Remapping German-Jewish Studies: Benjamin, Cartography, Modernity

"The silence of that hyphen does not pacify or appease anything, not a single torment, not a single torture."
—Jacques Derrida (11)

I. Mapping Mobility: The German/Jewish Dialectic

Much has been said about the little hyphen that simultaneously separates and binds together the terms "German" and "Jewish." Does the hyphen separate two independent identities and histories, or does it link them to one another in a deep and perhaps inevitable way? To what extent—at least in the modern era—did that which is German constitute that which is Jewish, and, recursively, to what extent did the Jewish constitute the German? And what about the very field of "German-Jewish studies," which, at its core, investigates the German Jews themselves: Did they suffer from irreconcilable loyalties, bifurcated identities, and oppositional tendencies? Or, did they manage, however precariously and tentatively, to unite, bridge, and fuse together these two traditions—one humanist and one religious, one religious and one humanist—into a single soul? And beyond this "inner" symbiosis, did the relationship between Germans and German speaking Jews attain the level of a productive dialogue or was it, in Gershom Scholem's famous assessment, nothing more than a delusional fantasy?\(^1\) Indeed, as Paul Mendes-Flohr has succinctly and cogently articulated, "the dialectics of German-Jewish spiritual history will be determined by this 'and' [between German and Jewish]—for although a simple particle of speech, this conjunction is not unambiguous" (75). While the hyphen may certainly signify "and," it opens up an array of possible meanings, ambiguities, relationships, and tensions in which the two terms move with respect to one another, in which they receive variousvaluations and inflections, even, at times, blurring together. We must pause—and keep pausing—on the hyphen because the connection between the two terms is far from symmetrical, stable, or obvious.\(^2\)
Within the field of German-Jewish studies, a significant body of scholarship has probed the psychic depths, fractured identities, and torn affiliations of German and Jewish thinkers like Varnhagen, Heine, Cohen, Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Arendt, Adorno, and others, while variously acknowledging and sometimes revitalizing critical moments of German-Jewish dialogue and friendship, such as that between Lessing and Mendelssohn. More recently, attention has begun to turn to what I call the deep—and decidedly tenuous—entanglements between German intellectual, cultural, and social history and Jewish intellectual, cultural, and social history. Here, I mention Peter Eli Gordon’s work on the “intimate commonality of ideas” between thinkers as seemingly divergent from one another as Heidegger and Rosenzweig (xxii), or Atina Grossman’s triangulated history of occupied Germany, in which she proposes an “entangled approach” that not only “de-Germanize[s]” German history by foregrounding “multiculturalism and heterogeneity” but also “cut[s] through the persistent division between German history and the history of Jews in Germany” (13). My own attempts to map moments of encounter within modern German-Jewish intellectual and cultural history are grounded in the idea that German modernity and Jewish modernity are deeply, precariously, and indissociably intertwined (Presner, Mobile Modernity; Muscular Judaism).

Perhaps, then, the little hyphen conceals too much, eliding the complexities and specificities of the relationship, not to mention the ways in which this modernity is constituted by the very interactions between German and Jewish. To underscore and revitalize this complexity, what if we began by drawing more attention to the relationship, by replacing the hyphen between German-Jewish with a slash, referencing the history of deconstruction and attempts to ground the meaning of the separatrix in various (and decidedly problematic) claims to truth, stable ontological identity categories, or uncontaminated and discrete histories? The slash between German/Jewish treats the two terms as dialectically and chiasmically related, presenting the terms in an unresolved tension, an indefinite and infinite back-and-forth, which is never resolved into a third or higher term. My contention is that “the Jewish” is not outside of or opposed to “the German,” but that the two terms are already contained within one another, co-constitutive, and deeply entangled. There is no pure German or timeless geography or history of Germany; rather there is only contamination of German with Jewish, Jewish with German. The challenge, then, becomes how to perform this entanglement: In what medium and with what methodology might we conceptualize, articulate, and probe the history of this modernity?

One approach, which I first explored in Mobile Modernity, is to imagine structuring a narrative around a group of dialectical encounters between German and Jewish thinkers, for example, Heidegger/Celan, Goethe/Kafka, Hegel/Heine, List/Herzl, Heidegger/Arendt, and Sebald/Freud. An encounter
does not necessarily refer to an actual meeting or a “dialogue,” especially if the term is limited to a conversation between two people who, in the critical words of Scholem, “listen to each other, who are prepared to perceive the other as what he is and represents, and to respond to him” (62). These encounters did not occur on even ground, nor were they dialogical in the sense that one learns from and comes to terms with the other. My primary concern, however, is not with the debate about whether “the German-Jewish dialogue” actually took place, as dialogue is simply too narrow a description for these relationships. Sometimes the thinkers in question did actually meet or correspond; sometimes one thinker “reads”—and in so doing reworks—the other; sometimes there are discursive conditions of possibility or intellectual commonalities that enable certain chiasmic, transhistorical, conceptual affinities; and sometimes the relationship is an imaginary encounter, a counterfactual meeting orchestrated from the standpoint of the present. In each case the separatrix between German and Jewish marks the relationship as dialectical and entangles the terms, their histories, and their places of encounter within one another.

In the introduction to The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered, Klaus Berghahn argues that despite “the contradictions, illusions, and failures of Jewish emancipation and/or assimilation in Germany, there is still the possibility of historicizing the German-Jewish experience and restoring the German Jews as key figures in German culture” (2). While I agree with this assessment and its implicit negation of the model of failed dialogue, I think we must go much further than simply “historicizing” the Jews in German modernity and “restoring” their place, something that essentially amounts to a retrospective project of historicization and commemoration. My provocation is more fundamental: German modernity is always already German/Jewish modernity. The two are inextricably and fundamentally linked. To reinsert the Jews into “German culture” would be to imply that they can be truly removed. In other words, there is no such thing as German modernity pure and simple; instead “German” is always mixed together, for better and for worse, in splendor and in horror, with “Jewish.” In this regard, the signifier “German/Jewish” draws attention to the movements, slippages, and tensions of this modernity.

