

*Fuzzy Boundaries*  
Festschrift für Antonio Loprieno



# *Fuzzy Boundaries*

Festschrift für Antonio Loprieno

II

H. Amstutz, A. Dorn, M. Müller,  
M. Ronsdorf, S. Uljas (Hg.)

Widmaier Verlag · Hamburg  
2015

Gedruckt mit grosszügiger Unterstützung  
der Freiwilligen Akademischen Gesellschaft Basel,  
der Gertrud Mayer Stiftung Basel,  
der Max Geldner-Stiftung Basel  
und der Sallfort Privatbank AG Basel.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie;  
detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© Widmaier Verlag, Kai Widmaier, Hamburg 2015  
Das Werk, einschließlich aller seiner Teile, ist urheberrechtlich geschützt.  
Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung  
des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen,  
Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.  
Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, archivierfähigem Papier.  
Druck und Verarbeitung: Hubert & Co., Göttingen  
Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-943955-60-6

[www.widmaier-verlag.de](http://www.widmaier-verlag.de)

# Inhaltsverzeichnis

## Band I

Vorwort.....	xi–xiii
Angaben zu den Autorinnen und Autoren.....	1–17

## Prolog

1	Emil Angehrn Vom Zwiespalt der Grenze. Über die Notwendigkeit, Grenzen zu setzen und Grenzen zu überschreiten.....	21–36
---	--	-------

## Sprache und Schrift

2	James P. Allen Fuzzy Negations.....	39–45
3	Giorgio Buccellati The Transcendental Revolution.....	47–54
4	Eva-Maria Engel Schrift oder Marke? Ein neuer Ansatz zur Lesung der Ritzmarken der Frühzeit.....	55–70
5	Silvia Luraghi From Non-Canonical to Canonical Agreement.....	71–88
6	Matthias Müller Empirie vs. Kategorienbildung. <i>Fuzzy boundaries</i> and <i>fuzzy categories</i> in der ägyptisch-koptischen Syntax.....	89–118

vi	Inhaltsverzeichnis	
7	Fabrizio Angelo Pennacchietti The Fuzzy Boundary between Verb and Preposition. The Case of Serial Instrumental Verbs in Chinese.....	119–129
8	Carsten Peust Egyptologese. A Linguistic Introduction.....	131–148
9	Stéphane Polis/Serge Rosmorduc The Hieroglyphic Sign Functions. Suggestions for a Revised Taxonomy .....	149–174
10	Chris H. Reintges The Early Egyptian <i>šdm(.w)ꜣf</i> Passive Revisited. Morphosyntax – Typology – Diachronic Connections.....	175–226
11	Tonio Sebastian Richter On the Fringes of Egyptian Language and Linguistics. Verb Borrowing from Arabic into Coptic .....	227–242
12	Helmut Satzinger These Strange, Exotic Egyptian Verbal Formations .....	243–255
13	Andréas Stauder La transitivité sémantique en égyptien. Le cas du pseudoparticipe et de la prédication de qualité .....	257–276
14	Sami Uljas The Results are Unclear. A Note on Clauses of Result in Earlier Egyptian.....	277–287
15	Pascal Vernus Le sémantisme fondamental de la négation <i>n-<i>js</i></i> .....	289–300
16	Ghislaine Widmer « Ostracasseries » égyptiennes. L'utilisation des os comme support d'écriture .....	301–309
17	Jean Winand Fuzzy Boundaries, Funny Syntax. Quelques réflexions sur le progressif et d'autres constructions en néo-égyptien .....	311–331

## Literatur und Bild

18	Marcelo Campagno Egyptian Boundaries in the Tale of Sinuhe .....	335–346
19	Michael Cooperson Al-Ḥimyarī’s Account of Medieval Malta. A Reconsideration .....	347–351
20	Alexander Honold Der Fluß und sein Lauf .....	353–363
21	Hanna Jenni Benoziglios <i>La pyramide ronde</i> (2001). Eine vergnügliche Lektüre .....	365–378
22	Efrain Kristal Max Beerbohm and the Other Borges .....	379–388
23	Ludwig D. Morenz Zur Poetik des <i>Schiffbrüchigen</i> . Versuch einer Annäherung .....	389–405
24	Herbert Morris The Absent and Present Serpent in Nicolas Poussin’s Spring .....	407–417
25	Miriam V. Ronsdorf Ancient   Aliens   Again. Remediation in Enki Bilals IMMORTEL (F/I/UK 2004) .....	419–430
26	Thomas Schneider Fuzzy (Hi)stories. On Cat Killing in France and Egypt, the Mystery of a Priest and Thirteen Assyrians, and the Boundaries of the Past in Demotic Literature .....	431–446
27	Rolf A. Stucky <i>Cestius exul</i> .....	447–459

