

Introduction: Jewish European History



Figure 1: Daniel Cohn-Bendit's portrait with the European Union's emblem and the 1968 rubric: "We are all German Jews now."

The setting was uncannily idyllic: an international conference on German-Jewish émigrés in 2011, held in the beautiful Schloss Elmau, set against the Bavarian Alps near the Austrian border, above the resort town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Leading U.S., German, and Israeli historians lectured on the émigrés' abiding legacy.¹ Europe's foremost philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, reminisced about the émigrés' role in his life, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit recounted his journey as a Jewish European public intellectual from 1968 to the Greens of today.² The pariahs,

¹ "Jüdische Stimmen im Diskurs der sechziger Jahre" (Jewish voices in the German sixties), International Conference of Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) and the University of California, June 27–29, 2011. Most conference lectures appeared in the *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 13:1 (2014).

² Jürgen Habermas, "Grossherzige Remigranten: Über jüdische Philosophen in der frühen Bundesrepublik: Eine persönliche Erinnerung," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (2 July 2011);

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fugitives of the Holocaust, have come to define European culture, inhabiting as non-Jewish a space as Schloss Elmau.³ In Garmisch-Partenkirchen below, memories abound of a sixteenth-century witch-hunt, a Marian miracle that saved the town from the plague, and the 1936 Winter Olympics, “Juden sind unerwünscht” (Jews unwelcome), but in Elmau’s Europe, “nous sommes tous des Juifs allemands,” we are all German Jews now.⁴ (See Figure 1.)

“But the majority of émigrés whom you called ‘Jewish,’ Herr Habermas, were no longer Jewish,” queried a participant.⁵ Habermas seemed puzzled for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders and gestured with his hand, as if to say “Give me a break!” The émigrés’ lives were fashioned by their exile as Jews, he pointed out: “Whatever the émigrés may have thought or believed [about themselves], they could return to Germany after 1945 only as Jews.”⁶ Habermas was right: Notwithstanding their own frequent disavowal of Jewish identity, racial and national exclusion had shaped the émigrés’ existence and their cosmopolitanism. He understood well their investment in Enlightenment traditions and their transformative cultural role in the Federal Republic. His incredulity and his interrogation of their disavowal of Jewish identity were well founded.

Still, Habermas could not quite answer the question about the émigrés’ Jewishness. In what sense were émigrés like Karl Löwith, a Protestant Jew, who was equally distant from Judaism and Christianity, or Theodor Adorno, son of an Italian Catholic mother, who refused religion and

“Daniel Cohn-Bendit im Gespräch mit Norbert Frei,” in *Münchener Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 6:1 (2012): 19–40.

³ Inhabiting it for a second time: Immediately after World War II, Elmau served as a sanatorium for tubercular displaced persons and Holocaust survivors. I owe this information to Noam Zadoff of Indiana University.

⁴ In the May 1968 Paris street protests, the students chanted “nous sommes tous des Juifs allemands.” They were responding to press articles accentuating Cohn-Bendit’s foreignness and calling for his deportation. The right-wing *Minute* opined that “ce Cohn-Bendit, parce qu’il est juif et allemand, se prend pour un nouveau Karl Marx” (“Assez de ces enragés rouges: Qu’attend-on pour expulser l’Allemand Cohn-Bendit, chef des Commandos de vandales?” 2 May 1968), and Communist Party Secretary General Georges Marchais inveighed the next day in *L’Humanité* against “‘Le Mouvement du 22 mars Nanterre’ dirigé par l’anarchiste allemand Cohn-Bendit” (“De faux revolutionnaires à démasquer,” 3 May 1968). Later in May, student banners appeared, carrying Cohn-Bendit’s jovial portrait, with the refrain under it. Decades after, election campaign T-shirts for the European Greens reproduced the banner, and encircled Cohn-Bendit’s portrait with a gold-starred European Union emblem.

⁵ “Jürgen Habermas im Gespräch mit Rachel Salamander,” *Münchener Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 6:1 (2012): 15. Throughout the book, translations are my own unless a translator is mentioned.

