Jefferson S. Chase
Inciting Laughter

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The Development of "Jewish Humor" in 19th Century German Culture

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Nottingham, July 1999 Jefferson S. Chase

Contents

Let me make the superstitions of a nation and I care not who makes its laws or its songs either.

Mark Twain.

CHAPTER 1

Vicious Circles: *Judenwitz* as Stereotype and Strategy

It is a common assumption that laughter embodies national character. The English enjoy a special renown as a people of wit, for example, whereas Germans are often accused of possessing no humor whatsoever. Although those who are familiar with the latter group would dispute the truth of this comparison, the currency of such assumptions points up the deep connection between our understanding of humor and collective identity. The constellations of what can be found funny – and not – are as endless as the possibilities for culture itself. Indeed, they are an integral part of what we mean by the term "culture." Laughter – and its absence – not only reveal but enact distinctions of sameness and difference, selfhood and otherness, membership and exclusion. This book examines one particular such constellation: the association of Jewishness and destructive, satiric laughter in nineteenth-century Germany.

This idea of a special type of "Jewish humor" written in German but antitical to the values of mainstream German-language society was the product of its time, originating alongside the gradual legal emancipation and social integration of German-speaking Jews and the rise of freelance, oppositional journalism via the industrial press. Its development can be sketched with a pair of citations. In 1819, on the heels of an anti-Jewish pogrom in the region, the *Aarau Newspaper* would run an article arguing that "the export of jokes from Frankfurt should be strictly prohibited, and the shameless profiteers who have made a profitable business out of the desperate conditions of their fellow citizens must be either lynched or hanged".[1] [*Die Witzausfuhr von Frankfurt sollte streng untersagt sein, und jene schändlichen Wucherer, die aus der Not ihrer Mitbürger einen Gewerbezweig*

1 Quoted in Börne: *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 1041. – All quotations and titles of primary source works are translated into English with the German original given in italics directly thereafter. I depart from this practice in those cases where, in my judgement, no possibility for inter-linguistic misunderstanding exists. All translations are my own. Citations are given in the original language.

machen, müssen gehängt oder gehenkt werden.] The group of "profiteers" in question was identified as coming from "the local Jewry," which group was advised either to mend its ways and desist in the production of jokes, or to quit the region as quickly as possible. Similar protests later appeared with regularity in conjunction with three humorists of Jewish background – Moritz Saphir, Ludwig Börne and Heinrich Heine – who were involved in a number of personal feuds, censorship battles and other public controversies. The result was to reinforce the general association of Jewishness and malicious laughter, establishing it far beyond the realm of provincial editorial polemic. By 1895, the Goethe scholar and Berlin expert Ludwig Geiger can be found referring in a discussion of Saphir to "the humorous pun and that special sub-category of wit, which was distinguishable from others on the basis of its acerbity and extreme pointedness and which because of its common use by Jews came to be known as Jewish wit."[2] [*den Wortwitz und jene Abart von Witz, die durch ihre ätzende Schärfe, ihre stark zugespitzte Pointe sich von anderen unterschied und die, da sie häufig von Juden angewendet wird, als jüdischer Witz bezeichnet wurde.*] Though Geiger distanced himself from automatic associations of this kind, the majority of his contemporaries, Jews and Gentiles alike, uncritically accepted the idea of Jewish humor. By the end of the nineteenth century the assumption of what I will henceforth term *Judenwitz* had become standard in literary and cultural history, and its influence would continue unchallenged up until 1933 and into the Third Reich.[3]

The discourse surrounding Jewishness and humor was complex and often contradictory, containing truth and distortion, positives and negatives side by side. On the one hand, *Judenwitz* was rejected as illiterate, transparently commercial and therefore undeserving of serious attention; on the other, it was denounced as malevolent and dangerous, part of a conspiracy among malicious outsiders to "take over" German culture. To their detractors, Saphir, Börne and Heine were simultaneously juvenile, sadistic, lascivious, economically mercenary, "interested,"[4] and treacherously anti-German. Images of the *Judenwitzler* were coupled with the imagination and valorization of native society, invoked by empty buzzwords such as *Gemütlichkeit* ["coziness"] and *Kultur*, and associated with the cul-

2 Geiger: *Berlin 1688–1840*, p. 517.

3 See chapter 5, footnote 53.

4 On the idea of aesthetic "disinterestedness" as derived from Kant and Schiller, see Bürger: *Theorie der Avantgarde* and *Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik*.

tural achievements of Goethe and Schiller. As negatively charged as this discourse was, however, it did not function exclusively to the detriment of the writers in question. Along with the smear of tawdriness and illegitimacy, the tag *Judenwitz* also carried the promise of the sensational and the exotic. This represented a major source of popular appeal, which could be exploited for commercial as well as intellectual and rhetorical purposes. Thus, although only too aware of the dubious aura around all but the most innocuous humor, all three men wrote within self-consciously satiric modes. The result was a vicious circle in which one feud led to the next, attacks were exchanged and insults were hurled round and round, until the line blurred between personal animosity and a general cultural logic concerning Jewishness and Germanity. "Jewish humor" was incited by anti-Jewish bias, further anti-Jewish bias, in turn, by satiric Jewish humor.

The present book examines both sides of the discourse that emerged from this situation in the form of three monographic essays, each dealing with a specific aspect of one writer's career. The topics are: 1) Saphir's scandalous four-year tenure as publisher in Berlin and his influence on the development of the German boulevard press; 2) Börne's shifting relationship with the nationalist literary critic Wolfgang Menzel; and 3) the unconsummated collaboration between Heinrich Heine and the J. G. Cotta firm, i. e. between the most gifted writer of the day and the publisher of Goethe and Schiller. In each case, my approach is twofold. On the one hand, I will consider *Judenwitz* as a pejorative concept that marginalized a perceived form of minority speech and helped re-define the identity of the self-appointed mainstream. On the other, I will treat it as an authorial strategy, applying its associated complex of ideas to the interpretation of various texts and showing how the three writers in question used satiric humor to create an alternative mode of authorship. A final main chapter will tie these three double-sided investigations together by identifying continuities in literary-historical reception. Although evaluative judgements fluctuated about Saphir, Heine and Börne individually, German literary history as a genre was deeply inflected by the *Judenwitz* stereotype since its central narrative turned around the imagination of the years 1820–50 as a period of "Jewish" cultural decline. The three representatives of *Judenwitz* became the primary bearers of what amounted to a "black period" in German culture.