Rather than proceeding chronologically, the dialectic of German/Jewish modernity opens up onto a geographic narrative that foregrounds places of encounter and mobility. What would it mean to plot German/Jewish intellectual history onto the transnational space of the railway system? What if intellectual history was organized like a geographical network, beginning, for example, at two sites—Berlin’s Anhalter Bahnhof and the Greek island of Delos—with Celan and Heidegger reflecting on places of memory after the Holocaust? From there, we might travel to the University of Berlin in the winter semester of 1822–23, with Heine attending Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of world history, or to the end of the nineteenth century to witness an
imaginary meeting of German railway pioneer Friedrich List and the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl. The railway system begins to function as an overdetermined symbol and material site for investigating German/Jewish modernity, allowing us to produce a new, deterritorialized map marked by the multiplicity of places of contact, interconnectedness, and contention. The geographic contours might stretch between Berlin, Delos, Sicily, New York City, the North Sea, Nuremberg-Fürth, Palestine, Auschwitz, Vienna, Prague, Antwerp, Paris, among countless other places. Far from a final, definitive, or complete mapping, this is merely one possibility of emplotting the dialectic of German/Jewish modernity.

In his studies of the semantics of historical time, Reinhart Koselleck has shown that “modernity” (Neuzeit) signaled the arrival of a specifically “new time,” representing both a new period and a reconfiguration of temporality. Time was no longer considered eschatological—the future already determined—but was newly imagined as a space of possibility, openness, and unfixedness. Koselleck chose the two terms “Space of Experience” (Erfahrungsraum) and “Horizon of Expectation” (Erwartungshorizont) in order to demonstrate how the presence of the past became distinguished from the presence of the future (Koselleck, Futures Past). Concepts like progress, acceleration, and revolution (the latter no longer strictly in terms of revolutio or “return” but now “rupture”) were only possible with the invention of a future-oriented view of the passage of time, one that facilitated the demarcation of one temporal period as qualitatively different from and better than another. In effect, this shift from an eschatological predetermination to an open space of possibility inaugurated a new approach to the temporalization of events and the practice of writing history. History—at least at the start of the nineteenth century—was no longer the collecting of knowledge but became the charting of progress, the designation of development, advancement, and evolution over time.

While Koselleck draws our attention to the temporal axes of modernity, he gives little attention to its geographic or spatial dimensions, despite the use of terms such “space of experience” and “horizon of expectation” to articulate this reconfiguration of the world. This neglect of space is something that postcolonial scholars have widely addressed, arguing that empire-building, industrial capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism comprise the spatial ideology of modernity. When Edward Said wrote Culture and Imperialism in the early 1990s, he justifiably maintained that “most cultural historians, and certainly all literary scholars, have failed to remark the geographical notation, the theoretical mapping and charting of territory that underlies Western fiction, historical writing, and philosophical discourses of the time” (58). According to Said, cultural criticism needs to “affirm both the primacy of geography and an ideology about the control of territory” (78). While Koselleck is right to speak of the newness of time during this period, for critics such as Said, Paul Gilroy,
and Arjun Appadurai, modernity cannot be understood apart from geography since nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism make up the spatial matrix of modernity.\textsuperscript{5} Gilroy's "black Atlantic" and Appadurai's "global ethnoscapes," for example, are two important geographic studies of the interconnected, transnational "new space" (Neuraum) of modernity that have come in Said's wake. The present essay explores what the complicated interplay between Neuzeit and Neuraum means for the study of German/Jewish modernity.

Inspired by Paul Gilroy's approach to studying the transnational spaces of encounter of the "black Atlantic," I suggest that we analyze the interlinked, trans-cultural and trans-historical spaces of German/Jewish modernity. Like the "black Atlantic," the spaces of German/Jewish modernity are marked by and inscribed with bodies traversing places, from the mass migrations of Jews westward during the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century to the transnational swath of Yiddish modernism from its eastern-European roots to Western Europe, north America, and Israel. These embodied geographies comprise a "rhizomorphic, fractal structure" (Gilroy 4) that stretches across and connects together nations, cultures, languages, and bodies. At the heart of such spaces of mobility is the dialectic: Discovery, enlightenment, and migration also entailed conquest, enslavement, and deportation. Indeed, the railway (like the ship) is a fundamentally dialectical construction; everything runs in both directions at once. New technologies of networking not only meant global connection and exchange but also brought about the conditions of possibility for exploitation and deportation.

Rather than forming a cultural history organized by the linearity and procession of time, such an argument rests on the significance of mobility, underscoring the places of encounter, exchange, and contamination between German and Jewish. Because the argument is not linear, we cannot proceed "from" a certain period "to" a certain period. At the same time, we cannot restrict ourselves to Germany as a preexisting territorial unit of reference because the argument is not based on or limited to nationality. The study of these intertwined histories, languages, and geographies becomes deterritorialized and re-mapped according to new constellations, figures, and sites of movement and contact. This has several important theoretical consequences: First of all, in shifting attention away from chronology, it becomes impossible to trace lines of development or continuities. Connections are not made according to the necessity of succession but rather according to the contingency of geography and the possibility of mobility. This means that a cultural geography is radically fractured, discontinuous, and incomplete. At the same time that succession is given up, it also becomes impossible to assign modality or direction to historical events. Geographies of simultaneity or constellations of possibility are the result. The remapping of German/Jewish intellectual history reveals that German modernity cannot be understood without its Jewish other and that Jewish modernity cannot be understood without its German other.
This method owes a significant debt to Walter Benjamin's anti-developmental, materialist approach to thinking about historical processes, one that begins and ends with the ruins of modernity, the debris of modern culture (from arcades and railway stations to panoramas and exhibition houses). It is out of these ruins—layered on top of one another like "Zeitschichten," (time-layers) or sedimented palimpsests—that we can compose a cultural geography of the hopes and catastrophes, possibilities and pitfalls of German/Jewish modernity. In so doing, histories become proliferated as inter-twining layers, making it possible to tell more than one story at the same time, or any number of possible stories. This does not mean that "anything goes" or that "what actually happened" no longer matters; instead, it gives way to richly interactive, multiplied stories in which the singularity of narrative succession has been abandoned. This, it seems to me, opens up a possible future for German/Jewish Studies: As the mapping (not only of the past but also of the present and of the future) of temporally layered sites of encounter and spaces of movement.

