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12-15-2020

Digital German-Jewish Futures: Experiential Learning, Activism, and Entertainment.

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Abstract

The future of the German-Jewish past is, in a word, digital, and not only in the sense of digital humanities or digital history. Future generations of scholars, students, and the general public will engage with the past online in the same ways—and for many of the same reasons—that they engage with everything else. There needs to be something redeeming, enjoyable, or at least memorable about studying history for people to feel that it is worthwhile. For many, the act of learning about the past serves as a kind of virtual travel, even an escape, to another time and place. Learning about German-Jewish history becomes possible on a regular basis when it is easily accessible through the newest media on computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. Perusing a digital history project about the 1930s or reading posts on Twitter and Instagram does not take as much time, nor require the same level of commitment, as sitting down to read a history book. Watching a hit television show about the 1920s feels just educational enough to mitigate the guilt of partaking in a "guilty pleasure," yet not so stiflingly academic as to prevent it from being fun. Twitter is the new Times. Netflix is the new newsreel—and noir. We must begin to harness the potential of these platforms to cultivate opportunities to teach and learn about the German-Jewish past. In this essay, I explore three ways of establishing a connection to the past in digital forms suited to the twenty-first century: experiential learning in a traditional college classroom setting, social media activism, and streaming television shows. [excerpt]

Keywords

German-Jewish Studies, digital history, Babylon Berlin

Disciplines

Film and Media Studies | German Language and Literature | Jewish Studies | Other Film and Media Studies | Other German Language and Literature

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Chapter Title: DIGITAL GERMAN-JEWISH FUTURES: Experiential Learning, Activism, and Entertainment
Chapter Author(s): KERRY WALLACH

Book Title: The Future of the German-Jewish Past
Book Subtitle: Memory and the Question of Antisemitism
Book Editor(s): Gideon Reuveni, Diana Franklin
Published by: Purdue University Press. (2021)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv15pjxvw.24

DIGITAL GERMAN-JEWISH FUTURES

Experiential Learning, Activism, and Entertainment

KERRY WALLACH

T HE FUTURE OF the German-Jewish past is, in a word, digital, and not only in the sense of digital humanities or digital history. Future generations of scholars, students, and the general public will engage with the past online in the same ways—and for many of the same reasons—that they engage with everything else. There needs to be something redeeming, enjoyable, or at least memorable about studying history for people to feel that it is worthwhile. For many, the act of learning about the past serves as a kind of virtual travel, even an escape, to another time and place. Learning about German-Jewish history becomes possible on a regular basis when it is easily accessible through the newest media on computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. Perusing a digital history project about the 1930s or reading posts on Twitter and Instagram does not take as much time, nor require the same level of commitment, as sitting down to read a history book. Watching a hit television show about the 1920s feels just educational enough to mitigate the guilt of partaking in a "guilty pleasure," yet not so stiflingly academic as to prevent it from being fun. Twitter is the new *Times*. Netflix is the new newsreel—and noir. We must begin to harness the potential of these platforms to cultivate opportunities to teach and learn about the German-Jewish past. In this essay, I explore three ways of establishing a connection to the past in digital forms suited to the twenty-first century: experiential learning in a traditional college classroom setting, social media activism, and streaming television shows.

As we consider how to reach those who will study and otherwise engage with German-Jewish history in the future, we must acknowledge that most younger students are three or more generations removed from those who experienced the "golden age" of

Weimar Jewish culture, as well as the Second World War and the Holocaust. Yet even seventy-five years after 1945, the past is no less relevant. New generations coming of age in the twenty-first century still confront a wide range of social and political questions that are intertwined with the legacy of German Jewry. Some reasons for making connections to the German-Jewish past are predictable, but others cannot yet be anticipated. In *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age*, Jeffrey Shandler reminds us that it is possible to use resources and archives "against the grain" to examine issues other than those that are central to an institution's mission.[1] As scholars, and as educators, it is our role to help future generations gain digital access to, become more knowledgeable about, and determine how they as individuals will make use of the German-Jewish past.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: MAKING GERMAN-JEWISH HISTORY MEMORABLE FOR GENERATION Z

