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## Ex Libris and Exchange: Immigrant Interventions in the German-Jewish Renaissance

At the beginning of the twentieth century, an atavistic interest in Eastern European Jewry served as an aesthetic catalyst for the German-Jewish renaissance. “The cult of the *Ostjuden*” is a phrase that was popularized by Gershom Scholem in his autobiography from the 1970s and is used to describe the perceived discovery of an authentic Jewish life in Eastern Europe by a generation of young German Jews around the time of the First World War (Scholem 60, 100; Aschheim 185–214). Some authors who are often associated with the longing gaze eastward include Franz Kafka, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Alfred Döblin. It is with a work by Arnold Zweig, however, that the tone of the cult shifted into an ecstatic register in its apotheosis of the Eastern European Jew. Opening his illustrated work from 1920, *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*, Zweig uses first-person *ekphrasis* to bring to life a romanticized drawing of an Eastern Jew with beard and yarmulke: “Er wendet sein Auge von mir fort in eine Ferne, die nichts sonst ist als Zeit. Sein Profil gleitet wie ein fallendes Wasser in den Bart, der sich in Gischt und Wolke löst” (13). Such portrayals of traditional Eastern European Jews afforded German-Jewish authors and artists an avenue to explore their own Jewish identity. In this article I argue that behind this image at the center of the Jewish renaissance were twenty years of collaborative work and cultural exchange between German Jews and Eastern European Jews who were already living in Germany. I claim that a transnational examination of German-Jewish modernism reveals the way in which Eastern European Jews themselves helped to fashion their own image in German culture.

Certainly, many factors went into the evolution of the German-Jewish renaissance and writers’ investment in the *shtetl*-Jewish archetype. Scholarship by Steven Aschheim, Sander Gilman, Michael Brenner, Shulamit Volkov, and others has shown that this phenomenon represented a radical transformation after more than a century, during which acculturated German Jews had rejected the more traditional Jewry of Eastern Europe (see also Wertheimer; Spector; Kalmar and Penslar; and Grossman). During the Weimar Republic, the acceptance of *Ostjuden* among mostly Zionist-leaning thinkers nevertheless ran against a continued rejection of

them by other German-Jewish groups (e.g., Naumann 21–22). Research on the idealization (or rejection) of this Eastern population has yet to focus on the immigrant Jews from various parts of Eastern Europe who lived in Germany and watched this turn of events. In examining this marginalized group, it becomes clear that the Eastern European Jews who had come to Berlin and Vienna in the 1880s and 1890s began publishing idyllic writings and drawings of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe around 1900.<sup>1</sup> These stories and pictures became the building blocks upon which native-born German Jews constructed the “cult of the *Ostjuden*” around the time of the First World War. With this article, I will shed light on the process of cultural exchange that allowed immigrant Jewish culture to shape German-Jewish life. I analyze the bookplate, or *ex libris*, as an unlikely record of the way in which the idealized picture of the *shtetl* Jew crossed over from Eastern European immigrants’ hands into those of native-born German Jews. Tracing the history of this image before the First World War and the early Weimar period, I expose these immigrants as the curators of their own idealized image.

This argument pivots on a unique piece of historical evidence that vividly illustrates the evolution of this cultural exchange—namely, bookplates. An *ex libris* is a piece of paper adhesively attached to the inside front cover of a book, which, at a minimum, states the book owner’s name and often includes a decorative design or picture of the owner’s choosing. Since its inception in the 1500s, the bookplate has not significantly changed its form, typically ranging in size from about 4 x 2 inches to 5 x 8 inches. Designed to juxtapose the book owner’s name alongside a chosen image, bookplates ideally showcase the way in which identity is selectively expressed—through occupation, hobby, and even sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup> Though it might be an unfamiliar cultural object today, ornate artistic bookplates were not uncommon for Western European men at the beginning of the twentieth century. When discussing the owners of *ex libris*, certainly class must be considered. For these owners of private libraries, the cost of commissioning a bookplate could soar to thousands of dollars.<sup>3</sup> Here, however, I will be reflecting specifically on bookplates owned by Jews in *fin-de-siècle* Germany and the aesthetic transformation that these *ex libris* underwent. Not only did this period see the rise in popularity of Jewish iconography on bookplates, but, thanks to the immigrant Eastern European Jews living in Germany who first produced and circulated the positive image of the bearded Jew with yarmulke, members of the broader German-Jewish community acquired a visual vocabulary for conveying their own idealized selves.

The material for this study comes from the Klau Library at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, which houses the largest collection of Jewish bookplates. This collection contains over ten thousand bookplates from across the world that span two centuries.<sup>4</sup> On file are the bookplates of many famous personalities, including those belonging to Albert Einstein, Martin Buber, Max Brod, Franz

Rosenzweig, and Sigmund Freud.<sup>5</sup> As is apparent from even a cursory glance at the collection, many of the Jewish-owned bookplates did not have Jewish themes.<sup>6</sup> A Star of David appears on the bookplates of Max Brod and Martin Buber, for example, but overtly Jewish iconography is lacking from many of the ex libris. Those explicitly bearing a Jewish message, through the use of Jewish symbols or Hebrew writing, thus constitute only a subset within the collection. The most popular bookplate in the collection is one with a drawing of a quintessential Jew from the *shtetl* with beard, yarmulke, and prayer shawl, who sits and learns from a large religious text. Jewish men and women from across the world have used this same image.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, this bookplate originated in the German-Jewish renaissance, yet continued to be used by various Jewish owners for the greater part of a century.

