Sexuality and Alternative Discourses in Jewish Prague:
A Feminist Reading of the Works of Franz Werfel

by

Natalie Rose Spagnuolo

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Carleton University,
Ottawa, Ontario

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ISBN: 978-0-494-87786-9

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submitted by

Natalie Rose Spagnuolo, B.Hum. Hons.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

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13 January 2012

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the conceptualization of alternative Jewish masculinities in relation to feminist notions of sexuality in early twentieth century German-speaking central Europe.

Specifically, I consider the positive representation of femininity, materiality, sexual desire, and sexual expression in the work of Franz Werfel, a member of the Prague Jewish literary circle. I argue that Werfel refuted popular binarisms that tended to support masculinist thinking and uneven power relations. His writing explores processes of alienation by framing inter-subjectivity in terms of sexual identity. Following a tradition established by the Jewish theologian Martin Buber, Werfel links eroticism to mystical expressions of spirituality and creativity. In order to situate Werfel's Buberian-derived thought more closely among contemporary theories, I bring his work into conversation with several Austrian Jewish writers while tracing other ideas that contributed to his feminist literature.

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank the people who have assisted with this thesis. I am grateful to Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences John Osborne, and further thanks are extended to Dr Dominique Marshall, Joan White, and the Department of History at Carleton University for much help and support throughout.

Special thanks to Dr Jennifer V Evans and Dr James Casteel for their challenging commentary, thoughtful academic supervision, and for their willingness to critically discuss this work as it developed.

Many thanks go in particular to Kyle O’Keeffe for sharing his ideas about the history of cognition and historicizing sense experience, and for actively engaging with many aspects of this work. I am thankful to Kyle for his close reading of the manuscript and for the conversations that ensued.

I am also grateful to John and Joan LaBrecque for their continuous encouragement; this project would not have been possible without their positive role and influence.

Finally, my thanks to my parents, Anne and Joseph Spagnuolo, and to my brother, Nicholas Spagnuolo, for providing inspiration, long-standing support, and great patience.

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Introduction

Encounters between minority groups and their dominant neighbours have left a challenging cultural legacy, replete with contradictions that draw into relief the complicated process of identity negotiation. Franz Werfel (1890-1945) is a unique example of early twentieth century European authors whose contribution to the history of minority masculinities, in the form of published fiction, offers invaluable insight into the imagined ideals and practical fears of his generation. The life and work of Werfel, which will be the focus of the next few chapters, offers particularly striking examples of integrationist solutions, based on inclusive reconceptualizations of human identity, that the challenges of multiethnic societies can inspire.

Werfel was associated with the innovative “Young Pragers,” made famous by Franz Kafka and Max Brod. His early career as a Prague poet made his reputation in Hapsburg Austria just as distinguished: in 1927 Werfel received the Schiller Prize and the Czech State Prize, and he was also elected to the Prussian Academy of the Arts.¹ Like many of his contemporaries, Werfel drew explicit attention to his hybridized identity and the challenges as well as the opportunities that the dynamic identity-category of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Austrian’ gave rise to within his multiethnic, German-speaking Prague milieu.

While it is tempting to characterize Werfel as a German-speaking Jewish Prague author, his own experiences, influences, concerns, and, most importantly, self-understanding, go beyond any of these categories. Werfel harnessed ideas from both eastern Jewish and western European philosophical traditions in order to develop a universalist outlook that was noticeably and radically feminist for its place and time. While the notion of radical feminism would have been anachronistic during the early twentieth century, the emphasis of this contemporary feminist movement on cultural systems structured by patriarchal theories was anticipated by Werfel and

1. Hans Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1993), 8.

other theorists of femininity who were not associated with any central European feminist movements and would not have been considered by their contemporaries as feminist thinkers.² By placing Werfel's writings within a radical feminist framework, connections between Jewish and non-Jewish voices that disrupted patriarchal language are elucidated as they are discussed through themes that are usually overlooked; such a theory of models, based on inter-textual, feminist readings of historical texts, rejects a monolithic view of any one tradition of culture.

Similarly, Werfel's appropriation of various intellectual as well as literary traditions, including Jewish, Czech, Viennese, and American, defies any simple categorization of his work. Nevertheless, historians discussing the Jewish German literati in terms of social poetics have often been tempted to 'think in islands,' fixing Werfel's milieu in a territorial imagery that discounts important avenues of influence which can be placed outside of his Hapsburg-Prague "island." Scott Spector's *Prague Territories* opposes this tendency by situating Jewish Prague as a moving island that interacted with German and Czech culture; Spector's study thereby represents a strong attempt to present a less centralized, insular image of early twentieth century Prague and its Jewish authors.³ In actuality, Werfel's sensitivity to minority experiences extended beyond the scope of many of the Prague male cultural activists of his day chiefly because his ideas harnessed arguments developed in other contexts and created a space for women alongside minority men. Werfel found affinity with positive theories of femininity and interpreted his own male identity outside of opposition to the patriarchal framework employed by his Prague literary contemporaries. As specialists in modern German and Jewish history Nils

2. Carolyn Zerfe Enns and Ada Sinacore, "Feminist Theories," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender, Volume I*, ed. Judith Worell (San Diego: Academic Press, 2002), 472.

3. Antonis Balasopoulos, "Utopiae Insulae Figura: Utopian Insularity and the Politics of Form," *Journal of Global Cultural Studies*, Poésie et Insularité (2008). Balasopoulos encourages "a move beyond the traditional hermeneutic binaries of "form" and "content," "interiority" and "exteriority," "autonomy" and "heteronomy"(2); Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 20; Spector references "the recurring image of the Prague island" and the "deployment of circular rhetoric... inscribed by discourses of inclusion and exclusion."(19).

Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman suggest in their introduction to *German History from the Margins*, it is constructive to consider such “positive traditions of pluralism,” traditions of tolerance, within Jewish-German relations.⁴ The fact that Werfel’s ideas existed and interacted with German-speaking audiences in Europe and English-speaking audiences across the United States is a positive reminder that society is much more than “a series of hegemonic institutions” or systems which mediate our interactions.⁵

Werfel’s primary concern was with the alienating nature of society that he identified with modernity.⁶ While he described himself as a Jewish man, and, as we will see, even employed Jewish metaphors to discuss the experience of marginalization, the most threatening form of alienation for Werfel was spiritual isolation and was not due to religious, nationalist, racial, or other differences. The spiritual reconciliation he envisaged between different segments of Bohemian society – encompassing Czechs, German-speakers, and western Jews who spoke mainly German or Czech – is especially interesting. Werfel made use of a countercultural interpretation of Judaism that he learned through the theologian Martin Buber. This Buberian tradition encourages what historian Daniel Boyarin, Jewish studies expert, considers to be an example of a rare, non-hierarchical model of gender relations.⁷ In his *Ecstatic Confessions* from 1909, Buber suggests a radical equality between men and women based on their spiritual capacity. Buber’s collection repeatedly describes how God’s “sons and his daughters” serve as his temples and are “filled with his glory,” promoting an egalitarian belief which Werfel echoes

4. Nils Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman, “Introduction,” in *German History from the Margins*, eds. Gregor, Roemer, and Roseman (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 6.

5. Ibid.

6. Franz Werfel, “Realism and Inwardness,” in *Between Heaven and Earth*, trans. Maxim Newmark (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1944), 58-61.

7. Daniel Boyarin, “Gender,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheron (New York: Cassell Press, 2000), 132.

in his own work during the 1910s and onwards.⁸ Boyarin's comparative study of feminism in rabbinical Judaism and early Christianity clarifies the phallocentric tendencies of both traditions, but allows for Werfel's Buberian alternative by proposing the existence of such an anti-patriarchal way of framing relations between the sexes.⁹

There are significant ideological differences between Werfel's use of Buber and many of his contemporaries' which contributed to his sense of self as more than just a Jewish man. Werfel saw no contradiction between his consistent identification as a Jewish man, his acceptance of Christianity, his use of Buberian theory, and his denouncement of both Zionist and nationalist strategies. While he drew heavily from Buber's Jewish theology and embraced a certain Jewish aspect of his own experiences, Werfel understood identity in terms of universal human qualities and tended to emphasize similarities above particularities. The most original and far-most neglected aspect of Werfel's thought is precisely his emphasis on Buber's non-hierarchical vision of total spiritual equality, which was rooted in a non-binary understanding of sexuality. Along with the idea of gender, religious, and racial equality, the Buberian vision of sexual parity radically equalizes the creative and spiritual capacity of every individual subject. Werfel's vision of human nature, based on a non-binary model of sexuality, characterizes a consistent part of his publications, yet the effect of this avant-garde position on his reconceptualization of gender relations and the compatibility of his ideas with some of the most innovative Austrian thinkers is often overlooked by literary, feminist, and Jewish historians.¹⁰

Werfel left his birthplace in Prague, where he first established himself as a member of the Jewish literati, to work in other German-speaking urban centres in central Europe. After his

8. Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, trans. Esther Cameron (Syracuse University Press, 1996), 127. Originally published as *Ekstatische Konfessionen* (Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1909).

9. *Ibid.*, 133.

10. Two valuable sources include Wagener's *Understanding Franz Werfel* and Spector's *Prague Territories*.

academic duties at the University of Prague ended in 1912, the already acclaimed poet moved to Leipzig, where he collaborated with expressionist publisher Kurt Wolff.¹¹ World War I (WWI) interrupted the rising star's urban career, but even while Werfel struggled against conscription, he continued to write and publish. The war placed him in Galicia in 1916, and left him in Vienna in 1918, where he would meet his wife and artistic partner Alma Mahler-Werfel (née Schindler). Alma's relationship with Werfel began in Vienna around 1917, and likely influenced the author's turn from poetry to historical religious plays during this period.¹² In 1938, sensing the rise of National Socialist political power in Austria, Werfel and his Catholic wife Alma were forced into exile.¹³ His career along with the rise of Nazism in the 1930s encouraged his move to the United States.

From his final home in Hollywood in 1944, Werfel began work on his last novel, *Star of the Unborn*, a dystopian epic in the popular science fiction genre of the period. Throughout his life, he explored other genres and occasionally the essay form, commenting extensively on Austro-German society during politically turbulent periods. These direct and critical pieces, mainly from the 1930s, complement many of the ideas he exposed through fiction, and provide excellent insight into his idealized reforms and radical humanism that are present in earlier works but culminate in *Star of the Unborn*. Werfel's essays, according to Hans Wagener, are crucially linked to his poetry and fiction and ought to be considered for the interpretive value they bring to these more artistic articulations.¹⁴ For this reason, I will explore key examples of Werfel's writing in all three styles.

11. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 4.

12. *Ibid.*, 4, 6.

13. *Ibid.*, 11.

14. *Ibid.*, 17, 25.

While the collection of publications that has been selected for this study crosses several genres, I privilege fiction as an historical source, following the belief that fiction often provides a valuable view of historical subjectivity. Following Stephen Bottomore's claim that as an interpretive aesthetic, fiction allows insight into the collective concerns of a place and time that are potentially closer to the original context than non-fiction sources, one can begin to gage the appropriateness of this source by considering the unique perspective it provides as well as what it shares in common with more commonly accepted historical sources.¹⁵ Jerome Blum reminds us that the act of historical writing invites an interpretative scope that is not unlike that of fiction, and he insists that this commonality validates fiction as a source for historians as much as it validates the very act of historical research.¹⁶ The utopian novel *Star of the Unborn* will therefore be considered along with several of Werfel's shorter novels and plays in order to gage the author's opinion on a variety of social relationships that relate to the intimate topic of sexual subjectivity and the contemporary feminist call for gender parity, namely through women's suffrage. As historian Richard J. Evans argues, most feminists in Bohemia linked their cause to Czech nationalism and supported the wider interests of an imagined Czech nation.¹⁷ Werfel's feminism can be contrasted with this political, legislative approach to women's rights; instead, his thought held affinity with the radical Viennese feminist call for sexual freedom as the source of restructuring social relations.¹⁸

Foremost among the social connections explored are various familial bonds. A portrait of father-son, mother-son binaries is offered in Werfel's 1919 play, "Not the Murderer," Werfel's

15. Stephen Bottomore, "Introduction: Moving Picture Fiction," *Film History: An International Journal* 20 no. 2 (2008): 124.

16. Jerome Blum, "Fiction and the European Peasantry: The Realist Novel as Historical Source," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 126 no.2 (1982): 126.

17. Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australasia 1840-1920* (London: C. Helm, 1977), 96.

18. Bruce Thompson, *Schnitzler's Vienna: Image of a Society* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 69.

depiction of the multiple romances of the heroine in “Poor People” (1931) and of her relationship with the male protagonist directly critiques the nature of gender relations. Finally, character relations in *Star of the Unborn* help unpack power structures between the sexes that are more clearly grounded in philosophical and religious worldviews.

A brief sketch of the possible experiences of Jewish men in Prague at the turn of the century will foreground important literary themes which appear throughout Werfel’s body of work. Within this introductory chapter, I will address the strain placed upon Prague Jewry by competing nationalist and Zionist visions as well as the different conceptualizations of these conditions by leading intellectuals who influenced their Prague Jewish contemporaries. I will suggest that the variety of responses by Jewish men to marginalization is suggestive of the hybridized nature of Werfel’s Prague network, a characterization that raises key historiographical questions concerning the relationship between Jewish studies and recent methodologies which seek to undermine essentialist explanations. I will indicate areas of historical research that integrate ideas from postcolonial theory as well as questions of gender and sexuality to develop new understandings of the modern Jewish experience. Throughout this historiographical discussion, special attention will be given to modes of exploring modern Jewish identity through literary sources and the benefits of employing these interdisciplinary approaches.

Werfel’s Prague: Multi-ethnicity in Transition

Through the device of utopian writing and the more direct form of the essay, Werfel imagines a future that directly addresses competing trends and different forms of activism from his own time. Central Europe was a thriving scene for Jewish literature and minority activism

during the first half of the twentieth century. Werfel was among a significant segment of German-speaking Jewry who walked the streets and attended the universities of major cities such as Prague during the decades leading up to the Holocaust. Between 1890 and the end of WWI, the Jewish Prague population nearly doubled and the capital was home to a steadily rising population of Czech-speaking Jews, which made up 39.8% of Bohemian Jewry by 1921.¹⁹ Specialist of Slavic Languages and Literatures Jonathan Bolton aptly refers to the decade after WWI as the golden age of Czech Jewish literature.²⁰ At the turn of the century, until their expulsion by the Nazi state three decades later, this group experienced optimism, integration, persecution, and alienation, all at once.

Jewish men considered a variety of political strategies that ranged from Zionism and nationalism to various degrees of assimilation, and included anti-nationalist approaches to racial and cultural questions as well. Prague Jewry experienced firsthand the struggle of various Hapsburg nationalities, especially Czech and German nationalism, which were intensified in their multiethnic city. Because middle-class Prague Jews fell consistently on the side of the Germans in their dispute with Czech nationalists, and because they had been steeped in German cultural assimilationist goals during the later part of the nineteenth century, one must consider Werfel and his Prague circle contemporaries' context as Jewish German-speaking Pragers, with a multi-ethnic background and close familiarity with German culture.²¹ Werfel is able to offer an especially instructive and unique view of the complex relations and exchanges that this Jewish minority experienced.

19. Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13.

20. Johnathan Bolton, "Czech Literature," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 371.

21. Peter Howarth, "The Erosion of *Gemeinschaft*: German Writers of Prague," *German Studies Review* 4 no.1 (1981): 26.

Werfel's generation and most of the Prague literary circle were born during the 1890s. Often, they are remembered for their rebellion against the liberal generation of their parents.²² An important shift occurred in the political climate in Europe during Werfel's childhood that explains this generational divide. The period under consideration, which follows 1880, is often recognized as explicating the decline of German liberalism and the intensification of anti-Semitism.²³ Intellectual historian Carl Schorske has argued that anti-Semitism played a central role as a negative force in the nationalistic mass movements that followed in liberalism's wake.²⁴ For many reasons, the liberal assimilationist attitude held by bourgeois Jews and their supporters, which had given rise to a process that had been underway in an accelerated manner for nearly half a century during Werfel's childhood, shifted dramatically around 1890. With the decline of liberalism, the last years of the nineteenth century introduced a stronger drive towards ethnic tribalism, and many Jews and non-Jews in Bohemia and elsewhere in Europe returned to essentialized views of identity.²⁵ Nevertheless, several assimilationist movements have been traced to the 1890s.²⁶ Historian of Czech Jewry Livia Rothkirchen argues that Czech Jewish participation in Czech nationalist movements helped shaped the Zionist movement that began in nineteenth century Prague; Rothkirchen explains how Czech nationalist leaders demonstrated to many Jewish Zionists the possibility of reviving a national language, history, and literature. Prague Zionism, according to Professor of Jewish Studies Noam Pianko, was further influenced

22. Jay Geller, "Freud, Blüher, and the Secession Inversa," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, eds. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Iskovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 93. Geller describes a revolt of sons against their fathers during the prewar period.

23. Robin Judd explicitly employs this periodization in her book *Contested Rituals* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). See Chapter 3, "The Radicalization of the Ritual Questions, 1880-1916."

24. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna : Politics and Culture* (New York : Vintage Books, 1981), 118, 130.

25. Robert Wheldon Whalen, *Sacred Springs, God and the Birth of Modernism in Fin de Siècle Vienna* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 71.

26. Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 15.

by the essentialist rhetoric that was popular among such non-Jewish nationalist movements.²⁷

Amidst concerns for procreation and population management, sexuality and Judaism were often coupled with concerns for social health and cultural criticism in discussions by anti-Semitic nationalists.²⁸

Jewish Nationalism and Buberian Theology

The late nineteenth century witnessed various nationalist and gender-based collectives in German-speaking Europe tighten their parameters. As previously mentioned, the struggle between ethnic groups was especially dynamic in Werfel's Prague, where Czechs, Jews and Germans attempted to redefine their membership in more exclusive, nationalistic ways in order to consolidate their position within the multi-ethnic Habsburg empire. During Werfel's university years in Prague in the 1910s, many Prague Jews responded with their own version of nationalism, initially adopting something resembling the political Zionist project of the Viennese Jewish activist Theodor Herzl.²⁹

The Prague generation that included Werfel's schoolmates altered the political Zionism of Theodor Herzl to suit the culturally-oriented priorities of their mentor, Martin Buber. Max Brod, Werfel's close friend and foil, was a notable adherent of the cultural Zionist program that Werfel resisted joining. Unlike Werfel, Brod and others participated in the newly founded cultural Zionist Jewish student organization *Bar Kochba*, which prioritized the renewal of Jewish culture rather than a 'return' to a Jewish state.³⁰ This cultural solution, which emphasized

26. Ibid., 4; Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Road not Taken: Radowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 44.

28. Nancy A. Harrowitz and Barbara Hyams, "Introduction," in *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger*, eds. Harrowitz and Hyams (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 4.

29. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, 94. *Bar Kochba*'s precursor was the Maccabi Association -a more politically oriented Zionist group founded in 1893.

30. *Bar Kochba* was founded in 1899.

creativity and autonomy, appealed to the Jewish students through its promise to reverse the alienating effects of assimilation.³¹

The Jewish philosopher and theologian Martin Buber worked closely with Jewish-Prague students during the 1910s, encouraging their interest in cultural, inward expressions of Jewish ideas.³² Buber expressed his commitment to Zionism in 1918 by describing this as a “spiritual seeking” that may be resolved when an individual by ‘takes root in the community.’³³ Buber’s attempt to resolve alienation through both cultural and spiritual renewal implicated the Jewish community and its traditions in a project of “rootedness, binding” and “wholeness.” His interest in Hassidism, eastern Jewry, and mysticism during the 1900s and 1910s is strongly reflected in Werfel’s work, and, according to Scott Spector, was also internalized by other Pragers such as Brod and Kafka with results spanning the spectrum between anti-nationalism, political nationalist, and cultural Zionism.³⁴ The reception of Buber’s Hassidic revisionism will be considered throughout this paper with reference to Werfel’s radical non-binary worldview and the question of whether cultural Zionists were able to cultivate a Buberian position that was similarly egalitarian. In particular, Buber’s collection of mystical writings from 1909, entitled *Ecstatic Confessions*, his 1908 essay “The Life of the Hasidim,” and his 1918 essay “My Way to Hasidism,” will be supplemented with interpretations of his correspondence from this period and drawn into conversation with contemporary texts by Werfel and various cultural Zionist thinkers.

31. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, 105-106.

32. According to Noah Isenberg in *Between Redemption and Doom: The Strains of German- Jewish Modernism* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), Buber’s address to *Bar Kochba* initiated a Jewish Renewal (23).

33. Buber, “My Way to Hasidism,” in *Hasidism and Modern Man*, ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 57-59.

34. In *Prague Territories*, Spector argues that the interest that was generated in the Ostjuden resulted in Kafka’s unique rejection of the link between Yiddish and national revival or territorialisation (89); Brod’s cultural Zionism, on the other hand, envisioned Yiddish as the key to solving Jewish ‘rootlessness’ or deterritorialization, allowing Jewish identity to “regenerate its decayed roots” (184).

In the cultural Zionist vision, culture and religion replaced the nation-based, capitalist Jewish project that Theodor Herzl envisioned. The early cultural Zionism of Prague, inspired by a series of pre-WWI lectures delivered by Buber, engaged many of Werfel's friends and may be distinguished from Herzl's view.³⁵ Nevertheless, the general appeal of this and many other forms of Zionism was rooted in the disillusionment, felt by many, with the promise of liberal emancipation as it neared its end game. While the anti-authoritarian romanticism of cultural Zionism resisted several key aspects of political Zionism, it also has much in common with the Herzlian brand. In order to understand broader Zionist commonalities, I will contrast attitudes towards sexuality as they appeared in the writings of nationalist, cultural Zionists and Werfel's anti-nationalist, feminist literature.

Many historians now recognize that Jewish nationalism – an idea that held a complicated form of appeal for cultural Zionists – and its German counterpart shared a worldview that held similar functions in terms of sexuality.³⁶ Nationalist, political Zionist and cultural Zionist visions specifically attempted to refashion the male subject, encouraging him to demonstrate his “masculinity” through what was considered to be a creative form action.³⁷ Boyarin describes a contemporary feminist critique of Zionism's chauvinist agenda as “effectively writing the women out entirely...” due to their focus on what cultural theorist George Mosse has termed the “New Jew” – a ‘re-masculinised’ Jewish subject.³⁸ Gendered understandings of human abilities, therefore, connected sexuality to the broader visions of identity politics. As Boyarin argues,

35. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, 99-100.

36. One early example includes Abdul Kayyali, “Zionism and Imperialism: The Historical Origins,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 no.3 (1977). For a more recent discussion of the connection between Zionist and chauvinist, nationalist conceptions of gender, see Iris Bruce's *Kafka and Cultural Zionism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007): 125-126.

37. See Daniel Boyarin's discussion of Freud in chapters 5 and 6 of *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

38. Ibid., 335; George Mosse, “Max Nordau, Liberalism, and the New Jew,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 no.4 (1992): 575.

homophobic and anti-Semitic discourses employed the same negative trope of femininity to characterize members of other groups, encouraging many Jewish men to respond to their perceived 'feminization' by asserting the masculine nature of their Jewish identity.³⁹

Radical Humanist Strategies and Weiningerian Influences

German-speaking Jewish men, however pressured, were not simply polarized by competing ideas of assimilation, cultural assertion, and Jewish nationalism, as the similarities between these strategies suggests. Furthermore, a less masculinist alternative was given voice by the cultural movement known as Jewish Humanism. As I will argue, Werfel's mentor, Martin Buber, was among the most vocal proponents of a Jewish humanist worldview that espoused a positive attitude towards femininity. Buber's diaries reveal that much of the tension between the humanist position and the various brands of nationalism, including political and cultural Zionism, was rooted in their refusal to accept Buber's universalized vision of the Jewish condition.⁴⁰

Buber was famously involved with the cultural Zionists; my paper follows the argument that his humanist commitments complicated his attitude towards Zionism, and that he was not in fact a cultural Zionist in the strictly masculinist sense that defined many of his followers. Buberian thought inspired a range of interpretations that included the feminist writings of Werfel. Werfel, who was less ambiguously anti-masculinist than his mentor, expressed himself

39. See Boyarin, "Chapter 8," in *Unheroic Conduct*, for his discussion of the Jewish castration complex; see also Benjamin Baader on gender and reform Judaism in *Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Cultural in Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

40. Nahum N. Glatzer, and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds. *The Letters of Martin Buber*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, and Hazy Zohn, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

as a Buberian humanist by rejecting the masculinist theories of the cultural Zionist organization at Prague.⁴¹

Jewish expressionist and humanist thought did not necessarily intersect, though figures such as Werfel reflected a combination of both.⁴² By tracing the history of the various ideas related to Buber and Werfel's humanism, I hope to situate them among other contemporary intellectual exchanges concerning alternative worldviews and lifestyle reform movements. In particular, their work presents a strong affinity with thinkers who allied themselves with groups that rejected nationalist causes along with the masculinist conventions which supported unequal gender relations.⁴³ Throughout this paper I argue that a radical, feminist perspective may be located within the small network of humanist thinkers associated with Buber and Werfel – a network that initially appears to be vague but, as their writing reveals, was in fact highly engaged in contemporary political issues. To illuminate the nature of these intellectual alliances I explore a variety of positions on sexuality and femininity, including the theories of the prominent feminist psychoanalyst Lou Andreas-Salomé and the homosexual rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld, both of whom collaborated with Martin Buber. As I will demonstrate, the common humanist ground that Buber shared with Hirschfeld and Salomé was taken up by Werfel and crystallized in his writing.

Conversely, most other Prague circle writers participated in the patriarchal discourses of early century cultural reformers who argued against the influence of women and the apparent feminization of western society. In one such characteristically misogynist diatribe against

41. Michael Lowy's monograph *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992) details the complex ideological fault lines which distinguished many members of the Jewish avant-garde. In Chapter 8 Lowy considers at Buber, Brod, and other Prague writers who correspond to what he identifies as "semi-anarchist religious Jews."

42. Seth Taylor, *Left Wing Nietzscheans* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990).

43. Ibid., 3-4. Taylor emphasizes the antinationalism and romantic anti modern stance of expressionist as a product of Nietzschean thought.

femininity, Elisarion von Kupffer laments that “we live in such unmanly times...” and connects masculinity to the success of western civilization.⁴⁴ However, the most prominent, contemporary argument relating misogynist with racist theories is widely considered to be Otto Weininger’s philosophical inquiry *Sex and Character*, published in 1903. The categories Weininger developed privileged a particular version of masculinity and were highly transferable. Because Weiningerian theories were adapted to suit the different ideological frameworks of Werfel’s contemporaries, they must be considered alongside the humanist worldview that Werfel adopted in order to appreciate the ramifications of either argument.

Due to his anti-Weiningerian position, Werfel’s work may be used to challenge the limitations of several of his literary colleagues. The impact of Weininger on Werfel and the Prague circle has been discussed in terms of complimentary misogynist views on creativity and other human abilities, and the potential for a feminist resistance to Weiningerian conceptions of such human qualities by Jewish men such as Werfel is not typically considered. I propose that Werfel was able to reject the Weiningerian model of masculinity entirely through a theological premise he inherited from Martin Buber’s interpretation of Hassidism. As I will demonstrate, Werfel’s interest in spirituality as a solution to alienation led to his interest in Buber’s mystical writings. Through a close reading of Buber’s mystical humanism, Werfel developed a thoroughly non-binary understanding of gender, sexuality and subjectivity in general, a fact that encourages us to situate him within more feminist humanist networks.

While Werfel’s rejection of Weiningerian theory was not unprecedented, it was certainly unique in its Prague context, as, following Spector’s account, many other Prague circle members appear to have embraced Weiningerianism, and which I will argue, was embedded in the dualism

44. Elisarion von Kupffer, “The Ethical-Political Significance of *Lieblingminne*,” in *Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, the Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler’s Rise*, eds. Herbert Kenney and Harry Oosterhuis (New York: Harworth, 1991), 35-40.

of cultural Zionism.⁴⁵ By resisting Weiningerianism, intellectuals across the Hapsburg Empire demonstrated that there were different ways to conceptualize sexuality in order to empower marginalized men. Through his contact with radical theories and movements that were more accepting of feminine qualities, Werfel witnessed a range of ideas on sexuality that would come to inform his own humanism. More broadly, then, this project is concerned with attitudes towards femininity by Jewish men, and the manifestations of these interpretations in the cultural products they created. By concentrating on Werfel and a selection of contemporary Austrian-Jewish writers, such as Max Brod, Kurt Hiller, and Karl Kraus, a range of responses to femininity will be compared along with the ways in which they shaped multiple Jewish masculinities.

Cultural Colonialism and the Jewish Postcolonial

Jewish historians now recognize that they are not dealing with a homogenous minority group. As is this case with other collectives, the concept of “belonging” is a highly subjective perception for modern Jewry. Werfel’s situation presents a particularly complex example of the ambiguities of identity categories such as Jewish and western; his degree of involvement with the multiple European, non-European, Jewish and non-Jewish cultures he encountered changed throughout his life. This fluidity of membership was especially true for European Jews after the 1840s, when religious Jewry began to evaluate and define itself in new religious and secular ways.⁴⁶

The influx of Jewish immigrants into Prague towards the end of the nineteenth century drew greater attention to the group as a whole and exacerbated anxiety over assimilation and

45. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 118-119.

46. Judd, *Contested Rituals*, 30.

cultural homogeneity among Jews as well as non-Jews. The pressure to conform to the dominant cultural values of Germans had been underway since the first wave emancipatory legislation was initiated by Joseph II during the late eighteenth century.⁴⁷ As the nineteenth century progressed, this trend was reversed and Werfel's generation resisted what has been described by historian Todd Presner as cultural colonialism, a process that was formerly embraced by their assimilationist parents.⁴⁸

Notions of fixity between group boundaries and within power structures are now being treated by scholars as problematic. Beginning around 1989, German historians began to reconceptualise diversity, rejecting the idea of a homogenized centre that interacts with a periphery. As Gregor, Roemer, and Roseman insist in the introduction to their collection *German History from the Margins*, “modernity does not reduce diversity.”⁴⁹ In the Hapsburg lands, Jewish emancipation and modernization went hand in hand with processes of Germanization that encouraged Jews and other minorities to adopt aspects of the majority, German-speaking culture. Germanization specifically attacked Jewish language practices through policies against the Hebrew and Yiddish languages, thereby attempting to colonize Jewish culture.⁵⁰ Following political theorist Joseph Turow’s definition of cultural colonialism as involving the immersion of a group in cultural products which serve another, Prague Jewry was no doubt colonized through their immersion in products and practices – including linguistic ones, such as texts and other language-based material– that supported the interests of a politically dominant German-speaking

47. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, 4-8.

48. Paul Lerner, “Conference Report,” on “Jewish Masculinities in Germany: Second International Workshop on Gender in German Jewish History,” University of California at San Diego, November 2005. Lerner writes that Presner characterizes the late nineteenth century understanding of *Bildung* as prescriptive and exclusionary.

49. Gregor, Roemer, and Roseman, “Introduction,” 5.

50. Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 6.

power.⁵¹ However, the porous nature of culture has demonstrated that despite their colonial position, Jews have indeed influenced the societies in which they participate.

The more widespread acceptance of the reality of cultural exchanges by historians has inspired this study to consider the ways in which German-speaking Jews such as Werfel and non-Jewish German-speaking groups interacted and engaged with ideas in a reciprocal manner. However, it is more often the case that the Jewish experience is not considered comparatively with other minority groups.⁵² Considering the multi-ethnic nature of Hapsburg Prague and the status of Jews within its many German-speaking communities, it is especially useful to view Werfel's history through a postcolonial lens. The persecution of German-speaking Jewry and the project to eradicate their specific cultural practices has only occasionally been treated with the same postcolonial methodologies applied to other minority groups and instances of cultural colonialism.

During the 1990s, Homi K. Bhabha argued for the necessity of demonstrating the political ramifications of cultural hybridity in a postcolonial context. Bhabha's theory, as explained in *The Location of Culture* (1994), demonstrates that culture is diffused in complex ways that holds meaningful effects for concepts of power and resistance.⁵³ In light of Bhabha's non-binary understanding of domination, notions of both empire and victimhood can more easily be understood as aspects of subjective perceptions.⁵⁴ As I will demonstrate, Werfel's ability to

51. Joseph Turow, *Media Today: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, 3rd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2009), 175.

52. Paul Lerner, "Conference Report." Lerner reports that Darcy Buerkle "urged participants to compare Jewish masculinities to the masculinities of other marginalized groups."

53. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 49-51.

54. The notion of empire as "conceived or perceived by metropolitan or peripheral actors as one of justifiable or unjustifiable inequity, subordination, and/or exploitation" is taken from Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, National Identity, and Theories of Empire," in *Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Suny and Terry Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 26.

adopt multiple perspectives on power in his writing reflected his own ability to shift between power roles to make use of different aspects of his multi-faceted experience.

Werfel, along with many members of his Jewish community in Prague, may have felt at times as though they existed under the pressure of empire, controlled either by Prague's German elite or pressured by its Czech majority. Indeed, as Rothkirchen demonstrates, the Prague circle was aware of its precarious position between German and Czech groups that did not fully accept Jewish members.⁵⁵ Just as equally, Werfel and other Prague Jews would have felt empowered by their status as educated members of the bourgeoisie. The reality of the fluidity of power and agency means that a postcolonial approach that acknowledges changing subject-positions holds wide application for German-speaking Jewry and other subcultures. More recently, this methodology has been applied to religiously-defined groups, which may include Jews, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi highlights Daniel Boyarin's contribution to the process of bringing a postcolonial perspective to Jewish studies by applying Bhabha's theory of mimicry to Talmudic literature. Boyarin's use of Bhabha is of particular interest to this study because it applies a theory of imitation and resistance to portraits of gender and gender relations in Jewish literary sources.⁵⁶ Employing a similar methodology, I will demonstrate how Werfel's writings engaged with ideas from Jewish and non-Jewish groups to establish a framework that resisted the idea of unequal gender relations

Werfel's history, therefore, involves more than Jewish and non-Jewish relations. His story is also about the experience of writing the self and of the contemporary concerns internalized by the male subject who is sensitive to, though not simply reduced to, marginality. Through his own shifting identity, Werfel's changing relationship to power developed an

55. Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 23.

56. Paul Lerner, "Conference Report."

awareness of subaltern as well as dominant perspectives. To fully understand Werfel, it is useful to draw upon several disciplinary approaches that privilege understandings of power dynamics, such as feminist, sexological, Jewish, and queer, to name a few. Werfel's humanist views on gender relations are particularly illustrative of the concerns of 'marginalized' social groups and individuals interested in undermining binary ways of structuring power and identity.

Religion, Gender, and Jewish Sexuality

Much of the existing scholarship on Werfel demonstrates that it is possible to ignore the feminist elements that distinguish this author's work from many of his Jewish literary friends. Indeed, historians tend to read Werfel as exemplifying the expressionist humanism of his day and its underlying misogyny. After exploring the current body of literature on this topic, I have yet to find an exception to this reading. Scott Spector's *Prague Territories* suggests that while Werfel intended his work as a refutation of Otto Weininger's masculinist philosophy, his writings were in fact misogynist. Spector's characterization of Werfel's efforts as a "failure to escape from Weiningerian categories even while pretending to refute them," reinforces the popular argument that Werfel was a misogynist thinker.⁵⁷ The example of Spector's argument demonstrates only one of the ways in which the unusual feminist structures that I will present as underpinning Werfel's worldview have previously been confused with more popular arguments against femininity.