⁶ *Ibid.*: “Jeder von den Emigranten konnte nach 1945 nur als Jude zurückkommen! Egal, was er sonst noch gedacht oder geglaubt hat.”

politics, “Jewish”?⁷ Habermas has little familiarity with Jewish cultures that could lend him insight into being Jewish, let alone Christian-Jewish. He has great appreciation for Jewish culture but limited understanding of its variability or complexity. The noted German-Jewish and Israeli Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) was Habermas’s model of Jewish authenticity, and other émigrés were “non-Jewish Jews,” Jews by virtue of Nazi persecution. The philosopher who has repeatedly acknowledged his debt to the Jewish émigrés, a “righteous gentile” who has done much to enshrine their legacy, had no access to their Jewishness.⁸

The conference’s inability to confront the Jewishness at its very center became evident in the final session. The non-Jewish Germans watched with dismay as German-Jewish participants sparred over Jewish identity, each bemoaning the vanishing of their favorite Jewish culture.⁹ This Jewish sense of irretrievable loss was too much for Cohn-Bendit: “Wir haben gewonnen” (We won), he cried out, mobilizing sentiment against defeatism. Jewish life, he said, has not disappeared from Germany but has been redefined and normalized. His son – “non-Jewish,” he insisted – coaches a multiethnic Maccabi team in Frankfurt, embodying a newly integrated Jewry in a multicultural Germany.¹⁰ Bela Cohn-Bendit vindicates the cosmopolitan Jewish European narrative, a story of modernity culminating in supranational Europe, and leading from Marx and Heine to Adorno and Benjamin to Habermas and Cohn-Bendit.

The cosmopolitan narrative is beautiful, and true within limits. It has made Jewish European history possible.¹¹ More traditional European

⁷ Ibid., 15–18.

⁸ In his earlier “Der deutsche Idealismus der jüdischen Philosophen” (1961), in his *Philosophisch-Politische Profile* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp. 37–66, Habermas suggested that German idealism absorbed kabbalistic influences via German Protestantism; hence, German-Jewish philosophers reencountered their tradition in new clothing in idealism. The dubiousness of his Scholem-inspired intellectual history aside, it is too narrow to define the émigrés’ Jewishness.

⁹ “Gesprächsrunde über jüdisches Leben im Nachkriegsdeutschland,” *Münchener Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 6:1 (2012): 41–60.

¹⁰ Ibid., 56. The text omits the outcry “Wir haben gewonnen” and reads: “My son is not Jewish [according to Jewish law].” Cohn-Bendit was right to emphasize the changing cultural profile of German Jewishness. It is all the more surprising, then, that he would deploy Jewish Orthodoxy to deny his son Jewishness. For both Habermas and Cohn-Bendit, inaccessibility to traditional Jewish culture paradoxically results in falling back on essentialist Jewishness, whether racial or legal.

¹¹ Dan Diner, “Geschichte der Juden: Paradigma einer europäischen Geschichtsschreibung,” in his *Gedächtniszeiten: Über jüdische und andere Geschichten München* (Munich: Beck, 2003), pp. 246–62; Dan Diner, ed., *Synchrone Welten: Zeitenräume jüdischer Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005). The *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* and the *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Dan Diner (Stuttgart: JB Metzler, 2011–17) have been major sites for

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Jewish history has also long broken out of the mold of Jewish national narratives and shown the Jews embedded in European culture, its creators and product at the same time. Jewish European history, as exemplified in the émigrés, has taken the further step of presenting the Jews – a Diaspora struggling to define its relationship to diverse national cultures – as both emblematic of Europe and a catalyst for European self-definition. It has shown Europeans defining their national and European identities in response to the Jews, and, in turn, the Jews negotiating their membership in the nation and in Europe, forming transnational networks, and inventing national and European ideas – the Europeans par excellence. At a time when Europe is struggling to define its identity against multiple national and minority cultures, Jewish history tells edifying European stories.

I admire Jewish European history. This book partakes in the project and pushes it further. In the forms it has assumed so far, however, it bears little relationship to traditional Jews and Jewish culture. Indeed, émigré scholarship has perfected a history that excludes traditional Judaism.¹² It wonderfully deploys the Jews to tell European stories, but limits the stories to Jews whose difference can be made intelligible and inspiring to contemporary Europeans, and these do not include rabbinic Jews. Historians have not yet found ways for traditional Jews to tell European stories. Instead, émigrés who struggled with their Jewishness but were remote from traditional Jewish culture – political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), philologist Erich Auerbach (1892–1957), and literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) – have become the paragons of Jewish European history. Émigrés who no longer regarded themselves as Jewish and professed cosmopolitanism – art historian Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001), jurist Hans Kelsen (1881–1973), and philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994) – tell the story of Europe fallen and redeemed.