Tafeln I–IV

## Band II

## Geschichte(n)

28	Daniel Arpagaus <i>Fuzzy Boundaries</i> in Nubien? Eine merkwürdige Art zur Angabe von Ackerflächen im Grab des Penniut von Aniba.....	463–493
29	Jan Assmann Rituelle und narrative Logik. Der Osirismythos in den „nächtlichen Riten“ der Pyramidentexte .....	495–517
30	John Baines On the Old Kingdom Inscriptions of Hezy. Purity of Person and Mind; Court Hierarchy .....	519–536
31	Susanne Bickel Religion and Economy. <i>Fuzzy Boundaries</i> around Karnak.....	537–545
32	Alfred Bodenheimer Der physische und der symbolische Feind. Wandlungen des Konzepts von Amalek in der jüdischen Tradition.....	547–557
33	Martin Bommas Fuzzification. On the Understanding of Social Motivation in Ancient Egypt .....	559–571
34	Mark Collier Evidence of Day Duty in O. DeM 10127 .....	573–587
35	Andreas Dorn Scratched Traces. Biographische Annäherung an den Schreiber Amunnacht, Sohn Ipuis.....	589–600
36	Madeleine Herren <i>European Global Studies</i> . Grenzüberschreitungen auf 90 Grad Nord.....	601–618
37	Victoria Loprieno „Der Mensch ist ein Rätsel“. Grenzerfahrungen in den Tiefen Berlins .....	619–640

38	Maria Michela Luiselli Tracing the Religion of the Voiceless. On Children's Religion in Pharaonic Egypt.....	641–654
39	Ueli Mäder Von der Einsamkeit des Schiedsrichters.....	655–666
40	Ronald Mellor Augustus as Pharaoh.....	667–692
41	Gerald Moers 'Egyptian identity'? Unlikely, and never national.....	693–704
42	David N. Myers Peter Beer in Prague. Probing the Boundaries of Modern Jewish Historiography.....	705–714
43	Rainer Nutz Bevölkerungsrückgang während der Ersten Zwischenzeit?.....	715–726
44	Claudia Rapp Late Antique Metaphors for the Shaping of Christian Identity. Coins, Seals and Contracts.....	727–744
45	Maurus Reinkowski New Uncertainties, Old Certainties. On Shifting Boundaries in the Middle East.....	745–757
46	William M. Schniedewind The Legacy of the New Kingdom in Early Israel.....	759–765
47	Stuart Tyson Smith Hekanefer and the Lower Nubian Princes. Entanglement, Double Identity or Topos and Mimesis?.....	767–779
48	Anthony Spalinger Temple Salary Distributions. Fuzzy Boundaries.....	781–799
49	Deborah Sweeney Monkey Business at Deir el-Medīna.....	801–813

x	Inhaltsverzeichnis	
50	Noémi Villars Un rite pas très net. L'offrande de l'œil- <i>oudjat</i> .....	815–827
51	Martin Wallraff Spitzenforschung. Der Obelisk vor der Bischofskirche des Papstes in Rom....	829–843

## Akademische Kultur

52	Hans Amstutz 20 Jahre Universitätsreform an der Universität Basel im Spiegel der Rektorsreden am Dies academicus.....	847–855
53	Dominique Arlettaz La science de la culture au service de l'art de convaincre .....	857–861
54	Crispino Bergamaschi <i>Fuzzy boundaries</i> im Rahmen des dritten Zyklus.....	863–866
55	Mauro Dell'Ambrogio I labili confini del diritto praticato.....	867–878
56	Ulrich Druwe Meditationen über den ersten Diener der Universität.....	879–888
57	Alex N. Eberle The Fuzziness of <i>Reproducibility</i> across Disciplines.....	889–903
58	Ernst Mohr Das wissenschaftliche stilistische System.....	905–923
59	Georg Pfeleiderer Theologie als Universitätswissenschaft. Eine Besinnung in theoretischer und praktischer Absicht .....	925–940
60	Ursula Renold Welche Akademikerquote brauchen wir? Über den Umgang mit Fuzzy Boundaries in internationalen Bildungssystemvergleichen.....	941–963
60+1	Ralf Simon Der unbedingte Parasit. Zur paradoxen Logik der Grenzziehungen in der verwalteten Universität...	965–979

Tafeln V–VIII

# Peter Beer in Prague<sup>1</sup>

## Probing the Boundaries of Modern Jewish Historiography

David N. Myers

The idea of history as an expression of human diversity and difference belongs to the modern age (Collingwood 1946: 10). In making this assertion, R.G. Collingwood and numerous other historians and philosophers have seen fit to contrast a pre-modern view of the cosmos as static and unchanging to a view of the world as dynamic and ever-changing, as comprised of so many discrete microcosms. It is the latter perspective, scholars argue, that defines “historical-mindedness,” (Butterfield 1960: vii) the paradigmatically modern faith in but one absolute: namely, the temporal and spatial contingency of all historical actors and events.

