

'JEWS IN SPACE'. A HISTORY OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL DIASPORA AND THE FUTURE OF GALACTIC JEWISHNESS¹

'Judíos en el espacio'. Una historia de la diáspora extraterrestre
y del futuro del judaísmo galáctico

Lena Kugler*
Universität Konstanz (Alemania)

Keywords

(extraterrestrial)
Diaspora
Zionism
Territorialism

ABSTRACT: Following Arendt's statement in 1941 that the moon was «the only place where we can still be safe from antisemitism», this article explores Jewish extraterrestrial existence as depicted in literature and popular culture, focusing on the intersections of Jewish identity, diasporic narratives, and speculative futures. Using Mel Brooks' satirical concept of *Jews in Space* and Martin Salomonski's lesser-known novel *Zwei im andern Land*, the text examines how Jewish communities have been imagined in fictional extraterrestrial settings as responses to historical and contemporary challenges. This allows to delve into the way these narratives engage with themes of displacement, belonging, and the search for a permanent homeland beyond Earth, reflecting anxieties and aspirations surrounding Jewish survival and self-determination. Whether on the moon or on any other celestial body: 'Jews in Space', as the article argues, appears again and again as a kind of reversible *gestalt*, alternating between quasi-Zionist and diasporic conceptions of the future.

Palabras clave

Diáspora
(extraterrestre)
Sionismo
Territorialismo

RESUMEN: Siguiendo la afirmación de Arendt en 1941 de que la Luna era «el único lugar donde todavía podemos estar a salvo del antisemitismo», este artículo explora la existencia extraterrestre judía tal y como se representa en la literatura y la cultura popular, centrándose en las intersecciones de la identidad judía, las narrativas diaspóricas y los futuros especulativos. Mediante el uso del concepto satírico de Mel Brooks de *Jews in Space* y la novela menos conocida de Martin Salomonski *Zwei im andern Land*, el texto examina cómo se han imaginado las comunidades judías en escenarios extraterrestres ficticios como respuestas a retos históricos y contemporáneos. Esto permite ahondar en el modo en que estas narraciones abordan temas como el desplazamiento, la pertenencia y la búsqueda de una patria permanente más allá de la Tierra, reflejando ansiedades y aspiraciones en torno a la supervivencia y la autodeterminación judías. Ya sea en la Luna o en cualquier otro cuerpo celeste: *Jews in Space*, sostiene el artículo, aparece una y otra vez como una especie de *gestalt* reversible, alternando entre concepciones cuasi-sionistas y diaspóricas del futuro.

¹ The article has been translated from German into English by Soliman Lawrence.

* **Correspondence author / Correspondencia a:** Lena Kugler. Universität Konstanz. Departamento de Literatura. Universitätsstraße, 10 (78464 Konstanz-Alemania) – lena.kugler@uni-konstanz.de – https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0063-4452.

How to cite / Cómo citar: Kugler, Lena (2025). «'Jews in Space'. A History of Extraterrestrial Diaspora and the Future of Galactic Jewishness». *Papeles de Identidad. Contar la investigación de frontera*, vol. 2025/1, papel 317, 1-15. (https://doi.org/10.1387/pceic.24793).

Received: april, 2023 / Accepted: october, 2024.

ISSN 3045-5650 / © UPV/EHU Press 2025



This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons Atribución 4.0 Internacional

1. INTRODUCTION

Mel Brooks' *History of the World, Part I*—nominated the worst film of 1981 shortly after its release— ends with a short trailer for *Part II*, although filming was not planned². In addition to a Viking funeral and an ice-skating Adolf Hitler, it features a preview of «Jews in Space». Accompanied by dramatic music, it shows a fleet of Star of David-shaped spaceships (see figure 1) cruising through space, narrowly escaping an enemy attack. In the idiom of bad taste and by parodying the aesthetics of *Stars Wars* and «Pigs in Space» from *The Muppet Show* (1976-1981), Brooks' staging of «Jews in Space» as a necessary chapter in the continuation of the history of the world is not so much a glimpse into the future, nor into world history or film history, as it is part of a now long established tradition—one that remains unbroken as such, for it is rooted in rupture and new beginnings— of exploring extraterrestrial ways of life and survival for future Jewish societies.



Retrieved from: <https://imgur.com/gallery/CRSKEI8>. Last visit: 01/03/2023).

Figure 1

«Jews in Space»: the legendary mock trailer in Mel Brook's *History of the World Part I* (Imgur by «ElBivo»)

² However, Brooks did release the (Jewish) satirical science-fiction comedy *Spaceballs* in 1987. Meanwhile, *History of the World, Part II*, this time as a sketch comedy series, premiered on March 2023.

At least within the vastness of fictional space, Jews far exceed Vulcans, eagerly greeting each other with the blessing of the Cohanim or in the form of unscrupulous, money-grubbing characters like the slaveholder Watto from George Lucas' *Star Wars I: The Dark Menace* (1999), who, most notably, is completely impervious to Jedi power. As Albrecht Koschorke (2003, p. 328f.) has pointed out, it is not only Watto's amphibian-like appearance in the para-Christological plot of the *Star Wars* saga that outwardly recalls anti-Semitic caricatures of the century before last, rather the more subtle modes of discrimination are to be found in the character itself, for the idea that Jews cannot partake of the sacrament and, consequently, are also not fit for communal life can be read in many anti-Semitic polemics from Achim von Arnim to Joseph Goebbels. It is one thing to point out that the tweet shared by Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green in 2018 about Jewish lasers shot from space fits well into an anti-Semitic tradition that is apparently easy to extrapolate into the extraterrestrial³. It is still another to note that the multifaceted nature of Jewish space has not been sufficiently explored through characters like Spock or Watto⁴. After all, 'Jews in Space,' at least according to my thesis, appears again and again as a kind of reversible *gestalt*, alternating between quasi-Zionist and diasporic conceptions of the future.