The cosmopolitan émigrés surely belong in the Jewish story, but they cannot stand for all of European Jewry and alone sustain Jewish European history. They leave out too much of Jewish culture. Their Jewishness is devoid of rabbinic culture – of Talmud, *Midrash*, Kabbalah and *responsa* – and of Hebrew and Yiddish literature. Meanwhile, traditional German-Jewish émigrés, like Israeli philosopher

experimentation with Jewish European history, but the genre has expanded on both sides of the Atlantic to cover much work in European intellectual history, even when the term “Jewish European” is not used.

¹² I use “traditional Judaism” for rabbinic Judaism broadly conceived. It includes Reform rabbis. Readers suggested that the rubric is both a misnomer – this book shows Jewish Orthodoxy, too, to be a modern invention; there is no traditional Judaism – and misleading, as it is used in Israel for Conservative Judaism. But I have no other: Postorthodox Jews, like this author, are traditional Jews conscious of their tradition’s historicity.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994), liberal Rabbi Benno Jacob (1862–1945), and Orthodox Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg (1884–1966), barely register in émigré scholarship because they chart alternative European Jewishness. Traditionally, European histories marginalized the Jews, and Jewish historians told exclusively Jewish stories. The émigrés’ journeys across cultural boundaries and their cosmopolitan visions have made it possible for historians to tell Jewish European stories, but they have narrowed unacceptably the meaning of “Jewish.” History as told via the émigrés excludes those Jews who led traditional Jewish lives. It is thus the task of this book to offer an alternative Jewish European history that integrates traditional Jews and Jewish culture.

In contrast with émigré history, the broader field of European intellectual history resonates with voices of Jewish authenticity. The Prague Zionists and their prophet, Martin Buber (1878–1965), have recently joined Weimar Germany’s antiliberal Jewish rebels, from Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) to Gershom Scholem to Leo Strauss (1899–1973), as historians’ favorite subjects. They are irresistible because they make possible a history that is so obviously both Jewish and European, and one that speaks eloquently to contemporary political concerns.

Yet the limits of the Jewishness emergent from Prague and Weimar histories should be noted, too. The Prague Zionists’ reinvention of Jewish ethnicity and religion took place against a background of disengagement from Judaism. Franz Kafka (1880–1924) depicted contemporary Prague Jewish authors as “writing in German to distance themselves from Jewishness . . . their hind legs still stuck to their father’s Jewishness and their forelegs finding no new ground.”¹³ Few had as firm grounding in tradition as Buber. Similarly, Scholem spoke of his generational rebellion as postassimilatory, and Paul Mendes-Flohr aptly describes Weimar Jewish intellectuals as having a dual identity, German and Jewish.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the ingenuity they displayed in creating new Jewish philosophy and theology, and the Weimar revival of Jewish learning, few Weimar rebels matched the erudition of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaftler des Judentums* (whom they derided). In explicating their

¹³ Franz Kafka to Max Brod, June 1921, in *Briefe 1902–1924* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1966), p. 337.

¹⁴ Scholem deployed Kurt Blumenfeld’s view of German Zionism as “postassimilatory Judaism”: *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, ed. Werner Dannhauser (New York: Schocken, 1976), pp. 1–2; Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). The “German” in German-Jewish was also European, as Jewish networks crossed national boundaries. See Malachi Hacohen, “From Empire to Cosmopolitanism: The Central-European Jewish Intelligentsia, 1867–1968,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 5 (2006): 117–34, and the other essays on Jews in multiethnic networks in this volume.

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work, historians pay as much heed to Christian theology as to Jewish philosophy, and as much attention to German culture as to Jewish texts.¹⁵ They find little occasion to refer to rabbinic literature.

