

Fathers, Sons and the Holo-Ghost: Reframing Post-Shoah Male Jewish Identity in Doron
Rabinovici's *Suche nach M*

by

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MSW, Barry University, 2008
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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The enduring, mythical and antisemitic figure of Ahasuerus is central to the unraveling and reframing of post-Shoah Jewish identity in Rabinovici's novel *Suche nach M* for it serves as the mythological color palette from which Rabinovici draws his characters and, to extend that metaphor, how the Jews have been immortalized in European culture. There is no escape in *Suche nach M*. When painting the Jew, both Jews and non-Jews can only use brush strokes of color from the Christian-created palette of the mythic, wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, who is stained in the blood of deicide, emasculated, treacherous, and evil. He is the constitutional "Other."

By deploying Urie Bronfenbrenner's (Bio) Ecological Systems Theory, the Mythic Jew and the Ikhud ("Fusion") Models that represent an evolving psychosocial environment combined with personal reflection, this thesis explores how *Suche nach M* invokes yet critiques the process of Jewish male identity formation in postwar Austria.

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Finally, I want to convey my sincerest gratitude to the University of Victoria and the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies for providing me with the opportunity to research and study the destructive myths that have been created about Judaism, Jews and gays which, at times, seem impossible to eradicate. Nevertheless, by analyzing and exposing them for what they are, I hope to mitigate some of their harmful effects.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and our family murdered in the Shoah. Also, to those whose lives and deaths are unknown and for whom there is no one to mourn for them.

May the completion of this thesis help to keep their memories alive.

Prologue

I remember when I was five or six years old being at a Synagogue picnic with my family and a group of their friends. All were Holocaust survivors and were standing around a rusting water pump on the picnic grounds. One of the women took a swig of water, winced and spat out “*Es shmekt fun Oishvits voser!*” (“It tastes like Auschwitz water!”) Everything went silent. They eyed one another. There was not a sound, only the blood rushing in my ears. She spat out again and everyone heaved a sigh of relief and began to nervously laugh. I knew better than to say a word. Though my parents and their friends have since died, I remain to bear witness for them. To do so is a responsibility that has shaped my life. (Žydų Gatvė – Jew Street)

Chapter 1: In the Beginning (“בראשית”)

1.1. The Search for Meaning)

As a child of a Holocaust¹ survivor, the legacy of the Holocaust has been a major influence in the development of my identity as a Jew. Being a child of a German mother, born a Roman Catholic, who married a Holocaust survivor and converted to Judaism, I may be considered a bit of an “outsider” and as such may be able to provide another perspective as it pertains to antisemitism and the Shoah².

In the role of a social scientist, I have a general interest in identity formation and memory, and a specific interest in understanding how the legacy of the Shoah has influenced the formation of Jewish and Israeli identity, and the transference of that identity from Shoah survivors to the second generation. Being a clinician, I am particularly interested in the treatment of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and the role of resilience in the recovery of those who have experienced a major traumatic event. And finally, as a logotherapist³, I have been heavily influenced by the work of Viktor

¹ Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Center in Israel, defines the Holocaust as the murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Between the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 and the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, Nazi Germany and its accomplices strove to murder every Jew under their domination. Because Nazi discrimination against the Jews began with Hitler's accession to power in January 1933, many historians consider this to be the start of the Holocaust era. The Jews were not the only victims of Hitler's regime, but they were the only group that the Nazis sought to destroy entirely. (“The Holocaust”)

² I favor using the term *Shoah* when referring to the Nazi genocide of European Jewry. The term Holocaust is derived from the Greek *holokauston* which means “a burned sacrifice offered to a god”. Shoah is the Hebrew word for “catastrophe” which more closely depicts the Nazi Judeocide. For the purpose of this thesis, I use the term *Holocaust* when quoting or citing other sources or when including the Nazis' genocide of not only Jews, but also Roma-Sinti, Homosexuals, the Mentally and Physically challenged, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, other Slavic peoples, and political dissidents.

³ The development of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis dates back to the 1930s. On the basis of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis and Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology the psychiatrist and neurologist Viktor Emil Frankl (1905-1997) laid down the foundations of a new and original approach which he first published in 1938. Logotherapy/Existential Analysis, sometimes called the “Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy,” is an internationally acknowledged and empirically based meaning-centered approach to psychotherapy. In Logotherapy/Existential Analysis (LTEA) the search for a

Frankl and his *search for m(eaning)* centered approach which has become the primary motivational force in my life.

In Doron Rabinovici's *Suche nach M*, Arie Bein, a son of a Holocaust survivor, always wanted to become a mathematician and not a *Mossad*⁴ agent. Even though his father Jakob tried to keep the Holocaust from "poisoning" him, the Holocaust eventually overwhelmed Arie's life. Arie forgot who he was, what he wanted and began searching for himself in others. And so it went with both Arie and Dani, with me and many other children, not only of survivors. *Suche nach M* is our story.

1.2. In Search of Austria's M(emory)

Doron Rabinovici's novel *Suche nach M*, translated as "The Search for M", is a labyrinth from which there appears to be no escape. Two families of Shoah survivors find themselves caught in a world still hostile towards their very existence and where the former structural reality of their pre-Shoah lives has been replaced by a world in which the reality of their traumatic experiences has become plural and relative. In trying to set themselves free, at times, their fractured journey may seem ambiguous, even absurd, but most often, beyond repair. As we enter into Rabinovici's maze of stories we must be willing to learn a deeply personal, traumatized language mostly spoken between Jewish survivors and their children.

meaning in life is identified as the primary motivational force in human beings. Frankl's approach is based on three philosophical and psychological concepts: Freedom of Will, Will to Meaning, Meaning in Life. (Viktor Frankl Institut)

⁴ The Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations, otherwise known as the Mossad, has been appointed by the State of Israel to collect information, analyze intelligence, and perform special covert operations beyond its borders. ("Israel Secret Intelligence Service")

Within the first few pages of the novel, the narrator begins to spotlight the injustice found in the dilemma two families of Shoah survivors must face while living in a country whose official foundational narrative is that they were the “first victim of National Socialism” (Uhl 187).

These families live with memories they cannot express in the midst of a country described by the novel’s narrator as follows: “In diesem katholischen Land standen einander alle wechselseitig in der Schuld, dem jeweils anderen die Absolution zu erteilen, solange er nur nichts beichtete” (“In this Catholic country everyone owed each other absolution just as long as the other in the particular case didn’t confess anything”; *Suche* 16; Sharp 7)⁵. He also observes that “Kriegsverbrecher wurden nicht vor Gericht gestellt, und alles, was sich auf die Untaten, die hier einst begangen worden waren, berief, zu Hetz und Massenmord aufforderte, wurde nicht verfolgt, sondern geflissentlich übersehen” (“War criminals were not brought to court and everything recalling the crimes once committed as well as actions provoking persecution and mass murder was deliberately ignored rather than prosecuted”; *Suche* 47; Sharp 29).

Austria’s claim as having been the First Victim of Nazi Germany’s aggression is found embedded in an extensive preamble to the Second Republic’s 27th of April 1945 Declaration of Independence. The obligatory mention of the *Mitverantwortungsklausel*, or the so-called “complicity clause,” was found at the end of the document and was successfully refuted by the Austrian government⁶ with the argument that Austria did not

⁵ All German citations from Rabinovici’s novel are taken from the following edition: Rabinovici, Doron. *Suche nach M.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997 and are cited in the body of the thesis as *Suche* and page number. All citations which follow from the English translation are taken from the following edition: Rabinovici, Doron. *Search for M.* (trans. Francis M. Sharp) Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2000 and are likewise cited as Sharp and page number.

⁶ Proclamation of 27 April 1945, *Staatsgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, 1 May 1945.

exist from 1938 to 1945 (Uhl 187). Therefore, the state of Austria could not be held responsible for what had happened to its Jewish citizens; for that only the Germans had to bear the burden.

Gottschlich⁷ warns that an outbreak of the “antisemitic virus” can occur at any moment and cautions that Austria has a dangerous “immunodeficiency” to this infection. He argues that there are historic and psychological reasons for this immunodeficiency which has been further debilitated by the fact that “[vierzig] Jahre lang lebte Österreich in der kollektiven Lebenslüge, bloß Opfer der Aggression Hitlers gewesen zu sein” (Simons 2) which I have translated as (“for the past forty years, Austria has lived a collective lie as being only a victim of Hitler’s aggression”).

He further contends that the one-sided interpretation of the 1943 Moscow Declaration⁸ gave Austria a convenient alibi for they no longer had to deal with agonizing questions of guilt and blame, responsibility, and complicity for the crimes of National Socialism (Simons 2).

⁷ Maximillian Gottschlich is professor at the University of Vienna’s Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences and author of the recently published *Die große Abneigung. Wie antisemitisch ist Österreich? Kritisch Befunde zu einer sozialen Krankheit* (“The Great Dislike: How anti-Semitic is Austria? Critical Findings of a Social Disease”). (Simons 4)

⁸ The following is the *Declaration on Austria* found in the *The Moscow Conference; October 1943 Joint Four-Nation Declaration*: “The governments of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States of America are agreed that Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression, shall be liberated from German domination. They regard the annexation imposed on Austria by Germany on March 15, 1938, as null and void. They consider themselves as in no way bound by any charges effected in Austria since that date. They declare that they wish to see re-established a free and independent Austria and thereby to open the way for the Austrian people themselves, as well as those neighboring States which will be faced with similar problems, to find that political and economic security which is the only basis for lasting peace. Austria is reminded, however that she has a responsibility, which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation.” (The Avalon Project)

This view continued into the sixties and seventies and from 1970 onwards, the Austrian government refused to pay compensation to Nazi victims and failed to pursue Austrian citizens who were senior Nazis (Zuroff n. pag.).

In Wistrich's⁹ article about Bruno Kreisky¹⁰, he makes the observation that in 1970, when Austrians elected him chancellor, it "mistakenly appeared that [...] anti-Semitism was a thing of the past" and that "[f]or the first time in its history Austria was ruled by a Jew. He adds, Kreisky was determined to demonstrate that he was indeed "chancellor of all the Austrians" and included no less than four ex-Nazis among the eleven ministers in his first cabinet (*"Austria..."* The Kreisky Years).

Gottschlich states that, "Simon Wiesenthal hat gegen eine Reihe von Ministern mit Nazi-Vergangenheit im Kabinett Kreisky I – das war 1970 – Stellung bezogen" which I have translated as ("Simon Wiesenthal protested the appointment of those ministers accused of having a Nazi-past in Kreisky's first Cabinet (1970)") which galvanized Simon Wiesenthal into action.

Before Kreisky's personal triumph of a spectacular Socialist victory in the October 1975 elections, he had let it be known that he would have no objections to an alliance with the far right's Freedom Party (FPÖ) and its leader, Friedrich Peter, should the Socialists fail to win an absolute majority. However, just before Election Day,

⁹ Robert Wistrich is Neuberger Professor of European and Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and head of the University's Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

¹⁰ Kreisky played down his Jewish background and tended to minimize Austrian anti-Semitism though he had, at times, suffered from it. In his memoirs he argued that nothing could be gained by presenting anti-Semitism as 'a particular speciality' (eine besondere Spezialität) or by depicting Jews as a 'nationality,' which, in his eyes, was a form of 'inverted racism.' To him, Jews were simply a religious group like Protestants or Catholics. Kreisky's attitude to Israel and Zionism reflected these assimilationist assumptions. He emphatically rejected the Zionist assertion that Jews constituted a worldwide people or a distinctive nationality in the Diaspora. For Kreisky such ideas raised the specter of dual loyalty and echoed the Nazi fiction of a "Jewish race." (Wistrich, *"Austria..."* The Kreisky Years)

Wiesenthal produced evidence that Peter had been involved as a tank commander on the Russian front in the First SS Infantry Brigade, responsible for the murder of 10,513 innocent men, women, and children, mainly Jews. Peter acknowledged membership in this Waffen-SS unit but denied involvement in any shootings, “illegal acts,” or war crimes (qtd. in Wistrich, “*Austria...*” the Kreisky Years). Instead of being grateful to Wiesenthal for his untiring efforts to expose the crimes of former Nazis, Kreisky and the media, in particular, the tabloid *Die Krone*, accused Wiesenthal of increasingly stirring up antisemitic feelings in Austria (Simons 2).

After the election results were in, Kreisky no longer required Peter as a coalition partner but he did accuse Wiesenthal of “political Mafia methods,” his “different milieu” (a reference to Wiesenthal’s Galician origins), and declared that “the man must disappear” (qtd. in The Kreisky Years). Kreisky not only attacked Wiesenthal’s campaign “to bring me down” but also what he called “Zionist” interference in Austria’s internal affairs. Intentional or not, Kreisky, along with the so-called “Waldheim Affair”¹¹, made antisemitism in Austria *salonfähig* (“respectable”) (Simons 3).

In the mid-eighties, during the “Waldheim Affair,” stereotypes of world Jewish power, negative Christian images about the Jews, and the notion that Jews were themselves responsible for antisemitism¹² became part of a “we-they” confrontation pitting ‘little’ Austria against international Jewry (Wistrich, “*Austria...*” The Waldheim Affair). It was not until well after the “Waldheim Affair” that the Austrian government

¹¹ The “Waldheim Affair” began with revelations about Kurt Waldheim, the fourth General Secretary of the United Nations, who during World War II, had been an intelligence officer in the *Wehrmacht*. His record indicated that he might be a war criminal. These allegations came to light when he was running in the 1985 Austrian Presidential elections. (Nittenberg 303-304)

¹² Both terms *anti-Semitism* and *antisemitism* are in common use. I favor the unhyphenated form *antisemitism* to avoid possible confusion involving whether the term refers specifically to Jews, or to Semitic-language speakers as a whole. I use the hyphenated form *anti-Semitism* when quoting or citing others.

was willing to acknowledge Shoah survivors as victims of National Socialism. This occurred in July 1991, when socialist Chancellor Franz Vranitzky declared in the Austrian Parliament that Austrians were partly responsible for the suffering of the Jews in the Second World War.

During this period, second-generation Jewish writers living in Austria began writing their own Jewish narratives about the Holocaust in order to present their insights into Austria's "normalized" past (Lorenz 3). In addition, the construction of a contemporary Jewish identity and the "continuity of a Diaspora culture on the historic territory of the Shoah" (Herzog 31) became major themes among young Jewish authors such as Doron Rabinovici, Robert Menasse and Robert Schindel (Lorenz 1).

Presumably written by Rabinovici in response to the Waldheim Affair and the rise to power of Jörg Haider's *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ), *Suche nach M* was first published in 1997. Rabinovici's characters bring the reader face to face with negative stereotypes about Jews in that they appear in every scene fully disguised in those traditionally antisemitic characteristics created in Christian folklore: the figure of Mullemann is indistinguishable from the itinerant and conniving Fetzenjude¹³ ("wandering rag merchant"); Ariele appears as the avenging Mossad agent demanding "an eye for an eye,"¹⁴ and almost every character has multiple names and identities into which s/he can easily slip to evade scrutiny.

In that same vein, I find it disturbing that Rabinovici's characters are fully aware of the fact that by remaining silent, they willingly participate in Austria's "First Victim"

¹³ *Fetzenjude* or *Lumpenhändler* ("rag trader") (*Pfälzisches Wörterbuch*).

¹⁴ A passage in the Book of Exodus, which is considered to be one of "the most controversial in the bible." Some have pointed to this passage as evidence of the vengeful nature of the Hebrew Bible. (Robinson 242)

narrative and allow for the development of the increasingly antisemitic Austrian psychosocial environment of the late twentieth-century, which perpetuated into this century.¹⁵ In *Suche nach M*, the issue of “Jewish complicity in the First Victim narrative” heats up the discussion at Leon and Rita Fischer’s *Rosch Haschanah* (“Jewish New Years”) dinner table:

Die Runde sprach weiter, sprach von der jüdischen Gemeinde, daß sie zu still bleibe, beklagte, daß nichts geschähe, alle Verbände unter allgemeiner Teilnahmslosigkeit litten. Es fehle der eigenen Führung an Tatkraft und der Gemeinde an Ordnung, verkündete Berger, worauf die anderen skeptisch schmunzelten. Scheinowiz sagte bloß: “Wir sind Träger einer großen Tradition – einer ist träger als der andere.” (*Suche* 16-17)

The group continued to talk, especially about the Jewish community and its complacency. The complaint was aired that nothing was happening and that no one took part in the associations. Berger (“citizen” in Yiddish) announced that the leadership generally lacked energy, the community a semblance of order. The others smiled skeptically. Scheinowiz said curtly: “We are representatives of a grand tradition – each is more lethargic than the other.” (Sharp 8)

My discomfort originates in the trajectory that the silence of a vulnerable minority must lead to its persecution. Therefore, if a Jew does not at least assume a defensive

¹⁵ Gottschlich states that, “more than anywhere else, there seems to be an antisemitic immunodeficiency in Austrian society, a reduced ability to fight the virus of antisemitism. The emotional climate in this country makes it easy to be antisemitic. Twelve percent of Austrians are of the opinion that it would be better if no Jews lived in Austria. Twenty-two percent state that Austrians need politicians that will stand up against the influence of Jews. Forty-four percent believe that Jews have too much influence in world economics.” (Simons 1-2)

posture within the dominant culture, s/he becomes complicit her/his own tragic fate. I am then lead to the question, why are those who hate Jews not held to such expectation.

1.3. *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (“M – A City Searches for a Murderer”)

The title of Doron Rabinovici’s 1997 novel *Suche nach M* (“The Search for M”) invokes the original title of Fritz Lang’s 1931 film *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (“M – A City Searches for a Murderer”) in which a serial killer, played by the Austrian Jewish actor Peter Lorre, stalks then murders Elsie Beckmann, a defenseless child, playing with a ball on a street. The image of a ball as an entrée into a child’s vulnerability and as a precursor to murder is also used by Rabinovici in *Suche nach M* to depict the treacherous role of both Ariele Bein as a Mossad agent and Sayid Taher as a Palestinian secret service agent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the film *M*, no violence is shown, only Elsie's ball rolling through the grass in front of some bushes, and then a child-shaped balloon, ensnared in telephone lines, eventually floats away. She, like the Jews of pre-World War II Europe, simply vanishes. Finding justice is almost impossible both in the film and in Rabinovici’s novel, as both narratives question the adequacy of the judicial system in confronting either a serial killer or a mass murderer.

Toward the end of the film *M*, Peter Lorre, playing the serial killer Hans Beckert, makes his confession before a kangaroo court of underworld criminals. Sweaty and bug-eyed, he tries at first to plead his innocence and then bursts out, "I can't help myself! I can't control this evil thing inside me!" Perhaps the words Hans Beckert uses to defend himself can also be employed in arguing for the “plausibility” of Austria’s First Victim

Narrative. Beckert was not directly guilty, because he was insane and “not himself.” By the same token, from 1938 until 1945, Austrian perpetrators were “not themselves” but Germans! Hence the novel’s three-fold connection between a cinematic criminal (Beckert), played by and Austrian Jew, the paired characters of Dani and Arie (guilt and vengeance) and the postwar backdrop of Austria as the crime scene.

