

**Literary Theory and the Jewish Condition:  
Assimilation as a Hypertextual Practice**

*by Carmen Dell'Aversano*

**Abstract**

*This paper aims to contribute to a theoretical, as opposed to a historical, understanding of the dynamics of assimilation by elucidating some of the paradoxes of imitative situations through recourse to Genette's theory of hypertextuality. The difference between the two textual modalities of "forgery" and "fake" is shown to be relevant to the anti-Semites' attitudes towards assimilated Jews, and the anxiety generated by the blurring of fundamental social distinctions which is a consequence of undetected imitative practices is shown to be a component in the "new anti-Semitism" which arose after Emancipation*

**Some Points of Theory and Method**

**Assimilation as a Hypertextual Practice**

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To Isoar, forever.

*If I concentrate here on the confrontation of Jews with modernity and on German Jews in particular, it is because here, as if in a laboratory, we have an excellent example of the problems and dangers inherent in such a secularization and modernization of religion.*

George L. Mosse, *The Secularization of Jewish Theology*

### Some Points of Theory and Method

The purpose of this paper is twofold.<sup>1</sup> The first is to propose a first essay of an argument about the possibility of a theoretical – as opposed to a historical – understanding of the situation in which, from the Enlightenment onwards, a sizable part of the Jews of Europe focused their individual and collective actions and aspirations towards the aim of approximating as closely as they could the culture and identity of the majority population of the countries where they lived, that is, of the process and condition of assimilation.<sup>2</sup> Because it focuses not on the

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<sup>1</sup> Heartfelt thanks to Piero Capelli for getting this (and me) out of the closet.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Guri Schwarz and an anonymous reviewer for pointing me towards a number of important contributions which helped me refine and complicate my understanding of the historical debate around the term “assimilation.” A number of very recent articles: David N. Myers, “On Gerson Cohen’s ‘Blessing of Assimilation’ a Half Century Later: Editor’s Introduction,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 429-32, David B. Ruderman, “The Blessing of Gerson D. Cohen,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 459-64, Arnold Eisen, “The Case for ‘Assimilation’ and Diaspora,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 450-458, Sarah Bunin Benor, “On Jewish Languages, Names, and Distinctiveness” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 440-49, Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, “A View from Late Antiquity Onward,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 106/4 (2016): 433-39) are focused on the analysis of Gerson Cohen’s 1966 remarkable commencement address to the Hebrew Teachers College “The Blessing of Assimilation in Jewish History.” Till van Rahden, “Treasure, Fate, or Blessing: Narratives of Assimilation in the Historiography of German-Speaking Jewry since the 1950s,” in *Preserving the Legacy of German Jewry. A History of the Leo Baeck Institute, 1955-2005*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2005), 349-73 is an extraordinarily useful contribution, notable both for its scope and for its rigor: after outlining several early-twentieth-century debates on assimilation which remain of interest today, the author considers the role played by the concept in historiography from the mid-1950s onwards, its relation to the contiguous concept of acculturation, and its “remarkable renaissance” (p.351) after the mid-1990s; its lucid methodological point is that “A reassessment of the concept should not aim at a definition that is analytically precise and free of historical and ideological ballast. Instead, the priority should be to analyze the concept’s historicity and explore the self-consciousness and hopes for the future contained within its various definitions and deployments” (p.351); van Rahden’s well-balanced conclusion, inspired by American sociologist of religion José Casanova, is that renouncing the concept of assimilation “would lead to even greater conceptual impoverishment, for in such a case one would also lose the memory of a

unique details of individual situations, but on abstract relationships and invariant definitions, such an understanding may prove relevant to the analysis of a number of urgent contemporary issues. The second is to argue for the relevance of methods from other, apparently very distant and quite unrelated, disciplines in achieving such an understanding; in the case I am going to discuss the discipline is literary theory, specifically Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality.

The present paper is but a part of a much larger project, very much in progress, aiming to apply a variety of concepts and methodologies elaborated in the humanities and social sciences over the last half century or more to the analysis of the path of European Jewry from the Enlightenment to the Shoah; one not negligible consequence of this application is to demonstrate the fundamental unity of a considerable range of theoretical approaches which are normally practiced in isolation, and whose proponents are, for the most part, not aware of one another's existence. The purpose – and the point – of applying methodologies from fields other than history to the study of assimilation is to achieve an understanding that, while different from the one which can be reached by historians, is potentially interesting and productive. More specifically, I believe that a set of tools and concepts developed over the last sixty years or so in fields as far apart as semiotics and literary theory, Membership Categorization Analysis and queer theory, critical discourse analysis and culturology, can illuminate a number of *logical* (as opposed to historical) dynamics which can be shown to underlie, to different extents and with different outcomes, most relationships between majority populations and minorities in multicultural societies.<sup>3</sup>

My interest in the logical structure of assimilation has, as far as I have been able to ascertain, not been shared so far by other researchers; this is somewhat surprising, since even the most cursory examination of the formidable literature on the topic shows that the words “paradox” and “contradiction” are routinely employed to define the condition of European Jews in the age of assimilation. Such commonplaces of historical description are clearly not to be understood with reference to a historical, political, or sociological framework; if they are to be taken seriously, there seems to be no choice but to acknowledge that they assert, implicitly but unambiguously, that one of the most conspicuous peculiarities of the process of assimilation – and one of the most fraught with implications – is the *logical* nature of the situations that arise from it. This would seem to me to

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complex history accumulated within the concept” (p.373). My decision to select “assimilation” as the fundamental keyword of my own enquiry, however, owes less to the most recent developments of historical understanding than to the central and fundamental place the term occupies in my sources: see below.

<sup>3</sup> I have sought to illuminate some of these dynamics from a specifically psychological viewpoint in Carmen Dell'Aversano, “Intersubjective Anticipation: Accountability, Anticipation, and Conversation as a Zero-Sum Game or, the (Real) Pleasures of a Pluralistic Society,” *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, in press.

indicate the possibility that employing in the analysis of assimilation a number of methods and concepts devised with the express purpose of accounting for paradoxes in social situations and human relationships might prove productive.

