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Issues of Assimilation, Language and Identity in the Lives of Young Max Nordau and Tivadar Herzl

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***Abstract:** The name of Theodor Herzl (Herzl Tivadar) evokes his Hungarian ties and the major stages of his life and work with relative ease, but doctor, writer and journalist Max Nordau (1849, Pest – 1923, Paris), requires a more delicate approach, having essentially sunk into oblivion despite his prolificacy in literature and his wide-ranging Zionist activities. In the case of Max Nordau, the second personality discussed in this paper, the aim of this paper is not to remedy the lack of information on Nordau, but to draw a comparison and a parallel between the years Nordau and Herzl spent in Pest in terms of assimilation and issues of language and identity. We first highlight events that are relevant to Nordau and Herzl's family background, schooling, school transfers and university education, and then discuss in greater detail the linguistic and cultural paradigm shift that began in 1861 and forced Nordau first into a defensive position and then into isolation both socio-culturally and occupationally, but led to well-balanced bilingualism in Herzl's case.*

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Max Nordau, Theodor Herzl, bilingualism, Judaism

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"In 1849, in the city of Pest – before Budapest even existed – as the sun set on July 28th and dawned on the 29th, a child was born on the ground floor of the house at 4 Dob street (Anna and Max Nordau 1928: 10). The date in Nordau's memoir is confirmed by his birth certificate issued for Simon Gabriel Südfeld, a name he officially changed to Max Nordau in 1873. Nordau's father, Gabriel Südfeld, was born in 1799 in the town of Krotoszyn (near Poznan), which was under Prussian rule at that time, and he was reputed as a deeply religious Orthodox Jew (Nordau 1920: 21-23). Although he was a well-educated rabbi, but he did not practice his profession but instead worked as a private tutor in Prague, Bratislava and Old Buda. Nordau's mother (born Nelkin) came from Riga. The Südfeld family eventually moved to Apartment 6 of the house on 7 Dohány street (Schulte 1997: 45).

Tivadar Herzl was born in 1860 at 4 Dohány street, in the house adjacent to the synagogue, and spent his childhood there until his family moved to the more fashionable Lipótváros, settling near the Vigadó Concert Hall. His father, Jacob Herzl, came from a German-speaking Moravian family and emigrated to Debrecen, settling down in Pest in 1856. Herzl's mother Jeanette Diamant, the daughter of a wealthy clothes merchant in Pest, came from a line of Moravian and Slovakian ancestors. Herzl's father was largely occupied with business, leaving his mother in charge of family affairs, and it is presumed that her dominant character inspired Mrs. Samuel and David's mother in his novels *Das neue Ghetto* and *Altneuland*, respectively. The family belonged to the circle of assimilated Hungarian Jews – an average modern religious Jewish family in Pest. Both Nordau and Herzl had one parent who was very committed to German culture – in Nordau's case, it was the father, and in Herzl's, the mother –, both of whom did their best to systematically instill this attachment into their children. However, the monographer documenting Herzl's childhood points out that the mother's fondness of German is better explained by her circumstances than by conscious choice, as her image of Pest was shaped more by its German atmosphere than the fact that it was the capital city of Hungary. She was not anti-Hungarian, or else she would not have allowed her children to learn fluent Hungarian, make friends with Hungarian-speaking children, and allow Tivadar to write patriotic poetry in Hungarian (see Handler 1983 for a more detailed discussion of Herzl's life).

In Jewish tradition, cultural capital and the importance of learning are prescribed in Deuteronomy, where it is said to be the father's responsibility to pass down the fundamental principles of religion to his sons and raise them in the spirit of Jewish tradition, which in turn makes compulsory education a religious obligation. The Haskalah – also called the Jewish Enlightenment, a movement originating in Germany – played an important role in the Jewish acquisition of cultural capital, the growing number of Jewish educational institutions and the secularization of the curriculum. This ideology combined with Joseph II's agenda in Hungary

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to make the establishment of Jewish schools desirable in order to help urbanize the Jewish population, which then saw the rise of new Jewish schools offering secular education (Felkai 1992: 75-79). Nordau, who was enrolled as Südfeld into such a Jewish school, the "Israelite Elementary School of Pest" (*Pesti Izraelita Főelemi Iskola*) founded in 1814, describes his experiences in his memoir as follows:

Young Max had attended a Jewish school before he was five years old, and since he had learned to read and write there, he immediately became an honor student. The language of instruction was German, the lingua franca of nearly every circle in Pest at the time, and German culture was the only culture taken seriously – Hungarian seemed to be the sign of an inferior, nay, a barbaric state. The young student dazzled his teachers with his perceptiveness and quick wit, as well as his uncanny memory; he always received the best grades and there was no absolutely doubt that high school would eventually follow. [A kis Max már ötéves kora előtt a zsidó iskolába járt, és mivel már tudott írni és olvasni, rögtön osztályelső lett. Német nyelven folyt az oktatás, mivel ez akkor Pest majdnem minden körének érintkezési nyelve volt. A német kultúra volt az egyetlen, amelyet komolyan vettek, mivel a magyar valami alsóbbrendű, sőt barbári állapot kifejezője volt. A fiatal diák elkápráztatta tanárait mind a megfigyelőképessége és gyors felfogása, mind a nem szokványos emlékezőtehetsége révén. Mindig a legjobb osztályzatokat kapta, és nem lehetett kétség afelől, hogy az elemi osztályok után a gimnázium következne.] (Nordau 1928: 16, literal translation by É. M.)

