal's conceptualisation of masculinity, it is critical to situate the construct of the Jewish male as defined by National Socialist ideology – which Wiesenthal was subjected to and victimised by – in this wider context. The shift in consciousness from being victimised by Nazi concepts of what it meant to be a man (or less than a man) to constructing a new masculinity that allowed him to integrate back into society would have been a transformative experience for Wiesenthal. Klaus Theweleit's theories of masculinity that focus on the connection between Fascist consciousness and the male body provide an important framework for understanding this transformation. When Wiesenthal witnessed a former SS guard – once the epitome of Aryan masculinity – being escorted by a former prisoner, it had a transformative effect upon how he viewed himself and his former persecutors. "We are free men now, no longer *Untermenschen*", he wrote.²² This was the defining moment that allowed Wiesenthal to create a new construct of masculinity. Wiesenthal's model borrowed from the strength of feminised models, not only from

19 Jewish women and their relationships to German and Austrian men either during or after the Holocaust are noticeably absent in his memoir. It seems they belonged to the private sphere, and Wiesenthal made a clear distinction between the private and public spheres he inhabited: It was his very public work that monopolised his life.

20 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 47.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, 48.

women but also from children and marginalised males, such as working-class Americans and homosexuals.

The hierarchical order of masculinity was completely redefined with the liberation of the Mauthausen concentration camp where Wiesenthal was held. The American GIs who controlled the camp assumed the position of the dominant alpha male at the top of the social order, while, in defeat, the Aryan male became the omega male, submissive not only to his captors but also to his former prisoners. The recently liberated inmates – previously the omega males – became beta males who assisted the GIs with translation and interrogation and by escorting the now imprisoned German males to their barracks. Second in the hierarchy, they moved into a position of trust with the higher positioned alpha males. The power dynamic that emerged with the liberation of the camp remained essentially unchanged, but the players had shifted places.²³ This in itself had a dramatic and powerful effect on Wiesenthal.

A key characteristic of the new alpha males, like the ones they replaced, was that they were unequivocally heterosexual. US servicemen discovered to be homosexual were dishonourably discharged during this period. For Wiesenthal, to be male was to be coded as heterosexual; homosexuality seems to have played no role in his discourse, even though homosexuals were interned in the Mauthausen concentration camp. In 2004, one year before his death, Wiesenthal wrote a letter of support for the *Homosexuelle Initiative Wien* (HOSI-Wien) campaign for restitution and medical expenses for homosexual victims of National Socialism. In his letter, Wiesenthal stated that gay men and women who were persecuted by the Nazis because of their sexual orientation were not likely to identify themselves and there was therefore a danger that they would not get the compensation they deserved, thus perpetuating the discrimination.²⁴ This was a significant endorsement for HOSI-Wien since Wiesenthal's favourable reputation was well ensconced in Austria by this time. It was also a significant development in how Wiesenthal integrated homosexuality into his understanding of hegemonic masculinity. After a lifetime of seeking justice for the murdered Jews of Europe, Wiesenthal's Solitary Justice Seeker masculinity defined him as an individualist who stood for justice. Consequently, he was able to integrate homosexuality into a broader framework of masculinity.

Yet, despite the assumed heterosexuality of the American GIs, Wiesenthal did not code them as invincible. These heterosexual men were still susceptible to the wiles of beautiful and charming women – a motif reminiscent of the biblical narrative of Samson and Delilah and the story of Adam being tempted by the feminine guile of Eve. From his memoir, one gets the impression that Wiesenthal imagined German-speaking women to be capable of stealthily defeating the American military male. As the denazification process continued into 1946 and 1947, Wiesenthal noted that the Americans taking part in the interrogations and background checks either did not know or were not interested in speaking German. Many of these American GIs were

23 My analysis posits that in the concentration camp structure as described by Wiesenthal, the *alpha* position was occupied by Nazi men, the *beta* position by Nazi men of subordinate rank, and the *omega* position by inmates. After liberation, the *alpha* position was occupied by American soldiers, the *beta* position by the former inmates, and the *omega* position by Nazi men. This theorisation is extrapolated from psychological research on adolescent males that suggests the existence of status or dominance hierarchies operating in defined settings that structure behaviour. For further details on male hierarchy in defined settings, see Richard Savin-Williams, *An Ethological Study of Dominance Formation and Maintenance in a Group of Human Adolescents*, in: *Child Development* 47 (1976) 4. Theorists such as Debbie Ging (*Alphas, Betas and Incels Theorizing Masculinities of the Manosphere*, in: *Man and Masculinities*, May 2017; <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17706401>) have expanded these categories of masculinity to include other categories.

24 Tom Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal. The Life and Legends*, New York 2010, 319.

not the same ones who had fought in the Second World War or liberated the camps. Although they wore the American uniform, they were recruits and GIs who had replaced the soldiers when their tours of duty ended. Wiesenthal wrote that their reliance on interpreters, usually young German and Austrian women, made them susceptible to their female charms and unfocused in their task of seeking justice: “They often became victims of the Nazis’ best secret weapon – the ‘*Fräuleins*’”, he wrote. “A young American was naturally more interested in a pretty, complaisant girl than in one of ‘those SS men.’”²⁵ Wiesenthal equated masculinity with strength, honour, and heterosexual virility, and femininity with temptation. Although Eve is not intrinsically evil, she is easily led astray and, perhaps more seriously, can tempt Adam into doing her bidding.

Wiesenthal’s immunity to the real or imagined influences of the *Fräuleins* is not unrelated to his concept of Jewish masculinity. Nearly 38 years of age when liberated, Wiesenthal would have been keenly aware of the years of Nazi propaganda that depicted Jewish men as feminine, yet also as sexual predators.²⁶ Therefore, his immunity can be interpreted as a desire to counter the negative stereotype of Jewish men as being sexually lascivious. Unlike some of the male subjects in Margarete Feinstein’s 2009 study on Holocaust survivors in post-war Germany, who saw sexual relations with German and Austrian women as a type of revenge, Wiesenthal never mentioned any such desire on his part. Feinstein noted:

“Revenge through sexual relations with German women also occurred. Few Jewish DPs [Displaced Persons] committed rape against German women, but those who did were motivated by revenge. More commonly, Jewish men bartered their rations for sex. Years of Nazi propaganda celebrating the German woman as the feminine ideal and denigrating the Eastern European man as a beast had encouraged a form of ‘revenge’ and desire to taste the forbidden fruit. At the very least such sexual contact turned the Nazi racial order upside down, demonstrating its defeat.”²⁷

Although Wiesenthal viewed young German-speaking women, the *Fräuleins*, with suspicion, he appreciated their techniques, which he associated with feminine wiles. Later, he utilised some of these methods in an attempt to portray himself as healthy and redoubtable. Liberation provided Wiesenthal with the opportunity to recover and adjust to life in the post-war period. His first priority was to regain his health and much needed bodyweight. When the Americans initially turned down his request to help them with interrogations, it reinforced for him the premise that masculinity is evinced by the male body but that power can reside with women, something he may not previously have been aware of. In his memoir, he recounted being told: “Wiesenthal, go and take it easy for a while and come back when you really weigh fifty-six kilos.”²⁸ Ten days later, when Wiesenthal again requested to assist in the interrogations, he left nothing to chance: “Now I put on some make-up. I’d found a piece of red paper and used it to redden my pale cheeks.”²⁹ In his efforts to

25 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 58.

26 Leonid Livak demonstrated the long history in the European imagination of coding Jewish men as feminine. Describing this conceptualisation, he wrote: “Pursuing luxury and pleasure, ‘the jews’ are thus homologous to women, the ur-symbol of sexuality and carnality in the eyes of the Church Fathers. The association works both ways. As the weak link in the divinely sanctioned community, Christian women are more likely than most to ally themselves with ‘the Jews.’ On the other hand, ‘the jews,’ their gender notwithstanding, can acquire qualities marked as female.”; see: Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination*, 40.

27 Margarete Myers Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Post-War Germany, 1945–1957*, Cambridge 2009, 116.

28 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 48.

29 Ibid.

create an image of health and stamina, Wiesenthal turned to make-up – something associated with femininity and which can be used to convey power, but also with the theatre and cinema – to convey a robust, healthy image of masculinity.³⁰ Wiesenthal was establishing the framework of his life's work. He recognised the importance of presenting an image that would show him in the best possible light.