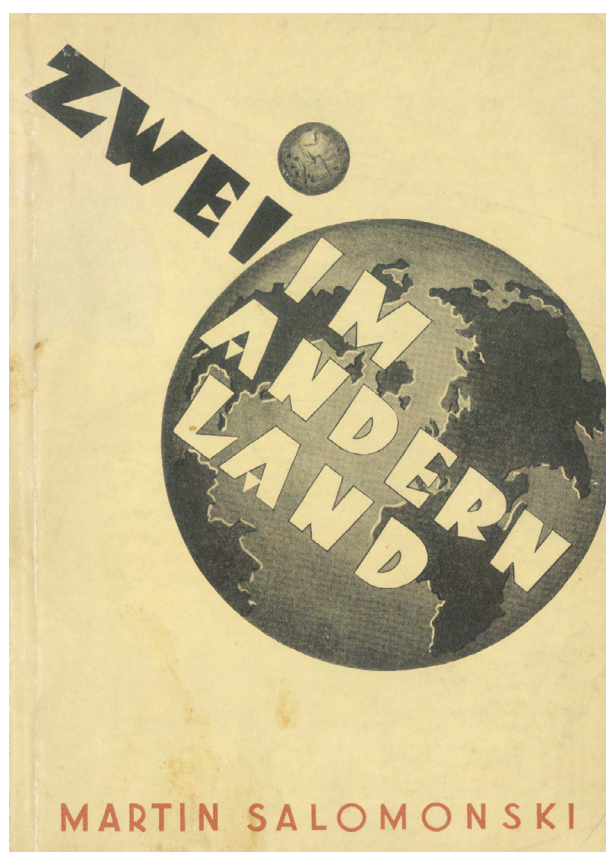
I would like to expound on this assertion first and foremost through an examination of the—in Philipp Theisoeh's (2021, p. 10) words—«strange novel» *Zwei im andern Land* [Two in the Other Country], by the Berlin Reform rabbi and writer Martin Salomonski⁵. The writer and Gertrud Kolmer biographer Dieter Kühn was baffled by the—at first glance—astonishing incongruity of Salomonski's works, ranging from the dissertation *Vegetable cultivation and crops in Palestine at the time of the Mishnah* (1911) to texts written in light of his participation in World War I as a military rabbi, *Ein Jahr an der Somme* (1917) and *Jüdische Seelsorge an der Westfront* (1918), the partly autobiographical Berlin-based «metropolitan novel» *Der geborene Tugendreich* (1928), up to his last novel that I am exploring here. Kühn (2008, p. 302) stated that the works were so difficult to reconcile that he seriously questioned whether they all came from the same person or whether he was dealing with a namesake.

Of these, Salomonski's last novel (figura 2) alone is enough to cause lasting consternation. Re-published in February 2021 by Alexander Fromm, it was first published in June 1933 as a serial story in the Berlin *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung* under the pseudonym Stefan Reginald Marknes and appeared the following year as a book under Salomonski's actual name with footnotes by Stefan Marknes, now appearing as a critic.

³ Greene's tweet speculating on whether the 2018 California wildfires were due to «space» and «laser beams» from «Rothschild Inc» can be read here: <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/marjorie-taylor-greene-penned-conspiracy-theory-laser-beam-space-started-deadly-2018>. Last access: 01/03/2023.

⁴ Corroboration for this assessment comes from, among other things, the extraordinarily rich exhibition *Jews in Space. Members of the Tribe in Orbit*, co-curated by the Center for Jewish History and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and shown for the first time in 2018. The aim of the exhibition was to tell the story of the Jewish relationship to the solar system. Numerous artifacts from pop culture were also exhibited.

⁵ Biobibliographical information on Salomonski will soon be available in the newly created *Digital Archive of Jewish Authors in Berlin, 1933-1945*. More details: https://www.kuwi.europa-uni.de/de/lehrstuhl/lw/diaspora/forschung/lehrstuhlprojekte/projekt0_dajab/index.html. Last access: 01/03/2023.



Retrieved from: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/2/2c/Salomonski_Zwei_im_andern_Land_Schutzumschlag.jpg. Last access: 01/03/2023).

Figure 2

Martin Salomonski's novel *Zwei im andern Land*.
Dust jacket of the book edition published in 1934 by Benjamin Harz Verlag

The story is strange, not least of all because it takes place in 1953, when there are hardly any Jews left in Berlin while a millennia-old population of Jewish refugees is living on the moon, but also because each of its three storylines seems in its own way to come to nothing (Theisohn 2021); eventually getting lost in the vastness of space, as it were.

The first storyline begins with something that seems consistent with science fiction, the patenting of a technical invention. The copywriter Victor Arago lives in an alternate version of Florida in the hypercapitalist near future and comes up with a design for a «sound film» machine that makes it possible to retrieve any memory, no matter how hidden, from the «store-room of the brain» and project it in moving images onto a screen. The ingenuity and, at the same time, danger of this highly coveted invention is emphasized several times and is the reason that Victor is kidnapped by a group of young women who call themselves «the Club of Decent People». Instead of this storyline developing further, however, it increasingly fades into the background until the reader learns, rather incidentally, that «the question of the patent (...) is anyhow dead in its tracks»⁶ (Salomonski, 2021, p. 163).

