

BETWEEN ASSIMILATION AND CATASTROPHE
HUNGARIAN JEWISH INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSES
IN THE SHADOW OF NAZISM

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A DISSERTATION

in

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Abstract

The dissertation is based on detailed empirical coverage of three publications, the *IMIT yearbooks*, the journal *Libanon* and the *Ararát yearbooks* that provide a representative sample of Hungarian Jewish scholarly and intellectual discourses in the second half of the Horthy era until right before the Hungarian Holocaust of 1944. In the course of the introduction, besides clarifying the subject, aim and scope of the work, a brief overview of modern Hungarian Jewish history is provided and the challenge of writing Hungarian Jewish intellectual history is explained and contextualized. Next to discussing the general characteristics of these three publications and providing overviews of their main contents, the six empirical chapters offer thematic analyses of Hungarian Jewish identity options, the ways internal and external relations were conceived, of alternative models of Jewish culture and assertions of defining values, of political-ideological platforms as well as of various stances on historicity and formulations of historical narratives. These chapters in turn clarify the differences between seven identity options (patriotic, nationalistic as well as five takes on dual identity labeled combined, mixed, primarily Jewish, formally dual and internally conflictual), analyze declarations of five different values as fundamental and fundamentally Jewish (ethics, truth, intellect and culture, life, adaptation and loyalty) and tackle five interpretations of the relevance of historicity stretching from stressing the completely ahistorical to emphasizing the thoroughly historical character of Jewry. Further chapters compare assimilationist - integrationist, interculturalist, particularist, universalist - essentialist and *völkisch* (népi) models of Jewish culture as well as semiliberal, conservative, corporatist, Zionist and religious revivalist political platforms. The dissertation also explores how authors included in this representative sample of the Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly elite interpreted the historical situation in the increasingly desperate years under scrutiny by studying the way historical consciousness worked, how the crisis of Jewry was narrated and what historical analogies were used until the unprecedented nature of the ongoing Judeocide was realized. The dissertation also aims to show the ways in which these discourses transformed in the dramatic years under consideration where the primary focus is on attempts to formulate more inclusive Jewish platforms.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation grew out of my longstanding interest in the history of modern Hungarian and Hungarian Jewish intellectual discourses. This interest was gradually triggered by the desire to understand contemporary scholarly and public exchanges and controversies. Admittedly, they often seem politically charged and are hindered by various forms of miscommunication and misunderstanding. Experiencing such problems and often also a lack of empathy made me want to study divergent historical narratives, different communities of memory, various cultural conceptions and political platforms, to try to compare and, ultimately, to connect them to each other. I ended up focusing on what I see as a relevant historical segment of these more broadly relevant public issues.

Even though completing the empirical research on the scale needed for a dissertation requires patience and perseverance through many mostly lonely hours, any dissertation is the result of many influences and much benevolence. Mine is certainly no exception. Therefore, I would like to thank, above all, my supervisor Viktor Karády, who has remained confident in me even when my work was progressing slower than expected and even when I had to seriously rethink my aims and sharpen my focus. He also kindly asked me to participate in an international, comparative research project which enabled me to let my thinking as well as this dissertation mature over the course of some additional years. I am very grateful to Balázs Trencsényi, who has served as a source of inspiration for many young intellectual historians in East Central Europe with his dedication and broad horizons. At the Department of History of the Central European University, I would like to thank László Kontler and Matthias Riedl who have helped me with recommendation letters, besides much else, and Karl Hall and Susan Zimmermann who have given me sound and useful advice. I have similarly benefited from the helpfulness of librarians, mostly those working at the *National Széchényi Library* and at the *Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library*, both in Budapest. Péter Bencsik (at *Aetas*), Gábor Egry (at *Múltunk*) and Attila Novák (at *Szombat*) have generously agreed to edit and publish my articles in Hungarian that drew on elements of this dissertation project and thus helped me clarify my ideas and improve my writing. I could always count on the friendly support of many of my fellow doctoral student and I would like to particularly single out (in strict alphabetical order and with the danger in mind of

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Introduction

I. The Subject, Aims and Scope of the Dissertation

This dissertation offers a series of linked case studies on the discourse of a broad segment of the Hungarian Jewish intellectual elite who might be called Jewish Hungarian Jewish.¹ Each of the three case studies aims to explore a decisively important historical period, the time between assimilation and catastrophe, namely the 1930s and early 1940s. More concretely, the dissertation features detailed and comprehensive coverage of three centrally important and explicitly Jewish printed organs, namely the yearbooks of the *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* (Israelite Hungarian Literary Society, or IMIT) that released its new series of fifteen extensive volumes between 1929 and 1943 (Chapter II to V), the journal *Libanon* that appeared altogether thirty-four times between 1936 and 1943 (Chapter VI) and the *Ararát* yearbooks, six of which were published from the year the Second World War broke out until the catastrophic year of 1944 when the large majority of Hungarian Jews were killed (Chapter VII).

Drawing on close reading of these rich and diverse, though still relatively little known and hardly studied documents of Hungarian Jewish intellectual activities, this dissertation sets two main goals: on the descriptive level, it ambitions to provide a relatively detailed and balanced summary presentation of their main contents. On the analytical level, it

¹ Here I am adopting the useful, if at first hearing perhaps somewhat awkward sounding qualification of Stanisław Krajewski who called himself a Polish Polish Jew to stress that he was a Polish Jew who was also a Pole and to thereby distinguish himself from Jewish Polish Jews. See Stanisław Krajewski, *Poland and the Jews. Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2005). Thus, the expression Jewish Hungarian Jews is meant to imply that they were both Hungarian Jews and Jewish and thus different from Hungarian Hungarian Jews (who might also be labeled Hungarian Jewish Hungarians). While the expression is somewhat cumbersome, I consider its analytical import to compensate for this.

offers a critical discussion of a number of important questions in modern Hungarian Jewish history as they were reflected in these three extended published sources. The research topics that shall be addressed in the course of later chapters include, first, the specificities and evolution of Hungarian Jewish collective identity discourses with a focus on various formulations of dual (Jewish and Hungarian) identity. Second, various interpretations of internal differences and external relations of Jewry and the ways they were increasingly transformed in the years of legal discrimination in Hungary (that started to take more and more severe forms after 1938) are explored. Third, competing conceptions or models of Jewish culture and claims made about Jewish specificities are under scrutiny. Fourth, the spectrum of Hungarian Jewish political ideas, particularly in the age of exclusion is mapped and, last but not least, alternative historical narratives almost all of which aimed to account for the crisis of the Jewish community as whole, or at least certain aspects of it are interpreted. These five topics, which could be broadly labeled identity, relations, culture, politics and history, are all highly complex and deserve separate analyses in their own right. In this thesis, I will restrict myself to a thorough analysis of the ways in which they were dealt in these three primary sources, providing, where necessary, references to broader discussions.

In other words, the chief goal of this study is to discuss these complex and rather controversial questions in a historically sensitive and synchronically pluralistic manner. In practice, this means that a picture of rich inner Jewish pluralism shall be painted (through exploring multiple identity options, various models of culture, differing narratives of crisis, etc.) and important discursive changes in the relatively short, but dramatic period of time under analysis will be regularly noted and illustrated on concrete examples. Thus, a

dynamic and colorful presentation of Hungarian Jewish intellectual discourses just prior to the Shoah ought to emerge that avoids all forms of essentialization and the potential trap of too strong a focus on single discursive traditions (whether or not such focuses directly imply identity choices, political agendas, cultural preferences or conceptions of history on the part of their authors). Thus, instead of offering a seemingly all-encompassing, but necessarily selective explanation of central positions and main trends, my aim is rather to approach Jewish authors hermeneutically (or more simply: emphatically, but not uncritically) and to identify implicit disagreements and explicit debates (which, admittedly, took place much more rarely) between them.

Having noted the centrality of diachronic shifts and synchronic diversity to my study, I ought to explain what this study is *not* in order to better clarify my specific focus. I neither study the Hungarian Holocaust of 1944, nor what led to it, nor do I directly address the looming question of Hungarian anti-Semitism, both of which have generated a pool of sound publications by now.² Nor do I venture into literary history where others have already completed some significant works: the analysis of fiction is absent from the pages of this dissertation.³ Perhaps most importantly, I do not analyze so called non-Jewish Jews, i.e. a

² Here the works of Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide – The Holocaust in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), Szabolcs Szita, *A zsidók üldöztetése Budapesten, 1944-1945* (Budapest: Magyar Auschwitz Alapítvány, 1994), László Karsai, *Holokauszt* (Budapest: Pannonica, 2001), Judit Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben az V. (szegedi) csendőrkörületben* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1995) and Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach, *Das letzte Kapitel. Der Mord an den ungarischen Juden* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2004) on the one hand and (particularly for the postwar period) those of András Kovács, *A másik szeme. Zsidók és antiszemiták a háború utáni Magyarországon* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2008) and Éva Ständeisky, *Antiszemitizmusok* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007) on the other need to be mentioned. The works by János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszméletörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001) and Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006) have broader focuses, but are relevant in this context too. The extended Chapter VIII of Gyurgyák's work on Hungarian radical right-wing and anti-Semitic "directions and movements" is the most detailed empirical study of these phenomena to date.

³ Studies of East Central European intellectuals often focus on literary authors. They have undoubtedly played major roles in national movements and could possess a level of symbolic-political capital rarely matched elsewhere. The study of literary cults has been flourishing in Hungary for some decades now with authors such

substantial part of Jewish intellectuals,⁴ some of whom were conservative and many of whom ought to be qualified as liberals and men of the left, but all of whom were completely unaffiliated with or simply not participating in Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectual initiatives.⁵ They are not subjects of this dissertation, even though admittedly several such authors happen to be much better known and are more often included in mainstream canons of Hungarian intellectual history than the ones who shall be in the focus of the explorations below.⁶ Much rather than renegotiating some of the details of such canons, my aim is to enrich this canon and therefore I want to address a still little known area: the intellectual discourse of the increasingly legally discriminated and persecuted Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars and opinion makers, their ideas and plans, hopes and concerns. Some of them might

as Péter Dávidházi, István Margócsy and József Takáts publishing important works in this vein. See, József Takáts (ed.), *Az irodalmi kultusz kutatás kézikönyve* (Budapest: Kijárat, 2003). On specifically Hungarian Jewish topics, the focus of Tamás Ungvári's monograph on the "Jewish question" is almost entirely a literary one (at the expense of neglecting the political and social historical aspects of the topic). The question of Hungarian Jewish literature and literary form are in the center of the recent dissertation (about to be published in Hungarian and French) of Clara Royer. On the complex question of Hungarian-Jewish literature, there is also an older, but still relevant collection: Petra Török (ed.), *A határ és a határolt. Töprengések a magyar-zsidó irodalom létformáiról* (Budapest: Országos Rabbiképző Intézet Yahalom Zsidó Művelődéstörténeti Kutatócsoportja, 1997). I ought to add that many practitioners of intellectual history in Hungary happen to be literary scholars.

⁴ When most broadly defined, the category could include converts and even some individuals whose parents or grandparents converted and raised them as Christians, but who were nevertheless often identified as "somehow still" or even as "essentially" Jewish. By recognizing this fact, one does not necessarily consider it acceptable. In this instance, the descriptive and the normative levels ought to be strictly separated.

⁵ Thus, these initiatives arguably created and maintained a subculture, not only within Hungarian culture or within Jewry at large, but also (more narrowly) within Hungarian Jewry.

⁶ Such intellectuals have received ample attention and some excellent treatments too. See György Poszler, Szerb Antal (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1973), Győző Ferencz, Radnóti Miklós élete és költészete: kritikai életrajz (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), and Krisztina Mikó, Halász Gábor (Budapest: Balassi, 1995). There are those who were born Christian, but in whose case the question of their Jewishness is nevertheless a significant public issue, see in particular the recent, but diametrically opposed interpretations of Oszkár Jászi. György Litván, Jászi Oszkár (Budapest: Osiris, 2003). János Pelle, Jászi Oszkár: Életrajzi, eszme és kortörténeti esszé (Budapest: XX. Század Intézet, 2001). Pelle considers the personal "Jewish question" of Jászi and its public version in his times to have played a major role, while Litván believed the matter hardly merited much attention. On György (or Georg) Lukács alone there are many books even in international languages. See the brief but informative work George Lichtheim, Lukács (London: Fontana / Collins, 1970). On the Hungarian (mostly Jewish) intellectual emigration, see Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought. Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919-1933* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991). See also the new work, dealing more with natural scientists, of Tibor Frank, *Double Exile. The Migration of Hungarian-Jewish Professionals Through Germany to the United States* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009). For some ideas on recent negotiations of Hungarian intellectual canons in the vein of intellectual history, please see my next subchapter.

have feared the worst, but the Hungarian Jewish catastrophe of 1944 was certainly not preordained and, what is more, it seemed like it might be avoided until the last stages of the Second World War.⁷ There is no doubt that these horrible experiences left deep scars on all of them. It ought to be noted that many of the contributors to these three publications survived the war years and some of them continued to live for decades afterwards – even if they could not (or, as in some cases and at least for a while, did not want to) address Jewish themes in communist-ruled Hungary.⁸

In spite of significant improvements in the conditions of studying Jewish issues and a good deal of respectable scholarly accomplishments since 1989, the lack of strong institutional backing to study modern Hungarian Jewish history and rather scarce opportunities to receive funding for such research projects locally have remained to constitute serious obstacles. Consequently, in-depth studies on several crucial aspects of Hungarian Jewish thought are still missing and the memory of Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars arguably has continued to be marginalized in particular. This study hopes to revive the memory of several relatively little remembered authors and thereby fill an obvious and major gap in Hungarian Jewish scholarship through a empirically rich and analytically sound discussion of how committed Jewish intellectuals wrote and reacted to changes in Hungary when they had to act in the shadow of Nazism and were in word and deed increasingly qualified as enemies of their own state? In short, the dissertation aims to be the study of the

⁷ As shall be shown, both the ongoing Holocaust and the simultaneous hoping for the survival of Hungarian Jewry left unmistakable discursive traces in 1942 and 1943. The latter arguably primarily through a new wave of emphasizing Hungarian national attachments and the positive exceptionality of Hungary in an anti-Semitic continent.

⁸ To mention only some of these authors whose names and writings will often reappear in the course of this dissertation: József Turóczi-Trostler passed away in 1962 at 74, Fülöp Grünwald in 1964 at 77, Imre Benoschofsky in 1970 at 67, Jenő Zsoldos in 1972 at 76, Imre Keszi in 1974 at 64, Aladár Komlós in 1980 at 88, István Hahn in 1984 at 71, while Sándor Scheiber died in 1985 at 72. Their postwar stories (when explicitly Jewish subjects were largely tabooed in the public realm) remain to be written.

1930s and early 1940s from the Jewish intellectual point of view. What matters, above all, from this perspective is how leading Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectuals interpreted their historical, political and cultural situation that I broadly and rather unassumingly decided to call, aiming to avoid the projection of any historical teleology, between assimilation and catastrophe. The relevant questions in this vein are what did they define as their most urgent scholarly and cultural tasks, how did they perceive the drastic ongoing changes and in what ways did they aim to react to them (or remain as uninfluenced by them as possible)?

The decade and a half under analysis starts at the beginning of the Great Depression with the launching of the new IMIT yearbook series right upon the refoundation of the Society. As is well known, this short period of time brought many unexpected and increasingly severe negative developments for Hungarian Jews which ultimately led to an unprecedented catastrophe. At the same time, Hungarian Jewish printed culture thrived in the 1930s, culminating in dozens of simultaneous initiatives in the mid-1930s. In broad terms, this flourishing was due to two major factors: to the (largely though not exclusively externally imposed) crisis of Hungarian national identification after 1919 and to the rich plurality and diversity of perspectives internal to Jewry. Arguably, the ideology of Jewish assimilationism, much more powerfully expressed towards the Hungarian nation than towards surrounding nations of the East Central Europe as well as some spectacular accomplishments in the frame of the “social contract of assimilation” legitimated and fortified the dominance of an increasingly conservative and growingly anachronistic form of liberalism. On the other hand, its prevalence in the political, scholarly and artistic realms

alienated large segments of the younger generations from the Jewish community as such.⁹ This mainstream Jewish and thus, in some ways highly specific form of Hungarian nationalism was also responsible for the high levels of quiescence. Their Jewishness might have been an important frame of activities for Jews in Hungary in terms of group belonging (i.e. national acculturation might have taken place in primarily Jewish settings) but content-wise it often seemed to offer comparatively little.¹⁰ As many have already remarked, in the Dualist times, compared to the size of the (internally split) community, the level of specifically Jewish cultural production of Hungarian Jews was relatively small.

The fundamental challenges and often drastic changes for the worse that the inter-war period brought in Hungary, alongside reception of new trends from outside the country led to much more intense forms of soul searching. There was a new and relatively open negotiation among Hungarian Jews splintered into various subcultures. The discourse of Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectual elite also revealed many signs of marked inner differences. Established organs presented alternative perspectives and competed to (re)define the mainstream, some organs were re-launched and many newly established at this time. In

⁹ The high level of Hungarian Jewish assimilationism is a prominent theme in the recently released YIVO Encyclopedia which also offers contrasts and comparisons with other eastern European countries. See Gershon David Hundert (chief ed.), *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008).

¹⁰ The level of Jewish cultural activities in Hungary left much to be desired, also (or rather especially) in the eyes of those actively involved in it. In terms of journals, Ben Chananja, edited by Leopold Löw, written in German and published in Szeged between 1858 and 1867 was the first of its kind, but although it rather ironically, occasionally propagated Hungarianization at times, it was not published in Hungarian. See the study of Viktória Bányai, “A magyar zsidó sajtó előzményei és kezdetei”. At <http://www.hebraisztika.hu/attachments/00000125.pdf>. Last accesss: Jan 19, 2010. After the compromise, Löw’s pathbreaking initiative was not followed by other ventures until the early 1880s or, more precisely, after the beginning of the Tiszaeszlár blood libel trial. This was the time when Egyenlőség and Magyar Zsidó Szemle emerged. As already noted, IMIT was established in the 1890s, while the other two organs under consideration here only appeared in the second half of the 1930s. Another notable publication, Múlt és Jövő began appearing in the time of the Dual Monarchy (it was first released as an almanac in 1911) and continued until the years of the Second World War (in spite of József Patai’s emigration to the Yishuv). Overall, however, the Dual Monarchy saw relatively few Hungarian Jewish initiatives: Sándor Scheiber lists fifty-three Hungarian Jewish periodicals being released in 1936 (not all of which were in Hungarian), compared to the mere twelve thirty years earlier. See Sándor Scheiber, *Magyar zsidó hírlapok és folyóiratok bibliográfiája 1847-1992* (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1993), 216.

short, in the most severe moment of crisis, various Hungarian Jewish conceptions were contesting and renegotiating some of the most basic contours of Jewish life.

It should be emphasized here that Hungarian Jewish materials were released long into the war years. This phenomenon is unique in its extent and is all the more unusual when the fact that Hungary was fighting on the Axis side in the Second World War is taken into account. Since Hungarian oppression was severe but not all-encompassing even in the war years and the Hungarian Holocaust of 1944 came as the final chapter of the Judeocide, the genocide of European Jewry, Hungarian Jews could still maintain some, if only few of their recurrent publications until late 1943 or even early 1944. Another notable feature of the Hungarian Jewish intellectual elite, in the context of the international relevance of this research, is that their rather pronounced Hungarian national identification notwithstanding, they were also in some ways part of the larger German cultural sphere.¹¹ While certain members of this intellectual elite showed particular fondness for this cultural affiliation, a kind of bilingualism was the norm also much more widely – an intriguing phenomenon which to date received very little scholarly attention. It goes without saying that such strong German connections and attachments acquired entirely new relevance and tragic coloring with the Nazi *Machtergreifung* of early 1933 and the ensuing persecution of German Jews.¹² Hungarian Jews were close observers of the unfolding German Jewish tragedy, who could both stand frighteningly close to the watershed events but could, though decreasingly so, pretend to live on an island of *relative* safety. Whether they hoped to survive the

¹¹ An important work (of two volumes) was recently released on the history of the German Jewish press. Eleonora Lappin and Michael Nagel (eds.), *Deutsch-jüdische Presse und jüdische Geschichte: Dokumente, Darstellungen, Wechselbeziehungen* = *The German-Jewish Press and Jewish History: Documents, Representations, Interrelations* (Bremen: Edition Lumiere, 2008).

¹² On the German Jewish press under the Nazis, Katrin Diehl has published an important scholarly monograph, see Katrin Diehl, *Die jüdische Presse im Dritten Reich. Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Fremdbestimmung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997).

unprecedented anti-Jewish and ultimately all-European onslaught or grew to despair in the face of terrible and worsening news (and sometimes both could be the case) prior to the Hungarian catastrophe of 1944, Hungarian Jews did leave many still understudied, though partly published documents that reflect this historical process.¹³

I have chosen the three case studies from among a number of possible options with several criteria in mind, the main one being their representative nature in different areas.¹⁴ The *IMIT yearbooks* were a chief forum of established, mainstream Hungarian Jewish scholarly discourse,¹⁵ *Libanon* of up-to-date insights, cultural conceptions and new plans and *Ararát* of political ideas, historical narratives (usually of crises) and literary

¹³ For a similar perspective on the Polish Jewish inter-war, see Katrin Steffen, *Jüdische Polonitaet. Ethicitaet und Nation im Spiegel der polnischsprachigen jüdischen Presse, 1918-1939* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

¹⁴ Other journals that could have been included but either did not quite fit the comparison or were studied elsewhere are *Egyenlőség* and *Múlt és Jövő*. The politically central organ of Neolog Jewry, *Egyenlőség*, stopped appearing in 1938, which would have excluded the final and the most tension-ridden years of the period under consideration. On the earlier heydays of this liberal but highly combative organ Miklós Konrád has recently published empirical studies. See, for instance, Miklós Konrád, “A neológ zsidóság útkeresése a századfordulón” in *Századok*, 2005/6., pp. 1335–1369. See also the important memoirs of Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő: Az Egyenlőség évtizedei, 1881–1931* (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1993). *Múlt és Jövő*, a secular cultural Zionist venture was already the subject of an extensive recent study by the chief editor of its revived (post-1988) version, János Kőbányai who wrote a dissertation about it at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Hungarian under the supervision of Michael K. Silber.

¹⁵ An alternative to the *IMIT yearbooks* would have been *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, a crucial Jewish studies periodical in Hungarian (though it also published materials in Hebrew and occasionally German). *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* was started in 1884 and served as an official organ of the Rabbinical Seminary after 1927. Prior to its current series that was started in 2004, *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* released a total of 65 volumes. I decided against studying it (and in favor of the *IMIT yearbooks*) mainly for the reason that its discussions tended to be more technical and thus of less interest for wider publics. At the same time, many of its contributors also appear in the *IMIT yearbooks*, resulting in a highly significant amount of overlapping content. I counted 25 authors who both published in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* between 1927 and 1941 and appear in the main text of my chapters on the *IMIT yearbooks* (Ernö Ballagi, Lajos Blau, Sándor Büchler, Imre Csetényi, Dénes Friedman, Izidor Goldberger, Zsigmond Groszmann, Henrik Guttmann, Mihály Guttmann, István Hahn, Bernát Heller, Ármin Kecskeméti, Arnold Kiss, Bertalan Kohlbach, Ottó Komlós, Sámuel Krausz, Ernő Munkácsi, Sándor Scheiber, Samu Szemere, Pál Takács, Pál Vidor, Pál Weisz, Adolf Wertheimer, Salamon Widder, Ernő Winkler). *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* was slightly shorter than the *IMIT yearbooks*: it was released between 1927 and 1941 on altogether 4322 pages, with much more variation as issues of the individual volumes could amount to anything between 84 (as in 1938) and 516 pages (as in 1931) at this time. It was edited by Lajos Blau, Simon Hevesi and Dénes Friedman, once also by Miksa Weisz, from the 1930s Simon Hevesi served as chief editor and was helped by Sámuel Löwinger, Mihály Guttmann, Ferenc Hevesi and Henrik Guttmann. In the volumes of 1927 and 1932 Lajos Blau made by far most contributions (in 1930, he made 22, while no one else made more than one). The three main sections of *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* were titled “Society”, “Scholarship” and “Literature”, but some of its issues also included “Homiletics”, “Pedagogy”, “Sources” and “Chronics”.

compositions. Moreover, all three periodicals cover more or less the entire period under consideration here, thus allowing me to trace the discursive shifts towards the peak of the crisis. Although the length of original source materials differs between the three chosen cases, these three were still the most comparable in terms of volume, as well as in terms of evenness and reliability of publication. Finally, while some of the other journals have been dealt with elsewhere, the in-depth study of these three offers fresh empirical evidence, adding to our knowledge of interwar Hungarian Jewish discourses.

The *IMIT yearbooks* (*IMIT évkönyvek* in original), whose 5 000 pages and more than 200 scholarly articles constitute the main body of four consecutive empirical chapters, was the annual publication of the *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* (the Israelite Hungarian Literary Society). These fifteen yearbooks consist mainly of lecture transcripts (which in their turn were attended by audiences of several hundred people) that were delivered with the aim of presenting and popularizing scholarly topics and findings. The *IMIT yearbooks* focused on Jewish historical and cultural themes, featuring mainly two kinds of articles: on Hungarian Jewish topics and on topics of general Jewish concern. IMIT started its new series in 1929 and continued to appear until 1943, which makes it a veritable treasury of in-depth information about Hungarian Jewish scholarship in the inter-war period, also before the onslaught of increasingly stricter and more encompassing discrimination. *Libanon* was a precious new periodical offering reflections on Jewish culture and several programmatic articles. Its contents also reflected historical developments in revealing ways. Initially, the journal was edited by teachers of the Jewish Gymnasium in Pest and began appearing three years after the Nazi regime was established but still shortly before the first general anti-Jewish law was adopted in Hungary (i.e. more severe than the specifically

education-related numerus clauses of 1920). Since it could continue as the official organ of the Jewish Museum in the 1940s, *Libanon* was released all the way until the end of 1943. *Ararát* was series of yearbooks that first appeared when the general Hungarian legal discrimination against Jews was already in place. *Ararát* was released during the years of the Second World War with the help of the Association of Israelite Women of Pest and for charitable purposes. It was even published, one last time, for the catastrophic year of 1944. *Ararát* features a number of intriguing Jewish literary and political pieces, making it one of the prime examples of Hungarian Jewish intellectual courage and resistance in these years.

While the five main themes of the analysis (the Jewish Hungarian Jewish discourse on Jewish *identity, relations, culture, politics* and *history*) are the red threads that run through the study, the themes of the individual chapters vary in accordance with the specific contents of the sources. In the case of *IMIT*, I devote an introductory chapter to describe the profile of the association which published the yearbooks and narrate the story of the yearbooks in the period under scrutiny. This introductory chapter, which also presents an overview of the ways in which the publishers and authors of *IMIT* understood its position and intentions, is followed by three empirical chapters dealing with the contents of the yearbooks. Chapter III is a study on collective identity discourses exploring Hungarian Jewish identity options and the evaluation of main modern Jewish traditions. It also attempts to reveal the contours of the dominant Jewish scholarly position. Chapter IV, titled “On the Historicity, Values and Roles of Jewry”, aims to unpack the rather abstract discourse on Jewish specificities, central values and historicity through thematic clustering of the relevant articles. It also analyzes the chief form of apologetic discourse, namely the one on Jewish contributions. Chapter V scrutinizes the history of the present in the discourse of this central

forum of Hungarian Jewish scholarship, comparing various descriptions of the present and tracing their evolution. The history of the present is also addressed through the examples of two more concrete discussions: of developments in Palestine and the Zionist movement and of German culture and might, Nazism, the Second World War and, ultimately, the genocide of European Jewry.

The subject of Chapter VI is the journal *Libanon*. Following the structure introduced with *IMIT*, I first present the key characteristics of this source. The main aims of this chapter are, first, to understand the formulations of various models of Jewish culture and account for the diversity of foundational ideas of this text-based Jewish subculture and, second, to explore the impact of time and tremendous historical changes on Hungarian Jewish perspectives as it transpires through this rather unique source. Unlike the *IMIT yearbooks*, which show only more gradual changes of content, *Libanon* reveals some highly significant shifts that are worthy of detailed attention.

Chapter VII is reserved for the discussion of the *Ararát yearbooks*, and begins with an analysis of the elaborate but contested ideas and plans of Aladár Komlós to define Hungarian Jewish literature and develop its literary history. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the various political-ideological platforms and divergent historical narratives, most of them tracing the origins of the contemporary crisis. Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes and brings together the findings of the six empirical chapters and suggests future directions of inquiry.

II. The Challenge of Jewish Intellectual History

Having briefly introduced the theme, aims and sources, as well as the potential relevance and chapter structure of the dissertation, let me devote some pages to a historiographical sketch of recent developments surrounding the Hungarian Jewish historical theme, in order to contextualise my intellectual historical approach. The aim of this brief subchapter is to highlight the recent revival of Hungarian Jewish historiography, its achievements, as well as the areas that still remain to be explored.¹⁶ It also outlines the general contours of local intellectual historical scholarship and explains the relatively novel nature of my efforts to bring these two developments together. Finally, it suggests some ways in which the intellectual historical approach, meticulously engaging the rich and under-explored source base, could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Hungarian Jewish history in the modern period as a whole.

As noted, contemporary Hungarian Jewish historiography is marked by a surge in the number of novel works exploring this previously understudied area, but also by some notable gaps in scholarship. Relative neglect of some potentially fruitful approaches stands out as a problem in its own right. This has much to do with the fact that in the postwar period all the way until 1989, the discussion on Hungarian Jewish topics, including Hungarian Jewish history, was minimal. Most attempts to address this vital aspect of

¹⁶ The gaps in Hungarian scholarship on this topic stand out especially if we compare intellectual historical publications on Hungarian Jewish themes with similar works on German Jewish topics. Among works that could be of particular interest for the Hungarian context (although the list is by no means exhaustive), I would single out the collection of insightful articles by Steven Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises* (London and New York: Macmillan and New York University Press, 1996) and David N. Myers, *Resisting History. Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003). See also the forthcoming monograph of Malachi Haim Hacohen, *Jacob and Esau Between Nation and Empire: The Central European Jewish Intelligentsia, 1781-1968* (2011), as well as the comparative works by Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) and David Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000).

Hungarian history and national consciousness were relegated to the realm of art, especially literature, as for instance in the works of Imre Kertész, although even in this form they received relatively little attention.¹⁷ Kertész' own writings were, and continue to be, much more appreciated in Germany than in Hungary. In terms of scholarly works prior to 1989, only a handful of publications merit attention, among them György Száraz's study of anti-Semitism,¹⁸ as well as a few source publications, such as the collections edited by Péter Hanák¹⁹ as well as Ferenc Miszlevitz and Róbert Simon.²⁰ Throughout this period, the most important works dealing with the Holocaust,²¹ the postwar period itself²² or Hungarian Jewish history in general²³ were written and published outside Hungary, and only started appearing in the Hungarian scholarly realm after 1989.

¹⁷ Imre Kertész, *Sorstalanság* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1975). See also Mária Ember's novel *Hajtúkanyar* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1974) which included substantial historical documentation, as well as the early novels of Imre Keszi, *Elysium* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1963) and Béla Zsolt, *Kilenc koffer* (Budapest: Magvető, 1980). The latter was originally published in installments in the journal *Haladás* in the immediate years after the war, just before the establishment of the communist dictatorship.

¹⁸ György Száraz, *Egy előítélet nyomában* (Budapest: Magvető, 1976).

¹⁹ Péter Hanák (ed.), *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984).

²⁰ Ferenc Miszlevitz and Róbert Simon (ed.), *Zsidókérdés Kelet- és Közép-Európában* (Budapest: ELTE, 1985). This book was the first to directly challenge the Bolshevik dogma on the Jewish question, and the taboo it placed over this topic. It included articles by authors such as Lev Trotsky and Isaac Deutscher, among others, and was banned within a month after its publication in December 1985. In his account of this epoch immediately after the end of socialism in 1989, Róbert Simon describes this case of censorship as exemplary of the regime. See Róbert Simon "A zsidókérdés utolsó félévszázadának kelet-közép-európai elágazásairól – Egy könyv betiltása kapcsán" in Balázs Füzfa, Gábor Szabó (eds.), *A zsidókérdésről* (Szombathely: Németh László Szakkollégium, 1989).

²¹ Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide – The Holocaust in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

²² Péter Kende (ed.), *Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon* (Párizs: Magyar Füzetek, 1984). This was one of the *Tamizdat* volumes of Hungarian emigrants in Paris.

²³ László Gonda, *A zsidóság Magyarországon, 1526-1945* (Budapest: Századvég, 1992). Gonda passed away in 1985 without completing the work (the manuscript was later finalized by Anikó Prepuk). Gonda's account starts in 1526, which was part of an agreement with Sándor Scheiber who was supposed to write on the earlier centuries, which never happened, as Scheiber passed away in 1985. This monograph was the first of this kind since Lajos Venetianer's version from the early 1920s, which emphasized the "millennium of common fate" between Hungarians and Jews. His work was republished in 1986, without the original foreword and introduction. See Lajos Venetianer, *A magyar zsidóság története a honfoglalástól a világháború kitöréséig* (Budapest: Könyvtérképző Vállalat, 1986).

Especially in Budapest,²⁴ which unlike most other cities of the region still has a substantial Jewish community,²⁵ the situation changed dramatically after 1989.²⁶ Next to the revival of contemporary Jewish publications and later the republication of some modern classics mostly by the publishing house *Múlt és Jövő*,²⁷ new historical studies soon began to appear.²⁸ They included works offering general narratives,²⁹ several monographs on the controversial history of the Jewish question in Hungary from different points of views,³⁰ more specialized scholarly studies in social history,³¹ monographs with regional or local

²⁴ Géza Komoróczy et al., *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999).

²⁵ Empirical explorations of the alleged (actually quite modest) Jewish religious revival in Budapest were conducted by Kata Zsófia Vincze, *Visszatérők a tradícióhoz. Elszakadás a zsidó hagyománytól és a báál tsuvá jelenség kérdései a rendszerváltás utáni Budapesten*. (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2009) and, somewhat earlier, by Richárd Papp, *Van-e zsidó reneszánsz* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2005).

²⁶ Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor, "Fine-tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s" in Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (eds.) *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007). Subchapter 9 is devoted to "Jewish History and the Historiographical Debates on Anti-Semitism" (pp.46-50). It starts with the claim that "The historical research on anti-Semitism became one of the most contested and vivid fields of social research in Hungary after 1989."

²⁷ Ignác Goldziher, *A zsidóság lényege és fejlődése* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2000). Lajos Blau, *Zsidók és világkultúra* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999). Vilmos Bacher, *Szentírás és zsidó tudomány* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1998).

²⁸ The first collections dealing with the recent past to be released within Hungary were published in 1989 and 1990. Balázs Füzfai and Gábor Szabó (eds.), *A zsidókérdésről* (Szombathely: Németh László Szakkollégium, 1989). Ferenc L. Lendvai, Anikó Sohár and Pál Horváth (eds.), *Hét évtized a hazai zsidóság életében, I-II*. (Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Intézete, 1990).

²⁹ Ferenc Fejtő published *Magyarság, zsidóság* (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2000). Anikó Prepuk narrated the regional story in Anikó Prepuk, *A Zsidóság Közép- és Kelet-Európában a 19.-20. Században* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1997). In Israel, there appeared the illustrated synthetic volume, written by multiple authors and edited by Anna Szalai (ed.), *The Land of Hagar. The Jews of Hungary: History, Society and Culture* (Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth, The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora and the Israeli Ministry of Defence Publishing House, 2002). See also Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

³⁰ János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszméletörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), Tamás Ungvári, *Csalódások kora. A „zsidókérdés” Magyarországi története* (Budapest: Scolar, 2010). Vera Ránki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1999). In Hungarian the latter work appeared as Vera Ránki, *Magyarok – Zsidók – Nacionalizmus. A befogadás és kirekesztés politikája* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999).

³¹ Viktor Karády, *Zsidóság, polgárosodás, asszimiláció. Tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997). Viktor Karády, *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek (1867-1945): történeti-szociológiai tanulmányok* (Budapest: Replika-kör, 2000). Kinga Frojimovics, *Szétszakadt történelem. Zsidó vallási irányzatok Magyarországon 1868-1950* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2008). Yehuda Don, *A magyarországi zsidóság társadalom- és gazdaságtörténete a 19-20. században: tanulmányok* (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatóközpont, 2006).

focuses but with broader agendas,³² more specific studies of societal organizations and social groups,³³ events³⁴, individuals,³⁵ as well as important source editions.³⁶ The same period saw an expansion of scholarship on the Hungarian Holocaust and anti-Semitism, which, however, go well beyond the scope of this enquiry.

This recent boom in Jewish historical studies coincided with growing reception of the immense amount of international scholarship of more empirical bent as well as of some novel theories and methods, though few historians have seriously engaged with such innovations.³⁷ These recent changes brought a sea-change to the landscape of Hungarian historiography, accompanied by a broad generational shift, notwithstanding some marked continuities in personnel of the profession. Perhaps the most dramatic change has to do with new subfields being catapulted to prominence. As noted in Trencsényi and Apor's account of

³² Such works have been released on the cities of Érsekújvár / Nové Zámky, Kassa/Košice or Miskolc, or the region Banat, among others. See Sándor Strba and Tamás Lang, *Az érsekújvári zsidóság története* (Budapest: Pesti Kalligram, 2004). Éva Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció A kassai zsidóság a két világháború között (1918-1938)* (Dunaszerdahely: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2004). Victor Neumann, *The End of a History: The Jews of Banat from the Beginning to Nowadays* (Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, 2006). Howard N. Lupovitch, *Jews at the Crossroads: Tradition and Accommodation during the Golden Age of the Hungarian Nobility, 1729-1878* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006).

³³ Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994).

³⁴ Péter Bihari, *Lövészárkok a hátszágban. Középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországn* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2008). Jacob Katz, *A House Divided. Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1998).

³⁵ Ambrus Miskolczy, Horn Ede – *A magyar-zsidó nemzeti identitástudat forrásvidékén* (Gödöllő: Attraktor, 2007). Tibor Frank (ed.), *Honszeretet és felekezeti hűség. Wahrmann Mór 1831-1892* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2006). László Tökéczki, Vázsonyi Vilmos (Budapest: XX. Század Intézet, 2005).

³⁶ Géza Komoróczy et al. (eds.), *Héber kútforrások Magyarország és a magyarországi zsidóság történetéhez: a kezdetektől 1686-ig* (Budapest: Osiris, 2003). János Kőbányai (ed.), *Zsidó reformkor* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2000). On the Jewish Council of Budapest, see Mária Schmidt, *Kollaboráció vagy kooperáció? A Budapesti Zsidó Tanács* (Budapest: Minerva, 1990).

³⁷ Here the collections of Gábor Gyáni provide the most conspicuous exception. See Gábor Gyáni, *Történészdiskurzusok* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2002). Gábor Gyáni, *Posztmodern kánon* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2003). Gábor Gyáni, *Relatív történelem* (Budapest: Typotex, 2007). Gábor Gyáni, *Az elveszített múlt: a tapasztalat mint emlékezet és történelem* (Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2010).

recent historiography, one of the strongest tendencies in Hungary was the rise of (a peculiarly inclusive version of) social history.³⁸

Next to this transformation of the mainstream, the rejuvenation of Hungarian intellectual history appears as another visible trend. Its scale remains modest, and the body of scholarship dispersed among practitioners in various disciplines, from history to literature, discursive politics, law or even aesthetics. Nevertheless, a collection of translations from the Cambridge School³⁹ and various translations of the leading German scholar of *Begriffsgeschichte*, Reinhart Koselleck,⁴⁰ among others, as well as the adaptation of contextualist and conceptualist approaches to empirical materials show the reception of new research practices. Sophisticated works of the middle to somewhat older generation of intellectual historians such as Ferenc Bíró, Iván Zoltán Dénes, Gábor Gángó, Ferenc Horkay Hörcher, László Kontler, Mária Ludassy, István Schlett, Márton Szabó (as well as the recently deceased György Bence and Lajos Csetri), are now joined by important monographs and substantial collections of studies written by younger scholars such as Gergely Romsics,⁴¹ Gábor Zoltán Szűcs,⁴² József Takáts⁴³ and Balázs Trencsényi.⁴⁴

³⁸ See Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor, "Fine-tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s" in Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (eds.) *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007). The main focus of the article is the transformation of political, social and intellectual history. It aspires to map the most important discourses and individual achievements and link these shifts to the transformations in the metapolitical and institutional context. See also the collection devoted to various social historical approaches: Zsombor Bódy and József Ö. Kovács (eds.), *Bevezetés a társadalomtörténetbe* (Budapest: Osiris, 2006).

³⁹ Ferenc Horkay Hörcher (ed.), *A koramodern politikai eszmétörténet cambridge-i látképe* (Pécs: Tanulmány Kiadó, 1996).

⁴⁰ See, above all, Reinhart Koselleck, *Elmúlt jövő. A történelmi idők szemantikája* (Budapest: Atlantis Kiadó, 2003).

⁴¹ Gergely Romsics, *Nép, nemzet, birodalom. A Habsburg-birodalom emlékezet a német, osztrák és magyar történetpolitikai gondolkodásban 1918-1941* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2010).

⁴² Zoltán Gábor Szűcs, *Az antelli pillanat. A nemzeti történelem szerepe a magyar politikai diskurzusban, 1989-1993* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010).

⁴³ József Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmétörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007).

⁴⁴ Balázs Trencsényi, *A politika nyelvei. Eszmétörténelmi tanulmányok* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007). A short comparison between the works of these authors reveals a broad similarity of approaches, but also some notable differences. Gergely Romsics has earlier applied lessons from narratology to memoir literature and has recently

In spite of the parallel revival of interest in Jewish history and the growing attention to intellectual history with its sophisticated theoretical apparatus and methodological offers, few authors have attempted to combine the two. The work that has come closest to successfully bringing together these trends is *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* by János Gyurgyák, widely acclaimed for its impressive empirical scope, but equally widely criticized because of its strong main theses and certain analytical weaknesses.⁴⁵ The scholarly ambition of this major study is enormous as it aims to cover the entire modern period (though the treatment of the communist period is rather brief⁴⁶) and practically all major political-

published a major study on the interpretations of the Habsburg Monarchy in German, Austrian and Hungarian historiography and historical-political thought of the inter-war years, with a special focus on the development of the *völkisch* challenge in these three contexts. Gábor Zoltán Szűcs produced a rich empirical monograph of Pocockian inspiration on the role and political uses of national history in the early transition years (1989 to 1993) where he drew primarily on parliamentary debates, and has since moved towards the study of 18th century political thought. József Takáts recently completed the first though surprisingly brief overview of the history of modern Hungarian political ideas, in an attempt, not always successful, to conceptualise this theme in terms of political languages. (The same topic received a much more comprehensive treatment, albeit through a completely different approach by political scientist István Schlett). Balázs Trencsényi combines various traditions of intellectual history writing and has developed his own blend he calls the “contextualist-conceptualist” approach. He has been particularly central to collaborative scholarly projects aimed at the transnationalization of East Central European intellectual history. He was one of the engines behind the creation of identity readers on the regional scale and is currently working on a monograph on the *longue durée* history of political thought in East Central Europe. See Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (eds.), *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945): Texts and Commentaries. Volume I and II* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006 - 2007).

⁴⁵ While the expression “integration” became popular in contemporary Hungarian Jewish subcultures, the debate on assimilation has remained rather central in historiography. Assimilation is arguably a rather loose term, and more concrete and reliable scholarly explorations have been conducted on notions such as acculturation, nationalization and/or on subcultures. This new round of discussion on assimilation included some fairly radical standpoints. Gyurgyák assesses Jewish assimilation as unsuccessful without using a comparative angle. János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszmétörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), p.19. In his more recent work, his former stance on the centrality of the Jewish question appears in a more moderate form, but he holds onto his thesis on the “necessary failure” of assimilation (which he derives from the notion that its terms were unfulfillable). János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok. A magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007), p.11. His approach ought to be compared to that of Vera Ránki whose Jewish nationalism posits assimilation as a mistake. Ránki’s assessment of Hungarian political views is often flawed but she offers a very competent discussion of nationalism. See, for instance, her thoughtful pages on the paradoxes of emancipation and assimilation. Vera Ránki, *Magyarok – Zsidók – Nacionalizmus. A befogadás és kirekesztés politikája* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999), p.61. I have discussed these and other works in greater detail in my extended paper in German “Ungarische Debatten über die „Judenfrage“ – Eine interpretierende Geschichte des langen 19. Jahrhunderts. Mit einem Postskriptum”.

⁴⁶ The best work on this topic to date is the extended new version of Róbert Györi Szabó, *A kommunizmus és a zsidóság a második világháború utáni Magyarországon* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2009). The dissertation of Kata

ideological groups of authors. Keeping in mind Gyurgyák's comprehensive approach, the absence of Jewish sources is all the more striking. Explicitly Jewish authors barely feature in this lengthy work, save in a subchapter on three rather different authors (Vilmos Vázsonyi, Aladár Komlós and Károly Pap). Regularly appearing Jewish publications that serve as the basis of this dissertation are almost entirely overlooked in this crucial work, which chose to discuss Jewish standpoints only in rather general terms and prior to the discussion of political-ideological trends, instead of presenting the former as integral parts of the latter.⁴⁷ Tamás Ungvári's study on the Jewish question in Hungarian literary history made similarly little use of these kinds of sources, in spite of briefly mentioning IMIT.⁴⁸

In conclusion, when the research findings presented below are assessed in the light of previous historiography, I believe that two main points should be highlighted: first, the study of Jewish Hungarian Jewish sources have been largely neglected until now even in the works (usually centered around the contested concept of the Jewish question) which otherwise offer elaborate discussions of the modern Hungarian Jewish problematic on the discursive level. Second and more generally, in the case of historical scholarship on documents in the Hungarian language, the attempt to combine and mutually enrich intellectual and Jewish history is a rather novel ambition and, particularly due to the absence of similar works on related topics, constitutes a significant challenge.⁴⁹

Bohus at the Department of History of CEU promises to make a similarly important contribution and extend the discussion to Hungarian-Israeli foreign relations too.

⁴⁷ So, for instance, the "Orthodox standpoint" merited less than four pages out of 788, with the Neologs and Zionists receiving some, but not much more attention.

⁴⁸ Tamás Ungvári, *Csalódások kora. A „zsidókérdés” magyarországi története* (Budapest: Scolar, 2010), p.15.

⁴⁹ Another major work, Katalin Fenyves' monograph on the identity of four generations of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals in the 19th century was published simultaneously with the finalization of this dissertation and thus its proper treatment could no longer be executed. Katalin Fenyves, *Képzelt asszimiláció? Négy zsidó értelmiségi nemzedék önképe* (Budapest: Corvina, 2010). Fenyves bases her findings on an encyclopedia with uniquely elaborate entries (including much information that later encyclopedic projects would not have considered relevant), namely József Szinnyei Sr.'s *Magyar írók élete és munkái* (The Life and Works of

Though the realization of this agenda is still in its infancy, I am convinced that the use of intellectual history tools to systematically explore the large and so far neglected pool of Hungarian Jewish primary sources promises a new and more nuanced picture of modern Hungarian Jewish history. It can help us understand better the discursive traditions and how the language of historical scholarship is and should be indebted to the historical tradition it purports to study or, alternatively, the extent to which it can hope to devise its own analytical metalanguage.⁵⁰ In general, this would mean a more conscious and purposeful use of language, with a clearer grasp of its historical legacies and analytical potentials. More concretely, a better grasp of discursive traditions, their key concepts and characteristics arguments as well as their internal evolutions and mutual influences on each other can help us confront the history of Jews in modern Hungary as a complex discursive problem, which has been conceptualized in strikingly different ways in different political-ideological, cultural and intellectual traditions.

Moreover, the intellectual historical approach promises more sensitivity towards the various statuses of different statements than has been displayed in previous historiography, by drawing attention to the primary context of statements. This means

Hungarian Writers). Its volumes were originally published in the decades before the First World War and they include autobiographical sketches of 317 Jewish writers and altogether 1424 entries on Jewish authors that Fenyves exploited in her research. Ibid., p.20.

⁵⁰ The reverse of the question about what contribution intellectual history might make is what standard should be applied when assessing the merits and shortcomings of intellectual historical works on their own terms. The eight points listed by Balázs Trencsényi serve as a guideline: “a) clear use of the analytical and conceptual web, b) problem-sensitive exploration of the relations between political and social contexts and the analyzed texts, c) drawing of the relevant comparative frames (comparing the special and idiosyncratic local and regional modes of speech with larger ones), d) identifying the intellectual source of certain ideas, e) a heuristically fruitful way of capturing discursive units above the level of the individual (traditions, political languages, etc.), f) sensitivity to genres, assessment of the relative weight and representativity of certain ideas, g) presentation of the relations between authors, h) reflection on previous historiography and current historiographical environment.” This is an ideal standard, and any empirical work measured against it is bound to prove more successful on some of these accounts than on others. Balázs Trencsényi, “Megtalálni az angyalok hangját – és a részletekben lakozó ördögöket” in 2000, January 2002. At http://www.ketezer.hu/menu4/2002_01/trencsenyi.html. Last access at Jun 14, 2010.

devoting particular scrutiny to the following questions: to what debates do the authors wish to contribute? How do they identify their audience, what do they take for implicit, shared knowledge and how do they aim to influence the current “climate of opinion”? In what situation and genre do they offer their ideas and how do these matter regarding the representativity and weight of the ideas expressed? The answers to these questions differ from one case to another, which ought to be reflected in our interpretations of their writings. A good part of the research presented here is about identifying such contested questions (some of which might have been perceived as uncontested by the authors analyzed), and pointing to their inner diversity and complexities. The central aim here is to see how exactly these questions (such as what was expressed through the formulations of dual identity, what did authors discussing Jewish culture think of its specificities, what political-ideological options were available in the years of the Second World War) were negotiated.

Since the intellectual history of Hungarian Jewry in modern times is still in its early stages, the realistic ambition of this work is to provide some illustrations of its potential benefits and contribute to paving the way for future explorations that could build on it – both in terms of empirical work and on the level of new research agendas. At the same time, writing the history of Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectual elite in the current *lingua franca* of international scholarship should also open up the pursuit of more in-depth comparative reflections, besides the more concrete goal of presenting the intellectual discourses of Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectuals in the shadow of Nazism, between assimilation and catastrophe.

III. Modern Hungarian Jewish History and the Jewish Question

External scholarly eyes tend to look upon Hungarian Jewish history as rather enigmatic or, if they happen to get to know it better, they consider some of its features rather unusual. This element of surprise is largely due to the fact that the Hungarian story does not seem to fit larger interpretative schemes. Basic features of this national case fall out of the various regional frames which were typically developed without first considering Hungarian Jewry on its own terms.⁵¹ The Hungarian was a Jewish community of mixed origins, resulting in unique set of characteristics and events. There is indeed a large discrepancy: Hungarian Jewry was one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe (and has remained so in the post-Holocaust world too) and Hungarian was its chief (though certainly not its only) means of linguistic expression in the century prior to the Holocaust, but the amount of scholarship devoted to this community, especially in international languages is comparatively small.⁵² In order to clarify the position of Hungarian Jewry within Hungarian society and

⁵¹ Variations on the regional frames include different definitions of “Eastern” or “East Central” Europe. The new YIVO Encyclopedia, for instance, includes Hungarian Jewry as well as the Jews of the Czech lands in its coverage of Eastern Europe, but not the territories of contemporary Austria. Jacob Katz, on the other hand, in his *A House Divided. Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry* focuses primarily on the German-Hungarian Jewish connections.

⁵² In the opening pages of his work *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology*, Raphael Patai laments that several of the greatest authors in Jewish historiography did not consider Hungarian Jewry worthy of their attention. Neither Heinrich Graetz, nor Simon Dubnow devoted much space to this group and this tradition was hardly broken later on. Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), pp.11-12. On modern Jewish historians, see the monograph of Michael Brenner, *Propheten des Vergangenen. Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2006). The same tendency to almost completely exclude Hungarian Jewry from the mainstream discussion of European Jewish historical development is present in David Vital’s more recent, otherwise comprehensive monograph, as well as in the *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*. See David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Martin Goodman, *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On the other hand, Yuri Slezkine in his highly interesting (and at least equally controversial) work *The Jewish Century*, illustrates the impressive successes and what he conceives of as overwhelming significance of Jews in modern times by frequently quoting figures about Hungary. Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp.48-50. This relative neglect of the Hungarian story is especially notable when considering the relative size of the community: the overall numbers of Jews in Wilhelmine Germany was smaller than in Hungary in the

avoid misunderstandings and possible misconceptions that could arise by extrapolating from the experiences of other European countries, this section will offer a brief overview of the historical background of my study.

Modern Hungarian Jewish history is often divided into periods before and after 1916-20. The period before is usually characterized as the era of significant Jewish achievements and contributions in terms of modernization, above all in the economic and cultural spheres, and by exceptionally high representation of the Jews in the modern Hungarian middle classes that was barely matched in any other national context on the continent. The epoch succeeding this was, on the other hand, marked by the adoption of early discriminatory legislation first in the educational system (the *Numerus Clausus* of 1920) only to be followed by several much graver, general discriminatory measures in the late 1930s and early 1940s that led to the exclusion of Jews from society and enabled the swift deportation and murder of the large majority of Hungarian Jews in 1944. The period under the regency of Miklós Horthy is often described through references to officially endorsed illiberal and Christian type of nationalism, which was coupled with widespread, officially supported, endorsed or at least hardly ever discouraged anti-Semitism. According to this conventional narrative, the Horthy regime and the majority Hungarian society of the times denounced the achievements and validity of Jewish assimilation and implemented various practices of segregation to counter the process of Jewish-Hungarian societal integration. In short, the idea of *the great reversal* of Jewish fortunes tends to be crucial to almost any long-term exploration of Hungarian Jewish history.

same period, but the number of institutions and individuals researchers currently dedicated to the former history is many times higher.

Even if the above is a rather accurate depiction of general trends, it fails to address notable continuities and cannot accommodate additional complexities and ambivalences. In order to take these into account, one would have to set the Jewish story against the background of the broader history of Hungary and further on into larger European interpretative frames. In this brief and general introduction I will attempt to provide this contextualization of the evolution of the Jewish question in Hungary, understood as the public debate on the current and desired legal status, economic standing, political position and cultural activities of Jewry.⁵³

In Hungary, after some modest beginnings in the late 18th century, a more widespread discussion began once modern political-ideological platforms were first articulated. The first open exchanges on the situation of Jews and the ways to proceed took place during the 1840s. In 1848-49 the discussion of Jewish legal equality was closely tied to the ambivalent program of Hungarian liberal nationalism and, more broadly, to the fortunes of the Hungarian national cause, i.e. the revolution and the Hungarian War of Independence.⁵⁴ At first, when the legal breakthrough of (effectively) revolutionary demands was achieved in the spring of 1848, Hungarian political authorities disappointingly delayed Jewish emancipation, though this was at least partly done for tactical reasons (as there were several instances of urban anti-Jewish violence).⁵⁵ During the final days of the Hungarian revolutionary side in the summer of 1849 and largely in reaction to considerable Jewish

⁵³ This is the theme of my extended study “Ungarische Debatten über die „Judenfrage“ – Eine interpretierende Geschichte des langen 19. Jahrhunderts. Mit einem Postskriptum.” Translated from the English original by Felix Kurz. The study is forthcoming in a publication also featuring similar research on Germany, Poland and the Czech lands.

⁵⁴ For an excellent account of 1848-49 in English see István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848-1849* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

⁵⁵ Ambrus Miskolczy, “<<...és a föld megnyílt alattunk>>. Zsidókravál Pozsonyban 1848. április 23-24-én” in Gábor Czoch, Aranka Kocsis and Árpád Tóth (eds.), *Fejezetek Pozsony történetéből magyar és szlovák szemmel* (Pozsony/Bratislava: Kalligram, 2005), pp. 360-398.

contribution to the Hungarian war efforts, conditional emancipation was declared – or rather promised, as no serious commitment to its actual implementation could be made.⁵⁶ Though conditional, this legal act was much less contested than the shape of the nationality law, since Jewish equality, defined as a question of equality between people of different faiths, easily fitted the liberal national framework. Notably, the Hungarian liberal national movement would have been a multid denominational undertaking even without Jewish participation.

Two decades later, following important social historical changes, the emancipation of Jews as individual citizens was woven directly into the Compromise between the House of Habsburg and the Hungarian political elite and the consequent reestablishment of constitutional order in 1867.⁵⁷ This time emancipation was declared unconditionally, though arguably an implicit social contract of assimilation existed between the concerned parties, stipulating, on the Jewish side, national assimilation, economic contributions and political reservation.⁵⁸ The almost completely consensual agreement on Jewish emancipation again contrasted with the much more difficult problem of settling the question of nationalities, constituting roughly half and even slightly more of the Kingdom's population.

The real Jewish controversy at this time was internal: the calling of a National Congress revealed severe disagreements and ultimately led to the unprecedented split of

⁵⁶ Ambrus Miskolczy, *A zsidóemancipáció Magyarországon 1849-ben* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999).

⁵⁷ R.J.W. Evans, "From Confederation to Compromise: The Austrian Experiment, 1840-1867" in R.J.W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary and the Habsburgs. Essays on Central Europe, c.1683-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵⁸ Kati Vörös, "A Unique Contract. Interpretations of Modern Hungarian Jewish History", in András Kovács and Eszter Andor (eds.), *CEU Jewish Studies Yearbook 2002-2003* (Budapest: Central European University Jewish Studies Program, 2003), pp. 229-255. At <http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/yearbook03.htm>. Last access: Nov 16, 2009.

Jewish communities into three main fractions (Orthodox, Neolog and Status Quo Ante).⁵⁹ This lack of unity was partly responsible for the delayed reception of Judaism, without which the basic forms of Jewish equality remained incomplete.⁶⁰ The legal ban on intermarriages and conversions to Judaism remained the cornerstones of persistent legal inequality beyond 1867. The gap between these two emancipatory legal acts is one of the peculiarities of the Hungarian story.

Eventually, the need to emancipate Judaism was seriously raised in the 1890s. Once again the discussion of this significant issue was not pursued independently, but took place simultaneously with the debates on a number of other liberal and progressive causes, most importantly the separation of state and the Catholic Church, the institution of freedom of religion and the establishment of civil marriage. These debates were recurrently on the agenda of Hungarian political life between 1892 and 1895. They constituted, despite all the passions associated with them, a rather mild Hungarian version of the transnational *Kulturkampf* of the late 19th century.⁶¹ The results of it were, at least at first sight, the completion of the basic liberal platform.

However, the moderate approach of the liberals, which was crucial to their success, arguably also entailed some severe negative consequences.⁶² It not only opened up a

⁵⁹ Jacob Katz, *A House Divided. Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1998). On the social historical consequences, see Kinga Frojimovics, *Szétszakadt történelem. Zsidó vallási irányzatok Magyarországon 1868-1950* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2008).

⁶⁰ On the history of the legal status of Judaism in Hungary, see József Schweitzer and Gábor Schweitzer, “A magyarországi zsidók és az izraelita felekezet jogállásának alakulása” in Lajos Rácz (ed.), *Felekezeti egyházjog Magyarországon* (Budapest: Unió, 1994), pp.236-240. Béla Szathmáry, “Az izraelita felekezet jogai” in Péter Antalóczy et al., *Felekezeti egyházjog* (Budapest: ELTE ÁJK Egyetemes Állam- és Jogtörténeti Tanszéke, 2004), pp.455-461.

⁶¹ See Móritz Csáky, *Der Kulturkampf in Ungarn. Die Kirchenpolitische Gesetzgebung der Jahre 1894/95* (Graz: Herman Böhlau Nachf., 1967).

⁶² Hungarian liberals proposed a moderate solution that “recognized the importance and power of religion in society while asserting the supremacy of civil law.” Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p.14.

chasm between them and much of the Catholic establishment, alienating many numerous and powerful groups from the liberal state, but it also did this without touching the formidable social bases of Catholicism (its material wealth and its control of many important educational institutions). What appeared as a victory for liberalism at the time in fact gave a boost to political Catholicism and revived rather than eliminated anti-Semitic agitation.⁶³ The manifold political-ideological shifts of the 1890s encompassed several opposing political-ideological trends, but together they gave rise to what Carl Schorske imaginatively called “politics in a new key.”⁶⁴

The new forms of anti-Semitism might appear less central to political formations than was the case in the days of the explicitly Anti-Semitic Party of the 1880s (the *Országos Antiszemita Párt*) and the Tiszaeszlár blood libel trial when Hungary seemed at once more backward and more progressive than France during the Dreyfus affair.⁶⁵ At the same time, its tenets became more widespread and influential as they got encoded in a more encompassing and ultimately much more powerful worldview of illiberal and autocratic nationalism. Political organizations potently merging such ideas grew during the complex changes of the 1890s and especially in the early 20th century when the Left – Right polarization rose to prominence, supplanting the earlier divide between Hungarian parties which was based on their stance towards the 1867 Compromise (and thus also the question of

⁶³ Ibid., pp.333-4.

⁶⁴ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: politics and culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979). “Politics in a New Key: An Austrian Trio” is the third chapter of this classic work on Viennese modernity. On the rise of Christian Socialists in Vienna, John W. Boyer has published excellent works, most recently a biography of Lueger in German which draws on his two massive monographs in English and extends his story to Ignaz Seipel too. John W. Boyer, *Karl Lueger (1844-1910). Christlichsoziale Politik als Beruf* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009).

⁶⁵ The accusation pointed in the former direction, while the determination of the state to clamp down in the latter.

national independence). By the end of the brutalizing years of the First World War, Anti-Semitism took on increasingly violent forms.⁶⁶

In retrospect, the 1840s was the beginning of a rather unique development that was to last for three-quarters of a century. This was the time when “the interaction of Magyar nationalism and Jewish Reform movement begun under the auspices of Hungarian liberalism”, making Hungary one of the few countries where Jews did not join a well-shaped and already developed national body, but were instead active participants and full-fledged members of a newly emerging national society.⁶⁷ George Barany goes as far as to claim that “the ingredients of what became the ideology of both Jewish and non-Jewish liberalism for the next century were actually shaped in the *Vormärz*.”⁶⁸ Therefore, when Hungarian Jewish history and the history of the Hungarian Jewish question is discussed in a wider, comparative context, a number of specificities of the Hungarian case ought to be kept in mind. Perhaps the most important fact related to Hungary is that the role and significance of Jewish people in the modernization of the country has been enormous, in many ways greater than in any other, western or eastern European state.⁶⁹ Especially during the Dualist period the upward social mobility of a highly significant part of Jewry was spectacular and accompanied by the

⁶⁶ For an excellent discussion of the Katolikus Néppárt (Catholic People’s Party) and the agrarian movement as well as neo-conservatism and right-wing radicalism in general around 1900 see Miklós Szabó, “Új vonások a századforduló magyar konzervatív politikai gondolkodásában” in Miklós Szabó, *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon 1896-1986* (Budapest: Medvetánc Könyvek – Atlantis Program, 1989). On the emergence of the People’s Party, see also Dániel Szabó, “A Néppárt megalakulása” in *Történelmi Szemle*, 1977 / 2. It ought to be noted that the emergence of this party was not due to the Reception Law, but took place earlier, in reaction to the Emperor’s sanctification of the laws on the separation of state and the Catholic Church, institution of freedom of religion and establishment of civil marriage in December 1894.

⁶⁷ Jakob Katz, “A magyar zsidóság kivételessége” in László Varga (ed.), *Zsidóság a dualizmus kori Magyarországon. Siker és válság* (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó – Habsburg Történelmi Intézet, 2005), p.34.

⁶⁸ George Barany, “<<Magyar Jew of Jewish Magyar?>> Reflections on the Question of Assimilation” in Bela Vago and George L. Mosse (eds.), *Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p.56.

⁶⁹ This observation is recurrent in a number of works dealing with Hungarian Jewry. See, for instance, Jakob Katz, “A magyar zsidóság kivételessége” in László Varga (ed.), *Zsidóság a dualizmus kori Magyarországon. Siker és válság* (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó – Habsburg Történelmi Intézet, 2005), p.36.

relatively weak modernization of other strata. As Viktor Karády put it, “in Eastern countries Jews did not achieve the same level of integration. In the West, the population numbers of Jews were simply insufficient for their role in modernization to reach the level they played in Hungary.”⁷⁰ Karády identifies the sources of these success in a coincidence of advantageous economic, ideological and political frameworks. He speaks of the general potential for rapid development of the country, the common interests of Jewish groups and the nobility combined with the relative weakness of potential competitors in the economic sphere, the relatively moderate anti-Judaism and restricted ethnic exclusivity of the national elite groups in the ideological realm, and the political necessity of bourgeois allies and assimilating elements in the creation of the Hungarian nation-state.⁷¹

In short, though Jews have lived in Hungary for over a millennium, even if in four discontinuous waves, it was only after the quite belated beginnings of Hungarian Jewish history more narrowly defined that this group took on greater historical importance, but when it did, this was quickly followed by impressive successes in various areas.⁷² This also implied that in the case of Hungarian Jewry, the processes of acculturation, assimilation, modernization and *embourgeoisment* were not only closely interrelated but they begun almost simultaneously and were exceptionally swift.

Given the role played by Jews in Hungarian modernization, assimilation could not be a straight-forward affair, not even on the level of elites, since many of the various groups to which Jews could in theory have assimilated did not exist, but were in fact largely

⁷⁰ Viktor Karády “Zsidóság és modernizáció a történelmi Magyarországon” in László Varga, *Zsidóság a dualizmus kori Magyarországon. Siker és válság* (Budapest: Pannonica, 2005), p.201.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.195.

⁷² The belated beginnings and relatively minor significance of the Jews of Hungary compared to the Jews of Poland-Lithuania in the 18th century is also attested by the disproportionate interest the latter generate among the scholars. For an excellent recent study of 18th century Polish-Lithuanian Jewry see Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

composed of and in some cases created by them.⁷³ Even among the non-Jewish middle classes in Hungary, many were not autochthonous ethnic Hungarian, but more or less other assimilated groups (most of them of German origin). Moreover, when measured by the standard of some Western European countries, these middle classes appear comparatively weak. Being among the most significant groups among the Hungarian middle classes, prior to the discriminatory legislation of the late 1930s and the Holocaust of 1944, Jews were to some extent able to set their own standards in terms of value systems, behavioral codes, lifestyles, etc., but they could not make them resonate and spread widely enough. Significant Jewish groups in Hungary might have acted as role models of modern behavior, but this could only give them rather limited (and even then typically ambivalent) recognition.

In sum, the special constellation of elements in Hungary – a multiethnic country behaving like a nation state within a larger empire with its numerically weak national elites seeking assimilating elements among which Jews, due to their level of modernization and lack of attachment to a non-Hungarian nationality of their own, were the primary target – produced a symbiosis of Hungarians and Jews. This resulted in exceptionally strong Jewish assimilationist discourses, to the point of assuming strongly Hungarian nationalist and anti-nationalities stances. At the same time, this symbiosis was based more on a division of labor than on the existence of many spheres of social integration.

Crucially for my study, the constellation that fostered this symbiosis collapsed almost completely in the aftermaths of the First World War, but the common ground began to

⁷³ An intriguing empirical study on Jewish acculturation as it took place in primarily Jewish settings (i.e. exploring the spheres of social integration as well as Jewish acculturation even when they were lacking) in Vienna is Marsha Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Ablany, NY: State University of NY Press, 1983). A rather odd consequence of this relative lack of middle class spheres of integration was the unusual frequency of Jewish ennoblements in Hungary. See the study of William O. McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1972).

crumble away already during the war years, especially after 1916.⁷⁴ The final year of the First World War and the immediate “postwar” years (when fighting actually continued in many places) led to the drastic reshaping of the East Central European region. When these territorial rearrangements were enforced, Hungary, fatefully attached to the Habsburg Monarchy in exchange for what László Kontler aptly (though rather diminutively) dubbed its “mirage of grandeur”, took the hardest blow. Through the Treaty of Trianon signed in 1920, Hungary lost over two-thirds of the territory of the Kingdom of Saint Stephen, i.e. Greater Hungary, with more than every fifth Hungarian assigned to one or another of the successor states.⁷⁵ Almost all its large nationality groups found themselves in one of the new states too, with Hungary suddenly becoming one of the smallest and ethnically most homogenous countries of the region.⁷⁶ At this point the historical development of Hungary exhibited another rather curious anomaly: arriving in such a shocking format, independence was certainly much less welcome than the previous imperial-national arrangement which granted representatives of the Hungarian nation political power way beyond what could be justified by their numbers or economic might.

Hungarians are often considered the greatest losers of the post-First World War arrangement but the new settlement and its founding principles were also detrimental to the (otherwise highly varied) interests of another group, namely Habsburg Jewry. The relative harmony the imperial arrangement enabled between various layers of their identity

⁷⁴ The crucial importance of the war for the Hungarian middle classes as well as for the history of the Jewish question and anti-Semitism was recently explored in the monograph by Péter Bihari who used the controversial idea of the solidification of the dual (Jewish versus non-Jewish) structure of the middle classes. Péter Bihari, *Lövészárkok a hátszágban. Középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországon* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2008).

⁷⁵ For a balanced analysis of the events see Ignác Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: the Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 2002).

⁷⁶ This held true until the breakup of two neighboring countries in the early 1990s, ironically, wholly (as in the case of Czechoslovakia) or partly (as in the case of Yugoslavia) along the former frontier of the two realms of the Dual Monarchy.

was disrupted when nationalist (or, more accurately put, ethnicist) pressures increased and religious and nationalist discourses started to converse more seriously. Within drastically reduced Hungary, many of the characteristics of the country that created a favorable environment for Jews were no longer present. The multiethnic setting crucially combined with a numerically weak but politically dominant national group striving for hegemony and aiming to solidify its hold on the country through promoting national assimilation, no longer existed. Standards of assimilation indeed took an increasingly hostile turn through the rise and frequent propagation of empirically unverifiable standards, such as conformity to the illiberally redefined national character or the intangible qualities of the national soul.⁷⁷

The social contract of assimilation with its large-scale division of labor did not make sense from the authoritarian-conservative viewpoint of the new rulers and their social base, even if it was commonly assumed that it would be counterproductive to alter the situation (i.e. the balance of power between Jews and non-Jews) overnight.⁷⁸ The loss of territories meant a drastic shrinking of political and economic opportunities for Hungarians. On the other hand, the attainment of middle class positions appeared possible, desirable and even urgent for certain segments at a time when a good portion of such positions and desirable assets were held by people who could be labeled Jewish – and their competitors could employ their symbolic capital of not being Jewish.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ In fact, alongside (or rather as a part of the story of) liberalism, the process of assimilation was often negatively reassessed as something superficial and rather illusory, most famously in the historical-political study *Három nemzedék* of the eminent historian of the times, Gyula Szekfű. This influential essayistic text was written in the midst of the collapse with the aim of self-critically examining what its author perceived as a national crisis of grand proportions: the long-term, continuous decline of Hungarians since the Age of Reform. Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék: egy hanyatló kor története* (Budapest: 1920).

⁷⁸ This indeed meant that even certain influential anti-Semites were convinced of the (temporary) necessity of Jewish contributions and their irreplaceability in the economic sphere in particular.

⁷⁹ After all, even though the level of modernization of various non-Jewish groups lagged behind that of Jews on the macro level, micro analyses show that many groups became more earnestly engaged in this process (on this scale the relative overmodernization of Jews tends not to appear as clearly as on the macro scale).

The loss of large numbers of Jews to successor states also meant that the composition of Jewry within Hungary was altered: through the loss of several more peripheral territories, the former balance between Orthodox and Neolog Jewish organizations was a thing of the past. The latter group enjoyed a clear numerical prevalence in post-Trianon Hungary. Though Budapest had been one of the largest Jewish centers in Europe already prior to 1920, with the proportion of Jewish inhabitants peaking at 23% around the turn of the century, it was only after this date that approximately half of the Jews of Hungary lived in the only metropolitan center of the country.⁸⁰

The drastic impact of the First World War that unleashed the brutality of the Age of Catastrophe; the end of the societal constellation in which Jews played important roles as assimilating elements; socio-historical developments and the crisis situation which fueled competition for middle-class positions; the traumatic moment in national history when many were looking for scapegoats spelled difficult times for Hungarian Jewry. The severity of their position was further compounded by their involvement in the republican regime of 1918-1919 and especially the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 in which individuals of Jewish origin dominated the ranks of leadership, in stark contrast to relatively modest Jewish political participation on the higher level in the previous times.⁸¹

Developments of the immediate postwar years not only outraged and scared conservatives of various sorts, but also radicalized the Left - Right opposition to the extent that consecutive

⁸⁰ These were the basic indicators when the centrality and influence of Budapest became a heavily contested issue in Hungarian political and cultural life. Often associated with modernity as well as foreign ways and the source of their perceived impositions, the discussion on the only great city of the country and on the Jewish question became closely intertwined. Beginning almost simultaneously with the birth of urban modernity, this process took on additional force in 1919.

⁸¹ This regime, somewhat surrealistically, fought a war on two fronts to preserve as much territory of the Kingdom of Saint Stephen under Hungarian rule as possible, an effort which, rather ironically, the right-wingers could not replicate in spite of an irredentist consensus among them. On the crucial and controversial topic of irredentism Miklós Zeidler has recently published an important monograph. Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945* (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 2007).

waves of Red and White Terrors unfolded, providing the first instances of widespread intra-Hungarian violence in modern times. These waves of violence were not only perpetrated and controlled from above, but took on a dynamic of their own and Jews were highly overrepresented among the victims. The abovementioned great reversal of the function and perception of the role of Jews in the Hungarian nation-building project ought to be accounted for in relation to these fundamental factors. Thus, the turn against assimilation had little, if anything to do with the level or, more normatively speaking, the success of Jewish assimilation. According to this explanatory model that tries to view the history of the Hungarian Jewish question in the context of national history in a more nuanced way, the rejection of assimilation had to do, at most, with the change in the definition of its standards.

The combined impact of all these factors resulted in two fundamental tendencies altering the situation of the Jews in Hungary. On the one hand, there was the birth of a potent mix of new forms of right-wing radicalism and more traditional conservative and authoritarian tendencies (colloquially and somewhat vaguely called Horthyism).⁸² Second, they witnessed the rise of novel, virulent forms of anti-Semitism and their much more successful push for the dissimilation and exclusion of Jews, which at first found expression as well as its limit in the Numerus Clausus legislation of 1920 concerning higher education.⁸³

⁸² An admittedly vague term for a regime under which many aspects of Hungarian political life remained almost unchanged or were reestablished, at least for a while, i.e. in the 1920s. Leading “Horthyist” politicians ranged from conservative liberals such as the eminent statesman of the 1920s, István Bethlen, through the more progressive but also more racist (and clearly more anti-Semitic) Pál Teleki to borderline fascists (notably Gyula Gömbös) and outright ones who were responsible for the mass deportation from Hungary in 1944, after occupation by Nazi Germany, when Horthy continued to be in power for the last fateful half a year of his regency. Reliable and in-depth biographies of Bethlen, Teleki and Horthy are available in English (in translation or, as in the case of Sakmyster, in original). See Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874-1946* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 1995). Balázs Ablonczy, *Pál Teleki (1879-1941): the Life of a Controversial Hungarian Politician* (Boulder: East European Monographs, Budapest: Institute of Habsburg History, 2006). Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1994).

⁸³ On the background to this legislation, see Viktor Karády’s survey “Socio-Historical Sources of the *numerus clausus* law and the ‘Christian Course’ in Post World War I Hungary”. A longer study on the prehistory by the

In social historical terms, these changes managed to slow down, but could not completely reverse the process of assimilation. Even during the inter-war years, it continued to progress through various channels. On the other hand, the widespread, politically dominant and ultimately fatal turn against assimilation in the new Hungarian state were accompanied by highly significant discursive changes. Already before 1938, the discourse of Jewish intellectuals was under the impact of having entered the historical period beyond assimilation, of having been thrown into a situation between assimilation and (as it was to turn out) catastrophe.

What were the prevalent Jewish intellectual discourses like in this period, how Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectuals discussed Jewish identity, relations, culture, politics and history in the 1930s and early 1940s is the subject of the next six empirical chapters. The only remaining issue that should still be addressed here is the row of increasingly severe and racialized anti-Jewish legislative acts that were adopted in the late 1930s and early 1940s and aimed at the economic and societal exclusion and dispossession of Hungarian Jews, and also greatly facilitated the deportation and murder of the large majority of them in 1944.⁸⁴ The

same author is available in German: “Die Bildung von Minderheitseliten im multiethnischen und multikonfessionellen Nationalstaat (Ungarn in der Doppelmonarchie, 1867-1918)”. A shorter survey covering similar ground in English is Karády’s “The ‘Smart Jew’ in pre-1919 Hungary. Denomination Specific Educational Investments and Cultural Assimilation”. All available on the website of Viktor Karády at <http://karadyviktor.uni.hu/> under the heading *Tanulmányok*. An excellent monographic work that devotes much space to the Numerus Clausus and embeds it in the long-term development of the liberal professions in Hungary is Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994).

⁸⁴ On *Ariesirung* policies in Hungary, see the polemical but well-researched work of Gábor Kádár and András Vági, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése* (Budapest: Jaffa, 2005). See also Szabolcs Szita, *A Gestapo Magyarországon: a terror és a rablás történetéből* (Budapest: Korona, 2002). On the military side of the war outside and in Hungary, see the monographs of Krisztián Ungváry: Krisztián Ungváry, *A magyar honvédség a második világháborúban* (Budapest: Osiris, 2010) and Krisztián Ungváry, *Budapest ostroma* (Budapest: Corvina, 2009). (These refer to the most recent editions.) The deportations were halted in early July just before the Budapest community would have been deported. Deportations were soon followed by the terror of the Arrow Cross who, once they came to power in October 1944, targeted the surviving Jewish population of Budapest in particular, and decimated it further until the Red Army liberated and occupied the territory.

Hungarian political developments of the times are not, strictly speaking, part of the present research, and these legal acts and other measures of exclusion after 1938 have already received more comprehensive treatment elsewhere.⁸⁵ I will therefore restrict my overview to a brief introduction of the main legal acts: in April and May of 1938 the two Houses of the Hungarian Parliament accepted law 1938/XV., colloquially known as the first Jewish (read anti-Jewish) law. It was officially and euphemistically called “On the More Effective Assurance of Balance in Societal and Economic Life”.⁸⁶ The rather modest discriminatory ambition of this law (especially when compared to later developments) was to limit Jewish participation to 20 percent in various occupations to be executed over a period of five years and allowed for a number of groups to be exempted. What is customarily referred to as the second Jewish law in Hungarian (officially called law 1939/IV. and titled “On Limiting the Jewish Conquest of Space in Public Life and the Economy”) followed the year after.⁸⁷ Not only did this law allow for fewer exceptions, it also mixed denominational and racial definitions of who officially qualified as Jewish. Most importantly, it limited Jewish economic participation to 6 percent and banned Jews from certain positions altogether. As a consequence, around half of Hungarian Jews lost their income. In 1941 the banning of

⁸⁵ For the details on discriminatory legislation, see the specialized monographs of Nathaniel Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews. Policy and Legislation 1920-1943* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan UP, 1981) and, newly, of Klaudia Farkas, *A magyar zsidóság megkülönböztetése, 1920-1944* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2010). János Gyurgyák has also discussed the birth of individual discriminatory laws at some length. See János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszméletörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), pp. 135-158. On the anti-Jewish public opinion of the times, see János Pelle, *A gyűlölet vetése. A zsidótörvények és a magyar közvélemény* (Budapest: Európa, 2001). In the case of Nazi Germany, the first volume of Saul Friedlaender’s masterful two volumes provide abundant evidence to show just how many such steps were taken there (besides his major achievement of covering the Jewish reaction in unprecedented depth). See Saul Friedlaender, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997). Evidently, Friedlaender expands his focus beyond Nazi Germany in his second volume. See Saul Friedlaender, *The Years of Extermination. Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

⁸⁶ The notion of balance played an important role in several Jewish reactions, as Chapter VII on the *Ararát yearbooks* will attempt to show. This law was proposed under Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi but was accepted under Béla Imrédy.

⁸⁷ This law was still prepared under Imrédy but was accepted under the Premiership of Pál Teleki in 1939.

intermarriages and the prohibition of sexual intercourse between Jews and non-Jews followed with the adoption of law 1941/XV.⁸⁸ These years also saw the introduction of the so called labor service (*munkaszolgálat*). Established in 1939, it obliged Jewish men (and also, separately from them, politically unreliable elements) to perform auxiliary military duties. From 1941, the year Hungary entered the Second World War onwards, Jews were excluded from fulfilling proper military duties, their realm of activities being restricted to labor service. In addition to the suffering inflicted by the lack of provision of proper equipment and painful humiliations by their superiors, the labour service also proved to be a death trap, especially on the Eastern Front where around 15 000 of inmates died and 10 000 more were captured. The Hungarian Jewish community lost altogether around 34 000 members even before the Nazi occupation of the country in March 1944 and the subsequent implementation of extermination policies.

⁸⁸ The year 1941 also brought the handing over of close to 20 000 immigrant Jews to be massacred by Nazis.

Chapter II

The *IMIT Yearbooks* (1929-1943)

Characteristics, Aims, Story

I. The Basic Characteristics of IMIT

Publication of the yearbook series was one of the main activities of the *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* (Israelite Hungarian Literary Society, abbreviated as IMIT). Originally founded in 1894 with the aim of helping the creation and distribution of Jewish literary and scholarly works, IMIT conducted its activities in the Hungarian language and was to a large extent concerned with Hungarian Jewish topics. The first yearbook of the Society was released in 1895 during the last phase of the political-ecclesiastical struggle and the fight of the Jewish reception movement for recognition of Judaism as one of the official religions of Hungary.⁸⁹ The yearbooks appeared each year until the end of the First World War when the initiative came to a halt: as the Society ceased its activities for over a decade, no yearbooks were printed until 1929. Upon the refoundation of IMIT in the late 1920s, its publishing activities continued for another fifteen years: the new yearbook series appeared regularly in volumes of roughly equal length all the way until 1943, the year just prior to the Hungarian Holocaust.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ As discussed in the introduction, the political-ecclesiastical struggle was the passionate, but comparatively speaking rather mild Hungarian version of 19th century religious (Catholic) versus secular conflicts or *Kulturkaempfe*.

⁹⁰ The yearbooks were first edited by Vilmos Bacher and Ferenc Mezey, later on by Vilmos Bacher and József Bánóczy. Samu Szemere served as the editor of the series that began in 1929. A philosopher and aesthetician, he was born in Zirovnica, Macedonia in 1881 and passed away in Budapest in 1978. He received his degree in 1904 and was member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences between 1945 and 1949. His main mentor (and later colleague) was Bernát Alexander. At first he taught in secondary schools. Between 1917 and 1919, he served as the secretary of the Hungarian Philosophy Society. Between 1927 and 1942 he was the director of the

The following chapters offer a detailed, thematically focused analysis of the contents of these fifteen yearbooks released in the second half of the Horthy era which, after the end of the consolidation period under Prime Minister István Bethlen, brought growing right-wing radicalization and anti-Semitic exclusion, and also multiple acts of discriminatory legislation starting in 1938. Before turning to the analysis of the publication itself, however, this introductory section summarises the basic characteristics of the sources.

The average length of the *IMIT yearbooks* is approximately 360 pages – the fifteen yearbooks cover altogether 5388 pages. The length of the volumes fluctuates very little: the shortest yearbook of 1938 is 313 pages long, while the last and the longest volume from 1943 has 387. Each yearbook contains two main sections, the *Literary Works* and the *Announcements of the Society*. The former occupies the bulk of the publication with 4624 pages (at least 239 and at most 351), while the later takes up 613 pages in total, between 18 and 84 pages per volume.⁹¹

The title *Literary Works* is used in a rather broad sense: the large majority of articles appearing under this heading were scholarly rather than fictional. In the Horthy era there were altogether 235 prose contributions and with the exceptions of less than two dozen pieces they were non-fictional. Discounting the annual reports, altogether 197 scholarly articles can be identified. Most of them averaged around 20 pages, but somewhat shorter and (occasionally much) longer texts were also published. Many of these materials were

Israelite Teacher Training Institute. He became the president of IMIT in 1945. As a pensioner, he taught history of philosophy at the Rabbinical Seminary starting in 1950 and even got a teaching position at ELTE in 1963. He translated several works of Giordano Bruno, Descartes, Dewey, Feuerbach, Hegel, Pestalozzi, Schiller, Spinoza, Vico and Windelband. He wrote his main works on Giordano Bruno, Oswald Spengler, John Dewey, Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Mann.

