



<b>Title</b>	<b>'Love is as Strong as Death': the triadic love of Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Gritli Rosenstock-Huessy</b>
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# ‘Love is as Strong as Death’: The Triadic Love of Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Gritli Rosenstock-Huessy.

## 1. The Background

In 1945 Nahum N. Glatzer, the ‘presenter’ (as he called himself) of the first lengthy introduction to the life and thought of the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig,<sup>1</sup> received a letter from Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. In that letter Rosenstock-Huessy informed Glatzer that he had a huge collection of letters written by Franz Rosenzweig to Rosenstock-Huessy’s wife, Margrit or Gritli. Not only had they had been written during the time of the composition of *Der Stern der Erlösung* (*The Star of Redemption*) and after, but he added ‘[a] whole commentary on the “Stern” is found in them.’<sup>2</sup> Like Glatzer, Rosenstock-Huessy was a German émigré living in the United States. And like Glatzer, Rosenstock-Huessy had been a close friend of Franz Rosenzweig. Indeed, he had played a pivotal role in Franz Rosenzweig’s life – in his attempt to have Rosenzweig follow him into the Christian faith, he opened Rosenzweig’s eyes to how faith across the times forms reality. In this respect he had also convinced Rosenzweig that the current secular and post-Nietzschean consensus about God’s death had been greatly exaggerated. Nietzsche had toppled the rotting corpse of idealist metaphysics but not the living God of Christians and Jews. Like Rosenstock, Rosenzweig had been born into a liberal Jewish family, but whereas Rosenstock’s insisted that the triadic unity of God, man and world was best understood and hence God was best served by entering in the Christian faith, Rosenzweig, on the verge of converting to Christianity, had the overwhelming conviction that he had to devote his life to the Jewish faith and that faith was the true faith, of which Christianity was an inferior, but essential relation.

While both were fighting for the Central powers, Rosenzweig in Macedonia, Rosenstock on the Western front, they exchanged a passionate correspondence about their respective faiths. That correspondence of 1916 was first published in Germany after Hitler had come to power, in 1935, by which time Franz Rosenzweig had been dead six years from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis; he had also become probably the most important intellectual leader for German Jewry. That role had largely derived from his establishment of the Jewish Lehrhaus in Frankfurt, his translation of the Bible, with Martin Buber, and his unflagging devotion to the promotion of the benefits of the Jewish life and tradition. Behind his fame lay, *The Star of Redemption*, a work which would make him the most important Jewish philosopher of the twentieth century (certainly, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, presented by Nahum Glatzer. (New York: Schocken, 1953.)

<sup>2</sup> The letter dated December 31 1945 in the collections of letters kept in Four Wells, the home of Freya von Moltke, the companion of Rosenstock-Huessy’s late years in Vermont.

two other contenders for that title, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas saw him in that light.)

Immediately after the holocaust, many Jews were suspicious of, if not downright hostile to, Jews who had converted to Christianity. And the fact that Rosenstock had not only been a convert, but had attempted to convert other Jews, including Rosenzweig, made him unpopular with a number of Jewish émigrés, including, according to the testimony of Rivka Horwitz, Glatzer. Another émigré, Ignasz Maybaum, even made the accusation, in my view, unfairly, and without a shred of evidence, that Rosenstock was an anti-Semite.<sup>3</sup> (The Nazis, of course, were not the slightest bit interested in distinguishing between Jews who kept the faith and those who didn't, and biologically Rosenstock was no less a Jew than any who went to the gas chambers.) Glatzer's book, not surprisingly, which is far from being a full biography – and no full biography yet exists of Rosenzweig, mentions a fateful evening of discussion between Rosenstock and Rosenzweig, but he deliberately, according to Horwitz, downplayed the importance of Rosenstock's continuing influence upon Rosenzweig.<sup>4</sup> For Glatzer, then, to have received this letter must have come as a shock. But he made no use of this material, which even Rosenstock-Huessy had not yet read. However, he knew that there was a lot of material on *The Star* because as Rosenzweig was composing it he was discussing its contents on many occasions, but on almost a daily (and sometimes more than daily basis, with Rosenstock's wife, Gritli, who had met him almost a year after her marriage to Rosenstock-Huessy and had become his muse and beloved.