⁶ Here and in the following: translated by Soliman Lawrence.

The second storyline involves the stormy beginning of a love and family story between Victor and his kidnapper Mica. At least from an earthly perspective, their marriage is literally made in heaven, namely on the moon. They travel there during a lunar eclipse without the help of any technical contraptions, guided instead solely by the strong hand of God. Despite these extremely favorable conditions, this romantic love story suddenly comes to a surprisingly quick end. Back on Earth, Mica, now pregnant, comes to learn of her recently wedded husband's infidelity and, although she does not renounce all attachments per se, she does declare her marriage to be over.

And then there is third storyline, the real subject of the novel: The moon and what it stands for. The moon in the Jewish tradition, as is well known, is a planet that is especially important in terms of *time*. The Jewish calendar is a lunisolar calendar and observance of the various holidays and prayers is dependent on the knowledge of its respective position. In contrast, Salomonski's novel—which contains a footnote on modern lunar fictions à la H. G. Wells and Desiderius Papp—is particularly concerned with the moon in spatial terms, namely as a Jewish territory that can serve as a refuge and home for persecuted Jews and possibly even Jews the world over. After their sudden and divine transfer to the moon, Mica and Victor are welcomed by a delegation of Jewish lunar inhabitants, whose leader—how could it be otherwise—turns out in the end to be Mica's father, who was believed dead. He explains to them:

«We are Israel's children and back in ancient times when Samaria's glory and Zion's temple fell into ruin, we were brought here by God Himself (...) carried from the bondage and persecution of the world by His strong arm. (...) Four times over 2.500 years, new settlers have come here: when Titus sacrilegiously destroyed Jerusalem once more, when the Crusades and the persecutions of the Black Death tried to exterminate us, when Spain and Portugal forced half a million Jews to the funeral pyres and into emigration. People came up to us even a short time ago. I set foot on the moon myself only nineteen years ago (...).» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 78)

Although it is stated explicitly that the Jews remaining on Earth in the present time of the novel's plot in 1953 «did not lack civil law» and that their lives were quite tranquil and comfortable, there is repeated mention of the fact «that not many of Israel's tribe had remained behind in Germany and in Berlin, and that there were hardly any youth left there». Back on Earth, however, it seems to Mica not only that German Jewry, but even world Jewry, is increasingly «doomed to fade away» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 154). Together with Victor as her ally, she gathers together an ever-growing group whose goal is to «break away from all peoples—somewhere in the world—in a completely different country (...) to get serious about the complete reorganization of the Jewish people» (*ibid.*, p. 167f). Petitions and appeals are written. The united powers of Europe and the United States of America and finally even the Pope urgently implore the Jews to please stay. At the same time, they are granted a territory on the north coast of Africa for their «exclusive and free disposal» (*ibid.*, 176) and, under international media attention, there begins an exodus of almost the entire world Jewry to the «enormous tent city» that has been erected there, which, however—and now the novel's expected punch line—turns out to be far from their actual «migration destination» (*ibid.*, 181f). In any case, one morning all the Jews have disappeared from this huge tent camp and while the world is still puzzling over where they are, only the readers of the novel know: Where else but the moon?

2. THE 'JEWISH QUESTION' FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MOON

Salomonki's novel about the Jewish exodus to the moon was advertised as a «futuristic novel about the solution to the Jewish question» and the text itself also explicitly mentions the so-called 'Jewish question'. Without going into detail here about its history, which begins in the 18th century and is connected with the Enlightenment belief in the 'improvement' and emancipation of the Jews, even the very linguistic structure of the term is unsettling, not only because it is not clear whether we are dealing here with a question *of* or *about* Jews, but also, as Alexander Fromm has noted, because questions usually have to be answered and not solved⁷, whereby the so-called 'Jewish question' has referred from the outset to a Jewish *problem* and often enough to the problem that Jews have when non-Jews have a problem with Jews. Without dwelling any longer on the plausibility of the question, Salomonki's novel, precisely due to the very improbability of the moon as an extraterrestrial foreign country, quite obviously offers—to use the words of a contemporary critic—a «sham solution» to this so-called 'Jewish question' while at the same time also exploring «many solutions» (Götz, 1933 & 1934). Thus, Salomonki's travel itinerary to the moon does not so much constitute an actual design of contemporary concepts of Jewish life and survival so much as an astonishingly precise sketch of the space in which such topics are thought and discussed.

Upon her return, Mica is presented with the options available to the Jewish people, which she considers—seen, as it were, from the perspective of the moon—already no longer possible:

«Either we should have dissolved and regrouped ourselves so that we could no longer be perceived, then our achievement as a religious people would benefit the present, like an invention whose creator has finally been forgotten and it no longer matters (...). But the half-measure of wanting to assert oneself as a race only to be left standing as a fully valid element through different epochs and in the midst of a myriad of nations, that is more than a mistake, that is delusion and indebtedness. I can be only one. The bird *ruiseñor* [nightingale] neither switches with the peacock nor the ostrich nor the hummingbird. He wants to be himself! And the lion would give thanks for being called tiger if names mattered in the animal kingdom. Even mixtures that are related are unhealthy, perhaps even hermaphroditic.» (Salomonki, 2021, p. 151f)

With her biologicistic-zoological departure from the concept of species, Mica refers (indeed, dismissively) to the project of radical assimilation as formulated and advocated by Walther Rathenau in 1871 with his demand for a Jewish «metamorphosis» and «*Anartung*»:

«So what must happen? An event without historical precedent: the conscious self-education of a race to adapt to foreign requirements. Adaptation not in the sense of Darwin's «mimicry,» which means the art of some insects to adopt the color of their environment, but an adaptation in the sense of tribal traits, which, whether good or bad, have been established as abhorrent by fellow countrymen and are thus discarded and replaced by more suitable ones.» (Rathenau, 1897, p. 93)

Although distorted by the vocabulary of race, she also refers critically to Simon Dubnow's concept of a Jewish diasporic nationalism, according to which the Jewish people form a distinct «national unity» and are thus «not a state within a state but a nation among nations,

⁷ Fromm wrote the following in his epilogue to Salomonki work: «It is striking that there is always talk of solving the Jewish question, never of answering it; generally speaking, questions are answered and problems are solved» (2021, p. 212).

a spiritual-historical nation in the midst of political nations» (1907, p. 40 and 54f). And, of course, Mica also «follows the developments in Palestine with utmost excitement, where, however», she says, «it has not progressed beyond a home for the Jews». For despite considerable successes in construction, the «opposition between the Arab population and the Jews (...) has not ceased, so that there could be no talk of a refuge in the land of the fathers for the fifteen million Jews of the globe» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 155).

Although Salomonski officiated as a Reform rabbi, and generally Reform Judaism in Germany was shaped by a strong sense of national loyalty and was thus at first staunchly anti-Zionist (Meyer, 2000, p. 302f. & 463-475), a fundamentally anti-Zionist attitude cannot be found here. On the contrary, it is the heterogeneous history of Zionism and so-called territorialism that is being invoked when Mica further emphasizes: «The entirety of all Jewry cannot make their home in any country that belongs to others (...). We must begin a life detached from all peoples —somewhere in the world— in a completely different country.» Or, to use another example, when Mica consequently demands for the Jewish people «a large territory that belongs to no one,» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 167) or finally, as the novel's plot develops, when a desert area in North Africa is then granted by the world nations.

This is hinted at in a footnote, unfortunately left out of the new edition of the novel, in which the figure of the critic states that he cannot decide whether the author of the novel is now a «radical Zionist» or whether it is possibly «the old Uganda project» he has in mind and merely does not dare to «mention the name» (Salomonski, 1934, p. 178). In this way, Salomonski alludes via his alias Marknes to the British proposal put forward in 1903 by Theodor Herzl himself to establish a Jewish refuge in colonial British East Africa, in an area that is now Kenya. There followed two years of bitter disputes between opponents and supporters until the seventh Zionist Congress in 1905, shortly after Herzl's death, where not only the so-called Uganda Plan itself was rejected but even all future discussions about projects outside Palestine were in principle forbidden; this became the founding hour of the ITO, the Jewish Territorialist Organization, headed by the British writer Israel Zangwill, which by no means saw itself as anti-Zionist (Alroey, 2011/2012, p. 6ss).

As research in recent years has increasingly made clear (*ibid.*; Rovner, 2014; Brenner, 2017) the Zionism that has since been realized in Israel represented for many at that time only one of many options, and was neither the most desirable nor the most probable. In his early Zionist manifesto *Autoemancipation*, from 1882, Leo Pinsker stated:

«The goal of our present endeavors must be not the 'Holy Land', but a land of our own. We need nothing but a large tract of land for our poor brothers, which shall remain our property and from which no foreign power can expel us. There we shall take with us the most sacred possessions which we have saved from the ship-wreck of our former country, the God-idea and the Bible. It is these alone which have made our old fatherland the Holy Land, and not Jerusalem or the Jordan.» (1916, p. 15)⁸

Herzl (1896, p. 28), too, could well imagine various territorial solutions and, as is well known, not only took Palestine into consideration in *Der Judenstaat* [The Jewish State], his policy draft for Jewish sovereignty, but also Argentina.

Be that as it may, the list of promised lands before Israel is, according to Rovner (2014, p. XV), astonishingly long, extending over the whole globe and to every continent, except Antarc-

⁸ For further discussion, see: Alroey, 2011/12, p. 3.

tica. Besides Palestine, Argentina, and today's Kenya, the feverish search that took place between 1820 and 1948 for Jewish homelands found hope, among others places, on Grand Island, a small island in the middle of the Niagara River, but also in Surinam, Angola, Madagascar, Australia, and Tasmania. Whereby Birobidzhan, formed near the Chinese border in 1934 by the Soviets, was never a sought-after Zion but rather a Zion decreed by Stalin, a Zion that to this day still exists under than name the Jewish Autonomous Region and is characterized above all by the absence of a prosperous Jewish population⁹.

According to Alroey (2011/2012, p. 10), the main argument for a pragmatic solution to the problem of territorialism was that the plight of Jews was increasing exponentially while the projects being realized in Palestine were only progressing arithmetically, i.e., there was simply not enough time to save Jewish life with Palestine alone. Moreover, and this is also mentioned by Salomonski, the territorialists had immense doubts that it was at all possible to build an autonomous Jewish homeland in Palestine given the Arab population already living there. Indeed, because, in Zangwill's words, the «legend that Palestine was empty and derelict» was simply not true. «Palestine proper,» Zangwill never tired of emphasizing, «already has its inhabitants» (*apud* Rovner, 2014, p. 83).

As is well known, however, every single territorialist group, whether the ITO or later the Freeland League, failed to find somewhere in the world a «great territory» for the Jewish people, something that even Mica could desire, much less «that belongs to no one» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 167).