Although in 1866 Herzl began his education in the same school as Nordau, by the time he enrolled the language of instruction had changed to Hungarian. In the 1860's, the Pesti Főelemi Iskola was not known for its strict adherence to German educational principles, and thus was not aimed at students whose parents were more fond of Jewish tradition and less fond of Hungarian culture, but rather the school sought to comply with Hungarianization policies, and according to Handler, this Hungarian-friendly attitude was largely due to the Israelite Hungarian Society [*Izraelita Magyar Egylet*]. As a compensatory measure for taxing Jews who actively and enthusiastically supported the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, the Empire returned a considerable sum of money to the Society, on one condition – that they must develop a denominational school system. However, Jewish schools far surpassed the

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ideology of this measure, trumping even Christian Hungarian schools in their efforts to Hungarianize, and their teachers soon became fanatic propagators of patriotism, struggling relentlessly against all German influence. Had the Herzl parents decided to shield their children from Hungarian influences, they would have followed the example of Jewish parents who enrolled their children in Catholic, Evangelical or Scottish Missionary schools (Handler 1983). Although the language of instruction in the Pesti Izraelita Főelemi was Hungarian and the textbooks were also written in Hungarian (or translated from German), the report cards were issued in both Hungarian and German, and Herzl's report card shows that his results were excellent, but not outstanding (Handler 1983). As Jacob Herzl took great pains to educate his children, he, like many others in that period, also hired a tutor for his son, and it is presumed that Herzl spent the whole school year of 1868-69 under private instruction since his name is not listed in the school newsletter. Nordau describes his high school years in great detail in his memoir:

In August, 1859, Max graduated from the Jewish school with honors and won a scholarship to study at the Catholic high school in Pest, where his success continued and it seemed that he would finish his studies with flying colors and virtually no obstacles. However, the spring of 1862 saw the rise of a strong Hungarian nationalist movement, bringing about a new school regulation and with it, the downfall of education. The German language was suddenly banished from all high schools, to be replaced with Hungarian in almost every subject, though few teachers were fluent in Hungarian and even fewer could actually teach in the language. (...) To young Max, this was a terrible catastrophe – his father had taught him to love the language of Goethe and Schiller and at the same time instilled into him a prejudice against Hungarian, which was the language of the lower classes at that time. Max Nordau would later learn to praise this nationalist movement fondly and openly, and the literature of the Hungarian people with it, but at that moment, the child felt betrayed by the change. He stayed at the high school for one more year, but his relationship with his new teachers – most of them former Jews feigning extreme Hungarianization – turned increasingly hostile, leaving the young man mortified. He left the institute at the end of the school year to enroll in the German-language Calvinist high school, where he finished his studies. [1859 augusztusában Max a zsidó iskolát a legjobb bizonyítvánnyal fejezte be, és a pesti katolikus gimnázium ösztöndíjasa lett. Sikerei folytatódtak, s úgy tűnt, hogy tanulmányait fényes

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eredményekkel és minden akadály nélkül sikerül befejeznie. Ám 1862 tavaszán egy erős magyar-nemzeti mozgalom bontakozott ki, amely egy új iskolatörvénnyel az eddigi oktatást teljes mértékben romba döntötte. A német nyelvet hirtelen száműzték a gimnáziumokból, és a magyar jött majdnem minden tantárgy esetében a helyébe. Kevés tanár beszélt folyékonyan a magyar nyelvet, és még kevesebben tudtak ezen a nyelven tanítani. (...) A fiatal Max számára ez egy szörnyű katasztrófa volt. Az apja Goethe és Schiller nyelvének a szeretetére tanította, de egyidejűleg beléirtotta a magyarral szembeni előítéletet is, amely akkoriban főként az alacsonyabb néprétegek nyelve volt. Később azonban Max Nordau annál szívesebben és nyíltabban méltatta ennek a nemzeti mozgalomnak a szépségét, nem kevésbé a magyar nép csodálatos irodalmát. Ám abban a pillanatban gyermeki lelkiületének egy ilyesfajta változás árulásnak tűnt. Bár még egy évig a gimnáziumban maradt, de közte és az új tanárok között – többnyire kikeresztelkedett zsidók, akik extrém magyarizálódást színleltek – állandósultak a súrlódások. A fiatalembert ez megbotránkoztatta, és a tanév befejeztével elhagyta az intézetet, hogy a német nyelvű kálvinista gimnázium tanulója legyen, ahol a tanulmányait be is fejezte.] (Nordau 1928: 19-20, literal translation by É. M.)

