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Departing the Parting

Jean-François Lyotard's *The Hyphen*
In light of Jewish and Christian studies

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Abstract

History is narrated, as any good storyteller knows, and narration depends for its effects on our notions and metaphors. In their 2002 introduction to *The Ways That Never Parted*, Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam H. Becker write "The notion of an early and absolute split between Judaism and Christianity, but also the 'master narrative' about Jewish and Christian history that pivots on this notion is being called into question" (2007, p.4). In this thesis, by bringing the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's *The Hyphen* into dialogue with both the "parting of the ways" and many other voices from within Jewish and Christian studies, I continue this calling into question. This dismantling does not leave us bereft of notions, narratives, and concepts but with the beginnings of new ones; as Judith Lieu has claimed "a more flexible 'map' [is] required", as are "different models to answer different questions or maintain different interpretations" (1995, p.101).

In a series of chapters, Lyotard's concepts of "designators", "idioms", "obligation" and "differends", are offered as some potential new models, and their interactions clarified. As well as conveying the, often implicit, sense these concepts had for Lyotard, further distinctions are layered in that he left unsaid. By way of this, a new conceptual schema for discussing religious "phrases" – encompassing both linguistic and other acts – is outlined and the areas for further elaboration within it are indicated. In each chapter, this schema is applied to specific texts from within Jewish and Christian studies, to see what new light it can cast on these debates, as well as to refine and test it. All of this is offered in support of a second level argument, that a renewed dialogue between Lyotard's writings and Jewish and Christian studies could generate ways out of the impasses in each of their paths ahead.

Contents

Its funeral pyres on castles, disturbs, distorts,
Lights in departing the parting of the ways.[1]

1 Interpath

1.1 False Partings

If you drift onto the hard shoulder of Highway 28 in Wyoming, that big flat river of asphalt known as South Pass, you may see a pair of markers, the most worn one "erected by the Historic Landmark Commission of Wyoming in 1956" which "proclaims this site to be Parting of the Ways, stating, "This marks a fork in the trail, right to Oregon, left to Utah and California.""

And yet in 1988, "Thirty-two years later, the Oregon-California Trails Association erected another marker next to this one, which correctly states that the true "Parting of the Ways" lies another 9.5 miles to the west. This site on Highway 28 is now widely known as False "Parting of the Ways" and directions to trail sites in this area will often reference 'False Parting'. The real site will often be called 'True Parting'". The sign promises that at "True Parting, the eye can follow the divergent trails for miles towards the horizon.""[2]

[1] Excised from "The Landscape" in the collection *Domaine Publique* (Desnos, 1953, p.391).
[2] These paragraphs are lightly adapted and rearranged from the *Online Encyclopaedia of Wyoming History* (Wyohistory.org, 2020).

Hyphens assert an agreement between words; their use provokes disagreement. They bind two terms together; in doing so they betray an irresolvable separation. As questions of identity and hybridity become ever more insistent, and the use of hyphens to mark and modify these identifications increases, these inner tensions persist, barely hidden in the hollows between the nouns they bind.

These tensions can be traced between as well as within languages. While the English "hyphen" embeds inside itself the Greek terms "huph" and "hén" ("under one"), the French term "trait d'union" marks more clearly the presence of a third "trait" that relates the two separate terms. For the former the sign is unifying, merging, the two become one; for the latter there remains an interchange not an amalgam, the two interact by way of a third. As a result of this latter implication, in French the term can also be used as a wider metaphor to designate a person who serves as an intermediary, as a bridge between two beings or objects.[3]

In his contributions to the jointly authored book *Un Trait D'Union* (1993), necessarily and rightly translated into English under the title *The Hyphen* (1999), the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard goes so far as to say that one particular hyphen, that between the words "Jewish" or "Judeo" and "Christian", in phrases such as "the Judeo-Christian West", conceals a silent intermediary behind that thin sliver, a bridge that crosses "the most impenetrable abyss within Western thought" (1999, p.13).

What Lyotard calls an "abyss", and approaches in the mode of a pragmatic inquiry into punctuation, has been often thought by means of metaphors in religious studies: religious studies itself being a hyphenation between many partly separate, partly interwoven traditions. Seeking an escape route from a crude supersessionist framing of Christianity and Judaism, yet emerging from within Christian studies, the picture of a "parting of the ways" came to dominate the discipline, if not quite hold it captive, by the second half of the twentieth century.

[3] This is the sense of the term that led to it becoming the title of *Trait D'union* the psychology magazine that Frantz Fanon wrote an editorial for in December 1952, where he spoke of the vigilance and weariness that the intermediary role requires (2018, p.286), and it is this same sense which made it the title of the poetry review "Le Trait d'union" where Robert Desnos first published the poem which gives this essay both its title and epigraph (1953, p.391).

As one hopes of all that dominates, this framing has been resisted and questioned from the start, including by those who first set out its structure. Despite, or even because of, this it persists on university syllabuses, in journalistic discourse, and in modified form as the title of many books: *Ways that Never Parted* (Becker and Reed, 2007), *Ways that Often Parted* (Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen, 2018), a series of suffix-ions, "… *and the Parting of the Ways*".[4] Even the idea of "interpath" dialogue, emerging as a new paradigm in the present, can be seen as an inheritor of these paths that part, and meet only to part again.

The lay of the land is summarised in the very last lines of the edited collection *The Ways That Never Parted,* when Adam H. Becker writes:

> …with so many qualifications appended to its meaning, perhaps the expression 'the parting of the ways' is not particularly useful for characterising the trajectory of Jewish-Christian relations at any time, in any place. Models can only be refined so far before they collapse in upon themselves. If we are to maintain the metaphor of 'the way' then in the end, it seems, they were ways that never parted. (2007, p.392)

The balance of these sentences reveals a great deal. What the first half negates, the second preserves in negative form; an afterimage that can never be fully erased from the photographic film. The sense is of neither wanting to remain within the framing of a 'parting', nor knowing what could replace it, despite ground being struck for a landscape beyond either true or false partings.

In this, the "parting of the ways" is more akin to a meta-narrative than metaphor. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed even use one variation of the term in the introduction to *The Ways That Never Parted*:

> The notion of an early and absolute split between Judaism and Christianity, but also the

[4] A long list, but as well as Marius Heemstra's *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (2010), which will be considered at length later, we could cite Boccaccini's *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (1998), Robinson's *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways* (2009) and even Judith Butler's *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (2012).

'master narrative' about Jewish and Christian history that pivots on this notion is being called into question (2007, p.4)

Still, as Lyotard infamously argued, incredulity to meta-narratives, their calling into question, is not the same as their overcoming.[5] In fact, the power of meta-narratives can increase as they more audaciously outlive their end. The adjacent term, 'the Judeo-Christian west', that tumbles easily from the mouths of politicians, is almost entirely discredited and yet remains in circulation.[6] Similarly, suspicions about the myths and manifest destinies of nation-states, or even explicit recognition of their decline, seems to inflame more than inhibit patriotic fervour.[7]

While allowing for, if not affirming, these afterlives, and what they can tell us about paths taken and abandoned, there remains the pressing need for new approaches. Judith Lieu offers, in the essay "The Parting of the Ways: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?", a useful list of what these new approaches within the discipline entail, writing that both "Specific and local analyses, and a more flexible 'map' are required, and the functions of different models to answer different questions or maintain different interpretations need to be recognised" (1995, p.101).

Her emphasis on the need for models in the plural, in place of single dominant framework, is both entirely correct and what I take as my warrant for, in this essay, offering a lesser-known series of Lyotard's concepts as among these much-needed models. Hidden behind that hyphen in the word "Judeo-Christian", as well as behind the book *The Hyphen*, the concepts he elaborated throughout his writings — of designations, idioms, obligations and differends — lend light to Jewish and Christian studies and are illuminated by those studies in turn. In this they attest to the array that binds these disciplines, and the differends that divide them: "Our hyphen … like all hyphens … disunites what it unites (*The Hyphen*, 1999, p.14).

[5] In his report to the "Conseil des universités du Québec", translated and repackaged as *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984).
[6] For a critique of which see Arthur A. Cohen's *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (1971). Cohen claims that the roots of the term are almost entirely geopolitical, and a result of American hegemony seeking to legitimise its global reach.
[7] Evidenced everywhere from the Washington Post's "Postmodernism didn't cause Trump. It explains him" (Washington Post, 2018), to earlier and more substantial treatments of the strange power of baseless nationalisms, in Gilles Châtelet's *Vivre et Penser Comme des Porcs* (1998) and of a mobilised sense of decline in Daniel Guerin's *Sur le Fascisme 1: La peste brune* (1965).

1.2 Traits

Lyotard was fond of paradoxes, and the focus he placed on the space behind the symbol, an approach which I have followed, risks hiding a second potential impetus for reading *The Hyphen*. As the conference "The Hyphenated Jew" and a preceding series of similarly titled articles shows, it is not only the negative space behind the hyphen that matters for Jewish studies but the foregrounded mark itself.[8] Hybrid and plural identities can become hyphenated ones.

As well as a thinker of silences and erasures, Lyotard had a equally important pragmatic side, and it would diminish what we can be gleaned from *The Hyphen* if this practical import was ignored.[9] While Christianity's socio-political position, its role as state religion for several empires, hasn't entirely exempted it from these questions of hyphenated identity (although for instance "Iraqi Christians" is a more common phrasing than "Christian-Iraqis"), having to hold the dual and difficult questions of diaspora and nationhood in mind means that Jewish studies has always had to traverse this linguistic terrain. So, having caught sight of the philosophical "abyss" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.13), for this essay and its author "our" abyss, let us cautiously approach from a few paces back, and this different angle.

"Farewell to the Controversial Hyphen in Asian American" ran a AsAm News headline in response to that year's revised Associated Press Stylebook (2019). Asian-American had, to echo the language of the article, both diminished the Asian part of that phrase, reducing Asian to a mere modifier, and also implied those named were not of equal status to other American citizens; hyphenated-citizens not full or, to quote directly, "full-blooded" citizens. Without the hyphen,

[8] See for instance Chad Goldberg's paper at the aforementioned "The Hypenated Jew" conference "Two Cheers for Alienation: Why 'Stabilization' of Hyphens May Not Be (Entirely) Bad for the Jews" (2019).
[9] For a good defence of this, see Ashley Woodward's "Pragmatics and Affect in Art and Commentary" in *Traversals of Affect: On Jean-François Lyotard* (2016).

Chinese becomes an adjective and as Eric Liu, a former US Presidential speechwriter, claims can finally be placed beside its peers:

> Chinese is one adjective. I am many kinds of American, after all: a politically active American, a short American, an earnest American, an educated American." For him, the hyphenated form "signifies a transaction between two parties, as in Chinese-American diplomatic negotiation or Chinese-American commerce and trade. The hyphen implies a state of interchange across nations. It does not name a person, much less a citizen. ("Why I don't hyphenate Chinese American", 2014)

Liu places his position, and the fortunes of this particular hyphen, within a wider history of immigration, and of finding a form of life where, on balance, the weighting of the American part of his identity had prevailed.[10] Here "educated" and "Chinese" can share their linguistic status as adjectives, seemingly without offence or injury, while "American" has a more potent hold on his psyche. Still, all the tensions that hyphens possess persist here.[11] That the correct use of hyphens can settle question of identity, for both societies and individuals. That the words they link can be weighed against each other and one given greater import.[12] That hyphens bind terms whose contents are clear and distinct. Above all, that the words they elect to bind can be separated in the first place. Can this be said, to return to the matter at hand, of terms such as "Jewish-Christian"? Of "Jewish American" or "Jewish-American"? Of the lingering pain that abides in the term "Jewish Germans" and "German Jews"? Can it even be said, or said once and for all, of the term with which we began "Asian-American"?

The philosopher Étienne Balibar in his, notably unhyphenated, book *Citizen Subject* (2016), demonstrates at length that citizenship, rarely considered to be a settled or apolitical concern, is ensnared in philosophical notions of individuality and subjectivity even deeper than the bureaucracy of passports, legal statuses and style guides reveals. In contesting ideas of

[10] This surety can be contrasted with the more ambiguous term "Latin American", as well as the conflict over what to call Czechoslovakia after the Velvet Revolution, colloquially known as "The Hyphen War".
[11] The recurrent, yet hardly uncontroversial, interchangability of the words "Asian" and "Chinese" for some in this debate should not be ignored either.
[12] This relentless weighing and fusing across time can be seen in the memorable title of the Reuters article

citizenship, quarrelling over what concepts and whose claims constitute the "citizen subject" of the title, we confront the conflictual, unsettled and unsettle-able basis of the idea of having an identity at all. This is especially true of those identities tied to the notion of nation-states but not exclusively, given the importance of diasporas for Jewish and other religious self-identifications. While this foundationlessness of identity is far from a new discovery, and could place us instead in a tradition of pragmatic citizenship politics that runs from Athenian Rhetoric to Richard Rorty (*Achieving Our Country*, 1998), it prompts for Balibar a more sustained disquiet; that the modern modes of identity we inherit from figures like John Locke are irretrievably broken.[13]

if we follow Balibar then, at the very least, these rifts are not reparable by way of a hyphen, nor by its erasure. Instead, we would have to see the shifts in the phrasing of "Asian American", "Jewish-American" and "Judeo-Christian" not as a settling of accounts, the "correct" usage becoming apparent after years of error, but as an indication of the instability of the linguistic site we are working on. An index of political shifts more than philological ones. This unstable line between nation-state, citizenship and "citizen subject" shows the stakes of a complicated Jewish hyphenation with other "national identities", the powers and pitfalls of diaspora.[14] It also speaks to the equally historically fraught idea of what would constitute a Jewish nationhood.[15] We would also see how within this parting of the terms Asian and American, Jewish and Christian, there is a new form of hyphenating at play, and within every hyphenating there is also a parting. The contested history of the relation between particular and universals, parts and wholes, is present and reproduced every time we strike a line between two terms.

"Thousands of Hyphens Perish as English Marches On" (Rabinovitch, 2007).

[13] These concerns link *Citizen Subject* (2016), with his earlier *Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness* (2013), first published in 1998.

[14] An issue that, given the harsh and racialised politics at present around populations and citizenship, is not merely a historical issue for those seen as or identifying as Jewish. Echoing our earlier mention of Islamophobia, it must be said this remains pressing for other racialised and economically oppressed populations as well. See for instance DImitra Koutouza's *Surplus Citizens* (2019).

[15] The literature on this is discordant and diverse, but Joyce Dalshiem's *Israel Has a Jewish Problem. Self-Determination as Self-Elimination* (2019) offers a startling reframing of the current situation.

1.3 Structure

Having established the philosophical and political stakes of this essay, let us now lay out a structure for approaching them. In the rest of this chapter, I would like to briefly situate Lyotard's work in its philosophical context, and then situate this entire essay within the context of Jewish and Christian studies; a necessary step given my wish to speak to the spaces shared by both disciplines.

In the case of the former, this is partly because of an unfortunately, yet understandably, critical reception of Lyotard's writings by writers in Jewish and Christian studies caused, I would claim, by how idiosyncratic, and initially inscrutable, his philosophical position can appear.[16] Moreover, I would like to immediately dispel the idea that his positions are reducible to "relativism" or an indistinct entity called "postmodernism". At the other pole, for those reading who are familiar with Lyotard's work, having some handle on how the "parting of the ways" has framed debates about the shifting meanings within, and relations between, the words Jewish and Christian, will be essential to understanding both what will follow, and how Lyotard's notions of "designators", "idioms", "obligations" and "differends" can offer another way of phrasing this passage.[17] I will conclude this subsection with a couple of paragraphs on issues of terminology that Lyotard's pre-*Hyphen* text *Heidegger and "the jews"* (1990) leaves us with, and that the work of Sarah Hammerschlag can save us from becoming lost in.

[16] For a representative pairing see Jonathan Judaken's *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (2009) and Vivian Liska's "Jewish Displacement as Experience and Metaphor in 20th-Century European Thought" (2018). While agreeing with the wider analyses of both works, the specific critiques of Lyotard over-simplify his strangeness.

[17] A textual note, I will occasionally place these terms in scare-quotes to indicate a shift in the focus of our

From there, the essay consists of four chapters and its contentions are similarly four-fold, the concepts of "designators", "idioms", "obligations" and "differends". The second and longest chapter, titled "Designations", takes us into *The Hyphen* itself, its opening essay "Mainmise" (1999, pp.1-12) and the concept of "rigid designators". As well as drawing on that text directly, both in this chapter and the work as a whole, I will attempt to couple its concerns with other writings by Lyotard and elaborate his concepts where I find the need and space to do so. In this case, by augmenting "designators" with a closely related term "assignators". Given the abundance of commentary and depth of theoretical engagement evidenced in Jewish and Christian studies, the "in light of" clause that forms part of my title could end up as a floodlight so, as well as striving to speak to the field more widely, in each chapter I will emphasise a particular interlocutor whose work is of relevance. In this second chapter I will be in dialogue with Marius Heemstra's book *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (2010) and add my voice to a debate in Jewish studies around the term "ioudaioi".[18] It is in chapter two that I work through the core of my argument, reducible to a set of two claims. The first is that philosophical thinking around designation, of how to relate particulars to categories, can clarify what was at stake in the "parting of the ways" dispute. The second is that Lyotard's rendering of designation is, for reasons that are ethical and political as well as philosophical, the one we should choose to develop further, and that doing so requires us to elaborate the interrelated concepts of idioms and obligations.

In the third chapter, "Idioms", I develop that particular notion of Lyotard's, with reference to his book *The Differend* (1988) and the essay "On a Hyphen" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, pp.13-27). As Karen Langhelle, in *The Lyotard Dictionary* writes, "Of all of the terms integral to Lyotard's philosophy of the phrase in *The Differend* 'idiom' is the one that receives the least elaboration" and in fact "Lyotard appears almost reluctant to provide further detail as to how we are to understand his use of the term" (2011, p.98). A matter of some concern, given how crucial it is to his work as a whole, and for our reconsideration of the hyphenated history between the words Jewish and Christian. Without entirely abandoning his cautiousness, I will risk a more substantial

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discussion to either their definition or close consideration.

[18] This debate about the variants of the term *ioudaios* [Ἰουδαῖος] first took place in the back-and-forth of an online forum and was later collected in *Jew and Judean: A Marginalia Forum on Politics and Historiography in the Translation of Ancient Texts,* edited by Law and Halton (2014).

account of the term than both Lyotard and his previous commentators, again subdividing the initially singular term into "idiom-images", "idiom-forms" and "idiom-matrices". After this, it is Annette Yoshiko Reed who I want to learn from and respond to most directly, particularly her essay collection *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism* (2018), alongside the work of Daniel Boyarin.[19] Idioms will be shown to be inextricable from designations, and so therefore is this chapter from the one before it.

In the fourth, titled "Observations", I will correct for what will have been by then an emphasis on the Jewish to the detriment of the Christian in my readings, and provide a few ways to think about the concept of obligation as we find it in Lyotard. The title of the chapter is "Observations" rather than "Obligations" to emphasise the provisionality of its content; a full account of all that the concept of "obligation" implies is beyond the reach of this particular essay. Especially in his final, incomplete, *The Confession of Augustine* (2000) Lyotard has much to say to and learn from writers in Christian studies and theology, and I will indicate some of those lines, that balances his critical stance that can be seen in both the "On a Hyphen" and the "Responding Questions" (pp.73-84) section of *The Hyphen*. Alongside this, Mara H. Benjamin's work on the maternal (*The Obligated Self: Maternal Subjectivity and Jewish Thought*, 2018) is offered as a bridge between some of these Christian considerations and those more weighted towards Jewish thought from our earlier sections. And the risk of a Jewish position defined only in negative opposition to the Christian will be countered, by a discussion of the concepts of "Paradosis" and "Paracletes" which could provide ways to think Lyotard's antinomian ethics and the relation of obligation between designations and idioms as something other than domination and duty. As such it is one more the ways of giving positive content to what he calls the "Jewish idiom" (*The Differend,* 1988, p.106) as well as the Christian.

A good way to see the relation and balance between those three chapters is the following. Think of the core argument as coming in the second chapter "Designations". This constitutes an attempted excavation below the unsteady ground left to us by the "parting of the ways"; a search for new models and strata. The ignition for the blast, is provided by the concept of

[19] Most closely *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (2004) and *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (2019).

designation, with its contested meaning between several philosophical schools giving off much of the energy and force. Towards the end of this process, it is the particular version of designation that I develop from Lyotard's work that is shown to be the most potent one. However, its power depends upon two further concepts, that of idioms and obligations. This dependency is so strong that each concept is unthinkable without the others. To know which designations and assignations are just or unjust we must know which idioms we are obligated towards in making them. I devote, as a result, the two chapters after that initial detonation to defining those concepts as far as possible; picking up the debris if you will.

In a final short chapter "Marks" I offer by way of conclusion, a "pragmatic" consideration of what alternative forms of punctuation, if any, could replace the hyphen between the words Jewish and Christian. In doing so, the arguments of the preceding chapters are recounted, while conveying a sense of the many "differends" between all the terms considered. As the centrality of it to Lyotard's work demands, that concept of "differends" will be a constant reference throughout.

1.4 Memory, History

The current consensus among the few scholars working on Lyotard is the following: forget him. Forget the Lyotard you have learned.[20] Like lawyers in the grand tribunal that "French Theory" has become, the argument is repeatedly put forth that few proceedings have been more prejudiced or miscarried. What is needed is a new trial now that the controversy of his case has abated.

Having started from this overstatement, let us work our way back to reality. There are shelves

[20] The evocation of *Forget Foucault* (1977) and *Forget Baudrillard?* (1993) here is intentional; along with all this implies about the incessant re-readings and re-valuations that constitute "French Theory".

and shelves of shrewd work on Lyotard, particularly in French, but what sticks in every scholar's craw is the reduction of abundance to a single short book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984). This led to a further paring back, Lyotard as "postmodernist" or "relativist", a figure from a long out-of-date debate. Rather than avoiding this issue, I would like to show how it has its source in Lyotard's position in relation to his peers, and to his philosophical sources. All of which will assist us in forgetting that mis-trialled Lyotard and recollecting another from the fragments.

Peter Osborne, building on the work of Étienne Balibar, Barbara Cassin and Alain de Libera, has claimed that what was called "post-structuralism" is now more clearly legible as a set of theories of the philosophical subject.[21] Rather than a relativising babble, the disconcertion caused by Cixous, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard et al is largely due to this unsettling of fundamental categories of self and subject. Far too crudely, we could say that despite all their efforts Derrida and Deleuze replace an old figure of the subject with a new one, textual in Cixous and Derrida, nature-philosophical in Deleuze.[22] Lyotard attempts to do without the subject entirely. When he writes, in the opening sections of his hinge text *The Differend*, that the only entity we can be certain exists are phrases (1988, pp.xi-xii), he is entirely serious.

Amplifying insights from his Francophone precursors in surrealism, structuralism, existentialism and phenomenology, Lyotard ends up in a position close to that of Pierre Klossowski; there is a minimal suppôt, or substance, through which phrases pass, not a substantial subject or self. While this short term would require an essay in itself to define, a sense of it can be gathered from the following account by Daniel W. Smith:

> … he [Klossowski] is refusing the theological idea of a 'will' that would preside over its destiny or command its interpretation. Against these determinations of the will, he opposes the free play of the 'impulsive forces' [forces impulsionelles] that inhabit the

[21] A position put forth in his lecture "Subject" (2016) given at a conference on the work of Étienne Balibar; held at Brown University.
[22] For an initial set of readings on differences between these figures and Lyotard see, in the case of Cixous, *Gender After Lyotard* (Grebowicz, 2007), for a contrast with Deleuze, *Différence, Différend: Deleuze et Lyotard* (Enaudeau, 2015) and, for Derrida, *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (Bennington, 1988).

> depth of the soul, and which, through their incessant combat, are constantly constituting and disintegrating the self: what Klossowski calls the suppôt, utilizing an old scholastic term. The suppôt cannot comprehend these impulses, even though it experiences their effects. ("Pierre Klossowski: From Theatrical Theology to Counter-Utopia", 2017)

It would be misleading to call this an ontology. It is more akin to an allergic reaction to any and all substantial or essentialist ontologies. Again, he is doing this with a greater intensity than his peers, if not from an entirely other set of starting assumptions.[23] While therefore not providing a positive ontology, Lyotard remains critically invested in histories of how ontologies are constructed, a tendency which places him in proximity to the late Foucault (*The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language,* 1976*)*, or the recent para-ontology of Nahum Dimitri Chandler (*X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought,* 2014).

This initial supposition about the subject and self, or better put this lack of an initial supposition of a subject and self, results in several variances further down the chain, and several problems. For if Lyotard considers the "I" to be a grammatical fiction, graspable more through phrases and meta-psychology than self-evident ("Referent, The Name" in *The Differend*, 1988, pp.32-58) how can he relate to what is called "lived experience". Critiques of his writings on what he calls "Jewish theme[s]" ("Responding Questions" in *The Hyphen,* 1999, p.77) draw an understandable animus from the sense that Lyotard's work only thinks Jews in the abstract, as figures and forms not messy "actual people".

By this measure Lyotard's work only lets us think anything at all — Jews, Christians, paintings, cats — in the abstract. While there is bite behind this critique, and all philosophy must reckon with the risk of over-abstraction and idealism, it is no more the case of Jews than of any other term. Lyotard's effort instead must be to find judicious ways to be attentive to history, joy, humour, stories without a presupposition of the subject. Must be, because the historical and political stakes are high. Given Lyotard's antipathy towards Heidegger, he cannot lapse into the

[23] For an enlightening contrast to this, see the collection *Subject and Object: Frankfurt School Writings on Epistemology, Ontology, and Method* (Groff, 2014), which demonstrates how different these positions are from that of Adorno et al.

jowlly paysan's indifference towards what he considered the merely apparent and transient facts of historical research.[24] Heidegger deemed this, in "The Black Notebooks", "the outermost grey scum of a concealed history" ("Schwarze Hefte" in *Gesamtausgabe 95*, p.96).

A compelling, and consonant, attempt to bridge inquiries into grammatical "I" with a form of meta-psychology can be found in Béatrice Longuenesse's *I, Me, Mine* (2019), and as that work shows, this territory is not beyond the pale of philosophy, nor even of its canon. Rather than an outlier, Lyotard situates himself in line with Kant and Wittgenstein as a critical philosopher. Like them, he is suspicious of un-argued assumptions — metaphysical, ontological et cetera — but no advocate of an "anything goes" relativism. In fact, the high placement of judiciousness and probity in his esteem, is more likely to result in the reverse; a sort of incessant judgement to which I will return in the fourth chapter's consideration of obligation. Less a relativism, more an emphasis on relations. While all of this may encourage uncertainty, casting formerly clear positions into shadow, it is only to show how exposed those other positions often are, how monochrome.