Through the labor of abstraction and generalization necessary to lay bare the logical structure implicit in the wide variety of historical situations which shaped the course of assimilation, the study of this past event can be shown to be relevant to the predicament of any multicultural society, and therefore to our contemporary world in general. Analyzing the path of European Jewry not as a historical phenomenon (one by definition unique and never to be repeated) but as a logical entity, that is, as a bundle of formal relationships between abstract objects which can occur in a wide variety of social, chronological, and geographical contexts, highlights a number of political, cultural, social, interpersonal, and psychological dynamics which can prove to be of momentous relevance to our own predicament.

This does not mean, of course, that these logical determinants by themselves can account for actual individual cases (whether it be the history of Italian Jewry, or of the Jews of a single German town), or deterministically predict their course or outcome; on the contrary, one major purpose of singling out and analyzing these determinants is exactly to make it possible to trace their diverse, and completely non-deterministic, paths in the bewildering variety of concrete historical situations.

As a consequence, even though the thrust of my argument is not limited to a specific national or geographical context, the theoretical focus of my enquiry is necessarily rooted in the analysis of a definite corpus. I have chosen to concentrate on the case of German-speaking Jewry for three main reasons: the first is, of course, that the most extreme and world-altering forms of anti-Semitism were a consequence of the policies of the Third Reich; the second is that German-Jewish history has been, over the last several decades, the object of sustained scholarly attention, which has resulted in a considerable number of extraordinarily perceptive investigations of virtually every aspect of the Jewish experience in Germany (both before and after unification), and in the German-speaking parts of the Austrian empire; the third, and probably the most important, is that a number of leading Jewish writers and intellectuals who wrote in German (from Zweig to Scholem, from Kafka to Anders, to name just a few) have extensively reflected on their experience of Jewishness in a number of contexts, and of both literary and non-literary forms – from letters to essays to novels to memoirs. These works, which are almost invariably of exceptionally high quality, provide a kind of insight into the *lived experience* of the Jewish condition which would be impossible to achieve through the means of historical inquiry, blending as they do sustained and nuanced first-hand knowledge of the various contexts and aspects of everyday life with an outstanding ability to reflect, abstract, and theorize in a

way that manages not only to take into account the most minute details of mundane experience, but to make them stand out as exceptionally vivid, and to endow them with lasting significance. As anticipated above (note 2), my main reason for choosing to use the word “assimilation” is that the authors I am referring to, in seeking to come to terms, each in their different times and ways, in a wealth of writings of extraordinary historical, theoretical and, in many cases, literary value, with the German Jewish experience, invariably referred to that experience with the (German) word “Assimilation.”

It should, however, be spelled out at the outset that in my argument (just as in Georg Mosse’s paper from which my epigraph is derived) the parable of German-speaking Jewry plays the (fundamental) role of a case study; because the purpose of my research is not historical but theoretical, the point of my argument is that the methods, results, and conclusions of my enquiry should illuminate a wide range of geographically and historically diverse situations and events.

In order to achieve a theoretical understanding of any object it is necessary first of all to construct a *model* of the object in question, one which, above and beyond the myriad fascinating historical, geographical, social, and cultural variables and variants lays bare, so to say, its most basic logical form. It is hardly worth pointing out that this is, by definition, an arbitrary choice: other researchers could (and, no doubt, would) select different models, and, consequently, reach different forms of understanding. Its being arbitrary does not, however, make it irrational: the most important consequence of this choice is to make available for the understanding of the object methods developed to account for the model in the most diverse disciplines; the relevance and significance (or lack thereof) of the results obtained by applying these methods is what ultimately determines the value of the choice.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to assimilation the model I chose was *imitation*. In my view, the logical essence of the process of assimilation lies in its being an imitative process, one in which a social group, and the individuals which make it up, mould the most diverse components of their identity and of its manifestations on those of another group.<sup>5</sup> This choice of model is, of course, far from original: not only is the

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in striving to understand the human psyche, Freud chose to model it as a nexus of physical forces to be accounted for by the laws of dynamics (this is why psychoanalysis is also known as “dynamic psychology”); such forms of understanding are, of course, metaphorical; again, this does not make them irrational: for the foundational role of metaphors in human cognition see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> In a structurally comparable, even though historically distinct, context, that of colonialism, the role of this kind of imitative dynamics has been highlighted and investigated at least since the middle of the twentieth century thanks to Franz Fanon’s enlightening reflections on colonial identity, whose extraordinary results have subsequently been built upon, with endless variations, since the Eighties with the establishment of postcolonial studies; Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October*, 28 (1984) 125–33 is the most widely

connection between assimilation and imitation self-evident from mere etymology, but historical accounts of assimilation regularly stress the imitative nature of the process.<sup>6</sup> It is common knowledge that the Enlightenment project of universal rights took, as far as the Jews were concerned, a rather peculiar form: both the theorists who dealt with the issue of the rights of Jews in the abstract, and the states which defined it in legislation, started from the assumption of the Jews' fundamental inferiority; therefore Jews were to conquer what Arendt would later define as the "right to have rights"<sup>7</sup> through a process which would lead them to transcend their cultural and moral peculiarities, in order to assume those of the Christian population among which they lived:

Emancipation and assimilation denoted reciprocally dependent processes [...]. They represented the inseparable halves of a *quid pro quo*, the two clauses of a complex contract. Put most simply, emancipation was what the states were to grant, assimilation what the Jews were to give in return.<sup>8</sup>

As Sorkin makes clear, the Jews were asked to assimilate in exchange for eventually being allowed, at an unspecified time in the future, to enjoy the same rights as the Christian majority, and assimilation was presented as the essential precondition to show that they were indeed deserving of those rights. The "quid" that the Jews had to contribute in the "quid pro quo of rights for regeneration" which spelled out the unwritten contract of emancipation (Sorkin 1987 p.4) was an *imitation* of the manners, competences, interests, occupations and ideals of the German *Bildungsbürgertum*.<sup>9</sup>

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quoted instance, but Frantz Fanon *Peau noire, masques blancs*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952) offers an analysis which is at least as perceptive and enlightening. David N. Myers "The Blessing of Assimilation' Reconsidered: An Inquiry into Jewish Cultural Studies" in *From ghetto to emancipation: historical and contemporary reconsiderations of the Jewish community*, eds. David N. Myers and William V. Rowe, (Scranton PA: University of Scranton Press, 1997), 17-36 outlines an illuminating perspective on the possibilities and rewards of connecting 'the exploration, and at times celebration, of hybridity as an existential condition" in 'cultural studies, postcolonial discourse, and postmodernism" with Jewish studies under the rubric of 'Diaspora identities" (76-83); this connection is certainly deserving of further exploration.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181 note 7 specifies that "German Jewry's subculture [...] borrowed its major elements from the majority middle-class culture [...] *consciously striving to avoid distinctiveness*" (my italics).

