

Dekel Shay Schory

Tree Trunks in the Snow

Four Jewish-Viennese Authors



Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem
The Zalman Shazar Center
Jerusalem



Bridges
Studies in the History of German and Central European Jewry

Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem
for the Study of German and Central European Jewry

The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History

**Editorial Board – Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem for the Study of
German-Jewish History and Culture**

Dr. Irene Aue-Ben-David, Prof. Doron Avraham, Dr. Aya Elyada, Dr. Sharon Livne,
Prof. Guy Miron, Prof. Galili Shahar

The Zalman Shazar Center

Hebrew editing: Inna Gozman Shargorodsky

Director of publications: Ezra Brom

Editor in chief: Yehezkel Hovav

Production editor: Noa Greenwald-Assis

The publication of this book was made possible by grants from

The Ministry of Culture and Sport

The German Federal Ministry of the Interior



Federal Ministry
of the Interior, Building
and Community

by resolution of the
German Bundestag

ISBN 978-965-227-382-6

Catalogue No. 185-1114

© Copyright by The Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem,
and Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem

Printed in Israel, 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any
form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy,
recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in
writing from the publisher.

Typesetting: Ronit Gilad

Printing: A.R Sheskin LTD
Jerusalem

Table of Contents

Foreword	7
Introduction: Between Jewish Literature and Word Literature	15
a. "Jewish Literature" in Non-Jewish Languages	16
b. German-Jewish Literature	22
c. Hebrew Literature in the German-Speaking Sphere	28
d. Viennese Literature	33
e. World Literature	37
Chapter One: Tree Trunks in the Snow: Four Authors	43
a. Stefan Zweig, Citizen of "The World of Yesterday"	43
b. Joseph Roth, A Homeless Jew	54
c. Shoffman and the Temporary-Permanent Residency	62
d. David Vogel, Vienna in Hebrew	69
Chapter Two: Reading and Writing in Multilingual Reality	77
a. The Literary Representation in a Complex Linguistic Reality	77
b. "Vienna Stories," G. Shoffman	90
c. Vienna as a Key to David Vogel	104
d. "Clarissa": A European Multilingual Sphere	134
e. Language and Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire	141
Chapter Three: The Wandering Jew	152
a. The Wandering Jew: A European Myth	153
b. The Ahasver Legend in European Culture	156
c. "Heimgekehrt" (The Returning Home) in Joseph Roth's Fiction	166
d. Three Elderly Jews in Zweig's Fiction	187
e. Shoffman and Wandering in Times of Trouble	211

Chapter Four: Multicultural Writers as Tricksters	224
a. Physical Borders, Literary Borders	224
b. The Trickster as Border Controller	227
c. G. Shoffman: The Writer as Mediator Between Cultures	234
d. Joseph Roth: The Author as Border Crosser	239
e. Stefan Zweig: The Narrator as Trickster	248
f. David Vogel: The Refusal To Be a Trickster	260
Conclusion	267
Bibliography	269
Index	288

Abstract

The reading proposed in this study is essentially a comparative analysis. Its main premise is that the unity of habitat – both temporal (1900–1933) and spatial (mostly Vienna, but other locations as well) – emphasizes the poetic and personal characteristics of each writer, as well as the interpretations and social meanings assigned to their works at the time of publication and in the present.

The study aims to connect two literary groups that have typically been seen as separate: Jewish German writers and Hebrew writers. This connection will not be based on biography, personal acquaintance, stylistic features, or shared readership within a cultural community. Instead, this study seeks to break down these barriers, positioning the four selected authors as key representatives of their respective groups (as well as unique geniuses) within a shared temporal and spatial habitat. It aims to explore the similarities and differences in their relationships to language and the key myths of the German-European sphere, while dismantling them from the confines of national literature that restrict readings and interpretations. Ultimately, it aims to present a wide range of possibilities for Jewish existence in the German-European space.

After an introduction that defines all of those literary possibilities, the first chapter of the book focuses on the biographical and socio-poetic background of the four authors during the period from the early 20th century to the outbreak of World War I. Specifically, it explores the literature written in Vienna or that which portrays the city's scenery. Joseph Roth and Stefan Zweig, writing in German, exist at the intersection between general German literature and Jewish German literature. Despite their social, familial, and economic differences, their common thread lies in the duality and tension arising from their connection to Vienna. While Zweig was a native of the city, Roth was an Eastern-European immigrant who arrived in Vienna as an adult.

Gershon Shofman and David Vogel, on the other hand, are notable representatives of their generation in Hebrew literature in Europe. Their position as non-Zionists adds complexity to their identity, as they operate beyond the borders of the Land of Israel. Through their Hebrew writings and publications, Shofman and Vogel align themselves with the rejuvenation of Hebrew literature during "Ha-Tchiya," the Hebrew Renaissance period. The broader European space and, more specifically,

Abstract

Vienna have influenced their respective poetic styles and, to some extent, set them apart from mainstream Hebrew literature.