Mirroring this unsettled supposition of an originary subject is Lyotard's suspicion of final ends and completed systems in philosophy. Another source of this sense of Lyotard as apolitical postmodernist, this dethroning of "absolute truths" or "settled knowledges" is entirely in line with the critical scientific method — what William C. Wimsatt calls its "piecewise approximations to reality" (*Re-Engineering Philosophy for Limited Beings,* 2007) — and places Lyotard closer to analytic philosophy than is often believed.[25] Finding the limits of particular forms of knowledge, and their techniques, is entirely different from the undermining of their basis. An enlarged notion of critical philosophy, and of its aim to find *The Bounds of Sense* (Strawson, 1966), is crucial here.[26]

[24] An antipathy that is most baldly stated in the section "Introduction to the Freiberg Conference" of his lecture titled "Heidegger and 'the jews''" (*Political Writings* 1993, pp.136-7).
[25] Lyotard, for instance, often draws on the work of Saul Kripke and attempts to relate his work to scientific concerns, without either presuming a mastery he did not possess nor ascribing one to a flat "science". Amusingly, in an interview with Gary Olson (1995), he admits to daydreaming of an alternative career as a biologist.
[26] The edited collection *Kant and the Laws of Nature* (Breitenbach and Massimi, 2017) and Gordon Brittan's *Kant's Theory of Science* (1978) offer a few angles among many from this alternate history of critical philosophy and

Lyotard contends that the crude illusion of capitalised and singular Truth inhibits the grasping of truths, Reason of our many reasons. Denying immediate and divine access to the innermost secret of matter, by science, does not prohibit a progressively increasing grasp on the situation. In the end, this is an acknowledgement of the plain fact that as well as plateaus of general agreement, all disciplines have deep crags of dissensus, strife about their axioms, foundations and methods. Philosophising involves risking initially obscure results when it enquires into areas such as affect and aesthetics, but trying to speak of these dark matters enhances, not diminishes, our capacities. From here, teleologies become enabling regulative ideas, not deterministic stories where the end is known from the start.[27] Thus, while it would be absurd to assert the "absolute-truth" of the models and modes of discourse presented here, they are not "one view, equal to all the others". We pare away at our ignorance, and the insufficiency of our previous understandings.

Given that his critique of the errors of dogmatic teleology, and theology, is developed at length in *The Hyphen,* and will hold our attention for much of chapter three, we can leave this underdeveloped for now. Necessarily, given its span, this account has depended more on assertion than argument, and it is only by interfacing it with Jewish and Christian studies, and reckoning with the political stakes of the matter at hand, that I will prove Lyotard's writing remains relevant, and useful for present concerns. That is to say, "useful on one condition", as Bernard Stiegler wrote, "which is that we do not turn it into a new mausoleum or a new antiquity for sale by secondhand dealers in French philosophical thought" ("Lyotard and Us: 'Death of the Sun' and the Anthropocene Era", 2019, p.51). Conceding that misunderstandings of Lyotard's work are not incidental but emerge from its intricacies should not dissuade us from reading it anew. After all, a similar situation is the case when we consider both the "parting of the ways", and the word "religion" itself.

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natural science.

[27] An "as if" approach to teleology that Kant lays out in his discussion of the "guiding thread" (*Critique of Judgement*, 2007, p.217).

1.5 Certain Martyrs

Seeing the abyss of the Shoah, caused the Anglican clergyman and Guernsey islander James Parkes to reorient his research to the causes, in antiquity and modernity, of anti-semitism, and to repurpose a widely used image to convey his results.[28] "The Parting of the Ways" was the title of Chapter 3 of his *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (1999, pp.71-120), published in mid. 1934, as Europe fell further and further into the catastrophe. A dual and ambiguous inheritance then, of Christian origin and as in response to the that hardly thinkable trauma. The parting begins then as a way one tide-caught man tries to reckon with this dereliction of history, a diremption which seeks also to bind and reunify. So, at the same time as he lights a votive for renewed relations, this new vigilance conceals a motive force and figure of "the Jew as martyr".

While it first passes into the discipline in Western Europe, beneath the pen of a Christian seeking interfaith dialogue, the phrase soon diffuses back into wider discourse.[29] It surfaces occasionally within the remit of religious studies: an essay in the 1961 issue of *The Jewish Quarterly Review* bore the title (Enslin, pp.177-197), as did a 1970 lecture by R.C. Zaehner (See *Concordant Discord: The Interdependence of Faiths*). Refocused and reinvigorated by a 1989 conference in Durham, in a series of lectures in Rome by James Dunn in 1990, and the publication of the latter as a book, it is in this period that the image becomes, for a time, authoritative; or at least authoritative in the way images can be in academic discourse, which is to say also immediately suspected, undermined.[30] While the interregnum lasted fifty five years, a tenth of that was all it

[28] Evidence of this variousness can be seen in everything from novels, such as Florence Gilmore's *The Parting of the Ways* (1914), to socialist speeches. A precedent in Christian writings can be found in the collection *The Parting of the Roads* (1912) edited by F.J. Foakes Jackson, though the use of the image is different and used mostly to bolster supercessionist agruements; more akin to a grand Christian highway with Jewishness as an overgrown country lane.
[29] The phrase has, for instance, a parallel history in discussions of decolonisation and nationhood, that has led to texts like James Lee Ray's *The Future of American-Israeli Relations: A Parting of the Ways?* (1985).
[30] The proceedings of the 1989 conference were published as *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70*

took for the undermining to bring about structural collapse. By 1995 the "parting of paths" imagery itself was fissuring. After all, James Dunn had already pluralised the first clause: *The Partings of the Way*s (2006). And yet, while there have been modifications, modulations, critiques, and counter-critiques, as we have already seen those four words — "parting of the ways" — have persisted, in negative, as afterimage.

This history has now intersected with another critical discourse, regarding the idea of "Religion" itself. In *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (2016), Carlin A. Barton and Daniel Boyarin contend that the Christian sources of the category overdetermine its current use. In this we can hear an echo of Dunn's second clause of *The Partings of the Ways … Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2006). This is no sudden shift for Boyarin, who in *Border Lines* (2004) uses the difficult dissonances of the term "partition" to question both the concept of "Religion", and how the barest notion of "parting", its underlying supposition of a shared path, could still entail an inescapably teleological framing of the events of history. That said, sometimes this interdiction on the category of religion seems to apply only in antiquity, and sometimes to anything that is not modern Christianity.

This ambiguity is understandable given the sheer range of activities that are bundled under the heading of "Religion", and Boyarin is far more precise when speaking directly in other works of Judaism and Jewishness. For him "… the difference between Judaism and Christianity is not so much a difference between two religions as a difference between a religion and an entity that refuses to be one" (*Border Lines,* 2004, p.8). What this entity is, or to echo Judith Lieu ("'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?", 1995) some models and maps for it, is given far greater substance by Boyarin's *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (2019). Speaking with the, recognisable and rather charming, passion of a new love affair, he says that his long search has led him to Wittgenstein's notion of "forms-of-life": "Wittgenstein has brilliantly formulated what was for me, before reading him, a hunch" (2019, p.24). As it is this exact notion of forms-of-life which Lyotard bases the idea of idiom (excising its residual anthropological assumptions) it seems possible that fruitful common soil can be found.

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to 135 (Dunn, 1992) and Dunn's later lectures as *The Partings the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2006).

Lyotard's initial scatterings within the field of Jewish Studies hit harder ground. A situation I consider with the utmost seriousness, and do not wish to pretend was otherwise. Much of this is due to the book *Heidegger and "the jews"* (1990), and the neologism it created. As Lyotard states in the "Responding Questions" dialogue within *The Hyphen*, before the series of essays which are collected in that volume, there were four writings where he, as his primary purpose:

> … pursues a 'Jewish' theme that has been of concern to [him] for several decades, from "Figure forclose" (1968) to "Oedipe juif" [1970] to "Sur une figure de discours" [1972], right up to "Heidegger et 'les juifs'" [1988] (The Hyphen, 1999, p.77-8)

As Lyotard elaborated in a subsequent, and similarly titled, lecture a year after the book's publication:

> "*Heidegger and "the jews"* belongs to the group of French publications that followed the release of Victor Farías's book Heidegger and Nazism: articles in the major press, in magazines, in specialized journals, books, 'dossiers', radio and television programs ("Heidegger and "the jews"" in *Political Writings*, 1993 p.137)

Several other philosophers wrote essays during what came to be known as "The Heidegger Affair". Positions varied from Heidegger's expressly anti-semitic writings being an inessential part of his philosophy, and a personal aberration, to these writings bearing an obscure relation to the actual system of Being and Time, and therefore needing to be carefully excised.[31] None of these stances for Lyotard are just (*Heidegger and "the jews"*, 1990, p.52).

While accepting it as an epochal contribution to philosophy (1993, p.138), Lyotard saw Heidegger's system as one instantiation of a more general inability to think the position of what resists the hegemony of Western thought (1990, p.22). And this inability is, for him, inseparable

[31] I should say that while aware of the debates between "anti-semitism" and "antisemitism" I prefer the former and will use it in this essay. In part this is to recognise the differends it allows, and shared histories it can show us (Guénoun, *Un Sémite,* 2003).

both from the persistence of anti-semitism and from the genocidal desire to 'solve' the question permanently. As well as this underlying complicity, Heidegger did not defy its concrete political instantiation in the Nazi party and, whether for 'pragmatic' or partisan reasons, even gave them his support. Lastly, and Lyotard felt this was particularly overlooked, Heidegger never said he regretted his actions. Silence, for Lyotard, is an ethical statement of its own (1990, p.56-7).

In rejecting silence and entering this charged debate himself, Lyotard's use of "the jews" to name the group Heidegger's philosophical and political positions, more or less tacitly, opposed was met with its own stridently critical response. While this reveals the tension around abstraction we have seen in Lyotard's thinking on "Jewish themes", it was closer to what we could call a tactical error. Lyotard chose to use "the jews" to reflect what he saw as Heidegger's reduction of real Jewish lives to a trope. By taking on this tropological position immanently, a mode of conceding the assumptions of an opponent's argument to then turn them against the one making it that the Sophists called "retorsion", Lyotard's larger strategy was precisely not to show that Jewish lives can be reduced to this trope of "absolute otherness" but that they cannot.[32] While there is for Lyotard a presence that disturbs the settled stories of the Occident, and the philosophy of Heidegger, ascribing it to particular populations and thus essentialising it should be seen as Heidegger's error, not Lyotard's.

That said, moments of inconsistency in his handling of this, alongside the difficulty of the gambit itself, resulted in a bit of a botched job. Because, while Lyotard doesn't think this "presence that disturbs" is equivalent to the nexus of Jewish thought and life, nor does he think of it as entirely separate from it. After all, he used the phrase "the jews" not "the josefs". And for Lyotard, certain parts of Jewish thought, culture and practice have been heroic instances of this defiance, if not the only ones.[33] These slips were magnified by the excision and circulation of the more egregious sentences from the larger work, an unavoidable part of scholarship but distorting in this case. After all, if you walk past someone feigning agreement with a misogynist solely for

[32] For the definitive account of retorsion's role in Lyotard's writings see *Lyotard and Greek Thought: Sophistry* (2004) by Keith Crome.
[33] As Élisabeth de Fontenay argues, his writing if anything strays into the fog of philo-semitism, not its reverse. She does not play down the dangers of exoticisation and infantilisation this involves. *See Une tout autre histoire: Questions à Jean-François Lyotard* (2006).

the purposes of undermining their argument ("retorsion"), and hear only or two sentences, it's likely you would end up thinking they were both as bad as each other.

It would be hyperbolic to say the response has been entirely hostile. Sarah Hammerschlag in "Troping the Jew: Jean François Lyotard's Heidegger and "the jews"" (2005) offers a judicious and cautious defence, at greater length than I can here, of Lyotard's method. She offers Sartre as an illuminating contrast and clearly shares several of the arguments above, writing:

> For Sartre the negative definition describes the Jew as such, leaving no room for a definition arising from elements such as race, faith or canon of thought. Lyotard, in contrast, is *distinguishing* 'the jews' from Jews by defining the first as the idea of the Jews in the minds of Europe, the idea for which real Jews have suffered. (2005, p.373)

Any future account, and a book-length one seems overdue, would begin from the base she has laid out. For now, I think it is wisest to admit that the argument is, at best, undecided.[34] Élisabeth de Fontenay's meticulous trawl through Lyotard's writings, *Une tout autre histoire: Questions à Jean-François Lyotard* (2006), could not be accused of carelessness and, I would concede, she identifies several real problems in his writings up to and including *Heidegger and "the jews"* as do a some of the most recent accounts: Vivian Liska's (*German-Jewish Thought and its Afterlife,* 2017, pp.149-150) and Jonathan Boyarin's (*Jews and the Ends of Theory*, 2019). At the same time Donatella Di Cesare speaks more favourably of *Heidegger and "the jews"* in her not quite identically titled *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks: r*eferring several times to what "Lyotard wrote in his farsighted 1988 book" (2018, p.9).

Some of the underlying issues here are related to Lyoard's wider thinking of the subject, which we have we already mentioned. Élisabeth de Fontenay (2006) in accusing Lyotard of falling prey to the error of philo-semitism in his fervour to counter anti-semitism ascribes some of this to Lyotard's elision of personal experience and identity. Subtly, Jewish experience ceases to be one

[34] Balancing Hammerschlag's essay, for instance we could read Eric Chalfant's icy defence of Adorno against Lyotard "Forgetting souls: Lyotard, Adorno, and the Trope of the Jew" (2017) though, unsurprisingly, I agree far more with Hammerschlag's account.

instantiation of otherness that is experienced by particular people, and instead becomes nothing more an mirror of that abstraction. She is far from alone in her suspicions of this philosemitic slip. Gillian Rose, in her *Judaism and Modernity* (1993), castigates all French philosophy from this period for similar failings to think the figure of the Jew, shuffling Lyotard in with the rest of the knaves. And there is an inconsistency in Lyotard's use of the term "the jews". Given that it is principally concerned with Freud, the sixth section of the transcript of the "Heidegger and "the jews" lecture is aptly symptomatic. In swift succession we read of ""the jews" … the Jewish condition … bad jews …the Jews" (*Political Writings,* 1993, pp.141-144). And this variation in formatting doesn't appear to bear any relation to the specific aspect of the "Jewish theme" under consideration. Lyotard appears instead to be fumbling, due precisely to an uncertain grasp of his terms.

Lyotard's corpus is unusual when it comes to philosophers in that, while his writings display certain continuing commitments, he will explicitly repudiate his earlier positions. While he never quite critiques himself in the third person, the way the later Wittgenstein did the author of the Tractatus, he does come close. It is understandable that this tendency in Lyotard's writings, combined with a general method of approaching philosophical works that, either from lack of time or care, conflates different periods and positions if they are published under the same name, would result in a certain suspicion about his writings on a "Jewish theme". As stated earlier this is without trying to reckon with his wilder writings of the seventies, including "Figure Foreclosed" which binds Judaism to psychosis and brands it a "malady which is more liberating than the 'cure'" (1993, p.552).[35]

If, as Elizabeth Jane Bellamy claims, Lyotard wrote *Heidegger and "the jews"* in part "[seeking] to atone for his earlier essay", namely "Figure Foreclosed", we can claim that *The Hyphen* seeks to reckon with — if not "atone for" — the aporias of "the more tropic 'jews' of postmodern alienation" in turn (*Affective Genealogies,* 1997, p.139). After this he writes of the Jews, no longer ''the jews''. He holds to this, unless directly responding to a question on the Heidegger book. This is in particularly the case in the "Mainmise" essay. We could imagine its invocations

[35] I owe this translation of quoted phrase to Martin Jay, from his essay "The ethics of blindness and the postmodern sublime: Levinas and Lyotard" in his *Downcast Eyes* (1993, pp.543–586).

of grasping and holding as indicating Lyotard's own effort to gain more purchase on the matter at hand. Moreover, it is in *The Hyphen* as a whole, and in its defence of the differend, that we see Lyotard most strongly reject the equation of otherness and "the jews". By losing the specificity of the "idioms" or "designators" in question, collapsing both into the sole term "the jews", we would also lose the insistent ethics that abides between them. There are no differends in a diffusion.

We would be amiss if we framed this as issue only for writings from French philosophy on the figure of the Jew. Echoing recent questions of otherness, errancy and fugitivity, elaborated recurrently in black studies, we can hear similar strains, and dangerous strategies, in Étienne Balibar's recent work on the imaginary of Islam in Europe:

> … the Jews, especially the Eastern European Jews, were once the prototype of the errant, of fugitive people, essentially because they were expelled from one place to another but they are no longer. Conversely Muslims are an important part of today's errancy of migrants and refugees, which is compounded by their traditional image as nomads, and their more recent assimilation with transnational terrorism. Their negative privilege does not only come from there. It comes from the representation of Islam as the absolute theological other (2019).[36]

Balibar, like Lyotard, recognises that this otherness can become its own essentialism, and is trying to work through the trope, but similarly does not evade unscathed the charge of abstracting away the lived reality of Islamic life.

Unresolved, this tension legible in Lyotard's punctuation marks and capitalisations around the category of "jew" and "Jewish" passes into *The Hyphen*. Can these designators be made coherent enough to not elide the specificity of Jewish experience and history in favour of a diffuse otherness? Can they at the same time not become so limited or essentialist in their

[36] Transcribed from the lecture "What is the New Racism?", given at Bard College (2019). As it took place under the auspices of the Hannah Arendt Centre, the lecture both explicitly and implicitly compared this positioning to Arendt's.

definition that the continuity of Jewish experience is broken and its continuity and change across history defined away? Accused of the former error, of losing coherence, and lapsing into a reading of Jewishness that in emphasising its structuring, symbolic presence, as the very definition of otherness lacking any link to the reality of Jewish life, Lyotard would end up speaking of no-one while claiming to speak for everyone. He would have thus failed to fulfill his own statement that "there is no universal subject victim" ("Tomb of the Intellectual" in *Political Writings*, 1993, p.6). Placed beside his statement in the lecture that followed the publication of *Heidegger and "the jews"* that "the expression "the jews" refers to all those who wherever they are, seek to remember and to bear witness to something that is constitutively forgotten, not only in each individual mind, but in the very thought of the West" (*Political Writings*, 1993, pp.140-1) the tensions are plain. Is it even that far away from his claim in *The Hyphen* that Paul practices "A resolute indifference with regard to every community that is not a community of love?' (1999, p.83). In all this "the jews" has become a totalising term for those who are effaced by totalisers.

The word "martyr", with its roots in the early Christian centuries, haunts our language here.[37] It enfolds both those senses, of universal witness and of victim, along with the risk of once more reframing Jewish life by way of Christian concepts. Can Lyotard avoid lapsing into Arendt's illuminating image of the Jew seen only as either Pariah or Parvenu (Arendt, 2007, p.69-90), a dilemma she drafted in those catastrophic years up to 1944 but still resonant, and find a language that does not draw a line binding the words Jew and "Martyr"?

[37] For a long history of the interrelation between our notions of martyrdom, witness and ethics, as well as its intensification in the twentieth century, see Carolyn Dean's *The Moral Witness* (2019).

2 Designations

2.1 Argument

While “Let my people go” has become a refrain, and thereby traded some of its original force for other resonances, the second clause of Exodus 5.1 has lost little of its charge. In *The Jewish Study Bible* one of the most beautiful translations can be found: “that they may celebrate a festival for Me in the wilderness” (Berlin and Brettler, 2014, p.106). In succeeding chapters, there will be greater celebration of the startling resources, intellectual heft and fundamental re-imaginings of philosophising that the phrases “Jewish-idiom” and “Christian-idiom” signify for this particular writer. In this chapter, though, we must remain with painful questions of exodus, of being under the command of another, and of the wilderness. As well as a forewarning, I want to promise here that having passed through this discussion of intolerance and persecution, racisms and essentialisms, there will be festivals.

The Hyphen opens with the essay “Mainmise”. As written, we could translate it with “Domination”, “Control”, “Seizure”, “Grip” or “Strangehold”. If we were to hammer a hyphen into its joints, “Main-mise”, the allusions to the physical hand, “Hand-taken”, would become clearer; “mise” being derived from “mettre”. “Mise en main”, putting or taking in hand, as with mise en scène, placing or setting the scene. In France, it has further associations:

> a term from feudal jurisprudence referring to the action of taking hold of or seizing someone because of infidelity or lack of devotion to a feudal lord … laying a hand upon or striking someone … The freeing of slaves by their lords. (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.12 n1)

As with a few of his other writings, grasping what Lyotard, ever the stylist, is reaching for with the title is useful for understanding the essay in its entirety; though the many meanings evoked may make the gesture seem, to some, more like flailing than a firm grip.[38] Another reading, a little ingenuous perhaps, is that as well as indicating the shifting senses that the act of laying hands will hold in the essay it is a restatement of method. The shadows within, as well as between, words an inexhaustible impetus for Lyotard to renewed thinking and philosophising.

By considering in turn the tactical silence in "Mainmise" on the subject of the hyphen itself, its echoing of earlier political writings on "emancipation" and its specific interventions into theological and historical disputes, I will demonstrate these dense dozen pages are far from the outlier in Lyotard's corpus that they can initially seem; a busman's holiday in theology. Instead, by restating in this new context his recurrent fascination with "designators", we can open out Lyotard's writing to the concrete thinking through of Jewish and Christian history. By doing so will we be able to distinguish the treatment of Jew and Christian as designator from that of the Jewish-idiom or Christian-idiom elsewhere in *The Hyphen*. Essentially, understanding what Lyotard thinks the modern tradition of political thought grasps about discrimination and oppression, and how he would amend that account, lets us understand what he thinks is entirely silenced in that tradition, the differends caused by the injustice between idioms.

The chapter will conclude by enacting that interface, essential after Kant, between history and philosophy, bringing the notion of designator developed in "Mainmise" into dialogue with the "parting of the ways" dispute, via Marius Heemstra's *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (2010), and into the midst of a debate about the uses of the word "ioudaioi" (In Law and Halton, eds. *Jew and Judean: A Marginalia Forum on Politics and Historiography in the Translation of Ancient Texts,* 2014). By indicating where the concepts of idiom and obligation begin to emerge in our reading of "Mainmise", we will prepare the ground for their close consideration in the third and fourth chapters respectively; both of them moving from "Mainmise" to the succeeding essay in *The Hyphen: "On A Hyphen"*. As was conveyed in the first

[38] The titles and many possible translations of *Chambre Sourde* (1998) and *A l'Insu* (1988) being two paradigmatic examples.

chapter the core of my argument's inner velocity comes from what follows, so I would like to run through the wiring diagram one time before we begin.

In schematic form, the argument can be restated as the following. The "parting of the ways" dispute is essentially concerned with how to subsume particulars under categories. The questions of historical timing and periodisation it prompts are a result of this more fundamental query: when is it legitimate to categorise these particular people and populations as Jewish, or as Christian? Philosophical strategies for approaching these sorts of questions are known under the heading of "designation". Saul Kripke's concept of "rigid designators" developed from within analytic philosophy, is arguably the most advanced mode for discussing these sorts of categorisations, and unarguably the one that Lyotard draws from in his work. But what this abstract form of designation in analytic philosophy cannot reckon with is abstract designations' inseparability from the politicised reality of designation in the actual world. Defined populations are designated as particular categories, with results ranging from persecution to elevation, via indifference. "Mainmise" is deeply concerned with this, the actual effect of being singled out as belonging to a category, with a particular sensitivity to the case of Jewishness in Antiquity. Additionally, analytic accounts of designation seem to over-emphasise the "rigid" aspect of "designators" to the detriment of their "revisability". Lyotard emphasises the latter instead.

From there the argument turns to interlocutors from outside analytic philosophy. Emphasising the revisability of designators raises the potential of a category having literally no fixed content. I show how this is what gives Sartre's account of what it means to be called, by oneself or by others, a "Jew" its existential openness, and how this remains worth preserving from that account. However, this lack of positive content results in "Jew" becoming not a position but an anti-position, defined by its opposite. Thus, complete revisability lapses into a different form of rigidity; a category exists only in relation to what it opposes. This raises the question of what using certain designators obliges us towards, and of how we then place ourselves in relation to norms, to traditions and sets of rules. In modernity this is shown to be the question of emancipation, of binding oneself to a particular set of rules ("manceps") or another. Lyotard distinguishes between three types of emancipation in "Mainmise", two of which are shown to be deficient due to their dependence on unargued-for assumptions: associated here with Marx and

Saint Paul. The third form of emancipation, which I initially develop with reference to Saint Augustine, is linked in "Mainmise" to the Jewish-idiom, and to the Kantian notion of reflection: a capacity for an uncertain consideration of which rules and norms I find myself obligated to. Another, better, way of describing this third form of emancipation is "Exodus": defying one law, passing through the desert of reflection, and then binding yourself in obligation to another (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.2).

Finally, having elaborated on what this "Exodus" would be, we can reconsider designations, and a related term assignations, with new eyes. How does calling oneself, or being called by others, a "Jew" — or identifying as "Black" for instance — obligate you to the histories and memories that are associated with the category? Frantz Fanon's account in *Peau Noir, Masques Blanc [Black Skin, White Masks]* (1971) assists us greatly here. Thinking of oneself as being obligated to particular idioms, to the histories and cultures they embed, is shown to be a way to avoid lapsing into either essentialism or what we could call inessentialism when engaged in either self-designations or designations of others. An ethics of care and obligations is evoked, close to what in Yerushalmi's Jewish-idiom is called "Zakhor" [recollection or anamnesis] (*Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory,* 1996), and all these concepts are applied to our source texts from Jewish and Christian studies. This ethical relation of obligation between designations and the idioms they invoke, is why we will then need to turn in the third and fourth chapter to the difficult task of defining, or clarifying as far as is possible, the concepts of "idiom" and "obligation".

A textual note, then a contextual one. There are two distinct versions of "Mainmise" in English. The version presented in *The Hyphen* "was slightly revised by Lyotard for the [collected] volume" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.12). I shall call this version "Mainmise". When I need to refer to the earlier version, published for the first time in English in the journal *Philosophy Today* and then collected in Lyotard's *Political Writings*, I will use title it appeared under: "The Grip" (1993). "Mainmise" will be the primary text, but the different phrasing of "The Grip" occasionally opens some points that add to the discussion.

While it was not until 1995, the same year Lieu had called time on the parting and proposed the

search for new models, that the series of essay-length reflections on the hyphen passed between Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber, reached its end. Spanning a period of five years, with the initial "Mainmise" and "On a Hyphen" by Lyotard not intended as instalments of an exchange but as isolated essays, the set of five writings — two essays by Lyotard, two responses by Gruber and a response by Lyotard — was published first in French, as *Un Trait D'union* in 1993 and in English as *The Hyphen* in 1996 with a concluding set of "Responding Questions" between the participants appended to the latter. Despite alighting on the same concerns and, inevitably, on that same small plateau of history which is the territories around Jerusalem in the early centuries of the common era, neither debate was present in or for the other; they pass in parallel silence.

In terms of context, it is useful for the English language reader to know that *Autre Temps*, the French journal the article version of "Mainmise" was first published in describes itself as "part of the long line of reviews of social Christianity whose origins date back to 1887" (Monteil (ed.), 2002, back cover), and that Lyotard was therefore presuming a theologically adept and likely Christian emic readership. This could also account for what this tactical silence on the hyphen shimmed between "Judeo" and "Christian", and much of the troubled history it conceals. After all, one of the recurring words in this essay by the philosopher of dissensus is "agreement" (*The Hyphen*, 1999, p.9).

2.2 Silences What It Shows

"Designating, which goes together with signifying, means mortifying" claims Lyotard in "Sear of Silence" (*Miscellaneous Texts II: Contemporary Artists*, 2012, p.401), a text written to accompany the artist Ruth Francken's exhibition *Wittgenstein Variations*. Calling both Ruth Francken and, more contentiously, Wittgenstein "Jewish thinkers" (2012, p.407), Lyotard is here

reiterating a critique he began as far back as the seventies in *Discourse, Figure* (2011)[39]. What is said silences what is unsaid. Or, more accurately, every phrase instance contains both what it says and what it cancels out. This is not only the case with writing, "Painting like language silences what it shows" (2012, p.401). While artistic practice is permitted a certain degree of contradictory license, in our communication-societies this contrasts with what writing is becoming: clarification. Writing then, for Lyotard, is caught in a tight bind; in its drive to defy injustice and banality it cannot help but speak, conceptualise, and categorise, but in doing so it simplifies, nullifies, betrays. As he would later write "in witnessing one also exterminates. The witness is a traitor" (*The Inhuman,* 1988, p.204). It is possible that the echo of "le témoin est un traître" in the later *Trait D'Union* is intentional.