<sup>7</sup> The phrase 'a right to have rights' occurs for the first time in Hannah Arendt, "The Rights of Man': What Are They?," *Modern Review* (summer 1949): 24-37, parts of which Arendt later reworked in chapter 9 ("The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man") of Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), on which most discussions of the concept are based.

<sup>8</sup> David Sorkin, "Emancipation and Assimilation. Two Concepts and their application to German Jewish History," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 35/1 (1990): 17-33, here 18.

<sup>9</sup> "What was the substance of Jewish assimilation? In practice it was linked to the process of *embourgeoisement*. [...] German Jewry did not integrate into some abstract *Volk* but into the middle class, and they spent much of the nineteenth century internalizing the economic, ethical,

What may be considered novel, and might prove interesting, in the approach I am presenting here is the decision to make the choice to model assimilation as an imitative process the focus of a systematic enquiry, by deploying towards the understanding of assimilation a number of theories developed over the last sixty years in a wide variety of fields of the humanities and social sciences with the express purpose of accounting for imitative processes. The connection between these theories and the issue of assimilation may well prove surprising, and its consequences and results may consequently be of some interest.

To my mind, an attempt to reach a new understanding of assimilation, one which considers its theoretical structure rather than focusing on its historical peculiarity, by a synergy of methodologies which have not, as far as I know, been employed to this end, may prove worthwhile for at least three reasons: first because assimilation, in all its bewildering intricacy, can only be accounted for by a genuinely inter- and multidisciplinary approach, one that not only considers a wide variety of highly complex materials, but which also employs a range of methodological perspectives of equivalent complexity; second, because assimilation, being, so to say, an “intrinsically transdisciplinary” topic, embracing as it does (among others) linguistic, psychological, social, literary, historical, economic, political, religious and philosophical components, is quintessentially apt to demonstrate the productivity (or lack thereof) of ideas and methods from a variety of disciplines, and the possibility (or the impossibility) of integrating different approaches into an informative and original synthesis; and lastly, because the patterns, structures and invariants which can be unearthed by a theoretical – as opposed to a historical – analysis of assimilation are of crucial relevance to our own predicament. As a historical phenomenon, the assimilation of German Jewry may have met its end in the Shoah; but as a theoretical entity – and as a social process – assimilation still plays a major role in our present-day multicultural society: the more we understand about its hidden – and not invariably benign – workings, the better for all concerned.

### **Assimilation as a Hypertextual Practice**

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and aesthetic standards of that class.” (Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1880-1923*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 7). This had already been pointed out by Katz in his dissertation (Jacob Katz, *Die Entstehung der Judenassimilation in Deutschland und deren Ideologie*, (Diss. Frankfurt, 1935), 32). Simone Lässig, *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004) explains the peculiarities of this unique process by referring to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital; her work is an exceptional—and exceptionally successful—attempt to integrate methodologies from other fields in the analysis of historical data.

The importance of imitative practices in the genesis of literary texts has been recognized since the beginning of literary-theoretical reflection in the West.<sup>10</sup> In this paper I will focus on showing how a small number of theoretical concepts, originally formulated to account for literary practices of imitation, can be helpful in elucidating both the peculiarity of the German-Jewish subculture (Sorkin 1987 p.6), and some of the most puzzling – and most devastating – reactions which confronted it.<sup>11</sup> Because of its momentous long-term consequences, the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Germany after 1870 has been the object of sustained scholarly attention; here I would like to suggest one additional potentially productive approach, which is, to my knowledge, original: considering its sudden appearance, and its inexplicable virulence, as sociopsychological reactions to a specific form of imitation, that of the *fake*.

In his 1982 book *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, literary theoretician Gérard Genette delineates a typology of hypertexts (texts which derive from other texts: Genette 1982 p.7), which considers pragmatic variables, that is, the effects texts have on their audiences, as well as formal ones. Among the kinds of *mimotexts* (texts arising from a process of imitation: Genette 1982 p.81) he describes, two are, in my opinion, deeply pertinent to an understanding of assimilation: forgeries and fakes.

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<sup>10</sup> One not negligible issue in which a reference to the conceptualization of imitation in literary studies can be shown to be immediately pertinent to the issue of assimilation is that of the creativity evidently displayed on so many levels in the process of assimilation. This feature has been rightly emphasized in historical accounts: Cohen's authoritative interpretation states that "The great ages of Jewish creativity were born out of a response to the challenge of assimilation" (Gerson Cohen, "The Blessing of Assimilation in Jewish History" (1966 commencement address to the Hebrew Teachers College), in *Jewish History and Jewish Destiny*, (New York – Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 145-56, here 155), and Fonrobert, "A View from Late Antiquity," 436, while discussing Cohen, rightly stresses the component of 'cultural agency' in the process. Van Rahden, "Treason, Fate, or Blessing," 370 quotes a number of scholars who 'have all recently argued that assimilation should be understood as a mode of creative agency,' and his reference to postcolonial approaches to the issue is particularly pertinent, and potentially very enlightening. However, this active, agentic, and creative component of assimilation is invariably presented, however implicitly, as somehow surprising, or at least counterintuitive; of course Western literary theory since its inception has considered creativity a hallmark of conscious and sophisticated imitation, as witnessed most conspicuously by nearly three thousand years of Western literary tradition.

<sup>11</sup> The equivalence between cultures and texts, which has proved methodologically extraordinarily productive in cultural anthropology over the last forty years, was first put forward by Clifford Geertz in his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), which introduced hermeneutical concepts and methods into anthropological research: "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" ("Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 450).