Of the love story, it had been kept a secret for many years, first seeing the light of day in a public talk by Eckart Wilkens on October 10, 1978 at a *Volkshochschule* in Köln, while Edith was still alive.<sup>5</sup> But the story's significance first impacted on the scholarly community when Harold Stahmer presented a paper quoting from a number of the letters in the Franz Rosenzweig Conference in Kasell in 1986.<sup>6</sup> And the correspondence, having been typed up by Ulriche von Moltke, only appeared in print in an edited (and unsatisfactory manner) in 2002, while a full online edition was placed, that same year, on the web by Michael Gormann-Thelen.<sup>7</sup> Rosenzweig's widow, Edith, was still alive when

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<sup>3</sup> Rivka Horwitz, 'The Shaping of Rosenzweig's Identity According to the Gritli Letters' pp. 11 – 41 of Martin Brasser (ed.), *Rosenzweig als Leser: Kontextuelle Kommentare zum 'Stern der Erlösung,'* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004), pp.12-13. Ignasz Maybaum, *Dialogue between Jew, Christian and Muslim*, (London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, pp. 23-24..

<sup>5</sup> Michael Zank, "The Rosenzweig-Rosenstock Triangle, or, What Can We Learn from Letters to Gritli?: A Review Essay", in *Modern Judaism* 23 (2003), pp. 74-98, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Stahmer's contribution, 'Franz, Eugen, and Gritli: "Respondeo etsi mutabor"' is now available in Wolf Dietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), *Franz Rosenzweigs "neues Denken": Band II: Erfahrenen Offenbarung in theologos*, (Freiburg, Karl Alber, 2006), 1151-1168. Also see Harold Stahmer's Franz Rosenzweig's Letters to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, 1917-1922, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34 (1989), pp. 385-409. For other material on the 'Gritli' letters see Michael Gormann-Thelen highly informative 'Franz Rosenzweigs Briefe an Margrit ("Gritli") Rosenstockk: Ein Zwischenbericht mit Drei Dokumenten' in *The Legacy of Franz Rosenzweig*, edited by Luc Anckaert, Martin Brasser, and Norbert Samuelson, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004). Thus far there has only been one book length analysis of the material and that is Ephraim Meier's *Letters of Love: Franz Rosenzweig's Spiritual Biography and Oeuvre in Light of the Gritli Letters*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2006). Meier's treatment tends to be quite one-sided, due to insufficient knowledge/ consideration of the Rosenstock-Huessys.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Gormann-Thelen's posting on <http://home.debitel.net/user/gormann-thelen/edition.htm> is the complete and unabridged version of all available letters typed up by Ulriche Von Moltke. The published

the stirrings had started, and had been forced to confront what, it appears, was a shameful and humiliating event for her -Wilkins himself reported in the lecture that she had been horrified to learn of his intentions to talk about the love story.<sup>8</sup> For while the love story between Franz Rosenzweig and Gritli Rosenstock-Huessy had begun before Edith had become his fiancée, the correspondence reveals that Gritli had been his great passion.

The publication of such private stuff as these letters can easily be seen as, and indeed become, but the disgraceful intrusion into a sphere of life that concerned no one but the parties involved and hence should have remained veiled. Certainly, and very understandably, Edith Rosenzweig had not wanted this material to become public – so much so she had even burnt Gritli Huessy's correspondence to her husband, whether in compliance with Rosenzweig's wishes is not known.<sup>9</sup> A number of references to her are humiliating, callous even, and although Rosenzweig may have been (and for many was and, for me still is, something of a saint), his letters reveal a complex, irritable, spoilt, and self-obsessive nature – which, is to say, he was not a saintly figurine, but a young man involved in a complicated situation, doing his best to deal with the forces of his faith and his loves.