That said, for Lyotard there is no mystical mountain to retreat to, no escape into silence. "Silence is a phrase" (*The Differend,* 1988, p.xii) and, in a manner to which we will return, so are grunts, sighs, coughs and the other inarticulate detritus of the voice and the sonic: the belch of a cynic, the taps of a sage's cane. "There is no no-phrase … There is no last phrase" (1988, p.xii) and even "Intention is itself a phrase" (Lyotard, *The Interviews and Debates*, 2020, p.61). As Lyotard lets slip "paradoxes and even silences or noises, [are] the same thing" ("Oikos" in *Political Writings,* 1993, p.100). While silence can be a particular mode of defiance to the precise totalities that *The Hyphen* guards against — "you take a certain pleasure in this silence. You feel its opacity as an interesting resource against Hegelianism or absolutism in general" ("Endurance and the Profession" in *Political Writings*, 1993, p.75) — this is only true of some species of silence, not all, and it can become its own form of stupefaction.

This inseparability of naming and silencing abides in the notion of designators, which Lyotard develops from Saul Kripke's account in *Naming and Necessity* (1980, pp.3-15). The hard pit face of this can be found in the "Antisthene Notice" (1988, pp.36-7) and sections 57 and 59 (1988, pp.39-40) of *The Differend*. It should be said here that Lyotard's interpretation is not uncontested. Peter Sedgwick and Alessandra Tanesini's "Lyotard and Kripke: Essentialism in

[39] *Discourse, Figure* is also deeply concerned with the interactions between designation and signification that occupy us in this chapter. In some ways, the entire effort of this essay could be seen as trying to fold *Discourse, Figure* into *The Hyphen*.

Dispute" (1995, pp.271-278) provides a stark critique of his use of Kripke's "rigid designators", from an analytic philosophical perspective, along with the related reformulations of Kripke in *The Differend*. Heresy is, however, part of Lyotard's intention. As Sedgwick and Tanesini's emphasis on essentialism attests to, Lyotard and Kripke diverge sharply on that aspect of designation.[40] Whether with warrant or not, Lyotard uses Kripke's minimal technical base to elaborate his own idiosyncratic general theory of proper names, referents and deictics. In this, there are residual traces of his structuralist account of similar terrain laid out in *Discourse, Figure* (2011), a latent presence our treatment will intensify.

At stake are some of the fundamental affordances of language. As Lyotard puts it "'Before' knowing whether what one says or will say about it [a referent] is true or false, it is necessary to know what one is talking about" (*The Differend,* 1988, p.37). A designator attempts to fix the referent and allow for those engaged in phrasing to understand what is being referred to (1988, p38). Emphasising the "rigidity" in designation can be misleading. It is revisability that interests Lyotard, not rigidity. A great capacity of rigid designators, such as proper names, is that they permit modification over time. The significations and conceptual contents of the name may change, but it will not (1988, p.39). Moses is Kripke's model for this, which Lyotard echoes (1988, p.47). The name "Moses" has fixed a referent, the particular content of which — in terms of descriptions (Moses had a beard), normative commitments (He was a prophet), statuses (He is alive) and so on — has been revised over time and will be continually revised by future historians and thinkers (1988, p.48). Despite this ongoing process of revision, two people speaking about "Moses" can establish that their phrases concern the same referent; by way of phrases such as "Yes, Moses the prophet" or "I didn't mean Moses Mendelssohn". Lyotard uses the examples of "Kant" and "Rome" (1988, p.39).

It should be emphasised again here that Lyotard's reading and subsequent use of Kripke's concept is unconventional, and that as his mentioning of designation several times in his early text *Discourse, Figure* indicates there is an existing structuralist hue he constantly blends in:

[40] Admittedly, a direct response to their critique by someone from the small band of Lyotard scholars is long overdue.

> … the linguistic sign … relates to what it designates, to a real or unreal object about which the speaker is speaking … This relation of the sign to the object can be called designation. (*Discourse, Figure,* 2011, p.77)

Lyotard's structuralist interest in signification sits oddly against the desire for a metaphysical essence that Sedgwick and Tanesini speak of. They are not alone in this another analytic philosopher Scott Soames, considered a key interpreter of Kripke, also claims that in his account Kripke intended to emphasise, not the revisibility that Lyotard elevates, but the metaphysical access designation can provide. This would dissolve the distinction between on the one hand analytic, necessary, a priori truths and on the other synthetic ones. Neither interested in essences nor metaphysics, it is the revisable aspect of "rigid designators" that is crucial for Lyotard. In *Beyond Rigidity: The Unfinished Semantic Agenda of "Naming and Necessity"* (2002) we can see traces of this in Soames as well, but there remains more disagreement than common ground. In short, while also keen to maintain constant reference to certain particulars that can rigid designators provide, Lyotard undeniably draws them much closer to Wittgenstein's notions of "family-resemblance" (*Philosophical Investigations,* 2009, 36e-40e), underscoring the revisability they permit, than to the more canonical "Kripkean" accounts.

To use the language of identity, while you cannot cast all the predicates into disarray at once, you can permit of partial revisions, one after the other, such that eventually the term is used in an entirely different way. These concepts can end up contradicting each other. Once more, in the case of Moses, the name has variously been taken to designate someone who did exist and someone who did not exist, a mythical hero and a living man. While in the canonical Jewish tradition it refers to a person who was born a slave, under the "manceps" of Egypt, Freud revises the meaning to refer to a royal ward.[41] Archaeological or historical claims yet unstated may revise it again. In all these cases, the designator remained, or will remain, rigid while what Kripke calls the cluster of concepts or descriptions associated with the designator is revised (*Naming and Necessity,* 1980, pp.31-2). Wittgenstein, this shared source for Kripke and Lyotard, gifts us in *The Brown Book* a sentence which encapsulates this view of language use:

[41] For a defence of the intention if not the theory behind this, see Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991).

> A rope is made of a huge number of fibres, but not a single fibre goes through the rope's entire length, it's the way they overlap that creates the strength. (*The Blue and Brown Books,* 1958, p.87)[42]

Here, I hope only to make an overview Lyotard's account of designation comprehensible and plausible: the question of whether it is conclusive will have to be deferred. There is an ongoing storm in the field of analytic philosophy about whether general terms can be "rigid designators", about whether the theory obtains at all, and its dependence upon the idea of multiple linguistic or metaphysical world. Eleonora Orlando in "General Terms and Rigidity" gives us a gust of this, in amenable terms for our task here:

> Kripke has clearly suggested that we should include some general terms among the rigid ones, namely, those common nouns semantically correlated with natural substances, species and phenomena, in general, natural kinds -'water', 'tiger', 'heat'- and some adjectives -'red', 'hot', 'loud'. However, the notion of rigidity has been defined for singular terms; after all, the notion that Kripke has provided us with is the notion of a rigid designator. But general terms do not designate single individuals: rather, they apply to many of them. In sum, the original concept of rigidity cannot be straightforwardly applied to general terms: it has to be somehow redefined in order to make it cover them. (2014, p.49)

This raises related issues regarding how far revisability can be taken; to what extent can the individual fibres be broken and re-tied without severing the entire rope. In Lyotard's account, new phrases about existing designators adds senses but it does not set a single sense, and certainly there is an awareness in analytic writings on "rigid designators" that to be applicable across historical timescales revisability would need to extend far. This has been clear from the first causal-historical theory of reference laid out by Keith Donnellan in "Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions" (1972) to Kripke's more well-known account in *Naming and Necessity*

[42] There is an alternate and equally lucid version of the same metaphor in *Philosophical Investigations* (2006, p.36e).

(1980). In both, the account is of reference-passing links which form a causal-historical chain.

Now, as we will see more closely in the "ioudaioi" debate, this is what some scholars believe has occurred with the designator "Jews". There is a tension here. If, as Lyotard writes in *The Differend,* "the name fills the function of linchpin because it is an empty and constant designator" (1988, p.44), what does this mean for words that sit halfway between proper names and general terms. Those that fix referents like "Jew", "Christian" or, to speak of other political terrain, "he", "she" and "they", rather than proper names like "Moses". Initially it could seem as if designation, dependent on the context of the conversation it occurs in, a mere nullity of the name which indicates how revisable and lacking in foundation Lyotard considers our use of words to be.[43] But foundationless does not mean freely chosen. Clearly there are discrepancies of political force between the position of being able to designate someone else as something and the position of being designated as something by someone else, and silencing can occur as a result both of the act of being-named, and of being denied a designation. In this, the designation "Jew" seems more different to that of "we" than the mere addition of a letter would imply. Lyotard makes a distinction in *The Differend* between "the rigid (constant) designator that the name is and the "current" designator that the singular pronoun is" (1988, p.99) but the designator "Jew" would appear to have aspects of both.

For Lyotard, there are four potential locations in any "phrase universe" invoked whenever we phrase. That is to say, in the same manner that the phrase "I baptise you Mary Shepherd" places the designator Mary Shepherd in the position of the addressee, the phrase "My name is Mary Shepherd", places the designator "Mary Shepherd" in the addressor position. The phrase "Mary, this was a predominantly Jewish part of Edinburgh" places "Jewish" in the referent position. Whatever the contents are of those designators is the "sense". We can adjust the obligations of designators: "Mary Shepherd, the philosopher who's work parallels that of Kant", "I meant Mary Shepherd, my granny".

[43] I use the everyday word "conversation" for initial clarity, but more accurately these designations are happening in what Lyotard calls, to avoid a purely linguistic of common-sensical conception of the situation, phrase-universes. These are instances where an addressor, an addressee, a sense, and referent are brought together, and phrases happen. See *The Differend* (1988, p.99).

With that in hand, consider the normative phrase “this fiscus applies to all Jews in the Roman Empire” followed by the designative phrase “And you are a Jew”. As well as indicating the discrepancies of political power that can seem lacking in analytic accounts of designation, one phrase only makes sense in a historically specific situation, but the other could obtain whether it occurred in that situation or only following that preceding phrase. This seems to add meaning and continuity to the word “Jew”, not shave it away. Also consider the different emphasis that the phrase “you are a Jew” has when the utterer, what Lyotard calls the addressor, is an armed soldier. There are the related, and complicated, resistant political powers that inhere in self-ascriptions of the form “I am a Jew” (“I am K”), and in cases when someone wishes to change their name is denied the right to do so. Designations are contested. Their contestation is political, and immediately so. Therefore, the initial abstractness of the analytic account, while useful, has to swiftly meet with political reality. Legibility is bound constantly with erasure. Designation with exclusion and inclusion.

Now, when reading *The Hyphen* as a whole it is possible to forget the following textual point. There is not a single use in “Mainmise” of the term “Judeo-Christian”. As with that absence in *The Hyphen* of the neologism “the jews”, this silence attests to a great deal. The series of words that occupy Lyotard’s attention instead are firstly designators — “Jews”, “Christians”, “Jews and Christians” — and then states of political relation — “mainmise”, “manceps” and “mancipium”. To reinvoke our starting schema, we are now deep into considering the first series. We have seen how “designations” seem to function and how they draw distinctions. And we have seen a little of how these designations are immediately political; how the relation of particulars can become a partitioning (Boyarin, *Border Lines,* 2004). We should bear in mind though, as well that second series on the horizon, that absent term “Judeo-Christian”. If designations into particular categories are highly revisable, could that leave them entirely without positive content, and could they then become overdetermined by other categories: as “Christian” overdetermines “Judeo” by way of a hyphen? The first of Lyotard’s silent interlocutors in “Mainmise” will let us listen to these dissonances.

2.3 Other People's Eyes

Sartre is, for Lyotard, the embodiment of the public intellectual, an indictment not an endorsement, and an under-recognised antagonistic presence in his writing. The strength of Lyotard's own sense of this can be seen in another intricate title and the subtle critique it encrypted ("Tombeau de l'Intellectuel" in *Political Writings*, 1993, p.3-7), a public intervention in *Le Monde* with which Lyotard both entombed Sartre in a past as weighty as the chambers of the Panthéon and, with its echo of "Tomber", sounded out his toppling; his memorialisation.[44] While critical characterisations of Sartre abound in Lyotard's writings, direct citations of him are scarce, as are considerations of him as a critical interlocutor in scholarship on Lyotard. Similarly to what Ashley Woodward has demonstrated regarding Lyotard's implicit late dialogue with Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology ("Lesson of Darkness: Phenomenology and Lyotard's Late Aesthetics", 2019) there is in "Mainmise" a structuring citation-in-relief of Sartre, and Existentialism. To hear it, we will have to listen closely to the background noise.

These parallels have been critically noted, or footnoted at least, by Angelika Bammer in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*: "Lyotard's views seem to be in the tradition of Sartre" (1994, n.21 p.196). While I concur with the general drift of her statement, there are juddering differences that wrest Lyotard's account away from Sartre's errors. In Sartre, the designation "Jew" lapses into an anti-position. Bammer is likely placing Lyotard in this line because of the fraught reception already recounted of *Heidegger and "the jews"*. The account of Vivian Liska in *German-Jewish Thought and Its Afterlife* (2017, p.150), on a similar basis, places Lyotard in line with Sartre and those who would elide the experience of "real Jews" in favour of an absolute diasporic otherness.[45] Before we dismiss Sartre though, and with him this line of

[44] A "tombeau" in French can also mean a literary or musical memorial composition.
[45] The page where Lyotard uses the phrase "bad jews" which Liska takes particular issue with, requires re-reading

French-Jewish and French-Thought on Jewishness, it is worth working through some of the history here.[46]

The clamour of anti-semitism marrs our century as it did the centuries before. However for those of Sartre's generation it had a direct presence in the seizure of paricular people, the laying of hands upon their shoulders.[47] The younger Lyotard witnessed, and was troubled by his "thoughtless" responses to, similar instances of direct designation by seizure of people as enemies within the states; both of Jewish classmates and of peers involved in resistance activities.[48] While I would like to avoid responding to essentialising claims that Lyotard, raised a Catholic (Bamford, 2017, p.21), cannot comprehend French Jewish experience with a counter-essentialism, there is a practical force to the fact that Lyotard's wife of around forty years was from a Jewish family and was read as such. This was not only in the charged situation of the Vichy-era street, but by Lyotard's conservative leaning family (Bamford, 2017, p25). Furthermore, Lyotard's daughters by Andrée meet even the strict Orthodox criteria of matrilineal descent, and while not raised in the religious rituals of Judaism would have also been read by many others as "Jewish".

We can imagine then, if we even needed them, additional reasons then why Lyotard would have been suspicious of any written sign, our hyphen, that came to silence the brutal fact of that manhandling. Scrutinising it, its passage through centuries, we can ourselves fall into a form of overwriting. After all, what could seem more abstract than the division between those grand western narratives of Judaism and Christianity, approached through a what appears the most abstract of languages? But for those who lived in those early centuries after the events on Golgotha these were pressing, torturous questions with immediate effects upon their economic and political position in a ragged, diverse and militarised Empire. Their tax status, their

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on the basis of the tropological account we indicated earlier. Rather than singling out "real Jews", Lyotard is trying to testify to a common condition of striving towards what struggles to be put into words: "all texts fail to reinscribe what has not been inscribed" (*Heidegger and "the jews"*, p.81).

[46] It is worth noting that Levinas or Derrida's writings on Jewish themes are part of the same line as Lyotard's; they unfold in a similarly critical relation to their existentialist precursors Sartre and Heidegger and take similar risks.

[47] Evident in his Alsace *War Diaries* (2012), and in *Réflexions sur la question juive* (1946), translated into English as *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1995), both by his choice of examples (1995, p.54) and in his unfiltered recounting of his time in thirties Berlin (1995, p.44).

[48] As recounted by Kiff Bamford in *Critical Lives: Jean-François Lyotard* (2017, p.22).

exposure to state violence, their ability to breathe lightly while passing by an armed mob or unit of soldiers. Paul, patron Saint of Gentile Christians, was exceptional in many senses, but not this one. The precise nature and dating of the different religious persecutions experienced by Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians during this period is one basis of the "parting of the ways" debate and differing accounts abound. Marius Heemstra, in *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways*, summarises how this unfolded both for those designated as Jewish (2010, pp.7-8) and for those designated Christians (2010, pp.85-102), including Jewish Christians from 96 CE. Retold again and again, the narrative loses this reality and becomes fiction. Violence is lost in centuries as easily as in statistics. Zealots were murdered and murdered in turn. Martyrs were martyred.

So, as unlikely as it may seem to critics who misread Lyotard as apolitical, this physical force is painfully present for him.[49] Here, as in all his writings. Far from some weekend historical re-enactment, Lyotard seizes upon this time period in "Mainmise" because it continues to clutch ours; in Pétainist Paris, many could not breathe lightly when passing by soldiers or crowds, often because of where they found themselves placed on that ancient dividing line. And, as previously argued, some of this seemingly apolitical aura is from his particular position on the subject and self, not from any lack of attention to questions of justice.

Against any positive notion of political freedom (what is called freedom-to or positive liberty) this question of passing, of safely passing a crowd has, in this case, intractable force. What can be mistaken for a hazy ethics in Lyotard's texts is often, in fact, ethics-in-negative; a freedom-from or negative liberty.[50] It is about the absence of violence, of prohibition, of "differends". Given this, his consideration in "Mainmise" of emancipation, and of being designated by law, Roman or otherwise, as a Jew or a Christian, is not merely a critique of modernity's misreadings, but an assertion of another possibility. Less about the end of harm, and more about *passing unharmed*. This is the essential context for comparing his account of the designation "Jew" with

[49] For a particularly strong instance of this, which also makes plain that the source of these readings is *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), see Janet Lungstrum and Elizabeth Sauer's 'Creative Agonistics: An Introduction' in *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest* (1997, p.4).
[50] These two concepts of liberty, positive and negative have a long history, at least back to Kant and possibly Plato. See Paul Guyer's *Virtues of Freedom: Selected Essays on Kant* (2017).

Sartre's, which is to say, of situating him within his conjuncture as we should also situate Sartre.

Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* was published in 1946. In a similar way to what was outlined above, I contend it should not be taken as an abstract account, but as abstraction trying to reckon with a painfully concrete reality. Here, I am influenced by Étienne Balibar's contention that while the context of a book's composition does not overdetermine its content, what he calls the particular "conjuncture", namely the political situation and problems it was embedded in and which need to be considered. For Balibar, philosophical writing is "never independent of specific conjunctures" (1995, p.144)

In this instance, 1946 marks the immediate aftermath of the Vichy Regime in France, a government both the result of the Nazi German occupation, and of a complicity with that regime of terror by much of the, admittedly desperate, French population and the more callow and calculating Catholic Right and local capitalist class. The later recognition of the extent of this complicity, especially among the wider population, became something close to a national trauma.[51] That said, antisemitism was an undeniable presence in France, and in the French Far Right, back to the days of Boulangism and the Dreyfus Affair, and had a hold in the minds of influential thinkers such as Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès.[52] While not as institutionally integrated by the earlier decades of the tens as the Jewish populations of neighbouring countries such as Germany, Jewish communities had existed in France since the middle ages, their number bolstered by more recent migrations from Russia and Eastern and Central Europe, and as such Frenchness and Jewishness had become blended concepts. All this, the question of who was seen by the regime as Jewish or French, who could pass unseen, who was complicit with the murderous deportations of Vichy and a nascent recognition of how deep that complicity ran, is present in and played a part in forming Sarte's text.

[51] The painful detail of *Vichy Et Les Juifs* by Marrus and Paxton, when published in 1981 made plain to a mass audience the level of local complicity in the massacres and remains an indispensable reference point for understanding the period.

[52] Given how complicated, and contested, this history is, studies such as Charles Stewart Doty's *From Cultural Rebellion to Counterrevolution: The Politics of Maurice Barrès* (1976) offer a useful lens through a single figure and their development.

Summarising in a few sentences, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (translated as *Anti-Semite and Jew)* interrogates the general form of hatred between humans by considering anti-semitism as its exemplary instantiation. Sartre's assertion that anti-semitism's roots are primarily psychological, "cowardly" (1995, p.38, 64) and passionate not rational, juts oddly against claims elsewhere in the text that its source is structural; a form of class-based resentment and fear of financial and other abstractions. Either way, Sarte's text presents anti-semitism as emerging within anti-semites themselves, to the extent that in his rendering even Jewish identity in its entirety risks seeming as if an emanation of this hatred, lacking any substance in itself: "…it is not the Jewish character that provokes anti-Semitism but, rather … it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew" (1995, p.103). In essence, Sartre seems to draw the wrong lesson from his Richard Wright's statement, which he nonetheless quotes, "There is no Negro problem in the United States, there is a White problem" (1995, p.109). What in Wright is an indication of where blame should lie, becomes in Sartre's text the source of categorisation itself. In so doing, he presents a highly revisable version of what the category "Jew" entails but, at the same time, fixes it rigidly in relation to the anti-semite. So what for Ralph Ellison was "a sensation that he does not exist in the real world at all" that it is "not unusual for a Negro" to experience that "He seems rather to exist in the nightmarish fantasy of the white American mind as a phantom that the white mind seeks unceasingly, by means both crude and subtle, to lay" (*Ralph Ellison: The Collected Essays,* 1997, p.328) becomes in Sartre's text not sensation, nor phantasm, but fact.[53]

Sartre was criticised heavily for this at the time and since.[54] Even a generous reading would deem him insensitive to the historical actuality of Jewish experience, an ungenerous one an infantilising reducer of that experience to sufferings and traumas. One can hear echoes of the critiques of Lyotard's term "the jews" which we dissected in the previous chapter, and similarly Sartre's error seems more akin to a pro or philosemitism circling around into its opposite. That said, Sartre's less critical stance than Lyotard towards universal categories, especially "man", results in a difficult and seemingly unresolved contradiction both between the positions put forward in the third and fourth chapters of the book which vitiates the entire text. As it does so

[53] Ellison echoes (1965, p.4) and expands on this in *Invisible Man* (1965).
[54] An overview of this is offered in the introduction to *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1995, vii), and an evocative instance of its continuing reception can be found in Di-Capua's "Haunted: on the New Arabic Translation of Sartre's Anti-semite and Jew" (2020).

in relation to being noticed and named or passing unnoticed – in short, to being designated as a Jew - it is a contradiction worth exploring.

Designating someone as a Jew is, in Sartre's text sufficient to make them a Jew, or more accurately to make them confront a series of questions around authenticity that constitute Jewish identity. Whether shouted at in the street or called a "Yid" in the playground (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, 1995, p54), does the person designated-as a "Jew" accept the designation and begin the transition from an in-authentic to authentic position or futily reject the designation? In chapter three this process is presented as becoming what they are, embracing the particularity of the designation "Jew".

In chapter four of Sartre's text, the antinomy becomes concrete. While authenticity has been advocated for, and therefore "the particular", it grates against the desire destination in chapter four of "universal brotherhood … humanism" (1995, p.105). As a reader of Lyotard I am not unaccustomed to contradiction, but here the mechanism for handling that contradiction, and for passing from the particular to universal, remains obscure. A "concrete liberalism" is posited but this liberalism is freighted with contradictions that Sartre does not dispel.

Instead, he argues that the difference will be resolved by an abstract process that after "[the] Jew's choice of authenticity … bit by bit, [makes] possible, without violence and by the very course of history, that assimilation to which some would like to drive him by force" (1995, p.106). Sartre sees the renunciation of particular as a necessary prelude to a utopian society, in line with narratives of class struggle, where existence and the human comes to replace specific identities. Lyotard specifically notes Sartre's claim to speak on behalf of a universal subject in "Tomb of the Intellectual" (*Political Writings,* 1993, p.5) and we would add that given this dialectical, universalist frame we can already see him searching for a method that will become Marxism, however antinomian in form.

A crucial contention follows from this. Lyotard is responding in "Mainmise" to the way of phrasing the Jewish question that derives from Sartre's text and tradition. This suffused the French context in which Lyotard was educated and which, to some extent, he re-enacted in his

own earlier writings on a "Jewish theme". This method emphasises the revisability of language and designation and for both Sartre and Lyotard accords with a broadly Wittgenstein-derived account of names and designators. However, in straying into a form of universalism, in trying to bind this foundationlessness to an existential process of authenticity and then a hidden universalist teleology, Sartre's account silences and unjustly forgets the particularity of Jewish experience, and what we will come to call the obligations that inhere in designations.

Lyotard's account of designators will have to avoid this; it is no pseudo-problem. If one asserts that language has a capacity for designation and redefinition beyond any simple dynamic of truth names and ultimate realities, if anyone can be called a "Jew" in the street, what sorts of injustice and silencing is risked? If the meaning of language is use, can it be used without limits? At the same time, what affordances does this more expansive use of language offer? We should recall that there were many positive readings of Sartre's text at the time, including by those who identified as Jews. Sarah Hammerschlag provides an overview of these responses in *Modern French Jewish Thought*, noting that Sartre's existentialist take on Jewish identity:

> … struck a chord with a generation of young Jews after the war … Claude Lanzman said his whole way of walking was transformed by reading the book. Pierre Vidal-Naquet reported feeling 'avenged' … it raised the possibility for new nonreligious ways of thinking about Judaism, such as Albert Memmi's and Robet Misrahi's. (2018, p.179)

There is a paradox here. Sartre sets the category of "Jew" in opposition to the anti-semite, but then this seems to give rise to a new feeling of freedom for "young Jews after the war". The second use of the word "Jew" seems to have a different referent from the first, as a positive content not mere anti-position.

Those "nonreligious ways", Memmi's for instance, enabled by Sartre did often come around again to criticise their source, but were at the same time seemingly uncommencable without it:

> L'erreur de Sartre, toujours la même, est de ne pas assez voir que même la négativité, le malheur, vécus, deviennment en quelque maniere chair et sang, en somme positivité. [

Sartre's error, always the same, is not seeing clearly enough that even the negativity, the misfortune, when lived, becomes in some way flesh and blood and, in the end, positivity.] ("La Vie Impossible de Frantz Fanon" Esprit 39, 1971, p.248-73)

This is the case with Fanon as well, who both echoed Sartre in his "Algeria Unveiled", writing "it is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude" (*A Dying Colonialism,* 1994, p.47), and later bemoaned the limits of a strict Sartrean existentialist position on race (*Peau Noire, Masques Blanc,* 1971, pp.108-9).[55] This shared source, albeit in negative, of critical discourses on blackness and Jewishness should not go unnoticed. And it should be said, with our eyes upon the horizon, and the discussion we shall come to of designation and race, that in Fanon the second clause invokes the creation of something beyond the designation or self-description as "negro"; an idiom named "Negritude".

2.4 Future Perfect

This, for now, fleeting mention of the idiom "Negritude", ushers in our next set of questions; a no-less propitious starting point for which would have been that feeling of freedom for "young Jews after the war" (2018, p179). If this defining of designators as anti-position is too revisible, too empty or overdetermined by its opposite, and the analytic one too apolitical, rigid and arid, what way could we find between? And how would this relate to these third terms that arise again and again in our discussion: an idiom called negritude, a new French-Jewish identity or idiom that Memmi, Levinas and innumerable others who never wrote a single book brought into the world after the war?