Wiesenthal was very much aware of the importance of visual aesthetics to defining one's construct of masculinity as well as the impression it created for others. When he attended the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, Wiesenthal suggested to the prosecutor, Gideon Hausner, that Eichmann, one of the primary architects of the 'Final Solution', should wear his SS uniform, just as he had appeared during the Holocaust. The trial would make a greater impression if Eichmann looked more like a Nazi criminal.³¹ Indeed, had Eichmann been dressed in his SS uniform, his masculine performativity would have been that of the Fascist male. Wiesenthal recognised, of course, that it was not possible to have Eichmann appear before the court in his SS uniform. Such a tactic would have been seen as staged theatrics and might have given the trial the ambiance of a circus. It demonstrates, however, that Wiesenthal recognised that the aesthetics of masculinity is vital to its performance, and how one is seen by the world.

Once Wiesenthal regained strength and his sense of independence, he moved to the alpha male category in his own right, becoming the Solitary Justice Seeker who tracked down criminals of the Nazi era. This depiction is strikingly similar to the new Western Hero Uta Poiger theorized played an important role in the reconstruction of German masculinity in the 1950s. In these 'town-tamer' westerns, powerful criminals caused social injustice; the hero defeats them and thus empowers the decent townsfolk, bringing progress to the frontier.³² Like the respectable sheriff in the western film Wiesenthal also possessed a gun. It too was to be used as defensive tool; in the service of bringing criminals to justice and thereby reinforced the depiction of strong yet restrained masculinity.

Wiesenthal's success in hunting was dependent on his ability to gather and collect information. He relied on his research and detective skills and his belief in the justice system to demonstrate that the pen is the mightier weapon. Wiesenthal's career required that he listen to, and document, countless personal testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust who experienced Nazi atrocities. His memoir is permeated with accounts of victimisation from individuals who sought his counsel. One senses that these personal accounts weighed heavily on Wiesenthal, who realised that it was impossible to obtain justice for most of them. Wiesenthal described the rather unusual position he found himself in as the keeper of these narratives through a conversation he had with a former SS officer:

³⁰ Wiesenthal's attention to the accoutrements of image (make-up, clothing) may be interpreted as a reference to the importance of the physical process of crafting or alternatively concealing masculinity. His specific reference to the use of women's make-up to create a healthy appearance, thus appearing more masculine, seems to indicate that Wiesenthal was not only aware of how masculinity is perceived, but also how it is performed. His actions indicate that he enlisted whatever tools were necessary in his performance of a robust, healthy male. In the same chapter, he described a conversation with a friend who saw him apply cheek make-up: "A friend asked me whether I was going out to look for a bride. 'Some people won't like that bride,' I said."; see: Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 48. One can interpret this as a veiled reference to homosexuality or even drag, and as Wiesenthal incorporating traditionally marginalised forms of masculinity into a broader discourse on masculinities.

³¹ Segev, Simon Wiesenthal, 151.

³² Uta G. Poiger, A New, "Western" Hero? Reconstructing German Masculinity in the 1950s in: *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24 (1998) 1, 147-162, 156.

“You would tell the truth to the people in America. That’s right. And you know what would happen Wiesenthal?’ He got up slowly and looked at me, and he smiled. ‘They wouldn’t believe. They’d say you were crazy. Might even put you into a madhouse. How can anyone believe this terrible business – unless he has lived through it?’”³³

It is not surprising that Wiesenthal cloaked this fragility in the guise of the traditional Harris Tweed jacket. He was not the warrior-hunter in military fatigues or body armour, but a hunter of clues and evidence necessary to bring war criminals to justice. Wiesenthal’s uniform, his tweed jacket, served as his only body armour, a constant visual aesthetic amid a turbulent life. Describing his work in locating Adolf Eichmann, Wiesenthal termed the search for Eichmann as “not a ‘hunt,’ as it has been called, but a long, frustrating game of patience, a gigantic jigsaw puzzle.”³⁴ His weapons, those of intellect, perseverance, and investigation, are characteristic of another aspect of his construct of masculinity: Puzzles and games are most frequently associated with the activities of children, but avenging those murdered in the Holocaust was not a game for Wiesenthal – it was a mission.

Indeed, Wiesenthal’s construct of masculinity relied on an on-going performance of his role as a Nazi hunter. Wiesenthal was often photographed wearing a traditional houndstooth jacket or conservative three-piece suit. Although it may have been in keeping with his upbringing and his early career as an architect, it also elicited the image of the hard-boiled detective of American cinema. Margarete Feinstein stated that clothing was one significant way in which Jewish men and women reclaimed their sense of masculinity or femininity: “Many secular survivors adopted the military fashion of pants tucked into riding boots and military-styled jackets.”³⁵ She posited that some Jewish men did so in unconscious imitation of the aggressively masculine Nazis, providing further evidence of the power structure remaining the same while the players shifted, and the longevity of the influence of the dress code of Aryan masculinity.³⁶ Wiesenthal’s crafted image and unique role in post-Holocaust Europe recalls the American detectives portrayed by Humphrey Bogart such as Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe.³⁷ Through his quiet sense of toughness and devotion to seeking justice rather than exacting revenge, Wiesenthal’s construct of masculinity reimagined the American detective of film noir as a Jewish Nazi hunter. Like his film counterparts, Wiesenthal was a self-confessed workaholic, who approached his work with a sense of duty, righteousness, toughness, and endurance.³⁸

This construction of the Solitary Justice Seeker for the victimised who cannot speak for themselves is evident in American cinema of the period. Film productions presented male protagonists – for example Henry Fonda as Juror Number 8 in *12 Angry Men* and Gregory Peck as lawyer Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* – who were driven by an overwhelming sense of rightness in their position.³⁹ In each film,

33 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 335.

34 *Ibid.*, 99.

35 Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Post-War Germany*, 111.

36 Feinstein also argued that the regrowth of hair was another signifier of masculinity: “In occupied Europe the Nazis attacked Jewish men wearing traditional beards and *pays* (side curls) and tried to force them to shave [..., and] men and women had been shaved in the concentration camps.” Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Post-War Germany*, 111. For some Jewish men, being able to grow their hair signified a return to both Jewish identity and masculinity.

37 See for example: *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) and *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946).

38 One of the characteristics often attributed to *film noir* is the tendency towards a tragic or bleak conclusion, which often includes the death of the hero. In reality, aspects of Wiesenthal’s marriage may lead to the bleak conclusion that it came second to Wiesenthal’s work.

39 *12 Angry Men* (Sidney Lumet, 1957); *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962).

the central male protagonist is positioned as the moral authority, a man who is steadfast in his belief system even when faced with ostracism from the community he inhabits. Unlike Wiesenthal, however, these men did not begin as outsiders; their moral commitments rendered them as such. Wiesenthal can be seen as having taken his cues from a contemporary form of American masculinity. Wiesenthal's construct of masculinity did not evolve in isolation. It was initially inspired by the American soldiers who liberated the Mauthausen concentration camp and also by the image of the independently thinking, moral individualist presented in American cinema.

In addition to this American influence, Wiesenthal took cues from traditional Jewish values when constructing his identity as the Solitary Justice Seeker. In describing his position on the collective guilt of a nation or people, he succinctly noted: "A Jew who believes in God and in his people does not believe in the principle of collective guilt."⁴⁰ For Wiesenthal, adherence to the moral code of ethics grounded in Jewish principles played an important role in how he hunted war criminals, and why he believed in justice through a court system rather than revenge killing. Wiesenthal distinguished between bystanders, *Mitläufer* (those who ran with the crowd but were not decision makers), and those who committed crimes against humanity, and sought justice against the latter.⁴¹

Not surprisingly, the values and moral code Wiesenthal adhered to clashed with those of the people he sought to bring to justice. When he attempted to describe to a former SS officer the value that Judaism places on human life and why revenge killing is not in accordance with this Jewish value, the man replied: "Aren't you sure, Wiesenthal, that it wasn't just weakness?"⁴² Wiesenthal was certain, however, that his belief in Jewish ethical principles was what shaped and defined his construct of masculinity and what differentiated him from the failed, Aryan male. When a colleague pondered exacting revenge upon Eichmann by kidnapping his two sons living in Austria, Wiesenthal again invoked this moral code as a point of difference between his construct of masculinity and that of the Fascist male: "We Jews are not Nazis [...] we don't wage war on innocent children."⁴³

Given his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps, the question arises why Wiesenthal chose to reside in Austria after the end of the war. Indeed, many of his family members and friends fell victim to National Socialism and, as his memoir attests, life was never easy for him in Austria. Yet it must be remembered that Wiesenthal was born in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his father fought and died in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War. In 1915, Wiesenthal had attended public school in Vienna, the capital of the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire. The bourgeois Austrian way of life, through which he grew up speaking German, was both home and heritage to Wiesenthal. Yet, more decisively, the decision to remain in Austria was intrinsically linked to his desire to bring Nazi war criminals to justice: "Having made up his mind during that early post-war period to start a search that he had no hope of ever completing, Wiesenthal used his architect's training and began to build from the foundations."⁴⁴ Methodically,

40 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 12.

