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Herausgegeben von Hans Otto Horch

in Verbindung mit Alfred Bodenheimer, Mark H. Gelber und Jakob Hessing



Ena Pedersen

# **Writer on the Run**

German-Jewish Identity and the  
Experience of Exile in the Life and  
Work of Henry William Katz

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# Introduction

## German-Jewish Writers in Exile 1933–1945

The main focus of this book is the life and work of the German-Jewish exile writer, Henry William Katz. Although he was awarded the first Heinrich-Heine-Prize in exile by the ›Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller im Exil‹ in 1937, Katz has largely been forgotten by scholars and critics for the past fifty years. Indeed, this is the first scholarly treatment of his work. Through an analysis of Katz's works, it is further my hope to shed light on aspects of German-Jewish exile literature, such as the writings of and about Eastern European Jews, which have only been treated marginally in the existing body of research. In which ways is Katz distinctive, why did he disappear into obscurity for so long, and to what extent is he representative of German-Jewish writers in exile? This introduction will seek to give an overview of the cultural, religious, and political demography of the German exiles, focussing, in particular, on the problems faced by Jewish emigrants. Are there any major differences between the Jewish and the non-Jewish exile experience and its reflection in the literature of the period, and, if so, how can these differences be explained?

The mass emigration following Hitler's assumption of power early in 1933 was on an unprecedented scale. Never before had so many members of Germany's intellectual elite left the country in such a short time, thereby making an overtly political statement against the new regime. However, their aversion towards Nazi Germany and the experience of exile were virtually the only common denominators to this otherwise very diverse group of German exiles. Politically and religiously they were as scattered as they had been during the Weimar Republic, unwilling to resolve their previous differences despite the common experience of expatriation. This diversity was shown not least by the failed attempt to create a ›Volksfront‹ uniting all exiles of all political colours in a common battle against the Nazi regime, under the leadership of Heinrich Mann. Its aim was summarised as follows in 1937:

Die Volksfront will keine neue Partei sein. Sie soll ein Bund aller derer werden, die entschlossen sind, ihre Kraft für Freiheit und Wohlstand des deutschen Volkes einzusetzen. Alle in ihr vereinten Parteien und Gruppen bleiben ihren besonderen weiterreichenden Zielen treu.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Stephan: *Die deutsche Exilliteratur 1933–1945. Eine Einführung*. München: Beck 1979 (Beck'sche Elementarbücher), p. 125.

Yet only a few months later, the initial enthusiasm had given way to the old political battles, leaving the believers in the effectiveness of a people's front deeply disillusioned.

When one examines the background and composition of the German exiles, the difficulty in creating a bond across political and religious differences becomes obvious. One main division is that between Jewish and political refugees. According to Hans-Albert Walter, 350.000 to 360.000 of the 400.000 German emigrants were of Jewish descent, having fled primarily because of their Jewish heritage.<sup>2</sup> The remaining 40–50.000 refugees were people who left because their political, artistic, or intellectual activities were in direct or indirect confrontation with the ideology of the Nazi regime. There were, of course, overlaps between the two groups such as German-Jewish writers, scientists, and intellectuals who fled because of their Jewish heritage, their political activities, and their critical publications.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Jews thus formed the majority of German emigrants, they did not form a homogeneous group. Instead, they largely maintained the mixed ethnic and social structure that had characterised the Jewish minority in Germany. Out of 500.000 German Jews in 1933, it is estimated that 76 % were born in Germany and 80 % were German citizens. Approximately 20 % were immigrants, mainly from Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the recently arrived Eastern European Jews, most of the German Jews were assimilated to the German population to the point where they were indistinguishable from non-Jewish Germans, something which was a matter of pride to most Jewish families. Socially, most of them belonged to the middle class, and politically, they represented all parties from the Communist to the German National Party. Yet, according to Hans-Albert Walter, most German Jews were apolitical and, apart from the Zionist and Marxist minorities, certainly not active opponents of Fascism.<sup>5</sup> Martin Gumpert, a German-Jewish doctor and writer who stayed in Germany until 1936, even made the following claim based on his observations at the time, »[...] manche glaubten sogar an Hitler, und viele reiche Juden hatten eine heimliche Liebe zu ihm, sie wären gern dabeigewesen, wenn man sie gelassen hätte«<sup>6</sup>. Similar

<sup>2</sup> Hans-Albert Walter: Öfter als die Schuhe die Länder wechselnd ... Ein Überblick über die deutsche Emigration nach 1933. In: Sie flohen vor dem Hakenkreuz. Selbstzeugnisse der Emigranten. Ein Lesebuch für Deutsche. Ed. by Walter Zadek. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 1981 (rororo, 4836; rororo aktuell), p. 10–22, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> By ›German-Jewish‹ I am referring to any German-speaking Jewish writer or intellectual in exile, thus making a distinction on the basis of language rather than nationality. The latter would presuppose German citizenship and thus exclude important Jewish exile writers such as the Austrian Joseph Roth, the Czech Hans Natonek, and the Pole Manès Sperber among others.

<sup>4</sup> Hans-Albert Walter: Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933–1950, Vol. 1: Bedrohung und Verfolgung bis 1933. Darmstadt: Luchterhand 1972 (Sammlung Luchterhand, 76), p. 199–200.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

claims have been made by other contemporaries of Gumpert, and have since been confirmed by Walter's research.<sup>7</sup>

In retrospect, such a statement may seem drastic, considering the later fatal consequences of Hitler's ascension to power for the Jewish people. It can, however, only be applied to a minority of German Jews, such as the members of the ›Verband nationaldeutscher Juden‹, who under the leadership of Max Naumann asserted their close affiliation with the German people and their deep roots in German society and history, often at the expense of the Eastern European Jewish emigrants. The vast majority of German Jews were not as radical. In order to understand their position, it is therefore important to bear in mind the enormous admiration of the Jews for Germany and German culture, the very admiration and idolisation which led thousands of Eastern European Jews to flee to Germany from pogroms and wars in the East. Germany was considered the country of humanistic ideals and enlightenment, thus offering liberation to the suppressed and persecuted Eastern European Jews who flooded Germany from 1880 onwards. This idolisation of Germany and German ›Bildung‹ is demonstrated extremely well, for example, in Abraham Meyer Goldschmidt's speech »Rede zur Lessingfeier in Leipzig« from 1860. Like most Jews at the time, especially in Eastern Europe, Goldschmidt (rabbi of Leipzig, 1812–1889) praises Lessing as the man who through his drama *Nathan der Weise* and through his friendship with Moses Mendelssohn brought German culture, manners, education, and humanity to the suppressed Jewish people in Eastern Europe. The enormous enthusiasm in these lines illustrates the hope of liberation and personal freedom with which the Eastern European Jews embraced the whole concept of Germany which, to them, was represented by a few enlightened writers:

Und waren auch nicht alle Schranken auf einmal niedrigerissen, und waren auch nicht alle Hemmnisse auf einmal überwunden, so hoffte man doch – und der Erfolg hat die Hoffnung gerechtfertigt –, daß *das Land*, das einen Lessing erzeugen konnte, auch *der Boden* sei, in welchem der Same der Humanität, den einer seiner edelsten Söhne gestreut, tiefe Wurzeln schlagen, sich entfalten und gedeihen müsse. [...] Die Toleranz, die er gepredigt, sie ist zur Tat geworden; ja noch mehr, die sogenannte Duldung, sie ist zur *gleichberechtigten Anerkennung* geworden.<sup>8</sup>

The attitude expressed by Rabbi Goldschmidt was certainly the prevailing one among Eastern European Jews at the time, although, as has recently been pointed out by Ritchie Robertson, a more critical reading of Lessing's plays would question the actual extent of Lessing's tolerance of the Jews.<sup>9</sup> Mean-

<sup>7</sup> Walter, Bedrohung und Verfolgung (p. 2, note 4), p. 201–202.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Meyer Goldschmidt: Rede zur Lessingfeier in Leipzig (1860). In: Lessing – ein unpoetischer Dichter. Dokumente aus drei Jahrhunderten zur Wirkungsgeschichte Lessings in Deutschland. Ed. by Horst Steinmetz. Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum 1969, (Wirkung der Literatur, 1), p. 346–348.

<sup>9</sup> Ritchie Robertson: »Dies hohe Lied der Duldung? The Ambiguities of Toleration in Lessing's »Die Juden« and »Nathan der Weise«. In: The Modern Language Review 93 (1998), No. 1, p. 105–120.

while, the already assimilated German Jews rose within German society, gaining not only wealth but also distinguished positions. Indeed, in the Weimar Republic, many of the most prominent artists, scientists, journalists, writers, and bankers were Jewish. Such positions, however, had not been achieved without an indefatigable struggle for recognition and serious attempts to demonstrate that they were worthy to participate in German cultural and political life.

For the most part, the German Jews were more than willing to *earn* their acceptance by the German people, considering their citizenship a matter of both privilege and responsibility. By involving themselves in all aspects of German society, apart from higher positions within the army, the legal profession, and academia to which they were generally denied admission except when serving as token Jews, they wanted to show their enthusiasm and make their contribution to the country they loved. Their deep admiration for Germany, the years of struggle to assimilate, and their largely financially secure positions in society thus constituted serious impediments to a swift decision for exile when Hitler became Chancellor. Indeed, most German Jews could and would not believe that Nazi anti-Semitism would escalate to a point worse than other anti-Semitic experiences in the past which, after all, the Jewish people had survived. Their emigration therefore proceeded extremely slowly, counting only 37.000 Jews in 1933, 60.000 in 1934, 81.000 in 1935, 106.000 in 1936, and 129.000 in 1937. The Jewish exodus reached its peak with the pogrom of 9 November 1938 by which time, however, emigration had been rendered increasingly difficult by financial matters and by a decline in the number of countries willing to accept the refugees.<sup>10</sup> In other words, most Jewish emigrants did not leave until a continuation of their German-Jewish existence had been made absolutely impossible by the Nazi regime. However, having made the decision to leave, most Jews did not expect to return to Germany. The symbiosis they believed they had with Germany had been destroyed, leaving no other option than emigration and assimilation to another country, be it Palestine or any other open and friendly nation. It was indeed as Hans-Albert Walter has pointed out an »Auswanderung mit dem Charakter der Endgültigkeit«<sup>11</sup>.

Unlike the Jewish emigrants, the non-Jewish political exiles left Germany almost immediately after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. Most members of this group were left-wing writers and journalists whose political activity during the Weimar Republic made them obvious targets when the Nazis came to power. Whereas most Jews abandoned the idea of a return to Germany after their emigration, the political exiles believed that the new regime would quickly be overthrown, enabling them to return within a few months or years. Meanwhile, they considered themselves representatives of the *true* Germany, struggling to enlighten the world and the German people about the threat of Hitler's policy not only to Germany's future but to all of Europe. They thus

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<sup>10</sup> Walter, *Bedrohung und Verfolgung* (p. 2, note 4), p. 202–203.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

kept their eyes fixed on the political developments in Germany, longing for the day when they could return to build up a new and better German state.

However, the aim of this book is not to treat either of the two groups exclusively but to examine the small but significant group of politically active writers and journalists of Jewish descent belonging to both. Eager to demonstrate the difference between Jewish and political exiles, Walter largely ignores these writers and intellectuals who were doubly persecuted, counting them instead solely as political refugees. Indeed, only within the last fifteen years has academic interest in the Jewish aspect of German exile literature increased, leading to extended research by scholars into the field and to the first conference on the topic in Jerusalem in 1989.<sup>12</sup> But why, when so much time has been spent examining the consequences of the Nazi regime for German Jews and the reasons why something so terrible as the Holocaust could occur, has the Jewish aspect of German exile literature been neglected for so long?

Ernst Loewy offers one plausible answer to this question:

Könnte die starke Fokussierung des ›antifaschistischen‹ Exils durch unser Erkenntnisinteresse unter weitgehender Ausklammerung der Massenvertreibung (und Massenvernichtung) der deutschen und europäischen Judenheit nicht auch den Verdacht evozieren, daß eine Art geschichtlicher Deckerinnerungen dabei im Spiele waren [sic]? Etwa, um das gerade noch Ertragbare vor dem Blick auf das Schlimmste abzuschotten? Weil dieses unfaßbar war und in keine wie auch immer geartete rationale Vorstellung paßte?<sup>13</sup>

Dealing with any Jewish topic in the immediate post-Holocaust era was difficult because it involved unspeakable pain for the victims and guilt for the perpetrators. The psychological process and the results of the ›Vergangenheitsbewältigung‹ among German historians since the Second World War have undoubtedly played a major part in the ultimate openness towards an analysis of the Jewish aspect of exile literature. Indeed, the study of exile literature did not begin until the late 1960s and the analysis of Jewish literature in general not until the 1980s. The study of the crossing of these two fields, ›German-Jewish exile literature‹, thus followed in the wake of increasing scholarly interest in them separately.

<sup>12</sup> See for example: Deutsch-jüdische Exil- und Emigrationsliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert. Ed. by I. Shedletzky and Hans Otto Horch. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1993 (*Conditio Judaica. Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, 5); Hans J. Schütz: Juden in der deutschen Literatur. Eine deutsch-jüdische Literaturgeschichte im Überblick. München: Piper 1992 (Serie Piper, 1520), p. 293–308; Frithjof Trapp: Deutsche Literatur im Exil. Bern, Frankfurt a. M., New York: Lang 1983 (Deutsche Literatur zwischen den Weltkriegen, 2; *Germanistische Lehrbuchsammlung*, 42), p. 190–200; Deutsch-jüdisches Exil. Das Ende der Assimilation? Identitätsprobleme deutscher Juden in der Emigration. Ed. by Wolfgang Benz and Marion Neiss. Berlin: Metropol 1994 (Reihe Dokumente, Texte, Materialien, 14).

<sup>13</sup> Ernst Loewy: Zum Paradigmenwandel in der Exilliteraturforschung. In: Deutsch-jüdische Exil- und Emigrationsliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert (last note), p. 15–28, p. 22.

The past fifteen years have furthermore witnessed the development of what has come to be known as ›cultural studies‹ – a perspective on the interrelation between literature and culture. Particularly the interest of this research area in minorities', emigrants', and women's literature in different cultures and contexts may very well have inspired the growing interest in the ethnic aspect of exile literature. At the same time it was realised that although many of the German-Jewish writers in exile had been counted among the political émigrés because of their political engagement, the content of their works was noticeably different from that in works by non-Jewish writers. In some cases, such as Lion Feuchtwanger's *Die Geschwister Oppermann*, the treatment of the Jewish topic was very obvious whereas in other cases, for example Bruno Frank's *Cervantes*, the Jewish dilemma was dealt with much less overtly.<sup>14</sup>

Ehrhard Bahr points to two political reasons for the neglect of German-Jewish exile literature, mentioning first the Nazis' attempt to prove to the world that only Jews had gone into exile, leaving behind the ›real‹ Germans who were all happily accepting the new regime. Disputing this, non-Jewish German exiles, who had fled for political reasons, emphasised their identification and solidarity with the Jewish refugees in order to demonstrate that not only an ethnic but also a political exodus from Germany had taken place. The intellectual exiles themselves thus contributed to the impression that they were a homogeneous group, deliberately underestimating the ethnic aspect. Secondly, Bahr points to the fact that during the first many years after the war, the historiography of exile literature was heavily influenced by Marxist and neo-Marxist ideologies and in the West German state furthermore by the calls of the 1968 generation for an evaluation of the Nazi past. In addition, there was an increasing aversion on the political Left towards Israel. There was, in other words, no wish for an acknowledgement of the Jewish part in the German exile experience, not least because of the urgent need to create an anti-fascist image and tradition in West Germany which had been embarrassingly absent both during and after the war. With most left-wing exile writers returning to the East German state, West Germany had to rely on former Nazis who after a period of de-nazification and re-education were to continue their former occupation but within the new democratic framework. The political aspects of German exile literature thus came to play an important part in West Germany's ideological identification as a basically and traditionally anti-fascist country. In view of this development, it is understandable that Jewish themes were of little interest at the time.<sup>15</sup>

Exactly how these Jewish intellectuals' situation in exile differed from that of their non-Jewish fellow exiles is best demonstrated by looking at their social

<sup>14</sup> See: Klaus Ulrich Werner: Dichter-Exil und Dichter-Roman. Studien zur verdeckten Exilliteratur in der deutschen Exilliteratur 1933–1945. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang 1987 (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 1/1031).

<sup>15</sup> Ehrhard Bahr: Deutsch-jüdische Exilliteratur und Literaturgeschichtsschreibung. In: Deutsch-jüdische Exil- und Emigrationsliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert (p. 5, note 12), p. 29–42, p. 30.

background prior to emigration. Because of their mostly left-wing political activity during the Weimar Republic, these Jews defined themselves as German Socialists or Communists rather than as German Jews or even Germans of Jewish faith. In most cases, the religious aspect of their Jewishness had been abandoned entirely in favour of a political outlook with which they now identified wholeheartedly. Therefore, when the Nazis came to power, most of them continued to regard themselves as political opponents of the regime, yet could not deny that they were also being persecuted because of their Jewish identity.

The political aspect was thus the main reason why these Jewish writers fled immediately after the burning of books on 10 May 1933 at the latest, but the exposure to Nazi anti-Semitism had seriously shaken their belief in a German-Jewish symbiosis and their own assimilation to German society. Having fled early like most political emigrants, they now realised, like most Jewish emigrants, that a return to Germany was largely impossible after Hitler's takeover, a view which was only reinforced after the horrors of the Holocaust became known much later. Not only did they thus have to face the futility of their political efforts to defeat the Nazis, they also had to admit the futility of their efforts to become accepted as Germans, a position which most of them believed they had successfully achieved by the time of their expatriation. The exile experience thus demanded a redefinition of their own identity as Jews and a re-evaluation of their relationship with Germany. The situation was particularly difficult for those who through assimilation had abandoned their Jewish beliefs in favour of a Socialist or Communist identity or who had attempted to rid themselves of their Jewish heritage by converting to Protestantism or Catholicism; Edith Stein, for example, the student and assistant of Edmund Husserl, converted to Catholicism in 1922. Others, such as Alfred Döblin, spent years investigating the Christian faith and converted in exile. However, the Nazis' racial anti-Semitism made no distinction, and in exile, these German Jews suddenly found themselves belonging neither to the Jewish community nor to the German people. It is this process which can be witnessed in many of the works written by German-Jewish writers between 1933 and 1945.

What form, then, did the re-evaluation take? Looking at the effect of this mass identity crisis on Jewish literature in the period, one notices several changes. After 1933, the need to find new meaning in the Jewish existence became much more urgent than had previously been the case. As pointed out by Itta Shedletzky, assimilation had resulted in a separation of the traditional entity »Jewish life« from »Jewish tradition«, the consequence being an unavoidable alienation from the lifestyle of their forefathers.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the decision by many young Jewish intellectuals to abandon their traditional Jewish background in favour of Socialism, Communism, or simply to assume a more secular outlook, was increasingly reflected in their pre-war writing. In many cases such as

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<sup>16</sup> Itta Shedletzky: Existenz und Tradition: Zur Bestimmung des »Jüdischen« in der deutschsprachigen Literatur. In: Deutsch-jüdische Exil- und Emigrationsliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert (p. 5, note 12), p. 3–14, p. 4.

Anna Seghers, Hans Sahl, or Ernst Toller, it was impossible to determine on the basis of their literature whether or not they were Jewish writers. However, Nazi anti-Semitism forced even the most secularised Jews to confront their background, creating the need to reunite Jewish life with Jewish tradition.

The way in which this was done varied greatly, but generally the writers began to treat Jewish topics in a more or less overt way in order to comprehend their painful and precarious situation. Figures such as Job, Ahasuerus – the Wandering Jew – and Ulysses were used by, for example, Joseph Roth in his novel *Hiob. Roman eines einfachen Mannes* (1930), Lion Feuchtwanger in his *Josephus* trilogy (1932–45), Franz Werfel in his novel *Hörtet die Stimme* (1937), and in the poetry of Nelly Sachs and Karl Wolfskehl as metaphors for Jewish fate whereby exile, persecution, and homelessness became synonymous with Jewish life. Although, as Sigrid Bauschinger has pointed out, Biblical themes and figures were used by a wide range of writers throughout history, an increase in the use of two figures in particular, Job and Jeremiah, can be noticed from the First World War onwards. This is undoubtedly to do with the increasing anti-Semitism of the inter-war period which, unlike the anti-Semitism of previous periods, now became a political tool. However, as Bauschinger shows, the former purely historical references to the figures and their symbolism now give way to a much more immediate use of them as metaphors for the Jews' present situation, a change which can especially be observed in Sachs's and Wolfskehl's poetry.<sup>17</sup>

The writer as a homeless wanderer is thus a recurring trait, pointing to the Jewish fate as a model of identification and comfort to the Jewish as well as the non-Jewish exile. In this German-Jewish literature, then, the figure of Job not merely represents the patient enduring of pain but also the exiled and persecuted Jew's untiring search for justice and meaning in his suffering.<sup>18</sup> Tragically, in most cases such a cathartic revelation is absent in these novels as is furthermore evidenced by the frequent omission of Job's ultimate reunion with God. This reflects the state of despair in which most German-Jewish exiles found themselves, feeling that they had been expatriated undeservedly whereas most non-Jewish exiles were regarded as being themselves entirely responsible for their present situation. Stefan Zweig said about these Jewish emigrants: »Aber das Tragischste in dieser jüdischen Tragödie des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts war, daß, die sie erlitten [sic], keinen Sinn mehr in ihr finden konnten und keine Schuld.«<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a not insignificant number of prominent Jewish exiles, including Zweig

<sup>17</sup> See: Sigrid Bauschinger: *Hiob und Jeremias. Biblische Themen in der deutschen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*. In: Akten des VI. Internationalen Germanisten Kongresses Basel 1980. Ed. by Heinz Rupp and Hans-Gert Roloff. Bern, Frankfurt, Las Vegas: Lang 1980 (Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik. Reihe A: Kongressberichte, 8), part 3, p. 466–472.

<sup>18</sup> Im Zeichen Hiobs. Jüdische Schriftsteller und deutsche Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Ed. by Grimm, Gunter E. and Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer. Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum 1985, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Stefan Zweig: *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 1981 (Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden), p. 484.

himself, Kurt Tucholsky, Ernst Toller, Walter Benjamin, and Walter Hasenclever, committed suicide, despairing of their hopeless situation in exile and the lack of an obvious hope for the future. Others used their writing as therapy in order to cope with the present, attempting with hindsight to determine why their assimilation had been such a failure and what to deduce from that about the future. Still others found comfort in the Jewish religion when imprisoned or tortured during the Nazi period. Manès Sperber, for example, having abandoned his religious faith years earlier, describes in his autobiography, *Die Wasserträger Gottes*, how he suddenly remembered and was comforted by Jewish psalms when imprisoned in Berlin at the beginning of Hitler's reign.<sup>20</sup>

Most importantly, the Jewish writers no longer needed to fear the effect of public identification with their Jewishness and the depiction of Jewish life and problems on their position in society. Quite the contrary, as pointed out by Ehrhard Bahr, who defines German-Jewish exile literature as follows:

Mit deutsch-jüdischer Exilliteratur wird eine Literatur bezeichnet, in der die Identifikation mit der jüdischen Herkunft und die Darstellung jüdischer Wirklichkeit und Problematik nicht mehr mit Rücksicht auf Integration in Gesellschaft und Staat zu erfolgen brauchten. Im Gegenteil, sie erfolgten in Opposition zu Staat und Gesellschaft, die aufgrund ihrer rassistischen Ideologie eine große Anzahl von Autoren nicht nur exilierten, sondern sogar mit dem Leben bedrohten [sic]. Der negativen Fremdidentifikation wird die positive Selbstidentifikation entgegengesetzt. Selbstidentifikation wird somit zu einem Kriterium der deutsch-jüdischen Exilliteratur.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, in exile the self-perception of these Jewish writers changed from being a denial of or a lack of interest in their Jewish side to a positive acceptance and indeed a deliberate exposure of this heritage. Having accepted, however reluctantly, that the battle for true assimilation was lost, German-Jewish writers could now profess their background and freely treat Jewish themes in their works.

Yet, this sounds easier than it was. In reality most Jewish writers could not abandon their German past, struggling to come to terms with their failed assimilation and the loss of what they had considered their mother country. Rabbi Leo Baeck's words of 1933 are probably one of the best testimonies to Jewish sentiments at the time:

Für uns Juden aus Deutschland ist eine Geschichtsepoke zu Ende gegangen. Eine solche geht zu Ende, wenn immer eine Hoffnung, ein Glaube, eine Zuversicht endgültig zu Grabe getragen werden muß. Unser Glaube war es, daß deutscher und jüdischer Geist auf deutschem Boden sich treffen und durch ihre Vermählung zum Segen werden können. Dies war eine Illusion – die Epoche der Juden in Deutschland ist ein für alle Mal vorbei.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Manès Sperber: *Die Wasserträger Gottes. All das Vergangene ...* Wien: Europa-Verlag 1974, p. 49–50.

<sup>21</sup> Bahr, Deutsch-jüdische Exilliteratur (p. 6, note 15), p. 41–42.

<sup>22</sup> *Selbstzeugnisse des deutschen Judentums 1870–1945*. Ed. by Achim von Borries. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 1962 (Fischer Bücherei, 439), p. 45.

Thus, a detachment from everything German was ideally wanted in order to begin a new existence somewhere else. One major obstacle to this process, however, was their close relationship with the German language – something which also caused non-Jewish exile writers great problems. German was their native tongue and the language in which they were used to expressing themselves both in speech and writing. In many cases, they did not speak the language of the country to which they emigrated, and only in a few cases, such as Albert Ehrenstein and Siegfried Kracauer, did they come to master it well enough to produce their literature in it. Thus, most writers continued to write in German, knowing that if they could find a publisher at all, their works would most likely only be read by their fellow exiles because the native population of their exile country only rarely spoke German. The latter were furthermore generally uninterested in the topics treated by the emigrants, as issues such as current German politics or the life of an exile were of limited interest to the average citizen of other European states, not to mention the Americans at the time. As Klaus Mann pointed out, it was thus infinitely more difficult for an artist to make a living in a foreign country than, for example, a doctor or a baker:

Man kann auch in gebrochenem Englisch Geschäfte machen, ein Zahnarzt kommt mit einem relativ geringen Wortschatz aus, und niemand wird von einem Konditor oder Damenschneider die Eloquenz eines Winston Churchill erwarten.<sup>23</sup>

The writers, on the other hand, cut off from their natural linguistic surroundings, were having increasing difficulties producing contemporary texts in idiomatically correct German.

To many exile writers, then, losing touch with their mother tongue became an existential question as the loss of their everyday language, the stagnation of their written German, foreign influences, and despairing attempts to produce literature in a foreign language were of crucial importance to anyone whose main tool was language. Alfred Döblin described his personal experience of the problem in the following way:

Es gab Emigrationsgewinnler, gewiß ... Aber wir, die sich mit Haut und Haaren der Sprache verschrieben hatten, was war mit uns? Mit denen, die ihre Sprache nicht loslassen wollten und konnten, weil sie wußten, daß Sprache nicht ›Sprache‹ war, sondern Denken, Fühlen und vieles andere? Sich davon ablösen? Aber das heißt mehr, als sich die Haut abziehen, das heißt sich ausweiden, Selbstmord begehen.<sup>24</sup>

The connection between language, identity, and nationality is thus obvious, but was it perhaps of greater consequence to Jewish emigrants than to non-Jewish political exiles? This would seem very likely as members of the latter group were, after all, still German. Even the Nazis could not deny them their German

<sup>23</sup> Klaus Mann: Das Sprachproblem. In: K. M.: Heute und Morgen: Schriften zur Zeit. Ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin. München: Nymphenburger 1969, p. 287–293, p. 287.

<sup>24</sup> Alfred Döblin as quoted in: Stephan, Die deutsche Exilliteratur 1933–1945 (p. 1, note 1), p. 147.

heritage but only expatriate them on the grounds of political rebellion against the government in power. To them, therefore, the loss of their German environment including the daily contact with the German language caused alienation from political and cultural developments in Germany and perhaps difficulties in writing and selling their books. It would, however, not mean the eruption of a major identity crisis as in the case of many Jewish intellectuals. These were denied any membership of the German people and with that the right to identify with the German language considered a cultural possession belonging exclusively to the Germans. In her autobiography, Margarete Susman describes the meaning of the German language to her as a Jew and the disastrous consequences of losing it:

Wir waren Deutsche, sonst wäre nicht alles, was später kam, so furchtbar, so niederschmetternd gewesen. Wir sprachen die uns teure deutsche Sprache, im wahrsten Sinn die Muttersprache, in der wir alle Worte und Werte des Lebens empfangen hatten, und Sprache ist fast mehr als Blut. Wir kannten kein anderes Vaterland als das deutsche, und wir liebten es mit der Liebe zum Vaterland, die später so verhängnisvoll wurde.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, both in the case of Alfred Döblin and Margarete Susman language is related to something as personal and precious as the individual's body. Döblin describes the loss of one's language as being as painful as ripping off one's skin and tearing out one's bowels. Susman equates mother tongue with blood, thereby defying the Nazis' claims that only people with Aryan blood spoke real German and indeed had a right to do so. Indeed, this equation of German language and Jewish blood furthermore testifies to her belief in a German-Jewish symbiosis; one can change one's nationality but not one's innermost personality of which language is a major part. In the works of Albert Ehrenstein, for example, exile is equated with speechlessness and thus social isolation. Animals whose language can only be understood by children and strange lonely people are the main characters of a number of stories, showing that with the loss of his language, Ehrenstein lost not only his mother country but also to a large extent his identity.<sup>26</sup> The reason why Jewish exiles in particular stressed the problem of language was, of course, that speaking fluent German had traditionally been a test of assimilation. So had the possession of German *>Bildung* of which language was a major part. Losing the right to speak German thus equalled losing the right to be a German altogether. This was the crucial and most painful aspect of their expatriation.

Given the above evidence of the existence of a specifically Jewish identity crisis as a consequence of Nazi persecution, I cannot agree with Alexander Stephan who argues that the exile experience had no major impact on the Jews because they were eternally exiled anyway:

<sup>25</sup> Margarete Susman: *Ich habe viele Leben gelebt. Erinnerungen*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1964 (Veröffentlichung des Leo-Baeck-Instituts), p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Hanni Mittelmann: *Exil, eine jüdische Erfahrung?* In: *Deutsch-jüdische Exil- und Emigrationsliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert* (p. 5, note 12), p. 237–248, p. 247.

Kaum Neues bot das Exilerlebnis dagegen jenen – oft bürgerlichen und jüdischen – Schriftstellern, für die das Exil schon vor 1933 eine Art von Lebensform gewesen war. Ihnen bedeutete die Aufhebung von Provinzialität und nationalen Bindungen, die Lösung vom kommerzialisierter Kulturbetrieb, der Verlust gesellschaftlicher Bindungen, kurz: die »harte Schule« der Exilerlebnisse wenig.<sup>27</sup>

On the contrary, I would argue that although many German Jews would have been exposed to anti-Semitism in their youth and certainly in the years immediately preceding Hitler's ascension to power, their struggles to assimilate and the extent to which they identified with Germany as their mother country created an even closer bond, leaving a particularly painful vacuum when this bond was torn apart. The same applies to those who belonged to fully integrated Jewish families and who took their assimilation for granted. Among the sources cited by Stephan to substantiate his thesis, one finds both Jewish, left-wing, and right-wing voices which more than anything else seems to indicate a general marginalisation to outsider positions of all groups within Weimar society. This, in turn, would imply that no one, including the Jewish emigrants, was particularly affected by their expatriation which can certainly be disputed with many other statements from the period of which several are quoted above.

Alfred Kantorowicz presents a more plausible view of the Jewish emigrants' relationship with Germany during and after the exile period by pointing out that most of these Jews were so closely attached to Germany that hardly any anti-German sentiments were uttered by German-Jewish exiles.<sup>28</sup> Instead they would vehemently defend the ›real‹ Germany, with which they themselves identified, against the Nazis who were presently in power. Indeed, many of them expected to be asked to return after the Nazi ›intermezzo‹ was over, hoping that the Germans might have undergone some sort of moral cleansing leading to greater acceptance of minorities. Only after the revelation of the Nazi genocide on the Jews after the war did Jewish intellectuals in exile reluctantly acknowledge that perhaps the Nazis had not been as ›un-German‹ as they had made them out to be while in exile. In particular, they were disappointed with the lack of a spontaneous national outcry and repentance when the Nazis' terrible deeds became publicly known. Thus, as Kantorowicz points out, for many German-Jewish emigrants the real exile did not begin until the 1950s when they realised that not only were they not asked to return, there was indeed no basis for a common German-Jewish co-existence in the future:

Es dauerte eine ganze Weile, bis der gute Wille – man darf durchaus von Heimatliebe sprechen – bei den meisten jüdischen Exilierten aufgebraucht war. Auch die Dickfelligen begriffen allmählich, daß man ihre Rückkehr gar nicht wünschte, daß die Zeit über sie hinweggegangen war.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Stephan, Die deutsche Exilliteratur 1933–1945 (p. 1, note 1), p. 154.

<sup>28</sup> Alfred Kantorowicz: Politik und Literatur im Exil. Deutschsprachige Schriftsteller im Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Hamburg: Christians 1978 (Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte, 14), p. 139–146.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

Exactly how the experience of exile and expatriation from Germany affected Jewish writers, how they dealt with the necessary redefinition of their Jewish identity and their relationship with Germany in their lives and works, and what characterised their self-perception before the exile period, are the questions I would like to address in the following analysis of Katz's journalistic and literary work. As this is the first academic treatment of Katz's writings, some emphasis will be put on depicting his life and self-perception as a Socialist and a Jew as a means to understand his fictional and non-fictional works. Methodologically, I will thus take a combined historical, biographical, and sociological approach to Katz's literature, as I believe that not only his ethnic background but also his political involvement and the turbulent times in which he lived contributed greatly to the shaping of the person and writer he eventually became. This will become clearer in the following chapter outline.

Chapter I is a biography providing a chronological account of Katz's life. Its aim is to show the interplay between his cultural, religious and geographical background and his development as a person, a writer, and a Social Democratic journalist in a time of political crisis. How did his Eastern European Jewish background affect him and his work, what was his relationship with Germany before and after 1933, when he went into exile, and how did he define his own identity as a Jew in a modern secularised world? Since no secondary sources about Katz exist, this chapter is based on primary sources such as interviews with Katz's widow, Friedel Katz, who today lives in Florida, and on interviews with friends from his young days who still live in Gera, Germany. Much valuable information has also been gathered from his letters, manuscripts, and other documents which are kept in the ›Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933–1945‹ in Deutsche Bibliothek Frankfurt a. M.

Chapter II is an analysis of Katz's journalistic work, mainly written between 1925 and 1939, of which the main body of articles and short stories was produced between 1930 and 1933. This analysis shows the development of Katz's political engagement and his own development as a Social Democrat. The chapter further contains an examination of his short stories, which testify to his strong social commitment, from a literary and a sociological perspective. Through this treatment of Katz's journalistic work, a picture of the controversy within left-wing journalism in the Weimar Republic emerges which is further elaborated in comparisons between Katz and contemporary journalists such as Alfred Polgar, Kurt Tucholsky and Joseph Roth. Since no edition of Katz's collected newspaper articles exists and this is the first academic treatment of it, the material had to be gathered in archives in Gera, Dortmund, Erfurt, Leipzig, Hamburg and Weimar.

Chapter III is an interpretation of Katz's first novel, *Die Fischmanns*, for which he was awarded the Heinrich-Heine-Prize in 1937. The main focus of the analysis will be concerned with Katz's portrayal of shtetl society. I approach the material from a historical-sociological as well as literary perspective, showing with what stylistic and narratorial means he creates his panoramic view of the

multi-national Habsburg Empire. The chapter furthermore examines the elements which in Katz's view contributed to the construction of Jewish identity in the Habsburg Monarchy, be they religious, national, or political, and the transformation of this identity by secular forces intruding from the West. The emphasis of the examination is placed on Katz's description of Jews and non-Jews and their interaction in the shtetl, his view of the Habsburg Monarchy as such and as a Jewish mother country in particular, and on the discussion of Jewish identity and fate. In the last section of the chapter, *Die Fischmanns* will be analysed in the context of exile literature and in the tradition of Jewish ghetto writing. This is done by comparing the novel to selected novels and short stories by Joseph Roth, whose biography and works bear many resemblances to those of Katz.

Chapter IV consists of an interpretation of Katz's second novel, *Schloßgasse 21*, set in the Weimar Republic. Again Katz provides a mosaic of Jewish and non-Jewish life, showing the effect of political upheaval and rising anti-Semitism on the Jewish minority in the inter-war period. Particular emphasis is placed on analysing the complex picture of the various groups within the sharply divided Jewish community and Katz's insightful and analytical presentation of German politics at the time. Particularly interesting is his portrayal of various social types within German society through whom he attempts to demonstrate the causes and effects of the financial and political crisis in the Weimar Republic. This is done by an extensive use of humour, irony and sarcasm, making Katz's representation of the inter-war period distinctly different and much more subtly penetrating than other contemporary novels. The chapter further contains an analysis of the different models of Jewish life in the Weimar Republic, focusing, in particular, on the inevitable re-evaluation and redefinition of the characters' Jewish identity when Nazi anti-Semitism begins to increase exponentially. The chapter closes with comparisons between Katz's novel and seven contemporary Jewish and non-Jewish novels, mainly written in exile like *Schloßgasse 21*. These comparisons shed important light on Katz's distinctive perspective and stylistic approach to the description of Weimar Germany.

The book closes with a conclusion summarizing Katz's significance as a left-wing journalist and a German-Jewish writer in exile. I here particularly seek to answer the questions regarding Katz's uniqueness as a writer and the extent to which he is representative of German-Jewish exile literature between 1933 and 1945.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Should, unintentionally, copyrights have been violated in this book, I ask the copyright holders to make themselves known.

# Chapter I

## Henry William Katz: A Tour Through the Twentieth Century

Wie soll man diesen Autor katalogisieren?

Beginnen wir mit dem Geburtsort, der mal österreichisch war, dann polnisch wurde und jetzt russisch ist. Aber er ist weder Österreicher, noch Pole, noch ein Russe – er ist Amerikaner. Es gibt Menschen, die der Meinung sind, er sei immer ein Chamäleon gewesen – in jedem Land war er eine andere Person, eigentlich kein sehr stabiler Charakter ... Für die Nazis in Deutschland war er ein »Saujud«, für gewisse Franzosen »un sale boche«, und in Amerika ist er für eingeborene Amerikaner ein »Deutsch-Amerikaner«, weil er Englisch mit einem deutschen Akzent spricht. Und mit Juden hat er auch nicht viel Glück. Da er weder jiddisch, noch polnisch oder russisch spricht, halten ihn manche Ostjuden für einen deutschen Juden, einen »Jecke« – natürlich. Nur ein deutscher Jude wird doch im Exil nach 50 Jahren immer noch deutsch sprechen und schreiben ... Nein, sagen manche deutsche Juden, die seine Bücher gelesen haben, dieser Katz ist kein deutscher Jude, kein deutscher Jude kannte Ostjuden in Deutschland so wie er sie scheinbar kannte – und deshalb kann er kein deutscher Jude sein ... Der ist ein Goy, sagen religiöse Juden und wollen nichts mit ihm zu tun haben ... »Unsinn«, sagen manche Leser. »Seine Bücher sind keineswegs anti-religiös ...« Und Nichtjuden wissen auch nicht recht, wer dieser Autor eigentlich ist. Er scheint eine Menge über Juden zu wissen – aber genau so kennt er die Deutschen, die Nichtjuden, die Nazis und die Nicht-Nazis ... Wahrscheinlich ist er ein Jude, aber vielleicht ist er halb und halb ...<sup>1</sup>

As is clear from his own description of his complex identity, Henry William Katz does not easily fit into any one category. Had it not been for the turbulent history of Europe, particularly of Germany in the first half of the twentieth century, he might have remained a Galician Jew all his life or – as was his great dream during his youth in Germany – a Berlin journalist giving more thought to his political work than to his Jewish background and ancestors. However, from early on Katz became the victim of events over which he himself had no control, and the fact that throughout his life he was forced to change his citizenship four times, being an Austrian by birth and changing consecutively to German, Polish, and American citizenship before the age of 43,

<sup>1</sup> From speech by H. W. Katz in Frankfurt a. M. (7.5.1987). Original in EB 93/135 – Nachlaß Henry William Katz, Deutsche Bibliothek, Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933–1945, Frankfurt a. M., p. 1. Unless otherwise stated, future references to this source will be abbreviated »Deutsche Bibliothek«.

bears witness to the vicissitudes of his life. This chapter will attempt to reconstruct Katz's life and outline his background and ideals, thereby providing the basis for the understanding of his literary and journalistic work.

Henry William Katz – then Herz Wolff Katz – was born on 31 December 1906 in the Galician shtetl, Rudky, close to the Russian border between Lvov and Sambor. Galicia then belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and was mainly inhabited by Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians of whom the Poles formed the majority. One and a half years later, in 1908, Katz's father, Aron Katz (born 29.4.1882), and his wife Jenny Katz<sup>2</sup> (born Fern in Rudky 3.3.1884) had another son, Michael, and the two children spent their early childhood in a traditional, orthodox Eastern European Jewish environment. At an early age they were sent to *Cheder*, the orthodox religious school, to learn Hebrew and study the Torah and the Talmud, but soon it was arranged that a *Melamed*, normally a young Jewish scholar, should come to the house every day to teach the boys. In Galicia, the family presumably lived with Aron Katz's parents. His father, H. W. Katz's grandfather, owned the local restaurant and the family were middle-class members of the local shtetl society. Despite the traditional upbringing, Katz was also influenced by more modern currents. His mother was a Polish nationalist who wanted to speak Polish with him. Like many Eastern European Jews his grandmother was fascinated by Goethe and Schiller, trying to pass her love of German and Germany on to her grandchildren:

Ich erinnere mich noch daran, daß sie einige ihrer Bücher, und es scheint mir, daß es Bücher mit einem goldfarben bedeckten Umschlag waren, von Schiller hatte, und daß sie uns Kindern – wir waren zwei Kinder – oft aus diesen Büchern las. Ich habe wahrscheinlich alles vergessen, was sie las, denn wir haben das nie verstanden, was sie las. Ich erinnere mich nur, daß es Schiller war, und daß es deutsch war.<sup>3</sup>

At an early age, Katz was thus acquainted with Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, and German, but personal circumstances and the wish to assimilate into Western European society soon brought out the wish and the need to forget his Eastern European roots, including Yiddish and Hebrew. As his wife, Friedel Katz, recalls, later in life he could still remember the sound of Yiddish and single Yiddish words, but during his childhood and youth in Germany he – like so many other Eastern European Jewish refugees – put great effort into adjusting and assimilating to the new environment.<sup>4</sup> Considering the dramatic events of his later life, his early childhood thus soon played a minor role in his awareness:

<sup>2</sup> Relatives insist that her first name was not Jenny, as stated in the official register of the Leipzig cemetery, but Goldy. If so, this would be due to a not uncommon administrative error committed by the German authorities during the registration of the Galician refugees. Another possibility is that she may sometimes have used a German name (Jenny) as well as her original Jewish one (Golda).

<sup>3</sup> Radio interview with Peter H. Jacoby: Gespräch zur Zeit mit Henry William Katz (RIAS Berlin, 4.10.1987), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 3–4.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mrs Katz in April 1995. Future references to her comments about Katz will be based on this interview.

Ich muß sagen, daß ich sehr wenige Erinnerungen aus meiner Kindheit habe. Es ist oft so, daß ich mich wundere, ob ich eigentlich eine Kindheit vor 1914 hatte. Das kann damit zusammenhängen, daß die Eindrücke nach 1914 so stark waren, daß alles, was vorher geschah, einfach wegradiert wurde.<sup>5</sup>

What precisely were these dramatic events which could erase the memory of the first eight years of his life?

In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, the Eastern provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were attacked by the Russians, and the population, including thousands of Jews, was forced to flee to the West. Although the evidence is missing, it can be assumed that Aron Katz was called up to military service, because Katz and his brother fled alone with his mother – an experience so terrible that it left a permanent mark on Katz's personality and in his consciousness:

Ohne Zweifel wäre ich ein ganz anderer Mensch geworden, hätte ich als Kind das Licht der Welt nicht in einem österreichischen Dorf sondern in Berlin erblickt. Das Entrinnen aus der Frontlinie mit einer von Angst gejagten, erschöpften Mutter wäre nicht eine mich für immer verfolgende Erinnerung geworden. Ich kann nicht vergessen, daß ich ein verdrecktes, hungriges Flüchtlingskind auf der Landstraße war. Ich war kein verwöhntes Kind, das mit einer eleganten Mutter in einem Schnellzug saß, auf dem Weg von Berlin zur Nordsee, um dort mit anderen frohen Kindern einen spielerischen Sommer zu verbringen. [...]

Mein späteres Denken, mein Charakter, meine Meinungen und Interessen und die des anderen Kindes aus Berlin, das 1914 Ferien an der Nordsee machte, sind nicht die gleichen. Weder blonde Haare, blaue Augen, gerade Nasen noch arisches Blut haben etwas damit zu tun. [...] Was einem ein ganzes Leben lang in den Knochen und im Gehirn steckt sind die bleibenden Erinnerungen an die Kindheit, die uns antreiben oder lähmeln, ob wir das wissen oder nicht.<sup>6</sup>

Under difficult circumstances and in a poor condition Jenny Katz arrived in Gera, Germany, with her two children – a rather unusual choice at a time when most Eastern European Jews headed for major cities such as Vienna, Berlin, or Warsaw. However, the Katz family had relatives in Gera and this seems to have been of crucial importance to their choice of a place to settle.

In the beginning, the family must have lodged with their relatives or in a rented room, as Aron Katz is not listed in the local address books until 1917, when he and his family rented their own flat at 3 Arndtstraße. At approximately the same time, his two brothers Leo and Matthias Katz settled in Gera – Leo in 12 Hospitalstraße and Matthias in 1 Bauvereinstraße. The grandparents had perished during the flight. At first, Aron Katz supported his family by commerce, travelling a great deal to sell his goods which initially consisted of ironmongery and later of furs. His brother Matthias became a corn dealer and later a furrier like Aron. Leo Katz was a merchant and a trader. Somewhere between

<sup>5</sup> Radio interview: Gespräch zur Zeit (penultimate note), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Speech delivered in Weimar (1991), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 6.

1926 and 1929<sup>7</sup> the three brothers opened a shop together in 6c Margarethen-gasse where they sold textiles. The last mention of this shop is 1937, but it can be assumed that the shop continued to exist until the ›Polenschub‹ in the night of 28 October 1938 when Polish Jews were forced out of the country across the border to Poland. Here, however, they were not welcome and so they spent several days and nights in ›No Man's Land‹ between Germany and Poland until the Polish authorities finally admitted them. In 1920 Aron Katz moved with his family to 12 Hospitalstraße and from 1933 till 1938 they lived in 7 Altenburgerstraße.

In Germany, the young Katz – now no longer Herz Wolff but Heinrich Wilhelm and ›Willy‹ among friends – began to attend a German school. Although he was an immigrant from the East, he soon found both Jewish and non-Jewish friends: »Ich war ein Immigrantenkind, aber ich fand sehr bald Anschluß an eingeborene Jugendliche. Vielleicht hatte das damit zu tun, daß ich leidenschaftlich Fußball spielte, Halbrechts.«<sup>8</sup> However, despite the feeling of equality and acceptance which to some extent was connected with his status as a refugee, Katz also had his first anti-Semitic experience during the First World War, reminding him that ultimately in the eyes of his contemporaries, he was not really German:

Während dieses Krieges wurde ich als Flüchtlings nicht angefeindet. Das ist wichtig zu wissen. Ich war ein Flüchtlings, und jeder verstand, daß ich ein Flüchtlings war, weil ich vor den Russen flüchten mußte. Aber auch während dieser Zeit muß ich auch sagen, daß ich zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben ein antisemitisches Erlebnis hatte. Ich wurde nämlich von einigen Kindern verprügelt, die waren meines Alters und etwas älter, und zwar warfen sie mir vor, ich hätte Jesus in Jerusalem aufgehängt. Ich beschwörte sie, daß ich nie in Jerusalem war, und ich sagte ihnen, daß ich einen Mann Jesus nie gekannt habe. Aber das hat mir nicht geholfen, und ich wurde furchtbar verprügelt. [...] Und damals erfuhr ich zum ersten Mal: erstens daß ich ein Jude bin – zwar wußte ich vorher schon, daß ich ein Jude bin; aber daß ich anders bin als die anderen, das haben die anderen mir damit natürlich bewiesen.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, despite the apparent equality it soon became clear that even in Germany there were limits to the tolerance and acceptance granted to the Eastern European refugees. Joseph Roth, one of Katz's later fellow exiles, speaking from experience himself, pinpointed the workings of human pity very well:

Wenn eine Katastrophe hereinbricht, sind die Menschen nebenan hilfreich aus Erschütterung. Das ist die Wirkung akuter Katastrophen. Es scheint, daß die Menschen wissen, daß Katastrophen kurz sind. Aber chronische Katastrophen können die Nachbarn so wenig ertragen, daß ihnen allmählich Katastrophen und deren Opfer gleichgültig, wenn nicht unangenehm werden. [...] Man gewöhnt sich an das eigene Unglück, weshalb nicht an das Unglück des Nächsten, insbesondere an das Unglück der Juden?<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The address books were published very irregularly, thereby complicating the exact dating of events.

<sup>8</sup> Speech delivered in Gera (1991), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 6–7.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Roth: *Juden auf Wanderschaft*. In: J. R.: *Werke*. Ed. by Klaus Westermann and Fritz Hackert. 6 Vols, Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1989–1991, Vol. 2, p. 895.

This was indeed what happened. Even worse than the indifference, however, was the increasingly anti-Semitic atmosphere in inter-war Germany to which even children were exposed, marking them for the rest of their lives and inducing in them an obsession with justice because they themselves had so often been subjected to injustice. However, anti-Semitic prejudices were not just common among children but more significantly were also spread by teachers. Katz recalls the changing view of him and his new status as a Jew rather than a refugee after the war:

Vieles änderte sich dann später nach dem Krieg, als Lehrer eines Tages in der Klasse erzählten, daß die Niederlage der deutschen Armee die Schuld der Juden sei. Jeder in der Klasse sah mich an, denn ich war ja eines der wenigen jüdischen Kinder in der Klasse, und sie betrachteten mich als einen Schuldigen, ich hätte die deutsche Armee besiegt.<sup>11</sup>

Despite such experiences, the friendships he formed and the influence of the German school system soon made Katz feel at home in Germany. His growing interest in secular subjects rather than in his Jewish culture and background was, however, much regretted by his father who had hoped to make him a pious Jew of German nationality. One of Katz's major interests was satisfying his hunger for literature, reading almost everything within reach (»Ich vergaß nie Jack London, Tolstoy, Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, Balzac, Döblin, Heinrich und Thomas Mann – es waren so viele. [...] Ich lebte mit den Charakteren, die in den Büchern beschrieben wurden. [...] Das waren die glücklichsten Stunden meiner Jugendzeit in Gera.«<sup>12</sup>), but it eventually became difficult to combine his German life with a traditional Jewish upbringing:

Ich war mehr interessiert in die Stadtbibliothek und die dortigen deutschen Bücher als in den hebräischen Unterricht, den ich wöchentlich nehmen mußte, um meinen Vater zu befriedigen. Ich gestehe, daß ich hebräisch vergaß, aber nicht deutsch.<sup>13</sup>

In 1916, Katz was exposed to one of the most traumatic experiences of his life – an experience from which he was never to recover completely. On 12 November 1916, his mother, having given birth to a third child, died of puerperal fever. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Leipzig on 15 November 1916. Katz, who, because of his father's military service and later occupation as a trader, had spent a major part of his life alone with his mother and his brother – mostly in physical as well as psychological hardship – felt particularly close to his mother and could never rid himself of the feeling that she had not died a natural death. Instead, he felt that she had tried to keep her husband at home with her by remaining seriously ill, thereby succumbing to her own act of will. Until the mother's death, the Katz family had led a very happy domestic life, but

<sup>11</sup> Radio interview with Barbara Dobrick: Von Galizien nach Amerika. Lebensstationen des Schriftstellers, Widerstandskämpfers, Arbeiters und Fabrikdirektors H. W. Katz (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 25.10.1991), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Speech in Gera (p. 18, note 8), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

the tragedy of losing his beloved mother at the age of ten left a permanent scar on Katz's psyche. Many years later when he described the death of the mother in *Die Fischmanns*, the pain of his own experience was still as strong as when it happened. His wife recalls the painful process of writing this chapter:

Als er das Kapitel über den Tod seiner Mutter schrieb, war er stumm. Man konnte nicht mit ihm reden. Ich habe ihn vollkommen in Ruhe gelassen. Es war dann wie eine Erleichterung, als er das Kapitel geschrieben hat. Er hat gesagt, »Jetzt fühle ich mich besser.«

After their mother's death, Katz and his brother were placed out until their father had sorted out his life. The newborn baby died after a few months. Meanwhile, the close relatives worried about the situation and began searching for a new wife for Aron Katz, impressing on him the necessity to find a mother for the boys. Gusti Katz, born in Cracow on 31 March 1888, was chosen as a suitable wife and mother, but this marriage was to mark the end of a happy and harmonious family life. She was a very pious woman, attaching great importance to prayer and running the household in a strictly orthodox manner. This soon led to serious conflicts between the stepmother and her eldest stepson, who refused to accept her presence in the house and her role as a surrogate mother. Friedel Katz recalls how he later described his relationship with his father's new wife: »Sie war besessen und er [Katz] hat später zu mir gesagt, ›ich muß ein schreckliches Kind für sie gewesen sein, denn ich habe sie bekämpft von der ersten Minute an. Meine Mutter sollte nicht ersetzt werden!‹« Michael, the younger brother, was very different from Katz and found it easier to accept Gusti, being grateful simply to have a mother. It soon became clear that the boys were developing in two completely different directions, for Katz showed an increasing interest in literature and writing at the expense of his Jewish religious beliefs and consciousness. Michael, on the other hand, although not as orthodox as his parents, remained faithful to his Jewish upbringing and did not share his elder brother's hunger for knowledge in the form of German literature, politics, and philosophy. Eventually, the atmosphere in the home became so oppressive and the conflicts between Gusti and her stepson so intense that at the age of fifteen, Katz decided to leave his father's house permanently, at first living with friends and later in a room of his own in the Schulstraße (the present Husstraße). He continued to go to school (»Realschule«) and supported himself by doing various small jobs. One incident in particular bears witness to the obstinacy and the determination with which he detached himself from his family and its values. Friedel Katz remembers:

Mein Mann hätte dieses strenge Milieu des orthodoxen Judentums. Alles war verboten. [...] Er hat mir mal erzählt, daß ihm sein Vater gelehrt hat, daß Gott einen bestrafen wird, wenn man Schinken ißt, und daß man, wenn man nicht fastet, von Gott bestraft wird. Ich werde nie vergessen, als er mir erzählte, daß er, als er mit fünfzehn Jahren ausgezogen ist, am Yom Kippur in ein Restaurant gegangen ist und einen Schinkensandwich bestellt hat. Und er hat sich gesagt, »Wenn ich jetzt sterbe, dann gibt es einen Gott und wenn nicht, dann ist es alles Quatsch.« Er hat damit doppelt gesündigt, weil man ja am Yom Kippur nichts essen darf. Er war so ein Rebell, weil er sich alles erkämpfen mußte!

One may wonder how a fifteen-year-old boy managed to get by on his own. However, the decision to leave his home at such an early age was to mark the beginning of one of the most important phases of his life – the phase that shaped his character and formed his outlook as an adult.

The event of most crucial importance was his encounter with the local Socialist school, Tinz (›Heimvolkshochschule Tinz‹), a form of further education college for adult workers of both sexes. The primary aim of the school was the general education of the workers in order to impress on them a greater class-consciousness and provide them with a broad knowledge of history, economics, art, and literature – all taught from a Socialist point of view. The teachers at the school noticed the bright and ambitious young man and realised that if given the necessary support, he would have the potential to go far. Thus, the professors Alfred Braunthal (teacher of economics), Greiner (teacher of art and literature), and in particular the blind Otto Jenssen, who taught history at Tinz, came to have an enormous influence on the shaping of young Katz's values and political views, allowing him to attend their lectures whenever he wanted without paying the fee expected of regular students at the school. During his visit to Gera in 1991, Katz described his encounter with Tinz and its influence on him in the following way:

Es war ganz besonders die Heimvolkshochschule Tinz, die mich zu einem politischen Menschen machte. Es waren Otto Jenssen, Alfred Braunthal und Greiner, die in meiner Jugend auf mich den größten politischen Einfluß hatten. Es war besonders der blinde Otto Jenssen, der mich – den Jüngling – unter seine Fittiche nahm [...] Wir begegneten uns zum ersten Mal an einem Diskussionsabend, das Thema war »Antisemitismus« und ich war so jugendlich impertinent, daß er mich einlud, ihn in Tinz zu besuchen. Es begann mit einem Besuch und es wurden hunderte und mehr, ein Jahr nach dem anderen ...<sup>14</sup>

Another figure of considerable influence was the Gera painter Otto Dix (1891–1969). Like Katz, Dix was a strong opponent of war, sharing with Katz his pacifist views which were the prevailing message of his paintings. Dix particularly wanted to show the atrocities of war and sharply criticised modern society, becoming famous for his psychologically deep portraits and socially critical depictions of his contemporaries. Both as a person and through his art, Otto Dix had a major influence on the young Katz.

Approximately at the same time, Katz, now seventeen years of age, became a member of the Socialist youth organisation SAJ (›Sozialistische Arbeiter Jugend‹) and left the Jewish nationalist youth organisation (›Blau Weiß‹) of which he had been a member until then. His interest in literature and Socialist politics was intensified, and he began to write articles, poems and short stories, dreaming of a future career as a journalist. Meanwhile, his engagement with the SAJ grew and he soon became one of its leaders, organising literary evenings and political discussions and paying visits to the many unemployed young people in

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

the surrounding villages to educate them about their rights and about social politics. He also took part in the political cabarets organised by members of the SAJ, although he himself was never among the performers. Instead he devoted himself to the more intellectual aspects of the work, writing political texts for the popular songs of the time with the purpose of fighting war or demonstrating the capitalist exploitation of the workers. Käthe Hartmann, a contemporary of Katz's in the SAJ, remembers him as ambitious and sometimes distant but very well liked. He was intelligent, a true academic, and mostly serious, occupying himself more with politics than with, for example, girls and relationships. She describes him as a wonderful and helpful young man who showed the others what to fight for and where they belonged.<sup>15</sup> This impression of the young Katz is supported by a description given by Walter and Hilde Heinke, two other contemporary SAJ members:

Katz war sehr aktiv bei den literarischen Abenden der SAJ und hat oft vorgelesen. Er war aber nicht oft bei den Tanzabenden dabei und wenn, dann in einer Ecke mit Greidinger [Katz's best friend], wo sie Politik diskutierten. Er hat nie getanzt. Er war eher ein ernsthafter Mensch.<sup>16</sup>

In 1927, the *'Ortsausschuß Gera der deutschen Jugendverbände'* was founded, making the 19 independent youth groups in Gera part of German youth organisations on a national level. On 26 August 1927, Katz was elected auditor of the Gera committee, and from 1928 to 1929 he was one of the committee's three chairmen. Katz was thus very active at all levels of Socialist youth politics in Gera.

Although Katz had left his father's house, he had not completely broken off contact with him. Indeed, they continued to meet outside the home, often with aunts and uncles who felt responsible for the children after their mother died and always invited Katz to their house on religious holidays. Katz thus never alienated himself completely from his family. Despite his attempts to reverse his son's decision to move out, Aron Katz somehow understood that his son had ambitions entirely foreign to his father. He was clearly proud of his son's success and read all his articles when these began to appear in the *Ostthüringer Tribüne*, the local newspaper edited by Franz Petrich and later by Karl Sippel – two figures who were also of major importance to Katz's personal and political development. From 1925 onwards, an increasing number of articles, short stories, and poems by Katz appeared in *Ostthüringer Tribüne*, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, *Zeitzer Volksbote*, *Erfurter Tribüne*, *Holzarbeiterzeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, and other Social Democratic newspapers in the surrounding area, some under the name of Willy Katz, others under the pseudonym Willibald Kater. Friedel Katz, who never met her father-in-law, describes the impression she was given of him as follows:

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mrs Käthe Hartmann in Gera (20.8.1995).

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Walter and Hilde Heinke in Gera (14.8.1995).

Er war ein geschlagener Mann von Anfang an – hat die Frau verloren, hat alles verloren. Der Krieg ... Er war nie ein positiver Mann – eine sehr verschiedene Natur im Vergleich zu meinem Mann, der sehr optimistisch war und kämpferisch in allem. Der Vater hat nicht gekämpft, aber er liebte den Sohn und hat irgendwie verstanden, daß man sich anders entwickeln kann.

Whenever they met, his father would give Katz some money to help him survive and the aunts would provide him with food and clothes.