My hope is that by crossing disciplinary boundaries I can describe the idea of *Judenwitz* from a dual perspective as both stereotype and strategy, thereby getting at its appeal for both would-be critics and self-conscious

adherents. In so doing, it is crucial to keep the situation in wider focus and avoid depicting either majority or minority identity in terms of essence. The works of Saphir, Börne and Heine should not be treated as manifestations of some innate core of Jewishness, nor can the anxiety engendered by a perceived "Jewish" mode of speech be reduced to some intrinsic flaw in German nationality. Neither would be true to the nineteenth-century situation. There was no accepted view about the boundaries of Jewishness and Germanity: there was not even certainty as to whether any such strict boundaries *had* to exist. All three of the authors in question defined themselves via the German language, and the resulting sense of Germanity was by no means subordinate to their attachment to their Jewish upbringing. Further complicating the situation was the issue of religious conversion: both Börne and Heine were converts, however strategic, to Christianity, and Saphir repeatedly applied for baptism, only to be frustrated by hostile Prussian officials. The ethnic status of the three writers in question – as Germans, as Jews, as both, as neither – must therefore be treated as an open, indeed insoluble question.

A similar caveat applies to our understanding of the self-appointed majority. As crucial as they were to particular attitudes among German speakers, the *Judenwitz* controversies of 1820–50 by no means programmed what was to come. A number of discourses shaped German definitions of native and foreign ethnicity, and popular thinking on these issues constantly shifted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Germans were and are by no means alone in either feeling threatened by satiric laughter or connecting humor with minority groups. If the association of Jewishness with destructive humor was a particular German phenomenon, it is because various contingent aspects of what was to become German national society favored its development. In order to draw balanced, sensible conclusions from the three authors' writing and public reception, we must examine both the historical context surrounding the rise of the *Judenwitz* discourse and the special relevance of humor in general as a crux for the assimilation/exclusion of minority members of society. The rest of this introduction will be devoted to setting out these two important contexts.

Humor as crux of majority/minority identity

I begin with etymology. The distinction between the terms "humor" and "wit," *Humor* and *Witz*, represents a greater European linguistic phenomenon spanning the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[5] In English, the term "humor" originally referred to bodily fluids and, by extension, the various emotional dispositions they were assumed to cause. "Wit" was a synonym for human reason, one particularly associated with literary imagination. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the terms began to be used especially for the comic sphere. "Wit" came to stand for the production of laughter through displays of analytic cleverness, "humor" for a benevolent appreciation of life's general absurdity. In the process, "wit" acquired a range of negative connotations similar to those often attending analystic reason, namely, of being mercenary, malicious and wantonly destructive. "Humor," in contrast, remained entirely positive. The distinction recurred in German at a somewhat later juncture with the adoption of the foreign term *Humor* in contrast to *Witz*. By the nineteenth century it was firmly established, thanks in no small measure to the popularity of the novelist Jean Paul, one of the first German theorists of laughter, whom many commentators held up as a paradigm example of German *Humor*.[6] Nonetheless, for all their similarities, the English and the German

5 See the volume *Humor und Witz*, edited by Schmidt-Hidding, upon which the following summary is based. The conclusions of that volume can be confirmed with a few glances at contemporary lexica. In an 1822 dictionary no negative connotations at all are listed for the word *Witz* (see Hensius: *Volkthümliches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*), while a similar one published in 1830 already draws the connection with mockery and contrasts the term unfavorably with *Phantasie* (see *Neues Rheinisches Conversations-Lexicon oder encyclopädisches Handwörterbuch für gebildete Stände*, vol. 12, pp. 396-7). Grimms' dictionary, which began to appear in 1853, includes an entry devoted to the negative undertone of the term *Witz*, taken to signify a false, calculated and ingratiating use of reason not far removed from the idea of sophistry (see *Grimms Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 14/2, p. 882). In a similar vein, Daniel Sanders' 1865 *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (vol. 2/2, p. 1644) would offer a definition of "an illegitimately obtrusive – i. e. in excess of acknowledged limitations – and superficial cleverness." [*eine sich unbefugt – über die inne zu haltenden Schranken – vordrängende Naseweisheit.*] Meanwhile none of these works list any negative connotations for *Humor*. By the turn of the century the literary-historical significance taken on by the terms in the 1830's would be so established that the 1909 edition of *Meyers Konversations-Lexicon* would explicitly mention the period under investigation in its entry on *Witz* (vol. 20, p. 706), while careful distinguishing *Humor* from all tones of bitterness, sarcasm and pessimism (vol. 9, p. 638).

6 See *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, pp. 102–89. Although Jean Paul distinguishes between humor,

differed in one crucial respect. In common English one could speak equally well of English wit as of English humor, with the result that strict distinctions eventually faded, compressed into the idea of a "sense of humor." In nineteenth-century German, however, it was far more usual to speak of German *Humor* than German *Witz*. Such usage involved a logical leap absent within the English equivalents. The term *Humor* signaled what were acknowledged as autonomous cultures – hence the idea of *deutscher* or *englischer Humor* – whereas the word *Witz* designated groups subordinate to the mainstream. The idea of *Judenwitz* therefore entailed an understanding of Jews as a recognizable entity within German society possessing a particular, "interested" mode of discourse.

This etymological history has guided the choice of terminology in the present book. The subject of my investigation is humor in the contemporary American meaning of the word, encompassing all discursive acts that aim to elicit laughter[7] and presupposing no distinction between *ridiculum* (things which are funny in real life) and *vis comica* (the aesthetic enjoyment of them in literature).[8] Precisely because of its inclusiveness, the English

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irony and wit [*Witz*], he does not view them as necessarily opposites, nor did he promote either mode of humor over the other. Indeed, Jean Paul asserted the need for and the possibility of an increase in German wit.

7 The phrase "literary humor" therefore signifies any form of literature that can be deemed successful if its audience laughs, a definition that certainly doesn't preclude a work of literary humor from being considered simultaneously as something else. The term "comedy" I take to refer to a specific literary tradition, usually though not necessarily humorous, with certain characteristic plots and themes, such as catalogued by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* (pp. 163–185). The same holds true for satire (see Frye: *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 223–39), which I define along with Ronald Paulson (*The Fictions of Satire*, p. 3) as a usually, though not necessarily humorous form of literature with a recognizable object of attack, possessing its own literary tradition similar to that of comedy. The terms "jokes" and "joking" designate for me formulaic utterances of humorous intent, a subset within the category of humor, which includes riddles, puns, jests and witticisms. Finally, on occasion, I use the word "wit" in its everyday meaning as the individual facility for producing laughter.