Just as this somewhat ironic faith in contingency is a modern phenomenon, so too have modern historians become, as Amos Funkenstein observed, priests of this new faith.<sup>2</sup> There is less agreement, however, on the critical issue of derivation: when did a modern historical sensibility take hold? What is the provenance of modern historical study?<sup>3</sup> The boundaries are fuzzy. I must add here that the theme of fuzzy boundaries seems especially appropriate for a volume in honor of the great Antonio Loprieno. In moving from language to language, from L.A. to Basel, from scholarship to administrative work back to scholarship, Antonio has always traversed boundaries with the greatest of ease and grace. Indeed, he renders boundaries – though not fond memories – evanescent in ways that very few can.

Meanwhile, in thinking of the temporal boundaries of modern historical thought, some scholars hark back to Renaissance Italy when a strong neo-classicist impetus brought forth a new acumen in scrutinizing documentary evidence. Others suggest that French legal scholarship of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries evinced a new appreciation for the single and singular

---

1 This essay had its origins as a paper at the conference “The Jewish Presence in Europe: The Prague Experience” at the Charles University in Prague on 14 July 1993.

2 Funkenstein referred to historians as “priests of culture” as a response to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor*, in which the author referred to history, in its modern guise, as “the faith of fallen Jews.” (Funkenstein 1989: 8; Yerushalmi 1982: 101).

3 It must be noted that some scholars, such as the German émigré philosopher Karl Löwith emphasize the continuities between pre-modern and modern historical world-views, for instance, between Christian and Marxian teleologies (see Löwith 1949). However, for those interested in the genesis of critical historical methodology, the differences between medieval hagiography and modern historiography seem patently obvious.

historical datum. Still others point to the first echoes of Romanticism and the incipient steps to institutionalize historical study in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Germany. More frequently, it is the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the century of Michelet, Ranke, and later Burckhardt that earns recognition as the age of historicism.<sup>4</sup> This was the age in which nationalist ambitions inspired historians to tell the story not of the universe, but of their own particular *Volk*; moreover, it was an era in which new professional norms and methods were introduced which obtain in the historical discipline to this day.

The various opinions regarding the origins of modern historical thinking and writing that I have just mentioned are curiously mirrored in considerations of modern Jewish historical thinking and writing. Scholars of Jewish history have long assumed a sharp divide between premodern and modern historical sensibilities, but they have not agreed on its precise location. For some, the point of demarcation was the sixteenth century in which writers such as Solomon ibn Verga, Yosef Ha-Kohen, and David Gans demonstrated a nascent interest in profane, as opposed to sacred, history. Salo Baron concurred with this dating, though suggested that it was Azariah de' Rossi, the Renaissance Italian rabbi, who deserved recognition as the first modern Jewish historian (Baron 1964: 205–239).<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, it has been argued that late 18<sup>th</sup>-century *Maskilim* wrote with new vigor and interest in history, and especially, biography, in *Ha-Measef*.<sup>6</sup> But, as with non-Jewish historiography, the most commonly accepted starting point for a modern historical sensibility among Jews is the nineteenth century – more specifically, the year 1819 when a circle of anxious Jewish intellectuals assembled in Berlin as the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden.<sup>7</sup> According to Yosef Yerushalmi, whose seminal book *Zakhor* inaugurated a new debate on the origins of modern Jewish historiography, the Verein generation represented “a drastic leap into a new kind of thinking,” in essence, a leap from sacred to scientific history (Yerushalmi 1982: 83).

What is one to make of all of this? After all, there seem to be many reasonable and competing interpretations of the origins of modern Jewish historiography. My own approach is to eschew any of the mutually exclusive sets of datings, as well as claims of drastic leaps, in favor of a more incremental scheme of development. Central to this scheme is a refinement of several terms mentioned earlier.