Meanwhile, Katz's journalistic work progressed and more of his articles were published. He soon began to specialise in what was called ›Sozialreportage‹, visiting companies and factories in order to describe the workers' conditions and rights. By doing so, he hoped to improve their circumstances and point out other areas in need of improvement. Equally, his short stories mostly dealt with workers' conditions, single mothers, old people, women supporting their families alone because of sick husbands, war experiences, and so on. In 1930 he moved to Bad Dürrenberg north of Gera where he ran a small clothing shop for a cousin while devoting his spare time to writing articles. He soon became involved in the local Social Democratic Youth Group and often attended classes or lectures at the Bad Dürrenberg ›Metallarbeitereschule‹, a school run by the unions, offering courses to workers in the steel industry. Here, he met and fell in love with Gertrud Stade, the 15-year-old daughter of the head of the ›Metallarbeitereschule‹ and was, as she recalls, often invited to her house for dinner and political discussions with her father.<sup>17</sup> Despite an age difference of nine years and her limited interest in politics, obviously an area of utmost importance to Katz, the plan was for her to follow him to Lyon as soon as possible after his emigration in 1933. However, difficulties in obtaining a passport, her mother's sudden death, and her wish to educate herself at a home economics school in Germany eventually made this plan impossible. At the same time, Katz's encounter with a young German Jewess in Lyon further complicated matters.

While still in Bad Dürrenberg, however, Katz lived with a worker employed at the ›Leuna Werke‹ – a big factory close to Gera producing fertiliser. In 1932 this worker managed to smuggle him into the factory, enabling him to write a number of ›Sozialreportagen‹ for the *Berliner Tageblatt* about the working conditions there. The Berlin senators Paul Hertz and Siegfried Aufhäuser noticed his article ›Einer sucht Arbeit im Leunawerk‹ and immediately contacted Katz. Shortly thereafter this contact led to Katz's engagement as a junior editor with the Berlin weekly *Die Welt am Montag*. Thus, at the age of 26 with a monthly income of 800 Deutschmarks, Katz was well on his way to fulfil his dream of becoming a successful German journalist.<sup>18</sup> However, this was to be no more than a brief intermezzo, as only a year later Hitler appeared on the scene, shattering all Katz's hopes and dreams for the future through systematic persecution of the Jews.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Gertrud Thiele (then Stade) in Berlin (May 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Declaration by Siegfried Aufhäuser from 19.2.1958 confirming Katz's employment at *Die Welt am Montag* and the loss of his job in March 1933 due to Hitler's ascension to power, Deutsche Bibliothek (Briefe an H. W. Katz II Ca. 46E).

When Hitler came to power in January 1933, Katz knew that his life was endangered in three ways: he was a Jew, a Social Democrat, and employed as a journalist at a liberal newspaper. Even before this event, however, his curiosity had triumphed over danger when, in the summer of 1932, he attached a swastika to his jacket and went to one of the Nazi gatherings to hear Hitler speak in the town of Halle:

Keiner erkannte mich, den »schuldigen« Juden. Es ist wahr, daß ich mir ein Hakenkreuz an die Windjacke gesteckt hatte. Alle im Zelt hatten Hakenkreuze an ihren Jacken oder Kleidern, oder Armbinden mit dem Hakenkreuz, und unterbrachen Hitlers Rede immer wieder mit ohrenbetäubendem »Heil Hitler«-Geschrei. Keiner hatte um mich herum den Verdacht, ich könnte ein »Untermensch« sein. Vielleicht weil ich »arischer« aussah als der dunkelhaarige Hitler?<sup>19</sup>

As the months passed and political developments in the country became clearer day by day, Katz felt increasingly disillusioned and disappointed with the fact that the left-wing parties undertook no measures to liberate the country from the Nazi government. He was a member of the ›Reichbanner‹ – an organisation of unions, Social Democrats and Liberals who had declared themselves willing to defend the Weimar Republic against the Nazis. However, to Katz's great disappointment, nobody took the initiative to mobilise these groups, allowing Hitler's grip on power to manifest itself. What brought about the final decision to leave the country and opt for exile was the organised burning of books on 10 May 1933. On 5 March 1933, the editorial office of *Die Welt am Montag* in the Ritterstraße, Berlin, had been shut down and most of the editors arrested. Katz was also on their list, but had, by great good luck, been out buying a guidebook on the morning when the rest of the staff was rounded up by the Gestapo. He then knew that his life was in danger, but stayed in the hope that the situation might yet be reversed. On 10 May, he experienced the horror of the organised burning of books, an experience which deprived him of his last hopes for an improvement of the situation:

Der 10. Mai 1933 war ein persönlicher Schicksalstag für mich. Ich stand an diesem 10. Mai, nachts um 11 Uhr, in Berlin eingezwängt in einer riesigen Menschenmenge, irgendwo zwischen der Staatsoper und dem Aulagelände auf dem Kaiser-Franz-Joseph Platz und viele Daten gingen mir durch den Kopf. Alle Daten vom 30. Januar bis zu diesem 10. Mai ... Und auf einmal war ich völlig im Bilde und ohne Illusionen. Auf was wartete ich eigentlich? Kein Wunder würde geschehen. Deutschland, das ich liebte, das Land in dem ich meine Kindheit und Jugend verbracht hatte, dieses Deutschland existierte nicht mehr. Jetzt hieß es: Hitler ist Deutschland und Deutschland ist Hitler ... Mir war auf einmal ganz klar, daß ich in diesem Lande nicht leben konnte. Es war das einzige Mal, daß ich mit den Nazis übereinstimmte ...<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Henry William Katz: Die Fischmanns. Roman. Weinheim, Berlin: Beltz Quadriga 1994, Nachwort, p. 250–251.

<sup>20</sup> Speech delivered in Century Village, Florida (November 1987), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 5.

This is the statement of a person who is deeply hurt but who, unlike many of his contemporaries, is also very realistic. Katz obviously felt rooted in Germany and shaped by the country and its culture but his political involvement did not allow him to be deceived by illusions of improvement, unlike his father, who took no interest in politics whatsoever. He refused to believe in the seriousness of the approaching disaster and begged his son to stay in Germany. However, Katz had made up his mind to leave the country while it was still possible, yet went back to Leipzig on 15 May 1933 to pay a last visit to his mother's grave. At midnight on 16 May, he arrived in Gera, sneaked past the Gestapo and the Nazis in the pubs, and managed to see his father once more before leaving Germany. At that time, neither of them knew that this was to be their last meeting. Some time after the war when living in America, Katz learned that his father had been shot in Lvov in the summer of 1941 because he refused to enter a lorry taking the Jews to a concentration camp. Before this event, Aron Katz, his second wife, and their son, Saul (born in Gera on 17 May 1921), had become the victims of the ›Polenschub‹. Katz's stepmother and stepbrother were deported and probably perished in the camps as all later attempts to find them proved fruitless. Michael, Katz's younger brother, was an apprentice and later head of department in the department store ›Biermann‹ in Gera until he was fired because of his Jewish background. He then began to prepare himself to go to a Kibbutz in Palestine. There, he was called up for military service in the British army, taken prisoner by the Germans but soon thereafter released by great good luck because the German commandant interrogating him happened to know him from his youth in Gera. After the war, Michael Katz became a soldier in the Israeli army, thus spending altogether ten years of his life in the army. He later emigrated with his wife to America where he settled in New York not far from his brother Willy – now Henry William Katz or ›Bill‹ among friends. Today Michael Katz lives in San Diego, California.

Having seen his father and visited his mother's grave one last time, Katz left Germany on 17 May 1933, taking only a small bag and a briefcase with manuscripts with him in order not to attract attention. Crossing the border to France by train, his first stop was Strasbourg. Here, with no money and no passport, as these had been confiscated when he crossed the border, he first went to see a friend of his father's who provided him with a little money and some food. From Strasbourg he moved on to Lyon where several refugee committees had been set up to help. Like his fellow exiles from Germany, Katz was now exposed to the perpetual search for residence and working permits, money to live on, and a place to sleep. The exile experience was not easy:

Ich habe anfangs viel gehungert. Ich habe oft in der Heilsarmee gegessen. Ich habe von einer Familie ein kleines Zimmerchen in der Mansarde gekriegt, wo es kein elektrisches Licht gab, wo ich eine Kerze hatte. Ich arbeitete in einem Restaurant, wo ich Gläser und Teller spülte. Ich arbeitete in einer Lederfabrik, wo ich Ledermäntel zuschnitt. Alles das kann man natürlich lernen; bis die Fremdenpolizei kommt und herausfindet, daß ich keine Arbeitspapiere habe, und dann muß man

dann wieder verschwinden. Das Leben wurde mir nicht leichtgemacht, nicht von der franz. Fremdenpolizei, noch sonstwie. Ich habe in einer Mädchenschule Deutsch unterrichtet. Ich muß sagen, daß ich meine Stelle verlor, als die Mädchen herausfanden, daß ich mich mit einer jungen Deutschen verlobt hatte und die Liebesaffaire zwischen den Schülern und dem Lehrer, die vollkommen platonisch war, war damit zu Ende.<sup>21</sup>

Who was the mysterious German woman who succeeded in turning the head of the serious young journalist, Katz?

Friedel Krämer, born to Jewish parents on 2 September 1912 in Heilbronn, Germany, was a very independent and determined young lady. Her father, the local music and theatre critic and a teacher (*>Oberlehrer<*), considered himself a German of Jewish faith, providing his daughter and her elder brother, Kurt Krämer, with a religious but non-orthodox upbringing. He put great emphasis on showing that he was unprejudiced towards Eastern European Jewish emigrants whom he invited to their home on the Jewish holidays, thus ensuring that his children were taught the ethics of tolerance and acceptance at an early age. Friedel took great interest in reading and decided to study law. To do this, however, substantial knowledge of Latin, French, and English was required, and she therefore decided to go to a boys' school rather than a girls' school where Latin was not taught. As a young girl she joined the Social Democratic sports club (*>Sozialdemokratischer Turnerbund<*) because she found the local sports club anti-Semitic. Through her sports activities she was thus introduced to Socialist ideas and ideology, something which was to form the basis of her later friendship with Katz. During her first years as a law student at the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin, she also took courses in journalism.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Friedel at first decided to participate in a German/French student exchange programme in Switzerland for six months, thinking – like most of her contemporaries – that the Nazi regime in Germany would not last long. Indeed, this belief was common to most German exiles. However, upon her return to Germany she found herself being forced to sign a declaration stating her willingness to leave the country as soon as she had finished her studies. This humiliating experience combined with her dangerous position as a Jew and a Social Democrat made her opt for emigration to Lyon in September 1933 at the age of 21. Here, on her first evening in Lyon, she was introduced to Katz in one of the emigrants' cafés where he apparently greeted her with the words, »Ach, Sie sind die, die studiert hat, und Ihr Bruder weiß nicht, was mit Ihnen anzufangen?«<sup>22</sup> As she recalls, Katz was determined to emigrate to Palestine when she met him; not because he was a confirmed Zionist but because that appeared to be the only sensible way out of Europe. After his meeting with Friedel Krämer, he explained the situation to Gertrud Stade and their relationship was broken off. This, however, did not prevent the development of a life-long friendship.

<sup>21</sup> Radio interview with Barbara Dobrick: *Über den Tag hinaus* (19.12.1991), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Friedel Katz, April 1995.

Life in exile was indeed not easy. Both Friedel and Katz took every kind of odd job, losing them as quickly as they found them because of the lack of a working permit. Friedel rented a room from a French landlady and the neighbours soon took pity on the young German emigrant and provided her with whatever food they had, which she in turn shared with Katz and other emigrants. Later, she succeeded in getting a small flat in a new complex in Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon. Katz lived in a small unheated room with no light, given to him in return for weekly German lessons for the French landlord's son. The landlord, a Jewish doctor, and his wife wanted to help and would occasionally invite him for dinner. Every day, Katz and Friedel would get together with other fellow exiles of all professions in the emigrants' cafes where rumours about work permits, financial help, people's plans for emigration to other countries, and the latest news from Germany were spreading quickly. Despite regular food packages from Friedel's parents and the ten Deutschmarks they were allowed to send their daughter every month, it was rarely possible to afford more than one meal a day. A pleasant anecdote from this phase of Katz's life describes how one day when sitting in the cafe with his fellow exiles, he and Friedel suddenly got the idea to make a living as translators. The emigrants came from all over Europe and spoke many different languages – they could easily translate business letters and so on from French into other languages and vice versa. Thus, Katz applied for a job as a translator, claiming to speak seven languages. No one knew that in reality the work was carried out by a whole group of emigrants at night in the cafe. Seeing that this was a success, Katz and Friedel soon realised that they could also teach languages. Katz was employed as a teacher in a girls' school (mentioned in an earlier quotation) and Friedel began to give private Latin lessons during the day while continuing to translate at night in the cafe. For about a year, she was also employed as a furrier, stretching the furs before they were made into coats.

At the end of his first year in exile, Katz decided to write a novel. The topic – Eastern European Jews in Germany – had occurred to him when he attended Hitler's spiteful speech about the Jews. Writing a novel under such poor conditions, however, was not an easy task:

Es dauerte fast zwei Jahre, es waren sonderbare Jahre. Oft war die Dachstube heiß wie eine Backstube und im Winter kalt wie ein Kühlschrank. Aber ich fühlte nichts. Die Dachkammer hatte weder eine Gaslampe noch elektrisches Licht. Nachts brannte ich Kerzen, hunderte in diesen zwei Jahren. Ich verbrauchte jeden Franc, den ich besaß – und ich besaß wenige – für Kerzen, Schreibhefte und Bleistifte.<sup>23</sup>

The manuscript was finished at the beginning of 1935. In May the following year, Katz happened to read about a literary competition issued by the ›Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller im Exil‹ and submitted his manuscript anonymously as required. About a year later, in May 1937, he was notified that he

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<sup>23</sup> Katz, Die Fischmanns (p. 24, note 19), Nachwort, p. 258.

had been awarded the first Heinrich-Heine-Prize in exile for his novel *Die Fischmanns*. The committee members were Anna Seghers, Bruno Frank, Hans A. Joachim, Ernst Leonhard, Rudolf Leonhard, Hans Marchwitza, and Hans Sahl. In a letter to the Prize committee, written on 9 May 1937, the day on which he was notified about the result, his surprise and joy are obvious:

Sie haben mir eine ordentliche Freude eingejagt. In den ersten Minuten wars ein schöner Schreck. Ich stieg mit Ihrem Brief in den vierten Stock, obwohl ich im dritten wohne. Essen habe ich dann auch nicht recht können. Ich gestehe offen, daß ich nicht *täglich* an das Preis-Kollegium dachte. Es ist ja schon so lange her, daß der Heine-Preis ausgeschrieben wurde. Am 25. Mai werden es zwölf Monate. Und da kommt Ihr Brief. [...]

Das Manuskript schrieb ich in verdammt kalten Wintermonaten in einer ungeheizten Bodenkammer und wenn ich schlapp machen wollte, habe ich mir auf einen schönen weißen Bogen immer wieder folgende Worte niedergeschrieben: »Erst fertigschreiben, dann verrecken.« Und dann kriegt man den Heine-Preis.<sup>24</sup>

The year before the award, Katz and Friedel had finally succeeded in getting married whereupon they rented a two-room flat in Villeurbanne (41, Avenue Henri Barbusse; Villeurbanne, Rhône; Lyon). This allowed Katz room to work at home. Apart from the financial problems connected with living in exile, their plans for marriage had been further complicated by the fact that they were both stateless and thus caught up in the vicious circle of not being able to get married because they did not have papers and not being able to get papers because they were stateless. Katz explained the problem to his father who went to the Polish passport office in Leipzig to present their case to the Polish consul. The consul took pity on them and issued two Polish passports which were then sent to Lyon. On 11 January 1936 they had their registry-office wedding in Villeurbanne and three weeks later a traditional Jewish wedding in a synagogue according to the wish of Friedel's father.

The Heinrich-Heine-Prize (2.000 francs) enabled Katz and his wife to move to Paris where they settled among fellow German exile writers such as Hans Sahl, Alfred Döblin, Hans Joachim, Joseph Roth, Ödön von Horváth, Anna Seghers, Bodo Uhse, and Hermann Kesten who would meet in the emigrants' cafes every day to exchange the latest news. In October 1938, *Die Fischmanns* was published by Allert de Lange in Amsterdam and in Czechoslovakia. In the same year, it was printed in English translation by the Viking Press in New York and in London by Constable & Co. It was further distributed in Canada by Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd. A Polish translation was published by Fruchtmann in Warsaw under the title *Strady nad rzeką Stryj* (Strody on the River Stryj). Reviewers were united in their praise of the book. The *Newcastle Herald*, for example, called it a »brilliant novel of character and dramatic power«, the *Boston Evening Transcript* called it a »memorable« story and the *New York*

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<sup>24</sup> Letter to unspecified member of the Prize committee, Deutsche Bibliothek.

*Times* said, »It is a good book built around a charming elliptical humor that muffles heartbreak, but is an authentic contribution to the literature of agony« (10 July 1938).<sup>25</sup> Every Thursday evening, the writers would gather in Paris to listen to somebody read from his or her latest work. Katz never read from his work until he was awarded the Heinrich-Heine-Prize. Unfortunately, the evening of the prize award, when he was celebrated as the winner of the literary competition and was asked to read from *Die Fischmanns*, was to become one of the greatest disappointments of his life:

Plötzlich ging die Tür auf. Ich las ein Kapitel aus meinem Buch, und plötzlich hörte ich Beifall, und ich dachte natürlich, daß dieser Beifall mir galt, dem Kapitel, das ich las, galt. Dann sah ich, daß er gar nicht für mich bestimmt war, sondern Arthur Koestler kam an diesem Abend zurück aus Spanien; er war begnadigt worden. Man kann sich vorstellen, was das für eine Enttäuschung für diesen jungen Schriftsteller Katz war.<sup>26</sup>

The writer Arthur Koestler, who was working for the British press in Spain, had been taken prisoner by the Franco government and condemned to death. After his miraculous release, he returned to Paris on the night of the Heinrich-Heine-Prize award, making his entrance at a rather unfortunate time – at least as far as Katz was concerned.

At the time of their move to Paris, Friedel was expecting their first and only child, their daughter Eve, who was born on 2 July 1938. The prize money had got them to Paris where the money from the American edition of *Die Fischmanns* supported the small family while Katz devoted his time to writing his second novel, *Schloßgasse 21*, a continuation of the Fischmann story. It was published in English translation under the title *21 Castle Street* in 1940 by the Viking Press, New York; in Great Britain by Chapman and Hall in 1942, and later in Braille. Again the reviewers were predominantly positive, calling the novel »intelligently conceived, well written, it deserves unstinting praise« (*Contemporary Jewish Record*; 3 June 1941). The *Times Literary Supplement* praised its originality, saying that »its intimate knowledge of the facts and its sincerity raise it above several of its predecessors with a similar theme« (7 March 1942). The Katz family's economic situation was still very insecure since all their money was spent on rent and on providing for their daughter. An application for financial support to the ›American Guild‹ from 9 February 1939 shows Katz's desperate attempt to build up an existence as a writer and to continue the success he had experienced with his first novel. To do this, however, a certain amount of financial security was required:

Schon seit langem ist mir bekannt, daß die A.G. Arbeitsbeihilfen für emigrierte Schriftsteller gewährt. Trotzdem habe ich bisher nie den Versuch gemacht, Sie um eine Arbeitsbeihilfe für mich zu bitten. Wenn ich es heute tue, so nur deshalb, weil ich nicht mehr ein noch aus weiß. [...]

<sup>25</sup> Nachlaß Henry William Katz, Deutsche Bibliothek Exilarchiv (EB 93/135).

<sup>26</sup> Radio interview with Peter H. Jacoby: Gespräch zur Zeit (p. 16, note 3), p. 16.

Ich weiß nicht, wie ich weitermachen soll. Ich bin verheiratet, habe ein Kind von sieben Monaten. Außerdem alte Eltern, die völlig mittellos Deutschland verlassen mußten. Der Roman, an dem ich z.Zt. schreibe, ist halb fertig. Aber wie soll ich weitermachen? Unter diesen Umständen werden Sie verstehen, wenn ich, nach wirklich langem Zögern, an Sie schreibe.<sup>27</sup>

Despite his difficult situation, the ›American Guild‹ did not offer any support which may, in part, be due to the evaluations by Richard A. Bermann and Alfred Döblin who were asked by the Guild to give an opinion on Katz and his work. Thus, Bermann points to the difficulty of making an American audience interested in the Eastern European Jewish topic:

The writer is certainly gifted but I cannot see what the American Guild could do for his stories which are more or less untranslatable and would hardly interest anybody in America.<sup>28</sup>

Döblin's comment is of a more condescending character, almost patronising:

[...] ein schönes Anfangswerk [i.e. *Die Fischmanns*], das die Aufmunterung verdiente (freilich werden solche Aufmunterungen fast immer von den Autoren falsch verstanden und sie fühlen sich »preisgekrönt«). Katz begann dann einen zweiten Band, von dem ich ein Kapitel kenne, – er bemüht sich, er ist unzweifelhaft talentiert, ohne gerade ein auffallendes Mass zu besitzen. Es ist schlimm, dass nette Begabungen dieser Art jetzt keinen journalistischen Ausweg finden; man sollte jedenfalls seiner irgendwie gedenken.<sup>29</sup>

The older and more established writer's feeling of superiority is very clear in his evaluation of his young colleague merely at the beginning of his career, and the above evaluation may have had some impact on the Guild's decision to deny Katz financial support.

Meanwhile, the peace the family had found in France came to an abrupt end at the outbreak of the Second World War whereupon Katz – a confirmed pacifist – joined the French Foreign Legion (6 October 1939). Experience from Germany had taught him not to expect protection from strangers and he would not again be in the position of the defenceless victim. However, taking up arms against the enemy remained an unacceptable solution to many of his Social Democratic friends:

Es gab einige Freunde, die mit mir Freunde waren, bis zu dem Augenblick, wo ich in die Fremdenlegion eintrat. Sie waren der Meinung, daß man nicht gegen Menschen schießen darf, von denen man nicht weiß, vielleicht waren das gar keine Nazis. Es könnte ja sein, daß das einfach deutsche Soldaten waren. Meine Antwort war immer die gleiche: Wenn es ganz einfach deutsche Soldaten waren, dann sollen die-

<sup>27</sup> Letter to the American Guild (9.2.1939), Deutsche Bibliothek (American Guild – EB 70/117).

<sup>28</sup> Statement by Richard A. Bermann, Deutsche Bibliothek (American Guild EB 70/117, Akte H. W. Katz).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Statement by Alfred Döblin.

se deutsche Soldaten ganz einfach eine Meuterei machen gegen die Nazis, wie ich sie mache. Ich kann keinerlei Rücksichten auf schweigenden Widerstand machen. Ich bin bereit, mein Leben zu riskieren, und ich erwarte das gleiche von den anderen.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the resistance to armed defence against Hitler was widespread among Liberal and Social Democratic writers in exile. Instead, they advocated literature as a means of fighting the Nazis, believing that literary plots demonstrating the brutality and irrationality of Nazi ideology would be a more efficient way to persuade the German people to oppose Hitler. Katz, however, no longer shared their pacifist views:

Wie sehr ich bedaure, daß mir Verbrecher eine grausame Lehre erteilten! *Das ist die Lehre*: wenn politische Verbrecher oder Geistesgestörte oder Kriminelle unsere Freiheit und unser Leben bedrohen, dann retten uns weder Kampflieder noch Volksstänze, keine Schreibmaschinen und keine Gedichte, in Leinen gebunden oder in einer Taschenbuchausgabe ...<sup>31</sup>

And yet, in a letter of 30 May 1937 to Ernst Leonhard, Katz makes clear that art must serve a purpose and have a message in order to be of any value. As with most of his fellow writers, all ideas of *l'art pour l'art* and art solely as a means of therapy for the writer himself are thus condemned:

Für mich ist Schreiben eine öffentliche Angelegenheit. Wissen Sie, wie ich schreibe? Ich habe beim Schreiben immer den Eindruck, als stehe ich an einem Rednerpult und erzähle vielen, vielen Menschen alles das, was mir sehr am Herzen liegt. Ich bin kein egozentrischer Lyriker. Dass Kunst eine Unterabteilung von Pädagogik sei, stammt, wenn ich mich recht erinnere, von Brecht. Dieser Satz könnte auch von mir sein. Manuskripte schreiben ohne Aussicht, sie an Massen zu bringen, das hiesse, ein sinnloses Leben führen. Zum ›Mit-sich-selber-sprechen‹ braucht man weder Tinte, noch Papier.<sup>32</sup>

The notion of literature as a political tool were thus also of utmost importance to Katz but in the face of the Nazi threat, he did not dare to rely on its effect.

Upon joining the French Foreign Legion, Katz was initially trained to become an officer but was sent to the front as an infantryman when the war broke out. From 15 April to 28 June 1940, he was a corporal in the 12th Regiment. Occasionally, he also worked as a translator for the *2ème Bureau de l'Arrondissement de Saint-Amand-Montrond*, translating, for example, during the armistice at the demarcation line in St. Amand after the battle of Soissons in May 1940; a battle from which only 268 out of the 3000 soldiers in his regiment returned.<sup>33</sup> He was later honoured with a *Croix de Guerre* for his rescue

<sup>30</sup> Radio interview, Von Galizien nach Amerika (p. 19, note 11), p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Speech delivered in the ›Heimvolkshochschulen‹ Bad Münstereifel and Bergneustadt (19./21.5.1987), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Katz to Ernst Leonhard (30.5.1937), Deutsche Bibliothek (Briefe an H. W. Katz II Ca. 46E).

<sup>33</sup> Certificate from the French Government, Deutsche Bibliothek (II Lebensdokumente Ca. 113E).

of certain confidential documents from the enemy zone. Yet despite abandoning his pacifist views, he did not wish to continue his military career, »Ich haßte jede Minute meines militärischen Lebens. Ich haßte die Nazis, die mich zwangen zu hassen.«<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, Friedel Katz, who had remained in Paris, was forced to leave the city in the middle of the night with their one-year-old daughter when the Germans approached Paris. A journey which at the time seemed like a nightmare and afterwards resembled a fairy tale was to follow before she was finally reunited with her husband in St. Amand. Upon hearing the approaching front, Friedel Katz realised the need to flee – not least because her flat in Paris was full of anti-Nazi manuscripts and articles which, if discovered, would endanger both her own life and that of her daughter. She was lucky enough to get a lift to Fontainebleau from where, however, she had to continue on foot. When an order was issued to evacuate all civilians, she ended up in a village close to Bordeaux and the Spanish border where she stayed for several months with the local mayor and his wife. During her flight, she had continually written to her husband's military address and he had written to their address in Paris. However, few letters got through until 14 June 1940 when she received a postcard telling her where he was and that he had obtained permission for her to join him in St. Amand if she could find a way to get there.

A young couple with a child and a car, who happened to be passing through the village, agreed to take her to her husband. However, after leaving the car for a brief moment, Friedel returned to find that the young couple and the car were gone, along with all her money and the little jewellery she had brought. Continuing her journey on foot in a state of despair, she was approached by two girls who had lived in her neighbourhood in Paris. Their uncle was now the local commandant, and he succeeded in bringing back the fugitive couple. Threatening to refuse them petrol for the car and to confiscate it if they did not take the young woman and her child to her husband, the commandant forced the couple to do as they were told and Friedel arrived in St. Amand the same day only to discover that Katz had just left to fetch her. They were, however, reunited within the next few days and after his demobilisation in the south of France, they went to Lyon. Here, Professor Gumbel, a very close friend and former professor at the University of Heidelberg where Friedel had studied, informed them that Katz's American publisher had managed to get him on the list of an American rescue committee (*Operation Emergency Rescue*) in Marseilles led by the Quaker Varian Fry. Through this committee, the American government succeeded in saving more than one thousand European artists and intellectuals from Nazism.

Upon arriving in Marseilles, the Katz family had to wait to be smuggled out of Europe. Their stay there was not entirely safe and Friedel Katz recalls how the Vichy police examined their papers every night. One day, Katz was ar-

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<sup>34</sup> Speech delivered in Wiesbaden and Hamburg (11./15.5.1987), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 2.

rested by the police and taken to prison where he met Alfred Kantorowicz, whom he promised to help, should he succeed in being released. Katz was saved by the fact that he was still wearing his French uniform and in particular by the fact that one of the interrogators recognized him from his time in the Foreign Legion and let him escape through a back door. In his book *Exil in Frankreich*, Kantorowicz describes their encounter:

Fast täglich traf ich unter den »Zugängen« alte Bekannte. Da wurde am 5. Dezember der Schriftsteller H. W. Katz eingeliefert, der sogenannte Heine-Katz, weil er mit seinem Roman »Die Fischmanns« 1937 den Heinepreis des »Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller im Exil« erhalten hatte. Er hatte in der französischen Armee gedient, war mit dem »Croix de Guerre« ausgezeichnet und mehrfach in Regimentsbefehlen ehrend erwähnt worden. Trotzdem hatte man ihn als Verdächtigen aufgegriffen. Er wurde allerdings nach dem Verhör sogleich entlassen. [...] Jedenfalls konnten wir einige Stunden lang Erinnerungen austauschen, und er hielt sein Versprechen, nach seiner Freilassung die Konsulate und Komitees von meiner noch ungeklärten Lage zu unterrichten.<sup>35</sup>

At Christmas 1940, Katz was finally notified that the necessary papers had arrived from America. He now only needed an exit visa from the French government, a procedure complicated by the fact that France would not permit potential soldiers to leave the country. Eventually, however, the exit visa was issued and three guarantors were found in America (Roger William Riis, Ben Huebsch – Katz's publisher in America –, and Carl van Doren).<sup>36</sup> The Katzes were asked by the Rescue Committee to travel with Siegfried Kracauer and his wife in order to take care of the elderly couple and to appear as a family. They were taken close to the Spanish border by night train. After walking over part of the Pyrenees through ice and snow, they finally reached the border where the frontier guards were so infatuated with the two-year-old Eve that they did not pay much attention to the Katzes and did not discover the 50 dollars sewn into the child's coat. Arriving in Madrid by train, they followed the instructions given to them in Marseilles and were taken to a hotel where they were to spend the day until they could catch the night train to Lisbon. Here, like all other German refugees, they waited for weeks to get tickets for the steamship taking them to America. Finally, these were provided, and on 15 April 1941, they arrived at Staten Island on the ship »Guynée« together with other German writers and intellectuals in exile such as Hans Sahl, Soma Morgenstern, and Valeriu Marcu.

Katz and his wife rented a flat in Brooklyn (217 Ocean Avenue, Brooklyn 25, New York; they stayed here until 1956 when they moved to 115 Ashland Place, Brooklyn 11201). The American publisher of *Die Fischmanns*, Ben Huebsch, helped them financially in the first month, whereupon the family was left to its

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Kantorowicz: *Exil in Frankreich: Merkwürdigkeiten und Denkwürdigkeiten*. Unveränd. Nachdr. der 1971 erschienenen Ausg., Hamburg: Christians 1983, p. 202.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Ben Huebsch to Katz (27.7.1943), Deutsche Bibliothek (H. W. Katz und andere Materialien I Ca. 141E).

own devices. As Richard A. Bermann had predicted, Katz soon realised that supporting his family by writing in America for the American market was impossible, not only because his English was almost non-existent at the time of his arrival but even more because the topics he wrote about were of little interest to the American population. Thus, giving first priority to the support of his family (which after the war consisted of his wife, daughter, parents-in-law who had come to live with them in 1946, and his wife's sister) and the upbringing of his only daughter, and second priority to his own desire to write a third novel, Katz began to look for work in factories, earning in 1941 only \$ 500 and in 1942 \$ 2.171,33.<sup>37</sup> His daughter, Eve Katz, recalls her father's descriptions of the first months and years in America:

My father told me that in the first days he would go from factory to factory and say he could operate the machine and then just give it a try. [...] One day, he told me, he found a machine he didn't break, so they kept him ... It was a chewing gum machine.<sup>38</sup>

The company was The Rathbun & Bird Company, Inc. in New York owned by Carl J. Bergstrom. On 14 April 1952, Katz was nominated vice-president in charge of production and assistant to the president of the Dellenbarger Machine Company as well as executive assistant to the president of the Rathbun & Bird Company.<sup>39</sup> A few years later, he switched from the production of machine parts to food manufacturing, eventually becoming the vice-president of the company Claridge & Co. which was owned by Russian emigrants. In November 1962, Katz agreed to work for the Metropolitan Defense Committee on Food Supply, an emergency programme in the state of New York ensuring the supply of food and medicine in the event of an emergency situation as a consequence of the cold war.

Meanwhile, his longing to return to writing remained, and during their first couple of years in America, Katz did indeed finish a third novel, describing his wife's flight from Paris until they were reunited in St. Armand. Writing a novel after a ten to twelve-hour working day was not easy, however, and the novel was never published although curiously enough, Katz did sign a contract with the Viking Press in New York on 25 April 1941, giving the publishing house »an option on his next full length novel on the same terms as for Schlossgasse 21« on which occasion he also received \$ 500 as »an advance against all earnings under the agreement for the option book mentioned in Paragraph 1 and for ›Die Fischmanns‹ and ›Schlossgasse 21‹. It was further understood that »if the Publishers should not accept the novel referred to in Paragraph 1, the Author will repay the unearned balance of said advance of Five Hundred Dollars«<sup>40</sup>. According to

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Katz to the Treasury Department in Washington (15.7.1943), Deutsche Bibliothek (Briefe H. W. Katz I Ca. 141E).

<sup>38</sup> Letter to the author from Eve Katz (20.8.1995).

<sup>39</sup> Statement from Carl J. Bergstrom (14.4.1952), Deutsche Bibliothek (II Lebensdokumente Ca. 113E).

<sup>40</sup> Agreement between Katz and the Viking Press (25.4.1941), Deutsche Bibliothek (NL Katz Lebensdokumente).

Katz's widow, the difficult circumstances under which the novel was written lowered his usual standard, ultimately preventing him from submitting the manuscript to the publishers. This claim of lacking quality in his last novel, however, is somewhat contradicted by a contemporary review of Katz's reading from this very novel at an ›Autorenabend‹ in New York on 15 January 1943:

Besonders reizvoll war das Kapitel, das H. W. Katz, der Träger des Pariser Heinepreises aus seinem dritten Band »Die Fischmanns« vorlas. In einem Auto voll zufällig mitgenommener Zivilisten fliehen drei desertierende Soldaten durch das Frankreich des Zusammenbruchs. Katz las höchst lebendig. Er ist ein Meister des scharfen Dialogs, Witz und Tragik sind natürlich ineinander verflochten, grossartig dieses Bild des hoffnungslosen Zerfalls auf ein paar Seiten!<sup>41</sup>

This by no means sounds like a review which could have prompted Katz to abandon his manuscript or even destroy it. Exactly why the novel was not published is uncertain. Perhaps he himself was indeed dissatisfied with the result, perhaps the manuscript was submitted and rejected by the publishers. The fact remains that the manuscript is at present nowhere to be found.

The disappointment at having to give up writing as a profession was great but Katz was very pleased and proud to be able to provide his daughter with a good education at Harvard and Yale Universities. Indeed, their daughter was one of the main reasons why the Katzes decided to stay in America:

Ich entschied mich, in Amerika zu bleiben. Ich zog Vergleiche zwischen meiner deutschen Kindheit und der glücklichen amerikanischen Kindheit meiner Tochter, die in New York eine Heimat gefunden hatte. Ich hatte kein Recht, sie zu entwurzeln. Sie liebte ihre Freunde, ihre Schule, ihre Straße, ihren Spielplatz – sie liebte ihr amerikanisches Leben. Hier war sie nicht der »Untermensch«, der ihr jüdischer Vater als Kind in deutschen Schulen war.<sup>42</sup>

Yet his reply to his American publisher's inquiry into his ›literary ambitions‹ in the year 1948 describes very well how Katz, now aged 42, viewed his daily life and the conflict he experienced between his new occupation and his longing to write:

If I would have time I would sit down and write a book as answer. You see that the ›ambitions‹ are somehow the same. [...]

My days here are not very exciting. I get up at 6:30 A.M. and try to come home 12 hours later. In those 12 hours I live for my job in New York, building Special Machinery. I am still with the same company I started to work for 6 years ago. I am afraid it is not a very original story – »The Lathe-hand works his way up« or so. Right now I am Prod. Mgr. of the plant which is one of those places where hundred irish, german, polish, jewish, italian and other american machinists make a living between a war and an election. [...]

<sup>41</sup> Review in the *Tribüne* (New York), date unknown, Deutsche Bibliothek (NL Katz Zeitungsausschnitte).

<sup>42</sup> Speech delivered in Century Village, Florida (November 1987), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 9.

After so many american years my wife still can't understand how a man can change his life so fundamentally. But I don't think I changed much. Every day is a chapter. I just don't write it down yet – I live it first.<sup>43</sup>

The combination of Katz's love and responsibility towards his family and the difficulties of writing in a foreign language for a foreign market prevented him from pursuing his own desire to return to writing. Instead, he dedicated his time and energy to an occupation which a few years earlier he had never imagined would become his main profession.

Although Germany was the country that had shaped him and the place he had considered his native country, the Nazi regime and the experience of anti-Semitism and exile had clearly left deep wounds, some of which were never to heal. In 1985, when *Die Fischmanns* and *Schloßgasse 21* were published in Germany for the first time in the Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt a. M., invitations to come to Germany to speak in universities, high schools, bookshops etc. began to arrive. Thus in 1985, Katz and his wife returned to Germany for the first time in 54 years, visiting towns and cities in Western Germany. In 1991, they returned to visit towns in the former GDR including Gera. Unlike many other German-Jewish emigrants, Katz did not hold a grudge against Germany as such or against the German youth of today: »[...] die deutsche Generation von heute ist nicht verantwortlich für die grauenhafte Erbschaft, die ihr von den Eltern und Großeltern hinterlassen wurde. Aber es ist eine Erbschaft. Und ich beneide sie nicht darum ...«<sup>44</sup> However, he never forgot the thousands of Germans who voted for Hitler in 1933, thereby beginning the catastrophic process which was to have such fatal consequences for his life. His prime concern was to educate and enlighten today's youth about the past in order to prevent a repetition of history.

Although Katz obtained American citizenship on 13 December 1949, on which occasion he also officially changed his name from Herz Wolff to Henry William, he never came to regard the USA as his native country. During his trips to Germany in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he was constantly confronted with the question where this place was, and his answer was always: »Meine Heimat ist dort, wo man mich leben läßt.«<sup>45</sup> From 1941 onwards, this country was the United States which he eventually came to regard as his home but never as a ›Heimat‹ in the German sense of the word. In a letter of 6 January 1987 to the German journalist and editor, Peter Mosler, however, he points to another view of the concept of ›Heimat‹:

Was ist ›Heimat‹? ›Heimat‹ ist, wenn man zu dem Land seiner Kindheit und Jugend zurückkehren kann und wo einem Freundschaft und ein warmes Willkommen und Anhalt erwartet ... Gibt es das noch? Für wen? Und für wen nicht? ›Heimat‹ ist ein kompliziertes Problem. [...] Meine Erinnerungen und die Sprache – das ist meine ›Heimat‹.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Letter from H. W. Katz to Mr. B. W. Huebsch (7.1.1948), Deutsche Bibliothek.

<sup>44</sup> Speech delivered in Marburg (13.5.1987), Deutsche Bibliothek, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Mrs. Katz (April, 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Letter from H. W. Katz to Peter Mosler (6.1.1987), Deutsche Bibliothek.

The passage makes clear once again the close emotional connection he had felt with Germany. When this connection was brutally destroyed, all he had left was the language with which he had communicated his ideas and values. In exile he was deprived even of his German language, having to learn first French and later English – the language the Katz family spoke at home in America in order not to complicate their daughter's acclimatisation and adjustment to American culture any more than necessary. He always refused to speak of the Germans as a group but would emphasise the importance of seeing people as individuals. Until his death, Katz stayed in contact with friends in Germany, read German newspapers and magazines, and cared deeply about the political development of the country. He especially put his trust in the European Union as a means of uniting Europe and giving all countries equal rights and obligations, thus keeping single countries from gaining too much power and endangering the peace of the continent.

In April 1970 Katz retired, when the company for which he was working closed. Feeling that he had done his duty, he considered it time for him to return to his main interests, reading and writing. In a letter to Hermann Kesten of 11 October 1970, he describes his first literary project as a pensioner and his plans for the future:

Als erste »freelance« Arbeit habe ich mein altes Manuskript »Castle Street« wieder in Ordnung gebracht. [...] Im Mai sandte ich das Manuskript an Rowohlt unter dem Titel »In einer kleinen deutschen Stadt«. Jetzt warte ich auf eine Antwort und habe begonnen, von einem neuen Buch zu traeumen [sic].<sup>47</sup>

As early as 1965, Kesten had attempted to intervene on Katz's behalf and have his novels published with the Kurt Desch Verlag in Munich and with the Walter Verlag in Switzerland. However, it was too early; German interest in the Jewish topic and exile literature in general had not yet developed. The same was true of Katz's own attempt in the early 1970s which also amounted to nothing. Indeed, the novels were not published for the first time in Germany until 1985/86 (by the Fischer Verlag) and again in 1994/95 when they were reissued in a hardcover edition by Belz/Quadriga in Berlin.

Shortly after his retirement, Katz began to write a new novel for which he initially chose the title *»Biography of a Lousy Company«*. This was later changed to *»Money«*. In April 1972, he wrote to Hermann Kesten that he had completed 300 pages, and in November 1972, the title was changed once again, this time to *»Of Money and Big Shots and Small Potatoes«* because a new magazine had just been published under the title *Money*. In January 1975, then, he informed Hermann Kesten and his wife, Toni, that his manuscript was finished, but he very much doubted that he could find a publisher for it. Unfortunately, Mr. Huebsch, the publisher of *Schloßgasse 21* in New York who had encouraged Katz to get back to writing, had died years earlier, and in 1975

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<sup>47</sup> Letter from H. W. Katz to Hermann Kesten (11.10.1970). Original in the Handschriften-Sammlung der Stadtbibliothek München.

most American publishing houses were unable to take in new manuscripts because of the economic crisis of the business – including the Viking Press to whom Katz also submitted his new novel. After his visit to Frankfurt in 1987, Katz was encouraged by Dr. Ulrich Walberer, an editor at the Fischer Verlag, to write his autobiography. However, by then he no longer felt up to the task and destroyed the manuscript he wrote after the visit. In December 1978, the Katzes had moved to Florida, following the advice of Friedel's doctor after she had suffered a heart attack that same year. In 1987, Katz himself fell ill and went through his first cancer operation which was followed by an increasing amount of chemotherapy until his death in 1992. Thus, when he began to write his memoirs in 1987, obstacles and events beyond his control prevented him from finishing the work, and being a perfectionist, he was unwilling to compromise its quality. Despite his illness, Katz remained a serious advocate of the humanistic ideals of tolerance, equality, and mutual acceptance between minorities and majorities until his death. Even in 1991, during the last year of his life, he insisted on going to Germany to bear witness to the terrible events in the first half of the twentieth century to the new generation of young Germans. On 6 June 1992, he died in a hospital in Florida at the age of 85. According to his own wish, no funeral took place. Instead, his ashes were scattered at sea.

As Katz himself liked to put it, his life was a »tour through the twentieth century« and his personal fate the outcome and the reflection of the ups and downs of European history in this period. The many changes of his name and the number of citizenships he assumed are only the outward testimony to the many times he had to adapt emotionally to new cultures and mentalities, every time hoping that this would be the last. Luckily, his optimistic, but also very pragmatic, personality and view of life enabled him to survive these different phases without compromising his beliefs and values. Until his death, he remained faithful to his Social Democratic views but at the same time, he never forgot his Jewish background and would fight for the rights and acceptance of the Jews when given the opportunity. It is significant, however, that during his lecture trips to Germany, he did not want to be categorised as a Jewish writer only, but would emphasise his mixed German-Jewish background. The reason for this may be found in one of his speeches when discussing the concept of Jewish exile literature:

Was bezwecken wir mit der Klassifikation »Jüdische Komponente der Exilliteratur«? Da das 3. Reich nicht mehr existiert, hat wohl niemand hier die Absicht, exilierte Schriftsteller jüdischer Abstammung mit einem gelben Stern zu katalogisieren ...

Es gab viele Schriftsteller jüdischer Abstammung, die nicht nur in ihren Büchern sondern auch in ihrem Denken das jüdische Denken von sich fernhielten. Sie fühlten sich nicht als jüdische, nur als politische Flüchtlinge – als kommunistische oder sozialistische oder demokratische Flüchtlinge. Sich als jüdische Flüchtlinge zu bezeichnen, schien diesen politischen Exilanten als ob sie den gelben Stern und damit die Nazi-Rassentheorie akzeptierten ...<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Speech delivered in Germany, date and place unspecified, Deutsche Bibliothek.

In other words, Katz, having at an early stage in life distanced himself from his orthodox Jewish background and dedicated himself to the Social Democratic cause and humanistic values, could not and would not accept the differentiation between Jews and non-Jews from a racial point of view, as this would not only support the Nazi ideology but also destroy the basis of the assimilation into German society for which he and many thousands of his Jewish contemporaries had struggled so hard – to no avail, as became clear in 1933. Thus, many German-Jewish exiles would stress their belonging to the group of German political exiles and ignore their Jewish background because having detached themselves from Judaism and Jewishness in order to be accepted by German society, their Jewish identity played no great role for them in any case. It is therefore of major significance that the otherwise so politically active young Katz chose to devote his novels, which he would probably not have written had he not been exposed to the exile experience, to the commemoration of his own ancestors, the Eastern European Jews. This devotion bears witness to a fascinating and many-faceted personality – an impression confirmed by his wife when she says:

Er war sehr direkt und kämpferisch bis zum Ende seines Lebens. Er hat zum Beispiel nicht von den Nazis gesprochen, sondern sie immer »Mörder« genannt. Er war ein »self-made man«. Gleichzeitig konnte er mit mir ins Kino gehen und beim Zuschauen des Filmes weinen. Er hat in seiner Jugend viele Gedichte geschrieben, und ich konnte kaum glauben, daß das derselbe Mann war.

It was no doubt these qualities, his adaptability to new situations and places, and his determination to do what he considered morally correct, that enabled him to carry on his fight against intolerance and injustice and eventually survive until illness, rather than anti-Semitic persecution or war, put an end to his ›tour through the twentieth century‹.



## Chapter II

### Katz's Journalism: Spokesman of the Proletariat

Although Katz's journalistic work is not as extensive as that of many other left-wing journalists in the Weimar Republic, it plays a major part in this context because it testifies to Katz's personal development as a Social Democrat and as a journalist between 1925 and 1933. There are furthermore interesting links between the topics of Katz's short stories and his later fiction which help explain the narratorial viewpoint in his novels. Finally, an analysis of his articles and short stories sheds light on the history of the Social Democratic press in the years leading up to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933 and clearly demonstrates the political and ideological battles on the political left. As a result, all left-wing parties and newspapers were prohibited immediately after the Nazi take-over. Katz's articles, exclusively published in Social Democratic newspapers, reflect this crisis, and a brief overview is necessary in order to understand the background to his writing, his style, and his choice of themes.

The financial crisis of the period seriously impaired the individual's spending power, making the circulation of left-wing newspapers, in particular, decrease by the year. However, as the SPD soon realised, inflation was not entirely to blame for the situation. Indeed as early as 1913, SPD functionaries had attempted to determine why only 35 % of SPD members read party-related newspapers, concluding that the Socialist papers were too serious and heavy in style, too theoretical and indeed incomprehensible to large parts of the working-class population.<sup>1</sup> A serious change was necessary to save the Socialist press, and after the First World War the first steps were taken to make the newspapers more accessible. They were to respond to the demand of the masses for less political and more entertaining papers, provide more news and material related to the worker's daily environment, and more stories and pictures. They were, in short, to »polemicise less, and chat more«<sup>2</sup>.

In order to achieve this goal, more emphasis was to be placed on the *feuilleton*, the entertainment section of the paper, which was considered particularly suitable

<sup>1</sup> Kristina Zerges: Sozialdemokratische Presse und Literatur. Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Literaturvermittlung in der sozialdemokratischen Presse 1876 bis 1933. Stuttgart: Metzler 1982, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm L. Guttsman: Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany. Between Tradition and Commitment. New York, Oxford: Berg 1990, p. 276.

to retain women readers. Whereas the *feuilleton* before 1918 was intended to support the political-ideological part of the paper, placing particular emphasis on the great socio-historical novels, the new policy was to select lighter works such as love stories and family novels and the occasional *Heimatroman*, genres which were also typical of the bourgeois press.<sup>3</sup> In the wake of this trend there was furthermore a demand for entertaining and digestible short stories – an area to which, as we shall see in the following analysis of his articles, Katz was a great contributor. Indeed, he largely conformed to the new party policy regarding the literary section of the paper:

Was wir zunächst einmal brauchen, sind die wirklich unterhaltsamen Kurzgeschichten (nicht dauernd Übersetzungen, um Geld zu sparen!) voll Spannung, Lebenserfahrung aus allen Gebieten, also auch aus erotischen, sind flotte Reiseskizzen mit sozialer Tendenz, die nicht faustdick aufgetragen werden muß, sind Reportagen, die knapp informatisch und doch flüssig, kritisch, satirisch wichtige Tagesereignisse beleuchten, sind geistig-kulturelle Abhandlungen über Theater, Musik, Kino, die nicht nur vom Standpunkt des Ästheten, sondern auch des kämpfenden Sozialisten geschrieben sind.<sup>4</sup>

Compared to the literature previously presented in Socialist newspapers, described as »die altbewährten, etwas trockenen, moralisch tendenziösen und sachlich schiefen Erzählungen vom grauen, hoffnungslosen Elend der strebsamen, armen Leute«<sup>5</sup>, the new party policy was a much-needed innovation.

Initially, the new policy seemed to work, as by 1924 the circulation of Socialist newspapers began to rise. This change was, however, not achieved without measures which some old party-line Socialists considered regrettable concessions to the Social Democratic ideology, not only in the literary sections but in the overall layout of the papers. After the SPD became the government party with Friedrich Ebert as Reich Chancellor, the party suddenly found itself having to appeal to a public that covered a much wider political and social spectrum than the strictly Socialist one in order to retain governmental power. With the Communists and the National Socialists as strong opponents to democracy at either end of the political scale, the SPD was to provide the stability necessary to maintain the new democratic system, something which was only possible with major popular support. The task of ›advertising‹ the Republic to the German people, then, devolved on the Socialist press which was very aware of its new role:

Denn schließlich ist ja auch zu beachten: früher waren alle Leser unserer Presse auch klassenkämpferisch gesonnene Sozialdemokraten, heute, wo wir mehr allgemeine Volkszeitung werden wollen und müssen – heute müssen wir auch mit unpolitischen Leserschichten rechnen.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> Hermann Bicker: Wohin des Weges? Noch eine Antwort an den Genossen Bolze. In: Mitteilungen des Vereins Arbeiterpresse 315 (July 1931). Quoted in: Zerges, Sozialdemokratische Presse und Literatur (p. 41, note 1), p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> Josef Kliche: Vom Roman in der Tagespresse. In: Mitteilungen des Vereins Arbeiterpresse 289 (May 1929), p. 6. Quoted in: Zerges, Sozialdemokratische Presse und Literatur (p. 41, note 1), p. 111.

The attempt by the Communist and the National Socialist press to rouse their readers by agitation characterised by aggressive anti-republican content and irrational claims rather than political debate, were not an option to a party press which was expected to embrace readers ranging from Social Democrats and Liberals to parts of the bourgeoisie.

Katz's articles and the Socialist newspapers at the time mirror these political controversies between the SPD and the KPD, which were initially taken much more seriously than the threat from the extreme right. Endless quarrels went on about the role of literature in politics, with the Communists insisting that its main function was to make heavy political ideology more accessible to the working class. As is obvious from the short stories, poems, and sketches which appeared in Communist papers and magazines, such as *Die Rote Fahne* and *Volkswacht*, the artistic and aesthetic quality of literature was less significant. Instead, the sole purpose of these stories was to 'awaken' the proletarian to revolutionary deeds by showing him the only way to improve his lot: the KPD. Bearing in mind the deliberate softening of political allusions in the literature published by the SPD at the time, it is no wonder that the discrepancy between the two parties resulted in direct accusations by the KPD that the SPD were misleading the workers and making them politically apathetic with stories about love, nature and peaceful co-existence.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as we shall see, although Katz's literary articles are less directly political in content than, for example, short stories published in *Die Rote Fahne*, they are nonetheless extremely class-conscious, dealing almost exclusively with workers and their lot during the political and financial crisis of the Weimar Republic. The Socialists, on the other hand, accused the Communists of destroying the Republic with their revolutionary propaganda. In its capacity as the government party, the SPD had lost interest in a revolutionary programme because it was now working closely together with industry and the workers' unions, believing that the present social discrepancies between the classes would eventually eliminate themselves. It was even assumed that the proletariat would automatically disappear as living standards were raised through the implementation of Socialist policies.<sup>8</sup>

The instant rise in subscriptions experienced after the change of the SPD press policies did not last long. When the financial crisis set in again in 1929, even the most exciting and entertaining newspapers could not retain their readers. Thus, even a big Social Democratic publishing house such as the Ullstein Verlag quickly lost 25 per cent of its readership. The right-wing papers were more successful, and the left-wing press became increasingly aware of its failure to combat the rise of Nazism. Hermann Ullstein himself later said:

<sup>7</sup> Deutsche Arbeiterdichtung 1910–1933. Ed. by Günter Heintz. Stuttgart: Reclam 1974 (Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, 9700), p. 6–7.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Stephan: Zwischen Verbürgerlichung und Politisierung. Arbeiterliteratur in der Weimarer Republik. In: Handbuch zur deutschen Arbeiterliteratur. Ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold. München: Edition Text + Kritik 1977, p. 47–81, p. 54.

Es hat keinen Zweck, die Tatsache zu leugnen, daß die Presse versagte! Ich selbst, ein Mann der Presse, gebe es freimütig zu und klage mich damit selbst an. Aber es ist eine offene Frage, ob eine kraftvollere Opposition gegen die ursprüngliche Bewegung das Endergebnis wesentlich geändert hätte. Zu viele Faktoren waren auf Hitlers Seite: eine unglückliche Wirtschaftspolitik, die Verarmung des Volkes, ein altersschwacher Reichspräsident, Angst vor dem Kommunismus, Rassenhaß und der politisch diktierte Abscheu vor dem ›Erbfeind‹ im Westen.<sup>9</sup>

As Peter de Mendelssohn points out, the left-wing press and politicians undoubtedly underestimated the power of National Socialism, considering the extreme and in many ways primitive right-wing agitation unworthy of serious attention. However, as is clear from a superficial glance at any left-wing newspaper from the years 1930 to 1933, once the Social Democrats finally acknowledged the catastrophic consequences of a Nazi victory, they did not hesitate to warn against the rising right-wing extremism in strong, clear language. Katz, a young journalist who had mainly focused on social issues until he entered Berlin journalism in 1932, also published a few articles and poems to warn against the latest political developments. However, as he and his fellow Social Democrats soon realised, their efforts were largely in vain since by then the readers were unwilling to listen to further appeals for patience and contemplation. They wanted action, and while those who could afford it continued to read the Socialist papers, these readers no longer identified with the content. Hermann Ullstein reflected on this situation in retrospect:

Aber obwohl unsere Leser uns nach außen hin treu blieben, bestand nur wenig Zweifel, daß sie im Herzen nicht mehr auf unserer Seite waren. Innerlich war die gute Hälfte von ihnen, die überzeugt war, daß »es nicht so weitergehen kann«, bereits in Hitlers Lager. Tag um Tag kritisierten wir ihr Idol und griffen es an, und es hatte nicht die geringste Wirkung.<sup>10</sup>

The futility of their efforts to warn against the dangers of Nazism became clear when Hitler was appointed Chancellor, whereupon all opposing newspapers were prohibited and most of their staff, including Katz, driven into exile. The weapon of peace and democracy had been blunted.

Katz's journalistic articles are clearly products of the decision to make Socialist newspapers more accessible, less political in style, and more entertaining to the average worker while at the same time impressing on him a strong class-consciousness. The articles designed to warn against Hitler are more political and indeed sarcastic in style, while his *›Reportagen‹* from various industrial plants in the Berlin area are objective, well-researched and yet intended to display the poverty of many workers, indirectly criticising the injustice done to this group of the population. The following analysis of his articles will focus on Katz's development as a Socialist writer and the influence of the increasingly difficult political atmosphere in which he began his career as a journalist.

<sup>9</sup> Peter de Mendelssohn: *Zeitungstadt Berlin. Menschen und Mächte in der Geschichte der deutschen Presse*. Berlin: Ullstein 1959, p. 311.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

### a) Political Involvement in the Social Democratic Cause

Unlike better-known left-wing journalists from the period like Kurt Tucholsky, Siegfried Jacobsohn, Carl von Ossietzky, Alfons Petzold, and Joseph Roth, who feared that membership of either the SPD or the KPD would severely limit their political and creative freedom, the motivation behind all of Katz's journalistic writing was his membership of the SPD. He strongly identified with the party and its politics, involving himself actively at all levels in order to further the party ideology. This is especially obvious from his contributions to Social Democratic party magazines and newspapers in which, for example, he is greatly concerned with providing the young people with a proper political education. One of his first articles, »Arbeit und Erholung« (*Ostthüringer Tribüne*, 1925), aims at providing the pupils about to enter the labour market with proper working ethics and the knowledge that all kinds of work are equally valuable to society. The important thing, Katz says, is to carry out any work happily, being rewarded in body and spirit by knowing that any job is part of a greater process. The article ends by encouraging these young people to join the Social Democratic Party because here they will find proper support and the opportunity to spend their spare time with like-minded young people.

Another article, »Zehn Bücher. Ein Beitrag zur Debatte: Was soll die Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend lesen?« (*Ostthüringer Tribüne*, 1927), is concerned with the political education of Social Democratic youth, recommending ten books explaining Socialism, Marxism, and Capitalism. Katz emphasises the higher goals of such education:

»Wissen ist Macht« heißt es, Wissen wird aber nur dann zur Macht, wenn es richtig angewendet wird. Der Jugendliche aus dem Bürgertum verwendet sein Wissen, um zur »harmonischen Persönlichkeit« zu werden. *Wir* verwenden unser Wissen für den Kampf der Arbeiterklasse um ihre Befreiung!

The enthusiasm of the young journalist, who had himself joined the SPD only three years earlier, is obvious in this statement. His rousing style testifies to an attempt to make the young people identify with the Social Democratic cause, finding in it their spiritual home as he himself had done. This is done by dissociating them from the young people of the bourgeoisie whose purpose of studying is presented as selfish and unsocial. The young people from the working class, on the other hand, must be brought up to aim for higher more noble goals, working towards the creation of a truly equal society.

Exactly how this is to be achieved becomes clear from a summary of a SPD conference on Socialist education written by Katz in 1929. A short extract from this summary will demonstrate Katz's enormous enthusiasm for the cause and the confidence with which he and other Socialist leaders sought to educate young members in particular:

Die Bildungsarbeit muss immer im Zusammenhang stehen mit der wirtschaftlichen und politischen Situation. Sie ist untrennbar vom politischen und wirtschaftlichen Kampf. Die sozialistische Bildungsarbeit muss bewusst gegen alle Neutralitätsduse-

lei Stellung nehmen. Sie hat dafür die Lehre vom Klassenkampf zu stellen. Wenn auch die allgemeingültigen Vorträge, Feiern, Konzerte usw. für uns auch Geltung haben, so hat doch die sozialistische Bildungsarbeit die Aufgabe, für die geistige Aufrüstung des Proletariats, für den täglichen Kampf der Klassen, die Waffen zu liefern. Die bürgerlichen Volksbildner wollen »Brücken« zwischen den Klassen schlagen. Wir aber wollen Kämpfer bilden! Nicht Wissen um des Wissen willen, sondern Wissen um der Gestaltung willen! [...]

Das Bewusstsein [sic] der Arbeiter muss durch die Arbeiterbildung rebelliert werden [sic]. Unsere Aufgabe ist der bewusste Kampf gegen die bürgerliche Gesellschaft!<sup>11</sup>

The militant style of this article is typical of Socialist party writing at the time, testifying to the fervour with which these young Socialists dedicated themselves to their political ideals. The text is furthermore characterised by an extensive use of left-wing political jargon and clichés (»Klassenkampf«, »geistige Aufrüstung des Proletariats«, »Bewußtsein der Arbeiter«), which constituted both an external and internal sign of Socialist unity and class-consciousness.