The question here is that of obligation, of finding what particular designations — "Jew", "Black"

[55] If we are trying to avoid essentialisms, then "Algeria Unveiled" is a hazardous textual site, with overhanging crags especially when it comes to sex/gender. Still, these lines seemed worth unearthing.

et cetera — commit us to, and of seeking a measure for justice. Analytic philosophy has many ways of speaking about this process, of binding oneself to norms, of seeking and following rules. Again, these can end up too apolitical to be of use for our purposes here. Fortunately, in "Mainmise" we find means for thinking through the questions in an appropriately political register: the idea of "Emancipation". The stakes of this concept can be shown by sounding out the second of Lyotard's quiet interlocutors.

Sartre's original title, with its promise to be *sur la question juive,* offers us a clue to this interlocutor which, as Sartre has for "designation", can clarify the dangers latent in any discussion of "emancipation". Geoffrey Bennington in *Writing the Event* (1988, pp.8-9) is not alone in elevating Marx as the most constant of Lyotard's implicit discussants.[56] In fact, Lyotard comes close to asserting this himself in "A Memorial to Marxism" (*Peregrinations,* 1988, pp.45-75). What has not yet been noted, is what binds one of Lyotard's intricate text on religion and Jewishness "Mainmise" to Marx's most-reductive one "On The Jewish Question" (*Collected Works, Vol. 3,* 1975, pp.146-174): their constant focus on the word "emancipation".

Unconscious or otherwise, the parallel is striking. Marx uses variations of the word "emancipation" over eighty times in the short span of "On The Jewish Question", including several sentences that, based not on his later use of "scientific" methods such as statistics but on stereotypes, assert a particularly fraught relationship between those designated as Jewish and political emancipation.[57] Gallingly, he posits that emancipation of humanity from capitalist relations would be equivalent to the emancipation of humanity from Judaism. Based again on seemingly nothing but stereotyping, he asserts that Christians need not be emancipated from their faith, as capitalist relations have served to render them, in a practical and economic sense, Jewish not Christian.

Emancipation is undeniably a potent theme in several political-philosophical writings from the canon, including writings on chattel and ancient slavery which also concern Lyotard, but this

[56] See allso John Mowitt's introduction to *Discourse, Figure* (2011, p.xv-xix) and James Williams' *Lyotard and the Political* (1999).
[57] Given the toxicity of this textual site I will refrain from unnecessarily mining quotes.

particular parallel stands apart. Lyotard, as a decade long Marxist militant would certainly have read these passages. Despite Lyotard's conviction, one this author shares, that there is an insight worth preserving in the economic analysis of Marx ("A Memorial To Marxism", 1988, pp.61-2), the necessity of critiquing Marx's dubious treatment of "emancipation" should be clear. And there is further textual evidence for Lyotard having re-read the essay "On the Jewish Question" in the period around "Mainmise". In Lyotard's "The Wall, The Gulf, The Sun", written in 1990, the word emancipation occurs several times, in one instance specifically linked to the topic that had prompted Marx's essay, that of liberal bourgeois notions of emancipation: "the discourse that Marxists called the bourgeois discourse of emancipation" (*Political Writings,* 1993, p.115). Further, in "Ersiegerungen", written in response to a seminar Lyotard taught in Siegen college, he notes that he "came with my 'jewish question'" (*Political Writings,* 1993, p.78).

In addition to this simple countering of their contents, there is another possible reason for the echo. As he had claimed to do with Hegel's system, Marx has here turned the received narrative of historical progression of its head. Instead of Judaism birthing Christianity, birthing Hegelianism, Christians become Jews and only from there can become emancipated. Lyotard's concern with the discrepancies of political power between the Jewish and Christian positions here faces a different, and ethically suspect, narrative that maintains its oppressive charge. In doing so, he highlights that the issue is less the order of the terms than the entire dialectical framing. In line with Keith Crome's claims, earlier noted, that Lyotard often deploys the sophist technique of retorsion (*Lyotard and Greek Thought,* 2004), conceding the axioms of an opponent's position to then undermine their results, "Mainmise" could be read as a retorsion of both these essays *sur la question juive*. That is to say, both of Sartre's mishandling of designation as anti-position and Marx's overdetermined emancipation. In doing so it performs a retorsion of the entire emancipatory frame of modern politics. This can be made clearer by adding the final name to its strange trinity alongside Sartre and Marx: Saint Paul.[58]

There are three forms of emancipation presented in "Mainmise". Since comprehending these particular forms is essential to understanding what Lyotard is gesturing towards in his discussion of the dissensus between Jewish and Christian idioms, it requires a little reconstruction here.

The first is to be emancipated by another, for a despot to relinquish their hold upon you: "The freeing of slaves by their lords" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.12 n1). In this instance the question of what status you are emancipated *into* is unresolved. It seems as if it can only depend upon your initial condition, on givens and precedent. The second is to emancipate yourself, in the popular phrase to take your fate into your own hands (1999, p.7). This is associated in "Mainmise" with the Enlightenment, in particular with Kant's account of it in "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?", a phrase Lyotard quotes as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage" (1999, p.2). While the more recent collection of Kant's writings *Practical Philosophy* renders it as "self-incurred minority" (1996, p.17) the allusion to childhood remains clear in either case. While the first form is presented as overdetermined by its initial conditions — the Lord still exerts and extends their power in freeing those enslaved to them — the second is ruled out as essentially impossible: "they escaped the Pharoah's *mancipem* only by placing themselves under the *mancipem* of Yahweh (1999, p.2). A useful regulative-idea, perhaps, of pure freedom, but never experienced in actuality, where a new law always replaces the old.

The third form may seem more ambiguous but Lyotard wishes to draw out its politically judicious aspects. In fact, he ends up privileging it as of significantly greater consequence than the other two (1999, p.6). One can be emancipated from the hold of one entity to the "manceps", the hold, of another one. In Paul, we see how Christian emancipation implies becoming beholden to faith and its duties. In the Jewish religious tradition, the second stakeholder is given as the Law. As Lyotard writes "On this point Jews and Christians are in agreement, emancipation is listening to the true manceps" (1999, p.9).

It is worth lingering on how this reading of Paul offers a different way of thinking emancipation within the Christian tradition, as a means of complicating Lyotard's account. The philosophers James K. A. Smith and Ron Kubsch have debated back and forth on whether Christianity is a meta-narrative for Lyotard. This debate is detailed concisely in Kubsch's *Why Christianity is an Emancipation Narrative for Jean-François Lyotard* (2008). However, the particular Christian emancipation narrative they are concerned with, and which Kubsch rightly says Lyotard opposes, is more millenarian in form, the gradual Christianising of the external world. This "listening to

[58] We could call this the "Sarx and Saul" pairing, flesh and spirit.

the true manceps" (1999, p.9), to faith, in Paul has a different tone to it, emphasising an initial interiority to Christian emancipation. Still, we will see later how it lapses into some of the same difficulties as the exteriority that the advance of Christendom evidences.

Returning to "Mainmise", counter to the first two notions of emancipation, to the abstract emancipation of political modernity and the an account of the Enlightenment as the ceasing of childhood, there is something then to be preserved in the notion of being in the hands of another, of interdependency and inseparability: "I am interested in remaining a child" as Lyotard had put it in "Oikos" (*Political Writings,* 1993, p.107) and as he underlines in his discussion of childhood here (1999, pp.7-8). To reiterate, this is not to say all "manceps" are permissible, or just. It is right to resist the strangehold of an authoritarian, whether Pharaoh or plantation owner. A particularly unjust "manceps" would be the domination of a fable of development, of which Lyotard here recounts one among the similar versions in a few of his later writings (1999, pp.4-5). However, if one must be in a relation of "manceps" to something the question becomes which "manceps" it should be. Is it a just "manceps" or an unjust one? How precisely are you obligated to it? To clarify the stakes of this, and the "manceps" that Lyotard advocates for in "Mainmise", we will briefly consider an entirely different account of the Enlightenment from Kant's, one derived from Julie E. Cooper's *Secular Powers* (2013) and that emphasises modesty and humility instead of self-mastery.

While the modern mind bristles at being in a state of "manceps", Cooper clarifies in *Secular Powers* that there is a second strain within modernity itself, and even the Enlightenment, that rejects any simple binary between power and vulnerability, between self-deification and existing in a state of simple subjection to another. Although substituting "empowerment" for "emancipation" she follows a line of reasoning consonant with Lyotard's in 'Mainmise', but more recognisable in its terminology: "the premise that modesty and humility are sources of empowerment does not require one to endorse every exercise of power that these virtues facilitate" (2013, p.140).

In Cooper's counter-reading, the Enlightenment was a process where reasoners began to recognise their limits, their finitude not their potential for infinite mastery. This tension is, for

Lyotard, encapsulated in his idiosyncratic reading of Kant's Critical Philosophy and its careful separation of the faculties, while for Cooper it is Spinoza, Rousseau and their precursor Hobbes that embody the same tendency. What in Cooper is the empowering side of learning to abide with, and utilise the affordances of, modesty and humility is in Lyotard the disruptive potential of a childhood whose "manceps" is the inarticulate aspects of experience, the injustices and aesthetic ideas that it is our duty to witness (1999, p.8).

What in Cooper permits scientific progress, in Lyotard enables the "apparitional" powers of art: "the uncertain and slow resource … immemorial infancy lends to the (art)work, to the (art)work as expression of the desire for the *act* of bearing witness" ("The Grip", *Political Writings,* 1993, p.152). This "immemorial infancy … demands indeterminate and infinite anamnesis" (1993, p.152). The words "indeterminate" and "infinite" point us towards one potential criteria Lyotard provides for judging the true manceps from the unjust: temporality.

In "Mainmise" the figures of Paul and Augustine come to stand for the emergence of modern ways of conceptualising time's passing (1999, p.3, 6). This chronology is, according to Lyotard, coupled with an emancipatory eschatology: "the promised emancipation is what orders time as the course of a history or, at least, according to a historicity" (1999, p.10). Now, recent developments in, for instance, the study of the Seleucid Empire would put paid to any crude empirical notion that linear time is an artifact of the common era, and Lyotard should not be thought of as claiming Paul and Augustine invented modern time in the same way Thomas Rawlinson invented the modern kilt.[59] Rather their writings both contributed to, and were more intense expressions of, a way of narrating the passing of days from what had gone before: namely, with constant reference to an end (1999, p.11).

Here teleology and theology share more than their letters. As Lyotard sees it in "Mainmise", the forms of emancipation associated with Christian thought are bound to a eschatological historicity. This permeates even the interior emphasis we noted earlier in Paul's evocations of faith, and that seemed to offer a way out of the excessive meta-narrative of Christendom

[59] See Paul J. Kosmin's *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire* (2018) for an account of the transition of the Seleucid Empire to a linear calender.

coming to cover the earth (Kubsch, 2008). That said, Jewish thought has its own Messianic theories, as well as its own calendar, so is Lyotard right to exempt it from this apocalyptic framing? Furthermore, Lyotard's later mention of Jacob Taubes in *The Hyphen* indicates (1999, p.83) he was not unaware of — the roots if not branches — of what is now known as the "New Perspective on Paul".[60] How does he reckon with Paul's own Jewishness in positioning him so sharply in contrast to his context?

First, we need a more precise sense of what this apparent temporal progress is. In "Left / Right" (2020), Lyotard's contemporary, and fellow philosopher of the hyphen, lays out a useful schema. Based upon a French revolutionary, rather than religiously inflected, framework it still has much to say to these issues in antiquity. Nancy in fact notes that:

> The idea of emancipation has the advantage of foregrounding the need to break out of a state of tutelage or dependence (in Rome this was a legal act by which a master could take slaves out of servitude and set them free). (2020, p.9)

Not all emancipations are equal in Nancy's essay. For the right, it is necessary to maintain a dependency on givens, traditions, and precedent; imagined balances of nature with natural justice (2020, p.10). At the same time, this set of givens sits uneasily against an:

> … incessant exaltation of emancipation … in the limitless ways found by the conjunction of technology and capitalism to increase the yield of resources, including what we call "human" resources. (2020, p.10)

This is the "emancipation, not of human beings but of the mechanisms of indefinite production", a danger implied and then defied in "the opening of another history that does not proceed from a given seed and has no necessary fruit, one that delivers the world—cosmos, nature, forces and forms—entirely over to the responsibility of the human as an indeterminate and indefinite being"

[60] For a summary of debates about the Hebraic and Christological inheritances or otherwise of Paul see, respectively, chapter 9 and 10 in Gupta and McKnight *The State of New Testament Studies* (2019). For an indication that Lyotard did at least some of the contextual groundwork required when reading Paul, see his invocation of the dubious authorship of the Epistles to the Hebrews in "On a Hyphen" if not "Mainmise" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.17).

(2020, p.12), the emancipation he associates with the left.

The right then remains caught between maintaining what is past and unleashing one dull future, that of constantly increasing production. The left lacks the right's referent in precedent and must face head on the openness of a continually revisable humanity which has no "given seed … no necessary fruit" (2020, p.12). And yet the left, in Nancy's schema, still has a hand above it, that of "responsibility". Relating this back to the forms of temporality that Pauline faith implies is tricky. If it is a "promised emancipation" that "orders time as the course of a history", we would seem to be more in the realms of the right; the promise of a sure and certain given.

N.T. Wright's biographical work on Paul presents a vulnerable figure, quite different from the one-dimensional ideologue he is sometimes reduced to, while at the same time showing how his zeal emerges from that very uncertainty (*Paul: A Biography*, 2018). It is, of course, not unheard of for preachers to have their doubts, nor for them to use these doubts as an intensifying impetus. Many commentators have, also emphasised both how imminent and important Paul held the second coming to, the priority he placed on an apocalyptic imaginary.[61] Taken together, Paul can appear as figure who, while certainly not "of the right" (I cannot underline enough that I am not casting this anachronism upon him) grounds his apocalyptic teleology in a sure and certain origin; the promise of the Christ-event. We can concede that his zeal and triumphant tone may hide all too human failings, while noting that he buries them so well they are practically invisible; they certainly do not dominate his theology. Even if, as is widely thought, the historical figure is not the hand behind every last letter, the shared framework of the writings is that of a surety. It seems likely that Lyotard's response would be similar to the "New Perspective" that emphasises the Jewish aspects of Paul. While biographical detail can unsettle simple readings, it does not overdetermine the figure we encounter now.[62] Especially since Paul exists for us more as a pile of phrases upon which others have commented; as a rigid, revisable

[61] Contested of course, as all interpretations of Paul are, but put forth clearly in Martinus C. de Boer's *Paul, Theologian of God's Apocalypse: Essays on Paul and Apocalyptic* (2020).
[62] As *Jesus and the Forces of Death* by Matthew Thiessen has shown, this "New Perspective" may be a better fit for the figure of Jesus himself, as portrayed in those post-Pauline gospels, given his antinomian following of Jewish purity laws.

designator in fact.[63]

Augustine's uncertainties, failings, sins and strayings did not need careful excavation by contemporary scholars; he wrote his own unsparing biography. His account in *The Confessions* (1999) offers for Lyotard and us a second strand within Christian thought we would do well to heed. On the one hand, it would emphasise interminable grace over faith (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.2), "pardon" or "forgiveness" over revelation.[64] On the other, the uncertainty and attentiveness to the figure of the child, that is the true scandal / stumbling block [skandalon] of Jesus' teaching ("the arrow that [hits] its target", 1999, p.7).[65] As Derrida has noted ("Lyotard and us", 2010) the long years Lyotard spent in Algeria, including involvement in its bitter political struggles, only partly explains his fascination with Augustine. It is Augustine's uncertainty, his lack of a sure and certain basis for his obligations that makes him compelling. Whether translated as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (*King James Version*, Hebrews 11:1) or as "the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists" (*International Standard Version*, Hebrews 11:1) the treatment of faith by Paul is quite different to this.

Faith conditions an act of emancipation such that you proceed from something sure, certain and potentially unseen. This sure and certain basis is not an argument, it is a history that *does* proceed from a given seed. There is a temporal paradox here. The seed is priori and revealed from the start: the Christ-event of the incarnation in Paul (1999, p.22). And yet, to paraphrase our earlier quote from "Mainmise" an eventual emancipation is promised in the same gesture, a late fruit that "orders time as the course of a history or, at least, according to a historicity' (1999, p.10). An emancipating act which will have occurred at some time in the future (to use the future perfect tense), is asserted as certain and based on something that already took place. A teleology essentially, but very different from Kant's careful and regulative use of the term

[63] As well as assisting us in understand how we engage with figures like Paul and Augustine, there seems to be some relevance of rigid designators to what is now called the synoptic problem and which Augustine interrogated under the heading of "The Harmony of the Gospels".
[64] For a detailed sense of what this entails for differing Jewish and Christian commitments and relations see Paula Fredreksen's *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (2011).
[65] Here, we would have to begin by comparing the congruence or otherwise of the different Gospels as regards this elevation of the child-figure. We would also do well to heed the earlier chronological dating of the Pauline epistles.

(*Critique of Judgement*, 2007, p.217). Here, the warrant for the teleology, that which brings it about, is a revelation which cannot be questioned, only assented to.

Lyotard dissects the "dialectical trait" this betrays in Paul, and which separates for Lyotard this strain of the Christian idiom from the Jewish, elaborating from similar arguments, in "On a Hyphen" as well (1999, pp.19-22). Within a few pages, he dismantles any basis for a super-seccessionist framing of Jewish and Christian history, and he indicates the latent dialectics in other apparently demure ways of phrasing that passage. It requires reading in full, but the undergirding structure can be seen in the following:

> First, the flesh is cursed and abandoned because it sins, and it recognizes it sins only in the presence of the law … Next … a curse is attached to the law because of its intrinsic relation to the abjection of the flesh … The conclusion of the argument is that the law … can never be confirmed by works, since to do so one would have to fulfil the precepts in their entirety, something the flesh can never do. (1999, p.19-20)

By performing this cruel revision of the designators "Jew" and "Israel", Lyotard catches Paul positioning them as the "abject" remainder to be sublated that his dialectical gambit presumes:

> Paul [on Jewish purity rituals and law] adopts a cautious but firm strategy … This cautiousness is not merely strategic … It rejects Israel only to take its place by fulfilling its truth … The salient feature … is once again part of a dialectic … The abjection of Israel is sublatable … Paul here reinscribes and aggravates the trait of disunion to the point of contradicting himself … The world enters into the mystical circulation thanks to the abjection of the Jews … What does a Jew say of this dialectic? [They] are terrified I imagine (1999, p.20-2)

This universalism, and its dialectics of abject, sublation and overcoming, is what permits the elision of particular difference; the infamous "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Galatians 3:28) emptying out of the subject associated with the figure of Paul. This aspect, universalism as a form of indifference, was even noted approvingly by the philosopher,

and Secretary of the Board of Trade and Plantations, John Locke (*A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*, 1987, pp.117-8, 371-2, 421-2).[66] To return to Lyotard's three forms of emancipation, this indifferent and empty universal is hardly that different from being solely under the grip of another, as the source for the "manceps" cannot even be questioned or reflected upon. As Lyotard puts it "Paul bases his ruse … upon an impenetrable, divine reckoning, which he solemnly reveals to the Romans to be a 'mystery'" (1999, p.22). And this structure, revelation as what allows for universalism, is not solely Pauline. One can hear its marching drum elsewhere in the New Testament. As Luke puts it "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Luke 11:23). Enmity here, the forming of an us-them distinction, would for Lyotard be a particular form of the universal, one that recognises difference only as an abject-other to be overcome.

If this would appear to present Augustine as modern, and Paul as placed firmly within antiquity, we can caution that Lyotard sees the Christian philosophy of Paul as an instigator of modernity (*The Differend*, p.155). It should be said this is modernity as a way of ordering time, not as a unit of chronological measurement. There is no need to rewrite Lenny Bruce's Jewish and Goyish routine, placing modernity and metaphysics alongside Instant potatoes as "scary Goyish". We may have reason though to return to Bruce's statement that "Ray Charles is very Jewish. Al Jolson, Goyish".

Similarly, the emancipatory schema of Marx, which we will now develop a little, is considered by Lyotard to be both conceptually modern and Pauline in structure.[67] Lyotard was no novice when it came to close readings of Marx's works. Though he mentions it rarely, many of his Algerian evenings were spent discussing those theories, and he put them into practice both at factory gates and behind the typewriter for the journal *Socialisme Ou Barbarie* (Bamford, *Critical Lives)*. I am also all-too aware that there are nuances to both the schema of emancipation in Marx, and the one we outlined about Paul, but they will nonetheless stand as cautionary examples. Accepting that there are readings that refuse this founding decision, does not contest that

[66] Locke's hyper-individualism and "blank slate" theories of knowledge stand in stark opposition to what has been outlined here. See Balibar, *Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness* (2013).
[67] The position of Ward Blanton's *A Materialism for the Masses: Saint Paul and the Philosophy of Undying Life* (2014) would seem to support this characterisation of Lyotard's.

reading's hegemony in Marxist discourse.[68] What in Paul was the revelation of the Christ-event is in Marx the revelatory light that emanates from the hidden abode of production. The historical subjectivity of the proletariat, along with the many teleologies with which Marx embrodiers their red banner, is this sure and certain revelation: history's riddle solved.[69] This question of Marx-derived teleologies is not a new position for Lyotard. It is stated polemically in his *Libidinal Economy:*

> … the proletariat is Christ, and his real suffering is the price of his redemption … his redemption requires a total suffering, therefore a total wrong … Christ the proletariat, Marx his witness-martyr? (1993, p.100)

More philosophically, we could criticise Marx for a paradox. He has to presuppose the existence of a proletariat and the labour theory of value as the animating basis for his argument which proves the existence of a proletariat and that of labour power. In this he remained all too Hegelian.

Lyotard wrote in his earliest book, his introduction to *Phenomenology* that "In order to understand history (and there is no greater task for philosophy) we must therefore escape this impasse of equally total freedom and necessity" (1991, p.131). Escape Hegel, in short. The contention after this has to be "not that history has a meaning — unique, necessary, and thus inevitable … but that history has some meaning" (1991, p.131). In Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*, we can see the "unique, necessary" revelation of the Christ-event placed in contrast to the uncertain and resistant figure of "Kant and the Mosaic Law" (1948, p.205-223). Hegel sees, in both the prohibition on representing the absolute and the interminability of cosmopolitan politics that this pairing represents, an early threat to his system building.

As Balibar has noted, the third form of emancipation that Lyotard seeks, a post-enlightenment

[68] Accepting also that for every single issue of the journal *Endnotes* (see the especially acute analyses of *Unity in Separation*, 2015) and precise rethinker of Marx's problems (see Balibar's *Masses, Classes, Ideas,* 1993) there are ten times as many preachers of the "project of universal emancipation".
[69] The tendency of the rate of profit to fall, production of a surplus population, the changing ratio of fixed to variable capital being a representative sample of said teleologies.

reflection on rules, is a rethinking of Hegel without a single telos of absolute spirit, and with a "multiplicity of enunciations" (*On Universals*, 2020, p. 28) instead. Or as the earlier Lyotard puts it "This collective meaning is the result of the meanings projected by historical subjectivities at the heart of their coexistence … the very existence of historical subjects in their 'world'' (*Phenomenology*, 1991, p.130). The Lyotard of *The Hyphen*, of the eighties and nineties, will sand away the remainders of the absolute, teleology and metaphysics that still adhere to these sentences. A process which for some readers, though not this one, counter-intuitively begins with a heretical Marxian materialism. In their place he will gesture at a multiplicity of idioms, and their troubled interpenetrations; their differends.

We agree with a great deal of Balibar's contentions, although we will now take a particular parting from his elliptical evocations of emancipation, and the community without community (2020, p.17-8) and similar ideas elsewhere of *On Universals*. He concedes that for him "emancipation" is less a claim than "an ideal, or perhaps a gamble (*On Universals*, 2020, p.18). Being concerned as we are, that a "supersessionist" framing, that precursor to the parting, may remain latent in that metaphor of emancipation and remain not overcome due to the inherently Pauline nature of our conception, we may seek another language for this third form of emancipation. Within the Christian-idiom, we could call it the "Quarrel of the Universals"[70]. In a Marxist one beyond Marx, it marks what the political theorist Neil Gray has called the "obscured processes of political decomposition" which he urges should not lead to despair but instead "create the need for new inquiries, understandings and organisation that require perpetual reformulation and mobilisation *from a base of dis-homogeneity* … the real question today [which] cannot be shirked" (2018).[71]

While it would be an error to say that this third form of emancipation, the passage from one "manceps" to another, the setting of a new law, is somehow "Jewish not Christian", there are traces of this in Lyotard's treatment. We can admittedly see aspects of the first form of emancipation that Lyotard rejects in the "parting of the ways" narrative. He writes "One

[70] See Alain de Libera's *La Querelle des Universaux* (2014).
[71] Gray's spatial composition and territorial inquiry being two exemplary ways to begin thinking this third form of emancipation, what we will soon call "Exodus". Each a pair of particular with universal, spatial as particular with composition as contested universal.

emancipates oneself from the other by exteriorising the other, and then clamping a hand down upon them" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.4) a sentence which would work as an indictment of a crude super-sessionist version of the "parting". Given his critical stance to those false emancipations, Lyotard appears to propose Exodus as an alternative way of phrasing this third form (1999, p.2). This would be a recognition of the strange temporality we find in the Torah and Talmud, as compared to the admonishments for past actions told as prohibitions on the future, and prophecy for the future told as re-figurings of the past in some Pauline Epistles (Hebrews 11:1). Exodus would be the way, within the Jewish-idiom, to represent this general framing, that the only forms of obligation we should assent to depend neither of givens, nor precedent nor the force of unseen revelation, but on the difficult and uncertain passage through the desert of reflection to a new set of obligations. An emancipation from narratives of emancipation.

2.5 Mancipations, Assignations

If we are capable of this Exodus, of giving ourselves obligations and binding ourselves to rules, what does this mean for our account of designations? Before our discussion of Emancipation and Exodus, we were concerned that there was no mechanism for distinguishing between just designations and unjust ones. It seemed as if either any and every one could call themselves a "Jew", or that the term could only be defined only in reference to its opposite. So how could these processes of designation and assignation occur within a framework of justice? This can be best considered, like many matters, by returning to Frantz Fanon.

While a recognised political thinker, Fanon remains an under-appreciated philosophical one. This is despite recent efforts at remediation.[72] He can be seen in this new light as a node through which several huge currents in twentieth century philosophy passed. These would include

[72] An exemplary instance of which was the "Fanon and Philosophy" conference run by the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University, 20 November 2015.

Existentialism, Phenomenology, an emerging Structuralism, the increasingly scientific practices of psychoanalysis and even Surrealism.[73] In this he has some similarities to Lyotard, who shares those influences. However, his more explicit account of how designation functions in our everyday experience makes him better than Lyotard for our purpose here, especially as this is the point where we will begin adding to Lyotard's work, as well as trying to convey it. Fanon's in-depth account in terms of the self-designation "Black" bolsters ours about the designation "Jew". While clearly non-equivalent, there are parallels-with-qualification here that have been recognised by writers from Albert Memmi to Zora Neale Hurston.[74] We can begin to encounter these intricacies, in Fanon and for us, by comparing a few powerful scenes from *Black Skin, White Masks*.[75]

In a famous passage discussing light and his relation to the earth, Fanon reaches a poetic register while self-designating as "Black". He says "Je suis Noir [I am Black]" (1971, p.36) though the capitalisation of "Noir" is not maintained in the current English translation, and then "If I am Black it is not due to a curse" (1971, p.36). In both instances this is a positive self-designation, what I would like to now call an assignation. He follows this with "je réalise une fusion totale avec le monde, une compréhension sympathique de la terre" ["I achieve a total fusion with the world, a sympathetic understanding of the earth"] (1971, p.36) which if nothing else underlines the level of affect and joy present here; all this from the initial assignation "I am Black".

