

Alte Bücher in Haifa: (Re)building a German Jewish Library in the 21st Century
Joshua Shelly

A year and a half ago, while working in the archives conducting research for my dissertation, I came across a draft of a short, unpublished essay entitled “Alte Bücher in Haifa” (Old Books in Haifa). The text, written in Palestine in the 1930s, details the experience of its author, Arnold Zweig, as he looks for German books in a city where only Hebrew-language books are printed. Zweig, whose considerable library had been seized by the National Socialists during his flight from Germany, was reliant on the city’s used-book market to reconstruct his book collection. The titles he lists in the essay range from the complete works of the giants of German literature such as Goethe and Schiller to (then) more recent fare by Zionists such as Theodor Herzl and Martin Buber. In three short pages, the reader of this essay gains insight into the reading practices of German-reading Jews who belonged to a generation that continued to search for solace in the pages of German literature, even while its members packed their bags and set sail for far-off locales in search of refuge.

Although I build my own library eighty years removed from Zweig, his essay is not disconnected from my own book collecting impulse. My collection of works important to German Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is related to my dissertation on German Zionist literature, but my acquisitions reflect a broader affection for, and interest in, works that extend far beyond the narrow confines of my research topic. Whether clicking through internet pages on the path to that one title, browsing *Bücherschränke* (little libraries) in Berlin, or else leafing through physical pages in a book shop in Jerusalem, my decision to add a book to my collection is shaped by factors such as the book’s physical condition, price — where relevant —, and my own idiosyncratic literary taste.

One of the unique aspects of German Jewish literature is the wide range of places one can locate titles. In the course of the Shoah (Holocaust), German-reading Jews fled to places as disparate as Palestine, the United States, central Asia and even Shanghai, China. In flight, they brought not only passports and clothes, but also precious titles from their libraries. And this is not without consequence. For the book collector like me, this means that titles of interest are just as likely to be found in used book shops in New York or Tel Aviv as in Berlin or Frankfurt. Indeed, as Tom Segev notes, many classics of German literature “survived only in Palestine since the Nazis had confiscated and burned all the copies in Germany”.¹

I thought about this last year when I was in Israel on a research fellowship. On the recommendation of one of my colleagues at the Hebrew University, I found my way to Pollak Books in Tel Aviv, a store bursting at the seams with German books piled two and three layers deep. Overwhelmed by the number of volumes before me, I set to work sifting through what I could in my limited time there. Paging through various volumes, I thought of the “Yekkes” — German Jews — who brought these books with them during their flight. Many left whole libraries behind to sons and daughters who could no longer read German. At another bookstore in Jerusalem, I came across an unorganized carton of German books. The owner, indicating the box, laconically noted that it had been left on his door step. I wondered who sought to offload these books and what journey they had undertaken to end up in a box before me.

My collection might best be described as consisting of works published in German that were of interest to at least one segment of the German-reading Jewish public during the latter part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Of course, this community was

¹ See Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million*, translated by Haim Watzmann (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000)

interested in a wide variety of titles, but I have limited myself to those works that thematize questions of Jewishness or depict Jewish characters. Finally, almost all copies I own were versions of works published during this same time period, although I have allowed myself some liberties for texts republished at a later date or those only made available in their full form at a later time (see entries on Theodor Herzl and Soma Morgenstern). In assembling this collection, then, I view myself as performing an act of remembrance, creating a little monument to a community often associated with the tragedy of the Holocaust, but whose stories continue live on in the pages of books that sit on my bookshelves today.

Collection:

1.–2. Achad Haam. *Am Scheidewege. Gesammelte Aufsätze. Autorisierte Übertragung aus dem Hebräischen von Israel Friedländer und Harry Torczyner*. 2 Bde. (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1923)

A two-volume essay collection from the leading cultural Zionist Asher Ginzburg, whose nom de plum was “Ahad Ha’am” (“one of the people”). Ginzburg, who wrote in Hebrew, authorized this translation into German. The Jüdischer Verlag, which released this collection, was an incredibly important Zionist publishing house in the first third of the twentieth century. Both philosopher Martin Buber and Chaim Weizmann, who would go on to be the first president of the State of Israel, had a hand in its founding. I found these two volumes at Stein Books in Jerusalem.

3. Böhm, Adolf. *Die zionistische Bewegung. Eine kurze Darstellung Ihrer Entwicklung von Adolf Böhm. I. Teil Die Bewegung bis zum Tode Theodor Herzls*. (Berlin: Welt-Verlag, 1920)

One of the first histories of Zionism, this book was published twenty-eight years before the founding of the State of Israel. Even at this early date, Adolf Böhm, a Jew who came from Bohemia and was later murdered by the Nazis, viewed the movement as creating a history worth writing about!