41 The term *Mitläufer*, for which there is no concise English equivalent, was used during the denazification process in former West Germany and is particularly useful for contextualising the complicity of individuals during the Nazi era.

42 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 261.

43 *Ibid.*, 108.

44 Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 12.

Wiesenthal began preparations for his documentation centre, collected and catalogued affidavits from victims of National Socialism, and established a network of eyewitnesses, informants, and volunteers. Austria was home to Wiesenthal, but perhaps more importantly, it was where he could actively seek out and bring to justice the murderers among the populace.

Living in Austria came to represent for Wiesenthal what it meant for him to be both an Austrian and a Jewish man after the Holocaust. Austrians had enthusiastically welcomed Adolf Hitler at Vienna's Heldenplatz following the 'Anschluß' in 1938 and they had participated in Nazi organisations at the highest levels, especially given their relatively small population in relation to that of Germany. Although Austrians accounted for only eight percent of the population of the Third Reich, about one third of all people working for the SS extermination machinery were Austrians; Wiesenthal even claimed that almost half of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi regime were killed by Austrians.⁴⁵ As historian Bertrand Perz demonstrated, the exact number of Austrians involved in Nazi crimes has been subject to divergent views.⁴⁶ Yet it is reasonable to assume that for Wiesenthal the Austrian involvement reflected national identity and required the nation state to assume responsibility for its complicity in the crimes of National Socialism. Wiesenthal believed that his presence was needed to prod Austrians to come to terms with their involvement in Nazi crimes. He wrote: "In Germany, my efforts are appreciated. In Austria, they are unhappily tolerated, and that's why I am going to stay here."⁴⁷ It also shaped his conceptualisation of masculinity, especially when confronted with the possibility of violence against his family. While in Linz, the family was confronted with a telephone threat to their daughter's life, and Wiesenthal's wife suffered a mild heart attack. This resulted in Wiesenthal questioning his masculine role as family provider and protector vis-à-vis his professional role as justice seeker and detective. It also, perhaps for the first time, made him question his assumption of women's strength and power: "For the first time in my life I was not sure whether I should go on – whether I had the right to go on. I don't mind taking a risk but I couldn't expose my family to danger."⁴⁸ In the end, however, Wiesenthal was compelled by his own moral conviction to bring war criminals to justice. His words convey his commitment to his mission: "It was no use, I had to go on. I remember I held my head in my hands, saying to myself, 'I cannot stop, I cannot stop.'"⁴⁹

Wiesenthal believed that Austria was the right place to be, compelled by a personal mission to hunt Nazi war criminals. By relegating his roles of husband and father to secondary status after his commitment to his work, Wiesenthal demonstrated that he was willing to sacrifice them for his overriding ambition of acquiring justice for those murdered in the Holocaust. Indeed, all of his relationships came second to his commitment to bringing Nazi criminals to justice.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁶ Bertrand Perz, Der österreichische Anteil an den NS-Verbrechen. Anmerkungen zur Debatte, http://www.erinnern.at/bundeslaender/oesterreich/e_bibliothek/seminarbibliotheken-zentrale-seminare/8-zentrales-seminar/bertrand-perz-der-osterreichische-anteil-an-den-ns-verbrechen-anmerkungen-zur-debatte (17 April 2018).

⁴⁷ Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, 193.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The *Kultur Mensch*: Marcel Reich-Ranicki

Marcel Reich-Ranicki was born in Włocławek, Poland, on 2 June 1920, the youngest of three siblings. His German Jewish mother guided his childhood education, ensuring that her youngest son was educated at the German-language Protestant school in their hometown. Struggling to maintain a marginal middle-class lifestyle in Poland, the family moved to Berlin when Reich-Ranicki was nine years old. Recalling the significance of the move to Germany, Reich-Ranicki noted:

“Before leaving, so my mother believed, I had to say goodbye to my teacher, and I shall always remember the words with which she sent me out into the world [...] ‘You’re going, my son, to the land of culture.’ I did not quite understand what this was about, but I was aware of my mother nodding approvingly.”⁵⁰

Nor could he have imagined that his future in Germany would include expulsion by the Nazis and intellectual celebrity in the Federal Republic and later unified Germany.

On 27 October 1938, the Reich-Ranickis were among the Jews with Polish citizenship living in Germany who were deported by the Nazi regime and abandoned near the Polish border town of Zbaszyn when Polish authorities refused them entry. Later, confined to the Warsaw Ghetto, Reich-Ranicki experienced Nazi German expulsion a second time when his parents were deported to the death camp of Treblinka. Yet, throughout, Reich-Ranicki maintained an unwavering attachment to German literature and culture that even the murderous effects of National Socialism could not shake. When he defected to Germany from Poland in 1958, it heralded the beginning of a literary career that saw him become one of Germany’s most influential literary critics.

Marcel Reich-Ranicki seems to have inherited the mantle of a highly intellectualised *Kultur Mensch* masculinity as exhibited by scholars such as Sigmund Freud. In 1925, describing his own sense of identity, Freud wrote: “My language is German. My culture, my attainments are German. I considered myself German intellectually, until I noticed the growth of anti-Semitic prejudice in Germany and German Austria. Since that time, I prefer to call myself a Jew.”⁵¹ Although they shared a similar educational background, rather than becoming a detective, a hunter of clues, and a seeker of justice like Wiesenthal, Reich-Ranicki developed into a *Kultur Mensch*, a man of arts and letters and creativity. His 1999 memoir *Mein Leben* (published in English translation in 2001 as *The Author of Himself*) is the basis for the following analysis, in which I examine the relation between Reich-Ranicki’s almost unparalleled passion for German literature, the relationships that guided his conceptualisation of masculinity, and how milestones in his life shaped his responses to situations.

Reich-Ranicki’s memoir offers insight into the factors that determined not only his construct of masculinity, but also the interconnected markers of nationalism, identity, family, and culture. During the Nazi period, despite being subjected to humiliation, hunger, and persecution by German soldiers and Nazi policies, Reich-Ranicki maintained his belief that National Socialism had hijacked the true values of Germans and Germany. In 1937, Thomas Mann, then living in Switzerland, described the regime as “[d]espicable powers which are devastating Germany moral-

50 Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself. The Life of Marcel Reich-Ranicki*, Princeton 2001, 12.

51 Freud, *Conflict & Culture*, www.loc.gov/exhibits/freud/freud03a.html# (16 April 2018).

ly, culturally and economically”.⁵² Reich-Ranicki heard the article read aloud at a secretive literary circle he belonged to in Berlin in 1937, and it solidified his unwavering belief in what true German values and culture were. He described his reaction to Mann’s words: “That dark evening in Grunewald, hearing the words of Thomas Mann and continuous beat of the rain against the window panes and the breathing of those present being audible in the silence – what did I feel? Relief? Yes, certainly; but more than that – gratitude.”⁵³ Mann’s missive served not only to inspire Reich-Ranicki, it validated his worldview and all that he realised he had come to hold dear.

Thomas Mann’s literary works had a formidable influence on how Reich-Ranicki negotiated his place in the world:

“I esteemed Heinrich Mann, especially his *Professor Unrat* and *Der Untertan*. But I admired and revered Thomas Mann after reading his *Buddenbrooks* [...] I have time and time again referred to the central idea of that letter. They – meaning the National Socialists – have the incredible temerity to confuse themselves with Germany! At a time when, perhaps, the moment is not far off when the German people will give its last not to be confused with them.”⁵⁴

The ideas and cultural heritage that Reich-Ranicki cherished were derived from and validated by the men of German literature and the values they espoused. More importantly, Mann provided a moral legitimacy permitting Jews to return to and to live in Germany.

Reich-Ranicki’s passion and commitment to German literature earned him the reputation of being Germany’s ‘Literaturpapst’ (literature pope). Yet, much like his consciously constructed hyphenated surname, Reich-Ranicki saw himself as a blend of cultures and heritages. In 1958, after he defected to West Germany, Reich-Ranicki apparently asked his friend Hans Schwab-Felisch, arts editor for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, how he should sign his published articles. As he described the episode in his memoir, “I told him that in Poland I had always used the pseudonym Ranicki but that my real name was Reich’ [...] His answer was prompt. ‘Why don’t you do as I have done and adopt a double-barreled name.’⁵⁵ The hyphenated surname exemplified two distinctive features of Reich-Ranicki’s heritage but not a third, which surfaced in another episode that took place in 1958 and is recounted in *The Author of Himself*. Günter Grass questioned him on how he self-identified:

“He, Günter Grass from Danzig, wanted to know: ‘What are you really – a Pole, a German, or what?’ The words ‘or what’ clearly hinted at a third possibility. Without hesitation, I answered: ‘I am half Polish, half German, and wholly Jewish.’ Grass seemed surprised, but he was clearly happy, even delighted, with my reply. ‘Not another word. You would only spoil this neat bon mot.’”⁵⁶

52 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 69.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 68-69.