In the chromatically inverse scene, set amid snowdrifts, a child indirectly slurs at Fanon who hears, or at least transcribes, the child's words as "Maman, regarde le nègre, j'ai peur" ['Mum, look at the negro. I'm frightened"] (Peau Noire, p.90). "Peau" and "peur" are here are in a precise interplay, it is the locus of phenomenological data, Fanon's epidermal colouration ("Peau"), that the child seems to fear ("peur"). Note also the lack of capitalisation in "le nègre". Fanon designates-himself, what we are now called "assignates" as "Noir" [Black] and is

[73] The role the idiom of Surrealism played in the formation of the Negritude movement, under the pen of the pivotal figure Suzanne Césaire, is also only beginning to become more widely known (*The Great Camouflage,* 2012*)*.
[74] Memmi's essay "Negritude and Judeity" formed much of my thinking here, as did Hurston's novel *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1984).

[75] I would like to use the original French for this, as there are some useful indicators in the capitalisations that were erased in translation.

called, or designated by another, “le negre” [a / the negro].

At first, this distinction between “being-called” and “calling-oneself” could seem a sufficient ethical guarantee when it comes to designation. Fanon can call himself “Black”, but others cannot undertake the same linguistic act, certainly without consulting the person being designated. To some extent, this is our first-order sense of the ethics of assignation and designation. If I call myself a category and permit you to echo that assignation in a designation then your act is just. In a Lyotard-like way, we could say that if the addressor and addressee are the same then an assignation is just, if the addressor and addressee are not the same — if two or more phrase-users are present — then the justness depends upon the relation between those present. The reason the speech of the child is a slur would then depend not its content, but on its lack of an ethical relation of approval between Fanon and the child.

Elsewhere however, when heavily affected by despair, Fanon writes “Plus violente retentit ma clameur : je suis un nègre, je suis un nègre, je suis un nègre...” [More and more violently my clamor resounds: I am a negro, I am a negro, I am a negro ...”] (1971, p.112). Here Fanon is using the same root word, but it as if from within his own mouth the words of his persecutors, the child and others who only see him as the designation “negro / black”. Now, what is it that separates this use from the picture we had until now? While initially it may have seemed knowing the source, and if a relation of agreement obtained between those sources, was sufficient to distinguish between a hurtful, unjust designation as black and a just one as “Black”, it appears here to be insufficient. Fanon is reiterating the slur-like designation within his own psyche. If not the relation between the particulars, between Fanon and the child, could it be that a third presence is here. A trait that unites the two; or divides them by the depth of their differend?

A clue to our route out of this lies in what Aimé Césaire has called the “violent affirmation in the words Negre and Negritude” (*Resolutely Black,* 2019, p.29). In Césaire’s statement we glimpse the possibility of slurs turned on their speakers. After all, although we now associate it with the literary and theoretical movement, initially Negritude came from a Francophone slur. Similarly, several self-designations from within Jewish life began the same way. The formation of

"Negritude" is, I would contend, a paradigm of the creation of an "idiom".[76] In forging this collective product, a possibility was produced for assignations, what Césaire terms "violent affirmation" of the form "Je suis Noir [I am Black]" that do not leave their speakers in the position of an isolated individual, but bind them in an intricate process of obligation to a larger, shared "idiom", to a "third thing".[77] Rather than the question of justice existing solely in the relation between the individuals caught up in a situation where designation and assignation occurs, it is secondarily present in relations of obligation between those speakers and the idioms their designations and assignations call out to. More accurately, it consists in that relation. The unjustness of the child's relation to Fanon is replicated in the unjustness of the child's designation in relation to the idiom evoked. An obligation of the idiom now known as that of "Blackness" could be that it should not be a designation made out of fear or for violent reasons, the idiom having been revised from its original content as a slur. Césaire's subsequent caution that "There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in he particular, or dilution in the 'universal'" (2019, p.33) would seem to underline why this approach is needed. One that would combine obligation with revisability. This aligns our discussion here of the enabling and group-binding aspects of ethical designations, with our earlier consideration of the dangers of universal subjects or the Jew-as-antiposition in Sartre. Neither segregated away from their associated idioms, nor empty and revisable without responsibility, there is an ethical relation of obligation between acts of designation and the idioms they evoke.

This presentation could be enhanced greatly both by further refinement of its internal mechanism, and by continuing its interfacing with other set-ups. Emily Lee's edited collection *Race as Phenomena: Between Phenomenology and Philosophy of Race* would deepen its relation to questions of racialisation, and the designations and assignations considered could be broadened by a reading of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Staring: How We Look* (2009), with its precise thinking through of the implications of "normality", "abnormality", "disability" and "ability" as phenomenologically encountered, especially in public space. Still, playing only the

[76] Later, I will lay out some distinctions between different "idioms". Within that coming schema, Negritude could be thought of (roughly, given the experimental nature of the new terminology) as an "idiom-image" within the "idiom-form" of Blackness.
[77] I intend to echo here our opening discussion of the difference between the English "hyphen" and French "trait d'union".

cards in the pack, it is undeniable that as well as the more complicated picture above there is a tendency for "being-called" a designation, as opposed to electing to affirm that term as assignation, to have entirely different effects; political as well as linguistic. Thus, the more complicated account provided should not be seen as contradicting more common-sense notions that much of the ethical charge of our designations derives from their sources, but as enhancing it.

As such, I would hazard that Lyotard's account of designation, alongside the wider analytical one, would benefit from a expanded account of "rigid assignators", that would incorporate the act itself, and the political stakes involved, directly into the concept. To reiterate, designation is when other language users name a particular phraser as a given term, assignation is when a language user names themselves as such. Or, to erode the anthropological drift that Lyotard would have detected in the term "language-user", designation is when the addressor and addressee of the given phrase are not the same, assignations is when they are. This offers a clue to the likely ethical situation abroad in the act, but the core resides in the relation of designations to idioms. Assignations often increase those they speak of and designations, if they lack a relation of ethical obligation to idioms, diminish. Designations can be brutal or benign. It all depends on how they stand as regards the "third thing" of idioms, and to our "modes of linking" (Peregrinations, 1988, p.27) with them.

With this in mind, we can start to specify what is it about being hailed this way that can cause such hurt, such strong negative affects. By self-assigning as a "Jew" you declare an obligation to, and interest in, the "Jewish-Idiom", you bind yourself as an utterer to larger idioms. This provides an underlying unity to several different terms, both denominations and cultural or historical terms ("Judean Jews", "Upper East Side") through their overlapping obligations to a shared idiom. We would see divergence with this of course, the assignation of "Haredi Jew" or "Upper East Side" implying different configurations of obligation, as well as a minimal shared set. In a basic sense, assignations enhance your inflection between the particular and general. While clearly not true that all designations diminish, as they can and often do follow with care the self-assignations of others and the obligations of idiom, but this diminishing is true of slurs.

In this light, slurs seem to be where the term that otherwise offers, or previously offered, a transit from individual to idiom, is used instead as if were a collective "proper name", or even "general term". In the former case it is akin to our example of Moses, by which I mean that designating someone without reference to their assignations collapses them into a stereotype/archetype that they have no hold on. In the latter it is as brutal as treating their complicated set of relations to phrases and idioms as if they were a mere category, close to the way we use words like "green" or "cold". In all this the binding to idioms is entirely absent. This would not rule out rare cases where particular proper names, if they exist in relation to idioms, have an enhancing rather than diminishing aspect, as when collective names are taken on in a period of resistance to tyranny. Alongside its capacity to offer a way to begin speaking of what is unjust or just in our scenes from *Black Skin, White Masks*, we can with this account capture some of the sense of what Fanon called sociogeny (the formation of categorisations within continually revisable historical processes). The fact that this "designations and idioms" account is flexible enough to include these possibilities, is another reason to recommend its further elaboration.

In case this account is beginning to sound too mechanical, a language of obligation that would exclude that of emotion, it would be worth adding another nuance to Lyotard's account of designation. As Ashley Woodward has demonstrated, words for Lyotard are both signifying and charged with affect, and this is as true of designators as anything else. Lyotard tries to elucidate these dynamics with his term "tensor-sign". Woodward gives us the following definition:

> The tensor is distinguished from the semiotic sign, but is not another kind of sign, set up in opposition: it is an interpretation of all signs from a different perspective, one which includes the semiotic but also adds 'a dimension of force which escapes the logic of the signifier … In Lyotard's later work some similar themes are taken up through a treatment of the proper name as a rigid designator, and the feeling of the sublime is called a tensor sign. ("Tensor" in *The Lyotard Dictionary*, 2011, p.222-4)

Thus, when the relation of designations to their idioms is unjust, we can consider the situation not as a mere change in technical status but a profound ratcheting of a tensor sign. This would

allow for some of the heavy affects we heard in Fanon's prose, without isolating those affects from the ethical relation of obligation outlined so far. Rather it is the breaking of that ethical relation that is experienced as a torsion upon the tensor sign and which produces strong affects in the figure designated. The invocation of the sublime in Woodward's definition points us to something we will considered in chapter four, that the betrayal of existing obligations is often necessary for the creation of new idioms.[78]

We can gain an additional grasp here by inserting two new terms: essentialism and inessentialism. Let us call essentialism when the contents of a designator are entirely fixed, and inessentialism when the contents are entirely revisable. In the former case, we would place bare biological definitions of Jewishness when severed from a historical and covenantal community, in the latter the statement that anyone who says they are a Jew is a Jew.[79] This relation of obligation allows us to preserve the right level of openness and non-determination of the later (to permit of conversion which would be rethought of as entering into a new relation of obligation, an Exodus, to the Jewish-idiom) while avoiding the overdetermination without revisability of the former. The strange status of the suppôt, that indistinct substance that supports our phrasemaking, here goes from a weakness to a strength.

Startling in its initial presentation, I would argue many aspects of the suppôt can be brought into line with our current scientific understandings of biology and personality and serve as a useful counter to both essentialism and what we are calling inessentialism. This latter pair, stated again, is another way to describe the hazards we have tried to stay aware of between abstraction and over particularisation of the designator "Jew". Essentialism would collapse any distance between the biological and historical, resulting in a racist particularisation of who is and is not Jewish. This essentialism would leave us incapable of comprehending the history of world Jewry and Judaisms, the actuality of conversion and of Jewishness as a porous cultural

[78] As an aside, it is less often considered that tensors can de-intensify as well as intensify, and therefore along with the signifying content we have be unpacking from the hyphen, we could see it as a tensor sign, that de-potentiates the sublime space behind it, hiding "the abyss".
[79] It should be noted that accounts of Jewishness as linked to the maternal would not be essentialist by this measure, as they exist in relation to a context of community meaning formation across a diverse grouping of peoples, whereas one that would malignly mobilise a crude form of genetics would be.

presence. Inessentialism is the mirror-problem, of saying that anyone at all is Jewish, it's all a matter of self-ascription, and entirely unrelated to history and the work of memory. This false fork is resolved by the binding of designations to idioms.

As Naomi Zack in *Philosophy of Science and Race* (2002) underlines, the settled consensus for several decades has been that there is zero biological basis for our constructs of race (2002, p.59-72). Instead of having this material substrate, whether purportedly epidermal or genetic, race is a conceptual construct. Like many conceptual constructs, this immateriality does not prevent it from exerting brutal, material force on racialised bodies and populations.[80] These processes were part of the formation of modern subjectivity and modern nation-states, and persist in their regimes of security, coloniality and policing.[81] Suffering cannot be compared as if it were a known quantity, but Jewish populations have faced these forms of violence, exclusion and death to an unbearable degree, and still feel its effects. The persecution of Christians in antiquity has painful, present echoes in some parts of the world. The misery all this has brought about on bodies, whether read as "Black" or "Jewish", can obscure the fact we began with; there is no biological basis for our constructs of race. Instead Zack argues, and this is reiterated several times in *Race as Phenomena* and *Staring: How We Look*, that what causes people often to make designations of others — whether just or unjust — is nothing more than fleeting perceptual and phenomenological data that our discourses cause us to racialise (2002, p.114).

So, while the suppôt could seem empty and arid, its desertification is what allows fecundity to flourish; resisting the imprint of a predetermined, non-revisable "identity".[82] The fruits of personality, the unending series of genres and ways of speaking that pass through us, the affects of humour, joy, arousal, attachment all can pass through with this suppôt as support. This account would allow for the changes in personality, sex/gender and assignation which complicate many conceptions of personal identity. The suppôt remains the same while the phrases and designations passing through and over it — and the way those designations bind that

[80] For a full account of this see Saidiya Hartmann's *Scenes of Subjection* (1997).
[81] A pair of lecture-series that Foucault gave in the seventies, «*Il Faut Défendre La Société*» (1997) and *Sécurité, Territoire, Population* (2004) lay this history out at length. *Dark Matters: On The Surveillance of Blackness* (Browne, 2015) and *Badges Without Borders* (Schrader, 2019) bring it into our present.
[82] As Lyotard puts it "Turning my culture into a desert made me fecund" (2020, p61).

suppôt to idioms — change and modulate with the dual processes of reiteration and experimentation. And our obligation to idioms stands to prohibit careless appropriations — whether of "Black", "Jewish" or other identities — and permit the immense commitment we see within many processes of "identity" transition.[83] It offers apertures also on the perils of those more mixed affects of romanticism and nostalgia that, as Barbara Cassin has shown (*Nostalgia*, 2016), can end up binding particular personalities to exclusionary national narratives, and reasserting essentialisms. With their roots in givens, and the seeming surety of tradition, these "manceps" would seem to fit our definition of the right we drew from Nancy ("Left / Right", 2020), and should raise our suspicions.[84]

On the other hand, if our account did not include the "anchor" of idioms, the rich series of phrases that passes through the individual suppôt could seem to slip into a sort of amnesia. The plasticity of phrasing and experimentation becoming a babble of disconnected moments. It is Lyotard's concept of anamnesis that can counter this amnesia, and the related risk of losing the deep stores of historical memory along with the nightmares that haunt our designations. Anamnesis, the recollection of previous strong affects and experiences, is a crucial concept for Lyotard, and one way I believe he tries to speak to this capacity for contact with our idioms. In light of our "designations with idioms" account then, we could see anamnesis — described by Yerushalmi within the Jewish-idiom as Zakhor [recollection/care] — as another name for the relation of the designated suppôt to its idioms. In this we can begin to bind the critical reflection of "Exodus" (the desert) with the endless recollection of old "manceps" (the thinking of the law) to allow for the construction of the new. All this occurring within the designating and assignating processes we have traced here.

The distinction I have tried to introduce between designations and assignations would also make legible the difference between the designating standpoint of a politically dominant entity and that of those that assign themselves: in the case of the Jewish and Christian — and the intermingling of the two — in antiquity the designating standpoint of a Roman state. I use the

[83] For an account of which see Preciado's *Un Appartment Sur Uranus* (2020).
[84] I attempt to give a fuller account of why this is in Chapter four when I offer some images for registering our obligation to preserving the capacity for reflection; the ability to transition between various relations of obligation to idioms.

term politically dominant entity to emphasis the different scales possible: an individual, an institution, a liberal nation-state, a tyrannical regime. One can see how designations made upon populations can enable violence, sorting and exclusion. A designation that is intended to enable these violent processes would exists in an unjust relation to the idioms it evokes, whereas an individual assignation may be just. This would give us a different way of thinking exclusion and inclusion, though as Étienne Balibar notes:

> Sexism is a mode of domination that tends to the inclusion (and even to the domestic confinement) of its victims, whereas racism resists this inclusion and tends to the exclusion, segregation and elimination of its victims (*On Universals,* 2020, p.8).

It may also offer a way to distinguish the potency for oppressed populations of identifying with particular terms — as Black, as Jews or Zealots — from the actions of a dominating entity that excludes them on that basis. Distinguished precisely by the obligation or non-obligation it places those making it regarding our immense store of idioms. Imagining what this enables us to think on a long scale is hazardous, but is akin to the persistence of the enabling and rich idiom of "blackness" in a future world where skin colour means no more than eye colour.

As well as indicating some of the strengths of this "designation and idiom" account of how we can reckon with ethical questions, this initial application to the case of race can returns us to some of the complexities that we were seeking to unpack in the designation of particulars as "Jews" or "Christians". Treated sometimes as a "race", or as a culture or within the Christian framing of religion, and often caught up as Daniel Boyarin has shown in related significations of sex/gender (*Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, 1997) the designation of "Jew" is in our account bound to a more collective and continually revisable complex of further idioms which does not prohibit the overlap (intersecting) of those idioms.

We have then for instance "African-Jewish" idioms, "Chinese-Jewish", as well as those such as "Femme-Jewish" or "Butch-Jewish" to only take two terms from the arresting and mellifluous language of queer identifications. For all its oddity, such risky shifts of terminology may be one

of the only ways to help end the situation where:

> In western civilization the Jew is always measured on scales which do not fit him ... And by taking the words of our < language > as the only possible standards we constantly fail to do them justice (Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 1980, p.16e).[85]

Rather than seeing the account above as a new or definitive schema for discussing identity, I would like to think of it as a new model to add to those we have. It does not settle issues but could open us to new ways of thinking these disjunctions, what Lyotard calls "reflective judgement" for responding "to a case without criteria … an event to which an answer, a mode of linking will eventually have to be found" (*Peregrinations*, 1988, p.27). In this unsettling, it can lend light as well on that debate with which we began, the "parting of the ways".

2.6 Fiscus, Designator[86]

Designation tends to be thought of as linguistic, as a speech act. As we have argued designation can also be seen as a physical gesture; the laying on of hands that "Mainmise" analyses. In *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (2010) Marius Heemstra tries to intervene in the debate around the "parting" by using an even more immaterial designator, that of a tax. While as early as 6 CE a general tax was applied to the population of Judea by its Roman administrators, the emergence of a specifically "Jewish" tax took several more years. While careful to acknowledge Alpers' claim that an earlier decree in 44 CE may have had a similar effect (*The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways*, 2010, p.12), Heemstra nonetheless

[85] Note, the surrounding symbols "<" and ">" used here are present in the original text to signify the insurmountable difficulty of transcribing Wittgenstein's handwriting in the case of this one word with any certainty.

[86] "Its proper field, the environment it requires in order to try to establish itself, is the pseudarchaic" (Lyotard, "Fiscourse, Digure" in *Discourse, Figure,* 2011, p.328).

believes that the Fiscus (the word merely means tax) of the decade beginning 70 CE — and more specifically its harsh and punitive enactment during the period known as "Domitian's Terror" between 85-93 CE (2010, p.24-66) — was more definitive, and its historical veracity better grounded in the sources that survive (2010, p.12). While Heemstra acknowledges that some sort of possible distinction between "Jews" and "Christians" was underway before that period (2010, p.1-6), 85-93 CE supercharges this until-then sluggish separation. Coinciding with the Gospel of John, he sees 96 CE as marking a "final break" (2010, p.201). This is due, perhaps counter-intuitively, to the interaction between the ongoing fiscus, which had established a specifically Jewish population, with the change of status of Christianity within the Empire; a shift from a general suspicion of what was seen as a Jewish cult, to its status as "superstitio illicita" (2010, p.202). This led to a situation where, to Roman observers at least, there was a Jewish population both legible as such and considered part of a "religio licita" and a Christian one practising a "superstitio illicita".

That focus on dating, gives us occasions for an aspect of the "parting of the ways" that has be underemphasised in our account until now. While, given our philosophical focus, we have spoken more of the signifying and classifying aspects of the debate, for many scholars it comes down to a question of dates. Inseparable from each other, these dual-aspects ("parting" as metaphor and as a question of dating) wend their way through all the texts that use the phrase. Often the question is not "Is the "parting of the ways" a good metaphor for the process that occurred?", it is "When exactly did the ways part?". Estimates can vary in specificity from a span of decades to the emphasising of individual years, even individual acts. Heemstra's account that underlines the importance of 85-96 CE, which a special emphasis on the single year of 96 CE, is one of the most precise but not the only one. Jacob Neuser in *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine* (1987) had earlier underlined both the general period of the fourth century, along with the specific effect of the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, which made Christianity also a "religio lictia". Neusner notes that this marked increased interactivity between Jews and Christians, but the fact this is presented as interactivity *between* "Jews" and "Christians" aligns him with the position that by then the "parting" was long underway, if not fully achieved. For a sharp contrast, we could consider Daniel Boyarin's contention that Judaism did not really exist until the modern period as setting a "parting" date much later, sometime in the 18th or 19th century even

(*Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion*, 2019), though Boyarin of course rejects the general framing of a "parting" (*Border Lines,* 2004) along with that of Judaism as a religion (*Imagine No Religion*, 2016).

Heemstra's account is unassailable in its details, and broad synthetic scope. But the way he frames the question sits awkwardly against the new models we have been fashioning. As Heemstra is careful to note, much of the account he gives is from a "Roman standpoint" (2010, p.202) and it could be said that it is only this standpoint which makes such sharp datings possible. Here we can redeploy our language of assignation and designation. From a "Roman standpoint" it was possible, even desirable, to designate particular populations with the terms "Jewish" and "Christian". However, that designation fails to capture that the shifting assignations of those populations was placing them in relation to constantly, and at that time, rapidly revising idioms. The ferment and reformulation from below, is seen as a steady state change from above. This change in status from "illicita" to "licita" (2010, p.202) seen from the Roman side is then an indication not of a new fixity to the concept "Christian" but a marker of its sudden and continuing redefinition. The "Christian-idiom" was becoming legible in its adjacency to the "Jewish-idiom", but then as now it had strong overlaps and interpenetrations. If we were to emphasise the situation as experienced from those designating themselves for the first time as "Christians" we would see both the formulation of new rules and obligations to the new idiom that term relates to, but also their simultaneous designations as Judean / Jewish. In short, clarity of date is only possible by taking the standpoint of the designators. It may be useful for that purpose but fails to capture the continuity the extended idioms provide.

This nuance is not absent from Heemstra's account. In fact, he occasionally seems suspicious of both the 'parting' and the possibility of specific dates illuminating the lives of those in that period (2010, p.208). This suspicion is, however, never sustained, and he ends with the claim that "scholars are possibly to some degree responsible for making the tracks muddier than they actually are" (2010, p.211) having reiterated that "Still it is possible to defend the case that in 96 CE there was a formal separation between Judaism and Christianity" (2010, p.208). Although his qualifications ("are possibly to some degree") demonstrate a desire to avoid any pejorative critique of the muddy-tracks I am committed to defending, Heemstra clearly sees possibilities for

sharp distinctions that to myself and others seem utterly impossible (Boyarin, 2019, Lieu 1995 and Reed, 2018). The only way to see these clear tracks is from the "Roman standpoint". We could call this "definding": defining what you go on to find, and date.

As such, alongside the supplement of messy and specific historical experiences offered in the accounts of Boyarin, Lieu and Reed, Heemstra's framing remains faulty. Despite occasional qualifications, he fixes the content of the word "Judaism" and "Christianity", "Jew" and "Christian", such that it is incompatible with the accounts of language use, revisability and historical continuity we have been crafting and then depending upon throughout this chapter. The family resemblances between ever-shifting idioms and designators, what Wittgenstein calls "comparing different cultural epochs with the lives of families" (*Culture and Value*, 1980, p.14e), is lost, and the rigidity of the categories means they fails to capture the messy reality, only the "Roman standpoint": the standpoint of the designator.

2. 7 Rectify The Names

These anxieties of appellation have similarities to a recent dispute, recorded in the Marginalia Collection *Jew and Judean* (2014) between several scholars of antiquity and literature. We can recall and recast the tension outlined, in our reading of Heemstra, as that between coherence and continuity. By accepting more revisability, more of a role for family resemblances and its muddy processes of meaning transmission, we increase the potential for continuity. At the limit this results in the inessentialism we have cautioned against. By setting stronger and more numerous obligations on descriptors, by saying their bind to the idioms they relate to has to be greater, we increase the coherence of the category. At the limit of this pole, we find a corresponding essentialism. We can then see the same dynamics being played out in this edited collection *Jew and Judean*. Applying our set of terms — "designator", "idiom" — offers us also a way of both lending these Lyotard-derived terms substance, and of clarifying the stakes and

sides of the *Jew and Judean* debate itself.

For, while it is precisely argued, the collection produces something close to confusion. This is not due to obscurantism or dogma. Instead, the stridency and articulacy of all the voices combined creates an effect close to cacophony. By the end, one feels either everyone is equally right or equally wrong. I contend, this is due to philosophical problem, not a philological one. In Wittgenstein's sense, our use of language has become confused. It has exasperated us. While it cannot be rectified, what this confusion of the names indicates can be shown by using approaches from Lyotard's writings.[87] A second contention. This is not philosophy in the grand style, swooping in to settle a debate from on high. It is a situated attempt to clarify the terms at stake in a dispute. And these approaches from Lyotard are only legible due to the precision of those contributions in the debate, Joan Taylor and Annette Yoshiko Reed's offerings in particular. Here, studies in Antiquity and Philosophy mutually lend each other light. This stress-test of our jerry-rigged version of *The Hyphen*'s conceptual cogs will let us see them clearer in the machinery of the text itself. Secondarily, this test will show us, in miniature, many of the dynamics at play in the larger "parting" dispute.

So, what will be our approach? Separating out the two forms of designation was our first step, designations of groups and self-assignation by groups, what we are calling respectively designations and assignations. Then applying this distinction to firstly the fairly rigid designator "Judean" and secondly the revisable designator "Jewish". We can then distinguish the two-aspects that inhere in the terms Jewish, Jew and Judaic in the debate. The first aspect we will call, again echoing Lyotard, the Jewish designator, the second the Jewish-idiom. Finally, we will consider the relation of these terms to that of "narrative", and of "narrative" to both historical writing and, specifically, the question of anachronism.

How does the debate unfold? Given how both meticulous and distinct each of the eight contributors are this short survey will by necessity be reductive. The dispute began due to a new translation of Josephus by Steve Mason. Conventionally translated as *The Jewish War*, his different rendering of "Ioudaioi" resulted in the title *The Judean War*. Adele Reinhartz's opening

contribution to the forum, "The Vanishing Jews of Antiquity", sets out some initial stakes. This dissension from precedent, for Reinhartz, sunders the continuity of anti-semitism (2014, p.13). And while "The Jewish/Judean War", in spite of its import, is read mainly by specialists, the generalisation of this rendering of "Ioudaioi" for her potentially "lets the Gospel of John off the hook for its role in the history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism" (2014, p.14), along with other writings that use the word "Ioudaioi". This issue is not resolved by simply considering derivations, as there are parallel possibilities for translating "Ioudaios" as 'Judeanism' instead of 'Judaism', as unusual as that may initially seem.

While I am ill equipped to assess the debate philologically, some philosophical discussion can be useful here. We are here again in Wittgensteinian territory. Reinhartz is establishing that what is at stake is the *uses* of the word "Ioudaioi" not any sort of transcendent meaning. She writes "Whether or not centuries of readers and hearers were mistaken … the fact remains that John's hostile portrayl of the "Ioudaioi" did contribute to anti-Semitism" (2014, p.14). To reinvoke our earlier distinction, Reinhartz is seeking to preserve continuity by accepting a revisble definition that would allow both the "Ioudaioi" and the Yiddish speaking Ashkenazi diaspora to be designated as Jews, and therefore to exist in a long historical relation of obligation to the Jewish idiom. In this, she is accepting a looser coherency in the predicates of the definition. We are not importing terms to the debate here. In a later contribution Jonathan Klawans confirms "the real issue … is one of continuity or discontinuity" (2014, p.56).