In order to understand Nordau's prejudices and decision concerning the Hungarian language, we must look to the history of education and education policies at the time he was attending school. In 1849, Minister of Religion and Education Leo Thun introduced the institution of eight-year gymnasium system in Hungary, based on the Austrian school system. The language of instruction was to be the language of the host settlement, and its grammar and literature was to be taught extensively. A year after this new edict, German became a compulsory school subject, and in accordance with a provision introduced at the end of 1854, the majority of senior high school classes also had to be taught in German. By the school year 1855-56, this provision was extended to lower-level classes as well; however, these demands proved unrealistic in light of the lack of language knowledge exhibited by students and teachers alike, as well as due to the anti-Habsburg sentiments of the population. As a result, these measures were reconsidered, allowing school management to choose the language of instruction, and by 1860, German was just another subject in the curriculum. However,

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fundamental changes did not occur until the *October Diploma*,¹ which overruled the provisions of the *Entwurf der Organisation der Gymnasien und Realschulen in Oesterreich*, the Austrian education system (Mészáros 1988: 78) in favor of a new high school curriculum that foregrounded Hungarian nationalist high school education and reduced German to an elective subject, although one year later a new provision made German language and literature a compulsory subject to be taught in all high school classes two hours a week.

After graduating from the Jewish elementary school, Nordau began the school year of 1859-60 as a first-year student at the *k. k. Staatsgymnasium* (a "state high school" in Pest).² Students aren't listed by name in the school newsletter issued at the end of the year, but the statistics of the school (officially an eight-year high school) are worth mentioning: out of 299 students, 149 were Jewish and only 83 were Catholics. Nordau's class counted 68 students, 35 of them Jewish, while in terms of nationality, 58 considered themselves German, seven Hungarian. Nordau's first-year school schedule contained the following subjects: Religious Education (2 hours a week), Latin (8), German (4), Hungarian (2), Natural History (3), Physics (2), and Mathematics (3).

Although Catholic education sought to obtain the educational autonomy enjoyed by Protestant schools, they were completely under state control until 1935 in terms of financing, pedagogy and curriculum as well. In October 1861, when Nordau was in the third year, the Royal Council of Governors passed a decision that divided Catholic high schools into two categories: Hungarian-language and multilingual institutions. Nordau's school belonged to the latter, which means that the language of instruction was Hungarian, but the majority of students were German speakers and tended to use German in explanations, quizzes, tests, etc. alongside Hungarian. Protestant schools, on the other hand, enjoyed greater freedom despite having to adhere to the requirements of the *Entwurf* – due to having achieved educational autonomy in parliament in 1790-91, they were largely self-regulated, with the school administration free to choose the language of instruction, with secular authorities maintaining the right of inspection (Mészáros 1988: 85-89).

The liberal spirit of Protestant school management might have been the driving force behind Nordau's decisions to switch schools – although he started his fifth year (1863-64) in

¹ The October Diploma (German: *Oktoberdiplom*) was a constitution of the Austrian Empire issued by Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph on October 20, 1860 to resolve issues of state legislation within the Empire.

² "From the end of the 1770's, Catholic high schools that were maintained by the state-run Educational Fund were called »royal« high schools" (emphasis in the original). After 1849, to adhere to *Entwurf* terminology, royal high schools were renamed state high schools, then "royal" high schools again between 1867 and 1883, then "royal Catholic" high schools between 1883 and 1946 (Mészáros 1988: 84-85). The institute Nordau enrolled in opened Fall of 1858 with four classes (Mészáros 1996: 51).

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the Catholic gymnasium, he transferred to the Calvinist high school mid-semester and finished his gymnasium year there. At that time, Nordau had already published some of his shorter writings, with several poems and short stories appearing in *Der Salon. Organ für Belletristik, Kunst und Mode*, a journal published in Pest. Nordau published the following works in these journals: his poems *Mein Lied*, *Sternschnuppen*, *Das Meer der Liebe*, *Das Meer*, *Wunsch*, *Rosenmärchen*; his short story *Das schöne Raizenmädchen*, and one translation, *Ein Melodrama* (Nouvelle, nach dem Ungarischen des G. Lauka von Max Nordau); a story titled *Sechs Geschenke* (Mythe von Max Nordau) in the feuilleton column, and lastly, a piece titled *Die Eröffnung des deutschen Theaters in Pest*, signed M. N-au. In 1866, he went to spend a year in the country as a private tutor in Rákoskeresztúr, and then finished the senior high school classes, graduating in 1867.