1.4. Meet the Characters

After several readings, I came to realize that the novel’s gender roles are polarized. Most female characters are portrayed as being rather one-dimensional: they are loving, supportive and nurturing women. And even though the identity of male characters is represented as being fluid and ambiguous, the male characters appear to be multi-dimensional, more fully developed and plausible. Therefore, I revised the focus of my thesis from unraveling post-Shoah Jewish identity to unraveling post-Shoah *male* Jewish identity as represented by Rabinovici in *Suche nach M*. In particular, I wanted to explore the perceived ambiguous and fluid nature of that identity.

The four major male Jewish characters are two fathers, Jakob¹⁶ (“Jakov” in Hebrew), (“Yankel” in Yiddish), Scheinowiz (Fandler) and Mosche Morgenthau, both Shoah survivors and their two sons, Arie¹⁷ (Arie) Scheinowiz (Fandler, Bein) and Dani

¹⁶ The following is the source of the Biblical text where the Jewish patriarch Jacob is renamed Israel. 25. And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. 26. When he saw that he could not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his leg, and the socket of Jacob's leg became dislocated as he wrestled with him. 27. And he (the angel) said, “Let me go, for dawn is breaking,” but he (Jacob) said, “I will not let you go unless you have blessed me.” 28. So he said to him, “What is your name?” and he said, “Jacob.” 29. And he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] God and with men, and you have prevailed” (*Chabad*, Gen. 32: 24-28).

¹⁷ *Arie* (“lion” in Hebrew).

Morgenthau (Mullemann).¹⁸ The plurality of names reflects the multi-layered and fluid representation of Jewish identity developed throughout the text and will be further explored in Chapter Three.

Shunned by their adopted Austria, Mosche and Gitta Morgenthau along with Jakob and Ruth Fandler (Scheinowiz), are deeply wounded by the events and aftermath of the Shoah. As a result, they are only able to pass on to their children a very fragile sense of worth and belonging. With weakened personal boundaries, Rabinovici's second-generation characters suffer from a pathological compulsion to either claim the guilt of criminals or be able to morph into their prey when hunting for the enemies of the Jewish state.

Upon a first reading, the four male characters seem to represent the extreme in the spectrum of male Jewish identity: emasculated or hyper-masculine, saintly or diabolic, homeless wanderer or the ruthless Israeli Mossad agent who defends the *moledet* ("homeland" in Hebrew) at all costs. I will argue that most of these binary representations of male Jewish identity originate in Christianity's antisemitic, mythic figure of Ahasuerus. This stigmatization of the Jew has embedded itself in Western consciousness, and greatly influenced twentieth-century racial and political antisemitism and the emergence of a "new" antisemitism. The myth has proven devastating for the Jewish people.

¹⁸ Throughout the rest of my thesis, Jakob (Jakov or Yankel) Scheinowiz (Fandler) will be referred to as *Jakob Scheinowiz*; Mosche Morgenthau as *Mosche Morgenthau*; Dani Morgenthau (Mullemann) as either *Dani* or *Mullemann* and Arie (Arieh) Scheinowiz (Fandler, Bein) as *Arieh Bein*, or as otherwise indicated.

1.5. Research Questions and Thesis Statement

I will argue that the enduring and antisemitic, mythical Jewish figure Ahasuerus is central to the unraveling and reframing of post-Shoah Jewish identity in Rabinovici's novel *Suche nach M* for it serves as the mythological color palette from which Rabinovici's characters have been drawn. There is no escape in *Suche nach M*. When painting the Jew, both Jew and non-Jew can only use brush strokes of color from the Christian-created palette of the mythic, wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, stained in the blood of deicide, emasculated, treacherous, and evil. He is the eternal "Other." Gilman contends that the hated-Jew has not been created from "reality" but rather from a representation of "reality" ("The Jew's Body" 2). The figure of Ahasuerus is the primary example of the constitutive "Other."

The issue of identity formation as the "Other" is an important thread that helps tie the narrative strands in *Suche nach M* together. A fundamental component in the formation of identity is the concept of the "Other," which acts as a "negative mirror" reflecting everything that someone is not. It is a psychological mechanism which is essential in differentiating "us" from "them" (Merton 265).

The "Wandering Jew" is a figure from medieval Christian folklore whose legend began to spread in Europe during the 13th century. The original legend concerns a Jew who taunted Jesus on the way to the Crucifixion and was then cursed to walk the earth until the Second Coming (Idalovich 4). In Jungian terms, the Ahasuerus myth is identified as a Shadow figure (qtd. in Hassan 189). In Christian theological terms, Ahasuerus is represented as the Antichrist, Cain or the Sacred Executioner (qtd. in Hassan 190). This derogatory nature of the figure can explain the negative

characterization of Ahasuerus's physical appearance as well as his total isolation from Christian society.

In terms of isolation and marginalization, Rabinovici's characters are Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe, a community of victims whose children have been traumatized by their parents' memories. They must negotiate the formation and transference of their identity "in einem Land, das allgemeine Unbeflecktheit beanspruchte" ("in a country that claimed to be without blemish"; *Suche* 47; Sharp 29). The German term *Unbeflecktheit* used by Rabinovici to describe Austria is a sarcastic reference to the "immaculate conception". Rather than try to hide or disguise their "Otherness," Rabinovici's characters are painted in the garish colors of their stigmatization.

As the primary source of my thesis, the novel's complexities left me perplexed and unsettled and in need of a framework or model to further explore Rabinovici's extreme representations of post-Shoah Jewish identity in an Austrian context.

Two topics emerge as Rabinovici calls for the (re)construction of a contemporary Jewish identity: the mythic Jew and the creation of a "new" Jew. Both will be explored in my thesis through the use of a model, which I named the *Mythic Jew Model*. The latter is an interpretive tool that I created to assist in the unraveling of Rabinovici's interconnected portrayal of post-Shoah male Jewish identity and the Ahasuerus myth.

My model applies system dynamics and is rooted in Bronfenbrenner's (Bio) Ecological Systems Theory. As such, its goal is to take into account the psychosocial environment of Austria in the 1960s and to represent the impact of that environment on the identity formation of Rabinovici's post-Shoah male Jewish characters. With the help

of the Mythic Jew Model, I hope to provide the reader with a fuller understanding of antisemitism's role in the formation of Jewish identity in postwar Austria.

How do the generations mutually form a post-Shoah identity? One answer is provided by Marianne Hirsch, who coined the term *postmemory* and defines it as a “sense of living connection” (Hirsch 104) between Holocaust survivors and their children. The “transmission of the survivors’ traumatic experiences to their children are so profound that they constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch Abstract). It has been best put in words on the front cover of Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel *Maus*: “my father bleeds history” (Spiegelman Front Cover).

The methodology used to explore the development and transference of post-Shoah male Jewish identity formation is interdisciplinary. It combines both a cultural studies approach – especially in my use of Marianne Hirsch’s seminal work on postmemory – with a Social Work approach, based in Social Systems Theory, using Bronfenbrenner’s (Bio) Ecological Theory.

1.6. Thesis Structure

Chapter Two is entitled “Reframing Bronfenbrenner’s (Bio) Ecological Systems Theory”. Based on my background in clinical social work and my psychotherapeutic approach when working with clients, I decided that by applying a social systems model to understand the psychosocial dynamics taking place in postwar Austria, I would better understand their impact on the male Jewish identity formation of Rabinovici’s characters and the relationship between the Ahasuerus myth and the development of European *Judenhaß* (“the hatred of Jews”) and antisemitism.

However, a major problem arose when I tried to re-create postwar Austria's psychosocial environment from the intact and distinct systems depicted in Bronfenbrenner's model. The structuralist foundations of that model seemed to dissolve in the postwar and contemporary Austria of Rabinovici's novel. As such, I began questioning the reliability of this model as a guide in helping me to structure a *Weltanschauung*¹⁹ from which I practice as a social worker. Therefore, I created the Mythic Jew Model from Urie Bronfenbrenner's adaption of the Social Ecological Model (SEM), which he coined the Ecological Systems Theory. At the core of my model I placed *post-Shoah male Jewish identity* and encircled it in *postmemory* and *resilience*. Resembling the ripple effect, the core and microsystem are framed in three more concentric layers: the meso- exo- and macrosystems.

For Rabinovici's Jewish characters living in postwar Austria, the once intact micro- meso- exo- and macrosystems, the structuralist foundations of Bronfenbrenner's original model, have collapsed under the enormous weight of the Shoah and a presence of absence has been created which I have named the Holo-ghost. The ghosts of murdered families, the silence of God and Humanity, and the impossibility of geographic and spiritual escape make up the hungry realm of the Holo-ghost.

Chapter Three, entitled "Framing the Jew," uses the Mythic Jew Model as a tool to explore the question of how the Ahasuerus Myth has affected the formation and representation of Jewish identity in Rabinovici's novel. The best example of the difficulties associated with unraveling the representation of Jewish identity in the novel occurs in a scene in which there is a major conflict between characters over the identity

¹⁹ A comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint. (Merriam Webster Dictionary)

of a mummy-like figure in Toot's painting named Ahasuerus. The scene accentuates the centrality of the Ahasuerus myth in understanding the post-Shoah Jewish identity formation of Rabinovici's characters.

Rabinovici's protagonists represent the characteristics and stereotypes most often attributed to the mythic figure of Ahasuerus which, in the second part of this chapter, I have grouped into four major categories: (1) the blood of deicide (2) an ambiguous identity (3) embodies polar opposite characteristics (4) the constitutional "Other". They are central to the development of *Judenhaß* and modern antisemitism. Each category is further explored as to how it may help us in understanding the Jewish identity formation of Rabinovici's characters.

Chapter Four, entitled "In the Wilderness," explores how memory and identity have been transferred from traumatized Shoah survivors to their sons, Arie and Dani, in Rabinovici's contemporary Austria. The collapse of systems in the Mythic Jew Model reflects the Jewish experience of living in postwar Austria where traditional ways of Jewish identity formation are replaced by the inter-generational transference of traumatic memory as described by Marianne Hirsch's seminal work on postmemory. The reclamation of traumatic memory is central in Rabinovici's novel and plays a pivotal role in my own personal work for both the author and I are children of survivors. We, along with the protagonists in *Suche nach M*, have been forced to find our own identity in a world of dissolved truths.

In the remnants of a once rich and complex, traditional way of life where the Shoah irrevocably changed the Jewish peoples' relationship with their omnipotent Father, Arie and Dani slowly begin the process of forging new identities. As their identities

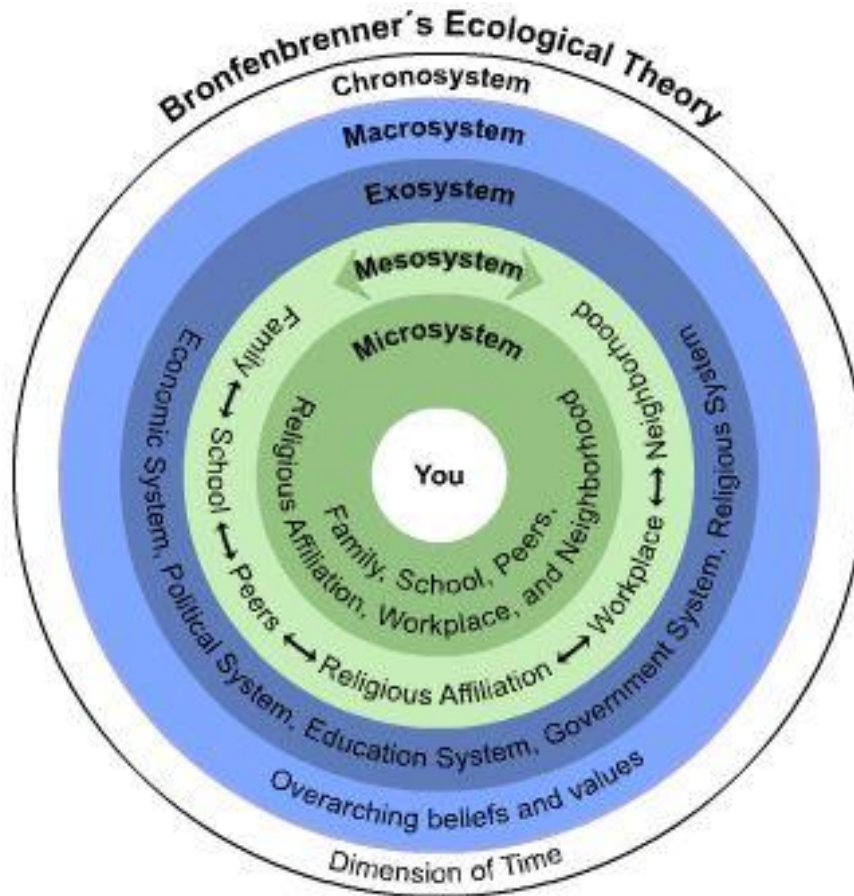
began to shift, the core of the Mythic Jew Model no longer reflected the Jewish identity of Ariele or Dani. Therefore, I felt it was imperative to reconstruct the core of the model in order to mirror the fusion of these emerging Jewish identities. I have coined this new model *The Ikhud* (“Fusion”) *Model*.

Chapter 2: Reframing Bronfenbrenner’s (Bio) Ecological Systems Theory

After realizing that the Ahasuerus myth was central to the unraveling of post-Shoah male Jewish identity in *Suche nach M*, I needed to understand how that identity was formed and transferred to the next generation in postwar Austria. Based on my background in social work, I decided that by applying a social systems model to understand the psychosocial dynamics taking place in postwar Austria, I would better understand the impact of these dynamics on the male Jewish identity formation of Rabinovici’s characters and the relationship between the Ahasuerus myth and the development of European *Judenhaß* and antisemitism.

2.1. The Social Ecological Model (SEM)

The (Bio) Ecological Systems Theory was formulated in the fields of social work and psychotherapy by Urie Bronfenbrenner in his 1979 book *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. (Bio) Ecological Systems Theory places individuals within progressively more comprehensive and inter-related social structures, in which individuals are active participants (i.e. can alter the systems in which they are embedded).



Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979. Print.

Traditionally, many social theorists considered only a dichotomy of perspectives, either micro (individual behavior) or macro (media or cultural influences).

Bronfenbrenner's perspective emphasized the person, the environment, and the continuous interaction of the two. This interaction constantly evolved and developed both components. However, Bronfenbrenner maintained that it was not only the environment directly affecting the person, but that there were also layers in-between, all of which had resulting impacts on the next level. Bronfenbrenner considered the individual,

organization, community, and culture to be nested factors, like Russian dolls. Each echelon operates fully within the next larger sphere.

(Bio) Ecological Systems Theory is system dynamics being applied to a social problem. My thesis applies system dynamics to the unraveling and reframing processes of post-Shoah male Jewish identity in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*

At the core of Bronfenbrenner's model is the *person* or the *individual* around whom the structure of the environment is framed and divided into four layers or systems: micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro. The *microsystem* refers to the institutions and groups that most immediately and directly impact an individual's development including family, school, religious institutions, neighborhood, and peers. The *mesosystem* refers to relations between these microsystems or connections between contexts. *Exosystems* are the contexts we experience vicariously and yet they have a direct impact on us. They can be empowering or degrading. The *macrosystem* describes the overall beliefs and values of the culture in which the individuals live. The *chronosystem* is time related and includes events occurring in the context of passing time. The system captures the way changes in environmental systems, such as social trends and life events, are patterned over a person's lifetime. For Arie and Dani, the effects of transgenerational transmission of trauma over time would be included in the chronosystem. (Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Models of Human Development").

In the course of my research, I began questioning Bronfenbrenner's structuralist approach in trying to explain the psychosocial dynamics taking place for Jews in Rabinovici's contemporary Austria. His model assumes a kind of intactness and stability that did not exist for Jews in postwar Austria. This raised the question: Does

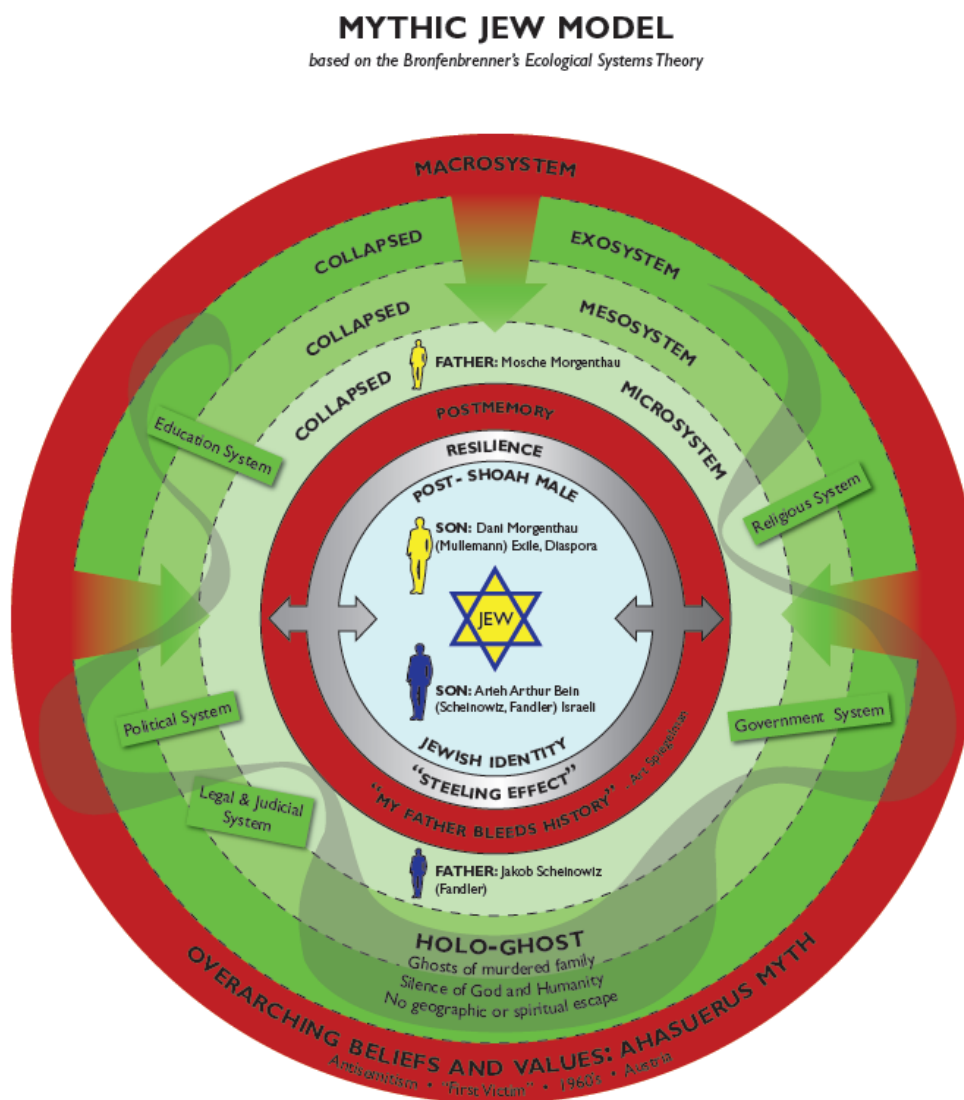
Bronfenbrenner's model have the flexibility to reflect the psychosocial environment and perceived realities of minority groups in a dominant culture?