8 The distinction was first made by the linguistic philosopher Michel Souriau in his 1948 essay "Le risible et le comique" and has established itself in semiotic humor theory, for example, in Preisendanz and Warning's 1976 volume *Das Komische*, which presents the results of a research colloquium on the poetics and hermeneutics of the comic and whose contributors include Hans-Robert Jauß and Wolfgang Iser. Although the distinction underscores the inherent tension between humor and literature as competing discursive systems – a legitimate insight – it also reproduces the classicist demand for "comic" sublimation of "risible" laughter, essentially viewing humorous discouse as inferior to its literary counterpart. It is precisely this assumption, however, which requires critique in an investigation of *Judenwitz*, and thus I have chosen not to follow, indeed, at times, to take direct issue with it.

"humor" doesn't distinguish between pastoral/benevolent and satiric laughter. Therefore, I've chosen to retain the German *Humor* and *Witz*. To translate would be to obscure differences between my own understanding of laughter and the nineteenth-century German ones under investigation. It is precisely my intention, however, to underscore the arbitrary, constructed character of that distinction in order to create distance from its assumptions and implications. Accordingly, the term *Judenwitz* does not occur in its most common meaning of *Judenwitze*, or "jokes about Jews," but rather indicates what was understood at the time, both negatively and positively, as a specifically Jewish mode of discourse. Not surprisingly, "Jewish humor" was something of a tar-brush category, equating dialect storytelling of the Jewish ghetto with an emerging brand of politically pointed and urbane satire written in High German and published in daily papers and the mass press. My usage of the term makes no attempt to resolve such internal contradictions but intends, rather, to highlight them.

The point is more than semantic hair-splitting. As Raymond Williams points out in the introduction to *Culture and Society* and pursues at length in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, definitions of everyday terms embody the basic organizing principles of a society. Seen from a comparative perspective, they indicate, on the one hand, structural transformations common across cultural boundaries and, on the other, emerging differences between cultures. Along with concepts like "culture," "industry," "democracy," "class" and "art," the shifting significance of humor via terms like *Witz* and *Humor* represents a crux of social evolution. The basic direction of the change has been well described by the social theorist Anthony Giddens as the "disembedding" of social relations from local and traditional contexts and their "re-articulation across indefinite tracts of time-space."[9] This re-articulation process took place throughout the industrialized West; at the same time, its cultural manifestations varied dramatically in individual societies. This broader historical context must be kept in mind if we are to evaluate questions of German peculiarity with fairness. The rest of this introduction will outline theoretical models of humor, then set the general historical context so that we can better appreciate the effects of the *Judenwitz* discourse as a vehicle for social change.

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9 A good introduction to Giddens' understanding of these issues is provided by the section "The Nature of Modernity" in: *The Giddens Reader*, pp. 284–305. For this citation, see p. 291.

Why was it humor – and not some other mode of speech – which should have been such a crux of social evolution? The connection stems from two seemingly contradictory aspects of the phenomenon itself: the communicative instability at the heart of humorous speech acts versus the palpable certainty of laughter as the elicited response. Uncertainty – be it the ambiguity of a pun, the discrepancies between tone and content of a travesty, or merely the necessary novelty of a joke – is an essential ingredient in the production of laughter. For good reason, then, one of the main theoretical perspectives on laughter, with representatives including Kant and Schopenhauer, is the so-called "incongruity theory," which asserts that the essence of humor resides in the collision of opposites.[10] In some sense, humorous utterances always represent unstable moments that disrupt established patterns of significance. On the other hand, humor also partakes of stability. Jokes follow set formulae, slapstick consists of physical "routines," and dramatic comedies feature a relatively limited range of familiar stock characters. For this reason, humorous speech acts must be "gotten," i.e. unambiguously comprehended, a point which is decisively signaled by laughter. As a physical phenomenon – a "ha-ha" or "tee-hee" – laughter remains both self-identical across various registers and universally recognizable despite barriers of language and culture practice. It is spontaneous, physical and reflexive, comparable to a cough or a sneeze. Furthermore, aside from a handful of marginal situations, it is connected with pleasure. Indeed, laughter is simultaneously a pleasurable experience in itself and the signification of that pleasure. It can therefore function as a uniquely concrete, indisputable measure of whether its attendant speech act has been successful or not. If the audience laughs, the joke has worked. If they don't, it hasn't – no amount of argumentation and justification can alter the terrible fact of a failed joke. Thus, notwithstanding its disruptive potential, humor also entails an unusual, perhaps unique measure of discursive certainty.

The question then becomes how these contradictory properties of humor co-exist and function in actual social practice. The two seminal mod-

10 On the three fundamental perspectives of humor theory, see Gutwirth: *Laughing Matter*, pp. 29–99. Gutwirth writes of "the socio-integrative approach" for Bergson, "the psychological approach" for Freud and the "binary-structural approach" for incongruity theory. On individual thinkers and the issue of incongruity in general, see the various essays in *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, edited by John Morreall. For sociological descriptions of humor as a mode of discourse, see Purdie: *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse* (discussed in detail below) and Mulkay: *On Humour*, pp. 7–38.

els – Henri Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on Comic Significance* and Sigmund Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* – approach the topic from divergent perspectives and reach diametrically opposed conclusions. For Bergson,[11] who focuses on laughter and not on any specific type of humor, the essence of the matter resides in the conflation of mechanism and humanity. We laugh, Bergson argues, any time a person or an element of the human world appears or is made to appear as a thing. Included in the category of mechanism is any form of extreme behavior, so that whenever an individual deviates too far from the norm, he or she appears machine-like and becomes a likely butt of the joke. The "social gesture" [*geste social*] of humor, according to Bergson, is therefore punitive and conservative, disciplining would-be rebels and encouraging them to conform to social rules. Freud, on the other hand, focuses on verbal jokes, seeing their absurd content as the key to laughter's social import.[12] Humor, for Freud, arises from the dreamlike "condensation" [*Verdichtung*] of two or more elements and the concurrent encoding of potentially offensive sentiments in seemingly harmless, inconsequential form. By expressing psychic content otherwise in need of repression, the joke-teller is able to release his or her audience from the need for repression and therefore provide them with a moment of pleasure. The upshot of what Freud terms humor's "social procedure" [*sozialer Vorgang*] is covert individual rebellion against collective constraint, precisely the opposite of what it is for Bergson. Good examples for both perspectives could be found throughout Saphir, Börne and Heine's works: Bergson's model provides insight into the techniques and social import of satire, whereas Freud's helps explain both the appeal of wordplay and its potential for undermining preconceived ideas. That Freud, sensitive as he was to issues of Jewishness, should have been so fascinated by *Witz* is hardly accidental – as his own choice of examples shows, he was writing very much in the wake of Heine and the controversies described throughout this book.