This study of modernity as mapping mobility allows us, then, not only to consider the complex ways in which the two terms, German and Jewish, are dialectically connected and moving with respect to one another, but also to foreground embodied encounters, networks, and spatiality for the study of history. In fact, the term "mobility studies" was coined by Stephen Greenblatt to describe a critical trend already afoot in literary and cultural studies to re-focus on questions of diaspora and displacement, including "colonization, exile, emigration, wandering, contamination, and unexpected consequences" (62). Greenblatt was referring to what he called the restless and unpredictable movements of languages and literatures, in which contingent interactions and oftentimes violent encounters form the conditions of possibility for cultural production and diffusion. We might see German/Jewish studies as an emblematic site for performing mobility studies, especially insofar as it dovetails with the work of postcolonial studies, the emphasis on geography for the analysis of cultures in transit, and the recent critical interest in non-national spaces of encounter such as the sea, the railway system, and even the world wide web. German/Jewish studies, it seems to me, has always been about movement, migration, wandering, exile, exchange, encounter, and contamination.

Whether the railway system or the web, the very structure of a network—its interconnectedness, its acentric openness, its infinite number of possible connections—allows us to underscore the significance of space and embodiment as well as reflect upon the very media in which historical studies are produced. "Mobility studies" requires an attention to moving bodies, an employment of the places traversed, and a visualization of narratives of dislocation, encounter, and dispersal. We might ask: What if history was no longer written (at least not exclusively) in linear prose but composed like the net-
PRESNER: Benjamin

worked spaces of a railway system? What if the past was mapped onto and along streets, neighborhoods, and territories; what if culture was reconnected to place? What if mobility—the movement of bodies in space and through time—was the fundament of "emplacing" German/Jewish studies? How might other kinds of visualizations and media—whether cartographic, filmic, or web-based—not only extend but potentially disrupt the normative medium of print, perhaps giving way to a more open, transient, flexible, and multilayered environment for conceptualizing and composing historical studies?

II. The Cartographic Imaginaries of German/Jewish Modernity

Figure 1. Screenshot of 1926 Pharus Map of Berlin from HyperCities. The map is slighted tilted due to the geo-referencing.

To begin to answer these questions, we need to start concretely with cartographic representational practices. Let me begin with a Pharus map of Berlin from 1926 [Figures 1 and 2]. It is an extraordinarily detailed, five-colored, ink-printed map of Berlin, which depicts nearly all the streets in the city center, bound by Charlottenberg in the west, Pankow in the north, Tempelhof in the south and Friedrichshain in the east. What is immediately striking about the map is the prominence given to significant German architectural monuments and transportation networks (including railways, subways, and express roads). The former are represented as miniature, three-dimensional models, rendered in black ink and dusted with a brownish-gold tint: The Reichstag, the Siegessäule, the Schloss, the Berliner Dom, Gendarmenmarkt, and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, among others. And over the map,
we see railway stations rendered in red with their connecting lines spread out across the city. Interestingly, the main stations—Potsdamer, Anhalter, and Lehrter—have accompanying signs indicating their possible destinations both in Germany and beyond: Cologne, Frankfurt, Munich, and Hamburg, but also Paris, Basel, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. Not only is Berlin connected to an international network of cities throughout central and western Europe, but one can travel to these cities in any order one wants: From the Anhalter train station, Basel comes before Leipzig, and Munich comes before Dresden. As part of an interconnected network, they do not demand a definitive order or a unitary direction; instead, they can be experienced in any number of new temporal and spatial configurations.

Figure 2. Close up of 1926 Pharus Map with Potsdamer and Anhalter train stations indicated with their possible destinations.

Benjamin surely saw maps like this, maybe even this one, as Pharus printed the most popular folding maps during the 1920s and '30s, and is especially well-known for its pocket-sized maps of Berlin. In fact, Benjamin references a Pharus map in passing in his city montage, One-Way Street, a text that was completed in the same year, 1926, and uses the street as its organizing principle. But unlike the Pharus Map, in which one can actually follow the procession of a street much like the movement of a flâneur, Benjamin's urban meditations do not easily map onto the city or its traditional, cartographic representations. In One-Way Street, for example, we begin at a filling station, before moving into a breakfast room, the Number 113, a visit to Goethe's house, memories of Chinese curios, the Mexican embassy, and a construction site. While many of these vignettes may have been derived or distilled from the vast signifiers of the urban landscape (not unlike Alfred Döblin's Berlin Alexander-
PRESNER: Benjamin

platz)—"this space for rent," "Optician," "Lost-and-Found Office," "Post no bills!" and so forth—these signifiers certainly do not add up to produce a map that looks anything like the Pharus map. That is because Benjamin is concerned with things that are absent from the Pharus map: social and economic structures, childhood memories, emotions, fleeting images, tastes and smells, noises, textures, and other somatic experiences. One map is not more realistic or more accurate than the other; rather, we have different interpretative and symbolic systems for representing the spatio-temporal order of modernity: a planometric map and a mental map. Through various strategies of selection, visualization, and interpretation, both produce the space that they only ostensibly represent. Indeed, the Pharus map is part of a spatio-temporal order that stretches back at least to the eighteenth century and has become naturalized in its cultural redundancy, utilitarian value, and political efficacy: We have become used to looking at maps with a bird’s eye perspective, a grid-like organization of streets, framed boundaries, a clear coordinate system, planometric accuracy, and alignment to true north. The birth of cartographic reason is inextricable from the history of the territoriality of the nation-state, both its internal linkages and expansive—imperial and global—ambitions.