2.2. Introducing the Mythic Jew Model

In an effort to better portray the multiple and shattered realities found in Rabinovici's novel, I created the Mythic Jew Model. As a reflection of my own life, the creation of this model closely followed three important stages in my own personal development. Firstly, I came to realize that I am a child of a Holocaust survivor. Secondly, I struggled with the stigmatization, prejudice and hatred around my own identity as a Jew and a gay man. Thirdly, I made a conscious decision to dedicate my life to find effective ways to combat traditional antisemitism, the "new" antisemitism, homophobia and Holocaust denial.

As a gay man who lived in New York City during the AIDS epidemic, I, along with most members of the gay community, quickly came to realize that the governmental, political, judicial/legal, religious and medical systems of the early 1980s had been created for the welfare of the heterosexual majority and not for the gay community and those who were suffering with AIDS. In fighting for our own lives it became evident that from these failing systems we needed to (re)create our own systems and institutions to better serve the needs of our minority community. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), and the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt were just a few of the many institutions created to serve and support the gay community during those wretched years. As a member of various stigmatized communities, a model depicting the psychosocial environment of the dominant culture becoming unglued from its rigid framework much better reflects my own life experiences and indeed the postwar

Austria of Rabinovici's Jewish characters. The model represents the formation of male Jewish identity within postwar Austria and as such systematizes the identity formation of the "Other."



(© Michael Gans)

When comparing both models, it is immediately apparent that in my model the macro- exo- meso- and microsystems are in the process of collapsing. In their place, the “hungry realm” of the Holo-ghost emerges as an intermediary between these

disintegrating worlds and systems. I coined the term Holo-ghost from *Holocaust* and the *ghostly* images of friends and family murdered in the Shoah and the haunting silence of God and humankind during one of history's darkest periods.

I borrowed the terms “hungry” and “realm” from the title of Maté's important work about the “black hole” of addiction *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction* (Maté).²⁰ In the vernacular of addiction, the “black hole” is defined as “consuming everything in its pathway, including the addict and his loved ones” (Rounds-Bryant). Like the “black hole” in addiction, Shoah survivors could not escape their spiritual and geographic *homelessness*, which threatened them along with future generations of Jews with being consumed within the realm of the hungry Holo-ghost.

A second metaphorical basis for my model comes from Paul Celan's poem *Todesfuge* (“Deathfuge”). In *Todesfuge*, those Jews who suddenly vanished from the cities and *shtetlach*²¹ of Europe begin to reappear in the black smoke belching Shulamit's ashen hair from the chimneys of Europe's concentration camp crematoria. Throughout the poem, Shulamit, a Jewess, whose ashen hair is being described by color or by having been burned in a crematorium, is juxtaposed to the golden hair of the Aryan Margarete.

On the camps' *Appellplätze* (“roll-call squares”) as rows of sick and starving prisoners waited hours in the snow and freezing cold to be counted, they breathed in the *sustenance* of Shulamit's “black milk.”

²⁰ Theories of addiction may also be useful in the development of alternative models of antisemitism and may merit further research but are beyond the scope of my thesis.

²¹ A small Jewish town or village formerly found in Eastern Europe. (Shtetl, Merriam-Webster)

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
 wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
 wir trinken und trinken
 wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
 (Celan Todesfuge)

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening
 we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night
 we drink and we drink
 we shovel a grave in the air where you won't lie too cramped
 (Felstiner Deathfugue)

The structure of Celan's poem is similar to that of a fugue in that the phrases are recombined. The title can also be seen as a reference to *Todesmusik* ("death music"). Prisoners in concentration camps were oftentimes forced to play music to other prisoners waiting for their execution.

Throughout my thesis, I use the image of "black milk" which nourishes and obscures, in conjunction with the term Holo-ghost, along with a severe type of anxiety disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In the world of the Mythic Jew Model, the Holo-ghost floats within the black smoke of Schulamit's ashen hair which may simulate the nightmarish world of those who suffer from PTSD.

Like my father, a survivor of the Kovno Ghetto in Lithuania and the Klooga Concentration Camp in German-occupied Estonia, Rabinovici's characters such as Jakob Scheinowiz re-experience the original trauma through flashbacks or nightmares. For example, while hospitalized, Jakob has a nightmare about buying a new identity and

wakes up screaming: “Ich habe zuviel bezahlt” (“I paid too much”; *Suche* 89; Sharp 59).

When interned in the ghetto, Jakob took advantage of a mix-up in prisoners and assumed the identity of the printer Adam Kruzki to save his own life (*Suche* 100-101; Sharp 66). It seems that this simple twist of fate continues to haunt Jakob’s dreams.

Survivors with PTSD also avoid stimuli associated with the trauma and experience and once aroused, have difficulty falling or staying asleep, experience anger, and remain constantly hyper-vigilant. Leon Fischer, another survivor and friend of Jakob Scheinowiz, echoes these symptoms when speaking with him at his hospital’s bedside:

Ich bin in Behandlung. Depressionen... Seit Jahren kann ich nicht mehr arbeiten. Gehe ich in einen Raum voller Menschen, fürchte ich zu ersticken, und meine Enkel lachen über den Opa, der sich vor Gedränge im Zug, vor einem Kinobesuch ängstigt, immer Unmengen an Essen anschleppt, als glaube er, sie könnten verhungern. (*Suche* 98-99)

I’m in treatment. Depression... I haven’t been able to work for years. When I go into a room full of people, I’m afraid I’m going to suffocate and my grandchildren laugh at grandpa who is frightened of crowds in trains or of going to a movie; who always drags along large amounts of food as if he thought they would starve. (Sharp 66)

At this point, I would like to return to the Mythic Jew Model in considering the novel. In the center of the model, we find the two sons of Shoah survivors, Dani Morgenthau (Mullemann) and Arie Arthur Bein (Fandler, Scheinowiz) who represent post-Shoah male Jewish identity as depicted by Rabinovici throughout most of the novel. Dani Morgenthau (Mullemann), cocooned in guilt, portrays the stereotype of this

victimized, diasporic Jew. At the core, I placed the yellow Star of David. The star was once worn by Jews in the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe and represents the Jews of the diaspora. The star is outlined in blue as found on the flag of Israel and represents the return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland. Arie Beinfeld (Fandler, Scheinowitz) embodies the role of a rather ambivalent Zionist. Together, as sons of Shoah survivors, they represent the construction of second-generation male Jewish identity in Rabinovici's postwar Austria.

In Bronfenbrenner's Model, the microsystem is the closest layer to both Dani and Arie and contains the structures with which they have direct contact: family, school, neighborhood, etc. Vienna of the 1960s is the setting in which they live. In this layer, relationships have impact in two directions - both away from Dani and Arie and toward them. At the microsystem level, bi-directional influences are strongest and have the greatest impact on the development of the individual (Berk 24). But as we will see, chaos at the meso- and macro- system levels can greatly impact inner structures.

In my model, I have added Hirsch's postmemory as well as the process of resilience around the model's core. In psychology, resilience refers to the process of how an individual tends to cope constructively with stress and adversity. Resilience may result in the individual returning to a previous state of normal functioning, or using the experience of exposure to adversity to produce a "steeling effect" and function better than expected (Masten). Resilience may explain how remarkably well some Shoah survivors and their offspring have recuperated from the Shoah.

It is important to note that by viewing postmemory as a bi-directional process, the second generation and their children play a pivotal role in the transmission of historical

trauma. Rather than becoming victims, they become active participants in the process of memory transfer. In addition, a number of variables need to be weighed, including the resilience and “steeling effect” of both Shoah survivors and their children, prior to understanding the impact of inter-generational transference of traumatic memory. Close to the individual core of the model, teachers and peers have the ability to highly influence identity development (Bronfenbrenner, “Ecological Models of Human Development”).

The disintegrating microsystem encompasses the direct relationships and interactions Dani and Ariele have with their immediate surroundings. Structures in the microsystem would include their parents, Jakob and Ruth Fandler (Scheinowitz) as well as Mosche and Gitta Morgenthau, the encroaching whirlwind of the Holo-ghost, their peers, their religious setting, and the schools and neighborhoods of Vienna in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is at this level, in early childhood development, where Ariele’s and Dani’s beliefs and behavior were formed. It is here where Dani learned that his parents thought of him as the “Wiederauferstehung der Juden” (“resurrection of the Jews”; *Suche* 71; Sharp 46) of their murdered families and Ariele learned that “Dich soll keiner ungestraft schlagen, Ariele. Hörst du? Dich nicht” (“Nobody who hits you gets off unpunished, Ariele, do you hear?”; *Suche* 49; Sharp 30).

We will now explicate further concentric elements of the model. The *mesosystem* provides the connection between the structures of the person’s microsystem (Berk 24). It is the relations and communication between microsystems or the connections between contexts. For example, the mesosystem would encompass the communication between one of Ariele’s or Dani’s teachers with his parents. Dani or Ariele have no direct contact within the communication taking place but are influenced by that process.

Finally, the *exosystem* defines the larger social system in which Ariele and Dani do not function directly. The structures in this layer impact their development by interacting with some structure in their microsystem (Berk 25). Within this layer are the political, economic, legal and judicial, educational, and religious systems. In my model these systems are depicted as having become detached from their foundations in the exosystem and float freely within the “black milk” of the Holo-ghost. Ariele and Dani may not be directly involved at this level, but they do feel the positive or negative forces when they interact with these systems. Austria’s “First Victim” narrative, such as the government’s refusal to bring former senior Nazis to justice, sidelining Jews, or excluding Turks and other minorities in reaping the rewards of the country’s emerging postwar economy, are a few examples of contexts that can dramatically affect individual lives and experiences. It is important to remember that even though the effects of the exosystem are indirect, they can still be quite profound and far-reaching.

In my model, the psychosocial environment in which Jewish identity developed in postwar Austria is depicted as fragmenting. In prewar Austria, the various systems found in the former, intact exosystem began to rupture under the weight of an expanding macrosystem including public attitudes and ideologies which became rabidly antisemitic (Friedländer, *From Anti-Semitism*, 16). After the Anschluss²² in May of 1938, the Nazis enacted the Nuremberg Racial Laws in occupied Austria. Within a short period, Jews had lost nearly all of their civil liberties; they were unable to attend university, were excluded from most professions and were forced to wear a yellow badge. Jewish organizations and

²² On March 12, 1938, German troops entered Austria, and one day later, Austria was incorporated into Germany. This union, known as the *Anschluss*, received the enthusiastic support of most of the Austrian population and was retroactively approved via a plebiscite in April 1938. (Anschluss)

institutions were shut down (Weiner). For Austria's Jews, all national institutions and systems were closed and turned against them in an effort to further what Goldhagen has termed an "eliminationist antisemitism".²³ The failure of Austria's institutions to protect its Jewish citizens is reflected in my model's depiction of these systems as being in the process of disintegration.

The macrosystem is the layer which may be considered the outermost system in the Mythic Jew Model's environment. While not being a specific framework, this layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk 25). In this layer, I have placed the Christian-created mythic figure of Ahasuerus, the eternal, wandering Jew. As an integral part of European culture, this antisemitic myth has morphed and expanded into many forms of Jew-hatred. Finally, under the crushing weight of Hitler's "Final Solution to the Jewish Question," the macrosystem ruptured, causing the exo- as well as the meso-, and micro-systems to also rupture and collapse. In the Mythic Jew Model, the "black milk" of the Holo-ghost has replaced the collapsed exo-, meso-, and micro-systems.

Unfortunately, in present-day Austria, the macrosystem remains as an open wound and continues to hemorrhage under the strain of antisemitism²⁴ (Antisemitism).

Systems that have become structurally unglued, such as the economic, government or judicial, once firmly ensconced in the exosystem of Bronfenbrenner's model, unbalance the Jew. This applies, especially to the post-Shoah characters of

²³ Goldhagen argues that "eliminationist antisemitism" became the cornerstone of German national identity, that this type of antisemitism was unique to Germany and because of it, ordinary Germans willingly killed Jews. Goldhagen asserted that this special mentality grew out of medieval attitudes from a religious basis, but was eventually secularized. Many historians have severely criticized Goldhagen's work. (Goldhagen 53)

²⁴ The emotional climate in this country makes it easy to be antisemitic. Twelve percent of Austrians are of the opinion that it would be better if no Jews lived in Austria. Twenty-two percent state that Austrians need politicians that will stand up against the influence of Jews. Forty-four percent believe that Jews have too much influence in world economics". (Simons 1-2)

Mosche, Jakob and their families, who are attempting to resettle themselves in Austria, in *Täterländern*, the former territories where the Shoah had been perpetrated.

Swirling around the model's core, the influence of these systems on the development of post-Shoah Jewish identity remains unpredictable. This is due to the fact that these systems were created by and for the dominant culture of Austria's Christian males whose negative stereotypes of the Jew were heavily influenced by the Ahasuerus myth.

An example of the dominant culture's hegemony and abuse of power occurs in Rabinovici's text during the trial of Yilmaz Akan, a Turk living in Austria, for the honor killing of his boss Hüseyin Çerçi. Judge Waller, sitting behind a cross, ends the swearing in of the defendant with a "Judenwitz" ("Jew joke"; *Suche* 72; Sharp 46) replete with "Er jiddelte in Synkopen, feixte, verschraubte den Kopf, rang und rieb die Hände, seifte ein und schlug Schaum, bis alle, außer Dani Morgenthau, lachten" ("In Yiddish syncopated rhythms, he smirked, screwed his head tighter to his shoulders, wrung and rubbed his hands, and soaped up to a lather until everyone, except Dani Morgenthau, laughed"; *Suche* 72; Sharp 46). The lives and identity formation of Rabinovici's characters are dependent upon the goodwill of individual non-Jewish Austrians and not on judicial systems that would be applied *universally*. As Rabinovici clearly reminds the reader, postwar Austrian institutions have failed to expunge antisemitic attitudes.

In addition, the Shoah created a moral and spiritual crisis in the religious lives of Jews. Rubenstein, author of *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, argued that the traditional Judaic concept of God, especially as the God of the covenant with Abraham, an omnipotent Father, directly at work in the lives of his chosen

people and their history, died in Auschwitz (70). Rubenstein's conclusions have been included in the "triunity" of the Holo-ghost as the silence of the God of Abraham during the Shoah.

Within the microsystem, the burden placed by the Shoah on the structure and integrity of the Jewish family in Rabinovici's novel irrevocably changed their relationship with God, their Austrian neighbors and themselves: "Jakob Fandler hatte seinen Sohn von Religionsunterricht abgemeldet, besuche nie die Synagoge, blieb allen Festen fern, feierte bloß zu Hause Pessach mit seiner Familie" ("Jakob Fandler had his son dropped from religious instruction, never stepped foot in the synagogue, and stayed away from all festivals, celebrating only Pessach at home with his family"; *Suche* 49-50; Sharp 31).

In conclusion, the Mythic Jew Model was created in an attempt to apply the principles of system dynamics in order to gain insight into the complex processes involved in the formation of post-Shoah male Jewish identity in Rabinovici's contemporary Austria.

Chapter 3: Framing the Jew

The realm of the Holo-ghost is like being submerged in Chagall's painting *Over Vitebsk*. A man with a walking stick and a beggar's sack floats over Chagall's hometown of Vitebsk symbolizing the plight of Eastern European Jews being forced to move regularly. The suspended figure appears in shadows, giving the impression that he is ceasing to exist. His facial features are not clearly discernible, as if they do not matter. Chagall's probable intention was to show the world how it felt to be on the outside of a marginalized culture, and how it felt to be disembodied from the community and the world during times of persecution (*Over Vitebsk*).

3.1. Unraveling the Historical and Mythical Threads of the Ahasuerus Myth

The "Wandering Jew" is a figure from medieval Christian folklore whose legend began to spread in Europe during the thirteenth century. The original legend concerns a Jew who taunted Jesus on the way to the Crucifixion and was then cursed to walk the earth until the Second Coming (Idalovichi 4). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the figure of the "Wandering Jew," an apocryphal legendary individual, was identified with the fate of the Jewish people as a whole. The "Eternal Jew" became an increasingly "symbolic . . . and universal character" as the struggle for Jewish emancipation gave rise to what came to be referred to as "The Jewish Question"²⁵ in Nazi Germany (Bein 159).

²⁵ According to Holocaust scholar Lucy Dawidowicz, the term "Jewish Question", as introduced in western Europe was a neutral expression for the negative attitude toward the apparent and persistent singularity of the Jews as a people against the background of the rising political nationalisms and new nation-state. Dawidowicz writes that "the histories of Jewish emancipation and of European antisemitism are replete with proffered 'solutions to the Jewish question'." (Dawidowicz xxi-xxiii)

The legend of Ahasuerus first appeared in print in a pamphlet, published in 1602, entitled *Kurze Beschreibung und Erzählung von einem Juden mit Namen Ahasverus* (“Short Description and Story about a Jew named Ahasuerus”) and quickly spread throughout Europe (Wandering Jew). The fast promulgation of the myth might have been due in part to the spreading popularity of the printing press as well as the writings by Martin Luther. According to historian Lucy Dawidowicz, the line of “anti-Semitic descent” (23) from Luther to Hitler is “easy to draw” (23). In her *The War against the Jews 1933-1945*, she writes that Luther and Hitler were obsessed by the “demonologized universe” (23) inhabited by Jews. Dawidowicz states that the similarities between Luther’s anti-Jewish writings and modern anti-Semitism are no coincidence because they derived from a common history of *Judenhaß*.

Local rulers and church officials closed many professions to the Jews, pushing them into marginal occupations considered socially inferior, such as tax and rent collecting and moneylending. Catholic doctrine of the time held that lending money for interest was a sin and forbidden to Christians. Jewish law forbade lending money for interest to another Jew but not to non-Jews. Since few other occupations were open to Jews, they were given little choice but to take up money lending. Subsequently, the negative stereotype of the Jew as the usurer, as Shylock, was added to the Ahasuerus Myth (Idalovich 8).