Analyzing artistic bookplates as a case study for trends in the visual arts, I give an historical overview of the rise of the image of the traditional Eastern European Jew on German-Jewish owned bookplates and identify the multiple discourses of the Jewish renaissance that inform this imagery. I shed light on the influence of Eastern immigrant Jews and demonstrate that they were the main curators of the mythic image of *Ostjuden* that came to be so entrenched in later interwar German-Jewish culture. Eastern European Jews living in Germany sought to identify with and own the idealized images for themselves. With this research I call into question the following historical narrative of the German-Jewish renaissance: In the late nineteenth century with anti-Semitism on the rise, Zionism emerged from the ethnic contexts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a Jewish response to European nationalism. The *fin-de-siècle* saw the subset of cultural Zionism enter into more mainstream German-Jewish culture, bringing with it Orientalist-inflected notions of the New Jew. Continuing the legacy from the nineteenth century, this program involved a rejection of Diasporist Jewry, and Eastern European Jewry in particular. But the encounter with Eastern Jews on the warfront during the First World War by German-Jewish soldiers led to a reversal in thinking about Eastern European Jews. An aggrandizement of this group thus emerged in full force at the beginning of the Weimar Republic. This narrative places Eastern Jews in a thoroughly passive position: they *are rejected*; then they *are encountered*; and finally, they *are appropriated*. In contrast, I aim to upend this view of the passive Eastern Jew by arguing that immigrant Eastern European Jews in Germany, who numbered thirty-five thousand by 1900 (Wertheimer 79), played a central role in the creation and distribution of idyllic images of East European Jewish life. In their negotiation of identities, these immigrant Jews at the turn of the century—perhaps knowingly, maybe unwittingly—initiated the cult of the *Ostjuden* a decade before the German-Jewish encounter during the First World War. In the following, I move along East–West, artist–patron, text–image, Jewish–Christian, and public–private axes to speak to the

larger idea that German-Jewish and East European Jewish modernist projects were intrinsically linked in a dialectic relationship of cultural exchange.

### Jewish Bookplates as Western Engagement

A brief historical overview reveals the rise of the bookplate among Jews as an engagement with modern Western culture. Even though the illustrated ex libris appeared in sixteenth-century Western Europe after the advent of the printing press, Avrom Weiss identifies the earliest Jewish-owned and Jewish-designed bookplates from 1746 in England and 1790 in Germany (xvii). Weiss notes that during the nineteenth century, no notable Jewish artist designed bookplates with a Jewish theme, but by the twentieth century the use of Jewish themes was widespread, especially in the United States, with its “hundreds of [Jewish] cultural and religious institutions” (xviii). He traces the rise in Jewish bookplate usage to artists in Germany, who play a predominant role in his historical narrative, notably E. M. Lilien, Hermann Struck, Joseph Budko, and Jakob Steinhardt.

A commissioned bookplate, custom-designed with the owner’s name and a selected picture, might represent some of the most characteristic Western values—individuality, commercialism, and private ownership. As is apparent from the highly artistic bookplates I reproduce in the appendix, these were meant to be seen by others. And they were. Jewish ex libris were not merely found on bookshelves, but were also collected, discussed at ex libris society meetings, and printed in Jewish and non-Jewish periodicals.<sup>8</sup> This ostentation or, more specifically, conspicuous ownership, should be understood in its modern Western context. As a point of comparison, rabbinical authorities from pre-modern Jewish society seem to have looked down upon ostentatiously asserting ownership of an item, books in particular. The influential medieval rabbi Yehudah HaChasid (1140–1217) wrote from thirteenth-century Regensburg, “One should not write in a book ‘This is mine,’ instead he should write his name without ‘This is mine’” (10). This prescription limits the acceptable level of claiming ownership and signaling it to others. Even today, there is a custom among traditional Jews to preface his/her written name in a book with the acronym for the following biblical verse: “The world in its fullness belongs to God” (Ps. 24:1).<sup>9</sup> Brent Spodek argues that this custom is evidence that traditional Judaism shuns consumerism and validates simple ownership. In his interpretation of the custom, “one’s ownership of a book is really just a limited stewardship” (2). According to this reasoning, humbling thoughts of the divine should temper one’s display of book possession.<sup>10</sup> From the time of Yehudah HaChasid to the *fin-de-siècle*, the German-Jewish community underwent a radical transformation. By the nineteenth century, German rabbinical figures from across the religious spectrum, like

Abraham Geiger and Esriel Hildesheimer, were using bookplates as much as the laymen did to boldly declare their ownership of a work (Goodman, *Illustrated* 12). The slight signature or book stamp that took up little space on a page was replaced with an almost full-page artistic advertisement in Western Europe (Habermann xii; Wolf; Katz).

Over time, Jews living in Germany came to adopt the use of the bookplate. Even at the turn of the twentieth century, however, bookplates were a specifically Western, and not an Eastern, European phenomenon. At this time, the bookplate was not nearly as popular in Eastern European society at large. At the Hebrew Union College collection, few bookplates dated before the Second World War come from locations in Poland or Russia. The cultural differences between Western and Eastern European Jews are important to keep in mind. Immigrant Jews who commissioned bookplates in Germany were tapping into a Western European practice. We can now turn to the way in which cultural exchange took place once these immigrants made this cultural object their own.