Herzl began his secondary school studies in 1870, in a "science school" (*Pesti Városi Nyilvános Főreáltanoda*) founded in 1855 in Pest. Just like eight-year high schools, six-year science schools were a new type of secondary school introduced by the *Entwurf*, but instead of offering humanities-oriented, rigorous linguistic and literary education, science schools instead prepared their students for polytechnic studies and placed great emphasis on the natural sciences (Pukánszky 1998: 411-14). From 1861 on, the language of instruction in science schools was Hungarian, but most of the teachers – several of them veterans of 1848 who sometimes spoke enthusiastically of Kossuth in class – were not fluent speakers of the language (Handler 1983). According to the school newsletter issued at the end of 1870-71, Theodor Herzl belonged in class I. B and was listed among the top students despite the fact that his grades were not outstanding or excellent due to the incredibly high number of students in his class – 118 in total, whittled down to 105 by the end of the school year. Nevertheless, Herzl's final grades satisfied neither his nor his parents' expectations, and according to the newsletter issued a year later, he was still an honor student, but with slight improvements. However, at the end of the third year, the newsletter lists Herzl among those who "Left School", and it is safe to assume that he became a private student and prepared for the finals by himself. Although he achieved the highest grade in Religious Education, his monographer claims that religious studies were not Herzl's forte. His results were outstanding in Hungarian, German, Geography and History, while his weakest subject was Art (Handler 1983). After a year-long hiatus from his studies, Herzl became unmotivated and was absent quite often in the second semester, but while his results in Hungarian and Religious Education suffered, he still remained one of the top students of his class.

As there were no unexpected events or sickness in the family, Herzl's long absences might have been due to his founding and managing, in his fourth year, a high-standard literary club called *Wir (We)*, with his sister and friends, in which he acted as chairman. In order to

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restore some balance in face of the extreme Hungarianization experienced in school, Herzl drafted the charter of the club in German, which became the official language of their meetings. Club members still sought to maintain their bilingualism, however, and so at their meetings they presented both Hungarian and German papers and poetry. The club was heavily influenced by German language author, in particular, Lenau and Hölderlin, but Herzl did readings of his own Hungarian work as well, such as his translation into German of János Arany's *The Mustache (A bajusz)*, a summary of Arany's epic *Miklós Toldi (Toldi Miklós)* in his essay of the same name, and a discussion of Mihály Vörösmarty in his paper *The Hungarian Poet (A magyar költő)*. Herzl also shared his papers *Oxygen (Oxigén)* and *The Philosopher's Stone (A bölcsek köve)*, and wrote about historical figures like Girolamo Savonarola and Napoleon. While in his Hungarian works Herzl did not tackle German topics, Hungarian events often served as a backdrop in his German works; Jewish topics, on the other hand, were completely absent in both. According to Handler, Herzl's Hungarian works reflect his character and intellect better as they were based on reality, experience and impressions, while his German writings were often ruled by his imagination. As Handler says: "His Hungarian works are that of a Hungarian boy whose education and social relationships are permeated by a prominently Hungarian environment, while his German works are that of a Hungarian boy admiring German culture from afar" (Handler 1983: 71).

According to the school newsletter discussed above, Herzl was not a member of the official school clubs of the institute (such as the *József Eötvös Club*) and did not partake in its activities or win in any of the contests, neither in the literary nor in the literary-historical category (Newsletter no. 288: 45), but was all the more active in his own group. However, he was forced to dissolve the club after three months when its greatest disadvantage proved to be the lack of faculty sponsorship enjoyed by other official clubs. Membership in Herzl's club meant extra work since everyone had to do at least one reading per meeting, and it is possible that teachers might have warned the parents when their children's performance at school began to suffer on account of their extracurricular activities. Although the club only operated for a short time, it showed Herzl's dedication to literature, and his literary success also had a positive impact on him, balancing out his poor performance at the science school.

In the 1874-75 school newsletter, Herzl is once again listed among the "Absentees" in his fifth year, and it is presumed that he was once again preparing for his exams as a private student. Though his childhood hero had been Ferdinand de Lesseps, the designer of the Suez Canal, Herzl's interest in polytechnics was snuffed out by his passion for writing. However, to become a writer, he needed proper high school education, and starting from the second semester of 1875-76, he spent three years (his sixth to eighth year) in the Evangelical high school (*Pesti Ágostoni Hitvallású Evangélikus Főgymnasium*) founded in 1822 and

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considered the best high school at the time (Beller 1996: 18-19). Due to the strict regulations of Catholic high schools, the Evangelical high school was *the* school of choice among Jewish students and thus became considered a Jewish school. After his experiences in a non-Jewish environment, Herzl now entered a different setting, one that greatly resembled the atmosphere of his family's house – the very prototype of a particularly well-assimilated but still distinctly Jewish environment (Beller 1996: 19) His grades were satisfactory at first and then by the summer of 1877 they greatly deteriorated, probably due to the fact that he dedicated most of his time to writing. This time, however, he was writing for a wider audience – according to his biography, he published his works in the two most prominent German-language journals in Pest, *Pester Lloyd* and *Pester Journal*, and sent reports of the parliament in Pest to the journal *Leben* in Vienna (Zsoldos 1981: 14). Following the death of Herzl's sister Pauline, the family removed permanently to Vienna in 1878, forcing Herzl to finish his high school studies as a private student.