Katz seriously involved himself in the practical implementation of these ideas of which several initiatives originated from the SAJ (Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend) – the Social Democratic Youth Movement. Particular attention was paid to the tradition of Social Democratic festive culture (*Festkultur*) which was scrutinised and found wanting because of its similarity to bourgeois society's party traditions. Katz, among others, called for a thorough reformation of the Socialist festive tradition, demanding a *Festkultur* which reflected the workers' lives and the Socialist cause for which they were all fighting. Political cabaret, theatre, singing, concerts, and recitals were to replace the usual beer-drinking, dancing, and smoking crowds, which Katz considered a disgrace to Socialist ideals. As W. L. Guttsman points out, the novelty of the new *Festkultur* lay not only in the basic ideas and concepts, but even more in the techniques employed.<sup>12</sup> Through *Sprechchöre*, that is mass-choruses declaiming the Socialist ideology more forcefully than traditional solo performances, and *Bewegungschöre*, co-ordinated rhythmic movements, performers and spectators were to be united, symbolising the unity and strength of the workers' movement and thereby reinforcing the individual worker's identification with the cause. Katz wrote several articles on the topic, strongly condemning the political apathy of the working classes and their lack of class-consciousness which made them content with the performance of bourgeois operettas instead of enlightening political cabarets and other politicised entertainment.<sup>13</sup> In a contribution from 1931 to *Unser Wille*, a periodical published monthly by the SAJ, he even goes a step further, demanding that Socialist celebrations should not only reflect the political programme of the party, but be the natural outcome of a deeply ingrained Socialist outlook in the individual:

<sup>11</sup> w-k: Unsere Bildungsarbeit [Manuscript: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1929].

<sup>12</sup> Guttsman, Workers' Culture (p. 41, note 2), p. 234.

<sup>13</sup> See his articles »Arbeiterfeste und Arbeiterjugend« (1928), »Silvesterfeier 1929« (1930), »Alle Jahre wieder – kommt das Sommerfest« (1931), and »Zum Mit-Denken! Grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zur Festkultur« (1931).

Der proletarische Mensch (und das mit Stolz) und die sozialistische Gesinnung sind nicht Feiertagsangelegenheiten! Und der proletarische Feiertag, das proletarische Fest kann diesen Menschen und diese Gesinnung nicht schaffen, nur der proletarische Alltag!

Deshalb: Der Revolution der Feste muß vorausgehen eine Revolution des Alltags!! Erst muß das Zusammenleben, das Zusammenwirken, die Zusammenarbeit getragen werden von dem Geist der Kameradschaft, der gegenseitigen Hilfe, der Freundschaft! Erst muß die funktionelle Demokratie im »Staate der Arbeiterorganisationen« spürbar sein! Dann wird man die Früchte ernten können: Feste und Feiern, die nicht bis zum Übelwerden aufgefropft wirken, die nicht im pathetischen lustleeren Raum schweben.<sup>14</sup>

Again we find strongly political and class-conscious language testifying to Katz's deep involvement in day-to-day Social Democratic politics and to the extent to which he identified with the party doctrines. The SPD had become his spiritual home and the centre of his hopes and beliefs for the future, shaping his outlook and influencing his choice of themes for his fictional journalistic writing, to which we shall turn shortly.

Such commitment to party politics could not, however, be presupposed with regard to all left-wing journalists at the time. Indeed, the journalists and intellectuals mentioned above were largely regarded as mere fellow-travellers of the Social Democratic Party because of their contempt for the Weimar Republic and its version of democracy. Yet, as Walter Laqueur points out, the SPD was quite content to keep these ›bohemians‹ at arm's length:

German social democracy traditionally had not much respect for intellectuals; they were useful as editors of party newspapers, and occasionally as speakers, even though they usually had difficulty in finding the right approach for a proletarian audience. [...] In any other capacity the intellectuals were found wanting: they were unwilling to do the *Kleinarbeit*, the essential daily chores of party life on which the movement depended. Such routine work was of no interest to them; instead (as the party leaders saw it) they were forever pressing utopian demands divorced from reality or pursuing campaigns which were of no obvious concern to the working class.<sup>15</sup>

While the accusations of a lack of commitment to Socialist politics on a day-to-day level are certainly true for some left-wing intellectuals such as Kurt Tucholsky and Carl von Ossietzky, the claims that they were also characterised by an utopian outlook cannot be applied to all writers and journalists who were not members of a party at the time. Many of them, including Tucholsky and Ossietzky, were certainly not utopian in their outlook but dedicated their lives to the battle against injustice and right-wing influences until the Nazi victory was a certainty. Tucholsky, for example, who was a major contributor to *Die Weltbühne* and even edited the paper for a short while after the death of Siegfried Jacobsohn, was famous for his sharp satirical criticism of Weimar bureaucracy,

<sup>14</sup> Willibald Kater: Zum Mit-Denken! Grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zur Festkultur. In: *Unser Wille* (1.12.1931).

<sup>15</sup> Walter Laqueur: Weimar. A Cultural History 1918–1933. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1974, p. 48.

militarism, and indeed the entire political administration of the Republic. He also lashed out at Hitler in several articles and poems, warning against the catastrophe of a Nazi take-over. Last but not least, he was famous for his theatre and book reviews published in *Die Weltbühne*, *Vossische Zeitung*, and *Prager Tageblatt*. Towards the end of the 1920s Tucholsky gravitated towards the KPD but never actually joined the party, preferring to maintain his political independence free from strict party doctrines. Realising the futility of his efforts to warn the German people of right-wing extremism, Tucholsky resigned and concentrated increasingly on his work as a reviewer in the years preceding Hitler's take-over.<sup>16</sup>

Compared with Tucholsky, Katz worked on a different political level, generally concerning himself more with the everyday life and problems of the proletarian than with the overall scheme of Weimar politics. This may have two reasons. First, his active involvement with day-to-day Social Democratic politics and his concern with the proper political education of the young members of the party made him focus on the ›little man‹ whose lot urgently needed improvement. Second, Katz was very young and inexperienced as a journalist at a time when Tucholsky, sixteen years his senior, was at the peak of his career. After his employment with the Berlin newspaper, *Die Welt am Montag*, in 1932, Katz too began to write articles criticising more directly both the Nazis and the KPD. These articles, however, never reached the level of stylistic and linguistic sophistication for which Tucholsky is famous till this day and soon thereafter, Hitler's ascension to power put a definitive end to Katz's apprenticeship as a Berlin journalist.

### b) The Fate of the Proletariat in Short Stories and *Reportagen*

How, then, does Katz describe the plight of the proletariat? What are his topics, perspectives, and methods? His preferred genre is the short story, published in the entertainment section of the Socialist newspapers for which he wrote. The vast majority of his contributions are signed with the pseudonym Willibald Kater, while others are various abbreviations of his name such as H. Willyk, h.W-k, W. Katz, wk, Willy Katz, and H. W. Katz. This reminds us of the distress of the young Jakob Fischmann in *Schloßgasse 21* who with great skill and ingenuity makes up various versions of his name in the hope of getting one of his poems or stories published – initially to no avail.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this scene in the novel may very well have been inspired by Katz's own experience as a young journalist.

<sup>16</sup> See: Klaus-Peter Schulz: Kurt Tucholsky in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten. Hamburg: Rowohlt 1959 (Rowohlt Monographien, 31) and: Berndt W. Wessling: Tucholsky – ein deutsches Ärgernis. Ein biographischer Essay. Gerlingen: Bleicher 1985 (Bleicher-Taschenbuch).

<sup>17</sup> Henry William Katz: *Schloßgasse 21. In einer kleinen Stadt.* Roman. Weinheim, Berlin: Beltz Quadriga 1994. Future references to the novel will be made in the text, marked S.

Katz's main concern is with the people most severely hit by the financial crisis: the unemployed, young couples, single mothers, pensioners, and children suffering hunger and deprivation. In his stories, he describes every facet of working-class life with great psychological insight, encouraging the reader to empathise with the fictional characters. In order to achieve this identification, he uses different perspectives and narratorial techniques such as telling the story from a child's point of view. The language of these articles is kept simple and the arguments are naive, yet touching and to the point precisely because of their simplicity. One such example is the story *'Meine Mutter weint nicht mehr'* (*Leipziger Volkszeitung* and *Erfurter Tribüne*, 1931), in which a young child begs for fruit for his family because his mother is unemployed and very poor. The story is told by the ten-year-old brother who in naive terms explains the mechanisms of society to his younger brother as he himself has been taught them at the Socialist children's group, *'Die Roten Falken'*. The story is typical of Katz's short stories at the time and the latter half of it will therefore be quoted at some length:

Fritz ist erst sechs Jahre alt, er versteht noch nicht viel. Er weiß nicht, daß die Mutter arbeiten will, aber sie kann nicht. Ich bin schon zehn Jahre alt und bei den Roten Falken. Ich habe dem Fritz gesagt, die Mutter will schon arbeiten, aber sie wird nicht gelassen. Es sind sehr, sehr viele Menschen arbeitslos. So viele Menschen haben wir auf einmal noch nie gesehen. Bei uns im Hause gehen alle stempeln. Und wenn die Mutter aufs Stempelamt geht, da stehen dort schon welche aus allen Häusern in unserer Straße. Und in der ganzen Welt. Ich weiß das ganz genau, weil ich ein Roter Falke bin, ich lese jeden Tag die *'Volkszeitung'* und unsere Helfer bei den Kinderfreunden haben es uns gesagt. Immer sind nur die Armen arbeitslos, die gern arbeiten wollen, weil sie doch essen wollen und überhaupt leben. Aber sie können nicht arbeiten, weil sie doch keine Maschinen haben. Die gehören anderen Leuten, die einen großen, großen Sack voll Geld haben und keinen Hunger.

Wenn wir einmal groß sein werden, dann nehmen wir die Maschinen und geben sie den Arbeitern. Dann werden alle arbeiten können und richtig leben. Und wir kriegen dann wieder Brot in die Schule mit. Da wird Wurst drauf sein oder Käse oder eine Banane, aber eine ganze. Und die Mutter wird arbeiten können, und der Herr Pauli auch, und alle, alle Menschen. Und wir werden die Mutter jeden Tag an der Fabrik abholen und mit ihr durch die Straßen bummeln. Und wir werden die Schaufenster angucken, und dann kaufen wir was ein. Und dann gehen wir nach Hause, und dann dürfen wir das Licht anknipsen. Und wir werden nie wieder im Dunkeln sitzen. Denn die Mutter wird Arbeit haben.

Das habe ich dem Fritz alles gesagt. Und ich habe ihn gefragt, hast du alles verstanden? Da hat er gesagt, ja.

Die Mutter weint viel, aber ich habe ihr gesagt, sie soll nicht mehr weinen. Ich bin ein tapferer Arbeiterjunge, ich will ihr helfen. Ich werde sie nie wieder ärgern. Ich rutsche auch nicht mehr mit meinen Schuhen auf den Pflastersteinen, weil ich dann so viele Sohlen brauche. Ich habe ihr gesagt, daß ich bei den Roten Falken ein tüchtiger Kerl werden will. Denn wir wollen doch später die Maschinen holen für die Arbeiter und auch für sie damit alle wieder arbeiten können.

Da hat die Mutter aufgehört zu weinen.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Willibald Kater: Meine Mutter weint nicht mehr. In: *Erfurter Tribüne* (1.12.1931).

To the modern reader, the style of this story and its naive explanation of the Socialist ideology seem almost embarrassingly mawkish, and yet it was by no means unusual at the time. As mentioned earlier, the *feuilleton* was to appeal particularly to women readers who as housewives and mothers were attracted by stories from everyday life with which to identify. Katz himself wrote several such stories about workers' children who helped sustain the family through model behaviour and self-sacrifice, such as giving up Christmas gifts (»Arbeitslosenkind läuft in der Stadt herum«, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1931). In other cases, children's games mirroring life itself during the financial crisis are observed and related from a distance, showing very plainly the difficulties of unemployment and poverty which had become a normal part of their childhood (»Kinder spielen 'Kasperle geht stempeln'«, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1931). As in the above quotation, the style is always very naive, reflecting the mind of an innocent and unspoiled child undeservedly victimised by the crisis. Indeed, all characters in Katz's articles are victims of forces which they themselves cannot change or even understand. Contrary to Communist literature at the time, which always offers a solution in the form of a revolutionary Communist takeover, almost all Katz's stories merely depict proletarian misery without suggesting a way out of it other than the »comfort« that they were not alone in their suffering. In fact, the above quotation from »Meine Mutter weint nicht mehr« (*Leipziger Volkszeitung* and *Erfurter Tribüne*, 1931) is one of the rare examples in Katz's short fiction of a direct political statement, arguing that membership of the SPD offers relief in the present situation and the prospects of a more just society in the future. The child's naive confidence conveys a kind of blind trust in the power of the party designed to comfort and retain party members. The story is furthermore deliberately didactic in that it indirectly encourages the imitation of the child's model behaviour such as the daily reading of a Social Democratic newspaper.

However, as mentioned above, Katz mostly contents himself with depicting proletarian life and misery, thereby levelling indirect criticism at the government's policy. Yet most of the time the characters' problems are simply blamed on the difficult times rather than the government; Katz was, after all, an active member of the governing party. While the majority of these social realist stories depict everyday events, some assume a sensational character, describing, for example, the consequences of extreme despair such as fathers killing their families for lack of money to support them. Stories such as »Die Geschichte eines einfachen Mordes« (*Metallarbeiterzeitung*, 1931) and »Joseph der Tischler« (*Holzarbeiterzeitung*, 1931), always testify to the individual's willingness to find work, his despair of succeeding, and the psychological effect of rejection and unemployment. Katz's focus, then, is not only the physical consequences of poverty and unemployment but even more the depiction of the characters' psychological state. Very carefully and with great empathy he enters their minds, using free indirect discourse to reveal the thoughts and feelings they cannot even share with their wives or husbands. As always

the narratorial voice is full of compassion, encouraging the reader to empathise with the frustrated protagonists. Often their way to the present misery is shown in short glimpses, depicting an initially happy family or couple whose life is slowly ruined by inflation and unemployment. In his non-fictional article ›Verpfuschte Jugend‹ (*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1932), Katz expresses more direct criticism, pointing to the demoralising effects of unemployment for the young German people:

Das ist Zivilisation! Das ist Kultur! Das ist die kapitalistische Gesellschaft:

– Verpfuschte Jugend!! – So sieht diese ›Schön-ist-die-Jugendzeit‹ heute aus;

Die Schulzeit ist zu Ende, drei Jahre Lehrzeit, Gesellenprüfung. Entlassung, keine Arbeit da, stempeln gehen, aus –

Die Schulzeit ist zu Ende, keine Arbeitstelle aufzutreiben, gleich stempeln gehen, aus –

Junge Ehe, arbeitslos, Erwerbslosenversicherung, Krisenfürsorge, Wohlfahrtsunterstützung, immer wieder eine Treppe tiefer, Kind bei den Schwiegereltern, aus –

Ist das die ›Gottgewollte Ordnung‹:

Die Jugend ist zum Nichtstun verurteilt! Sie ist zum Hungern verurteilt! Die arbeitswilligen Hände sterben ab! In den Köpfen stirbt der Arbeitswille ab!!!

Was sollen uns die Worte: Kultur, Zivilisation – wenn junge Menschen von der Arbeit und damit vom Leben ausgeschlossen sind!

Hinweg mit dieser kapitalistischen Gesellschaft!!<sup>19</sup>

The rather long article, of which the above quotation forms the end, is written in a very angry tone, demonstrating Katz's resentment of the government's handling of the unemployment situation. The quotation furthermore indicates that although he is a member of the governing Social Democratic Party, he still considers contemporary Germany a capitalist society, calling for more radical left-wing measures to be taken. Yet, speaking from an anti-Communist position, Katz was decidedly against an armed revolution and does not elaborate further on how to overthrow the capitalist system. As a close observer, he notices and recounts the misery around him, telling people's stories from their point of view, unlike, for example, Kurt Tucholsky, who almost always describes his observations from his own point of view. Katz reports proletarian life with the proletarians' own voices, reproducing, for example, imagined or authentic interviews with original Berlin dialect to stress the realism of his accounts. One interview, conducted in a shelter for unemployed workers, particularly reflects the basic ideas of most of his fictional journalistic work and will therefore be quoted at some length. The paragraphs quoted here are preceded by interviews with two factory workers about working conditions and their fear of being dismissed. Katz then turns to a group of unemployed workers, asking them to describe their lives and political outlook:

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<sup>19</sup> Willibald Kater: Verpfuschte Jugend. In: *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (21.1.1932).

Nicht die Arbeiter, die Erwerbslosen geben heute der Klasse des Proletariats ihr besonderes Gesicht. Welche Werte werden durch die Arbeitslosigkeit zerstört! [...] Aber alle wissen, daß ihre Not nicht eine persönliche ist. Das öffnet ihnen den Mund und die Herzen, sie reden sich das Elend vom Leibe, sie sind froh, daß sie jemanden haben, der ihnen zuhört. Sie können nicht immer zu Hause sitzen, sie halten die stummen vorwurfsvollen Blicke der Frauen und Kinder nicht mehr aus.

Da sitzt einer neben mir, vielleicht fünfunddreißig Jahre alt. Unter der dunklen Schirmmütze blicken mich zwei ernste, tief eingegrabene Augen an. »Mir ist ja alles ganz egal. Aber meine Kinder –! Ist denn das eine Erziehung für die, wenn ich zu Hause sitze und nicht arbeite!? Die können das doch nicht verstehen, daß ich will, aber nicht kann, nicht darf! Die sagen immer nur: Schmidts Emma ihr Vater geht auf Arbeit und kauft ihr immer was neues. Ist ja gar nicht so schlimm mit dem kaufen! Der hat seinem Mädel jetzt mal ein paar Schuhe mitgebracht. Aber das haben meine Kinder nun gesehen, das genügt ihnen und nun sagen sie: wenn Vater auf Arbeit ginge, kriegen wir auch Schuhe.« Der Mann stiert vor sich hin. Nach einer Pause fährt er fort: »Ist denn das überhaupt ein Leben, wenn man keine Arbeit hat! Da sitzt unsreiner den ganzen Tag in Mutters Küche und es steigt ihm manchmal auf. Und die Tränen kommen einem, wenn man so die Mutter ansieht und die Kinder ...«

Ein anderer: »Nicht nur weil du keine Arbeit hast: Nein, krank wirst du dabei! In dir geht was entzwei! Du verlierst jeden Mut und das bißchen Selbstvertrauen, was du dir noch gegeben hast, geht drauf. Und haste wieder mal Arbeit, heißt es nach einer Woche: Es tut uns leid, lassen Sie sichs gut gehen. Und dann liegt man wieder monatelang draußen, und dann wieder das gleiche Theater. Man verlernt doch alles, was man mal gekonnt hat! Ich getraue mir gar nicht mehr, eine Rauhbank anzufassen, weil ich Angst habe, ich kanns nicht mehr. Drei Jahre lieg ich nun schon auf der Straße.«

Einer ist am Tisch, der schiebt das Gespräch aufs Politische. Der meint: »Viele sind selber schuld, wenn es jetzt ihnen und uns allen schlecht geht. Solange sie Arbeit hatten, kümmerten sie sich 'nen Dreck um ihre Organisationen. Sie waren vielleicht organisiert, aber mitgearbeitet, mitgeworben – nee, davon war keine Spur zu merken. Erst als sie aufs Stempelamt mußten, merkten sie auf einmal, wie wichtig die Gewerkschaft und die Partei ist. Und manche sind dabei, die waren nie organisiert. Die haben andere für sich schuften lassen. Aber wenn diese Kerle zum ersten Mal Hunger spüren, dann sind sie auf einmal »führende Männer« in den Groschen-gewerkschaften, bei den »Gelben« und bei der RGO. Da sind sie auf einmal politisch bis dahinaus. Da meinen sie, alle anderen sind Lumpen, nur sie wüßten, wodurch es so ist und wie es besser werden kann. Da schimpfen sie auf die Bonzen, und glauben, wer weiß wie revolutionär sie damit sind. Radau machen ist noch keine Revolution! Diese Brüder, die heute das Maul nicht weit genug aufreißen können, das sind die Drückeberger von gestern! Die haben nichts getan, um die Front der Arbeiter zu stärken. Die haben sich gedrückt, als es galt, nicht nur zu schreien, sondern zu handeln. Und die werden sich auch morgen wieder drücken, wenn es nicht nur auf das Reden ankommt! Die Solidarität der Arbeiter und die Führung des Klassenkampfes ist keine Angelegenheit der großen Schnauze, sondern der unermüdlichen Kleinarbeit in den Klassenorganisationen! Ob es uns gut geht oder schlecht: immer ist es der sichtbare Ausdruck unserer Macht oder Machtlosigkeit!« Der das sagt, ist noch jung. Aber er setzt die Worte sicher. Was er sagt hat Hand und Fuß, aus jedem Satz spürt man, daß es durchdacht und erlebt ist.

Der Prolet spricht –: das ist nicht das Gerede eines Dozenten, der sich vorher alles klüglich auf Papier niedergelegt hat. Das ist auch nicht das niederträchtige, schwülstige und verquollene Geschwabber verantwortungsloser Hetzer und Stänker,

die sich den Mantel des ›nationalen Sozialismus‹ oder des ›revolutionären echten Leninismus‹ umgehängt haben, um in Wahrheit die Geschäfte der Reaktion zu besorgen. Nichts faszinierendes im schauspielerischen Sinne ist in den Worten des einfachen Mannes ohne Namen. Kein schamloser Wortschwall, kein simples Wortgeplänkel zeichnet diese Gespräche in den Wohnungen, auf den Stempelämtern, auf den Straßen aus. Der Prolet spricht –: er redet ohne Pathos, nachdenklich, bedächtig und manchmal – nur zu leise von dem, was ihn bewegt.<sup>20</sup>

The above paragraphs contain several elements of importance to Katz's writing. There is, first of all, the psychologically devastating effect of unemployment mentioned earlier. Fathers' difficulty in facing hungry family members, for example, is a recurring theme in many of his short stories as well as the lack of money to buy their children even the most necessary clothing. Silence prevails between spouses or quarrels develop because wives refuse to accept their husbands' passivity. More important than these characteristic features, however, is the way in which Katz lashes out at different political groups – even within the SPD. His anger particularly concerns the party members who have only joined the workers' union and the SPD after they became unemployed, now loudly proclaiming the workers' rights and demands as their own. Yet, as he points out, they are only doing so from a personal and selfish point of view, showing no trace of true class-consciousness or identification with the Socialist cause. Unwilling to commit themselves to the day-to-day work of the party, they are of no use and therefore do not deserve to share the results achieved by the workers' unions. Katz thoroughly dislikes loud voices with no substance, as is also evidenced by his criticism of the National Socialists and the Communists, whom, in keeping with traditional SPD policy at the time, he dismisses as being equally anti-Socialist and reactionary because both ultimately lead to dictatorship. The style is kept colloquial, characterised by a distinct use of everyday workers' jargon. The mention of silence is employed as a narratorial device to emphasise the workers' hopelessness. At the same time, the account conveys to the reader the workers' political integrity and determination in a way which a second-hand account by the narrator would not have been able to do. By reproducing the workers' own words, not only their anger but also their intelligence become obvious. This is achieved by means of different rhetorical devices such as the reiteration of certain words at the beginning of sentences (Da sind sie auf einmal ..., Da meinen sie ..., Da schimpfen sie ...). Well-structured argumentative talks by high-minded speakers are thus dismissed as pompous while the unschooled voice of the proletarian is celebrated as true-to-life utterance. The proletarian's sentences are short but characterised by the narrator as having ›Hand und Fuß‹ unlike the talk of the intellectual speaker which he calls ›Gerede‹ and ›Geschwabber‹, thereby stressing its superficiality and wordiness as well as the consequent lack of a deeper meaning. By having the worker express his own views, Katz avoids the pitfall of becoming such a speaker himself. Instead, he contents himself with the role of the narrator, describing in very sympathetic

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<sup>20</sup> Willibald Kater: Der Prolet spricht ... [Manuscript: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1931].

phrases the fate of the suppressed workers of whom the proletarians in the text are clearly meant to be representatives.

A theme which deserves particular attention is Katz's critical depiction of the clerks (›Angestellte‹) who in their capacity as white-collar workers are caught between the lower middle classes and the proletariat. Indeed, as Katz wants to show, they are worse off than the proletarians because they are non-union labour with no financial, political, or moral support from anyone when they lose their jobs. Several short stories deal with the lengths these people go to in order to maintain their supposedly privileged position which, as Katz wants to demonstrate, is not privileged at all but a terrible trap. In some cases this is done with biting sarcasm, describing the petty lives of these lower working-class members who in their own minds stand well above the common worker and yet are financially as troubled as the proletarian. Their high-minded opinion of themselves as well as their attempts to keep up appearances are ridiculed. In the story ›Emil, ein Angestellter‹ (*Freie Angestellte*, 1931), for example, the clerks are portrayed as dependent and easily manipulated men, eager to please their mostly National Socialist employers in order to keep their ›privileged‹ positions:

Friedrich Emil Zierfischel hat schon immer gesagt: es muß anders werden. So wie das ist, ist das eine große Schweinerei. Und was seine Kollegen im Büro sind, die haben ihm recht gegeben. [...]

Emil ist aktives Mitglied in einem Verein: Im Gesangverein »Liedertafel«. Er macht dort den dritten Schriftführer und singt im ersten Tenor. Wenn er Donnerstags in seinen Verein geht, gibt ihm Frau Zierfischel neunzig Pfennig, und er sagt »danke schön«. Die anderen Abende verbringt er zu Hause und hört Radio. Er sagt immer, am schönsten sind die Rheinlandlieder. Im Büro hat er gesagt, seine größten Erlebnisse am Radio waren die Rheinlandfeiern. Und Emil muß es ja wissen, denn er ist musikalisch.

Seine Frau geht jede Woche zweimal in den Frauenverein. Da muß er zu Hause bleiben. Einmal im Monat geht sie ins Kino, da darf Emil mit. Wenn sie vor dem Kino stehen, gibt ihm seine Frau Geld, und er kauft die Karten. [...]

Emil bekommt im Monat Hundertsiebenundsiebzig Mark. Eigentlich hat er viel mehr zu beanspruchen. Aber sein Chef ist doch mit in der »Liedertafel«, und da kann Emil eben nicht so, wie er möchte. Seine Frau sagt immer: Emil, sagt sie, du bist ein Esel. Und da hat sie recht. Emil ist auch in einem Verband organisiert, nämlich im »Deutschnationalen Handlungsgenossenverband«. Da ist er mit rein, weil der, was der Generalsekretär von dem Verein ist, der Freund von seinem Chef ist. Wenn das nicht so wäre, wäre Emils Frau auch gar nicht dafür, daß er drin ist. So ist sie dafür, und er drin.

Emil hat also immer gesagt, es muß anders werden. Er ist gegen die Schweinerei, wie sie jetzt ist. Und die größte Schweinerei, hat er gemeint, ist die Politik. Das sagt auch seine Frau, die es von der Frau Pfarrer hat, und die muß es wissen, weil ihr Mann doch beim Stahlhelm ist. Zu Hause hat Emil nicht viel zu melden. Aber im Büro führt er das große Wort. Immer schimpft er gegen die erbärmlichen Zustände, die schon gar keine mehr sind. Einmal schreit er ganz laut: er ist gegen die Partei. Und seine Kollegen sagen mitgerissen: sehr richtig. Nur einer fragt schüchtern, gegen welche. Da sagt Emil mit gewaltiger Stimme: gegen alle. So ein Politiker ist Emil.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Willibald Kater: Emil ein Angestellter. In: *Freie Angestellte* (16.1.1931).

At the next election Emil votes National Socialist because his employer asks him to, and yet shortly thereafter he is asked to work at seriously reduced wages or leave the company because of financial problems. His employer obviously has no scruples whatsoever about firing him, but the incident completely shakes up Emil's secure world. At the end of the story the narrator's sarcasm is gone, leaving a very sober description of Emil's rude awakening to reality:

Und dann saß Emil wieder an seinen (sic) Schreibplatz. Und sein fieberheißer Kopf stellte ihm Fragen. Warum, wo er doch mit dem Alten in der »Liedertafel« ist, wo er doch ihm zuliebe im DHV ist, wo er doch seine Partei gewählt hat, warum, warum ... Und dann hat Emil an seine Frau gedacht, wo sie doch heute gerade ins Kino wollen. Und seine Kinder. An die Vier, die er schon hat, und an das Fünfte, das wo unterwegs ist, weil seine Frau nicht anders wollte, wo sie doch im evangelischen Frauenverein ist. Und Emil saß da und hat angefangen über alles nachzudenken, zu denken, nachzudenken, zu denken, nachzudenken, zu denken...

Er ist verrückt geworden, denn er war das Denken nicht gewohnt.<sup>22</sup>

As in most of Katz's stories, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions. Emil is not shown the way to the SPD and the unions but his ›special relations‹ with his employer, designed to give him security, are revealed as useless. His opportunism is futile because, as it is implied, ›capitalist‹ employers unscrupulously exploit their employees. However, the narrator blames not only the unprincipled employer, as his behaviour is to be expected in a Socialist world view, but even more Emil himself whose naïveté is blatantly exposed by the narrator's sarcastic and patronising description of his life. His servile relationship with his wife serves to show his general weakness and disposition for manipulation by people stronger than himself. Indeed, his name, Zierfischel, indicates that Emil is only ›zur Zierde‹ – merely ornamental and furthermore as passive as a fish. Emil, then, belongs to the group of people characterised as ›Drückeberger‹ in the above quotation from the article ›Der Prolet spricht‹, referring to those who disregard the workers' movement until they are in Emil's situation. Particularly incisive is the ironic description of Emil's apolitical attitude, characteristic of many middle-class citizens in the Weimar Republic. Dissatisfied with the present state of affairs, he needs to vent his anger and frustration and does so by randomly accusing ›the party‹ without specifying which party he means. It is important, of course, that only one of his colleagues wonders which party he blames for the misery while the rest show their own political ignorance by agreeing with Emil that ›the party‹ is to blame. For lack of a clearly defined enemy, any scapegoat symbolising powers beyond one's own control will do. As mentioned earlier, a lot of the earlier sarcasm is gone in the last paragraph, which is meant to impress on the reader the consequences of Emil's

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

opportunistic and apolitical attitude. This is particularly stressed by the change from the present to the past tense in the last paragraph which constitutes a change of the reader's perspective. Throughout the present-tense sections, we experience Emil's life with him on his level. The change to the past tense, however, makes the reader see him from a distance, providing us with the opportunity to realise and condemn his foolish behaviour through hindsight. We leave him reflecting on his situation, assuming that he will take a different course but uncertain if this course will be the SPD, the National Socialist or Communist alternative.

Ten months later, the story about Emil and his wife is continued in the short story *'Emil spricht mit dem Chef'* (*Zeitung der Angestellten*, 1931). The tone is now less ironic and more serious, intended to demonstrate Emil's miserable situation. He is still depicted as a naive fool but no longer ridiculed as in the first story. Instead, his poverty and unhappiness are emphasised, resulting in a conversation with his employer, Reibeisen, who blames Emil for lack of understanding for the employer himself. Once again we find an interesting symbolic use of names, as Reibeisen is the owner of a cheese factory. His name could thus refer both to the grating of cheese and to his harsh treatment of his employees. Unlike the earlier story, the narrator's irony now targets the employer's self-pity instead of Emil who, after all, is the one to be pitied. Instead of giving him the pay rise he asks for, Reibeisen tells him to join the National Socialists who will provide him with explanations for his misery and make him feel better. How this is going to feed his family is a mystery to Emil. Again the ending is open, providing no hope for the future.

Eight months later, we encounter Emil Zierfischel one last time in the story *'Kolleg Zierfischel. Beinah ein deutsches Märchen'* (*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1932). Emil has won a prize for the best business slogan which will earn the company a lot of money. The prize, however, is the change his employer happens to have in his pocket and clearly an insult to Emil's hard work. Hurt and angry, Emil decides to return the *'prize'* and tell his employer what he thinks of him, and yet, he cannot do so because he needs all the money he can get for his family. He further fears to destroy the *'special relationship'* he believes himself to have with his employer since both are members of the same National Socialist choral society. Katz's intention is to show the futility of such *'special relations'* designed to raise the *'Angestellte'* above the level of the common worker. The personal relationship is an illusion, leaving the clerk to his own devices when it comes to the crunch. In this story, the satirical tone is gone and Emil is described as a naive but innocent victim of circumstances beyond his control. He is pitied rather than ridiculed by the narrator.

The poem *'Geteiltes Leid ist halbes Leid'* (*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1932) further illustrates this combination of descriptive social realism and biting sarcasm characteristic of Katz's journalistic writing:

Wir haben ein Kind. Und noch ein Kind  
Und noch.

Und noch.

Und noch.

Wir haben *fünf* Kinder zur Welt gebracht –  
da hat sie mich arbeitslos gemacht –

mich rausgeschmissen  
mich umgerissen

den Kindern vor die Füße geschmissen –  
die Welt.

Wir haben fünf Kinder – und haben kein Geld.  
Kein Geld.

Kein Geld.

Kein Geld.

Jetzt hat sie den Fritz in die Schule geschickt –  
in Strümpfen. Dann hat sie mich angeblickt,

die Mutter – stumm –  
das wirft mich um.

Sie macht mich heiß und kalt und stumm –  
die Not.

Wir haben fünf Kinder – und haben kein Brot.  
Kein Brot.

Kein Brot.

Kein Brot.

Sie kriegen zum Frühstück kein Frühstück nicht,  
Zum Mittag immer ein Hafergericht –

das hält dann nach  
bis – andern Tag.

Nachts liegen sie hungrig, ohn' Licht und wach –  
im Bett.

Wir haben fünf Kinder – und das ist nett!  
Ganz nett!!

Ganz nett!!!

Ganz nett!!!!

Geteiltes Leid ist halbes Leid  
– wenn Kinder mithungern – fast Lustbarkeit.

Im Kreise der Lieben  
das Hungern zu üben

ist beinah ein Spaß mit Vergnügungssteuer –  
nicht teuer.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the obvious lack of poetic qualities, the poem succeeds in conveying its strong political message to the reader by contrasting what could have been a happy family with the actual physical and psychological consequences of poverty and

<sup>23</sup> Willibald Kater: Geteiltes Leid ist halbes Leid. In: Leipziger Volkszeitung (24.2.1932).

unemployment. The last stanza, in particular, cynically mocks the ›blessings‹ of family life under the present circumstances, sarcastically dismissing the ›truth‹ of the proverb that shared sorrow is easier to bear. Once again the text merely depicts the poverty of thousands of workers, offering the reader the opportunity to identify with the narrator but no hope of improvement in the future.

Katz, however, was not the only journalist with an interest in the little man's plight and in people in general. Alfred Polgar, for example, another journalist and critic at the time, was famous for his sketches (*Skizzen*) and stories which closely portrayed people and little, apparently insignificant things in society. Indeed, contemporary journalists awarded him the unofficial title ›Meister der kleinen Form‹ for his short prose. Like Katz, Polgar was interested in people's behaviour and innermost thoughts, describing their struggles with jealousy, envy, loneliness, love, and poverty.<sup>24</sup> His style was very concise and to the point, characterising human nature in a few sentences. Often, he pondered on the use or meaning of things which most people do not care to think about until their attention is drawn to them, or he used sarcasm to pinpoint certain characteristics about people common to all humans in certain situations. Unlike Katz, however, Polgar was entirely apolitical and uninterested in party politics although he must certainly be considered left-wing in his general outlook. Indeed, although Walter Benjamin did not actually mention Polgar in this context, Ulrich Weinzierl counts him among the left-wing intellectuals, such as Kurt Tucholsky and Erich Kästner, who suffered from what Benjamin called ›linke Melancholie‹:

Kurz, dieser Radikalismus ist genau diejenige Haltung, der überhaupt keine politische Aktion mehr entspricht. Er steht links nicht von dieser oder jener Richtung, sondern ganz einfach links vom Möglichen überhaupt. Denn er hat ja von vorneherein nichts anderes im Auge als in negativistischer Ruhe sich selbst zu genießen.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Katz, Polgar was thus no advocate of working-class rights but merely wrote social criticism from a humanistic point of view, defining his outlook in negative rather than positive terms for lack of a positive world view to which to commit himself. This also explains why the number of his socio-critical writings diminished at the beginning of the thirties when, like most other left-wing intellectuals, he began to foresee the coming right-wing take-over. Instead, he devoted himself to writing theatre reviews and unpolitical sketches. Katz only rarely wrote such things because of his strong political commitment which became increasingly militant as the year 1933 approached. Such differences in background and motivation, however, do not alter the fact that there

<sup>24</sup> See ›Nicht für es gebaut‹, ›In der Telefonzelle‹, ›Einsamkeit‹, ›Bescherung‹, ›Irrlicht‹ in: Alfred Polgar: Auswahl. Prosa aus vier Jahrzehnten. Ed. by Bernt Richter. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 1968.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Benjamin: Linke Melancholie. Zu Erich Kästners neuem Gedichtbuch. In: W. B.: Gesammelte Schriften. Ed. by Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1972, Vol. 3, p. 279–283, p. 281. See also: Ulrich Weinzierl: Alfred Polgar. Eine Biographie. Wien, München: Löcker 1985, p. 152.

are certain similarities in style and themes in Katz's and Polgar's short fiction which testify to a common interest in people, psychology, and social realism.

Like Alfred Polgar and Kurt Tucholsky, Joseph Roth largely adopted an attitude of resignation when Hitler's political victory became predictable. In the early twenties he wrote socio-critical articles and poems for the left-wing newspapers and magazines *Vorwärts*, *Lachen Links*, and *Drachen* which he signed »Josephus« or »Der rote Joseph«. Although he seems to identify with the proletariat in these texts and although his use of language is clearly influenced by Socialist ideology, Klaus Westermann points out that Roth's sudden commitment to the labour movement more likely testifies to his enjoyment at playing with meanings and identities than to true commitment to Socialism. The use of the colour red, for example, very often signifies blood and love rather than Communism and Revolution in Roth's language.<sup>26</sup> Yet his articles from this period are more concerned with condemning the reactionary tendencies in Weimar society, militarism, bureaucracy, and the increasing number of right-wing extremist actions than with the fate of the individual proletarian.

In 1924 Roth abandoned his Socialist commitments in favour of the liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, ultimately putting an end to his more directly political writing. However, as Edward Timms has argued in his study of Roth's journalism, Roth was not nearly as unpolitical as he has been described by Klaus Westermann among others. Indeed as Timms points out, he continued to write about the Jewish question and the increasing Nazification of Germany in exile, while others such as Tucholsky and Karl Kraus gave up.<sup>27</sup> He also travelled to Russia and Eastern Europe as a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, producing articles about the culture of the countries he visited. Yet, it is true that a shift in emphasis did take place towards the end of Roth's life, causing him to expand his work as a theatre reviewer and pay increasing attention to his work as a novelist rather than overtly political writing. Klaus Westermann attributes Roth's employment with such a broad spectrum of newspapers to a general political rootlessness at the time, which in turn derived from a chronic lack of money and an attitude of resignation towards the rise in right-wing extremism in Germany. In particular, Roth needed time and money to devote himself to his work as a novelist.<sup>28</sup> Compared to Katz, then, Roth concerned himself with more general political questions. Katz, on the other hand, worked on an entirely different basis, committed to the Socialist cause and the plight of the individual in everything he wrote. Pointing out social injustice and fighting radical political tendencies were his only priorities until the beginning of his exile.

<sup>26</sup> Klaus Westermann: Joseph Roth, Journalist. Eine Karriere 1915–1939. Bonn: Bouvier 1987 (Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik-, und Literaturwissenschaft, 368), p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Timms: Joseph Roths Antisemitismuskritik und die jüdische Identitätsproblematik. In: Joseph Roth. Der Sieg über die Zeit. Londoner Symposium. Ed. by Alexander Stillmark. Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz 1996 (Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 320), p. 18–30.

<sup>28</sup> Westermann, Joseph Roth (penultimate note), p. 68.

It was, however, not Katz's short stories which eventually led to his employment with *Die Welt am Montag* in Berlin but his *Reportagen* from industrial plants in the Berlin surroundings. Particularly his accounts from the well-known Leunawerke, published in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* in early 1932, awakened the interest of the two Berlin senators, Paul Hertz and Siegfried Aufhäuser, who managed to get him a position as an editor with the Berlin newspaper. What aspects of German industry did Katz deal with and what were his views on the relationship between workers and employers, on the one hand, and between man and machines, on the other hand?

Implied in the genre *Reportage* is the authenticity of its content. Katz entered the industrial plants – legally or illegally – and reported what he saw in an entertaining yet matter-of-fact and critical way. Frequent interviews with workers about working and living conditions as well as the employment policy of the plants contribute to a multifaceted and convincing presentation. Most *Reportagen* describe the sequence of operations, deplored that many workers have now been replaced by machines, thus causing immense unemployment in the area and the closure of entire workers' villages. Interviews with workers testify to the constant fear of unemployment and to difficulties with surviving on continually reduced wages. Katz is furthermore very critical of the cultural life at the plants, accusing the leaders of providing the workers with bourgeois entertainment. He further criticises the workers' newspapers published by the plants, for strongly discouraging Socialist activity among the workers, although the papers are advertised as politically neutral.<sup>29</sup>

Particularly interesting is his ambivalent view of modern technology. On the one hand, Katz deplores the consequences of the introduction of machines for the thousands of workers who have recently been fired. The impersonality of these machines versus a feeling and thinking human being is presented as ominous. He is furthermore deeply critical of the negative effect of the plants on the environment in which so many workers and their families spend their lives:

Das »Werk«, so wird es allgemein genannt, steht einsam, wie Zwingburger [sic] immer, in dieser trostlosen Landschaft ohne Hügel, Wald und Täler. Wie eine drohende Faust erhebt sich dieses riesige Bündel Schornsteine aus dem flachen Boden wuchtig, fest und unerschütterlich: gemahnend an die Kraft des Besitzers – Rauch, Flammen und giftige Lüfte um sich werfend.<sup>30</sup>

This clearly negative view of modern industry is, however, contradicted in Katz's admiration for its immense efficiency compared to previous working methods demanding the labour of thousands of workers. He is furthermore fascinated by the look of the machines which he considers strangely beautiful as they rise in the German landscape:

<sup>29</sup> See, for example: Willibald Kater: Im mitteldeutschen Industriegebiet: Gewerkschaft Michel-Vesta. In: Ostthüringer Tribüne (10.10.1931).

<sup>30</sup> Willibald Kater: Kleiner Leuna-Bilderbogen. In: Leipziger Volkszeitung (12.1.1932).

Wie gewaltige Urwelttiere, wie aufgeblasene Riesenfrösche hocken graue Bagger auf den Gleisen. Wie in Schlaf versunkene Märchentiere lassen sie ihre Greifer nach oben und unten hängen. Unheimlich elegant strecken die Absatzbagger (Ableger) ihre großen Arme von sich. Die Absatzbagger ruhen! Nur ein einziger Löffelbagger frisst mit seinen Schaufeln Erde, mit einem Hieb legt er fast 2 Kubikmeter Erde ab.<sup>31</sup>

This poetic, almost uncanny description of the machines significantly contrasts with the above depiction of the Leunawerke. In this description, the machines assume the characteristics of prehistoric animals, merging the notion of impersonal technology versus living and feeling beings. Words such as »hocken«, »in Schlaf versunkene«, »strecken«, »ruhen« and »frißt« suggest a personification of something which is otherwise cold and threatening. Provided with animal qualities it becomes distinctly less uncanny.

Katz, however, was not the only one to show concern with the relationship between man and technology. Indeed, this conflict preoccupied many writers at the time. While earlier generations had perceived the industrial process as exclusively hostile to man, the workers' literature between 1910 and 1933 began to view it as one organism. Writers such as Paul Klose and Christoph Weprecht attempted to show the aesthetic side to industry, presenting it as something mythical and fantastically beautiful. In other words, these Socialist writers wanted to recreate the idea of harmony between man and work whereas Communist writers would stress the exploitation of the workers caused by the introduction of industrial-capitalist society.<sup>32</sup> Katz is clearly a representative of the Socialist view as he is less concerned with the machines per se than with the human cost of unemployment as an unavoidable consequence of industrialisation.

Only once does Katz deal with his Jewish background. His short story ›August 1914! Juden flüchten!‹ (*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1931) describes the outbreak of the First World War in Eastern Europe and is clearly the forerunner of his novel *Die Fischmanns*. The narrator claims that the story is true and is yet deliberately unclear about the name of the shtetl in question. »Am Abend flüchtet das ganze Städtchen, nennen wir es Zolkiew oder Brody, das bleibt sich gleich.« As in *Die Fischmanns*, the description of the Jews' flight is representative of Jewish fate in general, not merely a story about particular Jewish individuals. The narrator tells the story with great sympathy towards the characters and insight into the Jewish world, using Yiddish names and phrases in order to create a realistic Jewish environment. As in *Die Fischmanns*, the father is starry-eyed, concentrating only on carrying out his religious duties, whereas the mother is the one who encourages and organises the flight. The narratorial voice emphasises the Jews' piety and vulnerability as well as their distaste for violence and war. Most importantly, however, Katz points out the Jews' age-old role as the gentile scapegoat, using the historical setting of the First World War to draw parallels to Germany in the year 1931. In the packed

<sup>31</sup> Willibald Kater: Braunkohle jubiliert. In: *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (3.7.1931).

<sup>32</sup> See: Deutsche Arbeiterdichtung (p. 43, note 7), p. 18–21.

train on which the Jews are fleeing, it is rumoured that they are going to camps in Hungary where they will be forced to abandon their orthodox lifestyle:

Schweigend hören sie sich das alle an und glauben jedes Wort. Warum soll es nicht wahr sein? Was kann man wissen? Krieg ist Krieg, und haben sie es mit uns, nicht heute gedacht, im Frieden anders gemacht? Na also! Ist Frieden, und es paßt ihnen der Frieden vielleicht nicht, wer ist dran schuld: der Jud. Ist Krieg, und der paßt ihnen vielleicht auch nicht, wer ist da wieder schuld: auch der Jud. Das ist schon ein sehr altes Lied – und gesungen wird es noch heute.<sup>33</sup>

The above quotation shows the inconsistency of the nature of gentile anti-Semitism and is directed at the National Socialists who blame the Jews for the German defeat in the First World War and for the Versailles Treaty. In war as in peace the anti-Semites find a reason to blame the Jews. The readers are subtly encouraged by the narrator to apply this criticism to themselves and to the time in which they live.

This semi-autobiographical short story is furthermore interesting because it was published a year before the speech by Hitler which allegedly inspired Katz to write a novel about the Eastern European Jews.<sup>34</sup> The consciousness of his own Jewish background and past was obviously reawakened prior to this speech by the growth of anti-Semitism, although this background did not otherwise play a significant role in his life. His depiction of these Jews, then, provides a much needed positive picture to counterbalance the horrific portrayals spread by the Nazis. This story, however, remains his only attempt to combat anti-Semitism and create understanding for the Eastern European Jews' plight before his exile – perhaps for fear of drawing too much attention to his own Jewish background or because he realised that it was useless to fight only one aspect of National Socialism. A more thorough approach was needed.

### c) Anti-Extremist Articles and Poetry

Such an approach began to manifest itself in Katz's writing after he took up his employment as the youngest editor of *Die Welt am Montag* in Berlin in 1932. Finding himself in the midst of political events, he began to participate more actively in contemporary politics, writing about the conflicts between the SPD and the KPD on the one hand, and the SPD's condemnation of the NSDAP on the other hand. Unfortunately, Hitler came to power relatively soon after Katz took up his position with *Die Welt am Montag*, preventing him from further developing his involvement in national politics. We therefore have only a few articles from this period to illustrate Katz's new journalistic approach, but it seems that rather than working internally towards a strengthening of the SPD and the party's voters, he now begins to represent the party externally in disputes with other political organisations.

<sup>33</sup> Willibald Kater: August 1914! Juden flüchten! In: Leipziger Volkszeitung (1.8.1931).

<sup>34</sup> See Katz's postscript in *Die Fischmanns* (p. 24, note 19), p. 249–250.

Katz's criticism particularly concerns the KPD and their ›corrupt‹ Communist methods to win voters from the SPD. He severely rebukes them for making false and unethical use of Marx's ideology, deliberately misinterpreting his words in order to use them for their own purposes. On the other hand, he sarcastically pities the Communist voters because they have fallen into the trap of the KPD leaders who provide them with no solid ethics to live by. Instead, according to Katz, the Communist workers spend their time and energy destroying the SPD and the potential basis for a co-operation between the two parties, shouting the only political slogans they know, ›Verräätter! Bonzen! Sozialfaschisten!‹<sup>35</sup>

Another article, ›Hitler, das »kleinere Übel« der KPD‹ (*Hamburger Echo*, 1932), again begins by deplored this lack of co-operation which significantly facilitates a Nazi take-over of political power. From an SPD standpoint, then, the Communists are entirely to blame for the situation. Katz writes:

Der deutsche Kapitalismus, dessen Hauptstütze der Hitlerische Faschismus ist, hat es leicht, weil die deutsche Arbeiterschaft in einer tragischen Verkennung ihrer Mission nicht diesen gemeinsamen Willen in die Waagschale zu werfen weiß, sondern nur ein in sich uneiniges, gespaltenes Proletariat: auf der einen Seite die große Armee der Sozialdemokratie – auf der anderen: das Gewirr unzähliger Gruppen und Grüppchen, inklusive der KPD, von denen jede Gruppe sich unbändig freut, die Opposition der anderen zu sein. Das nennen sie dann stolz und dumm: den ›einzigsten, revolutionären, marxistischen Klassenkampf‹.

In dieser Situation befindet sich der Klassenkampf in Deutschland – und in dieser Situation führt die KPD seit Jahr und Tag einen freventlichen Bruderkrieg gegen die sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter!<sup>36</sup>

The style is accusatory and slightly patronising towards the KPD, yet also characterised by statements of regret about the state of affairs on the political left. The Communists wrote similar articles, blaming the SPD for the lack of co-operation between the parties. Katz thus finds himself in the middle of one of the most fierce debates at the time which contributed to the rise of Nazism. Both the SPD and the KPD foresaw this development, yet did nothing to avoid it.

In February 1932, Katz was caught up in a dispute with the *Geraer Nachrichten* – a right-wing newspaper in his home town. The reason was his article, ›Bonzen – Antibonzen‹ (*Ostthüringer Tribüne*, 12.2.1932), in which he severely criticises the ›politics‹ going on around the German ›Stammtische‹. The Nazi adherents, he says, blame the ›Bonzen‹ for their miserable situation, thereby meaning the workers, the clerks, and the minor officials. These are blamed for Germany's bad economy because of the unions which allegedly enrich their members at the expense of the employers. To this the *Geraer Nachrichten* responds by presenting their view of what a ›Bonze‹ is: ›Der Bonze ist ein Sumpf-

<sup>35</sup> Willibald Kater: Kabarett Litfaßsäule: Die »antifaschistischen Thälmanner«. In: Leipziger Volkszeitung (11.3.1932).

<sup>36</sup> Katz: Hitler, das »kleinere Übel« der KPD. In: Hamburger Echo (16.4.1932).

gewächs, erzeugt auf dem schwankenden Boden des Marxismus.« (»Warum Bonze?«, *Geraer Nachrichten*, 13.2.1932) »-n«, the pseudonym of the journalist who wrote the article, further points out that the workers, clerks, and minor officials are morally above exploiting society in the way indicated by Katz and that these are not the ones targeted when the Nazis speak of »Bonzen«. He further predicts the certain abolition of all left-wing papers once the Nazis are in power. A few days later, Katz retaliates with a very angry article directed more against »-n« personally than against the political content of his article.<sup>37</sup> The dispute has descended to the level of mutual personal insults which both journalists should have stood above. Yet a dispute of this kind was only possible because both sides used the word »Bonze« as an invective to express their anger and dissatisfaction with the political and financial situation, a term conveniently imprecise and therefore open to interpretation.<sup>38</sup> The incident further testifies to the fierce arguments between political parties at the time and to the fact that Katz had now made his debut on the scene of German political journalism in the year 1932.

Only a couple of times did Katz manage to write against Hitler before the Nazi regime became a reality but when he did so, it was always in a very satirical and mocking tone. Like many other left-wing intellectuals, his view of Hitler was one of mixed emotions, on the one hand realising the danger Hitler posed to German society, while on the one hand being unable to take him seriously. One poem in particular demonstrates this view of Hitler as incapable of helping the masses whom he merely uses for his own purposes while he himself is living the good life:

*Bonze Adolf hat 'nen Posten*

Bonze Adolf ist Beamter,  
hat drei Autos und Pension.  
Ist Regierungsrat geworden,  
das Parteibuch lohnt sich schon.

In der SA ist der Müller,  
hat sechs Kinder und ein Weib.  
Hat 'ne alte Stempelkarte,  
Hunger und 'nen Hungerleib.

Bonze Adolf hat ein Bäuchlein,  
eine Locke in der Stirn.  
Und die Bäckchen glänzen speckig,  
aus dem Maule trieft das Hirn.

<sup>37</sup> Willibald Kater: Noch einmal: »Warum Bonze?« In: *Ostthüringer Tribüne* (17.2.1932).

<sup>38</sup> »Bonze« came into use in Germany in the 18th century, adopted from French and Portuguese and ultimately from Japanese, where it originally referred to a bigoted priest. The German workers' movement used it as a derisive term for unsympathetic functionaries, only concerned with their own interests. Later it was generally used about highranking and rich people. See: Friedrich Kluge: *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. 22. Aufl., Berlin: de Gruyter 1989.

Und Frau Müller fragt den Müller,  
 »Mann, wann wirst du so ein Rat  
 der Regierung, kriegst ein Auto --?  
 Mann, wann essen wir uns satt?«

Bonze Adolf kriegt Moneten  
 und die SA einen Dreck.  
 Müller darf das »Strammstehn!« üben –  
 Bonze Adolf kriegt 'nen Scheck.

Dieses ist das Lied vom Bonzen  
 und von einem SA-Mann.  
 Bonze Adolf hat 'nen Posten --  
 Doch was hat der SA-Mann?<sup>39</sup>

Although the SA man belongs to Katz's political opponents, he is here pitied as a victim and treated on a par with the Social Democratic workers. They are all proletarians and thus in the same boat. Hitler, on the other hand, is almost depicted as a wild animal, a bloodsucker who himself exploits the German people. Although the poem is meant to be a farce, sung to the melody ›Die Moritat von Mackie Messer‹ in Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*, its almost vulgar depiction of Hitler in stanza three does not encourage serious criticism of him as a politician. The other stanzas, however, do severely criticise the social and financial discrepancy between Hitler and his adherents by juxtaposing Hitler's luxury and the SA man's poverty.

In another anti-Nazi article, ›Was der 'Nationalsozialist' seinen Lesern bieten kann!‹ (*Ostthüringer Tribüne*, 6.5.1932), Katz takes an entirely rational approach, commenting on an article in the newspaper *Der Nationalsozialist* of 28 April 1932. The purpose of Katz's response is to correct a serious misuse of Hegel's name and philosophy in Nazi propaganda. Indeed, Katz proves that the author of an article claiming that Hegel founded the German workers' unions in the early 18th century is historically uneducated and entirely misinterpreting Hegel's philosophy for his own purposes. In fact, Hegel was not even alive at the time when he is claimed to have founded the workers' unions. Katz's article demonstrates the danger of such deliberate misinterpretations since the common reader of the Nazi paper is unlikely to have sufficient insight into German intellectual history to be able to uncover such misuse. The serious style of the article suggests deep concern with the state of affairs but also has a slightly sarcastic tone to it which ridicules the ignorance of Nazi journalists and editors:

Wir wollen dem biederem Nationalsozialisten in Schloßvippach seine Unwissenheit nicht übelnehmen, wenn wir auch der Meinung sind, daß wer als deutscher Mann den »Marxismus« bekämpfen will, die Verpflichtung hat, die Elemente der deutschen Geistesgeschichte ebenso zu beherrschen wie die Marxisten selbst und auch eine leise Ahnung vom Marxismus selber zu haben. Aber daß es in einer Kultur-

<sup>39</sup> Willibald Kater: Bonze Adolf hat 'nen Posten. In: *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (8.3.1932).

stadt, wie Weimar es sein soll, möglich ist, daß in einer Zeitung, die in ihrer Redaktion über zwei Redakteure mit dem akademischen Doktograd verfügt, solch ein – wir müssen schon sagen: Bockmist – gedruckt wird, das scheint uns denn doch das Kennzeichen eines argen Niederganges der deutschen Kultur zu sein.

Through the article, Katz might have hoped to have an influence on Nazi sympathisers by demonstrating the utter nonsense and indeed direct falseness of the right-wing press. Another, perhaps less noble, purpose of his article is to boast of the high level of education among the ›primitive‹ workers in comparison with the allegedly well-educated members of the bourgeoisie whose university degrees nevertheless do not prevent them from producing blatant lies for Nazi propaganda purposes. Like many other left-wing journalists, Katz thus fought Hitler by every means available, using both sarcasm and rational argument to convey the danger of Nazism to his readers.

#### d) Exile

After Katz left Germany on 17 May 1933, he hardly published any articles or short stories. As became clear in the biographical chapter, he was busy earning a living and decided to devote himself to writing novels rather than continue an apparently hopeless battle against right-wing extremism in Germany. The German people had made its decision and there seemed no point in carrying on the resistance by journalistic means.

Katz did, however, publish a few articles describing the exile experience. Ultimately, a few chapters from his two novels also appeared as independent short stories in *Das Wort*, a Communist journal published in Moscow and edited by Bertolt Brecht, Willi Bredel, and Lion Feuchtwanger. When, however, he was asked to produce more overtly Communist articles, Katz ended his co-operation with *Das Wort*. One of the stories describing the exile experience, ›Jean, der Gläzerspüler‹ (*Der Wiener Tag*, 1934), is very autobiographical, as it describes one of Katz's first jobs after his arrival in France. The narrator has been employed as a dishwasher at a café and describes his first day at his new place of work, the atmosphere, the difficulty of getting used to exhausting manual work, and the problems with his ruthless French employer. The story is well told, entertaining, and informative, but does not mention why the narrator is so poor that he has to wash dishes at a French café. His past as a student is indicated, but not elaborated on, and there is no actual mention of the exile situation. Only our biographical knowledge about Katz's first years in Lyon indicates that the story may be authentic.

Unlike the above story, ›Die Ausweisung‹ (*Pariser Tageszeitung*, 1937) is solely the story about life in exile. Indeed, its main purpose is to depict the psychological torture of uncertainty about one's fate as many exiles experienced it when waiting to be told the French authorities' decision about their request for an extension of their residence permits. The story is written as a

letter from one such emigrant to his friend and former fellow-exile, expressing his fear of rejection. His despair is mirrored in the narratorial style which is almost like spoken language (»Ich bin ja wirklich zu allem fähig. Ich bin nicht feige, ich kann ja so viel vertragen, ich kann auch mal warten – aber ich kann doch keine vier Nächte warten!«<sup>40</sup>). The narrator reflects on past experiences with other exiles who committed suicide because they were denied further residence, envisaging how he himself will be subjected to the humiliating treatment of the French authorities. By reminding his friend of the appearance of the room in which he is writing, we also get a glimpse of the typical exile's living conditions: fleas and bedbugs, dirty bedding, and a stench of stale sweat. At the end of the letter, the narrator strongly appeals for sympathy from his friend who is now married and no longer living the terrible life of an exile:

Welch eine Züchtigung erst, wenn man einsam und seinen eigenen Gedanken überlassen ist! Welch ein Leben, dieses Verlöschen im 5. Stockwerk eines ärmlichen Hotels, als Fremder, als Flüchtlings, als Arbeitsloser, als Hungernder, als Ausgewiesener, der Donnerstag das Land verlassen soll ... Bruder Emigrant, erinnerst Du Dich noch, was das für ein Leben ist? Erinnerst Du Dich noch dieser ärmlichen Nächte in der Fremde ...?<sup>41</sup>

This quotation and indeed the whole story resembles Anna Seghers' novel *Transit* (1944) in which she also depicts the exiles' despair. Her novel particularly describes the exhausting and humiliating battle with French bureaucracy which the German exiles faced in Marseilles before they could leave the country or be permitted to stay. Naturally, Katz's short story can only touch on these matters, but the descriptions of the refugees' problems and despair are very similar in the two writers' works. Particularly interesting is the sense of solidarity in the above quotation, expressed very clearly in the term »Bruder Emigrant« which both universalises the experience of exile and creates a bond between all people ever subjected to it. By the time Katz wrote the story, he had been awarded the Heinrich-Heine-Prize and was himself doing somewhat better financially. Perhaps it was the relief of escaping this atmosphere of poverty and insecurity which enabled him to describe it in such a realistic and moving way.

Finally, Katz's short story in four episodes, »Die Geschichte vom Manne, der leben wollte« (*Die Zukunft*, 1938), should be mentioned. It is a somewhat bizarre story with the purpose of demonstrating the conditions in Germany just before and after the Nazi take-over and the difficulties of exile. However, its main purpose is to show the irrationalism of the Nazi movement and display specific paradoxical traits of the German national character. This is done by means of bitter irony and a rather strange story severely criticising the German people's morals.