Students of German and Jewish studies are among those who will continue to engage with German-Jewish history in an intensive way in the coming years. To be sure, an immersion trip or an extended period of study in Central or Eastern Europe would provide the ideal mode of experiential learning, but this is not an option for everyone. For those who cannot travel to such places as Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, Vienna, Prague, and Budapest, there must exist more easily accessible ways to become passionate about the histories of these cultures. Although students might begin to study German-Jewish topics while still in high school, college and university students delve most deeply into online resources and thus represent a primary audience for many digital materials. Many college students obtain the majority of sources for their papers, presentations, and other projects via online searches. It is no surprise that virtual archives serve as key sources of information: the Jewish Women's Archive, for example, has one million visitors annually, most of whom find the site using Google.[2] It is my observation that college students respond best to digital assignments and activities when their mode of engaging with a project is highly interactive, thus constituting a memorable experience in its own right. Multiple forms of media (text, image, audio, video) enable students to experience material in different ways, and students with proficiency in more than one language benefit further from accessing this material in two languages. The design of the online resources and the assignments themselves affect the degree to which student experiences are interactive and potentially impactful.

By 2024, college courses will serve mainly post-Millennial students who differ in a number of ways from previous generations of students. Undergraduate courses in the United States, where traditional students range in age from 18 to 22, currently contain

the last groups of students that combine Millennials (sometimes also "Generation Y," born between 1981 and 1996, according to the Pew Research Center) and members of "Generation Z."[3] The generation born from 1997 onward is now commonly referred to as Generation Z, although some locate the beginning of this generation in the post-9/11 era.[4] By most definitions, the majority of college students who graduate in 2020 and later can be considered part of Generation Z. Cohorts beginning with the class of 2024 contain students born after 9/11. Whereas most Millennials can still remember a time before smartphone technology and the rise of social media, members of Generation Z cannot. Many members of Generation Z prefer to communicate via text messages rather than phone or email, and they favor such image-driven platforms as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube over Facebook and Twitter. They are "digital natives"; the ways that Generation Z and future generations consume information will continue to drive the ways scholars, institutions, and cultural producers choose to present it.

In my courses at Gettysburg College, where I have taught since 2011, I have used several digital history projects that focus on German-Jewish life and culture, and I have begun to make use of the wide array of digitized resources that deal with the Holocaust. Gettysburg is an undergraduate liberal arts college with an emphasis on small class size; course enrollment usually ranges from six to eighteen students. By far the most successful of my assignments using digital resources was a four- to six-page paper in my spring 2018 course, "European Jews: History, Holocaust, Future," which required students to find, view or listen to, and critically analyze the video or audio testimony of a Holocaust survivor. Here the vast digitized resources of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive were invaluable. Without exception, the students agreed that they benefited from the act of searching for and accessing survivor testimony. Nearly all chose to write about video testimony, though one student noted that she preferred the audio-only format. Several opted to work with video testimony for which there was also a transcript available. Having the freedom to write about any testimony meant that some students voluntarily watched portions of multiple interviews, or viewed several hours of testimony by one survivor, in order to locate a segment that interested them and would lend itself to this paper assignment. Of course, there is a clear difference in terms of scope, resources, and audience when it comes to learning about the German-Jewish past versus the Holocaust, and I focus hereafter on ways of engaging digitally with specifically German-Jewish topics.

Inviting students to choose and analyze one short text that interests them is standard practice when I ask students to work with digital history projects. For a short homework assignment in my course on "The German-Jewish Experience," I asked students to work with the Jewish Museum Berlin's project, "1933: The Beginning of the End of German Jewry" (https://www.jmberlin.de/1933/en). This smaller-scale project, rolled out in 2013 to mark the eightieth anniversary of 1933, draws primarily

from the collection of the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Leo Baeck Institute New York/Berlin (LBI). It was created in conjunction with the Berlin citywide theme year "Zerstörte Vielfalt (Destroyed Diversity): 1933–1938–1945."5 The 1933 project includes a selection of original documents matched to corresponding dates throughout the year, with an average of ten documents per month. It also contains transcriptions of hand-written German documents and translations into English. In other words, there is too much material to assign in full if only a short unit of the course focuses on the 1930s.