Max Nordau's school years were decidedly different from Herzl's in terms of self-identification and education as well. He was born Simon Gabriel Südfeld, and according to a copy of Simon Miksa Südfeld's birth certificate, Nordau only received the permission of the Home Secretary to legally use his chosen name, Max Nordau, in 1873. In his memoirs, Nordau hinted at the fact that, even as a child, he liked to use this name or the initials M. N. to sign his short writings published in the monthly *Poesie und Kunst und Wissenschaft*, as well as his tales, poems, literary and theater criticism published in the biweekly *Salon der Literatur, Kunst und Mode*, and in *Entre Acte* (Nordau 1928: 21). In the decades following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the state was fairly liberal-minded towards name changes, and most requests were approved regardless of the social, ethnic background or religious affiliation of the petitioner, and the authorities did not distinguish between Hungarianization of names and other changes, meaning that it was possible to change a Hungarian name to a foreign name, or a foreign name to an equally foreign name (Karády and Kozma 2002: 39; on Jewish name changes in Hungary, see further the articles by Farkas).

The most relevant question regarding Nordau's name change is what motivated the switch from Süd/Feld to Nord/Au ('south'/'plains' to 'north'/'grove'), or rather, what inspired him to showcase his changed identity and alter the way he presented himself in public. Jens Malte Fischer, for example, questions the applicability of the theory of artificial Aryanization to Nordau's case (Fischer 1997: 94), while Christoph Schulte claims that Nordau's late transformation into self-conscious Jew was brought on by anti-Semitism and by the influence of Theodor Herzl once the German-language writer moved to Paris of his own volition. The name change was intended to hide all traces of Nordau's Jewish roots in Pest, and Nordau spent decades trying to erase all hints of a Jewish identity in his outward

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appearance. This name choice meant resisting not just Judaism, but Hungarian nationalism, and as such was "a political and ideological act" (Schulte 1997: 37). Max Nordau used the German language to express himself as a writer and an author, not the Yiddish of his parents or the Hungarian spoken in Pest. In fact, all published documents were signed "Max Nordau", and we only know that his original name was Südfeld through his memoirs

As a student, Nordau was affected by the October Diploma (a constitution issued by Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph to resolve issues of state legislation), particularly the provision that made Hungarian the official language of instruction. Overall, the process of Hungarianization was a negative experience for Nordau's whole family both culturally and financially. Due to this provision, his father Gábrriel Südfeld, who harbored deep resentment towards Hungarian culture, lost his livelihood as a German-speaking private tutor. The economic stability of the Südfeld family was compromised, and this bitterness is later voiced in Nordau's bestseller *Entartung* (1892-93), its principle line of thought being that any departure from Goethe and Schiller's culture leads to cultural depravity. The idea of Hungarian assimilation filled Nordau with disgust and he wanted to stay a German-language writer to the end, and thus severed his Jewish roots by changing his name and escaped Hungarian culture by leaving the old familiar setting and moving abroad (Schulte 1997: 37-39). Nordau's behavior and actions were the exception, rather than the general tendency of his generation and the Jewish population of the period. The Emancipation Act of 17th December 1867 fostered by baron József Eötvös acted as a catalyst for the assimilation efforts of the Hungarian Jewish population, and until 1914 there was a period of political and economic integration where the Jewish population gradually improved their economic status and their numbers had grown substantially between 1869 and 1910 from 542,000 to 911,000 (Katzburg 1999: 57). This growth was even more palpable in the capital city, where the Jewish populace grew to four times its previous size – statistics recorded 44,890 Jewish residents in 1869, 70,879 in 1880, and 203,687 in 1910. In percentages, this means 16.6% of the population in 1869 and 23.1% in 1910 were Jewish (Zeke 1990: 163). In 1881, 59% of the capital's Jewish population claimed Hungarian as their mother tongue, and in ten years, the number grew to 75% (Kovács 1988: 605). Viktor Karády (1993) called assimilation the joint interest of both Hungarian society and those trying to assimilate, and held that it served the collective safety of the Jewish population. To the liberal-minded nobility, supporting the process of assimilation was considered a *raison d'état*, as assimilation held the promise of a social stratum that would fill the role of the national bourgeoisie and would lead to a Hungarian majority within the nation. This linguistic and cultural assimilation, the process of Hungarianization, acquiring a strong sense of national consciousness and fostering loyalty to the Hungarian nation state took two generations to complete in the Jewish population.

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Successful assimilation and the rise of a strong middle class are linked together, and this is very apparent in the correlations between language, culture and religion (Karády 2002). However, Karády also points out the contradictions inherent in assimilation. For instance, while the first stage of blending in was swift and thorough, integration into Hungarian society was largely superficial, allowing the Jewish population to preserve and protect its differences. Emancipation also made the social rise of the Jewish population possible (intellectual careers, titles, government positions); however, the Christian middle classes sought to protect their positions, prompting the Jewish populace to counterbalance with "compensatory strategies", including "overachieving assimilation requirements" (Karády 1993: 38-40). In Nordau's case, this meant an unconditional love for German culture.