Jimmy is unemployed and decides to starve himself to death. However, he is taken to hospital where he recovers, yet decides to take up hungering profes-

<sup>40</sup> H. W. Katz: Die Ausweisung. In: Pariser Tageszeitung (22.8.1937).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

sionally when he is discharged. This proves to be a very successful profession at a time when millions of Germans suffer poverty and starvation:

Kein Wunder also, daß der Hungerkünstler Jimmy das Interesse der Berliner weckte. Welcher Deutsche hatte sich noch nicht die Frage vorgelegt: Wie lange kann ein Mensch ohne Nahrungszufuhr leben? Irgendwie war ein ganzes Volk diesem Jimmy dankbar, daß er, einer für alle, die Probe aufs Exempel machte.<sup>42</sup>

This is gallows humour in its highest form. The absurdity of the idea is further stressed by the way in which the entire German people closely follows his starvation process on a daily basis, calmly watching a man starve himself to death. The narrator ironically attributes this to the German national character and the patience with which the Germans subject themselves to any policy of the government in power:

Das deutsche Volk kann noch viele andere Dinge wie kein anderes Volk auf der Welt, zum Beispiel: hungern. In diesem Lande wird im Frieden aus Not gehungert, weil die kolossalen ökonomischen Experimente des Vaterlandes Opfer erfordern – und in kriegerischen Perioden wird aus patriotischen Gründen gehungert, auch weil die Ehre des Vaterlandes Opfer erfordert. Seit Jahrhunderten wechseln sich in diesem Lande der Hunger im Frieden und der Hunger im Kriege für große Teile dieses schwergeprüften Volkes periodisch ab.<sup>43</sup>

The honour of holding this ›record‹ is rather dubious because it testifies to a willingness to obey every kind of order issued by political leaders. When the famous Jimmy is later forbidden to starve publicly because he is Jewish and only Aryans are allowed to do so, everybody thus dismisses him as a fraud without questioning the government's decision.

This prohibition, then, forms the height of absurdity in the story as is clearly shown in the narrator's ironic and bitter comments,

Hunger ist Hunger. Ein Katholik hungert wie ein Protestant, ein Neger wie ein Weisser [sic], ein Mann hungert, eine Frau hungert, der Hunger des einen ist so sauer (Hunger ist sauer, nicht bitter) wie der Hunger des andern.<sup>44</sup>

Hunger thus becomes a metaphor for basic human qualities shared by all human beings regardless of colour and race. The event is designed to show the insanity of racial prejudice as advocated by the Nazis and accepted by the German people. Katz's criticism of the Germans, however, becomes even stronger when Jimmy goes into exile in France, following severe smear campaigns against him in Germany. To his great surprise, the French are unwilling to pay to see a man starve. It is against their perception of human rights and their basic moral attitude. The juxtaposition of the decent and morally intact French national character with the immoral character of the German nation thus clearly falls out to the former's advantage. In fact, the French try to force

<sup>42</sup> H. W. Katz: Die Geschichte vom Manne, der leben wollte. In: Die Zukunft (28.10.1938).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Jimmy to eat but to no avail. By then, he is so weakened by his ›career‹ in Germany that he dies. Katz's story brings to mind other texts with similar topics such as Franz Kafka's short story ›Ein Hungerkünstler‹ and Ernst Toller's drama ›Hinkemann‹. Like Jimmy, the protagonists of both these texts perform grotesque and humiliating acts in order to make a living, one eventually starving himself to death in a circus, the other eating living mice and rats.

Katz's preoccupation with moral issues is by no means new. Even during the Weimar Republic, he was preoccupied with the effect of the financial crisis on the individual's moral values. Indeed, three days before Hitler's take-over as Chancellor, Katz published an article in which he expressed concern about the way in which sheer envy would drive people to denounce each other if somebody received more unemployment or child benefit than others. He condemned such behaviour but concluded that the financial crisis was to blame.<sup>45</sup> Given this interest in moral issues, it is not surprising that he should occupy himself with the morals of the German people after its failure to prevent a Nazi take-over, especially since Katz himself had recently become the victim of this fateful failure despite his and other left-wing writers' warning cries. The above short story thus illustrates Katz's attempt to display the immorality of political laxity and the absurdity of racial prejudice as it was uncritically accepted by the German people in January 1933.

### e) Conclusion

The main characteristics of Katz's journalism, then, include empathy with suffering people, an interest in psychology and morals, an urge to point out social injustice and political inequities in society and a wish to educate and enlighten people in the Social Democratic spirit which formed the basis of all his writing. The above analysis of Katz's articles, *Reportagen*, and short stories illustrates both his personal development as a journalist and a Social Democrat and through his writing the internal workings of the SPD, especially within the field of Social Democratic cultural policy. It shows a young ambitious journalist who put all his skills and enthusiasm into combating the problems he perceived around him with every means possible. Katz's journalism is furthermore an example of the practical implementation of the new Social Democratic press policy outlined in the introductory section of this chapter.

Indeed, Katz's short stories appeal to a working-class audience because they deal with milieus and problems familiar to this group of people, yet they are not overtly political in order not to bore the reader with direct political propaganda. Instead, they offer identification with the characters and leave any further political reading up to the individual reader. The characters are presented

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example: Willy Katz: Denunzianten. Oder: Die Moral in der Krise. In: Leipziger Volkszeitung (27.1.1933).

vividly by a narrator who is intensely concerned with their fate. He passionately comments on their present and past living conditions, paying particular attention to their psychological state which he explores through a mixture of direct narratorial intervention, free indirect discourse, and sober description of their lives. Despite their semi-political content, the artistic quality of these short stories testifies to Katz's skills as a story-teller which were to be fully developed in his two novels. Indeed, the mixture of simplicity, sympathy and biting sarcasm of his short prose points towards the stylistic and narratorial means he was going to employ in the creation of his long fiction. A chronological study of Katz's journalistic writings from the onset in 1925 till the abrupt end in 1933 thus provides an excellent overview of the development of the writer Katz from being a young journalist to becoming an award-winning author. It further illustrates central problems and the development of Social Democratic and indeed German political issues in the Weimar Republic. Like a postscript, the few articles Katz did publish in exile show glimpses of the fate of the people who like himself had fought bitterly to maintain a democratic constitution in Germany, but to no avail.

## Chapter III

*Die Fischmanns*: ›Man verfolgt nicht nur die Juden aus Strody‹

Henry William Katz's first novel, *Die Fischmanns*, was published in Amsterdam in 1938. The central theme of the novel can be summed up as the consequences of being born a Jew. This theme embraces a number of topics such as assimilation, emigration, exile, and homelessness which all play a central role in Katz's dealings with the problem. Through his description of the Galician Jewish Fischmann family, he shows the effect of anti-Semitism on the character, life, and fate of Eastern European Jews in the years before and during the First World War. However, Katz depicts not only the Jews but also other minority groups in shtetl society such as the Polish and Ukrainian peasants, making clear the Jews' longing for a better life and their frustration and helplessness when they fail to obtain it. Among the themes presented in the novel, there are several questions of significance to a study of Jewish exile literature in the years 1933 to 1945. How, for example, does Katz deal with the subject of anti-Semitism and pogroms, considering the fact that he himself had recently been a victim of German anti-Semitism, and how are the gentile persecutors described? What is the attitude towards exile per se, and what influence does Katz's Jewish background have on his attitude? The blurring of facts and fiction in the novel raises the question to what extent *Die Fischmanns* is an autobiography. What views of Jewish identity, life and religion are presented in the novel, and how does Katz deal with the question of assimilation? What kind of picture does Katz give of shtetl life – is it romanticised, realistic, or even critical? Since the novel was written in exile, one might ask what the circumstances of its composition were and to what extent it represents a typical piece of exile writing. Finally, how does Katz see the Jews' future? These are the major questions treated in the novel which will be discussed in this chapter.

### a) Narrative Perspective and Style

The story of the Fischmann family is told by the young son of the family, Jakob, who from a first-person viewpoint describes his and his family's fate. At the same time, however, there is an omniscient narrator who informs the reader about the thoughts and motives of the other main characters. This mixture of a

first-person and an omniscient viewpoint creates a lively narrative style and an intimate relationship between reader and characters. The story ranges widely in time and space, beginning in 1905 in Galicia and ending in November 1915 in Germany with the death of the narrator's mother, Lea. When her husband, Jossel, emigrates to America, we also gain an insight into the life of the thousands of Eastern European Jews who left for the States at the turn of the century. However, before this event, we are introduced to shtetl life described by means of an impressionistic use of short scenes, each representing a single image in the larger picture of Eastern European Jewish life. The presentation of characters follows the same pattern, making individuals into representatives of their respective social groups. Thus, for example, the gentile peasants are represented by Janek, the assimilated, westernised Jews by Dr. Spiegel, and the Austrian authorities by the provincial governor in the shtetl. Within this narrative framework, then, the reader is shown characteristic places and events such as the marketplace – the central gathering point of the shtetl – and a typical Jewish wedding. We are introduced to the tradition of matchmaking and the constant threat of pogroms, and we witness serious discussions about emigration and assimilation. This network of events and traditions is held together by a frame constituted by the Fischmann family. They are presented as a typical Eastern European Jewish family through whom the reader is given an impression of shtetl surroundings which to a large extent are characterised by penetrating smells and material backwardness, as is obvious from the following typical quotation from the novel:

Endlos waren die Ebenen, kurz war der Frühling, auf den Äckern dampften Misthaufen, säuerlicher Kuhmist.

Der Sommer war trocken und dürr, und ich hörte dumpfe Einschläge. Es donnerte oft, und es schlug oft ein, denn die Blitzableiter waren hier noch ebensowenig bekannt wie das elektrische Licht, das Gas, das Kino. Dafür dufteten der Weizen und der Hafer scharf und durchdringend. Und die langgestreckten, tiefgedüngten Felder wetteiferten mit dem Gestank der Fische, der Zwiebeln und der Bettelei aus den kleinen Städten.<sup>1</sup>

This rather bleak description of the Galician landscape with its sharp smells, arid soil, and material backwardness does not encourage any close emotional affiliation with the country. Indeed it completely fails to evoke feelings of *»Heimat«* in the Jews in the novel.

The story proceeds chronologically with occasional interruptions by the narrator in, for example, the form of general historical information designed to provide the reader with the necessary background to understand the novel (see e. g. F 92–93). Indeed, the narrator seeks to establish a very intimate relationship with his readers, attempting to win their sympathy and understanding through direct approaches such as: »Es ist überall der gleiche Dreck, lieber Leser.« (F 111) He thereby not only provides us with his own subjective evaluation of the events but also indicates how we are to interpret them. There are furthermore several auto-

<sup>1</sup> Katz, Die Fischmanns (p. 24, note 19), p. 14. Future references will be made in the text marked F.

biographical allusions designed to give the novel credibility (see e. g. F 17–18, 21, 109, 216). In fact, the reader who is familiar with Katz's biography will know that large parts of *Die Fischmanns* are derived from his own childhood and youth experiences. The frequent anticipations of future events – especially as regards young Lea's life and death – are thus also not surprising:

Sie ahnte ja nicht, und wir Kinder noch weniger, daß es sich für sie gar nicht mehr verlohnnte, Pläne zu schmieden. Nächstes Jahr? Sie würde es nicht mehr erleben. Amerika? Sie würde es nie zu sehen bekommen. (F 225. See also 18 and 51)

The ending is open, pointing towards a continuation (»Doch dies ist eine Geschichte für sich.« F 246), and rather bleak as it rejects all hope for a better future for the Jews despite their struggle and personal sacrifices to attain happiness.

Although the Fischmann story proceeds chronologically after the first chapter, beginning *in medias res* with a description of the family's flight from the Russians, the frequent leaps back and forth in time and the many interruptions by the narrator create a slightly disruptive narrative effect because we are only allowed glances into selected aspects, albeit the most important and typical ones, of the Fischmanns' lives. In his postscript Katz himself comments on this structure:

In meiner Schulzeit mußten Aufsätze nach einem Plan geschrieben werden: Anfang, Hauptteil und Ende. Ich verwarf die Idee eines solchen Plans. Die Geschichte, die ich erzählte, war wie das Leben selbst. Und welches Leben verläuft nach einem Plan? (F 258)

In other words, *Die Fischmanns* reflects ›life‹, which at the time of writing equals the exile situation with all its uncertainty and frustration. Thus, through its structure and narrative mode, the novel presents a picture of internal and external uncertainty to which there seems to be no end and no solution. This pessimism may be ascribed to the fact that *Die Fischmanns* is a Jewish novel written by a Jewish writer who at the time of writing was already experiencing his second exile. Considering the course of Jewish history and his recent experience of Nazi anti-Semitism, he really had no reason to expect a reversal of this destiny. Thus, unlike many other exiles whose self-deception led them to believe in a rapid defeat of Hitler and a quick return for all emigrants to Germany, Katz is a realist refusing to fall victim to illusion. At the beginning of his exile, Joseph Roth addressed this problem, claiming that the Jewish emigrants were among the keenest propagators of the idea of Hitler being merely a short political intermezzo:

[...] sinnlos, wenn die geschlagenen, ohnmächtigen, vertriebenen Deutschen sich und der Welt einzureden versuchen, das »Dritte Reich« sei gewissermaßen nur ein fataler Irrtum; es gebe das »andere Deutschland«; [...] Zu den fanatischen Verbretern dieser Versionen gehören die deutschen Juden.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Roth: Der Segen des ewigen Juden. In: Roth, Werke (p. 18, note 10), Vol. 3, p. 528.

Like Katz, Roth is a realist who sensed the coming catastrophe early on.

Considering the amount of realistic and often depressing material in *Die Fischmanns*, how does the novel succeed in maintaining such a positive and at times even playful narratorial tone? Stylistically, the answer is mainly to be found in Katz's loving attitude towards his characters and in his use of humour, sarcasm, and (melancholy) irony which pervade the entire novel. These constitute his way of dealing with difficult moral and emotional subjects such as the omnipresent anti-Semitism, the threat of pogroms and the difficult task of accepting the consequences of being a Jew. This becomes obvious, for example, in the following quotation ending with a typical touch of Katz's melancholy irony: »Heute glaube ich, daß es ganz gleich ist, wo ich, der Jude, zur Welt kam. Daß ich als Jude geboren wurde, war bestimmender für mein Leben. Denn man verfolgt nicht nur die Juden aus Strody.« (F 15) This touching and insightful remark is made by the young narrator as he contemplates the meaning of fate and origin at the beginning of the novel. However, Katz also makes use of biting sarcasm, as, for example, in the following description of the Jews' hope for a better future, if not for themselves, then at least for their children: »Manche [Juden] hatten sogar ganz verrückte Einfälle. Sie träumten, daß es wenigstens ihren Kindern einst besser gehen würde.« (F 17) The sarcasm reveals the naiveté of such dreams in the light of Jewish history, while at the same time showing that for non-Jews, such dreams would by no means be unreasonable.

Katz's depictions of an otherwise unpleasant reality are considerably softened by his often lyrical descriptive style. This applies not only to descriptions of Strody's surroundings but also to the account of Jossel's departure for America: »Er fuhr ab von einer Hafenstadt. Europa versank, ewig blieb nur der Himmel. Kühn stieg an ihm die Sonne empor. Groß und gewaltig ertrank sie jeden Abend in den fernen, fernen Fluten.« (F 131) Sometimes the style is more dreamlike: »Die Feder kratzt leicht über die weißen Bogen, die sich mit fernen Landschaften, Häusern, seltsamen Menschen und Schicksalen bedecken ...« (F 34) or even reminiscent of a fairy tale:

Es war einmal ein kleines Mädchen in Kischinew. Es hatte nicht viel Glück mit dieser Stadt. Dann kam es nach Strody und wurde dort die Frau eines braven Mannes und die Mutter zweier Knaben. Aber auch Strody war kein guter Ausgangspunkt für das Glück. Sie war tot, bevor sie es gefunden hatte. (F 244)

The traditional fairy-tale opening is merely an example of Katz's irony. Because of the idyllic opening the reader expects a typical fairy tale with a happy ending and is thus doubly shocked when the events take a completely different course. The fairy-tale background thus makes the actual events seem much more cruel, indirectly suggesting that under other circumstances Lea's life might have taken a completely different and better course.

Katz's sympathetic descriptions of the characters and the innocent naiveté with which they accept their fate and yet continue their fight for a better life also contribute to the novel's gentle rather than polemical depiction of the

Jews' situation. However, at times Katz's journalistic background becomes very obvious, making his narrative style approach reporting rather than descriptive prose, as can be seen, for example, in the account of the events leading to the Kishinev pogrom (F 47–48). Here his sentences are short and poignant, providing the reader with the most essential information in a matter-of-fact manner. His interest in sociology and socio-political issues furthermore prevents him from conveying a romanticised picture of shtetl society.

In the novel, Katz makes clear distinctions between the present time (the time of writing) and the past which he is describing. Working in two time frames enables him to convey to the reader a picture of Galician reality as he experienced it as a boy and also – in retrospect from his present adult position – to make it clear that the boy's perception of the surrounding world was only partly accurate. This opposition between past and present ›reality‹ becomes particularly obvious in his description of the Galician road system. Here he wants to enlighten his audience by distancing himself from his own artistic representation of the Eastern European world:

Es gab damals viele kleine Städte in diesem Land. Die Wege, die in sie hineinführten, waren ungepflasterte, schmale, löchrige Streifen. Wenn der Regen troff, und dies war besonders oft im Herbst der Fall, glich die Landschaft einem lehmigen Morast. In den Gräben faulte eine trübe, stinkende Brühe.

*Damals* war es mir unbekannt, aber *heute* weiß ich, daß es außer diesen gepflasterten Wegen auch einige gute Straßen gab, die sich in diesem windigen Zipfel Europas wie peinlich sauber gehaltene schöne Teppiche in einem verwilderten Ziegenstall ausnahmen. Diese breiten, mit grauen und festen Decken versehenen Fahrbahnen waren nicht aus Liebe zu den hier wohnenden Polen, Ruthenen oder gar Juden angelegt worden. Der einzige Grund für ihre Errichtung war ein militärtechnischer. In schnurgerader Linie führten sie nach dem Osten. Dort lag das große mächtige Zarenreich, der gefürchtete russische Bär. (F 14–15, emphasis added)

However, showing the opposition between memory and reality is not the only purpose of the passage. It also contrasts the unpleasant and primitive road system used by the Jews and other inhabitants of the shtetl with the ›civilised‹ road system built by the government. Ironically, these roads were not built for the benefit of Galicia's inhabitants but purely for military purposes. The passage thus masks a critical assessment of the Austrian authorities who were responsible for the backwardness of the Eastern part of the Monarchy. In the same way, and not without irony, Katz describes the coming of the ›new times‹ to Galicia when three street lamps are put up in the marketplace. The irony is especially obvious in the description of the shtetl inhabitants' reaction to this event (»Es herrschte diese ganze Nacht hindurch ein unbeschreiblicher Jubel, ein tolles Schreien im Städtchen.« F 151), a reaction which seems exaggerated and almost ridiculous considering the level of modern civilisation in the rest of Europe at this time. The passage, then, is another reference to the backwardness of Galician society and the central authorities' policies towards the province. Katz's fictional representation of Galician society before the

First World War is thus not a sentimental picture of a time long gone, like the descriptions of many other Eastern European Jewish writers (such as Sholem Aleichem or I. L. Perez), but a much more realistic portrait showing the reader both the backwardness of shtetl society and the complexity of Jewish and non-Jewish interaction.

Katz does, however, also dwell on happy occasions such as Jossel's and Lea's wedding and the close and warm relations among the shtetl Jews. The present time frame very often consists of reflections interwoven with the story of the past time frame to an extent where it is difficult to tell them apart:

Eine traurige Panik herrschte. Der wildeste Taumel hatte alle gepackt. So mögen wohl Menschen versuchen, die Rettungsboote zu erreichen, wenn ihr Schiff im Sinken ist. Hersch und ich hieben [...]. (F 196)

Shortly thereafter we find another allusion to the two time frames:

Die Atmosphäre dieses traurigen Flüchtlingslebens habe ich damals mit sehr wachen, jungen Sinnen in mich aufgenommen. [...] Erst kam der Zug nach Wien. Aber da gab es, wie dort jede Zeitung witzelte (ich las später solche »Witze«) schon »mehr Flüchtlinge als Wiener«, also durften wir den Zug nicht verlassen. (F 198–199)

Besides showing the reader the discrepancy between the boy's perception of the surrounding world and the insight he has gained as an adult, the mixture of past and present also serves as an alienation effect. By constantly drawing direct or indirect parallels to the present (through utterances such as: »Aber solche Gedanken der Verzweiflung zwangen *und zwingen* die Juden auch, den Ausweg aus diesem vermauerten Dasein zu suchen.« F 92, emphasis added), and by inserting reflections on life in general and the events described in the story, Katz reminds his reader that the novel is not pure fiction. Instead, he wants to emphasise that it is largely based upon real events with relevance to the present time on which, then, the reader is invited to take a critical stand.

Finally, it should be noted that Katz achieves a strong sense of verisimilitude without incorporating a large number of gratuitous details in his description of people and places. In most cases, the details in *Die Fischmanns* have a function. Thus, for example, the little blue roses on Riwke Singer's nightdress are described as follows:

Auf dem dicken blauen Unterrock drehten sich große weiße Kreise, und auf dem zerknitterten Kragenrand ihrer Bettjacke wand sich eine schmale Borte mit winzigen blauen Rosen, kreuz und quer, blaue Rosen. (F 30)

This detail may seem to be an example of Roland Barthes' *reality effect*<sup>3</sup> – the incorporation of superfluous detail whose only function is to create a sense of the real. However, the roses on Riwke's nightdress assume the character of a leitmo-

<sup>3</sup> See: Roland Barthes on the Reality Effect in Descriptions. In: Realism. Ed. by Lilian R. Furst. London and New York: Longman 1992 (Modern Literatures in Perspective), p. 135–141.

tiv recurring whenever she is mentioned and reminding us of her lost dream of a good and happy life with a healthy husband. On the other hand, the very sparse description of the refugee huts and the environment in general, in which the fleeing Jews are allowed to live for a while (F 200–204), is an indication of Katz's interest in people and his wish to demonstrate the consequences of refugee life rather than providing the reader with a detailed picture of the actual environment. In other words, the living conditions are conveyed to us through a description of what the Jews are actually doing to survive and to retain a sense of human dignity (delousing the children, sewing blankets for military use, rolling cigarettes for sale, children stealing cabbage, wood, coal, etc.) rather than through a direct and detailed depiction of the environment itself.

Instead of using such means to achieve verisimilitude, Katz creates his own reality effect by presenting his story as autobiographical memories of the narrator's childhood. This is done in the very first sentence of the novel:

Mitten in meine Kindheit brach ein Tag ein, mit dem mein bewußtes Leben begann. [...] Ich durchlebe noch jetzt, nach mehr als zwanzig Jahren, jede Phase dieses denkwürdigen Tages.« (F 11)

He furthermore presents us with occasional allusions to ›real‹ people who are said to have been sources of inspiration and information to him (F 17–18, 21, 34, 109). In addition, sentences such as »Ich sehe diesen Janek ganz deutlich vor mir, ja ich spüre ihn fast körperlich« (F 22) as well as the mentioning of real geographical places (Kishinev and Zhitomir), and the years in which certain events take place (»... der schöne Monat Mai 1905«, F 52), function as indicators of reality. The most important indication of reality, however, is the fact that Katz does not attempt to embellish the impression given of people and places – his novel is not meant to be an idyllic and sentimental description of a lost world. Typical of Katz's narrative style is further his extensive use of analogies as, for example, in the description of Aron Amtmann's attempt to arrange a wedding between Jossel and Lea

Wie ein Friseur sanft und liebkosend seinem Kunden mit warmem Seifenschaum unter das Kinn fährt, und immer wieder streichelt, und immer wieder streichelt, so machte er es mit warmen Worten. (F 58)

These frequent analogies create a more vivid narrative style and a multifaceted representation of the Eastern European world and its inhabitants.

### b) The Shtetl

As has been shown in the above quotations describing the Galician landscape, the physicality of shtetl life is not attractive. In fact, as pointed out by Piotr Wróbel, Eastern European shtetls were notorious for their squalor:

The Jews of Galicia lived under very difficult living, housing and health conditions. Jewish city districts, densely built over, were usually dirty and dark. Their inhabitants, subsisting on an unhealthy diet, frequently suffered from various diseases. Even in the capital of Lvov there were only a few paved roads and streets by the late 1860s. Most city streets were covered alternately with drift sand and sticky mud. People accustomed to city life were choked by the stench from open sewers and gutters. Cholera epidemics threatened Galician villages in 1873 and 1894.<sup>4</sup>

Manès Sperber's description of his own Galician home town, Zablotow, supports this description:

Es gab kein Gas, keine Elektrizität und keine Kanalisation im Städtchen, und es gab natürlich auch keine Wasserleitung in den Häusern, sondern einige wenige Brunnen, aus denen man das Wasser schöpfte.<sup>5</sup>

However, the backward state of the Galician province compared to neighbouring countries and other Austrian provinces was not merely due to unfortunate circumstances. The Austrian government carried out a »colonial policy« towards the region, deliberately preventing its industrialisation in order to use it as a market for the products produced by the industrialised areas in the monarchy. This policy coincided with the interests of the large Polish landowners who developed only those branches of industry that would increase the profits from their own estates.<sup>6</sup> According to Piotr Wróbel, Vienna furthermore »came to the conclusion that it would be unwise to develop industry in the militarily jeopardised border province«<sup>7</sup>. Katz's depiction of Strody and its surroundings is thus thoroughly realistic as it confirms the above description of a Galician shtetl.

However, not everyone at the time criticised the Eastern European shtetl environment for being backward and even primitive. Arnold Zweig, for example, presents a very positive picture of the Jewish community in the East in his essay *Das ostjüdische Antlitz*.<sup>8</sup> It was written after he had experienced the Eastern European Jewish world at close hand during his war service in the Oberost division from 1917 until the end of the war. Although he acknowledges its backwardness, Zweig's portrayal of the shtetl and of the Jews living in it is not one of condemnation. Indeed, it shows great admiration for traditional life in the East. The poverty and primitiveness of housing and lifestyle as well as the strictness of everyday religious practice are romantically praised as the uncorrupted environment of true Jewish tradition unjustly criticised in

<sup>4</sup> Piotr Wróbel: The Jews of Galicia under Austrian-Polish Rule, 1869–1918. In: The Austrian History Yearbook 25 (1994), p. 97–138, p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Sperber, Die Wasserträger Gottes (p. 9, note 20), p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Raphael Mahler: The Economic Background of Jewish Emigration from Galicia to the United States. In: East European Jews in Two Worlds. Studies from the YIVO Annual. Ed. by Deborah Dash Moore. Evanston/Ill.: Northwestern University Press 1990, p. 125–137, p. 126.

<sup>7</sup> Wróbel, The Jews of Galicia (note 4, above), p. 118.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold Zweig: Das ostjüdische Antlitz. In: A. Z.: Herkunft und Zukunft. Zwei Essays zum Schicksal eines Volkes. Wien: Phaidon-Verlag 1929, p. 7–161.

the West for its backwardness. By comparison, Alfred Döblin's description of his trip to Poland in 1924 is an attempt to paint an objective picture of his findings there. He comments on the impoverished Jewish quarters in the major Polish cities, describing Jewish religious practices and holidays from the perspective of the neutral onlooker. At times, he is horrified by the dogmatism of the Jewish traditions, wondering to what extent they represent Judaism at all or if they are simply remnants of pagan rituals. When the women are praying to the dead to help them in their misery, crying and tearing their clothes apart, for example, Döblin is clearly shocked at what he is witnessing:

Ich bin durchschauert, wie ich dies gesehen und gehört habe. [...] Es ist etwas Grauenhaftes. Es ist etwas Unerträgliches, Atavistisches. Hat das mit Judentum etwas zu tun? Das sind leibhaftige Überbleibsel uralter Vorstellungen! Das sind Überbleibsel der Angst vor den Toten, der Angst vor den Seelen, die herumschweifen. Ein Gefühl, den Menschen dieses Volkes überliefert mit ihrer Religion. Es ist der Rest einer anderen Religion, Animismus, Totenkult.<sup>9</sup>

This, then, is no romanticised picture of Eastern European Jewish practices. Rather, contrary to Zweig, Döblin considers it his duty to be critical of Jewish life in the East because only constructive criticism can lead to an improvement.

In Katz's novel, public life in the shtetl, characterised by severe anti-Semitism, is just as unattractive as the physical surroundings. Indeed, one of the main topics is the depiction of how Jewish characters' behaviour, personality, and choices are influenced by the surrounding hostility. This aspect is introduced in the very first scene when the Fischmanns are fleeing on a hay cart driven by a hostile peasant. Leib's attempt at conversation with the peasant is an attempt to elicit sympathy; otherwise the Jews' fate is in the hands of an indifferent gentile who is only taking them with him for money. However, being familiar with peasant anti-Semitism, Leib surely cannot expect an answer. This is clear to his wife, Malke, who is more cynical and realistic than her husband – she knows the nature of the peasants and has no illusions about them.

This preconceived ›knowledge‹ of the other ethnic groups in the shtetl largely dictates their interaction. As far as possible, Jews and gentiles attempt to live separate lives – or in other words: the Jews try to stay away from the gentiles because history and experience have taught them the physical danger of interaction. Each group has its own traditional way of life and they are separated not only physically but even more by an impenetrable wall of mutual prejudice and contempt. Whether they like it or not, however, the isolation of the shtetl makes them interdependent, forcing them to interact on two regular occasions, the weekly market day and when the travelling Jewish merchant visits the peasants to sell his goods. Manès Sperber's autobiography supports this depiction of the complicated relationship between Jews and non-Jews in

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Döblin: *Reise in Polen*. Ed. by Heinz Gruber. Olten, Freiburg i. Br.: Walter-Verlag 1968 (Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelbänden), p. 92–93.

the shtetl. Admitting that there were serious prejudices separating them, he also points to the ties that necessarily bound them together:

So unähnlich sie einander auch waren, die Armut der einen wie der anderen und die technische Zurückgebliebenheit, die ihnen gemeinsam war, und schließlich der zwar verschiedene, aber gleichermaßen tiefe, alles durchdringende Gottesglaube brachte sie einander näher, als der Fremde es je vermuten konnte.<sup>10</sup>

Given that difference in religion was usually one of the main sources of anti-Semitism, Sperber's presentation of it as a unifying factor seems romanticised and historically inaccurate. Indeed, Sperber himself stresses that this limited sympathy did not prevent the Jews from perceiving the Ruthenians and particularly the Poles as potential pogromists.

In order to demonstrate the effects of anti-Semitism, Katz initially describes the shtetl and the marketplace as peaceful:

Die Männer dieser hockenden Bäuerinnen standen an ihre kleinen Pferde oder Karren gelehnt und blickten verträumt und schweigend in die sie umgebende Welt. Die hieß Strody. So sehe ich diese Männer noch: vorstehende Backenknochen, feste Schnurrbärte, und die widerspenstigen Haare hängen ihnen nach unten, Stirne und Brauen verdeckend. (F 16)

However, this idyll is destroyed as soon as a Jew enters the marketplace, immediately turning the atmosphere cold and hostile:

Aus dem verträumten Blick eines solchen Bauern konnte schnell ein feindseliger, verkniffener, hassender Blick werden. Wenn ein Jude vorbeikam, einer, der weder kaufen noch verkaufen wollte, der nur vorbeikam, dann fiel es hinterlistig und zischend über ihn her:

»Jude, noch immer nicht verreckt, he?«

»Noch nicht, Panje Bauer«, sagte der Jude. Lachte verlegen. Machte einen Bogen. Einen großen. (F 16)

The peasant, wrapped up in his own concerns, is obviously provoked by the mere presence of the Jew, especially as the Jew is of no use to him because he is interested in neither buying nor selling – the only acts that might have brought them briefly together. The Jew, on the other hand, is clearly marked by this hostility and reacts nervously to it. He does not try to defend himself in any way, passively consenting to any accusation or comment from the peasant because he is aware of the alternative: »Der Jude wußte nie, wann so ein gefährlicher Bauer seine handgreifliche Gefährlichkeit zeigen wollte. Er lernte stillschweigend, wie man Verhöhnungen hinunterschluckt.« (F 17) Katz excels in creating such scenes which very strikingly illustrate the hostility to which the Jews of the shtetl are exposed. As in the above passage this is achieved by means of contrasts, an idyllic scene is suddenly destroyed by the introduction of anti-Semitism. Because of its unexpected appearance, the reader is made to

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<sup>10</sup> Sperber, *Die Wasserträger Gottes* (p. 9, note 20), p. 67–68.

understand the pressures of an ever present anti-Semitism. In fact, the idyllic scene only appears to be »idyllic« because of the following cruel interruption whereas in reality, it is merely a description of what one could define as »normal« social reality. This can also be seen in the scene when Jossel takes leave of his family before departing for America:

Auf dem verödeten ungereinigten Perron stand die Familie Fischmann, der Rest der Familie Fischmann, und blickte bis nach Amerika, bis nach New York.

Dann tat jeder ein Seufzer. Und alle weinten so unglücklich.

(Nun kommt schon, liebe Fischmanns, kommt schon. An der Sperre wartet der Beamte auf euch!

Ein Jude darf einen Beamten nicht warten lassen!

Ein Jude soll wissen, daß das sofort böses Blut gegen *alle* Juden macht!

Schnell!! Schnell!...) (F 130)

By communicating directly with the characters, the narrator demonstrates to the reader the strains of living under constant threat of persecution. The warm and sympathetic tone with which he addresses the Jews is in sharp contrast with the pretended direct speech of the gentiles, constituting an efficient narrative means of demonstrating the cruelty of anti-Semitism.

A close look at scenes such as the above reveals that Katz uses contrast as a structuring principle in his novel. As we shall see in the following analysis, different ethnic, social, and gender groups are not only juxtaposed but, at times, contrasted so sharply that the picture presented of them appears artificial. However, the use of such artificially sharp antithesis does not diminish the characters' individuality as one might expect. Instead, it simplifies Katz's presentation of social types, making his panoramic view of shtetl society and its inhabitants clearly understandable and recognizable. It further enables him to expose the prejudices between Jews and gentiles with unmistakable clarity, while showing that these prejudices are mutual and by no means only characteristic of the peasants. It is furthermore significant that the whole matter is presented without bitterness or accusations towards the stronger party, the gentle peasants.

The use of contrast as a structuring principle becomes particularly obvious in the description of Jossel's visits to the peasants. Katz attempts to show and explain the characters' differences by juxtaposing Jewish and non-Jewish trains of thought, thereby revealing mutual prejudices and their causes. Even before Jossel reaches the peasant, he realises that their differences in occupation and educational background are among the main causes of their clashes:

»Den ganzen Tag arbeiten sie mit Gras und Steinen, mit Erde und Holz, und dann kommt so ein Jude und erschreckt sie mit seiner Klugheit. [...] Die Juden in Strody sind zu klug für die Bauern, die hier wohnen«, grübelte Jossel. »Der Gegensatz ist zu kraß, deshalb können wir uns nicht vertragen.« (F 78)

Because of these sharply divided social roles, Jossel is forced to approach the peasant on a level which will neither deter him nor make him feel inferior to the Jew. A suitable approach is entertainment in the form of stories told with

irony and sarcasm in which the Jews are ridiculed and the peasants portrayed as the wiser party. This kind of deliberate self-disparagement, along with the fact that Jossel even tells the story about Marischka and Janek to amuse the peasant – the very story which permanently damaged his sight – is sadly ironic and shows the reader how desperately he must struggle in order to make a living at the cost of his own dignity (F 82).

These circumstances exert a peculiar influence on Jossel's character. In order to survive psychologically and at the same time earn a living in order to support his family, he develops two distinct personalities: one in the home and one among the peasants. Katz thus reintroduces one of the themes of the first chapter – the effect of anti-Semitism on the Jews. The two responses to it, aggression and humility, represented by Malke and Leib in the first chapter are here merged into one character, Jossel:

In der Liebe war er, wie meine Menschenkenntnis mich annehmen läßt, anhänglich und dankbar, ein untadeliger Ehemann von draufgängerischer Schüchternheit. [...]

Ich weiß sehr wohl, daß er im geschäftlichen Leben zu einem kriecherischen, zu einem phrasenhaften und oft hemmungslosen Verhalten gezwungen war. Dazu trieben ihn aber sicherlich nicht seine oft lächerlich melancholischen Anlagen, sondern seine bäuerlichen Kunden, die ihre verbissene Antipathie, ihren hitzigen Haß gegen die Juden brutal und gefährlich zur Schau trugen. (F 88)

To support his panoramic representation of the shtetl, Katz generalises (»wie viele Jossels«), making Jossel a representative of the average Eastern European Jewish pedlar while at the same time allowing him to retain his individuality as a character in his own right.

Katz further stresses the physical difference between Jossel and the peasant by means of exaggerated contrast: »Der Bauer [...] saß wuchtig da, ein Körper, der von robuster Gesundheit strotzte« while Jossel, »halb so breit« (F 79), tries to ignore this difference and its potential threat. Indeed, later in the story he is beaten up by a peasant for requesting overdue payment, an event designed to show the reality of anti-Semitic threats of violence. The landscape in which the peasants live is also antithetical to our picture of Jossel and his surroundings. The landscape of the peasants is described as healthy, open, and »pure nature« (»die schwere, rauschende Landschaft der Bauern, [...] den dunklen Wald, die fetten Äcker, den weiten Himmel«) whereas »der Strodyer Jossel« (F 79), a shtetl Jew, has spent all his life in small, narrow and overpopulated streets, studying Torah and Talmud in strict separation from nature:

Daß man diese Juden jahrzehntelang absonderte von den anderen Völkern, sie in ein paar enge Gassen zusammenpferchte und ihnen kein anderes Loch zur Freiheit öffnete als jenes, durch das der tote Mensch zur ewigen Ruhe hinabgleitet. Daß die Straßen, auf denen sie als Gejagte, als Fremde seit Jahrhunderten ihr jammervolles Leben verbringen mußten, beängstigend schmal waren, oft nicht breiter als dünne Seile – und wer von ihnen nicht abstürzen wollte, der mußte balancieren lernen wie ein Seiltänzer. (F 88–89)

The narrator obviously sympathises with the Jews as is clear from his choice of words to describe their lot. Indeed, words such as ›zusammengepfercht‹ and ›Gejagte‹ recall the treatment of cattle. The shtetl is described as a confined space, an almost hermetically sealed community from which only the dead can escape. It is important, however, that Katz's criticism of this condition is directed at the Austrian authorities and not, as in some shtetl literature, at the orthodox groups in the shtetl who were presented as obstacles to modernisation because of their opposition to secular influences. A typical example of this tradition is the novel, *Der Pojaz* (1905), by Karl Emil Franzos (1848–1904).

Perhaps the most interesting facet of the above scene between Jossel and the peasant is the way in which Katz once again manipulates our sympathies by means of artificially sharp antitheses. We are clearly meant to sympathise with Jossel who is struggling to survive in such difficult conditions. However, it is interesting that although the peasant is exclusively described in negative terms and Jossel, on the other hand, appears as helpless and vulnerable, Katz makes us aware several times that the prejudice and hostility between them are mutual. These feelings existed long before they confronted one another:

Jossels Meinung über die Bauern war schon lange da, bevor er mit ihnen sprach, und er wußte, daß auch die Bauern schon eine Meinung über ihn hatten, bevor sie ihn überhaupt kannten. (F 77)

By pointing to such mutual prejudices, Katz softens the otherwise sharp contrast between the Jew and the gentile – not by suggesting a possibility of reconciliation but by showing the existence of a universal human scepticism based on prejudice and bad experiences. He thus shows how several centuries of hostile interaction between Jews and non-Jews have created myths and prejudices, yet refrains from imputing the responsibility for their bad relationship entirely to the hostile gentile peasant; a very remarkable trait in a Jewish novel whose main topic is the evils of anti-Semitism.

What form, then, do these mutual prejudices take? Jossel's prejudices mostly concern the peasants' simplicity and ignorance: »Die Bauern verstehen uns nicht, weil wir vielleicht zu kompliziert denken«, and later: »Wer weiß, welche Lügen ihnen der Pope in der Kirche gegen uns auftischt. Den Bauern kann man ja alles erzählen.« (F 78) This is, perhaps, a rather conceited attitude, but nevertheless understandable considering the generally high level of literacy and education among Jews in stark contrast to the often illiterate peasants. The peasants' prejudices, on the other hand, are influenced by superstition and the Jews' economic role. This was mainly to do with the Jews' frequent function as links between peasants and landowners, collecting taxes and running inns. In addition to this economic hostility was a long-standing perception of the Jews in Eastern Europe as an alien ›other‹ – a distinct religious and cultural group outside Christian society.<sup>11</sup> The Jews

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Shmuel Almog: Nationalism and Anti-Semitism in Modern Europe 1815–1945. Oxford: Pergamon Press 1990 (Studies in Antisemitism: History); Jacob

were therefore often regarded as leeches exploiting the non-Jewish peasants. Katz condemns such prejudiced thinking because it is based on ignorance, yet shows that the evils of anti-Semitism are not confined to the ›backward‹ Eastern parts of the Habsburg Monarchy but are, in fact, a universal phenomenon. This is shown, for example, when the narrator intervenes in Jossel's visit to the peasant, referring to Jossel by means of the most disparaging words for ›Jew‹ in Polish, German, and French: »zyd, Jud', youpin« (F 90). Even nations, such as the French, with an otherwise long-standing reputation for tolerance have derogatory terms for the Jewish minority and occasionally display their hostility as, for example, during the Dreyfus affair at the end of the 19th century.

The relationship between Jews and non-Jews is thus to a large extent characterised by Jewish self-control, necessitating a very mature and well-contemplated approach to the problematic relationship with the peasants. The peasants, on the other hand, act irrationally, thus representing an even greater danger to the Jews who never know when to expect pogroms and persecution. Again, we see Katz's structuring principle of artificially sharp antithesis at work, presenting the Jews as a people of the mind and the peasants as a people of irrationality and emotion. This is particularly visible in the marketplace scene (F, chap. 5) when Riwke and Jossel are made scapegoats by the furious Janek although they are not responsible for his misery. Katz here attempts to explain how anti-Semitism arises and how a peasant's personal anger may suddenly be taken out on the Jews, although they are not responsible for his misery. It is noteworthy that Katz devotes an entire chapter to characterising Janek before the scene in the marketplace and the assault. By giving us an insight into Janek's personality, Katz attempts to explain, not justify, the attack on the Jew.

Janek is described as an irresponsible child rather than an adult. His walk through the forest shows this very clearly:

Er trollte ganz allein dahin, er sprach laut vor sich her, er pfiff und sang. Anfangs machte es ihm noch Spaß, sich selbst auszureißen, wie ein Irrer davonzulaufen, sich nachzusetzen, geräuschlos durch die Büsche gleitend sich einzuholen. Aber bald wurde er dieses zu ruhigen Spieles müde, und er begann seinen Gesang hochzuschrauben auf ein fröhlich-grollendes Gebrüll. (F 23)

This mixture of a simple, childish mind inside an adult's body is dangerous, and Janek's physical strength is constantly emphasised as he makes his way to the local prostitute, Marischka. Katz does this through personification of the surrounding nature, which at one and the same time plays Janek's game and is terrified of him because Janek himself *is* nature, sensing nothing but his need to be with Marischka:

Mitmarschierte der frische Wind, mitzusingen versuchte der finstere Wald, stärker jedoch waren die Lungen, die starken, des Janek. Halb demütig, halb tückisch, schmetterte er gegen den klaren Nachthimmel: »Laß herein mich!« Der Mond versteckte sich schnell hinter einer Wolke, als er die rotbehaarte Brust und die muskulösen Schlüsselbeine erblickte. Er sah, vor Neid erblassend, tief unter sich den mächtigen Leib, der trumpetend vorwärtsstelzte, zur Marischka, nach Strody. (F 24–25)

At the same time, the passage suggests that the peasants have an affinity to their surroundings which the Jews lack (»Mitmarschierte der frische Wind« etc.). The Jews seem to be a foreign body both to the gentile population and to their surroundings, as is obvious when Jossel approaches the peasant's house in order to trade with him: »Von weitem schlügen Hunde an, Hähne krähten sich zornig zu, und die ersten Häuser wichen wie scheu vor dem Juden Jossel Fischmann zurück.« (F 79) There is no sign of a harmonious relationship between man and nature in this passage. As to Janek, he is indeed »Ein großer lebendiger Fleischberg mit einem nicht sehr üppigen Gehirn« (F 34), a combination of physical strength and minimal intelligence which makes him diametrically opposed to Jossel – his victim – who is small and weak, but very contemplative. Because of these character traits Janek is incapable of controlling his own strength. When cheated by Marischka, he therefore directs his anger towards Jossel and Riwke in the marketplace, hitting both of them because he is dissatisfied with the price of Riwke's herring, thereby damaging Jossel's sight. The Jews have again become scapegoats and Leib's belief in an inevitable Jewish fate seems perfectly justifiable: »Man ist ein Jude und hat zu leiden« (F 112). In fact, fate seems to play an important part in the event in the marketplace as Janek seeks a reason to begin a quarrel, determinedly directing his anger at the two Jews without contemplating the absurdity of his act:

Es war höchst sonderbar. Obwohl Janek keinen Menschen nach der Riwke Singer fragte [...], kamen trotzdem beide zusammen. Er lief auf die Frau zu, als sei nur sie auf dem Markt, als habe nur sie Tonnen zu verkaufen, als hätten sie sich vorher verabredet. (F 38)

In other words, the Jews are easy victims because of their insecurity and because no one cares to protect them. Katz exposes their weakness by exaggerating the differences between Jews and gentiles, reflected both in their personalities and in their relationship with the surrounding world, rather than focussing on their potential similarities. His personification of nature makes these differences particularly vivid. The scene in the marketplace shows that Katz wants to display the origins of anti-Semitism. Indeed, the incident might very well have been the beginning of a pogrom – like the later description of the gentile servant who died in a Jewish hospital and thus sparked the Kishinev pogrom (F 47–48). The utter absurdity of gentile anti-Semitism and persecutions is what makes their acts unpredictable and meaningless, creating insecurity and despair among the Jews who can never know when the next pogrom may arise. Two such pogroms are described in the novel – the

Kishinev pogrom and the one in Zhitomir. In both cases the Jews are made scapegoats, and superstition and prejudice play a very important part in the smear campaigns against them as, for example, in the headlines of the anti-Semitic newspaper *Bessarabetz*:

»Christliches Mädchen von jüdischen Blutsaugern erst geschändet, dann vergiftet!  
Christliches Mädchen erhält im Judenspital Ätherspritzen!  
Zu Ostern brauchen die jüdischen Mörder christliches Blut!!!« (F 49)

It is noteworthy that *all* classes in society are open to this kind of anti-Semitism – it is obviously not connected with lack of education or certain social circumstances, but rather a way to break a boring everyday routine:

Alles riß sich um sie [the anti-Semitic newspaper]: die stets nach Sensationen lechzenden Kleinbürger, der stets sprangbereite lauernde Pöbel, die mit langweiligen Akten beschäftigten Beamten – und besonders die pickelbesäten, milchbärtigen Gymnasiasten. [...] Dort, wo der seit Jahren geschrüte Judenhaß wie wartender Sprengstoff aufgestapelt lag, fiel diese Osternummer des *Bessarabetz* wie eine sehr sichtbar glimmende Zündschnur hinein. (F 48–49)

As regards the Zhitomir pogrom, the Russian government uses anti-Semitism as a means of finding a scapegoat for the lost war against Japan in 1905 – a parallel to the end of the First World War when the Jews among others were accused of having »stabbed the German army in the back«. Indeed, this is just what Dr. Spiegel predicts at the beginning of the First World War:

Herumzanken werden sie sich jetzt alle. Die Tschechen mit den Polen, die Ruternen mit den Bosniern, die Bukowiner mit den Wienern. Aber schuldig wird immer der andere sein. Ganz zum Schluß wird es dann sicher mal heißen: »Schuld an allem ist der Jud!« Das ist immer die einfachste Lösung, das gibt ihnen Einigkeit. (F 162)

It is noteworthy, however, that Dr. Spiegel is not merely making a random prediction. His utterance is based on Jewish wisdom and experience, supporting Katz's intention to generalise history and psychology while individualising Jewish fate. Thus in the novel, anti-Semitism and pogroms are blamed on superstition, ignorance, boredom, a lack of tolerance and interest in mutual understanding, and the fact that the Jews are easy scapegoats because they hardly ever defend themselves and are never defended by other groups in society. Everyone finds them curious and suspicious and nobody takes an interest in their fate. The Jewish response to the pogroms is silence. All know what they imply and all suffer, but they are too terrible and painful to talk about. If pogroms had been a mere relic of the past, they might have been easier to cope with, but they are very much part of the present time, and the awareness that they could occur at any time makes the Jews pass over the whole issue in silence, speaking only of the future (F 50–51, 110–111).

### c) The Jews and the Austrian Authorities

The Strody provincial governor (Bezirkshauptmann), however, the official representative of the Habsburg Monarchy in the shtetl, is the Jews' refuge in times of trouble. As a social type, he is presented as a classic example of Habsburg officialdom in Galicia, thoroughly inefficient and preoccupied with his own affairs rather than the well-being of the Emperor's subjects. We first encounter him when the general anti-Semitism in the shtetl, but especially Janek's attack on Jossel, make Dr. Spiegel approach the gentile provincial governor for help. Dr. Spiegel is another social type who in his capacity as the local Jewish doctor and the novel's representative of assimilated, westernised Jews is the only one who can venture to present the Jews' problems to the provincial governor. This is an important scene because it shows that anti-Semitism is present at all levels of society since even educated Jews like Dr. Spiegel, who has clearly abandoned all signs of Jewish religion and tradition, are also exposed to it. Through the governor's absentmindedness and his deliberate misunderstanding and minimisation of the event in the marketplace, Katz demonstrates the hypocrisy of the Habsburg authorities, heavily criticising their treatment of the Jewish minority. Yet at the same time, he wraps up this criticism in a humorous garb, exposing the sad state of the Empire at the end of its existence. This decay is reflected in the depressive state of the Emperor's officials: »Er [the official governor] sah wie der müde Angestellte einer Firma aus, die bald verkrachen würde.« (F 43) The comparison of the Habsburg Empire to a firm about to go bankrupt shows an attitude of irreverence towards the Monarchy. It is clearly no longer the powerful and vigorous state it used to be. It is interesting, however, that unlike Joseph Roth, whose works will be treated in the last section of this chapter, the narrator of *Die Fischmanns* does not lament this disintegration of the Habsburg Empire. He merely states the historical process without showing any emotional attachment to the Empire either geographically or as a metaphysical idea.

In order to avoid taking steps to protect the Jews, the governor uses a variety of tactics to handle the insistent Dr. Spiegel. He sincerely believes that all other minority groups in the Monarchy are also potential claimants on support and protection and that helping the Jews would set a precedent liable to get himself and the government into trouble. He also clearly lacks understanding of the actual power relations between the different minority groups in Galician society. A subtle detail is the way the governor's attitude towards other people, and towards Jews in particular, is expressed in the buttoned or unbuttoned state of his coat. When the academic Jew causes problems, his academic side is ignored by the provincial governor and he only notices the Jew in the Doctor, from whom he then feels compelled to distance himself. However, as soon as Dr. Spiegel abandons his fight and consents to the governor's only solution – to tell Roman, the local policeman, to take extra care (an entirely useless course of action) – the official again unbuttons his coat and returns to his

›friendly‹ self. This, ironically, he considers an excusable »Rückfall« (F 45) caused by his own good nature.

Katz further stresses the official's naiveté by ridiculing his enormous admiration for the government in Vienna. We hear that »der Wiener Hofrat« has been to Strody to open a new bridge across the river Stryj, on which occasion he declared that »Das österreichische Volk ist stolz auf seine Völker«, an utterly inane sentence as it does not become quite clear who »das Volk« is if it is not comprised of »die Völker«. The ›Wiener Hofrat‹ is obviously too removed from the everyday life of the Austrian peoples to acknowledge that there are major internal problems in the Empire. It is furthermore highly ironic that he has come to open a bridge across the local river when he and his government are clearly unable and unwilling to build a bridge of peace and understanding between the many peoples constituting the Monarchy.<sup>12</sup> The episode makes it clear why the Jews continue to live in fear of persecutions. The officials are ineffective and reluctant to intervene, and, as revealed by the doctor's thoughts, the provincial governor in Strody is not merely an exception: »Welch ein tapsiger Greis sitzt hier! Und nicht nur hier, dachte er erschüttert.« (F 45) Dr. Spiegel may here be referring either to Emperor Franz Joseph himself or to other provincial governors within the Monarchy.

Dr. Spiegel's function in the book is thus to represent the group of modern Jews who believe in Enlightenment and assimilation as the solution to the Jewish question. Having studied in Vienna, he has deliberately detached himself from orthodox Jewish life and is influenced by Western European values rather than Jewish orthodoxy. This is evident not least from his renunciation of religious practice and of the typical orthodox Jewish appearance. Like many German and Austrian Jews, he even serves as a doctor in the army during the First World War, thereby hoping to win the Austrian people's approval, a fact which is now well-documented by historians. Yehuda Bauer gives the following explanation of the Jews' eagerness to show their patriotism to Germany or Austria:

Jewish enlistment appears to have been prompted by a basic feeling of insecurity in the Gentile environment and a consequent desire to prove a loyalty equal to, or beyond, that shown by others. But their patriotism availed them not. Stereotyped as unmilitary, German Jews suffered humiliating inquiry into their collective behavior and were frequently the victims of pent-up aggressions.<sup>13</sup>

This sacrifice of his Jewish heritage and his service in the Austro-Hungarian army supposedly give Dr. Spiegel a stronger position in the interaction with non-Jews. Indeed, it is to his credit that he does not hesitate to intervene on behalf of his people, as for example seen in his visit to the governor. Yet, his attempt to become accepted by non-Jewish society fails. Despite his attempt to

<sup>12</sup> On the problem of multinationality in the Monarchy see: Gerald Stourzh: Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs 1848–1918. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1985.

<sup>13</sup> Yehuda Bauer: A History of the Holocaust. New York: Watts 1982, p. 54.

be treated on equal terms with the non-Jews by joining the Austrian army as a doctor, the officers, whom he helps identify the supposedly dangerous spy, Jossel Fischmann (F 208–210), cannot conceal their prejudice against Jews despite occasional Jewish attempts to assimilate: »Diese Juden stecken ja doch alle unter einer Decke, alle« (F 209), and later, making a poor attempt at denying that their views also include the Jewish Dr. Spiegel:

»Was diese Juden für Arbeit machen!« knurrte Hauptmann Sedlotschek. »Diese Herumtreiber, die! Diese ewigen Aus- und Einwanderer, die! Nur mit Juden hat man diese Arbeit!« [...]

Doktor Nachum Spiegel schwieg nicht. Er sagte:

»Meine Herren!« [...]

»Aber ich bitte Sie! *Sie* meinen wir doch nicht«, lächelten der Hauptmann und sein Oberleutnant. Beiden schlugen sie dem jüdischen Arzt »aus unserem Heere« sehr, sehr freundschaftlich auf die widerstrebende Schulter. (F 210)

Like the provincial governor, the officers' behaviour towards Dr. Spiegel is condescending, only concealed by a thin layer of superficial friendliness. The passage is furthermore ironic because it reveals the officers' ignorance with regard to the Jews' situation. They completely fail to realise that the reason why the Jews are constantly travelling is the outcome of centuries of anti-Semitic prejudice of the kind which they themselves have just displayed. Katz thus exposes the hypocrisy of such gentiles who would have been even more discontented if the Jews had, in fact, settled in their country. There is, in other words, nothing the Jews can do to avoid anti-Semitism, inevitably posing a national problem to the country in which they live. As to Dr. Spiegel, his efforts to please non-Jewish society have obviously failed although on the surface he may appear to have been accepted. However, as demonstrated in the two above examples, the layer of tolerance is thin and the underlying anti-Semitism deep-rooted.

#### d) Jewish Identity and Jewish Fate

The attack on Jossel in the marketplace not only makes Dr. Spiegel approach the provincial governor; it also makes the Fischmann family discuss emigration. This discussion eventually develops into a fundamental debate about Jewish identity and fate. The narrator explains the historical context:

Man versteht diese Diskussion [...] nur, wenn man weiß, welche Ausmaße damals die ostjüdische Emigration bereits angenommen hatte. Händler fuhren weg, jüdische Tagelöhner, Schuster, Thoraschreiber, Lastträger, Schneider, arme Juden, reiche Juden, junge Leute, alte Leute, Männer und Frauen. (F 92)

When Jossel is physically attacked, the idea of emigration is thus not unfamiliar to the Fischmanns. At the same time, external factors played a part, as improvements to the economic infrastructure and the means of communication brought new ideas to the closed shtetl community. This also affected the Jews' economic

status as it enabled the peasants to trade with a wider range of people from surrounding towns, thus deliberately avoiding trade with the local Jews. Foreign tradesmen would often settle in the shtetl, offering a different selection of goods from the Jews at a lower price. The so-called »Bauerngenossenschaften« (F 82), whose purpose it was to encourage trade among peasants in order to avoid dealing with Jews, also contributed – often intentionally – to a deterioration of the Jews' subsistence level.

In this period, the Galician Jewish population increased exponentially. This growth necessitated an increase in income and greater occupational diversity. However, modernisation and industrialisation, along with the gentile peasants' avoidance of local Jewish tradesmen whenever possible, had precisely the opposite effect. Furthermore, poverty also increased among the gentile population, considerably reducing their spending power in the weekly markets. According to Klaus Hödl and Raphael Mahler, the majority of Galician Jews who emigrated did so because of such economic factors and not primarily because of anti-Semitism<sup>14</sup> – a view supported by the fact that compared to Russia, anti-Semitism in Galicia only occurred in a »mild« form. In *Die Fischmanns*, however, Jossel's main reason for emigrating is anti-Semitism. We hear that his business is suffering considerably, but this is blamed on his absent-mindedness resulting from thoughts about emigration and not on the general economic crisis:

Es geht nicht gut aus, wenn man auf einem polnischen oder ruthenischen Bauernhof steht, um Stacheldraht zu verkaufen, dabei aber gar nicht an den Stacheldraht denkt, sondern an das Auswandern nach Amerika.« (F 90)

This may appear rather naive, but the fact that Katz omits other important historical and social facts again suggests that his primary purpose in writing the novel was not to provide the reader with a detailed historical account of economic and social forces in Galician society at the end of the 19th century. It was rather a wish to deal with the psychological mechanisms and social dynamics of a society displaying anti-Semitism as one of its most prominent features and to do so through the daily lives of a typical Jewish family.

Given these circumstances, emigration seems the only obvious way to a better life. The Fischmann family's discussions about the pros and cons of such a decision introduce another central theme in the novel – that of Jewish identity in the Diaspora. Having no historical claim on the land on which they live, where do they belong? Their attitude towards the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy is shown as ambivalent. On the one hand, they adore the old Emperor Franz Joseph who was considered a particularly benevolent monarch, friendly and just towards all minorities in his Empire. The reasons for the Jews' reverence become clear when considered in a historical and cultural context:

<sup>14</sup> On economic changes in Galicia at the end of the 19th century see: Klaus Hödl: »Vom Shtetl an die Lower East Side« Galizische Juden in New York. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau 1991 (Böhlaus zeitgeschichtliche Bibliothek, 19), esp. p. 40–41. Also: Mahler, The Economic Background (p. 78, note 6), p. 125.