Moreover, current political concerns join to diminish traditional Jewish culture. If émigré history tracks the European search for supranational identity, Prague and Weimar intellectual histories reflect the academic pursuit of alternatives to liberal democracy and contemporary Zionism. Heidegger's philosophy and Schmitt's political theology frame the context for scholarly work on Hans Jonas, Emmanuel Levinas, Rosenzweig, Strauss, and Jacob Taubes.¹⁶ *Berit Shalom*, a Palestinian Jewish group of mostly Central European Zionists who pursued binationalism as a solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine in the interwar years, confronts Israeli politics with a Zionist alternative.¹⁷ Jacob Taubes was trained in a *yeshivah* and received an Orthodox rabbinic ordination, but it is his Pauline millenarianism that fascinates contemporaries most: In a post-Marxist age, Paul's putative nonviolent messianism appears as a political alternative to liberalism.¹⁸ The burgeoning interest of émigré history is, nowadays, in Christian-Jewish émigrés. With recent debates on

¹⁵ Luc Anckaert, Martin Brassler, and Norbert Samuelson, eds., *The Legacy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2004); Zachary Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Eugene R. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile: The Making of a Political Philosopher* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006). Even Orthodox Rabbi Alexander Altmann felt impelled to create, in the 1930s, a new theology in defense of the *Halakhah* (Jewish law), rather than argue from within Jewish sources: Thomas Meyer, *Vom Ende der Emanzipation: Jüdische Philosophie und Theologie nach 1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

¹⁶ Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Nitzan Lebovics, "The Jerusalem School: The Theopolitical Hour," *New German Critique* 35 (2008): 97–120; Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Steven Aschheim, *Beyond the Border: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Adi Gordon, ed., *Brith Shalom and Bi-National Zionism* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008); Zohar Maor, "Between Anti-Colonialism and Postcolonialism: *Berit Shalom's* Critique of Nationalism and Secularization" (in Hebrew), *Theory and Criticism* 10 (2007): 12–28; Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken: Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010); Yfaat Weiss, "Central European Ethnonationalism and Zionist Binationalism," *Jewish Social Studies* 11 (2004): 93–117.

¹⁸ The current popularity of Taubes's *Die politische Theologie des Paulus* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993) owes much to Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

Judeo-Christian Europe, interest in émigrés who contemplated Christian-Jewish civilization, from Auerbach to Carl Friedrich to Löwith to Hans Joachim Schoeps, has surged.¹⁹ Jewish intellectuals are still Europeanized in a manner that makes them accessible to Europeans and usable to academic culture – and diminishes their Judaism.

What is to be done? The horizons of Jewish Studies and European history have been drawing closer in recent years, as national narratives have opened up to border crossing.²⁰ Jewish Studies scholars now seek to locate their subjects within European history, and European historians recount transnational histories using the Jewish Diaspora. But convergence is still limited. Rabbinic scholars and European historians still seem to inhabit different intellectual universes, as if their concerns did not matter to each other. Divergent training and interests continue to inhibit the extension of European Jewishness to traditional Jews. The painstaking textual labor of Jewish Studies, whether in Talmud, Midrash, rabbinic responsa or Kabbalah, does not make it into European history.²¹ Traditional Jewish Studies still do not tell a European story, and European intellectual history does not tell a traditional Jewish one. For traditional Jewish culture to become part of European history, rabbinic discourses must be “Europeanized,” and Jewish European history written, at least in part, out of traditional Jewish sources. This book aims to do just that.

¹⁹ *Religions* 3: 2/3 (2012), special issue on “Between Religion and Ethnicity: Twentieth-Century Jewish Emigrés and the Shaping of Postwar Culture,” esp. essays by Matthias Bormuth, “Meaning and Progress in History – A Comparison between Karl Löwith and Erich Auerbach,” 3:2, 151–62; Adi Gordon and Udi Greenberg, “*The City of Man*, European Émigrés, and the Genesis of Postwar Conservative Thought,” 3:3, 681–98; and Malachi Haim Hacohen, “Typology and the Holocaust: Erich Auerbach and Judeo-Christian Europe,” 3:3, 600–645. See also Udi Greenberg, “The Limits of Dictatorship and the Origins of Democracy: The Political Theory of Carl J. Friedrich from Weimar to the Cold War,” *The Weimar Moment*, ed. Rudy Koshar (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), pp. 443–64.