⁹¹ It provides an excellent illustration of how little fluctuation there were between the lengths of the various yearbooks that the first section was shortest exactly when the second grew longest. (4624 and 613 add up to 5237. There are 151 extra pages since the articles usually start at page 9 and the tables of contents were not counted.)

presented in some format at the annual lecture series organized by IMIT too that were attended by large audiences of several hundreds of people.⁹² This set-up required the authors to consider the demands of popularization for a broadly educated but non-specialist audience.

Thematically, the studies can be divided into two main categories, Hungarian Jewish and general Jewish. The former group includes 93, the later 76 articles, and while some yearbooks focus more strongly on Hungarian Jewish topics, others include more pieces on general ones, so that overall the two categories receive roughly the same amount of attention.⁹³ Although most pieces feature some heterogeneous elements, the dividing line between two thematic clusters is nevertheless very clear and already evident in many article titles.⁹⁴ The remaining articles can be broadly classified into three, much smaller, categories. There are another twelve studies on German Jewish themes, seven on the contemporary

⁹² The lecture series was held from fall to spring each year and so the years of IMIT ended in the summer.

⁹³ There are altogether five yearbooks where the representation of the two topics was particularly skewed in favour of one or the other: In 1929 the ratio is 9-1, in 1932 8-3, in 1943 11-3 in favor of the Hungarian Jewish thematic. (Remarkably, two of three instances are the first and the last IMIT yearbook in the Horthy era.) General Jewish topics dominated in 1937 and 1938 (7-3 and 7-2), with hardly any Hungarian Jewish studies in these two years.

⁹⁴ For instance, articles titled “Remembrance of the First Hungarian Jewish Congress”, “*Egyenlőség* and Hungarian Literature” or “Data on Hungarian Jewish History. The Question of Emancipation at the Parliament in 1861” quite obviously belong to the former while “Tragedy in Aggadah”, “Commentary on Jewish Calendar and Chronology” or “The Value of the Person in Jewish Thought” belong to the latter. The “Hungarian Jewish” category also includes the article on the person of Májer/Meier Kayserling who, although more of a German than a Hungarian rabbi, was nevertheless active in Pest and thus connected to the history of the Jews of Hungary. Similarly, Moses Sofer would not be called a Hungarian in some other contexts, but in this respect the authors of IMIT seem to have employed a broad, inclusive definition (Jews of Hungary), which puts the articles dealing with his person in the same category. The subjects of some studies are not Jewish (János Arany, Imre Madách, Mihály Babits), but the method of their treatment connects them directly to Jewish culture – see especially “Arany János viszonya a legendához és agadához”, “Madách Imre és a Biblia”, “A Szentírás Babits Mihály költeményeiben”, which aim to demonstrate Jewish contributions to Hungarian culture, a theme that will be addressed in a separate subchapter (Chapter IV/2.). Other pieces were, however, more difficult to categorise: in the case of writings on Moses Mendelssohn, I ultimately decided in favor of general Jewish (and against German Jewish), since their focus was rather the general significance of Mendelssohn and not his specific German context (see Kecskeméti Ármán, “Mendelssohn kétszáz esztendeje”, and Richtmann Mózes, “Mendelssohn Mózes mint a zsidóság védelmezője”). In one instance (Zsoldos Jenő, “Mendelssohn a magyar szellemi életben”) the Hungarian Jewish label seemed most appropriate as the study dealt primarily with the history of Hungarian reception. On the other hand, the discussion of Leopold Zunz belongs to the German Jewish category, though a good third of this article is also dedicated to his impact on Hungarian Jewish scholars.

situation in the Holy Land (dealing with Zionism or, in one case, with modern Hebrew) and seven more on other foreign themes.⁹⁵

In the course of these fifteen years, altogether 150 authors contributed to IMIT, among them 42 were poets⁹⁶ and 108 prose authors.⁹⁷ The poetry in IMIT consisted overwhelmingly of original compositions, but there were also some translations from German and Hebrew. Of the 108 authors who published mostly their scholarly studies in prose, 63 appeared only once, 17 of them made two and 13 three contributions. The most frequent contributors were Bernát Heller with 13 appearances,⁹⁸ Fülöp Grünwald with 9,⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Articles belonging to the former two categories feature prominently in two subchapters of Chapter V (“Discourse on Zionism and Palestine” and “Germany and Nazism in IMIT”). Out of the seven “other” ones, four were on French drama history, all of them written by Oszkár Elek. They will be (rather critically) addressed in the subchapter devoted to the discourse on Jewish contributions. All IMIT studies could be assigned to one of these five categories, save two writtend by Turkologist, folklorist and linguist Ignác Kúnos on Turkish and Muslim subjects with relatively few Jewish bearings. Put together, these categories include a total of 197 contributions (93 + 76 + 12 + 7 + 7 + 2), which, let it be repeated, does not include the annual reports, nor the literary compositions (short stories and poetic works).

⁹⁶ No one published poetry more than four times in IMIT, but Béla Vihar, Endre Barát, Zoltán Zelk, Zoltán Somlyó and László Fenyő all made appearances this many times, while two others, namely Frida Szilas and István Vasvári contributed altogether three times.

⁹⁷ Next to the overwhelming majority of Hungarian Jewish authors (105 out of 108), there was a translation of the commemorative and highly laudatory text on Ignác Goldziher by the Dutch scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (published after his own death), and two further commemorative texts by leading non-Jewish Hungarian historians, Gyula Szekfű and Zoltán Tóth in 1943, who made significant gestures by allowing their texts to appear in IMIT at that point. In his article on Marczali, Szekfű insisted that Henrik Marczali (who was also actively involved in IMIT, serving as head of the committee preparing the publication of the Hungarian-Jewish Archives, which was one of IMIT’s four committees) “was born Hungarian, and therefore needed no assimilation” and that, moreover, he “did not, could not know viewpoints other than the Hungarian one”. Gyula Szekfű, “Marczali Henrik”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.131. Moreover, Marczali fulfilled essential national tasks running 20-30 years ahead of his time and belonged among “the best Hungarians”. Ibid., pp.130-2. Zoltán Tóth, from his side, referred to his “undeserved forlornness” which he had to bear late in his life. Zoltán Tóth, “Marczali Henrik” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.137.

⁹⁸ Bernát Heller was born in Nagybecse in 1871 (today Bytča, Slovakia) and died in Budapest in 1943. He was an Orientalist, a literary historian and folklorist. His main research interests were in Biblical scholarship, Hebrew and Islamic tales and legends and in comparative literary history. His main Jewish work is *A héber mese* (The Hebrew Tale). He was a graduate of the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest and became a doctor of philosophy in 1894 and a rabbi in 1896. Between 1919 and 1922 he was director of the Jewish Gymnasium and afterwards taught at the Rabbinical Seminary until 1935. Upon his death in 1943, Sándor Scheiber devoted an article to his life and works, emphasizing that Heller was „an exceptionally gifted Jewish scholar who possessed unique knowledge about the literature of the East as well as of Classical and European literature”. His scholarly work was supposed to have inaugurated a new epoch in Hungarian-Jewish scholarship. See Sándor Scheiber, “Dr. Heller Bernát élete és tudományos munkássága” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.125.

⁹⁹ Fülöp Grünwald (Sopron, 1887 – Budapest, 1964), historian and teacher. In the inter-war years he taught at the Jewish Gymnasium for Boys and served as its director in the postwar period. He was also the director of the

Mihály Guttman¹⁰⁰ and Pál Náday with eight,¹⁰¹ Aladár Komlós (6 studies and some poems), Sándor Scheiber,¹⁰² Jenő Zsoldos, Bertalan Kohlbach¹⁰³ and Aladár Fürst all with six,¹⁰⁴ Bertalan Edelstein¹⁰⁵ and Miksa Pollák with five,¹⁰⁶ Mór Fényes,¹⁰⁷ Oszkár Elek,¹⁰⁸ József Turóczi-Trostler¹⁰⁹ and Károly Sebestyén all with four.¹¹⁰ This group of fifteen

Hungarian Jewish Museum between 1948 and 1963, and served as the head of History at the Rabbinical Seminary starting in 1959. Together with Scheiber, he edited four volumes of the *Monumenta*. His main scholarly work from the inter-war period is his *A zsidók története Budán* (The History of the Jews of Buda) published in 1938.

¹⁰⁰ Mihály Guttman (Kiskunfélegyháza, 1872 – Budapest, 1942). He pursued parallel degrees at university and at the Seminary, graduating from both in 1903. He taught at the Seminary between 1907 and 1921 and then moved to Breslau from where he returned in 1934 to serve as the Director of the Budapest Seminary until his death. His research focused on the Halakha and the Talmudic method. His main publication is the highly ambitious, but unfinished *Das Judentum und seine Umwelt* that appeared in German 1927.

¹⁰¹ Pál Náday (Cegléd, 1881 – Budapest, 1945) wrote on art, mostly on applied art and artistic education. He was a prolific author, director of *Országos Magyar Izraelita Közművelődési Egyesület* (the National Association for Hungarian Israelite Culture) in the 1920s and a lecturer in art history. He also contributed to contemporary progressive journals. It ought to be noted that his contributions to IMIT (at least stylistically) tended to border on fiction.

¹⁰² Sándor Scheiber (Budapest, 1913 – Budapest, 1985), linguist, historian of literature, rabbi (1938). In the late 1930s, he spent some years in England on a scholarship (1938 to 1940). Upon his return, he served as rabbi at Dunaföldvár (1941 to 1944) and later became director of the Rabbinical Seminary (1950 to 1985) He is best known for his publications on Jewish cultural historical and ethnological topics.

¹⁰³ Bertalan Kohlbach (Liptószentmiklós, today Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia 1866 – Budapest, 1944). Doctor of Philosophy (1888), rabbi (1890). Kohlbach was among the first pupils of the Seminary. He served at Temesvár (Timișoara) and Kaposvár. He was a leading authority on Jewish ethnology.

¹⁰⁴ Aladár Fürst (Kismarton, 1877 – Tel Aviv, 1950). Fürst was active at the Jewish Museum until his departure to Palestine in the mid-1930s.

¹⁰⁵ Bertalan Edelstein (Budapest, 1876 – Budapest, 1934). Doctor of Philosophy (1900), rabbi (1902). Edelstein was a rabbi in Buda for three decades, and became the chief rabbi in 1924. He taught at the Rabbinical Seminary, at lower grades where his subjects were the Bible, the Talmud and the systematic study of religions. He wrote for several Jewish organs.

¹⁰⁶ Miksa Pollák (Beled, 1868 – Auschwitz, 1944), rabbi after 1894, chief rabbi of Sopron, studied Eastern languages, Hungarian and German literature and philosophy, graduated in 1892. He worked as a translator and wrote a history of Jews in Sopron. He had three children, among them the famous writer Károly Pap with whom his relationship was strained.

¹⁰⁷ Mór Fényes (Erdőbénye, 1866 – Budapest, 1949), earned the title of Doctor of Philosophy in 1891 and was a qualified rabbi after 1893 (worked as an assistant). He worked as a teacher of religious subjects, and was the author of educational materials and supervisor of educational institutions.

¹⁰⁸ Oszkár Elek (Szolnok, 1880 – Budapest, 1945), teacher of French and Hungarian. Elek published many reviews and studies in literary history, and also wrote on pedagogy and ethnography.

¹⁰⁹ József Turóczi-Trostler (Moskóc, 1888 – Budapest, 1962), Hungarian literary scholar, critic, and translator. Born in Moskóc, currently Slovakia, Turóczi-Trostler became a high school teacher in Temesvár (Timișoara, Romania). Between 1917 and 1943, he was literary critic of the German-language newspaper, *Pester Lloyd* and won the Baumgarten prize in 1934. During the revolution of October 1918, he became a senior official in the Hungarian Ministry of Education. Under the Council's Republic he was promoted professor of world literature at Budapest University. Removed from his post, he became a teacher at the Jewish Neolog community's girls' gymnasium in Budapest. From 1945, Turóczi-Trostler was a member of the Hungarian Academy as well as of the Hungarian parliament as a social democrat, and professor of world literature at Budapest University. In 1947, he was made professor of German literature.

authors, all of whom appeared in IMIT more than three times between 1929 and 1943, qualify as regular contributors.¹¹¹

Edelstein's and most of Grünwald's publications were part of a series that provided annual coverage of changes in the fate of Jewry around the globe.¹¹² This global panorama did not appear in the last, 1943 yearbook, which is possibly related to the fact that the 1942 report brought very detailed and explicit news about the situation in Europe.¹¹³ Next to this series of reportages, the second longest was the series authored by Miksa Pollák on the theme of Imre Madách and the Bible (five articles on altogether 161 pages).

II. Aims of the Analysis

The next three chapters of this dissertation provide an intellectual historical analysis of these diverse and colorful Hungarian Jewish scholarly studies. After a brief sketch of the history and aims of IMIT the analysis will turn to seven themes: Hungarian Jewish identity options, the assessments of key traditions, understandings of Jewish values and historicity, the discourse on Jewish contributions, the descriptions of the present epoch, the relation to Zionism and the interpretations and coverage of Nazism. These thematically

¹¹⁰ Károly Sebestyén (Gödre, 1872 – Budapest, 1945), literary historian, teacher, critic, translator, philosopher. He studied at the universities of Budapest, Leipzig and Berlin. He taught at secondary schools and wrote for the daily press: he worked for the *Pester Lloyd* after 1916 where he published leading opining pieces and theatre criticism. He also worked at the Drama Academy where he taught aesthetics and dramaturgy and even headed the institution for some years (between 1928 and 1930). He became a member of the prestigious Kiszaludy Society in 1930.

¹¹¹ Zsoldos and Grünwald were the only two authors who published in each of the eight volumes of *Libanon*, together with Turóczi-Trostler who appeared in six volumes of the same journal. From among the most frequent contributors to *Ararát*, only Aladár Komlós, its chief editor, belonged to this group of fifteen authors.

¹¹² The series was originally started by Edelstein in 1916 (or 5675 according to the Jewish calendar). After his death in 1934 the series was continued by Grünwald. There was a gap year in 1934, but the first report by Grünwald in 1935 covered both years. . The editor, Samu Szemere published an article recalling the life of Edelstein in the aforementioned gap year.

¹¹³ Another notable feature is the inclusion of Hungary in the 1939 overview, due to what Grünwald called “profound changes” and “a sharp break” in the situation of Hungarian Jews.

structured seven subchapters offer a detailed presentation of this textual corpus and address crucial questions regarding the views of the Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly elite. The seven themes encompass most of the articles and ideas presented in the *IMIT yearbooks*, although some contributions address more than one of them, and accordingly, they are discussed in more than one context.

Section 3 of this chapter expounds on the story of the *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* and Section 4 tackles its aims the way they were understood by leaders of the Society and reflected by contributors on the pages of its yearbooks. Relevant developments of IMIT can best be traced through the section *Társulati Közlemények* (Announcements of the Society), which contains data on the changes in membership and the budgetary situation, as well as the leaders' perceptions concerning the state of the Society. The aims of the yearbook series can best be gauged through analysis of self-descriptions or normative declarations by leaders of the Society and of the occasional reflections by the contributors on the character and purpose of their studies written for its volumes.

With the remainder of this chapter setting the background to the analysis of IMIT, the following chapter opens the discussion of the yearbooks' contents with the often evoked question of dual identity. More precisely, it brings forward various versions of collective identity discourses, most of which formulated some form of dual identity. Seven distinct identity options can be identified through meticulous analysis of these discourses, each of them re-evaluating the position and categorisation of the Jewry (as religion, people or something else). The next theme is closely connected to this one: scrutinizing different assessments of Jewish traditions. This subchapter tries to understand which traditions the authors of IMIT considered worthy of their attention, how they characterized and evaluated

them, whether there was at all something like a mainstream scholarly position, and how the assessments of Jewish tradition changed in the years under consideration. These questions are pursued through meticulous analysis of concrete discussions on certain segments of the Jewish tradition (such as historiography or art) as well as on landmark ideas and personalities, such as that of Moses Mendelssohn who is often perceived as the symbolic founder of modern European Jewry.

The third chapter on IMIT (the fourth of the dissertation) deals with on Jewish historicity, values and roles and begins by studying formulations that can be grouped under the heading of Jewish values. Such values were sometimes presented as unchanging essential characteristics and sometimes simply as specificities that differentiate Jewry from the outside world. Five categories of statements can be identified within this cluster, most of them ahistorical. The authors arguing in favor of the temporality of Jewry are treated separately, in the section dedicated specifically to the contested question of historicity. The second half of this chapter on Jewish historicity, values and roles deals with the surprisingly great number of studies which aimed to account for beneficial Jewish impacts on the outside world. Jewish scholarship seems to have made it one of its major tasks to reveal the existence of such positive influences and no intellectual history of the *IMIT yearbooks* in the Horthy epoch could be considered complete without interpreting the discourse on such contributions.

The fourth and last chapter on IMIT aims to reconstruct the “history of the present” as it transpired through the pages of the *IMIT yearbooks*, with subchapters devoted to one rather general and two more specific research areas. The first subchapter explores the ways Hungarian Jewish scholars presented their situation and epoch. What kind of comparisons did they draw between their own, radically changing and after 1938 drastically

worsening situation and those of Jews in previous epochs? Related to this concern are the interpretations of the Jewish situation in the same period but in different circumstances: the last two subchapters are dedicated to the discussions on Palestine and Nazi Germany. The debate on the Zionist project and Palestinian developments is a factinating topic in its own right, but all the more worth exploring in its complex and sometimes contradictory relation to Hungarian Jewish identity discourses. Last but not least, reflections on Germany and Nazism in these yearbooks offer intriguing insights, while the publications on the developments of the Second World War and courageous and explicit communication about the genocide of European Jewry until 1942 constitute unique historical documents that are especially noteworthy, when the fact that Hungary was actively involved on the Axis side in the Second World War is born in mind.

III. IMIT in the Horthy Era

In the period under analysis the Presidency of IMIT was located at 27 Ferenc József rakpart (today Belgrád rakpart) while its Secretariat could be found on Deák tér.¹¹⁴ The organization had four levels: assembly, elected board, directorate and board of officers. Assemblies could pass decisions if forty people were present, but this rule was (even according to own admissions) not always taken seriously.¹¹⁵ The board could pass decisions

¹¹⁴ I use the expression Horthy era, which lasted for quarter of a century (from the Counterrevolution of 1919 till the punch of the Arrow Cross in October 1944) as a matter of convention and convenience, although my sources only begin in 1929 and stop when Nazi Germany occupied Hungary in March 1944 and these publications ceased to appear, even though Horthy remained in power for another half a year which brought the deportation and mass murder of most of Hungarian Jews. I am aware that the decision to name the era after the person of Regent Miklós Horthy (who at times acted rather like a weak president and was arguably never a historical actor of epochal significance) is rather questionable.

¹¹⁵ “Az IMIT alapszabályai” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.337. Note that most authors appear in IMIT with the title “Dr.” in front of their names, but considering its usage somewhat awkward in English, I have decided not to employ it.

if at least ten members participated.¹¹⁶ Twenty members of the board could be appointed to the directorate, while the board of officers consisted of the president, his two vice-presidents, a secretary, treasurer, superintendent, legal adviser and scrivener.

The refoundational Assembly of IMIT in the Horthy era was held on the 26th of February 1928. IMIT sought to acquire members, among others, by paying official visits to different communities.¹¹⁷ Its efforts soon bore fruit: by the end of 1929 IMIT managed to increase the number of its members to 485. Ferenc Hevesi, the secretary of IMIT, could proudly report to the Assembly held on the 22th of June 1930 that the Society already had 600 members (hundreds of whom were newly recruited).¹¹⁸

On the other hand, in 1931, Wertheimer cited worsening economic conditions as explanation of a significant slowdown in the expansion of the Society. At this time there was still a net increase in membership (next to seven deaths and eighteen departures there were fifty-six new members¹¹⁹) but by 1932, the president sounded the alarm against the “widespread false belief” that culture was merely of “secondary importance”.¹²⁰ Wertheimer

¹¹⁶ It is a particularly interesting fact that, as a principle, half of the members had to be from the capital and the other half from outside it. This reflected the rough numerical equality between the two groups but certainly did not quite compensate for the imbalance in terms of cultural life and influence.

¹¹⁷ For instance, Szeged was the destination of the representatives on the 8th of December 1929, while they went to Újpest on the 18th of February 1930. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.314. Újpest, now the 4th district of Budapest, was a separate town back then and thus in 1944 its Jewry, with its famous rabbi (who shall reappear in the course of this text), Dénes Friedman was deported and murdered.

¹¹⁸ “Titkári jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.317. In this yearbook, 519 regular members and 72 contributing members (*pártoló tagok*) were listed by name and place of residence. Few of the founding members and of the so called *pártfogó* members (patrons) were still alive. Close to 90% (63 out of 72) contributing members were from Budapest, while slightly more than half of all regular members (271 out of 519). Out of the 248 members from outside Budapest, 39 were from Nagykanizsa, 35 from Szombathely, 21 from Székesfehérvár, 18 from Szeged, 17 from Szolnok, 13 from Szekszárd, 12 from Eger and Nagykőrös. All other places could claim fewer than ten members. (The secretarial report emphasized the great significance of the recruitment of sixty new members from Nagykanizsa, Szombathely, Eger and Szekszárd on the occasion of official visits.)

¹¹⁹ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.313.

¹²⁰ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.303. In his words, the incorrectness of such a conception was proven “splendidly by the teachings of our sacred religion”. Ibid., p.304. In the subsequent yearbook we read that “the willingness to make financial sacrifices has decreased even more than what could be explained by reference to the worsening of economic conditions”. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki jelentése”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.251. In Wertheimer’s interpretation this was another clear sign of the

felt the new developments to be so threatening that he even warned against the dangers of “future collapse”.¹²¹ In reaction to these negative tendencies, Wertheimer formulated the rather modest aim of “not falling too far below the level reached through years of perseverant work”.¹²²

It is important to add that, next to wealthy and charitable “friends of Jewish culture”, IMIT wanted to rely on the support of Jewish congregations. However, the presidential address of 1934 reveals that only a very select number of Jewish religious communities joined: while Wertheimer complained about the disinterest of hundreds of them, he could list no more than nineteen actual members.¹²³ He explained this relative failure by reference to the tearing away of “peripheral territories” through the Treaty of Trianon where Hungarian Jews supposedly most ready to “sacrifice for our Society’s beneficial cultural mission in the interest of Hungarian Jewry” lived.¹²⁴ The Hungarian capital clearly became the primary basis of the newly active IMIT: its chief supporters were the (Neolog) Jewish community of Pest and the Chavra Kadisa of Pest, not to speak of the large majority of contributing members.¹²⁵

declining status of culture. His bitterness was triggered not only by the indifference of potential supporters, but he also offered some critical words on the agents of Hungarian Jewish culture: “both in terms of quantity and quality, we had to observe a very strong decline of Hungarian Jewish literary and scholarly activities”. Ibid., pp.252-3.

¹²¹ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.305. The Society indeed lost a few members in the preceding year (sixteen people left, while nine died and only twenty-one joined in compensation), but this in itself could not have justified Wertheimer’s dramatic tone. Ibid., p.307. The ratio of fee-paying members, which seems to have been rather low, might however go a long way in explaining his worries.

¹²² “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.303.

¹²³ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.321. The list looks like this: Baja, Bonyhád, Esztergom, Győr, Hódmezővásárhely, Kaposvár, Kispest, Mohács, Nagykanizsa, Nyíregyháza, Orosháza, Pécs, Szeged, Szombathely, Tapolca, Veszprém and Zalaegerszeg. 1935 brought no significant changes: the report addressed the problem that the number of those who could potentially support IMIT shrank again and that there was a growing necessity to support writers in need. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, pp. 325-6.

¹²⁴ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.322.

¹²⁵ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.342. In 1930, for instance, next to membership fees amounting to 3 686 florins (*pengő*), the former contributed 3 000 and the latter 2 000 to what

Next to the small, but nevertheless painful decrease in members and the parallel increase in charitable expenses to assist writers in need, the most serious material burden on the shoulders of the Society was the publication of the new volumes of the *Magyar-Zsidó Oklevéltár* (Hungarian Jewish Archives) in 1936. The total cost of 12 000 florins wiped away most of the savings of the Society and aggravated IMIT's situation to the point where its president argued in favor of expelling and suing non-paying members. At the same time, Wertheimer turned to Jewish society with what he called a "heartfelt request" to help maintain the institution.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, the Society managed to continue its work in barely changed shape: between the 27th of November 1935 and the 6th of May 1936, there were six lecture evenings. Moreover, IMIT received eleven submissions to its novel writing contest (the deadline for which was the 1st of September 1935).¹²⁷ The decidedly crisis like situation of IMIT left no marks on the content or the length of the yearbooks – unless we consider the fact that in 1937 and 1938 there were way fewer Hungarian Jewish themes as an indicator of crisis.¹²⁸

Dedication and perseverance must have played serious and respectable roles around this time in keeping IMIT going, but the voices of pessimism grew louder. By 1937, Wertheimer stated that "the question of *quo vadis* regularly reemerges" for the leaders of

was a total income of 12 749. Out of this, 2 563 was spent on the Jewish Museum, 1 600 to finance the lecture series held at the splendid Goldmark room of the Pest community, while the editing of the yearbook cost 1 196. "Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat zárszámadása 1929. december 31-én" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.319. In the financial plans for 1932, the yearbook demanded a much larger share of expenses, over 40% of the total, its editing and publication claiming 4 000 florins out of the 9 500 budget. "Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat előirányzata az 1932. évre" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.310.

¹²⁶ "Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.334. He went as far as to emphasize that only through scholarship and literature could the "the willingness to help be planted into individuals" (at that this was recognized also by Gyula Ádler). Ibid., p.332.

¹²⁷ "Jelentés az IMIT regénypályázatáról" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, pp. 342-5.

¹²⁸ These two yearbooks focus almost exclusively on general Jewish questions.

IMIT.¹²⁹ Year 1937 saw a deficit of 6 000 florins which was to continue into the next year: according to the leadership's calculation, IMIT would exceed its budget by another 3 500.¹³⁰ That year, only four lecture evenings took place, which clearly indicated waning enthusiasm compared to the early 1930s.¹³¹ In the words of Wertheimer, the function of the Society was "almost identical" with the "support provided to our cultural workers in need of help".¹³²

Perhaps the most important change of the late 1930s was growing dissatisfaction with the contents of IMIT. This development was partly, if not almost wholly due to the worsening situation of Hungarian Jews, the drastic narrowing of Jewish opportunities already on the way at this time. The report of Samu Szemere on the lectures mentioned that "we have recently heard it more than once that the lectures of IMIT are foreign to the concerns of the present, their subjects keep a cold distance from the truly urgent issues of life".¹³³ Szemere contested the validity of this critique and defended the choice of topics. According to him, the subjects covered were in line with the basic written principles of IMIT, and it was also "in the nature of scholarly subjects" that they could be

¹²⁹ "Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.312. He also stated that "We can hardly trust that there shall appear a subsequent generation who would take care of the work instead of us now" and that is why IMIT decide to publish more extensive volumes of the *Monumenta* (that, goes without saying, required making financial sacrifices). *Ibid.*, p.313.

¹³⁰ This was mostly due to the spending of 4 100 pengő on the new volumes of the *Monumenta*.

¹³¹ At the same time, in 1938, the Jewish Museum opened its exhibition on the 70th anniversary of emancipation with sad contemporary resonances, i.e. in the shadow of the discriminatory legislation. The exhibition had an unusually large reception. Munkácsi remarked that "practically from one day to the next, the historical artifacts of our Museum had to be converted into weapons in our daily struggle". "Igazgatósági jelentés" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.341.

¹³² "Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.277. Things continued in rather similar fashion in 1939 (or at least they were discussed in very similar ways): Wertheimer spoke of "struggle and thrashing" and again remarked that receptivity towards the aims of IMIT ("these infinitely important goals") was getting ever weaker. "Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.335. Expenses also continued to be higher than incomes. Plans for the year after counted with a loss of 11 600 florins (this was partly due to the republication of the five books of the Jewish Bible). The document also reveals that the new recruitment methods failed to yield the desired results. The only real novelty of 1939 seems to have been (and another negative one at that) the "complete failure" to gain new members in the territories Hungary reacquired from Czechoslovakia.

¹³³ "Az IMIT felolvasóbizottságának jelentése az 1938/39. évi működéséről" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.352. The report also listed the topics: there were two on historical, one on the Talmud and one on the philosophy of religion, besides short stories and poetry.

“only rather loosely connected to exciting problems of the present”.¹³⁴ Crucially, he insisted that it was also necessary to continue the scholarly discussion of such atemporal and lasting questions because “if there were merely some weak signs that the subjects of our lectures address daily concerns, deal with political issues, we could no longer count on the permission of the policing authorities.”¹³⁵

In Wertheimer’s eyes, reiterating the complaints characteristic of the 1930s would have sounded completely anachronistic by 1940. He maintained that the “misfortune befalling Hungarian Jewry is so huge that any more narrow complaint has to be inaudibly silent in comparison”.¹³⁶ At the same time, he persisted in his conviction that the indifference shown towards IMIT, the “Hungarian Jewish cultural center” was exceptionally troublesome since a higher level of receptivity to cultural values could make the burdens of the present easier to bear.¹³⁷ He emphasized that scholarly and theoretical knowledge can be uplifting, strengthen consciousness and serve as badly needed encouragement. Samu Szemere, head of the lecture organizing committee and editor of the volumes, used a redemptory move to continue dodging a wholehearted recognition of contemporary needs, insisting that the subjects of scholarship were contemporary at all times and even “atemporal questions can acquire topical relevance in the moment they are discussed”.¹³⁸ Moreover, he reacted to the (supposedly stubbornly repeated) ideas of young rabbis by saying that religious and secular, young and old cannot be crudely opposed to each other and recognized as indicators of

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.353.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.353.

¹³⁶ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.315.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.315.

¹³⁸ “Az IMIT felolvasó-bizottságának jelentése az 1939/40. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.325.

scholarly or literary value, asserting that IMIT was more than ready to recognize and respect all that was really valuable.¹³⁹

According to the available evidence, the situation of IMIT continued to worsen until the early 1940s. Perhaps surprisingly, in 1941 things seemed to take a turn for the better. Primarily because of the division of Transylvania between Romania and Hungary and thus the return of Northern Transylvania to Hungary in 1940, the chances of “the propaganda to increase the number of members” seemed to be promising. In spite of Hungary joining the war in the course of 1941 and the situation of Hungarian Jewry further deteriorating, Szemere believed that in the near future IMIT could potentially acquire hundreds of new members in Transylvanian urban centers.¹⁴⁰ In order to take advantage of this opportunity, the Society paid official visits to both Kolozsvár (Cluj) and Nagyvárad (Oradea), in addition to a similar excursion to Kispest in February of the same year.¹⁴¹ By this time IMIT was one of the few remaining forums of Jewish scholarship and literature and it proceeded to establish committees on the level of religious communities, cultural departments and also in Budapest districts. It was probably due to the last factor (i.e. the concentrated effort made in Budapest) that Wertheimer would announce in 1942 that “contrary to what was stated at our previous meeting, the increase in members has been most notable in our capital city rather than outside of it”, which also implied that the plans of a major Transylvanian breakthrough did not materialize.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.328.

¹⁴⁰ “Jelentés az irodalmi és felolvasóbizottságnak az 1940/41. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, pp. 342-3.

¹⁴¹ Two out of these three times the subject of the evening was (on the request of local organizers) Bergson.

¹⁴² “Wertheimer Adolf ünnepi megnyitója az IMIT 1942. június 22-én tartott közgyűlésén” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.360. In fact, the list of contributing members from 1942 shows that 33 out of 41 of them were from Budapest. “Pártoló tagok” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, pp. 376-7. A year later the ration was 39 to 11, but while the 39 contributors from Budapest tended to be individuals, the 11 from outside Jewish communities (such as two separate communities from Kolozsvár, one from Győr, Gyula, Kaposvár, Nagykanizsa Szeged). Thus, there

Taking into account the narrowing opportunities in the war years, it can be considered all the more positive that the budget of IMIT showed a 5 000 florins surplus and the Society was even hoping that in 1942 it might increase to 10 000. This was supposed to arise entirely out of the new publication of the Bible (planned expenses related to it were at 15 000 and the planned income at 25 000).¹⁴³ On the other hand, the leaders of IMIT were aware that the long-term financial situation of the Society was still far from stable. IMIT continued to lack capital (its savings amounted to altogether 5 816 florins at this time) and so even the possibility of releasing a reedition and a popular version of the Bible was doubtful.¹⁴⁴

Around this time, a moderate but tangible shift in the position of Samu Szemere can be observed: by 1942, he defended the stance that the literary committee (responsible for organizing the lecture series and thus, indirectly but in practice largely for the articles in the yearbooks too) “did not remain insensitive to the demands of the times”.¹⁴⁵ In the midst of the Second World War, at the time of the extermination of European Jewry, the editor of the *IMIT yearbooks* would still enumerate Jewish cultural plans in Budapest such as the launching of a new journal and the release of a series of scholarly (“always timely”) books.¹⁴⁶ The last IMIT yearbook shows that the Society indeed pursued a more intensive program of book support: the publication of the Hertz Bible was completed and another three books (written by Tamás Kóbor, Mihály Guttmann and Ferenc Hevesi)

were only four contributing individuals outside Budapest. Pártoló tagok had to pay at least twice the amount as regular ones (24 as opposed to 12 *pengő*).

¹⁴³ “Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat költségvetése az 1942. évre” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.362.

¹⁴⁴ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója az IMIT 1943. június 29-én tartott közgyűlésén” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, pp. 367-8.

¹⁴⁵ “Jelentés az irodalmi és felolvasó bizottságnak 1941/42 évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.368.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.368. It is somewhat surprising that while such expansionist plans were formulated, Wertheimer also wanted to submit his resignation and recommended Simon Hevesi as his replacement. His offer was rejected. (The proposed replacement would anyhow not have been a fortunate choice since Hevesi passed away in 1943.)

received support. IMIT also continued to assist young authors, especially those who had to perform so called labor service (*munkaszolgálat*).¹⁴⁷

I consider it a highly symbolic fact regarding my own research that IMIT wanted to celebrate what turned out to be the catastrophic year of 1944 with the preparation of a scholarly work on the history of the Society.¹⁴⁸ Had this study appeared, its intentions, methods and final contents would have in all likelihood differed significantly from what can be read below. My approach to the story of IMIT from the distance of two generations is, above all, empirical and textual. Moreover, my aims are primarily of an analytical kind, which in the midst of the Second World War could have reasonably been expected only to a limited degree.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ “Titkári jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.370. The exact amount cannot be known as it was listed in the category of “Lectures, helping writers, contributions to toms, support for journals, etc.” “Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat 1942. December 31-i zárszámadása”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.373.

¹⁴⁸ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója az IMIT 1943. június 29-én tartott közgyűlésén” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.366.

¹⁴⁹ Any historical study of the brutally broken Hungarian Jewish scholarly tradition (a process compounded by the subsequent communist takeover) inevitably carries certain moral overtones. As a non-Jewish author, my aim is to contribute, with my doubtlessly modest means, to some form of retroactive justice, which admittedly can never be complete. At the same time, my primary ambition is analytical and not tributary. In my assessment, a fair and honest confrontation with the recent past requires a serious engagement with the works of Hungarian Jewish authors. Thus, I have tried to steer clear of unjustified laudatory gestures which sometimes only serve to hide the lack of analytical content. More generally speaking, our moral sense wants us to paint a rather idealized image of victims, but this might be difficult to justify from the analytical point of view. All in all, the ambition of this dissertation is to present Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectual discourse with its stark inner pluralism, irreducible complexities and strange ambivalences and modestly contribute to the understanding of the process ultimately leading up to the Holocaust from the Jewish perspective – a historiographic turn to which Saul Friedländer contributed landmark volumes after decades of focus on the perpetrators at the expense of the victims. For many valuable reflections on the importance of his work for the present and future of Holocaust Studies see Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (eds.), *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination. Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London: Continuum, 2010).

IV. The Aims of the Yearbooks in the Mirror of Self-Interpretations

The first new *IMIT yearbook* of 1929 contained references to former Hungarian Jewish yearbooks from the years 1848, 1861 and 1875, as well as to the first *IMIT yearbook* series and its original intentions. In this volume, Lajos Blau cited Ignác Goldziher's plan for a popular literary society formulated by the famous Orientalist scholar already in 1884.¹⁵⁰ Blau expressed his commitment to the dual obligation propagated by Sámuel Kohn too, according to which making Jewish religious life known by promoting faith and knowledge simultaneously should constitute the main agenda of IMIT, but this attempt had to be accompanied by the "many-sided enriching of Hungarian culture in the interest of national and public consciousness".¹⁵¹

Ferenc Hevesi agreed that IMIT should strive to return to its original activities, which to him meant no less than to revive what Bánóczi in 1904 rightly called "one of the greatest works" and "most beneficial achievements" of Hungarian Jewry in an honorable manner.¹⁵² The point of his article was to discuss how central the role of József Bánóczi was to IMIT.¹⁵³ In the course of this article, Hevesi introduced the dual ambition of

¹⁵⁰ Lajos Blau, "Mezey Ferenc és az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.14. Goldziher believed that the major task of this society would be the preparation of translations.

¹⁵¹ Blau, "Mezey", p.19.

¹⁵² Hevesi, "Bánóczi", p.11. This is one of the themes of our next chapter, but it might be helpful to note already here that such references to 19th century Jewish traditions tended to directly evoke the dominant program of dual identity from those times. Unmistakable signs of this are the differentiation between "Jewish coreligionists" (members of the Israelite denomination) and "our Hungarian people" and the plan of their simultaneous, completely non-conflictual service (since they are entities of a different kind, exist on different levels, in different registers). Blau, "Mezey", p.20. According to a representative evocation of this tradition born and institutionalized at the very beginnings of the liberal period, the ambition was (as stated in the yearbook of the Izraelita Magyar Egylet of 1861) "to offer Hungarian literature to our coreligionists and provide Israelite literature to the Hungarian nation". Ibid., p.22.

¹⁵³ Bánóczi not only launched the Hungarian Jewish scholarly journal *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* together with Vilmos Bacher and edited it between 1884 and 1892 and was instrumental in the development of modern Hungarian philosophical language. In 1894, he was among the founders of IMIT, and later for several decades

the Society, whereby he affirmed the underlying notion of dual identity, and pointed to the third major task: that of fighting anti-Semitism.¹⁵⁴ According to Hevesi, the aims of IMIT were “to fill Jewry with Hungarian spirit, to raise patriotic and active Jews who possess Hungarian culture and, on the other hand, to show the values of the Jewish past and thought to those Jews who seem increasingly indifferent and also to those from fellow denominations who currently show animosity towards us, so that they shall appreciate and respect Jewry in the future.”¹⁵⁵ Arnold Kiss even claimed that in his own days Bánóczi wanted and managed to have IMIT recognized as the (unofficial Hungarian) Jewish academy.¹⁵⁶

The affirmative recalling of such 19th century traditions continued even in the late 1930s. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the death of Vilmos Bacher in 1939, Mihály Guttman was exceptionally affirmatively about the original Hungarian Jewish scholarly agenda and accomplishments, urging that “right now we need to appreciate all the more every spiritual treasure, every piece of knowledge that the dedicated men of the times of emancipation managed to create in their calm houses of learning.”¹⁵⁷ According to this speech held at the time of the beginnings of institutionally supported societal exclusion and the consequent major crisis of Hungarian Jewry, the moment was meant to make Hungarian

as its secretary too. He coedited the yearbooks with Bacher between 1896 and 1899 and then served as sole editor until 1918. He passed away in 1926.

¹⁵⁴ Miksa Weisz also listed the aims of IMIT in his study published in the first yearbook of the new series: these were to strengthen Jewish consciousness, to spread convictions and principled behavior, the sense of belonging together (all leading to the rebirth of Hungarian Israel) and pursue the fight against widespread prejudices. Miksa Weisz, “Kayserling M. emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.170. Simon Hevesi delivered a speech on the occasion of the anniversary of the journal *Egyenlőség* where he referred to the program of creating Hungarian Jewish literature as a goal shared by the two organs (i.e. by *Egyenlőség* and the *IMIT yearbooks*), but recognized that *Egyenlőség* provided a precedence. Simon Hevesi, “Az <<Egyenlőség>> 50 éves jubileumára” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.197.

¹⁵⁵ Ferenc Hevesi, “Bánóczi József és az IMIT” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.9.

¹⁵⁶ Arnold Kiss, “Bánóczi József egyénisége”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.187. In 1931, Andor Peterdi spoke of the forum of IMIT with rather pathetic words: “in this place the flames of Jewish culture are still preserved with sacred conviction”. Andor Peterdi, “Ujvári Péter emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.73.

¹⁵⁷ “Dr. Guttman Mihály emlékezésére Bacher Vilmos halálának 25. évfordulója alkalmából” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.339.

Jewish intellectual and spiritual values of the former liberal era strike Jews as all the more obvious and make them more widely cherished.¹⁵⁸

The President of the Society, Adolf Wertheimer had rather similar things to say on the matter of continuity. For instance, he declared in 1941, on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Sámuel Kohn that the Society aimed to continue its work in “the spirit of the founding fathers”.¹⁵⁹ According to one of his speeches held more than a decade earlier, the refounded IMIT aimed at “reaching the level our respected predecessors managed to attain under circumstances admittedly more favorable than our own”.¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere, Wertheimer formulated the general aims of IMIT as pursuing cooperation and “raising Jewish self-consciousness and self-respect” in the “spirit of Jewish ethics”.¹⁶¹ More concretely, the yearbooks aimed to serve as a “faithful mirror” of “Jewish scholarly and partly also of literary life”.¹⁶²

The themes Samu Szemere wanted to be covered were “partly Jewish topics of universal relevance, partly those current aspects of cultural life which concern Jewry, Hungarian Jewry in the first place” where, as we have seen above, interest in current cultural

¹⁵⁸ Guttman also reflected on how this epoch shall appear in a new light due to the (ongoing) growing distance from it and subsequent acquisition of a proper historical perspective on it. He stated that in retrospect the two most conspicuous features of this epoch were the universal possibility of participation and the “humanistic sense of shared purpose and collaboration” between scholars. Ibid., p.346. Moreover, in Guttman’s view faith and knowledge were in synchrony at this time.

¹⁵⁹ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.334.

¹⁶⁰ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.315. The topical preferences of this tradition were reflected in the two subjects IMIT decided to organize contests about in 1929: it called for general histories of emancipation and an introduction to the Bible worthy of scholarly standards but written for the widest possible audience (the deadlines were the 15th of April of 1931 and 1930, respectively). “Dr. Hevesi Ferenc titkári jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.345. Five entries were submitted to the latter. Mór Fényes received first prize for his *Szentírásunk kialakulása, eszméi, hatása* (The Emergence, Ideas and Impact of Our Holy Script) that was eventually published in 1931.

¹⁶¹ “Előszó”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.7.

¹⁶² “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.313.

life did not equal a focus on topicalities.¹⁶³ On the principle of selection, the official communiqué of the committee organizing the lectures insisted that quality mattered above all and assured everyone that “every justified demand” would be satisfied.¹⁶⁴ IMIT intended to achieve a reasonable balance between different interests and therefore, next to texts dealing with the Bible or with historical and literary problems, Szemere considered the discussion of various current issues (i.e. issues he considered “contemporary” but “not practical”) entirely possible. While admitting that various groups produced multiplicity of contradictory expectations and requests, he firmly rejected the application of strict numerical proportions.

Having quoted some authors’ rather uncritical appropriation and restatement of what they saw as basic elements of the IMIT tradition, it is worth looking at the six officially accepted goals of the Society: “a) publication and distribution of the Bible in Hungarian, b) publication and distribution of works dealing with the Bible and with the religious literature of later epochs and, generally, of works that present and enlighten about Jewish religious and ethical thought, c) organization of public lectures in Budapest and outside of it on Biblical, Jewish historical and literary topics as well as on the contemporary life of Jews, d) publication and distribution of scholarly and popular works in the same vein, e) announcement of contests relevant to the aims of the Society and the rewarding of works,

¹⁶³ “Jelentés az IMIT felolvasó bizottságának 1930-31.évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.319. Szemere emphasized that, in line with the basic rules of IMIT, some practical subjects could not be tackled – in the years of legal discrimination this would not even have been possible due to the imminent threat of state intervention. Even though no one tried to justify this practice in theory, it is conspicuous how great the role of the calendar was in determining the choice of subjects: a good part of the articles were written on the occasion of anniversaries. Mihály Guttmann made the most direct (though still rather lyrical) reference to this phenomenon in his commemorative speech on the life and works of Vilmos Bacher, when he referred to “the mystical tendencies of our soul venerating round numbers”. “Guttmann Mihály emlékebeszéde Bacher” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.337. To give a sense of the phenomenon: in 1929, the 200th anniversary of the birth of Moses Mendelssohn, the 60th anniversary of the first Hungarian Jewish Congress and the approaching 50th of *Egyenlőség* provided relevant occasions. In 1935, there were three articles devoted to Maimonides on the 800th anniversary of the birth. In 1936, the 100th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Ágai and the 50th of the death of Leopold Zunz served as occasions of studies, etc.

¹⁶⁴ “Az IMIT felolvasó bizottságának jelentése az 1931-32- évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.312.

f) collecting monuments, books, documents, pictures and other artifacts that are of significance for Jewish history, life in Biblical times and our religious cult, especially those which show our Hungarian connection, and also the foundation and maintenance of a Museum with the purpose of exhibiting them.”¹⁶⁵

Thus the publication of its yearbook series did not explicitly feature among the chief official goals of IMIT – presumably it was subsumed under “publication and distribution of works dealing with the Bible and [...] Jewish religious and ethical thought”, and “publication and distribution of scholarly and popular works in the same vein”. In practice, however, in addition to the occasional writing contests, IMIT seems to have focused its efforts primarily on (re)publishing its own (first ever) translation of the Hebrew Bible,¹⁶⁶ releasing further volumes of the Archives and its yearbooks, and the organization of lectures.¹⁶⁷ The project of expanding and opening the Jewish Museum, first conceived by Miksa Szabolcsi in the year of the millennial celebrations in Hungary, in 1896, in its new (and also current) location in Dohány utca was added to these three most visible activities.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ “Az Izr. Magyar Irodalmi Társulat alapszabályai” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, pp. 328-9.

¹⁶⁶ In this respect, IMIT is eminently comparable to the Jewish Publication Society (of America). The secretary of IMIT, Ferenc Hevesi remarked in 1931 that the republication of the Bible was the main goal of the restarted IMIT. “Titkári jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.316. In 1939, Mihály Guttmann called the original Hungarian Jewish edition of the Bible (released between 1898 and 1907) “the brightest moment” in the history of IMIT. “Guttmann Mihály emlékebeszéde Bacher” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, pp. 342-3. Sámuel Löwinger also aimed to prove that the goals of IMIT, which he listed as publication and distribution of the Hungarian translation of the Bible, popularization of Jewish literature and history, maintenance of the Jewish Museum and organization of lectures, had always been closest to Lajos Blau’s heart. Sámuel Löwinger, “Dr. Blau Lajos élete és irodalmi munkássága” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.54.

¹⁶⁷ These largely overlapped with the yearbooks. In the course of the first year there were ten lectures, nine of which were published as studies in IMIT, amounting to majority of articles included in the 1929 yearbook. There were another ten lecture evenings between the 3rd of October 1929 and the 28th of May 1930, eight the year after, eight after that, etc., even though of the fourteen studies in the yearbook of 1932, only six were presented. In 1939-40, four lecture evenings were held. In 1940-41, there were six (three outside Budapest), in 1941-42 five and in 1942-43 four.

¹⁶⁸ The first assembly of the Jewish Museum, restricted to fifty participants, took place on the 13th July 1931. The Museum was established primarily in order to present Jewish artifacts to the young and adult population as part of an educational agenda and thereby raise the historical consciousness of Jewry. Moreover, the Museum aimed to prove the strength of Hungarian Jewish rights by illustrating (literally by “incorporating”) the arguments for it. The Jewish Museum was thus an autonomous institution, but it was rather closely linked to

Finally, let us look at some concrete examples of authors reflecting on the contents of their studies in relation to the standards and expectations of IMIT the way they understood them. For instance, in his study on the life and works of Bernát Alexander, Károly Sebestyén noted that “the place where my study gets published obliges me to devote some words to his [Alexander’s] relation to Jewry”.¹⁶⁹ Thereby Sebestyén indicated that he would not have considered it necessary in all circumstances, but wished to fulfill the expectations of IMIT and its audience. A complimentary consideration is reflected in Miksa Pollák’s article series “Madách Imre és a Biblia” where he found it necessary to justify the inclusion of relevant segments of the New Testament and of apocryphal literature. “Even though strictly speaking this is not in conformity with the goals of IMIT”, he wrote, it was nevertheless necessary “to achieve a complete coverage of the task”.¹⁷⁰ In Pollák’s interpretation, IMIT practically wanted discussions only on Jewish religious literature, and

IMIT, so much so that the annual reports of the Museum were released in the *Announcements of the Society* section of the IMIT yearbooks until the Museum acquired its own organ *Libanon* in 1940 (see Chapter VI). The Museum (which called 1933 the first “worthwhile” year of its existence) was later on constantly supported by IMIT – the costs were divided between it and the (Neolog) Jewish Community of Pest. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.314.

¹⁶⁹ Károly Sebestyén, “Alexander Bernát” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.93. Here I would like to draw readers’ attention to one of the biggest problems of translation, namely the recurrent usage of the Hungarian word *zsidóság* which can be translated, depending on the context and sometimes only on intuition, as Jewry, Judaism, Jewishness or even simply as Jews (Similarly, *Judentum* in German has multiple layers of meaning, though they are not identical to the multiplicity of *zsidóság* or other Hungarian terms such as, for example, *magyarság*). Any English translation necessarily obliterates some of the complexities and ambiguities of the original statement (which is occasionally downright crucial for my analysis): for instance, Judaism directly implies a religion the way *zsidóság* does not (its more direct Hungarian equivalent, *judaizmus* was not used at all). Jewry suggests a complex and rather abstract entity, while Jews refers to the concrete people. Thus, dependent on whether the statement seemed to be about concrete matters or about general abstract claims, I variously use one of these translations. The quote in the text, originally “Alexander viszonya a zsidósághoz”, could also be legitimately translated as “Alexander’s relation to his Jewishness” though, in order to be clear and distinct, this would have to be “Alexander viszonya zsidóságához” – but this way of phrasing was never used consistently. Phrases such as “Alexander viszonya a zsidósághoz” much rather tend to imply both questions (in case Alexander is assumed to be somehow Jewish): how Alexander related to Jewry as such and how he dealt with his own Jewishness.

¹⁷⁰ Miksa Pollák, “Madách Imre és a Biblia” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.88.

references to other empirical materials or comparative reflections would constitute an exception rather than the rule.¹⁷¹

In his discussion of the Ten Commandments, Mór Fényes also made a relevant remark when he announced that he did not consider it among his tasks to “enter into the kind of argumentation that would accomplish a satisfying apologia of the Jewish faith”. He insisted that instead his article was built on “the scholarly principles of textual interpretation”, but stated this precisely in order to introduce his “digression” and offer an apologetic type of argument.¹⁷² He wanted to challenge the narrow conception of and focus on scholarly aims and even might have considered one of the purposes of IMIT lectures to present apologetic arguments, while defending his reluctance to fully articulate an apologetic position by recourse to the principles of scholarship. Ultimately, he emphasized that Jewish scholarship, the way he practiced it, did not conceive of religious and scholarly aims as opposites.¹⁷³

Elsewhere the scholarly priorities were explicitly critiqued as implying a too narrow thematic focus. In his presentation on Rabbi Akiba Eger, Aladár Fürst rhetorically requested that “here, on the pages of the *IMIT yearbooks*, where inspired scholars and writers have appreciated so many Jewish geniuses already, let us once introduce one of the <<giants of the Torah>>”.¹⁷⁴ When writing on the anniversary of the journal *Múlt és Jövő*, Fürst also

¹⁷¹ Note that such perceptions of IMIT’s narrowly defined thematic were at best only partially justified by the actual contents of the yearbooks, which often treated the Jewish traditions in comparative frames (Greeks being the most common object of comparison with Jewry).

¹⁷² Mór Fényes, “A Tízige” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.126.

¹⁷³ As we shall see this was accompanied by a strong demarcation of the two realms. In *Libanon* he attacked “the slogan” that religion and scholarship were ultimately completely alike in their results and consequences. He was particularly adamant about the supposition that religion needed the justification of scholarship.

¹⁷⁴ Aladár Fürst, “R. Éger Akiba” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.169. Fürst called Akiba Eger, who died in Posen (today Poznań, Poland) a hundred years earlier, in 1837, “the last gaon of Germany”. Ibid., p.168. In Fürst’s assessment, he turned the declining phase of the medieval institution of the Rabbinate into a new golden period. Ibid., p.183.

referred to its review section which he evaluated as a praiseworthy initiative, but not a truly “competent guide to orient reading and buying audiences”. He considered it one of the tasks of IMIT to develop such an orienting role in a “well-planned and systematic” way, believing that *Múlt és Jövő* would only partially and temporarily fill the painfully existing gap.¹⁷⁵ Fürst thus expressed his expectation that IMIT would emerge as the Hungarian Jewish intellectual center and play an important role overshadowing alternative venues – an expectation that is all the more striking since with very few exceptions, IMIT did not review books between 1929 and 1943 at all, and it would be a rather futile attempt to try to use these yearbooks as guides to contemporary Jewish publications.

After weighting these sentences of reflection, it transpires that IMIT wanted to pursue a scholarly discussion of Jewish topics, but not in “classically religious” areas.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Aladár Fürst, “A <<Múlt és Jövő>> jubileumára” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.210.

¹⁷⁶ There is a marked resemblance here to the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* which by this time entered its period of decline in Germany, but seems to have exerted a more lasting influence among some important Hungarian Jewish scholars. Bernát Heller’s study “Zunz Lipót” discussed *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in greatest detail, focusing on its original, 19th century form. Heller praised Zunz as the founder of the scholarly study of Judaism and at once its very best practitioner. “There is not a single Jewish scholar in his age or later who would not have felt gratitude towards Zunz”. Bernát Heller, “Zunz Lipót” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.64. According to him, Hungarian Jewish scholars of the consecutive generation were “gratefully connected to Zunz”. Ibid., p.75. Heller mentioned the names of Vilmos Bacher, Immanuel Löw, Lajos Venetianer, Sámuel Klein and “above all” Dávid Kaufmann, with Vilmos Bacher playing, in his opinion, the role similar to that of Zunz in Germany. Ibid., p.75. What is more, Heller declared that Zunz’s place should be next to Philo and Maimuni as one of the greatest Jews of all times, denying Mendelssohn the right to this position as his views were based “primarily on German culture and philosophy”, while Zunz viewed Jewry as it emerged out of its own organic historical development and presented the specifically Jewish spirit to scholars and cultured audiences of his day. Ibid., pp. 77-8. Heller’s quite hyperbolic presentation reached its climax when he declared that Zunz and Jewry “felt as one”, referring to his “loving nature” and his sense of justice as his two chief virtues. According to him, Zunz expected scholarly works to contribute to the spread of justice. Ibid., p.77. Concerning the latter, Heller himself was skeptical, fearing that such consequences were hardly observable. Zunz’s legacy is also discussed in Sámuel Löwinger’s writing on Lajos Blau, as he praised him for “truly practising Jewish scholarship in the spirit of Zunz, with conviction, enthusiasm, faith and thorough knowledge”. Löwinger, “Blau”, p. 19. Ármín Kecskeméti also offered some observations on Jewish scholarship in his “Mendelssohn kétszáz esztendeje” (The 200 Years of Mendelssohn). According to him, “the only possible frame for European Jewish life is assimilation, a culture that unifies elements that are European and those that belong to the homeland”. To his propagation of assimilation Kecskeméti added that European Jewishness ought to be coupled with Jewish self-consciousness, which in his eyes could only arise out of “the scholarly study of Judaism”. Ármín Kecskeméti, “Mendelssohn kétszáz esztendeje” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.159. Kecskeméti thus arrived at the following synthetic, but thoroughly polemical statement: “the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* offers what later became the Jewish renaissance”. Ibid., p.159.

Some complained that there was not enough on traditional Jewish knowledge and knowers and wanted to make up for it, others wanted to push across the border into the realm of the extra-Jewish and the comparative, but felt they needed to justify this ambition. This seems to illustrate well where the middle ground lay: in the 1930s, the organizers and the public of IMIT were not particularly favorably disposed towards, but would not have hindered either, attempts to address matters beyond the sphere of Jewish subjects, discuss questions with clearly apologetic intentions or topics relevant exclusively from the point of view of traditional religious life.¹⁷⁷ However, such ventures were uncommon enough. The series of yearbooks released in the Horthy era offered a relatively homogeneous Jewish thematic while the approach was based on scholarly principles that did not neglect (but did not regularly insist on) the aim of strengthening faith. Importantly, in terms of periods, the modern era and particularly questions related to modern Hungarian Jewry were roughly equally, even slightly more often addressed than previous epochs. In sum, IMIT lectures, as well as the related yearbooks aimed to be the most popular forum of modern Hungarian Jewish scholarship.

¹⁷⁷ In line with these aims, the authors of IMIT in the early years employed collective identity discourses based on maintaining distance from both Orthodox Jewry and religious reformism, thus making a modern Hungarian and an even more emphatic Jewish identity offer. The next chapter will analyze various identity options present in these modern Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly writings, the divergent assessments of some crucial Jewish traditions and the characteristics of the scholarly position in a more nuanced way, also addressing the question of changes (practically that of increasing openness) over time.

Chapter III

Discourses of Collective Identity

I. Hungarian Jewish Identity Options

This chapter aims to explore a bundle of Hungarian Jewish collective identity discourses articulated during the years of the Horthy regime on the pages of the *IMIT yearbooks*. Throughout this subchapter I focus on the questions of Hungarian and Jewish identities and various conceptions of their interrelation (or lack thereof). I will argue that the authors of IMIT could choose from a number of Hungarian Jewish identity options and will discuss and compare seven of them that emerge most strongly from the analysis of their writings. Five of these seven are versions of dual identity. The analysis of their colorful spectrum begins with the conventional version from the times of emancipation that favors the position that religion provides Jewish group cohesion and that therefore Jewry constitutes one of the denominations that make up the multiconfessional Hungarian nation.¹⁷⁸

This 19th century formulation of dual identity is quite common in *IMIT yearbooks*, not least because many of the authors experienced their primary socialization prior to 1914. Another reason is the selection of themes: many writings commemorated

¹⁷⁸ For instance, Lajos Blau wrote in the course of his text on Ferenc Mezey (1860-1927) that Jews (zsidóság) lived for their religion in their millennial history. Blau, “Mezey”, p.12. József Katona remarked on Simon Hevesi that his desire was the happiness of Jews, the cause of his “religious community”. József Katona, “Hevesi Simon” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.68. The uses of categories such as religion or denomination were not nearly self-evident: the correct way of categorizing Jewry is a controversial issue, complicated by the abovementioned ambiguity of the Hungarian term zsidóság. Some have reflected on this specific complexity: Edelstein observed, for example, that “new theories are emerging and continuously replacing each other”. He mentioned the ideas of separate nationality, a (secondary) part of the nation, race and denomination – always depending on what national elite groups and the majority wanted to claim. Bertalan Edelstein, “A külföldi zsidóság története a háború utáni évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.312. Bertalan Hatvany believed that in the case of Indian and Chinese Jews, the subjects of his contribution to IMIT, it was simply impossible to decide whether they constituted a denomination or a race. Bertalan Hatvany, “Kínai és indiai zsidók” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.54.

leading Jewish personalities from the age of the Dual Monarchy. Lajos Blau, for instance, who was born in 1861, wrote on the ideas of Vilmos Bacher (1850-1913) and József Bánóczy (1849-1926) that were originally articulated in the late 19th century. In their view, the literature of the Jewish denomination is just one of the branches of national literature, for which the literature of other Hungarian denominations can provide models as well as parallels.¹⁷⁹ The dual task of Israelite Hungarian authors would thus be to “offer Hungarian literature to our coreligionists and provide Israelite literature to the Hungarian nation”.¹⁸⁰ In turn, in 1936 Löwinger wrote about Blau himself (who passed away shortly before) that his goal was to gain appreciation for his “confession” and to propagate Hungarian culture worldwide.¹⁸¹ Bernát Heller argued that Ignác Goldziher’s (1850-1921) religiosity was purely Jewish.¹⁸² This was a polemical assertion to some extent since there were rumors about Goldziher cherishing syncretic religious beliefs. Heller maintained that his best friends, highly accomplished (non-Jewish) scholars, respected the religious Jew in him. At the same time, this exceptionally important Orientalist scholar was also an ideal Hungarian and could not even imagine being other than Hungarian.¹⁸³ In the same way, Samu Szemere wrote of

¹⁷⁹ Blau, “Mezey”, p.15. Blau also denied the existence of a historical conflict between Jews and non-Jews, and explicitly contested the legitimacy of the view that there ever was one: according to him, the ideas of “host and guest peoples are new inventions”. Lajos Blau, “A zsidók gazdaság helyzete az ó- és középkorban” in IMIT évkönyv, 1933, p.15. In Wertheimer’s eyes, the greatest merit of Bacher was to have given “Hungarian Jewish scholarly work its national character” that suffused it ever after. (Bacher also helped Hungarian Jewish scholarship to achieve international recognition through his publications in various important tongues.) “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in IMIT évkönyv, 1939, p.332. As his energies were also directed towards the central object of IMIT, the Bible, Wertheimer quoted his activities as a highly relevant tradition. Ibid, p.333.

¹⁸⁰ Blau, “Mezey”, p.22. On the conceptual level, the distinction between Israelite coreligionists (*hitsorsosaink*) and the wider group of Hungarian people was also used. Ibid, p.20.

¹⁸¹ Löwinger, “Blau”, p.10. Löwinger added that the research interests of Blau were much broader: he was interested in the unity of the Jewish spirit and its manifestation in culture but refrained from treating Jewish phenomena in isolation. Ibid., p.20.

¹⁸² Peter Haber wrote his German language dissertation on the identity of Goldziher. See Peter Haber, *Zwischen jüdischer Tradition und Wissenschaft. Der ungarische Orientalist Ignác Goldziher (1850-1921)* (Wien: Böhlau, 2006).

¹⁸³ Bernát Heller, “Goldziher Ignác emlékezete” in IMIT évkönyv, 1932, pp. 20-23. In Sebestyén’s text, Goldziher represented another duality. He was the “palatial wise intellect of the Orient” while “his love of his

Lajos Palágyi (1866-1933) that he was “an inspired poet of his nation and a self-conscious son of his denomination”.¹⁸⁴ In his analysis of the platform of *Egyenlőség* (originally started in 1882, at the time of the blood libel trial of Tiszaeszlár) Simon Hevesi quoted the conviction of Ferenc Székely that the journal was founded in order to simultaneously articulate two sentiments: “dedication to the ancient religion” and “unshakable loyalty to the Hungarian homeland” (*haza*).¹⁸⁵ In 1931, Lajos Szabolcsi also wrote of a “sacred duality” which meant that homeland and religion ought to be loved equally.¹⁸⁶

This version of dual identity was again evoked in more general discussion of the age of the Dual Monarchy. According to Groszmann, for instance, the spirit of liberalism and national democracy made the country flourish and fostered the renewal of Hungarian Jewry, and in this successful era “the greatest sons of the nation” and “the leaders of the denomination” fought together on the same side.¹⁸⁷ (Probably unintendedly, this was a somewhat ambivalent formulation: it presupposed that the great persons of the Hungarian

country was unmatched by anyone”. Károly Sebestyén, “Goldziher, az ember” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, pp. 47-9.

¹⁸⁴ Samu Szemere, “Palágyi Lajos” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.254. László Fenyő evoked the “memory and example” of Palágyi as of “one of the few Hungarian-Jewish poets”. László Fenyő, “Palágyi Lajos emlékezete”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.153. In his treatment of Palágyi a year earlier, Hugó Csergő pointed to a grave contradiction: in his eyes, Palágyi was a Jewish poet who created works of lasting value in Hungarian literature (Csergő called him a worthy successor of Petőfi) and in Hungarian Jewish cultural life, but who did not manage to occupy the position he deserved and had to face humiliations. Hugó Csergő, “Palágyi Lajos” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, pp. 40-44.

¹⁸⁵ Simon Hevesi, “Az <<Egyenlőség>> ötven éves jubileumára” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.199.

¹⁸⁶ Lajos Szabolcsi, “Emlékbeszéd Lucien Wolfról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, pp. 33-4. The text of Lajos Szabolcsi provides an excellent example of the (difficult) balancing of national and denominational consciousness: he wrote that “no matter how painful and shameful the *numerus clausus* was [...] it hurt us equally that foreign diplomats and statesmen took up this inner pain of ours and negotiated over it”. *Ibid.*, p.29. The key issue for Lucien Wolf, a historian, journalist and a fighter for Jewish rights and the prime subject of Szabolcsi, was the recognition of the minority status of Jews. *Ibid.*, p.26. Later on, Grünwald would write that “the recognition of Jews as a national minority did not bring with it the expected solution of the Jewish question”. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az 5694. és 5695. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.302.

¹⁸⁷ Zsigmond Groszmann, “Mezei Mór és kora” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.197.

nation and the Israelite leadership were two separate groups without overlaps.¹⁸⁸) Last but not least, Mór Mezei believed that at that time the attempt to reconcile two centrally important goals (the “religious and cultural” and the “patriotic”, which implied economic and political) was successfully completed. To him, an obvious sign of this success was the fact that Hungarian Jewry managed to strengthen Jewish religious and cultural institutions and win respect for Jews while greatly contributing to the greatness of its Hungarian homeland.¹⁸⁹

There were other ways of expressing Hungarian Jewish dual identity. These alternative options did not categorize Jewry (*zsidóság*) as a denomination and thus a part of the larger nation parallelly with other confessional groups. In one of these alternative formulations the two qualities (i.e. Hungarianness and Jewishness) were of a much more similar kind. They exerted their influence on the same level and were partly mixed: Hungarian Jews represented a combination of Hungarian and Jewish elements. In his discussion of *Egyenlőség*, Csetényi sought to emphasize dual attachments and referred to Jewry as a tradition. He maintained that *Egyenlőség* was conceived as a journal “in the Hungarian spirit and language but rooted in the Jewish tradition and written for a Jewish-Hungarian readership”.¹⁹⁰ Thus, in his eyes, *Egyenlőség* offered a great opportunity to develop Hungarian-Jewish literature and served the Hungarian nation.¹⁹¹ Wertheimer wrote of joining Hungarianness and Jewishness, which would create a new type with some markedly Jewish sentiments and colors: “With the, so to say, <<racial purity>> and masterful use of his Hungarian language, he [the poet József Kiss] articulated the captivating and noble

¹⁸⁸ Heller had very similar things to say on the age of the Dual Monarchy (i.e. drawing a clear distinction line between the Hungarian nation and Jews in order to link them): “the nation gave lavishly [pazarul – FL], Jews reciprocated gratefully”. Bernát Heller, “Goldziher Ignác emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.7.

¹⁸⁹ Groszmann, “Mezei”, p.205. Note the frequent use of homeland (*haza*) instead of nation (*nemzet*).

¹⁹⁰ Imre Csetényi, “Az Egyenlőség és a magyar irodalom” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.109.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.124.

sentiments that arose from his Jewishness. What he created truthfully reflected the spiritual world of his parental house and his Jewish environment.”¹⁹² He added three years later that “Hungarian Jewish life has a special color, but it is Hungarian life nevertheless and constitutes an integral part of the life of the Hungarian nation”.¹⁹³

Having looked at two forms of dual identity, the *combined*, the nationally Hungarian and religiously Jewish, and the *mixed* type (Hungarian Jewish, where Jewishness was not only a denominational category and thus was on the same level of identification as the Hungarian nation) let us turn to an alternative discourse on assimilation which put a greater emphasis on Jewish identity. This we might call the option of *assimilating, but self-preserving Jews*. As already quoted above, Ármin Kecskeméti, for instance, maintained that “the frame of European Jewish life can only be assimilation, the creation of unity between European and national culture”.¹⁹⁴ Assimilation and Jewish consciousness were not opposed

¹⁹² “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.316.

¹⁹³ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.255. In the course of his presidential speeches, Wertheimer recurrently referred to concepts such as equal rank, amalgamation, inseparability. Similarly to Munkácsi, Wertheimer often switched between analytically distinguishable options. For example, he spoke of “decisive proofs of Hungarian Jewish merits that were manifest in our homeland” and “perfect amalgamation with the Hungarian nation”. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.330. Moreover, he declared that “our dedication to our Hungarian home and Hungarian nation is unshakable and our love never ending”, in spite of which he asserted that very difficult times were to be expected. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.273. In 1943, he went as far as to refer to Jewish loyalty and the Jewish “attempt” to “earn dignity”. Thus, at least verbally, he clearly accepted that the burden of proof was on Jewry: “our Hungarian homeland has shown us good will for over a thousand years” and “we have tried to reciprocate this with all our intellectual might and with every beat of our hearts, with unshakable loyalty to our homeland, and will continue to try to earn it” (i.e. this good will), he added in the middle of 1943. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója az IMIT 1943. június 29-én tartott közgyűlésén” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.363. The idea that Jews were merely parts of larger entities, but still assumed special roles within these entities through their outstanding individuals resurfaces also in the writings of Turóczi-Trostler: he evaluated the work of Wassermann as the first conscious Jewish creation since the times of Heine of “a separate symbolic reality within more elementary Germanness”. József Turóczi-Trostler, “A zsidó-német irodalmi kapcsolatok kérdéséhez” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.286.

¹⁹⁴ When at least nominally discussing Mendelssohn, Ármin Kecskeméti made a complaint, but through using the voice of commitment: Jewish self-esteem made one sense that “there has never been a historical ungratefulness” comparable to that shown towards Jews, but in spite of it “we confess and declare it loudly that we shall not be diverted from our path and will not turn back”. Ármin Kecskeméti, “Mendelssohn kétszát esztendeje” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.158. This also illustrates that the discourse employed here was not disposed critically towards certain forms of Jewish integration (which Kecskeméti called assimilation, a term that was often used but with diverse meanings).

here: “Assimilation cannot mean heroic death, cannot require our dispersal into European culture without leaving any signs.”¹⁹⁵ Instead, Kecskeméti propagated a version of coupling Jewish Europeanness with Jewish consciousness. To achieve the desired duality he recommended the pursuit of Jewish scholarly works that were to be conducted in the interest of Jewish self-preservation.

There also existed the identity option of “clearly Hungarian, but primarily Jewish”, or in other words the identity option of *assimilated, but emphatically Jewish Jews*. This option is similar to the previous one with the difference that it aims not at assimilation and self-preservation, but starts from assuming the completion and naturalness of assimilation (in current, more precise terms this might be called acculturation) and goes on to state that the pursuit of Jewish activities are in perfect harmony with the fact of being assimilated – as if it was talking about the subsequent stage of history that logically followed from Kecskeméti’s position. The option of *assimilated, but emphatically Jewish Jews* thus becomes a subcategory of the third option, a more confident, more assertive discourse which affirms the continued salience of Jewishness and aims to prove that reconciliation of the two elements of the existing duality is real. An example of this stance in discursive practice is Arnold Kiss’ writing on Bánóczi where he stated that “the bouquet of his personality is a specifically and unmistakably Hungarian one, from Szentgál”, adding that Bánóczi received his patriotism “from a long line of ancestors who were already immersed in it, for whom such patriotism went without saying and in its obviousness required no special

¹⁹⁵ Ármin Kecskeméti, “Mendelssohn kétszát esztendeje” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.160. Aladár Fürst, on the other hand, declared as early as 1930 that he preferred not to use the expression assimilation because in his eyes it was “an overused term and the phenomenon it referred to has often been accused”. He revealingly added that he did not mean to use it also because he did not want to declare that it was illegitimate as it could only lead to self-destruction and to making Jewishness redundant, though he believed that a stronger form of Jewishness needed to be asserted. Aladár Fürst, “Németország zsidó középiskolái” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.226.

demonstration”. His Hungarianness was so self-evident that there was “nothing in him of the Jewish sense of being humiliated or lacking self-esteem”.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, Kiss went on to say that “the humaneness of the Jewish prophetic ideal” pulsed in Bánóczi.¹⁹⁷ The subjects of his work and his hopes made him emphatically Jewish in his Hungarianness: “His symbolic hope of collecting his people from the four corners of the Earth led him to collect the scattered treasures of Jewish scholarship and help the creation of many volumes in Hungarian to enrich Hungarian-Jewish literature”.¹⁹⁸ In sum, Bánóczi searched for “the path of the Jewish soul in the Hungarian” and managed to stay resolutely Jewish even while being positioned firmly within Hungarianness.¹⁹⁹ This was, however, not only a description of a canonical personality, but, as far as Kiss was concerned, a prescribed identity option: “We are translating the Holy Bible with his Hungarianness, confessing our Jewishness with his self-esteem, and promulgating our Hungarianness with his natural self-consciousness and thus without unnecessary ostentatiousness”, Kiss wrote.²⁰⁰

The fourth identity option is a somewhat peculiar combination: here the attempt was made to combine and reconcile theories of Jewish peoplehood with dualist conceptions. This option went beyond the previous formulations in stressing the Jewish part of identity.²⁰¹ This might be called the option of *belonging to the Jewish people, while also being Hungarian*. For instance, discussing Péter Újvári, Andor Peterdi evoked the ideas of

¹⁹⁶ Arnold Kiss, “Bánóczi József egyénisége” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, pp. 183-4.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.159.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.184. It is intriguing (as observed by Kiss himself) that being positioned “within Hungariandom” (i.e. being naturally assimilated) in the case of Bánóczi also led to intolerance towards the so called nationalities of the country.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p.186.

²⁰¹ The attentive reader would perhaps notice that when Kiss was discussing the “evident Hungarianness” of Bánóczi, he mentioned his “symbolic hope” of recollecting Jewish people scattered around many countries. Therefore, my previous example is also weakly connected to this category – though Kiss clearly wrote of a symbolic kind of scholarly recollection and not any kind of actual commitment to gather the Jewish people.

the Jewish people as well as the Jewish kind (*fajta*). He wrote that Újvári “knew his people best, even managed to delve into their spirit in the most profound way” and “dedicated his life to his kind”.²⁰² At the same time, he painted the portrait of Újvári as a person in whom a “miraculous unification” took place: he was at once “the golden storyteller of his kind, his people” and “a true artist in the Hungarian language”.²⁰³ In the articulation of this identity option, the primacy of Jewishness was coupled with the yearning to have duality generally recognized: “When I say that Péter Újvári was primarily Jewish [*mégis csak zsidó volt* – FL], this was in no way at the expense of his Hungarianness. The fact of his Jewishness much rather demands a more appreciative evaluation for him”.²⁰⁴

Another assessment of this firmly welded but uneasy duality can be found in Imre Benoschofsky’s commentary on the novel *Áron öt könyve* of Ignác Rózsa where Benoschofsky said that “Hungarian and Jewish sentiments are burning in us through all of hell, until the end of days”.²⁰⁵ He also spoke of Rózsa’s sober Hungarian language and its mixing with “some Jewish pathos.” Moreover, he stated that if Jewry was no religion and no caste either (unlike what Coudenhove-Kalergi maintained but as Áron, the main character of the novel knew) but had a sense of mission and great tasks ahead, then it could only constitute a people.²⁰⁶ In his eyes, this was not meant to be a source of conflict: even if Jews were a people, the one-sided attraction, unshakable loyalty and unrequited love they kept on showing to Hungarians would not disappear, noted Benoschofsky in a self-critical and even fatalist rather than affirmative or proud way. This attitude becomes all the clearer since his call was addressed at the Jewish people and lacked any ambition to accommodate

²⁰² Andor Peterdi, “Újvári Péter emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.73.

²⁰³ Ibid., 1931, p.78.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 1931, p.78.

²⁰⁵ Imre Benoschofsky, “Áron öt könyve” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.241.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p.249.

Hungarianness next to it: “We have been made into the people who exert a thousand times more effort than others, the people who have to launch millions of new beginnings. So let us prove to be the people of a new beginning!”²⁰⁷

Perhaps the most formal attempt at squaring these two components of identity can be found in Pál Weisz’s article on Miksa Weisz (1872-1931) that clearly asserted the primacy of his Jewishness. In this presentation, the recently deceased Miksa Weisz appeared as faithful to traditions, a convinced conservative who “was very angry at the imitation of foreign habits” and hurt by the “lack of <<Nachwuchs>> of traditional Jewry”.²⁰⁸ Moreover, he demanded that Jewry should show self-respect and no longer deny that it constituted a people. To this presentation a reference to his Hungarianness was added in a rather incoherent way: we read that Miksa Weisz was in favor of “religious freedom” and was also an “enthusiastic Hungarian”.²⁰⁹

Discourses on modern Hungary that go beyond such, almost purely formal attempts to reconcile the two elements of identity (i.e. stress solely the Jewish part) can hardly be found in IMIT. Interestingly, these options of collective identity were accompanied, as we shall see in the next chapter, by a parallel discourse on basic Jewish values and by an implicit debate on Jewish historicity where questions of Hungarianness did not play any significant role. Among others, Bernát Heller wrote down sentences such as “Our duty is to perfect our own community. Our task is to preserve and purify Jewry”²¹⁰, but when discussing the identity of Jews in modern Hungary, it would have been highly unusual to leave out all references to Hungarianness. In short, these two bundles of reflections seem

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.251.

²⁰⁸ Pál Weisz, “Weisz Miksa” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.77.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p.77. Notably, this reference to his enthusiastic Hungarianness appeared under the heading “A zsidó”. (The article consisted of three parts: The Person, The Jew, The Rabbi.)

²¹⁰ Bernát Heller, “Zsidó hitelesítés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.101.

to be almost hermetically separated on the pages of IMIT, something which certainly merits further analysis – and will be discussed slightly more extensively in the Conclusions.

There were several other references to Jewish peoplehood (*népiség*), so much so that overall the concept was approximately as frequently used as that of Jewry as denomination.²¹¹ At the same time, there were hardly any authors who employed the notion of Jewish peoplehood to conceptualize an inner conflict. Uncharacteristically, Aladár Komlós (whose ideas are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter VII) explicitly elaborated the theory of conflict. His identity option revolving around the perception of the *internally conflictual nature of Hungarian Jews* is the fifth one I identified in IMIT.²¹² In his treatment of József

²¹¹ Mór Fényes wrote about “our people” (*népünk*) in 1929, and in 1930 Dénes Friedman also called Jewry “a people”. In his speech of 1933, Ödön Gerő said that “the objects exhibited at the Museum are the memories of the experiences of our people” and Jewry “was a historical people”. “Gerő Ödön emlékeszéde Perlmutter Izsákról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, pp. 285-6. Aladár Fürst quoted at the very end of his article on the Jewish secondary schools of Greater Hungary the “idealistic words” of the director Kugel Chajim. According to him, the aim of the school in Munkács / Munkacevo was the raising of a new Jewish generation which would not be “alienated from its people” (*népétől sem idegenedett el*, would not be *Volksfremd* either). Aladár Fürst, “Nagymagyarország zsidó középiskolái” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.237. Beyond this, there was even a reference to the “voice of blood” (*a vér szava*): Károly Sebestyén thought that even though Börne believed after his conversion that “his polemical writings serve the interests of humanity and liberty, the reality was that he never managed to suppress the voice of blood within himself”. Károly Sebestyén, “A zsidóság története levelekben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.61.

²¹² Ernő Ballagi did not suppose such an inner Jewish conflict, but aimed to present a sober picture of the relations between the two sides. He started out by declaring that in Hungary “Jews saw in Hungariandom the pledge of its rights against the imperial court from the very beginning”. Ernő Ballagi, “A magyar zsidóság harca az emancipációért” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.141. The great Hungarian minds seemed to confirm this Jewish understanding of the situation. *Ibid.*, 142. Next to sober, common sense reasoning, narrow-minded calculations, intolerance and petty opposition were to some extent all present in Hungarian political culture: they could be observed on the side opposing emancipation. Beyond this balanced claim, Ballagi argued that perceived national interests were a prime factor in the relatively equitable stance liberal Hungarians developed towards Jews. “The appreciation of Hungarian Jewry emerged more out of the defense of nationality than from the spirit of the age”, he wrote. Ernő Ballagi, “Szabadelvűség és magyar zsidóság” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.229. Ballagi aimed to counter certain illusions: he stated that “the patriotic middle nobility aimed to strengthen the nation above all, and did not show any special or selfless empathy towards Jews.” *Ibid.*, p.234. Ballagi defended the position that the relatively positive Hungarian political attitudes towards Jews developed because of “the identification of Jews with Hungarians” (i.e. the perception that they could be Hungarianized). *Ibid.*, p.229. Ballagi listed four factors (the coincidence of Hungarian and Jewish national and economic interests, the clear improvement of Hungarian statistics as well as the emotional and moral strengthening of Hungarians through Jewish contributions, the desirability of Jewish legal status reflecting their actual situation and the possibility of thereby bettering public morals) to claim that all these pointed in the direction of emancipation and inclusion, but added that it cannot be forgotten that prejudice against the bourgeois order and lifestyle was widespread in Hungary and that in spite of the realization of the “dominant idea of the age”, Jews were not allowed to escape the Middle Ages in 1848. *Ibid.*, p.238. Ballagi concluded that Jewish legal rights were long due by the time they

Kiss, the leading Jewish poet of the times of the Dual Monarchy, Komlós asserted that the “outlook he inherited from his people” was “at odds with the outlook he acquired by way of culture”.²¹³ On the most general level, Komlós formulated the inner conflict of Kiss as one between his instincts and his environment. Moreover, the societal-symbolic position of Kiss was also presented as asymmetric and misfortunate: while many found him too Jewish, religious Jews thought he was not Jewish enough. Importantly, in his theory the conflict did not arise out of the lack of Hungarian identification or its dishonesty, but was rather due to the exaggerated and distorted form this identification took and the problems it engendered.²¹⁴

Clearly at odds with the idea of conflictual identity articulated by Komlós were the articles that suggested the centrality of Hungarian identification. Giving expression to Hungarian nationalism was the sixth identity option available to Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars. For instance, Bertalan Edelstein proudly accepted the accusation that Jews were the most Hungarian group in Romania. Speaking of Romanian anti-Semitism, he claimed that “the official complaint about Transylvanian Jewry is that they show least willingness to accept the change of the situation”²¹⁵ (i.e. Romania’s acquisition of the territory) which Edelstein evaluated thus: “It is an honor to us, *our glory* to be identified with Hungarians” in Transylvania.²¹⁶ On the other hand, the very fact that these views on the intransigent and enthusiastically Hungarian Jews of Romania were part of a study on the fate of Jews living

were granted in 1867 but Jews were still not sure whether the law would be promulgated, though admittedly emancipation was ultimately accepted with “general and enthusiastic agreement”. Ernő Ballagi, “A magyar zsidóság harca az emancipációért” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, pp. 162-7.

²¹³ Aladár Komlós, “Kiss József emlékezete, vagy: A zsidó költő és a dicsőség” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.57.

²¹⁴ As I shall show below, later on and in much worsened circumstances, Komlós expressed his conviction that there was a need to reverse the direction of identification. He wanted to redirect the process from aiming to become ever more Hungarian towards wanting to become more Jewish. He stressed that this was the only means left to act collectively and meaningfully.

²¹⁵ Bertalan Edelstein, “A külföldi zsidóság története a háború utáni évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.310.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.309.

around the world makes his identity discourse more complex and also much more ambivalent from the national point of view.

In his “Magyar nyelven írt idegen irodalom” (Foreign Literature Written in Hungarian) Tamás Kóbor suggested a version of Hungarian identity free of such ambivalences. Kóbor contested the thesis that Jewish writers writing in Hungarian were somehow creating foreign literature. He construed a national model transcending present-day borders, part of which was the claim that Jews were “no more different” than other groups constituting the nation: they were just as Hungarian as Swabians, Serbs, Cumanians or Pechenegs, all being above all parts of the Hungarian nation, or the city of Kassa (Košice) which, even though attached to Czechoslovakia, will nevertheless remain Hungarian.²¹⁷ Kóbor affirmed that the life and history of Hungarian Jews was shared with Hungarians of other origins, not to mention that their education and literary tradition and their consequent identification with the traditions and forms of national literature made them fully Hungarians.²¹⁸ From among the available Hungarian Jewish options, Kóbor thus articulated the one which depicted Jews as completely Hungarian. He remained silent on any potentially distinguishing characteristics: neither the denominational criterion, nor the idea of the mixed (Hungarian-Jewish) type plays any role in this article. In order to have authors of Jewish origin fully accepted, he based his argumentation on the validity and smooth applicability of the national criterion.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Tamás Kóbor, “Magyar nyelven írt idegen irodalom” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.62.