In contrast to Edith Rosenzweig's response, was Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's. From the beginning he had been told of the love that his best friend and his wife had for each other. Yet he had accepted and blessed it. Indeed, this was what both Franz and Gritli insisted they wanted. That did not mean it was easy – on the contrary. In another Rosenzweig conference at Kassel, this time 2004, Harold Stahmer referred to an unpublished letter of Rosenstock-Huessy to Gritli. There he writes of his pain in feeling shut out by the passion that Franz and Gritli have for each other, and he complains that his love for both has been forgotten or taken for granted.<sup>10</sup> This 'crisis' however was overcome and the love story continued until Gritli and Franz could no more. With Franz devoting himself ever more to serving his Jewish community, and the initial symptoms and full blown effects of his illness there was a rupture with the Rosenstock-Huessys, a rupture which pained them very much, and which, for a time at least, Rosenstock-Huessy saw as a sacred violation of their pact. Eventually Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy would pick up their correspondence, but not another line is to be found by Rosenzweig to Gritli or her to him.

The importance of this love story was something that pulled at Rosenstock-Huessy, mentioning the correspondence at different times to different peoples, knowing that it was of enormous importance. In the same year that he wrote to Glatzer, he wrote to his friend, admirer, archivist and publicist Georg Müller 'these letters really deserve your attention.'<sup>11</sup> But he expounded on this some fifteen years later when having conceded

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version is Franz Rosenzweig, *Die "Gritli Briefe: Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy"*, Mit e. Vorw. v. Rafael Rosenzweig, Hrsg. Inken Rühle u. Reinhold Mayer (Bilam, 2000). The final crisis between Rosenstocks and the Rosenzweigs is treated in a completely cursory and utterly misleading manner.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Zank.

<sup>9</sup> It seems that Rosenzweig wished to have the correspondence returned, whether to spare his wife embarrassment or out of a sense of shame that his reality and image were not in sync.

<sup>10</sup> Stahmer's contribution, 'Franz, Eugen, and Gritli: "Respondeo etsi mutabor,"' is now available in Wolf Dietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), *Franz Rosenzweigs "neues Denken": Band II: Erfahrenen Offenbarung in theologos*, (Freiburg, Karl Alber, 2006), 1151-1168.

<sup>11</sup> December 3, 1945. The translation is in Harold Stahmer's 'Franz Rosenzweig's Letters to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, 1917-1922' in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 34 (1989), 388.

that Rozenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* had been one of the three defining moments of his 'spiritual person he takes up Müller's question about the genesis of Rosenzweig's *Star*:

Has the hour already come for that today? In her article, Miss Emmet indicates the limits of your effort. I also warned her. As a result of your bold announcement, I looked yesterday, for the first time in my life, over the letters which Franz directed to my wife daily while he was writing the *Star* and in which he reports on every page and every progress. He does speak of his 'Eugenisation,' but he also says the chapters II, 2; II,3 originate from her. After forty years of patience, however, I may certainly ask my Pylades to apply the All Souls speech also to the bodily Trinity which was experienced at the time, and to recognize in individualistic analyses a primitivisation that would block comprehension. I don't know if the hundreds of letters should ever be printed. Margrit, and at a certain point our faithful Anna [the live-in domestic helper of the Rosenstock-Huessys] have saved those papers from the confusion of autumn 1918 up to today. So they really shouldn't perish. But these letters are illuminated by the *Star* and, according to my existential sense, they are more important than the whole *Star*. May Beatrice be less important than the *Divine Comedy* – it is a serious question whether, in the century of existence and as Christians, we must not elevate faith above the 'works.' And we had faith then, we didn't think. You are perhaps the first person, yes, certainly, the first with whom I have spoken about these original relationships. Precisely because the *Star's* origin from the Trialog can be proven in detail, your plan to commit yourself publicly without this Trialog makes me uneasy. You will be able to understand that without truly Truly- this loyalty also obliges me to tell you, what neither Altmann nor Emmet needed to know. Your Eugen.<sup>12</sup>