Werfel's intellectual and political allies were not obvious; these tended to be isolated individuals from widely different movements, and included Jewish and non-Jewish men as well as women from various disciplines. To understand the ideas that forced such a range of

57. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 119.

connections, it will be useful to consider Werfel's early involvement with the Prague circle and the implicit disagreements that separated him from this group.

Spector's *Prague Territories* remains a valuable text on the subject of the literary network of early twentieth-century Prague, despite his simplification of Werfel's work. Spector deftly manoeuvres through the active and complicated network of Prague writers by focusing on Jewish thinkers and artists. His stated goal is to expose many of the idiosyncrasies within the Prague milieu, even though, as previously mentioned, he is less interested in any potential feminist sympathies that would distinguish Werfel from his Prague contemporaries.⁵⁸ Conversely, the present study suggests that a feminist reading can reconcile many of the diverse streams that are combined in Werfel's thought.

Werfel's Christianity is another source of inquiry that this study attempts to address. Scholars largely disagree over the degree to which the Austrian writer abandoned his Jewish roots and embraced a Christian worldview.⁵⁹ The role of Alma Mahler, Werfel's Catholic wife, in her husband's life also appears as contradictory and confusing. There are several interpretations of Alma that recur in the literature; she is generally described as either as passive muse, an aggressive manager, or, more harshly, a conservative deadweight and an antagonistic anti-Semite.⁶⁰ The Werfel couple are rarely respected as mutually influential artists, equally interested in expressing feminist ideas in their separate art forms. My reading of Alma attempts to undermine the conservative, reactionary image that is being perpetuated by studies which highlight the differences between her and Werfel, while overlooking the potential similarities.

58. Ibid., 26.

59. For a study that directly explore the subject of Werfel's Jewish identity see *Anarchy and Eros* (New York: Peter Lang, 1983) by Jennifer E Michaels.

60. See for example, Lionel B Steiman, *Franz Werfel: The Faith of an Exile* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Univeristy Press, 1985) and Hans Wagener's *Understanding Franz Werfel*.

Favouring the view of Alma as a feminist composer, I will consider parallels between her music and her husband's conceptualization of gender relations and sexuality.

Changes in gender relations throughout the history modern Judaism have already been suggested by several historians; particularly relevant to this study are theories linking the negative perception of feminine attributes to anti-Semitic arguments. Sander Gilman's long career has provided an index of the many ways in which gentiles imagined Jews as 'womanly,' and the reactions to these stereotypes by different Jewish men.⁶¹ In her 2009 article, Sharon Faye Koren makes a similar argument as Gilman, suggesting a more problematic pairing of Jewish masculinity with European Christian views that was anticipated by Michael Satlow in 1996.⁶² Satlow argued that feminine stereotypes have been employed by Jews against "others" as well by Christians: "rabbinic Judaism has always been compatible with Christian misogyny."⁶³ The focus on the role of the feminine in defining the boundaries of group identity also touches on a central cause for the persistence of the Judeo-Christian patriarchy Werfel rejected.

With these theories of Judeo-Christian patriarchy in mind, this paper seeks to present alternative, feminist models that were derived from mystical readings of religious traditions. Specifically, Werfel's interpretation of the work of Martin Buber draws together Christian, Jewish and other religious practices through the theme of universality, challenging deterministic interpretations which limit the effect of either tradition to patriarchal structures. As I will argue, Werfel's expansion of Buber's Jewish mystical perspective enables him to undermine contemporary gender relations and universalize the experience of creative spiritualism.

61. See Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) for more on the invention of Jewish stereotypes and their reception by Jewish people.

62. Sharon Faye Koren, "Kabbalistic Physiology: Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides, and Moses de Leon on Menstruation," *AJS REVIEW* 28 no.2 (2004): 327

63. Michael Satlow, "Try to Be a Man: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity," *The Harvard Theological Review* 89 no. 1 (Jan., 1996): 20.

Often considered a forerunner in Jewish Gender Studies, Paula E. Hyman's writing on Jews and gender, beginning in the 1980s, is more concerned with the effects of such traditions on gender relations and sexuality. Specifically, Hyman's thematizes a range of secular as well as religious factors that shaped Jewish gender relations and images of Jews and Jewish women in terms of femininity.⁶⁴ Marion Kaplan, a pioneer of Jewish-German gender history during the 1970s, has edited a recent volume with Deborah Dash Moore on feminist Jewish Scholarship (2010), indicating the strength of this approach in the near past as well as insisting upon its current relevancy.⁶⁵

It is true that within the past decade, there has been significant research in the area of Jewish masculinity, though few historians engaged in this discussion are ready to apply a truly relational approach to gender that considers masculinity as well as femininity. Instead, there has been a noticeable attempt to treat Jewish men in isolation from women. In 2005, at the first conference dedicated to the topic of German Jewish gender and masculinity, lead organizer Benjamin Baader reminded participants to consider women and gender relations as well. Other speakers expressed a similar hope that in the future, greater attention will be paid to points of intersection between Jewish culture and the projects of German feminists and other marginalized groups.⁶⁶

The current study engages directly with Benjamin Baader's concerns by presenting a range of German-speaking male Jewish identities and their connections to feminist ideologies. I will consider a wide range of literature on male Jewish subjects in order to foster a better understanding of the concerns and coping strategies of these men during the first three decades

64. For one such example, see Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Washington: Washington University Press, 1995).

65. Marion Kaplan and Deborah Dash Moore, eds. *Gender and Jewish History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

66. Paul Lerner, "Conference Report."

of the twentieth century. An important point of departure for this study is Daniel Boyarin's work on Zionist masculinism. Boyarin identifies the Zionist movement that Werfel was first exposed to in Prague in the 1910s as a hyper-masculine turning point in western Jewish culture. He argues that Zionism, in response to effeminate perceptions of Jewry, rejected the non-physical, 'passive' scholarly activities that had developed in Jewish tradition along with Torah study.⁶⁷

Similar to Boyarin's argument are studies that distinguish between other types of masculinity among Jews, some of which focus on the Jewish absorption of western or Christian androcentricism during various periods, from Antiquity to the present day.⁶⁸ In a recent paper, Stefanie Schuler-Springorum has called for further consideration of alternate Jewish masculinities which rejected mainstream chauvinism. According to Paul Lerner, her work as well as Benjamin Baader's reveal the feminist side of the German-speaking male of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ Similarly, my own research into twentieth century German-speaking Europe will present alternative and feminist visions of male identity.

The Jewish Modern and German-speaking Jewry

There are several key resources on German-speaking, European and, more specifically, Austrian Jewry that have informed the present study. Of particular value is Marsha Rozenblit's research into the position of Austrian Jews during WWI. Rozenblit considers the reception of the war in terms of relations between Jews and non-Jews, as well as western and eastern Jews. She

67. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 273-274.

68. See Benjamin M. Baader, "Rabbinic Study, Self-Improvement, and Philanthropy: Gender and the Refashioning of Jewish Voluntary Associations in Germany, 1750-1870," in *Philanthropy, Patronage, and Civil Society: Experiences from Germany, Great Britain, and North America*, ed. Thomas Adam (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Satlow's article "Try to Be a Man" highlights the similarities between Christian masculinity and Talmudic rationalism; Daniel Boyarin's discussion of Zionism as phallus in *Unheroic Conduct* and Matti Bunzl's recent monograph *Symptoms of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) highlight the development of the masculine identity of Viennese Jewish and Queer men.

69. Paul Lerner, "Conference Report."

contextualizes changing attitudes to the war and the ranges of responses within a multi-cultural framework that emphasizes political and social encounters between various groups.⁷⁰

Following a similar thread, Spector's work employs the theme of cultural transmission and de-territorialisation to explain the tension brought about by aspects of modernity, as experienced by the Jewish Prague literati.⁷¹ In a broader study of the development of modern Czech Jewry from the late 1980s, Hillel J. Kieval considers Jewish reactions to nationalist movements, tracing the development of Zionist and other calls for national and collective autonomy in the Bohemian territories.⁷² Kieval places Jewish history in direct conversation with the dominant political atmosphere of largely non-Jewish areas, providing another image of cross-cultural exchanges.

Both Yfaat Weiss and Steven Aschheim have presented surveys of Jew-German hybrid interactions, grounded in the notion of cultural exchanges. They have considered the absorption of non-Jewish culture and its effects on the formation of a particularly Jewish European Identity. Aschheim concentrates on both the Jewish interpretation of the German Nietzschean philosophical traditions, as well social and cultural tensions between eastern and western Jews.⁷³ Similarly, Weiss considers encounters between western and eastern Jewish cultures, each group's collective image, and the images they construct of their Jewish neighbours.⁷⁴

70. Marsha Rozenblit, *Reconstructing National Identity: The Jews of Hapsburg Austria during World War I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

71. Spector, "Introduction," *Prague Territories*, 19. Spector discusses territorial metaphors employed to describe the diversity of Jewish Prague artists in diaspora. He explains that "Jewish authors saw themselves as 'precariously suspended between territories with no firm ground beneath their feet'" (20).

72. Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*.

73. Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1982).

74. Yfaat Weiss, *Ethnicity and Citizenship: German and Polish Jews between 1933-1940* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 2000).

The idea of hybridity and transmission is central to Hapsburg Jewish history, as anxiety over national identity was especially salient to Jewish artists living in multiethnic cities such as Prague before WWI. In an attempt to ground themselves in Jewish tradition, Werfel and many of his friends looked to neighbouring groups of eastern Jewish immigrants and Yiddish speakers. The Pragers' ambiguous attitudes towards the Yiddish language and eastern Jewry in general have already been discussed at length by Spector, providing insight into Jewish self-perception and identity construction during the early twentieth century period.⁷⁵

Writing the Self: Jewish Languages and Subaltern Resistance

In Stanley Corngold's commentary on Deleuze and Guattari's book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, he argues for an expansive understanding of language and literature as inadvertently participating in dominant structures. Corngold explains that literary language is something that may "constitute a national consciousness always in the process of dissolving outside its frame."⁷⁶ Similarly, the act of writing fiction in particular, the central vehicle of expression for Werfel, can be taken as a boundary-defying, spiritualizing act; for this reason, Werfel's literature will be considered alongside other cultural systems that engaged with the politicized idea of sexuality and femininity. This paper agrees with Corngold's view of dominant cultures as unstable, ambiguous entities, and explores the ways through which literature participates in processes that destabilize notions of fixity.

The political value presented by different genres of literature has been explored by Germanists, specifically in relation to emancipation and gender relations. Marti Lybeck's recent dissertation considers some of the feminist ideas in circulation before lesbianism was clarified as

75. Spector, *Prague Territories*. Spector begins to look at the adoption of Yiddish by German-speaking Jews in Prague (85) and pays special attention to Kafka's turn towards Yiddish language and theatre (88-90).

76. Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces: Franz Kafka's* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 91.

a category during the Weimar Republic. During the same period, Werfel's unique political views were also difficult to articulate. Reflecting Lybeck's conviction, Werfel's literature offers the best expression of a position that was not yet formalized by mainstream society, despite the many parallels it shares with other influential thinkers. Lybeck explains that many radical feminists imagined a genderless performance as the basis for altering social dynamics to achieve greater gender parity.⁷⁷ I will show how Werfel's own project reflects many of these feminist notions of asexual performance, and how his method of articulation, like these sexually "subversive" feminist contemporaries, was through literary fiction.

Lybeck's study explores fiction as a meaningful genre that encapsulates the hopes of reformers, in order to understand ideas about the modern sexual subject itself. David Biale supports this view of text and shapes his own understanding of Jewish sexuality around a sample of Jewish literature.⁷⁸ Both Biale's and Lybeck's studies emphasize that the historical value of text lies not only in its ability to speak to the experiences and intimate views of their Jewish subjects, but in shaping these experiences as well.⁷⁹ Following this method, I hope to shed light on the turbulent politics of Werfel's generation by interrogating the literary record of thoughts and goals that motivated and shaped the life of the author and both his German and English readership.

As Biale observes, the topic of sexuality and Judaism are often combined with a certain assessment of that culture as either positive or negative, sexual or non-sexual.⁸⁰ I will turn to the wealth of literature addressing sexuality and feminism in German-speaking Europe, and in

77. Marti Lybeck, "Gender Sexuality and Belonging: Female Homosexuality in Germany," PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007, 32.

78. See David Biale's Introduction to *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (London: University of California Press, 1997) for his discussion of popular representations of Jewish sexuality, and Chapter one for his analysis of biblical texts which present a non-binary image of the same.

79. Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 7.

80. Biale, "Introduction: Dilemmas of Desire," *Eros and the Jews*.

particular to Tracie Matysik's monograph *Reforming the Moral Subject*, to clarify contemporary valuations of sexual expression. Matysik presents an intellectual history of the early feminist movement for sexual reform that emphasizes the philosophical traditions that underpinned different views of sexuality and the manifestation of these views in society through proposed ethics reforms.⁸¹

Recent work on German sexology, the homosexual and women's rights movements, firmly connects sexuality and ethics reform with social questions. A recent publication by Elena Mancini summarizes the legacy of German sexologist and homosexual rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld and positions him as a feminist reformer.⁸² Conversely, other studies concerning the identity construction of homosexual men often demonstrate how contemporary theories from sexology or psychoanalysis supported a popular patriarchal discourse.⁸³ Taking up Mancini's characterization of Hirschfeld, I will compare his position on femininity with Werfel's attempt to undermine patriarchal structures, demonstrating the influence of Hirschfeld's thought on members of Werfel's network of radical feminist thinkers.

Matysik's work will be especially helpful in exposing the influence of sexology on feminism, showing the ways through which science and psychoanalysis were used by activist women involved in Werfel's network, such as Helene Lange and Lou Andreas-Salomé.⁸⁴ Matysik's study, however, is not the first to argue that scientific or pseudo-scientific culture informed the activism of various contemporary thinkers interested in gender parity, asexuality

81. Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject : Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe 1890-1930*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

82. Elena Mancini, *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Quest for Sexual Freedom* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

83. See John Alexander Williams' discussion of the connection between homoeroticism and cultural superiority of German nationalists in his article, "Ecstasies of the Young: Sexuality, the Youth Movement, and Moral Panic in Germany on the Eve of the First World War," *Central European History* 34 (2001).

84. Matysik, Chapter 7 "Losses and Unlikely Legacies: Psychoanalysis and Femininity," in *Reforming the Moral Subject*.

and androgyny.⁸⁵ The wealth of research on this topic will be addressed with a strong focus on ideology as well as biography to support the intellectual connection I propose between these activists and Werfel and Buber.

Werfel's Utopian Literature and the Movement for Sexual Emancipation

It is challenging to gage the radical ideas and values expressed in Werfel's fiction against the actual limitations of his feminist and minority utopianism. His imagined reforms only become accessible as practical theories when they are considered alongside the contemporary activist literature of the many counter-cultural writers whose ideas he would have encountered. This paper takes the position that Werfel's future-oriented literature is not simply a revealing source for assessing attempted reforms, but in clarifying the shared reality and concerns that motivated many of contemporary German writers –often feminist, homosexual, Jewish or all three– in their struggle for equal rights.

Star of the Unborn will be treated with special attention as the culmination of Werfel's humanist thought. Chronologically more recent, *Star of the Unborn* will be read against some of Werfel's earlier works of short fiction, poetry and plays. Additionally, I integrate various essays by the author in my analysis in order to clarify his position on central themes and concepts related to femininity and sexuality. To fully address the historical significance of Werfel's thought, comparisons with broader trends and movements will be necessary. Publications by contemporary writers will be used to situate these ideas, and correspondence between different members of his generation will be interpreted to establish a variety of intellectual connections.

85. Other examples include Elena Mancini, Aldo Carotenuto's *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein between Freud and Jung* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), and John Kerr's *A Most Dangerous Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

Werfel's writing often explores sexual subjectivity and individuality, and these themes were also pervasive in the discourse of German-speaking reformers.⁸⁶ The struggle of individualism against both German, Czech, and Jewish nationalisms is therefore central to understanding the early century in Europe. In order to appreciate Werfel's anxiety about modern selfhood, this study engages with the postcolonial project of exploring various forms of agency and the hybridized nature of identity. Werfel's position as a member of Prague's Jewish bourgeoisie, an affluent German-speaking writer, and a Jewish citizen of a city that witnessed an outpouring of anti-Semitism after the 1890s, enabled him to occupy contradictory roles and to move through a series of power relations. While at times he enjoyed significant public influence, Werfel was also sensitive to the idea of censorship and persecution, and experienced these threats firsthand during the early 1930s when the rise of Nazism forced him into exile. Exemplifying the changing nature of subject-positions, Werfel demonstrated his sense of literary authority in the United States, where he resumed writing narratives that challenged hierarchical models of identity and sexuality.

The notion of an alternative masculinity as a means of negotiating oppression and uneven power relations certainly is one among many nuanced expressions of agency that are often identified in postcolonial histories of multi-ethnic societies. The ways in which sexual identity contributed to the work of writers from other minority groups is therefore of keen interest to this study. The classification of the goals of minority populations as either integrationist or secessionist do not apply to Werfel. Instead Werfel demanded what Winona Stevenson has linked to many aboriginal groups across the globe, "a different kind of coexistence strategy that

86. One example being Martin Buber's philosophical investigation of subjectivity in *I and Thou* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1923).

protects and enhances autonomy.”⁸⁷ Werfel’s approach to this solution involves a paradigmatic shift in masculinity that reconfigures conceptions of gender, sexuality, and other identity categories.

Werfel’s publications remain relatively consistent in terms of their feminist, spiritual, view of human capacity, and there are few significant turning points in his career. Exposure to different systems of thought at different points in his life allowed Werfel to consistently build towards a comprehensive vision – as expressed in his novel *Star of the Unborn*. A chronological survey of events and ideas, therefore, suggests different causes for development rather than the development of difference within Werfel’s body of work. A chronology centred on key publications, personal experiences, and urban geography, following Werfel from his student days in Prague, to Vienna, and finally to Los Angeles, will be combined with thematic divisions to best illustrate the development of Werfel’s theory on sexuality and human identity.

As Harrowitz and Hyams suggest, one can better understand the relationship between non-literary texts which promulgated anti-Semitic and misogynist theories and literary texts that were created in their wake, by considering their context and initial reception.⁸⁸ Through an inter-textual approach to Werfel, I will position him within the early twentieth century discourse on femininity and misogynist anti-Semitism, especially in relation to Otto Weininger’s popular text on the subject. As a result of this comparative approach, the appeal and pervasiveness of Weininger’s argument and the relative silencing of its intellectual foils – represented by Werfel, Buber and other humanist, feminist sympathizers – will be drawn out.

The first chapter will treat some of the more influential ideas in circulation in the German-speaking world before WWI, addressing broad philosophical changes and their impact

87. Winona Stevenson, “‘Ethnic’ Assimilates ‘Indigenous’: A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 13 no.1 (1998): 43.

88. Harrowitz and Hyams, “Introduction,” in *Jews and Gender*, 6.

on Werfel and several of his Jewish-German contemporaries. I will pay special attention to Otto Weininger's polarizing piece *Sex and Character* (1902) along with the different attempts made by minority men to reconcile their identity with the hateful racism and misogyny of the Weiningerian model. Werfel would have encountered Weiningerian thought during his university career in Prague in the 1910s, after the publication of Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1902); Martin Buber, the Hassidic theologian, entered the world of Prague students through a series of lectures around the same time.

Werfel's specific response to Weininger will be illustrated through a theological discussion which centres on the work of his mentor, Martin Buber whom he met around 1911 in Prague. I will argue Martin Buber's Jewish mysticism played an important role in Werfel's intellectual development by providing a non-binary worldview through which he withstood Weiningerian philosophy.

Werfel's Jewish expressionist colleagues, many of whom were equally dedicated to pacifist, anti-nationalist issues, differed with Werfel in their belief in a polarized reality. A comparative look at Werfel's contemporaries in this chapter will expose the subtle ways through which they internalized Weiningerian gender values and Weininger's dualistic worldview in order to assess the cultural value of individuals.

The contrast between Werfel and his literary colleagues will point to the simultaneous existence of multiple Jewish masculinities, the ideas that shape them, and, importantly, will help clarify the Buberian strategies through which Werfel separated his ideas from his intellectual climate of a general expressionist misogyny. Werfel's pacifist poetry from this period will be analyzed as an example of his early Buberian, anti-chauvinist worldview and unique acceptance of femininity.

The next section considers the ways through which members of marginalized associations – namely Jewish and homosexual – that were active in Prague adopted the same Weiningerian framework as their enemies to create places where they could practice the principle of masculine action. This second chapter also seeks to illustrate how various minority groups engaged with binary ideas that sought to enforce their sense of marginality; it presents several divergent though contemporaneous visions of sexuality and erotic desire in order to situate the non-binary, feminist vision that is expressed by Buber and Werfel.

Another challenge to Weiningerian thinking came from a small, radical branch of the feminist movement, represented by Lou Andreas-Salomé's erotic spiritualism and the experiences of Werfel's wife Alma. The third and final chapter will argue for the existence of invisible networks of feminist thinkers outside of the actual movement that served as forums for the exchange of counter-cultural ideas and philosophies of resistance. Werfel and Alma, who had no formal affiliations with the feminist movement, represent a surprisingly similar understanding of sexuality. I propose that Werfel held much in common with feminist thought, to a much greater extent than the existing literature has suggested. The final discussion of this section attempts to draw these feminist themes together through a close reading of *Star of the Unborn*, a piece he completed towards the end of his life and career – which, in fact, ended around the same day in 1945.

Chapter 1: Creativity, Action, and the Austrian Avant-garde

For one may doubt, first, whether there are any opposites at all...

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

From the Sonnenstein asylum near Dresden in 1893, patient and former judge Paul Schreber began to study the “the limits of psychiatric expertise and power.” His thesis concerned “a transgression of the clinical mandate ... the participation of medical practitioners in the domain of legal questions.”¹ The collapsing of medical and police powers at the turn of the century in Central Europe was reflected in Schreber’s auditory hallucinations – delusions which Germanist Eric Santner insist hold a kernel of truth.² Santner interprets Schreber’s trauma as the result of unequal and invasive power relations, he writes, “Schreber was traumatized.. by exposure to particular forms of inter-subjective power.. the possession and elaboration of knowledge about the body and its development and its functions.”³ In Schreber’s case, psychosis was triggered by the loss of his own power through binary, medical understandings of health and illness to which he was subjected. Not coincidental but perhaps surprising is the fact that Schreber expressed his denigration through the language of feminization and judaization, characterizing his loss of autonomy as feminine and Jewish.⁴

Schreber’s reaction to institutional intrusions into his private body and sexuality offers insight into contemporary understandings of marginality and difference and the construction of the identity-categories used to determine them. Schreber’s case was also interpreted by contemporaries as a libidinal crisis related to homosexuality, indicating that notions of pathology at the turn of the century in German-speaking Central Europe often hinged on the axis of queer,

1. Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Paul Schreber’s Secret History of Modernity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 78.

2. *Ibid.*, 81.

3. *Ibid.*, 77.

4. *Ibid.*, 55.

Jewish and feminine. Any contemporary defence of individualism that invokes one of these interrelated categories necessarily inserts itself into a discourse of sexuality, social identity, and the experience of marginalization.

The late Hapsburg Empire presents us with a society where sexual, gender and religious identities were expressed and debated in dynamic ways. The various representations of femininity in the works of counter-cultural Austrian-Jewish authors such as Franz Werfel will help us gauge their relationship to the power dynamics that inspired Schreber's critique. Werfel's writing in particular presents us with an egalitarian framework that reconciles conventional fault lines and perceptions of difference. This chapter will argue that Werfel questioned gendered perceptions of subjectivity in an effort to refute many of the popular theories used to justify uneven power relations. More specifically, Werfel's critique of the hierarchical treatment of humanity is based on his affirmative treatment of sexuality and femininity. His non-binary appreciation of gender and sexuality stands in stark contrast to the attitudes held by many contemporary Austrian-Jewish left-wing activists. In particular, discussions by Karl Kraus and Kurt Hiller, both Jewish and homosexual authors, will serve as useful points of contrast to Werfel. Because Kraus and Hiller present their own Jewish and homosexual identities as non-feminine, we will see that they are complicit in the broader cultural project to pathologize certain forms of sexuality and, almost consistently, femininity.

Sexual deviancy was particularly threatening to popular ideas of progress that were circulating throughout German-speaking Central Europe, and the presence of 'outsider' groups was believed to shape and limit collective cultural output. This anxiety was acutely articulated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century not only in scientific and legal discussions, but in cultural and social analyses as well. This chapter will introduce the popular

philosophy of Otto Weininger, which combined multiple disciplinary approaches where ‘deviancy’ represented a type of pathology or anomaly; importantly, Weininger specifies that the masculinity of these individuals, who range from homosexuals and foreigners to Jews, had been tainted or feminized.

By framing rejection and persecution in terms of a Weiningerian understanding of sexuality, we can more clearly illuminate the different coping strategies of men such as Werfel, who expressed a heightened awareness to the idea of marginalization. In the context of early twentieth century Prague, Werfel’s Jewish identity likely drew his attention to the threat of social exclusion and the categories used to justify this. However, he was most anxious about secularizing processes that threatened to alienate individuals from God. In order to connect mankind to the divine and to each other, he developed an inclusive conception of human identity that was based on the idea of a shared spiritual capacity.⁵ Quite uniquely for its time, his published poetry from WWI rejected popular Weiningerian ideas about otherness that were based on sexual difference and femininity. This series of poems was composed in a militarized atmosphere that allowed for the more extreme actualization of denigrating theories of “otherness” that had culminated in the action-based imperatives of Weiningerian thinking.

Werfel’s poetry reacted against mainstream Weiningerian attitudes by offering an oppositional discourse to this popular valuation of action. Karl Kraus and Kurt Hiller serve as valuable foils to Werfel in terms of their potentially doubly-marginalizing position as homosexual Jewish men, and their differing reception of Weininger. This chapter will argue that Kraus and Hiller’s work compliments Weiningerian philosophy, reflecting its popularity as well as highlighting the exceptional nature of Werfel’s alternative, anti-Weiningerian worldview.

5. For one example of these views, see “On Man’s True Happiness,” in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 38, 43.

The following discussion therefore presents a comparative look at Weiningerian and anti-Weiningerian perspectives, with the goal of developing a more precise understanding of the ways in which conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity shaped attitudes towards action and creativity, enabling certain power relations and inspiring different forms of self-definition on the part of Jewish men in the late Hapsburg Empire. Werfel's decision to express himself through literature rather than more aggressive forms of action reflects a view of creativity that flowed from a more feminist appreciation of sexuality. The first section considers the connection between attitudes towards sexuality and creative expression; it deals with two models of creativity, one formulated in elitist, binary terms by Weininger, and the second, offering a radical humanist vision of a universal capacity for creativity, inspired by Werfel's mentor the Jewish theologian Martin Buber.

The next section addresses the reification of Weininger's model during WWI by interpreting the treatment of eastern peoples in two contexts: on the Galician war front where Werfel served in the Austrian army, and in Prague, where many eastern European Jews (the *Ostjuden*) sought refuge during the war. This chapter concludes with a close reading of Werfel's poetry and essays against Kraus's and Hiller's cultural criticism; this comparison will demonstrate how different attitudes towards femininity and creativity were internalized and expressed through either politically oriented literary activism, or culturally oriented literary products.

Following philosopher Allan Janik's suggestion, it will be valuable to consider the structures rather than the conclusions of arguments when comparing texts and thinkers such as Werfel, Kraus and Hiller.⁶ The pervasive, almost invisible system that Werfel would come to

6. Allan Janik, quoted in Harrowitz and Hyams, "Introduction," in *Jews and Gender*, 14.

identify as oppressive was Weiningerian in nature, and derived its power from a fundamental masculine/feminine binary. We will then turn to the seminal text *Sex and Character* and to a closer consideration of the dualistic model that coloured the thinking of the culturally-engaged Jewish literati.

The Weiningerian Complex: Sexuality and Creativity as Categories in Human Life

The publication of Otto Weininger's influential book *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character) in 1903 represents much of the discussion against 'otherness' from this period. Prior to Weininger, German anthropologists had already pathologized non-white and Jewish people as deviant and promoted a similar view of 'sexually deviant' people.⁷ Weininger's goal was to build on existing scientific theory and develop these ideas, through selective use, into a cultural critique. His methodology combined nineteenth century biomedicine with the German idealism of Kant in a novel way that was well received and internalized by much of the German-speaking public, including not only an audience receptive to anti-Semitism and misogyny, but also members of minority groups who defended their own position in reference to Weiningerian conceptions of gender and race.⁸

Harrowtitz and Hyams have emphasized the importance of Weiningerian theories among the philosopher's immediate contemporaries to which Werfel's Jewish expressionist network was no exception.⁹ The appeal of Weiningerian philosophy to Jewish thinkers is equally related to 'non-Jewish' and 'Jewish culture,' which we must remember are not so cleanly divided. By

7. Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 143, 240, 18.

8. Chandak Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 2000), 10.

9. Harrowitz and Hyams, "Introduction," in *Jews and Gender*, 5-6.

1897, fear of Jews had replaced that of Germans in Czech Bohemia.¹⁰ The Jewish intellectuals in Prague who matured at the turn of the century, including members of the Prague circle, would have felt pressured to address pervasive anti-Jewish prejudices. It is natural that in order to define and defend themselves in relation to the Weiningerian ideas from which these negative perceptions flowed, many Jewish intellectuals applied a Weiningerian, hierarchical interpretation of human difference.

In *Sex and Character*, Weininger posits complimentary sexual and racial categories that contrast the Jewish-feminine with the Christian-masculine.¹¹ These categories universalized the qualitative ‘degeneracies’ that scientists had been employing to explain cultural and ethnic differences and related pathologies. As we will see, Werfel’s war poetry interprets the same qualities as positive strengths, and determines, in defiance of Weininger, their presence to the same extent in all humans; notably, his early poems privilege femininity as a positive, universal quality.

By WWI, anthropology and biology had already sexualized certain races. Jewish people, even men, were linked with femininity due to the perception of their ‘cultural backwardness.’¹² Weininger’s metaphysics was clearly influenced by contemporary scientific theory, since much of the discrimination directed at Jews following emancipation was centred on a thesis contained in Weininger’s text *Sex and Character*, which viewed even acculturated Jews as highly feminized.¹³ Despite being a Jewish philosopher, albeit one who converted to Protestantism, Weininger’s publication contributed to the broadening of anti-Semitism by arguing for the

10. Howarth, “The Erosion of *Gemeinschaft*,” 16.

11. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, trans. and ed. G.P. Putnam’s Sons (New York, 1906). 7-8.

12. Sander Gilman, *Inscribing the Other* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 199; Harrowtitz and Hyams, *Jews and Gender*, 14.

13. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 284; Benjamin Baader, *Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Cultural in Germany*, 132. The effect of *Bildung* on practicing Jews, as Baader points out, actually narrowed “the gap between women and their male counterparts.”

abstraction of empirical research into general ideology. Through his philosophical enquiry, science-based anti-Semitic theories were abstracted and transformed into a more general, metaphysical worldview.¹⁴

Weininger divided sexuality into binary categories, generating a system that prevented any sense of a shared human nature and that was at odds with the radical humanist position that Werfel had arrived by rejecting essentialist models. Notions of physicality and creativity are central to understanding the differences between Werfel's Buberian humanism and Weiningerian gender theory, and the ways through which these themes structured different attitudes towards women and Jewish people. One way of discussing these differences is by recalling that Werfel and Weininger each represent a very different side of Nietzschean philosophy. Weininger, following historian Stephen Aschheim's definition, can be considered as part of the masculinist school of Nietzschean interpreters whose emphasis on will-to-power and self-realization generated elitist notions of identity categories.¹⁵

Despite the positivism of the late nineteenth century ceding to a metaphysics of phenomenology, Weininger's presentation of femininity as a cultural problem ensured that the bigoted attitudes of the outdated sciences remained relatively stable during this transition. His disapproval of female sexuality was exacerbated by the women's movement, and, in an attitude shared by Kraus and Hiller, he feared that his generation would welcome a matriarchal revival.¹⁶ Weininger contributed to misogynist theory by radically essentializing the identity of gender to the cellular level. He extended the idea of discrete physical attributes signifying feminine

14. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 26-27.

15. Stephen Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 95, 59.

16. Harrowitz and Hyams, *Jews and Gender*, 17, 21.

difference to create a thoroughly feminine physiology;¹⁷ hence his claim that “every cell of the organism has a sexual character,” either male or female.¹⁸

Weininger’s use of binary categories in his discussion of sexuality presents the politically loaded categories of Jew/non-Jew, masculine/feminine, elite/deficient, and conflates these exact types with real women, real Jews, and real men.¹⁹ Werfel and Weininger’s positions are irreconcilable due to their very different attitudes towards femininity, which each derives from their evaluations of physicality. According to Weininger women are prone to an overly sexual existence that prevents them from contributing to culture and society in a meaningful, creative way. Weininger’s fear of sexual expression can be contrasted with Werfel’s belief that this was useful to personal development. Unlike Werfel, Weininger believed that the feminine preoccupation with physicality stunted cultural growth, preventing the development of abstract, conceptual ideas. Due to her obsession with sexual expression, Weininger believed that women simply obeys their most innate instincts.²⁰ As proof of this female degeneracy, he cites hysteria as an exclusively female condition that best exhibits the degraded, sexualized nature of the female subject. According to Weininger, this hysterical, overly-sexual condition was a constant part of female identity.²¹ Femininity, following this argument, is an inherently and consistently negative attribute that prevents creative development.

Weininger’s model positions physicality and creativity as polar opposites, and presents the latter as a necessary ingredient in cultural improvement. To illustrate his point, he explains the powerful distinction between creative and rational intelligence, pairing each with a form of

17. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 71.

18. Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 17.

19. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 8

20. Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 231; *Ibid.*, 232.

21. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 104.

sexuality.²² Weininger formulates the connection between intelligence and sex in racist, gendered terms, applying misogynist values and the trope of effeminacy to certain groups of men. In contrast, Werfel is strongly dismissive of these chauvinist distinctions.

Creative and rational intelligence were also commonly distinguished within popular discourse during Werfel's time, and each was understood as having an entirely separate effect on culture. Rational intelligence was usually associated with Jewish and female intelligence, and devalued as un-inventive, opportunistic – overall, ineffectual.²³ Conversely, creative intelligence was understood by Weininger and those who adhered to his theory, such as Kraus and Hiller, as the most powerful expression of intelligence. Furthermore, creativity was viewed as an exclusively masculine quality that was commonly denied to Jews.²⁴ Kraus and Hiller managed to expand this last stipulation to include Jewish men, and in doing so neither rejected the exclusive, essentialist position at the heart of this model. The emphasis on creative thinking by such cultural reformers resulted in the identification and denigration of supposedly feminine, uncreative individuals.