²¹⁸ Kóbor stressed that “Hungarian Jews know very little about Jewish history, but are at home in Hungarian history just like anybody else”. Kóbor, “Magyar nyelven” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.61. It is revealing that Ödön Gerő thought Kóbor was “adamantly defending the Hungarian national idea against its debauchers, falsifiers, devaluers”. Ödön Gerő, “Kóbor Tamásról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.42.

²¹⁹ Ernő Munkácsi would similarly refer to Jews as a group of citizens, without defining more closely the nature of this group, beyond saying that whatever kind of group Jews constituted, they certainly closely resembled others: “We have been here for a millennium, lived and died on this land the same way as other citizens of Hungary”, he wrote. Ernő Munkácsi, “Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940,

A number of individuals such as Mór Wahrmann, Bernát Alexander, Pál Hirschler, Sámuel Kohn and Ede Kisteleki were discussed in a fairly similar manner. Gyula Mérei's lines on Mór Wahrmann spoke of amalgamation (*beolvadás*) or complete assimilation and thus (at least logically) contradicted options of dual identity: "The complete assimilation of Jews to Hungariandom intended to melt Jewry into the life of the Hungarian nation. This was done in reaction to calls directed at Jewry that found their expression in emancipation".²²⁰ Samu Szemere wrote that for Bernát Alexander "collective spirits" appeared to be predominantly influential and "the [Hungarian] national community" stood in the first place.²²¹ Alexander was always nationally committed, in spite of accusations to the contrary.²²² What is more, according to Szemere, his name was one of those that "grew attached" (*összenőtt*) to the history of national culture as it developed, got enriched and was lifted high.²²³ Zsigmond Groszmann published a similar piece on Ignác Hirschler that discussed the dual ambition of legal equality and Hungarianization as well as the

p.341. At the same time, this text by Munkácsi provides an interesting example of the separation of parts addressed at the internal Jewish public and those meant for an external audience. Munkácsi wrote on "the continuity of a thousand years", but he also proposed that "we ought to revise our view of history, our paths and aims – which we have cherished since the times of emancipation". Ibid., p.338. His discourse shifted between different positions: in the course of one of his speeches, he would mention that "we are a historical people" (whereby he referred to Jews) as well as "becoming a part of" and even "merging into" the (Hungarian) nation. Beyond finding out facts about Jewish history, the visitors to the Museum were supposed to learn from the exhibition that "Hungarian Jewry has been a useful and historically closely connected part of the Hungarian state and society". "Igazgatósági jelentés (1933. jún. 29.)" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.312. Thus, here Munkácsi employed three identity options in the course of a single speech: the primarily Jewish, the primarily Hungarian (or nationalistic) and the mixed.

²²⁰ Gyula Mérei, "Wahrmann Mór" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.340. On Mór Wahrmann, see Tibor Frank (ed.), *Honszeretet és felekezeti hűség. Wahrmann Mór 1831-1892* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2006). In one place, Wertheimer also spoke of Jewry as one of the original, initial (*törzsökös*) parts of the nation. He also discussed the necessity of spreading public knowledge that "Hungarian Jewry has played a significant role from the very beginnings of the existence of the Hungarian nation within the borders of Greater Hungary. It has always considered itself among the founding (*törzsökös*) parts of the Hungarian nation. Alongside all other nation-preserving elements, Jews have served the interests of Hungariandom with loyalty and dedication". "Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.315.

²²¹ Samu Szemere, "Alexander Bernát emlékezete" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.33.

²²² Ibid., p.47.

²²³ Ibid., p.50.

“consequent desire” of national amalgamation (*nemzeti egybeolvadás*).²²⁴ In the same 1941 volume of IMIT Groszmann also recalled the person of Sámuel Kohn whom he presented as intent on fulfilling a mission through magyarizing the pulpit in Pest.²²⁵ Groszmann stressed that Kohn did not want to parade his patriotism, but loved his homeland in a natural way and honestly fulfilled his duties towards it. Thereby, he presented a normalized image of the process of Hungarian nationalization as well as the resulting form of Hungarianness characterizing Jewish individuals. In 1941, Mózes Rubinyi relied on an alternative Jewish tradition when discussing the art of Ede Kisteleki who passed away exactly ten years earlier.²²⁶ In his phrasing, Kisteleki was “not an urbanite” (*nem urbánus*), but a patriotic and irredentist poet in whose soul the spirit of the countryside (*vidék*) lived on unchanged.²²⁷ Moreover, he was pictured as a poet of interconfessional rank who managed to achieve almost equal popularity among members of various denominations due to the shape of his beliefs and the generally captivating voice resonating in his devotional poetry.²²⁸

²²⁴ Zsigmond Groszmann, “Hirschler Ignác” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.145.

²²⁵ Zsigmond Groszmann, “Dr. Kohn Sámuel emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.337. For some reason, this text was released in the *Announcements of the Society* section. The title of the text is different in the Table of Contents from the heading used at its beginning (“Dr. Groszmann Zsigmond előadása Kohn Sámuelről”).

²²⁶ To evoke bits about Rubinyi’s background: he worked as a linguist as well as a literary historian, organized parts of the literary legacy of Kálmán Mikszáth and published a monograph on the popular conservative writer Ferenc Herczeg.

²²⁷ Mózes Rubinyi, “Kisteleki Ede emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.266. This naturally referred to the népi-urbánus opposition and debate, in which Jews with few exceptions (most famously György Sárközi) were active on the latter side. There is an extended literature on the emergence and consequences of this opposition between groups of intellectuals in Hungarian which acquired some political relevance in the early transition years. On the debate, see the collection of original documents Péter Sz. Nagy (ed.), *A népi-urbánus vita dokumentumai, 1932-1947* (Debrecen: Rakéta, 1990).

²²⁸ Ibid., p.268. So much so that even his tomb was paid for by an unknown Catholic family who deeply admired his work. The topic of revisionist and irredentist remarks in Hungarian Jewish publications is an exciting and controversial one that would deserve separate treatment. A few illustrations shall suffice here: from the report of the lecture organizing committee, we find out about the return of territories that “the whole of Jewry received these events with patriotic joy”. “Az IMIT felolvasó-bizottságának jelentése az 1940/41. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, pp. 342-3. Károly Sebestyén maintained that the last joy in the life of József Vészi was the return of *Felvidék* (literally Upper Region, usually rendered Upper Hungary in English). Károly Sebestyén, “Emlékbeszéd Vészi József felett” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.52. Munkácsi stated in the mid-1930s that in the Jewish Museum there was a strong emphasis on “exhibiting pictures of synagogues in Greater Hungary”. “Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum. Igazgatósági jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.358.

Beyond these five articles, another very interesting piece is Károly Sebestyén's portrait of József Vészi. Sebestyén considered Vészi's Hungarianness to be his defining feature. He maintained that Vészi "fought for the most cherished goods of his nation" and used the German language only in order to do this all the more effectively, as a weapon in the arsenal of Hungarians.²²⁹ At the same time, Sebestyén admitted that Vészi was so strongly committed to universal suffrage that he was ready to "sacrifice his popularity, his authority, his future, his newspaper in order to help the cause of this great idea" and therefore, when he was at the peak of his popularity, he decided to side with the so called *darabont* government (i.e. the government led by Géza Fejérváry in 1905-06).²³⁰ The article offered a stark reinterpretation of what the national interest consisted of: Sebestyén wanted to justify the decision of Vészi by writing that he supposedly foresaw that the "survival of the country was at stake" (*az ország léte forog kockán*) and "therefore and only therefore did he ever want to serve Fejérváry, taking on all the odium of his deed".²³¹ Supposedly, the application of the national principle and nationally conscious foresight had determined even Vészi's seemingly most normatively based, pro-democratic political decision. Thus, Sebestyén presented Vészi as a committed democrat, but a most consciously national democrat, thereby questioning the validity of the dilemma of the times which tended to conceive of the future safety of the nation and the establishment of a democratic system as mutually exclusive options.²³²

²²⁹ Sebestyén, "Vészi" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.40.

²³⁰ Ibid., p.42.

²³¹ Ibid., pp. 50-1.

²³² On the dilemma and proposals to overcome it in early 20th century Hungary, see György Litván, "*Magyar gondolat – szabad gondolat*": *nacionalizmus és progresszió a század eleji Magyarországon* (Budapest: Magvető, 1978).

Pál Vidor published the most marked (and probably also the most pathetic) articulation of Hungarian commitment in the *IMIT yearbook* of 1941 when he quoted Arnold Kiss' outcry from 1939: "we have been Hungarians, are Hungarians and will be Hungarians forever."²³³ It is worth adding that Kiss described Hungarian Jewish activities in 1939 thus: "We work in the interest of the complete greatness of our holy homeland with our all strength, blood, deeds, with all our beliefs and without ever tiring. Our work is in the patriotic spirit, even though undeservedly we are gravely humiliated and ignominiously stigmatized."²³⁴ This emphasis on the contrast between the real activities of Jews and the attitudes and deeds of the outside world towards them underlined the tragedy of the Jewish condition but also their unyielding national dedication. This interpretative scheme based on contrast was certainly not unique to Vidor's contribution, and I will return to it in the next chapter when exploring ideas on the relevance of history to Jewry and the defining characteristics of Jewish history.

Here it is useful to distinguish between two kinds of Hungarian historical identity discourse. One referring to the millennium of Hungarians and Hungarian statehood (an idea central to the legitimacy discourse of national history) and the other, offering empirically rather more verifiable claims, on the "awakening" of national self-consciousness (or in the case of Jews, more precisely, the process of their Hungarian identification and cultural Hungarianization).²³⁵ While the former talks of the nation, the latter of nationalism. It is unsurprising that the idea of a thousand years was employed most often in *IMIT's*

²³³ Pál Vidor, "Kiss Arnold" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.70.

²³⁴ Ibid., 1941, p.70. On the other hand, he wrote wistfully about the past, writing that "the gratefulness we feel towards the glorious great personalities of the Hungarian nation is undying". Ibid., p.70.

²³⁵ On the political discourse of national history, see Zoltán Gábor Szűcs, *Az antelli pillanat. A nemzeti történelem szerepe a magyar politikai diskurzusban, 1989-1993* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010), pp. 64-70.

official discourse, as in the speeches of Wertheimer and Munkácsi.²³⁶ On the other hand, it was Márton Weisz who approached the question of Jewish reasons behind choosing the Hungarian side most explicitly, when he tried to understand why Jews joined “the ranks” when the Hungarian National Guards were established in 1848.²³⁷ Márton Weisz believed that the echoes of French revolutionary ideas and the attractiveness of Hungarian liberalism were of primary importance.²³⁸ Several other authors devoted attention to the process of Hungarianization too. Jenő Zsoldos wrote on the German speaking Jews of Hungary, their literary activities directed at showing the “common creative dynamism” of Europeanness and Jewishness and their local reception from the 1820s onwards. Zsoldos narrated the story until Jewish writers, after some modest beginnings in the early 1840s, built more solid “bridges between Hungarians and Jews” in the second half of the 1840s.²³⁹ At the same time, Gyula

²³⁶ Wertheimer wrote statements such as Jewry had lived amalgamated and in unity with the Hungarian country and nation since the times of Saint Stephen. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.112. Next to this, as part of the agreement between IMIT, the Jewish community of Pest and the Jewish Museum declared that “Our ill-intended opponents question the patriotic nature of Hungarian Jewry, its loyalty to the country and the fact that it has lived here for thousand years, the history of which show countless examples of how Jews worked with all their energies and talents for the prosperity (*boldogulás*) of the homeland”. “Megállapodás,” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.324. In the same vein, he stated that the exhibition of the Museum shows “our rights, our certificate of nobility, which connects us to the thousand year old Hungarian homeland”. “Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum. Igazgatósági jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.355. “We have lived here for thousand years and died on this piece of land, just like other citizens of Hungary”. “Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.341. It should be added, however, that the identity discourses of Wertheimer and Munkácsi, while referring to the notion of thousand years more than others, were not consistent. Both kept on switching between (what can be identified as) various options.

²³⁷ Márton Weisz, “Besze János életrajza” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.255.

²³⁸ Weisz narrated the life of János Besze who defended Hungary and protected Jews. He maintained the “Viennese government” or, more precisely, “its soulless agitators” and courtly “henchmen” were responsible for anti-Jewish deeds (the urban pogroms or *kravallók*). Ibid., p.256. This way Weisz not only supported the thesis that Jews chose the Hungarian side at the time, but also provided a nationalist interpretation of the events themselves. It is a notable that elsewhere Miksa Weisz evoked the slogan of Meier Kayserling (in the German original): “Lasset uns als Bürger Juden und als Juden Bürger sein, lasset uns unsere Brüder im anderen Lager lieben und achten”. Miksa Weisz, “Kayserling M. emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.191.

²³⁹ Jenő Zsoldos, “Az első magyar zsidó írók fogadtatása irodalmunkban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.172, 195.

Mérei observed (rather more crudely) that “the second generation of native born Jews after the issuing of the Edict of Toleration in 1782 was already fully Hungarian”.²⁴⁰

The large-scale Jewish identification with “the Hungarian cause”, the desire to assimilate and, on the other hand, the rather unusual willingness of Hungarians to welcome (or at least accept) Jewish participation is often evoked within the interpretative frame of Hungarian liberal nationalism.²⁴¹ More specifically, articles stressing the Hungarianness of Jews often employ key elements of the independentist liberal national narrative.²⁴² In this respect too, the contents of the *IMIT yearbooks* display some clear lines of continuity with this 19th century tradition which had seriously weakened in the meantime, especially due to the newly gained influence of illiberally nationalist circles.

Beyond the continued propagation of an inclusive version of Hungarian national identity, there also existed the seventh option of the *patriotic* discourse that could draw on an even longer history. This identity discourse maintained that Jews were loyal citizens who valued an ethic of service, in theory as well as practice. The outstanding example of this is Gyula Csermely’s “Ítéletrehívás” (A Call for Judgment), a story of personal growth, we might say of *Bildung* through war and occupation, a parable whose aim was show that Jews were not traitors, but rather behaved as “passionate patriots” on both sides in cases of mutual, consecutive occupations. The striking example Csermely elaborated

²⁴⁰ Mérei, “Wahrman” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.315. This remark arguably sounds somewhat unrefined as it offers an interesting mixing of the discussion of the historical process of Hungarianization with claims about the full Hungarianness of all native Jews of Hungary in modern times.

²⁴¹ National case studies of liberal nationalism can be found in Iván Zoltán Dénes, *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006).

²⁴² The most radical example of the independentist convictions of Jews, reaching the level of a secular or political religion, is provided by one of the contributions of József Vészi, “Kölcsy himnusza a mexikói hegyekben” (The Anthem of Kölcsey in the Mountains of Mexico). In this article, two Jewish brothers from the city of Kecskemét who have been living in Mexico for forty years tell the narrator: “occasionally, once we are done with our religious prayers, we stand in front of [the image of – LF] Lajos Kossuth to perform our Hungarian prayers there”. József Vészi, “Kölcsy himnusza a mexikói hegyekben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.162. It is also noteworthy how positive the image of Protestantism tended to be: it was recurrently presented as quite similar to Judaism and evaluated much more favorably than Catholicism.

was that of the First World War and the occupation of Transylvania by Romanian troops, followed by occupation of Bucharest by the forces of Wilhelmine Germany, with participation of Hungarians and Hungarian Jews.²⁴³ Csermely's prophetic, Jeremiahic justification of "that noble sentiment that is patriotism" ran thus: "into whichever land your fate, good or bad, brings you, consider it your own and love it the way you love your own mother".²⁴⁴ This keen patriotism was a source of Jewish pride. At the end of the parable, as the conflict subsided and the lessons were drawn, the Jews who found each other on the opposite sides revealed to each other: "I am proud of myself and of you too, proud we are both Jewish". In short, Csermely's narrative provided a normative, principled justification for patriotism including the considerate, righteous acceptance of the patriotism of others.²⁴⁵

Further articles explored Jewish patriotic loyalty without mentioning special Hungarian affiliations. More conventionally than Csermely, they recalled stories from early modern times. In his "Buda visszafoglalásának zsidó irodalmi emlékei" (Jewish Literary Sources on the Reconquest of Buda), Aladár Fürst presented the little known contemporary accounts of this event written by Izsák Schulhof and Süsskind Taussig. In these Jewish sources, the re-conquest of Buda actually appeared as its fall – the two Jewish authors did not narrate the event according to the traditional, canonized Hungarian, Christian perspective. In Fürst's interpretation of these sources, however, there was nothing shameful about the fact that Jews defended Ottoman Buda. Jewish identity formulated here was clearly based on propagating the preciousness of having loyal subjects: "It should be considered their merit

²⁴³ Moreover, Csermely maintained that the model Jewish person forgets any personal grievance whenever the cause of his homeland demands urgent action. Csermely Gyula, "Itéletrehívás" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.154.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 1930, p.157. Mór Fényes also wrote about homeland as the land where one is received well and gets admitted. He thought that the Jews of the Diaspora "considered the land their homeland that showed readiness to accept them". Mór Fényes, "A zsidóság erkölcstana" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.51.

²⁴⁵ Csermely, "Itéletrehívás" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.158.

that they fought so loyally for their ruler at the time”.²⁴⁶ Three year later, Henrik Guttmann offered a very similar analysis of the 16th century history of Hungarian Jews. Guttmann pointed out that in 1598, at the time of the bloodbath in Buda, Jews suffered alongside Turks, but that even Emperor Rudolf was ready to admit that they merely fulfilled their duties. A more general assessment of Jewish patriotism and its moral value is found in Fényes’ claims that a marked Jewish strand of patriotism got manifested in their loyalty towards host people and in recognition of the dominant religion.²⁴⁷

This patriotic identity discourse, based on the value of loyalty and reliability of Jewish subjects, also existed in a version that dealt directly with Hungarian history and local patriotic service. Its most elaborate and sophisticated formulation can be found in Albert Kardos’s “Magyar államférfiak házi zsidói” (The Private Jews of Hungarian Statesmen). The article opens with the observation that for Hungarian lords having their “private Jews” was as customary as having splendid carriages or court poets.²⁴⁸ Kardos believed that this attitude remained unchanged throughout the 19th century.²⁴⁹ The most excellent Jews continued “to serve their landlords who in the meantime turned into statesmen, but now they did so by means of intellectual work, as journalists, publicists, editors, scholars, as committed fans of greatness”.²⁵⁰ Kardos’s conception, similarly to Csermely’s employment of the patriotic idea to discuss Jewish encounters during the First World War, maintained that the relations and roles that many must have thought of as

²⁴⁶ Aladár Fürst, “Buda visszafoglalásának irodalmi emlékei” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.184.

²⁴⁷ Fényes, “Erkölcstana” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, pp.35-8. The subchapter is called “Ethical Values in Jewish Patriotism”

²⁴⁸ Albert Kardos, “Magyar államférfiak házi zsidói” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.94.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.95.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.96.

belonging only to previous eras, continued to exist and could be observed also in the age of the birth of modern Hungary.

The gist of this elaborate story was that “the great individuals of three generations were connected to each other and followed in each other’s footsteps: next to each great Hungarian statesman there stood a highly intelligent and useful Jewish worker”.²⁵¹ As part of this chain of relations, Miksa Falk was the trustee of István Széchenyi who, among others, dictated to him his *Ein Blick auf den anonymen Rückblick* in Döbling; Ignác Helfy helped Lajos Kossuth as his personal secretary; Manó Kónyi stood by Ferenc Deák in Pest (next to Falk who helped him achieve the Compromise with his timely Viennese articles); Lajos Dóczy lead a department of the Viennese foreign ministry under Gyula Andrassy; Kálmán Tisza could also rely on Falk (who was by then the leading personality of the German newspaper of Hungary, *Pester Lloyd*), but also on Mór Wahrmann and Ede Horn. Younger Jews of the next generation such as Vilmos Vázsonyi or Mór Mezei figured in the ranks of the independentists (i.e. the opposition), but other Jews such as Ferenc Hevesi were close to such leading personalities of the government as Gábor Baross. Even Ágoston Trefort, perhaps the least liberal of them all, relied on the services of Mór Kármán. A further sign of the closer rapprochement between Jews and Hungarians was the ministerial secretarial work József Szterényi performed for Ferenc Kossuth, and to top it all, “the absolutely just statesman”, István Tisza had Lipót Vadász as his irreplaceable assistant. Vadász also served as the president of IMIT and, according to Kardos, thereby provided a living proof that Jewish assimilation “was completed”.

Kardos sought to account for the phenomenon he called “modern private Jews” in two ways. On the one hand, he pointed to the competence, preparedness, suitability

²⁵¹ Ibid., p.96.

and linguistic skills of these Jews as well as to their loyalty and personal reliability.²⁵² On the other hand, these model Jews, who might have lived an easier life and could have earned much more material benefits in other walks of life, were seduced and motivated by the power of greatness as well as their patriotic duties and deeply engrained ethic of service. This led them to perform such necessary tasks in the interest of the Hungarian nation with zeal and, ultimately, with notable successes.²⁵³

The above analysis of the yearbooks of the *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* released between 1929 and 1943 revealed seven distinct identity options, some of them consisting of more than one sub-type. The first four identity options were different formulations of dual identity, identifying different relations between Hungarian and Jewish parts. The first option assigned these two levels of identification to separate planes, emphasizing the denominational quality of Jewishness. Thus national and religious affiliations had parallel subjects and could be combined. The second option rejected this act of “separation and combination” and regarded Hungarianness and Jewishness as existing on the same levels of identification. This resulted in a mixed identity for Hungarian Jews, i.e.

²⁵² Ibid., pp.114-5. Expressions of the sense of loyalty and trust could resurface in the most unexpected places, as in the report of Grünwald from 1939. Grünwald announced at the onset of this report that the livelihood of 200 000 Jews were under threat. He urged for more collective responsibility and action on the part of Jews, but also believed that help could be expected to come from Hungarian society and even the government (such help “could not be denied”). Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.327. The situation was somewhat more ambivalent and not because he also remarked that Hungarian Jews needed to request help from abroad for the very first time, but much rather since, while his narrative was a liberal one that desired the return of the recent national past, his standard of measurement was the recognition of (more) “cultured nations”. He wrote namely that Hungarian Jewry “hopes and expects that those majestic ideas shall become more influential in Hungarian hearts and minds again that, when they were predominant in the previous century, gained the unequivocal sympathy of cultured nations”. Ibid., p.328.

²⁵³ Kardos, “Házi” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, pp. 115-6. These two kinds of patriotic discourse (the general and the particular) could also be combined. Gyula Fodor wrote about Jewish loyalty in general as well as the special love for Hungary in his piece on Goldmark: “the flowers of gratefulness and loyalty do not flourish anywhere else in the same splendid way as in the Jewish soul”, he wrote, presenting patriotism as a specifically Jewish character trait. At the same time, he brought up that “there certainly is some seductive power to the Hungarian land” which makes Jews so attracted to it. Gyula Fodor, “Goldmark” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.262. These two statements appear in the same paragraph, right next to each other.

they were Hungarian-Jewish. The third identity option, while favourably inclined towards the concept of assimilation, insisted more on the preservation of Jewry as a distinct identity within Hungarian society. This option, as opposed to conceptions linking assimilation to the disappearance of Jews, believed that the two were eminently reconcilable. It could be formulated in different ways, depending on whether the author believed assimilation was a matter of the past or the future: some of them urged preservation of Jewry as opposed to their amalgamation, dissolution in the larger nation, while other described themselves or others as evidently Hungarian, but above all as Jews, i.e. already assimilated but nevertheless self-consciously Jewish in practice. The fourth identity option within the dual identity cluster aimed to reconcile dual identification with the theory of Jewish peoplehood. This feeble attempt at reconciliation could make the reference to Hungarianness appear rather weak and formal, but also an unconflictual matter for Jews. Indeed, all these four dual identity options, ranging from those that offered distinct and complementary conceptions of Hungarianness and Jewishness to those that thought of them as similar and potentially competing choices essentially evaded the question of the potential conflict between the two. The notion of inner conflict thus becomes the essence of the fifth identity option, most explicitly formulated by Aladár Komlós. He thought of inner conflict and even Jewish self-hatred as direct consequences of this misfortunate duality and the imposed subordination of Jewishness in a negatively disposed and disrespectful environment.²⁵⁴ His intention was to raise the

²⁵⁴ More recently, scholars started employing the controversial concept of Jewish self-hatred. See Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

awareness of this conflict, strengthen Jewish consciousness and propagate the idea of Jewish peoplehood – without his fellow Jews abandoning their commitment to dual identity.²⁵⁵

The sixth identity option rejects the notion of duality by either referring to the thousand years of shared history in a common state or to the process of Hungarianization (nationalization) to emphasize the melting of Jews into the nation or the perfect amalgamation of the two entities. While Komlós positioned himself near the one end of the scale, these texts pointed to the place of Hungarian Jewish identity outside the scale but on the other, Hungarian end of it. Finally, the seventh identity option offered an alternative to nationalist identification by relying on patriotic themes such as the idea of principled Jewish loyalty to state and ruler or concrete cases of dedicated service to the Hungarian nation.

In the *IMIT yearbooks*, Jewish Hungarian Jewish authors formulated altogether seven markedly different identity options in response to various discursive and historical challenges. Even though the notion of “dual identity” is quite common in the discussion of Jews in modern Hungary, it is important to bear in mind that this actually involved multiple identity options, which could stand quite far from one another. This is why it is all the more important to distinguish between them, in order to arrive at a more nuanced and exact understanding of the complex discourse on dual identity and, more generally, on Hungarian Jewish identity formulations as such.

²⁵⁵ Komlós himself never offered a consistent formulation of this abandonment and even during the years of the Second World War he would still propagate no more than what he considered the minimum necessary adjustment in favor of Jewishness.

II. Jewish Traditions and the Scholarly Position

The aim of this subchapter is to partly reconstruct the picture of Jewish traditions as presented on the pages of the *IMIT yearbooks*. Jewish traditions were so widely discussed and evaluated in this forum that a full analysis of the topic would go well beyond the purview of this sub-chapter. My focus here is mainly to distill the assessments of modern Jewish traditions that can help us define the contours of the Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly position. In concrete terms, many such articles are concerned with the reputation of Moses Mendelssohn, a crucial symbol for the beginnings of modern Jewry and its “original characteristics.” The comparison of texts belonging to this corpus illustrates the main lines of opposition among contemporary Jewish intellectuals. Emerging from this analysis is a particular trend whereby the assessments of modern Jewish traditions become more pluralistic and inclusive towards the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s.²⁵⁶

Before turning to the reception of Mendelssohn, let me touch three aspects of the Jewish tradition, namely the historiographical, the musical and the architectural, which can help us understand how the authors approached the historical contexts and external relations of these traditions. In “A zsidó történetírás alapelvei” (The Basic Principles of Jewish Historiography), Dénes Friedman offered a summary of “the development of modern Jewish history writing, drawing a chart that shows its emergence and evolution”, through discussion of two towering Jewish historians, Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnov.²⁵⁷ The apropos of the preparation of this study was the publication of Dubnov’s magnum opus

²⁵⁶ *IMIT yearbooks* published scholarly articles that tend to follow a more or less standard structure and fulfill relatively constant expectations. Consequently, the transformation of their contents over time was not as spectacular and obvious as in *Libanon*, for example, where the form, topics and contents of articles was much less strictly defined. See the third subchapter “The Reflection of Historical Changes” in Chapter VI.

²⁵⁷ Dénes Friedman, “A zsidó történetírás irányelvei” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.127.

Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes. Friedman stated that previously to Dubnov, there were three authors who aimed to present Jewish history from new vantage points: Jacques Basnages De Beauval, a Protestant priest working at the beginning of the 18th century, Isaak Markus Jost who was active at the beginning of the 19th and, as the first one after the emergence and reception of modern scholarly methods, Heinrich Graetz.²⁵⁸ The latter received the most positive evaluation from Friedman, who maintained that his work was based on reliable methods and therefore proved successful in executing its ambitious plan.

Gratz's work had consisted of an attempt to single-handedly write the external and internal story of the Jewish people, which involved writing on Jewish suffering as well as on grandiose intellectual activities, but the newly released work of Dubnov presented a number of novelties even compared to Graetz's both in terms of conception and arrangement of the material. The work had a surprisingly calm tone and provided an impartial overview of Jewish political and economic history.²⁵⁹ Even though these two spheres were central to Dubnov's analysis, he maintained that Jews constituted, above all, a cultural community. They were best described by their peculiar spirit and by various forms of autonomy they enjoyed throughout their history. Friedman believed that "the bold [Dubnovian] assertion of the national idea" became "softer, milder and quieter in his great historical synthesis".²⁶⁰ Although his *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* focused on Jewish organizations or Jewries of individual countries, the Jewish story was presented through constant comparisons with world history at large.

²⁵⁸ Friedman maintained that the nine volumes of Jost's *Geschichte der Israeliten seit den Zeit der Maccabaer* (originally published in the 1820s and also later on in extended versions) amounted to a chaotic, uncritical and ultimately unsuccessful work.

²⁵⁹ Friedman, "Történetírás", pp.134-5.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.136.

Friedman formulated his own ideal of a historian thus: “affection and objectivity, passion and the dedicated search for truth, enthusiasm combined with a clear vision: these are the foundations on which the scholarly writer of history has to build”.²⁶¹ In his eyes, Dubnov was a historian both faithful to historical reality and capable of reaching profound insights. At the same time, he noted that the rather low level of pathos that characterized Dubnov compared to his predecessors made his work less appealing to the wider readership and thus less likely to contribute to the strengthening of Jewish self-consciousness.²⁶² In sum, Friedman called Graetz first a Jew and then a historian, whereas Dubnov was above all a historian and only then a Jew.²⁶³ This observation of the relative decline of the Jewish criterion and perspective was not made as a point of criticism. In fact, Friedman argued that Dubnov undoubtedly represented a new phase in the development of Jewish historiography: his work namely “shows evolution over those of his predecessors and he will be overcome by his colleagues in later times, in particular those working in the vein of *Geistesgeschichte* [*szellemtörténet*]”, supposing that developments will follow their “normal course”, he added somewhat skeptically.²⁶⁴ Here Friedman referred to the vision of development in history and historiography, according to which the current and thus also highest stage was *Geistesgeschichte*, but considered the continued application of such a model to Jewish history of rather doubtful value.

Music resurfaces as one of the specific facets of the Jewish tradition in Gyula Fodor’s (somewhat exaggerated) declaration that “in the course of the last hundred years,

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp.130-1.

²⁶² Ibid., p.142.

²⁶³ Ibid., p.144.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p.148.

Jews have excelled in music more than in any other area”.²⁶⁵ At the same time, Fodor also thought that, with the exception of Károly Goldmark, not a single musician wrote “Jewish music” in this period.²⁶⁶ Jewish music did not even exist as a historical reality or in the racial sense of the word, he warned, nor could it be proven in scholarly terms. Still, he found the evidence of its existence in “instincts and emotions”.²⁶⁷ Goldmark’s music was “highly original” but it made Jews feel as if they had already heard it some thousands of years before. According to Fodor, this was due to what he referred to, in a collectivist and rather irrational manner, as “the special tendency of the Jewish nervous system to comprehend it.”²⁶⁸

Discussions on art in relation to the Jewish traditions are also found in Ernő Naményi’s analysis of what he perceived as “gaps” in Jewish art history. To account for this phenomenon, Naményi employed the thesis of the long period of oppression: “above all, it was the absence of liberty that disabled the creation of Jewish art”, since “the way Jews were not independent for thousands of years, their art could not be either”.²⁶⁹ At the same time, Naményi also believed there had been internal Jewish opposition to art.²⁷⁰ His image of the Jewish artistic tradition was quite complex: he acknowledged relatively high numbers of Jewish artists in the modern age, but declared that there was no such thing as specifically Jewish art.²⁷¹ In spite of this, he argued against what he saw as unoriginal aspects of

²⁶⁵ Fodor, “Goldmark” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.266. On the theme of Jewish music, see Philip Vilas Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.268-9.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p.269.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p.271. On the other hand, non-Jews supposedly would immediately call it “foreign, but beautiful” music.

²⁶⁹ Ernő Naményi, “A zsidók és a képzőművészet” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.129.

²⁷⁰ In his writings he referred to what he called “lifeless conservative opposition to most aspirations in fine arts”, as well as “stiff orientation towards purely spiritual and lawful ideas”. Ibid., p.126. What is more, Naményi wrote that “we ought to state with regret that a great part of official Jewish leaders related to art with incomprehension or even animosity”. Ibid., p.142.

²⁷¹ “When the gates of European culture finally opened up for Jews in the 18th century, when liberty and the recognition of human dignity provided them with the divide opportunity to create art, they used their chance and

synagogue architecture (that he critically labeled “the creation of inappropriate copies”).²⁷²

All in all, he formulated a rather ambivalent position towards Jewish art: as an analyst, he doubted its existence, but believed in it intuitively and supported it also as a future-oriented project of linking art and identity. What most clearly distinguished his discourse on art from that of Fodor was that he did not seek anything essentially Jewish – nothing that in art reception would get manifested on the level of the Jewish collective subconscious.

In spite of their differences in the object and approach of study, what all these three writings have in common is that they (voluntarily or involuntarily) pictured the present as a transitory age. These reflections on key aspects of the Jewish tradition revealed tensions between the descriptive and the prescriptive levels. In other words, these articles carried the seeds of tension between the demands of scholarly perspectives and collective identity discourses. In practice, this meant claims that analytically speaking there was no specifically Jewish art, while, on the level of preferences, it implied that there ought to be a Jewish stylistic canon and special connections between truly Jewish artists and audiences.

Let us now turn to the discussion of the cluster of articles dealing with the person of Mendelssohn and the divergent assessments his evaluation generated. The first instance of this debate appeared already in the first *IMIT yearbook* released under the

appeared in all branches of fine arts all over Europe. Jews did not create specifically Jewish art, but in their own cultural community, age and country they did not remain in last place.” Ibid., p.136.

²⁷² Naményi evaluated synagogues built in Moorish, Roman and Gothic styles in the previous century and early 20th century as the products of a “misfortunate age”. Ibid., p.141. He valued the protest against “conceptions inherent to the symbols of Christian architecture”, i.e. attempts to consciously differentiate synagogue architecture from that used to build Christian churches (such in Worms in the 12th and Prague in the 14th century). Ibid., p.132. Ernő Munkácsi thought that Jews were in grave error when they (copying fashionable architectural styles from Pest-Buda) built Moorish synagogues in Kolozsvár (Cluj), the heart of “Hungarian Gothic and Baroque architecture”. Ernő Munkácsi, “Utazás a múltba” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.207. Manó Pollák tried to harmonize the history of synagogue construction with the requirements of the national narrative: “were not our beautiful, Hungarian synagogues the products of the age in which the Jewish denomination was received within the fortification of the Hungarian constitution?”, he asked rhetorically. Moreover, he asserted that “the new and beautiful synagogues of our homeland were built by Hungarian Jews, without exception”. Manó Pollák, “Zsidó templomépítés Magyarországon a XIX. századtól a mai napig” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.192.

regency of Miklós Horthy in 1929, where Ármin Kecskeméti's "Mendelssohn kétszáz éve" (The Two Hundred Years of Mendelssohn), a treatise on the giant of the Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah, appeared alongside Izidor Goldberger's study on Moses Sofer, the most influential Orthodox Jew from Hungary and a fervent critic of the Haskalah. Kecskeméti offered a nuanced picture of Mendelssohn's views and impact, with the main goal of providing an apologia of his person while criticizing his followers who have misused (or perhaps rather overused) his legacy.²⁷³ According to Kecskeméti, the program of Mendelssohn was directed at creating an internal harmony between the Jewish citizen and the believing Jew.²⁷⁴ That is how his idea of "European Jewry" emerged. It implied cultural ideals and political plans, subsuming the desire for liberty and struggles to achieve legal emancipation.²⁷⁵ Kecskeméti thought emancipation was the most natural and perfectly honorable Jewish demand. Moreover, he called Mendelssohn's Bible translations "the most important fact of Jewish cultural history of modern times".²⁷⁶ In defense of Mendelssohn, Kecskeméti even argued that he was not a reformer: his passion for knowledge might have included everything in the world, but religion was clearly in the right position to regulate this mighty desire.²⁷⁷ In other words, Mendelssohn wanted to harmonize free and unlimited

²⁷³ László Bakonyi similarly observed that Moses Mendelssohn, even "without intending so, caused divisions among his people" and that his activities constituted the first stage of the process that ultimately led to the split of the Jews of Hungary in the late 1860s and early 1870s. László Bakonyi, "Visszaemlékezés az első magyar zsidó kongresszusra" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.253.

²⁷⁴ Kecskeméti "Mendelssohn" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.134.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p.136. What is more, the spheres of culture and politics were closely connected in the innovative project of Mendelssohn: the newly gained and recognized intellectual weight of Jews was supposed prove that they were worthy of civic rights. Ibid., p.133.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p.139.

²⁷⁷ Kecskeméti stressed that Mendelssohn practiced Jewish rituals diligently, and clarified that the proponents of religious reform (such as Einhorn, Holdheim, Leopold Löw, Geiger, who in his assessment invented dogmas and formulas to justify their innovations) attacked his theories. Ibid., p.145.

thinking with compliance in deeds.²⁷⁸ He thereby created the “Jewish dilemma of the modern age”²⁷⁹ – how to sacrifice the ghetto and preserve Jewry all the same.²⁸⁰

In spite of all laudations, Kecskeméti maintained that Mendelssohn played “a tragic role in our history”. He “caused ill without intending to because his colleagues and trusted friends lacked Jewishness”.²⁸¹ His high ideals were desecrated as their fate got intertwined with the “deviation of Jews of the consecutive age”.²⁸² Claims about his tragic impact were accompanied by a more general and specifically Jewish criticism of the Enlightenment.²⁸³ Kecskeméti pointed out that it was the “one-sided and excessive” desire to enlighten that “destroyed the dominant position of traditional literature, that timeless creation of Jewish genius”. The struggle for independence of reason also “went beyond the law of life that affirmed the connection between Jewish peoplehood and our studies” and was the secret of “our power to resist for 1 700 years.”²⁸⁴ Kecskeméti sought a peculiar balance: to assert

²⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.146-7.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p.143.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. p.149. In Kecskeméti’s view, Mendelssohn knew it well that Jewry meant much more than some theological views: it was a whole way of life, and had not only an emotional but also a historical reality.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p.137.

²⁸² Ibid., p.149.

²⁸³ He wrote that “people in that period [the 18th century – FL] also hit the firmament with their heads, but not in order to make the idea of God the culmination of their thinking, but to break through the sky and overstep revelation and transgress traditional belief”. Ibid., p.140.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 141-2. The criticism of the one-sided application of the Enlightenment program was also present in Zsigmond Groszmann’s “Mezei Mór és kora” (Mór Mezei and his Age). Groszmann opined that when Mezei proposed the exclusion of Jewish clerics (*zsidó papok*) from the Congress of 1868-69, he fell into the “trap of a misconceived <<enlightenedness>>” Zsigmond Groszmann, “Mezei Mór és kora” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.203. As a consequence, “this fear of <<clericalism>> led them to want to silence rabbis when Jewish issues were negotiated”. Ibid., p.204. In 1941, Groszmann returned to this decision, calling it “a derailment”. Even though the decision was taken in a principled way (in the belief that merely non-religious, organizational issues shall be on the agenda of the Congress), it still constituted a grave mistake and caused severe problems later on. Moreover, Groszmann claimed that “no denomination can exclude its clerics when matters of the denomination are at stake”. Groszmann, “Hirschler” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.154. Pál Weisz quoted that the exclusion of rabbis from the leadership of the (Neolog) community was accepted as “the main cause of the decadence of Judaism” even by its current worldly leaders in 1934. Pál Weisz, “A rabbi ügykörének története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.132. Weisz elaborated on what he saw as the contemporary tasks of the rabbi: “it cannot be merely consist of preaching and the taking care of religious services, but has to include <<more encompassing and effective education of youth and adults, performing of pastoral work and teaching of every layer of society>>.” Ibid., p.132. In both instances, he quoted the document from 1934 titled “Indokolás a Kiegészítő Szabályzat javaslatához” (Justification of the Recommended Additional Regulations).

that assimilation was “an old and natural life phenomenon of the Jewish diaspora”²⁸⁵ and yet criticize its unmerited practical consequences.²⁸⁶

Thus his main problem was what he saw as the destruction of balance in the course of the 19th century between Europeanness and Jewishness, between culture and religion. Kecskeméti was convinced that acculturation and education were opposed to religion by this time and acquired larger roles at its expense. At the same time, among those who aimed to fight the spiritual crisis the platform of religious exclusivity became dominant.²⁸⁷ The internal harmonization of believer and citizen did not succeed: believers and citizens emerged as opposed groups. As a consequence of the fierce battles between them, both sides became prisoners of half-truths.²⁸⁸ Kecskeméti believed this was a misfortunate, fruitless, condemnable fight. In spite of the failure of the harmonization attempt and the deepening crisis of the 19th century, the overall evaluation of Mendelssohn was positive. Kecskeméti insisted that his spirit brought “culture into Jewry, and let us not forget his even greater significance: he wanted cultured Jewry to be Jewish, because our historical ability to life does not exist without religion”.²⁸⁹ Thus, in this thoroughly ambivalent telling,

²⁸⁵ Kecskeméti, “Mendelssohn”, p.152.

²⁸⁶ He wrote that in the name of “unity in civic life, a shocking Jewishlessness spread”. Ibid., p.153.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p.155.

²⁸⁸ As quoted above, one of the normative stances Kecskeméti took was that “Assimilation cannot mean heroic death, cannot require our dispersal into European culture without leaving any traces.” Ibid., p.160.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p.162. Turóczi-Trostler maintained that assimilation was necessary for the fulfillment of European mission and “Jewish renewal, regeneration” could not have happened without it either, but that the “balancing role” of religion was indispensable to it. József Turóczi-Trostler, “Jakob Wassermann” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.160. In his eyes, the balance sheet of spiritual assimilation showed “no uniform picture”. Its assessment was particularly difficult since “simple agreements” between the forces of two worlds (such as in England, France or the Mendelssohn family) had to be considered next to “quasi-metamorphoses” (as observable among Eastern Jews). Ibid., p.158. Turóczi-Trostler thought that Jewishness was not a living tradition for Wassermann. Its meaningfulness emerged for him only because of pressures from the outside world. Still, Turóczi-Trostler was convinced he created an entirely new symbolic universe precisely as a German-Jewish author. Ibid., pp.161-2.

the ideas of Mendelssohn were at once showing the right path and worked as catalyzers of later decay.²⁹⁰

Kecskeméti was in favor of a particular version of assimilation that was based on the act of harmonization, but did not offer any explicit criticism of Jewish orthodoxy. The fact that Moses Sofer was introduced in the first volume as “the most famous rabbi in all of Judaism in the first half of the 19th century” is arguably even more indicative of the attitude towards Orthodox Jewry in the *IMIT yearbooks*.²⁹¹ Moreover, Izidor Goldberger, the author of the article on Sofer, argued that Sofer provided a standard that could not be overlooked back then and could not be dismissed in the present either.²⁹² He depicted Sofer as a rabbi of all-Jewish significance and impact, emphasizing that his “swarm of pupils” reached all parts of the world and served “each of the various Jewish communities”.²⁹³ This implied that Sofer was a most consensually appreciated historical actor: Goldberger went as far as to affirm that “his great knowledge and holy life conquered all Jewish communities without difference,

²⁹⁰ Pál Hirschler addressed a similar ambivalence. He referred to the problematic nature both of drawing a strict boundary between the two spheres and of not drawing it. “Attempts to explain miracles rationally show bad taste, and it is not to be welcomed from the point of view of religion or scholarship”, he wrote, but admitted that miracles can be approached rationally. Pál Hirschler, “Izrael honfoglalása az ásatások megvilágításában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.28. Pál Vidor explored the relations between rationalism and irrationalism within the Jewish tradition on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the death of Yehuda Halevi. This comparative article titled “A zsidó vallásfilozófia két főtípusa” pictured the attempt of Maimonides at a philosophical merger of Greek philosophy and Jewish thought as the accentuation of the rational and universally human side of Jewish religion. Halevi, on the other hand, did not create any system, was rather a poetic philosopher who referred to Jewish religious and historical experience and articulated specifically Jewish, irrational contents. Pál Vidor, “A zsidó vallásfilozófia két főtípusa” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, pp. 72-3. In principle, Halévi affirmed that “religious life, life with God is only possible in the Jewish religious community” but was ready to be more accommodating when practical ideas were at stake. *Ibid.*, p.71.

²⁹¹ Izidor Goldberger, “Szófer Mózes” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.201. In 1932, Samu Bettelheim (a leading Hungarian Zionist already in the early stages of the movement who later became a supporter of the Orthodox Agudath Israel and who was, similarly to Sofer, from Pozsony / Bratislava / Pressburg) presented parts of Moses Sofer’s diaries (translated from Hebrew) on the shelling of his city during the Napoleonic Wars. The aim of publishing this document was to show that Sofer was no fan of Napoleon, the same way he rejected the granting of Jewish legal equality in Frankfurt (his birthplace). An interesting aspect of the document was that the Hungarian army troops appeared in it as the looters of the city and local Jews, while, according to Sofer, Saxons behaved as friends of theirs, as true “men of peace”.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.202.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.203.

each shade of Judaism around the world, and he has consequently been elevated among the greatest”.²⁹⁴ Goldberger admitted that Sofer sharply opposed Mendelssohnian ideas and even forbade reading him. He explained that “he would always remain in favor of such a rigid approach” and played “a leading role among our Orthodox coreligionists”.²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Goldberger preferred to stress in his discussion of Sofer’s 33 years in Pozsony (Pressburg, Bratislava) that this well-known bastion of Orthodox Judaism (that by the time of writing belonged to Czechoslovakia) was “the most excellent Jewish center of learning in our country”.²⁹⁶ This makes it clear that in spite of some critical remarks, this article in the first new volume of IMIT did not mean to approach Sofer’s person and views with a primarily critical attitude: his intention was to underline that he was a significant person for Jewry in general as well as for Hungarian Jewish history, without addressing more controversial aspects of his in any greater detail. Avoiding such controversies came at the expense of presenting Sofer’s person in a rather shallow narrative – Goldberger focused almost exclusively on his life story, without going into greater detail about his views.²⁹⁷

Besides these images of Sofer as a self-secluding but excellent Jew and of Mendelssohn as someone who proposed a model synthesis but was partly and despite his intentions responsible for later decay, it is worth exploring other evaluations of Mendelssohn which range from much more positive to decidedly more negative ones than what Kecskeméti offered. On the one extreme, Jenő Zsoldos published his study “Mendelssohn a magyar szellemi életben” (Mendelssohn in Hungarian Intellectual Life) in 1933, where he

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.216.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p.208.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 211.

²⁹⁷ This interpretation of the influence of the thematic focus is further supported by the fact that the only place where some more critical comments were uttered was precisely when touching upon Sofer’s rigid stance towards Mendelssohn.

presented Mendelssohn as the articulator of the human ideal of the religious and cultured Jew, and referred to his work as “the last Jewish objectification of rationalism”.²⁹⁸ This idea of a religious and cultured Jew resembled the proposal of harmonization that Kecskeméti identified as central to his agenda: the core of this idea is that Jewish and worldly pursuits could be united in the interest of valuable work without compromises or renouncements.²⁹⁹

More narrowly, Zsoldos focused on the Hungarian reception and adaptation of Mendelssohnian ideas in Hungary. In his view, the beginnings of his philosophical reception were promising, but ended very quickly once the reception of Kant got under way. On the other hand, Hungarian aesthetic literature was much more lastingly impacted by Mendelssohn, surpassing even the influence of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten.³⁰⁰ For Zsoldos, the balance sheet of his activities was thus thoroughly positive, without any of the ambivalences expressed by Kecskeméti. According to him, Mendelssohn “symbolized the Jewish ideal of the human being and represented the idea of immortality which strengthens our connection to our faith”, he turned “the problem of rationalist theology into a timely question once again, and launched the system of thought known as popular German aesthetics”.³⁰¹

On the other extreme, Károly Sebestyén almost exclusively stressed those negative aspects which Kecskeméti also exposed, but in the frame of a more complex and

²⁹⁸ Jenő Zsoldos, “Mendelssohn a magyar szellemi életben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.58. It ought to be noted that Zsoldos apparently used “rationalism” to refer to a period that was more or less synonymous with the age of Enlightenment. He thus believed that with the end of the Enlightenment and the beginnings of Romanticism, rationalism also drew to a close – this is why Mendelssohn appeared in his text as “one of the last rationalists” and not one of the first ones. (A more detailed analysis of Zsoldos’ views can be found in the second subchapter “Models of Culture” of the chapter on *Libanon*.)

²⁹⁹ In 1932, Arnold Kiss referred to the preservation of harmony between Jewish and secular scholarship in the education of rabbis as the basic ambition of Bánóczi. Arnold Kiss, “Bánóczi József egyénisége” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.176. Kiss opined that Bánóczi was firmly convinced that “pure religiosity could be expressed even when the outer parts of the person showed the refinement of his culture”. *Ibid.*, p.175.

³⁰⁰ Zsoldos, “Mendelssohn” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, pp. 73-4.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.79.

balanced assessment. Sebestyén maintained that Mendelssohn started a process within Jewry that “alienated the best of our denomination from our faith” and “provided a pretext to persecute and belittle Jewry precisely in the spiritual and intellectual realms”.³⁰² Quite apart from the discussion on Mendelssohn, a similar observation was made by József Patai who insisted that three factors, the Jewish priesthood, the prophecies and idealism assured the existence of Jewry in the Diaspora – something that Gordon did not realize when he attacked what he saw as exaggerated forms of Jewish spiritualism.³⁰³ Patai wrote of the “fetish of the Enlightenment” and criticized the propagators of its tenets for turning their backs on the Hebrew language and, ultimately, on Jewry as a whole.³⁰⁴

Mózes Richtmann implicitly reflected on the chasm that separated Zsoldos from Sebestyén when he addressed the heavily polarized nature of the reception of Mendelssohn. He evidently remained a living force even 150 years after his death, he wrote, but admitted that there existed Jewish strands that offered many kinds of criticisms (and even some rather denunciatory assessments) of him.³⁰⁵ Richtmann painted the image of polarized current reception in order to attempt to bridge the divide and convince the opponents of Mendelssohn of the injustice of their stance. He argued in favor of a dialectic interpretation according to which even Orthodoxy benefited from the appearance and deeds of Mendelssohn: in this narrative, he triggered a “beneficial disorganization” out of which (or rather in reaction to which) intransigent Orthodoxy could be born. In other words, the catalyzation Mendelssohn helped to get under way pointed in multiple directions and urged

³⁰² Sebestyén, “Levelekben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.51. In his article on R. Eger Akiba, Fürst also related rather critically to the Enlightenment and supporters of religious reform. He thought that they showed an “intolerant opposition to Talmudism and its method” in the name of “modern education and cultural adaptation to surrounding people”. Aladár Fürst, “R. Éger Akiba” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.181.

³⁰³ József Patai, “J.L. Gordon” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.57.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.58.

³⁰⁵ Mózes Richtmann, “Mendelssohn Mózes mint a zsidóság védelmezője” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.79.

the realization of several sharply opposed but similarly unavoidable processes. The accusations of his detractors that asserted that Mendelssohn had a harmful impact could thus be declared unfounded: Richtmann explained that to those with a synthetic vision, Mendelssohn represented an inevitable historical phenomenon rather than being personally responsible for some undesired (and merely partial) effects.³⁰⁶ Richtmann's evaluation downright idealized Mendelssohn: the leading spirit of the Haskalah was presented as a uniquely important phenomenon in post-Biblical Jewish history because he all at once managed to exert a marked cultural impact, follow religious traditions, develop certain branches of knowledge and apply contemporary philosophical insights in order to formulate a persuasive apologia of Jewish ways.³⁰⁷

This kind of idealization was not unique, but there were hardly any other texts that pursued direct polemics with Orthodoxy on the pages of the *IMIT yearbooks*. Overall, there were remarkably few attempts to question Orthodox tenets and behavior: Hungarian Jewish scholarly authors were certainly not overly combative in this respect. One of the exceptions was Zsigmond Groszmann's "Meisel pesti főrabbi kora" (The Time of Meisel as Chief Rabbi of Pest) who wrote of a "repellent chase" that the Orthodox Jews organized against Meisel in order to avoid being emancipated. Groszmann declared that Meisel was merely in favor of moderate and legal developments, which could in no way justify the one-sided, ignoble and harsh attacks against his person. Meisel could not stand these oppressive moves of the Orthodox side but, according to Groszmann, he nevertheless managed to

³⁰⁶ In stark contrast to Sebestyén, Richtmann specifically singled out from among the positive impacts of Mendelssohn that the example of his life "undeniably strengthened the honor in which Jewry was held" – Richtmann contested that this had to be recognized irrespective of how his activities and personality were assessed. *Ibid.*, p.81.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-1.

remain a “loyal supporter of Orthodox people who caused him so much bitterness”,³⁰⁸ thus demonstrating, in Groszmann’s interpretation, the moral superiority of a moderate rabbi who refrained from fueling animosity towards Orthodox Judaism.

What makes the infrequency of these rather reserved polemics all the more noteworthy is that there were articles that provided more detailed criticism of Neolog Jewry, sometimes going as far as to question its very theoretical core. Most notably, Imre Benoschofsky in his “A zsidó vallás és a racionalizmus” (The Jewish Religion and Rationalism) wanted to make his readership aware of the flawed nature of the Neolog way of being Jewish. His fundamental belief was that the depth of reverence counted above all.³⁰⁹ Benoschofsky considered it proven that “when the light of reason wants to replace the altarfire of Isaiah, what emerges is an unreligious phenomenon which cannot provide real experiences, only a lifeless form of religion that is dead already at the moment of its birth.”³¹⁰

In order to demonstrate the negative side of Neolog views, Benoschofsky offered a comparison with Maimonides who, according to him, even through his scholarly pursuits only desired knowledge of God. On the other hand, the core of the modern attempt to rationalize religion was precisely the opposite: instead of God, it wanted to accept a philosophical concept and use an ethical textbook. Benoschofsky’s criticism was, above all, aimed at Hermann Cohen and his philosophizing on the ethical imperative which, in his view, made Cohen shy away from talking of faith nearly all the time and resulted in an image

³⁰⁸ Zsigmond Groszmann, “Meisel pesti főrabbi kora” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.110. This contribution is particularly interesting also because it deals with a (non-Orthodox) rabbi who was not one of the Hungarian, not even one of the pro-Hungarian Jews. Groszmann did not fail to note that Meisel “was in incomprehension” when observing the process of Hungarianization. The popularity of Sámuel Kohn (who spoke Hungarian) hurt him in particular, but in his defense, Groszmann did mention that he tried to learn Hungarian. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4. Groszmann ultimately evaluated Meisel as one of the most excellent but perhaps most unfortunate rabbis of his times (he used the term *pap*). *Ibid.*, p.101.

³⁰⁹ Imre Benoschofsky, “A zsidó vallás és a racionalizmus” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.132.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.130.

of the universe without a place for the divine in it. These polemical lines were not intended to mobilize sentiments against “the excesses of modern rationalism”: Benoschofsky believed that the time of such 19th traditions had already passed. “Flat rationalism prospered only shortly among Jews. We are thirsty for the solace and happiness religion offers.”³¹¹ As an example of this positive new religiosity beyond flat rationalism, he quoted neohasidism.

Benoschofsky published these ideas in 1939, an age fraught with danger, when the process of increasingly severe Hungarian anti-Jewish legal discrimination had already started. There are signs that after this date and into the years of the Second World War the *IMIT yearbooks* sought to present a wider and more inclusive image of Jewish traditions.³¹² One such sign, a rather small one, was an article Pál Vidor wrote in 1940 on the recently deceased Arnold Kiss, a former rabbi in Buda that emphasized Kiss’ intentions to destroy the prejudices Jews shared against the Hebrew and Yiddish languages and make them question the “darkest anti-Semitic slogans” they internalized about these tongues.³¹³ According to this portrait, one of Kiss’ main aims was to prove that Yiddish showed the

³¹¹ Ibid., p.132. As opposed to Benoschofsky, Turóczi-Trostler described the 19th century as the age of openly triumphant humanism when the divine sky and the despised earth get connected again, the people of the Bible and emancipated Jewry could overlap, mutually influence and strengthen each other. József Turóczi-Trostler, “Három klasszikus novella” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.213.

³¹² In 1940, Grünwald formulated the practical guideline that the Jewish public ought to be connected through stronger religious, spiritual and ethical bonds. The unification of forces had become necessary: new social, economic and spiritual tasks needed to be taken care of. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. 5700” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, pp. 299-300. Much earlier, in 1932, there was a similar attempt in *IMIT* when Fürst reported on his journey to Poland and explicitly called for “decreasing the mutually felt distance”. Ultimately, Fürst went much further and wanted to turn the reigning assessment upside down: he explicitly claimed that this “unusual milieu” provided “in some respects the exact opposite of what we tend to picture it to be”. Ibid., p.268. He explained, for example, that the Yiddish language was a very pleasant experience, the reasoning of locals the “sharpest possible”, and even claimed he found ideal Jewish communities there (while he also stressed the Polish Jewry was not an unitary group). Aladár Fürst, “Lengyel zsidókról és iskoláikról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, pp. 268-9. He also called this “also externally separated strata” a “people predestined to achieve very much” (*sokra hivatott nép*). Ibid., p.266 and p.271.

³¹³ According to Vidor’s interpretation, the “main sin” the short stories of Arnold Kiss wanted to depict was the lack of Jewish self-respect. He was strongly critical of Jews who acted to gain the favor of non-Jews, wanted to get accepted at all costs and lacked honesty. He also went against those who showed signs of self-importance and were loud without much to show for it.

“unitary spirit” of seven million Jews and manifested the “true soul of Eastern European Jewry” and was therefore of unique value.³¹⁴

In the yearbook of 1943, there were two more articles on similar themes, one of which was markedly pro-Hasidic. To this last *IMIT yearbook* released under the regency of Horthy, Pál Nádain contributed a brief sketch on the Yiddish theatre that operated in Jassy in the late 19th century (it was established in 1876) and showed “melodramatic, morale-strengthening plays with plenty of somersaults”.³¹⁵ Nádain believed that the performances of this theatre (similarly to what Vidor claimed about the general convictions of Kiss) gave expression to “the collective soul of Jews [*zsidó néplélek* – FL]”: they managed to heal some Jewish wounds while entertaining.³¹⁶ Around the same time István Hahn published his study “A törvény vallása” (The Religion of the Law) that presented Hasidism as a merry synthesis.³¹⁷ According to Hahn, in Hasidism the revealed religion of God and natural religion were unified and the demands of law and life reconciled through the love of God. It transformed the “yoke of the law” into happiness through “the reality of religious experience”.³¹⁸ In his eyes, Hasidism could thus claim to be the most significant Jewish movement.

³¹⁴ Vidor, “Kiss” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, pp. 74-5. Arnold Kiss even introduced the works of the Yiddish poet Morris Rosenfeld (whom he also translated) in a lecture he held at Petőfi Society, a “distinguished home of Hungarian literature”. Bertalan Edelstein remarked in his very first report that the discussion of Yiddish “cannot be stopped [*nem tolható félre* – FL] with simply declaring it a corrupted tongue”. Bertalan Edelstein, “A külföldi zsidóság története a háború utáni évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.324. In 1933 he observed that eight out of the altogether fifteen million Jews spoke Yiddish and that English, in second place with around 2.5 million speakers, was far behind, not to speak of German with its one million. Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5692. és 5693. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.238.

³¹⁵ Pál Nádain, “Népénekese” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.185.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p.187. Nádain also wrote that on the surface of these performances “collective consciousness created bubbles”. Ibid., pp. 187-8.

³¹⁷ It is of important to note that both Benoschofsky and Hahn were among the youngest contributions. They were born in 1903 and 1913, respectively.

³¹⁸ István Hahn, “A törvény vallása” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, pp. 170. Hahn referred to this relationship in general thus: traditional Jews at once cause fright and amazement in the Jews of today, as if recalling an ancient memory, something rigid, unchanging and indestructible. Ibid., p.155.

At the same time, the two authors who wrote most extensively on the way Jewish scholarship and tradition should be related both continued to propagate their harmonization. Theirs were direct restatements of previously articulated platforms: in 1942, Mihály Guttman published a study on the 1 000th anniversary of the death of Saadja gaon. He wrote of the unity of continuous tradition and erudition as the main principle,³¹⁹ adding that “there are certain contents [from a thousand years ago] that ought to be known and that we should renew [...] rays of light that are meaningful to us too”.³²⁰ In 1943, Sámuel Löwinger joined the debate on the basic principles of Jewish renewal, professing his belief that the “spiritual renaissance” could only be permanent if based “on the unshakable partnership of scholarship and tradition, religion and the sense of self-worth”.³²¹

An interesting point about the internal evolution of the Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarship was the adoption of a more open and inclusive picture of recent trends and traditions – expressions of more favorable attitudes towards Eastern Jews and Hasidism sometimes even resulted in their idealization. Another significant aspect of this scholarly position was the drawing of a clear line between itself and the phenomenon of reformism, which until the war years clearly implied a dual self-differentiation in the discourse of the scholars in question. Ideological reformism and restrictive traditionalism were to be simultaneously rejected with a golden middle path being sought between them.³²² A good

³¹⁹ Mihály Guttman, “Szaádja gáon életmunkája” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.23.

³²⁰ Ibid., p.9. He called the works of Saadia gaon “the opening act of the flourishing of the Spanish-Jewish epoch”. He was also the creator of the first work of Jewish religious philosophy which was “in some respects also the first in rank”. Ibid., p.20 and p.25.

³²¹ Sámuel Löwinger, “Hagyományos irodalmunk fejlődése a görög-zsidó kultúrkapcsolatok tükrében. (Guttman Mihály helye a zsidó szellemtörténetben)” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.60.

³²² To find a third way between “exorbitant Jews” and “exorbitant Hungarians” was also one of the main goals of Aladár Komlós in his article on József Kiss. He maintained that Kiss created this third way or in other words, the middle course of the Hungarian Jew. Komlós, “Kiss” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p. 73. Komlós wrote that Kiss “openly showed his concern for the Jewish community, but also for Hungariandom and beyond that also for the community of <<oppressed, cheated millions>>”. Ibid., pp. 72-3. Kiss was also the first artist in whose works

illustration of this delineation is Zsoldos' writing on the beginnings of the Hungarian Jewish tradition and its non-Jewish reception, where he denounced Móric Rosenthal as a "monotonic and one-sided Jewish interpreter" of rationalism who represented an "extreme stance" and formulated "false" and "offensive" ideas.³²³ Ernő Ballagi wrote in the same vein on the Jewish religious reformers who got organized in Pest in 1848: according to him, large parts of their group not only "fell for exaggerations" but were "practically atheistic".³²⁴ Ballagi's criticism clearly had two targets: he also maintained that in the 1860s "the conservative strata belonging to the denomination were afraid that the state regulation of questions of religious life would mean violent interventions. They misunderstood the real goals of the national congress" planned at the time.³²⁵ In the course of his characterization of Sámuel Kohn, Zsigmond Groszmann returned to the idea of the "middle way": he "walked straight down

"the Jewish soul found poetic expressions in Hungarian". Ibid., p.72. Komlós believed that "Since his appearance on the literary scene the universe of Hungary knows of the tears and beauty of the Jewish soul. He taught them that the mouth that, according to foreigners, only speaks the grotesque words of jargon, is capable of fine singing". Ibid., p.72. The canonization attempt took the following form in this article: Komlós stated that he approached him "with the reverence of sons" and that "all Hungarian Jews have been indebted to him. We, Hungarian Jewish writers think of him with special affection. We feel that he is our very first direct ancestor and he provides us with an eternal symbol of the Jewish poet." Ibid., p.72. (The ideas of Komlós are discussed in Chapter VII dealing with the *Ararát yearbooks*.)

³²³ Jenő Zsoldos, "Az első magyar zsidó írók fogadtatása irodalmunkban" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.191.

³²⁴ Ballagi, "Emancipációért" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, pp.152-3.

³²⁵ Ibid., p.164. László Bakonyi also aimed at a balanced assessment, but considered the responsibility of the Orthodox side to be greater: "let us openly confess after the passing of 60 years that mistakes were committed on both sides, but let us add immediately that the number of mistakes was lower on the side of the progressives". Bakonyi, "Visszaemlékezés" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, pp. 261-2. Bakonyi clearly did not write with exclusionary intentions: perhaps the most obvious sign of this was his statement that "Both tracks are necessary, the one just as important as the other". Ibid., p.265. Zsigmond Groszmann also affirmed that in the 20th century the formerly strained relations between the two groups were a thing of the past. Even though Jewish unity could not be recreated, "cordial relations" was the dominant form of exchange between the parties. Groszmann pointed to the "uncontestable role" Mór Mezei played in achieving this change of attitudes. Zsigmond Groszmann, "Mezei Mór és kora" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.208. Addressing a different subject, Sámuel Krausz also combined the ideas of mutuality and superiority: he described the relations between Polish and Hungarian Jews thus: the Polish, "as is well known, tends to vindicate his superiority" which "the Hungarian in turn does in relation to him, but I believe he does so with more justification." His article was meant to underline this point. Sámuel Krausz, "Magyarországi útiképek a múlt századból" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.89.

the middle path and avoided all deviations”.³²⁶ Groszmann even expressed his belief that if the wise moderation of Kohn would have acquired a greater role “the unity of our Jewry might have been saved”.³²⁷

A larger pool of contributors was involved in the renegotiation of various Jewish traditions, but my aim was to analyze only the most relevant formulations. Instead of presenting an exhaustive overview of the topic, the focus was on key questions in order to draw conclusions about the Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly position and its image of crucial Jewish traditions of the modern age. Moreover, I pointed to some notable changes in these conceptions in the volumes released during the cataclysmic years of the Second World War.

The stance taken towards Mendelssohn, a centrally important historical-intellectual actor, provided illustrations of some fundamental modern European Jewish dilemmas, particularly the parallel demands and difficult realization of renewal and preservation. Some contributors sought to highlight that the principles of renewal Mendelssohn invented were essentially correct. Others pointed to mid-range consequences that seemed condemnable from the point of view of self-preservation, or even went as far as to articulate their fundamental doubts about the beneficial nature of the Haskalah.

Three basic conclusions can be offered about the contours of the scholarly position: first, there was hardly any open polemic against or explicit criticism of Jewish Orthodoxy. Second, when the distance from Orthodoxy was nevertheless explicitly kept, this was typically done through a dual strategy of self-differentiation: the simultaneous

³²⁶ Groszmann, “Kohn” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.336. These ideas of his are quoted from his text “Kohn Sámuel emlékezete” which (for some reason) appeared in the *Announcements of the Society* section of the yearbook.

³²⁷ Ibid, p.337.

declaration of disagreement with dangerously liberal reformism and strict traditionalism. The evidences from these yearbooks support the thesis that Neolog Jews tended to imagine themselves as representatives of the middle way and their key accomplishment was thus the creation of the right balance. Third, this position altered in the years of growing exclusion in Hungary and the Second World War through its one-sided opening: several texts reveal a more sympathetic reception of Eastern Jews and Hasidism. The frequency of such remarks shows that there was an attempt to create a new Jewish “unity in diversity,” even though Zionism was conspicuously absent from the options. From the late 1930s onwards the Zionist movement was surrounded by complete silence in IMIT’s studies, although it continued to feature in the reports on Jews around the world.³²⁸

³²⁸ Chapter V discusses the discursive relation to Zionism in greater detail.

Chapter IV

On the Historicity, Values and Roles of Jewry

I. Jewish Values and the Question of Historicity

This subchapter has a twofold aim. Its first ambition is to analyze those discursive elements in IMIT's contributions that made declarations on the Jewish "essence" or tried to define specifically Jewish character traits. The discourses on Jewish essence and character revolved around fundamental values, and for the sake of this analysis, these discourses will be clustered into several groups. Due to the frequency of appearance and depth of treatment, five values can be identified as the common bases for these clusters of discourses: the Jewish values of ethics (1.), truth (2.), intellect and culture (3.), life (4.), and adaptation and loyalty (5.). A number of articles in IMIT stressed more than one of these values and some examples of such combinations will be brought up towards the very end of the subchapter.

Second, I will address statements related to the question of the historicity of Jewry. These statements are truly heterogeneous: they stretch from those that deny the relevance of history to those that affirm it, i.e. from completely ahistorical (6.) to decidedly historical interpretations (8.). There also existed, of course, a number of intermediary positions: a number of authors dealt with the strange manner and unusual power of inheriting Jewish character features, and sought to provide an explanation for this admittedly enigmatic phenomenon. Their discussions stressed the relative insignificance of historical changes: even if they did not present Jewry as entirely ahistorical they positioned themselves closer to the ahistorical end of the scale (7.). Other texts articulated the desire of utopistically or

messianistically overcoming history (9.), and beyond these options several contributors offered a more encompassing interpretation of the Jewish historical condition through formulating a sharp contrast, an enormous gap between external predispositions and Jewish realities. I close the subchapter with the presentation and analysis of this important thesis (10.).

The historicity of Jews was thus a contested question: it could be denied for the sake of ahistorical essentialism or flaunted in order to claim a special historical pedigree. Some other authors searched for ways out of history, others stressed the insignificance of history or the vision of its basic injustice. On the other hand, on many basic values, such as Jewish ethic, IMIT's contributors formulated only affirmative statements. In the case of other basic values implicit or explicit polemics could be identified. For instance, Jewish intellectuality was such a contested value: while strong intellectual inclinations were favorable assessed, the phenomenon identified as intellectualism was an object of criticism, a Jewish character trait that needed to be fought and overcome. Adaptation and loyalty, which could at times (and only seemingly paradoxically) be presented as special Jewish qualities, were opposed to statements that stressed the need for self-regard.³²⁹

It is conspicuous that the discourse on Jewish specificities could support both stances. Beliefs in Jewish adaptability on the one hand and in commitment to own norms on the other could even be synthesized: drawing a contrast between the perceptions of the outside world and Jewish realities and actual behavior could serve exactly this purpose. In this synthetic vision, Jews could at once appear as especially adaptable people who "opposed" the animosity of the outside world precisely through their dedicated and loyal

³²⁹ This could in turn be combined with notions about the Jewish possession of truth or some other value (or values), for instance exceptional Jewish morality.

behavior – they firmly sided with or rather belonged to the righteous majority or minority as against the unjust, anti-Semitic “others”. Jews could thus appear as obstinate and stubborn, but also as highly moral and cultured. They could be presented as righteous people with an undeserved, tragic fate, but as consistently righteous even in their martyrdom – in spite of its regular recurrence.

Arguably, this image of Jewry (as adaptable, committed and loyal, but with a serious and special contribution of its own) was at the core of the Jewish scholarly discourse on how to make the “contract of assimilation” work.³³⁰ This image of Jewry combines the thesis of Jewish distinctiveness (or resistance to complete disappearance, to simply melting into the larger society) , the emphasis on the justified nature of Jewish pride (in the importance of their contributions, a thesis intended primarily for internal Jewish consumption and the strengthening of self-respect) and an explicitly articulated desire for cooperation addressed at the partners (which was also partly based on the belief that Jews can make such important and beneficial contributions). Significant segments of the Jewish intellectual elite imagined the coexistence of Jews and non-Jews in modern Hungary as such a combination and reconciliation of ideas. The contract of assimilation from this perspective was meant to be a platform offering something in between the perceived Jewish requirements and the Hungarian national demands, without rejecting significant parts of either one of them. From the analytical point of view, this discourse thus had to be composed of quite diverse elements and at times appeared rather eclectic.³³¹

The concrete traits of these discursive negotiations will become clearer through textual analysis of their content. The first bundle of articles to be examined is the one

³³⁰ It ought to be kept in mind that the expression as such was not used by IMIT’s authors, but the Hungarian Jewish concern to find mutually acceptable terms of coexistence was reflected in much of their writing.

³³¹ To varying degrees, this is in the nature of all formulations of dual identity.

dealing with the special Jewish value of *ethics* (1.). In Ármin Kecskeméti, Jewish ethics, universalism and idealism are tied together in the exceptional person of Moses Mendelssohn: according to him, the most Jewish character trait of this leading figure of the Jewish Enlightenment was “the dream of progress, the holy naivety of his ethical idealism”.³³² Kecskeméti maintained that “the secret of the victory of the Jewish spirit is not its burning love of culture but its talent for irrationalism inherited from the most ancient of times and hidden inside it that turns Life into something holy, it dreams of Ethics.”³³³ For him, Jewish religion was “a form of ethical universalism, our cultural path is that of intellectual universalism, which has its sources everywhere”.³³⁴ Elsewhere, in his “Az ókori zsidók gazdasági helyzete a diaszpórában” (The Economic Situation of Ancient Jews in the Diaspora) he declared that Judaism knew that religion was “the ethical organization of life”.³³⁵ Jews were the “carriers of a social mission” which could not justifiably be “turned into the profane means of economic selfishness and oppression”.³³⁶

Ottó Komlós provided one of the purest articulations of ethics as a prime value and the holiness of life it leads to in his “Az imitatio dei a zsidóságban” (Imitatio Dei in Jewry). He maintained that the divine commandment “be holy!” was the “classical formulation” of the Jewish ideal of life.³³⁷ Jews were forever trying to reach perfection: their

³³² Kecskeméti, “Mendelssohn” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.133.

³³³ Ibid., p.161. This is why Mendelssohn appears here as the “genuine Jewish prototype”: not because of his rationalism, but because he stuck to his *Ceremonialgesetze* to lead a holy life.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 140. Mihály Guttmann articulated ideas similar to Kecskeméti’s when he stressed that the Jewish ideas on ethics and humanity were general and universal. Mihály Guttmann, “A fogadalom értelmezése a zsidó vallástani forrásokban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.16. This was one of the many claims to contest (what were considered) ill-intended theses on the particularism of Jews and their supposed recourse to double standards.

³³⁵ Ármin Kecskeméti, “Az ókori zsidók gazdasági helyzete a diaszpórában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.106.

³³⁶ Ibid., pp. 106-8. Ármin Kecskeméti complained that this quality was hardly observable in the Jews of the Diaspora, and denounced stratification into the Jewish “oligarchy of money”, the petit bourgeois stratum and the poor who lived below them. Ibid., p.96.

³³⁷ Ottó Komlós, “Az imitatio dei a zsidóságban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.151.

task was to “practice what was virtuous” and thereby “unfold the divine”.³³⁸ To qualify his stance, Ottó Komlós added that humans were created in the image of God but should in no way try to imitate his divine being. “The aim of our life thus is to reach holiness as closely as possible and through our ethical behavior realize imitatio dei as interpreted in Jewish sources”, he wrote.³³⁹ He insisted that this ideal remained unchanged even in ages that wanted to revalue ethical values and questioned the absolute good.³⁴⁰

Mór Fényes also assigned a central role to ethics in his “A zsidóság erkölcstana” (The Ethical Teachings of Jewry) but his was a far more complex model than the ones offered by Ármin Kecskeméti or Ottó Komlós. Fényes connected ethical thought not to any raw form of universalism but to the idea of Jewish mission (that in his case incorporated notions on the exceptionally strong loyalty of Jews), the unity of the divine order, the collective consciousness of a people and their uniquely ambitious cultural and educational program. Fényes’ article begins with the question about the values that are at the core of the Jewish soul. His answer pointed to the centrality of ethics which in his mind stood between religion and law.³⁴¹ In spite of its central role, Fényes thought that Jewish ethics never consolidated into an ethical system. Rather, the Jewish *ethos* was inherited as divine law. The core of Jewish conceptions, according to him, was that everything was the manifestation of the single and unified world order moved by the Almighty. In this particular sense, Fényes echoed the arguments in favor of Jewish universalism, as well as the understanding that the ultimate goal of ethics was to reach the state of holiness.

³³⁸ Ibid., p.153. Ottó Komlós declared that “the realization of imitatio dei is the task of the Jewish community. Our Aggadah is full of the idea that God and Israel are similar in their holiness”. Ibid., p.165. The task concerned the collective as a whole, but also each single individual belonging to it: “the deeds of single individuals can be the source of appreciation or belittling of Jewry as a whole. This creates lofty connections between morals, religion and peoplehood”, he wrote. Ibid., p.165.

³³⁹ Ibid., p.164.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p.154. Here he explicitly took his own age as an example.

³⁴¹ Fényes, “Erkölcstana” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.9.

On the other hand, he also emphasized that in (implicit) contrast to Christian ethics, Jewish ethic was not otherworldly. It provided Jews with a worldly mission, that of spreading ethical values with ethical means in this world.³⁴² Moreover, he believed that the consciousness of Jewish peoplehood also emerged “under the sign of ethics.” Thus, he clearly distinguished it from forms of exclusivism: “Jewish racial consciousness was not exclusionary, the separateness of Jews was much rather based on an ethical commitment”.³⁴³ Such ethical values were articulated not only in Jewish consciousness, but also in Jewish patriotism which Jews were willing to display towards non-Jewish political entities – even in its ethical form, the practice of Jewish separation only emerged because of unacceptable circumstances and forces reigning in the world. In this way, Fényes managed to present the separation of the object of Jewish consciousness (Jewry) and the relevant object of political loyalty as completely normal. It even had his normative support: Jewry was loyal “out of principle” towards its “hosting peoples” (*vendégfogadó nép*) and willing to pay “due respect” to dominant religions.³⁴⁴ Towards the end of the article, instead of favoring the complete merger of Jews and non-Jews that a flat universalistic vision would require, Fényes went on to emphasize that Jews were distinguished by their sense of duty to educate themselves. In fact, he concluded with a claim on Jewish exceptionality, arguing that the Jewish commitment to becoming cultured had “no parallel in history”.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Ibid., p.18. Pál Náday (decidedly ironic) first two sentences can be related here: “The Jewish religion did not recognize asceticism. Its believer did all the more so.” Pál Náday, “Diogenes Párizsban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.51.

³⁴³ This moral basis enabled the mixing of the sense of special destiny and the sense of worthlessness in Jewish self-consciousness – in the same complex way solidarity and democratic ideals of belonging were combined with insistence on autonomy and individualism.

³⁴⁴ Fényes, “Erkölcstana” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.36.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p.41. In his contribution to the yearbook of 1942 titled “Az első író-próféta” (The First Writer-Prophet), Imre Benoschovsky constructed a narrative that propagated the basic values of Jewish ethics, prophetic religion and the ability to go beyond national confines. He argued that the just nature of God made him require just, merciful, humane behavior on Earth – more concretely, the divine anger was directed only at

Several authors presented the Jewish adherence to *truth* (2.) as their defining feature: Imre Benoschofsky maintained the unchanging Jewish yearning for homeland, the unending wanderings to find a “stable altar, house, homeland” were but “the search for truth”.³⁴⁶ Bertalan Hatvany wrote that “the people of Moses constituted neither a nation, nor a denomination. The people of Moses were the carrier of truth”.³⁴⁷ Hatvany also referred to the prodigious tenaciousness of Judaism which, “even after heavy mixing of races”, its followers continued to display.³⁴⁸ Thus, the special Jewish relation to truth could be discovered both in their ancient peoplehood and their diasporic form of existence. Truth was in fact presented in both instances as at the core of Jewish existence: while the Jewish people could be seen as its carriers, Jews in the Diaspora were untiringly looking to find it.

For József Farkas the primary object of exploration was neither Jewish peoplehood, nor the search for homeland, but the goals of liberation and salvation. The means of this though was similar to what Benoschofsky and Hatvany identified as so crucially important: the representation of truth without any compromises. Discussing Prophet Elia, Farkas voiced his conviction that his spirit had to fill all Jews since “liberation and

moral sin, the inhuman cruelty of Moab. His other basic choice of values was made when he declared that the prophetic religion rises above national religion in its great magnificence. Even though Fényes did not discuss ethics as a central question in his “Hagyomány és forradalom a zsidó nép történetében” (Tradition and Revolution in the History of the Jewish People), this article of his should be quoted as a counter-example to Benoschofsky’s. Here Fényes spoke of the mutuality of faith and nation: (when discussing the revolutionary power of Jewish religion, its sources and forms and the means of its domestication and as opposed to authors preferring universalism) he concluded that the two were inseparable in spiritual life. He wrote that “faith means dedication to a higher idea, and nation the sacred pulling of the totality of the people towards itself. The former turns towards the sky and the latter towards the earth of the homeland, but they keep the soul in a balanced state”. Mór Fényes, “Hagyomány és forradalom a zsidó nép történetében” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, pp. 128-9. We ought to add that Fényes did not formulate these statements with isolationist intentions. He stated, for example, that the Jewish people were connected to other ancient people. He also made apologetic types of statements about the Talmud such as “the wise of the Talmud live up to the demands modern people may pose towards religious ethic and that hinder the outbreak of revolutions.” Ibid., p.117.

³⁴⁶ Benoschofsky, “Áron” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.239.

³⁴⁷ Bertalan Hatvany, “Kínai és indiai zsidók” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.46. He added that the carriers of truth formed a nation once they “arrived in their own land.”

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p.54.

salvation shall be brought about not by those who hide the truth, who aim to paint ugly and repellent signs in a better light, but by those who explicitly point to it and condemn it.”³⁴⁹

Mózes Richtmann maintained that “we have to continue fighting for our truth which is also the truth for the whole humankind” and also expressed his trust in the higher meaning of historical existence: “the precise end and the exact length of historical struggles cannot be foreseen, but the struggle certainly has its goal”.³⁵⁰ Thus, instead of arguing for a concrete version of truth but similarly to Benoschofsky, Richtmann declared that the ultimate value would emerge directly out of the as yet seemingly incomprehensible historical process that shall be completed one day.

In addition to these two sources of defining Jewish values, other authors argued that it is *intellect and culture* (3.) that have a special and unusually large role in Jewish existence or are perhaps even central to defining its essence. There are some rather simple formulations of this special affinity: László Fenyő maintained, for instance, that “all the hopelessness of the past almost two millennia has not been enough to kill the yearning of the Jewish soul for higher intellectual horizons”,³⁵¹ while Ervin György Patai argued that “Jews have always been the people of the Book as well as education and intellectual culture throughout the centuries of landlessness”.³⁵² Similarly, Gyula Fodor claimed during his discussion of the life of Goldmark that “only one thing hurt him – and this was one of his characteristically Jewish traits – that he could not study what he wanted and as much as he desired”.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ József Farkas, “Élia próféta” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.205.

³⁵⁰ Richtmann, “Mendelssohn” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.99.

³⁵¹ László Fenyő, “Palágyi Lajos emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.134.

³⁵² Ervin György Patai, “Kultúrélet a Szentföldön” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.297.

³⁵³ Fodor, “Goldmark” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.265. Imre Keszi was another author who wrote extensively about Jewish intellectuality, and pointed to the important but partial role of this quality. Keszi believed that what distinguished Jewish spiritual reverence was its more reified nature. According to him, Jewish music was

Emil Roth articulated the cultural historical concept of the people of the Book (which, as we shall soon see, could be developed into an ahistorical concept) in greater detail than Patai in his “Zsidó könyvek, zsidó sorsok” (Jewish books, Jewish fates). Roth connected it to the ideas of Jewish mission and service. He declared, rather categorically, that “Jewish history is one with the history of the Jewish book and writing”³⁵⁴ and that “whoever chooses the book, escapes the sword. It seems our fate is to be endlessly engaged [*örök jegyesség*] with the Book”.³⁵⁵ Roth also used a more historicizing formulation to apply this ahistorical notion to the present: according to him, “the education of three thousand years” had its impact, and this is the reason why the “sons of the people of the Book” were “to such a significant extent workers and supporters of writing, of books” in the present.³⁵⁶ Besides formulating a direct analogy between Jewry and the book (“Jewry and the book both imply service and mission”³⁵⁷), Roth quoted the idea of “salvation through service” as their hallmark of distinction: “we are distinguished not only by our special rite or by Jewish expressions, but through performing redemptive service.”³⁵⁸

Those who argued that the large role played by the intellect among Jews constituted something valuable did not manage to create a consensus around their thesis.³⁵⁹ In his “Tragikum az agádában”, Mór Fényes built his stance around a paradox: he maintained that the most characteristically Jewish cultural tragedy was “being deluded through religious

Eastern by origin, but it evolved into a conglomerate of various elements. Jewish artistic products were clearly intellectualized to the extent that they consisted of abstract formulas, though were built through what Keszi referred to as “associative logic”. Imre Keszi, “A zsidó zene vallási funkciója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.215.

³⁵⁴ Emil Roth, “Zsidó könyvek, zsidó sorsok” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.156.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.165.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.172.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.173.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173. Roth also believed that what made writers and books specifically Jewish was that they contained something of “the ancient mission” and displayed signs of “inner trouble caused by holy dissatisfaction.”