Forgery is an imitation in a serious mode whose dominant function is the pursuit or the extension of a preexistent literary achievement.<sup>12</sup>

From Genette's definition of forgery three fundamental characteristics emerge, two explicitly and one implicitly. First, the aim of a forgery is "serious," not comic or satiric: the purpose of a forgery is not to ridicule the model; on the contrary, because the forger chose the model as his model, and devoted a considerable amount of effort to mastering its most minute peculiarities, he implies that the model is worthy of being imitated, and thus admirable and excellent. Second, the forgery aims to "pursue or extend" a pre-existent text, not to distort or exaggerate its features: a good forgery is stylistically indistinguishable from its model, not a caricature. Third, the forgery is an imitation presented and recognizable as such; it does not aim to take anyone in, it does not attempt to pass as the work of the author of the model.

Out of these three characteristics, the forgery shares one with another kind of imitative text: the fake:

an imitative text itself is not identified *as such*, and therefore passes for an authentic text [...]. This [...] situation is the well-known *literary fake* or apocryphal text.<sup>13</sup>

In order to pass for an authentic text, the fake, just like the forgery, must reproduce the features of the model in the most painstakingly scrupulous way; any divergence in any details, no matter how minute, will make the fake recognizable as such. But, even though they share this all-important technical feature, forgery and fake are very different, indeed opposite, semiotic and social phenomena. Unlike the forgery, the fake aims to pass for an authentic work. This implies on the part of the faker a very different attitude from that of the forger; the forger is motivated by respect and admiration for his model, and is honest with his audience, whereas the faker uses his model to deceive his audience, usurping a status to which his work, if it were presented as his own, would have no social right.

One extremely important technical consideration is that the—pragmatically crucial—distinction between forgery and fake hinges not on formal or intrinsic factors but on the availability (or lack thereof) of external information:

the theoretical distinction between [the various kinds of mimotexts] is clear, but the specific mode of a given mimetic performance often remains

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<sup>12</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, original French edition 1982, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 85.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

indeterminate, except when determined externally through context or paratext.<sup>14</sup>

More specifically, the *only* piece of information which makes it possible to distinguish a forgery from a fake is the identity of the author: if I write a credible imitation of Montale and sign it with my own name, that is a forgery; if I circulate the exact same poem with Montale's name on it, that is a fake. And it goes without saying that the two texts, identical word for word except for the author to which they are attributed, will actually be perceived as very different, and will elicit very different responses. It is perhaps worth spelling out that (as is evident from the previous example) the most pragmatically crucial piece of information delivered by the paratext concerns precisely the identity of the author, whose name is of course hardly ever included in the text of the literary work proper.

The reason why I believe it to be useful to introduce subtle technical distinctions pertaining to literary theory to the analysis of a socio-cultural phenomenon is that I am convinced that the relationship between forgery and fake is a crucially relevant component in the complex dynamics of assimilation, and that its consideration can shed light on otherwise puzzling and bizarre attitudes and events. It is worth emphasizing again that this relationship only exists on the pragmatic level, “in the eye of the beholder.” But “the eye of the beholder” (and their minds, and their lives...) is the place where all social realities exist. In the eyes and minds of all its supporters, both Jewish and non-Jewish, from the late eighteenth-century onwards, the process of assimilation had as its end (both chronologically and teleologically) the elimination of every perceptible difference between Jews and non-Jews, an elimination which was to be achieved through painstaking imitation by the Jews of the most minute particulars (with the possible exception of religious belief, as the tellingly awkward<sup>15</sup> formulation ‘deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens’ implies) of Gentile culture, that is, in Genette's terms, through the production of a forgery. However, what makes assimilation as a social practice not only intrinsically paradoxical but also always potentially explosive is that, from the point of view of its audience (which is of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 85. Genette defines the paratext as follows: “The second type [of relationship between two texts] is the generally less explicit and more distant relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken with the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its *paratext*: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapagina, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic. These provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not, which even the purists among readers [...] cannot always disregard as easily as they would like and as they claim to do. [...] [*T*]his is probably one of the privileged fields of operation of the pragmatic dimension of the work—i.e., of its impact upon the reader [...]” (Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, 3, emphasis mine).

<sup>15</sup> The awkwardness is a consequence of the fact that no equivalent expression exists for Christian citizens, since “deutsche Staatsbürger” of the Christian faith did not have to specify their confession, since it went without saying that all “normal” German citizens were Christians.

course the only pragmatically relevant one), in a number of social situations the imitative practice of forgery automatically, naturally, and involuntarily crosses the border which is supposed to keep it always separate from that of the fake. If Jews must earnestly and tirelessly devote all their energies to becoming as similar as they can to non-Jews, it is only to be expected that, sooner or later, they will succeed. At that point, unless a helpful yellow star is introduced, it will prove impossible to distinguish them from non-Jews.

One major component in making this distinction more difficult was, of course, the granting of legal equality: before emancipation (a process which in Germany reaches its conclusion between 1869 and 1871)<sup>16</sup> Jews could be distinguished from the rest of society at least because a variety of social roles and contexts were *a priori* inaccessible to them; under these conditions the outcome of the imitative process of assimilation, no matter how high the technical proficiency displayed in its accomplishment, could still be interpreted as a forgery; when emancipation erased (at least in theory) all boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, the outcome of the exact same process achieved the transition from forgery to fake.<sup>17</sup>

There is also another reason why emancipation precipitated the forgery/fake shift: one fundamental difference between forgery and fake is that a forgery is *pragmatically empty*: for all its ingenuity, it does not aim to achieve any effect beyond disinterested aesthetic admiration for the technical proficiency it displays. A fake, on the other hand, clamors for social recognition: it wants to break into the closed and closely guarded circle of “authentic” works. This is exactly the kind of social recognition which the Emancipation made accessible to Jews as a matter of undisputable legal principle; and the central relevance of pragmatic considerations to the “new anti-Semitism” from the 1870s onwards is shown by

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<sup>16</sup> In July 1869, King Wilhelm I of Prussia promulgated the North German Confederation Constitution, which gave Jews civil and political rights; when the new German empire was established, on 14 April 1871, the constitution was extended to all German states (Bavaria adopted it on 22 April).