Although it is not stated so strongly in this letter, familiarity with Rosenstock-Huessy's work reveals that he himself had been fundamentally changed by Rosenzweig, eventually accepting the special importance of the Jewish people and the need of Christians to acknowledge their eternal right and need to exist – indeed, their role as God's elect, which was the core of the argument that Rosenzweig had made against Rosenstock in the course of their debate, thus lending support to Rosenstock-Huessy's comments that:

*Franz and Eugen did exchange with each other certain fundamentals of their life rhythm in mutuality, and —must it be*

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<sup>12</sup> Harold Stahmer's 'Franz Rosenzweig's Letters to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, 1917-1922' in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 34 (1989), 397-98. Alexander Altmann and Dorothy Emmet wrote essays to the original translation of some of the 1916 correspondence between Rosenstock and Rosenzweig, which Rosenstock in the *Journal of Religion*, October 1944. In 1969 the letters appeared in *Judaism Despite Christianity* with the Emmet and Altmann essays, in violation of copyright [the letters were under the legal jurisdiction of the Rosenzweig family – and although Edith Rosenzweig had on a number of occasions expressed her wish that these letters not be translated and republished] her and her son Rafael let it pass.

added?—quite unintentionally, in total unconsciousness. Individual purposes or intentions were subordinated to a large extent to a process of re-creation or transformation brought about by a most unwanted, even abhorred, exposure to each other.<sup>13</sup>

Before reflecting upon the triadic love of Franz and Gritli and Eugen as an immortalizing force I wish to briefly comment upon some of the key concepts in Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*.

## 2. Pagans, Christians and Jews in Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*

There are three fundamental triads in Rosenzweig's system – two of which form the symbol of the star itself which is the symbol of the eternal truth that is experienced by the Jewish people. The first is the triad of God, Man, World, in which each is a pole of historical orientation and collective appeal in self, group and world making. Rosenzweig demonstrates that any attempt to deny the existence of one pole, such as God, by atheists, or the independence of the world by idealists, or to collapse man completely into the world, as the naturalists is to deface the only world that we know, a world in which each name of appeal has played its respective part. In this respect, Rosenzweig refuses to accept that the bare world of nature is the one true world; or, to say it another way, for Rosenzweig culture *matters*. Rosenzweig's elaboration of the triadic connection is premised upon a critique of philosophy, which he sees as having undergone a welcome revolution in the writings of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who make experience the touchstone of truth, and Schelling, his most important 'classical' precursor, whose treatment of myth provides Rosenzweig with the example of 'absolute empiricism' which he adopts.<sup>14</sup> The triad of God, Man World, for Rosenzweig, is contrasted with the mistaken attempt of classical and modern philosophy to try and think everything under one idea. This 'idealist' move (which applies equally to naturalism) which purports to comprehend the 'all' is the source, for Rosenzweig, of all the dogmatic 'isms' which he thinks plagues modern thought/ systems and transforms them into totalizing and sickening life-ways.<sup>15</sup>

The second triad is Creation, Revelation and Redemption – which is perhaps most swiftly understood if discussed simultaneously with the third triad. Unlike the first two triads, the third triad is not a triad that helps form the symbol of the star, but it is, for Rosenzweig, no less essential for understanding the world we live in. This is the triad of pagans, Christians and Jews. On the surface to break humanity in to three core groups seems very superficial – and it is one of the most common criticisms that is launched against him by his own advocates who seem to be embarrassed by such archaisms. However, I believe the criticisms miss the point and show the superficial understanding

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<sup>13</sup> Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy (ed.) *Judaism despite Christianity: The "Letters on Christianity and Judaism between Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy and Franz Rosenzweig* (New York: Schocken, 1971 [1969]), p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> *Franz Rosenzweig's 'The New Thinking'*, edited and translated by Alan Udoff and Barbara Galli, (New York: Syracuse University press, 1999), 101.

<sup>15</sup> For his comment on isms see Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy: A View of World, Man and God*, tr. Nahum Glatzer, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 57.

of the system by the critic rather than the superficiality of Rosenzweig's divisions – for the divisions are only meant to hold for the very specific intention/ configuration which Rosenzweig wants to illumine.