³⁵⁹ There were even several small remarks that questioned the validity of the thesis: for instance, Gyula Mérei talked of the Wahrmann family “entering the path of intellectual life through Christian culture” Mérei, “Wahrmann” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.314.

doctrines”.³⁶⁰ The prime example he took was the case of Akiba who wanted to approach the divine light through what Fényes called *intellectus dei* and had to tragically suffer for it. However, his tragic self-deception and subsequent punishment were not presented as absolutely negative, but rather appeared as organic parts of the divine plan. Fényes reiterated the thesis that, after all, the tragedy of the Jewish people was supposed to contribute to their future catharsis and ultimately also to complete fulfillment.

In his “Zsidók és a képzőművészet” (Jews and Fine Arts) Ernő Naményi opted for a balance between the two guiding principles of intellect and life. Discussing the question of the appropriate relation between religion and art, he maintained that (in order to avoid its separation from life) religion cannot do without the support of art.³⁶¹ He thought that non-practicing Jews should be won back to religion, but that this could be achieved only through certain changes: the aesthetic poverty experienced by observant Jews was a cause for worry and urgent action.³⁶²

This idea of filling religion with more life leads us to our fourth and fifth themes, discourses that highlight the concept of *life* (4.) and those that propagate the importance of Jewish adaptation and loyalty. In “Visszaemlékezések az első magyar zsidó kongresszusra” (Remembrances of the First Hungarian Jewish Congress), László Bakonyi expressed his belief that the exceptional power and duration of religion was due its special adaptability. Bakonyi aimed to balance between what he saw as exaggerated stiffness and excessive flexibility. Forms, “ancient, essential” forms were irreplaceable bases of religion. At the same time, he thought people should realize that “forms have lives of their own. They

³⁶⁰ Mór Fényes, “Tragikum az agádában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.233.

³⁶¹ Beyond this, Ödön Gerő emphasized that the symbolism of Jewry was “not fantastic but speculative”. Ödön Gerő, “Magyar-Mannheimer Gusztáv” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.117. Even though Jewry was not as such iconoclastic, it did not depict or try to embody metaphysical concepts.

³⁶² Ernő Naményi, “Zsidók és a képzőművészet” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, pp.143-4.

develop and get adjusted to circumstances. The survival of Jewry is due to its adaptation to life, while it remains dedicated to the essence of its ancient beliefs.”³⁶³ Here the discourse on essential features and the stress on change, which are (at least in theory) opposed to each other, went together. Mihály Guttman argued in favor of a similar reconciliation in his “Hagyomány és élet” (Tradition and Life). His chief concern was “how it was possible, or whether it was admissible to create a synthesis between tradition and life?”³⁶⁴ Guttman, in spite of calling religion an “indivisible and unified whole” and referring to its fundamental role in preserving Jewry in times of its severe persecution, went on to propagate the close linking of tradition and life. He asserted that the existence of a strong connection between the two was a “lasting principle of religion which assures its sustenance over time”.³⁶⁵

Sámuel Löwinger, while admitting that the outside world (the Greeks in particular) had a major influence on Jews, suggested that Jewry was essentially an independent entity. In “Hagyományos irodalmunk fejlődése a görög-zsidó kultúrkapcsolatok tükrében” (The Development of our Traditional Literature in the Mirror of Greek-Jewish Cultural Relations), Löwinger discussed the partly Jewish (as in religion, ethics and social views) and partly Greek (as in science, literature, philosophy and art) fundament of Western civilization.³⁶⁶ He employed a discourse that drew heavily on the ideals of culture and life,

³⁶³ Bakonyi, “Visszaemlékezés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.264. On the general level, the author claimed that “true culture cannot ever be opposed to true cult. The enemy of faith is never knowledge, but faithlessness.” Ibid., p.263. At the end of his first report from 1935, Fülöp Grünwald stressed that Jewry possessed a respectable level of “life force” and ability to resist. He added in dramatic fashion (but which was meant to show his confidence) that this is why Jews shall not die in accordance with the promises of the last Prophet. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az 5694. és 5695. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.322. Two years later (in 1937), Grünwald referred to the “eternally unchanging fate of Jewry”, but still affirmed (with some conviction and a rather moderate level of trust in the future) that “eternal wandering and struggle: this characterizes Jewish fate in our days too. We need to constantly defend ourselves, but we are prepared to stand the fight”. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. 5697” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.284 and p.307.

³⁶⁴ Mihály Guttman, “Hagyomány és élet” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.10.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p.21.

³⁶⁶ He used the words *nyugati kultúra* but I decided to render it as Western civilization since this is much more customary in English.

maintaining that the thoroughly special feature of Jewish culture was that it not only produced cultural values, but also assured that they would remain “fresh” and “alive”. His main claim in this respect was that Judaism “was not a rigid religion of law, even if it often tends to be characterized as such, but a living organism.”³⁶⁷

Several authors were keen on emphasizing the outstanding *adaptation and loyalty* (5.) of Jews. Gyula Gábor argued that “Jews have adapted to their environment, and were ready and eager to borrow habits from others. They have <<assimilated>> already in ancient times, to use a contemporary term.”³⁶⁸ A number of references to Jewish adaptation served to highlight the unshakable loyalty of Jews. Aladár Fürst wrote that “Rabbi Akiba Eger was a loyal son of king and country, just as every truly religious soul is”.³⁶⁹ Bertalan Hatvany made a similarly general statement on the reliability and positive role of Jews: “Jews might be planted into any soil or culture and they shall always prove useful and trustworthy members of society and the nation. They will unfailingly enrich their land with their diligent work”.³⁷⁰

In his “A magyar zsidóság harca az emancipációért” (The Struggle of Hungarian Jewry for Emancipation) published in 1940, Ernő Ballagi felt he needed to make special efforts to stress that Jewish ambitions were not of a peculiar nature and could not be considered independently of the evolution of the entire society. He concluded that “Jewry always wanted to have its rights recognized within the frames of general liberties and never asked for special treatment...”³⁷¹ Writing these thoughts down in the Hungarian Jewish scholarly yearbook of 1940, Ballagi obviously sought to contest ill-intended claims that

³⁶⁷ Löwinger, “Hagyományos” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.44.

³⁶⁸ Gyula Gábor, “Római kori zsidó emlékek Magyarországon” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.151.

³⁶⁹ Aladár Fürst, “R. Éger Akiba”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.180.

³⁷⁰ Hatvany, “Kínai” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.54.

³⁷¹ Ernő Ballagi, “A magyar zsidóság harca az emancipációért”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.166.

circulated widely in the outside world, such as the concept of *térfoglalás*, which literally means conquest of space, but which directly implied that Jewish social mobility was achieved and economic wealth accumulated at the expense of other groups.³⁷²

Ideas on *the eternal core, the unchanging essence* (6.) of Jewry offer an alternative to the aforementioned thesis on Jewish flexibility and adaptability and they lead us to consider the various takes on the question of historicity. István Hahn, for instance, wrote of strong Jewish roots, which to him meant that seemingly destructive trends could also enrich Jewry and at best might even be understood as contributions to the further crystallization of Jewish thought. His confident, optimistic attitude made him trust in the Jewish victory over time and utter the quote from prophet Isaiah: “the holy tribe shall remain forever”.³⁷³ Sámuel Krausz fulminated when he addressed the legendary prestige of the Abyssinian royal family which included a part about the reception of the Ark of the Covenant: “what nonsense! We have not handed over our legacy to anyone and no one can replace us as long as we exist”. He added that “divine providence promised us eternal life.”³⁷⁴ Next to Hahn and Krausz, Aladár Fürst also argued that the travel writings of *Múlt és Jövő* not only provided geographical and folkloristic data, but were always based on the idea of “Jewish unity” and aimed to spread the conviction that “the essence of Jewry is the same everywhere”.³⁷⁵ While there were overlaps in personnel and ideas between the *IMIT*

³⁷² Some year earlier, Jenő Mohácsi tried to illuminate another facet of the same problematic (i.e. of whether Jews were generally useful or looked only after their own interests and cared for their own values): he saw in Jews’ dedicated service of values, irrespective of their origin and originators, one of their most characteristic and respectable traits. He wrote namely that “their service of great causes shows the nobility of humans. To be Jewish means precisely this, among others: the recognition of greatness and the willingness to support talent and genius”. Jenő Mohácsi, “Az ember tragédiája és a zsidók” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, pp. 100-1.

³⁷³ István Hahn, “Zsidó szekták a talmudi korban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.283.

³⁷⁴ Sámuel Krausz, “Sába királynője és az abesszín királylegenda” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, pp. 44-5.

³⁷⁵ Aladár Fürst, “A <<Múlt és Jövő>> jubileumára” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.211. In the course of his general characterization of *Múlt és Jövő*, Fürst claimed that its appearance was not merely a literary event, but also a “moral victory” and a “truly Jewish deed”. Ibid., p.203. He praised *Múlt és Jövő* further by stating that it

yearbooks and *Múlt és Jövő* (see Chapter V), its platform was not exactly identical to the official agenda of IMIT. Fürst, however, saw no reason to dispute this platform - he quoted the idea without any critical comments or further reflections.³⁷⁶

In his “Hellénizmus a zsidóságban” (The Role of Hellenism for Jewry), Bertalan Kohlbach accepted as a historical description that “for approximately a thousand years, beginning in the times of Alexander the Great and lasting until the rise of Jewish-Arab scholarship, the great intellectual culture of Hellas found refuge in the tents of Semitic Jews. What is more, in the fields of philosophy and exact sciences this has already lasted for another millennium”.³⁷⁷ The reminder of this influence was meant to highlight how receptive Jews were and what extraordinary potential for renewal they possessed. “Neither Hellenism nor Islam, the Renaissance, nor the thought of the 18th and 19th centuries impacted the Jewish truth in a harmful manner,”³⁷⁸ wrote Kohlbach, explaining that this was due to the fact that

presented (as opposed to merely declaring the intention to create) Jewish culture. Ultimately, this journal contributed to the raising of a “more self-conscious generation” and helped create a “healthier and happier future” through releasing issues that made people “love what is beautiful and noble in Jewry, Jewry itself”, Ibid., p.204., 218. On the scale of identity options analyzed in the previous chapter, Fürst would have positioned this journal close to one of its ends: it was a “flagship of the Jewish renaissance as well as of building up of the Holy Land” and propagated the values of Jewish culture with “Hungarian words and a patriotic heart”. Ibid., p.218.

³⁷⁶ So much so that members of the Patai family made numerous contributions to the IMIT yearbooks (the details of which are analyzed in the next chapter). Edith Patai submitted a novel offering a panorama of life in the Yishuv to the novel writing competition of IMIT. It was assessed as the best out of eleven entries – but ultimately the prize was not given out. Her work even received some rather unfavorable assessment: “it occasionally creates the impression of being a naively optimistic, propagandistic description of a journey”. “Jelentés az IMIT regénypályázatáról” in IMIT évkönyv, 1936, p.343. Edith Patai Ehrenfeld (1889–1976) was the wife of József Patai. The committee was headed by Tamás Kóbor, its five other members were Lajos Dénes, Miklós Hajdú, Aladár Komlós, Sámuel Löwinger and Samu Szemere.

³⁷⁷ Bertalan Kohlbach, “Hellénizmus a zsidóságban” in IMIT évkönyv, 1940, p.206. On the topic of Jewish Hellenism, there is Yaacov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem. Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew* (London: Littman, 1999).

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p.212. The discussion Mihály Guttman offered of the Talmud (even though he employed the concept of life in a prominent way elsewhere) reached the conclusion that Jewish fate (by which he practically meant the history of persecution) transcended the fate of Talmud and (misfortunately) acted as its regulator: “Jewish fate directed the assessments, condemnations and falsifications of the Talmud”. Mihály Guttman, “A Talmud sorsa” in IMIT évkönyv, 1934, p.25.

while Jews were ready to accept values wherever they found them, their reception was principled and thus eminently selective.

As opposed to the concept of life the way it was employed by Löwinger (quoted above, implying that Jewry was a living organism and therefore flexible), in 1943 István Hahn pointed to the existence of a strict border never to be crossed. He asserted that there was not a single Jewish mass movement in denial of Jewish laws and stated on the normative level that such a movement can never emerge. Laws were meant to bring Jews together, and as “internally felt and voluntarily performed duties”, they also constituted the backbone of their carriers, the Jewish people.³⁷⁹ Here again Hahn formulated strongly ahistorical views on the Jewish spirit, calling it original, special, eternal and unchanging.³⁸⁰

One step away from these strongly ahistorical notions we find authors who believed that Jews had, even if not completely, *largely unchanging* qualities (7.). Their main idea was that Jews managed to remain largely unimpacted and almost independent of historical changes. This made them significantly or, as in some formulations, even essentially different from other peoples. A simple example of this is Lajos Blau’s praise of the power of conservation he believed Jews possessed to an exceptional degree. A “wonderful example” of this was how Jews, uniquely among the people of the world, preserved ancient expressions intact in their vocabulary.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ István Hahn, “A törvény vallása” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.173.

³⁸⁰ More concretely, he wrote that the Jewish heart was eternally pulsating, polemical and logically searching for the truth.

³⁸¹ Lajos Blau, “A Talmud mint az ókori keleti élet tükre” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.32. Sámuel Löwinger quoted Blau’s discussion of the border between ahistorical and historical types of understanding. He claimed that there was an unchanging Jewish essence, but did refer to the historical horizon too when he spoke of the unaltered form and use of basic, defining documents that had characterized Jews for three and a half millennia. In the course of his argumentation, he considered it legitimate to declare in an essentialist manner that “the being of the Jews was conservative” (*zsidó lényének konzervativizmusa* in the original). Sámuel Löwinger, “Dr. Blau Lajos élete és irodalmi munkássága” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.35. A basic Jewish principle Blau used (and

Some authors sought to identify the reasons behind this intriguing phenomenon of longevity. Their perception was that Jews were to a large extent culturally autonomous and developed special, enduring contents (going way beyond the level of individuals while directly shaping them). The complex and somewhat peculiar ideas of József Turóczi-Trostler merit a more elaborate discussion here. For instance, in his article on Stefan Zweig he addressed not only what he saw as Zweig's Jewish specificities but also maintained that they were directly derived from his Jewish origins. "Due to his origins, Zweig had a naturally impressionistic <<tuning>>, but also a more excited soul and a more unsolvable thirst for culture as well as more limitless possibilities of drawing on collective memory",³⁸² he wrote. On the other hand, Turóczi-Trostler believed that from the sociological point of view, Zweig was the "purest representative of the assimilating type".³⁸³ Another example is his attempt to articulate the defining features of Jakob Wassermann. He perceived Wassermann as an author for whom his Germanness played a dominant role, but Jewishness also constituted an "ineradicable and undeniable" legacy. Thus, "no matter how faint the acting power of his Jewishness was, with its few historical signs it still managed to decisively intervene in his fate".³⁸⁴

Löwinger evoked) affirmed that "a mere spot of ink of tradition is worth more than the sharp mind of the inkstand". Ibid., p.34.

³⁸² József Turóczi-Trostler, "Stefan Zweig (Szellem és forma)" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.79.

³⁸³ Ibid., pp. 94-5. "He was born Jewish and remained so till the day of his death. He considered his Jewishness a natural form, but never exhibited it ostentatiously, the way healthy people are not showing off their health" and "thought it was a self-evident fact that he felt, thought, spoke and wrote in German". Ibid., p.94.

³⁸⁴ József Turóczi-Trostler, "A zsidó-német irodalmi kapcsolatok kérdéséhez" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.285. He wrote that, once Wassermann managed to find a stable position, his Germanness played a dominant role for him, while his Jewishness meant no more to him than a "fruitful and controlling climate". Ibid., p.286. Elsewhere Turóczi-Trostler argued that Wassermann's works were German based on their language, form and content, but their blood and rhythm made them Jewish. "His impressions as well as the images in his memory were German, but the structure of his talent to remember was part of his Jewish legacy", he wrote. József Turóczi-Trostler, "Jakob Wassermann" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p. 162. Lenke Steiner spoke of a similar duality when she discussed Adolf Ágai: while Ágai "dreamt the dream" of assimilation and "walked down his Hungarian road without the least doubt and oscillation" and his subjects barely related to his Jewishness, his voice gave away much more of his deeply felt Jewishness. Lenke Steiner, "Ágai Adolf" in *IMIT évkönyv*,

Turóczi-Trostler also formulated some generalizations about history: “it is certain that the development of the Jewish spirit in Europe always points in the same direction, leading from obscurity towards reason and the clarity of geometric order”.³⁸⁵ The presupposition of such teleology of history was however in contradiction with his observation made in the same article that Jews played an important role in turning the world irrational again. In his view, a marked tendency towards re-irrationalization among Jews was observable in the philosophy of Bergson, as well as in the active Jewish participation in the impressionist and expressionist movements.³⁸⁶ He believed this Jewish role to be so widespread that among Austrian Jewish writers there were an even greater number of “irrationally tuned” ones than consistently rational ones. Arguing against a form of essentialization here (while maintaining that the Jewish spirit had its independent and pre-designed trajectory³⁸⁷), Turóczi-Trostler asserted that thus the “legend of the original rationalism of Jews deserves to be discarded”. In sum, Jewry was not inherently rational, nor was it evidently rational in the present, but his belief in the teleology of history still seemed to assure him that one day it would become completely rational.

1936, p.215. Steiner’s hierarchical interpretative scheme is even clearer in her discussion of Tamás Kóbor, where she argued that Kóbor’s horizon broadened and became as wide as possible but in order to get there he first had to “reach the deepest layer of his soul, the experience of his Jewishness to see societal oppositions and urban moral decay in a new light”. Lenke Steiner, “Kóbor Tamás” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.113. In her presentation, the developmental path of Kóbor led him out of the ghetto, but the world in his fiction, his sensitivity, wandering instincts, desires and passions were “decidedly” and “fatally” Jewish. *Ibid.*, p.119.

³⁸⁵ Trostler, “Zweig” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.96.

³⁸⁶ This was in tune with the observations of Imre Benoschofsky, already quoted in the previous chapter on religious rebirth in the late 1930s: “flat rationalism prospered only shortly among Jews. We are thirsty for the solace and happiness religion offers”. Imre Benoschofsky, “A zsidó vallás és a racionalizmus” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.132.

³⁸⁷ In 1942, Turóczi-Trostler again took a stance in favor of distinguishing Jewish and non-Jewish phenomena. He proposed that there were major differences between phenomena “below the surface level”, and argued that non-Jews were determined by the combination of possessing physical homes, the “safety of the atmosphere” but feeling spiritually homeless, while Jews felt lonely and deserted in the world but had a metaphysical form of assurance. Trostler, “Zweig” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.98. Earlier he stressed that the fundamental Jewish experience was “the vision of unity” and the consequent sense of its split and wounded present state. He asserted that the eternal Jewish vision, the timeless Jewish demand was of restored, renewed unity. Trostler, “Wassermann” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.167.

In spite of the different agendas of these articles and the different counter-positions they spoke to, what is common to all of them is Turóczi-Trostler's questioning of what he saw as rationalist wishful thinking and its suppositions of Jewish rationality. At the same time, he emphasized the unusually great relevance of Jewish origins, legacies and collective memory. Jewishness was something more profound and intuitively graspable, something deeper than what could be easily observed on the surface level of history. Jewishness was a lasting and often decisive quality: it was situated within history, but appeared almost permanent.³⁸⁸

Somewhat similarly to Turóczi-Trostler, Erzsébet Szenes wrote of essential differences that were only accessible through intuition. She believed that the characters of the Bible were still alive in the "blood" of Else Lasker-Schüler since she was a Jewess with "connection to Jewry from ancient times. Her music is in the German language, but coming from her mouth even the Germanic language resembles that of a Biblical, Semitic princess".³⁸⁹ Károly Sebastyén in turn wrote that Rahel Verhagen was decidedly Jewish: her fanatical love of truth and her optimistic soul and instinct of life made her one. Sebastyén maintained that without receiving Jewish education in her youth, Verhagen would still choose to become a conscious Jewess whose Jewishness ultimately provided "a synopsis for all that oppressed, beset and hurt her".³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ I shall return to Turóczi-Trostler in Chapter VI to highlight another aspect of his writings. Here I have focused on his ideas on the profound influence of Jewish qualities and its unusual power of being inherited. However, the subchapter titled "Models of Jewish Culture" looks at his exploration of interactions and mutual influences in modern times (what might be called his multiculturalist conception of culture).

³⁸⁹ Erzsébet Szenes, "Else Lasker-Schüler" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.248. To Szenes, it seemed as if Lasker-Schüler had appeared in the world of German lyric straight out of the land of Bible – the "rhythm of her speech" was "Biblical," her "verbal ornaments" of "Oriental kinds." In sum, Schüler was an even more decidedly Jewish phenomenon than Heine. At the same time, Szenes declared that next to Ricarda Huch, she was "the most excellent modern German female poet" and "richer, more original and artistic" than "any other female lyricist in world literature". Ibid., p.253.

³⁹⁰ Károly Sebastyén, "A zsidóság története levelekben" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, pp. 57-8.

These notions of “intuitively felt inheritances” postulated some kind of mystical Jewishnesses and would have been difficult to verify empirically. As such, they were also directly challenged by other authors: those who maintained that historical changes were of little significance and that Jews had a core that remained largely unimpacted by time or other peoples, had to negotiate their vision, among others, with Lajos Venetianer.³⁹¹ Ernő Winkler described his *ars historica* in the yearbook of 1935 thus: Venetianer considered the theses on origins and originality highly questionable and he assured his readers that “no group preserved” its original religious expressions.³⁹² Moreover, he asserted that “the phenomenon of interactions and compromises” provide the most important data to comprehend the spirit of the masses as it gets manifested throughout the history of religion.³⁹³ These claims questioned the notions of unchanging Jewish nature or almost unchanged survival of Jewish character traits.

They also lead us to the proponents of the *historicity* of Jews (8.) in IMIT, who argued that Jews led a historical existence and were thus being exposed to changes. Others (and this was a more common approach) wrote of Jewish historical existence but aimed to reconcile it with their ideas on Jews’ holiness, their embodiment of the spirit of the Holy Script or the notion of a unitary Jewish tradition (which logical and organic historical evolution would not alter, let alone undermine). When the aims of the Jewish Museum were at stake, Ödön Gerő argued that “we are a historical people, not least because history is sacred to us.”³⁹⁴ Ernő Munkácsi sought to combine the discourses on Jewish equality and exceptionality: he wanted to prove that “we have our own past, our own history and tradition.

³⁹¹ As mentioned in Chapter I, Venetianer published his apologetic history of Hungarian Jewry shortly after the White Terror and the numerous clauses.

³⁹² Ernő Winkler, “Venetianer Lajos” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.238.

³⁹³ Ibid., pp.237-8.

³⁹⁴ “Gerő Ödön emlékbeszéde Perlmutter Izsákról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.286.

What is more, our history and tradition are the oldest of all those that still exert real force and continue to inspire human civilization”.³⁹⁵ A year later, Munkácsi reiterated his belief that it was necessary to apply historical notions to comprehend Jewish existence: “our religion leads us to a historical conception of the world”, he declared.³⁹⁶ In his eyes, the specialty of Jewish fate was that the history of Jewish suffering (the “blood of martyrs”) revealed the “path of development.” Thus, the character of the known events (in Koselleckian terms the Jewish *Erfahrungsraum*) and the basic structure and dynamic (akin to *Erwartungshorizont*) were separated from each other. Munkácsi indeed tried to square the circle and synthesize *Leidensgeschichte* and a progressivist version of history: according to his presentation, recurrent suffering did not have to contradict the notion of progress. In fact, it was meant to justify it.

Pál Hirschler in his “A zsidó messianizmus” (Jewish Messianism) accepted that Judaism allowed great liberty to its practitioners as far as secondary matters were concerned, and confirmed that it did not develop its theological system. He nevertheless argued that there were basic tenets of the Jewish faith that could be accessed through knowledge of Jewish history since the spirit of Jewish history was in unity and harmony with the Bible.³⁹⁷ Hirschler asserted that core Jewish beliefs concerned historical facts rather than abstract principles. He explicitly affirmed his historical conviction that “God shall be king in Israel, will have his chosen and commissioned servant who will lead his people according to his divine will”.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ “Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum. Igazgatósági jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.344.

³⁹⁶ “Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum. Igazgatósági jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.354.

³⁹⁷ Pál Hirschler, “A zsidó messianizmus” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.94.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.89. He wrote accordingly that the messianic concepts of the Talmudic Age “expected salvation on Earth”. *Ibid.*, p.91. What is more, he pointed to the longer vintage of this tradition: he showed that ideas on rebirth of the people of Israel and messianic expectations were already connected when Jews were still captives in Babylonia.

His main claim was that the kind of strong belief which was necessary in the present times could only be that of historical Jewry.³⁹⁹ Hirschler explained that the previously dominant liberalism put its hopes in progress instead of salvation, and thus neglected what was truly essential: the work of God. Hirschler added that in the meantime, modern historical development anyway took a new turn that was wholly unpredicted by liberal conceptions.⁴⁰⁰ In the same yearbook of 1941, Bernát Heller argued that the prophetic tradition was unified and developed logically in time: the most characteristically prophetic teachings of different prophets “were identical or show the natural, evolutionary historical path”, he wrote.⁴⁰¹ In these two usages, the term history was practically identical in meaning to truth already imparted in the past or, in other words, the valuable elements of tradition. True knowledge of it was supposed to defend Jews against the danger of uncontrolled change.

In these texts the need to turn to historical realities and the vision of future perfection were both articulated without reference to potential contradictions between them. Other texts gave clear expression to the *utopian mission* of Jewry or pointed to the centrality of *Messianic thought* (9.). In 1941, Mór Fényes stressed that Jews had an activist and utopian attitude towards history. He distinguished this stance from what he called the “Eastern way” of clinging to the idea of salvation in a rather dispirited fashion. According to this text, Jews “trusted the ability of the human soul to act and restrain itself and thereby bring the world closer to the state of fraternity, peace, perfection and holiness.”⁴⁰²

Zsigmond Groszmann articulated perhaps the most peculiar version of religious utopianism. He merged it with concrete, this-worldly, political plans. In this

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p.97.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., pp.96-7.

⁴⁰¹ Bernát Heller, “Prófétáink” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.15.

⁴⁰² Mór Fényes, “A Tízige” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.141.

interpretation, there were four basic Jewish “articles of faith”: the existence of the protector of Israel, the recovery of humanity, the victory of humaneness and the coming of the merry age of Greater Hungary.⁴⁰³ Here the belief in transcendence and utopian expectations were quoted in the same breath with the recovery from the severe and general crisis. Original harmony would reemerge through the fulfillment of a universalistically Jewish and the triumph of an explicitly Hungarian (and secular) irredentism.

More conventionally Messianic ideas were also formulated in IMIT that belong to the reconstruction of the implicit debate on the relevance, shape and contents of Jewish history. One of the authors writing in this vein was József M. Grózinger, for whom the love of God, strong as it was among Jews, meant a continuous drive to “approach and realize Messianic tasks that emerge through divine correlation”.⁴⁰⁴ Ervin György Patai (who later used the first name Rafael, which he also spelled as Raphael) went as far as to declare that “Jewish history in the Galuth is a continuous chain of Messianic movements.”⁴⁰⁵ To him, the Jewish belief in the coming of the Messiah was an “inextinguishable volcano”. Through these movements the Jewish people and the “emotional force present in their collective soul” sought to take central stage.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, Messianic movements could simultaneously appear as phenomena typical of the Galuth and as historical events that justified speaking of the continuous and unified history of the Jewish people so central to both the Zionist conceptions of history and its political agenda.

Last, but not least, there is the cluster of discourses that formulated the perception of some stark contrast between the animosity and ill intentions of the outside

⁴⁰³ Groszmann, “Mezei” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.208.

⁴⁰⁴ József M. Grózinger, “A filozófiai kriticismus zsidó képviselői” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.205. Approaching is different from teomorphistic assimilation and unification as well as from a pantheistic form of unity.

⁴⁰⁵ Ervin György Patai, “Sabbatai Zevi alakja a modern zsidó irodalomban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.253.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p.284.

world towards Jews and specifically Jewish features or some forms of Jewish essence. In their more elaborate forms, these discourses attempted to provide a holistic interpretation of the Jewish condition. One of the simple and pure versions of them can be found in the 1940 report of the Jewish Museum where Munkácsi argued that “the mistakes that were considered the sins of Jews in fact did not emerge out of the Jewish essence, out of the ethical fundament of Jewry, but were diametrically opposed to it.”⁴⁰⁷ Already in the year IMIT was relaunched, Ödön Gerő emphasized that there was a wide gap between the roles the outside world forced on Jews (through excluding them from others) and their inner and collective needs: “economic, business-like thinking was forced on Jews, but Jewry was never maintained by its businessmen but by its daydreamers.”⁴⁰⁸

Mátyás Rubinstein also pointed to the dramatic difference between Jewish cultural content and intentions and the distorted reception and aggressive reactions of the outside world in his study “Az ember értéke a zsidó gondolkodásban” (The Value of Man in Jewish Thinking). “Who would have guessed that this law which proves the selfless and noble love of humanity that Israel cherished, would become the object of ill-intended attacks; who would have guessed that this tradition which taught love to Israel and to the world at large, would be held as a weapon of hatred against it?”⁴⁰⁹, he asked in 1940. In his conception, Israel fulfilled a universal priestly mission. Being the chosen people did not mean superiority, but rather implied motivation to elevate others through the Jewish clarity of

⁴⁰⁷ “Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.339. The President of IMIT, Wertheimer also referred to what he considered one of the constant characteristics of Jewish history: he believed that József Kiss “senses in our own days the tragedy that our race and denomination had to suffer throughout its showery millennia, even when they felt completely amalgamated with the receiving nations, the ideals, interests and traditions of peoples”. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.316. It is interesting that Wertheimer here referred to Jews as a race, but (based on the evidence we have) would not have accepted its categorization as a people (*nép*).

⁴⁰⁸ Ödön Gerő, “Kóbor Tamásról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.46.

⁴⁰⁹ Mátyás Rubinstein, “Az ember értéke a zsidó gondolkodásban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.190.

vision and cognition and thereby serve as “the light of humanity.”⁴¹⁰ Rubinstein combined the idea of universality with a(n unusual) stress on the importance of proselytization: he quoted the passage of the Talmud where Rabbi Eliezer claimed that the Almighty specifically scattered Jewish people around the world in order to “make proselytes join them”⁴¹¹ – though such attempts were solely educational and, as they aimed to enlighten, they always showed proper respect for free will.

Bertalan Edelstein seemed genuinely puzzled at what he identified as Jewish character traits when he wrote that Jews possesses special power and could remain confident. “How much power and confidence do we see [...] in such a weak, deeply divided, powerless people who even lack unifying frames”, he wrote.⁴¹² Edelstein felt that the stubbornness and firmness of the Jewish moral character was most amazing: “no animalistic cruelty can kill the Jewish belief in the victory of what is good, just and loving”.⁴¹³ The contrast he expressed in this article could hardly be any sharper: the experience of animosity and violence gave birth to a diametrically opposed Jewish reaction, it led namely to idealism and utopianism.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p.195.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p.197. Bertalan Hatvany expressed similar ideas in his study “Kínai és indiai zsidók”. He maintained that it was “solely due to its religious aspect that Jewry, if not oppressed, is still able to turn foreign races into carriers of Jewishness”. He added that such an impact can only be fully exerted in “the infinitely tolerant atmosphere of Hinduism”. Hatvany, “Kínai” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.49.

⁴¹² Bertalan Edelstein, “A külföldi zsidóság története a háború utáni évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.298.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p.336.

⁴¹⁴ In a passage characteristic of his writing, Edelstein elaborated further on this observation: “The life of Jews around the world consists of struggles and hoping. The suffering, oppression, misfortune and injustice that impact them either here or there and sometimes all the time, should fill them with the darkest pessimism. Nevertheless, the basic nature, religion and cast of mind of Jews make them optimists, full of confidence and positive expectations towards the improvement of their own fate and the future in general. They hope for the reconciliation of the whole of humanity, the calming down of passions and the shared work of peoples and religions in the interest of each other and of humanity. Jewry demands a share of this work as it is a part of cultured humanity that battles for ideas, maintains ideals and enthuses for what is beautiful and true.” Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5690. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.308. In another of his reports he contrasted the hatred of Jews to the stance taken by the (non-Jewish part of the) best of humanity: “The best of humanity are on our side, our wound hurts them too; blind hatred is an offense not only to us, but to the sacred teachings of religion and humanity”, he wrote in reaction to the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, on the pages of what turned out to be his last report. Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5692. és 5693. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.247. Beyond this, the topoi of culture and loyalty both appear in his texts in forms such as “every [Jewish] strata share the aspiration to

One of Aladár Komlós' noteworthy contributions to IMIT (his ideas are discussed at some length in Chapter VII), titled "Kiss József emlékezete, vagy: A zsidó költő és a dicsőség" (The Memory of József Kiss, or: The Jewish Poet and Glory), was built on a similar contrast, but he developed it from the opposite end. His critical approach suggested that already as a child Kiss must have known that "to be a Jew even in the village of Serke meant to be a second class creature."⁴¹⁵ Komlós contrasted his "Jewish fate", practically the incomprehension, stigmatization and rejection that surrounded him and made him bitter with the supposedly impartial and therefore redeeming assessment of his artistic accomplishments. Komlós went on to argue that "József Kiss was assigned a Jewish fate even in immortality, but fortunately poetic beauty has no religion and thus we can rest assured about the future of his poetry."⁴¹⁶ In this text, Komlós employed the notion of Jewish fate (presented as unchanging, even as unchangeable by Jews in their present-day environments such as Hungary) to evoke the hostility of the outside world, while the idea of the higher realm of art was offered to show that treasures temporarily unrecognized due to this hostility would surely be preserved and can count on well-deserved appreciation in the future.

By 1941, the thesis on the unchanging martyrdom of Jews took precedence over the historicist accounts of the "Golden Age" of Hungarian Jewry, as in Pál Vidor's recourse to the classic topoi of Jewish *Leidensgeschichte*: "to be Jewish has always meant wearing the crown of martyrs. To some extent it meant martyrdom even in those old and happy days the return of which we nowadays so often cry after",⁴¹⁷ he wrote. Ideas on the continuity of suffering and a row of historical experiences that revealed the almost

become cultured and be loyal citizens of the state". Bertalan Edelstein, "Az 5689. év" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.284.

⁴¹⁵ Komlós, "Kiss" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.50.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 71-2.

⁴¹⁷ Pál Vidor, "Kiss Arnold" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, 62.

completely hopeless nature of Jewish historical existence were in contrast to what Vidor considered the most essential aspect of Jewry, namely that “no matter what, we are the people of the prophets” and this obligated Jews to recognize certain truths and behave in certain ways.⁴¹⁸

Although most authors focused on one of these ten themes in their attempts to describe the distinguishing or even essential traits of being Jewish, some articles aimed to combine several themes. In some cases, no single value emerged as paramount. Ferenc Hevesi, for instance, stressed the parallel role of ethics and intellect, combining two of the basic values I outline above. In his “Maimuni és Aristoteles” he elaborated an ahistorical version of the often evoked contrast between Greeks and Jews. He wrote of an unchanging opposition between alternative types of thinking, and declared that the “eternal type” of Greek thinking was “the explanation of the world in physical and mechanical terms” (as in Aristotle), while “intellectual and ethical perspectives” were central to Jewish thought (as in Maimonides).⁴¹⁹

One of József Turóczi-Trostler’s (previously not quoted) articles was published under the title “A zsidó-német irodalmi kapcsolatok kérdéséhez” (On the Question of Jewish-German Literary Connections) and argued for the crucial relevance of ethics, but also presented a critical perspective on the exceptionally important role of the intellect in Jewish life. The same article offered a balance between contemporanist and ahistorical ideas: on the question of Jewish form he asserted that order “is a timeless ideal but it can acquire

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p.77.

⁴¹⁹ Ferenc Hevesi, “Maimuni és Aristoteles” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.30. He called *micva* the basis and essence of Judaism and added that “the task of true believers” was “to hope and believe that what God does leads to the best results”.

topical relevance in any moment of time”.⁴²⁰ Above all else, he saw in Jews ethically serious people close to the Almighty, but considered their excessive intellectual orientation and biases a part of their character flaws. Due to the latter, he believed the Jewish prototype stood “closer to the realm of the intellect (*szellem*) than to reality” – and all its actual current versions were still connected to this original type.⁴²¹ His sharp critique of intellectualism becomes all the more obvious in his evaluation of the modern age, which presents the Enlightenment as responsible for “completely sacrificing the Jewish spirit to the exaggerations of the intellect”, although “the intellect was in a dominant position already before”.⁴²²

This combination of the two values of ethics and intellect is hardly exceptional, and it appeared on the pages of *IMIT* both in its affirmative (as we have seen in the example of Ferenc Hevesi) and critical variety (as in this very article of József Turóczi-Trostler). A somewhat more original and even surprising example is Bertalan Kohlbach’s “A bűnbocsánat napja” (The Day of Atonement), which mixes the theory of subconscious but decisive Jewish inheritance with the idea of the contrast between internal assessment and external circumstances.⁴²³ In Kohlbach’s view, “thousands of unjust and barbaric years could not divert Jewry from the road of *humanitas*, no matter how persecuted, violently beaten, kicked, spat at and excluded it has been, because the idea of Yom Kippur has even subconsciously exerted its impact on the Jewish people”.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰ Trostler, “Zsidó-német” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.268.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p.271. Trostler stressed that the use of analytical intellect and the tone of pathos created a strange and particularly Jewish mix. He claimed that (understandably) the dialectics of pure reason were combined with the rhetoric of self-defense, while sentimentalism and irony were present in a way that showed a “disturbed balance”.

⁴²² Trostler, “Wassermann” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.159.

⁴²³ I.e. the 7th and the 10th theme of this subchapter.

⁴²⁴ Bertalan Kohlbach, “A bűnbocsánat napja” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.293.

Finally, I would like to spend the last pages of this subchapter on one of the most complex articles which offers an intriguing combination of several ideas presented above: “A zsidó nép szerepe világtörténeti megvilágításban” (The Role of the Jewish People Approached from World Historical Perspective) published in the 1938 yearbook by Sámuel Löwinger. On the one hand, Löwinger emphasized Jews’ strong connections to world history as well as their global role, and pointed to their universally relevant, but quite special, even unique mission. To this, he added some conservative ideas, evoking, for instance, the theme of “preserving people”. These notions were peculiarly combined with the articulation of his belief in moral development.

More concretely, Löwinger wrote that the story of the Jewish people was intertwined with almost all important centers of power and all influential cultural formations from the very beginning.⁴²⁵ He declared that the purpose of existence of the Jewish people in history was to serve as “the official protector” of the monotheistic idea. Theirs was an irreplaceable role: they were the only people that could preserve the Holy Script and all its ideas as part of their own heritage.⁴²⁶ Somewhat at odds with this vision of preservation as the main Jewish task, Löwinger defined the Jewish worldview not by its ethical conservatism, i.e. the need to maintain and protect ethical standards and levels, but by the

⁴²⁵ Sámuel Löwinger, “A zsidó nép szerepe világtörténeti megvilágításban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.128. Discussing, above all, the connections between the Talmudic legal system and the external world, Mihály Guttman made very similar statements: “Jews are well aware of their relation to the surrounding world” and “there is no part of the Jewish story which would be entirely free of human bearings of a universal kind” (*egyetemes emberi vonatkozások* in the original). Mihály Guttman, “Idegen jogrendszerek érintkezési pontjai a Talmudban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.9.

⁴²⁶ Preserve it in their “complete purity, in the *language* in which the Lord of the world spoke to *the whole of humanity*”, Löwinger emphasized. Sámuel Löwinger, “A zsidó nép szerepe világtörténeti megvilágításban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.143.

thought of moral development. For Löwinger, it was an essential part of Jewish beliefs that “the world was heading towards a higher moral state”.⁴²⁷

His study of Jewish history explicitly wanted to contribute to the comprehension of the “essence of history”. According to him, this essence was that the Jewish religion had a huge but not completely successful impact on the outside world – and the reason its impact was not completely successful was that hundreds of millions still remained completely ignorant of the Bible while, in his eyes, both Christianity and Islam were also “still far” from having truly converted all their notional believers.⁴²⁸ This justified the original mission of Jews, which continued to be relevant, irrespective of the close connections and peaceful relations between Jews and other peoples. In this article, the Jewish practice of strict preservation functioned as a precondition of the belief in progress and the realization of the Jewish historical mission. Löwinger thus managed to create a synthesis of seemingly contradictory elements: special task and universal role, faithful preservation and future completion through diffusion appeared as elements of a single whole that did not contradict but directly supported each other.

To summarize the general findings of this subchapter: a great number of contributions to the *IMIT yearbooks* attempted to define fundamental Jewish values. I assigned them to five groups in accordance with their content, although some articles could assert more than one value. The second part of the subchapter then attempted to clarify five significantly different stances on the importance and content of Jewish history. I consider it especially important that while in the case of collective identity discourses the various options of dual identity were in a dominant position, and thus Hungarianness figured in most

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p.129.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p.143.

of these approaches in varying relations to Jewishness, the discourse on basic values and the debate on historicity exclusively concerned the subject of Jewry. In other words, what emerges from over 5000 pages of text printed in the *IMIT yearbooks* in the years between 1929 and 1943 is that the same group of authors who predominantly subscribed to different versions of dual identity, only reflected on the special character and essential features of Jews, and did so quite regularly. The nature and special features of Hungariandom (*magyarság*) or even Hungarian Jews was of little concern for Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars. Therefore, the primary subject of collective identity discourses (Hungarian Jews) and the subject carrying basic values and character traits (Jewry) were not identical.

Arguably, this discrepancy points to a rather more explicit self-identification than that suggested by the idea of a religious group, a denomination within the larger nation. This fairly representative sample of articles by Hungarian Jewish scholars in the Horthy era shows that their discourse on values and historicity focused on Jewry exclusively, while non-Jewish Hungarians rarely entered the picture. The Hungarian national frame seemed to have provided an unproblematically received and regularly employed discursive frame, but a frame which was of no real relevance when such more fundamental or historical-philosophical questions were at stake. The Hungarian national frame, which was practically irrelevant in the past thirty pages, acquired a much higher level of significance in the widespread scholarly discourse on Jewish contributions, but this is discussed in our next subchapter.

II. Jewish Contributions

In the fifteen *IMIT yearbooks* released between 1929 and 1943, a remarkable number of articles aimed to demonstrate the impact of Jewish culture, whether they highlighted its beneficial influence or simply discussed its undeniable cultural role.⁴²⁹ This discourse focused above all on the impact of the Bible, which was typically considered a Jewish product and in some sense still the property of Jewry. Often an abundance of illustrations were provided to underscore these impacts, so much so that several studies of this kind were among the most empirically detailed ones.

This discourse on *Jewish contributions* can thus be seen as the most widespread scholarly form of Jewish apologia in the age of the Horthy regime and as such it deserves separate treatment.⁴³⁰ *IMIT*'s authors searched for and found signs of these contributions mostly in works of well-known, even outstanding non-Jewish authors who were central to national or even international canons of literature (such as Hungarian classics of poetry and drama from 19th century, János Arany and Imre Madách, respectively, or even Thomas Mann, to take an example of a contemporary German novelist).⁴³¹ It is conspicuous that, since the *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* wanted to publish yearbooks with articles

⁴²⁹ On the connections between the Bible and Jewry, Bernát Heller offered a remarkable quote from Zunz: the Bible was at once the “national wealth, law, history, language, literature, pride and support, palladium of its history and expression of its sentiments” of Jewry. Bernát Heller, “Zunz Lipót” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.64.

⁴³⁰ While he was nominally discussing Jewish artifacts from Roman times, Gyula Gábor offered explicit support for linking cultural achievements, scholarly aims and political (but strictly defensive) purposes thus: “The increase in the number of Jewish-related artifacts from Roman times has not only historiographical significance. Our production of as much as data as possible on Jewish agents of culture active already in the earliest centuries has political significance”, he wrote. Gyula Gábor, “Római kori zsidó emlékek Magyarországon” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, pp. 154-5. A recent volume tackling the idea of Jewish contribution as it evolved since the 17th century is Jeremy Cohen, Richard I. Cohen (eds.), *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization. Reassessing an Idea* (London: Littman, 2007).

⁴³¹ It is important to note that “A német zsidók szerepe a német kultúrában” (The Role of German Jews in German Culture), one of the most detailed and sophisticated discussions on a German topic, written by Henrik Horvát and published in 1937, contains elements that are of some relevance to the discussion of my present theme, but I have decided to address it in its entirety in the last subchapter of the next chapter, when the themes of German culture and Nazism will be in the center of my analysis.

on diverse themes but with a decidedly Jewish focus, non-Jewish authors appeared almost exclusively as the subjects of articles dealing primarily with Jewish influences. This was the only angle from which their works ever received detailed attention.⁴³²

These studies serve as the primary pool of sources in the analysis of the discourse of Jewish contributions, but a number of other articles which otherwise focus on different topics have also touched upon this theme, and these will be discussed separately in the second half of this subchapter. In the latter case, the notion of contributions is more diverse, and also includes social, economic and religious contributions. Finally, the last part of the subchapter provides some evidence on counter-examples, i.e. the cases of Jewish borrowing or, as in one case, the special story of the widespread reception of an element of the Talmud that was clearly pursued with unfavorable intentions towards Jews. Although overall the number of such counter-examples was rather small, they are necessary to evoke in order to provide a balanced presentation.

The studies that constitute the first analytical cluster are quite easily identified even on the basis of their titles alone: two articles by Bernát Heller, “Arany János viszonya a legendához és agádához” (The Relation of János Arany to Legends and Aggadah) and “Thomas Mann, az aggádistá” belong here, together with the five parts of Miksa Pollák’s “Madách Imre és a Biblia”, Jenő Mohácsi’s discussion of the most famous work of Madách under the title “Az ember tragédiája és a zsidók” (The Tragedy of Man and the Jews).

⁴³² It should be added that Heller also emphasized that Hungarian Jewish scholars, Ignác (Ignaz) Goldziher above all, played “a central role” in the emergence of modern Oriental scholarship, cultural history and religious history. From the very beginning, his philological studies focused on different but connected worldviews and the influence of the Oriental spirit. Bernát Heller, “Goldziger Ignác emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, pp. 12-13. Goldziher wanted to explore the origins and development of Islam as well as its broader connections and the mutual influences. *Ibid.*, p.14. On the other hand, Sándor Scheiber claimed that while Heller wrote comparative studies on Hungarian literary history, he “measured the human greatness of Hungarian writers against their evaluations of the Bible and of Jewry”. Sándor Scheiber, “Heller Bernát élete és tudományos munkássága” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.123.

Another two articles deal with Jewish and Biblical impacts on Hungarian authors Mihály Csokonai Vitéz and Mihály Babits,⁴³³ while Pál Takács' "A magyar gondolkodás első találkozása a Bibliával" (The First Encounter of Hungarian Thought with the Bible) treats the more general Hungarian impact of the Bible.⁴³⁴ József Waldapfel's "Egy talmudi hely szerepe a reformáció korának történetképi szemléletében" (The Role of a Place in Talmud in the Vision of History of the Age of Reformation) explored the role eschatological ideas of the Talmud acquired in early Protestant polemics.⁴³⁵

Besides the two articles mentioned above, in his "Szentírásunk alakjai az iszlám legendájában" (The Characters of Our Holy Script in the Legends of Islam), Bernát Heller also raised a theme that went beyond the story of Jewish-Christian connections and impacts, whether mutual or one-sided.⁴³⁶ Both of Klára Friedrich's studies addressed Jewish cultural contributions beyond the sphere of strictly religious issues or text-based culture.⁴³⁷

⁴³³ These are the studies by Albert Kardos, "Csokonai ószövetségi látomása" (The Vision of Csokonai from the Old Testament) and Piroska Reichard, "A Szentírás Babits Mihály költeményeiben" (The Holy Script in the Poetry of Mihály Babits).

⁴³⁴ In spite of its title, this article also includes some reflections on modern times.

⁴³⁵ This role was arguably central to the Protestant visions of history, but highly controversial from the Jewish point of view. The analysis of this text features among my counter-examples.

⁴³⁶ Bernát Heller wanted to explore the organic emergence of Islamic legends in the vein of *vergleichende Sagenkunde* (which was the approach he used in his arguably chief scholarly work on the Arabic *Antar* novel). Bernát Heller, "Szentírásunk alakjai az Iszlám legendájában" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, pp. 83-112. He wrote that the Bible and the Aggadah influenced the Christian Church in a way not dissimilar to its impact on Islam. Many Aggadachs were in fact preserved only by Christians. The legends of the Middle Ages were full of such elements, but even so they were "much more common to Islam". Mohammed only knew the Aggadic mutations of the Bible, thus the Koran incorporated these. Later on, Muslims developed these "Mohammedian Aggadachs" further. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

⁴³⁷ These were her articles "Tyroler József, a magyar szabadságharc rézmetszőművésze" (József Tyroler, the Brazier of the Hungarian Freedom Fight) and "Pollák Zsigmond, a zsidó fametsző" (Zsigmond Pollák, the Jewish Woodcutter). According to Friedrich, József Tyroler (who died at 32 and, in the opinion of the author, was practically forgotten by the 1930s) deserved attention as the chief creator of Hungarian fashion (alongside Miklós Barabás). Klára Friedrich, "Tyroler József, a magyar szabadságharc rézmetszőművésze" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.256. Among others, his drawings appeared on the Hungarian money that was in use during the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848-49 (the so called Kossuth-bankó). *Ibid.*, p.259. Similarly, Zsigmond Pollák was "one of the forgotten pioneers of Hungarian book art". Klára Friedrich, "Pollák Zsigmond, a zsidó fametsző" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.222. Pál Náday wrote miniatures on similar themes: in 1939, he published on the ceramist Fischer family and on the gunsmith Jakab Guttmann. In the yearbook of 1933, there were two other articles on art themes: Ödön Gerő in his "Magyar-Mannheimer Gusztáv" wrote that "Hungarian Jews entered fine arts rather late, but they thoroughly made up for their early and involuntary omissions". Ödön Gerő,

Next to the abovementioned article on Thomas Mann, a German author who by the time of writing (following his departure to Switzerland immediately in 1933) had moved to the United States, non-Hungarian themes also appeared in the article of Oszkár Elek analyzing the fate of Jewish historical/Biblical characters in French drama history, particularly of the 17th century.⁴³⁸

By far the longest article of the first new *IMIT yearbook* of 1929 with over sixty pages is Bernát Heller's "Arany János viszonya a legendához és agadához".⁴³⁹ The art

"Magyar-Mannheimer Gusztáv" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.119. Ernő Naményi similarly concluded that the accomplishments show that "Jews are capable of artistic creation, that there are hardly any truer representatives of the spirit of the age than those Jews who are embraced by their larger cultural community. The treasure house of culture has no better stewards than the Jews." Ernő Naményi, "A zsidók és a képzőművészet" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.142.

⁴³⁸ Elek wrote altogether four such studies for *IMIT* that were all published in the late 1930s and early 1940s. These are his "Lamartine és a Biblia", "Bérénice", "Esther" and "Athalie". It is important to clarify that studies on how Jews were perceived such as those of Jenő Zsoldos ("Bessenyei és Kölcsey zsidólátása", "A romantikus zsidószemlélet irodalmunkban", "Fáy András zsidószemlélete", "Az első magyar zsidó írók fogadtatása irodalmunkban", "Emancipációs motívumok lírai költészetünkben"), and one of Lajos Palágyi ("Vajda János és a zsidóság") do not belong to this category. Zsoldos' ideas are addressed in greater detail in the chapter on Libanon (including his contributions to *IMIT*) since there Zsoldos served as editor and was also one of the two most regular contributors. In the *IMIT yearbook* of 1933, there is a study about János Vajda by Palágyi that has relevance for our present purposes. Palágyi claimed here that "One of the ways to measure the excellence of people is to see how they treat Jews, the same way that the value of an individual can be established by seeing to what extent they are ready to recognize the value of their Jewish fellow being". Lajos Palágyi, "Vajda János és a zsidóság" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.34. Palágyi maintained that Vajda was the truest Hungarian in this regard: "he loved, above all, Hungarianness and dreamt of the greatness of the Hungarian nation, thus he only pronounced words of recognition regarding Hungarian Jewry. He never differentiated Jews from non-Jews, he did not ask, mostly did not even know who was and was not Jewish." *Ibid.*, p.37. This point about not distinguishing at all is at odds with the description of Vajda's views, statements such as "Jewry constitutes a greatly respectable and unique value for the Hungarian nation" as well as "Jews supported everything that is beautiful and valuable in public life. Their readiness to make an effort and offer sacrifices is without parallel". *Ibid.*, p.37. Ultimately, Palágyi clarified János Vajda's stance in the following terms: "Jewry is a uniquely valuable part of the Hungarian nation and deserves to be appreciated". Moreover, Vajda maintained that Jews had supported all the things "that are appealing and valuable in our public life. Their devotion in this respect has been unprecedented". Lajos Palágyi, "Vajda János és a zsidóság" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, pp. 37-8. These are examples of a non-Jewish author pointing to especially valuable Jewish contributions. It seems that such utterances were seen as providing especially strong support for the main apologetic thesis analyzed here, and Palágyi probably considered it essential to quote them for this reason.

⁴³⁹ It is conspicuous next to such detailed articles on the Jewish impact on canonical Hungarian authors (Mihály Csokonai, János Arany, Imre Madách, Mihály Babits) that there are hardly any articles on modern Hungarian Jewish literary works. As one of the few exceptions, Lenke Steiner wrote on the way the urban was discovered in Hungarian literature and pointed to the decisive role of Jews (for whom the streets of Pest supposedly felt much cozier). Steiner, "Kóbor" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.113. Elsewhere, she discussed the emergence of a "group of smart men with that special Pest spirit". Steiner, "Ágai" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.219. They did not have passions, never aimed to defend principles or to commit to singular viewpoints. The contents of their impressionism could at times appear rather arbitrary but it was never unauthentic. Standing on the platform of

of János Arany arguably constituted an ideal subject since (as noted by Heller at the very beginning of his study) both Hungarian folk traditions and the Bible visibly impacted the works of this greatly appreciated poet. It ought to be noted that Arany, a devout Protestant, though in great admiration of the Bible and recurrently drawing artistic inspiration from it, composed hardly anything at all on Biblical themes.⁴⁴⁰ Heller's subject of interest was further circumscribed by the fact that Arany was no poet of legends either – he considered only two of his own poems as belonging to the legendary kinds and, strictly speaking, only few more can be considered borderline cases.

Heller argued that in all likelihood Arany did not know the legends of the Aggadah from its original source. He was only familiar with their popular versions or, more

the then current regime brought about by the Ausgleich, these smart (Jewish) men of Pest created a strange kind of humor that supported existing authorities. Ibid., p.226. It is characteristic that when Andor Peterdi raised the question of modern Jewish literature, he mostly referred to largely futile attempts. To him, Péter Újvári appeared “a poet, writer and martyr of Jewish culture” whose death meant “a great loss for our rather poor Jewish literature, even though he was not noticed all that much while alive and active.” Andor Peterdi, “Újvári Péter emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.73. and p.76. He assessed his oeuvre as equal to those of “Perc, Salom Asch, Zangwill, Salom Alechem”, but his Hungarian reception was narrow-minded and unfair to him – “here, where it is considered a merit if someone manages to shrewdly hide his Jewishness, the fate of people like Péter Újvári could not be different”. Ibid., p.81. Peterdi believed that his works only needed to be translated to guarantee him significant posthumous successes. “I believe that he will shine in the light of recognition outside Hungary much much earlier than we could conceive here”, he wrote. Ibid., p.77. Still, it was Ernő Ballagi who made the strongest claim about internal weaknesses: he maintained that the paper *Der ungarische Israelit* was, “as most products of the Jewish press, established because of the unfavorable situation Jews found themselves in”. Ballagi, “Harca” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.146. This implied that there were hardly any regular publishing ventures independent of what the outside world forced on Hungarian Jews. Several authors also noticed the strange duality encoded in the Hungarian situation: Károly Sebestyén wrote on the “unique popularity” of Bernát Alexander as well as his unjust official treatment and disregard (literally: *hitéhez való hűségéért évtizedes mellőzésnek, igazságtalan visszavetésnek árával kellett megfizetnie*) he suffered for decades. Károly Sebestyén, “Alexander Bernát”, in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.94. The strange duality of Hungarian patriotism of Jewish scholars and the near absence of their local recognition has recently been illustrated with the example of Ignác Goldziher in several places. The Dutch Snouck Hurgronje remarked on the strangeness of this combination in his translated article written shortly after the death of Goldziher in the 1920s, but released in *IMIT* only in 1941. Snouck Hurgronje, “Goldziher Ignác” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.109. Pál Vidor described the behavior of Arnold Kiss as “loyal through disappointments” which he described as essential for rabbis: they need to see the hardships of everyday life and, after disappointments, ought to return to God and find happiness there. Vidor, “Kiss” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.63.

⁴⁴⁰ Heller spoke of Arany as a person with strong convictions who avoided “petty denominational struggles” and “dogmatic theological arguments”. Bernát Heller, “Arany János viszonya a legendához és az agadához” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.75. Moreover, Heller affirmed that the religiosity of his soul, the direct artistic inspiration of the Bible was evident for all to see.

precisely, he was well aware of the use made of them in two at the time recent German compilations.⁴⁴¹ Arany was “most warmly attracted” to one of these two works, that of Ludwig August Frankl.⁴⁴² Frankl admittedly added at will to the Talmudic core of his stories, whereby he also rationalized them to an extent and thus helped Arany to develop his “congenial comprehension of Aggadah”.⁴⁴³ Heller placed Arany in the very first circle of authors belonging to the canon of non-Jews who comprehended Jewish sentiments and appreciated Jewish values. In his interpretation, Arany “managed to understand the Jewish soul as fully as Lessing, Byron or Eötvös. No other non-Jewish poet, with the exception of Herder, saw the value of Aggadah as profoundly as he did”.⁴⁴⁴

Heller’s other study on a similar theme, “Thomas Mann, az aggádista” formulated rather similar ideas. Even though Heller remarked that Muslim legends on Joseph, the main character of Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers* were richer than the Jewish ones, and that Mann’s imaginative and creative powers as well as other books of the Bible and Oriental scholarly works exerted great impacts on him when working on his tetralogy, Heller wanted to show, above all, the significance of the Aggadah both in its form as interpretation of the Bible and as poetry that had special values.⁴⁴⁵ According to the

⁴⁴¹ Heller stated that the “official garb” of Aggadah was the explication of the Bible, but this form of traditional religious literature also features many legendary elements. He mentioned two direct sources of János Arany in particular: Heymann Jolowicz’s volume *Polyglotte der Orientalischen Poesie* that was published in Leipzig in 1853 and Ludwig August Frankl’s *Helden- und Liederbuch*, originally released in Prague in 1861. Ibid., p.81.

⁴⁴² “He was attracted by what distinguished Frankl: that he served as a mediator of the Aggadah”. Arany was so taken by this work that “in his review of it, he translated as much of it as from the rest of German literature”. Ibid., p.122.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., p.101. Heller also maintained that Arany formed judgments about its meaning that were of stunning quality. Ibid., p.107.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p.123.

⁴⁴⁵ Heller argued that “the creative powers of the authors were of greatest importance, but even these powers exerted their influence in the manner and direction of the Aggadah.” Bernát Heller, “Thomas Mann, az aggádista” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.69. I consider it necessary to add that the article also has a section called “Muszlim legendai elemek” (Elements from Muslim Legends). In a balanced manner, Heller also announced that “if an Assyriologist or an Egyptologist analyzed this novel, he could show a rich layer of Babylonian or

presentation of Heller, Thomas Mann made only few direct references to the Aggadah, but his novel abundantly drew on his knowledge of it. The quality of the uses he made of Aggadic material clearly proved that Mann “learned amazingly much”.⁴⁴⁶ Heller concluded that the success of the novel is thus also the “triumph” of Aggadah.⁴⁴⁷

One of the few instances of open polemic on the pages of *IMIT* was provided by Turóczi-Trostler. In his article from two years later, he explicitly questioned the usefulness of Heller’s approach to this masterly novel of Thomas Mann: “We should not be misled either by the number, or by the celebratory or sentimental nature of images, statues, musical compositions and poetic works with Jewish bearings. Jewry merely provides a subject and is used as the subject of “objective” historical and spiritual comprehension in most of these cases. It offers a symbolic apropos, a simile and nothing more, because its authors approach it with a different collective memory”, he wrote.⁴⁴⁸ To make sure that all of his readers understood that he was criticizing Heller’s article, Turóczi-Trostler added that the strength of his intuition might have enabled Thomas Mann to remember convincingly, but his collective memory was not identical to that of Jews. He added that Mann made intuitive,

Egyptian elements too. It is perhaps nonetheless no act of partiality to believe that the impact of Aggadah was stronger”. *Ibid.*, p.72.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 69. According to Heller, Aggadah had such an impact on Mann that he not only frequently borrowed some of its materials, but looked closely at its procedure, learned about its methods, accepted its moral judgments and took its atmosphere as a “model” for his own work. *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.72.

⁴⁴⁸ Trostler, “Zweig” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, pp.105-6. One of the keys to interpreting the articles of Turóczi-Trostler is to remember that in many of them he propagated the decisive importance of collective memory. For instance, in his “Stefan Zweig (Szellem és forma)” he declared that the role of collective memory clarified provided better guidance where the “questionable wisdoms” of characterology and typology failed. *Ibid.*, p.99. The idea was, of course, famously developed by Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). The work was originally published in French in 1925. Accordingly, Turóczi-Trostler answered the question why there were so few truly great Jewish poets, painters or composers by pointing to the paradoxical situation of the European Jewish artist: with the languages he/she also had to assimilate and use corresponded pasts and collective memories, which needed to be harmonized with “their own unalienable [Jewish] past, the collective memory of a people and its ethics.” He thought this harmonization was a highly difficult task and rarely led to the required complete agreement. *Ibid.*, pp.98-9. A year later, Turóczi-Trostler again wrote on the “dual collective identity” of Jews undergoing the process of assimilation: “together with the language, images of the collective past have been assimilated too, but without her [Ricarda Huch’s] own collective memory fading away”. Trostler, “Három” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.232.

imaginative and emphatic use of memory but could not avoid mixing the “unmasking irony” of modern man into his otherwise respectably emphatic approach.⁴⁴⁹

A similar ambivalence accompanies the elaborate discussion of a canonical Hungarian author in IMIT. Miksa Pollák wrote of Imre Madách that he was a thorough thinker with a profound mind, that his soul was religious and that he also possessed theological knowledge. Thus, he first turned to the Bible “with the thirst of the religious soul” and only “later on with the interest of poets”.⁴⁵⁰ Madách drew Biblical parallels so often that Pollák noted (with some exaggeration) that “references to the relations of the ancient Jewish people or to the Bible are present everywhere”, i.e. throughout his works.⁴⁵¹ These impacts made it clear that “he must have known Jewish theological literature” or at least “the poetic parts of rabbinical literature”, the Talmud and the Midrash.⁴⁵² Regarding Madách’s outstanding work, *The Tragedy of Man*, Pollák emphasized that the basic idea of the play “is in its essential aspects the same” as the image of seeing future generations

⁴⁴⁹ Turóczi-Trostler was also keenly interested in questions of this type: he asked on the pages of the first new IMIT yearbook “what mutations happened to Jewish form within German intellectual life: what was the impact of being fed on European contents and of adaptation to European forms?” Trostler, “Zsidó-német” in IMIT évkönyv, 1929, p.269. He wanted to clearly distinguish between different ways of exerting intellectual impact. He wrote, for instance, on the impact of the Bible on many forms of literature and also on the more hidden impact of Jewish mysticism on philosophical and quasi-philosophical works (impacts which respected no borders or time limitations). Second, he wrote on the concrete and direct impacts of epoch, environment, individual books or persons. In the case of Germans, these kinds of Jewish impacts could be studied only since the 18th century. Ibid., pp. 274-7. In his eyes, the starting points from which to explore this complex topic were studies on Jewish subjects, environments, bearings, motives. The exploration could not be complete though without reaching comprehension of the more profound and also more mysterious occasions when “individual impressions and the impacts of the age met”. Ibid., p.278. Third, Turóczi-Trostler considered the study of the activities and roles of Jewish authors and authors of Jewish origins important. He believed that their “immanent Jewishness” was unmistakable: their works combined Jewish forms, subjects, motives and environments. Ibid., pp.281-2. He maintained that such authors played pioneering and dominant roles in certain branches of art (notably expressionism). His own choice of application of this rich research agenda was Wassermann who received a treatment full of verve and imaginative insights as well as several inconsistencies. Ibid., pp. 284-94.

⁴⁵⁰ Miksa Pollák, “Madách Imre és a Biblia” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.74.

⁴⁵¹ These examples (that in Pollák’s treatment appeared as Jewish examples) had a remarkable external (in epithets, analogies, images, phrasings) and internal (ideas, thoughts, descriptions) impact on the works of Madách. At the same time, it ought to be noted that the primary aim of this series of studies was aesthetic. Thus, Miksa Pollák included the New Testament and apocryphal writings among his sources, in order to show that “each time Madách tried to play on the strings of the heart he would take his impulse from the Bible”. Ibid., p.90.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p.87.

encountered in rabbinical sources.⁴⁵³ On the other hand, Pollák's assessment of Madách (as opposed to the idealized presentation of Arany we find in Heller's study) is certainly not wholly uncritical: "In the case of Madách, the words of the Bible did not turn into blood. Some strangeness remains between them and it hinders their complete merger".⁴⁵⁴ Pollák even maintained that Madách used Biblical materials primarily to fill the gaps in his works.⁴⁵⁵

Jenő Mohácsi wished to show, in a *pars pro toto* argument, what Jews have contributed to the success of Hungarian literary classics in ways other than authoring them. He also took the case of *The Tragedy of Man* and discussed the roles Jews played in its theatre premiers (as directors and actors), their valuable contributions as critics, as popularizers, later as biographers of Madách and as his translators, with the preparation of radio plays and so on. Mohácsi declared that these contributions revealed no special Jewish merits but that they evidently supported the claim that "Jews served many great causes with love, enthusiasm, talent and perseverance".⁴⁵⁶ What is more, Mohácsi went on to claim that

⁴⁵³ Miksa Pollák, "Madách Imre és a Biblia" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.157. One of the main conclusions of his second article (released under the same title) was that "the idea of seeing into the future and covering scenes from world history Madách took through "the mediation of Jean Paul from Rabbinical literature, while the Bible, as we have shown, provided the first impulse for the solution of letting the characters fall into a dream". Ibid., p.166. Pollák also believed that the popularity of the play had much to do with the fact that it featured Biblical characters. Miksa Pollák, "Madách Imre és a Biblia (Harmadik közlemény)" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.89. In order to avoid potential misunderstandings, particularly giving the impression that he went too far in discussing borrowing and receptions, Pollák felt the need to stress that Madách's play was unique and original.

⁴⁵⁴ Miksa Pollák, "Madách Imre és a Biblia" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, pp. 107-8.

⁴⁵⁵ He had to do this since his "talent of imagination was behind the power of his thinking". Ibid., p.108.

⁴⁵⁶ Jenő Mohácsi, "Zsidók" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.100. Béla Berend wrote in similar ways in 1943 about the "unparalleled rebirth" of Hungarian literature in Transylvania and particularly on the Jewish participation in one of its chief organs *Erdélyi Helikon*: "I do not refer to them to discuss their merits. They were brought to this thorny road through education, their Hungarian culture and loyalty". Béla Berend, "Egy erdélyi magyar íróról" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.306.

in Hungary, “where the proportion of Jews is rather high, the participation of Jews in culture is even much more conspicuous than in the countries of Western Europe”.⁴⁵⁷

Albert Kardos began his article on Csokonai, a highly important Hungarian poet of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with the statement that “no one can doubt that the poet and the Prophet are twins, both descent from higher spirits and both carry a transcendental mission.”⁴⁵⁸ Moreover, Kardos thought that the great poet and the true prophet was often one and the same person and believed that the case of Csokonai provided an excellent illustration of this thesis. Accordingly, his interpretation of Csokonai aimed to show that he had many basic features in common with Jewish prophets. Kardos wanted to present him as “the late but not unworthy disciple of the great teachers of the Old Testament”.⁴⁵⁹ Among Csokonai’s general characteristics the most noteworthy was his peculiar “memory” which offered visions of the future and made him prophesize about things to come or, more concretely, that the object of his beliefs was his own future glory and that he trusted the future greatness of his nation. I would add that Kardos’s examples suggest a prophetic parallel only partly and thus not entirely convincingly.⁴⁶⁰

Last but not least, in the yearbook of 1941, a recently deceased poet, Mihály Babits, appeared as the object of a more elaborate discussion. Piroska Reichard approached his work from rather far: she started by declaring that “the strict separation of the Old and New Testament is arbitrary and often almost impossible”.⁴⁶¹ She then went on to offer a brief

⁴⁵⁷ Jenő Mohácsi, “Zsidók” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.90. Mohácsi was convinced that due to conversions a good part of this work remained hidden (was written onto “foreign accounts”).

⁴⁵⁸ Albert Kardos, “Csokonai ószövetségi látomása” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.279.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., p.284. As his source, Kardos used above all one of the poems of Csokonai from 1798 titled *A haza templomának örömnapja*, focusing on the elements it borrowed from the Old Testament.

⁴⁶⁰ Kardos in fact remarked that “perhaps I went too far in looking for similarities and thereby erred”. What he wanted to have recognized “by all means” was that “the images and ideas that took hold of Csokonai were almost identical to those of Rabbi Ammon of Mainz”. Ibid., pp.283-4.

⁴⁶¹ Piroska Reichard, “A Szentírás Babits Mihály költeményeiben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.278.

historical overview comparing Christian denominations, in order to justify lower expectations of knowledge and insights in Babits, who was a Catholic, as compared to, for instance, János Arany.⁴⁶² “Catholic upbringing almost exclusively emphasizes the books of the New Testament”, she explained, adding that Babits’s religious feelings became increasingly profound as he was grappling with himself.⁴⁶³ The result was a series of poems full of Catholic religious images.

Her main finding was that the Bible had a large and conscious impact on Babits. Reichard maintained that “precisely because Babits was consciously estranged from our Bible, there is something overawing and shocking in the fact that he did not manage to stay free of its impact. In his years of increasing suffering he fell more and more under the impact of the grand characters and captivating images of the Old Testament.”⁴⁶⁴ This contextualization, which aimed to starkly separate Protestantism and Catholicism led Reichard to some rather paradoxical statements: she claimed that Babits was in reality so “unable” to “stay free” of this impact that signs of the influence of the Old Testament could be found in a whole row of his works in an artistic career of over three decades. Moreover, Babits was supposed to have achieved the most complete articulation of his individual sense of life (*egyéni életérzés* in the original) through his treatment of the symbolic figure of Jonas.⁴⁶⁵ Reichard declared that this work was “one of the most excellent creations of the

⁴⁶² She called the 16th century “the century of the Bible” and claimed that “the most profound and richest source of literature in this epoch was the Holy Script”. Ibid., p.274. This was accompanied by the Protestant sense of spiritual connections with Jews. She added that “especially among Protestants”, knowledge of the Bible “was inherited during later centuries from generation to generation”. Ibid., p.275. Elsewhere Mór Fényes wrote about the “recognized viewpoint” shared by Harnack and Wellhausen that “in the Reformation, the restoration of many institutions and teachings of the mother religion acted like an infusion of blood that made the daughter religion more similar to her mother”. Mór Fényes, “Hagyomány és forradalom a zsidó vallás történetében” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.109.

⁴⁶³ Reichard, “Babits” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.276.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 290.

Hungarian spirit as well as of the human spirit in our age.”⁴⁶⁶ Her final conclusion was that “the poetry of Mihály Babits filled completely the golden cup that he borrowed from the treasure store that is our Bible”.⁴⁶⁷ In sum, her intention was to argue that Babits borrowed the form (i.e. the golden cup he filled) of his outstanding composition from a collective (obviously Jewry, elements of whose Bible he employed).

In his “A magyar gondolkodás első találkozása a Bibliával” (The First Encounter of Hungarian Thinking with the Bible), Pál Takács made a connection between the Bible and Hungarian culture on a more general level. He wrote of a symbolic trinity of Hungarian written culture, European thinking and the living presence of the Bible that were there “at the cradle of the new culture.”⁴⁶⁸ In his view, these three factors were inseparable: the Bible meant the basis, source and completion of Hungarian writing. It provided by far the strongest connection between Hungarian literature and European thinking. Takács’s narrative aimed to explain that while by the 19th century the Bible seemed to be present mostly in the form of individual experiences and memories, in the course of the 20th it served once again as the main source of inspiration for outstanding artists such as Endre Ady and Mihály Babits.

Beyond these treatments of Hungarian authors intending, as it were, to demonstrate the general strength of Jewish artistic influence on them, the contributions of Oszkár Elek deserve further attention. Even though unproblematic from the standpoint of IMIT’s authors efforts to emphasize Jewish contributions, the focus on the Bible could be a source of some confusion. Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars believed it to be a commonly shared understanding that the Bible and all its tales were indisputably Jewish. However, this understanding was hardly shared by the Christian parts of Hungarian society. Elek’s

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 299.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 299.

⁴⁶⁸ Pál Takács, “A magyar gondolkodás első találkozása a Bibliával” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.262.

contributions were written on the basis of such presuppositions: the main subject of his four pieces on French drama history was the artistic impact of the Bible, which he understood as a proof that Jewish historical materials were adapted and used.⁴⁶⁹ At the same time, his conclusions ultimately proved rather unconvincing even on their own terms.

Elek's study "Esther" asked "who argued in favor of the truth of Israel in a more beautiful way than Racine in his play *Esther*?"⁴⁷⁰ Here he claimed that even the Biblical Book of Esther had some deficiencies, but that the work of Racine also showed signs of being immersed in the divinely inspired Bible – the artistic vision, the strong lyricism of this drama made the audience feel the "finest beats of the female heart."⁴⁷¹ Elek's presentation of the adaptation of *Esther* includes a rather striking contradiction. On the one hand, he wrote of "the reawakening to life of a Jewish story by the pen of this enthusiastic poet".⁴⁷² What is more, the power of religious lyricism made it clear to him that the play was immersed "in the fate of Jewry and the spirit of Psalms".⁴⁷³ On the other hand, he recognized that in contemporary France the play was generally interpreted allegorically (audiences believed that Jews merely symbolized the fate of Huguenots in France).

We can observe a similar duality in his text "Athalie". Elek maintained that *Athalie* was such an exceptional work of French literature that Jewish self-esteem could directly derive much from it, except that Jews still had to realize that their "Bible inspired a

⁴⁶⁹ For instance, according to his presentation, Lamartine had "a Christian soul, in the most honest and serious meaning of the word". Oszkár Elek, "Lamartine és a Biblia" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.256. Therefore, he cherished noble sentiments towards the "original source of his faith," the Jewish spirit, and "its ancient soil," the Holy Land. Elek discovered many Biblical motives in Lamartine's works and described them as valuable contributions of the Jewish tradition to his artistic achievements. Ibid., pp. 262-3. To Elek, connections to the Old Testament meant Jewish connections. Supposing such a direct link, the conclusion of this article was of a compensatory kind: "When Jewish fate feels so comfortless and severe, it feels good to see that the Biblical tradition impacted the soul of one of the greatest poets of world literature to such an extent that he more than once created splendid works out of what Jews felt and thought." Ibid., p.271.

⁴⁷⁰ Oszkár Elek, "Esther" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.286. The question was italicized in the original.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p.287.

⁴⁷² Ibid., p.295.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p.291.

world famous masterpiece of one of the most outstanding tragic playwrights of world literature.”⁴⁷⁴ “There is no other classic writer of tragedies who would have been able to adapt a Jewish subject with the inspiration and genius of Racine. It is also true that no other masterpiece has received such profound, warm and emotional respect from its critics and appreciators”,⁴⁷⁵ he concluded. These two sentences together reveal a distortion that makes the writings of this kind questionable from the analytical point of view. While Elek elaborately quoted from the French reception of the play, there was no concrete sign in this reception that critics and literary historians considered the play to be on a Jewish subject. Nonetheless, he suggested that there was some kind of connection between the Jewish subject of the play and its uniquely positive reception (after all, this is why he considered *Athalie* to provide an unexplored source of Jewish self-esteem). The two matters seemed to be unrelated in French consciousness, even according to the evidence he mustered.⁴⁷⁶

Besides these studies on the influence of Jewish culture (mostly the Bible, but occasionally also of traditional Jewish literature from later centuries) on artists, above all canonical literary authors, there were articles in *IMIT* that discussed beneficial Jewish

⁴⁷⁴ Elek Oszkár, “*Athalie*” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.193. On the character of Joad he wrote: “This majestic character of Racine stands in front of us as the most splendid dramatic depiction of the prophetic spirit in all of lyrical history”. Ibid., pp. 201-2.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 212-3.

⁴⁷⁶ Bernát Heller made the most pointed (and from a certain point of view paradoxical) formulation on the impact of the Bible as a sign of Jewish cultural influence: “The Church of the Middle Ages greatly respected and was attached to our Bible”. Bernát Heller, “Szentírásunk, mint legendák forrása” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.50. In this piece of writing, Heller explored the legends of the Church more closely. He brought up nineteen examples that all showed how much the Church appreciated the Bible and respected “its words, letters, images, hyperboles” – he did not touch on the examples of creating new versions of the stories and new stories with the characters of the Bible. Heller’s main claim was evidently correct, but had he not considered the Bible a Jewish property of sorts, the findings would hardly appear as surprising, nor would the subject itself merit a study. On the other hand, this was published in 1942, in the middle of the implementation of Nazi extermination policies accompanied by frequent and vehement denials of the Jewish roots of Christianity, which explain the urge with which Heller wanted to show the absurdity of the creation of such “purified” versions of Christianity. On this topic, see newly Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Heller’s focus on the Middle Ages also point in this direction, since concepts of the medieval world and medieval Christianity played a pivotal role in modern mythologies of purity.

influences in other areas. More concretely, they sought to provide an account of the positive contributions Jews made in the spheres of religion, in intellectual and scholarly life and in the economic realm.⁴⁷⁷ On religion, for example, Ernő Winkler asserted that Venetianer managed to prove (in reaction to an attack by Harnack) that “what is beautiful, ideal and eternal in Christianity was for the most part borrowed from Judaism”.⁴⁷⁸ In one of the articles of Bertalan Kohlbach we read that Philon and the Jewish Hellenists from Alexandria “prepared the triumphant road of Christianity’s conquest”.⁴⁷⁹ István Hahn, on the other hand, wrote about the idea of salvation, which he believed emerged in the oldest days, and even though the shape it took and the images it evoked changed later on, it remained a phenomenon that

⁴⁷⁷ Five brief general statements serve as illustrations: Mihály Guttmann wrote that “in several respects, modern man is a product of the Bible. This is especially clear in the realm of religious morals, of ethics”. Guttmann, “Fogadalom” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.17. Taking into account the dominant interpretation of the Bible in *IMIT* as a strictly Jewish (and thus also non-Christian) product, even this might be taken as a claim of Jewish impact. Ármán Kecskeméti was proud to announce that “we are the people of the Holy Script, we gave humanity what is most precious in human culture”. Kecskeméti, “Mendelssohn” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.160. Mór Fényes also believed in the world historical contribution of Jews, when he wrote that the main value of Jewish ethics, with which they enriched the common ethical treasure, is “the concept of humanity”. Alone among ancient peoples, Jews realized that there was a fraternity (*testvériség* in original, which is gender neutral) between all nations and used this concept. Mór Fényes, “A zsidóság erkölctana” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.51. Imre Benoschofsky in his “Az első író-prófeta” asked about the unintended consequences of Amos’ activities, and found that they were grandiose, almost all-encompassing: “the Bible, the prophetic and Jewish religions, the Christian religions and European culture”. Imre Benoschofsky, “Az első író-prófeta” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.243. In 1941, Wertheimer recalled Bernát Mandl and called the second and third volumes of the *Monumenta* his major work that “provided excellent proof of the merits Hungarian Jewry earned in our country and its perfect amalgamation with the Hungarian nation”. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.330.

⁴⁷⁸ Winkler, “Venetianer” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.239. Winkler here referred to Venetianer’s book titled *A zsidóság eszméi és tanai*. Next to this, Winkler self-critically remarked that “as long as Jewish scholarship aimed to hide the light “we did not have the right to complain” about our opponents whose “false lights made Jewry appear in an untruthful way”. Ibid., p.239. In a study published in the 1930 yearbook Bernát Heller wrote that Jewish teachings about conversions to Judaism were to be accounted for in the light of history. In this piece, Heller went further than Venetianer: in his writings on the *szombatosok* (a sect of Sabbath keepers among the Szeklers) he formulated his general idea on the relation between religions and their variously strong connections to the Bible. The Sabbath keepers provided an example “what it means to return to the Bible. The stations on this road are Catholicism, Protestantism, Unitarianism, Sabbathianism and Jewry”. Bernát Heller, “Zsidó hittedzés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.98.

⁴⁷⁹ Kohlbach, “Hellénizmus” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.211. The grand narrative offered by Löwinger was remarkably similar: Christianity as it emerged in Judea was the protector of ancient culture in European countries. Löwinger, “A zsidó nép” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.136. Islam meant the birth of monotheism as well as the development of state power. Löwinger wrote that Jewish culture prepared the way for Greek culture in Islam too, in the same way that Christianity (based as it was on Jewish sources) passed on the most important elements of Latin and Greek cultures – in spite of the fall of the Roman Empire. Ibid., p.137.

connected peoples as well as epochs. For him, it was crucial to declare that this idea “found its most splendid formulation in Judaism”.⁴⁸⁰ Thus, Hahn wrote of Jews as the purest and most excellent articulators of a universal religious tradition.⁴⁸¹

Károly Sebestyén’s “A zsidóság története levelekben” (The Story of Jewry in Letters) focused in turn on the issue of Jewish intellectual and scholarly influences. This article covered those contents of a recently released German-language anthology that were relevant from the perspective of *Geistesgeschichte*,⁴⁸² in order to underline the thesis that “had Jewry remained closed in the ghetto, the intellectual fruits of the last two centuries would be incomparably poorer”.⁴⁸³ Following in Kobler’s footsteps, Sebestyén did not describe positive impacts as merely one-sided. Instead, he wrote on mutual influences that enriched Jews as much as Jews enriched others.⁴⁸⁴ Jewish scholarly influences received further attention in two articles with a special status, namely a presidential introduction and an annual report. In his brief introduction of Maimonides, Wertheimer stressed that “especially since the beginnings of the 19th century, enormous scholarly work was conducted in Greater Hungary” and a huge number of scholars left the country and went on to

⁴⁸⁰ István Hahn, “Jesájától a IV. eklogáig (Egy vallásos gondolat történetéhez)” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.273. A question of literary history was in the focus of his empirical analysis: the origins of the most important Messianic poem of classical literature, namely the IV. Ecloga of Virgil (that presented the ancient past as the never ending future to come). Ibid., p.265. Hahn claimed that in the days of Virgil knowledge about Jewish matters was widespread (even if it was rather confused and superficial, similarly to the ideas about Jews that circulated more widely in later times). Jewish influences could be detected in the environment of Virgil. Ibid., p.271. At the same time, Hahn maintained that belief in the Messiah was born at Mount Sinai and all later versions could be shown to derive from sources of “Jewish thinking, history, spirituality”. Ibid., p.272.

⁴⁸¹ Without clarifying the question of temporal precedence, Hahn made it clear that the most complete form of Jewish influence (or non-Jewish borrowing) could only be beneficial in terms of raising the quality of messianic thought.

⁴⁸² The anthology in question was published in Vienna in 1935. It was released by Franz Kobler (1882-1965), a lawyer and a pacifist who originated from the Czech lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, under the title *Juden und Judentum in deutschen Briefen aus drei Jahrhunderten*. Sebestyén claimed that the book as a whole “throws valuable light on the struggles of Jews, their seeming successes and inherited suffering in the past 300 years.” Sebestyén, “Levelekben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.47.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.50.

⁴⁸⁴ The issue of how Jews benefited from external sources was (especially when compared to the treatment of the reverse question analyzed in this subchapter) only rarely tackled in the IMIT yearbooks.

contribute to the further development of international Jewish studies.⁴⁸⁵ In his report from 1933, Edelstein argued that “in our current state of mourning we find solace in seeing that the merits of Jews are highlighted almost everywhere. They are underlined in scientific and intellectual life. The beneficial activities with which Jews contributed to human development in general are also emphasized.”⁴⁸⁶

Finally, a number of authors touched upon Jewish contributions in the economic sphere. In his “Spanyol földön” (In the Land of Spain), part travel report, part historical recollection, part discussion of the current situation in Spain, Sándor Büchler wrote of the significant Jewish role in economic development and creation of wealth. In his eyes, Spain was, next to Palestine, “a prototypical land where creative Jewish genius got manifested in grandiose fashion”.⁴⁸⁷ He wrote on “the eternal value” which “once upon a time Jews created in terms of human wealth and progress in Spain”,⁴⁸⁸ and maintained that the expulsion of Jews and the suffering of converts (persecuted as heretics) led to enormous economic losses for the country.⁴⁸⁹ In his directorial report of 1937, at the time of an

⁴⁸⁵ Adolf Wertheimer, “Maimuni Mózes” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.11. He used the term “*nagyvilág zsidó tudománya*”.