Mason's response could be expected to invert this. It does, but in quite an odd manner. This oddity will help us however to reframe the debate. The question becomes not what English language designating word should translate the source, but whether there are one or two instances of designation at stake. Can we use both "Judean" and "Jew" for the same word in a single text? Should we use only one? Mason favours the former option. In doing so he accepts a highly coherent definition of "Judean", tied to an identifiable place, but a far less coherent one of "Jew". In doing so he wears away at the link between the "Judean" designator and "Jewish" idiom, worried about their incomplete overlap. For him "historical precision" is "a category misake" (2014, p.20) in this debate. Instead he insists that in response to the question "how

[87] "The Confusion of the Names" intended to reference both Babel and Philo.

‘should’ we translate Ioudaioi … there is no should” (2014, p.25) In essence, for him the term depends on the situation, of text, translator and audience. “When speaking of the long span of history, I too would speak of Jews without difficulty … When it comes to research in the Greco-Roman period, I can only explain the reasons why I prefer to translate ‘Judean’ there” (2014, p.26). For us, this “there is no should” seems doubtful, given the aim *should* be to indicate the obligations of the designator “Judean” to both a place and an idiom.

Mason's use of the Confucian term “rectification of the names” is instructive here. As this correspondence between the word, the people and the thought, this horizon of essentialism, is what the “Jewish narrative”, that particular binding and unbinding of fibres, calls into question, as do our other models developed in this chapter. Lyotard's awkward neologism “the jews” attempted to array this dissonance in a single word. In doing so, it fell prey to reductive abstraction. Reinhartz's characterisation of this word “Jewish” as already bearing the problem of overlap and elison, aligns us then with Lyotard's shift from *Heidegger and “the jews”* to *The Hyphen*.

Despite this apparent difference, it is clear that Reinhartz and Mason agree that the use of a word is decisive. Beneath the surface we can also see a shared, and commendable, preference for continuity that would be content with less coherence as a result. Reinhartz emphasises that this continuity of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism from the Gospels to the diaspora to the present must be preserved so that it can be criticised. For Mason, this less limited sense of the word Jewish is permissible, but he believes that in certain paratextual situations the geographically coherent term “Judean” is preferable.

Annette Yoshiko Reed’s contribution challenges this. She writes that “Something must be lost when the different senses of ioudaioi are collapsed into a series of points along a straight line” (2014, p.22). While invoking continuity, she is more concerned with the defence of the “different senses”. She emphasises the need then for coherent and distinct senses of the historically conditioned concepts. This is not to say that she doesn’t want there to be transitions between the senses, but that she is concerned about collapsing them into a continuous line. Aligning herself with Daniel Boyarin (2014, p.24), Reed underlines the uncertainty that the

question of how to translate ioudaioi invokes. A thinking of idiom would attempt to break us out of this straight line, to hear both the continuity and revision of senses within the story told. Not a "straight" story, but some form of narration. And the "different senses" is reminiscent of Lyotard's concern about preserving the specificity of idioms, the differends as well as commonalities. If we were to echo Wittgenstein's weaving image, Reed is mindful that "not a single fibre goes through the ropes entire length" (*The Blue and Brown Books*, 1958, p.87).

Contra Mason, Reed asserts that:

> … the more we delve into the complexity of ethno-political discourse in the ancient world … the less it seems plausible to solve the problem of anachronism just be choosing one or another rote translation depending on the date of the text in question (2014, p.25).

She ends by raising the possibility of transliteration (2014, p.26). What does it imply then when we transliterate a word, when the clear lake of language freezes? An insurmountable gap between the different uses of words. It is this incommensurability inherent in "ioudaioi", this confusion of names, that the Jew and Judean dispute indicates. An incommensurability that indicates the need to preserve the presence of differends within the continuities that idiom offer. Despite agreeing with Reed's wider argument, I am doubtful of transliteration as a solution here. We may be tempted to leave the situation there, satisfied with this undecidable end, but in doing so we only displace the question. As Lyotard persistently urges we cannot but judge (*The Differend,* 1988, p.6). The title will be translated as something, even if it occurs only in our heads when we see those letters "ioudaioi". The particular silence of transliteration merely cedes the ground.

Reconsidering the parting of the ways debate will assist us in seeing the temporal dynamics also at play here. As Joan Taylor puts it "At stake for these scholars is not so much the question of 'who is a Jew' … but whether there were any Jews at all, anywhere, prior to the third or fourth centuries" (2014, p.6). More coherent categorisation produces an earlier date of emergence and shorter chain of continuity. Less coherent, more adaptable, categorisation produces longer chains of continuity, but some say fails to grasp the group in question. The more predicates we

add, the later the dating. The less predicates, the earlier the dating but less precise the group described. It is an antinomy, and it requires the concepts of designation, and of idioms of thought, that Lyotard has lent us. Only then can we understand these “Chains of continuity” forged in the manner of ropes, and the obligations these ropes bind us to. Joan Taylor senses another silent partner in the debate. Until her contribution there has been an elevating of the people who are called “ioudaioi”, of the designative function. She seeks to “consider Judaism as a philosophical entity … governing life that also involved cultic aspects for its adherent” (2014, p.39). It is this philosophical entity that we can think under the name of “idiom”.

3 Idioms

3.1 Argument

As Karen Langhelle cautioned us (*The Lyotard Dictionary,* 2011, p.98-9) the concept of idiom, despite its load bearing role in the structure of Lyotard's philosophy, is barely understood. Compared to other concepts, such as phrase-regime, which Lyotard provides decent definitions of in *The Differend* (1988, p.84), idiom recurs fleetingly and without full expression (1988, p.85, p.117, p.142 et cetera). If many of the modalities of thought that Lyotard outlines in *The Differend* can be usefully considered as transliterations from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* — genre for language game (1988, p.137), phrase-regimes for the various grammars of "prescription", "description" and their associates — then idiom can be seen as his version of "forms-of-life". Though it has stimulated a small industry of commentary, the phrase "form-of-life" occurs only a couple of times in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. He writes in sections 241 and 242 of the *Investigations* for instance "human beings … agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life … It is not only agreement in definitions but also (odd as it may sound) in judgments that is required" (2009, 94e).[88]

By necessity, Wittgenstein is as reticent to define his term as Lyotard is when it comes to idiom. Whereas Wittgenstein does appear to see different "forms-of-life" as marking boundaries between species — an anthropological focus that Lyotard was critical of and which caused

[88] There are only two other direct citations of the term (2009, p.11e, 15e).

Wittgenstein to speak of the language of lions[89] — Lyotard sees multiple idioms as operative within human activity itself.[90] Langhelle, following this, cites "culture", "language" and even "existence" as potential synonyms (2011, p.98); the first two more evocative of differences of "idioms" within humanity, the last term of Wittgenstein's "lion". Notably, in that dictionary entry on "Idiom" the sole example cited is that of the "Jewish Idiom" which "with its emphasis on the genres of discourse of questioning and interpretation is an idiom that is open to the unrepresentable instant" (2011, p.99).

Idioms then would be sets of agreed judgements. These sets, or better patterns, can be revised and are constantly so. Words like "culture" or "language", too close to "world-views", do not quite capture it. Patterns of agreements is another way of saying patterns of rules and obligations; of normative commitments and statuses.[91] But these are not rules in the sense of natural law. Their revisability reiterates what a simple sense of rule can obscure; phrase-users agree and disagree on rules. Gravity is not really a rule, it does not cease to condition our motion if we disagree with it. It is more of an affordance, something that lets us do certain things and not do others. We cannot come together and choose to change gravity with new agreements alone. Techniques and technologies are required. We can of course revise how we phrase about gravity, or what that term tries to capture outside our meaning-making activities. Idioms, in general, are these processes of meaning-making, of forming patterns of rules and obligations that inhere in and accrue across time.

This chapter will begin with a technical discussion, over several sections, of "idioms", drawing extensively on Lyotard's book *The Differend*. In many ways his "systematic" work — and the scare-quotes are required — *The Differend* provides deep background material that *The Hyphen* is not able, nor aims, to equal.[92] Having undertaken that effort, we will be able to turn again to the matters at hand, the hyphens, partings, and histories that have preoccupied us until now. By

[89] Form of life is implicit in his aphorism "If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it" (*Philosophical Investigations,* p.235e).
[90] Arguably so does Wittgenstein at times, such as in his fleeting discussion of "Egyptian painting" (*Philosophical Investigations,* p.xii).
[91] This can be distinguished from the set and non-revisable sorts of laws Lyotard critiques in "Oikos": "what is called a memory in cybernetics, a sort of set of rules" (*Political Writings,* 1993, p.100).
[92] Lyotard's work is not systematic in the traditional sense, but it is consistent, or consistent in its translations and

using what we have gleaned, these new models and maps, we can resolve some of the issues around memory, history, and group identity which "designation" and "assignation" left us with, and which philosophy has often disavowed. To do so we will turn first to the larger role of these concepts in philosophical work before Lyotard, then his essay "On a Hyphen" and lastly to Daniel Boyarin and Annette Yoshiko Reed's work within Jewish Studies. A brief coda attempts to indicate the overall picture of our idiom-usage and, like Lyotard's attempts at the same task, depends upon an illustrative image, that of a web woven by successive generations of spiders. Moving beyond dualisms between something called "Religion" and something called "Culture" is hard, but worth the effort, and though the shores found here may seem wild, they have related hints of openness, fresh air, and space.

3.2 Genre, Idiom

What do you look at all day but never see? For many in this century's technologically developed societies, the answer to this riddle is "pixels". Seen from a distance, their edges blend and blur into an indistinct mass; we forget they are even there. It is when we come up close to them, or when our computers fail and dead cells start to form, that they become visible. And only then do we start to wonder about what a strange thing a pixel is.[93] Our situation is like trying to answer that question, to show what a pixel is, using a screen that itself consists entirely of pixels.

It seems as if as great deal of the difficulty in defining "idioms" comes from a similar source; the fact that idioms are so immediately apparent to us that we struggle to gain a distanced, proportional view of them. Whether reading, writing or at rest, we are constantly acting as the suppôt of various phrases, and this combination of immediacy with the sheer range of what

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transformations at least.

[93] Wittgenstein was fond of the saying "colours spur us to philosophise" a version of which can be found in *Culture and Value* (1980, p.66e).

"idiom" is trying to capture in Lyotard's schemas — whole histories and huge series of phrases, both linguistic and otherwise — can result in profound puzzlement. Augustine infamously made similar claims about the opacity of time (*The Confessions,* 1998, pp.256-63). One strategy to help them come into view, and with that their efficacy for finding non-essentialising means for considering Jewishness and Christianness, I propose, is re-purposing a distinction Lyotard makes in his *Discourse, Figure*, but applying it to idioms instead of "figures". This would give us a three-fold distinction: "idiom-images" (*Discourse, Figure,* 2011, pp.49-50), "idiom-forms" (2011, pp.49-50) and more elusive "idiom-matrices" (2011, pp.327-8).

The impetus from this can be unpacked by considering Lyotard's constant invocation that differends may be overcome by the creation of new idioms. Now, if this is the case, how can both the long historical "Jewish-idiom" and the fleeting moments of creation in which painters "forge new idioms" be compared? If we do not layer in some distinctions, it can seem as if huge century-encompassing processes of meaning are equivalent to a single stroke of a painter's brush. By seeing different scales of idioms as embedded within each other, some of this confusion can be resolved. Conditions can also be set on the revisability of idioms, without stabilising them into essences.

Each of those three terms — image, form, matrice — should be read as encompassing a greater scale than the last. In essence, those working on the edges of genres form strange new idiolects which, when grouped together, can be seen as an "idiom-image", a sort of snapshot of the wider processes at play. Lyotard's privileged instance of this is painters, as can be seen throughout *What to Paint?* (2012).[94] Postponing the question of their agency in this, the overlap of several painter's particular idiolects leads to the creation of new idioms, new organisations of genres as I shall soon explain. These aggregates we can call "idiom-images", such as that of "Fauvist painting" say.

What we could call "idiom-forms", the "Jewish-idiom", to which Lyotard refers several times, especially in the section of *The Differend* called "Obligation" (1988, pp.105-6), are the deeper

[94] In *The Truth In Painting* (1987), Derrida also elevates painting as a privileged site for thinking through questions of individual idiolects and their agglomeration into group styles.

structural organisations that would unite several such “idiom-images”. The nearly ineffable sense of there being a common pattern, or shared set of conditions for idioms in general, our most fundamental capacity for rule-forming and following, we could name “idiom-matrices”: the idiom of forgiveness, which Lyotard says has differing relations to the Christian and Jewish idioms (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.11). Though I should underline Lyotard does not use this schema himself, and it needs further research before being as rigorous as the issue demands, I contend that it helps clarify his use of the same word “idiom” for multiple types of thought formation.

These at times share their titles with historical instantiations of religions or cultural movements (Say the specific context of the Haskalah being an “idiom-image”), at times they arrange a latent organisation into sets of forms (”speculative-idiom” an “idiom-form”[95], or the larger Jewish-idiom in relation to Haskalah) or stand for more protean bindings of several “idiom-forms” into “idiom-matrices” (The idiom-matrice of “forgiveness” which underlies several “idiom-forms”). There are very occasionally, as well, references to idiom as if it stood for the very largest sense of the conditions of idiomaticity itself (approached often through metaphorical or poetic language such as “the archipelago” of genres (*The Differend*, 1988, pp.130-1): which we could tentatively call the “Idiomatrice”.

Another difficulty in defining what Lyotard means by an “idiom” is their binding with what Lyotard calls “differends”. Any neologism presents us with problems of clarity, and the “differend” is no exception. There is a standard definition, recited like a catechism in Lyotard scholarship and taken from the first page of the book that bears its name; “As distinguished from a litigation, a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments” (*The Differend,* 1988, p.xi). Serving as a useful starting point, these sentences still cannot substitute for the book which spends almost two hundred further pages seeking a stronger sense of the word. And in the works that came after, Lyotard layers in many additional qualifications and qualities In fact, it comes to appear as if there are two distinct forms of the differend.

[95] The confusion that Lyotard’s, at times parallel, presentations of the “speculative-idiom”, “speculative-genre” and “speculative discourse as language-game” introduces means it would require an essay of its own to unpack, and I will let it pass into silence for now.

The first obtains between genres or, to be more accurate, between their stakes (*The Differend*, 1988, p.128-9). A genre such as comedy has as its stake the evocation of laughter, the genre of tragedy the production of cathartic tears. The stake of the genre of ethics is justice (1988, p.129). Though those classical and Athenian examples may make it seem as if genres exist only in creative works or solemn debate, Lyotard strongly counters that we speak in genres constantly. Thus, there are genres such as "folksongs" and "technology" (1988, p.129); genres can be "erotic" or "ironic" (1988, p.136). As the existence of ironic-erotic folksongs would seem to show we can also move between genres in our phrasing, or phrase in several genres at the same time. These motions should be thought of as playful, experimental, and exceedingly plastic. Phrasing for Lyotard, as mentioned in our discussion of the suppôt and designation, can be linguistic but also gestural, bodily, affectual. Even "silence is a phrase", possibly even the early moments of the universe (1988, p.62). Phrasing can be thought of as everything that happens, and everything that happens takes place within a world of genres.[96]

Now, not everything is a genre: politics obtains between genres, and philosophy occurs when genres go in search of their rules.[97] There are tricky intricacies that seem counter-intuitive at first and are easy to fumble: economics is a genre for instance (1988, p.173), whereas "capital" is described as a meta-rule which settles disputes between genres (1988, p.171-2). Genres nonetheless are a constituent feature of our experience and phrasing entirely outside of any genre appears to be impossible.[98] Since the stakes of genres, what they "desire" to fulfil, are not the same and can contradict each other, this gives rise to the first form of the differend, that between the stakes of genres. There can be a tension between making a listener feel moved (the stake of the tragic genre is catharsis) and making a quick buck (the stake of the economic genre), and this gives rise to a differend. As Kafka's peals of laughter (the stake of comedy is laughter) on reading his stories would seem to prove, differends can be overcome if new ways of

[96] There is some sinewy muscle here around whether nature has idioms and genres. Most likely, it has one: the matter-idiom (1988, p.62). In this sense, what we call "humanity" is the capacity for phrasing in multiple-idioms (the matter-idiom alongside at least one, and usually many, others).
[97] Philosophy defined this way is no longer the preserve of philosophers, or those who work with words, as his examples of painters and musicians going "in search of the rules" of their genres and idioms shows (1988, p.139).
[98] This is debatable given late writings by Lyotard on the "affect-phrase", but "affect-phrases" to my reading seem to occur within inchoate genres and on genre's edges, not in an entirely different conceptual space.

bringing their stakes into alignment are found.[99] Unpacking Kafka's arrangement of genres entirely is impossible, but could include tragedy, narration, irony, erotics as well as the philosophical presentation of "what is ghostly between us".[100] Lyotard often calls this process the search for new idioms. As he writes, idioms "constantly come into contact with one another through these fragile antennae of sensibility" (*The Postmodern Explained to Children*, 1995, p.92). Balibar and others are seeking a similar process in terms of "translation" and "transduction" (*On Universals*, 2020, pp.115-9).

Here and there we can feel a little looseness in terminology. While seems clear that finding new idioms helps dissolve differends between genres, at other points Lyotard implies there are differends between idioms themselves. This has caused Gérard Sfez to claim there are two forms of differends, between genres and between idioms, and that the latter form becomes a central in Lyotard's later writings (*Lyotard: La Partie Civile,* 2007). While a differend between genres forms as a result of conflicting stakes, a differend between idioms is more severe. In this rift-situation, the idioms agree neither on definitions nor on judgements: we could imagine a vast gulf forming between them. While it sounds strange to ascribe agency to what we usual would consider linguistic constructions — "these idioms agree" — this strangeness is inherent to Lyotard's larger effort. Namely, his attempt to de-anthropologise Wittgenstein's philosophy.[101] Paraphrasing the poet W.S. Graham, he is interested in "what the language is using us for" (*New Selected Poems,* 2018, p. 76) or, to be more accurate given the non-linguistic nature for Lyotard of many phrases, what idioms are using us for.[102]

Differends between genres are no insignificant obstacle in themselves but are overcome again and again by finding new idioms. More accurately, given Lyotard's swoop from the abstract stakes of genres to the specific actions of painters, writers and scientists, these differends are overcome by the formation of new idiolects which aggregate into "idiom-images". These

[99] I cite Kafka here because to reflect Lyotard's use of him. An infinite series of other writers could be cited here: Brooke-Rose (*Amalgamemnon*, 1984), Vizenor (*Griever: An American Monkey In China*, 1990) and so on.
[100] To refer to the earlier part of this chapter, this rearrangement of genres forms the idiolect we associate with the word "Kafka".
[101] The way this then anthropomorphises language, and the political stakes of that effect, has been considered in depth by Wendy Lynne Lee in "The Politics of Anthropomorphizing Language" (2003).
[102] This sense of language is present also in Balibar ("Les Langues Se Parlent" in *On Universals,* 2020, pp.115-6)

processes of aggregation and overlap embed the agential activity of particular phrase-users into ever larger historical idioms, and ultimately "idiom-matrices". We can see then the questioning of the limits of genres and their constant rearrangement as the work of history, enacted without a fixed end but as a process of continual reflection on genres and idioms. It should be noted that there are idioms we may now wish to inhibit, and that the way those specific idioms would try to overdetermine all the others offers a means for measuring this. The economic genre gives rise to many idioms which may be worth maintaining in miniature but become unjust when they impose their rules and obligations upon all other idioms.

3.3 Image, Form, Matrice

Taking this tentative, new, terminology into the field of religious studies can help elucidate the stakes and processes involved in what we would usually call both inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue. It also brings us again to the question of revisability. Each of the three levels of idioms outlined above are continually revisable. However, since the larger aggregate idioms are only modified by the effects of the more local ones they alter more slowly, preserving historical formations over vast stretches of time. If we propose for the present discussion that the "Jewish-idiom" or "Christian-idiom" lie on that middle line, as "idiom-forms", then we can see how they can be both continuous and constantly in motion. The local idiolects of specific religious and textual practices, working through the rules of the genres they intervene in, do not immediately alter that higher level. So, for instance, particular individual attempts to align the stakes of the scientific genre with the ethical, literary, and other genres that we may associate with the Haskalah, do not immediately call into question all the rules and obligations of the "Jewish-idiom". However, the aggregating of these idiolects into a larger "idiom-image", which we now (mostly after the fact) call Haskalah, indirectly and more diffusively alters that larger "image-form" of the "Jewish-idiom".

This layers in a measure of temporal drag to the situation, with "idiom-forms" changing more slowly and incrementally than the more mobile "idiom-images". The same would be true of "idiom-matrices", only more so. It should be said that the potential for these revisions is not the same as their inevitable occurrence. Many chains of phrases occur entirely within the existing genres, "idiom-images" and the larger idioms they are both embedded in. Particularly striking instances of this, that illuminate the intricate relations of obligation that obtain within these nested idioms, would invoke the feeling that Kant calls "beauty" (*Critique of Judgement*, 2007, p.97). More quotidian, though no less necessary, re-iterations within existing arrangements of idioms would correspond to Kant's under-appreciated category of the "agreeable" (2007, p.37). The edge cases of idiolects would then be associated with the "sublime" (2007, p.77) and with free reflection on the limits of rules: Lyotard's definition of philosophy (*The Differend*, 1988, p.xiv).

As Ashley Woodward argues, these idiolects and their sublime affects may not be legible, or phrase-able, at first. They are saved from silence:

> This feeling or affect, according to Lyotard, is a 'negative presentation' of the 'indeterminate' … Moreover, this feeling associated with silence is a 'sign', which he tells us is not a referent, to which a signification validatable under the cognitive regimen is attached, but is rather an indication of something which cannot be phrased in the current idiom. ("Testimony and the Affect-Phrase" p.176)

If this gives some sense of how we could imagine the interaction between the levels of "idiolects", "idiom-images" and "idiom-forms", what of the interactions between multiple "idiom-forms"? And of the transitions that obtain between the forms and matrices, when considered in relation to Jewish examples? Beginning with the first question, in *The Differend*, Lyotard implies that the "Jewish-idiom" has a particularly important obligation within it, a sort of meta-rule that affects all genres phrased in that idiom. This is the stakes of all genres are tempered by a withholding of a final phrase (1988, p. 127). While not its sole preserve or private property, this commitment strongly correlates with what the words "Jewish-idiom" indicate. He links this to both the paradoxes of the Messianic within Jewish thought, using evocative

terminology of being held hostage to something unpresentable, to Jewish exegetical practices, and to the prohibition on representation of the absolute, the commandments and practical interventions against idolatry.

Though settling those paradoxes is not our present concern, this reading of Lyotard's fits with that of several figures from within Jewish traditions. Hermann Cohen, in *Religion of Reason* (1995) for instance, often speaks of a paradoxical Messianism which is both expected and endlessly deferred; an aspect of his work Steven S. Schwarzschild later emphasised (*The Tragedy of Optimism: Writings on Hermann Cohen*, 2018). *While Messiah Tarried* (Levin, 1977) is an apt title for the definitive history of Jewish Socialist Movements, given their practical refusal of finality when phrasing the political.[103] Finally, a Lyotard adjacent reading of Jewish textual practices can be seen in Michael Fishbane's contribution to the collection *The Jewish Political Tradition: Authority:*

> This hermeneutical diversity brings us back to the pointed query of Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaria, how can one learn Torah if there are many solutions and no final judge? The answers of the rabbinic legal tradition may vary, but they all depend on the virtues of probity and patience and the will to know. These virtues produce a culture of exegetical intensity and debate, of conflicts and contradictions. By producing texts that display its paideia in full view (the interpretations, the debates, and the conflicts), the literary tradition demonstrates publicly the nature and limitations of its exegetical solutions and the way different exegetical procedures justify diverse models of the person and society. (2000, p.lv)

This interminable exegesis, is figured by Lyotard in the form of the disconnect between the letters and the Voice, brought about by the broken tablets.[104] After Sinai, "It is necessary to examine closely, to scrutinze, the letters of the book" (*The Hyphen*, 1999, p.10). We are impelled also to unbind the affects latent in language by other means: "Jewish stories, Jewish

[103] Except for Socialist Zionism, of course (Levin, pp.400-40). A topic for another time.
[104] For a beautiful reading of this theme in the "literary afterlife of Religion" see Sarah Hammerschlag's *Broken Tablets* (2016).

jokes" (1999, p.10) The critique of idolatry, and the strict interdiction specifically placed upon direct presentation of a divine absolute (Exodus 20:4), runs throughout Jewish thought. It is praised by Kant as the most sublime prohibition:

> As such it can never be anything more than a negative presentation — but still it expands the soul. Perhaps there is no more sublime passage in the Jewish Law than the commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. (*Critique of Judgement*, 2007, p.204)

This, in condensed form, is why Lyotard's recurrent antagonist Hegel treats Jewish-thought and the Kantian protocols around absolute-ideas as betraying the same sensibility.[105]

As a result of this meta-rule that is carried out within the proliferation of genres, and therefore organisations of phrase regimes, no phrase can claim finality. The result of this is that the Jewish-idiom blossoms differends, since several other ways of constructing the stakes of genres are based upon the final phrase, including many of those conditioned by the Christian-idiom. Restating our earlier account of emancipation, we could see a differend between the larger "idiom-forms" of the Christian and the Jewish form here. The "Christian-idiom" as an "idiom-form" has strong overlaps with the wider "idiom-matrice" of the "teleology-idiom" and the "speculative-idiom", the "Jewish-idiom" with that of "reflection", and therefore a differend obtains between them. This is not only the case between our hyphenated idioms. Calamitously, fascist forms of meta-narrative, their seizure of stakes, have differends with the "Jewish-idiom" as a large "idiom-form".[106] This would appear to obtain whether this fascist framing finds its dire passions in narratives of British, Chilean, or German decline, though Lyotard like many emphasises the latter. As Gerald Sféz puts it:

> Already, in the confrontation between the Nazi myth and Jewish thought, Lyotard remarks

[105] For a sustained and comparative account of Kant's relation to Jewish thought, that also doesn't shy away from Kant's countervailing anti-Semitic outbursts see Paul Guyer's *Reason and Experience in Mendelssohn and Kant* (2020).
[106] I am currently unequipped to posit how meta-narratives and idioms interact but leave this here to indicate it as a problem of import.

> that the Differend is at its height and touches its extreme limit. Nazi speech is indexed to self-foundation and the addressee, while that of the Jews is indexed to the listener and the recipient; so that there is no compatibility between these idioms, so much so that the first is based on the destruction of the other. (*Le Partie Civile*, 2007, pp.56-7)

And this is a result of only one particular obligation, of which there would be hundreds and hundreds within the overlapping territories of the "Jewish-idiom". Other obligations we could posit, here following Boyarin, would include a particular relationship to the idea of election, and of an entity that can be thought many different ways but is marked out by the fraught designator "Israel" (*Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion,* 2019).