The pagan in Rosenzweig's system refers to any life world built upon the immediate energies and signs of creation. Thus any life-way which legitimates itself through an appeal to the gods and/ or the world as it is is pagan. From his vantage point Islam, neo-Platonism, Buddhism, Confucianism, no more nor less than animistic societies and atheistic ones are all united by the commonality of their underlying modalities of sources of ultimate appeal whether Allah, the One, nirvana, nature, the nothing, the pantheon; these are all sources which are invoked to make sense of the world and a society's place within it and which may well seek to orientate beyond death. People build worlds around their sources of appeal – and while Rosenzweig is not denying the detailed diversity of every life-way, in comparison to one particular life-way – the life-way of the Jewish people he claims that there is a fundamental cleavage and that can be traced back to the *original* uniqueness of the Jewish source of appeal. To a certain extent, since the spread of Christianity, ways of being and seeing and making reality which originated in the Judaic experience have now become part of a more universal human experience. In this respect, for example, Rosenzweig emphasizes that even atheistic philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche resort to Christian (and therefore to some extent also) Jewish appeals.

The original uniqueness to which Rosenzweig refers when speaking of the Jewish people is that they were a people who were formed over time in response to the law of a God who was a lover who revealed the law of triadic redemption of His people, His world and Himself. Two things are important here: first Rosenzweig does not deny that other persons ever had an experience of this loving God, nor that no other philosophers spoke of love's divine importance – Empedocles, for example, spoke of love as a cosmic force – but the point is that until the Jews no other people was formed, albeit frequently in defiance and outright rebellion against their God and His law, over time by the commandment to love the neighbour. Afterwards, Christianity took core Jewish teachings into the world, albeit in a distorted manner with its most provocative claim that the Messiah had already arrived. But in making spirit and faith stronger than blood and inheritance, the Christians acted as a middle term between Jews and pagan. To restate this, for Rosenzweig the uniqueness of the Jewish body of believers lay in the overwhelming importance of love as the revealed law of redemption – not power, not piety, not ascetic renunciation, not justice in itself, but love becomes the ray through which all other potencies of creation are inflected and thereby totally transformed, which is to say they are redeemed by love. The corollary of this is that love – not ethics, not politics, not philosophy, not ideology, not a change in the mode of social production - redeems the weak and the evil. And indeed the redemption of the weak and the evil is a fundamental line of continuity between Jews and Christians. Although *The Star* makes the case that Jews need Christians to enable their own perpetuity and that this is part of God's plan, he also insists that the Christian body of believers is forever overpowered by other energies, other prospects, other sources of appeal, and thus Christians continually relapse into the tumultuous world of paganism before regrouping again around their faith. Unlike Christians, however, Jews must ever confront the living God – having no state, forced always to dwell in the land of others and speak the tongues of others they are what

they are. (*The Star* was written before the existence of Israel, and while Rosenzweig became more conciliatory toward Zionists, his vision is premised upon the perpetuity of a Jewish Diaspora). In this respect, they are not like Christians, mere believers, they are the Other by birth. And again the truly remarkably prophetic aspect of *The Star* lay in its prescience that the great new persecution would have nothing to do with what Jews believed but with who they were said to *be*. Further, and my last point on the system, *The Star* also raises the matter of the Christian's eternal hatred of the Jew, a hatred that has its roots in the Christians need to create a universal fellowship, and the Jews being the permanent and stubborn reminder of the impossibility of the task.

### 3. Love's Immortalising Power

Even if one concedes the essential truth of Rosenzweig's sketches of pagans, Christians and Jews, it is also true that if we take love in a more limited sense than can be found in the Jewish and Christian Bibles, but as a force of erotic attraction, then the idea that lovers are participating in an immortalizing force is a pagan one, probably having roots in Orphic cults. Of course it receives its first fully blown philosophical exposition in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. For Plato, the beloved's beauty which stirs the soul of the lover is a spur to love of the beautiful itself; that is, nature in its simulation of perfection is a spur to transcendence. While it is a force for the eternal, it is also a force for the transformation of our qualities – hence the idea in the *Phaedrus* that each lover is really drawn to the god that most moves the beloved - a kind of reconfiguration of the self takes place via the range of qualities which become accentuated via the radiance of the beloved. This idea finds itself reproduced in neo-Platonic influenced Arab love poetry and the songs of the troubadours, who, like Plato, see love as a transcendent force and the role of the beloved as the activation of the courageous deeds and service of the lover – deeds which would never be done were it not for the beloved's radiance and promise. The greatest fusion of troubadour poetry with neo-Platonic thematics is Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a work which manages to synthesize them with pagan and Christian mythology and thought.<sup>16</sup> That is, in Dante, love in its highest pagan form is synthesized with the