### Immigrant Interventions

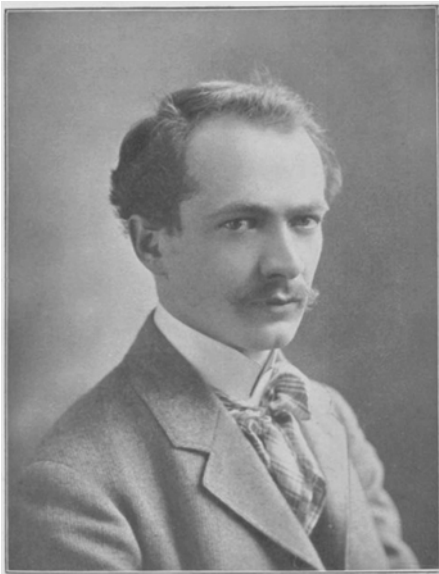


Figure 1. Portrait of E. M. Lilien, 1905  
(Regener, *E. M. Lilien*).

Among the bookplates at Hebrew Union College owned by German Jews, work by the artist Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874–1925) appears again and again (Figure 1). The artist of the nascent Zionist movement, E. M. Lilien was praised in the newspapers as the founder of a new Jewish art. With his distinctive use of Jugendstil and clean, black, sweeping lines, he almost single-handedly illustrated the discourse on the New Jew of *Muskeljudentum* (Presner). Lilien's Eastern Jewish background (born in Drohobycz, Galicia) provided authentic credibility to his idyllic images of Eastern European Jews, which he consistently produced after his illustration of Morris Rosenfeld's *Lieder des Ghetto* in 1902.

Lilien, who has been called “the father of the Jewish bookplate,” made over fifty bookplates, some forty of which were drawn in the decade between 1898 and 1908 (Goodman, “Bookplates” 1219; Simon 61; O. Lilien 73).<sup>11</sup> His patrons included Martin Buber, Maxim Gorki, and Stefan Zweig.<sup>12</sup> Showcasing Lilien’s bookplates became a pet project of the editors of the first largely illustrated German-Jewish periodical, *Ost und West*. In its first few years, the Berlin-based journal displayed both Lilien’s generic and Jewish-themed bookplates in an effort to show the new direction of Jewish art.<sup>13</sup> Lilien’s bookplates were so significant that Buber explicitly mentioned them in recognition of Lilien at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901: “Jedenfalls haben ihm sein Buch ‘Juda’ und seine hebräischen Exlibris unsere ganze Liebe gewonnen, und wir setzen eine Hoffnung in ihn, der mehr ist als das grösste Lob” (Verein 163).<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Buber’s love for Lilien’s bookplates was shared by others. Among more than ten thousand internationally Jewish-owned and Jewish-themed bookplates in the collection, the most popular is an image by Lilien of an elderly, bearded man bent over a religious tome wearing a yarmulke and a traditionally striped prayer shawl. Jews from Germany to America before and after both World Wars took this image, often adapted it to their tastes, and attached their names.<sup>15</sup> The bookplates of Rabbi Frank and Wilhelm Freyhan are two examples of such adaptations by German Jews (Figure 2). Before turning to the original drawing, I will first focus on how these German-Jewish book owners appropriated this image of the *shtetl* Jew. One can see from these two examples that the male figure drawn

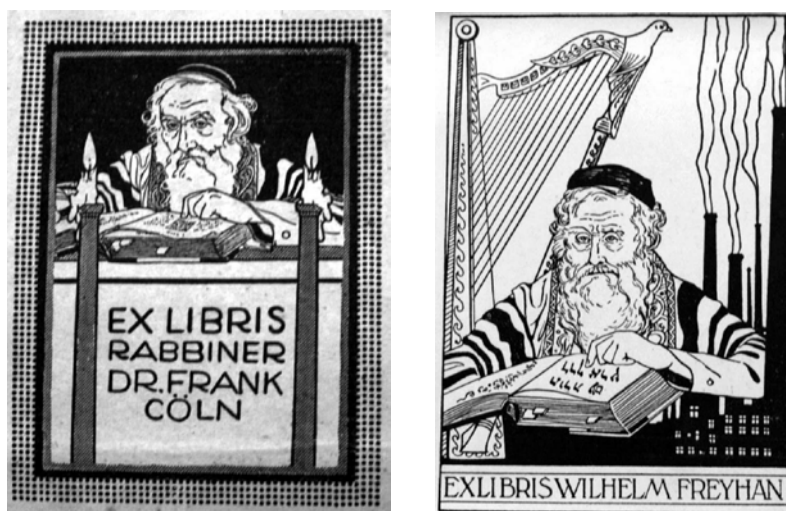


Figure 2. Two examples of bookplate images that were originally drawn by E. M. Lilien and later changed by German-Jewish book owners.



with ink appears at the center of both plates. However, there are many features that differ between the two images and have been modified from Lilien's original drawing. Rabbi Frank's bookplate presents a stark black background in contrast to the man sitting in the foreground, while Wilhelm Freyhan personalized the background of his image by adding factory smoke stacks and a harp. The frame around Frank's ex libris is absent from Freyhan's. Significantly, the text in the book depicted on Freyhan's bookplate is altered, so that the Jew reads, not from the Talmud with its characteristic page layout (which one sees in Frank's bookplate), but from a book by the Orthodox German rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. The Hebrew text, changed from the original bookplate drawing, now yields Hirsch's motto *Torah im derech*



Figure 3. Ex libris Leo Winz, illustrated by E. M. Lilien, 1901.

many of Lilien's bookplates for public consumption. In 1904, Winz used the forum of the journal to print his own bookplate made by Lilien (Thon). Looking past his bookplate avatar (Figure 3), the real face of Leo Winz is dramatically different (Figure 4). Winz, like Lilien, did not wear religious apparel and did not have a beard. Both were thoroughly acculturated Jews in

eretz, which roughly translates to "Torah with Worldliness." Perhaps Rabbi Frank and Wilhelm Freyhan had beards themselves. This was not the case, however, for the first owner of this idealized picture.

