antiquity, as well as ethnic historical conceptions, would encourage even a broader range for interdisciplinary relations between folklore and history.93

But most important of all are the changes that the discipline of folklore itself has undergone in the last quarter of a century. Fictional and drawing upon diverse intellectual sources, trends and traditions, folklore has been able to achieve the synthesis that eluded Zora and his friends, namely to integrate the study of the spirit with the analysis of behavior. Folklore has accomplished this by absorbing the spiritual and the expressive in society as its behavioral level, and by consciousness of human conduct in social life as a symbolic manifestation of the spiritual. At this level folklore has become both an explorative and an interpretive discipline. It sets out to discover the poetic principles of artistic communication within social units, and seeks to interpret the symbolic systems in specific cultures as the members of these societies use them in their appropriate, and inappropriate, contexts. The artistic texts and their social performances are the subject of interpretation and analysis. The ethnographic description that Zora could program but could not implement into Jewish studies becomes, in the current folklore synthesis, a homogenized interpretive task in which actions and words are taken at their symbolic value. Folklore is hence poised to explore the symbolic behavior in Jewish societies, not as an ideal normative system, not as a set of absolute goals, but as a real system that has an historical depth and ethnic diversity, and which is forged anew each time through confrontation with new social and cultural conditions.94

The relationship between subject and discipline is fundamental to any intellectual history. Not all subjects give rise to specialized fields of study devoted exclusively to them. Accordingly, there are two key questions for a history of Jewish folkloristics: first, how have Jews been constituted as a subject? Second, what is the relationship between this subject and the historical processes by which disciplines are formed? I view the history of Jewish folkloristics—which must be considered in relation to ethnography and anthropology—as a struggle over whose representation of Jews and their culture would be authoritative.95

Theology Sets the Ethnographic Agenda

"Apostolic nostalgia" and Christian sectarian struggle set the ethnographic agenda for at least three centuries.96 Not until the nineteenth century did scholars manage to divorce the ethnographic study of Jewish life from Christian theological concerns. With the "discovery" of Hebrew, Christian Hebraists had engaged in historical ethnography as a form of Biblical exegesis. So passionate was the desire to imagine the world of the Bible in the most literal and concrete terms that Johann Christoph Georg

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95 An earlier version of this essay was presented at the "Third International Scholars' Conference in Jewish Studies" that took place at Indiana University on November 8-10, 1987.

96 For a more extended treatment of this subject, see my forthcoming book Ashkenaz: Essays in the Intellectual History of Jewish Folklore and Ethnography (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press).

Hodenschatz, author of Kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden sonderlich in Deutschland (Leipzig, 1748), actually built scale models of Noah's Ark and the Tabernacle of the Wilderness. Such undertakings, including the many accounts of Jewish liturgy and ceremony, were part of the internal Christian polemic against the interlace between Judaism and Christianity. Descriptions of Jewish custom and ceremonies offer a vivid sense of the ground on which to wage the sectarian struggles for legitimacy. Jews and Judaism were central to this debate, both as subject of study and as objects for religious and cultural reflections. The works on which it is modelled, theologico-tendentiousness is conspicuous by its absence. The book states explicitly that this collection of Jewish custom is intended as a contribution to Volker-Kunde, which emerges here as the sheer “description of Jewish customs without any Christian editorializing. Unterrichter has created a Volker-Kunde of the Jews by a process of elimination, by stripping away the theological argumentation that is so important in the classic works of Margarita, Buxtorf, Simon, Schudt, Hodenschatz and others.

Logical Divisions of Knowledge: Educating Citizens

The history of the “logical division of knowledge” in the latter half of the eighteenth century was given in a way that is both general and Jewish scholars, the material we associate with Volkskunde, ethnography, and anthropology dominated discourse on philosophy, literature, statistics, anthropology, and geography, among others.

Geography was an important part of the curriculum of Jewish schools from the late sixteenth century. By 1782, Vatfell Thesis stressed the importance of geography as a Jewish school subject. Matis Steinachneider studied geography with Carl Ritter at the University of Berlin and taught geography at a Jewish school. His work on geography in an eighteenth-century Jewish school curriculum that statistics and geography converged where descriptions of people and their way of life were concerned.

accompanied by music because the bridal couple is put on public display in a filthy courtyard. What is worse, such ridiculous wedding customs look like fooflay to the non-Jews. How much preferable are the refined practices of the Jews in Laizig who hold their wedding ceremonies discreetly in the nicest room in the city.

Such descriptions, which oppose traditional practices to the bourgeois ideals that are considered prerequisites for the social integration of Jews, are illuminated by Norbert Elias’s notion of “what may be described as an advance of the threshold of embarrassment and shame, as ‘refinement,’ or as ‘civilization.’” Elias is pointing to an important psychological component in the social integration process, a process that reconfigures the habits of social distinction. The ethnographic Burkean is where at thresholds of its own making. This area of culturally and rhetorically induced estrangement mobilizes the will of the reader to abandon established custom and internalize new forms of sensibility and conduct. In this way, cultural inscription prepares the ground for change.