What has been designated as a modern historical sensibility, in fact, refers to a continuum extending from the lowest common denominator of “historical-mindedness” to the more arcane practice of critical historiography. Evidence of “historical-mindedness” can be seen in ibn Verga’s introduction of “ha-sibah ha-tiv’it” (the natural cause) into his account of Jewish persecutions in *Shevet Yehudah*.<sup>8</sup> In ibn Verga, we begin to see a prosaic sense of historical

4 To cull but a few examples from a vast literature, see Cochrane 1980; Kelley 1970; Kelley 1998; Beiser 2011.

5 Others have maintained that Benedictus Spinoza’s trenchant criticism of Mosaic authorship of the Bible in the 17<sup>th</sup> century heralded a historicist analysis of textual evidence.

6 The *locus classicus* is Feiner 2002.

7 See Myers 2003: 13–25. See also Meyer 1967 and Schorsch 1994.

8 An earlier and anomalous intimation from the fourteenth century may be seen in Yosef ibn Kaspi’s *Tam ha-keseif*.

causality accompanying, though not yet supplanting, a more traditional conception of Divine causality. Still absent, however, are a fluid narrative style, a well-defined and consistent method of critical analysis, and a resilient claim to objectivity that are hallmarks of modern professional historiography. And yet, these latter qualities naturally emerged out of the new mode of historical cognition that ibn Verga's "natural cause," and other similar expressions of his generation, represent; in fact, these qualities constitute a more advanced developmental stage in an ongoing process of historicization.

The pinnacle of this process, it would seem, was the canonization of a new professional ethos, *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, founded on the proposition that historical truth can be established through scientific methods of analysis. Without question, the *wissenschaftliche* ethos, from the early nineteenth century, has been one of the central features of modern Jewish historiography. Nonetheless, several qualifications are in order. First, the assumption that such an ethos precludes belief in Divine, as opposed to natural, causality, is misguided. One need only read the most distinguished Jewish historian of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Graetz, or the work of one of the most eminent twentieth-century historians, Yitzhak Baer, to see traces of the Divine hand in the history of the Jewish people. Second, while the ideal of *Wissenschaft* was and remains a pervasive inspiration among Jewish historians, it has not eliminated the powerful instrumental function that has accompanied Jewish historical chronicling since the Bible. This instrumental function is particularly noticeable in the Enlightenment period. Just as non-Jewish scholars in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Germany practiced what Peter Reill has called "pragmatic history," so too German *Maskilim* made recourse to historical writing as a means of effecting an overall improvement, or *Verbesserung* to borrow the resonant term of C.W. Dohm, in the condition of the Jews (Reill 1975: 41–47).

What is significant to note is that this instrumental function for history did not disappear in the age of *Wissenschaft*. Through their labors, Jewish historians, whether in Berlin, Jerusalem or New York, have repeatedly affirmed Abraham Geiger's admission that "critical inquiry now serves not only to make perceptible what was; its sources also enhance the appreciation, the shaping of the present" (Geiger 1836: 5). The persistent desire to utilize history not only to clarify the past, but to shape the present, points to an important functional continuity in Jewish historical writing, one that challenges starkly drawn boundary lines such as that between the Enlightenment and Romanticism – and indeed, one that scholars have been slow to recognize.

An important exception is the major study of Haskalah attitudes to history by Shmuel Feiner, who argues that we must shift the focus from "the circle of young intellectuals and academics who laid the foundation for the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century to the circles of Jewish *maskilim* in Germany in the 1780s and 1790s" (Feiner 2002: 9). In what follows, I would like to lend support to this argument for gradual development by calling attention to a circle of Jewish scholars in Prague who stood at the crossroads of Enlightenment and Romanticist eras, and consequently embody some of the defining and enduring tensions of modern Jewish historiography. In this regard, I follow

in the path of Louise Hecht who regards Prague as a laboratory for the emergence of that historiographical tradition (Hecht 2005: 347–373).

Prague is, of course, noteworthy not only as a great Jewish cultural center, but also as home to prominent Jewish chroniclers and historical researchers from David Gans in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport (ShiR) and Zacharias Frankel in the 19<sup>th</sup>. Despite this roster of distinguished individuals, Prague has not usually been regarded as a major center of modern Jewish historical scholarship. In fact, an anthology on the history of modern Jewish scholarship in Europe included chapters on Hungary, Italy, France, and Switzerland, but none on Prague or Bohemia (Carlebach 1992). To a great extent, this omission results from the absence of a lasting institutional legacy for Jewish scholarship in Prague. Unlike Berlin, Breslau, Budapest, or even Padua, Prague produced no rabbinical seminary or institute of higher Jewish learning in which students could receive professional scholarly training.<sup>9</sup>

Then again, the first generation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany did not have the benefit of study or employment in an institution of advanced Jewish learning. Nor did a group of Enlightenment advocates who congregated in Prague in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is symbolically fitting that this early *Prager Kreis* is positioned chronologically between the generation of the *Measfim* and the generation of the Verein. For its members exhibited a mix of sentiments, ambitions, and modes of expression which bespeak their shared Enlightenment and Romanticist sensibilities. This mix manifested itself in a spate of works on Jewish history ranging in style from *Maskilic* didacticism to scholarly studies replete with critical apparatus.