⁴⁸⁶ Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5692. és 5693. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.218.

⁴⁸⁷ Sándor Büchler, “Spanyol földön” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.159. He used the term *klasszikus*.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p.160. In 1935, Wertheimer asserted that contemporary Spain showed signs of regret and penance, and true reconciliation between the persecutors and the persecuted was on the way, strengthened by the occasion of the anniversary of Maimonides’ birth. Wertheimer, “Maimuni Mózes” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, pp. 9-10. Grünwald quoted from Sir John Hope Simpson, an English expert on refugees, what might be considered the complementary idea to Büchler’s (referring to the one quoted in the main text): “refugees have always contributed to the flourishing of the country which showed its readiness to accept them”. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt és története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.293.

⁴⁸⁹ Büchler, “Spanyol” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, pp. 170-1. It is worth noting that Büchler went against the theme of the especially strong Hungarian tradition of tolerance. Somewhat unusually, he wanted to account for contemporary Hungarian tolerance by speculating about the impact of Spanish attitudes: “It is perhaps not unfounded to suppose that the complete absence of the persecution of Jews in Hungary around this time, the favorable treatment of Jews by the Hungarian kings Endre II and Béla IV were due to the spirit of the Spanish government which had an impact here too.” Ibid., p.162. Emma Lederer took a stance against both Büchler and Grünwald (as quoted in the previous footnote). She opined that the economic and social situation of Jews in Europe was best whenever “they lived among economically less developed people where their stronger and more developed economic culture could find proper ways to get articulated”. Emma Lederer, “A magyar zsidóság gazdasági jelentősége Mátyás korában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p. 233. She maintained that where

increasingly visible anti-Semitic wave which, as it later turned out, paved the way for the first general anti-Jewish discriminatory legislation adopted in the spring of 1938, Ernő Munkácsi felt he needed to clarify the Jewish role in Hungarian economic history. To set the context, Munkácsi emphasized that ethnic Hungarians were almost completely inactive in industry and trade until the middle of the 19th century, and that such activities were left to foreign, rather closed and isolated groups in the Kingdom of Hungary. Later on, this strange division of labor was to be replaced by the capitalist economy, the creation of which, according to Munkácsi, was “almost entirely the historical accomplishment of Hungarian Jewry”.⁴⁹⁰ This most significant Jewish achievement made the country economically powerful and also strengthened the central organs of the state. What Munkácsi’s polemic aimed to prove, above all, was that the “Jewish conquest of space” (*térfoglalás*) in Hungary took place in the interest of the Hungarian state – at the expense of “foreign nationalities”.⁴⁹¹

non-Jewish bourgeois strata were present, they showed strong determination to defend themselves against Jewish competition. Ibid., p.234. The narrative of Lederer referred not only to the conflict between Christian bourgeoisies and Jews, but also had a markedly anti-Western approach: she directly connected the birth of Hungarian anti-Semitism to the spread of Western lifestyles and economic transformations: by bringing Hungary closer to Western patterns, she also raised the level of anti-Semitism, she argued. Ibid., p.235. If we applied her concept to current Hungarian anti-Jewish discrimination, we might get an ambivalent explanation – exclusion of Jews might thus be pictured as a sign of development and Westernization.

⁴⁹⁰ “Az igazgatóság jelentése a múzeum 1936. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.331. In “A zsidók gazdasági helyzete az ó- és középkorban” Blau declared that “What the facts show is that Jews have always helped the development of material culture”. As an eminent example, he referred to the foundation of world trade in Europe, which he considered an achievement of Jews. Blau, “Gazdasági” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p. 15. Blau explicitly clarified that he was not asking for gratefulness – as Jews have known well since their experiences in ancient times not to expect it, he added wryly (he even remarked that the word might be deleted from the vocabularies from various languages without incurring any loss). Ibid., p.13.

⁴⁹¹ “Az igazgatóság jelentése a múzeum 1936. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.331. Gyula Mérei’s contribution to the yearbook of 1943 belongs here too. Mérei described Wahrmann as a loyal patriot who above all desired stability. The main aim of his manifold activities was to achieve the independence of Hungarian financial markets. “The services he performed in the interest of the government and the country, above all in matters of finance, were enormous.” Mérei, “Wahrmann” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.322. Mérei also explained that Wahrmann was against doctrinaire stances in politics. He was a pragmatist, a sober person in favor of concessions and compromises, as demonstrated by his preference for a liberal form of capitalism and for the practical aims of conservatism. Ibid., p.324. In a sense, Wahrmann was clearly partial: he perceived and assessed issues from the point of view of industrialists and office clerks. Having recognized the mutual need for cooperation, he supported the Compromise of 1867, but wanted to reach the kind of *modus vivendi* with Austria that preserved all of Hungary’s rights, i.e. implemented the principle of full equality and economic parity. Ibid., pp. 329-30.

Having analyzed the texts in IMIT that studied Jewish literary impacts (most of them, somewhat controversially, focusing on the Bible as the primary example of Jewish influence), as well as those that aimed to identify positive Jewish contributions in other important domains, let us take a look at those discourses which provide us with counter-examples to this direction of inquiry. One such instance is József Waldapfel's study in the 1940 yearbook on the influence of a traditional Jewish source that was, rather paradoxically, certainly not advantageous from the point of view of Jews. His "Egy talmudi hely szerepe a reformáció korának történeteszemléletében" (The Role of a Talmudic Place in the Historical Vision of the Age of Reformation) was an intriguing and complex study that dealt with 16th century Hungarian thought. More concretely, he explored the "fate of a part of the Talmud" that aimed to reveal the correct way of counting historical time. Waldapfel explained that this portion had a tremendous impact lasting for some three decades, so much so that "it became an essential part of the official views of the Reformation on history, providing the basic framework for it."⁴⁹² It acquired a level of respect equal to that usually assigned to canonical, Biblical prophecies. In fact, Protestants almost generally divided historical time in accordance with this Talmudic calculation, although Catholics never considered it to be of much significance.

According to Waldapfel, even though chiliasm "was an uninterrupted tradition in Judeo-Christianity, starting from ancient Jewish apocalypticism and recurring throughout the Middle Ages, even after Saint Augustine declared it false and heretical".⁴⁹³ The first

⁴⁹² József Waldapfel, "Egy talmudi hely szerepe a reformáció korának történeteszemléletében" *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.104. The idea that time could be made to pass faster (and that the end of time would thus arrive at an adjusted, earlier moment) was part of the Protestant way of measuring historical time and counting when the end would arrive. (The supposition was that due to the amount of human sins a part of the last 2000 years would not take place.) For the larger context, see Jerry L. Walls (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p.98.

millenarian division of history in Hungarian was penned only in the 16th century: it appears in the work of András Batizi from 1544 that survived in the Hoffgref collection of songs.⁴⁹⁴ Prior to the Reformation the scheme on how to divide time we find in Batizi was present only in rabbinical literature. The twist in the story is that a host of other Christian writers drew on the same source but did so with the intention of justifying their own faith against Jews.⁴⁹⁵ Through the way the arrival of the Messiah was counted, this Talmudic source provided “one of the favorite arguments of polemical anti-Jewish literature that was ultimately meant to convert the Jews.”⁴⁹⁶ The same text could simultaneously be seen as a sign of Jewish wisdom and prophetic powers and taken as proof of their blindness and stubbornness.

Some other studies were also included in the *IMIT yearbooks* that discussed certain cases only to conclude that Jews played no real role in them. For instance, Sándor Scheiber wrote on the conventions of depicting the way the smoke of the sacrificial fire of Cain and Abel spread. He aimed to show that the distinction between the smoke that went up and that stayed on the ground (serving as the sign of divine acceptance and rejection of the sacrificial offer) was established way before Byron – it was Bernát Heller who ascribed the invention of this symbolic distinction to Byron and thus received a second rebuttal in the same yearbook of 1942. Scheiber showed that the distinction was in fact widely in use until 1770, although its main medium was not literature but visual arts. Scheiber managed to trace the motive back to the 12th century, but among the dozens of examples he provided there was

⁴⁹⁴ Its full title was *Meglött és megleendő dolgoknak teremtéstől fogva az ítéletig való história* or in English, History of Things which Have Been and Will Be, from the Times of Creation until the Judgment. Melanchthon was in all likelihood the main source of this work since Batizi was his pupil until 1543, i.e. until just before the composition of his work. The other source Batizi used was the world chronicle of an astronomer named Carion.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 93-4.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p.99. Around this time, at the beginning of the 16th century, János Reuchling, among others, was also in favor of Christians studying the Talmud. He justified this in a way that revealed his markedly anti-Jewish intentions.

not a single one of Jewish origin, which he duly acknowledged.⁴⁹⁷ Elsewhere Bernát Heller himself wrote on a case of borrowing that proceeded the other way from the one usually studied. “It is enough to know <<Echod mi jaudea>> and read the song from the Catechism and it immediately becomes obvious that these are the model and a variation. The only question is which is the model and which is the variation on it?”⁴⁹⁸, he asked. He concluded that the author of “Echod mi jaudea” borrowed the song probably around 1506 in the city Worms and with an act of “inorganic continuation” of previous versions, created a Jewish song out of it.⁴⁹⁹

These counterexamples demonstrate that the forum of *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat* was not exclusively concerned with cases of Jewish contribution, but at times pointed to the lack of Jewish parallels or cases of Jewish borrowing. This would happen especially in instances when the direction of borrowing had to be clarified. Such, albeit infrequent, examples contribute to a more balanced assessment of the scholarly discourse on Jewish contributions, but they do not change our basic conclusions. The first, most general among these is that the authors of IMIT recurrently tried to find examples of positive Jewish impact (in general as well as in specific areas) and subjected them to detailed treatment. Second, the quantitatively most significant part of this discourse dealt with the impact of the Bible on canonical literary authors and outstanding works of literature. Third, these studies interpreted Biblical influences as evidence of the Jewish impact, which,

⁴⁹⁷ Sándor Scheiber, “A Kájin és Ábel áldozati füstjéről szóló legenda életrajza” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.148.

⁴⁹⁸ Bernát Heller, “Echod mi jaudea és a katekizmusi ének” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.39.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p.43. Pál Vidor also gave an account of a rather moderate Jewish impact (or rather formulated the concept that an independent Jewish philosophical tradition that could parallel the Greek one was largely missing). Vidor maintained that “Platonism and Aristotelianism together defined the direction almost of the whole of ancient and medieval Jewish religious philosophy”. Pál Vidor, “A zsidó vallásfilozófia két főtípusa” 1942, p.58. He added that the importance of Jews in the Middle Ages lay in the role they played as mediators: they helped the transmission from Arab to Latin (through Hebrew). Ibid., pp. 59-60. He added that even though the gaons developed a religious philosophy that was sophisticated and strengthened religion, their mental accomplishments had barely any echoes in wider circles. Ibid., p.61.

knowing the complex nature of Christian-Jewish relations was not uncontroversial and could lead to some (at least in their exaggeratedness) questionable claims and even to some rather distorted assertions. Whether such a more critical perspective is still warranted, once the circumstances of the age and the clearly apologetic intention of the discourse on Jewish contributions are properly taken into account, is a moot point that I shall leave for the kind reader to ponder.

Chapter V

A History of the Present

I. Various Descriptions of the Age

The aim of this subchapter is to review and compare those texts printed in the *IMIT yearbooks* that attempted to describe the contemporary situation and might even have ambitioned to assess the age. I also wish to account for the changing contents of these descriptions and assessments over the course of the fifteen years under scrutiny. In line with IMIT's scholarly agenda, its authors rarely dealt with topical questions. There are in fact no instances of extensive reflection on the age, except in the annual reports. Several contributors nonetheless offered interpretations and evaluations of their own days, at times in concurrence, at others in contradiction with each other. These comments reveal not only their sense of their place and time, but also some intriguing shifts between what I shall identify as three subperiods within this decade and a half.

One of the first interpretations of the postwar world was penned by Bertalan Edelstein in his report of 1929, which employed many well-known elements from the vocabulary of narratives of cultural decline and visions of overarching crisis. Edelstein wrote of the “horrific disappointment of cultured human beings”,⁵⁰⁰ and referred to what he saw as the “reign of mercilessness,” using terms such as debauchery, moral decay, roughness, savagery, etc. Edelstein sought to portray the novel and unexpected difficulties of the new epoch also in more general terms: “We have not expected and could not have expected how

⁵⁰⁰ Edelstein, “Évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.296. “Cultured human being” is *kultúrember* in the original (a mirror translation of *Kultur Mensch*).

complicated and horribly difficult peace would turn out to be, the same way we were previously caught by surprise by the merciless nature of the the war.”⁵⁰¹

An article by one of the non-Jewish contributors, Zoltán Tóth, which appeared in the yearbook of 1943, might be depicted as providing, together with Edelstein’s from 1929, the symbolic frame for interpretations of the present in IMIT. In his remembrance of Henrik Marczali, Tóth recalled that prior to his death in 1940 Marczali made recurrent references to the “increasingly severe struggle between humans,” the “worsening roughness of their behavior” and the growing number of conspicuously evil deeds.⁵⁰² It is of some symbolic significance that, according to this laudatory depiction of his life, Marczali fled to the county of Somogy, his place of origin, in order to escape the decline of cultural standards and the new fearsome boundlessness of politics. In his “narrower homeland”, he tried to find a hiding place from the world at large.⁵⁰³ These two articles provide a somewhat superficial link between the first and the last volumes of IMIT released in the Horthy era: overall, the interpretations of the epoch were much more complex and direct continuities between them much less strong than what these two would imply.

Initially, there were even some clearly positive statements on the age. For instance, in 1930, Adolf Wertheimer spoke of “the humanistic understanding characterizing

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p.295. (The war here obviously referred to the First World War.) Edelstein must have considered these difficulties extremely severe already in the late 1920s, at least judging by the following, rather radical depiction: “since the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, the hand of fate has not treated Israel as heavily as in the years since the war”. Ibid., p.298. One of the main reasons behind this assessment was that anti-Jewish stances seemed to have become generally accepted in several crucial questions (such as the undesirability of Jewish citizens). Ibid., p.312. Wertheimer wrote in a similar vein, though in a much less detailed way about Hungarian Jewry. In 1931 even the agreement between IMIT, the Jewish community of Pest and the Jewish Museum stated in a prominent place that “since the world war, Hungarian Jews are living through very difficult times”. “Megállapodás,” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.324.

⁵⁰² Zoltán Tóth, “Marczali Henrik” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.135.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p.136.

modern times”.⁵⁰⁴ Other writings presented the postwar Hungarian developments in a more nuanced way. In the *IMIT yearbooks*, the Horthy era and the situation of Jews could also appear in a much more ambivalent light than what the black picture painted by Edelstein on the global situation would suggest. Lajos Szabolcsi, while nominally discussing the career of Lucien Wolf, remarked in the early 1930s that “the prejudicial third paragraph, that stigmatizing stamp on Hungarian Jewry, was excluded from the new, revised text of the law”.⁵⁰⁵ In other words, Szabolcsi spoke of the successful revision of the *numerus clausus* law in the late 1920s, the cancellation of its derogatory intentions towards Jews and thereby the (as it turned out, only temporary) end of officially and explicitly endorsed stigmatization. More than a decade passed until Sándor Scheiber published his thoughts on Bernát Heller (briefly after Heller’s death), in which, looking back from the years of the Second World War, the years between 1922 and 1931 nearly appeared as the new golden age for Heller himself and for Hungarian Jewry as a whole. In retrospect, Scheiber referred to it as “a time of development”, even if his intention was far from apologetic: he did not try to hide later injustices Heller suffered in the 1930s. “The most qualified researcher on the Bible had to supervise teaching on the elementary level and teach basic religious instruction in a school meant for future traders”, he wrote.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.317. He wrote that “We are confident that” the Hungarian nation will not “accept false beliefs that are so contrary to the humanistic understanding characterizing modern times.”

⁵⁰⁵ Lajos Szabolcsi, “Emlékbeszéd Lucien Wolfról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.30.

⁵⁰⁶ Scheiber, “Heller” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.104. It ought to be noted that such differentiation between the decades of the Horthy era is central to one of the influential streams of newer Hungarian historiography dealing with the period. This thesis, opposing the wholesale condemnation of the counterrevolutionary regime, was propagated already prior to 1989, among others by Ignác Romsics who has since completed and edited several important works in this vein. See Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: a great conservative statesman of Hungary, 1874-1946* (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 1995). See also the recent collection of studies Ignác Romsics (ed.), *A magyar jobboldali hagyomány, 1900-1948* (Budapest: Osiris, 2009).

Such differentiation based on the internal periodization of the Horthy era was thus not unheard of, but there are many more counter-examples which prefer to draw the dividing line at before and after the First World War. Thus the directorial report from 1933 offers the following description of the recent past: “Historical consciousness and thought showed a great ascent since the war. [...] This veritable rebirth of historical thought had special relevance in the life of Hungarian Jewry, the group that has been widely offered as the scapegoat for the catastrophe befalling Hungariandom.”⁵⁰⁷ Anti-Jewish scapegoating took the forms of “denying the national value of Hungarian Jewry, questioning that it ever belonged to Hungarian history and contesting its cultural and moral standing.”⁵⁰⁸ Some authors, however, looked for the causes of the crisis in the loss of spiritual values internal to Jewry. Writing about the process of Jewish secularization and the consequent impoverishment of Jewish religious life, Arnold Kiss observed that “becoming a rabbi at that time [in the second half of the 19th century – FL] still seemed to be a desirable path in the eyes of many Jewish parents and youth.”⁵⁰⁹

Against the discourse which contrasted the current situation with some version of a “golden age” before or after 1919, we find a group of authors that proposed different contextualisations of the crisis. Imre Benoschofsky, for instance, described the change rather as a painful process of clarification, which was meant to bring about the end of an age of illusions: “previously we did not dare trust our own eyes and ears. We wanted to accept only

⁵⁰⁷ “Igazgatósági jelentés (1932. dec. 26.)” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.295.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., p.295. A similar sense of strong break between the historical periods (and the situation of Jews within them) is also detectable in the (non-evaluative) words of Aladár Fürst in an article on the Israelite High School for Trade in the city of Nagykanizsa: “in sum, this institution provides an interesting opportunity to recall the times when Jewry saw its sole cultural task in raising decent and educated citizens for the homeland”. Aladár Fürst, “Nagymagyarország zsidó középiskolái” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.214.

⁵⁰⁹ Arnold Kiss, “Bánóczi József egyénisége” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.172. Pál Vidor wrote precisely on Kiss that while his inauguration as a rabbi in 1895 coincided with one of the happiest periods of Hungarian Jewish life, his death took place in the moment of the “gravest and saddest” crisis. Vidor, “Kiss” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.58.

the illusions cherished by our hearts. We seemed convinced and kept on repeating to ourselves that what was possible in Romania or Russia could never happen here.”⁵¹⁰ Benoschofsky’s Jewish critique of the liberal epoch received its clearest formulation in his conviction that these self-enforced illusions were “the unconscious work of some death instinct working in us”.

Somewhat similarly to Benoschofsky, Andor Vér offered a critique of assimilation, where he described the efforts of the assimilant (whom he practically identified with the convert) in a mildly mocking tone packaged in an *understatement* since to him the revival and uncontested power of racism had already proved the futility and hopelessness of Jewish assimilation attempts beyond any reasonable doubt. “The assimilant chooses the holy water of baptism, but today, in the age of merciless blood cell research going back four generations his solution does not seem like a safe one at all”, he wrote.⁵¹¹ Edelstein emphasized the complementary side of such critiques, that the age since the war brought about the “awakening of Jewry”, above all in Germany. This awakening was presented in stark contrast to the somber external situation, but was admittedly not unrelated to it.⁵¹²

Writing on Martin Buber, Simon Gedő adopted the periodization according to which the first quarter of the 20th century should be seen as the time of the Jewish Renaissance. Gedő stressed that this movement aimed at a new synthesis between tenets of

⁵¹⁰ Benoschofsky, “Áron” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.249.

⁵¹¹ Andor Vér, “A zsidóság örök útja Stefan Zweig Jeremiásában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.171.

⁵¹² This national Jewish community appears here as very similar to other people of its homeland: active, thorough and good at organizing. German Jewry was devoted to the work of self-defense and enlightenment. Edelstein, “Évtized” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.318. Fürst believed that German Jewry fought a perseverant and successful fight in a hostile environment. His conclusion on their secondary education was also that these are “eight living, struggling and grappling organizations that, amidst hardships, try to navigate the hostile seas of postwar relations.” Fürst, “Németország” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.252.

the Enlightenment and mystical insights.⁵¹³ More concretely, this grandiose Jewish undertaking wanted to attain knowledge of the “living Jewish *Volksseele*” (*néplélek*). In consequence, previously “mocked and despised” themes are now “dealt with in serious scholarly works and receive due appreciation.”⁵¹⁴ In the meantime, the report of Edelstein also discussed how traditional Jewish knowledge was “reawakened and newly strengthened” in the United States.⁵¹⁵ In 1930, he was glad to report that American Jews “awoke to their consciousness” (*eszméletre ébresztették*).⁵¹⁶ On the other hand, in the eyes of Grünwald, certain parallel Polish Jewish developments could do little to alter the essential features of the Jewish condition there: desperate poverty and severe political problems remained central to their experience.⁵¹⁷ In spite of all hardships then, and more emphatically in some contexts than in others, some of the early articles maintained a positive assessment of the internal Jewish postwar developments.

However, immediately upon the Nazi seizure of power, voices critical of the age significantly gained in strength. Statements of this kind also display a measurable quantitative increase.⁵¹⁸ Remarks, such as Károly Sebestyén’s to the effect that the present

⁵¹³ Simon Gedő, “Martin Buber” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.163. The narrative offered by Imre Csetényi on local developments echoed this: he claimed that in the 1920s (following the “terrible year” of 1919), Hungarian Jewish audiences became more receptive of mystical trends. Csetényi, “Egyenlőség” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, pp. 121-2.

⁵¹⁴ Gedő, “Buber” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.171.

⁵¹⁵ Edelstein, “Évtized” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.329.

⁵¹⁶ Edelstein, “Az 5689. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, pp. 299-300. In his explanation, this was due to three factors: the severe poverty of the war years, the appealing image of Palestine and the more conservative orientation of recent immigrants.

⁵¹⁷ In his first report, Grünwald explained that “they might have achieved their cultural autonomy and might have been able to build a school system of their own. Still, their new position did not yield results in political and economic life”. Nor did “the recognition of Jews as one of the national minorities provide the expected solution of the Jewish question” in other Eastern European countries. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az 5694. és 5695. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.302.

⁵¹⁸ As a significant exception, Edelstein expressed a rather optimistic opinion in 1933: “this [i.e. the Nazi *Machtergreifung*] is a miraculous challenge to Jewry that history will recall with words of amazement and recognition” since “both the level of persecution and the greatness of help has superseded anything known from the past”. Edelstein, “Az 5692. és 5693. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.221. According to this presentation,

was the “house of slavery” in which frightening darkness had descended on “our mournfully fated nation”⁵¹⁹, or László Fenyő’s observation that “the age is defined by dictatorships against the spirit and the <<treason of intellectuals>>” provide illustrations of this trend.⁵²⁰ In 1935, Ernő Munkácsi voiced complete uncertainty about the future: “we know and can feel that we are at the beginnings of a new epoch without knowing the future or the direction of the ongoing transformation with any precision,” he wrote.⁵²¹ Munkácsi declared that the only certainty was that the struggle would not cease.⁵²²

Another two narratives diagnosing radical changes were released in IMIT around this time: one on Hungarian Jewish history writing and the other on Hungarian literary life. In 1934, Fülöp Grünwald wrote that the emancipatory idea that defined history for the lives of three generations had lost its old attractive power. The “glitter” it once possesses was entirely gone. Applying the generational scheme proposed by Nachman Krochmal, he explained that Lipót Löw was active at the time of “constructive development,” the period of Sámuel Kohn merrily coincided with the highest peak, the time of Hungarian Jewish flourishing, while Lajos Venetianer had to labor after the blossoming had already passed.⁵²³ The ongoing changes forced Hungarian Jews “to search for a new idea and look for a novel aim.” Grünwald warned that “we are turning away from the path our

Jewry shows signs of growth to fulfill its tragically increased tasks and will heroically survive this renewed severe storm of history.

⁵¹⁹ Sebestyén, “Alexander” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.96.

⁵²⁰ László Fenyő, “Palágyi Lajos emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.152.

⁵²¹ “Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum. Igazgatósági jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.344.

⁵²² “Now we also know that we need to prepare for a new struggle, acquire spiritual panoply and be completely prepared morally,” he wrote. *Ibid.*, p.344.

⁵²³ Fülöp Grünwald, “A magyar zsidó múlt historikusai” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.225. After stating that Jewish history writing developed “rather late”, he discussed three authors: Meier Zipser (presented as the first cultural historian), József Bergl (who received some rather critical comments), and Dávid Kaufmann (who was the first “maestro with universal interests,” but who failed to address Hungarian topics).

ancestors walked”,⁵²⁴ and declared that the massive historical and political changes would (and should, as the descriptive and the normative level of his argument were barely distinguishable) visibly impact history writing too: “we shall perceive our past from a slightly different angle”.⁵²⁵

On the 20th of June 1934, Adolf Wertheimer used his position as president to speak about the situation in literature. His presentation described the situation in rather ambivalent terms: they simultaneously referred to the danger of “complete disappearance” of Jewish participation and the potential underrepresentation of Jewish writers compared to their overall share of the society. “Of the many Hungarian Jewish writers, there are barely some left. The old ones grow silent while the young ones do not even get the opportunity to speak. Hungarian Jewry, six percent of the population, has included ninety percent of all Hungarian readers, but the time seems near when not even six percent of Hungarian writers would be Jewish”, he forecasted.⁵²⁶

It is noteworthy that exactly around this time, on the 25th of November 1934, a commemorative evening dedicated to Lipót Vadász was held where in front of an audience that also included prominent non-Jewish personalities hopes for the future were wrapped in Hungarian national colors.⁵²⁷ Having summarized Lipót Vadász’ life story, József Vészi turned to the assessment of the present epoch. He suggested that Vadász was continuing his dialogue with István Tisza in heaven, while the curse of Trianon was “still alive”, but the conscience of many countries of the world had already awoken. This would enable Hungary

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p.225.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p.225.

⁵²⁶ “Az IMIT felolvasó-bizottságának jelentése az 1933-34. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.329. Wertheimer mentioned the emerging new system in journalism as constituting an exceptionally serious problem (since it directly impacted the livelihood of many Jewish writers).

⁵²⁷ “I wish the tree of Hungarian hope would green as soon as possible and the sky, presently covered by dark clouds, would shine brightly on our dear homeland”, we read. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.114.

to soon regain what was stolen from her “unjustly” and “with godless violence”. Vészi also addressed the political situation within Hungary, which he characterized by stating that Orgovány (or more generally the White Terror since Orgovány has often been used as shorthand for it) “has been left behind forever as the spirit of noble tolerance has revived in the nation. Everyone whose Hungarian heart beats for the Hungarian homeland becomes part of a harmonic unity without exception.”⁵²⁸ This depiction of the present was in contrast to other depictions in the *IMIT yearbooks*, not only because it offered a positive image of the future but also because, spoken before a distinguished and mixed (both Jewish and non-Jewish) audience, it formulated what can be interpreted as a Hungarian-Jewish political offer of renewed national cooperation based on avoiding false and harmful internal distinction making (i.e. discrimination). At this celebratory evening held in the mid-1930s, some years before the passing of anti-Jewish legislation, Vészi thus refrained from painting an image of crisis. He rather emphasized how noble and useful the spirit of inclusion or, more generally, liberal nationalism had been and envisioned the recurrence of national harmony after the terrible days of White Terror that, he believed, would never return.

This most divisive recent row of events, the period between 1918 and 1920, was rarely discussed in the *IMIT yearbooks* beyond the aforementioned references that anyhow aimed to question its continued relevance. Aladár Fürst was one of the few who recalled the “tragic period” of 1919-20, though he did so in rather general terms. In his interpretation, the primary significance of this brief but momentous time was that in consequence a “more self-consciously Jewish public life” started to emerge in Hungary.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ József Vészi, “Vadász Lipót” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.139. István Tisza appeared here as a conservative “visionary” who proved “heroically committed” to resisting “misfortune preparing to do the work of destruction”. Ibid., p.118.

⁵²⁹ Aladár Fürst, “A <<Múlt és Jövő>> jubileumára” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.216.

To quote a truly exceptional reference to the Republic of Councils of 1919, we need to turn to Sámuel Löwinger's discussion of Lajos Blau. Löwinger evaluated this crucial period thus: "the situation was especially grave under communism when the Republic of Councils declared the dissolution of the [Rabbinical] Seminary."⁵³⁰

The counterrevolution that followed was also only sporadically evoked. Mór Fényes went furthest in this respect when in his "A zsidóság erkölcstana" (The Ethical Teachings of Jewry) from 1939 he attempted to justify these events that included mostly anti-Jewish violence causing death of at least several hundred people. He tried to re-embed the counterrevolution in Hungarian Jewish traditions and therefore specifically referred to three shared and connecting Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarian historical events, namely the freedom fight (i.e. 1848-49), the world war and the counter-revolution. He insisted that "among the heroes of the counterrevolution, the share of Jews was truly significant."⁵³¹ In addition to controversially propagating these events as moments of crucial Hungarian-Jewish cooperation, this narrative claimed a kinship between events as different as the (admittedly) lawful revolution of 1848 and the not only anticommunist but also illiberal counterrevolution of 1919 – events that were hard to reconcile on a consistent political-ideological platform.

This attempt clearly put Fényes at odds with other contributors.⁵³² Elsewhere the epoch was practically the object only of critical reflections: understandably, these voices

⁵³⁰ Löwinger, "Blau" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.17. More indirectly, Mór Fényes' study "Hagyomány és forradalom a zsidó vallás történetében" (from the yearbook of 1934 and already analyzed above) can be linked here too. In his article on Venetianer, Ernő Winkler addressed the question in a negative manner. When he was discussing the fact that Venetianer produced an apologetic narrative of history in the early postwar years, he claimed that "it shows that no single moment can be found which would prove that Hungarian Jews had antinational strivings or that they negative impacted society". Mór Fényes, "Hagyomány és forradalom a zsidó vallás történetében" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.236. Thus, "Hungarian Jewry did everything not to deserve the shame of the denial of legal rights, its discrimination as citizens." Ibid., p.236.

⁵³¹ Mór Fényes, "A zsidóság erkölcstana" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.38.

⁵³² Note that Fényes published this article in 1939, the year the second anti-Jewish law was passed that severely damaged the opportunities of Hungarian Jews to make a living.

acquired additional strength beyond 1938. Even before that date, in 1936, Grünwald understood the present epoch as bringing a drastic decline in Jewish fortunes: “contemporary events brought a catastrophic regression in the evolution towards complete Jewish legal equality, mercilessly breaking a line of development of a century and a half”, he wrote.⁵³³ In the same yearbook, Mózes Richtmann also conveyed the idea that the era had a “twisted nature” that contradicted the previously accepted teleology of history. He reacted to what he perceived as the (rather paradoxical) unpopularity of enlightening work. “There are only a select few individuals in whom justice and the love of humanism are so strong that they would be ready to counter anti-Jewish hatred behind which many crude interests hide, and become agents of an unpopular enlightenment”.⁵³⁴ Thus, Richtmann linked these strange tendencies, the problems with progressive developments and the decreasing level of enlightenment to the decline of the spirit of justice and humanism and the spread of anti-Semitic racism (a “worldview” masking varied ignoble interests).⁵³⁵

The first reference to officially supported Hungarian anti-Semitism in the *IMIT yearbooks* was made in 1937 when more and more obvious signs that a discriminatory

⁵³³ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. 5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.299. Grünwald maintained that from the Rhine to the Volga and from the Northern Sea to the Black Sea stretched the territory where six million Jews were exposed in all their vulnerability to the whims of fate. Their emigration needed to be organized through “productive help” and “appropriate considerations”. Ibid., p.307. Grünwald wrote of “painful transitory era” already in 1935 that burdened the weakest strata the most – precisely those, including Jews, who have fewest means to defend themselves. Ibid., p.322.

⁵³⁴ Mózes Richtmann, “Mendelssohn Mózes mint a zsidóság védelmezője” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.83. The annual report released that year did not treat racism and anti-Semitism as independent phenomena, but presented them rather as negative consequences: “The worsening of the Jewish question is one of the effects of the catastrophic earthquake unleashed by the world war”. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. 5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.327. A year earlier, Grünwald pointed to two factors: exaggerated nationalism (which can easily turn against Jews) and the times of economic crisis (which make people more receptive to false, anti-Semitic theorizing about the economy). Fülöp Grünwald, “Az 5694. és 5695. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.310. and p.312.

⁵³⁵ When he aimed to assess the afterlife of Moses Mendelssohn (who “shines like a star above our heads in the current night”), Richtmann remarked that Mendelssohn could not have foreseen that “150 years after his death the philosophy of humanism will have to struggle just so that state and racial registers would not become identical.” Richtmann, “Mendelssohn” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.99.

law was in the making began to transpire. The sentence in question appeared on the pages of the *Announcements of the Society*, in the directorial report of the Jewish Museum: it stated that “unfortunately we have to hear from influential corners, people in governing positions, that Hungarian Jewry’s conquest of space in the economic sphere did not in all cases serve the cause of healthy development.”⁵³⁶ As mentioned above, upon the adoption of the first general anti-Jewish law in Hungary in 1938 (limiting Jewish participation to 20% in any given social context), the perspectives on the age altered rapidly and significantly. As Wertheimer phrased it, “the recent adoption of the Jewish law as well as its justification mortally offends, humiliates and deeply hurts the spirit of Hungarian Jewry as a whole”.⁵³⁷ Ideas of evolution and modern Enlightenment were no longer evoked at this point.⁵³⁸ The president recommended facing the newest chapter in the history book of constant Jewish tribulations, regardless of the exact nature of negative developments it might bring, through “unshakable trust in divine providence” and, if necessary, through preparation for martyrdom.⁵³⁹ In 1938, the contemporary situation reminded Bertalan Kohlbach of the “most severe era” in Jewish history, the times between the 13th and 16th centuries.⁵⁴⁰ Two years later, Ernő Munkácsi wrote that even though the present seemed to resemble the 16th

⁵³⁶ “Igazgatósági jelentés a múzeum 1936. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.331.

⁵³⁷ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.274. Ernő Munkácsi maintained immediately upon the adoption of the law that the “great attack” against legal equality had been in preparation for almost two decades. He thought that the two main claims of anti-Semites consisted of contesting the ancient settlement of Jews in Hungary (calling them recent, temporary immigrants) and denying the obvious signs of their adaptation and the benefits resulting from their work. “Az igazgatóság jelentése a múzeum 1937. évi működéséről” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937 pp. 292-3.

⁵³⁸ For instance, Wertheimer’s interpretation of the present was that it “mirrors and carries” those painful aspects that filled Jewry with so much “sadness and bitterness” throughout its history.

⁵³⁹ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.273.

⁵⁴⁰ Bertalan Kohlbach “Dr. Weisz Miksáról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.303. In 1938, Löwinger also declared that “our generation experiences a chapter of crisis in world history.” Sámuel Löwinger, “A zsidó nép szerepe világtörténelmi megvilágításban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.127. By this time Grünwald believed it was obvious that all the countries of East Central Europe (*Közép- és Kelet-Európa*) considered the “removal of Jews”, i.e. their complete emigration as the only way to solve the Jewish question. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.242. The expulsion of Jews from Austria occupied by the Nazis in his words took place in “a medieval manner but under modern slogans.” Ibid., p.249.

century,⁵⁴¹ the new times were such that there was simply “no point in speculating about the details of the future.”⁵⁴² In comparison, Grünwald was rather affirmative: he maintained that in the current situation linking Hungarian Jews through “stronger worldly, spiritual and ethical bonds” should constitute an “absolute priority”.⁵⁴³

Grünwald’s views on the age propagated in the late 1930s deserve a somewhat more elaborate treatment. According to him, by 1939 “the Jewish question was made into a severe global problem” whose “center of gravity” was in Central Europe.⁵⁴⁴ He also tried to interpret the drastically deteriorating situation through historical analogies: “the restrictions known from centuries long gone are coming into force again”, he wrote.⁵⁴⁵ At the same time, he recognized the limitations of such analogies, and warned that European states now aimed at the hermetic sealing of Jewry and the complete cessation of relations between Jews and non-Jews. These ambitions (as he admitted) could evoke no historical precedents.

One of the most central contemporary problems for Grünwald was that Jewry seemed to be left alone, without support from any influential corner. He believed that international negotiations should be organized in order to find a land appropriate for large-scale Jewish emigration and establish an international fund to cover the temporary, but

⁵⁴¹ “Igazgatósági jelentés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.340.

⁵⁴² Ibid., p.350. Adolf Wertheimer referred to the present explicitly as “apocalyptic times”. “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki megnyitója” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.315.

⁵⁴³ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.300. In 1938, Grünwald still spoke of the near future in a rather trustful manner. He was hoping that tensions would finally ease. His prognosis was that the territorial distribution of Jews, their proportions in different places would change, resulting in a “healthier” occupational stratification. He presented the ongoing changes as incorporating two parallel trends: on the one hand, a new Jewish center was appearing in “the land of our historical traditions”, on the other, European Jewish centers were forcefully eliminated, leading to the even more radical scattering of Jewish people across the globe. Grünwald also tried to formulate a balanced judgment when he reported on the meeting between government representatives at Evian. He agreed that “many hopes were disappointed” by the very modest results of the meeting, but claimed that its achievements should not be underestimated: those of recognizing emigration as a global issue and “in many countries, the Jewish question happens to be a problem of emigration right now.” Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.269.

⁵⁴⁴ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.262.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., p.267.

sizeable costs of resettlement. He saw that only Jews showed some commitment to the realization of these urgent plans and that this would never prove sufficient. Nevertheless, he still expressed some hope in a future solution: “the question can be solved, but only if all interested governments join forces, and dedicate themselves to solving this complex problem on the international level.”⁵⁴⁶ Grünwald’s trust in improvements concerned the mid-term horizon while, as noted above, the only sensible Jewish course of action in the meantime would consist of strengthening organizational bonds.

In spite of his calls for action, descriptive voices continued to dominate IMIT’s pages even during the years of the Second World War. They regularly referred to the disappointments of Jews but without much pathos. At times they expressed the idea that Jews were forced to live outside historical time, excluded from the epoch that turned out to be so different from what they (and obviously not only they) had previously expected.⁵⁴⁷ The adoption of a series of anti-Jewish measures between 1938 and 1941 made some of them arrive at a realization that the liberal age was definitely over, and some of the contributions of the last few volumes responded by adopting resigned overtones.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p.297.

⁵⁴⁷ An example of this is the way Mózes Rubinyi wrote on Ede Kistelegi’s quiet and peaceful life past 1920. He explicitly mentioned that Kistelegi was “like a living anachronism, he refrained from hatred”. Mózes Rubinyi, “Kistelegi Ede emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.261. In his commemorative speech on József Vészi, Károly Sebestyén emphasized that “this world was no longer his”. Károly Sebestyén, “Emlékbeszéd Vészi József felett” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.52. What is more, he had to face “the worst kind of disappointment: what he believed in more than anything else let him down”. Ibid., p.55. In 1942, Trostler spoke of the collapse of Stefan Zweig’s world, which followed directly upon the First World War. Trostler, “Zweig” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.108.

⁵⁴⁸ Exploring spiritual developments, Pál Vidor presented an entirely different narrative on the meaning of the age. He thought that contemporary processes were leading towards a greater share of sentiments in life and an increased role for religious experiences. As far as can be known, “the trend that started with Schleiermacher and that resembles Yehuda Halevi now seems even more victorious and it spreads ever more widely.” The meaning of this was no less than to lead religion “back into its own realm” where “its own special values, the lights of the sacred, of *numinosus* can shine”. Pál Vidor, “A zsidó vallásfilozófia két főtípusa” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.75.

In this respect, Ernő Ballagi's contributions are particularly interesting: of all the authors, he reflected most elaborately on the end of the liberal epoch and the sea changes it brought.⁵⁴⁹ Ballagi believed the present constituted the last days of an epoch which lasted a century and a half. He thought that many were ready to bury this age without any pain in their hearts and found no words of praise for any of its features. He, on the other hand, thought that if an age was truly coming to an end, the natural obligation was to look for a proper, retrospective viewpoint and reach balanced assessments.⁵⁵⁰ Ballagi pointed out that great historical changes tended to transform the philosophy of history while groups negatively impacted by dramatic changes often tried to flee into the past and develop nostalgic forms of remembrance.⁵⁵¹ He thought that this was fully understandable, yet unfruitful. Ballagi believed that the situation of Jews could generally be read from overarching historical trends and movements opposed to them (i.e. reactionary, anti-Jewish movements), an idea which he formulated as follows: "truly great changes in the life of the nation cannot take place without seeing its impact on the situation of Jews too. If the

⁵⁴⁹ Ballagi did this in ways that resembled the content of Pál Hirschler's article on Jewish Messianism (quoted above), but his elaboration offered significantly more details.

⁵⁵⁰ One of the more concrete goals of Ballagi was to create a Hungarian historical narrative which showed that liberalism and the national principle were in harmony. He argued that liberalism aimed at the unification of the forces of the nation, and "always developed on a national basis, served national goals". The societal transformation "coincided with the defense of nationality at all times". Ernő Ballagi, "Szabadelvűség és magyar zsidóság" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.227. Gyula Mérei wrote in a similar vein in 1943: "The liberal statesmen completed their plan of assimilating Jews with declaring Jewish legal equality", i.e. here too national interests (which included the preference for and possibility of assimilation) were responsible for the extension of rights (though it ought to be noted that in this conceptual web the word assimilation did not refer to a process, but rather to something that directly followed from or was even simply equal to the declaration of legal equality). Mérei, "Wahrmann" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.320.

⁵⁵¹ According to Grünwald too, the traditions of the liberal age were clearly rejected since those times "barely knew of denominational statistics". Fülöp Grünwald, "Az elmúlt év története. 5697" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.284. He illustrated the extent of change by drawing attention to the fact that the numbers of Jews, their economic might and role in intellectual life were perceived in many countries as too large. Albert Kardos formulated his perception of the memory of the liberal era in 1939: "nowadays it is basically considered a Jewish age", he wrote. Albert Kardos, "Magyar államférfiak házi zsidói" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.106.

expected impact failed to materialize, we have to account for this fact by looking for the forces that aimed at the contrary result.”⁵⁵²

Increasingly severe discrimination made Ballagi reflect on what he saw as the indubitable end of the liberal epoch and made him approach it as an era of the recent past. Bernát Heller, on the other hand, continued to bring up Biblical analogies. In 1941, the year when the Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union, he expressed his conviction that Amos and Jeremiah speak to the contemporary soul in profound ways since their situations display “fascinating similarities” to the current Jewish predicament.⁵⁵³ The much younger István Hahn (there was four decades of age difference between the two of them) had rather similar things to say. He believed that the age required extra dedication to Jewish duties, but that this did not impact the contents of obligations. In his eyes, there was no need to look for and propagate more timely cultural notions.⁵⁵⁴

Instead of dwelling on the unchanged relevance of Jewish Biblical and religious traditions, Lenke Steiner, rather similarly to some texts from the 1930s, spoke of a dual process, i.e. parallel Jewish and external developments. “Today, when Jewry – not only out of self-defense but also as a result of its conscious ambition – considers and demands the recognition of its own values”, she wrote.⁵⁵⁵ Even as late as 1942 she maintained that the

⁵⁵² Ballagi, “Szabadelvűség” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.223. Ballagi formulated this in agreement with Győző Concha.

⁵⁵³ Bernát Heller, “Prófétáink” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.9.

⁵⁵⁴ “Our laws are holy in sentiment, belief and history. Today our duty to propagate the truth of them is twice as large,” wrote Hahn. István Hahn, “A törvény vallása” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.174.

⁵⁵⁵ Steiner, “Somlyó” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.115. Emil Roth wrote that Jewish writers “have to learn to be alone a hundred times, to fall down a hundred times and then to begin again each single time”. In other words, he argued that they had to relearn “the great mystery of walking above the abyss”. Emil Roth, “Zsidó könyvek, zsidó sorsok” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.163. Roth believed that knowledge of Jewish books and Jewish fate would enable contemporary writers to find solace. He formulated his version of the critique of the age and culture thus: “most of Jewish writings that appear today lack this sense of mission and service” and “today we commit the mistake more and more often that we provide our poor only with bread without giving them books and endowing them with the right spirit”. Ibid., p.173 and p.168. He also affirmed that the way out could be

attacks launched against Jews and the internal process of gaining strength pointed in the same direction, namely that of increased Jewish autarky. In her eyes, this development did not appear as *per se* condemnable, as it pointed in the direction of Jewish self-knowledge, the restoration of previously sourly lacking Jewish self-confidence as well as the development of a more conscious cultural orientation.⁵⁵⁶ The first appearance of the expression “the age of Jewish laws” can be found in the yearbook of 1943 – it appears on the pages of an article which József Katona wrote on Simon Hevesi.⁵⁵⁷ The sense of helplessness and resignation received its first concrete articulation in the same *IMIT yearbook* that also turned out to be the last before the catastrophe of 1944: Zsigmond Szöllősi lamented that there was “no point in discussing and trying to contest facts when the force of events is shaking the entire world.”⁵⁵⁸

In conclusion, based on the various interpretations of the present, three basic periods can be distinguished within these fifteen years. Each of these periods was described and assessed in a different way, although they were substantial overlaps between the yearbooks of these periods and a plurality of voices to each of them. The descriptions of the age in the years prior to the Nazi *Machtergreifung* of 1933 displayed certain ambivalences:

found through written texts: “the power of letters can show the way to Jews, and through Jewry it can show the way back to the world”. Ibid., p.173.

⁵⁵⁶ Steiner claimed that the general process of reevaluation triggered rethinking around and within Jewry too. This meant that the question whether Hungarian Jewry could give lasting values to others and provide them to itself arose with new urgency. Steiner, “Somlyó” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.112 and p.115. Once these newer assessments will prevail, certain Jewish products that are currently recalled only as part of accusations will be upheld as signs of merit. Steiner mentioned cabaret, *Schlagers* (i.e. hit songs she called kitschy) and the popularity of the streets of Pest as such. Ibid., p.122. Several others directly questioned her belief in an internal Jewish renewal: for example, when discussing directions of Jewish history writing, Dénes Friedman thought that ingratitude and the lack of proper historical consciousness and rightful pride characterized the present and this was why not even the memory of Graetz was appropriately enshrined. Dénes Friedman, “A zsidó történetírás irányelvei” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, pp. 125-6. Bertalan Kohlbach also felt the need to reflect on and condemn lack of Jewish preparedness: “we stand as orphans in front of our coreligionists, in particular in front of contemporary youth some of whom have never even been to a synagogue in their lives”, he wrote. Bertalan Kohlbach, “Tefillin és Tallith” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.176.

⁵⁵⁷ József Katona, “Hevesi Simon” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.79. The expression is “a zsidótörvények korszaka.”

⁵⁵⁸ Zsigmond Szöllősi, “Kóbor Tamás, az újságíró” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.35.

even though the authors were clearly aware of the difficulties of the external situation, they frequently assessed internal Jewish developments in much more positive terms. Most importantly, the latter could be interpreted as resulting in increased and improved Jewish self-consciousness. Some authors were even inclined to distinguish between different subperiods of the postwar years.

1933 brought immediate quantitative and qualitative changes. Critiques of the age dominated the discourse beyond this point. Already before 1938, various narratives of decline and crisis made up the majority of statements on the age, but after 1938, explicitly critical voices became even stronger, and were joined by a growing expression of uncertainties about the future, in spite of the appearance of an asynchronic text that tried to adapt the legitimacy discourse of the Hungarian regime for Hungarian Jewish political purposes as late as 1939. The cyclical conception of history and thinking based on historical analogies moved into the foreground, and were succeeded by the theories of the end of the liberal era and, ultimately, the expression of resignation in the last *IMIT yearbook* of 1943 – published simultaneously with the implementation of policies to exterminate European Jews.

II. Discourse on Zionism and Palestine

In line with the scholarly and programmatically apolitical aims of IMIT, the annual reports tackled ongoing historical processes and topical political issues while the rest of the pages were mostly reserved for (supposedly) eternal, atemporal matters. These annual reports by Bertalan Edelstein and Fülöp Grünwald, which discussed the fate of Jews around the world and from the later 1930s onwards also included reflections on the Hungarian situation, regularly covered developments in the territory of the Palestinian Mandate too.

Even though both authors were concerned about preserving a neutral position and to that end kept these reports largely descriptive, they nevertheless partly reflected their value choices and political preferences. One of the goals of this subchapter is to reconstruct their Palestinian story and analyze these (implicitly and sometimes explicitly formulated) values and political positions.

In purely quantitative terms, the amount of source material the *IMIT yearbooks* offer for the study of this topic is far thinner than the volume of material that is relevant from the point of view of Jewish collective identity discourses or of the discourses on basic Jewish values and historicity. Nevertheless, a number of articles were devoted to Palestinian developments and the Zionist movement, largely due to the fact that three members of the Patai family contributed to the *IMIT yearbooks* between 1929 and 1943.⁵⁵⁹ In the very first new volume of 1929, the name of József Patai appeared as a poetry translator, while both he and his son, Ervin György (or Rafael/Raphael, as he was later called) made contributions to the yearbook of 1931. The latter was the most regular contributor among the Patai family members: he published another three articles, in 1933, 1934 and (as Rafael) in 1937. In the year in between, in 1932, Avigdor Hamméiri wrote an overview of Hungarian literature in the Hebrew language. József Patai made another appearance in 1935, upon the death of Hayim Nahman Bialik in 1934 and Éva H. Patai published several poems. Remarkably, in the period of anti-Jewish legal discrimination and the ultimately catastrophic

⁵⁵⁹ József Patai (Gyöngyöspata, 1882 – Tel Aviv, 1953), Hungarian and Hebrew poet, translator and editor. He was an active member of the Zionist student movement from early on (he joined in 1903). He earned his degree in 1907 and worked as a secondary school teacher until the early 1920s. In 1911 he launched *Múlt és Jövő* which was subsequently released until 1944 (even after his departure to Palestine in the 1930s). He also published his reports from the Holy Land in book format: *Feltámadó szentföld* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1926) and *Az új Palesztina útjain* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1938), as well as a biography of *Herzl* in 1932. His son, Ervin György Patai, later Rafael (1910-1996) moved to Palestine in 1933. He was the founder of the Folklore and Ethnology Institute at the Hebrew University, but from the 1950s onwards he spent most of his time in the United States. József also had a daughter, Éva who was less active (and is certainly less known) than her brother, but she had some publications to her credit too.

years of the Second World War no other contribution appeared from any member of this important Zionist family. Four of the abovementioned contributions dealt specifically with the situation in the territory of the Palestinian Mandate and the ongoing changes there: József (not counting his translations from the “poetry of the Holy Land”) wrote on the commemorative year dedicated to J. L. Gordon, while Ervin György published on the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on cultural life in the Holy Land and later offered a panorama of the land.⁵⁶⁰

From what has been stated up to this point, it can be concluded that contributing members of this family spoke of different issues and drew different conclusions than other members of the Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectual elite. It is therefore remarkable that, even though there was a separate organ much closer to Zionist thought in the shape of *Múlt és Jövő*, IMIT welcomed their texts in the 1930s, thereby adding a recognizable color to the palette of writings. Beyond the aforementioned ones, there is only one other article whose main focus is a question rather closely related to Zionism, even if it did not discuss the movement as such: Salamon Widder’s reflections on the history and special characteristics of the Hebrew language reform.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ József Patai’s aim was “to reveal the soul” of Bialik, the poet, explore his feelings torn between individual and collective existence, his personal tears falling into the sea of Jewish tears that emerged over thousands of years. József Patai, “Bialik, a könny és fény költője” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.179. When assessing his oeuvre, Patai claimed Bialik was such an integral part of the Hebrew renaissance that his death was the greatest loss since that of Herzl: for him, Bialik convincingly summarized the “tragic duality” that assimilation meant for the Jewish people (Ibid., p.179). He also recalled Bialik’s insistence that without the Jewish renaissance in education, literature, scholarship and arts, Zionism would only be a “dead Golem”, and referred to him as the “dreamer and Apostle” of the reviving land of his earlier dreams. In a more critical spirit, Patai lamented that Bialik was admired and proudly evoked but his messages sadly remained without influence on actual Jewish practices. Ibid., p.198.

⁵⁶¹ In his article from 1933, Widder emphasized that Hungarian language reform found its worthy counterpart in Hebrew language reform (“a more fruitful parallel could hardly be drawn”). Salamon Widder, “A héber nyelvváltás” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.173. At the same time, he pointed to some marked differences: most importantly, the different direction of the process as there were many scholarly and literary works in Hebrew and what was missing was much rather the language of everyday life, nor could the language of the people serve as a source for the renewal. Thus, the task of the reformers was to create “the new from the old” and

Thus, this subchapter is based mostly on these two sources (the annual reports and the “reports” about the Holy Land, the majority of which were contributed by members of the Patai family). To complement these sources, however, I will also rely on a number of observations found in studies that did not mean to elaborately speak to the problems and opportunities emerging in Palestine.

In his very first report, which aimed to cover an entire decade, Bertalan Edelstein declared that the “most important event of the decade from the Jewish point of view has been the revival of Palestine.”⁵⁶² Edelstein employed expressions well known from the Zionist vocabulary when he described the process in the following way: “the ancient power of Jewry is renewed upon Jews reconnecting to their homeland, the sacred soil of heroes and prophets.”⁵⁶³ Wishing to account for the stunning achievements, Edelstein claimed that the “dynamism arising from the sense of belonging together” was at work.⁵⁶⁴ Seeing respectable Jewish accomplishments, Edelstein trusted that “even the Arabs who cherish rather hostile attitudes towards Jewish Palestine observe it jealously and enjoy the cultural gains that are brought about.”⁵⁶⁵

Elsewhere, his support of the Zionist project seemed rather relative and partial or at least it allowed for the existence of more fortunate exceptions. He thought of it as a project with a limited scope: “It would be enough if the Holy Land provided a home for those

achieve “something almost entirely different” through “speeding up” the development of the language. Ibid., p.175. Compared to the overall length of his discussion, Widder made only a very brief reference to the fact that “the most decisive element [in the reform of the Hebrew language] was the declaration of Palestine as the Jewish national home”. Ibid., p.174. However, Widder was hesitant to elaborate on this theme any further, which is why I excluded his text from the main analysis above.

⁵⁶² Edelstein, “Évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.332.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., pp.335-6.

⁵⁶⁴ Edelstein, “Évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, pp. 336-7. What exactly was there to explain? In his own words the fact that “the Holy Land began to improve at a huge pace” and “the results of a single decade already go beyond the once seemingly illusionary dreams of the most extreme optimists”. Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5689. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.333 and p.302.

⁵⁶⁵ Edelstein, “Évtizedben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1929, p.334. Edelstein wrote of “the Arab” in singular, but considering it awkward in English, I decided to translate it into plural.

without one in the present”.⁵⁶⁶ In 1930, in a rather similar spirit, he observed that the Holy Land was “seen as a place of escape and self-preservation [*mentsvár*] by Jewry all around the world”.⁵⁶⁷ On the other hand, the thesis that Edelstein’s support was qualified and relative is strongly contradicted by his assertion that this political project “filled the whole of Jewry with great hopes”.⁵⁶⁸ In one place he even argued that “almost the entirety of Jewry stands there as the preserver of this idea, hoping the ideal would be implemented. This can only benefit the holy cause, and ensure that it continues to enjoy a mighty dynamism”.⁵⁶⁹ (Note that Edelstein referred to the project in terms that had unmistakable religious connotations, calling it a “holy cause”.) In his interpretation, once upon a time Hungarian Jewry might have seemed like a lucky exception, but in the meantime the justifiability of (the often mentioned) Hungarian Jewish resistance to Zionism had evaporated. Edelstein’s evocation of this somewhat clichéd point in one of his reports was discernibly critically disposed: “it was precisely the Jewry of his [Herzl’s] homeland that resisted the thought of Palestine for the longest time”⁵⁷⁰ even though the solution Herzl provided “a new star to follow, new hopes and new opportunities for his people.”⁵⁷¹

There was an intriguing basic ambivalence to his views of the local Arabs: he spoke of the “ancient rights” of Jews to possess the Promised Land and occasionally

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., p.336.

⁵⁶⁷ Edelstein, “Az 5689. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.302. Discussing recent developments in Austria, he noted that “the political and economic situation has grown worse” and therefore it “cannot be too surprising that separate Jewish and Zionist parties have emerged”. Ibid., p.291.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p.302.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., p.302. Perhaps even more revealing is his choice of words when he first reported on a more serious clash between Arabs and Jews. He wrote that “our heroes fought and repelled the attacks on the colonies with the courage of Maccabees”. Ibid., p.308.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., p.303.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p.304. In Edelstein’s conception, Herzl (whose name here, as in so many other texts, can be taken to symbolize the Zionist movement) had “undeniable merits”. His initiative not only caused “unprecedented enthusiasm” but his proposals (which at first sounded daring to many) can also be credited for making “the other half of Jewry” dedicate itself to Jewish cultural work. Ibid., p.305.

described Arabs as opponents who were “becoming overly courageous and merciless.”⁵⁷² At the same time, he seemed to trust that blocking “political excitation” would automatically do away with the existing problems and resolve the tensions between Arabs and Jews. What is more, he saw the future of coexistence in a rather optimistic light: “Arabs and Jews could live next to each other just fine”, he wrote, especially since Arabs “only gained from the settlement of Jews and they shall sooner or later realize this and gratefully accept it as a fact.”⁵⁷³

His support of Jewish plans occasionally went as far as the silencing and even the denial of the existence of contrary opinions. In reaction of the massacres of August of 1929, he spoke of “the loud dissatisfaction of the Jewish collective”.⁵⁷⁴ A year later, he used similarly homogenizing language when he claimed that “Jews of the whole globe displayed their dissatisfaction”.⁵⁷⁵ Such remarks, implying the all-encompassing Jewish concern for and support of Zionism were clearly more frequent than talk of partial dedication, but the consequence was that Edelstein also remained wary of providing a more concrete definition of the object of support, beyond general invocations.⁵⁷⁶ Based on this evidence, I believe that

⁵⁷² Ibid., p.307.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p.308. These remarks were made in the course of a global report on the fate of Jewry, right next to the discussion of anti-Semitic outbursts. It is probably due to this (i.e. it emerged directly out of the need of linking different parts of the text) that instead of Orientalist stereotypes that were occasionally used elsewhere in IMIT, Edelstein resorted to a different analogy: “The fanatics of the Arab world use European methods.” Edelstein, “Az 5690. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.290.

⁵⁷⁴ Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5690. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.287. Literally: “*felzúdult a világ zsidósága*”. He also claimed that “it was Palestine that caused the pain and bitterness” that was the main source of Jewish hope. Ibid., pp.286-7.

⁵⁷⁵ Bertalan Edelstein, “A külföldi zsidóság az 5691. évben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.282. What is more, all Jewish groups “throughout the world” voiced their “sharpest” protest (or literally: “*Az egész világ zsidósága forrongott*”) against the White Paper of Lord Passfield made public on the 1st of October in 1930 (the mainstream local Jewish interpretation indeed was that the English betrayed the Jews as well as their own promises, and shifted more in favor of the position of the Arabs). Ibid., p.281. As a consequence of this Jewish campaign, Ramsay MacDonald soon sent a letter to Chaim Weizmann clarifying the British position. Passfield’s move (and new signs of the “Arab unwillingness to accept any kind of compromise”) made “the hearts of all those tremble who put their hopes in the resurrection of Palestine.” Ibid., p.280.

⁵⁷⁶ In 1933, Edelstein repeated that “Palestine is the holy land to which the world now turns with amazement and expectations”. Bertalan Edelstein, “Az 5692. és 5693. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.239. It is noteworthy

Samu Szemere, the editor of the yearbooks was overly reserved when he observed that Edelstein saw the development of the Holy Land “as one of the encouraging guarantees [biztató zálogaként – FL] of the future of Israel”.⁵⁷⁷ His publications in the *IMIT yearbooks* rather point to the fact that he considered development in the Mandate territory centrally important and sought to present Zionism as a practically universally supported Jewish cause.

I have already noted elsewhere that Fülöp Grünwald took over the task of writing reports from the deceased Edelstein in 1935. Unlike Edelstein, he attempted to give an explanation of the growth of Zionism in his very first report. “Economic liberalism is on the decline everywhere”, he wrote, with autarky and self-sufficiency providing new, popular slogans.⁵⁷⁸ According to Grünwald, the recent developments followed a scenario familiar from the last centuries of the Middle Ages when they heralded the general persecution of Jews in several countries. Analogously, “countries undergoing economic crisis” in the present “would like to get rid of significant parts of their Jewish populations”,⁵⁷⁹ which explains why “Palestine became the main target of Jewish immigration in recent years.”⁵⁸⁰ In other words, negative developments in the outside world and the growing dangers of life in the Diaspora were the cornerstones of Grünwald’s explanation, but his reflections might also be read as expressing the necessity of the Jewish reception and implementation of autarkic theories.

that the word “world” here clearly referred to the Jewish. The greatest novelty in his discourse was that in 1933 he formulated expansionist plans that bespoke great territorial ambitions. “There is a large possibility of settlement in the territories surrounding the Holy Land and it is hoped that Jewry would slowly push forward into these places”, he wrote. *Ibid.*, p.246. He specifically mentioned the possibility of settling Transjordan, which “could only become dynamic through Jewish settlements”, but Syria and Iraq (“formed from territories of ancient Assyria and Babylon”) also appeared in the same context. *Ibid.*, p.246.

⁵⁷⁷ Samu Szemere, “Edelstein Bertalan” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.317.

⁵⁷⁸ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az 5694. és 5695. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.313.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.313.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.313

Even though Grünwald at one point called James de Rothschild the father of “Jewish colonization”, his discourse on Palestinian developments was of a very different kind: the overall picture emerging out of his presentation had nothing to do with imperialism. In his telling, the land was to become “the land of productive labor. It requires sacrifices and enthusiastic work in the interest of the Jewish homeland.”⁵⁸¹ As opposed to Edelstein, who recurrently stressed Jewish unity, Grünwald emphasized that internal Jewish oppositions and tensions were “rather sharp” in Palestine.⁵⁸² After Edelstein’s rather uncritical attitude, Grünwald’s articulation of some unfulfilled desires is all the more conspicuous: “We expected more, we expected the development of a better, healthier and more just life on the ancient land. The renewal of the Holy Land ought to give us assurance and hope for the future, after all the painful phenomena in the Galuth.”⁵⁸³ At the same time, he seemed to have discursively shared Edelstein’s conviction that practically all Jews showed special interest in the events taking place over there.⁵⁸⁴

Grünwald responded with a paradox to the moot question of the Arabs: on the one hand, he was convinced that “the constructive work can only be in their interests”, but warned that developments were likely to lead to the strengthening of their national consciousness and the spread of Pan-Islamic ideas – so much so that Palestine was already the center of “anti-Jewish and Pan-Islamic” propaganda.⁵⁸⁵ Thus, he had to face the fact that

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p.319.

⁵⁸² Ibid., p.320.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p.322.

⁵⁸⁴ He did employ the concept of global Jewry (egyetemes zsidóság), in addition to the reports being based on this concept. He wrote, for example, that “a million and a half Jews in the Soviet Union are torn away from global Jewry and from their own past” or that the Jews of the United States were “about to take up the role of the defender of the global interests of Jewry” (in the original: készül átvenni a zsidóság egyetemes érdekeinek védelmét). Grünwald Fülöp, “Az elmúlt év története. 5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.311 and p.318.

⁵⁸⁵ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az 5694. és 5695. év” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.321. The most relevant aspect of the Arab plans to create a federation (i.e. the one worth stressing in IMIT) was that it was “directed against the foundation of the Jewish state”. Ibid., p.322. When discussing the movement for Islamic unification, Grünwald

in spite of the economic and financial developments of the previous ten years, the political relations had deteriorated. Tensions between Arabs and Jews were starting to feel much worse than before: according to his report, the outbreak of a wave of frightening Arab terrorist acts was the chief problem of the day.

As we approach the end of the 1930s, Grünwald grows increasingly pessimistic. He confessed already in 1936 that he saw emigration as the only remaining “safety valve”. Even though he still believed it to be perfectly justified that the Jews should demand from their present homelands (such as Poland with the largest Jewish population in the world) to provide them with an opportunity to lead decent lives, he maintained that the present situation required at least larger waves of emigration.⁵⁸⁶ His conclusion from this year summed up succinctly both the difficulties and the strength of the national movement and deserves to be quoted in its entirety: “the Jewry of Eretz was forced to live through difficult months, but since it has deep roots in the ancient ground under its feet, it has managed to pull through the storm.”⁵⁸⁷ Grünwald’s evaluation from a year later is much less confident: “In the land of Eretz Israel, the vision of the future full of hope has turned pale this year.”⁵⁸⁸ Grünwald reported that regular outbursts of protests were accompanied by the uprising of “terrorist groups” and a wave of strikes that lasted for approximately half a year.⁵⁸⁹

employed some Orientalist stereotypes too: “their Eastern fantasies seduce them, they dream of a Pan-Arab Empire.” Grünwald, “5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.321.

⁵⁸⁶ Grünwald, “5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.310.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p.327.

⁵⁸⁸ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt és története. 5697” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.298.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.298. It might seem like an important change in the Grünwald’ discourse at first sight that, in reaction to recent events, he spoke of “hindering of peaceful coexistence and mutual trust for long time to come.” Ibid., p.299. It is noteworthy that he nevertheless aimed to balance between the sides descending into an ever worse conflict. He briefly outlined the British plans to divide the territory through cantonization and argued that both sides protested against it with their one-sided understanding of who would remain with no more than a rump country (though the Arabs were more divided since the supporters of emir Abdullah were in

In 1938, the report began, for the first time, with developments in what he now kept on referring to as Eretz Israel, thought this arrangement did not become regular practice later on. Apparently forgetting about his previous assessment regarding the deteriorated situation, Grünwald expressed his trust that a solution would be found which both sides could accept as just and practical. He acknowledged that in order to achieve this both sides would have to make some concessions and show readiness to accept the decisions reached by a joint committee.⁵⁹⁰ While Grünwald considered agreement and mutual understanding with the Arabs highly important, due to the necessity of urgently finding a place for millions of persecuted Jews, he proposed that Jews should maintain their unquestionable rights based on “historical connections” and hold on to the platform of “the original plans for the Mandate”, i.e. the Balfour declaration – a proposal that was at least partly at odds with the political desirability of mutual concessions he elaborated elsewhere.⁵⁹¹ Both goals seemed necessary to him but were hardly reconcilable in the given circumstances.

Witnessing the Nazi persecution of Jews in Austria after the *Anschluss*, their brutal treatment as well as the swiftness of their expulsion, Grünwald thought that these developments provided “a sad justification for Herzl”.⁵⁹² The uncertain situation in Palestine, however, led him to believe that “large-scale emigration of the next decades will undoubtedly

favor of separation). He even mentioned Arab protests first: “Tiltakozások hangzottak el már korán az arabok és zsidók részéről a megcsonkítás ellen”. Ibid., pp.301-2. This shows that he was certainly not committed to the idea of the righteousness of Jewish demands in some absolutistic manner.

⁵⁹⁰ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.229. On the other hand, one of the unfavorable English proposals (which would have left only a territory of 5 500 km² as Jewish land) was unacceptable because such a territory “could never accommodate the millions of people who need to emigrate from Europe”.

⁵⁹¹ The chances of making mutual concessions clearly worsened. Arab violence was directed not only against the English but flared up internally too, while violence between Arabs and Jews was now mutual. This fact did not remain hidden though Grünwald wrote of “antiterror”, which in fact was another sign of a right-wing shift. “The fact that the revisionist idea of the need to use antiterror has recently spread among the youth of the yishuv has an explanation in the terror that has lasted for two years.” Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.235.

⁵⁹² Ibid., p.252. Especially in his assertion that “who is a foreigner the majority will decide. It is a question of power.”

target Latin America”.⁵⁹³ A year later he went as far as claim that due to the major clashes “the entire future” of the National Home became “doubtful”.⁵⁹⁴ He maintained that terrorists have acquired frightening influence and the situation could best be described as a civil war. The only reason for hope he saw was that Arab resistance was quickly broken once the government was willing to show determination and demonstrate its power.

The uncertainty in the Holy Land was all the more saddening since “Palestine remained the only hope of millions of Jews”.⁵⁹⁵ In the meantime the Aliyah of refugees was on the way – though strongly opposed by British colonial policy, it could not be completely stopped.⁵⁹⁶ Hungarian Jews were now explicitly mentioned among the sources of this new, desperate wave of migration. According to Grünwald, in spite of a growing willingness to emigrate, Hungarian Jewry had not given up the fight for its “third emancipation” (after 1849 and 1867), and emigration remained its “final resort”.⁵⁹⁷

In addition to his rather detailed coverage of the first years of the war in 1940 (to be discussed in the next subchapter), Grünwald articulated his conviction that “the general human problem of Jewry can only be solved through a generous political deed”.⁵⁹⁸ In his

⁵⁹³ Ibid., p.269.

⁵⁹⁴ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.304.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., p.306.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p.312. At this point, Grünwald took a clear stance against the division of the territory. He maintained that due to political, administrative and financial reasons it would be very difficult to implement. The MacDonald White Paper from 1939, which signaled the new English political line, also rejected the idea of division, but aimed to drastically limit Jewish immigration (whereby many Jews were shocked). Grünwald maintained that the National Committee would fight till the last possibility against this severe restriction that, as we know, had catastrophic consequences. A movement of civic disobedience sprang up, the desire to become independent of the state was much more marked than before and Jews began to make attempts at economic self-sufficiency. Mobilization was at a level which quickly transformed even some nominally defensive measures into aggressive ones. In Grünwald’s formulation “after three years of Arab terror, nowadays Jewish counterterror is to be held responsible for the newest victims”. Ibid., p.312. In spite of his preferences, Grünwald did not wholeheartedly embrace the terrain of political activism: he wished to report from a somewhat distanced position. He wrote, for instance, that “we cannot know whether the nation building under way in Palestine will continue or the flames of hatred will set all accomplishments of Jewry on fire here too”. Ibid., p.315. In my reading such lines of his did not aim to mobilize but merely expressed his skepticism.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., p.328.

⁵⁹⁸ Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. 5700” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.305.

eyes, it was essential that “the need for an independent Jewish homeland” be recognized as a matter of primary importance.⁵⁹⁹ This declaration of preferences might have seemed especially urgent also because by this time the war spread to Palestine, immigration was stalled for months and new plans were supposedly being discussed which, if implemented, would have reduced the Jewish territory to a “mere ghetto”.⁶⁰⁰ By 1941, Grünwald’s position changed: he considered the “ultimate solution” of the increasingly desperate Hungarian situation to be reachable through “emigration organized from above” to the “unified Jewish state”.⁶⁰¹ In his last report published in the yearbook of 1942, Grünwald could finally write of a calmer year in Eretz Israel. He continued to report on Jewish attempts to reconcile two aims, namely striking peace with the Arabs and establishing a Jewish majority in the territory.⁶⁰²

In an important passage, he quoted the official Zionist view on the global relations among Jews according to which America had “material primacy”, but intellectual-spiritual (*szellemi*) leadership and the right to determine the direction of the future belonged to Zion.⁶⁰³ In fact, the thesis on the development of intellectual life in Zion was the most

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., p.305.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p.308.

⁶⁰¹ It is not quite clear from his wording to what extent this reflected his sober assessment of the situation and to what extent it mirrored the change in his preferences and normative stance, but it is highly probable that the former was the case. In Grünwald’s eyes, the main difficulty was that the livelihood of Jews had to be ensured simultaneously with organizing their emigration. As he emphasized the senselessness of staying and the difficulties of leaving, Grünwald also discussed that half a million people in the Yishuv found themselves in opposition to the power holders of the Mandate. It was an understandable ambivalence on his part, but an ambivalence nevertheless that he expressed his joy over the “improvement of relations with the Arabs” but explicitly regretted that no Jewish majority could yet emerge due to the complete blockade of further settlement. Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, pp. 321-2.

⁶⁰² He wrote that “Jewry looks for an agreement with the native population, but no longer wants to be in a minority even in its ancient homeland.” Fülöp Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. (5702.)” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.351. He continued to see the chief problem in the radical restrictions of immigration and referred to an independent Jewish army as the most important current Jewish demand.

⁶⁰³ Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.324. His image of the future in the early 1940s is illustrated by remarks such as the one on the Technical School of Haifa and the University of Jerusalem, which he believed would soon provide education for the whole of “European youth”.

recurrent element of his reports: in 1936 he wrote on “the higher form of flourishing of new Hebrew culture”,⁶⁰⁴ in 1937 he maintained that “the development of intellectual life realizes the concept of Achad Haam about the Jewish intellectual center”,⁶⁰⁵ intellectual life was “progressing further” in 1938,⁶⁰⁶ and in 1940 Jewish intellectual life was “developing in the ancient land”.⁶⁰⁷ This continuous potential to grow implied no less to him than “Eretz Israel would increasingly turn into the educator of Jewish youth and become the intellectual center for the entire Galuth”.⁶⁰⁸

The second part of this subchapter provides brief overviews of those writings that dealt exclusively with Palestinian themes. The affiliation of their authors with the Zionist movement was evident and requires no special proof. It is the details of their discussions in the volumes that should much rather merit our attention. A report on an aspect of the Hebrew renaissance was first released in the yearbooks of 1931 through József Patai’s portrait of Yehuda Leb Gordon, a Hebrew poet born in 1830 (practically a hundred years earlier) who died “lonely and forlorn” forty years before – and whose poems Patai translated for *IMIT* twenty years before this portrait was written. Patai wished to demonstrate the huge contrast between the days of Gordon’s death and the present times: when Gordon passed away, he was hailed as “the last Hebrew poet” and thus, the afterlife of his art seemed highly uncertain, but the newly founded Hebrew University dedicated the year 1930 to his memory and an “impressive reception” of his works was under way in Hebrew.

⁶⁰⁴ Grünwald, “5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.327. Higher than what political and economic developments showed.

⁶⁰⁵ Grünwald, “5697” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.304.

⁶⁰⁶ Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.240.

⁶⁰⁷ Grünwald, “5700” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.310.

⁶⁰⁸ Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.241.

Ervin György Patai announced his conviction that “the Jewish people have lived in constant yearning for the Land”.⁶⁰⁹ He also articulated his prognosis about the “recreation of proper relations” between the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora. “Palestine will irresistibly draw Jewry into its spiritual orbit as it once did, back in the times of the first diasporic centuries. Thus the existence of Jewry in the Galuth, so threatened right now in the absence of spiritual bases, shall be secured.”⁶¹⁰ In 1934, he wrote confidently that “in the intensity of its life as well as its cultural production” the Holy Land had already emerged as the center of gravity for global Jewry.⁶¹¹ Beyond the intellectual sphere, the centrality of the land was also reflected in its economic life. Thus, the goal for the near future would have to be no less than to turn Palestine into a decisive influence in religious matters too – which, he argued, was anyway well deserved on the basis of the moral weight of the place.⁶¹²

What he saw in the territory of the Mandate he interpreted as the “development of the life of a people” in “all its multiplicity and colorfulness.” For Patai, the emergence of true peoplehood was closely related to a “higher form of connectedness to the land”.⁶¹³ He added that new works of the Yishuv, although closely tied to the land, also had high spiritual content. At the same time, he construed a sharp opposition between the “natural” culture of the Holy Land and the “artificial” culture that supposedly characterized

⁶⁰⁹ Ervin György Patai, “Sabbatai Zevi alakja a modern zsidó irodalomban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.253.

⁶¹⁰ Ervin György Patai, “A jeruzsálemi héber egyetem” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.197. He thought that the existence of the Hebrew University was highly important for three basic reasons, one of which he called psychological (i.e. that Jews can be sure there is a place they can turn to), another he labeled real (that Jews are coming to teach and learn in Jerusalem), and the third as a cultural center, a role that was admittedly yet to be fully realized. Ibid., p.195. In his eyes, the real gate to the Jewish spirit (*szellem*) was Jerusalem. He called it the city of Jewish thought, which Tel Aviv could merely complement by providing means of modern technology. Ervin György Patai claimed that “even though the largest part of books, journals and dailies are released in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem is behind this production”. Ervin György Patai, “Kultúrélet a Szentföldön” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.304.

⁶¹¹ Ervin György Patai, “Kultúrélet a Szentföldön” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.295.

⁶¹² Ibid., p.306.

⁶¹³ The existence of the Jewish people as a people he simultaneously defined by its past and the “miraculous air” and “clean surroundings” that characterized the land.

most Jewish communities of the Galuth.⁶¹⁴ At one point, he even tried to agitate: “come and see”, he wrote, how markedly different the life of the Yishuv was from “the catastrophe befalling German Jewry, the continuous weakening of Hungarian Jewry, the constant drastic losses of Russian Jewry, the impoverishment of American Jewry, the misery of Polish Jewry or the oppression of Yemenite Jews”.⁶¹⁵

Avigdor Hamméiri’s rather sketchy “A magyar irodalom élete Palesztinában” (Hungarian literature in Palestine) was interested in the opposite way of exerting literary impacts and his contribution had a somewhat different tone too.⁶¹⁶ At the time of writing, Hamméiri lived in the territory of the Mandate and understandably, he used the expression “by us” to refer to Palestine.⁶¹⁷ In his study, he described the differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem by pointing out that Tel Aviv was the city of Hechalucianism as well as the intellectual center where the Writers Union and the Hebrew section of the Pen Club were located. Its dominance was almost complete, only to be broken “by one exception: the entry of Hungarian literature into Hebrew culture”.⁶¹⁸ According to Hamméiri, Hungarian literature “had its first canonization in the sacred city of Jerusalem” that happened primarily through the notable successes of the works of Sándor Petőfi, Imre Madách and Endre Ady.⁶¹⁹ Next to the proud evocation of these successes, he also discussed the local reception of Hungarian

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., p.310.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., p.311. In his later contribution titled “Szentföldi panoráma” (Panorama of the Holy Land, which he submitted as Rafael), he called Zionism “perhaps the most noteworthy political and economic experiment of our age”. He characterized the project by saying that the Jewish people “aim to peacefully occupy and build up the country which used to be their home thousands of years before”. Rafael Patai, “Szentföldi panoráma” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.247. As opposed to Grünwald, but in agreement with Edelstein, Rafael Patai painted a picture of Jewish unity in Zion, writing on the social and cultural amalgamation of Eastern and European Jews. Ibid., p.253.

⁶¹⁶ He made significant contributions to this presence, for instance, by translating Endre Ady’s poetry.

⁶¹⁷ Avigdor Hamméiri, “A magyar irodalom élete Palesztinában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.258. He migrated there from Hungary after the First World War where he used to publish as Albert Kova-Feuerstein and even edited a short-lived Hebrew paper titled *Hajehudi*.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., p.254.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p.254.

Jewish scholarly giants such as Vilmos Bacher, Lajos Blau, Immanuel Löw or Mihály Guttmann, and concluded that “the scholarly life of Palestine has also felt the profound impact of Hungarian genius”.⁶²⁰ His more general claim was that “adding all these up, it becomes clear that the influence of Hungarian culture on New Hebrew culture is way greater than what could reasonably be expected.”⁶²¹ In sum, Hamméiri broadened the history of the relations and transfers between Hungary and the Yishuv by relating to non-Jewish authors while trying to reverse the clichéd claims about the rather weak Hungarian Jewish participation.

The last source I would like to explore is the scattered remarks on Palestine and Zionism that appear in writings with different thematic and can enrich my findings with some relevant data. The series of Aladár Fürst’s articles on Jewish secondary education (that deal with German, imperial Hungarian and Polish territories) are particularly rewarding from this aspect. In his second article, Fürst confronted the issue of educated Jews who had Hungarian citizenship prior to 1920 but ended up outside the borders of Hungary. They used to be subjected to theories that claimed they had a keen interest in Hungarian national assimilation, but since then the Jewish national movement proved rather popular among them (to an extent that was unmatched by Jews of post-Trianon Hungary). Fürst’s explanation of this change of heart contended that “severe spiritual crises accompanied the change of rule. They prepared the way for another kind of solution that approaches the Jewish national standpoint or might even fully share it.”⁶²² In other words, he tried to account for the widespread adoption of the Jewish national platform by referring to its compensatory nature

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p.260.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p.261.

⁶²² Aladár Fürst, “Nagymagyarország zsidó középiskolái” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.210.

in relation to the negative consequences of the Hungarian tragedy.⁶²³ In the third article of the series, “Lengyel zsidókról és iskoláikról” (On Polish Jews and their Schools), Fürst reported on his experiences and attempted to draw some general lessons on the postwar situation and evaluate Jewish political developments. In this article, the two matters became tightly connected: in the newly formed, multiethnic Poland “Jews had to face the dilemmas of old versus new patriotism when nationalities on multiple sides wanted to claim <<anationals>> as their own”. He thought that in this situation making “the self-conscious Zionist choice showed a way out and, with its modern slogans of independent and autonomous peoplehood combined with the inherent nostalgia all Jews feel towards the Holy Land and the language of their ancestors, it managed to acquire notable power especially among the youth who were short on other ideas”.⁶²⁴

Zionism thus appeared as a phenomenon that mostly concerned the young and seemed largely to be a choice forced on the Jews in the course of a competition that did not truly concern them, offering them a way to escape from the nationalist struggles of non-Jews. On the other hand, it also provided modern, up-to-date answer to ancient, unchanging and generally cherished desires – but especially to those who were young and thus without other commitments and insights. In this single sentence as well as in the article as a whole, stronger

⁶²³ In 1931, Fürst discussed Jewish secondary education on the example of a school complex catering for 650 pupils in Temesvár/Timișoara (gymnasium, Realschule and trading school). He maintained that the gymnasium part of the complex produced the best student results in the whole of Romania. The complex was supported by the Jewish National Alliance as well as the religious community and, accordingly, education was held in it in a national and religious spirit. Fürst attempted to explain this by pointing to four factors: the aim to avoid humiliations, the narrowing gap between various Jewish groups, the awakening of Jewish national sentiment and the defense of minority cultural interests. It is noteworthy that this description included the animosity of the new Romanian rulers as well as the steps necessitated by the newly gained minority status, but the transformation of Hungarian – Jewish relations in Romania did not receive any treatment. He also reported on the Tarbut cultural Zionist association’s school in Kolozsvár / Cluj that provided education on a national basis, in the Hebrew language until its forced Romanianization in 1923 and its subsequent closure in 1925. He also wrote on the gymnasium of Munkács / Munkacevo (belonging to the Carpatoukranian part of Czechoslovakia at the time) which taught in Hebrew, propagated the Jewish national platform in its educational practices, but lacked state support and was thus in an uncertain situation and in a rather poor material condition.

⁶²⁴ Aladár Fürst, “Lengyel zsidókról és középiskoláikról” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.274.

kinds of justificatory statements mixed with rather apologetic-sounding notions, which makes it difficult to decide whether Fürst wished to provide a reasonable apologia for the increased popularity of the Jewish national program without identifying himself with it, or rather else tried to justify it as being the (theoretically as well as practically) right choice for Jews.