In a primarily monolingual text, the utilization of language or multiple languages serves to highlight the intricate and multi-faceted identities of each writer. These linguistic choices shed light on the sources of influence, the writers' relationships with each language, the nuances accompanying their language usage, power dynamics among different languages, and more. Whenever Jews settled in new locations, they engaged in linguistic and cultural exchanges with the non-Jewish societies surrounding them, while also fostering an internal cultural dialogue that has given rise to a rich diversity of Jewish languages and literatures. The relationship between Hebrew and German is just one example among many, but it has garnered significant attention from both the public and scholars over the years.

The reading in the second chapter primarily focuses on the language employed within the texts. This includes the spoken language within the novels or stories, the language used in the text itself, and the meta-linguistic aspects that emerge through the act of reading. Additionally, the description of the urban space holds great importance as it serves as a common thread throughout the texts. All of the examined texts either reference Vienna or are set within the city itself.

Within the diverse linguistic, literary, and cultural options available in Vienna, I propose an axis that focuses on the literary representations of multilingualism and positions the four authors accordingly. Positioning the four writers on the multilingualism axis allows for a better understanding of the poetic nuances present in their texts or the meta-poetic elements inherent in the act of writing itself.

On one end of the axis are writers who are indifferent to the multilingual reality of Vienna. They describe or create undisturbed monolingual environments in their texts, either due to ideological or poetic reasons. This group includes Zweig and Vogel, although they exhibit distinct differences in their approaches.

On the other end of the axis are writers who strive for the utmost realistic accuracy in depicting reality. They aim to capture the variety of voices, accents, and languages heard in the streets. Multilingual writers fall into this category, as they may write in a single language but represent a multilingual reality through meta-linguistic references and the incorporation of linguistic elements from other languages. They embody an ambivalent ideology that carries different values, highlighting the complexities of language mixtures, disharmony, incongruity, language gaps, and the experience of living in a metaphorical Tower of Babel. Shofman and Roth belong to this group.

In the third chapter of the study, I conducted a comparison of how the mythical

Abstract

figures of Ahasver, the wandering Jew, and the trickster are utilized by the four authors in their works. This comparative analysis sheds light on the role of Jews in European society, the socio-cultural significance of the writer, and the exploration of border-related themes, which are essential to the presented poetics.

In addition to the myth of the wandering Jew, which enables discussions about the Jewish state and the experiences of specific Jews, the myth of the trickster provides not only a central archetype of a figure situated on the border but also encompasses the artifice inherent in the act of literature. The trickster embodies the liminal space, never fully belonging to the center, always connected to a particular society, and constantly crossing its boundaries, often as a constitutive element of that society. According to Jung, the trickster represents the "collective shadow," embodying inferior qualities that need to be repressed in the process of cultural development. The cultural significance of the trickster lies in the therapeutic effect that arises from the telling of their story, enabling the acknowledgment of dark and primitive aspects and subsequently moving towards the "light side" of society or the human psyche (Jung, 1956).

The elusive and marginalized nature of the trickster figure portrays a solitary, self-sufficient individual with a crucial role in mediating and amalgamating undesirable and marginal elements into the heart of the majority society. In other words, an essentially social process emerges from the seemingly asocial position. Therefore, identifying trickster figures within the texts themselves or identifying trickster-like manipulations that the writers employ on their readers serves to highlight both the social margins and their transgression.

Analyzing these characters through the lens of the trickster myth allows for characterizing them in relation to each other and understanding their social roles. In the works of Shofman and Roth, certain characters assume a social responsibility that is expressed through active representation towards others or the reader. On the other hand, in the works of Zweig and Vogel, the trickster position is more pronounced through the positioning of the writer and narrator figures at the core of their works.

Zweig's works often feature frame stories in which his alter ego seemingly wanders the world, attracting stories and storytellers to him in a magical yet natural manner. This can be observed in novellas such as *Buchmendel*, *Amok*, *The Royal Game*, *Confusion of Feelings*, and in the novel *Beware of Pity*. The narrator position exhibits strong trickster characteristics, acting as the mediator of stories and secrets that do not belong to him and taking place in locations that are not "his," yet the readership recognizes him as an authoritative narrator. The trickster-narrator-Zweig-

Abstract

alter-ego facilitates the exploration of primal drives such as pity, the desire for honor, greed, and madness, which are not only primitive but also human and universal. By framing these stories within a “cultural” context through the narrator, who is a product of Western culture and writes in the German language, Zweig contributes to the construction of the society of which he is a part.

The four authors central to this research – Joseph Roth, Stefan Zweig, Gershon Shofman, and David Vogel – differ significantly from each other in terms of literary genre, writing style, moral positions, and main themes. However, they all wrote during a parallel time and emerged from a similar space, not only the city of Vienna, which is prominently depicted in their prose, but also a linguistic and cultural space consisting of multiple languages, literatures, cultures, and sub-cultures. Reading their works through shared theories of language, space, and poetics, and examining them through two central myths, creates a sense of companionship and proximity. For example, the use of the writer-figure as a trickster connects Zweig with Vogel, while the exploration of the myth of the wandering Jew links Roth’s wandering Jews to those of Shofman. Furthermore, analyzing the reception of these writers within their respective communities positions Zweig and Shofman in a more central position compared to Roth and Vogel. Reading each of these works, which represent different manifestations of Jewish existence in the German-speaking space, aims not only to strengthen interpretations of individual works but also to highlight a network and a space that connects them to each other.