To speak of a Prague historical circle is perhaps something of a misnomer. All in all, there may be no more than a handful of figures worthy of mention. For instance, in his recent history of modern Jewish historiography, valuable for its bio-biographical details, Reuven Michael lists Peter Beer (1758–1838), and three younger men, Ignaz Jeteles (1783–1843), Markus Fischer (1788–1858), and Solomon Löwisohn (1789–1821) as comprising the Prague circle (Michael 1993: 133–159). None of these four was a staggering intellect capable of producing a revolutionary paradigm shift in Jewish historical thought. To be sure, none was the equal of the near contemporary German scholars Eduard Gans or Leopold Zunz. Nevertheless, the stature of these men as second-tier scholars only adds to the intrigue of the story; for it suggests that an appreciation for history and historical research was part and parcel of the intellectual profile of the newly educated Central European Jew.<sup>10</sup>

That this would be the case in Prague in the early nineteenth century is not accidental. The Jewish “historians” of Prague met at the intersection of three important cultural currents: first, the Haskalah, with its use of history to illuminate virtuous examples of Jewish Enlightenment

9 However, Peter Beer, who will later surface in this paper, did draft a proposal in 1820 to create a Jewish theological seminary in Prague. See Roubik 1933: 318. For more on the idea of a rabbinical seminar, see Roubik 1935: 316–331.

10 On the importance of history for the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Prague *Maskilim*, see Kestenberg-Gladstein 1964: 302–303. Arthur Lovejoy has noted that the “tendencies of an age appear most distinctly in its writers of inferior rank than in those of commanding genius.” See Lovejoy 1936: 20.

in the past (most notably, Maimonides); second, German Romanticism, especially the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, with its emphasis on the organic development of the historical *Volk*; and third, incipient Czech nationalism, whose foundations were partly laid by the historico-linguistic researches of Josef Dobrovosky and, later, Josef Jungmann (Seton-Watson 1943: 171–172).

One of the common threads running throughout all three of these movements was the importance assigned to a pure and authentic national language. The link between language and group identity, frequently observed by scholars of nationalism, was exemplified by the Jewish historians of Prague. For they frequently wrote in Hebrew, the ancestral national language of the Jewish people. But Hebrew, for them, was not exclusively or even primarily a vehicle for veneration of a glorious Jewish nation. It was also a medium through which to instruct Jews in the virtues and dignity of non-Jewish culture. A symptomatic use of Hebrew was Markus Fischer's book, *Korot shenot kedem*, published in Prague in 1812. This work was devoted not to ancient Jewish history, but to ancient Roman history in which Fischer identified political and ethical qualities worthy of emulation by Jews. Interestingly, the strong moralistic tone of this book earned it the approbation of one of Prague's leading rabbis, Eliezer Fleckeles, who declared that nothing in it contradicted the Jewish faith (Michael 1993: 137–138). Fischer's efforts would seem to be in line with the *Maskilim* of Berlin, especially the more cautious among them, whose desire was to enlighten, without alienating, the literate Jewish public.

However, Fischer presents a more interesting and complex case. For instance, in *Korot shenot kedem*, he presented a chronology of the history of mankind that commenced not with Adam in the Garden of Eden, but rather with primitive cave men.<sup>11</sup> This reflected a decidedly terrestrial perspective that later developed into a critical iconoclasm vis-à-vis the Jewish past. Emblematic of this iconoclasm was Fischer's fascination with the personality of Uriel da Costa, and more generally, with the phenomenon of Marranos. Unlike Maimonides, the paragon of intellectual holism for the Berlin Haskalah, Uriel da Costa, the seventeenth-century Portuguese Marrano, represented a tormented and bifurcated soul whose inability to integrate into the Jewish community of Amsterdam ultimately led to suicide. Fischer devoted considerable attention to da Costa in a small historical primer published in Judeo-German in 1814, in which he evinced sympathy for da Costa's spiritual turmoil, though ultimately condemned his renunciation of rabbinic Judaism. Fischer's curiosity about this tragic figure is especially interesting given that it was shared by another Prague scholar, Solomon Löwisohn, who wrote of da Costa in his history of post-Second Temple Judaism (published in German in 1820; Meyer 1988: 162).