Neither Freud nor Bergson's model, however, is fully adequate for my present purposes. In order to elucidate the significance of *Judenwitz* as both stereotype and strategy, the present investigation will use the vocabulary of Susan Purdie's recent *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse*. Synthesizing theoretical insights from Saussure, Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, Purdie argues for hu-

11 See Bergson: *Le rire*, especially pp. 15–6, pp. 101–14.

12 See Freud: *Der Witz*, pp. 135–48, especially p. 136.

mor as a nexus of constantly shifting social hierarchies carried by language. Summing up this perspective, she writes:

> Because joking marks transgressions on the site of their genuine occurrence, it confirms us strongly as able to keep the rule of same and different, as well as to break it. The effect of joking is to emphatically instate the law, and ourselves as those who master discourse in defining as well as producing the usages which conform to it.[13]

This outlook encompasses both the disciplinary and the oppositional potential of humor as social practice: Freudian "transgressions" may be allowed to stand against established values – what Purdie follows Lévi-Strauss in calling the Law – or they may be reversed à la Bergson in order to reinforce the status quo. Humor thus emerges as a political free agent, equally available for attacking or enhancing the authority of an existing social order. The common factor is the abstract social exchange between humorist and audience, which consists of pleasure being swapped for the security of social acknowledgement. The laughter that the humorist receives acknowledges his or her "full discursive capacity"[14] and, with it, confirms his or her membership in the audience community. In the process he or she can also attack "butts," excluding them from the group in much the way Bergson describes. What allows humor its particular function within an ongoing struggle for mastery of discourse is the palpability of laughter, which provides an unambiguous sign of the success or failure of humorous utterances and thus a clear index of winners and losers. I call this process ongoing because it can never be fully settled. All instances of humor are, rather, *bids* for social acknowledgement whose results must be constantly re-confirmed and may vary drastically from person to person, group to group, culture to culture and time to time. Different people, after all, laugh at very different things.

If we accept the characterization of humor as bid for mastery of discourse, it becomes obvious that the production of laughter carries special significance for questions of minority and majority membership. By being funny, outsiders gain access to and purchase over a social mainstream from

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13 See Purdie: *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse*, p. 30. Her term, taken over from Freud, for what I call humor is "joking." Although the nomenclature is different, the meanings are the same, since both Freud and Purdie extend the idea of "joking" to include all communicative acts where laughter is the intended result.

14 Purdie: *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse*, p. 96.

which they are otherwise excluded. Even if the audience is predisposed toward rejecting minority bids for inclusion, a display of humor can overcome resistance by eliciting a reflexive response not under the audience's full control. With laughter confirming one's community membership, a successful humorous gambit nullifies preconceptions about difference. Moreover, in its satiric mode, humor offers a means of self-defense. A humorist can neutralize enemies who otherwise would have the upper hand by turning them into the butts of jokes, calling *their* discursive competence and community membership into question: the careers of Saphir, Börne and Heine are littered with the corpses of ill-advised adversaries vulnerable to public ridicule. Of course, given the prominence of stereotypes in all forms of joking, minority figures are also especially vulnerable to humorous attack. Nonetheless, on balance, humor would seem to offer an advantage to those on the social margins since its transgressive element always involves a disruption, however temporary and inconclusive, of established convention and hierarchies. For this reason, humor has been perennially perceived as a threat to social stability and subjected to coercion and control. Such control not only takes the form of censorship "from above." Social marginalization "from within" – for example, the idea that certain types of humor are out-of-bounds for good society – is another means of restricting the potentially disruptive properties of laughter. The eighteenth-century distinction between humor and wit is a classic instance of just such an internal restraint.

Judenwitz as Sign of German Particularity

If constraints upon humor are part of various societies, as I have just argued, then the German distinction between *Humor* and *Witz* would not, in and of itself, indicate any special intolerance toward otherness. At the same time, however, German ideas of humor and ethnicity, informed as they are by the specific conditions and problems of their society at the beginning of the nineteenth century, do reflect German peculiarity. It is to these that I now turn my attention. The first, and probably most obvious issue is that of Jewish emancipation and mainstream social assimilation.[15] Saphir, Börne

15 The best specific studies, in my opinion, are Rürup: *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus*; Toury: *Soziale und politische Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland 1847–71*; and Berding: *Moderner Antisemitismus*. For a general historical contextualization of Jews' problematic status during the nineteenth century, see Nipperdey: *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866*, pp. 248–55.

and Heine lived in a society where the social position and possibilities of educated Jews were not at all determined, a society which featured regular outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence, such as the oft-cited Hep-Hep riots of 1819, yet which also supported a strong and eventually successful pro-emancipation movement. While it was perhaps clear that the trio of *Judenwitzler* would lead lives radically unlike those of their parents and grandparents, it was entirely uncertain at the beginning of the 1820s which careers society would allow them to pursue. There is no better example of this indeterminacy than Börne, who was initially employed as a police record-keeper and only turned to journalism after the restoration of pre-Napoleonic prohibitions on Jews' holding civic positions. The maddening vagaries of Börne's personal situation reflected those affecting Jews within nineteenth-century German society as a whole. As demarcations of Jewish cultural difference began to disappear, individuals of Jewish extraction were playing an ever more prominent role in mainstream culture: one thinks of the enormous influence of the literary salons surrounding Rahel Varnhagen von Ense and Henriette Herz. Moreover, there were a growing number of converts who were vying for complete admission to German society. Nonetheless, those officially registered as Jews were still subject to legal restrictions upon occupation, and there was considerable resistance to the idea of full participation, for individuals defined for whatever reason as Jewish, in mainstream public life. The situation cried out for redefinition.

On all sides, the categories developed during the *Judenwitz* controversies of 1820–50 "re-articulated" the idea of Jewishness in the Giddensian sense. For hostile observers, the stereotype of the malicious and mercenary wisecracker established a cultural border in the absence of traditional external signs of Jewish difference. For the writers in question, the role of *Judenwitzler* offered liberation from traditional standards of public speech, which were themselves complicit in discriminatory attitudes, allowing for claims to full membership in a non-local citizenry defined by the standard idiom. The compatibility of "Jewish humor" and "German culture" was thus a point of refraction from which the thinking of those on both sides of the assimilation issue was re-directed, disembedded from its previous context and recast on a national scale.