In November 2016, I asked students to visit the 1933 project's site and choose one document on which to focus. They were instructed to read both the English and German texts if able. In a discussion forum on our online course management system, Moodle, students responded to two broad questions: "What can we learn from this document about how Jewish life in Germany changed in and after 1933? What do you find particularly interesting about the document?" Using an online forum facilitates a wider variety of posts since students can see each other's posts and are encouraged not to examine the same document. One student noted the contemporary resonance of the document posted for January 30, 1933: a letter written by Rosa Süss in Mannheim to her daughter and son-in-law on the day when Hitler became chancellor. Süss wrote: "Well, they [he] won't be any different from all the others. We'll have to wait and see what happens! People abroad will be surprised." The student observed that Süss's reaction "has both elements of hope and fear at the same time," not unlike what the student and many of his friends felt shortly after the U.S. presidential election earlier that month. Although I do not wish to draw categorical parallels between events of the 1930s and 2010s, I would suggest that comparing and contrasting these two eras of political change made the assignment more meaningful for this student. His ability to understand January 1933 was informed by his experience of November 2016, and vice versa.

In spring 2018, in "European Jews: History, Holocaust, Future," I introduced students to the 1938 Projekt of the Leo Baeck Institute New York/Berlin in order to make a lesson on Jews in Nazi Germany more interactive. The 1938 Projekt (http://www.lbi.org/1938projekt) commemorates each day in 1938 through one post published on every corresponding day of 2018, exactly eighty years later, in both English and German. Materials used in the daily posts originate from over ten partner institutions. The posts were publicized widely; the LBI made them available on its website and in daily posts on social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This approach suggests that the project format was designed to maximize impact on users. William Weitzer, the executive director of the LBI, suggested that these social media platforms allow users to have a "transactional" experience by scrolling through and interacting with the posts in a way that is personally meaningful.6 In a podcast inter-view about the 1938 Projekt, Frank Mecklenburg, the director of research and chief

archivist of the LBI and also a contributor to this volume, points to the significance of 1938 as a historical reference point with respect to twenty-first-century political issues: refugees, the rise of right-wing political groups, and the gradual and incremental normalization of everyday restrictions.[7] In Mecklenburg's view, the broader issues of the past are inseparable from issues in the present.

In my "European Jews" course, we worked with the 1938 Projekt during class time to facilitate a collective encounter with this digital project. In other words, we made the use of social media a social experience in real life, at least for a few minutes. Together, we studied the post from March 5, 2018: "Homosexual Relations with a Jew." This post highlights the fact that the blond, non-Jewish German tennis star Gottfried von Cramm, who was accused of homosexual conduct and arrested on March 5, 1938, was not immune to Nazi persecution. Students found this story compelling both because it deviated slightly from the traditional narrative of persecution and because it challenged them to think about other groups who fell victim to the Nazis. After looking at one post together, the students accessed the 1938 Projekt individually. Most of the fifteen students present that day used cell phones, although a few pulled out laptops or Surface devices. I asked the students to scroll through the project's feed and select one additional post. Students then prepared short responses to the prompt: "How does this project use sources from 1938 to make a critical point about Jewish history? What point does this post seem to be making?" We integrated their responses into a group discussion, which also included their feedback on learning about the past through digitized media.

These students of German-Jewish history responded enthusiastically to the act of engaging with historical sources in an online platform. This mix of (late) Millennial and Generation Z students offered overwhelmingly positive feedback on their experience using the 1938 Projekt. They appreciated the concise summaries of historical documents as well as the translations of short, one-sentence quotes from the original German document into English, for example in the post from February 25, 2018, about the separation of young lovers Julius Hirsch and Elisabeth Schiff. The discussion of this post provided a natural complement to our earlier discussion of the difficulties many Jews faced in obtaining visas as they sought to emigrate. One German studies major noted that the 1938 Projekt is "not intimidating" because of its "short little stories" and appealing presentation of "facts not everyone knows." Another student pointed out that each story takes only about five minutes to read in full. A third said that the concept reminded her of the Timehop app, which can be paired with social media (Instagram, Facebook) and other apps such as photo albums to remind users what happened in their lives one or more years ago on that same day. In deploying strategies popularized by social media apps, digital history projects gain access to the students whose worlds are built around these apps.

In addition to online resources and digital history projects, access to German-Jewish topics through other digital means such as Skype or Zoom provides a different type of experiential learning. On several occasions, I have devoted a whole class period to a video call with one or two people who could provide insight into German-Jewish topics. This low-budget approach to incorporating guest speakers into a course relies on a free app, as well as the camera and microphone found in most computers, though it is also helpful to conduct calls in classrooms equipped with special video conferencing technology. One of these calls was in fall 2016 with Gabrielle Rossmer Gropman and Sonya Gropman, mother and daughter co-authors of *The German-Jewish Cookbook* (Brandeis University Press, 2017). Talking with these authors provided students in "The German-Jewish Experience" a different way of considering the campus-wide "Year of Food." After reading an excerpt from the cookbook about Sabbath and holiday foods, students prepared advance questions about recipes and traditions relating to specific dishes. The class sampled several Jewish foods during the Skype call, thereby adding additional participatory elements to the lesson and reinforcing the conversation with something tangible.