Tracing the history of the bookplate, we find in Figure 3 that the original owner was not a German Jew, but an East European Jewish immigrant to Berlin, Leo Winz (1876–1952). Born in Hlukhiv, present-day Ukraine, Winz was a transplanted Eastern European Jew like Lilien. He was the editor of the journal *Ost und West*—the same journal that published

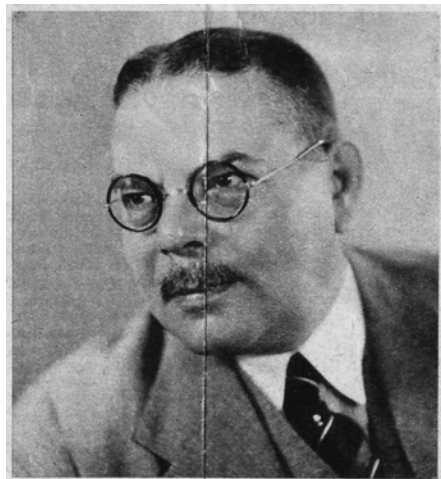


Figure 4. Portrait of Leo Winz, 1935. Courtesy of Philipp Messner.

terms of appearance, who chose to identify with a religious, distinctly Eastern Jew (and, when speaking of “identifying,” it might be better to say that these bookplate owners were placing the *shtetl* Jew into the framework of their self-understanding).

One variation between the original bookplate owned by Winz and the altered bookplates of Frank and Freyhan can exemplify the differences between the two groups of Jews that we are discussing—immigrant, cosmopolitan Eastern European Jews and dissimilatory German Jews.<sup>16</sup> One might notice that the yarmulkes on the three bookplates are slightly different from one another. The yarmulke on Frank’s bookplate is somewhat thinner. The yarmulkes on Frank’s and Freyhan’s ex libris are black, in comparison to the decorative, woven yarmulke that Lilien draws for Winz. The color variations of the yarmulkes might seem insignificant, but they actually imply an important political statement. However many words the Eskimo might have for snow, Jews have just as many for hats. The differences among headgear signify religious affiliation, observance level, and geographic location, among other things. A black yarmulke signifies a religious Jew; though not necessarily worn only by Orthodox Jews, it is most commonly found among them. The woven yarmulke on Winz’s ex libris is traditionally worn by Jews of the Caucasus Mountains and Bukhara (Uzbekistan). The Bukharian yarmulke on an otherwise Ashkenazi (Central/Eastern European) religious Jew indicates that either Lilien or Winz was orientalizing this Eastern European Jew, imagining him geographically displaced farther in the East (see Kalmar and Penslar). In contrast, the Jewish figures in the adapted versions by Frank and Freyhan are brought closer to home with the black yarmulke. Especially given the new inscription by the German rabbi Hirsch on Freyhan’s bookplate, this revision suggests that the Jewish figure is to be read as German and Orthodox, like Freyhan himself. These three examples demonstrate how the same Eastern Jewish representation was employed to fit into disparate discourses of Jewish authenticity. Despite the differences between German Jews and the Eastern Jewish immigrants living in Germany, this context where bookplate images were circulated and exchanged contributes to our understanding of the communal nature of German-Jewish book culture and the cultural transfers that underpinned it.

Further examples from other cosmopolitan Eastern European Jews can demonstrate that Winz and Lilien were not alone in their attachment to the *shtetl* Jewish image. Reuben Brainin (1862–1939) was born in Lyady, present-day Belarus. An author of Hebrew literature, he resided for a few years in Vienna and Berlin before moving to the United States. During his time in Berlin, he commissioned Lilien for his ex libris (Figure 5). Brainin’s bookplate was the first all-Hebrew, Jewish-centric bookplate to be displayed in *Ost und West*, appearing in one of the first issues of the journal, three years earlier than the issue that showcased Winz’s (M. Brenner 166). Besides displaying Brainin’s Hebrew name (Reuven ben Mordechai Brainen), the



bookplate also bears Lilien's Hebrew neologism *misifre*, a translation of the Latin *ex libris* (Goodman, *Illustrated* 14). The issue in which it was printed included a reading of the bookplate, which provides us with insight into its German-Jewish reception:

Das zweite hier abgebildete Bibliothekzeichen trägt unten in hebräischer Sprache und Schrift die Bezeichnung "Missiphre" (aus der Bücherei), oben ebenso den Namen des Eigentümers "Ruben ben Mordechai Brainin". Brainin ist ein jetzt in Berlin lebender, bedeutender hebräischer Schriftsteller, dessen Muttersprache hebräisch ist und dessen Bibliothek fast ausschliesslich aus hebräischen Büchern besteht. Deshalb finden sich auf der Zeichnung auch nur durchweg hebräische Worte. Das Motiv ist einfach, aber charakteristisch. Umrahmt von kahlen Dornenranken, dem ewigen Symbol des jüdischen Volkes, das seit langer, langer Zeit nichts mehr von Rosen weiss, sehen wir die Bilder von zehn hervorragenden Hebräern, die durch ihre Schriften ihr ganzes Leben lang für das Judentum gewirkt und gestrebt haben. Ernst und Milde, Würde und Weisheit liegt [sic] in ihren durchgeistigten Gesichtern. Als die schönsten und markantesten ragen unter den Köpfen hervor: der grosse Karlsruher Rabbiner Thias Weyl; Rappoport, der geistvolle Kritiker und einstige Rabbiner von Prag, und Spinoza. (Hirschfelder, "Lilien'sche Ex-Libris")