Weininger's broader intention was to reform society by studying the sources of uncreative thoughts in order to better understand the lack of genius and the degraded culture of his era. He believed that the cause of the modern condition was the feminized nature of society.²⁵ Femininity and Jewishness, according to Weininger, are very similar, and the degenerate direction of contemporary culture was believed to be embodied by each. The idea of the effeminate male Jew stems from the perception of Jewish nature as overly sexual or physical;

22. Sander Gilman's monograph *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), summarizes Weininger's view of Jew intelligence (123-125).

23. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 57.

24. Gilman, *Smart Jews*, 28-29.

25. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 45.

these ‘negative impulses’ are thought to prevent active, artistic genius.²⁶ According to *Sex and Character*, female and Jewish sexuality are both passive and strictly physical, and therefore disconnected from abstract or spiritual insight.²⁷ Both the woman and the Jew lack, in Weininger’s words, Kantian reason.²⁸ According to this theory, the female, like the homosexual and the Jew, is passive and prefers inactive reception.²⁹ This form of sexual passivity was extended to the political sphere and represents a non-participatory type of anti-citizen.³⁰

Creative intelligence was crucial to popular conceptions of culture during this period, and importantly, was understood as exclusive to and only accessible by so-called masculine individuals. Kraus and Hiller, as will be demonstrated later on, exemplify this elitism while Werfel represents its total subversion. Werfel’s egalitarianism is strikingly different from the Weiningerian vision of masculinity as the perfected form of creativity.³¹ The ideal male type, according to Weininger, is a fully free subject, able to think both empirically and conceptually.³² Jews and women are limited to empiricism because they are not fully free as subjects, and subsequently, as thinkers.³³ Weininger claims “... the Jew, like the woman, is denied the highest degree of genius” and “both lack in greatness.”³⁴ The cause of their denigration is linked to Weininger’s denial of physicality: in his elaboration on the Jewish predisposition towards femininity, he charges Judaism with practicing obedience to an external law concerned with

26. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 62-64.

27. Ibid., 7; Sengoopta argues that Weininger reduces women to sexuality, and that both Jews and women are sex-obsessed, Women thinking only of coitus and of winning the attention of men to achieve this (64); he claims that Weininger equates Jewish and feminine (67).

28. Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 277.

29. Ibid., 237.

30. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 229.

31. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 52.

32. Ibid., 58.

33. Ibid., 63. This is referred to as the “lack of an autonomous self” in Kantian terms.

34. Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 285.

material condition that leads to an un-mystical view of the world.³⁵ As a result of this perceived focus on materiality, Weininger connects Jewishness to a lack of subjective consciousness, bluntly stating: “The Jew has no self, no intrinsic value.”³⁶

Jewish men such as Kraus and Hiller, who had internalized anti-Semitic conceptions of their own intelligence, have noted the lack of original cultural contributions from their own group. The lamentation, “We Jews seem predestined to copy others’ ideas,” summarizes the negative self-perception that presents Jewishness as parasitic on the superior, creative culture of Germans.³⁷ As Yfaat Weiss has suggested, many Jews in Central Europe during this period followed the tragic “impulse of minorities,” meaning that they sought “essentialist explanations for their cultural differences.”³⁸ These explanations only intensified the perceived need for masculine-aggressive action, which contributed to the degradation of femininity and its related categories of identity.

Rather than drawing on Weiningerian categories, Werfel adopted a model of creativity that undermined the need for masculine action and allowed for a less active expression of creativity, based on a positive valuation of femininity. He turned to the writings of Martin Buber, a Jewish theologian who was active in Prague in the early 1910s. While Werfel’s involvement in the Jewish community of Prague led to his encounter with the theologian, he put Buberian theories to broader use, developing a wider application of his mystical theories that went beyond that of his cultural Zionist friends.³⁹ Buber presented Werfel with a strongly humanistic and anti-Weiningerian conceptualization of feminine/masculine and creative/uncreative qualities. In his own formulation of creativity and femininity, Buber followed a mystical tradition that was based

35. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 63.

36. Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 278.

37. Gilman, *Smart Jews*, 103. Here, Gilman is quoting Victor Adler; *Ibid.*, 103.

38. Yfaat Weiss, *Ethnicity and Citizenship*, 9.

39. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 115.

on readings of Kabbalah, a collection of Jewish mystical texts. In his interpretation of Jewish mysticism, Buber applied an anti-masculinist and as we will see, strongly eastern perspective in a way that defied the hierarchical ordering of power.

Buberian Anti-Dualism and the Mystical Model of Creativity

My reading of Werfel will demonstrate that his own work drew heavily from Buber's early writings. Werfel's emphasis on the non-dualistic aspects of Buber's thought allowed him to ground his understanding of creative expression in a non-hierarchical structure that did not devalue femininity or passivity; this suited both the feminist content of his work and his decision to express himself through cultural products rather than through more aggressive forms of action. Buber presented Werfel with a highly unconventional interpretation of Hasidism that decentralized concepts of power through an egalitarian gender framework. In a series of writings dating from 1906, Buber began to address the subject of Hasidism.⁴⁰ He valorizes spirituality as a human quality, stating that all humans, without exception, possess spiritual abilities.⁴¹ Whereas traditional Hasidism privileges the cultivation of a connection with the divine by Jewish men, Buber consciously applied an egalitarian understanding of spirituality that universalized this spiritual capacity.⁴²

By establishing spirituality as a general human condition, Buber equipped Werfel with the necessary premise from which he could reconsider and reject the elitist definition of creativity that Weininger had presented. According to Buber, the actual process of creative

40. Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 2.

41. Martin Buber, "The Life of the Hasidim," in *Hasidism and Modern Man*, ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 101. Originally published in 1908.

42. Shaul Magrid, "From Theosophy to Midrash: Lurianic Exegesis and the Garden of Eden" *AJS REVIEW* 22, no. 1 (1997): 56. In the Lurianic tradition, the divine effluence is transferred first to the male and only to the female through him; See Moshe Idel's discussion of Lurianic Kabbalah in *Hasidism* (3) for his comments on Buber's departure from traditional Hasidism.

activity is possible since the human soul is a reflection of the divine.⁴³ The human soul enables individuals to imitate the divine's most unique ability: engaging in the creative process. Because this process is non-gendered, Werfel expressed no anxiety about his lack of political involvement – the Weiningerian indication of masculine creativity. In fact, his apoliticism was rooted in a highly political, feminist reading of Buber that flowed from a non-hierarchical conception of creative ability.

The Buberian conception of creativity that is presented throughout Werfel's WWI poetry is remarkably different from Weininger's in that it has greater universality. In a 1930 essay, Werfel exposes his Buberian influence when he reminds readers that all humans, women as well as men, are made in the image of God and therefore every individual therefore possesses the divine gift of creativity.⁴⁴ Creativity, following Buber's model, is a general human ability that is not restricted to a particular group of people, as Weininger believed. As a result of this egalitarian framework, there is no difference in value between masculine or feminine, active or passive, expressions of creativity.

For Buber, the creative moment is epitomized by the mystical encounter whose "path is creation."⁴⁵ The creative path may be followed through one's humanist attitude that emphasizes love and care above other concerns, for "so much the more can he give to the other."⁴⁶ This non-aggressive form of creativity follows a distinctively eastern tradition of Kabbalistic interpretation. According to Mordechai Rotenberg, such eastern accounts tend towards non-aggressive, non-hierarchical models of creation.⁴⁷

43. Buber, "The Life of the Hasidim," 107.

44. Werfel, "Realism and Inwardness," in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 66.

45. Buber, "The Life of the Hasidim," 106.

46. *Ibid.*, 112.

47. Mordechai Rotenberg, *Creativity and Sexuality: A Kabbalistic Perspective* (2005: London: Transaction Publishers), 43.

Rotenberg's discussion of non-aggressive cosmogonies sheds light on an interpretative tradition that explains the peculiarities of Buber's conception of creativity. The concept of creativity in eastern cosmogonic myths, regarding the creation of the world or universe, is distinctly less masculinist than in western Christian stories. Rotenberg observes that in many western cosmogonies, the initial act of creation occurs through a "penetrating action," that results in the emergence of the created object. He terms this act of creation an aggressive, masculinist will, or phallic-erection.⁴⁸ Conversely, the Kabbalistic counterpart of this Christian myth is much more conciliatory and includes an act of contraction and emanation, suggesting the non-hierarchical notions of cooperation and unity rather than forceful action and imposed change.⁴⁹

The relatively aggressive form of creativity exemplified by western myths of origin is the same that is mobilized by Weininger when he stresses the active cultivation and expression of creative intelligence as the source of personal and cultural improvement.⁵⁰ Weininger's favoured expression of creativity is through action and aggressive change. An individual's capacity for creative action is determined by the degree of his or her masculinity or femininity, which is linked to the biological body. Avoiding the deterministic implications of such biological theories, Werfel located creativity within the human soul – a soul that is universal –thereby undermining the connection between masculinity and creativity, as well as the importance of creative action.

Appropriately, Werfel's activities as an author represent a feminist mode of creative expression that may be contrasted with more aggressive, masculinist activities. The very act of writing and reading that authors and their audiences engage in reflects the eastern creation process of contraction and emanation, suggested by the need for interpretation as well as expression. As a cultural product, literature requires what Rotenberg terms a passive or feminist

48. Ibid., 20, 23.

49. Ibid., 24.

50. Susan C. Anderson, "Otto Weininger's Masculine Utopia," *German Studies Review* 19 no.3 (1996): 437.

approach, necessarily incorporating diverging viewpoints through its interpretative necessity. Therefore the very medium of Werfel's literary argument parallels the theological structures underpinning its content.

Werfel uses Buber's erotic or ecstatic Nietzscheanism, which, according to Aschheim, is more receptive to femininity when compared to the Weiningerian approach, to expand a humanist and feminist platform through a less action-oriented means, such as literature.⁵¹ As evidence of Werfel's position against aggressive action or the "deed," Spector points to a statement by Werfel in 1917 that accuses action of discouraging "the passion for higher things."⁵² Kraus and Hiller, who must be distinguished from Werfel, utilized Weininger's masculinist model of creativity and encouraged the cultivation of genius by political action led by an elite.⁵³ The anxiety over the ability to shape culture through leadership and education distinguished these activists from Franz Werfel and was also present at a broader level during WWI. Before turning to Werfel, Kraus and Hiller, we will consider two case studies from WWI, both of which address popular Austrian attitudes towards culture and elitist perceptions of eastern peoples during the war.

Actualizing Weininger

Androcentrism in Ober Ost

During WWI, both the Austrian army and Jewish citizens of Prague attempted to lead a 'civilizing mission' against their eastern neighbours, echoing Weininger's binary method of categorization. As previously suggested, Weiningerian elitism was partly supported by the popular German notion of *Bildung*, or education. *Bildung* itself suggests a hierarchy of culture or

51. Aschheim, *Nietzsche Legacy*, 82, 59.

52. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 128-129.

53. Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 49.

identity, and as such, Buber's non-binary model did not encourage this form of aggressive "improvement." *Bildung* encapsulates the idea that the potential exists for degraded individuals, such as Jews and women, to improve themselves through a process that privileges one-sided acculturation. Even while the belief in cultural imitation presents the potential for social mobility, there is a degree of what Boyarin terms "masquerade colonialism," which acknowledges the ambiguities of colonial power relations as well as the negative connotations of processes of colonization.⁵⁴ Following Todd Presner's argument that *Bildung* was often applied as a prescriptive and exclusionary concept, it is easy to imagine how this popular conception of cultural improvement could be enacted through an elite-led, education-oriented cultural and social activism.⁵⁵

During the wartime campaign to 'reclaim' eastern Europe, German and Austrian armies applied their knowledge about pathology and femininity to different ethnic groups they encountered. Around 1916 on the Galician front, Werfel observed first-hand how Austrian soldiers behaved towards the *Ostjuden* and other civilians in occupied territories. Werfel's WWI poetry suggests that he rejected the developing military culture that actualized Weiningerian theories about degeneracy and intelligence. Attitudes towards eastern Jews and other allegedly culturally weak groups such as women and Slavs, serve as a useful barometer in gaging Weiningerian dispositions within the German-speaking military, as well as among Werfel and his Jewish expressionist contemporaries.

As we will see, Werfel's poetry engages with the idea that the labour carried out by WWI soldiers in the East was aggressive, masculinist and intolerant. There are countless examples of

54. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 280.

55. Lerner, "Jewish Masculinities."

the chauvinist beliefs and behaviour that fuelled supremacist German attitudes, but several are particularly relevant for our purpose. Germans encountered a relatively poor and unsanitary population, which they attributed to the essential character of the eastern Jewish population. In some instances, occupiers initiated projects that actually improved the conditions of eastern people, but as Aschheim reminds us, the negative perceptions of eastern Jewry that this missionary work helped shape is equally significant. The unclean state of many impoverished eastern Jews and their need for material relief was often viewed by German-speaking armies as representative of a deeper need for “cultural purification.”⁵⁶ A German soldier summarized this negative, essentialist attitude by describing the supposedly detrimental effect of *Ostjude* habits on the Polish population.⁵⁷

David Blackbourn’s study supports Werfel’s critique, arguing that control, even when exercised through destruction, was seen within the German tradition as creative and taken significant of civilization and culture.⁵⁸ Conversely, a people who are unable to control their environment – such as the Slavs, Jews, and Poles encountered in the *Ober Ost* administrative district in the Baltic that was under German military rule – were interpreted as unmanly.⁵⁹ Vejas Liulevicius supports this point when quoting a German officer observing Belarusians as “culturally very backward and indolent.”⁶⁰ My reading of Werfel will suggest that he understood this conception of culture as the key to legitimating control and the means for control in eastern

56. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 148.

57. *Ibid.*, 145.

58. See David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), especially Chapter 5, “Race and Reclamation.”

59. Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*, 246.

60. Vejas Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 121.

Europe. The elitist mentality of the campaign, as stated by one officer, that “we are the ones who bring *Bildung* and no one else,” is indicative of the uneven power relations practiced.⁶¹

The theatre of war pushed the Weiningerian reconceptualization of *Bildung* to a point where it could be used to justify violence and crime. It is within this wartime context that Werfel formulates his non-hierarchical views of sex and identity that would come to distinguish him during the wartime and interwar period. On the domestic front in Prague, similar masculinist attitudes prevailed as in *Ober Ost*. As we turn to the Jewish reception of *Ostjude* refugees during the war, we will see how Weiningerian ideas impacted relations between eastern and western Jews.

The masculinity complex that Werfel rejected in his poetry and elsewhere was a powerful worldview among Jews living in Prague, where an influx of refugees from the East were received during the war. In Prague alone, 72, 000 eastern Jewish refugees had settled by 1917, most of these coming from Galicia and Bukovina. The most desperate of the *Ostjuden* refugees to enter western Europe had settled in Bohemia, and mostly in Prague.⁶²

The Weiningerian model that was undoubtedly compatible with the eastern military campaigns of WWI called for a specific type of social activism. Following Blackburn's argument, aggressive action, related to the impulse to master nature, was part of German culture well before the twentieth century, and included the desire to shape the humans as well as the natural environment.⁶³ A similar preoccupation with action can be detected in various forms of activism carried out by elitist thinkers like Kraus and Hiller through their literary activism. To a certain extent, these preoccupations also affected Prague Jewry's relief efforts and their attempts to integrate the *Ostjuden* immigrants. Weiningerian concepts practiced in wartime actually

61. Ibid., 122.

62. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing National Identity*, 66.

63. Blackburn, *The Conquest of Nature*, 6, 14.

paralleled the attitudes of many well-meaning war-resisters; this comparison prevents confusion as to the masculinist implications of social and humanitarian activism as it was practiced by Kraus, Hiller and Werfel's Prague contemporaries.

In order to better understand the wider, Jewish appropriation of Weiningerian elitism, it must be stressed that Weininger's anti-Semitism was firmly grounded in a chauvinist, Nietzschean way of thinking that served as a common ground between men of minority and majority groups. Aschheim argues that German-speaking Jewish men during this period followed broader social trends in their widespread acceptance of Nietzscheanism.⁶⁴ In light of the early century popularity of Nietzsche, it is less surprising that Jewish responses to persecution during this period often proposed the 're-masculinization' of Jewish culture, echoing elitist, Weiningerian visions of creativity.

The Reception of Eastern Refugees in Prague

During WWI, the multi-ethnic Hapsburg army brought western Jews in contact with their eastern neighbours and Werfel, positioned in Galicia, would not have been able to avoid this encounter.⁶⁵ Many German-speaking Jews attempted to redefine their own position in society as cultured and masculine, vis-à-vis their eastern neighbours. In western German-speaking society, the *Ostjuden* exemplified an Asian element of Judaism, enforcing their view of eastern Europe as a 'cradle of barbarism'. This was a perspective shared by many well-meaning Austrian Jews whose acceptance of Weiningerian principles coloured their treatment of the *Ostjuden* and

64. Aschheim, *Nietzsche Legacy*, 95.

65. Marsha Rozenblit, *Reconstructing National Identity*, 82, 91.

encouraged them towards a form of ‘improvement’ that was premised on a negative understanding of the East and the feminine.⁶⁶

To the western Jewish imaginary, the *Ostjuden* represented “an unacceptable culture.” They were seen as strangers to Europe and came to be identified with a social pathology, lack of progress, and ‘ugliness’ that is visible in western discussions of the Yiddish language as a corrupt and lowly derivation of German.⁶⁷ Similarly, German-speaking proponents of *Bildung* maintained that a western education was necessary in order to for ‘progress’ to occur in eastern Europe.⁶⁸ The elitist claims of social activism practiced by many western Jews closely parallel Werfel’s poetic caricature of German-speaking colonizers on the eastern front, which criticizes the western construction of a feminized and sexualized other.

Historian Marsha Rozenblit documents the ambiguous reception of the *Ostjuden* by fellow Jews, drawing attention to the founding of schools by Prague Zionists that were intended to civilize and secularize the newcomers.⁶⁹ Her study brims with accounts of the condescending but well-meaning treatment of eastern Jewish refugees, and concludes that Prague was more hostile towards this group than Vienna. Fearing the anti-Semitism of non-Jewish nationalist movements, Prague Jewry may have felt threatened by the arrival of a large Jewish population who were unfamiliar with the German or Czech language.⁷⁰ Overall, these population changes heightened Central Europe’s awareness to ‘the *Ostjuden*’ question and the negative stereotypes of feminized eastern cultures.⁷¹

66. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 147.

67. Ibid., 6; Gilman, *Smart Jews*, 161.

68. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 8-9.

69. Ibid., 70-71.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., 5. The *Ostjuden* were more of an obsession for German-speaking Jews than other European Jews because of Central Europe’s geographical proximity to the east and the rockier path they took to Jewish emancipation; this intensified during the WWI occupations (142).

Following Buber, who has been characterized by Aschheim as a strident anti-elitist whose position evaded the elevation of one group above another, Werfel did not share in the activist and philanthropic activities that resulted from the widespread excitement of the eastern newcomers.⁷² His ability to identify and suspend Weiningerian norms allowed for Werfel to express a mutual respect for eastern European Jewish immigrants, despite his privileged position as a member of the western Jewish bourgeoisie.⁷³ Conversely, many of Werfel's contemporaries exhibited more ambiguous attitudes towards the *Ostjuden*, whose positive reception was complicated by westernizing agendas. Citing evidence from the Prague's cultural Zionist paper *Selbstwehr*, Rozenblit points to debates over the eastern, traditional appearance of eastern refugees as indicative of the Prague Jewry's desire to westernize this group. According to Rozenblit, nearly all contributors to the paper agreed that "the peyos and caftan would disappear as a result of the refugees' contact with western culture."⁷⁴

Sensing the paradoxical relationship between these attempts to westernize and imitate eastern Jewish groups, many of Werfel's Prague colleagues followed Buber to Berlin, where a more 'pro-eastern' initiative was founded to assist eastern Jewish refugees. The *Volksheim*, or People's Home, was founded in Berlin in 1916 by Siegfried Lehmann, with help from Buber, as a forum for western and eastern Jews to interact through relatively even power relations. Buber and many members of the Prague circle participated in this collective, including Kafka and Brod, hoping to achieve the cultural Zionist goal of cultural regeneration. Their general belief was that the *Volksheim* would function as an important counterpoint to the activist organizations which sought to re-educate the *Ostjuden* and minimize signs of their eastern culture.⁷⁵

72. Aschheim, *Nietzsche Legacy*, 107.

73. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 195.

74. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing National Identity*, 77.

75. Bruce, *Kafka and Cultural Zionism*, 120-121.

However, the *Volksheim* did not escape criticism, and Lehmann was reprimanded by Jewish mystic Gershom Scholem for failing to respect Jewish religious practices. While Lehmann was not a Zionist, Buber and cultural Zionist participants would have expected their involvement with eastern Jews at the new collective to foster the cultural revival they hoped to achieve through imitation of eastern traditions. In an exchange of letters from 1916, Scholem suggests that attempts to develop a sense of Jewish spiritualism utterly failed. He accuses the *Volksheim* leader of western-centric attitudes and vehemently denounces the superiority complex of participants, who maintain an “illusion of greatness,” despite their lack of knowledge of Hebrew, Yiddish, or Jewish religiosity in general. Scholem’s review of the *Volksheim* matches Rozenblit’s characterization of other instances of east-west contact as western-led initiatives that do not result in a mutual exchange of cultural practices. His disparaging remarks conclude with the warning that “one cannot and must not work from the perspective of Berlin as if one were doing so from Zion.”⁷⁶ In the next chapter, we will see how the cultural Zionist sense of Jewish identity was often based on what Scott Spector has described as a misogynist interpretation of spirituality. Spector’s discussion of the masculinist tendencies of cultural Zionist members such as Max Brod reinforces the connection that has been suggested in this chapter between activist projects and masculinist, binary worldviews.

We will now turn to a close reading of Werfel’s WWI poetry, which expresses an outlook that can be linked to a non-binary undercurrent of thinking that was not shared by many contemporary members of the Jewish avant-garde. Refusing to allow any potential sense of empowerment gained through his position as a Westerner to affect his treatment of eastern peoples during wartime, Werfel remained critical of the negative perceptions of femininity that

76. Gershom Scholem, to Siegfried Lehmann, 4 October 1916, in *A Life in Letters 1914-1982*, Anthony David Skinner, Anthony David, eds. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2002), 33-35.

often underpinned such views. Indeed, the effeminate perception of the *Ostjuden* held many western Jews was filtered through a Weiningerian lens; this comparison encourages us to understand Werfel's respect for eastern peoples as an expression of a feminist worldview.

Situating Werfel in the Theatre of War

Since the beginning of the war, Werfel's poetic voice worked to undermine the Weiningerian segregation of eastern 'others' that he witnessed in Galicia. Despite his privileged status as a soldier in the Hapsburg army, Werfel remained sensitive to processes of marginalization that were being enacted upon groups of people by German-speaking armies in eastern Europe. He rejected the androcentrism of the Weiningerian model of creativity and the aggressive action, which often took the form of persecution of 'non-masculine' groups, that this encouraged. Instead, Werfel's poetry was based on a decentralized, Buberian approach to creativity that supported a positive image of eastern peoples and a pacifist perspective.

Werfel's dismissal of ethnic and nationalist notions of belonging can be linked to his belief in a broader human community based on a shared spiritual-creative capacity. His acceptance of passive expressions of creativity follows a rejection of the hierarchical distinctions between femininity and masculinity that were employed by Weininger to privilege creative action. Similarly, much of Werfel's poetry from WWI engages critically with the military's masculinist insistence on action.⁷⁷ The poems examined in the following section span the period between 1914 and 1918 and have been selected to suggest the thematic development of his feminist critique of colonialism and aggressive forms of action in eastern Europe.

77. Edwige Brender, "Neither as a Cowboy nor as a Goldhunter," in *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 118 .

A feminist reading of Werfel's poetry allows us to trace central themes that directly comment on experiences of inter-subjectivity as they were framed through the war-time climate. My analysis begins with Werfel's representation of death and decay and the relationship of the living with the war-dead. While Werfel did not engage in actual combat, he was well aware of the effects of violence and the human cost of war. After being recruited into the Austrian army in 1914, he was initiated into the eastern campaign as a telephone operator in Galicia. He served briefly in an artillery regiment in Prague in 1915, and his stay at a military hospital that same year would have provided his earliest and most intense encounter with the effects of war.⁷⁸ It was here, amid the beds of the wounded, that Werfel witnessed firsthand the reality of the masculinist mission in eastern Europe, or what David Blackbourn describes as destructive action for the sake of cultural progress.⁷⁹

Werfel's critique begins as a stand against violence, but his continuous sensitivity to suffering and alienation allows leads him towards a radically inclusive position that encompasses feminist ideals. Indeed, Werfel's efforts to neutralize hierarchies begins with his refutation of the negative perceptions of women and femininity that supported colonialism during WWI. The point must be emphasized that Werfel's pacifism represented a response to war that tackled some of the philosophical underpinnings of sanctioned violence. His critique of war is notable for its incorporation of various processes of subjugation that lay outside of the terrain covered by masculinist thinkers such as Kraus and Hiller. By relating many forms of suffering and subjugation to gender structures, Werfel's poems reflect his awareness of the gendered language used by German-speaking militaries' to distinguish themselves from the eastern 'others' they encountered abroad. A close-reading of his poetry will demonstrate that hierarchical perceptions

78. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 4-5.

79. See David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*.

of difference were linked to a Weiningerian emphasis on action during the war that resulted in extreme suffering and alienation.

The manner in which Werfel implements a specifically pacifist condemnation of violence brings the idea of identity and difference into a causal relationships with aggressive, masculinist action. A stanza from “Litany of the rooms of the Dead,” composed during the first two years of the war, suggests that the living are not so different from the dead. This undermining of difference refers to several things that must be unpacked. Firstly, Werfel presents the idea of death as a shared human destiny unites people in a temporal sense; he suggests it is also the failure to realize this shared condition that leads to alienation, represented by death. Werfel refers to the act of killing as treason, an extreme form of alienation.⁸⁰ This second point is further embellished through imagery connecting war victims with specific groups of people who have been unfairly betrayed and outcaste.

His reference to statehood, diaspora, and the guidance of God implies that the ‘war dead’ in “Litany” share certain qualities with the Jewish people – sometimes referred to by the popular trope, ‘God’s chosen people.’ In many literary traditions, Jewish people are identified or self-identify as being in a constant state of exile, and, as Eric Wettstein argues, this *galut* condition is a pervasive theme in Jewish history.⁸¹ The following lines from the poem, concerning the war-dead, contain imagery which is suggestive of this ‘wandering’ condition:

We’ve bowed the dead out with unreason.

They’re now outcast rabble who wait

80. Franz Werfel, “Litany of the Rooms of the Dead” in *Franz Werfel Poems*, ed. and trans. Edith Abercrombie Snow (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1945), 73.

81. Howard Wettstein, “Coming to Terms with Exile,” in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 48.

In God's obscure hidden state⁸²

The Jewish metaphor in this early war poem combines contemporary attitudes towards gender and Jewishness with violent processes of marginalization. As has been argued throughout this section, Jewish culture at the start of the century (and much earlier) was characterized as feminine and was rejected by non-Jewish German-speakers for the perceived threat that this posed to German culture. In light of this negative conception of femininity, Werfel's Judaized representation of the dead touches on Weiningerian principles of othering that are sexually loaded.

Werfel's portrait of the dead in this early poem anticipates a more explicit satirical attack on Weiningerian hierarchies contained in later pieces. In "The Song of the Forebears," an undated poem likely composed in 1915, the speaker mimics the masculinist attitude of colonialism while reversing its intentions.⁸³ At several points, this piece indicates and ridicules the masculinist attitude of the colonizer along with its pretensions to creativity and intelligence and the sense of entitlement that this legitimates: "Don't act big, take care! Bow before our power. Beware!" In another section, Werfel satirizes the civilizing mission he witnessed on the eastern front, emphasizing the delusional quality of the project by reducing its effort to "utter" and articulate knowledge to something as inarticulate as "children's stutter."⁸⁴

Werfel's derisive reference to perceived cultural deeds as "children's stutters" alludes to the mistaken sense of self-importance of the Weiningerian colonizer who believes in the value of his own actions. The emphasis on action as the symptom of this delusion is further suggested by

82. Werfel, "Litany of the Rooms of the Dead," 73.

83. In order to contextualize "The Song of the Forebears" (*Das Lied der Ahnen*) I consider the collection of poems from 1915 entitled *Einander; Oden, Lieder, Gestalten* (Kurt Wolff, 1920) which references similar imagery. See especially "Der Krieg," (47) and the other *Lieder* in this collection.

84. "... and what you think you gather and you utter/Is echoed stammerings and children's stutter." Werfel, "The song of the Forebears," in *Franz Werfel Poems*, 69.

descriptions of aggressive acts of gathering and uttering which are contrasted with the relative passivity of teaching and praying. The notion of death as an extreme form of passivity and a shared human destiny frames this comparison, suggesting the overall futility of aggressive action.

Werfel develops his critique of war towards a more direct consideration of masculinist action in a poem composed around 1916. “To a Lark in wartime” specifically attacks soldierhood as a form of slavery; this directly challenges notions of freedom that were central to Weininger’s Kantian understanding of masculine subjecthood and its role in the ‘civilizing’ mission, without naming or describing creativity or action in gendered terms.⁸⁵

Other poems by Werfel from this year deal with the issue of gender, foregrounding Werfel’s characterization of colonial action as masculinist. At the start of the war in 1914, he addresses gendered stereotypes of victimhood and the negative perception of femininity. The connection between marginality and femininity is supported by his description of the war wounded as women; here, the general linking of oppression and victimhood with femininity focuses on the feeling of shame in an attempt to inspire sympathy and respect for these qualities:

Hold the scream tight in your throat!

Still! Lower your head

That now is bowed down forever, you women⁸⁶

This description of the demeaning treatment of feminized ‘others’ draws attention to some of the more specific processes of marginalization related to masculine action and the colonial mission that surrounded Werfel in WWI.

The reversal of Weiningerian hierarchies is thematically suited to the rest of Werfel’s

85. Werfel, “To a Lark in Wartime,” in *Franz Werfel Poems*, 53.

86. Werfel, “First Transport of the Wounded,” in *Franz Werfel Poems*, 51. Originally composed in 1914.

published poems. His rejection of creative action is reinforced by his morbid dwelling on the more passive states of death and non-action, which distinguishes his pacifism from the activist approach. Similarly, numerous poems in *Der Gerichtstag*, Werfel's wartime collection, prioritize the spiritual side of humanism over its political imperatives. In several places, he describes a state of unity that develops from the suffering humans experience in their shared material condition. In a poem from 1915 he elaborates on this humanist sentiment, explaining that the human condition is one of shared suffering that renders racial, national, and religious differences irrelevant: "More than by kinship of words and of work We are all bound by the last dying look."⁸⁷ Werfel's insight into this universalism is grounded in a metaphysical rather than a political perspective. In order to experience the sense of unity he describes, one must simply tune into the emotional experience of suffering; this suggests that the pursuit of political equality is less important.⁸⁸ Throughout these early poems, Werfel's faith in a spiritual resolution to alienation is expressed through his tendency to represent the nature of life and death as a shared experience.

Werfel's preference for personal, spiritual approaches to marginalization is reinforced by his vocal resistance to activist solutions and, more generally, the aggressive nature of masculinist, creative action. Activism, in his view, necessarily implies an 'other' who must be guided towards 'improvement' by the activist leader. Werfel's WWI poetry suggests that the gendering of perceived differences as 'feminine' was commonly used to construct a hierarchical view of eastern and western cultures that justified the aggressive actions of western soldiers in the European East. Following the war, he formulated a broader critique of creative action that condemned the humanist-based activism of pacifist authors such as Kraus and Hiller. Again,

87. "Supreme Kinship," in *Franz Werfel Poems*, 31. Composed in 1915.

88. Brender, *Exile and Otherness*, 118.

early poems from 1915 indicate that Werfel's initial awareness of the problems created by masculinist action were based on his personal experience and introspection.⁸⁹ At this point, rather than addressing the broadly philosophical themes of action and othering, Werfel employs concrete and personal examples as case studies that are thematically consistent with his later attitude. As previously suggested, his humanist vision develops along more philosophical lines as his work progresses chronologically.

This reading of Werfel's WWI poetry as consistent with his post-war philosophy undermines the claim forwarded by historian Rachel Kirby, which argues that Werfel emphasized ethnic belonging and communal identity. Kirby states that Werfel is guilty of western condescension towards eastern communities, despite his celebration of folk traditions.⁹⁰ This characterization, however, is mostly based on Kirby's allegorical readings of Werfel's fiction. A consideration of more direct, introspective statements, communicated through poetry, supports a very different understanding of his position as radically inclusive in terms of his deeper acceptance of humanity, which is exemplified by his positive attitude toward eastern peoples.

Before turning to the broader reception of the *Ostjuden* refugees within the German-speaking Jewish community of Prague, Werfel's impression of the groups he encountered in the East should be stressed. His poetry indicates an unqualified respect for the 'simplicity' of people who are generally viewed as uncultured. In a 1919 poem "Prayer for Purity," he expresses his respect by blessing the "simple-hearted, the unknowing" and "the simple good, /the simple bad."⁹¹ Various lines point to a specifically favourable image of *Ostjude* stereotypes. Like Buber

89. "Alas, I have no enemies, for we human beings love each other." "Prayer for Purity," in *Franz Werfel Poems*, 55.

90. This forms of the central argument of Rachel Kirby's book *The Culturally Complex Individual: Franz Werfel's Reflections on Minority Identity* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999). See especially "Musa Dagh as a participant in Dominant Discourses," 111.

91. "Prayer for purity," in *Franz Werfel Poems*, 55. Composed in 1919.

and many of his Prague contemporaries, Werfel privileges the spiritual qualities of humanity, or the “heavenly enjoyments” above concrete gains. As we will see, it was precisely these qualities that were subjected to reform by western Jews who simultaneously admired the irrational, spiritual aspects of eastern Jewish cultural. Unlike his Prague neighbours, Werfel’s encounter with eastern communities during the war resulted in his resistance to masculinist, Weiningerian standards of culture and intelligence. Instead, he harboured a respect for expressions of spirituality that distinguished him from his neighbours because it was not couple with an activist insistence on action. Werfel believed that masculinist action and spirituality were at odds and denounced impulses that distract individuals from more noble, heavenly thoughts.⁹²

In her analysis of Werfel’s writing, Kirby overlooks the moral message suggested by his spiritual and emotional priorities. The reading which has been proposed in this chapter is consistent with Werfel’s connection to mystical thinkers who accepted the irrational “uncultured” elements admired by Prague circle and cultural Zionists upon meeting their eastern counterparts.⁹³ Despite their appreciation for *Ostjude* culture, many German-speaking Jews approached their eastern brothers with a paternalistic attitude that favoured western culture and the idea of *Bildung*.⁹⁴ Werfel avoided the implicit elitism of *Bildung* by emphasizing love over cultural activism, favouring inter-subjective relationships based on equality and compassion. Like Buber, Werfel’s thought represents what James W. Walters has described as a feminist interest in promoting agency through inter-subjective relationships, especially in potentially oppressive situations. The open championing of similar ethics by feminist philosophy invites

92. Ibid,

93. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 185; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*. 103.

94. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 185, 188.

further discussion of Werfel's attitude towards femininity and the role of gender in identity politics.⁹⁵

Activism and Non-Action in Literary Rivalries

Werfel Between the Wars

In his non-fiction, Werfel explicitly admonishes the elitist mentality of his avant-garde contemporaries along with the civilizing mission that engaged many concerned western Jews. In a series of essays from the early 1930s, he develops the themes of pacifism, humanism and feminism from his war poetry towards more direct statements denouncing the avant-garde activism and elitism of contemporary literary activists such as Karl Kraus. Werfel outlines an non-hierarchical approach to culture by describing an alternative, spiritual approach to life, health and contentment. In a paper he wrote in 1931, Werfel draws attention to the ethics of action that was pervasive during the early twentieth century in Central Europe and calls for its replacement with spiritual priorities.⁹⁶ His essays represent a more systemic rejection of Weiningerian philosophy; written more than a decade after the end of the war, he would have made the connection between the colonial attitude, which he witnessed and critiqued as early as 1914, and the equally masculinist efforts directed towards cultural reform that led by Jewish activists and avant-garde social critics such as Kraus after WWI.

Werfel's interwar essays – much like his war poems – lament the substitution in recent times of “religious depth” for “strenuous activism.”⁹⁷ Since the end of WWI, the manifestation of a Weiningerian and masculinist ethics of action would have appeared in less violent and

95. James W. Walters, *Martin Buber and Feminist Ethics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 71-72.

96. Werfel, “Realism and Inwardness,” 51.

97. *Ibid.*, 55.

potentially beneficial forms when compared to the atrocities of war. However, considering the broader social climate and anti-nationalist and anti-Semitic unrest during this period, we should not be surprised that Werfel's distrust of this philosophy intensified. Werfel turns his attention to the avant-garde and challenges their seemingly progressive advocacy of creative action by stressing the hypocrisy of any revolutionary program.⁹⁸

Cultural activists who were concerned with improving culture through nationalisms based on ties related to "mythical heritages.. race and family, religious, primitive awe, etc.," were guilty, in Werfel's words, of intellectual deification. Their emphasis on the potential for creative intelligence and action, a Weiningerian notion, is the result, Werfel believes, of 'the new modern interest in consciousness.'⁹⁹ As we have seen, Weininger's categories of male and female were based on different levels of freedom or consciousness, which were thought to determine a subject's ability to think creatively and intelligently and enact their masculinity through action.

After discounting creative action as a means of bettering society and labelling active expressions of creativity as useless abstractions.¹⁰⁰ Werfel challenges the foundation of activist [and colonial] projects by refuting the notion of creativity as a faculty that could be claimed by any one group. Rather than distinguish between different individuals' or groups' ability to think or act creatively, he proposes that creativity is a shared human instinct: "all people have the spirit of the muses at their core."¹⁰¹ The establishment of a spiritual foundation for creativity and culture renders the concept of *Bildung*, or the cultivation of culture, meaningless. The fullest

98. Ibid., 68. He writes, "the false ideal of power is akin to the false sentiment of revolutionaries, who are equally interested in power as the dominant groups their denounce."

99. Ibid., 64.

100. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 18.

101. Werfel, "Realism and Inwardness," 66.

expression of creativity, Werfel states, is through a humanist attitude and “sympathetic action,” rather than action geared towards education, improvement or social change.¹⁰²

Werfel believed that creative aptitude was closer to spirituality than it was to intelligence, and as such, he believed it took residence in the soul.¹⁰³ As a spiritual quality, Werfel argued that creativity does not have to be actualized, and the means through which he articulated his own political views was through literature rather than political activism. In a short story written between 1918 and 1919 entitled “Not the Murderer,” Werfel clarifies his attitude towards action, warning readers of the desire to be active rather than passive.¹⁰⁴ He links action with elitism, and demonstrates the destructive potential of these concepts when they are put into practice.¹⁰⁵ Conversely, literary manifestations of creativity are more suited to the non-binary, Buberian conception of femininity, and presents a less aggressive attempt at expression.

Werfel’s belief that individuals ought to abandon their obsession with the conquest and improvement of the material world directly undermines the goals of activists such as Kraus, Hiller, and many Jewish humanitarians.¹⁰⁶ The motives supporting education-based activism are specifically criticized by Werfel as futile, mostly due to their overly-practical focus.¹⁰⁷ The limited results of this educational approach are exemplified by the secular, spiritless pretensions that he detected in the dominant central European culture.¹⁰⁸ This critique brings to mind the many schools for the *Ostjuden* that were founded around Prague and other major cities, which aimed to discourage ‘superstitious,’ ‘non-rational’ beliefs. According to Werfel, it is the inward

102. Ibid., 65.

103. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 22.

104. Werfel, “Realism and Inwardness,” 73.

105. Werfel, “Not the Murderer,” in *Twilight of a World*, trans. H.T Lowe-Porter (New York: The Viking Press, 1937), 615, 645. Originally published as “Nicht der Mörder” (Munich: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1920).

106. Werfel, “Realism and Inwardness,” 33. This is a recurring argument in other papers, for example “Of Man’s True Happiness,” (13) in *Between Heaven and Earth*; this essay was originally published in 1937.

107. Ibid., 70.

108. Ibid., 50. Here, he discusses “the danger of living without God.” See also “Of Man’s True Happiness,” (33).

quality of the soul that generates creativity and culture, and so there is no reason to dismiss these 'superstitious' outlooks.

Equally, Werfel saw no point to external processes of social activism that sought to instruct and improve individuals through leadership. As we know, he believed that no form of action could be expressed that is more creative than what is inwardly and innately present. WWI demonstrated to Werfel that active-aggressive attempts to express creativity tended to be degrading and masculinist in nature, based on binary understandings of sexuality and human potential. Appropriately, his vehicle of criticism of masculinist aggression during this period was poetry, a cultural product, which, like most literature, can be engaged with through relatively neutralized power relations.

Werfel considers more ubiquitous examples of misguided, Weiningerian action by turning to journalism and satire. He had already engaged in debate with Kraus, and was likely referring to the Kraus/Hiller literary approach to activism when he attacked these genres as empty attempts at civilizing and improving society.¹⁰⁹ Somewhat ironically, both Kraus and Hiller imagined their own identities through a Weiningerian framework, a counter-intuitive strategy that is evidenced through their hesitancy to accept femininity and their insistent promotion of creative, masculine action.

Together, Hiller's speech in 1913 and Kraus' essay from 1918 frame WWI; both pieces exemplify the reification of Weiningerian philosophy in pacifist thought during this period, and in this way, these examples help clarify Werfel's own anti-activist views. Hiller and Kraus ascribed to a school a Nietzschean interpretation that placed creativity as the exclusive

109. Werfel, "Realism and Inwardness," 52, 70.

experience of a self-appointed elite group of artists.¹¹⁰ Their notion of the imperative for action on the part of these creatively-gifted individuals will be explored in the following discussion.

Kurt Hiller and the Early Homosexual Rights Movement

Kurt Hiller, who became the new leader of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee following its founding in 1897 by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, collaborated closely with Werfel during WWI (1915-1916) despite the many differences between the work of the two writers during this period. The fact that Hiller published several of Werfel's pieces is especially striking considering the former's own misogynist leanings. While Hiller states that Jewish and homosexual men have much in common in terms of their social and political positions, he overlooks their shared position with women. By 1917, on the eve of the achievement of women's suffrage, Werfel was inspired to write an open letter to Hiller challenging his views on spirituality, which served as the source of Werfel's own humanism and feminism.¹¹¹ Hiller's total refutation of femininity, as evidenced by his 1913 address, speaks to the common anxiety felt by minority men across central Europe who witnessed the growing power of the women's movement during these early decades of the century.

Unlike Werfel, Hiller's reaction to the idea of alienation was an insistence upon, rather than critique of, the very structures that established his own perceived otherness. Echoing the masculinist insistence on creative action, defending its importance by claiming that it possessed revitalizing qualities that could revive the German *Geist*, or collective spirit.¹¹² In order to achieve a cultural revival, advocates and practitioners of creative action and masculine culture,

110. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy*, 65.

111. Kurt Hiller, "Die christliche Sendung. Ein offener Brief an Kurt Hiller von Franz Werfel," in *Die neue Rundschau*, xxviii (January 1917).

112. Hiller, "Ethical Tasks of Homosexuals," in *James White Review*, trans David Thorstad, 9. no1 (1999). Originally published in 1913.

he argued, would have to take on a leadership position in order to expose, convert or conquer the ‘uncultured non-creativity’ of feminine elements.¹¹³

Instead, Hiller’s activism occurred within the male-dominated circles of the homosexual rights movement who resisted the publicized claims concerning sexual intermediaries, which were forwarded by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1913. Not coincidentally, this was the same year as Hiller’s address.¹¹⁴ The language of his speech reflects these fears of chauvinist groups concerned with implications of feminized sexual theories, which, Elena Mancini has argued were derived from Hirschfeld’s humanitarian commitments.¹¹⁵

At this stage, Hiller’s literary activism could already be distinguished from Werfel’s project in several regards. Hiller openly rejected “sentimentality” and emotion as responses to persecution and suggested their replacement by an elite-led movement of resistance. His acceptance of a hierarchical understanding of culture is further evidenced by his attempt to use art as a means of political activism, targeting ‘cultural degeneracy’ much like the German colonizers documented by Werfel. As we will see, Hiller, like Kraus, expressed a clear belief that the common person needed leadership.¹¹⁶ Even more narrowly, he believed that homoeroticism represented a superior creative outlet and fostered a higher intellectual capacity.

Despite his apparent support of equality and socialism, Hiller distanced himself from Werfel’s anti-Weiningerianism by repeatedly demonstrating that his political views are connected to stratified and essentialized perceptions of social groups. While Werfel entered WWI in 1914 with a spiritualized approach to human difference, Hiller had already been

113. Tracy Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, (New York: Cornell University, 2008), 170.

114. Mancini, *The Quest for Sexual Freedom*, 63.

115. *Ibid.*, 88.

116. Hiller “Ethical Tasks of the Homosexual.” Hiller says that what today people will call his project utopian, but tomorrow when it is realized, they will accept it as law; essentially, the average people are slow, must follow a visionary, an elite, superior thinker.

immersed in legal and scientific frameworks that treated sexual identity through binary categories. With no sense of how essentialist thinking was extended to violence in wartime, Hiller, despite his pacifism, was not deterred by the anti-feminine, binary framing of sexuality as Werfel had been.

Like Karl Kraus, Hiller firmly believed in both pacifism and anti-nationalism but must be distinguished from Werfel for his support of Weiningerian action and revolution. In a revealing passage from the 1913 paper, Hiller unquestioningly adopts the Weiningerian attitude towards action and masculinity by naming ‘bravery’ as a chief virtue. He praises two gay leaders, Friedlander and Hirschfeld, but derides the non-aggressive Hirschfeldian approach as ‘dull’ and scientific – language that strongly suggests the Weiningerian binary of creativity versus ‘dull’ imitation. In 1920, Hiller launched a more direct criticism of Hirschfeld’s approach. The timely nature of this intensified rivalry occurred two years after the passage of women’s suffrage in 1918, a move applauded by Hirschfeld and other feminists.¹¹⁷

Turning to Karl Kraus’s postwar paper “Bread and Lies,” we will see how the recurrence of specific ideas about action indicate that Weiningerian philosophy had a divisive function during, as well as after the war. As we have seen throughout this section, Werfel’s interwar essays expand and systematize his critique of the masculinist behaviour he witnessed in WWI; on the other hand, literary activism during this early period, such as that practised by Hiller, reflects a masculinist strategy. The following discussion of Kraus’s 1918 article “Bread and Lies” supports the claim that these principles, triggered during the crisis of WWI, remained active in peacetime and actually constituted the core of Kraus’s pacifist critique of past events.

117. See Elena Mancini, *Quest for Sexual Freedom*, on Hiller’s split (124) and on suffrage (110).

Karl Kraus's Pacifist Retrospective

While Kraus is commonly considered to be Werfel's expressionist foil, a closer look at his commentary on the state of culture during the first two decades of the century will help account for the oppositional strategies among other minority men.

Kraus worked with many of the same publishers as Werfel, including Kurt Wolff. Early correspondence between Wolff and a contemporary network of writers reveals that he was familiar with the Prague circle.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, several divisive viewpoints generated clear tension within the Jewish expressionist community. Tellingly, Walter Benjamin's preference for Werfel's work over the writings of Kraus and Hiller is related to his support of a spiritual, rather than activist approach to renewal.¹¹⁹

Kraus had little interest in Werfel, nor in Benjamin's emphasis on subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Instead, his concerns were centred on the individual's ability to operate constructively within human society. Kraus suggested leadership by truly creative, artistically-minded men as the source of social improvement. Aesthetic taste, in this view, is directly linked to collective priorities and the type of action that a group pursues. As this chapter has argued, Werfel maintained that spirituality and creativity were part of human nature, as opposed to qualities possessed by a group of elites. Kraus strongly disagreed with Werfel's radical egalitarianism and, after the war, he presented a critique of society based on his Weiningerian-inspired model of creative action.

In 1918 Kraus published "Bread and Lies," which outlines an essentialist understanding of the human capacity for creativity. Kraus, much like Weininger, emphasizes action over passivity and his metaphysical explanation of creativity carries Weiningerian echoes: the act of

118. Michael Ermarth, ed., *Kurt Wolff: A Portrait in Letters and Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 66, 74, 108.

119. Taylor, *Left Wing Nietzscheans*, 74.

producing, he explains, should be valued because it exposes the soul to the most natural, positive force: creativity. Kraus believed that “life and creativity appear to be integrated,” but unlike Werfel, he maintained that creativity is a type of action.¹²⁰

If we simply focus on Kraus's conclusions rather than the system through which they were derived, the differences between Werfel and himself are less apparent. For instance, Kraus explains that the creative experience, due to the feelings and memories it generates, are powerful enough to invoke ‘caring’ and to cause people to act on empathy. Unlike Hiller, he privileges an emotional relationship with wider society.¹²¹ Here, Kraus’s logic appears to follow Werfel's understanding of inter-subjectivity, but unlike Werfel, his emphasis on action is directly related to political involvement as opposed to personal enlightenment. Like Werfel, creativity is the source of Kraus's humanism, but it is a limited humanism whose value is derived from its actualization; thus it is a type of action that can only be achieved by an exclusive group of people.

Kraus's seemingly counter-intuitive adoption of Weininger can be better understood through a closer analysis of his conception of creativity. Kraus maintains that respect for nature and for human life is creative; social activism, by extension, is creative and this activity marks the citizen as an artist. While Kraus’s view of ‘creativity as action’ holds much in common with the fascist aestheticization of politics, this idea, more interestingly, reflected a wider trend among liberal mystics at the time: “much of the liberal writing on mysticism came to focus precisely on activism.”¹²² The theme of citizenship and community that recur in both fascist and liberal examples must be emphasized in order to distinguish between Werfel and Kraus's spirituality.

120. Karl Kraus, “Bread and Lies,” in *No Compromise: Selected Writings of Karl Kraus*, ed. Frederick Ungar (New York: Ungar, 1977), 48.

121. *Ibid.*, 50.

122. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 69; Leigh Schmidt, “The Making of Modern Mysticism,” *Journal of the*

The metaphor that Kraus employs to explain the cultural state of Austria is that of war and the materialist focus it demands. His rejection of the material is in line with Weiningerian anti-Semitism, which will be contrasted with Werfel's world-affirming ethics in Chapter 2. Interestingly, Kraus's pacifism is framed in Weiningerian terms that echo this anti-Semitic anti-materialism. According to Kraus, war distracts the mind and makes creativity and free-thinking impossible –or, in Weininger's terms, war does not demonstrate the masculine possession of Kantian autonomy. Following this logic, war is not a form creative action and as such, its participants are more feminine than masculine. This seemingly odd coupling of war and femininity is further clarified by Kraus's charge that Austrians are “so highly fit for war we are unfit for freedom.”¹²³ He believed that “the curse of a mental state,” that was initiated during the Hapsburg reign continued to hamper cultural progress. In this respect, Kraus's misogyny is startlingly compatible with his pacifism.¹²⁴

Kraus suggests that the psychological precondition for the exercise of freedom is at odds with mainstream society's materialist preoccupations – an obsession that prevents creative action. His critique weaves together themes of conflict and solution in a way which, as Craig Evans explains, the problem appears to overwhelm any idea of resolution.¹²⁵ The connection between the perceived social problem – its femininity or materialism – and its potential solution is never presented as a possibility; the image of wide-scale social improvement or re-masculinization is withheld. Instead, Kraus presents himself as one of the rare practitioners of the mystical-creative

American Academy of Religion 71, No. 2 (June 2003): 280.

123. Kraus, “Bread and Lies,” 58.

124. *Ibid.*, 57.

125. Craig Evans, *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* (New York: BRILL, 1997), 443.

ascent he describes, further evidencing his elitist attitude. He insists that it is “his duty” to expose the true role of art, a self-image that places Kraus as the leader of an imagined elite.¹²⁶

This chapter has argued that Werfel was aspired to an anti-Weiningerian and egalitarian interpretation of creativity. Like Kraus, he employed Jewish theology but in a way that democratized ideas of chosen-ness and creative capacity. The limited actualization of Kraus's model demonstrates one way through which the nationalist elitism of Weininger could be transposed to the expressionist avant-garde; creative action during Werfel's period became a popular new measure of superiority.

Despite its elitism, Kraus' reform did differ from nationalist projects in terms of their exclusive, biological pretensions. While it may be tempting to place Kraus's work in direct opposition to these mainstream political trends, it is clear that “Bread and Lies” operates within a tension-wrought, prophetic structure that is informed by somewhat conventional models. The nature of prophecy, mysticism and creativity are inherently elitist and exclude a significant segment of the population in practice.¹²⁷ According to James C. Scott, the “cultural elite” must be viewed as imposing, self-assigned educators, and are therefore complicit in a form of postcolonial elitism.¹²⁸ For these reasons, Kraus's ideas, like those of Hiller, do not reflect a truly counter-cultural discourse that attempts to subvert dominant power structures.

The Weiningerian nature of activist programs developed in response to the threat of persecution by men such as Kraus and Hiller will be contrasted with Werfel's spiritual conception of creativity and radical individualism. This comparison will emphasize how Weiningerian binaries must be rejected to allow for a truly inclusive vision of social improvement to be realized. Kraus and Hiller did not address the Weiningerian connection

126. Kraus, “Bread and Lies,” 53.

127. Taylor, *Left Wing Nietzscheans*, 55-56.

128. James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 96.

between creativity and femininity that was being used in attempts to exclude Jews, homosexuals and women. Instead, they reworked this binary in order to divorce both male groups from feminine impulses. In doing so, both accepted Weininger's vision of creativity as a masculine privilege. In fact, very few artists from Werfel's period challenged the assumptions of Weininger's misogynist model. In order to refute mainstream androcentric discourse, it was necessary to re-conceptualize sexuality by directly engaging with the discourse that informed Weininger's philosophy.

As this chapter has suggested, Buber's interpretation of Jewish theology provided Werfel with an avenue through which more positive interpretations of femininity could be derived. Avoiding claims to exclusive talents, Werfel followed the mystical theology of Martin Buber and his non-aggressive cosmogony to arrive at his feminist system. Santner has argued for similar parallels between Schreber's delusional theology and the Kabbalistic concept of *Tikkun* – a vision of emanation that resists creative action and masculinist themes of authority and essentialism. As a proponent of *Bildung*, Weininger, Kraus and Hiller advanced the possibility of cultivating a new, inherently masculine elitism.¹²⁹ Kraus's essay on the Jewish-German author Heinrich Heine, which denounces his legacy as uncreative and his style of writing as resembling the rational, scientific language of Jewish science, exemplifies the connection between chauvinism, anti-Semitism and anti-materialism that deserves further consideration.¹³⁰

Werfel, much like Schreber, Buber, and other critics of contemporary knowledge-based power structures and identity politics, embraced a vision of creativity and sexuality that privileged material spiritualism. The connection between the physical environment or

129. Santner, *My Own Private Germany*, 57.

130. Leo A. Lensing, "Heine's Body, Heine's Corpus. Sexuality and Jewish Identity in Karl Kraus's Literary Polemics Against Heinrich Heine," in *The Jewish Reception of Heinrich Heine*, ed. Mark H Gelber (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991), 107.

corporeality and erotic impulses in radical humanist thinking will be traced in the following chapter. Chapter two continues to seek points of contrast between Weiningerian chauvinism and elitism and Werfel's inclusive humanism by engaging in greater detail with some of the philosophical and theological arguments that underwrite the attitudes of minority men. Specifically, by probing the views prominent Jewish thinkers from the cultural Zionist and homosexual rights movement towards femininity and materiality, we will be able to better situate Werfel's reception of Buber's mystical worldview, and his application of Buber's gender-defying theology. As such, the next two sections focus on gender relations, gendered visions of reality and relationships between ideas about sexuality and femininity, spirituality and materiality, as well as their authors and proponents. We will immediately turn to hierarchical, feminized visions of corporeality in an effort to illustrate their centrality in determining the treatment of minority groups.

Chapter 2: Materiality and the Search for Normalcy Among Communities Formed on the Margins

For me such moral limits to voluptuousness no longer exist.

Paul Schreber, *Memoirs*

Deviance, according to Sander Gilman, is closely inscribed on the body.¹ Moral limits to the body's actions, especially those concerning expressions of desire, were studied from a variety of disciplines in the German-speaking fin de siècle. These were often directed towards the creation of pathologies that were connected to deviant individuals. Questions about sexuality and its social effects concerned scientists, spiritual leaders, and political activists alike. In the late nineteenth century, after a significant number of Czech liberals turned towards more right-wing nationalist strategies, many Prague liberals began to promote state involvement in private life, and as a result, state efforts to identify deviancy accelerated. During this period, the parameters of legitimate society were partly fixed in accordance with 'scientific' understandings of the intimate topic of sexual pleasure.² As Eve Sedgwick explains, during the nineteenth century sexuality was treated as the key to understanding (supposedly stable) individual personalities, supporting methods of categorization that informed society's understanding of deviancy.³

When dealing with concepts of community, the humanist imagination, of which Franz Werfel's literature was an important product, poses a direct challenge to systems and strategies of exclusion and the binaries which provide their foundation. Werfel's example represents humanism's subversive potential, promoting a positive definition of sexuality that allows for greater inclusion. Among the diverse range of strategies practiced by Jewish humanists such as Werfel and his mentor Martin Buber, is the tendency towards a world-affirming ethos. Their

1. Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 40.

2. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry*, 73.

3. Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 83.

positive conceptions of materiality also complimented the erotic, anarchistic strand of German feminism developed during the same time and reflected in the early work of Lou Andreas-Salomé. In this chapter, I will address several key alliances and differences that were concerned with materiality; in doing so, I seek to draw out the repercussions as well as the potential influences on Werfel's counter-cultural worldview by exploring the reception of highly erotic and world-affirming concepts among the communities and associations of minority men in his native Prague.

Different forms of erotic desire, either physical, spiritual or both, were promoted by leaders of new communities at the turn of the century and had the effect of structuring attitudes towards materiality more broadly. In particular, the ideological arguments forwarded by three organizations incorporated concepts of erotic desire that directly influenced Werfel's German-speaking Jewish circle. The groups I am concerned with include two different branches of the early homosexual rights movement that were active in fin de siècle Prague, and *Bar Kochba*, the cultural Zionist organization that arose in this city around the same time under the guidance of Martin Buber. In order to illuminate Werfel and Buber's anti-dualistic understanding of erotic desire, I will address the attitudes towards physical expressions (to be contrasted with spiritual expressions) of erotic desire that emanated from these prominent organizations for minority Prague men. This chapter, therefore, is framed by a comparison of institutional relations to non-binary ideologies on the erotic, and the biographical connections between these institutions and Franz Werfel, spanning the prewar and early WWI period of roughly 1900 to 1918.

First, I will consider the early thought of Magnus Hirschfeld, the Jewish-Viennese founder of sexology and the chief opponent of the criminalization of homosexuality at the turn of the century. I argue that of the three institutionalized models of sexuality under question,

Hirschfeld's scientific theory of sexual intermediaries bares more in common with the world-affirming theology of Martin Buber. I will then show how Buber's early theology and mystical humanism functioned as a useful parallel to Hirschfeld's scientific theory of sexuality from around the same time, and how this perspective was crystallized at different stages in Werfel's career as a writer.

I then turn to Hirschfeld's opponents in the gay rights movement and interrogate several Prague members of *Die Gemeinschaft der Eigene* (the Fellowship of Individuals), an organization notable for its adherence to a brand of masculinist, homosexual elitism. I propose that the cultural Zionist group *Bar Kochba*, which began in Prague during the first decade of the century and was affiliated with Buber's spiritual revival, closely follows *Der Eigene's* misogynist ideology and must be contrasted with Hirschfeld, Buber and Werfel's non-binary worldviews.

Through a comparative look at three different systems of erotic meaning as reflected in the work of Hirschfeld, *Der Eigene* and cultural Zionism during the first two decades of the century, I seek to draw out Werfel and Buber's affirmative stance on corporeal sexuality. I have found that positive attitudes towards femininity, as reflected in the work of Hirschfeld, Buber and Werfel, coincide with a greater respect for the physical body and its erotic desires along with a radical egalitarianism. As the previous chapter foregrounds, Werfel's anti-elitist approach to pacifism and creativity was thoroughly anti-hierarchical; when compared to several of his exceptionally prominent contemporaries, this attitude is clearly related to a rejection of Weiningerianism and its masculinist formulation of culture and progress.

The Foucauldian notion of *ars erotica* and its erosion in Western society through a ‘will to knowledge of sex’ is connected to the positioning of sex as secret.⁴ The allocation of a specific and secret area for sexual desire and knowledge of this desire marks a binary division of space and behaviour. Interestingly, this polarized view of sexuality compliments the tendency that Moshe Idel has identified within Kabbalism in which practitioners interpret sexual fulfilment as existing either apart from or on the margins of an enlightened spiritual lifestyle.⁵ The common ground between Idel and Foucault’s arguments is their characterization of society’s binary conception of sexuality. Through the case studies mentioned above, I will expose how similarities between Jewish and secular scientific notions of sexual desire, represented by Buber and Hirschfeld respectively, hinge on their rejection of the binary perspectives identified above. The process of degrading the physical body was complicit in the devaluation of femininity among the Jewish intelligentsia in Prague, and represents a binary outlook that flows readily from the Weiningerian elitism that has been argued to be characteristic of these artists.

The exclusion or degradation of physicality and corporeal sex from spiritual systems did not occur evenly or without exception. In fact, the writings of Werfel and Buber reflect an interest in exploring a whole range of positive approaches to femininity that had been expressed within Kabbalistic theology. In a letter from 1914, Werfel suggests that the importance of Buber’s influence lay in his ability to foster subject-affirming experiences, specifically, to “reassure and to give joy” through his ability to connect with individuals by affirming their “being.”⁶ Werfel’s writing employs Buber’s affirmative approach to various subject-positions, premised on non-dualistic conceptions of identity and reality. The various dualistic positions that are criticized in the work of these two radical authors are also reflected in some of the ideas

4. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1976), 57.

5. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 9.

6. Werfel to Buber, 6 May 1914, in *The Letters*, 155.

presented by the Zionist association, *Bar Kochba*, and the association for homosexual men, *Der Eigene*, both of which were active in Prague before WWI.

During the prewar and wartime period, competing ideas about action and culture practiced by networks of minority men in groups such as *Bar Kochba* and *Der Eigene*, came to involve without exception every member of Werfel's Prague circle. These Jewish writers, from the active cultural Zionist Max Brod, to the Hasidic theorist, homosexual, and *Bar Kochba* member Jiri Langer, experienced at least some degree of involvement in one of the new interest groups. The issue of materiality, especially concerning bodies and sexual gratification, appeared frequently in discussions by both groups, albeit more explicitly in the homosexual-themed literature of *Der Eigene* and Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee.

Among many members of the Prague circle, Peter Horwath observes, was a pervasive and acute fear of materiality and of sexuality.⁷ However, Scott Spector's inclusion of Werfel in this list of anti-materialist thinkers, contradicts the feminist reading I will propose, which is grounded in Werfel's acceptance of material reality.⁸ Throughout this chapter, I will demonstrate how Werfel's positive conception of materiality and femininity may be contrasted with attitudes held by contemporaries. As an extension of Horwath's argument, I propose that two of Werfel's literary friends, both Jewish men, who were active within the cultural Zionist group *Bar Kochba*, participated in an ideology that strongly favoured spiritual over corporeal eroticism. That association's degradation of materiality was based on a binary formulation of reality, and this structured participants' attitudes towards desire more generally and created surprising parallels between *Bar Kochba* and *Der Eigene*. For a case in point, I emphasize the fact that Langer, who was sensitized to marginalization through his Jewish and homosexual identity, was

7. Horwath, "The Erosion of Gemeinschaft," 29.

8. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 100, 120.

simultaneously committed to cultural Zionism and to the neo-platonic philosophy of *Der Eigene*, which prioritized a comparable form of spiritual eroticism.⁹

Involvement in specialized interest groups connected minority men from Prague such as Langer and Brod to other cosmopolitan German centres in Austria and Germany, forging intellectual alliances with other Jewish or gay men based on abstract, metaphysical goals that transcended national borders; at the same time, as I will demonstrate, Prague Zionism and *Der Eigene* reinforced other barriers, especially with respect to gendered identities, typically favouring a Weiningerian, male-dominated group ethics. Meanwhile, homosexual and Jewish groups such as *Der Eigene* and *Bar Kochba* presented themselves as moderate alternatives to more blatantly exclusive forms of collective chauvinism, and for this reason they held special appeal within Werfel's circle of avant-garde writers. Among this generation, cultural Zionism initially took a stronger hold than did the Herzlian, political strand of Zionism, and neo-platonic intellectualism resonated loudly with the subtle misogyny of these self-described enlightened artists. Special attention will be paid to potential limitations of each group's vision, and through the theme of sexual desire, an attempt will be made to gage the relative inclusiveness of their ideologies.

The first two sections of this chapter are concerned with definitions of sexuality and desire by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld and theologian Martin Buber; I will discuss the appearance of radical humanist theories of erotic desire in Werfel's published work, and suggest these non-binary models as a point of contrast to the misogynist thinking that structured *Bar Kochba* and *Der Eigene*. The final sections deal with binary models of desire supported by Werfel's literary friends in Prague, through a comparison of *Der Eigene*'s response to Hirschfeld and the failed transmission of Buberian theology to *Bar Kochba*.

9. Shaun Jacob Halper, "Coming out the Hasidic Closet," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 101.2 (2011).

Hirschfeld and Buber at the *Neue Gemeinschaft* c. 1900

As I have suggested, one of the principle fault lines that distinguished radical humanist thinkers such as Werfel from the more conventional ideas of their left-wing contemporaries relates to the reception of Weininger's binary conception of femininity and masculinity. Following Weiningerian philosophy, the material world was often degraded and this trend carried forth in the ideological formulations of new associations that designated materiality, along with femininity, as a barrier to cultural progress.

The implications of the reception of Weiningerian ideas are embodied in the competing views of future communities articulated by *Der Eigene* and Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee – the latter was founded by the Hirschfeld in 1893 and *Der Eigene* evolved shortly after. While each group maintained a strong presence in Prague leading up to WWI, it was the non-binary, scientific Hirschfeldian model of desire that provided the best outlet for more inclusive, feminist thinkers such as Werfel.¹⁰ *Der Eigene*, despite being a free association based on cultural rather than scientific values, had far less fluid conceptions of desire and the body. In fact, *Der Eigene* better symbolizes Weiningerian elitism and its denigration of femininity and materiality, an outlook that appealed to most of Werfel's Prague colleagues.¹¹

From within the homosexual rights movement at the turn of the century, Magnus Hirschfeld worked closely with representatives of other minority groups outside of the field of sexology. Through his impulse towards inclusion and collaboration, Hirschfeld encountered the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber in the monistic circle known as the *Neue Gemeinschaft* (The new community), a group of social egalitarians – at times described by historian Eric Paul

10. Halper, "The Hasidic Closet," 217–218.

11. Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe Vol 1* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004),

Jacobson as socio-anarchists – that was active near Berlin between 1900 and 1903.¹² The *Gemeinschaft* espoused an ethics of unity and an interest in universal rights premised on a belief in the ennobling power of the material world.¹³ Functioning as a centre for the collection of thinkers and ideas about alternate lifestyles, the *Gemeinschaft* attracted some of the most radical minds of central Europe.

Evidence of Hirschfeld's alternative attitude is further indicated by his early involvement with *Neue Gemeinschaft* figures such as Buber, along with the early feminist Helene Stöcker, and the Jewish socialist Gustav Landauer. As Eric Jacobson explains, all participants in this monistic community, despite their disparate backgrounds, shared an interest in alternative lifestyles and in open discussion. His membership in the monistic circle indicates that Hirschfeld espoused world-affirming views; such a positive conception of materiality explains why the radical ideas about “free love” and sexual liberation forwarded by Stocker were well-received by Hirschfeld alongside Buber.¹⁴

The *Gemeinschaft*, with their romantic emphasis on nature, community and the material world, may be considered alongside the broadly defined group of Nietzschean Radicals that included authors, feminists, activists and artists of all stripes. This brand of Nietzscheanism, characterized by Steven Aschheim as radical, was marked by an “emancipating eroticism,” that coincides with the *Gemeinschaft*'s celebration of materiality, and would have certainly suited Hirschfeld's homosexual rights agenda.¹⁵ Hirschfeld's own research at the turn of the century was concerned with naturalizing alternate sexual identities so as to decriminalize apparently subversive sexual acts.

12. Eric Paul Jacobson, *From Cosmology to Ecology: The Monist Worldview in Germany 1770-1930* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 246-247, 254.

13. Ibid., 217.

14. Ibid., 248.

15. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 57.

The congruities symbolized by the group of theorists at the new monistic community defied the often narrow expectations of common interest groups. The fact that the Jewish theologian Martin Buber and the homosexual rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld found common ground at the *Neue Gemeinschaft*, was not accidental. As Daniel Boyarin explains in the introduction to his volume *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, the conceptual linking of “Jewish” with “homosexual” helped shape perceptions of both groups, affecting how Jewish and homosexual individuals were treated.¹⁶ Buber and Hirschfeld shared an interest in overcoming binary structures that lent themselves to discriminatory theories.

While Hirschfeld maintained an anti-elitist, non-binary outlook during the early stages of his careers, his opponents from *Der Eigene* did not. *Der Eigene*’s interest in questions of cultural improvement, as I will show, was structured by strict categorical divisions between the sexes and modes of desiring. Similarly, Buber’s Zionist followers in Prague ignored the theologian’s emphasis on non-binary models of desire in order to pursue an agenda of cultural improvement. Before turning to these allies and enemies of Hirschfeld and Buber, it is necessary to unpack the specific commonalities that distinguished their thought from the binary discourse on culture and masculinity that was evolving at the same time.