55 Ibid., 282.

56 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 3. That Grass asked this question said as much about his own issues of self-identification as did Reich-Ranicki’s succinct response. Born in the Free City of Danzig, Grass’ father was a Protestant German and his mother a Roman Catholic of Kashubian-Polish heritage. Coupled with this is Grass’s own involvement as a student *Luftwaffenhelfer* (anti-aircraft helper) and later in an SS-Panzer division that was deployed on the eastern front. In Reich-Ranicki’s retelling of the story, it is not surprising that Grass was delighted with his response, since he too drew upon an at times conflicting mélange of heritage.

Reich-Ranicki's blended family background formed an integral part of his identity as a Jewish man. His mother Helene (née Auerbach) Reich, a German Jew who was born in Prussia and only moved to Poland following her marriage, instilled in her son from an early age the importance of learning to speak and read German. When the family moved to Berlin in 1929 to improve their economic prospects, Reich-Ranicki immersed himself in school, an experience he described as follows: "Quite quickly I fell under the spell of German literature, of German music. Fear was joined by happiness – fear of things German by the happiness I owed to things German."⁵⁷ Berlin was a city of contrasts and perplexities for the youthful Reich-Ranicki. Having been brought up with the idealised notion that Germany was the land of culture and that culture equated superiority and refinement, he was shocked to witness corporal punishment being meted out by a male teacher to a fellow male student: "Should schoolchildren receive such harsh treatment in the land of culture? Something was not right here."⁵⁸ For the first time, Reich-Ranicki encountered the harshness of Berlin as depicted by Hans Fallada in his 1937 novel *Wolf unter Wölfen*, when he had only known the idealised Berlin taught to him by his mother. Accepting these two disparate images of German society and culture was difficult for Reich-Ranicki, but the effect was as if he had encountered an epiphany and realised that the world of literature did not have to imitate reality.

Reich-Ranicki's early relationship with his Polish Jewish heritage was also ambiguous. As the primary influence on his education, his mother was not interested in anything Polish – except her Polish-born husband – and expressed little interest in Jewish traditions or religious customs. Born on 28 August, Helene Reich believed that sharing a birthdate with Goethe was a symbolic reference to her place in the world and that through the German cultural tradition she would achieve her ambitions. Reich-Ranicki portrayed his mother as a woman to whom life dealt a continual series of disappointments, particularly her marriage and the lack of economic success her husband achieved. Reich-Ranicki pointedly summarised his mother's description of her husband as follows: "If her husband had manufactured coffins, she used to say, people would have stopped dying."⁵⁹ Helene Reich emerges from Reich-Ranicki's description as a woman defeated but not broken, melancholy but not bitter, and one who saw her husband as weak and ineffective. She lived for the future accomplishments of her three children, particularly the youngest of the three, Marcel.⁶⁰ Describing his mother's attitude towards her own birthdate, he wrote: "When every year, I wished her happy birthday on 28 August, she asked me if I was aware of who else had that day as his birthday. She was born on the same day as Goethe. This she liked to think was in some way symbolic."⁶¹ The close identification of Reich-Ranicki's mother with Germany and Goethe, tropes German as phallic, despite the female gender of his mother, and therefore as strong, virile, and valuable – while Polish is troped as feminine and therefore weak, passive, and lacking value on account of Reich-Ranicki's father David, who, by contrast, played an extremely limited role in the formation and development of his son's hybrid construct of intellectual masculinity. A terminally unsuccessful business entrepreneur who described himself as an

⁵⁷ Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰ Reich-Ranicki was named after the Roman Catholic saint Marcellinus, whose saint day, 2 June, was the date of Reich-Ranicki's birth. Reich-Ranicki believed the name was suggested by a Roman Catholic servant or nanny who worked in the household, and not one that his parents chose.

⁶¹ Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 5.

industrialist, David Reich was viewed as a failure by both his wife and his youngest son.⁶² Reich-Ranicki wrote of his father: “Application and energy were not among his virtues. His life was marked by weakness of character and a passive disposition.”⁶³

When the family moved to Berlin in 1929, Reich-Ranicki continued to see his father as a passive and ineffective paternal figure.⁶⁴ Describing the one attempt David Reich made to introduce Jewish learning to his son by hiring an Orthodox Jewish tutor, Reich-Ranicki noted:

“[A]t that moment my mother appeared and immediately intervened: I was, she said resolutely, too young for tuition. The disappointed teacher was sent on his way with the promise of employment at some future date. This was my father’s first attempt to intervene in my education; it was also his last.”⁶⁵

Later, after the ascent of National Socialism had curtailed social activities for Berlin’s Jewish community, David Reich encouraged his son to accompany him to synagogue services: “Having attended synagogue with my father a few times I simply refused to go any more [...] weak and benevolent as my father was, he accepted this.”⁶⁶ Unsuccessful in business and passive in nature, David Reich did not represent a type of masculinity to which Reich-Ranicki could relate.

Reich-Ranicki’s impression of his father was not improved by their expulsion to Poland by the Nazis in 1938: “Later too, when we were living in the Warsaw ghetto, my good-hearted and good-tempered father was a failure [...] I did feel a sense of shame in front of my colleagues because, at the age of twenty, I had to try and find a miserable job for my father, then aged sixty.”⁶⁷ Although he did not use the term in his memoir, and there is no reason to believe that Reich-Ranicki ever used Yiddish idioms, his portrayal of David Reich is that of the Yiddish *schlimazel*, a born loser.⁶⁸ The weakness of Reich-Ranicki’s father stood in stark, dichotomous contrast to the Germania-like image with which he depicted his mother.

Yet, despite this seemingly dichotomous portrayal of his parents, Reich-Ranicki was able to unite them when he depicted their deportation from the *Umschlagplatz* in the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp. Although Reich-Ranicki’s proficiency in German had secured him a role as an interpreter for the ghetto administration, he was unable to offer any security or protection for his parents. He detailed the final moments before his parents embarked on the journey that took them to their deaths:

“I showed them where they had to queue. My father looked at me helplessly, while my mother was surprisingly calm. She had dressed carefully: she wore a light-coloured raincoat which she had brought with her from Berlin. I knew that I was seeing them for the last time. I still see them: my helpless

62 Reich-Ranicki’s description of the dynamic between his parents is eerily reminiscent of Raul Hilberg’s description of his parents. In his 1996 memoir, Hilberg described a scene in Vienna in which his mother shouted at his father “Du bist ein Niemand!” (You are a nobody!). Hilberg’s parents had a similar German and Polish background as Reich-Ranicki’s; see Raul Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory. The Journey of a Holocaust Historian*, Chicago 1996, 31-32.

63 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 11.

64 This is reminiscent of the conditions that brought the Freud family to Vienna when the paternal business in Freiberg in Mähren/Přibor in Moravia failed.

65 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 9.

66 *Ibid.*, 35.

67 *Ibid.*

68 Added to this complex gender troping is the conceptualisation of the masculine as German, intellectual, dominant, and vigorous, and the feminine as Polish, Yiddish, Jewish, weak, and passive. With regard to Reich-Ranicki’s parents, it was his mother who ascribed to the masculine gender trope and saw his father in the feminine gender trope, thereby inverting their biological genders.

father and my mother in her smart trench-coat from a department store near the Berlin Gedächtniskirche.⁶⁹

They faced deportation to Treblinka – a “choiceless choice” as defined by Lawrence L. Langer – in the same manner in which they had lived their lives: David Reich with a sense of helplessness, and Helene Reich with her quiet, German Jewish bourgeois resolve. Physical resistance to the well-armed German military was not a possibility for the sixty-year-old bourgeois Jewish couple from Berlin. Instead, Reich-Ranicki depicted them as going to their deaths with dignity, awaiting certain death united in their spiritual defiance of the dehumanisation National Socialism had imposed on them.