While the Pharus map abstracts and excludes the kinds of experiences that Benjamin privileges in all of his city reflections, it is organized by the logic of a particularly modern spatio-temporal system in which experience and expectation are both bound up and broken apart from one another. Every significant architectural monument and building is depicted in exactly the same way, as if to cast them all as part of the permanence of the past or the inheritance of history, what Benjamin calls, unsympathetically, "their enshrinement as heritage" (Benjamin, Arcades 473). The past is given value because it is inherited, and every structure, even the most recent, is endowed with the temporality of the oldest (in this case, the Schloss), a kind of leveling effect in which the non-simultaneous becomes simultaneous. What is far more relevant for Benjamin’s cityscapes and a central idea of the German/Jewish cultural geography that I am proposing are the non-simultaneous, fractured histories that co-exist as "time layers" in any given present. The critical question remains: How can such a map (and, thereby, the construction of its history and the history of what it represents) be re-animated—that is to say, opened to the infinite number of non-simultaneous histories contained in every street, structure, and building, the innumerable voices and bodies that made these histories through their interactions and contingent encounters in such spaces?

Before forging ahead with an attempt to answer this question, we should recognize the fact that there is another, decidedly modern spatio-temporal logic operating on the Pharus map: namely, the reconfiguration of space and time ushered in by the railway system. It would have made little sense to indicate Paris, Basel, Vienna, or even Leipzig and Hamburg on a Berlin map prior to
the mid-19th century. While these places could obviously be approached by carriage (something that easily took days), one didn't think of them as places already "in" Berlin. On this map, the railway stations are like worm-holes: One goes in and pops out in Paris. It is not coincidental, then, that Pharus privileged the railway system on the map (one doesn't see other network systems such as electricity grids or sewers, for example), as there was arguably no technology of modernity that had more of an impact on the reconfiguration of space and time than the railway.\textsuperscript{13} In 1843, with the opening of a number of major rail lines around Paris, Heine famously declared railways to be "providential events" because they "killed" space and intimated the coming death of time. He famously exclaimed:

Let us simply say that our entire existence is being ripped up and hurled on new tracks [\textit{neue Gleise}]; that new relationships, pleasures, and torments await us, and the unknown exerts its ghastly fascination, irresistible, and at the same time, fearful. ... Even the elementary concepts of space and time have become shaky. The railways have killed space, and only time still remains for us. If only we had enough money to respectfully kill time, too.\textsuperscript{14} (509)

Railways not only presented an unprecedented mobility, the first means of transportation, as Benjamin says, to move the masses, but they also became emblematic of the modern (Benjamin, \textit{Arcades} 602): This meant the "new time" (\textit{Neuzeit}) of modernity as both a break from the eschatological temporality of the past and the institution of a new, world standard time (something precipitated as early as 1842 in London with railway timetables); acceleration, progress, and speed as the mottos of the modern world; the rise of the secular but not without a significant debt to the theological; the creation of an interconnected, globalized world in which Paris could be in Berlin and vice-versa; the materiality of modernity—iron and glass structures built to showcase transcendental size, speed, and mobility; and, of course, this world's destructive capacities.\textsuperscript{15} As I have argued in much more depth in \textit{Mobile Modernity}, becoming modern meant building railways, and to this extent, the German/Jewish experience of modernity—migration, exile, wandering, exchange, encounter, deportation—is fundamentally imbricated in the mobility of the railway system, its hopes and splendor in the nineteenth century as well as its horror and catastrophe in the twentieth.

This dialectic is something that punctuates Benjamin's writings in exile, as he constructs a commemorative, imaginative geography of German places no longer occupied by Jewish bodies. In 1932, having already left Germany, Benjamin imagines setting his life out on a map. Exile becomes a site of displacement from which to imagine another history as well as to map out his own life. In the early drafts that he made for his chronicle of Berlin, he writes: "I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life—bios—graphically on a map. First I envisaged an ordinary map, but now I would incline to a general staff’s map of a city center, if such a thing existed"
(Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle" 596). He then goes on to mention things he would mark in his "system of signs" as a kind of classification scheme or legend: houses of friends and girlfriends, assembly halls, hotel and brothel rooms, benches in the Tiergarten, prestigious cafes, and what he calls "street images" from "lived Berlin" (597). The idea of setting these out in a General Staff’s map is striking, as these kinds of maps—following the metric system and indicating relief in an exact way—only became widespread in the nineteenth century as part of military campaigns. Such maps included topographical features of the landscape and terrain as well as information about populations and transportation networks, especially railways. The first Prussian General Staff maps were produced in 1841, only six years after the first railways opened in Germany. They would be widely used in the three wars leading up to Germany’s unification in 1871 (Corvisier 113–14). As far as I know, no such map of Benjamin’s life has surfaced, although one could certainly argue that all of his experimental writings on travel and urban space (from the early city portraits to the Arcades Project) were not only attempts to map his life but also to think through what it might mean to write history in graphic form, to map culture and spatialize history, to bring together the experience, representation, and production of space.16 It is an avowedly non-mimetic, anti-developmental, non-linear model of imagining history as places to be mapped, one which is rooted in exile, displacement, and the dis-embodiment of the German/Jewish experience.