<sup>17</sup> That the accessibility of all social contexts to Jews after the Emancipation proved immensely anxiety-provoking is shown, for instance, by a petition, signed by a quarter of a million Germans in 1881, which, among other things, asked “that the Jews be excluded from all positions of authority; that their employment in the judiciary – namely as autonomous judges – receive appropriate limitation” and “that the Christian character of the primary school – even when attended by Jewish pupils – be strictly protected; that only Christian teachers be allowed in these schools and that in all other schools Jewish teachers be placed only in special and exceptional cases” (2. daß die Juden von allen obrigkeitlichen (autoritativen) Stellungen ausgeschlossen werden und daß ihre Verwendung im Justizdienste – namentlich als Einzelrichter – eine angemessene Beschränkung erfahre; 3. daß der christliche Charakter der Volksschule, auch wenn dieselbe von jüdischen Schülern besucht wird, streng gewahrt bleibe und in derselben nur christliche Lehrer zugelassen werden, daß in allen übrigen Schulen aber jüdische Lehrer nur in besonders motivierten Ausnahmefällen Anstellung erlangen): [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/413\\_Antisemites%20Petition\\_114.pdf](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/413_Antisemites%20Petition_114.pdf); original German version [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/deu/413\\_Antisemitempetition\\_114.pdf](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/deu/413_Antisemitempetition_114.pdf)).

the rather inelegant, indeed grotesque attempts which were made to transform emancipation itself into a kind of forgery, that is, into a sign without pragmatic implications, as illustrated by an incident related by Gershom Scholem in his memoirs:

How far this went is shown by a very characteristic statement made by Werner Sombart, a very famous sociologist and economist of the time who was torn between liberal and antiliberal views. When this statement was published and widely quoted in 1912, it created a tremendous stir among the Jews. It said that while the legal equality and formal emancipation of the Jews should not be abrogated, Jews should voluntarily refrain from making use of these rights in public life.<sup>18</sup>

But this implicit claim for social recognition is far from being the only reason why a fake is invariably experienced as a powerful threat to the social order, and calls forth the most extreme reactions. In order to achieve a better understanding of this apparently puzzling fact we should now turn to examine in some detail several aspects of the social significance of fakes.

First, fakes are intrinsically threatening to any social order because they question the distinctions on which the social order itself rests. The invariably violent reaction to the discovery of a fake is a reaction to its perceived mockery of the social competence of all those who did not spot it. The ineludible presence of an element of mockery in the pragmatics of the fake is cursorily referred to by Genette:

[in] the well-known [situation of] the *literary fake* or apocryphal text [...] the imitator is the only one to laugh—with his friend or accomplices, if there be any—at the expense of everyone and especially of self-proclaimed experts.<sup>19</sup>

Genette, however, does not explain why a fake is inevitably experienced as a mockery by those who fall prey to it, what exactly it is that it mocks, and why this mockery should be perceived as threatening by society as a whole. The reason for these far from self-explanatory reactions is that what the fake mocks is not only the competence of those it managed to take in, but also, and most of all, the natural, cultural, and social boundaries which that very competence, and the social role connected to it, should above all protect.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, original German edition 1977, (New York: Schocken, 1980): 27.

<sup>19</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 86 (italics in the original).

<sup>20</sup> Two examples, neither of them having to do with Jews or with assimilation, are useful to illustrate this. One is the case of the Modigliani fakes, which upset the art world in Italy in 1984; after the teenagers who had manufactured the statues explained the prank, the media and public opinion turned violently against the art critics who had vouched for the authenticity of the fakes

What the fake says to its victims is, in effect: “You assume that you are able to distinguish A from B, and this ability enables you to function in the world, and is a part of who you are. But, actually, despite what you would like to think, you cannot tell A and B apart; and this may mean either that you are not who you think you are, or that the world, in which you assume the distinction between A and B to hold, is not what you think it is, or, of course, both.” The structurally and intensely subversive effects of any successful serious imitation which does not preliminarily disqualify itself as a forgery through a cautious use of paratextual signals are illustrated with particular clarity by this passage from an autobiographical narrative by a Jewish mother in the Third Reich:<sup>21</sup>

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and who, by so doing, had demonstrated their own inability to recognize the social distinction which it was their institutional task to uphold (a useful English summary of the facts can be found in (no author named), “Livorno plans to show fake Modigliani heads,” *The Local*, 20 May 2014, <https://www.thelocal.it/20140520/livorno-plans-to-show-fake-modigliani-heads>). The other is Kimberly Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry* (USA 1999); the movie, based on a true story, relates the successful passing of a transsexual boy in a group of marginal teenagers in Nebraska, his happy love relationship with the sister of one of his male friends, and their savage reaction to the chance discovery of his biological sex. The rape and murder of the protagonist by his former friends is a typically violent reaction to a fake involving crucial dimensions of social competence and personal identity: if I have been unable to realize that my buddy was actually a woman, this may mean that I do not know the first thing about men and women, and the reason why I do not may well be that the categories of “man” and “woman” are more problematic than I ever suspected, and than I am willing to acknowledge.

<sup>21</sup> *Jewish Life in Germany. Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz, abridged translation of the original German edition 1976–1982, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): 355–56. The original is as follows: “Eines Tages kamen meine Kinder einmal wieder mit glänzenden Augen und kichernd und lachend aus der Schule nach Hause. Sie berichteten, daß sich am Morgen fast alle Klassen in der Aula versammeln mußten, weil ein Beauftragter der neugeschaffenen Rassenamtes den Kindern einen rassenkundlichen Vortrag halten wollte. “Ich fragte die Lehrerin, ob ich nach Hause gehen konnte,” erzählte meine Tochter, “aber sie meinte, sie habe keine Anweisung irgend jemanden wegzuschicken. Du kannst dir vorstellen, daß der Vortrag gräßlich war. Zuerst erklärte der Mann, daß es hochstehende und niedere Rassen gäbe, die am höchste stehende Rasse seien die Germanen, die daher auch dazu bestimmt seien, die Welt zu regieren, während die Juden eine sehr niedrigstehende, verächtliche Rasse seien. Dann, Mammi, schaute er sich in die Aula um, und bat eins von den Mädchen, zu ihm zu kommen.” Die Kinder fingen wieder an zu kichern. “Zuerst wußten wir überhaupt nicht, was er eigentlich wollte,” erzählte meine Tochter weiter, “und wir wurden ganz ängstlich, als er Eva auswählte. Aber dann fing er an zu erklären, und zeigte dabei auf Eva: ‘Seht mal, den schmalen Schädel dieses Mädchens, die hohe Stirn, die blauen Augen und das blonde Haar,’ und dabei nahm er einen ihrer langen Zöpfe in der Hand. Er fuhr fort “Beachtet auch die hohe schlanke Gestalt. All dies sind die untrüglichen Zeichen der reinen, unvermischten Germanischen Rasse!” Mammi, du hättest wirklich hören sollen, wie alle Mädchen zu lachen anfangen. Sogar Eva konnte sich das Lachen nicht verbeißen. Von allen Seiten wurde dem Beamten zugerufen: ‘Sie ist doch jüdisch!’ Sein Gesicht war sehenswert. Ich glaube, er war froh, daß der Direktor schnell aufstand, uns mit einer Handbewegung zum Schweigen brachte und die Veranstaltung beendete, indem er dem Mann für seinen so interessanten und lehrreichen Vortrag dankte. Bei den Worten des Direktors mußten wir wieder lachen, aber er sorgte sofort für Ruhe. [...]” *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland*, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Monika Richarz, 3 Bände, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1976–1982), 3, 236–37.