This reading by Moritz Hirschfelder, a writer and doctor from Berlin, whose



Figure 5. Ex Libris Reuben Brainin, 1900.

own bookplate was drawn by Lilien, demonstrates the nascent German-Jewish fantasies of the holistic life of the Eastern Jew (O. Lilien 75, 79). Hirschfelder sees Brainin as a thoroughbred Hebrew. In this short paragraph, the word *Hebrew* appears five times. Brainin is a Hebrew writer with a library of exclusively Hebrew books, which will soon be decorated with this bookplate of "ten exemplary Hebrews." To top off his description, the author writes that Hebrew was Brainin's native language. Certainly, the Hebrew in which Brainin wrote was not spoken at home, and this should be understood as a misunderstanding and idealization on Hirschfelder's part.

The bookplate imagery here strongly evokes Brainin's Eastern European home, while also illustrating the westernizing forces within modern Jewish thought, of which Brainin himself was a product. Spinoza, the

Jewish figure representative of modern Western Judaism, is supposedly at the top of this mass of bearded Jews.<sup>17</sup> Not only including Spinoza in the bookplate, but also privileging his picture at the top, indicates Brainin's desires to affiliate with a

pan-European Jewish identity. The immigrant Brainin's use of the bearded men is more than the product of a simple, unidirectional gaze; he simultaneously employs both an eastward and a westward gaze. Not coincidentally, Brainin founded a short-lived Hebrew-language journal called *Mimizrach umimaarav* (*From East and From West*), published in Vienna. This title echoes the name of Winz's journal *Ost und West*, published in Berlin. These immigrants actively positioned themselves and their modern sense of Jewish self between the poles of East and West. Even when, for all intents and purposes, the immigrant's use of the bearded men represents a fusion of cultures, the German Jew read Brainin via the images of bearded Jews in a simple Orientalist fashion that ignored the complexities of the discourses involved.

E. M. Lilien, Reuben Brainin, and Leo Winz, respectively the artist, patron, and publicist of these ethnically marked bookplates, were all immigrants. Native-born German Jews themselves played a very marginal role in this initial phase of *Ostjude* idealization around 1900. This distinction is essential to an understanding of the cultural exchange at stake here. Once Lilien, Brainin, and Winz are situated within their broader European context as immigrants, the cultural baggage they brought with them can be unpacked. Beginning roughly in the 1880s, cosmopolitan Eastern European Yiddish writers became attracted to the "*shtetl* Jew." City-dwelling Eastern European Jews, like Yitskhok Leybush Peretz, and later S. Ansky, staked out expeditions into Jewish *shtetl* life, which prefigured similar excursions by German Jews in the subsequent decades.<sup>18</sup> Peretz's Yiddish travelogue from 1891, *Travel-Pictures*, shares many characteristics with Alfred Döblin's *Reise in Polen* from 1926. Like Döblin, Y. L. Peretz and Sholem Aleichem were not the *shtetl* Jews they portrayed (Miron 1-80).

Thus, the appearance of the *shtetl* Jew on bookplates made by and for immigrant Eastern European Jews in Germany should not be perceived as a specifically immigrant phenomenon, a sign of homesickness. Instead, these immigrants were bringing pre-



Figure 6. Ex libris Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz.

existing romantic notions of the *shtetl* along with them. In order to understand the cultural exchange that I am tracing, one should consider the bookplate of Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz, an Eastern European Jew who did not live in Germany (Figure 6). In the background of this bookplate, which was made with a woodcut, the gabled houses suggest a hamlet. The window or door that hangs at an awkward angle to the bottom left could

be read as a symbol of poverty, if not simply expressionist angst. Depicted are a tall, non-Jewish figure in an aggressive stance vis-à-vis a hunched-back, bearded Jew. The non-Jew has blond hair; the Jew, black hair.

Berkowitz, a Hebrew and later Yiddish author as well as Sholem Aleichem's son-in-law, clearly chooses the *shtetl* as a site for self-reflection. With no information provided at Hebrew Union College's Jewish bookplate collection, Berkowitz's bookplate is hard to date. Some clues from the ex libris itself, in combination with biographical information, can assist in dating this bookplate before Berkowitz's 1928 move to Palestine. The artist's name, which appears in Latin letters, and the Latin words "ex libris" suggest that it was designed during either Berkowitz's stay in the United States from 1913 to 1928 or his pre-1913 life in Europe. The possibilities are endless as to what the image represents—a pogrom, the First World War, or, perhaps, a literary allusion to one of his father-in-law's stories. Berkowitz, a Westernized Jew who did not wear a yarmulke or a beard, chose to place his own name alongside a bearded Jew with a long frock. The image of a *shtetl* Jew as utilized by a cosmopolitan Eastern European Jew again adds context to the idyllic appearance of the *shtetl* Jew in German-Jewish life that was imported by immigrant Jews around 1900. At this time, immigrant Eastern European Jews were creating the positive image of the *Ostjude* that would become central to the German-Jewish renaissance. Certainly, the artists of these images intervened in the negative discourse on the Eastern Jew that had begun in nineteenth-century German-Jewish society. But to these bookplate owners, the images represented a reflection inward.