From his description, this scene at the *Umschlagplatz* must have been seared into Reich-Ranicki’s memory, for it severed the connection to his familial past. He was everything that they were not. Unlike his father, Reich-Ranicki was intellectual and energetic, and unlike his mother his ambitions were fulfilled in Germany. Reich-Ranicki’s depiction of his parents’ deportation omitted any discussion of the chaotic and brutal conditions that memoirists such as Calel Perechodnik emphasised in describing deportations at Warsaw’s *Umschlagplatz*:

“Eighty thousand men, women, and children crammed between houses, sitting on the ground for days and nights. Every little while, a salvo of shots falls on that crowd. Ukrainians are shooting for the sheer pleasure of killing. They are also shooting so that Jews do not recover from the state of deadness and will not respond with some act. Frequently, in the dark of night, a series of shots falls; every moment one hears a drawn-out cry of pain. The wounded who were not finished off moan.”⁷⁰

One senses that Reich-Ranicki repressed or sanitised much of the horrific memory of events that he witnessed in the Warsaw Ghetto in order to live with the losses inflicted upon him by National Socialism.⁷¹

When Reich-Ranicki was deported from Germany to Poland in 1938, it caused him to experience a sense of *Heimatlosigkeit*, the loss of a sense of home. Describing this loss, he wrote: “So now I was back in Poland – the land of my birth – which had become my place of exile.”⁷² The disconnect he felt with the land of his birth lessened over time, but Reich-Ranicki never displayed the passion for Polish literature and culture that he did for German. Poland was equated with being *heimatlos*, and only the return to Germany could remedy this loss. With the German invasion of Poland and the eventual creation of the Warsaw Ghetto in October 1940, Reich-Ranicki experienced additional losses. In his memoir, he described selling his grandfather’s gold pocket watch in the ghetto, a highly symbolic episode that shaped his life and his construct of masculinity.⁷³ When Reich-Ranicki and his wife discovered she was pregnant, they were immediately fearful of the consequences. To avoid an almost certain deportation that the pregnancy might have instigated, the gold watch was

69 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 182.

70 Calel Perechodnik, *Am I A Murderer? Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman*, Boulder 1998, 105.

71 Tom Segev similarly commented upon Simon Wiesenthal’s occasional exaggeration of his Holocaust-era experiences in an attempt to cope with his losses. Segev stated: “Exaggerating his suffering and spinning fantasies around his survival may have made it easier for him to push out of his consciousness the real atrocities he had experienced.”; see: Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal*, 403. Both Reich-Ranicki’s repression of the reality of the Warsaw Ghetto and the exaggeration of events that Segev claims Simon Wiesenthal engaged in can be seen as coping mechanisms to deal with extreme trauma and loss.

72 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 113.

73 The story that Reich-Ranicki recounted about the significance and loss of the gold pocket watch is reminiscent of O. Henry’s short story *The Gift of the Magi*. The story takes on almost mythic proportions and is laden with symbolism.

sold to to pay for the termination of the unplanned pregnancy: “There I had to sell this beautiful old-fashioned watch, much as it hurt, because I needed money urgently – to pay for an abortion.”⁷⁴ Having received the watch upon the death of his grandfather, an Orthodox rabbi, it was the only tangible link Reich-Ranicki his religiously observant grandfather. The sale of the watch signified the severing of the last remaining connection Reich-Ranicki had to Jewish tradition. Just as the watch severed Reich-Ranicki’s link to Jewish tradition, so too did it sever a Jewish life.

Reich-Ranicki never indicated any conflict between the German identity he cultivated and his family’s treatment by the Nazis. Concerning his return to Berlin in 1946, he offered a hint as to how he managed to reconcile his concept of Germanness with the loss of his family in the Holocaust: “I would have had every reason to gloat, indeed to feel deadly hatred. But there was no question of that. I was incapable of hatred – and this surprises me a little to this day.”⁷⁵ This glimpse Reich-Ranicki offered of returning to the city he loved so much, and to the country that had enacted genocide upon his family, once again confirms the complete separation he was capable of making between his Germanness – *Bildung* – and the actions of the Nazis. Reich-Ranicki created a model for returning to live in German-speaking Europe that emphasised canonical German literature, literary achievement, and high culture, which contrasts dramatically with Wiesenthal’s reasons for remaining in Austria. He seemed able to compartmentalise any and all negative experiences into neat categories that fell outside of this *Bildung* ideal. Although the Holocaust destroyed his German Jewish family and annulled the emancipation of Jews, it did not dampen his passion for *Bildung*. It did, however, make him aware of his separateness from the country and people whose traditions and culture he loved so much. It was a sentiment he shared with others, such as the musician Yehudi Menuhin. In recounting a visit to China where he accidentally met Menuhin, Reich-Ranicki reflected:

“I asked him what he was doing there. He answered briefly: ‘Beethoven and Brahms with the local orchestra.’ And what was I doing? ‘I’m giving lectures on Goethe and Thomas Mann.’ Menuhin was silent but not for long: ‘Ah well, we’re Jews of course [...] that travel from country to country, spreading German music and German literature, and interpreting it – that’s good and how it should be.’”⁷⁶

German male literati had inspired the development of the Jewish bourgeoisie and intellectualism in German-speaking Europe with both their works and Enlightenment values. This was a masculinity of intellect and humanism, where men engaged in cultural production as well as critique. Reich-Ranicki’s construction of masculinity personified the image Stefan Zweig described:

“The real determination of the Jew is to rise to a higher cultural plane in the intellectual world [...] Subconsciously something in the Jew seeks to escape the morally dubious, the distasteful, the petty, the unspiritual, which is attached to all trade, and all that is purely business, and to lift himself up to the moneyless sphere of the intellectual.”⁷⁷

While Zweig believed that this image transcended class, it was a very specific representation of intellectualist masculinity, as exemplified by Reich-Ranicki.

The realm of German literature provided Reich-Ranicki with role models for his construct of intellectual masculinity. The connection to classical German literary

74 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 93.

75 *Ibid.*, 233.

76 *Ibid.*, 376.

77 Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, translated by Anthea Bell, Lincoln 1964, 11.

ideals and cultural values cemented Germany in the imagination of many, Jews and non-Jews, as the land of poets and thinkers, *das Land der Dichter und Denker*. Reinhold Knick, a teacher and mentor, assisted Reich-Ranicki in the process from merely reading German texts to understanding the personification of values they represented and attempted to instil. Reich-Ranicki described the immensity of the influence Knick had on him as follows:

“To none of my teachers during the years 1930–1938 do I owe as much as I do to Dr. Knick [...] he was an enthusiast, one of those who believed that life had no meaning without literature or music, without art or theatre, and, to older students he was known as ‘the blond romantic.’ He was marked by the poetry of his youth – by Rilke, Stefan George, and by the early work of Gerhart Hauptmann.”⁷⁸

From this teacher-mentor, he claims to have acquired what he believed was the German *Bildung* ideal of engaging in a passionate search for truth, developing self-knowledge, and harmonising emotion with reason: “Reinhold Knick was the first person in my life who represented German idealism and personified that which, until then, I had only known from literature: the ideals of the German classics.”⁷⁹ It was not his Polish Jewish father or his rabbi grandfather whom Reich-Ranicki saw as his mentor. Nor was it his mother, although she was the conduit through which he connected to his German Jewish heritage. Rather, it was this male German teacher who personified for him the best of the German humanist tradition that credited all individuals with unique talents and characteristics; therefore, individuals needed to live in communities and with others that provided a natural complement.

The other main influence in Reich-Ranicki’s life was his wife Tosia (Teofila) Langnas, who also encouraged him to valorise German *Bildung* over his Polish Jewish heritage. In Warsaw, Reich-Ranicki married Langnas, who exemplified his conceptualisation of a woman, wife, and mother, modelled from German classical literature. Refusing an offer to be smuggled out of the ghetto to the ‘Aryan’ side where her physical appearance and fluent Polish would allow her to pass as a Pole, Langnas exhibited a love of German poetry, classical literature, theatre, and music that echoed the fears, and hopes, of the characters Reich-Ranicki encountered in German literature, characteristics that Reich-Ranicki recognised and idealised. He was at once captivated by her refusal to save herself: “For a woman to risk her life in order to save her friend, lover or husband – that was a theme I was familiar with from operas, ballads and short stories. I experienced it for the first time in reality in the Warsaw ghetto.”⁸⁰

In 1958, when he made the critical decision to flee Communist Poland for West Germany, Reich-Ranicki returned to his cultural *Heimat*. Reflecting on the transition, he later wrote: “I have never thought of myself as Polish, not even as half-Polish, as I said to Grass in *Grossholzleute*.”⁸¹ He quickly established himself in literary circles, including the renowned Gruppe 47, and his literary reviews, radio broadcasts, and television programming made him a household name. At a time when intellectual Jewish men in North America were often represented in screen culture as effete and weak, Reich-Ranicki successfully merged intellectualism with masculinity by tying it to the specifically German literary tradition and bourgeois masculinity: “Between the 1940s and the present”, wrote Sander Gilman, “the representation of the ‘smart Jew’ in the mass media has taken up the figure of Monroe Stahr, and the idea

78 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 30.