Digitally savvy students enjoy using platforms that are already familiar to them as they learn about the past. The experience of interacting with German-Jewish topics through websites and apps becomes memorable precisely because it borrows from a nonacademic sphere of life. Some of the digital projects and media that work well for experiential learning also provide individuals and institutions with opportunities for social outreach beyond the classroom.

THE REACH OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

The ways in which many institutions have begun to promote the German-Jewish past on social media can be interpreted only as a form of activism. The goals of these social and political activist efforts are linked to the ongoing struggle against antisemitism, racism, homophobia, sexism, and other forms of oppression. Such forms of activism often rely on historical lessons by connecting the events of the past to the present moment, sometimes in the form of political commentary. By examining a few different uses of social media, we gain insight into why academic, educational, and other nonprofit institutions—as well as some individuals—rely on digital activism to achieve their desired impact. This type of activism ultimately serves as a vehicle for promoting the content generated by virtual archives and digital projects to much wider general audiences. When disturbing content is involved, its shock value can further contribute to the reach of digital activism.

The use of the German-Jewish past has attracted considerable media attention in recent years and is not uncontroversial. One of the most extreme cases is the social media presence of the nonprofit Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect

(@AnneFrankCenter), which since 2017 has regularly cited Anne's diary on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in its overt criticism of specific acts and policies of the Trump administration. According to Emma Green for the *Atlantic,* the Anne Frank Center's "more aggressive and hyperbolic" approach runs the risk of undermining Anne Frank's legacy by politicizing it. Green suggests that whether Anne Frank or her father Otto would have wanted her legacy politicized is of little consequence to the center, which does not necessarily deserve the authority it gains through the use of her name.[8] Yet it is undeniable that millions of people have seen and interacted with the center's social media posts relating to Anne Frank's history, and it is possible that the media attention Anne Frank's family regularly receives is partly a result of the center's work. As of 2020, the center has nearly 104,000 Twitter followers and over 115,000 Facebook followers, and its activism has been featured in dozens of news articles from publications across the political spectrum. Whether "authorized" or not, more people have begun to consider the German-Jewish past as they attempt to make sense of the tumultuous twenty-first century.

More established academic and educational institutions are able to make less controversial use of social media, as their work is widely received as scholarly even when it tends toward the political. However, even these institutions are not immune to criticism. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (@HolocaustMuseum; USHMM) leads the pack with 322,000 Twitter followers, 1,169,000 Facebook followers, and 105,000 Instagram followers. It regularly uses social media platforms to commemorate important dates and occasions (often with the hashtag #OTD, On This Day), protest immigration or refugee policies, or raise awareness about antisemitism, hatred, and genocide. Yet in summer 2019, the USHMM came under fire when it implicitly criticized U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's comparison of the U.S. government's immigrant detention centers to "concentration camps," which also used the phrase "Never Again." In response, the USHMM released a statement regarding its unequivocal rejection of Holocaust analogies; this prompted historians Andrea Orzoff and Anika Walke to pen an Open Letter asking the USHMM to retract its statement.[9] Within a few days, 580 scholars had signed the letter, which was circulated through Google Docs. Several weeks later, on July 18, the USHMM published a response that cautioned against "careless comparisons and simplistic equivalencies" but conceded that the Holocaust "can and should also be carefully analyzed for areas where there may exist some similarities with and differences from other events, both historical and contemporary, utilizing appropriate contextualization and avoiding simple answers to complex questions."[10] This debate took place almost entirely in publicly accessible online platforms. It demonstrates the enduring significance of German-Jewish history and the Holocaust for the future of American politics, particularly within a digital framework.