In recollecting “images” of his childhood in Berlin, Benjamin pauses on one train station in Berlin in particular. The Anhalter Bahnhof was the largest, most expensive, and most opulent station in Europe when it was rebuilt and opened to the public in 1881. He writes: “The Anhalter terminus [refers to] the mother cavern of railroad stations, as its name suggested—where locomotives had their abode and trains were to stop [anhalten]. No distance was more distant than the one in which its rails converged in the mist” (“Berlin Childhood” 387). To Benjamin the railway was the reality of that marvelous and equally dubious nineteenth-century dream of progress characterized by, among other things, the possibility of connecting to a faraway place; it is where he recollects leave-taking from the city and arrival back at his childhood home. The Anhalter was also where Franz Kafka arrived from Prague when he visited Felice Bauer in Berlin; it is where Paul Celan stopped over on his way to Paris from Czernowitz on the day after Kristallnacht. In the 1930s thousands of Jewish children were sent on trains from Berlin’s Anhalter Bahnhof to safety outside of Germany; and in 1941–42 the station was used to gather elderly Jewish “transports” who were deported to the concentration camp of Theresienstadt. Although the iron and glass roof of the station collapsed during one of the last bombing raids of Berlin, the station was not completely destroyed, and, after the war, trains began running again as of August of 1945. They continued to run until 1952 when the tracks were cut by the division of
Berlin and later by the erection of the Wall. After much debate the ruined station was razed in 1961. Most of its remains were disposed of in the early 1960s, except for part of the front portal and the southbound railway tracks. These tracks were left to the forces of nature since their last use on May 17, 1952. For more than five decades, birch trees grew between the ruined tracks. It was not until 2008 that the urban wasteland between the former Anhalter and Potsdamer train stations was finally cleaned up and reclaimed by the city of Berlin for another future (Flatau and Schmiemann).

In this highly constricted but deeply layered place, one can move diachronically—much like archaeological coring—through a remarkable band of German/Jewish history, tracing contingent moments of encounter, interaction, mobility, and destruction. Although no longer visible, each time-layer coexists in this stratified place, from which one can move forward or backward. At the same time, one can also proceed synchronically, stopping at a particular time and moving horizontally through space, noting the closeness of the Anhalter train station to other layered structures and streets in Berlin, such as the Gestapo Headquarters on Prinz Albrechtstrasse in 1944 or Felice Bauer’s home in 1912. In this sense, the time-layers of the Anhalter station open downward as well as laterally, calling up the possibility of an infinite number of stories and encounters. Like so many fraught, overdetermined places in Berlin, one discovers, in Benjamin’s words, “the crystal of the total event” (Arcades 461), the essential dialectics of German/Jewish modernity.

What would it mean, then, to produce a cartographic history of modernity, not simply a history of modernity in maps but rather a practice of history that was spatial, a way of understanding events and cultural encounters by plotting them onto maps? Could one begin to unpack the German/Jewish experience of modernity by examining the persistently geographic imaginaries in literature and philosophy, mapping snapshots of German/Jewish intellectual history onto the railway system? This line of thinking opens up an investigation of how modernity is not just a temporal designation (as in Neuzeit) but also a practice of cartographic reasoning, spatial representation, and geographic persuasion and control. We might call it Neuraum. I am less concerned with the relationship between Geschichte (what happened, in the sense of das Geschehen) and Historie, the narrative rendition of events, what Hayden White calls emplotment; instead, I want to think about what it would mean to turn “cultural history” into “cultural geography.” It was Michelet, after all, who famously declared that “history is first of all geography” (2). And so by “mapping” German/Jewish intellectual and cultural history, I mean this quite literally: by looking at maps, spatial imaginaries, and geographies of German/Jewish encounters in order to create a narrative that follows the expansive and particular spatial logic of a railway map, not unlike the “worm-hole” on the map that connects Berlin to Paris at the Anhalter Bahnhof in 1926. While Benjamin began with the arcade and the Paris of the
nineteenth century, we might start with the Anhalter train station and its ruins in present-day Berlin. The resulting deterritorialized map of German/Jewish modernity—a diffusion of bodies, languages, and cultures—would yield many possible mappings, for the spatial narrative opens up in many directions and depths at once.

If one takes space (rather than time) as the prerequisite of historical narrative, it becomes impossible to write unidirectional, developmental stories; instead, there is a nearly infinite proliferation of perspectives, stories, interactions, and possibilities. What would it mean to produce a narrative that looked more like a railway system or web, with a multiplicity of connecting segments, branches, nodes, and possible pathways to get from 'here to there'? The result is a labyrinthine structure in which straying and contingency are the methodological starting points. The necessity of chronology, progress, teleology—or just the gentle, forward movement of a historical argument—gives way to spaces of possibility. It makes little sense to speak of 'before' or 'after' or necessity as a modality of movement; instead, we get temporally layered, spaces of possibility, marked by distance and proximity, contingency, simultaneity, and networks of connection. Not only can readers or viewers insert themselves into the "system" at multiple points and look for their own orientation, but the narratives themselves are multilayered, fractured, and open-ended. Cultural history—transformed into a practice of cultural geography—begins to look more like a railway system or a series of city maps with many possible intersecting streets and narratives. This seemingly absurd idea is really not that far from the historiographic methodology of the Arcades Project or the map Benjamin wanted to produce of his life. It is also the basis of Mobile Modernity and the companion digital cultural mapping project that I direct called HyperCities (http://www.hypercities.com). In the final section of this article, I will discuss HyperCities as a practice of German/Jewish mapping.