An early affinity between Hirschfeld and Buber is suggested by the recurring themes of sexuality, desire, and the denunciation of dualism in their work. When Hirschfeld lectured to the *Neue Gemeinschaft* in the early 1900s on the third sex, he would have drawn upon concepts of sexual intermediaries that defined him for the public at this time. Other contributions by Hirschfeld to the monistic group, which would have occurred between 1900 and 1903, overlap

16. Daniel Boyarin, “Introduction,” in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, 9.

with the publication period of *Sappho and Socrates*, a pamphlet that exposed Hirschfeld's belief in non-binary sexual identities to the public.¹⁷

Around the same time, Buber's interest in the topic of sexuality and erotic desire was equally as strong as the sexologist's. In two separate letters from 1910, the theologian strongly emphasized the connection between feminist formulation of the erotic and the (monistic) project of combating duality. Buber wrote to the radical feminist Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861-1937) in order to express similarities he had found between her work "on the sexes" and "the problem of duality" that he had been exploring in his own.¹⁸ Her early letters to Freud demonstrate that Salomé rejected the psychoanalytical notion of polarized impulses and objects of desire. Her correspondence reveals that during the first decade of the century, she espoused an identical view as Buber on binary oppositions. Salomé expressed her rejection of polarities in the language of psychoanalysis, promoting "the interplay between sexuality and intelligence," rather than their separation or opposition. In a letter to Freud two years later, she echoes the theme of non-binary structures and explicitly states that regarding sexuality and intellectuality, "the creative union of both" leads to health and happiness.¹⁹

These letters support Tracy Matysik's argument that Salomé valued desire as a means of overcoming alienation, or individuation. As Matysik explains, Salomé, a student of psychoanalysis, believed that desire of any material thing reflected a deeper desire for the divine.²⁰ The connection between various forms and objects of desire for Salomé is that these all

17. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sappho und Sokrates*, in *Documents of the Homosexual Rights Movement in Germany: 1836-1927*, eds. Jonathan Katz et al. (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 14-15. Originally published in Leipzig, 1902. Hirschfeld's data places the *seelenzwitter*, a hybridized soul, along with manly and womanly characteristics on a spectrum.

18. Martin Buber to Andreas Lou-Salomé, 10 February 1910, in *The Letters of Martin Buber*, 122-123.

19. Andreas Lou-Salomé to Sigmund Freud, 9 Nov 1912, Vienna, in *Sigmund Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé Letters*, ed. and trans. Ernst Pfeiffer trans William and Eliane Robson-Gott (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1972), 8-10.

20. Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 237.

point to something beyond themselves: “all sexuality has an inborn yearning (which differentiates it from other pleasure yearnings) to reach beyond the object of the moment.”²¹ Salomé’s formulation of desire as different from other ways of yearning forges connections between material, non-material, and other usual oppositions.

Buber’s early writing is often coded in the metaphorical language of mysticism, making discussions of corporeal desire more difficult to detect. However, his observation that his own ethics matches Salomé’s ideas on sexual desire from the same year, supports a more literal interpretation of his often sexual metaphors for mystical encounters.²² Buber went so far as to recommend Salomé’s book to a Viennese author Hugo von Hofmannsthal in a separate letter that same year.²³ This example reveals that Buber not only maintained an interest in non-binary perspectives on life, but more specifically in the role of corporeal desire and sexuality.

Following Buber’s early work, the theologian understood the everyday and the spiritual, along with the desire directed towards these, as one and the same. He introduces the notion of *Hitlahavut* as an erotic connection to things can occur anywhere, at anytime, implying the positive value of the material world and demonstrating that he espouses a non-binary ethics.²⁴ The idea that man should not hold himself “far removed from the world” is a clear call by Buber to engage with the physical body. Similarly, he concludes his earliest anthology on mysticism with the anti-dualistic declaration that “good people cherish life,” affirming his belief in binding connection between soul and life in the material world.²⁵

Indeed, one can begin to see the conceptual parallels between Buber and Hirschfeld during the first two decades of the century from these various samples of each one’s writings.

21. Salomé to Freud, 9 Nov 1912, Vienna, in *Letters*, 8-10.

22. See Buber’s *Ecstatic Confession*.

23. Buber to Hugo Hofmannsthal, 26 June 1906, in *The Letters of Martin Buber*, 111.

24. Buber, “The life of the Hasidim,” 74-75. Originally published in 1908.

25. Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, 156.

Werfel's writing, which consistently drew on the world-affirming ideas expressed by Buber, also had much in common with the work of other *Neue Gemeinschaft* collaborators such as Hirschfeld and Lou Salomé; central to Werfel's approach is the non-binary belief in material and spiritual as equally valuable.

As an early example of his position against dualism, Werfel's poetry around WWI reflects a distinct preoccupation with the material world, a theme that connects him to the broad, common ground of monism. The young writer's letters to Buber indicate that he was certainly taken with the theologian's work during the pre and early WWI period, and his poetry echoes a distinctively Buberian conception of the physical and spiritual realms.²⁶ As one such example, Werfel's 1915 poem "Springtime" expresses the speaker's desire to connect this earthly world with the spiritual, heavenly source of things, instructing his audience to pour out "your goblet of life into heaven."²⁷ From the same year, "Stranger we are all Upon the Earth" repeats a concern for the nature of our material condition, informing readers that "what is solid falls before our sight."²⁸ The reason for pairing these two messages is to suggest that Werfel did not share his literary colleagues' dread of corporeality, despite his clear sensitivity to its transiency. Instead, Werfel draws together the physical and spiritual aspects of reality in order to elevate the former, thereby redeeming its function in reality without aspiring to transcend this material state.

Following the war, Werfel published his short novel *Not the Murderer* (1920), where he engages more directly with non-binary, world-affirming ideas. With the violence of WWI in retrospect, Werfel was likely inspired to couple his critique of the patriarchal order, which forms the central plotline, with a mystical alternative regime. In the story, the narrator's father is an

26. Werfel to Buber, May 6, 1914, Leipzig, in *The Letters of Martin Buber*, 155. Werfel writes, "you have such great power to reassure and to give joy."

27. Werfel, "Springtime," in *Poems: Franz Werfel*, 41. First published as *Frühling* (Kurt Wolff, 1915).

28. Werfel, "Strangers we are all upon the earth," in *Poems*, 43. First published as "Fremde sind wir auf der Erde alle" (Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1915).

oppressive military official who is only defeated by his son through the mystical atmosphere of a carnival. Within the joyful atmosphere of the carnival crowd, his father disappears: “God had taken him from me,” symbolizing the defeat of military chauvinism by the unity of mankind, and divine nature of this process.²⁹

Not the Murderer, a relatively short piece when compared with Werfel’s other works from this period, contains his clearest formulation of the various modes of perception that are articulated throughout his career. The narrator of the story introduces these modes systematically, enumerating and naming each one. He argues that the modern scientific understanding of perception is wrong, as there are more than two ways of experiencing reality. He suggests that rather than viewing human experience through a binary lens that accepts the two central nervous systems and dismisses knowledge gained through intuition, readers ought to consider a third “nervous systems.” This third system, according to the narrator, relates the mental and physical worlds, and is dubbed the “*nervus magicus*,” throughout the story this is described as the spirit, the world, and the connection between them.³⁰ In other places in *Not the Murderer*, Werfel elaborates on the idea of a *nervus magicus* by providing examples of its creative energies. The atmosphere of a jovial crowd and of a romantic opera (*Der Freischütz*), are considered creative deeds that resonate well with the *nervus magicus*.³¹ As well, Werfel asserts the beauty and creative energy present of more concrete things in the material world by including the sight of certain women, sexual intercourse, and parenthood in his account of ennobling experiences.³²

29. Werfel, “Not the Murderer,” in *Twilight of a World*, 580. Originally published as “Nicht der Mörder” (Munich: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1920).

30. Ibid., 681.

31. Ibid., 578-581.

32. Ibid., 691.

Werfel's positive connection to materiality through a non-binary understanding of reality, as expressed in the above examples, influenced his reception of Buber's radical conception of the erotic and all its political, feminist implications. The importance of anti-dualistic thinking and explorations of materiality in his early poetry lays the necessary foundation for a Werfel's more detailed consideration of erotic desire in *Star of the Unborn* and the novella *Poor People*. Before turning to Werfel's model of desire and its feminist implications, the connection between feminism and materiality, which was central to his understanding of desire, must be elaborated upon. Werfel's positive conception of femininity and materiality is strongly representative of the early century figures of Hirschfeld and Buber.

Hirschfeld's scientific theories on sexual intermediaries closely participated in the broader foundation of Buber's non-binary theological interpretations of erotic desire, which, in a biographical sense, directly impacted Werfel's position towards corporality. Buber's argument for the erotic nature of both corporeal sex and spiritual ecstasy in his Hasidic-themed writings parallels Hirschfeld's early scientific model of desire and sexual intermediaries. While Buber relates expressions of desire that are usually polarized through a theological explanation (which I will turn to shortly), nature forms the focus of Hirschfeld's non-binary model.

At the turn of the century, Hirschfeld's science was geared towards humanist goals, and through his 1902 theory of the "third sex," as suggested in *Sappho and Socrates*, he proposes that male effeminacy is neither abnormal nor tantamount to homosexuality.³³ In 1903, Hirschfeld published an analysis based on the close observations of several patients, where he concludes

33. Hirschfeld, *Sappho und Sokrates*, 14.

that male and female are constructs and that real people exist on a spectrum of gendered qualities, as elaborate combinations of different qualities.³⁴

His work insists on highly individualized data and close observation, and in this sense promotes a better understanding of the pedestrian or ground-level experience of the everyday.³⁵ According to de Certeau, the advantage of bottom-up analyses such as Hirschfeld's lays in its avoidance of structures that impose ideal, totalizing concepts rather than an actual understanding of experience.³⁶ His 1902 publication of a theory of sexual intermediaries contains a condemnation of state involvement in the private affairs of citizens, namely in matters of desire, and serves as an excellent case and point.³⁷ During the nineteenth century, sex was believed to provide insight into the personal character of the individual: it was no longer predictable, but privatized; concerned with personal choice, this new conception of sex could include much more individualized theories as it was no longer "embedded in fixed social patterns."³⁸ By working against conventional expectations and categories, such as those suggested by the popularity of Weiningerian philosophy, Hirschfeld contributed an alternative discourse on sexual identity. His more individualized interpretation of human sexual desire allowed for him to identify spaces that exist between absolute, Weiningerian categories, establishing a foundation for a more fluid appreciation of human sexuality that can be traced from Buber to Werfel.

34. Hirschfeld, *Ursachen Wesed und des Uranismus*, in *Documents of the Homosexual Rights Movement* 127. Originally published in Leipzig in 1903.

35. Hirschfeld, *Ursachen*, 4, 21.

36. Caroline Polk, "The Bush Tetras, "Too Many Creeps," and New York City," *American Music* 25, no. 2 (2007): 207.

37. Hirschfeld, *Ursachen*, 9-11.

38. Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 235.

Martin Buber's Jewish Mysticism

Like Hirschfeld, Martin Buber promoted a non-binary understanding of human nature in his published writings from the early twentieth century. His interpretation of Hasidism between 1908 and 1918 suggests that much like the Jewish sexologist, Buber viewed sexuality as fluid. Buber essentially expanded the non-binary perspective that allowed for him to embrace corporeality in order to describe other expressions of erotic desire. Following an eastern mystical interpretation, he emphasized erotic spirituality as well as physical expressions of desire. The following analysis will demonstrate exactly how Buber's Jewish cosmogony played a parallel role as Hirschfeld's scientific theory of sexual intermediaries in structuring anti-binary thinking and conceptions of desire.

If Buber's mystical approach to human experience enabled him to eroticize spirituality, it also allowed for him to spiritualize the material world and the act of desiring things of a 'this worldly' nature. Buber's early research on mystical experiences – leading to the publication of *Ecstatic Confessions*, his anthology on the topic, in 1909 – reflects his commitment to exploring a world-affirming, anti-dualistic, erotic spiritual lifestyles. The cases of mystical union that are explored in *Ecstatic Confessions*, which Werfel read in 1917, are founded on the possibility of a highly erotic, ecstatic spiritual encounter.³⁹ In *Kiss of God*, Michael Fishbane, specialist in Judaism and rabbinic literature, refers to ecstatic spiritualism as a process wherein the believer is brought to ecstasy through "the eros of mystical contact."⁴⁰ Buber's selections of mystical accounts for *Confessions* support Fishbane's contention that eros plays a central role in most

39. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 133.

40. Michael Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 20.

Jewish mystical encounters, where the soul is frequently feminized to emphasize the erotic nature of this experience.⁴¹

In an essay from 1908, Buber refers to ecstasy as the ‘eternal key’ to the meaning of life and the qualities of ecstasy are clearly sexualized. The characterization of spiritual union as “inflaming” and the use of similar descriptors that conjure sexual imagery demonstrates the centrality of a specifically erotic form of desire to the spiritual life.⁴² *Ecstatic Confessions* provides even more examples of erotic language. One account records that “at night in my cell, enraptured by the love and compassion of the Lord [I] burst into intoxicated familiar speech to him,” and implies that others would have condemned this outburst as inappropriate and sexual; the explanation by this mystic that she was “receiving the body of the Lord” carries noticeable literal implications.⁴³

Following Buber’s resolute stand against dualistic thinking, passages from *Confessions* imply a deep link between spiritual and corporeal ecstasy. In one story, the mystic confuses the material world with spiritual reality: “I felt such contentment of all desires that I did not know whether I was on earth or in heaven.”⁴⁴ These passages indicate the wedding of spiritual and corporeal reality through the mutual pursuit of erotic desire, thereby encouraging a different reading of other erotic metaphors in Buber’s anthology; in this context, lines such as “God had immediately united himself with me” were likely more than literary devices to Buber. The fact that he endorsed sexual expression early on may be explained his conflation of physical experiences of intercourse with more abstract encounters with the divine. Supporting this non-binary view of erotic desire is a 1917 letter from Buber to Hugo Bergmann, an early Prague

41. Buber, *Ecstatic Confession*, 46. In one 12th century account in which the soul is described in excessive detail, it is repeatedly referred to as a “she.”

42. Buber, “The Life of the Hasidim,” 74.

43. Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, 136.

44. *Ibid.*, 119.

disciple, where he emphasizes his belief that splitting the corporeal and spiritual is at odds with Judaism.⁴⁵ The erotic experiences articulated by Buber in the above passages echo his endorsement of Salomé's vision of free love, as both suggest a definitively non-binary basis for his conception of desire.

Buber employed the inter-related themes of creativity and erotic desire to express his humanist vision and to link the material and spiritual worlds. Addressing the subject in 1903, he insisted that encounters which result from erotic desire must be *creative* in order to "avoid repetition."⁴⁶ Importantly, Werfel's anti-elitist conception of creativity (see Chapter 1) can be connected to his appreciation for the role that creativity plays in Buber's definition of desire. Buber upheld a non-binary model of creativity and erotic impulses that welcomed the expression of these inter-connected forces. His belief in the creative value of erotic desire positioned him as an opponent of the dominant Freudian model of creativity, which was grounded in the opposition between expression and repression of desire as the source of creativity.⁴⁷ Salomé, who studied with Freud, had forcefully rejected his binary model; writing to him in 1912, she explains that creative action is deeply connected to a spiritual source: "all intellectual and cultural achievement is unreal and shadowy, unless it is linked to the vital warmth from which it springs."⁴⁸ Salomé's insistence on the spiritual source of creativity parallels Buber's conception of sexuality and desire as spiritual and creative. Much like Salomé's theory, Buber's understanding of desire posed a challenge to Freud's binary theory of sublimation.

Mordechai Rotenberg, a professor of psychology and Judaism, astutely comments upon the influence of Freud's repression/expression binary, developed at the turn of the century and

45. Buber to Hugo Bergmann, 1917, in *The Letters of Martin Buber*, 209.

46. Buber, "Life of the Hasidim," 75.

47. Rotenberg, *Creativity and Sexuality*, 7-8.

48. Salomé to Freud, 9 Nov 1912, in *Letters*, 8.

heavily discussed with students such as Salomé in Vienna; Rotenberg believes that this Freudian theory helps explain the role of social policies and taboos regarding sexuality in Western society, and, more specifically, how this treatment of sexuality has had an adverse effect on creativity. Following Rotenberg's argument, Buber's mystical conception of desire allows for a wider source of creativity that encompasses both spiritual and corporeal forms of sexual expression. In contrast, Freud's model positions physical sexuality as either fully encouraged or completely censored, affecting creativity as it is controlled and released in this way. This binary attitude is what Rotenberg believes limits any wider, more encompassing view of sex and therefore source of creativity. In order to fully liberate human potential Buber had to reject this Western, Freudian formulation and replace it with a model of sexuality that is radically spiritualized.

Werfel's acceptance of the Buberian model of erotic desire distinguished him from many of his Prague contemporaries. As anti-materialists, most members of the Prague circle interpreted physical sexuality as a source of creative inspiration rather than a form of creative expression.⁴⁹ Cultural Zionists such as Max Brod and Hugo Bergmann understood physical sexuality without engaging with the object of their sexual desire as an autonomous subject. Brod's many exchanges with Kafka during the 1910s reveal that he enjoyed pursuing multiple women and discussing these casual relationships with his friend.⁵⁰ In a 1929 essay, Brod proposes a theory on the love of women that explains his behaviour towards them during his youth: positioning love and desire as a means to a greater end, Brod suggests that women are meant to inspire a desire for something that goes "beyond relations between people."⁵¹ Brod's conception of desire

49. See Spector's discussion of this in *Prague Territories*, 120-123.

50. For example, see Franz Kafka's letter to Max Brod, 13 July 1912, in *Franz Kafka: Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 79.

51. Max Brod, "Women and the New Objectivity," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 205. Originally published in 1929.

supports Scott Spector's claim that certain members of the Prague circle placed physical sexuality and the desire for women within an exclusively male spiritual quest geared towards the transcendence of materiality – and therefore the very processes that allowed for this transcendence. Conversely, Werfel took his mentor's erotic writings and concretized these theories in his post-WWI fiction, forging an even more direct link between corporeal sex and the creative experience of ecstasy through the examples of his characters actions.

By the early 1930s, Werfel had written more novels and plays that radicalized his earlier concern with issues of materiality, the human body and the human soul. During the late 1920s he began to write "Poor People," a Prague-based story about an affluent boy named Hugo and his governess Erna.⁵² This novella, not published in 1931, concerns the event of an 'illegitimate' pregnancy and can be considered as one of Werfel's earliest critiques of social attitudes towards corporeal sexuality. Werfel defends the pregnancy through a Buberian model of desire that redeems his female character. His decision to portray all of his central characters as Christians does not pose any challenges to his adoption of Buber's mystical theories. In fact, the plot explores several principles that are integral to Buberian mysticism that are summarized in the relationship between the corporeal and spiritual eroticism of Christian characters.

The novella's ability to combine Jewish and Christian spirituality compliments its bold appreciation of attraction between members of different classes and, in other parts of the story, between difference races. Werfel explicitly presents relationships and events that undermine sexual taboos, and his story ought to be considered as occurring within the atmosphere of 1920s central European movements for radical sexual liberation. During the 1920s, the famous "femininity debates" drew theorists from various disciplines into questions of human nature and

52. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 106.

the role of women in society.⁵³ Werfel had already demonstrated his receptiveness to feminist questions through his close relationship with Buber's work. His place within the sexuality debates can be traced through his nuanced treatment of the sexuality of his characters in "Poor People," which follows a Buberian line of thinking that is at once spiritual and world-affirming.

The relationship between the central characters in "Poor People," Hugo and Erna, allows Werfel to explore the possibility of a non-dualistic mode of erotic desire. The couple, a student and his governess, experience sexual tension on both spiritual and physical levels: Hugo is at times attracted to the female body of his older caregiver, causing his mother to fear that her new employee will inspire 'inappropriate' sexual feelings in her son.⁵⁴ On a physical level, Hugo indeed enjoys the physically intimate encounters between himself and Erna and expresses a desire for her that defies their separation by class and age. These erotic experiences are described as ennobling rather than inappropriate, as Hugo's enjoyment of Erna's body is closely connected to his appreciation for "her strength and power."⁵⁵ Indeed, it is through the help of his governess that Hugo cultivates a greater intellectual and spiritual capacity through the exercise of his imagination.⁵⁶ Werfel's positive portrayal of this relationship uses a non-hierarchical Buberian model of desire to undermine the social hierarchies of class and age, which would otherwise have degraded Erna.

Furthermore, Erna should not be confused with the heroines characterized by Spector as mere vehicles or mediators for the spiritual ascension of men. Spector explains how Werfel's own relationship with the "dream-like Alma" exemplifies a connection that benefits only the

53. Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 24.

54. Werfel, "Poor People," in *Twilight of a World*, 47. Originally published as "Kleine Verhältnisse," (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1931).

55. *Ibid.*, 49.

56. *Ibid.*, 49.

male partner, who simply uses the female figure as a source of inspiration for his creative work.⁵⁷ Spector's argument does not take into account Alma's attitude towards her relationships with men – a perspective we will explore in the next chapter – which suggests the potential for a more mutual, partial reversal of male and female hierarchies. Alma discusses the creative benefits of her participation in romantic relationships, and in this respect, she has much in common with the Werfelian character Erna, who exposes her own creative abilities.

Erna possesses an exceptional creative aptitude, which inspired the story's hero, Hugo, to imitate rather than attempt to transcend her influence, as Spector would have it. Her role in Hugo's spiritual life is described by Werfel as exemplary, and in this respect she has more in common with the spiritual leaders, the *Zaddiks* mentioned in Buber's Hasidic-themed works. Buber recalls his early contact with an exemplary *Zaddik* figure as illuminating, inspiring the feeling that he must follow this example.⁵⁸ In a parallel scene when Hugo visits Erna's house, he is overwhelmed by the sincerity of her family's piety, which compels him to aspire to its imitation and to criticize the hollow spirituality of his own family.⁵⁹

"Poor People" inputs Werfel into the heated debates about sexuality that characterized a large part of the decade through its consideration of multiple forms of desire and the various strategies that result from fluid and essentialist perspectives. Werfel investigates different models of desire and masculinity through his characters' relationships with one another and the binary or non-binary worldviews that underpin these. Upon observing the example set by a chauvinist officer, Hugo asks, "behaving like a man – what was it..."⁶⁰ The beneficial effects of a fluid understanding of desire and sexuality can be seen in Hugo and Erna's exchanges, which generate

57. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 120.

58. Buber, "My way to Hasidism," 59.

59. Werfel, "Poor People," 76.

60. *Ibid.*, 53.

intellectual and spiritual stimulation; this relationship is only possible because their reciprocal respect and appreciation for one another supersedes the restrictive identity categories that threaten to separate them. Werfel presents the effects of other characters' reliance on polarizing categories as alienating and unproductive, using their concepts of desire to build a critique of dualistic and rationalistic thinking.

A decade after the publication of "Poor People," Werfel began work on *Star of the Unborn*, a novel which uses the setting of a future world to present a broad criticism of contemporary society that is both more specific and more detailed than any criticism presented in his previous publications. *Star of the Unborn* represents a crucial aspect of Werfel's political voice due to its ability to draw together various themes from previous social critiques, suggesting a more reflective position on the part of the author. This final novel is an explicit review of a very dominant, contemporary attitude towards materiality that is structured by a binary, Weiningerian worldview that denies the non-hierarchical, mystical formulation of desire inherent in Buberian thought.

In the story, the tension between a very rigidly structured sense of reason and mystical irrationalism are brought to a head when the 'evolved' civilization of the future world begins to 'backslide.' In the story, the process of 'backsliding'— which proves to be positive — begins with the reassertion of the material world on a barren planet through the spreading of a literal jungle; along with the growth of the jungle, the sexual, corporeal desires of the central characters begin to replace their radical celibacy. The culture encountered by the new visitor, the narrator FW, even denied conjugal relations; erotic desire is only reawakened through his questioning and encouragement. One such example of FW's revitalizing role occurs in an early scene where he

flirts with Lala, the paradigm of womanhood and celibacy in the new world, encouraging what is suggested to be her innate sexuality.⁶¹

Along with the revival of physical desire is the discovery of irrational spiritual elements in the form of miracles.⁶² The refusal to accept such occurrences is symptomatic of the type of “progress” achieved in this version of the future, praised by its citizens as “too progressive, too enlightened, too superior” for sorcery.⁶³ Werfel’s antihero, FW, provides a satirical commentary that suggests to readers that the idea of progress through world-denying, spiritualism is hollow: in fact it is only the dogs – likely a reference to masculinist activism and Weiningerianism – who bark about culture.⁶⁴ The more clever cats embrace the appearance of the jungle, a symbol of materiality that is reinforced by its appeal to the young, sexualized heroine Lala.⁶⁵

The appeal of materiality is further connected to the irrational through the unexplainable occurrence of miracles in the story. The process of vegetative growth and sexual discovery reveal that even in this carefully planned rational utopia, it is impossible to deny corporeality and true creative, spirituality on earth. F.W decides that even in this sunless society, and “even if we lie deep in the earth .. the inner light can be found within.”⁶⁶ Indeed, Werfel’s plot progresses to demonstrate the pervasiveness of spiritual reality. Throughout the story the idea that “nothing springs from below, it comes from on high,” suggests an integral connection between the heavens and the natural world that imbues both with the mysterious and emotional aspects of human reality.⁶⁷

61. Werfel, *Star of the Unborn*, trans. Gustav O. Arlt (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1967), 219. First published as *Stern der Ungeborenen* in 1946.

62. Ibid., 323-325.

63. Ibid., 157.

64. Ibid., 393.

65. Ibid., 216, 219.

66. Ibid., 192.

67. Ibid., 208.

These interrelated themes of sex and miracles as suppressed and denied in the future world as impossibilities are contrasted with their acceptance by the visitor, FW.⁶⁸ Through favourable descriptions, the central character's creativity is presented as the antidote to the stagnant rationalism of the fictional society; his disillusionment with the rationalist style of argumentation inspired his adoption of a 'chance' method of selection that is received by the future society as novel and ingenious.⁶⁹

In other places, creativity as sexual desire is promoted through descriptions of the negative consequences of its attempted suppression or subjugation . One such example is the mound of wet nurses, which was designed as a centre for breast-feeding in order to minimize the effect of this necessary activity on society. The project ultimately fails when a wet nurse interferes with the plot of the story, effecting a major turning point by interacting with the opposite sex from her spot on the segregated mound; this attempt to control expressions of sexuality is criticized as a form of empty rationalism because it failed to take into account the creative role of physical sexuality as part of human nature.

More than any other published material considered in this essay, *Star of the Unborn* reflects Werfel's willingness to engage with Buber's ideas about erotic experiences. The very title "star of the unborn" carries several possible meanings, all of which point to the failure of anti-materiality through reference to a combined Jewish and Christian narrative of mysticism and sexuality. The star of the story may represent FW, the catalyst for change, the sun, whose absence in the future world is repeatedly noted, or a young scientist who must save his planet. Each meaning of "star" hinges on the central problem: in the sunless world of the future,

68. Ibid., 321-325.

69. Ibid., 119.

humanity attempts to reverse the process of aging, to become “unborn,” thereby distorting the spiritual and natural order represented by the absence of sunlight.

Werfel works through FW, his first star, to critique and restore the fraught relationship between this society, corporeality and spirituality. The spiritually and physically empty individuals of the future have committed their final blasphemy in attempting to be unborn, and, following Christian tradition, this must be atoned for through a sacrifice. Werfel, however, reverses the usual Christian focus on spiritual redemption so that the sacrifice results in material renewal on earth –a view that supports Buber’s anti-dualistic conception of reality. Finally, the star represents the character who must be sacrificed. It is no coincidence that this victim is the most promising student in the prestigious scientific academy of the future, the symbol of the ‘new man’ envisioned by Nazi fascism as possessing reason, restraint and action, all at once.⁷⁰

Werfel’s literary confrontation with this masculinity of the future followed the brutal consequences of certain approaches to eugenic and scientific theories that were revealed during WWII. Essays published between 1942 and 1944 under the collective title “Theologoumena,” are described by Werfel as his attempt to explain the rise of Nazism. He suggests that the violence and cruelty towards specific minority groups was likely connected to fanatical, binary thinking and a related obsession with progress. Alluding to racial scientific theories, Werfel explains that biology fails to account for differences among people, which are not due to “the composition of their blood or because of their sex glands.”⁷¹ Throughout these essays, Werfel repeatedly denounces the destruction of life and its justification through various binary models, affirming instead that “all matter is sacred” and, notably, so is human body.⁷²

70. George Mosse, *The Image of Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163.

71. Werfel, “Theologoumena” in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 158.

72. Ibid., 162, 168.

Werfel's positive formulation of materiality and sexuality, inspired by his Buberian non-binary worldview, supported his rejection of contemporary masculinism. The Weiningerian elitist vision that enabled conceptions of the 'new man' that was rejected by Werfel, Hirschfeld, Buber, and other radical feminist thinkers, was indeed supported by binary understandings of reality.⁷³ In light of this summary, it may appear surprising that *Der Eigene* and *Bar Kochba*, organizations characterized by masculinist, world-denying ideologies, included allies and friends of Werfel and Buber.

The apparent contradiction between Buber's non-binary position and his involvement with the Prague Zionists is further complicated by the figure of Jiri Langer, a young Jewish writer and who had close ties with the Prague circle. Langer was both a devout Hasidic thinker and homosexual theorist, and a member of *Bar Kochba*. Langer sided against Hirschfeld's early work and came under the influence of Hans Blüher from *Der Eigene*. For this reason, Langer's double membership in *Der Eigene* and *Bar Kochba* establishes a link between both ideologies that clarifies the anti-Buberian impulses I have already suggested. In this sense, Langer, through his affiliations with Zionist and homosexual organizations, represents the 'new man' whom Werfel's Buberian hero must sacrifice.

***Der Eigene* in Prague: Homosexuality's Search for Sexuality**

The motivation for Langer's rejection of Hirschfeld's early ideas about the fluidity of sexuality is also an important key to understanding how Werfel and his contemporaries arrived at different understanding of Buber's message. In this section I will argue that Brod, along with other *Bar Kochba* intellectuals, interpreted Buber's spiritual revival much differently than Werfel, mainly by overlooking the non-binary aspects of his theology and opting for a dualistic

73. Anderson, "Otto Weininger's Masculine Utopia," 438.

model that favoured a single (and masculinist) mode of erotic expression. A closer look at Hirschfeld and Buber's ideas on the erotic in relation to both extremes is therefore a useful step in clarifying Werfel's reception of more inclusive, flexible models of sexuality in relation to his contemporaries.

Because Hirschfeld did not view effeminacy as a pejorative label or one that was exclusive to women, his theory of the third sex held less appeal within Werfel's circle of mostly masculinist thinkers, as indicated by Stephan Halper's research into Iri Langer's intellectual affiliation with *Der Eigene* theorists at the advent of WWI.⁷⁴ *Der Eigene* formed at the turn of the century in response to Hirschfeld's rejection of conventional notions of masculinity. Founder Adolf Brand and *Der Eigene* affiliates such as Benedict Friedlander and Hans Blüher re-focused homosexual activism on cultural arguments to describe their vision of masculine superiority and same-sex desire. Friedlander's essays on culture from 1903 and 1906 follow the neo-platonic misogyny that was typical of *Der Eigene*: framing his case against women in terms of essentialist descriptions of both sexes contribution to culture, Friedlander then connects women's interests and importantly, sexual interest in women, with civilizational decline.⁷⁵

Friedlander's writing was typical of many of the cultural arguments forwarded by *Der Eigene* in support of same-sex male love.⁷⁶ Writers who followed this trend of essentialist arguments did so because they believed that Hirschfeld's non-binary discourse failed to effectively dismiss the charges of pathology and femininity that were supported by binary, Weiningerian theories. A gay reader summarizing this deficiency in a letter to sexologist Krafft-

74. Halper, "The Hasidic Closet," 189.

75. Benedict Friedlander, "Male and Female Culture: A Causal-Historical View," in *Male Bonding* 209. Originally published in 1906; Friedlander, "The Decline of Eros in the Middle Ages and Its Causes," in *Male Bonding*, 102. First published in 1903.

76. For two contemporary examples, see Adolf Brand's article "Homosexuality and Reaction" (1911) and Peter Hamecher's "The Tragedy of Being Different" (1914) in *Male Bonding*, 193, 95.

Ebing expresses the view that binary categories such as pathological and normal, had to be engaged with and not rejected.⁷⁷

Following Weiningerian and more western binary views of sex, Blüher's branch of the homosexual rights movement *Der Eigene* as Halper and Spector describe them, encouraged all male erotic relationships without a corporeal element.⁷⁸ In Prague, Werfel's literary colleague Langer came to espouse the ideas of Hans Blüher (1888-1955), a figure who was described by Buber and his correspondents as exhibiting a radical nationalist attitude.⁷⁹ Blüher coupled his anti-Semitism and nationalist beliefs with *Der Eigene*'s theory on the superior nature of male-male Eros. From his exchange with Buber, one can see that a fundamental binarism is the source of many of Blüher's convictions.

Langer's Zionist loyalties and the inspirational role that Blüher played in his life leading up to his arrival in Prague in 1919 suggests a link between these binary worldviews. One potential explanation for this 'gay space' within Zionism is that male homosexual theorists such as Blüher, as I have already shown, tended towards similar forms of masculinism as more nationalistic thinkers, grounding their perspective on culture in a binary model of desire.⁸⁰

The male homosexual association *Der Eigene* rejected Hirschfeld's third sex theory on explicitly binary, Weiningerian grounds: they feared a feminized view of male homosexuals and sought to clarify their own masculinity against a degrading view of femininity and materiality.⁸¹ Physical sexuality, according to prominent *Der Eigene* theorists, was not a proper expression of

77. von Krafft-Ebing, Richard. *Antipathic Sexual Instinct*, trans. F J Redman (New York: Redman Company, 1903), 573.

78. See Halper and Spector on *Der Eigene*'s neoplatonism.

79. See *The Letters of Martin Buber*, 167, 402, 417.

80. Halper, "The Hasidic Closet," 211.

81. *Der Eigene*'s platform is explained by Friedlander in a paper from 1907 entitled "Memoir," in *Male Bonding*, 81-84.

homosexuality, and for this reason Friedlander declared a struggle against the sensual man.⁸²

This dual rejection of femininity and corporeal sex can be contrasted with the monistic perspective of Magnus Hirschfeld, which affirmed both of these elements. In many ways, the hyper-intellectualism of this anti-Hirschfeldian movement echoes Kraus's elitist agenda for cultural reform, presenting gay men rather than artists as the highest representatives of culture.⁸³

Through their binary approach to sexuality and culture, *Der Eigene* writers were responding to the more general social threat associated with feminized society by presenting a common, contemporary argument related to the need to improve and strengthen national culture through correct sexual practice and monitoring. The fear of sexual desire in women is nicely articulated by the German theorist Elisarion von Kupffer (1872-1942) who, at the turn of the century, summarized the widely accepted pessimism that Germans have become emasculated: von Kupffer complained that modern Germany had been corrupted by female influence.⁸⁴ In a paper in 1899 he argued that man had been forced into the service of woman.⁸⁵ The central issue for von Kupffer is that men are not exercising self-determination, and, as a remedy to this pessimistic belief, *Der Eigene* theorists suggested that homosexuality would contribute to the restoration of manliness.