### The Private in German-Jewish Book Culture

To this point, I have shown how the bookplates of E. M. Lilien displayed Eastern European Jews in a positive light. Lilien belongs to a constellation of immigrant artists in Berlin and Vienna, whose drawings of traditional Jews, "*shtetl* Jews," influenced such canonical works of the interwar period as *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*. Transnational interventions were integral to German-Jewish renaissance discourse. This idea of an intervention by Eastern European Jews, combined with the loaning practices of books with their bookplates, along with the publishing of the bookplates in journals, all imply an outward, extrinsic performative practice. Such an emphasis alone in this examination would ignore the space, however, that immigrant Jews were making for themselves as individuals. The public characteristics of bookplate ownership have to be considered alongside the private aspects. Imagine the following scenario: Leo Winz sits alone at home with a book, takes one of a pile of bookplates that were personally made for him, attaches it to the inside cover of the book resting on his lap, and then closes the book, nestling the ex libris away on a bookshelf.

This scene evokes intimacy and needs to be examined as such. To observe the private space, or the inward-looking aspect of this immigrant culture, more closely, we can turn to one of the bookplates that Lilien designed for himself in 1898 (Figure 7).<sup>19</sup> Unpacking the elements of the over-determined bookplate can reveal Lilien's own expression of his East-West identities.

On the bookplate, the Hebrew words seem to be an appendage to the image, an afterthought. Clear demarcations, borders, and color contrasts separate the two parts of Lilien's bookplate. Running down along the left side is, first, the word *misifre*, Lilien's neologistic Hebrew translation of the Latin *ex libris*. Moving down the left margin, we find the text, "To the pure, everything is pure" ("L'tahorim kol tahor"). Underneath is Lilien's Hebrew name, Efraim Moshe ben Yaakov HaKohen Lilien. Lilien's name includes a titular reference to his priestly lineage that adds to the sanctified message carried over from the Hebrew motto. Lilien, a *kohen*, is a descendent of the priestly class of Jews, a direct descendent of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Given that in the Bible the priestly class is the Jewish group most governed by the laws of purity (*tahara*), purity is thus found in both



Figure 7. Ex libris E. M. Lilien, 1898.

this motto and in Lilien's name. With an eye to this background, one cannot help but notice the tension between the main frame of the bookplate, with its words in Latin letters, and the Hebrew part of the bookplate, which is not part of the image and only located on the borders. The Hebrew wording espousing purity and priestly heritage is rather jarringly placed alongside a naked nymph. Her hair gingerly wraps around her body to cover her nakedness.

Jewish bookplates often displayed modern art, as is apparent from this bookplate and the others presented in this essay. While Lilien, of an earlier generation, opted for Jugendstil, Yitskhok Dov Berkowitz turned to Expressionism.<sup>20</sup> Michael Stanislawski writes in *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle* that the Jewish nationalist movement was greatly indebted to its European heritage. Commenting specifically on the artwork of Lilien as a case study, he writes, "Lilien's 'Judenstil' was not a break, departure, opposition, or nationalistically inspired 'purification' of Jugendstil or art nouveau, but a seamless extension of genre, approach, and technique from the German and cosmopolitan to the specifically Jewish arena" (105). Working briefly with this bookplate, Stanislawski identifies the verse as a Hebrew version of Paul's state-

ment to Titus, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure” (Tit. 1:15). Stanislawski takes this biblical passage as his point of departure to show how indebted Jewish Zionism was to non-Jewish European cultural mores: “Why was a self-consciously Zionist, avant-garde artist borrowing such a New Testament homily in the service of a new nationalist Jewish art?” (100). Stanislawski rhetorically poses the question in order to hone in on the fact that this particular bookplate can stand in for any of Lilien’s artworks, since each was deeply beholden to the European *fin-de-siècle* and to its cultural reference points. However, in one misreading Stanislawski covers over the significance of Lilien’s cross-cultural move. Stanislawski misses the mark in suggesting that the Hebrew phrase is simply Lilien’s “rather stilted Hebrew” translation of the Letter to Titus. The Hebrew quotation found on Lilien’s personal bookplate can be traced to a bookplate attributed to Albrecht Dürer.

The famous sixteenth-century artist (1471–1528) is cited, at least in ex libris circles, as “the father of the bookplate” (“Book-plate”). The bookplate of Hector Pömer is considered by some to be Dürer’s most exquisite ex libris (Figure 8).<sup>21</sup> Like other Dürer bookplates, this one is multilingual, including Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words. The Hebrew text is the same one as found on Lilien’s bookplate: “To the pure, everything is pure.” Lilien was consciously aware in 1898 that he was charting new territory with his Jewish ex libris. In his very successful bid to be the “father of Jewish bookplates,” Lilien turned to the tradition of bookplate making and, in so doing, borrowed from one of the central German cultural icons, Dürer.



Figure 8. Ex libris Hector Pömer, 1525.