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<sup>16</sup> Dante was a minor poet up until the writing of the *Comedy*. His life was transformed by being escorted to heaven, through hell and purgatory by Virgil, albeit through Beatrice's behest, and through heaven by Beatrice. For Dante, Virgil's own power was a derivative one (Beatrice is the requesting/behesting power who has him leave hell's outer circle, enter further therein and move through the mount of purgatory) and a limited one (he cannot enter and hence sing of, nor guide through the wonders of heaven – he is a pagan and the limits of his vision are the limits of the configurations of pagan virtues and potencies). At the time of the *Comedy*, Virgil was to poetry what Aristotle was to philosophy, he was *the poet* – Homer, a great name who also dwells in the same circle of hell as Virgil and Aristotle, was not read (just as most of Plato's corpus, the *Timaeus* excepted, was unread in Christendom in 1300). Indeed, while Dante mentions numerous poets, classical and contemporary in the *Comedy*, it is Virgil's place as supreme amongst poets that he challenges and it is Virgil whom he ultimately defeats in his attempt to take the art of poetry towards new heights. Dante is not driven by *hybris*, but by the draw of heaven which is what is manifest in the gaze of the beautiful Beatrice and the sweet sounds of her voice. That is, while Dante may well have wished to be as great a poet as Virgil, that wish would be but nought were it left to the *ars poetica* itself, or even his love of that art. It is the love of a woman for him that ultimately enables his vision first to see what Virgil can see and then to see beyond it. In part, that ability to see further comes from the historical time



law of love that is common to Jews and Christians. Indeed, in Dante we see that this synthesis of the law of love with the (Platonic) romantic is what makes this complete. To be sure, in Dante, the transcendence is preserved by accepting the renunciative Christian and pagan ascetic (also Platonic) dimensions, but even allowing for this significant difference between Dante's great cosmic love story and the terrestrial love story of Franz Rosenzweig and Gritli-Huessy we can see some broad parallels.

In the first instance, although Eugen was not originally summoned to assist Franz, as Virgil was to assist Dante by the feminine stream (Our Lady to Lucy to Beatrice). Yet in Franz's formation he plays a role somewhat analogous to Virgil. It was Eugen (in a letter of 1916 on the formative nature of speech) that brought Franz into what he would later call his *New Thinking*. It was Eugen who would open his eyes to the dead-end of faithlessness (which is really what Virgil does to Dante), by demonstrating to him the moribund future of idealism and modernism. He showed Rosenzweig that faith was a means for activating what philosophy did not touch, that it was a mode of the soul's orientation. Philosophy provided reasons, but faith drew one to act in the knowledge of the limitations of the light of the world and the urgency of the moment.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, Eugen Rosenstock was pivotal in helping form Franz Rosenzweig, in making Franz Rosenzweig who he became. That he was a Christian and Rosenzweig would become a major, possibly the major Jewish thinker of the twentieth century is indicative of the spirit's refusal to be contained and subjected by the will of the subject. Thus too, as I indicated above, Rosenstock-Huessy would later come to concede that Rosenzweig's decision to remain a Jew was absolutely right – the right of the decision had nothing to do with the arguments both launched at each other like hand grenades from their respective foxholes on a common front. It had to do with what Rosenzweig became and what he

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into which he was born. Whereas Virgil can announce the birth of Augustus and predict the *pax Romana*, Dante knows of Rome's fall and of its transmutation into a holy Roman empire, just as he knows that paganism will be usurped by the Christian religion, which in turn will find itself in danger of losing its potency as a transcendent guide and becoming merely a major source of social and political disintegration – hence the repeated attacks throughout the *Comedy* on clerics and their sins and the political impact of those sins. Virgil, we may say, inspired Dante to sing the world as he saw it, but Beatrice taught him about a love more sweet and a place more perfect and hence demanded more of his voice than the love of Virgil could have brought forth.