By the high medieval period, the majority of the European Jewish community was engaged in financial occupations, and the community was a financially highly successful part of the medieval economy (Malamat 401). Starting in 1551, Jews had to wear a yellow spot on their clothing every time they entered the market towns or cities of

Austria. Even though they experienced less discrimination throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in 1669, a commission was appointed by King Leopold I, in which Bishop Count Kollinich urged the expulsion of the Jews from Austria (Leopold I). As a thanksgiving for the expulsion, the inhabitants renamed the area Leopoldstadt (“Leopold's city”). As an ironic twist of fate, when Jews were allowed to return to Vienna, the majority of them settled in the Second District, also known as Leopoldstadt. This edict of expulsion remained in force until 1848; however, a number of *Hofjuden* (“Court Jews”) were permitted to remain with their families and servants. As early as ten years after the edict of 1669, individual Jews were granted permission to return to Austria. Samuel Oppenheimer and Samson Wertheimer acted as Court Jews, gaining influential positions and significant privileges (Shields).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, a large segment of the working and lower middle classes would draw upon this historical stereotype of the Jew as a userer. These Christian communities would rally against “International Jewish Money - Capitalism” and support anti-Jewish policies (Shields).

In 1852, Gustave Doré made a woodcut entitled “The Wandering Jew” that depicted the legendary figure with “a red cross on his forehead, spindly legs and arms, huge nose and blowing hair, and staff in hand” (Mosse 57). Whereas previous images of “The Wandering Jew” had afforded him some dignity, Doré’s pejorative depiction was co-opted by anti-Semites (Mosse 57) and the exaggerated caricature was adapted by artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Levy 186).

From around 1860, the *Otherness* of the Jew took on an increasingly antisemitic tendency. Jews were described under the “Jewish Question” as a stumbling block for the

collective identity and cohesion of the emerging German nation and were constructed as enemies. In addition, Gilman points to the “increasingly anti-Semitic critique” of the Jewish body as inherently unfit for military service” and the association of Jewish males with nervousness and traditionally female hysterical tendencies (Gilman, *Jew's Body* 63-64). He argues that, in the nineteenth century, Jewish hysteria was used as an anti-Semitic stereotype to emasculate Jewish men (Gilman, *Jew's Body* 63).

Antisemites such as Wilhelm Marr, Karl Eugen Dühring, Theodor Fritsch, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Paul de Lagarde and others declared “Jews” a racial problem unsolvable through integration. Their demands included the “de-jewifying” of the press, education, state, economy, and culture. These individuals also condemned inter-marriage between Jews and non-Jews, and tried to oust Jews out of their supposedly more socially dominating positions (Furet 182).

By far the most infamous use of “the Jewish Question” was by the Nazis in the early- and mid- twentieth century, culminating in the implementation of their “Final Solution to the Jewish question” (Furet 182) during World War II.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933 they made the stab-in-the-back legend (“Dolchstoßlegende”) the founding myth of the Third Reich. They portrayed the Weimar Republic as the work of the “November criminals,”²⁶ many of whom were Jews, as having stabbed the German Empire in the back when seizing power and causing its defeat in World War I. Rabinovici is being ironic when Dani claims that it was he who

²⁶ The November Criminals were the German government leaders who signed the Armistice on November 11, 1918. Nazi propaganda depicted Weimar as “a morass of corruption, degeneracy, national humiliation, ruthless persecution of the honest ‘national opposition’ — fourteen years of rule by Jews, Marxists and ‘cultural Bolsheviks’, who had at last been swept away by the National Socialist movement under Adolf Hitler and the victory of the ‘national revolution’ of 1933.” (Kolb 140)

murdered Siegfried and takes on the treacherous role of Hagen²⁷. Even though the *Nibelungenlied* was an epic from ca.1220 A.D., the German right reinvoked Siegfried's murder as the politically symbolic murder of all that was good in Germany by the November Criminals.

As the constitutive "Other," the myth of 'The Wandering and Eternal Jew' is best known in the twentieth century through its revival in the NSDAP propaganda film *Der ewige Jude*. The film is the Nazi interpretation of the powerful age-old legend of the Eternal or Wandering Jew (Idalovichi 5). The revival of the "Eternal Jew" myth was a powerful tool used by National-Socialist propaganda to justify the persecution of the Jews and prepare the masses for the forthcoming Holocaust. Nazi propaganda filmmakers offered a portrayal of world's Jewry as being ugly, corrupt and perverse. Jews were portrayed as diabolic imposters: "No viewer would fail to shudder at the sneaking servility and dirty bartering of the Jews" (Idalovichi 5). Peter Lorre was stigmatized by the Nazi propaganda machine as representing this conniving, compulsive Jewish criminal and pervert. His confession in *M* before the kangaroo court of underworld criminals found its way into the Nazi propaganda film *Der ewige Jude* as an "example" of the Jewish psychological disorder.

Throughout the novel, it is obvious that Rabinovici wraps Mullemann in the gauze of Ahasuerus. After further readings of the novel, I came to realize that the Ahasuerus myth was not only embedded in the character of Mullemann but could also be found in the creation and construction of all of Rabinovici's post-Shoah male Jewish characters. His protagonists reflect the characteristics most often attributed to the mythic

²⁷ In the epic poem *Nibelungenlied* ("Song of the Nibelungs") Siegfried is famously stabbed in the back by Hagen.

figure of Ahasuerus which, in the next few sections of this chapter, I have grouped into four major categories.

Central to the development of *Judenhaß* and modern antisemitism as well as in the construction of post-Shoah male Jewish identity, these four broad groupings of the wandering Jew's characteristics are as follows: firstly, he is stained in the blood of deicide; secondly, he has a fluid and ambiguous identity; thirdly, he is accused of having characteristics that are the polar opposites of each other; fourthly, he remains the constitutive "Other" in Christian society. Each category will be further explored as to how it may help us understand the post-Shoah male Jewish identity formation of Rabinovici's protagonists.

From a historical perspective, the impact of the Ahasuerus myth on Jewish civilization cannot be underestimated. Søren Kirkegaard has counted the legend of 'The Wandering Jew' among the three fundamental myths of European culture, alongside those of Don Juan and Doctor Faust (Pattison 74).

In *Suche nach M*, Rabinovici explores the new manifestations of the old myth and joins those scholars of literature, theology and history who have for centuries examined the relationship between the mythical portrayal of the Jew and its tie to the fate of Jews all over the world.

3.2. Blood of Deicide

A belief in Jewish deicide places the responsibility for the death of Jesus on the Jewish people as a whole and as such assumes a Christian's right to retribution. Therefore, the Jew's life is under constant threat. Even though the Second Vatican

Council (1962-1965) of the Roman Catholic Church repudiated the belief in collective Jewish guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus, Jews remain a convenient scapegoat. As Leon Fischer says to Ariele, “Merk dir, der Schuldige ist immer der Jude. Erst wird er gekreuzigt, dann angebetet. So was ist bei jenen immer schon Sitte...” (“[d]on’t forget, the guilty party is always the Jew. First, he’ll be crucified and then worshiped. That’s always been their custom ...”; *Suche* 187; Sharp 129).

When Navah mentions to Ariele, “wir wurden alle mit einer blauen Nummer am Arm geboren” (“[w]e were born with a blue number on our arm”; *Suche* 219; Sharp 152), she is expressing the *woundedness* felt by Rabinovici’s Jewish characters and many post-Shoah Jews. She is also telling the reader of her fears surrounding the uncertainty of once again being re-wounded, most clearly illustrated in Otto Toot’s stabbing of his own painting of Ahasuerus.

Mulleman, as the reincarnation of Ahasuerus, is the open wound of the Jewish people, always in need of gauze and bandages. Paradoxically, this bandaging covers and conceals, yet draws attention to the wound. In his efforts to ferret out criminals and force them to confess their crimes, his wounds would become so severe that “[b]ald wußte Mulleman nicht mehr, wo sein Verband endete, wo seine Haut began” (“he no longer knew where the gauze ended and his skin began”; *Suche* 111; Sharp 74). Indeed, Mulleman has a very peculiar affliction. Only Sina Mohn, a Christian, is capable of healing this uncanny manifestation of the old myth, the blood libel.

The blood libel is a false accusation that Jews murdered Christians to use their blood in certain aspects of their religious rituals and holidays. Historically, these claims along with those of well poisoning and host desecration have been major themes in the

European persecution of Jews (Jewish Encyclopedia, Blood Accusations). As for the blood libel, Trachtenberg argues,

The Jews [were accused] of suffer[ing] from certain peculiar and secret afflictions [...] which did not normally bother Christians. Indeed, it was this belief that helped to account for the Jewish need of Christian blood, the sole effective therapeutic available to them. Most often among these ailments was that of menstruation, which the men as well as the women among the Jews were supposed to experience; close seconds were copious hemorrhages and hemorrhoids (all involving loss of blood). (Trachtenberg 50)

The alleged male menstruation and hemorrhaging are explained by citing the cry of the Jews before Pilate: “His blood is on us and on our children.”²⁸

Arieh, in his last letter to Mullemann, tells him that he has broken “mit meinem Mordhandwerk” (“from his murderous trade”; *Suche* 259; Sharp 180), which demanded the blood of his enemies and implores Dani to stop hemorrhaging from the wounds of Jewish history. Arieh also challenges Dani to break with his familial ties which have both traumatized and infantilized him. Arieh writes “Du aber streife erst Deine Wundwindel ab, diesen familiären Verband [...] Löse die Binden, entwirre die Verstrickungen” (“but you have to first pull off those diapers from your wounds, those familial wrappings [...] undo the bandages, unravel the entanglements”; *Suche* 265; Sharp 185).

Arieh insists that only Sina’s love is capable of healing Mullemann’s deep-seated wounds: “Schau bei Sina vorbei. Bei ihr konntest Du den Bandagen entkommen,

²⁸ Matt. 27.25. (Matthew 5 ESV)

damals...” (“Look in on Sina. Earlier, you were able to escape the bandages at her side...”; *Suche* 265; Sharp 185). Only the love of a Christian can set Mullemann free from his own self-hatred since the stigmatizing image was created by Christians: “Du solltest bei ihr untertauchen, solltest Mullemann abwerfen, Dich entpuppen. Wenn du Dich für Sina entscheidest, wird Karl Siebert sich Dir nicht den Weg stellen, wird er Mullemann nicht festhalten. Auch Gitta und Mosche werden es akzeptieren” (“You should disappear with her, cast off Mullemann and come out of your cocoon. If you decide for Sina, Karl Siebert won’t stand in your way. He won’t hold you captive. Gitta and Mosche will accept it too”; *Suche* 265-266; Sharp 185). Rabinovici contends that their assimilation into each other will be accepted by a changing, contemporary Austria as well as by Mullemann’s own family.

3.3. A Fluid and Ambiguous Disguise or Defense?

During the Shoah, Mosche imitated death by going underground and “tagelang reglos dichtgedrängt, an andere Körper geschmiegt, liegen, sitzen, in sich verharren zu können” (“remain[ing] motionless for days – lying or sitting – while living closely packed together, body on body”; *Suche* 28; Sharp 17) when in hiding. For Jakob to stay alive, he assumed the identity of another, “wurde ich zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben für den Buchdrucker Adam Kruzki gehalten. [...] ich wurde an seiner Statt geschont, gerettet” (“I was taken for the printer Adam Kruzki [...] I was spared and saved in his place”; *Suche* 100-101; Sharp 67). Rabinovici’s Shoah survivors, like many Jews throughout European history, have had to develop ingenious responses to combat the constant threat of annihilation. These survival strategies are seen by the Jews as

necessary. Many gentiles, on the other hand, perceive Jews as having a fluid or ambiguous identity and there is a suggestion of “rootlessness.” The antisemite stigmatizes the Jew as being cunning and cowardly.

The most infamous examples of Jews being portrayed as shrewd and avaricious can be seen in NSDAP propaganda films, such as *Der ewige Jude*, which was shot in the Polish ghettos of Lodz, Warsaw, Cracow and Lublin, and the wildly popular and commercially successful film *Jud Süß* (Idalovich 5). In the animated text at the beginning of *Der ewige Jude* the audience is informed that this “documentary footage” (Reimer 135) shows Jews in their original state “before they put on the mask of civilized Europeans” (Reimer 135). In *Jud Süß*, when Süß is given a pass from the Duke, he cuts his hair, shaves his beard, and dons “Christian” clothes so that he can enter Württemberg disguised as a Christian (Haggith 80).

Throughout the centuries, Jews have been wounded by angels of God, enslavement, exile, and Christian folklore. Like the Ahasuerus myth, much of what non-Jewish communities perceive as having a Jewish identity is rooted in stigmatization and the Jews’ response to *woundedness*.

In the Torah, Jacob is renamed *Israel* (“you have struggled with God and mankind and overcome”), prior to re-entering the land of Canaan by an angel of God after having struggled and been injured by him. Jacob is then left with a permanent limp. Both Jacob, the Biblical patriarch, and Jakob Scheinowiz, the Shoah survivor are marked by their wounds. As opposed to Jacob the patriarch who struggled with an angel and somehow emerged victorious, Jakob walks with a cane but no longer argues with angels and seeks only to escape their challenges. From a psychotherapeutic perspective, we might

diagnose Jacob and Jakob as suffering from the re-occurring diagnostic symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a response to a major traumatic event.

In the realm of political psychology, which uses psychological perspectives to understand traumatic events, we could analyze the remnants of postwar Jewry as suffering from a diagnosis of a collective PTSD. Indeed, we could diagnose many of Rabinovici's Shoah surviving characters with such an illness.

However, collectively diagnosing an entire people with PTSD, in particular, Shoah survivors and their children, is not only worrisome, it may only serve to re-victimize the victim. It does smack of the late nineteenth century "scientifically reliable" diagnosis which stigmatized the Jew as being hysterical and racially inferior. Indeed, throughout history we find that the sciences have also been negatively influenced by the Ahasuerus Myth. The underlying motives in diagnosing Jews as being different from others must always be carefully scrutinized.

While everyone experiences PTSD differently, Jakob Scheinowiz's erratic behavior of assuming a multitude of names and identities indicates that he is trying to escape deep-seated feelings rooted in survivor's guilt. As a significant symptom of PTSD, survivor's guilt is experienced when a person perceives himself as having done something wrong to have survived a catastrophic event while others perished. When in the hospital and speaking with his friend Leon Fischer about taking on the pseudonym Fandler, Jakob says: "Habe ich dafür überlebt, während andere ermordet wurden? – Du glaubst, ich hätte mich nicht mit Absicht verleugnet?" ("Have I survived because of it while others were murdered? – Do you think I didn't intentionally disavow my identity? You're wrong"; *Suche* 99; Sharp 66).

As a concentration camp prisoner, Jakob Scheinowiz was misidentified by his captors as being Adam Kruzki, a printer. Adam is Jakob's *Doppelgänger*: they both originate from Cracow, are divorced, have a daughter from their first marriage, and resemble each other in appearance (*Suche* 17-19; Sharp 8-10). Jakob decides to take advantage of the situation and impersonates Adam: "Ich wurde an seiner Statt geschont, gerettet" ("I was spared and saved in his place"; *Suche* 101; Sharp 67). "Mein ganzes Überleben war eine Verwechslung" ("My survival depended on a mix-up"; *Suche* 101; Sharp 67).

Both Jakob Scheinowiz and Mosche Morgenthau seem to suffer from survivor's guilt. Among Shoah survivors, some felt guilty about having done something wrong and shameful, even though those feelings were often not grounded in reality (Chodoff 159). Feelings of self-hatred are compounded by a sense of guilt not only for having survived but also for having been "singled out and persecuted" in the first place (Lawson 41). Survivor's guilt not only affects the way survivors perceive themselves, it also affects how others perceive them. As Ariele states,

In den Augen dieser Leute müssen die Überlebenden ehrloser als die Ermordeten gewesen sein; zumindest seien sie nun schwierig geworden, auf jeden Fall bleiben sie verdächtige Subjekte. Wurde jemand nicht umgebracht, dann wird gesagt, wieso er durchkommen konnte, ob er jemanden verriet, sich verkaufte, ein Henkershelfer war; schlechthin über Leichen ging. (*Suche* 219)

In these people's eyes the survivors are less honourable than those killed ... they remain suspicious characters. If a person wasn't killed, then

people ask how he made it through, whether he betrayed somebody, sold out, or was an informant. They think he just walked over corpses. (Sharp 151-152)

Questioning the moral character of survivors is one of the many ways survivors have been re-victimized. In Ruth Klüger's memoirs *Still Alive* she writes about an incident that occurred while teaching in Cleveland:

Ein Bekannter, ein Jude in Cleveland, verlobt mit einer Deutschen, sagt mir ins Gesicht: "Ich weiß, was ihr getan habt, um euch am Leben zu erhalten." Ich wußte es nicht, aber ich wußte, was er meinte. Er meinte: "Ihr seid über Leichen gegangen." [...] Ich hab gar nichts gesagt, ich bin nach Haus gegangen und war deprimiert. Und in der Wirklichkeit war es Zufall, daß man am Leben geblieben ist. (Klüger, *weiter leben* 72-73)

A young Jewish political scientist, engaged to a German woman, said to my face, without flinching: "I know what you survivors had to do to stay alive." I didn't know what we had had to do, but I knew what he wanted to say. He wanted to say, "You walked over dead bodies." ...I said nothing, went home to my children, and was depressed. For in reality the cause of survival was almost pure chance. (Klüger 66)

Both situations highlight the hostility or, at best, the indifference felt by many for Shoah survivors in particular and Jewish survival as a whole. This assumed complicity or brutality in having survived may say more about the accuser than the accused. I would argue that we can trace this hostility or ambivalence back to those medieval stereotypes of the Jew that were further demonized by the Nazified version of the Ahasuerus myth.

The young Jewish political scientist, who shamelessly accused Ruth Klüger of “surviving” must have incorporated this mythic Jew into his self-image.

No matter what Jewish survivors have endured, their victimization is still held in question. They are not only morally cross-examined and made to feel guilty about surviving, they are also accused of being vengeful, wanting “an eye for an eye” when they seek to bring former Nazis to justice. Worst of all, in an effort to neatly categorize their suffering and, perhaps, our own discomfort with the enormity of their suffering, they are sidelined with a diagnosis of some seemingly incurable traumatic malady. In Rabinovici’s *Suche nach M*, Ariele bitterly scoffs at the accusers:

Streitet er [der Überlebende] alle Verdächtigungen ab und leidet dennoch wie jeder normale Mensch unter solchen Vorwürfen, wird er bedauert, für seelisch zerrüttet erklärt, werden Gefühle der Überlebensschuld diagnostiziert. Das Überlebenssyndrom? Daß ich nicht lache! Wenn das Überleben eine Krankheit ist, dann will ich nicht gesund oder normal sein. (*Suche* 219)

If he [the survivor] denies all the accusations and still suffers like every normal person from such reproaches, he is pitied and declared a mental wreck. He’s diagnosed as having feelings of survival guilt. The survival syndrome? That’s a riot! If survival is a sickness, then I don’t want to be healthy or normal. (Sharp 152)

After World War II, researchers such as Chodoff, Krystal and Niederland tended to base their studies on the long term effects of the Holocaust primarily on survivors’ clinical records. This led them to emphasize the negative effects of the Holocaust

experience as cited by Glickman et al in their 2003 study²⁹. As a consequence, leading mental health practitioners adopted the perspective that survivors were unable to deal effectively with loss and problems of guilt and shame (Chodoff; Krystal). However, these conclusions were later questioned, as empirical evidence increasingly suggested that there was “diversity in long term effects of the Holocaust on survivors [...] Some survivors report a high level of psychological distress, while others, who were exposed to similar experiences, report few, if any, symptoms” (Hantman, Solomon and Horn 126)³⁰ (qtd. in Greene, 412). Again, we must remain vigilant to the fact that the health and social sciences are not immune to the influences of current pedagogy, trends, and especially cultural influences which, as these pertain to Jews, have been negatively affected by the Ahasuerus Myth. I agree with Ariele that diagnoses that spotlight a Jew’s separateness from others need to be carefully scrutinized.