Compared to Nordau, who experienced a great deal of conflict between Hungarian and German and eventually chose the latter, Herzl's linguistic identity was relatively stable, living in well-balanced bilingualism that remained largely intact until his sister's death in 1878 and his family's consequent move to Vienna. This raises the hypothetical question of what would have happened had Herzl's family stayed in Pest? Herzl would have undoubtedly had to choose between becoming the German writer Theodor Herzl and becoming Hungarian writer Tivadar Herzl, and, it is possible that he might have become a prolific Hungarian-language playwright, much like his cousin Jenő Heltai (Handler 1983: 83). Heltai himself remembered his fluent Hungarian and German speaking relative as follows:

(...) had the tide of Hungarian literature swept him away, he would have become just as excellent a writer. Nay, I think he might have been even better since Tivadar's mother tongue was Hungarian, and when I met him years later, there was no trace of any accent in his Hungarian speech. He was perfectly acquainted with Hungarian literature, knew a vast amount of Hungarian poetry by heart, and not just those he had to learn in school, but many other poems of János Arany, Sándor Petőfi and József Kiss. [(...) ha történetesen a magyar irodalom sodorja magával, éppen olyan kiváló író lett volna belőle. Sőt: úgy gondolom, hogy talán még kiválóbb, mert hiszen Tivadar anyanyelve magyar volt, és amikor évek múlva találkoztam vele, soha nem volt észrevehető magyar beszédjén semmiféle akcentus. Tökéletesen ismerte a magyar irodalmat, rengeteg magyar verset tudott könyv nélkül, mégpedig nemcsak azokat, amelyeket az iskolában kellett megtanulnia, hanem főképpen Arany Jánosnak, Petőfinek, Kiss Józsefnek igen sok versét.] (Zsoldos 1981: 21-22, literal translation by É. M.)

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Herzl biographers are not unanimous in their assessment of Herzl's identity, with, for example, Amos Elon (1975) representing him as the "German boy from Pest", largely based on Herzl's autobiography, while Israel Zangwill characterizes Herzl as a Middle-European, rather than as a Hungarian or Austrian Jew, which means he does not associate him with an area or country but to two larger cities, Budapest and Vienna (Novák 2002: 12-13). According to Jacques Kornberg, Herzl was very attracted to Vienna and already regarded himself as a German writer during his years spent in Pest, suggesting further that with the spread of Hungarian, Pest would have had little holding power over someone like Herzl, who was an ambitious German-language writer (Kornberg 1993: 13). Beller, on the other hand, claims that the Herzl family's commitment to German culture did not cancel out their support of Hungarian liberalism, and argues that Jewish families drew their bilingualism from German-Jewish tradition and from supporting liberal forces that were largely Hungarian (Beller 1996: 19). Handler (1983) completely disagrees with Elon's image of Herzl, arguing that Tivadar Herzl was just as much a Hungarian boy in Budapest as Theodor Herzl was an assimilated Austrian in Vienna. Furthermore, Handler claims that Herzl had never truly left Budapest physically or emotionally, as shown by the fact that although the family had moved to Vienna, Herzl returned to his sister's grave every year and continued to maintain relations with writers Adolf Ágai, Sándor Bernát, Sámuel Rothfeld, Áron Chorin and Lajos Dóczi, among others.

Nordau graduated from high school in 1867 and enrolled in Medical School at the University of Pest. There are merely speculations as to why he chose medicine, since there are no concrete hints in his memoirs. Viktor Karády suggests that, at the beginning of modernization, there was growing interest in not just traditional education, but also in occupations that required great intellectual attention, such as the medical profession (Karády 1997a: 96-97). The following statistics also confirm this trend for the first semester of 1872-73: 252 Jewish students enrolled in Law, 141 in Medical School, and only 15 pursued studies in the Humanities, and the same trend persisted among Roman Catholic students as well (791 in Law, 248 in Medicine, 151 in the Humanities).

1867 was an important year in Nordau's career as a journalist when he was hired to write for *Pester Lloyd*, a prestigious German-language journal edited by Miksa Falk, where he made his debut at the journal on November 9th, 1867 with his feuilleton *Das Altarbild*. Writing the feuilleton affected his life considerably, as he studied during the day and wrote for the journal at night, but it was financially rewarding, since as an insider employee of the feuilleton column he earned a monthly income of 200 forints (Schulte 1997: 51). Based on the amount of published writings left behind from this period, we cannot determine exactly what sort of work he was charged with and how much he actually worked. We do know for certain

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that, in 1872, he also edited the sister journal of *Pester Lloyd*, *Ungarische Illustrierte Zeitung* (Ujvári 2006).