Men who supported the cultivation of a specific version of masculinity in early twentieth C Prague tended to adopt a Weiningerian stance that ascribed gendered qualities to physical sexuality. Thought of as the Austrian counterpart to Elisarion, social reformer Christian von Ehrenfel forwarded similar arguments in Prague, blaming the matriarchal nature of religious

82. Ibid., 105.

83. Halper, "The Hasidic Closet," 214.

84. Edward Ross Dickinson, "Sex, Masculinity, and the "Yellow Peril": Christian von Ehrenfels' Program for a Revision of the European Sexual Order, 1902-1910," *German Studies Review*, 25, no. 2 (May, 2002): 257.

85. Elisarion von Kupffer, "The Ethical-Political Significance of *Lieblingminne*," in *Male Bonding*, 35. First published in 1899.

society for the negative view of male relations.⁸⁶ Ehrenfel was active in the city as a popular professor at Charles University between 1896-1929. While his lectures in philosophy attracted Kafka, who attended several around 1913, and requested to borrow one of his publications from Brod.⁸⁷ There are even deeper similarities between Ehrenfel's outlook and that of the more ardently binary thinkers among his cultural Zionist friends.

Following Halper's argument for an intellectual affinity between Weiningerian masculinism and seemingly less political versions of Zionism, it is no coincidence that Langer came to espouse cultural Zionist beliefs while simultaneously adhering to the homosexual theories of Hans Blüher.⁸⁸ The connection between homosexuality and masculinist thinking has been well documented here (and elsewhere) and a closer exploration of cultural Zionism's masculinist appropriation of Buberian theology will reveal closer parallels between these two binary worldviews.⁸⁹

Spiritualizing Erotic Impulses: Cultural Zionist Sexuality

The differential attitude towards desire, the material body and women among members of Werfel's literary circle can be better understood through a closer look at the cultural Zionist association *Bar Kochba*, initiated by students of Werfel's generation and active between 1901 and 1914. *Bar Kochba*'s Buberian brand of Zionism attracted Werfel's close friends Max Brod (1884-1968), who claims to have befriended Werfel before his work was even in print, and Felix

86. Dickinson, "Sex, Masculinity, and the Yellow Peril," 257.

87. Bruce, *Kafka and Cultural Zionism*, 67; Kafka to Brod, early April 1918, in *Kafka's Letters*, 205.

88. Halper, "The Hasidic Closet," 191.

89. Among the authors cited in this chapter are Steven Halper, Edward Ross Dickinson, Scott Spector, Oosterhuis and Kennedy. See also John Neubacher's essay, "Between Aufbruch and Secessio," in *Literary Fraternity, Literary Friendship*, ed. Gerhard Richter (Chapel Hill: University of South Carolina Press, 2002): 219.

Weltsch (1884-1964), whom Brod introduced to Werfel shortly after and well before WWI.⁹⁰ However, Buber's position against binary thinking is not reflected in the ideology of any of *Bar Kochba*'s prominent members. The early cultural Zionist platform, as represented by self-described Buberians Brod and Hugo Bergmann, was in fact more inclined towards Weiningerian social systems, and in this regard their approach reflects the hyper-masculine platform of *Der Eigene*. The ramifications of Brod and Bergmann's Zionist interpretation of Buber coloured their understandings of race and nation, and helps explain the negative and seemingly hypocritical reception of the *Ostjuden* by many well-meaning cultural Zionists in Prague during WWI.

It is important to recall that Werfel chose a more inclusive avenue, rejecting all suggestions of duality by acknowledging the equal value of women and eastern peoples. Even though he was concerned with marginalization, he feared that this would result from "the act of secularization" that occurred through modernization. Instead of resolving alienation through nationalism, Werfel proposed a universal spirituality.⁹¹ The early anti-nationalist poems explored in Chapter 1 suggest that Werfel would have recognized the nationalist potential of any cultural Zionist association, and indeed this sentiment helps explain why he refrained from joining *Bar Kochba* or any other Zionist organization.⁹² Werfel's later writings indicate that his early reservations concerning collective identification may be related to an even deeper fear of utopian thinking.

His post-WWI story *Not the Murderer* dramatizes the consequence of dreaming by exploring the danger of ideologies that promise change through limited membership, thereby

90. Max Brod, "Franz Werfel," in *The Era of German Expressionism*, ed. Paul Raabe (New York: Overlook Press, 1985), 54; Brod to Buber, June 2 1913, in *The Letters*, 148. Brod expresses his attraction to Buber's work and the perceived compatibilities between Buberian thought and his and Felix Weltsch's attitude at the time.

91. Werfel, "On Man's True Happiness," in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 33.

92. Brod's novel *Tycho Brahe's Path to God* (1915) may be interpreted as alluding to Werfel's resistance to Zionist strategies; a similar reading is proposed by Max Brod in his commentary on *Kafka's Diaries*.

ignoring the “common man.”⁹³ Dreams, he claims “are vampires, they are dangerous.”⁹⁴ The story comments on the pride of solidarity as one of the many tragic ironies of an organization that intends to “fight against the patriarchal world-order.”⁹⁵ The main character’s brush-up with revolutionary subalterns exposes similarities between the group and the old order they despise. Werfel’s final attack against the fictional organization argues that its members ignore the value of spirituality, which is then suggested as the only real alternative to the destructive masculinist dreams of utopian thinking that he unravels over the course of the story. Through the superficial appeal of their heroine, the revolutionary group’s religious ceremonialism is revealed to be vapid – a point that can be read as a challenge to Brod’s Buberian-inspired cultural Zionist revolution.⁹⁶

In later poems as well, such as “Tempora Mea in Manibus Tuis” from 1935, Werfel resists Zionism by refusing to identify with a strictly Jewish cause, asking, “To whom do I belong? A nation? No!”⁹⁷ Elaborating on his belief in the limited scope of collective identities, Werfel’s essay “Realism and Inwardness,” written during the early 1930s, addresses the types of convictions which lead to violent schisms, as WWI would have demonstrated to the author. He characterizes these as both un-spiritual and aggressive, again demonstrating his consistent adherence to Buber’s non-aggressive, eastern cosmogony.⁹⁸

Despite its apparent softening of the chauvinism of Herzl’s nationalist politics – an illusion well-noted by Daniel Boyarin – cultural Zionism in Prague was more compatible with the masculinist essentialist worldview of the anti-Hirschfeldian homosexuals than may first

93. Werfel, *Not the Murderer*, 613.

94. *Ibid.*, 691.

95. *Ibid.*, 615.

96. *Ibid.*, 636-637.

97. Werfel, “Tempora Mea in Manibus Tuis,” in *Poems: Franz Werfel*, 99. First published under the same title in Germany (Berlin: Zsolnay, 1935).

98. Werfel, “Realism and Inwardness,” in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 50.

appear.⁹⁹ *Bar Kochba* was inspired by Buberian thought and eventually led by two of his friends and admirers, Hugo Bergmann until 1905, and Robert Weltsch shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁰ Buber's influential speeches in 1909-1911 had placed him as the central interpretative focus of the Prague student group instead of Herzl, who he had already split with by 1903, well before he began his serious work with the Prague group. Buber's exchanges with Herzl during 1903 indicate the severity of this split: two weeks after he addresses Buber as "my dear fellow Zionist," Herzl refuses to collaborate with him for allegedly attacking Max Nordau, Herzl's political Zionist colleague.¹⁰¹

Buber's central message to Prague students in his series of speeches is often described by historians as promoting the imitation of Eastern Jewish spiritualism, and indeed part of this message was clearly communicated and repeatedly emphasized by Buber.¹⁰² In his 1913 letter to Brod he describe "Jews as a people of the Orient," reinforcing the connection between Judaism and the East.¹⁰³ Rather than emphasizing political action as other German-speaking Zionist groups had done, Buber encouraged the younger generation of students he spoke with to focus on eastern Jewish spirituality.¹⁰⁴

Despite Buber's emphasis on fluidity and spirituality, *Bar Kochba* leaders Hugo Bergmann (1883-1975) and Robert Weltsch (1891-1982) imbued his message with highly politicized binarisms, and Jewish Zionism in Prague during the first decade of the twentieth century developed along its own distinguished path, having only been *triggered* by Buber's

99. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 300.

100. Manfred Voigts, "Franz Werfel," in *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century*, trans Karen Goulding (Taylor and Francis, 2009), 88.

101. Theodor Herzl to Buber, 14 April 1903, in *The Letters*, 91; Herzl to Buber, 1st May 1903, in *The Letters*, 91.

102. Kieval, *The Marking of Czech Jewry*, 105.

103. Bergmann to Buber, 11 May 1915, in *The Letters*, 172; Brod to Buber, 2 June 1913, in *The Letters*, 148.

104. Vogt, "Franz Werfel," 88.

lectures. In 1913 Buber attempted to explain the important difference in their approaches, telling Bergmann that he had overlooked his stance against duality. Buber tells Bergmann that he must overcome this binary thinking, and writes that his disciple ought to view unity as the larger goal.¹⁰⁵ Bergmann's own letter to Buber illustrates the interpretative freedom he consciously took with Buber's message: Bergmann believed that "realization is supreme," an end which Buber explicitly objects to in his reply. Despite this disagreement or misinterpretation, Bergmann still acknowledged the influence of Buber's thought, which certainly help shape his approach to cultural Zionism.¹⁰⁶

The differing responses to Buber, represented by thinkers such as Bergmann and Werfel, illustrates the range of his influence and the interpretative scope that mediates this connection. While Buber supported a world-affirming and feminist spiritualism, Prague students such as Bergmann, informed by their dualism, chose an approach to Jewish spiritualism that was distinctly masculinist and tended to "marginalize the body;" following Kabbalistic interpretations, these different approaches to sexuality, like the competing versions of homosexuality mentioned earlier, may be characterized by their rejection or acceptance of gendered binaries.¹⁰⁷ Buber's feminist approach to spirituality and sexuality, most directly evidenced by his endorsement of Salomé's book, supports Moshe Idel's claim that his was one that "dignified the human shape" along with physical pleasure.¹⁰⁸ Attitudes towards gender, materiality and desire therefore have considerable overlap in Zionist discourse.

Buber promoted an inclusive, non-binary conception of human life, but his followers tended towards a spiritualistic drive that better resembled *Der Eigene's* neo-Platonic, anti-

105. Buber to Bergmann, 7 May 1913, in *The Letters*, 146.

106. Bergmann to Buber, 2 May 1913, in *The Letters*, 144 .

107. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 72, 9; *Ibid.*, 97.

108. *Ibid.*, 9.

materialist eroticism. Werfel alone supported multiple expressions of desire, while cultural Zionists such as Brod privileged a single, elevated expression of eroticism, an attitude that is consistent with a binary outlook. Brod, like Bergmann, tended to favour results over processes, to the effect that he developed a world-denying vision of erotic desire and, concomitantly, a misogynist understanding of women. In Brod's 1929 essay on "Women and the New Objectivity," he describes the function of romantic relations with women as a source of inspiration for escaping material reality; Brod explains that for men, these are ennobling experiences, "...interactions that lifted them above the duller senses."¹⁰⁹ Women, according to Brod, participate in the world of the senses, and so erotic desire must be directed beyond both of these towards a world that is "more real."¹¹⁰

I have already mentioned how the strictly dualistic understanding of sexuality represented by *Der Eigene* tended towards an anti-materialist attitude that degraded women and corporeal sexuality; a similar reading of Brod's ideas about cultural Zionism as masculinist supports Spector's characterization of many of *Bar Kochba*'s Prague circle members as misogynist transcendentalists. Spector identifies the cultural Zionist's peculiarly spiritualist strategy as an "erotic symbioses" that constitutes a process of self-improvement for exclusively male subjects. While the erotic process is triggered by contemplation of a female representative of the material world, the goal is to surpass this desire and cultivate a greater interest in the masculine world of the spirit.¹¹¹

The prevalence of binary thinking among Werfel's literary colleagues in Prague is not entirely surprising, given that cultural Zionism, like most associations at this time, participated in broader discourses. Till van Rahden has already considered several of the ways through which

109. Max Brod, "Women and the New Subjectivity," 142.

110. Ibid.

111. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 120-123.

Jews adopted an ethnic-based mentality, absorbing wider national discussions and synthesizing these with their own goals.¹¹² I have already shown how Werfel absorbed ideas about sexual fluidity from Buber and Hirschfeld; expanding the idea of cultural absorption, I propose that cultural Zionism, fuelled by its masculinist approach to spirituality and the body, reflects one of the ways through which Prague Jews participated in the language of race and binary systems of categorization that surfaced more explicitly within the Herzlian Zionist literature that the Prague group had nominally rejected. In a letter to Buber from 1917, Max Brod expresses his belief that Jews have a national spirit of their own, which makes him an alien to German cultural systems. Specifically, as a writer, Brod feels that he is foreign to German literary traditions and presents Jewish and German spirit of writing in completely polarized terms. He announces, “I feel my native soil” in the diction of the Talmud, and nowhere else.¹¹³ Buber uses similar nationalistic terms, though, as Werfel’s reading demonstrates, he complicates his descriptions of a Jewish nation or essence in other places by emphasizing the unity of the human species.¹¹⁴

The presence of non-dualistic elements within Zionist thought in Prague is matter of emphasis on one aspect Buberian thought. Cultural Zionist dualism may be further attributed to other competing ideas and programs that were in circulation and available to this generation of Prague students. Brod’s ability to internalize political Zionist ideas by men such as Herzl parallels Werfel’s decision to draw upon notions of sexual fluidity and is indicative of the hybridity of Buber’s Prague interpreters. In many respects and despite Buber’s early split with Herzl, the Prague Zionists were not very different from their Herzlian counterparts in Vienna. As I will demonstrate, *Bar Kochba*’s literature and their actions during WWI reveal that the group

112. Till van Rahden, “Germans of the Jewish Stamm: Visions of Community between Nationalism and Particularism, 1850 to 1933,” in *German History from the Margins*, 8.

113. Brod to Buber, 20 January 1917, in *The Letters*, 201.

114. For an example of Buber’s use of essentializing, nationalistic descriptions of Jewry, see Gustav Landauer to Buber, 12 May 1916, in *The Letters*, 190.

borrowed similar ideas about gender and sexuality from Herzl's political approach to Zionism; in both cases, this resulted in the degradation of women and the *Ostjuden*.

If one accepts the suggestion that the Prague Zionists made use of the language of race and nationhood to articulate their own identities, ranking women and Eastern Jews unfavourably, then a closer consideration of the masculinist qualities of cultural as well as political Zionism will be useful in distinguishing Brod and Werfel's competing interpretations of Buber's Jewish spirituality and their very different reactions to Weiningerian elitism.

According to David Biale, political Zionism framed male sexuality within the project of nation-building, celebrating sexual intercourse only as a means to this end. Even though the conditional acceptance of sexuality was presented at the time as being more feminist in nature, a myth that misled even Hirschfeld, reality proved to be very different.¹¹⁵ To this end, Daniel Boyarin explains how Zionism effectively completed the assimilationist process for many Jews. The desire for political action, he explains, resulted from an internalized fear of femininity, rooted in the perceived connection between Jewishness and passivity. The appeal of a return to Israel (dubbed "Phallustine" by Boyarin) resided in its promise of 're-masculinization,' which was intended to resolve the 'emasculating' experience of cultural alienation.¹¹⁶

The ambiguous reception of the *Ostjuden* by cultural Zionists flowed from sets of binaries they had inherited from Weiningerian philosophy and which resulted in a Herzlian form of degradation towards Eastern Jewry. Specifically, Scott Spector's characterization of Brod's writing as highly eroticized coupled with the author's binary understanding of material and spiritual reality lent itself to a negative perception of materiality that assumed that the material

115. Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 76-77.

116. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 222.

concerns of Eastern Jewish refugees rather than being contextual, were symptomatic of the inferior nature of this group.¹¹⁷

Key to understanding western Jewish conceptions of the *Ostjuden* is their negative formulation of femininity and materiality. Kafka wrote Brod in 1917 to describe his encounter with a woman who possesses intelligence (he does not mention creativity) and a knowledge of the world, which he calls “horribly feminine.” In his 1916 novel *The Redemption of Tycho Brahe*, Brod employs themes that support his friend’s negative conception of femininity as connected to materiality and an un-creative form of intelligence. Brod describes the “tricks” of women and their constant desire for attention. In his novel, even the wife of the central protagonist is represented as incapable of appreciating the creative work of her husband.¹¹⁸

Brod’s notion of femininity and materiality as interdependent categories was easily extended to his perception of Eastern Jewry. According to Peter Fenves, Brod tended to create certain “types” of Jews and was often attacked for his essentialist portrayals of these characters.¹¹⁹ His early novel 1912 *Arnold Beer* demonstrates the superfluous materialism held by Jewish people who follow such folk wisdom as, ‘clothes make the man’ (*Kleider machen Leute*).¹²⁰ In the story, the cure for materiality is triggered by Greek learning, the same subject that Brod taught to Eastern refugees.¹²¹ It is therefore probable that Brod felt that the group of *Ostjude* people he encountered required the same recuperation from materialism as his protagonist Arnold Beer.

117. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 65.

118. Max Brod, *The Redemption of Tycho Brahe*, ed. Peter Fenves (Northwestern University Press, 2007) 117-118, 26.

119. Peter Fenves, “Introduction” in *The Redemption of Tycho Brahe*, xxix.

120. Max Brod, *Arnold Beer: Das Schicksal eines Juden* (Berlin: Axel Juncker Verlag, 1912), 7.

121. Fenves, “Introduction,” Iv.

In his 1896 pamphlet “The Jewish State,” Herzl exhibits an essentialist understanding of the *Ostjuden* which, like Brod’s, links these eastern people to materiality. He expressly positions Eastern European Jewry as a labour source capable of establishing the crudest connection with the land. Furthermore, the *Ostjuden* are to be exploited by wealthier Western Jewish settlers: “the poorest who will go first to cultivate the soil – and increasing the value of the land to attract wealthier capitalists – these labourers will come “from the great reservoirs of Russia and Rumania.”¹²² As Boyarin explains, political Zionists would then attempt to educate eastern Jewry, and “by spreading *Bildung* to *Mauschel* [” they would be able to claim a sense of cultural superiority by reconfiguring themselves as masculine, western colonizers.¹²³

Through a binary framework that privileged what was allegedly masculine, western and abstract/intellectual over what was considered to be feminine, eastern, and corporeal, both cultural and political Zionist ideology present the *Ostjuden* as inferior and feminine. Herzl and Brod both suggest the *Bildung* or education-oriented activism as a approach to apply to eastern Jewry, who were characterized as feminine and materialistic. It is this negative evaluation of materiality and femininity within an essentializing framework that complicated Prague Jewry’s reception of Eastern refugees and challenged the process of mutual cultural exchange that Buber envisioned. Reflecting on his Jewish identity in a letter to Buber in 1915, Bergmann problematizes relations between eastern and western Jews in Prague. He writes that “the reverence for East European Judaism which was our intellectual capital... had already come to an end before the war [WWI], even in the relatively few circles that had espoused it.” Bergmann’s letter suggests that the cultural Zionist interest in imitating the spiritualism of the *Ostjuden* did

122. Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, ed. and trans. Jacob M Alkow (New York, Dover Publications: 1988), 93, 130. Originally published in German as *Der Judenstaat* (Vienna: 1896).

123. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 309. Boyarin characterizes the discursive practices of Zionism as *similar* to colonialism.

not carry over into the wartime period. In the same letter, Bergmann also quotes an argument that criticizes Buber for inaction, stating that this claim is “not wholly unjustified.”¹²⁴ Bergmann’s support for such action-oriented views connects him to the broader masculinist attitudes that have been explored throughout this paper. The fact that Bergmann’s support for masculinist action follows a discussion of his disillusionment with eastern Jewish spirituality further illustrates the connection between masculinist attitudes and uneven power relations between eastern and western Jews.

This closer look at cultural Zionism supports Moshe Idel’s claim that within Jewish mystical thinking, chauvinist versions of Eros are certainly possible.¹²⁵ The gendering of a spiritual realm as male and of the *Ojstuden* as female allowed for the contradictory reception of this eastern group. Boyarin explains that before the nineteenth century development of discriminatory theories on homosexuality, Jewish self-esteem had in fact enjoyed the positive valuation of an alternate type of masculinity, one that involved piety and spiritual submission – qualities often considered to be feminine.¹²⁶ Such a favourable characterization of spirituality as masculine was re-appropriated by the Prague Zionists considered in this section, and fully detached from any feminist implications.

Freud also believed that western Jews ought to feel masculine, rather than feminine and inferior. The Jewish “mistake,” as he understood it, was in ignoring the masculine nature of the act of obedience to God. The exception Freud’s points to is the eastern Jewish male, for whom their Jewish spiritual identity supposedly leads to positive, masculine self-image. Several interpreters disagree with Freud’s discussion of spiritual eroticism as masculinising. Boyarin explains an apparent contradiction in Freud’s reading of the Jewish renunciation of materiality

124. Bergmann to Buber, 11 May 1915, in *The Letters*, 71.

125. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 97.

126. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 255-257.

and concludes that the mystical connection is actually inherently feminine, because there is a “parental or erotic intimacy with God” that feminizes the male worshipper, who becomes, vis-à-vis the male God, a “fantasized erotic object.”¹²⁷ Buber followed a similar interpretative stream as Boyarin and his positive conception of femininity and the female capacity for creativity would have led him to disagree with Freud’s masculinist characterization of spirituality. Similarly, Werfel rejected negative perceptions of femininity along with the anti-materialism inherent in dualistic thinking. His erotic interpretation of Buberian spirituality rejected the radical, world-denying intellectualism represented by *Bar Kochba* and *Der Eigene*’s ideologies.¹²⁸

Confusion about the nature of erotic desire posed a severe problem for men concerned with their masculinity, and the topic occupied the minds of homosexual and feminist activists, mystical Jews and cultural Zionists alike. A far less common response to this perceived identity crisis was to reject masculinity as something that is mutually exclusive from femininity. As I have demonstrated, Hirschfeldian and Buberian theories influenced Werfel’s exceptional response to the general trend in Prague. Werfel drew upon Buber’s theologically imbued notion of sexual fluidity, formulating a positive conception of materiality and femininity as an alternative to dualistic discourses on desire. His writing reflects an interest in exploring both spiritual and physical expressions of desire that echoes Buber’s monistic conceptualization of erotic expression.

The next chapter will focus on the specific nature of these feminist impulses in Buber’s early publications on mysticism, including his *Ecstatic Confessions*, which Werfel had read by WWI. As I will demonstrate, Werfel translated the theologian’s emphasis on feminine impulses and healthy sexuality into a commentary on contemporary, everyday concerns through his

127. Ibid., 257.

128. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Europe*, 106-107.

fiction. In order to understand how Buber's seemingly contradictory connection with Prague Zionism was possible, and how his mystical theories could inspire the many different conclusions addressed above, I will turn to Werfel's feminist reading of Buber and the particular texts which shaped and resulted from this interpretation.

Chapter 3: Erotic Identity and Inter-Faith Theology

Do you really think my good looks are there for your benefit?

Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Diaries: Alma Mahler*

Franz Werfel's post-WWI period was strongly coloured by his encounter with a dynamic and highly opinionated artist during the late stages of the war, an affluent composer from Vienna named Alma Schindler-Mahler who became his wife in 1929 until his death in 1945.¹ In quite striking ways, Alma embodied the contradictory, Nietzschean qualities that were identified and institutionalized at various levels through the Prague circle's activities.² As I have argued in Chapter 1, these contradictory interpretations of Nietzsche flowed from competing approaches to subjectivity. The complexity of Alma's character is partly a reflection of her radical feminist understanding of her identity as an artist, which I shall argue is Buberian in nature. Alma's affinity for Buber and radical feminist thought occurred without her being Jewish or a member of any feminist organization; this, along with her marriage to a Jewish writer whose thought was earmarked with Buberian feminism, speaks to the confusing nature of alliances from this period. As Eve Sedgwick points out, the unusual variety of connections among interest groups that stem from gender debates may lead to such seemingly strange pairings as Alma and Werfel.³

Alma's influence on her husband was compounded by their very different cosmopolitan origins within the Austrian Empire - Vienna and Prague, respectively - as well as their social position as an intermarried couple. The characterization of their relationship, however, is less straightforward than Christian-Jewish. As most studies of the couple emphasize, Werfel embraced Christian theology during the early 1920s, following his meeting with Alma in 1917

1. Alma Mahler-Werfel née Schindler is often referred to as simply Alma by Alma scholars, so as not to be confused with any of her well-known former husbands Gustav Mahler or Franz Werfel, or even Walter Gropius; for the sake of clarity, I will follow the tradition of using the common name, despite the diminutive implications, which all the same must be pointed out.

2. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 106-107.

3. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 89.

and the birth of their first child two years after.⁴ However, Werfel's Jewish convictions and sense of Jewish identity were never lost or renounced and in fact remained quite significant even after his conversion to Christianity before his marriage.⁵ It is due to Werfel's consistent acknowledgement of both his Jewish and Christian identity that the usual binary pairing of Christian-Jewish is less useful in discussing the couple's experience.

Drawing on Buber's understanding of a spiritual crisis that is Jewish as well as universal, characterizing both the general human and particularly Jewish experience of alienation, Werfel embraced multiple expressions of closely related Jewish and Christian themes.⁶ After his marriage with Alma and into a Christian family much wealthier than his own, Werfel's sensitivity to ideas of otherness and the potentially othering effect of his Jewish background likely intensified. In 1917, the year he met Alma, Werfel writes to Buber, "I feel the fate of the *galut* [Diaspora] Jew," identifying his feeling of alienation that comes from exile with his Jewish identity.⁷ Werfel's use a Jewish metaphor to express his sensitivity to alienation, which, as previously argued, was not necessarily rooted in his sense of Jewishness, exposes his belief in a link between the Jewish condition and processes of exclusion. His relationship with Alma, which developed towards their marriage in 1919, also provided him with reason to defy restrictive understandings of culture by presenting continuity between Jewish and non-Jewish traditions. Werfel was certainly committed to the humanist search for unity through erotic desire and was willing to approach this from the perspective of more than one religious system.

Alma, for her part, exposed a similar fluidity in her compositions and self-reflections. Her work emphasized female sexual desire as a creative and meaningful experience equal in capacity

4. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 6-7.

5. *Ibid.*, 9.

6. Martin Buber, "My Way to Hasidism," 59.

7. Werfel to Buber, 6 May 1914, in *The Letters*, 155.

to its male version. As a couple, Werfel and Alma understood creative desire as a force that could defy the boundaries of identity-categories. Each partner was well-positioned to contribute to the feminist debates that were underway during the interwar period. Both Werfel and Alma adhered to a non-dualistic conception of reality, which, following Judith Butler's famous claim, is the foundation of serious feminist theory.⁸

Throughout this chapter, I advance the argument that Werfel drew from the most radical elements of his intellectual and cultural environment. Specifically, the anti-dualism of Buberian philosophy encouraged Werfel towards what can (retrospectively) be considered a radical feminist reading of Christian theology that could be reconciled with the radical sexuality of his Viennese wife and other proponents of sexual liberation. I propose that Alma, though usually portrayed as a conservative anti-Semite who limited and directed the contents of her husband's literary work, was actually a productive force in the development of Werfel's humanist worldview; following this argument, I consider how Alma may have contributed to Werfel's evolving feminist ethics, which had been imparted to him well before their marriage through Buber's mystical writings.⁹ My interpretation of Alma rejects the dominant trend among Werfel scholars and builds upon Walter Sorell's characterization of Alma *Three Women: Lives of Sex and Genius*, which presents her as an active artists. Sorrel argues that she maintained a similar level of artistic activity as her husband(s), and suggests that Alma was more of a radical thinker than even she herself realized.¹⁰ I will demonstrate how Alma's concept of creativity and art has more in common with the radical feminist thought that had crystallized for Buber during his *Neue*

8. Judith Butler, quoted in "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," by Daniel Boyarin, *Representations* No. 41 (Winter, 1993): 1.

9. Manfred Voigts, "Franz Werfel," 88.

10. Walter Sorell, "Alma Mahler-Werfel: Body and Mind," in *Three Women: Lives of Sex and Genius* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1975), 32, 4.

Gemeinschaft period, encouraged by his encounters with feminist thinkers such as Helene Stöcker and Lou Andreas-Salomé.

I believe that Alma's identity as a sexual person deserves more attention, as Werfel's reconciliation of Jewish and Christian theology was achieved through a Buberian understanding of desire that Alma already practiced in her social relationships and method of musical composition. The theme of sexual identity that can be traced through Werfel's work suggests even less of a contradiction between his Buberian and Christian influences and between Alma's ethics and both of these. In fact the example that Alma set for Werfel would have helped concretize the humanist arguments transmitted to him from Buber, such as his non-binary view of erotic desire and feminist tendency towards materiality. I will turn to Alma's diaries and her musical compositions in order to illustrate her compatibility with Buberian thought, and, finally, I will compare her sexually affirmative social and musical practices with discussions of female behaviour and gender relations from a selection of Werfel's publications during the 1920s, 1930s and his final novel *Star of the Unborn* from 1945.

Over the course of this discussion, I hope to draw out the biographical and intellectual connections between a broad network of theorists of femininity, who would today be considered radical feminists, in order to better situate Werfel's worldview and both his and Alma's sexual identities. I will discuss the influence of such radical feminist ethics in Werfel's wartime poetry, which, as I have already argued, helped distinguish his reception of eastern peoples and femininity more generally. I will focus on several congruities between radical feminist thought and Buber's mystical philosophy for the reason that Werfel and Buber's anti-Weiningerianism was rooted in a feminist approach to sexuality; the overlap between themes sexual liberation and gender equality in Buber's theology and radical feminist thought is also present Werfel's work.

Finally, I hope to convey a sense of continuity between the author's Prague-based poetry, his later publications from his Vienna years, and his final work, *Star of the Unborn*, created while he and Alma lived in exile Hollywood during the last years of WWII.

In a recent publication, *Myth Matriarchy and Modernity* (2011), cultural theorist Peter J. Davies introduces the argument that Werfel held positive views towards matriarchy which were influenced by the expressionist theorist Otto Gross. Davies's portrait of Werfel as a writer who favoured women over men is unique and can certainly be contrasted with those that argue for his conservative misogyny.¹¹ While I agree with Davies's claim that Werfel sought alternative masculinities, I disagree that his literary exploration of this concept was actually structured by matriarchal theory.¹² Davies emphasizes Werfel's 1917 meeting with Gross as a potential point of departure for his matriarchal theory, but then notes the strange appearance of feminist ideas in works that predate these encounters.¹³ I have found that this apparent discrepancy is better explained through an exploration of the role of Buberian theology in shaping Werfel's vision of gender relations, and that the matriarchal imagery that Davies detects in his writing are more visible as mystical, egalitarian ideas related to Buber's thought.

I would also like to highlight what Davies has already described as Werfel's turn from Gross' interpretation of Bachofen's matriarchal theories, marked by his satirical approach to matriarchal ideas.¹⁴ I believe that this apparent turn represents a more consistent understanding of matriarchy on Werfel's part rather than a turn or conversion, as Davies claims. The apparent disavowal of Gross by Werfel may in fact indicate the Prague poet's adherence to Buberian thought and anti-dualistic thinking. Buber's worldview, while in line with radical feminist

11. See Scott Spector's *Prague Territories* and Rachel Kirby's *The Culturally Complex Individual*.

12. Peter J. Davies, *Myth Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2010), 277.

13. Ibid., 253.

14. Ibid., 283.

thought, is in no way matriarchal for the important reason that it rejects the binary opposition of masculine/feminine. While Werfel at times employs imagery of a primordial mother or mother earth figure, seemingly privileging feminine impulses, his consistent rejection of polarized views of reality and of gender in his poetry and fiction indicate that he does so allegorically, privileging feminine symbols in order to affirm materiality and the beauty of bodies, both male and female.¹⁵

A closer consideration of the themes of sexuality and the body in Werfel's work will demonstrate how the binary oppositions of material/feminine and spiritual/masculine are eroded in his Buberian worldview; a chronological survey will demonstrate that his sensitivity to these themes remained an acute preoccupation throughout his lifetime. Finally, through my analysis of Werfel's literature, spanning the WWI, interwar and WWII periods, and consisting of poetry and fiction, novel, play and short story form, I hope to expose the increasing and consistent importance of the role of physical sexuality, especially female sexuality, which is amplified in later works as his relationship with Alma developed.

Franz Werfel's Erotic Identity

Throughout his early poetry and late fiction, Werfel addresses the issue of the body, its appearance, its functions, and its effects on the world. Central themes relating to physicality, ranging from decay, beauty, and death, to more intimate issues of desire, pregnancy, and culpability for conception, are linked through Werfel's Buberian understanding of sexuality; each theme reveals an aspect of Buber's integrated and highly erotic vision of corporeality and the spiritual world, which I have characterized as mystical, eastern and non-binary. Werfel's Buberian conception of sexuality facilitates his promotion of mutual relationships between the usual polarities of male/female, material/spiritual, connecting his work to other contemporary,

15. For example, "An Old Woman Passes," in *Poems: Franz Werfel*, 23.

radical formulations of gender and sexual relations as well as what Biblical scholar Wayne Meeks has characterized as a rebellious religious worldview.¹⁶

Werfel questions key binary relations relating to his own sexual identity from his position as a Prague Jew and pupil of Buber's, and, much like his contemporaries, he is inspired to do so by a deep sense of alienation felt at a spiritual and physical level. In this respect, Werfel's reaction to alienation is in line with other expressionist critics from his circle, such as Bergmann and Brod, who were also concerned with Jewish masculinity. However, the unique process through which Werfel attempts to come to terms with his sexuality is, unlike the various authors mentioned throughout this paper, not repressive or hierarchical in any sense. Throughout the entirety of his literary career, Werfel avoids the Weiningerian denigration of corporeality or femininity; the physical body, regardless of gender, is not dismissed as inferior to more transcendental conceptualizations of sexuality.

This complimentary affirmation of materiality and femininity on Werfel's part offers an interesting and early contribution by a male Jewish expressionist writer to the radical feminist program that was developed during the 1920s and, according to cultural theorists Jan Campbell and Janet Halbrod, consisted of an important dialogue between Vienna and London in the realm of psychoanalysis.¹⁷ Interestingly, Werfel and Alma both articulated ideas related to radical feminism well before the 1920s. Meanwhile, during the first two decades of the 1900s, the Stöcker branch of the feminist movement engaged with the rational scientific discourse of eugenics that developed out of a concern for motherhood and fertility in the context of the population decline of the 1890s. For many, the casualties of WWI amplified these population

16. Wayne Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *Journal of the History of Religions* 13 no.1 (1973): 207.

17. Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord, "Introduction," in *Psycho-Politics and Cultural Desires*, eds. Campbell and Harbord (London: University College Library Press, 1998), 8.

concerns and the question of fertility rose along with the development of a discourse of technology in modernized Austrian society.¹⁸

A chronological overview and analysis of Werfel's publications will demonstrate how specific events and personal influences shaped his radical approach to feminist arguments about sexuality, and that this radical feminist thread remained a consistent part of his literature, present in a variety of forms, largely due to the fundamental rejection of the eugenic-positivist approach to sexuality that characterized much of modernist-utopian feminist thought during this period.