After partaking in a rather bizarre exchange with Tonja Kruzki, the ex-wife of Adam Kruzki, Jakob, who has cruelly pretended to be Adam Kruzki, leaves their shared Rosh Hashanah (New Year’s) meal and begins the dramatic process of taking on a new identity. However, this was a buried identity. Scheinowiz exhumes Jakob Fandler, the name and persona he assumed when he went underground during the war (64). It is rather telling that the new identity included a more Germanic sounding surname to displace the heavily consonant-ed Eastern European sounding family name Scheinowiz.

In a Kafkaesque crescendo, Jakob who has been hospitalized, informs his doctor that “sollen Sie wissen, daß ich nicht Adam Kruzki heiße. Ich bin Jakov Scheinowiz [...]”

²⁹ See Glickman, A., Van Haitisma, K. Mamberg, M. Gagnon, and D. Brom. “Caring for Holocaust Survivors: Rethinking the Paradigms.” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 3rd ser. 79.2 (2003): 148-53. Print.

³⁰ See also Danieli’s 1981 and 1982 studies.

“Ja, aber meine Versicherung läuft unter dem Namen Jakob Fandler [...] “Nennen Sie mich Scheinowiz” (“my name is not Adam Kruzki. I am Jakob Scheinowiz [...] But my insurance is under the name Jakob Fandler [...] Call me Scheinowiz”; *Suche* 102; Sharp 68). These sentences are a comic-ironic representation of how Jewish identity is often portrayed in *Suche nach M. Die Verwandlung*³¹ or transformation of one’s physical identity is as easy “Es ist, als säßest Du in einem Café unserer Geburtsstadt. Du wählst Dir Identitäten aus dem Menü.” (“as if you were sitting in a café in our hometown choosing identities for yourself from the menu”; *Suche* 260; Sharp 181).

Like the shifting identities of the protagonists in Rabinovici’s novel a variety of names have become associated with the many manifestation of Ahasuerus, “The Wandering Jew,” including “The Eternal Jew,” Matathias, Buttadeus, Paul Marrane, and Isaac Laquedem (“Wandering Jew”). In addition, the exact nature of the wanderer's indiscretions varies in different versions of the tale, as do aspects of his character and his profession. Sometimes he is said to be a shoemaker or another tradesman, and sometimes he is the doorman at Pontius Pilate’s estate (“Wandering Jew”).

As a manifestation of the old myth, Rabinovici supplies his characters with an elaborate choice of names, masks, disguises and shifting identities. They are used by Rabinovici’s characters for many reasons, but mainly to either escape persecution or to ingratiate themselves into the dominant culture’s good favor.

³¹ An allusion to Franz Kafka’s novel *Die Verwandlung*, translated into English as “Metamorphosis” or “Transformation.”

3.4. Names

Names are one of the most significant aspects of an individual's personal identity and heritage. Historically, Jews did not have permanent family surnames. Exceptions included Jewish communities in large cities such as Prague or Frankfurt am Main, where many of the names were derived from house-signs and rabbinical dynasties, which often used a town name, typically the birthplace of the founder of the dynasty. Such surnames were much easier to shed or change than they would be today, and did not have the official status that modern names do (Judaism 101).

Within the Jewish community, patronymics were used, such as David *ben* (son of) Joseph or Miriam *bat* (daughter of) Aaron. The process of assigning permanent surnames to Jewish families began in Austria-Hungary (Judaism 101). One reason for the frequency of German names among Jews is a 1787 Austro-Hungarian law. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, which controlled a substantial part of Europe at the time, was the first country in Europe that required Jews to register a permanent family surname, and Austrian bureaucrats required that this surname be German (Judaism 101). Requiring Jews to have German surnames was the beginning of a deliberate process to totally assimilate the Jews of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany and end the "Jewish Question."

Most of Rabinovici's characters have German last names even though they were born in Poland. We may assume that the Fandlers, Fischers and Morgenthau originated from Galicia, a province in present-day southern Poland that had a large Jewish population and was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Scheinowitz family, who

has a Slavic last name, must have originated from other parts of Poland or Eastern Europe.

It appears that similar to the Ahasuerus myth, surnames were also used to Christianize Jewish identity. Unlike the myth, which portrays the Jew as the “Other” and separates Jews from non-Jews, surnames were used in a carrot-and-stick-approach to begin a process of assimilating Jews into European society. Like so many of these benefits bestowed upon the European Jewry, the privilege of having a German name was soon abrogated. In August 1938, German authorities decreed that by January 1, 1939, Jewish men and women bearing first names of non-Jewish origin had to add *Israel* or *Sara* to their given names. For their children, only a restricted number of Jewish first names were allowed. Most of these names were highly unusual, and many were likely to attract derision (e.g. *Geilchen* “little horny one”) (Holocaust History).

As portrayed in *Suche nach M*, Jewish identity seems to have a natural fluidity and ambiguity. Throughout their long and arduous history, Jews have had to find unique and innovative alternatives in which they could live in peace with or within the local population and still retain a certain degree of Jewishness.³²

In a similar vein, when Arie Fandler was born, the narrator tells us that he was “[m]it Bedacht . . . Arie Arthur geheißen worden. Auf diese Weise sollte er weder unter Christen noch unter Juden ein Ausgestoßener sein, die Wahl zwischen beiden Welten haben.” (“prudently called Arie Arthur so that he would not be an outcast among either

³² For example, at birth, most Jewish babies are given a Hebrew name along with a non-Jewish name. I would venture to say that the non-Jewish *local* name represents the degree to which that family has assimilated into the local culture. For instance, true to the Ashkenazi tradition of naming children, I was given the name of my deceased grandfather *Moshe* by my newly arrived immigrant parents but renamed *Michael* by my mother’s Americanized obstetrician.

Jews or Christians and would have a choice between these worlds”; *Suche* 139; Sharp 94). Nevertheless, in Rabinovici’s upside down Chagall-esque world, Arie Fandler discovers that his father had been hiding behind the pseudonym Fandler and that his real surname was Scheinowiz. Ironically, the first part of the surname Schein-owiz, comes from the German verb *scheinen* which in English means (“to seem”) and the second part of the family name –owiz is the German spelling of the Polish word ending –owicz which means (“son of”). This begins Arie’s odyssey of trying to find his own true identity, which includes murdering a neo-Nazi, escaping to Israel and coming to terms with his ability to morph into the essence of his prey, the enemies of the Jewish people.

Rabinovici uses a traditional Jewish method of quoting a sage to suggest what virtuous behavior might look like for the purpose of warning Arie that he cannot find his true identity in others: “Wenn du du bist, weil du du bist, und ich bin ich, weil ich bin ich, dann du bist du du, und ich bin ich; wenn aber du du bist, weil ich bin, und ich ich bin, weil du du bist, dann bist du nicht du, und ich bin nicht ich (Rebbe of Kotzk)” (“If you are you because you are you and I am I because I am I, then you are you and I am I. If, however, you are you because I am I and I am I because you are you, then you are not you and I am not I (Rebbe of Kotzk)”; *Suche* 59; Sharp 37).

While growing up in Austria, Arie uses his Hebrew name. After a mysterious accident and morse-code encounter with Mullemann he emerges as Arthur Bein. It is interesting to note that *Bein* translates into English as “bone” and also “leg” and “etzem” in Hebrew. In Hebrew *etzem* not only translates into the English word for “bone” but has a much deeper meaning and can be translated as “essence.” In Hebrew, *etzmi*, which translates into English as “myself” literally means “of my bone” or “of my essence.”

Throughout the novel, Ariele searches for his identity, his essence in others but his name reminds him that his essence can only be found in himself. It is also revealing to note that Bein was Navah's surname, which Ariele assumed when they married. In the biblical creation story, Eve was created out of a bone in Adam's rib. In *Suche nach M* the reverse is true.

We later learn that in the course of his intelligence work as a Mossad agent, which focused on investigations rather than the actual murder of Israel's enemies, Ariel had been assigned the name *Arthur* for reconnaissance and *Alex* for murder (73-74). In the novel, Ariel is never again referred to as *Alex* for "[i]hm mangelte es an der Entschlossenheit, eine Bluttat zu Ende zu führen" ("Ariel lacked the determination to carry out the lethal strike"; *Suche* 110; Sharp 74). Since Ariel's essence appears to be one of mimicking rather than murdering, is Rabinovici suggesting that killing, even in the defense of the homeland, is somehow *un-Jewish*? Has killing become an unexpected consequence of wanting to be like the rest of the world?

The narrator also uses the name Arthur to refer to Ariele when he is abroad, outside of Israel. For example, when Ariele is on the train on his way to a small Italian town remembering Teddy's words about hunting down his Palestinian enemy Sayid, the narrator is quoted as saying, "Arthur dachte an Tel Aviv" ("Arthur was thinking of Tel-Aviv"; *Suche* 138; Sharp 94).

Rabinovici's characters portray Jewish identity as being ambiguous and fluid. I would argue that his characters employ the stereotypes and identities imposed on them in a myriad of creative ways simply as strategies to survive antisemitism and Holocaust denial in postwar Austria and the hostilities Israel faces on a daily basis. Like the

transparent balls through which Ariele, Jael and Maria peer, they see “die ganze Welt stand Kopf, war umgekehrt und verzerrt” (“the world in a jumble, topsy-turvy and distorted”; *Suche* 149; Sharp 101). They respond like the children playing on the street in the beginning of the film *M* by doing whatever they can to escape being chosen by “the nasty man in black [who] will come with his little chopper. He will chop you up!” (*M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*). Rabinovici’s characters must remain in constant motion so as to successfully dodge the latest manifestation of Jew-hatred.

3.5. Embodying Polar Opposites

It was the young Zionist movement, which around the turn of the century took up most fiercely the fight for the equalization of the Jewish body. Zionism not only rose in order to make Europe's Jews resettle in their old home in the British Mandate for Palestine, but also to create a “new Jew.” In Theodor Herzl's words that meant “*aus Judenjungen junge Juden zu machen*” (“to form young Jews out of Jewish lads”) (qtd. in Brenner). In this respect, the Zionists demanded a completion of emancipation, not just in a mental, but also in a physical sense, thus responding to the earliest calls heard in the fight for emancipation (Brenner, Reuveni, “Emancipation through Muscles”).

In 1891, Theodor Herzl became the Paris correspondent for the influential liberal newspaper *Die Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna. Herzl was in Paris when a wave of antisemitism broke out over the court martial of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer. Dreyfus, falsely accused of espionage, was banished to a lifetime of imprisonment on Devil’s Island. Herzl watched and was forever changed as Dreyfus was humiliated in a public ceremony in January 1895. All the while, the mob kept shouting “Death to the

Jews.” Herzl became convinced that the only solution to the Jewish problem was the mass exodus of Jews to their homeland (Herzl 4).

In 1898, the Zionist leader, Dr. Max Nordau, during the Second Zionist Congress in Basel warned:

The history of our [Jewish] people relates to the fact that we were once strong physically but today that is not the case. Others succeeded in degenerating us physically. They made the ghetto Jews of the Middle Ages into sorrowful weaklings, haggard and unable to defend ourselves in the narrow alleyways of the Ghetto. (Stanislawski 89)

Early Zionists agreed that to root European Jewry in the soil of Zion, a major transformation would need to occur. The stereotype of the emasculated, hysterical “Wandering Jew” would need to be reinvented into a masculine tiller of the soil. Could the exiled and victimized Jew of the Diaspora, represented by Mullemann in *Suche nach M* be transformed into a figure, ideally, more determined than Ariele Bein?

In Rabinovici’s novel, Jewish characters are initially portrayed as having polar opposites, dueling identities, which are represented by *Doppelgänger(s)*. For example, the character Mosche Morgenthau represents the uncertain questioning survivor, and his *Doppelgänger* Jakob Scheinowiz represents the self-assured linear verticality of the exclamation mark. Mosche’s dreams, like those of many other survivors, are anchored in their children’s questionable future: “Danis Geschichte scheine die einzige zu sein, die dem Vater übrig geblieben war” (“Dani’s story seemed to be the only one left to his father”; *Suche* 31; Sharp 17). However, as dreams grow into disappointments, Mosche’s body atrophies into a physical representation of a question mark: “Als folgte die Melodie

der Worte seiner geschwungenen, verschlungenen Wirbelsäule, kurvte jede seiner Aussagen in eine Frage” (“Remarks curled its way into a question as if the melody of his words were following his bent and twisted spinal column”; *Suche* 38; Sharp 22-23). On the other hand, Jakob Scheinowiz in the linear verticality of pinstripe suits carries a cane and exclaims: “Dich soll keiner ungestraft schlagen, Arie, Hörst du? Dich nicht” (“Nobody who hits you gets off unpunished, Arie, do you hear? No one hits you,”; *Suche* 49; Sharp 30) and “Identität – zu Ende formuliert – ist nichts als eine Grabinschrift” (“identity in its final form is nothing more than an inscription on a gravestone”; *Suche* 57; Sharp 36).

Initially, Jewish identity in Rabinovici’s postwar Austria seems to be best described by Leon Fischer when speaking with Arie about Mullemann’s identity: “Entweder der Jud Süß oder der süße Jude, das Unglück oder der Heiland, Jesus oder Judas, denn wenn kein Heiliger, dann ist der Jude ein Shylock, ein Teufel...” (“Either the Jew Süß or the pure Jew³³, the devil or the saviour, Jesus or Judas; because when he’s not a saint, the Jew is a Shylock, a demon”; *Suche* 187; Sharp 129).

At first glance, on the continuum of post-Shoah Jewish identity, Rabinovici has placed our two second generation protagonists Mullemann and Arie Bein on opposite ends of the masculinity and moral spectrum. In doing so, Rabinovici provides us with a framework in which an array of polar opposite Jewish stereotypes, characteristics and identities can be placed, such as:

- emasculated or hyper-masculine

³³ The translation of *Jud Süß* and *süße Jude* is not quite accurate. *Jud Süß* refers to “one of the most notorious and successful pieces of anti-semitic film propaganda produced in Nazi Germany” (Cull 205) while *süße Jude* translates as (“sweet”) Jew.

- saintly or diabolic
- the questioning Jew (question mark) or the confident Jew (exclamation mark)
- speakers of a Diaspora language/Yiddish or Hebrew

Furthermore, those abovementioned subcategories could be placed under the headings of either the exiled, diaspora Jew or the “new,” “muscle” Jew: the Israeli.

Mullemann is the exiled Jew of the diaspora and the reincarnation of the old Ahasuerus myth while Ariele is the “new” Jew, the Jewish reaction to the Christian-created myth.

As the exiled, diaspora Jew, Mullemann should be emasculated and saintly while Ariele would then have to be the diabolic, hyper-masculine Zionist. However, these polar opposite Jewish stereotypes do not hold up throughout the novel. Obviously, there is a major flaw in this type of black-and-white type of thinking, which is exactly what Rabinovici is emphasizing to the reader. Ariele was not motivated to make *aliyah*³⁴ by a deeply felt love for Zionism nor is he a macho “muscle” Jew who blindly serves as one of Israel’s secret service agents. Through the eventual dissolution of these opposing and extreme aspects of Jewish identity Rabinovici reminds the reader that stereotypes created from the Ahasuerus myth can and should not be universally applied.

As Rabinovici points out, the rebuilding of the ancestral homeland came with some unexpected problems (*Suche* 147-148; Sharp 100). As a homeless people, Jews understood the futility of physically trying to defend themselves, particularly with weaponry. For the most part throughout European history, Jews were unable to secure and possess weapons (Trachtenberg 161). Therefore, Jews were forced to creatively

³⁴ *Aliyah* is a Hebrew word that means “ascent” or “going up.” According to Jewish tradition, immigrating to Israel is an ascent, both geographically and spiritually. The term may originate in the fact that Zion, located in Jerusalem, is 2,700 feet above sea level and from the surrounding areas is an ascent. (Philologos)

engage in other forms of self-defense such as creating their own myths, the *Golem* being one of those examples, and having strict rules about one's own values and behavior within and outside of the Jewish community.

In Jewish folklore, the golem is an animated anthropomorphic being, created entirely from inanimate matter (Idel 296). The most famous golem narrative involves Juday Loew ben Bezalel, the late 16th century chief rabbi of Prague who created a golem to defend the Prague ghetto from antisemitic attacks and pogroms (Bilefsky). To protect the Jewish community, the rabbi constructed the Golem out of clay and brought it to life through rituals and Hebrew incantations. As this golem grew, it became increasingly violent, killing gentiles and spreading fear. The Emperor begged Rabbi Loew to destroy the Golem, promising to stop the persecution of the Jews. To deactivate the Golem, the rabbi rubbed out the first letter of the word *emet* ("truth") from the creature's forehead leaving the Hebrew word *met*, meaning ("dead").

In traditional Judaism, humans are created out of the dust of earth and God breathes life into our lifeless form. Therefore, all of us are golems, unshaped forms, waiting to be created by our experiences.

However, the creation of Israel not only began to pull at some of the threads of Christian folklore and theology, it also created a host of problems for Jews not accustomed to governing themselves on a national or international level. One of these issues concerned the defense of Israel.

Through Ariele, masked as a kinder, gentler Mossad agent, Rabinovici poses some of these difficult political questions. For example, we expect Rabinovici to vilify Ariele as a cold-blooded angel of death stigmatized in such films as Steven Spielberg's

Munich, Edward Zwick's *Defiance*, Eytan Fox's *Walk on Water*, Enzo G. Castellari's *Inglorious Bastards* and John Madden's *The Debt*. But we soon find out that Arie cannot murder. He is only capable of stalking his prey but lacks "Entschlossenheit, eine Bluttat zu Ende zu führen," ("the determination to carry out the lethal strike"; *Suche* 110; Sharp 74). By presenting the reader with such an ambivalent Mossad agent, Rabinovici creates dissonance and discomfort for both the ardent Zionist and those who are highly critical of Israel's right to exist and defend itself.