Da Costa's life story symbolized to these men a bitter, and at times honorable, revolt against normative Judaism. Perhaps more importantly, though, their fascination with his life story bespoke a new understanding of history; it was no longer to be the celebration of eternal verities, but rather the critical recognition of diverse cultural expressions and shifting local contexts. When applied to Judaism, this understanding led to an interest in previously

---

11 In a later book on the Jews of Mauritania, Fischer explicitly proclaimed that God was not an active force in history. See Fischer 1817: 76–77; see also Michael 1993: 146.

neglected or suppressed subjects, subjects that had been excluded from a sanctified and sanitized account of the Jewish past.

This historicist principle is perhaps best illustrated in the work of another Prague historian, Peter Beer. Beer was the first Jew to write a history of sectarian movements in Judaism (Meyer 1988: 165). He was also a radical *Maskil* and religious reformer, whose personality induced strong emotional responses. Not surprisingly, the editor of Beer's brief autobiography referred to him in 1839 as "one of the brightest stars in our literary horizon." By contrast, Heinrich Graetz ridiculed Beer as "uneducated and boorish", a man whose intellectual shallowness and lack of taste led to "the flattening of Judaism".<sup>12</sup>

Despite the tremendous passion that Beer generated among fellow Jews, scholars have devoted relatively little attention to him until recently. Louise Hecht has undertaken the most thorough examination of Beer in her 2008 study devoted to him, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen* (Hecht 2008; Brenner 2010: 25–32). Beer remains an intriguing figure who illustrates the sometimes fuzzy boundary between Enlightenment and Romanticist sensibilities that informed modern Jewish historiography at its inception.

Peter Beer's early career began quite like that of scores of other *Maskilim*. Born in 1758 in the Bohemian town of Nový Bydžov some sixty or so kilometers northeast of Prague, he was raised in a Jewish society in which traditional modes of living and learning reigned supreme. As a youngster, Beer was trained in Hebrew, the Pentateuch in Judeo-German, and eventually the Talmud (Beer 1839: 8–14). But he was also permitted to learn German and even Latin with a local Christian teacher. It seems that his father, somewhat uniquely for this milieu, spoke, read, and wrote German, and encouraged his son to do the same. Still, the primary focus of his education was the classical Jewish canon. At the age of fourteen, Beer began the peripatetic life of a yeshiva student. He was sent off to Prague where he studied for four years in the academy of Rabbi Yehezkel Landau after which he went to Pressburg to study with Rabbi Mayer Barbi. At the conclusion of his yeshiva studies, Beer found employment as a tutor for children in private homes in various locations. While this work was often painfully boring to Beer, it did permit him to continue to study and educate himself – not so much in classical Jewish sources as in the literature of the Enlightenment. By his early twenties, Beer had read Voltaire, Leibniz, Herder, and others, the result of which was to impose, as he put it, "a confused chaos" on his earlier Talmudic training (Beer 1839: 17). It was also in this period that Beer encountered the writings and personality of Moses Mendelssohn. In fact, it was Mendelssohn who imbued in Beer that "most central and powerful impulse for betterment" (Beer 1839: 17). And it was this impulse that inspired Beer's first major literary undertaking, a Hebrew book entitled *Toldot Yisra'el*, published in Prague in 1796 and described by the author as the first history of the Biblical age written in Hebrew (Beer 1796: 3–4).

If one turns to this volume in anticipation of a critical historical analysis of the Biblical era, disappointment will come quickly. The Hebrew narrative, accompanied by a Judeo-German

---

12 See Hermann's foreword in Hermann 1839: 3; Graetz 1900: 414. A more distant observer, Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, records that Beer was reviled by many members of the Prague Jewish community for his radical views. Kestenberg-Gladstein 1969: 60. See also Sadek/Šedinová 1977: 7.

translation, maintains a reverential respect for the chronology and causality of the Biblical account. More interesting is Beer's Judeo-German commentary on the Biblical narrative. As Beer noted in the book's introduction, his purpose was not only to overcome the methods of rote learning of his own early education, but to inculcate a high ethical standard in the readers (Beer 1796: 22). He attempted to do so by extracting contemporary lessons from Biblical events – for instance, by using the story of the *'akedah* or binding of Isaac to instill deep love for God, as well as veneration for elders. The role history was to serve in *Toldot Yisra'el* was as a pedagogic prop, quite consistent with prevailing *Maskilic* strategies. In fact, one might even speculate that Beer imagined his book, with its Hebrew text and Judeo-German translation and commentary, as an historical companion to Moses Mendelssohn's *Biur*.