On a smaller scale, and often in German, the Jewish Museum Berlin (@jmberlin; 9,500 Twitter followers, 33,500 Facebook followers) uses social media for some similar purposes, including showcasing items in its collection that relate to current events. Its Twitter feed is notably more political than its Facebook page, and the use of Twitter has also led to recent controversies. For example, retweeted articles about the kippah that led to the antisemitic attack in Prenzlauer Berg in April 2018 contributed to the ongoing dialogue about whether it is safe for Jews to wear kippahs in public in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. But Twitter revealed its potential to bring about more severe consequences when Peter Schäfer, the director of the Jewish Museum Berlin, resigned after a tweet endorsing a petition against a motion defining anti-Israel boycotts as antisemitic. When institutions or their affiliates use social media for activist purposes, they risk negatively impacting how the public engages with representatives of the German-Jewish past. Some institutions therefore tend to be more cautious in digital spheres. The Leo Baeck Institute New York (@lbinyc), for example, tends to post articles about German-Jewish individuals, places, cultural texts, or traditions; most of the institute's regular social media posts are not as overtly political.

Not only institutions, but also individuals from celebrities to artists use websites and social media to inspire social change. One particularly noteworthy example is Israeli-German satirical artist Shahak Shapira's short-lived YOLOCAUST project (www.yolocaust.de; YOLO = You Only Live Once), which went viral and was viewed by over 2.5 million people within one week in January 2017. The project used Photoshop to superimpose twelve selfies and other photographs taken at the Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe onto graphic images of the victims of Nazi death camps. Its goal was to call attention to the inappropriate and disrespectful ways many visitors interact with this massive memorial, which since its inauguration in 2005 has become part of the topography of central Berlin. Shapira found the photos on public social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Tinder, Grindr) and gave the photos' subjects the opportunity to request the removal of their images; all twelve of them contacted him within a week to have their photos removed. This sharply critical project supposedly reached as many as 100 million people due to the extensive media coverage it received. Through a combination of shocking satire, creative image manipulation, and incisive social criticism, Shapira persuaded his viewers to reflect on appropriate ways to commemorate the Holocaust.

Digital media provided Shapira a platform for calling attention to the potential consequences for sharing images that disrespect the Jewish past. His work serves as a warning of the Internet's power to publicize seemingly private acts of disrespect—as well as acts of hate. To be sure, Shapira's own activism is at times also offensive and his techniques of exposing and shaming individuals and corporations are as rife with controversy as with good intentions. (In August 2017, he spray-painted hateful

tweets on the pavement near Twitter's Hamburg headquarters for his #HeyTwitter campaign.) Still, with 187,000 Twitter followers and over 132,000 Facebook followers—and Internet-related projects that reportedly have managed to reach 250 million people all told—Shahak Shapira has found ways to win what he terms "The Race for Attention" on several occasions.[11]

Institutions and activists who seek to reach a broader audience have much to learn from Shapira's stunts, as well as from the social media practices of such institutions as the Anne Frank Center. Successful outreach campaigns do not shy away from controversy; in fact, they benefit from shock value. Yet some of these politically motivated initiatives go awry. The German-Jewish past contains no shortage of events and incidents that provoke reactions of disgust, horror, anger, and fear, and references to these events tend to elicit strong responses. In this digital age of oversaturation and clickbait, one way to draw the public's attention to the past is to amplify it online in controversial and innovative ways.

STREAMING HISTORY TO ENTERTAIN THE MASSES

Whereas one previously needed access to a television and certain cable networks to enjoy cutting-edge trends in home entertainment, popular new streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon, and Sky now bring representations of the past to everyone with Internet access. In fact, Millennials have notoriously "cut the cord" and cancelled their cable subscriptions in favor of streaming television—and many members of Generation Z rely largely on streaming services. Historical dramas are all the rage and in the past few years several German-language television series have joined the ranks of such period dramas as *Downton Abbey* and *The Crown*. Two seasons (16 episodes) of the German series *Babylon Berlin* reached international audiences in late 2017 and 2018, and a third season was released in early 2020 (12 episodes; the third season is not discussed here). American audiences, too, have become obsessed with this crime series, set in the final years of the Weimar Republic, which is the most expensive non-English-language television drama series ever made.[12] The series is based on Volker Kutscher's bestselling novels, including *Der nasse Fisch* (2008), and was created by Tom Tykwer, Achim von Borries, and Henk Handloegten. In May 2018, I had the privilege of discussing how *Babylon Berlin* connects to my book, *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (University of Michigan Press, 2017), in conversation with film scholar Noah Isenberg at the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. The LBI sold roughly 100 advance tickets for this event, due in part to the popularity of the suspenseful *Babylon Berlin*. The potential mass audience for streaming television

dramas far exceeds the readership of most academic scholarship and presumably also surpasses the potential audience of bestselling books and hit films, at least in the immediate sense. When audience size is of the essence, the best way to maximize the reach of the lessons of the German-Jewish past is to teach them through the mass medium de rigueur, which in this case is streaming television.