²⁰ Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), discusses the challenges and opportunities that blurry boundaries and hybrid identities present to the coherence of Jewish history and its subject, the Jew. David Hollinger, “Communitist and Dispersionist Approaches to American Jewish History in an Increasingly Post-Jewish Era,” *American Jewish History*, 95:1 (2009): 1–32, does the same for American Jewish history. Hollinger legitimates non-Jewish Jews as subjects of Jewish history; I seek to legitimize traditional Jews as subjects of non-Jewish history. The projects are complementary.

²¹ This has been changing for the better. Two examples: Maoz Kahana, *From the Noda BeYehuda to the Chatam Sofer: Halakha and Thought in Their Historical Moment* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2015); Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Still, émigré historians and Kabbalah scholars study Scholem, but they have little to say to each other and create divergent Scholem profiles. The German-Jewish intellectual and the Kabbalah scholar do not converge.

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The challenge is not as formidable as it may seem. Acceptance of the Jewish minority in European Christendom has been an issue from the beginnings of Europe. Medieval religious polemics and disputations between Christians and Jews showed both sides defining their identity against the other. In modernity, the Jewish Question became the ultimate test case for the European nation-state.²² The debate on Jewish emancipation and the prospects for Jewry's national integration began in the 1780s and continued all the way to the Holocaust.²³ Whether the Jews opted for integration in the nation-state or for autonomy in Central and Eastern Europe's multinational empires, Austria-Hungary and Russia, they exemplified a Diaspora minority negotiating its membership in a nationalizing state or a federalist empire. The debates on Jewish integration and autonomy reverberate today in deliberations on Europe's Muslim communities and on European federalism.

For well over a millennium, Jews and Christians, rabbis, theologians, and secular intellectuals polemicized over the terms of Jewish existence in Europe. Indeed, the debate is older than Europe itself. The Roman Empire's destruction of Jerusalem and devastation of the Palestinian Jewish community constituted the greatest trauma of Jewish history and were permanent *topoi* of rabbinic discourse. As the empire became Christian, and the Christian Empire became, later, definitive of Europe, rabbinic discourse on imperial Rome carried on to Christian–Jewish relations in medieval Europe. Empire and Christendom became the notions against which the Jews defined their European membership. A two-millennia-old rabbinic discourse on Jewish–non-Jewish relations permeates European history.

The rabbinic idiom for Jewish–Christian relations emerged from the biblical story of the rival twins, Jacob & Esau. (I use the ampersand rather than the conjunction “and” advisedly – Jacob and Esau appear in this book as a unit, each defined by the other, deriving their meaning from the polarity.) Genesis tells that the two already began struggling for primacy in their mother's womb. Jacob was born holding onto Esau's heel (*aqev*

²² The term “Jewish Question” entered political discourse in the 1750s with the British debate on the naturalization of Jews, and it became widespread with the German debates on emancipation in the 1840s: Jacob Toury, “The Jewish Question – A Semantic Approach,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 11 (1966): 85–106.

²³ The term “Jewish emancipation” was first used in 1828 in the course of the debate in England on Catholic emancipation – the removal of the Catholics' civic disabilities: Jacob Katz, “The Term ‘Jewish Emancipation,’” in his *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Westmead, UK: Gregg International Publishers, 1972), pp. 21–46. While Roman law spoke of freeing slaves as “manumission” and not as emancipation, the term also became quickly associated with the abolitionist struggle to end slavery in the colonies and the U.S. South.

בַּעֲקֵב), as if trying to outmaneuver him and come out first, hence his name Yaakov (עַקֵב). A tent dweller, he bought the rights of the firstborn from Esau, a hunter, by feeding his hunger. With the help of his mother, Rebecca, he deceived his father, Isaac, by wearing Esau's clothes and received the firstborn's blessing. A furious Esau conspired to kill him, and Jacob escaped abroad, returning, after two decades, wealthy and mature, and with a large family. He feared that Esau would still seek revenge and decimate his family, but when they met, they fell on each other's shoulders and cried. The Genesis story ends in reconciliation.²⁴