In addition, the narrator claims that the Mossad has become a "Markenzeichen für Härte und Unnachgiebigkeit." ("brand name for harshness and intransigence"; *Suche* 148; Sharp 101). "Auch Arie Arthur Bein zweifelte am Sinn mancher Aktionen, denn einige davon schienen bloß die Möglichkeit zur Verständigung zu verschlechtern, obgleich die Lösung des Konflikts greifbar wurde" ("even Arie Arthur Bein had doubts about its actions since they appeared merely to worsen the possibility for agreement"; *Suche* 148; Sharp 101).

Once again, Rabinovici forces us into the grey area found in-between polar opposites. Through the character of Arie, I would expect Rabinovici to describe Zion as an Israeli's beloved home and the diaspora in the most negative of terms. Yet, the narrator describes Arie's return to Austria as follows: "So war er [...] aus Zion heimgekehrt in die Diaspora, an jenen Ort der Zerstreuung und Auslöschung, wo Generationen von Juden in Umbestimmtheit und Ungewißheit, in Abhängigkeit und Bevormundung gelebt hatten" ("[h]e had returned home into the diaspora from Zion, home to that place of reverie and obliteration where generations of Jews had lived in doubt and uncertainty, dependence and servility"; *Suche* 183; Sharp 126). After years of

living in Zion, the Jewish people's two-thousand-year-old dream, Ariele, who is an Israeli secret service agent, still perceives Austria and the diaspora as being "home." If that were not enough, Austria and the diaspora can also be a place of reverie.

In a similar ambivalent manner, Mulleminn does not conveniently fit into those prescribed categories of being emasculated and saintly. His sexuality is rather curious, and gender-neutral. As a child he learned from his mother the "Geographie des weiblichen Körpers, nach der Anatomie ihres Leidensweges [sowie] nach den Namen der Konzentrationslager und denjenigen der Geschlechtsorgane" ("geography of the female body, the anatomy of her suffering [as well as] the names of the concentration camps and the sexual organs"; *Suche* 32; Sharp 18) all at the same time. Subconsciously, how was Dani able to incorporate his sexuality with the traumatic memories of his parents that were transmitted to him throughout his childhood?

In addition, after being rescued by Sina Mohn, a non-Jew, her nursing of him evolves into an erotic, almost comic, gauze-fest. There is this same kind of comedic eroticism when the narrator describes Otto Toot's obsessive-compulsive relationship with gauze. For Mulleminn, there seems to be a regression from being intoxicated by the opium derived from Sina "poppeyseed" to her becoming a mother figure who changes his bandages or diapers to end his (childish) suffering. In Ariele's letter, which attacks Mulleminn, he clearly suggests a path for Mulleminn to take back his own body and sensuality.

Sina wird Dir über Deine Verletzungen streichen, die Mullrollen lösen.

Deine Haut streicheln, Deine Ängste besänftigen, Deine Schmerzen

lindern. Sie wirst Du mit Deinen Geständnissen nicht entsetzen. Sie kannst

Du mit Liebesbekenntnissen entzücken, mit Deinen Beteuerungen erregen. Komm schon, Du windelweiches Wickelkind: Mach Dich auf. Sina wird an Deinen Lippen hängen, Dir lauschen und Dich küssen, wird zwischen Deine Bandagen greifen. Und falls sie Dir eines Tages eröffnen sollte, daß sie schwanger ist, dann kannst Du ja Deine Zauberformel sprechen, Deine Parole, Deine Losung rufen. (*Suche* 266)

Sina will soothe your wounds, loosen the rolls of muslin, stroke your skin, calm your fears and ease your pain. You won't horrify her with your confessions. But instead, you can enchant her with your confessions of love and excite her with your declarations. Come on, you infant in swaddling clothes, make your move! Sina will hang on your lips, listen to your every word, kiss you and seek you out underneath the bandages. And one day when the time comes and she reveals to you that she is pregnant, then you can utter your incantation, your slogan, your watchword. (Sharp 185)

Ambiguity around masculinity as a form of self-defense may also play a role in male Jewish identity formation. The role of masculinity in Judaism seems to differ from the dominant Christian culture. Brod brings up the point that traditional Jewish men strive to be a *mensh*, a person with an upright and righteous character. Striving to become a *mensh* is gender-neutral in the dominant Christian culture and seems to reflect the ambiguities or *Otherness* of Jewish male identity. In turn, *Otherness* makes not only Jewish men but all other men not ensconced in a Christian sense of masculinity a target of those men uncomfortable with their own sense of masculinity (Brod 23). Throughout

this chapter we traced the profound influence that the Ahasuerus Myth has tattooed on the Jewish body in European culture. We also found the extreme and negative stereotypes mirrored in Rabinovici's characters. Painted in the garish colors of their stigmatization, Rabinovici forces the reader to closely examine his or her own image of the Jew and, as the novel progresses, to examine the absurdity of these negative stereotypes of the Jew.

3.6. Toot's Ahasuerus

“Civilization now includes death camps and Muselmänner among its material and spiritual products.” (Rubenstein, “Approaches to Auschwitz” 324)

The first time I began drawing the concentric circles around the core of my models, I was reminded of prejudice and hatred's ever widening rippling effect in my life. As a child, when I would get angry at my parents, I would sneak into their bedroom, reach way up high and pull down from on top of their dresser the sole surviving photo of my father's family, most of whom had been murdered in the Holocaust. In that brown cracked picture frame I would try to bring them back to life by telling them my young troubles and hoping they would somehow intervene, for my parents had told me they were all in heaven! Throughout the years, I have come to realize that my efforts to immortalize them in words, poems, essays and film are synonymous with placing the mourner's stone on their unmarked graves.³⁵ Realizing I was a child of a Holocaust survivor was the first ripple.

³⁵ In traditional Judaism, placing a stone on a grave is a marker that a mourner has visited the gravesite.

After years of grappling with my own identity as a Jew and a gay³⁶ man I found in Rabinovici's novel the string that tied it all together; the Ahasuerus myth. The accusation of being the "Other" framed Rabinovici's novel, my model and my life. Here was the source of most Jewish stereotypes and the stigmatization of both Jews and gays. I came to realize that my own former self-hatred was the internalization of a Christian-created antisemitic and homophobic myth.

Bunzl argues that in the creation of a German nation-state, Jews and gays became national bearers of negative identification, in particular, stereotyped as incurably "effeminate" (Preface). He contends that "Jews and queers, thus figured as symptoms of modernity, abject by-products whose irreducible *Otherness* underwrote the fictions of the modern nation-state" (Preface).

At a recent conference on the topic of 'Jewish masculinities in Nazi Germany,' Gilman argued that Jewish identity became racialized in the latter half of the nineteenth century in that it was understood as having an underlying immutable biological basis. The same applied to sexual identity as no ambiguity could be tolerated in Nazi Germany ("Sexual Identity").

In the novel, the mummy-like Ahasuerus figure, Mullemann also reminded me of my best friend wrapped in bedsheets, dying of AIDS and how it felt to survive the AIDS epidemic in New York City. The realization of how central the Ahasuerus myth is in my own life created the second ripple.

³⁶ I use the term *gay* to include the entire spectrum of sexual orientation, including: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning.

Otto Toot, an Austrian painter in Rabinovci's Austria, is an anagram and *Toot* is similar to the word *Tod* ("death") in German, or *toyt* ("death") in Yiddish, is exhibiting his self-portrait, entitled *Ahasuerus*.

The pivotal role of the Ahasuerus myth both in the Jewish and non-Jewish construction of post-Shoah male Jewish identity comes to light in the novel when a major confrontation takes place over the identity of an extreme and ambiguous mummy-like figure: Toot's Ahasuerus (154). Niefanger agrees that the most "pregnant example" (194) of the confusion surrounding Jewish identity in *Suche nach M* occurs when two of the novel's major female characters become locked in battle over the identity of a figure, shackled in gauze and bandages, in one of Otto Toot's paintings, named Ahasuerus (144).

Sina Mohn (Sina "Poppy seed"), an Austrian art theoretician and one of the novel's main female characters, sees the figure as her guilt-ridden and tormented lover. Navah, a visiting Israeli Jew and Holocaust scholar, sees him as the enduring and antisemitic stereotype, Ahasuerus, whom she ironically confuses with her husband. Later on in the scene, a dying Bulgarian hitman mistakes the figure as Jesus Christ while Otto Toot, the creator, defends his political rights to use the rather disparaging name "Ahasuerus" to name this painting.

Sina Mohn initially approaches Toot's painting in a rather ambivalent, almost caustic manner mirroring a modern Austrian's intellectual approach to art, Jews and the Holocaust. Throughout her career she developed "ein Feingefühl, ja eine Schwäche für die einstigen Verfolgten, auch für Juden, die Nazis fortgejagt oder ermordet hatten" ("a sensitivity and empathy for the persecuted and for the Jews murdered by the Nazis as well"; *Suche* 206; Sharp 142).

It is important to point out that the German word *Feingefühl* (“sensitivity”) includes a sense of connoisseurship. Sina Mohn has become a “connoisseur” of selected *Verfolgten* (“those who were persecuted”). It seems that Sina Mohn has developed “sensitivity” for those who were persecuted by the Nazis, mainly, in the artistic community. The throwaway phrase, *auch für Juden* (“for Jews as well”) is used rather disparagingly or ironically and may reflect the “First Victim” attitude developed in postwar Austria’s intellectual community towards the victimization of Jews during the Shoah.

She also distrusted “ihrem eigenen Unbewußten, [sowie] den Untiefen der [antisemitischen] Überlieferung [ihrer Heimat]” (“her own unconscious [as well] as the depths of [her homeland’s antisemitic] tradition”; *Suche* 206; Sharp 142). In Toot’s painting, she sees the man she loves, Mullemann, whose name echoes the former concentration camp term for a prisoner close to death, *Muselmann*³⁷ (Levi 94). In Yiddish and German, *Muselmann* means “Muslim.”³⁸

Mullemann (Dani Morgenthau), a son of Shoah survivors, whose mother, Gitta Morgenthau, the daughter of Tonja Kruzki, tells the reader that “Der Junge fühlt sich für unsere Leiden verantwortlich, er kapselte sich ein und hüllte sich in Selbstvorwürfe” (“[h]e withdrew into a shell and wrapped himself up in self-reproach”; *Suche* 243; Sharp

³⁷ The following quotation appears as a footnote in *If This Is a Man*, Primo Levi’s autobiographical account of his time in Auschwitz, and it serves as the introduction to the word in that book. “This word ‘Muselmann’, I do not know why, was used by the old ones of the camp to describe the weak, the inept, those doomed to selection.” (Levi 94)

³⁸ I would like to remind the reader that the concentration camp term, *Muselmann*, was used prior to the conflict in the Middle-East and, as such, should not be seen as being pejorative or serving as a commentary on any modern-day prejudices or stereotyping. One explanation is that Islam means “submission” and if you have resigned yourself to death then you have submitted. Another explanation is that those lifeless and stooped camp prisoners who appeared to have given up looked like Muslims bowed in prayer.

169). Dani becomes cocooned in Mullemann and the guilt-ridden gauze of perpetrators. He has also become trapped in the death ritual of mummification, “in den Banden der Zeit eingelegt zu sein wie eine Mumie” (“...tied down by the shackles of time like a mummy”; *Suche* 259; Sharp 180).

Mullemann, who has been accused by Leon Fischer as being “[e]in Schuldwedel, der alles Verleugnete abstaubt” (“[a] feather duster gathering up guilt by dusting off everything that’s been denied”; *Suche* 187; Sharp 128-129) also becomes the *Doppelgänger* of Rabinovici’s character Rainer Sender. Sender is a serial killer, and as his conscience, Mulleman drives him into confessing his murders. The term *Doppelgänger* comes from German and literally means “double-goer.” A *Doppelgänger* is often the ghostly counterpart of a living person. It can also be synonymous with an alter ego, or even another person who carries the same name or who looks the same. For Mullemann’s wounds to heal, serial killers and mass murderers must confess their guilt. Rainer Sender’s character is also reminiscent of the serial killer Hans Beckert in Fitz Lang’s *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*.

A contrasting reading of the painting is provided by Navah Bein (Navah “Leg”) who is a second generation Israeli Jew and Holocaust scholar³⁹ who sees in Toot’s painting the enduring and antisemitic figure, Ahasuerus, whom she also mistakes for her husband Arie. Toot simply recognizes himself in his painting. Georgi Antonov, a former

³⁹ Niefanger points out that Navah is a historian who has researched the history of the Jewish community in Czernowitz and its annihilation for many years (195). Czernowitz (“Tshernovits” in Yiddish), was home to Doron Rabinovici’s father and also Paul Celan, the poet of *Todesfuge* (“Deathfuge”). (Niefanger 195)

Niefanger also points out that Otto Ohlendorf was the brutal and infamous commanding officer of Einsatzgruppe D, who conducted a series of mass murders in Czernowitz as well as in the rest of Moldova, in South Ukraine, the Crimea, and in the northern Caucasus. As such, his first name may have been adopted by Rabinovici in the naming of his character Otto Toot (195).

Bulgarian hitman is brutally stabbed to death by Toot uttering his last words “Isus Cristos” (154). Next, Otto Toot plunges that same knife into his painting of Ahasuerus and “einige Tropfen von Antonovs Blut rannen vom Messer harab aus dem Schlitz. Über Ahasver” (“drops of Antonov’s blood ran off the knife out of the gash. Over Ahasuerus”; *Suche* 223; Sharp 154).

The stabbing of the Ahasuerus figure in Toot’s painting tears at the very heart of the Ahasuerus myth. Firstly, I am reminded of a verse from the *Horst Wessel Lied* (“Horst Wessel Song”) also known as *Die Fahne hoch* (“The Flag On High”) which was the anthem of the Nazi Party from 1930 until 1945, “und wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt dann geht's nochmal so gut, dann geht's nochmal so gut (“when Jewish blood spurts from the knife, things will go well again”).

I am also reminded of verses 24-25 in Matthew 27.

Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands and said, “I am innocent of the blood of this Just person. You see to it.” And all the people answered and said, “His blood be upon us and on our children.”

Matthew 27:25 arguably stands out as one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted passages in all of the New Testament. Of the proposed interpretations for Matthew 27:25 the anti-Jewish interpretation is the oldest and most frequently cited in the history of the Church. This view says the Jewish people are permanently guilty and condemned in the eyes of God for their murder of Jesus Christ. As such, the cry of “His blood be upon us” means that the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem admitted full guilt for killing Jesus Christ and thereby invoked God’s curse upon themselves and their

descendants until the end of time. This interpretation first surfaced in the writings of the early church fathers in the second century A.D. It became universally accepted by the Middle Ages. The result, among other things, was the slanderous accusation that all Jews were “Christ killers” and “murderers of God.” Sadly, this is still a widespread belief in the Church today (Baker).

Lastly, Gilman contends that the hated-Jew has not been created from “reality” but rather from a representation of “reality” (“The Jew’s Body” 2) therefore, when Toot stabs his own painting, Rabinovici may be implying the “death” of an old stereotype.

Chapter 4: In the Wilderness (“במדבר”)



Gans (Ganzas) Family in 1938 Erzvilkas, Lithuania

4.1. Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma

I do wonder if Doron Rabinovici was inspired to write *Suche nach M* from a photo of his family, most or all of whom had been murdered in the Shoah? I know that from the picture above, taken in 1938 of my immediate family, I was inspired to write and direct a documentary, entitled *Žydy Gatvė – Jew Street*. The film is about an unexpected encounter I had with my grandmother’s ghost while eating borsht in a restaurant that was built on the former foundations of our home in Erzvilkas.

Whenever the first few frames of the film begin to unreel, my entire family is reanimated and we are sitting around grandmother's kitchen table, happily chatting and eating. Perhaps, I chose the media of film, the moving picture, to tell my family's story in an effort to keep them alive by avoiding the final "take."

Hirsch states, "postmemory relies on photography as the primary medium of transgenerational transmission of trauma" (103). The question then arises which picture of a family member or film (perhaps, *M?*) inspired the creation of Mosche Morgenthau, his wife Gitta, Jakob Scheinowiz, and his wife Ruth. Perhaps, these characters were the reincarnation of aunts and uncles Doron Rabinovici's mother or father would tell stories about.

Hirsch contends that children of Shoah survivors use art and fiction to express their feelings about their lost and wounded family:

Second-generation fiction, art, memoir, and testimony are shaped by the attempt to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma. They are shaped by the child's confusion and responsibility, by the desire to repair, and by the consciousness that the child's own existence may well be a form of compensation for unspeakable loss. Loss of family, of home, of a feeling of belonging and safety in the world "bleed" from one generation to the next, as Art Spiegelman so aptly put it in his subtitle to *Maus I*, "My father bleeds history." (112)

Hirsch continues by arguing that “when we look at photographic images from a lost past world, especially one that has been annihilated by force, we look not only for information or confirmation, but also for an intimate material and affective connection” (116). My family’s photo enables me, “in the present, not only to see and to touch that past but also to try to reanimate it by undoing the finality of the photographic ‘take’” (115).

In *Suche nach M* the transgenerational transmission of trauma occurs early on even prior to the birth of our protagonists. In Rabinovici’s text, when commenting on acquaintances who had married and had children as soon as they had been liberated from the DP camps, Jakob Scheinowiz states “daß Nachkommenschaft vielen jenes einzige Gefühl des Sieges über die Vernichtung ermöglichte,” (“[a]nd he knew that for many offspring were the only hope for victory over obliteration”; *Suche* 12; Sharp 5) but these marriages “schienen ihm eine Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen” (“seemed a sham to him”; *Suche* 12; Sharp 5). Scheinowiz “glaubte nicht, was verloren war, in anderen aufheben, wieder wundersam ergänzen zu können, meinte vielmehr, daß all die Verluste bloß beidseitig verdoppelt würden” (“[he] didn’t believe that what an individual had lost could be kept and wondrously replenished by another. All individual losses were simply doubled in both parties”; *Suche* 12; Sharp 5).

After the war, the birth rate among Shoah survivors was exceptionally high (Yachil 31). In the DP camps, children were an essential element in the process of rebuilding identities, both individually and collectively. However, some survivors, in their desire to rebuild their family life as quickly as possible after the war, entered into what Danieli has called loveless “marriages of despair” (qtd. in Bar-On 9).

In Rabinovici's text, many survivors entered into non-traditional marriages, which reflect the process of destabilization in the Jewish family structure of the Mythic Jew Model's microsystem. Jakob goes undercover, assumes a former identity he used in surviving the Shoah and marries Ruth, a woman some twenty years his junior. Jakob seems most comfortable escaping, especially into his proclivity for younger women. The questioning and insecure Mosche marries the strong and determined Gitta, another Shoah survivor.