Another important instance of disembedding and re-articulation affected the practitioners of *Judenwitz* and their adversaries in equal measure, namely, the structural consequences of the mass press and increases

in literacy.[16] Technological advances during the first half of the nineteenth century revolutionized German-language publishing: it was during Heine's tenure as foreign correspondent, for example, that the newspaper for which he worked acquired the first steam-driven printing press in greater Germany. Perhaps more importantly, the extension of public education reconfigured the audience that would buy and ultimately pass judgement on the nascent industry's products. The career of freelance writer to which Saphir, Börne and Heine, along with many of their adversaries, aspired did not exist in preceding generations, since the possibility of subsisting directly from journalistic earnings depended on the existence of a broad readership. Not surprisingly, then, the *Judenwitz* discourse was shot through with reactions to the new forms and standards of public discourse occasioned by these structural changes. On the one hand, enemies accused practitioners of *Judenwitz* of writing solely for commercial gain and of exercising a dangerous influence over an ill-educated, half-literate mob. On the other, Saphir, Börne and Heine contrived strategies of publicity to reflect the nature of their audience and, by thematizing the commercial nature of cultural production, countered adversaries' attacks with accusations of hypocrisy. Obscured in the arcane specifics of various personal feuds was a decisive shift in cultural authority, part and parcel of a Habermasian transformation of the public sphere within the German-language realm.[17] Culture was becoming popular, and though monarchical authority

16 The secondary literature on the topic is immense, but for an overview see Eisenstein: *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* and Wittmann: *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*. The most frequently cited source on German literacy is Schenda: *Volk ohne Buch*.

17 Because the phrase "transformation of the public sphere" is so often used nebulously, it's worth reminding ourselves of its origins. Habermas defines the main bearers of the "bourgeois" public sphere (Habermas: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, pp. 74–5) as "the private citizens who, because they lack governmental office, are excluded from participation in official political power" [*die Privatleute, die, weil, sie kein Amt innehaben, von der Teilnahme an der öffentlichen Gewalt ausgeschlossen sind*] and for whom official authorities come to represent "a tangible adversarial entity" [*einem greifbaren Gegenüber*]. A few pages later (p. 86), the term "bourgeois public sphere" [*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*] is provisionally introduced as "private individuals collectively, assembled as the public" [*die der zum Publikum versammelten Privatleute*]. The term "bourgeois" in English is misleading because it primarily refers to economic categories and doesn't include the idea of education, *Bildung*, encompassed by the German. The public Habermas describes didn't come exclusively from the mercantile classes – indeed it often encompassed members of low nobility excluded from political power. In order to avoid confusion and to resist the pull of a class-specific vocabulary toward developmental paradigms, I will refer to the modern or private-citizen-dominated public sphere. See ibid., pp. 69–90 for Habermas's full account of the rise of what he calls the "bourgeois" public sphere.

still made itself felt in the form of censorship, the "public opinion" of self-perceived representative citizens was taking over as the arbiter of literary reputation and reception.

A third major historical transformation is concerned less directly with the attitudes of Saphir, Börne and Heine and more with those of their adversaries: the rise of conservative activism and proto-nationalism. Nineteenth-century conservatism, for all its rhetoric about preserving past practice, was neither a local nor a traditional movement: conservatism, as Karl Mannheim recognized early on,[18] utilizes and indeed itself depends upon means of mass publicity, and therefore entails a modern revision of identity categories. The various conservative campaigns against *Judenwitz* fully bear out Mannheim's analysis. Although the stereotype of the wisecracking cultural mercenary was full of nostalgic longings that imagined the printed word to have taken on a radically new, pernicious character, there was no turning back the clock. Even as those who spoke out against Saphir, Börne and Heine claimed to be defending traditional standards of public speech, they were led toward new vocabularies and ideas by the sheer fact of having to carry on their feuds via the mass press. Neither the journals in which the enemies of *Judenwitz* published their opinions nor their readership had existed thirty years previously. Moreover, as just pointed out, there was no precedent for self-proclaimed representative citizens acting as stewards of a culture that was defined by factors such as shared language. The "tradition" promoted by conservative enemies of *Judenwitz* was one of their own inventing.

Throughout Europe and the West, the conservative "invention of tradition" has been linked to nationalism,[19] and the present case is no exception. Although the opponents of Saphir, Börne and Heine followed no explicit political program and hardly represented a single homogenous camp, their claim to represent public opinion called upon categories of language, geo-

18 See the posthumously issued volume *Der Konservatismus*, especially pp. 92–3.

19 See Eric Hobsbawm's introductory essay in *The Invention of Tradition*, edited with Terence Ranger, pp. 1–14. The enormous number of recent theoretical material on nationalism would defeat any attempt at a comprehensive list of references, but a good survey of the various perspectives is Smith: *Theories of Nationalism*. The works most relevant to the relationship between nationalism and Giddensian shrinkage of spatial and temporal distance are Deutsch: *Nationalism and Social Communication* and Giddens: *Violence and the Nation State*. Useful for its theoretical connection of nationalism and conservatism, especially in the impulse to find a secular replacement for religion, is Anderson: *Imagined Communities*. On the specific forums in which concepts of national identity were institutionalized, see Hobsbawm: *Nations and Nationalism* and Mosse: *The Nationalization of the Masses*.

graphical residence and ethnic relatedness that ignored differences of class, local custom and religion. Appropriated by self-appointed natives and would-be traditionalists of all sorts, German language and culture were reified into quasi-physical entities impossible for foreigners to acquire. Although such essentialist reasoning was manifestly self-contradictory – had Heine, Börne or Saphir truly been incapable of mastering German, they would have presented no threat – it did, in a warped way, reflect the reality of a national sphere of culture gradually coalescing from the expanding possibilities for communication within greater Germany. What started out as local scandals could be transmitted with minimal delay wherever German was spoken: with only a few days' lag time, readers in Freiburg or Passau could get just as exercised about the doings of a Saphir in Berlin as his personal adversaries in the Prussian capital. Because the *Judenwitz* controversies had such broad import, frustrated national aspirations under the Restoration were bound to make themselves felt. Indeed, many of the controversies surrounding Saphir, Börne and Heine can be seen as outlets for nationalist sentiment at a time when direct demands for reform would have been not only politically risky but cognitively dissonant with the patriotism engendered by the Napoleonic Wars.[20]