The intellectual profile that emerges from this work is manifestly that of a confirmed Enlightenment adept. Beer's later career as instructor of morals and history at the Israelitische Hauptschule in Prague reinforces that profile. What confounds this image is Beer's most enduring scholarly achievement, his two-volume history of Jewish sects published in German in 1822–1823 (Beer 1822–1823; Beer 1796: vol. 1: 2). Originating as an article in the first volume of *Sulamith* in 1806, (and inspired by the author's appreciation for the "spirit of differentness" in religion), Beer's *Geschichte* was a study of the variety and dynamism in Jewish religious expression (Beer 1822–1823: 1: 2). The first volume of the *Geschichte* traced the history of Jewish sects including, in order of presentation, the Samaritans, the Hellenists, the Essenes, the Karaites, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees. The second volume was devoted to the history of Kabbalah, and to its early modern representatives, the Hasidim and the Zoharites (or Sabbatians). Various scholars have suggested that Beer was drawn to the subject of the second volume because of his own background as a Frankist. In fact, Beer himself acknowledged his friendship with some Frankists in Prague, though there is no conclusive indication that he or members of his family in Nový Bydžov themselves belonged to these circles (Beer 1822–1823: 1: x).

In any event, it is important to note the novel interest in mysticism – hardly a favorite of the *Haskalah*, though a tell-tale sign of a Romanticist sensibility. This is not to suggest that Beer was altogether sympathetic to the mystically inclined; for instance, his antipathy for Hasidim, whom he included in the chain of Kabbalistic influence, ran deep (Beer 1822–1823, 2: 201 ff.). However, Beer seemed genuinely intrigued by the psyche of a Jew attracted to mysticism. To justify his own interest, Beer relied on the works of non-Jewish scholars of mysticism, and even included an eight-page discussion of kabbalistic doctrines by J.G. Herder, one of his inspirations and a leading early Romanticist (Beer 1822–1823, 2: 188–196). Beer's own analysis focused not on a static depiction of mystical ideas, but rather on their changing form and continuing allure over generations, from the ancient Israelites in Egypt to the Frankists in Beer's own Bohemia. The result was the most empathic and exhaustive treatment of Jewish mysticism by a scholar of his day.

The same can be said for Beer's broader treatment of the phenomenon of Jewish sectarianism. His discussion of Jewish sects in the first volume of the *Geschichte* substituted the model of a static and unchanging religion with the model of a dynamic and ever-changing Judaism,

possessed of different faces in different contexts. However, Baer steadfastly maintained that beneath the many layers of historical Judaism lay an *Urreligion* – a pure Mosaic faith. In fact, Beer announced in the second volume of his *Geschichte* that he had hoped to conclude his history of Jewish sectarianism with a third devoted entirely to an “Apology for Pure Mosaicism” (Beer 1822–1823, 2: xii). Recognizing that his plans would not be fulfilled, he instead appended to the end of the second volume a brief section in which he articulated the three main principles of faith of a “pure Mosaic religion”: belief in one God, love of God, and love of mankind (Beer 1822–1823, 2: 416).

These articles of faith reflect Peter Beer’s debt to an Enlightenment-era conception of natural religion, as well as to the goal of spiritual and cultural ecumenism. They also reflect an essentialist view of Judaism that seems to lie in deep tension with his historiographical pluralism. After all, it was precisely the diversity, the dynamism, the historicity of Jewish religious expression that Beer sought to capture in his two-volume work. In fact, this latter impulse calls to mind Gershom Scholem’s typically ironic definition of Judaism as something that “cannot be defined according to its essence, since it has no essence.” (Scholem 1987: 505).

A century and a half before Scholem’s “definition”, Peter Beer intuited this insight, and translated it into a scholarly inquiry of Jewish sectarianism. In doing so, he preceded more illustrious scholars such as Isaak Markus Jost or Abraham Geiger who studied Jewish sectarianism as a prism through which to explore the evolving nature of Judaism. At the same time, he also symbolized the permeable boundary between Enlightenment and Romanticist sensibilities that marked the work of these later Jewish historians. More generally, the competing aspirations to find a holistic sense of Jewish identity (e.g., “pure Mosaicism”) and to elucidate historical difference through critical analysis have shaped the conflicted personality of the modern Jewish historian.