Danieli states that, as a rule, these survivors remained married even though they lacked the emotional resources necessary for the development of intimacy, which may have made it difficult for the survivor-parents to provide proper nurturance for their own children. Still, a band of resiliency encircles Arie and Dani, the core of the model, and acts as a filter in the transmission of traumatic memory from their parents-survivors.

Nevertheless, establishing a family after the loss of relatives was vital for physical, mental and spiritual rehabilitation. Within communities of Shoah survivors in the DP camps of Europe, the Yishuv, whole social, cultural and educational systems were built around the raising of children. The same happened in Jewish neighborhoods of survivors that sprung up alongside well established local Jewish communities in cities throughout the United State and Canada (Holocaust History, "Displaced Persons").⁴⁰

Like many Shoah survivors, Jakob, Ruth, Mosche and Gitta grew up in the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe or went underground into hiding. "It is remarkable to discover how Jewish families, or the remaining parts of families, in

⁴⁰ Since families are social systems that both develop and carry on the value system and socialization process for its young members, it is not a coincidence that when the Nazis planned the total annihilation of the Jewish people, they focused their attack on the discontinuity of the Jewish family support system. (Bar-On Abstract)

ghettos, in the camps, in hiding and in the Partisans, withstood these pressures” (Bar-On Abstract). Nevertheless, it is under these extreme circumstances where Rabinovici’s characters developed their own concepts of parenthood “out of the void or the bits and pieces with which they were left” (Bar-On Abstract).

4.1.1. Children as a Replacement

For Mosche and Gitta Morgenthau their son Dani was the “Rückerstattung dessen, was zerstört und umgebracht worden war” (“compensation for those who had been destroyed”; *Suche* 71; Sharp 46). “In ihm pflanzten sich nicht bloß Herr und Frau Morgenthau, sondern alle Vorfahren der Familie fort . . . Dani Morgenthau sollte die Wiederauferstehung der Juden, ihres Glaubens, Denkens und ihrer Würde sein” (“It was not only Mr. and Mrs. Morgenthau who lived on in him, but all the family ancestors . . . Dani Morgenthau was to be the resurrection of the Jews, their beliefs, their way of thinking and their dignity”; *Suche* 71; Sharp 46).

Carrying the burden of being a “replacement” (Kellerman “Transmission of Holocaust Trauma”) for lost relatives can be most deleterious. Kellermann argues that by carrying the burden of being a “replacement,” children of survivors are affected on four levels:

- impaired self-esteem with identity problems
- catastrophic expectancy
- exhibit annihilation anxiety and frequent dysphoric moods or feelings of depression, discontent and indifference connected to a feeling of loss and mourning

- have exaggerated family attachments and dependency or exaggerated independence and difficulties entering into intimate relationships and in handling interpersonal conflicts

Firstly, children of survivors seem to have impaired self-esteem with persistent identity problems. They over-identify with their parents' "victim/survivor" status and need to be high achievers to compensate for their parents' losses.

We could argue that Rabinovici's entire novel is about the traumatized second-generation's search for identity. Certainly, both Dani and Ariele cannot separate themselves from the perceived guilt, shame and trauma of their parents and act out by developing uncanny abilities to ferret out those who are guilty of committing crimes against the Jewish people. In addition, their professional accomplishments are numerous. Ariele becomes a highly prized Israeli secret service agent. To make up for his parents' losses, Dani as Mullemin is invited by foreign governments to help in difficult crime cases and in Austria "wurde er mit Ordend, Titeln und Ehrungen ausgezeichnet" ("he was honored with medals, titles and accolades"; *Suche* 251; Sharp 175).

Secondly, on a *cognitive* level, there is catastrophic expectancy, a collective fear of another Holocaust, an intense preoccupation with death and stress upon exposure to stimuli, which conjure up the Holocaust. In an effort to stay one step ahead of impending disaster, Navah tells Ariele, "Du bist wie Jakob Scheinowiz, dein Vater, als lebstest du im Untergrund, verstecktest dich vor der Vernichtung. Auf ewiger Flucht. Unter falschem Namen" ("Just like your father Jakob Scheinowiz, you act as if you were living underground and hiding from extermination – in eternal flight – under a pseudonym"; *Suche* 153 ; Sharp 104).

To counter thoughts of imminent disaster, Rabinovici's protagonists understandably develop multiple identities in a continuing effort to protect and defend themselves from the direct and indirect dangers of antisemitism. In this context, the issue of multiple names again arises. One's name is the most obvious manifestations of one's individual identity. In Lang's film, *M* is the mark of *Mörder* ("Murder") but in the *Suche nach M*, Rabinovici avoids direct naming. However, this time, the use of multiple names as found in *Suche nach M* does not suggest ambiguity or fluidity in Jewish identity formation but rather serves as a way to "resurrect" those who perished during the Shoah. As Wardi, a clinical social worker who works with Shoah survivors and their offspring states with respect to her own biography,

It's not enough that I have three names that my parents gave me, but the neighbors called me by a Christian name of their own. I am named after my two grandmothers and my mother's youngest sister, who perished when she was only a little girl. (Wardi 28)

Thirdly, on an *affective* level, influenced by or resulting from the emotions, children of survivors exhibit annihilation anxiety and frequent dysphoric moods or feelings of depression, discontent and indifference connected to a feeling of loss and mourning. Even as children, both Arie and Dani had deep seated feelings of guilt, discontent and despair: "In Arie saß eine geheimnisvolle Schuld, von der er nichts ahnte, die aber seinem bloßen Dasein, der Gegenwart schlechthin, anhaftete" ("Deep within Arie there was a mysterious guilt, a guilt about which he knew nothing but which clung to his being and very presence"; *Suche* 49; Sharp 30). Dani tells us that "Schweigen

war Teil der mündlichen Überlieferung seiner Familie” (“Silence was a part of his family’s oral tradition”; *Suche* 35; Sharp 20).

Finally, on an *interpersonal functioning* level, children of survivors develop exaggerated family attachments and dependency or exaggerated independence and difficulties entering into intimate relationships and in handling interpersonal conflicts (Kellerman “Transmission of Trauma”). Exaggerated independence and dependency are present in the novel. Ariele, whose family history has been hidden from him by his father, escapes to Israel and seems to forget about his parents until the end of the novel. On the other hand, Dani feels dependent and responsible for his parents: “Gegen Papa und Mama aufbegehren konnte er nicht. Gegen sie zu protestieren hieß, sie im Stich, sie endgültig allein zu lassen in dieser Fremde” (“[He] was not capable of rebelling against papa and mama. To protest against them meant to abandon them, to leave them alone once and for all in this foreign place”; *Suche* 36; Sharp 21).

In *Suche nach M*, as the “replacement” for all that was lost in the Shoah, the insurmountable expectations Mosche and Gitta placed on their young son Dani transformed him into the guilt-ridden mummy Mullemann. As such, Dani is cocooned and disappears into Mullemann, preserver of the dead. He acts out the stigmatization of the tattered wandering Jew. He becomes the lifeless golem of our postmodern world searching for *emet* (“Truth”), which is written on his forehead. He exacts revenge with each and every confession and is not cured but rather wounded ever deeper.

4.1.2. Silence as an Escape or Punishment

Silence also plays an important role in the transgenerational transmission of trauma. In *Suche nach M* Jakob kept silent about his Shoah experiences because “[er]

fürchtete, es würde [Arieh] vergiften” (“[he] was afraid it would poison [Arieh]”; *Suche* 57; Sharp 36). With their own sense of identity severely undermined by the Shoah, both fathers seem to have only been able to pass on to their sons the survival strategies of assuming multiple identities and separating them from traditional sources of support such as the Jewish community. Using silence as either an escape or punishment, their sons had to find their own identity in these strategies, in the silence of their fathers or in the gas, dust and ash of their murdered families. Even in silence, Arieh rather sardonically reminds us that “[d]ie Vergangenheit qualmt aus den Ritzen” (“the fumes of the past find their ways through the cracks”; *Suche* 249; Sharp 173), the black milk of the Holo-ghost continues to haunt the present. As indicated by my model, the remnants of memory, trauma and identity float inwards and eventually are absorbed into the core of the model.

When growing up my father never spoke a word of Lithuanian even though he had been born in Lithuania and our ancestral family had lived there for over two hundred years. What I inferred was that Lithuania was the black hole of monsters and ghosts who haunted my bedroom closet and inhabited the nightmares of my traumatized father. Kellerman argues that through nonverbal, ambiguous, and guilt-inducing communication, trans-generational transmission of trauma occurs (“Transmission of Holocaust Trauma” n.p.). Rabinovici wonderfully portrays the transmission of this trauma from Tanya to her daughter Gitta and her grandson Dani in the following scene:

Zwischen den Beiden [Gitta und Tanya] herrschte ein einmütiges
Schweigen. Eine Meldung in den Abendnachrichten genügte, [. . .] und
schon schlossen die Frauen ihre Blicke kurz; schien die Luft geladen mit
Erinnerung. Wenn die Frauen einander so anschauten, zirpte es in Danis

Kopf, glaubte er zwischen ihnen Teilchen schwirren zu sehen, als zittre Gemüch im Lichte nächtlicher Scheinwerfer. (*Suche* 28)

They [Gitta and Tanya] enjoyed a relationship of harmonious silence. A report in the evening news was enough [. . .] to short-circuit their facial expressions. The air seemed heavy with memory. When the women looked at each other like that, there was a chirping in Dani's head and he thought he saw tiny specks buzzing between them as if gnats were flitting about in the light of nocturnal headlights. (Sharp 15)

At our Passover seder when I would ask if any of our family sitting in that cracked brown frame on my parent's bedroom dresser would be coming, silence was joined with pretending not to hear or telling my sister and I that we would talk about it later. Similar to Dani, I would hear "die Auslassungen der Eltern, die vereinzelt Wörter, die Kürzel, vernahm das Innehalten, die verbissene Stille" ("parents' omissions, the individual words, the shorthand code, the pauses and the grim silence"; *Suche* 29-20; Sharp16). We had twenty to thirty aunts, uncles and cousins at our Passover table but I later learned that they were not my real aunts, uncles and cousins but rather like us, families with no family.

Ironically, my family's records remain somewhere unfound in the municipal, county and national Lithuanian archives. It seems neither one of us want to be found in the other.

4.2. זכור! (“Remember!,” “Denken Sie daran!,” “געדענקט!”)

Through Leon Fischer, Rabinovici has his characters who survived the Shoah acknowledge the profundity of the biblical curse “Die Väter haben saure Trauben gegessen, und den Kindern werden davon die Zähne stumpf” (“[t]he fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth have become tarnished”⁴¹; *Suche* 188; Sharp 129). He recognizes that as survivors “wollten wir uns freikaufen von allen Schuldgefühlen gegenüber den Opfern, und haben diese Weise die ganze Rückstände auf euer Konto, an solche *Jingellachs* wie Dani und dich überwiesen.” (“we wanted to buy our freedom from guilt feelings towards the victims and transfer all the debts to your accounts, to those *Jungellachs*⁴² like Dani and you”; *Suche* 188; Sharp 129). However, Leon argues that “wenn ihr euch davon befreien wollt, müßt ihr in das Grundbuch der Geschichte schauen. Der einzige Weg aus der Vergangenheit in die eigene Zukunft führt über die Erinnerung” (“if you want to set yourself free from it, you have to look into history’s registry. The only way out of the past into your own future goes through memory”; *Suche* 188; Sharp 130).

In those last few sentences, Leon Fischer reminds Arie of *Zakhor!* (“Remember!”) Remembering is an active, integral part of personal and communal Jewish identity. *Zakhor!* calls the Jew into actively participating in the transgenerational transfer of memory. The Torah commands, *Zakhor et asher asa lekha amalek baderekh betzetkhem mimitzrayim* (“Remember what Amalek⁴³ did to you on your way out of

⁴¹ Jeremiah 31:29.

⁴² Young boys in Yiddish

⁴³ In the Torah, the Amalekites are nomads who attacked the Israelites at Refidim (Exodus 17:8-10) in the desert of Sinai during their exodus from Egypt “smiting the hindmost, all that were feeble behind” (Deuteronomy 25:18). Amalek is the embodiment of all of the Jewish people’s enemies.

Egypt.”)⁴⁴ This injunction is again found in the Passover *Haggadah*⁴⁵ as Jews fulfill the commandment to remember the story of the exodus from Egypt and to pass that memory onto future generations:

We are a people in whom the past endures,
 In whom the present is inconceivable without moments gone by.
 The Exodus lasted a moment, a moment enduring forever.
 What happened once upon a time happens all the time.
 (Frishman 163)

4.2.1. Who is Speaking?

“Jews are a people of memory. Perhaps more than anything else, what binds Jews together is a shared collective narrative, preserved and developed through stories, teachings and rituals” (Jacobs).

In Rabinovici’s contemporary Austria, Arie and Dani act out their fathers’ guilt, shame and trauma by becoming either the stereotypical *Fetzenjude*, the tattered wandering Jew, or the vengeful “eye for an eye” Israeli Mossad agent. Their extreme identities are solely invested in ferreting out those who have committed crimes and who are the enemies of the Jewish State. However, right in line with most aspects of *Suche nach M*, as we move through the novel their identities become ever increasingly ambiguous. At times, they appear as each other’s *Doppelgänger* or even as two sides of the same coin. Then, there are passages in the novel where the reader is left totally in the

⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

⁴⁵ Haggadah means the “(story) telling” and contains the narrative of the *Exodus* and the rituals surrounding the traditional Passover meal, the *seder* which literally means “order.”

dark as to which character is speaking. For example, when Ariele is in the hospital recovering from an infection he acquired while in Egypt, he says: “Mit einem Mal weiß ich Bescheid, was ich seit längerem bereits ahnte. Hörst Du? So höre doch. Ich war’s. Ich bin’s: Mullemann” (“All of a sudden I know something which I’ve suspected for a long time. Do you hear me? Just listen. It was me. I’m Mullemann”; *Suche* 110; Sharp 74). The deconstruction of Ariele’s and Dani’s identities is congruent with the labyrinthine nature of this postmodern novel where identity is a social construct, always subject to change.

4.2.2. Vanishing Jewish Traditions

In the novel, memory, trauma and identity are transferred not only through the process of postmemory but also through vanishing Jewish traditions. A fragmented, non-linear forgetfulness, deliberate or unconscious, pervades the novel. Remnants of a once highly structured Jewish way of life seem to aimlessly float in the collapsing traditions of pre-Shoah Judaism and my Mythic Jew Model. The random referencing of bits and pieces of vanishing memory is reflected in the interspersing of a selection of Jewish words, phrases and sayings throughout the novel. These random references are like the halting language spoken by long time emigrants who come home for a visit with friends and relatives and from disuse, salts and peppers his native tongue with words and phrases that flow more easily from his adopted language. For example, only the first of the *Four Questions* “Ma nischtanah ha lailah haseh mi kol ha leiloth?” (“How was that night different from all the other ones?”; *Suche* 45 Sharp 27) traditionally asked by the youngest person at a Passover seder is referenced within the text.

Perhaps in the post-Shoah Austria of Rabinovici's novel, his characters have already forgotten how to ask the next three questions. The *Four Questions* are also used to earmark important events in Arie's early years. Those events also appear to have been randomly chosen. In addition, Hebrew and Yiddish words and greetings along with famous sayings by great Jewish sages are also randomly interjected throughout the text. Rabinovici accomplishes this unwieldy task in various ways.

For example, after Arie unintentionally kills Herwig Wernherr, he uses the structure of the Rebbe of Klotzk's saying "If I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you. But if I am I because you are you and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you" to dialogue with himself about what he is feeling after committing murder. "Wenn ich der Täter bin, weil ich nicht ich bin, und der Täter ein Toter ist, weil ich ich bin, dann bin ich der Mörder, und sein Opfer bin ich" ("If I'm the perpetrator because I'm not myself and perpetrator is a dead man because I am myself, then I'm the murderer as well as the victim"; *Suche* 62; Sharp 39-40). Conscious of the fact or not, Arie then confuses the Rebbe of Klotzk's saying when ending it with a different saying by Rabbi Hillel⁴⁶, "und wenn nicht ich, wer dann, und wenn nicht jetzt, so wann?" ("And, if not I, then who and if not now, when?"; *Suche* 62; Sharp 40).

4.3. Shifting Identities

Through the image of the transparent ball, which is used by both the Israeli and Palestinian secret service agent to lure their daughters into extracting information about

⁴⁶ In *Avot*, Hillel stated "If I am not for myself, who will be? And when I am only for myself, what am 'I'? And if not now, when?" (*Avot* 2:4)

their whereabouts, Rabinovici has both Sayid, the Palestinian and Arie, the Israeli realize that their lives had been spared by each other. Consequently, Arie begins to re-evaluate the meaning of his life. In the background, Leon Fischer prods Arie along by reminding him that he must reclaim memory by actively remembering. From the remnants of a once highly structured way of identifying himself Arie begins the process of slowly uncovering an identity in which he feels more comfortable.

He also encourages Dani to re-evaluate his life in a letter he decides not to mail. He tells Dani to “allen Techniken der Konservierung eine Absage [zu] erteilen, die Schichten ab[zustreifen], die Knoten auf[zulösen] [. . .] die Binden ab[zuerwerfen] [. . .] aus dem Labyrinth [herauszufinden]” (“reject all the techniques of preservation, to shed layers, undo knots [. . .] throw off the bandages [. . .] and find a way out of the labyrinth”; *Suche*; Sharp 180-181).

As Arie’s and Dani’s identities begin to shift, the core of the *Mythic Jew Model* must be reconstructed to include and reflect these seemingly multidimensional and ever-morphing new Jewish identities.

4.3.1. Israeli-Jews living in Former *Täterländern*

Doron Rabinovici’s father, originally from Czernowitz, Bukovina (present day Ukraine) and his mother, who was from Vilnius, Lithuania left the DP camps of postwar Europe to settle in the Yishuv.⁴⁷ In 1963 they left Israel and resettled in Vienna, Austria. Only 700 Viennese Jews survived the Shoah (Jerusalem Letters). When the Rabinovici

⁴⁷ *Yishuv* (Hebrew) The Jewish community in the British Mandate for Palestine prior to the declaration of the state of Israel, including the pre-Zionist era (Old Yishuv) as well as the Zionists of the late Ottoman Turkish rule and British mandate eras (New Yishuv). (Yishuv)

family arrived in Vienna, most of the Jews living in Austria were either Shoah survivors or recent immigrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Weiner). During those early years when the Rabinovici family decided to leave Israel for Austria, Jews who chose to settle in another country were derogatorily referred to as *yordim*,⁴⁸ or those who have descended from Israel. Still, those Jews were pioneers in the formation of a new Jewish identity which I will refer to as the Israeli-Jew living in former *Täterländern*, the former territories of perpetrators.