That the globe alone might not be sufficient for the project of a Jewish territory was illustrated by a cartoon postcard by Mikhail Liubashka in 1907 (figure 3), proposing Mars instead of the moon:



Retrieved from: <https://yivo.org/Other-Zions>. Last access: 01/03/2023.

Figure 3

With Australia no long a possible Jewish homeland, Mars is offered as a new territory. Postcard with drawing by Mikhail Liubashka (1907), YIVO online exhibition *Other Zions*

⁹ On the history of Birobidzhan, see for example: Weinberg, 1998, and also Gessen, 2016.

Francis Montefiore's assertion «that a politically virgin territory can be found only in the moon» was countered by Zangwill himself with the remark: «Not even there, I fear. For there is a man in the moon, and he is probably an anti-Semite» (1907, p. 13). In an article published in 1941 on the question of a Jewish fighting force of its own against Hitler, Hannah Arendt, in turn, stated:

«Just as significant as Zionism's moral effect on individuals, just as tremendous as the conquest of Palestine by hard work, is the catastrophic effect of no one's having ever found a political answer that addresses what for Jews is the principal political movement of our time: antisemitism. (...) But the moon is the only place where we can still be safe from antisemitism; and Weizmann's famous statement that the answer to antisemitism is to build up Palestine has proved to be dangerous lunacy.» (2007, p. 142f)

For Arendt, this resulted in three insights in 1941, namely, first, that anti-Semitism could only be fought if Jews, and indeed as a European people, fought Hitler with weapons in hand, and, second, that:

«Palestine can be regarded solely as an area of settlement for European Jews. In other words, that Palestine's politics are to be derived from the larger politics of European Jewry and not vice versa, whereby Palestinian politics cannot determine Jewish politics as a whole. For, third, the solution to the Jewish question is not to be found in one country, not even in Palestine.» (*ibid.*, p. 143)

Salomonski's novel, published shortly after Hitler's rise to power, also points to the catastrophic lack of an overall political response to the growing anti-Semitism. This is depicted, for one thing, with the gaping void around which the text constantly circles: The complete lack of a characterization of the early 1930s, when, according to Mica's father, the fifth and, for the time being, last exodus to the moon is supposed to have taken place. Nowhere is a remotely plausible explanation ever given as to the nature of the persecutions and how it came about «that not many of Israel's tribe had remained behind in Germany and in Berlin» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 154). While on the other hand, however, this lack also finds expression in the fairytale-like story of colonizing the moon as the *only* safe Jewish home and refuge. As Michael Brenner (2017, p. 116) has pointed out, Vladimir Jabotinsky, founder of revisionist Zionism and later commander-in-chief of the Irgun, had described the Jewish land beyond Palestine, which had been so feverishly and repeatedly sought in vain, as a «Fata-Morgana-land»; for Salomonski anyway, it was only to be found in the extraterrestrial.

Two in the Other Country can therefore at best be understood as an *extra-territorialist* novel and not simply a phantasmagorical rendering of the early territorialism advocated by the ITO. For while the latter aimed to a certain extent at abolishing the Jewish diaspora by demanding an autonomous Jewish territory even outside Israel and, by contrast, the Freyland Liege, founded by Isaac Nahmann Steinberg in 1935, was designed from the outset to emphasize cultural autonomy rather than state-political autonomy¹⁰, there is no question of any such dismissal and negation of the Jewish diaspora in Salomonski's novel. On the contrary. For, firstly, the moon as a sphere of Jewish life and creation remains strangely vague and is reminiscent of a version of an early Zionist kibbutz, constructed and Orientalized out of thin air,

¹⁰ For detailed treatment, see Alroey (2011/2012, p. 18ss).

with «pyramid-like structures,» «tents,» and a reference to the laborious reclamation of the «ember-protected cones» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 73). And second, it is the side of the moon that faces away from Earth that the inhabitants call «the three sevenths of longing» despite the wondrous beauty of its sea teeming with singing fish. For:

«The moon people, who live around the sea, greatly miss the sight of our Earth. The entirety of their poetics and costumes, their songs and sagas, pertain to our heavenly body. That is why parents carry their little ones one year of age up to the moon's crests on the day they are kissed by the earth' rays (...). The moment the parents cross that line where the globe becomes visible, children in their many thousands raise their little arms and shout: Volva!, Volva!, for this is the earth's name in their babytalk. And the parents and all the adults begin to weep and gaze enraptured at the majesty of the star that was once their home.» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 83)

In the context of the literal planetary loss of home, it is not Jerusalem that cannot be forgotten but rather, in a simultaneously Latinized and clearly eroticized form, all of Earth. Even with the moon as God-ordained Jewish territory, there is no end to the Jewish experience of diaspora, for, as Liliana Feierstein notes, even Abraham left his homeland in accordance with the divine command *lech lecha*, «in order to move to the 'Promised Land'—into the future». Israel is thus to be understood «not as *eretz moledet* (as the land of birth), but as a promise» (2018, p. 99).

What remains in Salomonski's text is, on the one hand, the hope for a time of return to the earthly homeland and, on the other hand, as Theisohn (2021) points out, the desire expressed in the novel of also wanting to be missed at a time when it was said that the people of Earth simply cannot explain «what has become of the Jews. They have disappeared and remain disappeared, and the name 'Israel' belongs since then only to history» (Salomonski, 2021, p. 185).