Falk must have been pleased with Nordau's work if he sent Nordau to Vienna to be the journal's correspondent in the imperial city for the 1873 World Exhibition. Nordau had published over 100 feuilletons in the feuilleton-column from April to November, travelled across Germany and parts of Northern-Europe at the end of the year, and in 1874, he finally began his long awaited European tour on the money he earned himself. Nordau's long absence from Budapest had ill consequences for his medical studies, which he presumably suspended when he went abroad. He only returned to Budapest in 1875, and completed his first exam in December of that year at the Royal Hungarian University of Budapest (*Budapesti Magyar Királyi Tudomány Egyetem*), with his name listed as "Simon Südfeld (Nordau) in the exam minutes. A few days after passing his medical exams in January 1876, Nordau left *Pester Lloyd* when Falk refused to acquiesce to his demand for a salary increase, and two days later he signed a contract with *Neues Pester Journal* (Schulte 1997: 79). However, he did not stay in Budapest for long. By May 1, he had moved to Paris with his younger sister and mother, where he worked as a doctor and the correspondent of several European journals, sending as well as writing feuilletons to *Neues Pester Journal*, several of which were published subsequently in his book *Paris: Studien und Bilder aus dem wahren Milliardenlande* (1881).

Between 1878 and 1883, while Nordau was studying in Budapest, Herzl was studying law at the University of Vienna, which, at the time, was the most prestigious university of the Monarchy. Jewish attendance was high in every faculty, with Jewish students comprising one third of 3,456 students enrolled between 1881 and 1886 (Prepuk 1997: 104). Unlike Nordau's grades during his university studies, Herzl's university grades support the claim that Jewish university students continued to outperform their peers by acquiring their degrees in a shorter amount of time and with better-than-average results (Karády 2005: 209).

Herzl's German identity had not entirely solidified during the years he spent at the university in Vienna. His documents show that while he first claimed German as his mother tongue, which was not particularly surprising, but in the following year he changed it to Hungarian, only to list himself again as German-speaking in the spring semester of 1881. During his university years, he joined the liberal student club *Akademische Lesehalle*, and then the student club *Albia* in 1881, where he proudly showcased his German identity as well as the social prestige attached to it (Beller 1996: 20). He participated in the club's activities, which meant fencing, drinking, playing cards and singing, as well as heated debates among liberal and nationalist students. In the student club, Herzl was given the nickname "Tancred" after the assertive and combative male character in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*. A then

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famous event called the Richard Wagner night took place at the beginning of 1883, which *Albia* also helped organize. Events like these, called *Festkommers*,³ were traditional in German student clubs, and though anti-Semitism was not on their agenda (Novák 2002: 24-26), Beller claims that the clubs did harbor anti-Semitic sentiments. Herzl, however, initially perceived their anti-Semitism not directed towards his person, but as cultural anti-Semitism towards money-grubbing, uneducated Jews who were unable to integrate into German culture, an attitude that he condoned since he felt that emancipation had made it the responsibility of Jewish people to better themselves and become worthy of citizenship rights. Herzl's admission to *Albia* shows that not all German "Burschenschaften" rejected Jews completely, or that he was considered, in any case, a "clubbable" Jew (Beller 1996: 21). The Wagner night was not, however, without strong anti-Semitic undertones, and in the end, Herzl decided to quit the student club, and explained his decision as being due to him being offended by anti-Semitism, not at as a Jew but as an equal citizen of the state, meaning he did not assume collective offense, and appealed to general human rights, rather than his Jewish sensibilities in his letter to the club. (Novák 2002: 24-26). During this period the collective fate of the Jewish people did not yet interest Herzl, as his primary goal was to become an acclaimed Austrian-German writer and playwright. According to his diaries, he had been writing plays since 1878, though none of them ever led to a breakthrough.

Much like Herzl, Nordau also saw his own future and better opportunities abroad, and by the beginning of the 1870's, he decided to leave Pest. Nordau had first left his family in 1873, to become the correspondent of *Pester Lloyd*. In this period, he and his younger sister Lotti exchanged letters frequently, but did not meet in person. The only one to pay him a visit was his mother, but their meeting ended disastrously. As Schulte put it, the mother's provinciality, her Yiddish, her analphabetism and lack of understanding was in stark contrast with modern Vienna and its culture, filling the boy with embarrassment (Schulte 1997: 59). In his letters, Nordau refers to Falk's journal as a "Provinzblatt" that will always be ignored in Vienna, and to Pest as a "Provinzstadt" that he cannot endure any longer. A few months after the visit, he even declined the position of Pest correspondent, though it was offered by the much-respected Vienna journal, *Neue Freie Presse*. Subsequently, in 1876 Nordau moved to Paris, and then in 1880 settled there permanently. Before he left to Paris, he published a long paper in the best-selling Leipzig journal *Gartenlaube* on Hungarian instead of German becoming the language of instruction in Hungarian elementary and secondary schools, disregarding the fact that *Gartenlaube* was the leading anti-Semitic journal in Germany. The first draft, titled *Deutschenhetze in Ungarn*, was so politically-charged that the editor refused

³ *Kommers* (from Lat. *commercium*) were prestigious official school events organized and held by school clubs.