For Doron Rabinovici and his family, Israel became the homeland to which they could always return. They were no longer exiles needing to reassimilate. Rather, they could decide to acculturate themselves or live alongside the dominant Austrian culture. Israeli-Jews living in former *Täterländern* form one of many minority immigrant groups trying to establish themselves in today's Austria⁴⁹. With almost 30 percent of Vienna's population foreign born, there is some recognition of cultural diversity at the municipal level.

Nevertheless, the Israeli-Jew cannot escape the legacy of the Shoah, the antisemitism described in Rabinovici's novel nor the antisemitic incidents, which occurred during the Waldheim Affair. Similar to the Turkish community and other transnational ethnic groups living in present-day Austria, these Israeli-Jews have the power to confront and "break the silence [of] long-simmering resentments, becoming what Ruth Klüger calls 'quarrelsome'" (192).

⁴⁸ Zionists are generally critical of the act of *yerida* and the term is somewhat derogatory. (Ben Moshe, Zahor 324)

⁴⁹ Presently, there is no constitutional, legislative or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism at the central or regional levels and no existence of a government ministry, secretariat or advisory board to implement this policy in consultation with ethnic communities. (Ratzenböck and Hofecker)

In writing *Suche nach M* Rabinovici begins exploring the “quarrelsome” nature of the new post-Shoah male Jewish identity in Austria. The novel not only questions the “populist and xenophobic trends in Austrian politics and media” (Rabinovici 189) but also challenges the local Jewish community to take a more active role in the future development of Jewish identity in Austria.

Rabinovici has framed this new Jewish identity in his political and artistic activism but his “quarrelsome” Israeli identity cannot be reframed in the Mythic Jew Model. Thus, I was faced with the task of creating a new model.

4.3.2. Another Son

As a gay child of a Shoah survivor, I cannot find a full expression of my own identity in Bronfenbrenner’s model, Rabinovici’s novel, and thusly, my own Mythic Jew Model. At this point, I would like to again mention the heteronormative nature of Rabinovici’s gender roles in which Jewish identity formation is defined only in terms of the dominant sexual orientation. In addition, the implicit legacy of children as replacements and a product of marriage also reflect heteronormative assumptions. As with Jews, gays were never considered in the construction of systems and institutions found in Bronfenbrenner’s model. It is only recently that a few countries have begun caring for the well-being of their local gay community by granting them full legal rights.

In addition, neither Bronfenbrenner’s nor my model accommodates the rich ambiguity created by those who want to become a part of the Jewish community or those who for some other reason are involved in some aspect of Jewish civilization. These take on a rainbow of possibilities.

My father must have read Arie's final letter to Mullemann for he decided to marry Rosina, a Roman Catholic *Straßenbahnführerin* ("streetcar conductor") with whom he fell in love and whose nickname was Sina. He also believed what Arie suggested: "Wenn Du Dich für Sina entscheidest, wird Karl Siebert sich Dir nicht in den Weg stellen [...] Auch Gitta und Moshe werden es akzeptieren" ("if you decide for Sina, Karl Siebert won't stand in your way [...] Gitta and Mosche will accept it too"; *Suche* 265-266; Sharp 185). He instinctively knew that as a couple they would eventually be accepted. Long after they married in a Reform Synagogue in Munich, they left for the United States.

Unaware of the United States' rather discriminatory post-World War II immigration policy towards Jews, I imagine that my parents as well as their other friends who were living in Cleveland, Ohio, only remembered how grateful they were in having been able to escape Europe and not how difficult it was to enter the United States. Through writing this thesis it has become clearer to me why my parents and their best friends did not immigrate to the United States until 1952.

Any future model depicting Jewish identity would also have to reflect the varying degrees of intermarriage and assimilation which are quickly changing the face of Jewish identity throughout the world.

In an effort to mirror the beginnings of change in our protagonists towards the end of Rabinovici's novel, I created a second model, which I coined *The Ikhud* ("Fusion") *Model*. *The Fusion Model* has evolved from the Mythic Jew Model and the core reflects the beginning of change being made by Jews, in general and Arie and Dani, in particular. The Star of David, and the figures of both Dani and Arie have been colored white to signify a physical, emotional and spiritual distancing from the recently all

consuming Holocaust past. In addition, the former identities of both Ariele and Dani have begun a process of melding into each other. In the center of the core, the fusion of the two appears as green, reflecting the combination of blue and yellow. The factors that influence their identity formation, such as ethnicity, religiosity, sexual orientation, etc. are no longer concentric circles but have collapsed and float in the uncertainty of the space being created between the original postmemory and resilience bands found in the Mythic Jew Model. As you can see, the identities of Ariele and Dani in the Fusion Model are beginning to more and more reflect the uncertainty found in the Mythic Jew Model's psychosocial environment. Finally, the Holo-ghost is also slowly fading in time and memory.

In Ariele's final letter to Mulleman, he tells him that he is washing his hands of his "Mordhandwerk" ("murderous trade"; *Suche* 259; Sharp 180) and encourages Mulleman "die Binden ab[zuwerfen]" ("to throw off the bandages"; *Suche* 259; Sharp 181) and put "die Maskeraden und die Tarnung" ("the masquerades and disguises"; *Suche* 259; Sharp 180) behind him. He encourages Dani to join him in finding a way out of the labyrinth of a Jewish identity solely rooted in trying to escape or act out the guilt, shame and trauma of the Ahasuerus myth and the legacy of the Shoah. The core of this new identity is imbued with *individual choice*.

Rabbi Blanchard identifies what it means to be a Jew in the twenty-first century, proposing the following:

- Choice of self identifying as a Jew
- Fluid and linked to personally important life contexts; "shape shifting"; being open to important life cycle changes

- Suspicious of religious “experts”

(Blanchard, “*A New Model for Jewish Identity*”)

Similar to my first model, systems such as culture, religiosity, ethnicity, Israel, conversion and assimilation, and sexual orientation have been randomly placed between resilience and postmemory. This randomness of placement accentuates the uncertainty of how systems may affect the future formation of Jewish identity and mirrors the depiction of the collapsed systems found in the Mythic Jew Model.

Traditionally, Jews have defined “Jewishness” from three aspects of identity:

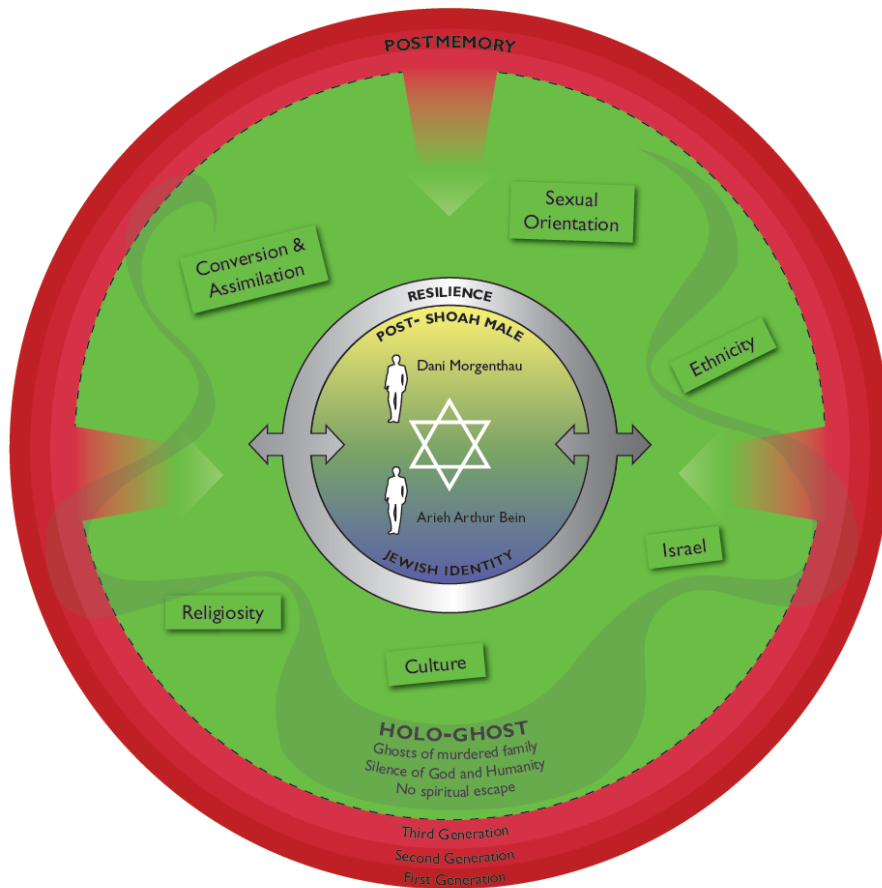
- A member of an ethnic group (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, etc.).
- Religious observance (the degree to which a Jew follows the tenets of the religion).
- Cultural identification (those who celebrate Jewish holidays or are raised in a Jewish home).⁵⁰

To honor the trinity of effort in the writing of this thesis—the novel, *Suche nach M*, Doron Rabinovici and myself—I have also added the following three aspects for consideration in the formation of Jewish identity at the end of Rabinovici’s text:

- Israel
- Sexual orientation
- Conversion and Assimilation

⁵⁰ The definition of who is a Jew varies, depending on whether a religious, sociological, ethnic or cultural aspect is being considered. In addition, Jewish identity is defined according to whether it is being considered by Jews based on normative religious statutes, self-identification or by non-Jews. (Herberg, Dalin 240)

THE IKHUD (FUSION) MODEL



As portrayed in the Fusion Model, Rabinovici creates the beginnings of a contemporary Jewish identity that continues to challenge itself as it evolves in former *Täterländern*. It is an identity created from the agony of the Shoah but not solely from it. It celebrates Freud, Herzl, Mahler and hundreds of thousands of Austria's sons and daughters as one of their own. It is the postmodern language of individual choice where a Jew can decide to settle in Israel or wherever s/he wants and no longer feels exiled or homeless. Modern Hebrew has joined Yiddish, the former language of exile, and given the Jew a new vocabulary with which to explore and re-define himself or herself. Rabinovici's novel is written in a resilient Jewish language rooted in a cosmopolitan

Viennese German, spiced with an Eastern European Yiddish and yidishkayt, and aged in both a Biblical and modern Israeli Hebrew.

In Chapter Four we explored how memory and identity have been transferred from traumatized Shoah survivors to their sons, Arie and Dani, in the relativism of Rabinovici's contemporary Austria. From the collapsing systems in the Mythic Jew Model, the reader is brought into the circle of inter-generational transference of traumatic memory based on postmemory.

In the remnants of a once highly structured way of life where the Shoah irrevocably changed the Jewish people's relationship with their once omnipotent Father, Arie and Dani slowly begin the process of forging new identities. As their identities begin to shift, the core of the Mythic Jew Model no longer reflects the Jewish identity of Arie or Dani. The core and microsystem need to be reconstructed so as to mirror the fusion of their converging new Jewish identities. What emerges is a new model I have coined *The Ikhud* ("Fusion") *Model*.

Chapter 5:

My Final Words

My mother, Sina, was born a Roman Catholic in a tiny village near the Bavarian town of Rosenheim. When she told my grandmother, Rosa, she was planning on marrying a Jew who was living in the Föhrenwald DP camp, *Oma* (“grandmother”) who had lived her whole life at the foothills of that quaint and picturesque Alpine village, and had actually never met a Jew, warned my mother that if she married Eli, my father, she and her children would be cursed to endlessly wander to the ends of the earth.

In that little Bavarian village, as well as in Rabinovici’s novel *Suche nach M*, Jews cannot escape the stigmatization of the Christian created Ahasuerus Myth. This damnation of the Jew has embedded itself in Western consciousness, and greatly influenced twentieth-century racial and political antisemitism as well as the emergence of a “new” antisemitism. The myth continues to jeopardize Jewish existence.

As a work of postmodern literature *Suche nach M* is highly enigmatic and resists being reduced to a single meaning. It is a pastiche of crime fiction, Jewish liturgical references, and historiographical metafiction. The author also relies on parody and historical re-conceptualization. The narratives are fragmented and non-linear, just like the novel’s representation of Jewish identity.

To unravel and reframe post-Shoah Jewish identity in Rabinovici’s postmodern novel *Suche nach M*, I employed an interdisciplinary approach by combining Social Work’s Social Systems Theory with Cultural Studies - especially in my use of Marianne Hirsch’s seminal work on postmemory. By employing this methodology, I was able to

create two original models, the Mythic Jew Model and the Ikhud or Fusion Model to map the dynamic process of Jewish identity formation in Rabinovici's main protagonists.

The Mythic Jew Model supports my argument that the Christian created mythical figure Ahasuerus serves as the color palette from which Rabinovici's characters have been drawn. In addition, this model recreates the psychosocial environment of Austria in the 1960s and portrays the impact of that environment on the identity formation of Rabinovici's post-Shoah male Jewish characters. With the Mythic Jew Model, I also provided the reader with a fuller understanding of antisemitism's role in postwar Austria.

The Fusion Model reflected the stirrings of change in the identities of the novel's protagonists, which continue to play an increasingly important role in present-day Jewish life. In recognition of this emerging third Jewish identity, alongside the "old" Jew of the diaspora and the "new" Israeli-Jew, I introduced the concept of the Israeli-Jew living in former *Täterländern*. By referring to Austria as one of the so-called *Täterländern*, I remind the reader that for many Jews and non-Jews alike, the Shoah remains a traumatic event from which recovery may never be possible.

Two other aspects of Jewish identity were missing in the Mythic Jew Model as well: sexual orientation and the role of conversion and assimilation. I argued that these aspects are important in not only the formation of my own identity but also that of an increasing number of other Jews.

Finally, I demonstrated that most of the extreme binary representations of male Jewish identity that originate in Christianity's antisemitic mythic figure of Ahasuerus cannot maintain their polarity in Rabinovici's postmodern world.

In Chapter Two, based on my background in clinical social work, I applied a social systems model to understand the psychosocial dynamics taking place in postwar Austria in order to better understand their impact on the male Jewish identity formation of Rabinovici's characters and the relationship between the Ahasuerus myth and the development of European *Judenhaß* and antisemitism. My efforts were one more step in the process of better understanding the phenomenon of antisemitism. By understanding the process and knowing when to strategically intervene, I hope to effect positive change in the perception of Jews.

A major problem arose when I tried to re-create postwar Austria's psychosocial environment from the intact and distinct systems depicted in Bronfenbrenner's model. The structuralist foundations of the Bronfenbrenner Model seemed to dissolve in the postwar Austria of Rabinovici's novel. In addition, as a social worker, I began questioning the reliability of this model as a guide in helping me to understand my own world from which I create therapeutic relationships with my clients.

In Chapter Three, I used the Mythic Jew Model as a tool in exploring the question of how the Ahasuerus Myth has affected the formation and representation of Jewish identity in Rabinovici's novel. The best example of the difficulties associated with unraveling the representation of Jewish identity in the novel occurs in a scene depicting a major conflict between characters over the identity of a mummy-life figure in an artist's painting named "Ahasuerus." The scene accentuates the centrality of the Ahasuerus myth in the stigmatization of the Jew.

Rabinovici's protagonists reflect the characteristics and stereotypes attributed to the mythic figure of Ahasuerus. In the second part of the chapter, I grouped them into

four major categories. They are central to the development of *Judenhaß* and modern antisemitism. Each category was further explored as to how it may help us in understanding the development of Jewish identity.

Chapter Four explored how memory and identity have been transferred from traumatized Shoah survivors to their sons, Arie and Dani, in Rabinovici's contemporary Austria. From the collapsing systems in the Mythic Jew Model, the reader is brought into the circle of inter-generational transference of traumatic memory based on Marianne Hirsch's seminal work on postmemory. The reclamation of traumatic memory is central in Rabinovici's novel and plays a pivotal role in my own work since we are both children of survivors. We along with the protagonists in *Suche nach M* have been forced to find our own identity in a world of dissolving truths.

By employing an interdisciplinary approach to the reading of the novel, I was able to create two original models, the Mythic Jew Model and the Ikhud or Fusion Model to map the dynamic process of Jewish identity formation in Rabinovici's protagonists. Both models support the argument that the Jew has been irrevocably stigmatized by the Christian created, mythical figure Ahasuerus. Finally, the Fusion Model reflects the stirrings of change in the identities of the novel's protagonists and incorporates aspects of Jewish identity previously excluded. These aspects of identity will continue to play an increasingly important role in the formation of Jewish identity.

I hope that by having used an interdisciplinary approach in discussing my reading of *Suche nach M*, I have encouraged future researchers to use innovative and creative ways to understand the scourge of antisemitism, historical revisionism and the denial of

the Shoah. The worldwide increase in antisemitism attests to the weakness in continuing to use traditional methods.

By having some of the titles of my chapters incorporate the names of the five books of the Torah I wanted to create a historically and religiously fragmented yet personal structure, reflecting what I have come to consider the essence of modern-day Jewish identity formation; the importance of finding personal meaning in a fragmented world.

I also want to reiterate the importance of remaining vigilant to the fact that the health and social sciences are not immune from the influences of current pedagogy, trends, and especially cultural influences which, as these pertain to Jews, have been negatively affected by the Ahasuerus Myth. I agree with Ariele that diagnoses that spotlight a Jew's separateness from others need to be thoroughly examined.

The last time I was in Kaunas, ("Kovne" in Yiddish), the former capital of Interwar Lithuania and the ghetto in which my father was once interned, I was with a group of students, some of whom are Orthodox Jews, who were enrolled in summer Yiddish courses at the Vilnius University's Yiddish Institute. As we walked through the main square lined with cafés, a group of locals relaxing at their café table began holding their noses as we passed by. On that same day, as two orthodox Jewish students stepped off our tour bus, two young Lithuanian onlookers menacingly sliced their throats with their index fingers.

In Kaunas, I also visited the former home of Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, the universal language. In a 1905 letter to fellow Esperantist Alfred Michaux he wrote,

If I had not been a Jew from the ghetto, the idea of uniting humanity either

would never have entered my head or it would never have gripped me so tenaciously throughout my entire life. No one can feel more strongly than a ghetto Jew the sadness of dissension among peoples... my Jewishness is the main reason why, from my earliest childhood, I gave myself wholly to one overarching idea and dream, that of bringing together in brotherhood all of humanity. (Zieve)

Like Leon Fischer said, “Der einzige Weg aus der Vergangenheit in die eigene Zukunft führt über die Erinnerung” (“The only way out of the past into your own future goes through memory”; *Suche* 188; Sharp 130).

Zakhor! Remember!

Epilogue

In 1974, a few days after my father died, I had a dream that he was entirely wrapped in gauze, like an Egyptian mummy, and through two holes in the bandaging around his face I could see his piercing, blue eyes. Together, we began unravelling layers of preservation, undoing knots, unlacing and removing straps; doing the “work of memory” (Sharp 181) from endless streams of gauze.

He emerged from his cocoon the strong and smiling, certain young man, I once had seen in a picture of him fishing in the Saltuona River near his hometown of Eržvilkas. We began crying as we embraced.

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