In the process, ethnographic Burkean also enlarges the terrain of ethnography. By narrowing the domain of what could be considered normative, critics of traditional ceremonies and customs simultaneously expanded the field of the non-normative, which was to become the heartland of ethnographic investigation. What one was too ashamed to do, one said to study. Fifty years later, the vituperation we see in Sulamit would give way to nostalgia and the very wedding customs that Fränkel Burkean would be offered by Joseph Perels as a critique of Jewish respectability. In 1860, Perels wrote:

The marriages of Jews of quite recent times have only this one peculiarity that need engage attention, that instead of the old tone of natural and religious joy which sprang from the heart, we now too often see the stiff etiquette of the沙龙, and it is only in a few localities that the old forms, artless and happy as they were, have held their ground against the general tendency to sublimate and refine away what antiquity handed down.

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Particularly interesting in this connection is the account from the pen of a French tourist, of a Jewish marriage celebrated not long ago in Algiers. Here we see the "Marshallis," who have so long disappeared from our weddings, still amusing the guests with their improvised discourses abounding in surprising twists of thought; the costumes, so singular and of such venerable antiquity, defy the universal supremacy of French fashion, and the man of the world from Paris who witnesses and reports the scene, tells us that he could not help fancying that he sat a table with hosts that had lately started out from the grave of the preceding century.  

Rather than being a tool for the interment of despised practices, cultural isolation is used here as a force for the revivalization of Jewish life. The writer stands at the edge of an open grave, not with age in hand to bury old traditions but with a pen to inscribe them. At counterdiscourse, this type of ethnography envisions tradition as resistance and opposition to the cultural fashions of the European metropole.

omnibus Disciplines

From the outset, the vision of the Wissenschaft des Judentums included the study of living Jewish communities. Imanuel Wolf's manifesto in the Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in 1822 provided for: 1. Study of Judaism in its historical and literary writings; and 2. Statistical study of Judaism in relation to the present-day Jews scattered throughout all the countries of the world." Leopold Zunz quickly followed Wolf's essay with a detailed protocol in 1823 for the statistical study of Jews that included everything from settlements, religion,


narrowed its scope. The mathematical component became the domain of statistics proper. The descriptive component was narrowed to political science, which formed its own discipline. These two divisions did not however encompass everything that used to be subsumed under statistics as a comprehensive field of study. The residue, topics that might have been studied under the heading National-Humane in earlier statistical schemes, were absorbed by Volkswissenschaft and Volkerkunde, fields that had been cut loose and were consolidating their own autonomy.

In anthropology, the analysis of human variation developed exponentially in a statistical direction, and by 1910, most uses of the term 'anthropology' could be understood as being statistical. Indeed, physical anthropology expanded the study of man so far in a biometric statistical direction that during the latter half of the nineteenth century, anthropology was often subsumed under zoology or defined as a medical speciality. 11 Samuel Weissehert, Maurice Fishman, and Arcadius Elkind were all Jewish medical doctors who specialized in physical anthropology.

The field of anthropology had grown so quickly, achieved such public attention, and was so deeply distressing to Jewish intellectuals that one of David Kaufmann's very earliest publications addressed the abuses of what he called 'ethnography'. In Das Judenrecht und die Ethnographie, which appeared in Israelitisiche Wochen-Schrift in 1873, Kaufmann called upon Daniel Cohn-Bendit to refute objectionable theories about Jewish racial characteristics based on bodily form and on theories or Semitic philology. 12 In this turbulent period, which saw the unification of Germany and the last stages in the legal emancipation of the Jews, Kaufmann recognized clearly how thin was the veil of science and how intense the anti-Jewish prejudice in these studies. It was precisely in these terms that Max Grimm, twenty years later, appealed to the members of the Verein für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur in Hamburg and the readers of Israelitisiche Wochen-Schrift.
role as disciplinary adversary to anthropology.

unified Science of a Unified Subject

There were others who opposed the formation of autonomous 'sub-disciplines' of Jewish studies, and who would not have welcomed an institutionalization of Jewish Volkskunde as a separate field. Ismar Elbogen, writing in 1922 on the occasion of the centennial of the Wissenschaft des Judentums, recognized that disciplinary eclecticism was necessary for the science of Judaism to achieve its goal of encompassing "the entirety of the expressions of Jewish life" and presenting "the total range of its intellectual creativity." At the same time, he stressed the necessity for holding in check the centrifugal tendency towards establishing separate Jewish disciplines. He was committed to a unified Jewish science of a unified Jewish subject. Indeed, scholars who contributed to Jewish folkloristics often worked in several fields. While this is characteristic of other fields at earlier stages in their history, it is here given an ideological charge. Others, such as Reithmann S. Krausz argue for the integration of Jewish folkloristics into German Volkskunde. The debate continues to this day in the Jewish Studies field.

The 1980s was a critical period in the development of Jewish folkloristics. In Warsaw, St. Petersburg, London, Prague, Hamburg, Vienna, Budapest, Boston, and elsewhere, increasing numbers of scholars interested in Jewish folklore joined study circles, supported Grunwald's newly founded Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde, and published in the pages of his and other journals. As the intellectual ground shifted to Eastern Europe and to cultural creativity in the Yiddish language, the field was expanding in directions that remain to be charted.

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