3. 'JEWS IN SPACE' AFTER 1948

Even after the Nazi persecution and murder of the Jews ended —Martin Salomonski was murdered in Auschwitz on October 16, 1944— and the state of Israel was founded, future narratives of 'Jews in Space' have continued to function as diasporic entries in the «history of possibility»¹¹. While Israeli science-fiction and fantasy narratives, especially as «Zion's fiction» (Teitelbaum & Lottem, 2018) quite rarely 'take off' into space, and Israel thus appears even in the darkest visions of the future as a thoroughly terrestrial enclave¹² (.) US-American Jewish future narratives in particular leave the Earth repeatedly. In the vastness of space, these narratives are permanently caught in a kind of galactic loop, reanimated as it were by

¹¹ Caspar Battagay's impressive *Geschichte der Möglichkeit. Utopie, Diaspora und die ›jüdische Frage‹* [History of Possibility. Utopia, Diaspora and the 'Jewish Question'], published in 2018, does not deal with 'Jews in Space', but very much with the post-apocalyptic narrative of science-fiction literature and with «cybergolems» or «cyborgs in the diaspora». See in particular the 10th and 11th chapters, pp. 291-326.

¹² Gideon Marcus notes, just by looking at the cover of Teitelbaum and Lottem's anthology —showing a Vulcan-eared Herzl in a spacesuit leaning over the control console of a spaceship and gazing earnestly at the passing globe— that what is «missing from this volume is any evidence of human space travel (...), in every predicted future for Israel, whether utopian or apocalyptic, *Eretz Yisrael* is a terrestrial enclave» (2019, w/p).

each successive forced departure¹³ and the various projects and hopes for planetary territorialization that are thereby set in motion. A William Tenn story from 1974, for example, is about what happened at the First Interstellar Neozionist Conference on the planet Venus. And in the first volume of Phobee North's *Starglass* series (2013), the Jewish population of a spaceship discovers just as they are entering the atmosphere of the planet Zehava, their final destination after five hundred years, that it is already inhabited. In these and similar future scenarios, Israel as a territory that is both Jewish and inhabited by Jews, as well as sometimes even the planet Earth as a whole, have long since ceased to exist, while pogroms and expulsions, however, have taken on planetary proportions, such that, as Hannah Arendt (2007/1941) argued, one is by no means safe from anti-Semitism even in space or on the moon.

This constant shifting between de-territorialization and re-territorialization brings two aspects in particular into view. First, the texts repeatedly work through the diasporic dialectic of exile and domicile—but now on a galactic scale—. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi identifies in this dialectic the ability to not only see «expulsion (*gerush*) [as] part of the negative history of exile (*galut*)», but also to be able to «endow the place of exile with the familiar, to perceive it as 'Jewish'» and thus to feel «truly 'at home' in *galut*» (1993, pp. 34 & 31). Take for example, «I'm Looking for Kadak», a short story by Harlan Ellison, who also wrote the original screenplay for the *Star Trek* episode «The City on the Edge of Forever» (1967), legendary among Trekkies. «I'm Looking for Kadak» is the story of a mourning ceremony that takes place shortly before being relocated to another planet. It is a kind of sitting *shiva*—but not because of a death but because of the impending loss of their planet, as, according to the first-person narrator, this was their *goldeneh medina*, «the golden country; it was good here, we were happy here, now we have to move» (Ellison, 2009, p. 214f).

The second aspect, with different political stakes in each case, is about the loss of a geographical center, or rather, as Feierstein (2018, p. 106) emphasizes in reference to Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin (Boyarin, 2002; Boyarin, 2015), about the extra-territorial centerlessness that has been specific to the Jewish diaspora from the very beginning. While the world is still unable to explain where the Jews have disappeared to, Salomonski's question about the whereabouts of the Jews in time and space—a question also raised in later texts—is answered with the announcement that a surprising explanation was found randomly in a novel published some time ago. A page reference is then given to that very book, which, indeed, is the very same book currently in front of the reader—both entitled *Zwei im andern Land* [Two in the Other Country]—at which point an account of the exodus of the Jews to the moon is then given. On the one hand, the book's duplication and mutual verification opens up a kind of time loop because the publication of each respective novel can be dated as either in the 1930s (the time of Salomonski's publication) or in the 1950s (the temporal setting of its plot), so that the exodus to the moon itself can no longer be located in generally valid historical time anyway. While, on the other hand, locating the Jews spatially is less a matter of planetary geography than of the written word and its universe of mutually referential texts; in the spirit of Heinrich Heine, a «portative homeland» transposed into the galactic, so to speak (Feierstein, 2018, p. 106ss). This is even expressed pictorially on the 1934 dust jacket, in that the moon's place above the earth is part of the writing itself as the title above «i» in the word *zwei* (see again figure 2).

¹³ See on the temporal peculiarities of these types: Kray, 2002.

4. CONCLUSION: 'JEWS IN SPACE' AND THE FUTURE OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL JEWISHNESS

Since the early 1970s at the latest, science-fiction narratives have come to focus not only on the physical, political, and cultural modes of life in a future extraterrestrial diaspora but also on the *biological*. It has thus been an attempt to rethink the entanglement of various particularities, spaces, and times—a veritable multi- and interplanetary *Jewcology*¹⁴, as it were—. Take, for example, the 1999 novel *Planet of the Jews* by the American Philip Graubart, who is incidentally also an active rabbi. In this story within a story, it turns out that the voice that haunts the protagonist so persistently and annoyingly, commanding him to gather the Jews of the terrestrial world and protect them from an impending attack by anti-Semitic Ukrainians, was in fact not God at all, but actually the planet of the Jews itself¹⁵. In other words, a thinking, talking entity—a kind of talkative *Jewish* manifestation of the Gaia theory and at the same time a homage to Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1961)—. And not only does the planet love to show off its rich and, unlike the earth, decidedly biodiverse ecosystem, but also increasingly enjoys studying the Talmud with its new inhabitants¹⁶.