During Werfel's career as a Prague-based poet and Austrian soldier, his writing dwelt on the human form and its impermanency, eroticizing the morbid content of his work through a Buberian lens. Take, for instance, the following lines that appear in a poem from a 1917 collection and conjure a clear feeling of temporality: "already alive in my good fruit is the long-worded worm.. the rot showing under his shirt."¹⁹ As I suggest in Chapter 2, Werfel's fixation on material degeneration is often coincides with his ennobling understanding of erotic processes of regeneration, as represented in Jewish mystical thinking. Werfel, as I have previously demonstrated, avoided submitting to the world-denying argument of neo-Platonism and spiritual-eroticism, which were charged with masculinist pretensions, instead presenting a narrative centred on the beauty and importance of material decay (and existence) as a necessary part of redemption. The events of the war gave Werfel access to profoundly morbid images, which he explains he came to view as beautiful, and he celebrated the process of death from a non-binary perspective strongly grounded in Buberian mysticism.²⁰

18. Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987): 123.

19. Werfel, "Zerfall," in *Der Gerichtstag in Fünf Büchern* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1919), 243.

20. Werfel's "Theologoumema," in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 181. "I have never forgotten.. mortally wounded men from the days when I was in the war.. [they're] childlike gracious spirituality .."

By WWI, Werfel was familiar with Buber and would have had access to the language of Jewish mysticism, wherein death occurs whenever a believer is kissed by God. Buber had already eroticized the human soul as female, and provided accounts of individuals delivered into a state of ecstasy that is death/decay. The climax of spirituality, expressed through the symbol of a kiss, can be taken as a celebration of the most innate tendency of the human body.²¹ Buber emphasizes this connection between death and eros early on in his *Ecstatic Confessions*, which contain blunt statements concerning the splendour of death: “dying is the true being of the soul.”²²

Werfel’s WWI poetry reveals that he romanticized the morbid content of the war as a Buberian, and his formulation of a positive view of death was extended to the theme of decay more generally. Werfel understood the process of aging as more than a mere vehicle for spiritual transformation; the inevitable decay of the material world was represented as something that constituted a transformation of both body and soul in a mutually positive and highly integrated way. During the war, Werfel’s presentation of death functioned as a condemnation of masculine aggression, but his overall message remained one of the connected experience of body, soul, male, and female.

Werfel makes this point about unity clear in the 1915 poem “Supreme Kinship,” which characterizes the shared destiny of human life as one of decay that is at once painful and ennobling: “You are not deprived of pain’s nobleness. For because you exist, you are equal. Be proud!”²³ Occurring even earlier, the seemingly matriarchal poem “An Old Woman Passes,” presents a more universal statement that mixes the theme of a decaying world – represented by

21. Fishbane, *The Kiss of God*, 19-10.

22. Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, 117.

23. Werfel, “Supreme Kinship,” in *Einander: Oden, Lieder, Gestalten* (München: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1920), 31. First published in 1915 as “Hohe Gemeinschaft.”

the aging old woman - as a positive quality that characterizes the unique nature of human temporality, emphasized by a reminder of “our life in time and space” as a “mighty” presence.²⁴

Death, the ultimate state of temporality that Werfel embraced, was commonly discussed in Expressionist literature with the advent of modern war and technology. Expressionist authors in particular provide insight into the morbid atmosphere of WWI through their sensitivity to temporality, and an awareness of the impact of technology not just in war and death, but in forcing what Todd Presner describes as broader spatial and temporal limits.²⁵ Indeed, modern technology inspired reactions that lay between dystopian and utopian acceptance of its effects, and its reach extended to the discussions about sexuality and held wide appeal for feminist thinkers. Cultural theorist R. L. Rutsky has identified rationalist/functionalist views of technology and contrasted this with its acceptance by anti-rationalist thinkers, such as Werfel. In order to understand Werfel’s praise of liminality, one ought to consider Rutsky’s observation that the modern condition may be understood through an emphasis on what is “irrational, chaotic, and even the destructive aspects of technology.” This view of technology may be linked to creative-sexual expressions, if one “sees it as a dynamic, shocking, almost libidinal force.”²⁶ In this light, Werfel’s view of morbidity does not contradict the typical anti-rationalist apprehension of new technology, but finds within the use of technology for total war and mass death an example of the beauty of temporality and the eros of human nature.

Once again, the mechanics of the writing process are well suited to Werfel’s views, as temporality suggests a lack of stability that is equally present in the act of interpretation. I have

24. Werfel, “An Old Woman Passes,” in *Franz Werfel: Poems*, 23. First published in 1913 as “Eine Alte Frau Geht” in *Wir Sind*.

25. Todd Presner, *Mobile Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 66. Presner uses Kafka’s insight into the “different kind of spectatorship” provided by technology as an entry point into the experience of mobility.

26. R. L. Rutsky, *High Techne: Art and Technology from the Machine Aesthetic to the Post-Human* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 48.

already suggested that literature as a cultural products may be characterized as feminist based on its ability to include multiple interpretations; the role of writing in society reflects an undermining of hierarchies that carries similar erotic connotations as death and temporality. At the beginning of Werfel's Alma-period, his conception of death becomes more explicitly sexualized.

Werfel was politically active in Vienna around 1918, and lived between the Austrian capital and Alma's country homes after they established a home together around 1920.²⁷ The influence of Alma's radical feminist sexuality and the femininity debates of that penetrated the intellectual climate of the German-speaking world – especially Vienna – during the decade of the 1920s would have complimented Werfel's newly found Christian sympathies. From his Viennese experiences of sexuality, feminism and Christianity, Werfel transformed his early Jewish mystical understanding of reality as non-binary and of death as erotic towards a formulation – still within a Buberian framework – that privileged a unified understanding of all three.

The theological underpinnings of Buber and Werfel's spiritual systems have been described throughout this paper as a set of non-aggressive, anti-masculinist principles of creativity and sexuality. These spiritual ideas carry a world-affirming tone which allows for them to compliment the work of radical feminists like Salomé and, importantly, Alma Mahler. While many of the early feminists echoed the patriarchal, rationalist thinking of the eugenics movement by justifying sexual liberation in terms of its social value, namely fertility and healthy motherhood, radical feminists like Alma and Salomé resisted this ambiguous echoing of

27. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 7.

positivist thinking, finding ways of expanding sexuality without reflecting structures of patriarchy.²⁸

Alma, like her contemporary Salomé, adhered to an inclusive view of erotic desire that can be placed within the Buberian-Nietzschean tradition of anti-modernist, anti-rationalist thinking. The usual description of Alma as a stifling force in Werfel's life – a manager who attempted to structure and direct his work –²⁹ will be balanced with the argument that Alma actually contributed the most flexible aspect of her husband's thought by encouraging his non-binary understanding of sexuality towards actual expressions of sexual desire.

Following Werfel's marriage to Alma, the idea of death and gender equality as inter-related ideas in his work undergoes a noticeable progression from subtle inference to more direct statements of this view. As the culmination of this trend, the setting of the 1944 novel *Star of the Unborn* in the fictional year of Virgo makes direct use of a classical symbol of female empowerment and death.³⁰ In the Hellenic tradition, Virgo the maiden cycles continuously through death and life through the agency of sexual attraction. Her impact on material reality is significant, causing necessary and positive changes in the seasons and agricultural cycles that guide human life. Similarly, the cycle of renewal, birth, and death that Virgo represents is promoted as a positive resolution in this story of a civilization whose growth has been stunted by world-denying, asexuality.

As I have argued elsewhere, world-affirming beliefs often corresponded with the positive reception of femininity among Werfel's contemporaries, and this trend is reflected in Werfel's

28. See Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 59; Jean Pfaelzer, "The Changing of the Avant-Garde," *Science Fiction Studies* 15 (1988): 149.

29. Lionel B. Steinman, *Franz Werfel: The Faith of an Exile* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1985), 45-48.

30. Werfel, *Star of the Unborn*, 233.

self-image as a sexual being in *Star of the Unborn*. The narrator of the story presents himself as a former father, accepting mutual responsibility for the results of his sexual activities.³¹ As Wagener explains, Werfel underwent a similar experience with Alma with the passing of their first child.³² The novel *Star of the Unborn*, which includes Werfel's reflections on the actions leading to his lost child, also represents his clearest critique of gender roles and binaries. Before turning to this final novel and to a discussion of previous publications and experiences that contributed to its development, I will turn to Alma's history with her own sexuality and music, which provides a piece of the complicated picture that helps explain how Werfel arrived at the radical feminist texts which are under consideration.

Alma, to be sure, lived a productive life that combined notions of creativity and sexuality in the mystical, kabbalistic sense that Buber had illuminated for Werfel. Through her erotic experience as a composer, performer and romantically adventurous woman, Alma was able to merge the abstract, inner world of the spirit with more mundane, corporeal experiences. The following discussion exposes that each of these elements – music and human relations – were interconnected, thereby satisfying Buber's concept of total erotic identity.

The intensity of Alma's many romantic affairs with renowned Viennese artists are an important part of Alma's sexual identity, but these also run the risk of misleading one to believe that she was a mere catalyst for these men's careers. Alma proved through her introspective commentary on these relationships and on her own musical career and compositions that she in fact found the notion of women as mere objects of desire rather than creative agents who desire, problematical. Her thought serves as an example of a non-Freudian model of sexuality and

31. Ibid.

32. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 7.

creativity, which, as the previous chapter details, was also articulated through the non-binary perspective shared by Buber and Lou Andreas-Salomé.

Alma's composition style reflects a non-binary formulation of erotic desire, connecting the creative process to physical expressions of sexuality. In two recent studies on music and feminist aesthetics, Sally MacArthur observes Alma's deep interest in love and desire, pointing to her many romantic relationships in support of an erotic reading of her music.³³ Alma's diaries suggest that she was creatively motivated by sexual desire, and she celebrates sexual desire as a source of inspiration. She insisted that certain relationships were stimulating in the creative sense while others are not, and, as she 'flowers for her art' she will continue to engage in stimulating romantic flings.³⁴ In an affair that did not yield creative fruit, Alma plotted her escape, explaining that it is her music that was suffering.³⁵ Another telling example is a social event recorded by Alma on February 2nd, 1900, after a public performance of her music. Her reflections on the evening recount escapades with multiple men, placing her role as a performer of music next to descriptions of herself as a sexual interlocutor.³⁶ Her performance as a flirt on the evening of her first public concert demonstrates more than a mere enjoyment of sexual desire and music in simultaneity. An entry from the very next day explains that the "external stimuli" – referring to the atmosphere of amplified sexual desire - was an important source of her musical creativity.³⁷

Around the same time that Hirschfeld and Buber were considering the radical feminist ideas of Helene Stöcker at the *Neue Gemeinschaft*, Alma was recording her own feminist arguments against the gendering of sexual impulses. Throughout her diary entries from the early 1910s, she rejects masculine privileges in romantic relations, defending her own right to behave

33. Sally MacArthur, *Feminist Aesthetics in Music* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 73.

34. Alma Mahler-Werfel, 22 April 1901, in *Diaries*, 400.

35. *Ibid.*, 24 April 1901, 401.

36. *Ibid.*, 2 February 1900, 240-241.

37. *Ibid.*, 9 February 1900, 245.

like the flirtatious Secessionist leader Klimt. Embracing the label “flirt” that was often applied to her, she asks why should Klimt be permitted to pursue multiple women, while she is not allowed to court multiple men?³⁸ Alma’s discussions of her affair promote an understanding of a woman’s erotic experience as equally valid as a man’s often by comparing her behaviour to Klimt’s by insisting on her status as artist – all *despite* her femininity, which she actually draws our attention to as a positive quality.³⁹

On one of her finest evenings, the night of her first concert in 1900, she is both artist and sexual subject. As an explanation of her dual-role, Alma comments on conventions and morality, concluding, after much contemplation, that “I don’t give a damn for morality.”⁴⁰ In her longing for sexual freedom over morality, Alma aligns herself with the early radical feminist school of thought in stating the irrelevancy of morality.⁴¹ In her attempt to transcend morality, Alma is echoing a contemporary argument forwarded by Helene Stöcker, who followed a radical post-1890 tradition and disputed the role of morality in structuring social relations.⁴²

My own reading of Alma’s diaries is that they serve as a clear record of a sexually aware and world-affirming personality. Comparisons drawn by Walter Sorell between Alma and Salomé enhance MacArthur’s interpretation of Alma’s music as a sexually charged expression of gender equality.⁴³ Alma’s diaries, resplendent with defiant statements against male privilege, support a feminist reading of her music.⁴⁴ MacArthur argues that the piece “*Ansturm*,” composed in 1911, with its multiple climaxes, is Alma’s expression and celebration of female sexual

38. Ibid., 24 April 1900, 280.

39. Ibid., 9 June 1899, 153. Alma wrote what she would have said to Klimt: “I am just as much an artist as you are.”

40. Ibid., 7 February 1900, 244.

41. Ibid.

42. Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 59.

43. Walter Sorrell, “Introduction,” *Three Women: Lives of Sex and Genius* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), ix.

44. For one such example see 30 May 1901 in Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Diaries*. Alma writes, “he will educate me..and I will educate him”(410).

experience. The poem by Richard Dehmel that the music is set to, as MacArthur points out, is one of the first examples of a female composer using an explicitly sexual theme. Regardless of the accuracy of this characterization, the poetry Alma selected reveals that she held an interest in sexual intercourse and insisted on its celebration well before the femininity debates, and before her meeting with Werfel.⁴⁵ In the text for “*Anstrum*,” there is an aggressive call to be open about female sexuality, to “bring it into the light,” (*ans Licht, ans Licht!*) after an allegorical discussion of a sexual encounter.⁴⁶ Alma, therefore, should be considered alongside early radical thinkers such as Buber, Salomé and Hirschfeld, who dealt with sexuality in the humanist vein explored in the previous chapter. In the wider feminist movement, the pre-WWI period was coloured by Stöcker’s consistently radical views, and the debates that her responses provoked by more moderate strains.⁴⁷

The point of this analysis, of sexing Alma’s music and drawing out the radical feminist elements of her introspection, is to further advance the point that Alma, like Werfel, supported a model of desire and creativity that was non-gendered. Alma shared a fundamental vision with anti-dualistic thinkers, one of ‘God and nature united,’ which shaped her musical feminism.⁴⁸ The use of music to subvert patriarchal social systems and norms is sometimes overlooked, as it is often forgotten that music is politically charged. Music is particularly well positioned to comment on social systems because it follows its own conception of time – musical time. Following Theodor Adorno’s discussion of music, one can understand this as a system that is less bound to convention than others, such as scientific or perhaps even literary.⁴⁹ One can therefore assume

45. MacArthur, *Feminist Aesthetics in Music*, 76-77; *Ibid.*, 69.

46. Richard Dehmel, “Anstrum,” *Spiegel online*, accessed April 4, 2011, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/1729/49>.

47. Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 62.

48. Alma Mahler-Werfel, 14 June 1900, *Diaries*, 294.

49. Theodor Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,” in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (London: The Continuum Publishing Company,

that the factors that are determined and influenced through *experimental* music are more fluid and possess even greater potential for subversion than those determined in the more closed system that structure ordinary human time.⁵⁰

The nature of Alma's feminist erotic composition style may be considered alongside her former husband's work as experimental, as hers also presents a mode of resistance against social conventions. Alma's work follows the definition of experimental music proposed by Morag Grant, which holds that music is experimental through its attempt to assert the organic or natural, everyday experience of life, drawing attention to this by rejecting social conventions and systems that were seen as disconnected from this experience.⁵¹ Her insistence on a sexually liberal experience for women and the incorporation of this lifestyle in her music is a mode of cultural rebellion; for this reason, Alma's music plays an ideological role and her musical consciousness, like most music, can be linked to a broader worldview.⁵²

Alma's erotic music and lifestyle, when taken together, present an understanding of creativity that is inclusive on several levels: regarding female subjects capable of possessing erotic desire that is intrinsic to the Buberian model that presents corporeal objects of desire as leading to appropriate experiences of creativity. Alma overturns gendered understandings of creativity and sex and with it, the masculine monopoly on erotic desire and the gender relations that flow from these. Similarly, her rhetorical question, "do you really think my good looks are

2005), 272; Adorno, *The Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley G. Blomster (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), 60; Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten, *Music and Manipulation: On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 57.

50. Gilles Deleuze, "Memory as Virtual Coexistence," in *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1961), 61.

51. Morag Grant, "Experimental Music Semiotics," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 34 no.2 (2003): 173-174.

52. Ron Eyerman, and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 28.

there for your benefit?” challenges the idea of female sexuality as a mere source for male stimulation.⁵³

Letters from composer Gustav Mahler, her husband during this period, expose that Alma was even able to disregard female responsibility for pregnancy. Gustav refers to her loss of several children as the relief of “burdens”—possibly allusion to abortions—as failing to inspire any sense of remorse in his wife.⁵⁴ While Alma was not unique in her conception of a liberated female sexuality, with Stöcker’s League for the Protection of Mothers having already launched a pro-contraceptive (including abortion) campaign before 1910, what is more significant is Alma’s acceptance of radically feminist views during this pre-WWI period that certainly predate its popularization by later feminist campaigns.⁵⁵

In order to connect Alma’s feminism more directly to the activities of other radical thinkers from the prewar period, I will turn once again to Salomé and to the specific qualities that her branch of the early radical movement shared with Buberian mysticism. To varying degrees, Buberian feminism proved to be compatible with Alma and Salomé’s sexual ethics; Werfel’s affinity with Buberian mysticism helps account for his receptivity towards feminist theories of sexuality after the 1920s, when this became a large part of public discourse. The Buberian ideas that lay the foundation for the gradual and consistent development of feminist and sexual themes in Werfel’s work stem from the theologian’s own affinity for early radical feminism.

Letters exchanged between the pair suggest that Buber’s ideas on femininity would have been transferred to the author through during the 1910s, when his mentorship was most warmly

53. Alma Mahler-Werfel, 22 April 1901, *Diaries*, 400.

54. Gustav Mahler to Karl Moll, 10 March 1909, in *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Eithne Wilkins et al. (New York: Faber and Faber, 1979), 333.

55. Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 72.

acknowledged.⁵⁶ Buber, as I have already pointed out, engaged directly with Salomé's discussion of sexuality in the early 1900s, and with radical feminist thought even earlier in his monistic circle at the turn of the century; by the time he encountered Werfel, Buber was already familiar with the anti-dualistic feminist discourses that I have traced in Werfel's work. Chapter 2 details how Buber's early Hasidic-themed theology is underpinned by a rejection of binary views of corporeal sexuality and gender relations; his correspondence with Salomé, early exchanges with his wife, and records of his collaboration with other feminists support the hypothesis that Buber embraced a sexually affirmative role for women.

Underpinning Buberian feminism is an emphasis on inter-subjectivity and reciprocity, which may be unpacked through a discussion of Buber's views on human interactions and relationships. Buber's late philosophy from 1923 has been described by James W. Walters as complimentary to feminist ethics, as both, he observes, are grounded in inter-subjective experiences.⁵⁷ Buber's early Hasidic writings were certainly read by Werfel, and these anticipated the relational ethics of *I and Thou* by exposing what Walters calls "the realm between two subjects," the heart of the relational experience, or *Zwischen*.⁵⁸ Buber's theology is primarily interested in overcoming alienation through connecting with other humans and the divine, which, according to him, are one and the same, and can be described as an ethics of inter-relationality that privileges the space between people that would become Buber's *Zwischen*. Buber's understanding of mysticism therefore serves as a model for inter-human encounters, and as an early entry point into the theologian's very feminist understanding of gender relations.

Buber's discussion of mystical encounters does not discriminate between men and women vis-à-vis the divine. In *Ecstatic Confessions*, readers are exposed to descriptions of male and

56. See for instance, Werfel to Buber, 6 May 1914, in *The Letters*, 154-155.

57. James W. Walters, *Martin Buber and Feminist Ethics* (Syracuse University Press, 2003), 78.

58. *Ibid.*, 70.

female mystics who achieve the most intimate level of contact with the divine, and record their recollections of this elevated state of being in the same sexual language. Buber's inclusion of the assertion that "God's truth is in his children. For his sons and daughters are his temples in which he dwells and which he has filled with his glory" by an anonymous mystic, sets the tone for gender equality within Buber's mystical movement.⁵⁹ In other places throughout the anthology, this point about men and women serving as vessels of God is proven to be true; one woman writes, "God is in my heart and in my soul and seldom leaves me," a conviction that establishes a connection between God and femininity.⁶⁰ An interesting passage by Jakob Bohme, a popular 17th century German mystic, is quoted by Buber to reinforce the idea of gender-defying principles established through mysticism. Bohme adopts the position of a woman, describing his connection with God as being embraced with love as "a bridegroom embraces his dear bride."⁶¹

Buber intended for his collection of mystical accounts to serve as a model and source of inspiration for readers, so by including a proportional number of female mystics, he is endorsing the view that women are equally capable of the most creative human achievement. Going even further, Buber includes statements of non-denominational, universal spiritualism. In a 17th century conversation between two men about Jakob Bohme, the first man is criticized for enquiring about Bohme's religious affiliations, as if "he wanted to bind the bliss of God to his congregation alone."⁶² The anthology affirms Buber's own belief in inclusive humanist values, presenting mystical reports from a variety of non-European traditions, such as Hindu and Taoist. I will later show how the plurality of traditions informing Buber's work echoes Werfel's own

59. Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, 127.

60. *Ibid.*, 78.

61. *Ibid.*, 127.

62. *Ibid.*, 130.

hybridized influences, which, in addition to Buber, included Christian theological arguments for a feminist vision of sexuality.

Buber's open-minded interest in feminist theories was likely developed at the *Neue Gemeinschaft* in the early 1900s, and maintained through a relationship of mutual respect with feminist such as Elen Key and the more radical, Nietzschean feminist Lou-Andreas Salomé.⁶³ Salomé is an especially important figure for Buber, not only because of their shared anti-dualism (see Chapter 1) but for her role as bridge between Alma and Buber's separate influences on Werfel. It is more than coincidental that Alma has been compared to the feminist psychoanalyst, and that her husband was an open Buberian. Buber's interest in *Zwischen* politics closely parallels Salomé's early respect for female subjectivity and sexuality, which would become a central issue during the femininity debates as theorists sought to understand and overturn the Freudian castration complex that defined women in terms of their implicitly inferior relationship to men.⁶⁴

In order to be compared with Werfel and Alma, Salomé's radical feminism must be distinguished from the radical eugenicist stream that employed sexuality and the sexual liberation of women as a functional means of achieving a collective good. Salomé and the Werfel couple shared a unique interest in expanding the conception of sexuality and erotic desire more generally, and they did so by avoiding the grey-area between rational systems of thought, including eugenics and collective-oriented discourse on technology, and placing themselves instead in direct opposition to any functionalist understanding of erotic life. The feminist movement began to take shape in the Austrian Hapsburg empire at the turn of the century, and as

63. Buber to Helen Key, 23 September 1908, in *The Letters*, 116.

64. Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord, "Introduction," 8.

it developed, it took many forms.⁶⁵ What can be termed radical feminist thought, as represented by Werfel, Alma, and Salomé, flowed from an immediate appreciation of Nietzschean subjectivity and anti-rationalist understandings of individuality and human nature.

Steven Aschheim describes the Freudian school of psychoanalysis – where Lou Andreas-Salomé trained – as an unsuccessful attempt to overcome the limiting effects of rationalist positivist analysis.⁶⁶ In 1915, Salomé expressed her personal interest in Freud's text *Narcissism* (1914), where the castration complex is fully developed, and problematized the essentialist, positivist elements she detected in the text. Before sharing her thoughts on the topic, she included the disclaimer that "no doubt this interest of mine is subjectively motivated," suggesting perhaps that her interest in the question of narcissism had as much to do with her identity as a woman and individual as it did with her role as a pupil and correspondent of Freud's.⁶⁷ In her 1915 letter, she challenged the fundamental theory of the phallus-desiring woman proposed in *Narcissism* by drawing on a very Buberian definition of erotic desire. Salomé built her case against Freud by suggesting that the experience or state of desiring generates more pleasure than the fulfillment of desire, as he had implied: instead of craving relief, "quench(ing) the thirst" by obtaining the object of desire [which would be the phallus, for women] one actually craves the experience of craving, in Salomé's words, of "yearning for the thirst itself."⁶⁸ Salomé explains how satisfaction ends the process of desiring and diminishes our pleasure, "a pleasurable tension."⁶⁹

Her formulation of desire and difference (between subjects and objects of desire) does not suggest these as pathological or negative, but instead frames pleasure in such a way as to enable a

65. See Agatha Schwartz, "Austrian Fin-de-Siècle Gender Heteroglossia: The Dialogism of Misogyny, Feminism, and Viriphobia," *German Studies Review* 28.2 (2005).

66. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy*, 55.

67. Salomé to Freud, 4 December 1914, in *Letters*, 22.

68. *Ibid.*, 10 January 1915, 25.

69. *Ibid.*, 26.

female subject to continue to desire a male body without actually attempting to obtain or become this body. Furthermore, addressing the desire for physical alterations more directly, Salomé states that the search for an altered body could never lead to pleasure, so instead ‘we come to accept this [natural physicality] more and more.’⁷⁰ The very idea that erotic desiring can serve as a productive force, removed from its biological results – especially from fertility – distinguishes Salomé as a feminist thinker who, like Alma and Werfel, understood sexual liberation as a liberation of broader erotic impulses. At this point I would like to recall an argument by the historian of modern Germany and sexuality, Elizabeth Heineman, that attempts by central Europeans to control expressions of erotic desire through rationalized, scientific discourse, mark an important continuity between the period leading up to the 1930s and the Nazi implementation of measures targeting sexual expression and fertility. Importantly, Heineman notes that the discussion of sexual expression that the Nazi regime adopted was about more than reproduction. In actuality, Nazi as well as non-Nazi authorities and organizations, including those with feminist goals, were interested in erotic desire more generally and in its relationship to identity and power. Salomé, Werfel, and Alma’s anti-Freudian formulation of desire may be considered alongside these more rationalistic models in order to expose the connection between various attitudes on sexuality and different perceptions of individuals and their ‘social value.’

Without openly criticizing the implications of the Freudian model of female desire (for a phallus of her own), Salomé undermined the formula of desire that is at the heart of this model. Her non-binary worldview allowed for her to consider pleasure in a more universal way that confirms a natural, positive relationship with the body. It is therefore Salomé’s emphasis on the universality of the human condition rather than the particularities of male/female differentiation (based on the possession of phallus), that stands at the centre of her refutation of Freud’s

70. Ibid., 26.

masculinist explanation of female sexuality. During the 1910s, the parallels between Salomé, Buber and Alma centre on a non-binary interpretative framework that affirms materiality and femininity. As an early Buberian and later on, as Alma's husband, Werfel is appropriately positioned as a radical discussant on issues of female sexual liberation.

Werfel and the Femininity Debates

Werfel's writing after 1920 expands on the radical feminist views of sexuality suggested by Alma's music and her early lifestyle which at once mirrored Buber and Salomé's writings on desire. During this post-WWI period, more mainstream feminist arguments for sexual liberation fell in step with the rationalist models proposed by eugenicists. Conversely, those who championed anti-rationalism, such as Salomé, tended to focus on inter-subjective relationships and avoided the limiting effects that eugenics sought to impose on erotic desire. The popularity of the eugenics' movement among more mainstream feminists matched a broader post-WWI concern with fertility that valorized motherhood. As Maureen Healey argues, the idea of motherhood legitimized the new Austrian women in the immediate postwar period, as women's citizenship was partly founded on her capacity to act as mother and spouse.⁷¹ However, the industrialized society of 1920s central Europe created new jobs for women that threatened the preconceptions of misogynist thinkers and even feminists interested in motherhood, fuelling a conservative backlash against women's newly expanded role as labourer.⁷² As a result, the place of women in social relations became an important topic of debate during the interwar years.

Elena Mancini explains that women's presence in male-dominated spheres as well as certain new rights acquired before the 1920s resulted in widespread anxiety about changing

71. Maureen Healey, "Becoming Austrian: Women, State and Citizenship in World War I," *Central European History* 35 no.1 (2002): 1-2.

72. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters*, 166.

gender roles.⁷³ Similarly, in Werfel's personal life, the 1920s involved a powerful female spouse whose difference in terms of gender, religion, and wealth, threatened to intensify her husband's fear of alienation. Rather than supporting perceptions of otherness, Werfel's work from this period engages with the similarities between men and women, Christians and Jews, and people of from various social position.

Motivated by his attempt to reconcile social differences, Werfel participated in the broader discourse on general human and gender relations that followed the war. He suggested that men and women may use sexuality to the same end, in a way that is meaningful and creative, rather than through one-sided, masculine-aggressive expressions of desire. To reinforce this theme of positive female sexuality, Werfel crafted several novels that tackle the question of women's position in sexual relationships. As I will demonstrate, in *Star of the Unborn* Werfel celebrates the erotic playfulness and physical-sexual enjoyment of his heroines as well as heroes. Through subtler devices he engages with feminist sexuality in earlier stories, ranging from 1920 through to 1936; leading up to *Star of the Unborn*, Werfel slowly builds upon his Buberian acceptance of physical and spiritual desire as equally valid expressions of creativity, ultimately drawing attention the violation of women's rights and the unjust suppression of sexual expression.

Werfel's Buberian foundations and his encounter with Alma propelled him towards more explicit exposure of the positive role of physical sexuality and the related assertion of gender equality in his first short novel from this decade, *Not the Murderer*, where Werfel suggests that sex cannot be part of a patriarchal economy of power. Following WWI, Werfel began work on *Not the Murderer* (1920), which, as well as serving as a condemnation of utopian/nationalist schemes (see Chapter 1), marks the development of his criticism of gender relations. In the story

73. Mancini, "A Brighter Shade of Pink," PhD dissertation, The State University of New Jersey, 2007, 123.

the mother of the antihero is abused by the same figure who represents the idea of patriarchal culpability for WWI and the rising anti-Semitism that followed in its wake. By connecting misogyny with racial thinking and aggressive violence, Werfel concretizes the link between Buberian feminism and his mystical humanism that insists upon a positive valuation of all inter-subjective experiences.

The hero's rejection of patriarchy through the assertion of magic and myth is what allows him to accept the beauty of sex, women, and their union in the family (as noted in Chapter 2) but it also goes beyond this dignifying view of corporeality by insisting upon the specific need for women to find similar creative experience in the world. The heroine Zinaida functions as the tragic example that exposes the unjust imbalance between the sexes. The narrator laments she "had never lived at all."⁷⁴ Instead of acting creatively, Zinaida is the impetus for male action: "she almost never spoke yet all speeches were addressed to her."⁷⁵ She is simply a source of male inspiration, and, as is characteristic of many misogynist behavior, she is undermined by the same men who openly deny the value of the common person.⁷⁶ Through the example of Zinaida, Werfel critiques the binary, elitist principles that would deny the feminine enjoyment of life in the material world.

At this point in his own life, Werfel's relationship with Alma had progressed and by 1918, they already shared a home together and had experienced the death of their recently-born infant.⁷⁷ Six years after this birth, Werfel's marriage to Alma, a Viennese-Catholic, would have encouraged his very unique acceptance of Christianity as compatible with Buberian mysticism. Along with his Buberian attitude towards Christianity, Werfel's marriage to his vocally sexual

74. Werfel, *Not the Murderer*, 663.

75. *Ibid.*, 623.

76. *Ibid.*, 639, 613.

77. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 7.

Catholic Wife would have supported an even more radical affirmation of physical sexuality and female equality based on a hybridized Jewish-Christian theory. His Jewish brand Christianity was often addressed in his writing through the figure of Paul of Tarsus. However, Werfel's turn towards Paul was not unique among Jewish humanists: Daniel Langton has traced an interest in Paul of Tarsus on the part of many modern Jewish writers, which he argues was fuelled by their deep interest in unity.⁷⁸ In Werfel's own words, Paul can serve as a unifying rather than divisive figure between Jews and Christians.⁷⁹

As a transitional piece between Werfel's inter-faith period and developing sexual ethics, the play "Paul Among the Jews" was composed in 1926, three years before his marriage to Alma and conversion to Catholicism.⁸⁰ The timing of this piece, composed in the years leading up to the couple's marriage, makes "Paul" an especially salient example of Werfel's strategy of reconciliation of religious differences. In the forward to "Paul," Werfel indicates that he considers himself to be a Jew, a move that suggests his deeper preoccupation with the 'otherness' that this aspect of his identity threatened to created at this point in his life.⁸¹ The Christian content of the play, largely centred on Paul of Tarsus (the Christian Saint Paul), also suggests that Werfel held deep Jewish sympathies, further evidencing his hybridized sense of identity as a Jewish-Christian. Not coincidentally, the historical Paul was also a hybridized figure, known as a Jewish follower of Christ who, according to biblical scholar Calvin Roetzel, was influenced by Hellenistic culture. Paul's life occurred at a crossroads of civilizations and traditions that further complicates his reception by Jewish and Christian thinkers alike.⁸² While Werfel was developing

78. Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-2.

79. Werfel, "Preface," in "Paul Among the Jews," i.

80. Voigts, "Franz Werfel," 88.

81. Werfel, "Preface," i.

82. Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 6-7; *Ibid.*, 5.

his inter-faith identity, he applied a synthesis of Jewish and Christian theology to advance his gender criticism through themes related to corporeality that had been presented in his early work. Throughout the 1926 play, several Jewish characters are suggested as parallels to the Christ-following Jewish Paul. Allies of Paul share a common affirmation of materiality, while those who are portrayed as enemies of his Judeo-Christianity are presented as anti-materialists.

Werfel's disclaimer against institutional understanding of religious divisions further illuminates these points of contrast, supporting a reading of "Paul Among the Jews" as a humanist story that surpasses binary divisions between Judaism and Christianity. In order to emphasize his point, Werfel has the central heroes of the play openly acknowledge their own cross-cultural identities, while only the villains maintain strict boundaries between ethnic, religious and gender divisions. Werfel is especially careful to highlight the Jewish aspects of Paul of Tarsus's identity in conjunction with the disciple's loyalty to Christ. Werfel's Paul identifies as a Jew, referring to the Jews as "my people." He then proves his loyalty to the Jewish tradition by defending the Torah against a presumably early Christian man who threatened to defile the sacred Jewish text. In a scene that promotes the participation of women in critical conversations, Werfel once again emphasizes Paul's Jewishness by having a female bystander point out that Paul uses the Jewish term *rabbi*, "my teacher."

In direct opposition to Paul is Father Exorcist, a character who stands as a symbol of resistance against inter-faith alliances. Exorcist also reflects the dualistic stance against materiality and the conservative condemnation of women, and he denounces both women and inter-marriage through the logic of binary reasoning; his values are structured by essentialist divisions between world and spirit, sacred and profane, man and woman, Jew and non-Jewish

Greek, Jew and follower of Paul, and so on.⁸³ The most influential of these pairings, the distinction between profane and sacred, is what allows Exorcist to contemplate the tension between the enjoyment of creation and appropriate moral behaviour.