It is safe to say that all the Jews of Austria, whatever their social class, religious views, or level of modernization, were *Habsburg-treu* (loyal to the dynasty) in the late nineteenth century. In Galicia, for example, the contrast between the benevolent Emperor Franz Joseph and the malevolent Russian Tsar just over the border provided sufficient cause to adopt a pro-Habsburg orientation. More significantly, of course, Jews all over the Monarchy felt enormous gratitude to the Austrian government for having granted them emancipation in 1867; for having ended all the medieval disabilities on Jewish residence and economic opportunity; for declaring the Jews equal citizens with other Austrians; and for bestowing upon them the protection of the *Rechtstaat*.<sup>15</sup>

The Jews thus felt indebted to the Emperor for understandable reasons. In his autobiography, Manès Sperber confirms the Emperor's significance in Jewish awareness:

Kaiser Franz Joseph bedeutete für alle Städte-Bewohner [sic] der Monarchie weit mehr als für andere Untertanen, denn sie sahen in ihm den Garanten ihrer staatsbürglichen Rechte, den Beschützer gegen Willkür und Haß.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout Katz's novel, examples of the Fischmanns' loyalty towards the Emperor recur. He is mostly described as a very kind, yet also very old man with whom the Jews can identify precisely because of his weakness:

Wie oft war ich in meiner Kindheit Zeuge, wie die jüdische Seele, die sich sofort und ganz mit allem Traurigen auf der großen weiten Erde identifizieren kann, die so viel Mitleid hat mit jedem Leid, gar sehr den ehrwürdigen Kaiser bedauerte. Ach, nicht einmal in seiner Familie war er wirklich mächtig, schwach ist also die irdische Macht. Keiner wollte ja auf ihn hören, jeder in der Hofburg lebte, heiratete, liebte und starb, wie er wollte. »Lieber Kaiser Franz Joseph, Du verstehst uns, und wir verstehen Dich – und jeder muß sich selber helfen.« (F 93)

The Emperor thus represents a fellow-sufferer with whom the Jews can identify and empathise rather than a pillar of strength to whom they can flee for protection. Yet, however comforting this identification may be, it does not shield them from gentile persecution and neither does, as we have seen, the Emperor's representative in the shtetl, the provincial governor. It is therefore not surprising that the Jews in the novel do not feel closely attached to the Habsburg Monarchy, a fact which is also expressed by the narrator: »Da sie keinen starken, sie schützenden Staat sahen, hatten sie wirklich keinen Grund, ein Vaterland zu sehen.« (F 93) Indeed, their position between Ukrainian and Polish national aspirations seriously retarded Galician Jewry's assimilation and encouraged Jewish nationalism in the region. Jewish support for Polish nationalism was furthermore deeply resented by the Ukrainians, leading to frequent

<sup>15</sup> Marsha L. Rozenblit: The Jews of Germany and Austria. A Comparative Perspective. In: Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century. From Franz Joseph to Waldheim. Ed. by Robert S. Wistrich. London: Macmillan 1992, p. 1–18, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Sperber, Die Wasserträger Gottes (p. 9, note 20), p. 126.

anti-Semitic violence.<sup>17</sup> Yet, as Marsha L. Rozenblit has pointed out, despite the influence of such nationalistic movements on Jewish aspirations for an independent Jewish state, many Austrian Jews – although perhaps mainly the acculturated Viennese Jews – perceived that the multi-national and multi-ethnic structure of the Habsburg Monarchy was an advantage to them as a minority:

They understood that the supra-national empire best served them as a bulwark against the narrow chauvinism and anti-Semitism of the national camps. Unfortunately, few members of other national groups joined them in creating an »Austrian« national culture.<sup>18</sup>

The Jews were, in other words, the Empire's most loyal citizens, and Katz's portrayal of Jewish attitudes towards the Habsburg Monarchy is thus clearly different from the findings of historians because it does not aim to encompass all nuances of Jewish political and religious life at the time. Instead Katz seems to be writing from hindsight rather than attempting historical accuracy. In *Die Fischmanns*, then, the Jewish lack of ›Vaterlandgefühl‹ is ascribed precisely to the fact that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy provides the Jews and every other minority group with no uniform culture to assimilate to:

[...] man muß also die Geschichte dieses Landes kennen, um zu verstehen, warum weder die Juden, noch die dort wohnenden Polen oder Ruthenen um die Jahre vor 1914 einen so festen »Vaterland«-Begriff haben konnten wie etwa die Bewohner eines einheitlichen staatlichen und kulturellen Territoirs wie Deutschland oder Frankreich. (F 92–93)

Rather than looking to the Austrian state for a definition of their identity, Jewish self-perception was based on the Jewish community, the Jewish family, and especially the Jewish religion. This was due not least to the slow economic development and the multinational structure of the Monarchy which meant that many Jews had not assimilated and indeed did not intend to do so. They therefore continued to consider themselves »members of the Jewish people, a nation exiled by God, awaiting God's redemption«. Rozenblit continues: »The essence of their identity, therefore, was Jewish rather than German, Czech, Austrian or anything else.«<sup>19</sup> This is also the case in *Die Fischmanns* where the synagogue is defined as the Jews' true mother country on the Day of Atonement: »Hier, im Bethaus, war das wahre Vaterland, die Heimat der Juden.« (F 190) Here, the Jewish identity is thus defined exclusively in religious terms.

The overall message implied by Katz, then, is that only within the structure of a nation state can the Jews really assimilate and develop a sense of belonging. However, as he shows in his depiction of the Fischmanns' lives in Germany, even a nation state such as Germany is not free of anti-Semitic prejudice. The only difference between Galicia and Germany is that Germany, as

<sup>17</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn: The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1983, p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> Rozenblit, The Jews (p. 91, note 15), p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

opposed to Galicia, represents a country to which it is immediately desirable for the Jews to assimilate. This, then, also changes the concept of Jewish identity as it is now up to the Jewish individuals to accommodate themselves to the German mentality, struggling to find acceptance with the German people on their own. In Germany, the experience of anti-Semitism and persecution is therefore perceived as personal failure of integration, resulting in serious identity crisis in the individual. In Galicia, on the other hand, such anti-Semitism had merely strengthened the Jewish community, forcing it to stand united in its fight for survival.

A particularly important feature of Eastern European Jewish identity at the time is the Jewish faith in a protecting God. Indeed, although religion plays a relatively minor role in the novel, we are aware of its constant presence and its vital importance in the lives of the Fischmanns. Thus, for example, Jossel, surrounded by hostile peasants with whom he has to trade, makes it his priority to obey God in everything he does in order to obtain His protection and sympathy: »Noch wichtiger als das Vertrauen seiner Kunden war für Jossel, daß Gott, der alleine wußte, wie schwer es so ein Jude hat, zu ihm Vertrauen habe.« (F 89) Grandfather Leib, too, is a very pious Jew, expressing in his monologues his anxieties about Jossel and Lea's emigration to the West and the consequent danger of them losing their faith in God:

»Aber sieh mal an, Malke. Wenn du die Kinder nach dem Westen drängst, werden sie alles vergessen«, trumpfte Leib zum Schluß auf. »Nicht einmal beten werden sie dann noch können, genau so wie dieser Doktor Spiegel, der schnell ein paar Seiten weiterblättert, wenn der Vorbeter ein lautes Wort sagt. Ist das Bildung?« (F 119)

However, when the Jews flee from the approaching Russians during the First World War, a different and very interesting notion of religion is conveyed to the reader, suggesting a discrepancy between the characters' and the narrator's views of religion. This day happens to be Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement – and the orthodox Jews refuse to continue their flight, putting their trust in God: »»Gott wird schon helfen, wenn man betet«, sagten sie. »Man muß auch leiden können als Jude.«« (F 188) Yet when their makeshift synagogue is bombed despite their prayers, the Jews are terrified and unable to understand God's severity. In retrospect, the narrator explains the situation in the following way:

Wir baten um Errettung, wir alle, Kinder und Erwachsene, jammerten und flehten mit unseren hellen, dunklen, vibrierenden, schwelgerischen und ergreifend gläubigen Stimmen. Aber die Kanonen, die platzenden Schrapnelle, das Winseln der Verwundeten waren an diesem Tage wohl stärker zu vernehmen als wir. (F 189–190)

As a child, the narrator was clearly as pious as the adult Jews. Yet describing the incident with hindsight, he seems to have distanced himself from his orthodox beliefs, attempting unsuccessfully to explain why the Jews' prayers to be rescued were not answered. Indeed, it would be blasphemous for an orthodox Jew to suggest that God, who is omnipotent, did not answer his prayer because He was unable to hear it amidst the noise of cannons and the screams of the wounded.

The narrator's attempt to excuse God is obviously sarcastic. All attempts to explain the incident from an orthodox perspective simply as God's will are missing. This disbelief in God's omnipotence is further stressed in the almost poetic passage describing how the Jews' prayer is left fluttering over the Carpathians like a wounded bird because it, like a bird, was hit by pieces of shrapnel:

Über den Karpaten flatterte ein Gebet aus einem Städtchen, in dem eine Brücke gesprengt worden war. Das Flehen konnte sich nicht erheben, es flatterte ängstlich, immer ängstlicher im Kreise umher. Es flattert noch heute über den dunklen Bäumen der Karpaten. Es wird ewig dort flattern.

Die Flügel des Gebetes waren von Sprengstücken getroffen worden. (F 192)

Of particular importance is the change in the verb »flattern« from the past to the present tense, indicating that the narrator generally has little faith in the effect of prayer for the Jewish people. The prayer has been personified, thus representing the Jews' fear at the time and their hopelessness till the present day and in future (»Es wird ewig dort flattern«). These, however, are the reflections of the adult narrator and not his view of God at the time.

Rather than God, world politics and unfortunate circumstances, over which the Fischmanns have no control, are blamed for most of the misery which the characters in the novel experience. Thus, for example, the narrator did not choose to flee from Strody. He was forced to flee by the war:

Wir fuhren nicht freiwillig. Wir flüchteten nicht aus eigenen Stücken aus dem »unzivilisierten Osteuropa« in die »zivilisierten westeuropäischen Länder«. Die »Enge der Heimat« war für mich Siebenjährigen wahrlich keine Enge gewesen. Nichts zog mich in die weite Welt, sondern der Krieg stieß mich aus Strody hinaus, nicht wie einen Menschen, nicht wie ein Kind – wie ein seelenloses Stück Kriegsmaterial. (F 167)

Indeed, it was estimated in a report by an Austrian minister in 1915 that by then 340.000 refugees had left Galicia, most of whom were Jews. Their knowledge of the Russian army's anti-Semitism made them flee in large numbers, leaving behind all their possessions.<sup>20</sup> In the same way, Lea and the children are prevented from going to America because first the children and then Malke fall ill. Jossel's plans are destroyed when he feels compelled to go back to Europe because of the war and is then called up to military service by the Austrian government. Some of their misfortune, however, could also be ascribed to the interplay between character and destiny; to the way the characters make their choices based on their moral consciousness. Their sense of responsibility for one another, for example, makes Lea stay until Malke has recovered, and it makes Jossel feel obliged to leave for Europe because of the war. Had they been less scrupulous, things might have developed differently.

Into the psychological interplay between character and destiny, however, comes the dimension of unforeseeable historical and political events and not

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<sup>20</sup> Wróbel, The Jews of Galicia (p. 78, note 4), p. 133.

least the notion of fate. Indeed in the novel, the Fischmanns' misfortune is more often than not explained as ›Jewish Fate‹. This view, represented by Leib, for example, becomes especially obvious in his discussions with Malke about the sense – or lack of sense – in emigrating. Leib sees no point in trying to escape anti-Semitism and persecutions because all events in his life are the inevitable result of being a Jew. Thus, after Jossel has been attacked by the peasant, Leib sees no other solution but to obey this fate:

»Ach was!« sagte Leib mißtrauisch. »Glaubt ihr wirklich, daß es anderswo besser ist? Im Westen liegt der Frieden auch nicht auf der Straße. Jude sein heißt eben: Die Beschimpfungen nicht hören, sich taub stellen, sich bezwingen, überall. Für einen jungen Menschen ist das keine leichte Sache, ich weiß, ich habe es noch nicht vergessen. Aber man gewöhnt sich mit der Zeit ...« (F 91)

The rest of the family, especially Malke, consider Leib a hopeless pessimist. He represents old, traditional, conservative, orthodox Jewish views, whereas she represents the ›modern‹ views of the Haskalah – the Jewish Enlightenment. She believes that knowledge alone leads to understanding and tolerance (›weil das Glück nur mit dem Wissen kommt‹, F 95–96), basing her faith in a better future in the West on the works of Schiller and Lessing. Indeed, these German writers were often considered guarantors of western humanism, freedom, and equality in Eastern European shtetls.<sup>21</sup> Their importance to Jews in the East is also depicted very vividly in Franzos's *Schiller in Barnow* and also mentioned in Joseph Roth's *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, thus supporting Katz's picture of Jewish reverence for Lessing and Schiller in *Die Fischmanns*.<sup>22</sup> In the description of Malke's admiration of the two writers, the Fischmanns once again become representatives of the average Galician Jewish family:

Malke hatte an einem Nachmittag wieder einmal in den beiden Büchern geblättert, die man in jenen Jahren häufig in den Wohnungen galizischer Juden finden konnte. Es waren zwei deutsche, schon sehr zerlesene Bände ›eines Herrn von Schiller‹ und ›eines Herrn von Lessing‹. Jedesmal, wenn sie die vergilbten Seiten überflog, geriet sie für eine ganze Woche in große Begeisterung, die sie am liebsten auf alle Hausbewohner (später auch auf uns Enkelkinder) übertragen hätte. (F 95)

This view of Lessing and Schiller as representatives of Germany remained even after the Jews had experienced the more hostile German reality.

Compared to Leib, then, Malke is a fighter who shows only contempt for those who – like Leib – accept the role as the eternal victim. Her solution to anti-Semitism is emigration but, as has been shown, her dream of a better life in the West is based on ignorance, as she reads only Schiller and Lessing and

<sup>21</sup> Robert Wistrich: Between Redemption and Perdition. Modern Antisemitism and Jewish Identity. London: Routledge 1993, p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Emil Franzos: Schiller in Barnow. In: K. E. F.: Erzählungen aus Galizien und der Bukowina. Ed. by Joseph Peter Strelka. Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung Beuermann 1988 (Deutsche Bibliothek des Ostens), p. 19–33; Roth, Juden auf Wanderschaft (p. 18, note 10), p. 828.

not, like Leib, the newspapers in which less favourable things about western countries are written. Malke is thus passionately in love with an image that is only partly true because it is based on antiquated ideas: »Sie liebte ja alles, was westlich von Strody war, wie ein junges Mädchen einen vielgenannten schönen Unbekannten anbetet.« (F 96) Indeed, it is precisely her ignorance that allows her to form her own ideal picture of Germany. When, for example, she is asked if Lessing lives in Berlin, Malke must reluctantly confess that unfortunately Lessing has already died. This, then, indirectly anticipates the death of Lessing's high ideals for a tolerant society, predicting that the Fischmanns' lives in Germany will not be as easy as Malke hoped.

As for Leib, he does not for a moment believe that Germany will be any different from Galicia, refusing even to become acquainted with the German classics on which Malke bases her dreams of a better future (»Deine gebildeten Schreiber will ich gar nicht kennen.« F 97), although this would have constituted an easy – if unrealistic – escape from his miserable life in Strody. Yet in the end, his pessimism is vindicated as the Fischmanns face serious hardship and anti-Semitism in Germany, too. Early on in the novel, the narrator foresees this development, concluding, like Leib, that persecution seems invariably connected with being Jewish:

Ich habe oft und lange darüber nachgedacht, ob mein Leben eine andere Wendung genommen hätte, wenn mein Geburtsort nicht Strody gewesen wäre. Heute glaube ich, daß es ganz egal ist, wo ich, der Jude, zur Welt kam. Daß ich als Jude geboren wurde, war bestimmender für mein Leben. Denn man verfolgt nicht nur die Juden aus Strody. (F 15)

This realisation, uttered with a touch of subtle irony, is one of the novel's most crucial passages because it sums up the whole essence of the novel: the Jews – not only the Fischmann family, but Jews in general – suffer *because* they are Jews, and there is nothing they themselves can do to change this fate. Despite this realisation, however, the narrator does not at any time agree with Leib's passivity. Instead, he fights for a better future and encourages other Jews to do the same even if their hopes are disappointed. Apart from the main acknowledgement of the narrator's own great disappointment with life in Germany, uttered in the novel's very last paragraph (F 246), there are several hints throughout the novel at the political development in Germany which was to become so fatal for the Jews. Leiser Selzer, for example, unknowingly predicts exactly these events when he says: »Aber vielleicht gibt es eines Tages in Deutschland dasselbe Elend, dieselbe Hetze, die gleichen Hetzer wie in Wolhynien.« (F 113) This is clearly an allusion to the persecution of the Jews in contemporary Germany and an example of Katz's wish for the reader to draw parallels between the events described in the novel and present-day German society.

By using the narrator's grandparents as mouthpieces of orthodox and assimilationist views, Katz once again implements artificially sharp antithesis as a structuring principle for his material. Indeed, the contrast between Malke and Leib is representative of all relationships between men and women in the novel,

although the differences in the couples express themselves in a number of ways. Generally, one can say that the women are stronger characters than the men either physically or psychologically. The structure of these relationships, then, forms a pattern similar to the contrasts between Jews and gentiles described earlier. Just as the artificially sharp antithesis between Jew and peasant served as a structure to illustrate life outside the ghetto, the sharp contrasts between men and women demonstrate the workings of the Jewish family within the ghetto.

In the case of Leib and Malke, the difference is clearly an intellectual one displaying their different political views and attitudes towards Jewish life *per se*. Their discussions reveal deep-rooted prejudices towards the other sex on both sides. Malke, for example, bullies not only her own husband but indeed every male person exposed to her immense vitality and energy. Her general opinion of men is rather condescending:

»Mit Männern kann man nicht reden«, sagte sie wegwerfend. »Sprich mit einem Blinden vom Licht, das geht auch nicht. Ich rede von der Zivilisation, und er spricht von Prozessen.« (F 96)

Leib, on the other hand, does not look much more favourably upon women. When Jossel worries about marrying a woman he does not know, Leib's well-meaning advice to his son clearly expresses his own views:

Bei deiner Mutter ist es nicht anders gewesen. Ich habe sie auch erst später kennengelernt, nach der Hochzeit. Vor oder nachher – es ist gehüpf wie gesprungen. Man kennt sich sowieso nie mit Frauen aus. (F 60)

Leib's peculiar sense of logic is here presented through his naive yet clearly prejudiced attitude towards marriage and women in general. The narrator's humorous presentation of Malke and Leib as well as his deep respect for them softens their otherwise pronounced opposition with regard to more serious matters such as emigration and the future of the Jewish people. Their amusing idiosyncrasies furthermore ensure that they do not lose their individuality despite their function as social types.

The other couples in the novel are equally depicted by means of contrasts, thereby revealing an uneven power balance between the sexes. We see this, for example, in the relationship between Riwke and Mendel Singer. Because of his physical weakness, she has determinedly and singlehandedly provided for the family throughout their marriage – an act of selflessness which is greatly admired by the narrator (F 31). Unlike Riwke and Mendel, the meeting between Marischka and Janek is characterised by her manipulation of him. Indeed, Katz here reverses the picture of Janek given in the description of his walk through the forest. Facing Marischka, Janek is no longer the self-confident young man affiliated with nature, but alternately meek and furious yet unable to assert himself. The contrast thus works in reverse, showing Janek in an inferior position to Marischka whereas he is portrayed as superior to the Jews simply because of his physical strength. However, nothing works against Marischka's slyness, and the narrator clearly enjoys Janek's defeat, ridiculing him quietly (F 28–29).

Unlike all other couples in the novel, Lea and Jossel are not portrayed by means of sharp contrast. Instead, they seem to be perfectly matched, both being quiet and shy people who thoroughly dislike quarrels of the kind Malke and Leib are having. The humour with which Katz occasionally makes fun of Leib and Malke is also entirely missing in his description of Lea and Jossel, who are generally described in a sympathetic way encouraging the reader to empathise with them in their misery. Jossel is mostly portrayed as a helpless young man, and the way in which both he and Lea struggle to survive is greatly admired by the narrator. They are not natural fighters but become ones because of the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves. Lea, for example, is often referred to in terms such as »meine Mutter, die arme kleine jüdische Mutter« (F 222), thus arousing the reader's sympathy and pity for her. The care with which the Katz describes Jossel and Lea is, perhaps, connected with the fact that it may well be a portrait of his own parents.

Despite the prevailing female dominance, there is a certain harmony in the relationships between men and women in the shtetl which can be ascribed to the traditional orthodox framework of life. Everyone has his or her prescribed role in society and in the family from which no one diverges, yet the responsibility placed on women within the Jewish family makes them independent and self-confident in their opinions. During the inter-war period in Germany, as described in Katz's second novel, *Schloßgasse 21*, the traditional framework has largely disappeared, the individual is unsure about his or her place in society, and family life is depicted as disruptive and chaotic as will be shown in the analysis of the novel in the next chapter. It is important, therefore, that Katz depicts the shtetl and the Jewish community within it as a safe and harmonious environment despite the material backwardness and the severe anti-Semitism which he portrays so realistically. The shtetl may be primitive but at least it provides the individual with clear directions as to how to live his or her life. As Katz shows, this safety disappears with assimilation to western countries, forcing the individual Jew to completely redefine his or her values and place in society. This dilemma is also evident in the description of Jossel in America which will be treated below.

### e) Assimilation

*Die Fischmanns* describes the hopes and disappointments of many Jewish people, their continuing struggle for a better life despite innumerable setbacks, and the way anti-Semitism shapes character. Its effect becomes particularly obvious in the characters' varying responses to persecution and harassment. All the Jews of Strody are marked by the experience of living in constant fear of pogroms and verbal or physical assaults and yet they have all developed their own mode of survival. Malke, Jossel and Lea are characters fighting for a better life, taking refuge in dreams and eventually in actual flight, whereas

Leib is the eternal pessimist or, as it turns out, ultimate realist who, like the narrator, believes that fate condemns all Jews to persecution. Dr. Spiegel represents the emancipated and enlightened Jew who because of his unsuccessful efforts to assimilate ultimately belongs neither to the Jews nor to the gentiles – i. e. one side still despises him because of his Jewishness, the other for abandoning it. Anti-Semitism, in other words, prevents the characters from developing freely and fully, something which might have been possible in a different and more tolerant society such as Germany. However, even there Lea and her children face anti-Semitism. Katz succeeds in depicting the sensation of complete helplessness when the young narrator is called *>Dreckjude<* by two of his best friends, who from that day on refuse to play with him:

An diesem Tag, die Mutter war unterwegs in den Dörfern, hatte ich, das Kind, Gedanken und Gefühle wie ein Mörder. [...]

Ich war also auch hier ein Dreckjud'.

Ich schluckte und schnaufte und kämpfte verzweifelt gegen meine Tränen an. (F 224)

This incident inevitably makes the child wish to become *>German<*, to assimilate to German society to the extent where all traces of his Eastern European background have been obliterated. He therefore feels uncomfortable walking in the street with his mother who is unable to speak German without a revealing Yiddish accent. As early as the age of eight, the narrator has realised the consequences of *>otherness<*:

Wie brennt heute mein Gesicht, wenn ich daran denke, daß ich mich mit acht Jahren meiner Mutter schämte, weil sie, eine Emigrantin, mit uns in ihrer Muttersprache sprach. Aber ich wußte ja damals schon, daß wenn ich auf der Straße jiddisch redete, die Straßenjungen *>Mauscheljud!<* und *>Hep, Jud!<* hinter uns herschreien würden – und daß die Erwachsenen, mit jener sauer-lächelnden Gebärde der Falschheit, die mir als Kind schon die Kehle würgte und mich zittern ließ vor Hilflosigkeit, ihre Sprößlinge von uns wegufen würden, um diesen zuzuflüstern: »Komm, laßt die Judenstinker«. (F 223)

On the one hand, the child wants to deny his own background because of the problems caused by belonging to this culture, while, on the other, he is ashamed of distancing himself from it because it means distancing himself from his parents and everything they represent. In other words, he is caught between love for his parents and a growing contempt for the Eastern European world and traditions which make him a despised outsider in German society. Again, the contrast between Malke's dreams of Germany and German reality becomes obvious.

Through his description of the narrator's emotional conflict, a conflict he would most likely not have experienced had he stayed in the shtetl, Katz also emphasises that anti-Semitism and its effect on the shaping of a person's character are not necessarily connected with any one society in particular, such as the Eastern European shtetl, but may in fact also exist in a society otherwise enlightened and tolerant. In Strody, the peasants' anti-Semitism made the Jews frightened creatures who tried to avoid all encounters with a non-Jew and who,

like Jossel, developed dual personalities in order to survive both physically and mentally. Thus in Strody, anti-Semitism would have serious effects on the Jews' personalities but it would not create an emotional conflict within themselves; in fact, their belonging to the Jewish community would give them strength to deal with the surrounding hostile non-Jewish society. In Germany, however, anti-Semitism has the opposite effect on the narrator, caught as he is between the two worlds, and wanting to belong to both of them. This aspect of Eastern European Jewish life in Germany and the dilemmas arising from it become the main focus of *Schloßgasse 21* in which the Fischmanns' lives in the Weimar Republic are described. As opposed to non-Jewish life and mentality in the shtetl, German society represents a model of life to which it is very desirable to belong, making the narrator's dilemma even greater since by assimilating, he would not only escape anti-Semitism (or so he thinks) but also become part of this modern and enlightened society so different from the Galician world he left behind.

America, however, is different. It is generally described as a confusing place because we see it mainly from Jossel's point of view. He feels utterly lost in the big city, never really succeeding in becoming integrated because he is there only to earn enough money to send for his family. Until he has achieved this goal, he has no illusions of becoming an integrated part of a society so radically different from Strody:

Auf den vollgepropften Trottoiren liefen, rasten, stießen sich dunkle und helle, gestreifte, gesprenkelte, getupfte Anzüge und Kleider, in denen ruhelose Menschen, Frauen, Männer, Halbwüchsige stakten. Auf den Fahrdämmen lagen lange Regenwürmer, die sich als Autos und Droschken entpuppten. Über alle Dämme ergoß sich eine nie rastende Wanderung. Hochhäuser, Kuppeldächer, Häuserblöcke, Gesteinfassaden zogen an dem rasenden Stadtzug blitzschnell vorbei. (F 134)

In his study of Eastern European Jews in America, Irving Howe describes this bewilderment which the emigrants experienced when arriving in America. However, he also points to the fact that the Jews had an easier time adjusting themselves to their new environment than other emigrants because the Jews were used to being a minority in the countries from which they had fled:

The need to adjust to conditions of life in a strange country first became a problem for other groups only in America; but for Jews it was a problem they had had to face for many centuries. Others came to their new country with one culture; the Jews came with two, and frequently more than two, cultures. One culture they carried deep *within* themselves, within their spiritual and psychic being. The other they bore *upon* themselves, like an outer garment.<sup>23</sup>

Despite this predominantly hectic and confusing representation of America, it is the only society depicted in Katz's novel which is free of overt anti-Semitism and persecution, something which has a positive effect on Jossel's view of life:

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<sup>23</sup> Irving Howe: *World of Our Fathers*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1976, p. 71.

»Da keiner zu ihm ›zyd‹ sagte, war Vater überglücklich, und er vergaß diese erschütternde Tatsache in keinem Brief an uns.« (F 138) This, however, does not mean that America is entirely free of prejudice, as is obvious from the stereotypes existing among the various emigrant communities (F 136). Yet the stress-filled American way of life with which Jossel finds it so difficult to cope contains an intrinsic complexity suggesting a lack of time for – and indeed interest in – dealing with minority problems and cultural differences. Everyone is a minority in America until they adopt an American identity, and most people left Europe to escape not only poverty but also such social and ethnic discrimination. The interest in seriously carrying on old prejudices therefore seems minimal. The reader is indirectly encouraged to compare America and Europe with regard to assimilation and integration. In doing so, he is expected to realise how a free and tolerant society can provide equal and optimal living conditions for all groups at the same time without the use of scapegoats.

The best example of how such a liberation can change an individual character is Leiser Selzer. When he comes to live with the Fischmanns after the Zhitomir pogrom, he is a defeated character with no home and an uncertain future in Germany or America ahead of him. In his presence, the words Zhitomir or pogrom are taboo: »Wenn wir abends mit ihm um den Tisch saßen, redete keiner von Wolhynien. So wie man einst von Kischinew geschwiegen hatte, schwieg man heute von Schitomir.« (F 110) Life in free and tolerant America, however, transforms him completely, and coming to fetch Jossel on his arrival in New York, Leon Selzer appears to be another person, able even to joke about anti-Semitism and persecution in Galicia: »Vielleicht fehlt dir auch bloß so 'n Panje Bauer, lieber Freund«, setzte er lächelnd hinzu.« (F 135) The reason why Selzer succeeds in becoming integrated into American society while Jossel fails is that Selzer is independent and free of all ties to Eastern Europe when he emigrates. Jossel, on the other hand, has responsibilities towards his wife and children and hesitates to settle down until they have arrived. Through Leon Selzer, and partly through Jossel, Katz demonstrates what influence an unprejudiced society and an open-minded environment may exert on the shaping of an individual's character. The fact that Katz himself had just been forced to flee from Germany because of a lack of such tolerance makes his discussion of this topic all the more personal and touching.

Despite the new tolerance, it is, however, important to notice that Jossel is never described as completely happy in his new country. The narrator wonders about this question, reaching the following conclusion:

War er glücklich in Amerika? Ich glaube, nein. [...] Denn Du warst allein ... Er fühlte sich gar oft einsam, ohne Glück, ein bedauernswerter Mann. Er begann, mit sich selber Mitleid zu haben, mit seinem sehr eintönigen Leben, mit seiner »amerikanischen Einsamkeit«. (F 146)

Jossel's unhappiness is partly due to his loneliness since most other Jewish emigrants are busy living their own lives with their own families, and partly to

an inner insecurity with regard to his place in this confusing society apparently consisting only of stress, noise, and skyscrapers. Without the orthodox framework of shtetl life, prescribing the Jewish individual's place in the world, and surrounded by a secular society seemingly based entirely on the pursuit of wealth, it is difficult to maintain a traditional Jewish lifestyle and remain a pious Jew. The shtetl, however backward and insecure life had been there, did at least ensure a simple and pious way of life:

If airless, the shtetl had been snug; it was a social world in which the totality of existence came under the command of religion and in which everyone knew his precise status. But here in the United States life seemed at first utterly chaotic, so much so that the idea of freedom could only gradually be apprehended and enjoyed; it was a social world in which no one quite knew where he stood and which even raised the subversive possibility that where a man stood was open to his own definition.<sup>24</sup>

The fear of being lost, then, both literally and in a religious sense, brings Jossel to defend his orthodox Jewish values vehemently, although he knows that these values are of little use to him in American society (F 137–138). Only gradually does he learn to come to terms with the American lifestyle but he never accommodates himself to it completely.

In his description of Jossel's life in America, Katz not only illustrates the difficulties encountered by the thousands of Eastern European Jews who emigrated to the States at the turn of the century but, in doing so, also depicts the hardship of exile with which his contemporary readership would have been able to identify. One major problem was, for example, the new language. Jossel, when coming to America, feels completely lost because he does not understand the American language. Suddenly, however, a small but significant change takes place, and Katz succeeds in conveying the psychological importance of possessing a means of communication, however limited it may be initially:

Eines vor allem hinderte ihm beim Marschieren, beim schnellen und freien Marschieren: die neuen Wörter, die Sprache.[...]

Er verstand die ersten Tage nichts, nicht eine Winzigkeit mehr als nichts. Dann vernahm er plötzlich einen Laut, der immer wieder gesprochen wurde und beinahe wie die erste Silbe seines Vornamens klang – er hörte das Wörtchen »Yes«. Da fühlte er sich mit einem Male nicht mehr ganz so unglücklich. (F 138)

The language problem, however, also works in reverse, leaving those who do not understand Yiddish in an awkward position when surrounded by Yiddish-speakers. Leon Selzer's young wife Sally, for example, a second-generation Russian-Jewish emigrant who speaks only English, is left completely out of the conversation when Jossel and his friend, the *Kischinewer*, come to visit the Selzers. Eventually, certain arrangements have to be made in order to bridge the language barrier and the problems it causes:

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

Jetzt war folgende Regelung getroffen worden: zweimal wöchentlich kam Jossel zu Selzers, da sprachen die Männer halb jiddisch, halb englisch. Sally hatte sich damit abgefunden, daß ihr Leon, ihr Mann, erst hinterher, wenn sie allein waren, genauen Bericht über die Gespräche gab. Sie fragte nur ganz selten inmitten der angeregten Unterhaltung nach irgend etwas, sie verstand Jossel und seine Sehnsucht nach jiddischer Unterhaltung wohl deshalb, weil ihr Vater, der russische Jude, auch nicht anders gewesen sein mag. Emigrantenschmerzen, Emigrantenschicksal. (F 141)

The problem described in the passage becomes representative of emigrants in general through the words »Emigrantenschmerzen, Emigrantenschicksal«, uttered with a silent sigh of resignation. At the same time the fact that Sally can no longer speak the language of her father testifies to the speed with which newly arrived emigrants tended to assimilate to the culture of the American melting-pot. This, then, leads to a question of particular interest to Jewish emigrants – the possibility of integration and citizenship in the country to which they had fled. This question was of immense importance to these emigrants because the States were usually the final destination of their travels and the place in which they hoped to stay for the rest of their lives. It is therefore only logical that Katz has Jossel, recently arrived in America and hoping to find a new life for himself and his family, express these worries:

Kann unsereins ein richtiger Amerikaner werden? ...

Mein Vater hatte diese Frage gestellt, er wollte unbedingt wissen, wie ein »richtiger Amerikaner« sein muß. So etwas interessiert doch, wenn man hier bleiben will, nicht wahr? (F 142)

Upon being told by the pretentious »Kischinewer« that, »Ein richtiger Amerikaner, meine Lieben, muß ein großes Selbstvertrauen haben, so ein Selbstbewußtsein, als stände die ganze Welt auf seiner Seite« (F 142), Jossel is discouraged, focussing his hopes for integration into American society on his children instead. He himself feels too »marked« by life in Eastern Europe to summon up the requisite self-confidence and capability to assimilate to a society so different from his childhood environment. The realisation of personal ambitions and hopes of success is thus passed on to the next generation whose task it is to fulfil the fathers' dreams. Indeed, as Irving Howe has shown, even by 1905, Yiddish had yielded to English as the predominant language of the East Side where most of the Jewish emigrants settled. The younger emigrants were also striving much more than previous generations to become American in dress, looks, and speech.<sup>25</sup> The generational conflicts arising from such developments and parental expectations are elaborated on and demonstrated in their full implications in *Schloßgasse 21*. The chapter on this novel will treat these conflicts further.

The final chapter of *Die Fischmanns* is called »Das weit offene Tor«, an apparent allusion to the Jews of Galicia finally being permitted to escape the backwardness and the anti-Semitism of Eastern Europe and enter the enlight-

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

ened western world promising freedom and tolerance. However, this promise proves false. The gate concerned is not the gate leading to freedom but one leading to death. Indeed, the description of Lea's life, death and funeral sums up the notion of Jewish struggle and fate pervading the entire novel. The weather on the day of her funeral – »ein wunderschöner Herbsttag« (F 244) – is diametrically opposed to the sad event taking place in the Jewish cemetery. Everybody outside the cemetery seems to have had more luck in life than she, and the description of her last journey symbolically describes her entire life:

Die Straße, auf der der Leichenwagen fuhr, war entsetzlich lang – wie ein ewiges Unglück. Sie endete mit dem jüdischen Friedhof und seinem breiten Tor, das als einziges in dieser traurigen Straße weit offen stand. (F 244)

Like the road along which she is now taken, her life has been »ein ewiges Unglück« and her many missed opportunities are displayed symbolically in all the closed gates which she is wheeled past on her way to this single open one. The narrator's last statement confirms this belief in a Jewish fate and in the hopelessness of Jewish aspirations for assimilation despite their continuing struggle for acknowledgement and acceptance. His belief in such a particular fate is stressed by the emphatic use of the word »jüdisch«:

Was folgte, war eine Jugend, ausgefüllt von heißen Träumen nach Heimat, Verwurzel sein, nach Freunden, nach der fehlenden Mutter ... Es waren jüdische Träume einer jüdischen Jugend ... Wie habe ich dies alles ersehnt, erlebt, wie habe ich gekämpft – und wie wurde ich betrogen! (F 246)

Despite this sad ending, however, and the apparently hopeless prospects for the protagonist and the Jews in general, the reader is not left with a sense of despair. We are encouraged to feel pity for the victimised Jews, yet there is no trace of self-pity, and many situations that might otherwise have been grim (such as descriptions of pogroms) are subtly transformed with touches of humour and irony. The novel is thus remarkable for its immense emotional vitality and for dealing with the very serious and morally complex issues of anti-Semitism and interaction between minorities and the host society without expressing bitterness or hate for the persecutors. Katz endeavours to explain how anti-Semitism and pogroms arise by depicting their context and stressing the existence of *mutual* prejudices; each critique of the gentiles' behaviour and their persecution of the Jews is implicit in the description of their action. Katz's demonstration of what leads to anti-Semitism and persecution, however, is not a justification, but rather an attempt to describe the psychological mechanisms and social dynamics which provoke such behaviour. Through its main theme – the description of anti-Semitism and the search for a Jewish home in the Diaspora – the novel levels severe criticism against the political conditions in any society tolerating anti-Semitism and failing to combat unjust treatment of minorities. However, of even greater importance than the political aspect is the moral message of the novel. This message, expressed by Jossel on his way to the hostile peasants, is Katz's conception of an ideal world and an appeal to his readers for more tolerance and acceptance:

–träumerisch und verzückt [...] dachte er wohl auf seinen Touren [...] immer intensiver und heißer an ein fernes, glücklicheres Land, in das man entrinnen müßte, dort wo auch ein Jossel Fischmann ruhig leben kann. Wo es nicht zuerst »Jude« heißt, sondern »Mensch«. Wo auch die Bauern klüger sind als hier, und wo ein Fischmann so viel wert ist wie ein Bauer. (F 89)

Thus, the interaction between Jews and gentiles, between minorities and majorities, plays a central part, especially with regard to anti-Semitism but also as regards behaviour in general, as for example in the description of the Austrian Empire's treatment of the Galician refugees (see F 197–202). Yet most important of all is Katz's ability to convey to the reader the everyday experience of being a Jew, the joy and the suffering, the fear and the caution when dealing with the surrounding hostile world. This is the main aim of the novel, as is obvious from the absence of all attempts to deal with and explain historical and political events at the time. Only the events necessary to understand the Jews' situation in Galicia are mentioned while all descriptions of political parties and movements are omitted. The reader soon realises that an ›insider‹ is telling this story and that his aim is to provide an emotional rather than political account of what Jewish life in Galicia at the turn of the century was like. It is precisely these qualities that distinguish *Die Fischmanns* from other novels dealing with similar themes.

#### f) *Die Fischmanns* and Exile Writing

Since *Die Fischmanns* was written in exile, it belongs to the category of ›exile literature‹. Precisely how and where, however, does it fit into this category, and why did Katz choose to write about Eastern European Jews? In his autobiography *Der Wendepunkt* Klaus Mann defined what the exiled writers saw as their main task and obligation:

Der deutsche Schriftsteller im Exil sah seine Funktion als eine doppelte: Einerseits ging es darum, die Welt vor dem »Dritten Reich« aufzuklären, gleichzeitig aber mit dem »anderen«, »besseren« Deutschland, dem illegalen, heimlich opponierenden also, in Kontakt zu bleiben und die Widerstandsbewegung in der Heimat mit literarischem Material zu versehen; andererseits galt es, die große Tradition des deutschen Geistes und der deutschen Sprache, eine Tradition, für die es im Lande ihrer Herkunft keinen Platz mehr gab, in der Fremde lebendig zu erhalten und durch den eigenen schöpferischen Beitrag weiter zu entwickeln.<sup>26</sup>

In order to achieve these goals, three literary topics prevailed: descriptions of the current political situation in Germany, the writers' life in exile, and of the Nazi regime and its victims in a historical garb, generally in the form of historical novels.

<sup>26</sup> Klaus Mann: *Der Wendepunkt. Ein Lebensbericht*. Mit einem Nachw. von Frido Mann. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 1994 (rororo, 5325), p. 293.

Placing *Die Fischmanns* in one of the three categories is not an easy task as the novel contains no characteristics which would make it easily definable as either a contemporary novel taking place in Germany or in exile (the category in which Katz's second novel *Schloßgasse 21* belongs) or as a historical novel. The story is clearly set in the past but it is not a description of an important historical event or personality. Instead, one finds a depiction of Katz's own past which is highly unusual. This clearly suggests that Katz did not set out to write a historical novel in the traditional sense although his novel does draw clear and very critical parallels to the present-day situation in Germany – a recurrent trait in most historical novels of the period (for example Mann's *Henri Quatre* or Feuchtwanger's *Der falsche Nero*). This difficulty in fitting *Die Fischmanns* into the canon of exile literature only confirms the novel's uniqueness and stresses Katz's remarkably different way of dealing with his experiences. Characterising it as a mixed genre consisting of fictional and strong autobiographical elements is probably the closest genre classification of the novel.

But to what extent does Katz draw on personal experience in his novel? I. e. how much of it is fiction and how much autobiographical fact? The story is set in Galicia and begins in 1905 with the marriage of the narrator's parents. Soon after, the narrator is born and his birth thus coincides with Katz's own birth in 1906. As in the novel Katz and his family were forced to flee at the outbreak of the First World War, and like the Fischmanns they settled in Germany, where Katz spent his youth. His father went to war and his mother died when he was ten years old. The autobiographical elements in the novel can thus hardly be overlooked, but certain elements indicate that Katz did not intend the novel to be an autobiography. First of all, the genre is designated ›Roman‹ and the narrator's name is Jakob Fischmann, not Henry William Katz – two crucial indications that we are dealing with what Philippe Lejeune has called the ›novelistic pact‹ between writer and reader.<sup>27</sup> Lejeune argues that it is only possible to talk about autobiography where the identity between author, narrator and character is obvious and where the text claims to be based on truth. This is what he calls the ›autobiographical pact‹ – a kind of contract between reader and writer laying down the author's guidelines as to how the text is meant to be read. Likewise, he talks about a ›novelistic pact‹ when there is no identity between the author and the ›I‹ of the text (nominally), and the text is clearly presented as fiction, for example by means of the designation ›Roman‹ as in the case of *Die Fischmanns*. Thus, the autobiography must always be based on complete identity whereas the autobiographical novel can be more or less autobiographical. Furthermore, Katz deliberately changes certain facts (for example, the Katz family went to Thuringia whereas in the novel, the Fischmanns go to

<sup>27</sup> See: Philippe Lejeune: Der autobiographische Pakt. In: Die Autobiographie. Zu Form und Geschichte einer literarischen Gattung. Ed. by Günter Niggel. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1989 (Wege der Forschung, 565), p. 214–257, p. 230–232.

Saxony). Despite the novel's fictional claim, however, its plot is clearly presented as an autobiography with many allusions to the narrator's sources and memory of specific events (see e. g. F 17–178, 21, 36, 216), and yet it is uncertain whether or not these are also the *author's* (i. e. Katz's) sources. In his postscript of 1985 Katz presents his novel as a mixture of several different components:

Ich war der Erzähler. Aber je mehr ich schrieb, desto mehr spaltete ich mich auch in viele andere Personen auf. (F 258)

In dem Buch *Die Fischmanns*, in dem Erinnerungen an die ostjüdischen Freunde meiner Kindheit in Deutschland mit Entdeckungen meiner eigenen Kindheit und mit Erfahrungen und Phantasie vermischt sind, beschreiben die Personen ihr eigenes Leben selbst. Sie sprechen in dem Buch, nicht ich. Sie diktierten mir, und ich schrieb nieder, was sie mir sagten. Es war ihre Idee, daß ich Jakob Fischmann wurde. Der Roman hatte von Anfang an sein eigenes Leben, ich war nur ein ausführender Erfüllungshelfer. (F 259)

Thus, although Jakob Fischmann is the narrator, the narrative voice is really split between several identities. He is the I of the novel whose story we are told, but also the We, identifying with the whole of Eastern European Jewry, and finally the authorial narrator providing us with general information about the characters and their environment.

The fictional elements of the novel, then, are as strong and significant as the autobiographically authentic parts. At the same time Katz emphasises that the characters are not limited to the narrow context of the novel – they function as archetypes and are to be seen as representatives of their particular social class or minority group in a certain society at a certain time. Occasionally, this makes them appear as clichéd mouthpieces of certain views or features of shtetl life at the time. Major characters such as Jossel, Leib, and Malke do, however, retain their sense of individuality while at the same time playing their parts as archetypes. Allusions to this archetypal role of the characters are frequent. Janek, for example, is not just a forest ranger but a representative of forest rangers and their social class in general. The following quotation very clearly indicates this and from shifting prejudiced standpoints expresses the feelings of different minority groups – not only towards »Janeks«, but towards all other minority groups in shtetl society:

Dieser Janek war ein einfacher Waldmensch, wie es Tausende gab um 1905 herum, mit schmutzigem Schafpelz und halbhohen Schaftstiefeln, mit Stoppeln wie Steckpflanzen im Gesicht und dickem Stock als dritten Arm. Ein großer lebendiger Fleischberg mit einem nicht sehr üppigen Gehirn war er, was aber nicht sein Verschulden ist, wohlgemerkt.

»Haha, so ein echter Janek also«, freuen sich alle Nicht-Janeks.

»Haha, also ein Ruthene«, freuen sich die Polen.

»Haha, also ein Pole«, freuen sich die Ruthenen.

»Auf alle Fälle kein Jude«, sagt jeder Jude aus Ostgalizien. (F 34)

The change from past to present tense in the direct speech expressing the different social groups' views of each other shows Katz's intention to demonstrate that mutual prejudice is a universal phenomenon with relevance not only to the society depicted in his novel but in fact also to contemporary German society. The passage demonstrates the self-awareness of these groups and the way in which such prejudice is used to define group identities by excluding and ridiculing other ethnic or national groups.

Similarly, after Jossel's departure for America, he is made an archetype of the Eastern European Jewish emigrant – not merely a character in his own right within the framework of the novel:

Armer Vater, armer Kamerad Jude, armer Kamerad Emigrant, armer Kamerad Entwurzelter, der du, wie so viele Jossels, auszogst, um für dich und für uns das Glück zu suchen, weil du es in Strody nicht fandest, warst du glücklich in Amerika? (F 146)

The generalisation is here presented extremely effectively as it happens in four steps from the most specific to the most general, ending with an individualisation of the most general group by giving them his father's name in the plural. Thus, they all share a common fate, but at the same time each member of a category has his own background and his own detailed human story.

As is clear from the above description of the novel in an exile context, *Die Fischmanns* was significantly different in content compared to the average exile novel at the time. The novel would also have been remarkably different compared to the other manuscripts submitted for the Heinrich Heine Prize in 1937 among which were, for example, Stefan Heym's Drama *Heimfahrt*, Ernst Goldschmidt's *Esterwegen*, a book about concentration camps, and Iwan Heilbut's *Meer*, works which were also highly praised by the committee. Although the committee's evaluation no longer exists, the qualities emphasised by contemporary critics were Katz's sincere and gentle way of describing the eternal wandering and suffering of the Jewish people, thus stressing the novel's moral and historical merits and drawing parallels with present-day persecutions of the Jews in Germany:

Now, at a time when it is sorely needed, comes a book about the persecution of the Jewish people that resolves the whole problem into one aching pity. Asking nothing, merely retelling the tragic tale of the wandering Jew with Biblical beauty and understanding, 'The Fischmanns' is a piece of literature wrung from the very soul of Europe.<sup>28</sup>

It is not a comfortable book to read; it is disturbing, sad, and full of moral indignation. Which is, perhaps, considering its subject matter, as it should be.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The Register (New Haven/Conn., 10.7.1938), Deutsche Bibliothek (EB 93/135 – Nachlaß Henry William Katz).

<sup>29</sup> Constitution (Atlanta/Ga., 31.7.1938), Deutsche Bibliothek (EB 93/135 – Nachlaß Henry William Katz).

Certainly, the novel is remarkable for depicting the adversity of the Jewish people without bitterness or hate – at times even with subtle humour – and parallels to anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1930s are easily drawn. This, of course, was a matter of great relevance to the Jewish emigrants, as they themselves had been forced into exile because of German anti-Semitism. However, it is important to remember that the Heinrich Heine Prize, although it carries the name of a well-known Jewish writer in exile, was not a *Jewish* exile prize and that not all members of the jury were Jews. In other words, the novel must have displayed other qualities appealing to non-Jewish German writers in exile.

One such quality is the portrayal of the exile situation itself. As we have seen, the hardships of exile are described very carefully in Jossel's emigration to America, where we are shown his problems in adjusting himself to the new environment and the very different mentality of the Americans. It further appears in the touching depiction of Lea's life in Germany and her difficulty in finding work and supporting her children. Katz thus deals with some of the most basic problems of the exile situation, making clear to the reader that he is not a stranger describing the exiles from the outside; he is one of them: »Heute erst versteh ich diese Nervosität, denn ich bin selbst ein Emigrant geworden, habe selbst nun auch, verfolgt und verjagt, die alte Reise aller Juden angetreten.« (F 110) Exile is here associated exclusively with Jewishness and not with political rebellion or discrimination against minorities in general. Jewishness thus once again comes to carry the connotations of eternal exile, presenting persecution as an intrinsic and inescapable part of Jewish life.

Finally, Katz treats a problem of exile common to all emigrants, but undoubtedly particularly relevant to his fellow Jewish exiles:

Der junge Spiegel also hatte Ferien und ging auf den Markt.

Was sonst hätte er in diesem Nest schon machen sollen? (Er sagt dies verächtlich, doch seine Augen reden eine andere Sprache. Wer von uns kennt nicht diesen inneren Riß, dieses Heimweh, das ein jeder von uns empfindet – und die Scham, es einzugestecken. Dürfen wir denn Sehnsucht nach einem Lande haben, das uns ansie ...?). (F 36)

In the passage Katz is referring to Eastern Europe but the general character of the question more than hints that it is also a matter of great importance to him in his present situation. The »Sehnsucht« mentioned in the quotation is the longing for Germany, for the country in which he and most other German Jews felt at home. As shown in the introduction, they were incapable of hating Germany although this country had just rejected them, denying them all belonging to what they, too, had considered their mother country. This phenomenon, then, is made very relevant and personal in the above quotation through the change from »er« to »wir«. The uniqueness of the Eastern European Jewish perspective, the description of the Jews' fate in the first 30 years of this century, highly relevant to most of Katz's contemporaries in exile, and the parallels to their present exile situation would thus be possible reasons why Katz was awarded the Heinrich Heine Prize in 1937.

### g) *Die Fischmanns* in Context

Joseph Roth is probably the most obvious writer to whom to compare Katz. Not only are their biographies until 1939 strikingly similar, their works also largely deal with the same people, problems, and milieus. Like Katz, Roth was born in Galicia, worked as a journalist in Berlin in the 1920s and early 1930s, and chose to go into exile in France when Hitler came to power in 1933. Being twelve years Katz's senior, Roth had already published several novels at the time of his exile, and it is extremely probable that Katz was familiar with his work when he wrote *Die Fischmanns* and *Schloßgasse 21*. Given their parallel backgrounds and experiences, the number of similarities in their works is not surprising. Like *Die Fischmanns*, most of Roth's works are set in the eastern parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, describing the people and problems of those particular regions.

A comparison of their works further reveals interesting aspects of their views of themselves as Jews and of the Jewish idea of a mother country. Where do they belong in a time when their country of birth, the Habsburg Monarchy, has been dissolved and their country of residence, Germany, has denied them membership of the German nation? What is their relationship with both of these states and how are they depicted in their works? The purpose of this section is to compare Katz's and Roth's presentations of shtetl life, the interaction between Jews and gentiles and the Habsburg Monarchy as such. Since Katz most likely knew Roth's pre-exile works and since Roth deals with aspects relevant to a comparison with *Die Fischmanns* before as well as after 1933, this study will also include the novels *Hiob* (1930) and *Radetzkymarsch* (1932) apart from the exile works *Tarabas* (1934), *Der Leviathan* (1934), *Die Büste des Kaisers* (1935), *Das falsche Gewicht* (1937) and *Die Kapuzinergruft* (1938). The following examination will look at Katz's and Roth's literary representations of the Eastern European world and its people.

If, as we have seen, Katz's novel is structured by means of contrast, ambivalence is the literary device which most accurately describes Roth's work. His presentations of both people and places are characterised by such ambivalence, making his picture of Galicia and its inhabitants more complex than the one provided by Katz. As has been shown by Celine Mathew, at times even central events to Roth's stories can be seen as ambivalent, and are presented as incomprehensible even to the narrator.<sup>30</sup>

Katz does not offer his reader many descriptions of the Galician landscape, and when he does, these descriptions are mostly negative. During Jossel's trips to the peasants, for example, we are given the following glimpses of the surrounding area, »Leer und trocken lagen die Straßen da. Von den Feldern erhoben sich Krähen und ließen den stinkenden Kadaver eines Hasen tief unter sich

<sup>30</sup> Celine Mathew: Ambivalence and Irony in the Works of Joseph Roth. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang 1984 (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 1/686).

zurück« (F 78) and shortly thereafter, »In der Luft mengten sich der Pferdeschweiß und der Geruch der Misthaufen in den verwahrlosten Höfen zu einem anspruchsvollen Gestank« (F 79). The winter is described as »der trostlose Winter« – »eine einzige trübselige Schneeflur« (F 87). Significantly, all depictions of the landscape are provided by the narrator because the characters themselves do not notice their surroundings. On the day after Jossel's and Lea's wedding, for example, Jossel shows Lea the river: »Das ist der Stryj«, sagte er und gab dieser kurzen Erklärung einen komisch-inhaltsschweren Klang [...]. »Das ist der Stryj«, sagte er also, dann ließ er die Natur sprechen.« (F 71) Jossel's silence may, ironically, be caused by the fact that there is indeed nothing worth commenting on in the Galician landscape. Neither does the narrator follow up his silence with a more elaborate description of the surroundings, merely giving the reader a brief comment on the river described as »unappetitlich[en]«. The passage furthermore shows Jossel's alienation from nature. It clearly does not appeal to him, and even on fine days, Jossel takes no notice of his surroundings: »Noch überflutete die Sonne ziemlich durchdringend den Himmel und die Erde, sie schien prall auf Jossel, der auf seinem schmalen Kutscherbock saß und mit seinem Verstand jonglierte.« (F 87) This alienation helps to explain why he has nothing to add about the river Stryj.

In his description of the Galician landscape, Katz uses the principle of deliberately sharp contrast in two ways. Firstly, he juxtaposes a typical Jewish landscape with a typical non-Jewish one – seen from a Jewish and a peasant perspective respectively:

Das Leben in Strody war arm und eingeengt, es kannte keine friedlichen Berge, keine ruhigen Täler, keine sonnigen Felder der Juden [...]. Aber keiner konnte uns hindern, daß wir uns an der Pracht jenes fernen Landes, in dem einst ein kluger König Salomon regiert hatte, erfreuten. (F 74)

The peasant landscape, on the other hand, is described as follows: »[...] die schwere, rauschende Landschaft der Bauern [...], den dunklen Wald, die fetten Äcker, den weiten Himmel« (F 79). The difference is emphasised by contrasting pairs such as »eingeengt – den weiten Himmel«, »sonnigen Felder – den dunklen Wald« and »ruhigen Täler – rauschende Landschaft«, presenting the Jews' idea of King Solomon's landscape as peaceful and pleasant while the peasant lands are open and wild. It is obvious that all description depends on the viewer's perspective. The Jews clearly do not identify with the land on which they live and thus take no notice of it. This leads us to Katz's second contrast which is the one between the hostile surroundings and the warmth of Jewish family life. This juxtaposition serves to underline the anti-Semitism and general hostility to which the Jews are exposed in Galicia, sharply contrasting with the domestic warmth and security of the traditional Jewish community. The result is alienation from their surroundings because these surroundings are associated with the hostile peasants and therefore not worth knowing and at times even dangerous. Katz's personification of nature, described earlier in this

chapter, further demonstrates his use of artificially sharp contrasts to prove his points about Jewish and non-Jewish relationships with their surroundings.

Katz's portrayal of the Jews and the Galician landscape supports Joseph Roth's statement in his essay *Juden auf Wanderschaft*: »Der Ostjude sieht die Schönheit des Ostens nicht. Man verbot ihm, in Dörfern zu leben, aber auch in großen Städten. In schmutzigen Straßen, in verfallenen Häusern leben die Juden« and later: »Die große Mehrzahl kennt den Boden nicht, der sie ernährt.«<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this attitude also characterises the Jews' relationship with Galicia in some of Roth's works, such as his novel, *Hiob*, based on the Biblical story of Job. In his study of this novel, Sidney Rosenfeld points to the discrepancy between the Jews' and the gentiles' relationships with nature.<sup>32</sup> This discrepancy becomes particularly obvious in the description of the return of Mendel Singer's sons, Jonas and Schemarjah, from their military examination at which they have been called up for service in the army:

Es schneite dichter und weicher, je weiter der Tag fortschritt, als käme der Schnee von der ansteigenden Sonne. Nach einigen Minuten war das ganze Land weiß. Auch die einzelnen Weiden am Weg und die verstreuten Birkengruppen zwischen den Feldern weiß, weiß, weiß. Nur die zwei jungen schreitenden Juden waren schwarz. Auch sie überschüttete der Schnee, aber auf ihren Rücken schien er schneller zu schmelzen.<sup>33</sup>

The two black Jews do not fit into the white landscape and are clearly not natural inhabitants of it. Unlike the peasants who, when walking through the same landscape, remain white from the heavy snow (»[...] auf ihren breiten Schultern lag der Schnee wie auf dicken Ästen«, H 23), the two Jews stand out as foreigners – people without roots in the surrounding nature. As Rosenfeld rightly shows, this is the case on several occasions throughout the novel, but perhaps most obviously in the description of the Jews gathering in the field to greet the new moon:

Und sie hasteten, stumm und schwarz, in regellosen Grüppchen, hinter die Häuser, sahen in der Ferne den Wald, der schwarz und schweigsam war wie sie, aber ewig in seinem verwurzelten Bestand, sahen die Schleier der Nacht über den weiten Feldern und blieben schließlich stehen. (H 43)

The forest is eternally rooted in the Eastern European soil (»ewig in seinem verwurzelten Bestand«) and the Jews clearly do not feel at home in it. This alienation from nature can partly be ascribed to the isolation of the Jews in narrow and dirty streets and partly to the gentiles' prohibition against them owning land, thus preventing any close contact with their surroundings. How-

<sup>31</sup> Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (p. 18, note 10), p. 829.

<sup>32</sup> Sidney Rosenfeld: *Glaube und Heimat im Bild des Raumes*. In: Joseph Roth und die Tradition. Aufsatz- und Materialiensammlung. Ed. by David Bronsen. Darmstadt: Agora 1975 (Schriftenreihe Agora, 27), p. 227–240.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Roth: *Hiob. Roman eines einfachen Mannes*. In: Roth, *Werke* (p. 18, note 10), Vol. 5, p. 23. Future references to the novel will be made in the text marked H.

ever, the alienation is first and foremost attributed to the fact that unlike the forest and, metaphorically speaking, the native peasants, the Jews have no roots in the Russian landscape. They do not belong there and every attempt to settle and become accepted by the native population is doomed to fail as is shown both in *Die Fischmanns* and in *Hiob*.

However, unlike Katz, whose picture of the Eastern Habsburg lands is quite one-sided, Roth presents and uses the Galician landscape in a number of ways. Maria Klanska points to three roles of the landscape in Roth's works. It is the ›verlorene Heimat‹; the peaceful contrast to the chaos of the First World War, and the dangerous land of the swamps.<sup>34</sup> The Monarchy's function as a lost home is meant both in a geographical and a mythical sense. This is closely linked with Roth's own situation as an exile at the time of writing, having lost his beloved Habsburg Monarchy and everything it stood for. His only way to revive it is through literature, constantly presenting it in a very nostalgic light. Indeed, Roth's presentation of the Monarchy and the Emperor becomes increasingly sentimental as his time in exile progresses and his hopes for a revival of the Empire under Otto von Habsburg vanish. Just as Roth himself was an exile at the time of writing his most nostalgic pieces, it is more often than not emigrants who express such sentimental longing in his novels. In *Tarabas* and *Hiob*, for example, the emigrants Tarabas and Mendel Singer long for the peaceful Galician landscape presented in sharp contrast to the hectic life in America:

Die Blumen kamen aus der Heimat. Er gedachte ihrer gern. Diese Wiesen hatten es dort gegeben und diese Blumen! Der Frieden war dort heimisch gewesen, die Jugend war dort heimisch gewesen und die vertraute Armut. Im Sommer war der Himmel ganz blau gewesen, die Sonne ganz heiß, das Getreide ganz gelb, die Fliegen hatten grün geschillert und warme Liedchen gesummt, und hoch unter den blauen Himmeln hatten die Lerchen getrillert, ohne Aufhören. (H 99)

Nowhere in *Die Fischmanns* does one find such nostalgia and such elaborate descriptions of the Galician landscape. Mendel Singer's and Tarabas's longing for their homeland after their emigration to America has no counterpart in Katz's novel. When Jossel is lonely in America, he longs for his family but never for Galicia as such. These two very different approaches to the Habsburg Monarchy, then, testify to a fundamental difference in Katz's and Roth's views of the Monarchy as a place of belonging for the Jews; an aspect which will be treated further below.

The second function of the Galician landscape, to provide a peaceful contrast to war-torn Europe, is especially prominent in *Radetzkymarsch* and *Die Kapuzinergruft*. In both these novels, the protagonists, Carl Joseph Trotta and Franz Ferdinand Trotta, learn of the outbreak of the war while posted in Gal-

<sup>34</sup> Maria Klanska: Die galizische Heimat im Werk Joseph Roths. In: Joseph Roth. Interpretation – Kritik – Rezeption. Akten des internationalen, interdisziplinären Symposiums 1989, Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart. Ed. by Michael Kessler and Fritz Hackert. Tübingen: Stauffenburg 1990 (Stauffenburg-Colloquium, 15), p. 143–156.

cia. Furthermore, in both cases, peaceful and idyllic descriptions of the Galician landscape immediately precede the onset of war. This image of Galicia as a peaceful and hitherto undisturbed corner of the world is thus contrasted and thereby emphasised by the violence with which war and death invade it.