III. "HyperCities" as Cartographic History

Over the past few years, the analysis of cartographic reason within the fields of literary and cultural studies has grown substantially through Franco Moretti's plottings of space in literature (representations of space) and literature in space (the physical geographies of literary production), Fredric Jameson's cognitive mapping, the attention to spatial analyses in postcolonial scholarship, and the studies of the global spaces of capital in the work of Appadurai, David Harvey, Edward Soja, and many others. I have found much of this work quite satisfying and inspirational for my own thinking about the cultural geographies of German/Jewish modernity. But what seems to be missing is a media-specific analysis of the practice of history—perhaps
similar to Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*—in which *Geschichte* is disaggregated from the writing of history; in other words, a written narrative would be just one of many choices for producing history. One might make a map, a montage, a railway network, a series of paintings, a hypermedia website, or something else entirely. My own work within German/Jewish studies has been an attempt to proliferate narratives, to tell more than one story at a time, to overlay them on one another, to preserve their spaces of contingency, and to imagine both real and fictional spaces of encounter, mobility, and exchange.

Indeed, it is well-known that the *Arcades Project* attempted to create a new critical methodology for writing the cultural history of nineteenth century Paris by “[carrying] over the principle of montage into history” (*Arcades* 461). History was no longer to be a cumulative narrative of development articulated according to the linearity of chronology and print, but rather a constellation of dialectical images, saturated by the tensions and contradictions of the montage form. Although Benjamin does not fully articulate a media-specific analysis, the montage principle is both a recognition of the limitations of print and a meditation on the normative medium of the discipline of history. I imagine that Benjamin would have found the tools of new media, specifically the rhizomatic techniques of hypertext and the hypermedia possibilities of the web, especially well suited to “giving dates their physiognomy” (*Arcades* 476) and realizing what he called “the Copernican revolution in historical perception” (*Arcades* 883).

In the digital space of HyperCities, a kind of cultural archaeology of cartographic reason, the overlay functions as the pendant to Benjamin’s dialectic images that come together in an explosive tension. Tracing its historical genealogy back to “database” projects such as Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grossstadt* (1928) and Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (1928–40), the goal of HyperCities is to construct an interactive, web-based research and teaching platform for representing and studying the cultural, urban, and architectural history of layered city spaces. Unlike traditional models of cultural history, which proceed chronologically and take the linearity of print as a structuring principle, HyperCities is a digital-spatial network built around an ever-expanding geo-temporal database to probe, configure, and reconfigure the time-layers of a given city and its embodied places. The result is a spatialization of historical practice into “writerly” maps that, through their various annotations, form complex urban palimpsests.

Semantically, the term “HyperCities” accords with “hypertext” and “hypermedia,” coinages by the visionary media theorist, Theodor Nelson. In a seminal essay of 1965, “A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing, and the Indeterminate,” Nelson sketched out an open-ended, non-linear system for organizing, interlinking, and accessing information. A hypertextual structure, in his articulation, cannot be reduced to a single medium (such as print) and could grow and change as new information was added to the system. The
term "hypertext" thus refers to "a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper... Such a system could grow indefinitely, gradually including more and more of the world's written knowledge" (144). Anticipating the World Wide Web by nearly twenty years, Nelson called his invention the "Evolutionary List File," an interconnected, linked, hypermedia information system that could grow and proliferate as users added new material. As an open-ended authoring, curatorial, and annotation environment, HyperCities is founded on an analogous logic.26

Within the disciplines of geography and urban planning, "Hypercities" often refer to densely populated cities with more than twenty million inhabitants. While this definition is important for investigating urbanism and population dynamics, the HyperCities project focuses on the past, present, and future of cities. In this respect, HyperCities are much larger than twenty million inhabitants, since they connote the entire (largely erased or absent) history of a city—potentially every life, every structure, every street, every voice. Of course, it would be absurd to posit the resuscitation of the dead or pursue a naïve positivism (that the past can be fully recuperated or represented by the employment of technology); instead, HyperCities is about the possibility of telling stories, of narrating places, and of producing new configurations of knowledge in which every past, present, and future is a place.27 Not unlike the situationist remappings of European cities, then, HyperCities allows users to create and annotate maps, stories, symbolic systems, and navigation routes as well as rearrange historical maps and data on top of one another. A user might annotate part of a 1772 map of Berlin, place it on top of contemporary satellite imagery, and ask both factual and counterfactual questions: What if we overlay the Berlin Wall now [Figure 3]? We quickly see that nearly the entire city of Berlin would have been contained in the East had the Wall been erected then. More relevant for our discussion here, we might ask: What happened to the space and time of the city as it expanded, when new gates were erected and certain bodies entered and exited, such as Moses Mendelssohn first coming to Berlin through the infamous Rosenthaler Thor in 1743?28 In this emblematic German/Jewish encounter, we begin to recognize the contingency of history: Would it have been possible for Mendelssohn to have come a century earlier or later? What if he was permitted to enter the south side of Berlin rather than this single gate reserved for Jews and cattle? Where did he go and who did he encounter as he moved through a city that was slowly transforming into a crucible of German/Jewish thought? In what ways was his thinking about the German/Jewish enlightenment the product of his movement through this highly regulated urban matrix?