These re-articulated categories of selfhood and otherness did more than just change definitions of Jewishness and Germanity; they created competition between two identities where none had previously existed. The popular re-articulation of native identity demanded the integration of all residents on "German soil" into the mainstream community. This could take the form of assimilation, as in the Dohmian emancipation movement, which aimed at the "civic ameloriation" of Jews, i.e. their re-education

20 The issue is a complicated one since for for the period from 1813–1870 there was neither a single nationalist movement nor consensus as to Germany's proper borders. Recent scholars have cast considerable doubt upon the traditional assumption that the Prussian establishment of a *kleindeutsch* German nation was in any way the result of a single ongoing process of ideological development. In fact, even as of 1870, the majority of Germans do not seem to have thought in particularly nationalistic terms. My argument is that cultural issues such as controversies surrounding humor and ethnicity were one of the subtle ways in which Germans gradually came to conceive of identity in nationalist terms. On the forms and history of the nationalist political movement, see Breuilly: *The Formation of the First German Nation-State*; Hughes: *Nationalism and Society*; and Sheehan: "State and Nationality In the Napoleonic Period." These treatments are more sophisticated than those in Nipperdey (*Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866*, pp. 300–13) and Sheehan, (*German History 1770–1866*, pp. 371–88), which tend to reinforce the paradigm of Prussian-led, *kleindeutsch* nationalization.

from Jews into good Germans.[21] Or it could lead to calls for exclusion, as in the nascent antisemitic outlooks of the early nineteenth century. Within the latter, hostility toward Jews on the grounds of religion or traditional socio-economic role gradually shaded over into an essentialist rejection of "semitism" and a tendency to interpret the entire world through the lens of a perceived Jewish conspiracy. This marked a discontinuity in attitudes toward Jews and Jewishness,[22] tending, in the words of the historian Paul Lawrence Rose, "to negate Judaism on that social level which had always been theoretically independent of Christian religious mythology."[23] Although the attacks on Saphir, Börne and Heine featured a great deal of pro-Christian rhetoric, the label *Judenwitzler* was secular, referring to social and economic categories, not confession. Several anti-*Judenwitz* polemics to be examined in the course of this book prefigure racist pamphlets later on in the nineteenth-century, and there is hardly a major work of right-wing cultural history that fails to heap contempt upon Heine, Börne and Saphir. Perhaps more importantly, however, the reaction to the three writers established links between mainstream and antisemitic views of German cultural history. Although the vast majority of nineteenth-century Germans did not think in terms of ethnic absolutes, the *Judenwitz* discourse represented a point of literary- and cultural-historical convergence between mainstream nationalism and the lunatic fringe of antisemitism. This common attitude might never have been politically activated. In point of fact, of course, it was.

Although history should never be seen as teleology, we can and should be sensitive to the self-reinforcing nature of modernity itself and the particular responses it engenders.[24] Technology not only produces social change; it

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21 See the 1973 reprint of Christian Wilhelm Dohm's "Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden." For a discussion of the importance of this pamphlet in the history of the emancipation movement see the works cited in footnote 15.

22 A number of scholars from various disciplines have advanced the thesis of a basic discontinuity in the history of anti-Jewish prejudice. Earlier hostility, it is argued, centers on religion, which at least in theory allows for the possibility of Jewish integration through conversion. Later socio-cultural antisemitism, which in the course of the nineteenth century evolves into pseudo-scientific racism, posits an irremediable Jewish essence or identity as a people. See Rose: *Revolutionary Antisemitism*, pp. 3–22; Rürup: *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus*, pp. 95–108; Langmuir: *History, Religion and Antisemitism*, pp. 275–305; Berding: *Moderner Antisemitismus*, pp. 11–84; and Sokel: "Dualistic Thinking and the Rise of Ontological Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century Germany," especially pp. 154–6.

23 See Rose: *Revolutionary Anti-Semitism*, p. 57.

24 On the idea of particularity, as opposed to exceptionalism, see David Blackbourn and Geoff

also accelerates the pace at which society changes, producing increasing anxiety about social stability. This anxiety in turn provides the impetus for still more change. In all of the authorial careers under investigation, personal feuds quickly gained momentum, calling forth responses, counter-responses, counter-counter-responses and so forth, until the personal assumed general proportions. There were no clear victors. The alarmist warnings of self-proclaimed traditionalists did not succeed in halting the three writers' careers – if anything, the resulting aura of scandal bolstered their readership and helped them secure a level of subsistence as freelance authors. On the other hand, the situation was not especially conducive toward outsiders' efforts at mainstream assimilation. It may have been good rhetorical strategy for the punning Saphir to deconstruct adversaries' statements into frivolous babbling, Börne to compile a mock dictionary of juvenile insults for his unimaginative enemies, or Heine to pillory literary rivals and their works with reference to everything from personal finances to sexual orientation. Yet every such humorous sally added to the individual enemy's antipathy and arsenal, for inciting laughter in one section of the audience incited negative stereotypes about Jewish authorship in others. Thus, in spirals of reciprocal influence, the perceived antithesis between Jewish and German modes of discourse, between *Witz* and *Humor*, commercial writing and culture, established itself in the public imagination of the period and, eventually, at the heart of literary-historical legend.

Conclusion

Such historical and theoretical considerations will, I hope, provide a better basis for forming opinions about the various parties and perspectives to be encountered in the rest of this book. The general appeal of the *Judenwitz* idea stemmed, on the one hand, from the demands of self-appointed representative citizens for stable concepts of identity and, on the other, from the mainstream possibilities that humor accorded its bearers. In a vicious circle, the very mode of discourse that was most attractive for Saphir, Börne and Heine turned out to be precisely that which provoked extreme unease and hostility among all those anxious in the face of change. By

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Eley's seminal volume of post-*Sonderweg* historical criticism *The Peculiarities of German History*. The nineteenth-century history that, to my mind, is most successful in avoiding the trap of teleology is Blackbourn's recent *Germany 1780–1918: The Long Nineteenth Century*.

injecting humor, with its inherent tendency to undermine and unsettle, into German literature and culture, which was so important to German national pride, the writers in question were programming conflict with a substantial portion of educated society. The fact that the three were already perceived to be Jewish "outsiders" only exacerbated the situation. Thus, not surprisingly, the roving satiric wit with which Saphir, Börne and Heine sought to win over their audience often ricocheted back against them in the form of exclusionary opprobrium. Such opprobrium was – and is – by no means restricted to nativist reactionaries. Some prominent supporters of assimilation at the time denounced the three writers' controversial humor as untypical of Jewishness, and in corollary attitude, a number of recent critics have diagnosed a masochistic, self-hating impulse at the heart of their frequent satiric asides at Jewish figures.[25]