In the following two passages, I will show how Werfel connects Exorcist's understanding of identity to his definition of reprobate, which is centred on denial of the human body and especially the female body. Paul is criticized by Exorcist for "enjoying life" by dancing, establishing his dualistic vision of reality. It is reasonable to assume that Exorcist's belief in the inferiority of women, "sin cometh from women," is due to their perceived connection to the reprobate world of material reality.⁸⁴

Conversely, the Jewish followers of Paul accept the input of women and respect the supposedly materialistic Greek culture. The acknowledgement of femininity and feminized identities stems from a belief in a non-dualistic relationship between the material and the spiritual and allows for these Pauline sympathizers to identify with the supposedly materialist non-Jewish Greeks. Among this group of anti-dualistic thinkers is Mathias, a character who best reflects Werfel's own position as a Jewish man pursuing a relationship outside of the Jewish community. Mathias, who is engaged to a Greek woman, insists that he is a Jew and he denies that there are fundamental differences Jews and (non-Jewish) Greeks. He expresses his apprehension of social divisions based on religious affiliation, abhorring the concept of "our blood" and asking "Why should I dress differently from the Greeks?"⁸⁵ Going even further, Mathias decides that differences are positive, "what is foreign is beautiful."⁸⁶

83. Werfel, "Paul Among the Jews," 40. Exorcist characterizes contact with gentiles as unclean; His altercation with Paul is described in further detail. (98).

84. Ibid., 46.

85. Ibid., 25; Ibid., 15.

86. Ibid., 22.

Throughout the play, Werfel's sympathies lie with exceptional or marginalized figures understood to be under threat, though he avoids discussing these generalities in binary terms. Through extensive monologues performed by persecuted characters such as Paul, Werfel encourages closer identification for the audience with marginalized situations. Lines conveying the thought process of these characters also contribute to the impression that persecuted individuals possess agency. For instance, when Paul's opponents in the place of execution demand that he repent in order to be saved, Paul insists that, according to his own values, he is innocent, and explains that he has already been saved through his own decisions.⁸⁷ Paul's trial is also suggestive of Werfel's interest in the tension between individual spirituality and more patriarchal, institutionalized forms of religion. In this context, the debate between Paul and the authoritative, all-male Jewish assembly, the *Sanhedrin*, does not necessarily stand for a struggle between Christian and Jewish ethics, but rather the relationship between individual agency and patriarchal institutions.

Werfel invents "Mathias" as his representative in the play, using this character as a vehicle for emphasizing his Buberian understanding of inter-subjectivity, specifically promoting the unity of seemingly polarized pairs, such as Jewish and Christian. Similarly, Mathias is deeply connected to Werfel's broader, Buberian preoccupation with the question of material/spiritual divisions. As an ally of Paul, Mathias implicitly accepts the disciple's world-affirming behaviour and his argument that death and life are interconnected, a theme Werfel had dealt with in his wartime poetry.⁸⁸ Werfel seamlessly integrates these earlier arguments against dualistic reality when he has Mathias rebel against the constraints of the "the laws," declaring that he wants to

87. Ibid., 97.

88. Ibid., 22.

“enjoy life” and implying that he cannot do so under Father Exorcist’s dualistic system.⁸⁹ By contrasting characters who are specifically Jewish, such as Mathias and Father Exorcist, as world-affirming feminists or world-denying misogynists, Werfel simultaneously addresses the tensions surrounding his own personal issues with sexual and religious identity, while demonstrating that sexuality and spirituality are closely intertwined. His ability to consider identity politics - spanning feminist issues to question of inter-marriage - from the standpoint of Jewish humanism demonstrates the compatibility between the Buberian ethics Werfel developed during the 1910s, and the broader social concerns that were inspired by his life experience in Vienna in the 1920s.

In 1931, Werfel proposed a model for the sexual liberation of women through the character of a Christian mystic in his short novel *Poor People*. However, his call for sexual equality can also be taken as a sign of his continuous interest in reconciling differences not only between men and women, but between different segments of society; as we will see, the story challenges both class and gender divisions through the inter-related themes of female sexual expression and spirituality. This interest in greater social equality serves as one of Werfel’s clearest expressions of Buberian mystical, anti-dualistic theories. His awareness of the negative effects of limiting sexual expression is also compatible with Alma’s insistence on female access to erotic stimuli for creative purposes. The timing of *Poor People*, published over a decade after Werfel’s relationship with the feminist composer began, suggests the likelihood of Alma’s encouragement of its central themes.

Erna, the female protagonist of the story, is a ‘poor’ governess whose behaviour as a sexually-independent subject contributes to her role as a positive example for Hugo, her wealthy charge. Hugo’s governess stimulates the development of his creative faculties and his search for

89. Ibid., 15, 29.

an intimate relationship with the divine. Through Erna, Werfel demonstrates that an individual can occupy both sexual and spiritual roles, as the corporeal aspect of desire and sexuality is deeply related to spirituality – an idea he foregrounds in his early work (see Chapter 2). Erna is highly creative and sexual, and the fictitious heroine certainly bares much in common with Alma's sexually expressive behaviour. Like Alma, Erna's relationships with men, including her pupil Hugo and several romantic partners, demonstrate that her sexuality - a female sexuality - compliments her spiritual and creative integrity.

However, Erna is very unlike Alma in that she is an impoverished, uneducated, woman who is financially dependent on the family to which she is employed. Despite these disadvantages, she is a devout Christian whose behaviour recalls the mystical model Werfel learned from Buber; Erna is able to develop her creative intelligence through this Buberian-like spiritualism. Werfel's decision to echo Buber's mysticism through a Christian, female character who resembles his wife, presents a complicated attempt to reconcile various aspects of his own identity. By imbuing Erna with a gifted creative capacity, Werfel suggests that the sense of spirituality he gained from Buber's writings is not limited to class, faith, or gender. Following this logic, sexual expression, which is intrinsically connected to spirituality, ought not be limited to any one group of people. In a similar way, the theme of inter-generational and inter-class love, represented by the wealthy Hugo's attraction to Erna and her reciprocal concern for him, undermines attitudes which attempt to limit or degrade expressions of desire.

Importantly, Hugo's physical attraction to his tutor is inseparable from the example she sets as his tutor and creative thinker. As I have argued in Chapter 2, much of Erna's appeal as a tutor rests in her ability to think outside of routine structures: Hugo finds a companion for story-telling, inventions, and is spared the usual exercises and training that was dictated to children by

the science of that period.⁹⁰ By applying more intuitive strategies, Erna also maintains a creative connection with her sexual partners. Werfel suggests that these creative erotic pursuits are legitimate, describing how Erna defies the house rules and social expectations to pursue her lovers without tainting her positive image.

While the details of her pregnancy are unclear, the circumstances surrounding its revelation place Erna in a sanctified, mystical relationship with the divine that is closely observed by her pupil Hugo. Upon entering Erna's home, where she is to share the news of her "trouble" with her family, Hugo remarks that "this is where God lives," and that Erna "belonged here."⁹¹ The setting and timing of Hugo's dual revelation - that Erna is spiritual and pregnant - reveals that his tutor's relationship with the divine is not simply established in spite of her sexuality, but as a positive attribute that is closely related to her creative-sexual role. Erna's actions and affection towards both potential father-candidates are described without demeaning her place in the partnership. As a partner, Erna is not submissive and appears to have argued and negotiated with both men, often arriving at Hugo's house upset or in tears.⁹² Her affirmative, assertive position in these relationships is emphasized by the seemingly perverted, illicit nature of her late-night dates. Once again the setting of these dates coincides with an enhancement of Hugo's perception of Erna as a spiritual figure: after sneaking home, dishevelled and late, Hugo accompanies her through the living room, where considers the shallow spiritualism of his parents, symbolized by their religious paraphernalia. Importantly, this implicit comparison between Erna and Hugo's parents strongly favours Erna and has the effect of enhancing her physical and spiritual appeal to Hugo.

90. Santner, *My Own Private Germany*, 64-66.

91. Werfel, *Poor People*, 78-79.

92. *Ibid.*, 67.

Werfel's characterization of Erna reveals that female sexuality and spirituality are complimentary, and his literary portrait echoes Alma's argument that women are free to employ both with positive effect. In Werfel's story, Hugo continues to admire his mentor after her dismissal. Through Hugo's child-like intuition, Werfel emphasizes Erna's inherent goodness and exemplary qualities. Through the combined themes of sexuality and spirituality, Werfel suggests that erotic desire does not occur exclusively between two people, but between many people, and between an individual and God. Because erotic desire is given this non-dualistic significance, physical attraction can be assigned a more flexible meaning that allows for Hugo's multi-layered attraction to Erna.

Following WWI and his marriage to Alma in 1929, Werfel's work was increasingly drawn into the countercultural discourse on sexual relations that was already a strong part of the feminist ethics of radical thinkers like Lou Andreas-Salomé, and as I have argued, Martin Buber. The interwar period and the femininity debates, combined with the influence of Alma's feminist theories on sexuality, would have encouraged Werfel to expand on his early interest in corporeality and the body towards issues of inter-subjectivity - especially between the sexes.

***Star of the Unborn* and the Sexual Liberation of Women Through Science Fiction Critique**

Werfel's final novel *Star of the Unborn* caps off his career as social critic in terms of the thematic developments that were central to the femininity debates, as well as to his personal and literary life; these include the emphasis on non-binary relationships between subjects of different sexes, between materiality and spirituality, and between Judaism and Christianity. Also a product of the tragic witnessing of war, Nazism, Holocaust atrocities, and failed utopian thinking, the

novel's publication in 1945 provides an acute insight into the social and cultural atmosphere around these events.

His final novel is overtly dystopian in that it imagines distinct connections between social theory and practice, providing fictitious examples of social planning in order to demonstrate the consequences and benefits of various ideas. Werfel composed his social critique through the form of a science fiction novel, while living in exile in Hollywood. Having been forced out of Central Europe by the rise of Nazism, he left Austria with Alma in 1938, first for Italy and then France, finally settling in the United States.⁹³

Around the time that Werfel was establishing himself as a writer in California, other German writers in exile were defining themselves as a German community against the less 'authentic' fascist one that had forced their departure.⁹⁴ Germanist Edwige Brender argues that Werfel distinguished himself from the German literati in exile by adapting more quickly to his American reading audience. Werfel, according to Brender, lived more comfortably in America than other Germans, and despite the challenges of immigration, he did not despair over his situation.⁹⁵

Even while Werfel may have enjoyed the security of his new American home, he remained concerned with the threat posed by alienating theories of subjecthood.⁹⁶ Brender's theory concerning Werfel's success in America rests on the author's concept of exile as something unrelated to territorial displacement; for Werfel, deterritorialization meant the loss of a humanist connection to the divine.⁹⁷ His equivalency within this new American context relates back to his

93. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 11.

94. Edwige Brender, "Neither as a Cowboy nor as a Goldhunter," 99.

95. *Ibid.*, 115-117.

96. Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel*, 153.

97. Brender, "Neither as a Cowboy nor as a Goldhunter," 117.

Buberian mission to combat the dualistic separation between man and God, which he detected in other sets of binaries used to separate individuals experiences.

Settling into an American readership, Werfel continued his humanist project with the realization of his powerful position as a popular writer. He ensured his family's financial security by learning the tastes of his target market, demonstrating his awareness of his own influence and ability to foster greater appeal.⁹⁸ It is out of this conscious exercise of power and marketing that *Star of the Unborn* was developed. In order to understand the leap that a piece of science fiction such as *Star of the Unborn* meant for Werfel in terms of genre, something must be said of the American literary climate that the Austrian writer found himself in during the late 1930s. As a cultural system, following Eric Rabkin's characterization of the genre, science fiction was well-established in the US by the 1930s, and its value for social criticism was being born out of an apprehension for technological advancements.⁹⁹ Werfel's transition to sci-fi was smoother out by the interconnected nature of Buberian humanism and anti-rationalism and the conceptual linking of technology, violence and rationalism that Nazi biopolitics had demonstrated.¹⁰⁰

Biopolitics, following political scientist Simona Forti's definition, can be thought of an extension of rationalist discourse against degeneracy, and is premised on the belief that positive change is achievable through legislative intervention.¹⁰¹ Biopolitics is chiefly concerned with procreation and population management, and therefore intervenes in the intimate realm of sexuality, the body and erotic desire. Nazi and pre-Nazi era attempts at controlling sexuality and erotic desire were approached through similar rationalist discourses. Targeting procreation and the body, biopolitics acts as a continuation of earlier scientific discussions of materiality and

98. Ibid., 102.

99. Eric Rabkin, "Science Fiction and the Future of Criticism," *PMLA* 119 no.3 (2004): 472.

100. Simona Forti, "The Biopolitics of Souls: Racism, Nazism, and Plato," *Political Theory*, 34 no.1 (2006): 10.

101. Ibid., 10.

erotic desire and its program affected broader concepts of all of these as well as issues of identity.¹⁰² Far from Magnus Hirschfeld's scientific justification of sexual liberation, Nazi biopolitics sought to limit sexuality and channel erotic energy towards goals that favoured specific groups of people.

Werfel's sci-fi feminist critique overlooks the potential for scientific arguments such as Hirschfeld's to subvert the content of binary rationalist logic. *Star of the Unborn* draws an overly clear line between scientific and creative thinking, suggesting that content must match form of an idea. As an unscientific form of expression, fiction and science fiction may appear to be more suited to subvert certain social systems, but it is also important to consider the relationship between these cultural systems and others, and the ways through which these relationships may limit the scope of any critique.

Werfel launches his critique against rationalist, masculinist thinking and the relations this encourages between people through a synthesis of Buberian Hassidism and Christian theology. As he had done in the 1920s and 1930s, he frames his commentary around ideas about sexuality, spirituality and creativity, this time through an inter-faith synthesis of concepts about androgyny. Werfel's story imbues the figure of the androgyne with Buberian Kabbalistic and early Christian attributes in order to provide a hybridized, deliberately feminist critique of conventional gender roles. The effect is a portrait of sexuality that supports his wife Alma's sexually affirmative and explorative lifestyle. Werfel's model is carefully unpacked through a literary comparison of competing approaches to sexuality, and enables him to justify his marriage to a sexually-free, non-Jewish woman.

102. Elizabeth D. Heineman, "Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Unspeakable," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11 no.1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (2002): 49.

Werfel was well aware of the existence of certain analogies between the early Christian communities and his own era by 1932, though he does not suggest any specific points for comparison that I am aware of until *Star of the Unborn*.¹⁰³ In his last novel, Werfel compares the Christian apocalyptic androgyne who is sexless and genderless with a Buberian interpretation of Adam Kadmon, the primordial human, a sexual and more world-affirming figure. There is evidence that Buber discussed Adam Kadmon with his followers as early as 1917, specifically seeking its “awakening.”¹⁰⁴ If one considers the concept of Adam Kadmon as a doubly-sexed human, who possesses both male and female genitalia, then his call to reawaken the androgyne places Buber in line with non-binary arguments for sexual identity through an affirmation of male and female sexuality.¹⁰⁵

Alma was equally supportive of sexual expression by women, and her preoccupation with the role that sexuality plays in the creative process is reminiscent of Adam Kadmon’s doubly sexualized nature. She insists on the importance of sexual expression regardless of biological difference, a notion that is embodied in Adam Kadmon’s hyper-sexualized and biologically neutral state. However, in order to affirm equality in spite of perceived biological differences, in other words, to address the construction of gender, a biologically less ambiguous figure is required. To directly challenge unequal gender relations that are inspired by the perception of sexual difference, Werfel merged Adam Kadmon with an early Christian example of male and female relations.

Werfel intended to replace the masculinist, rationalist (hu)man who, one will recall, is sacrificed in *Star of the Unborn*, with a sexualized, genderless figure based on aspects of Adam

103. Werfel, “Can we live without faith in God?,” in *Between Heaven and Earth*, 112. First published in 1932.

104. Buber to Bergmann, 4 December 1917, in *The Letters*, 255.

105. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 56.

Kadmon's charged eroticism, and an early Christian *asexual* community's genderless social relations. Werfel is therefore proposing a model that reflects a more complex hybrid, drawn from several traditions, rather than a single figure, or androgyne, lifted directly from either, and his ideas about various models of human sexuality are diffused through multiple characters throughout the story. The two principle features of the new human identity are exemplified by FW, Lala, and her great-grandmother (GR³). Each of these three characters possesses attributes that are drawn from a synthesis of Judaism and Christianity: like Adam Kadmon, the new human is sexualized and has the capacity to act sexually as either a male or female, and following the example set by the Christian Galatians who were in correspondence with Paul of Tarsus, despite the existence of physical differences between men and women, there is no discrimination between the "new" humans based on physicality, so gender as a category becomes irrelevant.

In order to refute a totalizing view of the new human that follows either the Jewish or the Christian model exclusively, Werfel provides a critique of each tradition through two contrasting examples which serve as foils for his own synthesized model. Within the story, readers encounter the erotic figure of Adam Kadmon in the mysterious underground world of the Wintergarden. The characters representing Adam Kadmon are highly sensual and their exact sexual identity is ambiguous, much like the double-gendered primal man.¹⁰⁶ The placement of these Adams at the entrance to the story's central symbol of stagnation, the Wintergarden, is the crux of Werfel's critique, and marks his divergence from Buberian thought: the Adam Kadmon version of dual-sexuality, according to Werfel, is not an appropriate source of human regeneration and so the concept should not be re-awoken, as Buber had demanded. Werfel suggests his preference for discrete, or "natural," physical sexual identities over Adam Kadmon's androgyny by only

106. Ibid. These characters are the primal men who guard the gates of the Wintergarden.

allowing the characters who are sexually active as discretely male or female – namely FW, Lala and GR³ – to escape the Wintergarden and total stagnation.

On the surface of the future world, readers witness the early Christian version of androgyny practiced by the dominant society as a total asexuality – the reverse of Adam Kadmon's sexually charged figure. Werfel is inspired to arrange the future society's social patterns after an interpretation of a line attributed to Paul of Tarsus in a letter directed to the early Christian community at Galatia, which famously promises the eradication of male and female. According to Wayne Meeks' theory, established in 1974, the early Christian community at Galicia took Paul's words quite literally, and fully ignored their sexual bodies and all physical differences.¹⁰⁷ Werfel describes the asexuality of the his new friends who mirror the Galatian interpretation of Paul with irony: this is a community whose denial of their sexual instincts, of nature and of miracles (See Chapter 2) leave them devoid of spiritual and creative energies. However, Lala's romance proves that it is impossible to exist in the material world and avoid sexual desire by ignoring the sexual body.

Werfel's resistance to Galatians' asexuality can be traced to his Buberian appreciation for non-dualistic thinking. The sexually-denunciatory tone of Galatian community, an idea forwarded by Biblical scholars such as Wayne Meeks, is elaborated upon but Jewish Historian Daniel Boyarin who emphasizes the crucial limits of dualism. According to Boyarin, the early Christian conception of a genderless world is based on a morbid dualism that upholds the separation of body and soul in anticipation of the destruction of the former –something Werfel would have difficult to accept.¹⁰⁸

107. See Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne."

108. Daniel Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," 2.

However, the early Christian group is compatible with Buberian feminism to a certain extent, that is limited by the Galatians dualistic worldview. Werfel's novel emphasizes the early Christians belief in gender equality that resulted from their asexuality, even though he did not endorse sexually repressive views. Werfel insists on a sexual, more corporeal version of gender equality, that borrows from the Galatians' their ability to structure social relations without gendering differences. Werfel's Buberian emphasis on anti-dualism reflected in the double-sex of Adam Kadmon, allows for the affirmation of materiality, while the Christian interpretation emphasizes gender equality based on the irrelevance of sexual differences. Raymond Furness has argued that the figure of the androgyne was highly popular in early twentieth century German literature.¹⁰⁹ Werfel, to an extent, participated in this trend, but his use of this literary trope was coloured by his affirmative view of corporeality and his peculiar Buberian brand of anti-dualism.

I will return for a moment to Werfel's 1926 play "Paul Among the Jews" to show how his understanding of Paul of Tarsus as a non-dualistic thinker shaped his use of early Pauline ideas about sexual identity. In the play, Paul is portrayed as a positive figure who is world-affirming and deeply spiritual, an interpretation that contradicts Galatian dualism and their notion of asexuality. Paul is described by Werfel as bridging the gap between his self – meaning his soul – and creation.¹¹⁰ He is able to enjoy himself, to dance, all while drawing the "light of heaven" into himself, meaning that he is spiritual communion with the divine while he is engaged with his own body and the pleasures of the material world.¹¹¹ For Werfel's Paul, there is no contradiction between corporeality and spirituality.

109. Raymond Furness, "The Androgynous Ideal: Its Significance in German Literature," *The Modern Language Review* 60 no. 1 (1965): 61.

110. Werfel, "Paul Among the Jews," 138.

111. *Ibid.*, 63.

Werfel describes his Paul as a man romantically in love with God, who expresses the same erotic desire for the divine that characterizes so many of Buber's mystics. Paul "smiles like an old man in love," when he thinks about Christ, as though he were romantically engaged with the divine figure.¹¹² The role played by love and desire was central to Buber's understanding of mystical connections, and Werfel applied this to his own Pauline figure, using Paul to place emphasis the value of love. Paul says to Father Exorcist, his enemy, that love can be extended to even him as a liberating force, thereby universalizing the concept of love powerful.¹¹³ Similarly, Buber believed that love permeated and structured everything, as "everything is in everyone and only love can extract it."¹¹⁴ According to Langton, Buber had already noted the similarities between Kabbalah and Pauline teachings, and the Jewish theologian would not have been surprised by his student's interpretation of the Christian saint as a unifying figure.¹¹⁵ Werfel uses Buberian mysticism to bridge an important gap between Judaism and Christianity, applying a hybridized framework to convert the figure of Paul into a symbol of inter-faith unity rather than division.

Paul is able to serve as a bridge between two traditions because the erotic nature of his approach to reality, which, as I have just demonstrated, extends to corporeality as well to the divine. While Werfel applies the usual tropes about mysticism to describe Paul's experiences, he imbues the character for an unconventional attitude towards the material world, especially in terms of gender relations. Paul, as Werfel presents him, is both world-affirming and unconcerned with gender as a category and calls manhood only a garment.¹¹⁶ The Pauline tradition of more

112. Ibid., 63.

113. Ibid., 98.

114. Buber to Paula Winkler Buber, 3 October 1902, in *The Letters*, 85.

115. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination*, 62.

116. Werfel, "Paul Among the Jews," 138.

equal gender relations, as reflected in the Galatian community's response to Paul's letter, is already established by Werfel in this 1926 play as a suitable model for feminist social criticism.

In much of *Star of the Unborn*, Werfel continues to attack male privileges after the Pauline model in Galatians. His story upsets heteronormative patriarchy's through dark descriptions of militant characters, such as "the war-mad bride groom."¹¹⁷ The particular groom Werfel is referring to represents male privilege within marriage and society more generally, the result of which is the launching of a total war against materiality, symbolized by the growing jungle. Patriarchal values are coupled with the violence of a "war-mad" society that neglects sexuality but upholds gender distinctions in their obsession with progress.

The future civilization FW encounters is non-physical, avoiding nature, physical sexuality and all forms of physical contact. Werfel causes FW to point out that while erotic desire is minimized and even discouraged, the tradition's associated with it are fanatically maintained. Matrimony, then serves as this civilization's primary tool for structuring society according to gendered power relations that ultimately subjugate women.¹¹⁸ The contradiction that Werfel exposes between this society's asexual values and their emphasis on gendered social roles is almost hyperbole, causing the narrator to remark that his hosts' gendered behaviour is ceremonial and "exists for no good reason."¹¹⁹ Considering these passages alongside Werfel's sexualized female characters and the important role they play in the reawakening of human spirituality and creativity, suggests that Werfel, sympathized with the radical feminist affirmation of female sexuality against inherited morality, just Alma and Buber had done.

It is interesting to consider what motivated Werfel's thematic priorities: his decision to emphasize sexuality and gender relations in 1944, at a time when the effects of Nazism and

117. Werfel, *Star of the Unborn*, 86.

118. Ibid., 38.

119. Ibid., 71.

WWII were generating global concern, is only surprising if one considers *Star of the Unborn* outside of its literary chronology. The novel's emergence at the end of Werfel's life and literary career draws our attention to important thematic continuities I have attempted to bring together – the Buberian struggle against dualism remained consistent part of Werfel's worldview that encouraged him to unify binary pairs such as material/spiritual, man/women, reason/intuition, individual/community, Christian/Jewish, to name a few. *Star of the Unborn* develops a gender criticism from an understanding of an eroticized and interconnected material/spiritual reality, but it does so with an eye to the broader role that sexuality plays in human relations.

Leading up the 1940s, Werfel's work came to emphasize the human body and physical sexuality, and I have already demonstrated how it did so through the influence of various feminist and spiritual models in order to critique patriarchal structures. During the 1930s and 1940s, Werfel observed how scientific and pseudoscientific approaches to the body and sexuality led to violent experiments in eugenics and mass murder, drawing a portrait of Buchenwald and Majdanek in his discussion of the Wintergarden's greenhouses. Werfel specifically mentions the concentration camps – “horror camps” where “many of my contemporaries” suffered – as a possible, though unjust comparison to the Wintergarden's eugenic program, highlighting his own inability to recreate through fiction the unreal suffering of those Nazi-run camps.¹²⁰

One can assume that Werfel, more convinced of the failure of the new man in 1944, offered his spiritual-erotic vision of sexual identity in place of Nazi utopianism that strove for progress and rationalized death. Werfel's dark underworld, the Wintergarden, is the most direct threat to his humanist model of sexuality. Werfel understood Nazism as he saw the Wintergarden, which deceived citizens and forced them to participate in the process of creating a future by literally creating “shattered pasts”–breaking individuals into their component parts, forcing the

120. Ibid., 546.

erasure of identity-building experiences.¹²¹ Sexuality, then, is at the centre of Werfel's very nuanced understand of human relations, encompassing gender, class, religious, ethnic, and countless other divisions and the range of reactions these perceived differences foster.

Werfel's promotion of sexual liberation represents the successful dissemination of radical arguments about sexuality that stemmed from calls for greater social equality and contributed to one side of the femininity debates in the 1920s and 1930s. Of course, the foundations for such a radical acceptance of sexual expression, especially for women, were developed much earlier. Werfel's views connected him with a broader network of feminist thinkers, many of whom already held close affiliations with the author. His wife, Alma Mahler-Werfel, launched a personal struggle against the male artist's monopoly on sexuality and the ethical conventions that supported the suppression of female sexual enjoyment. As a couple, Alma and Werfel enacted the sexual egalitarianism of some the anti-Freudian discourses articulated in the works of Buber and Salomé.

The network of radical feminist thinkers that is imagined to have existed in early twentieth century Austria has been explored through this chapter's inclusion of musical, literary, and theological arguments. The importance of expanding the notion of feminist activism from an action-based politics to politicized cultural products extends the range of influence of contemporary feminist ideas that helped to distinguish Werfel from other Prague circle authors; Werfel's literary portrait of the highly politicized concept of sexuality would otherwise be discounted, along with the importance of sexuality in establishing other humanist themes that characterize his work.

121. *Shattered Pasts: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), is a monograph by Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer. Geyer and Jarausch employ the concept of a shattered past to address the tainted history of Germany's post-Nazi generation.

Conclusion

... for in what does one at present believe more firmly than in one's body?

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Considering the post-WWII interest in identity politics and the place of cultural production in postcolonial analyses of power dynamics,¹ it is surprising that we are witnessing a relative slackening in Werfel studies. Werfel's literary career presents an excellent example of the postcolonial consciousness of affective relationships. In order to access the inter-subjective experiences that occur within multi-ethnic territories, close readings of literature such as Werfel's has been considered alongside its intellectual allies and foils. This project has attempted to identify a network of subjects defined by their common interest in encouraging universalist expressions of subjectivity. Different conceptions of creativity, masculinity, femininity, sexuality, materiality, and desire have served as areas where such intersecting or diverging views of subjecthood play out.

We have seen that the chief threat to Werfel's conception of subjecthood is the inattentive understanding of difference and the belief in absolute differentiation. At the centre of his complex argumentation is the simple refutation of essentialist visions of humanity. In this regard, Werfel presents us with a worldview that bares much in common with the postcolonial philosophy of Jacques Rancière, who characterizes politics as a "scandal" that seeks to rationalize difference and disagreement. The validation of difference, as Rancière explains it, "comes down to a dispute over the object of a discussion and over the capacity of those who are making an object of it." Similarly, the mode of enquiry employed throughout this project considers popular literature as a product of popular culture through a philosophical lens that is

1. Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 159-160, 166.

not devoid of politics, but seeks instead to avoid the political scientific “scandal in thinking.”²

Instead of treating conflicting arguments as discreet ideologies, this paper has engaged with the similarities and the differences between structures that shaped differing views of identity.³

The fuller context that surrounded early twentieth century Austrian intellectuals such as Werfel provided them with various models to discuss human nature and human differences. We have seen how attitudes towards femininity shaped the construction of binarisms during this period, and earlier models of masculinist thinking have served as direct points of contrast to Werfel’s own acceptance of femininity. This project has attempted to demonstrate how approaches to femininity, following Sander Gilman’s argument, have had the ability to define Jewish and non-Jewish attitudes towards otherness more generally.⁴ Indeed, Werfel’s humanistic and anti-dualistic interpretation of human identity was established through a specifically positive attitude towards femininity.

Werfel approached the question of otherness through a non-binary lens he largely borrowed from Buber’s mystical theology. His understanding of ‘difference’ was grounded in an extreme faith in intermediaries, hybridized identities, and an overall ability to overcome the alienating effects of this realization. In a period when femininity served as a central signifier of difference, Werfel and Buber maintained a positive attitude towards this concept and a fluid approach to sexual identity more generally. Following Buber’s lead, Werfel cultivated a unified vision of reality and of humanity that allows us to consider him alongside other radical humanists.

2. Jacques Rancière, “Preface,” in *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xii.

3. *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

4. Sander Gilman, *Inscribing the Other*, 129.

This paper has traced several connections between Werfel's thought and contemporary theories on sexuality by exploring concepts that were shaped by different attitudes towards femininity. To illustrate the complexity of Werfel's social, intellectual and literary context, a variety of figures were introduced as points of contrast and comparison. Chapter One focused on Weiningerian philosophy and its impact on Kraus and Hiller, and the alternative, Buberian conception of femininity that influenced Werfel's writing. We explored on the link between sexual and creative identity and their combined ability to structure social relations. A comparison between Buber's anti-dualistic conceptualization of sexuality and Weininger's misogynistic theories suggested that positive perceptions of femininity are necessary for an ahierarchical model of creativity. We encountered the argument that Werfel developed an egalitarian, humanist worldview based on Buber's feminist theology and distinguished himself from contemporary elitist, action-based politics that were grounded in chauvinist, Weiningerian theories.

In Chapter Two, Werfel's positive conception of femininity was connected to a materially affirmative worldview and contrasted with various world-denying ideologies, represented by his Prague contemporaries. In this second chapter, more attention was paid to Zionist and homosexual rights movements that addressed erotic expression, and the relationship of these ideologies to Werfel and Buber's notion of erotic desire. If we recall that Werfel's exploration of human nature and identity was derived from his own desire to erotically and creatively connect to the divine, then sexuality was understandably an intrinsic part of his erotic seeking-out of a connection with god. This model of desire was contrasted with the cultural Zionism of several Prague writers who were also influenced by Buber.

The cultural Zionists' privileging of spiritual over material expressions of desire implied that a variety of interpretations of Buberian theology existed within the Prague circle. While Werfel tended towards a fluid, non-binary view of desire that was more in line with Buber and Hirschfeld's monistic ideologies, his Zionist friend Max Brod applied a dualistic model that reflected *Der Eigene's* degradation of materiality. Hirschfeld, Buber and Werfel's feminism was argued to be the source of their acceptance of corporeal sexuality. For Werfel and Buber, the divine is manifested on a material level, imbuing inter-subjective relationships with a spiritual and sacred status. For these reasons, Werfel's formulation of femininity and sexuality relate to core questions about corporeality and its monistic relation to spiritual reality. Werfel was echoing Buber's belief that the everyday world, the material and the mundane, is sacred, and his feminism was inseparable from this Buberian, monistic perspective.

Werfel remains unique among Prague circle writers for his interpretation of Buber that accepted so-called feminine qualities as positive. His inclusive attitude suggested closer ties between his work with radical feminist notions of gendered identity that were proposed in Chapters Two and Three. The final chapter placed Werfel's work from the 1920s and 1930s in the broader context of the femininity debates, employing Alma, Buber and Lou Andreas-Salomé's feminist theories as an entry point into feminist discussions of sexual liberation. We saw how Werfel's poetry from the 1910s exhibited attitudes that were continuous with portrayals of female sexuality in his fiction, and how these ideas aligned with calls for female sexual liberation by his wife Alma, his mentor Buber and the radical feminist theorist Salomé. The novels, plays and short stories covered in this chapter were presented chronologically to suggest both continuity in terms of feminist notions of sexuality, and the intensification of these politics as Werfel's work approached the Nazi era. Building from these analyses, his final novel, *Star of*

the Unborn, was considered alongside feminist arguments for sexual expression and further characterized as a refutation of rationalist systems of thought that underpinned Nazi biopolitics and alienated certain aspects of sexual identity.

Star of the Unborn was further used to demonstrate the hybridized nature of Werfel's sources, which included feminist, Jewish and Christian theories of sexual identity. Throughout this paper, the notion of hybridity was approached on several different levels. Werfel's sources, his status as in an inter-faith marriage, the nature of the multiethnic Hapsburg Empire, which included western as well as eastern Jews and other cultures, and finally, Werfel's place among literary contemporaries who held oppositional perspectives on sexuality and femininity, each suggest the importance of employing an interpretative framework that refutes deterministic theories of historical identity. Postcolonial theory has developed a view towards culture as porous and full of multiple, overlapping points of contact that engender complex power dynamics. Such dynamics were active in Werfel's multiethnic reality and as such, postcolonial theory has been instrumental in addressing his work in context.

Werfel's own rejection of dualistic models of identity was emphasized in order to demonstrate the potential for a feminist reading of his work. Through an inter-textual analysis of contemporary literature, we have encountered some of the ways in which sexuality can structure identity categories aside from gender, and how this functions as a central concept in understanding identity politics in early twentieth century Austria. This paper has touched on some of the key areas where sexual identity has been used to structure social categories such as intelligence, creativity, and, deviance— all of which impacted various hierarchical interpretations of individual intellectual abilities. Conversely, egalitarian attitudes proved to be premised on non-binary conceptions of sexuality that accepted masculinity and femininity as equally positive

attributes. It has been argued that cultural reformers were often concerned with the binary categorization of individuals, and the various case studies explored in the previous chapters have demonstrated how cultural systems derived from such theories can function to empower certain groups of individuals.

Werfel's positive treatment of the subaltern category of femininity presents us with one of the ways through which definitions of deviance functioned in literary arguments and anti-Weiningerian interpretive structures. A feminist reading of Werfel encourages a consideration of how discourses of gender and sexuality interacted with the performance of male identity in other early twentieth century texts. Werfel's dynamic interest in multiple, overlapping aspects of identity undermines the narrow scope of projects that are motivated by singular categories – such as feminist or Jewish – and rejects the idea these categories are mutually exclusive. Similarly, the common warning that minority studies risk minoritizing and further marginalizing individuals may be taken as a call for more expansive, complicated narratives of subjectivities. In order to expand our understanding of experiences of oppression, alienation, and broader power relations, a consideration of the connection between religious and sexual identity, gender and class, and other identity-categories, marks the beginning of an approach that may include other concepts that are capable of generating relationships of inequality.

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