In a similar vein, Henrik Horvát, wrote about Zionism as a means of regaining Jewish dignity in his “Az antiszemitizmus a humanitás ítélőszéke előtt” (Anti-Semitism at the Court of Humanity). Discussing the ideas of prince Gréciano, Horvát stated that he was convinced that it offered a path to reach the “sacred work of peace”, and considered its realization necessary.⁶²⁵ In the early 1930s, hopes were explicitly articulated elsewhere too, but like here, they tended to be combined with qualifications and a moderate level of trust in what the future would bring.⁶²⁶

Besides the annual reports, the contributions made by members of the Patai family and Hamméiri, the article series of Fürst and the thoughts of Horvát, Simon Gedő published an article on a crucial person in the history of Zionist thought: he briefly explored the thinking of Martin Buber who was widely considered representative of the previous three

⁶²⁵ Henrik Horvát, “Az antiszemitizmus a humanitás ítélőszéke előtt” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.161. He added that even if its materialization would end up producing only more modest results than originally hoped, it would still constitute a significant achievement

⁶²⁶ When plans for the Jewish Museum were discussed in 1933, it was brought up that “the past as well as the present of the ancient home of Jews, the land of Palestine ought to be included”. “Igazgatósági jelentés (1932. dec. 26.)” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.308. In the middle of the 1930s, we find two further references to Zionism: Bernát Mandl mentioned when presenting the life of the 16th century “selfless diplomat” Don Josepf Nasi (who labored in the interest of a peace treaty between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans) that even though few know his name, he might well be seen as one of forerunners of Zionism. Nasi wanted to acquire an island from Venice for the purpose of Jewish settlement. Bernát Mandl, “Don József Nászi és az 1568. évi drinápolyi osztrák-magyar-török békekötés” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.244. Addressing the question of negative phenomena in the intellectual life of the Galuth, Mihály Guttmann tentatively formulated the idea that “the literary shortcoming that some want to view as arising directly out of the Jewish genius, should perhaps be viewed, above all, as a problem of the Galuth”. Mihály Guttmann, “A Talmud sorsa” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.15.

decades of German Jewry.⁶²⁷ Buber was depicted as a humanist standing on the platform of “formal nationalism” and religious conservatism whose goal was to synthesize the Enlightenment and mystical, particularly Hasidic currents to achieve the renewal of human community through a “spiritual, cultural and ethical” form of Zionism – which he considered a mere part of the larger movement of Jewish Renaissance.⁶²⁸ Gedő emphasized that for these reasons, Buber should at once be considered a Zionist, a German Jew and a person of interconfessional merit and relevance.

The most daring Zionist idea in the course of the 1930s was formulated by Lajos Blau, who, borrowing the theory from Klausner, offered a chauvinistically Jewish interpretation, which can only superficially be read as pro-Arab. In his “A Talmud mint az ókori keleti élet tükre” (The Talmud as Mirror of Ancient Eastern Life), Blau wrote that “Ancient Jewish life is best maintained by the Arabs in Palestine in whose veins much Jewish blood flows, so much so that the majority of Arab inhabitants might be of Jewish descent, taking into consideration the fact that there were too few Arab conquerors to populate the land.”⁶²⁹

By contrast, in his historical analysis titled “A romantikus zsidószemlélet irodalmunkban” (The Romantic View on Jews in our Literature), Jenő Zsoldos claimed that it appeared natural in the “air of romanticism” that “Jews have eternally yearned for their ancient homeland. Hungarian literary opinion did not question their right to Jerusalem

⁶²⁷ In the evaluation of Gedő, the “high intentions of Buber are among the most effective forces of Israel today.” Gedő, “Buber” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.187.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., p.167.

⁶²⁹ Lajos Blau, “A Talmud mint az ókori keleti élet tükre” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.27. At this time, there were several other signs of the Hungarian reception of Klausner. For instance, Ervin György Patai wrote in the same volume of 1934 that the orientation of his party was “fascistic and nationalistic”. Ervin György Patai, “Kultúrélet” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1934, p.306.

either.”⁶³⁰ The reader might conclude from these words that Zsoldos wanted to present the Jewish national program as entirely normal and thereby justify it, but his historical reflections dealt specifically and exclusively with the 19th century. He went on to claim that, as a general principle, there was an inverse relation between the popularity of such programs and the situation in Europe: once the latter started to improve in earnest, the former rapidly declined. This meant that circumstances and circumstances alone, not some absolutely valid principle, could explain such Jewish “yearnings.”

In the 1930s, with the tragic and drastic (but by no means all encompassing, as we shall see in Chapter VI) decline of the prestige of German and the further rise of English and modern Hebrew, it became an open question which language would serve as the *lingua franca* of Jewish scholarship in the future – supposing that one dominant center would emerge in the first place. Sámuel Löwinger clearly argued in favor of Hebrew when (apropos the works of Blau) he maintained that “his historical studies in Hungarian can only become the common treasure of the whole of Jewry once they become accessible in Hebrew. Towards the end of his life, Blau shared this conviction, and encouraged his pupils who knew Hebrew well to translate their Jewish historical studies.”⁶³¹ Elsewhere, Löwinger propagated very similar ideas of his own: discussing the impact of the “Greek-Arab age” he remarked that Jewish authors wishing “to count on the interest of the universe of Jewry and readers in centuries or even millennia to come, have to express themselves in the *Hebrew language*”.⁶³² Besides the linguistic question, Löwinger was also interested in the specific complexity and paradoxical aspects of the Jewish national project that he elaborated in his “A zsidó nép szerepe világtörténeti megvilágításban” (The Role of the Jewish People Approached from

⁶³⁰ Jenő Zsoldos, “A romantikus zsidószemlélet irodalmunkban” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.278.

⁶³¹ Löwinger, “Blau” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.39.

⁶³² Löwinger, “Hagyományos” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.49.

World Historical Perspective). He was alone among the authors of IMIT with providing some reflections on the special difficulties of Zionism resulting from the diverse geographic and social places Jews presently occupied. After referring to some general problems of contemporary history such as the lack of stability,⁶³³ and the acceleration of historical changes,⁶³⁴ he explicated that Jews possessed their own history and had closed communities, but their situation was nevertheless multifaceted and confusing. He believed that “every people wishes to find its way through exploring its past [...] this poses a particularly difficult task for Jewry. Their various units happen to live within groups of people with the most diverse fates and attitudes”.⁶³⁵ The Jewish problem of being scattered over many different places was thus conceptually complemented in this text by Löwinger’s rather unusual mixture of calling Jews a people (*nép*) and imagining them as living *within* larger communities.⁶³⁶

Bernát Heller evoked a different kind of duality when discussing the political position of one of the most outstanding persons of Hungarian Jewish scholarship, Ignác Goldziher. In his “Goldziher Ignác emlékezete” (The Memory of Ignác Goldziher) this major Orientalist scholar appeared as someone who combined an affirmative stance towards the “homecoming of Jews to the Holy Land” (although he did not feel the need to follow up on this stance personally) with a negative predisposition towards the Jewish national program. He “desired that persecuted Jews should find a home in the Holy Land, and live in fraternity with Christians and Muslims there. He felt and confessed that in the prayers so dear to him

⁶³³ He wrote that “the cultural and power bases of the whole of humanity” have become unstable in the recent past. Löwinger, “Világtörténeti” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.128

⁶³⁴ He maintained that there “never has there been so many events of global significance as in the past quarter of a century”. Ibid., pp. 127-8.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., p.128.

⁶³⁶ This is indeed a rare combination: conceiving of a group as a people usually implies not only a notable level of inclusion and exclusion (closedness was Löwinger’s term) but also their relative independence. Not so in this text.

the love for Zion was expressed.” Heller added that “there was no national element in his deeply felt religiosity”, that Goldziher in fact kept his distance from Zionism.⁶³⁷ On the pages of this recollection, the basic conceptual difference between Goldziher and Löwinger becomes apparent: the former, living at the time of the last (and arguably most impressive) cultural flourishing of the Habsburg Monarchy, conceived of Jewry above all as a religious community (a denomination, in legal terms), while Löwinger, writing in the age when the concept of peoplehood was spreading more widely, could accept and further its use even without denying the difficulties of its application to Jews.⁶³⁸

The main lesson of this subchapter is that even though the *IMIT yearbooks* devoted limited space to developments in the territory of the Palestinian Mandate and gave even less attention to the characteristics and history of the Zionist movement (to the extent that the term Zionism was hardly ever used), all three groups of authors who somehow dealt with the topics, i.e. report writers, people writing about (and usually from) the Yishuv and the occasional contributors on related themes, were generally supportive of the Jewish agenda there.⁶³⁹ The annual reports dealt with the fate of Jewish groups around the world and this theme evidently implied that Jews living across political and linguistic borders belonged together – at least emotionally and spiritually. Pursuing this basic thematic obviously cannot

⁶³⁷ Bernát Heller, “Goldziher Ignác emlékezete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.25. In one of his letters from 1889, Goldziher announced that he would travel from Jerusalem to Hungary and described this as a “return home”. Ibid, p.25. Heller provided only this one illustration to support his claim, which was meant to “clear” Goldziher’s reputation of Zionist sympathies. It was a somewhat unusual claim, though it followed from Heller’s attempt to explain the details of Goldziher’s profound religiosity.

⁶³⁸ Heller stressed this contrast by arguing that the golden age of Hungarian Jewry had ended and proposing that “we should look back at the glory from the darkness of today.” Ibid., p.8. In his interpretation, the age of Goldziher, i.e. the decades between Világos (referring to the loss of the War of Independence in 1849, the year before the birth of Goldziher) and Trianon meant for Hungarian Jewry no less than the age of Pericles for Hellas, the rule of Augustus to Rome, the “great century for the French or the Weimar decades for the Germans.” Ibid., p.7. Károly Sebestyén maintained that in the last years of his life, Goldziher was strongly averse to “bodily contact with those in whom he saw signs of the sick age.” Károly Sebestyén, “Goldziher, az ember” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.48.

⁶³⁹ On the other hand, openly critical voices and explicit anti-Zionist polemics cannot be found on the pages of these volumes at all.

be directly translated as an expression of support for Zionism. What is clear though is that these reports contributed to the sense that Jews who moved to Palestine were part of a vital undertaking (Edelstein communicated this very clearly), even if their tone was purposefully restrained and both authors, in line with the requirements of their task, preferred to remain in the role of observers. The centrality of Jews active in the Holy Land was particularly frequently and explicitly expressed when developments and relations in intellectual and cultural life were discussed.

Beyond this, the recurrent contributions of members of the Patai family prior to 1938, in particular the articles by Ervin György (later Rafael), added a more committed perspective to the yearbooks and occasionally brought in what was unmistakably the tone of agitation. Notably, such articles were no longer published beyond the mid-1930s. What is more, a similar decline can be observed in the third pool of sources: while in the mid-1930s several articles on unrelated topics touched upon the issues of Palestine and Zionism, there were hardly any such examples in the years of legal discrimination and the Second World War, barring two minor cases, one of which was merely a case of “potential echoes.”⁶⁴⁰ Overall, however, the attitude of this mainstream forum of Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly discourse towards Jewish initiatives in Palestine was far from negative (contrary to

⁶⁴⁰ In 1941, Pál Hirschler published his ideas on Jewish Messianism, in the course of which he formulated a sharp critique of the modern age. Among the mistakes and problems, he referred to what he saw as the subordination of religion to epochal currents as well as its unacceptable reform on essential points. He concluded his critique by writing that in the newest times “the future renewal of the people of Israel in the Holy Land is not believed and is even denied.” Pál Hirschler, “A zsidó messianizmus” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p. 95. The case of a “potential echo” is Zsigmond Telegdi’s conclusion of his “A kazárok és a zsidóság” (The Khazars and Jewry), where he argued that at the time Jewry “was especially enthusiastic about the existence a Jewish country, about Jewish people ruling a land”. Zsigmond Telegdi, “A kazárok és a zsidóság” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.282. Telegdi did not discuss to what extent Jewish conceptions and attitudes have changed in the meantime. Thus, it is possible (though by no means necessary) to suppose an analogous relation between what he stated about an example from a thousand years earlier and what he wanted to imply about his own age. On the theme of the Khazars and the work of Yehuda Halevi, see Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

some still widespread assumptions). While Jewish initiatives there were only occasionally discussed, the agenda of Zionism and its accomplishments were respected.

III. Germany and Nazism in IMIT

This closing subchapter on a version of the history of the present, the one emerging out of this centrally important Jewish Hungarian Jewish yearbook series, analyzes writings on German themes. The subchapter consists of three parts: the first discusses a key interpretation of German Jewish cultural history, “A német zsidók szerepe a német kultúrában” (The Role of German Jews in German Culture) by Henrik Horvát, which appeared in the 1937 yearbook. The second part briefly evokes a few comparative remarks that attempted to describe similarities and differences between German and Hungarian Jews and Jewries. The third, and most important task of this subchapter is to reconstruct, in a chronological fashion, how the large-scale and shocking contemporary German historical developments, the popularity and violent deeds of the Nazis, their rise to power and the ensuing beginnings of radical state-led anti-Jewish policy, its continuation and extension into most areas of life and, last but not least, the developments of the Second World War leading to genocide against European Jewry, were described and interpreted in IMIT.

As already noted in the subchapter introducing the *IMIT yearbooks*, there were altogether twelve pieces on German themes, and the number of writings that partly deal with German topics is even larger.⁶⁴¹ Such contributions appeared regularly, but with one exception there was never more than one per year. Four of them were authored by the

⁶⁴¹ Some studies ought to be mentioned here that aimed to show the impact of Jewish culture on Hungarian authors such as the five parts of Pollák Miksa’s “Madách Imre és a Biblia” and Bernát Heller’s study “Arany János viszonya a legendához és agádához” since Ludwig August Frankl and his German-language publications were presented as the central mediator between Jewish and Hungarian cultures in both cases.

Germanist József Turóczi-Trostler who liked to combine encompassing historical panoramas with effective micro analyses.⁶⁴² Two more were written by Bernát Heller (one of them, the one on Leopold Zunz was analyzed in a footnote above, end of Chapter 1, while the other, “Thomas Mann, az aggádista” appeared in the subchapter on Jewish contributions⁶⁴³), and were accompanied by several other works on German themes, including contributions to literary history such as Andor Vér’s “A zsidóság örök útja Stefan Zweig Jeremiásában” (The Eternal Path of Jewry in *Jeremias* of Stefan Zweig) or Erzsi Szenes’ article on Else-Lasker Schöler. It was mentioned not long ago that Fürst’s three articles on Jewish secondary education began with his coverage of relevant schools in Germany. On contemporary German Jewish thought, there was only a single article that dealt with Martin Buber, the leading spirit of a peculiar kind of German Jewish Zionism. Beyond these, Károly Sebestyén’s “A zsidóság története levelekben” (The History of Jewry in Letters) was also classified here since it offers a summary of a German book published in Vienna in 1935: an anthology edited by a lawyer and a pacifist originating from the Czech lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, Franz Kobler titled *Juden und Judentum in deutschen Briefen aus drei Jahrhunderten*.

The key text in this cluster is Henrik Horvát’s “A német zsidók szerepe a német kultúrában” which provided a rather elaborate and encompassing discussion of Jewish roles in 1937. At the beginning of his study, Horvát distinguished between two basic forms of Jewish impact: on the one hand, Jews impacted the fundamentals of German worldview

⁶⁴² “A zsidó-német irodalmi kapcsolatok kérdéséhez” (On the Question of Jewish-German Literary Connections), “Három klasszikus novella” (Three Classic Short Stories), “Jakob Wassermann”, “Stefan Zweig: Szellem és forma” (Stefan Zweig: Spirit and Form),

⁶⁴³ As quoted above, this article led to a direct, though one-sided polemic between them: Turóczi-Trostler called Heller’s interpretation of Thomas Mann *Joseph and his Brothers* (written from a Jewish point of view and focusing on the impact of the Aggadah) misleading.

through Christianity while, on the other hand, they contributed to German cultural achievements as individuals. Horvát argued that the former influence enabled, but did not necessitate the talk about Jewish impacts (somewhat similarly to what I have identified as controversial in the discourse on the Biblical-cultural contribution of Jews⁶⁴⁴). The latter question Horvát simplified by writing that in the case of the technical questions tackled by the exact sciences all the problems were (at least formally) the same for all peoples and therefore, there was no specifically German object of study. It was literature, the press and the arts that provided the kind of subjects where “what German Jews gave to Germandom and how much these contributions became integral parts of German culture” could be explored.⁶⁴⁵

Horvát’s theory was that the “majority” of German Jewish cultural work belonged to the “specifically national” category.⁶⁴⁶ His aim was twofold: on the one hand, he wanted to show the extent of such cultural impact on the basis of individuals of exceptional quality and, on the other, to discuss the “attitude and relation of the Jewish masses to German literature”. Horvát even offered a brief narrative of German-Jewish cultural history, according to which Jews have devoted themselves to German national literature since the very beginning, the days of Moses Mendelssohn. Horvát began with the entry of Jews into German culture under the “sign of philosophy” and emphasized the special role German Jewish women (such as Rahel Levin Varhagen, Henriette Herz or Dorothea Veit-Mendelssohn) played in creating and maintaining salons, those crucial places of polite

⁶⁴⁴ Horvát argued in favour of asserting this impact, but in a more concrete and circumscribed way than was often done on the pages of IMIT. His stance was that Christianity displayed an essential ethical identity with Judaism but also borrowed several aspects of it. He was also ready to accept that this impact could alternatively be conceived as an agreement, an overlap or a common heritage.

⁶⁴⁵ Henrik Horvát, “A német zsidók szerepe a német kultúrában” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.152.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p.152.

society and cultured interaction. He added that the relevance of Jews in the reception and popularization of German authors was unquestionable,⁶⁴⁷ but argued against exaggeration: since Jews constituted merely one percent of the inhabitants, they could never have made anyone truly popular on their own.⁶⁴⁸ At the same time, they did constitute a disproportionate share of the reading public and could thus acquire significant roles in supporting certain authors (Horvát mentioned the cases of Theodor Fontane and Thomas Mann).

At this point, Horvát reached a truly controversial question: he maintained that “in its own way even official anti-Semitism recognizes that Jews have shown strong interest in German literature”.⁶⁴⁹ This claim was intentionally subversive and not unfounded, but still misleading in the sense that it underestimated the nature of contemporary anti-Semitism: Nazi anti-Semitism in no way wanted to “recognize” this fact (not even in “its own way”), but rather used the label of Jewish as a racist denunciation of certain literary platforms and canons – Horváth himself mentioned Hauptmann, Wedekind, Heinrich and Thomas Mann and “even Goethe”⁶⁵⁰ as authors who were labeled “Jewish” or “Jewified”. Using a(n arguably overly) restrained tone and (too) polite formulations, Horvát nonetheless sought to

⁶⁴⁷ In his conclusion, Horvát questioned the approach that sought the merits of German Jews exclusively in their outstanding artistic achievements.

⁶⁴⁸ Horvát mentioned the role Varhagen played in the cult of Goethe, which led him to the following observation: “look at this German Jewish work in the interest of understanding and acceptance of the greatest German genius”. Ludwig Börne appeared as a “patriot of exceptional moral composure,” a satirical fanatic of liberty, the head of German emigration in Paris under the July Monarchy. Horvát pointed out that Börne managed to become the first great German publicist even though he was often negatively discriminated as a Jew and acquired the skills to write literary German relatively late in his life. Ibid., pp.156-7. Heinrich Heine, known best for his poetry, a rational romantic, a self-ironic but sentimental author deserved to be mentioned because he articulated the lyricism “present in the heart of the people” and reflected modern sentiments and thoughts. Ibid., pp.158-9. In all likelihood, Turóczi-Trostler would have qualified Heine as clearly Jewish due to the combination of sentimentalism and self-irony that Horvát believed characterized him.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p.165.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p.165.

reveal and contest the manic desire to stamp and delineate at all cost that would lead to the stigmatization and exclusion of Jews as a seemingly logical next step.⁶⁵¹

The ambivalence of this discourse is most notable at the last stage of the study. On the one hand, Horvát claimed that German Jewish carriers of culture “walk in the same line as non-Jews do, they are people of equal rank and merit, working in the interest of universal German culture”. On the other hand, the facts he quoted were meant to show that this cultural work was “important” and showed “the general ability of German Jews to create culture”.⁶⁵² Thus his sober polemic wanted to offer a discussion of Jewish contributions and merits and simultaneously prove complete equality and the absence of Jewish – non-Jewish differences. To simplify matters a bit, Horvát’s analytical focus was the Jewish collective but in his conception the Jewish collective was not an independent and active agent in history: it did and did not behave like a special collective.⁶⁵³

In his panorama of German Jewish schools, next to describing the German situation, Fürst also drew some comparisons with the *Philanthropin* in Frankfurt a.M., which he claimed was more similar to the gymnasium of Pest than any other school in Germany, though “like all German institutions, it implements its principles in a more determined fashion and more consistently” than the one in Budapest.⁶⁵⁴ As a further point of comparison, he added that in Germany the cause of Jewish schooling was almost exclusively taken up by

⁶⁵¹ For instance, he stated that “the masses of German Jews cannot be recognized by their speech” since they “speak the unmistakable dialect of their homelands”. Ibid., p.166. They could only be identified through their use of certain expressions of Jewish origin, but even these, he maintained, were employed well beyond Jewish circles.

⁶⁵² Ibid., pp.167-8.

⁶⁵³ One of the characteristics of this kind of apologetic discourse was that Horvát did not employ essentialist notions of Jewish specificities. The ambivalence of his text derived precisely from the fact that, while he wanted to question discourses on collective, essential character traits, he needed to defend the Jewish collective from accusations. The logical problem here was that special Jewish accomplishments only happened to be there – they followed from no specific cause since Jews were supposed to be just like others.

⁶⁵⁴ Aladár Fürst, “Németország zsidó középiskolái” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.239. On this organizational excellence, Fürst remarked also more generally that it could be considered the most characteristic strength or weakness of Germans, depending on the perspective.

conservative forces. Thus, the aim of these schools was “less to spread that shining light [of reason], but much rather the preservation of the atmosphere of warm reverence and religious intimacy”.⁶⁵⁵ One of the directorial reports also provided some comparative reflections in order to critique the state of Hungarian activities. The basis of this comparison, published in 1933, was that the material situation and overall numbers of German Jewry was similar to those of Hungarian Jewry, but that they nevertheless managed to maintain ten times as many scholarly journals and the volume of their book publications were also many times higher.⁶⁵⁶ In the *IMIT yearbooks* these brief remarks offer the most significant examples of direct comparison. Further examples of relating the two places and communities deal rather with German influences and Hungarian reception.

In the light of these assessments of German culture and the standing of the German Jewry, how did the authors of IMIT present and evaluate the ongoing events in Germany and on the territories coming under the control of the expanding Third Reich? Edelstein dealt with the dangerous looking current German events quite elaborately as early as in 1930. He devoted altogether five pages to the frightening political developments whose direction at this point remained uncertain. Demonstrating sharp foresight, he pointed out that

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., p.252. Fürst claimed to have encountered one liberal exception that therefore immediately qualified as the closest one to the gymnasium in Pest – though the size of this Frankfurt institution did not even approach that of the Boys’ and Girls’ Gymnasium in Pest with its 1 300 pupils. Moreover, the fact that the teachers in German Jewish schools belonged to diverse confessions appeared to him as the “most conspicuous fact” from “our national perspective”. Ibid., pp. 253-4.

⁶⁵⁶ “Wertheimer Adolf elnöki jelentése” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, pp. 253-5. Not to speak of further differences throwing similarly critical light on the Hungarian situation such as the much greater interest shown by Christian scholars in Jewish topics in Germany, or the almost complete absence of Jewish literary works, Zionist works and works on social policy in the Hungarian language. Bernát Heller maintained that this backwardness of *Hungarica Judaica* was not always so: in the age of the Dual Monarchy “Jewry gave to Hungariandom Vilmos Bacher, Ignác Goldziher and Mór Kármán, a sum value of such magnitude only German Jewry could compete with at the time, not French, English, Italian or other Jewries.” Heller, “Goldziher” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.7. Löwinger went even further, claiming that “the scholars at the Seminary were of such significance that no other Jewish theological institute in the world could pride itself with anything similar”. Löwinger, “Blau” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.16. This canonical (“immortal”) group (Löwinger mentioned Bacher, Bloch, Goldziher, Kaufmann and Blau) will continue to show to Hungarian Jews and Jewry at large “the great cultural significance Hungarian Jewry possesses within universal (*egyetemes*) Jewry”. Ibid., p.56.

“in Munich, the party of Hitler decided that it will continue its agitation until the Jewish question found a solution.”⁶⁵⁷ In 1931, he devoted even more attention to the Nazis, connecting their rise to the collapse of the (previously dominant) image of German reasonableness: the deeds and popularity of the Nazis annulled their generous previous reputation.⁶⁵⁸

The question of anti-Semitism around this time appeared more important than fascism. The assessment of fascist Italy, an important ally of Hungary, was not so negative, as it was emphasized that “the fascist party was far from accepting anti-Semitic conceptions.”⁶⁵⁹ Edelstein even believed that the “strengthening and unification” of Italian Jewry could be expected from Mussolini’s rule, especially since a new law had been passed regulating the life of religious communities.⁶⁶⁰ On the other hand, the troubling and threatening nature of the German situation was clearly perceived: Edelstein saw that in the uncertain and violent years before the Nazi *Machtergreifung* there was a grave danger of

⁶⁵⁷ Edelstein, “5689” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.293.

⁶⁵⁸ He wrote that “Hugenberg, the leader of the national party and Hitler, the national socialist party leader who counts on the lowliest passions of the lower members of society even more, have shaken our belief in the sobriety of Germans. They agitate the immature and irresponsible classes of the people and make defamatory calls to evil deeds.” Edelstein, “5690” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1931, p.300. By 1932, Edelstein made several condemning and mocking remarks about Germans, discussing them as the new leading anti-Semitic might. The foundation of the Hitler sects in the United States he called an unpleasant surprise which is “the newest achievement” of “the previously jealously followed German culture.” Edelstein, “5691” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.288. Concerning Alsace, he mentioned that it remained German in some respect as “a Jewish cemetery was attacked in a barbaric fashion there”. Ibid., p.290. He described the growing problems in Poland already two years earlier with the words. “Synagogues were attacked and desecrated, as if this was cultured Germany!” Edelstein, “5689” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1930, p.284.

⁶⁵⁹ Edelstein, “5692. és 5693.” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.225. Edelstein evoked the role of Jews among the 120 founders of the party as a reason for this.

⁶⁶⁰ Edelstein, “5691” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.291. In 1935 Grünwald complained that Jews could not even count on the understanding of national minorities, so much so that “the international meeting of fascists formulated a more condemning statement on the deprivation of German Jewish rights” than the international meeting of national minorities. Grünwald, “5694. és 5695.” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.298. In the report from the mid-1930s we also find the opinion about “the Duce”, who “directs every movement” that he “condemns all forms of anti-Semitism”. Ibid., p.311. In 1936, Grünwald stated that Jews “consider the aims of fascism as their own” and even quoted Mussolini who announced that Italian and Jewish ideals had been merged. Grünwald, “5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.315.

Germany “being swallowed up in mass anger and the outbreak of passions”.⁶⁶¹ Anti-Semitism was depicted as a central and consensual issue in German politics even before 1933: Edelstein wrote that “an undeclared civil war was raging, in which several parties find common ground on one issue, their hatred of Jews”.⁶⁶² Even so, the rise of (what he continued to call) the party of Hitler (*Hitler-párt*) undoubtedly continued to cause the greatest shock and fear.⁶⁶³ As the main reason of their unexpected, stunning electoral successes, Edelstein referred to the desperation of the populace to which “only economic improvements” could provide proper remedy.⁶⁶⁴

In 1933, in an attempt to indicate the sharp contrast between German history and the character of the new regime he evoked the famous formula of Wolfgang Menzel: “the nation of poets and thinkers can hardly be recognized any longer”.⁶⁶⁵ He characterized the beginnings of the Nazi regime thus: “the rule of open violence has started, individual freedom is suppressed with terror employed even just to frighten, and the most boundless hatred of Jews is manifested”.⁶⁶⁶ He pointed to extreme but realistic dangers: “it is often maintained that the Third Reich would starve or shoot its Jews dead”.⁶⁶⁷ This explicit prognosis from 1933 provides strong support for the often evoked thesis that the Nazis never

⁶⁶¹ Edelstein, “5691” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.292.

⁶⁶² Ibid., p.292.

⁶⁶³ While the sense of shock and fear was real, Edelstein also tried to mock the Nazi type of anti-Semitism and its grounding in the racist “Aryan theory.” He sought to reveal its absurdity, for instance, through making the ironic statement “It is quite miraculous that the Germanic [here he used the word “germán” instead of “német” – FL], so proud of his racial might and talent should find his gravedigger in merely 600 000 Jews”. Ibid., p.232.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., p.293.

⁶⁶⁵ Edelstein, “5692 és 5693.” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.211.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., p.215.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., p.212.

tried to hide their true intentions, and that there was no way to realize them except through genocide.⁶⁶⁸

Beside the horrific transformation of Germans, the reports also referred to Goebbels and Nazi propaganda. Its wild successes raised the problem of historical time: with the newest technical means Nazis managed to spread hatred in much more effective ways, frightening not only Jews but all those “who still believed in the slow but gradual improvement of humanity.”⁶⁶⁹ Edelstein recognized the heavy contradiction immediately upon the Nazi seizure of power: technical development detached from moral growth could have perverse effects.⁶⁷⁰

When Fülöp Grünwald took over the task of report writing in the mid-1930s, he began his first such contribution with words on the increasingly desperate German situation. The “victorious National Socialist revolution continues the work of internal regime consolidation”, he wrote. He asserted that the new Germany, the Third Reich was built on the idea of a racially defined German *Volk* and thus, non-Aryan citizens were reduced to second-class status – which he reported already right before the passing of the Nuremberg laws in

⁶⁶⁸ A further sign of immediate reaction is that the clear sense of the international danger Nazism posed changed a number of perspectives: Austria, which was constantly criticized earlier, now made an “admirable effort to preserve its independence and cultural autonomy” Ibid., p.223. The directorial report on the 29th of June 1933 also emphasized that “the most important event in Jewish history is the tragic change in the situation of German Jewry”. “Igazgatóság jelentés (1933. június 29.)”, p.309. This report stressed that “with the destruction of the force of German Jewry, Jewish scholarship is under threat too”, which was pointed out in order to state that beyond the pain and the feelings of sympathy the changes “oblige us [Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars – FL] who are so close to German Jewry both in spatial and cultural terms to accomplish additional tasks.” Ibid., pp. 309-10.

⁶⁶⁹ It constituted a special problem for Edelstein, just as for many others that “passions, blindness, racial hatred and the predilection to do harm have become dominant in a country that we used to think of as highly cultured”. Edelstein, “5692. and 5693.”, p.211. Later on, Grünwald also complained that the previously accepted teleology of history could no longer be applied since (as we quoted above) “contemporary events brought a catastrophic fall in the evolution towards complete Jewish legal equality, mercilessly breaking a line of development of a century and a half.” Grünwald, “5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.299. The fact that this was happening in the center of Europe, where “our ancestors began to live early on”, “out of its language jargon [meaning Yiddish] was developed” and “whose culture we have completely assimilated” all added to the inexplicability of this drastic turn. Ibid., p.299.

⁶⁷⁰ This seemingly unsolvable problem is that the development of means can surpass the evolution of morals and enable ever greater tragedies.

September 1935.⁶⁷¹ He emphasized that the process set in motion pointed towards the exclusion of Jews, and believed that the Nazis' ultimate intention was setting up a "new kind of ghetto".⁶⁷²

Unsurprisingly, Grünwald explained that the drastic changes had shaken German Jews "deeply and in their whole being", though he also claimed that Jews began to recover from the initial shock and the accompanying sense of despair. "Being forcibly excluded from the German *Volksgenossenschaft* [*német népi közösség*], they now feel as part of the Jewish community" and had started to care for "their own culture." The forced cultural separation from Germandom thus also meant that shortly after 1933 Jewish papers "acquired a level of readership previously unseen in Germany". Grünwald remarked on similar tendencies in several other areas (such as those of cultural associations, sports, Jewish lectures, Hebrew language and, last but not least, the spectacular growth of religious observance).⁶⁷³ The preparation for mass emigration took place in hurried steps. Programs to achieve the reeducation of youth were also launched: the raising of He-Chalucs (pioneers) was becoming more and more widespread. We read in 1935 that German Jews counted with 200 000 emigrants in the course of the next ten years.⁶⁷⁴

The year after Grünwald had to report on the adoption of the Nuremberg laws that deprived Jews of the rights of citizenship and discuss the process of their gradual but encompassing exclusion and thorough economic ruin. In spite of these very tangible

⁶⁷¹ As relevant examples, he took the consistent discrimination being done to Jews in the bureaucratic practices and in the courtrooms of Nazi Germany.

⁶⁷² Grünwald "5694. és 5695." in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, pp. 293.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., p.296. The relatively calm year of 1937 received more cursory treatment. We only find out that German Jews "in line with the changing circumstances, continue to develop their own organizations" and that there was a Nazi directive that German Jews ought to exclusively serve Jewish culture. Grünwald, "5697" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.291.

⁶⁷⁴ Grünwald, "5694. és 5695." in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.296. In 1937, he concluded that everyone able to do so is leaving which will lead to the "sad destruction of Jewry so proud of its Germanness". Grünwald, "5697" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.292.

problems, Grünwald called “their humiliations and the denial of human dignity to them” the most painful development.⁶⁷⁵ In 1938, we read about the Nazis creating of a whole system of mechanisms to deprive Jews of their possessions.⁶⁷⁶ Grünwald addressed another, perhaps even more central Nazi objective: the one directed at the complete cessation of contact between Jews and non-Jews.⁶⁷⁷ He stressed even before the *Kristallnacht* that in order to achieve this goal, the Nazis would not shy away from any means – their “psychological terror” campaign was accompanied by public acts of physical terror. His interpretation was that the liquidation of the Jewish community was under way, which he supported by the arguments that one half of Jewish youth would have to emigrate within the next five years and that new statistics about Berlin showed that the rate of deaths was five times higher than that of new births.⁶⁷⁸

The evolution of Nazi politics posed a remarkable challenge to the analyst: it was radical from the very beginning but, especially in the later years of the regime, it would continuously reach new level of extremity. Grünwald reacted to this process with an

⁶⁷⁵ Grünwald “5696” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1936, p.302. In the discussion of fascist Italy a certain (though, as we shall see, temporary) change could be observed around this time. Even though Jewish legal equality was intact in Italy, “its conflict with Great Britain over foreign policy was enough to launch an attack on Zionism and Jewry” and start supporting the Arabs and Muslims. Grünwald, “5697” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, pp. 293-4. A year later Grünwald opined that Italian anti-Semitism “was not aimed at Italian Jews, but those international Jews who head the antifascist movement”. He added that the Italian state (or more precisely, its Minister of Culture and its *Informazione Diplomatica*) continued to deny the existence of the Jewish question and was again favorably disposed towards the establishment of the Jewish state. Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, pp. 261-2. These apologetic statements were probably offered to calm down worried Hungarian Jews – and let us not forget either that Mussolini was not only an important ally of Hungary since the second half of the 1920s, but at first he strongly opposed the *Anschluss* which would have brought the Nazis till the border of Hungary in the West.

⁶⁷⁶ Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.243. On the question of Jewish property, see Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., p.244.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., p.246. In 1939, he reported on the “increasingly rapid march of emigration and dying out” and added that not even this seemed to satisfy the total state. Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.263. He confirmed that the ultimate aim of Nazis remained “the removal of the last Jew from the territory of the Empire”. Ibid., p.279. Restrictive measures came into force gradually. It is deeply troubling to read Grünwald’s supposedly praising remark on the “admirable discipline” Jews manifested in reaction to them (*csodálatraméltó fegyelmezettséget tanúsít*). Ibid., p.268.

intriguing, essentially non-political theory: he marveled at how resourcefulness could be fuelled by hatred. In this manner, he managed to put the self-strengthening nature of the process into the center of his interpretation, arguing that “We start to hate whom we have hurt and so, the more we go on hurting the Jews, the more we need to raise hatred against them to justify our treatment”.⁶⁷⁹ He intuitively felt that what he saw was merely the beginning of something altogether more monstrous. He announced his fear ahead of the outbreak of the war in the following words: “The birth of any kind of internal opposition or the outbreak war with other countries could prove fatal for the German Jewish community”. Moreover, he directly accounted for the growth of anti-Semitism in other countries by the influence of Germany: he qualified Polish calls for economic boycott and the ongoing campaign for a Polish version of the “Aryan paragraph” as such cases.⁶⁸⁰

The internal Jewish situation dramatically worsened in the aftermath of the so called Night of Broken Glass (*Kristallnacht*): institutions of Jewish culture, with few exceptions, were abolished in Nazi Germany. Grünwald assessed this development by declaring that “an epoch of Jewish cultural history is coming to a close, the period of

⁶⁷⁹ Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.244. Later on the thesis of cumulative radicalization (defined in a rather different way from this though) functioned as the key element in the explanation of some German historians, perhaps most notably Hans Mommsen.

⁶⁸⁰ This anti-German line was reflected in some historical studies too. For instance, Henrik Guttman in his “Adalékok a magyar zsidók történetéhez a tizenhatodik században” (Date on the History of Hungarian Jews in the 16th Century) affirmed that “It is to be put to the Austrian or rather German influence that Jews were so often expelled from mining towns.” Henrik Guttman, “Adalékok a magyar zsidók történetéhez a tizenhatodik században” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.165. An even more interesting sign of this stance was that in 1943 Sámuel Löwinger claimed that Mihály Guttman released his *Das Judentum und seine Umwelt* in 1927 in German “not least because this was the language in which most of the works making the opposite judgment appeared”. Löwinger, “Hagyományos” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, p.58. The second part of this reference is not necessarily inaccurate, but as the justification of Guttman’s 1927 decision it does not sound too credible. (When we look back, we find for instance that in 1933, IMIT, or more specifically Adolf Wertheimer still praised the interest shown by non-Jewish Germans in Jewish subjects, for which he could not find Hungarian parallels.) There were counterexamples too: when he had to report on the destruction of the highly cultured Viennese Jewish community, Grünwald recalled that they were “fanatics of German culture and were enthusiastically committed to spreading it further”. Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1938, p.252. In 1939, he remarked that Jews had been “true fans and admirers” of the *Kaiserstadt*. Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.271.

German-Jewish culture, just like the Hellenic-Jewish and the Arab-Spanish-Jewish centuries disappeared into the depth of time prior to it. Those coming after us will assess the results of German-Jewish cooperation and interaction in philosophy, the most varied branches of scholarship and science, poetry and art in a fair manner.”⁶⁸¹ Imagining that once there will be such a historical distance from the contemporary events enabled him to paint a positive image of the future: in the face of the brutal suddenness and unprecedented force with which German Jewry was destroyed in front of his observing eyes, Grünwald articulated his encouraging conviction that later evaluations of the German Jewish community would be properly respectful and essentially just.

In 1940, after the outbreak of the war, Grünwald published rather elaborately on the events with a particular focus on anti-Jewish practices in the newly occupied Polish territories. “The most densely populated Jewish land in the world, Poland, has become a battlefield of war once again”, he pointed out to set the scene for his dramatic descriptions.⁶⁸² He mentioned the complete exclusion of Jews from the territories the Nazis had occupied, their forced separation from the Polish people and deportations to the area around Lublin – which he claimed was planned as a reservation for over half a million Jews.⁶⁸³ He estimated the number of Jewish victims to be around quarter of a million. Since we do not know the exact date of writing, it is hard to assess the accuracy of this, but it shall become clear that Grünwald had extended and reliable information on the events of the war and what was being done to European Jewry.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ Grünwald, “Elmult” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.270.

⁶⁸² Grünwald, “Elmúlt” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.290.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., pp.294-5.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., p.291.

In 1941, Grünwald once again published rather explicitly on recent developments. He claimed that in general the ongoing war was fought “for the reordering of Europe, and getting rid of the Jewish question [*a zsidókérdés elintézése* – FL] is one of the most important tasks towards this order”.⁶⁸⁵ He reiterated that the aim of the new Germany was to be *Judenfrei* (*zsidómentes*), but had to add that within the Empire Jewry already constituted a “quantité négligeable”, having lost more than 2/3 of its members – even though the Nazis were still not satisfied and continued to “call for its disappearance”.⁶⁸⁶ Grünwald declared that their principal aim was applied not only to the Reich, including its newly occupied territories, but also to allied states. This acquired extra meaning when he added that “Hungary conducts its policies in closest alliance with the Axis powers”.⁶⁸⁷ Put together these two statements reveal how courageously Grünwald communicated about the ongoing horrors and the extreme threats that Hungarian Jews might have to face soon.

Grünwald wrote explicitly on the new round of deportations which concerned all 45 000 remaining Viennese Jews: he reported that “Jewish transports to the area of Lublin, which have stopped temporarily, are again under way since February” and should deport the last Viennese Jew by the 18th of April.⁶⁸⁸ He referred briefly but revealingly to the extreme conditions in the newly created ghettos, mentioning for instance that the ghetto of Łódź had around 100 000 people in it,⁶⁸⁹ while Warsaw cramped a staggering 500 000 of them.⁶⁹⁰ He also wrote on the “horrible bloodbath” causing the death of many Jews that took

⁶⁸⁵ Grünwald, “Elmúlt” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.300.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., p.300.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., p.308. The practical consequence of this was that the creation of a separate Jewish legal status was “completed”. Grünwald, “Elmúlt” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1940, p.296.

⁶⁸⁸ Grünwald, “Elmúlt” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1941, p.302.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p.303. He referred to the city as “Litzmannstadt (Łódź)”.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., p.304. Due to its special relevance for Hungarian Jewish history, he stressed the significance of “the complete depopulation of Czech and Moravian Kehillas, “such as Nikolsburg, Ungarisch-Brod, Prossnitz, etc.”, that in the 17th and 18th centuries served as the mother towns of Hungarian Jewish communities”. Ibid., p.303.

place in Romania when the Iron Guard was forcefully defeated but nevertheless managed to wreak havoc,⁶⁹¹ and observed that in Slovakia “medieval restrictions were coming into force again” – though labor camps were also set up that were admittedly unknown in the Middle Ages.⁶⁹² The analogies suggested by this historically conscious author would prove only moderately useful to comprehend the times in the early 1940s.

In the course of his last report published in 1942, Grünwald wrote that “there were many pretexts to launch attacks against the Jews of the Galuth in the course of their almost two millennia of homelessness, but the most terrible accusation of them all is the one with which they are currently brought to the court of justice of history: international Jewry is responsible for the outbreak of war and has to be severely punished”.⁶⁹³ Hereby he voiced his realization that historical analogies would not be sufficient to describe the present, but at the same time he continued to employ misleading notions such as “the court of justice of history”. After all, how was the image of a court of justice supposed to be reconciled with the unfounded and most terrible nature of the accusation which brought the accused there and, even more to the point, the way they were treated in this collective criminal proceeding?

Grünwald was explicit in communicating that any nearly accurate descriptions of the events of war would lead to his punishment. Nevertheless, he wrote down many crucial facts, starting from the assertion that in the territory of Greater Germany, which he described as stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the banks of the Don, “the solution of the Jewish question at its root” had already started. He added that it was reported that the numbers Jews in Germany fell “well below 100 000”, its institutions could no longer be

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., p.314.

⁶⁹² Ibid., p.316.

⁶⁹³ Grünwald, “Az elmúlt év története. (5702.)” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1942, p.333.

maintained and thus, the “shared life of Germans and Jews dissolved completely”.⁶⁹⁴ Next to mass murder, Grünwald also wrote of deportations, where he stressed that instead of mere compulsory emigration, the forced movement of Jews was under way, i.e. the German state was taking masses of Jews involuntarily to pre-war Polish territories. He could find no historical analogy for this either since, as he emphasized, Jews could choose their destination even during the expulsions of the 14th and 15th centuries.⁶⁹⁵ Nazis and their collaborators created “closed Jewish reservations” there, sealed ghettos next to townships in which, to his knowledge, altogether 1 350 000 Jews were interned. Grünwald presented all these as temporary measures since “the great European *Lebensraum* [élettér] has to be completely freed from them after the war.”⁶⁹⁶ This contextualization was perhaps added to mislead censors, but probably it also had to do with his awareness of (as we know, mistaken) German expectation of quickly finishing the war as victors.

Why do I think that there was an intention to mislead? Because the article as a whole communicates the image of mass murder and, in spite of the use of some coded terms, there is no real need to read between the lines in order to see it. In addition to offering the facts on recent German moves (for instance, the creation of the special camp of Theresienstadt and forced expulsions from the Czech-Moravian provinces⁶⁹⁷), Grünwald also wrote on the deportations from the territory of Slovakia (and in this context used the expression the “final solution of the Jewish question”),⁶⁹⁸ the institution of forced labor in

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., p.335.

⁶⁹⁵ Elsewhere he nevertheless tried to explain these developments through the use of an analogy, namely, he wrote that the “clearing” of Central Europe of Jews would lead to the quasi reemergence of the *Ansiedlungsrayon* known from Tsarist Russia.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p.336. He added that due to the circumstances of the war and the lack of materials, Jews were ghettoized for the time of the war.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p.336.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p.338.

Croatia,⁶⁹⁹ the creation of the Sofia ghetto,⁷⁰⁰ ghettos set up and stigmatizing signs forced on Jews in Romania and even the “resettlement” of them to Transnistria which, as we know, led to genocide.⁷⁰¹ He wrote that in sum “the place of dying European Jewry” was “taken over by <<a reserve army>>, the Jews of America”.⁷⁰²

Concerning Hungarian Jewish policy he used more cautious formulations though, most probably due to the much more sensitive nature of what he stated in this respect. According to this last report, Hungary was returning to the idea of the state of Saint Stephen and was about to “implement nationality laws according to the ideas of [Ferenc] Deák and [József] Eötvös, but it discontinues the liberal traditions of the age of the Compromise regarding Jews” – as an exception in a state otherwise supposedly generously predisposed towards its minorities. Grünwald repeated one of the main slogans meant to defend the official position, namely that anti-Jewish steps were “entirely lawful,” but went on to list practically all recent anti-Jewish measures: the race protection law and the annulment of the reception of Judaism from 1941, the drastic measures of economic exclusion, the cessation of social and cultural contacts and the required service of “helping out the military”, officially known as labor service.⁷⁰³

It is evident that the extermination of German Jewry, the fate of Jews under direct German occupation and the collaboration (or, in the Romanian case, parallel practices) of allied countries as well as the last concrete steps taken towards genocide (namely deportation and ghettoization) were all referred to in the last report of 1942. All these were

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p.339.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p.344

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p.344.

⁷⁰² Ibid., p.350.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., pp. 340-2. Already back in 1939, Grünwald thought that the near future would bring the consistent implementation of Hungarian anti-Jewish plans, but that this would not take cruel forms. Grünwald, “Elmúlt” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1939, p.326.

published in Budapest over a year before May 1944, in spite of censorship and dangers difficult to overlook. They were all published at the time when the mass murder of European Jews was progressing in monstrous steps and when the Second Hungarian Army was brought to the Eastern Front in close alliance with Nazi Germany and under its direct military control. And this is how the Jewish scholars residing in one of the geographically rather central countries of the continent, Hungary, could have become the courageous and fortunate agents of pronouncing the horrible truth at the time of the crime of the century, serving as the voice of the seemingly completely silenced conscience of people on the Axis side – if the words they uttered during the Second World War, in the midst of the implementation of the Shoah would not have remained unheard and ineffectual.

Chapter VI

Models of Culture and Historical Changes

The Hungarian Jewish Journal *Libanon* (1936-1943)

“The task of the historian approaching the events of the last decade will prove more difficult [...] all so many anti-Jewish provisions can only provide the bare bones of this story into which the life of Jewry, with its virtues as well as faults, will have to be filled in. The task of that future historian shall consist of drawing the picture of the struggle for life and death of this pluralistic community.”

Ilona Katzburg, in *Libanon*, 1943, p.85.

I. Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed analysis of the Hungarian Jewish journal *Libanon*. This important organ published altogether 34 issues between 1936 and 1943. *Libanon* started off at the peak of Hungarian Jewish intellectual activities and served as one of the central forums of the increasingly desperate search for orientation and direction. During the years of the Second World War, it was one of the few remaining organs where Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectuals could still publish their ideas, formulate their (usually rather veiled) reactions to contemporary developments and express their hopes and fears for the future.⁷⁰⁴ In this respect, *Libanon* is unique: there is no other Hungarian Jewish periodical

⁷⁰⁴ Sándor Scheiber lists 14 new Hungarian Jewish organs (which were not necessarily in Hungarian) and a total of 53 such periodicals released at least once in 1936. By comparison, ten years earlier there were only 22 and thirty years earlier, in 1906 merely 12. By 1943 only 13 were allowed to be released, among them *Libanon*, as the organ of the National (*Országos*) Hungarian Jewish Museum. See Sándor Scheiber, *Magyar zsidó hírlapok és folyóiratok bibliográfiája 1847-1992* (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1993), p.216.

which started in the mid-1930s and survived long into the war years, right until the end of 1943. In this practical sense, *Libanon* was the most lasting Hungarian Jewish intellectual initiative of its times and it took an unprecedented form of organized collective violence for this journal to cease and never to be released again.

Its high average quality, striking inner plurality and special timing all make this journal an exceptionally exciting source for intellectual historians, but no detailed exploration of it has been attempted to date, either in Hungarian, or in any other language. One of the aims of this chapter therefore is to provide an *analytical summary*, a relatively detailed exposé of this precious part of Hungarian Jewish intellectual discourses of the 1930s and early 1940s. The introduction offers an overview of the general characteristics of *Libanon*, followed by a discussion of the contents of this journal gauged through two analytical lenses. The first explores models of culture explicitly articulated by its contributors, and identifies five central ones, illustrating them by excerpts from the writings of their main advocates.⁷⁰⁵ The second offers a diachronic analysis, scrutinizing the reflection of momentous and drastic historical changes on the pages of this journal.

Each of these two questions is discussed in a separate sub-chapter. The differences between them are not only a matter of focus and content, but they in fact presuppose different perspectives. The first section models the heterogeneous conceptions of the foundational idea of *Libanon*, namely specifically Jewish and peculiarly Hungarian Jewish culture. It is thus interested in synchronic diversity. The second exploration is

⁷⁰⁵ In his book on Jewish historiography and the question of postmodernism, Moshe Rosman analyzes four different models of early modern Polish Jewish culture that were employed by various groups of historians. See Moshe Rosman “Hybrid with what? The Relationship between Jewish Culture and Other People’s Culture” in Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?* (London: Littman, 2007), pp. 82-110. This article served as an inspiration and source of ideas for the second subchapter.

diachronic: it reconstructs important shifts throughout the years of *Libanon*'s publication, most of all the appearance of certain new ideas and the changing analogies of Jewish fate.⁷⁰⁶

Prior to tackling these two questions, let me introduce the basic characteristics of the journal and discuss the similarities and differences between the two main periods of its history. *Libanon* released eight volumes, had altogether 34 issues on a total of 1132 pages. Over this period, it had 107 contributors who published under their full name, out of whom 52 appeared in only one of the eight volumes, while only two authors, Fülöp Grünwald and Jenő Zsoldos published in each of them.⁷⁰⁷ Personal relationships between the most important contributors must have been close, and many of the leading personalities of *Libanon* also shared institutional affiliation: most of the teachers of the Jewish Boys' and Girls' Gymnasium of Pest who, bearing in mind the journal's focus on the humanities, could be considered potential contributors, wrote for this organ. All three editors of the first four years, József M. Grózinger, Zoltán Kohn and Jenő Zsoldos, were employed at this gymnasium.⁷⁰⁸

Generational discourses were only infrequently employed in *Libanon*, and there were hardly any instance of generational self-definition. However, in another, more objective (but from the discursive point of view less substantial) sense *Libanon* might be considered a generational initiative. The birthdates of several key contributors show that they

⁷⁰⁶ This said, I would like to avoid presenting an unduly homogeneous story of some kind of linear evolution. At the same time, my decision to narrate a story is unavoidably based on a selection of evidence. It leaves out additional, more permanent aspects of the journal and cannot do full justice to the diversity of voices either.

⁷⁰⁷ *Libanon* compiled a list of contributors for every year of its publication except 1943. There were ten new contributors in this last volume, and having added them to the previous lists I arrived at the number 107. Two authors wrote for seven volumes: Grózinger did not contribute to the shortest volume of *Libanon* (that of 1939), Kohn is missing from the year 1943, unless he published under the initial K. Sámuel Kandel, Lenke Steiner and József Turóczi-Trostler published in six of the *Libanon* volumes. Fluctuation between the volumes was not too high. The two greatest exceptions to this rule are György Goldberger who wrote in the first four years but not afterwards, and György Balázs who was active in years 5 to 8 but not previously.

⁷⁰⁸ On the Gymnasium see the study of László Felkai, *A budapesti zsidó fiú- és a leánygimnázium története* (Budapest: Anna Frank Gimnázium, 1992), especially 72-75.

were born in the decade and a half prior to 1900, and were thus between 40 and 50 when they launched *Libanon* in 1936.⁷⁰⁹

In 1940 the number of Hungarian Jewish periodicals was drastically reduced, from 37 to 24, and it was precisely at this time that the *National Jewish Museum* took over the role of *Libanon*'s publisher. Until then, *Libanon* was published under the subtitle *Zsidó tudományos és kritikai folyóirat* (Jewish Scholarly and Critical Journal), but after 1940, simultaneously with the imposition to highlight the category *Zsidó lap* (Jewish Paper) on its cover, *Libanon* adopted the subtitle *Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum Tudományos és Művészeti Egyesület tudományos és művészeti folyóirata* (The Scholarly and Artistic Journal of the Scholarly and Artistic Association of the Hungarian National Jewish Museum). In 1940, Ernő Munkácsi, the Director of the Museum whose name we encountered in previous chapters already, was newly appointed chief editor.⁷¹⁰ Two years later, at the beginning of 1942, the editorial board was expanded to seven members and from then on, Ernő Kanizsai and Jenő Zsoldos served as its two main editors.⁷¹¹

The role of the teachers of the Jewish Gymnasium was somewhat less central to the journal in its second period, but it certainly did not become irrelevant. Jenő Zsoldos and József M. Grózinger, the two authors who practically set the tone of the entire journal in the early years, were somewhat less active after 1940.⁷¹² In some respects, the focus of the journal became broader in this phase, above all through the presentation of the life and

⁷⁰⁹ To highlight the birthdates of five significant authors: Grünvald was born in 1887, Turóczi-Trostler in 1888, Grózinger in 1891, Komlós in 1892 and Zsoldos in 1896.

⁷¹⁰ Munkácsi Ernő (Páncélcseh, 1896 – Budapest, 1950), the son of linguist Bernát Munkácsi, lawyer, secretary of the Israelite Community of Pest as well as its prosecutor, later the chief secretary of the Jewish Council. He served as the director of the Jewish Museum and was also active as an art historian. The Fittler brothers and their wives hid and saved him and his family in Kistarcsa, just outside Budapest. See Kinga Frojimovics and Judit Molnár (eds.), *A világ igazai Magyarországon a második világháború alatt* (Budapest: Balassi, 2009).

⁷¹¹ The seven members in 1942-43 were Ernő Kanizsai and Jenő Zsoldos as editors, and György Balázs, Fülöp Grünvald, József M. Grózinger, Zoltán Kohn and Ernő Munkácsi as board members.

⁷¹² Their contributions are explored in detail in the second part of this chapter.

possessions of the Museum.⁷¹³ The contours of different sections of *Libanon* arguably became sharper as well, and some new article series were introduced such as the one discussing various Jewish spiritual directions in modern times. On the other hand, largely due to the ever more radical restrictions of the war years, the otherwise highly prominent book review section covered narrower ground, featuring, for example, most of the items in the *Javne* book series of the *Magyar Zsidók Pro Palesztina Szövetsége* (Alliance for Palestine of Hungarian Jews).⁷¹⁴

It would still be exaggerated to write of a conscious and consistent change of direction of *Libanon* in the 1940s. The contours of the sections might have become sharper, but the changes were otherwise rather peripheral, leaving the three basic elements of the journal – the sections Studies, Criticism and Smaller Contributions – untouched throughout these years.⁷¹⁵ At the same time, close reading reveals major differences in content and important shifts of emphasis between the various volumes.⁷¹⁶

In spite of the fact that the shifts in the early 1940s are best understood as a modification, rather than as a genuine change of direction, the dual periodization of *Libanon*

⁷¹³ Summaries of annual assemblies, annual reports, presentations of exhibitions, descriptions of explorations, visual communication of important objects belonging to the Museum as well as reproductions of important written documents in the Museum's possession were the concrete manifestations of this.

⁷¹⁴ This Zionist undertaking was modeled on *Schocken Verlag*. *Javne* books included altogether seventeen volumes between 1941 and 1944. Until 1941 there were book reviews and book notes. In 1936, *Libanon* reviewed 61 books (40 reviews and 21 notes), in 1937 54 (31 and 23), in 1938 60 (34 and 26), in the brief volume of 1939 only 21 (13 and 8), in 1940 again 53 (25 and 28). In the last three years there were no more book notes, and the journal only published 16 reviews in 1941, 20 in 1942 and 15 in 1943. Thus, until the beginning of the age of general discrimination the average was close to 60, while in the last three volumes it fell below 20.

⁷¹⁵ The last of these represented a transition between the former two, without being strictly distinguished from either: pieces in Smaller Contributions could at times be longer than those in Studies (though this was partly concealed by the difference in the font size). At other times book reviews were released in this section under a different heading. The section Journal Review appeared until 1939, going through publications in six languages, but only spent very few words on each. In the first issue of 1939 there were Hungarian, Hebrew, German, French, Italian and English journals under review. Most attention was usually devoted to German and Hebrew publications that were covered by Grózingers.

⁷¹⁶ As already stated, these shall be the theme of part three of this chapter.

clearly holds up to closer scrutiny on another level. The year 1940 can be considered a new beginning since the story of *Libanon* was basically one of decline until 1939. Quantitative indicators may be the best way to support this claim: in the first year of enthusiastic publication, *Libanon* had six issues on 276 pages, but in the following years the circumstances drastically worsened and the zeal also gradually disappeared. *Libanon* managed to release a meager two issues on altogether 40 pages in 1939, the year when the so called Second Jewish Law was passed. The overall picture of the four years (1940-1943) when *Libanon* was institutionally embedded, i.e. published by the Museum, shows much greater stability: there were three or four issues each year, never less than 96 but never more than 128 pages per annum.

Hungarian Jewish periodicals experienced a period of flourishing in the mid-1930s when the search for directions was ripe and the crisis of orientation perceptible but not yet severe. The sense of crisis in an increasingly anti-Semitic environment, the search for internal renewal and this boom of publishing activities were doubtlessly strongly related. In some of these publications, such as *Libanon*, Jewish intellectual life was manifested in its colorful inner diversity. Not being strictly committed to any political-ideological line, *Libanon* would regularly exhibit signs of internal differences and polarization on certain controversial questions. At the same time, as already illustrated on the case of the *IMIT yearbooks*, consciously held intra-Jewish animosities were on the wane in the war years when drastically narrowing opportunities and the perception of the need for closer defensive cooperation softened the differences and led Hungarian Jews to seek greater unity.

Libanon has a special place among Hungarian Jewish journals that have, as a matter of course, contributed to a highly pluralistic intellectual realm. It would be wrong to

conceive of this special place as implying some sort of isolation: the authors of *Libanon* had connections to other organs and there were some substantial overlaps in content with other publications. Even the authors who left a strong mark on *Libanon* and invested a substantial amount of their time into this publication wrote for numerous other Hungarian Jewish organs: they may have published their longer studies in the *IMIT yearbooks* and some of them appeared in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* as well as in one or more of the six *Ararát yearbooks*, but there were similar connection with *Múlt és Jövő* and even (nominally) non-Jewish journals such as *Nyugat*, the most prestigious Hungarian artistic journal of the first half of the 20th century.⁷¹⁷ What is more, it was quite common in *Libanon* for authors whose works were reviewed to appear as contributors too. It is clear that members of the Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectual elite not only paid attention to each other's scholarly work but typically knew each other personally. In turn, personal acquaintance often meant shared involvement in various undertakings.

In spite of these close connections and overlaps, *Libanon* did have a special profile among the Hungarian Jewish publications of the period. Without forgetting about parallel and alternative venues, *Libanon* remains one of the few Hungarian Jewish attempts to regularly publish programmatic ideas, and to offer insightful and up-to-date coverage of cultural themes. *Libanon* officially conceived of its role as “filling a gap” with a self-declared task to establish a forum for “the smoldering interests of Hungarian Jewry”.⁷¹⁸ It managed to

⁷¹⁷ The level and the kind of Jewishness that ought to be attributed to *Nyugat* continues to be a source of some controversy and debate. For instance, in the monograph of Tamás Ungvári, the retrospective, racial division of *Nyugat* authors is presented as the fatal step in Hungarian literary life. Ungvári views such polemic (pursued notably by László Németh) as the symbolic negation of the contract of assimilation. Tamás Ungvári, *Csalódások kora. A „zsidókérdés” magyarországi története* (Budapest: Scolar, 2010), p.302.

⁷¹⁸ “Beköszöntő” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.1. The contributors identified several such gaps. One opinion was that falsely understood assimilation “kills Jewish peoplehood,” which means that in spite of being excluded “Jewish self-sufficiency” did not emerge. Fülöp Grünvald warned that even though “the Jewish question has become the most debated problem of our political and societal life,” there were simply no reliable historical studies on the

consistently combine articles of high quality and the ambition to communicate scholarly, cultural and historical insights with attempts to define the nature as well as the external relations of Jewish culture.⁷¹⁹ Thereby, the authors of *Libanon* wanted to influence collective identity discourses – in markedly different ways, as we shall see. As a less prominent item on its agenda, *Libanon* also sought to publish reflections on current issues of the Hungarian Jewish community and topical problems of public life, even if there were reservations about addressing too many topicalities – while later on the censorial supervision of the journal also had obvious repercussions in this respect. At the same time, the issues tackled on the pages of *Libanon* clearly suggest that large-scale historical changes intervened with the intentions of its creators and impacted its contents more than was the case with the *IMIT yearbooks*.

No introduction of *Libanon* would be complete without a note on the impressive and multifaceted contemporary culture of the group of authors contributing to it. *Libanon* not only attracted a representative sample of the grand old men of Hungarian Jewish scholarly life who were still alive (among those of the generation born around 1870 who were still alive, Bernát Heller, Sándor Büchler and Béla Bernstein all published in *Libanon* in 1942), but some of the most promising members of the younger generation contributed several of their early writings to this journal too. István Hahn wrote for *Libanon* on numerous occasions, Sándor Scheiber was first mentioned as a student, later on his own writings

theme. Fülöp Grünwald, “Virág István: A zsidók jogállása Magyarországon” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.68. In a review of Agnon in 1941, most likely authored by Pál Hirschler, we read the following: “if we had a Jewish intellectual life, but let’s be frank, we do not have it”. Is Jehudi, “Smuél Jozsef Agnon: Tengerek szívében” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.89.

⁷¹⁹ There are further instances of explicit self-definition scattered around the pages of *Libanon*. In one place we read that “this journal, being intent on creating Hungarian-Jewish culture”. Pál Kardos, “Zsolt Béla: Kakasviadal” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.12, while elsewhere we encounter the proud (and somewhat elitist) statement that in *Libanon* “only scholarly matters are dealt with”. “Válasz Bibliophilnek” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.136. Later we find that the Museum considered its institutional task to be the protection and maintenance of Jewish historical self-consciousness and the publication of *Libanon* was part of this effort. Ernő Munkácsi, “A Zsidó Múzeum Mendel prefektus-émlékérme. (Örkényi Strasser István szobrászművész alkotása)” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.1. Moreover, all members of the Museum’s association would automatically receive a copy of *Libanon*. “Múzeumegyesületi közlemények” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.95.

appeared as well, while the name of László Gonda (a teacher in Debrecen at this time) was evoked when the recipients of a writing competition award were announced.⁷²⁰ Most importantly, there was the abovementioned cohort of authors belonging to the middle generation – József M. Grózinger, Fülöp Grünwald, Aladár Komlós, József Turóczi-Trostler and Jenő Zsoldos, among others.

In addition to this, we find references to a good number of the most exciting Jewish intellectuals of the first half of the 20th century, several of whom were not that widely known at this time, but acquired admirable reputations later on. References were made to Gershom Scholem, for instance, the researcher who first started serious scholarly inquiries into Jewish mysticism and Messianism,⁷²¹ but also to intellectuals such as Hugo Bergmann,⁷²² the philosopher who served as the Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem or perhaps *the* leading Jewish historian in 20th century America, Salo Baron who taught at Columbia University from 1930.⁷²³ Other references included Abraham Heschel, who had just completed his dissertation in Berlin and was to become influential in more conservative circles in the United States later on,⁷²⁴ Ernst Cassirer some of whose impressive works in the history of philosophy have just appeared (seventy years later) in Hungarian

⁷²⁰ “A Zsidó Gimnázium Barátainak...” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.96. Gonda received praise for his submission. I mention him since he and Scheiber decided decades later to write the history of Hungarian Jewry together, dividing the periods. Gonda’s volume was published after his death (and the change of regime). László Gonda, *A zsidóság Magyarországon, 1526-1945* (Budapest, 1992).

⁷²¹ He is mentioned with his original German name Gerhard Scholem. “Folyóiratszemle” in *Libanon* 1937, p.103. Later on his name appears as Schalem. G.M.J., “G. Schalem: Chalomotav sel hasabatai R. Mordechaj Askenezi” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.61. György J. Weisz applied the theory of Scholem and the concept of Baroque in a peculiar way: he saw in Lurianic Kabbalah and the Kabbalistic poets of Safed the manifestation of Jewish Baroque – as opposed to the Jewish literature of the Middle Ages. György J. Weisz, “Barokk a zsidó irodalomban” in *Libanon*, 1939, pp.19-23. Weisz also referred to the “Baroque impatience of self-appointed Messiahs.”

⁷²² József M. Grózinger, “Az ismeret és az igazság problémája” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.257.

⁷²³ “Folyóiratszemle” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.176.

⁷²⁴ Zoltán Kohn, “A vallási és prófétai lelki típus” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.25-29. Between 1946 and his death, Heschel was employed at the *Jewish Theological Seminary of America*.

translation,⁷²⁵ and, last but not least, Leo Strauss who would serve as a source of inspiration for American Neoconservatives decades later, but who was at this time still writing his early works on Jewish topics.⁷²⁶ This impressive list illustrates how familiar some of the contributors must have been with contemporary Jewish high culture as it was just developing internationally, and provides a background to the main topic of the next subchapter: the analysis of cultural models.

II. Models of Jewish Culture

The two most productive authors of *Libanon* were Jenő Zsoldos and József M. Grózingér. They were more or less equally prominent in defining the journal and contributed a great many articles especially to its first volumes, besides serving as its editors. Their interests and platform can be distinguished in many ways, so much so that there is a stark contrast between their models of culture. Zsoldos, indubitably the more well-known of the two, published mostly, though not exclusively, literary historical articles.⁷²⁷ On the basis of *Libanon*, it is safe to argue that Zsoldos was primarily interested in the Hungarian past and its Jewish aspects. He was particularly keen on exploring Hungarian-Jewish connections with an emphasis on the first half of the 19th century and, to a lesser extent, the Biblical (Judeo-

⁷²⁵ József M. Grózingér, “Ernst Cassirer: Descartes Lehre, Persönlichkeit, Wirkung” in *Libanon*, 1940, pp.94-95. Most important among these is the appearance of *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* in Hungarian, translated by Katalin Scheer and published by Atlantisz in 2007.

⁷²⁶ József M. Grózingér, “Filozófia és törvény” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.23-24.

⁷²⁷ Zsoldos Jenő (Budapest, 1896 – Budapest, 1972), literary historian, linguist, pedagogue. He graduated in Hungarian and Latin and received his doctorate in 1923. Starting in 1920, he taught at the Jewish Girls’ Gymnasium and was the director between 1939 and 1965. In the period under question, he edited two volumes, one of them with Turóczi-Trostler. Jenő Zsoldos and József Turóczi-Trostler (eds.), *Száz év előtt. Az első magyar-zsidó írónemzedék* (Budapest: Pesti Izraelita Hitközség Leánygimnáziuma, 1940) and Jenő Zsoldos (ed.), *Magyar irodalom és zsidóság* (Budapest: 1943).

Christian) common ground.⁷²⁸ As he stated in one of his articles, “the story of Hungarian-Jewish cultural assimilation remains unwritten” and “we do not have an overview of Hungarian-Jewish history of real scholarly value”.⁷²⁹ Judging from his contributions to *Libanon*, his intention was, above all, to inquire into the broadly conceived story of cultural assimilation, and to this end he labored to present many precious details of this story, often on the basis of newly uncovered sources.⁷³⁰ Elements that could be useful in the

⁷²⁸ He maintained that “perhaps there is no other European literature which for centuries was as closely related to the Bible as Hungarian was”. Jenő Zsoldos, “Irodalmunk új talmudszemlélete” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.16. Even in 1943, Kardos wrote that “We believe and hope that another epoch will emerge when this conception, the spirit of the Old Testament will again be manifested in Hungarian poetry, in the works of Protestant as well as Catholic poets”. Albert Kardos, “Debreceni teológus könyörög Izráélért” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.26. This national perspective ought to be compared with that of József Turóczi-Trostler who seemed to think in world historical dimensions. His article “Song about friendship” narrated world history through the dialectics of allegorical and symbolic worldviews. For him, the Greek idea of *paideia* and the Roman idea of *humanitas* “had to be infused with the forces of Judeo-Christianity to become the cultural humanism that encompassed and defined centuries”. József Turóczi-Trostler, “Ének a barátságról” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.169.

⁷²⁹ Jenő Zsoldos, “A zsidóság szerepe Pest és Buda megmagyarosodásában” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.125-128. He also accounted for this absence: he believed the religious strata were not preoccupied with it, the worldly strata did not even think of it and it had no place in the curricula of Hungarian universities either. Zsoldos’ thesis was supported by István Virág who referred to a vacuum in Jewish scholarly policies which existed in spite of there being an interested audience. István Virág, “A magyar-zsidó történettudomány célkitűzéseihez” in *Libanon* 1937, p.148. What is more, Virág claimed that “only by us, in Hungary did the research into the Jewish past cease almost completely”. Ibid., p.145. Virág considered a monograph on the hundred years of emancipation to be among the most urgent scientific tasks. Years later Endre Sós also maintained that “It is the most urgent task of the intellectual life of Hungarian Jewry to be aware of and do justice to the authors of Hungarian national literature of Jewish religion”. Endre Sós, “Emil Makai” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.45. The ideas of Aladár Komlós expressed in *Libanon*, some of which resonated with these thoughts, are discussed elsewhere in this subchapter as well as in Chapter VII.

⁷³⁰ His ambition yielded the following explorations: a piece on the Talmudic borrowings and its concrete sources in the book of anecdotes by Péter Bod from 1760. Jenő Zsoldos, “Bod Péter Szent Hiláriusa és a t Talmud” in *Libanon*, 1936, pp.212-213. He also wrote on Jews in Hungarian plays of the late 18th century and the appearance of first “Hungarian Hungarian Jew” on stage in 1820. Jenő Zsoldos, “A zsidó a XVIII. századvég magyar drámájában” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.63-65. Moreover, he published on a Hungarian article by Zsigmond Hirsch (“Egy ismeretlen magyar-zsidó író” in *Libanon*, 1940, pp.44-46.), on Ignác Benedek who wrote pro-Jewish pamphlets in 1848 (“Benedek Ignác és emancipációs röpirata” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.90.); on why the accusation of anti-nationalism was unjust when levered against Zsigmond Saphir (“A Pesther Tageblatt és az Athenaeum” in *Libanon*, 1940, pp.6-11.); on the beginning of the career of Rózsa Csillag at the National Theater who later on became famous at the Viennese Opera (“Csillag Rózsa pályakezdése a Nemzeti Színházban” in *Libanon*, 1938, pp.17-18.). András Vág discussed the “mission” lasting six nights of the French Jewish actress Rachel in 1851, which Zsoldos added to by covering the references to her in Hungarian literature (“Rachel és a magyar drama története” in *Libanon*, 1941, pp.52-56.). Later on, on the occasion of the poetry evening of László Bródy, Zsoldos wrote on the Hungarian-Jewish poetic tradition, enumerating the main figures who, in his eyes, constituted the canon: József Kiss, Emil Makai, Zoltán Somlyó, Tamás Emőd and László Bródy (“Bródy László: Ének seregszemléje” in *Libanon*, 1941, pp.29-30.). In the very last issue of *Libanon* Zsoldos contributed a study on the (back then) barely known beginnings of Márton Diósy’s career (“Diósy Márton írói munkásságához” in *Libanon*, 1943, pp.93-96.).

strengthening of positive political-cultural traditions occupied prominent places in many of his pieces.⁷³¹ In all likelihood, Zsoldos hoped that by making the readers aware of these traditions he could contribute to the development of a Hungarian literary canon opposed to those of anti-Semitic inspiration.

In the very first issue of *Libanon*, in his discussion of the Jeremiadic source of the Hungarian National Anthem, *Hymnus* by Ferenc Kölcsey, Zsoldos wrote of a Hungarian-Jewish parallelism springing from a shared ancient source.⁷³² Six years later, in 1942 he made a similar, but generalized statement according to which “the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries is the time when the <<Jewish>> Bible and the Talmud started to be treated in a fair manner in our homeland”, adding that the Romantic era discovered “the Jew” as well as the previously unexplored areas of Jewish spiritual and material life.⁷³³ This (in Zsoldos’ terms) “Romantic period of Hungarian history” and especially its specific perspectives on Jews as well as the first Jews writing in Hungarian were among his recurrent themes. He often wrote on rationalism in general and more specifically on the relation of national

⁷³¹ Note that the label Jewish was neither automatically, nor uncritically used. Aladár Komlós, for instance, sent in his corrections twice: he explained that Hönigh, active in the 1820s, was not a Hungarian Jewish author and that László Arany active in Izraelita Magyar Egylet during the early 1860s was not the son of János Arany. In another instance, Zsoldos set out to show that a supposedly Hungarian rabbi who appears in literary histories as Dávid Czvittinger was invented through a misinterpretation of sources. Jenő Zsoldos, “Téves zsidó adapt Czvittinger Specimenjében” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp. 148-152.

⁷³² Jenő Zsoldos, “Kölcsey és Jeremiás” in *Libanon*, 1936, pp.28-29. In the same spirit, on the 100th anniversary of the death of Kölcsey, Albert Kardos joined in with the following remarks: “I am trying to provide an explanation for a poem and I am not preaching patriotism, but whoever wants to sense in my lines that Hungarian Jewry, suffering from so many misfortunes, can sing this Hungarian Anthem rooted in the Old Testament with special devotion [is free to do so]”. Albert Kardos, “A Himnusz és az ótestamentom” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.98.

⁷³³ Jenő Zsoldos, “Irodalmunk új talmudszemlélete” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.17. He wrote on József Ponori Thewrewk who was the first to compile a collection of the treasures of the Talmud in Hungarian, ahead of all Hungarian Jews. He did so at the beginning of the 1830s. Jenő Zsoldos, “Az első talmudi <<gyöngyszemek>> irodalmunkban” in *Libanon*, 1942, pp.82-83. Somewhat earlier Imre Waldapfel wrote on a Midrash quote used by László Peresényi Nagy in 1802, one of the earliest signs of the direct impact of Jewish traditional literature on Hungarian worldly literature. Imre Waldapfel, “Midrás-idézet történeti romantikánkban” in *Libanon*, 1939, pp.2-4.

Romanticism and the Enlightenment.⁷³⁴ It seems he took this opposition for granted which is considered much less self-evident by contemporary scholarship about Hungary and East Central Europe more generally.⁷³⁵

Many of his contributions to *Libanon* can be read as parts of his attempt to create a canon of Hungarian writers particularly devoted to Jewry. In the second issue he presented the pro-Jewish views of Péter Vajda, who believed that the Hungarian and Hebrew languages were related. In Zsoldos' interpretation, Vajda was the first to turn "the idea of emancipation into a general national problem without any reservations", adding that, when the Hungarian past was discovered, the Jewish past had a vivid presence in Hungary as religious-Biblical knowledge.⁷³⁶ Zsoldos also wrote on Viktor Cholnoky's theory that placed

⁷³⁴ On the relations between the Enlightenment and Judaism see the excellent work in intellectual history by Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003). In the 1932 yearbook of IMIT, Zsoldos published on Bessenyei and Kazinczy, claiming that they represented the spirit of two epochs, that of reason and that of emotion, and thus their views on Jews were worth comparing. Jenő Zsoldos, "Bessenyei és Kölcsey zsidólátása" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, p.206. He maintained here that through its presentist convictions reason (though it accepted Jews as humans) could not approach the specificities of Jewry. 18th century reason thought Jewry was a fanatical, superstitious, but passive and immoral nation with blind faith who was not ready to adjust to the spirit of the age. Ibid., pp.207-10. Elsewhere he added that rationalism condemned positive religion in all its forms. Jenő Zsoldos, "A romantikus zsidószemlélet irodalmunkban" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.256. Bessenyei (a Voltaireian of sorts, though somewhat more moderate in his views on religion) could promote tolerance in abstract while preaching harsh anti-Jewish tenets. Zsoldos, "Bessenyei" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1932, pp.216-7. Emotion, on the other hand, could sense the Jewish fate and recognize the value of the Jewish spirit. Kazinczy did not see any contradiction between reason and matters of the heart. He also almost completely managed to display the historical sense of the Romantics ahead of time. In his eyes, tradition was no opponent of development. Starting from a Rousseauian premise that their oppression led to their vices, Kazinczy promoted the humanistic treatment of Jews in the interests of cultural assimilation (Ibid., p.218). Zsoldos maintained that he found the right balance between rationalism and Romanticism, between the cult of reason and the sentimental veneration of emotions. Zsoldos, "A romantikus" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1935, p.270. Kazinczy was "justified by posterity" and his spirit of defending Jews was "fully developed in the works of József Eötvös", he argued. Zsoldos, "Bessenyei", p.221. In another of his studies, we read that Kazinczy showed "the most profound veneration" of Mendelssohn among all Hungarians. Zsoldos, "Mendelssohn a magyar szellemi életben" in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1933, p.61. In his article on the Romantic image of Jews, Zsoldos claimed that in Hungarian letters the defense of Moses (which simultaneously meant the loosening of the grip of Voltaireian ideas) already started in the works of certain rationalists who aimed to reconcile reason and revealed religion. Zsoldos, "Romantikus", p.261. He added that for the Romantics, under the influence of the developing genres of characterology and ethnography and under the impact of Herderian ideas, Moses was an ancient hero of freedom. Ibid., p.266 and pp.281-2.

⁷³⁵ See Endre Bojtár, "Hazát és népet álmodánk..." *Felvilágosodás és romantika a közép- és kelet-európai irodalmakban* (Szekszárd: Typotex, 2008), 20-21.

⁷³⁶ Jenő Zsoldos, "Vajda Péter zsidószemlélete" in *Libanon*, 1936, p.50. Zsoldos even published an article on emancipatory themes in Hungarian poetry in the IMIT yearbook of 1943. Here Zsoldos discussed the belief in

“the Semitic” next to “the Turanian”, and here he tellingly referred to Cholnoky as the successor of Vajda.⁷³⁷ Elsewhere, he devoted attention to János Hetényi, a “progressive, romantic and rationalist” who was supposedly the single “respectfully objective” evaluator of Jewish trading activities in Hungary of his days.⁷³⁸ The Biblical imagery of the books of András Fáy, who in his words “consistently validated the spirit of rationalism in his Protestantism”, also appeared among his subjects.⁷³⁹ Furthermore, in one of his reviews, he specifically referred to Zoltán Franyó as someone who attempted to “defend universal human culture, and within it the Jewish spirit, against anti-Semitism”.⁷⁴⁰

In the second volume of *Libanon*, Zsoldos narrated the history of “the fiction of common fate”. Discussing the Hungarian literary references to the destruction of ancient Jerusalem, he provided an excellent short history of this idea, beginning with the 16th century and focusing not only on its propagators, but also on its opponents.⁷⁴¹ Nevertheless, it is clear

the Messiah (and its allegorical interpretation in particular), the motif of the wandering Jew (and the conviction that emancipation would save him), the idea of political-societal responsibility (which claimed that the current state of Jewry had emerged due to the sins of society at large and the inappropriate laws in place, thus almost always supported Jewish emancipation) and the yearning for the promised land and the conquest by Moses (which hardly ever appeared in Hungarian poetic works). See Jenő Zsoldos, “Emancipációs motívumok lírai költészetünkben” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1943, pp.286-304.

⁷³⁷ Jenő Zsoldos, “Cholnoky Viktor és a semi kultúra” in *Libanon* 1936, p.225. He quoted the attempt by a Jewish 19th century author, Herman Bauer-Márkfi, to apply the theory of linguistic relations originally invented by János Sylvester. Zsoldos, “A magyar zsidó nyelvrokonság történetéhez” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.195-196. Three years later he reported on a similar, rather rudimentary thesis developed by Móric Kaufmann in 1841. Zsoldos, “Még egy magyar-zsidó nyelvrokonító” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.125. At the same time, *Libanon* featured similar attempts by contemporary authors: Dávid Fokos-Fuchs pondered whether the repetition of word roots in Hungarian might be due to some Biblical-Hebrew influence – or at least to the same way of reasoning. Dávid Fokos-Fuchs, “Bibliai hatások a magyar nyelvben” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.10-12.

⁷³⁸ Jenő Zsoldos, “Irodalmunk zsidószemlélete: Hetényi János” in *Libanon*, 1938, pp.131-138.

⁷³⁹ Jenő Zsoldos, “Bibliai képek Fáy András műveiben” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.7. Discussing András Fáy in the IMIT yearbook of 1937, Zsoldos declared that Fáy “only managed to reach an honest assessment of the suffering of Jewry through the power of his heart”. Jenő Zsoldos, “Fáy András zsidószemlélete” in *IMIT évkönyv*, 1937, p.188. At the same time, Fáy was responsible for collecting data on the Jewish population of Hungary and so directly knew its religious, societal, cultural situation. *Ibid.*, p.198. In his literary oeuvre, practically all the arguments of the emancipatory movement can be found. *Ibid.*, p.191. In order to justify his position, Fáy often referred to the demands of humanistic treatment, the national interest and the European example. *Ibid.*, p.200.

⁷⁴⁰ Jenő Zsoldos, “Franyó Zoltán: Zsidógyűlölet” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.162.

⁷⁴¹ Jenő Zsoldos, “Jeruzsálem pusztulása a magyar irodalomban” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.91-92. Elsewhere he also expresses decidedly ahistorical ideas, for instance when discussing the art of Béla Révész he writes that it

that, at least to a certain extent, Zsoldos also wanted to promote the idea of similarity. When dealing with the book of Frigyes Riedl on Kölcsey, he presented his own, rather striking ideas: he found Biblical or Jewish equivalents for three of “our mission-devoted” poets. According to this view, Petőfi “made the role of poets similar to the people-liberating leadership of Moses”, Komjáthy “wanted to reach the end-point of his worldview through identification with the Messiah” while Kölcsey “took on the role of the Prophets of the Old Testament”.⁷⁴² This peculiar principle of convergence is probably the most radical expression of Zsoldos’ Hungarian-Jewish ideas (note that he used the two expressions with a hyphen), and provides an excellent last illustration of his assimilation-integrationist perspective on Hungarian Jewish culture.

József M. Grózinger, the other most diligent author of *Libanon*, published most of his pieces in the first period of *Libanon*’s history. He was a philosopher who cherished German Jewish culture, although the evidence regarding the development of his writings in *Libanon* suggests that he increasingly oriented himself also towards Hebrew culture. Grózinger published his main work on the history of Jewish philosophy in German.⁷⁴³ Importantly, in the introduction of this work, which he released in 1930, Grózinger announced that he originally wanted to write in Hebrew, but eventually decided

approaches “the original motives of the Jewish soul” and expressed “eternal Jewish sadness”. Jenő Zsoldos, “Révész Béla és a zsidóság” in *Libanon*, 1938, pp.6-9.

⁷⁴² Jenő Zsoldos, “Riedl Frigyes: Kölcsey Ferenc” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.34.

⁷⁴³ His articles in *Libanon* were obviously written in Hungarian but even here he hardly ever expressed his Hungarian identity. I found the strongest sign of his Hungarian consciousness in a review of a Modern Hebrew language course book republished in Debrecen, where he remarked that “We consider the inclusion of the German equivalent of words redundant”. József M. Grózinger, “Ch. C. Groszmann: Szifrénu mahadurasémit metukevet” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.126.

that his presentation of Jewish philosophers would be able to reach a larger audience if it appeared in German.⁷⁴⁴

In *Libanon*, he analyzed various moments in the history of philosophy, focusing on the aspects relevant from the Jewish point of view. It appears that he considered his two main tasks to be, on the one hand, the coherent presentation of Jewish spiritual life based on the conviction that religion and scholarship/philosophy made up a harmonious unit and, on the other, communicating across languages, i.e. providing Hungarian translations and summaries of important Jewish-related philosophical works in foreign languages. Grózinger reviewed an impressive amount of works published in German and Hebrew, usually presenting them in the form of accessible content summaries. He mainly chose to write on authors who resonated with his personal preferences, but his convictions can be most easily accessed on those occasions when he opted to argue with someone. For instance, in his study on Lev Sestov, Grózinger declared Sestov's ideas unscholarly. Sestov supported the thesis of the irreconcilability of religion and scholarship and this was even worse in his eyes. In reaction, he somewhat indignantly remarked that this was against the traditional Jewish interpretation of Holy Scripture.⁷⁴⁵

When summarizing the ideas of Wilhelm Sole, Grózinger declared that the task of Jewish philosophy “is and has always been to rationally explain and thereby

⁷⁴⁴ Joseph Grózinger: *Geschichte der jüdischen Philosophie und der jüdischen Philosophen von Moses Mendelssohn bis zur Gegenwart. I.: Von Moses Mendelssohn bis Salomon Maimon* (Berlin: Philo, 1930). Grózinger was born in the eastern part of Hungary in the small village of Csengerújfalu in 1891. He studied in Budapest and (for his doctorate) in Pécs. His other main publications include a study of Kantian metaphysics (both in Hungarian and German) and of Bernát Alexander from the late 1920s as well as shorter philosophical and pedagogical works. Some of his *Libanon* articles (for instance “A jiddis nyelv pszichológiája”) were also released as booklets.