Such a view, I will argue, ignores the other, equally important side of *Judenwitz*: the legitimate possibilities it offered its bearers as a mode of authorship. Hated as it was by many, humor was a major element in the popularity of the three writers in question, helping Saphir, Börne and Heine establish careers against great economic odds as first-generation freelance writers. It also proved an invaluable commodity in an age where personal rivalries took the form of vitriolic feuds waged in the daily press. Furthermore, although often turned upon Jewish targets, the satiric humor of all three writers allowed them to develop authorial voices reflecting both their outsider background and sense of mainstream community membership. Even if it was not always successful – either from a nineteenth-century or present-day perspective – the authorial mode of *Judenwitz* offered a source of resistance against discrimination. We need to reflect upon the rather limited options open to Saphir, Börne and Heine for developing their careers, as we evaluate the strengths and weakness of their bids for audience acceptance. We must also consider the full range of reactions from various audiences and not just focus on the negative judgements that reached their apotheosis in the Nazi years. And finally, we should neither project today's concepts of identity onto the past nor dismiss – out-of-

25 See Gilman: *Self-Hatred*; Mayer: *Außenseiter*; Prawer: *Heine's Jewish Comedy*. Others – Theodor Reik: *Jewish Wit*; and Salcia Landmann: *Der jüdische Witz* – have elevated the capacity for self-satire within "Jewish humor" into a point of pride, and even evidence of superiority in relation to other ethnic groups. Somewhere between these two poles is John Murray Cuddihy, who in *The Ordeal of Civility* suggests that the German-Jewish minority tried to use humor as mode of interfacing with a hostile mainstream within a larger denial of background and self.

hand and with benefit of hindsight – Saphir, Börne and Heine's claims to membership in a mainstream German community.

I hope that the following three investigations will be of interest even to those who may not agree with their conclusions. Whatever one thinks about the writers in question and their particular bid for mainstream assimilation through satiric humor, the details of their lives and works merit our considered attention. The problematic connection between humor and majority/minority ethnicity reveals much about German attitudes toward culture and history and remains an issue for various national societies today. Laughter is of interest to everyone, although everyone most certainly does not laugh at the same things.

CHAPTER 2

The Pamphlet War: Moritz Gottlieb Saphir in Berlin 1826–30

Though virtually forgotten today, the Budapest-born humorist and publisher Moritz Saphir's four-year career in Berlin wrought enormous changes on both local and national culture. Saphir was a major pioneer of the boulevard press, whose two periodicals – the thrice weekly *Berliner Express* and the daily *Berliner Courier* – were among the first German language papers to review cultural events, especially theatrical performances, more or less as they happened. This sort of rapid turn-around created a new forum for cultural exchange, prompting revisions in categories of collective identity and cultural legitimacy. Thanks to the *Express* and the *Courier*, Saphir achieved fame as one of the day's leading German-language humorists and as the father of modern journalism in the Prussian capital. At the same time, he was also accused of being the city's first professional scandalmonger. The success of Saphir's publications provoked vigorous, often vitriolic responses from contemporary cultural elites, who resented the contentious upstart and, upon failing to enlist royal protection against his constant jibes, decided that their only effective defense would be an attack in kind. The result was a "pamphlet war" which fascinated and amused readers in Berlin and beyond for the better part of a year. The commonly used martial metaphor hardly exaggerated the situation: in the course of the controversy sides were taken, alliances forged, weaknesses probed, insults stockpiled and satiric missiles launched from every direction. At the same time, half-obscured by sandlot-level acrimony, a debate commenced about the contours and content of culture itself.

The importance of the pamphlet war shouldn't be underestimated just because it was short-lived and populated by what have become relatively obscure figures. The reaction provoked by Saphir's humor transferred the responsibility for monitoring culture from the ruling aristocracy to a self-appointed mainstream within the private citizenry. Ironically, the process was set in motion by the government itself, specifically by the monarchy's refusal to defend Saphir's opponents against the journalist's insults. This

policy unwittingly encouraged a new activism among private citizens, who banded together independently of the state to act against their adversary. In the process they staked an implicit claim to control an important aspect of the public sphere. Because the claim was based on what they believed to be their own inalienable connection to the body politic itself, Saphir's enemies were led to formulate, rework and in some cases fabricate points of common identity. The scandals surrounding Saphir's publications thereby demonstrated the importance of the mass press and gave cultural elites a better appreciation for the power of public opinion. Even while the monarchy retained control over the coercive mechanisms of state – censorship, confiscation, and incarceration – popular legitimacy increasingly fell to whoever could best claim to represent the values of "native" culture. No shots were fired, nor were any declarations of independence issued, yet a revolution in public speech was underway.

There has only been one recent study to treat Saphir in any depth, the historian Mary Lee Townsend's *Forbidden Laughter: Popular Humor and the Limits of Repression in Nineteenth-Century Prussia.*[1] She locates the journalist at the beginnings of what was known as a particular brand of Berlin humor, practiced by some 110 freelance authors,[2] most notably Adolph Glassbrenner. *Berliner Witz* was satiric but not sophisticated, urban but not urbane. Its most famous fictional mouthpiece was "Nante," a day-laborer who delivered a running critical commentary about life on the streets. Such *Berliner Witz* originated together with the boulevard press, which inundated the Prussian capital with scores of cheap, regularly appearing newspapers and journals.[3] Though elevated in rhetoric, Saphir's *Berlin Express* and *Berlin Courier* were two of the first periodicals in this style, combining theater and book reviews with gossip, humorous anecdotes, riddles, puzzles and the like. Townsend's argument – a legitimate one – is that this ostensibly trivial wisecracking provided a forum for political self-expression amidst Prussian censorial repression. Concerned as it was with everyday reality, *Berliner Witz* couldn't avoid reflecting the social problems of its time, and no matter how innocuous the subject matter, its satiric edge often entailed indirect political commentary. For this reason conflicts invariably arose between its

1 See Townsend: *Forbidden Laughter*, above all pp. 35–41.

2 See ibid., p. 64.

3 On the situation of newspapers in general in early nineteenth-century Berlin, see de Mendelssohn: *Zeitungsstadt Berlin*, pp. 38–55.

main practitioners and wary censors, who were sometimes able to hinder but never to eradicate the trend toward popular humor.