The third and last function of the Galician landscape, as mentioned by Kłanska, is the one of the dangerous swamps. Surprisingly enough given his nostalgic sentiments, Roth does not always present Galicia as the peaceful region characterised by the harmonious co-existence of Jews, Ukrainians and Poles. Indeed, in works such as *Radetzkymarsch* and *Das falsche Gewicht*, he draws our attention to the perilous, unpredictable character of the deep swamps which only the natives really understand. In both novels, the protagonists are foreigners with no prior experience of the region and both perceive the danger of these seemingly endless marshes. In *Radetzkymarsch*, for example, the swamps are associated with a perfidiousness characteristic also of the people of the region. The narrator explains:

Sumpfgeborene waren die Menschen dieser Gegend. Denn die Sümpfe lagen unheimlich ausgebreitet über der ganzen Fläche des Landes, zu beiden Seiten der Landstraße, mit Fröschen, Fieberbazillen und tückischem Gras, das den ahnungslosen, des Landes unkundigen Wanderern eine furchtbare Lockung in einen furchtbaren Tod bedeutete. Viele kamen um, und ihre letzten Hilferufe hatte keiner gehört. Alle aber, die dort geboren waren, kannten die Tücke des Sumpfes und besaßen selbst etwas von seiner Tücke.<sup>35</sup>

This, then, is an entirely different side to the Galician landscape from the earlier presentation of it as infinitely peaceful and idyllic. Particularly the personification of the grass and the swamps as ›evil‹ (tückisch/Tücke) is interesting, suggesting that they possess a human-like disposition which is inherently malicious. Roth is thus much more ambivalent about his view of Galicia compared to Katz who generally presents it as dull regardless of the changing seasons. Interestingly enough, Roth's ambivalence even reaches into individual ›leitmotifs‹ such as the swamps. In *Der Leviathan*, for example, the swamps assume a highly positive meaning to the protagonist, Nissen Piczenik, to whom they represent the sea from which his beloved corals come:

Am faulen Geruch des Sumpfes erkannte er ahnungsvoll den gewaltig herben Duft des großen Meeres, und das leise, kümmerliche Glucksen der unterirdischen Gewässer verwandelte sich in seinen hellhörigen Ohren in ein Rauschen der riesigen grün-blauen Wogen.<sup>36</sup>

Nature thus plays a much more significant part in Roth's portrayal of the Eastern European environment than is the case in Katz's novel; at times even play-

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Roth: *Radetzkymarsch*. In: Roth, Werke (p. 18, note 10), Vol. 5, p. 258. Future references to the novel will be made in the text marked R.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Roth: *Der Leviathan*. In: Roth, Werke (p. 18, note 10), Vol. 5, p. 549. Future references to the short story will be made in the text marked L.

ing an active part in the plot. However, sometimes Katz also uses nature to strengthen his points as in his personification of it mentioned earlier, but his descriptions of nature seldom acquire the almost poetic quality which often characterises Roth's detailed depictions of the Galician landscape.

Katz's and Roth's descriptions of the Eastern European environment do not only portray the landscape but also encompass the people inhabiting that part of the Habsburg Monarchy. As we have seen, Katz works with social types in order to create a clear panoramic view of the social dynamics of Galician society at the time. To this end, he employs artificially sharp antitheses to bring out his version of the nature of the people in that region. His extended use of humour and irony contribute to a non-stereotypical portrayal of the characters who are frequently mocked by the narrator in an affectionate way. Unlike Roth, as we shall see, Katz is hardly concerned with the personal development of individual characters and their moral dilemmas in *Die Fischmanns* – something which changes significantly in *Schloßgasse 21*. Instead, he focuses on the problem of anti-Semitism and the shtetl society in which such prejudice thrives, describing in sometimes painful detail the implications for the Jews of living under such constant pressure. On the margin of this topic but certainly influencing it, we find accounts of socio-political and historical forces at the time. Katz's approach to the Galician world can thus be described as highly realistic, although he does not attempt to encompass all aspects of it.

Compared to Katz, Roth takes a significantly different approach. Indeed, we here again detect an ambivalence in his attitude towards characters and events which is most uncommon in Katz's novel. Roth, for example, presents a much more complex picture of the non-Jewish population in the region than Katz. Like in *Die Fischmanns*, Roth depicts the Jews and the gentiles as trading partners out of mutual necessity and the gentiles as potential pogromists. This trait is, for example, very obvious in *Tarabas* where the Jewish innkeeper, Kristianpoller, makes a living from serving the gentile soldiers who later begin a pogrom, killing and wounding many of the local Jews. Yet, there is another more positive side to the non-Jews in Roth's works, portraying them as loyal Habsburg subjects and as benevolent neighbours to the Jews. In *Hiob*, for example, Mendel Singer generally keeps to himself, leading his life according to the laws of the Jewish religion. His and his wife's contact with the gentile world is limited to rides with the peasant Sameschkin, undertaken only in the most desperate situations. As Roman S. Struc rightly points out, it is precisely the contact with the gentile world which causes Mendel's distress, although, admittedly, his world is also disintegrating from within, since his children happily embrace the gentile lifestyle.<sup>37</sup> His sons are called up to serve a foreign Tsar and will undoubtedly lose their Jewish faith in doing so. His daughter,

<sup>37</sup> Roman S. Struc: Die slawische Welt im Werke Joseph Roths. In: Joseph Roth und die Tradition. Aufsatz- und Materialiensammlung. Ed. by David Bronsen. Darmstadt: Agora 1975 (Schriftenreihe Agora, 27), p. 318–344, p. 325.

Mirjam, has affairs with Cossacks, eventually forcing Mendel to emigrate in order to save her from ruin. The gentile world is thus a threat to the maintenance of Mendel's safe Jewish world, but one scene in particular reverses the negative picture of the Slav people, depicting them as benevolent fellow sufferers to the Jews. This scene describes Mendel and Sameschkin in a roadside ditch on their way back from Dubno where Mendel has been to get visas for the family's emigration to America:

Plötzlich begann Mendel zu schluchzen. Mendel weinte, mitten in einer fremden Nacht, neben Sameschkin.

Der Bauer drückte seine Fäuste gegen die Augen, denn er fühlte, daß er auch weinen würde.

Dann legte er einen Arm um die dünnen Schultern Mendels und sagte leise:  
»Schlaf, lieber Jude, schlaf dich aus!« (H. 58)

Their mutual poverty and their difficult living conditions as inhabitants of the backward eastern provinces here create an emotional bond transcending all prejudices and religious differences. Claudio Magris even speaks of the existence of a Jewish-Slavonic symbiosis in Roth's novels according to which a mutual basis of human purity and metahistorical fate connect the Jews and the Ukrainians in the common experience of peoples who, having been exposed to years of suppression, have lost every political initiative and exist in a kind of timeless vacuum.<sup>38</sup> Roth's presentation of the interaction between the Jewish and gentile groups in Galicia is thus by no means as one-sided as that of Katz but perhaps at times an expression of nostalgic wishful thinking. Indeed, as Struc points out, at times Jews and non-Jews even function as catalysts for each other's personal development in Roth's works.<sup>39</sup> One such example is *Tarabas*.

More than any other of Roth's works, *Tarabas* deals with the problem of Jewish and non-Jewish coexistence. Roth himself said of the novel that it was »sehr katholisch«<sup>40</sup> but it is, in fact, an attempt to penetrate the borders of Jewish and Christian religion to reach a level of universal humanism. Claudio Magris calls the novel »ein exemplarisches Zeugnis für den erschöpften Glauben Roths und seinen Willen, ihn um jeden Preis wieder aufzurichten«.<sup>41</sup> This may be true but interestingly enough, Roth fails to decide on either faith, instead ending up showing what is common to human experience beyond all religion. The most important feature of Tarabas's conversion from a superstitious, anti-Semitic and generally brutal soldier to a repentant ›Heiliger‹ is the idea of guilt and expiation. Realising his wrongdoings towards the Jew, Scheimarjah, whose beard he tears out in a fit of rage, Tarabas takes it upon himself

<sup>38</sup> Claudio Magris: *Weit von wo. Verlorene Welt des Ostjudentums*. Wien: Europa Verlag 1974, p. 137–139.

<sup>39</sup> Struc, *Die slawische Welt* (penultimate note), p. 337.

<sup>40</sup> David Bronsen: *Joseph Roth. Eine Biographie*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1974, p. 570.

<sup>41</sup> Magris, *Weit von wo* (above, note 38), p. 257.

to live the life of a wanderer. Frank Joachim Eggers says of the ultimate transcendence of the two religions:

Leben wird von Joseph Roth als Kategorie des Unterwegsseins, als »Wanderschaft auf Erden« aufgefaßt und damit zur verbindenden Dimension jüdischer und christlicher, humaner Existenz insgesamt erklärt.<sup>42</sup>

Ironically, by becoming a wanderer Tarabas in effect takes on the part of the Wandering Jew, thereby combining the Christian idea of sin and repentance with Jewish myth, although, admittedly, the image of the Wandering Jew is predominantly a mythic figure within Christianity.

Particularly important is the fact that two Jewish characters, Schemarjah and the innkeeper, Kristianpoller, become catalysts for the gentile Tarabas's conversion. Jewish and non-Jewish interaction is thereby assigned a much deeper significance than in *Die Fischmanns* where their mutual differences and prejudices are stressed although Katz never condemns the gentiles for their persecution. In *Tarabas*, it is the realisation of the cruelty of his assault on Schemarjah and his interaction with Kristianpoller which eventually open Tarabas's eyes. Kristianpoller's words and actions have a particularly deep impact on the colonel whose anti-Semitic prejudices have never before been challenged. Kristianpoller draws the gentile's attention to the fact that he and all other Jews are being unjustly persecuted for the simple reason that they are Jews: »»Euer Hochwohlgeboren«, erwiderte Kristianpoller, »erlauben mir gnädigst, sagen zu dürfen, daß ich ohne meinen Willen ein Jude geworden bin.«« (T 568) This defence is very much in keeping with the attitude towards anti-Semitism in Katz's novel, and so is Roth's depiction of the Eastern European Jews as a people so pious that they fail to defend themselves. This is, for example, the case when the Jews in *Tarabas* hide in their houses before the expected pogrom rather than fleeing or defending themselves. We also see it in *Hiob* when Mendel refuses to take active steps to cure his son, Menuchim, leaving the matter entirely in God's hands. Both Katz and Roth are thus ambivalent towards the orthodoxy of the Eastern European Jews. On the one hand, they admire their purity and piety and the idyllic peace with which they conduct their daily lives. On the other hand, they realise the danger of the passivity following on from such resignation. This leads Katz to reject the effect of religion altogether whereas Roth keeps searching for a solution and a fixed point in his spiritual life after he has definitively lost the geographical one.

However, Roth does not limit his search to the realm of religion. Indeed, from having been a politically active journalist, he now retreats into a world of myth, legend and fairytale in which he cultivates an increasingly nostalgic love for the lost Habsburg Monarchy; a feature which will be treated further below.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Joachim Eggers: »Ich bin ein Katholik mit jüdischem Gehirn«. Modernitätskritik und Religion bei Joseph Roth und Franz Werfel. Untersuchungen zu den erzählerischen Werken. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang 1996 (Beiträge zur Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts, 13), p. 128.

Unlike Katz, who attempts to give as realistic a presentation as possible, Roth thus mixes realism and myth or legend. This can, for example, be seen in *Tarabas*, *Hiob* and *Der Leviathan* and forms a significant difference in Katz's and Roth's approaches to their material. However, since Katz does not employ such devices, a further examination of Roth's use of myth and legend will not be undertaken here. Instead, we shall deal with the depiction of social types in Roth's and Katz's works.

*Hiob* and *Der Leviathan* are Roth's most Jewish novels. Since Roth and Katz depict the same environment in the same period, we inevitably find similar characters in Roth's work to those described in *Die Fischmanns*. Nissen Piczenik in *Der Leviathan*, for example, is a typical shtetl Jew, living peacefully in a traditionally orthodox community. He loves his corals more than anything else, even more than his wife, from whom he has grown apart like so many of Roth's male protagonists. However, the initial idyll is soon reversed to the opposite when Piczenik begins to detest his peaceful life, longing for the depth of the ocean where the corals come from. The framework of the story and the initial portrait of Nissen Piczenik are thus similar to the picture of the Jewish community in *Die Fischmanns*, but Roth employs symbolism to a much greater extent than Katz, thereby allowing for much more diverse interpretations of his work. Gershon Shaked, for example, speaking from a Marxist standpoint, suggests that the real corals, sold by Piczenik, and the false ones, introduced by the immoral Lakatos, symbolise the intrusion of capitalism into a traditional rural society.<sup>43</sup> Lakatos, representing American capitalism, against which Roth issued a serious, almost hysterical warning in his essay *Der Antichrist* (1934), destroys not only the harmony of the traditional Jewish society but also the morals of the individual, in this case Piczenik. Unlike Roth, Katz does not use symbolism to illustrate his points, perhaps influenced more than Roth by his previous existence as a journalist with the need to express himself in clear and easily understandable terms. Any criticism of the Habsburg Monarchy is offered directly by the narrator. During his period as a writer of the ›Neue Sachlichkeit‹, Roth too wrote in a more realist way but this changed from *Hiob* onwards.

On the surface, *Hiob* has many traits in common with *Die Fischmanns*. The two novels are set in the same Galician environment with orthodox Jews as their main protagonists. The relationship between Mendel and Deborah Singer is similar to that between Malke and Leib. Both men are extremely pious, resigned to their fates as Jews, and both women are very outgoing, taking the initiative to change things. Both novels contain idyllic sabbath scenes and both

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<sup>43</sup> Gershon Shaked: Kulturangst und die Sehnsucht nach dem Tode. Joseph Roths ›Der Leviathan‹ – die intertextuelle Mythisierung der Kleinstadtgeschichte. In: Joseph Roth. Interpretation – Kritik – Rezeption. Akten des internationalen, interdisziplinären Symposiums 1989, Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart. Ed. by Michael Kessler and Fritz Hackert. Tübingen: Stauffenburg 1990 (Stauffenburg-Colloquium, 15), p. 286.

depict the gentile world as hostile and dangerous apart from the scene in *Hiob* mentioned earlier, describing Mendel Singer and Sameschkin, the driver, in the roadside ditch. Even a minor character such as Sameschkin has a counterpart in *Die Fischmanns* in the peasant, Janek. However, once again we find that the similarities between the two novels are limited to the framework and cultural background which, significant as they are, do not conceal the fact that Katz and Roth are taking different approaches to the material. Unlike Katz, whose realist approach has been discussed several times already, Roth bases his novel on the Biblical story of Job, occasionally adding fairy-tale elements as is particularly obvious in the miraculous recovery and return of Mendel's son Menuchim at the end. This is not the place to discuss differences and similarities between *Hiob* and the book of Job. It need only be mentioned that the Biblical basis of the novel to a great extent prescribes the course of the story. At the same time, the Eastern European setting of Roth's ›modern‹ Job adds a new dimension to it, closely linking Job's piety with the orthodoxy which Roth so admired in the Eastern European Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is this setting and Roth's portrayal of his Jewish characters which might have inspired Katz when he wrote his novel.

At times, however, we find even more striking similarities in Katz's and Roth's work than merely cultural ones. In *Radetzkymarsch*, for example, there are several such character and image resemblances although *Die Fischmanns* is thematically very different from *Radetzkymarsch*. Roth's main focus is the decline of the Habsburg Monarchy, reflected in the gradual decay of the Trotta family, whereas Katz deals with the Jews' conditions in the same society, commenting only marginally on the decay of the Monarchy. With regard to individual characters, there is a striking similarity between the ›Bezirkshauptmann‹ in *Die Fischmanns* and the one in *Radetzkymarsch*. Indeed, their personalities are almost identical as can be seen, for example, by comparing Dr. Spiegel's visit to the Bezirkshauptmann in Strody to the welcoming of Carl Joseph Trotta by his father, the Bezirkshauptmann of W. in Moravia, when he comes to spend the summer holidays at home. This visit traditionally begins with a three-hour interview, the strictness of which resembles the manner in which Dr. Spiegel is treated by the governor in Strody. Both governors are men to be feared and obeyed, and they decide whether the atmosphere should be friendly or hostile. Ultimately, after having interrogated Carl Joseph Trotta and Dr. Spiegel respectively, both governors adopt more conciliatory attitudes. Thus, in *Die Fischmanns* the Bezirkshauptmann ends the talk in a most friendly way:

Beim Abschied fragte der Backenbart jovial lächelnd, eingedenk seines einzigen konkreten Auftrages, sich mit allen Bevölkerungsgruppen gut zu stellen, »Und was halten S' von der allgemeinen Lage, Doktor?« (F 45)

The same atmosphere prevails at the end of Carl Joseph's interview in *Radetzkymarsch*: »›Erzähle weiter!‹ sagte er [the Bezirkshauptmann] und zündete sich eine Zigarette an. Es war das Signal für den Anbruch der Gemütlichkeit.« (R 159)

In the above quotation we find the interesting synecdoche of the ›Backenbart‹ – another object of interest to a comparison between Roth and Katz which will here be discussed in some detail. In a study of Roth's use of the beard as a literary image, Edward Timms points to the symbolic significance of facial hair in Roth's novels.<sup>44</sup> Moustaches, for example, signify belonging to the army. Thus, Roth, who tried to pass himself off as an Austrian-Hungarian officer, always had a moustache towards the end of his life. The full beard has several symbolic meanings. Depending on the historical situation, it could signify the attachment either to a revolutionary movement or to the better-off middle classes. Of even greater importance to Roth, however, was the symbolic relation between the full beard and the unassimilated Eastern European Jews whom he loved and respected for their orthodoxy. In one of the key scenes in *Radetzkymarsch* – the Emperor's encounter with the orthodox Jews (chap. 15) – the Emperor and the Jews seem to be communicating on the mutual symbolic level of the full beard despite their obvious differences. The old Emperor belongs to a world on the verge of being overturned completely by the First World War and the Jews, too, though in a different way, live in a world belonging to the past, showing loyalty to the Emperor precisely because of the image of order and stability which he seems to radiate. Similarly, among the Jews the lack of a beard or the shaving of part of the face signified assimilation.

Comparing this systematic use of the beard image in Roth's novels with Katz's novel proves very rewarding. In fact, in *Die Fischmanns* no man's beard or lack of beard is left unmentioned and like Roth, Katz clearly uses it as a means to describe a person's place and function in society as well as his personality. Thus for example, the gentile peasants have moustaches (›feste Schnurrbärte‹, F 16) as does Janek, being one of them. In the first description of him, his beard is described as »Stoppeln wie Steckpflanzen im Gesicht« (F 34) and later as »festen Schnurrbart« (F 39). Together with the rest of the description of Janek, the image of the »Steckpflanzen« stresses the lack of personal hygiene characteristic of large parts of the peasant population at the time.

The Bezirkshauptmann, being a representative of the Monarchy and the middle classes, has a very well-cared-for and trimmed full beard, resembling that of the Emperor to a nicety:

Sein Backenbart, das einzige hervorstechende Merkmal seines Gesichtes, war mehr als untadelig und sah akkurat wie der Ausschnitt aus einer jener vielen Ansichtskarten aus, die Seine Majestät, den volkstümlichen Alten, seinem gemischten Volke nahezubringen hatten. (F 43)

This description is not without satire, suggesting that the Bezirkshauptmann's outward resemblance to the Emperor, of which he is clearly very proud, is also a reflection of an inward resemblance, in which case the image of the Emperor

<sup>44</sup> See Edward Timms: Doppeladler und Backenbart. Zur Symbolik der österreichisch-jüdischen Symbiose bei Joseph Roth. In: Literatur und Kritik, No. 247/248 (Sept.–Oct. 1990), p. 318–324.

as a kind but unfortunately also rather ineffective old man is also to be applied to the Bezirkshauptmann. The outward description of the Bezirkshauptmann and the emphasis on similarities between him and Franz Joseph thus indicate the outcome of his conversation with Dr. Spiegel already before it takes place. The resemblance between the Bezirkshauptmann and the Emperor is furthermore stressed by the fact that throughout the passage, the Bezirkshauptmann is referred to as »der Backenbart«.

Among the Jews, we find a variety of different beards describing their different attitudes towards Judaism and Jewishness. When the war breaks out, the Jewish men gather in the market place and the following sentence indicates that it is the common rule to have a full beard: »Krieg war das gewaltige Wort, das ihnen unzählige Mal zwischen Bart und Schnurrbart herausfiel.« (F 158) This is also the case with the old, orthodox Jews who are described as »fanatische Graubärte« when praying on Yom Kippur (F 188). Jossel, too, being a pious Jewish man, has a full beard (»Ich saß auf dem Arm des weinenden Vaters, der damals einen dunklen Bart trug«, F 129) but the changing circumstances in his life are reflected in the description of his beard. Thus for example, America has a modernizing effect on him, making him attempt to look younger by changing the shape of his beard. It is significant, however, that he does not cut off his beard as did many Jews when arriving in America, but makes the change within the limits of the religious rules. When Jossel returns to Europe, the police are very suspicious of his new looks and the helpless and uncomprehending Jossel is forced to explain why he undertook the change:

Auf Ihrem Bild tragen Sie einen fast viereckigen Bart, und heute tragen Sie einen kürzeren und spitzen. Warum das, Sie! [...]

Mechel Pollatschek in New York hat mir gesagt ... hat gesagt, daß ein spitzer Bart ist heutzutage praktischer. Ein junger jüdischer Mann von heute trägt nicht mehr so große Bärte wie die Zaddikim von Cholm ... hat mir Mechel Pollatschek in New York gesagt ... (F 183)

Towards the end of the novel, Jossel's hard life is reflected in the appearance of white streaks in his beard which Lea is very shocked to discover, as at this time of the story, Jossel is no more than thirty years old: »Heimlich, von der Seite, sah sie ihn an. Sie bemerkte, daß sein Haar und sein Bart von vielen weißen Strähnen durchzogen waren.« (F 236) In Jossel's case, the image and changing state of his beard thus become a kind of *»leitmotif«*, telling us something about his personality and the course of his life.

Finally, there are the two representatives of the group of assimilated Jews – Dr. Spiegel and Aron Amtmann, the pedlar. In both cases it is emphasised that these are *»modern«* men who shave and thus have left the path of pious Jewishness. Dr. Spiegel has a red goatee beard (»rötlicher Knebelbart«, F 42) and it is significant that on two occasions Leib is the one who expresses the orthodox opinion of such an appearance: »Betrachte doch den Doktor Spiegel. Der hat ja schon vergessen, was ein Jude ist. Er rasiert sich, obwohl das Gesetz das ver-

bietet« (F 118) and later: »Gott sei Dank«, atmete Großvater auf. Er war bereit, eine Hoffnung auch von einem ›Modernen‹ anzunehmen, selbst von einem, der sich rasiert [...]« (F 161). Aron Amtmann is another assimilated Jew and as such immediately associated with Dr. Spiegel and modernity: »Den Aron Amtmann, diesen ›modernen Menschen‹, der sich rasierte und einen städtischen Anzug trug wie der Doktor Nachum Spiegel [...]« (F 52–53). In other words, the presence or lack of a beard is not only a religious signifier but also an indication of ›modernity‹ or the belief in Enlightenment which since Moses Mendelssohn had divided Jews into two groups – those who believed in assimilation, mostly involving the abandonment of orthodoxy, and those who clung to traditional Jewish life and religion. This division and its reflection in literature, however, was not introduced by Roth but appeared even earlier in works such as *Der Pojaz* (1905) by the Galician writer Karl Emil Franzos. In this story, the main character, Alexander or ›Sender‹, must rid himself of all signs of Jewishness before going to Germany to become an actor. This he does by cutting off his earlocks, shaving, and exchanging his Jewish caftan with a modern German set of clothes and a coat.<sup>45</sup> Thus, to sum up, both Katz and Roth use beards as not merely a physical feature but an indication of the character's function in society and religious practices among the Jews (modern/backward – assimilation/orthodoxy).

A final detail of interest to a comparison between Katz's and Roth's works is their at times almost identical use of gestures to indicate a character's mood. A particularly striking example of this is found in *Radetzkymarsch* where Dr. Max Demant has a conversation with his father-in-law, Herr Knopfmacher. As Katz uses the open or closed state of the Bezirkshauptmann's coat to indicate his attitude towards the Jewish Dr. Spiegel (F 43–45), so Roth uses the same image in the conversation between Dr. Demant and Herr Knopfmacher to indicate the latter's uneasiness about his son-in-law's wish to borrow money (R 215–216). The only obvious difference in Katz's and Roth's use of the image seems to be the attitude with which the characters change from closed to open states of their garments. The Bezirkshauptmann in Strody seemingly uses it as a conscious device to keep his opponent in place, whereas Herr Knopfmacher appears to be unconscious of his acts.

To sum up, Katz and Roth clearly depict the same Eastern European environment and the same social types in this environment. The framework and the cultural background to their work are thus very similar. In some ways, however, their handling of the material differs. Whereas Katz aims to provide a realistic picture of a Galician shtetl at the time and the dilemmas faced by the Jews living in it, Roth digresses further and further into a mixture of social reality and myth, legend, and fairytale. His description of the region and its people is multifaceted and even ambivalent at times compared to Katz, whose

<sup>45</sup> See Karl Emil Franzos: *Der Pojaz. Neugesetzt nach der Erstaufl.* Stuttgart 1905 Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum 1979, p. 271 and 286.

use of contrasts provides a clear panoramic view without, however, becoming clichéd. Nostalgia for the past, the feeling of uprootedness and an interest in moral dilemmas in the individual can thus be described as some of the main features of Roth's later works. Katz, on the other hand, shows no nostalgia for Eastern Europe as such and is more concerned with social matters than moral questions. He does, however, perhaps even better than Roth, succeed in conveying the day-to-day experience of being an Eastern European Jew. He further deals with the problem of belonging for the Jewish people; a trait of great importance to Roth, too, which will be discussed further below.

Katz's and Roth's different approaches to the shtetl places them in different traditions within the genre of ghetto literature; an aspect which will here be discussed briefly. There were two main traditions within nineteenth-century ghetto literature, the first being a nostalgic view, idealising the shtetl, and the second a critical representation, almost exclusively depicting the shtetl as a backward, orthodox, and oppressive environment. The nostalgic presentations were not least a reaction to anti-Semitic depictions of the Jews in nineteenth-century novels such as Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855) and Wilhelm Raabe's *Der Hungerpastor* (1864). Writers like Leopold Kompert and Aron Bernstein now began to write novels in which the shtetl was depicted as idyllic and Jewish life as not significantly different from that of the German middle classes. At the same time, the influence of the Haskalah – the Jewish Enlightenment – became visible in works by writers such as Karl Emil Franzos who perceived the shtetl as a prison and orthodoxy as a serious obstacle to modernisation and assimilation. These feelings are expressed with particular sharpness in Franzos' *Der Pojaz* in which the same Jewish customs, which Bernstein and Kompert praise as virtues, are presented as means of oppression.

Both Katz's and Roth's works contain elements typical of ghetto fiction such as depictions of sabbath meals. Yet, both are clearly modernist writers, presenting the content of nineteenth-century ghetto literature in a twentieth-century narrative manner. Thus, Ritchie Robertson says of Roth's narrative principle in *Hiob*:

He has adapted ghetto fiction with an economy that is thoroughly modernist. His indications of setting are analogous to stage directions: rather than describing a social or topographical milieu, they evoke an atmosphere. With the hints that Roth supplies, the reader is left to construct the setting of *Hiob*.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ritchie Robertson: Roth's *Hiob* and the Traditions of Ghetto Fiction. In: Co-Existent Contradictions. Joseph Roth in Retrospect. Papers of the 1989 Joseph Roth Symposium at Leeds University to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of His Death. Ed. by Helen Chambers. Riverside/Ca.: Ariadne Press 1991 (Studies in Austrian Literature, Culture, and Thought), p. 185–200, p. 199. For a detailed study of the tradition of ghetto fiction see further: Gabriele von Glasenapp: Aus der Judengasse. Zur Entstehung und Ausprägung deutschsprachiger Ghettoliteratur im 19. Jahrhundert. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1996 (Conditio Judaica. Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 11).

This can be applied to Katz too, who in *Die Fischmanns* presents a chain of individual scenes, each representing a typical aspect of Jewish ghetto life. These range from descriptions of every-day life to discussions of a more existential nature. The reader, then, is left to form his or her own cohesive impression of it by putting together the individual images.

The question remains, however, to what extent it is possible to place Katz and Roth in either of the two traditions of ghetto literature. As we have seen in the above examination of Roth's attitude towards the Eastern European regions described in his novels, his presentation tends to be ambivalent, although nostalgia clearly prevails. Often this sentimental attitude is exacerbated by the comparison with life in the West, especially America, which is perceived of as impersonal and hectic. This is particularly the case where we see Galicia through the eyes of an emigrant such as Mendel Singer or Tarabas. In *Hiob*, Roth acknowledges the poverty and primitiveness of the shtetl, yet does not condemn it. He also seriously underplays the presence of anti-Semitism and pogroms in Galicia. Even in *Tarabas*, where a pogrom does take place, its implications are played down soon thereafter when the Jew, Schemarjah, thinks: »Späße, wahrhaft harmlose Späße waren eigentlich, bedachte man es genauer, gestern die Grausamkeiten!« (T 576). Symptomatically therefore, Kristianpoller never considers emigration and neither does Mendel Singer until his daughter's affairs with the Cossacks force him to take such steps. On the other hand, a melancholy air of disintegration is always present in Roth's novels, indicating both the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy and of the Jewish shtetl with all it stood for. Nissen Piczenik in *Der Leviathan*, for example, is clearly dissatisfied with his traditional ghetto life, longing for the freedom outside the shtetl, represented by the sea. Unable to find a place to fit in, the sea ultimately becomes his death although, as noted by the narrator, a happy death. Only by means of myth and fairy-tale elements can Roth avoid facing reality when this reality becomes too painful. This, for example, is what we see at the end of *Hiob* and *Der Leviathan*. Roth's representation of Galicia can thus be characterised as nostalgic, yet with a reluctant acknowledgement of the necessary break-up of traditional patterns because modernity is too tempting to the individual.

Katz is equally difficult to place in either of the two categories. His description of Galicia is realistic with no attempts to embellish the shtetl or its surroundings. He does, however, present a very positive picture of Jewish family life, but there is no longing for a revival of such traditional religious patterns as in Roth's works. Neither do his characters long for Galicia after having left it, and none of them has second thoughts about leaving. Katz thus seems to take a more objective approach to his material than Roth who is clearly so emotionally involved with his stories that one may speak of escapism into a fictional world in order to avoid confrontation with reality. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Katz is more level-headed than Roth. He harboured the same feelings for Germany as Roth did for the Habsburg Monarchy and experienced the same kind of pain when expelled from Germany in 1933 as Roth did after the fall of the Habsburg Empire.

As I have shown in the section ›Jewish Identity and Jewish Fate‹ above, Katz dismisses the idea of the Habsburg Monarchy as a mother country for the Jews because of its multi-ethnicity and multi-nationality – a view significantly different both from the findings of historians and from contemporary writers' accounts such as Stefan Zweig's *Die Welt von Gestern*. In *Die Fischmanns*, the Jewish lack of ›Vaterlandgefühl‹ for the Monarchy is ascribed not only to the anti-Semitism they experience there but also to the lack of a uniform and unifying culture into which the Jews could assimilate. Only a nation state like Germany or France, Katz argues, displays the kind of mentality with which the Jews can really identify. Assimilation is an acceptable price to pay for a mother country. However, at the end of both of his novels the painful failure of this policy becomes clear. In *Die Fischmanns* it is merely hinted at; in *Schloßgasse 21* it is a fact when Jakob goes into exile at the very end of the novel. Thus, both the multi-national Habsburg model and the German nation state are dismissed as viable solutions to the ›Jewish problem‹. With Zionism largely ignored in both novels, Katz has nothing but uncertainty to offer his readers at the end. Despite these hopeless prospects, the question of Jewish belonging remains vital throughout his work and the characters' untiring search for acceptance and a national identity is presented as admirable. Unlike Roth's characters, however, the Fischmanns feel no great personal loss when driven away from Galicia by the Russian army. Their search for a place to belong always points them towards the West rather than back to the Habsburg Monarchy.

Compared to Katz, then, what is Roth's position with regard to the nationality and the Jewish identity question? Like the Fischmanns, Roth's characters are searching for a place to belong and a new identity after the fall of the Habsburg Empire. Most of them feel uprooted, struggling to find a place in a world so different from the pre-war situation. This is obvious, for example, in works such as *Tarabas* and *Die Kapuzinergruft* where the protagonists, Tarabas and Franz Ferdinand, find themselves unable to cope with life outside the army. Indeed, the army gave their lives a structure which had previously been provided by the hierarchical framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. Their frustration reflects Roth's own distress when the Monarchy seized to exist. This, as has been mentioned earlier, made Roth detach himself from a confusing reality, retreating instead into a world increasingly inspired by myth and legend as well as increasingly monarchical sentiments and concrete plans to reintroduce the Monarchy in Austria under Otto von Habsburg whom Roth met on several occasions.<sup>47</sup> The nostalgic sentiments displayed in his literature are undoubtedly most obvious in *Radezkymarsch*, *Die Kapuzinergruft* and *Die Büste des Kaisers*.

All three works are characterised by a strong sentimental attachment to the Habsburg Monarchy and the frustration of its citizens immediately before and after its collapse. As in many of Roth's works, the mixture of the narrator's admiration for the Empire and the knowledge of its approaching end result in a

<sup>47</sup> Bronsen, Joseph Roth (p. 116, note 40), p. 478.

melancholy narrative tone. The Emperor is usually portrayed as a father-like figure who reigns solely by the grace and will of God. The general decay in religious practice is therefore partly blamed for the Monarchy's fall. *Die Büste des Kaisers* shows particularly well Roth's reverence for the multi-national and multi-ethnic idea upon which the Empire rested. To him, it represented the ideal state form because it encompassed a multitude of different religions and ethnic groups. Thus, the Jews too were merely one group out of many and not, as in nation states such as Germany or France, a distinctive minority. The harmony which Roth ascribed to the Monarchy despite its ethnic diversity is described symbolically when a Jewish rabbi, a Greek-Catholic priest and a Roman-Catholic priest meet to bury the Emperor's bust. The protagonist, Count Morstin, who at the beginning of the story is forced by the new Polish government to remove the bust, wishes to be buried next to the bust rather than in the family grave, thereby showing his allegiance to the ideological foundation of the Monarchy. The deep regret with which Roth witnessed the fall of the Empire is particularly obvious from Count Morstin's words at the end of the story:

Meine alte Heimat war ein großes Haus mit vielen Türen und vielen Zimmern, für viele Arten von Menschen. Man hat das Haus verteilt, gespalten, zertrümmert. Ich habe dort nichts mehr zu suchen. Ich bin gewohnt, in einem Haus zu leben, nicht in Kabinen.<sup>48</sup>

To sum up, Katz's and Roth's very different views of the historical and mythological significance of the Habsburg Monarchy are also reflected in their works. Given these differences, one can say that the focus of Katz's novel is much more on the problems of assimilation than on a retrospective idealisation of multi-ethnic coexistence. His work is more forward-looking than that of Roth, acknowledging the course of history and encouraging adaptation to the present-day political situation. Roth, on the other hand, is caught in nostalgic fantasies about what used to be. His characters constantly find themselves in cul-de-sacs, unable to move on and therefore bound to perish in the turmoil of post-war life. These different approaches, however, do not mean that Katz has any more solutions to offer than Roth in the face of Nazi persecutions. Jakob Fischmann can merely note at the end of the second novel that assimilation was not a successful path either. What comes next is uncertain but Jakob appears optimistic for the future and ready to begin anew somewhere else. Roth's characters, on the other hand, are paralysed by their frustration with the present, living instead entirely with and for their memories of the past. Thus, Roth's mythological recreation of the Habsburg Monarchy after its collapse became both his salvation and his fall – his salvation because it gave him something to cling to, his fall because it prevented him from moving on. Katz's realism, on the other hand, may have made him more vulnerable at the time but also better equipped to cope with a hostile reality.

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Roth: *Die Büste des Kaisers*. In: Roth, Werke (p. 18, note 10), Vol. 5, p. 675.

## Chapter IV

### *Schloßgasse 21: German or Jew? The Question of Identity*

Katz's second novel, *Schloßgasse 21*, was first published in English translation in 1940 by the Viking Press in New York. By then, the publication of the German original had been made impossible by Hitler's occupation of the European countries which had previously published the exiles' works. Writing in 1939 when the Nazi party had been in power for several years, Katz, having himself experienced both the political events leading up to the take-over and then observed the Nazi rule from a distance, was in a good position to provide an overview of the inter-war period in Germany. In its description of increasing violence and anti-Semitism as well as the political crisis, the novel links up with a tradition within exile literature which sought to demonstrate and analyse the events leading to the Nazi seizure of power. And yet, its focus on the Eastern European Jewish experience of these events as well as Katz's sophisticated use of humour, irony and free indirect discourse make the novel distinctly different from all other exile novels on the same topic; a claim which will be analysed further through comparisons with other novels dealing with the same period in German history. Novels written before the exile period will also be considered with regard to their possible influence on Katz's writing.

The main task of this chapter, however, is to examine Katz's portrayal of the Weimar Republic and the events leading to its end. I will here focus on his depiction of the political crisis, its reasons and effects on the individual, on the one hand, and on the Jewish experience and search for identity in modern German society on the other. What factors in society, according to Katz, made the rise of Nazism possible, why did it find favour with the German people which, despite the power of the nationalist Right, was still reputedly loyal to the *>Humanität* of the Enlightenment? What effect did it have on Jewish self-perception, and what courses of action were open to the Jews exposed to increasing anti-Semitism? Finally, what literary means does Katz use to portray these things? These are the main questions which I will seek to answer through an analysis of the novel's non-Jewish and Jewish main characters. Particularly important is the way in which Katz presents his characters as social types who through dialogues with one another represent a wide range of the main political viewpoints at the time. Among the non-Jewish protagonists we find Hermann Kupke, the unemployed

who finds a purpose in life with the Nazi party, Oberlehrer Zunk, the sadistic teacher at Jakob's school who later becomes an enthusiastic National Socialist, the editor Albert Koch, the Communist Paul Hummel, the Schallers and the Liebigs. Among the Jewish main characters special attention will be given to Jossel, Jakob, and Hermann Fischmann, their friends Chaskel and Dwore Weiss, Feiwel, and Grünfeld, the assimilated Jewish businessman, who all represent the Eastern European Jews in Germany. The numerous marginal characters will, however, also be considered, as these contribute to the novel's multifaceted picture of the Weimar Republic. The novel's strength is thus its unusually complex presentation of Weimar society in general and of Eastern European Jewish life in particular combined with Katz's unique use of irony and humour to bring out the social types and political currents of the time.

### a) Narrative Technique and Perspective

The novel begins with a brief recapitulation of the situation at the end of *Die Fischmanns* and continues the Fischmann story from the year 1916 until the spring of 1933 when Jakob Fischmann goes into exile in France. Although Jakob is still the narrator, a significant change in narrative perspective has taken place compared with *Die Fischmanns*, as Katz now introduces a collective protagonist mainly represented by the inhabitants of the Schloßgasse. Through these characters, Katz presents the reader with a bird's eye view of German society, enabling him to follow simultaneously the development of the many parallel events, while at the same time presenting a detailed picture of individual characters' choices and actions on an everyday level. Despite the often impressionistic nature of the scenes described, the novel is thus held together by recurring motifs and characters, through whom the narrative continuity is secured, and by the political events of the time which are presented in chronological order. Occasionally, the narrative perspective shifts from Jakob to one of the other characters, for example in chapter 39 where Marie describes Jakob and her relationship with him; a most significant change in perspective because she observes traits in him of which he himself is not aware and about which the reader would have been left in ignorance, had the narrative perspective remained with Jakob. Later the omniscient narrator hands over the account of the events on 1 April 1933 to Frau Pilz who relates everything to her Jewish tenant, Herr Feiwel (S 545). As a rule, however, the narrative perspective remains with Jakob and the omniscient narrator.

Compared with *Die Fischmanns*, *Schloßgasse 21* is a less lyrical and more political novel. Writing in 1939, Katz had gained an overview of the events leading up to the Nazi seizure of power, and the novel is therefore characterised by an extensive use of hindsight through which historical events and the characters' fates are predicted, for example Lina Kupke's suicide (S 28), the fate of the children in the Schloßgasse (S 110), and the failure of Jossel's com-

promise with German culture (S 118). Having been told in advance what is going to happen, the reader can thus concentrate on the characters' actual development and the reason for their choices in a particular situation.

The omniscient narrator not only enlightens us about the fates and emotional lives of individual characters but also inserts descriptions of German society at large and the political situation in the Weimar Republic (for example S 174, 176, 246, 251–252, 572–574), providing the reader with an idea of the atmosphere in which the action takes place. Major events such as the revolution in November 1918, the Kapp Putsch in 1920, and the boycott of Jewish shops on 1 April 1933 play a significant part as the framework within which the story is told. Throughout the novel, dates are thus given to hold the story together, beginning in 1916 and ending on 4 April 1933 with Jakob's emigration to France. The consequences of these political events for the individual – both Jewish and non-Jewish – are given highest priority. The first three months of the year 1933 thus take up one third of the entire novel, while only fifty pages are devoted to the years from 1930 to 1932. Having initially put the main emphasis on the years 1918 to 1923, the story thus moves quickly forward in time to 1933 to depict the decisive consequences this year was to have for the Jews and for Germany in general.

The narrative style is extensively characterised by the use of irony and sarcasm, for example when the narrator ridicules the ›spontaneity‹ with which the boycott of the Jews on 1 April 1933 is implemented:

Niemand ließ sich von der gespannten Ruhe täuschen. Es war ja im voraus angekündigt worden, daß es erst um zehn Uhr, und dann aber schlagartig und spontan, losgehen würde. (S 572)

In addition to this sarcastic and sometimes bitter irony, however, one finds an abundance of humorous depictions of the novel's characters and events: a trait which pervades the entire novel and adds not only to its readability but also provides an important balance to the seriousness with which Katz treats the political development of the period and its consequences for the individual. This narrative technique combined with an extensive use of free indirect discourse are what makes Katz's description of inter-war Germany more subtly penetrating and effective than other more directly critical novels at the time.

How, then, does Katz depict Germany during the Weimar Republic? In his realistic and matter-of-fact portrait of the period, Katz was clearly indebted to ›Neue Sachlichkeit‹ with its emphasis on factual and realistic depiction of reality. In fact, Katz's picture of the period could be designated as social realism with obvious ties to ›Sozialreportage‹ – the genre in which he specialised while working as a journalist. The depiction of Jakob's experience as a factory worker and the hard conditions to which the workers are exposed (S 319–321) are merely two examples of the attempt to give an unvarnished description of the workers' lot. The novel's main theme is thus the conditions of the Eastern European Jews, yet through them and their environment a general analysis of German society

during the Weimar Republic is undertaken, presenting the reader with a broad mosaic of Jewish and non-Jewish working-class life at the time. It is significant and also natural that Katz limits himself to a description of the working and lower middle-class environment as this was where the Eastern European Jewish emigrants were to be found – at the bottom of society at large, and equally at the bottom of the internal Jewish hierarchy. Of particular significance is the fact that he not only depicts Nazism but puts great emphasis on demonstrating the causes of its rise; here his own frustration with the political developments becomes apparent. The description of the Nazi followers, for example, is a mixture of sensitive psychological analysis and satire. Almost all his major characters undergo a personal development changing their views and lives significantly, be it due to events in their past or to the increasing difficulties in surviving the financial and social crisis. Initial patterns of interaction between characters are interrupted and turned on their head in the course of the novel, making friends into enemies and changing the entire personal make-up of several characters.

### b) A Society in Crisis

Throughout the novel, descriptions of *›die Zeit‹* or the political and financial crisis of the Weimar Republic play a significant part as the novel's framework, constituting the basis for the rise of Nazism. Katz describes this process by presenting an increasing number of views on the matter as we approach the year 1933, all seen through the eyes of different characters whose views are very subjective. The responses of Feiwel, Jossel, Grünfeld and Jakob to the problem, for example, differ widely, ultimately leaving the reader to form his or her own opinion of whom to believe. At the beginning of the novel, however, the characters' misery is caused by the ongoing war. The men are at the front and the women are left to their own devices, working to support their children and often filling the spaces left by the men; Lina Hering, for example – later Frau Kupke – produces ammunition and weapons for the war (S 69). The situation at the front is depicted as neither idyllic nor heroic:

Viele waren Krüppel geworden, hatten einen echten soldatischen Kiefer-, Bauch-, Brust-, oder Gesäßschuß abbekommen, viele mußten jetzt lernen, sich mit einem neuen Stelzfuß mühsam fortzubewegen. Vielen eiterte in einem schlötternden leeren Ärmel ein winziger fleischiger Armstumpf. [...]

Der Wind begann in dieser Jahreszeit bösartig und kalt zu pfeifen. Trotzdem war er nicht stark genug, um aus der trüben Wasserlache, die zwischen dem Feld und dem Wald lag, die Choleraerreger fortzutragen; und die Kadaver der hastig eingeschaufelten Gefallenen des schon weit zurückliegenden letzten Gefechtes verpesteten die Luft, als sei noch Hochsommer. (S 113–114)

The war is thus described as an inferno filled with the stench of death, crippling otherwise young and healthy men and depriving them of their ability to

act as independent individuals. The narrator's aversion to war becomes particularly obvious through the bitter sarcasm with which he describes Jossel's life as a soldier. Jossel, we are told, only becomes a good soldier after his wife's death in 1915: »Er war willenlos geworden. Er gehorchte. Er schoß wochentags, und er schoß am Sabbat. [...] Der Krieg befahl, er gehorchte.« (S 115). The novel is thus an example of strong anti-war propaganda, supporting Katz's own pacifist views before he joined the French Foreign Legion in 1939.

Katz further demonstrates not only the horror of war on the battlefield but even more its psychological effects on the individual, both at home and at the front. Since, for example, fathers are away at the front, many mothers complain of a lack of respect in their children because they are growing up without the paternal influence (for example S 82 and 132). At the same time the women themselves are losing their sense of morality, chasing after every man who has not been called up for military service. Thus, Louise Liebig spends her afternoons with the fifteen-year-old baker's apprentice, Ewald (S 75–76), and Jakob's friend, Anna Gaal, has difficulty deciding exactly which of her mother's male friends she is meant to call her father (S 31). The strongest anti-war statement, however, comes from Franz Schaller, who during his short leave discusses with his wife, Berta, the absurdity of war and his horrible experiences on the battlefield. Shocked by the women's behaviour during the men's absence, he blames his own anger and frustration as well as the women's behaviour on the war: »Ich bin wohl tüchtig runter mit meinen Nerven«, sagte er und schämte sich. »Wir beide. Das ist der Krieg. Es ist eine Schande.« (S 79) Bad health, weak nerves, and infidelity are thus blamed on the war, and later even Herr Liebig forgives his wife her affair with Kupke because he considers it no moral flaw on her part, but the consequences of his return as a cripple from the war (»Der Krieg, Fischmann, ist an allem schuld, nur der Krieg.« S 457).

This view, then, is contrasted by the very different attitude of the Nazis who in proud nationalistic terms try to create a glorified image of the war and of the German soldier in particular. Kupke, for example, profits greatly from his participation in the war when joining the Nazi party, gaining no little recognition from the younger members of the group:

Und mit diesen unreifen Jüngelchens verglichen, war er doch so etwas wie ein bedeutender Mann. Denn er hatte ja immerhin den Krieg mitgemacht, und darauf legte die Partei ganz großen Wert. (S 332, see also S 330)

Later, the Nazis attempt to use people's frustration with the lost war and the Versailles Treaty, both considered highly unjust and blamed on the secret power of Jews and Communists among others, to justify their anti-Semitic politics. Such claims of a Jewish world conspiracy were also supported by contemporary publications as, for example, Artur Dinter's novel *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (1917) and the *Protokolle der Weisen von Zion* (1919), accusing the Jews of leading a world conspiracy against the Aryan German people, ultimately, as depicted in *Die Sünde wider das Blut*, aiming at extinguishing all non-Jews through intermarriage.

In *Schloßgasse 21*, the German population's readiness to participate in this jingoism is described as a willingness to continue the war fever first displayed in 1914. In the following passage from the novel, the narrator's voice is full of bitter sarcasm, once again testifying to Katz's own pacifist views. Entailed in this account of loud popular opinion we thus perceive the narrator's own more subtle ironic criticism:

Hurra! Das Volk marschiert! Hurra! Das Volk marschiert willig mit! Das Volk marschierte immer, wenn es Kommandostimmen vernahm, wenn getrommelt wurde, wenn es gegen einen Feind ging! Es marschierte von 1914 bis 1918! Und jetzt marschiert es wieder! Jetzt nimmt es den damals unterbrochenen Marsch wieder auf! Hurra! Endlich kann man wieder marschieren, wieder hassen, wieder vernichten! (S 394)

Although Katz does not trace the ›Untertanengeist‹ further back than 1914, it is noticeable that the German people is depicted as having an inbuilt respect for authority and will to obey whenever this is demanded – a trait encompassing violence as an end in itself in order for the individual to cope with his or her frustration. In his book on the myth of the Jewish world conspiracy, Norman Cohn shows how the lost war, the harsh conditions of the Versailles Treaty, inflation, unemployment and poverty all combined to emphasise the need for national assertion.<sup>1</sup> As a relatively young nation, the German people needed a common cause to fight for in order to create a feeling of national unity. The loss of influence and dignity after the war therefore significantly damaged German self-confidence, making the fight against a common enemy, be it the external enemy during the war or the internal one, the Jews, even more crucial to the creation of a unifying German sense of nationhood. Katz makes this process very clear in the novel through the speech of individual characters and through details such as the fact that in 1922, a film entitled *Erinnerung an unsere Kriegsflotte* is still being shown in German cinemas as an attempt to sustain the notion of national strength and unity experienced during the war (S 303). However, as Ian Kershaw has shown in his study of the connection between persecution and German popular opinion, the Nazis were generally unsuccessful in their attempts to make the German population violently anti-Semitic. Yet they did succeed in depersonalising the Jew and thereby increasing the already existing indifference of most Germans towards the plight of the Jewish population. This, then, facilitated the community-building side-effect of Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism also described in *Schloßgasse 21*:

But the ideological function of antisemitism with regard to the mass of the population consisted at most in strengthening the German identity-feeling and sense of national consciousness by associating the Jews with Bolshevism and plutocracy and otherwise caricaturing the non-German character of Jewry.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Norman Cohn: Warrant for Genocide. The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode 1967, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Kershaw: The Persecution of the Jews and German Popular Opinion in the Third Reich. In: Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute 26 (1981), p. 261–289, p. 288.

The majority of Jewish characters in the novel, such as Jossel and his friends, are very aware of this process but seldom willing to admit it. Yet, Katz does have characters such as Grünfeld, Feiwel and Jakob utter their scepticism with regard to the Jews' future in Germany. Grünfeld, for example, the assimilated Jewish businessman, who has survived the financial crisis because of his unusual ability to scent problems in advance, attempts a realistic analysis of German post-war society, calling the present events a continuation of the Middle Ages (S 249). This is important because it suggests the existence of irrational and therefore dangerous forces ready to erupt at any time if given the right social and political conditions. More importantly, he later ascribes the Germans' blind obedience to authority to a national character willingly disciplined to obey:

Sie waren gewohnt zu gehorchen, sie hatten ihr ganzes Leben lang nur das getan, in der Schule, vor dem Kriege, im Kriege, nach dem Kriege, in der für sie schlechten alten Zeit und in der für sie schlechten neuen Zeit, es waren ja brave dumme Leute. (S 491)

Surprisingly, this statement almost seeks to find mitigating circumstances excusing the Germans' behaviour by presenting a patronising picture of them as good-hearted but easily manipulated. Yet, the reader is inclined to trust Grünfeld's judgement because of his reputation for being level-headed. His Eastern European Jewish background combined with his long history of assimilation furthermore make him cautious yet very familiar with the innermost being of the German national character. The narrator never offers a final view on the matter but merely presents a number of beliefs among which the reader is left to choose for himself. The more realistic voices in the novel thus suggest that the success of Nazism is due to the lost war and the subsequent financial and political crisis, on the one hand, and to an inherent admiration for authority and a susceptibility to superstition in the Germans on the other. Like Grünfeld, Feiwel recognises this development but is not taken seriously by the other characters because of his exaggerated and overly emotional way of airing his views.

The political instability following the First World War is, however, not only reflected in the two major attempts to seize power, the revolution in 1918 and the Kapp-Putsch in 1920 – both events which play a significant part in the story.<sup>3</sup> It is also, more importantly, shown through the characters inhabiting the Schloßgasse which comes to represent a miniature model of the political scene of the Weimar Republic. Katz thus presents us with a panoramic view of the different political ideologies offered the Germans at the time and of the kind of people who became their adherents. The schoolteacher, Zunk, and the disillusioned soldier, Hermann Kupke, for example, serve as representatives of the little men whose pent-up personal frustration with life is merely waiting for an outlet. Katz shows how this outlet is provided by the Nazis who exploit the general frustration at the time by offering a ready-made world view and the

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed and vivid description of the Kapp-Putsch in Gera see: Erich Knauf: *Ça Ira! Reportage-Roman aus dem Kapp-Putsch*. Berlin: Büchergilde Gutenberg 1930.

intellectual defence of traditional German anti-Semitism. The Jews are thereby offered as scapegoats on whom any frustrations that the individual may have can legally be blamed. Both Zunk and Kupke play major parts in the novel as such typical representatives of the post-war ›Zeitgeist‹, and Katz's presentation of them as social types shall therefore be discussed in some detail.

The fact that the narrator does not approve of Zunk's choice of political ideology is very clear from the irony with which he describes him. From early on, Zunk shows the inclination to become a good Nazi, driven as he is by hate, envy and the quest for revenge. Like the schoolmaster, Zacharias, in Hermann Broch's *Die Schuldlosen*, Zunk is a product of the lower middle classes and a typical opportunist who, suffering from a serious inferiority complex, steps on everyone else below him to gain influence and power. Like Zacharias, he also regrets the absence of a strict hierarchy characterised by military discipline in post-war Germany, thereby showing an early inclination for Nazism which advocated these qualities. The narratorial voice describing Zunk is almost exclusively critical and mocking, thus exposing the pettiness of his zealous ambition. This can be seen, for example, in the description of his desperate climb up the social ladder:

Mit eisernem Fleiß und einem Holzlineal warf er sich auf die auch dazu geschaffene Natur und bestand das Zeichenexamen mit »ausgezeichnet«. [...] Keine Blume und kein Tier konnte ihm entfliehen. Rosen und Tulpen lagen auf dem Papier wie in Zwangsjacken. (S 53)

Katz's use of the zeugma »eisernem Fleiß« and »Holzlineal« simultaneously ridicules Zunk's zeal and testifies to his demand for discipline which, as the narrator humorously points out, even shows itself in his style of drawing. The connotations of the ruler as Zunk's means of punishing his pupils are clearly intended and are further emphasised by the word »eisig[em]« preceding it.

In his attempt to show how the personal background and psychological make-up of this kind of authoritarian Nazi are deeply rooted in Wilhelmine Germany, Katz devotes a major part of chapter four to a detailed description of Zunk's youth. This account is characterised by details uncovering Zunk's true disposition on which the narrator comments critically. Although spoilt by his rich uncle, Zunk feels neglected and dissatisfied that he can ›only‹ become a teacher when his cousin studies to become an engineer. Bitterness and self-pity are thus the motives for most of his actions from early on (›Die Ziegelei würde schon sehen!‹ S 52). That he is inherently evil is further shown by the fact that the animals, for whom he professes love, fear him regardless of his approach; an aspect which, of course, is significant because animals judge intuitively. The narrator mockingly points to this anomaly: ›Zunk stand vor einem Rätsel. Die Tiere ignorierten seine Tierliebe!‹ (S 41) The narrator's constant ironic comments about Zunk's stupidity and self-confidence, such as when he invents adjustable children's shoes or sketches of a new German banknote (S 49–50), further contribute to the entertaining yet critical portrayal of him, not least because

Zunk himself is completely unaware that he is being ridiculed: »Doch fühlte sich Zunk gar nicht verlacht, denn er begriff die Ironie gar nicht.« (S 50)

Having thus failed to make something grand of himself, Zunk bears a tremendous grudge against life, seeking to compensate for this failure through authoritarian behaviour. This results in an overt search for scapegoats to blame for what he considers his failed youth, and he humiliates his defenceless pupils in order to enforce the respect he so yearns for. Like many Germans of his generation, Zunk longs for the reestablishment of the discipline and the rigid social and political order of imperial Germany. He therefore joins the Nazis early on because these values are at the core of their message. His personal grudges and his inclination to enforce discipline with violent means make Zunk's transition from authoritarian school teacher to a brutal Nazi prison guard very easy. Indeed, his innate satisfaction in humiliating his fellow human beings becomes clear when he beats up political and Jewish prisoners in the local prison. He thereby once again asserts his power by physical means to cover up for his psychological insecurities:

Es war sein Beruf, Widerspruchsgeist zu brechen, zu brüllen, mit Strafen zu drohen und diese Strafen anzuwenden, bis die Burschen ihm gehorchten. Er war hier ganz in seinem Element. Er war gewohnt, im scharfen Befehlston zu erklären.« (S 441)

Through Zunk, Katz thus introduces the type of brutal authoritarian schoolmaster which is also familiar from other literature such as Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat* (1905) and Friedrich Torberg's *Der Schüler Gerber* (1930). Through Zunk, Katz, however, also demonstrates how authoritarianism, taken for granted in Wilhelmine Germany, survived into the Weimar Republic and even contributed to the development of Nazi tyranny.

Hermann Kupke is the other major representative of Nazism in the novel. His low moral standards, his search for a place in post-war Germany, and his strong need for recognition ultimately lead him to the Nazi party. Whereas Zunk is a remnant of Wilhelmine Germany, longing for a revival of the stable imperial period, Kupke typifies a different generation with different motives for joining the Nazis. During the war, Kupke happily identifies himself as a soldier because that provides him with security, fellowship and the convenience of handing over responsibility for his life to his superiors. After the war, however, he finds himself alone and insecure, unable to take responsibility for his own life in a world that seems utterly chaotic. That he is desperately searching for a new identity is obvious from the number of political parties he joins irrespective of their political ideology. He thus initially expresses firm »kaisertreu« sentiments: »Ich bin schwarzweißbrot bis in den Tod! Wie ein Mann! Schulter an Schulter! Es lebe unser Wilhelm!« (S 96) Later he joins first the *Unabhängige Sozialisten* and then the Communist *Spartakusbund* (S 145). In both cases he is thrown out, because he is driven by irrational anger and violence (his wife, Lina, calls him a »gemeingefährliche[r] Schläger«, S 146) rather than the wish to engage in politics on an ideological basis. This oppor-

tunism and his unpredictable anger, however, prove to be of great value to the Nazis to whom he ultimately swears his allegiance.

Katz puts great emphasis on showing not only the process of Kupke's change but the reasons for it, explained both through Kupke's own psychological make-up and through the political environment influencing his situation. From the very beginning he is shown as an extremely manipulative character. This is, for example, seen in the way he courts Lina Hering, easily winning her favour by presenting an image of himself as the lonely man in desperate need of companionship. At the same time, we know about his treatment of Hilde Seibert whom he left after having made her pregnant. Soon after his marriage to Lina, however, Kupke's true self emerges and he becomes violent and hot-headed. The vehemence with which he tries to assert himself at his wedding, pointing to his 'heroic' past as a soldier (S 95), testifies to strong inner insecurities and a need for acknowledgement, something he has difficulty obtaining from anyone, least of all from Lina. The narrator clearly distances himself from Kupke as can be seen, for example, when describing the way he looks at the tired and pregnant Lina: »Er sah sich die Bescherung ganz genau an und fand, wie alle Männer seines Kalibers, daß eine Frau einen lächerlichen Eindruck machte in diesem Zustand.« (S 212) Apart from demonstrating Kupke's vulgar personality, the passage also shows how the narrator often moves very quickly from using the words, which the character would have used (here the condescending »Bescherung«), to inserting his own judgemental verdict of the character (»seines Kalibers«). The passage is furthermore an interesting mixture of the narrator's voice, depicting from the outside Kupke's wandering eyes (»Er sah sich die Bescherung ganz genau an«) and free indirect discourse reproducing his thoughts (»fand [...], daß eine Frau einen lächerlichen Eindruck machte in diesem Zustand«).

The narrator never mocks Kupke as subtly as he mocks Zunk. Instead he criticises Kupke's primitive, manipulative, and pompous character, subjecting him to a more straight forward kind of ridicule which emphasises his baseness. Scenes like the following, for example, describing his courtship of Lina in retrospect, reveal Kupke's primitiveness particularly well: »Lina, du bist mir sympathisch«, hatte Kupke ihr gesagt. »Du bist hier in der Bude weit und breit die einzige Frau unter allen Kühen, die mir gefällt.« (S 69) This total lack of tact, of which Kupke himself is unaware and which gets him into trouble several times, is also what ultimately leads him to his powerful position with the Nazis. Initially, however, his inferiority complex is stressed, creating entertaining scenes in which he tries to assert himself by acting too self-confidently, for example during his job interview at the post office: »Dann ging er aufs Hauptpostamt. Ich bin nämlich vorgeladen. Ich heiße nämlich Hermann Kupke mit K vorne, ein hartes K. Ich komme nämlich, weil ich bestellt bin.« (S 208). The description of Kupke is thus by no means without humour, but it is less subtle and mocking than the humour used to describe Zunk.