The obligations that we take on when we bind ourselves to particular idioms are, to return to the previous chapter, what permits us to undertake certain designations and assignations. If sufficient obligations are fulfilled, then the designation or assignation is just. If insufficient, then it is unjust or appropriative. By refusing bounded portions of the obligations within idioms, but committing to others, we can play our part in creating new idiolects, which then via "idiom-images" can revise larger "idiom-forms". "Jewish-idioms" and "Christian-idioms" have been revised, in many cases by these idioms becoming more cultural than ritual. We could think of this "becoming cultural" as a result of initially individual and small-scale actions accruing into "idiom-images" of Judean culture or Chinese Jewry, the Marrano idiom-image that lies between those Jewish and Christian idiom-forms. One can be phrasing in a "Christian-idiom" without any belief in God but still follow the idol of Hegel: revising that commitment as the speculative capacity for culture to realise itself in ever-more-rational laws.

There are negative theologies of course, existential Christianities, endlessly recursive complexity.[107] This overall schema allows also for the combinations of idioms that we constantly see, and that are constantly being researched in Religious Studies.[108] We can think here of the

[107] For an account of the deep potencies of the minor-mode within the Christian-idiom, and one whose focus on language aligns it with our concerns here, though differs in its estimation of Heidegger, see George Pattison's *A Rhetorics of the Word.*

[108] Saeko Yazaki's *Islamic Mysticism and Abu Talib al-Makki: The Role of the Heart,* and wider work offers evidence of the many possible hyphens, or sartas, between Jewish-idioms and Islamic, Buddhist, Shinto and other ones. Of

interactions between the Buddhist "idiom-form" and Confucian by way of certain "idiom-images" and idiolects, those between Jewish and Islamic "idiom-forms" by similar means and so on. Daniel Boyarin has mapped the contacts between the "Socratic" idiom-form and the "Jewish" as no one else could (*Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*, 2012). The temptation to substitute a term such as "thought" for "idiom-images" should be resisted here, as we would lose all the richness of the layers it is the aspiration of the above, partly promissory, account to indicate. We would also lose that final transition that completes the series of "idiolects" into "idiom-images" and "idiom-images" into "idiom-forms": that from "forms" into "matrices".

This sort of transition is hardly discussed by Lyotard but can be glimpsed in his errors and inconsistencies. Again, the "Jewish-idiom" is a good instance of this. Occasionally the specificity of that "idiom-form" can be lost in his discussions and equated entirely with that huge scale commitment to "presenting the unpresentable". But if we take "presenting the unpresentable" to be a strange "idiom-matrice" which within its remit would include the "Jewish-idiom", the Modernist literary "idiom-image", Kafka's particular idiolect and so on then an enabling and rich series of structures can be maintained alongside the common obligation. This would also mean that we could counter any simplistic ideas that, to turn to the history of the "Christian-idiom" and colonialism, that the "idiom-form" of the "Christian-idiom" it is equivalent with say the "idiom-matrice" of "force" or "domination". We can see points where they overlap, but also several "idiom-images" (Liberation theology, Existentialist Christianity) that do not share the obligations of the "idiom-matrice" and actively defy it. In doing so they strive to revise the "Christian-idiom" in the direction of justice.

As I hope is appreciated, all of what I have attempted to describe here is new and partly embryonic work. Lyotard's shifting uses of the word "idiom" do not give us this level of complexity, but also lack the potential I see here for both precision and polyphony, and for refusing essentialising notions in favour of revisable ones. It offers us a language for thinking about how what have been called "Religions" interact, modify their own internal commitments, and modulate on contact with others, without recourse to a traditional and Christian-centric vocabulary of "Religion" and the "Syncretic" (Baron and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*, 2016).

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the making of similar books within "Religious Studies" there is no end.

Nor does it necessitate isolating culture from “Religion”, which hampers our understanding of the continuity of the “Jewish-idiom” in forms sometimes cultural, sometimes purely ritualistic. By exercising these until-now unused muscles, over time we could gain a closer grasp on how the many levels of idiom interact, which would offer increasing insights: a few among the many models that Judith Lieu argued were needed in replacing the “parting of the ways”. An interpenetrating of the idioms?

Given what I have confessed about the conceptions and hypotheses listed above, it would appear necessary to regain our bearings within the wider history of attempts to think similar thoughts within philosophy. For we are not entirely lacking in precursors and potential allies, even if questions of history, memory and of thought occurring within multiple frameworks have tended to be more challenged by philosophy than embraced.[109] The limitations of these previous attempts to contend with the “history of history” within philosophy can, after all, serve to spur us to further work on these terminologies.

3.4 History, Memory

Kant had hardly any use for memory. That is, in his philosophy not his biography, given the meticulous routines that characterised his later life (Cassirer, 1982). In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (2003), as Gordon Nagel reads it, “one of the striking 'omissions' … is any significant role of memory in cognition. Memory ... does not figure at all in the critique” (*The Structure of Experience: Kant's System of Principles*, 1983, p.215). Kant was not alone among philosophers in suffering from these memory troubles. Socrates is recorded several times, by his amanuensis Plato, muttering “I find that I am a forgetful sort of person” (*Protagoras,* 334d) and “I have not a very good memory” (*Meno,* 71c).

While his own forgetfulness is often wielded in the dialogues as rhetorical weapon, used to unsteady his interlocutors and let them talk themselves into contradiction, Socrates went further. Forgetfulness in general is sternly warned against. Writing in general, Socrates argues, wearies the mind, and leaves it liable to a low-level amnesia that soon becomes an impediment to philosophising. The case is put forth with definite force during his dialogue with *Protagoras*. In essence, as another preacher before an assembly put it "There is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body" (*The Jewish Study Bible,* 2014, Ecclesiastes 12.12).

Aristotle's incessant pen traced out "many books" from within almost every classical genre but, as far as we know, when it came to history he wrote only of plants. Philosophy and history have a troubled past then, and trouble each other still. History calls into question philosophy's grand schemas, its architectures in the air. Philosophy's critical acid undermines the stable categories and facts which historians attempt to unearth. But without historical understanding how can it speak to the deep content of its concepts? In fact, it appears many philosophers have feet placed on both sides of these diverging paths.

Moses had a different sort of suspicion towards some tendencies of the written word, its tendency to become icon and idol; Socrates' critique took a less physical form than that practised by that other prophet upon descending from Mount Sinai. In the Jewish-idiom, the tablets are rewritten, though while the first were carved by the finger of God, there is already a ambiguity regarding the author who inscribed the second. Exodus 34:1 implies a co-authoring between Moses and God, 34:28 an entirely earthly hand. Either way, the destruction of the original letters of law, inaugurates its endless recounting and rewriting by many hands: in mishnah, aggadah, commentaries, lectures on the Talmud, treasuries of yiddish stories, book upon book.

As Lyotard says, these endless attempts to present the unpresentable are deemed out-of-date by Paul: "The new covenant [alliance / binding], as Paul explains, replaces the letter by faith" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.11). The Jewish-idiom, among others, puts emphasis on the "secret, hidden and inaccessible meaning" (1999, p.14) and requires an attentiveness instead to the hidden Voice of

[109] Lyotard uses, as proxy for this, the exclusion of pagan polytheism.

obligation, a process Lyotard links to anamnesis [Zakhor] (1999, p.15). These "fiction[s] of litigation" strive to "speak the languages … of 'the Law' and of the Differend" (Boyarin, J., *Thinking in Jewish*, 1996, p.88).

Kant's incessant writing practice, and his explicit defences of public and published reason, of "Turning Out Books" (*Practical Philosophy*, 1996, p.623-7) would seem to place him at odds with the Socratic prohibition, yet the idea that reflective thought should occur immediately and unconstrained by history and its idioms recurs often in the centuries between those thinkers, and in those that followed them. As P.F. Strawson puts it in The Bounds of Sense:

> … if experience is impossible without memory, memory also is impossible without experience. From whatever obscure levels they emerge they emerge together. (1966 p.112)

Why should the domiciling of memory in those "obscure levels" where philosophy cannot reach concern us? Until the "Kant-Krisis", it was how the disciplines of history and philosophy could be separated.[110] If we take seriously the work of figures after Kant, philosophical thought and history are impossible to separate. As Yirmiyahu Yovel contended (*Kant and the Philosophy of History*, 1989), and Karl Ameriks confirms (*Kant and the Historical Turn*, 2006), this is even the case for Kant himself, if his anthropological papers are closely read.[111] The crisis not only commences with Kant then, but is contained within his writings as well. Furthermore, if we begin to take as seriously as Hegel the work of figures like Levinas, Yerushalmi and others working within a "Jewish-idiom", philosophical history *and* ethics are impossible to separate. For Levinas ethics is first philosophy, and Yerushalmi considers the interdiction on binding memory and history to apply only within non-Jewish idioms. More than this, Yerushalmi's concepts of Zakhor and Anamnesis (*Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 1996) would align him with Lyotard's interest in the inflections between ethics, listening and idioms. After all, for Yerushalmi a synonym for these processes of care and recollection would be "justice" (*Zakhor*,

[110] For the historical side of this crisis see *Kant and the Historical Turn* (Ameriks, 2006).
[111] Some intrepid readers, such as Howard Caygill (*A Kant Dictionary*, 1995 pp.290-1), locate lambent traces of memory in even the *Critique of Pure Reason* itself.

1996, p.117). Yet it would seem, if we remain at the level of Kant's "theory of experience" and its modern variants (Nagel, 1983, p.215), we lack a mechanism by which that experience can accrue, rather than merely occur. Having been reduced to an empirical prior required for experience to be compiled and cognised, an interdiction is then placed upon any further inquiry.

Opposed, as we are, to either a conception of philosophy as replacing many perspectives with a single total or synoptic one, or the abandonment of perspective and position altogether, we would be wise to maintain some link between philosophising, the calling into question of the rules of genres, and memory-history. A hyphen, that like all hyphens, disunites what it unites.

Memory retention, as a basic faculty, is of course a necessity for the continuity of experience. Husserl has offered several ways to think these local forms of retention (*Experience and Judgement,* 1975).[112] But the binding of that memory to the larger frames of history and idioms is placed in question by a thought that would always "begin from first principles". Those first principles come from somewhere and finding a way for our idioms to remain in sight lets us work through those principles, engage in Zakhor, rather than be determined by them behind our backs. Our idioms must be materially grounded: in memories, texts, reiterated practices, records and recordings.[113] Even if the interactions can be obscure, as we are speaking within idioms of idioms, given the history presented here the task is necessary, pressing and overdue.

[112] For a readable account of the current scientific consensus see Samarth Varma's *Thoughts on Memory Consolidation* (2019).
[113] Jonathan Boyarin's account in *Storm From Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory* (1992, pp.1-8) of the textual and physical interplay of memory and forgetting in a single shul is an indicator of this.

3.5 The Jewish West

If Judaism and Christianity are religions, if they were in antiquity, then between them there is only litigation, and the question of true and false partings. If they are religions, if that is all they are, then it is this common concept, religion, that permits passage between them, untroubled, and which underwrites the metaphor of a "parting of the ways" (Boyarin, *Border Lines,* 2004).

If they are religions, if Judaism is, then the only question that it would be worth trying to answer here is that of periodisation, of true origins of the "parting" and false ones. If they are religions then all that remains is the placing of the parting's emergence on a particular point on the timeline, guided by the placements of the past, striving to skirt their errors, sharpen their philological acuity. Placed too early, and it becomes anachronistic, and the unfamiliarity of identity in antiquity becomes lost. Even hybridity, by this measure, is an anachronism for a time before identities as we know them, political and religious hybridity dependent upon their prior separability. Place the "parting" too late, and the continuity of Jewish practices, and of oppression, could be lost, and the long history of anti-semitism elided. In both cases, the act of placing at all risks creating either a Jewish essentialism or passivity from this unruly, diasporic history.

And if not? If Daniel Boyarin's contention, with which we commenced, is correct, if Judaism imperfectly indicates an entity, an idiom, from which Judaism as religion — whether the idiom-image of "Normative Judaism" or "family-resemblance" Judaisms — is a selection then between them, between Christianity-as-religion and Judaism-as-that-which-resists there lies a differend, a rift between "idiom-forms". To say once more, paraphrasing Lyotard, this is a case where between two entities there is a lack of a common rule of judgement, which would settle wrongs and disputes (*The Differend,* 1988, p.i). Between them there could be no partings, only a

displacement, a hyphen which would distract from the differend, subsume the two words as one.

Given the immense store of readings and interpretations that sit behind the four words “Jewish studies”, our dialogue will now elevate two specific texts, Daniel Boyarin’s *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (2019) and Annette Yoshiko Reed’s *Jewish-Christianity* (2018). By writing in dialogue with these dual readings, which diverge as much as they overlap, the full dissensus of philological and historical inquiries in Jewish and Early Christian studies can be felt. As can the complexity embedded in Lyotard’s phrase “The Jewish West” (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.6). We begin with Annette Yoshiko Reed. More than any other work cited here, her *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism* most closely calls out for the inter-relating of “designators” and “idioms” we have been striving after. I would like therefore to read closely two particular sections from the book, and try indicate when I see the strongest ties:

> … in a postmodern age in which metanarratives and totalizing discourses are increasingly subject to suspicion, it is comforting to seek refuge in the and microhistorical. Yet some of the local stories told by Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity reflect their own efforts at universalizing and abstractifying, with specific events and circumstances recast in global, total, or even cosmic terms ... Although the modern model of the 'Parting of the Ways' may be misleading in its conflation of literary rhetoric with social reality in Late Antiquity, something is also missed if a focus on the local leads us to overlook the potential social power of totalizing and
> differentiating rhetoric. (2018, p.62)

In these sentences we can see many common aspirations, and shared concerns, with what we have spoken of under the headings of “designators” and “idioms”. Reed speaks both of the danger of “metanarratives”, those such as the “modern model of the “Parting of the Ways””, but also of something else. The distinction she draws between “literary rhetoric” and “social reality” could initially seem to map directly onto that between “idiom” and “designator”, and yet we keep stumbling on a lot of “social reality” encrusted in our “idioms”, and a similar amount of “literary rhetoric” each and every time we use a “designator”. What she speaks of as the tempting “refuge” in the “microhistorical” is another way of phrasing the desire for such

strict categorisation of historical particulars that they lose any continuity, becoming a disconnected series of individual cultures. When she adds and emphasises that local cultures themselves often strived for "universalising" and "abstractifying" recastings of their particular situation in "global, total, or even cosmic terms", it serves as salutary reminder that the desire for continuity across historical time and categorisation was something desired by situated populations themselves.

In this light "totalizing and differentiating rhetoric" can be thought as marking the sometimes determined, sometime incidental accretion of these "global" and "total" obligations into the form of "idioms". Idiolects, what in her discourse are the risky "efforts at universalizing and abstractifying" enacted by both historical populations such as "Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity" accrue and revise upwards in the sorts of series we have outlined: idiolects, "idiom-images", "idiom-forms", "idiom-matrices". The "potential social power" this offers, are the fruits of the assignations this permits, the means by which populations come to conceive of their historical continuity with others who share their common obligations to idioms, in face of the categorising and crude designations of politically dominant institutions.

Reed's insistence that while "the modern model of the 'Parting of the Ways' may be misleading … something is also missed if a focus on the local leads us to overlook" these sorts of larger processes and powers find a common cause with Lyotard in "On a Hyphen". One of the curious aspects of that text is Lyotard's constant tightrope walk along the following paradox. On the one side, the distinction between "Judaism" or a "Jewishness" and "Christianity" must be maintained, otherwise the domination and overwriting of one by the other may become illegible. At the same time, clearly the two interact and interpenetrate to such a degree that they cannot be considered in isolation from each other. Where does the injustice lie then? If, as has been made clear by careful scholarly work on populations such as the Pseudo-Clementines, the Essenes, the Phraisees and even Paul himself, the boundaries between the two designators were utterly porous, then where can we locate the injustice?[114] We could posit the following solution:

[114] For the Pseudo-Clementines, see Jones (ed.) *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* (1995). For the Essenes, see Davies' *Behind The Essenes: History and Ideology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1987). For Paul and his fellow Apostles, see Eshleman's *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire* (2012). The Pseudo-Clementines are also discussed at length throughout Reed's *Jewish-*

between their "idiom-forms". When the "Christian-idiom" attempts to overdetermine the "Jewish" or hide its differends with it by means of a hyphen, then there is an injustice that cries out for witnessing and redress. This difference between certain of their obligations, or one idiom's desire to impose its obligations on all others, can subsist alongside processes of porous designation on the level of local populations, who bind themselves to several "idiom-forms" at once and to "idiom-images" that stretch borderlands between them. The differends are between the idioms, not the individuals. Those phrase-users may feel the presence, the need "to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them" (*The Differend,* 1988, p.30) as an internal sense that struggles to be put into words: "This state is signalled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling: "One cannot find the words" (1988, p.13).

To cite Reed again, in the "Beyond Identity" section of *Jewish-Christianity* she writes, following the work of Brubaker and Cooper, that:

> …instead of focusing on 'identity' (and thus debating how best to define specific identities, trace their 'origins', organize them into subsets and systems, contest when they become set, etc.), we might better turn to focus on ongoing acts and processes of *identification"*. (2018, p.405)

These "ongoing acts and processes of *identification"* is precisely what the language of designators could permit us to speak of. Here, "*Identification"* would describe that Exodus-like act of reflecting on your obligations and forming relations to idioms in your self-designations. By seeing both designations and idioms as revisable, we recognise the impossibility of "[defining] specific identities, [tracing] their 'origins'". While a minimal level of organisation is needed, and a language that can speak of embedding and historical accrual of meaning, this is entirely different from a set schema of "subsets and systems".

In *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (2019), Daniel Boyarin stakes out a position that has several overlaps, as well as sharp divergences, from this picture. While short, Boyarin claims the book is an encapsulation of a new method he would like to follow in subsequent work, one

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Christianity (2018).

that would use Wittgenstein's "forms-of-life" as a way of speaking about Jewishness continuity and difference. Its brevity also conceals a deep grounding in earlier scholarship, such as the work of Leora Batnitzky. Alongside this more methodical argument, the book argues for an emphasis on the discontinuities as much as bindings between different historical instantiations we associate under the heading of "Jewishness". The textual terrain is, as a result, unfamiliar and invigorating. He reiterates Wittgenstein's claim that "Our world looks quite different if we surround it with different possibilities" (2019, p.155).

Mirroring his work on the category of religion in its entirety, one of the most starling new possibilities is laid out in Part III of the book; that Judaism is a "Christian invention" (2019, p.105-129) what he even calls — in a likely unintentional echo of Lyotard's critique of Paul — "the abject of Christianity" (2019, p.129). This alters substantially his earlier, and influential, claim in *Border Lines* (2004) that the fourth century marked an intensifying dislocation of religious identities from their ethnic and other framings. Unsurprisingly, this new account of Judaism as being an anti-position, "Judaism as Anti-Judaism" (2019 p.128), re-summons our spectres from our discussion of designators: Marx and Sartre. If that would seem to settle the question of the title, Boyarin's argument is convincing, in part because he refuses the reduction of Jewish difference to a unitary religious Judaism.

As such, in other chapters he is concerned with "Jewry" (2019, p.33-59), with "Medieval Yahadut" (2019, p.60-104), "Yiddishkayt" and "Judentum" (2019, p.130-152). Each exegesis establishes both the internal coherence of the category tackled, along with its distinctions from those that surround it. However, a question remains. Despite Boyarin's critical claim, which I wouldn't contest, that much of what we now associate with the designations and assignations of "being a Jew", only comes into existence with the forms-of-life forged in modern Judentum, Yiddishkayt and religious Judaism, he constantly refers to a form of historical continuity over which these individual moments were placed. This is pithily summed up in his claim that "Judentum had to be carefully taught, to the Jews" (2019, p.135).

Working along with Boyarin, could we claim then that rather that there being one Jewish form-of-life, that there is a continuity between the "idiom-form" of the "Jewish-idiom", with

"Judentum", "Yiddishkayt" and so on being "idiom-images" that strived to and succeeded in partially revising that larger "idiom-form"?[115] As well as allowing for the injustice that the designation of Jews as heretics wrought, and which Boyarin unpacks in in detail here and elsewhere (See "Why Ignatius Invented Judaism" in Baron, Hicks-Keeton and Thiessen (eds.) *The Ways That Often Parted*, 2018, pp.309-323) it would explain the continuity that underlies Boyarin's account, despite all the distinctions made between different historical instantiations of Jewish life. Avoiding a religious definition, ruled out by Boyarin's critique, the book could be seen as both a genealogy of the "idiom-image" of modern religious Judaism and the narration of a constantly changing Jewish "idiom-form"; to echo Mendele Mocher Seforim, its travels and adventures across the centuries (1968).

Daniel Boyarin's work, and his concentration upon the Jewish experience in Germany and other diasporas, points us back to that term "the Jewish West"; the "Jewish-idiom" as deeply embedded within and revising the idioms and societies it encounters. For Lyotard, the Jewish-idiom is not caught in a choice between land or diaspora, Judea or Judentum. It is, in part, a relation to a book: "They claim to have their roots in a book" ("Europe, the Jews and the Book" in *Political Writings*, 1993, p.159). This stands in sharp contrast to "the Athenian *polis* … where, ultimately, the life of a unitary social body was sustained by a primordial cosmic ecology of gods, land, and people.' (Anderson, *The Realness of Things Past: Ancient Greece and Ontological History*, 2018, p.24). As we will see in Chapter four, it also exists in contrast to a social contract model: it is an obligation but not to a cosmos or ontology, nor to a purportedly freely agreed contract.

Here, we can begin to lend ever more content to what some of the positive obligations of the Jewish-idiom are, as well as its prohibitions.[116] There is, for Lyotard, a particular feeling for

[115] The fact that our neologism "idiom-form" echoes Wittgenstein's "lebensform / form-of-life" is here leant heft by Boyarin's interdisciplinary hospitality.

[116] It should be noted that Lyotard's account here can sound overly focused on the textual to the detriment of the lived. Lyotard's own insistence that what he calls "phrases" incorporate 'acts' more widely conceived means that "scrutinizing" and "writing" could mean silent ritual practices, or my glazing of challah with eggwash, or the hybrids of hora dances and ceilidhs that were a feature of life in the Jewish 'Greater Gorbals'. This is not to deny the textual drag in his accounts of the Jewish-idiom, nor in my recapitulation of it, but to indicate that his concept of "phrases" lets us read him otherwise, and that I try to do so.

witness and testimony. Carried out in "scrutinizing the letters of the book" and the "pursuit of writing" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.10), it opposes indifference, the closure to justice and the settling of a final phrase, with the sense of a debt, a messianic one, that cannot be met. For Lyotard, Jewish narratives tend towards the weave of the petit récit. In this they have a freighted, subordinate relationship towards hegemonic meta-narratives, and an affinity to jokes. In this they have a humorous, subversive relationship to the politician's old tale of the long arc of progress of the Christian West. For Lyotard, What the Jewish-idiom, and its "idiom-images" such as the Hasidic, recurrently contests is that a matter can be settled, that reading and interpretation can be brought to an end:

> Basically this is what the Hassidim could say, with their perfect concern (and considerable intelligence in the matter) for making very clear that the content of this idea is not giv-en, that this law is not determinant, and that one never knows … There is here a very interesting short circuit because the just of the Hassidic tradition rise up against Jacobinism, saying that it is madness to know the just. (*Just Gaming*, 1985, pp.91-2)

We would note here that while notions like "Westness" or "Eastness" may seem to be potential "idiom-matrices", they are more like meta-narratives purporting to play that role. There is no "obligation of Westness" that would give it positive content only the sense, encouraged for political ends, that there is a unity to the disunities. We are back here with the propagandistic side of that "Judeo-Christian" hyphen. For Jewishness is not a "Westlessness" nor "Westness" but a profound force both in its own positive content as a "Jewish-idiom", and for the revision of many other idioms affected by its obligations and effects upon genres: literary, pictorial, ritualistic and innumerable others.[117] We can then think what is hidden by hyphens beyond that between Jewish and Christian, those with Shinto-idioms, Islamic. Could Jewish narratives of diaspora — Moorish society, Middle Eastern — not in fact be said to challenge those "false-idioms" of East and West more than any other?

But how does this capacity of the Jewish idiom for reinterpretation sit beside the obligations we

[117] Jonathan Boyarin's dually anthropological and theoretically work would lay the idea of Jewish "westlessness" to rest in any case ("The Other Within and The Other Without" in *Storms From Paradise,* 1992, pp.77-99).

have evoked? Seeking judiciousness in designation called us to this obligation towards idioms, but these seditious idioms appear to constantly undermine themselves. And if they did not we may have even worse problems, "another danger - that of sticking strictly to the letter" (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.25). Can betrayal and obligation find common cause? It would have to be by way of paradox, rather than a hyphen, a mode of passage familiar to the Jewish-idiom:

> [in] a certain Jewish tradition, more precisely the Hassidic one … I found the same striking paradoxes as in the Sophists, but with what the Sophists lacked: a feeling for the law, and for the testimony of the law. There is a law and we absolutely don't know what it says, nor even from where it comes to us, but we have always to invent it through our actions. This law tells us that there are things to do and things not to do, without telling us which is which … there is in [Kafka's] work a definite sense of 'something that must be done,' of a debt. ("That Which Resists", 1992, p.404)

We will return to these enabling paradoxes of the "Jewish-idiom" in the Chapter ahead. For now, we have one final pass to risk across the schema we now have some sense of. If we imagine these nested "idiom-forms", "idiom-images" and so on, and all the differends that obtain between them, a question arises as to the largest scale we can conceive of. How would differends be resolved between "idiom-matrices", these huge trans-historical patterns of rules that have been with us for millenia?

Imposing as the task of finding new means to approach century-scale differends between "idiom-forms" or more local ones between "idiom-images", idiolects and genres is, this larger rift could leave us silent. Are all our idioms marked by a meta-scale partition that can hardly even be thought? What could prevent this reification of these immense aggregates of our "idiom-images" and "idiom-forms" would have to be a sort of general and shared capacity for idiomaticity in general: something we could call the "idiomatrice".

3.6 Cardross, or the Spider

If pixels were the ever-present, yet invisibilised, example with which we began this chapter, then the idiomatrice would indicate the potentiality for colour in general. In Lyotard's recurring image of languages, or more accurately acts-of-phrasing, as an archipelago, the idiomatrice would be the immense mountain ridge that forms if the water were drained. Given our language's need to classify, to indicate and single out, we struggle to think through a deeper unity that must underly this process of isolation and indication. But that unity is necessary to bear in mind. Otherwise, we end up in a bad infinite, a regress of idiolects which are grouped into idiom-images which are grouped into idiom-forms and so on. A separateness, in their differends, could go all the way down. If they have a unity, and it seems they must, because there are no idioms that are utterly untranslatable into others, then that unity would be something like a capacity for rule-forming in general. If idioms are patterns of rules, then this unity is the possibility of pattern *at all*.

When trying to think this idiomatrice, this vast inter-relation of so many idioms I often turn to the image of a spider's web. The individual strands are like the "idiom-images", those seemingly unending lists we could begin to form. These could be styles for painting: Renaissance, Modern, Actionist, Fauvism.[118] Even the idiolects of some individual painters could form "idiom-images", with enough tenacity.[119] They could be denominations, cultural movements and populations within the wider Jewish-idiom and its adjacent idioms: Haredi, Masorti, Masortim, Haymanot,

[118] While this list and its focus on painting is in line with Lyotard's constant citation of what is thought of as "high-art", the schema applies to other instances of creative activity. In this way, the questioning by UK Drill of the obligations of Electronic Music, as well as previous questionings by Garage, 2-Step and so on would be equally philosophical, an attempt by its practioners to form idiolects that rethink the rules of a genre. In that example the "idiom-images" would be UK Drill, Garage and 2-Step and the "idiom-form" Electronic Music.
[119] We could think here of Joaquín Torres-García's "Universal Constructivisim" (Rommens, *The Art of Joaquín Torres-García*, 2016), Gwen John, even Maître Frenhofer.

the Haskalah, Yiddish tales, Marranos as well as Iberian Jews. And these strands are made up of tiny idiolects bound into lines of obligation: like the map-lines of Wittgenstein's walks over the wider landscape of language games. Together these strands form webs, "idiom-forms". They have what seem to be centres, what could be taken for fixed shapes, but the constant addition of new strands could change that completely, throw them into entirely different arrangement of gravity.