Jews are not foregrounded in most episodes of the first two seasons of *Babylon Berlin*, but their limited presence plays a significant role nonetheless.[13] This mainstream drama neatly embeds German-Jewish topics in its story without overemphasizing them. The plotline of the first two seasons, set in 1929, makes it impossible to ignore the growing tensions between political factions, as well as the fact that Jews are located at the heart of several conflicts. Still, some scholars have pointed to the omission of (other) Jewish characters as troubling and historically inaccurate.[14] The central Jewish character is Councillor August Benda (played by Matthias Brandt; perhaps loosely based on Bernhard Weiss), a Social Democrat and the head of the Berlin Political Police.[15] His Jewishness is made explicit in the sixth episode of the first season; we learn that Benda comes from a Jewish family and refuses to be baptized. Additional references to Benda's Jewishness can be found throughout the first two seasons: a number of menorahs on display in the interior of the Benda home (episode 7 and others); his strong preference for (kosher) sausages from the Scheunenviertel, the largely East European Jewish district near Alexanderplatz (episode 8); his use of a Yiddish expression—"*A leyb hot nit moyre far keyn flig*" (A lion is not afraid of a fly)—while conversing with Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, who claims his wife often uses the same phrase (episode 11); and Benda's tragic death when he becomes the target of an antisemitic plot carried out by a group of Nazis who turn his own maid, Greta Overbeck (Leonie Benesch), against him (episode 15). Benda is a generally likeable central character with whom viewers might sympathize. It is telling that the only obviously Jewish main character dies because of an act of deception perpetrated by someone he trusts. If nothing else, the first two seasons of *Babylon Berlin* teach that, with the rise of the Nazi Party, even the most seemingly benevolent average citizen could easily be turned against his or her Jewish neighbors or employers.

Although August Benda is the only explicitly Jewish character of note, the first two seasons of *Babylon Berlin* incorporate a few other subtle allusions to Jewishness that provide insight into exactly how Jews and Jewishness might have been relevant for the average resident of Weimar Berlin on an everyday basis. Police inspector Gereon Rath (Volker Bruch) lives for a time in a boarding house alongside journalist Samuel Katelbach (Karl Markovics), who writes for the historically significant left-wing journal *Die Weltbühne* and is thus coded as Jewish on several levels (name, appearance, profession, left-wing political leanings). Katelbach serves as a constant reminder of the perceived influence of Jews via liberal journalistic outlets. Described by historian

Peter Pulzer as the profession most "completely dominated by Jews," journalism was a field in which many Jews built successful careers.[16] Due to the prominent role of many Jews in liberal and left-wing publishing, this sector was slanderously termed the "*Judenpresse*." Throughout the series, Katelbach's articles represent this sector and indeed attempt to check the power of the political right, including those with close ties to the German military.

Other references to Jews in *Babylon Berlin* offer nuanced historical lessons by calling attention to well-known antisemitic stereotypes. In a rant about Berlin's downsides, the pharmacist at Severin pharmacy, where Gereon Rath obtains his illicit preparations, rattles off a long list: "the construction sites, the millions of visitors, the Jews, the hacks, the prices, only ugly women" (episode 7). Jews are depicted here as an unavoidable part of the urban landscape, and one that many Berlin residents regarded as a disadvantage. The one brief visual allusion to East European Jews in the very first episode of *Babylon Berlin*—an image of several Hasidic Jews in fur-trimmed *shtreimel* hats strolling near Alexanderplatz—reminds viewers of the highly visible position of traditionally clad East European Jews, as well as the major roles Jews played in the garment and fur industries. Later, when aspiring inspector Charlotte Ritter's (Liv Lisa Fries) mother dies, Charlotte's sister Ilse finds a wedding dress that their mother claimed she had long since taken "to the Jew," and Ilse suggests that "the Jew" will still give them a good price for the valuable prewar material (episode 10). Jews were indeed responsible for a disproportionately large portion of the trade in secondhand clothes in interwar Berlin. This relatively benign association of Jews with clothing dealers emerges again in a different, defamatory context, with the representation of the historical "fur coat affair" of Mayor Gustav Böß, who was accused of embezzling funds to buy his (Jewish) wife a fur coat in conjunction with the Sklarek brothers scandal (episode 15). By crosscutting between scenes that emphasize stereotypes about Jewish women and opulence, to scenes in which Benda is killed by a bomb planted in his elegant home, the first two seasons leave no doubt that Jews were targeted for their wealth and positions of power in the late Weimar years.