However, in the universe of future diasporic spaces that fiction opens up, there arises not only the question of the particular character and adaptability of a future Jewish world but also that of the future Jewishness itself: For, as the narrator in Tenn's story puts it, «if there are alien *goyim*, why can't there be alien Jews?» (Tenn, 2009, p. 29)¹⁷. Are blue Jews, for example, still Jewish? Or do they—and I quote—not only «not look Jewish» but are «no longer human at all»?¹⁸

What would be the origin history of a future «Space Age Jew»? How would that history be remembered, and to whom and in what way would it be told? And would that history one day have been a human history? The reader in Ellison's story of a planetary-traditional mourning ceremony only realizes quite late the impact of the fact that not only the first-person narrator, with his eleven arms and his row of caterpillar feet, but actually all the *minyán* that are present are not members of the *human* species.

Originally sent to measure the lunar magnetic field and the distance to the earth, the Israeli lunar probe Bereshit («in the beginning» in Hebrew) instead crashed on the moon on April 11, 2019 with more on board than was mentioned in the epilogue of Salomonski's novel: «the memoirs of a Holocaust survivor, a Hebrew Bible as well as the Israeli Declaration of Independence»¹⁹. Also on board as part of a planetary DNA archive were so-called tardi-

¹⁴ The reference to the extraterrestrial is however still missing on webpage: <https://jewcology.org/>, as declared «Home of the Jewish Environmental Movement». Last access: 01/03/2023.

¹⁵ «It's the planet, he realized, suddenly. The entire world. The Planet of the Jews summoned us. It's been the planet all along» (Graubart, 1999: 46).

¹⁶ «But even though the Planet wasn't God (and—for that matter—wasn't Jewish, or even human), it did enjoy participating in Evan's weekly Talmud class» (Graubart, 1999, p. 59).

¹⁷ In Tenn's short story, which is especially concerned with who and what a «Space Age Jew» is, this question is finally answered as follows: «Let's put it this way: there are Jews—and there are Jews» (2009, p. 39). On the ethical and theological implications of the questions that the extraterrestrial pose about the future of Jewishness, see: Cohen Ioannides, 2019.

¹⁸ The first-person narrator in Carol Carr's story «Look, You Think You've Got Troubles» complains, for example, that his son-in-law from Mars «not only [...] doesn't look Jewish, he's not even human» (2009, p. 59).

¹⁹ See: Fromm's epilogue of Salomonski's novel (2021, p. 202).

grades in a dehydrated state, tiny microorganisms known for their survival skills, which upon impact were scattered over the surface of the moon²⁰. What will become of this, quite literal, lunar *diaspora*, or what can become of it anyway, remains to be seen.

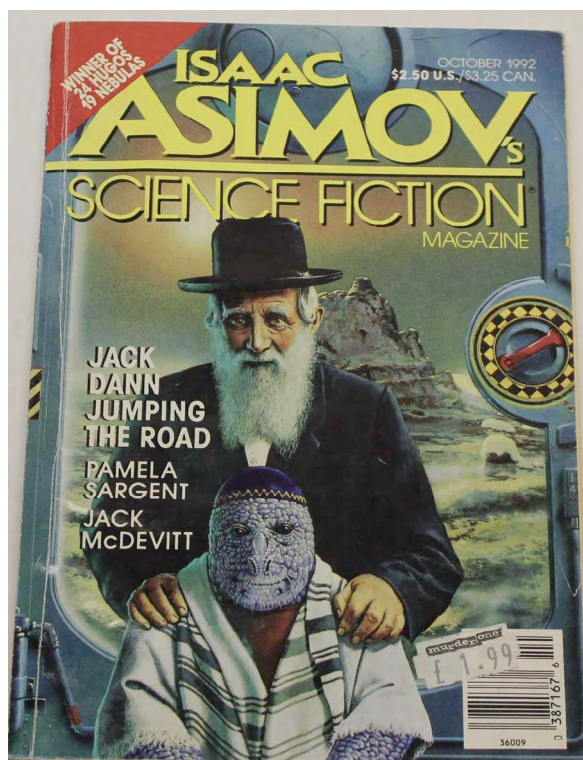


Figure 4

Are blue Jews still Jewish? Cover of Isaac Asimov's *Science Fiction Magazine*, October 1992

5. REFERENCES

- Arendt, H. (2007/1941). *Ceterum Censeo*. In J. Kohn & R. H. Feldman (Eds.), *The Jewish Writings* (pp. 142-44). Schocken.
- Alroey, G. (2011/2012). Zionism without Zion: Territorialist Ideology and the Zionist Movement, 1882-1956. *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture and Society*, 18, 1-32.
- Battegay, C. (2018). *Geschichte der Möglichkeit. Utopie, Diaspora und die «jüdische Frage»*. Wallstein.
- Boyarin, D., & Boyarin, J. (2002). Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity. *Critical Inquiry*, 19, 693-725.
- Boyarin, D. (2015). *A Travelling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

²⁰ See, for example, on this widely reported lunar incident and accident in the media: Illinger, 2019.