Now imagine pulling further back to see that these webs are hanging across a huge hall. A ruin, we could imagine the abandoned seminary at Cardross: a depleted silo. Combining into other webs, clashing and intersecting, you would struggle to isolate any web entirely from the ones around it. This is one way to image the "idiom-matrice". Suspended, these webs upon webs hang in the void. If taken in isolation they would seem foundationless but not structureless. Each strand depending on each other, each web within the web both its own entity and not. You could find the centre of a web by pressure, by travelling across it. If idiom-forms could be said to have centres, to have "essential-for-now" aspects, they could be these struts on which much of the rest of the web depends. And you change them of course, in fact any strand can break, be reconnected, rerouted or change, but not all of them at once, these sticky chains of continuity and coherence. Interrelation and fine details prevail. There are radial strands and orb ones, overlap and underlay.

We are far from any relativism, with this intricacy. And through all this the spider tightrope walker tentatively steps, utterly immersed in it even as they spin new sections.[120] Which is not to say that some do not construct crude images, as simplistic as a spiderweb tattoo, to intimidate others and proclaim impartiality; in actual fact the leverage of one particular part of the web. Forgetting this, or not forgetting but forgoing this essentialism, we instead can be captivated by the play of light across and within it, feel the silk in our own spinnerets, and help the other spider-flies to find our way and strand out new sections without becoming stuck. We can defy both those who would swipe dumbly through the structure, and those who would claim to be its

[120] This impressionistic account is not entirely in opposition to scientific fact. In "Extended Spider Cognition" Japyassu and Laland write "We conclude that the web threads and configurations are integral parts of [a spider's] cognitive systems" (2017, p.11)

sole spinner. We can even see a few stray spiders ballooning, feeling for electrostatic beneath their feet, spinning idiolects in the empty air.

The question comes, what is holding all these webs up, what binds them to the hall over which they hang? This entire structure is attached by the oldest of webs. We could call one of the walls space-time and, as Lyotard does in *The Differend,* the idiom that attaches to them the "matter-idiom". We could call the other the ability to set and follow rules. They are what all the other idioms in their intricacies are attached to. They are what we could call the idiomatrice.[121]

[121] And what could we say of Malraux's fear of both the maternal and the spider's bite? (Lyotard, "Berthe, or the Spider" in *Signed, Malraux,* 1999, pp.1-14*)*.

4 Observations

4.1 Argument

Kant frets, in a note on his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* that "Everything goes past like a river and the changing taste and the various shapes of men make the whole game uncertain and delusive. Where do I find fixed points in nature, which cannot be moved by man, and where I can indicate the markers by the shore to which he ought to adhere?" (2011, pp.xlv). While in later works his search for fixed points, for oughts and obligations, would conceal its affective charge for the author more carefully, here in this handwritten note slipped into his personal copy, we can see him affected by the issue intensely. Kant, the quiet day walker of Königsberg's bridges, caught in a raging tide of indifference.

"[To] respond to a case without criteria, which is reflective judgement, is itself a case in its turn, an event to which an answer, a mode of linking will eventually have to be found. This condition may be negative, but it is the principle for all probity in politics as it is in art. I am also obliged to say: as it is in thinking" wrote Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984, p.27) seeing the same lack of fixity that terrified Kant as an enabling condition of thought. Caught between these two, the tug of uncertainty's tide and the free flow it offers, we find ourselves on a strange shore; a parádoxos. The obligation is to have no fixed and final obligation.

Having given the until now hardly developed concept of idiom some skeletal structure (if not quite fleshy nuance) we need in this chapter to confront a new problem it prompts. Why should one feel obligated to any Idiom over another? Should we? If we are unable to answer this,

democracy and pluralism can end up as, what Hobbes called, an "aristocracy of orators" (Flathman, *Thomas Hobbes: Skepticism, Individuality and Chastened Politics*, p.141). Without any criteria for obligation and judgement we risk a situation like the free speech regress. Which speech acts are silently excluded to guarantee the freedom of all the others? In the mode of philosophy's first practitioners, answering these questions will depend upon paradoxes as much as assertions.

When considering the "Jewish-idiom", and what it embeds within itself of Jewish thought and its numerous "idiom-images", we will elevate questions about ethics. In so doing, we will see a hidden lineage emerge from within that mode of thinking, a maternal subjectivity and ethical relation that has a patriarchal mirror image in Emmanuel Levinas and Franz Rosenzweig. This is brought out into bright light by Mara H. Benjamin's *The Obligated Self: Maternal Subjectivity and Jewish Thought* (2018). The relation of being interdependent and in the arms (to return to previous phrases, in the "Mainmise") of another also opens out a common space with the "Christian-idiom" as we find it threaded throughout Lyotard's writings.

The concept of paradosis, will come into our discourse here. While often translated simply as "tradition", the word has resonances far beyond the simple handing over of an unchanged set of precepts. By blending transmission with betrayal, paradosis constitutes another, propitious, way to think through central concerns of Lyotard's, and the implications of the concept of idiom. It also allows for a highly risky, required and, for now, postponed [distentio] encounter with the presence of erotics and the libidinal in Lyotard's writings on what we could call "Christian themes". This includes *The Confession of Augustine* (2000), along with other references to the Algerian-born Saint elsewhere in his corpus. Jean-Luc Nancy in his *Dis-enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (2008), which includes an essay directly concerned with *The Hyphen*, and in Nancy provocatively titled *Coming* (2011) would offer us a companion spirit for this future exploration of the "Christian-idiom". And "Companion spirits" will recur in our concluding consideration of what the concept of Paracletes may have to offer us.

As is necessary, this chapter will function as much as a promissory note for further research as that research's undertaking, but it lends balance to our, until now, heavy emphasis on Jewish

thought to the expense of the Christian. Research from within Christian studies and theology on Lyotard has tended to transfer his concepts unchanged into theological debates, a protocol carried out with the greatest nuance and number of generative results by Lieven Boeve in his *Lyotard and Theology* (2014). Nonetheless this uni-directionalism has left Lyotard un-illuminated by Christian studies in turn. However, exposed this insecure initial attempt to transfer concepts from the "Christian-idiom" back into Lyotard's discourse may leave us, I hope it has the merit of at least invoking new possibilities. In this, it strives to provide a second answer to that insistent question, what obliges us to one idiom in particular situations rather than another? Here we will see why many writers have placed interdictions on how explicitly we can speak of ethics.[122] We will also see the potent means that idioms associated with words like "Jewish" and "Christian" continue to offer for irresponsibly betraying that interdiction.

4.2 The Maternal, The Mountain

Feminist theorist Luce Irigaray once claimed, in *Le Corps-A-Corps Avec La Mere*, that "our entire Western culture is founded on the murder of the mother" (1981, p.81). Leaving aside the erasure of the Jewish and Christian differends implied in a unitary "Western culture", this excessive statement does capture a certain painful truth. Lyotard's writings often lapse into this more masculine language Irigaray attends to, and his sometimes his infancies can end consisting only of sons. Claire Nouvet's "For "Emma"" (2016, pp.37-56) uses resources from within Lyotard's work, and hints of Freud, to this end. But we can aid her in the correction of some of this masculine excess, by drawing on resources from Jewish Studies.

In *The Obligated Self: Maternal Subjectivity and Jewish Thought* (2018), Mara H. Benjamin offers us a new way to think through notions of interdependency. What is abstract and ethical in Levinas was, for her, made physical and immediate by her relationship to her children (2018,

[122] Wittgenstein not least among them.

p.xvii-xviii). However, as she immediately clarifies, this relationship was not reducible to biology, to a maternality that would depend upon womb-gestation (2018, p.xviii). Rather, Benjamin's experience of deep congruity between the ethical obligation she felt towards both the child she gave birth to and the child she adopted, gave her a new sense of maternal subjectivity as something immaterial and non-essentialist. This raised new possibilities for her, such as maternal subjectivities in bodies designated as male. It also demonstrated that these obligations were reducible neither to the bourgeois family nor to traditional couple forms or gendered pairings (2018, p.xviii-xix).[123] She is clear about the openness of this to trans and feminist imaginaries.[124] Benjamin's countering of parenting as patriarchy, by way of the figure of an "other" speaks to Lyotard's position: "It is necessary to be *bound,* expropriated, appropriated by the other, rather than the father" ("Mainmise" in *The Hyphen*, 1999, p.7).

Over the course of three chapters, titled "The Other", "The Third" and "The Neighbour", she explicitly sutures this sense of obligation to the ethics-as-first-philosophy of Levinas (2018, pp.86-7). At the same time as this binding, she carries certain ideas much further uphill. Levinas' reticence to speak too directly about how he sees the relation of his ethics to the "Jewish-idiom", is absent here.[125] Benjamin offers Mount Sinai as one instance of the ethical encounter with our inter-subjective obligations (2018, p.15-6). This is presented both in relation to the tablets, including their breaking, to the address by a voice whose presence remains at arm's length, and by re-emphasising voices excluded from the canon, especially Hagar (2018, pp.96-99). Though often abstract, she offers more material examples as well: placing Mount Sinai in contrast to the myth of the freely chosen "Social Contract".

Building on the jurisgenerative theories of Robert Cover, particularly in his essay "Obligation: A Jewish Jurisprudence of the Social Order" (1995, pp.239-248), Benjamin elaborates a basis for conceiving of society at odds with the tradition of Locke and Smith.[126] Given that it lies latent in

[123] A more material account of these complexities, emphasising the designating and dominating attempts of nation-states, will be offered by Helen Charman in her forthcoming *Mother State* (2021).
[124] Forms of materniality we can see all around us, and also in Pedro Almodovar's *All About My Mother* (1999) and Chantal Akerman's *My Mother Laughs* (2019).
[125] This reticence by Levinas was evident in his discussions with Lyotard (*The Interviews and Debates,* 2020, pp.95-104).
[126] Cover's attentiveness to obligation is also in evidence throughout *Narrative, Violence and the Law,* especially in

our legal traditions — our idioms are condition by the "idiom-image" of "Social Contract" we could say — this account of obligation with its related associations of responsibility, debt and law, may seem constraining on first reading. And Benjamin discusses it in those exact terms several times (2018, pp.14-5, 51-2). The modern subject bristles at being told it has obligations as well as freedoms.[127] However Benjamin's focus on the maternal offers a less harsh sense of what it is to be obligated, such as the obligations we have spoken of again and again to idioms. In a very practical sense, she is calling us towards societal forms that would try preserve our capacities to both be obligated and to reflect on our obligations.[128] These would be democratic, socialist, encouraging of popular discourse and education.[129] From this we could bind two senses of the maternal, two inter-related obligations. A first "maternal" obligation to the material conditions for reflection and inter-subjectivity. A second "matrice-ical" obligation, to the voice of infancy that call us to present the unpresentable: "a philosophical politics apart from the politics of "intellectuals" and of politicians. To bear witness to the differend" (*The Differed,* 1988, p.xiii).[130] The false freedom, that absolute image of emancipation we earlier unpicked, replaced with a difficult and dual process of reflection and the defence of the capacity for that reflection. We called it Exodus.[131]

In her images of infancy, Benjamin offers another bridge to the work of Lyotard. In his later writings, Lyotard often speaks of our obligation to reflection and justice in terms of childhood and the inarticulate voices within us (*The Hyphen,* 1999, p.5, 7). Benjamin, in an arresting section, describes the Jewish deity in these terms, as a child (2018, p.13-14).[132] This child-God cries out to the Jewish people in a desperate demand of obligation. Lyotard, in "On a Hyphen" speaks several times of this demanding voice of a God which remains out of reach and yet

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"The Folktales of Justice" (1995, pp.173-202) and his account of commitment in "Nomos and Narrative" (ibid, pp.144-6).

[127] Such has been the reaction, for instance, in the press to Judith Butler's recent turn towards interdependency as the utmost ethical relation. See *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020).

[128] If we use Howard Caygill's language from *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (2013), we could say that as well as the "capacity to resist" [Widerstand] he dissects, there is a "capacity to reflect" [Widerstreit] of no lesser importance.

[129] Reflection on our obligations and idioms "in place of the fear" of the imposed contract and the punishments of false scarcity (Bevin, *In Place of Fear,* 1952).

[130] Mia Spiro's "Anti-Nazi Modernism" (2013) attest to how these two obligations have and will continue to coincide.

[131] These polar processes are not antinomies but, to use an idiom to hand, an antisyzygy.

[132] Even as a *needy* and *highly demanding* child if we are being honest and unafraid of a little heresy. God is also imagined as an adoptive parent, as breastfeeding and as a figure giving birth.

demands of us an interminable debt (*1999,* p.25). Here, the obligation to the un-presentable, threaded through his writings, meets a "Jewish-idiom" of aniconism and non-presence. By inverting our inherited image of the Abrahamic God as a parent, Benjamin also inverts what we associate with obligation in general.[133] Rather than an imposition, it is here a relation-of-care, of constant Zakhor. Or rather it is both a relation-of-care and an imposition, as her unromantic accounts of lived motherhood attest to. The nocturnal cry is a clear instance of this, as well as lucid illustration of Lyotard's more abstract accounts of our debt to a Voice: unseen and just out of reach. If, as Lyotard claims, when we reflect on our obligations we are subjects "in a state of infancy" (*Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime,* 1994, p.20), then Benjamin's set of images and concepts are one potent way to explore and embrace that condition.

4.3 Paradidōmi, Idiom

Supplementing this account from within the "Jewish-idiom" of what it is to be obligated to a voice, to an un-presentable ethical presence, I would like to turn to the "Christian-idiom" and to a set of languages and figures it offers for thinking tradition-as-obligation. As with our account of the maternal, this will raise more lines for further thought than it settles. It should be said that some of the linguistic moves here are intended as playful ways of opening out new lines of thought, and not as claims to having a definitive reading of the sources.

The conveying of tradition is often thought of as among our heaviest obligations. In this we can feel some of the difficulty of that vast interchange of idioms evoked in the preceding Chapter, the sheer scale of which seems to erase our small phrasings. Still, instead of thinking of the passage and passing of tradition as solely a matter of fidelity, we could rethink it as involving an

[133] God as a parent, either female or agendered, is an active part of the present rethinking of "God and Gender". Christian-Womanist theology has done much to challenge dogma here, and so has Rachel Adler's work within the "Jewish-idiom" (*Engendering Judaism,* 1998*).*

equally necessary betrayal. Rather than seeing this betrayal as if it were an ethical failing, we should rethink it as a different inflection of the same obligation. We are obligated to carry and convey our idioms, and to betray them.

The odd status of the word Paradosis — and consonant terms such as paradidōmi — in the New Testament offers up an aperture upon this. If we translate "didōmi" as "to give", then the para prefix should render "paradidōmi" as something close to "to give into the hands (of another)", accepting of course immense variation given the specific context. The passive voice of "paradídōmi" is in fact used in Corinthians 11:23–24 to refer to the handing over of Jesus to the authorities, rendered usually as "was betrayed"[134]. This would emphasise the relation between Jesus and Judas, a mis-en-scène of trust broken like loaves. Even so, hidden here is another sense, that alongside this betrayal by Judas there was a handing over. And not of crumbs, but that structuring part of the "Christ-idiom", the paradox of God handing over his Son to the Romans and thus to "all". A similar stricture inheres in Luke 23:25: "He … surrendered Jesus to their will". Clearly the narrative sense is that "He" stands for "Pilate", and that betrayal or condemnation is the predominant sense. Still, the "He" incorporates within itself the shadow sense of God handing over his Son to the world.

This pact can be reinforced by making temporary peace with Paul. In Romans 4:25 we find another citation: "He was delivered over [paradidōmi] to death for our sins". Later, in Romans 8:32, we read "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up [paradidōmi] for us all". Paradidōmi then combines surrendering with handing over, delivering with betraying. Michael Dillon, in his essay "Paradosis" (1995, pp. 229-239), demonstrates how this generative matrix of terms gestate in the Greek term for "tradition" too. In fact, the patterning of paradidōmi in the New Testament is a large part of what grafts those codes to it.

"Paradosis" for Dillon has further sibling senses: that of "surrendering to justice" and of being both an act of giving and a "gift" (1995, p.229). We can see here how the traditions we transfer from one person's grasp to another, may demand not only a fidelity but a betrayal and surrendering. Thus, to be obligated to an idiom should not be thought of as a harsh imposition or

duty, but also a counter-intuitive "duty-to-betray"; an imperative to remake as well as preserve. "The witness is a traitor" (*The Inhuman*, 1988, p.204). In *The Hyphen,* Lyotard finds this dual imperative in the inextricable bind between the three r's — ritual, reading and writing — a bind that Paul tries to sever:

> It is necessary to examine closely, to scurtinize, the letters of the book. To scrutinize … is not only to follow the letter of the ritual, as Paul nastily suggests. The Jewish emancipation consists in the pursuit of writing, in the pursuit of writing on the subject of writing and on the occasion of the event. (*The Hyphen*, 1999, p.10)

This rendering of tradition as being treacherously in the hands of another, obligation as witness, betrayal and revisability, would also call us back again to the enriched maternal relation that Mara Benjamin attended to; as well as the perilous and partly erotic sense of being in the hands of another that Lyotard lends obligation and the call in his *The Confession of Augustine* (2000). Secondly, we find ourselves cycling back to that joyful sense that there should be festivals in the desert, in Exodus: "What the Christianized nations named Bible or Scripture is called in Hebrew *Miqra*, meaning convocation, reading, festive celebration" (1999, p.13).

4.4 Paracletes

Invoking Augustine brings us to one more and, for our purposes here, final way of phrasing our relations of obligation that we find in the Jewish and Christian idioms. Augustine's confessions are considered an early account of what it is to have a conscience, to be tossed back and forth by an un-presentable voice that challenges your commitments to the obligations which you claim to have bound yourself to. In "Accuser, Judge and Paraclete - On conscience in Philo of Alexandria" (1999) H-J Klauck offers an account of how the third of those terms — "Paraclete" —

[134] "Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread" (Corinthians 11:23–24).

can illuminate the roots in antiquity of our idea of having a conscience.[135] Another word here would be an intercessor, an angel or spirit that intervenes within us and on our behalf. As the tripartite structure of Klauck's title shows it may not be blindly on our side. But the paraclete curiously combines a witness, advocate, accuser, and judge in a single figure. Philo even links it to the logos itself ("The Life of Moses III" in *The Works of Philo*). In the New Testament it is found exclusively in the Johannine literature, as a recurrent descriptor for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In all this abundance, we can see several overlapping attempts to describe how our sense of our ethical obligations — whether we fail or meet them — is experienced as both a call from outside or near to us ("para" meaning "beside" and "kalein" to call) and a voice experienced from within: as a conscience. The sense that we are both obligated to our idioms (that we exist in relation to them) and that they almost entirely constitute us (save that minimal suppôt through which we cannot but les them pass) is here given form in the figure of an intercessing spirit, a conscience of our obligations that as much as it may judge us, and act as a "telltale at the passage" (Harvey, 2001), also advocates on our behalf.

Listening to the harmonies between these three figures — the maternal obligation, the conveying-betrayal of tradition and the advocate-judge of our conscience — we can hear the stirrings of a different way of conceiving obligation than the heavy drone of duty. It may even cause us to question if those serial terms, the ones that Paul and others while caught in the fervour of a new idiom's formation cast into doubt (Law, duty, obligation, and tradition) may be better though not as dull, dead sand but fecund grounds for ethical inquiry. Certainly, the fact that our "designations" would place us in a state of obligation to something beyond our reach would not rule out that position as a mere "manceps" of domination. The free reflections on our laws are an ever-necessary supplement to the lawless freedom of our imaginations.[136]

Walter Benjamin was fond of similar figures to the paraclete. Better remembered, by many, than his "theses" on history was his passing on of that icon-image of a melancholy angel: the "Angelus

[135] For the definitive modern account, see Balibar's consideration of the hyphen that was inserted into French translations of Locke's "con-science" in *Identity and Difference* (2013).
[136] The tension here, between reflection and obligation, is a path-forming reality in Jewish practices such as Halakhic discourse, and merits far deeper reflection in relation to the concepts outlined in this essay than I am, at present, able to carry through with the care required.

Novus" (1920) of Klee. Gillian Rose proposed as her preferred figure the "Angelus Dubiosus" (*Judaism and Modernity*, 1993, pp.9-10, 209); an all-too-canny counter-suggestion. Could we say, following Mara H. Benjamin, that instead Klee's "Angel Applicant" would be a kinder companion paraclete? This young angel in-formation, a little clumsy and liable to fumble tradition as it carries out its obligations, that evokes an ethical sense of the maternal in us. An unruly angel, in a state of interminable infancy.

5 Marks

5.1 Concluding, Marks

Collections of Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* tend to conclude with what are known as the *Remarks* on those observations (2011, p.65-202). I would like to follow all the observations made in this essay up to this point with four marks by way of conclusion. They are ~, |, _ and ☰.

As I asserted in the opening chapter, Lyotard's interest in the hyphen, and in the effects (philosophical, political) of punctuation on thought has a pragmatic side as well as an abyssal one. Given that a constant critique of philosophy is that it fails to produce any results, in this pragmatic spirit we could ask "if not a hyphen, then what?". As well as carrying out this short experiment, each symbol corresponds to an aspect we have covered in the chapters up to this point, offering a chance for recounting as well as concluding.

"Jewish~Christian"? While visually akin to a hyphen, a tilde holds a quite different meaning. Tildes can mean roughly; the journey took roughly four hours or D=~4h. It can also have a function closer to a minus, a command to find the difference between two quantities: 3~5=2. In a sense then the tilde is the reality of the situation as we found it, particularly within Religious Studies. The relation between Jewish and Christian is complicated, impossible to fix definitively. New models and maps are needed, as we found in our first chapter, and what we have at present is a stopgap. However, this confession of complexity was not, and is not, a lack. It evidences a necessary humility, alongside a salutary suspicion about the ability of any single reading or

symbol to encapsulate these intricate histories. Further, it undermines the tendency to abstract away the messy, sometimes joyful or grieving, realities of that history which has been the constant critical check on the models outlined in what has been argued here.

It is the difficulty of this tilde-esque relation between the terms that prompts a severe punctuating mark like “Jewish | Christian”. The vertical bar, as a symbol in programming, is used to designate the logic operation “or”. Rotating the bridge of the hyphen, we create a partition, a sense of sharp decision and desire for clarity. It come closes to that direly limited horizon of Jewish¬Christian or Christian¬Jewish, but in this the way of writing the relation, “Jewish | Christian”, there is not only a lessening, but a lesson.

Despite the effort to bear the messiness of lived experience in mind, there are still acts of seizure and designation of others as certain categories, based on little more than staring. It was the ever-shifting sightlines of these acts of designation and assignation that occupied us in chapter two. The harm that slurs can cause, that sting from being reduced to another figure’s designation, can be turned against this threat, in a treacherous process of self-assignation. These assignations, if they avoid becoming as fixed and remain revisable, offer potent political powers not easily abandoned. They also open individuals onto intricate processes of obligation in relation to larger idioms, with which they often share their letters.

Excessive, this sharp vertical line can remind us of the benefit of a little distinction every now and again, of how it places us in situations of obligation. These processes, of being in the grip of a voice or call beyond oneself, turned us to ideas of exodus, of crossing a wilderness from one “mancipem” into another. It cannot be the mark we are after; its partition prevents all interchange between the terms. But, as with the tilde, its refusal should serve also as means for recollection.

In writing “Jewish_Christian” it is as if we write “Jewish Christian” and then emphasise the space. It is tempting to turn towards this radical openness, when we are caught between the rough relation of the tilde and the tough boundary of the vertical bar. This underlining of the space could be taken to emphasise the difficulty, and differends, in our existence between

idioms, an issue we strived to speak to in chapter three. This reckoning with the ineffable edges of idioms has its own risk though, if practiced in isolation from other processes of designation and obligation, from ethics, even erotics. A non-interventive indifference, too content with silence, can become injustice. And so, we felt the call to orientate ourselves in this web of idioms, and to accept obligations that proceeded our potential to reject them.

By the end it could seem as if only multiple lines could capture the complexity that confronts us. An underlining and hyphening with a high Hebrew maqaf, and the threat of the too sharp tilde or vertical line still strong in our minds. We could write it as “Jewish三Christian”, as “Christian三Jewish”. These parallel lines perhaps recall for us, as well as the symbols until now, paracletes and paradosis, two of the many strands shared between the Jewish-Idiom and Christian that we began to trace in the fourth chapter. The spider spray, and image of the ineffable “Idiomatrice”, that concluded the third chapter seems to hang around here too, a little hard to grasp. All these traits and traces that can be hidden by way of a hyphen.

But, provided we write “Christian-Jewish” as often as “Jewish-Christian” is it possible that despite having looked so long for another sign the hyphen could remain our mark of choice? When seen, as we now can, not as a solid dividing or joining stroke, but as a slit, an aperture onto the series of developing images that have been taken here, and which ceaselessly need to be reframed, retaken, remade. Between all these images, and the idioms they invoke, are further differends, and countless hyphens, punctuating our interminable and watchful ethics.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

These textual matters, which have occupied much of our argument, should not obscure the stakes behind this thesis. We began by recognising an issue within our current ways of speaking of religious life, which scholars were concerned failed to track with sufficient care the interrelations between categories, or to avoid teleological framings of history. Bound to this,

were real and lived concerns that these apparently loose linguistic symbols could be and still are mobilised to bring about violent ends; tangling history's dreamwork into a trap and nightmare.

In the 'Designations' chapter the basis of a different way of conceiving the relation between self-ascribed identity and linguistic utterances was elaborated alongside Kripke, Lyotard, Fanon and others, an account which was built up by critically dissecting Sartre's. As well as a reconceiving, this was intended as a challenge; to the ascribing of particular identifiers to populations for the purposes of exerting force upon them, and to the subsequent assaults, displacements, pogroms and other miseries inflicted upon bodies after this sorting process. A new reading of the *Jew and Judean* debate was offered, testing the threads that had been spun.

In the "Idioms" chapter that followed, the crucial question of what these words must refer to, if we are suspicious of it being a fixed, essential, transhistorical content, was addressed. Lyotard's quiet and cautious response of "idioms" was given fuller, lively, voice in dialogue with Wittgenstein and writers from Jewish Studies: Daniel Boyarin and Annette Yoshiko-Reed. While not scurrying over the limits of what was possible, this extension beyond any treatment in the scholarship on Lyotard up to now was offered as a resource for further refinement by the present researcher and others; an outline whose fine web of detail future work could weave.

In the "Obligations" section before these concluding marks and remarks, the third term connecting "designators" to "idioms" was examined: "obligation". Seeking a more open sense of "obligation" led us to Mara P. Benjamin's writings, and other guiding figures. In all this, we tried to both bear witness to and lend light on those differends that inhere in our concepts as we inherit them, and to cast any thin spidery tightropes we could between those words left hanging.

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