Beyond the emplottment of space-time dynamics on maps or an analysis of the cartographic imaginary through "close readings" of maps, HyperCities is an interactive, collaborative platform for commentary, destabilization, anno-
tation, remixing, and play. To annotate the missing places and people, the sites of erasure and oblivion, is to participate in a weakly redemptive practice of history, one in which narratives come together with places, that which has been comes together with the now. A Jewish peddler map might, for example, be set on top of a military map, illuminating sites of contact, exchange, and violence. Or, a user might toggle back-and-forth between the Judenhof in 1772 and the present day apartment courtyard and adjoining parking lot to reveal a disjunction that disturbs the quietness of historical oblivion. Of course, this is not about redeeming the fullness of the past (as if this was even worth pursuing or possible); rather, it is about a certain openness to the future, the adoption of a critical stance and perspective that destabilizes the groundedness of inherited meaning and preserves something that might have otherwise been unsaid or irrevocably lost. Again, I mean this quite literally: the ground itself, the emplacement of history, the past as place. Indeed, Berlin, like many other cities, is haunted by German/Jewish encounters—and most of them are unmarked, erased, and vanished.

Without wanting to essentialize or be reductive, I wonder, then, if there is something specifically “German/Jewish” about this kind of mapping, if there is at least a tradition or lineage in which the practice of spatializing history and proliferating texts and contexts can be placed? Of course, there is the Talmud, which, after all, is a space of commentary on commentary, a radical de-centering of text and the multiplication of voices and interpretations. In the German/Jewish context, the Berlin Salons were places for this kind of freedom, encounter, multiplication, and critique. And are Heine’s linguistic
doublings, wordplays, counter-histories and counter-mappings (for example, the Reisebilder) not part of this tradition of de-centering authority, of writing from the outside, of undermining and sliding together texts and contexts? There is also the dislocative history of Yiddish modernism—from Eastern-European shtetls to major metropolitan cities of the West—which is about the mobility, transnationality, and deterritorialization of languages, cultures, and bodies. Or perhaps Freud’s dream interpretation: When you map the dreams out (again, quite literally), do they not look strikingly like railway systems? Freud’s interpretation of his famous Jewish dream, “My Son, the Myops,” functions as a railway network with multiple nodal points, connected throughout the system, without a center, a beginning, an ending, or even borders. A virtually infinite number of possible routes exists to traverse a given distance in this acentric interpretative network. Everything is connected, but without converging at or diverging from a single point. In Freud’s words, interpretation—arguably the crux of German/Jewish studies—is a branching, multilayered spatial “meshwork” or “intricate network” without “any definite endings” (525). German/Jewish studies is the interpretation of embodied places of mobility and, hence, is necessarily cartographic, opening both synchronically and diachronically across temporal topographies.

In Philip Ethington’s apposite words: “Mapping is the form of interpretation that historians practice. Their hermeneutic operation is intrinsically cartographic, or possibly choreographic, for all life is movement, despite the conceptual utility (as in Benjamin) of freezing it photographically” (487). Indeed, the German/Jewish dialectic only comes to a standstill in constellation moments in which past and present form a finite, temporally arrested image. Of course, these images do not add up to produce a history; rather they begin to open up onto an infinitely expansive cartography, one that moves laterally at the same time as it moves downwards. Not unlike Derrida’s work of deconstruction, this mobile mapping of the interpretative process is infinite, eluding the groundedness of truth claims, the finality of history, and the stability of identity. I do not think it is coincidental that Benjamin wanted to map out his life while in exile and, to the extent that he did, he created mental maps of his childhood as sites of memory, places of critique, and imaginary encounters in the layered places of the cityscape. HyperCities is another attempt to create and preserve these entangled spaces of encounter and possibility, to map and remap both the present and the past for the sake of something yet to come. Such interpretative mappings and remappings, it seems to me, are the future of German/Jewish studies.

Notes

1 The term “inner” dialogue or symbiosis “within the mind of the Jew” comes from Mendes-Flohr 93–94. The literature on the question of “dialogue” and “symbiosis” is
enormous, and I will not review it here. Many of the salient deliberations are collected in Schulte, Reinharz and Schatzberg, and Berghahn.

2 Analogous questions with regard to "hyphenated" identities have been explored by thinkers such as Said and Derrida, both of whom pressed on the fault lines separating and binding together the categories of "Arab" and "Jew." In a late essay on the politics of separation, Said pointed to a paradox at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, namely the fact that "[drawing] lines between peoples whose cultures, histories, and geographic proximity cannot be separated" actually betrays the fundamental ways in which "the Other is always one of us, not a remote alien." (Said, "What Can Separation Mean?"). Among other places, Derrida explores the politics of the hyphen between Arab-Jew in Monolinguisim of the Other. For a fascinating cultural study of the intimacy and inseparability between Hebrew and Arabic, the Jew and the Arab, see Hochberg.

3 Again, the literature on these thinkers (and others) is enormous, and I cannot do it justice here. Suffice it to say some of the other works that have influenced my thinking include: Arendt, Gordon, Hess, Hohendahl, and Prawer.

4 In a thought-provoking, counterfactual argument, Spector asks the question of what modernism would look like "if purged of the historical presence of Jews" (627) —in other words, if Jews were completely removed from German culture and, more broadly, European modernism. He entertains a de Manian question of imagining texts "outside of the presumed overdetermined contexts of their authorship [i.e., their Jewish heritage]" (628). Spector wants to problematize the concept of "Jewish modernism" by arguing that it cannot be understood as a canon of works or register of authors, but rather "a way of thinking about oneself and one's place in relation to the past, the future, and creativity" (628).

5 Focusing on the cultural and political origins of the discipline of geography and modern cartography, Tang has recently shown how space, like time, was reconfigured at the end of the eighteenth century. Citing Koselleck's historical semantics (and their shortcomings), Tang articulates the geographic paradigm of modernity.

6 Koselleck argues that "the advantage of a theory [of history attuned to] time-layers consists in the fact that different speeds can be measured, accelerations or decelerations, thus making various phases of change visible, which demonstrate significant temporal complexity" (Zeitschichten, 22). It should not be forgotten that the German term for history (Geschichte) contains a spatial root (Schicht), which refers to geographic "layer" or socio-political "strata."