[Dortmund 1935] One day, for the first time in a long while, I saw my children coming back from school with shining eyes, laughing and giggling together. Most of the classes had been gathered that morning, since an official of the new *Rassenamt*, the office of races, had come to give a talk on the differences of races. "I asked the teacher if I could go home" my daughter was saying, "but she said she had orders not to dismiss anyone. You may imagine it was an awful talk. He said that there are two groups of races, a high one and a low one. The high and upper race that was destined to rule the world was the Teutonic, the German race, while one of the lowest was the Jewish race. And then, Mommy, he looked around and asked one of the girls to come to him." The children again began to giggle about their experience. "First we did not know what he intended, and we were very afraid when he picked our Eva. Then he began, and he was pointing at Eva 'Look here, the small head of this girl, her long forehead, her very blue eyes, and blond hair [...] and look,' he said 'at her tall and slender figure. These are the unequivocal marks of a pure and unmixed Teutonic race.' Mommy, you should have heard how at this moment all of the girls burst into laughter. Even Eva could not help laughing. Then from all sides of the hall there was shouting: 'She's a Jewess!' You should have seen the officer's face! I guess he was lucky that the principal got up so quickly and, with a sign to the pupils, stopped the laughing and shouting and dismissed the man, thanking him for his interesting and very enlightening talk. At that we began again to laugh, but he stopped us immediately."<sup>22</sup>

This potential of a successful fake – even of a completely involuntary one, as in the case of little Eva – to radically question the usefulness, applicability, and ontological consistency of the most basic distinctions on which social order rests, and to mock the authorities whose task it is to uphold them, is one main reason why society will always attempt to exert a capillary and totalitarian control on imitative practices, that is, on the appropriation of signs characterizing a specific social category by other categories: the yellow star that a few years later little Eva will be compelled to wear will have the double – and logically contradictory – effect both of controlling her “imitation” of Aryanness, and of admitting that no competent objective judgment on the quality of that imitation is possible, that

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<sup>22</sup> Episodes like this one must of course have been far from infrequent. The most iconic instance is the joke Berlin portrait photographer Hans Ballin played on the Nazi propaganda machine in 1935, when he submitted a photograph of a Jewish baby to a contest for a depiction of the “perfect Aryan baby;” his image won the contest, and the picture of young Hessa Taft appeared not only on the cover of the *Sonne ins Haus* magazine, but on countless cards and posters (Adam Whitnall, “Hessa Taft: ‘Perfect Aryan baby’ of Nazi propaganda was actually Jewish,” *The Independent*, Wednesday, July 2, 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/hessa-taft-perfect-aryan-baby-of-nazi-propaganda-was-actually-jewish-9578268.html>).

Jews cannot be distinguished from non-Jews unless by having recourse to what Genette would call paratextual aids.

This sobering acknowledgement is the basis of a very important strategy through which the anti-Semitic worldview reacts to the world-shattering anxiety induced by the prospect of a successful “fake.” Whenever, and as soon as, damning paratextual information becomes available, that information is put to paradoxical use in evaluating the “imitation” *retrospectively*; this allows the anti-Semite to congratulate himself on his necessary vigilance, and on his eagle-eyed ability in “spotting the fake.”

The company in my present pension [...] are all German and Christian. Conspicuous are [...] one former or present — I t is all the same — general and a similar colonel, both sensible, pleasant people. I asked to be served at a separate little table in the common dining room, for I saw that others were served that way; moreover, that way my vegetarian diet attracts less attention, and above all one could chew better and on the whole it is safer. [...] But today when I went into the dining room the colonel (the general was not there yet) invited me so cordially to the common table that I had to give in. So now the thing took its course. After the first few words it came out that I was from Prague. Both of them – the general, who sat opposite me, and the colonel– were acquainted with Prague. Was I Czech? No. So now explain to those true German military eyes what you really are. Someone else suggested “German-Bohemian,” someone else “Little Quarter.” Then the subject was dropped and people went on eating, but the general, with his sharp ears linguistically schooled in the Austrian army, was not satisfied. After we had eaten, he once more began to wonder about the sound of my German, perhaps more bothered by what he saw than by what he heard. At this point I tried to explain that by my being Jewish. At this his scientific curiosity is satisfied, but not his human feelings. At the same moment, probably by sheer chance, for all the others could not have heard our conversation, but perhaps there was some connection after all, the whole company rose to leave (though yesterday they lingered on together for a long while; I heard that, since my door is adjacent to the dining room). The general too was very restless, though from politeness he brought our little chat to a sort of end before he hurried out with long strides. That hardly satisfied my human feelings either; why must I be a thorn in their flesh? But otherwise it is a good solution; I shall be alone again without ridiculously sitting off by myself, provided that they do not invent some disciplinary action for me.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Franz Kafka, Letter to Max Brod and Felix Weltsch, Meran April 10, 1920: “Die Gesellschaft in meiner jetzigen Pension [...] ist ganz deutsch-christlich, hervorstechend: [...] ein gewesener oder gegenwärtiger, es ist ja das gleiche, General und ein ebensolcher Oberst, beide kluge, angenehme Leute. Ich hatte gebeten, mir im gemeinsamen Speisezimmer auf einem separierten Tischchen zu