With the Nazis, then, Kupke finds the recognition he was longing for and once again becomes part of a powerful group. This change is extensively de-

picted by means of sarcasm, demonstrating Kupke's political naiveté, for example during a Nazi gathering where he, uncritically accepting every one of the Nazis' explanations, loudly declares his support for the party although clearly ignorant of what is actually being said (S 333–334). In this connection the argument of Theodor Wolff, the editor of the famous Liberal newspaper, *Berliner Tageblatt*, that the development of racially based anti-Semitism in Germany is the outcome of the German people's reverence for science is particularly interesting. Terms such as ›Rassenkunde‹ and ›Rassenforschung‹, Wolff argues, came to legitimise any actions that would be the outcome of such ›scientific‹ investigations, making all measures taken against the Jews permissible and indeed useful to the Aryan race.<sup>4</sup> In *Schloßgasse 21*, Katz ridicules this deference to pseudo-science through Kupke who attaches no little importance to the academic background and therefore, as he perceives it, reliable character of the Nazis speaking in the pub (for example S 328 and 332–337). In the novel, Kupke thus represents the ›alte Kämpfer‹, the many German men whose war experience became the most important event in their lives because it gave them a sense of purpose and unity. Their miserable situation after their return, unemployment and poverty and the increasing feeling that the loss of the war had been unjust, contributed to their desperation, making them susceptible to Nazi anti-Semitism, which then, as Ian Kershaw has rightly pointed out, came to play an important part in satisfying many of the party members' desire for action:

Anti-Jewish violence provided not only an outlet for pent-up energies in the movement; it gave the Party activists an apparent *raison d'être* for their commitment to the movement in a period where the disappointment of many Alte Kämpfer was intense, where the Party's role in the new state seemed anything but clear, and where the emasculation of the SA's powers had left a sizeable army of activists without any obvious political function.<sup>5</sup>

Of particular importance is the fact that the Nazis provide simple answers to complicated questions, answers which, although new and unusual, Kupke is more than ready to accept as the truth:

Daß Kapitalismus, Kommunismus, Demokratie und Christentum ein und dasselbe Ding waren und alle zusammen soviel wie Judentum bedeuteten, das hatte er bis jetzt auch noch nicht gewußt. Aber den Juden war so was schon zuzutrauen! Wo sie doch alle schwerreich waren und den Kapitalismus erfunden hatten. Warum sollten sie da nicht auch gleich noch den Kommunismus miterfunden haben? (S 329)

The narrator sarcastically uses Kupke's simple-mindedness to demonstrate the intellectual absurdity of Nazi theories, presenting Kupke as the perfect member of the Nazi party precisely because of his naiveté. The party, which he admires not least because of its obvious power and generosity to its adherents, has thus

<sup>4</sup> Theodor Wolff: Die Juden. Ein Dokument aus dem Exil 1942/43. Ed. by Bernd Sösemann. Königstein/Ts.: Jüdischer Verlag bei Athenäum 1984, p. 66–67.

<sup>5</sup> Kershaw, The Persecution of the Jews (p. 132, note 2), p. 265.

reestablished his self-esteem and restored a ›German‹ meaning to his life – i. e. given him a noble, national cause to fight for:

Nach langem faulen und einsamen Dahinschlendern hatte sein Leben wieder einen Sinn, einen deutschen Sinn bekommen. Er hatte da wieder 'nen Vordermann, 'nen Hintermann, 'nen Nebenmann. Er war doch mal Gefreiter gewesen. (S 336)

As it soon turns out, Kupke is not the only one of the members whom the party has provided with a purpose in life and a much-needed scapegoat. Each member bears his or her own grudge against life and more than willingly blames the Jews for having ruined their own personal success. As pointed out by Thomas Koebner, at that time any accusation against the Jews could be justified, creating a highly complex and to some extent internally conflicting paradigm of prejudices:

Auf kleinem Raum finden sich nebeneinander sowohl übertriebene Vorstellungen von der Macht und dem Einfluß der Juden als auch verkleinernde, herabsetzende Diffamierungen dieser Schädlinge, Schmarotzer, Wucherer oder Verbrecher.<sup>6</sup>

Through Kupke and his Nazi friends, Katz thus mockingly shows how each anti-Semite could seek out the prejudice most suitable for his own purposes.

Finally, Katz criticises the increasing corruption of the period through Kupke. Having spent three years in prison for stealing money from his former employer, Kupke is unexpectedly cleansed of his criminal past when it is discovered that this employer was Jewish. Kupke thus suddenly becomes a martyr and a true fighter for the German ›Vaterland‹. This has no small impact on his self-confidence:

Er war von nun an stolz auf seine Vergangenheit. Alles hatte sich verändert, seitdem er in der Partei war. Er war stolz auf seine Partei. Sie hatte seinen dunklen Fleck hell und strahlend gemacht. Er war wieder vollwertig geworden, ja, sogar ein Held, der sich im Kampfe gegen das raffende jüdische Finanzkapital bereits bewährt hat. (S 343)

The narrator clearly mocks Kupke's ›heroic‹ martyrdom by showing in free indirect discourse how he boosts his own self-confidence by repeating Nazi clichés which are clearly not his own (›raffende jüdische Finanzkapital‹). At the same time, his child-like joy in finally being accepted by people who will assign him a firm place in their hierarchy shows that that is really the issue for Kupke rather than the chance to support this political ideology in particular. Because of his blind loyalty to the party, Kupke is eventually given increasing power enabling him to harm and exploit several of the characters in the novel such as Louise Liebig and Anna Gaal.

As representatives of the political left we find Berta and Franz Schaller and Paul Hummel. In his description of Franz Schaller, Katz demonstrates with great empathy the effect of unemployment and despair. When the economic

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Koebner: Feindliche Brüder. In: Probleme deutsch-jüdischer Identität. Ed. by Norbert Altenhofer and Renate Heuer. Bad Soden/Ts.: Woywod 1986 (Jahrbuch / Archiv Bibliographia Judaica e.V., Frankfurt am Main, 1), p. 29–55, p. 46.

crisis sets in, Schaller becomes unemployed and not only his life but also his personality undergo serious changes:

Wie hatte ihn das nutzlose Herumsitzen verändert! Franz, der früher voller Lebensfreude zu sein schien, war verbissen und streitsüchtig geworden, ein ausgestoßener, ein arbeitsloser Tischler. (S 362)

This results in serious arguments with his pregnant wife, Berta, because he has joined the Communists whereas she has remained a Socialist. These political discussions between man and wife are sober and factual, presenting the key differences between Communists and Socialists at the time. Generally, descriptions of individual characters representing the political left are almost entirely without the sarcasm used to describe Nazis such as Zunk and Kupke. Instead, characters belonging to the left are pitied and their frustration with the situation is taken very seriously in marked contrast to the ridicule heaped on Kupke and Zunk. This, however, does not imply that the left wing's blindness to the political development is not criticised, as will become clear below.

Through their discussions, the Schallers come to personify the vehement internal political battles fought among left-wing parties during the Weimar Republic; battles which significantly impeded their judgement of the general political situation and prevented them from recognizing the real enemy, the Nazis. Indeed, Katz's depiction reflects reality accurately in showing why the Social Democrats so resented the Communists. The killing of Social Democrats in the Soviet Union, the German Communists' agitation against the Weimar Republic and its constitution, Communist accusations that the Social Democrats were Social Fascists because their reformist policy diverted the workers' attention from their revolutionary task and finally, the Communists' co-operation with the Nazis to veto Social Democratic measures in parliament all combined to prevent the creation of a strong left-wing alliance.<sup>7</sup> It is thus no coincidence that Kupke laughs when overhearing one of their discussions, knowing how serious the threat from the left-wing parties would have been, had they been fighting the Nazis together (S 364). Indeed, Katz's general depiction of the left-wing parties' actions, or lack of such, is bitterly ironic, as is seen, for example, in the description of a Social Democratic meeting on 28 January 1933, two days before the Nazi seizure of power. At this meeting, the alteration of the local cemetery and the introduction of motorised transportation of the corpses are the only topics discussed. Reading with hindsight, the remark of the head of the cemetery commission is not without irony to the reader, suggesting on a symbolic level the death of Socialism itself in Germany: »Der kommende 30. Januar 1933 wird für unsere Stadt ein historischer Tag werden. Endlich wird unsere Stadt einen Leichentransport-Kraftwagen haben.« (S 481) As would soon be clear, another and much more fateful event was to overshadow this one, and the narrator thus concludes with grim sarcasm:

<sup>7</sup> Hagen Schulze: *Weimar. Deutschland 1917–1933*. Berlin: Severin und Sieder 1982 (Die Deutschen und ihre Nation, 4; Siedler deutsche Geschichte, [10]), p. 83–84.

Ganz deutlich, zum Greifen nahe, sah ich vor mir den Vorstandstisch mit dem Rednerpult, sah die Männer, die sich sehen ließen und selbst niemanden sahen, diese Männer, die mit immer wiederkehrenden Worten und weiten Gebärden den Nebenmann auf sich aufmerksam machen wollten, aber der Nebenmann war mit sich selbst beschäftigt, jeder nahm sich selbst ungeheuer wichtig, zwei Tage vor dem 30. Januar ... (S 481)

Similarly, Franz Schaller, when interrogated by the Gestapo, must reluctantly admit that the last Communist meeting he attended before the Nazi take-over concerned the building of the underground railway in Moscow rather than the critical political situation in Germany: »Heute scheint es mir selbst auch unwahrscheinlich«, sagte Schaller bedauernd. »Aber es ist so. Das war das Thema.« (S 466)

It is significant that Katz merely mentions the building of the Moscow underground but refrains from praising it as a monumental event in the history of Communism, as did many contemporary left-wing writers such as Bertolt Brecht in his *Svendborger Gedichte* and Lion Feuchtwanger in his essay *Moskau 1937*. Being strongly rooted in the Social Democratic tradition, Katz was much opposed to the totalitarian character of the Soviet Union, viewing its achievements with scepticism; an attitude which in the novel is most clearly expressed by Berta Schaller in her arguments with her husband. And yet Katz's main concern is not to present a political polemic on the vices and virtues of Socialism versus Communism, but merely to demonstrate the regrettable self-absorption of the left-wing parties and the consequences of their failure to create a common front against Nazism.

If Katz juxtaposes Socialism and Communism through the Schallers, he uses the Hummels to contrast Communism and Nazism, although the opposition between them could have been more elaborate. Paul Hummel's frustration is just as deep as that of Franz Schaller as is clear from the free indirect discourse with which his thoughts are accounted (S 507–511). Having given his whole life to Communist politics, firmly believing in the strength of the left-wing parties, he is greatly disappointed when nothing is done to prevent the Nazi take-over. At the same time, his wife is becoming increasingly sympathetic to Nazi promises, hoping that the new government may indeed be able to improve their financial situation. Paul Hummel is thus deeply disappointed both with the Communist party and with his own wife. Again, unlike the descriptions of Kupke and Zunk, the narrator encourages pity and empathy rather than ridicule. When Hummel decides to spend 1 April 1933, the day of the anti-Jewish boycott, with Jossel, he does so partly to protect Jossel and partly because he wants to provoke the Nazis. The outcome of this encounter between the Jew and the gentile suggests the establishment of a Jewish-Communist alliance based on Hummel's credo: »Unterdrückte, vereinigt euch, denn Einigkeit macht stark.« (S 537) This would have constituted a revival of the collaboration between Jews and Communists during the Russian Revolution in which many Jewish Communists played a significant part, hoping for better conditions for themselves if they contributed to the establishment of the new regime. Having abandoned their orthodox background, many young Jews thus found a substitute for religion in the Commu-

nist ideology.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Jossel and Hummel, however, Jossel's religious outlook prevents such an alliance because of his belief in the meaning of suffering, an attitude entirely foreign to the earthbound Communist Hummel:

»Wer weiß, wozu dieser Tag gut ist?« redete Jossel Fischmann dem skeptischen Hummel gut zu. »Wir wissen oft nicht, warum wir leiden. Aber alles hat einen Sinn. Schütteln sie nicht so Ihren Kopf. Verlassen Sie sich auf mich. Unser Leben ist eine weise Prüfung.« [...]

»Mit meinem Leiden helfe ich. Ist das nicht genug?«

»Nein! Das ist 'n Dreck!« (S 536–537)

However, despite their basic differences, Jossel's firm belief in a better future has a remarkably positive effect on the disappointed Hummel:

Dem so schwer enttäuschten Paul Hummel ging es sonderbar. Er bekam bei diesem Juden wieder Mut und Hoffnung. Natürlich hatte dieser Fischmann recht! Nach jedem Heute kommt ein Morgen und ein Übermorgen. (S 537)

Hummel, interpreting Jossel's statement within his own Communist world view, completely misses Jossel's more mystical understanding of suffering, assigning no other meaning to it than the concrete improvement of their circumstances on earth. On the one hand, the reader is thus invited to admire Jossel for his faith and piety, realising the personal comfort provided him through this faith, while on the other hand, through the explicit comparison with Hummel's more earthbound views, he can only regard this piety as ineffective and naive in the present situation.

By operating with social types such as Kupke and Zunk as representatives of the extreme right, and Schaller and Hummel as left-wing party representatives, Katz shows the ideological diversity of inter-war Germany and the effect of the individual's social background and psychological make-up on his or her handling of the political and financial crisis. Katz's extensive use of free indirect discourse, in particular, contributes to the intimate impression we are given of the characters' most personal frustration and ambitions. Having displayed the development of various social types on a more individual level, chapter 36 then provides an overview of the situation, both literally as Jakob contemplates the consequences of the strengthened Nazi regime, overlooking the town from a hill, and metaphorically, summing up the reasons for Hitler's success. Jakob's symbolic location at the top of a hill while contemplating the past is also a structural device for rounding off the novel, presenting the reader with a final up-to-date account of the political development described in it. The narrator, providing a last factual evaluation of the situation, points to the despair and poverty experienced by most people in these years regardless of political affiliations: »Trotz der Verschiedenheit der Uniformen, der Mützen, der Armbinden, standen vielen

<sup>8</sup> Robert Weltsch: Die deutsche Judenfrage: Ein kritischer Rückblick. Königstein/Ts.: Jüdischer Verlag 1981, p. 35.

Marschierenden im Gesicht Verzweiflung, Hunger, Arbeitslosigkeit, Fanatismus.« (S 393) Furthermore, the Nazis' apparently never-ending money supply does not fail to impress people, for example the minor characters, Arthur Schubert and his wife Martha, who marvel at Kupke's power and wealth since he joined the Nazi party: »Er ist früh, sehr früh mitmarschiert, dafür ist er heute wer! Der liebe Herrgott persönlich, möchte man meinen. Nein wirklich! Und Geld hat er auf einmal! Geld! Der imponiert mir!« (S 505)

Katz uses such minor characters to demonstrate the little man's response to Nazism. As in the description of Zunk and Kupke, the narrative voice commenting on people like the Schuberts and the anonymous couple above Jossel's shop is extremely mocking and sarcastic. They are portrayed as naive, spineless and easily manipulated people – »Spießer« who secretly support the Nazis because the violence and the discipline fascinate them. Thus, the man living above Jossel's shop is described ironically as being too fat to become an active member of the Nazi party. However, he strongly supports it because it brings action to his boring life. Similarly, the conversation between the Schuberts humorously reveals their blind admiration for Hitler and at the same time their limited knowledge of him. Martha Schubert's submissiveness to her husband is exaggerated and her political ignorance exposed when she fills in every gap in her knowledge of Hitler with fantasies about his life (S 505–507). Katz thus at one and the same time ridicules the petty lives of these middle-class Germans and demonstrates their danger to society precisely because of their stupid naiveté. Of particular importance to his explanation of Hitler's popularity with such people is the fact that Hitler apparently offers all Germans active involvement in politics – a chance to partake in the construction of the new Germany. This, then, gives the individual a sense of responsibility and meaning in life. Martha, Arthur's cowed wife, naively repeating a cliché, thus admits that compared to the former governments, Hitler's is a positive change:

Ja, sie gab zu, daß auch sie stark beeinflußt sei, das sei wohl endlich richtige Politik, sagte sie zaghafit, eine bewundernswürdige und beispielhafte Politik, wo auch das Volk mittun könnte, nicht nur die Abgeordneten im Reichstag, ach ja. (S 505)

The delusion that a dictatorship could give people a more active part in politics than a representative democracy was not least due to the visibility of Hitler's adherents in the streets. Whereas the former governments had mainly operated behind closed doors, the SA and the SS played a significant part in conveying to the man in the street a picture of power, discipline, and control – something many citizens were missing in German political life. Furthermore, parliamentary democracy was something new in Germany and was frequently accused of involving the people only as voters, leaving many Germans uninterested in politics. Hitler's forceful approach and charismatic appearance thus suggested the beginning of an invigorating change.

Such delusion, together with the inane motives for many Germans' admiration of Hitler, is thus what Katz seeks to expose by presenting a mocking yet

sufficiently true-to-life picture of the average ›Kleinbürger‹ in order for him or her to be recognisable as a social type. Indeed, this mockery also adds extensively to the humour which characterises large parts of the novel's narrative style. This is seen, for example, in the portrayal of the adoration of Hitler expressed by many women. On 30 January 1933 when Hitler becomes Chancellor, Fräulein Nachtigall thus falls into ecstasy when the news is broken to her:

»Also ist es authentisch?« – »Ich bin so glücklich!« – »Er [Hitler] ist doch *Alles* für mich! Ich habe sein Bild in meinem Zimmer hängen! Wenn ich ihn ansehe, dann empfinde ich ganz tief, wie groß er ist! Ich habe nie den Glauben an ihn verloren!« [...] »In meiner Kindheit habe ich vom lieben Gott geträumt. Jetzt träume ich vom Führer!« (S 412)

While Fräulein Nachtigall's reaction is clearly exaggerated by Katz, it is to some extent rooted in the overt admiration which many women, in particular, showed for the charismatic Hitler at the time. In the novel, however, this admiration is not limited to the women but is also displayed by men such as Arthur Schubert to whom Hitler assumes a god-like status: »Martha, ich halte ihn für einen Heiland! Für einen Übermenschen, den Gott uns Deutschen geschickt hat!« (S 507) Arthur even grows a little moustache to resemble and honour his hero. In these highly amusing passages, Katz displays his own contempt for such politically naive and spineless people by presenting them in the most ridiculous way possible. Characters like Fräulein Nachtigall are too extreme to be taken seriously as social types, yet in their own way represent aspects of the political climate at the time. This is also seen when many of the inhabitants of the boarding-house in which Jakob and his friends, Rascher and Marie, live reveal themselves as members of the party after the announcement of the Nazi take-over. Only then do they disclose their true loyalties which they had conveniently kept secret until they could safely be announced in public. The scene is characterised by an extensive use of clichés, and Katz uses the characters' ridiculous behaviour and ludicrous expressions of joy to mock not only the Nazi adherents but Hitler himself, who is thus reduced to a popular idol whose followers are merely echoing their ›Führer‹. At the same time, however, it is clear that these people are dangerous precisely because of the uncritical stupidity with which they accept Hitler's doctrines.

At the end of the novel, frustration and personal grievances have made almost all inhabitants of the Schloßgasse members of the Nazi party despite the attempts by Hummel and the Schallers to make their neighbours see reason. There is, however, little reason and much prejudice and superstition involved, and the three left-wingers soon give up the attempt. Thus, most of the housewives now avoid the Jews, having been persuaded by Kupke's tireless propaganda that the Jews are indeed to blame for all their misery. Katz seeks to uncover the true face of Nazism by exposing the inane reasons for their change of mind. Elli Stiefel, for example, becomes a Nazi because the Fischmanns always do their laundry on Thursdays, leaving no room for Elli's laundry, and even the midwife, Frau Schade, with whom Jakob used to go foraging in the countryside, has joined the party, having been convinced that Jewish midwives

are conspiring to eliminate the German people by means of abortions and birth control (S 371). Both reasons are, of course, utterly ridiculous and are indeed meant to be so in order to demonstrate the inanity of the Nazi ideology and the naiveté of its adherents. Jakob's former classmates, Xaver Wunder and Anna Gaal, have also joined the party, but whereas Xaver has done so for ideological reasons, Anna Gaal, now Kupke's mistress, has clearly joined to please her rich and influential lover. Her past relationships were characterised by the same enthusiasm for the man's interest, and the fact that she earlier became a devoted Communist to please her Communist boyfriend testifies to her political ignorance and spinelessness. The friendly and almost sentimental way in which she approaches Jossel, when he invites her and Kupke into his shop (S 376), and the fact that she used to be *>Schabbesgoite<* with the Fischmanns, carrying out the domestic jobs prohibited to Jews on the Sabbath, furthermore confirms that Anna Gaal is merely a camp follower and not a devoted Nazi.

The novel's presentation of German society in the years preceding the Nazi take-over is thus one of gradually increasing brutalisation and growing acceptance of the Nazi ideology in the German population, culminating in the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor on 30 January 1933. The internal power struggles on the political left prevent them from realising the seriousness of the situation. Even the editor Albert Koch, one of the left-wing parties' greatest leaders, now an old man, is completely incompetent, showing greater interest in his own illnesses and anecdotes from his long life than in the present critical political situation. He thus fails to gather the left-wing parties and provide the strong leadership called for in the situation. The narrator deeply regrets this unfortunate state of affairs:

Es war tragisch: in einer Zeit, da das Schicksal des Landes auf dem Spiel stand, waren für diesen politischen Redakteur Krankheit und Tod seine Hauptprobleme geworden. Er war ein alter Mann. (S 386)

Similarly, the representatives of the old, conservative values of tolerance and *>Humanität<*, such as Professor Urban and Direktor Hüsemann, are unable to exert any influence. Direktor Hüsemann, a devoted monarchist and humanist, realises the danger of the political development and tries to call his teachers to order, but in vain. He, too, is no longer young and gives up the fight, merely waiting for the day he can retire: »Noch ein Jahr, und er hat die Pensionierung erreicht, dann mag ein Jüngerer versuchen, ob er mit der heutigen Zeit besser fertig wird ...« (S 168) Jakob's German teacher, Professor Urban, also relinquishes his ideals in the end. Having witnessed the increasing success of the Nazi ideology and being exposed to Nazi cruelties in prison, he sees no hope for the human race:

Die ganze Welt ist voller Ungerechtigkeit, die nach Sühne und Wiedergutmachung schreit. Je älter die Welt wird, desto mehr Ungerechtigkeiten begeht sie gegen uns Menschen. Es ist kein Platz mehr da für Liebe, nicht für Gott, für nichts mehr. Ich werde nie mehr an etwas glauben können. (S 463)

Thus, total disillusionment characterises the people whose belief in ›Humanität‹ should have constituted a bulwark against the dehumanisation and brutalisation of society. Katz treats these characters with great seriousness, deeply deplored their passivity. Yet the fact that he has all of them resign themselves also shows the extent of the evil that has penetrated German society. In fact, in the above quotation, Professor Urban seems to have given up on the world at large, calling for universal redemption and cleansing before a return to humanistic values will be possible.

Under these circumstances, the implementation of Nazi policies including severe anti-Semitism went reasonably smoothly. Katz's presentation of the period and of the increasing hostility to the Jews in the German population is thus largely in agreement with the findings of historians. Trude Maurer, for example, has examined the importance of such latent anti-Jewish sentiments in the German population for the ultimate acceptance of Nazi anti-Semitism. She suggests that it was not the mere presence of the Eastern European Jews themselves, but current politicians' and right-wing agitators' warnings as to the dangers of these emigrants for Germany that made the average German citizen consent to anti-Semitic discrimination and ultimate persecution.<sup>9</sup> Whatever reservations the Germans might have had about Nazi violence against the German Jews, these were abolished with regard to the Eastern European Jewish emigrants because the latter were perceived as a threat. Maurer thus concludes:

Die Haltung der Nicht-Antisemiten oder der selbsterklärten Gegner des Antisemitismus war nicht so gefestigt, daß sie nicht gegenüber bestimmten Gruppen von Juden ins Wanken gebracht werden konnte. Und da dies auch für die Liberalen und die Sozialdemokraten galt, gab es in Deutschland keinen festen und mächtigen Widerstandsblock gegen den Antisemitismus mehr.<sup>10</sup>

*Schloßgasse 21*, then, is the fictional representation of exactly this process, based on the historical facts but presented with sophisticated humour and irony as well as considerable psychological insight to help display the political dynamics and social types influencing Weimar society.

One of the novel's major achievements is, in fact, to successfully portray the penetration of politics into people's lives and relationships causing severe instability in inter-human relations, particularly in the relationship between spouses. Individual characters are thus used to typify social change. In *Die Fischmanns* most marriages were stable and harmonious despite hard conditions and occasional disagreements, and in most cases the women were the stronghold of the families. Within this closely knit unit everyone knew their responsibilities and felt at ease with the traditional pattern of life. In *Schloßgasse 21*, however, these traditional family patterns no longer prove a functional framework for modern life, resulting in general insecurity and frustration. There are thus practically no

<sup>9</sup> Trude Maurer: *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918–1933*. Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag 1986 (Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden, 12), p. 485.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 491.

happy marriages to be found in the novel. Instead, we find an abundance of weak and psychologically damaged women who flee into a fantasy world, to weak and often cruel men and ultimately to Nazism like Fräulein Nachtigall and Louise Liebig who has an affair with Kupke. The men returning from the war are insecure because they do not know how to fit into a seemingly chaotic world so very different from pre-war Germany. At the same time, the new self-confidence gained by the women through their entry into the labour market during the war also significantly changed their outlook and expectations. However, with nothing but the practical aspect of co-habitation and sheer habit to bind them together, most couples in the novel suffer from mutual disappointment and serious communication problems as, for example, in the case of Jossel and his second wife as well as Martha and Arthur Schubert. The pressures from unemployment and poverty also occasionally lead to physical or verbal abuse as in the case of Kupke and Lina as well as Hummel and his wife. Instability in the public sphere is thus reflected symbolically in depictions of domestic instability.

### c) The Jewish Response

Since the novel presents German history from the perspective of Jewish immigrants, great emphasis is put on describing especially the Eastern European Jews' traditions, values, and religion. This has several reasons. It is first of all an attempt to introduce the world of these Jews to a non-Jewish audience unfamiliar with the customs and traditions of orthodox Judaism. At the same time, it is an insider's demonstration of what it was so many Germans feared because of superstition and prejudice – a wish to enlighten and explain. Finally, it is necessary in order to understand the generational conflicts developing between these first-generation emigrants and their children. Only against the Eastern European Jewish background do we realise what it is the children are rebelling against and the extent to which their German world differs from the traditional lifestyle of their parents. We thus find descriptions of the Sabbath meal (S 21, 139–141) and of the »Schabbesgoite« (S 90). The food laws and the notion of eating kosher are described humorously when Dwore Weiss despairs at the thought of having to lend her kosher pots and pans to the non-Jewish midwife (S 80–81), and later the law against consuming milk and meat together prevents the family from having curd cake (»Quarkkuchen«) because they had meat for dinner (S 220). The importance for the Jewish male of learning Hebrew and studying the Talmud is once again emphasised by Jossel when he has a Jewish scholar teach his sons every afternoon (S 130), and the orthodox Jewish women's custom of wearing a wig is mentioned when Jossel's second wife moves in (S 240). Chapter 17 is of special significance to the novel's depiction of the maintenance of traditional Jewish life in Germany. The entire chapter is devoted to an idyllic description of the Eastern European Jews' daily gatherings in the park after work, their exchange of memories, gossip, and news from home and the tradition of storytel-

ling in which, for example, the figures of the ›Golem‹ and the ›Dybbuk‹ are introduced and explained. Although the children are still young, the discrepancy between them and their parents is already obvious. The older generation is clearly satisfied to talk amongst themselves and do not desire German company. Mentally and emotionally, they still live in the shtetl, and their conversation is clearly centred around the Eastern European Jewish culture which shaped them. The children, on the other hand, play their German games and pay little or no attention to their parents' conversation. Later when stories are told, they listen with fascination and amazement to the tales from a country so unreal and alien to them. Although they are still very young, their world and outlook are almost exclusively German and clashes are inevitable. We see this, for example, when the children want their parents to have gardens like German families:

Da sagten die Kinder nichts mehr. Sie verstanden ihre Eltern nicht, und die Eltern verstanden ihre Kinder nicht. Man möchte gern einen Garten, sogar nur einen ganz ganz kleinen Garten – was aber kommt dabei heraus? Vorwürfe! (S 202)

As will become clear later, it is less a question of disagreements than of the existence of a total communication gap between the generations. Rather than talking with one another or even to one another, they are talking at cross purposes.

The demonstration of Jewish life and customs is not done with obvious didactic means, however. There is no lecturing voice teaching the reader about Jewish tradition because this is not the main focus of the novel. Instead, we are given information providing the background to the comparison between Eastern European and Western Jews, Jews and non-Jews and finally, between generations of Eastern European Jews. The explanations of the customs are thus provided subtly and not always immediately; we see this, for example, when Jossel and Chaskel Weiss are going to the synagogue during the Kapp Putsch because Chaskel must say ›Kaddisch‹ for his parents – the prayer a Jew must say on the anniversary of his parents' death. This is first announced on p. 190 but not explained till p. 192 when they are stopped by a group of workers wanting to know where the two Jews are going. This technique of explaining the meaning of a custom or tradition to another character, and not through the narrator, is frequently used, for example also when a child asks the meaning of ›Dybbuk‹ (S 203).

Of significance to the picture of Eastern European Jewish mentality and the language problems experienced by refugees and emigrants in general is also the novel's use of Yiddish phrases and word order, for example during Jossel's visit to the German Rabbi. The Rabbi's German is perfect whereas Jossel's German language is heavily influenced by Yiddish grammar and syntax:

Wenn Sie wären kein Jud, müßte ich Ihnen sehr viel erklären und immer wieder erklären, daß ein Jud nicht kann dort leben. Zwanzigmal kann man das erzählen einem Goy, er wird nicht verstehen. Zum Beispiel wird ein Deutscher oder ein Engländer oder ein Amerikaner vielleicht nicht einmal wissen, wo es liegt Galizien, und warum es wohnen dort so verschiedene Völker und warum alle sich schlagen untereinander, weil es doch dort gibt keinen Verdienst für niemand, und warum alle schlagen den Juden, weil er doch nebbich ist der Schwächste von alle. (S 122–123)

As pointed out by Matthias Richter, the language of Jewish characters in German literature is often a mixture of real Yiddish and linguistic idioms which can be interpreted as Yiddish – a stylised way of suggesting Yiddish in other words. This constructed Yiddish language or ›Literaturjiddisch‹, then, is one of a number of things suggesting Jewishness, such as names (Itzig, Schmuel, Cohn), physical characteristics (nose), and spiritual qualities regarded as typically Jewish (sense of justice, materialism, cowardice). Generally, ›Literaturjiddisch‹ carries negative connotations, mainly describing the unassimilated Eastern European Jews and what was considered their primitive orthodox background, i. e. their ›otherness‹. Only a few writers use ›Literaturjiddisch‹ to provide a positive picture of Jewish characters. In fact, almost all pro-Jewish texts avoid the use of Yiddish phrases, instead presenting the Jewish characters as very able German speakers.<sup>11</sup> Against this background, it is interesting that Katz's Jewish characters, who are almost exclusively presented in a positive light, generally speak perfect German when their thoughts and ideas are the main issue, but ›Literaturjiddisch‹ when Katz wants to draw our attention to their otherness and their helplessness. Occasionally, he even finds it necessary to inform the reader that the characters are speaking Yiddish (for example S 219). The use of ›Literaturjiddisch‹ in *Schloßgasse 21* is thus most pronounced when we are invited to feel sympathy and pity for the characters (for example S 192) or when the difference between the largely unassimilated older generation and the very German younger generation is being pointed out (S 199). Jossel, for example, having just arrived with the best of intentions to become German, begins an intensive study of the German language, but to no avail (S 131). Whenever he becomes upset or angry, he immediately falls back into his Yiddish mother tongue and is greatly hurt when, for example, the peasant, to whom he has gone to sell his wares, makes fun of him (S 135–137). Although the peasant is generally well-meaning, his pointing out Jossel's faulty German hurts Jossel greatly because this categorises him as the eternal alien who failed to complete the assimilation process. It thus soon becomes clear to all Jewish emigrants that an imperfect command of German signifies social inferiority and emphasises their ›otherness‹. Historically, this was not least due to the equation in Germany at the time of nationhood and language, making a perfect command of German the criterion for membership in the German nation. Until most Jews spoke flawless German, they could conveniently be denied access because of their Yiddish ›jargon‹. Then, however, a new means of distinguishing was called for, introducing a linguistic interpretation of the racial doctrine according to which language was equated with the German soul and therefore inaccessible and incomprehensible to strangers. The Jews, although perfect German speakers, were perceived as having an inherent Jewishness in their discourse now hidden from the Germans because of the Jewish ability to disguise their true identity with a perfect German accent. This ›otherness‹, then, is what prevents the Jews from ever becoming truly assimilated

<sup>11</sup> See: Matthias Richter: Die Sprache jüdischer Figuren in der deutschen Literatur (1750–1933). Studien zu Form und Funktion. Göttingen: Wallstein 1995.

and what is considered the presence of an inherently dangerous element within German culture by nationalist groups.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, most of the older Jews in the novel remain imperfect German speakers whereas the children soon become fluent, feeling embarrassed to be seen with their Yiddish-speaking parents in the street:

Es gefiel mir aber gar nicht, daß Vater nur Jiddisch sprach. Wenn einer Jiddisch sprach, machten die Nichtjuden Witze, und ich wollte nicht, daß man über Vater Witze mache. (S 126)

Dwore Weiss, for example, consistently refuses to speak in the street because of her imperfect German (S 126), a strategy much appreciated by Jakob. In fact, having become aware of the power of language at an early age, Jakob swears never to speak another language than German and never to speak loudly in the street like most Eastern European Jews (S 126). In step with their integration into German society, the Eastern European Jews would thus adopt the German Jews' distaste for the Yiddish language, regarding it as an undesired remnant of their Eastern European past. Trude Maurer confirms this:

Mit der Übernahme der deutschen Sprache durch die Juden in Deutschland hatte das Jiddisch hier für sie wie für die Gesamtgesellschaft seinen Wert als eigene Sprache verloren, wurde auch von Juden als »Jargon« verachtet. Deutsche Juden fühlten sich oft geradezu peinlich berührt, wenn man es in ihrer Gegenwart gebrauchte.<sup>13</sup>

Having become increasingly German himself, Jakob's antipathy towards Yiddish is determined by fear of isolation and hatred from his peers as well as genuine admiration for the German language and culture per se of which he, unlike his father's generation, appears to have successfully become a part. Yiddish is therefore only an unpleasant reminder of his Eastern European Jewish background.

By means of his characteristically subtle irony, Katz further uses language to demonstrate the futility of racial and religious prejudice. On a Sunday afternoon, Jossel and his children go for a walk in the nearby woods with Chaskel and Dwore Weiss. Dwore expresses her admiration for the weather and the view in loud, homely Yiddish:

»Scheen is es hier!« seufzte, auf jiddisch, Frau Dwore Weiss beglückt bei jeder Aussicht auf. [...] »Sehr scheen, tache sehr scheen!« bestätigte Vater ihre Ansicht. »Jakob! Hermann! Gucktse euch an, die scheene Aussicht!« (S 219–220)

They are, however, not alone in the forest but surrounded by Germans admiring the same view in perfect German: »Schön ist es hier!« »Ja, sehr schön! Otto! Elfriede! Aufpassen! 'ne sehr schöne Aussicht! Wirklich, sehr sehr schön.« (S 220) By means of this simple scene with its obvious parallels in thought but

<sup>12</sup> For a more elaborate study of the question of Jewish otherness and the significance of language see: Sander L. Gilman: *Jewish Self-Hatred. Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*. Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland* (p. 145, note 9), p. 126.

contrasts in expression, Katz shows the existence of intrinsic human character traits common to people of different races and religions, pointing, through a demonstration of their fundamental similarities, to the futility of hate and persecution. The scene is thus clearly intended as an appeal for a return to ›Humanität‹ and fundamental human values.

More problematic than Jossel's relationship with his non-Jewish neighbours, however, is the relationship to his own sons as the lack of a common language, in the concrete sense, emphasises their alienation and worsens the absense of a common language in a communicative and psychological sense:

Da war er nun der Vater, aber er konnte mit seinem deutschen Sohne nicht väterlich reden. Auf jiddisch hätte er ihm alles sagen können, was er auf dem Herzen hatte, aber dann würde ihn der Sohn ja kaum verstehen ... (S 269)

Deeply hurt and frustrated because of this widening gap between himself and his sons, Jossel becomes increasingly quiet and reserved. This process is described most intimately in chapter 25 where Jossel's innermost thoughts and worries about his life in Germany are depicted through free indirect discourse. This narrative technique emphasises his helplessness and encourages the reader to empathise with him. Realising that his attempt to become a good German has failed, Jossel at the same time must admit that he is no longer the Galician Jew he used to be. He therefore finds himself in a spiritual No Man's Land with no real sense of belonging to either culture:

Was war das für ein sonderbares Leben in Deutschland? Er wurde, je älter er wurde, immer mehr dem Jossel Fischmann aus Strody am Flusse Stryj ähnlich. Aber nur ähnlich. Er stammte aus Galizien, aber er war kein galizischer Jude mehr. Und er war noch immer kein deutscher Herr Fischmann geworden. [...] Nie würde er ein richtiger Deutscher mehr werden. Hatte er eigentlich früher wirklich daran geglaubt? Ach, für sich hatte er keine Hoffnungen mehr ... (S 268)

This experience of personal failure and confusion is intensified by the simultaneous alienation from their children. Comparing, for example, Jossel's relationship with Jakob to the description of the anonymous Jewish father and his son at the end of the novel (S 577–581), we find the same sense of frustration with sons who have almost entirely abandoned their Jewish background in favour of a more secular German outlook: »Ich will Euch ganz offen sagen, [...] daß ich mit meinem einzigen Sohn leider nicht viel Glück gehabt habe. Was soll ich Euch viel erzählen? Er ist ein ganzer Deutscher, er ist doch hier in Berlin aufgewachsen und er hat nur goyische Freunde gehabt« (S 579), the Jewish father complains. Similarly, Jossel is deeply worried about the widening emotional and cultural gap between himself and his sons:

Er hatte Kinder und hatte doch keine Kinder. Sie waren noch jung, aber schon verstand er sie nicht, wenn sie von ihren Plänen redeten. Was sollte das später werden? Sie redeten schon jetzt von Dingen, die er nicht kannte. Die Kinder wohnten mit ihm in der gleichen Wohnung, aber manchmal glaubte er, daß sie und er in verschiedenen Ländern wohnten ... (S 268)

The difference in outlook becomes increasingly evident as the children grow older. Jossel, for example, is deeply shocked when discovering that Jakob not only eats pork but has also left the house without his phylacteries and prayer book (S 275 and 283). And yet, at the same time, he knows that he himself is partly to blame for his sons' development, »Was nützte es schon zu klagen? Er hatte doch alles getan, was er konnte, damit sie Deutsche würden. Er tat doch täglich nichts anderes. Er wollte doch, daß sie anders werden als er!« (S 267) He thus has great difficulty enforcing this policy of compromise between the two cultures towards his sons, for instance when Jakob wants to go to the theatre on a Friday evening instead of celebrating the Sabbath with his family:

»Kürzlich hast du mir gesagt, ich soll kein Zionist, sondern ein richtiger Deutscher werden. Aber wenn ich mal Freitagabend wie ein richtiger Deutscher ins Theater gehen will, bist du auch dagegen.«

Sprachlos sah mich Vater an, dann gab er mir eine Ohrfeige. (S 228)

This is an excellent example of the paradox of assimilation. Jossel, for want of a valid counterargument, ultimately resorts to physical language in a last desperate attempt to maintain his fatherly superiority however unconvincing it is. In other words, by projecting on to the sons the goals that the fathers themselves could not reach, they try to compensate for their own failure through the success of their children as, for example, seen in the humorous conversation between Jossel and Herr Wolf about their sons' careers (S 315–318). The children's success, however, largely depends on an extensive degree of assimilation at the cost of traditional Eastern European Jewish values, but even so, the parental pride in seeing them succeed is greater than the fear of them losing their Jewish inheritance. It is thus also both funny and tragic that Jossel is initially incapable of showing any joy when told about Jakob's first publication – funny because his prime concern is not being able to show off to his friends when Jakob writes under a pseudonym (»Wer wird schon wissen, wer der J. Fisch-Fischel ist? Wer von meinen Bekannten wird mir das schon glauben?« S 325); tragic because the public hatred of the Jews prevents him from rejoicing with his son in this event out of fear of the consequences (S 323).

This, then, is the Eastern European world and mentality as it exists within the German framework of the novel. But how do the Jews cope with the political pressures and with the hostility of an increasingly anti-Semitic society? Three groups can be distinguished. First, there are the Jews of the older generation who largely retain their Eastern European Jewish values, having realised the failure of their intended assimilation. Second, there are apparently assimilated young Jews shaped by their German education and friends but now being confronted with a Jewish identity they no longer regard as theirs. And, finally, there is the group of German Jews who consider themselves a hundred percent German or, as they say, »Germans of Jewish faith«. All three groups are represented in the novel and we are thus given a broad overview of the different models of Jewish identity in inter-war Germany and the various ap-

proaches taken to cope with anti-Semitism. It must, however, be noted that these groups are not representative of the entire spectrum of German Jews at the time as Katz, for example, hardly comments on the position of the Zionists. This may be because Katz himself was not a Zionist or because German Zionism remained a minority movement until the beginning of the Nazi period.<sup>14</sup> The novel's strength is to demonstrate the complexity of the individual on the basis of background and psychological make-up, making a strict and definitive categorisation of any individual character impossible.

### *The older generation*

In this group we find Jossel, his new wife, and most of his friends. With the exception of Jossel's new wife, they all come to Germany with the best of intentions to become good Germans and yet retain their Jewish values and religion. Thus Jossel makes a deal with his new mother country to sacrifice his traditional Eastern European Jewish looks including his beard if, in return, he can live what he considers a decent life. However, as the narrator points out, his efforts amount to nothing because of German prejudice against Eastern European Jews and because every attempt on his part to modernise and Germanise himself only emphasises his Jewishness. Realising that his efforts have no effect on the Germans' view of him, Jossel thus grows his beard in the traditional way again. He does this »zornig und auch ein wenig beschämkt« (S 117–118), angry with himself and embarrassed at his attempt to hide his Jewish background rather than professing his true identity. Making Jossel's beard a symbolic representation of his failed assimilation is an interesting stylistic device showing the ironic and illusory character of assimilationist aspirations. No matter what course of action the Jews take, they cannot satisfy gentile demands. This failure, then, is predicted by means of hindsight (»Viel später sollte er feststellen, daß ihm die Verwirklichung dieses Plans mißlungen war«, S 118) but even earlier, at the end of the war when Jossel finds himself in a camp hospital, the futility of his enterprise becomes clear in the discussion about the new post-war Europe: »Zu Jossel Fischmann, der ihn schüchtern fragte: ›Und ich? Was bin ich geworden, Herr Landsmann?‹, sagte er erstaunt: ›Was Sie gewesen sind. Ein galizischer Jud.‹« (S 116)

It thus soon becomes clear that Jewish participation in the war has not resulted in the recognition the Jews had hoped for. Instead, they have once again been assigned the role of the eternal outsider belonging to no specific nation but merely classified as ›Jewish‹; as standing above the events in European history and politics rather than being part of them. The disappointment at this rejection despite the vast number of Jews who died in the trenches is made clear on several occasions throughout the novel but perhaps most pithily in the diary of the young German Jew, Heinz Levy:

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<sup>14</sup> Steven E. Aschheim: Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness 1800–1923. Madison/Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press 1982, p. 80.

War denn das Blut meines Vaters von einer anderen Farbe als das eurer gefallenen Väter? Und das Massengrab in Flandern, in dem mein Vater liegt: ist da auch eine Sonderabteilung für Juden gemacht worden? Ist er denn nur für euch gefallen und nicht auch für mich? (S 543)

The use of free indirect discourse throughout the description of Heinz Levy's last contemplations and ultimate suicide emphasises the injustice of German politics. Proportionally, the Jews contributed more soldiers than their gentile fellow-Germans, which, however, did not prevent allegations that Jews attempted to shirk their patriotic duties. This led to vastly increasing anti-Semitism in the German population, ultimately provoking what has become known as the German army's *Judenzählung* in 1916.<sup>15</sup>

Through Jossel and his friends Schochet Klein and the Weiss couple, Katz demonstrates the hopes and ultimate failures of the adult Eastern European Jewish emigrants. Initially, Jossel's situation in Germany is very similar to that in Galicia. He has once again become a pedlar and as in *Die Fischmanns*, he is described with great empathy as a psychologically and physically weak and in every way modest man. In the scene depicting his approach to his customers, for example, he is characterised as »bescheiden«, »vorsichtig«, »ängstlich« – »Er war unscheinbar, er war ein kleiner Mann mit einem traurigen Gesicht.« (S 137) The emphasis put on Jossel's humble attitude towards life is significant because it accentuates the sharp contrast between the reality of the Jewish individual and the claims made by the Nazis as to the Jews' power and wealth. Throughout the novel, the gradual strengthening of the Nazi party is thus contrasted by an increasing emphasis on the Jews' vulnerability. Equally, the Nazis' claim that the Jews are conspiring against the German state is counteracted by scenes describing how Jossel's helplessness in itself prevents such deeds. This is emphasised by the narrator when, for example, during the inflation Jossel would have been utterly lost and eventually ruined had it not been for Grünfeld and Linke, the two businessmen whose financial activities are not only highly profitable, but also only barely within the limitations of the law:

Jossel Fischmann war selber kein Halsabschneider, kein Totengräber, kein Haifisch. Er war immer ein schlechter, ein armer Kaufmann gewesen. [...] Er wäre ertrunken in diesen Nullen, in diesen faszinierenden runden Fallen, wenn er nicht den »Haifisch« Grünfeld und dessen Kompagnon, Herrn Willy Linke, gehabt hätte. (S 247)

In the passage, Jossel is presented as the explicit opposition to the Nazis' prejudiced clichés about the Jews. Not merely his obvious decency but also his sheer helplessness prevent him from exploiting the German people. The clichés of the time are thus juxtaposed with the reality of many small merchants like Jossel who pose no danger to German society and economy. Grünfeld's activities, on the other hand, show that there is some truth to these clichés about the sly Jewish

<sup>15</sup> Werner T. Angress: The German Army's *Judenzählung* of 1916: Genesis – Consequences Significance. In: Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute 23 (1978), p. 117–135.

businessman. Indeed, rather than denying these tendencies, the narrator exposes them, thereby confirming Katz's intention to present a diverse and objective picture of Weimar Society. At the same time, however, Grünfeld's change of conscience in the course of the novel to some extent disputes the claims about an inherent greediness in the Jewish character. This is also evident from the simultaneous change of the narratorial voice depicting him which, then, becomes much more sympathetic to his situation. Although Katz does not deny that their prejudice is partly true, the balance of Jewish characters in the novel is thus both in number and in attitude decidedly in the favour of the helpless Jewish majority rather than the scheming Jewish businessmen represented by Grünfeld.

Ignorance in political matters and denial of the increasing danger are Jossel's and his friends' response to their deteriorating situation. This is not least due to their age and the fact that most have already fled and begun new lives several times before. Katz's presentation thus corresponds to the findings of historians:

Die deutschen Juden waren in einer Falle, und der Entschluß zur Auswanderung – der einzigen radikalen Lösung – fiel ihnen schwer, nicht nur weil die Aufgabe mühsam erarbeiteter Positionen und völliger Neubeginn in neuem Land bei vorgeschriftenem Alter [...] eine übermäßige menschliche und moralische Kraftanstrengung bedeutet, sondern auch weil damit indirekt zugegeben würde, daß die Beziehung zum deutschen Vaterland endgültig gelöst werden mußte.<sup>16</sup>

Jossel, among others, therefore continuously denies all knowledge of the increasing danger, knowing that the consequence would be flight. Bruno Bettelheim has referred to the Jews' adoption of convenient ignorance as ›ghetto-thinking‹ relieving them of their obligation to take action and save themselves. Bettelheim's argument is based on the theory that thousands of years of compliance and the belief that those who bend do not break made them deaden their senses in order to survive without having to leave their homes and possessions in Germany.<sup>17</sup> Despite its controversial content, this theory could well be true of both Eastern European Jewish emigrants and German Jews at the time. Indeed, Katz's description of the orthodox Jews' reluctance to leave both in the shtetl and in Germany to some extent supports this theory in that Leib, for example, submits to his fate in order to avoid taking action (F 91). This attitude is passed on to his son, Jossel, who is equally passive when subjected to Nazi anti-Semitism. In Germany, however, a major difference is the way in which the German Jews' denial of danger reflects a reluctance to admit the failure of what they had praised as the German-Jewish symbiosis. To the Eastern European Jewish emigrants, on the other hand, very well aware of their ›otherness‹, such a symbiosis had never existed. Instead, their self-imposed ›blindness‹ to the facts is the outcome of general fear of another flight and ultimately homelessness (S 553 and 567). Jossel thus appears to be most confident about the situation:

<sup>16</sup> Weltsch, Die deutsche Judenfrage (p. 141, note 8), p. 67–68.

<sup>17</sup> Bruno Bettelheim: Recollections and Reflections. London: Penguin Books 1992, p. 243–271.

Nur die Regierung will uns vielleicht töten. Aber kann die Regierung zu jedem einzelnen von uns kommen und jeden einzelnen von uns umbringen? Es war ein schwerer Tag für uns Juden heute. Aber ihr seht doch selber, wie brav die Deutschen sind! Haben sie uns totgeschlagen? Sind wir tot? (S 566)

And yet, deep down even Jossel recognises the falseness of the image of Germany to which he so desperately clings.

Through Jossel, Katz shows the fatal consequences of maintaining one's belief in traditional moral values and common decency at a time when the Nazis proclaim that morality is a luxury the Germans cannot afford (S 540). This naïveté is displayed, for example, when Jossel wants to have a man-to-man-talk with Kupke or when he believes that the Germans, seeing his weakness exposed on 1 April 1933, will come to their senses and stop their persecution (S 536). As pointed out by Walter Zwi Bacharach, clinging to their belief in reason and rational argument at a time when the Nazis were spreading irrational and romantic notions of the German ›Volksgemeinschaft‹, based on race rather than culture and religion, was one of the Jews' main mistakes because they were fighting Nazi anti-Semitism on outdated premises:

It was not theoretical consistency but arbitrary opportunism that lay behind racist agitation, whereas the Jews endeavoured, on the whole, by way of rational argument by disputing racist premises and by unmasking the contradictions inherent in racial thought to fight an attitude nurtured by a theory that had from the outset declined to assume the mantle of rationalism. [...]

It was only when the Nazi pragmatists became entrenched that the racist ideology, which had in fact abandoned theory in favour of practice, came to be fully comprehended in all its implications.<sup>18</sup>

However, the Jewish tradition of rational (theological) argument proved useless in disputing allegations based on myth and prejudice.

The novel's presentation of the older generation and its piety is thus a very complex one. On the one hand, the reader is invited to respond with admiration for their faith and unshakable trust in God regrettably missing in the young. On the other hand, the narrator deeply regrets the fatal consequences of such piety as being political passivity and lack of initiative to actively save their own lives: »Viele gingen an diesem Tage leider so zu Werk wie Jossel Fischmann in Strody vor mehr als zwanzig Jahren ...« (S 562) However, the narrator never takes sides, but merely juxtaposes the two views. Exactly how important religion is to this older generation of Jews is proved by the fact that they insist on going to the synagogue even during the Kapp Putsch and on 1 April 1933, the day of the ›Judenboykott‹. Descriptions of Jossel are thus almost always connected with religion because his entire

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<sup>18</sup> Walter Zwi Bacharach: Jews in Confrontation with Racist Antisemitism, 1879–1933. In: Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute 25 (1980), p. 197–219, p. 219. See also: Weltsch, Die deutsche Judenfrage (p. 141, note 8), p. 51.

awareness and outlook are pervaded by this way of thinking. This is obvious, for example, during his conversation with Paul Hummel on the day of the ›Judenboykott‹: »Wir wissen oft nicht, warum wir leiden. Aber alles hat einen Sinn. [...] Unser Leben ist eine weise Prüfung.« (S 536) This attitude clearly relieves the Jewish individual of all responsibility because God will protect them. If He fails to do so, this too is God's will, and suffering thus becomes an intrinsic and purposeful part of life. In the same way, some Ukrainian refugees having just escaped the pogroms in the Soviet Union try to fit their sufferings into a positive world view: »Klug wird man, Kinderlech, wenn man hat Unglück, jammerten sie.« (S 151)

At the end of the novel, however, Katz deprives the reader of all hope as even the characters themselves know how pathetic their excuses are. Feiwel thus predicts that they will all die if they stay, »Man wird euch alle totschlagen« (S 565), and even Chaskel Weiss, having just announced his intention to stay in Germany, predicts a bleak future for himself and others: »Die Deutschen, das sage ich euch, sind sehr gerissene Leute! Sie werden uns tatsächlich alle noch zwingen, entweder zu flüchten oder zu sterben.« (S 566) This contradicts Jossel's view of the Germans as »brave Leute« (S 566), suggesting a distinction between the ›Germans‹ and the ›Nazis‹ presenting the Germans as the ordinary man in the street who is naive and inherently harmless but possibly open to manipulation by the Nazis. ›Gerissen‹, on the other hand, suggests an intrinsic psychological malfunction and imbalance in the German population per se of which the Nazification of the country is a natural outcome. As mentioned above, however, such concessions must be suppressed if the Jews' decision to stay in Germany is to remain viable. Only Feiwel can really afford such predictions because of his determination to flee while there is still time. It is thus ironically he who survives, despite his conviction throughout the novel that things cannot get worse and that he is bound to die in the near future. Writing with hindsight, Katz thus issues a serious warning against Nazism at the end of the novel, when using his Jewish characters as mouthpieces of extremely realistic or perhaps rather pessimistic views on the Jewish future in Germany. The narrator is almost entirely absent in this scene, passing no value judgement on the views presented in the heated debate beginning when Hermann, Jossel's youngest son, decides to leave. Both with regard to Nazism and the Jewish response to it, Katz thus warns against the danger but does not attempt to offer a solution. He merely presents a number of beliefs in dialogue, leaving the reader to judge among them for himself. This attitude corresponds to the open ending when Jakob leaves Germany, realising what lies in store for the Jews in Germany. Again, the narrator is absent, refraining from either praising or deplored his decision.

At the end of the novel, Feiwel and Hermann depart for the Austrian border, having at least better prospects than the Jews who remain behind. No more is heard of Jossel and his friends. As to Hermann, we are told early in the novel that he is now – at the time of writing – in a kibbutz in Palestine (S 110).

### *The assimilated first-generation emigrants*

The second model of Jewish identity in Germany is represented by first-generation Eastern European Jews who, as it seems, have successfully completed the process of assimilation. In this group we find Jakob and Hermann Fischmann, Grünfeld, Heinz Levy, and the son of the anonymous Jewish couple who save Jakob at the end of the novel when he is hunted by the Nazis. Common to all of them are the swiftness and skill with which they have adapted themselves to German culture. Indeed, they are almost indistinguishable from the majority population. This process, however, has largely been completed at the expense of their Eastern European Jewish background and values. The detachment from their background is not entirely painless, however, and through the novel's depiction of Jakob's personal development, their hopes and desires but also their frustration and guilt are made clear.

As we have seen, Katz demonstrates this process through the characters' dialogues and through monologues in the form of free indirect discourse, thereby clearly revealing the ongoing alienation process between the generations. He does, however, also present it more indirectly by having otherwise marginal characters describe their impression of the main characters. Thus Marie, for example, the girl who is in love with Jakob, exposes the degree of his assimilation when comparing him to his father. Unable to make a connection between the Jewish father and his German son, the narrator says: »Sie hatte seinen Vater kennengelernt und keine Ähnlichkeit mit dem Sohn, den sie liebte, feststellen können.« (S 426) Importantly, it is also she who reveals a feature in his emotional life of which Jakob himself is most likely unaware: »Er war ein einsamer Junge, und die Politik ersetzte ihm die fehlende Familie, das fehlende Heim, sie war dessen fast sicher. [...] Das Wort »Familie« jagte ihm Schrecken ein.« (S 426–427)

Through Marie's analysis of Jakob, we see a side to him of which we were hitherto unaware, a fanaticism and devotion to the Social Democratic cause which have replaced traditional family values. His reluctance to begin a relationship with her is, however, not merely caused by his devotion to politics but also, as she rightly concludes, by an inherent fear of commitment and relationships which might very well derive from his own problematic family situation.

At the very end of the novel, Katz also introduces a new character, the anonymous Jewish restaurant-keeper who, like Jossel, is deeply disappointed with his son's disloyalty towards his heritage and is shocked to find that many of the son's friends are unaware of his Jewish background:

Vor vierzehn Tagen ist ein junger Herr zu ihm gekommen, er war zum erstenmal hier, und mein Sohn war nicht da. Und was habe ich da gemerkt, wie der junge Herr mich und meinen Bart und meine Nase erstaunt anschaut? Dieser Freund, den er schon seit vielen Jahren kennt, hat gar nicht gewußt, daß mein Sohn ein Jude ist! [...] Ach, von allen Sachen hat mein Sohn mit ihm gesprochen, aber nicht von seinen jüdischen. [...] Und jetzt ist mein Sohn in Brüssel. Und warum ist er in Brüssel? Wegen einer Sache, über die er nie hat sprechen wollen! (S 580)

The function of this new character is to summarise the various positions and dilemmas regarding the Jewish question just before the novel comes to a close. Indeed, second-generation immigrants often concealed their Jewish identity, both because they wanted to protect their hard-earned assimilation and because they simply took no interest in it. As indicated by the father, a second dimension is added when these sons suddenly find themselves confronted with their Jewish background because the Nazis do not accept their assimilation. Their environment suddenly associates them with an identity they no longer consider theirs. This experience causes tremendous frustration because the way back to traditional Judaism is blocked by years of assimilation and the way ahead by increasing anti-Semitism denying them a place in the society they, too, consider theirs. They thus feel trapped and uncertain about their true identity. How does Katz present this process in the novel, and what are the characters' responses to this complicated situation?

Through Jossel's and Jakob's relationship in particular, Katz demonstrates the ambiguity of assimilationist aspirations and the consequent dilemmas on both sides of the generational gap. The narrative tone stresses Jossel's helplessness with regard to his sons who have given up more of their Jewish heritage to become German than he originally expected. Jakob, on the other hand, is described in very sympathetic terms demonstrating his emotional struggle to find his place in the world as a German Jew. As the first-person narrator, Jakob shares his innermost thoughts with the reader whereby we are given excellent insight into his identity crisis which begins to develop after Jossel's return from the war. Confronted with his father's Eastern European Jewish ways and his religious ›fanaticism‹ as Jakob calls it (S 213), the son distances himself from the Jewish tradition out of fear of being mocked and rejected by the German environment of which he has become part during his father's absence. At home, he vehemently opposes Jossel's demands that he must go to the synagogue to pray and that he must learn Hebrew. At the same time, however, we find Jakob defending his Jewish heritage whenever this is under attack by the non-Jewish environment, as, for example, when Jossel forbids him to write on the Sabbath and the teacher makes him face the wall for an hour as punishment for his disobedience. Having initially blamed his father for his refusal to let him write on the Sabbath, Jakob then, much to the teacher's surprise, stresses his own Jewish identity, presenting his father's wish as his own (S 128–129). Through scenes such as this, Katz demonstrates the ambiguity of assimilationist aspirations as well as the emotional conflict of these young Jews caught, as they are, between rebellious feelings towards their rigid home environment and a strong sense of loyalty towards it, whenever it is attacked by outsiders.

The serious empathy with which Katz treats Jakob's dilemma and development and indeed the development of most of his Jewish characters is particularly striking. The irony and sarcasm with which non-Jewish characters such as Zunk and Kupke were described at the beginning of the novel is not applied in the portrayal of the identity crisis undergone by Jakob, Jossel, Hermann, Heinz Levy, and Grün-

feld. Instead, the reader is encouraged to empathise and identify with the Jewish characters whereas the earlier mocking irony made us distance ourselves from Zunk and Kupke. Jakob's first-hand account is remarkably personal and untouched by the narrator's interpretation. Sentences such as »Ich bin sicher einer der unglücklichsten Menschen in der ganzen Welt. Ich habe keine Mutter mehr, und Vater versteht mich nicht« (S 228), testify to Jakob's pronounced feeling of desolation and loneliness and is clearly meant to evoke a feeling of sympathy in the reader. It is, however, significant to Katz's panoramic portrayal of Jewish psychology in this period that the feeling of desolation is not limited to Jakob but is extended to his generation of Jewish emigrant children in general, as is clear from their enthusiasm for the building of a Jewish homeland: »Ich wollte Pionier werden und das jüdische Land aufbauen. Alle vom *Davidstern* wollten das.« (S 226) Later, after the young Zionist leader, Fritz Schwarz, suddenly disappears, their former frustration sets in again: »Es war niemand da, der sich für uns interessierte.« (S 229) The brief picture we get of Zionism is thus one of an ideology appealing mainly to lonely people with nowhere else to go, or to Jews such as Hermann, desperate to leave Germany because of the increasing anti-Semitism. Fritz Schwarz, the novel's only real representative of Zionism, is also portrayed as a loner. The fact that he disappears just as suddenly as he came without having made any lasting impression on the children, leaves the reader with the idea that Zionism is a last resort to Jews in times of trouble, but not a movement worthy of consideration on religious or historical grounds.