⁷⁴⁵ József M. Grózinger, “Leo Schestow vallásfilozófiai elmélete” in *Libanon*, 1942, pp.110-113. Grózinger's theory that there was no opposition between scholarship and religion Fényes called a “flippant slogan”. Mór Fényes, “Laikus vallásszemlélet a hit és tudomány egységéről” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.77.

strengthen the divine origin of faith”.⁷⁴⁶ Thus, it was among his most important goals to reject and revise the ideas of Renan who maintained that Jewry was unphilosophical. He wanted to show that “Prophetism has given European thought not only monotheism but also philosophy”.⁷⁴⁷ In this quest, Hermann Cohen, Maimonides and Spinoza proved particularly important for him. In clear contrast to Imre Benoschofsky, the Marburg-based leading neo-Kantian, Hermann Cohen was clearly among his favorite philosophers. Cohen viewed religion as a universal function of reason and thought of Jewry as its most ancient source, both of which must have appealed to Grózingers.⁷⁴⁸ Moreover, he referred to Maimonides as the founder of European monotheist philosophy.⁷⁴⁹ He also contested that Spinoza was ever a panteist and considered him a rationalist philosopher as well as a mystical and fanatical believer, stating that he was a saint committed to both religion and freedom.⁷⁵⁰

In spite of appearing next to each other on Grózingers’ platform of Jewish philosophy, the abovementioned trio was no doubt eclectic and somewhat paradoxically selected. Crucially, Cohen took the stance that Spinoza’s ideas caused Jewry great misfortunes. Cohen also denied that his thinking had Jewish sources and firmly supported his expulsion from the community.⁷⁵¹ Grózingers circumvented such complexities and contradictions: his canon was evidently meant to stress commonalities and not to highlight inner Jewish differences. At the same time, his basic canon of the whole of modern philosophy was centered on Jewish authors: at one point, he even explicitly remarked that “in

⁷⁴⁶ József M. Grózingers, “Wilhelm Sole: Kulturprobleme des Judentums” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.30.

⁷⁴⁷ József M. Grózingers, “A prófétiizmus útja a legújabb gondolkodásig” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.79.

⁷⁴⁸ Samu Szemere, “Cohen Hermann” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.35.

⁷⁴⁹ József M. Grózingers, “Maimonides és a mai filozófia” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.120.

⁷⁵⁰ While Spinoza was considered a heretic for centuries, his symbolic reintegration as a Jew (which required a new concept of the Jewish nation) was peaking around this time, parallel with another great debate on pantheism, which immensely raised interest in his thinking. On these matters see Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted. Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008), 77 and 84.

⁷⁵¹ Lazier, *God*, 85-88.

the polyphonic concert of modern philosophy [...] the conductors have been two Jewish thinkers. Hermann Cohen from Marburg [...] and] Henri Bergson from Paris”.⁷⁵²

I find the following statement exceptionally revealing when trying to understand his model of culture: “Jewish philosophy, as we have discussed in several places, has always declared Jewish ideas. Whether it happens to be Platonic in Alexandria, whether it builds a geometric system of philosophy in Amsterdam or establishes a new Kantian School in Marburg – it always teaches Jewish philosophy. The thinking of the Jewish philosopher can only be Jewish. It has a Judeogenic basis and is rooted in Jewish soil. Even though external influences can modify the rudiments of thought, they cannot change their origins”.⁷⁵³ On another occasion, Grózingler announced that the great scholarly question of the future would be what “that mysterious fluid is that reveals the Jewish origin even of works neither concerned with a Jewish problematic, nor written on specifically Jewish themes?”⁷⁵⁴ Elsewhere he asserted that the “meaning of life and existence, the peculiar meaning and goal of Jewish existence and life can only be sought through a philosophy emerging out of the Jewish soil and mentality”.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵² József M. Grózingler, “Bergson” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.8. On the contemporary Jewish theological and philosophical “soul searching” in Germany see, most recently, Thomas Meyer, *Vom Ende der Emanzipation. Jüdische Philosophie und Theologie nach 1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2008).

⁷⁵³ József M. Grózingler, “Kurt Sternberg: Philosophische Probleme im biblischen und apokryphen Schrifttum der Juden” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.123. He employed an almost identical formulation three years later: “The Jewish philosopher – whether he creates Platonic philosophy in Alexandria, builds on Aristotelian bases in Spain, spins Cartesian mathematical formulas in Amsterdam or whether he propagates antimechanistic vitalism in Paris – writes Jewish philosophy”. József M. Grózingler, “Bergson” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.12.

⁷⁵⁴ József M. Grózingler, “Sigmund Freud irracionáliszmusa” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.39. It is worth comparing this idea with those developed in the new work of Pierre Birnbaum that recently appeared in English translation. Birnbaum points to the fact that the most significant social scientists of Jewish origin have hardly dealt with Jewish themes in their main works, if at all. Pierre Birnbaum, *Geography of Hope. Exile, the Enlightenment, Disassimilation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008), p.11. When their private writings are taken into account, we can notice though that they shared a vivid interest in some kind of Jewish problematic though in different ways and with different levels of seriousness. (The eight authors analyzed are Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Aron, Arendt, Berlin, Walzer and Yerushalmi). The book was originally published in French in 2004.

⁷⁵⁵ József M. Grózingler, “A zsidó filozófiai időszerevése” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.212.

Even though such attempts to distinguish and essentialize the qualities of Jewish thought play a central role in Grózingers philosophical reflections on the pages of *Libanon*, some of his remarks contradict the notion that his thinking was exclusionary.⁷⁵⁶ His image of Jewish tradition seems to be rather inclusive: this can, for instance, be seen in his presentation of Bialik's theory of duality or in his review of Dezső Schön's novel on Hasidism, *Istenkeresők a Kárpátok alatt*. On the other hand, there is an interesting ambivalence or double standard in his language: two of the expressions he employed were *Wille zur Wahrheit*⁷⁵⁷ and *Wille zum Wert*.⁷⁵⁸ Most probably, he meant these expressions as a challenge to the thinkers who based their views on the concept of (the will to) power (most notably Nietzsche) for he believed that human endeavors ought to be both logical and ethical. His vocabulary reveals more though: when he wrote on a Hebrew volume published in Cracow, he employed precisely those expressions he so categorically rejected elsewhere, namely he discussed "the vitality" of Hebrew culture and even more strikingly "the absolute will" of the Hebrew spirit, which supposedly knew "no limits".⁷⁵⁹

To sum up: Grózingers reflected on the basic characteristics of the religious and philosophical Jewish spirit and considered history instrumentally, building a canon around the idea of Jewish specificity and, what is more, of a Jewish essence with universal

⁷⁵⁶ Elsewhere Grózingers wrote that "The path of thoughts is unlimited, it does not know borders or demarcation lines, speeds through times and spaces, centuries and nations unstoppably and no one and nothing can remain uninfluenced by it". József M. Grózingers, "Mendelssohn Mózes, a német filozófia stílusművésze" in *Libanon*, 1936, p.30. In his article on "The psychology of Yiddish" it was part of his explanation that "the Jew" did not isolate himself but was "an integrated type". József M. Grózingers, "A jiddis nyelv pszichológiája" in *Libanon*, 1936, p.157.

⁷⁵⁷ József M. Grózingers, "A neokantianizmus legújabb héber rendszerezője" in *Libanon*, 1938, p.51.

⁷⁵⁸ József M. Grózingers, "A gonoszság szerepe a világtörténelemben" in *Libanon*, 1940, p.120. He used both expressions in German.

⁷⁵⁹ József M. Grózingers, "Széfer hasanah lijhudé polánija..." in *Libanon*, 1938, p.88.

philosophical relevance.⁷⁶⁰ We might call this a *universalist - essentialist* model of culture, while Zsoldos presented an *assimilationist - integrationist* model through emphasizing the positive local, Hungarian and Hungarian Jewish traditions, pointing to shared cultural bases and evoking the idea of common fate.⁷⁶¹ Grózinger's model of culture had no close parallel in *Libanon*. Next to Zsoldos, the most articulate expression in favor of such an assimilationist - integrationist model can be found in the writings of Ilona Katzburg, who recurrently referred either to the humanist tradition or to an inclusive version of organic national unity – and sometimes both.⁷⁶² A practical illustration of this model, often evoked on the pages of *Libanon*, was the person of Bernát Munkácsi (the father of Ernő Munkácsi, who served as editor starting in 1940).⁷⁶³ Bernát Munkácsi was typically depicted as a scholar

⁷⁶⁰ According to Grózinger “the Jew” was forward-looking, “protection of the past and respect for history are mere instrument to [...] building the future” for him. József M. Grózinger, “Az individuálszichológia zsidó eredete” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.194.

⁷⁶¹ An excellent illustration is provided by Zsoldos' attempt to distance himself from Béla Zsolt whom he accused of inventing differences (compare with the ideas of Aladár Komlós). Zsoldos proposed a discourse based on class, stating that “We feel cultural assimilation has made such fictitious differences impossible to assert. The Jewish and Christian petit bourgeoisie live within the same societal horizon and are becoming similar to each other.” Jenő Zsoldos, “Zsolt Béla: A Wesselényi utcai összeesküvés” *Libanon*, 1937, p.99.

⁷⁶² See, most of all, on humanism and the image of the Jew: Ilona Katzburg, “Humanista zsidószemlélet” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.70. Moreover, she used the trends in charters to demonstrate how the links which “unbreakably connect Jewry to Hungarian fate,” became stronger. She added that Hungarian Jewish charters were an organic part of Hungarian heritage, see Ilona Katzburg, “Magyar-zsidó oklevéltár” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.121. She also discussed that as a consequence of the struggle against the Ottoman Turks, Jews entered the great community of the humanists to help save European culture – here a tacit call for an analogous interpretation of the contemporary situation seems to be evident. Ilona Katzburg, “Budai zsidók egy svájci krónikában” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.14. Elsewhere she went on to generalize: “Jewry has always been a member and organic part of larger cultural units”, and expressed her belief that Jewish history can only be explored within these larger national frames, see Ilona Katzburg, “A zsidóság történeti és művészettörténeti emlékei Délolaszországban” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.53. The concept of assimilation was used in the broadest and most encompassing sense by Imre Waldapfel who called Károly Pap a “programmatic Jewish writer” but labeled his art clearly Hungarian in a “rooted way” and argued that Pap should be seen as having reached the “highest level of assimilation”. Imre Waldapfel, “Pap Károly: Irgalom” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.268. On the other hand, Endre Szegő reflected critically on assimilation already in 1937 (when reviewing Ákos Molnár's *A hitehagyott*), which according to him lifted people out of time, making them leave behind the old but without allowing them to dissolve in the new, leading them to a “loss of balance, in exchange for a questionable gain that they shall see through a list of obsessions, biases [and...] interests”. Endre Szegő, “Molnár Ákos: A hitehagyott” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.199.

⁷⁶³ The autobiographical writing of Bernát's father, originally written in Hebrew, was released in Hungarian just a few years ago. It is an important primary source on 19th century Hungarian Jewry. See Méir Ávrám Munk, *Életem történetei* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2002).

enthusiastically researching ancient Hungarians, a patriot writing “universally valid scholarly works” who was simultaneously deeply committed to Jewry.⁷⁶⁴

In addition to these two, most elaborately presented models of culture, several other alternatives found their place on the pages of *Libanon*. Of these, the three most coherent models were those articulated by József Turóczi-Trostler, Imre Keszi and Aladár Komlós. Apart from these five, there was also a small number of Hungarian nationalist⁷⁶⁵ and occasionally even irredentist utterances⁷⁶⁶ and some statements referring to the contemporary “Jewish rebirth” and national movement in a positive and supportive manner,⁷⁶⁷ but I have touched upon such formulations already in the discussion of the *IMIT yearbooks* and the evidence from *Libanon*, hardly amounting to comprehensive models of culture, would not add substantially to our knowledge of these discourses – they will appear in the next subchapter on the reflection of historical chapters though.

⁷⁶⁴ Thus, Bernát Munkácsi appeared as a hero of Jewish integration (as opposed to assimilation). Instead of continuing the debate on assimilation, András Gerő, among others, proposed the exploration of the option of integration in the early 1990s. András Gerő, “Zsidó utak és magyar keretek a XIX. Században” in András Gerő, *Magyar polgárosodás* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1993), p.316. This conviction also inspired his later work *A zsidó szempont* (Budapest: Polgart, 2005).

⁷⁶⁵ See, for instance, Lenke Steiner’s observation that a certain book was “Hungarian, therefore quality literature”. Lenke Steiner, “Sándor Pál: Fajok” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.30. Elsewhere she declared that “the enthusiastic Hungarianness of Jewish Hungarians is a well-known fact in occupied territories”. Lenke Steiner, “Ignác Rózsa: Anyanyelve magyar” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.97. For comparison, see the materials assembled in Attila Gidó, *Úton. Erdélyi zsidó társadalom- és nemzetépítési kísérletek* (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 2008). She explored the possibilities of Jewish writers to “arrive at lyrical occasions” four years later though (i.e. under radically different circumstances) and recommended to them the concern for their “own natural community”. Lenke Steiner, “Das Lied von Bernadette” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.94.

⁷⁶⁶ The most peculiar of these was when Klein asserted that even Rashi believed that “nature itself has created Hungary as a unified empire, the break-up, the reduction of which is not only a historical sin and injustice but an outrage against nature”. Ábrahám Klein, “Rási értelmező módszere” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.43. Contradictions of such an irredentist stance were exposed in the fourth volume: in the review of the work “Justice for the Jewry of Upper Hungary”. Kohn maintained here that they had struggled in the interest of Hungariandom for twenty years but also mentioned that after twenty years a shocking tragedy awaited them. Zoltán Kohn, “Igazságot a felvidéki zsidóságnak” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.39.

⁷⁶⁷ In the first volume, Salamon Widder reflected on the Hebrew Renaissance on the basis of the works of Mendelev Mozer Szeferim, in the last Ernő Szilágyi wrote of “the complete culture” of the Zionist political workers movement, which also happened to be “rooted in the soil.” Similar topics and phrases can be found in each *Libanon* volume.

A more coherent model emerges from Turóczi-Trostler's several unusually long contributions, some of which had only some Jewish references. In one of his articles, somewhat unexpectedly (though one might say in accordance with his rhapsodic writing style), Turóczi-Trostler stated that "ever since the Renaissance the number of Jewish and non-Jewish transmitters of culture has constantly increased which assures that the mutual exchange of values and forms and the process of assimilation will not be overshadowed in the epochs of darkest oppositions and deepest isolation."⁷⁶⁸ To borrow a relatively recent popular term, these ideas depict the *multiculturalism* (or interculturalism) of modern times. Turóczi-Trostler formulated it to contest Jewish and other isolationisms both normatively and empirically, though elsewhere (as we have seen in our discussion of the *IMIT yearbooks*) he argued that due to the molding power of collective memory and its unavoidably different contents, works of non-Jews with "authentic Jewish content" were nearly impossible to find – and futile to seek. Even so, he thought that Jews undergoing the (unfinished) process of multicultural exchange represented mixed types and he showed a keen interest in the results of such, in his eyes, partial fusions.

He was not the only one to conceive of the current state of Jewish culture as a melting pot: Ernő Munkácsi also wrote that "the history of the Jewish Diaspora is the summary of mutual cultural impacts."⁷⁶⁹ A number of other articles in *Libanon* addressed the currently also fashionable and relatively widely researched topic of intercultural transmission and borrowing: a significant number of its pages were devoted to influences and receptions, overlaps and agents of transmission.⁷⁷⁰ These articles tackled various kinds of cases and thus,

⁷⁶⁸ József Turóczi-Trostler, "Fenékkel fölfordult világ" in *Libanon*, 1941, p.35.

⁷⁶⁹ Ernő Munkácsi, "A vatikáni könyvtár <<Palatini>> kéziratai" in *Libanon*, 1936, p.252.

⁷⁷⁰ For instance, there were several studies on the mixed nature of Jewish musical tradition in the first volume. (Imre Keszi registered some traces of classical Greek-Latin music in Spanish-Jewish music, while Bence

the apologetic discourse on Jewish contributions was not as dominant in *Libanon* as in the *IMIT* yearbooks.

By contrast, Imre Keszi's model of Jewish culture was based on Hungarian *völkisch* (*népi* – populist or peasantist) ideas. He pressed for a peculiar Jewish authenticity.⁷⁷¹ At the same time, his contribution unavoidably exposed the ambivalences and contradictions inherent to assuming a *népi* stance as a Hungarian Jew: Keszi argued vehemently against “mask-wearing” and “ill-intended role-playing”, and instead propagated an open and unproblematized Jewish collective identity. He declared that they (thereby providing a rare instance of speaking in the name of an unspecified collective on the pages of *Libanon*) identified with the historical past of Jewry, and that their crucial reference points were Jerusalem (emphatically not Tel-Aviv) and Hungary – ancient tradition and current country, not the modern Jewish national movement. Discussion the complex, rather metaphorical thought of László Németh, whom he called the “most authentic Hungarian”, Keszi sought to justify his stance on the Jewish question by polemically expressing that Németh's anti-Semitism was merely “the fiction of Jews”. In his eyes, Németh's relevant pieces demanded no more than Jewish self-knowledge. It is particularly interesting that while Németh argued that Jewish writers and their “literary movement” did not belong to the literature of

Szabolcsi sought to understand the origins of the various elements of Yiddish dancing songs, etc.). I found the most complex illustration of the idea of (intra-Jewish) transmission in another one of Bence Szabolcsi's studies. Writing in Hungarian, Szabolcsi reported on a woman from Cracow who found in Cairo a score of a Spanish-Jewish melody written around 1400 for the Song of Songs – and published this finding in German. Bence Szabolcsi, “Zsidó zenei nyelvemlék: a legrégibb kotázott bibliadallam” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.67.

⁷⁷¹ Imre Keszi (1910-1974), born Krámer, was from an intellectual family. He attended the university specializations in Hungarian and German and studied musicology (music history as well as folk music). He started his publishing career as a poet and musicologist. He soon quit writing poetry and switched to prose, but continued to write on music all his life. In the period after 1944, Keszi became a notorious (and deeply resented) communist literary critic. He was removed from his teaching position in 1957. (Even the *Hungarian Biographical Lexicon* mentions his “sarcastically sharp tone”, traces of which can be found in his *Libanon* writings. Perhaps the most spectacular examples of this are his ill-intended accusations of Komlós who in response pointed to a number of factual mistakes in the accusatory piece. It ought to be added that Keszi was one of the youngest contributors.)

“Hungariandom”, thus forcing upon them a choice between supposedly opposed sides, Keszi rather paradoxically expressed his hope that “the stance of Hungarians is revealed in his words” but rejected the obligation to choose between what Németh admittedly presented as irreconcilable options. Instead, Keszi wrote of “fateful harmony” that in his eyes existed between Jews and Hungarians and proposed the striking of a “fraternal alliance”.⁷⁷²

In 1937, when reviewing a new history of modern Hungarian literature published by Aladár Schöpflin, Keszi quoted that “the actual bourgeois functions [...] were left to be taken up by Jews”, but here too he would have wished to see a report on new Jewish literature of “internal accounting and self-knowledge of the Jewish nationality [*nemzetiségi önismeret*]” – just as he thought that relevant aspects of Marxist literature and works dealing with the roles Jews played in the years of “revolution, emigration and conjuncture” were unduly neglected by Schöpflin.⁷⁷³ In the same volume of *Libanon*, in 1937, Pál Budai also propagated Jewish institution-building on a *népi* (*völkisch*) basis. He proposed the establishment of an academy training Jewish cantors and grand choirs in order to replace the “Unjewish” grand opera style and spread *népi* songs instead. This implies that Budai suggested an unusual combination of religious Zionist and *népi* ideas.⁷⁷⁴

Last but not least, Aladár Komlós also formulated his model of Jewish culture on the pages of *Libanon*. He relied on the notion of its distinctiveness, but his concept was much more inclusive than what *népi* interpretations offered. We find cultural ideas in two major articles of his in *Libanon* where he laid out his otherwise eminently controversial stance without rhetorical flourishes. One of these articles explicated his approach to

⁷⁷² Imre Keszi, “Németh László és a zsidóság” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.47.

⁷⁷³ Imre Keszi, “A zsidóság magyar irodalmi szerepe” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.108. The work under review is Aladár Schöpflin, *A magyar irodalom története a XX. században* (Budapest: Grill Károly Könyvkiadóvállalata, 1937).

⁷⁷⁴ Pál Budai, “A zsidó templomi zene kérdése” in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.78-81.

Hungarian Jewish literature and literary history, while the other offered reflections on the history of Hungarian Jewish assimilation. On the former question, Komlós expressed himself in favor of including all authors of Jewish origins, not because he accepted racial perspectives, but because the Jewish “social situation” was supposedly different.⁷⁷⁵ In his opinion the Jewish collective had been going through one of its gravest crises which left many marks in literature as well – may these be manifested in preference shown for displaying (honest or dishonest) indifference, in peculiar taboos or otherwise.⁷⁷⁶ Though Komlós referred to the difference he saw in the societal situation of Jews in an undifferentiated way and without any reference to overlaps with the Christian parts of the population (compare Turóczi-Trostler’s notions on the spread of ideas), he expressed his belief that these communities were merely organs of a body that together composed the body of the nation. Therefore dual solidarity was eminently possible, and was also very real, an idea which Komlós illustrated by comparing the Jewish soul to an ellipsis with two focal points.⁷⁷⁷ As opposed to Grózinger’s belief in some Jewish spiritual essence with universal

⁷⁷⁵ Note that *Libanon* also published stances opposed to the concept of Jewish art, partly motivated by the protest against exclusion: Ernő Naményi declared that “artists cannot be categorized according to their denominational belonging”. Ernő Naményi, “Zsidó művészek kiállítása” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.20. When the summary on five years of exhibitions was provided in 1943, he maintained that these exhibitions “completely lacked unity”. E.N. “Az OMIKE képzőművészeti csoportjának V. kiállítása” in *Libanon*, 1943, p. 81.

⁷⁷⁶ Aladár Komlós, “Egy megirandó magyar-zsidó irodalomtörténet elé” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.5. Not much later Jenő Nyilas-Kolb also offered a program in cultural history and sociology. Jenő Nyilas-Kolb, “Magyar-zsidó kultúrmunka” in *Libanon*, 1936, pp.177-182. When writing on Tamás Kóbor, Lenke Steiner expressed similar ideas: “If today, cautiously and modestly, we decided to take into account the values of Jewish writers for Hungarian literature, even if merely in the sphere of the history of objects, then we would have to accomplish another task of evaluation: we would have to analyze to what extent these writers expressed their Jewishness and how significant they have become for Jewry. We have to operate with the “principle of ourselves” as recommended by János Horváth”. Lenke Steiner, “Kóbor Tamás” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.38.

⁷⁷⁷ Aladár Komlós, “Egy megirandó magyar-zsidó irodalomtörténet elé” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.5. The spread of the idea of an ellipsis in American historiography was largely due to the impact of the works of Salo Baron. For a discussion of its centrality, see Moshe Rosman “Some a Priori Issues in Jewish Historiography” in Rosman, *How Jewish*, pp. 45-6. This idea is based on the notion that Jewish historical existence is impacted by internal as well as external forces, which are, if not completely, at least largely independent of each other.

relevance, Komlós's cultural model formulated on the pages of *Libanon* stressed Jewish specificity and its particular relevance: it was decidedly historical, *particularist*.

In another of his *Libanon* articles, Komlós provided a case study of the problems, misunderstandings and personal tragedies of assimilation as well as a concrete application of his theory of the decisive nature of origins. He expressed his conviction that only Ignotus (who was both Hugó Veigelsberg, lived between 1869 and 1949 and was among the founders of *Nyugat*) managed to succeed both at being a leader in Hungarian literary life as a Hungarian Jew and a true representative of the interests of the best Hungarian writers of his day. In Komlós' eyes, the positions Ignotus took and his fate were ultimately deeply influenced by his origins – the way Ignotus was eventually discarded he qualified as revealing his “Jewish fate”.⁷⁷⁸ In accordance with the identity option he formulated in the *IMIT yearbooks*, one of the crucial passages of this article addressed the conflictual nature and potentially tragic consequences of assimilation. Building on the idea of a partial Hungarian and Hungarian-Jewish agreement and aiming to mediate between two half-truths as he saw them, Komlós wrote: “Ignotus was right in maintaining that it is impossible to demand assimilation and to complain that the assimilated differs from the receiving nation, but didn't he forget that it is equally impossible to want to maintain his racial characteristics while making demands to be accepted as completely alike? The conflict between these two impossible, yet so understandable truths composes the tragedy of assimilation”.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁸ Aladár Komlós, “Ignotus” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.47.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.44-45.

III. The Reflection of Historical Changes

Due to its special though certainly unintentional “timing” (1936 to 1943) *Libanon* is a fascinating primary source on historical developments and their discursive reflection in this period. The journal started appearing shortly before the beginning of harsh and increasingly encompassing anti-Jewish discrimination, and in its very last issue its authors witnessed the extermination of European Jewry, in despair and uncertainty, and hoping against all hope for the survival of Hungarian Jewry. At this, last, stage of the history of *Libanon* we read: “We do not know what divine providence has ordered, whether it will allow Hungarian Jewry to welcome the dove signaling the end of the cataclysm. But we have to trust in this and we must keep [...] those spiritual treasures above water, which on our continent we *almost alone* have the chance to protect”.⁷⁸⁰

Neither providing analyses on the current European, Hungarian or Hungarian Jewish political life, nor publishing reflections on contemporary historical developments were among the explicit aims of *Libanon*. On the basis of this source alone not even a partial version of the historical narrative could be written – too many fundamental facts never found their way into its pages. At the same time, the evolution of Hungarian Jewish interpretations of the chances and dangers facing the community can only be understood in relation to the ongoing historical process. In other words, *Libanon* can provide important insights into the reactions of a sizeable group of consciously Jewish Hungarian intellectuals to worsening discrimination and mounting difficulties in this crucial period and, more generally, allow us to study the evolution of their agendas and positions in the course of these eight years.

⁷⁸⁰ “Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum közgyűlése” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.110. Italics added.

More specifically, my aim is to show through what stages *Libanon* arrived from the agenda of creating a Hungarian-Jewish culture in 1936 to the necessity of saving the remains of a culture and the sense of responsibility towards the future of the entire European Jewish culture by 1943. Their sense of hope, trust in the power of scholarly means and open polemic with Nazism were gradually replaced by voices of doubt. This was due, in the first place, to the growing but hardly ever openly discussed discrimination within Hungary itself. Later on, in parallel with the demand for religious renewal several articles reinterpreted Orthodoxy in a positive light and occasionally pieces justifying or even propagating the Jewish national program appeared as well. While the analogies of contemporary Jewish fate highly revealingly changed to end up expressing the unprecedented nature of the ongoing destruction, some clear references to the Shoah can also be found in the last volume of the journal.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the first volumes of *Libanon* is the open polemic with Nazism. This presupposed the situation of some kind of debate, which was neither literally meant, nor practically conceived, but nevertheless defined the virtual addressees and set the tone of these contributions. Nor is it surprising to find the authors referring to the unscientific nature of racism, as at this point their belief in the power of properly scientific (*tudományos*) ideas to determine the future seemed unshaken – one might add that, rather ironically, their only reservations were about the present.⁷⁸¹ It is more

⁷⁸¹ Ábrahám Klein remarked that “In this strange world of terrible realities fairy tales acquire greater credibility than truths”. Ábrahám Klein, “Shylock” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.251. At the same time, Zoltán Kohn formulated an idealized version of the internalist model of scholarship: “Its path of conquering glory and its quiet, mute failures cannot be influenced by either individual whims, or by national interests and political ideologies. The life and death of scholarship depends on the truth value of what it discovers and expresses.” Zoltán Kohn “Sigmund Freud a maga zsidóságáról” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.119.

unexpected from the contemporary point of view that this recurrent polemic often took the shape of rewriting Nazi ideas and changing their connotations into their opposites.

Three remarkable articles on Nazism deserve attention. The most encompassing of these is Zoltán Kohn's "Old and New Paganism", in which Kohn construed an opposition of world historical significance between Western or Greek pagan ideals and Eastern Semitism, which gave rise to monotheism.⁷⁸² In the Nazi "insanity that is the myth of blood" he aimed to uncover the hatred of Judeo-Christianity, but also highlighted rationalism as one of the indirect causes of the hatred of humans.⁷⁸³ With a clear sense of irony, Kohn even called the infamous work of Alfred Rosenberg the "Bible of the new German revelation"⁷⁸⁴, and mockingly added that perhaps Rosenberg was correct to believe in the German - Greek connection, i.e. to maintain that the Germans were pagans at the heart of their hearts. In sum, Kohn's crucial aim here is to show that even though in practice they are often opposed, theoretically and ultimately Christianity and Judaism belonged together.⁷⁸⁵

Grózinger took on the ideas of Erich Jaensch, the representative figure of Nazi philosophical anthropology and "anthropological psychology." Grózinger not only called Jaensch's attempts futile, but used a peculiar method of subversion: he asked the rhetorical question whether the idea of a philosophy close to life was not perhaps directly borrowed

⁷⁸² He applied this opposition even to Italy, contrasting the "Greek ethos" of the South with the "religious ecstasy" of the North.

⁷⁸³ He specifically referred to the genealogical chain whereby mechanistic-naturalistic worldview, monist-pantheism, atheism and the self-serving love of science were successively derived.

⁷⁸⁴ Zoltán Kohn, "Régi és új pogányság" in *Libanon*, 1936, p.65.

⁷⁸⁵ A stronger formulation appeared when the thought of Joachim Schoeps was discussed who maintained that the debate of two millennia turned into a "truly empathic dialogue" in the 20th century. Schoeps also opined that "the Jewish religion is the actual world religion and the Christian Church serves a global Jewish mission". József M. Grózinger, "Joachim Schoeps: Jüdisch-christliches Religionsgespräch in 19. Jahrhunderten" in *Libanon*, 1938, p.26. The same polemic can be detected when Grózinger declared that "The Holy Scripture is at the origins of Christianity. It is not the Greek who provided the Christians with their Old Testament, but the Revelation at Sinai". József M. Grózinger, "M. Stein: Dath Vedaath" in *Libanon*, 1939, p.36.

from *homo iudaicus*?⁷⁸⁶ Similarly, Imre Keszi discussed the “arsenal of our enemies in the *Geisteswissenschaften*” on the basis of the ideas of Wilhelm Stapel, one of the important thinkers of the conservative revolution in the 1920s who committed himself to the “National Socialist worldview” at the beginning of the 1930s. With the confidence of someone more cultured than his opponent, Keszi observed: “I am not sure whether we can rejoice over all this without feeling some inner pain. Let us not forget that once upon a time this was the nation of Diltthey!”⁷⁸⁷

In the same volumes of *Libanon* from the mid-1930s, alongside some early signs of the intellectual struggle against anti-Semitism in Hungary,⁷⁸⁸ there were still clearly laudatory statements on the German nation such as “they are the leading nation today in culture, science, music”. For instance, György Bokor categorized Bertalan Hatvany’s rejection of Germans as “unfortunately one-sided and politically motivated”.⁷⁸⁹ It seems that while the authors of *Libanon* considered anti-Semitism a serious enemy and did not disregard its manifestations in Hungarian intellectual life either, the monstrosity of the Nazi regime and the magnitude of the threat it posed did not yet become clear to them. This might not be all that surprising since in its early years many thought the Nazi regime would not last for long and that the threat it posed should not to be exaggerated.

⁷⁸⁶ József M. Grózinger, “A mai német filozófia és a nacionálhumanizmus” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.242.

⁷⁸⁷ Imre Keszi, “Wilhelm Stapel: Die literarische Vorherrschaft der Juden in Deutschland 1918 bis 1933” in *Libanon*, 1937, p.32.

⁷⁸⁸ György Kecskeméti published an article titled “The Sociology of Anti-Semitism” in the very first issue of *Libanon*. In the same volume, Imre Keszi offered an overly long polemic with what he called the “aggregation of citations” published by Lajos Fehér under the title *Jewry* (Keszi himself referred to the lack of balance between the effort he spent on discrediting the work and the attention it truly deserved). He called anti-Semitism unjustifiable from the religious point of view, unscientific and “poetic”, seeing in it “the sociology and psychology of bunglers”. Keszi also shared his rather sarcastic ideas on Gyula Farkas’s infamous work, *The Age of Assimilation in Hungarian Literature*, even suspecting that this book was written “in order to be translated into German”. Imre Keszi, “Az asszimiláció kora a magyar irodalomban” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.27.

⁷⁸⁹ György Bokor, “Ázsia lelke” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.209.

On the other hand, Hungarian Jewish elites were well-known for their active bilingualism and their deeply held respect towards German culture might well have played a part in hindering clearer appreciations of the emerging political realities.⁷⁹⁰ Similarly to their German counterparts, some Hungarian Jewish intellectuals used the subversive strategy of fashioning themselves as more intimate knowers and more legitimate representatives of German culture than the “intellectual *Führers*” of the new regime at this time. Taking this fact and this subversive strategy into account, their attempt to have an open debate with the Nazi ideas becomes more understandable, but it does not change the fact that the reserved and cultured polemic they pursued did not attest to an overly sharp sense of political realism. In any case, unlike in the *IMIT yearbooks*, there is little reflection in *Libanon* on “the thorough perversion of Germans”: their shocking turn from admirable levels of culturedness to utter barbarism. What can be stated with certainty is that in the *Libanon* issues of the mid-1930s the occasional belittling of Nazis would still often be followed by different and much more positive opinions about Germans, creating certain ambivalences in judgment.

It is a remarkable development in *Libanon*’s discussion of Nazi Germany that articles such as the aforementioned three could no longer be found in later volumes. The single exception was Grózingers’ reflections on a work by a non-Jewish German, Johannes Hessen in 1941, a pro-Western and anti-Nazi philosopher who aimed to compare and contrast

⁷⁹⁰ There are several interesting smaller signs of this German orientation: Birobidjan was spelled Birobidschan (instead of Birobidzsán), Sestov appeared as Schestow (instead of Sesztov) while a quote from Polish writer Reymont was rendered in German in 1942. When *IMIT*’s British style *Pentateuch* (The Hertz Bible quoted above) was discussed in the same year, it was stated that “For readers used to German commentaries it will perhaps appear slightly strange that there are hardly any philological references”. Ottó Komlós, “Mózes öt Könyve és a Haftárak” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.61.). Homeland and ideal national scientific community did not have to coincide either: in 1943, Mózes Rubinyi called Bernát Munkácsi (whose committed Hungarianness and deeply felt Jewishness were already noted) “a German scholar in the classical sense” who shall “forever remind us of a shinningly beautiful age of the past”. Mózes Rubinyi, “Bernát Munkácsi” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.63. There were positive remarks even on the contemporary German scholarly community: in his review of Ferenc Hevesi, Grózingers stated that “The German summary included at the end of the book enables the scholarly world to properly value Ferenc Hevesi’s merits” – let us remember that this also appeared in 1943. József M. Grózingers, “Dr. Hevesi Ferenc: Az ókor zsidó bölcsselete” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.85.

Prophetism with Platonism.⁷⁹¹ In a footnote Grózinger felt compelled to remark what can be of little surprise value to those aware of Nazi expectations and their fulfillments (or at least concurrence with them) in publications: “Hessen does not even mention Jewish philosophers”.⁷⁹² Only Imre Keszi and Andor Fenyvesi used explicit wording. Keszi wrote that in the Nazi mass movement “what is great is precisely what is terrifying.” In a similar vein, Fenyvesi added that “a religious war is under way with all its fanaticism and brutality”.⁷⁹³ A more concrete reference to the ongoing destruction than these can first be read in 1938 when in the *Libanon* section Journal Reviews (which appeared in small font at the very end of the issues), the following lines were printed: “an unknown author paints a shocking image of the quiet, cruel and well planned gradual erasure of German Jewry”.⁷⁹⁴

This assessment of the German situation came only a little ahead of the first mention of potential discrimination in Hungary. Uttered by Fülöp Grünwald, it took the form of a strong understatement: “in the <<hysterical>> spring of 1938 when some wish to revise emancipation”.⁷⁹⁵ At the same time, he expressed that the organization of Jewish social work was now urgently needed in order to set up the infrastructure ahead of the “arrival of obliging necessities”.⁷⁹⁶ Even less straight forward than the striking understatement just quoted was Grünwald’s employment of the official euphemisms: he wrote about “the debate around the law to assure societal and economic balance more effectively”.⁷⁹⁷ It appears that in his

⁷⁹¹ The work in question is Johannes Hessen, *Platonismus und Prophetismus. Die antike und die biblische Geisteswelt in strukturvergleichender Betrachtung* (München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1939).

⁷⁹² József M. Grózinger, “A prófétizmus útja a legújabb gondolkodásig” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.79.

⁷⁹³ Andor Fenyvesi, “Szabó Lajos és Tábor Béla: Vádirat a szellem ellen” in *Libanon*, 1936, p.272.

⁷⁹⁴ “Folyóiratszemle” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.32.

⁷⁹⁵ Fülöp Grünwald, “Stern Samu: A zsidókérdés Magyarországon” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.53.

⁷⁹⁶ Fülöp Grünwald, “Eppler Sándor: A budapesti zsidóság szociális munkája” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.54.

⁷⁹⁷ Fülöp Grünwald, “Bakonyi László: A kongresszusi zsidó hitközségek statisztikája” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.90.

writings from the late 1930s, Grünwald preferred to maintain a certain air of detachment and expose an ideal of objectivity, in spite of its obvious practical difficulties.⁷⁹⁸

The ways doubts about the future started to appear provides a much better indicator of the changes that were taking place and could not fail to impact the contributors of *Libanon*. In the discussion of Endre Sós’ “In Front of the Doors Slammed Shut” the rhetorical question was posed: “Who could count on the work of a new generation of scholars amidst to the current circumstances?”⁷⁹⁹ Some sings of fatalism were expressed as early as 1938: when reviewing the book of Ernst Sommer on the expulsion of Jews from Spain in the 15th century, Pál Kardos asked whether “its topicality would not remain eternal – in spite of the intention of its author?”⁸⁰⁰ Moreover, this was the time when Mór Fényes’ ideas on the unreliability of scholarship were published where he concluded that religion did not need to seek the approval of scholarship.

An arguably even more characteristic symptom of the uncertainties of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals suffering under discrimination is the fact that Zoltán Kohn thought of the tragic condition of German Jewish youth in 1938 as reflecting the tragedy of Jewish youth worldwide. He referred to the possibility of living outside Europe, claiming that the only hope left was in the possibility fleeing, but even to this he added the doubtful question of whether “life could truly be better and more peaceful anywhere for Jewish youth today?”⁸⁰¹ Soon afterwards Kohn assumed a much more militant voice to express a rather utopian desire: “oh, how I wish that the fight of the silenced moral law in the spirit of the

⁷⁹⁸ Note that one of the rare references from later on also refers to the anti-Jewish law in a neutral way, stating, in connection with the *Ararát yearbook* that “the air of law XV. from 1938 defines the topicality of some of the published writings”. (-ö), “Ararát évkönyv. Zsidó magyar almanach. 1939” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.15.

⁷⁹⁹ (-ld-), “Sós Endre: Becsapott ajtók előtt” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.62.

⁸⁰⁰ Pál Kardos, “Ernst Sommer: Kelt Granadában 1492” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.86.

⁸⁰¹ Zoltán Kohn, “Günther Friedländer: Jugend zwischen gestern und morgen” in *Libanon*, 1938, p.110.

Prophets would begin as soon as possible against the mad godless forces.”⁸⁰² In 1940, Grózinger also went much further than revealing merely his doubts: “wherever we look, everywhere we see despair, suffering, resignation, uncertainty and hopelessness”, he wrote.⁸⁰³ By this time he believed that when a future historian of the spirit would observe the distorted face of “the first four decades of the 20th century, he will call this century *seaculum diabolicum*”.⁸⁰⁴ To Imre Keszi, his age appeared as “a bottomless, putrid and insidious swamp”.⁸⁰⁵

By contrast, E.M. (most likely Ernő Munkácsi) appeared nearly optimistic when he chose to indulge in uncovering historical constants, and thus concluded that the current problems of Hungarian Jewry were “the same now as they used to be a hundred years ago” – essentially problems related to the lack of emancipation.⁸⁰⁶ György Balázs assessed the situation in 1940 similarly when he wrote that “They could not have imagined that two generations later the same troubles, dangers and suffering will await their descendents, which they and their ancestors had to endure for centuries”.⁸⁰⁷ In another article of Ernő Munkácsi we find yet another historical analogy: his generation “lives through times which were almost unprecedented in the past 2000 years”,⁸⁰⁸ namely it had to pass “at once, all of a sudden, from legal equality and the complete possession of the rights of citizens to the pain and suffering of legal restriction and a condition without legal rights.”⁸⁰⁹ At the same time,

⁸⁰² Zoltán Kohn, “A profétizmus Ignaz Ziegler szemléletében” in *Libanon*, 1939, p.6.

⁸⁰³ József M. Grózinger, “Vallásfilozófiai körkép” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.19. It might be just a coincidence but it is at this point that he reviewed a German work for the first time not in its original version but in its Hebrew translation.

⁸⁰⁴ József M. Grózinger, “Sigmund Freud irracionalizmusa” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.37.

⁸⁰⁵ Imre Keszi, “Fenyő László: Hűség” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.26.

⁸⁰⁶ E.M., “A Magyar zsidóság újta vezércikkek tükrében. Összeállította: Dr. Ballagi Ernő” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.59. (E.M. stood as M.E. in the original.)

⁸⁰⁷ György Balázs, “Az erdélyi szombatosok 1941. tavaszán” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.22.

⁸⁰⁸ Ernő Munkácsi, “Az ókori zsidóság feliratos történeti forrásai (I. közlemény)” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.68.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., p.68.

Munkácsi clearly considered “the ancient model” desirable, according to which Jewry managed to adapt while staying loyal to its religion.⁸¹⁰

It is another symptom of the changing times that, even though there were some lines supportive of the Zionist movement already in previous volumes, in 1940 this movement appeared in a new, wider perspective for the first time when Lipót Herman made the following statement: “The building up of Palestine means the defense of honor for civilization, a civilization which enables pogroms, the persecution and murder of Jews”.⁸¹¹ The voices of a new type of soul searching became stronger around this time: Sámuel Kandel, referring to the ideas of Martin Buber, wrote on the renewal of religious beliefs among the people and quotes “the idea of the sacred gathering of a truly humane community” in Zion.⁸¹² Grózinger also related to the possibility of religious rebirth. He argued namely that the belief that the world was governed by the order of divine necessity should be maintained. Grózinger was convinced that this belief would “reemerge renewed and reborn out of the current catastrophe”.⁸¹³

References to the lack of Jewish self-defense also became more frequent and their tone sounded more accusatory by the early 1940s. Discussing a book by Pál Kardos, Jenő Zsoldos talked of the “causes of decay”, pointing to the fact that there was hardly any effort to create a meaningful intellectual and spiritual life for Jewish youth.⁸¹⁴ Endre Sós voiced similar observations in a collectively though only partly self-accusatory way: “We did

⁸¹⁰ Ernő Munkácsi, “Az ókori zsidóság feliratos történeti forrásai (Befejező közlemény)” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.118. He also expressed his conviction that the ancestors from ancient times could “trust in the reward of good deeds and in eternal life amidst great misfortunes and world-shattering events”.

⁸¹¹ Lipót Herman, “Gerő Ödön” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.13.

⁸¹² Sámuel Kandel, “Martin Buber: A zsidóság megújódása” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.88. On the idea of Renaissance in modern Judaism see the recent work: Asher D. Biemann, *Inventing New Beginnings: On the Idea of Renaissance in Modern Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009).

⁸¹³ József M. Grózinger, “A gonoszság szerepe a világtörténelemben” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.121.

⁸¹⁴ Jenő Zsoldos, “Kardos Pál: Levél egy kibujdosott barátom után” in *Libanon*, 1940, p.59.

not show enough resistance against the mass of accusations addressed towards us and directly at us, even though these accusations at times amounted to <<blood libel>> in seemingly literary shape.”⁸¹⁵ What only a few years earlier were still formulated as positive plans and seemed at worst painful but corrigible absences started to appear as irredeemable losses, as proofs of sinful negligence.

Still, the most dramatic expressions from the very early 1940s can be found in the report of the annual assembly held on the 21st of September 1941. It is remarkable how much sharper the formulations of this oral presentation were than the characteristically restrained written words. “Many of us feel that the cup of our misfortune is close to being filled. In these horror-filled, apocalyptic times, Messianic, miraculous beliefs are spreading among the masses”.⁸¹⁶ Here Munkácsi attempted to adopt the tone as well as display the idealism and fanaticism of Prophets when he asked “isn’t it the sin of sins that Hungarian Israel, in its hour of critical need, isn’t ready to recognize reality and draw appropriate conclusions from it? [...] Do we deserve the divine miracle when our ranks are rife with undisciplined behavior and internal splits?”⁸¹⁷ As the understanding emerged that what was at stake was the bare survival of Hungarian Jews in the middle of a continent-wide Judeocide,⁸¹⁸ the historical analogy with Spanish Jews of the 15th century gained prominence: the declared Hungarian Jewish aim was now “besides the saving of our lives, the saving of our spiritual treasures”.⁸¹⁹

In addition to the growing awareness of terrible dangers and the yearning for spiritual renewal, in the second issue of 1942 we find for the first time a decidedly pro-

⁸¹⁵ Endre Sós, “Makai Emil” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.46.

⁸¹⁶ “Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum Közgyűlése” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.56.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., p.57.

⁸¹⁸ “Múzeumegyesületi közlemények” in *Libanon*, 1941, p.95.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., p.96.

Orthodox stance.⁸²⁰ According to Sámuel Kandel, in today's Orthodoxy "all those forces can be found in front of which the modern Jew has to bow down. These values are there in the moral commitment to accept sacrifices and, if needs to be, even to accept martyrdom".⁸²¹ In Kandel's eyes, it was through Orthodoxy that Jewish national life was successfully preserved (though in peculiar form, as he admitted) until today. In his characterization, modern Jews were distinguished mainly by their powerlessness and a lack of true community. Moreover, in assimilation he saw no more than the continuation of "the desire to convert by other means". Although he considered the existing Jewish institutional infrastructure adequate for accomplishing the necessary mission, he believed that in order to fulfill their urgent tasks they would have to assume new roles well beyond their current ones: "all our institutions would have to be elevated and turn into pieces of the living Bible", he wrote.⁸²²

The next issue of *Libanon*, still in 1942, featured an article by Pál Weisz on Conservative Judaism. He distinguished it from Orthodoxy, propagating moderate reform in the vein of Zacharias Frankel. At the same time, he presented moderate reform as a combination of faithful maintenance of traditions with a free spirit and thus essentially different not only from its Orthodox but also from its Neolog alternative. Seeing something "hopelessly Unjewish" in liberal reformers of Judaism, Weisz believed they provided

⁸²⁰ In the first volume of *Libanon* Ábrahám Klein wrote polemically on "conservative Jewry," saying for example that its rejection of black as the color of mourning was incomprehensible. Ábrahám Klein, "Az élet és a halál szín-jelképei" in *Libanon*, 1936, p.146.). Zsigmond Groszmann emphasized in 1937 that "Hungarian Jewry never diverged from a unified Rabbinite basis," never served as the basis of "religious radicalism and never diverged from Talmudism" and even its modern character was based on traditionalism. Zsigmond Groszmann, "Gondolatok egy magyar-zsidó vallásreformátor körül" in *Libanon*, 1937, pp.49-56.). Groszmann presented León Klein Pollák as an appropriate role model.

⁸²¹ Sámuel Kandel, "A mai zsidó útja" in *Libanon*, 1942, p.45.

⁸²² Ibid., p.45. Interestingly, when the current *IMIT yearbook* was reviewed in *Libanon* in 1942, the article of Aladár Komlós in it merited a similar summary: "the modern Jew of the turn of the century left behind his Jewishness, but that of the present day returned to it." K., "Évkönyv" in *Libanon*, 1942, p.127.

lukewarm substitutes that unavoidably led to bankruptcy.⁸²³ Towards the end of his article, he also expressed his support for a religious Zionist position: he maintained that “the task of creating a Jewish homeland in the land of the ancestors flows naturally from Jewish conservatism.”⁸²⁴

Contrary to Weisz, Ernő Kanizsai declared liberal Jewry “more valuable” and presented it even as “more Jewish.” Kanizsai pictured liberal Jews as the group that not only searched for the essence but taught it too. At the same time, he admitted that liberal Jews tended to consider their conscience and reason the arbiter of what qualified as “inspired and eternal law”, and thereby accepted the distinction that only the task of religion was solid, but “the solution could never be.”⁸²⁵ This platform rooted in the religious Enlightenment undoubtedly proved conducive to the discovery and accumulation of spiritual wealth, but when the organization of collective self-defense became the most urgent task, its potential left something to be desired.⁸²⁶ This emerging realization, next to the perception of the need for inner Jewish reconciliation, seems to be behind the shifts in emphasis we observe in *Libanon*.

Around the same time, Zoltán Kohn formulated his comprehensive critique along the lines similar to Weisz’s, but with a crucial difference: for Kohn, emancipation was the main culprit. “The distancing of modern Jewish soul from religion and faith started with

⁸²³ Pál Weisz, “Konzervatív zsidóság” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.70.

⁸²⁴ Ibid., p.72.

⁸²⁵ Ernő Kanizsai, “A liberális zsidóság” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.18.

⁸²⁶ One of the most respected researchers of German Jewry, David Sorkin recently published his revisionist book on the religious Enlightenment. David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment. Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008). Sorkin deals with six authors, most of them less known today, from six different areas of thought. The most famous among them is Moses Mendelssohn. Arguably, one of the main motivations of Sorkin was to show that there were phenomena within Christianity parallel to the Jewish, religiously based Enlightenment.

European emancipation and we see the culmination of this process today,” he wrote.⁸²⁷ In Kohn’s assessment, form had always been essential to Jewishness, and any attempt to make faith independent of form lacked Jewishness from the beginning and, quite unsurprisingly, led to the general weakening of faith. Kohn explicitly argued that there was an unalterable connection between culture and religion and that in the interest of self-preservation Jewry needed to maintain the religious character of its culture.⁸²⁸ In his presentation, Neolog Jewry offered no more than a “religious substitute” at a time of “a 150 year-long short circuit of religion and faith”.⁸²⁹ Once again, Orthodoxy appeared as a positive example: “Only the minority of closed and traditionally loyal Jewry defended itself adequately against the danger of dissolution”.⁸³⁰ So while Kohn presented the narrative of decline and stressed the decisive nature of the current stage of history, he did so in the hope of religious rebirth. It is a surprising twist on his previously expressed ideas that he closed his lines with words of trust, stating that the consequence of current developments would be “the rebirth of Jewish humanity that shall turn out to be a sacred kind of humanity”.⁸³¹

⁸²⁷ Not much earlier than this, writing on the book Nordau by Béla Révész, he argued that Libanon’s former approach was retrospectively justified: “Only few people know [...] but experts, professional literary scholars have never forgotten about the Jewishness of Béla Révész and, what is more, our journal remembered it in a nice study that appeared a few years ago”. Zoltán Kohn, “Révész Béla: Max Nordau élete” in *Libanon*, 1941, pp.27-28.

⁸²⁸ According to Kohn, “the meaning of the concept of Jewry cannot be transformed so much as to become a mere distorted analogy of the original and primary: Jewry as a religious phenomenon”. Zoltán Kohn, “Holtponton (A mai zsidóság helyzetképe) (Folytatás)” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.109.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.108.

⁸³⁰ Zoltán Kohn, “Holtponton (A mai zsidóság helyzetképe)” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.79. The recent monograph of Kinga Frojimovics analyses the social history and opposition between Orthodox and Neolog Jewry. She claims in various places that these two trends within Jewry largely defined themselves in opposition to each other. See, for instance, Kinga Frojimovics, *Szétszakadt történelem. Zsidó vallási irányzatok Magyarországon 1868-1950* (Budapest: Balassi, 2008), p.19.

⁸³¹ Zoltán Kohn, “Holtponton (A mai zsidóság helyzetképe) (Folytatás)” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.110. “Suffering seems to have broken not only Jewry but also its faith. We cannot yet tell where Jewry’s tragic road would lead, but it is certain that a Jewry broken in its soul – like that of today – will not be able to face up to its doomed fate. Developments indubitably point towards a *népi* type of rebirth, but this does not exclude the possibility of a religious renaissance, it does not make it impossible that Jewry would emerge out of its tribulations with a faith capable of recreating its spiritual life, the life that is currently at a dead end”. Zoltán Kohn, “Holtponton (A mai zsidóság helyzetképe) (Folytatás)” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.108.

In 1942 the sense of immeasurable tragedy and hope for rebirth could still be presented as if they were in equilibrium. This verbal exercise can be detected, for instance, in a sentence by Fülöp Grünvald who wrote, similarly to his parallel discourse in *IMIT*, that “Europe is just ahead of a major reorganization, and the settlement of the Jewish question is an unavoidable part of this reorganization”.⁸³² The other main sign of the hope for survival of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals writing for *Libanon* is that voices of national commitment resurfaced again at the time of the Kállay Double (Hungary’s timid attempts to negotiate with the Allies, while the country was still contributing enough to the cause of the Axis side not to appear disloyal and provoke direct Nazi occupation).⁸³³

On the ongoing mass murder there were only few words. This scarcity of references was partly due to the partial lack of information (which, in the view of what was published in the *IMIT yearbooks*, must have been very partial indeed) and, more crucially, was evidently related to the level and type of censorship applied in wartime Hungary. With that in mind, probably much more remarkable than the relative scarcity of detailed information was the fact that such references were nevertheless published and distributed in Budapest even in the course of 1943. The first unmistakable reference to the widespread genocide of European Jewry on the pages of *Libanon* is from 1943. It appeared in an article titled “Zionism” by Ernő Szilágyi. Szilágyi identified the event as the destruction of the

⁸³² Fülöp Grünwald, “Löw Lipót” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.76.

⁸³³ Fülöp Grünvald quoted a letter of a Jew full of complaint that was written in April 1848 (when Jewish emancipation was not yet declared by the Hungarian revolutionaries), but at the end of his article he unexpectedly discussed the later turn: “soon afterwards the Jewish youth of Pest hurried to defend the homeland”. Fülöp Grünvald, “Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Muzeum levéltárából” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.121. In his review of Jenő Mohácsi, “B.Sz.” (most probably Bence Szabolcsi) wrote of the “ideal national assimilation” of Márk Rózsavölgyi around this time. B. Sz. “Mohácsi Jenő: Hegedű és koldusbot” in *Libanon*, 1942, p.128. (The initials Sz.B. were used in the original.) Ernő Munkácsi also complained that no Hungarian additions were made to the Hungarian translation of Cecil Roth’s writings on the Jewish Middle Ages, since these “could have provided light and consolation in the dark night”. Munkácsi thus wanted to see the idea that Hungary was the best place for Jews revived. Ernő Munkácsi, “Cecil Roth: Zsidó középkor” *Ibid.*, p.29.,

“Ostjude” when he stated that “We do not yet see, do not have the courage to see the elementary and unprecedented change which the perdition of Eastern European Jewry amounts to.”⁸³⁴ Szilágyi addressed the horror from the Zionist point of view: in his opinion, for the “Ostjude” Zion was an idea as well a reality, but “none of this exists any longer.” At the end of his article, we read a prognosis of Israeli national rebirth emerging out of this immeasurable misfortune: “And when the grass starts to grow on the millions of new graves in the Galuth, the message will get everywhere that they should all come up here”.⁸³⁵

In the very last issue of *Libanon* (the fourth of volume eight), the report of the annual assembly that took place on the 31st of October 1943 was printed. This report described the catastrophe of the recent past in a more detailed way and in more concrete terms than Szilágyi did, but at the same time it introduced an interesting duality. On the one hand, it is announced for the first time that the contemporary Jewish tragedy had no historical analogy: “We read in Josephus Flavius that at the siege of Jerusalem a million Jews perished. In the course of last year, more weaponless men, weak women, innocent and helpless children and old people have become victims of furious racial struggle.”⁸³⁶ On the other, when discussing the fate of Hungarian Jewry, “complete deportation” was mentioned as the most extreme possibility, though it was linked to the threatening but unspecified notion of “the final solution of the Jewish question”. The deployment of the Nazi expression here could either be taken to mean merely the disappearance of Jews from Hungary through their

⁸³⁴ Ernő Szilágyi, “A cionizmus” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.49. Compare this with the intriguing statement of Snyder: “Auschwitz as symbol of the Holocaust excludes those who were at the center of the historical event. The largest group of Holocaust victims – religiously Orthodox and Yiddish-speaking Jews of Poland, or, in the slightly contemptuous German term, *Ostjuden* – were culturally alien from West Europeans, including West European Jews. To some degree, they continue to be marginalized from the memory of the Holocaust.” Timothy Snyder, “Holocaust: The Ignored Reality” in *The New York Review of Books*, Volume 56, Number 12. See also Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁸³⁵ Ernő Szilágyi, “A cionizmus” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.51.

⁸³⁶ “Az Országos Magyar Zsidó Múzeum igazgatóságának jelentése az 1942-43. évről” in *Libanon*, 1943, p.112.

complete deportation, or be rightly interpreted by those who possessed enough information to imply genocide that would quickly follow: “State laws and decrees, anti-Jewish societal movements [...] in their manner wish to prepare for the final solution of the Jewish question, which – as was repeatedly stated – could be nothing else but the complete deportation of Jewry”.⁸³⁷

IV. Conclusion

Libanon added a special shade and made significant contributions to the colorful and rich though ruinously narrowing palette of Hungarian Jewish journals of the 1930s and early 1940s. *Libanon* proved to be the only periodical that continued to be released for eight years after its launching in the mid-1930s, still before the beginning of severe and ever stricter discrimination, and thus ended up among the few Jewish journals to be published regularly during the years of the Second World War all the way until the end of 1943, the year before the Hungarian Holocaust. The impressive contemporary culture of its contributors, its pluralistic nature documenting the soul searching of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals and its special historical “timing” together mean that *Libanon* is one of the most precious sources on Hungarian Jewish intellectual discourses of this momentous period. In addition to the insights it provides into simultaneous, competing conceptions of Jewish culture, it can help us understand the ongoing historical process as it was seen by a crucial segment of Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectuals and as it impacted their positions and agendas.

⁸³⁷ Ibid., p.118.

To summarize the findings of this chapter: in addition to more easily decodable Jewish and Hungarian nationalist utterances, I have identified five central and well articulated models of culture, which reveal the heterogeneity of the foundational ideas expressed in *Libanon*. These were the assimilationist - integrationist, the multiculturalist, the (rather ambivalent) *népi*, the model founded on the idea of Jewish philosophical-spiritual essence with universal relevance (or universalist – essentialist) and, last but not least, the model of Jewish specificity with particular relevance (or particularist). Each of these models can be illustrated by the position taken by one or several important authors and traced in their writings. Thus, the chapter explicated that Jenő Zsoldos wanted, above all, to revive positive Hungarian-Jewish traditions and present the idea of Hungarian-Jewish community of fate through his explorations in literary history. The ideas of Turóczi-Trostler can be placed one step away. He denied the existence of barriers in modern times and presented interactions and exchanges as partly defining each culture. Formulating his ideas on a world historical scale, he saw Jewry as an integral part of this global process, as a group influencing others and being influenced by them. In his eyes, Jews were one of the participants in intercultural processes that did not eliminate significant differences but clearly resulted in more mixed forms. Opposed to such ideas, Aladár Komlós based his program for a Jewish literary history on the idea of the peculiar, distinguishable fate of the Jewish community, emphasizing that their Jewish specificities and societal position were of such decisive relevance that they could not be overlooked either by scholars, or by Jewish people at large. Komlós believed that there were basic problems with the way assimilation was conceived and with the forms Hungarian-Jewish shared life assumed, which resulted in a severe crisis of Hungarian Jewry – a crisis that in his eyes existed irrespective of and beyond the frightening anti-Semitism of

the outside world. József M. Grózinger explored the specificities of the Jewish (philosophical and religious) spirit, arguing that it was exceptional and remained largely self-enclosed, although it shaped the non-Jewish world. In Grózinger's perception, Jewish philosophers were both entirely Jewish in their thought and the greatest of modern philosophers, which obviously implied that ideas deriving from essential qualities of Jews had universal relevance. At the same time, he presented a rather heterogeneous and inclusive image of Jewish traditions. Last but not least, Imre Keszi called for Jewish *völkisch* self-knowledge which had a peculiar acoustics in contemporary Hungary. Keszi grappled with the ambivalence of applying the *népi* agenda to Hungarian Jews: in spite of his supportive and even glorifying words for László Németh, he criticized the idea of *völkisch* exclusivity.

Such reflections of historical changes as are available on the pages of *Libanon* suggest that, even though Jewish Hungarian Jewish intellectuals' reactions to contemporary developments rarely took more elaborate forms, there have been several important shifts over the years of its publication. In the second half of the 1930s, cultural plans were future-oriented and indicating strong commitments to initiate and to create. In the early phase of *Libanon* the belief in *Wissenschaft* was still dominant and the open intellectual polemic with anti-Semitism and Nazi ideas presupposed a climate of at least relatively open debate and an "external," i.e. non-Jewish audience. Understandably, as the extent of legal discrimination increased from 1938 onwards, the still recurrent expressions of hope were now increasingly accompanied by doubt, and the aforementioned "virtual debate" ceased. Second, by the early 1940s many authors discussed the possibility of a Jewish religious and national renewal, which must have appeared as a way out of the tragic present to many of them. Third, in addition to new, more positive attitudes towards Zionism and its depiction in a more

emphatic light, several articles critical of Neolog Jewry appeared simultaneously with partial but tangible improvements in the assessment of conservative Judaism and even Orthodoxy – so much so that in the last volumes of *Libanon* Orthodox Jews were occasionally depicted as the model for the suffering Hungarian Jewish community as a whole.

Chapter VII

Political Platforms and Narratives of Crisis

The *Ararát Yearbooks* (1939-1944)

“Irrespective of how restrictive the circumstances are under which it has to maintain its existence, Jewry still possesses its own press organs, literature, associations, pulpits, schools, lectures, courses, and they can instill beliefs in the shaken souls, achieve a sense of clarity, raise hope and improve their moral community through the power of the written and the spoken word.”

Marcellné Denker, in the *Ararát yearbook* of 1941, p.41.

„[I]f the earthquake currently shaking the entire European continent is about to eliminate us from the Hungarian landscape, which is our homeland and mother to us as well, this land into which the bones of our fathers are mixed shall serve as our witness – when that ancient walking stick known from our history is forced into our hands again, we shall stop on the road and turn to that Other and Eternal Hungary, to the Hungary of the Spirit and Liberty, from which no force can expel us.”

Béla Vihar, in the *Ararát yearbook* of 1942, p.64.

I. Introduction

This chapter aims to identify Hungarian Jewish plans to define and create Hungarian Jewish literature, Hungarian Jewish political ideas and platforms as well as various historical narrative of crisis formulated during the Second World War through a detailed analysis of the *Ararát yearbooks*. As already mentioned, there were many more

Hungarian Jewish publications in the 1930s than ever before or after, but from the moment anti-Jewish discrimination began to worsen, i.e. the late 1930s onwards, their numbers decreased swiftly and radically. Of the multiple Jewish Hungarian Jewish initiatives of the 1930s, *Libanon* proved the most lasting, as this journal, originally edited by three teachers of the Jewish Boys' and Girls' Gymnasium of Pest, Jenő Zsoldos, Zoltán Kohn and József M. Grózinger, was subsequently taken over by the Jewish Museum and published as its official periodical between 1940 and 1943. *Ararát* began somewhat later, when general anti-Jewish laws were already in place and more restrictive ones were in preparation. It is similar to *Libanon* in that it continued to appear well into the war years, with its last volume published for the catastrophic year of 1944.

Edited by Aladár Komlós, *Ararát* was released six times between 1939 and 1944 (or between 5699-5700 and 5704-05 according to the Jewish calendar) and its rich and diverse contents were printed on altogether 944 pages. This also makes *Ararát* roughly equal in length to *Libanon*, though due to the size and density of the printed pages, *Ararát* is actually significantly shorter.⁸³⁸ A more substantial parallel between the two, however, is found in their institutional embeddedness: the role the Jewish Museum played in case of *Libanon* after 1940 is comparable in case of *Ararát* to those of the *Pesti Izraelita Nőegylet* (the Association of Israelite Women of Pest) with its base in Dessewffy utca of Terézváros and, more specifically, the Orphanage for Girls it operated on Hungária körút. According to one contemporary source, this charitable institution cared for 110 orphans and the Association's funds also proved sufficient to provide a reliable financial base for *Ararát*.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁸ The length of the individual yearbooks is rather constant, the number of pages range between 135 and 170.

⁸³⁹ The orphanage was opened in 1867. After 1923, it was operated at 9 Hungária körút. The Association of Israelite Women of Pest was founded the year before, in 1866. Its history was covered by its director between 1898 and 1927: Katalin Gerő, *A szeretet munkásai: A Pesti Izr. Nőegylet* (Budapest: Izr. Nőegylet, 1937). The

At the same time, the Association of Israelite Women of Pest could only support limited number of copies: the number mentioned in one of the volumes is no more than 150, but these yearbooks attracted much more public interest than the number of its printed copies would lead us to believe. One of its essay competitions, for instance, received as many as 112 submissions, or three-quarter of the supposed readership, which indicates that the actual circulation of *Ararát* must have been much greater. As opposed to the relevance and visible impact of the life of the Museum on the contents of *Libanon*, *Ararát*'s institutional connection left hardly any impact on its contents, though a few contributions over the years dealt with the theme of childhood and some of them specifically with the life of orphans and the theme occasionally entered some figures of speech, as in "all Jews are somewhat like orphans today in spirit"⁸⁴⁰ or "if we did not carry it in our hearts, the cause of Jewry would remain orphaned"⁸⁴¹.

Altogether 106 authors contributed to the *Ararát* yearbooks, excluding those published posthumously, republished or translated for its purposes. Only two eminent literary authors, Károly Pap and Ernő Szép, wrote for all six volumes. Five authors can be found in five as well as in four volumes: Aladár Komlós, Béla Vihar, Ákos Molnár, Zseni Várnai and Piroska Reichard⁸⁴² belong to the former group, Béla Zsolt, László Bródy, Géza Szilágyi, Jenő Mohácsi and Gábor Goda to the latter. Out of these 106 authors, 23 also contributed to *Libanon*, but only three of them can be regarded as regular contributors in both cases, using the criterion of at least three pieces here and participation in at least three editions there:

association had 1528 members in the mid-1930s. It was officially abolished in 1945. On Katalin Gerő as well as the Association, see the study of Julia Richers, "Johanna Bischitz, Katalin Gerő, and Budapest's Jewish Women's Association (1866-1943)" in: Judit Gazsi, Andrea Pető and Zsuzsanna Toronyi (eds.), *Gender, Memory, and Judaism* (Budapest: Balassi, 2007), pp. 123-141.

⁸⁴⁰ "Előszó" in *Ararát*, 1940, p.5.

⁸⁴¹ "Előszó" in *Ararát*, 1941, p.7.

⁸⁴² Reichard passed away in 1943. Gyulai Márta wrote about her in the last *Ararát* edition of 1944 where some of her poems were also reprinted (the number of contributions above also includes this one)

Aladár Komlós (5-3), László Bródy (4-5) and Imre Keszi (3-5). There were 64 authors who only published once in *Ararát*. It is especially noteworthy that in the yearbook of 1943 eleven and 1944 (compiled in 1943) fourteen new names were added to the list. This shows that *Ararát* was successful in involving new authors until the very end and was a well established, stable source of new articles with a steadily growing output right until the murder of the large majority of Hungarian Jews in the last year of the Second World War.

The following list, taken from the 1939 yearbook, illustrates well the variety of contents of the individual yearbooks: in included seven poems (one of which was a translation), three short stories, one fragment of a play, two letters (by a single author), two forewords, a calendar and an accompanying text introducing its meaning and significance, eleven pieces without specific label, most of them brief studies (on such diverse themes as the legal situation of Jewry, Jewry and capitalism, Bergson, synagogue music or politeness) as well as reproductions of works of art (three drawings, one pastel, one painting and seven more visual illustrations that included reproductions of documents). Later yearbooks consisted of similar (i.e. similarly diverse) elements, with the three most important novelties being, first, the publication of the winning entries of competitions on the themes of music, literature and the most timely duties of Jewry; second, sketches on the most important new Jewish publications of the year (in the last two editions); and third, the organization of smaller *enquêtes*.⁸⁴³

In spite of the diversity of the type of materials, we can identify a strong thematic thread running through these yearbooks: in almost all of them there are studies

⁸⁴³ Enquête is spelled *ankét* in Hungarian. In the yearbook of 1940 several contributors discussed the racial question and the Jewish (i.e. anti-Jewish) laws, in 1943 there was a discussion on the current crisis of Jewry and the lessons to be drawn from it, and in 1944 a number of authors tried to answer the question “Why am I a Jew?”

covering various fields of modern Hungarian Jewish culture. To name but the most central contributions, Ödön Gerő published on “Hungarian Jewry and Hungarian Fine Arts”, József Balassa discussed “Jewish Scholars in Hungarian Linguistics”, Komlós contributed his “Jewish Poets in Hungarian Literature”, Hugó Cseregyő wrote on Jewish journalists and Grünwald presented the story of Jewish historians in Hungarian historiography. It is highly probable that these brief studies covering Jewish cultural activities in modern Hungary were commissioned by the editors: some of these articles employ the “contribution discourse” analyzed in Chapter III on the *IMIT yearbooks*, but their basic aim seems to have rather been to provide a sense of Jewish achievement and help to strengthen Jewish cultural self-respect. This reveals that the intended audience of *Ararát*, started already in the age of legal discrimination, was primarily Jewish while IMIT released studies with both Jewish and non-Jewish reception in mind.

In order to provide a better overall sense of the intellectual context of this yearbook series, an analysis of references to personal names on its pages might be useful. There are altogether 784 personal names mentioned in the various writings of its six volumes and they can be assigned to roughly five categories that are of interest to this analysis.⁸⁴⁴ Apart from 81 names that could not be clearly assigned to any of these, the quantitative overview of the pool of *Ararát*’s references is as follows: 52 ancient historical and/or Biblical names, 311 names belonging to Hungarian Jewish individuals, 152 non-Jewish Hungarians, 72 non-Hungarian Jews and 116 non-Jewish non-Hungarians. Even though it is in line with the thematic foci of the yearbooks, it remains conspicuous that more than two-third of

⁸⁴⁴ The number of names mentioned in the articles adds up to 987. 854 appear only on one page of a piece, 133 on more than one. The repetitions have to be subtracted from 987. There are 148 redundant items among the 854 (leaving us with 708). From the 133, 55 appear in the other list too, 78 are new. This needs to be added to the 708, that is how the overall number of 784 names can be arrived at.

Hungarians referred to were Jewish Hungarians. On the other hand, more than three-fifth of the foreigners mentioned were not Jewish.⁸⁴⁵

The three most frequently evoked names come from three different categories noted above: there is a Biblical, a Hungarian Jewish and a non-Jewish Hungarian among them. Thus we find the name of Moses in altogether ten pieces and, together with the name József Kiss (evoked in seven articles), he is the only one to appear on more than one page in more than three articles. Endre Ady appears in nine different pieces but only twice on more than a single page. Next to the three of them, we find Lipót (Leopold) Lőw's name in six pieces, in one of which he appears on four pages but all the other five times only once. Theodor Herzl's name is present in four articles, twice more than once. There are four more names that recur at least four times in such a way that there is at least one piece in which they appear more than once: Emperor Joseph the Second, Lajos (Louis) Kossuth, József (Joseph) Eötvös and Miksa Falk. Gyula Szekfü's name appears only in three pieces, but each time more than once.⁸⁴⁶

One of the crucial differences between *Ararát* and *Libanon* is the more prominent role accorded to literary compositions in the former, though this orientation by no means implied greater reservations concerning questions of direct political relevance, burning issues of public life or conscious attempts to influence Jewish collective identity discourses. In fact, the opposite was the case: while *Libanon* was characterized by sophisticated and well grounded argumentation and featured at most cultured, reserved

⁸⁴⁵ From these 116 individuals, 43 lived in German-speaking lands (besides 8 Austrians, 35 of them can be called Germans – I have not assigned members of the House of Habsburg here, as they were both Austrians Kaisers and Hungarian Kings, so I considered their “national status” uncertain), 33 were French, 15 English and 7 Italians. All the other national groups were present with only few names.

⁸⁴⁶ Besides these, eight more authors appeared at least four times but each time on only one page: king David and Heine six times, Abraham five times, János Arany, Lipót Kecskeméti, Tamás Kóbor, Sándor Petőfi and William Shakespeare four times.

polemics and tended to only indirectly touch upon topical political questions, in the *Ararát* yearbooks we find much more explicit discussion of the ongoing drastic changes and the ever more disheartening Jewish situation, while a number of authors also offered potential solutions to current challenges and formulated plans (or at least expressed their desires) for the future. It is an important indicator in this respect that the foreword to the first yearbook directly appealed to “the courage and honesty” of writers.⁸⁴⁷ *Ararát* clearly used a more critical tone and offered more straight-forward observations than was typical of *Libanon*, let alone the *IMIT* yearbooks, and on occasion even featured explicitly subversive statements.⁸⁴⁸ At other times, however, instead of manifestations of Jewish intellectual opposition, we find a wholly different kind of political agency that wanted to suggest ways to reach Hungarian – Jewish compromises.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on the non-fictional materials in *Ararát* and follows three main lines of inquiry. The first scrutinizes the programmatic aspects of these yearbooks as formulated by their editor and author, Aladár Komlós. In this subchapter, I also draw on his other publications on Jewish themes from the inter-war period, and show how others positioned themselves towards his ideas on the pages of *Ararát*. The aim here is to explore his attempt to define and create Hungarian Jewish literature and the ways in which it was contested. Second, I analyze the manifold and diverse assessments of the current situation in order to map the spectrum of political positions presented in *Ararát*. The primary context of crucial utterances will be a centrally important conceptual tool of my

⁸⁴⁷ “Előszó” in *Ararát*, 1939, p.3.

⁸⁴⁸ To quote just two instances from the third yearbook (1941), which, given the historical context, can be considered subversive: Aladár Komlós published a poem “Mourning” which features lines such as “Ouch, our sons lie dead unburied/ in the mud and are not mourned”. Aladár Komlós, “Sirató” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.72. In the short story titled “Berenike” written by Iván Vándor we find the following dialogue: “– The sin of your people is that it exists. – This is blasphemous, Florus. Everyone has the right to live, everyone who is born. States cannot have stepchildren.” Iván Vándor, “Berenike” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.126.

interpretation.⁸⁴⁹ The last subchapter focuses on those parts of *Ararát* that present modern Jewish historical developments in narrative form. It explores the concrete manifestations of Hungarian Jewish historical understanding and sense of crisis during the Second World War. The contents of these narrative fragments will in turn be related to the authors' positions on the contemporary situation and their programmatic and future-oriented utterances, aiming to understand the interrelations between them that existed during the years of the Second World War.⁸⁵⁰

II. A Contested Plan

According to one of the forewords penned by *Ararát*'s chief editor, Aladár Komlós, the series of yearbooks ambioned to combine its focus on Jewish subjects with "European" quality and outlook on the pressing needs of the present. For Komlós, to bring these two successfully together was the "precondition of ascension"⁸⁵¹. According to its self-definition, *Ararát* sought to employ and spread the voice of a "more intense and more honest" Jewish ethos and contribute to the development of Jewish literature.⁸⁵²

Persons responsible for the contents of the yearbooks occasionally formulated rather explicit statements about some of their fundamental beliefs. For instance, when the submissions to one of the competitions were assessed and the winner announced, one of

⁸⁴⁹ See József Takáts, "Nyolc érv az elsődleges kontextus mellett" In József Takáts, *Ismerős idegen terep. Irodalomtörténeti tanulmányok és bírálatok* (Budapest: Kijárat, 2007), pp.78-91. For a more comprehensive and critical approach see Gábor Gyáni, "Kontextus és kontextualizáció a történetírásban" In Gábor Gyáni, *Relatív történelem* (Budapest: Typotex, 2007), pp.241-258.

⁸⁵⁰ It should be noted that I did not consider it among my tasks in this chapter to directly present and analyze the signs of spiritual opposition and courageous resistance. Such can be found in dozens of pieces of writing, mostly those of fiction. Although these certainly present an interesting source in themselves, serious attempt to assess their novel nature and literary historical importance would have been beyond the scope of this research.

⁸⁵¹ "Előszó" in *Ararát*, 1941, p.8.

⁸⁵² "Előszó" in *Ararát*, 1943, p.3.

members of the decision making board, Lajos Dénes declared that “the community of fate, which has thrown the Jewish generation of today into a kind of furnace of history, has not only made an external kind of solidarity come to fruition, but created a community of revived spirits as well, with common aims and morals, ideals, cultural demands. All of these are embedded in the historical consciousness of popular unity and directed at a historical mission”.⁸⁵³

In spite of such strongly worded statements, which can be seen as rather characteristic of the editorial position, *Ararát* was clearly not a partisan organ: it was keen to include the self-presentation of authors representing varied and sometimes even opposed agendas.. *Ararát* wanted to provide a forum for mutual acquaintance and exchange of ideas between people representing different Hungarian Jewish platforms. It explicitly wanted to serve as a stage “on which the representatives of each Jewish direction can speak, if he/she is honorably committed to bettering Jewish life”.⁸⁵⁴

This openness to diversity was clearly manifested in the content of the yearbooks as well as in its relatively liberal editorial policy. Some of the contributors even contested the most fundamental assumptions of this undertaking. For instance, Hugó Csergő took on the traditional stance of national liberalism when he argued that, in terms of national commitment and cultural value, “there is and can be no room for judgments according to the denominational criterion”.⁸⁵⁵ In other words, Csergő voiced explicit disagreement with the most basic differentiation on which these yearbooks were based, namely the possibility and potential usefulness of distinguishing Jewish phenomena.

⁸⁵³ Lajos Dénes, “Pályázási jelentés” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.37.

⁸⁵⁴ “Előszó” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.3.

⁸⁵⁵ Hugó Csergő, “Zsidó vallású újságírók” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.61.

On the other hand, the fact that it allowed contestation and even such contradictions on its pages by no means implies that *Ararát* possessed no character of its own or that it lacked thematic foci and a relatively solidly established conceptual basis. The programmatic formula it offered was the following: its agenda should revolve around the key aim of “educating and improving the Jewish public spirit through literature”.⁸⁵⁶ According to this conception, purposeful literary activity was supposed to shape collective identity: the same foreword explicitly referred to literature as a means of reaching a “healthy and cleaner self-consciousness”.⁸⁵⁷ The basic function of Jewish literature was conceived as “awakening the collective spirit”.⁸⁵⁸ A certain sense of exceptionalism and mission also accompanied the formulation of this program, since this unsigned foreword that in all likelihood was written mostly, if not entirely by Komlós defined *Ararát* in opposition to “the decadent products of a declining people,” offering a refuge for “the Jewish sense of community that is prepared to make sacrifices and lives life in a moral way.”⁸⁵⁹ The perception that this intellectual program had eminent political implications is further supported by the fact that elsewhere Komlós remarked that “the point of writing today” was to offer a political contribution and have a direct impact on the world.⁸⁶⁰

Before I enter the discussion of the contents of *Ararát*, it is worth addressing the question of how Komlós arrived at this programmatic initiative by the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, when Jews were already legally discriminated in Hungary?⁸⁶¹ What were his main concerns and ideas in the interwar years? My analysis in

⁸⁵⁶ “Előszó” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.5.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., p.7.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., p.5.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., p.5.

⁸⁶⁰ Aladár Komlós, “A magyar zsidó író útjai” in *Ararát*, 1939, p.131.

⁸⁶¹ Komlós Aladár (1892-1980), writer, poet, literary historian dealing mostly with lyric. In the years of the Second World War, he was employed the Jewish Gymnasium of Pest, teaching Hungarian and Latin. He started

this regard draws heavily on the collection of his Jewish publications released in a new Hungarian edition in 2009 under the title *Introduction to Hungarian-Jewish Literature*, which contains his writings on Jewish themes published between 1921 and 1944.⁸⁶² These articles were originally published mostly in explicitly Jewish organs: eleven of them appeared first in *Múlt és Jövő* and four in the *IMIT yearbooks* – but also three in the prestigious *Nyugat* and one more in *Magyar Csillag*.⁸⁶³

The focus here is on Komlós' collective identity discourse, the multiple layers of his own narrativistically formulated identity, his criticism of the times of assimilation from the Jewish point of view and his Jewish self-criticism. I will also devote some reflection to what I consider a central conceptual opposition in his thinking, that between health and sickness. Finally, the last sections of this sub-chapter offers a more critical assessment of his theories, namely his recourse to circular logic which renders some of his ideas unfalsifiable, and thus (in the Popperian sense) unscientific.

“Jews on the Crossroads”, an early piece by him from 1921 provides an excellent summary of his changing identity choices and strengthening Jewish identification over time. In this text, Komlós distinguished between three periods of his life: the days prior to the First World War, the times of his Hungarian, assimilatory though oppositional phase, followed by a brief stage in which he became an internationalist due to the awakening of his sense of justice once the Great War broke out in 1914. His experiences in Chyrov, Galicia in 1915 and his consequent “semiconscious ideas” triggered the strengthening of his sense of

to write an overview of Hungarian Jewish *Geistesgeschichte* prior to 1944. This unfinished work was published posthumously, most recently as Aladár Komlós, *A magyar zsidóság irodalmi tevékenysége a XIX. században* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2008). He fled to Switzerland as one of the passengers of the Kasztner train (see below).

⁸⁶² Aladár Komlós, *Bevezetés a magyar-zsidó irodalomba* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2009).

⁸⁶³ *Magyar Csillag* is customarily considered the successor of *Nyugat*. It was initiated and edited by Gyula Illyés after the death of Mihály Babits, in the period between 1941 to 1944.

Jewishness to the point of its subsequent dominance. Nearly quarter of a century later, shortly before the catastrophe of 1944, Komlós reformulated this model of development, projecting it onto generations: he wrote about succession of nationalist, radical and self-consciously Jewish political-intellectual generations. At the same time, he still maintained that this process could also play out in a condensed format in some “sensitive individuals”.⁸⁶⁴

In his narrative and reflections on personal identity from 1921 Komlós formulated the possibility of reconciling these three elements. He argued in favor of “transitory forms”, but also believed in a hierarchy: due to the Jewishness of what he called the primary milieu, one’s home, Hungarian sentiments could only be “very superficial” according to him when compared to Jewish ones.⁸⁶⁵ His position on this issue remained more or less unchanged until 1943 when he argued that the “living consciousness” of Jewishness ought to motivate Jews to maintain a “tactful distance” from Hungarians.⁸⁶⁶

Elsewhere he compared the Jewish soul to an ellipsis, which had two focal points, Hungarianness and Jewishness, and thus refused to prioritize either one of them.⁸⁶⁷ In practice, however, he must have perceived the conflict as rather sharp: in 1932, for instance, he wrote that “every Jew who acquires a foreign culture and nevertheless manages to maintain the organic consistence of his individuality is a miracle”.⁸⁶⁸ This ambivalence, this shifting back and forth between dual or trial identity and hierarchical ordering of its elements keep resurfacing in many of his writings. In one of them, he emphasized the simultaneous impact of “origins, character and external world” but his choice of words revealed a different

⁸⁶⁴ “A nyugati zsidó magatartás lélektanához” in Aladár Komlós, *Bevezetés a magyar-zsidó irodalomba* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2009), pp.43-4.

⁸⁶⁵ “Zsidók a válaszüton” in *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁸⁶⁶ “Zsidóság, magyarság, Európa” in *Ibid.*, p.60.