Yet there is another side to this story. Although Townshend briefly discusses the relative prominence of Jews – chiefly Saphir and his protégé Eduard Maria Oettinger – within the group of Berlin humorists,[4] she doesn't discuss ethnic bias within the opposition. This is an important omission, since many opponents defined such popular humor not primarily as *Berliner Witz*, but as *Judenwitz*. This tendency is evident from the very beginning of the period under consideration, as anti-Jewish stereotypes – old and new, tacit and articulated – helped Saphir's enemies form common front against him. Not only did this result in biased attacks on the publisher as crassly commercial, it also led to the rejection of a whole mode of discourse he was perceived to represent. At the same time as they adopted Saphir's methods and medium, self-proclaimed defenders of native culture increasingly dismissed Saphirian humor as a by-product of foreignness and Jewishness. Though unable to destroy his career, Saphir's enemies did succeed in setting the tone for his literary-historical reception and helped to establish the idea of *Judenwitz* as the antithesis of native *Kultur* and *Humor*. Ironically, belief in this dichotomy was encouraged by none other than Saphir himself, who adopted the mantel of the *Judenwitzler*, using it to help define his own identity and career.

This chapter will reconstruct the basic discourse of the pamphlet war by examining the statements issued by the various parties in conflict: the monarchy, Saphir himself and a number of his enemies. I hope to show how the various ideological constellations around the idea of *Judenwitz* evolved from the efforts of all concerned to promote themselves and attack rivals within the context of a rapidly expanding popular press. The result will be not just a single conclusion about the character of German society, but a series of observations, commensurate with the heterogeneous nature of identity itself. Just as people have identity, but no single identity, the story of Saphir in Berlin has various ramifications, all illustrating its protagonists' efforts to decide who they were, what contours society was to have and which groups were to fall outside its boundaries.

4 Townsend: *Forbidden Laughter*, pp. 65–66.

Saphir's arrival and the beginning of the conflict

Saphir was a foreigner. Born in 1795 to Jewish parents in a small village near Pest (then Austria), he arrived in Berlin in 1825, after having secured permission from Friedrich Wilhelm III to take up one-year residence there for "literary purposes."[5] For the previous three years, in the wake of an incomplete course of rabbinical instruction, Saphir had been living in Vienna and had achieved some notoriety writing theater criticism. It is unclear precisely what brought him to Berlin. His adversaries would later claim that he had been forced to leave the Austrian capital because of legal problems, an accusation he consistently denied. In any case the fact that Saphir had no official citizenship and needed to obtain special permission before he could take up residence anywhere was to play a central role in his life. He was a person without a home, and it's likely that he came to Berlin hoping to find – or better yet, build – one.

Surprisingly, the caustic wit for which Saphir became (in)famous appears quite tame by today's standards. The humorist's favored form was the farcical essay, constructed around strings of jokes somewhere between modern-day stand-up comedy and "deconstructionist" punning. This sort of wordplay exploited the malleability of language in a variety of ways and often with no obvious purpose beyond that of travestying seriously intended speech. Sometimes puns were incorporated into longer pieces; sometimes they were appended at the end of issues of his periodicals. Later on in his career, Saphir would enjoy tremendous success as a public speaker. So popular were a handful of his witticisms that his otherwise hostile entry in that monumental nineteenth-century encyclopedia of German literature, Goedeke's *Grundriß zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*,[6] would describe them having been for a time on everyone's lips. The following are some representative examples with English renditions of the sense:

> Inwiefern sind Minister und Pantoffel sich oft so gleich? Man gewinnt beide oft erst dann lieb, wenn sie abgetreten sind. [*How are government ministers and slippers the same? You only start to like them when they've stepped down/have been worn out.*][7]

5 Houben: *Der gefesselte Biedermeier*, p. 383.

6 Goedeke: *Grundriß zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, vol. 9, p. 153.

7 Saphir: *Mutterwitz und Vatermörder*, p. 19. This accessible paperback volume is the best source for a quick introduction to Saphir's work. Otherwise all quotations from Saphir in this chapter refer to either individual pamphlets or the standard edition of his collected works, published by Karafiat in 1886, which is divided into three parts, each with multiple

Die Liebe ist ein bewaffneter Friede, die Ehe ein entwaffneter Krieg. [*Love is an armed peace. Marriage a disarmed war.*][8]

Warum sagt man eigentlich dankbar? Weil der Mensch gewöhnlich keinen Dank bar ausdrückt. [*Why do we say thank-ful? People don't normally express their thanks by filling your pockets.*][9]

Der wahre Dichter, sagt man, muß geboren werden. Jawohl! Bei dem jetzigen Zustand unserer Dichter muß man sagen: Die wahren Dichter müssen noch geboren werden! [*True poets, so the saying goes, are born and not made. My thoughts exactly! The way today's poets are, one would have to say true poets have* yet *to be born and not made!*][10]

Wenn ich unsere fünfaktigen Trauerspiele sehe, so weiß ich nicht, zu was der Mensch fünf Sinne hat.
Im ersten Akt, wo bloß erzählt wird, hört man das, was man sehen sollte.
Im zweiten sieht man, daß man nichts hört.
Im dritten Akt fühlt man, daß einem Hören und Sehen vergeht.
Im vierten riecht man schon die Leiche vom letzten Akt, und im fünften sagt man: das schmeckt wie gar nichts!
[*Whenever I see one of our five-act tragedies, I have to ask myself why mankind possesses five senses.*
In the first act, which is all talk, you hear what you should be seeing.
In the second you see that you're hearing nothing at all.
In the third you feel numb all over.
In the fourth the corpse of the last act has already started to stink, and in the fifth you say, "That doesn't have much taste at all."][11]

The final two quotes provide good examples of the mocking tone that earned Saphir the enmity of established figures in the Berlin theatrical scene. Also turning up with regularity among the publisher's writings were humorous anecdotes, mostly about stock topics such as stupid provincials, nagging wives and snail-paced postal carriages. Saphir rarely took on ex-

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this chapter refer to either individual pamphlets or the standard edition of his collected works, published by Karafiat in 1886, which is divided into three parts, each with multiple volumes. Citations will appear with Roman numerals indicating the part, Arabic numerals the volume and page numbers.

8 Ibid., p. 71.

9 Ibid., p. 76.

10 Ibid., p. 29.

11 Ibid., p. 40.