7 In addition to the work of Gilroy, I would also cite Cohen and Dever, Kaplan, Clifford, and Bhabha.

8 Within studies of historical and cultural geography, much attention has been paid to the distinction between "space," which has been thought of as absolute, empty, objective, and rationalized (such as by Kant) and "place," which is—quite problematically—considered to be secondary and something that is made or derived from space. My thinking about "place" owes much to the path breaking work of Casey, who argues that human beings are "ineluctably place-bound" by virtue of our bodies and because fundamentally "lived bodies belong to places" ("How to Get from Space to Place" 24). He maintains that human beings are "placelings" (more than "earthing"") ("How to Get from Space to Place" 19). For a more elaborate treatment of this argument, see The Fate of Place. In addition to Casey, see Hayden and Ethington.
9 Restoring the term “culture” to its etymological roots of cultivating, tilling, and inhabiting, Casey argues that “we must, finally, put culture back in place” because there is no other way of studying culture except by a recognition that it “is carried into places by bodies” (“How to Get from Space to Place” 34).

10 In his seminal book, *The Image of the City*, Lynch articulated the ways in which mental geographies (personal associations, memories, desires) meld with and even structure the physical geographies of the city.

11 On the development of planometric maps and the evolution of the bird’s eye perspective, see Harley and Woodward.

12 Wood argues that the history of cartography is inseparable from the history of the nation-state in *The Power of Maps*. For an overview of the history of “cartographic reason,” see Pickles and Harley.

13 Earlier maps of Berlin, such as those created after the end of the Thirty Years’ War, show the city as a fortification with a walled-in, star-like structure. By contrast, the maps of modernity, especially those created after 1850, show Berlin as an emerging network, with railway stations situated at nearly all the former city gates along the southern and eastern periphery of Berlin. For a wide-ranging discussion of this spatial transformation in modernity, see Mattelart.

14 I discuss this at more length in *Mobile Modernity* (58ff). The classic cultural and social history of the railway remains Schivelbusch, who also describes the “annihilation” of space and time.

15 For a compelling account of the conceptual history of “Neuzeit,” see Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*.

16 Such a project begins to approach the tripartite analysis of space as lived, perceived, and represented that Lefebvre articulated in his *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre argued that space is not an empty “container” awaiting meaning but is, instead, socially and economically produced and reproduced by people through particular spatial practices and representations.

17 As Ethington has elegantly argued in a recent manifesto, this “spatial turn” has been catalyzed by the significant upsurge of geographic argumentation in historical studies, especially through the influence of thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Casey, Edward Soja, and David Harvey. Ethington argues that “knowledge of the past... is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime” (“Placing the Past” 466). Ethington’s forthcoming spatial history of Los Angeles, *Ghost Metropolis*, is an innovative, geo-temporal narrative that is not only mapped onto historical cartographies of Los Angeles but—in its visual and semantic layout—forms new maps of the city, as sentences literally follow the twists and turns of city streets. Parts of it are available online in HyperCities.

18 Greatly influenced by Benjamin, Foucault, and Harvey, Gregory’s *Geographical Imaginations* explores the significant influence of “cartographic” and “geographic” thought on social and cultural theory.

19 For a further discussion of the “new space” of modernity, see my forthcoming article, “Hegel’s Philosophy of History via Sebald’s Imaginary of Ruins.” For a fascinating and wide-ranging study of the spatial axes of modernity, see Tang.

20 This is not to say that chronology is irrelevant; rather, it is to point to a historiographic practice in which the past is sedimented—as layers—into any given present. This thinking about history as “the map of the past” in which various “re-
regional regimes" are inscribed on top of one another owes much to the work of Ethington and his forthcoming history of Los Angeles, *Ghost Metropolis*. The quote comes from Ethington, ("Placing the Past" 485).

21 Originally called "Hypermedia Berlin," HyperCities is a web-based, collaborative mapping platform that facilitates the investigation and authoring of the invisible historical layers of city spaces. Begun in 2001, I sought to carry over the historiographic principles of the Arcades Project to the digital realm. After going through several digital iterations, HyperCities was awarded one of the first "digital media and learning" grants from the MacArthur Foundation/HASTAC in 2008. The project is currently directed by Todd Fresner, with six co-Principal Investigators (Dean Abernathy, Mike Blockstein, Philip Ethington, Diane Favro, Chris Johanson, and Janice Reiff) working on Berlin, Los Angeles, New York, Rome, Tel Aviv, Lima, and other cities. Earlier versions of the Berlin portion of the project were supported by a "digital innovation" award from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the UCLA Office of Instructional Development, the UCLA Faculty Senate Grants Program, the UCLA Center for Digital Humanities, and the Stanford Humanities Laboratory.

22 Some of the key studies include Moretti (1998 and 2005), Jameson, Appadurai, Harvey, and Soja.

23 Flusser and Danto have both argued that history is intimately connected with writing narratives and, hence, a specific product of print culture. I ask: What happens when print is no longer the normative or exclusive medium for producing historical studies? I've discussed possible answers to this question in two articles: "Hypermedia Berlin" and "Cultural History in the Age of New Media, or 'Is There a Text in this Class?'"

24 For analogous calls for "media-specific analysis" in the field of literary studies, see Hayles and McGann.

25 In addition to "Hypertext" and "Hypermedia," Nelson also proposed "Hyperfile," "Hyperfilm," and "Hyperspace."

26 For a comparative discussion of the genealogy of HyperCities via a conceptual framework built on the ideas of Lefebvre and Nelson, see Reiff.

27 Here, I am building on Ethington's pithy statement that "every past is a place," in: "Placing the Past" (483).

28 Attuned to the significance of this spatial boundary, Amos Elon begins his chronology of the destruction of German Jewry with the story of Mendelsohn entering the city of Berlin.

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