⁸⁶⁷ “Egy megírandó magyar-zsidó irodalomtörténet elé” in *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁸⁶⁸ “Kiss József emlékezete, vagy: a zsidó költő és a dicsőség” in *Ibid.*, p.193.

conception: he spoke namely of the community of “blood origins” on the one hand and of “foreign environments” on the other.⁸⁶⁹

Another significant element of Komlós’ discourse on Jewish themes was his elaboration of Jewish self-critique. He first discussed the in his eyes closely related problems of the modern age, the questions of assimilation and the attitudes of Hungarian society – he stressed that the “possibilities and dangers of assimilation is an essential question for both sides”.⁸⁷⁰ Komlós started with the issue of symbolic inequalities, which posited that to be Hungarian was considered advantageous while being Jewish was merely a tolerated option. He wrote that “the open or hidden understanding of the public even in the so called liberal era was that being Jewish implies inferiority”.⁸⁷¹ Pre-war liberalism “accepted Jews as equally valuable but only if they ceased being Jewish”,⁸⁷² he wrote elsewhere. He did mention a certain strain of Hungarian philo-Semitism but in his eyes this was merely “the humiliating sign of the slave-like infancy of Jews” and, accordingly, it decreased once Jews started to be active in Hungarian public life.⁸⁷³

According to Komlós’ presentation the 19th century was chasing unattainable and ugly illusions: “it embarked on the complete unification of state and nation with blind intolerance”.⁸⁷⁴ Instead of homogenization, he propagated a “more flexible” national concept which would be able to accommodate various communities that were intent on preserving their individuality.⁸⁷⁵ One of his remarkable justifications of this stance was that “by taking care of my garden, I am not refusing the fruits of my neighbor, through doing this I can much

⁸⁶⁹ “A nyugati zsidó magatartás léletanához” in *Ibid.*, p.42.

⁸⁷⁰ “Az asszimiláció kora, a magyar irodalom és a zsidók” in *Ibid.*, p.291.

⁸⁷¹ “A zsidó lélek”, *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁸⁷² “Válasz Móricz Zsigmondnak” in *Ibid.*, p.94.

⁸⁷³ “Ignotus” in *Ibid.*, p.240.

⁸⁷⁴ “Egy megírandó magyar-zsidó irodalomtörténet elé”, in *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁸⁷⁵ “Válasz Móricz Zsigmondnak” in *Ibid.*, p.95.

rather hope to provide him with something in the future”.⁸⁷⁶ Next to raising the issues of the unattainable, ugly ideal of the homogeneous nation and the consequent symbolic inferiority of Jews, Komlós also pointed to the lack of societal integration: “the inclusion of Jews was not completed. It remained on paper and was not reflected in the reality of social life”.⁸⁷⁷ Emancipation only took place “half-way”.⁸⁷⁸ He considered the ensuing situation both unnatural and embarrassing as “the Jew” ended up “excluded from society but only half way, others are jealous of him and despise him at once” while simultaneously he was also jealous of others and despised them too.⁸⁷⁹

In Komlós’ depiction, a misfortunate symmetry remained in place throughout the liberal epoch: the “stifled hatred” of the outside world was coupled with the “lack of self-esteem of those accustomed to hiding”.⁸⁸⁰ In Komlós’ opinion, the “greatest sin” of the assimilatory drive was that “it stole our belief that to be Jewish was something attractive and indeed our splendid calling”.⁸⁸¹ Even though assimilation “started to expose problems right when Jewish education began to neglect the memory of separate origins”,⁸⁸² since Jews decided not to keep any distance from Hungariandom, they could not create a “valuable own world”⁸⁸³ and ended up in a vacuum, experiencing an increasingly severe identity crisis.

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⁸⁷⁶ “Zsidó könyvek” in *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁸⁷⁷ “A zsidó lélek” in *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁸⁷⁹ “A magyar-zsidó író útjai” in *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁸⁸⁰ “Beszélni kezdenek a zsidóról” in *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁸⁸¹ “Zsidó írók – zsidó közösség” in *Ibid.*, p.108.

⁸⁸² “Zsidóság, magyarság, Európa” in *Ibid.*, p.60.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁸⁸⁴ “Beszélni kezdenek a zsidóról” in *Ibid.*, p.62.

drive was that “it stole our belief that to be Jewish was something attractive and indeed our splendid calling”.⁸⁸⁵ Jews decided not to keep any distance from Hungariandom, they could not create a “valuable own world”⁸⁸⁶ and ended up in a vacuum, experiencing an increasingly severe sense of crisis. Thus, their assimilation attempt “started to expose problems right when Jewish education began to neglect the memory of separate origins”.⁸⁸⁷ This epoch that, in Komlós’ assessment, was already and completely a matter of the past, “raised sick souls. It raised Jewish people who felt that they sourly lacked something and instead of having proper self-esteem, they were merely vain. Their vanity led them to enter companies they considered of superior standing, but there they were continuously wounded. This not only meant losses to Jewry, but suffering to themselves and they were also a burden on their Christian environment”,⁸⁸⁸ he continued in this crucial paragraph. For him, the tragedy of modern Jews consisted in their behavior oscillating between extremes, between revolt and conformity, even sleekness since (using the words of Ignotus) “they are less biased and thus can notice biases, but prove overly biased when attacking them”.⁸⁸⁹

In a separate discussion, Komlós returned to the problematic aspects of assimilation. He saw in the eager and widespread Hungarianization of Jewish names signs of the dissolution of Jewish peoplehood and complained about what he considered “subservient, morally detestable” behavior.⁸⁹⁰ He found the Jewish jokes that were featured in the cabarets of Pest decadent and their comedy lowly because Jews tended to be presented as ridiculous as a direct consequence of their Jewishness.⁸⁹¹ He also lamented that the epoch of (Jewish)

⁸⁸⁵ “Zsidó írók – zsidó közösség” in Ibid., p.108.

⁸⁸⁶ “Zsidóság, magyarság, Európa” in Ibid., p.61.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., p.60.

⁸⁸⁸ “A zsidó középiskoláért”, in Ibid., p.67.

⁸⁸⁹ “Ignotus” in Ibid., p.241.

⁸⁹⁰ “Különvélemény a névmagyarosításról” in Ibid., p.30.

⁸⁹¹ “Három zsidó megy a vonaton (A zsidóvicc)” in Ibid., p.49.

dissolution rarely appealed to writers as it was a world without character – literary depictions had nothing to show but “humans suffering because of Jewish problems”.⁸⁹² From all this Komlós concluded that even in the supposed golden age of assimilation the world for Jews was tormented and cold.

Complementary to this criticism of assimilation and Jewish involvement in it is Komlós’ assessment of the contemporary Jewish character. He described Jews as men of reason, even as one-sided in their strong focus on reason. He referred to their vigilance on several occasions and noted their inner insecurities and cramped way of self-disciplining. Discussing the specificities of the “Jewish soul” he announced that creating inner harmony between its elements was of primary importance. In 1941 he wrote that the problem of Jewry was “first of all of a spiritual kind. We suffer not only because of the laws imposed on us by the outside world, but also because of our own sins”, he wrote, adding that unworthy behavior, Jewish indifference and community leaders merely interested in personal gains should be the main objects of criticism⁸⁹³.

On the other hand, “The assimilant” was the object of his fierce attack. In 1921, he went as far as to call him a “spineless, sick worm” and a cowardly liar.⁸⁹⁴ According to Komlós, the sorry state of the assimilant was due to his suppression of the “lively sense of Jewish unity” and its replacement by self-delusional conceptions. Moreover, “externally assimilated gentry-wannabe” Jews were amoral, frivolous and cowardly creatures, but constituted only one, though the dominant type among Hungarian Jews.⁸⁹⁵ Nevertheless,

⁸⁹² “Vázlat a zsidó regényről vagy egy kultúra felbomlása” in *Ibid.*, p.91.

⁸⁹³ “Zsidó írók, zsidó közösség” in *Ibid.*, p.107.

⁸⁹⁴ “Zsidók a válaszüton” in *Ibid.*, p.12 and p.20.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.

according to Komlós, even this type of assimilant was moved by his Jewishness, even if only in unconscious ways.⁸⁹⁶

To this type of harmful assimilation Komlós responded with his own alternative program of continuous, gradual assimilation and pointed to the strength of an alternative kind of assimilant who is open about his Jewishness and can thus be confident in his behavior.⁸⁹⁷ This kind of assimilant would try to fight his vices and aim to develop in himself “the best of what Western Christianity had to offer, its fine morality”, while also remaining a self-conscious Jew.⁸⁹⁸

One of the most problematic aspects of Komlós’ method can already be observed in these early pieces of writing – his combative and somewhat mystical approach to things Jewish that manifested, among others, in his stress on what he himself called “unprovable inponderabilities”.⁸⁹⁹ He occasionally went as far as to contest the freedom of self-identification of people of Jewish origin. This is detectable, for instance, in the way he declared that the poets of assimilating Jewry can solely maintain and develop their individuality and originally if they were in touch with their “Jewish existence’s unconscious profound depth”⁹⁰⁰. In his articles from the 1920s and 1930s, Jewish consciousness appears above all as a sign of health. He did not consider denial a valid alternative – it merely revealed the sickness or at least its symptoms. In a clear instance of circular reasoning, whoever was “in denial of his hiding” remained a coward, he wrote.⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁶ “Zsidók a válaszüton” in *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁸⁹⁹ “A hatvanéves magyar-zsidó költészet pöréhez” in *Ibid.*, p. 362.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁹⁰¹ “Zsidók a válaszüton” in *Ibid.*, p. 25.

The ideal he formulated in numerous writings was an assertive and strong Jewry. It was supposed to replace the current one that in his eyes lost its will to live and was visibly maladjusted. His publications on Jewish themes revolve around the following key concepts, all having positive connotations (the list could obviously be extended further): community, origins, self-consciousness, self-esteem, dignity, will. The binary between health and illness is the most frequently employed motif in his writing: it appears in dozens of his articles and often functions as the primary evaluative criterion. Examples abound: for instance, Komlós formulated his agreement with Károly Pap in the following way: “the first precondition of making Jewry healthier and renewing it morally is a new, thorough examination of the soul and reaching inner and outer honesty”.⁹⁰² On the other hand, he called Pap’s call for Jewish national minority status “a sickly one-sided” proposal.⁹⁰³ The same concepts resurface in his scrutiny of the inner insecurities of Jews, which he described as an “ill condition”.⁹⁰⁴ Being open about Jewishness was supposed to have “the effect of being cured from a sickness”.⁹⁰⁵ The national consciousness of Eastern Jews, based on “true Jewish values”, was also “healthier” than Western Jewish consciousness which supposedly lacked soul and culture.⁹⁰⁶ When discussing the pupils of the Jewish gymnasium, Komlós again emphasized that their soul was “healthier” than those of other Jewish youth who grew up in different environments.⁹⁰⁷

This conceptual opposition was employed not only in his discussions on such more general issues but also when he turned to concrete literary phenomena. The appearance

⁹⁰² “Zsidó sebek és bűnök (Pap Károly vitairatáról)” in *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁹⁰⁴ “A zsidó lélek” in *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁰⁵ “A nyugati zsidó magatartás lélektanához” in *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁹⁰⁷ “A zsidó középiskoláért” in *Ibid.*, p. 67.

of Hungarian novels openly discussing the Jewish question was a “healthy thing”, as opposed to the preceding silence on the matter.⁹⁰⁸ The most educated strata of the supposed golden age of assimilation in Vienna and Berlin all appeared “deformed by sicknesses” on the pages of relevant literary works. Their manic search for safety was an even more “dangerous sickness” than their paranoia.⁹⁰⁹ In terms of his evaluation of individuals, Komlós maintained that Ignóty assimilated but also managed to preserve his own personality, but warned that there were only few Hungarian-Jewish writers who managed to solve the Jewish question “in such a healthy way”.⁹¹⁰ As opposed to Ignóty, Hatvany passionately wanted to escape from Jewry and thus ended up “squirming all the more deeply and painfully in the sicknesses of assimilation”.⁹¹¹

Again on a general level, the clash between desires and realism led to an inner duality from which not even “the healthiest and most sincerely believing souls could escape.” “The development of this illness” was specific in the case of Jewish writers though since they “fell ill more deeply” and had worse chances of recovering.⁹¹² Komlós employed the same linguistic scheme in calling the wave of name Hungarianizations an “epidemic”,⁹¹³ the desire of the modern Jew to acquire money, success, rank and fame a “sick way of advancing”.⁹¹⁴ The Jewish jokes Jews created were merely a symptom to him, signaling alienation and the lack of self-respect. Ultimately, they were the products of “a great popular illness”.⁹¹⁵ He claimed that “healthy people of unitary conceptions” did not make jokes about themselves.⁹¹⁶

⁹⁰⁸ “Beszélni kezdenek a zsidóról” in *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹⁰⁹ “Vázlat a zsidó regényről vagy egy kultúra felbomlása” in *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

⁹¹⁰ “Ignóty” in *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁹¹¹ “Kóbor Tamás” in *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁹¹² “Hatvany Lajos: Csendes napok és hangos esték” in *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁹¹³ “Különvélemény a névmagyarosításról” in *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹¹⁴ “A zsidó lélek” in *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹¹⁵ “Három zsidó megy a vonaton (A zsidóvice)” in *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Instead they “dreamt up legends”.⁹¹⁷ In sum, Komlós’ subjects varied from the identity options of Jews and phenomena of literary history to name Hungarianization, but the conceptual opposition between health and illness appeared to him as a useful means to explain and evaluate almost all of them. This suggests that his program of Jewish cultural assertion and renewal was still tied to rather stereotypical linguistic codes of Jewish self-criticism – or, as in some controversial interpretations, the codes of “Jewish self-hatred”.

Komlós saw remarkable and unusual similarities between Jews living in very different environments, among diverse peoples, and this led him to attach special importance to Jewish origins, which he also relied on in his conception of literary history.⁹¹⁸ As mentioned in Chapter VI, in his understanding of Jewish literature, “all Hungarian writers of Jewish origins, even those who have persistently avoided facing the problems of their people” should be included.⁹¹⁹ Beyond the expression of solidarity with one’s fellows, there was also a “whole way of feeling and perceiving” that was specifically Jewish. He maintained that it emerged out of the different Jewish social situation.⁹²⁰ However, in describing these Jewish differences Komlós mostly dwelled on vague references to distinctiveness that were there “at the depth of their souls” or manifested in “special emotions” that were “hard to articulate”, although he also made some more tangible observations, such as pointing to differences in life styles, behavior in social interactions, as well as the cherishing of peculiarly Jewish conventions and customs.

In addition to the historical principle of origins and some more empirical observations on the distinctiveness of Jews, Komlós’ theory of Jewish literature also

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁹¹⁸ “A zsidó lélek” in Ibid., p. 32.

⁹¹⁹ “Egy megírandó magyar-zsidó irodalomtörténet elé” in Ibid., p. 76.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 77-8.

contained a normative aspect. He declared that Jewish literary authors were able to write “more truthful things about Jewish people [...] Jewry requires to see itself in the mirror of art too”.⁹²¹ Jewish self-consciousness would only remain an empty frame unless it acquired adequate cultural content, and the Jews needed “consciously formulated goals” – among others, through literary works.⁹²² Komlós was quite adamant about the potential of literature to shape worldviews: in 1940 he went as far as to write that “today Jewry can only be resurrected by its writers and artists”.⁹²³ According to his 1941 definition, the task of writers was “to nurse self-consciousness, in our case to strengthen Jewish souls, the Jewish self-esteem currently under attack, and to cure maladjusted Jewish self-perception, contribute to the inner reeducation of Jews”. Moreover, he stated that “our current expectation of writers is the creation of an ethical renaissance”.⁹²⁴

His program as a literary historian was doubtlessly closely connected to these ideas and preferences. As early as 1921, he considered the analysis of Jewish writers active in Western (and thus according to him “foreign”) environments a most exciting task.⁹²⁵ He was interested in three (rather general) aspects: the literary representation of Jews, the Jewish contributions to literature, and “how the Jewishness of Jewish writers transpired through everything”.⁹²⁶ In 1936, Komlós reconceptualized his interests in the following way: his scholarly project would try to provide “justice [*jogvédelem*, literally “legal defense”– FL] through criticism”. More specifically, he wanted to explore the roles of Jews as literary critics, patrons and readers and was also keen on analyzing Jewish models in literary works

⁹²¹ “Beszélgetések a zsidókérdésről (Kóbor Tamás)” in *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁹²² *Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁹²³ “Zsidó könyvek” in *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹²⁴ “Zsidó írók, zsidó közösség” in *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹²⁵ “Zsidók a válaszáton” in *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

as well as the relation of Jewish writers to their community.⁹²⁷ Tellingly, in his sketch of the hundred years of Hungarian-Jewish poetry, he wanted to provide an overview of communal self-image and what he called the “changing aggregate of the community”.⁹²⁸

Finally, it should be noted that Komlós’ self-critical undertaking owed a lot to its immediate historical context. As his position was rather precarious, his emphasis also varied depending on the concrete situation. The primary context of his utterances could matter a great deal: this can perhaps best be seen on the polemics he had with Gyula Farkas and László Németh in 1940. Here Komlós announced again that “it would be high time to look at our inner selves” and that it was important to seriously discuss Jewish mistakes, but added that when the work of Jewish authors who in his eyes were guilty of these mistakes were evaluated more broadly, i.e. without focusing on mistakes alone, even their activities should be considered justified. This realization obliged him to urgently fulfill the task of apologia.⁹²⁹

When debating the ideas of Farkas and Németh, Komlós’ words were situated in a different primary context and, accordingly, their content was markedly different. In this polemic with non-Jewish authors who had some markedly anti-Semitic ideas, he argued that the intellectual poverty of the early post-67 period could barely be accounted for by pointing to the role of assimilants. He even maintained that, quite on the contrary, taking into account the participation of Jews provided “a much better explanation for the great flourishing of Hungarian literature in the 20th century”.⁹³⁰ It was precisely around 1890 that a new effervescence begun, “at the exact time when Jewish writers, press and readers became much

⁹²⁷ “Egy megírandó magyar-zsidó irodalomtörténet elé” in *Ibid.*, pp. 80-1.

⁹²⁸ “Költőink és a zsidóság” in *Ibid.*, p.134.

⁹²⁹ “Az asszimiláció kora, a magyar irodalom és a zsidók” in *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

more active in Hungarian intellectual life”.⁹³¹ Komlós’ maintained that any fair comparison must conclude that “the epoch in which we exerted our influence not only produced between works but was also the more Hungarian period of the two!”⁹³² In his remarks on *Nyugat*, Komlós spoke of successful assimilation that, tragically enough, could not be repeated among the wider social strata of the nation. Thus, the Jewish intellectual elite in question unfortunately merely managed to assimilate “to the small group of the politically dissimilated”.⁹³³ It is entirely comprehensible but nevertheless remarkable that in this polemic Komlós did not address his favored themes, such as assimilatory pressures, the maladjustment of Jews or their inner emptiness. Instead, he talked of successes and belittled the problems of assimilation. His more general conclusions also refrained from emphasizing the special significance of Jewishness, but rather stressed reconcilability: “Jewishness and Hungarianness are not necessary irreconcilable enemies. They are dependent on each other and complete each other”.⁹³⁴

Komlós’ ideas on Jewish literature were partly echoed by other authors of *Ararát*. Many of them believed that the creation of emphatically Jewish literature in Hungarian was a welcome and timely initiative, but one that nevertheless still existed in the shape of a plan to be realized in the difficult, tumultuous, tragic and ultimately catastrophic years of the Second World War. In other words, this category was often used more to express an ambition than to describe a contemporary reality. Even Komlós himself wrote in one of

⁹³¹ Ibid., p. 305.

⁹³² Ibid., p. 310.

⁹³³ Ibid., pp. 308-9.

⁹³⁴ Ibid., p. 308.

his pieces that “honest words” would be “too embarrassing” on the current condition of Jewish literature.⁹³⁵

This idea of the programmatic nature of conceiving, developing and studying Jewish literature in Hungary around this time is further supported by the manner in which Lenke Steiner discussed this issue in the very last *Ararát yearbook*: she referred to the “rather provincial character” of Jewish literary life and stated that “the awakening of [Jewish] literary consciousness is still in the stage represented by the times of Kazinczy”, i.e. the very early, foundational stage.⁹³⁶ She also added that “it is still unclear what we demand when we speak of Jewish literature”.⁹³⁷ At the same time, Steiner trusted that a new epoch of literature was about to begin when Jewish themes and contemporary forms could be brought together, although she perceived an exaggerated and artistically inappropriate ambition to enlighten the public, rendering slightly artificial even the works which displayed the signs of this desirable combination. This misfortunate artificial tone in their expression she directly ascribed to their “conscious purposefulness”.⁹³⁸ Thus, in the yearbook of 1944 Steiner went as far as to claim that the Jewish community that had recently been reshaped was still without credible and valuable artistic depictions. She nevertheless maintained that the contours of a “new Enlightenment” (or rather a Counter-Enlightenment) could already be discerned that, in her view, would lead Jews to their “newly interpreted, consciously experienced community”.⁹³⁹

⁹³⁵ “Előszó” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.6. Komlós az V. évkönyv előszavában jegyzi meg, hogy az *Ararát* „még mindig jóformán az egyetlen nem-időszaki kiadvány, melynek lapjain magyar-zsidó irodalom van kibontakozóban”. “Előszó” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.3.

⁹³⁶ Lenke Steiner, “Az év magyar zsidó irodalma” in *Ararát*, 1944, p.148.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.148.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.150.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.156.

We find slightly different reactions to the program for Jewish literature in the reflections of László Kardos. Kardos' article on new Jewish books attributed their "spiritual underdevelopment" precisely to what Komlós propagated in his own writings, namely the strong interconnections between different levels and spheres. Kardos believed that the artistic and scholarly points of views ought to be clearly demarcated from those emerging out of charitable, tributary, religious, popular or communitarian concerns and interests. He propagated the autonomy of art and scholarship and contested the advisability of a collectivist view of literature.⁹⁴⁰ In his opinion, it was precisely the lack of effort to formulate collective experiences, the absence of "typical feelings" that made the poems of László Fenyő so persuasive and such excellent works of art. It is also indicative of Kardos' position that he called the new book of Ernő Szép, *Felnőtteknek* [For Adults] the greatest treasure of Jewish literature, while noting that it had "hardly any openly Jewish bearings".⁹⁴¹ This unmistakable polemic with Komlós, which Kardos pursued, of all places, in the yearbook series edited by Komlós reached its climax in his discussion of Komlós' own new play *Az első csillag* [The First Star]. Here, after the customary compliments, Kardos judged that one of the play's major shortcomings was that it included too many topicalities.⁹⁴²

In conclusion, Jewish literature as it appeared in the *Ararát yearbooks* was an idea under negotiation, a program around which there was never a full consensus in the years of the Second World War: the chief editor, Aladár Komlós painted its desired features while other contested his descriptions and proposals. One might say that the idea of strengthening Jewish self-awareness through this kind of literature was of rather questionable effectiveness to begin with – this can be safely supposed when the impact of literary works is compared to

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.148.

⁹⁴¹ László Kardos, "Új zsidó könyvek" in *Ararát*, 1943, p.151.

⁹⁴² Ibid., p.151.

the influence of the deadly techniques of propaganda and immoral political manipulations that were perfected around this time. On the other hand, the claim that the current forms of Jewish identity were somehow flawed was supported by a larger number of authors besides Komlós, so much so that it can be considered one of the few almost consensually shared ideas in the *Ararát yearbooks*. This is hardly surprising, since the goal of increasing collective self-awareness goes hand in hand with suppositions about its current deficiencies.

Regarding this issue, Ernő Ligeti presented the most detailed case study of an individual, while Samu Szemere, focusing on one concrete aspect of the problem, provided a diagnosis of the Jewish community as a whole. Ligeti narrated the life of Tamás Emőd and its changing contexts, presenting through his person the tragedy of an author who was excluded from national literary life but who would prove unable to contribute to Jewish literature.⁹⁴³ Ligeti painted the picture of high, even unprecedented, level of assimilation in Nagyvárad (nowadays Oradea, Romania),⁹⁴⁴ noting that Emőd could interact so well with Endre Ady precisely because of their similar way of being Hungarian.⁹⁴⁵ Ligeti ascribed Emőd's subsequent loneliness to his wounded Hungarian-Jewish soul: he suddenly had to discover that "his Hungarianness, on which his whole life depended, turned out to be nothing but a mistake, a mere optical illusion".⁹⁴⁶ In this article, Ligeti doubtlessly wished to present the paradigmatically tragic nature of the life and art of Emőd: ultimately, he maintained that Emőd's poems were "the most artistic expressions of the Hungarian-Jewish soul".⁹⁴⁷ According to this depiction, Emőd's age, upbringing and loyalty did not allow him to become

⁹⁴³ Ernő Ligeti (1891-1945), writer, poet, publicist, editor. He moved from Cluj/Kolozsvár to Budapest in 1940 and became a chief employee of the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*.

⁹⁴⁴ Ernő Ligeti, "Emőd Tamás" in *Ararát*, 1944, p.56.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.58.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.63.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.64.

a Jewish poet in the “positive sense”, while on the other hand he was not allowed to remain a Hungarian one either, finding himself in a limbo, not fitting in anywhere, lost in the world that emerged after the First World War. In Ligeti’s eyes, his inability to embrace his Jewishness more firmly and fully was at the heart of his individual tribulations.

Samu Szemere’s ideas on the sorry consequences of the fading of Jewish identity were presented in relation to a rather different theme and level, namely the education of Jewish youth and the communal level. Szemere’s complaint about the weakness of Jewish-self awareness started off with his understanding of Jewry as being “in favor of modernity in a prejudiced way”.⁹⁴⁸ For him, Jewish self-awareness amounted to the knowledge of Jewish history and he insisted on it becoming the central task of educational institutions.⁹⁴⁹ Such a plan of upbringing and education could, according to Szemere, save Jewish youth from the gravest present threat, their looming “spiritual collapse”, and countered the “despicable” but spreading “Jewish self-hatred” which he saw as being rooted in ignorance.⁹⁵⁰ In this text, an educational and, more specifically, a curriculum reform attuned to the pressing needs of ailing Jewish identity appeared as a necessary step in the interest of future generations.

In sum, while the agenda of narrating the history of Jewish literature was rather precisely formulated by *Ararát*’s chief editor, but Steiner’s sober assessment of Jewish literature’s achievements in the Hungarian language also shows that this type of literature was rather in the planning stages during the years of the Second World War. On the theoretical level, Komlós’ ideas on the future shape of the new Jewish literature were contested by Kardos, for whom only the preservation and furthering of the autonomy of spheres could ensure their quality and proper functioning. At the same time, the

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.53.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.55.

⁹⁵⁰ Samu Szemere, “A zsidó iskola feladatai” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.56.

contemporary weakness of Jewish collective identity was a thesis shared by the majority of authors. Individual case studies that illustrate this consensus range from stressing the tragedy of staying in the limbo, Jews being rejected in their Hungarianness by the outside world, but incapable of becoming publicly and properly Jewish, to educational programs to improve Jewish self-knowledge and fight spiritual malaise and growing self-hatred. The moot points concerned what the tools to increase Jewish self-awareness were to be and, more particularly, whether Jewish literature should serve as means to this end.

III. Assessments of the Current Situation and Plans for the Future

The above negotiation of the contours of Jewish literature as well as the very basis of systematically distinguishing some phenomena as specifically Jewish has already demonstrated the non-partisan nature of the *Ararát yearbooks*. This inner plurality is perhaps even more persuasively illustrated by different assessments of the contemporary situation. Opinions expressed in *Ararát* ranged from arguments on how Jews were more intransigent Hungarians in Transylvania, which after the First World War became part of Romania, than Christians (which we have already encountered in the *IMIT yearbooks*), to statements that the currently most widely accepted Jewish program propagates the elimination of the existing “life community” (*életközösség*) with European peoples – which were thereby countering while directly mirroring anti-Semitic aims. Other authors saw the root problem in the decline of religion, particularly in the “crisis of Biblical knowledge”, and still others would have liked to impose soft self-restraining measures and wished to encourage the realization of

“economic assimilation” or else proposed an increased role for Jewishness while wishing to maintain a synthesis and find a new harmony between Jewishness and Hungarianness.

This subchapter explores all these positions in some detail through the application of the methods of intellectual history. The aim here is to analyze *Ararát* as a series of publications containing Hungarian Jewish assessments of the situation during the Second World War and reflect on plans for the future that were formulated on its pages. The subchapter focuses on political ideas and seeks to identify the political platforms conceptualized. The starting point of my explorations is the reception of discriminatory legislation and the proposed modes of appropriate reaction, as the current legal standing of Jewry and the consequences it was expected to bring constitute the most important conflicts of interpretation found in the first *Ararát* volume.

According to Ernő Munkácsi, “the idea of legal equality was not, at least in principle, violated through this legislation [i.e. the anti-Jewish law of 1938]”.⁹⁵¹ Munkácsi argued that though the equality of citizens no longer existed in its 19th century sense, civil and political rights were not denied to Jews. Thus, discrimination should be conceived as constituting an exception. While Munkácsi tried to preserve trust in the legislators (to prove their on the whole benevolent intentions, he would even extensively quote from them), he had to admit that the status of Jewry indubitably changed and became uncertain: in an unclear way, both racial and denominational definitions were now considered partly valid. This overly benevolent, naïve and almost apologetic stance was immediately challenged by Lajos Dénes. In his letter for the same first volume of *Ararát* he wrote that “today it would be a foolish and sinful delusion to maintain that we can still consider ourselves equal to our

⁹⁵¹ Ernő Munkácsi, “A magyar zsidóság és a zsidóvallású magyarok jogi helyzete” in *Ararát*, 1939, p.19. On the development of anti-Jewish policies of the times, see Nataniel Katzburg, *Zsidópolitika Magyarországon, 1919-1943* (Budapest: Bábel, 2002).

Christian fellow citizens – with the only difference that we happen to be very misfortunate. No, we have to realize that we were forcibly made into a minority and maintain awareness of this and all the consequences it brings”.⁹⁵²

The next stage in the process of worsening discrimination, the adoption of the so called second Jewish (i.e. anti-Jewish) law of 1939 also led to a vivid discussion on the pages of *Ararát*. The most notable position was formulated by the authors advocating a semi-liberal compromise, which is well illustrated by the writings of Géza Ribáry.⁹⁵³ While Ribáry supported the idea of “establishing numerical proportions” and thus believed “parallel reeducation” was a necessary precondition, he did not consider state-imposed limitations on the “conquest of space” (*térfoglalás*) acceptable.⁹⁵⁴ Later on, he would write of the inseparable union that existed “with Hungarians” (*magyarsággal*), while emphasizing the necessity of stronger defensive measures against anti-Semitism. Somewhat peculiarly, he thought that the most effective means of this was to exercise modesty and act morally – he did not employ references to useful participation and positive contributions.⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁵² Lajos Dénes, “Két level” in *Ararát*, 1939, p.94.

⁹⁵³ Ribáry Géza, lawyer, vicepresident of the Jewish Community of Pest. He was one of the leaders of the National Association for Hungarian Israelite Culture (*Országos Magyar Izraelita Közművelődési Egyesület, OMIKE*) as well as of the distinguished initiators of the Rescue Action (*Országos Magyar Zsidó Segítő Akció, OMZSA*) aimed at helping excluded Jewish artists. After his death, OMZSA dedicated its yearbook to him in 1943. Hugó Csergő, Zoltán Kohn and György Polgár (eds.), *OMZSA évkönyv Ribáry Géza emlékének, 1942 – 1943* (Budapest: OMZSA, 1943). It ought to be noted that the expression *térfoglalás* (conquest of space) Ribáry used in an idiosyncratic way, reinterpreting its meaning to suit his needs: according to its traditional meaning space can only be conquered from someone else (thus the expression presupposes struggle between groups), in other words it presents a zero sum game. Ribáry expressed his belief in the possibility of simultaneous increase in conquered space and would have liked to support state endorsement of “parallel conquests” of space.

⁹⁵⁴ Géza Ribáry, “A magyar zsidóság és a zsidóvallású magyarok jogi helyzete” in *Ararát*, 1940, p.75.

⁹⁵⁵ Géza Ribáry, “Ankét a Magyar zsidóság legfontosabb feladatiról. Tanulmány” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.12-13. While Ribáry accepted certain goals of the legislation and aimed to present a more just and beneficial alternative to it, Frigyes Görög focused on specific additional injustices, namely the injustices emerging out of the way it was applied. The proportion of 6% was anyhow too low since there was an extra dual discrimination of people (the converted were included as well as those who lived outside Trianon Hungary and were in the meantime reincorporated into the country increased the proportions). According to Görög’s somewhat exaggerated estimate those actually discriminated by the law reach nearly 10% of the population. Frigyes Görög, “Izraelita zsidók és keresztény zsidók” in *Ararát*, 1940, p.78-79.

Somewhat similarly to Ribáry's ideas, László Bakonyi accepted the notion of the "unhealthy stratification" of Jews, a thesis frequently reiterated since the beginnings of the modern age.⁹⁵⁶ Thus, Bakonyi also affirmed that there was a need to alter the existing stratification,⁹⁵⁷ so much so that he labeled it the sacred duty of Jews to exercise "wise self-restraint" and referred to the "evidently deserved supremacy of ethnic Hungarians" (*törzsökös magyarság*).⁹⁵⁸ Bakonyi's concept of the nation was discernibly oscillating between a narrower, ethnic type of definition and an inclusive (imperial) kind of conception: while making the abovementioned reference to ethnic Hungarians, he also expected emancipation to be granted by the "great and happy Hungary of Saint Stephen." This combination of ideas is reminiscent of the times of Hungary of the Dual Monarchy, which Bakonyi in all likelihood would have liked to see recur (or "resurrect", to use the more common, but heavily loaded expression). A further proof of his greater Hungarian liberal nationalism is his hope that the reemergence of the multinational country organized around a dominating nation would also protect the "Hungarian soul" from racial hatred.⁹⁵⁹ In short, Bakonyi's political ideas were based on legal equality in a state which would not be ethnically neutral, and in this way resembled Ribáry's semi-liberal stance.

We find a softer version of the propagation of Jewish self-restriction in the contribution of György Polgár, who called for "honest and serious attempts at economic assimilation" in *Ararát*.⁹⁶⁰ While Polgár also expressed his support for a new proportional distribution, which he considered more appropriate, since, as he stated, "we need to learn to

⁹⁵⁶ See Derek S. Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Bakonyi László, ügyvéd és író, az Országos Izraelita Iroda titkáráként is dolgozott.

⁹⁵⁷ László Bakonyi, "Zsidó gondok és remények" in *Ararát*, 1942, p.29.

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.30.

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.28.

⁹⁶⁰ György Polgár, "A zsidó jövő gazdasági kérdése", in *Ararát*, 1943, p.10.

avoid clashes”,⁹⁶¹ he added that such desires should not manifest themselves in artificial attempts to enforce strict numerical proportions.⁹⁶² In this way Polgár expressed more explicit criticism of discriminatory legislation than the aforementioned two authors and remained closer to the liberal position, but did so without even trying to clarify what probably he could not have either: how was such a “collective voluntary self-restriction” supposed to be implemented in practice?

In sum, these three authors differed in their emphases, but from the political-ideological point of view the substance of their arguments were nearly identical. They were all ready to partially endorse the theory of Jews playing an overly great societal and economic role and possessing too much power. Their aim was to offer an alternative to harsh exclusion through a compromise solution. Their semi-liberal attempts were based on accepting some of the declared aims of discriminatory legislation on the one hand, while contesting its means – which they variously called the denial of rights, the restriction on the conquest of space and artificial proportionalism. These texts can only be understood by taking into account their primary contexts and the closely connected question of authorial intention: in all likelihood, the central ambition of Ribáry, Bakonyi and Polgár was to formulate a position that was simultaneously acceptable to Jews, due to preserving some crucial liberal principles, as well as to milder proponents of anti-Semitism by affirming the existence of (in scope narrower but nonetheless supposedly) higher “national goals”. Next to these overly cautious and diplomatic ideas, it is conspicuous how clearly and concisely Magda Dénes formulated her position, in an article which dealt primarily with applied psychology and nominally did not even aim to address political issues. Dénes firmly declared

⁹⁶¹ Ibid., p.8.

⁹⁶² Ibid., p.9.

that “there can be no economic rationale that would specifically require those working in intellectual occupations to get reeducated and take on industrial jobs”.⁹⁶³

This straight-forward statement, in obvious contrast to the three texts quoted previously underscores two related points: first, there must have been much diplomatic moderation and self-restraint to the aforementioned three pieces of writing and second, their authors must have believed in the possibility of some reconciliation through compromise.⁹⁶⁴ Knowing that Bakonyi’s and Polgár’s pieces were released in the yearbooks of 1942 and 1943, respectively, this intention to assume a middle position between previous Jewish demands for equality and current Hungarian demands for increased exclusion shows not only how difficult it proved to some Hungarian Jewish intellectuals to adjust to the changed realities and how it remained nearly evident for them that they could speak with at least some fractions of Hungary’s political leadership as partners in negotiation, but also how this intention to continue to serve as partners and the hope for some acceptable compromise survived long into the war years. The exact dates (1942 and 1943) are also of significance as these were the years of the premiership of Miklós Kállay when, due to a combination of awful fright and the strongly felt urgency to try to avoid the looming but hardly fully conceivable disaster, such hopes became particularly vocal once again.

Zoltán Kohn also addressed the question of the right way of assimilation. He opposed the re-stratification of the Jewish society as advocated by Ribáry, Polgár and Bakonyi. While these three partially stood by liberal values, they accepted the notion that

⁹⁶³ Magda Dénes, “Gyakorlati lélektan és átrétegződés”, in *Ararát*, 1941, p.168. Magda Dénes (1908-1982), teacher, child psychologist, historian of education. She is not the same person as the relatively famous psychoanalyst whose memoirs were published in the United States as Magda Dénes, *Castles Burning: A Child’s Life in War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

⁹⁶⁴ On contemporary non-Jewish public opinion, János Pelle has published a detailed study: János Pelle, *A gyűlölet vetése. A zsidótörvények és a magyar közvélemény* (Budapest: Európa, 2001).

society ought to be at least partly reorganized in order to approach some abstract ideal of justice through a new societal balance, and supported speeding up this transformation through official state policies and legal incentives. Kohn was convinced that such “quick fix” approaches to assimilation constituted the problem, not the solution. In his eyes, programmatic, “fast, exaggerated and loud” Jewish adaptation would only “raise suspicions”.⁹⁶⁵ He also believed that this fallacious, programmatic approach was deeply rooted in the Jewish condition: he considered the intention to become another, the “revolt against one’s origins” to be particularly strong among Jews and ascribed it to the “absence of physical homeland and fixed community” – not to the system of societal expectations and pressures. At the same time, he maintained that certain special “laws existed above the level of will”: it was the “miracle of the spirit” that hindered the disappearance of Jews that otherwise could have easily happened through their complete merger into non-Jewish societies.⁹⁶⁶ In sum, in Kohn’s opinion, the conservative support for a natural, organic adaptation would lead to more appropriate and fortunate results, since “nature does not know of jumps” and “I cannot *become* another by the mere force of my will, I can only *evolve* into another”.⁹⁶⁷

The political ideas of Aladár Komlós were to a certain extent similar to those of Zoltán Kohn, since Komlós also propagated a new *internal* balance for Jews. A significant difference between them is that while Kohn wished to slow down the process of assimilation, and would have preferred to turn it into a “natural process”, thereby preserving the Jewish community, Komlós wished to reverse the direction of the process of identification under the obliging circumstances in force at the time. His proposal revolved around taking Jewishness

⁹⁶⁵ Zoltán Kohn, “Miért vagyok zsidó?” in *Ararát*, 1944, p.86.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.83-85.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.86.

more seriously and moderating what he conceived of as unjustifiably one-sided Hungarian identification and commitment. In his own words: “We are not only Jews but also Hungarians and humans, and the aim is merely to emphasize those aspects of our many determinants more which our current situation requires and which we are exclusively allowed to express”.⁹⁶⁸ Three years later, he derived from the indeed dramatic “changes in the circumstances” that it was obligatory for Jewish artists, if they still wished to create relevant art works, to “fully experience and feel” the fate of the Jewish people.⁹⁶⁹ While previous history forced Jewish artists to turn their backs on “themselves”, the unfolding of the then ongoing historical catastrophe meant that they again had to express “the sentiments of their own collective”.⁹⁷⁰

Elsewhere Komlós’ stance seemed to closely approach that of Kohn in its choice of expressions: in his “Zsidóság, magyarság, Európa” published in the yearbook of 1943, he declared that “what can save us from the fever of headless assimilation is a more calm and gradual form of assimilation”.⁹⁷¹ Komlós derived the legitimacy of this new kind of dual (or trial, together with the European level) identity from the interests of Hungariandom (*magyarság*). He wrote, for instance, that “precisely in order to make our relation to Hungariandom unproblematic, it is necessary to be more aware of our Jewishness”,⁹⁷² or more simply: “let us be Jews to have good relations with Hungarians”.⁹⁷³ Yet his practical proposal remained almost unchanged: in recommending a new duality he was advising a one-sided shift in proportions, a change in the relative weight of the two central elements. In this

⁹⁶⁸ Aladár Komlós, “A magyar zsidó író útjai” in *Ararát*, 1939, p.132.

⁹⁶⁹ Here he used the Hungarian equivalent of the German term *Volksschicksal*.

⁹⁷⁰ Aladár Komlós, “Zsidó költők a magyar irodalomban” in *Ararát*, 1942, p.169.

⁹⁷¹ Aladár Komlós, “Zsidóság, magyarság, Európa in *Ararát*, 1943, p.25.

⁹⁷² Ibid., p.26.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., p.27.

article, Komlós supposed that the strengthening of Jewish consciousness was inversely related to the intensity of Hungarian identity, the former filling the vacuum created by the weakening of the latter.⁹⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that the tragedy of exclusion appears here too as a form of resignation from “our leading role in Hungarian life”.⁹⁷⁵ Moreover, Komlós also employed the widespread idea of “useful collective self-restraint”, which was already quoted above when presenting semi-liberal proposals.

In stark opposition to more conservative ideas to re-embed Jewry, as propagated by Zoltán Kohn, there were some radical plans to transform Hungarian Jewish society. The most detailed plan of reorganization can be found in the piece by Marcellné Denker.⁹⁷⁶ The fact that her paper was selected by Béla Zsolt, Aladár Komlós and Lajos Dénes as the best out of forty-six entries about “the most urgent tasks and duties of Hungarian Jewry” lends additional importance to her corporatist thoughts.⁹⁷⁷ In this article, Denker sketched the contours of a new, more just societal order based on Jewish individuals committed to unity and solidarity.⁹⁷⁸ She wrote that “the best solution would be to follow the governing principles of the Portuguese economic model of social policy”,⁹⁷⁹ and added that due to the current necessity of economic self-sufficiency, Jewish youth would have to be assimilated to the Hungarian peasantry.⁹⁸⁰ Ultimately, Denker proposed her ideas merely as temporary solutions and expressed her belief that the next phase of

⁹⁷⁴ For instance, he wrote that “If our relation to Hungarianness becomes somewhat cooler, we have to make our relation to Jewry warmer.” Ibid., p.27.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1943, p.27.

⁹⁷⁶ Her maiden name was Bea Szántó, but she used her married name (the wife of Marcell Denker).

⁹⁷⁷ The other submissions receiving praise were the ones written by György Neumann, Hanna Kéri, Béla Dénes and Ignác Rózsa, as well as another one submitted with an identification sign. See Lajos Dénes, “Pályázati jelentés” in *Ararát*, 1941, pp.36-8.

⁹⁷⁸ Marcellné Denker, “A magyar zsidóság jelen feladatai” in *Ararát*, 1941, pp. 40-41.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.42. The source of this rather unusual reference might be the recently released Portugal book of Vid Mihelics. The contemporary reception of this work was studied by Iván Bertényi Jr., “Fasiszta diktatúra vagy a keresztény társadalmi tanítás megvalósulása? Salazar rendszerének megítélése a II. világháború előtt Mihelics Vid: Az új Portugália című könyve alapján” in *Protestáns Szemle*, 2000/4, pp. 237-259.

⁹⁸⁰ Marcellné Denker, “A magyar zsidóság jelen feladatai” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.43.

development would bring Hungarian national reintegration alongside (or rather as part of) the arrival of a more just societal order.⁹⁸¹ Thus, her award-winning contribution aimed to advance radical change but only for the moment and it also remained indebted to the model of history that promised harmony would soon follow at the end point of gradual, steady progress.

Until now I have presented three semiliberal stances which accepted that there was a need to transform Jewish society, to de-develop it in relative or absolute terms in order to reach a compromise even with those pursuing more moderately anti-Semitic agendas, I have analyzed Komlós' view according to which Jewish identity needed to be strengthened and Jewish works of art had to become more emphatically Jewish. I have also sketched the contours of the prize-winning conception of Marcellné Denker who drew the image of an alternative, corporatist society and have provided a counterpart to this through discussion of the conservative, gradualist ideas of Zoltán Kohn. The rest of this subchapter deals with the views on the current situation and plans for the future formulated by the advocates of a more central role for Judaism, and by those affiliated with the Jewish national movement. Neither of them constituted a large group in terms of overall numbers, but both contributed some significant and well-articulated pieces to *Ararát*.

One of the more representative contributions to the discussion of the lessons to be drawn from the contemporary crisis of Jewry was written by an anonymous author who believed that the real Jewish question or problem was the lack of an adequate answer to the immensely difficult "inner Jewish question", which he or she defined as the question of the "meaning and sense" (*jelentés és értelem*) of Jewish distinctiveness for Jewry. As mere existence could not be enough, the specific reason behind the identification of unreligious

⁹⁸¹ Ibid., p.43-44.

people as Jewish had to be confronted as well. According to this conception, an internal renewal was a precondition for the correct arrangement of “external existence”.⁹⁸² Jewry would only find solid ground under its feet when awareness of its worldly mission, the carrying of a religious idea, the idea of the divine, would be widespread again.⁹⁸³

In a strikingly similar formulation of the problem, Béla Tábor asked whether Jewry was still a real community that possessed some “specific contents”.⁹⁸⁴ More concretely, he inquired whether Jewry had an elite capable of articulating such a specifically Jewish content, and whether members of the Jewish community felt at least passive solidarity with this spiritual elite.⁹⁸⁵ In Tábor’s assessment, it was precisely the Jewish content that had gone missing and there was no “current Jewish universalism.” Therefore, in the Hungarian present Jewry could hardly claim that it fulfilled the basic requirement of possessing an “internal content” capable of making a distinguished elite opt for it. Having stated these ideas on the sorry state of Jewry, Tábor defined the prime task as making faith possible for a generation without it. Thus, he traced the current crisis to a single root cause, namely the crisis of the “Jewish possession of the Bible”.⁹⁸⁶ In his opinion, the Bible had turned into a preoccupation of the pious and had become a mere relic, in spite of the fact that its in-depth knowledge was absolutely necessary for all Jews.⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸² Anonymous, “A zsidóság életproblémája” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.12.

⁹⁸³ Ibid., p.15.

⁹⁸⁴ Béla Tábor (1907-1992). His chief work was published originally in 1939 under the title *A zsidóság két útja* (reprint: Budapest: Pesti Szalon, 1990).

⁹⁸⁵ Béla Tábor, “Szakzsizidóság vagy zsidó világnézet” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.82.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid, p.88.

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid, p.87. György Kecskeméti maintains that the attempt to create a Jewish national homeland in Palestine “indubitably renders great service to Jewry, but the solution of the great global or European Jewish problems” cannot be expected from it, since its capacities are limited. György Kecskeméti, “A zsidóság mai problémái” in *Ararát*, 1940, p.99. His alternative is the road of internal, spiritual renewal and purification, which he simultaneously presents as the method of survival. Ibid, p.100. Salamon Stern aims at representing the position of Orthodoxy, distancing it from both “assimilationist Jewry” and nationally based Zionists – though adding that they are closer to the latter. Stern sees the root of all problems in “the insufficient role religion currently plays”. Salamon Stern, “Ankét a magyar zsidóság legfontosabb feladatairól. Tanulmány” in *Ararát*, 1941, p. 25.

Of the three most important Zionist articles, two were written by a current and a former president of the *Magyar Cionista Szövetség* (the Hungarian Zionist Alliance), Mózes Bisseliches and Ottó Komoly, while the third one was penned by Ernő Marton, another important actor in the Transylvanian branch of the movement. The unprecedented and still ongoing catastrophe constituted the starting point for the reflections of Bisseliches and the first part of his article sought to uncover its causes.⁹⁸⁸ While he charged Jewish historical actors with blindness, allowing only for a single, though crucial exception, he offered a rather deterministic view of history, declaring that “Jews, supposedly such smart people, were unable to see that developments would directly lead to catastrophe,” adding that “the only person seeing clearly what the situation was like was Tivadar Herzl”.⁹⁸⁹ To Bisseliches, the current situation was of transitional nature: even though the necessary truth of the Zionist idea was already proven by the constant rise of anti-Semitism and the consequent exclusion of Jews, there remained much to be desired in terms of real achievements as these could only develop in direct correlation with the amount of practical work performed.⁹⁹⁰ In other words, the current tragic transition was presented as one between the victory of an idea and its practical realization. Wedged between these two points in time, Jewry had to undergo strange and horrible tribulations. Bisseliches provided a simple, monocausal explanation: “the source of all Jewish trouble” was the fact that the Jewish people had no homeland. On the other hand, he explicated that the ultimate aim was not to make the entirety of the Jewish people emigrate, but rather the achievement of societal

⁹⁸⁸ Bisseliches, born in 1878, was one of the early Hungarian Zionist leaders. He was president of *Makkabea*, founded in 1903, the largest Hungarian Zionist association of university students prior the First World War with approximately a thousand members. The main venue for his publications was *Zsidó Szemle* (started in 1909), the chief forum of Magyar Cionista Szövetség (Hungarian Zionist Alliance).

⁹⁸⁹ Mózes Bisseliches, “Ankét a magyar zsidóság legfontosabb feladatairól. Tanulmány” in *Ararát*, 1941, p.17.

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.18.

“balance” through emigration and the consequent “normalization” of the relationship with other peoples.⁹⁹¹

Ottó Komoly made similarly categorical statements. For instance, he wrote that “we have to consider it entirely true that the Jewish question did not disappear with emancipation and assimilation but [...] we have to solve it ourselves”.⁹⁹² Though he noted that circumstances played a certain role too, he quoted above all the responsibility of Jews who in his eyes clearly misjudged the situation.⁹⁹³ Much like Bisseliches, Komoly connected the possibility of assimilation to the creation of a Jewish national homeland.⁹⁹⁴ The third Zionist contributor to *Ararát* was Ernő Marton, who maintained that the current chapter was the most terrifying one in the long history of the permanent crisis of the Jewish Diaspora.⁹⁹⁵ He also linked this both to the homelessness of the Jewish people and their special social-economic position.⁹⁹⁶ Marton sought to account for historical developments in simple terms: “through painful suffering and bloody sacrifices we will finally come to accept the simple

⁹⁹¹ Ibid., p.19.

⁹⁹² Ottó Komoly, “Mit tanulhat a zsidóság a mai válságból?” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.16. Ottó Komoly (1892-1945) was president of the Hungarian Zionist Alliance from 1940. He also published a book in 1942 with the title *Cionista életszemlélet. Kísérlet a pozitív zsidó hivatástudat természetrajzához* (Budapest: Magyar Cionista Szövetség, 1942). Next to Rezső Kasztner, he was the president of the Budapest Rescue Committee from 1943. See Szabolcs Szita, *Aki egy embert megment - a világot menti meg: mentőbizottság, Kasztner Rezső, SS-embervásár, 1944-1945* (Budapest: Corvina, 2005). His diary was published already in 1983, thanks to Mária Schmidt, Tamás Majsai and Miklós Mester. Judit Molnár wrote a study of it: Judit Molnár, “Vajon megtelnek-e följegyzéseimmel a könyv lapjai? Komoly Ottó naplója (1944)” In László Karsai and Judit Molnár (szerk.), *Küzdelem az igazságért. Tanulmányok Randolph L. Braham 80. születésnapjára* (Budapest: Mazsihisz, 2002), pp. 473-490.

⁹⁹³ Ottó Komoly, “Mit tanulhat a zsidóság a mai válságból?” in *Ararát*, 1943, p.18.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid, p.18.

⁹⁹⁵ Ernő Marton was one of the leaders of the Zionist movement in Transylvania. He started a journal titled *Új Kelet* in Cluj/Kolozsváron in 1918, which he (through help, among others, from people who were active in Budapest) turned into a daily in 1920. Marton released a book with the title *A magyar zsidóság családfája. Vázlat a magyarországi zsidóság település- történetéhez* (Kolozsvár: Fraternitas, 1941) around this time. He is included with five pieces of writing in the anthology discussing the period in Transylvania. Attila Gidó, *Úton. Erdélyi zsidó társadalom- és nemzetépítési kísérletek*. (Csíkszereda: Pro Print, 2008). An important study dealing with Marton and, more broadly, Transylvania Jewry during the Second World War: Holly Case, „Navigating Identities. The Jews of Kolozsvár (Cluj) and the Hungarian Administration 1940-1944” in Wolfgang Mueller and Michael Portmann (eds.), *Osteuropa vom Weltkrieg zur Wende* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), pp.39-54.

⁹⁹⁶ Ernő Marton, “Utóirat az *Ararát* ankétjához” in *Ararát*, 1944, p.33.

truth that Galut cannot be cured by Galut”.⁹⁹⁷ From such historical lessons he concluded that all attempts at assimilation were meant to collapse like a house of cards, with tragic suddenness. To Marton, this meant that the life of individuals could not be ensured through the loss of their “peoplehood.” On the other hand, “purposeful, hard, self-sacrificing work” would lead to self-redemption.⁹⁹⁸

Even though each of these pieces is rather stereotypical, offering basic and somewhat schematic Zionist arguments, it is noteworthy that not only did they discursively accept the existence of the Jewish question and the need to solve it (which also conforms to standard Zionist patterns), but two of them also referred to the lack of societal balance and the problematic nature of the social-economic position of Jews – similarly to those texts which I have labeled semi-liberal above. On the basis of this it can be argued that though Zionists considered themselves agents of Jewish separation and exit from political communities they realistically considered imbued with (by this time vicious and murderous, or as Saul Friedlander called it, redemptive) anti-Semitism, their independence from Hungarian and even from anti-Semitic political culture was only relative. Implementing changes in the social structure of Jewry was among their serious plans but it also curiously resonated with the legitimacy discourse of official Hungarian anti-Semitism. In other words, they did not constitute a political force with thoroughly original ideas, but merely one with a unique combination of them. During the Second World War, Hungarian Zionists put forth a national program that denied the possibility of acceptable compromises, and preferred to rely on self-help instead. At the same time, they had a line of what we could call unofficial

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid, p.35.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.39-41.

foreign policy that aimed to legitimate their ideas and plans in non-Zionist circles, as their articles in *Ararát*, among others, illustrate.

In conclusion of this subchapter, instead of repeating a summary of the main political platforms, I would prefer to offer a tentative recontextualization of these positions. The palette of contributions to this printed organ of Hungarian Jewish intellectual subculture in the years of the Second World War was not only colorful, but (perhaps somewhat surprisingly) the political spectrum unearthed from these yearbooks reproduces the all-Hungarian diversity of political-ideological options in small: semi-liberal attempts at compromise, conservative critiques, hope in religious revival, the formulation of nationalist programs and the vision of alternative, corporatist order we find in the Hungarian Jewish yearbook *Ararát* were mirrored in the public exchanges in the Hungarian national sphere.⁹⁹⁹ It goes without saying that some other platforms with a significant presence on the Hungarian scene, most notably militant anti-Semitism, found no parallel in *Ararát*, but other political ideas expressed here, though the corpus is unfortunately relatively small, offer ample materials for extra-Jewish comparisons within the broader Hungarian political-ideological context. Only detailed future comparisons between Hungarian Jewish and Hungarian political ideas during the Second World War, the period of sharpest divide and unprecedented one-sided onslaught against Hungarian Jews can properly develop these admittedly counter-intuitive and ironic parallels.

⁹⁹⁹ An important in-depth study of the period is Gyula Juhász, *Uralkodó eszmék Magyarországon, 1939-1944* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1983).

IV. Fragments of Historical Narratives

The final section of this chapter is dedicated to historical narratives that were published in *Ararát*. These narratives appeared in a rather sporadic and concise form and many of them are best classified as narrative fragments. Though brief and often partial, they nevertheless allow us glimpses into larger historical visions. The Zionist narrative and Bakonyi's historical vision of the reappearance of the Kingdom of Saint Stephen have already been presented above and will not be discussed in this subchapter, although in order to map out the spectrum of narratives I will briefly return to the ideas of Aladár Komlós, whose well-articulated and centrally important historical narrative merits some more attention. The rest of the chapter turns to exploration of the narratives of decay and of inner split, followed by pro-reform and liberal historical fragments, and ending with the ambivalent narrative of Jewish history by a sophisticated historian of ancient times. In some way each of these provides a narrative of crisis, though the ideas on what, since when and why exactly was in crisis differed markedly.

Komlós' programmatic articles that formulated his agenda for Jewish literature were based on a coherent narrative explanation of modern Hungarian Jewish literary history. Arguably the chief purpose of his narrative was to present collectivist, topical and "consciousness-raising" Hungarian Jewish literature as the superior synthesis of previous historical developments. According to the periodization he offered on the history of poetry in *Ararát*, until 1860 practically only works dealing with the questions of emancipation were created, which could now be considered linguistic documents – basically provided materials for cultural historians. It was only in the 1860s that such external pressures on literature lessened, though societal and political ambitions remained crucial at least until 1868, if not

later.¹⁰⁰⁰ After emancipation, primarily through József Kiss, Jewish private life received its first occasional artistic depiction, which in Kiss' oeuvre was clearly accompanied by the desire to strengthen the Hungarian connection. For the members of the generation after him who started their literary careers in the 1890s, their own Hungarianness could already appear self-evident. Komlós emphasized that they were ready to criticize not in spite of their Hungarianness, but precisely because of it. Simultaneously, they would have liked to detach themselves from traditional bonds, which they understood to be rooted in questionable prejudices.¹⁰⁰¹ For Jewish literature more narrowly defined, this development meant a dead-end, as members of this generation hardly ever composed poems with explicit Jewish bearings.

According to this narrative, Hungarian Jewish poetry split into two around this time, as traditional and modern culture more generally came into opposition. Modern, urban and pro-Western artists, these “sensitive and lonely humans” who firmly believed in the autonomy of art, were the source of controversy as they departed both from their community and religion, but they certainly managed to become well-known and successful.¹⁰⁰² Komlós complained that in spite of the catastrophe befalling Hungarian Jewry in the postwar period they hardly ever became truly conscious of the “fate of their people.” As mentioned above, Komlós believed that this asymmetrical compromise with one-sided commitments came to a halt in the face of the ongoing historical catastrophe, and that in order to create great and convincing art works, artists now had to be occupied with their own fate as well as that of their people.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Aladár Komlós, “Zsidó költők a magyar irodalomban” in *Ararát*, 1942, p.163.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid., p.165.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., pp.168-9.

This narrative critique of historical development was based on two main ideas: the split into two fractions and the secession of artists, and the separation between art and society. Komlós wanted to cure the negative consequences of these with a new synthesis based on unity and communal, collectivist art. He considered the modern differentiation and separation of the spheres or sub-systems anachronistic, and accused the proponents of the autonomy of literature of detachment from reality and even of backwardness. In his eyes, under the new circumstances, artists could relate to their fate only through “belonging to a people”. Komlós thus propagated the idea that collective fate had already overwhelmed the variety of individual life trajectories.

Bence Szabolcsi published a study on the cultural geography of synagogue singing. In this article, he discussed a number of regional types and, in a somewhat contradictory manner, characterized the Hungarian territories as a whole with their supposed balance between East and West and their “eternally transitory” nature, while he also maintained that the significance of the local story was precisely that it transformed Eastern phenomena into Western.¹⁰⁰³ Szabolcsi’s historical narrative was based on the idea of a radical break: the collapse of the age of organic progress. In Szabolcsi’s eyes, the 19th century began with struggles to achieve Westernizing, European type of reforms. Such successful reforms managed to become dominant for the lifespan of two generations, in the years between 1830 and 1890. These timely and sensible reforms created a synthesis that seemed unshakable since it managed to create modernized ceremonies while continuing the Jewish tradition. According to his narrative, it was this kind of liturgy and, more broadly, this trend that declined after 1890, when both Eastern and Western traditions began to falter and the gradual and slow fading of the liberal spirit no longer enabled the worthy continuation of

¹⁰⁰³ Bence Szabolcsi, “A magyarországi zsinagógai ének” in *Ararát*, 1939, p.123.

successful Westernizing reforms.¹⁰⁰⁴ Much like Komlós, this brief narrative on the history of Jewish liturgy put the beginning of the crisis at around 1890, but unlike Komlós, Szabolcsi neither talked about a split, but much rather of the simultaneous decline of two similarly influential entities, nor did he complain about modernist secessionism leading away from tradition, but believed that the Westernist, moderately reformist tradition's loss of dynamism was mainly responsible for the ensuing crisis.

An even more decidedly pro-reformist narrative is found in Ernő Naményi's article written in support of the cause of the *Ézsaiás Vallásos Társaság* (Religious Association Isaiah). This implied that Naményi contested the idea that religious reformism ever attained power in Hungary. While he thought that the reformist tradition was successful "everywhere else" and huge masses had come under its influence, he maintained that real reformism was defeated in Hungary but not through its own weakness, but "exclusively by the leaders of the Jewish community who were focused on their own material interests".¹⁰⁰⁵ From this perspective, the moderate reformism of the Neolog kind was both partial and superficial. He thought that was why Neolog Jewry could neither protect the unity of Jewry, nor hinder the decline of religion and the accompanying spread of materialism.¹⁰⁰⁶ As a consequence, a vacuum opened up between the "completely Orthodox" and the "completely unreligious" strata.

In this story, the very survival of religious Jewry (which Naményi implicitly defined as non-Orthodox here, shifting from his previous conceptual opposition between Orthodox and unreligious) depended on the implementation of "real religious reform".¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., p.124.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ernő Naményi, "Vallásos reformmozgalmak Magyarországon" in *Ararát*, 1941, p.140.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., p.140.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid., p.141.

His narrative also included an account of what Komlós diagnosed as the phenomenon of secession from religion and community starting around 1890, but which he did not quite attempt to explain. In Naményi’s version it was namely due to the lack of sustained and serious reformism that Neolog Jewry could not maintain the relevance of religion. It is worth comparing his narrative with Szabolcsi’s too. Since Szabolcsi supported moderate reform, he presented the Jewish 19th century as an epoch when the reform process progressed harmoniously, while in the more radically reformist story of Naményi the same period was characterized by externally disabled and malevolently suppressed attempts at reform.

Fülöp Grünwald presented a history of Jewish historians in modern Hungary. He explained that Jews concerned with historical knowledge at first wished to use their insights primarily as means in their political struggles, but once 1848-49 created a “real community of sentiments”, they began to write on the past of (non-Jewish) Hungarians too.¹⁰⁰⁸ Assuming a Hungarian national perspective was completed after their legal emancipation in 1867, and acquired its highest manifestation in the works of Henrik Marczali and Ignác Acsády. In his assessment though, crucial “attacks were launched against Jewish historians” as early as the first years of the 20th century. The exclusion of Jewish historians was soon so thorough that those places which provided opportunities to conduct professional research “no longer employed Jews in the 20th century and, what is more, out of principle no secondary school appointed Jews as history teachers”.¹⁰⁰⁹ Thus, following the passing away of the first generation of Jewish historians after Jewish emancipation, the line of Jewish Hungarian historians was quickly broken.¹⁰¹⁰ In this narrative of Jewish historians, Grünwald identified the turn of the century as the beginning of a decisive anti-Semitic wave, claiming

¹⁰⁰⁸ Fülöp Grünwald, “A magyar történetírás zsidó művelői” in *Ararát*, 1940, pp. 135-6.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., 1940, pp.138-9.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid., 1941, p. 139.

that exclusion started much earlier than was usually thought, way before the First World War – he considered Dávid Angyal’s later career exceptional. In line with this presentation of a more long-term and stronger national tradition of exclusion, Grünwald did not consider future national reintegration certain at all, calling future Jewish contributions “doubtful”.¹⁰¹¹

Ernő Ballagi was alone in offering a text on the period of Jewish emancipation written from a purely liberal point of view. His story was periodized in terms of legal historical milestones. In his conception, Jewish emancipation could not be separated from the spread of modern notions of liberty, which rekindled the hopes that its period would return sooner or later. For Ballagi, emancipation was not a consequence of legislator’s benevolence but was the rational understanding of the possibility of a mutually beneficial exchange. In other words, it constituted an agreement on services and counter-services. The concept of emancipation was therefore not solely underpinned by the ideas of legal equality and religious freedom, but was solidly rooted in the modern Hungarian national program. “They wanted to provide Jews with rights and a homeland, to make the Jew work in the service of the homeland”,¹⁰¹² Ballagi explained. These simultaneous agendas also enabled the symbolic unification of Jewish commitments to faith and motherland. In this liberal version, the balance sheet of the age of emancipation was decidedly positive: it “not only brought the flourishing of Jewry, but the enrichment of humanity as well”.¹⁰¹³ Ballagi believed assimilation was essentially the Jewish “adaptation to freedom”. As such, it provided such a precious opportunity in his eyes that even some of its negative consequences could be easily accepted.¹⁰¹⁴ Crucially, Ballagi wrote that “liberty itself did not shake the leading strata of

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid., p.140.

¹⁰¹² Ernő Ballagi, “A százötvenéves európai emancipáció”, in *Ararát*, 1942, pp. 33-4.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid., p.32.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid., p.34.

Jewry, only the threat of its loss”.¹⁰¹⁵ Trying to clear the image of the age of legal equality and liberty, he directly connected the departures from the Jewish community (he talked of waves of conversions) to the onslaught of discrimination. In short, what distinguished Ballagi’s liberal narrative above all was that it did not follow the usual chronology of crisis formulated in *Ararát*. According to him, the current crisis, which he (similarly to Komlós, among others) saw above all as the loss of elites, stemmed directly from the denial of rights, and thus it only started in earnest in the late 1930s.¹⁰¹⁶

Last but not least, there is one notable case of a scholarly, thematically focused article which also contains the seeds of a grand narrative of history. István Hahn, historian of ancient times, nominally reflected on the birth of Jewry “as understood today” in 70 CE, in Yavne, where Jewry “felt and lived its own religious life and peoplehood as part of a single unit”.¹⁰¹⁷ Ever since, Jewry regularly recalled its ancient past and depicted the recurrent crises it had to face as merely temporary, while holding on to ideas that transcended the temporal horizon. Thus, the idea of the Jewish community managed to survive the fall of the Jewish state and the forced departure from the country. In Hahn’s eyes, a Jewish “ethical commitment” successfully replaced these material sources of power and under the impact of the Book and Jewish education national life was maintained in the only possible way. Hahn stressed that Jewish national life continued due of the “voluntary” and “noble” one-sidedness of Jews.¹⁰¹⁸

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid., p.35.

¹⁰¹⁶ Endre Sós was another author who supported Jewish national assimilation and defended the thesis that it had already worked out. Parts of his Hungarian Jewish urban history were released in *Ararát*. Sós formulates his ideas in opposition to the anti-Semitic topoi of *Verjudung* and conquest of space, pursuing a polemic with non-Jewish opponents. For instance, when writing on the history of Gyöngyös, he stated that “since 1880, during the lifetime of the past two generations, it is incorrect to speak of the Jewish conquest of space”. Endre Sós, “A gyöngyösi zsidók útja”, in *Ararát*, 1944, p.129.

¹⁰¹⁷ István Hahn, “Javne”, in *Ararát*, 1944, p.112.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., p.114.

According to him, the forgetting of the book and the laws started with the Enlightenment, when modern notions of liberty (so evidently cherished by Ballagi) started to spread much more widely and turned the millennia he recalled in his study into an “irreparable past”. Although it would appear that Hahn presented Jewish national life as something that continued to exist for many centuries, but came to a halt in the 18th century, what he ultimately suggested was more ambivalent. In the conclusions of his article, he stated that the generations of the present and the future can remember this tradition from nearly two millennia and draw “appropriate lessons” from it. Although he did not specify what he meant by these lessons, this nevertheless clearly implies that he did not think of the past as something gone, but rather as something that lived on with the Jewish people and whose relevant traditions could potentially be revived.

Though the narratives of Jewish history analyzed here provide us only with brief and partial evidence mostly on key aspects of modern Hungarian Jewish history, they not only show the plurality of perspectives on the main developments, but also reveal significant correlations between them and the political positions of their authors and strong links to their assessment of the current crisis as well as their hopes for the future. To summarize, most authors, with the exception of the purely liberal version advocated by Ballagi, identified some sort of crisis: of the rise of a modern elite disconnected from communal traditions and the separation of spheres of life (Komlós), the suppression of serious religious reform which led to the decline of Jewish religiosity by the end of the 19th century (Naményi), the disappearance of dynamic equilibrium that emerged between liberal Westernization and tradition in the 19th century (Szabolcsi), the rise of anti-Semitic exclusion

by the early 20th century (Grünwald), the advent of modernity and the seemingly ultimate, but perhaps only temporary eclipse of the primacy of the Jewish collective (Hahn).

These historical narratives and interpretations of the present crisis were closely connected to their views on the solution: Komlós wanted a new synthesis based on Jewish unity and communal, collectivist art, Naményi propagated more comprehensive religious reform, Hahn suggested that long-term Jewish historical traditions could potentially be revived – his remembering and accounting for them constituting the first stage of this process. Grünwald argued against unfounded hopes in Hungarian national reintegration, while Ballagi, who wanted to protect the pure image of the times of emancipation and assimilation, claimed that their return was all Jewry should wish for – and that there was reason to hope for it. Only Szabolcsi's sense of crisis (his story centering on the vision of a laudable age that lost its dynamism and was left behind) did not have a relatively obvious counterpart in terms of a present-day, future-oriented agenda. He did not elaborate on the contours of the age that followed the passing of the 19th century, except that it was a period much less harmonious and balanced. He seemed to be the only one speaking of a foreign country when discussing the past. For all other authors analyzed in this subchapter, historical narratives closely reflected their existential concerns in the years of the Second World War.

Conclusions

The previous six chapters were based on detailed empirical coverage of the *IMIT yearbooks* (1929-1943), the journal *Libanon* (1936-1943) and the *Ararát yearbooks* (1939-1944). These three organs provide a representative sample of Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly and intellectual discourses in the second half of the Horthy era until right before the Hungarian Holocaust of 1944 as all three continued to be released long into the years of the Second World War. Thus, they allow us a unique vantage point to explore Jewish ideas in the period between assimilation and catastrophe, including the final years when extermination policies were already being implemented against European Jews outside Hungary. Next to discussing the general characteristics of these three publications and providing overviews of their main contents, these chapters offered analyses of the discourses on Jewish identity, relations, culture, politics and history.¹⁰¹⁹ My aim was to present a nuanced picture of Hungarian Jewish identity options, ways of conceiving of internal and external relations, models of Jewish culture and assertions of defining values, the spectrum of political-ideological platforms as well as various stances on historicity and formulations of historical narratives, and I tried to show how these discourses transformed in the dramatic years under consideration.

These concluding pages summarize the main findings of these empirical chapters, offer some further reflections on the relations between them on the example of three individual authors, and discuss potentially fruitful future directions of inquiry. I have

¹⁰¹⁹ When comparing the contents of these organs at the most general level, it becomes clear that each published different kinds of materials: *IMIT yearbooks* specialized primarily in longer scholarly articles, shorter articles with more contemporary focuses and often with a higher level of sophistication represented the mainstream in *Libanon*, while *Ararát yearbooks* mainly published literary contributions, alongside brief historical narratives, discussions of political options and submissions to writing contests.

approached discourses of dual and other forms of Jewish identity articulated on the pages of the *IMIT yearbooks* with the ambition to paint a more differentiated picture of identity options than has been done in previous studies on Hungarian Jews. Chapter III showed that these yearbooks contained very different versions of dual identity, which I labeled combined, mixed, primarily Jewish, formally dual and internally conflictual versions. I argued that they might be seen as points on a scale ranging from denominational-national (i.e. combined, the least markedly Jewish option) to conflictual, the only one among these options to offer a critical assessment of the reality of dual identity. This chapter also delved into various attempts to revive the patriotic tradition and present its normative core as emotionally appealing and intellectually convincing. The scholarly articles in the *IMIT yearbooks* included multiple Hungarian nationalist statements too which, contrary to formulations of dual identity, did not assign any significant role to Jewishness.

These findings can be related to the apologetic discourse on contributions, Biblical/literary or otherwise, claims made about fundamental values as well as the contest over the role of historicity all explored in the course of Chapter IV. The discussion here focused practically only on the subject of Jewry, which indicates that the strict thematic division between particular/national and universal topics was also observable in Jewish scholarly discourses, but with a special twist: Jewish discourses on local/national matters tended to stress heterogeneous forms (since various formulations of dual identity were clearly dominant) while discussions of notionally universal themes (such as human development, fundamental values, the relevance and meaning of historicity) addressed the Jewish community which in these instances nearly always appeared as unitary and homogeneous.

To risk a generalization, what Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholars normatively preferred was a pluralistic Hungarian national concept, inclusive in terms of the criteria of belonging and negotiable in terms of cultural content. At the same time, many of their writings implied that the Jewish tradition had a core and that Jewish people shared important, even essential features. The way they envisioned future coexistence was therefore based, on the one hand, on the common recognition and acceptance of existing Jewish specificities and of (at least internal) expressions of Jewish pride and, on the other hand, on the widespread appreciation of the Jewish desire to cooperate and contribute, and on the mutual benefits of this cooperation. This scholarly discourse preferred to see its own agenda as rooted in the act of balancing: as a reconciliation of scholarship and faith that represented the middle way between ideological reformism and restrictive traditionalism.

While this holds true about the mainstream forum of Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarship in general terms, Chapter VI, dealing with the journal *Libanon*, offered a more finely tuned comparison between various models of culture. Notwithstanding significant overlaps between the two groups of authors, *Libanon* was largely defined, even dominated by a somewhat younger and more up-to-date generation of scholars who were born around 1890. The analysis of their texts revealed a striking plurality of foundational ideas. There were contributions in a national liberal or assimilationist - integrationist as well as in a multi- or interculturalist key (stressing the relevance of interactions and exchanges), while other texts propagated the notion that the fate of the Jewish community was clearly distinguishable and that this should have particular relevance in the consciousness of individual Jews and in defining research agendas. Other formulations maintained that the Jewish philosophical and religious spirit was unique and remained largely self-enclosed but also had universal

relevance. Last but not least, some called for a *népi* redefinition of Jewish culture that simultaneously attempted to contest the troubling exclusionism of *népi* thought.

Analyzing the transformation of these discourses over time yielded some equally notable results. Above all, the years of legal discrimination and increasingly severe exclusion of Hungarian Jews brought a clear opening in both the *IMIT yearbooks* and *Libanon*. Both adopted a platform that tried to incorporate diverse Jewish subgroups, which in *IMIT*'s case meant, above all, articulation of more favorable positions towards traditional Jews, together with a novel absence of articles about or even references to Zionism beyond the late 1930s. On the other hand, the study of the changing content of *Libanon* not only showed that it was more strongly transformed in general, which is unsurprising knowing it had a less clearly defined format and also underwent a change of institutional status, but it proved that, next to novel stances towards Orthodox Jews that were more conducive to dialogical engagements, *Libanon* also displayed an increasingly marked tendency to propagate Zionist ideas.¹⁰²⁰ The previous empirical chapters also tracked the way historical consciousness worked, explored the changing historical analogies until the authors realized the unprecedented nature of their times. Crucially, both organs published articles that reported on the ongoing Judeocide, the explicit nature and extent of which is unparalleled in other countries fighting on the Axis side.

It can be taken as another sign of the changing times that Aladár Komlós who, practically alone among the contributors to the *IMIT yearbooks*, presented dual identity as conflictual, served as the chief editor of one of the few new initiatives of the war years, the *Ararát yearbooks*, which was even released for the catastrophic year of 1944. In this function

¹⁰²⁰ What complicates the comparison of these organs further is that *Libanon* not only offered receptions of some more up-to-date intellectual and cultural trends, but was at first also clearly more explicitly attached to German culture.

Komlós tried to publish volumes that provided a platform for diverse Jewish voices while offering a well-developed but contested agenda of his own. Besides exploring his ideas in some detail, the aim of Chapter VII was to analyze and compare political platforms and historical narratives offered in this yearbook series.

I have uncovered five political platforms in *Ararát*: the semiliberal offer aimed at a compromise with the Hungarian national elite to moderate the methods of discrimination while preserving some of its declared aims; the conservative critique of what it saw as too rapid and artificial assimilation combined with a call for more balanced (i.e. stronger) forms of Jewish consciousness; the corporatist model of an alternative, more harmonious order; the Zionist agenda trying to awaken and mobilize Jewish national consciousness; and, last but not least, the religious revivalist that hoped for spiritual rebirth. Comparing the fragments of historical narratives printed in the *Ararát yearbooks*, it turned out that while most of them were narratives of crisis, what the crisis consisted of, how Hungarian Jewry got there and what was the way out of it were formulated in strikingly diverse ways. They variously presented the crisis as that of Jewish religiosity, of Jewish belonging and the decline of emphatically communal art, of harmonious Westernization, of (early) anti-Semitism and longer term societal exclusion, of the withdrawal of emancipation, or of Jewish national life, for which emancipation itself was responsible.

My research questions inevitably impacted the findings about authors. On the theoretical level, this might be seen as support for the claim that objectivity is an unreachable ideal since scholarly perspectives and findings are inevitably intertwined. On a more practical level, however, this lesson is indubitably connected to the approach I used: my aim was to explore crucial discursive formations in various contexts instead of, for instance,

aiming to clarify the supposedly unitary thought of towering figures. What this implied is that my understanding and positioning of authors' texts heavily depended on the context in which I situated them. Let me provide three examples of this and thereby relate authors' different utterances to each other.

For example, the texts of Aladár Komlós appeared in different lights when analyzed in relation to the clusters of discourses in these three organs. In terms of the identity option articulated in the *IMIT yearbooks*, Komlós' ideas appeared at the far end of the dual identity scale since, uniquely among the contributors, he insisted on emphasizing its conflictual nature. When compared to other models of culture in *Libanon*, he appeared as a Jewish particularist, who stressed the distinguishable nature of Jewish fate and propagated its specific relevance for Jews. In the *Ararát yearbooks*, his contributions were explored as one of the historical narratives, based on his vision of a misfortunate break in the past and support for the agenda of a new collectivist synthesis in art. These elements of his discourse are evidently related to each other, and together they offer a nuanced picture of Komlós as a Jewish particularist whose ideas were based on the perception that dual identity was real but troubling, above all, because it led to Jewish self-hatred. This realization was supposed to justify a shift in proportion in favor of Jewish identity and, ultimately, prepare the way for a new, up-to-date version of Jewish collectivism. In other words, abundantly employing the vocabulary of the supposed sickness of assimilated Jews served as justification for his new, emphatically Jewish (particularist and collectivist) cultural program. Nonetheless, this well-articulated support was never coupled with an explicit rejection of dual identity.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰²¹ Interestingly, Komlós referred to the "force of circumstances" to explain his call for a greater role of Jewishness, but it rather seems that his sense of the circumstances and the position of his audience did not allow him to articulate a rejection of dual attachments.

Depending on which segment of it was highlighted, the exploration of the complex thought of József Turóczi-Trostler produced rather different results. When his writings were evaluated in relation to the issue of the relevance of historical changes for Jews, he seemed to speak of its relative unimportance in light of the decisive nature of (a largely unchanging form of) collective memory. Accordingly, he implicitly asserted the primacy of Jewishness. When his articles were interpreted as reflections on what model of culture was heuristically useful to study the contemporary world, it appeared that he was interested in the transformation of Jews in modern times that he understood as part of a process of mutual influences and exchanges between Jews and others. Taken together, these two results imply that the subject of historical study and the key concept Turóczi-Trostler used to approach it were rather disparate. While he wanted to explore the ongoing, though uncompleted (perhaps even uncompletable) process of amalgamation in an interculturalist mode, his key notion, that of collective memory made him depict Jewish distinctiveness in a strong and rather rigid way.

Let me take the texts of Mór Fényes as my third and last example to show the relevance of perspective and point to possibilities of bringing the ideas of single authors together (whether the outcome can be judged coherent or not). Fényes made four important contributions to the *IMIT yearbooks* which I have returned to in several chapters. Emphasizing the value of loyalty, Fényes opted for the patriotic among the seven identity options. Accordingly, he discussed ethical behavior as a fundamental Jewish value, and managed to present the separation of the object of Jewish consciousness (Jewry) and the relevant object of political loyalty (in his case Hungary) as entirely normal. As I argued in my discussion of the diverse assessments of the age, Fényes in fact went furthest in trying to

legitimate the Horthy regime through embedding it in Hungarian Jewish political traditions. At the same time, he took a utopian stance on the question of history: he declared that the Jewish mission implied an activist attitude aimed at overcoming the current mode of historical existence. In sum, Fényes' normative considerations led him to propagate patriotism and loyalty while in practice he combined a Jewish way of legitimating the counterrevolution of 1919 (and thereby also the Horthy regime) with belief in a universal Jewish mission that directly implied an activist attitude towards approaching utopia.

These three examples of single authors show that the relation between their contributions to various topics might be relatively unproblematic and reconcilable (as in the case of Komlós, where identity option, model of culture and historical narrative pointed in similar directions), strained (the case of Turóczi-Trostler with the discrepancy between central subject and key concept) or somewhat peculiar (the case of Fényes where his realist and loyalist political choice and utopian stance towards history seemed to run in parallel tracks). These examples support the notion that authors could choose from a number of discursive options on each question, but they combined these in different ways in their individual discursive choices. On the pages of my primary sources, some authors managed to offer strong, more holistic interpretations, some articulated their parallel convictions, while others expressed individually captivating ideas that weakened each other's persuasive power.

Last but not least, dealing with a relatively unexplored topic means that in spite of the overview presented in this work there is a lot of ground still to be covered, and I would hereby like to point to some potentially fruitful lines of further inquiry. A still missing but highly important study using another approach to these organs would be to trace the social historical characteristics of the contributors. I have identified most of the individuals

who participated in these initiatives, listed the most regular contributors to each and specified those who were active in more than just one of them. What remains is to compare their social, family, and geographical backgrounds as well as their key life choices and career patterns with other Hungarian Jews who possessed similar characteristics (starting with a degree in humanities) but never got engaged in such ventures. This would enable us to probe the social historical determinants of this group and thereby develop an account of how Jewish Hungarian Jewish scholarly elite groups were formed. Comparisons across generations also promise to yield interesting results since, as I mentioned earlier, the contributors could to be divided into at least three age cohorts: those born around 1870 who molded the contents of the *IMIT yearbooks* in particular (to take some relevant examples: Mór Fényes was born in 1866, Bertalan Kohlbach in 1866, Bernát Heller in 1871 and Mihály Guttmann in 1872), those born around 1890 who were largely responsible for *Libanon* (József M. Grózinger in 1891, Jenő Zsoldos in 1896) and those younger scholars who were born after 1900 but started to make an impact from the 1930s onwards (Imre Benoschofsky, Imre Keszi, István Hahn, Sándor Scheiber). Many members of the second and third group continued to play important roles in the postwar period in Jewish, mostly Jewish as well as non-Jewish intellectual groups. Their postwar changes of career paths, their political attitudes (the positions they took towards the communist dictatorship in particular) and their recollection of the pre-1944 period constitute fascinating topics for further research.

Another way to add to the findings of this study would be to relate them to explorations of other Jewish Hungarian Jewish publications, though the selection made here is meant to be representative for the scholarly elite discourse and I would not expect major new findings in this vein. More fruitful results can potentially be derived from comparisons

between Jewish scholars in different countries. In such an undertaking German materials ought to be prioritized. Even though a comparative study of the war years would be difficult given the different source bases, previous parallels and the nature of intellectual influences and local reception (which the one-sided bilingualism largely restricts, though numerous Hungarian Jewish authors also published actively in German) make this comparison an obvious further step towards transnationalizing the study of Jewish intellectual history in this key period just prior to the Holocaust. Embedding the varieties of Jewish Hungarian Jewish identity options, internal and external relations, cultural models, political platform and historical narratives in such a larger frame would also give a more accurate sense of their peculiarities. Another relevant path of inquiry would be to avoid treating Jewish materials in isolation and instead compare Jewish with non-Jewish Hungarian sources more earnestly.¹⁰²² Precious little has been done in this vein yet and therefore, establishing relevant connections, including the exploration of spheres of integration and personal relations, also provide ample opportunities for additional research.

¹⁰²² Based on the findings of this dissertation, ironically, the political platforms and proposals of the war years might well constitute a fruitful beginning of such future comparisons.

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