79 *Ibid.*, 33.

80 *Ibid.*, 179.

81 *Ibid.*, 275.

that Jewish superior intelligence compensates for Jewish physical weakness has remained.”⁸² Stahr, the fictional character developed by F. Scott Fitzgerald and based on the Hollywood film producer Irving Thalberg, who was born in the United States to German Jewish parents, strongly influenced the perception of the American Jewish male intellectual within the dominant culture. Reich-Ranicki, however, evoked a long-standing tradition of male German-speaking intellectuals, something to which he credited his success:

“Consciously or unconsciously I adopted a tradition that was officially outlawed in the Third Reich, a tradition which colleagues abandoned after the Second World War [...]. I learned a great deal from the great German critics of the past, from Heine and Fontaine, from Kerr and Polgar, from Jacobsohn and Tucholsky.”⁸³

Undoubtedly, Reich-Ranicki reminded Germans of the very best aspects of their history and culture, defining and lending legitimacy to his reimagined construct of Jewish bourgeois masculinity.

Embracing cultural values while still being set apart from the dominant culture was something Reich-Ranicki had recognised during his childhood. When he first attended German school, his classmates saw him as an outsider: “They saw in me, not surprisingly, the foreigner, the stranger [...] my clothes were a little different from theirs, their games and pranks were unfamiliar to me. Hence I was isolated. In other words, I was not one of them.”⁸⁴ This situation with the school environment can also be interpreted as a gender construct. Reich-Ranicki was an outsider from Poland and therefore troped as feminine, rather than as German/masculine. It was not until he was thoroughly acculturated and therefore troped as masculine that he found acceptance in his all-male school environment, and even that was temporary.⁸⁵

This realisation of separateness and the embracing of a set of cultural values and ideals while still being set apart from the dominant culture manifested itself during significant episodes of Reich-Ranicki’s life in Germany. Although clearly empathetic with the German student movement in 1968, which called for far-reaching reform of the German educational system, Reich-Ranicki did not participate in any of the demonstrations. He commented: “I certainly did not take part in any ‘sit-in’, ‘go-in’ or ‘teach-in’, I never experienced any ‘happening’, I never attended a single meeting or demonstration, I never joined any march.”⁸⁶ The physical demonstrations reminded him of the Nazi period and were far removed from his cultural interests in German literature. No matter how empathetic he might have been, this was a fight he left to non-Jewish Germans. Although Reich-Ranicki enjoyed enormous popularity as a literary critic in Germany, his position of prominence can be interpreted akin to the Court Jews who served the German princes and Austrian court in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Reich-Ranicki’s success and prominence was not indicative of the greater Jewish community, and as a symbolic, intellectual Court Jew, he was aware that political matters were beyond his involvement. In essence, this was a type of disempowered masculinity.

82 Sander Gilman, *Smart Jews. The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence*, Lincoln 1999, 178.

83 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 309-310.

84 *Ibid.*, 17.

85 This fits the common nineteenth-century representation of Poland in art and literature as Polonia, a passive, subjugated, and often oppressed woman, without much agency or control over her future. Reich-Ranicki’s mother was instrumental in codifying Germany in traditionally masculine terms: powerful, important, and learned. Poland, however, remained for Reich-Ranicki a place of weakness and subjugation, characteristics traditionally seen as feminine.

86 Reich-Ranicki, *The Author of Himself*, 328.

Similarly, Reich-Ranicki did not feel compelled to become involved in the *Historikerstreit*, the German historians' dispute about interpreting the Holocaust in German history. From 1985 through 1989, when the literary genre of *Väterliteratur* was peaking, the *Historikerstreit* erupted as a clash between left- and right-wing intellectuals. Reich-Ranicki remained silent, making only one reluctant foray into what he considered a cultural debate in the autumn of 1985. When Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod* was to premiere at Frankfurt's Kammerspiel, Reich-Ranicki unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade the Frankfurt Jewish community from protesting the event. He wrote: "Even so I regard it as typical of its time, however awkwardly and brutally, it explores a Federal German problem – the German attitude to the Jews."⁸⁷ The play held no literary or artistic merit for Reich-Ranicki, but it held the possibility of generating informed intellectual debate on German attitudes towards Jews and their role in the country. Rather than prevent the play from being performed, Reich-Ranicki felt that what was needed was a full debate in German society, something Fassbinder's play might initiate. Although he did not succeed in having the protest stopped, Reich-Ranicki was, not surprisingly, not in synergy with the opinion of the Frankfurt Jewish community at the time. Yet, despite these public happenings, nothing occurred to dissuade Reich-Ranicki that his decision to (re)settle in Germany had been incorrect: "Fassbinder's play, the historian's dispute [...] all of them important symptoms of the spirit of the age have since done nothing to change my mind."⁸⁸

One must be careful not to assume that Reich-Ranicki's position on the Fassbinder play was the result of internalised antisemitism or a break with the Jewish community. Reich-Ranicki did speak out against a poem condemning Israel by his sometime friend and antagonist, Günter Grass. Entitled "Was gesagt werden muss", the poem was published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on 2 April 2012. Using language similar to his critique of Fassbinder, Reich-Ranicki denounced Grass' poem as "disgusting, and without any literary merit."⁸⁹ In one of his rare political comments, Reich-Ranicki clearly felt that Grass had crossed the line from literary discourse and civil commentary to outright condemnation not only of Israel but of all Jews: "Iran wants to wipe Israel off the map and has repeatedly said so and Gunter Grass turns it into a poem. It is a vile thing to publish [...] The poem is a planned attack not only against Israel but against all Jews."⁹⁰ Loath though he may have been to comment on political situations, Reich-Ranicki's response was in keeping with his role as Germany's literature pope, and as a man who described himself as "half Polish, half German and wholly Jewish".

The *Brückenbauer* and *Versöhner*: Paul Spiegel

Unlike the first two memoirists discussed here, who were adults when they chose to remain in or return to German-speaking Europe, Paul Spiegel was a child when he returned to his hometown in Germany after the Second World War. As an eight-year-old, it was his parents' – primarily his father's – decision to rebuild their lives in Germany. Born in 1937, Spiegel was schooled in the German educational system and

⁸⁷ Ibid., 383.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 390.

⁸⁹ Reich-Ranicki attackiert Grass, in: www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/reich-ranicki-kritisiert-israel-kritisches-gedicht-von-guenter-grass-a-826300.html (16 April 2018).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

made the conscious decision as an adult to remain in Germany and to assist in re-establishing the Jewish community there. At the end of the Second World War, Spiegel's mother emerged from hiding in Belgium and began preparations to immigrate to the United States. It was only when she discovered that her husband, Hugo Spiegel, had survived three years in various Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, that her plans changed. Hugo Spiegel was adamant that the family return to their hometown of Warendorf, Westphalia, where the Spiegel family had agricultural roots going back several hundred years. Like many rural Jews, they had thrived as cattle-traders. The Jewish presence in the cattle trade was so ubiquitous that Yiddish expressions had worked their way into the local German dialect used in this trade. Spiegel recalled: "I remember in the 1950s, when occasionally after school I accompanied my father to the cattle markets. I heard how he and his Christian business partner, and other non-Jewish cattle dealers, were talking among themselves using their traditional German-Yiddish idioms."⁹¹ The deep connection to the land, rather than a philosophical or esoteric imagining of *Heimat*, coupled with the rural lifestyle, played a significant role in the conceptualisation of masculinity for Spiegel. Jewish men in Spiegel's family were tied to the agricultural development of the German land over several generations, providing Spiegel with examples of pragmatic, rural masculinity.

Wieder zu Hause? Erinnerungen was published in 2001 and has not yet been translated into English.⁹² Spiegel here depicted how his life goals and construct of masculinity were shaped by a formative experience of which he has no personal memory. The account was retold to him on numerous occasions by his mother, Ruth. To escape Germany, his mother bribed an SS officer to smuggle them into Belgium. The escape involved crossing a river and Spiegel was hoisted onto the shoulders of the SS officer as they waded across the river. Spiegel lost his balance, fell into the river, and was rescued by the officer, who carried him safely to the other side. "An SS man saved your life, Paul. God will not forsake you."⁹³ The symbolism of the passage evokes the biblical hero Moses: Spiegel was rescued by a person connected to the persecuting regime, symbolising that he was destined to achieve greatness in his life. Spiegel introduced this narrative early in the memoir, laying the foundation for the reader that predetermined survival meant he would achieve a specific goal that he expected to carry out. This is not an account of survival by a miracle or luck; Spiegel's narrative implies that he survived for a specific reason. It is also strongly coded in Christian imagery.⁹⁴ It invokes the popular legend of St. Christopher bearing, on his shoulders, the Christ child across a dangerous river. Recognised as the patron saint of travellers, medals depicting the Christ child on the shoulders of St. Christopher in German bear the expression *Gott schütze dich* (God protect you). Spiegel confirmed his belief in his mother's narrative by continuing "To date, it has been proven right."⁹⁵

91 Paul Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause? Erinnerungen*, Berlin 2003, 12.

92 All translations of *Wieder zu Hause* are my own.

93 Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause*, 34.