Of Beatrice herself, let us just note a few of the obvious things – she was married to someone else, so her capacity to instill transcendence was never sullied by the mundanities of the everyday. Indeed, that Dante could never possess her meant that their love retained, forgive me using a word that has all but lost its sheen, but which is the right word in this instance, its fundamentally spiritual nature. Yet the spiritual nature of that love required a degree of attraction which could exercise a kind of compulsion over the soul, a compulsion strong enough to draw Dante away from his other compulsions. These were the compulsions which had led him into the forest of darkness where he is first found in the opening of the *Comedy*: his compulsions are the compulsions of every man and woman and they are the compulsions which had woven the hellish worlds he visits in his 'wakeful dream,' which are in turn but the gruesome and terrible aspects of the world transformed into eternalized theatrical renditions by the damned for the living. Beatrice took a damned man and made him a shining light – his gratitude to Beatrice was to immortalize her name. His gratitude to Virgil was to ensure his perpetuity into a time beyond the classical and the riven world in which Dante himself lived. Dante, whether rightly or wrongly, believed he dwelt on the precipice of a new age, one foretold by Joachim of Fiore, it was to be an age of the reign of peace: the redemption promised in heaven would have as its counterpart the redemption of the living as they would inhabit a world of justice and love.

<sup>17</sup> I should add immediately that the examples of others such as his Uncle Adam and Hermann Cohen also should not be underestimated.

meant for his people at the time of their greatest trial. Of all the things in *The Star of Redemption* its most overwhelming importance was the truth expressed about the Jews being God's 'elect' at a time when it seemed and more than seemed that every force of the demonic generated within Christendom over the last two thousand years conspired to simultaneously destroy God's elect and in the doing destroy the line of continuity – between the Jewish and Christian peoples. I venture that Rosenstock's belated deployment, within the context of his Christian eschatology, of Rosenzweigian arguments about the eternal necessity to preserve the people of Israel and the absolute requirement of Christian people's to do this is based upon his acceptance of *The Star's* truth – not a truth as a series of arguments – Rosenstock-Huessy found the philosophical language and style of the book to be ugly – but as an act of world shaping.

But it is here that the name of Gritli, having been recovered, or literally arisen from the ashes, reveals itself as the single most important transcendent force in Rosenzweig's name becoming immortal, becoming a source of inspiration and veneration for successive generations. For as his letters to her state on a daily basis, while Eugen pushed him to seek the living God, Gritli showed him the meaning of love, and it was that meaning that sings through the pages on the section on Revelation and Redemption in the *Star*.

That Rosenzweig takes the cornerstone of the revealed law of love, that it is as strong as death, from the Song of Songs (8:6) is an acknowledgment of the potency of the sensuousness of love as a means of expressing and activating the love between God and the soul. Or to say it another way, Gritli's love for Rosenzweig, and what is hinted at by taking his core principle from the Song of Songs is a sign of the redemptive love that he experiences through Gritli. Rosenzweig's name becomes something special because he provides a story at a particular historical juncture of what it means to be God's elect – it means to be the bearers of the significance of the revealed truth that love is as strong as death. That love is hard – it is not mere pleasure, and it must eventually part ways with the beautiful, for it is sacrificial – and sacrifice is the height and depth of love, not beauty nor goodness, as both Plato and Dante wanted it. It is a means of being empowered and redeemed by love, but there is no protection from life's afflictions in this; on the contrary Rosenzweig's response to his own illness was an example of what this meant, the acceptance of God's call to be in this place under these conditions performing this work in this faith – not Stoic resignation but active love of the condition and the loving power behind the condition are what is required. And *The Star* is the astonishing articulation that such is the 'terrible' loving role that God assigns to the elect – which is why to the pagan, the Jewish life/ love is not even something desirable. It is a great paradox – but one that powerfully illustrates the strange co-existence that occurs between the truth and its phantasmic inversion – that the people who were first conscious of themselves as elect as a 'people' and a 'nation' were so often to be the victim of national chauvinism, and were to be almost annihilated on the alter to the divinity of the nation, a divinity which had showed its real face in the horrors of the Napoleonic and Great wars before morphing into the sheer brutality of Nazism. The reason that the Jewish people could never, from Rosenzweig's position, essentially be elected by their living God and be beholden to the God of nationalism is that they have been commanded by their God to love, and that love does not and must not only extend to each other but to their neighbour. This is also a sign of the nature of the love that forms them – it is, to repeat, not and must not be idolatrous,