4.–6. Buber, Martin (translator). *Die Fünf Bücher der Weisung, verdeutscht von Martin Buber gemeinsam mit Franz Rosenzweig*. (Köln: Jakob Hegner, 1954)

Buber, Martin (translator). *Bücher der Geschichte, verdeutscht von Martin Buber gemeinsam mit Franz Rosenzweig*. (Köln: Jakob Hegner, 1955)

Buber, Martin (translator). *Das Buch der Preisung, verdeutscht von Martin Buber*. (Köln: Jakob Hegner, 1958), together with a pamphlet entitled “Beilage zu dem Werk ‘Das Buch der Preisungen,’ verdeutscht von Martin Buber” (11 pp.)

These three volumes are post-war publications of the famed “Buber-Rosenzweig” translation of the Hebrew Bible into German. The translation, parts of which were first published in 1920s Germany, would not reach its final form until well past the death of one of the translating duo Franz Rosenzweig, who died from ALS in 1929. (This explains the absence of Rosenzweig’s name from “Das Buch der Preisung”.) Martin Buber, who fled Germany for Palestine after the National Socialists came to power, would only release the translation in its final version in the 1950s. I have long had an affection for this work. I first encountered it during a week-long internship at the Leo Baeck Institute in 2013, when I was tasked with digitizing the notes that Buber and Rosenzweig sent back and forth during the beginning stages of the project. I then wrote on the translation myself when I did my M.A. in Religious Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The translation stretches the German language to its limits and seeks to capture the original Hebrew by coining new words. Although I worked with library copies when I wrote about the translation, I had long wanted to have my own copies of the translation and was overjoyed to find these three volumes in several used book stores in Jerusalem.

7. Eliot, George. *Daniel Deronda, Roman von Georg Eliot*. (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1918)

One of the two volumes in my collection not originally written by a German Jew, this is a translation of George Eliot's (Mary Ann Evans') novel *Daniel Deronda*. The original work, written in English, was celebrated by many early Zionists as anticipating their own movement by several decades. Reception of *Daniel Deronda* has often been split. Some like the love story and find the Jewish story line uninteresting; others find the love story uninteresting and Daniel Deronda's rediscovery of his Jewish heritage fascinating. When the Jüdischer Verlag released this translation, they abridged it, cutting out much of the love story, seeking instead to provide their readers with a story that could be read as a precursor to the modern Zionist movement. In so doing, this volume works as an example of the creative power of abridgement and translation to tell a different story from the piece of literature in its "original" form.

8. Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Der jüdische Krieg. Roman*. (Berlin: Propyläen-Verlag, 1932)

A first edition of the first volume in the Josephus Trilogy written by Lion Feuchtwanger. The Propyläen-Verlag that released this book was also responsible for publishing Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). A year after the publication of this volume, Feuchtwanger, whose books were burned by the National Socialists, would flee Germany. The final two volumes in the trilogy would be released by Querido Verlag, a German publishing house set up in Amsterdam to release the works of German authors in exile.

9. Frankl, Ludwig August. *Nach Jerusalem. Ein Reisebericht aus der Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. (Berlin: Im Schocken Verlag, 1935)

An abridged version of a Middle East travelogue written by Ludwig August Frankl and originally released in 1858. This particular version belongs to a series first conceived of and funded by Salman Z. Schocken, a German Jewish publisher and businessman. The full series would eventually include eighty-three titles. Remarkably, the entire series was released in Germany during the time of National Socialist rule, with the first title released *after* the book burnings and the final one published in 1938.

10. Franzos, Karl Emil. *Die Juden von Barnow. Geschichten*. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990)

A series of short stories about *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews) written by Karl Emil Franzos. For non German Jewish specialists, Franzos is notable for being the first to publish Georg Büchner's works. During his lifetime, Franzos was also famous for his considerable oeuvre of stories about Eastern European Jews. Franzos fell out of favor in the postwar period, largely due to his orientalisising, paternalistic look at his eastern "brethren". Yet although these things certainly exist in his stories, I think there remains something worth reclaiming in Franzos: they are stories that can continue to delight to modern reader.

11. Hermann, Georg. *Jettchen Gebert* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1985)

A novel first released in the early twentieth century by Georg Hermann about a German Jewish woman living in Berlin a century earlier. I found this book in a *Bücherschrank* (little library) near where I live in Berlin. This volume piqued my interest, as it was published in East Germany, four years before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

12.–18. Herzl, Theodor. *Briefe und Tagebücher*. Herausgegeben von Alex Bein, Hermann Greive, Moshe Shaerf, Julius H. Schoeps. 7 Bde. (Berlin: Propyläen, 1983–1996)

A seven-volume collection of the letters and diaries of the founder of modern Zionism Theodor Herzl. Although portions of his diaries and other writings were released in German before the Second World War, the publication of these volumes in the 1980s marked the first time that his unabridged Zionist diaries were made available in the German original. (Remarkably, an English translation was available well before this!)

19. Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Nathan der Weise*. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1946)

The second of two volumes on my list not written by a German Jew, this is a publication of *Nathan the Wise*, an eighteenth century play famed for its advocacy of Christian toleration of Jews. I found this in a *Bücherschrank* near where I live in Berlin. *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*) has been published many times over; what stuck out to me about this version was the publication date. In 1946, Berlin was in ruins, under Allied occupation, and experiencing an acute paper shortage. Anything published required explicit permission from one of the Allies, who collectively controlled the paper supply. Although I cannot prove it, I suspect publication of this philosemitic work was no mistake. It functioned as a repudiation of National Socialism's systematic persecution and murder of Jews, the full extent of which was certainly not fully understood in 1946.

20. Meinhardt, Gustav. *Jüdische Familienpapiere. Briefe eines Missionairs* (Hamburg: Otto Meißner, 1868)

A novel published by William Herzberg under the pseudonym Gustav Meinhardt in 1868. Herzberg was the founder of a German Jewish orphanage in Jerusalem in the late nineteenth century. The novel has been read as a proto-Zionist work of great influence to early Zionists and immensely popular at the time of its release. I found it on the front table of Pollak Books in Tel Aviv at an incredibly affordable price.

21.–24. Morgenstern, Soma. *Die Blutsäule. Zeichen und Wunder am Sereth*. (Lüneburg: zu Klampen Verlag, 1997)

Morgenstern, Soma. *Der Sohn des verlorenen Sohnes. Erster Roman der Trilogie Funken im Abgrund*. Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Ingolf Schulte. (Lüneburg: zu Klampen Verlag, 1999)

Morgenstern, Soma. *Idyll im Exil. Zweiter Roman der Trilogie Funken im Abgrund*. Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Ingolf Schulte. (Lüneburg: zu Klampen Verlag, 1996)

Morgenstern, Soma. *Das Vermächtnis des verlorenen Sohnes. Dritter Roman der Trilogie Funken im Abgrund*. Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Ingolf Schulte. (Lüneburg: zu Klampen Verlag, 1996)

My advisor Kata Gellen first introduced me to the works of Soma Morgenstern, who wrote a series of stunning novels about Jewish life in Galicia. Morgenstern's book *Der Sohn des verlorenen Sohnes* was one of the last books published in Germany (in 1935) by a Jewish author. (My copy of this first volume was a gift from my advisor.) The second and third parts of his "Sparks in the Abyss" trilogy would first be published in the 1940s in English translation by the Jewish Publication Society. His complete works were only made available in German in the 1990s.

25. Roth, Joseph. *Romane und Erzählungen 1916–1929*. Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Fritz Hackert (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1989)

Joseph Roth is a second author who I will always associate with my advisor. Together, both Roth and Morgenstern (see above) constitute part of a tradition she calls the "Galician novel".

These works look back, often nostalgically, on Jewish life in Galicia, a part of the Habsburg Empire located in Eastern Europe. This is the fourth volume of Roth's collected works that I found at a used book store in Berlin called "Kafkaesk".

26.–28. Zweig, Arnold. *De Vriendt kebrt heim. Roman.* (Berlin: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1932)
 Zweig, Arnold. *De Vriendt kebrt heim. Roman.* (Rudolstadt: Greifenverlag zu Rudolstadt, 1956)
 Zweig, Arnold. *De Vriendt kebrt heim. Roman.* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1996)

During the course of writing my dissertation, I fell in love with the writer Arnold Zweig. Zweig began as a Zionist, fled to Palestine soon after the National Socialists rose to power in Germany, found himself deeply unhappy there, and returned to (East) Germany after the Second World War. Zweig has largely been forgotten, but I quickly found myself collecting any number of books by him, full of appreciation for the story each one told.

De Vriendt Returns Home is a novelization of one of the first political murders of a Jew by a Jew in the modern era: that of of a Dutch Jew named de Haan, here called de Vriendt, in 1920s Palestine. This was Zweig's last book published in Germany before the end of the Second World War. This first version, published in 1932, is from that time. I found it in Tel Aviv. It is from the first print run and bears a personal inscription: "Peter zu Chanukkah 1932! Heinz". Unfortunately for Zweig, the book proved deeply unpopular in the Yishuv (Jewish Palestine), where he would soon flee to, as the Zionists viewed him as airing their "dirty laundry" for all the world to see.