94 The image of the child being carried aloft by a strong male figure is also reminiscent of the ogre in Michel Tournier's *The Erl King*. Tournier's male protagonist rides on horseback through the German countryside recruiting boys for the military. Initially he is convinced that he is bringing the boys to a better life and protecting them from harm. However, his belief is called into question when he discovers the real fate that awaits the boys and how he is called "the ogre" by the people of the country for his role in scooping up children, taking them away never to be seen again. Although this image provides a powerful counterbalance to my analysis, I have chosen not to focus on it in a substantive manner as I believe it places the emphasis on the bearer of the child rather than the child. In addition, Spiegel was clear that his protector was motivated by money, not by any sense that he was bringing the child to a better life.

95 Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause*, 34.

Spiegel not only survived the Holocaust, he survived to be a man with a purpose. Spiegel became a *Brückenbauer*, a builder of bridges, the word Bauer on its own meaning both farmer and builder. The boy rescued from the river – the son of a farmer and cattle-trader – as an adult assisted the integration of Russian Jews into the wider German Jewish community, and also built metaphorical bridges of understanding and reconciliation between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. Whereas Wiesenthal's *raison d'être* was hunting Nazi war criminals and Reich-Ranicki committed himself to advocating and spreading *Bildung* in post-Holocaust Germany, Spiegel worked to progress German and Jewish communal relations so that Jewish and non-Jewish Germans would know each other as citizens committed to the same nation.⁹⁶

In his memoir, Spiegel described his father Hugo as an important and positive role model. The pragmatic paternal figure shaped his son's sense of commitment to both the land and to the people, both Jewish and non-Jewish: "Hugo Spiegel was not a philosopher. He had a clear head and Westphalian stubbornness. He had been born a German and had felt so his entire life – even in Auschwitz. It was unshakable for him: Warendorf is my home – come what may."⁹⁷ Hugo Spiegel exhibited a construct of masculinity indicative of his rural upbringing. He longed for neither sophisticated living nor literary intellectualism and sought only to live in harmony with the land, his local Jewish community, and the wider German community. Spiegel's memoir is an extension of this desire to live in harmony with one's neighbours, not as foreigners or strangers but as equals whose customs and beliefs are known and understood by the non-Jewish German majority. The following analyses Spiegel's adulthood involvement in Jewish communal life, while elucidating the impact his pragmatic father had on his life and concept of masculinity.

Spiegel's construct of masculinity was formidably influenced by his father and grounded in a love of the rural lifestyle. Despite this sense of belonging and connection to the German countryside, however, Spiegel was acutely aware of being different from other Germans: "I was, after the war, the only Jewish child who grew up in Warendorf."⁹⁸ A longing for a sense of camaraderie and "sameness" remained with Spiegel until he moved to Düsseldorf at the age of 21.⁹⁹ In his reaction to the move from the countryside to an urban environment, he also took his cues from his father: "For my father, despite the grief and sorrow, Warendorf steadfastly remained *Heimat* and home. It was the same for me."¹⁰⁰

Hugo Spiegel exhibited the traditional, paternalistic paradigm of the male being producer, provider, and protector for his family. After re-establishing his family in their home, Hugo Spiegel ensured that his young son would be safe in the village school. The situation was particularly fragile for Paul, who emerged from hiding in Belgium speaking only French and thus had to relearn German. Describing the tension in their hometown at the end of the Second World War, Paul Spiegel wrote:

"On my first day at school, I was insulted during the break by a boy as being a 'dirty Jew'. Although I could speak almost no German, that word was quite clear to me. I threw myself on him. A friend came to his aid. In the end, I

⁹⁶ Spiegel's tenure as President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany made him a well-known figure in German political circles. His presidency was distinguished by his tireless campaigning against antisemitism and his work for reconciliation between Germany and its Jewish community.

⁹⁷ Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause*, 85.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁹⁹ This longing for sameness and camaraderie was a sentiment also expressed by Reich-Ranicki, particularly during the immediate post-Holocaust period in Berlin.

¹⁰⁰ Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause*, 286.

crept home like a whipped dog. I told my parents nothing. But my scrapes and bruises were just as obvious as my depressed mood. My mother comforted me. When my father heard of my disgrace that evening, he was red with anger. 'That will never again happen to my son!' He promised. He kept his word."¹⁰¹

Enlisting the aid of the British military police stationed in the town, Hugo Spiegel ensured that his son was never threatened again.

This construct of masculinity sought fairness, justice, and authority, characteristics Hugo Spiegel passed on to his son. During this early period following the family's return to Warendorf, Hugo Spiegel learnt from sympathetic friends who, amongst the village's residents, had been Nazi sympathisers or perpetrators. His reaction was not to seek revenge, but to simply avoid contact with them, as if they did not exist. Paul Spiegel described his father's reaction as one of pragmatic realism: "They told father in disgust, guilt, and certainly for other reasons, who had been a Nazi. He avoided these farmers and traders, as he told me later, even though he had done good business with them previously. My father harboured no resentment; revenge was alien to him."¹⁰² This controlled, non-confrontational expression of masculinity was the foundational model for Paul Spiegel's *Brückenbauer* construct.

The events of the Holocaust remained very real for both Hugo and Paul Spiegel. In his memoir, Paul Spiegel revisited two episodes frequently, reminding the reader how he and his father were shaped by them. He was too young to possess his own memories of the November Pogrom, but it was a pivotal event recounted to him by his father that he then internalised. In 2001, when Spiegel accepted an honorary citizenship from his hometown of Warendorf, his thoughts went immediately to his father, who had nearly been beaten to death during the November Pogrom: "He was intimately familiar with this, his German homeland and its people. Until they beat him nearly half to death on 9 November 1938."¹⁰³ The pogrom became for Spiegel the symbolic representation of the German attack not just on Jewish businesses and synagogues, but also on Jewish men and masculinity. Jewish men could no longer guarantee the safety of their families or their properties; the pogrom was an assault on the traditional masculine construct of the male as provider and protector. In doing so, it reinforced the pernicious stereotype of the Jewish male as weak and powerless.

Spiegel recounted another foundational narrative that permitted him to see the goodness in people, and to distinguish between those Germans who were sympathetic to National Socialism and those who were not:

"Father had scarcely arrived in Warendorf when he met Henry Baggerör. The leather goods dealer knew him peripherally from the pre-war period. In late May 1945, when my father returned to Warendorf, he [Baggerör] sought him out immediately and took him, without asking, to his house. Herr Baggerör had silently witnessed the desecration and destruction of the synagogue on Freckenhorster Straße – but he had not remained idle. The merchant had succeeded in preventing the stormtroopers from completely wiping out the memory of the Jews in his city. On the night of 10 November 1938, after the stormtroopers had withdrawn from their destructive work, Herr Baggerör snuck into the vandalised Jewish synagogue on Frecken-

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁰² Ibid., 86-87.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 286.

horster Straße and collected several heavy parchment Bibles and prayer books. He hid the Torah scroll in his basement. Herr Baggerör was certain that the Nazi crimes would not be the last word of history or the end of the Jews of Warendorf.¹⁰⁴

In this narrative, Herr Baggerör exemplified pragmatic masculinity for Paul Spiegel. Although Baggerör recognised his limitations against the sheer physical force of the stormtroopers, he also recognised that he could take an individual stand against the collective force. Thus, he was able to help by hiding sacred Jewish texts from the synagogue in his home.

A further recurring narrative event is the arrest, deportation, and eventual murder of Paul Spiegel's older sister, Roselchen. She was the spectre whose very presence of absence was apparent at every family gathering, such as in 1962, when Hugo Spiegel was awarded the honour of *Schützenkönig* by his shooting club. Yet the celebration is related as having been marred by the memory of the loss of Roselchen: "When we were finally alone after all the hubbub, he, who never spoke about the past, said to mother and me: 'Do you see! It was right to return to home to Warendorf.' And then, almost falling silent: 'If we could see Roselchen.'¹⁰⁵ This narrative of familial loss was passed from father to son, becoming one of the foundational events in the Spiegel family.