it is not only directed at the redemption of the single self, nor the nation, but at the redemption of the whole world. Only thus too is God Himself redeemed. In this respect, the Jew is there for the redemption of all.

One might say, without exaggeration, that the *Star* is a love-drunk vision of a God who pours out infinite love to a people who must be strong enough to drink it and then to share their loving strength. In this respect the *Star* is a very Jewish book, even though Rosenzweig quite rightly insisted it was not just a Jewish book – and it was not, for amongst other things it is written for Christians who he hopes will see and act to stop the forces of anti-Semitism swelling in Germany at that time. Yet – and this yet is all important – it is also a book that could not have been written without the pagan and the Christian.

Rosenstock-Huessy knew this, much more than Rosenzweig's Jewish admirers who were ignorant of the triadic love story – the fourth triad which ruptures the beautiful symmetry of this fabulous system. In his autobiographical work *Ja and Nein*, Rosenstock-Huessy had provided the formulation which was the only one that he held truthfully made sense of the European world – that the full life must be lived as Jew as Christian and as pagan.<sup>18</sup> While he saw Rosenzweig as articulating the dialogical view of life from the vantage point of the Jew, he knew that Rosenzweig's own life – had been the incarnation of those three forms of life – just as his had been from the vantage point of the Christian and just as Buber's had been from the vantage point of the pagan.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

The reason that Rosenstock-Huessy knew that the letters between Franz and Gritli were of overwhelming importance was because he knew it was not merely a bit of personal gossip, but that it was an essential component of the way of thinking and being in the world that he and Rosenzweig had brought to the public. He also knew that once the existential condition of *The Star* became public then the nature of the forces and faiths that formed Rosenzweig would have to be seen in a different and truer hue than the popular one of that of the paragon of Jewish life. It was not merely his love of God and His people that drove *The Star's* composition and the uniqueness of its accentuations – all of which were the forces which elevated his own star among his people – but the love he had for and received from a Christian woman. In many ways it is not going too far to say that *The Star* is an attempt to woo Gritli towards Judaism, in the full knowledge that she must not leave Eugen if the love is to be a redemptive force for all three – for Eugen, in that he would see that the struggles between them in the foxholes were but stages on the way to the creation of *The Star* and that he, Eugen, had helped build the edifice not for Christians but also for Jews, but also for Gritli in that her love would not just be directed at her Christian husband but would fill her Jewish beloved with the energy to be more than he would otherwise be and by so doing show to His people the love that existed

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<sup>18</sup> Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Ja und Nein: Autobiographische Fragmente*, (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1968), pp. 71-2.

<sup>19</sup> The remark about Buber is provocative. I will explore it fully in my forthcoming book *The Star and the Cross: Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's Post-Nietzschean Revivals of Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, under contract).

between him and a Christian woman was indeed divinely sanctioned because it too was integral in the world's redemption. And that this love between Gritli and Franz was transgressive, that it was sensuous and because it was sensuous, in contravention of the decreed walls of the sanctimony of marriage, it revealed that all three accepted the compulsions of the pagan.

That the truth of this love story which lay concealed for so many years finally burst out, and like all repressed truth it came into the world like a lacerating blade damaging the ideal portraiture of Rosenzweig's marriage with Edith was yet but one more verification of the truth that "love is as strong as death."

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