Rabbinic Midrash and Kabbalah, and Jewish historiography, rewrote and retold the Jacob & Esau story in innumerable versions over two millennia. The discourse had parallels among Christians and, to a lesser extent, among Muslims. Jews, Christians, and Muslims recognized Patriarch Jacob as the father of the Jewish nation and Esau as the ancestor of Edom, a people who lived on the southern borders of the Israelite Kingdom of Judah. Through a remarkable chain of events, recounted in the following chapters, Esau became first Roman and then Christian, and the rabbis directed biblical prophecies on Edom against the Roman Empire and Christianity. The biblical story became a *topos* for Roman–Jewish and Christian–Jewish relations. The Bible presaged the future: “All that happened to our ancestor Jacob with Esau his brother,” opined the medieval Spanish Jewish biblical commentator Nahmanides (1194–1270), “will always happen to us with Esau's descendants.”²⁵ Jacob & Esau provided the paradigm of the Jews' relationship to Europe.

Christianity developed its own Jacob & Esau typology to speak about Christian–Jewish relations. God's oracle to the matriarch, Rebecca, presaged that of the rival twins she carried in her womb, “the elder shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). “The older people of the Jews,” said Augustine, “was destined to serve the younger people, the Christians.”²⁶ The typology was not as central to Christianity as it was to Judaism, but it provides historians with a rare view of Jews and Christians using analogous discourses, vested in shared sources, to discuss their relations. As they deliberate about Jacob & Esau, they

²⁴ *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999); *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). I have occasionally modified the English translations.

²⁵ Ramban (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman Girondi; Nahmanides), *Commentary on the Torah*, trans. Charles B. Chavel, 5 vols. (New York: Shilo Press, 1971–76): 1 (Genesis): 32:2; *Perush ha-Torah*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1969): “כל אשר אירע לאבינו עם עשו אחיו יאירע לנו תמיד עם בני עשו”.

²⁶ *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1985), 16:35–38, 18:31, quotation on p. 698.

negotiate, from asymmetrical power positions, the Jews' place in Europe. *Jacob & Esau* tracks the Jews' changing position in Europe over two millennia, from the late Roman Empire to Christianization to the Crusades to late medieval expulsions to early modern *modus vivendi* to emancipation to racialization and murder to postnational integration. To rectify the exclusively modern focus of Jewish European history, *Jacob & Esau* projects modernity – Jewish emancipation, racial antisemitism, and genocide – against the *longue durée* of a beleaguered European minority, whose oppression and survival alike, simultaneous foreignness and kinship to Europe, had been, until modern times, fundamental premises.

Modernity and its Jewish dilemmas remain, however, this book's focal concern. The European nation-state opened for Jews the unprecedented prospect of national integration, but three multiethnic empires, the Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman, represented, until they collapsed in the aftermath of World War I, the prospect of Jewish autonomy in an imperial federalist structure. Modern Jewry negotiated its political membership between nation and empire. German-speaking Central Europe was the battleground of emancipation and antisemitism, the cradle of Jewish pluralism, and the sphere where Jews were confronted with the competing options of nation-state and empire, represented by Germany and Austria-Hungary, respectively; hence its preeminence in this book.

Contrary to most historical narratives, however, my focus is not solely on Germany but also, and even more so, on Austria, and not on the interplay between nationalism and cosmopolitanism but on the nexus of imperial pluralism that proved capacious enough to accommodate emancipation. Gerson Hundert has not tired of reminding us that the majority of European Jews lived until 1917 in imperial Russia (including former Congress Poland), and experienced modernity without emancipation or secularization.²⁷ Historians have begun telling the story of Eastern European Jewish modernity, and it will no doubt become a center of future studies. *Jacob & Esau* puts traditional Eastern European Jewry in dialogue with German culture via Austrian Galicia, and shows Yiddish and Hebrew literature to be crossing imperial borders between Russia, Germany, and Austria. But my search for a Europeanism accommodative of Jewish culture, and my insistence that the story of traditional and secular Jews be told together, lead to late imperial Austria rather than to Russia.

²⁷ Gerson David Hundert, "Re(de)fining Modernity in Jewish History," in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Oxford: The Litman Library, 2009), pp. 133–45, and *The Jews of Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth-Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), pp. 1–20. I am indebted to a conversation with Nancy Sinkoff of Rutgers University.