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to publish it, fearing that business would suffer and the journal might be banned in Hungary. After Nordau toned down his article it was published under the title *Die Deutschen in Ungarn*, which he signed not with his name but as "Ein Deutsch-Ungar". After a long overview of the history of Germans in Hungary, the article drew the conclusion that German language and culture were completely legitimate in Hungary, both historically and legally, and deemed the process of Hungarianization starting in 1861 nothing short of scandalous. He also notes that the atrocious language policies and pressure to use Hungarian affected not just education, but the German theater as well, which was on the brink of closing its doors, and that every day life, too, was burdened by the process of Hungarianization since many people were forced to turn to interpreters in institutions due to communication difficulties. He also wrote that the problematic process of Hungarianization was further exacerbated by the "social terror" where Hungarian papers slandered merchants with German trade-signs and wrote condescendingly about clubs and families that conversed in German. Nordau saw the whole language issue as having devastated Hungarian intellectual and public life, and warned that, should Hungary do away with bilingualism and opt for the largely inaccessible Hungarian language, it would end up in isolation and lose contact with the European community and European culture, and then would have to stoop to maintaining relations with Asia. In his view, only the German language kept Hungary in Europe, and monolingualism would be the downfall of Hungary. He concluded that he could not see himself or his future in such a country and so his only way out was emigration (Schulte 1997: 93-96).

We can only offer hypotheses as to why Nordau had chosen to move to Paris. Its anonymity, cosmopolitan atmosphere and neutrality to religion certainly worked in its favor, as well as fact that there was nothing there to remind Nordau of his Jewish roots except his family, allowing him to feel like a true "German writer" (Schulte 1997: 27). Yet another incentive may have been that talented people were deeply respected in Parisian society, regardless of their ethnic origin. Germans often paid long or short visits to Paris, and much like German Jewish intellectuals, they considered Parisians liberal-minded and learned citizens (Kaiser 1988: 480-81). Heinrich Heine's image of France emphasized not just political ideals, but hedonism, a positive view on life, and eroticism, and last but not least, political determination and the hope that poetry will change reality and lead to French (Republican) conditions (Lange 1994). Since 1750, foreign writers focused on the Rome-Paris-London triangle, since these were the only real alternative to staying in their own countries. Rome, London and Paris were cosmopolitan havens offering refuge to aspiring writers. In contrast, German cities could not keep up with this changing mentality, leading to a marked difference between Western and German approaches to writing and culture. German writers thus arrived to metropolises as "provincial refugees", although their knowledge,

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competence and intellect were incontestable, and the intellectual goods they brought with them not only justified their presence, but also secured their otherwise unpredictable existence abroad (Wiedemann 1988).

When Nordau arrived in Paris, the opportunities he was presented with as a freelancer journalist and the international fame of the Parisian medical circle were definitely a positive experience to him. He considered his medical studies inconclusive and planned on writing a dissertation and familiarizing himself with medical anthropology, a field for which there were no Hungarian specialists at that time, let alone a university department (Schulte 1997: 80). Professor József Lenhossék gave him a letter of recommendation so he could go to Paris, but could do no more for Nordau since Lenhossék's nationalist colleagues denied Nordau the requested scholarship due to his alleged anti-Hungarian opinions (Schulte 1997: 40). Denying Nordau's request for a scholarship also meant that the professors of the medical faculty no longer wished to support Nordau's medical career and admit the successful journalist to the medical faculty of the Medical School.

Despite his lack of support and a stable income, Nordau was not dissuaded from emigrating to Paris. Since the Vienna journal *Neue Freie Presse* no longer required his services in Paris, he supported his family by writing feuilletons to *Neues Pester Journal* and journals published in Frankfurt and Goteborg. His medical career was also off to a good start as he interned under Professor Jean-Martin Charcot, the psychiatrist who earned his international fame by treating hysteria with hypnosis. Nordau also worked for several hospitals and later obtained enough training at a private gynecology clinic to consider becoming a gynecologist instead of a journalist, for which the opportunity presented itself when he returned to Pest in 1878. However, his medical career proved to be short-lived, as in 1880, he and his family returned to Paris, and two years later, he had the honor of defending his doctoral thesis on female castration with Professor Charcot as his supervisor and the head of the exam committee.

Conclusion

Nordau and Herzl's lives were intertwined from the start of their careers in Pest, lasting until Herzl's early death in 1904. Although their backgrounds suggest an identical situation between Nordau, born in 1849, and Herzl, who was ten years his junior, the development of their careers differed vastly in terms of assimilation, language choice and identity. The linguistic and cultural paradigm shift that occurred before the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 led to bilingualism in Herzl's life, but affected Nordau more deeply both socio-culturally and professionally, eventually leading to complete isolation.

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