What the two well-meaning military men desperately need to perceive, and what therefore they lead themselves to believe that they *are* perceiving, is an immediate, self-evident sensory difference between Jew and German; one which, unlike those pertaining to somatic characters, can offer a foundation and a justification for a verdict of inadequate mastery of the linguistic code, and therefore of *cultural otherness*: the significance and the consequences of this verdict of otherness are clearly perceptible in one of its extreme examples (not only chronologically), the statement by Msgr. Joseph Frings of Cologne in 1942 “The Jew is not of our blood” and “does not speak our language.”<sup>24</sup> I believe that this is the reason for the centrality of the “Jewish” accent (the notorious *Mauscheln*) in the image of the Jew manufactured by anti-Semitic propaganda.<sup>25</sup> That, in the speech of Jews like Kafka, whose mother language was German, the perception of such an accent was, in all likelihood, purely hallucinatory is not the point: paradoxically, what was presented as the objectively motivated indictment of the language of the Jew was nothing but an obvious and predictable consequence of the pre-existing awareness of his being Jewish,<sup>26</sup> which could be easily inferred, if not from his somatic traits, as in Kafka’s case, certainly from his name, which is normally the first object of any verbal exchange, whether it takes place in person or on the phone.

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servieren, ich sah, daß auch sonst derartig serviert wurde, auch fällt das Vegetarische so weniger auf und vor allem, man kann besser kauen und es ist überhaupt sicherer. [...] Nun nötigte mich aber heute der Oberst, als ich ins Speisezimmer kam (der General war noch nicht da) so herzlich zum gemeinsamen Tisch, daß ich nachgeben mußte. Nun ging die Sache ihren Gang. Nach den ersten Worte kam hervor, daß ich aus Prag bin; beide, der General (dem ich gegenüber saß) und der Oberst kannten Prag. Ein Tscheche? Nein. Erkläre nun in diese treuen deutschen militärischen Augen, was du eigentlich bist. Irgendwer sagt “Deutschböhme,” ein anderer “Kleinseite.” Dann legt sich das Ganze und man ißt weiter, aber der General mit seinem scharfen, im österreichischen Heer philologisch geschulten Ohr, ist nicht zufrieden, nach dem Essen fängt er wieder den Klang meines Deutsch zu bezweifeln an, vielleicht übrigens zweifelt mehr das Auge als das Ohr. Nun kann ich das mit meinem Judentum zu erklären versuchen. Wissenschaftlich ist er jetzt zwar zufriedengestellt, aber menschlich nicht. In demselben Augenblick, wahrscheinlich zufällig, denn alle können das Gespräch nicht gehört haben, aber vielleicht doch in irgendeinem Zusammenhang, erhebt sich die ganze Gesellschaft zum Weggehn (gestern waren sie jedenfalls lange beisammen, ich hörte es, da meine Tür an das Speisezimmer grenzt). Auch der General ist sehr unruhig, bringt er aber doch das kleine Gespräch zu einer Art Ende, ehe er mit großen Schritten wegeilt. Menschlich befriedigt mich ja das auch nicht sehr, warum muß ich sie quälen?, sonst ist es eine gute Lösung, ich werde wieder allein sein ohne das komische Alleinsitzen, vorausgesetzt, daß man nicht irgendeine Maßregeln ausdenken wird.” English translation in Franz Kafka, *Letters to Family, Friends and Editors*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston, (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 232-33.

<sup>24</sup> Sander Gilman *The Jew’s Body*, (New York – London: Routledge, 1991), 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Exactly like the indictment of women’s musical abilities, until – quite recently – blind auditions became the norm – see Claudia Goldin & Cecilia Rouse “Orchestrating Impartiality. The impact of ‘blind auditions’ on female musicians,” *NBER Working Paper Series*, Working Paper 5903 <http://www.nber.org/papers/w5903.pdf>



The forgery-fake dynamic is the reason why the problem of telling Jews apart from non-Jews is an obsession of anti-Semitic propaganda. The anxiety which arises from the difficulty, nay, the impossibility, of identifying the Jew consumes the anti-Semite's psyche. From Achim von Arnim's "Über die Kennzeichen des Judenthums," published in 1812, to *Der Stürmer's* 1938 textbook for schoolchildren, *Der Giftpilz* [*The Poisonous Mushroom*],<sup>27</sup> to Goebbel's articles and speeches during the second world war, the anti-Semitic imagination is haunted by the specter of "mimicry," by the Jew's uncanny ability to escape identification through what are regarded as his praeternatural imitative abilities. The impossibility of identifying the Jew with any certainty induces an unbearable anxiety in the anti-Semite, since it calls into question the validity and applicability of the fundamental categories on which both his worldview and his construction of his own identity rest. And of course, in the anti-Semitic worldview, this impossibility is not evidence of the scrupulous honesty with which the Jews kept their side of the "rights for regeneration" deal and, consequently, of the obsolescence of the label "Jew" as an informative, indeed as a viable, social or anthropological category but, on the contrary, of the dreaded *Judenschwindel*, the "Jewish deception."

Jews are the only people who practice mimicry. Mimicry of blood, of name, and of shape. [...] But when the Jew practices mimicry, he hides his essence completely. [...] Jewish mimicry is rooted in the destiny of the race, that is, in the idea of Jewishness.<sup>28</sup>

When the Jews showed up a few weeks ago, marked with a Jewish star, at first, the population of the Reichshauptstadt was perplexed. Only very few knew that there were still that many Jews in Berlin. Everyone discovered in his area or neighborhood a contemporary [but a Jew] acting as if he was harmless, except for his occasional griping or inappropriate action but would have never recognized him as a Jew. So, obviously, he has masked himself in mimicry, adjusted to his environment in which he lived, and waited for the hour of his opportunity. Who of us would have recognized that an enemy stands right next to us who was a silent listener or skilled agitator in talks on the street, the U-Bahn, and amongst the lines assorting in front of the cigarette stores? There are Jews who can hardly be recognized

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<sup>27</sup> Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz*, (Nürnberg: Stürmer-Verlag, 1938).