That Jakob's frustration is rooted in a need for spiritual guidance is clear both from his poetry at the time (S 243) and from his inquiries into existential matters, ultimately shaking the foundation of his childhood faith in God. Consequently, finding himself abandoned by his potential advisors at home and having rejected the traditional Jewish source of comfort and advice, God, Jakob presents his frustrating situation to his friend, the librarian Karl Rascher:

»Ich werde nicht mit mir fertig! Sie wissen zwar, daß ich Jude bin. Aber Sie können nicht wissen, was das ist. Außerdem bin ich der Sohn eines eingewanderten Ostjuden. Und was das heißt, wissen Sie schon gar nicht. Mein ganzes Leben ist dadurch belastet. Ich stoße überall an, bei mir selbst an. Die einfachsten Begriffe sind verschoben und werden kompliziert, schon wenn ich an sie denke«, klagte ich ihm mein Leid. (S 281)

This confession of his own frustration combined with his following statement, »Ich möchte ein guter Deutscher werden« (S 282) is a precise illustration of Jakob's precarious situation, trapped, as he is, between the two cultures. Significantly, one finds the same dilemma described in almost the same words in Jakob Wassermann's autobiography, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (1921):

Ein Nichtdeutscher kann sich unmöglich eine Vorstellung davon machen, in welcher herzbeengenden Lage ein deutscher Jude ist. [...] Mit seiner Doppelliebe und seinem Kampf nach zwei Fronten ist er hart an den Schlund der Verzweiflung gedrängt.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Jakob Wassermann: *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*. Berlin: S. Fischer 1921, p. 119.

The problem thus seems to be common to many assimilated German Jews at the time, and the fact that neither Wassermann nor Katz offers any solution to the problem bears witness to their deep frustration. Of great importance to Jakob, however, is Rascher's reply which not only helps Jakob put his situation into perspective but is, in fact, elevated to the level of universal truth

Ihr Vaterland ist nicht dort, wo Sie zufällig zur Welt gekommen sind, und nicht dort, wo man Sie vielleicht nicht leben läßt. Das Vaterland eines Menschen ist da, wo er als Mensch behandelt wird. (S 283)

Katz is here clearly expressing his personal creed, for it closely resembles his own standard reply to the question where his mother country is: »Meine Heimat ist dort, wo man mich leben läßt.«<sup>20</sup> Such answers reduce his own and his characters' previous aspirations for a German-Jewish symbiosis to a bare minimum consisting in the maintenance of life itself. At the same time, Katz dismisses the notion of social background and ethnic heritage as acceptable excuses for failed integration, emphasising instead the importance of personal initiative and engagement (S 282). This idea is strongly supported by Jakob's final reflections on his way out of Germany: »Kinder haben kein Vaterland. Das Vaterland wird ihnen beigebracht, wie ihnen alles im Leben beigebracht wird ...« (S 586) The sense of belonging is thus not connected with one's birthplace but with one's personal contribution to the country and culture in which one lives, provided that the host society is willing to accept foreign assimilation. As Katz makes sufficiently clear in *Schloßgasse 21*, this was not the case in the Weimar Republic.

When Jakob chooses to take the consequences and leave the country, his decision is mainly caused by a high degree of political awareness which Jossel and his friends do not have and, indeed, do not wish to have. Jakob, on the other hand, does not hesitate to face reality: »Die Republik war fertig, erledigt. Die Nazis hatten keinen Widerstand gefunden. Der Terror wütete ...« (S 479) Despite this realisation, however, the actual act of leaving Germany proves more difficult than Jakob expected. While leaving the country by train, he recollects his youth in Germany, seeing in short flashes the key incidents of his life. As he says, »Es waren keine fröhlichen Jugendjahre in Deutschland gewesen [...]« (S 585), and yet the fight for acceptance and the conviction that the process of assimilation had been successfully completed increase the disappointment and the pain at having to leave the country:

Nur Heimatlose können mich verstehen ... Deutschland wurde von mir erkämpft, ich verfiel diesem Land ... Daß es heute auf dem Kopf stand, hatte ja nichts mit mir zu tun ... Ich haßte die Nazis, aber ich liebte Deutschland ... Und jetzt mußte ich es verlassen. (S 586–587)

Katz here exposes Jakob's pain in a way not unlike the nostalgia with which Joseph Roth portrays the Habsburg Monarchy. Once again, the distinction

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mrs. Katz, April 1995.

between the Germans and the Nazis is made to justify a continuing love for Germany despite the rejection and the present political situation. There is no mockery or irony in this depiction but only serious evaluation and lamenting of Germany's fate.

Like the son of the anonymous Jewish couple who rescue Jakob from the Nazis in the street, Jakob is thus confronted with his Jewish identity at a time when he has abandoned his faith and is more concerned with politics than traditional Jewish culture. This is partly an act of defiance and partly due to a genuine lack of spiritual connection with his heritage. The ending is open, leaving us in ignorance about his future fate and development. And yet there is a strong indication in the Jewish restaurant-keeper's monologue that Jakob and indeed many of the Jews in his situation may in fact return to their Jewish origins when facing adversity because of their Jewishness:

[...] und vielleicht wird er [the son] in Brüssel das werden, was er in Berlin nicht geworden ist: ein Jude. Es ist doch ein Unglück für einen jungen Menschen, nicht mehr ein Heim zu haben. Aber wer weiß, zu was das gut ist! Im Unglück fängt doch jeder Mensch erst an zu verstehen, wer er ist und war er falsch gemacht hat. Meint Ihr, daß Hiob seinem Unglück nichts verdankt? (S 581)

›Judentum‹ here equals ›Heimat‹, though Jewish identity is defined in religious rather than national-geographical terms. This idea is supported by the restaurant-keeper's mentioning of Job who, as a representative of persecuted and suffering Jews throughout all times, symbolises the purpose of pain and the Jewish questioning of God's motives. The restaurant-keeper's monologue thus assumes the character of a last summary of the Jewish dilemma amidst the confusing situation in which we find Jakob at the very end of the novel.

Hermann Fischmann, who unlike his brother, Jakob, leads an anonymous and ordinary life (›Er war nicht besser, nicht schlechter und nicht oberflächlicher als viele andere junge Männer seiner Zeit‹, S 312), appears to be just as integrated into German society as his brother. Unlike his brother, however, Hermann is initially completely uninterested in politics. He is even in ignorance about the burning of the Reichstag (S 429). Until this incident, Hermann has represented an outlook very similar to that of Jossel and his grandfather, Leib, blaming whatever happens to him on fate, as is clear from his conversation with old Professor Urban in prison:

Es ist das Schicksal, Herr Professor, das Schicksal hat es so gewollt. Ich lief nichts-ahnend auf der Straße, und Sie gaben Ihren Unterricht in der Schule. Und trotzdem verhafteten sie uns. Wir wären wahrscheinlich sogar verhaftet worden, wenn wir uns auf dem Mars befunden hätten. Oder anderswo, wenn Sie wollen, Herr Professor. Dagegen ist nichts zu machen. Gegen das Schicksal ist nie etwas zu machen. (S 462)

In other words, the individual is defenceless against fate (cf. also Herr Klein and Herr Wolf, S 570) and thus exempted from personal responsibility for the events in his life. However, the experience of Nazi arrest brings about a complete change, making Hermann devour the daily paper's section on the political state

of affairs in the hope that the Nazis have finally been defeated. The rude awakening makes him a politically aware and responsible person capable of saving his own life, unlike Heinz Levy, who is also exposed to Nazi imprisonment, but who ultimately commits suicide because he sees no future for himself in Germany and cannot summon the energy to flee. One may question the psychological plausibility of Hermann's sudden change of heart, but given the shock of Nazi imprisonment, it is not entirely impossible. At any rate, it clearly serves a didactic purpose in the novel, encouraging all reluctant Jews to leave while there is still time. Through Hermann, Katz further demonstrates the ambiguity of German demands that the Jews must assimilate, on the one hand, and of their reluctance to accept them despite such assimilation, on the other. Not only does Hermann perfectly fit the image of a German of Jewish faith, as his father, Jossel, had hoped, but also the image of the ordinary, unpolitical, and anonymous person the Germans wanted the Jews to be. Yet either way, there is nothing the Jews can do to gain the German people's acceptance, and in the end Hermann's perfect compromise between Jewish and German values is also dismissed as useless. In the description of Hermann's development, we again perceive a more sober and serious tone encouraging the reader to identify himself with the character in his trials. Particularly the scene describing his hope, joy, and disappointment about the factory job, which he gets but loses immediately afterwards because he is imprisoned by the Nazis, invites the reader to sympathise with him.

Unlike his fellow Jews, Heinz, Hermann and Jakob, Grünfeld is an older and more experienced man who also appears to have successfully completed the process of assimilation. In fact, he initially fits the Nazis' image of the Jewish businessman, being indistinguishable from German non-Jews and selfishly exploiting the German state. Ever since he left Eastern Europe as a young man, money has been his panacea in every situation: »Geld – das war sein ganzes Geheimnis. Mit Geld konnte man alles machen, alles erwerben und alles vergessen.« (S 402) He is described as a ruthless, selfish, and sly businessman seeking his own profit whenever and wherever he can, showing only contempt for religion and political ideologies: »Grünfeld vergeudete seine Zeit weder mit Religion noch mit anderen unrentablen Dingen. Nur was Zinsen trug, interessierte ihn.« (S 402) And yet a remarkable change takes place in the course of the novel, partly caused by his old mother's death reminding him of his Jewish background, and partly by the Nazis' increasing power against which, for the first time in his life, Grünfeld's money proves useless. The fact that he initially seems to be described through prejudiced German eyes, bears witness to the novel's complexity and Katz's wish to provide a different and more just depiction of Jewish life in inter-war Germany than the one presented by the Nazis. The initial negative description of Grünfeld is an admission of the fact that some Jews did indeed correspond to the Nazis' prejudiced description of them. And yet Grünfeld is in himself a complex character showing compassion for Jossel during the inflation despite his general hard-heartedness, and ultimately realising the futility of his selfishness and avarice.

The tone describing Grünfeld is sober, and the reader is clearly invited to sympathise although not necessarily identify with him in his precarious situation. The pitiful and touching narrative tone pervading the descriptions of Hermann and Heinz Levy, for example, is absent in the depiction of Grünfeld's development and ultimate suicide. His alternative, to return to his Eastern European Jewish heritage by becoming a traditional Jewish *Schnorrer* (S 513), is dismissed because the way back to traditional Jewish culture is blocked by years of assimilation and efforts to abandon precisely these Jewish values. This solution is rejected on rational grounds whereas Hermann's, Jakob's and Heinz Levy's decisions are largely shown to be the outcome of emotional influences. Grünfeld thereby becomes a typical example of the dilemma experienced by members of this group. As Robert Weltsch points out, the Jews had always been subject to persecution because of their obvious Jewishness, whereas now they were accused of being too German and were expected to retreat once again into the position of the social outcast. Having abandoned their Jewish background, most did not know where to turn, facing serious psychological consequences as a result of the unexpected rejection:

Wohin also sollten sie zurück? Sie waren in der peinlichen Situation, ihr Eigenes aufgegeben zu haben, ohne auf dem neuen Kulturboden als zugehörig anerkannt zu werden. Das machte sie innerlich unsicher und führte zu den Eigenschaften, die dann als »Wurzellosigkeit« gebrandmarkt wurden.<sup>21</sup>

Thus in a sense, the apparently successful assimilation of the Jews of this group places them in a worse position than the older generation with their insistence on maintaining a traditional Jewish lifestyle in Germany. At least the latter group has a strong sense of identity and belonging to support them in times of trouble whereas the younger group find themselves stranded midway between Jewish tradition and assimilation.

### *The German Jews*

While the German Jews themselves play only a minor part in the novel, their role as the *»aristocrats«* in the Jewish community in Germany not only shows a different model of Jewish identity but also, by means of contrast, contributes to our understanding of the Eastern European Jewish world. As is common within any hierarchy, the Jewish emigrants from the East eagerly discuss their more wealthy German co-religionists, and it is thus mainly through their conversations that we learn about the views and values of the German Jews. Katz's representation of them generally works by juxtaposition with the Eastern European Jews, and the narrator clearly distances himself from these German Jews, describing them with mocking hostility. In Jossel's conversation with the rabbi shortly after his arrival in Germany, for example, two of the main out-

<sup>21</sup> Weltsch, *Die deutsche Judenfrage* (p. 141, note 8), p. 61.

looks characteristic of German-Jewish thought during the period are played off against each other. Jossel here represents Jewish orthodoxy, and the rabbi the policy advocated by the ›Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens‹ to be a man in the street and a Jew in the home. This, according to the Central-Verein, would minimise the obvious differences between Jews and gentiles in German society and prevent anti-Semitism while at the same time allowing the Jews to retain their own culture. Jossel's piety, however, clearly makes the rabbi feel uncomfortable because the rabbi, unlike Jossel, has compromised his orthodoxy for the sake of assimilation and acceptance by the Germans. This is particularly obvious from his many evasive answers to Jossel's pious statements (S 123–124) and his insistence on being addressed as ›Doktor‹ rather than Rabbi. Katz merely presents the different views without describing one as superior to the other. On the one hand, Jossel's faithfulness to his religious beliefs is presented as admirable and the rabbi's deviation from such orthodoxy as regrettable. On the other hand, the rabbi's approach to life is also presented as more practical and realistic compared to Jossel's blind trust in God.

Theodor Wolff is a typical example of such an assimilated German Jew. Writing his pamphlet *Die Juden* in 1942 during his exile in France, where he was to die in a concentration camp in 1943, he vehemently criticises the Eastern European Jews for their unwillingness to rid themselves of all signs of traditional Jewishness, blaming them for the rise in German anti-Semitism, and not surprisingly ending by criticising the German government for failing to prevent Eastern European Jewish emigration:

Meine Meinung war und ist, daß es ein Fehler der deutschen Regierung war, in allzu unbeschränktem Maß, mit sehr wenig Kontrolle und ohne Auswahl, alle sogenannten Ostjuden aufzunehmen, und daß man sich doch ein wenig mehr um Erziehung, Zeugnisse und moralische Qualitäten hätte kümmern sollen.<sup>22</sup>

This attitude is largely representative of Liberal German Jews at the time whose antipathy towards Eastern European Jewish emigrants was obvious despite the many relief actions to help the refugees.

The religious differences between Eastern European Jews and assimilated German Jews in the novel are made particularly clear when two separate congregations are established because of severe disagreements as to the correct interpretation of the religious texts. The emigrants from the East insist that organ music is prohibited in a synagogue, whereas the German Jews, trying to adapt the conduct of their services to the more solemn and quiet Christian style, suddenly introduce not only organ music, but also demand that every one must pay for their seats in the synagogue (S 188–189). This is clearly a means to keep the poor Eastern European Jews out and an attempt to maintain a strict division between themselves and the Jews from the East. The latter are very

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<sup>22</sup> Wolff, *Die Juden* (p. 137, note 4), p. 104.

much aware of this division, as seen in Jossel's disbelief when Fritz Schwarz, a German Jew, spends his time and energy on the children of Eastern European Jewish families, »Denn Fritz war doch ein deutscher Jude – und sonst wollten doch die deutschen Juden, sagte Vater, nicht viel mit uns zu tun haben. Eher kam doch ein Ostjude mit einem Christen zusammen als mit einem deutschen Glaubensgenossen« (S 223), a claim which has also been historically documented by Jack Wertheimer:

The resulting response of German Jews to the aliens in their midst was one of deep ambivalence, a mixture of empathy and discomfort aptly summoned up by a contemporary observer: »One had the desire to help the Eastern Jew when he was financially – and, we may add here, politically – »needy; but there was no desire to greet him ›Unter den Linden‹.«<sup>23</sup>

By continually presenting the German Jews in contrast to the Eastern European Jewish protagonists and by keeping a strict, mostly ironic narratorial distance to them, Katz thus voices his sharp critique of their arrogant attitude towards their Eastern European Jewish neighbours. It is, however, important to note that the Jewish hierarchy does not merely consist in the strict division between Eastern European and German culture but can also be found within the Eastern European community. Thus, for example, special emphasis is put on the fact that Jossel is a Galician and Grünfeld a Lithuanian Jew, a major difference as is sarcastically pointed out by the narrator: »Ein großer Unterschied! Verdächtigen Sie nur einmal einen Galizianer, er sei ein Litwak! Sie werden was erleben!« (S 247)

Of particular significance to the development of the relationship between Eastern European and German Jews in the novel is the way in which the latter handle the increasing anti-Semitism. As an attempt to save themselves and their secure and financially stable existence in Germany, a group of fifteen right-wing German Jews have founded the ›Bund nationaldeutscher Israeliten‹ and a few days before the ›Judenboykott‹ publicly declare their loyalty to the new regime, singing Nazi songs and using the Nazi greeting. The ›Bund nationaldeutscher Israeliten‹ is the fictive equivalent to the Verband nationaldeutscher Juden (V.n.J.) formed by Max Naumann in 1921 in order to win a place for the German Jews within the German ›Volksgemeinschaft‹. Like the ›Bund nationaldeutscher Israeliten‹ in the novel, the V.n.J. was joined by a small but distinct group of Jews. These, however, were by no means representative of German Jews in general, but were very visible because of their radical

<sup>23</sup> Jack Wertheimer: *Unwelcome Strangers. East European Jews in Imperial Germany.* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987 (Studies in Jewish History), p. 175. The ›contemporary observer‹ referred to is Leo Kreindler, quoted from an article in: *Jüdische Welt* I (1928), p. 3. The phrase ›unter den Linden‹ is a quotation from a poem by Heinrich Heine to a lower-class girl friend: »Blamier mich nicht, mein schönes Kind, / Und grüß mich nicht unter den Linden; / Wenn wir nachher zu Hause sind, / Wird sich schon alles finden.« in: H. Heine: *Sämtliche Schriften*. Ed. by Klaus Briegleb. München: Hanser 1968, Vol. I, p. 237.

views within the Jewish community. In order to achieve the Germans' acceptance, the V.n.J. advocated complete assimilation into German society, rejecting all notions of a separate Jewish *Volk* and of a religious bond connecting Jews all over the world. Instead, complete abandonment of all Jewish traits, language, culture, and religion was demanded. The V.n.J. thus saw the Zionists, the *Centralverein deutscher Juden*, and the Eastern European Jews as serious impediments to full integration. It called for the expulsion of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, revocation of citizenship for all German Zionists and the public rejection of Jewish left-wing intellectuals and politicians.<sup>24</sup> The V.n.J.'s official attitude towards the Eastern European Jews was described very clearly by Max Naumann in his programmatic pamphlet *Vom nationaldeutschen Juden*, in which he clearly distances himself from them: »Dem nationaldeutschen Juden ist der Ostjude ein Fremder und nichts als ein Fremder, er ist ihm gefühlsfremd, geistesfremd, körperlich fremd.«<sup>25</sup>

These efforts of the right-wing German Jewish community are reflected in the novel through the attempts of the *Bund nationaldeutscher Israeliten* to persuade the Nazis that there is no such thing as *Jews*, but only decent German Israelites, such as themselves, and indecent *caftan* Jews like the ones recently arrived from Eastern Europe. The narrator describes this event in hostile and satirical terms, presenting this group of German Jews as ridiculous, naive, and selfish – naive because they think they can save themselves, selfish because they attempt to do so at the expense of their Eastern European Jewish co-religionists. This obvious case of Jewish self-hatred is partly rooted in true admiration for the new regime and partly in detestation for the *primitive* Eastern European Jews. However, the influence they believe themselves to have is an illusion and their situation is just as dangerous as that of the Eastern European Jews because the Nazis do not distinguish between different Jewish groups, something of which, in real life, many liberal German Jews and most members of the *Central-Verein* were fully aware:

Eines sollten aber diejenigen unter unseren Stammesgenossen sich sagen, die allzugeern einen Unterschied zwischen West- und Ostjuden machen und auf die letzteren herabblicken zu müssen glauben: einen Unterschied macht der Antisemitismus zwischen beiden nicht! Jude bleibt Jude, wir selbst aber sollten doch immer im Auge behalten, daß Israel füreinander einstehen soll! Kein unjüdischerer Gedanke als der einer Abstufung zwischen verschiedenen Gruppen!<sup>26</sup>

Such declarations of sympathy are also made by some German Jews in the novel but do not suffice to create a bond between Eastern and Western Jews enabling them to fight the Nazis together. As on the political left, the internal division of the Jewish community prevents such common action, and each

<sup>24</sup> Carl J. Rheins: The Verband nationaldeutscher Juden 1921–1933. In: Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute 25 (1980), p. 243–268, p. 247).

<sup>25</sup> Max Naumann: *Vom nationaldeutschen Juden*. Berlin: Goldschmidt 1920, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums (12.4.1922), p. 97.

group fights its own battles for survival as is clear from the fact that on the day of the ›Judenboykott‹, the old disagreement about the organ in the synagogue causes them to gather separately to consult about which course of action to take (S 519). It is, however, important to note that Katz does not entirely impute the responsibility for this internal Jewish division to the German Jews. Instead, he presents it as the outcome of religious disagreements, in which both Eastern European and German Jews play an equally important part. On the part of the German Jews it is an attempt to distance themselves from the image of the Eastern European Jews who are a serious threat to their own assimilation. This, as pointed out by Herr Kahn, a German Jew who stands up for the Eastern European Jews, is a deplorable attitude since the majority of the German Jews themselves originally came from the same orthodox and in many ways backward environment. Steven E. Aschheim summarises this dilemma:

Increasingly, East European Jewry, bordering Germany and constantly infiltrating her space and consciousness, became the living reminder to German Jewry of its own recently rejected past. The Eastern Jew was the bad memory of German Jewry come alive and an ever-present threat to assimilationist aspirations. At the same time, he was a convenient foil upon which German Jews could externalize and displace what were regarded as negative Jewish characteristics. Precisely because he was perceived as a threatening remnant of a bygone age, the Ostjude could also become a psychological repository into which German Jews could deflect anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, at the same time as representing a serious threat to German-Jewish assimilation, the Eastern European Jews also served as a convenient inner-Jewish scapegoat onto whom the German Jews could project all the prejudices they themselves faced in German society. In fact, this is precisely what happens in the scene describing the tasteless attempts of the ›Bund national-deutscher Israeliten‹ to save their own skin at the expense of the Eastern European Jews. On the other hand, the separation of the two groups was also an act of rebellion on the part of the Eastern European Jews because of what they considered religious blasphemy in the German synagogue. This ultimately causes them to set up their own ›Schul‹. However, as both Western and Eastern European Jews soon come to realise, all strategy is useless in the face of Nazi anti-Semitism denying them a place in the German ›Volksgemeinschaft‹ on purely racial grounds.

As in *Die Fischmanns*, Katz is clearly drawing on autobiographical material in his second novel, describing from an insider's point of view the development of the crisis and its effect on the lives of working class members, particularly Eastern European Jewish members of this class. This focus, then, forms a continuation of his pre-exile interest in social matters and the conditions of the working classes. Using inter-war Germany as his setting, Katz creates a well-balanced picture of society at large with its many political currents, increasing Nazi influences, inflation, unemployment, and general frustration on national

<sup>27</sup> Aschheim, Brothers and Strangers (p. 152, note 14), p. 12.

as well as individual levels while at the same time portraying the role and fate of the Jews within this framework. By means of his highly perceptive style and his insight into human psychology, Katz analyses not only the political events but also the psychological mechanisms in the individual leading to the Nazi take-over as seen, for example, in his description of Zunk and Kupke. While, on the one hand, pointing to the increasing physical violence in society at large, he also, on the other hand, succeeds in bringing out the constant subtle fear which eventually pervades most of the characters' lives.

At the end of the novel, not only the Weimar Era has come to a close but apparently also the era of the German-Jewish symbiosis, if, as some might argue, there ever was such a thing. Gershom Scholem strongly denied the existence of such a symbiosis in German-Jewish history, speaking of a Jewish monologue rather than a German-Jewish dialogue.<sup>28</sup> Martin Buber, on the other hand, speaks of an »in die Tiefen unserer Existenz reichenden Synthese«<sup>29</sup> which has regrettably been terminated with the Nazi regime. Although opinions are thus divided with regard to the existence of a German-Jewish symbiosis, there can be no doubt that such a symbiosis is the goal of all the Jews in the novel, the only difference being the roads embarked upon to reach it, as can be seen from the three groups described in the above section. Having thus depicted not only three models of Jewish identity throughout the novel, but also the generational conflicts and the severe disagreements between Western and Eastern European Jews, Katz ends his novel by rejecting both active integration into German society and polite reticence as advocated by the Haskalah (be a Jew in the home and a man in the street) as workable ways to acceptance. The anonymous restaurant-keeper, describing his discussions with his assimilated Jewish son, summarises the Jewish dilemma in his conversation with Jakob at the very end of the novel:

»Mein Sohn«, habe ich ihm immer gesagt »zu solchen Juden, wie du einer bist, sagen die Antisemiten: ›Sie drängen sich vor in unserer Wirtschaft, in unserer Wissenschaft, in unserer Politik, in unserer Literatur, in unseren Tanzlokalen‹, habe ich ihm gesagt! [...]« »Vater«, hat er gesagt, »wenn wir Juden uns von dem Leben der Deutschen zurückhalten und immer nur für uns und unter uns bleiben, dann sind wir ein Fremdkörper und nur das ist ein gefährliches Argument für die Antisemiten« hat er gesagt ... »Mein Sohn«, habe ich ihm darauf erwidert, »die Antisemiten brauchen keine Argumente, sie brauchen nur Juden und sie machen keinen Unterschied unter den Juden, nur die Juden machen sich Unterschiede ...« (S 579–580)

In this final remark and rejection of both assimilation and reticence lies implicit the futility of Jewish efforts to find acceptance with a non-Jewish majority. With

<sup>28</sup> Gershom Scholem: Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue. In: G. S.: On Jews and Judaism in Crisis. Selected essays. Ed. by Werner J. Dannhauser. New York: Schocken Books 1976, p. 61–64.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Buber: Das Ende der deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose. In: M. B.: Der Jude und sein Judentum. Gesammelte Aufsätze und Reden. 2., durchges. und um Reg. erw. Aufl., Gerlingen: Lambert Schneider 1993 (Bibliotheca judaica), p. 629–632, p. 629.

the alternatives at the end of the novel being either flight (Feiwel, Jakob, Hermann), suicide (Grünfeld, Heinz Levy), or a continuation of their previous existence, ultimately facing death as is indicated several times (Jossel and friends), the novel thus supports the notion of persecution as eternal Jewish fate.

Such a conclusion, however sad it may be, is understandable considering Katz's own fate as an exile at the time of writing. And yet, the open ending is by no means pessimistic. Indeed, its very openness implies the hope for a brighter future, expressing once again the indomitable Jewish belief in ultimate relief and survival pervading the entire novel. There is great disappointment with the failed assimilation but also the possibility of a better future elsewhere for those who manage to flee in time. Every flight entails the possibility of improvement. At the same time, Katz severely criticises the Germans' lack of resistance to Hitler, attacking especially the left-wing parties but also political ignorance and pacifism in general. The high degree of sensitivity to psychological mechanisms and social dynamics, the humour and sarcasm with which many characters are described, and the rare emphasis on Eastern European Jewish matters thus make the novel a unique piece of literature and an important chronicle of life in the Weimar period.

#### d) *Schloßgasse 21* in Context

Katz was not the only writer dealing with the political and financial crisis of the time. Indeed, a significant number of novels describing Weimar society were published in the late 1920s and early 1930s, attempting to offer explanations and, if possible, suggestions about how best to cope with the crisis. Because of their depiction of inflation and unemployment, among other things, these novels constituted obvious points of identification to the masses of people victimised by the crisis. Many of them therefore became immediate best sellers. Katz's decision to describe life in the Weimar Republic was thus by no means unusual or revolutionary at the time – indeed as a young journalist with an immense interest in politics and social matters, Katz would have been familiar with these novels before he began to write his own fictional works. And yet *Schloßgasse 21* offers a different picture of Weimar society from all other contemporary novels because of its focus on the Eastern European Jews and their lot during the period. As Katz himself said in a letter of 1985: »Ich schrieb aber – so glaube ich – nicht nur die Geschichte von ostjüdischen Ausländern, sondern von Ausländern, die das besondere Pech hatten, Ostjuden zu sein.«<sup>30</sup> To what extent, then, does this perspective influence his depiction of Weimar society, and how does the novel fit into its literary context? In the following analysis, I will seek to answer these questions through comparisons

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Katz to Carel ter Haar dated 4.2.1985, Deutsche Bibliothek (Briefe H. W. Katz II Ca. 46E).

with contemporary novels, initially looking at three works by non-Jewish writers who in very different ways try to assess the political situation in Germany at the time: Leonhard Frank's *Von drei Millionen drei* (1932), Hans Fallada's *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* (1932), and Erik Reger's *Union der festen Hand* (1931). I shall then examine *Schloßgasse 21* in the context of three novels either written by Jewish writers or in which the Jewish perspective is predominant: Martin Beradt's *Beide Seiten einer Straße* (finished in 1933 but not published till 1965 under the title *Die Straße der kleinen Ewigkeit*), Lion Feuchtwanger's *Die Geschwister Oppermann* (1933), Ernst Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902* (1928), and Joseph Roth's *Das Spinnennetz* (1923).

Common to the first group of novels is their emphasis on the political and financial crisis of the Weimar Republic, the fate of the individual in this situation, and the fact that none of them, including *Schloßgasse 21*, can really suggest a way out. In *Von drei Millionen drei*, for example, three unemployed German men set out on a journey, which ultimately takes them as far as South America, to find work because their situation at home has become unendurable. However, unemployment is growing in South America, too, and the inevitable conclusion is that the crisis is inescapable – a universal phenomenon over which even the most determined individual has no influence. In the end, after a long journey two of the men return to their starting point, leaving behind their friend who died abroad. Significantly nothing has changed in the town; even when they visit their former landlady, conversation about everyday events immediately continues where it left off two years earlier as if nothing much had happened in the meantime. On a micro-level life continues its old jog-trot whereas on a macro-level society as a whole seems to stagnate. The hope and mutual encouragement characteristic of the three unemployed men throughout the novel is thus deeply disappointed at the end, offering the contemporary readers and fellow-sufferers pity and sympathy, but not much hope for the future. This abstract nature of the message is furthermore achieved through the narrative technique of the novel. The three protagonists, for example, have no names but are consistently referred to as ›Glasauge‹, ›der Schreiber‹, and ›der Schneider‹, thus becoming representatives of all unemployed people at the time. Their depersonalisation is further stressed by the fact that all references to family life and marriage are omitted. As pointed out by Christian Schmeling, this universality of Frank's characters shows the full hopelessness of the crisis, but does not encourage identification with them on an everyday level.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast to Frank's novel, Hans Fallada's world success *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* offers ample opportunity to identify with the main characters, Pinneberg and his wife Lämmchen. Indeed, this is the detailed description of a young married couple's struggle to survive in a world increasingly hostile to the little man without great means or position, who is particularly vulnerable to

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<sup>31</sup> Christian Schmeling: Leonhard Frank und die Weimarer Zeit. Frankfurt a. M: Lang 1989 (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 1122), p. 98.

life's ups and downs. Unlike Frank's novel, everyday life plays a major part in *Kleiner Mann – was nun?*, following at close hand the degradation of the ›Angestellte‹ Pinneberg from a position as a salesman in the clothing business to his final situation as one of the unemployed, threatened by moral decay and financial ruin. The fact that like Pinneberg, Jossel and Hermann Fischmann in *Schloßgasse 21* are also working as salesmen in the clothing business is not the only similarity between the two novels. The great attention paid to detail in the characters' everyday lives, the wit and irony used to describe them, the narrator's encouragement to identify and empathise with the protagonists, and the narrative technique of generalisation, showing the extent and consequences of the crisis on a universal level through the depiction of a particular family, are further examples of the similar stylistic means used by Katz and Fallada to describe the close link between individual fate and politics in the Weimar Republic.

One feature in particular makes *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* the almost exact non-Jewish counterpart to *Schloßgasse 21*: the fact that like the Eastern European Jews in Katz's novel, the ›Angestellte‹ Pinneberg is also a social outcast in the sense that he belongs to a white-collar class without any sense of solidarity amongst its members. Thus, while considering himself to be socially above the working class, Pinneberg at the same time longs for a distinct social identity and for the kind of solidarity found among workers. Indeed it is, as pointed out by Reinhard K. Zachau, a recurrent trait in the many ›little men‹ in Fallada's works that they consider themselves to be members of the bourgeoisie while they are in fact financially no better off than members of the proletariat.<sup>32</sup> The ›Angestellte‹ as a minority group in society is thus characterised by internal frustration not unlike that experienced by the Eastern European Jews in Katz's novels, striving to become accepted by society as German Jews, yet ultimately realising the impossibility of this endeavour.

A major difference between the two novels, however, is the fact that Fallada allows for a happy ending despite Pinneberg's miserable situation at the end. Having not only been fired, but also exposed to the humiliating treatment of a social outcast because of his unemployment, Pinneberg is psychologically destroyed, thinking that he can never again face another human being. At this point his wife, Lämmchen, once again comes to his rescue, assuring him that as long as they are together, nothing can go really wrong. Indeed throughout the novel, Lämmchen, and through her the concept of marriage and family life, represent the secure haven and bolster to the individual against a hostile world. In other words, the end of the novel presents a retreat into a harmonious private sphere as the only way to survive the hard times. By comparison as stated earlier, in *Schloßgasse 21* one finds that the financial crisis and political pressures have destroyed family units, too, making a retreat into a secure private sphere as advocated by Fallada impossible.

<sup>32</sup> Reinhard K. Zachau: Hans Fallada als politischer Schriftsteller. New York, Bern, Frankfurt a. M., Paris: Lang 1990 (American University Studies, Ser. 1: Germanic Languages and Literatures, 83), p. 26.

The very different approaches taken by Frank and Fallada are to some extent merged in Erik Reger's *Union der festen Hand*. The depiction of Weimar society is centred around the Risch-Zander steelworks, an industrial giant at the time, in whose ups and downs the financial and political crisis is reflected. In the beginning it is emphasised that at Risch-Zander, workers and employers used to be like one big family, the workers identifying with the factory and the employers caring for their employees as if they were children of the family. The financial crisis, however, destroys this symbiotic relationship. Thousands of workers are fired and those remaining become increasingly attentive to the voices of Communist union leaders encouraging strikes and revolution. Through depictions of the interaction between industry and workers – a relationship increasingly characterised by intrigues and manipulation – Reger embraces a much wider range of society than the novels mentioned above, which mainly concentrate on the working class. Although the main focus of the novel is the financial and political aspect of the crisis, there are also scenes depicting its effect on the workers' everyday lives – mostly provided by the omniscient narrator. Because of the vast number of characters, however, these scenes mainly refer to the workers as groups and less, compared to Katz and Fallada, as individuals. While the reader thus obtains an excellent insight into the plight of the workers in the coal and steel industry as well as their poverty, sorrow, and occasional joys, identification with single characters is difficult because of the novel's broad approach. The novel's strength, then, is its vivid description of the political landscape at the time and its panoramic view of society disclosing the political and financial manipulation taking place behind the scenes. This perspective is also seen in Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *Erfolg* (1930) in which individual characters clearly represent different groups in society at the time. Like *Union der festen Hand*, Feuchtwanger's novel illustrates the political and financial corruption in great detail and the severe political tensions between Communists, Social Democrats, and National Socialists.

As in the case of the novels by Katz, Fallada, and Frank, *Union der festen Hand* does not offer much hope for the future. The Communist leader of the workers at the factory, Adam Griguszies – later Grieghöfer – has been fired, too, and has given up the fight for better rights. At the end of the novel, then, the unemployed workers are whiling away their time gambling, waiting for the moment to come when workers will be needed to replace the many young men killed in the war. Until then, survival and life itself seem to be determined by the same haphazard principle as their gambling. Compared with contemporary novels, the open ending of *Schloßgasse 21* is thus by no means unusual. The artistic expressions at the time merely reflect the general feeling of frustration and hopelessness. What is unusual, however, is the particular dimension added to Katz's novel through the Eastern European Jewish perspective. Through the depiction of what it was like not only to be a worker but an *Eastern European Jewish* worker in those circumstances, the story is given an unusual slant. And yet, since the Jews were the chief scapegoats at the time, would one not expect

their depiction of the situation to be different from that of their non-Jewish contemporaries? This question will be treated in more detail in the following comparison with Jewish contemporary novels.

Martin Beradt's novel *Beide Seiten einer Straße* is remarkably similar to *Schloßgasse 21* and yet very different. Finished in 1933 but not given its final form until 1939, when the lawyer and writer Beradt fled to England and from there to New York, the novel provides a vivid description of everyday life in Berlin's Scheunenviertel – the Jewish quarter of the German capital. Like *Schloßgasse 21* the novel focuses on a particular geographical area and on a particular ethnic group of people, the Eastern European Jews. These have left their Polish and Russian ghettos in search of a better life in Germany and, so many of them hope, ultimately in America or Palestine. However, few can afford the ticket to these countries and most never leave the overcrowded houses of the Grenadierstraße where the story takes place.

As in Katz's novel, the characters in *Beide Seiten einer Straße* form a collective protagonist, but they are, unlike the characters in *Schloßgasse 21*, all without exception Jews. It is, in fact, a significant difference between the novels that Beradt limits himself to a depiction of Jewish life in what seems a hermetically sealed space with practically no connection to surrounding society. Only on two occasions do the police and people from the building control department enter the street in order to inspect the state of some of the overcrowded houses, but no violence arises from these incidents. Apart from these scenes, there is no significant interaction with non-Jews. Furthermore, although the story takes place in 1927 and was written in the early 1930s, the spread of right-wing extremism in German society and the political situation in general are hardly mentioned. The approaching persecution is merely hinted at in a very vague sentence at the beginning of the novel:

Zwar hatte in Deutschland schon damals eine Partei gegen die Juden Drohungen ausgestoßen, aber nie, so glaubten selbst die deutschen Juden, würde sie die Übermacht gewinnen, viel weniger je ihre Drohungen wahrmachen.<sup>33</sup>

A similarly brief hint at the coming catastrophe and the fate of the Jews in the novel is made in a postscript called *Schatten*, added to the novel by Beradt during his exile, but there is no attempt to describe, let alone analyse, the events which led to the drastic transformation of their lives. Instead, the novel creates a picture of a unique Jewish environment and from the beginning provides a detailed description of Jewish life in the Grenadierstraße, an atmosphere which, as Beradt says in the postscript, had disappeared by 1939 when most of the Jews described in his novel had either left the country or had been taken to concentration camps. Descriptions of Jewish religion and traditions thus pervade the novel as well as memorable stories about life in the Eastern European shtetls, religious disputes about food laws among other things, short

<sup>33</sup> Martin Beradt: *Beide Seiten einer Straße: Roman aus dem Scheunenviertel*. Berlin: Mackensen 1993, p. 8.

discussions about Zionism versus assimilation and depictions of the ›Luftmenschen‹ – destitute Jews without money and work, existing merely through the mercy of others. Indeed, most of the Jews in the novel belong to this group.

Beradt's approach, then, is valuable in itself as a tribute to the Jews of Berlin in the late 1920s and an important documentation of life in the Jewish ›Scheunenviertel‹ before it was destroyed forever. Presupposing knowledge of the crisis of surrounding society, the novel does thus not attempt to describe the reasons for the conflict and its effect on Jewish life in Germany until 1933 which, as we have seen, are Katz's main concerns. Like Katz's novel it does, however, present a highly multifaceted portrait of the Jews and is by no means a solely nostalgic description of Jewish society at the time. Indeed, Beradt's critical approach and his honest portrayal of both vices and virtues in his Jewish characters prevented the publication of the novel for many years because it was accused of being anti-Semitic. The novel was therefore not published until 1965 when Heinrich Scheffler in Frankfurt agreed to issue it.

Despite the Jews' presentiments of evil, the optimism evident towards the end of both novels is a further significant common trait. Although both have open endings suggesting no end to the uncertainty of the Jews' situation, the belief in ultimate Jewish survival based on experiences of persecution in the past prevails at the end of both novels. This trait is perhaps even more explicit in Beradt's novel than in that of Katz because the Jews in *Schloßgasse 21* are constantly reminded of the Nazi threat. As a fictional chronicle of life in general during the Weimar period, then, *Schloßgasse 21* displays more psychological and political depth than *Beide Seiten einer Straße*. With regard to the Jewish aspect, Katz furthermore succeeds in reaching beyond the mainly descriptive level of Beradt's novel, analysing practical problems of assimilation and generational conflicts that are hardly an issue in *Beide Seiten einer Straße* for the simple reason that the Jewish characters are not exposed to the gentile world. Considering the violence and turbulence of surrounding society at the time when the novels were written, a novel like Beradt's depicting Jewish everyday life in an almost timeless vacuum does seem slightly escapist. Its prime quality, then, is the rare, humorous, and to some extent critical depiction of the Eastern European Jewish environment in the Scheunenviertel.

Unlike *Beide Seiten einer Straße*, Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *Die Geschwister Oppermann* is a highly political account of the events leading up to Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor. The novel was originally written as a film-script at the request of the British prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, who wanted to enlighten people about the events in Germany. However, the film project was abandoned because of the British government's wishes to maintain good relations with Germany, and Feuchtwanger rewrote the script as a novel, thus becoming one of the first writers to describe the horrors of early Nazi Germany.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Stefan Dreyer: Schriftstellerrollen und Schreibmodelle im Exil. Zur Periodisierung von Lion Feuchtwangers Romanwerk 1933–1945. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang 1988 (Münchener Studien zur literarischen Kultur in Deutschland, 4), p. 118.

However, the speed at which this change was undertaken and Feuchtwanger's eagerness to enlighten the world about the danger of Nazism somewhat compromised the aesthetic value of the novel. Frequent naive exaggerations regarding the extent of German opposition to Hitler and the devastating effect of the new regime on the German economy, which was, in fact, improved during the first years of Nazi rule, testify to Feuchtwanger's intentions to issue an urgent warning against rather than present an artistically rounded description of the new regime. However, despite the occasional exaggerations, the novel is a piece of highly political writing, representing in itself Feuchtwanger's answer to the second problem addressed: the role and moral responsibility of the intellectual in exile. Can he afford to remain in idealistic and aesthetic isolation or must he descend from his ivory tower to make his art available for the cause that is morally and politically correct?

Through his depiction of the Jewish Oppermann family in Berlin in 1932 and 1933, Feuchtwanger demonstrates the rapidly escalating anti-Semitism preceding Hitler's ascension to power and its consequences for upper middle-class German Jewry. The class difference alone thus significantly distinguishes *Die Geschwister Oppermann* from Katz's and Beradt's novels which are set almost exclusively in a working-class environment, primarily depicting the lives of Eastern European Jews. Unlike these, the three brothers Edgar, Martin, and Gustav Oppermann are famous and wealthy representatives of highly educated circles in society – medicine, business, and the arts. Entirely assimilated and respected members of German society, they initially deny any danger posed by the Nazi party, dismissing it as a ridiculous and primitive movement not to be taken seriously. In step with the increasingly hostile measures taken against them as Jews, however, they gradually realise how illusory their sense of security and belonging is. In particular, their rapid abandonment by former friends and colleagues is a shock to them, and they ultimately all decide to flee with their families.

Feuchtwanger combines this process of realisation with the questions of German-Jewish identity and where to place the responsibility for the rise of Nazism. By depicting assimilated Jewish members of the bourgeoisie, he demonstrates the immense impact of ideological anti-Semitism for Jews to whom Judaism no longer plays a significant role, and at the same time blames them for their political blindness – not only as Jews but as educated and responsible members of German society. His attack is thus extended to the wider circles of upper middle-class citizens whose political naïveté prevents them from acknowledging the approaching threat to Weimar democracy. This process of realisation is primarily described through Gustav Oppermann, a writer and an epicurean, whose outlook is entirely determined by the ideals of Enlightenment humanism. Initially blind to the political development and the danger it poses to him as a Jew, he eventually realises the need to take responsibility and act in order to secure his ideals. Returning to Germany from his exile in Switzerland to enlighten the German population about the Nazi atrocities, he is taken to a

concentration camp where he dies. Gustav's attempt to break his passivity thus fails because he acts alone. Instead, Feuchtwanger encourages the formation of a strong resistance movement to combat the Nazis, hoping that his German readers will identify with Gustav and eventually realise the need for action. He does not, however, offer concrete suggestions as to the drawing up of this resistance but merely ends by reiterating his confidence in a strong anti-Nazi basis in the German population. Reading with hindsight, this confidence seems extremely naive, but at a time when no other European country took Hitler seriously as a threat, internal German resistance to the Nazis was Feuchtwanger's only hope.

Both *Die Geschwister Oppermann* and *Schloßgasse 21* attempt to enlighten their readers and analyse the sociological reasons for the rise of Nazism. In Feuchtwanger's novel, however, there is a sense of urgency to provoke a political awareness in the German people which is absent in Katz's depiction – perhaps because Katz's primary concern was not to warn about Nazism, but rather an attempt to enlighten his readers about the Jewish dilemma and German-Jewish interaction. The writing process furthermore served as a means of therapy for himself in his difficult situation. By comparison, *Schloßgasse 21* is thus less a political tool than an attempt to present an overview of the political events and a psychological analysis of the German population at the time – Jewish and non-Jewish – as is also evidenced by its high literary quality and sophisticated use of humour and irony, stylistic devices almost entirely missing in Feuchtwanger's rather matter-of-fact presentation. Like Katz's novel, *Die Geschwister Oppermann* shows different paths taken by the persecuted Jews (Zionism, suicide, emigration to West European countries), depicting how assimilated German Jews were unpleasantly reminded of their Jewishness by Hitler's anti-Semitism. Indeed, the focus on upper-middle-class German Jews naturally makes the novel less Jewish than *Schloßgasse 21* because the latter shows the Eastern European Jewish milieu and the struggle to assimilate. In Feuchtwanger's novel, this process is regarded as fulfilled and the Jews are clearly more aware of their German than of their Jewish identity. This changes in step with the increase in anti-Semitism, but it is significant that Gustav's process of cognition is characterised by a growing political awareness rather than a return to his Jewish roots. Indeed, this is the case with most Jews in the novel. Thus, Feuchtwanger's concern about the development of German resistance and the relationship between spirit and power (*Geist und Macht*) ultimately predominates over his interest in the Jewish response to the crisis. Because of their almost identical topics but different emphasis, the novels complement each other very well, however, providing the reader with valuable insights into the mentality and identity of two so different groups within German Jewry in the early 1930s.

Another novel which is very similar to Katz's *Schloßgasse 21* is Ernst Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*. Although Glaeser concerns himself exclusively with life in Germany shortly before and during the First World War, his narrative tech-

nique and perspective as well as the political attitude pervading the novel are very similar to those of Katz. Even more than *Schloßgasse 21, Jahrgang 1902* could be designated a ›Bildungsroman‹, presenting events from a child's point of view and describing this child's development into adolescence. Unlike Katz, however, Glaeser does not have a more mature narrator to explain the characters' experiences with hindsight, nor does he intrude to explain political events and their implications. This makes the narrative style naive and quizzical as the protagonist attempts to discover what is constantly termed the ›secrets of adulthood‹, meaning the way to his political and sexual awakening. Instead, Glaeser introduces a host of characters representing various political attitudes who express their views, either directly to the protagonist or in dialogue with each other. Priority is given to Socialist views which are often described didactically by friends of the protagonist whose fathers are union members, or through letters explaining what is considered the injustice of capitalist society. The contrast between the middle and working classes is furthermore very explicit, as the protagonist is from a middle-class background from which, however, he distances himself in the course of the novel. Glaeser's narrative style is humorous and at times self-ironic, but the sarcasm used by Katz to describe Nazi adherents is not typical of *Jahrgang 1902*. Instead, the focus of the novel is the atrocities of war; a realisation to which the reader gradually ›awakens‹ together with the protagonist as hunger begins to affect the initial enthusiasm for the war.

Although only one of the characters is Jewish, special attention is paid to the German Jews' precarious situation at the time. Thus, for example, a fragile Jewish boy is bullied by a teacher very similar to Zunk in *Schloßgasse 21*, and the almost ridiculous extent of the parents' joy is described when some non-Jewish friends pay a visit after the event. In a following monologue, the Jewish father outlines the Jews' fear and constant need to take precautions in order to survive. The gentile protagonist silently confirms this state of affairs:

»Ein sehr anstrengendes Schicksal«, denke ich und muß Herrn Silberstein heimlich recht geben, wenn ich an die Art und den Ton denke, wie in den Familien unseres Städtchens das Wort »Jude« ausgesprochen wurde.<sup>35</sup>

Even on the day of his son's death, Silberstein must attend to his shop in order to show his patriotic sentiments. The attitude in *Jahrgang 1902* is thus clearly pro-Jewish although the Jewish aspect is only really present at the beginning of the novel. Much more than *Schloßgasse 21*, Glaeser's novel is centred around the protagonist's personal development rather than the political currents in society at large, but it does provide an excellent depiction of Germany during the First World War and the fading enthusiasm for the war in the German population.

Finally, a brief analysis of Joseph Roth's depiction of the inter-war period in his early novel, *Das Spinnennetz* will be undertaken. Because it was written in 1923, it can hardly be considered contemporary to *Schloßgasse 21*, espe-

<sup>35</sup> Ernst Glaeser: *Jahrgang 1902*. Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer 1929, p. 65.

cially in the light of the extreme radicalisation of German society between 1923 and 1934. And yet it must be considered in this context because it describes the same period as *Schloßgasse 21* and because Katz may have been familiar with it at the time of writing his own novel. Although *Das Spinnennetz* is not a particularly Jewish novel in the sense that, unlike the above examples, it does not have a mainly Jewish perspective, it may very well have been an inspiration to Katz through its perceptive analysis of Nazi tendencies in society as early as 1923.

In *Das Spinnennetz*, Roth describes the characteristics of the individual susceptible to Nazi ideology and the political climate in which the growth of Nazism was possible. Like Hermann Kupke in *Schloßgasse 21*, the protagonist of *Das Spinnennetz*, Theodor Lohse, is extremely insecure about his own identity and deeply frustrated after the end of the war because the army had given him the identity and sense of belonging that he needed. Angry with the world and jealous of the rich and successful Jewish Efrussi family, for whom he is working, Lohse soon discovers the suitability of the Jews as scapegoats and joins the Nazis. The vehemence with which he dedicates himself to the cause testifies to his need to stifle the feeling of weakness and confusion instead of committing himself on ideological grounds. He thus soon becomes a dangerous man continually compelled to succeed in order to refute his own spinelessness. Peter W. Jansen rightly characterises him as:

[...] der wild gewordene Kleinbürger, der aus dem Ressentiment lebt, von seiner Frustration zehrt, der feige ist und aus seiner Feigheit gefährlich, weil er sich selbst blutige Gegenbeweise liefern muß, der gerade noch so intelligent ist, die eigenen Lebensuntüchtigkeit zu erkennen, aber nicht intelligent genug, um sich in dieser Realität einzurichten [...].<sup>36</sup>

This description of the little man driven by frustration and a severe inferiority complex rather than true ambition and idealism becomes representative of a great number of Nazi adherents in the inter-war period. Uncertain about their own identity, they fill the empty space with a ›ready-to-wear‹ ideology providing security in a broken world. Significantly, Hermann Kupke, for example, joined both the Communists and the Socialists before finding his ›true‹ brothers among the Nazis. In *Das Spinnennetz*, the second protagonist, Benjamin Lenz, an anarchist Eastern European Jew, immediately sees through Lohse and makes him entirely dependent on him. Unscrupulously exploiting the system and everyone in it, Lenz survives because he is cynical enough to accept the spiritual emptiness of post-war Europe, resigning all hopes of security and stability. Society, as depicted by Roth, is thus characterised by chaos and a great social divide, one in which weak, reactionary opportunists like Lohse may gain dangerously high amounts of power. Significantly, on 8–9 November 1923, Hitler and Ludendorff attempted a coup in Munich and reality thus over-

<sup>36</sup> Peter W. Jansen: Nachwort. In: Joseph Roth: *Das Spinnennetz*. Roman. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1967, p. 154.

took the plot of Roth's first novel of which the last part had only just been published in the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* on 6 November. A planned continuation of the story was never undertaken, for as Wolf R. Marchand says:

Wie hätte er die bereits gesteigerte Wirklichkeit seiner Dichtung nochmals steigern können, nachdem die Realität bewiesen hatte, daß es nichts Erfundenes gibt, das sie nicht auch kann?<sup>37</sup>

This incident, however, only testifies to Roth's high sensitivity to the close interplay between politics and dangerous psychological developments in interwar Germany.

Seen in the context of these ›Jewish‹ novels, *Schloßgasse 21* is different because of its unusual mixture of present-day politics and detailed descriptions of the Eastern European Jewish community. Indeed, Katz has struck a unique balance between politics and the Jewish problem by providing an overview of German society in the 1920s and early 1930s through the depiction of the Fischmann family and the intrusion of politics into the individual's private sphere. This is very similar to Feuchtwanger's approach, but whereas the political aspect is stressed towards the end of *Die Geschwister Oppermann*, the Jewish dilemma is clearly the main problem at the end of *Schloßgasse 21*. Looking at Beradt's novel, its description of Berlin working-class Jews is similar to that of Katz, but its almost total exclusion of the political crisis in surrounding society makes it almost worthless as a literary chronicle of the time – something which is a major strength of *Schloßgasse 21*. In *Das Spinnennetz*, on the other hand, Joseph Roth does provide a significant portrayal of Weimar society with its political and financial crisis, showing, in particular, how the psychological insecurity of many German men after their return from the war was to form the basis of Hitler's support in the population. In particular, the social type represented by Theodor Lohse has a strong counterpart in Hermann Kupke in *Schloßgasse 21*. However, Roth's main focus is clearly on developments in society rather than on the Jewish component which is only a marginal phenomenon in his novel and by no means represented by significant Jewish characters as in Katz's novel. Katz's unique blend of politics and the internal crisis in the Jewish community thus seems to form a rare contribution to the contemporary body of literature in and on the Weimar Republic.

<sup>37</sup> Wolf R. Marchand: Joseph Roth und völkisch-nationalistische Wertbegriffe. Untersuchungen zur politisch-weltanschaulichen Entwicklung Roths und ihrer Auswirkung auf sein Werk. Mit einem Anhang: bisher nicht wieder veröffentlichte Beiträge Roths aus »Das Neue Tage-Buch«. Bonn: Bouvier 1974 (Bonner Arbeiten zur deutschen Literatur, 23), p. 63.



## Conclusion

Having completed the study of Katz as a writer and the analysis of his fictional and non-fictional works, it is possible to answer the questions asked in the introduction to this book: Why did Katz disappear into obscurity for so long, in what ways is he distinctive as a writer, and to what extent is he representative of German-Jewish exile literature between 1933 and 1945?

The answer to the first question is closely connected with Katz's age and experience at the time of emigration. Unlike writers such as Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Alfred Döblin, who had already gained considerable fame before their exile, Katz was a young and ambitious journalist but entirely unknown to most of the German people in 1933. Furthermore, he had not written any novels before his exile, merely political short stories which served their purpose very well but were not of such outstanding literary merit that they made him well-known in writers' circles. Not until he was awarded the Heinrich-Heine-Prize in 1937, did Katz gain public recognition, a change which was reinforced by the publication of his second novel. However, the fact that the planned continuation of the *Fischmann* story was never published and that no other works appeared in the years following his emigration to America made him disappear into obscurity. Another important reason is that his novels were not published in Germany until 1985 and could thus not become part of the scholarly interest in and revival of both well-known and lesser known exile writers beginning in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Only when his novels were published in 1985, did they and Katz himself become the subject of renewed public interest.

In what ways is Katz distinctive as a writer? As demonstrated in the interpretation of his two novels, *Die Fischmanns* and *Schloßgasse 21*, his achievement lies first and foremost in the Eastern European Jewish perspective from which he depicts and evaluates the world around him. Apart from Joseph Roth, few other Jewish writers in exile would have had the necessary background and knowledge to produce an account of Eastern European Jewish life both in Galicia and in Germany with such insight and cultural perception. At the same time, Katz's political and journalistic background provided him with the ability to expand his perspective to embrace the German non-Jewish population, creating a psychologically penetrating political and cultural panorama of the inter-war period in Germany. This is particularly evident in *Schloßgasse 21* where Jewish as well as non-Jewish characters assume the role of a collective protagonist.

A further distinctive feature in Katz's writing is his style, characterised by a warm sense of humour, a somewhat rare occurrence in exile literature for un-

derstandable reasons, but also irony and sarcasm. The reader is encouraged to empathise with the persecuted Jews, but there is also a good deal of self-irony involved. Indeed, in *Die Fischmanns*, one of the minor characters presents this as a characteristic aspect of Jewish culture: »Seit wann amüsiert man sich bei uns über andere? Ein Jude soll sich über sich selber amüsieren!« (F 62) The omniscient narrator's comment in the lines following the above quotation are a typical example of precisely this phenomenon: »Und er dachte erbost: ›Solche Späße kann nur ein Ausländer machen, wahrscheinlich einer aus Stryj am Flusse Stryj! Pfui!‹ (Die Orte Stryj und Strody liegen dreißig Minuten auseinander, lieber Leser.)« (F 62) In his usual intimate manner, the narrator thus conveys a slightly ridiculing but loving and amusing picture of his fellow-Jews to the reader. Characteristic of Katz's style, however, is also the seriousness with which he portrays the rise of the Nazi movement and the consequences of this development for the Jews.

To what extent is Katz representative of German-Jewish writers in exile? Like most Jewish and non-Jewish intellectual exiles, he was politically left-wing and through his Social Democratic engagement an active opponent to Hitler prior to his exile. He is furthermore a typical example of an assimilated and secularised German Jew's return to his Jewish identity as a direct consequence of Hitler's anti-Semitism. As in most such cases, this did not mean a return to orthodox practice of the Jewish religion, but rather to a new awareness, acknowledgement, and thematic treatment of this identity in his works. Indeed, as pointed out earlier, Katz would most likely not have written his two novels about the Eastern European Jews, had he not been exposed to Nazi persecution. Through his works, Katz furthermore becomes part of the general tendency to use Biblical figures, such as Job and Jeremiah, as well as the mythological figures Ahasverus and Ulysses, mentioned in the introduction to this book. At the very end of *Schloßgasse 21*, for example, the Jewish restaurant keeper, who rescues Jakob from the Nazis, points to Job for an answer to the Jews' suffering: »Im Unglück fängt doch jeder Mensch erst an zu verstehen, wer er ist und was er falsch gemacht hat. Meint Ihr, daß Hiob seinem Unglück nichts verdankt?« (S 581) In other words, the experience of anti-Semitism can lead to soul-searching and thus to a new self-awareness as a Jew. This, however, does not mean that the Jews in the novel always submit to suffering in an entirely passive manner. Indeed on Yom Kippur, despite initial attempts to remain calm and subject herself to God's will, Lea does cry out to God for justice and some sort of meaning in her present situation:

Mein Vater wurde erschlagen, weil er Jude war. Meine Mutter wurde erschlagen, weil sie Jüdin war. Meine Brüder wurden erschlagen, weil sie Juden waren. Alle fielen in Kischinew, am gleichen Tage alle vier, die Deine Kinder blieben bis zuletzt. [...] Was aber willst Du von meinen unschuldigen Kindern ... (F 191)

Katz thus conforms to the pattern of presenting Job and the Jews, whom Job represents, both as endurers of pain and tireless inquirers into the meaning of

their suffering. Underlying the depiction of Jewish life in the novels is further the notion of the Jew as an eternal wanderer, a homeless person whose settling in any country can only be of limited duration. Indeed, this idea recurs throughout Katz's work although the figures of Ahasuerus and Ulysses are not actually mentioned. We see it, for example, in the following sentence: »Heute erst verstehe ich diese Nervosität, denn ich bin selbst ein Emigrant geworden, habe selbst nun auch, verfolgt und verjagt, die alte Reise aller Juden angetreten.« (F 110) ›Judentum‹ thus becomes synonymous with ›Emigrantentum‹, supporting the novel's general message that the Jews are destined to be persecuted.

Although the experience of Nazi anti-Semitism and persecution thus caused Katz to return to his Jewish roots, one must beware of claiming that such a clear change can be observed in all Jewish writers in exile at the time. Poets such as Karl Wolfskehl and Nelly Sachs certainly did experience a revival of their Jewishness, whereas Lion Feuchtwanger, for example, had dealt with Jewish topics in most of his literary production ranging from his doctoral thesis on Heine's *Der Rabbi von Bacharach* (1907) to *Jesfta und seine Tochter* (1957). However, in exile his treatment of the Jewish theme became more personal and more related to his present situation as a victim of Nazi anti-Semitism as can, for instance, be seen in his *Josephus* trilogy. Furthermore, the treatment of Jewish topics is not limited to Jewish writers alone; the non-Jewish Thomas Mann, for example, wrote his major work *Joseph und seine Brüder* while in exile. Yet such individual instances fail to undermine the dominant trend of a reidentification and re-evaluation of their Jewish identity which can be observed in many German-Jewish writers in the period. Katz is thus both representative of this group of exiles and yet unique; representative because he returns to his Jewish roots as a consequence of Nazi persecution, unique because he chooses the Eastern European Jews as the main characters and perspective of his two novels. These novels, then, become his evaluation of the political and cultural development in Germany preceding Hitler's assumption of power, his own re-assessment of his identity as a Jew, and a distinct contribution to the body of German-Jewish exile literature.



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