This contextualization eases the tension in Lilien’s bookplate between the Hebrew border and the image that appears in its main frame. I started out by drawing attention to several antinomies that are present in the bookplate: Jewish–Gentile, Hebrew–Latin, religious piety–sexuality, text–image. However, the Hebrew text cannot be read simply as a traditional Jewish element, used by Lilien to make his mark on the Western phenomenon of the bookplate. Indeed, this Hebrew citation is not Jewish, but Christian. Likewise, the drawing on the bookplate is more complex than a pagan graven image. The woman with flowing hair is undoubtedly representative of high Jugendstil. However, the vines at the bottom left represent Lilien’s intervention, marking it, as Stanislawski writes, “Judenstil.” Lilien took the vines, snakes,



tendrils, and wispy hair common to Jugendstil and imbued them with a Zionist message to represent Jewish exile. In many of Lilien's illustrations, thorns are set in a corner, partially wrapped around a person.<sup>22</sup> The bookplate of Reuben Brainin that was reproduced above in Figure 5 depicts a group of *shtetl* Jews ensconced in a bed of thorns. This theme was so common in Lilien's drawings that Stefan Zweig, Lilien's close friend, complained that Lilien used the thorns to represent Jewish exile "vielleicht zu oft" (25). The thorns that cross over the feet of the naked woman ultimately undo a binary reading of the ex libris. Lilien's personal bookplate, like all of his bookplates, demonstrates the intersection of the private and public, Christian and Jewish, religious and secular, and Eastern and Western spheres. This bookplate is not a reaction to Western bookplates, but actually an homage to the original father of the Western bookplate, Dürer. As a cultural product from the "contact zone," it has echoes of the dominant culture (Pratt).

### Conclusion

After a century of Western and secular influence that had reached far into the Pale of Settlement, the mass westward migration of Eastern European Jews into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany during the *fin-de-siècle* and interwar period furthered the impact of Western European culture on Eastern Jews. In my argument I have focused on the immigrants' engagement with Western culture and intervention in certain discourses that framed Western Jewish identities. I have shown that the bookplate, as a cultural product dramatically shaped by immigrant Eastern European Jews, can be a prism through which one views the phenomenon of transnational engagement. In a semi-public space in the German-Jewish community, the ex libris was at the crossroads of cultural exchange between East and West.

Various levels of exchange are reflected in the bookplates at Hebrew Union College. First, Western Jewish society adopted a practice that would have been frowned upon in earlier generations. Whereas pre-modern Jewish authorities warned against conspicuous book ownership, modern Jews welcomed it with open arms. Not coincidentally, the first Jewish-owned and Jewish-made bookplates appeared in the eighteenth century, as Jews engaged with the processes of secularization *en masse* in Western Europe. Second, an internal exchange developed, as Eastern European Jews in the twentieth century reworked the content of German-Jewish bookplates and altered their iconography. Ephraim Moses Lilien's appropriation of Albrecht Dürer's work is an example of one such layering effect, as he reached into the (Christian) Western past and appropriated it for the affirmation of a twentieth-century Jewish identity. The story of a Galician Jew who brought Dürer into Zionist propa-



ganda illustrates the transnational, multidirectional, and over-determined nature of these bookplates.

To complement the significant amount of scholarship written on the topic of *Ostjuden* in Germany, I am advocating a broader, transnational evaluation of the active cultural contributions of immigrant Eastern Jews. David Brenner in his book *Marketing Identities* comes closest to providing this perspective with his focus on the immigrants on the editorial board of *Ost und West*. Though Brenner's work is significant, some of his assertions lead to an ambivalent message about what these immigrants accomplished. For example, he repeatedly asserts that the editors of the journal sought to package East European Jewish authenticity for a Western audience. In his suggestion that these immigrants were trying to sugarcoat Eastern Jewishness in "marketing" it to German Jews, he only reinforces the binary thinking of the nineteenth century, which these immigrants were dialectically collapsing. Performing for German Jews as part of the immigrant Eastern Jewish experience should not overshadow the efforts by those who were truly wrangling with their own identity and seeking a synthesis for themselves. I have argued here that the immigrants were more concerned with their own identities than with programmatically changing German-Jewish reception.

The examination of the bookplates here showcases this alternative narrative. Much of the scholarship on *Ostjuden* relies on German-Jewish reception—in Brenner's case, the reception of the journal *Ost und West*.<sup>23</sup> The intended audience for literary and artistic representations of Eastern European Jewry has to be rethought in the context of these bookplates. Though the ex libris were published in a journal for German Jews, each bookplate was ultimately intended for its Eastern European owner. The bookplates that prominently display the *shtetl* Jew were, at least initially, in the first few years of the 1900s, made by immigrants for immigrants. When Reuben Brainin or Leo Winz attached their ex libris to the inside of a book, they were making a statement for themselves, and essentially reaffirming it each time they affixed it. These bookplates were highly personal and private affairs at the same time that they served as a bridge into the public sphere for the owners to express their Jewish identities. Imagining an Eastern Jewish culture entwined with Western Jewishness was a reflective act by these immigrants, a project primarily directed inward rather than outward.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Horch suggest that immigrants began the German literary shift from "Ghettoliteratur" into a more positive "Shtetl-literatur" (1119).

<sup>2</sup> A collectable genre of bookplates today is known as *ex libris eroticis*.

<sup>3</sup> In 1907 E. M. Lilien charged 200 Mark for one bookplate (in today's value, \$1,161). In 1912 Lilien charged 300 Kronen (in today's value, \$1,392). In 1948 Marc Chagall charged \$1,000 for a single bookplate (in today's value, \$9,536)! See Simon 62; E. Lilien 127; Harshav 648.