Spiegel's conceptualisation of masculine identity, like that of Wiesenthal and Reich-Ranicki, embodied traits that were often associated with women. He was able to mirror the nurturing qualities his father displayed throughout a childhood in which his mother was minimally involved. His fond memories of accompanying his father to synagogue services in Münster prepared Spiegel to be a carrier of this tradition. Describing his bar mitzvah ceremony, Spiegel wrote:

"It was the first bar mitzvah in the Münster region, indeed in all of Westphalia, since the Holocaust [...] The men were over the moon with joy that life should go on in their city and their land [...] I, however, remained calm. Apparently, I had inherited from my father, who watched the event with pride, a balanced temperament."¹⁰⁶

As the primary parental figure, Hugo Spiegel passed on to his son a sense of family and community that incorporated both masculine and feminine attributes.

The experience of serving on the executive of the Central Council of Jews in Germany emerges as a central theme in Spiegel's memoir. Describing his role as both bridge-builder and German Jew, he commented: "In addition, I am the representative of the Jewish communities in Germany and if, in my opinion, our immediate interests are affected, but also if there is a threat to freedom, human dignity, and democracy, I speak up without hesitation."¹⁰⁷ Spiegel distinguished himself from his more intellectually sophisticated colleagues by his down-to-earth manner, a trait that assisted him in what he saw as his role as bridge-builder. When he became President of the Council, he remarked on this difference: "I was not Ignatz Bubis and I did not want to be him. But I wanted to follow his direction: to consolidate the German Jews, not only through the integration of our co-religionists, but also with non-Jewish society."¹⁰⁸ Bubis, the person Fassbinder had attacked through the character of 'the Jew' in his play discussed above, was a successful real estate entrepreneur in

104 Ibid., 85.

105 Ibid., 130.

106 Ibid., 116.

107 Ibid., 279.

108 Ibid., 207.

Frankfurt. He was well known for his Orthodox Jewish beliefs and politically conservative views. Bubis was representative of the paternalistic, conservative masculinity of the German era he in which he was born.¹⁰⁹

During his tenure as President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Spiegel's self-reflexive construct of masculinity also allowed him to speak in support of other groups subordinated and marginalised by the dominant culture:

“This conciliatory attitude does not mean that I am willing to overlook anti-humane occurrences or thought, regardless of whether they relate to Jews or others. Humanity and human dignity are indivisible – if we do not understand this, we will have a rude awakening. Today it goes against the disabled, tomorrow against homosexuals and foreigners, the day after that against Jews, and by the weekend finally all democrats will be in the pillory. Therefore, we must all vigilantly defend our freedom.”¹¹⁰

Spiegel purposefully included the references to two groups traditionally marginalised in hegemonic masculinity: homosexuals and foreigners. Spiegel's position and construct of masculinity was representative of a minority group living in a dominant culture insofar as he moved within two distinct spheres: Whereas he represented hegemonic masculinity within his Jewish community, in the wider non-Jewish German community he represented a subordinate masculinity since he was not part of the dominant culture. However, Spiegel's status as a survivor of the Holocaust provided him with a special status in the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant culture. He was able to speak on behalf of groups traditionally marginalised by society, ensuring that they were included in the discourses on citizenship, politics, and masculinity. Here again, the image of St. Christopher from Spiegel's childhood emerges, this time, however, with reversed roles. Spiegel was not one in need of assistance or support; rather, he provided support to those in need of it. The child in his mother's narrative, who was carried across the river by the bribed SS officer, had become the bearer of others.

Spiegel was not motivated by greed or financial gain, but only wanted to improve the overall conditions of the society he lived in. In 2000, speaking at the annual commemoration of the November Pogrom at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Spiegel said:

“We must fight against right-wing radicalism, antisemitism, and xenophobia. For it is not just about us Jews but also about Turks, Blacks, the homeless, and about gay men [Schwule]. When it comes to this country, it is about the future of every single person. Do you one day want to be governed by skinheads and their mentors? That is really the question at issue. Not how many foreigners this country can tolerate.”¹¹¹

In German, Spiegel used the term *Schwule*, which refers specifically to gay men, and it is a significant word choice. One might have expected him to use the phrase “Lesben und Schwule” to refer to both lesbians and gay men, or the more traditional term “Homosexuelle”. However, because gay men have been the target of persecution by right-wing skinheads in Germany, and were also targeted under National Social-

109 Ignatz Bubis was born in 1927 in Breslau, Germany and later became a successful business entrepreneur and real estate developer in West Germany. As President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Bubis was often outspoken and involved in a number of controversies including his very public lack of support for Reform Judaism and female rabbis. He is often remembered for declaring, a few weeks before his death in 1999, that Jews could not live freely in Germany. Following his request, Bubis was buried in Israel.

110 Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause*, 250.

111 *Ibid.*, 286.

ism, Spiegel included this often marginalised form of masculinity through the specific term *Schwule*.

Similarly, Spiegel confronted the issue of *Leitkultur* with the same sense of passion and responsibility to speak for those marginalised or subordinate. The discourse surrounding *Leitkultur* deals not only with issues of immigration and integration in Germany, but with the very essence of who can be considered German. “What is this talk about the sole dominant culture?” wrote Spiegel. “Is it an issue of German culture to hunt foreigners and light synagogues on fire and to kill the homeless?”¹¹² Spiegel was here referring not only to the November Pogrom, but also to contemporary issues of attacks on immigrants and the homeless. In answering his own question, Spiegel wrote: “The dignity of human beings – all human beings – is inviolable, not only those of the Central European Christians!”¹¹³ As survivors of the Holocaust, Spiegel and his family had experienced the annulment of these values by the Nazi regime. This provided him with the moral authority to speak out on issues in the same manner in which Biblical prophets spoke. Their words were meant not just to warn, but to shepherd along a path of correct moral and ethical behaviour. So, too, Spiegel’s construct of masculinity enabled him to act as a bridge-builder and, when needed, as a modern-day prophet.

As R.W. Connell argued, marginalisation is always relative to the authorisation of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group.¹¹⁴ Spiegel used his position – as subordinate within the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant culture and his deeply personal connection to the November Pogrom – to include marginalised groups in the discourse on topics ranging from sexuality and citizenship to Germany’s rearmament. Spiegel described his faith and trust in the direction taken by post-Holocaust German policies: “In the nearly five decades of its existence, the Bundeswehr has proven that it is neither a state within the state nor is it the continuation of the older German militarism by another means. Rather, it is part of our constitutional democracy.”¹¹⁵ Spiegel’s confidence in the German state underscored the rural Jewish masculine construct he had developed from his father. Along with Wiesenthal and Reich-Ranicki, Spiegel saw his role as one that contributed to the nation state he chose to rebuild his life in.

Concluding Thoughts about Jewish Men in German-Speaking Europe

I have often heard Holocaust survivors living in North America attempt to understand the desire of Jews to return to German-speaking Europe in the post-war period. For many, it is incomprehensible that Jews would want to actually return to countries that had stripped them of their citizenship, deported them, and finally implemented genocidal policies to annihilate their very presence. Jews, I have been frequently told, seem to have an unrequited love for German culture. The relationship between Jews and German culture could however, be more accurately described as indicative of the unique synergy between these two distinct mores.

The three texts discussed in this essay demonstrate that just as Germanophone Europe provided a fertile environment for Jewish culture, religion, and intellectualism to flourish – at least until the twelve-year period of National Socialism – Jews

¹¹² Ibid., 267.

¹¹³ Ibid..

¹¹⁴ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, Berkeley 2005, 80-81.

¹¹⁵ Spiegel, *Wieder zu Hause*, 285.

were, and continue to be, societal and cultural contributors shaping the communities in German-speaking Europe in which they live. Similarly, Jewish masculinity was imagined and shaped by the land, culture, and society in which they lived. The three protagonists profiled in this article were remarkable, prominent Jewish individuals who shared a commitment to Jewish life in German-speaking Europe. Although their decisions to remain were individual and their experiences diverse, each saw his future intrinsically linked to the lands in which Jews had lived for centuries before the Second World War. Each memoir offers poignant and intimate depictions of Jewish masculinities that were shaped by the societal and cultural elements of the German-speaking lands as well as by the Holocaust. Just as each protagonist shared a commitment to transforming the post-war society in which they lived, they also demonstrated the synergistic relationship between Germanophone cultures and Jews whose roots extended back at least to the *ShUM* cities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz, the cradle of Ashkenazi Jewry.

Carson Phillips
Historian, Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, Toronto
cphillips@ujafed.org

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