If we take *Babylon Berlin* as a prime example of how streaming television can reach and educate mass audiences, we get a sense of what will be possible in the increasingly digital age to come. Those who could benefit from learning about the German-Jewish past—students, activists, social media users, television viewers—require two separate things to engage with it: (1) something that captures their initial interest, from an interesting-sounding course to a provocative news article, trailer, or review; and (2) simple and engaging means of accessing information, for example, an attractively constructed digital history project, a well-crafted social media post, or a highly addictive form of streaming media. It seems obvious that more scholars should use social media to share their research and also incorporate more media into their teaching,

but perhaps scholars should go further and prioritize collaborating on digital projects, serving as consultants for television or film projects, or even writing their own screenplays. For the past to remain relevant, it must also go digital.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey Shandler, *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors' Stories and New Media Practices* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 4.

2. Gail Twersky Reimer, "Remarks Delivered upon Receiving the Lee Max Friedman Award at the American Jewish Historical Society's 2014 Biennial Scholars Conference," *American Jewish History* 99, no. 1 (January 2015): 93–98, here 97.

3. Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," Pew Research Center Fact Tank, January 17, 2019. https://www.pewresearch .org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins.

4. Notably, *Forbes* contributor Neil Howe has written about the "Homeland Generation," which in his view includes people born in 2005 or later. See Neil Howe, "Introducing the Homeland Generation (Part 1 of 2)," *Forbes*, October 27, 2014, https://www.forbes .com/sites/neilhowe/2014/10/27/introducing-the-homeland-generation-part-1-of-2 /#6eb70bfa2bd6.

5. The citywide 2013 exhibition included museum exhibitions and an open-air exhibition of posters displayed prominently in such public spaces as subway stations and Potsdamer Platz. See Moritz van Dülmen, Wolf Kühnelt, Björn Weigel, and André Schmitz, *Zerstörte Vielfalt. Berlin 1933–1938–1945: Eine Stadt erinnert sich* (Berlin: Kulturprojekte Berlin, 2013).

6. Conversation with William Weitzer at the Leo Baeck Institute, New York on May 15, 2018.

7. Jason Lustig, "Why 1938 Matters Today with Frank Mecklenburg," *Jewish History Matters*, March 11, 2018, http://www.jewishhistory.fm/why-1938-matters-today-with -frank-mecklenburg.

8. Emma Green, "Who Does the Anne Frank Center Represent?," *The Atlantic*, April 24, 2017, http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/04/anne-frank-center/524055.

9. See the "Statement Regarding the Museum's Position on Holocaust Analogies," June 24, 2019, https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/statement -regarding-the-museums-position-on-holocaust-analogies. The open letter was published online as well: Omer Bartov, Doris Bergen, Andrea Orzoff, Timothy Snyder, and Anika Walke, et al., "An Open Letter to the Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum," New York Review of Books Daily, July 1, 2019, https://www .nybooks.com/daily/2019/07/01/an-open-letter-to-the-director-of-the-holocaust -memorial-museum.

10. "The Role and Relevance of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," July 18, 2019, https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/the-role-and -relevance-of-the-museum.

11. Shahak Shapira, "The Secret of Going Viral: TEDxVienna," TEDx Talks on YouTube, November 17, 2017, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60d-u0PYMiU.

12. Noah Isenberg, "Voluptuous Panic," *The New York Review of Books Daily*, April 28, 2018, http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/04/28/voluptuous-panic.

13. There are numerous references to Jews in the third season that are not discussed in this essay. It is possible that Jews will play an even more central role in later seasons of *Babylon Berlin*, particularly if a fourth season is based in part on the third book by Volker Kutscher, *Goldstein: Gereon Raths dritter Fall* (2010).

14. See especially historian Darcy Buerkle's comments in the forthcoming *Babylon Berlin* Forum in *Central European History*, edited by Veronika Fuechtner and Paul Lerner.

15. Bernhard Weiss, the Jewish vice president of the Berlin police, plays a more prominent role in later books by Volker Kutscher; in contrast, August Benda dies at the end of season two of the series.

16. Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (London: Peter Halban, 1988), 13.