Does this complex of tensions make Peter Beer the first modern Jewish historian? I do not want to make that argument. But I do want to suggest that Beer’s interests and motives precociously anticipate those of more renowned scholars from the German *Kulturbereich*. And it is not simply Beer who merits our attention. It is also the Prague milieu, home to Fischer, Jeiteles, and Löwisohn as well. It is the Prague that stood at the geographic juncture of East and West, and the linguistic crossroad of Hebrew and German. It is the Prague that fostered an ambience of “realistic romanticism”, as Felix Weltsch once put it, an ambience that could support a radical *Maskil* and incipient critical historian such as Peter Beer (Weltsch 1971: 442). It is this Prague that merits our attention. For it is this Prague that occupies an important, though still underacknowledged, place in the history of modern Jewish historiography.

## Bibliography

Baron 1964

S. Baron, *History and Jewish Historians*, Philadelphia.

Beer 1796

P. Beer, *Toldot Yisra’el*, Prague.

- Beer 1822–1823  
P. Beer, *Geschichte, Lehren und Meinungen aller bestandenen und noch bestehenden religiösen Sekten der Juden und der Geheimlehre oder Kabbalah*, 2 volumes, Brünn.
- Beer 1839  
P. Beer, *Lebensgeschichte des Peter Beer*, Prague.
- Brenner 2010  
M. Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History*, Princeton.
- Beiser 2011  
F. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, New York.
- Butterfield 1960  
H. Butterfield, *Man on his Past: The Study of the History of Historical Scholarship*, Boston.
- Carlebach 1992  
J. Carlebach (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums: Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa*, Darmstadt.
- Cochrane 1980  
E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago.
- Collingwood 1946  
R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford.
- Feiner 2002  
S. Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, Oxford/Portland.
- Fischer 1817  
M. Fischer, *Toldot Yeshurun*, Prague.
- Funkenstein 1989  
A. Funkenstein, *Theology and Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*, Princeton.
- Geiger 1836  
A. Geiger, *Die Gründung einer jüdisch-theologischen Facultät, ein dringendes Bedürfniss unserer Zeit*, in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie* 2, 1–21.
- Graetz 1900  
H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* 11, Leipzig.
- Hecht 2005  
L. Hecht, *The Beginning of Modern Jewish Historiography: Prague. A Center on the Periphery*, in: *Jewish History* 19, 347–373.
- Hecht 2008  
L. Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Der Pädagoge und Reformers Peter Beer (1758–1838)*, Köln.
- Hermann 1839  
M. Hermann, *Foreword*, in: P. Beer, *Lebensgeschichte des Peter Beer*, Prague.
- Kelley 1988  
D. Kelley, *Faces of History: Historical Inquiry from Herodotus to Herder*, New Haven.
- Kelley 1970  
D. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language Law, and History in the French Renaissance*, New York.
- Kestenberg-Gladstein 1964  
R. Kestenberg-Gladstein, *A View from the Prague Enlightenment*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 9, 295–304.
- Kestenberg-Gladstein 1969  
R. Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden in den Böhmisches Ländern*, Tübingen.

Löwith 1949

K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago.

Lovejoy 1936

A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge.

Meyer 1988

M. Meyer, *The Emergence of Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs*, in: *History and Theory* 27, 1601–1675.

Meyer 1967

M. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749–1824*, Detroit.

Michael 1993

R. Michael, *Ha-ketivah ha-historit ha-yehudit mi-ha-renesans 'ad ha-'et ha-hadashah*, Jerusalem.

Myers 2003

D. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, Princeton.

Reill 1975

P. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, Berkeley.

Roubik 1933

F. Roubik, *Die Verhandlungen über die Revision des jüdischen Systempatents vom Jahre 1797*, in: *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik* 5, 316–324.

Roubik 1935

F. Roubik, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Böhmen im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, in: *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik* 7, 305–386.

Sadek/Šedinová 1977

V. Sadek/J. Šedinová, *Peter Beer (1758–1838) – penseur éclairé de la Vieille ville juive de Prague*, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 13, 7–28.

Scholem 1987

G. Scholem, *Judaism*, in: A. Cohen/P. Mendes-Flohr (eds), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs*, New York, 505–508.

Schorsch 1994

I. Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, Hanover.

Seton-Watson 1943

R.W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks*, London.

Weltsch 1971

F. Weltsch, *Realism and Romanticism: Observations on the Jewish Intelligentsia of Bohemia and Moravia*, *The Jews of Czechoslovakia: Historical Studies and Surveys*, volume 2, Philadelphia.

Yerushalmi 1982

Y.H. Yerushalmi *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Seattle.