- Brenner, M. (2017). *Israel. Traum und Wirklichkeit des jüdischen Staates. Von Theodor Herzl bis heute*. C. H. Beck.
- Carr, C. (2009/1974). Look, You Think You've Got Troubles. In J. Dann (Ed.), *Wandering Stars. An Anthology of Jewish Fantasy & Science Fiction* (pp. 59-71). Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Cohen Ioannides, M. W. (2019). Judaism and Extraterrestrials: Theological Lessons from Science Fiction. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 52(5-October), 1200-1217.
- Dubnow, S. (1907). *Die Grundlagen des Nationaljudentums*. Jüdischer Verlag.
- Ellison, H. (2009/1974). I'm Looking for Kadak. In J. Dann (Ed.), *Wandering Stars. An Anthology of Jewish Fantasy & Science Fiction* (pp. 211-235). Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Feierstein, L. R. (2018). Diaspora. In C. von Braun & M. Brumlik (Eds.), *Handbuch jüdische Studien* (pp. 99-109). Böhlau.
- Gessen, M. (2016). *Where the Jews aren't. The Sad and Absurd Story of Birobidzhan, Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region*. Schocken.
- Götz, G. (1933). Gelüftetes Redaktionsgeheimnis: Wer ist Stefan Reginald Marknes? *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung*. Reprinted in M. Salomonski (2021). *Zwei im andern Land* (pp. 195-197). Vergangenheitsverlag (edited by Alexander Fromm).
- Götz, G. (1934). Das jüdische Buch. *Gemeindeblatt der jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*. Reprinted in M. Salomonski (2021). *Zwei im andern Land*. Vergangenheitsverlag (edited by Alexander Fromm).
- Graubart, Ph. (1999). *The Planet of the Jews*. Creative Arts Book Company.
- Herzl, T. (1896). *Der Judenstaat. Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage*. M. Breitenstein's Verlags-Buchhandlung.
- Illinger, P. (2019). Bärtierchen sind die ersten Mondbewohner. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Aug. 7. Retrieved from: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/baertierchen-weltraum-mond-israel-1.4554839>.
- Koschorke, A (2003). Theologische Makeraden. Figurationen der Heiligen Familie in George Lucas' *Star Wars*. In C. Benthien & I. Stephan (Eds.), *Männlichkeit als Maskerade: kulturelle Inszenierungen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (316-335). Böhlau.
- Kray, S. (2002). Jews in Time: Alternate Histories and Futures in Space ... And Who Was That Bearded and Yarmulkeh'd Old Man? In G. Westfahl, G. Slusser & D. Leiby (Eds.), *Worlds Enough and Time. Explorations of Time in Science Fiction and Fantasy* (pp. 87-102). Greenwood Press.
- Kühn, D. (2008). *Getrud Kolmar. Leben und Werk, Zeit und Tod*. S. Fischer.
- Marcus, G. (2019). 'Zion's Fiction'. Homegrown Sci-Fi from Israel. *Hadassah Magazine*, July 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.hadassahmagazine.org/2019/07/01/zions-fiction-homegrown-sci-fi-israel/>
- Meyer, M. A. (2000). *Antwort auf die Moderne. Geschichte der Reformbewegung im Judentum*. Böhlau.
- North, Ph. (2013). *Starglass*. Simon & Schuster.

- Pinsker, L. (1916). *Auto-Emancipation*. Federation of American Zionists.
- Rathenau, W. (1897). Höre Israel! *Die Zukunft*, March 6.
- Rovner, A. (2014). *In the Shadow of Zion. Promised Lands before Israel*. New York University Press.
- Salomonski, M. (1934). *Zwei im andern Land*. Benjamin Harz.
- Salomonski, M. (2021). *Zwei im andern Land* (edited by Alexander Fromm). Vergangenheitsverlag.
- Teitelbaum, S., & Lottem, E. (Eds.) (2018). *Zion's Fiction. A Treasury of Israeli Speculative Literature*. Madel Vilar Press.
- Tenn, W. (2009/1974). On Venus, Have We Got a Rabbi. In J. Dann (Ed.), *Wandering Stars. An Anthology of Jewish Fantasy & Science Fiction* (pp. 7-40). Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Theisohn, Ph. (2021). Sie werden vermisst. Jüdischer Exodus ins Außerirdische: Martin Salomonskis Mondreise-Roman «Zwei im andern Land» von 1934 erscheint neu. *Review in the literary supplement of the FAZ*, 87, April 15.
- Weinberg, R. (1998). *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and The Making Of A Soviet Jewish Homeland: An Illustrated History, 1928-1996*. University of California Press.
- Yerushalmi, Y. H. (1993). Exil und Vertreibung in der jüdischen Geschichte. In Y. H. Yerushalmi (Ed.), *Ein Feld in Anatot. Versuche über jüdische Geschichte* (translated by Wolfgang Heuss and Bruni Röhm) (pp. 21-38). Wagenbach.
- Zangwill, I. (1907). *A Land of Refuge*. Emigration Regulation Department of the ITO.

6. FILMOGRAPHY

- Brooks, M. (Dir.) (1981). *History of the World, Part I* [Film]. USA.
- Brooks, M. (Dir.) (1987). *Spaceballs* [Film]. USA.
- Brooks, M. (Dir.) (2023). *History of the World, Part II* [Series]. USA.
- Harris, P., & Casson, P. (Dirs.). (1976-1981). *The Muppet Show* [TV Show]. UK & USA.
- Lucas, G. (Dir.) (1999). *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* [Film]. USA.
- Pevney, J. (Dir.) (1967). *The City on the Edge of Forever* (Star Trek: The Original Series, season 1, episode 28) [Series]. USA.