<sup>28</sup> Hans Blüher, *Secessio Judaica*, (Berlin: Der Weiße Ritter, 1922), 19, my translation; the original is as follows: "Die Juden sind das einzige Volk, das Mimikry treibt. Mimikry des Blutes, des Namens und der Gestalt. [...] Wenn aber der Jude Mimikry treibt, so verbirgt er seine ganze Substanz. [...] Die jüdische Mimikry ist im Schicksal der Rasse verankert, das heißt in der Idee Juda."

from their looks. They have aligned themselves here also as much as possible. These are the most dangerous ones.<sup>29</sup>

This explains the central, and the most tragic, paradox of assimilation: the more seriously the Jews took the “assimilation contract,” and the more scrupulously they displayed their observance of their side of the deal, the more violent and rabid the majority population’s hatred of them became. What the anti-Semites desperately wanted and needed was to be able to distinguish the Jews’ “imitation” of Germanness from the “real thing,” which they considered to be their birthright, the foundation of their identity, and the justification for their being in the world. As a consequence, the more impossible it proved to tell Jews and “pure Germans” apart, the more hostility to Jews grew and spread. And one main form this hostility took was the pervasive attempt to police and control imitative practices, which of course culminated in the German 1941 law mandating the wearing of a six-pointed yellow star for all Jews over the age of six in Germany and in the annexed territories.

On an abstract level, control on imitative practices can assume two main forms. The first is that of only allowing a kind of imitation which has no connection to any claim to social recognition. This is what regularly happens when, for paratextual reasons, the forgery cannot aspire to take anyone in: Macaulay’s vision of “a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (meant, of course, to be confined to India and never to darken the door of the metropolis, geographical isolation compounding the effect of physical anthropology) is a case in point.<sup>30</sup> This brand of imitation, because of its very lack of pragmatic consequences, can be brought to the highest levels of perfection without being perceived as a threat but, on the contrary, is only

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<sup>29</sup> Josef Goebbels, “Die Juden sind Schuld!,” *Der Stürmer*, 16 November 1941: “Als die Juden vor einigen Wochen, geschmückt mit ihrem Judenstern, im Berliner Stadtbild erschienen, war der erste Eindruck unter den Bürgern der Reichshauptstadt der einer allgemeinen Verblüffung. Nur die allerwenigsten wußten, daß es noch so viele Juden in Berlin gab. Jeder entdeckte in seiner Umgebung oder Nachbarschaft eiens harmlos tuenden Zeitgenossen, der zwar durch gelegentliches Meckern oder Miesmachen aufgefallen war, der aber niemand für einen Juden gehalten hätte. Er hatte sich also offenbar getarnt, Mimikry getrieben, sich in seiner Schutzfarbe dem Milieu, in dem er lebte, angepaßt und auf seine Stunde gewartet. Wer unter uns hatte auch nur eine Ahnung, da der Feind direkt neben ihm stand, daß er schweigend oder geschick antreibender Zuhörer war bei Gesprächen auf der Straße, in der U-Bahn, in den von den Zigarettenläden stehenden Schlangen? Es gibt Juden, die man kaum noch an ihrem Äußeren erkennen kann. Diese sind die gefährlichsten,” quoted in Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 606-7; English translation: [https://archive.org/stream/ItsTheFaultOfTheJews/SpeechGoebbelsItsTheFaultOfTheJews1611941\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/ItsTheFaultOfTheJews/SpeechGoebbelsItsTheFaultOfTheJews1611941_djvu.txt)

<sup>30</sup> *Minute by the Hon'ble T[homas] B[abington] Macaulay*, dated the 2nd February 1835: *Bureau of Education. Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839)*, edited by H. Sharp, (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920; reprint: Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965), 107-17.

interpreted as an act of homage to the excellence and the ontological superiority of the model, much like Virgil's imitation of Homer, which, however masterly, could never aspire to the status of a fake since, after all, Homer did not write in Latin.

The second form of control, which is the exact mirror image of the first, is the brutal repression of any form of imitation which, no matter by how circuitous or paranoid an interpretation, could be read as trying to pass as an original, that is, as a fake, and the pre-emptive attribution of fraudulent or generally antisocial intentions to all imitative practices, which (with a seemingly paradoxical reaction) are punished with a violence which escalates in parallel with their pragmatic success:

The more the old Jew with his sometimes ridiculous aspect fades away, the more Jew-hatred increases. One disdained the Jew that made one laugh, but one tolerated and often even liked him; but one hates the Jew in equal position and with equal rights.<sup>31</sup>

That the more honestly the Jews kept faith to their side of the “rights for regeneration” deal,<sup>32</sup> by an ever more painstaking and successful imitation of German culture, the more vicious, violent and uncontrollable anti-Semitism became is thus tragic but not surprising: for an incompetent caricature a laugh will suffice;<sup>33</sup> for a successful fake, performed by hundreds of thousands of people over many decades, nothing short of death camps will do.

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<sup>31</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1855, Heft 33 (13/8/1855), 418, my translation. The original is as follows: “[J]e mehr der alte Jude mit seinen mancherlei lächerlichen Außenseiten verschwindet, desto mehr nimmt der Judenhaß zu. Den Juden, der Stoff zum Humor gab, verachtete man zwar, aber man tolerierte [*sic*] ihn, hatte ihn oft gern, den gleichstehenden und gleichberechtigten haßt man.” (Rachel 26 Juli (Privatmitth.); quoted from <http://www.compactmemory.de/>).

<sup>32</sup> Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> In the early nineteenth century a number of playwrights and actors built their fortunes on unflattering portrayals of what were perceived as the typical mannerisms of unsuccessfully assimilated Jews (Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 64). As the century progressed, it became increasingly clear that caricature was no longer an appropriate means to stigmatize their efforts: “As the [nineteenth] century wore on, it grew more difficult to satirize cultural assimilation precisely because German Jews were acculturating so successfully. [...] [B]y mid-century most of these embarrassing vestiges had been removed from the language and gestures of German Jews. Certainly with the rise of the organized anti-Semitic movement of the 1880s the obviously distinguishing elements had disappeared.” (ibid.).

Centre <http://cirque.unipi.it/en/>), the first center for queer studies in the Italian academic system, which she directs. For well over a decade now she has been working to integrate a number of theoretical approaches (from literary theory, personal construct psychology, queer studies, and several other fields in the human and social sciences) into a coherent and CTR usable methodological perspective.

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