The second version was published in 1956 in East Germany, where Zweig lived after the Second World War. If Jews in Palestine viewed the story as writing against Zionism, the East German censors feared it was too pro-Zionist — a no-go in the Communist bloc. They required Zweig to make some changes to the novel before its republication. (I didn't know this when I first purchased this book in a used book shop in Berlin in 2018 and read it for my prelims. I only discovered it when I started researching it further for my dissertation!)

The third and final version is a critical edition released in the 1990s as part of a rerelease of Zweig's collected works. It provides an excellent history of the work by the editor Julia Bernhard and includes some unpublished sections of the novel from the archive.

29. Zweig, Arnold. *Familie Klopfer. Erzählung.* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1952)

Die Familie Klopfer (The Klopfer Family) was one of the first stories published by Arnold Zweig in 1911. Few scholars write about this work that is set in a future Jewish State and has been read as a Jewish counterpart to Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. I don't own the original version, but this copy from the 1950s tells its own story. Before Zweig rereleased it as a standalone volume with the Insel-Verlag in East Germany in the 1950s, he updated it. The new version concluded with a storyline that incorporated the Shoah. In adding this ending, Zweig created a story with a whole different valence from the original.

30. Zweig, Arnold. *Herkunft und Zukunft. Zwei Essays zum Schicksal eines Volkes. mit Bildern von Max Liebermann, Marc Chagall u.a.* (Wien: Phaidon-Verlag, 1929)

In the 1920s, Arnold Zweig collaborated with the artist Hermann Struck to create two volumes. One was about Eastern European Jews (*Das Ostjüdische Antlitz*); the other was about Jewish Palestine (*Das neue Kanaan*). Both volumes were richly illustrated, oversized affairs that were unaffordable to the average book buyer. This led Zweig to rerelease the two works together in a smaller format, this time without Struck's pictures. This volume was available at a lower price

point. Today, the two original works are still unaffordable — at least for me! But the cheaper edition fits my budget, and I was thrilled to find it when I was in Tel Aviv looking among the piles at a used book shop in Tel Aviv.

31. Zweig, Arnold. *Symphonie Fantastique. Zwei Erzählungen*. (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1963)

This book, also made available by the East German *Insel-Verlag* (there was a West German one, too), is still available at a cheap price point. (Under ten dollars!). It contains another story I love by Zweig, “Quartettsatz von Schönberg” (first published in 1913). The story is about a man who attends his last concert in Europe just hours before departing for Palestine. Though this main character is a convinced Zionist, he retains an affection for European Jewish life. Zweig captures the resulting ambivalence beautifully in this story.

32. Zweig, Arnold. *Traum ist Teuer* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1962)

When Arnold Zweig was in Palestine during the Second World War, he wrote a novel that he only found a publisher for years later when he was living in East Germany. *The Dream is Costly* is not Zweig’s best work, but I appreciate it for the story it tells about the Yishuv during the Second World War. It reminds me that although book censorship was a real problem in East Germany and the entire eastern bloc, there remained stories that struggled to find a publisher in the west, but could appear in East Germany.

32.–33. *Schlemiel. Jüdische Blätter für Humor und Kunst*. Jahrgang 1919, Nrs. 5 and 11.

These are two issues of a satirical Jewish periodical called *Schlemiel*. They contain funny cartoons and other commentary that can, at times, be so biting that I wouldn’t be surprised if it would fail to find a publisher today. One cartoon makes a pun on the word “conversion”. The Jewish character exclaims he would gladly convert to Christianity, but would never convert his war bonds! (This latter type of “conversion” would lead to a financial loss). The joke only works if the reader assumes a particular Jewish relationship to money. Today it makes me cringe, even as I realize that these were jokes written *by Jews for a Jewish audience*.

Wishlist:

1. Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Die Söhne*. (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1935)

This is the second book in the aforementioned Josephus trilogy (see Nr. 8 above). One of my post-dissertation goals is to work through this series, and I would love to do so with the original versions.

2.–3. Franzos, Karl Emil. *Aus Halb-Asien*. 2 Bde. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1876)

A two-volume set of Karl Emil Franzos’s famed collection of stories about Eastern European Jews. Although it has rightly come in for criticism for its orientalizing gaze (Eastern Europe is here called “half-Asia”), it remains a landmark of German Jewish literature that deserves to be read today. (See Nr. 10 above.)

4. *Jüdisches Lexikon*. 5 Bde. (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1927)

A five-volume lexicon on Judaism and Jewish life completed less than a decade before the beginning of the Shoah. This is a beautiful, richly illustrated set of volumes that I would love to see on my bookshelf. It remains relatively affordable and is a joy to leaf through.

5. Roth, Joseph. *Tarabas. Ein Gast auf dieser Erde. Roman.* (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1934)

One of Joseph Roth's later novels released with the exile publisher Querido (see Nr. 8 above).