<sup>4</sup> For inventory overview of the HUC "Jewish bookplate collection," see Rodgers. In comparison, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York has three thousand.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> The collection contains bookplates owned by non-Jews, when the theme of the bookplate displayed some Jewish iconography or the owner had some Jewish connection. Adolf Hitler's bookplate is here, for example.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>8</sup> These bookplates were often featured in the ex libris journal *Zeitschrift für Bücherzeichen—Bibliothekenkunde und Gelehrten-geschichte: Organ des Ex-libris-Vereins zu Berlin*.

<sup>9</sup> "לה' הארץ ומלואה" This is often abbreviated ל"ה. See Shneerson 279, note 13.

<sup>10</sup> It is of note that only books are within the purview of these *Halachic* discussions. Intriguingly, other property which one might also want to mark as one's own—say, a coat or an animal—is not mentioned. Books specifically hold a unique place in Jewish custom.

<sup>11</sup> Hermann Simon writes that Lilien made a total of fifty-five bookplates, Otto Lilien counts fifty-two.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix A. For a list of Lilien's bookplate patrons, see O. Lilien.

<sup>13</sup> For the significant impact of this journal on German-Jewish identity, see D. Brenner and G. Rosenfeld. For examples of the bookplates printed in *Ost und West*, see Hirschfelder, "E. M. Lilien"; Hirschfelder, "Lilien'sche Ex-Libris"; Buber; Regener, "Zionistenstolz."

<sup>14</sup> With time, other Jewish artists vied for the love of Jewish book owners. An art critic Karl Schwarz preferred Joseph Budko's ex libris as "the only real Jewish ex libris," criticizing the "misdirected formalism" of Lilien. See Goodman, *Illustrated* 38.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of dissimulation, see Volkov.

<sup>17</sup> When Hirschfelder identifies a few of the figures for the reader, it must be assumed that he consulted Lilien or Brainin, since the figures would not have otherwise been identifiable. Others have interpreted the top figure as Solomon Herschell (1762–1842), Chief Rabbi of the German and Polish Jews in England. See Goodman, *Illustrated* 147–149.

<sup>18</sup> Some German Jews who visited East European Jewish centers include Theodor Lessing in 1910, Hermann Cohen in 1914, and Alfred Döblin in 1925.

<sup>19</sup> This was the first of three bookplates Lilien made for himself, see O. Lilien 80, S. Zweig 81.

<sup>20</sup> See the bookplates of Hans Friedländer (father of the historian Saul Friedländer) and Hannele for other expressionist examples at the HUC collection.

<sup>21</sup> There is a debate about whether Dürer drew the ex libris of Hector Pömer himself or whether it was one of his students in the "Dürer School." During Lilien's day, however, this bookplate was commonly attributed to Dürer. See Leiningen-Westerburg, "Bibliothek-Zeichen" 61 and *Verzeichnis*; Woodbury xiv; Leiningen-Westerburg, *German Book-plates* 110; Habermann xii.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., "Passah" in von Münchhausen.

<sup>23</sup> The subtitle to Aschheim's book is "The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness." In her article on "cultural transfers," Delphine Bechtel writes that her focus is "on reception and interpretation of Yiddish literary culture by German- and Austrian-Jewish intellectuals" (70).

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## Appendix. HUC Jewish Bookplate Collection

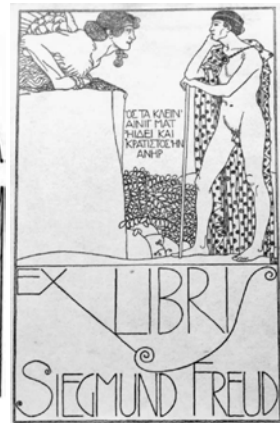
### A. Famous Owners of Bookplates



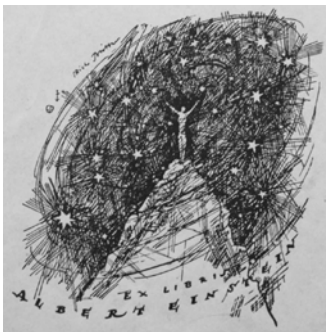
Max Brod.



Martin Buber.  
 Artist: E. M. Lilien.



Sigmund Freud.  
 Artist: Bertold Löffler.



Albert Einstein.  
 Artist: Erich Büttner.



Maxim Gorki.  
 Artist: E. M. Lilien.



Franz Rosenzweig.  
 Artist: Hanna von Kästner.



## B. Most Popular Bookplate Image

Originally drawn by E. M. Lilien, this bookplate is the most common in the collection. A sampling of some of the bookplate owners shows great geographic distance and a spread over the twentieth century. Most owners changed the image slightly. Leo Winz's Jewish figure with an oriental, Bukharian yarmulke was not chosen by others. They opted for a solid black version. Little is known about these owners other than their names.



Emanuel Elzas. The artist here who used Lilien's image, B. J. Joseph, wrote a note in English: "with apologies to Lilien." Many features are slightly different from the original. The image appears to have been traced.



Meir Lipman. The artist here writes the owner's name using a font similar to that found in a Torah scroll.



Neshamah Ehrlich, daughter of Shmuel. She is one of the rare female owners of this bookplate.



Leyzer Ran. Lilien's image was used by a Yiddish speaker. The inscription states: "From Leyzer Ran's collection." The bottom half of the original image was cut.



Rabbi Joseph Gitin. San Jose, California. The image appears to have been mechanically copied.



Lewis Browne. Candles in background have disappeared. The Latin words *ex libris* are to the left; the Hebrew *misifre* to the right.